



Early Childhood Care and Education Strategic Plan Update

Children's Cabinet

March 23, 2023

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ISLAND

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.

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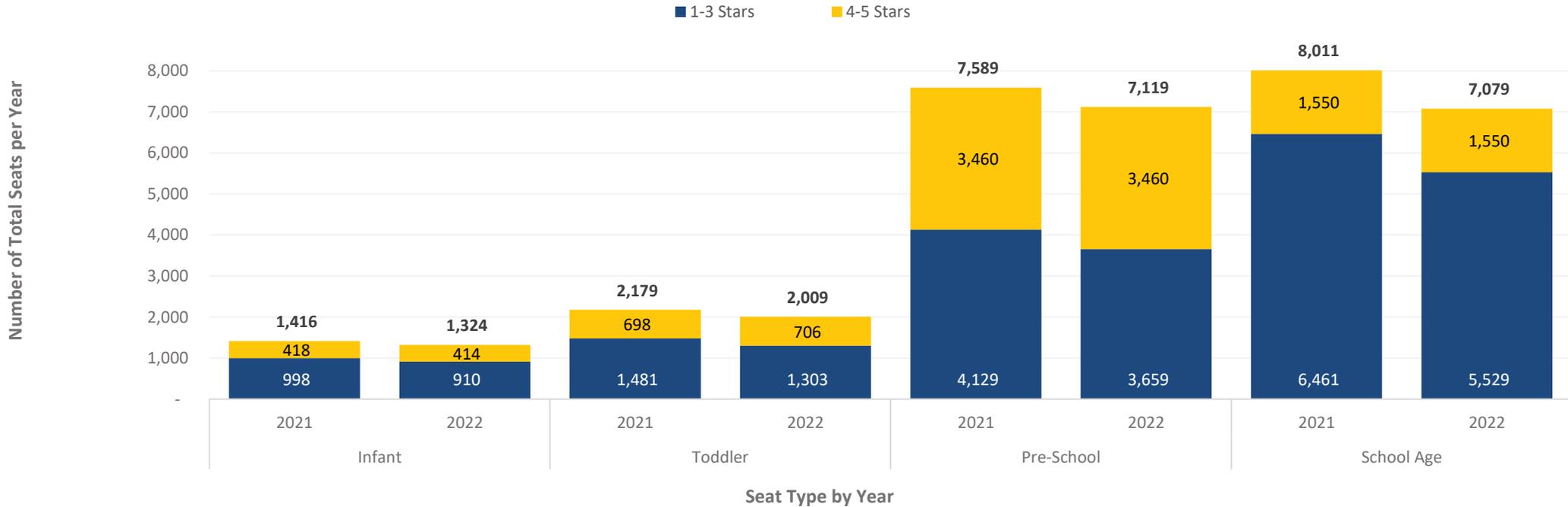
Objective 1: Rhode Island’s early childhood programs meet high-quality standards for care and education as defined by our Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Among CCAP providers, there is a critical lack of infant/toddler capacity to support working families.

Number of CCAP Seats by Age Group and BrightStars Rating and Year

Total Seats* in 2021: 19,195

Total Seats* in 2022: 17,531



* Not all CCAP providers, and no non-CCAP indicate their capacity by age group, Total seats referenced here will be less than actual “Total Capacity” in the Scorecard.

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Strategies & Impact Statements

- **Strategy 1:** Strengthen and streamline foundational quality standards through regular review and robust data collection.
 - *Impact Statement: Clarity and consistency in the definition of quality -- based in best practices and evidence -- will ensure that all initiatives to improve quality ratings will have a true impact on child development and long-term positive outcomes.*
- **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.
 - *Impact Statement: By investing in the increasing the capacity within the early learning sector and investing in direct quality improvements, there will be more high-quality spots for children utilizing CCAP to access.*
- **Strategy 3:** Ensure the workforce of early childhood educators and care professionals are professionally prepared, fairly compensated and have meaningful pathways towards career advancement.
 - *Impact Statement: The most important element of early childhood education are the educators who support children's development. Early education needs to recruit, retain, and train educators to have classrooms open and lead high quality programs.*

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.

