



Consulting

9/18/23

Colorado Early Childhood System Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning
Working Group Meeting Three



Agenda

- Grounding Exercise: Equity Reflection (10-15 min)
- Strategic Plan Progress Update (5 min)
- Partner Engagement: Focus Group Initial Findings (30 min)
- Terms and Definitions Refresh: Colorado's Early Childhood System (5 min)
- Branding Ideation (40 min)
- Closing/Next Steps (5 min)

Housekeeping

- If you have an organization listed as your name on Zoom, please change it so that we can see your first and last name.
- If you'd like to receive a stipend for your participation in this meeting, please email Susanne Beilmann - sbeilmann@startearly.org

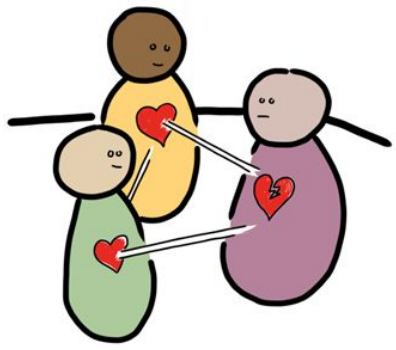
We also want to know who's here today...

- Please share your name, title/organization, and where you're joining us from in the chat.

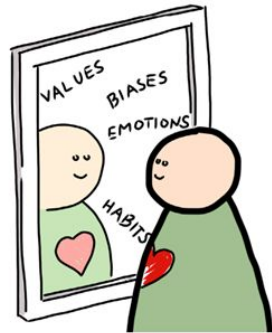
Regrounding Exercise: Liberatory Mindsets and Co-Creation

- Take a look at the Liberatory Design Mindsets on the next slide (or download the full deck at [this link](#) and see more detail about the mindsets from pp. 2-14). You will notice that all **12** are now featured.
- Reflect/Jot Down: Which of these mindsets do you want to hold top of mind today? How will you practice this intentionally?
- We will highlight two that we think are helpful towards:
 - Ensuring equity is embedded in the process and outcomes for this important work.
 - Liberatory co-creation
- Your reflections are welcome and encouraged.

