



COLORADO

JANUARY 2022

COLORADO UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is the culmination of intensive work by stakeholders across the state of Colorado, including the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC); the Transition Advisory Group (TAG); the TAG subgroups; the Transition Working Group (TWG); and participants of ECLC listening sessions, town halls, and other engagement events. The work of these teams and individuals builds upon the strong foundation of engagement by organizations such as the Colorado Children’s Campaign, the Women’s Foundation of Colorado, and Early Milestones Colorado.

Transition Working Group (TWG): HB21-1304 created the TWG and required this group to develop a Transition Plan for the Department of Early Childhood and make recommendations for a new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program.

ECLC CO-CHAIRS:

Pamela Harris, Ph.D. - President & CEO,
Mile High Early Learning

Susan Steele - President & CEO, Buell Foundation

Tom Massey - Deputy Executive Director,
Department of Health Care Policy and Financing

REPRESENTATIVES FROM EXISTING DEPARTMENTS

Ben Henderson - Director of Operations and
Cabinet Affairs for Governor Jared Polis

Carrie Cortiglio - Director of Prevention Services
Division, Colorado Department of Public Health and
Environment

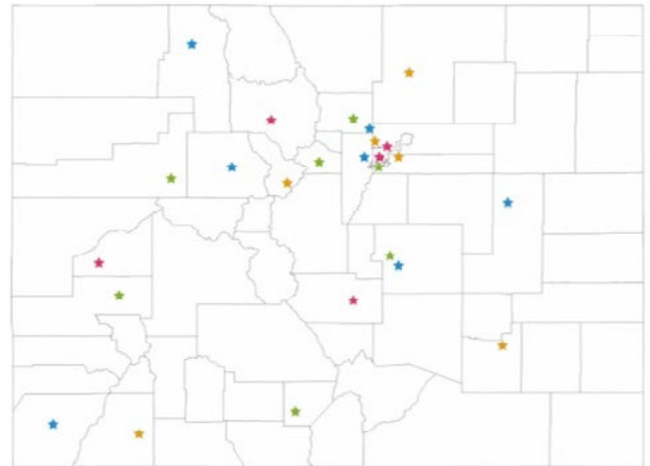
Katy Anthes, Ph.D. - Colorado Commissioner of
Education

Michelle Barnes - Executive Director, Colorado
Department of Human Services

Sondra Ranum - Director of ECE Workforce
Policy, Colorado Department of Higher Education

Transition Advisory Group (TAG):

As required by HB21-1304, the ECLC convened the TAG¹ to advise the TWG and ensure that this process is grounded in the recommendations of a diverse group of stakeholders. The TAG is composed of 56 community leaders who offer a wide array of diverse public and private perspectives to ensure the recommendations reflect the full spectrum of early childhood programs and services. This includes parents, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, local Early Childhood Councils, and other stakeholders representing under-served and under-resourced communities.



1. See Appendix 1 for more detailed information about TAG members

TAG Members²

Amber Bilby • Angela Fedler • Angela Mills • Anji Gallanos • Anna Jo Haynes • Ashley Henshaw • Ayelet Talmi, Ph.D. • Betty Dalton • Brandon LaChance • Carol Woods • Carsten Baumann • Cassandra Johnson • Debra Locke • Deidre Johnson • Diane Price • Dustin Elliott • Elisabeth Lawrence • Elsa Holguin • Floyd Cobb, Ph.D. • Gerie Grimes • George Davis V • Gina Robinson • Jade Woodard • Jamie Ulrich • Kallie Leyba • Kate Brunner, MA/LIS • Khatira Amn • Ki'i Powell, Ph.D. • Kirsten Yang • Kristie Kauerz, Ph.D. • Laurie Noblitt • Leigh Pytlinski • Lisa A. Hill • Lorena Garcia • Maegan Lokteff, Ph.D. • Maria Tarajano Rodman • Mary Alice Cohen • Mat Aubuchon • Megan Burch • Melissa Buchholz, PsyD • Melissa Mares • Michelle Shiffman • Moira Hawks • Nami Bhasin • Penny Harris • Robert A. DeHerrera • Robert McDaniel • Scott Bright • Sherri Valdez • Sherri Wright • Sondra Ranum • Tara Manthey • Tom Brinegar • Tracey Lucero • Ty Johnson • Whitney LeBoeuf

Subgroups: Four subgroups were convened and open to the public to offer comprehensive insight in key areas:

- Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding
- Universal Preschool Implementation
- Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability
- Special Education Service Delivery

Facilitators from Early Milestones Colorado, in partnership with Marzano Research and the Colorado Education Initiative, then elevated themes and concerns from these sessions to the TAG, which made recommendations to be considered by TWG.

The Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup, specifically named in the legislation, included 37 seated members and offered reports directly to the TWG.

Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup Members³

Alisha Lacombe-Emile • Alison Hargarten • Amy Kilgour • Bill Jaeger • Cheryl Caldwell • Christy Scott • Clare Vickland • Corinne DePersis • Dana Richardson • Danae Davison • Dawn Klco • Diana Herrera • Dinah Frey • Eileen Sullivan Kratzer • Heather Hicks • Heidi White • Jane Miyahara • Jennifer Levin • Jennifer Yates • Jon Paul Burden • Julie Knowles • Kayla Marcella • Linda Meredith • Lisa S. Franklin • Lisa Trautwein • Liz Costaldo • Lucinda Hundley • Moe Keller • Nazia Hasan • Olivia Coyne • Paul Foster, Ed.D. • Rashida Banerjee • Rhonda Palic • Rick Simms • Shannon Secrest • T Vail Shoultz McCole • Tammy Johnson • Taran Schneider

This report was prepared by Watershed Advisors.

² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q3WaeLf6BjuoW2ikvW9CFsHJ2erAw6Bu/view>

³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N-lxM9P19VwHYjzt06Rr1ffwyBArGwf/view>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colorado has a decades-long commitment to the early care and development of its youngest children. This dedication was recently underscored by the enormous will for early childhood investment and reform when a bipartisan majority of voters supported funding for high-quality, 4 year old universal preschool in a mixed delivery system with the passage of Proposition EE in 2020. This new voluntary preschool program will build upon the successes of Colorado's existing early childhood programs, including the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), to offer every child in Colorado access to funded early care and education services the year before they enter kindergarten.

This exciting development will have a long lasting impact in Colorado. The research is clear: children who attend a high-quality preschool in the first few years of life are more likely to experience higher levels of educational attainment and less likely to experience poverty or enter the criminal justice system.^{4 5 6} By investing in early childhood and universal preschool, Colorado aims to break the cycle of poverty in the long term, while also immediately creating an accessible and streamlined system that alleviates the burdens of families and children.

The magnitude of this vision, and the importance of ensuring, not just access, but quality of care provided, requires the state work urgently toward achieving this goal of building a birth to 5+ system that is accessible, affordable, and valuable for children and families over the next several years. Through the creation of universal preschool, Colorado also has an unprecedented opportunity to leverage the newly created Department of Early Childhood (DEC) to improve the quality and availability of early childhood programs and services for all young children, including infants and toddlers.

While the universal, voluntary preschool program will launch in July 2023, fully implementing these recommendations and addressing challenges in the entire early care and education system must be a process of continual and urgent innovation, engagement, and adaptation.

This report sets a bold vision, and the implementation and details will evolve over time as DEC is established and more engagement occurs. The infrastructure investment this report suggests will create a system to support Colorado's families for generations to come. This report is a first step in making this innovative and ambitious universal preschool program a reality and provides Colorado with guidance on the infrastructure needed to implement a comprehensive, family-focused, universal preschool program model at this pivotal moment.

Building and Strengthening an Early Childhood Infrastructure

To achieve Colorado's goal of a universally available preschool program that helps to prepare all children for school and beyond, the state must think about its infrastructure needs, including leadership, capacity, workforce, resources, and more. In the many conversations across stakeholder groups, there was clear consensus that to realize this goal, the state would need to develop a clear vision for the experiences every child should have at each age before entering kindergarten, and then invest in and partner with local leadership to ensure every child can access universal preschool and additional birth to 5+ slots and services.

Colorado should invest in an infrastructure with:

1. Local leads empowered and charged to solve local challenges, foster partnerships, create alignment across all local entities, and plan for the allocation of funding equitably across providers in their communities.
2. A demonstrated commitment from DEC to provide resources to local leads and communities, to help build their capacity to execute their charge including fiscal capacity, and to ensure Colorado's aligned early childhood vision is executed successfully across the state.

4 https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2019/05/F_Heckman_PerryMidlife_OnePager_050819.pdf

5 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6344026/>

6 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6426150/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (continued)

Local Lead's Role

To ensure every child is offered a universal preschool slot, every family can easily navigate enrollment, and all funding is maximized, including local investments, universal preschool implementation should be facilitated through newly-designated "local leads." Local leads, which could be any public agency (e.g., a county), nonprofit organization (e.g., an Early Childhood Council), or newly created organization, should serve as the coordinator of birth to 5+ early childhood services in regions across Colorado, beginning with universal preschool. They should bring together partners to build a local plan that accounts for how all available resources will be used to support access to quality, affordable early care and education in a mixed delivery system that supports children's healthy growth and development.

Department of Early Childhood's Role

DEC should select local leads through a transparent, rigorous application process that demonstrates buy-in from a community's regional partners. DEC should clearly define the scope of authority and expectations for local leads, collaborate with them as implementation partners, fully support them to build collaboration and coordination with their local partners, and create incentives and an accountability mechanism with clearly delineated responsibilities. If a community is unable to identify an appropriate local lead, DEC should fulfill these responsibilities itself or through another partner until the local lead can assume full responsibility. DEC should then work to recruit and build the capacity of a local lead within the first three years of universal preschool implementation. As part of overseeing local leads, DEC should provide contracts, partnerships, training, technical assistance, and resources to local leads, promote collaboration and collective learning, and elevate examples of success from Colorado and nationally.

Additionally, to ensure the success of universal preschool, the recommendations of this report advise DEC take on the following responsibilities in the course of the launch of the program:

Application: DEC should work to develop a single, unified application for families to access all publicly-funded early childhood services and slots from birth to 5+ that is equitable and streamlines the enrollment and eligibility process for both families and providers. This application should be designed with the user experience in mind and offer families a simple and engaging interface. This application should ensure families are able to go to one place to apply for all early childhood services for their children, and at a minimum, this application should be functional for universal preschool by 2023.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (continued)

Eligibility and Prioritization: DEC should work with stakeholders and experts to create a base rate for universal preschool and additional adjustments or incentives that can build upon the base rate to ensure access for all children. This rate must balance the tensions between universally funding quality preschool for 10 hours a week and providing additional hours for Colorado’s children with greatest needs.

