



# Better Together Learning Collaboratives: Implementation Toolkit

July 2022



# LEARNING COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

---

## Nemours Children's Health:

Roshelle Payes, MPH  
Caliste Chong, MS  
Alexandra Hyman, MPH  
Chidinma Nwankwo, MPH

## Go NAPSACC:

David Yates, MBA  
Aviva Starr, MSW  
Emily Alexander, BA  
Falon Smith, PhD

## For more information, please contact:

### Nemours Children's Health:

[BetterTogether@nemours.org](mailto:BetterTogether@nemours.org)

### Go NAPSACC:

[GoNAPSACC@unc.edu](mailto:GoNAPSACC@unc.edu)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

The authors acknowledge the invaluable contributions of organizational partners across the country committed to supporting children's health and development through their participation in Better Together. We acknowledge the resiliency of our partner agencies, consultants, and ECE providers who had to pivot continuously since this project launched in spring 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Better Together Learning Collaboratives build on Nemours Children's Health's [Early Care and Education Learning Collaboratives](#) project implemented from 2012-2018 in 10 states. This version integrates the online Go NAPSACC tools and resources, which launched in 2014.

We thank the states and their lead agencies that participated in Better Together from 2019–2022 for their dedication to this program and to ECE professionals:

**Arizona:** Arizona Department of Health Services

**Arkansas:** Curricula Concepts, Inc. and Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention (ArCOP)

**Indiana:** Jump IN for Healthy Kids and Spark Learning Lab

**Mississippi:** Mississippi State Department of Health

<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
Who is the Toolkit Designed for? .....	6
What is a Learning Collaborative? .....	7
Components of a Learning Collaborative .....	7
<b>PLANNING</b>	<b>10</b>
Identify and Collaborate with Community Stakeholders.....	10
Select the Better Together Module(s) for Your Learning Collaborative.....	11
Choose Learning Collaborative Delivery Method .....	13
Determine Your Budget.....	14
Consider Program Incentives.....	15
Determine Staffing.....	17
Plan for Recruitment and Implementation .....	17
Set Project Objectives and Evaluation .....	18
Planning Checklist .....	20
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>21</b>
Recruit and Enroll ECE Programs .....	21
Secure Training Venues (for In-Person Learning Collaboratives) .....	22
Train-the-Trainer Sessions .....	22
The Role of Consultants .....	23
Learning Collaborative Materials.....	23
Learning Session Components .....	25
Delivering Technical Assistance (TA) .....	29
Go NAPSACC TA Activity Log.....	30
Implementation Checklist .....	31
Closing.....	31



## Additional Resources

- [Learning Collaborative Curriculum](#)
- [Potential Funding Sources](#)
- [Training Hours/CEUs Guidance](#)
- [Project Coordinator and Consultant Roles and Responsibilities](#)
- [Implementation Plan Template](#)
- [Program Monitoring and Evaluation: Go NAPSACC Reports and Tools](#)
- [Sample ECE Program Recruitment Materials](#)
- [Better Together Logo](#)
- [Sample Interest Form and Enrollment Questionnaire](#)
- [Sample Participant Agreement](#)
- [Venue Checklist](#)
- [Facilitating Adult Learning](#)
- [Tips for Successful TA Visits](#)

<b>Action Period</b>	A period between Learning Sessions during which Leadership Teams lead a variety of tasks. Leadership Teams share information learned with staff and families and complete self-assessments and action plans. They also engage others in implementing changes and documenting progress.
<b>Action Plan</b>	List of tasks to guide an ECE program to implement a new best practice. Within Go NAPSACC a sample action plan is provided for each goal the Leadership Team selects.
<b>Best Practices</b>	Best practices are research based items that have been proven to impact children’s health today and their long-term healthy habits. Go NAPSACC brings together the best practices specific to ECE settings for each of its modules. These best practices are the basis of the <i>Better Together Curriculum</i> .
<b>Best Practice Session</b>	A type of Learning Session where best practices are presented to the Leadership Teams. There are recorded versions that allow members to watch individually and, if they wish, share with their full program staff. If preferred, the Best Practice Sessions can be facilitated live by consultants. This content is included in the Learning Collaborative PowerPoints.
<b>Better Together</b>	Name of an initiative and research study conducted jointly by Nemours Children’s and UNC- Go NAPSACC to support improvements in ECE programs’ physical activity, healthy eating, breastfeeding support, and screen time practices, policies, and environments. One component of this initiative was Learning Collaboratives.
<b>Better Together Curriculum</b>	Content delivered through the Learning Collaboratives to guide Leadership Teams and their ECE programs through the process of making healthy changes aligned with best practices.
<b>Consultant</b>	Individuals responsible for leading the Learning Sessions and providing ongoing technical assistance to participating ECE programs. To facilitate these sessions, the consultants must be certified Go NAPSACC consultants.
<b>Early Care and Education (ECE)</b>	The field, sector, or industry that includes care and learning experiences for children from birth to age five.
<b>Early Care and Education Program (ECE Program)</b>	A business or organized service that provides care and learning experiences to groups of children from birth to age five. ECE centers and family child care homes (FCCH) are common types of ECE programs.
<b>Early Childhood</b>	A developmental period of time, typically birth to age five.
<b>Facility</b>	The physical place where an ECE program is offered.
<b>5-Step Improvement Process</b>	The Go NAPSACC quality improvement process that supports ECE programs in adopting healthy habits. The five steps are Assess, Plan, Take Action, Learn More, & Keep it Up.
<b>Go NAPSACC</b>	An online platform that supports ECE programs’ adoption of evidence-based healthy eating and physical activity best practices. Resources include self-assessment and action planning tools and an extensive Tips & Materials library. This version of the <i>Better Together Curriculum</i> integrates the use of Go NAPSACC in the Learning Collaboratives.
<b>Go NAPSACC State Lead</b>	The person who oversees the implementation of Go NAPSACC in each contracted state. Those implementing Better Together Learning Collaboratives should communicate with them about materials, Go NAPSACC questions, and collaboration opportunities.
<b>Leadership Team</b>	ECE program staff that are committed to leading the work of the Learning Collaborative – attending the Learning Sessions and guiding the Action Periods. For child care centers, the Leadership Team is usually composed of three people (e.g., owner/director, lead teacher, food service personnel, or other staff). A FCCH may have a Leadership Team composed only of the owner/teacher or may include additional personnel or family members of children in their care.

<b>Learning Collaborative</b>	A learning community of ECE programs brought together to increase their knowledge, create networks of support, and equip programs to make healthy changes to their practices, policies, and environments that align with Go NAPSACC.
<b>Learning Session</b>	Learning Sessions provide the curriculum content. Most sessions are held live and offer active learning on nutrition, breastfeeding support, physical activity, or screen time, as well as their impact on children’s health and development. Live sessions provide opportunities to build relationships, develop leadership, increase collaboration, and plan for healthy change. All Learning Sessions can be conducted in-person or virtually. Additionally, the <i>Better Together Curriculum</i> offers some Best Practice Sessions that are recorded introductions of the Go NAPSACC best practices, which can be viewed independently by Leadership Team members.
<b>Module</b>	The content areas for health promotion addressed by Go NAPSACC. Each module includes best practices, self-assessments, action planning tools, a Tips & Materials library, and online trainings.
<b>Orientation</b>	The initial Learning Session where Leadership Teams are introduced to Better Together and provided with an overview of the Learning Collaborative activities and Go NAPSACC tools and resources.
<b>Project Coordinator</b>	The individual responsible for administering and providing overall coordination of the Better Together Learning Collaboratives in the state. To support delivery of Learning Collaboratives, this individual leads the recruitment of consultants and ECE programs, provides ongoing oversight and technical support for consultants, and facilitates communication about the project. This could be a separate staff member when multiple Learning Collaboratives are being coordinated simultaneously, or the consultant may serve as the project coordinator if implementing independently.
<b>Resource Guide</b>	An accompanying <i>Better Together Curriculum</i> guide for Leadership Team members that includes activities and handouts used in the Learning Sessions or should be shared with ECE program staff and families.
<b>Self-assessments</b>	A questionnaire in each module designed to help ECE providers identify which best practices they are and are not meeting in order to select relevant goals regarding program environments, practices, and policies.
<b>State Partner</b>	Agencies/organizations that work with the Go NAPSACC state lead to oversee the use and expansion of Go NAPSACC in the state. They may facilitate Learning Collaboratives or assist in their development and promotion.
<b>Technical Assistance (TA)</b>	Encouragement, support, information, and resources provided by consultants to help Leadership Teams develop and implement action plans for healthy change ensuring the inclusion of all staff members.

## Overview



The Better Together Learning Collaboratives bring together Leadership Teams from various ECE programs to learn about healthy habits in ECE settings while sharing experiences with each other and implementing new strategies in their programs. The Learning Collaboratives include Learning Sessions where discussions and activities enhance learning. Learning Sessions are followed by Action Periods where the Leadership Team uses the Go NAPSACC 5-step improvement process to assess current program activities, educate fellow staff on their learning, and lead staff through a process of change to increase healthy habits. Throughout the Learning Collaborative, connections are made to show how healthy eating and physical activity contribute to all domains of children’s development.

