

# NEW MEXICO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE DEPARTMENT TRANSITION COMMITTEE

*Final Report and 18-Month Action Plan*



NEW MEXICO

## **Early Childhood** Education & Care Department

NOVEMBER 2020



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

As co-chairs of the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) Transition Committee, we are delighted to share the group's final report and 18-month action plan, designed to support the state's important work on behalf of families and young children.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2020, we explored New Mexico's significant assets, and we also explored its needs. Ultimately, we identified five overarching priorities, and concluded that to ensure the success of our early childhood system, New Mexico must:

01. *Grow Investments*
02. *Advance a Diverse, Well-Compensated, and Credentialed Workforce*
03. *Increase Quality and Access*
04. *Achieve Equity*
05. *Enhance Authentic Collaboration*

Within this priority framework, the Committee identified 20 key actions that, if taken, will provide ECECD the strong footing required to catapult New Mexico from last in the nation in measures of child well-being to the national model that other states will follow. In just a few short months, the Department is already demonstrating progress toward making ambition a reality, with strong leadership in place alongside the state's most important mandate – preparing the state's young children for success in school and life.

The Department's ultimate success is dependent upon us all. It will require unprecedented collaboration. It will require a sustained commitment to excellence. And, importantly, it will require the resources necessary to meaningfully impact the lives of New Mexico's youngest and most vulnerable residents.

We are deeply grateful to Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky and her team at ECECD and to The Hunt Institute, for helping guide this process. Most importantly, we are grateful to the New Mexico leaders who carved out time during an unprecedented public health crisis to support this work as committee members and to the national experts who contributed their time and expertise to this process.

Now is the time for New Mexico to act with a sense of urgency on behalf of its children. We are honored to have had the opportunity to play a part in advancing this important conversation and are committed to the long-term success of the state's prenatal to age five early childhood system.

**Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales**



**Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver**



**NEW MEXICO: ACTING WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN**

New Mexico is a national treasure. With a richly diverse population, breathtaking landscapes, an abundance of natural resources, and a multicultural history, the state is a much-beloved home to over two million residents – an estimated 231,397 of whom are under the age of eight. Reflecting the state’s diversity, data from the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics (2016)<sup>1</sup> indicates that 55.5% of New Mexico’s estimated 24,692 annual newborn children are Hispanic, 28.2% are white, 11.6% are American Indian, 1.8% are black, and 1.8% are Asian/Pacific Islander.

Young children are among New Mexico’s greatest treasures. However, The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2020 Kids Count Data Book<sup>2</sup> ranks the state 50th in the nation for overall child well-being. This indicates a need for sustained attention to the needs of children and families and the additional fiscal resources necessary to propel the state out of this last-in-the-nation status and to demonstrate how New Mexico treasures its youngest children.

The good news is that the state is acting with a sense of urgency to remedy this situation.

Signed into law by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham on March 14, 2019, Senate Bill 22<sup>3</sup> (now codified as NMSA 1978, § 9-29-1, et seq. [2019]) created a consolidated children’s agency, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) to house and oversee programs for young children previously spread across multiple agencies, thus minimizing their efficiency and coordination.

On January 31, 2020, the New Mexico Senate unanimously confirmed Elizabeth Groginsky as the state’s first Early Childhood Education and Care Cabinet Secretary, paving the way for necessary transition processes to begin.

