



# Tech Talks with IDEC

March 11, 2026



# Accessing Interpretation



## How to access interpretation:

1. Click on the globe icon labeled "Interpretation" at the bottom of your Webex window.
2. Select your preferred language from the list.
3. If you only want to hear the interpreter, you can also click "Mute Original Audio."

## Cómo acceder a la interpretación:

1. Haga clic en el ícono del globo etiquetado como "Interpretación" en la parte inferior de su ventana de Webex.
2. Seleccione su idioma preferido de la lista.
3. Si solo desea escuchar al intérprete, también puede hacer clic en "Silenciar audio original."

# Overview | Early Childhood Services can be less burdensome, more efficient and equitable



Children and families experience difficulties with inputting the **same info** repeatedly, deciphering **eligibility requirements**, and accessing **resources**



Providers spend too much time on **administration** and experience **challenges** with sustaining **multiple state funding streams**



State cannot track **funding for providers** across multiple streams, deliver **services equitably** and **efficiently**, and view **services a single child** accesses or does not access

## ★ North Star

Illinois is on a path to be the best state in the country to raise a family with young children

## 📍 Short-term goal

Ensure seamless transition of services for parents & providers

## 🎯 Agency redesign priorities

- 1 Align programs and program standards toward kindergarten readiness
- 2 Bring data transparency to deliver equity and efficiency
- 3 Design 0-3 services to support families in the most critical years
- 4 Licensing & regulatory processes support the rich diversity of families and providers that serve them
- 5 Align funding streams at the state level, relieving complexity from local and shifting to the state

# Early Education & Care Services will Move, Broader Family & School Support

## Will Remain at Transferring Agencies

### IL Dept. of Human Services

- Child Care
- Migrant & Seasonal Head Start
- Head Start Collaboration Office
- Early Intervention
- Home Visiting
  - State Home Visiting
  - MIECHV
  - Maternal Child Home Visiting

- Better Birth Outcomes
- Family Case Mgmt.
- High Risk Infant Follow Up
- Refugee & Immigrant Services
- SNAP
- WIC
- TANF

### IL State Board of Education

- Early Childhood Block Grant
  - Preschool for All (PFA)
  - Preschool for All Expansion
  - Prevention Initiative (PI)

- K-12 Evidence Based Funding
- Special Ed.
- Nutrition
- Title I CACFP / School Lunch
- KIDS Assessment

- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)\*

### IL Dept. of Child & Family Services

- Child Care Licensing

- Child Protective Services
- Adoption & Guardianship
- Institution and Group Home Services
- Investigative Services

### GOECD

- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

### ILDS

- Illinois Longitudinal Data System Reboot

### Key



*\*Program not included in the initial legislative package. Additional discussions with USDOE and state stakeholders are needed to identify the best approach to support children and families moving forward.*

# Welcome

## IDEC Tech Vision

Deliver secure, modern solutions that improve experiences and access to essential services for families

## Objectives:

- Share progress on IDEC's digital transformation and preview new tools.
- Gather actionable feedback from families, providers, agencies, partners, and staff.
- Build transparency, engagement, and support for upcoming releases.
- Host internal and public Tech Talks with clear demos, Q&A, and feedback opportunities.

Our Tech Talks aim to promote transparency in our transformation efforts for early childhood. We seek early and continuous questions and feedback to guide the work and ensure the best results for the Illinois early childhood community.

Successful transition will involve three elements...

