



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

**Early Learning Advisory Council
(ELAC)
2021 Annual Reflection**

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INTRODUCTION

The Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) was created in 2007 by legislature. “The council was established to advise the department on statewide early learning issues that contribute to the ongoing efforts of building a comprehensive system of quality early learning programs and services for Washington’s young children and families”. Each year ELAC members meet in person to “work in conjunction with the Department of Early Learning (now the Department of Children, Youth and Families) to assist in policy development and implementation that assist the department in promoting alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives, and resources, ensuring school readiness” (ESHB 1719). ELAC includes diverse representation from public, nonprofit and for-profit entities. The members reflect regional, racial and cultural diversity to represent the needs of all children and families in Washington State. Membership also includes a Regional Advisor from each of the 10 Early Learning Regional Coalitions who were invited to participate by the agency in 2013.

ELAC is committed to advancing racial equity in early childhood by engaging communities of color impacted by programs, policies and practices, identifying and using data to highlight what works best, building partnerships and creating space for open dialogue. Using a racial equity lens, the Executive Committee worked with the Agency to develop a set of questions to use in gathering suggested ELAC meeting agenda topics:

- Is this policy, decision or practice good for kids, families and early learning educators of color?
- Do some kids, families and early learning educators benefit more or less than others?
- Do kids, families and early learning educators of color have access, and if not, why?
- What data and information is missing?
- Are there any unintended consequences?

These questions provide information on the benefits of, and objectives for the discussion and the nature of the topic, such as its urgency and relevance to the ELAC Work Plan.

In preparation for 2021, ELAC agreed upon a list of potential work plan items for the year with topics including but not limited to: *Integrated Pre-K, Department of Health programs, Preschool Development Grant, DCYF Leadership updates*, and more. Throughout the year ELAC had a total of six virtual meetings provide input and guidance on the topics listed previously. This reflection document serves as a summary of the early learning issues and topics on which ELAC provided feedback and guidance to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) throughout 2021, and the changes that were a direct result of this work.

MEMBERSHIP

ELAC's membership requirements were updated with the passage of the Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA). The list below reflects these new representation requirements as of July 2021

Required Representation in Order to Fulfill ELAC's Purpose

<u>ELAC SEAT</u>	<u>ELAC SEAT</u>	<u>ELAC SEAT</u>	<u>ELAC SEAT</u>	<u>ELAC SEAT</u>
Department of Commerce	Parent serving on DCYF's Parent Advisory Group (PAG)	The Washington State Women's Commission established under chapter 43.119 RCW	Organization advocating for expanded learning opportunities and school-age child care programs	An infant or early childhood mental health expert
Department of Health	Parent serving on DCYF's Parent Advisory Group (PAG)	The Washington State Office of Equity established under chapter 43.06D RCW	Largest union representing child care providers	Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregiver
Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC)	Private-Public Partnership created in RCW 43.216.065	Sovereign Tribal Government	Head Start, Early Head Start, or Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program	Representative from Prenatal to Three Services
Military spouse liaison created within the Department of Veterans Affairs under RCW 43.60A.245	Developmental Disabilities Community representing children and families involved in part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	Sovereign Tribal Government – Tribal ECEAP or Head Start Program (IPEL)	Educational Service Districts	A pediatrician
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)	Developmental Disabilities Community representing children and families involved in part B of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	Washington Federation of Independent Schools (WFIS)	A provider responsible for programs under section 619 of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	Representative of the statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Organization
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)	Early Learning Regional Coalition	Washington Library Association	State agency responsible for part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	
House of Representatives – Republican	Early Learning Regional Coalition	Statewide Advocacy Coalition of Organizations that focuses on Early Learning	Representative of the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program	
House of Representatives – Democrat	The Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs established under chapter 43.117 RCW	Association representing statewide business interests	Representative of licensed family home providers	
Senate – Republican	The Washington State Commission on African American Affairs established under chapter 43.113 RCW	Regional business coalition	Representative of child care centers	
Senate – Democrat	The Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs established under chapter 43.115 RCW	Advocacy organization for immigrants and refugees	Representative from the Home Visiting Advisory Committee established in RCW 43.216.130	

