TRANSITION ADVISORY GROUP

Welcome

Agenda

- Welcome

- Voices from the field

- Logistics

- Review charge

- Updates from workforce listening session

- Summary of program movement survey

- Revisit governance of new department

- Revisit local structures and partnerships, including technology needed for blending/braiding funding

- Next steps

- Public comment

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Voices from the Field

Carole Bakhos
Parent

Logistics

Meeting Norms

- Come prepared.
- Mute yourself when not speaking.
- Stay engaged (e.g., actively participate and use the chat function).
- Be mindful of how much "air time" each member receives.
- Always assume good intent.
- All ideas are valued.
- Center <u>equity</u> in all conversations.

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Expectations

Every meeting you should expect the following:
- Via e-mail:
  - Agenda for meeting
  - Suggested pre-reading

- In meeting:
  - Subgroup updates
  - Background information
  - Focused discussion around a specific part of the transition plan
  - Closing/next steps

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TAG Meeting Schedule

Meetings will take place on Wednesdays from 3–5:30pm MST

Meeting Dates	Key Focus Areas
~~July 14~~	*–Kick–off meeting : Introductions and mission/vision discussion*
~~August 4~~	*–Movement of programs to new department* *–Department structure & timeline of move*
~~August 25~~	*–Revisit program movement, funding & timeline* *–Discussion: local structures & partnerships*
~~September 15~~	*–Complete program review including Special Education* *–Governance of DEC* *–Local structures & partnerships* *–Technology and blending/braiding funds to support unification*
September 22	–Revisit governance of DEC –Revisit discussion on local structures & partnerships –Revisit discussion of technology and blending/braiding funding
October 20	–Review transition plan draft –Universal, voluntary preschool implementation
November 17	–Universal, voluntary preschool implementation to support most vulnerable populations and mixed delivery
December 15	–Additional topics regarding universal, voluntary preschool

Feedback Form Responses

A reminder about the Feedback Form [responses](#):

- The responses are all shared publicly on the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) website removing all identifying information

- TAG members should review the responses in the feedback form before every meeting

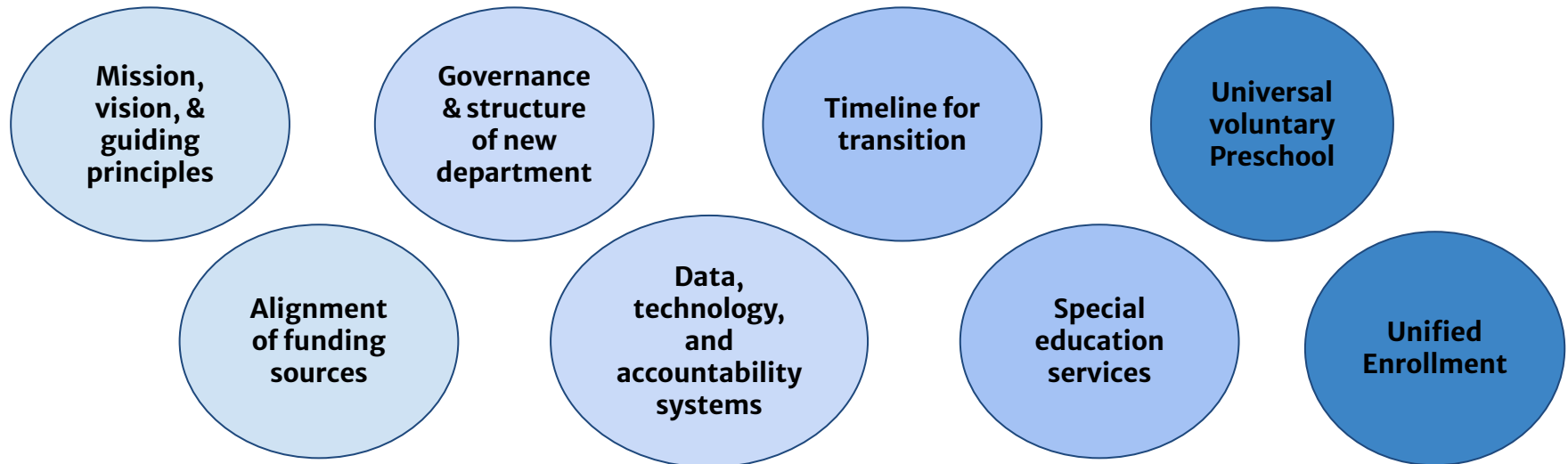- These responses are valuable input for this stakeholder engagement process

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Review Charge

TAG Charge

Over the coming months, TAG will convene to discuss ideas and recommendations for the transition plan to offer to the TWG, taking into consideration the work done in the topic subgroups, focus groups, town halls, and all other stakeholder engagement structures.

