

DRAFT Blue Ribbon Plan Outline Version 3, October 2023

Purpose of this Document:

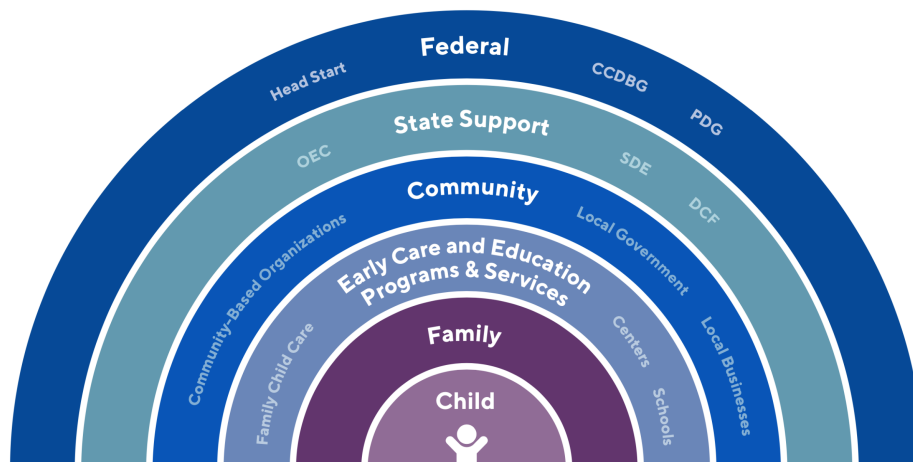
This outline represents goals, objectives, action steps, and measurable indicators for consideration by the Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care. The first section of the document outlines the long-term vision. The subsequent sections provide detail on the proposed plan for the first five years. This outline reflects extensive feedback from Blue Ribbon workgroups, national and local experts, Panel members, and other stakeholders, including providers, parents, businesses, and advocates. This outline will be used to draft the Blue Ribbon Panel report. The final report will be submitted to the Governor in December. Ongoing stakeholder input will continue to be prioritized as plans for implementation develop and evolve.

I. Overarching Vision

All families will have access to an equitable, high-quality, and affordable early childhood education (ECE) system.

This system will center on the needs of children and families, enabling children to learn and thrive, and families to work.

A strong ECE system will benefit our communities and economy by investing in the healthy development of our youngest children; helping to attract and retain young families; increasing workforce participation – especially among women; and growing the State’s economy.



Source: Adapted from Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

To achieve this vision, all stakeholders will work together to:

- Invest in and support a high-quality, appropriately compensated professional workforce
- Expand access to affordable child care for families
- Increase the supply of high-quality care that meets the needs of all families, including cultural preferences and work schedules
- Elevate family and community voice in system design, implementation, and decision-making
- Enhance early childhood systems and funding to build on recent investments, maximize use of the current system, and build a high-quality, sustainable ECE system

