



**Policy & Finance Subcommittee**

Public Meeting

Tuesday, March 17, 2026, | 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm

**Virtual Meeting Location:** Zoom.com. Click [HERE](#) to join **Meeting Id:** 867 0737 7682 **Passcode:** 851310

**ATTENDANCE**

**7 of 10 MEMBERS' PRESENT**

1. Abbey Bernhardt, Systems Alignment Co-Chair
2. Brianna Cambra, Provider Support Director, The Children's Cabinet
3. Lela Gonzales, Workforce Support Coordinator, The Children's Cabinet
4. Jerek Hough, Regional Director, Source Academy
5. Kate Pflughoeft, PDG B-5 Assistant Grant Manager, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
6. Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Co-Chair
7. Stephanie Vega, Teacher, Washoe County School District

**3 of 10 MEMBERS' ABSENT**

1. Anna Binder, Parent Representative
2. Rachel Stepina, PDG B-5 Grant Manager, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
3. Patty West, Employer Support Statewide Coordinator, The Children's Cabinet

**PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

1. Brandi Hearst, ECAC Administrative Coordinator, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
2. Krystal VanDelden, Community Member
3. Patrice Gardner, ECAC Vice Chair
4. Anna Villatoro, Family Engagement Specialist, The Children's Cabinet
5. Tiffany Olivas, HRSA Manager, The Children's Cabinet



## MINUTES

### 1. Welcome, Call to Order, and Roll Call

Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Subcommittee Chair

- Denise Tanata started the meeting at 3:40 pm
- Brandi Hearst conducted roll call, noted above

### 2. Public Comment #1

Public Comment not given

- No Comment

### 3. Approval of a Flexible Agenda *(Discussion for Possible Action)*

The Subcommittee approved a flexible agenda.

Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair

- Lela Gonzales motioned to approve a flexible agenda
- Kate Pflughoeft seconded the motion
- Members voted unanimously, motion carries

### 4. Approval of January 20, 2026, Minutes *(Discussion for Possible Action)*

The Subcommittee approved the January 20, 2026, Meeting Minutes.

Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Subcommittee Chair

- Denise Tanata shared that Rachel Stepina needs a Job Title on Members Present section
- Brianna Cambra motioned to approve January minutes with the edit above
- Kate Pflughoeft seconded the motion
- Members voted unanimously, motion carries

### 5. Summary of Approved Strategic Plan and Changes Being Implemented *(Discussion, Informational)* 5-7 minutes

The Members discussed and reviewed the newly approved Strategic Plan and its effects on the Policy and Finance Subcommittee, with a brief overview of other subcommittees.

**Materials:** Motion 1, Motion 2, Meeting Schedule

Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Subcommittee Chair

- Denise Tanata shared an overview of both motions, described below:

Link: [Motion 1](#): Outlined the goals and objectives for the new 2026-2030 strategic plan (final plan not yet available for sharing)

Link: [Motion 2](#): Established new subcommittee structures and assigned objectives to each subcommittee

#### Subcommittee Changes

- Denise Tanata explains the Subcommittee changes outlined below:
  - Currently in transition period with Executive Leadership developing new subcommittees and determining leadership structure
  - Total subcommittees has increased to 7
  - Two new subcommittees are:



- Family Leadership and Engagement
- Workforce Development
- Sunsetting Subcommittee:
  - Systems Alignment

### **Objectives:**

- **Objective 1.1:** Develop recommendations and advocate for an integrated early childhood governance structure to improve alignment and coordination across agencies, and supports shared oversight of programs services, funding, and administration
- **Objective 3.2:** Develop guidance and recommendations for funding needed to ensure access to high-quality early childhood services across sectors for all and support system sustainability
- **Objective 3.3:** Identify and promote diversified funding sources and fiscal policy that strengthen long-term sustainability and stability of Nevada's early childhood system

The current meeting proceeded as scheduled to discuss the work plan and interim activities despite the ongoing transition.

### **Transition Considerations:**

- Denise Tanata suggested some considerations for members and Executive Leadership to consider, outline below:
  - Placement of the right people on the right subcommittees
  - Members should evaluate if their current subcommittee is still a good fit
  - Opportunity to identify additional members to bring on
  - Executive leadership reviewing the number of individuals serving on subcommittees
  - Asked Patrice to provide additional comments on the transition process, below.

