

2020-2023 Early
Childhood Care and
Education (ECCE)
Strategic Plan:
2022 Update

Our Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Strategic Plan was adopted in early 2020.

Mission: Rhode Island's comprehensive focus on Early Childhood Care and Education brings together providers, programs, advocates and families to ensure that our children prenatal through age five have equitable access to high-quality educational, health and developmental care, and services and supports needed in order to enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

Vision: All Rhode Island children enter kindergarten educationally, social- emotionally, and developmentally ready to succeed, putting them on a path to read proficiently by 3rd grade.

Guiding Principles:

- **Focus on Vulnerable Populations:** We believe in focusing our work. In doing so, we prioritize actions that will deliver outcomes for our highest-risk children to ensure kindergarten readiness, putting them on a path to reading proficiently by third grade.
- **Inclusive and Diverse Engagement:** We believe our work is best supported through strong, sustained partnerships with families, caregivers, community members, educational institutions and providers. Collectively, we can positively impact outcomes for children.
- **Commitment to a Mixed Delivery Model:** We believe in providing child care and education through a diverse set of programs, services and providers so that young children and families can access the resources they need to thrive, in a setting that works best for them.
- **Workforce Advocacy and Support:** We believe in, and support, the individuals caring for our youngest constituents and support the expansion of programs that help recruit, prepare and retain a high- quality early childhood care and education workforce.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** We believe in the mutual alignment and advocacy of the Governor, Cabinet, and those agencies representing the health, well-being and education of young children and families, from prenatal and maternal health through to school- aged services, education and support.
- **Alignment of Funding with Impact:** We believe in rigorously pursuing diverse and sustainable funding, while also assessing the impact of our investments against desired outcomes for children. RI commits to refining our strategies and actions based on those finding

The ECCE Strategic plan has five core objectives to ensure that all children are on a path to reading proficiently in third grade.

Vision: all children on a path to reading proficiently in 3rd grade

Objective 1:

Rhode Island's early childhood programs meet high-quality standards for care and education as defined by our Quality Rating and Improvement System

Objective 2:

Children and families can equitably access and participate in the early childhood care, services, and supports that will help them reach their potential and enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

Objective 3:

All four-year olds in Rhode Island have access to high-quality Pre-K, inclusive of parental choice and student needs.

Objective 4: Secure the quality and delivery of ECCE through increased and sustainable funding and operational improvements.

Objective 5: Expand the depth and quality of family and child-level data accessible to and used by agencies, programs, and partners to drive decisions.

Objective 1: Rhode Island's early childhood programs meet high-quality standards for care and education as defined by our Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Key Progress Achieved:

- Secured \$19M in American Rescue Plan funding to implement the Pandemic Educator Retention Bonus program and the Family Child Care start-up grant program
- \$15M Early Learning Facilities bond – passed in March 21, 2021 – is on track to launch in early 2022
- Secured \$2.4M in Governors' Emergency Education Relief funds to address career pathways in higher education
- Implemented FY22 CCAP rates + pilot CCAP program for college students

Action Plan Steps Completed to Date.

ACTION STEPS
Visit all licensed care providers.
Pilot a hybrid approach to coordinated monitoring by thoughtfully integrating BrightStars' staff into the DHS Child Care Licensing Unit.
Pilot, improve and implement a Universal Application for programs to become both child care subsidy eligible (CCAP) and DHS licensed.
Assess all ECE classrooms across the state's mixed delivery system to ensure compliance to COVID-19 Emergency Child Care Regulations. Identify 3-5 high level trends re: non-compliance to high-risk COVID regulations and deploy dedicated technical assistance within the PDTA Hub for remediation.

Strategy 1: Strengthen and streamline foundational quality standards through regular review and robust data collection.

