



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Provider Supports Subcommittee of the Early Learning Advisory Council 2021 Annual Reflection

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Introduction

The Provider Supports Advisory Subcommittee of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) began meeting in early 2020. Provider Supports is comprised of two previously existing advisory groups – the Licensed Center Advisory and the Early Achievers Review Subcommittees of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC). These groups were combined as part of the ongoing work in developing and refining the DCYF Stakeholder Advisory Mechanism and is the first step in creating a comprehensive advisory group to represent the diverse voices, roles and interests within the Provider Supports arena. Members are representatives of Washington's regional, racial, and cultural diversity and have made a commitment to racial equity and consider cultural and linguistic responsiveness as key aspects of their work. The expectations and representation of the Provider Supports Subcommittee continues to expand to meet the diverse needs and interest encompassed within the scope of DCYF, as well as the changing directives of ELAC.

In preparation for 2021, Provider Supports agreed upon a list of potential work plan items for the year with topics including but not limited to: *Integrated Pre-K, Early Achievers, Background Checks, Professional Development*, and more. Throughout the year, Provider Supports had a total of six virtual meetings, including two Joint meeting with the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC), to 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 Provider Supports 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.

Purpose Statement and Community Agreements

Purpose Statement

In order to provide input on licensing and subsidy rules and regulations, the Provider Supports Subcommittee of ELAC will:

- Advise ELAC and DCYF regarding licensed child care
- Represent and support the needs of licensed child cares
- Deliberate and influence state/local policies and programs
- Actively support state/local licensed child care communications
- Commit to open dialogue regarding issues affecting our children
- Actively engage to preserve the viability, integrity, quality and educational standards needed for Washington's early learning centers and children

Community Agreements

Provider Supports Subcommittee of 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. Provider Supports Subcommittee of 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:

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

Essential Racial Equity Questions

ELAC and the Provider Supports Subcommittee of ELAC are 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 or its subcommittees:

- *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 Discussion Topics

Community Based Training Pilot

Agency Asks of Membership

During the February meeting, members were given an overview and provided feedback on the development and implementation of a Community-Based Training option to meet education requirements for licensing. They were asked to participate in a group discussion to address the following questions:

- *Does this pilot design advance racial equity?*
- *What do you like about the approach?*
- *What do you think should be revised?*
- *What do you think is missing from the design?*

Member Recommendations

Members engaged in a large group conversation and Q&A session to address the questions asked. A summary of this conversation can be [found here](#).

Agency Response

DCYF's Professional Development team created a summary of feedback received during their engagement strategies, including conversations with Provider Supports. You can view the full feedback report [online here](#).



Early Achievers

Provider Supports members were briefed on Early Achievers throughout the year, including updates in February, June, April and December. Topics included Early Achievers revisions, continuous Quality Improvement and Tribal participation in Early Achievers.

Agency Asks of Membership

During the April meeting, members received an update on Early Achievers Continuous Quality Improvement engagement, and were asked to weigh in on the following:

- *Help us prioritize our next steps. What is most important to you to help you feel prepared for the transition to the new Early Achievers?*

Member Recommendations

Members engaged in a large group discussion and shared their feedback via online survey. A summary of feedback provided can be [found here](#).

Agency Response

The Early Achievers team continued the conversation at the following meeting in June, and continues to engage with Provider Supports on a regular basis to provide updates and ask for guidance.

Integrated Pre-K

Agency Asks of Membership

During the April meeting, Members 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 Provider Supports to provide input on what they should consider during their planning phase

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 during the discussion, and the questions that were not answered during the meeting were collected for follow-up from the Agency to serve as a next step in the ongoing conversation between DCYF and Providers. These outstanding questions, along with the member feedback, were compiled with feedback and questions from ELAC, who had a similar conversation and shared similar concerns with the IPK team.

Agency Response

After the April meeting, Provider Supports 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 April 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](#).