> People

> Process

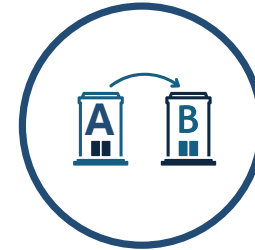
> Technology

...and each element is bucketed into one of three transition categories



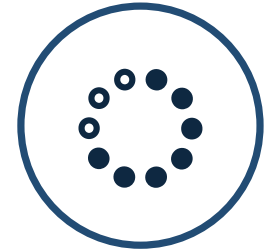
**Redesign, reform,  
and modernize**

*Enhance outdated processes or systems to align to future needs, introducing new solutions where necessary for best-in-class results*



**Lift, shift, & integrate**

*Seamlessly move existing processes, systems, & people into new environment to align with its vision & minimize disruption*



**Temporarily retain  
with transferring  
agencies**

*Delay transition for selected functions, keeping them with the current agency until resources or dependencies are satisfied*

# Who You'll Hear From



**Felicia Gray**  
IDEC Tech Change Management

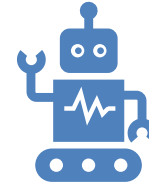


**Jessica Morris**  
IDEC Chief Information Officer



**Ailin Guo**  
Wonderschool Product Lead

# IDEC Monthly Tech Talks



Our Tech Talks aim to promote transparency in our transformation efforts for early childhood. We seek early and continuous questions and feedback to guide the work and ensure the best results for the Illinois early childhood community.



**Transformation Updates**



**Live Q&A**



**Recorded Demos**



**Progress to Goals**

## IDEC Tech Vision

Deliver secure, modern solutions that improve experiences and access to essential services for families



**MAR**

**Childcare Finder**



**APR**

**Grants**



**MAY**

**Subsidy**



**JUN**

**Licensing**



**JUL**

**Data Hub**

# Meeting Norms



Process is a part of the solution.



This is a demo and not a training session.



Seek to understand – submit your questions and comments in the Q/A box.



Accept that not all questions will be answered immediately, but there is a commitment to closing feedback loops.



Prioritize parent and provider experience.



Recognize the difference between intent and impact.

# Who's in the Room?

- Please add your name, county, and role in the chat!
- What's your favorite part of Spring?



# Early Childhood Grant Management Consolidation: EUNA Update

**IDEC is consolidating early childhood grant management services** from DHS and ISBE into a single, modernized system.

Pre Award	Evaluation & Review	Award	Post Award	Data and Reporting
Activities before funding is granted, including proposal development and submission	Assessment of the application for eligibility, quality, and alignment with grant criteria	Formal notification and acceptance of funding, including agreement on terms and conditions	Implementation of the funded project, managing compliance and financial oversight	Collection and analysis of financial reports and other grant-related data

Release 1 Go Live April 1

# Child Care Service Modernization: Wonderschool Update



**IDEC is implementing a single, streamlined digital system for child care services** designed to speed up, digitize, improve, and expand the capabilities related to finding and applying to child care, seeking subsidies, and for provider licensing and quality assurance.

Child Care Search & Apply	Child Care Subsidy	Child Care Licensing
Significantly expands childcare search functionality for families, including new filters, advanced profile pages, and the ability to schedule tours and apply for open spaces	Streamlines the subsidy process for families and administrators, including the ability to calculate eligibility before initiating the application process	Transforms a manual process for licensing into a streamlined digital experience that improves feedback loops, reduces errors, and accelerates licensing processes

