Evaluation of the Early Years Centre

Round 1 (2013–2015)

Provincial Report

Dalhousie University, Research Power Incorporated, Mount Saint Vincent University

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The Early Years Centre model indicates a new policy direction that supports the integration of programs and services at the government and community levels. The EYCs are providing support for children in their early years and their families, with the view that over time, as this model of integrated service delivery becomes increasingly well developed and aligned, families will have seamless access to the services they need, when they need them. The EYCs bring together existing programs and services, such as child care, family/parenting supports, early learning, health services, and early identification and intervention programs. The Early Years Centres are placed in elementary schools because the schools are focal points in communities, publicly owned, and mandated to provide education and information to young children and their families. In August 2013, the locations of the first four EYCs were announced, with centres to be established under four school boards. Four more sites have since been opened and will be evaluated in subsequent years.

This is the first of four annual evaluations that will be conducted, with the focus in this first year on gathering process measures (e.g., a description of key activities, challenges, enablers, and required supports) and baseline data related to program and service integration, program quality, and child development. Perceptions of key stakeholders about accomplishments to date were also gathered. Various methods and instruments were used to gather the data, including

- the Early Childhood Development instrument (EDI), to gather baseline data related to early childhood development
- the Indicators of Change tool, to gather baseline data related to the integration of early childhood programs and services
- the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale*, third edition (ECERS-3), to gather baseline data related to the quality of the Early Learning Program
- document reviews to gather data to describe the development and implementation of the EYCs
- key informant interviews with the site management team and key contacts at the EYCs (i.e., the principal, vice principal, and lead Early Childhood Educator) to gather information to assess process measures, including accomplishments, enablers, challenges, and required supports

Recommendations

The evaluation of the first four Early Years Centres (EYCs) was conducted between May and July 2015, approximately 18 months after the funding from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) was received. The findings reveal that significant work had been done over the 18 months, and given the early stages of development of the EYCs the accomplishments are impressive. The following section summarizes the conclusions and associated recommendations for the Early Years Centres, based on the findings of the evaluation.

The Early Years Centre Model

This evaluation revealed a need to clarify and strengthen the model description, especially as it relates to integrated service delivery. At the same time, the need for flexibility in order to adapt the model to meet the needs of individual communities was an important finding.

- Clarify the model description, ensuring that integrated service delivery is an overarching component.

Collaborative Practices

Forming partnerships and collaborating with community partners were identified as critical to the success of the EYC model. Bringing personnel from both the school system and the various, sometimes isolated, programs in the community requires time and a commitment to true partnerships.

- Define expectations and roles of partners to help support effective collaboration and coordination of programs, services, and EYC committees.
- Use some of the practices of community development in defining roles, creating standards, and offering learning opportunities, in order to facilitate true collaborative partnerships.

Integration at the Provincial Level

In continuing to clarify and describe the EYC model, it will be important to identify policies and expectations that enable the implementation of the EYCs at the provincial and school board levels. Regulated child care was identified as a potential challenge in implementation. The multitude of partners who work with EYCs have varying accountabilities to various provincial or federal departments.

- Complete a provincial policy scan to examine the various expectations of organizations or staff who partner with EYCs.
- Develop standards and guidelines for the EYCs.
- Ensure that there are no policy barriers in achieving the regulated child-care component of the model.

Early Childhood Educators (ECEs)

Early Childhood Educators within the EYCs were recognized as leaders in their field and champions for the play-based approach of the EYCs.

- Examine the implications and necessary supports for ECEs.
- Re-examine the proposed delineation of roles for ECEs (program and partnerships).
- Develop a curriculum for the Early Learning Program to support the ECEs and ensure evidence-based best practices are employed.
- Continue to support the ECEs' practice through the Early Childhood Development Consultants (ECDC).

Networking and Learning Opportunities

Support all EYC team members in their ongoing professional development by providing opportunities for networking and learning.

- Continue to bring together EYC teams (school board leads, principals, ECEs) to discuss their programs, challenges, and what they have learned.
- Consider including colleagues across systems and programs in these events, including members of the health professions, community services, community partners, and the early elementary team in schools. Provide cross-disciplinary opportunities, as well as time for groups to reflect as members of their profession (e.g., bringing ECEs together).
- Focus topics on integrated service delivery, play-based approaches.
- Evaluate these opportunities to ensure that they meet the professional development needs of all partners and that they inform practice.

Introduction

In 2013, the Department of Education was expanded to include an Early Years Branch (EYB), resulting in the creation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). The expanded mandate of the department was implemented in recognition of the need for an integrated system that supports the learning, care, and well-being of children, through the prenatal period to age six years, and their families. The EYB began to work with the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation (MWMFF) for the implementation of Early Years Centres (EYCs) in Nova Scotia, based on the earlier success of this model in other provinces, including Ontario (the Toronto First Duty project) and New Brunswick (Early Childhood Development Centres).

In August 2013, the locations of the first EYCs were announced, with centres being established in the districts of four school boards: the Halifax Regional School Board (Rockingstone Heights School); the Cape Breton–Victoria Regional School Board (in Sydney Mines, both Jubilee and St. Joseph elementary schools); the Tri-County Regional School Board (Yarmouth Central School); and the Strait Regional School Board (East Antigonish Education Centre). Each EYC receives $125,000 of sustainable funding from the EECD per year. Four more sites have since been opened and will be evaluated in subsequent years.

The Early Years Centre model tindicates a new policy direction that supports the integration of programs and services at the government and community levels. The EYCs are providing support for children in their early years and their families, with the view that over time, as this model of integrated service delivery becomes increasingly well developed and aligned, families will have seamless access to the services they need, when they need them. The EYCs bring together existing programs and services, such as child care, family/parenting supports, early learning, health services, and early identification and intervention programs.

The Early Years Centres are placed in elementary schools because they are focal points in communities, publicly owned, and mandated to provide education and information to young children and their families. The Early Years Centre model identifies schools as central to the delivery of early childhood education and related programming for children and families. Specific sites were chosen because of identified needs in the

community. Through the implementation of the EYCs, the EECD and school boards are partnering with communities, families, services providers, and other stakeholders to

- improve developmental outcomes for children prenatally through to school entry
- integrate core programs and services at the community level
- increase collaboration between core programs, related partners, and service providers
- increase access to programs and services for young children and their families
- improve program quality

Early Years Centres are working together with community partners to identify services and supports that respond to the needs of families. As a minimum, all EYCs in Nova Scotia include three core services:

- play-based Early Learning Programs (ELPs) for children in the year before entering school
- family supports and resources
- regulated child care responsive to family needs

The Early Years Branch of the EECD works closely with and supports school boards in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of EYCs. Each EYC is working with the EYB to evaluate the success of the model and to monitor progress on the establishment of the EYCs. An Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) was established to guide the EYC evaluation, which included the development of an evaluation framework and program logic model that describes the key activities of the EYCs and associated indicators, outputs, outcomes, and data collection methods. The evaluation framework with the logic model for the project is found in Appendix 1.

This report presents the findings from the first round of evaluation (2013–2015) for four EYCs. This includes a description of EYC activities and program implementation, alongside baseline data, which will be used to measure the impact of the EYCs over the course of the evaluation. The findings include a description of the program (organized according to the components of the logic model), the baseline measures used, and the findings from key informant interviews.

Methods

The following methods and data sources were used for the baseline and process measures.

Early Development Instrument

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a teacher-completed tool, developed at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and designed to measure the ability of a child to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations at school entry. The EDI measures children's developmental health in five areas of early development: 1) Physical Health and Well-Being; 2) Social Competence; 3) Emotional Maturity; 4) Language and Cognitive Development; and 5) Communication Skills and General Knowledge. Findings from the administration of EDI in Canada show that, in most jurisdictions, 25 per cent or more of children entering grade primary are vulnerable in at least one aspect of their development. Further research linking EDI findings to later educational data demonstrate that, on average, vulnerability at school entry is an indicator of ongoing vulnerability within the school system. Research has also found that early vulnerability is an indicator of other factors related to a person's lifelong health, learning, and behaviour.

EDI data were collected across Nova Scotia in 2012–13 and 2014–15. The 2012–13 data represents a baseline measure for the first four EYCs. Data were included in the report from completed questionnaires for children in class for more than a month who had not been identified as having special needs. For each domain of the EDI, scores on each scale for all children in a school were arranged from the lowest to the highest, to represent the "distribution of scores." Scores were then divided into groups, based on the number of children in the school. The distribution was divided into four groups representing percentiles, each consisting of scores of a quarter of the children in the school. Below the 10th percentile cut-off refers to children who fall *at or below* the 10th percentile cut-off for a domain.

Indicators of Change Tool

The Indicators of Change tool was developed by the Toronto First Duty project (TFD), designed to monitor and plan progress towards the efficacy of demonstrated integrated service delivery, and has been adapted to help support the evaluation of the Early Years Centres in Nova Scotia.

During the development of the evaluation framework, the Indicators of Change tools used in TFD and the New Brunswick Early Childhood Development Centres were reviewed and adapted to key components, and indicators were identified for the Nova Scotia context. Each indicator has benchmarks from 1 to 5 that provide a quantitative measure related to integration: 1) community co-location; 2) cooperation; 3) coordination; 4) collaboration; and 5) integration.

The Indicators of Change tool was completed by the EYC site management team (described in the Program Description section of the report) from May to July 2015 through a facilitated meeting led by a member of the Evaluation Team and EECD staff. The facilitators helped to explain the indicators and benchmarks and to answer questions of the site management teams. Site management team members reviewed each indicator and the associated benchmarks to identify the degree of integration (i.e., selected a benchmark from 1 to 5) and provided examples to support the score selected.

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, third edition

The third edition of *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale*, or ECERS–3 (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2015), is a revision of the widely used and researched *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale*, Revised Edition (1998), designed to assess the overall quality of early childhood programs. The ECERS-3 is designed to assess overall quality in an early childhood setting. The scale focuses on what children directly experience in their programs that has a direct effect on their development, including interactions between ECEs and children, interactions among the children, and how children experience the environment. It also focuses on features such as space, schedules, and materials that support interactions. Observations are conducted during a 3-hour time frame to determine scores for all items associated with the ongoing program, such as activities, interactions, and language. Attention to how teachers use materials to stimulate children's learning, teacher strategies for guiding language development and literacy, and a focus on becoming familiar with math are examples of items included in ECERS-3.

Two trained ECERS-3 administrators with established reliability visited the EYCs in June 2015 to complete the ECERS-3 assessment. Administration of the scale results in a Total Environment Rating Score, as well as subscale scores, in each of six areas: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language and Literacy, Learning Activities, Interaction, and Program Structure. The total number of items included in the scale is

35. Scores correspond to the following ratings: 1 (inadequate), 3 (minimal), 5 (good), 7 (excellent). To calculate average subscale scores, the scores for each item in the subscale were summed and divided by the number of items scored. The total mean score is the sum of all item scores for the entire scale divided by the number of items scored.

Document Review

Staff from the EECD and key contacts at the EYC (i.e., the principals at the schools for three EYCs and the executive director at the Family Resource Centre of one site) identified documents for inclusion in the document review, such as job descriptions, work plans, meeting minutes and agendas, committee terms of reference, resource materials, promotional materials, progress reports, etc. Selected Evaluation Team members reviewed all the documents provided, extracted information, and created written summaries. The summaries were then reviewed with the key contacts to validate the accuracy of the information. Adaptations and additions were made to the summaries based on the feedback received. The key findings from the document review were then synthesized and are included in the main body of the report.

Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with EYC partners (generally members of the site management team), key contacts from the EYCs, and staff from the EECD. The key contact at the EYC developed a list of key informants for the partner interviews and sent each a letter of invitation to participate. A member of the Evaluation Team followed up and arranged interview logistics. A total of 31 partners (of 33 identified) participated in a key informant interview; nine of eleven key contacts participated in a key informant interview; and four EECD staff participated in an interview (two staff members participated together for a total of three interviews). An interview guide was developed to cover areas of interest, reviewed by staff from EECD, and finalized based on the feedback obtained. There was a core group of questions asked of all key informants, with slight modifications made for each group of key informants (i.e., the partners, the key contacts, and the EECD staff).

All interviews were audio-recorded (with participants' permission) and then transcribed verbatim before being analysed by two members of the Evaluation Team. Sources were first coded to reveal broader themes, as well as sub-themes or subcategories that illuminate the data in ways not provided by the main themes or concepts. The themes and subcategories were then compared and contrasted across data sources. Systematic comparisons and verifications ensure that important categories are not overlooked,

and that emerging categories and concepts are properly identified. Coding was completed using the qualitative software package Nvivo (version 10). The findings from the qualitative data were synthesized and compiled into individual reports for each site. The findings from each site were then reviewed and synthesized into this overall report. Verbatim quotations are provided after the descriptions of each theme. Strength of response is reflected in the order the themes are presented, as well as through the use of descriptors such as “many,” “some,” and “a few,” and through an indication of how many EYCs identified the theme.

