

**Transition Advisory Committee
Meeting 24
November 18, 2025, 5:30 – 7pm CT
Public attendee link:**

https://aftonpartners.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JtnYAyzYQjmxBbylpwXFsg
https://aftonpartners.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GThjhVr-QICME4UtmOgDcA

In attendance:

Transition Advisory Committee (TAC) members: Katie Cobb (Peoria Public School District 150), Johnna Darragh-Ernst (Heartland Community College), Shontae Fennoy (East St. Louis SD 189), Rochelle Golliday (Cuddle Care, Inc.), LaKeesha James-Smith (Parent), Keshia Harris (Parent), Zena Madison (Birth to Five Illinois), Marcy Mendenhall (SAL Family & Community Services), Janice Moenster (Brightpoint), Bela Mote (Chair, Carole Robertson Center), Edgar Ramirez (Chicago Commons), Angel Powell-Muldrow (Early Childhood Center Principal), Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro (Latino Policy Forum), Sarah Ziemba (Shine Therapy Services)

State Agency Members and Consultants: Ann Whalen (IDEC, Chief Transition Design Officer), Maya Portillo (IDEC, Project Director for Funding Design), Christi Chadwick (IDEC, Project Director for Workforce & Intermediaries), Erin Arango-Escalante (All Children Thrive), Trish Rooney (IDEC, Chief Family and Community Systems Officer), Paige Greenwood (IDEC, Director of Family Engagement); Siri Smillie (Afton Partners), Ellen Johnson (Afton Partners), Beza Bulega (Afton Partners), Crystal Roman (Afton Partners), Kaitlyn McGovern (Afton Partners), Kristen Garcia (Afton Partners)

Members of the public: 39

Minutes

1. Welcome & Introductions – Bela Mote

Bela welcomed everyone into the meeting and started by sharing the meeting goals and agenda.

Today's Goals

- Build community amongst TAC members
- Provide updates on the transition process
- Learn about and provide feedback on the Funding Design Workgroup's progress
- Learn about and provide feedback on the Workforce Work Stream progress

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions – 10 min
- IDEC Updates – 15 min
- Funding Design Workgroup Update – 30 min
- Workforce Work Stream Update – 30 min
- Next Steps – 5 min

Bela paused to allow TAC members to reorient themselves with the TAC equity framework. As an icebreaker, TAC members were asked to respond to the following: *What is your favorite food for Thanksgiving?*

After the icebreaker, Bela shared a family spotlight quote: “PLEASE help the ECEC get more pay and support! They are working in high ratio classrooms with children who need more one-on-one care. Then they go home being burnt out mentally and physically and cannot even pay their bills with what they make.” – parent advocate, McHenry County

2. Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) Updates – Ann Whalen

Ann shared the news of the new staff joining IDEC:

- Arelene Herron, Human Resources Director
- Julie Gilling, Director of Policy
- Jessica Morris, Chief Information Officer (DoIT)
- Brandon Woudenberg, Deputy General Counsel

IDEC now has almost 30 staff. They are continuing to grow as they prepare for the new agency's first day on July 1, 2026.

Federal Updates

The federal shutdown has negatively impacted many stakeholders. There's a state resolution that reopened the government, but only until January 2026. Stay tuned for information and updates at ELC and other state meetings. The federal government also announced changes from the Department of Education, including moving divisions from the Department of Education to different agencies at the federal level. This includes Early Intervention moving to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and K-12 to the Department of Labor. How this change will be implemented is still unclear, but it will change IDEC's points of contact at the federal level. IDEC will keep TAC members abreast as they learn more. Later in the call, Ann Whalen corrected that the EI/ECSE federal department's move to HHS has not been confirmed and apologized for the confusion.

HHS also released a new PDG application, due December 1, 2025. This is a very aggressive timeline. There was a previous application in the summer of 2024 that Illinois applied to but did not receive. They are eligible for this round of applications, and IDEC staff are reviewing the new application now to see how similar or different it is from the 2024 application. They will create space and time to share updates on this application process as well. They will use a portion of the ELC ad hoc committee on Thursday to discuss this..