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS AND ESSENTIAL RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS

The following commitments guide the expectations of every person involved with the council and the conduct of all ELAC business:

Community Agreements

ELAC is dedicated to ensuring a safe environment where quality deliberations take place by allowing every individual the opportunity to be heard without censorship or judgement. All input and questions are encouraged and welcomed. ELAC is committed to listening to the voices of those gathered to work together to provide whole child outcomes for the families of Washington State. We are responsible for each other's learning. In order to support this process, all participants must agree to be:

- *Present*
- *Brave*
- *Respectful*
- *Forward Thinking*
- *Committed to the WHY? the WHAT? And the HOW?*
- *Truthful*
- *An Active Listener*
- *Open*
- *A Communication Conduit to Various Communities*
- *Engaged*
- *Comfortable with Messy Conversations*
- *An Advocate for and Agent of Change*
- *Solution Focused*

Essential Racial Equity Questions

ELAC is committed to advancing racial equity in early childhood by engaging communities of color impacted by programs, policies and practices; identifying and using data to highlight what works best; building partnerships and creating space for open dialogue. The council has adopted the following questions to reflect upon when providing feedback to the agency: The following principles and commitments will guide the expectations of every person involved in ELAC:

- *Is this policy, decision or practice good for kids, families and early learning educators of color?*
- *Do some kids, families and early learning educators benefit more or less than others?*
- *Do kids, families and early learning educators of color have access, and if not, why?*
- *What data and information is missing?*
- *Are there any unintended consequences?*

2021 AGENDA TOPICS DISCUSSED

Preschool Development Grant

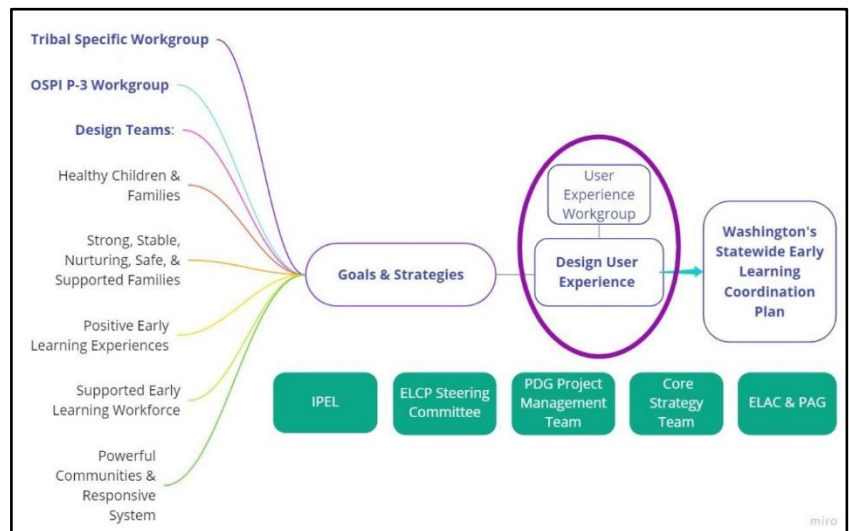
Updates:

- During the February meeting, the PDG team provided updates on outreach efforts as well as comments from the federal project team.
- During the March meeting, the PDG team provided an update on the Statewide Needs Assessment and the Statewide Early Learning Coordination Plan as well as end of year activities for the Initial Grant and the Renewal Grant.

Agency Asks of Membership

- During the June meeting, members received program updates and were asked to provide input on user experience for Washington's Statewide Early Learning Coordination Plan by answering the following:
 - *When thinking about the most useful online tool/website/document you've ever used: What were the characteristics that stood out to you? What made it so useable and impactful? Must haves or must not haves?*