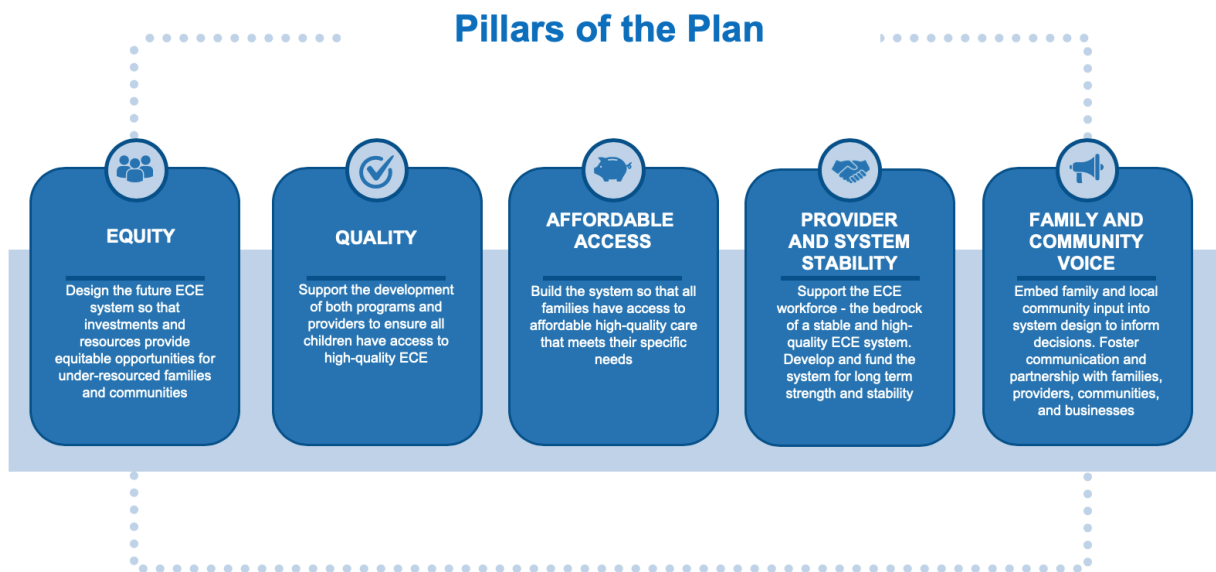
This vision represents a long-term effort, requiring major system-building and investments. The State has significantly increased its investments in ECE under Governor Lamont’s leadership. Building on this momentum, the Blue Ribbon Plan specifies the goals, objectives, and actions steps for the next five years. The plan recognizes the importance of building system capacity as a critical first step of implementation. Staging investments will provide stability to the ECE system and build the necessary capacity to expand supply, improve quality, and sustain the system.

The roll out of this plan will prioritize historically under-resourced groups and communities and will take care to honor the existing workforce and a public-private mixed delivery model.

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) will be the lead agency working in collaboration with partner agencies, and the Early Childhood Cabinet will serve as the ongoing advisory body.

II. Guiding Pillars and Principles

Pillars of the Plan



Principles Behind Plan Development:

- **Simplicity:** Seek efficient solutions (e.g., the most impact for the least effort)
- **Flexibility:** Design recommendations to be flexible, responsive to demand, and to optimize Connecticut’s mixed delivery system
- **Public/Private Mixed Delivery System:** Strengthen Connecticut’s current public/private early childhood system of community-based centers, group and family child care homes, and school-based early childhood programs, including before and after school child care
- **Leveraging what exists:** Use current resources efficiently. Build on recent successes and investments. Leverage local, national, and federal organizations, investments, and systems
- **Data-driven:** Develop new and enhance existing data systems and incentives to ensure continuous progress toward goals and to manage for improved outcomes for children, families, and the State’s economy

III. Executive Summary of Plan Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Workforce and Quality

Invest in and support the retention and recruitment of a professional, high-quality ECE workforce

Low ECE workforce compensation is the single largest barrier to making high-quality child care accessible to all Connecticut families. The ECE workforce is among the lowest paid professions in the state: child care workers have hourly wages 23 percent lower than those of similar workers in other occupations.¹¹ Inadequate compensation leads to high turnover and workforce shortages. Children, families, and their communities are negatively impacted when teachers leave for higher paying jobs and ECE programs close.

“The essence of quality in early childhood services is embodied in the expertise and skills of the staff and in their capacity to build positive relationships with young children.” (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007). Without a highly skilled, strong, and stable workforce, there can be no high-quality ECE. The ECE workforce needs professional compensation and other supports to provide high-quality care.

