

## BUILD Initiative & the Institute of Museum and Library Services Partnership Project



Leaders from museums and libraries share the desire of early childhood state systems leaders to create high quality early learning opportunities for children. Many state-level efforts aimed at supporting young children's healthy growth and development focus narrowly on the formal institutions of learning and health promotion, such as pre-kindergarten, K-12 education, and the public health system. But children live in and are most significantly shaped by family and community. Libraries and museums serve families and are significant assets of the community. The BUILD Initiative and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) are partnering in a year-long effort to better integrate these asset institutions into the statewide early childhood systems being developed and enhanced throughout the country.

### The partnership will result in:

- Multiple opportunities for shared learning;
- A self-assessment tool regarding early childhood practices in libraries and museums and their alignment with state levers for systemic change (e.g. early learning standards, program quality standards/QRIS, pre-k to 3rd grade alignment, family engagement practices, and professional development content/efforts);
- An early childhood systems self-assessment tool exploring utilization and partnership with libraries

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and museums as access points to extended learning opportunities and as early childhood systems partners through inclusion in local and state planning, advisory bodies, and governance; and

- Documentation of best practices to assist in embedding the early learning assets of libraries and museums into early childhood systems efforts.
- To achieve these objectives, the project will work with five pilot states: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Washington. In each state, a team will be formed that includes early learning leaders with a deep understanding of state program standards (QRIS), early learning standards (birth to 5), and the ways that early childhood plans, policies and programs operate, as well as representatives from state library agencies, public libraries and museums. In addition, teams may include a local community leader and leaders representing focused efforts on important early childhood issues such as literacy or obesity.

While some states have intentionally focused on building supportive communities and included museums and libraries at the heart of their early childhood systems work, most have not. While many museums and libraries have engaged in exemplary early learning activities, most have taken a programmatic approach and have not aligned with state systems-building efforts. Yet leaders from museums and libraries share the desire of early

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*Photo by Diana Guay, courtesy of the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, CT.*

childhood state systems leaders to create high quality early learning opportunities for children in the context of family and community.

BUILD and IMLS will collaborate over the coming year to create deliberate and mutually beneficial connections between the efforts of museums and libraries and those of early childhood systems builders to support the growth and development of children from birth to age eight with an emphasis on children from birth to age five.

Over the next several months BUILD will reach out to museums, libraries and state leaders to understand the context of their individual and collective work and to begin convening teams in each state to map out opportunities and strategies for state and or local efforts.

**The project seeks to:**

- Cross train the state early childhood systems leaders and state, local or regional library and museum leadership to achieve deeper understanding and alignment of these sectors;
- Define the mutual benefit and shared interests of the two fields related to young children’s healthy growth, development and learning from birth to age eight;

- Identify and disseminate effective practices in museums and libraries that support family engagement and growth and development in children across multiple domains of development;
- Align museum and library efforts with the key levers accelerating early childhood state systems change such as early learning and development standards, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), screening and assessment, enhanced local to state relationships, and early childhood-K-3 linkages;
- Produce turnkey tools to share promising practices;
- Co-create outcomes/measures that can demonstrate the effectiveness of the alignment of museum and library and state early childhood systems efforts; and
- Model effective partnerships between early learning leaders and their counterparts in museums and libraries.

Taking advantage of these opportunities to work together will help museums, libraries and state leaders create a shared understanding of their systems, policies and practices; better align their work with early learning standards; and strengthen their communities and enhance learning opportunities for children and families.

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