

Early Childhood Funding Commission

National Panel of Experts: Crosswalk to Recommendations

National Panel of Experts	Current Commission Recommendations
<i>Equitable Access to High Quality Services</i>	
<i>"Illinois should consider a broader definition of access, to include accessibility, accommodation, and awareness among families."</i>	One centralized ECEC agency should agree upon a broader definition of access to use in fulfilling its management & oversight capacities and objectives.
<i>"Illinois has an access and a quality issue, and Illinois needs to focus on those and define those issues in more detail."</i>	<p>Illinois has defined quality and has studied access to high-quality ECEC services (this background research was not provided to panelists). The Commission's charge focuses on improving equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care services. The Commission's draft recommendations focus on a unified approach to ECEC that would prioritize improving equitable access to high-quality ECEC and facilitate the state's ability to track access to quality (something the State has struggled to do in the current system).</p> <p><i>Do the Commission's draft recommendations create the conditions for providing equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and services, in fulfillment of the Commission's charge?</i></p>
<i>Family Choice, Navigation, and Engagement</i>	
<i>"A solution should respect that families have a choice in services and should ensure that providers can operate with stability."</i>	<p>The Commission's Guiding Principles include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design for stability and sustainability • Prioritize family perspectives, needs, and choices
<i>"Illinois needs to think about infrastructure across programs. There is not much information in the Commission's recommendations regarding family navigation of the system."</i>	<p>The Commission's draft recommendation of a centralized funding system is designed to increase stability for providers across the mixed delivery system. The Commission's draft funding adequacy goal includes all ECEC setting types and a need for greater local capacity and infrastructure to support family navigation and community planning. The Commission's draft recommendation to create a new state agency includes recommending development of community-level structures that would support family navigation of the system.</p> <p><i>Do the Commission's draft recommendations promote provider stability, honor family choice, and support family navigation of the system?</i></p>
<i>"Focus groups with families can create an ongoing feedback loop. Families should be included in design, implementation, monitoring, and regulations development."</i>	The Commission's work has been supported by multiple parent focus groups. The Early Learning Council is also in the process of launching a Family Advisory Council that can serve as a source of input for implementation of the Commission's recommendations.
<i>"The work cannot be done without significant and sustained parental</i>	The Commission's stated objectives for a new ECEC state agency include the following:

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<i>input into the process. Too often, it is assumed what parents want, and the Commission does not mention how parent engagement and parent choice will be built into the early childhood system.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to family need and earn public trust: unify family engagement and community systems strategies, engage diverse stakeholders in an inclusive decision making process, implement accountability focused on family perspectives, data, equitable access to high-quality ECEC, and equitable outcomes for young children and families.
<i>“Look at what parents want. Parents, especially parents of young children, change their views on what they want for their children. We can find ourselves in danger of building something that won’t serve parents unless we ask them.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan cohesively for sustainable ECEC: design program models and funding streams that respond to family and community needs and address system gaps and inequities.
<i>“Community engagement should be more thoughtfully considered, as families should be able to see themselves in this plan, and all parts of the state should be addressed.”</i>	<p>The Commission’s stated capacities to be fulfilled by a new ECEC state agency include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications: Create equitable and inclusive opportunities for collaborative decision-making with families and providers.
<i>“We might want to pay to support families’ and providers’ ability to share their voice and attend meetings. We have to pay for things we say are important.”</i>	<p><i>Do the Commission’s draft recommendations sufficiently respond to these panelist comments?</i></p>
Connections to Other Parts of Comprehensive Early Development	
<i>“We must think about broader connections to other parts of the state’s system.”</i>	<p>The Commission’s charge focuses specifically on providing equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care services.</p>
<i>“It’s important to develop an internal structure of coordination across comprehensive early development and an external structure that brings in partners.”</i>	<p>The Commission’s stated capacities to be fulfilled by a new ECEC state agency include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy Leadership: Coordinate with other child- and family-serving state agencies and ECEC system advisory bodies to ensure comprehensive and responsive supports for families.
<i>“There should be more attention paid to the transition between programs.”</i>	
<i>“Think about how to best transition children between systems. Build infrastructure between community-based organizations and schools.”</i>	<p>The Commission’s draft recommendations include that a new ECEC state agency be informed by an advisory group whose role includes collaboration and coordination across the comprehensive early development field, and that a new state agency support development of community-level infrastructure.</p>
Management & Oversight and Funding Mechanisms	