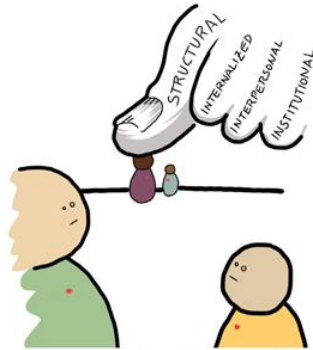
Liberatory Design Mindsets



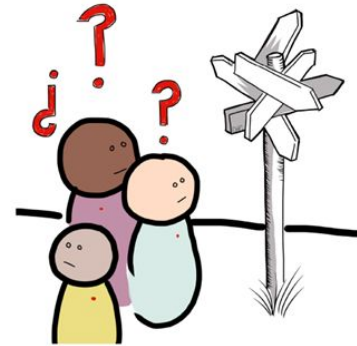
Build Relational Trust



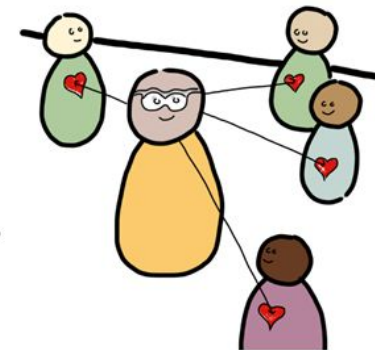
Practice Self-Awareness



Recognize Oppression



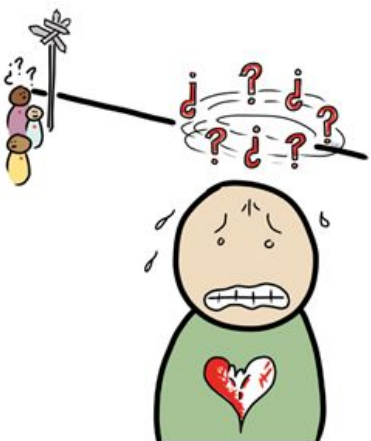
Embrace Complexity



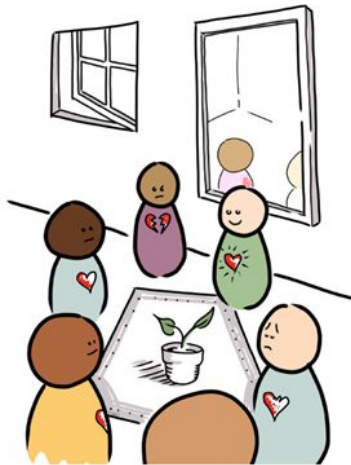
Focus on Human Values



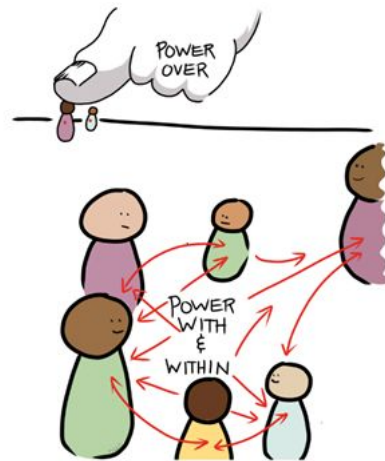
Seek Liberatory Collaboration



Work with Fear and Discomfort



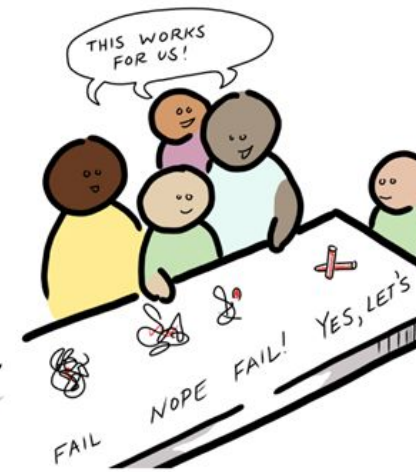
Attend to Healing



Work to Transform Power



Exercise Creative Courage



Take Action to Learn



Share, Don't Sell

Liberatory Mindsets and Co-Creation

Seek Liberatory Collaboration



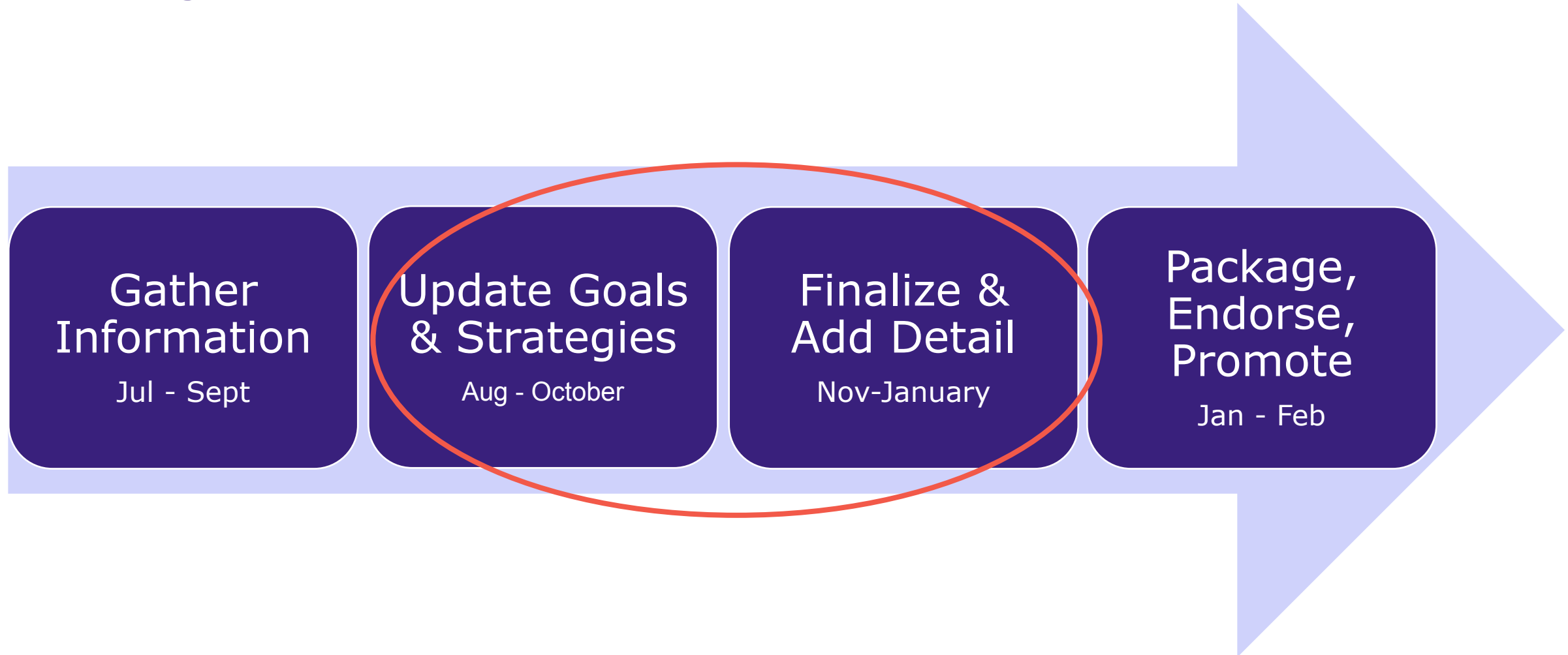
Why? Design work can be fraught with power and identity dynamics that can result in unintended consequences. ...**[We must]...reframe the relationship between designers and the communities in which they are working to one of partnership and equity, not patronizing expertise (p. 8).**