- **Objective 1A:** Support professional compensation for a strong and stable ECE workforce in all ECE programs
- **Objective 1B:** Pursue strategies that support ECE workforce recruitment and retention, and build education and training programs for skilled, diverse ECE educators and staff (e.g., apprenticeships, high school CDA, retraining from other fields)
- **Objective 1C:** Adopt a three-step career ladder that: aligns with the national Unifying Framework (UF); aligns compensation with credential attainment; and follows an implementation timeline and stakeholder input process to ensure that any new system supports all providers who advance their credentials

DRAFT

- **Objective 1D:** Develop services to help ECE programs maximize their fiscal health and improve their overall economics to support stability, quality, and increased workforce compensation (e.g., business coaching, shared services)
- **Objective 1E:** Create and expand equitable strategies to support educators in increasing the quality of early childhood programs

Goal 2: Equitable and Affordable Access

Increase equitable and affordable access to high-quality programs that meet the range of family needs

The cost of ECE in Connecticut is among the highest in the country, unaffordable for most families and well above the recommended 7% of family income. This impacts families' decisions to participate in the workforce and live in the State.

Families struggle to find care that meets their needs and preferences. The lack of access to high-quality care disproportionately impacts Connecticut families and communities with the least resources. Families who cannot afford child care are often patching together care and children lack a consistent caregiver/setting. Families experience daily stress covering care. And for children, structure and routine are important for optimal brain development. A patchwork of care impacts their healthy development and future learning success. Stress also occurs when families who receive child care subsidies become ineligible due to increased household income. They face a significant benefit cliff and families just out of reach of subsidies have limited affordable options outside of state-funded and school-based programs.

The need for infant and toddler care is particularly acute in Connecticut. The number of children with special needs has also increased dramatically since the onset of COVID, and the availability of supports for these children, their families, and the programs that serve them have not kept pace. Families that have young children with special needs report significant challenges finding child care or school-based programs that meet their child and family's needs.

Although all families need to trust the safety of their ECE provider, family needs and preferences vary in terms of their cultural and language preferences, the hours they need care, and the settings they want for their children. Therefore, it is important to support a high quality, culturally competent mixed-delivery system that offers care in a variety of day parts and helps families navigate and access ECE.

- **Objective 2A:** Expand affordability for low- and middle-income families, including committing to funding and expanding Care 4 Kids, Connecticut's subsidy program, by increasing eligibility up to households earning up to 100% of State Median Income (SMI) with a parent co-pay maximum of 7% of family income and phasing in over 5 years
- **Objective 2B:** Increase the supply of affordable infant and toddler care for families
- **Objective 2C:** Improve access to programs and services that meet the needs of children with special needs and their families
- **Objective 2D:** Increase equitable access to high-quality care, especially for under-resourced families and communities

Goal 3: Systems

Develop an agile, flexible, and responsive high-quality ECE system that maximizes current resources and supports economically viable programs

The ECE system is generally inflexible and complex. Programs struggle to navigate and administer multiple funding streams. Families struggle to access information and navigate the system.

Programs and agencies sometimes operate in silos, based on an out-of-date model of family and program needs.

Overall state capacity is insufficient to support the needed reforms and expansion.

Family voice is not always central in the ECE system. Local needs vary but stakeholders are not always represented in assessing a community's needs.

The use of data and outcomes tracking and technology generally is limited.

- **Objective 3A:** Simplify state-funded system and better align with federal systems to reduce complexity and increase utility especially for providers, but also for families and the State
- **Objective 3B:** Maximize existing resources by strengthening partnerships to identify opportunities for potential alignment and innovation, reduce administrative burdens, redundant costs, and barriers to accessing state systems
- **Objective 3C:** Ensure family and representative community voice are central in the ECE system
- **Objective 3D:** Develop data and information systems, including a provider and parent portal and navigation systems, to track and improve systems and outcomes, in coordination with other statewide efforts

Goal 4: Funding

Build a well-funded, sustainable ECE funding system that is poised to efficiently leverage future investment

The ECE system is significantly underfunded, leading the U.S. Treasury Secretary to describe it as “a textbook example of a broken market.” Funding does not support the true cost of quality care. Significant funds must be raised over time and investments staged and prioritized.