Progress & Key 2023 Activities

Progress since 2020	2023 Key Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress meeting the equal access standard for CCAP rates, with increasing CCAP rates to the 50th percentile of the market rate for 1 star programs and up to the 85th percentile for 5 star programs Expansion of CCAP eligibility to families up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and to income-eligible full time students at public higher education institutions Implementation of the \$15M Early Childhood Care and Education Facilities Bond, passed in 2021, to expand and improve quality early learning spaces across the state As of February 2023, 51 programs applied for bond funds and 15 have received awards. Implementation the Family Child Care start-up grants to support increased capacity in an important part of the mixed-delivery system. As of February 2023, 76 potential FCCs received funding and 30 have become licensed. Expansion of career pathways supports and pipelines for early educators, including funding to double the number of TEACH Scholarships Implementation of the Pandemic Retention Bonus program to address compensation and support retention in the field during the pandemic. As of February 2023, 5152 unique individuals have received a PRB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Quality:</i> Review QRIS alignment to national best practices and identify opportunities for streamlining and improvement to ensure that a high quality rating reflects evidence-based practices for improving child outcomes <i>Capacity:</i> Develop a strategic plan for infant/toddler care to address capacity, affordability, and access for children 0-3 years old <i>Operations:</i> Implement the RI Start Early System to replace existing Licensing System of Record, develop a workforce registry, and develop other key operational functions <i>Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Compensation:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot the Step Up to WAGE\$ initiative to provide tiered wage to supplements more than 300 early educators Continued implementation of the Career Pathways work (OPC/DHS/RIDE) to support innovative, accelerated pathways in higher education for incumbent educators Partner on the Governor’s Workforce Board Task Force on ECCE career pathways

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Under development: The focus of these metrics is to understand the degree to which children are accessing preventative care, which is an research-based key indicator for engaging with the broad set of services and supports.

Proposed Key Metrics Include:

- Children with at least 6 child well-visits by 18 months old
- Children over 3 years old with a preventative check-up in the last 12 months
- MCHAT for 18 month-olds completed with 6 months
- Completion of immunization requirements for students entering Kindergarten

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.

Strategies & Impact Statements

Strategy 1: Create a system for connecting families PN-5 to appropriate services and programs, and for supporting families' continued engagement in those services.

- *Impact Statement: By ensuring that families are meaningfully engaged in programs and have the supports they need, children will have increased protective factors to support positive development.*

Strategy 2: Leverage community-embedded resources to help parents understand, navigate and remain engaged in the comprehensive array of PN-5 opportunities, programs and services.

- *Impact Statement: Families are children's first, best teacher. By ensuring that families have the information needed to navigate the early childhood system, children and families will access available programs and services at higher rates.*

Strategy 3: Build on RI's leadership in children's access to healthcare to improve prevention and screening.

- *Impact Statement: Accessing pediatric services is an evidence-based way to prevent negative health and development outcomes for children. By ensuring equitable access to early healthcare, children will experience more positive development.*

Strategy 4: Ensure that all families and children under age five who face early adversity equitably access high-quality early childhood programs that provide services through a trauma-informed approach.

- *Impact Statement: Young children exposed to trauma are at higher risk for long-term negative health and academic outcomes. By ensuring children exposed to early adversity are engaged in the highest-quality early learning programs, children will have the protective supports needed to buffer the impact of the trauma they have experienced.*

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expanded Parents as Teachers by 300 spots and leveraged Medicaid funding for PAT to support ongoing sustainabilitySince 2020, implemented 12 Parent Support Programs through the Health Equity ZonesSecured \$11M in stabilization funding for Early Intervention and \$15M in stabilization funding for pediatric primary care providers to address health equity gaps and workforce challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemicIncreased Medicaid rates for Early Intervention and PediatricsMade perinatal doula services a covered benefit for all insurance beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">EOHHS Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Task Force to develop comprehensive recommendationsDevelop a comprehensive action plan to align developmental supports for young children across Early Intervention, Kids Connect, and Early Childhood Special Education to improve transitions and ensure continued engagementContinued implementation of the Health Equity Zone family navigators and caregiver support programsAdditional trainings for perinatal doulas to access new funding through insurance coverage

