

Early Childhood Funding Design Workgroup

Meeting 12

November 19, 2025, 4:30 – 6:00 pm

Public attendee link:

https://aftonpartners.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Ng4ltmT8QjO0kIYbzIXruQ

In attendance: 82

Workgroup members: Alicia Lynch-Deatherage, Anita Andrews-Hutchinson, April Janney, Lesley Schwartz, Bryan Stokes III, Candace Moore, Cristina De La Rosa, Delreen Schmidt-Lenz, Edie Washington-Gurley, Erika Mendez, Grace Araya, Irish Parks, Jill Andrews, Kesha Harris, Marcy Mendenhall, Priscilla Bahena, Robin Steans, Shontee Blankenship, Tom Layman, Rachel Latham

Home Visiting Subcommittee members: Jaime Russell, Lorena Nunez, Sandra Moscoso-Friedman

State Agency Members and Consultants:

Ann Whalen (Chief Transition Design Officer, IDEC), Maya Portillo (Project Director for Funding Design, IDEC), Lori Orr (IDHS), Penelope Smith (ISBE), Jean Davis (IDHS), Julie Gilling (Director of Policy, IDEC)

Megan Bock (Afton Partners), Abby McCartney (Afton Partners), Kayla Rosen, (Afton Partners), Marissa Ortiz (Afton Partners), Siri Smillie (Afton Partners), Crystal Roman (Afton Partners)

German Barrios– Interpreter

Members of the Public: Christy Filby, Lori Carroll, Beata Skorusa, Nancy Salvador, Aubry Stapleton, Bob Spatz, Sally Puleo, Denise Henry, Britt Gordon-McKeon, Jessica Kober, Jon Korfmacher, Kirsten Williams, Lois Meisenheimer, Jennifer Brown, Pedro Bortoto, Adam Slade, Dr. Jamilah R Jor'dan, Austin Railey, Katherine Buchanan, Kathleen Kimmey, Angela Farwig, Rose Malloy, Wendy Wright, Samantha Flarity, Adejumo Akinbusuyi, Aquilla Milton, Maria Padron, Maria Navarro Nojica, Kathy Fudge White, Drew McGee, Chad Wise, Sue Wilson, Kayla Goldfarb, Lucas Jemison, Karissa Zingula, Amy Gipe, Smita Puri, Lauri Morrison Frichtl, Chery Ceasar, Monique Lopez, Bri Stormer, Ireta Gasner, Beza Bulega, Tammy King, Donna Emmons, Rosario Hernandez

Minutes

1. Welcome and introductions

Abby McCartney (Afton Partners) welcomed the group and shared meeting norms expectations. German gave instructions for accessing the Spanish translation channel. Abby reviewed the agenda and shared goals for the meeting:

- Share updates on key activities underway for Funding Design and related work
- Provide feedback on potential cost factors identified by the Home Visiting Subcommittee

Abby briefly reviewed the funding design goals and emerging design principles and reminded the group of the timeline to implement funding design, noting that implementation will begin in FY28.

2. Updates on Funding Design Activities & Related Work

a. Deep Dives

Megan Bock (Afton Partners) provided an overview of the 12 deep dive conversations that IDEC has led with providers to build a deeper understanding of program-level operations. These deep dives have supported IDEC to learn more about different program structures and how their funding is set up, along with surfacing challenges. Providers that have participated in the deep dives include those that:

- Are in urban, suburban, and rural regions of the state
- Have a variety of funding streams including ECBG, Head Start, CCAP, military subsidies, DCFS subsidies, and private tuition
- Range in size from serving 40 children to serving 2,000+ children
- Represent different service provider structures like Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), school districts, center-based programs- including Head Start grantees with partnership sites
- Support inclusive practices for children with developmental delays, disabilities, and challenging behavior

The takeaways from these conversations include rising costs, learning around co-pay practices, challenges in eligibility for current funding and unique needs for programs in rural areas.

b. Head Start Cost Modeling

Megan also shared that the team is building an understanding of the costs to implement Head Start standards. This has been informed by engagement with Head Start providers. To date, the state has heard from Head Start providers through a provider panel in the funding alignment subcommittee, deep dive interviews with Head Start providers and the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start grant supervisor, and through participation of providers in existing workgroups and subcommittees. This will inform a cost model for Head Start. Key themes that have emerged include:

- Funding design work should consider Head Start and Early Head Start as critical and foundational funding sources in our system, serving high-need families and children
- Providers face challenges with managing multiple funding streams
- Head Start and Early Head Start programs face different costs in meeting the Head Start Program Performance Standards
- IDEC should begin to understand these cost factors to inform the funding design cost model

Megan then shared the objectives for Head Start cost modeling:

- Better understand costs associated with Head Start (HS), Early Head Start (EHS), and Migrant/Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) program models
- Gather input from HS, EHS, and MSHS providers about the costs they face
- Identify areas for further exploration

This preliminary cost model will include full- and part-day, center-based Early Head Start, Head Start and Migrant/Seasonal Head Start services. The preliminary model will not include Early Head Start home visiting (which was included in previous home visiting cost modeling) or detailed revenue estimates.