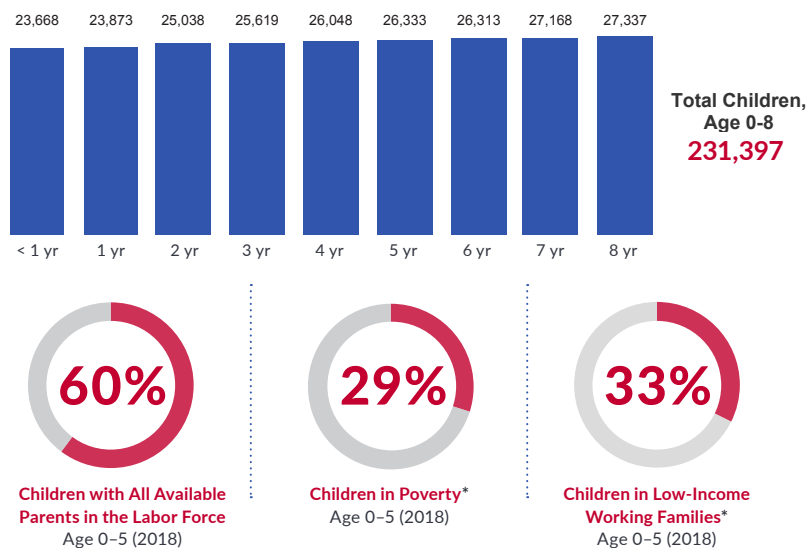
Just a month later, the New Mexico Senate approved creation of the state’s new Early Childhood Trust fund in a unanimous bipartisan vote. The fund, seeded with a \$300 million initial investment, will increase annually from excess oil and gas and federal mineral leasing revenues that will pay out an initial \$20 million in support of ECECD programming beginning in FY22 and then \$30 million or five percent of the Fund each year thereafter.

Launching formally on July 1, 2020, the Early Childhood Education and Care Department is now responsible for administering the following programs and services for families and young children:

- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Assistance
- Child Care Regulatory and Oversight
- Families FIRST (Perinatal Case Management)
- Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C)
- Head Start State Collaboration Office
- Home Visiting
- New Mexico PreK (public school and community-based)

As startup support, a 29-member ECECD Transition Committee co-chaired by Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales and Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver was convened across the spring and summer of 2020. The purpose of the Transition Committee was to identify key priorities to support the Department’s successful launch and initial 18-months of operation.

**FIGURE 1 | NUMBER OF CHILDREN AGE 8 AND YOUNGER, 2018**





## NEW MEXICO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE DEPARTMENT TRANSITION COMMITTEE

### Co-Chairs

- Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales
- Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver

### Elected Members:

- Representative Deborah Armstrong
- Representative Gail Armstrong
- Representative Alonzo Baldonado
- Senator Craig Brandt
- Senator Michael Padilla
- Representative G. Andrés Romero
- Senator Mimi Stewart
- Representative Christine Trujillo

### Appointed Members:

- Jovanna Archuleta, Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Childhood Education and Care, New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department
- Brian Blalock, Secretary, New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department
- Elizabeth Groginsky, Secretary, New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department
- Kathy Kunkel, Former Secretary, New Mexico Department of Health
- Carmen Lopez, Former Deputy Secretary, New Mexico Higher Education Department
- Bill McCamley, Secretary, New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions
- Mariana Padilla, Director and Chair, New Mexico Children's Cabinet
- Dr. David R. Scrase, Secretary, New Mexico Human Services Department
- Dr. Ryan Stewart, Secretary, New Mexico Public Education Department
- Lynn Trujillo, Secretary, New Mexico Department of Indian Affairs

### New Mexico Leaders:

- Rob Black, President and CEO, New Mexico Association of Commerce and Industry
- Steven Gluckstern, Chairman, TeacherCraft and WeAre.Org
- Javier Gonzales, Business Development, Government and Public Affairs, Descartes Labs
- Vince Kadlubek, CEO, Meow Wolf
- Dr. Sam Minner, President, New Mexico Highlands University
- Jeremy Oyenque, Youth and Learning Director, Santa Clara Pueblo
- Dr. Becky Rowley, President, Santa Fe Community College
- Zach Taylor, Director of Santa Fe Programs, Transformational School Leadership