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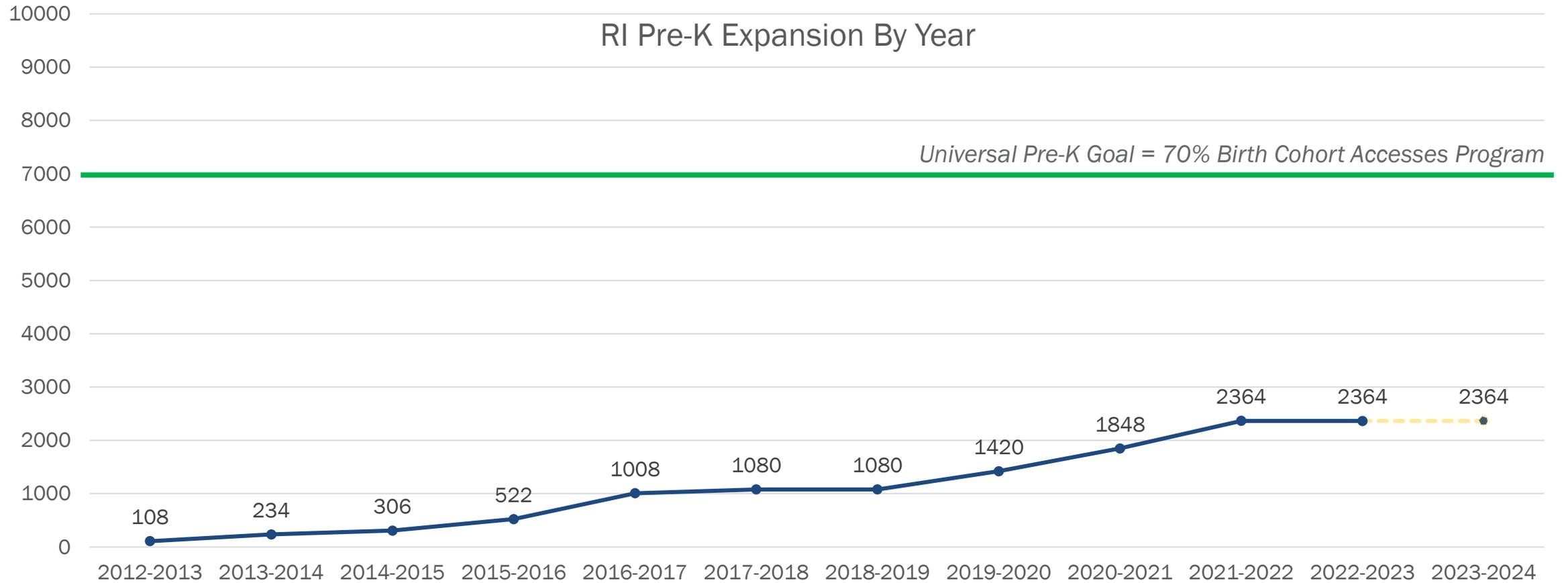
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Strategies & Impact Statements

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

- *Impact Statement: RI Pre-K is built within the existing mixed-delivery system. By increasing the number of classrooms meeting high-quality standards, more children will have access to high quality care and more classrooms will be positioned to become part of the RI Pre-K program.*

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.

- *Impact Statement: By leveraging resources across the early learning system, RI Pre-K can maximize funds in a way that sustains the program, improves transitions for families, and better supports providers.*

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.

- *Impact Statement: RI Pre-K depends on highly-qualified educators. If there is a pipeline of educators ready to teach RI Pre-K, RI Pre-K will be able to expand as more funding becomes available.*

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

- *Impact Statement: Pre-K expansions in other regions has shown that there can be negative impacts on the system – particularly infant/toddler care – if expansion is not done as part of the birth through five system as a whole. By taking a thoughtful approach and working with the community, RI will have a plan that can deliver RI Pre-K expansion in a way that strengthens all parts of early learning.*

