



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Meeting  
April 9 2024

**Regional Coalition & Washington Communities for  
Children (WCFC) Updates**

**Regional Coalition Update**

**Inland Northwest Early Learning Alliance, Northeast**

**For more information, please contact: Colleen Condon, [colleen@lilaccityelc.com](mailto:colleen@lilaccityelc.com)**

INWELA has spent much of our time lately on Living Wage Proviso activities. After compiling and synthesizing local data from parents and child care providers, we and other community partners worked together to host listening sessions to hear from those whose voices were missing from our landscape analysis. These listening sessions went well, and we are hopeful that DCYF will utilize the information and stories shared to create positive change in the early learning system.

Our coalition has also been working with Melia LaCour from Becoming Justice on our identified equity challenge, which is that our coalition is not representative of the communities that we serve. We are currently identifying ways we can “take action to learn,” one of the Liberatory Design Mindsets, and are excited to continue to build authentic relationships with the communities we hope to serve.

INWELA recently voted to act as the Child Care Advisory Group to inform a local commerce grant awardee on creating a child care center in north Spokane, which will create 150 new slots with wrap-around services, including infant slots.

**Investing in Children Coalition: Central**

**For more information, please contact: Lindsay Bowsell, [lindsayb@yakimavalleycf.org](mailto:lindsayb@yakimavalleycf.org) or Marina Medrano, [marinam@yakimavalleycf.org](mailto:marinam@yakimavalleycf.org)**

In March, our efforts were dedicated to coordinating listening sessions with a select group of child care providers from our region, as part of the Living Wage Proviso and WA STEM Catalyst projects led by WCFC. These sessions were designed to delve into the intricate landscape of child care in Washington, aiming to identify areas for enhancement and bolstering current services. The objective of these projects is to facilitate connections between families and caregivers, ensuring access to the highest quality early care while advocating for improved working conditions and equitable wages for child care providers.

Our scheduled listening session involved four primarily Spanish-speaking providers from across Yakima. Their invaluable insights shed light on the current state of child care in Yakima, offering

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profound perspectives on potential system improvements to benefit both providers and families alike.

### King County

**For more information, please contact: Donny Willeto or Bob Findlay, [kcelc@childcare.org](mailto:kcelc@childcare.org)**

No updates to share at this time.

### North Central

**For more information please contact: Nancy Spurgeon, [nspurgeon49@gmail.com](mailto:nspurgeon49@gmail.com)**

No updates to share at this time.

### Northwest

**For more information please contact: Linden Obel, [linden@first5fundamentals.org](mailto:linden@first5fundamentals.org).**

Northwest Early Learning Coalition continues to work toward an equitable, responsive, and coordinated early learning system that ensures access to early learning resources for all children and families, especially the most marginalized and oppressed in our communities, by bringing together cross-sector partners to build connections, share resources, innovate and collaborate, and advocate for systems and policy change. Here are some recent highlights:

**Listening sessions and survey distribution:** Our region has wrapped up listening sessions and survey distribution across the region for the Early Care & Education Access and Living Wage Proviso work. Over the next month, we will analyze and review the data we collected. This data is a critical addition to the existing data in our region, which will inform policy in the 2025 legislative session and strategic planning efforts as part of the Catalyst grant project.

**Planning for regional early learning brunch – Inspire Breakfast Northwest:** Our planning team is meeting regularly to coordinate a regional early learning brunch, Inspire Breakfast Northwest, which we are aligning with our fiscal sponsor First 5 Fundamental's Inspire Breakfast. The event is an opportunity to create space for cross-sector early childhood system partners to come together to strengthen relationships, review emergent early childhood data, inspire momentum around a collective purpose, and continue to build support for investment in the local/regional early learning network infrastructure. We aim to prioritize engagement with policymakers and our region's legislators in strategic preparation for the 2025 legislative session. We have secured Kristin Wiggins as the regional keynote.

**Catalyst grant project coordination:** We continue to work toward a regional early learning strategic plan that is co-designed by cross-sector early learning partners across our region. We are working closely with our WA STEM Network partners to make progress on three output areas of the project: early learning strategic planning in alignment with the Early Learning Coordination Plan (ELCP), building early learning business champions, and supporting an advocacy campaign in preparation for the upcoming legislative session. Our primary focus is to ensure existing efforts are coordinated.

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### Peninsula Early Learning Coalition

For more information, please contact: Elisia Anderson, [elisiaf\\_fstep@olypen.com](mailto:elisiaf_fstep@olypen.com)

No updates to share at this time.

### Pierce County Early Childhood Network

For more information please contact: Muriel Herrera-Velasquez, [muriel@first5fundamentals.org](mailto:muriel@first5fundamentals.org)

No updates to share at this time.

### Southeast (SEELC)

For more information, please contact: Brittany Hartikainen, [brittany@bh-consulting.org](mailto:brittany@bh-consulting.org)

No updates to share at this time.

### Southwest Washington Early Learning (SWEL)

For more information please contact: Debbie Ham, [Debbie.ham@selfwa.org](mailto:Debbie.ham@selfwa.org)

We have been working to complete the Living Wage conversations and collecting data in our region. We continue to increase the number of children registered with the Imagination Library. The work with ECCS and the development of a resource and navigation portal for families is moving forward, we have begun populating data. We continue to get Vroom resources and information out to our communities, through a wide variety of partners, including medical providers.