Limitations and Considerations

- Qualitative methods, such as the interviews used in this evaluation, are exploratory in nature and provide rich and valuable insight into people’s views and feelings. But results are not intended to be generalized or quantified.
- The sample for EDI includes almost all primary students in the school, but since the overall sample is small in size it should be interpreted with caution. To protect confidentiality, data are not reported for groups of 10 or fewer children.
- The Indicators of Change tool is in the early stages of use in Nova Scotia (as noted, the tool was originally used in the Toronto First Duty project and adapted for the Nova Scotia context). Given the early stages of use of the Indicators of Change instrument, the monitoring results should be interpreted with caution.

Findings – Program Description

This section summarizes the results of the document review and key informant interviews. The following overview of the key activities of the four EYCs is categorized according to the components of the logic model: leadership and accountability, access and navigation, communication and engagement, capacity and culture, and early learning environment.

Leadership and Accountability

Structures

Site Management Team

Each school board formed a site management team shortly after the EYC locations were announced. Each team was to establish the EYC by renovating space, hiring staff, and building partnerships. In three of the four EYCs, the site management team consists of 10–12 individuals, while the fourth has 3–5 individuals. Membership varies but generally includes representation from the school, the ELP, the school board, EECD (Early Childhood Development Consultants), Early Childhood Development Intervention Services, a Family Resource Centre, and Public Health. In the three EYCs with larger site management teams, meetings generally occur monthly, with more regular meetings between the principal or vice principal and ECEs (and in one site this includes the executive director of the FRC). In the EYC with a smaller site management team whose membership primarily derives from the school, meetings are held weekly.

Community Advisory Committee

All four sites have a Community Advisory Committee. At two sites, an existing community-based, early years partnership was accessed to serve as the Community Advisory Committee. At the other two sites a new Community Advisory Committee was formed but was discontinued because found redundant. Existing early years partnerships were identified and the people involved were asked to serve in the advisory capacity (at one site the EYC helped to reinvigorate the partnership in an effort to ensure efficient and effective use of resources). At all four sites the membership of the Community Advisory Committees is broad and includes representatives from many groups, organizations, programs, and services (e.g., police,

universities, health centres, community services, and community-based groups working with families, libraries, municipalities, and Schools Plus). The Community Advisory Committees meet less often than the site management team, generally quarterly.

Human Resources

The funding provided by EECD was intended to pay for two ECE positions. Additional ECE staff was hired at three EYCs. At two of the three sites additional funding was secured to support the inclusion of children with special needs. At another site there was an existing ELP (formerly named the Early Learning Opportunity), and there are additional ECE positions funded through the school board at this site. In three EYCs the ECEs are employed by the school board, and in one EYC the ECEs are employed by the local Family Resource Centre (there is a memorandum of understanding, and funds are transferred from the school board to the FRC). At three sites the school principal or vice principal provides administrative leadership for the EYC, and at the fourth site administrative leadership is shared between the school principal and the executive director of the FRC.

Job descriptions for the two ECE positions were developed by EECD, with one position focused on taking a lead on partnership and community development and the other on the ELP. In practice, however, these positions work differently according to each EYC. For example, in two EYCs, there is a lead ECE position that focuses on the program and on partnership and community development. In one EYC, both ECEs share responsibility for the ELP, and given the high demand for this program, broader community partnership and development work is not included in their scope of work. At the fourth site, there is a lead ECE for the ELP and a lead ECE for the family support component of the model (this is the site with a pre-existing ELP and more staff).

Policies and Practices

Various legislative policies exist that influence the work of the EYCs at the provincial level, including the Education Act and the Day Care Act.

All EYCs engaged in a variety of practices that included the following planning and evaluation activities:

- completing a community needs assessment related to early years programs and services (e.g., demographics, current programs and services, gaps in services, etc.)
- planning and coordinating the ELP (e.g., securing physical space, materials, supplies; developing a program philosophy and program schedule; hiring staff; defining roles and responsibilities of staff; planning for ECE substitutes; buying insurance)
- planning and coordinating the family support component of the model (e.g., obtaining physical space and materials; meeting with partners; engaging in community outreach and consultation; identifying community needs in collaboration with Community Advisory Committee members; program planning and coordination; action planning)
- incorporating the EYC within the school and linking with other grades, particularly with grade primary (involving, for example, transition planning, grade primary teachers visiting the ELP, children in the ELP attending school assemblies, etc.)
- planning for professional development of EYC staff
- completing a community needs assessment related to child care and development of proposals to support implementation of the child-care component of the model
- serving on the Evaluation Advisory Committee to help inform and guide the evaluation process (each site has at least one member on the EAC)
- receiving input from parents/families and partners to help inform program planning and program improvements (both informal and formal input)
- using local data and information (e.g., EDI data, data from the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, surveys conducted by partners, child development data) to help inform program planning and development
- collecting attendance data from the ELP at each site, with variable tracking of participation/attendance in family support programs
- conducting a few program specific evaluations (i.e., more detailed evaluations of specific programs or services offered)
- monitoring child development in the ELP through best practice documentation

Access and Navigation

Partnerships

As previously noted, a range of partners has been engaged in the EYCs and provided a number of supports, including

- planning and developing the EYC
- promoting the EYC programs and services
- building awareness and understanding about the EYC within their organization and broader community
- sharing information about services and practice with the EYCs and linking them to programs and professional development opportunities
- planning and coordinating programs as part of the family support component of the model

Communication and Engagement

Communication and Engagement Activities

Each site provided an opportunity for community and family engagement through the completion of the child-care needs assessment. All four sites implemented a variety of communication strategies to promote the EYC and its programs within the community, including

- the creation and dissemination of EYC-specific material (brochures, calendars, registration packages, and a welcome package)
- inclusion of information in school and partner newsletters and in websites and other online platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, email, etc.)
- face-to-face communication with parents, families, and care givers in communities (information nights, an open house, community events, presentations, one-on-one communication and outreach, tours of the EYC, door-to-door canvassing, targeted outreach)
- making use of traditional media (public service announcements, radio, local newspapers) and social media
- networking and sharing information with community partners

Capacity and Culture

Local Learning and Networking Opportunities

Local learning and networking opportunities have been provided by each site for the ECEs (and at one site there was inclusion of staff from the FRC). The number of opportunities and topics varied between sites, although generally the opportunities were focused on play-based or early learning. The ECEs and other EYC stakeholders have also attended professional development opportunities offered by the province.

Early Learning Environment (EYC Model)

Early Learning Program (ELP)

At all four sites, significant time was spent on establishing the ELP, and in one case on strengthening the program. Three of the sites offer a program that runs approximately 4.5 to 5 hours per day, five days per week. At one site, given high demand, a morning and an afternoon program (three hours each) are offered each day, five days a week. All sites described child-centred programs that are play-based learning models responsive to the needs and interests of the children.

Family Supports

All four sites have a family support room (also referred to as the Community Room or Community Resource Room). A variety of programs and services for children and parents or other family members are offered through the family support room by various partners (e.g., Family Resource Centres; Early Intervention Programs; Mental Health and Addictions and Public Health in the Nova Scotia Health Authority; Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech; Women's Centres; family support groups; libraries; and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority). At the site with the pre-existing ELP, programs and services are offered in the family support room through the EYC (the two ECEs having been hired through the funding), as well as through partner organizations. At this site there was also a pre-existing relationship with Public Health and primary care practitioners to offer enhanced health and medical services. At two sites, an enhanced relationship with primary care practitioners has resulted in the provision of physician services on site.

Onsite or Links to Regulated Child Care

As previously noted, all four sites completed a child-care needs assessment. All four sites are in the planning stages to address child-care needs based on the assessments completed. The work undertaken includes planning for after-school child-care programs in two EYCs; hiring a Family Home Child Care consultant at one site to support family-home child care; and planning to link to regulated child care at one site.

Program Quality

The ECERS-3 is designed to assess overall quality in an early childhood setting. Process quality consists of the various interactions that go on in a classroom between ECEs and children, among the children themselves, and in the interactions children have with the many materials and activities in the environment, as well as those features, such as space, schedule, and materials, that support these interactions.

Overall, the ECERS-3 evaluation shows us that the Nova Scotia Early Years Centre environments range from minimal to good quality. Mean Total Environment Ratings range from 3.2 (minimal) to 4.9 (good) on a scale of 1 (inadequate) to 7 (excellent). Mean subscale ranges included space and furnishings (3.0–5.14), personal care routines (3.75–5.0), language and literacy (3.4–5.0), learning activities (2.7–4.8), interaction (3.4–6.0) and program structure (2.33–6.0). Items that scored toward the higher end of the scale include those relating to room arrangement for playing and learning, safety practices, fine motor activities, individual teaching and learning, peer interactions, and staff communication with children. Examples of items that received mixed or lower scores are space for gross motor activity, play with blocks, promoting acceptance of diversity, understanding written numbers, and how staff introduce numbers to children in a meaningful way.

Integrated Service Delivery

This section provides a summary of the degree of integrated service delivery for the EYCs, tracked through the Indicators of Change instrument. Although the specific definitions for benchmarks 1 through 5 vary for each indicator, the following provides a broad overview of each benchmark:

- ***Community Co-location:*** work independently, maintain separate processes
- ***Cooperation:*** share, review, and discuss
- ***Coordination:*** work together to coordinate, begin joint activities
- ***Collaboration:*** expand joint activities, shift to collaborative decision making
- ***Integration:*** develop a common program for children, consolidate

Overall, the findings related to integration illustrate that two of the EYCs are in the early stages of integration, tending to work independently using separate processes (level 1), or sharing and reviewing processes/activities (level 2). At one of these sites, there was greater coordination (level 3) of programs and services in terms of community engagement and provision of joint professional development.

At one EYC, the findings illustrated variability in terms of integration, from a level 1 (separate processes and working independently) to a ¾ (coordination and collaboration). Areas of co-location (1) and cooperation (2) include human resource processes, budget processes, evaluation, family engagement, professional development, and approach to early learning (e.g., assessing child development and program quality, behaviour guidance and child management, and pedagogical approach). Areas of coordination and collaboration for this EYC include planning, partnership development, community engagement, and parenting programs.

At one site the findings illustrate that across all components of the logic model the site management team felt that there was coordination (level 3) and in most cases collaboration (4). In a couple of areas there was movement to integration—partnerships and onsite resources and supports for families. Two areas of less integration included policy development and a common intake protocol (rated as 2). At this site the findings from the Indicators of Change tool indicate a high degree of collaborative work among EYC partners, and

the site management team reflected that this may be due to a history of partnerships and of early years organizations and stakeholders working together.

Child Development

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) measures children's developmental health at school entry. Data were collected across Nova Scotia in 2012–13 and 2014–15 and will be collected every year as part of the Early Years Centre evaluation. The year 2012–13 establishes a provincial baseline measurement (or lens) through which we can view children's developmental health. Children's scores in each developmental area are divided into categories representing anticipated learning trajectories. Children are vulnerable and less likely to be successful at school if they score in the lowest 10th percentile of the distribution.

In 2012–13, the sample size for EYC sites ranged from 24 to 29 students. The results, therefore, should be interpreted with caution, considering the small number of students about whom the questionnaire was completed. There are, however, some important trends to note concerning these four EYC sites:

- a higher rate of vulnerability in one or more developmental domains in comparison to the provincial average of 27 per cent (ranging from 21–50 per cent at the four sites)
- a higher rate of vulnerability in the developmental domains of Physical Health & Well-Being (0–44 per cent range) and Social Competence (0–25 per cent) when compared to the province (13 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively)
- vulnerability rates in the domains of Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive Development, and Communication Skills and General Knowledge were lower or the same when compared to the province

Findings – Key Informant Interviews

Successes and Accomplishments

This section describes the successes and accomplishments of the work to date in establishing the EYCs, identified by key informants. The successes and accomplishments, which are described in detail below, include a description of the Early Learning Program and its benefits, the strengthening of community partnerships, and the building of awareness and understanding.