Quality and Evaluation: DEC should work with a representative group of stakeholders and experts to review existing Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) and other local and national standards to create a unified set of program standards for universal preschool that layer on top of minimum licensing standards and remove barriers for providers that hinder progress toward universal quality preschool. As part of this analysis, DEC should review Colorado’s existing birth to 5+ quality regulations and standards to align funding sources and develop a unified definition of quality experiences for the early care and education of all children, including in the universal preschool program. As charged by the legislation, DEC should contract with an external evaluator to measure the quality of universal preschool and child outcomes to enhance children’s positive outcomes for future years.

Workforce: To address the current early childhood workforce shortage and successfully launch a mixed delivery model for universal preschool, Colorado will need more educators, mental health specialists, home visitors, special education practitioners, and related service providers. DEC should support the workforce with increased compensation, including a liveable wage and benefits, aligned professional development supports, and other innovative strategies to ensure they are valued, healthy, and thriving. DEC should simplify the process to enter the early childhood field and clearly define the expected competencies the workforce should be achieving over time. As DEC works to implement these recommendations, they should consider ways they can strengthen the workforce as a whole, ensure the diversity of the workforce – racially, linguistically, and culturally – and avoid any unintended consequences on the rest of the birth to 5+ early childhood landscape.

Special Education: The recommendations related to special education as detailed in the DEC Transition Plan,⁷ including that the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) should continue to administer and be the identified state education agency responsible for compliance with IDEA Part B, are also relevant for the implementation of universal preschool. DEC should also partner with CDE to ensure all children with disabilities are served equitably in the universal preschool program, ensure access to inclusive classrooms, and operate in accordance with all federal and state regulations.

The establishment of universal preschool is an incredible opportunity for children, families, and providers that must be capitalized upon. This program will not only expand access for 4 year olds but can serve as a catalyst to transform Colorado’s entire early childhood system.

⁷ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1haHVk8WvAYOzAQ9Qe-QWgWxoUdYXIR92/view>



HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESCHOOL

Universal access to high-quality preschool can transform the lives of children, families, and communities. The window from birth to age 5 is a critical moment in a child's development, with 90% of brain development occurring during this time.⁸ The experiences children have in the first five years of their life lay the foundation for their future, and enrollment in a high-quality preschool program has major impacts on the entire course of a child's life.⁹

Research illustrates that children who attend high-quality preschool are, on average, eight months ahead in academic learning and about five months ahead in executive function skills, such as listening, planning, and self-control, compared to those who do not.¹⁰ Benefits extend far beyond the early years; children who attend high-quality preschool are more likely to graduate college and less likely to become a teenage parent or receive public assistance later in life.¹¹

Colorado Preschool Program

Colorado began its journey to universal preschool through the establishment of the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) in 1988, focused on serving Colorado's most in-need families. CPP also has a long history of strong, inclusive practices that provide children with disabilities opportunities to learn in the least restrictive environment with their peers. Each year, through the School Finance Act, the General Assembly approves funding for children considered to be at risk for later school failure to receive half-day or full-day preschool.¹² Since its inception, CPP has been managed by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) in partnership with local school districts and their preschool advisory councils. The strong collaborations among school districts, community-based partners, and CDE in administering CPP has resulted in over 378,000 children since 1988 being able to access high-quality learning experiences.¹³ While 23,474 children were served by CPP in the 2019-2020 school year, that represents only 33% of CPP-eligible 3 and 4 year olds and only 24% of all 4 year olds statewide.^{14 15}

The longitudinal data studies CDE has published demonstrate children experiencing risk factors who participate in high-quality preschool are promoted to the next grade at high rates in K-3, are meeting or exceeding Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) expectations compared to their peers who did not attend preschool, and are more likely to graduate on time.¹⁶ Coloradans recognized these benefits and voted overwhelmingly to offer preschool for all children across the state.¹⁷

Proposition EE

In November 2020, Colorado voters underscored their commitment to high-quality, voluntary preschool by passing ballot initiative Proposition EE by a 2-to-1 margin. Proposition EE increased the state tax on tobacco, established a nicotine products tax, and directed 73% of the funding to a universal, voluntary preschool program. Beginning in July 2023, all Colorado children, regardless of family income, will be entitled to access 10 hours per week of voluntary, high-quality preschool for free, in a system with options that accommodate diverse family needs and choice in the year prior to kindergarten.

Colorado Governor Jared Polis, knowing stakeholder input would be critical to the success of universal preschool, asked the Colorado Children's Campaign and Early Milestones Colorado to convene a process that would ensure the diverse interests of Colorado's stakeholders were reflected in the policy development process. This process led to the creation of two formal groups: the Preschool Policy Leadership Committee (PPLC) and the Preschool Policy Advisory Group (PPAG). From July 2020 to January 2021, these groups convened and developed considerations for policymakers regarding the preschool program.

During their conversations, these groups tackled issues ranging from the governance structures of the new preschool program to funding flow considerations to the capacity challenges Colorado faces.¹⁸ Experts were brought in to lend advice and guidance on how Colorado could structure this new program covering topics like family and provider participation, the development of program standards, and building from the current program structures that exist. This process culminated in a report outlining key learnings and conclusions.¹⁹ The work led by the PPLC and PPAG has been foundational to the recommendations in this report.

8. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-science-of-eecd/>

9. Ansari A. The Persistence Of Preschool Effects From Early Childhood Through Adolescence. *J Educ Psychol.* 2018; doi:10.1037/edu0000255

10. *ibid.*

11. *ibid.*

12. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp>

13. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/cppfacts>

14. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/2021cplegreport>

15. <https://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-KC-Final-low-res-8.18.21-1.pdf>

16. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/2021cplegreport>

17. https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/initiative%2520referendum_prop%20ee%20final%20lc%20packet.pdf

18. https://drive.google.com/file/d/12USDLsT7pM_SRAVtrFmNFV6US5d0CpWL/view

19. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CLUUSD4QtCV3oJwmAFmqoSAEfp9jibgx2/view>

Background (continued)

Creation of a Department of Early Childhood

Colorado recognized new government structures were needed to fully capitalize on the historic preschool investment voters had made in their state. During the 2021 legislative session, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC), the federally authorized state advisory council on early childhood, recommended the creation of a department that would “consolidate the various authorities, programs, and funding streams that currently exist across state agencies and focus on a unified vision of comprehensive early childhood service delivery for all children birth to age 5.”²⁰ This recommendation was realized through House Bill 21-1304.²¹

HB21-1304, sponsored by Colorado Representative Emily Sirota (D-Denver), House Speaker Alec Garnett (D-Denver), Senate Majority Leader Stephen Fenberg (D-Boulder), and Senator Janet Buckner (D-Aurora), created a new state Department of Early Childhood (DEC) to coordinate a unified early childhood system and ensure the equitable distribution of resources and programming, including the new universal, voluntary preschool program. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate and by an overwhelming margin in the House. By passing HB21-1304, the Colorado legislature recognized the historic moment of Proposition EE as one in which all children could be better served by a unified early childhood system for all of the services that support children and families.

DEC will be established as a cabinet-level state early childhood agency in July 2022 and will be responsible for the implementation of the new statewide, voluntary, universal preschool program beginning in the 2023-2024 school year. On November 1, 2021 the Transition Working Group, informed by a wide range of stakeholders, released a set of recommendations for the creation of DEC. This Transition Plan was approved unanimously by the ECLC.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Feedback and considerations from stakeholders from around the state have been central to developing these recommendations. HB21-1304 required the creation of three groups focused on advising and making recommendations on DEC and the universal preschool program.

Transition Advisory Group (TAG): The ECLC convened the TAG to advise the Transition Working Group (TWG) and ensure this process was grounded in the recommendations of a diverse group of stakeholders.²² TAG is composed of 56 community leaders who offer a wide array of public and private perspectives to ensure the recommendations reflect the full spectrum of early childhood program and service providers. This includes parents, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, local Early Childhood Councils, and other stakeholders representing under-served and under-resourced communities. In accordance with HB21-1304, more than half of TAG members are parents, early childhood programs and services providers, and members of the workforce who represent geographically and programmatically diverse perspectives.

Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup: The legislation called for the creation of a subgroup dedicated to developing recommendations for the administration of preschool special education services within the new preschool program. Recommendations from this group were presented to the TWG and informed the recommendations in the Transition Plan.

Transition Working Group (TWG): The TWG includes the ECLC co-chairs and representatives from existing departments and the Governor’s office. The TWG was charged with the development of the Transition Plan for the DEC, as well as recommendations for a new statewide, voluntary, universal preschool program.

A comprehensive overview of all stakeholder engagement can be found in Appendices 1, 2, and 3.

20. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5679be9605f8e24bd8be467a/t/606cceb28188da7a1525592b/1617743539248/ECLC+Governance+Recommendation+-+Final.pdf>

21. https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2021a_1304_signed.pdf

22. See Appendix 1 for more detailed information about TAG members.

UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the requirements of HB21-1304, the Transition Working Group (TWG), taking into account the advice of the Transition Advisory Group (TAG), subgroups, and other stakeholder engagement efforts, developed these recommendations for the new statewide, voluntary, universal preschool program. On January 11, 2022, the ECLC voted unanimously to approve these recommendations and submitted them to the Governor, the Joint Budget Committee, and Members of the General Assembly.

The recommendations outlined in this report aim to provide Colorado's Department of Early Childhood (DEC) with guidance and direction to ensure a successful launch of the voluntary, universal preschool program. These recommendations are a starting point DEC should use as they prepare for the launch of universal, voluntary preschool in the 2023-2024 school year. This work will undoubtedly necessitate continual stakeholder engagement, review, and evaluation to ensure all of Colorado's children are valued, healthy, and thriving.

By establishing a universal preschool program, Colorado is requiring the state scale the availability of preschool to ensure every 4 year old, regardless of zip code, can access at least 10 hours of free programming per week, while maintaining additional supports for children 3 years old and younger who are experiencing risk factors and currently being served through the Colorado Preschool Program. The magnitude of this vision, and the importance of ensuring not just that all families can enroll their children in preschool programs, but that those programs are high quality, requires the state work urgently toward achieving the goal of building an early care and education system that is accessible, affordable, and valuable for children and families over the next several years. Through universal preschool, Colorado also has an unprecedented opportunity to leverage DEC and new local infrastructure to improve the quality and availability of early childhood programs and services for all young children, including infants and toddlers.