Themes to be considered:

- Mission, vision, & guiding principles
- Governance & structure of new department
- Timeline for transition
- Universal voluntary Preschool
- Alignment of funding sources
- Data, technology, and accountability systems
- Special education services
- Unified Enrollment

This will help render a plan for the new department and implementation of the new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program that is robust, comprehensive, and centered on the children and families of Colorado.

Subgroup Structure

The ECLC Transition Advisory Group is convening subgroups to offer insights that will guide the creation of a transition plan for the new unified Department of Early Childhood. Each group will offer recommendations from their perspectives or in their areas of expertise.
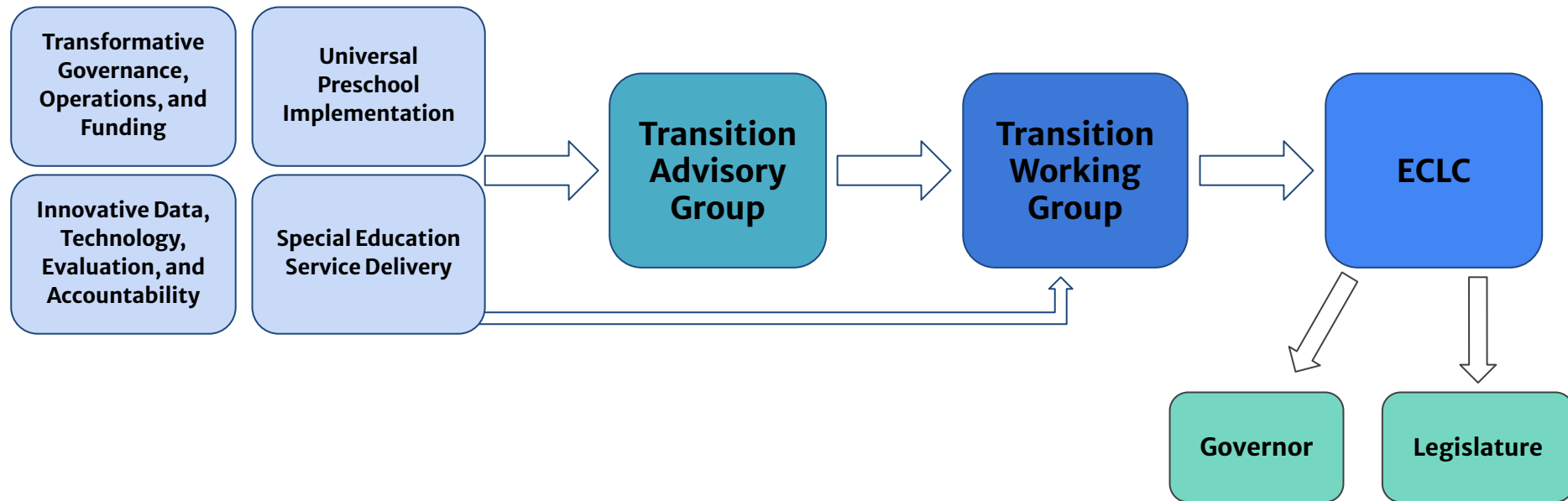
TWG Charge

House Bill 21-1304 created the TWG, which will develop a transition plan and recommendations for a new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program, working with a consultant and the advice of the TAG. The plan must address:

- Mission and vision, guiding values, and principles
- Governance and structure of new department
- Fiscal Structure for the new department & services provided & programs administered including administration and operations
- Timeline for completing key transition activities for the new dept., including moving services & programs from existing dept to new dept and considerations for a phased transition approach to ensure ongoing alignment
- Aligning and combining funding sources for early childhood (taking previous local efforts for streamlining into account)
- Technology required to achieve goals to support parents/caregivers to identify local, appropriate, and available early childhood program and service options and support unification
- Early childhood data systems strategies to inform planning, leverage resource, allocations, maximize children's access to programs, & support data-driven decision-making

Additional strategies to support: reducing overregulation, early childhood and early elementary alignment, alignment with child welfare system and child maltreatment prevention, alignment with existing departments, alignment with multi-generation strategies to support families, coordination and collaboration with programs that are not moved to the new department, robust stakeholder engagement strategies that include parents, and education and training related to trauma informed approaches to early childhood.