The Early Learning Program and Its Benefits

The ELP was identified as an accomplishment of the EYC at all sites and by most EECD key informants, and was the key (number 1) accomplishment at three of the four sites. These three sites noted that the focus of the EYC in the first year was the establishment of the ELP, and all sites noted that the programs are based on evidence-based best practices. A few EECD key informants noted that the ELP was a relatively easy fit for schools, compared to the other two components of the model. All sites described how the ELP (and in some cases the family supports) have benefited families by

- providing access to supports for families in vulnerable situations (e.g., those who have a low socioeconomic status or high-risk families) and in rural and remote locations
- providing programs and services responsive to the needs of children, parents, and families
- helping children to develop skills and confidence to transition more effectively to grade primary
- helping to build trust between the school and the family
- increasing parent and family confidence to visit the school and talk with teachers and school administrators
- increasing parenting and family skills and confidence, enabling participants to recognize their strengths and abilities

> *"[O]ur early learning program ... has been a huge success, and I think it really embodies the play-based learning philosophy. I think it's become a part of the culture of our building, our school, [and] our community that is very, very strong."*

"[T]he family participation part and the family support part [are] huge. It's a really interesting population of families who don't always get recognized for their strengths, and don't always get recognized for all of their efforts. And this is what the Early Years does; it really fosters their own abilities, their own resources, their own ability to be resourceful and really inclusive."

Strengthening Community Partnerships

The strengthening of relationships and links with community partners was identified as an accomplishment by key informants at each site. It was noted that the EYC has brought community partners together and built greater understanding within the school about community programs and services, as well as built understanding within the community about the school system. It was also noted that relationships between local schools and EECD have been strengthened through the EYC. In some cases the EYC has helped to foster greater collaboration between partners and facilitated greater coordination of programs and services.

"I was not anticipating that the relationships that were built so quickly in the Early Years Centre would then almost immediately strengthen the relationships that the school has with families. So I didn't see that part of it coming.… [B]ecause the Early Years Centre is here, we're seeing far greater comfort [among] the rest of the staff, and our interactions with parents who are here on a daily basis [and] have older children have improved dramatically."

Most EECD key informants also discussed the strengthening of partnerships at the provincial level across some government departments.

"This is a big step provincially and across departments. [It] has been an accomplishment to start those conversations and that work across departments that focus[es] on the early years."

Building Awareness and Understanding

At three of four sites, key informants discussed how the EYC is helping to build awareness and understanding within the school and community about the early years and the importance of appropriate support (e.g., providing play-based learning) for child development. It was also noted that the work of the EYC is helping to build understanding among families and within the school about available community-based services for the early years. All EECD key informants reported that the EYC model is helping to build greater awareness and understanding at all levels within the community, the schools, school boards, and the EECD.

"I think one large success is the fact that the Early Years and the value of play-based learning [are] highlighted by being located in a school [that forms] a central spot in any community…. [T]he importance of early development is highlighted, and how that links into later learning through the children's school years. [It's good] for community and general public … to know that early childhood educators hold a key and valuable link to all of that learning …, and that the education of the child does indeed begin much sooner than the first day of public school."

"It obviously is expanding [the school's] understanding … of the need for early years support, and additionally family supports, that [the school itself is] really … not able to provide, because it's just not within [its] scope…. [The school] works closely with families, certainly, but there are deeper issues within families that are beyond [the school's] ability to [deal with]. And this is what the outside agencies are there for too. But [the Early Years program] has maybe given [the school] a little bit better perspective and understanding of what's available in the community that could certainly change, in a positive way, the students that are in schools."

Enablers

This section describes the enablers, identified by key informants, to the development and implementation of the Early Years Centres. Enablers are described in detail below and include school, school board, and government commitment; commitment of community partners; support from the EECD; ECE expertise; flexibility; and the location of the EYC.

School, School Board, and Government Commitment

The majority of key informants from all four sites and most EECD key informants discussed the support from the schools, school boards, and government as enabling the development and implementation of the EYC. This support included

- the formation of EECD, the development of the Early Years Branch, and the financial commitment of EECD to the EYCs
- the commitment of senior leaders, such as the minister and deputy minister at EECD and superintendents of school boards, as well as directors of programs in the school board and principals and vice principals
- adequate staffing (e.g., vice principal positions, administrative supports, allocation of time within current positions, etc.)
- participation of key school staff in learning about the early years and how to support the EYC

Commitment of Community Partners

Most key informants at each site identified the commitment of partners and willingness to work together as important enablers to moving the work of the EYC forward and ensuring its success. At two sites a history of collaboration was described, which included a shared vision and leadership for early years programs and services. For the sites that had not previously collaborated extensively with other organizations working in the early years, the importance of identifying partners with expertise in the early years and having the "right" people at the table to help guide and inform the development and implementation of the EYC was noted.

At two sites, some respondents noted that many of the partners involved in the EYC have a good understanding of both the early years and the needs and strengths within the community, an understanding that was important to the development and implementation of the EYC.

> *"I think the combination of services … being offered [is important,] and the organizations that are working together on the Early Years sites are really good at knowing their communities and have drawn in families that have otherwise gone under the radar. So, really, [they identify] some of those at risk families."*

Support from EECD

The support provided through EECD was noted as an important enabler to the development and implementation of the EYC by key informants at all sites. The key supports described include the networking and sharing opportunities (e.g., principal meetings, sessions for a broader range of stakeholders), the learning opportunities or professional development, the hands-on support offered during meetings and conference calls to solve problems, and the funding. One EECD respondent noted the support from local early childhood development consultants as an important enabler in moving the work of the EYC forward.

> *"The support from the province has been excellent. They have visited the centre, [and] I have attended workshops in Halifax on numerous occasions, and of course, that's where it all started. They gave us the ground roots. They gave us the ideas, they gave us the growth plan, they gave us the expectations. So … you know, they were necessary for the whole process."*

Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Expertise and Commitment

Some of the key informants at each site discussed the knowledge, expertise, commitment, and work ethic of the ECEs as key enablers in building a strong ELP. The importance of the ECEs being trained in early childhood development was acknowledged at a couple of sites, and it was noted that this was critical to building an evidence-based ELP (e.g., play-based learning, evidence-based documentation, reflective practice, etc.). In addition, at a couple of sites the connection of the ECEs to the child-care sector was noted as an asset in linking with the community.

> *"Having trained staff in the early learning program …, [h]aving staff with … knowledge and background [in] early childhood education [makes all the difference].… We have a fabulous staff that just go above and beyond, like incredibly above and beyond.… [They] all seem very dedicated … wanting to make this work, and work well.*

Flexibility

Some of the key informants at three of the sites discussed the importance of the flexibility of the EECD, enabling each EYC to develop and implement the model based on their local context. The EECD was not

prescriptive but instead provided support based on the strengths and needs of each EYC, and the department was responsive to challenges that arose.

> *"[E]ach community is different. And the whole process and the planning and the implementation [haven't] been so restrictive that [the program] doesn't allow for some differences in the communities.… [F]or instance, in our centre we had so many children it was either put children on a wait list or let them attend half days. Now I know it wasn't the intention to [have children] attend half days, but in the first year, let's look at it and see how that works. So you know, the flexibility in some of those areas [helps meet] community needs, [and] the communities are so diverse."*

Location of the EYC

Most key informants at three sites and a couple of EECD key informants discussed the importance of locating the EYC in the school setting and also within a community with high needs, as this helps to ensure access for vulnerable families. At two of these sites the EYC is located in the school, while at the other site the EYC is located adjacent to the school (which was discussed as a challenge, because the preference was to have the centre in the school).

> *"Families know where the schools are in the communities. They don't necessarily know all of the services that are offered through a school, but because [the centre is] in the school [families learn about it].… [The school is] a key entry point, so people know that they can go to the school and access not just elementary school but other services."*

Challenges

This section describes the challenges identified by key informants to the development and implementation of the Early Years Centres. Challenges, which are described in detail below, include time constraints and competing priorities, complex linkages to regulated child care, uncertainty about the EYC model, system barriers, and lack of experience with the early years.

Establishing the Early Years Centre

Some key informants at each site noted that establishing the EYC is time consuming and involves engaging partners and building partnerships, renovations to the ELP space, hiring staff, etc. It was noted that both school staff and community partners supporting the EYC have priorities other than the establishment of the EYC, and this leads to challenges in moving the work forward. At a couple of sites key informants described the need for more human and financial resources, and key informants at another site identified the need to share the work more effectively.

Two sites also noted the challenge of engaging community partners. This was generally attributed to competing priorities within community organizations and to the relative unfamiliarity of the schools in working with community groups using a community development approach.

> *"I mean, we haven't yet been able to have any really … solid connection [with a community partner]. [T]hat's one [thing] that we haven't really been able to [do], and to take the time to be able to set up those meetings and explain what the Early Years Centre is and what we're all about. Sometimes it does take that face-to-face. Even so much as to invite somebody face-to-face to come and join the Community Coalition, [someone] who might be receiving e-mails but not really understanding what it's all about. So having somebody to be able to identify who is missing around the table and … reach out to them [would help]. We don't have that person."*

Linkages to Regulated Child Care

Key informants at all four sites noted a recent focus on establishing regulated child care at the EYC; the focus in the first 18 months was on establishment of the ELP and family supports. A few to the majority of key informants at each site described challenges to moving forward with the regulated child-care components, including a fear within the child-care private sector that the EYC would take away their business, as families would have access to a free program for their preschool children; and some of the provincial regulations pose challenges to offering onsite before- and after-school programs.

"[B]ut the regulated [idea] was very difficult…. [W]e have a lot of regulated centres in our town, some of which aren't operating at full capacity. So there was definitely a gap to be bridged right off the bat, because the feeling out there was that the centre was going to hurt these regulated centres."

Stakeholder Understanding of the EYC Model

At all four sites some key informants discussed a lack of clarity among some stakeholders about various aspects of the EYC. The main difficulties were that

- the community and families lacked understanding about early learning and the purpose of the EYC
- the school, school board, and community partners were uncertain about the different roles and responsibilities of the site management team and community advisory committee
- site management committee members were unclear about their roles and responsibilities and how they could effectively contribute to the EYC
- some school staff were unsure about the purpose of the EYC and the play-based learning approach

"We certainly have received roles and responsibilities from the Department of Education and Early Childhood, so we do have clear roles, but I don't think we've figured that out. I don't think we've had the conversation [within the] site management committee as to really what our roles are."

Two sites also indicated that more guidance from EECD in terms of expectations and how to implement the various components of the model would have been helpful.

"[W]e've certainly felt a lot of support from the DoE, but I think [a] road map of where we were going would be helpful. I know that it was new and everyone was figuring out their way, and I know that, for example, the Indicators of Change came after the launch of the project and that was because of the evaluation, which is all great.… Now that we have that it's really good. Now we have the direction we should be going in. I think that was a challenge for the first year and a half, because we didn't have a road map for where we were going."

Policy Alignment

At two sites the majority of key informants identified system barriers specific to policy, including a lack of alignment of policies and processes between government departments, the time consuming process of policy development at a high level (e.g., at school board or provincial government levels), and the need for a balance between policies and guidelines and for time for communities to adapt the model to meet local needs.

> *"[I]t's a systemic barrier. If you're going to place Early Years Centres in schools, then you're going to need to figure summer [scheduling] out. And it's a far bigger challenge than a school [can address]."*

Experience of Schools with the Early Years

At two sites some key informants, including respondents from the school, discussed the lack of experience of some schools in early childhood development, early childhood education, collaborative practices, and partnership building. This lack of experience was seen as a challenge for implementation of the EYC, particularly the family and community support component. In addition to lack of experience, some respondents noted that schools and school administration operate within a very structured framework that can counter community mobilization and engagement.

> *"The whole family support [component] … will be the last piece that comes together for the site, and it's because they don't know what to do, they being the school, and they're not relying on their management committee or their advisory committee enough to be able to make [family support] work.… [W]e have this room and no one comes …—that's not how you engage people. You don't just open up a room and say, come offer your programs here. You have to build the relationships with those community partners and bring them together [and] say, how can we better service our population by engaging families and engaging community partners in the development and delivery of programs? I think it comes down to an ownership thing, and again, it goes back to the very beginning where these silos were set up … back to the inexperience of the school in terms of engaging with the broader community.… Not having that experience, I think that is what created the challenge."*

Other

Other challenges identified by key informants at one site only included

- building trust with vulnerable families and those who may have had negative experiences with systems in the past
- recruitment and hiring of ECEs
- the lack of networking and sharing opportunities between ECEs
- meeting the needs of the community in terms of provision of the ELP and family supports

Required Enablers of Success

Key informants at each site and in the EECD were asked what supports, either additional or continued, would enable continuing development and implementation of the EYC. The following table provides the supports identified and quotations from informants..