This Toolkit supports the delivery of four distinct Better Together Learning Collaboratives with each one focused on a different topic area: **Physical Activity**, **Child Nutrition**, **Breastfeeding & Infant Feeding**, and **Screen Time**. While the content of each Learning Collaborative is different, the overall structure is the same.

### Learning Sessions:

- Increase knowledge on how nutrition and physical activity impact children’s health and why the ECE setting is an important place for their inclusion.
- Provide support for ECE programs to implement best practices in specific content areas.
- Offer peer networking and learning opportunities.
- Explore strategies for overcoming common challenges.
- Provide helpful resources and materials created specifically for ECE programs.

### During Action Periods, ECE programs:

- Complete Go NAPSACC self-assessments to determine current practices and areas for improvement.
- Share information with other staff and families.
- Receive support from consultants to develop action plans and implement new strategies.
- Document change in their ECE program.

You may choose to implement a Learning Collaborative with a group of ECE providers focused on one content area. However, you can facilitate a longer Learning Collaborative by merging different content areas based upon your available resources, providers’ interests, and the availability of consultants.

## Better Together Learning Collaboratives Overview

<p><b>Physical Activity:</b> Fostering healthy physical activity habits in infants, toddlers, and preschoolers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the amount of indoor and outdoor play and physical activity</li> <li>• Promoting daily Child and Adult-led play</li> </ul>	<p><b>Child Nutrition:</b> Supporting healthy eating habits in children by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving healthy foods and beverages</li> <li>• Increasing use of recommended feeding practices</li> </ul>	<p><b>Breastfeeding &amp; Infant Feeding:</b> Focus on the nutritional needs of infants by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting breastfeeding and breastfeeding families</li> <li>• Using responsive feeding techniques for all infants</li> <li>• Addressing nutritional needs of older infants</li> </ul>	<p><b>Screen Time:</b> Reduce screen time in ECE settings by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using screen time sparingly and only for educational purposes</li> <li>• Engaging in more active, interactive, and developmentally enriching practices</li> </ul>
---	--	---	--

### All Modules include:

- Nutrition and physical activity resources for children, staff, and families
- Guidance for adding new practices in ECE program policies
- Tools to support continued growth and learning

## Introduction



Thank you for your interest in the Better Together Learning Collaboratives! The goal of this Toolkit is to provide you with the roadmap and resources you need to successfully implement the Better Together Learning Collaboratives: Collaborating for Children's Health.

We developed this Toolkit based on our experience implementing Better Together, a three year project of Nemours Children's Health (Nemours Children's) and Go NAPSACC at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Better Together builds on Nemours Children's Early Care and Education Learning Collaboratives project implemented from 2012-2018 in 10 states and includes three components 1) Learning Collaboratives to provide focused learning and coaching support to low-income ECE programs; 2) Statewide systems change; and 3) Building a Statewide Go NAPSACC network. These components aimed to improve practices and policies around physical activity, child nutrition, breastfeeding support, and screen time in ECE settings.

**All Learning Collaborative materials are found in the [Better Together Basecamp](#) page organized by Go NAPSACC Module. These materials include the PowerPoint presentations for each Learning Collaborative module, the additional resources listed in the Table of Contents, and the Resource Guide to share with ECE programs in your Learning Collaborative.**

### Who is the Toolkit Designed for?

This Toolkit was created for organizations that are interested in increasing healthy habits in ECE settings through a peer-learning, action-oriented Learning Collaborative model. It incorporates the Go NAPSACC 5-step improvement process throughout the Learning Collaborative. Check the [Go NAPSACC website](#) to find out if your state currently has access to Go NAPSACC.

For states without a Go NAPSACC license, a version that does not require the use of Go NAPSACC is available through Nemours Children's at [www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org](http://www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org).

We suggest you read the entire Toolkit prior to planning and launching your own Learning Collaboratives.

### Flexible Use

While we designed this Toolkit based on experiences from Better Together implementation with a variety of partners in diverse locations and targeting different ECE program types, it is not a one-size-fits-all guide. Users are encouraged to adapt the guidance, tools, and resources provided to their implementation reality and the needs of their participants.

Once you've decided to implement, you'll find it useful to revisit the Toolkit and employ the tools in different sections of the document. This Toolkit is organized into two major sections: Planning and Implementation. Each section of the Toolkit includes guidance, tips, and suggestions for adaptations. Links to additional resources and guidance can be found throughout.

While you may complete many of the steps within each phase in order, there are activities that should be implemented at the same time. You will also have to re-visit some steps over the course of implementation.

### Better Together Learning Collaboratives

The Better Together Learning Collaboratives took place in four states from 2019–2022. The Better Together Learning Collaboratives fully integrate Go NAPSACC into the Learning Collaborative framework. Participants learned about Go NAPSACC best practices and received guidance on completing self-assessments and action planning.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we converted the six-hour, in-person Learning Sessions into multiple one-hour virtual live discussions and recorded training sessions. This Toolkit includes the latest version of the *Better Together Curriculum*, which reflects participant feedback and experiences. You may deliver these materials as we did or adapt them further to best meet the needs of your participants.



Additionally, this Toolkit supports large scale implementation of multiple Learning Collaboratives across a location or small scale implementation where a single consultant might choose to conduct a Learning Collaborative for their current Go NAPSACC programs. Some steps may not be needed by all planners.

## What is a Learning Collaborative?

A Learning Collaborative brings together program leadership and staff from different ECE programs to accomplish a common goal: making their ECE program healthier. Learning Collaboratives encourage participants to work together over a period of time to test, share, and implement improvement strategies. The *Better Together Curriculum* serves as the foundation to promote positive changes in physical activity, healthy eating, breastfeeding support, and screen time. Development of this curriculum was guided by:

- Go NAPSACC best practices
- Standards from [Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs, Second Edition](#), which is a part of *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, Third Edition*

A Learning Collaborative uses an empowerment model designed to support the growth of leadership, as well as the collaboration and confidence of ECE providers as they learn, change, grow, and become champions for children's health, development, and learning.

The *Better Together Curriculum* incorporates Go NAPSACC's 5-step improvement process throughout the Learning Collaboratives.

## Why is this Model Effective?

Combining the Learning Collaborative model with the Go NAPSACC platform is effective because it:

- Brings together a community of learners.
- Creates a network for sharing ideas and building mutual support.
- Offers evidence-based guidance about ECE practices and policies.
- Provides access to high-quality resources for quality improvement.
- Offers opportunities to build important knowledge and skills: being leaders and champions of change, nurturing collaboration among ECE program staff, and implementing best practices successfully.
- Supports long-term, sustainable improvements by engaging ECE programs and families as partners in support of children's health, development, and well-being.
- Provides a model for ECE programs to examine current practices and implement changes that can be used after the Learning Collaborative.

## Components of a Learning Collaborative

### Leadership Teams

Center-based or school-based ECE programs are asked to identify 2-3 program staff members to serve as a **Leadership Team**. This team approach allows for greater buy-in and feedback from staff with a variety of jobs and skill sets. Leadership Teams should include the center or program director, as well as teaching staff and anyone involved in the content area being covered.

For family child care home (FCCH) programs, most often run by single proprietors, usually only the owner/director attends the Learning Sessions. However, they are welcome to have a second person join them if that meets the needs of their program. This might be a family member of an enrolled child or a second staff member.

The Leadership Team attends the Learning Sessions, completes the Action Period tasks, and facilitates change in the ECE program.

## Learning Sessions

**Learning Sessions** offer participants a chance to increase their knowledge and skills. The goal of each Learning Session is to foster a supportive, adult learning environment that encourages trust and relationship building between staff of ECE programs.

Each Learning Session highlights best practices and strategies for implementation in ECE while showcasing state/local initiatives. Most Learning Sessions are presented live and can be delivered virtually or in-person. The content is primarily delivered through large group presentations, small group activities, and breakout sessions.

Best Practice Sessions are a specific type of Learning Session where Go NAPSACC best practices are presented. Each Learning Collaborative, depending on content area, has one or two Best Practice Sessions. These are available as recorded trainings, or if preferred, consultants can present them live using the provided PowerPoint slides.

## Action Periods

Throughout the Learning Collaborative the ECE programs engage in **Action Periods**. During this time, typically two weeks for a one module Learning Collaborative, the Leadership Team shares what they learned at the Learning Sessions with program staff and families and completes specific tasks. For centers and FCCH programs, each Action Period also includes a virtual or in-person meeting with the programs' assigned consultant. The Action Period includes reviewing the Go NAPSACC self-assessment results for that module, writing action plans, and beginning to work on areas of improvement.

The Go NAPSACC 5-step improvement process and the content areas (modules) covered are illustrated in this graphic. The consultant supports the ECE programs as they move through the 5-step improvement process during the Action Periods.