- **Objective 4A:** Develop a plan to transition to funding based on the true cost of care starting with infant and toddler care and high-need communities

DRAFT

- **Objective 4B:** Develop a flexible fiscal model to support implementation and help to prioritize and stage investments in alignment with system reforms
- **Objective 4C:** Identify new dedicated funding streams to support sustained and significant public and private incremental investment in ECE

IV. Goals, Objectives, Action Steps, and Indicators

Goal 1: Workforce and Quality

Invest in and support the retention and recruitment of a professional, high-quality ECE workforce

- **Objective 1A:** Support professional compensation for a strong and stable ECE workforce in all ECE programs
Action Steps:
 - o Provide state funding support to increase workforce compensation across ECE provider types
 - Implement operational grants to increase compensation for licensed child care programs serving high-need populations (70% of licensed programs)
 - Increase the state share of funding for licensed programs by both increasing the Care 4 Kids subsidy rate and increasing rates for licensed state-funded programs
 - o Align compensation increases with the roll out of the educator levels outlined in the Unifying Framework (UF) and set a compensation schedule for state-funded programs to gradually implement the UF after initial rate increases have given providers needed fiscal stability
 - o Advance strategies to expand key benefits and avoid benefits cliffs for the ECE workforce across the State, including:
 - Improved access to health insurance through strategies that could include dedicated resources for early childhood educators on Access Health CT and assistance for anyone whose increases in compensation make them ineligible for Medicaid coverage (including health navigators for Access Health CT benefits and/or funds to cover out-of-pocket healthcare costs on Access Health CT plans); and
 - Retirement savings plans for early childhood educators who do not have access to retirement benefits through the utilization of MyCTSAvings
 - o Assess equity impact of the proposed compensation schedule and develop strategies to prevent disparate impact on early childhood educators by converting experience to credit and recognizing years of service
 - o Enhance the supports, like stipends for transportation and school-related expenses, that would make education and training more accessible to anyone who needs new credentials for meeting requirements in the Unifying Framework**Potential Measurable Indicators:**
 - o Average or median earnings for ECE workforce
 - o Number of ECE workers with health insurance plans and/or retirement savings programs

DRAFT

- o Assessment of equity impacts (including whether adoption of UF educator levels supports the recruitment and retention of a more diverse ECE workforce)
- o Monitor and evaluate turnover and increased hiring in the field, including by key demographic indicators

- **Objective 1B:** Pursue strategies that support ECE workforce recruitment and retention, and build education and training programs for skilled, diverse ECE educators and staff (e.g., apprenticeships, high school CDA, retraining from other fields)

Action Steps:

- o Develop a campaign about the advantages to individuals of a career in ECE and the positive impacts of this work and market its importance in new and traditional settings, like high schools, community colleges, four-year colleges, and job centers
- o Support career mobility with clear education/training pathways such as apprenticeships; continue to expand apprenticeships as an ECE career mobility strategy; and consider opportunity to utilize a dedicated substitute pool as an employment option post-apprenticeship
- o Connect early childhood educators with currently available resources for “upskilling” (e.g., no- or low-cost education and training opportunities available to early childhood educators today). Improve OEC outreach, communication, and access.
- o Strengthen higher education infrastructure to support ECE program development, workforce needs, and recruitment to the profession (e.g., more robust career guidance resources for ECE students and on-campus assistance identifying and applying for scholarships)
- o Make scholarships and flexible educational opportunities available to field entrants
- o Ensure coursework is provided in languages, settings, and schedules that give early childhood educators the ability to work and study. Include dedicated supports for those pursuing education and training programs so they can participate fully as students
- o Explore granting presumptive eligibility for child care assistance programs to early childhood educators working in family child care homes and centers

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- o Rates of individuals entering and completing education or training programs
- o Number of ECE professionals advancing in levels of the UF
- o Family surveys about satisfaction with early education settings
- o Demographics of individuals entering and staying in the ECE workforce

- **Objective 1C:** Adopt a three-step career ladder that: aligns with the national Unifying Framework (UF); aligns compensation with credential attainment; and follows an implementation timeline and stakeholder input process to ensure that any new system supports all providers who advance their credentials

Action Steps:

- o Develop a roadmap with interim steps for UF implementation, including different pathways for the existing ECE workforce to adopt educator levels outlined in the UF; incorporate a transitional period and “grandfathering” provisions for existing early childhood educators