TWG recognizes the implementation of universal preschool and these recommendations will come with many challenges that state agencies, local communities, and individual providers will need to collaboratively address. These challenges include workforce shortages, limitations in current local capacity, and lack of existing alignment in funding and regulations. However, these recommendations articulate how investments in building infrastructure through local leads can set Colorado on the right track to address these challenges and build capacity over time not only for preschool programs, but for all early childhood and family strengthening programs. While the voluntary, universal preschool program will launch in July 2023, fully implementing these recommendations and addressing challenges in the entire birth to 5+ system must be a process of continual and urgent innovation, engagement, and adaptation.

With the establishment of the universal preschool program, DEC should define the components of a quality preschool program, including determining quality standards, requiring accountability, and addressing the needs of the whole child. Any provider may participate and receive funding provided they are licensed, agree and adhere to all program requirements, participate in the evaluation process, and comply with other requirements as they are developed by DEC. These recommendations outline the infrastructure needed to launch this program and call for DEC to use recommended processes to decide upon the structures, standards, tools, assessments, and details necessary to scale a quality program.

Vision, Mission, Values, and Guiding Principles

These recommendations for the universal preschool program remain grounded in the mission, vision, values, and guiding principles established in the DEC Transition Plan.

VISION	MISSION	VALUES	GUIDING PRINCIPLES
<p>All Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy and thriving.</p>	<p>The Colorado Department of Early Childhood ensures the delivery of a comprehensive, community-informed, data-driven, high-quality, and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education and well-being of all Colorado's young children, their families, and early childhood professionals in all settings.</p>	<p>We value equity across the early childhood system and are committed to utilizing an equity-focused lens to drive priorities and decision making.</p> <p>We believe formal and informal care environments can provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate care and learning.</p> <p>We respect and appreciate the diversity and strengths of all of our communities in Colorado.</p> <p>We believe accessibility to early childhood services considers affordability, cultural responsiveness, and parent choice.</p> <p>We value an innovative and expansive approach to our early childhood system.</p> <p>We value a whole-family approach.</p>	<p>Child, Family, and Community Centered</p> <p>Equity Driven</p> <p>All Children Served</p> <p>Holistic Services Approach</p> <p>Mixed Delivery System</p> <p>Thriving, Effective Workforce</p> <p>High-Quality Standards</p> <p>Streamlined Efficiency</p> <p>Data-Driven Outcomes,</p> <p>Focused Decisions</p> <p>Accountability</p> <p>Innovation</p>

Building and Strengthening an Early Childhood Infrastructure

To achieve Colorado's goal of a universally available preschool program that helps all children to realize their potential, Colorado must think about its infrastructure needs, including leadership, capacity, workforce, resources, and more. If done well, these investments in early childhood infrastructure have the potential to impact generations to come. While the establishment of infrastructure will take time and effort, it will ultimately result in an early childhood system that works for all children and families, maximizes funding, and is equitable and easy to navigate.

The structure of these investments have been a critical point of discussion. This infrastructure must answer for the requirements and aims of the legislation, including:

- **Funding flow:** How should funding flow from the universal preschool budget to a slot for a child, and what conditions are necessary for that process to ensure every child is offered a slot that meets their needs?
- **Local partnerships:** How can local partnerships be created and strengthened to incorporate locally-available funding and processes as part of the universal preschool program delivery?
- **Program alignment:** What alignment of programs is necessary to ensure successful delivery of the universal preschool program? What formal agreements need to be created?
- **Mixed delivery:** What is needed to ensure a mixed delivery of the universal preschool program and who is responsible for ensuring that?

Building and Strengthening an Early Childhood Infrastructure (continued)

Throughout the engagement process, stakeholders discussed various structure options that solve for these questions, and the following values arose:

- All families should be able to apply for and enroll in programs with ease.
- Every 4 year old should be offered a slot that reflects their family's preferences to the greatest extent possible.
- Children experiencing poverty or other risk factors should receive more hours of programming to the greatest extent possible.
- Families and providers should not bear the burden of blending, braiding, or stacking individual funding streams; the system must take on the burden wherever possible.
- Early childhood providers require funding predictability and stability in order to staff classrooms, reliably offer slots, and achieve and maintain quality.
- The state cannot solve localities' unique challenges. Communities must be empowered and given the flexibility to innovate and solve local challenges.
- There are varying levels of community readiness to administer universal preschool, which will likely require additional supports from DEC and its partners.
- Local innovation and leadership, such as special taxing districts, shared services models, and other community based efforts, must be elevated and supported.

Additional stakeholder input gathered throughout this process²³ and years²⁴ of engagement around universal preschool can be found in the footnotes.



Based on these values, to best serve the diverse communities across the state, Colorado should invest in an infrastructure with:

1. **Local leads empowered and charged to solve local challenges, foster partnerships, create alignment across all local entities, and plan for the allocation of funding equitably in their communities.**
2. **A demonstrated commitment from the Department of Early Childhood to resource local leads and communities and to ensure Colorado's aligned early childhood vision is executed successfully across the state.**

23. <http://www.earlychildhoodcolorado.org/transition-plan-feedback-form>

24. PPLC: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/futureofcopreschool>

Building and Strengthening an Early Childhood Infrastructure (continued)

What is a local lead and what might a local lead do?

Local leads, rather than state employees, are best positioned to know what a community needs and create innovative and responsive solutions that are best suited for the local context. There have been many examples of successful local leadership of coordination efforts across the state of Colorado that have benefited the entire early childhood landscape, including the Denver Preschool Program and early childhood coordination efforts in Summit County. By setting a shared vision and coordinating resources, these communities have demonstrated it is possible to maximize both state and local investments and meet families where they are to provide full-day programs for those that need and want it. As local leads are established across the state, DEC should elevate examples of success like these and learn from existing local infrastructure and practices.

Local leads should be DEC's partners in each area of the state to organize the local early childhood landscape and serve as the singular local level coordinator on early childhood. Local leads should bring community partners together - including Early Childhood Councils (ECC's), schools, child care, Head Start, and counties - to build a unified, long-term early childhood community plan and to request state-administered early childhood dollars (e.g., Proposition EE, future federal investments in early childhood) in alignment with that plan. This plan should be mindful of supporting and continuing existing community capacity, ensuring children with disabilities have access to inclusive preschool programs in alignment with the IDEA, and should also consider what is needed to align existing structures with community needs. In this process, DEC should set clear expectations and deliverables for local leads to ensure they engage with all local partners and all voices in the community are at the table.

Local leads should be charged to, at a minimum:

- **Ensure there is no wrong door.** Reduce steps and burdens for families and providers and ensure there is no wrong door for entering the early childhood care and education system.
- **Coordinate the application process.** Recruit and support families through the streamlined application process coordinated across all local partners.
- **Ensure universal access to the preschool program.** Ensure every 4 year old is offered a high-quality preschool slot, in alignment with family choice.
- **Manage mixed delivery.** Ensure universal preschool is implemented in licensed settings, such as public schools, community-based organizations, and family child care homes, and dollars are allocated in accordance with the community plan and family demand. Local leads should also recognize the important role school districts play in administering IDEA and ensuring access to high-quality preschool environments for children with disabilities in this process.
- **Plan for the allocation of funding equitably.** Plan for the allocation of all available early childhood funding in an equitable manner and ensure children experiencing risk factors receive more services to the greatest extent possible.
- **Ensure understanding of quality.** Ensure leaders and workforce across all programs clearly understand the state's definition of quality care and education across the birth to 5+ continuum, and provide supports to achieve that definition wherever needed.
- **Increase community capacity.** Where too few slots exist, grow capacity of quality providers over time to better meet family and community needs.
- **Support local workforce.** Support providers in the recruitment, development, and retention of a quality early childhood workforce.
- **Collect local level data.** Work with providers to collect key systems level data for their catchment area to report to DEC, while also reducing burdens and duplication.²⁵

²⁵ For specific examples of recommended data, please see page 28 of the [DEC Transition Plan](#).

Building and Strengthening an Early Childhood Infrastructure (continued)

Who could serve as a local lead?

Colorado's regional differences and local leadership diversity means the best equipped local lead will not be the same entity in each corner of the state, nor will every catchment area be defined by the same boundaries. The process for designating a local lead should be flexible enough to account for these differences and leverage strong existing community infrastructure, where possible.

Local leads should be selected through a rigorous application process conducted by DEC, and applications should demonstrate buy-in from other local partners (e.g., through letters of support from local partners). DEC should select the best fit entity to fulfill these duties, provide incentives to support coordination and collaboration, and hold such entities accountable to fulfill the charge, with the possibility of transferring, non-renewing, or changing the local lead if and when the responsibilities are not adequately executed. In determining local leads and the support they need, DEC, building on existing analyses and resources, should review the landscape to understand capacity and opportunities for efficiency and should consider multiple funding mechanisms to support efficient delivery of slots.

Any public agency (for example, a county) or Colorado-based nonprofit organization (for example, an Early Childhood Council (ECC)) could apply, including newly formed organizations, strategic partnerships between organizations, or other locally determined innovations.²⁶ Some local leads may elect to take on larger areas, or multiple areas, and the size of catchment areas may vary across the state. DEC should ensure there is a process to periodically re compete for this role to ensure there is accountability for achieving the charge of the local lead and the role is filled by the best fit entity.

What would be the Department of Early Childhood's role?

Local leads should be empowered and accountable for (a) creating strong local partnerships and alignment between programs in their region and (b) ensuring a clear vision for early childhood is executed in their area of the state. DEC and regional support staff should collaborate with local leads and support them to build collaboration and coordination with their local partners and to achieve their charge by providing them with resources to meet community needs. DEC should also create incentives and hold local leads accountable for executing their charge and adhering to both their local plan and the statewide early childhood vision.

Communities in Colorado are at varying degrees of readiness for universal preschool. Some communities have a clear local leader, while fragmentation between programs or providers hinders collaboration in others. Some areas have enough providers, while many areas are child care deserts. Many communities face a shortage of capacity in classrooms and transportation, and many areas face affordability issues. In addition, some communities have dedicated funding for preschool administered at the local level, while many do not.

Recognizing this variation, DEC should be responsive to all communities and support them in accordance with their needs. For example, in a community that is unable to identify an equipped local lead, DEC should provide the community with resources necessary to complete these roles or connect them to a partner organization who can provide these services. At the same time, DEC should work to recruit and build the capacity of a local partner within the first three years of universal preschool implementation.