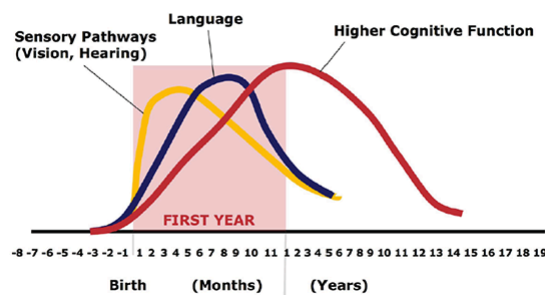
### National Experts:

- Harriet Dichter, Early Childhood Systems Consultant
- BB Otero, President, Otero Strategy Group

**SUPPORTING THE EARLY YEARS IN NEW MEXICO**

The earliest years of life – and those from prenatal to age three, in particular – represent a unique developmental window during which the fundamental architecture of the brain is wired - largely in response to relationships and interactions with family members and early childhood teachers. With consistent exposure to safe and nurturing environments and loving, supportive adults, young children develop robust networks of neural connectivity that will serve to undergird their academic and life success for decades to come.

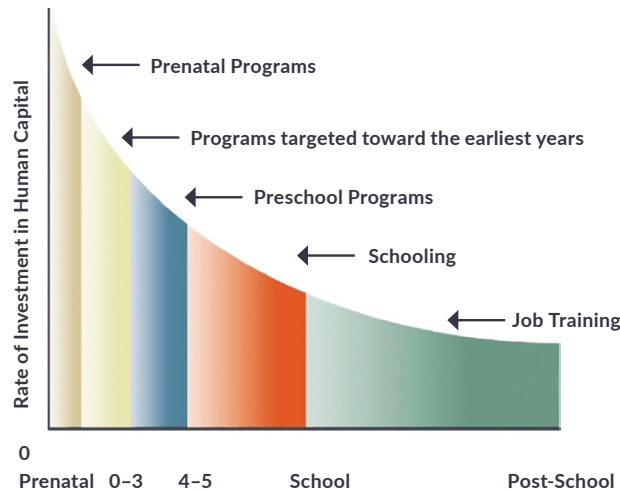
**FIGURE 2 | HUMAN BRAIN DEVELOPEMENT**



[View Source](#)

And with high-profile longitudinal research suggesting significant long-term returns on investment to taxpayers, it’s little wonder that governors and state legislatures across the nation are turning to early childhood as both a powerful incubator of human capital and a lever with which to generate long-term savings and minimize the need for taxpayer funded educational, social service and criminal justice interventions.

**FIGURE 3 | HECKMAN CURVE**



The “Heckman Curve” shows that investments have higher rates of return the earlier they are made in a person’s life.

[View Source](#)

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS: EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM PRIORITIES AND KEY ACTIONS**

Over the course of its convenings, the ECECD Transition Committee developed recommendations related to **five overarching early childhood system priorities** (depicted in the graphic at right), that are critical to tackle during the early implementation of the new agency. Each of these system areas plays a critical role in shaping child and family outcomes in New Mexico. These priorities are:

- 01. **Grow Investments**
- 02. **Advance a Diverse, Well-Compensated, and Credentialed Workforce**
- 03. **Increase Quality and Access**
- 04. **Achieve Equity**
- 05. **Enhance Authentic Collaboration**

Stemming from these early childhood system priorities, 20 key actions were identified for the ECECD over its first 18-months of operation.

