



Rhode Island Early Learning Council

DECEMBER 13, 2023

9:00 - 11:00 A.M.

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF RI

EARLY LEARNING RI

9:00	Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Meeting Overview	Lisa Odom-Villella, RIDE Kimberly Merolla-Brito, DHS Paige Clausius-Parks, RI KIDS COUNT
9:15	Update/Discussion: Early Childhood System Analysis and Governance Working Group Recommendation Report	Kayla Rosen, Governor's Office/Children's Cabinet Elliot Regenstein, Foresight Law + Policy Nasha Patel, Watershed Advisors
9:45	Rhode Island Early Learning Council Review and Vote Official Recommendation to Early Childhood Governance Working Group	Leanne Barrett, Early Learning Council Coordinator
10:15	New program at Rhode Island College for dual early childhood/special education teacher certification Federal Office of Head Start Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on supporting the workforce and program quality Open Call for 2024 Early Learning Council agenda ideas	Casey Ferrara, Meeting Street Catherine Green, RI Head Start Collaboration Director Leanne Barrett, Early Learning Council Coordinator
10:45	Announcements, Public Comments, & Next Steps	

Rhode Island System Analysis

December 13, 2023

Rhode Island Systems Analysis

Rhode Island has ambitious goals for improving early childhood. The State's vision is for all children to be educationally, social-emotionally, and developmentally ready to succeed, putting them on a path to positive long-term outcomes.

Accomplishing these goals require that Rhode Island have an effective system of early childhood governance. In order to strengthen that governance system, Article 10 of the enacted Fiscal Year 2023 Budget established an Early Childhood Governance Working Group to support the development of an Early Childhood Governance System Analysis.

The System Analysis has been developed by Foresight Law + Policy and Watershed Advisors pursuant to a contract with the state. Today, the Early Learning Council will consider a recommendation for the state's governance moving forward. That recommendation will likely be included in the final report of the Working Group.

Report Process

To arrive at the current draft, the team conducted the following activities:

- Information gathering with a wide range of Rhode Islanders engaged in the work of the early childhood system, summarized by the Landscape Analysis
 - Interviews were conducted with more than 70 people
 - Multiple public listening sessions were conducted
 - A survey was made available on the Children's Cabinet website
- Soliciting initial feedback on the draft Landscape Analysis in July and August to build consensus about the current conditions affecting providers and families
- Circulating a draft report to solicit public feedback
- Conducting a survey on governance options and engaging stakeholders about the draft recommendations

Report Process (cont.)

<u>Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 1</u>	October 25, 2022
<u>Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 2</u>	November 30, 2022
<u>Early Learning Council Meeting</u>	December 7, 2022
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 3	February 9, 2023
<u>Early Learning Council Meeting</u>	March 29, 2023
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 4	May 4, 2023
Early Learning Council -- Special Input Session for State Working Group on Early Childhood Governance (Zoom)	June 15, 2023
Open Forum: Early Learning Provider Roundtable (Zoom)	June 20, 2023
Open Forum: Family Visiting Provider Roundtable (Zoom)	June 21, 2023
Open Forum: Early Childhood Governance Roundtable (Zoom)	June 22, 2023
<u>Early Learning Council Meeting</u>	June 28, 2023
Early Childhood Professionals Roundtable (Zoom)	June 28, 2023
<u>Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 5</u>	July 27, 2023
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 6	August 22, 2023
Open Forum: Discussion on Emerging Recommendations (Zoom)	August 24, 2023
Early Learning Council – Special Session on Early Childhood Governance (Zoom)	August 30, 2023
<u>Early Learning Council Meeting</u>	September 27, 2023
<u>Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 7</u>	September 28, 2023
Open Forum: Input on Developing Recommendations (Zoom)	October 11, 2023
Open Forum: Input on Developing Recommendations (Zoom)	October 19, 2023
Early Learning Council – Special Session on Early Childhood Governance (Zoom)	October 31, 2023
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 8	November 16, 2023
Early Learning Council – Special Session on Early Childhood Governance (Zoom)	November 17, 2023
Early Learning Council Meeting	December 13, 2023
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 9	December 13, 2023

The Comprehensive Interim Draft

- **The Working Group previously submitted a Comprehensive Interim Draft** that included a landscape analysis, and a summary of the national landscape on early childhood governance.
- **The Comprehensive Interim Draft highlighted the system's strengths, and also the work remaining to be done.** The Working Group agreed that Rhode Island can improve the effectiveness of its early childhood system, building on important work already underway.
- **The Comprehensive Interim Draft did not recommend a path forward.** That draft was used to collect stakeholder feedback regarding how early childhood should be governed in Rhode Island.

Three Models of Early Childhood Governance

Unification Models

Coordinated

- Early childhood funding streams and functions live in multiple, distinct agencies – requiring coordination across those agencies
- Sometimes a centralized office helps to facilitate coordination

Consolidated

Early childhood funding and functions are consolidated into an existing agency that has other responsibilities (typically the state education agency or a human services agency)

Created

- Early childhood funding and functions are consolidated into a single agency created to focus on early childhood services
- Agency has a sole or primary focus on early childhood, without other responsibilities

The Last Working Group Meeting

- **At the last Working Group meeting, the Working Group considered a proposal to keep the state’s “Coordinated” governance model while making several process improvements.** The group discussed ways in which the state’s oversight of early childhood could be strengthened without pursuing a change in governance model.
- **Charged by statute with advising the process, the Early Learning Council has engaged at regular meetings and special sessions to provide input.** Its feedback has influenced the final report. The Council will be voting today on its recommendation for the state.
 - An Early Learning Council survey indicated support for the creation of a new early childhood agency. That support came primarily from stakeholders outside of state government.

Report Contents

The Updated Draft: Major Additions

- **The draft you have today includes a conclusion based on the handout from the last Working Group meeting.** The narrative was updated somewhat based on the conversation at that meeting and subsequent input from Working Group members. The recommendations propose some specific activities that will help the state further strengthen its Coordinated approach.
- **The new draft also includes a section about the cost of different governance models, including transitional costs.** These estimates were prepared by Afton Partners and have been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget.
- **The new draft includes placeholders for recommendations from the Early Learning Council.** The Council will vote on recommendations later in this meeting. The draft contemplates including the full recommendation as an appendix.

The Updated Draft: Other Changes

- **The new draft reflects the fact that it is a final draft.** Previous drafts included comments about upcoming stakeholder engagement; this one is reframed as a final report.
- **The new draft includes some updated data.** This includes the addition of Head Start data to some tables where it was not shown previously, including in Section I.3 and Appendix C.

Summary of Recommendations

- Strengthening the state's ability to use data in the early childhood system, including through integrating data from different services;
- Creating greater role clarity in state government, with guidance for partners to support improved problem-solving;
- Working with providers and families to define metrics of success for the early childhood system;
- Providing a holistic annual report on system spending, and tracking how the state's spending is impacting performance outcomes;
- Unifying definitions of quality across programs, and provide coordinated support to help providers meet those quality standards;
- Creating a “no wrong door” system that supports families in finding – and enrolling in – the services they need;
- Supporting local leadership and coordination through a pilot grant program;
- Utilizing a unified approach to communications and public relations on early childhood issues; and
- Providing ongoing support and staff capacity for interagency collaboration.

Discussion

Discussion

- Do you have any questions made about the changes since the Comprehensive Interim Draft?
- Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the updated Working Group draft?

Next Steps

We are grateful for your engagement in this process!

- The full report will be posted on www.kids.ri.gov/cabinet/governance-analysis
- If you have further questions or comments, please email us at:
 - elliott.regenstein@flpadvisors.com
 - nasha.patel@watershed-advisors.com
 - lizzie.cosse@watershed-advisors.com

Summary of November ELC Members Survey on Governance Options for RI

Votes	
2	Coordinate: Keep current structure and clarify coordination role of Governor's Office
0	Consolidate at DHS (Move RI Pre-K to DHS)
1	Consolidate at RIDE (Move Child Care and Head Start Collab to RIDE)
20	Create Cabinet Level Office with RI Pre-K, Child Care, and Head Start Collab (83% of those with a preference)
1	Other Option
3	Abstain/Neutral
10	No Vote
37	TOTAL MEMBERS

Sample Comments on Option 4

“I struggled to choose between the first and 4th options to either keep existing governance with the addition of a coordination role for Governor's office or to create a new cabinet-level RI Office of Early Learning and Child Development. I chose the latter as it **seems to have more teeth, autonomy and an office that oversees all the programs**. With this option, the person in charge will likely be an expert in the field leading the work for the State. It was a tough choice...”

“Creating a new RI Office of Early Learning and Child Development allows the state create a system of high-quality programs with increased alignment and coherence. The current structure has a number of subsystems that overlap and are often disconnected and difficult to navigate. A well aligned system would promote increased collaboration, opportunities for shared services, and more user-friendly access to services for families and community stakeholders. More importantly, this **change will also provide a more focused vision for early childhood services in the state**, which I believe will improve fiscal advocacy at the state level and increase access to additional revenue streams. **I want Early Childhood education and all of its components to be the priority in the state office it sits in**

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Public Comment

2024 Early Learning Council Meetings (Big Brothers Big Sisters of RI):

- Wednesday, March 27th, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, June 26th, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, September 25th, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, December 11th, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

See www.earlylearningri.org for meeting schedules, handouts, notes, and state reports