DEC's staff should be well-resourced so they can:

- Leverage existing and build early childhood infrastructure to successfully deliver universal preschool.
 - **Empower local leadership:** Competitively select, launch, manage, and train local leads to build community birth to 5+ early childhood plans and implement universal preschool, with a process to re compete to ensure continued best fit over time. Collaborate with local leads as implementation partners and fully support them to achieve their charge. Where local leads are not identified or ready, ensure universal preschool is offered in some form until the local lead is prepared.
 - **Oversee local leads:** Hold local leads accountable to fulfilling their charge, set clear expectations and deliverables, and ensure guidelines and regulations are complied with in all areas of the state, including the collection of data as recommended in the DEC Transition Plan²⁷ and the distribution of public funds.

26. For a longer list of who these local leads could be please see appendix 4.

27. For specific examples of recommended data need to be collected please see page 28 of the [DEC Transition Plan](#).

Building and Strengthening an Early Childhood Infrastructure (continued)

- **Build capacity, immediately and over time:** Invest in local leadership and capacity with strong investments in infrastructure for start up and implementation, including funding, training, technical assistance, partnership, and accountability.
 - **Incentivize local share:** Award funding based on the strong local spending plans that incentivize, at a minimum, (a) mixed delivery, (b) sustained/growing local investment, (c) infant and toddler care, and (d) inclusive classrooms.
 - **Fund equitably:** Ensure the funding allocation process provides universal service, but also ensures equity of offerings to all children in Colorado and contributes toward a liveable wage for the early childhood workforce.
 - **Align regulations and programs:** Align all funding and programmatic regulations, wherever possible, to better blend, braid, and stack federal, state, and local early childhood dollars.
- Establish a unified state-level vision and align all funding, initiatives, and efforts toward achieving it.
 - **Unify applications:** Build a simple, common application that can be used and adapted across Colorado. This application should connect to state eligibility systems to minimize families' needs to apply for services and maximize use of dollars across funding streams (e.g., CCCAP, Head Start, targeted funds).²⁸
 - **Define quality:** Clearly define a quality universal preschool classroom, evaluate classrooms across the state against that definition, and provide supports so more programs can achieve quality over time.²⁹ This definition should be above and beyond minimum licensing standards to ensure universal preschool promotes outcomes for children.
 - **Elevate competencies for the early childhood workforce:** Elevate the competencies for educators to guide the workforce, and review regulatory barriers to entry to the field while promoting attainment of these competencies through identified partners (including higher education pathways), freely available training, prior experience and learning, and reduced bureaucracy.³⁰
 - **Work towards a liveable wage for the early childhood workforce:** Work with local leads to determine liveable wage and compensation costs for their region and help to implement innovative strategies for benefits such as health insurance.
 - **Promote inclusive classrooms:** In coordination with CDE, provide guidance and funding to promote inclusive classrooms (classrooms with both children with disabilities and those with more typical development) in mixed delivery settings, and accessible supports for children with disabilities prior to kindergarten entry.
 - **Set mixed delivery guidelines:** Establish a set of guidelines regarding mixed delivery for local leads to ensure universal preschool is administered in an equitable, mixed delivery system.

Fiscal responsibility for payment is dependent on infrastructure and technology and should be informed by additional expertise to set the department and the universal preschool program up for the most success. Funding for the provision of early care and education, including preschool, should ensure the administrative costs of allocating funding is minimized so that funding for providers and the children and families they serve is maximized. DEC should make decisions about how to make payments for providers based on local context, efficiency, the potential for multiple funding streams, possible partners, as well as short and long-term capacity goals for DEC and local leads.

The DEC should work with local communities and – through a competitive-selection process – identify a local lead, such as a public agency or a Colorado nonprofit, that will then coordinate the distribution of funds to preschool providers within their catchment area. DEC should ensure, through its capacity, contracts, and partnerships, all areas in the state have implementation coverage, as local partners prepare to lead in all parts of the state. However, if no local lead in a community is able to undertake the financial responsibilities of this role, DEC should support them accordingly or through a partner to ensure the equitable distribution of public funds in each community. Funding

²⁸ A more comprehensive recommendation for application can be found on page 17.

²⁹ A more comprehensive recommendation for quality can be found on page 20

³⁰ A more comprehensive recommendation for the workforce can be found on page 21-23.

Building and Strengthening an Early Childhood Infrastructure (continued)

This infrastructure should be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of Colorado. As DEC builds this infrastructure, it should reward and elevate examples of programs and providers that are successfully serving children. As local leads are established, it will be imperative they are offered the opportunity to learn from the implementation challenges and solutions that arise throughout the state to create a culture of collaboration. **While local leads are a key part of the implementation of universal preschool, this infrastructure will be integral to the delivery of all early childhood services and programs.**

Establishing this innovative early childhood infrastructure will have transformative effects on the ways families and providers experience the system at a local level. Instead of having to navigate a fragmented system, families and providers would have a more streamlined experience with a strong local point of contact. Eliminating these burdens will result in a simplified system in which families and providers are able to focus on the things that matter most. Notably, this system will not just strengthen preschool delivery but will improve systems to deliver all early childhood programs birth to 5+, where appropriate.

This model would have the following impacts on the questions raised above:

Funding Flow: Fiscal responsibility for payment is dependent on infrastructure and technology and should be informed by additional expertise to set the department and the universal preschool program up for the most success. Funding for the provision of early care and education, including preschool, should ensure the administrative costs of allocating funding is minimized so that funding for providers and the children and families they serve is maximized. DEC should make decisions about how to make payments for providers based on local context, efficiency, the potential for multiple funding streams, possible partners, as well as short and long-term capacity goals for DEC and local leads.

The DEC should work with local communities and – through a competitive-selection process – identify a local lead, such as a public agency or a Colorado nonprofit, that will then coordinate the distribution of funds to preschool providers within their catchment area. DEC should ensure, through its capacity, contracts, and partnerships, all areas in the state have implementation coverage, as local partners prepare to lead in all parts of the state. However, if no local lead in a community is able to undertake the financial responsibilities of this role, DEC should support them accordingly or through a partner to ensure the equitable distribution of public funds in each community. Funding must be transparent, auditable, and reinforce clear accountability to ensure dollars are spent wisely and efficiently.

Local Partnerships: Local leads should be responsible for creating a community plan for early childhood, including birth to 5+, in collaboration with all local partners. These plans should, at a minimum, ensure all available funding for universal preschool is accounted for, define a streamlined application and enrollment process across partners, including aligning eligibility requirements where possible, and address capacity needs to achieve universal preschool for all.

Alignment with Other Programs: DEC should establish a unified vision for young children and their families, supported by regulatory changes to reduce fragmentation and burdens, that enables local leads to increase alignment and coherence for families and providers.

Mixed Delivery: Local plans should account for distributing funding in each community to providers in an equitable way that matches family demand, promotes inclusive classrooms, adheres to DEC guardrails, and promotes availability of care across ages.

For a summary of the recommended roles for DEC and local leads, see Appendix 4.



Simple and Unified Family Application

HB21-1304 calls for the development of a common program application process that is easily accessible to families and streamlines enrollment and eligibility. This application should ensure families are able to go to one place to apply for all early childhood services for their children.

In feedback across engagements, there was consensus on the following points:

- Colorado should build an application that is easy to complete and submit, and is designed around streamlining and enhancing user experience.
 - DEC must set requirements to ensure equitable access to the application process. The application should at a minimum be:
 - Translated into multiple languages.
 - Mobile accessible.
 - Available as a paper copy.
 - The base application should collect only as much information from families as necessary.
 - Families who would only like to access universal preschool should be able to complete a base application with the minimum amount of needed information collected.
 - Families interested in additional resources should be able to submit more specific information to determine eligibility for other services and support.
 - There should be easily integratable and interoperable technology that verifies eligibility for additional funding by checking against other programs families may already be eligible for or utilizing (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid).
 - As the application is developed and implemented, DEC should ensure it adheres to all state and federal data privacy and security laws.
 - Where possible, this application should reduce the duplication of information collection and the complexity of process for providers.
- This application should be comprehensive in its inclusion of all publicly-funded early childhood services and slots from birth to 5+. This would include all funding sources that can be blended, braided, or stacked with universal preschool dollars (e.g., Proposition EE and CPP/ECARE, CCCAP, Head Start, local funds). DEC should develop an implementation plan with all necessary partners to ensure, at a minimum, this application is functional for universal preschool by 2023.
- This application should allow for local customization, so communities can include any additional local or regional based programming in the application.
- DEC should fund and empower local navigation support through local leads to assist families in completing the application and to coordinate community outreach.

DEC should work with a team of experts to ensure these recommendations are thoughtfully integrated into the design and launch of this application.

The Department of Early Childhood should work to develop a single, unified application for families to access all publicly-funded early childhood services and slots from birth to 5+ that is equitable and streamlines the enrollment and eligibility process for both families and providers. This application should be designed with the user experience in mind and offer families a simple and engaging interface. This application should ensure families are able to go to one place to apply for all early childhood services for their children. DEC should develop an implementation plan with all necessary partners to ensure, at a minimum, this application is functional for universal preschool by 2023.

Eligibility and Prioritization for Funding

The universal preschool program must balance offering all participating 4 year olds a quality experience and providing additional services to meet the needs of children experiencing risk factors and their families. While Proposition EE calls for universal access, it also calls for the use of any additional dollars for preschool programming for families with limited incomes and children experiencing risk factors, ideally to provide full-day programming where needed by the family.

Stakeholders have emphasized the importance of a mixed delivery system, and legislation requires the universal preschool program to be implemented through both school- and community-based early childhood programs. Mixed delivery is defined as “a system (a) of early childhood education services that are delivered through a combination of programs, providers, and settings (such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, and community-based organizations); and (b) that is supported with a combination of public funds and private funds.”³¹

While rates based on the School Finance Act were used for CPP, a true mixed delivery system necessitates a new approach to per-child rates. This new approach needs to reflect the state’s commitment to ensuring all children can access 10 hours of funded preschool a week while continuing to prioritize children experiencing risk factors, taking into account regional differences, and supporting key priorities critical to the success of the universal preschool program, such as additional resources for special education services.

At the same time, current community-based and school-based programs have emphasized the importance of stability in funding to maintain quality programs and ensure that the state does not unintentionally reduce capacity, particularly for services for children experiencing risk factors as well as infants and toddlers. With additional resources through Proposition EE and coordination with other programs like the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), both of these goals are possible to achieve.