**FIGURE 4 | TRANSITION COMMITTEE STARTUP PRIORITIES FOR THE ECECD**



New Mexico ECECD Transition Committee Recommendations	
Early Childhood System Priority	Key Actions
Grow Investments	01. Create and disseminate the four-year early childhood education and finance plan required by the Department’s enabling legislation, SB22 of 2019.
	02. Develop and implement a comprehensive funding formula, reflecting the true costs of quality education and care.
	03. Complete cost modeling to identify funding and scaling needs for workforce, quality and access, equity, and collaboration.
	04. Maximize, leverage, and grow federal, state, local, business, and philanthropic investments in workforce, quality and access, equity, and collaboration. Participate actively in legislative conversations about opportunities to grow and diversify early childhood funding streams.
	05. Create opportunities, in collaboration with Children’s Cabinet agency partners, to create efficiencies of scale.
Develop a Diverse, Well-Compensated, and Credentialed Workforce	06. Increase awareness of the value of the early childhood workforce and their social, educational, and economic value to our communities.
	07. Develop a pay structure that supports tiered, equitable compensation based on credentials, certifications and lived experiences.
	08. Implement realistic and supported pathways for early childhood professionals to obtain higher education credits, credit for years of teaching experience, and bilingual and multilingual endorsements.

<b>Increase Quality and Access</b>	09. Target investments to equitably expand access to quality programs and services for all families and young children.
	10. Embrace a family-driven, comprehensive, and holistic approach to improving the health, development and well-being of infants, toddlers, and young children.
	11. Create a definition of quality that is based on the needs of children and families and provides equitable supports to assist programs in advancing quality.
	12. Ensure adequate resources and time are available to enable early childhood programs to advance their quality.
<b>Achieve Equity</b>	13. Actively support multilingualism and multiculturalism within the state’s early childhood programs and facilitate and foster teaching strategies that preserve a child’s home language.
	14. Develop and implement inclusive decision-making practices as the Department approaches planning, funding, policy, and program implementation.
	15. Take an agency-wide approach to supporting tribal communities through intentional government-to-government partnerships and consultation.
	16. Advance equity practices across state government through collaborative decision making and engagement with other state structures and departments.
<b>Enhance Authentic Collaboration</b>	17. Ensure funding is available to tribal communities to strengthen early childhood infrastructure, systems, and programs.
	18. Establish a strong collegial culture within the ECECD.
	19. Increase public awareness of the prenatal to five period and the benefits to families, communities, and public support.
	20. Adopt a systems approach in working collaboratively with other state and local jurisdictions, structures, and departments.

Over the coming pages, we explore each of these strategic priorities in greater detail.

## **GROW INVESTMENTS**

Put simply, New Mexico will not achieve the results for children expected from the new agency unless there is sustained and significant new investment in the critical programming offered by the Early Childhood Education and Care Department. While there are administrative efficiencies to be had as a result of program consolidation within the ECECD, the long-term success of the Department’s mission cannot – and will not - be accomplished without the new resources necessary to meaningfully address the needs of the state’s young children and families. Funding a high-quality, equitable early childhood system for New Mexico will require not only the maximization and leveraging of all existing state and federal dollars (including, but not limited to, those provided through Medicaid), but also increased investments at the federal, state, and local levels, alongside private, corporate, and philanthropic resources dedicated to addressing the needs of children and families.

The state is highly reliant on oil and gas revenues for its public investments in education and other public services. While this can be a significant asset to the state – the new Early Childhood Trust Fund, for example, will draw from excess revenues here in good years – it can also lead to instability and a level of unpredictability during less productive periods. There are tax policy options available to the state to potentially diversify and stabilize its general fund – ranging from the elimination of certain exemptions and deductions, to changes in the state’s property, personal income, motor vehicle and other taxes. While these decisions are ultimately in the hands of lawmakers and are handled by states in a number of ways, the identification of new and stable resources for the Department’s use in meeting the needs of children is a critical need.

# NEW MEXICO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE DEPARTMENT TRANSITION COMMITTEE

## Final Report



Following creation of the NM Early Childhood Trust Fund, there may be a temptation for some to view early childhood systems funding as a “mission accomplished.” While the creation of the Trust is undoubtedly a significant step forward for New Mexico, meeting the comprehensive needs of New Mexico’s young children is a proposition that will take sustained effort and require significantly greater resources.