Preschool Development Grant (PDG)

Agency Asks of Membership

- During the joint ELAC and Provider Supports meeting on June 1, 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

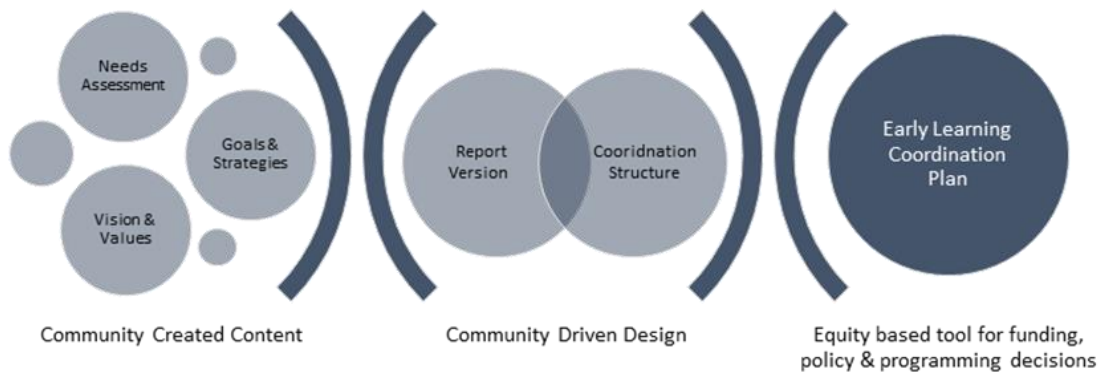
The PDG team shared the following update in response to the feedback received during the June meeting:

- We've reviewed the Early Learning Coordination Plan (ELCP) for asset-based language as we discussed at the June 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 ELCP 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!

The PDG team shared an additional update in December:

- Progress is 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:



Stabilization Grants and Fair Start Act Updates

Agency Asks of Membership

During the June meeting, Provider Supports 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

Members 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, Members 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 for the October joint meeting with ELAC 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) Temporary Licensed 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 ELAC 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, 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 invitation to any Provider Supports Subcommittee member who wishes to participate by January 1, 2022*
 - *Next, an open invitation to participate or observe the work of the temporary subcommittee will be sent to DCYF's provider distribution lists by January 1, 2022*
 - *DCYF's Licensing Division will participate on the subcommittee without voting authority.*
 - *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*
- **Subcommittee Updates and Final Recommendations**
 - *Provider Supports will receive written updates and progress reports on the work of the subcommittee via the feedback loop throughout 2022*

Agency Response

The FSKA Temporary Licensing Subcommittee proceeded as described in the above communication. Provider Supports members have received an invitation to participate in the Temporary Licensing Subcommittee, and will receive regular written updates and progress reports via the feedback loop throughout the upcoming year.

Grants and Rate Enhancements Overview

Agency Asks of Membership

During the December meeting, Provider Supports were provided with an overview of Early Childhood Equity Grants and were asked to provide feedback on the grants process by addressing the following questions:

- Which of DCYF's supports are the most helpful?
- What are the needs that have not been met with prior grants?
- What can DCYF do to improve communication during future grant development and distribution cycles?

Member Recommendations

Member feedback can be found in the graph on the right.

Agency Response

DCYF has taken this feedback into account as they continue to develop the stakeholder engagement plan for the next round of grants. They will be engaging with Provider Supports throughout 2022 to provide updates and share opportunities for input. Grant applications will be available starting in Spring 2022.

Conversation with DCYF Leadership

Agency Asks of Membership

During the April meeting, DCYF Chief of Staff Frank Ordway engaged in an open discussion with members, answered questions and asked members to share their thoughts and feedback for DCYF Leadership.