## Technical Assistance (TA)

Consultants facilitate the Learning Collaborative and provide on-going TA to each of their ECE programs. The number of consultants needed will depend on each consultant's caseload and their time on the project. To foster trust and relationship building, each consultant should provide on-going TA to the same ECE programs throughout the Learning Collaborative. Each consultant should coach their assigned programs during small group discussions and activities at Learning Sessions. They also provide TA via site visits, virtual meetings, phone, email, and texts between Learning Sessions.

Another important aspect of TA is providing the ECE programs with resources to use when making program improvements. Consultants can find resources in the [Go NAPSACC](#) Tips & Materials library and online trainings. Additionally, Nemours Children's has compiled a collection of resources at [www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org](http://www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org). Consultants can share curriculum guides, program supplies, resource books, handouts, or links to online information. TA should also include connecting the participating programs to community resources relevant to the content. ECE providers often feel isolated and do not know who to reach out to for support for staff and families. Bringing community providers into the Learning Sessions as guest speakers or connecting them with ECE providers helps sustain program change.

### Providing TA

During the final year of Better Together implementation, each state hosted multiple Learning Collaboratives. Each Learning Collaborative had an average of 20 participating programs with two consultants per ECE Learning Collaborative. Each consultant provided TA to approximately 10 ECE programs.

One state included SNAP-Ed educators to provide assistance during the Learning Collaborative, and those educators continued to provide consistent support after the Learning Collaborative.

## Better Together Participants Share about the Value of Technical Assistance

*Our [consultant] has made herself available all of the time and has shared so much information with us that has helped us implement and reach our goals. Go NAPSACC has helped with providing the opportunity to learn and grow as a community of educators and centers and has given us materials and online resources to implement our goals and change the way our program is run to match and meet recommended standards.*

**Rosalinda Jaime**  
Ironwood ECE Program, Arizona

*[Our consultant] was incredible! Her energy and enthusiasm are contagious! She loves sharing her knowledge and skills. She provides so much great feedback and so many resources. We could not have done any of this without her! Go NAPSACC is an INCREDIBLE resource! There are so many valuable resources available. We have utilized the parent handouts and the trainings. We are excited to continue to use the invaluable resource!"*

**Mary-Katherine Hardin**  
STARS Academy, Arkansas

## Planning



Allow several months (typically two to four months) to plan the implementation of one or more Learning Collaboratives. The following section outlines the major activities to be completed during the planning and pre-launch phase. They are presented in the recommended sequence, but you will have to work on many of these steps concurrently in order to launch your collaborative(s) in a timely manner.

### **Identify and Collaborate with Community Stakeholders**

Research community stakeholders who directly or indirectly support healthy eating and physical activity for young children and families. They may already be connecting with ECE programs. These organizations and contacts should know about your Learning Collaborative so they can offer services/support to the participants and assist with ECE program recruitment. These groups may also provide complementary resources or linkages to other initiatives.

Depending on your state and location, consider introducing the Better Together Learning Collaborative approach at an existing workgroup or coalition meeting, or you can organize a stakeholder meeting specifically to discuss the planning of Learning Collaboratives. These organizations can be tapped for funding, in-kind support of supplies, consultants, resources, and/or guest speakers at Learning Sessions.

#### **Child Nutrition and Physical Activity Stakeholders**

These are suggested stakeholders that may help you recruit and support ECE programs for your Learning Collaborative:

- Health departments, SNAP-Ed Local Implementing Agencies, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) chapters, pediatricians, and/or child health advisory groups
- Organizations working on obesity prevention initiatives targeting children/families
- Agencies that administer Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), ECE subsidy programs, and professional development for child care providers
- State licensing agency and/or local licensing offices
- Departments of Education, local school systems, state Pre-K office
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) state agency, sponsoring organizations
- Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) or the organization that oversee CCHCs
- Nonprofit organizations serving young children and families
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) and other groups that provide training and TA to ECE providers
- Community colleges and universities with ECE related degree/certificate programs
- Local offices/branches or staff of any of these organizations
- Families of children in care
- ECE providers (FCCH and center-based)
- Local/regional/state child care associations

### **Better Together State Level Impact**




**Megan McKinney-Cooper**  
Communications Director  
Jump IN for Healthy Kids  
(Click picture to view video)



## Select the Better Together Module(s) for Your Learning Collaborative

The *Better Together Curriculum* aligns with these Go NAPSACC modules: **Infant & Child Physical Activity**, **Child Nutrition**, **Breastfeeding & Infant Feeding**, and **Screen Time**. Each module's materials can be implemented on its own as a three to four month Learning Collaborative or as an eight to ten month Learning Collaborative covering all four modules. The materials are comprehensive, yet flexible. The local implementation team must determine the final structure and timeline that will be most effective for your ECE programs, consultants, and available funding.

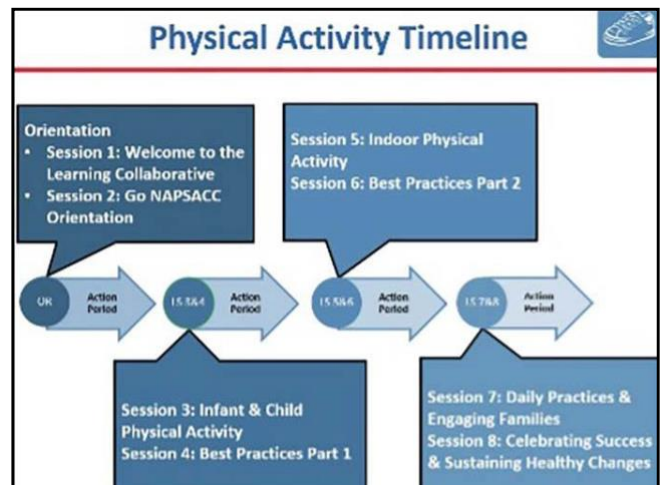
A list of Learning Collaborative modules, Learning Session details, Action Period tasks, and consultant objectives are detailed in the table below. Each Learning Session is scheduled for one hour. For virtual sessions, we suggest facilitating one-hour sessions. For in-person sessions, one-hour blocks can be combined to create a two-hour session or longer sessions. Additionally, these sessions can be extended by adding more icebreakers, discussions, or networking opportunities.

Learning Collaborative Content Area	
Infant & Child Physical Activity	Child Nutrition
Session 1: Learning Collaborative Orientation	
Session 2: Go NAPSACC Orientation	
Familiarize ECE programs with Go NAPSACC	
Register for Go NAPSACC	
Complete Go NAPSACC self-assessment	
Session 3: Module Specific Content	
Session 4: Best Practice Session RT/CL	
Review self-assessment results & collaborate with ECE program to create action plans	
Create two Go NAPSACC action plans	Create three Go NAPSACC action plans
Begin action plan implementation	
Session 5: Module Specific Content	
Session 6: Best Practice Session 2 RT/CL	Session 6: Celebrating Success & Sustaining Healthy Changes Session
Collaborate on the creation of action plans Check-in on strategies for implementation of action plans	Brainstorm support needed for final implementation of action plans and discuss remaining tasks
Create two additional Go NAPSACC action plans	Complete implementation of Go NAPSACC action plans
Continue action plan implementation	Retake Go NAPSACC self-assessment
Session 7: Module Specific Content	<b>Key</b>
Session 8: Celebrating Success & Sustaining Healthy Changes Session	 Learning Sessions – 1 hour each
Brainstorm support needed for final implementation of action plans and discuss remaining tasks	 Action Period Objectives for Consultants
Complete implementation of Go NAPSACC action plans	 Action Period Tasks for ECE Programs
Retake Go NAPSACC self-assessment	RT/CL: Recorded Training or Consultant-led

All materials listed to support implementation can be found on this [Basecamp Page](#) or can be downloaded individually from links provided on this [overview document](#). Materials include PowerPoint slides with speaker notes and activity details, a Resource Guide for ECE program Leadership Team members, and links to the pre-recorded Best Practice Sessions.

## Single Content Area Learning Collaborative Timeline

This image offers a glance at how the timeline for a single Learning Collaborative content area would be set-up. The timeline for each Learning Collaborative can be found in the PowerPoint and can be shared with participating or interested ECE programs to explain the structure and expectations for each collaborative.



### Individual ECE Program Implementation

The *Better Together Curriculum* can also be used for trainings at individual ECE programs. Specific training sessions could be used for a teacher training or professional development day. A consultant can also offer the full curriculum at an individual ECE program in one hour sections during staff meetings or naptime. This would allow all staff members to participate, learn, and implement healthy practices as a group.

### Combining All Four Modules

The four Learning Collaborative modules can be combined to create a more intense, comprehensive Learning Collaborative. Implementation of this Learning Collaborative usually takes place over eight to ten months, preferably aligned with the school year. This requires consultants to work diligently to keep ECE programs motivated and engaged. Larger incentives are usually needed to have ECE programs commit to a full year project.

The comprehensive Learning Collaborative will begin with the Orientation Session and Go NAPSACC Orientation. Then, each Module's content will be delivered in a sequence. For in-person delivery, this could include a half day Orientation Session and then full day Learning Sessions for each module. Smaller sessions over multiple weeks is also an option. Virtually this is recommended to be offered in one hour blocks. In this format, the sessions for each module would be offered weekly to complete them in approximately one month.