Table 1: Required Supports

Support Required	Quotations
Continue to offer networking and sharing opportunities, including through technology, such as sharing resources online, offering web-based networking sessions, etc.; and ensuring that the opportunities are available to community partners and at the local level (noted in all sites and in the EECD).	*"The other thing I really think would be great is to see some kind of [platform], whether it be a SharePoint or a Moodle or some [other] type of platform, for the Early Years Centres to [share] information."* *"[O]ne of the things I would suggest when we're bringing everybody together across the province [is] that we build in time to network. The professional learning [component] was absolutely great…. [I]if the [first part] of the day [involved professional learning], then there would be networking opportunities [afterwards]."*
Continue to provide professional development opportunities for all those involved in the development and implementation of the EYC (including partners), based on learning needs; bring together diverse stakeholders to learn from one another; and develop local and	*"I think something that would be valuable for professional development [is] the bringing together of the early childhood world and the public school world…. It would [involve] Early Years site individuals and perhaps primary teachers and consultants, and that way we [could] all start to see what we have in common, and how that can be applied in the Early Years sites/entry to school."*

Support Required	Quotations
provincial PD plans. (Noted at all sites and by EECD.)	
Continue to engage key stakeholders, building relationships and supporting partnership development with a diverse array of organizations at all levels of government (e.g., those working in mental health, primary care, SchoolsPlus, and Public Health, as well as local early childhood development consultants, municipalities [particularly recreation departments], etc.); strengthening family supports; clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and expectations; continuing dialogue and constructive debate; and facilitating coordination and collaboration of programs and services. (Noted at three sites and by the EECD.)	*"[T]he value of integration is [found in] the diversity of opinion, and the diversity of perspective, and the willingness to be able to put [ideas] on the table and bump into each other a bit, and have [a] healthy sort of unrestricted debate.… When you're inside a comfortable, trusting relationship you can say, well I don't agree with that—to me, that sort of highest level of integration is coming to a place where you can have very real conversation, where you build a shared philosophy, yes, but where we have different perspectives and can still … come to a common understanding, common agreement, and go forward."*
Continue to build awareness and understanding about the model within school boards, schools, the EECD, other government departments, provincial partner organizations, and among some community organizations. Efforts should include reflection on and dialogue about the model and adaptations needed for Nova Scotia, as well as advocacy to help ensure sustained funding for the early years. (Noted at three sites and by the EECD.)	*"I also think that there should be a meeting with HR people, finance people, and operations people from each Board to explain what the Early Years [program] is, and how this is going to affect the buildings [the program is] in … [T]he province is moving forward with this initiative. We're very fortunate we have the funding, and this is how [education and childhood development] improves, and this is why we do it.… [A]nd just think [of the advantages of] getting those people on board."* *"[T]his whole shift towards the Early Years is going to take some time maybe? I'm not sure. They need maybe more education about the importance of the Early Years, and the importance of collaboration."*

Support Required	Quotations
Develop and disseminate material resources to help provide guidance and direction to the EYC (e.g., by providing a handbook and distributing the Indicators of Change instrument early in the process); providing strategic direction from the EECD). (Noted in two sites and the EECD.)	*"[W]hat page do I look at in the booklet to find out how … I go about setting up regulated child care? Okay, fine, is there a big, fat book about this? Do you have one that I can [consult to learn] how to start one of these up or participate in starting one of these up?"*
Continue to provide flexibility for implementation of the EYC model, based on community needs and context. The EECD provides the strategy and guiding documents and receives input from the local level, and operational issues are led at the local level. (Noted at two sites and by the EECD.)	*"[I]f we just stay open…. I think we need to constantly stay open, have the flexibility … built in, stay open to listening to each other—having those conversations at all of the different levels is really key to … building it."*
Support the development of policies at higher levels (e.g., at EECD and the school board levels), with the input of local EYCs to help facilitate the development and implementation of the EYC model. However, recognize that policy development is time consuming and that too much standardization may pose challenges to moving forward with the work. (Noted at two sites and by the EECD.)	*"[E]levate [the model] a little … so that we [can] create the consistency [necessary] and standardize across all of the Early Years Centres."* *"[I]n terms of that policy [component], if we stopped and said, well I have to now go back to my shop and work through an internal process of getting a policy changed, I'm not so sure that the work would proceed the way that the work has proceeded."*

Conclusion and Recommendations

The evaluation of the first four Early Years Centres (EYCs) was conducted between May and July 2015, approximately 18 months after the funding from EECD was received. This is the first of four annual evaluations that will be conducted, with the focus in this first year on gathering process measures (e.g., a description of key activities, challenges, enablers, and required supports) and baseline data related to program and service integration, program quality, and child development. Perceptions of key stakeholders about accomplishments to date were also gathered.

The findings reveal that significant work has been done over the last 18 months, and given the early stages of development of the EYCs the accomplishments are impressive. The following section summarizes the conclusions and associated recommendations for the Early Years Centres, based on the findings of the evaluation.

The Early Years Centre Model

This evaluation revealed a need to clarify and strengthen the model description, especially as it relates to integrated service delivery. At the same time, the importance of flexibility in order to adapt the model to meet the needs of individual communities was an important finding.

- Clarify the model description, ensuring that integrated service delivery is an overarching component.

Collaborative Practices

Forming partnerships and collaborating with community partners were identified as critical to the success of the EYC model. Bringing personnel from both the school system and the various, sometimes isolated, programs in the community requires time and a commitment to true partnerships.

- Define expectations and roles of partners to help support effective collaboration and coordination of programs, services, and EYC committees.
- Use some of the practices of community development in defining roles, creating standards, and offering learning opportunities in order to facilitate true collaborative partnerships.

Integration at the Provincial Level

In continuing to clarify and describe the EYC model, it will be important to identify policies and expectations that enable the implementation of the EYCs at the provincial and school board levels. Regulated child care

was identified as a potential challenge in implementation. The multitude of partners who work with EYCs have varying accountabilities to various provincial or federal departments.

- Complete a provincial policy scan to examine the various expectations of organizations or staff who partner with EYCs.
- Develop standards and guidelines for the EYCs.
- Ensure that there are no policy barriers in achieving the regulated child-care component of the model.

Early Childhood Educators

Early Childhood Educators within the EYCs were recognized as leaders in their field and champions for the play-based approach of the EYCs.

- Examine the implications and necessary supports for ECEs.
- Re-examine the proposed delineation of roles for ECEs (program and partnerships).
- Develop a curriculum for the Early Learning Program to support the ECEs and ensure evidence-based best practices are employed.
- Continue to support the ECEs' practice through the Early Childhood Development Consultants (ECDC).

Networking and Learning Opportunities

Support all EYC team members in their ongoing professional development by providing opportunities for networking and learning.

- Continue to bring together EYC teams (school board leads, principals, ECEs) to discuss their programs, challenges, and what they have learned.
- Consider colleagues across systems and programs in these events, including members of the health professions, community services, community partners, and the early elementary team in schools. Provide cross-disciplinary opportunities, as well as time for groups to reflect as members of their profession (e.g., bringing ECEs together).
- Focus topics on integrated service delivery, play-based approaches.
- Evaluate these opportunities to ensure that they meet the professional development needs of all partners and that they inform practice.

Appendix 1

Early Years Centres
Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)

Evaluation Framework

Date: November 26, 2014 – *Updated April 17, 2015*

Table of Contents

Introduction

Program Description

In October 2011, the Nova Scotia Government tasked a working group, within Government, to begin to identify and understand the current context of the early years in Nova Scotia. The project was in response to the growing body of evidence regarding the importance of the early years.

The Early Years Project initiated the beginning of a process to collaborate on a vision and direction for the early years in Nova Scotia. The working group developed options and recommendations for an integrated system that supports the learning, care and well-being of children through the prenatal period to age 6 years and their families. The working group consisted of representatives from the Departments of Education, Community Services, Health and Wellness and the Office of Policy and Priorities. Based on the project work, a number of key directions were implemented which created the basis for a shift in Nova Scotia in supporting children and families.

In 2013, the Department of Education was expanded to include an Early Years Branch, thus creating the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). The expanded mandate of the department was implemented in recognition of the need for an integrated system that supports the learning, care and well-being of children through the prenatal period to age 6 years and their families.

An integral part of this integrated system includes collaboration of service delivery partners whose mandate is to support young children and their families. The Early Years Centre model is a new policy direction that supports integration of programs and services at the government level and at the community level. The Centres will provide support for young children in the early years (from birth to age 6) and their families, facilitating seamless access to programs and other supports.

An Early Years Centre is a first, important step to transforming the existing tangled web of child care, family support, and early intervention and child care programs into an effective, sustainable early childhood system. The vision of this new model is that over time, as integration and collaboration of key service providers become well developed and as programs and services become more aligned, families will have seamless access to the services they need, when they need them. The Centres will bring together existing programs and services such as child care, family drop-in, early learning, parenting supports, health services, and early identification and intervention programs. The Early

Years Centres will be strategically placed in elementary schools which are focal points in communities, publicly owned and mandated to provide education and information to young children and their families.

In 2013, the Early Years Branch established a collaboration with the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation for the implementation of Early Years Centres in Nova Scotia. Four Early Years Centres (EYCs) were established in Yarmouth, Spryfield, Monastery, and Sydney Mines in the 2013-14 fiscal year. During the 2014-15 fiscal year, four additional Early Years Centres will be established in the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial, South Shore Regional, Annapolis Valley Regional and Chignecto-Central Regional School Boards.

Through the implementation of the Early Years Centre model, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the school boards will collaborate with community partners, service providers and families to attain the following outcomes:

- Improve outcomes for children prenatally through school entry
- Integrate core programs and services at the community level
- Increase collaboration between core programs, related partners and service providers
- Increase access to programs and services for young children and their families
- Improve program quality
- Implement and learn from a new policy direction

Early Years Centres will utilize a community development approach in providing services and supports that respond to the needs of families. At minimum, all Early Years Centres in Nova Scotia will include three core services:

- Play-based early learning programs for children in the year before entering school
- Family supports and resources
- Regulated child care responsive to family needs

The Early Years Branch is working closely with and supporting school boards in the planning, implementation and evaluation of Early Years Centres. Each Early Years Centre will be required to work with the Early Years Branch to evaluate the success of the model and to actively monitor progress on the establishment of the Early Years Centres.

Early Years Centres in Nova Scotia are following similar models as have been implemented in Toronto (Toronto First Duty) and New Brunswick (Early Childhood Development Centres).

A logic model has been developed to describe program theory of the Early Years Centres. Six component areas related to the work of establishing and implementing the EYCs have been identified:

- Leadership and Accountability
- Access and Navigation
- Communication and Engagement
- Capacity and Culture
- Early Learning Environment
- Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration

Each component area is discussed below in terms of the activities that are carried out as part of the work of the EYCs and the outcomes expected to result from these activities.

Component 1: Leadership and Accountability

Policies and planning processes are essential to support the implementation of the EYC model; for this to be achieved it is necessary for effective leadership and governance structures to be developed. With these policies, processes and leadership structures in place, staff could be hired to implement the core services in collaboration with community partners. Evaluation is recognized as important for accountability and ensuring program quality; as such, support for evaluation activities and accountability mechanisms will be established. By putting these efforts into leadership and accountability, the EYCs will have the integrated infrastructure to support improved access to programs and services and the ability to improve the quality of EYCs.

Component 2: Access and Navigation

The EYCs will facilitate integration of programs and services within schools and support access to early years programs and programs for before and after school. Providing seamless access and navigation requires developing and supporting partnerships that will facilitate the implementation of the EYC model. It also means coordinating programs and services using a variety of processes and tools. We believe that this approach to access and navigation will lead to improved collaboration between school staff, service providers and other partners for the delivery of integrated programs and services to children 0 – 6 and their families.

Component 3: Communication and Engagement

Family and community engagement in the development and implementation of the EYCs is believed to be essential to the success of the program. To ensure such engagement and awareness, the EYCs will actively seek mechanisms for engaging and communicating with families and the community in EYC planning, programs and services. The EYCs will conduct an environmental scan to identify needs, strengths and opportunities for supporting children 0 to 6 and their families. This will allow the Centres to offer programs and services that are based on local community contexts. It is expected that this approach will increase community awareness of the EYCs and help to ensure participation of families and communities in the early years programs and services.

Component 4: Capacity and Culture

Building capacity means increasing knowledge, skills, abilities and awareness related to the Early Years Centres and the needs of the populations they serve. In addition to communicating with families about the EYCs, there is a need to develop and implement communication strategies to build awareness about the EYC model within schools, among partners, and in the community in general. The program will also develop and implement capacity building opportunities for staff within schools and for community partners. An EYC team of Centre staff and other service providers will be created and supported. By taking an active approach to capacity building we will increase awareness and understanding of the EYC model and improve knowledge and skills among EYC staff, services providers, and other partners in the community who support the EYC program.

Component 5: Early Learning Environment (EYC model)

Developing and implementing the EYC program includes finalizing and implementing the three core programming components of the model: The first component offers onsite access to family programming, supports and resources; the second offers regulated child care programs; and the third programming component is a child and family-centred Early Learning Program for children in their year prior to school entry. These three programs are intended to lead to strengthened family and parent capacity to support their children in the early years, to offer early education opportunities to children prior to Primary and to improve development outcomes for children.