In order to determine their needs, many states – New Mexico included – are undertaking early childhood cost modeling projects. Cost modeling is a data analysis process designed to accurately account for and project the actual (true) costs to implement, monitor and improve high-quality programs over time. According to The BUILD Initiative, “the preferred method of cost modeling in education is called “the ingredient method,” which defines the parameters of program services, including dosage, number of children served, and quality standards, and assigns a standard cost to each ingredient in order to determine the total program cost (including costs to administer the program at the system level) and average cost per child/family.”<sup>4</sup>

A recent report from the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine<sup>5</sup> used cost modeling to estimate the total (national) costs of a high-quality early care and education system (0-5), identifying the need for a \$29 billion increase in current public spending. The report’s ten major systems financing recommendations for consideration by policymakers are detailed in the excerpt below.

**While the creation of the NM Early Childhood Trust Fund is undoubtedly a significant step forward for New Mexico, meeting the comprehensive needs of the state’s young children is a proposition that will take sustained effort and require significantly greater resources.**

### BEST PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD FINANCING

In 2018, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine conducted a comprehensive landscape of early care and education financing and published its findings as the study, [Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education](#). This document – widely acknowledged as the most thorough, current examination of the topic - included 10 recommendations for consideration by policymakers:

01. Federal and state governments should establish consistent standards for high quality across all early childhood education (ECE) programs. Receipt of funding should be linked to attaining and maintaining these quality standards. State and federal financing mechanisms should ensure that providers receive payments that are sufficient to cover the total cost of high-quality early care and education.
02. All children and families should have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education. ECE access should not be contingent on the characteristics of their parents, such as family income or work status.
  - ECE programs and financing mechanisms (with the exception of employer-based programs) should not set eligibility standards that require parental employment, job training, education, or other activities.
  - Federal and state governments should set uniform family payment standards that increase progressively across income groups and are applied if the ECE program requires a family contribution (payment).
  - The share of total ECE system costs that are not covered by family payments should be covered by a combination of institutional support to providers who meet quality standards and assistance directly to families that is based on uniform income eligibility standards.
03. In states that have demonstrated a readiness to implement a financing structure that advances principles for a high-quality ECE system and includes adequate funding, state governments or other state-level entities should act as coordinators for the various federal and state financing mechanisms that support early care and education, with the exception of federal and state tax preferences that flow directly to families.
04. To provide adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding for a unified high-quality system of early care and education for all children from birth to kindergarten entry, federal and state governments should increase funding levels and revise tax preferences to ensure adequate funding.



- 05. Family payments for families at the lowest income level should be reduced to zero, and if a family contribution is required by a program, that contribution, as a share of family income, should progressively increase as income rises.
- 06. A coalition of public and private funders, in coordination with other key stakeholders, should support the development and implementation of a first round of local-, state-, and national-level strategic business plans to guide transitions toward a reformed financing structure for high-quality early care and education.
- 07. Because compensation for the ECE workforce is not currently commensurate with desired qualifications, the ECE workforce should be provided with financial assistance to increase practitioners’ knowledge and competencies and to achieve required qualifications through higher education programs, credentialing programs, and other forms of professional learning. The incumbent ECE workforce should bear no cost for increasing practitioners’ knowledge base, competencies, and qualifications, and the entering workforce should be assisted to limit costs to a reasonable proportion of postgraduate earnings, with a goal of maintaining and further promoting diversity in the pipeline of ECE professionals.
  - ▶ Existing grant-based resources should be leveraged, and states and localities, along with colleges and universities, should work together to provide additional resources and supports to the incumbent workforce, as practitioners further their qualifications as professionals in the ECE fields.
  - ▶ States and the federal government should provide financial and other appropriate supports to limit to a reasonable proportion of expected postgraduate earnings any tuition and fee expenses that are incurred by prospective ECE professionals and are not covered by existing financial aid programs.
- 08. States and the federal government should provide grants to institutions and systems of postsecondary education to develop faculty and ECE programs, and to align ECE curricula with the science of child development and early learning and with principles of high-quality professional practice. Federal funding should be leveraged through grants that provide incentives to states, colleges, and universities to ensure higher education programs are of high quality and aligned with workforce needs, including evaluating and monitoring student outcomes, curricula, and processes.
- 09. The federal and state governments, as well as other funders, should provide sustained funding for research and evaluation on early childhood education, particularly during the transition period, to ensure efforts to improve the ECE system are resulting in positive outcomes for children and in the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified workforce.
- 10. The federal government should align its data collection requirements across all federal ECE funding streams to collect comprehensive information about the entire ECE sector and sustain investments in regular, national, data collection efforts from state and nationally representative samples that track changes in the ECE landscape over time, to better understand the experiences of ECE programs, the ECE workforce, and the developmental outcomes of children who participate in ECE programs.