An Action Period of approximately four weeks follows each module. This provides an opportunity for the ECE programs to share with their staff, meet with their consultant, and work on implementation.

In this structure, you must develop a plan for ECE programs to complete the relevant Go NAPSACC self-assessments. This can be done in multiple ways:

- Have ECE programs complete all four self-assessments at the beginning of the Learning Collaborative immediately after the Orientation and complete all four self-assessments again after the final content and TA have been delivered.
- Develop a timeline for staggered completion of initial self-assessments where ECE programs complete the applicable self-assessment prior to the delivery of content in that particular module. The second self-assessment can also be staggered.
- Stagger the initial self-assessments to match the Learning Collaborative content. The second self-assessments can all be completed at the conclusion of the Learning Collaborative.

For more support in implementing this four module structure, reach out to Nemours with questions at [BetterTogether@nemours.org](mailto:BetterTogether@nemours.org).

## Choose Learning Collaborative Delivery Method

Due to COVID-19, the Better Together Learning Collaboratives were implemented virtually. While this shift was unexpected, we found some benefits with virtual implementation. We adapted the materials for either virtual or in-person delivery. To help you determine your preferred approach, we outlined the pros and cons below:

In-Person		Virtual	
PROS	CONS	PROS	CONS
Greater opportunity for participant networking and informal conversation.	Requires locating and securing meeting/training space, which may increase costs.	Easier to engage participants in remote areas/larger geographical regions.	Less informal networking.
Easier to distribute materials/incentives to programs.	Cost of food/mileage are increased, and more time is needed to manage these logistics.	More participants are likely to attend regularly since sessions are shorter.	Participants may be distracted if participating from their site and/or classroom.
Providers can engage more fully in the sessions since they are physically away from program distractions.	Fewer program staff may attend since they must leave the program and potentially hire substitute staff.	Can be scheduled during naptime or evenings.	Need reliable internet or cell phone coverage to support online learning.
Promotes a tighter peer-network that could endure after Learning Collaborative concludes.	Must recruit ECE programs from a smaller geographic area or require participants and consultants to travel farther distances.	Content broken into shorter sessions makes it easier for participants to digest and apply in their own programs.	Need consultants and providers to have/be comfortable with technology.
If local, consultants are located in the same community as the providers with more connections to local resources.	Consultants need to be local or travel time and subsequent expenses including mileage and lodging may be increased substantially.	Consultants can be located anywhere in the state if all virtual implementation.	Need screen sharing technology (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.).
	Difficult for providers to gather for long periods of time.	Is often more feasible for FCCH providers.	Consultants need to be comfortable with virtual facilitation.
	Need projection equipment, microphones, and internet access.	Allow participants to attend make-up sessions in other regions or watch a recorded session.	Need to mail materials to programs, increasing cost and logistics issues.
	Inclement weather can cause last minute schedule changes or cancellations.	Not as likely to be disrupted by weather.	

You can also mix in-person and virtual sessions throughout the Learning Collaborative. For example, the first and last Learning Sessions could be in-person, while other sessions could be virtual. Or, some TA sessions could be on-site at ECE programs, while others could be virtual check-in appointments. However, we don't recommend doing any of the individual Learning Sessions in a hybrid fashion, where some people participate in-person while others participate virtually. It is very difficult to facilitate and create community this way. Ideally, you want all the participants in one room or all in a virtual Learning Session.

### Mixed Delivery Examples

**In Arizona**, all Learning Collaborative sessions were delivered virtually, and TA was provided in-person when possible. This allowed for the development of deeper relationships and helped consultants see programs first hand.

**Arkansas** offered the final Celebrating Success session in-person while all other sessions were offered virtually. Offering the final session in-person helped create a more celebratory atmosphere while allowing participants to further develop relationships with the other providers

**In your planning, you will need to first decide:**

Will the Learning Sessions be conducted in-person, virtually, or a mixture of both?

What modules will be included?

A single module area or a combination of modules?

Who will deliver the Learning Collaborative?

How long will the Learning Sessions last?

The designated consultants facilitate the Learning Sessions and provide TA during the Action Periods.

All content is divided into one-hour segments for flexibility. You can combine the segments to create longer sessions and/or extend them by including more icebreakers, networking, and meals.



The format and content need to be determined before beginning other planning steps, such as creating a budget, hiring consultants, or recruitment.

***Determine Your Budget***

Implementing Learning Collaboratives requires managing multiple inputs, including staff, equipment, and supplies, participant resources, meeting venues, consultant time, meals, and incentives. If you are seeking funding for your Learning Collaboratives, please review these [potential funding sources](#) and descriptions.

Developing a comprehensive budget will help you to effectively manage your resources and to estimate your anticipated expenses. Budgets may vary greatly depending on whether you have existing staff or hire new staff, the number of modules included, and/or incentives provided to participating programs. Below is a list of potential line items to consider in your budget planning. You may find that you already have some of these expenses built into existing budgets. If so, you can deduct those expenses from your overall Learning Collaborative budget, or this available funding can count towards a required funding match.

***Potential Budget Line Items***

- Salaries and Benefits:
  - Project Coordinator: salaries and benefits
  - Consultants can be hired as employees or as contractors. For hiring an employee, expect salaries and benefits. Contracted individuals typically are paid based on an hourly rate. For both, include orientation time for consultants, recruitment of ECE programs, Learning Collaborative prep, Learning Session delivery, Action Period coaching and TA, travel time, paperwork, follow-up with ECE programs, etc.
- Equipment and Supplies:
  - Office Space, computers, other office materials
  - Printing of Learning Collaborative materials , if providing paper copies in addition to electronic
  - Training supplies
- Travel and Transport for In-Person:
  - Travel/mileage for consultants and Leadership Team members
  - Meeting space for Learning Sessions
- Direct Implementation Costs:
  - Zoom or other screen sharing accounts for virtual delivery
  - Recruitment materials
  - Program incentives – training hours, monetary incentives, or classroom materials
  - Meals or snacks for Learning Sessions if in-person



## Cost Saving Techniques

Staff, such as the Project Coordinator and consultants, are the core drivers of the Learning Collaboratives and represent the most significant costs. Potential strategies for lowering costs include:

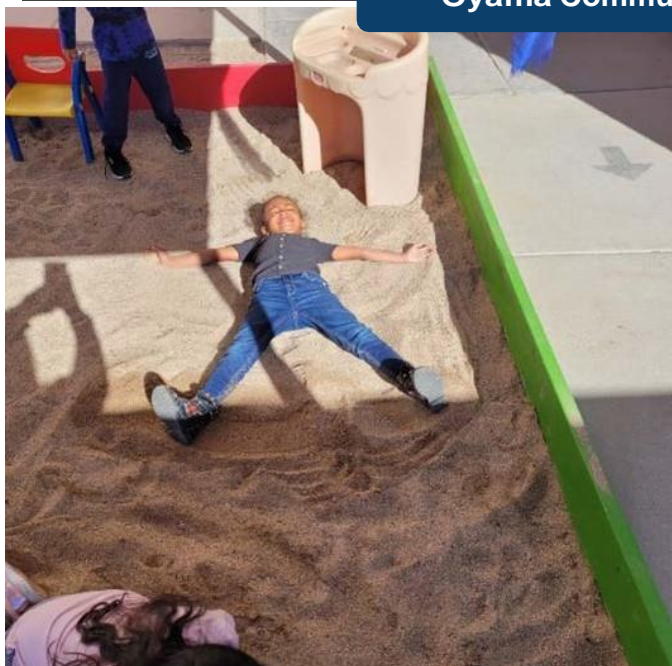
- Use in-kind (available free of charge) meeting space.
- Provide one set of printed participant materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides, Resource Guides, and classroom material incentives) per program instead of per participant. While encouraged, the entire Leadership Team (three staff members) do not usually attend all Learning Sessions.
- Consider sharing materials electronically instead of distributing hardcopies. (This approach will depend on participant's comfort with accessing and using the materials electronically. You don't want providers to feel obligated to print the materials themselves.)
- Recruit consultants that work in this field and can incorporate the Learning Collaborative into their daily work (e.g., community health educators who have ECE as one of their priority areas).
- Reduced or non-monetary incentives.
- A mix of in-person and virtual Learning Sessions and/or TA sessions. This saves on mileage and travel time for the consultants and limits the number of meals provided at sessions. For shorter in-person sessions, provide snacks instead of a full meal.

## Consider Program Incentives

ECE providers have many priorities and responsibilities. By providing incentives you can support the participation of program staff in the Learning Collaborative. Incentives may include licensing or professional development training hours, Continuing Education Units (CEUs), classroom materials, or monetary incentives (gift card or check to ECE program). Budgeting for incentives is essential. To ensure provider participation, be sure to clearly communicate the expectations that must be met to receive incentives and consider having programs sign a [participant agreement](#).