Member Recommendations



Preschool Development Grant
<i>When thinking about the most useful online tool/website/document you've ever used: What were the characteristics that stood out to you? What made it so useable and impactful? Must haves or must not haves?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I saw a website that had the opening page layout displayed like a little cartoon community. It may sound childish, but it was really easy to know which building to click on for different types of information. • Good search engines. • Must have interaction portal and searchable words to find topic • Simple lines with hyperlinks • Stories that are in other languages besides English • Glossary of terms • Updates need to be bulleted links "above the fold" - not buried and easy to find (above the fold refers to newspaper headlines) • Able to be usable on a mobile device • Have access to information, and not have a link within a link. Have as much information on pages or one link as possible. • Use of picture graphics to click on along with words to help with user experience. • I think pre-recorded videos explaining new and old policies and how they affect the program would be really helpful, especially in multiple languages. Videos are really helpful, to hear someone explaining changes in their tone of voice. • I think we also need to be careful to not fetishize cultures and linguistics—I think there's a fine line between acknowledging the differences in our cultures and fetishizing. • I hope the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ+) Commission can provide input into language as well - especially as we speak about intersectionality. • Please include the organizations you are working with in the notes on this presentation. • The language on the asset side is hard to understand • This starts to sound like an alignment project of the policies and cultural awareness. • If these pages can be broken down into smaller segments to make it easier for the reader. • Listserv or reminder emails of changes or updates • A newsletter that is also archived so one can catch up at their own pace. • A simple PowerPoint would be really nice to have to give an overview and an easy way to get to documents and a PowerPoint in other languages (i.e. Spanish)

Agency Response

The PDG team shared the following update in response to the feedback received during the June meeting:

- We've reviewed the Early Learning Coordination Plan (ELCP) for asset-based language as we discussed at the June ELAC meeting. We worked closely with partners with lived experience to ensure the language we use is not only appropriate, but also strengths-based. Edits have been made based on these conversations and a final document is in the works.
- We've developed a creative brief that outlines everything we've learning about what the ECLP both should and should not be in order to be truly useable by communities. This document will be used to inform the creation of a variety of products that will be available to support the implementation of the strategies in the ELCP. Thank all of you who attended and shared your thoughts on this topic!

During the December meeting, the PDG team shared an update on the status of the ongoing work:

The Early Learning Coordination Plan (ELCP) Steering Committee (formally referred to as the Early Learning Strategic Plan Steering Committee) is meeting regularly again. The committee met in October and will meet again in early December, with plans to meet virtually approximately every six (6) weeks over the next 9 months. Membership has shifted slightly as many folks have moved on to different roles since we began in June 2019. In those instances, the previous member identified the best replacement for their spot on the committee. We continue to have strong ELAC representation on the ELCP Steering Committee, with approximately six (6) members from the committee also serving on ELAC.

Progress is also being made on completing a full version of the Early Learning Coordination Plan. This document being created can serve as a shared roadmap and practical resource for Washington state's early learning system. A writer and a designer have been contracted and we expect a final version early in 2022. This version will include the Goals and Strategies written by Design Teams in 2020 as well as incorporating the Vision and Values, data from the Washington State Needs Assessment, background on how the ELCP was created a call to action and more.

Below is a process map that helps provide a visual of what the ELCP will be:

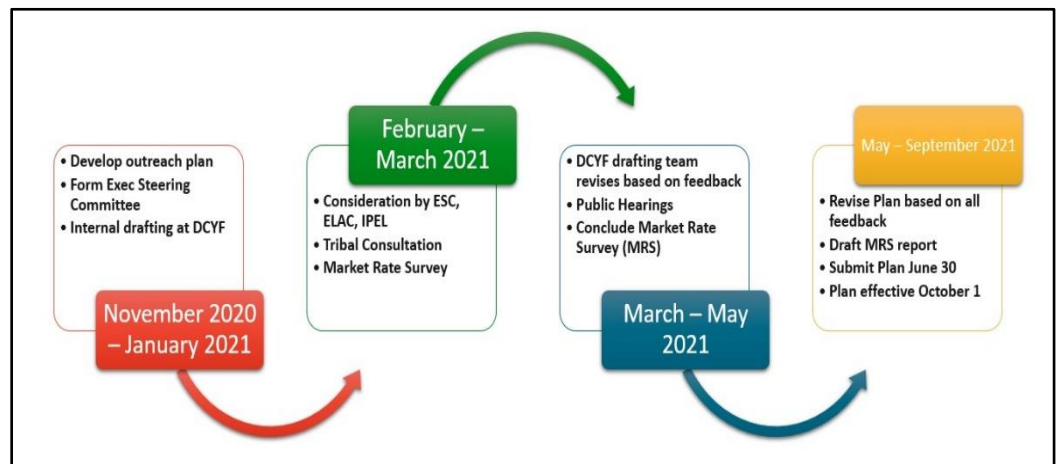


Agency Asks of Membership

During the March meeting, members received an overview and provided feedback on the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Plan. Members were asked to review specific sections of the plan and provide targeted feedback.

Member Recommendations

In addition to participating in a large group discussion to share thoughts and questions, members were asked to submit written [feedback here](#).



Agency Response

Member feedback was included with input from other outreach efforts, and was incorporated into the review and revision process. DCYF submitted the [Draft CCDF Plan](#) on June 1, 2021.

Integrated Pre-K (IPK)

Agency Asks of Membership

During the March meeting, ELAC received an update on DCYF's work in Integrated Pre-K. Per [Directive of the Governor 20-01](#), DCYF has been directed to collaborate with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to identify near-term administrative efficiencies and longer-term strategies to improve the alignment and integration of high-quality early learning programs administered by both agencies. The creation of IPK is a result the Governor's directive. DCYF's IPK team shared project status and goals with the group and asked ELAC to provide input on what they should consider during their planning phase.

Washington Pre-K Landscape

Building on a Strong Foundation: Early Achievers, ECEAP & Head Start

What We Know

- 14,177 children served in ECEAP
- 8,652 children served in Head Start
- 18,256 children receiving services through IDEA Part B, Section 619
- 49.7% of students with disabilities not in a regular early learning program
- Preschool offered in mixed-delivery system
- 51.5% incoming K students ready according to WaKIDS
- 139,000 children not enrolled in any early learning program

Funding Streams

- ECEAP-state funded Pre-K for 3 & 4 year olds
- IDEA, Part B – developmental preschool in school districts serving students with IEP's
- Transitional Kindergarten – an OSPI Kindergarten program for 4 year olds
- Head Start – federally funded Pre-K for 3 & 4 year olds
- WCCC – childcare subsidy offered for working parents and student parents
- Other (grants/donations/private pay)

Partners

- Tribal Nations
- ECEAP
- ESDs
- School Districts
- Childcare Aware of WA
- DSHS
- Community Based Providers
- Head Start
- Advocacy Groups: WSA, Rural Alliance & Arc of King County

Member Recommendations

Members asked a variety of questions to gain a better understanding of the project, and shared feedback during a large group discussion. Notes from the large group discussion and feedback that was shared can be found [here](#).

While a wide range of input was shared, a common theme was concern from Providers that such a program would have unintended negative consequences for the Early Learning Providers in Washington State. Members asked many questions to gain a better understanding of IPK, and the questions that were not answered during the meeting were compiled for follow-up from the Agency to serve as a next step in the ongoing conversation between DCYF and Providers.

Agency Response

After the March meeting, ELAC was provided with a document addressing all the outstanding questions from the large group discussion. This document can be [found here](#). The overall feedback received during the March discussion, as well as subsequent input from follow-up surveys, were added to the considerations as DCYF developed and revised IPK Report.

The following update was shared with Members in December 2021:

In the months following the discussions with stakeholders, DCYF and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) worked closely together to address partner and stakeholder feedback related to the IPK Report. A revised report was sent to various groups, including ELAC and Provider Supports committees, along with a survey for feedback on November 17 & 18. The survey feedback window closed on Wednesday, November 24. The Agencies are working closely together to review this new feedback and prepare the final report for submission to the Governor's Office. We anticipate moving forward with identified recommendations early in the new year and begin designing a work plan in collaboration with OSPI for a second report required by the legislature, due September 1, 2022. We anticipate further engagement with ELAC and Provider Supports as we move into Phase Two of this work.

