

SPRING 2026 BUILD PARTNER STATE MEETING

Houston, TX



Over 40 state leaders representing six states joined BUILD for our bi-annual Spring Partner State Meeting in Houston in spring 2026.

The goals of BUILD's Partner State Meetings are to:

- Advance and accelerate shared action within the state team as a foundation for ongoing cross-sector work within the state.
- Define essential policy, practice, and regulatory shifts responsive to communities marginalized by our systems to make modifications necessary for specific children, their families, and the workforce.
- Engage in a deep conversation to learn and reflect together, identifying possibilities for serving children and families marginalized by our systems, structures, and policies.

Dinner Conversation on Homelessness

The meeting kicked off with a dinner hosted by our PN-3 Hub partners. Participants heard from national expert Erin Patterson, from SchoolHouse Connection; Pennsylvania's Tracy Duarte, Director of the Pennsylvania Head Start Collaboration Office; and local Houston experts. BUILD's PN3-Hub Director Michelle Adkins facilitated the meeting. The conversation focused on how early childhood leaders can address homelessness for families with young children. State leaders heard about current national and local data and policy examples, Pennsylvania's efforts to increase enrollment in quality early childhood programs, barriers to accessing services for families experiencing homelessness, and state and local strategies to improve access to needed services.



During the Meeting

With the theme of *Coming Together for Collective Impact*, state leaders capitalized on their expertise and shared knowledge to **Strengthen** early childhood systems to work together during times of change and uncertainty; **Develop** an approach to data and family/community engagement to improve family well-being; and **Engage** and learn from innovation and insights across the partner states. They worked in their state teams to explore a collective impact approach to addressing the challenges facing early childhood systems and to examine the status of their respective early childhood systems. State teams also had the opportunity across the two days to meet as a team focusing on priorities, discussion topics, and agendas of their own design.

Participants shared and learned from one another in cross-state discussions focusing on selected topical areas of interest: governance and accountability, workforce development, quality improvement, data and information gathering, and family and community voice.



Participants said...

“ This makes me want to work harder to ensure that young children receive a rich, high-quality education under my leadership.

Today it seems like we've gotten further along with our conversations around where we're heading.

The meeting was very well organized, and the activities were purposeful and relevant. There was an excellent balance between individual state team time and opportunities for cross-state collaboration. The topics discussed were timely and meaningful to the field, which kept the work engaging and impactful.

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Site Visits

We also explored our host city using local, family, cultural, and historical lenses. Site visits are designed to expand our individual and collective knowledge of people, places, and programs that can be partners in advancing our shared commitments to children, families, and communities. The visits support our understanding of the local context, of people who may not be in our social networks, and create curiosity about similar people, organizations, and places in your state. With intentionality, each visit focuses on places that represent populations often marginalized by state systems, programs, and policies or are excluded from our networks. Participants visited the Children's Museum Houston and the Heritage Society, and participated in the Bayou Roots Walking Tour.