Component 6: Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration

The DEECD will provide supports to facilitate the work of the EYCs including provision of professional development and learning opportunities; creation and sharing of guidelines, tools and templates; and the creation of an online environment to share tools, templates and learnings. This support will help to increase the capacity of EYCs (e.g., knowledge, skills and confidence) to support program development and implementation.

Intermediate and long-term outcomes

The Early Years Centres are expected to result in a number changes to the early years system and to those who are part of this system. One system level change that is anticipated is improved access to quality early learning and child care options in the community for children 0 – 6 and their families. The EYCs are also expected to contribute to improved integration of programs and services for this population and a sustainable approach for delivering integrated early years programs and services. It is expected that the EYCs will contribute to increased recognition among the public of the role and value of ECE and to improved outcomes for children.

Ultimately it is expected that the EYCs will contribute to children being healthy, safe and nurtured in their families and communities.

Purpose of the Evaluation

Need for the Evaluation

Prior to the framework being developed, it was necessary to understand the need for evaluation of the Early Years Centres from stakeholders' perspectives. A day long workshop attended by a diversity of stakeholder groups was held to discuss the EYC program and the needs for the evaluation of the program.

Discussions throughout the day identified a broad range of stakeholder groups including:

- Nova Scotians
- Children 0 – 6 and their families
- The Wallace and Margaret McCain Foundation
- Department of Education and Early Childhood
- School Boards
- Schools and staff within schools
- Other government departments
- Community partner organizations
- The IWK Health Centre
- Early Childhood Educators

When developing an evaluation framework for broad and varied stakeholder groups it is necessary to consider the diverse needs of all stakeholder groups in terms of the utility of the evaluation. Needs for evaluation generally fall into three categories: accountability, demonstrating value, and learning. Depending on the evaluation needs of the program in question, the evaluation is likely to be used for purposes of communicating with external audiences, assessing the program's ability to meet its goals or achieve its mission, and/or identifying best practices or approaches to program implementation.

Stakeholder consultation identified a number of needs for evaluation under each of the three categories (i.e., accountability, demonstrating value, and learning). Table 1 summarizes how stakeholders could use evaluation findings for each category.

Table 1: Need for and Intended use of the Evaluation

LEARNING	DEMONSTRATING VALUE	ACCOUNTABILITY
– Learning about the effectiveness of the EYCs and how the program can be improved (challenges, gaps, needs, opportunities, best practices). – Support for evidence based decision making. – Evidence to inform curriculum development and pedagogy. – Learning about a child centred approach. – Understanding of professional development needs and taking a shared approach to PD. – Understanding and lessons learned from developing and implementing the EYCs.	– Creating a shared understanding of the EYCs. – Building knowledge and shared understanding of the importance of the early years and of addressing needs of this vulnerable population. – Outreach to target groups through communication about multiple approaches, needs met, services and programs available, and the importance of supporting children and families in the early years of development. – Inform others of the contribution the EYCs make to community development and impacts on families. – Demonstrating value of the EYCs for identifying unmet needs. – Demonstrating value of the EYCs for integration, consistency and sustainability of early years services in Nova Scotia for increasing accessibility. – Demonstrate value of the EYCs for connecting various community initiatives, and programs. – Demonstrate the value of the EYCs for helping to change the way the early years system works.	– Accountability to the model: delivering key components and core services as intended (programming); taking an integrated approach and building in coordination and partnering; achieving outcomes identified by the model; operations and infrastructure being implemented as intended (e.g., programming approach is play based, safety, physical space, quality of programs). – Accountability for the financial and resource investment into development, implementation and evaluation of the EYCs (all funders). Influence policies that might be informed by EYC experience e.g. possible ways to organize local infrastructure to support EYCs and related decision-making – Accountability for reaching the intended target population (children 0 – 6 and their families).

Contextual Considerations

Following a discussion of needs, the stakeholders were asked to comment on contextual factors that should be considered in developing and implementing an evaluation of the Early Years Centres. Participants noted that careful consideration should be taken in

designing methods for data collection and analysis. It was noted that it would be important to develop consistent and common indicators, methods and measures across sites and partner organizations where possible. Two potential challenges related to this issue that stakeholders feel should be addressed are diversity of the sites and issues related to confidentiality when sharing data.

Another contextual issue identified by participants was the need for relationship building among the various stakeholders involved in the Early Years Centres. Participants highlighted that establishing positive relationships at a community level will take time, but are essential for ensuring outcomes are achieved.

A final contextual consideration identified by the stakeholders is the diverse nature of the Early Years Centres. Stakeholders reported the Centres to be diverse in terms of stakeholder needs, language, geography and cultures across the province. This diversity should be considered in designing an evaluation framework that is flexible enough to be adapted to such variable contexts, but that also allows for comparison across sites where possible.

Evaluation Framework

Program Logic Model

A logic model provides an overall diagrammatic representation of a program or initiative. Logic models help to provide a broad overview of a program through systematically illustrating the relationship between the program activities, outputs, and outcomes. Each of these aspects of the logic model is defined below:

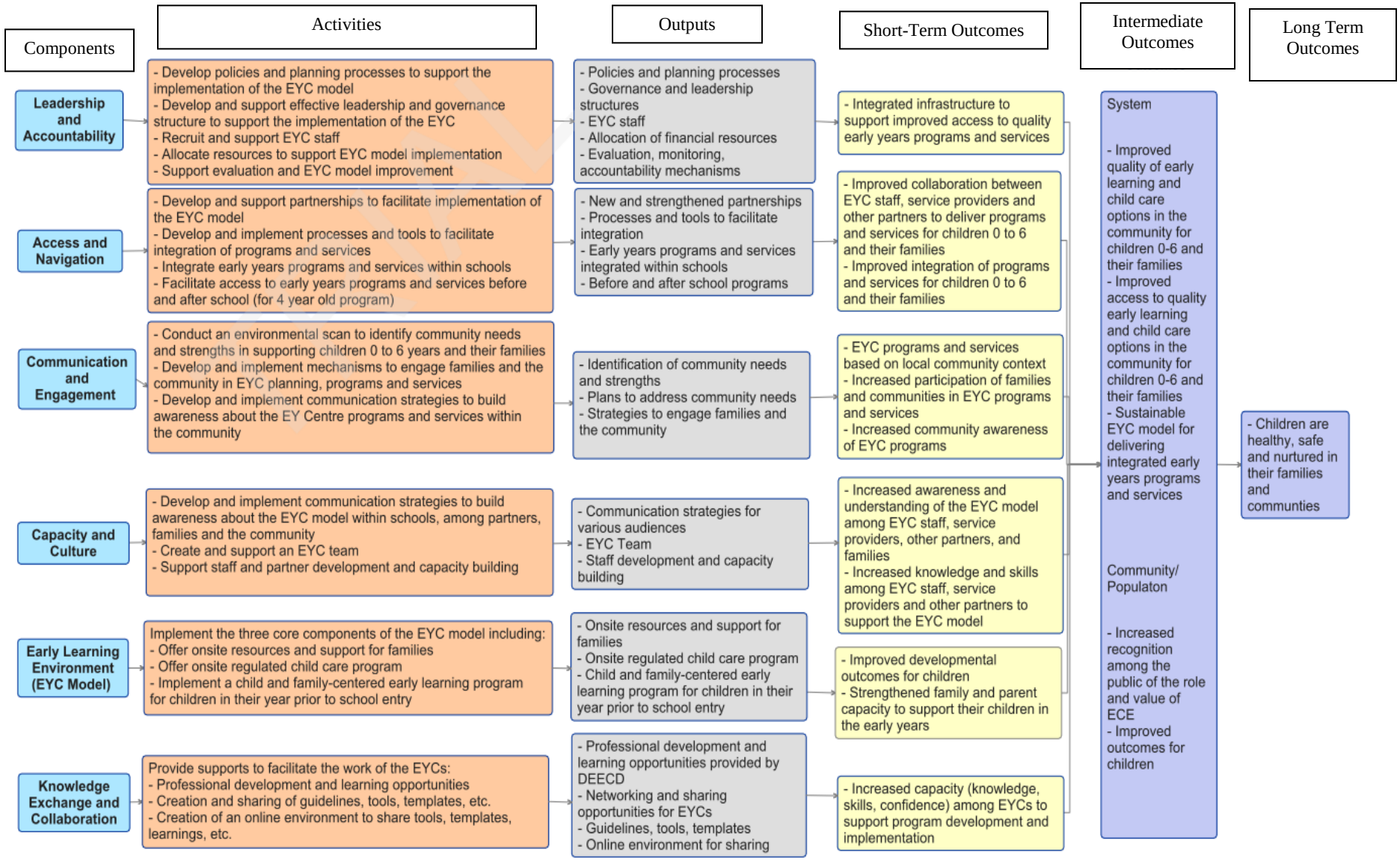
- **Activities:** The high level actions that the program/initiative will implement to achieve its anticipated goals including its outputs and outcomes.
- **Outputs:** The direct products/deliverables resulting from the program/initiative's activities. Outputs are the most immediate result of a program/ initiative's activities.
- **Outcomes:** Outcomes are the changes resulting from the initiative's activities and outputs, and the Early Years Centres outcomes include short, intermediate and longer term outcomes.

A logic model organizes a program/initiative's activities according to broad level 'components'. Generally the intermediate and longer term outcomes of a logic model are not linked to any one component, activity or output but are the result of the program/initiative as a whole. The various activities of Early Years Centres are contained within six components including:

- Leadership and Accountability
- Access and Navigation
- Communication and Engagement
- Capacity and Culture
- Early Learning Environment
- Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration

The Early Years Centre activities and their associated outputs and outcomes are depicted in the logic model in Table 1.

Table 1: Early Years Centre Logic Model



Evaluation Matrix

An evaluation matrix provides an overview of an evaluation strategy including how the outputs and outcomes will be measured. An evaluation matrix is presented as a table organized according to the components of the logic model. Evaluation questions, indicators and data collection methods are organized in the table by the outputs and outcomes in the logic model. The evaluation questions are "answered" by indicators. Indicators are the measures that will be used to determine if or how well each output and outcome has been achieved. Appropriate data collection methods and tools are then identified for each indicator.

In developing the evaluation matrix, data collection tools from Toronto First Duty and the New Brunswick Early Childhood Development Centres were reviewed, and these tools are captured in the data collection column of the evaluation matrix. The following instruments were reviewed:

- Practitioners/ frontline staff survey
- Indicators of change
- Tracking system user guide
- Parent survey
- Public awareness survey
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R)

In addition, the Early Development Instrument (EDI) was reviewed as the intent is to use this instrument to measure development outcomes of children.

Following is the evaluation matrix for Early Years Centres including indicators and evaluation methods for the outputs, short terms outcomes, and intermediate-term outcomes in the logic model

Component 1: Leadership and Accountability

Output 1.1: Policies and planning processes

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What policies were developed to support the implementation of the EYC model?	• # and type of policies developed to support the implementation of the EYC model	• Document Review (DR) – EYC files • Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff
Were the policies implemented? How?	• # and type of policies implemented	• DR-EYC files • Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
How were partners involved in the development and implementation of policies?	• Description of how partners are involved in the development and implementation of policies	• Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) staff and management • Interviews with partners
To what degree is there integration of policies in EY programs and services?	• Degree of integration of policies in EY programs and services	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Leadership and Management Structure 1.1 Program Mandate, Policies and Practices (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)
Were the policies effective in supporting the implementation of the EYC model? How? (or why or why not)?	• Perception of effectiveness of policies in supporting the EYC model?	• Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
What planning processes/ documents were developed to support the implementation of the EYC model?	• # and description of planning processes and/or documents developed to support the implementation of the EYC model ➢ Financial plans ➢ Building plans ➢ Programming plans ➢ Communication plan	• DR-EYC files • Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
How were partners involved in planning to support the implementation of the EYC model?	• Description of how partners are involved in planning to support the implementation of the EYC model	• Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with partners
To what degree is there integration in planning to support the implementation of the EYC model?	• Degree of integration of planning to support the implementation of the EYC model	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Leadership and Management Structure 1.2 Service Planning and Monitoring; Early Childhood Staff and Service Providers, 4.1 Program Planning and Implementation (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)
Were the planning processes effective in supporting the implementation of the EYC model? How? (or why or why not)?	• Perception of effectiveness of planning processes in supporting the implementation of the EYC model	• Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with partners
What were the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in the development and implementation of a) policies and b) planning processes?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in the development and implementation of policies and planning processes	• Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)