In order to define eligibility and prioritization for universal preschool funding, DEC should convene both stakeholders with diverse and representative perspectives and content area experts, including experts in early childhood finance, to help determine:

- A base rate for 10 hours of universal preschool.
- Additional adjustments including:
 - Weighting for underserved populations, including children experiencing risk factors, dual language learners, children in foster care, children experiencing homelessness, and children receiving special education services.
 - Regional considerations such as economies of scale in rural areas.
 - Potential for half-day or full-day slots.
- Any other additional incentives such as teacher qualifications, implementation of mixed delivery, care for infants and toddlers, options for wrap-around services, and quality.



31. Every Student Succeeds Act: <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>

Eligibility and Prioritization for Funding (continued)

In this process, the state should ensure:

- At a minimum, CPP funding does not drop below current levels as it is combined with Proposition EE to create one universal preschool funding stream, including keeping current funding for children 3 years old and younger experiencing risk factors, so these children can consistently access services.
- The universal preschool rate is not tied to the school finance formula and reflects differences in risk factors, regional needs, and special education services.
- The universal preschool rate is kept stable or increases over time to support a reliable system.
- There is a plan for funding allocation in times of scarcity and excess, including how to ensure the available targeted funds are allocated to meet family needs.
- The process to make these determinations is data driven and transparent.

When allocating additional funding for full-day services, DEC should review the current CPP risk factors, needs of the state, and national standards as a starting point to determine eligibility for additional funding to ensure students who are currently eligible for additional services do not lose that access. The risk factors determined by DEC should be clearly defined and consider the needs of all areas of the state and all populations. As additional funding is allocated, the needs of working families should be considered so resources are as closely aligned with full day needs as much as possible.

As DEC works to establish the details for the universal preschool program, in each decision, they should consider the impacts on the entirety of the birth to 5+ system and create alignment where possible.

The Department of Early Childhood should work with stakeholders and experts to create a base rate for universal preschool and additional adjustments or incentives that can build upon the base rate to ensure access for all children. This rate must balance the tensions between universally funding quality preschool for 10 hours a week and providing additional hours for Colorado's children with greatest needs.



Quality and Evaluation

Proposition EE makes all 4 year olds eligible not just for 10 hours of preschool but for 10 hours of a *high-quality* preschool per week. To ensure the program is fulfilling its charge, DEC will need to create universal preschool program quality requirements that define state-funded “preschool” for the purpose of this program and an evaluation process that effectively assesses all participating providers. Only early childhood providers meeting this definition will be able to receive funding under this program. This process will include defining the requirements necessary for a provider to offer universal preschool, setting program standards, considering a variety of research and evidence based curriculums and assessment tools, and determining practices around the administration of screeners, among other considerations.

To support a high-quality universal, voluntary preschool program, DEC should:

- Review standards from CPP, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Head Start Program Performance Standards, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Denver Preschool Program (DPP), and guidance on any possible new federal preschool funding to find opportunities to simplify and align as it designs standards for the universal preschool program (e.g., screening referrals, ratios, class size, teacher qualifications).
- DEC’s quality requirements should, at a minimum, reflect national best practices tied to social emotional learning and child and family outcomes.
- Where possible, DEC should identify where standards may limit universal access, such as ratios and licensing regulations, and look for solutions (e.g., ratios should allow providers to scale to meet additional needs).
- Contract with an external evaluator to measure the success of universal preschool, including measuring child outcomes, and to provide recommendations to improve the program in future years.
- Where possible, the data from these assessments should be provided to educators to inform their instruction practices and foster individualized improvement.

To create a quality, unified early childhood system, DEC should:

- Establish a single set of developmentally appropriate standards for the quality experience children should be having in classrooms regardless of funding source or setting, and align resources and supports to help local communities achieve it.
- Consider a phased approach to quality, due to the current constraints of the system, to support all communities as they seek to scale quality.
- Create free and widely accessible (e.g., multi-lingual) professional development on the Early Learning and Development Guidelines.³¹
- Work with local leads and eligible providers to build capacity to meet quality standards.

Throughout these processes, DEC should engage with a representative group of stakeholders, including all types of providers, to inform program standards and quality improvement. Through these engagements, DEC should ensure that the quality and evaluation system they create is not burdensome or duplicative for providers.

DEC should prioritize the development of these standards, quality definitions, and evaluation tools for universal preschool, prior to its launch in 2023. However, as soon as possible, DEC should work towards developing the vision for quality programming for the early care and education of all children and the process to evaluate achievement of that vision, to drive improvement in the experiences of children.

³¹ <https://earlylearningco.org/>

The Department of Early Childhood should review existing quality regulations and standards to develop alignment across funding sources and a unified definition of quality experiences for the early care and education of all children, including the universal preschool program. As charged by the legislation, DEC should contract with an external evaluator to measure the quality of universal preschool and child outcomes to enhance children’s positive outcomes for future years.

Workforce

Universal, voluntary preschool cannot be successful without a strong early childhood workforce. This program will fail to meet the vision that all 4 year olds in Colorado can access a high-quality preschool experience without enough early childhood providers, teachers, and health, mental health, and special education staff. Providing high-quality programming for all 4 year olds in the state will require major investments in recruiting, developing, and retaining an effective, diverse early childhood workforce.³²

While these recommendations center on the universal preschool workforce, many of these challenges are faced by the entire early childhood workforce, including birth to 5+ programs and services. As DEC works to implement these recommendations, they should consider ways they can strengthen the workforce as a whole and avoid any unintended consequences on the rest of the early childhood landscape as they seek to recruit new members of the workforce for the universal preschool program.

Currently, Colorado, like many other states, is in the midst of a major early childhood workforce shortage, which continues to take a heavy toll on access to the early childhood system. From 2020 to 2021 alone, the number of active early childhood professionals declined by 6.8%, and 70% of early childhood education providers reported difficulties finding qualified staff.^{33 34} In addition to challenges in hiring, early childhood providers struggle to retain staff, causing a barrier to quality programming. The Colorado Early Care and Education Workforce Data Dashboard reports a 28% turnover rate in the early care and education workforce in 2019 alone.³⁵

Colorado has been dedicated to strengthening and supporting its early childhood workforce for many years. In 2017, the ECLC endorsed Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan, an ambitious roadmap created by stakeholders that promotes a qualified and diverse early childhood workforce for Colorado.^{36 37} Additionally, higher education partners, in collaboration with the CDE, the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), and the Early Childhood Workforce Development subcommittee of the ECLC, have worked to innovate this space by creating effective and efficient postsecondary pathways that are responsive to the needs of the current and future early childhood workforce. The Colorado Department of Higher Education's (CDHE) statewide plan for higher education, Colorado Rises, includes strategies to increase postsecondary attainment, erase equity gaps, improve student success, and commit to affordability, cost containment, and innovation.³⁸ Colorado recently received national recognition for its work as the University of Colorado Denver, in collaboration with state agencies and a consortium of institutions of higher education, was awarded a significant grant from the Early Educator Investment Collaborative (EEIC) to continue to transform early educator coursework and degree pathways.³⁹

Additional details about how Colorado's higher education partners are supporting the early childhood workforce can be found in Appendix 6.



32. Given that the legislation requires classrooms to be licensed, universal preschool teachers will need to meet child care licensing requirements, at a minimum.

33. http://coga.prod.acquia-sites.com/sites/default/files/html-attachments/52de90a9a2a414ac872587560058a294_hearing_summary/Attachment%20A.pdf

34. <https://earlymilestones.org/project/transforming-colorados-early-childhood-workforce/>

35. https://public.tableau.com/views/OEC_PDIS_BJU_Analytics/Home?%3AshowVizHome=no

36. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5679be9605f8e24bd8be467a/t/594d23ee15d5dbae6d69c065/1498227696968/CECWF2020-062217-pages.pdf>

37. Colorado as a state has made commitments to the workforce through a set of statewide workforce development wildly important goals that can be found [here](#).

38. <http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/>

39. <https://earlyedcollaborative.org/what-we-do/grants/innovation-grant-opportunity>

Workforce (continued)

The early childhood profession must be elevated so members of the workforce are respected, valued, and seen as integral members of the fabric of communities across the state. DEC should build on the ongoing work of the ECLC, OEC, CDHE, and CDE, and by the launch of universal preschool in 2023, DEC should:

- Immediately focus funding resources on ensuring that there are enough workforce members, including special education service delivery providers, available to work on day one of universal preschool implementation, and that they are appropriately compensated with a liveable wage, while also ensuring continued access for all ages before preschool and addressing shortages across the age continuum.
 - This will include managing any unintended consequences impacting the workforce serving infants and toddlers.
- Review the current workforce qualification pathways to create a simplified process for the workforce and providers to attain credentials and qualifications.
 - Ensure the process for joining the early childhood workforce is welcoming, and there are minimal barriers to entry including being thoughtful about those who speak additional languages.
 - Consider how to recruit and incentivize different populations (e.g., high school students, teachers from other countries, parents) and reduce the barriers that prevent them from joining the workforce.
 - Consider an induction model that could decrease the time it takes to get a teacher in a classroom by using an onboarding process to meet regulations and requirements.
- Clearly articulate the most recently revised competencies⁴⁰ needed by the workforce, align the system of professional learning, and review regulatory barriers to promote attainment of these competencies through identified partners, including higher education pathways.
- Develop and share sustainable and evidence-based strategies in conjunction with leads from CDHE, CDLE, CDE, ECLC, and other organizations to sustainably recruit, compensate, develop, and incentivize new members of the workforce.
 - Align available supports for teachers across programs, contracts, and funding streams, and fund additional evidence-based supports.
 - Implement strategies to increase compensation, with a goal to reach a liveable wage (e.g., incentivizing providers to increase wages through grants, paying signing bonus, supporting shared services, and other innovations to increase availability of benefits).
 - Create free and widely accessible professional development on the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines⁴¹ once reviewed and adopted by DEC.
 - Support mentoring or coaching opportunities to promote development of the workforce.
 - Connect members of the workforce to early childhood career navigators as a resource.
 - Increase access to professional development to attain these competencies through freely available training, reduced bureaucracy, increased options for work-based learning, and stackable, credit-bearing experiences that align with degree pathways.
 - Provide targeted support for members of the workforce who have faced historic and systemic barriers to ensure Colorado's early childhood workforce is linguistically, racially, and culturally diverse.



40. https://www.coloradoshinespdis.com/s/Competencies-and-the-Colorado-Shines-PDIS?language=en_US

41. <https://earlylearningco.org/>

Workforce (continued)

DEC should increase the numbers across the ranks of the workforce, increase compensation, and improve the pathways towards competency-based, credit-bearing learning and development. To achieve these objectives, DEC should identify both short and long-term actionable goals that address the challenges faced by the early childhood workforce. Through these efforts, DEC should build and continue to strengthen the systemic supports that ensure every early childhood workforce member has the opportunity to gain needed skills, appropriate compensation, and ongoing career supports.

