

Overview

The [Help Me Grow National Center](#) is soliciting requests for applications from Help Me Grow (HMG) systems to participate in a new Learning Community to cultivate local coalitions of systems leaders who collaborate to catalyze early childhood systems change.

Learning Community participants will:

- Develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of systems change and systems leadership;
- See and better understand their role in leading systems change work;
- Lead their HMG system to shift/expand their work to include a greater focus on systems change;
- Strengthen their capacity to engage and bring along their HMG Leadership Team in system change and system leadership, inclusive of family voice; and
- Strengthen relationships with other HMG leaders across the country, with whom they can find support even when the Learning Community is complete.

Ten HMG systems will be selected to participate in this Learning Community.

Those interested in participating in the Learning Community should submit their applications using [this link](#) by July 31, 2024. Please direct questions to the Childhood Prosperity Lab at childhoodprosperitylab@connecticutchildrens.org.

Note: a list of key terms and phrases is included at the end of this RFA.

Learn More - Virtual Information Session for Prospective Applicants

Join us for an optional info session on June 27th, 2024 at 3:00 PM ET for an overview of the RFA and submission requirements. This session will also cover the goals and format of the System Leadership Learning Community.

There will be ample time to ask questions. Session recording will be shared with all registrants after the session for those who cannot attend in real time.

Key Dates

- **June 27, 2024:** Optional information session
- **July 31, 2024:** Applications due
- **August 9, 2024:** Acceptance notifications
- **August 22, 2024:** Kick-off
- **August 2024-September 2025:** Learning Community

[Register for the Virtual
Information Session](#)

Incentive

Participating HMG systems will receive a stipend of \$3,000 to be distributed at the conclusion of the project.

CULTIVATING SYSTEM LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

LEARNING COMMUNITY

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Eligibility

- Must be an affiliate of the HMG National Network.
- Must have an active HMG Leadership Team, i.e. a steering committee that guides the HMG system as it evolves. *The HMG Leadership Team is made up of representatives from agencies, community partners, and individuals who have expertise in early childhood services in their region/state. Leadership Team members share mutual interests, serve similar populations, and have the capacity to move an agenda forward.*
- Teams should consist of 2-3 participants per system, at least one of whom is a HMG lead.
 - For the purposes of this project, the HMG lead is defined as someone whose role is as primary manager/coordinator for HMG-related activities at either the state or local-level, with at least 50% of their role being the advancement of the implementation of the HMG Model.
 - Other participants should serve in roles that help carry out HMG operations or support local implementation of the Model (i.e. members of the Leadership Team and/or partners that help implement Core Components of the Model), decision makers within their respective organization, and/or have the capacity and authority to lead change.
- Must have participated in or viewed the recording for the [Water of Systems Change Webinar](#).
- *Preferred:* HMG leads with at least 6 months of experience in current role by the start of the Learning Community.

Purpose

The HMG National Center, in partnership with the [Collective Impact Forum](#) and [Connecticut Children's Childhood Prosperity Lab](#) ("Project Team"), has developed and will be utilizing a new curriculum to enhance understanding and application of systems change and systems leadership among HMG leaders via a Learning Community.

HMG leaders have a unique opportunity to steward best practices and system change approaches that strengthen early childhood systems within their communities. However, system change requires system thinking, which is a paradigm shift from a more traditional "programmatic" way of thinking. This pilot intends to support HMG leaders in cultivating system thinking and leadership skills that they can apply in their work and share with their communities to support a more collaborative, systemic approach to implementing the HMG Model.

Partners

Help Me Grow National Center: Dedicated to ensuring that early childhood systems maximize the potential of all young children, the Help Me Grow National Center is a program of the Office for Community Child Health at Connecticut Children's in Hartford, Connecticut. The Help Me Grow National Center serves as a national resource to support the implementation of Help Me Grow systems throughout the country.

Representatives: Melissa Passarelli, Associate Director of Implementation & System-Building, and Nadia King Implementation & System-Building Specialist will provide expertise in HMG Model implementation and early childhood system leadership.

CULTIVATING SYSTEM LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES LEARNING COMMUNITY REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Partners (Continued)

Childhood Prosperity Lab: Childhood Prosperity Lab, a program of the Office for Community Child Health at Connecticut Children's, is committed to elevating social innovations, which are creative strategies that support the health, development, and well-being of children, families, and communities where they live, learn, work, play and pray.

Representatives: Jacquelyn Rose, Director, and Annika Anderson, Program Specialist, will share their expertise in advancing the design, implementation, and evaluation of social innovations using human-centered design and strengths-based approaches.

Collective Impact Forum: The Collective Impact Forum, a program of FSG and the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions, supports community-centered solutions to strengthen collaboration, advance equity, and improve lives. The Forum provides resources, hosts learning events, facilitates learning communities, and offers coaching that can help advance collective impact work.

Representative: Jennifer Splansky Juster, Executive Director will contribute her knowledge on collaborative action, systems change, and systems leadership.

