Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council
Policy and Finance Subcommittee Public Meeting
Thursday, June 25, 2026, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM
Virtual Meeting located on Zoom Platform | Meeting Link: Policy and Finance

ATTENDANCE

8 of 13 MEMBERS PRESENT
Tiffany Alston, ECAC Chair
Lela Gonzales, Workforce Support Coordinator, The Children's Cabinet
Dr. Jerek Hough, Regional Director, Source Academy
Octavia McLaurin, Child Care Owner
Dr. Diane Nicolet, Council Member
Rachel Stepina, PDG B-5 Grant Manager, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Co-Chair
Dr. Stephanie Vega, Council Member

5 of 13 MEMBERS ABSENT
Abbey Bernhardt, Subcommittee Member
Patrice Gardner, ECAC Vice Chair
Patty West, Subsidy Coordinator, The Children's Cabinet
Brooke Yarborough, Council Member
Kathy Yoder Bass, Council Member

PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE
Brandi Hearst, ECAC Administrative Coordinator, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Carson Cityupdate
Anna Whitehead, Parent, Community Member

MINUTES

Agenda Item 1 Call to Order

- Denise Tanata called meeting to order 3:09 pm
- Brandi Hearst conducted roll call, noted above

Agenda Item 2 Public Comment #1

Public Comment not given

- No Comment

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

Members approved a flexible agenda.

Denise Tanata, Co-Chair

- Tiffany Alston motioned to approve a flexible agenda
- Dr. Jerek Hough seconded the motion
- Members voted unanimously, motion carries

Agenda Item 4 Co-Chair Report

Co-Chair shared an update

- Denise Tanata announced that Dr. Stephanie Vega has volunteered to be Secretary, further sharing that:
  - Dr. Vega has the opportunity to practice today and is also taking Minutes.
  - Offered her gratitude for taking on this commitment
  - Shared that she will join Stephanie Vega in the tasks as she is very hands on with the work
  - Will be available to help as needed

Agenda Item 5 Consent Agenda *(For Possible Action)*

Materials: May minutes

- Tiffany Alston motioned to approve May 19, 2026, minutes
- Lela Gonzales seconded the motion
- Members voted unanimously, motion carries

Agenda Item 6 Preschool Development Grant, Birth-5 (PDG B-5) Sustainability Plan

(*Information and Discussion)*

Rachel Stepina, PDG B-5 Grant Manager

- Rachel Stepina shared the sustainability plan of Preschool Development Grant, Birth-5 (PDG B-5) that ECAC has accepted to play a consultant role in.
  - Subcommittees received an update on the progress of the plan throughout June.
  - Steps the PDG Team has taken:
    - Determined the desirability to sustain a project of the PDG grant
    - There are over 80 projects implemented and
    - Some projects have been completed.
    - Determined who is responsible for the project.
    - Partner options:
      - Nevada Department of Education (NDE)
      - Other Partner
    - Determined if funding is available
    - Determined if enough staff available
  - Rachel Stepina mentioned two tools that relates to the PDG Plan and this Subcommittee:

- Early Childhood Funding Matrix
- Governance structure

- Denise Tanata suggested a focus on Goal 3
  - Funding for this Subcommittee to identify funding gaps.
  - Stated the funding gap identification would be helpful
    - Looking at the funding that is needed for:
      - Early childhood programs
      - Early Childhood Services
      - Nevada's Early Childhood System
      - Activity 3.2 is relevant for the key activities we can align within our Workplan.

Agenda Item 7 Information and Discussion Regarding Historical Documentation (*Information and Discussion)*

Members discussed their review of historical documentation.

Denise Tanata, Co-Chair

- Denise Tanata reviewed the Early Childhood Governance structure and historical documents with Members.
- Tiffany Alston recommended a brief overview of the context for new participants and public in attendance.
- Denise Tanata screenshared the Early Childhood Governance Resources and
  - Shared findings showing Nevada's Early Childhood Governance structure being " fragmented and siloed"
  - Recommended reading "Guinn Report, Guinn Research Brief"
    - Specific to Nevada
    - Found that Nevada is fragmented and demonstrates lack of coordination in Nevada
      - Resulting in underutilization of programs and services.
- Continuing on, Denise Tanata summarized Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center
  - Found on Vanderbilt website.
    - Multiple resources, including organizational structures for each state.
    - Maps out how states structure their Early Childhood System across agencies.
    - Case Studies of different types of governance structures
    - Main Take Away: There is no one right way to govern.
  - Also noted that the study suggests a bipartisan trend of having a State Early Childhood Department
    - Already in place in 14 states.
- Denise Tanata reviewed Kids First Nevada Case Study and the Pre-K Mixed Delivery Model reports.
  - Report explains why a variety of providers and delivery models are essential to meet the needs of Nevada.
- Dr. Diane Nicolet questioned the framing of the Kids First report using the term "broken", as it might take away from the early childhood work being done that is successful.
- Rachel Stepina thanked Dr. Nicolet for bringing the terminology to attention.
  - Explained the current systems are doing what they are designed to do.
  - Added that PDG did also use "fragmented" in grant documents
    - cited that it is the language that the Federal Government uses to describe lack of coordination within systems.
    - The term "fragmented" was used to align with federal requirements to be eligible for funding.
  - Rachel Stepina again shared that the system is doing what it is designed to do. unfortunately, the current system structure has problems.
- Tiffany Alston shared some of her childhood experiences and how the term "broken" does not represent her experience as she is a product of the Nevada Education system. She agreed that strong terminology is needed when the audience is legislation or decision makers in order to grab attention and elicit a call to action.
- Denise Tanata asked the Subcommittee to consider the collective message regarding early childhood governance, as follows:
  - How to develop it in a coordinated and efficient way.
  - What early childhood professionals like to see in early childhood governance.

