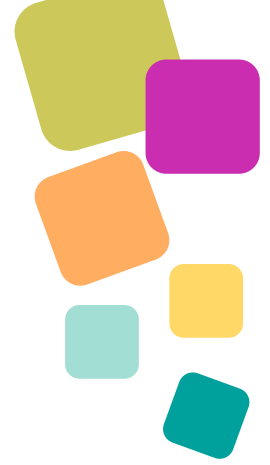


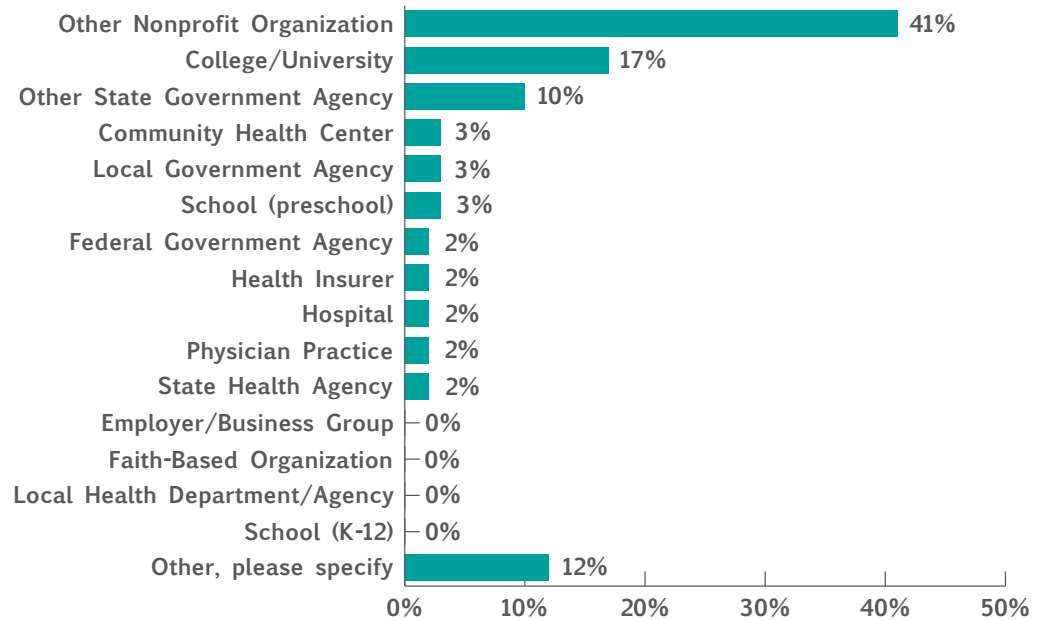
# Mississippi's 2021 Early Childhood Network Mapping PARTNER Survey



## Background

In August 2021, a PARTNER survey distributed by the Help Me Grow National Center, in partnership with Visible Network Labs and on behalf of the Child Health & Development Project: Mississippi Thrive! and Mississippi Families for Kids, was sent to 105 early childhood system leaders. Of the participants invited to complete the survey, 68% responded, most of whom were leaders of nonprofit organizations, followed by higher education institutions, as shown in the chart below.