DRAFT

- o Support the development of higher education and training programs non-native English speakers and English learners to support their inclusion in the new career ladder
- o Work with Connecticut higher education institutions to assure the educator levels outlined in the UF include the competencies associated with degree programs and higher education programs that offer credit
- o Build on current funding scholarships and service support (like child care and transportation stipends) to ensure access to training and education programs required in the UF
- o Align child care licensure requirements to the national Unifying Framework career ladder and ensure the availability of easily accessible professional development programs and scholarships to support a transition process
- o Work with family child care organizations to assure Connecticut's UF rollout, structure and supports speak to the needs for both child care centers and family child care homes, and that pathways and aligned compensation are clearly delineated for family child care providers
- o Gather information about current workforce to understand potential needs for professional development and credential supports

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- o Completed roadmap that clearly indicates how credentials or current steps on the career ladder correspond to educator levels in the UF
 - o Number of ECE professionals at each educator level post-adoption and thereafter
 - o Number of ECE professionals enrolling in programs to advance their educator level
 - o Average/median earnings by provider type and across different geographies in the state
- **Objective 1D:** Develop services to help ECE programs maximize their fiscal health and improve their overall economics to support stability, quality, and increased workforce compensation (e.g., business coaching, shared services)

Action Steps:

- o Develop programs, policies, and incentives to improve provider operations and maximize enrollment (e.g., shared services across multiple providers for efficiencies of scale, business coaching, improved provider data systems and enrollment supports)
- o Simplify OEC program administration requirements to reduce burdens on providers
- o Adapt the state's process for paying providers to support provider fiscal stability: paying state-funded programs up front, and quarterly, on a classroom-based system (excluding smaller providers below whose total enrollment is lower than classroom size)
- o Convert approximately 5% of Care 4 Kids vouchers to contracted program slots to add an additional consistent funding revenue stream for programs, starting with the RFP for state-funded spaces
- o Grow facility funding and expand access to low- to no-cost facility options, accessible to all types of programs, to reduce or eliminate ongoing facility costs
 - Secure bond funding (amount TBD) for facilities investments: conversions, renovation, expansion, and new builds that promotes safety and access
 - Focus investments in child care deserts and high-need communities.

DRAFT

- Evaluate opportunities to partner with SDE to identify low- to no-cost classroom space for programs where there is unmet need
- Work with the Department of Administrative Services to identify low-cost excess state space on campuses or other facilities in high-need areas and child care deserts.
- Develop capacity of local communities to help support program facility needs (e.g., subsidized space, churches, local philanthropy)
- Provide ongoing dedicated resources to help programs access any state as well as federal or local facilities funding
- Provide funding to enhance program safety and security
- o Incentivize the provision of unmet child care needs, such as multilingual and off-hour care

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- o Enrollment trends
- o Survey of program to understand changes in administration, facility needs, et cetera
- o Increased supply of child care in non-traditional hours

- **Objective 1E:** Create and expand equitable strategies to support educators in increasing the quality of early childhood programs

Action Steps:

- o Increase awareness of trainings, scholarships, and other resources for professional development available through Elevate and at OEC
- o Provide grants to programs to support for peer mentors/coaches and ECE workforce leadership coaches in programs to provide on-the-ground support for both child care centers and family child care homes
- o Reduce system barriers to the use of substitutes to give educators more time to both participate in professional development and support parent engagement and communication. Consider state support for a sub pool
- o Provide training on staff and program mental wellness, trauma, health and safety protocols through Elevate
- o Collect comprehensive information on the ECE workforce, including data on credentials for educators in both state-funded and non-state-funded systems, to better plan system development and workforce needs

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- o Share of ECE workers with licensure information entered through the Registry
- o Uptake of mentor/coaching services once available with surveys and enrollment counts
- o Surveys of educators reporting job satisfaction, access to professional supports, et cetera

Goal 2: Equitable and Affordable Access

Increase equitable and affordable access to high-quality programs that meet the range of family needs