Exercise Creative Courage



Why? Oppression creates fear of change. Succumbing to fear quells creativity. **We must act courageously to imagine possibilities beyond dominant culture (p. 12).**

Process: New, Comprehensive Early Childhood Strategic Plan

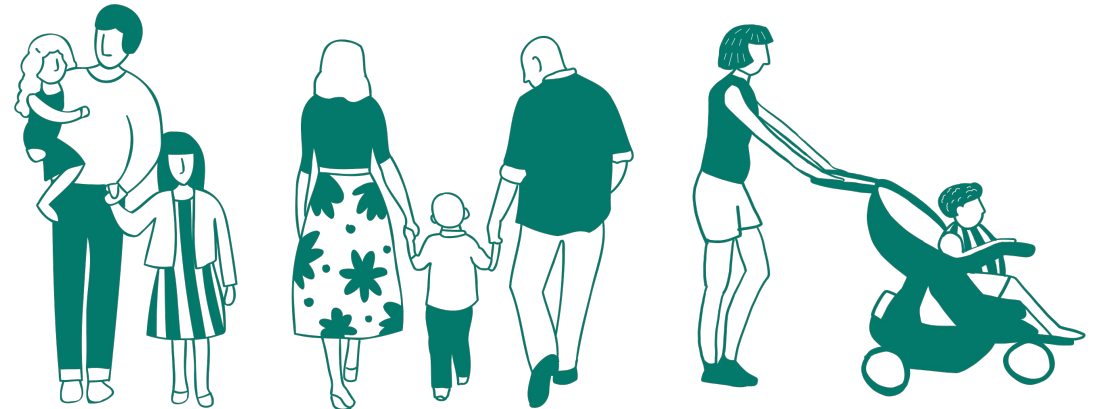


Start Early / Working Group Engagement Recap

*Ongoing, asynchronous engagement around Strategic Plan-At-A-Glance throughout timeline



Colorado Strategic Plan: Engagement Updates



Engagement At-A-Glance

Engagement Type	Start	Finish	Partners Engaged	# of Participants to Date
Interviews & Community Conversations	7/11	8/31	Systems leaders, provider and family representatives	
Focus Groups (11) <i>3 in Spanish; 8 in English</i>	8/14	9/20	Families & providers	59 <i>+19 RSVPed</i>
Survey <i>Spanish & English</i>	10/26	11/10	Families, providers, and systems leaders	N/A

Focus Group Update

Strong outreach led to strong response

ECLC Newsletter

CDEC Newsletter

Bright by Text

Migrant Head Start

Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance

Early Learning Ventures

Colorado Home Visiting Coalition

CDEC, Tribal Liaison

CDEC, Early Intervention

CDEC, Family Strengthening Unit

CDEC, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

Colorado Association of Family Child Care

Denver Asian American Pacific Islander Commission

Family Leadership Training Institute of Colorado

Colorado Department of Education McKinney-Vento

Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition

Valley Settlement

Hispanic Affairs Project

IECMH

Blazing Cloud Consulting

Colorado Backpackers

Heritage Camps

Red Rocks

Colorado Mesa University

CU Colorado Springs

Illuminate CO

Department of Public Health

Family Voice Council

Family Resource Centers



415
responses*

Focus Group Update

Responses came from a wide range of families and providers.

Providers with jobs as:

- **Licensed Early Care and Education Providers**
- Early **Head Start**/Head Start Providers
- **Informal providers**
- **Behavioral Health** Providers
- Early Childhood **Coaches**
- Early Childhood **Mental Health** Consultants
- **Early Intervention** Specialists
- Family **Advocates**
- **Home Visiting** Providers
- Public Health **Nurses**
- **Occupational Therapists**
- **Speech-Language Pathologists**
- **Lactation Consultants**

Families with children who:

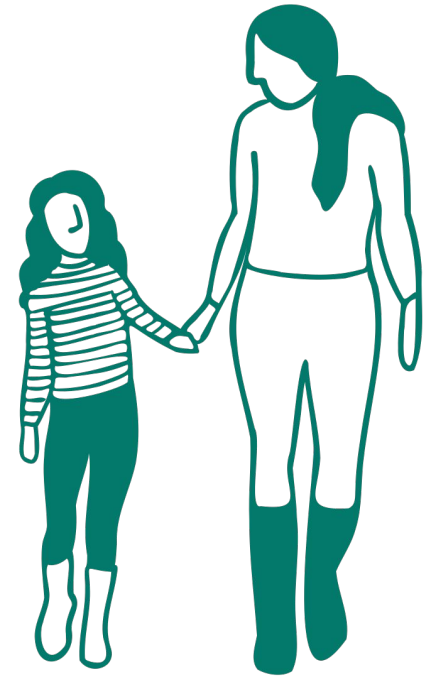
- Have **non-parental relatives and caregivers**
- Have special **physical health, behavioral health, and developmental needs**
- Have been involved in the **child welfare system**
- Are **infants and toddlers**
- Utilize **informal** child care, **licensed** child care, **Preschool** or Pre-K, **Healthy Steps** Colorado, and Preschool **Special Education**

Focus Group Update

Focus groups are gathering strong feedback.