Illinois continues to respond to immigration enforcement actions across the state. In October, the DCFS released nonregulatory guidance to support daycare facilities across the state to ensure understanding, resources, and support during this time. HB12 was passed, which requires additional requirements and expectations for daycare centers. This bill has not yet been signed, but we will continue to communicate its components to the agencies involved in that conversation.

Several online resources support communities on immigration rights were shared.

IDEC Budget Listening Session Update

The first-ever IDEC Budget listening session happened last month after the Optional TAC meeting. Ann thanked those on the call who shared their priorities. They had over 185 attendees who provided verbal and written comments. Ann thanked Paige Greenwood (IDEC), who supported the listening session. IDEC's first budget, FY27, is for administering programs. Ann thanked everyone for their support as they continue learning.

Workgroups & Other Transition Updates

Ann gave a huge thank-you to those who joined the optional TAC meeting in November and provided feedback on the Program Standards & Alignment scope.

Earlier this fall, an Executive Order directed all agencies to set aside a 4% reserve in the state budget. This is impacting their ability to execute the work as they originally envisioned. Some initial plans are slightly delayed as they get more clarification/information on their budget. This applies to both the workforce workgroup and the intermediary alignment workgroup.

Last month, Trish Rooney joined the team and is taking over to support and lead the TAC. She brings outstanding leadership and expertise to this group.

Trish shared that she's looking forward to working closely with Bela and TAC members in the months ahead.

3. Funding Design Workgroup & Subcommittee Update – Maya Portillo

Maya Portillo (IDEC) gave a presentation on the background of the funding design workgroup. It has been a while since they came to TAC with an update on their work. She gave an overview of the workgroup's charge and their timeline. Recommendations from this group will inform the state's legislative priorities. July 1, 2026, is the big transition date where programs will move, but funding redesign potential changes/implementation won't occur until July 1, 2027. There's a delayed implementation there that is purposeful as IDEC works towards implementation.

She also went over what they have covered during winter, spring, and summer 2025.

- Winter 2024-2025: Built Knowledge & Set Context
 - Aligned goals for the project
 - Built knowledge about funding design principles
 - Heard from parents, providers, and state administrators about current experience
 - Considered valuable aspects of current ECEC funding to build upon
- Spring 2025: Established Parameters
 - Grappled with funding system tensions, including universal vs targeted approach
 - Learned from other states and countries
 - Connected to other workgroups supporting the transition to the new agency
- Summer 2025: Moving Towards Solutions

- Launched Funding Distribution & Alignment Subcommittees
- Began addressing questions of funding stability, alignment, consistency, and equity
- Moving towards tentative alignment and distribution recommendations

She shared emerging design principles, developed through input from communities, working groups, and state leadership. She also provided updates from the summer subcommittees and summarized their overarching questions:

- The Funding Alignment Subcommittee focused on the essential question: *How can funding across all programs be better aligned and organized in service of our goals?*
- The Funding Distribution Subcommittee focused on the essential question: *How should the state distribute funds to providers to best support our goals?*

Maya then shared a summary of the Preliminary Funding Design Recommendations, highlighting key themes of funding misalignment, funding instability, and funding that does not match the true cost of services.

To review the full presentation, please visit [the IDEC website](#).

TAC Member Q&A

Maya paused for discussion with TAC members on the following question: *What impact would these recommendation have on providers or families?*

Edgar Ramirez (TAC member) thanked the team for the overview and referenced a slide that recommended building on the site administration for CCAP. He asked whether this meant an expansion or something else.

- Maya responded that this was cited as an example. She explained that the state currently uses site-administered contracts to distribute some CCAP dollars and noted that SSWG is an example of a grant the state has successfully used to administer funds.

Johnna Darragh-Ernst (TAC member) asked how standards are being conceptualized and aligned, noting that this could shift services for children and families through a more holistic integration of current programs.

- Maya responded that this topic has been raised frequently. She shared that the team is partnering with the Program Standards Workgroup to consider alignment. She said that while funding is one piece of the conversation, the focus is on comprehensive thinking through how children and families are served, and that additional information would be shared in the future.

Bela thanked Maya and the Afton team for the presentation. Referring to the slide about making funding non-competitive to promote equity in access, Bela asked how monitoring would be handled — whether it would be within IDEC or through a technical assistance (T/TA) arm.