**To grow investment in a high-quality, equitable early childhood system for New Mexico, the ECECD should:**

<b>Key Action 1:</b>	Create and disseminate the four-year early childhood education and finance plan required by the Department’s enabling legislation, SB22 of 2019.
<b>Key Action 2:</b>	Develop and implement a comprehensive funding formula, reflecting the true costs of quality education and care.
<b>Key Action 3:</b>	Complete cost modeling to identify funding and scaling needs for quality, access, collaboration, equity, and workforce.
<b>Key Action 4:</b>	Maximize, leverage, and grow federal, state, local, business, and philanthropic investments in equity, quality, access, collaboration, and workforce. Participate actively in legislative conversations about opportunities to grow and diversify early childhood funding streams.
<b>Key Action 5:</b>	Create opportunities, in collaboration with Children’s Cabinet agency partners, to create efficiencies of scale.

**DEVELOP A DIVERSE, WELL-COMPENSATED AND WELL-CREDENTIALLED WORKFORCE**

The years of early childhood shape the long-term academic and life outcomes of our nation’s children. Indeed, the period from prenatal to age three is a unique window in human development during which the architecture of the brain is wired in ways that, if properly optimized, will help to undergird the child’s success for decades to come. This early development is facilitated - above all else - by stable, high-quality relationships with adults, whose spoken language, facial expressions, and loving care all serve to support brain development in meaningful ways.

With 63% of New Mexico children under the age of six residing in households in which all available parents participate in the workforce,<sup>6</sup> New Mexico’s early childhood workforce holds the potential to impact the success and prosperity of the state and its residents in significant ways.

Yet across the state and nation, many early childhood professionals are undertrained and poorly compensated relative to their potential to impact children’s futures during these critical years. Without realistic pathways for current early education and care professionals to obtain higher education credits, credit for years of teaching experience, and bilingual and multilingual endorsements, the result will likely continue to be an inability to attract and retain highly qualified teachers to work with preschool age children, especially infants and toddlers, leading to an estimated 30% annual teacher turnover rate (nationally)<sup>7</sup> at precisely the time young children need stable, nurturing relationships to optimize their development.

Private child care, in particular, is locked in a seemingly perpetual fiscal crisis, with parents unable to afford the true costs of quality, providers operating on razor thin profit margins, and the entire system subsidized by the low wages of a workforce comprised primarily by women of color.

The table to the right, extracted from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment’s 2018 Early Childhood Workforce Index,<sup>8</sup> depicts both the median hourly wages of New Mexico early childhood professionals in different roles within the system and trends related to their compensation since 2015.

**With 63% of all New Mexico children residing in households in which all available parents participate in the workforce, New Mexico’s early childhood workforce holds the potential to impact the success and prosperity of the state and its residents in significant ways.**

**FIGURE 5 | EARNINGS BY OCCUPATION**

Occupation	Median wage
Child care worker	\$9.66
Preschool teacher	\$12.89
Center director	\$19.87
Kindergarten teacher	\$33.35
Elementary teacher	\$32.45
All workers	\$16.08

**Earnings by Occupation**

- In 2017 the median wage for child care workers was \$9.66, a **3% increase since 2015**.
- For preschool teachers the median wage was \$12.89, a **2% decrease since 2015**.
- For preschool or child care center directors, the median wage was \$19.87, a **2% decrease since 2015**.

