Transition Advisory Committee
Meeting 10
October 8, 2024, 5:30-7:00pm CT
Public attendee link:

https://aftonpartners.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_FWWdTE28T7aEz65kyZGcyg

In attendance:

Transition Advisory Committee (TAC) members:

Johnna Darragh-Ernst (Heartland Community College), Shontae Fennoy (East St. Louis SD 189), Tonya Frehner (Birth to Five Illinois), LaKeesha James-Smith (Parent, Family Advisory Council), Marcy Mendenhall (SAL Family and Community Services), Bela Moté – Chair (Carole Robertson Center), Angel Powell-Muldrow (Early Childhood Center Principal), Dara Munson (Family Focus), Robin Steans (Advance Illinois), Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro (Latino Policy Forum), Mariana Osoria (Chicago of Chicago), Makisha Binns (Kiddos Care), Sara Ziemba (Shine Therapy Service),

State Agency Members and Consultants:

Aressa Coley (Afton Partners), Beza Bulega (Afton Partners), Liz Garza (Afton Partners), Siri Smillie (Afton Partners), Kristen Garcia (Afton Partners), Marissa Ortiz (Afton Partners), and Ann Whalen (Early Childhood Transition Director)

Members of the public: 23

Angela Farwig, Bri Stormer, Carisa Hurley Davis, Cathy Mannen, Christy Filby, Cindy Berrey, Delores Rita, Donna Emmons, Erika Mendez, Ireta Fasner, Linda Wang, Maya Portillo, Michael Kim, Monique Hudson, Neoma Nagahawatte, Patricia Chamberlain, Ruby Loera, Shauna Ejeh, Teresa Weed, Veronica Cortez (3 participants over phone)

Minutes

1. **Welcome, & Introductions – Bela Moté (15 minutes)**

Bela Moté started the meeting by welcoming TAC members and public participants, outlining virtual meeting protocols and reminding everyone that meeting minutes and materials are available on the new Transition website in English and Spanish. Feedback was encouraged through the feedback form.

The TAC check-in question was “what is your favorite thing about the fall season?”, participants responded in chat.

Bela shared a family spotlight of parent voices from a Regional Listening Session participant to ground the TAC in family experiences.

Bela shared a few reminders including: the TACs charge, community engagement agreements, as well as the equity framework.

2. **Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) updates – Ann Whalen (15 min)**

Ann Whalen began her section with an apology for the lack of an in-person meeting, and informed participants that a poll would be sent out this week to schedule an upcoming in-person TAC meeting.

Ann shared that the search for an IDEC Secretary is still underway, and they hope to name someone by the end of the month.

Preschool Development Grant

Ann shared that due to insufficient federal funds Illinois was not selected for a grant in this round of PDG renewal funding. The US Department of Health and Human Services said they hope to have funding in the next fiscal year. Since federal funding is currently in Continuing Resolution, the State will not have any additional information on PDG until at least December 20th. Ann thanked people who were involved in this grant process and reminded participants that the State has been in a similar place before with Illinois not receiving grants in the first round.

Robin Steans and Marcy Mendenhall expressed disappointment with the lack of PDG funding and wanted more details on the impact of the lack of funding. Ann responded that the news was very recent and robust conversations are to come, and that they are also hoping for additional funding opportunities in FY25.

Workgroups Update

Ann reminded attendees that the workgroup interest form is open, and TAC members are encouraged to share it with their networks. Selections for the workgroups have yet to be finalized.

Marcy asked to understand what criteria will be used to select workgroup members. Ann responded that Family Service Workgroups will be heavily families and parents of children under five. Across workgroups, they will ensure representation from priority groups including multilingual and special needs families. There will also be a focus on ensuring diversity and representation.

Ann reminded the group of the multiple opportunities to engage and gather input from diverse perspectives, including attending workgroups as public attendees:

- Bimonthly listening sessions
- ChiByDesign Co-Design workshops
- TAC
- Early Learning Council meetings
- Early Learning Council committees
- Child Care Advisory Council
- Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention
- ECACE Consortium Advisory Council
- Workgroups
- Other regional or program specific advisories
- Listening Survey
- Regional listening sessions
- More to come

3. **TAC Updates – Bela Moté (20 minutes)**

Feedback Themes from Individual Check-ins

Bela thanked TAC members for participating in individual check-in meetings which provided insight on the experiences of TAC members and where there is room for improvement. The following themes were shared:

Successes

- Overall, the TAC feels inclusive, meaningful and engaging.
- TAC members feel their contributions are valued, and the planning team is responsive to feedback.
- Small group discussions are valuable and the balance between full group and small group conversations is well received.
- Appreciation for content shared including updates and community engagement data.

Challenges

- Some members are looking for more clarity about their roles and responsibilities.
- Disappointment with cancelling of the in-person meeting.
- Balance between feeling overwhelmed by the high content volume and feeling that the process is moving slowly.
- Need to further engage parents and families with multilingual learners.

Shontae Fennoy expressed that she had not completed a check-in because she was concerned that she had challenges to share including if the TAC is going in the right direction, but now sees that others have similar concerns.

Bela shared short- and long-term recommendations for improvement to address the challenges and encouraged TAC members to continue to share openly and honestly to continue to make improvements to the process.