*...all the trainings were helpful in making us a more quality program and the funds helped us to carry out our plans for extending our classroom to the outdoors. Thank you!*

**Susan Basurto, Director  
Oyama Community Preschool, Arizona**



## Incentive Considerations

<p><b>For all incentives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving incentives at the end of the collaborative or in smaller increments throughout the collaborative is a great way to encourage completion of all tasks.</li> <li>• Clearly outline the tasks providers need to complete to receive the incentives.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Training hours/CEUs</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providers expect training hours when they attend professional development sessions.</li> <li>• Trainings (and in some states the trainers/consultants) must be approved by the state ECE regulatory systems or connected to a CEU authorized entity.</li> <li>• Attendance must be tracked carefully.</li> <li>• In some states, “homework” or self-study assignments completed between sessions are eligible for training hours. This could provide credit for the Action Period work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Classroom Materials</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These materials can be linked to the content of the collaborative. Examples include children’s books that show and support breastfeeding, healthy pretend foods for dramatic play, or portable play equipment for physical activity and reducing screen time. All materials need to be carefully reviewed to ensure they align with the values of the Learning Collaborative and reflect the communities and cultures of the participating ECE programs.</li> <li>• Giving all programs the same materials is the easiest to coordinate. Another option is to provide a list of options and allow programs to choose the items that best meet their program’s needs.</li> <li>• Materials can be easiest to distribute at in-person Learning Collaboratives.</li> <li>• Consider engaging local bookstores or vendors to assist in ordering and distributing books or classroom materials. Companies might provide a discount for bulk purchasing. They may also coordinate the shipping to the ECE programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monetary Incentives (Checks or gift cards)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and understand your organization or agency’s policies and requirements for issuing monetary incentives and what formats are acceptable (e.g., gift cards, checks). Make sure to collect the appropriate paperwork from the recipients for tax purposes.</li> <li>• Decide if the incentive is for the program or for the individual Leadership Team members.</li> <li>• Some companies mail blank gift cards to programs and then have the incentive funds added remotely to decrease fraud or theft of funds provided through gift cards.</li> <li>• Gift cards could be linked to early childhood companies (e.g., Kaplan, Discount School Supply, and Lakeshore Learning) to guarantee that the materials purchased are appropriate for ECE settings. Local businesses may also assist by creating a specific shopping list for participants.</li> <li>• Gift cards can be a good choice for virtual Learning Collaboratives.</li> </ul>

Additionally, raffles and door prizes can be a fun way to increase participation in the Learning Sessions. You can reward completion of tasks during Action Periods, arriving early at sessions, being willing to share about their program, being the first to talk in a discussion, or just being present! You can budget for these incentives or solicit donations. These don’t need to be elaborate; a children’s book, a donated ticket to a fitness class, or box of sidewalk chalk are all easy ideas. The chance of winning is often motivating enough!

**Better Together Incentives**

For Better Together, implementation from 2019-2022, professional development credit, monetary incentives, classroom materials, and resources for each content area were provided to all ECE programs.

## Determine Staffing

Staffing needs will vary based on your organizational structure, the number of Learning Collaboratives you plan to implement, and the number of ECE programs you plan to recruit for each Learning Collaborative. For larger or statewide collaboratives, a separate project coordinator along with multiple consultants is recommended. Smaller local collaboratives can be planned and facilitated independently by an individual consultant. The position or title of the person who completes these tasks may vary.

Review this [detailed role and responsibilities description](#) for the project coordinator and consultant positions to learn more about specific tasks that will need to be completed. You may use these when developing your job descriptions if you plan to hire new staff for this effort. You should compensate consultants for time associated with being trained on Learning Collaboratives, recruiting ECE programs, preparing for Learning Sessions, facilitating Learning Sessions, and providing TA to programs during the subsequent Action Periods. Reimbursement for mileage when they visit participating ECE programs to provide TA and any office supplies needed for training should also be budgeted. The sample consultant job description includes a [grid](#) that can help determine the number of hours needed for the consultants to conduct a successful Learning Collaborative.

Each Learning Session consists of multiple activities and requires substantial behind-the-scenes work. Consider allocating some administrative support or an intern to support participant registration, preparing program materials, setting up food (in-person), managing technology (virtual and in-person), and other meeting day needs. Consultants will be busy presenting the materials and facilitating discussions with participants. If a consultant is working alone, a second person can be extremely helpful during the Learning Sessions to ensure participants have a seamless training experience.

## Plan for Recruitment and Implementation

As you prepare to launch your Learning Collaboratives, developing a written implementation plan may assist you as you move through all the steps in the process. Additionally, stakeholder feedback and information on ECE providers in your target area should directly inform your [implementation plan](#). This is especially important if you plan to convene multiple collaboratives at the same time.

### Determine Priority Programs for Learning Collaboratives

In coordination with state and local stakeholders, identify the priority ECE programs for the Learning Collaborative. The choice of in-person or virtual sessions will also influence your recruitment strategies. Utilize data related to the factors below to support your proposed focus areas. Also, explore current healthy eating and physical activity initiatives in these areas and how coordination will be achieved to prevent duplication, ‘initiative-fatigue’, or ‘over training.’

Factors to consider include:

- Locations (counties or cities, rural or urban)
- Prevalence of childhood obesity and overweight
- Prevalence of adult obesity and overweight
- Percentage of children under five in ECE programs
- Existing ECE quality improvement initiatives (childhood obesity or otherwise)
- Low-resourced communities
- Socioeconomic and racial disparities
- Type of programs, whether centers, school-based programs, FCCHs, or a mixture of all types of programs
- Availability of consultants to provide on-going TA to programs in the region

### Develop a Recruitment Plan

Think through your anticipated ECE program outreach and recruitment strategy. How will you build program interest and demand for Learning Collaboratives?

If your funding requires a target number of programs or children to be reached, that target number can help determine the number of collaboratives needed. It can also help determine the number

and size of the programs (i.e., number of enrolled children) to recruit for each collaborative. Using target numbers as part of your initial planning will lead to greater success with evaluation and reporting measures.

For an effective collaborative model, plan to recruit a substantial number of programs. Most collaboratives led by two consultants have a goal of recruiting between 20-25 ECE programs. More programs lead to more collaboration, more ideas shared, and more program change. However, more than 25 programs can be challenging for a pair of consultants to manage. If a collaborative is being led by only one consultant, then the number of ECE programs should be reduced to 10-12 ECE programs. Recruiting a few more programs over funding/evaluation goals can compensate for any programs that are unable to complete the Learning Collaborative. However, they must be budgeted for in case all programs complete the full collaborative.

Outreach materials should communicate the program expectations and incentives. The recruitment section on **page 21** of this Toolkit provides additional details on recruitment methods and samples.

### ***Set Project Objectives and Evaluation***

Once you have an implementation plan and timeline for your project, it is important to set measurable objectives. As the saying goes, “What gets measured, gets done.”

For Learning Collaboratives, determine a few process metrics (or outputs) and track them throughout the project. Consider these process metrics:

- Number of ECE programs enrolled
- Number of ECE programs who complete the collaborative
- Attendance at each Learning Session
- Completion of Go NAPSACC self-assessments
- Creation of Go NAPSACC action plans
- Action plans marked complete
- Number of TA sessions completed per ECE program

In addition to tracking and reporting these numbers, be sure to define an outcome metric(s) for your Learning Collaborative. Since the Better Together Learning Collaboratives are built around the Go NAPSACC 5-step improvement process, you can use the change in Go NAPSACC self-assessment scores for an outcome metric. When an ECE program completes a self-assessment in Go NAPSACC, two scores are generated:

- % Best Practices Met = The number of best practices the program has met (scored a 4 on the self-assessment report) divided by the total number of best practices.
- Total Score = The score determined by adding the individual score on each best practice divided by the total highest possible score on the self-assessment.

Both scores are reported in the self-assessment and detailed activity reports. Determine which score you are reporting in your evaluation. **A common outcome metric is the change in score from the initial self-assessment score (taken after the Orientation during the first Action Period) to the second self-assessment score (taken in the last Action Period at the end of the Learning Collaborative).** It is reasonable to set a goal of a +10% improvement in the best practice score.

Go NAPSACC also offers real-time reporting that can be very helpful to consultants as they support ECE programs while they move through the Learning Collaborative. From a consultant or State Partner Go NAPSACC account, the Project Coordinator and consultants can monitor program completion of tasks for all programs. View this table of helpful [Go NAPSACC reports](#) and tools to determine the process and outcome metrics described in this section.

### Program Monitoring and Evaluation


During program monitoring, participants can provide feedback to ensure you are meeting their expectations. Monitoring can also ensure that your program is being executed as you intended.

Program monitoring can include evaluation of the Learning Session presentations and facilitation, the amount, type and effectiveness of TA received, participant feedback on curriculum content, and the impact of participation on their ECE program, its children, families, and staff. You can collect this information by using surveys. In order to provide training credits for the Learning Sessions, which is important to participants, many states require specific training evaluations. Be sure to follow your state’s requirements and guidance for providing professional development credit. You may be able to add to or supplement the state form with other questions. This is your opportunity to ask additional questions about the TA provided in the Action Periods. These evaluation forms can provide helpful information and can serve as one of the core components of program evaluation.