Guiding Principles

Mission and Vision

Vision
All Colorado children, families and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy and thriving.

Mission
The Colorado Department of Early Childhood champions a comprehensive, community-informed, effective, high-quality and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education and well-being of all Colorado's young children, their families and early childhood professionals in all settings.

Values
- We value equity across the early childhood system and are committed to utilizing an equity-focused lens to drive priorities and decision making.
- We believe that formal and informal care environments can provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate care and learning.
- We respect and appreciate the diversity and strengths of all of our communities in Colorado.
- We believe that accessibility to early childhood services considers affordability, cultural responsiveness, and parent choice.
- We value an innovative and expansive approach to our early childhood system.
- We value a whole family approach.

2 Workforce Listening Sessions

Key Themes

- Be responsive to the needs of communities, ensuring there are supports for everyone no matter what language they speak

- Ensure there are family supports like the fatherhood program to educate the whole family, not just the child

- Provide more professional development, trainings, and ensure coaching is widely accessible

- Ensure clear communications with EC professionals whenever there are licensing changes – continue to shift the culture of licensing from a punitive role to a supportive role

- Address compensation: focus on ensuring the early childhood workforce is properly compensated for the skills and support they provide children and families

- Continue to allow choices of curriculum so that programs maintain their individuality

- Streamline regulations: Providers want to have one state contact, and clear alignment of regulations and requirements across agencies

Subgroups will reconvene the week of Sept 27. Click here for information on previous subgroups.

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Summary of Program Movement Feedback

TAG Final Feedback on Program Movement

Overall there was large agreement with TWG's recommendation of initial programs to move. Based on the 49 responses, here was the average for the survey** by program:

CDE
CPP: 8.8
Early Childhood Workforce Development Team: 8.7
Preschool Special Education (i.e. IDEA Part B 619): 7.9**

Office of Early Childhood
Early Learning Licensing and Administration: 9.2
Early Learning Access and Quality : 8.9
Community and Family Supports: 8.9
Early Intervention (i.e. IDEA Part C): 8.4
Early Childhood Operations 9.2

Additional comments:
- 4 individuals called out CACFP as an additional program to consider
- 3 individuals elevated concerns about alignment in the child welfare system
- While the majority of members agreed with moving OEC as a whole, 3 individuals requested to analyze movement on a program level rather than in categories

**A rating of 10 is fully agreement with the recommendation offered. In the case of Preschool Special Education, the recommendation was for the program to stay at CDE.

TAG Final Feedback on Program Movement

The draft recommendation for initial program movement:
- Colorado Preschool Program (CPP)
- EC Workforce Development Team
- All programs/systems currently housed at OEC, including IDEA Part C

By July 2025, Colorado will also consider the following programs at a minimum :
- WIC
- CACFP
- Preschool Special Education (IDEA 619 Part B)

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Discussion: Governance of Department of Early Childhood
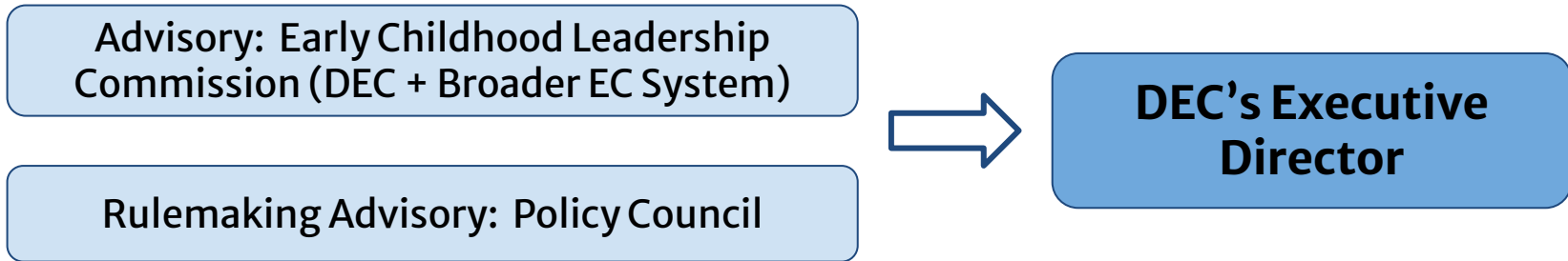
Key Themes from Sep 15 TAG: Governance