Approach

HMG National defines "Learning Community" as a shared learning experience in which HMG affiliates, HMG National, content area experts, and other national partners assess how integrating a novel strategy into the HMG Model can affect its implementation and impact. The expectation is that all parties contribute their knowledge, expertise, experiences, and a growth mindset to the Learning Community and receive knowledge, skills, and experiences in return. For example, HMG systems may learn new content and strategies, content area experts may learn how their work can be adapted and integrated into the HMG Model, and HMG National may identify strong practices that can be integrated into the Model and/or diffused throughout the Affiliate Network.

This *Cultivating System Leadership Skills and Competencies Learning Community* will provide technical assistance to HMG affiliates to develop and/or refine **six core competencies needed for effective systems leadership and systems change:**

1. **Systems Thinking:** Seeing the full system; understanding relationships and patterns, emphasizing the interconnectedness of elements within a system and the importance of considering the dynamic interactions among them.
2. **Trust and Co-Creation:** Supporting productive working relationships and shared trust amongst stakeholders in the system, and using these relationships to co-create the desired results.
3. **Facilitation and Navigating Conflict:** Designing and guiding group processes and decision-making, ensuring inclusive participation and navigating conflicts as they arise.
4. **Centering Equity:** Ensuring equity and inclusion in the participation, process, and outcome of systems change work.
5. **Communication:** Articulating a shared vision/goal and complex ideas in a way that resonates with diverse audiences, frequently and bi-directionally, both within the HMG collaborative and beyond to other relevant stakeholders across the community.
6. **Learning Culture and Adaptability:** Orientation to continuous learning and experimentation; adapting the work as it unfolds, based on internal progress and external context shifts.

CULTIVATING SYSTEM LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

LEARNING COMMUNITY

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Learning Community Experience

Ten HMG systems will be selected to participate in this Learning Community. Those selected will engage in a set of sequential activities divided into three phases over the course of one-year. Each phase is paired with a data collection strategy to support project evaluation.

The HMG National Center, Collective Impact Forum, and Connecticut Children's Childhood Prosperity Lab will guide and support the application of six leadership and change competencies to an opportunity area identified by each participating HMG system.

The three project phases are:

1. Phase 1 - Learning
2. Phase 2 - Action Planning
3. Phase 3 - Implementation

About Phase 1: Learning

Phase 1 will:

1. Provide Learning Community participants a foundational understanding of each of the six core competencies associated with systems leadership and systems change; and
2. Explore the extent to which each system is leveraging the six core competencies.

Phase 1 strategies:

- **Learning Sessions (6):** Curriculum-based learning workshops that provide a foundational understanding of the six core competencies while also giving participants an opportunity to practice emerging skills. Duration: 2 hours each
- **Team Time (6):** Systems touch base independently with their own participating team members to discuss skill development, barriers, and successes unique to their own participation and application. Duration: 30 minutes minimum
- **Collaboration Sessions (6):** An all-system, peer-to-peer, semi-structured discussion about skill/practice change and the adaptation of strategies tested. Duration 60 -90 minutes each

Phase 1 duration: August 2024 - January 2025

About Phase 2: Action Planning

Phase 2 will:

1. Identify a local gap, opportunity, or area for growth that can be filled/strengthened by one or more of the six core competencies;
2. Develop a plan to support application; and
3. Determine how to best assess the impact of the core competency on the identified opportunity area.

CULTIVATING SYSTEM LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES LEARNING COMMUNITY REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

About Phase 2: Action Planning (Continued)

Phase 2 strategy:

- **Action Planning Sessions (3):** Each team will be supported to identify a strategy or project related to the core competencies to implement locally. In partnership with the Project Team they will establish an evaluation plan to assess the impact of their strategy. Duration 60 minutes

Phase 2 duration: February 2025

About Phase 3: Implementation

Phase 3 will:

1. Apply appropriate system leadership/change competencies to the identified opportunity area(s).

Phase 3 strategies:

- **Collaboration Sessions (6):** Systems come together for a peer-to-peer, semi-structured discussion about skill/practice change and the adaptation of strategies tested. Duration 90 minutes
- **Team Time (6):** Systems touch base independently with their own participating team members to discuss skill development, barriers, and successes unique to their own participation and application. Duration: 30 minutes minimum
- **Coaching Sessions (2):** Targeted support for participants as they practice adopting skills through semi-structured discussion facilitated by the Project Team. Duration 60 minutes

Phase 3 duration: March 2025 - September 2025

Data and Evaluation

Evaluation Goals:

1. Assess changes in knowledge and/or skills of participants;
2. Report progress on the goals participants set for themselves and their respective systems; and
3. Share overall experience in participating in the Learning Community.

Please see the timeline on page 6 for further detail on when evaluation activities might occur.

