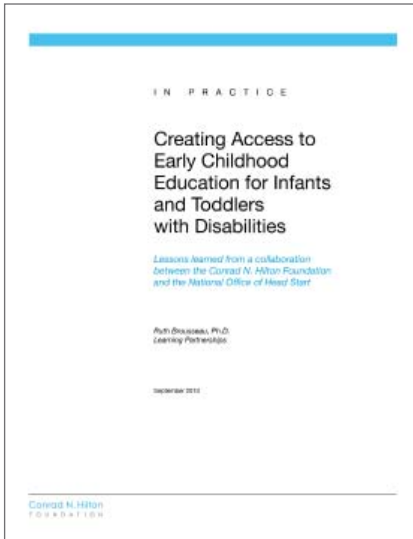


*This is a summary of the full In Practice report:*



Read the full report at [www.hiltonfoundation.org](http://www.hiltonfoundation.org)

## Key Findings

### Inherent challenges

- Defining the scope of a major cross-sector partnership
- Sustaining momentum despite changes in leadership
- Identifying points of leverage within dramatically different budget contexts represented by the federal government and a single foundation
- Finding ways to fully engage children with severe disabilities into Early Head Start

### Critical success factors

- Ensuring mission alignment and defining clear benefits for each partner
- Sustaining active engagement from the highest leadership of the two partnering organizations
- Enabling ongoing staff-to-staff relationships
- Sharing program funding investments equally
- Employing an intermediary to bridge the cultural and reporting differences
- Integrating learning into ongoing program activities and systems

## Creating Access to Early Childhood Education for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities

From 1997 through 2007 the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the National Office of Head Start collaborated to fund the Hilton/Early Head Start Training Program to include children with disabilities—including serious disabilities—in the new Early Head Start program. Together, the Hilton Foundation and Head Start Bureau contributed more than \$38 million over ten years for this project that touched the lives of over 17,000 young children with disabilities.

Collaborations between government and foundations are difficult to start and sustain. To contribute to knowledge about foundation-government funding partnerships and what it takes to make them successful, this paper explores this long-lasting and successful collaboration.

Early Head Start is a federally funded community-based program for low-income families with infants, toddlers and pregnant women. The Hilton/Early Head Start Training Program (H/EHSTP) started soon after the first Early Head Start programs were funded in late 1995. With a first five-year granting period from the Office of Head Start and the Hilton Foundation, the Hilton/Early Head Start Training Program went very quickly to national scale, reaching 80% of all Early Head Start sites in the country, and in a second five-year granting period reaching 65% of all sites (which continued to increase in numbers throughout the ten years) not touched in Phase 1. Over the course of the 10 years of funding the Hilton/Early Head Start Training Program reached a total of 480 sites where more than 17,000 infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families were served.

This program focused on children with a variety of disabilities including, for example, children with cerebral palsy, autistic spectrum disorders, Down syndrome, and spina bifida. Federal regulations required that Early Head Start set aside at least ten percent of its enrollment opportunities for children with disabilities. The number of sites meeting this mandate increased in both grant periods, from 42% to 63% in Phase 1 and from 49% to 75% in Phase 2. Participating Early Head Start programs increased the percentage of infants and toddlers with disabilities served from 11% to 17% over the course of the four years.

From the beginning, sponsors were concerned that many efforts to recruit children with disabilities were limited to children with milder levels of disabilities such as speech and language difficulties; they therefore increased the emphasis on integrating children with more severe disabilities. By the end of Phase 2, a sampling of participating programs indicated that over half of the enrolled children with disabilities had at least a moderate delay or disability and 22% had a severe disability. Participating Early Head Start programs were serving more children with disabilities and more children with significant disabilities.