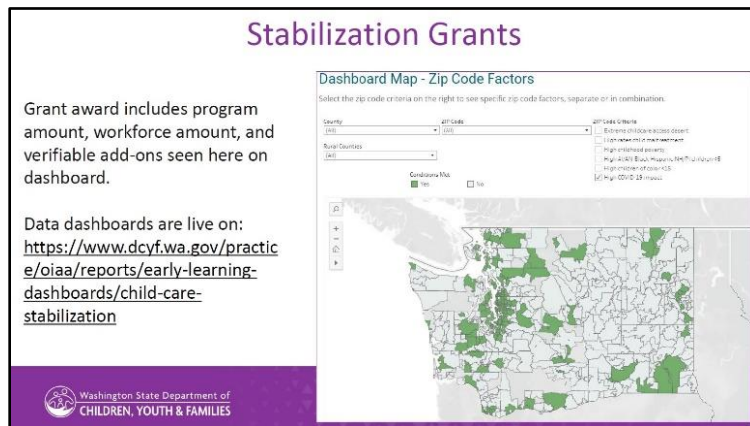
The final report can be found on the [DCYF Website here](#).

Stabilization Grants and Fair Start for Kids Act Updates

Agency Asks of Membership

During the June meeting, ELAC received an update on the Stabilization Grants funded by the Federal American Recovery Plan Act. Members received an overview of eligibility and were asked to weigh in on DCYF's engagement strategy by discussing the following questions:

- *Who is missing from DCYF's initial engagement strategy?*
- *How can this group help DCYF engage others in a meaningful way?*



Member Recommendations

ELAC participated in a large group discussion to ask questions and provide feedback on the engagement strategies, which can be found [here](#).

Agency Response

After further public engagement on strategies and roll-out, DCYF launched the Child Care Stabilization Grant application on the [DCYF website here](#).

DCYF Portable Background Checks

Agency Asks of Membership

During the June meeting, ELAC received information on the transition to a new fingerprint vendor and members had the opportunity to provide input. After receiving an overview of the new vendor, members were asked to weigh in on the following questions:

- *Tell us your concerns or thoughts about the comparison between the current and proposed vendor?*
- *Do you have other suggestions for DCYF about how to transition applicants to the proposed vendor?*

Member Recommendations

Members provided feedback in a large group discussion, as well as submitting written feedback. Details on what was shared can be [found here](#). Overall, members were supportive of the vendor switch, but shared that this update does not address the primary challenges that Providers are experiencing when it comes to Background Checks. Overall, member feedback has been consistently focused on the long turnaround time in processing background checks, which has caused disruption in their hiring processes. This, as well as feedback regarding the vendor change, were both shared during the discussion.

Agency Response

During the August meeting, the Portable Background Check team addressed outstanding questions from the June discussion via written [update here](#). The team shared this in regards to the out-of-scope feedback on turnaround times:

All of the suggestions related to improving processes and turnaround times relate to technological barriers, which we continue to look for solutions. We have some ideas that we cannot share at this time, but we have not lost sight of these pain points and they are a priority to us as well. An update will be shared when available.

DCYF followed up by returning to ELAC for the October meeting to provide information on the updated rules for background checks, share an [FAQ Doc](#), and answer questions from members. They provided follow-up to the outstanding questions and comments from this discussion via written update during the December meeting, which can be [found here](#). This conversation will continue into 2022 as technological barriers are addressed.

Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA) and ELAC

Agency Asks of Membership

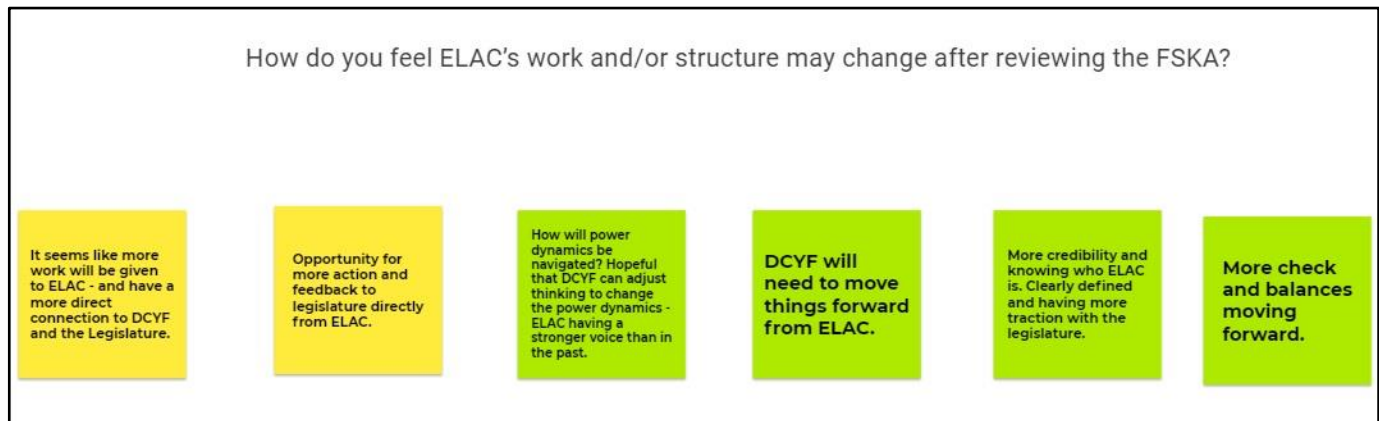
During the August meeting, ELAC received an overview of Section 104 of the recently passed [Fair Start for Kids Act](#) (FSKA), which includes changes and added deliverables to the ongoing work of ELAC, including the following:

"The council shall work in conjunction with the department to...Provide recommendations annually to the governor and the legislature, beginning August 31, 2022, regarding the phased implementation of strategies and priorities identified in section 102 of this act"

Members were asked to share their thoughts on potential changes to the structure and work of the Council moving forward.

Member Recommendations

Members participated in small breakout groups to provide feedback on potential changes to ELAC, and continued the conversation in a large group to debrief. Notes on the input shared can be [found here](#).



Agency Response

The Community Engagement team and DCYF Program staff are committed to ongoing collaboration and partnership with ELAC to ensure the Council has the information, resources and support they need in order to meet the new directives. The added deliverables associated with FSKA have been incorporated into the 2022 Work Plan and the Agency will continue to support any changes or adjustments needed.

FSKA Temporary Licensing Subcommittee

Agency Asks of Membership

During the Joint ELAC & Provider Supports October meeting, Members were presented with the DCYF plan for convening and facilitating the FSKA Temporary Licensing Subcommittee.

Member Recommendations

Members expressed concern and disappointment with DCYF's decision to take the lead on convening and planning the Temporary Licensing Subcommittee. Questions were raised regarding convening authority, and concerns were shared over trust and transparency. Detailed notes on the discussion and member feedback can be [found here](#). After a large group discussion where comments and concerns were shared, the decision was made to take a step back, have the Executive Committee connect with internal staff and mutually decide on next steps. After this took place, the following update was provided:

In response to feedback received during the joint meeting on October 5, the ELAC Executive Committee recently met with members of the DCYF Licensing team to further discuss the scope and next steps in regards to the Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA) Temporary Licensing Subcommittee. To date, the following framework has been confirmed:

- **Subcommittee Formation**
 - *ELAC will extend an open invitation to Provider Supports Subcommittee members who wish to participate. An open invitation to participate or observe the work of the subcommittee will also be sent to DCYF's provider distribution lists by January 1, 2022.*
 - *DCYF's Licensing Division will participate on the subcommittee without voting Parent input will be provided as needed by the Parent Advisory Group (PAG)*
- **Subcommittee Meetings**
 - *Once formed, the subcommittee will meet every three to four weeks for two to three hours through 2022. Timeline will be shared once finalized.*
 - *All meetings will be open to the public, with meeting details posted on the DCYF website*
 - *The ELAC Executive Committee will lead and facilitate the initial meeting with the support of the Community Engagement Team. After that, two subcommittee members will be appointed to act*

as leads and work with the support of Community Engagement to build agendas and track work plan progress for the remainder of the work

- **Subcommittee Updates and Final Recommendations**
 - ELAC will receive verbal and written updates throughout the year as the work progresses. The draft final recommendations will be shared with ELAC during the October 2022 meeting.
 - ELAC will add any recommendations they feel necessary to include in the ELAC FSKA Report to the legislature in 2023.