**To support New Mexico’s early childhood workforce, the Department should:**

<b>Key Action 6:</b>	Develop a pay structure that supports tiered, equitable compensation based on credentials, certifications, and lived experiences.
<b>Key Action 7:</b>	Implement realistic pathways for early education and care professionals to obtain higher education credits, credit for years of teaching experience, and bilingual and multilingual endorsements.
<b>Key Action 8:</b>	Increase awareness of the value of the early childhood workforce and their social, educational, and economic value to our communities.

**INCREASE QUALITY AND ACCESS**

The critical programs for which the ECECD is responsible are not available to large numbers of the state’s children and families, and these programs are not tied together by a common understanding of quality or by the resources needed to ensure that programs families are using are resourced to achieve and sustain quality expectations

**High-quality early childhood programming is currently not available to large numbers of New Mexico’s families and young children.**

For example:

- Only 45 percent<sup>9</sup> of children ages three and four in New Mexico attend preschool.
- Just 8.3 percent<sup>10</sup> of low-to-moderate income infants and toddlers (i.e., children with household incomes at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level) receive financial assistance to pay for child care.
- Just six percent of low-income (generally 100 percent or less of the federal poverty level) infants and toddlers are funded to participate in Early Head Start.<sup>11</sup>
- 33,718 New Mexico children under the age of five have an unmet need for high-quality child care, according to New Mexico’s recent Preschool Development Grant Needs Assessment.<sup>12</sup>

New Mexico’s early childhood system is a patchwork of programs, often with different eligibility and programmatic requirements. The equitable expansion of high-quality programs and services for all families and young children must be a priority for both the Department and New Mexico policymakers. By taking a holistic, family-driven approach to the support and expansion of these services, the state can meaningfully advance the well-being of – and the long term academic and life outcomes achieved by – the state’s young children. The Department has an opportunity to support providers and minimize programmatic silos by articulating a set of common quality expectations across the newly unified system and ensuring program providers have the resources necessary to advance their quality.

The ECECD has multi-pronged responsibility: operating and advocating for the expansion of programs, while simultaneously working to ensure their coordination and quality.

**In order to expand early childhood access and quality, the Department should:**

<b>Key Action 9:</b>	Target investments to equitably expand access to quality programs and services for all families and young children.
<b>Key Action 10:</b>	Embrace a family-driven, comprehensive, and holistic approach to improving the health, development, and well-being of infants, toddlers, and young children.
<b>Key Action 11:</b>	Create a definition of quality that is based on the needs of children and families and provides equitable supports to assist programs in advancing quality.
<b>Key Action 12:</b>	Ensure adequate resources and time are available to enable early childhood programs to advance their quality.

**ACHIEVE EQUITY**

New Mexico is home to a culturally and linguistically diverse population, with many Native American and Hispanic communities central to the state’s identity. It is clear from committee conversations that the historical oppression and exclusion of these communities from key decision-making has contributed to the institutional and systemic racism that has resulted in poor outcomes for Native American, Hispanic, and African American children.

Both Native American and Hispanic panelists described historical efforts – Native American Boarding Schools of the late 19th and mid-20th centuries, for example – designed to hasten the assimilation of their children into white American culture, to include the eradication of native languages and family cultural traditions. While perhaps less overt in contemporary society, modern educational expectations do not foster and develop the linguistic and cultural identities of New Mexico’s diverse communities, with acculturation into the dominant culture still considered a central goal.

Panelists noted that in their efforts to build trust and partnership, ECECD leaders will need to reckon with the fact that past actions – taken in the name of “education” – have often inflicted trauma on the communities they are engaging. Doing so will require deep reflection and thoughtful approaches by ECECD leadership, staff, and contractors.