It is important to communicate with key stakeholders, especially the project funder, at the start of the project to determine measures to include in the evaluation. The components of your project evaluation will contain all the data you have collected during your project’s implementation.

Consider the following questions when determining your evaluation plan:

- What data do you want to collect?
  - Have you included the evaluation information your funder is requiring?
  - Who will analyze the data and provide the results (this might be you)?
- How will the evaluation tools be administered, and the results collected and analyzed?
  - Go NAPSACC self-assessments are built into the Learning Collaborative structure providing you automatically with important evaluation information.
  - When are other tools being administered and data collected? Will these be done on paper or online?
  - How will you share the evaluation results, and with whom? It may be useful to have multiple ways to report and share evaluation results (e.g., grant reporting, infographics, executive summary, presentations).
- How will you disseminate the findings of your evaluation?
  - In addition to grant reports, you may wish to share the results with your stakeholder group and partnering agencies.
  - Share your successes on social media, in newsletters, and other avenues to let community members know about your work and opportunities to participate in the future.
  - Consider working with an academic researcher from your state if you wish to publish the results of your evaluation.

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <span style="font-size: 1.2em;"><b>Better Together Evaluation Template</b></span>  </div>		
	Target	Actual
# of ECE programs recruited for Learning Collaborative		
% attendance at Learning Collaborative sessions		
% of programs completing initial Go NAPSACC self-assessment		
% of programs completing second Go NAPSACC self-assessment		
# of Go NAPSACC action plans marked complete		
Average # of TA sessions completed per ECE program		
Change in Go NAPSACC Best Practice self-assessment score		

## Planning Checklist

Before moving on to implementation, review the checklist below to be sure you have thought through all planning components.

Learning Collaboratives Planning Checklist	
	Identify and collaborate with community stakeholders.
	Identify your curriculum needs.
	Determine your implementation structure (length of sessions; virtual or in-person).
	Determine program incentives.
	Determine number and location of Learning Collaboratives.
	Identify funding and develop a budget.
	Recruit or designate staff.
	Develop a recruitment plan.
	Determine timeline for your collaboratives.
	Create an evaluation plan.

*We included more physical activity time both indoor & outdoor. This also includes more adult-led activities... The children are more happy. Conflicts & challenging behavior have been reduced! ...Participation in the Go NAPSACC program has been a blessing for my childcare center. It's given me a more hands on approach with the help of the assessments & action planning tools.*

**Jackie Smith, Director  
Little Dreamers Childcare Center, Inc., Mississippi**

## Implementation



### Recruit and Enroll ECE Programs

Once you identify priority and eligibility criteria for participation, you can compile, with assistance from your stakeholders, ways to reach these programs. Choose a target start date for the Learning Collaborative, the program expectations, and incentives.

### Develop a Recruitment Plan

Developing and sharing [recruitment materials](#), such as a flyer, email, or cold calling script, will be helpful to ensure all communications are consistent. As you develop your recruitment materials, you may use the [Better Together name and logo](#).

Methods for initial recruitment may include:

- Send postcards or other mailings
- Create social media posts
- Email ECE program directors/owners and FCCH owners with promotional materials, such as a flyer
- Consultants personally invite programs
- Cold call ECE programs
- Post notices in places frequented by ECE providers
- Utilize ECE listservs and frequented websites (e.g., state ECE licensing, CACFP, ECE training sites, ECE resource and referral agencies)
- Present at ECE-related work groups/meetings/conferences/community trainings
- Ask other Go NAPSACC consultants in that region to promote the Learning Collaborative
- Ask Go NAPSACC State Partners and stakeholders to share with their network
- Ask stakeholder groups to share via Social Media
- Encourage local/regional/state ECE associations to promote the Learning Collaboratives in their communications
- Target ECE programs with Go NAPSACC accounts (especially those with little activity; they may benefit from the support of a collaborative)

If your consultants have already been selected, consider including hours for the consultants to provide recruitment support. They may already have relationships with ECE programs and be connected to local agencies for recruitment. It also provides the consultants the opportunity to build a relationship with program staff before the collaborative even begins!

During the recruitment period, compile an “interest list” for each respective collaborative. This list should include programs that meet the eligibility requirements and/or want to learn more about the Learning Collaboratives. Programs with a strong interest in participating can complete an [online interest survey or form](#) to provide you with additional information about their program.

*“ Things that I thought I was doing right over the past 32 years, I learned that I could be doing differently or better. I now spend more “on the floor” time with the kids than I did before, that’s for sure. ...[The consultants] both just had so much information about things I’d not even thought about. I LOVE all of the resources available for our use.*

**Norita Christensen, FCCH Owner  
Home Away from Home Child Care,  
Indiana**



**Norita Christensen**  
Home Away From Home Child Care  
Elkhart, Indiana



*(Click picture to view video)*

### **Enrollment**

Approximately one month before the Learning Collaborative begins, ECE programs must make a final commitment to the Learning Collaborative. At this point, provide a detailed explanation of the Learning Collaborative expectations and anticipated time requirements so participants understand the benefits and can fully plan for their participation. Potential ways to share this information include:

- Making individual calls or visits with directors/FCCH owners
- Conducting an interest meeting for interested ECE programs
- Having programs sign a [participant agreement](#)

During this process, collect information about the program:

- Leadership Team members who will attend the Learning Collaborative
- Their contact information and preferred means of communication
- Any information needed about the participating ECE programs for your funder and evaluation

Be sure to have ECE programs complete an [enrollment form](#) and/or [participant agreement](#) to solidify their commitment.

You can create an electronic enrollment form using Google Forms, Qualtrics, or other online survey tools. These tools provide an organized way to collect this information from all ECE programs. Google Forms is a free platform that can be used and offers the ability to quickly compile all program information in a Google Sheet (also downloadable as an Excel file), which can serve as your registration database.

Reach out to programs who fail to complete the enrollment survey. This could signify many barriers, such as: 1) being unsure about participation; 2) lacking clear leadership or time for Leadership Team participation; 3) discomfort with technology; and/or; 4) confusion about the project expectations. Be sure to answer any questions and determine their true ability to participate.

### **Secure Training Venues (for In-Person Learning Collaboratives)**

The Learning Sessions can be effectively delivered in meeting spaces at a community college, library, recreation center, stakeholder agency office, child care resource and referral center office, religious congregations (especially those with ECE programs), or even at larger ECE program sites. If the Learning Collaborative is focused on FCCHs, then participants sometimes enjoy hosting at each other's program so participants could directly assist each other in improving the home for healthy eating and physical activity. This is most effective for evening or weekend sessions.

When you find a venue that meets your needs, be prepared to secure all possible dates for your Learning Sessions with the venue coordinator. If using a space with a cost, these advanced bookings may result in reduced fees. Also, keep in mind that you may want to schedule alternative Learning Session dates as well, in case of inclement weather or to hold a "make-up session" due to an unexpected scheduling conflict.

View this [checklist of venue considerations](#) for more information.

### **Train-the-Trainer Sessions**

Whether implementing the Learning Collaboratives as an individual consultant or organizing multiple Learning Collaboratives at a time, all consultants will need to be trained on:

- Go NAPSACC Consultant Certification
- Better Together Learning Collaborative materials

As soon as consultants have been selected, they should complete the Go NAPSACC Consultant Training (if they are not already certified.) Your [Go NAPSACC state lead](#) can provide the dates for this free monthly training.

If a single consultant is leading a local Learning Collaborative, then this person should prepare the materials for the Learning Sessions. Co-workers or other Go NAPSACC consultants may be available to talk through any questions or observe a training to provide feedback. The



[Go NAPSACC state lead](#) can answer questions and/or connect the consultant with Go NAPSACC staff for additional questions.

When implementing multiple Learning Collaboratives bring together the consultants to discuss the logistics and content of the Learning Collaboratives. Coordinate a Train-the-Trainer event so consultants can gather to begin planning. Successful Train-the-Trainer events often include opportunities for consultants to teach each other the Learning Session material and to talk through any activities/discussions. Try to have your consultants meet at a central location for an in-person event, especially if they are new to the project. Future meetings may be effective virtually.

Throughout the collaborative, schedule a regular time for consultants to check-in and brainstorm with each other. Be sure to budget for train-the-trainer activities and session planning time.

### The Role of Consultants

Technical assistance (TA) is key to helping ECE programs implement healthy change. Although participants may be inspired, informed, and equipped to make changes by their discoveries and connections in the Learning Collaborative, effective TA helps transform ideas into reality.

In a Learning Collaborative, there will be an opportunity for consultants to lead small breakout discussion groups at each session. These groups offer a safe space to share experiences, ask questions, connect with colleagues, and think together about next steps. In addition to facilitating the Learning Collaborative, consultants should conduct TA visits to their assigned ECE programs promptly after each Learning Session to ensure that the Leadership Team:

- Understands the Action Period tasks
- Has a plan to share the content with other staff
- Have the information, support, and resources they need

Consultants have a unique opportunity to get to know their Leadership Teams and staff over the course of the Learning Collaborative, especially during TA visits. TA can take place through observation and debriefing, brainstorming, discussions, modeling, direct instruction, coaching, and/or mentoring. Consultants provide encouragement, support, and a collaborative approach to action planning.