Focus groups are being conducted to:

1. Gather feedback and reactions to the findings of the Needs Assessment, and
2. Seek input on strategies to address the needs.





Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Quality

“When you talk about ‘high-quality child care’ you’re talking about ‘high-quality teachers.’”

-Local Early Childhood Council Program Coordinator

“It’s sad to see centers trying to teach days of the week and ABCs when [children are] two years old. Social skills need to be in place...when children are ready to learn those academic skills, they will.”

-Early Interventionist

“...the scariest thing that I’ve ever faced since I’ve become a parent...is putting my child in someone else’s care and making sure they are being treated well.”

-Parent of a 2-year-old



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Quality

- Families are not using quality ratings to make decisions about child care because **they need convenient, affordable care settings right now**
- When families consider “quality,” they are looking for **experienced providers** who share their families’ values and safety; families rely on online reviews and **what other parents have to say** when making decisions about child care
- Families want the **state to take leadership** to ensure consistent quality across programs – the **state should define quality and promote that** to programs and families
- **Small programs may not have the resources and time to go through the SHINES process** and tying CCAP funding to ratings further distances small programs that are already “scrimping by”
- **In rural areas, quality may look different,** with smaller child care programs



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Availability

“We don’t ask - ‘what does the child need and where’? We just turn them down because they’re not eligible.”

-Mother of a 5-year-old with special needs

“One of the things that concerns me is that families seem to have less choice as far as programming goes if their child has a special need.”

-Grandmother of a 1- and 4-year-old

“Child care is really scarce here [in a rural county]. We don’t have a lot of support.”

-Parent of a 5-year old, 2-year-old, and 8-month old



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Availability

- There is a need for **increased access to and clearer funding** for children with special needs
- There should be more accessible ways to **inform families of what services are available** and how to **advocate** for the needs of their children
- In **rural areas**, there is **strong need for intervention services** and **improved hand-offs** from early childhood to elementary school
- There is **not a lot of choice** for families who have **children with a disability** – not many places specialize in these supports and there are **concerns over suspensions and expulsions** for children in programs that aren't trained to work with them



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Availability (continued)

- In rural areas, there is very limited availability for child care programs, especially publicly funded programs
- Availability generally is a challenge, with “**months-long waitlists**” – barriers are even bigger for **families who don’t speak English** and have to navigate complicated systems
- Many child care centers are “great and beautiful and prestigious” – but **costs are not attainable for families**
- It’s important to **consider parents who work at night** and don’t have as much support in finding care and sometimes have to make decisions that are not as safe
- Parents are looking for services where their language is spoken so that children are around their **home/primary language**
- There are **barriers to receiving sufficient medical care for children** – i.e. long waits at urgent care, not getting callbacks from doctor’s offices when child is sick, and limited options and availability of pediatricians



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Workforce

“We haven’t yet elevated the profession of caring for children.”

-Local Early Childhood Council Program Coordinator

“...our mental health consultant... focus[es] on mental health and relationship building with the children and the teachers. [They] are an important part of our daily operations.”

-Administrator, Head Start Program

“We can have all the programs we want, but if we don’t have any providers it won’t do any good.”

-Mother of a 5-year-old



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Workforce

- There is a need for more **classroom-level coaching/training and access to mentors**
- **Retention** is just as much of an issue as recruitment
- Some programs are so short on staff, they **don't have the time to train** employees
- **Free, online courses** are helpful, especially for those in rural areas
- There are good supports in place for licensed providers to attain **higher education with no student debt** (i.e. TEACH, Early Childhood Council's scholarship)
- **Cultural barriers** and stereotypes can restrict supports for informal care providers



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Family Engagement

“Family engagement [is] nice to have...because when you have training for all the family...when we can learn with the family... we all support [my daughter] in her learning.”

-Parent of a 2-year-old

“I still feel like I have families who have no idea there's... this free service out there”

-Early Interventionist



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Family Engagement

- Successful therapies engage families well by including everyone in trainings
- There is more work to do in **supporting working parents and re-entry** into the workforce, including encouraging employers to open up **on-site child care centers** and **extended FMLA** opportunities
- There is **no systematic way for successful hand-offs**; much depends on individual relationships and professionals
- Families – especially agricultural families, child care providers, pediatricians, and nurses **may not know about all of the free services available for children – education** on interventions and services by the state, through K-12 schools, or via HealthyStep Specialists could help
- Spanish-speaking families appreciate **language support** to enable them to access services
- The **whole-family approach** is very important, especially among Hispanic families, many of whom have **multi-generational households**



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Sustainability

“I love that UPK is a thing now, but the amount of money we’re investing in early childhood is a drop in the bucket compared to what we need.”