Statewide by 6/15

Work Ongoing.  
Release statewide in  
FY27

Statewide Rollout  
Regionally based to  
begin 7/1/2026



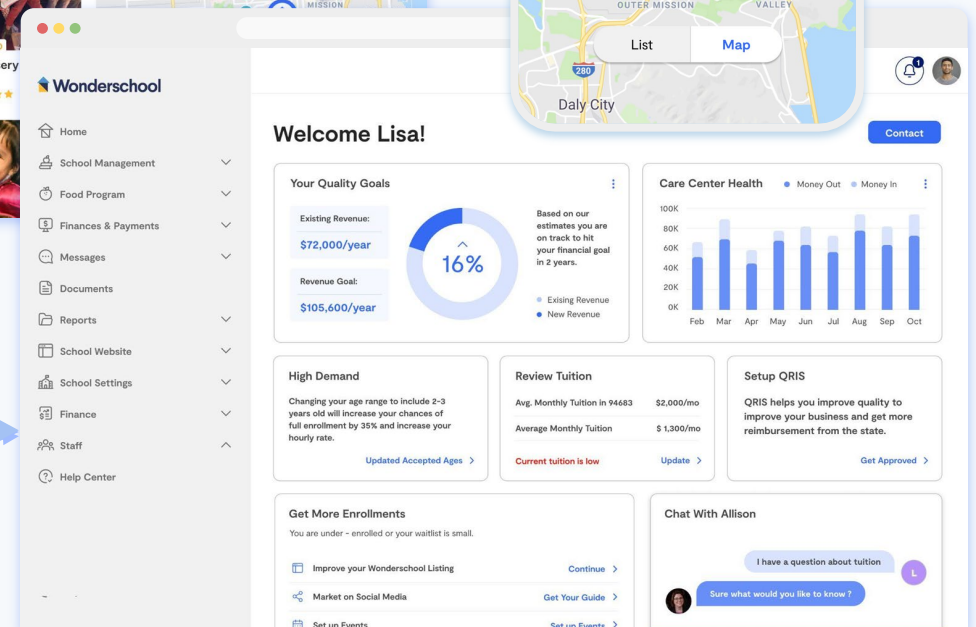
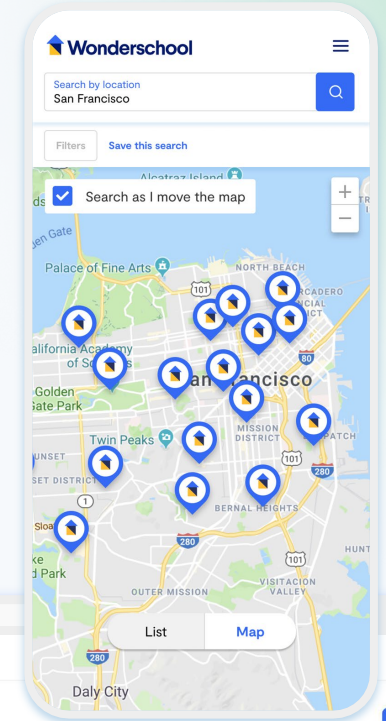
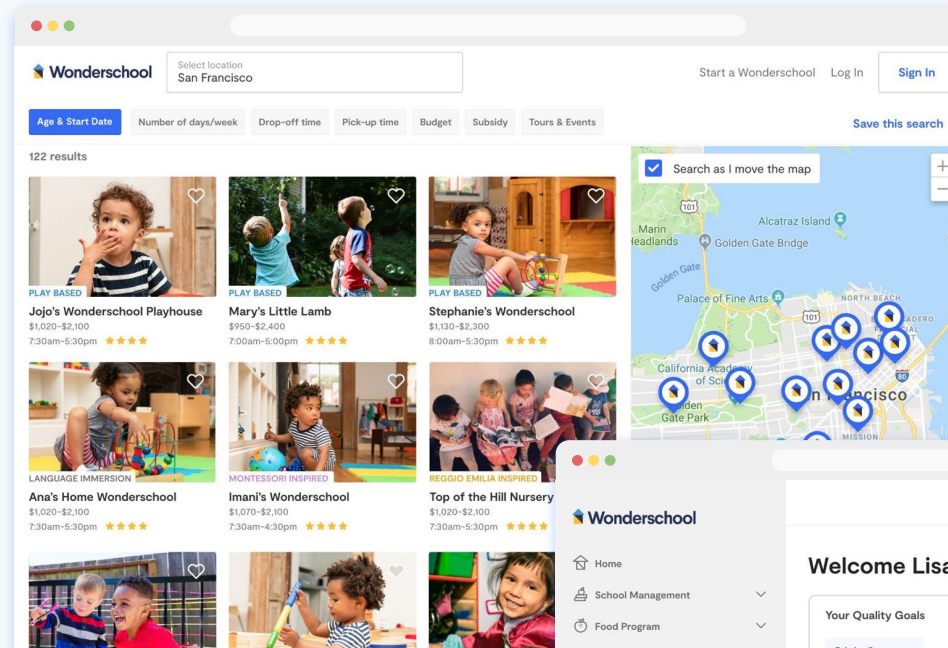
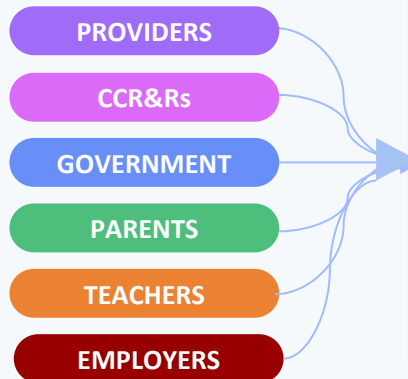
# Wonderschool Overview