### ECNM PARTNER Survey Participants

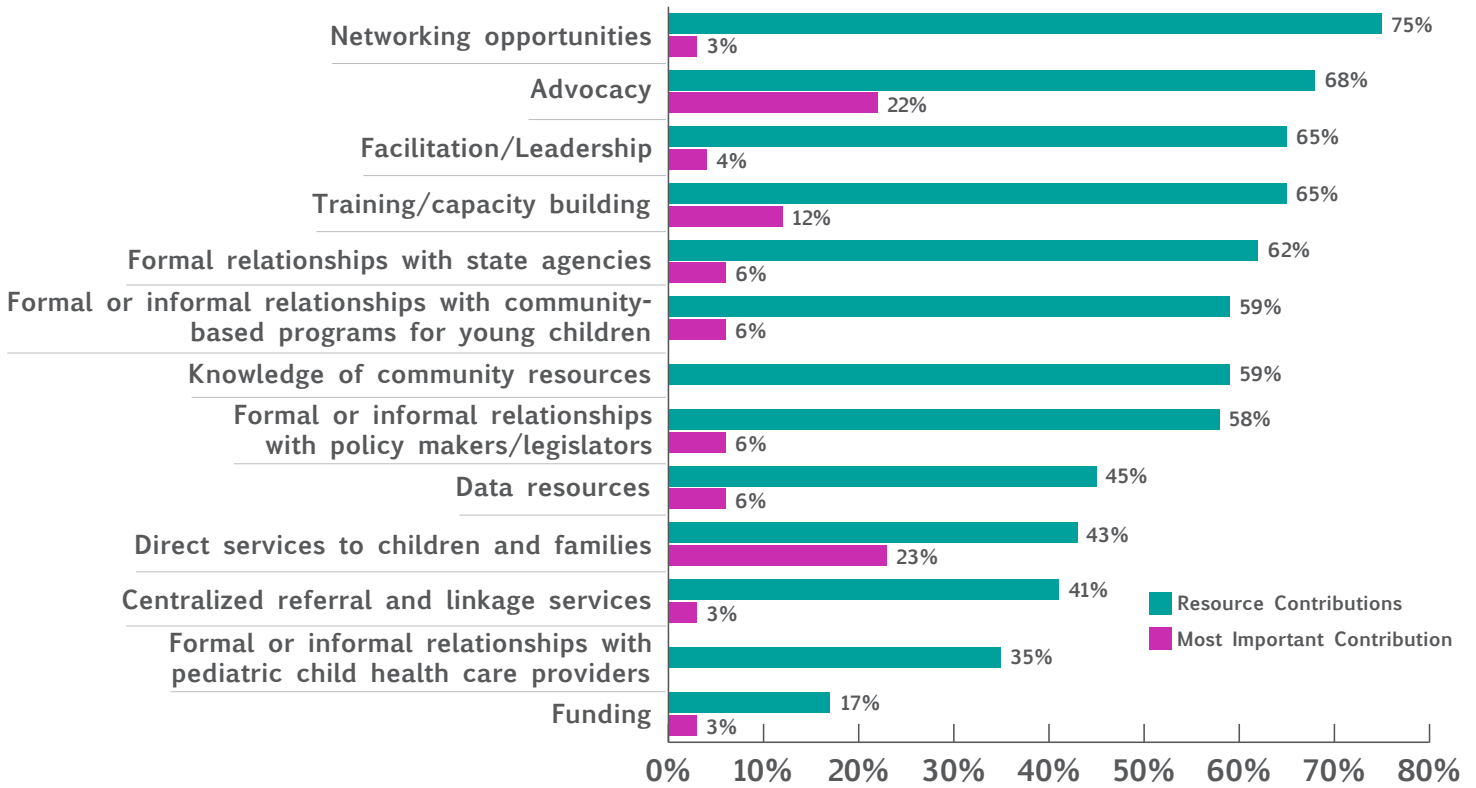


PARTNER survey data was utilized by Visible Network Labs to conduct a social network analysis of network partnerships and how partners are working together. This report summarizes key highlights of the Mississippi's 2021 Early Childhood Network Mapping PARTNER survey.



# Results

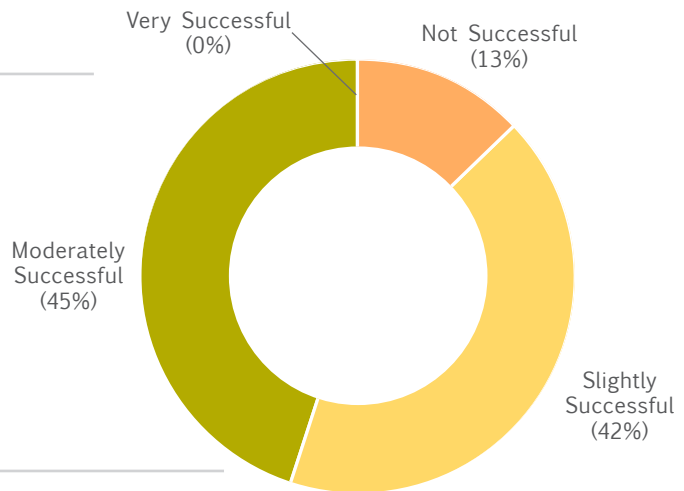
While stakeholders primarily identify their most important resource contributions as direct services and advocacy, the majority of stakeholders also offer networking opportunities, leadership, trainings, relationships, and other resources.