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

Progress & Key 2023 Activities

Progress since 2020	2023 Key Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 equitably strengthened 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. • Developed a comprehensive RI Pre-K Expansion plan to reach 5,000 seats by 2028, which includes recommendations for expanding to 3-year olds, ensuring equity, embedding ECSE, supporting transitions, supporting the mixed-delivery system, and sustaining and growing infant/toddler care • Piloted new community-embedded outreach to support families in signing up for the lottery and secured funding to continue and expand the initiative in 2023 • Developed new Pre-K to 2 Teacher Certification pathways for incumbent educators to support the workforce pipeline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support proposals in the Governor’s FY24 proposed budget to sustain all current RI Pre-K seats, as more than 800 seats are at risk of closure due to expiring federal funding after this school year • Passage of H5339 to implement QRIS across all ECE settings • With PDG planning funds, implement recommendations from the RI Pre-K expansion plan, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment for multilingual learners in early childhood education • Development of a model for family child care to deliver RI Pre-K • Review and make recommendations on the alignment across Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education, and Kids Connect to ensure equitable access to high-quality early learning programs for children with disabilities • Develop an infant/toddler strategic plan to address capacity and sustainability as a corollary to the RI Pre-K plan (see objective 1)

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Strategies & Impact Statements

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.

- *Impact Statement: By increasing awareness of the ECCE sector and its connection to other priority goals, there will be greater understanding of the complex needs and investments required to sustain and expand ECCE.*

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

- *Impact Statement: The goals of this strategic plan require new funding sources. By pursuing creative funding solutions, the ECCE system will maximize resources and have the funding available to achieve goals.*

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

- *Impact Statement: By coordinating teams, programs, and funding, RI will be able to advance the goals of this strategic plan.*

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

- *Impact Statement: By formalizing the interagency governance, more rapid decision-making will be possible and will accelerate progress on ECCE goals.*

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

Progress & Key 2023 Activities

Progress since 2020	2023 Key Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented innovative financing mechanisms for RI Pre-K and Parents as Teachers to ensure ongoing sustainability of the programs by maximizing available fund sources Secured and implemented several competitive grants to support funding for the ECCE strategic plan priorities, including multiple Preschool Development Grants, Prenatal to 3 Grant, and a Congressional Directed Spending award Secured more than \$50M in stimulus funding to advance goals across all Objective areas Achieved key budget priorities, including covering perinatal doula services, expanding First Connections prenatally, increased CCAP rates, and expanded CCAP eligibility Coordinated ongoing interagency governance to allow for shared oversight of the ECCE strategic plan Implemented public awareness campaigns related to pediatric care, RI Pre-K enrollment, child care access and workforce, and EI access and workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passage of the Governor’s FY24 Proposed Budget to sustain all RI Pre-K seats Development of the Governance Systems Analysis by October 1, 2023 to outline recommendations for future ECCE Governance approach, as required in FY23 Enacted Budget Apply for anticipated PDG Renewal Grant in October 2023 to invest in the recommendations emerging from planning efforts across Objective areas

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Strategies & Impact Statements

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.

- *Impact Statement: By regularly reviewing data on progress, the plan can be revised to meet emerging needs or refine approaches to address if strategies are not having the intended impact.*

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

- *Impact Statement: By improving operational data systems, agencies and programs will be able to focus on quality rather than on process.*

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

- *Impact Statement: By increasing awareness of the current state of the ECCE system, families, programs, and agencies will have more choice and access to programs and resources.*

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

- *Impact Statement: By engaging in ongoing research, the Strategic Plan can be updated to align with latest best practices to maximize impact.*

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.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed the ECCE Data Scorecard through the EOHHS Ecosystem to integrate child level data across ECCE agencies, allowing for longitudinal review of data at the child level• Procured a vendor to implement the RI Start Early System (RISES), which includes the child care licensing system of record and the workforce registry• Conducted a family survey to gather qualitative information about family experiences navigating and engaging with the early learning system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of the RI Start Early System across DHS and RIDE, which includes the licensing system of record, the workforce registry, the provider portal, the CECE applications, consumer website, and monitoring and evaluations• Continued refinement of the ECCE Data Scorecard to clean data and provide regular updates on progress of the strategic plan