Wonderschool partners with governments, businesses and nonprofits to ensure every child has access to high-quality child care close to home.

Since 2016, Wonderschool has led in providing integrated child care solutions, balancing technology and services to meet the needs of families.



**Chris Bennett**  
Co-Founder & CEO,  
Wonderschool



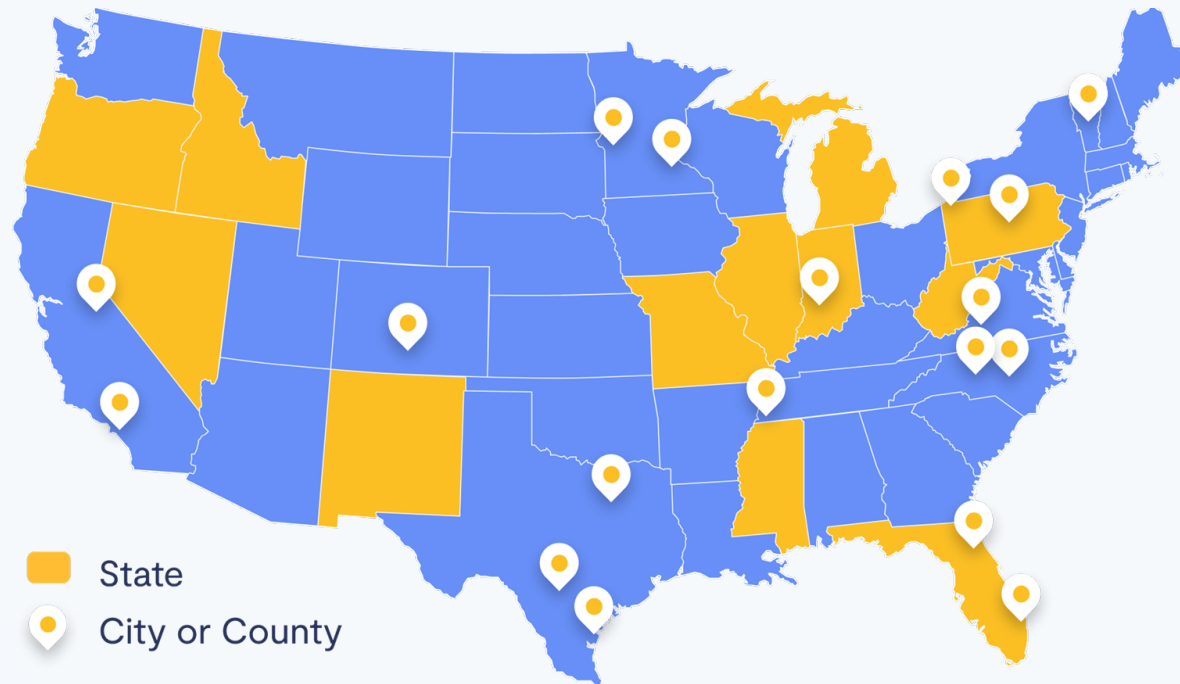
# State, City, and Local Technology Partnerships