Stakeholders believe that Mississippi’s early childhood system has been moderately successful in meeting the needs of families.

As shown in the chart on below, 45% of the respondents felt that Mississippi’s early childhood system has been moderately successful in meeting the needs of families, 42% felt it has been slightly successful, and 13% felt that it has not been successful at all in meeting families’ needs.

## Stakeholder Perceptions: How Well Is Mississippi’s Early Childhood System Meeting Families’ Needs?



**Stakeholders feel that the most critical goal of Mississippi's early childhood system is coordinated collaboration among partners of various sectors to improve children's health and development and to support children's and families' needs.**

As shown in the chart on the next page, the goal that survey participants indicated as the most critical was to **advance collaboration among partners and promote collective impact**, with 71% of participants who answered this question selecting this answer. In addition to this goal being the most critical, it is also the goal that participants said that Mississippi's early childhood (EC) community is **most likely to achieve**, at 63%. Three percent of participants, however, felt this was the goal that MS's EC community is the least likely to achieve. Similarly, another of the top answers indicated as a critical goal was to **improve systematic coordination and alignment across sectors**, with 51% of participants selecting this answer and 40% selecting this as the goal that MS's EC community is the most likely to achieve.

The goal that was ranked the second most critical was to **improve school readiness**, with 70% of participants selecting this answer. Forty-five percent of participants also said that this is the goal most likely to be achieved, with no participants indicating that this goal is the least likely to be achieved.

The goal that was ranked the third most critical to Mississippi's early childhood system, with 62% of participants selecting this answer, was to **improve referral and linkage systems to support child and family needs**. Fifty-one percent of participants said that this the goal most likely to be achieved.

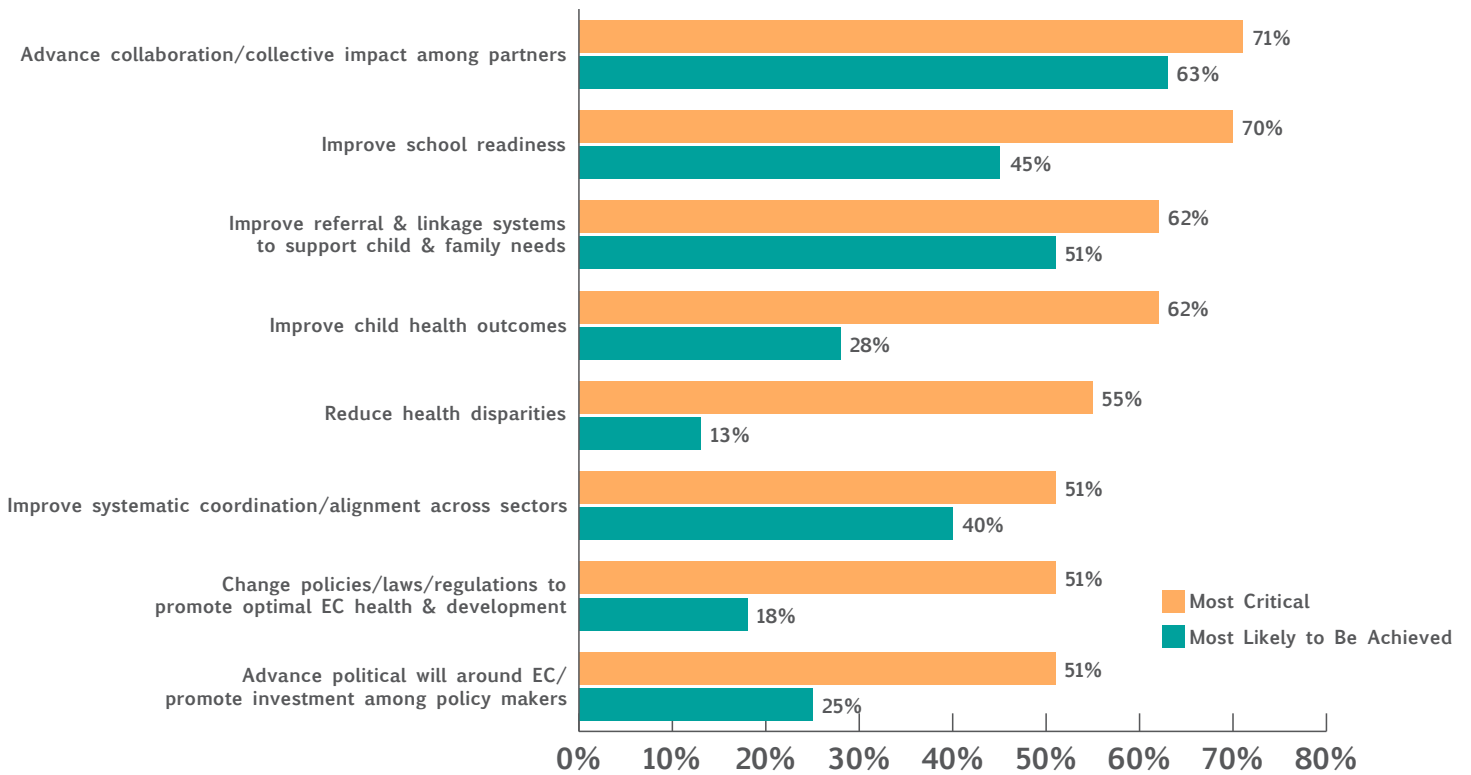
Another goal was also ranked the third most critical to Mississippi's early childhood system, to **improve child health outcomes**, with 62% of participants selecting this answer. Twenty-eight percent of participants also chose this goal as the one most likely to be achieved.