DRAFT

- **Objective 2A:** Expand affordability for low- and middle-income families, including committing to funding and expanding Care 4 Kids, Connecticut's state subsidy program, by increasing eligibility up to households earning up to 100% of State Median Income (SMI) with a parent co-pay maximum of 7% of family income and phasing in over 5 years

Action Steps:

- Expand Care 4 Kids eligibility to 85% of SMI phased in over 3 years to ensure equity with implementation, then raise to 100% by the 5th year with a maximum family co-pay of 7%
- Develop strategies to minimize the use of enrollment management systems (i.e., Care 4 Kids waitlist)
- Develop strategies to build business support for the ECE needs of their employees, including designing and implementing cost-sharing public-private model with businesses to reach families who do not qualify for publicly funded subsidies
 - Consider public-private cost share model similar to Michigan's Tri-Share to make access more affordable for those just out of reach of public support, also building on learning from additional states that are adopting this model
 - Focus first on the Eastern region of Connecticut where there is a severe shortage of ECE
- Transition OEC subsidy regulations to align with federal guidelines to remove application barriers, simplify, and allow for a more responsive system that allows more families to be eligible for affordable care
- Develop strategies to mitigate the impacts of benefits cliffs, including identifying opportunities to connect families and programs to benefits cliffs calculators and navigation supports
- Consider incremental opportunities to limit parent co-pay
- Track parent pay and workforce participation rates related to expanded eligibility to ensure least resourced families are being served and to build the case for potential further investment

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- Percentage of eligible children and families served by the ECE system across race, geography, and income level
- Parent co-pay
- Number and percentage of females of childbearing age participating in the State's workforce
- Reach of families just out of reach of Care 4 Kids
- Reduction in unmet need in Eastern Connecticut and other targeted areas of unmet need
- Participation of businesses in any public-private program

- **Objective 2B:** Increase the supply of affordable infant and toddler care for families

Action Steps:

- Increase access to infant/toddler care by expanding contracted slots by 2,600 over 5 years
- Develop policies and incentives to expand infant and toddler care in family child care homes and center-based settings, focusing first on aligning group home regulations with family child care regulations
- Consider opportunities to change ratios, e.g., toddler ratio for center-based care from 1:4 to 1:5

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- Supply of infant and toddler slots
- New child care center and family child care participation in state funded system
- **Objective 2C:** Improve access to programs and services to meet the needs of children with special needs and their families

Action Steps:

- Increase access to inclusive school-day classrooms led by credentialed teachers by expanding school-day, school-year Smart Start, by about 900 slots, focusing on communities with unmet need for care
- Seek opportunities to deepen partnerships with other state agencies--e.g., Department of Children and Families, State Department of Education (SDE)--to be more aligned and intentional in serving children with special needs and their families, considering transportation and part-day challenges
- Work with public school districts to develop strategies to remove barriers to receiving services and bring special education services to children in community-based settings
- Continue to evaluate the advantages of a potential Birth to Five system in Connecticut that would merge Part B and Part C to continue Birth to Three family and community-based services through kindergarten to support children and families with services that meet their need to work

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- System capacity to serve children with special needs
- Provision of care for children with special needs
- Number of districts serving preschoolers with special needs in community-based early childhood settings
- **Objective 2D:** Increase equitable access to high-quality care, especially for under-resourced families and communities

Action Steps:

- Expand the supply of and access to programs ready to serve children from under-resourced groups, such as undocumented families and families experiencing homelessness
 - Increase outreach to and enrollment of undocumented families and children, and families and children experiencing homelessness by partnering with local community-based organizations
 - Consider opportunities to help undocumented families navigate options for child care
- Increase the supply of family child care and group homes equipped to serve families needing care in non-traditional hours, multilingual care, and care for children who live in child care deserts
 - Align group home licensing regulations with family child care home regulations
 - Continue support of innovative models, such as the family child care incubator model
 - Develop additional incentives working with the family child care union
- Open new spaces in under-resourced communities to enhance affordability for families and help stabilize more private programs (FCC and Center)