Providing significant local flexibility may be one key to the successful engagement of these communities, with the Department setting broad priorities and goals while simultaneously providing the space and funding necessary for diverse, local communities to decide how to achieve them. And while there is undoubtedly a need for meaningful engagement and representation at state decision making tables, Committee members also heard of the need for local-to-state structures, through which the needs of communities can be raised to the Department for consideration.

Against a challenging backdrop, however, there is reason for real optimism that the new Early Childhood Education and Care Department will actively contribute to building trust through meaningful partnerships, shared decision-making and authentic collaboration with each of the tribes, pueblos and nations, and all the diverse multi-cultural communities throughout New Mexico. The Department’s enabling legislation,<sup>13</sup> for example, created a first in the state and nation leadership position, an Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Education and Care, intended to ensure the values, cultures, and languages of each of the state’s 23 Native American communities are understood by the ECECD staff, and that the Department consults with and seeks guidance from them on how the Department can support their priorities and needs.

**ECECD leaders will need to reckon with the fact that past actions– in the name of “education” – have often inflicted trauma on the diverse communities that they now hope to engage. Doing so will require deep reflection and thoughtful approaches by ECECD leadership, staff, and contractors.**

**In order to expand early childhood access and quality, the Department should:**

<b>Key Action 13:</b>	Actively support multilingualism and multiculturalism within the state’s early childhood programs and facilitate and foster teaching strategies that preserve a child’s home language.
<b>Key Action 14:</b>	Develop and implement inclusive decision-making practices as the Department approaches planning, funding, policy, and program implementation.
<b>Key Action 15:</b>	Take an agency-wide approach to supporting tribal communities through intentional government-to-government partnerships and consultation.
<b>Key Action 16:</b>	Advance equity practices across state government through collaborative decision-making and engagement with other state structures and departments.
<b>Key Action 17:</b>	Ensure funding is available to tribal communities to strengthen early childhood infrastructure, systems, and programs.

**ENHANCE AUTHENTIC COLLABORATION**

Across the Committee’s conversations, themes related to collaboration emerged, highlighting opportunities to create a cohesive, well-coordinated system across programs as well as for outreach to targeted communities and increasing state-local collaboration.

On the internal front, participants recognized the launch of the ECECD as an opportunity to break down silos across programs, services, and sectors. Recognizing the challenge – and opportunities presented to create a new organizational culture, Committee members urged Department leaders to promote collegiality and retain successful practices being brought into the new structure, while seeking new opportunities to communicate and coordinate between and among programs.

As referenced previously, the Department has significant opportunities to establish itself as a collaborator with the state’s Native American and Hispanic communities by ensuring representation and voice for these communities within its internal decision-making structures. It likewise has a chance to improve state-to-local collaboration with geographic communities throughout the state.

Finally, the Committee recognizes the opportunity for the ECECD to serve as a key collaborator with families, who may benefit from education and support in their own efforts to ensure the success of their young children. Committee participants felt that public understanding of what can be gained by increased focus and support during this time period of a child’s development were not at all well understood, and unless this changes, the long-term success of the ECECD will not be realized. By increasing public awareness around school readiness, for example, the Department has an opportunity to harness the power of families and communities across New Mexico to achieve the shared goal of improving school readiness.

**Participants recognized the launch of the ECECD as an opportunity to break down silos across programs, services, and sectors while maintaining successful practices of the past.**

**In order to expand early childhood access and quality, the Department should:**

<b>Key Action 18:</b>	Establish a strong collegial culture within the ECECD.
<b>Key Action 19:</b>	Increase public awareness of the prenatal to five period and the benefits to families, communities, and public support.
<b>Key Action 20:</b>	Adopt a systems approach in working collaboratively with other state and local jurisdictions, structures, and departments.



## CITATIONS

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