**-Local Early Childhood Council
Program Coordinator**

“We need trust.”

-Parent of a 2-year-old



Strategic Plan Focus Group Update

What we Heard: Sustainability

- **More funding is needed** – there is lots of work to do on the provider side year-to-year to secure grant funding
- There is a discrepancy between the **actual cost of care** and the reimbursement rate
- **Funding directly relates to the availability of care** – infant and toddler care is down because it is not profitable
- **Systems are incredibly complicated to navigate**, especially if English is not your first language and you are working other job(s)
- The state is doing good work trying to **support new, incoming providers** – like grants for newly licensed providers
- **Trust is important** – for families to trust providers, and for providers to trust the state

Focus Group Update Discussion

- What stands out to you about the needs that families and professionals identified (related to the needs assessment findings and additional needs)?
- What are the implications here for the strategic plan?
- What new strategies should be considered and/or crafted to address these needs?
- You can add thoughts in the [Jamboard](#).

Terms and Definitions

The CDEC convened a group of people to collectively come up with terms and definitions for the:

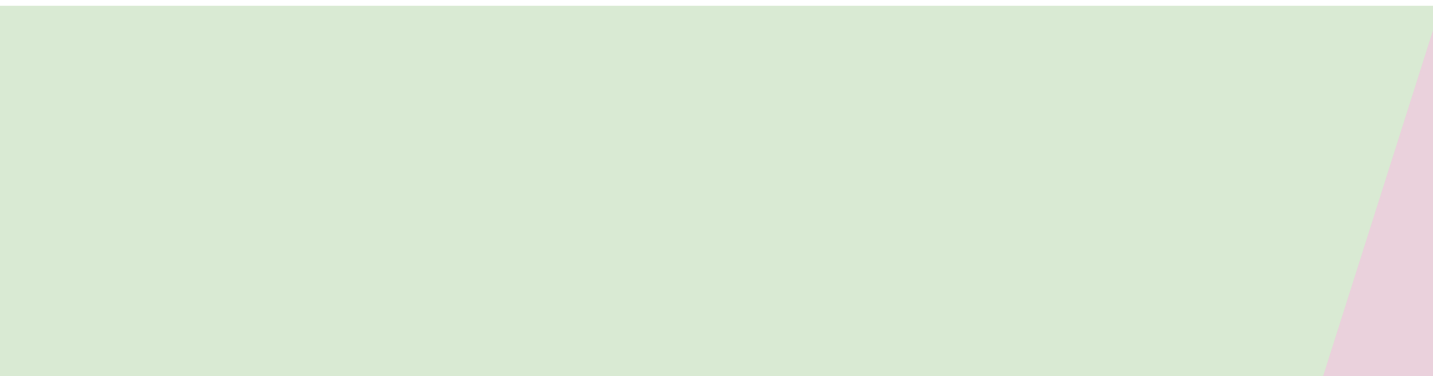
- *early childhood system*
- *programs and services* (in the EC system)
- *workforce*

The group met for the first time and reached consensus on the first term:

- **The Early Childhood System** is an infrastructure that supports positive child and family outcomes across the Early Childhood Colorado Framework domains of whole person health and well-being, learning and development, family support and education, and economic mobility.