In addition to identifying improving child health as critical, participants also felt that a goal of **reducing health disparities is critical**, with 55% of participants selecting this answer. Participants felt that this goal would be difficult to achieve, however, with 13% stating that this goal is the most likely to be achieved.

Participants also felt that engaging policymakers is critical to Mississippi's early childhood system. Fifty-one percent of participants identified each of the following goals as the most critical: to **advance political will around early childhood and promote investment among policymakers** and to **change policies, laws, and regulations to promote optimal health and development among young children**. Participants felt that these goals would be difficult to achieve, with 25% of participants indicating that advancing political will and promoting investment among policy makers as the goal most likely to be achieved. A similar trend was found for the goal of changing policies to promote optimal health and development among young children, with 18% stating that this is the goal most likely to be achieved.



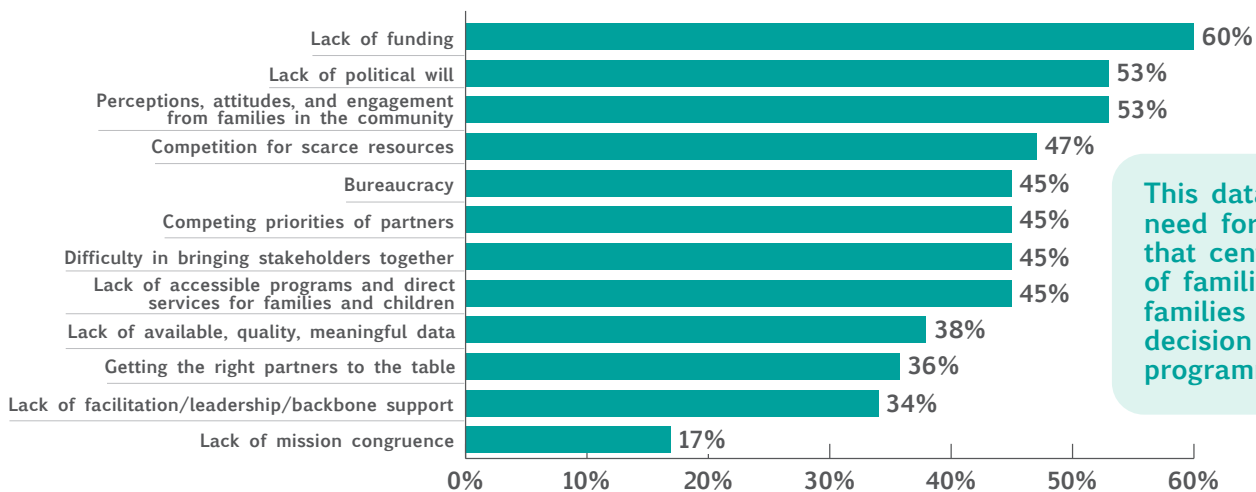
## Goals for MS's EC System



According to the stakeholders surveyed, barriers to achieving the goals of Mississippi's early childhood system include the need for increased funding, policymaker engagement, and family-centered systems.