To address the current early childhood workforce shortage and successfully launch a mixed delivery model for universal preschool, Colorado will need more educators, mental health specialists, home visitors, special education practitioners, and related service providers. DEC should support the workforce with increased compensation, including a liveable wage and benefits, aligned professional development supports, and other innovative strategies to ensure they are valued, healthy, and thriving. DEC should simplify the process to enter the early childhood field and clearly define the expected competencies the workforce should be achieving over time. As DEC works to implement these recommendations, they should consider ways they can strengthen the workforce as a whole, ensure the diversity of the workforce – racially, linguistically, and culturally – and avoid any unintended consequences on the rest of the birth to 5+ early childhood landscape.

Special Education

As the new statewide, universal preschool program is charged to serve all children in Colorado, children with disabilities must be prioritized and considered in all discussions. Colorado is proud of its strong legacy of building and sustaining inclusive classrooms that allow children with disabilities to learn in the least restrictive setting with their peers. In the DEC Transition Plan,⁴² TWG, based on the input from the Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup, recommended CDE continue to administer and ensure compliance with IDEA, Part B. This was necessary based on federal law, which makes Administrative Units accountable for delivering special education services across the state and the State Educational Agency the identified agency responsible for compliance with this federal law.

While this report does not suggest any programmatic or structural changes related to accountability and oversight of special education, it does recommend two critical steps DEC, in coordination with CDE, can take to build and strengthen inclusivity and supports for children with disabilities, including:

1. Considering additional funding for children with disabilities as a supplement to the universal preschool program rate; and
2. Ensuring strong collaboration between DEC and CDE on special education service delivery, including that both agencies support the implementation of inclusive classrooms for children with disabilities in a mixed delivery system.

Specifically regarding collaboration, the Transition Plan recommended:

CDE, in partnership with DEC and stakeholders, should utilize the input from the Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup to develop a preschool special education implementation plan to support districts, administrative units, and other providers working in partnership to fulfill the requirements of IDEA and Colorado's ECEA. This plan will include:

- ***Best practices of mixed delivery currently occurring across Colorado and nationally to provide lighthouse examples;***
- ***Optional training for 619 district coordinators on the legal obligations and opportunities related to mixed delivery for students; and***
- ***Ongoing support for the universal preschool program rulemaking process to ensure it can be easily delivered in compliance with IDEA and in support of all students in all settings.***

During the rulemaking process, DEC should collaborate with CDE to ensure that any rules are aligned with ECEA and IDEA, Part B regulations and can be easily delivered in compliance with federal law and in support of all students in all settings.

⁴². <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1haHVk8WvAYOzAQ9Qe-QWgWxoUdYXlR92/view>

Special Education (continued)

In addition to the above recommendations, to best support children with disabilities, DEC, in coordination with CDE, should:

- Establish clear expectations for supporting children with disabilities, consulting with stakeholders with requisite representation and expertise.
- As soon as possible DEC should create an interagency agreement(s) with CDE to:
 - Define the roles and responsibilities of the two departments, LEAs, and all types of preschool providers, recognizing that CDE will be the identified agency responsible for compliance with IDEA Part B;
 - Ensure data collection and sharing such that all critical data can be disaggregated, while adhering to requirements for protecting personally identifiable information;
 - Support programs and communities to provide inclusive, individualized, meaningful, culturally relevant, linguistically relevant, active, and participatory learning for all children;
 - Determine how community-based programs and school-based programs will be held accountable for providing access and supports in implementing a mixed delivery preschool program.
 - The interagency agreement should also address what training in working with children with disabilities will be useful for community-based and school-based preschool providers.
 - Ensure the universal preschool program's requirements are integrated with the existing requirements LEAs have for the provision of special education services;
 - Ensure compliance with all federal regulations;
 - Eliminate or reduce duplicative regulations ⁴³ ; and
 - Ensure regulations are addressing all legislative requirements for universal preschool.

The opportunities and challenges identified by the Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup (see Appendices 2 and 3) should be used as guidance in the creation of this interagency agreement and to further the state's commitment to build and strengthen inclusivity and enhance supports for children with disabilities.

The recommendations related to special education as detailed in the Department of Early Childhood (DEC) Transition Plan, including that the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) should continue to administer and be the identified state education agency responsible for compliance with IDEA Part B, are also relevant for the implementation of universal preschool. DEC should also partner with CDE to ensure all children with disabilities are served equitably in the universal preschool program, ensure access to inclusive classrooms, and operate in accordance with all federal and state regulations.

43. There have been various stakeholder efforts to identify where duplication of regulations and rules can be reduced and/or eliminated. DEC should continue to build on these efforts and look further into the opportunities identified by the various groups. These efforts have mainly occurred in the Special Education Subgroup and through the Commission to Eliminate Duplicate Regulations created by SB19-104. The work of the Special Education Subgroup can be found [here](#) and resources from the SB19-104 Commission are available [here](#).

CONCLUSION

The establishment of voluntary, universal preschool through Proposition EE positions Colorado as a nationwide leader in the early childhood sector. This program will build upon the successes of Colorado's existing programs and services and greatly expand access to high-quality services.

While the voluntary, universal preschool program is a monumental step, this program will be one piece of Colorado's broad early childhood system. As infrastructure is built to administer the universal preschool program, the Department of Early Childhood (DEC) should use this momentum to continue to transform and innovate Colorado's entire birth to 5+ system.

Hundreds of stakeholders, detailed in the appendices below, offered input into this process to design this program in a way that builds on the existing successes in Colorado and reduces challenges and barriers for families and children. These recommendations are also informed by the many years of work done by Coloradans through initiatives like the Preschool Policy Development Process.

These recommendations offer DEC guidance and a vision for the implementation of the new universal preschool program, but acknowledge DEC must continue to champion this work and operationalize these recommendations to inform the implementation and ongoing evaluation of the program. This bold vision to transform the early childhood system will not be fully accomplished immediately; however, these recommendations set a clear and strategic path toward a future in which all Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving.



APPENDIX

1. Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

In the five months following the passing of HB21-1304, there were a large variety of ways that stakeholders were engaged including:

- 5 town halls led by the ECLC
- 38 meetings of 4 subgroups
- 10 TAG meetings
- 8 TAG feedback forms
- 6 TAG office hours
- 6 ECLC meetings
- 6 user-centered listening sessions
- 11 statewide listening tour sessions
- 4 universal preschool feedback listening sessions
- More than 65 agency subgroup meetings
- Feedback form on the ECLC website that was continuously reviewed (see Appendix 5)



TAG Composition:

- 15 parents
- 7 school-based early childhood program providers
- 13 community-based program providers
- 7 Head Start/Early Head Start providers
- 2 family child care home providers
- 2 community-based early childhood teachers/educators
- 2 school-based early childhood teachers/educators
- 4 health and mental health program providers

Additional Information:

- 23 Black/Indigenous/People of Color (BIPOC) members (41%)
- 17 members from rural communities (30%)
- 17 individuals have family members with a disability (30%)

2. Meeting Calendar

Below is a chart detailing all of the ways stakeholders were engaged with their relevant materials. For more materials such as any pre-reading please visit the [ECLC transition website](#).

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials / Resources
July 7	Kick-Off - Cross Agency Webinar	This cross agency webinar helped to kick-off the transition planning process. It served to provide stakeholders with additional information about the planning process and how they can get involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 pager (English) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish • Recording here • Slides
July 14	Kick-Off - TAG Meeting #1	In this kick-off meeting for the Transition Advisory Group (TAG), members introduced themselves, reviewed the legislation, the TAG charge, and discussed a draft mission and vision of the new DEC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Slides • Recording • Meeting Notes

APPENDIX

2. Meeting Calendar (continued)

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials / Resources
July 21	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u> How is the early childhood system serving families well? Where are improvements necessary?</p> <p><u>Special Ed:</u> What are the current experiences of children and families receiving special education services in the early childhood system? What is working? How should it improve?</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Special Ed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording 1 • Recording 2 • Meeting Notes
July 22	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u> What should be the outcomes/goals of the new universal, voluntary preschool program? What does successful implementation of this look like for families? For providers?</p> <p><u>Governance:</u> What programs should be part of a truly unified early childhood system to meet the needs of families? What factors/criteria should be considered when deciding which programs should be part of the new department?</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
July 28	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u> How is the early childhood system serving providers well? Where are improvements necessary?</p> <p><u>Special Ed:</u> What are the current experiences of providers serving children receiving special education services in the early childhood education system? What is working? How should it improve?</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Special Ed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
July 29	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u> Brainstorm factors that should be considered when aligning or integrating the Colorado Preschool Program and the universal, voluntary preschool program. With which other early childhood programs must a successful preschool program interact?</p> <p><u>Governance:</u> What factors/criteria should be considered as governance is decided for the new department?</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
August 3, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Provider Listening Session	<p>Providers shared about what was going well within the current system as well as areas they would like to see improved. Additionally they envisioned what a new system that would meet their needs would include.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerpoint • Notes
August 3, 5:30 - 6:30	Provider Listening Session		

APPENDIX

2. Meeting Calendar (continued)

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials / Resources
August 4	TAG Meeting #2	New TAG members were introduced; TAG reviewed mission, vision, values, and guiding principles and prior stakeholder engagement and feedback, and began to discuss which programs to transition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
August 10	ECLC Town Hall	Stakeholders were provided an update on the process to date and given information on the ways they can get involved. The most up to date mission/vision/values/guiding principles were shared as well as updates from the Subgroups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint • Recording
August 11	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u> Building on discussions from the last meeting, how can the evaluation and accountability systems/tools/regulations better support families? Better support providers?</p> <p><u>Special Ed:</u> Review the regulations for IDEA Part B to understand legal obligations and establish a shared understanding.</p>	<p><u>Data and Tech</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Special Ed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
August 12	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u> What local infrastructure exists to support implementation of the new preschool program? Brainstorm additional supports that might be valuable to implementing a successful preschool program.</p> <p><u>Governance:</u> Brainstorm how blending/braiding of funds could be improved to maximize the use of public dollars. What factors/criteria should be considered when deciding how to align funding sources?</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
August 18	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u> In what ways might the new department use data/evaluation/accountability to ensure ongoing/improved alignment with kindergarten and beyond?</p> <p><u>Special Ed:</u> Review the regulations for IDEA Part C and the transition from Part C to Part B to set a common understanding of legal obligations.</p>	<p><u>Data and Tech</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Special Ed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes

APPENDIX

2. Meeting Calendar (continued)

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials / Resources
August 19	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool</u>: What should be considered when balancing universality of programming, serving children of greatest need, and ensuring access to half day or full day care (beyond 10 hours/week)?</p> <p><u>Governance</u>: What local entities in the community do families currently interact with in order to access the early childhood system? What works well? Where could it improve?</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Powerpoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
August 24, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Family Listening Session	<p>Families discussed what is working well for them within their current interactions with the early childhood system. They also identified challenges they have faced in this process. Finally, families worked together to envision a successful system in which all of their needs and concerns were met.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint • Recording
August 24, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Family Listening Session		
August 25	TAG Meeting #3	TAG engaged in the following discussions: a review of the feedback from the stakeholder engagement process to date; program movement; preview of local community structures and partnerships.	<p><u>Universal Preschool</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes
August 26	ECLC Meeting	The ECLC reviewed HB21-1304, pre-reading materials, and stakeholder feedback and discussed programs to move to the new DEC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording



APPENDIX

2. Meeting Calendar (continued)

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials / Resources
September 1	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u> What data/technology exists or is needed to support families to find and enroll in services that meet their needs across the early childhood system?</p> <p><u>Special Ed:</u> Who, in communities, supports seamless delivery of services for families and providers? What is working and what could be improved?</p> <p>What are our thoughts and considerations for coordination of Part B 619 and Part C of IDEA?</p>	<p><u>Data and Tech</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Special Education :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
September 2	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u> Brainstorm ideas to encourage mixed delivery of the new preschool program services (e.g., quality standards, supports, funding rates).</p> <p><u>Governance:</u> What does an ideal enrollment process look like for families? For providers?</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
September 8	<p><u>Subgroups:</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u> What should be considered when building from current state agency data systems?</p> <p>Note: This meeting included presentations from staff at CDE, CDHS, and CDPHE to help build understanding of what current state agency data systems look like and how they function.</p> <p><u>Special Ed:</u> What are thoughts and considerations for the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Early Childhood and CDE in the administration and oversight of special education services in early childhood education?</p>	<p><u>Data and Tech</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Special Education :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
September 8	ECLC Town Hall	Stakeholders were provided an update on the transition process and given information on the ways they can get involved. The most up to date versions of the mission/ vision/values/guiding principles were shared, the programs movement proposal was presented and a timeline for this transition, as well as updates on the discussions the other subgroups have been engaging in to date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording

APPENDIX

2. Meeting Calendar (continued)

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials / Resources
September 9	<p>Subgroups Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u> Brainstorm ideas to ensure adequate teachers, staffing, and facilities to implement the new statewide, universal preschool program.</p> <p><u>Governance:</u> What programs within the new department can best incorporate the voices of families, early childhood professionals, and direct service providers?</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
September 15	TAG Meeting #4	TAG engaged in the following discussions: a review of the stakeholder engagement process thus far, programs movement for the final time, governance structures for the new department, and the challenges of blending/braiding funding that stakeholders have identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes
September 21, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Workforce Listening Session	<p>Providers, professionals, and early childhood staff were invited to share what about the current system is working well for them and what could be improved and then were asked to think about what success in the new DEC looks like.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint • Notes
September 21, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Workforce Listening Session		
September 22	TAG Meeting #5	TAG members continued to discuss what governance of the new department could look like, heard presentations from Summit County and Denver Preschool Program on how they blend/braid funding in their communities, and discussed solutions to the blending/braiding challenges raised by stakeholders throughout the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes
September 23	ECLC Meeting	The ECLC discussed programs to transition to the new department and governance of the new department and began a preliminary discussion on blending/braiding funding and technology/data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Slides • Recording
September 29	<p>Subgroups: Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u> Representatives from the Governor's Office (Scott Groginsky) and CDE (Melissa Colman) gave a presentation that reviewed the history of the UID in Colorado. Whitney LeBoeuf, Director of Data Integration & Analytics at Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab presented recommendations for Building Knowledge in Colorado's Department of Early Childhood.</p> <p><u>Special Education:</u> Heidi White (CDE) began the meeting with a presentation that reviewed definition of mixed delivery from Every Student Succeeds Act, addressed what compels an AU to partner to meet their obligations to provide FAPE/special education, and reviewed the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Cañon City Schools and Centennial BOCES with their community partners presented in a community based organizations panel.</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Special Education:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes

APPENDIX

2. Meeting Calendar (continued)

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials / Resources
September 30	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u> Aside from the family solutions presented, what still needs to be figured out to implement UPK?</p> <p><u>Governance:</u> How can we be sure to integrate Health, Mental Health, and Family Support into the new department?</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
October 5	ECLC Town Hall	Stakeholders were provided an update on the transition planning process thus far and given information on the ways they can continue to stay engaged. Stakeholders were also presented with a review of the Human Centered Design work that Gary Community Ventures has been leading. They were also notified of the release of the draft Transition Plan and the statewide listening tour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording 1 • Recording 2
October 6	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u> Watershed Advisors presented a data analysis associated with the draft transition plan for DEC. The subgroup then discussed ideas for fostering data use culture in DEC.</p> <p><u>Special Education:</u> Following a presentation from LEAs about inclusive classrooms in public school settings, subgroup participants reflected on common goals of special education delivery in Universal Preschool.</p>	<p><u>Data & Tech:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Special Education:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
October 7	<p><u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u> Brainstormed how a unified enrollment system could support all students accessing the universal, voluntary preschool program.</p> <p><u>Governance:</u> How can we ensure, and embed equity into the new department?</p>	<p><u>Universal Preschool:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
October 11	ECLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Eagle, Grand Junction	The ECLC met with hundreds of parents and caregivers, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, Early Childhood Councils, and other stakeholders in communities across Colorado to share the draft Transition Plan and hear feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording <p>(one of the virtual listening sessions)</p>
October 12	ECLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Montrose, Durango		
October 13	ECLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Alamosa, Pueblo		
October 14	ECLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Denver and virtually		
October 15	ECLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Fort Collins, Fort Morgan		
October 20	TAG Meeting #6	TAG members discussed feedback on the draft transition plan and began preliminary discussions on the voluntary, universal preschool program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Slides • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes

APPENDIX

2. Meeting Calendar (continued)

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials / Resources
October 28	ECLC Meeting	The ECLC met and discussed the draft recommendations in the Transition Plan and provided feedback in addition to other business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording
November 2	ECLC Town Hall	The ECLC hosted its monthly town hall and reviewed the recommendations in the Transition Plan that was released by TWG on Nov 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording
November 3	<u>Subgroups</u> Special Education Service Delivery	Members discussed staffing considerations for providing inclusive learning environments and providing effective targeted supports and interventions in a mixed delivery system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
November 4	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation	The subgroup spent time discussing how the state can support and protect infant and toddler care as universal preschool is implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
November 9	TAG Meeting #7	TAG members discussed stakeholder feedback on universal preschool from the Universal Preschool Subgroup, the Preschool Policy Development Process, and previous TAG conversations. TAG began to discuss recommendations on application and funding flow for the universal preschool program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes • Jamboard
November 10	<u>Subgroups</u> Special Education Service Delivery	The meeting began with a presentation from Bill Jaeger (Colorado Children's Campaign) on mixed delivery considerations for UPK in Colorado and roles/responsibilities of local education agencies (LEAs) in special education service delivery. After this presentation the subgroup identified ideas and issues with administration of IDEA, Part B 619.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
November 10	ECLC Meeting	The ECLC met to approve the DEC Transition Plan and begin discussion on the recommendations for the universal preschool program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording
November 11	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation	Discussed the current challenges and potential solutions for streamlining duplicative regulations and oversight.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes
November 17	TAG Meeting #8	TAG members continued discussions around funding flow models for the universal preschool program and what the implications of each model would be on local partnerships, alignment with other programs, and mixed delivery. They also provided feedback on draft eligibility and prioritization recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes

APPENDIX

2. Meeting Calendar (continued)

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials / Resources
December 1	TAG Meeting #9	TAG members reviewed draft recommendations on quality and evaluation, workforce, and special education, as well as what the current work or initiatives are around these topics. They then reviewed all draft recommendations to date on funding flow, local partnerships, alignment of other programs, mixed delivery and eligibility and prioritization and offered further feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes
December 2	ECLC Meeting	The ECLC met to discuss the draft universal preschool recommendations and hear the feedback provided by stakeholders thus far.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording
December 7	ECLC Town Hall	The ECLC hosted its monthly town hall to present the draft universal preschool recommendations. Stakeholders were given the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback on the draft recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording
December 8	<u>Subgroups</u> Special Education Service Delivery	Members of TWG attended the subgroup and presented the draft recommendations. The subgroup then had the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording
December 9	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation	Members of TWG attended the subgroup and presented the draft recommendations. The subgroup then had the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording
December 10 - 14	Draft Report Review Sessions	TWG hosted 4 public listening sessions in which they presented the draft preschool recommendations and gathered feedback from the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides
December 15	TAG Meeting #10	TAG members reviewed the recommendations presented in the draft universal preschool recommendations as well as initial feedback from other listening sessions. TAG then offered feedback on the recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes
December 16	ECLC Meeting	Among other business, the draft recommendations along with feedback from the TAG and other listening sessions were reviewed by the ECLC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording

APPENDIX

3. Subgroup Takeaways

Subgroup	Topics Covered	Participants	Summary Materials
Universal Preschool Implementation	The Universal Preschool Implementation Subgroup identified strategies and recommendations to align the Proposition EE funding with CPP/ECARE into a new statewide, universal, high-quality, voluntary preschool program in a mixed delivery system.	Open to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpage • Reporting slides
Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding	The Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding Subgroup focused on the opportunities to align the governance, funding, and operations of DEC. This group was tasked with discussing the following topics: movement of existing programs to the new department, governance of the new department, alignment of funding sources, and restructuring enrollment process for families.	Open to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpage • Reporting slides
Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability	The Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Subgroup focused on the opportunities to enhance the data and technology needed to support a fully aligned early childhood system.	Open to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpage • Reporting slides
Special Education Service Delivery	The Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup is focused on recommendations for the administration of preschool special education services in collaboration with DEC.	Seated 37 members; also open to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpage • Reporting slides



APPENDIX

4. Recommended Roles for Department of Early Childhood and Local Leads

The following chart is a summary of roles recommended for DEC and local leads.