- Follow-up questions were raised about what would need to be monitored and whether there would be a set of criteria and funding expectations, as some institutions manage monitoring internally, while others contract monitoring teams.

- Maya stated that this topic is part of implementation discussions that are beginning but not yet finalized. She noted that the state continues to learn from existing programs, such as SSWG and the T/TA support provided to providers.
- Ann noted that as different funding streams are aligned, they each have different program requirements, contractors, and monitoring structures. She said that as the policy work continues, the team is considering what this means for agency organization and systems of support. Ann invited TAC members to share additional points they would like the team to keep in mind.

Marcy Mendenhall (TAC member) asked about the difference between vouchers, which fund individual children, and contracts, which fund classrooms or programs. She wondered how this approach might work across various child care settings.

- Maya shared that discussions on this topic have started and that the team is looking at costs at the child level, classroom level, and program level, including fixed costs that providers incur regardless of enrollment. She stated that these questions are being further explored in the subcommittees.

Rochelle Golliday (TAC member) raised that providers are concerned about budget uncertainty and asked whether there are plans for line-item funding or legislation to provide more stability from year to year.

- Maya acknowledged the question and noted that creating a stable funding environment for providers is part of the design discussions. She said that one area of exploration is how this might appear in an appropriations bill, adding that establishing a mandatory, ongoing appropriation is difficult to achieve and would require further examination.

Janice Moenster (TAC member) said that funding uncertainty remains a concern and asked how programs can continue to operate in these conditions. She said that if there are any negotiable deliverables or fixed-cost items, she hopes those will be considered, noting that costs continue to rise across the field.

- Maya said that current subcommittees have been discussing how costs have changed over time. She explained that the state has conducted cost modeling, but that updates are needed to reflect inflation and new or unanticipated provider costs.

Members of the public were given opportunities to share their thoughts on the discussion questions via Padlet:

Funding Design

- Advocates: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Funding_Advocates
- Families (English and Spanish): https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Funding_Families_Familias
- Providers (English and Spanish): https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Funding_Providers_Proveedores

- Service Organizations: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Funding_ServiceOrgs
- State-Local Agencies: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Funding_StateLocalAgencies
- All other roles (English and Spanish):
https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Funding_AllRoles_TodosRoles

After the discussion, Megan Bock (Afton) provided an update on the fall subcommittees, who are working on pressure testing and providing feedback on assumptions that will inform the development of IDEC's funding framework for childcare/Pre-K and home visiting across the mixed delivery system and provider types. Child Care/Pre-K subcommittee and Home Visiting subcommittee have each met once and discussed cost factors for their sector.

Megan shared that the focus of the November Funding Design Workgroup meeting will be on funding design updates and emerging home visiting recommendations.

She also shared a list of upcoming focus groups and invited participants to sign up. To register for the Head Start Focus Groups, please visit:

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=iHU7PV5JSkuNDYwF3mQMBb0CqDFQ5fFBh-0r-loeFYFUREVLN0xNUzhNMVBBQUxInJjSMTICOUxMNS4u&route=shorturl>

Janice noted that community stakeholders appreciate Maya's facilitation of the funding design presentations.

4. Workforce Workstream – Christi Chadwick

Christi Chadwick (IDEC) gave an update on workforce workstream's work. She shared the focus and session goals from the recent September workforce listening sessions.

Session Focus:

- Five sessions held in Fall 2025
- ~730 total participants
- Feedback was gathered across three topic areas:
 - Compensation;
 - Preparation, Training, and Professional Development; and
 - Work Environments and Workforce Well-Being

Workforce Listening Session Goals:

- Hear directly from frontline staff working with children and families regularly (and others)
- Share a summary of the Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC)'s current preliminary understanding of early childhood workforce challenges and successes
- Gather reactions and additional feedback from early childhood workforce members to inform the current understanding
- Gather input on the state's direction for strengthening the early childhood workforce

Christi shared that the majority of attendees—473 participants, identified as providers or workforce members. In addition, many participants identified most closely with child care centers.