DRAFT

- Consider collaborative, jointly funded opportunities to develop partnerships between community-based organizations and schools to serve unmet needs in local communities
- Develop a pathway to presumptive eligibility to grant families provisional coverage while their Care 4 Kids applications are being processed to help parents get to work, while simultaneously working to shorten Care 4 Kids application time to two months
- Provide support for training, coaching, and staffing to help programs support under-resourced families
 - Utilize the Head Start Parent, Family and Community Framework as a guide
 - Include training for programs to be able to meet the needs of multilingual learners and their families
- Track the provision of equitable care for families of color, families living in poverty, multilingual families, and families experiencing homelessness and under-resourced communities.

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- System's capacity to serve under-resourced children and families
- Supply of off-hour care
- Number of licensed family child care and group homes
- Care 4 Kids application time shortened to two months

Goal 3: Systems

Develop an agile, flexible, and responsive high-quality ECE system that maximizes current resources and supports economically viable programs

- **Objective 3A:** Simplify state-funded system and better align with federal systems to reduce complexity and increase utility especially for providers, but also for families, and the State

Action Steps:

- Consolidate into a one or two funding streams to minimize administrative burdens on providers and simplify parent navigation
- Determine statutory and regulatory changes to support a unified state funding system for the 2024 session
- Issue an RFP to continue to fund existing state-funded programs in communities to pilot the consolidation of funding streams by July 2025

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- Percentage of contracts funded from a unified funding stream
- Number of contracts funded from multiple SIDs
- Number of programs offering families more flexible schedules that meet family need including part week, part day, extended hours
- Number of required provider reports
- Number of GPs (OEC created rules for ECE state funded providers)
- Survey of impact on program administration

- **Objective 3B:** Maximize existing resources by strengthening partnerships to identify opportunities for potential alignment and innovation, reduce administrative burdens, redundant costs, and barriers to accessing state systems

Action Steps:

DRAFT

- Leverage the Early Childhood Cabinet to capitalize on opportunities that would benefit multiple state systems (e.g., Family First, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)
- Explore opportunities to enhance partnerships with state agencies SDE, Department of Children and Families, and Department of Social Services (DSS), among others, to identify additional opportunities for alignment
- Expand Head Start on Housing model with Connecticut Department of Housing to include families experiencing homelessness enrolled in ECE programs
 - Leverage federal and local resources, such as Head Start or Smart Start to blend, braid, and layer funding as well as to adopt potential standards and resources
 - Explore expanding the Early Childhood Mentorship Pilot in Partnership with Early Head Start pilot
- Explore partnering with local municipalities to secure low cost or subsidized housing for ECE educators

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- ECE funding related to inter-agency collaboration
- Head Start programming
- Smart Start programs serving children with special needs.

- **Objective 3C:** Ensure family and representative community voice are central in the ECE system

Action Steps:

- Recognize, empower, and embed families as central and valued decision-makers in the development of an equitable ECE system
 - Partner with parents as expert advisors to develop and implement policies at the program, state, and local level to elevate families' diverse voice and perspectives (e.g., parent input on implementation plans)
 - In concert with parent leaders, create a statewide umbrella entity for parent advisory groups to foster communication and identify areas for potential alignment
 - Increase opportunities for parent leadership training for interested parents
 - Track impact and outcomes related to parent leadership and equitable participation
- Expand local organizational supports and implement a common needs assessment to ensure an equitable and responsive ECE system that reflects the input of key stakeholders and represents all geographies in the state
 - Implement a rigorous common needs assessment that will reflect differences in local community needs and priorities, drawing from existing models (e.g., Community Action Agencies, Head Start, and North Carolina Smart Start, Iowa Empowerment, Michigan Great Start, Smart Start Oklahoma, and Build Initiatives resources)
 - Enhance funding to cover expanded role in local planning efforts to include needs assessment, planning and oversight of all state funded ECE programs in the community for:
 - Existing local early childhood councils (School Readiness and/or Local Early Childhood Collaboratives) as well as
 - Geographies that do not currently have representation, enabling these communities to collaborate and form multi-town councils as needed based on community size and capacity

