



**OK Futures Strategy Session Summary  
Family and Community Engagement Team Meeting  
July 11, 2019**

As part of our work with the OK Futures, Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC (“ACS”) planned and facilitated a two-day in-person strategy session with invited members of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) and key partners. This two-day session followed several months of planning and assessment calls with OPSR and the OK Futures Family and Community Engagement Team. The calls were designed to ascertain the history and background of early care and education (“ECE”) issues in Oklahoma, the current political landscape, begin identifying strengths and lessons learned regarding the current communication around early childhood, and create and review a survey plan for use in conjunction with the needs assessment and strategic plan being developed by The Urban Institute. Additionally, ACS completed a communication landscape survey of message themes and messengers being used by a wide variety of organizations and initiatives in Oklahoma today to inform the communication strategy and provide recommendations for key messages to use moving forward.

During the two-day meeting, ACS sought to:

1. Consider the communication landscape and effective existing messages to be able to make messaging recommendations.
2. Use ACS’ strategic communication framework and network mapping tool to inform the messaging goals, audiences, strategies, messengers, and tactics for reaching families.
3. Determine the structure for an Oklahoma Early Childhood Champions strategy
4. Use ACS’ strategic communication framework and network mapping tool to inform the development of the Oklahoma Early Childhood Champions.

During the session, participants engaged in several exercises using ACS’ communication frameworks to ensure communication and champions efforts are purposeful, informed, deliverable, and measurable. This document provides a high-level summary of the goals and strategies developed during the strategy session. The work accomplished during the two days represents the strong foundation on which to build an implementation plan to achieve intended goals with the flexibility to adjust as necessary.

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Participants discussed and assessed the proposed goals based on previous calls and materials to ensure they fully described OK Futures intended work. ACS recommends using the SMART goal framework. SMART goals are those that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-Related. Writing goals in a SMART format ensures that the OK Futures Partnership is explicit about what it's trying to accomplish, when, and how. Goals that include target audiences are more specific, attainable, and realistic. Additional work may need to be done to further refine these goals into this format.

As a reminder, if goals are your destination, strategies are the roadmap you will use to get there. Actions or tactics (not included here) are the turn-by-turn directions. Each goal will have its own set of strategies, although there are some that may overlap and help accomplish multiple goals.

The modified goals for OK Futures communication, and attendant strategies are:

- 1. Create alignment and consistency around early childhood messaging used by state agencies, ECE advocates, tribal governments, health care providers, and regional ECE providers.**
  - a. Rationale: To achieve consistent messages across the state there will need to be alignment among multiple organizations and agencies currently sharing messages. In turn, by educating and informing those who guide the work of agencies, tribal governments, health and ECE providers, the public should begin to see alignment among these different groups around ECE messages.
  - b. Strategies:
    - i. Strategy 1: Encourage and promote the use of core messages, as well as messaging guidelines and best practices to organizations that reach families and decision makers.
    - ii. Strategy 2: Empower agency staff with tools and support to shift agency cultures towards greater collaboration on early childhood messages.
- 2. Help legislators and Cabinet Secretaries connect to the value of early childhood broadly (i.e., whole child).**
  - a. Rationale: Term limits and a new gubernatorial administration provide both the opportunity and need to educate and inform those with decision making authority regarding ECE programs in Oklahoma. Governor Stitt's decision to give greater authority to Cabinet Secretaries regarding agency budgets, programs, and procedures means that Cabinet Secretaries now hold more authority than in previous administrations. The Oklahoma Legislature also holds decision-making authority over allocation of resources for ECE efforts. Both Cabinet Secretaries and the Legislature need to connect to the value of early childhood broadly to support ongoing efforts.
  - b. Strategies
    - i. Strategy 1: Cultivate ECE champions at different levels-Believer, Influencers, and Doer.
    - ii. Strategy 2: Educate and inform champions.

- iii. Strategy 3: Continue to guide and drive the work of ECE champions.
- 3. **Raise awareness among rural families that are low-income and/or are already receiving some social service/benefit about the value of early childhood development, local opportunities, and services available.**
  - a. Rationale: The concerns and needs of rural families are not identical to those in urban settings. Access to services and sources information is different in rural and urban areas, and therefore communication vehicles and methods must be different. For example, families in urban areas may need information about how to choose the right ECE provider for them. In rural areas, families may not have a choice at all, and may need information emphasizing what they are able to do on their own. By focusing on rural families who are connected to some type of service, benefit, or public system (health care, justice system, agricultural (food) programs), OK Futures can be intentional in their communication strategies, vehicles, and methods to reach families who may not otherwise receive the information.
  - b. Strategies
    - i. Strategy 1: Engage messengers to families in crafting targeted, segmented messages, then deploying those messages.
    - ii. Strategy 2: Partner with health care providers, to share messages about early childhood with families.
    - iii. Strategy 3: Engage media to reach families.
- 4. **Use intentional communication to support the implementation of OK Futures' Strategic Plan. (To be further developed.)**

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Next steps include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Deploying an online survey to 200 rural, low-income families.
2. Further refining messengers, actions, and implementation of that action to achieve the strategic communication goals.
3. Making recommendations regarding core early childhood messages to be deployed to key messengers.