The discussion focused primarily on feedback gathered about work environments and worker well-being

Christi framed the conversation on work environments and worker well-being:

- As in most work settings, aspects of the work environment can either support or negatively impact job satisfaction and worker well-being.
- Positive environments tend to increase retention, well-being, productivity, and quality of interactions.
- Participants shared that challenging work environments can contribute to:
 - Stress, physical, mental, and emotional strain, and burnout among workers.
 - Turnover and workforce shortages across the early childhood field.
 - Decreased productivity and effectiveness among workforce members.

Christi introduced Kaitlyn McGovern (Afton Partners) to share learning from the most recent listening sessions. Kaitlyn explained that these sessions helped fill gaps and add nuance to prior discussions. She reviewed what was shared with participants in the listening sessions and then what was learned.

In the listening sessions, workforce members identified positive aspects of their work environments including:

- Many stakeholders reported having supportive supervisors and leaders who foster a positive work culture, celebrate good work, and make difficult days more manageable.
- Participants described supportive colleagues and peers who collaborate, communicate, and build trust.
- For many, a passion for children, families, and their work continues to motivate them despite challenges.
- Early Intervention providers, Home Visitors, and some Family Child Care providers cited flexibility in setting their own schedules as a positive aspect of their jobs.
- Some center directors are experimenting with more flexible schedules to accommodate staff and family needs.
- Providers with access to coaching and support, such as Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants, reported that these resources help them address challenges and reduce stress.

Kaitlyn also outlined challenges shared by workforce members and stakeholders. Themes included:

- Lack of knowledge or skills needed to perform job duties effectively, with few staff available who have specialized expertise.

- Work expectations that exceed available capacity and resources.
- High caseloads and long hours.
- Limited time off for personal or professional needs due to a lack of substitute staff or schedule flexibility.
- Family child care providers highlighted the difficulty of managing a wide range of responsibilities—from child care to administrative paperwork—without additional support.

Kaitlyn noted that workforce members also described poor physical conditions, insufficient resources, and a lack of meaningful support structures. Stakeholders shared that these gaps contribute to stressful work experiences and interactions. Needed support includes:

- Coaching, mentorship, and peer networking, particularly when staff transition into new roles.
- Opportunities for reflective practice with supervisors.
- Accessible professional development and technical assistance to help staff succeed in their roles.

Following the presentation, TAC members broke into small groups to discuss the following questions:

- What are we missing? What do we need to understand better?
- How should the state best support productive and positive work environments?
- Which of these factors should the state prioritize addressing?

Members of the public were given opportunities to share their thoughts via Padlet.

Workforce

- TAC Members: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Workforce_TACMembers
- Advocates: https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Workforce_Advocates
- Families (English and Spanish):
https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Workforce_Families_Familias
- Providers (English and Spanish):
https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Workforce_Providers_Proveedores
- Service Organizations (English and Spanish):
https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Workforce_ServiceOrgs
- State-Local Agencies:
https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Workforce_StateLocalAgencies
- All other roles (English and Spanish):
https://padlet.com/kristengarcia4/Nov_Workforce_AllRoles_TodosRoles

5. Looking Ahead and Next Steps

Bela Mote shared information about upcoming meetings and next steps.

Bela announced details for the next in-person TAC meeting, scheduled for:

- Tuesday, December 9, 10:00 AM–3:00 PM
- Normal Public Library, 206 W College Ave, Normal, IL 61761

Meeting Objectives:

- Continue building community and strengthening relationships among TAC members.
- Celebrate and reflect on TAC’s contributions over the past year.
- Identify strategic priorities and revised processes for 2026.
- Learn about and provide feedback on Transition Workstreams, including:
 - Advisory
 - Program Standards & Alignment
 - Licensing

Bela also shared dates for upcoming meetings and workgroups which can be found on the IDEC website.

- **Funding Design Workgroup:** Wednesday, November 19, 4:30–6:00 PM
- **ELC Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Resources and Programs:** Thursday, November 20, 11:00 AM–12:00 PM
- **Supporting Multilingual Learners Workgroup:** Friday, November 21, 9:00–10:00 AM
- **Advisory Workgroup:** Monday, December 1, 4:00–5:30 PM
- **ELC Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Resources and Programs:** Thursday, December 4, 11:00 AM–12:00 PM
- **ELC Executive Committee Meeting:** Monday, December 8, 5:30–7:00 PM

A feedback survey link was shared in the chat before the meeting was concluded.