



Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council
Policy and Finance Subcommittee Public Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 23, 2026, Time: 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Attendance

Members Present 7 of 13

- Tiffany Alston, ECAC Chair, Co-Chair, Director of Programs, Sunrise Children's Foundation
- Abbey Bernhardt, National Alliance on Mental Illness
- Dr. Jerek Hough, Founder, Abbreviated Learning
- Dr. Diane Nicolet, Trustee Washoe County School District
- Denise Tanata, Co-Chair, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Advisor, TCC
- Dr. Stephanie Vega, Teacher, Washoe County School District
- Patty West, Subsidy Coordinator, The Children's Cabinet, Subcommittee Member

Members Absent 6 of 13

- Patrice Gardner, Education Programs Supervisor, NDE, OELD, NV Head Start Collaboration Director
- Lela Gonzales, Family Engagement Specialist, The Children's Cabinet
- Octavia McLaurin, Owner License Family Childcare Provider
- Rachel Stepina, PDG B-5 Grant Manager, NDE, Office of Early Learning and Development
- Brooke Yarborough, Nevada Department of Human Services, Division of Social Services
- Kathy Yoder Bass, Non-Profit Provider, Council Member

Public in Attendance

- Amy Adkins, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Amber Duncan, The Children's Cabinet
- Brandi Hearst, ECAC Admin. Coordinator, NDE, Office of Early Learning and Development
- Tiffany Olivas, Family Leadership and Engagement Chair
- Maddison Proctor, Community Member
- Sabrina Petrel, Community Member
- Anna Villatoro, Family Leadership Coordinator, The Children's Cabinet
- Anna Whitehead, Parent, Community Member
- Sabrina Jones ECAC Systems Specialist, NDE Office of Early Learning and Development

Minutes

1. Welcome, Call to Order, Roll Call, Introduction

- Denise Tanata called the meeting to order at 3:12 p.m.
- Stephanie Vega conducted roll call, as noted above.

2. Public Comment #1

- No public comment was offered.

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

- The Subcommittee approved the flexible agenda.
- Tiffany Alston moved to approve the flexible agenda.
- Diane Nicolet seconded the motion.
- All in favor, none opposed.
- Members voted unanimously. The motion carried.

4. Approval of June 25, 2026, Minutes (Discussion for Possible Action)

- The Subcommittee approved June 25, 2026, meeting minutes with edits.
- Tiffany Alston moved to approve the minutes with edits to Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod's title and noted spelling errors (page 3 delete (she), pg. 4. second bullet point extra (w) and 4th bullet extra (t)).
- Patty West seconded the motion.
- Members voted to approve the motion.
- Abbey Bernhardt abstained.
- The motion carried.

5. Co-Chair Report

- Co-Chair Denise Tanata stated that she did not have updates to report.
- Co-Chair Tiffany Alston did not have any updates to add.

6. Nevada Legislative Updates (Information and Discussion)

- Discussed previous meeting to stay on top of what is happening during the interim around early childhood policy. A list of some of the interim committee meetings and a sign-up sheet was done, but I am not sure if it was circulated.
- Denise Tanata provided an update on June 30, 2026, Joint Interim Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. The primary focus of the day was on child welfare and reports from various task forces regarding child welfare issues.
 - Presentation on the Child Care Subsidy Program, Division of Social Services (DSS) and The Children's Cabinet responding to some questions from the legislators about how program operate. Also, looking at some changes that occurred, and inquiries regarding the application and payment process.
 - Additional short presentations about specific policy recommendations prior to their final meeting next month, where they'll determine what bills, they are going to recommend out of the committee. The Children's Advocacy Alliance and the Kids First Nevada Coalition presented as well on relevant early childhood policy topics.
 - The August meeting is expected to include decisions regarding bills to recommend.
- Denise Tanata noted that other interim legislative committees, including Education, Health and Human Services, Revenue, and Government Affairs, will hold final meetings in August to develop requests for the 2027 Legislative Session.
- Members are encouraged and reminded to begin tracking new bill draft requests.
- Bill draft requests are already being put together for the 2027 legislative session, if anyone is interested, go to leg.state.nv.us.
- Keep in mind that bill drafts may be general until the legislative session begins.

7. Work Plan Updates and Review (Review and Discussion)

The Subcommittee reviewed key activities, priorities, and potential collaboration opportunities aligned with assigned Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

- Denise Tanata explained that the discussion is to define key activities under the assigned goals and objectives and provide a description of each.

- Goal 1: Promote an integrated, aligned, family-centered early childhood system.
- Objective 1.1: Develop recommendations and advocate for an integrated early childhood governance structure.
- Goal 3: Support funding for high-quality early childhood services across sectors.
- Objective 3.2: Develop guidance and recommendations for funding needed to ensure access to high-quality services, including family engagement.
- Objective 3.3: Identify and promote diversified funding sources to strengthen long-term sustainability.
- Members were reminded that ECAC's role is to advise and recommend rather than implement, and that activities can align with existing work by partners.
- Denise Tanata advised that we can bring others to the table to align and coordinate efforts.
- Members were asked to consider capacity, expertise, priorities, legislative timelines, and family and provider needs. A multi-phased approach may be used.