Partner	Responsibilities
Department of Early Childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage existing and build early childhood infrastructure to successfully deliver universal preschool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower local leadership: Competitively select, launch, manage, and train local leads to build community birth to 5+ early childhood plans and implement universal preschool, with a process to re-compete to ensure continued best fit over time. Collaborate with local leads as implementation partners and fully support them to achieve their charge. Where local leads are not identified or ready, ensure universal preschool is offered in some form until the local lead is prepared. • Oversee local leads: Hold local leads accountable to fulfilling their charge, set clear expectations and deliverables, and ensure that guidelines and regulations are complied with in all areas of the state, including the collection of data as recommended in the DEC Transition Plan and the coordination of the distribution of public funds.⁴⁴ • Build capacity, immediately and over time: Invest in local leadership and capacity with strong investments in infrastructure for start up and implementation, including funding, training, technical assistance, partnership, and accountability. • Incentivize local share: Award funding based on the strong local spending plans that incentivize, at a minimum, (a) mixed delivery, (b) sustained/growing local investment, (c) infant and toddler care, and (d) inclusive classrooms. • Fund equitably: Ensure the funding allocation process provides universal service, but also ensures equity of offerings to all children in Colorado and contributes towards a liveable wage for the early childhood workforce. • Align regulations and programs: Align all funding and programmatic regulations, wherever possible, to better blend, braid, and stack federal, state and local early childhood dollars. • Establish a unified state-level vision and align all funding, initiatives, and efforts toward achieving it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unify applications: Build a simple, common application that can be used and adapted across Colorado. This application should connect to state eligibility systems to minimize families' needs to apply for services and maximize use of dollars across funding streams (e.g., CCCAP, Head Start, targeted funds).⁴⁵ • Define quality: Clearly define a quality universal preschool classroom, evaluate classrooms across the state against that definition, and provide supports so that more programs can achieve quality over time.⁴⁶ This definition should be above and beyond minimum licensing standards to ensure universal preschool promotes outcomes for children. • Elevate competencies for the early childhood workforce: Elevate the competencies for educators to guide the workforce, and review regulatory barriers to entry to the field while promoting attainment of these competencies through identified partners (including higher education pathways), freely available training, prior experience and learning, and reduced bureaucracy.⁴⁷ • Work towards a liveable wage for the early childhood workforce: Work with local leads to determine liveable wage and compensation costs for their region and help to implement innovative strategies for benefits such as health insurance. • Promote inclusive classrooms: In coordination with CDE, provide guidance and funding to promote inclusive classrooms (classrooms with both children with disabilities and those with more typical development) in mixed delivery settings, and accessible supports for children with disabilities prior to kindergarten entry. • Set mixed delivery guidelines: Establish a set of guidelines regarding mixed delivery for local leads to ensure that universal preschool is administered in an equitable, mixed delivery system.

44. For specific examples of recommended data, please see page 28 of the [DEC Transition Plan](#).

45. A more comprehensive recommendation for application can be found on page 17.

46. A more comprehensive recommendation for quality can be found on page 20.

47. A more comprehensive recommendation for the workforce can be found on page 21-23.

APPENDIX

4. Recommended Roles for DEC and Local Leads (continued)

The following chart is a summary of roles recommended for DEC and local leads.

Partner	Responsibilities
Local Leads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is no wrong door: Reduce steps and burdens for families and providers and ensure there is no wrong door for entering the early childhood care and education system. • Coordinate the application process: Recruit and support families through the streamlined application process coordinated across all local partners. • Ensure universal access to the preschool program: Ensure every 4 year old is offered a high-quality preschool slot, in alignment with family choice. • Manage mixed delivery: Ensure that universal preschool is implemented in licensed settings such as public schools, community-based organizations, and family child care homes and dollars are allocated in accordance with the community plan and family demand. Local leads should also recognize the important role that school districts play in administering IDEA and ensuring access to high-quality preschool environments for children with disabilities in this process. • Plan for the allocation of funding equitably: Plan for the allocation of all available early childhood funding in an equitable manner and ensure that children experiencing risk factors receive more services to the greatest extent possible. • Ensure understanding of quality: Ensure leaders and workforce across all programs clearly understand the state's definition of quality care and education across the birth to 5+ continuum, and provide supports to achieve that definition wherever needed. • Increase community capacity: Where too few slots exist, grow capacity of quality providers over time to better meet family and community needs. • Support local workforce: Support providers in the recruitment, development, and retention of a quality early childhood workforce. • Collect local level data: Work with providers to collect key systems level data for their catchment area to report to DEC, while also reducing burdens and duplication.⁴⁸ <p>A local lead could be any public or Colorado nonprofit organization, including but not limited to: county, school system, Early Childhood Council (ECC), Family Resource Centers (FRC), Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), special taxing district, Head Start grantee, local nonprofit, charter school network, collaborative, or other public institution.</p>

5. General Feedback

Throughout this entire process, the ECLC collected and will continue collecting feedback from stakeholders through a public [form](#) on the ECLC Transition website. Responses from these forms were included as pre reading for all TAG meetings. Collected feedback can be reviewed [here](#). Additional feedback specific to the drafted Universal Preschool Recommendations can be reviewed [here](#).

⁴⁸. For specific examples of recommended data, please see page 28 of the [DEC Transition Plan](#)



APPENDIX

6. Higher Education Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce in Colorado

Creating efficient and accessible higher education pathways are critical to ensure a well-prepared and supported workforce that is able to implement and deliver universal preschool. Research indicates that the education level of early childhood teachers is positively associated with classroom quality and child outcomes. And, the 2017 Colorado Early Childhood Workforce Survey of 3,920 Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers (both center- and home-based) makes clear that they want a degree. In the sample surveyed, 66% were not currently enrolled in a degree program, but 87% said they would pursue a degree if provided support. While historic structures may have created barriers to providing specialized degree programs that are responsive to the needs of current ECE teachers and a diverse workforce, Colorado has become a nationally recognized leader for innovation and inclusive approaches in our higher education system. Well-prepared early childhood educators improve outcomes for children and families.

In 2012, the Colorado Commission of Higher Education (CCHE) overturned a previous decision that prevented Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) from providing a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Since that time, IHEs across the state have worked to provide more seamless and accessible pathways from associate through doctoral level ECE coursework and degrees. Aligning to the [Colorado Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators](#), 2-year and 4-year IHEs have established a robust [Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement](#) to ensure a smooth process for students to begin their degree pathway at any community college in the state and easily transfer credits into a bachelor's degree at public universities. After establishing this agreement, the faculty from these institutions created the Early Childhood Higher Education Partnership (ECHEP) that continues to collaborate across systems to plan, design, coordinate and advocate for well-aligned higher education pathways that effectively prepare and advance early childhood professionals in Colorado. Colorado's IHE innovations include:

- Concurrent and dual enrollment options for career pathways beginning in high school.
- Creation of licensure and non-licensure degree pathways to serve teachers in both district-based and community-based early childhood programs.
- Coursework formats that include in-person, online, job-embedded, evening and weekend structures to serve the needs of working professionals across the state.
- Increased options for credit for prior learning such as the community college system awarding college credit for the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.
- Place-based coursework and degrees that allow teachers to progress along degree pathways based on their identified competencies, within their current work place, and aligned with job-embedded experiences and coaching.
- Rural/urban partnerships to provide access from associate to bachelor degrees, especially in communities where higher education access is limited.

Reflecting these strong partnerships, the University of Colorado Denver was one of six institutions, out of 51 applicants, recently awarded a grant to transform ECE teacher preparation by the national [Early Educator Investment Collaborative](#) (EEIC). Through this grant, CU Denver is convening a consortium that includes the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) and four of the largest B.A.-granting institutions in the state: CU Denver; University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS); University of Northern Colorado (UNC); and Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU). The consortium will implement a set of reforms to provide culturally-sustaining, affordable, accessible, and competency-based coursework and degree pathways, especially for historically marginalized degree seekers.

APPENDIX

6. Higher Education Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce in Colorado (continued)

The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) is also focused on ensuring the state has a high-quality higher education system that is accessible to all Coloradans. The 2021 Higher Education Return on Investment Report published by the Department demonstrates that “Coloradans can significantly enhance their quality of life by taking advantage of the opportunities the Colorado higher education system provides,” and that the “system has been continuously improved through strategic partnerships among state government, institutions of higher education, businesses, and students.” CDHE’s statewide plan for higher education, [Colorado Rises](#), includes strategies to increase postsecondary attainment, erase equity gaps, improve student success, and commit to affordability, cost containment and innovation. The Department’s immediate goals are focused on workforce development, affordability, and equity. Through the Office of [Industry Partnerships](#), the Department supports increased access to work-based learning experiences and apprenticeships. As a member of the [Credential As You Go Initiative](#), CDHE is one of three states receiving funding and support to develop new sub-baccalaureate credentials to create a more incremental approach to postsecondary attainment. The [Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative](#) (COSI) provides scholarships to low-income students, fosters community partnerships to increase scholarship funding, and improves student support. In 2021, the Early Childhood Councils Leadership Alliance and Empowering Communities Globally were awarded [COSI Back to Work](#) grants to provide scholarships directly to individuals interested in becoming ECE teachers, including those who are recent immigrants.

Over the past year, the Department has also led implementation of the [HB21-1330 Higher Education Student Success Legislation](#). This work includes a Student Success and Workforce Revitalization Task Force to study and make recommendations on the role and mission of IHEs in the state in providing effective and efficient workforce development. Current task force recommendations include an increased focus on stackable credentials, work-based learning pathways, and competency-based education. Additionally, to address educator shortages and equity in the teaching workforce, CDHE is partnering with CDE to convene a workgroup to identify barriers and provide recommendations on strategies for the recruitment, preparation, and retention of a workforce that more closely represents our student population. All of these efforts combined with CDHE’s representation on the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, participation in the Early Childhood Workforce Development subcommittee, partnership with CDE to authorize Colorado’s educator preparation programs, and collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood will be critical as the new Department of Early Childhood launches universal preschool. Institutions of Higher Education and the Colorado Department of Higher Education are well-positioned to be key partners to ensuring the success of universal preschool through a prepared and thriving ECE workforce.

7. Draft Recommendation Feedback and Letters

In addition to the feedback gathered in listening sessions and presentations, feedback on the draft of these recommendations was captured through a form. Responses can be found [here](#). The following letters were also submitted to the Transition Working Group.

- [Early Childhood Higher Education Partnership](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Preschool Coalition](#)
- [Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance](#)
- [Trust for Learning](#)
- [Boulder County Early Childhood Providers](#)
- [Consortium of Directors of Special Education](#)

Much of the feedback gathered throughout this process is also relevant to upcoming processes that DEC will be undertaking. As such, these resources will be shared with DEC to inform their implementation plan.