### **Transition Process - Currently Underway:**

- Patrice Gardner described the transition process for Subcommittee members to move from one Subcommittee to another using the Transition Request Form, created for members to indicate which subcommittees they want to serve on or be removed from
- Brandi Hearst has gone through our data and listed out the ECAC Members who are not currently serving on a subcommittee
  - Required for all Governor Appointed ECAC Members to serve on at least one subcommittee
- Seeking Co- Chairs for the two new subcommittees

### **Bylaws:**

- Patrice Gardner shared with members that a comprehensive review is needed to align with strategic plan changes and subcommittee changes, expressing that there is a need for updated details for items not fully spelled out previously, including:
  - Appointing members
  - Application process
  - Discuss setting limits on Subcommittee rosters
  - Term limits- Do we add term limits, and if yes, which roles are to be limited and how long is a term?
  - Other procedural clarifications that need to be rewritten with clear direction leaving no room for interpretation errors

### **Timeline:**

- Patrice Gardner & Denise Tanata reviewed a loose timeline with members, showing the projected progression of the Strategic Planning, timeline below:
  - March 18, 2026, General ECAC meeting: Vote on the Ad Hoc committee to begin the work (not diving too deep yet)
  - April: Review and revise details within transition plan



- May General ECAC meeting: Roll out thorough overview of where they've landed and open opportunities for increased engagement, especially parent participation
- Members will receive updates accordingly

### **Rural Representation Discussion :**

- Kate Pflughoeft asked if geographical factors will be considered when resorting subcommittee members, specifically requesting rural perspectives on each committee since there aren't many participants from rural communities
- Patrice Gardner confirmed this is always the plan - seeking diverse voices including rural, community-based, Head Start, and all perspectives at the table
  - Noted significant progress made over the 8 years Patrice has served on the committee
  - Encouraged members to nudge or persuade individuals from rural communities to participate
  - Still working to seat a tribal representative
  - Will review work done by Tiffany Olivas and her subcommittee on current engagement and identifying gaps
  - Geographic and sector representation will be a key lens when recruiting participation and support

### **Additional Membership Considerations:**

- Denise Tanata discussed with members the Subcommittee Membership considerations having multiple factors to balance the subcommittees such as:
  - Geographic representation
  - Various sectors of the system
  - Content area experts
  - Managing subcommittee size to ensure quorum can be achieved
  - Non-voting members and public can still attend meetings and provide input

### **Meeting Schedule Changes:**

- Denise Tanata shared that due to expansion of subcommittees and loss of some administrative support services, all subcommittee meetings moving to bi-monthly
  - Next meeting is scheduled for May
  - We will keep the same scheduled dates, just fewer of them
  - Option to schedule additional subcommittee meetings if needed
  - Members will be notified if the schedule changes

### **6. ECAC Work Plan Updates (Discussion for Possible Action)**

The Subcommittee will compare the new objectives to the Interim Policy Priorities, partner survey responses, and key activities to create activities to add to the new 2026 Subcommittee Work Plan.

#### **Materials:** 2026 Work Plan Draft

Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair

- Denise Tanata explained the Workplan, outlined below:
  - First tab includes full list of all approved goals and objectives
  - New structure: subcommittees are assigned to specific objectives (not goals), and objectives cross over multiple subcommittees
  - Separate tabs created for each year of the strategic plan (2026-2030), with 2025 work plan included for reference
  - Work plan documents are flexible and created by the subcommittee to determine key activities aligned with assigned objectives
  - Must remain reasonable and aligned with ECAC's advisory body role



- Many deliverables will be things partners are doing that ECAC advises on or provides recommendations for
- Policy and Finance Subcommittee has 3 new objectives plus interim policy activities continuing from 2025
- Fewer objectives per subcommittee despite having more total subcommittees
  
- Work Plan Features were outlined by Brandi Hearst, below
  - Space to note collaboration with other subcommittees (cross-subcommittee collaboration will be a major focus for executive leadership)
  - Section for barriers or assistance needed to report back to executive leadership
  - Ability to input status, assign leads, input goals and deliverables, and add notes
  - Colors aligned with logo colors
  - Open to feedback and additions based on subcommittee needs
  - Once 2026 version is finalized, other years will match the format
  - This is the first subcommittee to review the new version

### **Interim Policy Activities - Key Accomplishments:**

#### **Survey for ECAC Member Engagement:**

- Denise Tanata explained to members that a survey to assess interest and engagement opportunities for ECAC members went out and is still live, details outlined below:
  - 11 responses received so far
  - Information organized by priority areas listed under item 3
  - Identified skills, talents, and support capabilities of members
  - Some gaps identified: developing infographics, creative pieces, media relations
  - Survey link available on ECAC website Policy and Finance Subcommittee page (Brandi to share link in chat)
  - Members can also volunteer directly for specific activities
  - Already utilized survey results - reached out to members for editing support
  - Tool to distribute work beyond core group members
  
- Denise Tanata confirmed with Brandi Hearst that the Annual Report has been sent out to partner list

#### **Developing Key Messages and Case Statements:**

- Denise Tanata explained that this is the primary work that needs to be done and requests for interim committee presentations are starting to come in from The Children's Cabinet policy work groups, CAA, and others on behalf of ECAC