### Learning Collaborative Materials

All Learning Collaborative materials are found on the [Better Together Basecamp](#) page organized by Go NAPSACC module. Alternatively, you can download each module’s materials using links found in this chart below.

Infant and Child Physical Activity	Child Nutrition	Breastfeeding & Infant Feeding	Screen Time
<a href="#"><u>Physical Activity PowerPoint</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Child Nutrition PowerPoint</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Breastfeeding &amp; Infant Feeding PowerPoint</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Screen Time PowerPoint</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Resource Guide</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Resource Guide</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Resource Guide</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Resource Guide</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Physical Activity Best Practices Part 1 Recorded Training</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Child Nutrition Best Practices Part 1 Recorded Training</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Breastfeeding &amp; Infant Feeding Best Practices Recorded Training</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Screen Time Best Practices Recorded Training</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Physical Activity Best Practices Part 2 Recorded Training</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Child Nutrition Best Practices Part 2 Recorded Training</u></a>		

**Learning Collaborative PowerPoints:** Each Learning Collaborative module has its own PowerPoint. In addition to the slides, the PowerPoint has detailed notes. The notes include a suggested script for each slide and suggestions on how to facilitate each section, including suggestions for both in-person and virtual presentations. This script is a guide. It will be more meaningful if information about your state's resources, ECE community, and regulations are added. Additionally, each consultant should share their own personal and professional experiences. Brief sharing can assist ECE providers in seeing opportunities for change in their own program.

**Tips:**

- Consultants must review and prepare for facilitation before Learning Sessions. If paired with another consultant, determine who will lead each section of material. Share the responsibility of leading sessions, so participants get comfortable with both consultants and see them both as support. In virtual trainings, the other person should provide technical support (e.g., monitoring the chat, muting participants with background noise, adding links to resources in the chat).
- Once downloaded, the PowerPoint can be personalized. Consultants may add an agenda, their contact information, a "next steps" slide with Action Period tasks, and any information about local and/or state resources.
- The PowerPoint can be saved as a handout and provided to Leadership Team members as a guide to the Learning Sessions. This, along with the Resource Guide, will be their training manual.

**Resource Guide:** The Resource Guide was developed for ECE programs participating in the Better Together Learning Collaboratives and includes handouts needed for Learning Session activities or for follow-up in the ECE program. There are two Resource Guide options:

- An overall Resource Guide with materials for all four Learning Collaboratives divided by module.
- Separate, smaller Resource Guides with just the content of a single Learning Collaborative module.

**Tips:**

- If your budget allows, print the Resource Guide and give it to each Leadership Team member. You can also email it as an electronic document.
- Leadership Team members must be reminded to bring their Resource Guide to the Learning Sessions, as it includes activities. For virtual Learning Sessions, a link to the Resource Guide can be put in the chat for those who forget theirs.
- Each handout in the Resource Guide is saved as a PDF in Basecamp. This allows consultants or Leadership Team members to share these individual handouts with staff or families.

**Key Learnings Handouts:**

Each module includes a Key Learnings handout located in the Resource Guide. This handout helps Leadership Teams to share the Learning Session materials with the full staff of the ECE program and families. It may be helpful to email this handout to all staff, as it includes links to videos and other resources.

**Best Practice Recorded Trainings:** Each Learning Collaborative, depending on content area, has one or two best practice sessions. These sessions have been recorded using an online tool (Visme), and you can share the links provided in the chart above for participants to access the recordings. Alternatively, you can offer these sessions as live trainings using the PowerPoint slides. Sample scripts, optional icebreakers, and physical activity breaks have been included for your convenience. If you would like to utilize the recorded trainings but need more information, please email Nemours Children's at [BetterTogether@nemours.org](mailto:BetterTogether@nemours.org).

## Supplemental Resources

**Program Materials:** Even if providing hardcopy versions of the Learning Collaborative Resource Guide, it may be helpful to both the consultants and participants to save the materials as independent documents available to download online (e.g., Google Drive, Dropbox) and/or on USB drives. This will allow participants to share with other staff members or families.

**Technology Needs:** In-person Learning Sessions require laptops, speakers, LCD projectors, microphones, Wi-Fi access, and panel tables with microphones (if you choose to have guest speakers and/or a panel discussion).

**Virtual Learning Sessions** require a screen sharing platform (e.g., Zoom or Teams), a laptop, and internet access. Consultants usually find it easiest to conduct virtual sessions if they have multiple screens, as they will be presenting content, managing the chat, and looking at the participants. The [Facilitating Adult Learning resource](#) contains specific tips for virtual and in-person sessions.

## Learning Session Components

### Consultant-led Content

Each Learning Collaborative module PowerPoint was developed using Go NAPSACC's evidence-based information on best practices for healthy eating and physical activity in ECE settings. Each PowerPoint includes all Learning Session content, sample scripts, facilitation guidance and notes for consultants, and considerations for in-person or virtual delivery. Consultants deliver content specific information using a single PowerPoint. While this is consultant-led, allow time for interaction and questions.

### Small and Large Group Discussion and Activities

To reinforce the information presented, consultants conduct small and large group discussions throughout the Learning Sessions. Each PowerPoint contains slides prompting the consultant to either lead a small group discussion, large group discussion, or an activity.

- In-person: Allow enough time for ECE providers to move freely throughout the room during the activities and to engage with each other.
- Virtual: Utilize breakout rooms for smaller discussions.

### Physical Activity Breaks

Physical activities breaks provide a transition between session activities. They provide a new way to engage with the materials and each other. To make the connection to state regulations, consultants should tie their state's early learning standards to the physical activities included throughout the Learning Sessions. This gives ECE providers an opportunity to identify which of their state's early learning standards are being met through conducting the activity and offers an example for use within a classroom.

- For in-person, encourage participants to move to a new place in the room and make new connections during the physical activity breaks.
- Virtual, physical activity breaks are also important! They help humanize the people behind the screens and can liven up online learning.

### Reflection and Sharing

Build some time into your Learning Sessions to allow members to share their successes and challenges in implementing healthy habits in their ECE program. Recognizing ECE programs' progress throughout the Learning Collaborative gives new ideas and motivation to other Leadership Teams. Sharing challenges allows for opportunities to brainstorm and gain new ideas through networking with their peers. While consultants can facilitate this conversation and serve as important sources of information, it's important for programs to speak directly with each other.

### Celebrating Success

Learning Collaboratives include the sharing of successes and challenges with fellow collaborative colleagues. At the last session, each program is encouraged to share their successes – the steps they've taken on their health journey. Two ways this can be done are to; 1) complete an online Success Story or; 2) have programs create a Storyboard.

**Success Story:** Go NAPSACC has a [Success Story](#) survey each participant can complete at the last session after each program shares their success verbally. This will bring your Learning Collaborative successes to the national attention of Go NAPSACC. All success stories shared this way will be provided to your [Go NAPSACC state lead](#). You can ask your state lead to share them back with you. In addition to you receiving the testimonials of the participants, your state can share them with stakeholders, state leaders, and current and potential funders. All of the Better Together participant quotes in this Toolkit came from the Success Story links.

The survey asks respondents to provide their consent to share their story. Otherwise, it will be used anonymously. The following questions are then asked:

- Tell us your success story! Include how Go NAPSACC was used and its impact.
- Why does this story make you smile?
- If you would like, please share a photo of your success story. We would love to see your success! Photos add impact to the story when it is shared but are not required. We want to hear from you with or without photos!
- Contact information.

*Our tag is “be good people” and just thinking about these kids growing up and being mindful about staying active and listening to their hunger cues and living a healthier life is so amazing. Both [consultants] did a great job of sharing the information and offering direction with I got stuck. It was really cool to see how we grew when I was able to retake the assessments. It makes you want to keep growing and learning!*

**Amanda Shroyer, Director  
Muddy Feet Early Learning,  
Indiana**

*A lot more physical activity in our program ! Kids are happier and eat more at meals. As they were more active and eating better they feel better and the parents could tell a difference ! Happy kids make for less discipline issues and more learning within our center...[Go NAPSACC allowed] us to evaluate our center and policies and seeing where we could improve.”*

**Virginia Jackson, Assistant  
Director, Little People’s Christian  
Academy, Mississippi**

You can also create your own local survey link using Google Forms or Survey Monkey. If using the Go NAPSACC Success Story, consultants can share the [link](#) or a QR code is provided in the PowerPoint slides.

**Storyboards** are a more formal way for ECE programs to document the changes made in their program. Sharing these changes can educate and motivate other ECE programs, as well as their own program staff and the families of children in their care. Each program shares the highlights of their experience and the changes they have made.

