

Working Group on Early Childhood Governance
August 22, 2023
Executive Conference Room, 4th Floor
Department of Administration
1 Capitol Hill, Providence, 02908

Approved

A full recording of the meeting can be found at:

- <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/3ehCXYXdVQHxWC8C86eWBu7fhMFvSrfCpJPzoxNn7PSNOaFZb6zQ234IzGTkMjgG.nuS7Z3YG3PEXmuGl>
 - Passcode: 4y!Xu9s3
-

Members in Attendance

- EOHHS: Ana Novais
- RIDOH: Kristine Campagna
- RIDE: Lisa Odom-Villella
- DHS: Kim Brito
- RI KIDS COUNT: Leanne Barrett
- DOA: Brian Daniels
- OPC: Greg Ebner

Welcome & Overview

- Ana Novais welcomed everyone to the meeting
- Attendees introduced themselves and their organizations around the table
- Kayla overviewed the agenda

Vote on Adoption of Minutes

- The Working Group on Early Childhood Governance voted on adopting the minutes from the July 27, 2023 meeting
 - First: Leanne Barrett
 - Second: Director Brito
 - All voted in favor and the minutes were accepted.

Landscape Analysis

- Elliot and Nasha, vendors for the State conducting the Governance Systems Analysis, presented on the updated landscape analysis and the upcoming schedule
- They received substantial feedback on the Landscape Analysis. Key themes of feedback included:
 - More precision around leadership / collaboration
 - More clarity on existing plans
 - Explanation of legislative / executive branch relationship
 - Discussed interagency collaboration
 - Added ELC survey results
- Discussion on the updated landscape analysis
 - Leanne thanked the group for the changes and sees that her input is reflected

- She asked for some text edits: the ELC did not officially endorse recommendations so asked that the wording update on page 2 to change to “initial priorities” to reflect that these are not finalized. She also asked that “home-based” be changed to “family child care.” On page 15, asked that ELC recommendations be changed to “ELC initial priorities”.
- All Working Group members were in agreement with those changes

Vote on Landscape Analysis

- Ana asked for a motion to vote on adopting the landscape analysis with the changes Leanne noted to the wording
 - First: Kristine Campagna
 - Second: Lisa Odom-Villella
 - All voted in favor and none were opposed
- The Landscape Analysis was adopted. The adopted version can be found here: <http://kids.ri.gov/cabinet/documents/wg-meeting-materials/Early%20Childhood%20Governance%20Overview%20of%20Current%20Status%20Final%20Report%20-%20Adopted%208-22-23.pdf>
- Ana thanked everyone for their engagement in the process and the consultants for their partnership in developing the analysis.

Upcoming Timeline

- August 24 and 30 – Public Input Sessions
- End of September – Full Draft Interim Report
- September 27 – Early Learning Council Meeting
- September 28 – Working Group meeting
- Submission of Interim Report to the General Assembly and Governor
- October-November – Review and revision of the report
- December – Finalization of the report

Comprehensive Interim Draft Report

- Elliot overviewed the anticipated components and framework of the final report for the Working Group’s feedback
- Ana noted that the benefits and considerations of both the status quo and of changes are explicated within the report, as no decision about change has been identified. In addition, the ‘transitions’ section should be within the context of a potential change but we have not made that decision.
 - Elliot noted that he will absolutely do both of those within the report. The benefits and considerations of the status quo are primarily discussed within the landscape analysis but will be discussed again as well.
- Brian asked about whether there is a half-step, i.e. is there a better way to do coordination than what we are doing now?
 - Ana and Lisa added- are there ways to enhance the status quo? Would welcome recommendations on ways to make it better from where we are now within the coordinated system.
 - Leanne added that improved coordination would be good to discuss; currently, grant funding is what is funding roles that drive coordination in RI and there is no statutory requirement that coordinator occur

- Ana noted that statutory changes to drive coordination or ways to strengthen the Children’s Cabinet may all be options to consider
- Elliot noted that the report will discuss opportunities for the status quo. We are talking about where authority sits for key funding streams and moving that is where significant transitions come for states. Whether you keep the status quo on that front or not, the issues we’ve framed as cross-cutting connections, there’s a lot you could do differently for interagency connections and state-local connections which we will discuss.
- Brian asked about the state community connections piece. RI is small so we do not need a local infrastructure; but was more compelling when thinking from the provider perspective. In each of the governance options, what would it look like for the end users is an important facet to consider.
 - Elliot acknowledged that there is not great appetite in RI for another bureaucratic layer but some functions may be better if they are closer to the ground. Role clarity at the local level can help as well. For example, school districts may not know how best to engage.
- Leanne asked about implementation and next steps, as she believes that the Senate will pass a similar bill as previous years. Generally to move things forward, it takes a combination of the Governor and General Assembly. Ask to put something in the report to give RI guidance on how to effectively move forward, if a change was to happen. For example, identifying the skills of a new director.
 - Ana noted that at this point, she would not be comfortable with the level of specificity of getting into the skills of the director of a new agency. We need to keep this report at the level that was charged to this group, i.e. what the governance structure generally should be. After that, we would need to go deeper into the specifics of any change, if that is in fact the direction.
 - Leanne noted that options in the report provide an opportunity for advocates and others to push forward, if they so wish.
 - Brian noted that it has taken time with the Housing Department to first identify what the structure was and then took time to develop the actual implementation time.
 - Ana noted that perhaps a recommendation can be that there needs to be a Commission or other next step to develop the implementation plan of whatever the decision is- that’s a next step after the report.
- Elliot noted that the first draft will include a lot of information for either legislative bill drafting or developing an implementation/transition plan. It will not go into the level of detail that Leanne was initially suggesting, but in order for this group to make recommendations, you will need enough information and analysis about the same questions.

Next Steps

- Public meetings coming up on Thursday and Early Learning Council August 30, and then will be working to polish up a draft
- We will circulate a draft in September and look forward to the discussion at our meetings in September
- Welcome feedback from everyone to inform the report
- Kayla noted that the document in September will be a draft which we will submit to the General Assembly with a cover letter clarifying the process to date and what the draft represents. This is to ensure there is adequate time for public input before a final draft is submitted.

Public Comment

- No public comment

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn
 - First: Leanne Barrett
 - Second: Kristine Campagna
 - All voted in favor
- The meeting adjourned at 2:51PM EST.