- What would families would like to see in early childhood governance.

- Dr. Jerek Hough mentioned a recent article from New Mexico regarding additional early childhood funding but not having the workforce and system in place to implement
  - He found another article citing the same difficulties in New York city.
  - Concerned Nevada could face this issue if securing funding
- Denise Tanata agreed that this is important for policy recommendations
  - provided the example of Nevada Ready! Pre-K seats in which
    - There is funding for the seats, but
    - There is capacity, which is limited
    - There are many families on waitlist
      - Limitations of the infrastructure of Nevada's childcare sector
- Dr. Diane Nicolet asked about discussions related to the Mixed Delivery Model with state charter schools as the documents noted this expansion.
- Denise Tanata shared with Members ter is now a "Nevada Ready Pre-K Common Application"
  - Will be officially launched next week
  - Families can look at the different options available, including:
    - Child care centers
    - Charter schools
    - Public schools
- Denise Tanata requested feedback from the Subcommittee about key activities to implement in the Workplan.

Agenda Item 8 Information and Discussion Regarding Nevada Legislative Updates (*Information and Discussion)*

Members had brief overview of Legislative Updates within the Early Childhood Sector

Denise Tanata, Co-Chair

- Denise Tanata shared the scheduled meeting for the Interim Committee on Health and Human Services on 6.30.26
  - There will be a presentation for the Childcare and Development Program in which
    - Division of Social Services and The Children's Cabinet are presenting at.
    - Child Welfare Task Force.
      - Hearing a variety of policy recommendations from various entities, including
        - Kids First Nevada
        - Presenting a proposal for developing a department of Early Childhood
        - Children's Advocacy Alliance. Kids First Nevada will be .
      - Denise Tanata encouraged members to submit written comments .
        - Explained that the final Meetings for Interim Legislative Committees are in July and August.
          - Work sessions will be when they draft recommendations on committee bills in the upcoming legislative session.
- Dr. Diane Nicolet suggested the Subcommittee consider reviewing the "Nevada Association of School Superintendents, iNVest 2027" report.
  - Platform 4 is to stabilize, align and expand Pre-K funding and structures.

Agenda Item 9 Review and Discussion Regarding the Workplan *(Review and Discussion)*

Materials: Workplan

- Denise Tanata shared two goals related to the Subcommittee's Workplan:
  - Goal 1: Promote an Integrated, Aligned, and Family-centered early childhood system
    - Objective 1.1 Develop recommendations and advocate for an integrated early childhood governance structure assigned to this subcommittee.
  - Goal 3: Funding: Promote sustainable and robust funding streams
    - Objective 3.2 assigned to this Subcommittee.

- Members to review the Workplan
  - Brainstorm key activities for each objective before the next meeting

Meeting stopped early due to lack of quorum at 4:18 pm.

Agenda Item 10 Information and Discussion on Agenda Items for July 23, 2026 Meeting
(Review and Discussion)

- Item not reviewed

Agenda Item 11 Information and Discussion Regarding Member Updates *(Informational and Discussion)*

- Item not reviewed

Agenda Item 12 Public Comment #2

- Item not reviewed

Agenda Item 13 Upcoming Meetings (*For Reference and subject to change*)

Data and Evaluation: 08.20.26, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Workforce Development: 6.30.26, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm
Family Leadership and Engagement: 07.02.26, 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm
Executive Leadership: 7.07.26, 11:00 am -12:30 pm
General ECAC: 7.15.26, 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
Policy and Finance: 7.23.26, 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Communication & Engagement: 7.28.26, 11:30 am

Agenda Item 14 Adjournment

- Denise Tanata adjourned meeting at 4:18 pm.