

WHAT IS PIECCE?

PIECCE is the Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education. This is a multi-sectoral teacher education project that aims to professionalise the sector by developing a standardised framework for the training of ECD practitioners working in Birth to Four.

Click [here](#) to read more about PIECCE



The PIECCE Community of Practice

A PIECCE Resource

Overview of the second CoP meeting

23 July 2019

A Knowledge Product from PIECCE



higher education
& training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

unicef 
for every child



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Background

Purpose

The Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education (PIECCE) is now in its third and final year. The main purpose of the second PIECCE Community of Practice (CoP) meeting was to get input from ECCE stakeholders in order to refine and finalise Output 3 of the PIECCE project, as explained below.

OUTPUT 1:
A Collaboration Process Model for Programme Development

A description of the project's multi-sectoral and collaborative partnerships, and the lessons learned about collaborative processes.

OUTPUT 2:
A Research Review Report

A report on the literature review of ECCE practices, and the survey of existing ECCE and capacity-building programmes, tracking themes related to quality criteria for these.

Output 1 is an ongoing process which will be reported on when the project is finished. Output 2 has been completed, and its findings have served to inform the main specific objective of the project, that is, to develop Output 3.

OUTPUT 3:
A Standardised Programme Framework and set of Support Materials

The framework gives guidelines on principles, content and approaches for standardising ECCE Diploma and Bachelor of Education programmes at NQF Levels 6 and 7. Illustrative exemplar learning materials for teacher educators and students will be produced.

The objectives of this CoP meeting were as follows:

- To share progress and lessons learned from the PIECCE project with the sector. The PIECCE Communiqué (available [here](#) and on the website www.piecce.co.za) gives information on the project's activities and achievements at this point.
- To explore issues related to the concept and implementation of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) for Diploma and Degree students. Inputs from CoP participants will help finalise the WIL chapter in the Programme Framework.
- To consider where these collaborative debates on teacher/practitioner education for ECCE workers can be housed once PIECCE comes to a close at the end of 2019.

Participants

More than sixty participants attended, speaking for a cross-section of actors in the ECD sector, including representatives from NGOs, universities, TVETs and other EU projects. Representatives from DHET and Unicef in their capacity as both funders and stakeholders were also present. Consortium members (from different stages of the project) are listed below, while the list of CoP participants is given at the end of this report.

Consortium members

NGOs	Saide, BRIDGE, Ntataise, Tree, Rhodes Centre for Development Studies
TVETs	False Bay College, South Gauteng College
HEIs	UNISA, University of Pretoria, North West University, University of Fort Hare, Walter Sisulu University, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, University of the Orange Free State, University of the Witwatersrand and University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Where is PIECCE now?

PIECCE members shared a quick overview of highlights and progress of the PIECCE project.

Collaboration

Melissa King from BRIDGE gave an overview of Output 1 in relation to why and how we have collaborated, and what have we learned from this. The building of collaborative partnerships between HEIs, TVETs and NGOs was an intentional research aim of the project from the start; this aim was bolstered by the inclusion of an additional eight universities from the DHET-funded Teacher Education for ECCE projects (TECEP, forming part of the EU/DHET Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme [Tldcip]). The recognition that PIECCE's key output, the Programme Framework for the ECCE Diploma and Degree, would only be relevant if it linked to and promoted common teacher educator goals in the sector was the motivating factor for collaboration. The fragmentation of the sector in relation to the training of ECD practitioners (for example, issues such as lack of articulation between different qualifications at different levels) has a negative effect on efforts to professionalise ECD. Collaboration in PIECCE between providers from different institutional contexts, working at different levels, is a step towards unifying the field.

Melissa reflected on the growth in understanding of collaborative processes throughout the three years of the project; these insights have been tracked through a process of self-reflection by the consortium. Collaboration is time-consuming and can be difficult; while sharing ideas collaboratively face to face is usually productive, working collaboratively at a distance proved challenging. Some initial resistance has been replaced by a recognition overall of the many benefits of collaboration; these include forging new and useful inter-institutional partnerships, supporting the professional development of emerging academics, and gaining new and richer perspectives on aspects of the field through working with those outside one's own institutional boundaries. A key impetus was the consortium's interactions with Birth to Four practitioners and NGO trainers in the field, through a process of site visits to different ECD centres in three provinces. The different partners in the consortium then shared their post-visit insights, thereby bringing together practice and theory in their

How?