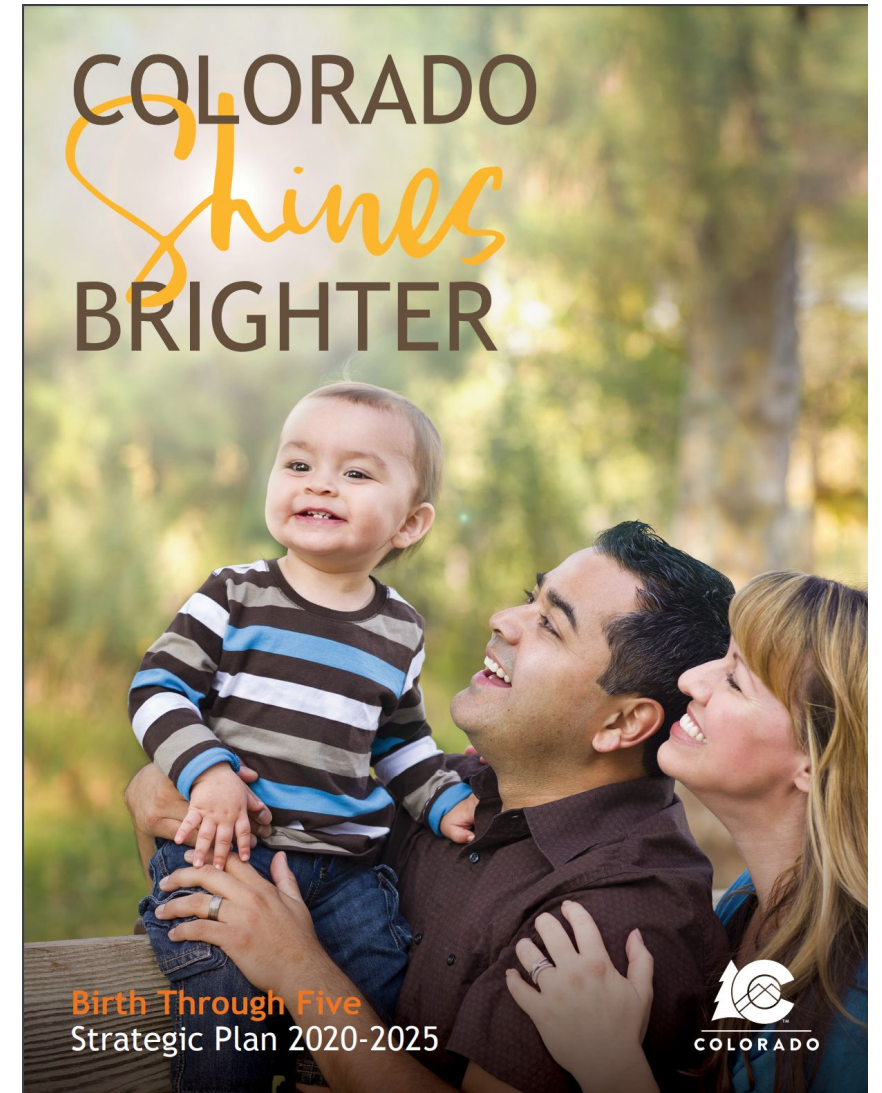
If you'd like to join the next meeting, please fill out [this Doodle poll](#) by end of day 9/20. We will also be sharing this with work with the Family Voice Council.

RESET!