Objective 1.1: Integrated Early Childhood Governance Structure

- Denise Tanata proposed building from the historical and national landscape overview already begun.
- The discussion included developing an ECAC position statement on integrated early childhood governance and presentation or talking points for consideration by the full ECAC. Also see some alignment with the communication and engagement subcommittee.
- Stephanie Vega recommended reviewing what was proposed during the previous two legislative sessions, current efforts, limitations, logistics, and the state's current structure.
- Jerek Hough suggested sending an email to revisit ECAC prior recommendations.
- Denise Tanata recommended reviewing the prior annual report recommendation on the nvecac.com, listed under reports and documents.
- A flowchart of Nevada's current early childhood structure was suggested to improve understanding and coordination.
- Denise Tanata confirmed that previous ECAC recommendations can be used as a starting point and are publicly available.
- Stephanie Vega identified monitoring policy meetings and bill tracking as a significant action item and suggested a curated list of bills and actions aligned with Subcommittee objectives.
- Dr. Diane Nicolet recommended registering for the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS) to follow selected bills.
- Denise Tanata identified opportunities to collaborate with the Children's Advocacy Alliance and Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy on bill tracking and stated that she would work toward an initial list by the next meeting, depending on available information.

Objective 3.2: Funding Needed for High-Quality Services

- Denise Tanata and members discussed determining the scope of funding analysis across key sectors and identifying a manageable starting point.
- Denise Tanata referenced prior work on the early childhood funding matrix, fiscal gap analysis, fiscal map, cost modeling, and fiscal recommendations framework.
- The Subcommittee discussed aligning with the Family Leadership and Engagement Subcommittee to understand family priorities.
- Brandi Hearst confirmed that the 2026 strategic planning community survey is current and can be shared as a resource.
- Dr. Jerek Hough requested Workforce Development Subcommittee collaboration on workforce-related funding considerations.
- Denise Tanata clarified that the early childhood fiscal map serves as the funding tracker and is being updated with the Children's Funding Project; the existing fiscal map and funding matrix remain available as resources.

Objective 3.3: Diversified Funding Sources and Fiscal Policy

- Denise Tanata discussed first identifying funding needs under Objective 3.2 and then considering diversified revenue sources under Objective 3.3.
- Denise Tanata referenced the Nevada Revenue Coalition and information from a recent tax policy summit as possible resources.
- Potential activities include understanding existing revenue sources, considering fiscal efficiencies, identifying potential revenue options, and developing recommendations for the full ECAC.
- Patty West emphasized documenting the benefits and impacts of existing funding to strengthen the case for continued or increased funding.
- Dr. Diane Nicolet noted that work by the Commission on School Funding may provide useful examples of revenue sources.
- Members discussed the complexity of Nevada revenue sources and the potential value of a future presentation to help narrow options.

Prioritization and Next Steps

- Denise Tanata recommended adding identified activities and timelines to the Work Plan and moving from planning into specific tasks.
 - Members agreed to begin with funding needs before a deeper review of revenue options.
 - The next meeting was proposed as a two-part discussion covering Nevada early childhood governance history/current structure and funding work completed to date.
 - Funding discussion will revisit the fiscal map, funding matrix, cost modeling, and previous funding needs assessments.
 - Members agreed that a fiscal map review would be helpful at the next meeting.

8. Agenda Items for August 27, 2026, Meeting (Review and Discussion)

- Presentation on Early Childhood Governance in Nevada, including what has been in place previously, what is currently in place, and what is needed.
- Review of the early childhood fiscal map with a focus on current funding.
- Revisit the funding matrix.
- Review prior cost modeling.
- Review prior funding needs assessment and analysis work.

9. Member Updates (Informational and Discussion)

- No member updates were provided.

10. Public Comment #2

- No public comment was offered.

11. Upcoming Meetings (For Reference and Subject to Change)

- Denise Tanata reminded all to review the upcoming meeting schedule

12. Adjournment

- Denise Tanata adjourned the meeting at 4:19 p.m.

Action Step Summary

- Denise Tanata will work toward an initial curated list of relevant bills and policy actions aligned with Subcommittee objectives for the next meeting, depending on available information.
- Review previous ECAC governance recommendations and prepare materials on Nevada's early childhood governance history, current structure, and identified needs for the August 27 meeting.

- Revisit the early childhood fiscal map, funding matrix, cost modeling, and previous funding needs assessments at the August 27 meeting.
- Continue updating the early childhood fiscal map with the Children's Funding Project.
- Coordinate with the Family Leadership and Engagement Subcommittee regarding family funding priorities and with the Workforce Development Subcommittee regarding workforce-related funding considerations.
- Brandi Hearst will provide access to the 2026 strategic planning community survey as a resource for family priorities.
- Members may use NELIS and partner bill-tracking resources to monitor legislation and bill draft requests relevant to Subcommittee objectives.

Meeting Summary

The Policy and Finance Subcommittee reviewed Nevada legislative developments, refined Strategic Plan work activities related to early childhood governance and funding, and identified governance history and funding analysis as priorities for the August 27, 2026, meeting.