- Identify **BOUNDARY CONDITIONS** (e.g. context & motivation)
- Agree on **FOUNDATIONAL DRIVERS** (e.g. collaboration principles, common goals, perceived benefits)
- Set up **PROCESS AGREEMENTS** (e.g. contractual arrangements roles & responsibilities, operational protocols)
- **SHARE** and **LEARN** from each other (e.g. through task teams; site visits)
- **COMMUNICATE**
- **REFLECT** and **ADAPT**
- **BE INTENTIONAL**



debates on the kinds of competencies, attitudes and orientations that need to go into ECCE teacher education through the Programme Framework.

Some examples of lessons learned about the factors that enable successful collaboration and those that hinder collaboration are given in Melissa's presentation [here](#).

PIECCE Research Review and Programme Framework

Hasina Ebrahim from UNISA outlined the early stages of the Programme Framework development, which was informed by a research process (including an international literature review) and a survey of existing institutional programmes and interventions for teacher education for ECCE. Key findings included:

- a review of the strengths and gaps in current policies - we have good policies but they often have to be reinterpreted for implementation in different contexts;
- the importance of understanding the contexts from which ECCE students come from, and the contexts in which they will practice - there is no one-size-fits-all-solution;
- linked to the point above, there is a need to explore different forms of academic support, including diverse forms of recognition of prior learning (RPL) for entry; and
- the importance of integrating reflective practice into teacher education at all levels.

Specific learnings are outlined in the presentation [here](#), and discussed in detail in the **Research Review and Survey Report** findings, available on the PIECCE website (www.piecce.org.za) or click [here](#).

Development of the framework for what is becoming known as 'initial and emerging teacher education' was also informed by interrogations of the ECCE workforce internationally, and by the 2017 Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for ECD Educator (known as MRQEECE, 2017).

The developmental work on the Framework has been an evolutionary process in developing shared understandings amongst consortium members. Key to the framework is the idea of ensuring that the mission of teacher education is to prepare 'habits of mind' that support graduates with professional know-how, attitudes and competences.

Programme Framework

• Main purpose

Provide guidelines to assist with the development of ECCE qualifications in ITE. (Diploma and Degree) - shared understandings

• Vision

Build a society where ECCE professionals are developed to reach their full potential for acting in the best interest of all young children.

• Mission

Prepare ECCE professionals who are equipped with the knowledge, skills and professional dispositions to effect quality ECCE practice in diverse contexts.

The Knowledge and Practice Standards which bring the different elements of the Framework together were based on competencies set out in MRQEECE, and informed by both international and local debates in the sector. Hasina briefly described each of the chapters in the Framework, as set out below. The current Draft Framework is on www.piecce.org.za, or click [here](#).

Chapters in the Programme Framework



PIECCE Materials Overview

Sheila Drew from Saide noted that the Illustrative Materials Packs (currently under development) are there to support teacher educators in their delivery of ECCE educator programmes, and to illustrate ways in which the principles in the framework can be modelled for ECCE students. While the primary target audience for these materials is the teacher educator, there are learning activities which speak directly to the students. Quality materials are seen as embodying principles such as activity-based learning in higher education, as well as illustrating the ‘golden threads’ running through the Programme Framework: inclusivity, collaboration, play and quality.

Materials development:



Illustrative Packs

- 🌱 Learning environments (including play)
- 🌱 Becoming a professional teacher
- 🌱 Constructions of childhood (& pedagogy)
- 🌱 Language diversity and multilingualism (incl. play and pedagogy)
- 🌱 Relationships (families / communities), AND Health, Safety & Nutrition
- 🌱 Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

The Packs will serve as exemplars illustrating aspects of topics noted in the slide on the left. Multi-media formats will be used where appropriate, so that materials can be used in different delivery contexts. The materials are illustrative rather than prescriptive; as Open Educational Resources (OERs), they can be adapted as needed. The foundational aim of all the exemplars is to help teacher educators engage with the idea of supporting their students in becoming professional ECCE practitioners.



Questions and points from plenary

Below is a summary of the key points made in response to the presentations.