ACTION STEPS
Solidify a shared set of quality standards for use across all B-5 classrooms, with intentional linkages to national standards of preschool quality (such as such as Head Start Program Performance Standards & the National Education for the Association for Young Children), RI early learning standards and our existing Quality Rating and Improvement System.
Review and update the RI Early Learning and Development Standards to align with latest research and best practice
Regularly review and update regulations and identify opportunities to initiate guidance and technical assistance to reflect the needs of current licensed child care providers and to strengthen incoming providers.
Ensure Family Child Care is considered in all mixed-delivery system planning and work to align current models (State PK, Head Start) to FCC service delivery models

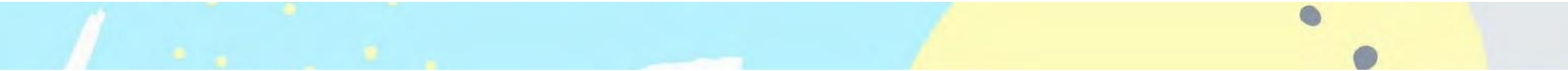
Strategy 2: Expand high quality programs by providing access to a range of data-informed initiatives, resources and supports that will improve their quality and better support the needs of families in the PN-5 system.

ACTION STEPS
Align health and safety priority areas to professional development and quality investments
Utilizing “Whole Family Approach” framework, pilot and expand models that demonstrate improved outcomes for children, beginning with the Infant/Toddler model which utilizes the Early Head Start child Care Partnerships Model as a framework
Build RI’s supply of quality family child care providers by identifying and developing a pipeline of prospective, qualified individuals to become DHS-licensed/CCAP-approved utilizing ARPA funding.
Continue the facility planning grant program and award 5-15 additional grants on a rolling basis
Implement the Early Learning Facilities bond to expand quality spaces for early learning
Provide targeted quality grants to providers to maintain and increase their BrightStars rating as programs rebuild in the wake of the pandemic
Regularly review and update the BrightStars framework to align with latest research, best practice, and evidence-based national high-quality standards.
Increase CCAP rates to meet or exceed the 75 th percentile of the 2021 market rate



Strategy 3: Ensure the workforce of early childhood educators and care professionals are professionally prepared, fairly compensated and have meaningful pathways towards career advancement.

ACTION STEPS
Establish a shared definition of preparation and development for early childhood educators and care professionals working in high-quality programs. Analyze existing workforce data to establish baseline and goals.
Pilot an apprenticeship program that supports the recruitment, retention and advancement of the infant/toddler workforce.
Launch streamlined professional development platform for early childhood workforce, with content aligned to RI quality standards, and with pathways for advancement.
Develop clear articulation of degree requirements across institutes of higher education.
Develop higher education partnerships, particularly among professional development and technical assistance vendors, and explore models that support flexible degree attainment.
Implement the Pandemic Educator Retention Bonus program to support increased compensation for early educators
Identify and evaluate additional strategies for supporting wage and compensation increases among early childhood professionals to ensure their economic wellbeing.
Expand the TEACH program to fund more early childhood educators in attaining higher education degrees



Objective 2: Children and families can equitably access and participate in the early childhood care, services, and supports that will help them reach their potential and enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

Key Progress Achieved:

- Expanded Parents as Teachers by 300 spots
- Since 2020, implemented 12 Parent Support Programs through the Health Equity Zones
- Secured \$9.14M in stabilization funding for Early Intervention and \$7.5M in stabilization funding for pediatric primary care providers to address health equity gaps and workforce challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Made perinatal doula services a covered benefit for all insurance beneficiaries

Action Plan Steps Completed to Date.

ACTION STEPS
Refine definition of priority populations, including baseline population demographics for children and families within the definition.
Expand Family Home Visiting to increase accessibility to more vulnerable families.
Cover perinatal doula services for Medicaid beneficiaries
Develop and implement a model of family navigators tailored to each Health Equity Zone based on community needs assessment information
Prioritize children in foster care who are 4 years old in the RI Pre-K lottery, ensuring they are able to enroll in a high-quality publicly funded pre-k.-

Strategy 1: Ensure that all families and children under age five involved with DCYF are provided with the option to access high-quality early childhood programs that provide services through a trauma-informed approach.

ACTION STEPS
Develop a system w/ RIDOH/DCYF/DHS to ensure foster children enrolled in high-quality ECE programs (five star and head start and FVH)
Provide professional development for early childhood providers on trauma-informed care, and training for mental health providers working as consultants to early childhood programs

Strategy 2: Create a system for connecting families PN-5 to appropriate services and programs, and for supporting families' continued engagement in those services.