Output 1.2: Governance and leadership structures

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
To what extent is governance of the EYCs being carried out as intended?	• Site-based management structure	• DR-EYC files
	• # and type of members of the site-based management structure	• DR-EYC files
	• Community-based advisory network	• DR-EYC files
	• # and type of members of the community-based advisory network	• DR-EYC files
How are the governance structures supporting the EYC?	• # and type supports provided by governance structures	• DR-EYC files • Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
How effective are the governance structures?	• Perception of governance structure members of their effectiveness: ➢ Roles and responsibilities clearly documented ➢ Decision making clearly documented ➢ Members report roles and responsibilities are clear ➢ Members report decision making processes are clear ➢ Members report shared decision making ➢ Members report "breadth and depth" of service provider involvement ➢ Members report there is breadth and depth of family involvement ➢ Members report participation in evaluation	• Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
Were any other governance or leadership structures created including at a provincial level?	• # and type of other governance and leadership structures created	• DR-EYC and DEECD files
What were the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in the development of the governance and leadership structures?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in the development of governance and leadership structures	• Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff

Output 1.3: EYC staff

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What EYC staff are hired?	• # and type of EYC staff hired	• DR-EYC files
What activities are done to support EYC staff? (i.e., human resources [HR] activities) Overlaps with indicators related to staff development in the *Capacity and Culture* component	• # and type of activities done to support EYC staff (human resource activities) ➢ Job descriptions ➢ Add others	• DR-EYC files • Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
How were partners involved in hiring and supporting EYC staff?	• Description of how partners are involved in hiring and supporting EYC staff	• Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners
To what degree are human resources and HR supports integrated?	• Degree of integration of human resources and HR supports	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Leadership and Management Structure 1.4 Human Resources (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)
What were the challenges, enablers and lessons learned related to hiring and supporting staff (i.e., related to human resource [HR] activities)?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned related to hiring and supporting staff (related to HR) ➢ Perception of EYC staff and management that appropriate staff complement has been achieved	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)

Output 1.4: Allocation of resources

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
How were financial, human and other resources allocated to EYC activities (e.g., programs and services, staff, staff development, etc.)?	• Description of how financial, human and other resources are allocated to EYC activities	• DR-EYC and DEECD files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) Interviews with DEECD staff
To what degree is there integration of financial, human and other resources to support EY programs and services?	• Degree of integration of financial, human and other resources to support EY programs and services	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Leadership and Management Structure 1.3 Allocation of Financial Resources (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)

Output 1.5: Evaluation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What monitoring and evaluation activities are done to support the implementation of the EYC model?	• Description of evaluation framework/ plan including indicators to support the evaluation of the EYC model	• DR- DEECD files
	• Description of data collection infrastructure to support the evaluation of the EYC model	• DR- DEECD files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
	• Description of activities to support staff and partner participation in monitoring and evaluation	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
		• Interviews with DEECD staff
	• Description of how partners are involved in evaluation and monitoring	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff
	• Description of evaluation reports/ findings including recommendations for quality improvement of the EYC model	• DR- DECCD files
To what degree is there integration in monitoring and evaluation of EY programs?	• Degree of integration of monitoring and evaluation of EY programs and services	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – need to add indicators and benchmarks (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)
How were the evaluation findings shared and used?	• # and type of strategies to disseminate evaluation reports/ findings • # and type of audiences	• DR-EYC and DEECD files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff
	• # and type of changes to the model to support quality improvement	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff

<u>Short Term Outcome 1.1:</u> Integrated infrastructure to support improved access to and quality of early years programs and services

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
To what extent has integrated infrastructure been created to support improved access to and quality early years programs and services?	• Degree of integration related to ➢ Policies and planning processes ➢ Governance and leadership structures ➢ EYC staff (human resources) ➢ Evaluation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms ➢ Allocation of financial resources	• Indicators of Change ➢ TO- <u>Governance</u> 3.1 Decision-making, 3.2 Allocation of Financial Resources, 3.3 Service Planning and Monitoring,3.4 Program Policies, 3.5 Human Resources; <u>Early Learning Environment</u> 1.6 Program Quality ➢ NB – <u>Leadership and Management Structure</u> 1.1 Program Mandate, Policies and Practices, 1.2 Service Planning and Monitoring, 1.3 Allocation of Financial Resources, 1.4 Human Resources; <u>Early Learning Environment</u> 3.5 Program Quality
	• Partner perception of the degree of integrated infrastructure related to policies and planning processes; governance and leadership structures; human resources (EYC staff); financial resources; and evaluation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms	• Interviews with partner organizations (could be from the site management committee, advisory committee or others) – need to develop instrument

Component 2: Access and Navigation

Output 2.1: Output: New and strengthened partnerships

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What partnerships are formed with organizations and individuals to support implementation of the EYC model?	• # and type of partnerships to support implementation of the EYC model	• DR-EYC and DEECD files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff
	• # and type of service providers and organizations engaged	• DR-EYC and DEECD files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) Interviews with DEECD staff
How do partners support implementation of the EYC model?	• # and type of supports provided by partners to facilitate implementation of the EYC model	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff
How effective are the partnerships?	• Perception of effectiveness of partnerships ➢ #and type of partners who feel they are engaged in decision making ➢ EYCs and partners each benefit from the partnership ➢ Others to be added	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff
What are the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in developing partnerships?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in developing partnerships	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff

Output 2.2: Processes and tools to facilitate integration

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What processes and tools are developed to facilitate integration of early years programs?	• # and type of processes and tools developed to facilitate integration of early years programs and services ➢ Common processes and forms for intake, tracking and assessment ➢ Program philosophy, goals and objectives ➢ Program schedules ➢ Program space ➢ Mechanisms for early identification and to track children's development	• DR – EYC and DEECD files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff • Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) - Early Learning Environment 3.1 Curriculum Framework and Pedagogical Approach, 3.2 Daily Routines and Schedules, 3.3 Use of Space, 3.4 Children's Development and Programs; Access and

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
		Intake Processes 2.3 Intake, Enrollment and Attendance (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)
What are the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in developing processes and tools to support integration of early years programs and services?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in developing processes and tools to support integration of early years programs and services	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff
How effective are the processes and tools in supporting integration of early years programs and services?	• Perception of effectiveness of processes and tools in supporting integration of early years programs and services	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff

Output 2.3: Early years programs and services integrated within schools

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
What early years programs and services are integrated within schools?	• # and type of early years programs and services integrated within schools	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
Who is participating in the early years programs and services within schools?	• # and type of participants of the early years programs and services within schools	• DR – EYC files
What are the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in integrating early years programs and services within schools?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in integrating early years programs and services within schools	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners

Output 2.4: Before and after school programs

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
What is done to facilitate access to before and after school programs and services?	• # and type of activities to facilitate access to before and after school programs and services	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
	• # and type of before and after school programs identified or developed	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
How are partners involved in ensuring access to before and after school programs and services?	• Description of how partners are involved in ensuring access to before and after school programs and services	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners
What were the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in facilitating access to before and	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in facilitating access to before and after school programs and services	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
after school programs and services?		

<u>Short-term Outcome 2.1</u>: Improved collaboration between EYC staff, service providers and other partners to deliver programs and services for children 0 to 6 and their families

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
Do EYC staff and other service providers feel that they are effectively working together to provide EY programs and services within the EYC and community?	• % of EYC staff and service providers who agree that there is interdisciplinary collaboration including: ➢ Utilization of expertise ➢ Provision of feedback ➢ Perceived value of teamwork ➢ Communication ➢ Understanding of roles ➢ Referrals ➢ Cooperative work ➢ Protocols reflect cooperation ➢ Formal mechanisms to facilitate dialogue ➢ Joint meetings ➢ Joint problem solving ➢ Flexibility to support collaborative work ➢ Sustainable relationships ➢ Commitment to working together ➢ Conflict resolution ➢ Openness ➢ Joint responsibility for programming	• EYC staff and service provider survey (termed the Practitioner survey by TO) – K1 to K38 (but K25, K33 and K34 not as directly related) (EYC Team)
Do other partners feel they are working effectively with the EYC to provide EY programs and services within the community?	• % of partners who agree that they are working effectively with the EYC to provide EY programs and services within the community (if doing interviews would change this indicator slightly – partners describe how they are working with the EYC to provide programs and services within the community)	• Partner interviews (e.g., site management team, advisory committee members) – may be able to use some of the questions from the practitioner survey
To what extent/degree are EYC staff and service providers collaborating to offer EY programs and services?	• Degree of integration related to ➢ Partnerships ➢ Processes and tools ➢ Early Learning Environment - early years programs and services, and before and after school programs	• Indicators of Change ➢ TO - <u>Early Learning Environment</u> 1.1 Curriculum Framework, 1.3 Daily Schedule and Routines, 1.4 Use of Space, 1.5 Children's Development Progress; <u>Early Childhood Staff Team</u> 2.1 Program Planning and Implementation, 2.3 Roles and Responsibilities; <u>Seamless Access</u> 4.1 Capacity, 4.4 Intake Enrollment and Attendance

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
		➢ NB – Access and Intake Processes 2.1 Capacity (some of it), 2.3 Intake, Enrollment and Attendance; Early Learning Environment 3.1 Curriculum Framework and Pedagogical Approach, 3.2 Daily Routines and Schedules, 3.3 Use of Space, 3.4 Children's Development & Progress; Early Childhood Staff and Service Providers 4.1 Program Planning and Implementation, 4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Short-term Outcome 2.2: Improved integration of programs and services for children 0 to 6 and their families

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
To what extent is there improved integration of programs and services for children 0 to 6 and their families?	• Degree of integration of programs and services for children 0 to 6 and their families	➢ TO - Early Learning Environment 1.3 Daily Schedule and Routines, 1.4 Use of Space, 1.5 Children's Development Progress; ; Early Childhood Staff Team 2.1 Program Planning and Implementation; Seamless Access 4.1 Capacity, 4.4 Intake Enrollment and Attendance ➢ NB – Access and Intake Processes 2.1 Capacity (some of it), 2.3 Intake, Enrollment and Attendance; Early Learning Environment 3.2 Daily Routines and Schedules, 3.3 Use of Space, 3.4 Children's Development & Progress; Early Childhood Staff and Service Providers 4.1 Program Planning and Implementation
Do EYC staff and service providers feel that integration of programs and services for children 0 to 6 and their families has improved?	• % of EYC staff and service providers that report improved integration of programs and service for children 0 to 6 and their families	• Staff and service provider survey - need to add questions (EYC Team)
Do families/ parents who use EYC programs and services feel that integration of programs and services for children 0 to 6 and their families has improved?	• % of families/ parents who use EYC programs and services that report improved integration of programs and services for children 0 to 6 and their families (e.g., improved ability to navigate programs, fewer transition points, reduced duplication)	• Parent survey- need to add questions
	• Parents describe how, if at all, the integration of programs and services are improved, and the impact for their family	• Parent focus group or interviews

Component 3: Communication and Engagement

Output 3.1: Identification of community needs and strengths

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
What was done to identify community needs and strengths?	• # and type of activities to identify community needs and strengths	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
	• Documentation of community needs and strengths including existing resources, gaps in programs and services, etc.	• DR – EYC files
How were partners involved in identifying community needs and strengths?	• Description of how partners were involved in identifying community needs and strengths	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Survey or interviews with partners
To what degree is there integration to identify community needs and strengths?	• Degree of integration to identify community needs and strengths	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Leadership and Management Structure 1.2 Service Planning and Monitoring (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)

Output 3.2: Plans to address community needs

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What was done to address the community needs identified?	• # and description of plans to address community needs identified	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
	• # and type of strategies implemented to address community needs	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
To what degree is there integration in planning to address community needs?	• Degree of integration of planning to address community needs	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Leadership and Management Structure 1.2 Service Planning and Monitoring (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)

Output 3.3: Strategies to engage families and the community

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What was done to engage families and the community in EYC planning, programs and services?	• # and type of activities to engage families and the community in EYC planning, programs and services	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
How are families and the community participating in EYC planning, programs and services?	• Description of how families and the community are participating in EYC planning, programs and services (e.g., participation on committees, participation in focus or discussion groups, family or community surveys, etc.)	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
How were partners involved in engaging families and the community?	• Description of how partners were involved in engaging families and the community	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc • interviews with partners
To what degree is there integration in engaging families and the community?	• Degree of integration in engaging families and the community	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Access and Intake Processes 2.1 Capacity; Parent and Community Engagement Opportunities and Activities 5.1 Parent Input and Participation in Programs, 5.3 Relationships with Families (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)
What communication strategies were used to build awareness about the EYC programs and services?	• # and type of communication strategies to build awareness about EYC programs and services	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
	• Description of audiences for communication strategies (to build awareness about the EYC programs and services)	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
How are partners involved and supporting communication strategies?	• Description of how partners are involved and supporting communication strategies (to build awareness of EYC programs and services)	• Document Review (DR) – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners

Short-term Outcome 3.1: EYC programs and services based on local community context

