

Instrument 1: Key Informant Interview (KII) Protocol

Consent

Hi, my name is **[NAME]** and I am a researcher at NORC at the University of Chicago. Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. _

As you may recall from our email, we are reaching out to individuals to learn more about the role that local coordinating entities, such as **[NAME OF LCE]** in **[YOUR STATE]** play in supporting Head Start and other early childhood programs to combine multiple funding sources, such as Head Start, the Child Care and Development Fund (also known as CCDF), and state and/or local prekindergarten, to meet their programmatic goals. The purpose of this effort is to fill in gaps in our knowledge of LCEs and to ultimately identify a list of states with LCEs in which to conduct in-depth case studies to illuminate the various policies and practices states around the country use related to combining multiple early childhood funding sources.

In particular, our questions are designed to 1) confirm the accuracy of and clarify data we collected from online sources about **[NAME OF LCE]** in your state; 2) fill in knowledge gaps; 3) gauge your interest in potentially participating in a case study if nominated; and 4) gather recommendations for case study interviewees, including roles and names of individuals at the state, regional, and Head Start program levels who are most knowledgeable about on-the-ground efforts in your state related to combining multiple funds.

There are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions. Our goal is to better understand your perspectives. Do you have any questions about our overall goals?

Your participation in this conversation is completely voluntary and all information will be kept private. If there are any questions you do not want to answer, just let me know and we can skip the question. We expect the interview to last approximately one hour, but you can end the interview at any time. There are no negative consequences for skipping a question or ending the interview. To thank you for your time today, we'd like to offer you a **\$50 gift card**. At the end of our time, I will ask how you would prefer to receive this gift card.

As a reminder, this interview is part of a larger research study about early childhood financing funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the US Department of Health and Human Services. Our team will use your responses from your interview, along with information we have collected from surveys, to describe national themes. Your state and/or your role may be identified in reports or other materials to ACF and public reports of study findings. However, reports to ACF and public reports will not identify you by your name. Everything you say will be kept private.

I am required to let you know that federal law states that an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this data collection is 0970-0356 and the expiration date is 01/31/2027. For any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Sarah Kabourek, the NORC Project Director, at (773) 256-6330 or Kabourek-Sarah@norc.org. Dr.

Kabourek's contact information was included in our outreach email, but I will also paste that and the OMB number for our study in the chat for your reference.

Finally, I want to ask if you would be comfortable with me recording our conversation to allow us to transcribe what was said and ensure that we do not miss any details. The recording and transcript will be kept private, and your name or affiliation will not be attached to any of your answers. You can also participate without being recorded. Are you okay with us recording the conversation?

[If "yes" then record. If "no" then do not record.]

Do you have any questions for me?

Do you consent to participate in the interview?

[If "yes" then proceed. If "no" then terminate interview.]

Interview Protocol

I'd like to start by defining what we mean by *combining funding sources*, which is an umbrella term used by our project team to describe the various ways states and programs might use multiple funding sources to provide ECE services. Other related terms deployed in the field include braided, blended, layered, stacked, or coordinated funding. While each of these terms implies a slightly different funding model or approach, we use “combining” or “combined” throughout the project to encompass all of these ways of using funds from multiple sources. We also use the term *Local Coordinating Entities or LCEs* to refer to formally established local or regional entities that work in collaboration with state-level agencies to support early care and education programs, such as [NAME OF LCE] in your state.

1. Questions to confirm whether Head Start programs can combine Head Start funds with other funding sources to enhance programming.

First, I would like to ask some questions about which ECE programs in your state are eligible for which sources of funding.

Through our online search:

- a. We found that the state has several state-specific ECE funding sources in addition to **[list as relevant: CCDF/child care, state pre-K, and special education parts B & C]: [summarize other funding sources]**. Can you confirm whether **[summarize sources]** is accurate and exhaustive?
- b. We found that Head Start programs in your state [can/cannot] access CCDF/child care funds. Can you confirm?
- c. We found that Head Start programs in your state [can/cannot] access state pre-K funds. Can you confirm?
- d. [If information was found on ability to combine funds] We found **[statute, administrative rule/regulation, and/or guidance]** related to ECE programs' ability to combine funds from different funding sources. Can you confirm **[summarize policy information and source(s)]**? Is there additional written guidance on combining funds that you can share?
- e. [If information was not found on ability to combine funds] We were unable to find a statute, administrative rule/regulation, or guidance confirming whether ECE programs, and Head Start programs in particular, can combine funds from different funding sources.
 - i. What is your understanding of whether ECE programs, and Head Start programs in particular, can combine funds to enhance programming?
 - ii. Which funding sources can programs combine?
 - iii. Can you tell me where we can find written documentation describing whether and how ECE programs can combine funding sources?
 - iv. Is [LCE name] involved in supporting programs to combine funds?
 - v. Can you tell me where we can find written documentation describing the role of [LCE name] in your state?