Advisory:
- Creation of an advisory role for parents, providers, and other community members
  - Authentic, meaningful, and compensated opportunities for community input.
  - Transparency about the process and expectations of participants,
- The ECLC should maintain strong interagency ties to continue to align and connect across state and local systems that support children and families
- Focus needs to be on all parts of early childhood not just preschool
- ECCs should be used as a mechanism for diverse engagement specific to each community's needs and make-up.

Rulemaking:
- A governance that provides needed structure, but also allows for a degree of flexibility, growth, sustainability, and responsiveness
- The child and family experience should be the ultimate determining factor for decisions.
- Need to maintain or build upon current representation from counties, districts, parents, providers, and other key stakeholders
- Process should be guided by people with the knowledge and expertise of early childhood practices and rule-making with advisory input from other relevant stakeholders – parents, community, etc.
- Look towards what other entities have done, including Head Start and other states with standalone ECE agencies

Governance of DEC

Advisory: Early Childhood Leadership Commission (DEC + Broader EC System)

Rulemaking Advisory: Policy Council

⟹ **DEC's Executive Director**

In addition, existing and adhoc boards, councils, and committees should continue to advise ECLC, Policy Council, and the Executive Director, including:

Name	Makeup
Issue specific committees	Experts, family members, providers, stakeholders
OEC Family Voice Council	Family members
Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council	Family Members, providers, experts, state agency staff
Appeals and Waiver Review Panel	State agency staff
Colorado Child Abuse Board	State agency staff
Other: Family Resource Center Association, Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance, State Intermediaries, Alliance, Home Visiting Coalition, Early Childhood Education Association, FCHA, Strengthening Families Network, Fatherhood Steering Committee, Colorado Community Response Implementation, Early Intervention Evaluations Task Force, Early Childhood Mental Health Program Model Advisory Board, and more.	

By July 2025, the DEC should be reviewed to determine if more supports are needed during the rulemaking process, and what form that should take.

Governance of DEC
Draft proposal per last week's TAG

To ensure early childhood decisions are well informed by stakeholders, a Policy Council should be convened to provide meaningful advisement, consultation, and collaboration about rulemaking guidance and other departmental decisions.

At a **minimum** the Policy Council should include:
- Family members of children who are enrolled in a variety of public and private early childhood programs
- Members of the early childhood workforce; including community and school based educators
- Representatives of geographically and programmatically diverse community and school based public and private early childhood programs
- County and school districts officials
- Representative from foundations, business and advocates

The Policy Council recommendations shall be made on a majority vote of this group.

To help maintain a unified vision, the executive director of DEC should have final authority on decision and rule making.

Governance: Discussion

As you consider this structure:

- What do you like or dislike?

- Are all voices included appropriately?

- What additional issues need to be considered?

Discussion: Technology & Blending/Braiding Funding

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge 1 Regulations (e.g. eligibility) are not aligned.	DEC should revise and streamline existing regulations across funding sources to ensure that families and providers have more flexibility with funds and less administrative burden.
Challenge 2 Separate programs have separate funding and technology structures.	DEC should utilize one simple application for universal preschool and related slot-based programs that is easy to use for families and providers, and technologically accessible. Over time, additional programs may be added to the unified application as it is beneficial for families and children.
Challenge 3 Different funding sources flow to different local structures with no one ensuring cohesion.	DEC should itself blend and braid state dollars before allocations are released for state-controlled funds, and it must build local capacity to blend and braid local and federal-to-local funds with state funds across slot-based programs.
Challenge 4 There is a lack of visibility into systems statewide.	DEC should prioritize, coordinate, and require the collection of data on access, need, demand, and capacity by demographics and locality in a way that does not burden providers.