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<p><i>“There must be consideration for accountability and oversight. There is more work to be done to determine how programs are monitored and held accountable, and this should not be an afterthought. In Illinois there is accountability for health and safety standards, but there should be accountability for quality as well. This should be considered alongside licensing and governance.”</i></p>	<p>The Commission’s recommendation to centralize ECEC services in a new ECEC state agency include centralization of day care licensing and ECEC quality rating and improvement system (ExceleRate) functions as well as centralized data systems. The Commission also recommends a periodic equity review overseen by the new ECEC state agency.</p> <p>The Commission’s stated capacities to be fulfilled by a new ECEC state agency include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy leadership: set quality and early learning standards and guidelines based on the science of early childhood development and informed by anti-racist approaches and the families and providers directly impacted by the standards and guidelines. • Funding and oversight: make funding allocation decisions that ensure equitable allocation of resources and equitable access to quality services; administer equitable funding distribution mechanisms; conduct monitoring and compliance oversight designed to support equitable outcomes for all children. <p>The Commission’s stated objectives for a new ECEC state agency include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan cohesively for sustainable ECEC: unify the definition of quality. • Improve access to high quality and ensure equitable outcomes: prioritize resource distribution to reconcile past underinvestment and support equitable access and outcomes. • Improve system transparency, accountability, and efficiency: unify monitoring, data collection, and reporting and monitor equitable access to resources. <p><i>Do the Commission’s draft recommendations sufficiently address considerations regarding monitoring, oversight, and accountability across the ECEC system?</i></p>
<p><i>“It is important to monitor investments and implementation to include those who have been previously excluded.”</i></p>	
<p><i>“Infrastructure should be more clearly defined, and there should be thought given to how infrastructure is resourced.”</i></p>	<p>The Commission’s stated capacities to be fulfilled by a new ECEC state agency include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure: Develop leadership capacity to implement improvements to the ECEC system; Collect, analyze, and evaluate systemwide disaggregated data; Manage system level continuous quality improvement; Administer professional development and workforce development.

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	The Commission’s technical working is currently estimating the one time and recurring cost of a new agency, which can be included in the Commission’s final report.
<i>“We might need to think about grantmaking in a cohesive way at the state level, and to align reporting and requirements.”</i>	The Commission’s recommendation to centralize funding systems and management & oversight into one agency, aligned with unified data systems, community engagement, standards, and policies, is aimed specifically at ensuring the State is able to take this cohesive and coherent approach.
<i>“The Commission should consider aligning regulations across the different programs and investing in places that have seen disinvestment.”</i>	The Commission’s stated capacities to be fulfilled by a new ECEC state agency include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy Leadership: Develop and implement system policies, rules, and regulations (including budget) based on diverse family, community, and provider perspectives and needs in response to gaps.
<i>“There is more alignment needed across IDEA Part B Section 619 and Part C.”</i>	The Commission’s draft recommendation is that further study be done on this issue. <i>With further study needed to determine how best to connect Early Childhood Special Education (IDEA Part B Sec. 619) and a new ECEC state agency housing Early Intervention (IDEA Part C), how can the Commission’s recommendations best address this comment?</i>
<i>“Think about how community-based partnerships are built to support community coherence and leadership.”</i>	The Commission agrees and recommends that there be a regional and community level component to the recommended new state agency’s structure, with funding policy and allocation informed by community and regional level resources. <i>Do the Commission’s draft recommendations sufficiently respond to these panelist comments?</i>
<i>“Develop a sense of the role of localism, partnership, and comprehensive services that will work for families and that is funded and sustainable for the network of providers and adults.”</i>	
<i>“It is notable that Head Start isn’t mentioned.”</i>	The Commission’s recommendation to centralize ECEC services in a new ECEC state agency includes the Head Start State Collaboration Office and a specific focus on intentionally accounting for and complementing Head Start and Early Head Start resources that exist in each community.
<i>“Look at how Head Start fits into your recommendations, specifically the Head Start State Collaboration Office.”</i>	
Implementation	
<i>“Once a state makes the decision to change, it is important to move forward and maintain focus on the purpose of the transformation.”</i>	The Commission’s charge includes a call to advise the Governor in planning and implementing the recommendations to establish funding goals and funding mechanisms.
<i>“Moving toward centralization requires a big intentional effort. A</i>	The Commission’s Guiding Principles include the following:

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<p><i>transition could take a long time, and it could require a lot of people and deliberation.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s important to build culture in an early childhood department, and this takes time.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize implementation realities: We will plan for meaningful change over a multi-year time horizon. We will respond to disruptions in the system to meet the reality of changing needs. <p>The Commission has learned from other states’ experiences in creating a new ECEC state agency that it is important to prioritize building a unified culture in said agency.</p> <p><i>What, if any, further implementation guidance should the Commission’s recommendations include?</i></p>
<p><i>“Affordability should be more clearly defined, as the 7% affordability standard was designed specifically for families paying a co-pay for a subsidy rather than a standard for all families.”</i></p>	<p>The Commission’s funding adequacy recommendation includes in its cost of adequacy an assumption that no family receiving ECEC services should pay more than 7% of family income to receive such services. Commission staff are seeking further clarification on this statement, and the Commission may want to consider national benchmarks at 10% of income for higher income families.</p>
Final Report Considerations	
<p><i>“Focus should remain on the child when the recommendations are drafted.”</i></p>	<p>The Commission’s report will be designed to draw clear lines from the children and families at the center of the ECEC system to the root causes that prevent equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care services to the recommendations proposed to provide equitable access to such high-quality services and how they will impact children and families in Illinois.</p>
<p><i>“Add a strengths-based narrative for families, that the work is being done because of an obligation and a responsibility to families.”</i></p>	<p>The Commission agrees. This work is meant to articulate what is needed to ensure that every child is afforded the opportunity to flourish.</p>