Evaluation expectations of participants and measurement strategies:

- Completion of Learning Community Experience Surveys (Baseline, Midpoint, Completion);
- Completion of quick polls to measure knowledge transfer (Beginning/end of Learning Sessions);
- Completion of Reflection Tool (Phase 1: After each Team Time session); and
- Completion of Data and Evaluation Plan (Phase 3: Beginning, Midpoint, Completion).

Commitment

Participants will be expected to participate fully in the experience as outlined above and detailed below. Participants will be expected to attend at least 80% of all project sessions and Team Time meetings and follow through with all tasks and assignments. This requires both meeting participation and independent work in between sessions, estimated to average 2 hours a week per participant.

CULTIVATING SYSTEM LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES LEARNING COMMUNITY REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Timeline

| Phase 1 - Learning | | |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Month | Date Time (All times are in EST) | Activity |
| August (end) 2024 | Aug 22, 2:00 PM | Level-set/ Kickoff Webinar Co-Design with Project Participants |
| | Learning Community Baseline Survey | |
| September 2024 | Sept 11, 2:00 PM | Week 1: Learning Session 1: Systems Thinking (2 hrs) |
| | Week of Sep 16 | Week 2: Team Time (>30 min) |
| | Sep 25, 2:00 PM | Week 3: Collaboration Session (60 - 90 min) |
| October 2024 | Oct 2, 2:00 PM | Week 1: Learning Session 2: Centering Equity (2 hrs) |
| | Week of Oct 7 | Week 2: Team Time (>30 min) |
| | Oct 16, 2:00 PM | Week 3: Collaboration Session (60 - 90 min) |
| | Oct 23, 2:00 PM | Week 1: Learning Session 3: Trust & Co-Creation (2hrs) |
| | Week of Oct 28 | Week 2: Team Time (>30 min) |
| November 2024 | Nov 6, 2:00 PM | Week 3: Collaboration Session (60 - 90 min) |
| | Nov 13, 2:00 PM | Week 1: Learning Session 4: Communication (2hrs) |
| | Week of Nov 18 | Week 2: Team Time (>30 min) |
| December 2024 | Dec 4, 2:00 PM | Week 3: Collaboration Session (60 - 90 min) |
| | Dec 11, 2:00 PM | Week 1: Learning Session 5: Facilitating & Navigating Conflict (2hrs) |
| | Week of Dec 16 | Week 2: Team time (>30 min) |
| | Dec 18, 2:00 PM | Week 3: Collaboration Session (60 - 90 min) |
| January 2025 | Jan 15, 2:00 PM | Week 1: Learning Session 6: Learning Culture & Adaptability (2hrs) |
| | Week of Jan 20 | Week 2: Team Time (>30 min) |
| | Jan 29, 2:00 PM | Week 3: Collaboration Session (60 - 90 min) |

| Phase 2 - Action Planning | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------|--|
| Month | Date | Time | Activity |
| February 2025 | Feb 5, 2:00 PM | | Week 1: Action Planning/Co-Design (60 min) |
| | Feb 12, 2:00 PM | | Week 2: Action Planning/Co-Design (60 min) |
| | Feb 19, 2:00 PM | | Week 3: Action Planning/ Co-Design (60 min) |
| Learning Community Survey | | | |

CULTIVATING SYSTEM LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES LEARNING COMMUNITY REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Timeline

| Phase 3 - Implementation | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|------|---------------------------------------|
| Month | Date | Time | Activity |
| March 2025 | Mar 5, 2:00 PM | | Collaboration Session (90 min) |
| | Week of Mar 10 | | Team time (>30 min) |
| April 2025 | Apr 9, 2:00 PM | | Collaboration Session (90 min) |
| | Week of Apr 14 | | Team time (>30 min) |
| May 2025 | May 7, 2:00 PM | | Collaboration Session (90 min) |
| | Week of May 12 | | Team time (>30 min) |
| | <i>Coaching (60 min)</i> | | |
| June 2025 | Jun 11, 2:00 PM | | Collaboration Session (90 min) |
| | Week of Jun 16 | | Team time (>30 min) |
| July 2025 | July 9, 2:00 PM | | Collaboration Session (90 min) |
| | Week of July 14 | | Team time (>30 min) |
| August 2025 | Aug 6, 2:00 PM | | Collaboration Session 90 min) |
| | Week of Aug 11 | | Team time (>30 min) |
| | <i>Coaching (60 min)</i> | | |
| September 2025 | Week of Sept 8 | | Team time (>30 min) |
| | Sept 17, 2:00 PM | | Project Wrap-up/ Celebration (60 min) |
| <i>Learning Community Survey</i> | | | |
| October 2025 | <i>Final Reporting Learning Community Ends</i> | | |

Application Requirements

Application Deadline

Applications must be received by COB Alaska Time on July 31, 2024. Selected applicants will be notified by August 9, 2024.

Please Complete the
[Application Here](#)

Point of Contact

For questions on the Cultivating System Leadership Skills and Competencies Learning Community and/or the application process, contact the Childhood Prosperity Lab at childhoodprosperitylab@connecticutchildrens.org