100k +  
Providers on Platform

50  
Marketplace live  
in 50 states

12  
State agency  
partnerships

29  
Local  
partnerships



## Mississippi

New Childcare Programs  
Program Sustainability  
Substitute Teacher Pool

## Florida

Statewide [Childcare Finder](#)  
0-12th Grade, All Schools  
17,000 Programs  
3 Languages, 4.6m Kids

## Indiana





Statewide [Childcare Finder](#)  
Micro-Facility Creation

## West Virginia

New Child Care Programs  
Business Sustainability  
Tri-Share

# IDEC Childcare Finder and Application Service Highlights

The new formation of IDEC has allowed for the opportunity to create a new childcare finder service that brings together information from licensing, subsidy, and our provider database for an enhanced experience for providers, families, and our referral specialists.

 <b>Design and Integration</b>	Responsive across devices, no login required, integrated with state system, providers able to update directly
 <b>User Experience</b>	Easily discoverable, clear state identity, clear call-to-action, clear and visible filters, direct support options (FAQ, chat, hotline)
 <b>Filters</b>	Location, Age, Provider Type, Subsidy Acceptance, Quality Rating, Hours, Availability, Language, Budget Range, Drop-off/Pick-Up Time, Map-Based Search
 <b>Provider Profiles</b>	License, Ages, Ratings, Pricing, Safety, Subsidy acceptance, Language, Available Slots by Group, Philosophy, Food Availability, Link to Application, Tour Scheduling, Favorites / Alerts, Photos





## Our Goals

- Consolidate childcare information across IDEC services
- Enhance user experience and functionality
- Create ease of both finding care and assessing eligibility for subsidy

# Hunt Institute National Child Care Finder Scale

- The Hunt Institute, an independent nonprofit education policy organization affiliated with Duke University, conducted the first national assessment of every state's official child care finder
- The report created a 20-point scoring scale built from:
  - Design & Integration
  - User Experience
  - Search Filters
  - Provider Profiles
- States were rated from Minimal, Adequate, Enhanced to Exemplary based on total score.
- Based on our requirements for features to be included with our finder release, we are targeting high marks across domains in the National Child Care Finder Scale.

## Current Score

	<b>Design and Integration</b>	Current Score: 4 out of 5
	<b>User Experience</b>	Current Score: 3.5 out of 5
	<b>Filters</b>	Current Score: 1 out of 5
	<b>Provider Profiles</b>	Current Score: 2.5 out of 5

**Current Total**  
11 out of 20



# Finder Feature Demo in Three Sections

# Wonderschool Finder Feature Demo

- Finder demo (short) <https://www.loom.com/share/8d372747a2d74feea4f0f2c1c7c1dde5>
  - Provider demo (short) <https://www.loom.com/share/e34b626060d04c799ea2be98c1837e27>
  - Parent demo <https://www.loom.com/share/5c22d47aaa584aec88bee908e945f23b>
- 
- Long version links:
  - Finder demo (long) <https://www.loom.com/share/7d86e61167524d20bef8862818aa75f9>
  - Provide demo (long) <https://www.loom.com/share/5c22d47aaa584aec88bee908e945f23b>



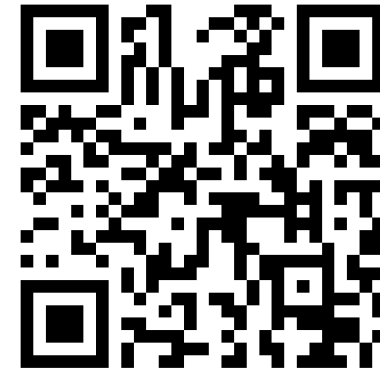
## Tech OCM: News You Can Use!



- [Questions.IDEC@illinois.gov](mailto:Questions.IDEC@illinois.gov) is the inbox used to receive all business/program related questions related to both projects.

## SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK!

<https://forms.office.com/g/Afrd6UUcLQ>



THANK YOU!



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[www.idec.illinois.gov](http://www.idec.illinois.gov)