The **biggest barrier to achieving goals** identified by participants was a **lack of funding**, with 60% of participants selecting this answer.

## Barriers to Achieving Goals in Mississippi's Early Childhood System



This data points to a need for systems change that centers the needs of families and engages families as partners in decision making and programming.



**Stakeholders feel that families need easy, equitable access to affordable, high-quality early health and education services.**

When asked what families need most, the greatest commonality among participant answers was **access to an affordable, high-quality early education system** with professionals who are well-trained in early childhood development and access to pre-K for all.

In addition to access to quality early education and child care, many participants felt that what families need most is **early access to health care**, including preventative care, diagnostic services, early intervention, and mental health supports. Several participants stated that families need regular, early **developmental screenings, partnered with appropriate referral and linkage services** for diagnostic and therapeutic supports that are adequately covered by health insurance, including Medicaid. Participants also stated that families need access to health care providers who are well-trained in early brain development science in all areas of the state.

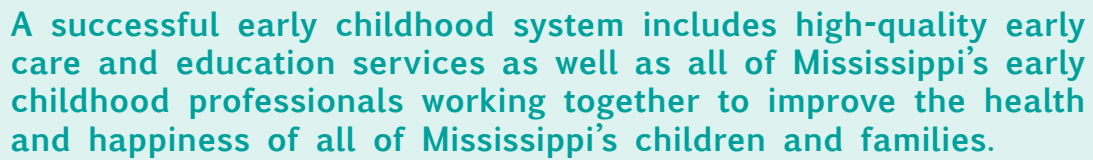
A significant number of participants felt that families need an early childhood system that is **coordinated and easy to navigate**, one in which families can easily obtain information on how to access to beneficial and relevant resources in a timely fashion, with quick responses from providers.

Many participants pointed out that **equitable access to resources** is an important need for families. According to stakeholders, families need access to quality, global services, no matter their income levels, where they live in the state, what disabilities their children have, or other identifying factors. Many participants also stated that resources providing **socioeconomic support** should be easily accessible for families who could benefit from these services.

A considerable number of respondents stated that families mostly need **educational and support opportunities for parents**, such as information about resources, parent-child interaction skills, prenatal health education, and opportunities for networking with other families. Participants noted the importance of agencies and organizations valuing parents as partners; empowering parents to make decisions for their children; and listening to parents before giving advice, without judgment, setting the tone for two-way communication.

Further research is needed in order to collect family input.





**A successful early childhood system includes high-quality early care and education services as well as all of Mississippi's early childhood professionals working together to improve the health and happiness of all of Mississippi's children and families.**

When asked how they defined success for Mississippi's early childhood system, the most common answer among participants involved **comprehensive, affordable, quality early childhood education**, with teachers well-versed in developmentally appropriate practices, leading to school readiness.

The second most common answer among participants regarding what a successful early childhood system looks like was an **efficient, comprehensive, accessible, and navigable system** operating in a **well-coordinated, collaborative, cohesive, non-competitive, family-centered network of well-trained health and education partners who share a common mission** and common practice of providing a broad, diverse array of services and resources to all families and children in the state, regardless of families' geographic location, race, ethnicity, income, health, or disability.

With access to a successful early childhood system, participants felt that **Mississippi's children and families would thrive, demonstrating increased health and happiness.**