Agency Response

The FSKA Temporary Licensing Subcommittee proceeded as described in the above communication. ELAC will receive periodic updates on the work of the subcommittee via written and verbal updates throughout 2022.

OIAA Early Learning Data, Analysis and Reporting

Agency Asks of Membership

During the October and December meetings, Members received an overview and provided feedback on data, analyses, and reporting related to FSKA and federal childcare stabilization from the Office of Innovation, Alignment and Accountability (OIAA). To provide preparation and support for FSKA implementation, ELAC added a data-focused session as a standing agenda item for ELAC meetings through 2022. The purpose of these consistent data reports is to get the data right for both DCYF dashboards and provide ELAC with the data they need for the recommendation report.

During the October meeting, Members were asked to address the following:

Please share your feedback on the following question for each objective listed below:

- *What are the most important pieces of this objective we should keep in mind as we develop indicators (measures) of success?*

Objectives:

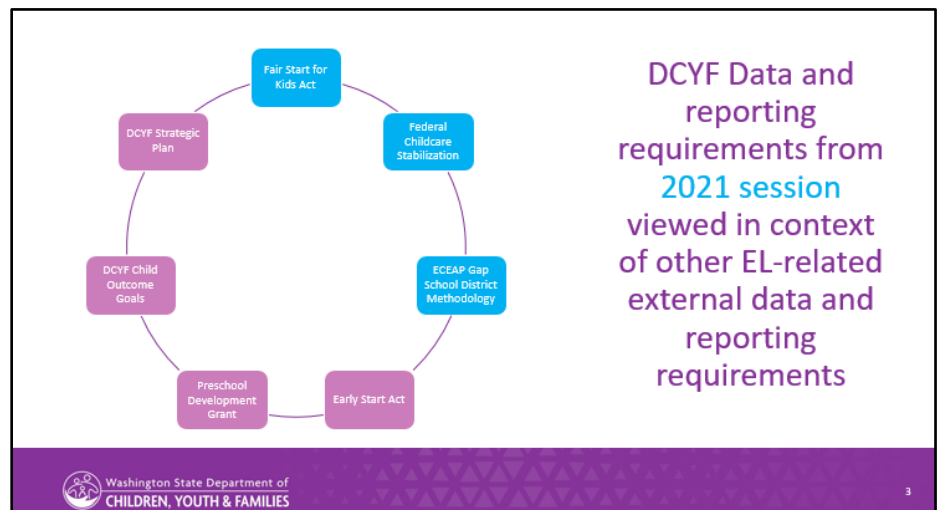
- *Advance racial equity and strengthen families by recognizing and responding to the growing diversity of our state's population.*
- *Promote access to affordable, high quality child care and early learning opportunities for all families, paying particular attention to the needs of rural and other underserved communities.*
- *Promote kindergarten readiness by enhancing child development, including development of social-emotional skills.*
- *Supporting working parents as well as stabilizing and supporting child care and early learning workforce.*

Member Recommendations

Members engaged in a large group discussion and provided both written and verbal feedback on the objectives. A full write up of the input can be [found here](#).

Agency Response

Feedback from the October meeting was incorporated into the December data share update as DCYF continues to gather data that has been identified by Members as important and supportive of their work to draft the FSKA recommendation report. This will continue as an ongoing discussion throughout 2022 as the Agency and the Council work in partnership to fulfill the expectations of FSKA.



UPDATES

In addition to advising the Agency on the topics above, ELAC also received occasional updates from DCYF programs and legislative work. Update topics included the following:

- 2021 Legislative Session
- FSKA Implementation
- COVID Response
- Department of Health Immunization Update
- Strengthening Families Child Abuse Awareness Campaign
- Dual Licensing Pilot Program
- Early Achievers

For questions or comments, please email the Community Engagement team at dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov.