

# Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC)

## Early Childhood System Strategic Planning

Monday, April 20, 2026



# Meeting Objectives

April 2026

1. Review the 2026 IRMC Charge to anchor in a shared purpose
2. Align on the opportunity and next steps for Delaware to build a unified early care and education (ECCE) system in 2026

# Agenda

Agenda Item	Time Allotted
Attendance and Minutes	10 mins
Welcome	5 mins
Review of 2026 IRMC Charge	20 mins
IRMC Member Updates	20 mins
ECE Landscape Analysis	25 mins
What's Next	20 mins
Closing	5 mins
Public comment	15 mins



# Welcome



# Review of 2026 IRMC Charge



# Ideal State: Delaware's ECE System

Delaware's vision for its ideal early childhood system is clearly articulated in both the IRMC Report and the PDG application, focusing on key components:

- Governance: System-level authority and accountability is clear, enabling coordinated cross-agency decision-making and a seamless experience for families and providers statewide.
- Funding alignment: Public dollars are transparent, predictable, and strategically aligned to shared outcomes, with the state able to model total system costs, assess tradeoffs, and sustain long-term investments.
- Quality: All early childhood settings are guided by a common north star for quality, supported by aligned standards, professional pathways, and meaningful workforce supports for educators across the mixed-delivery system.
- Data: There is an integrated, cross-agency data system that provide a clear and unduplicated view of children served, costs, quality, and outcomes, enabling informed policy decisions and continuous improvement.

All of Delaware's ECE system stakeholders must be prepared to coordinate and act quickly in 2026 to realize the vision for these key components.



# Building an Investable Early Childhood System: Final Outputs

PDG funds will be fully spent down in December 2026, at which time the following will be true:

- **An implementation-ready vision for Delaware's early childhood system:** A shared plan for what it means to achieve early childhood education as a public good, grounded in the IRMC's work and reflected in a coherent statewide strategy.
- **Decision-ready policy options:** The state will have developed and analyzed governance and financing options to inform future policy decisions.
- **Implementation tools and materials:** State agencies and partners will have practical tools, templates, and guidance to support implementation of governance, financing, and system coordination strategies.
- **Stakeholder-informed recommendations:** Insights from providers, employers, community partners, and agencies will inform the final recommendations.



# Building an Investable Early Childhood System: Focus Areas

As the 2026 PDG work begins, the IRMC and the B-5 Accountability team are focusing on the following major buckets of work:

**Landscape Analysis**

- Review current policies, funding structures, and agency roles
- Analyze how the early childhood system is working today
- Iterate initial recommendations with stakeholder input

A Coherent ECE State Plan that includes:		
Strategy	Communications	Implementation Readiness
Lay out the strategy to realize Delaware's vision for its early childhood system through the Delaware ECE State Plan	Create clear and consistent messaging about the Delaware ECE State Plan	Develop guidance, tools, and templates to support the implementation of the Delaware ECE State Plan



# IRMC Member Updates



# DECC Updates



# Legislative IRMC Advisory Group Updates



# ECE Landscape Analysis

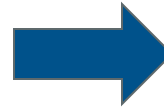


# PDG Landscape Analysis Thus Far

The ongoing comprehensive PDG landscape analysis will inform the IRMC's recommendations and ensure decisions accurately reflect the needs and current state of Delaware's ECE system.

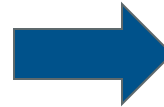
This work was made possible through broad collaboration from IRMC members and partners across Delaware's early childhood system. In March and April 2026, the PDG governance and finance project team:

**Conducted landscape analysis interviews** with Delaware's ECE system leaders, including state agencies, program administrators, and community-based organizations.



Interviews **aimed to understand how the system operates in practice** and how day-to-day experiences both shape and are shaped by it.

**Reviewed current and historical resources**, including legislation, program data, provider supply, enrollment, funding and budgets, quality and licensing, workforce, and child and family outcomes.



The document review **aimed to understand the previous efforts** that has gone into developing the Delaware system and is foundational to this work.

As we continue this work, what parts of the system should we further pressure test? Whose perspectives are critical to include before June?



# Landscape Analysis: Early Insights

Interviewees described programs that run well on their own, but have limited mechanisms to align decisions, resources, and outcomes at the system level. Interviews highlighted the following system trends.

## Strong collaboration, but no clear ownership of system-level decisions

- Staff described relying on personal relationships to move work forward, with collaboration widely varied and often dependent on who knows whom rather than formal structures
- When work spans agencies, there is no clear decision-maker or consistent structure for coordination, leading to work stalling or efforts being duplicated across work streams

## Thoughtful program-level investment, but limited cross-system visibility

- Funding decisions are made within individual programs and agencies, with limited ability to coordinate or align across departments (e.g., difficulty moving funds between agencies, even for similar work)
- This contributes to duplicated efforts and limited visibility into how funds are leveraged across the system, even when the same contractors or services are involved, and prevents strategic use of funding streams

## Significant data collection, but limited system-level insight

- Data is collected across programs, but systems are not integrated or designed for legacy structures, limiting the ability to connect information across programs or agencies
- As a result, data is often used for compliance or basic reporting rather than to inform decisions or understand system-level impact

## Strong commitment to quality, but no shared definition or measurement

- Interviewees noted that quality is assessed through a mix of compliance monitoring, licensing, and coaching supports, with no consistent way to measure or compare quality across programs.
- There is no consistent, system-wide mechanism to measure quality in practice, and monitoring capacity is limited, making it difficult to assess or compare quality across settings

# Key Takeaway: ECE System Fragmentation

**Currently, Delaware's system functions through workarounds and relationships rather than formal structures, making coordination possible but not consistent or scalable.**

Coordination depends on individuals, not system design:

- Stakeholders described a system where coordination works because people know each other and make it work, not because there are clear, consistent processes in place.
- Differences in eligibility rules, contracting, and program requirements create inconsistencies that families, providers, and service and supports vendors must navigate in practice.
- Leaders understand their programs well, but the system has no mechanism for seeing how decisions in one place affect outcomes across others.
- No single entity holds system level authority. Without clear ownership over decisions or priorities, stakeholders operate within silos without a clear view of how their work connects to the broader system.





# Delaware's State Governance

Delaware's children, families, providers, and the early childhood workforce are currently forced to interact with multiple state agencies and navigate a fragmented system that lacks a clear leader.



AND SOCIAL SERVICES

## Division of Family Services

Child Abuse and Neglect  
Background Investigation

## Div. of Prevention & Behavioral Health Services

Early Childhood Mental Health  
Intensive Family Consultation

## Office of Early Learning

State Funded Early Care and Education Program (SFECEP)  
Head Start  
Quality Improvement System (QIS)  
DEEDS - Delaware Educator Data System

## Office of Child Care Licensing

Licensing

## Student Support Services

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

## Office of Early Childhood Intervention

IDEA Part B  
School Nutrition Programs  
Part C Early Intervention Transfer  
Developmental Screening

## Division of Social Services

Purchase of Care (POC)  
TANF  
SNAP

## Div. of Medicaid & Med. Services

DE Healthy Children (CHIP)

## Division of Public Health

Bureau of Maternal and Child Health  
Help Me Grow  
DE Thrives  
Part C Early Intervention\*  
WIC

# The Impact of Fragmentation

This fragmentation in Delaware's early childhood system leads to enormous complexity with many consequences, including:



## Inconsistent Experiences for Children

Children's experiences are shaped by individual programs standards, rather than a shared definition of what every Delaware child should receive.



## Overburdened Families

Families navigate multiple entry points, unclear eligibility rules, and inconsistent referrals that make it difficult to find and access reliable care.



## Unsupported Employers

Employers struggle to recruit and retain employees who lack access to child care, and there is no path for community led solutions.



## Broken Child Care Market

Providers face unstable economics driven by low reimbursement rates and rising costs, limiting their ability to expand supply and meet family demand.



## Ineffective Data

Data is fragmented by program type and underutilized, limiting system-level decision-making, reinforcing fragmentation.

# Critical Elements of an Investable System

A coherent governance structure is the foundation that will allow Delaware to align policy, funding, and implementation into a coordinated and investable early childhood system.



**Funding alignment:** Align and coordinate funding streams into a transparent, predictable model that advances access, affordability, and **long-term sustainability**.



**Quality:** Establish a shared north star for quality and align standards, workforce supports, and **continuous improvement systems** across the mixed-delivery system.



**Data:** Create the structure and coordination needed to integrate data across programs, enabling Delaware to **understand who is served, identify gaps, and guide policy and investment decisions**.

Earlier, we discussed who else should be included in the Landscape Analysis. Based on these early insights, what feedback do you have on the landscape analysis process?







# What's Next?







# What It Takes to Deliver ECE as a Public Good

Delaware has committed to early childhood as a public good. To make that vision real, the system must be able to deliver across four key components.

## The IRMC defined ECE a Public Good to be:

-  Every child thrives and is prepared for school
-  Every family can access affordable, high-quality options
-  Providers are supported as a stable, respected workforce
-  The mixed-delivery system provides real choice and is equitable, transparent, and built to improve over time

## The 2025 IRMC Report defined the key components of a coherent ECE system as:

-  **Governance** – Operating as one coordinated system
-  **Funding alignment** – Using funding strategically and predictably
-  **Data** – Seeing and managing the system as a whole
-  **Quality** – Delivering consistent quality across all settings

# State Examples: Governance

Other similar states with provide models for Delaware to simplify state and regional governance of early childhood programs and funding to achieve desired outcomes:

	Illinois	Connecticut	Maryland	Virginia	Delaware
State's Lead Agency	<u>Department of Early Childhood</u> (In transition)	<u>Office of Early Childhood</u>	<u>State Department of Education</u> (Early Childhood within the MSDE)	<u>State Education Agency</u> (Early Childhood Care & Education within the VDOE)	Multiple agencies
State Governance	Unified in 2026 ( <u>SB 1</u> )	Unified in 2014 ( <u>PA 14-39</u> )	Consolidated in 2005	Consolidated in 2021 ( <u>SB 578</u> )	Not yet unified
Regional Governance	<u>Early Childhood Collaborations (ECCs)</u>	<u>Local Governance Partners (LGPs)</u>	<u>Local Early Childhood Councils (LECCs)</u>	<u>Unified with "Ready Regions"</u>	Coordinated across many regional actors



# Questions to Guide Decision-Making

As we approach our first opportunity to review decisions in June, the following questions can help anchor decisions in the state's vision for early childhood as a public good.



How do we ensure all children have **access** to high-quality early childhood experiences across settings, supported by a stable and well-prepared workforce?



How do we create a system families experience as one **coordinated** pathway, rather than separate programs and entry points?



How do we enable a **mixed-delivery system** where local communities have agency to implement statewide priorities in ways that reflect their needs?



How do we align **funding across programs** to support shared outcomes, ensure transparency, and enable a clear understanding of total system cost?



How do we build a system that generates the **data** needed to understand who is served, at what **quality**, and at what cost, and use that data to improve over time?







How do we create a system that functions with **children, families, and providers at the center**, and every child experiences consistent, high-quality care across settings?

# Preview: June IRMC Meeting

With a clear understanding of the needs of Delaware's ECE system, key decision makers can be ready to come to a consensus during the June IRMC meeting.

During the June 22nd IRMC meeting, IRMC members will be asked to engage in conversation about recommendations addressing the following:

-  **Governance:** What does our governance structure need to be to scale an investable system?
-  **Funding Alignment:** How do we ensure that each and every dollar is being used to its highest potential?
-  **Data:** How do we build a data foundation that tracks who is served, identifies gaps, and guides investment decisions.
-  **Quality:** How do we orient everyone in the system towards a clear north star on quality?

# Information-Based Decision Making

Prior to June 22nd, and in preparation for the discussions scheduled for June, IRMC members will be provided with the following materials

- Overview of current state
  - Landscape analysis takeaways
  - Considerations of previous work
  - Key ECE data to support decision-making
- Preview of options for discussion



# Closing



# IRMC Meeting Schedule

Month	Time
<del>March 5th, 2026</del>	<del>9:30-11:30 am</del>
<del>April 20, 2026</del>	<del>2-4 pm</del>
<b>June 22, 2026</b>	2 - 4 pm
<b>August 25, 2026</b>	2 - 4 pm
<b>October 19, 2026</b>	2 - 4 pm
<b>December 14, 2026</b>	2 - 4 pm



# Public Comment