Encourage ECE programs to include:

- The change(s) they made and who and how they were made
- Their successes and challenges
- Photos of the process including before, during, and after the change(s)
- Documents including lesson plans, activities, menus, or children’s artwork that demonstrate changes
- Quotes and stories from teachers, families, children, and support staff
- How participants reacted to the change(s)
- Changes to program policies
- Next steps to sustain changes and continue supporting the development of healthy habits



*Example of Tri-fold Storyboards*



*Example of PowerPoint Storyboard*

**Example of Video Success Story/Storyboard**

**Rosalind Hammond**

WBF Rainbow Learning Center Jackson, MS  
*(Click picture to view video)*



Storyboards can come in many forms. Some successful options and implementation tips include:

Storyboard Options and Considerations	
<p><b>PowerPoint presentations</b> (see picture on previous page)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Teams can create several slides that show their program changes. Leadership Teams should email the PowerPoint to the consultant in advance, so the consultant can share all programs' PowerPoints, which reduces transition time.</li> <li>• Some consultants find it easier if they make the PowerPoint slide show for all collaborative programs. During TA sessions, the Leadership Team and the consultant discuss program changes to include. Leadership Teams then submit photos to show this change in action. The consultant creates one PowerPoint with slides from each program for sharing with the full collaborative.</li> <li>• With either approach during the Learning Session, the consultant can share and advance the slides while the Leadership Team members describe the content and share the impact on their program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Trifold board</b> (see picture on previous page)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical posters, such as a trifold board, can also be used for in-person sessions. Leadership Team members can rotate around the room to view all of the Storyboards. Leadership Team members can also verbally share their experiences and changes.</li> <li>• If used in virtual Learning Collaboratives, encourage Leadership Team members to take a photo of their Trifold board to share.</li> <li>• Trifold boards can also be displayed at the ECE programs so families and others learn about the program's work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Video</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some programs may like to create a brief video to share their ECE program's story of change. These should be emailed to the consultant in advance to guarantee that it can be shown from the consultant's computer during the Learning Session.</li> <li>• The video can be shared with the program's families to demonstrate their work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Newsletter</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the ECE program has a (paper or online) family newsletter, then an issue can be dedicated to sharing their Learning Collaborative story. This newsletter would be shared with other Learning Collaborative members.</li> <li>• This is a way to share changes that are made in the ECE program with staff and families.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Go NAPSACC Success Story Link</b> (or individualized local link)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This can be a simple way to collect each ECE program's greatest change. If using the <a href="#">Go NAPSACC link</a>, then the <b>Go NAPSACC</b> state lead will receive these success stories monthly and can share them back with the consultants.</li> </ul>

**Consent:** Programs must collect consent before sharing photos of children. They may have a master consent at their ECE program for all photos or may need to collect them specifically for this purpose. Additionally, you may want to collect consent to share their Storyboards in other ways. This is a great way to publicize future collaboratives, promote your organization and work, and share your successes with current or future stakeholders and funders.

## Delivering Technical Assistance (TA)

During Action Periods, ECE programs proceed through the Go NAPSACC 5-step Improvement Process. During this time, Leadership Teams take self-assessments, write action plans, collect information from and educate their staff and families, and implement! This is where they put what they learn during the Learning Sessions into action!

Consultants serve many roles during this time:

- **Coordinator** – remind Leadership Teams them of tasks and assist with Go NAPSACC
- **Teacher** – answer questions and provide additional information and resources
- **Coach** – brainstorm and support strategies while cheerleading progress

### Action Periods and TA Strategy

Action Periods and the TA provided during this time are essential components of the Learning Collaboratives. Consultants provide TA to each program during the “Action Period”, the time when ECE programs set Go NAPSACC goals and work on implementation.

Approximately one hour of TA should be planned per program during each Action Period. Each program will need a different level of TA depending on their comfort with technology and Go NAPSACC, and their readiness for change. Scheduling a regular meeting time (with flexibility as needed) with each Leadership Team cements the importance of these TA sessions with the consultant.

TA helps participating programs implement and sustain change. TA begins with relationship building between consultants and their assigned programs. The TA received during Action Periods is the bridge for ECE programs between the content learned at the Learning Sessions and actual change in their programs. TA is personalized for each program. It is a time to check-in on Learning Collaborative tasks, answer questions, brainstorm possibilities, and provide encouragement.

TA can be provided in various formats:

- On-site consultant visits allow for relationship building and are a chance to see the ECE program in action.
- Phone calls, emails, and texts can be used to check-in and provide reminders. Ask the providers their preferred method of communication and use it.
- Screen sharing meetings (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Hang-out) can be effective options. These allow you to see the Leadership Team members and have a more focused conversation. If they have questions about Go NAPSACC, they can share their screens, and you can walk them through the steps.
- Consultants can conduct trainings at individual ECE programs to help the Leadership Team share the content they are learning in the collaborative. The pre-recorded Best Practice Sessions and the online Go NAPSACC trainings are also great reinforcers of the material.
- Observing the program at various times throughout the day (e.g., mealtime, outdoor play, etc.) can help consultants see first-hand additional support that might be needed.
- Resources, such as those in the Key Learnings Handout and Go NAPSACC Tips & Materials, are provided to share with the Leadership Team, other staff, and families.

## Consultant Experience with Better Together

### Lenora Phillips

Better Together Consultant Mississippi  
State Department of Health  
(Click picture to view video)



### Additional Tips for TA:

- TA on ‘how’ to meet and sustain best practices (operationally) is more important than education on best practices.
- TA is more effective when consultants build relationships with providers to influence change. Content knowledge is not always as important.
- Center leadership needs to be involved or well informed of TA activities.
- Own health is often a great motivation for changes. ECE staff wellness is an important consideration and topic to address.
- When delivering TA, link best practices to early learning guidelines, licensing standards, and Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) standards whenever possible. This increases motivation to work on achieving best practices while emphasizing how these changes help programs meet other existing requirements. People coming to ‘help’ often overwhelm ECE providers. It can be helpful to connect with other helpers (licensing, CACFP monitors, QRIS coaches); however, these people may not be knowledgeable of these best practices. While collaborating, it is also important for the ECE programs to know that your consultants aren’t reporting to licensing.

View the Tips [for Successful TA Visits resource](#) to learn more about how to conduct effective TA including virtual TA.

### Go NAPSACC TA Activity Log

The Project Coordinator and/or consultant may find it useful to collect information on TA provision. Consultants can document the TA they provide by using the TA Activity Log in their Go NAPSACC Consultant Account. This will collect information about the TA provided to each ECE program and the content of these interactions. Participation in Learning Sessions will be collected through separate attendance collection. The Project Coordinator may have additional information they want to track from consultants either to determine where they need to provide more support to consultants and providers or for evaluation needs. When determining additional information to collect from consultants, balance collecting helpful information with creating an overwhelming paperwork burden for consultants.

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Add TA Activity" with a green header. Below the header, it says "Record TA Activity for this program." The form contains the following elements:

- Date:** A text input field with a placeholder "mm/dd/yyyy".
- Activity Type:** A dropdown menu with "Select Type" and a blue arrow icon.
- Time Spent:** Two dropdown menus labeled "Hours" and "Minutes".
- Activity Categories:** A section titled "Please select all areas that apply for this activity:" with two columns of checkboxes:
  - Self-Assessment
  - Action Planning
  - Check-In
  - Child Nutrition
  - Physical Activity
  - Screen Time
  - Training
  - Orientation
  - Goal Setting
  - Resource Identification
  - Breastfeeding and/or Infant Feeding
  - Oral Health
  - Outdoor Play & Learning
  - Farm to ECE
  - Other
- Notes:** A large text area for entering details.
- Save:** An orange button at the bottom.



## Implementation Checklist

Review the checklist below to think through all implementation considerations.

Learning Collaboratives Planning Checklist	
	Determine the Learning Session dates and secure training venues.
	Recruit and enroll ECE programs.
	Confirm participation with ECE programs. Share the details of the Learning Session. (time; place and parking for in-person; time and link for virtual).
	Source and distribute Learning Session materials and supplemental supplies.
	Facilitate Train-the-Trainer sessions.
	Prepare for facilitation.
	Deliver TA during Action Periods.
	Monitor and evaluate program change.
	Provide incentives.
	Complete final evaluation.
	Report findings to stakeholders and funders.

## Closing

The Better Together Learning Collaboratives were adapted several times during the project period in response to COVID-19 and participant experiences. As you plan and launch your own Learning Collaboratives, be sure to continuously listen and respond to the needs of your participants. We welcome hearing your innovations and adaptations as we are always interested in improving this model.

### Share Your Success

You, too, can share your [Success Story](#) and increase your impact by sharing with other interested state organizations.

### For More Information and Resources

[Go NAPSACC](#) has additional resources in the support document sections of Consultant Resources, and the Provider and Consultant How-to Guides can be found on the help page of the Consultant and State Partner Accounts.

[Nemours Children's](#) has numerous resources for consultants and ECE programs on nutrition and physical activities topics at [www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org](http://www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org).

**Questions?** Email [GoNAPSACC@unc.edu](mailto:GoNAPSACC@unc.edu) or [BetterTogether@nemours.org](mailto:BetterTogether@nemours.org).