Sep 15 TAG: Blending & Braiding

There was large agreement from TAG members that the challenges and solutions presented were the right ones. Below are some highlights from the comments members made:

- It is important to center communities and not the bureaucratic systems that they interact with to access resources. Wherever possible, the new agency should work with and empower local decision making structures that are working well.

- " I recommend some mapping of readiness, structures, and systems right away to see where there ready communities and where additional structures are needed."

- Consider how ALL families and providers will be impacted by changes.

- It will be important to keep in mind that new structures can pose a burden on certain groups who already feel distrust in government for example undocumented families.

- Consider how to create a system that is prepared and flexible to scale to new investments, including potential federal investments.

- Members yearned for first answers on how this all could work especially how blending and braiding can work with real funding scenarios. There seems to be confusion on whether this can legally be done at the state level or not.

Panel: Local Leadership Examples

Summit County	Elisabeth Lawrence, Summit County Commissioner Lucinda Burns, Executive Director of Early Childhood Options
Denver	Elsa Holguin, President and CEO of Denver Preschool Program

- Describe the efforts you have made to support providers and families to access care and education through the blending/braiding of funding.

- What has made this possible?

- How can the new Dept of Early Childhood learn from and support the innovations you've established?

Updated Challenges and Solutions

Challenge 1 Regulations are not aligned.	DEC should revise and streamline existing regulations (e.g. eligibility, program standards, reporting requirements) across funding sources to ensure that families and providers have more flexibility with funds and less administrative burden, in alignment with federal laws.
Challenge 2 Separate programs have separate funding and technology structures.	DEC should utilize one simple application for universal preschool and related slot-based programs that is easy to use for families and providers, and technologically accessible. Over time, additional programs should be added to the unified application as it is beneficial for families and children.
Challenge 3 Different funding sources flow to different local structures with no one responsible for ensuring cohesion.	DEC should itself blend and braid state dollars before allocations are released for state-controlled funds. DEC must build local capacity to blend and braid local and federal-to-local funds with state funds across slot-based programs, including ensuring systems are ready for additional federal dollars should they become available.
Challenge 4 Each community is different with differing current levels of coordination and implementation.	DEC should structure itself, its money and its programs to empower local communities to lead and innovate based on their context. Immediately, DEC should commence a review of community readiness/structures/systems to determine necessary community support for successful launch of UPK, EC unification, and innovation. DEC should elevate and scale local exemplars to build statewide solutions, and should provide feedback and support for all communities. Where possible, DEC should promote and support community leadership within the state system.
Challenge 5 There is a lack of visibility into systems statewide.	DEC should prioritize, coordinate, and require the collection of data on access, need, demand, and capacity by demographics and locality across all program types and in a way that does not burden providers.

What else is missing or can be added to this chart?

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Closing/Next Steps

Next Steps

A *draft report of this plan will be released in early October* for review and feedback from TAG, subgroups, ECLC, providers, families, and stakeholders. Stakeholders will be engaged in the following ways:

- **Statewide listening tour**: To promote engagement and feedback, there will be a statewide listening tour in early October (see next slide for dates).

- **October 20 TAG Meeting:** TAG members will also have the opportunity to provide feedback at the October 20th TAG meeting.

- **Feedback Form:** Stakeholders can offer written feedback through a public form.

Per the legislation, all of the feedback and recommendations from the TAG and its subgroups are considered by TWG to inform the transition plan **due to the ECLC on November 1.**

Report with recommendations for new preschool program is due to the ECLC on January 1.

Statewide Listening Tour

Members of the Transition Working Group will travel the state and hold Listening Sessions to share the draft plan and ask for feedback:

Edwards Oct 11 10:30-12:00pm	**Durango** Oct 12 3:00-4:30pm	****Virtual**** Oct 14 10:00-11:00am	**Ft. Morgan** Oct 15 10:00-11:30pm
Grand Junction Oct 11 5:00-6:30pm	**Alamosa** Oct 13 10:00-11:30am	**Denver** Oct 14 2:30-4:00pm	**Ft. Collins** Oct 15 2:00-3:30pm
Montrose Oct 12 10:00-11:30am	**Pueblo** Oct 13 2:00-3:30pm	****Virtual**** Oct 14 5:30-6:30pm	

Information coming soon! Please help promote these opportunities in your community!