The role of ICT in ECCE Teacher Education

- It was suggested that ICT skills could be emphasized more in the Knowledge and Practice standards.
- Students also need to engage with the idea of preparing children for their future roles in the workforce in relation to the 4th Industrial Revolution. This should not, however, be at the expense of basic and foundational skills.

Articulation between qualifications from different sub-frameworks and provider sectors

- Articulation between qualifications at FET levels and higher education levels remains an issue. Practitioners who have occupational or legacy (unit standard-based) qualifications at NQF Level 4 or 5 cannot necessarily gain access to universities, even if they meet the minimum requirements set out in the policy (see MRQEECCCE for policy-based alignment routes); HEIs have the autonomy to set their own additional entry criteria and their enrolment plans in place.
- There is also a lack of alignment between ECD/ Childcare qualifications offered by TVET colleges and potential pathways in higher education. We need more conversations between the TVET and HEI sector as well as between the HEI and NGO sector.
- The issue of what used to be called ‘the fundamentals’ (that is, the skills and competencies in English as the language of learning, of maths or maths literacy, and of cognitive academic skills) has been discussed in the ECD sector for years. Practitioners who have entered the field through non-formal pathways, or with poor school-leaving certification, have often required help in achieving certification for these skills in their qualifications, and are under-prepared for higher education. So the question is not just about university entrance: it is also about how those working in the occupational sector can support students in these fundamental or foundational skills in order to prepare them for success in higher education. It is about how different sectors can work together to open viable career paths for these practitioners.

Employment opportunities

- We put in place various expectations of the workforce, but then erect barriers to making workplaces accessible, through regulations such as registration of centres and other employment requirements. Workforce issues in ECCE have to be addressed through closer cooperation with government departments.
- This raises issues in relation to offering qualifications in areas where there are limited job opportunities. How do we advocate for these qualifications – what is in it for potential students? Qualified ECCE practitioners can’t even go and teach in Grade R, and there are already barriers between Grade R and Grade 1.

Sheila Drew in her role of project manager of PIECCCE noted that some of the articulation issues and all of the employment concerns go way beyond the scope of PIECCCE. The migration of ECCE to the Department of Basic Education may begin to address some of these issues. She stressed, however, that we cannot ignore these questions; they will affect uptake and throughput of the ECCE qualifications, and are related to broader concerns in the sector. Where do these systemic questions continue to be asked and answered? This question is picked up in the discussion of the future of the PIECCCE CoP.



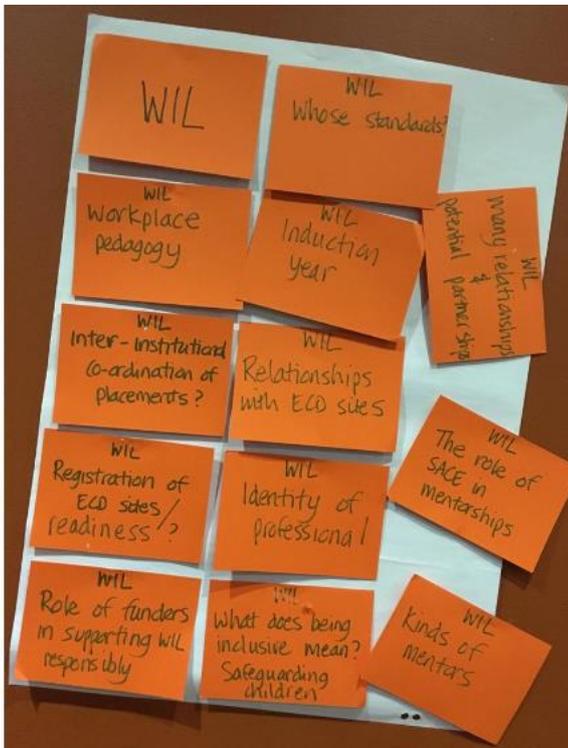
WIL in Practice: Improving Work Integrated Learning for ECCE Teachers

The aim of this interactive session was to get feedback from CoP participants on the WIL Chapter of the PIECCE Framework, and, crucially, give input and ideas about what WIL could look like in practice. To this end, participants were given a summary of the WIL chapter, and reflection prompts and questions to record their views on practical implementation or any other issues. The summary and reflection brief given to groups can be found [here](#).