The team is continuing to learn through Head Start provider focus groups, including one coming up on November 20th, 2025.

c. Communications

Maya Portillo (IDEC) thanked all of the workgroup and subcommittee members who have participated in this work and also noted that IDEC has been trying to meet community members where they are and is engaging in far-reaching communications about funding design. Within the past month, IDEC has presented at 6 different community meetings reaching 255 people. Key takeaways include the need for continued prioritization of the workforce, interest in focusing on infant/toddlers, questions about the FY27 budget, implications for current programs versus prioritization for new programs and the implications of funding design for Chicago, specifically. Maya highlighted the upcoming sessions happening in November and December.

3. Fall Funding Design Subcommittees

Maya provided context for the fall subcommittees by reminding the group of the summer subcommittee process and recommendations. She shared that the fall subcommittees will focus on providing feedback on assumptions that will inform the funding design framework for child care (0-5)/pre-k and home visiting. The objectives include:

- A recommended initial set of family driven cost factors to consider embedding in definitions of adequacy targets
- Qualitative input on known and unknown cost factors to inform development of adequacy targets
- Input on variations required based on the experiences and needs of different provider types
- Questions needing further consideration and research to inform funding framework

She shared the three subcommittees: child care (0-5)/pre-k, Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers, and home visiting. The intention across the subcommittees is to center experiences of families including multilingual learners and supporting children with disabilities and developmental delays.

She shared the concept of creating an adequacy-based funding target, explaining that this work will build on the recommendations of the funding alignment subcommittee. The target will be driven by family-driven cost factors and what providers need to deliver on this. The statewide target must account for costs associated with providing care to multilingual learners and children with disabilities and developmental delays and consider federal and other funding resources.

4. Home Visiting (HV) Subcommittee

Abby shared how the HV subcommittee is approaching the adequacy target, explaining that there are currently known and unknown cost factors. The known cost factors have been explored/defined by research and best practice and through an existing cost model developed by P-5 Fiscal Strategies. These known costs, including workforce staffing and program operations, make up the majority of costs. The focus for the subcommittee has been to understand the unknown costs.

There are program level costs, like administrative costs and support for direct services, as well as infrastructure costs, supported at the regional or statewide level, that need to be accounted for. The subcommittee is focused on program costs.

Lorena Nunez, subcommittee member, shared more detail about the committee's first meeting, which provided additional input on known and unknown cost factors. She noted the following key takeaways:

- Need to more clearly define transportation costs and how this can differ widely by region and community needs
- Tiered pay structures were noted as important, especially for multilingual staff

- Professional development is also important but is often underfunded
- Material supports for families (e.g. books, diapers, cooking supplies) need to be accounted for
- Outreach and recruitment take time and materials – coordinated intake systems reduce the burden on staff and make it easier for families to connect with home visiting services
- Need to develop a more comprehensive understanding and approach for doula services.

Abby shared a summary of themes from family input in the area of language access, access that meets their needs generally (hours and location), and awareness, noting that the subcommittee spent time in the second meeting to consider the costs associated with meeting these needs.

Sandra Moscoso-Friedman, subcommittee member, shared the discussion from the second subcommittee meeting. The group discussed the importance of providing access to home visiting services in their home language, and how multilingual home visitors have additional cultural competence. Waiting lists for Spanish-speaking families are longer as there is a lack of staff to provide home-language services. Multilingual home visitors also often have higher caseloads, but since they often provide added services, such as attending appointments with families, lower caseloads are needed. Additionally, there are costs to serving families in languages beyond English and Spanish, such as purchasing curriculum or interpretation. Recruitment and retention of multilingual staff is also challenging, and the group discussed the need for additional compensation through stipends or wage increases.

Jaime Russell, subcommittee member, shared more detail about the discussion of home visiting start-up and expansion. The subcommittee elevated a strong need for community planning and community buy-in and the long on-ramp to fully bring staff on, train, do community outreach, and grow caseloads. She noted that the current grant structure does not work well for new programs.

a. Discussion + Share-out

Abby shared the discussion questions and attendees discussed in breakout groups.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the subcommittee's input resonate with or differ from your experience?
- How does this input impact or interact with other parts of the EC system?
- What questions do you have for the subcommittee? What else should they consider as they move toward recommendations?