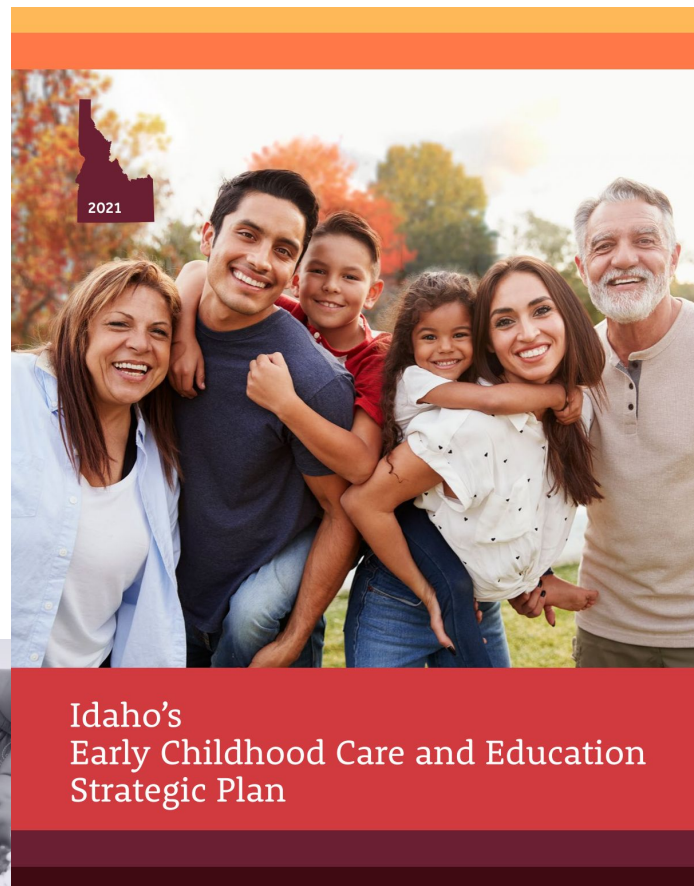


Brand Refresh

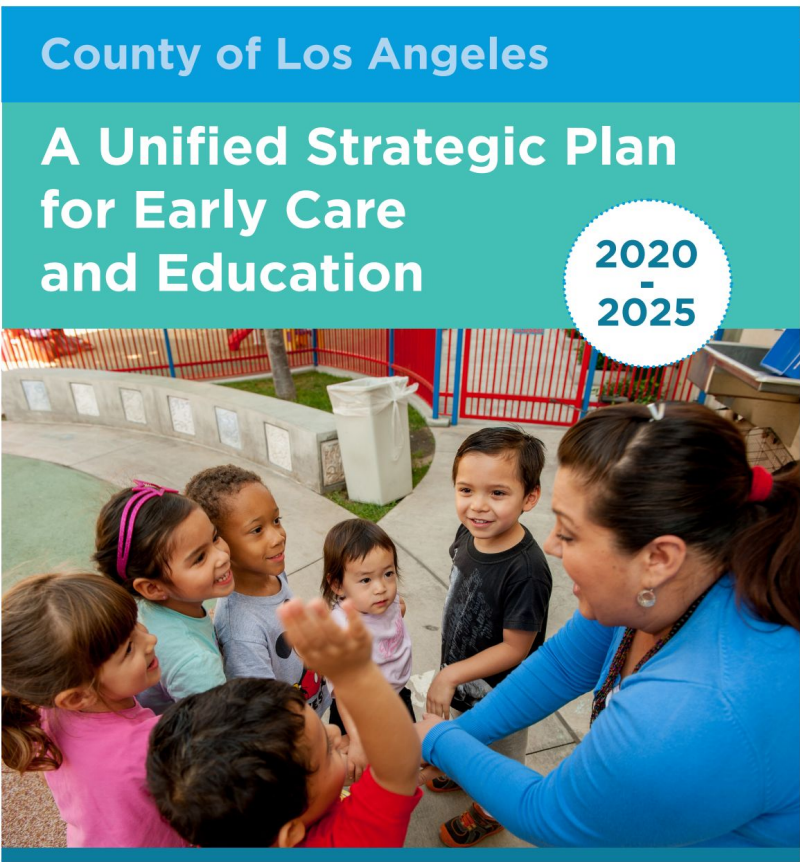
- **Our task:**
 - Create and recommend a refreshed **title, tagline,** and **graphic design** for the **Strategic Plan At-A-Glance and the Strategic Plan Report.**
- **The title** is the name of the plan, summing up what the plan is about. **The tagline** develops the title into a more descriptive phrase that says more about its purpose, content, and/or benefits.
 - must be clear, distinct, positive, memorable
 - may embody certain values
 - ideally make an emotional connection, spark interest, inspire, motivate
- **Why are we rebranding the plan?**
 - to communicate the plan is for the comprehensive, cross-sector early childhood system per the definition and EC CO framework