PIECCE consortium members participated in groups and will process the results of discussion. Only a few key issues shared in plenary are recorded here.



Working on WIL at the PIECCE CoP



Plenary Comments on WIL

- The WIL component for completing the qualification could happen within an ‘induction year’ for almost-qualified educators, during which time they would be supported by mentors. North West University is piloting such a model.
- WIL contributes to the development of the professional identity of teachers, and the WIL experience needs to embed certain habits of mind. We should consider whether there is a WIL pedagogy associated with this. What are the characteristics of a professional (e.g. openness to ideas, responsiveness to situations) and can (or should?) these be measured? What type of personality should be working with very young children? How does this relate to the implementation and assessment of WIL? What are the standards you want to measure for WIL, and are these different from the qualifications standards themselves?
- Where does the SACE Code of Ethics fit into WIL for ECCE?
- We need to be mindful that WIL for ECCE students has to take place in ECD centres, and not in a formal schooling setup. Are enough centres ready to take on WIL students? What does the ‘readiness’ of a centre actually mean? Is the fact of registration the only qualifier, or are there other criteria we need to consider? Consider other baselines such as norms and standards, conditions of service, and factors such as police clearance.
- It was suggested that universities need to build up relationships with ECD centres nearby and start setting up a pool of WIL-ready centres. Collaborative inter-institutional sharing of sites could help all those involved, if coordinated effectively. Models such as those in which students learn theory for four days and then have one day a week on which they meet at different sites to learn theory and practice together should be considered.
- There are a number of stakeholders involved in WIL, including the community, the parents, SGBs (where applicable), the principal and the on-site practitioners. Effective WIL also includes relationship management.
- How can funders support WIL responsibly? What are the financial models for WIL?
- Retired Foundation phase teachers could be used as mentors, as long as they do not have too much of a formal schooling approach. Training could address this. However, we need to also realise that a predisposition towards developing and supporting others is key to being a good mentor; this is sometimes even more important than qualifications or experience.
- An inclusive approach to ECCE brings with it responsibility issues. Finding sites that are inclusive becomes an issue, as does safeguarding vulnerable children.



Lessons Learned through PIECCE

Consortium members shared a few insights about some of the lessons learned in the project, in relation to collaboration, play, inclusivity and quality.

On Collaboration:

We feel we have grown a family. For young and developing academics, PIECCE has given us a voice. *Donna Hannaway, UNISA*

On Play:

Play underpins all ECCE practice – playful pedagogies needs more attention, especially in relation to indigenous understandings. But there are also common understandings about play and games even if we give these different names. *Lorayne Excel, Wits*

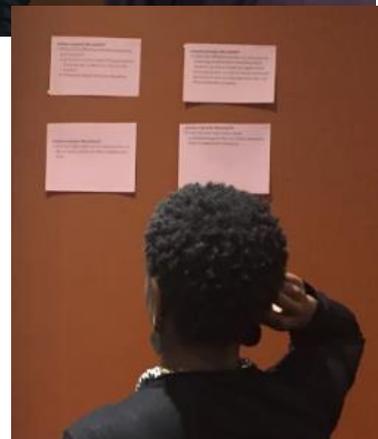
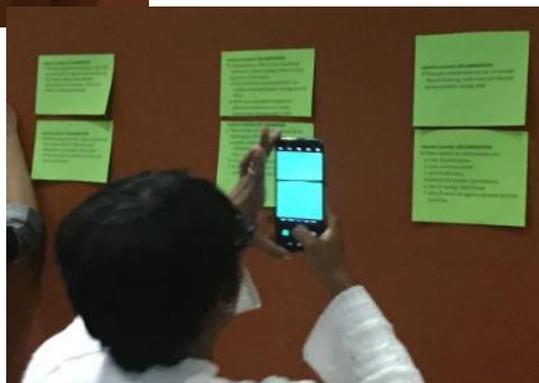
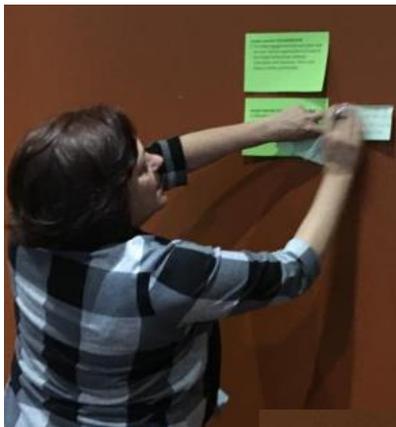
On Inclusivity:

Inclusion is about me, inclusion is about you, inclusion is about all of us. Understanding inclusion begins with understanding my own bias, attitudes, practice, so that awareness can move outwards to other relationships. For teachers in early childhood settings it's about embracing cultural, linguistic, physical and developmental diversity – we can and will teach all children. Inclusion is also about practitioners who have been excluded from HEIs. Inclusion is therefore about everyone. *Mary Clasquin-Johnson, UNISA*

On Quality:

To see universities, NGOs and TVETs working together towards a common vision – that, for me, is Quality! *Ruby Motaung, TREE*

This was followed by a gallery walk to consider other inputs from consortium members, and for CoP participants to respond with their own views.



Here is a selection of views:

Lessons Learned: Collaboration

- The deep engagement with each other that we have had the opportunity to be part of, has forged relationships between institutions and individuals. This in turn leads to further partnerships.
- Through collaboration we can encourage diverse thinking, build unity and develop group problem solving skills.
- Collaboration in PIECCE has broadened everyone's understanding of Birth to Four practices in the sector. HEIs know more about ECD site realities and practitioner training done by NGOs, while NGOs are better equipped to prepare practitioners for further professional development in HEIs.
- Some barriers to collaboration are:
 - lack of participation
 - poor communication
 - lack of efficiency
 - behind the scenes conversations
 - fear of saying I don't know
 - lack of sense of urgency because of other priorities.

Lessons Learned: Play

- Differences of understanding are in the fine detail, and in the application of playful pedagogy.
- We still need many conversations about play in ECCE and Foundation Phase, and how play pedagogies in these phases should link up.
- Unlock student-teachers' creativity by helping them learn how to make toys from found objects.
- Caregivers need to understand what play means and why it is valuable. We need to remember that children don't need to be taught how to play, but we can teach through play.

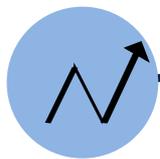
Lessons Learned: Inclusivity

- What is the difference between inclusivity and inclusion? Inclusivity is more overarching and about diversity, and is about our day-to-day practice. Inclusion is about inclusive education.
- Inclusion also refers to our own practice, in this project, and in our other collaborative work.
- There are different barriers to inclusivity in a learning environment (including ECCE students as well as children). Apart from learning barriers or special needs, there are also factors such as language diversity and socio-economic contexts.
- I am not sure I yet have a clear understanding of what we mean, especially how to implement inclusivity.

Lessons Learned: Quality

- Quality applies to ECD programmes and practices, but also to programme design and our own participation in the collaborative work.

- Quality is about a balance of different dimensions and of skills and theory.
- As teacher educators we need to model quality in our own pedagogical practices if we want our students to deliver quality ECCE.
- The quality of the programme does not guarantee the quality of the teacher. Quality teaching depends on WIL and the readiness of the centre/site.
- Quality takes on different forms in different contexts, and we can acknowledge a level of good quality in spite of difficult circumstances.
- Funder education in support of quality is key. What does the ecosystem look like? What support is needed where?
- Quality only matters if it results in improved practice.



Where to from here? Taking collaboration in ECCE Teacher Education forward after PIECCE

Hasina Ebrahim from PIECCE facilitated this session, pointing out that the teacher education system below Grade R supports and feeds into formal schooling. There needs to be collaboration both within and beyond this sector, as all these elements are integrated. We need some kind of forum in which to jointly explore the many issues raised in debates so far.

PIECCE began in 2017 and the project ends at the end of 2019. What is the onward movement to carry forward the positives of collaboration that have been engendered, and where do the ongoing questions raised in and outside the project continue to be addressed? These questions relate to professionalisation of the workforce overall, educator conditions of service and professional opportunities, articulation between educator qualifications, synergies with other ECCE human resource categories, and cooperation with government. These are all contextual questions which impact on discussion in the ECCE teacher education space. The question is whether we try to create a forum focused on teacher education in ECCE, or use an existing forum.