Each breakout chose a representative to share a summary of their conversation:

- Group 1: This group discussed how the conversation around multilingual staff resonated with their experiences and how often the additional work goes unnoticed and uncompensated. Some members of the group raised the need to better understand and discuss the full home visiting context including qualifications.
- Group 2: Group discussed the need to ensure funding is reflective of the amount of work and costs it takes to deliver quality home visiting. Staff turnover is an additional cost factor due to time it takes to onboarding new staff and the loss when they leave quickly after training. The group also talked about the alignment with existing funding streams and how it can create barriers for services when they are considered duplicative.
- Group 3: This group appreciated that the subcommittee is considering additional compensation for multilingual home visitors, noting that that was not included in the first cost model. They discussed the importance of coordinated intake and how that connects to other ECEC programs,

noting that it should be incorporated in the broader IDEC vision. The group also raised questions about variation of costs across the state and how funding streams will be combined.

- Group 4: The group agreed that the subcommittee's findings resonated and especially agreed with the need for additional compensation for bilingual or multilingual staff, as well as the direction away from "counting noses" and toward funding the infrastructure needed to adequately serve children and families. They discussed several implications, including how increased compensation for bilingual or multilingual staff would need to translate to other (non-home visitor) staff across larger organizations and also elevated concerns about the gap between the full, true cost of services and limited state resources. A member also elevated an example of a salary scale proposal for the Smart Start Quality Support program that included a 25 cent/hour "add-on" for child care staff with bilingual credentials.
- Group 5 (public attendees): This group discussed the importance of coordinated intake and if it could or should this live at the infrastructure level. A member also noted that home visiting programs are often not standalone programs and that there may be value in better understanding this dynamic. They also discussed various components of home visiting programs including doula services, language access, career pathways and transportation.
- Group 6 (public attendees): This group focused on the importance of developing career pathways and compensation ladders for home visitors and wanting to ensure that compensation accounts for the requirements and labor-intensive nature of this role. There was an interest in building on work that has already been done around wage scales and home visiting credentials.

5. Program Standards Alignment Workstream

Megan provided an overview of the program standards alignment workstream that is kicking off, noting that the current construct of programs is largely driven by federal requirements, funding requirements, and agency policies. The goal of this workstream will be to develop recommendations for aligning birth-to-five program standards and expectations for programs and services under IDEC with a vision of a continuum of quality that supports kindergarten readiness. The workgroup's recommendations will be informed by family needs, responsive to best practices, culturally inclusive, and aligned to federal requirements. This work will seek to map the current state of program standards and requirements through addressing questions related to identifying opportunities for alignment, reviewing state standards and understanding the continuum of quality systems of support. This work is interconnected with current conversations underway, including funding design and workforce.

Megan shared that the proposed outcomes for the first phase of this work (through June 2026) are to better understand the gaps and opportunities to align program standards. This will include completing an analysis of current standards and highlighting opportunities for alignment. Future work beyond June 2026 will include potential program standards revision processes and planning for implementation.

6. Public Comment, Next Steps & Close

Bri Stormer (Illinois Action for Children) provided public comment: Noted the importance of including FCC and FFN providers in funding deep dives. Elevated Providers in Action as group that can provide insight into that experience and offered to help connect IDEC. Also suggested consideration of license-exempt providers who are drawing down CCAP funds.

A workgroup member raised a question about next steps for this group, mentioning that the questions asked of the workgroup feel high level but the information they are receiving feels narrow and deep. They currently experience some fragmentation and would like a clearer overview of the goals and process of this work.

Appendix: Padlet Comments

How does the subcommittee's input resonate with or differ from your experience?

- Marketing, Outreach, Coordinated Intake
 - o There are likely both economies of scale and significantly increased efficacy to have community/intermediary marketing, outreach, and coordinated intake.
 - o In addition, a coordinated intake function can/should also be able to help smooth referrals that come out of home-visiting.
- How does this input impact or interact with other parts of the ECEC system?
 - o Coordination with FFN and "Nanny" Care - How does or doesn't home visiting interact with families that also have some level of FFN or "Nanny" (e.g. FFN where the person isn't known in advance)?
- What questions do you have for the subcommittee? What else should they consider as they move toward recommendations?
 - o Travel Time and Travel Cost for visitor and/or family - Just to get into the notes, there are "out of pocket" transportation costs (gas, parking, wear-tear on care), but travel time can also be very significant, especially in rural areas. A visitor's case load (and compensation) has to take into account their travel time. If families are expected to go to the "visitor", then the travel time is important to model/consider. A program that takes an hour each way (of uncompensated time) to get to may not be feasible for some families, even if "free".