Member Recommendations

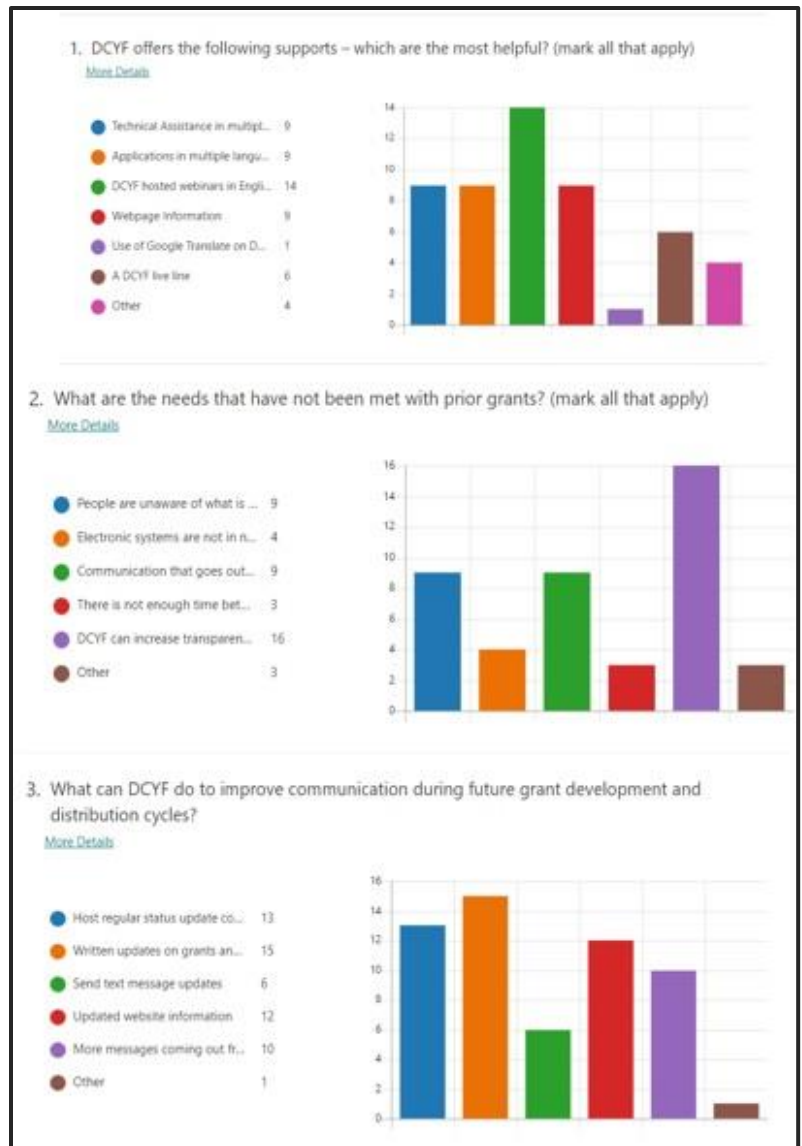
Members engaged in an informal large group discussion where they shared input on a variety of topics, including:

- The need for more transparency, communication and collaboration from DCYF
- More integration and cohesion between the different programs and divisions with DCYF
- More proactive and sharable content, better prioritization of info being shared
- Provider Supports should be the primary group to provide Provider input in decision-making rather than temporary work groups.

A more detailed write-up of what was shared can be [found here](#).

Agency Response:

Members received the following written update from DCYF Chief of Staff Frank Ordway during the June 1 meeting:



As part of our response to this meeting and other input from providers, we have established a new internal Early Learning Strategy table. We are striving to have everyone who helps support providers in one regular meeting to ensure coordination and consistency in our work. We want you, as providers, to be engaged and heard in a consistent and effective manner and that your experience with DCYF staff is consistent.

This new group includes representatives of Provider Supports, Licensing, ECEAP, Early Achievers, Contracts, Community Engagement, Finance, Government Affairs, Communications and Executive Leadership. We are striving to coordinate policy consideration, communications, implementation and other efforts that impact all of you. It will take a bit as this comes together for you to see real results, but I hope you get to look back on 2021 as a year of improvement in the consistency of your experience with us.

We also discussed the option of having Provider Supports play the role established in the Fair Start Act for a Licensing subcommittee. Members of this committee supported the idea so we will go forward with this group being where we do the work outlined in the Act and add the members that are required but currently not represented here.

We also discussed how we review and propose WAC to be considered for improvement or elimination. I am talking with our various policy teams see how we might do this across the agency. I hope to have a proposal for you to react to before the next meeting so it can be on the agenda.

I have not forgotten about the proposal of using surveys for rapid feedback for host of reasons. We are currently hiring a new Communications Director and this duty will be part of their new job requirements.

UPDATES

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

- 2021 Legislative Session
- Fair Start for Kids Act Implementation
- DCYF Oversight Board
- Child Care Provider Grants & Billing
- DCYF Integrated Equity and Strategic Plan
- DCYF Racial Equity and Social Justice
- In-Person Monitoring Visits

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