ACTION STEPS
Use data to drive decision making around policy and program decisions related to the increasing access to supports and ensuring families can stay engaged in supports that have positive outcomes.
Increase access and continued engagement in CCAP by expanding family income eligibility and reducing barriers to access, such as child support enforcement requirements
Support initiatives that increase diversity in hiring so that early childhood professionals reflect the communities they serve.
Create more streamlined connections between programs through the use of the electronic referral system (EOHHS)

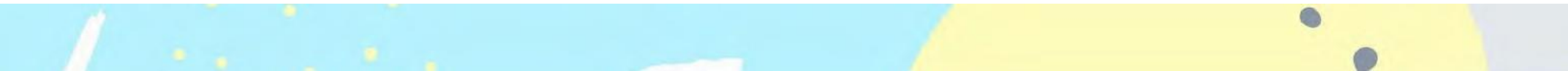


Strategy 3: Leverage community-embedded resources to help parents understand, navigate and remain engaged in the comprehensive array of PN-5 opportunities, programs and services.

ACTION STEPS
Support programs for families with young children within the Health Equity Zones based that meet specific community needs to become sustainable after PDG funding ends
Support family navigators in Health Equity Zones become sustainable resources after PDG funding ends
Add action about ongoing collaboration with HEZ- post PDG
Ensure intentional coordination and integration of Family Visiting and early learning programs to support families
Support family economic security utilizing the “Whole Family Approach” framework Whole Family Approach to Jobs: Lessons Learned and Outcomes (hhs.gov) at DHS, including enhancing the RI Works program and non-DHS family leave policies

Strategy 4: Build on RI’s leadership in children’s access to healthcare to improve prevention and screening.

ACTION STEPS
Support integration of the medical home with community-based family supports, such as family home visiting, literacy programs, and other resources
Support doulas in readiness to leverage insurance coverage in 2022
Maintain nation-leading vaccination rates & support COVID-19 vaccinations for children in 2021 through supporting pediatric primary care
Increase lead screening rates in compliance with state law through supporting pediatric primary care
Enhance equitable access to Early Intervention services with stabilization and performance investments



Objective 3: All four-year olds in Rhode Island have access to high-quality Pre-K, inclusive of parental choice and student needs.

Key Progress Achieved:

- Since SY 19-20, expanded RI Pre-K by 944 seats, up from 1420, a 66% expansion in seats
- Developed and piloted four new service delivery models for RI Pre-K that strengthen the mixed-delivery system, increase family choice, and allow more providers to become RI Pre-K providers (see models [here](#)). These models have been nationally recognized at Preschool Development Grant conferences.
- Implemented regular interagency meeting structure to enable ongoing collaboration across RI Pre-K, ECSE, DHS, and Head Start Collaboration Office

Action Plan Steps Completed to Date.

ACTION STEPS
Finalize and release RI Pre-K Grant Application for SY 21-22 and determine prioritization of vulnerable populations in the lottery process.
Conduct short survey/focus group with Head Start programs to determine potential barriers to maintaining high-quality standards and utilizing multiple funding sources within their programs.
Evaluate the feasibility of supplementing pre-k seats through blended funding.
Develop a model for assigning seats within a high-quality program through the lottery, as opposed to full classroom enrollment.

Strategy 1: Increase the number of classrooms that meet high-quality pre-k standards

ACTION STEPS
Analyze current needs and develop a plan for improving the quality of targeted programs serving the communities with our most vulnerable populations.
Support quality improvement of LEA integrated preschool programs
Revise Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) regulations to ensure alignment with high-quality standards and quality continuum with BrightStars
Work with community based programs, LEAs, and Head Start programs to address any potential obstacles to meeting the state’s established high-quality pre-k standards by providing quality grants, PDTA, or other supports.
Engage more LEA’s, CBO’s and Head Start programs in partnering with RI’s Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Itinerant Model, supporting children with differing abilities in Gen Ed classrooms.
Improve Kindergarten transitions through community-based cohorts and increased family engagement

Strategy 2: Establish a diverse and sustainable funding structure across state agencies to support the expansion of high-quality pre-k for all 4-year old children in Rhode Island.

ACTION STEPS
Establish incentives and supports for school districts to invest in quality Pre-K, alongside requirements for meeting and maintaining high-quality standards for classrooms
Evaluate the non-program expenses associated with RI Pre-K to identify the non-program per student funding needed (for example, delivering professional development and technical assistance, monitoring/evaluating progress, delivering mental health consultations, etc.) and identify cost savings for existing contracts when scaled.
Evaluate the efficacy of the 2021-2022 pilot funding models and recommend next steps for improving or expanding the new models
Develop recommendations for sustaining and expanding RI Pre-K after time-limited federal funding expires at the end of SY22-23

Strategy 3: Attract, develop and retain a strong workforce of qualified and well-supported educators to both build a pipeline for future expansion needs and support the current demand.

ACTION STEPS
Establish a pathway for the current workforce that will lead to PreK-2 certification.
Coordinate with DHS, DOH and EOHHS to establish a streamlined professional development platform for early learning professionals.
Create content that will provide synchronous and asynchronous opportunities for professional learning in areas aligned to the needs of pre-k classrooms.

Strategy 4: Begin a multi-year planning process to expand Pre-K for all children ages 3 and 4 in collaboration with the community

ACTION STEPS
Develop RI Pre-K standards for 3 year old classrooms aligned to NIEER quality criteria
Develop approaches to transitions into Pre-K and between years of Pre-K that ensure family choice and equitable access for historically underserved and excluded populations
Articulate options to maximize choice for children in Early Childhood Special Education
Ensure the continued strength of the mixed delivery system, including opportunities to bolster infant/toddler care and to engage with Family Child Care
Collaborate with the community to develop a family-centered Pre-K plan, with a focus on engaging parents/guardians directly in planning activities

Objective 4: Secure the quality and delivery of ECCE through increased and sustainable funding and operational improvements.

Key Progress Achieved:

- Secured more than \$50M in stimulus funds for early childhood priorities (EI, pediatrics, RI Pre-K, early learning workforce, and Family Child Care)
- Achieved key budget priorities, including covering perinatal doula services, expanding First Connections prenatally, increased CCAP rates, and expanded CCAP to college students on a pilot basis
- Accelerated spend-down and strong progress across almost all 25+ activities of the Preschool Development Grant B-5
- Implemented public awareness campaigns related to pediatric care, RI Pre-K enrollment, child care access and workforce, and EI access and workforce
- Developed strong interagency collaboration to achieve priorities across all objectives

Action Plan Steps Completed to Date.

ACTION STEPS
Secure interagency memorandums of understanding (MOUs) as needed to support sharing of funds allocated to early childhood priorities.
Design a shared governance model for PN-5 ECCE, focused on clear decision making and accountability
Establish a framework for mutually aligned advocacy for early childhood priorities, inclusive of role definitions and operational expectations.

Strategy 1: Drive an aligned advocacy effort to accomplish legislative and budgetary priorities, as well as increase community awareness of early childhood priorities and options.

ACTION STEPS
Share resources and information that enable stakeholder advocacy on research-based areas of impact for children and families PN-5.
Build a broad coalition of support for early childhood priorities, including legislators, advocates, families, educators and businesses.
Enhance video, web and print assets to increase awareness and utilization of care, services and supports.

Strategy 2: Increase high-impact investments in the PN-5 system through innovative financing levers and proactive sources of funding such as grants.

ACTION STEPS
Continuously identify and secure outside funding streams to support early childhood priorities (i.e. grants, new revenue opportunities, new federal opportunities).
Ensure that funding decisions center equity, with focused investment in historically under-resourced communities and priority populations
Leverage stimulus and other one-time federal funding opportunities to achieve ECCE strategic plan goals
Use the Children’s Cabinet budget to develop a comprehensive review of funding available and allocated for early childhood care and education within supporting agencies.
Identify programs that are not meeting objectives and recommend opportunities for reinvestment based on allowable use of funding.



Strategy 3: Support interagency collaboration and coordination to optimize and streamline operations and use of funds.

ACTION STEPS
Manage the Preschool Development Renewal Grant funds to support early childhood strategies and actions as defined by the Strategic Plan.
Identify opportunities for coordinated procurements and support execution of contracts.
Provide useful metrics, reports and tools that allow other objective areas to blend fiscal and program data in order to make informed budget and program decisions.

Strategy 4: Develop a sustainable PN-5 ECCE governance structure that allows for interagency and public-private collaboration and decision-making to achieve the ECCE mission and vision.

ACTION STEPS
Implement regular Governance meetings and process to track progress towards objectives and action steps
Engage with the Early Learning Council as an advisory council on key strategic decisions
Develop and engage with the Family Advisory Council as an advisory council on key strategic decisions
Engage with the Successful Start Steering Committee as an advisory council on matters related to the Prenatal to Age 3 Systems
Engage the Children’s Cabinet as the overarching Governance body
Consider further structural and governance changes to create a more family-centered system



Objective 5: Expand the depth and quality of family and child-level data accessible to and used by agencies, programs, and partners to drive decisions.

Key Progress Achieved:

- Completed a comprehensive data system review with DOIT to develop scope of work for needed system updates across the licensing system of record, workforce registry, CCAP provider portal, CECE certification, consumer website, CCAP application and renewal, licensing application and renewal, monitoring and licensing, and BrightStars rating
- Developed framework for shared performance metrics to understand progress across strategic plan and onboarded resources to produce regular reports

Action Plan Steps Completed to Date.

ACTION STEPS
Implement biweekly governance meetings to review and improve performance.
Create data-sharing agreements among agencies to integrate RIDE data into the EOHHS data ecosystem.
Produce a maintenance agreement for Early Childhood Education Data System (ECEDS), including ownership, access and resourcing plans for future builds and system administration.
Onboard new staff, including ECEDS Coder and ECE Performance Lead.
Determine the goals, strategy and resourcing for the ECEDS workforce registry, including use of the workforce registry by programs.
Identify resources for data support dedicated to ECCE.

Strategy 1: Use data to drive action and updates to the Strategic plan to better meet the objectives. Regularly review progress and performance data on each Objective to measure progress on the Strategic Plan, identify opportunities for improvement, and determine the overall health of the Early Childhood System.

ACTION STEPS
Establish baseline measurements, targets and progress indicators for programs within the strategic plan and PDG renewal grant; develop program performance evaluation (PPE) plan.
Review and update Action Plan bi-annually to align with latest research and address opportunities identified through the performance evaluation
Provide useful metrics, reports and tools that allow other objective areas to blend fiscal and program data to support informed budget and program decisions.
Publish and present data publicly to engage stakeholders, programs, and families in review of the ECCE system.

Strategy 2: Enhance the capabilities of the data systems that support operations and integrated data to increase efficiency and equity in the ECCE system.

ACTION STEPS
Develop and operationalize data governance sub-committee with authority to recommend operational and programmatic changes to the early childhood Steering Committee.
Develop an interagency solution for the operational data systems that support the Early Learning sector that are configurable and sustainable, inclusive of a workforce registry
Develop systems of data sharing to help RI determine if children B-5 involved with DCYF are able to access and enroll in five-star programs and/or high quality ECE programs
Advance our data systems to understand the enrollment and engagement levels of parents and families in services and supports that mitigate adversity and help children become ready for kindergarten, including Early Intervention, Family Home Visiting, Head Start, Parent Education and Support Programs and high quality child care.



Strategy 3: Improve and expand the use of state’s ECCE data among users, including families and programs.

ACTION STEPS
Support all Head Start programs in using state data systems such as ECEDS and KidsNet.
Utilize data governance subcommittee to provide oversight and support for research and data report requests from state agencies, users, families and programs.
Evaluate the accessibility of various data systems from users’ perspectives to ensure that systems are a helpful rather than burdensome
Develop useful communication strategies, tools and reports that help families, students, and the community access and understand data on education, health and development.

Strategy 4: Conduct ongoing research and needs assessments to inform updates to the Strategic Plan.

ACTION STEPS
Conduct annual ECCE Survey to understand population-level access, needs, and barriers
Partner with the Hassenfeld Child Health Innovation Institute to pursue longitudinal research.
Pursue targeted research studies to understand needs of high-priority communities and families.