### Visions for Early Learning, West Central

For more information, please contact: Sheila Kavanaugh, [kav.consulting231@gmail.com](mailto:kav.consulting231@gmail.com)

#### WCFC Living Wage Proviso:

Informed by the data landscape analysis as well as similar work being done within the region, Visions for Early Learning (VEL) determined to focus efforts to host listening sessions in Lewis County. In partnership with the Lewis County Early Learning Coalition (LCELC), four successful listening sessions were held in late February at the Centralia College:

- a. Spanish speaking providers
- b. English speaking providers
- c. Spanish speaking parents/caregivers
- d. English speaking parents/caregivers

#### WA STEM/Regional Catalyst:

The workgroup is adopting the existing criteria established from the Department of Commerce's Family-Friendly Workplace program to inform identifying regional family-friendly workplace champions. Members of the workgroup participated in a conversation facilitated by Ready Nation with employers, business leaders, and community partners. The discussion included perspective on how child care access, or lack thereof, impacts your workforce, community, family, and the economy.

The group is also partnering with the Pacific County Child Care Alliance (PCCCA). They are currently hosting listening sessions with parents, providers, and employers in their community. Their findings will help inform the regional strategic plan.

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### **Legislative Update:**

WCFC has endorsed several House and Senate bills this session that align with its three priority areas. VEL is actively engaged in WCFC's Policy and Advocacy Visioning workgroup, collaborating to strategically advance the network's mission of advocating for children, families, and early learning professionals.

Additionally, VEL is partnering with our WA STEM regional partner and other community-based organizations to host a legislative breakfast event this fall tentatively scheduled for Thursday, October 17th at Centralia College. This initiative arose from the recognition of the need for ongoing engagement with legislators outside of session to ensure they are continually informed about critical advocacy efforts on behalf of families accessing care and the many barriers faced by child care providers. The event aims to showcase the involvement of regional and local early learning coalitions in advocating for universal early learning opportunities (including child care) and living wages for providers, highlighting the importance and impact of a coordinated early learning network infrastructure.

### **Early Comprehensive Childhood Systems (ECCS)/Coordinated Access:**

The Grays Harbor Early Learning (GHLE) coalition's coordinated access workgroup is currently evaluating various budgeting models that reflect costs to implement and maintain a resource navigation system, which may include additional features such as a family resources navigator. Recently, the group became aware of a community resource guide maintained by the Aberdeen School District. The GHLE coordinated access team is reviewing this guide to identify resources to integrate into their resource database. Additionally, the group is considering adopting the Open Eligibility taxonomy to enhance their resource categorization. We are currently aligning existing categorized topic areas with those in the Open Eligibility taxonomy. This process will be followed by the establishment of a more detailed subcategory list using parent terms from Open Eligibility.

In terms of technology, I have been testing the integration between Airtable and JotForm. However, it appears that JotForm cannot integrate data into linked Airtable fields, which may require exploring alternative solutions or workflows being mindful of the lack of current capacity.

Meanwhile, the Early Learning Coalition of Mason County's coordinated access workgroup is mapping resources directly from the Mason County Public Health Department's most recent community resource guide to Help Me Grow essential services categories. The resources were exchanged with Help Me Grow. The coalition aims to enhance the Help Me Grow directory to include more services and programs offered to families in Mason County.

**WCFC Updates – For more information please contact: [info@washingtoncfc.org](mailto:info@washingtoncfc.org)**

**WCFC State Updates**

**For more information please contact: Rachel Hall, WCFC State Lead,  
[rachelh@first5fundamentals.org](mailto:rachelh@first5fundamentals.org)**

Living Wage Proviso

WCFC's role is to support and inform the work of DCYF's project to create an implementation plan to expand access to Washington's early care and education system and provide a living wage to its workforce. Over the past couple of months, our Network has:

- Identified and analyzed existing local data from families about access to affordable child care and early education and from child care providers about wages and benefits since 2020. Our goal is to avoid duplication of activities and leverage data to which we already have access.
- Hosted listening sessions throughout the WCFC Network, and administered an online survey, to capture perspectives from families with children B-12, and child care providers.

Our next step is to review, compile, and summarize all the survey data. There will be multiple opportunities to hear about what we learned. Stay tuned for meeting dates and registration information.

New Workgroup – Diaper Bank

WCFC is hosting a new monthly Diaper Bank conversation on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. Ongoing topics of interest for this group include sharing current best thinking/best practices, funding opportunities, sustainability, accessing discounted or free supplies, and diaper bank operations. [Contact Rachel Hall](#) to join - all are welcome!

WCFC Learning Networks – Join us!

WCFC is organized around statewide Learning Networks. The purpose of these teams is to foster learning and connections across the state, with particular focus in each of the component areas below. Participation is open to anyone, including state and local partners who are interested in shared learning and activities. For meeting schedules, and to get in touch with Learning Network Leads, please visit our website at [washingtoncfc.org/learning-networks](http://washingtoncfc.org/learning-networks)

- Child Care Voice
- Data
- Family Voice & Resource Access
- Health Provider Voice
- Policy & Advocacy

### WCFC Leadership Team Retreat & Structural Changes

The WCFC Leadership team composed of Regional Leads and State Network Leads met in early March to connect with one another, reflect on our current Network structure, and strategize what is needed from a Network of early childhood coalitions, today. We are in the process of finalizing updates to our Network structure based on our retreat, that we think will improve the integration and elevation of local community voice, and re-center the Regional Coalitions and the power that lies within our local communities. More to come!