- Consider potential legislative changes to current governance structure to ensure leadership by community-based organizations and broad representation of stakeholders, especially parents
- Consider potential for municipal match to support resourcing needs

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- Parent representation across the ECE system
 - Equitable parent participation in state and local governance
 - OEC approved community needs assessment utilized by a percentage of providers/communities
 - Number of geographies using common needs assessment
 - Percentage of towns covered by regional structure
- **Objective 3D:** Develop data and information systems, including a provider and parent portal and navigation systems, to track and improve systems and outcomes, in coordination with other statewide efforts

Action Steps:

- Develop an approach to track systems, child, and family outcomes to support accountability and progress
 - Identify strategies to collect the necessary data
 - Enhance demand and supply tracking to reflect the range of parent needs and preferences and program options
 - Continue conducting two Randomized Control Trials (RCT) through \$10 M study funded through ARPA to understand impact of infant and toddler care, including when combined with home visiting and specific professional development, to learn how to scale data collection and ongoing interventions tied to improved child outcomes
- Design and develop an easy-to-use, accessible parent portal that would be a “single point of entry” for the ECE system
 - Consult families representing diverse socioeconomic backgrounds across a variety of geographies and child care settings to understand needs and preferences
 - Map existing data systems to identify gaps and opportunities for enhancements
 - Devise a plan to rapidly launch a minimally viable product, improving on design of current parent navigation system, that is:
 - Easy-to-use, organized, accessible and
 - Engages parents as partners in children's overall development and well-being
 - Promote awareness of available family supports related to physical and mental health services, transportation, housing, and paid leave
 - Complement online navigation system with an expansion of trusted on the ground resources
 - Plan for dedicated marketing and outreach to ensure usage
- Enhance the Provider 360 portal for all Connecticut ECE programs, leveraging incentives, strategic communications, and broad access points such as licensing to encourage uptake and use
 - Consult providers across all settings to understand their uptake of current systems, needs and preferences

- Determine costs, sequencing, and scope for new and/or integrated system

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- Child, family, and system outcomes data collection
- Demand and supply matching
- Family experience navigating the ECE system
- Usage of and satisfaction with parent and provider portals

Goal 4: Funding

Build a well-funded, sustainable ECE funding system that is poised to efficiently leverage future investment

- **Objective 4A:** Develop a plan to transition to funding based on the true cost of care starting with infant and toddler care and high-need communities

Action Steps:

- Develop estimates of the true cost of quality care, building off the existing state cost of care model, by analyzing approaches from comparable states and aligning with Elevate’s quality standards
- Review federal guidelines to inform potential implementation plans

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- Development of true cost of quality care estimates
- Development of an implementation plan

- **Objective 4B:** Develop a flexible fiscal model to support implementation and help to prioritize and stage investments in alignment with system reforms

Action Steps:

- Build robust revenue, cost, and investment model that informs key policies and plans
- Identify resource gaps and significant hurdles and risks in implementation
- Prioritize the design of this model as an integral, initial implementation step to be able to be poised to stage investments
- Model phases to reflect first both foundational investments and high-impact investments with low effort

Potential Measurable Indicators:

- Ability to apply in implementation to make needed adjustments

- **Objective 4C:** Identify new dedicated funding streams to support sustained and significant public and private incremental investment in ECE

Action Steps:

- Secure significant new dedicated public and private funding, looking to other states and municipalities for funding models that have worked (e.g., New Mexico, Massachusetts, Vermont)
- Identify opportunities enabled by any new sources of revenues to leverage newly formed, non-lapsing Early Childhood Fund, defining its purpose, structure, and governance as applicable
- Cultivate philanthropic investment in ECE, especially for one-time catalytic investments in systems and facilities

DRAFT

- Consider incremental strategies to generate business engagement
- Potential Measurable Indicators:**
- Ability to raise sustained funding to address short- and long-term system needs