

# Innovation Zones

## *Systems Development Initiatives*

### **Overview**

In December 2012, Illinois was awarded a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to strengthen early childhood systems and kindergarten readiness for Illinois children.

The Innovation Zone initiative will help the state pilot-test strategies to increase enrollment of children with high needs in high-quality early learning and development programs. The most effective strategies will be recommended for statewide or larger-scale adoption.

### **Innovation Zone Communities**

Innovation Zones are set in the following diverse communities across the state: Aurora, Cicero, Greater East St. Louis, North Lawndale, Pilsen and Little Village, Thornton Township, and Williamson County. Each Innovation Zone was selected based on level of concentrated need; presence of providers with a demonstrated interest in quality improvement; a history of collaboration among early education providers; and strong local support for early learning.

### **Community Partnership Structure**

Each Innovation Zone encourages collaboration with community partners identified by the local community.

### **Contact Information**

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Innovation Zone Community Organization Referral

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### **Program Website:**

[http://www.actforchildren.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Early\\_InnovationZones](http://www.actforchildren.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Early_InnovationZones)