TAC Equity Framework – Quarterly Reflections

Mariana Osoria discussed the findings from the TAC Equity Workgroup feedback survey, sharing that only four responses have been submitted in the TAC feedback survey. In order to improve engagement with the survey they recommended using meeting time to allow members to complete the survey, including adding a question to the survey to understand how to better support TAC members in discussing equity, adding equity centered questions during meaning-making conversations and continuing to send survey reminders in emails.

Dara shared that the request to complete the survey has gotten lost among other requests and hopes that the lack of response doesn’t reflect on the lack of importance of the topic. She suggested that a TAC portal may be a helpful way to keep track of materials.

Shontae shared that she hasn’t completed the survey because she feels like her input would be repetitive to what she shares in meetings.

The survey link was shared with TAC members and they were encouraged to continue to complete it and share their perspectives.

4. **Community Feedback Overview – Aressa, LaKeesha and Johnna (20 minutes)**

Participation Analysis

Aressa Coley shared that 2,730 stakeholder responses have been captured through the state's transition stakeholder activities. This included:

- 760 TAC Attendees;
- 876 Listening Session Attendees;
- 537 TAC and Listening Session Feedback Survey Responses and
- 557 Regional Listening Session Attendees

Additionally, 16 Listening Session Feedback surveys were completed in Spanish, and 27 Padlet comments were in Spanish.

68% of the participants have been Caucasian/White, 15% African American/Black, and 11% Hispanic/Latino. Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American and Multi-racial populations along with those who preferred not to answer were under 10%. About a quarter of participants were ECE providers, with 13% participation from Community Based Organizations, 11% advocates and 9% parents. Other participants included intermediary organizations, local and state agencies, workforce, K-12, higher education and business.

Regional Listening Sessions

As of October 1st, 60 regional listening sessions have been held or are scheduled, and they represent all Illinois counties. The team is continuing to analyze October regional listening session data as it comes in and looking for themes across various groups, such as ECE roles and race/ethnicity to understand any differences in experiences. Meaning making from these findings will begin in November. Aressa thanked TAC members who have hosted or participated in regional sessions.

LaKeesha James-Smith and Johnna Darragh-Ernst discussed their experiences hosting regional listening sessions. They appreciated both the ability to be in-person with groups as well as the virtual sessions, which were better attended. They advertised sessions through networking, outreach and press releases. They felt that it was a great opportunity to build a collective understanding of what communities across the state need in an ECE system and appreciated the diversity of voices in attendance, especially parent participation.

September Listening Session Themes

Advocates discussed the need for accessible and affordable resources for student parents, services for multilingual learners and for children with disabilities. They are excited about the expansion of the data workgroups and are concerned that they are not included in the Professional Development Advisory Council.

Families are concerned about the separation of ECBG and IDEA Part B funding and its impacts on children with disabilities and noted that ECSE services are needed in community-based organization settings.

Providers shared concerns with the income verification requirements and with supporting families that have barriers to accessing services. They would like additional clarification on how the new agency will partner with family child care homes.

TAC members responded to the implications of the community engagement update and listening sessions in pairs.

Reflection and Discussion

TAC members responded to the implications of the community engagement update and listening sessions in pairs.

Padlet links:

- TAC members: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/TAC_members_thinkpairshare
- Advocates: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/OctoberTAC_thinkpairshare_Advocates
- Families (English/Spanish): https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/thinkpairshare_families_familias
- Providers (English/Spanish): https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/thinkpairshare_providers_proveedores
- Service organizations: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/thinkpairshare_service_organizations
- State and local agencies: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/thinkpairshare_state_local_agencies
- Spanish: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/thinkpairshare_todos_los_demas_roles

5. **TAC Timeline and Phases of Work - Bela Moté**

Overview

Bela provided an update on the on the timeline of TAC work and priorities, noting that the TAC will work on creating an interim update during the following months with a goal of providing the update in January 2025. The update will include an overview of community engagement and learnings, as well as naming the knowledge gaps that should be addressed in year two.

The TAC will be launching an Interim Update Workgroup and is looking for TAC members who would like to volunteer. The group will meet to discuss and bring a tentative update to TAC in November.

Discussion and Share Out

TAC members responded to the following questions in pairs:

- As we plan the agenda for the in-person meeting, what activities should we focus on to foster relationship building?
- What additional workgroups would you like to see prioritized?
- Are there topics/priorities that haven't come up through community feedback that you're interested in exploring?

Lakeesha shared in the large group that their group discussed the desire for an in-person meeting, and ideas about how other revenue sources might be used to support initiatives from the PDG application.

Robin suggested that it would be good to understand the funding streams at local level, and is specifically interested in looking at benefits.

Padlet links:

- TAC members: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/OctoberTAC_small_groups
- Advocates: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/OctoberTAC_smallgroups_advocates
- Families (English/Spanish): https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/OctoberTAC_smallgroups_families_familias
- Providers (English/Spanish): https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/OctoberTAC_smallgroups_providers_proveedores
- Service organizations: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/OctoverTAC_smallgroups_serviceorgs
- State and local agencies: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/OctoberTAC_smallgroups_state_local_agencies
- Spanish all other roles: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/OctoberTAC_grupospequenos_todoslosdemasroles

6. **Closing and Next steps - Bela Moté (5 minutes)**

Participants were given time to complete the TAC feedback survey and equity reflection. Mariana Osoria announced that she is leaving the governor's office and will no longer be on the TAC.

- Listening Session: Friday, November 15, 2024 12 – 1 pm
- Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 12, 2024, 5:30 – 7 pm