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December 15	–Additional topics regarding universal, voluntary preschool

TAG Members: Calendar Invites Coming Soon!

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Public Comment

Appendix

TAG Charge

HB21–1304 requires the transition plan to address:

- Aligning and combining funding sources for early childhood (taking previous local efforts for streamlining into account)

- Technology required to achieve goals to support parents/caregivers to identify local, appropriate, and available early childhood program and service options and support unification

- Early childhood data systems strategies to inform planning, leverage resource, allocations, maximize children's access to programs, & support data–driven decision–making

Given Colorado's local control context, recommendations to improve these areas should consider the appropriate roles for state and local governments and their interactions with families.

EC system for families

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, **families** expressed having to navigate the following functions within the early childhood system. An example family may have the below experience:

Navigate multiple websites, portals and communications structures to get information

Researches quality, affordability, and convenience of each individual program

Find help to complete applications if English is not their first language

A family is looking for a fully-funded, full time slot and other support services.

Applies at their local school for a half-day CPP slot, and awaits placement based on availability of limited slots.

Applies to Head Start for a full-time slot, and is placed on a waiting list

Applies through the local county office for CCAP for additional funded hours of care, but receives fewer hours than they need

Applies to local child care providers for a part-time slot and after school care that works with CCAP hours

Applies to several home visiting sites for additional family supports

This graphic is not exhaustive but highlights how the fragmented local governance system can cause challenges for the very people it is supposed to serve.
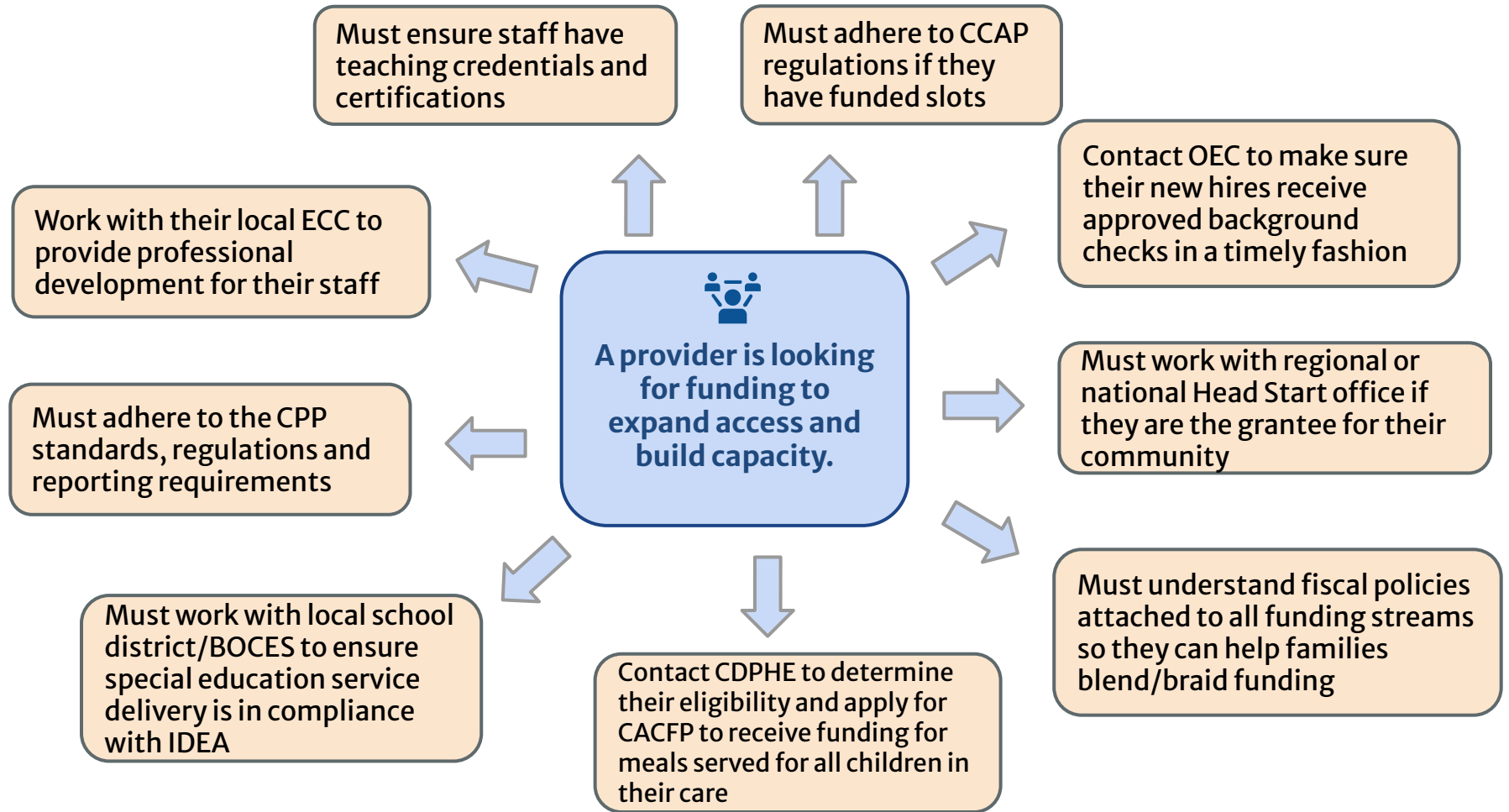
EC system for providers

Through the stakeholder engagement process, **providers** expressed having to navigate the following functions within the early childhood system:

A provider is looking for funding to expand access and build capacity.

Must ensure staff have teaching credentials and certifications

Must adhere to CCAP regulations if they have funded slots

Contact OEC to make sure their new hires receive approved background checks in a timely fashion

Work with their local ECC to provide professional development for their staff

Must work with regional or national Head Start office if they are the grantee for their community

Must adhere to the CPP standards, regulations and reporting requirements

Must understand fiscal policies attached to all funding streams so they can help families blend/braid funding

Must work with local school district/BOCES to ensure special education service delivery is in compliance with IDEA

Contact CDPHE to determine their eligibility and apply for CACFP to receive funding for meals served for all children in their care

This graphic is not exhaustive but highlights how the fragmented local governance system can cause challenges for the very people it is supposed to serve.

State and Local Relationship

Stakeholders have expressed that there is a need to strengthen the early childhood experience, not just at the state level but in coordination with their local communities as well.

In order to implement its mission and vision of creating a unified system, the new department will need deep and effective partnerships with localities to support the unique needs of each community in Colorado.

The next slide shares challenges that have been raised in subgroups, listening sessions, and previous TAG meetings.

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Key Challenges

1. Regulations (program quality, monitoring, operations) attached to different funding streams are complex to navigate, not aligned, and burdensome.

2. Separate programs have separate funding and technology structures that makes it complicated for some families/providers and inaccessible to others.

3. Different funding sources flow to different local structures (e.g. counties, providers), with no one ensuring cohesion or efficient maximization of blending and braiding capability.

4. There is a lack of visibility into systems statewide.
   - Clear, real time data on access, need, demand, and capacity by demographics and locality are unavailable to community leaders or state policymakers.

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Current State: Local Governance Structures

Colorado has multiple initiatives to support children, families, and providers. These initiatives are funded and authorized by different state agencies, and are locally led by different agencies and organizations, including:

- **64** County CCAP Administrators
- **34** ECCs: Early Childhood Councils
- **178** DACs: District Advisory Councils
- **35** FRCs: Family Resource Centers
- **1 statewide** CCR&R: Child Care Resource & Referral hotline
- **17** CCR&R: Child Care Resource & Referrals (regionally based)
- **4** Home Visiting State Intermediaries
- **21** BOCEs: Boards of Cooperative Educational Services
- **69** AUs: Administrative Units*
- **178** School Boards
- **20** CCBs: Community Centered Boards
- **7** CACFP Sponsor Sites
- **110** WIC Clinics
- **2** Tribal Communities: Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- **204** Head Start centers
- **119** Early Head Start centers

A major theme emerging out of ongoing conversations has been the need for a more coherent experience for families, providers, workforce, and children as they navigate these programs and services.

Key Challenge #1:

Regulations (program quality, monitoring, operations) attached to different funding streams are complex to navigate, not aligned, and burdensome.

