

# CONDUCTING HIGH-QUALITY, MULTIFACETED NEEDS ASSESSMENTS TO SHAPE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION (SESSION 1833)

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## Context

- Needs assessments are often completed by organizational administrators, program designers, or program directors without input from evaluators.
- Evaluators led an early childhood needs assessment process and worked to enhance systematic, inclusive, and multifaceted data collection and analysis methods.

## Approach

- Formed Institutions of Higher Education Collaborative consisting of early childhood education researchers from four South Carolina colleges/universities: Clemson University, College of Charleston, Francis Marion University, and the University of South Carolina.
- Collaborative used three standardized, research-based strategies to collect and analyze data to identify statewide priorities.
- Additional experts in the areas of equity and family studies critically reviewed the process, documents, and results to identify areas for improvement or clarification.

## Methods

- Engaged multiple types of stakeholders and gained feedback from 5,000 people to determine statewide priorities:
  - 1) 15 regional meetings, facilitated by Collaborative researchers, held across the state with 440 participants; standardized process used to reduce facilitator bias/increase participant voice
  - 2) Online survey garnered 3,114 responses focused on priorities of parents and caregivers
  - 3) Approximately 130 focus groups held across the state engaging more than 1,495 people, mostly parents and caregivers

## Findings

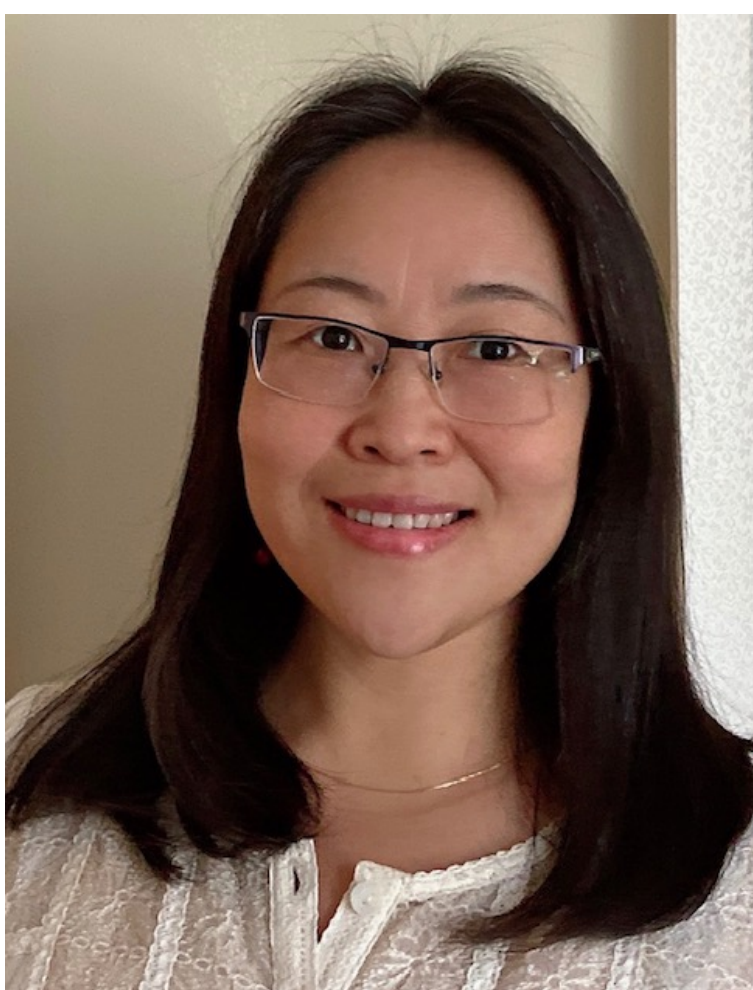
- Evaluators determined trends across data collection methods to inform statewide priorities and inform early childhood systems strategic plan.
- Goals and priorities emerged within three focus areas:
  - early learning and development
  - health and wellbeing
  - family and community
- Demographic information provided by parents/caregivers allowed survey results to be disaggregated in five areas: age, race/ethnicity, education level, employment status, and number of young children to identify similarities and differences in priorities based on these factors.

## Implications

- Needs assessment to be continually enhanced and expanded as organizational representatives became more aware of the importance of systematic, inclusive methods of data collection and analysis to fully understand needs.
- Developing connections between needs, program development, program implementation, and evaluation.
- Ensuring evaluation strategies and results are nested within the broader work.



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