**Mississippi's early childhood stakeholders trust and value one another.**

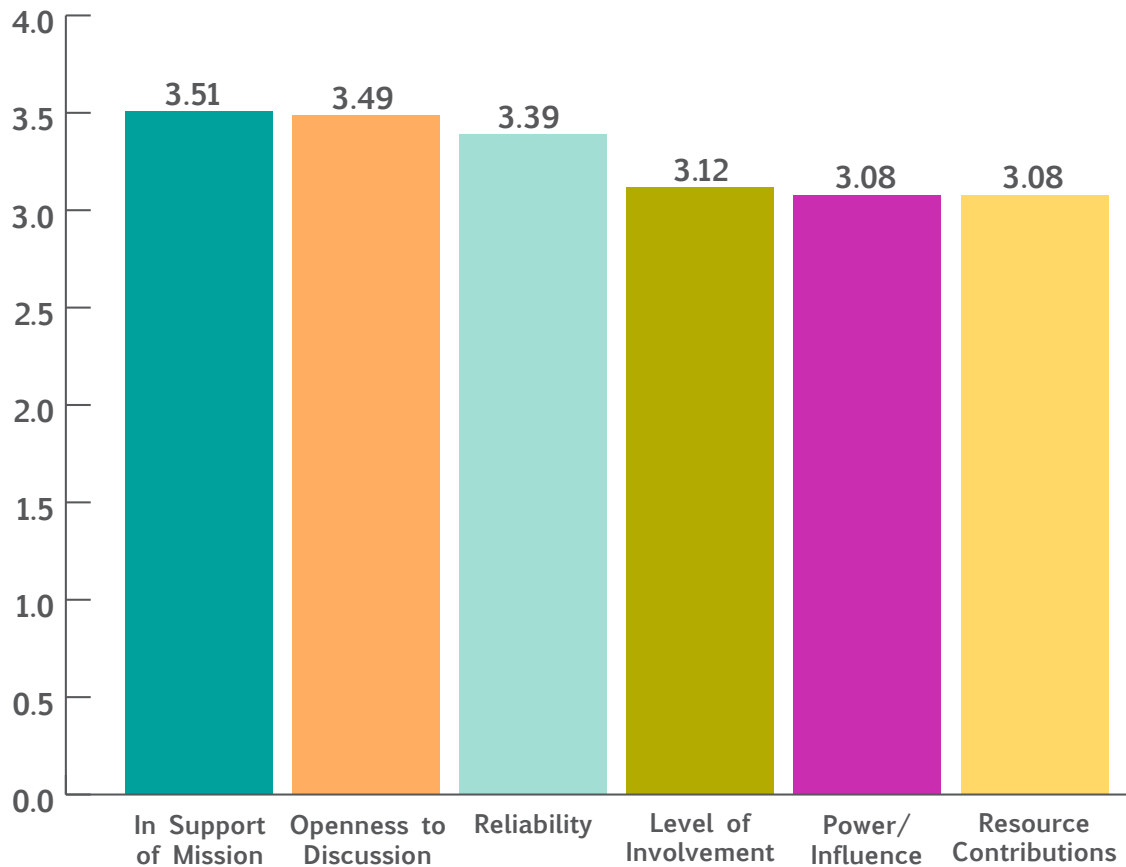
When asked to rate how much they trust and value their partners, participants indicated above average overall scores, as shown in the chart on the following page.

The overall trust score among participants was 3.46, with 4 being the highest possible score. This above average score shows that the participating organizations perceive their partners highly in regard to three trust indicators: mission congruence (the highest ranked of the three trust indicators, at 3.51), openness to discussion (3.49), and reliability (3.39)

The overall value score among participants was 3.09, with 4 being the highest possible score. This score is also above average and indicates that the participating organizations perceive their partners highly in regard to three value indicators: resource contribution (3.12), time commitment and level of involvement (3.12), and dimensions of influence and power (3.08).



Respondents reported having high levels of both value and trust for their relational partners.



## Conclusions

Participants in this study agreed unanimously that **Mississippi's early childhood system has not been very successful in meeting the needs of families**. The majority of survey respondents identified the **most critical goal of Mississippi's early childhood system as advancing collaboration among partners and promoting collective impact**, also ranking this goal as the **most likely to be achieved**. Respondents identified the **biggest barrier** to goal achievement as **lack of funding**. This data points to the need for stronger collaborations among organizations to effect change by leveraging existing resources within the confines of current policy and funding restrictions.

The greatest need that survey participants identified for Mississippi's families in this study was also reported as the greatest measure of the early childhood system's success: **access to an affordable, comprehensive, high-quality early education system**. To meet this need and achieve success, Mississippi's early childhood stakeholders must leverage their **trust of and value for their partners in a collaborative effort to improve the efficiency, navigability, accessibility, equity, and comprehensiveness of Mississippi's early childhood system**.

Due to this study's limitation of collecting only stakeholder perceptions and not those of families, future research should include Mississippi families in order to identify their perceptions and goals.





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