The ECLC and PPLC have been engaging with stakeholders in similar statewide conversations where the theme for increased coherence in the system was raised:

"It does not feel like we have coordinated services. We are reporting the same things to different entities with different standards, different funding (CPP, human services, others). Costly & time consuming"

"could there be one place for all reports to go to and other entities who need the data go to that place and retrieve what they need? We lose a lot of time/money managing paperwork."

"We need a unified and simplified funding system"

"Different standards from licensing, Head Start, state preK, CCCAP, etc. but funding doesn't always cover the misaligned standards or how it flows puts pressure on the provider to blend funding."

"Multiple funding streams, multiple expectations, accountable to multiple entities (multiple school districts, state agencies, national accreditation) –– all exist today."

Current State: Regulations

Providers and families are required to understand and navigate funding requirements in order to layer funding sources for which children are eligible.

Strengths:
- Funding requirements are designed to support as many at-risk children as possible have some level of access, without preventing funding combinations
- Funding structures, at points, require local match (e.g., CPP, HS) which supports more resources being allocated to children in need
- Localities are enabled to leverage or raise additional revenue to support children and families in their community

Challenges:
- Funding amounts, payment practices, and requirements for combining funds vary across each program, making it challenging to partner with programs and funding together.
- Local staff at ECCs/DACs/School districts/Head Start offices spend many hours every year putting together funding to create full day slots for children and families.
- Many resources are needed to help families navigate the complexities of financing their child's needs. An example of a helpful resource is the family guide to coordinated systems of payments for EI services.

Key Challenge #2:

Separate programs have separate funding and technology structures that make it complicated for some families/providers and inaccessible to others.

Current State: Technology Structures

Parents, providers, workforce members, and localities need to have the technology to access multiple websites to provide their children with the services they need, including (but not limited to):

- **Provider Hub**
  - QRIS
  - ATS
  - PDIS
  - Licensing
- **CHATS** (currently undergoing modernization)
- **CO PEAK**
- **Head Start Center Locator**

- **CO Shines**
  - Families find a program
- **Early Intervention Services**
- **Child Find**
- **State Intermediaries**
  - **Parent Possible**
  - **Invest in Kids**
- **CACFP**
- **CPP**

All of these websites assume that the families and providers being served have the technological resources they need to get online at home or find a resource to help. Families struggle to access services they are eligible for because of technological, language, and time barriers.

Key Challenge #3:

Different funding sources flow to different local structures (e.g. counties, providers), with no one ensuring cohesion or efficient maximization of blending and braiding capability.

Funding Sources for Slots

State funding	Local funding	Mixed governance of funding
Universal preschool (Prop EE funding) Targeted universal preschool funds Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) Early Childhood At-risk Enhancement (ECARE)	Additional school funds, including Title I, Title V, local funds (e.g., Colorado Preschool Program match funds) Head Start (federal to local grantees) Tax funds, including mill levies Philanthropic funds Tuition	Child Care Development Fund (Child Care Assistance Program) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

*This list is representative but not exhaustive of the funding universe for slots and services for Colorado's early childhood system, and generalizes funding governance by program..

Key Challenge #4:

There is a lack of visibility into systems statewide.

Clear, real time data on access, need, demand, and capacity by demographics and locality are unavailable to community leaders or state policymakers.

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Current State: Data

As required by the HB21-1304, the public transition plan must:

- Address the extent to which existing early childhood programs & services are available to and utilized by the child and family populations they are designed to serve (e.g. number of slots by program, number of children served by program),

- Identify the groups of children and families (by demographic, geographic and socioeconomic data) who are accessing the existing early childhood programs & services, and

- Provide specific information concerning the groups of children that have historically encountered barriers to school readiness

After extensive communications with agency staff, here are some key takeaways:
- We can only say with certainty the number of children served for certain programs
- The availability of quality, demographic, and age data varies greatly by program
- Data on capacity and access to care are difficult to aggregate due to the large variances in the systems that collect the data
    - Some systems require data while others allow parents/providers to elect to self report
    - Licensed capacity is available but does not provide utilization rate
- Data on hours of care are largely unavailable
- Data from before OEC unified are largely unavailable
- Comparisons across programs are not available as programs do not have any consistency in type of data collected and data systems are not linked