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Do EYC staff and service providers feel that programs and services are meeting families' and children's needs, and community needs?	• % of EYC staff and providers who report that the EYC programs and services are meeting family and children needs (participants of the programs)	• EYC staff and service provider survey (Practitioner/Frontline staff survey – Qs - G5, G9) (EYC Team)
	• % of EYC staff and providers who report that the EYC programs and services are meeting community needs	• EYC staff and service provider survey – need to add questions (EYC Team)
Do families/ parents feel that EYC programs and services are meeting their needs and community needs?	• % of parents/families who report that EYC programs and services are meeting their needs (participants of the program)	• Parent survey - need to add questions
	• % of parents/families who report that EYC programs and services are meeting community needs	• Parent survey – need to add questions

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
	• Parents/families describe how programs and services are meeting their needs and community needs	• Parent focus group or interviews
Do partners feel that EYC programs and services are meeting community needs?	• % of partners who report that EYC programs and services are meeting community needs or partners describe how EYC programs and services are meeting community needs	• Partner survey or interviews – new instrument

Short-term Outcome 3.2: Increased participation of families and communities in EYC programs and services

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Do EYC staff and service providers feel that families/ parents are engaged in EYC programs and services?	• Perception of EYC staff and providers that there is greater involvement of families/ parents in EYC programs and services including: ➢ That parent opinions are valued and sought with regards to programs and service they want or need ➢ That professionals from other disciplines encourage family member participation	• EYC staff and service provider survey (Practitioner survey – Qs - G6, K25) – need to add more questions (EYC Team)
To what degree are EY programs integrating to facilitate family/ parent participation in early years programs and services?	• Degree of integration in terms of family/ parent participation	• Indicators of Change ➢ TO – Parent Participation 5.1 Parent input, 5.2 Parent participation in programs, 5.4 Relationships with Families ➢ NB – Parent and Community Engagement Opportunities and Activities 5.1 Parent Input and Participation in Programs, 5.3 Relationships with Families
Do families/ parents feel engaged in EYC programs and services?	• % of families/parent who feel engaged in EYC programs and services including (but not limited to): ➢ % of parents/families who report that their opinions are valued and staff ask for their opinion about programs and services ➢ % of parents/families who disagree that they are part of this community	• Parent survey – Q17, maybe Q19 (but would need to be more specific) – would need to add questions
	• Parents/families describe how they are engaged in EYC programs and services	• Parent focus groups or interviews – need to develop instrument
To what extent are community partners engaged in early years programs?	• Perception of EYC staff and providers that there is involvement of community partners in early years programs and services including: ➢ That community partner opinions are valued and sought with regards to programs and service	• EYC staff and service provider survey (Practitioner survey) – need to add questions (EYC Team)

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
	• Community partners describe how they are engaged in EYC programs and services	• Partner interviews – need to develop instrument

Short-term Outcome 3.3: Increased community awareness of EYC programs

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Are parents/families who use EYC programs and services aware of EYC and other EY programs and services in their community?	• % of parents/families who use EYC programs and services that agree that they are aware of all EYC programs and services	• Parent Survey – Q12
	• % of parents/families who use EYC programs and services that agree that they are aware of EY programs and services in their community	• Parent survey – need to add a question
	• % of parents/ families who use EYC programs and services that agree that EYC staff tell them about available EYC and other EY programs and services	• Parent Survey – Q20
Are parents/families in the community aware of the EYC programs and services and other EY programs and services in their community?	• % of parents/families in the community who are aware of the EYC programs and services	• Community survey – QB1
	• % of parents/families in the community who are aware of EY programs and services	• Community survey – need to add a question
	• % of parents/ families who use EYC programs and services that agree other people in their community are aware of EYC programs and services	• Parent Survey – Q27
	• % of staff and service providers who agree that community members are aware of EYC programs and services and other EY programs and services in the community	• EYC staff and service provider survey (Practitioner survey – Qs - G10) - may need another question (EYC Team)

Component 4: Capacity and Culture

Output 4.1: Communication strategies for various audiences

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
What communication strategies were done to build awareness about the EYC model within the schools, among partners, and families?	• # and type of communication strategies to build awareness about the EYC model within the schools, among partners, and families	• DR – EYC and DEECD files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff
	• Description of audiences for the community strategies to build awareness about the EYC model within the schools, among partners, and families	• DR – EYC and DEECD files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff
How were partners involved in communication strategies?	• Description of how partners were involved in communication strategies to build understanding about the EYC model	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Interviews with DEECD staff
To what degree is there integration of communication strategies?	• Degree of integration of communication strategies	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – need to develop (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)

Output 4.2: EYC Teams

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Who is participating on the EYC team?	• # and type of participants of the EYC team	• DR – EYC files
How is the EYC team supported? Who provides these supports?	• # and type of supports provided to the EYC team, including who provides the supports	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) EYC Team survey
How effective is the EYC team?	• Perception of effectiveness of the EYC team (need to define indicators of effectiveness – this may overlap with short-term outcomes)	• EYC Team survey
To what degree is there integration within the EYC team?	• Degree of integration within EYC team	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Early Childhood Staff and Service Providers 4.1 Program Planning and Implementation, 4.2 Behaviour Guidance/ Child Management, 4.3 Roles and Responsibilities, 4.4 Staff Development

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
		(expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)

Output 4.3: Staff development and capacity building

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What staff development and capacity building opportunities have been done?	• # and type of staff development and capacity building opportunities	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
	• # and type of participants of staff development and capacity building opportunities	• DR – EYC files
How effective are the staff development and capacity building opportunities?	• Perception of effectiveness staff development and capacity building opportunities	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
What joint staff development and capacity building opportunities have been done?	• # and type of joint staff development and capacity building opportunities	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
	• # and type of participants of joint staff development and capacity building opportunities	• DR – EYC files
How effective are the joint staff development and capacity building opportunities?	• Perception of effectiveness of joint staff development and capacity building opportunities	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners • Staff and service provider survey (EYC team survey
To what degree is there integration of staff development and capacity building?	• Degree of integration of staff development and capacity building	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Early Childhood Staff and Service Providers 4.4 Staff Development (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)

Short-term Outcome 4.1 Increased awareness and understanding of the EYC model among EYC staff, service providers, other partners and families

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Do parents/families who participate in the EYC value the EYC model?	• Parent/ families are aware of and describe the benefits of the EYC model	• Parent survey – Q29, would need to add questions
	• Parent/ families value the EYC model	• Parent focus group or interviews – need to develop instrument
Do staff and service providers value the EYC model?	• % of staff and service providers who value the EYC model including (but not limited to) ➢ Agree with putting EY programs and services in schools	• Staff and service provider survey (Practitioner survey – Q C1, C2, C3, C4, G4 (somewhat)) (EYC Team)

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
	➢ Agree that licensed daycare programs should share information and coordinate their programs ➢ Would like the EYC continued at the school ➢ Report benefits of putting services in schools	
Do partners value the EYC model?	• Partners describe the benefits of the EYC model	• Partner interviews – need to develop instrument
	• Partners agree with the model – e.g., EY programs and services in schools, linkages to or onsite regulated child care program, learning program for children in their year prior to school entry in the school	• Partner interviews – need to develop instrument

<u>Short-term Outcome 4.2</u>: Increased knowledge and skills among EYC staff, service providers and other partners to support the EYC model

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
To what extent has capacity increased among EYC staff and service providers to support the EYC model?	• % of EYC staff and service providers who report increased knowledge and skills to support the EYC model including (but not limited to) ➢ Staff feel workload is manageable ➢ Staff feel adequately trained ➢ Staff feel confident in their role ➢ Staff feel adequately supported by their supervisors and other staff (this indicator needs to be further developed with the input of EYC staff and partners)	• Staff and service provider survey (practitioner survey) – need questions added (EYC Team)
	• % of EYC staff and service providers who report that they have benefitted professionally from participating in the EYC	• Staff and service provider survey (practitioner survey) – Q G1 (EYC Team)
To what extent has capacity increased among partners to support the EYC model?	• % of partners who report increased knowledge and skills to support the EYC model (need further discussion about this indicator)	• Partner ~~survey or~~ interviews – need to develop instrument

Component 5: Early Learning Environment

Output 5.1: Onsite resources and supports for families

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
What was done to assess needs related to family programming, supports and resources in the community?	• # and type of activities to assess needs related to family programming, supports and resources in the community (overlaps with indicators in *Communication and Engagement*)	• DR- EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
What family programming, supports and resources were developed and implemented?	• # and type of family programming, supports and resources developed and implemented including parenting programs	• DR- EYC files
To what extent do the family programs, supports and resources adhere to guidelines and best practices?	• # and type of guidelines and best practices represented in the family programming, supports and resources including but not limited to: ➢ # and type of play-based activities ➢ # and type of developmentally appropriate activities ➢ # and type of assessment, monitoring and support activities ➢ # and type of partnerships	• DR- EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
How were partners involved in family programming, supports and resources?	• Description of how partners were involved in family programming, supports and resources	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc • interviews with partners
To what degree is there integration of family programming, supports and resources?	• Degree of integration of family programming, supports and resources	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – need to develop (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)
To what extent are family programming, supports and resources based on evidence?	• Description of how programming and resources are based on evidence	• DR- EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
What are the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in developing and implementing family programming, supports and resources?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in developing and implementing family programming, supports and resources	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)

Output 5.2: Onsite regulated child care program

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What was done to assess needs related to child care options in the community?	• # and type of activities to assess needs related to child care options in the	• DR- EYC files

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
	community (overlaps with indicators in *Communication and Engagement*)	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
What was done to address needs/ gaps (and build on community strengths) related to child care options in the community?	• Description of plan to address gaps in regulated child care and build on current strengths in the community	• DR- EYC files • Interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
	• # and type of activities to address gaps/ needs related to child care options in the community including activities to link to regulated childcare programs and/ or establish onsite regulated child care	• DR- EYC files
To what extent do the regulated child care program(s) adhere to guidelines and best practices?	• # and type of guidelines and best practices represented in the childcare program(s) including but not limited to: ➢ # and type of play-based activities ➢ # and type of developmentally appropriate activities ➢ # and type of assessment, monitoring and support activities ➢ # and type of partnerships	• DR- EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
To what degree is there integration of regulated child care programs?	• Degree of integration of regulated child care programs	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – Access and Intake Processes 2.2 Child Care Provision and Affordability (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)
What are the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in establishing child care programs and linking with existing child care programs?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in linking with/ establishing child care programs	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners

Output 5.3: Child and family-centred Early Learning Program for children in their year prior to school entry

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Was a child and family-centred Early Learning Program for children in their year prior to school entry established?	• Description of child and family-centred early learning program for children in their year prior to school entry	• DR- EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
To what extent does the program adhere to guidelines and best practices?	• # and type of guidelines and best practices represented in the program including but not limited to: ➢ # and type of play-based activities ➢ # and type of developmentally appropriate activities ➢ # and type of assessment, monitoring and support activities ➢ # and type of partnerships	• DR- EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
Who is participating in the program?	• # of registrations	• DR- EYC files

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
	• # of intakes • Description of program participants	
How were partners involved in developing the Early Learning Program for children in their year prior to school entry?	• Description of how partners were involved in developing the early learning program for children in their year prior to school	• DR – EYC files • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners
To what degree is there integration of other EYs programs and services with the program for children in their year prior to school entry?	• Degree of integration of other EYs programs and services with the program for children in their year prior to school entry	• Indicators of Change (adapt from TO and NB) – need to develop (expectation that EYCs further to the left of the continuum in first years of implementation)
What are the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in the establishment of a child and family-centred Early Learning Program for children in their year prior to school entry?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in establishing a child and family-centred early learning program for children in their year prior to school entry	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with partners

Short-term Outcome 5.1: Improved developmental outcomes for children

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Are developmental outcomes for children improved as a result of the EYC?	• % of children who participate in EYC programs and services that have improved physical well being	• Early Development Instrument (EDI) – Section A, Q2-13
	• % of children who participate in EYC programs and services that have improved language and cognitive skills	• EDI – Section B, Q1-40
	• % of children who participate in EYC programs and services that have improved social and emotional development	• EDI – Section C, Q1-58
	• % of parents who report that the EYC helps their child to get ready for school socially and academically	• Parent survey – Q22, Q23
	• % of parents who report that their child has benefitted from the programs and services of the EYC	• Parent survey – Q13
	• % of staff and service providers who report that the EYC helps children to get ready for school socially and academically	• Staff and service provider survey (practitioner survey – Q G7, G8) (EYC team)

<u>Short-term Outcome 5.2</u>: Strengthened family and parent capacity to support their children in the early years

