Summary
The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) implemented a comprehensive project to enhance the data collection and data management capacities of Smart Start local partnerships. This project began with an assessment of local partnership data collection activities including measures, how the data are collected, where data are stored, computing platform, and how the data are used.

NCPC established a Data Advisory Group (DAG) consisting of local partnership representatives from across the state to work together to identify common outputs, outcomes, and measures for the Smart Start network. NCPC developed a new Smart Start data reporting system for local partnerships to report on outputs and common outcomes for each Smart Start funded activity. Extensive training was provided to local partnerships on outputs and common outcomes as well as on how to use the new data reporting system. In addition, the Smart Start Outcomes Measurement Tools Resource Guide was developed and was made available to local partnerships to aid in selecting the measures for each of their intended outcomes. Partnerships began using the new reporting system in the fall of 2015 for their outputs. The first wave of outcome data was reported in early 2016.

Additional support was provided to local partnerships through data mini grants and technical assistance. Mini grants were awarded to support their efforts to collect, measure, report, and use programmatic data. NCPC also continued its work to promote the use of high quality measurement tools. Funding for data collection for KIPS (Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale, identified by the Data Advisory Group as a gold standard measure for parent and child interaction) assessments and equipment was a common request for mini grants, gathering significant interest by the third round of grants. In addition, a multi-agency collaborative initiative began to further the use of the CLASS.

Moreover, NCPC laid the groundwork to enable the sharing of child level family support data, child care center data, and subsidy data with NC ECIDS. NCPC sponsored a demonstration of the new Penelope software for Parents and Teachers (PAT) data to assist in making PAT data available and eventually connecting with NC ECIDS. NCPC also developed an informed consent form for program participants as well as an online training series regarding data governance and data management.

Successes
The major intent of the data project was to increase the data capacity of local partnerships. A follow up survey with all partnerships showed improvements on every indicator of data capacity compared to a baseline survey three years earlier.
For instance:

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<th>Our Partnership Has Made Much Progress or Has Fully Achieved</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developed an overall evaluation and/or data collection plan for the partnership</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Used surveys and assessment tools that have been tested and shown to be valid and reliable measures when possible</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<td>Been able to produce summaries and reports to share with your board, staff, and others</td>
<td>60%</td>
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In addition, the Data Advisory Group was able to develop a robust list of outcomes for the Smart Start system that was sufficiently broad and comprehensive to meet the needs of nearly all Smart Start funded activities. FY 2015-16 was the first time ever that all Smart Start local partnerships reported on programmatic outcomes for each activity.

**Challenges**
Given the wide array of Smart Start funded activities across the state, as well as the differences in funded activities from one county to the next, Smart Start was not able to provide a statewide activity with child level data to link with the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS). Steps around informed consent and data governance though will position Smart Start to potentially provide data in the future.

**Lessons**
Building the data capacity of an organization takes time. Regular coaching is key in helping participants understand and apply new concepts. In addition, involving a range of stakeholders in developing new requirements is essential for developing a robust system that is acceptable to the network of those affected.

**Closing Thoughts**
The efforts of the Smart Start Data Project have been fully integrated into NCPC’s work with local partnerships, including what our system asks them to report, how we use the data, and how we prompt the partnerships to use the data. It has fundamentally changed our system, providing the foundation for a continuous quality improvement mindset going forward.