In order to give context to this discussion, Thandeka Rantsi from BRIDGE gave an overview of the principal existing forums and networks of which BRIDGE is aware. Click [here](#) for her presentation.

- The National ECD Alliance (NECDA) is an umbrella body with over eighty NGO members.
- The SA Congress for ECD is a practitioner-focused representative alliance.
- BRIDGE, NECDA and SA ECD Congress have recently formed a partnership called the Collaboration of ECD Networks (CECDN) to jointly host dialogues on the migration of ECD to DBE, and for advocacy around issues affecting sector, including workforce concerns.
- BRIDGE also runs the National ECD Community of Practice, which elected representatives from the CoP to sit on the Inter-Sectoral Forum of the Department of Social Development (DSD) as representatives of civil society. Thandeka noted that the ECD CoP deals with a range of topics relating to ECD, and does not have a specific focus on teacher education, or on Birth to Four only. It is a multi-stakeholder community, including training providers, intervention-focused NGOs, funders, practitioners and government representatives.

- There are also a number of provincial ECD CoPs (Kwa-Zulu Natal, Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga) which interact with government at local levels, and give input on sector-wide concerns. These generate their own agendas while giving and getting feedback to and from National ECD CoP discussions.
- Other BRIDGE CoPs which focus on Teacher Development are: the Initial Teacher Education CoP, the Early Grade Reading CoP, the Teacher Development CoP, and the Maths and Science CoP.

DISCUSSION

Becoming part of the BRIDGE National ECD CoP

- HEIs are expected to engage in research. Could the BRIDGE National ECD CoP provide a source of evidence for research, and for a knowledge generation agenda?
- The benefits of NGOs and universities collaborating in a CoP type of space could work in a number of ways. Universities could produce more grounded research as they would have access to the NGOs on the ground. If NGOs have staff going up the ladder into professional spaces, NGOs would have access to HEI sector experts to advise them.
- The link to provincial CoPs also provides an opportunity to involve grassroots practitioners in different parts of the country.
- If this consortium and other interested members become part of the National ECD CoP, we need to note that this is a general forum, and includes practitioners and service providers who offer other types of support, not just teacher training. How would the focus on teacher education be retained while being part of this CoP? Two suggestions for consideration are:
 - Set up a sub-group that focuses specifically on teacher education, taking relevant issues from the main CoP and reporting back to the CoP. BRIDGE has followed this model before, and some 'working groups' or 'colloquiums' have developed into their own communities of practice.
 - Using one of the four quarterly ECD CoPs in the year to focus specifically on teacher education debates.
- Discussions on the way forward also need to take into account funding and managing the inclusion of an additional group of people, and taking these needs into account: it might not just be 'business as usual' for the CoP, and BRIDGE needs to consider this.
- Noted that the CoP might not be an appropriate forum to discuss deep-level details such as government policies on conditions of service and benefits etc. Also noted that certain types of workforce advocacy may be outside the mandate of a multi-stakeholder CoP such as the BRIDGE National CoP. The National BRIDGE ECD CoP also has a Reference Group which advises it on its direction.

Other discussion points

- What is the role of SARAECE as an ECD research platform going forward?
- How do we get TVETs more involved in these discussions?
- René King as Chair of NECDA noted that NECDA's primary focus is capacity building with its 86 ECD NGOs. NECDA has for many years held similar discussions on the role of the fundamental/foundational competencies and how to improve these, given the nature of the workforce: that is, a workforce made up of mainly under-educated women. NECDA's members currently train around 22 thousand practitioners (these are not the final statistics), and NECDA wants to explore working more closely with universities.

- Ruby Motaung noted that PIECCE took a long time to build these collaborative relationships, and they need to be sustained. She also appealed to funders to join in and consider ways of supporting Level 4 and 5 graduates in entering HEIs.

No definite conclusion was reached about the nature of a forum specifically dedicated to collaborating on teacher education issues. However, it is clear that there are a number of synergies between all the existing forums, and that the CECDN partnership in particular will be taking the migration aspect of the workforce debates further. The PIECCE consortium will continue to consider various possibilities for a collaborative forum going forward. In the meantime, all who attended this PIECCE CoP are welcome to come to any BRIDGE ECD CoP meetings, as these are open forums.

*Collaborating at the PIECCE CoP,
July 2019*



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