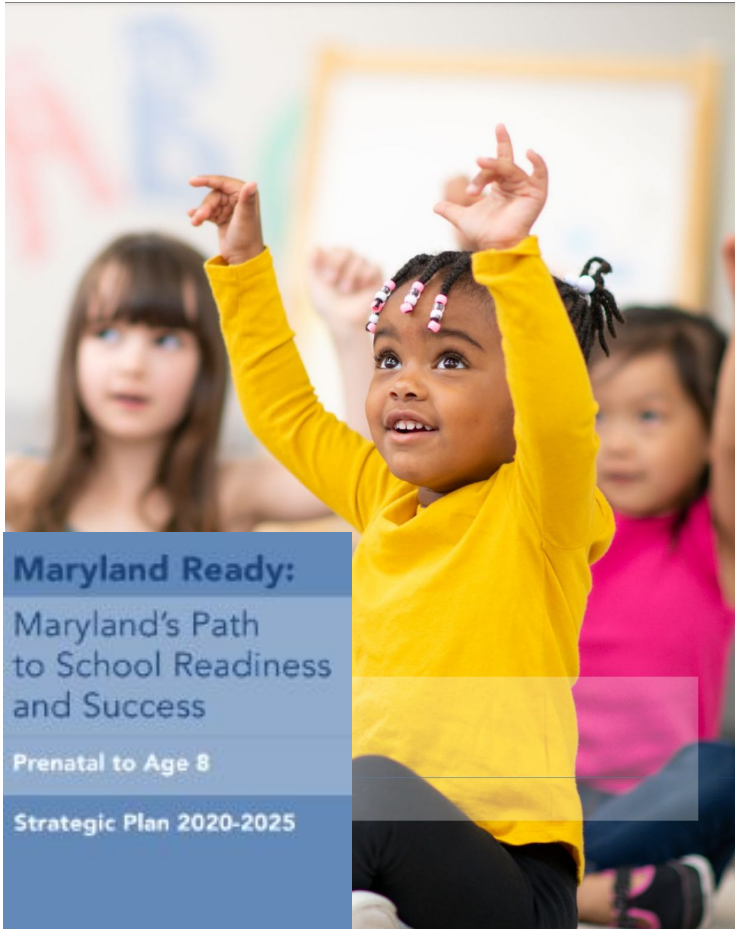
Examples



Examples



Examples



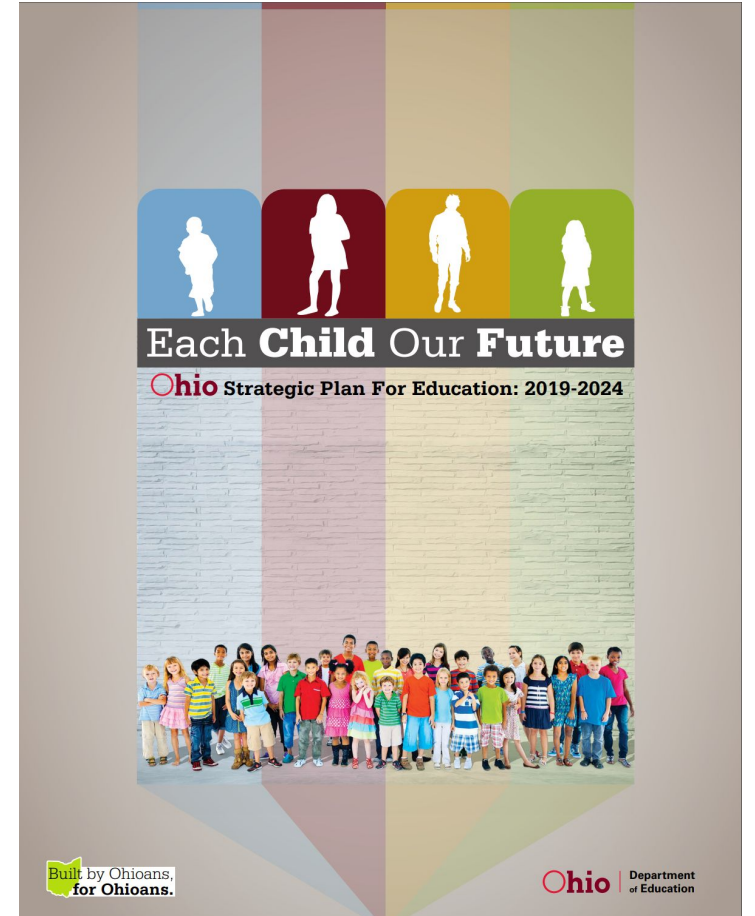
GEAUX FAR LOUISIANA STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028 OVERVIEW

**IF YOU WANT TO GEAUX FAST
GEAUX ALONE IF YOU WANT TO
GEAUX FAR GEAUX TOGETHER!**

OUR COLLECTIVE VISION
We believe in an equitable, unified early childhood system centering racial equity and ensuring families access to seamless, high-quality early child development, health, and educational services.

<p>A Family & Provider Driven System</p> <p>Families and providers are engaged and prioritized in leadership and decision-making throughout the state's early childhood system.</p>	<p>A Net That Works</p> <p>All families have access to an inclusive, caring, well-coordinated network that helps them meet their basic needs and support child development.</p>	<p>A Healthy Start</p> <p>All families receive family-centered, comprehensive, whole-person physical and mental health care from pregnancy through the early childhood years, and beyond.</p>	<p>Child Care for Everyone, Everywhere</p> <p>All families have equitable access to affordable, high-quality early care and education that is well-funded and responsive to the needs of families, children, and the educators and providers who make it possible.</p>	<p>Family Friendly Workplaces</p> <p>All employers in Louisiana have family-friendly policies that support employees with prioritizing the well-being of their children.</p>
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SUPPORT LOUISIANA'S CHILDREN AT GEAUXFARLA.ORG



What Makes a Brand Good and Memorable?

- **CLEAR MISSION:** A brand's mission is derived from its core values. It's the heart and soul of an organization, company, campaign - or strategic plan!
- **UNIQUENESS:** Good brands are easy to distinguish and separate from others/ the competition.
- **COMMUNITY:** Good brands are able to build a community that is passionate and supportive of the brand
- **TRUST AND CREDIBILITY:** People become loyal to brands when they know the brand is trustworthy and credible, when they're able to expect consistency
- What is a brand (can be any type of brand) that you always remember? Can you think of why it's memorable?

Branding Discussion - Breakout Groups

- **Guiding Questions:**

- What words, phrases, emotions, ideas could describe this plan/brand?
- How do you want people to feel engaging with this plan/brand?
- What values should it embody or convey?
- Who is the target audience?
- What problems does this plan/brand solve? What issues does it address?
- Standout traits, unique positioning, differentiating factors? What makes this Strategic Plan different from other plans in Colorado?
- Terms, imagery, sentiments to avoid?

- **Notes/Next Steps:**

- This is preliminary work. We'll continue to work on this in future meetings, using these ideas to brainstorm associations, generate potential titles and taglines, that we can circulate and get feedback on
- We will discuss graphics, colors aligned to the State of Colorado's [brand guidelines](#).
- The Start Early team will bring all these elements to a Designer who will then help finalize the product.

Closing/Next Steps

- Take meeting evaluation [survey](#)
- Fill out [Doodle](#) for Meeting 5 in early December
- Pre-reading for next meeting on October 13 (the retreat!)
 - Findings from all interviews, focus groups and community conversations
 - Recommendations about existing strategies in the CO Shines Brighter Plan
 - Themes from other existing plans



Every child has equitable opportunity to reach their full potential to thrive in school and in life.

StartEarly.org/Consulting

Find startearly.org on: [!\[\]\(4729e517bc6a7cd81c8025b9646574fb_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(90a2fb2f2c617b26262139ae4159c0a0_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(40394d85fb59f1a516df36b5a2680ad2_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(053a9c97005e586ce890308421354101_img.jpg\)](#)

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