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Do parents and families have greater capacity to support their children in the early years as a result of the EYC? In addition to the parent survey, there is also the "parenting daily hassles" survey – not sure the intent of this survey?	• % of parents/ families who report increased capacity to support their children in the early years including (but not limited to): ➢ Increased involvement in their child's learning ➢ Increased involvement at the school ➢ Increased confidence with parenting ➢ Increased knowledge and skills regarding parenting and care of young children ➢ Increased ability to handle stress ➢ Increased ability to access resource/ supports for their child ➢ Increased connections with other parents/ families (this indicator needs to be further developed with the input of EYC staff and partners)	• Parent survey - Q24, Q25, Q28 – would need to add more questions
	• Parents describe greater capacity to support their children in the early years as a result of the EYC	• Parent focus group – need to develop instrument
Do EYC staff and service providers feel that parents and families have greater capacity to support their children in the early years?	• % of staff and service providers who report increased capacity of parents and families to support their children in the early years including (but not limited to): ➢ Increased involvement in their child's learning ➢ Increased involvement at the school ➢ Increased confidence with parenting	• Staff and service provider survey (practitioner survey) – Q G2, G3 – would need to add more questions (EYC Team)

Component 6: Knowledge and Exchange and Collaboration

<u>Output 6.1</u>: Professional development and learning opportunities provided by DEECD

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
What professional development opportunities were provided by DEECD to EYCs?	• # and type of professional development opportunities provided by DEECD	• DR- DEECD files • Interviews with DEECD staff

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Tool
Who participated in the professional development opportunities?	• # and type of participants of professional development opportunities	• DR- DEECD files • Interviews with DEECD staff
How effective were the professional development opportunities provided by DEECD staff?	• Perception of effectiveness of professional development opportunities provided by DEECD including suggested improvements?	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff • EYC team survey
What are the challenges, enablers and lessons learned related to the professional development opportunities?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in related to the professional development opportunities	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff

Output 6.2: Networking and sharing opportunities for EYCs

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What networking and sharing opportunities were provided by DEECD to EYCs?	• # and type of networking and sharing opportunities provided by DEECD	• DR- DEECD files • Interviews with DEECD staff
Who participated in the networking and sharing opportunities?	• # and type of participants of networking and sharing opportunities	• DR- DEECD files • Interviews with DEECD staff
How effective were the networking and sharing opportunities provided by DEECD staff?	• Perception of effectiveness of networking and sharing opportunities provided by DEECD	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff • EYC team survey
What are the challenges, enablers and lessons learned related to the networking and sharing opportunities provided by DEECD?	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned related to the networking and sharing opportunities provided by DEECD	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff

Output 6.3: Guidelines, tools, templates

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
What guidelines, tools and templates were developed by DEECD for EYCs?	• # and type of guidelines, tools and templates developed	• DR- EYC files • Interviews with DEECD staff
How were the guidelines, tools and templates used by EYCs?	• Description of how guidelines, tools and templates are used	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • Interviews with DEECD staff
How useful are the guidelines tools and templates developed by DEECD for EYCs?	• Perception of effectiveness of guidelines, tools and templates developed by DEECD for EYCs	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)
What are the challenges, enablers and lessons learned in	• Description of challenges, enablers and lessons learned in developing and using the guidelines, tools and templates	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.)

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
developing and using the guidelines, tools and templates?		• Interviews with DEECD staff

Output 6.4: Online environment for sharing

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Was an online environment for sharing created?	• Description of online environment for sharing	• DR- EYC files • Interviews with DEECD staff
How useful was the online environment for sharing?	• Perception of usefulness of online environment (including how EYCs are using it, usefulness of resources/tools via online environment, usefulness of online environment as a mechanism for sharing, etc.)	• interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc • Interviews with DEECD staff

Short-term Outcome 6.1: Increased capacity (knowledge, skills confidence) among EYCs to support program development and implementation (overlaps with short term outcome 4.2)

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
To what extent has capacity increased among EYCs (staff and service providers) to support program development and implementation?	• % of EYC staff and service providers who report increased knowledge and skills to support program development and implementation (but not limited to) ➢ Staff feel workload is manageable ➢ Staff feel adequately trained ➢ Staff feel confident in their role ➢ Staff feel adequately supported by their supervisors and other staff (this indicator needs to be further developed with the input of EYC staff and partners)	• Staff and service provider survey (practitioner survey) – need questions added (EYC Team)
	• % of EYC staff and service providers who report that they have benefitted professionally from participating in the EYC	• Staff and service provider survey (practitioner survey) – Q G1 (EYC Team)
To what extent has capacity increased among partners to support program development and implementation?	• % of partners who report increased knowledge and skills to support program development and implementation (need further discussion about this indicator)	• Partner ~~survey or~~ interviews – need to develop instrument

ACROSS COMPONENTS

<u>Intermediate-term Outcome 1:</u> Improved access to quality early learning and child care options in the community for children 0-6 and their families

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Is the quality of early learning and child care options improved through the EYC?	• Improved quality in EYC programs and services including space and furnishing, personal care routines, language-reasoning, activities, interactions, program structure and parents and staff	• Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R)
	• Perception of parents that the quality of early learning and child care options is improved through the EYC including (but not limited to): ➢ Satisfaction with the quality of the programs and services for their children and families in the community	• Parent survey – Q14 – would need to add other questions
	• Parents describe how the EYC has improved the quality of early learning and child care options in the community	• Parent focus group
	• Perception of EYC staff and service providers that the quality of early learning and child care options is improved through the EYC	• EYC staff and service provider survey (termed the Practitioner survey by TO) – G4 (somewhat) – need to add questions (EYC team)
	• Partners describe how the EYC has improved the quality of early learning and child care options in the community	• Interviews with partner organizations (could be from the site management committee, advisory committee or others) – need to develop instrument
	• Perception of community members that the quality of early learning and child care options is improved through the EYC	• Community survey – C1 – would need to add other questions
Is there better access to quality early learning and child care options in the community for children 0 to 6 and their families as a result of the EYC?	• % of community members who are accessing the programs and services of the EYC	• Registration, enrollment and attendance data over time
	• Perception of community members that there is better access to quality early learning and child care options as a result of the EYC	• Community survey – would need to add questions

Intermediate-term Outcome 2: Sustainable EYC model for delivering integrated early years programs and services

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Is the EYC model sustainable for delivering integrated early years programs and services?	• Sustainable and guaranteed funding for the EYCs • Clear and likely sources of alternative funding • Priority of the program for Department of Education and Early Childhood Development • Program is supported by stakeholders • Program is supported and valued by the community	• Budget documents – File review • interviews with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development stakeholders • Stakeholder surveys or interviews • Community survey – would need to add questions

Intermediate-term Outcome 3: Increased recognition among the public of the role and value of ECE

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
Do community members recognize the role and value of ECE?	• % of community who recognize the role and value of ECE (including but not limited to): ➢ Support putting EY programs and services in schools ➢ Describe the benefits of putting EY programs and service in schools ➢ Agree that government should fund a learning program for children in their year prior to school entry, located in the school ➢ Agree that parents, schools and the community are responsible to prepare children for school	• Community survey – QB2. B3, E2, F1

Intermediate-term Outcome 4: Improved outcomes for children

Evaluation Question	Indicators	Data Collection Method
To what extent and in what ways does the EYC program contribute to improved outcomes for children?	• Evidence of how the EYC program contributes to improved outcomes for children	• Literature review of evidence/ expert opinion linking integrated models of early years programming to improved outcomes for children • Focus group or interviews with parents (perceived impact on outcomes) • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) interviews wi • th EYC team and partners
	• Evidence of the outcomes that the EYC program contributes to improving	• Literature review of evidence/ expert opinion linking integrated models of early years programming to improved outcomes for children • Focus group or interviews with parents (perceived impact on outcomes) • interviews with EYC lead(s) (e.g., Principal, ECE lead, etc.) • interviews with EYC team and partners

Next Steps

The evaluation strategy presented in this report provides a draft plan to monitor and assess the development and implementation of the Early Years Centres, as well as program outcomes. Evaluation findings will be used to continually refine and improve the project. The proposed strategy aims to ensure:

- ***Credibility*** of the findings through triangulation of data (e.g., using multiple data collection methods and sources);
- ***Feasibility*** through decreasing response burden, identifying priority indicators and proposing alternative data collection strategies to allow for a practical evaluation strategy given finite resources; and
- ***Usefulness/Relevance*** by engaging key stakeholders in the development of the logic model.

A logic model has been developed for the EYCs which includes six components, and associated high level activities, outputs and outcomes. An evaluation matrix has also been developed where questions, indicators and data collection methods are mapped to the outputs and outcomes. In developing the indicators, background information and instruments from two similar EYC models were reviewed – Toronto First Duty and New Brunswick Early Childhood Development Centres (a summary of potential data collection instruments is provided in Appendix 1).

The next stage in the evaluation process is to seek the input of local EYC staff and partners to validate and refine the evaluation matrix and strategy presented in this report. The learnings from the evaluation of the Toronto First Duty initiative and New Brunswick Early Childhood Development Centres will continue to be used to inform the evaluation of the Early Years Centres in Nova Scotia. In particular, the data collection instruments used in these projects will be adapted for the Nova Scotia context. The evaluation matrix illustrates where questions from these instruments fit with the outputs and outcomes, as well as where additional questions, and/or instruments will be required.

It is anticipated that the evaluation will be conducted in stages to assess both process and outcome measures. Process evaluation will focus on describing the implementation of the EYC model including activities of the EYCs related to the six components of the logic model. This process evaluation will help to provide an understanding of how the EYC model has been implemented in the local EYCs, including enablers and challenges. Process evaluation will also include quality assurance where participant (e.g., families,

staff, partners) satisfaction with the program will be assessed, and suggestions for program improvement will be obtained.

The outcome evaluation will focus on the achievements related to the implementation of the EYC model including the difference the Centres have made for children and families (e.g., increased awareness and participation of families and the community in early years programs and services, improved developmental outcomes for children, and strengthened family and parent capacity to support their children). System level outcomes will also be examined including improved capacity of EYC staff and partners to implement the EYC model, and improved integration of early years infrastructure, programs and services.

Appendix 1

List of potential data collection tools and methods

The framework for evaluation of the Early Years Centres in NS identifies a number of potential data collection methods that will require the use and/or development of a number of data collection tools. Below is a list of the tools identified by the evaluation matrix in the framework organized by evaluation stage. This list is based on the tools identified in the framework at the time of posting the RFP to hire a team to conduct this evaluation. This list is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather summarizes suggestions for potential tools that might be used in implementing the evaluation of the EYC's.

Additional tools may be developed and some existing tools may be removed by the successful evaluation team as deemed appropriate. Final decisions about appropriate tools will be made by the Department of Education and Early Childhood in consultation with the successful evaluation team and the Margaret and Wallace McCain Foundation.

The tools identified below are at various stages of development as follows:

- Two existing measures will be used (the EDI and the ECERS-R) for assessing outcomes for children and the early learning environment respectively;
- Two tools relevant for conducting process evaluation have been drafted based on the evaluation matrix but will require review by the successful evaluation team to be finalized;
- Several tools will need to be developed based on data collection instruments used by other jurisdiction – in particular Toronto First Duty (TFD) and the New Brunswick (NB) Early Years Centres. In such cases the existing tools that will be adapted for use in the NS context have been linked to particular indicators in the evaluation matrix;
- Finally, some tools will need to be developed entirely by the successful evaluation team using the evaluation matrix and based on needs for the evaluation as they develop.

Process (output) Evaluation Tools:

1. Document Review of various Early Years Centres files (Draft document review checklist developed; to be finalized by evaluation team)

2. Survey or interviews with EYC staff and management (Draft developed; to be finalized by evaluation team)

3. Indicators of Change tool (Draft of indicators has been developed; benchmarks to be developed by evaluation team and adapted from TFD and NB)

4. Survey with members of EYC governance structures (To be developed by evaluation team)

5. Survey or interviews with partners (To be developed by evaluation team)

Outcomes Evaluation Tools:

1. Survey or interviews with partner organizations (site management committee, advisory committee, etc.) (To be developed by evaluation team)

2. EYC staff and service provider survey (To be developed by evaluation team by adapting from TFD Practitioner Survey)

3. Indicators of change (Draft of indicators has been developed; benchmarks to be developed by evaluation team and adapted from TFD and NB)

4. Staff and service provider survey (To be developed by evaluation team)

5. Parent survey (To be developed by evaluation team)

6. Parent Focus group/ interviews(To be developed by evaluation team)

7. Partner survey or interviews (To be developed by evaluation team)

8. Community survey (To be developed by evaluation team)

9. Early Development Instrument (EDI) (Existing Measure)

10. Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) (Existing Measure)

11. Document/ file review data (registration, enrollment, attendance, budget) (To be developed by evaluation team)

12. Literature review of evidence/ expert opinion linking integrated models of early years programming to improved outcomes for children (To be developed by evaluation team)