

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 Working Group will consider a draft final report. The goal of the meeting is to adopt a final report. The Working Group should consider whether it would like to make amendments to the draft before voting.

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.)

Meeting	Date
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 1	October 25, 2022
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 2	November 30, 2022
Early Learning Council Meeting	December 7, 2022
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 3	February 9, 2023
Early Learning Council Meeting	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
Early Learning Council Meeting	June 28, 2023
Early Childhood Professionals Roundtable (Zoom)	June 28, 2023
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 5	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
Early Learning Council Meeting	September 27, 2023
Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 7	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 Early Learning Council voted this morning on its recommendation for the state; the draft contemplates including that recommendation as an appendix.
 - 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 voted on recommendations this morning. The draft contemplates including the full recommendations 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 changes to recommend before the Working Group votes on the final report?

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:
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