

# BUILDING A COMMUNITY-CENTERED SYSTEM IN HARRIS COUNTY



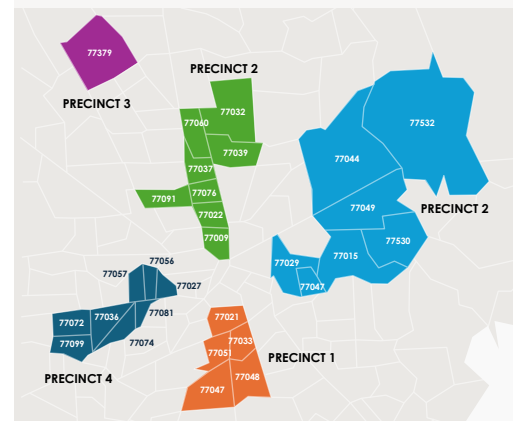
## Early Learning Quality Network Year One Highlights

Harris County's Early Learning Quality Network (ELQN) is a community-centered initiative designed to strengthen early learning and child care across the county. This three-year effort, supported through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars by the Harris County Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity, is guided by community input and local data to ensure that quality care improvements are responsive to the needs of families and providers. Local Network Organizations (LNOs), chosen for their strong ties to these areas, lead efforts to engage child care providers, families, and community members in identifying challenges, priorities, and improvement strategies related to early learning and care. CHILDREN AT RISK, serving as the Network Support Hub (NSH), provides LNOs with technical assistance and oversees funding for community-identified quality-enhancing initiatives.

### Map of Early Learning Quality Network (ELQN) Communities

#### Local Network Organizations (LNOs)

EHCEC HCPL-Precinct 1 HCPL-Precinct 3 VNTW YMCA



## LNO



Training and Professional Development • Facility, Safety and Security • Emergency and Temporary Care • Technology for Child Care Providers • Technology for Households



Training and Professional Development • Facility, Safety and Security • Emergency and Temporary Care



Training and Professional Development • Facility, Safety and Security • Technology for Child Care Providers • Technology for Households



Training and Professional Development • Facility, Safety and Security • Emergency and Temporary Care • Curriculum • Learning Materials



Training and Professional Development • Facility, Safety and Security • Emergency and Temporary Care

## COLLABORATION

The ELQN initiative was fueled by strong, trusting partnerships across Harris County, the Network Support Hub (NSH), and Local Network Organizations (LNOs). Participants shared a deep commitment to ELQN's community-driven goals and embraced flexibility through the pilot phase. LNOs created safe spaces for diverse voices, while NSH support through communities of practice and individual meetings strengthened collaboration. Despite early challenges, stakeholders stayed connected, open, and resilient.

### Recommendations to Enhance Collaboration:

- Clearly define roles and communication channels to foster effective teamwork.
- Build in ongoing opportunities for cross-role collaboration and shared learning.

### Potential Action Items:

- Allocate time for LNOs to collaborate and share best practices.
- Continue gathering and incorporating community voices to build trust.

## COMMUNICATION

Clear, consistent communication was critical to building partnerships, but participants noted challenges early on. Initial guidance around outreach and eligibility was often vague, leading to confusion. Over time, regular meetings, one-on-one check-ins, and a commitment to transparency improved communication. Participants valued the NSH's responsiveness and emphasized the need for timely, proactive communication as the work evolves.

### Recommendations to Enhance Communication:

- Provide clear, timely guidance, especially when priorities shift.
- Maintain open communication loops and create spaces for feedback.

### Potential Action Items:

- Develop a central resource hub for shared materials and updates.
- Schedule regular check-ins to anticipate and address needs.

**“ A crash course on child care in Texas would’ve helped to frame what we’re doing. ”**

**– ELQN PARTNER**

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

LNOs valued the tailored technical assistance (TA) provided by the NSH, including individualized support and quarterly Communities of Practice. These efforts helped LNOs address specific needs and build skills. However, early TA gaps around outreach strategies and survey development indicated the need for more structured support. Ongoing TA and professional development were seen as key to sustaining momentum.

### Recommendations to Enhance Technical Assistance:

- Offer early, structured TA that builds foundational skills.
- Continue providing individualized, flexible TA to meet emerging needs.

### Potential Action Items:

- Provide training on community engagement, data collection, and project planning.
- Maintain regular TA through Communities of Practice and one-on-one support.

## WHAT’S NEXT FOR ELQN

**Full-scale implementation of initiatives**

**Continued community engagement and input**

**Ongoing data collection for impact measurement**