2. Questions to confirm data our team collected from online sources and to fill in missing gaps

Our team collected information about [LCE name] from a variety of websites. I have several confirmation questions for you based on our online research. For some of these questions, I may just ask you to confirm information we found online. For

other questions, I may ask you to elaborate a bit on information we either found through our scan or could not find.

- a. [If needed] Is [name of state agency] responsible for oversight of **[NAME OF LCE]**'s network? YES/NO
 - a. If NO: Which state or other entity is responsible for this oversight?
 - b. [If needed] If YES "Can you briefly describe [name of state agency's] role in providing oversight or accountability? "Does your [name of state agency] play a role in coordinating the work across different branches of **[NAME OF LCE]**? If so, can you briefly describe what that entails?
- b. [If needed] Does your state have a state-level organization whose role is to help coordinate [LCE name] statewide?
 - a. If YES "What is the [name of the state-level LCE coordinating organization]? What is its role in coordinating and supporting the work of local [LCE name]? If so, can you briefly describe what that entails?
 - b. How does the role of the state-agency vary from that of the state-level [name of LCE coordinating organization]? How do they interact to coordinate activities related to [LCE name]?
- c. Which state agency, or agencies, have decision-making authority over [name individual funding sources the state uses] funding decisions?
- d. Can you briefly describe how funding sources flow from the [name of state agency or agencies] to [LCE name]? [If relevant] to [name of state-level LCE coordinating organization]? to ECE programs? to Head Start programs (including Early Head Start)?
- e. Does your state agency provide **[x, y, z as found online]** supports to [LCE name] related to financing and combining funds? (e.g., training, technical assistance and direct supports with budgeting, written guidance, individualized consultation)
- f. Does your state agency provide **[x, y, z as found online]** supports directly to ECE programs? Head Start programs?
- g. [If relevant] Does your [state-level LCE coordinating organization name] provide **[x, y, z as found online]** supports to [LCE name] related to financing and combining funds?
- h. [If relevant] Does your [state-level LCE coordinating organization name] provide **[x, y, z as found online]** supports directly to ECE programs? Head Start programs?

We are particularly interested in working with LCEs that help support ECE programs, including Head Start programs, to combine funds from different funding sources.

- i. Can you confirm if [LCE name] in your state supports Head Start programs to combine multiple funds?
- j. [If answer is no] What, if any, supports does [LCE name] provide to Head Start programs related to financing?
- k. [If they do] Which funding sources does [LCE name] focus on?

- l. [If they do] What kinds of supports does [LCE name] provide to ECE/HS programs as it relates to combining multiple funds? What other supports do they provide to ECE programs? Head Start programs in particular?
 - a. *Probe for training, technical assistance and direct supports with budgeting, written guidance, individualized consultation.*

Our records indicated that there are [**x number of branches/divisions** of LCEs] in your state.

- m. Is this correct?
- n. How is [LCE name] funded in your state?
 - a. What is the funding intended to be used for?
 - b. When was [LCE name] first funded?
- o. Can you briefly describe [LCE's name] organizational structure and staff composition?

Our records indicated that your state has a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care.

- p. Is this correct? What role, if any, do they play in regard to policies and practices on combining funds?
- q. In what ways, if any, do they work with [LCE name] around combining funds?

3. Questions to gauge interest in potentially participating in a case study if nominated

- a. If nominated, would you be interested and have the capacity to potentially participate in a case study designed to better understand the role that local coordinating entities in states play in supporting Head Start and other ECE programs in combining multiple funding sources to enhance programming?

4. Questions to gather recommendations for potential case study interviewees, including roles and names of individuals at state, LCE, and Head Start program levels

We may be interested in learning more from individuals in different roles in your state who are particularly knowledgeable about the role that LCEs play in supporting Head Start and other ECE programs in combining funds.

- a. Who would you recommend we talk to at the state agency level?
 - a. *Probe for names and titles*
- b. Who would you recommend we talk to at the state-level LCE coordinating organization?
 - a. *Probe for names and titles*
- c. Are there specific local LCE administrators we should talk to? Why?
 - a. *Probe for names and titles*
- d. Are there specific local Head Start program administrators we should talk to who are engaged in combining funding sources?
 - a. *Probe for names and titles*

- e. Are there other individuals you would recommend we talk to about combining multiple funding sources? Why?
 - a. *Probe for names and titles*