#### **Interim Committee on Education hearing confirmed for April 24th**

- Denise Tanata working to get details on topics to be covered and how many individuals can present, it is pending whether it will be an official ECAC presentation sharing it's an urgent priority to develop key messages around policy priority areas as none of the key messages have been developed yet , stating that:
  - We need a conversation with Patrice about what messages ECAC wants to convey and whether they're ready
  - Option 1 or 2:
    1. Get ECAC presentation slotOR
    2. Ensure key messages are conveyed through partner presentations
  - Main issue is developing those key messages regardless of presentation format
- Patrice Gardner agreed key messages are the priority



- Denise Tanata continued sharing information on interim hearings, the goal is presenting issues so legislators can formulate policy recommendations for 2027 session, expresses that it is helpful for members to provide public comment or participate in presentations if possible
- Abbey Bernhardt volunteered to help to support or write materials
- Denise Tanata suggests the Systems Alignment work is already happening, and key messaging can be picked up from existing work, then suggested conversation at next Executive Leadership meeting to share information and identify alignment with other subcommittees

### **Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB)**

- Brianna Cambra shared context for the GWDB, outlined below:
  - The Children's Cabinet involved with GWDB for over 3 years
  - Regular attendance led to creation of a child care subcommittee to address child care as a barrier to workforce participation
  - Initially focused on small-scale solutions (single remodels creating 10 slots)
  - The Children's Cabinet pushed for bigger thinking: using collective power to address state and local regulations, policies, and fiscal asks
  - February meeting in Las Vegas brought together sector partners: out-of-school time providers, ECAC representation, Children's Cabinet and others
  - Discussion focused on incentivizing solutions to lack of child care access and affordability
  - Outcome: Starting to develop a bill to advance that addresses access and availability of child care
  - Using this as opportunity to educate about holistic early childhood system needs
  - Recognizing interdisciplinary nature: investing in slots requires workers, and parents need subsidy access to afford slots
  - Currently advancing specific policy recommendations and gathering data to support bill draft request with numbers
  - Bill being developed by people involved with ECAC and addresses all four priority areas
- Stephanie Vega asked about repurposing elementary schools into child care centers or partnering with school districts, specifically in Washoe County where new larger schools are being built
- Brianna Cambra replied that yes, The Children's Cabinet has a child care capacity manager already working with Washoe County
  - Conducting landscape analysis of local neighborhoods and potential child care feeders for decommissioned buildings
  - Helping compile data: number of regional families impacted, potential children served, associated costs
  - Washoe County School District has internal working group examining this issue
  - Statewide discussions across all counties about examining decommissioned public infrastructure (elementary schools, old libraries, other public use buildings) for child care
- **Key policy/fiscal need: Child care facilities fund** - need state dollars to help remodel and bring buildings up to compliance with child care licensing and local zoning/planning codes

### **7. Subcommittee Co-Chair Update** (*Discussion, Informational*)

The members of this Subcommittee were updated on the status of the Subcommittee Co-Chair position.  
Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair

- Denise Tanata shared that they are still looking for a Co-Chair

### **8. Agenda Items for May 19, 2026, Meeting** (*Discussion, Informational*)

The Subcommittee Members can add items to the May 19, 2026, agenda.  
Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair

- April 7 possible meeting- send poll and if quorum met, create meeting



- Interim Subcommittee Presentation
- May 19- add key activities for Workplan
- Update from Brianna Cambra for GWDB Child Care Committee
- Denise Tanata to provide an Early Childhood Governance update

#### **9. Member Updates** *(Discussion, Informational)*

Members shared announcements

- Lela Gonzales shared that on April 9 The Child Care provider Action Committee has the Beyond the Band-Aid: Creating Permanent Solutions for Nevada’s Child Care second event to address recommendations to:
  - Supports child care providers
  - Advocate for policies
  - Provide recommendations to support providers
  - Hear the struggles the providers face
  - Registration is open- link: [Child Care Provider Action Committee \(CCPAC\) | Eventbrite](#)
  - CCPAC Website: : [Child Care Provider Action Committee - Nevada Child Care Resource & Referral](#)
- Patrice Gardner requested Brandi Hearst shares this information on the Listserv

#### **10. Public Comment #2** *(Discussion for Possible Action)*

Public comment not given during this agenda item

- No comment

#### **11. Upcoming ECAC Meetings** *(Informational)*

General ECAC: 3.18.26 @9:00 am

Executive Leadership: 4.07.26 @ 11:00 am

Data 4.16.26 @1:00 pm

Communications and Engagement 4.28.26 @11:30 am -12:30 pm

Policy and Finance: 5.19.26 @3:30 pm

#### **12. Adjournment**

- Denise Tanata adjourned meeting at 4:31 pm

#### **Action Steps:**

- Denise Tanata and Patrice Gardner to set up meeting before 4.24 for Interim Committee Presentation
- Brandi Hearst to send poll to members to see if an April 7th, 3:30 pm-4:30 pm meeting can be scheduled
- Brandi Hearst to update the Workplan to include edits sent via email as well as during the meeting