



# Idaho's Early Childhood Care and Education Strategic Plan



## A Message from Idaho Governor Brad Little

I am pleased to announce the release of Idaho's new Strategic Plan for early childhood care and education.

This work was made possible through a statewide partnership led by the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC). The purpose of this collaborative effort is to build a foundation to prepare Idaho children ages 0 to 5 for a successful start in school and in life. Literacy continues to be our top priority in education, and this plan creates the path to ensure our youngest children have expanded and improved opportunities to stay on track with their reading to be ready for school.

The federal Preschool Development Grant will significantly expand efforts to engage families, communities, business partners, early childhood educators, schools, policymakers, and others to build a mixed delivery system for families with young children. This important work will also improve school readiness outcomes with a focus on early literacy.

We know that the early years are a critical period for brain development and create the foundation for lifelong learning. We also know that the long-term academic success of children is dependent on third grade reading proficiency.

This important plan includes Idaho's mission and vision for early childhood care and education and the goals, objectives, and strategies to accomplish this vision as well as how we will gauge our success. To create this plan, we engaged hundreds of diverse stakeholders over the past year. We listened to families and received input from professionals working in early learning across our state. This plan demonstrates a solid understanding of our challenges and the best path forward to ensure a bright future for our youngest Idahoans.

Idaho's quality of life and long-term economic prosperity depend on a well-educated workforce, the foundations of which begin in early childhood. Early childhood development is directly linked to economic development. Investment in the early years has been shown to create cost savings to taxpayers by reducing the need for educational remediation and diminishing social service and other government service utilization.

As a geographically and demographically diverse state, Idaho is building upon a robust mixed delivery system of early childhood programs and services to support families and their young children, empower parental choice and family engagement, and ensure successful transitions throughout the early years and into the early grades. I encourage you to read this plan carefully, especially looking for areas where you can partner with us to help meet the early childhood care and education needs of all Idaho's children and families.

I would like to commend Idaho AEYC, as well as the parents and families, early childhood community leaders and educators, and stakeholders for their partnership and for the hard work they do every day to support our youth. Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we work together for the wellbeing of our youngest Idahoans.

Sincerely,



Governor Brad Little



# Executive Summary

In December 2019, Governor Brad Little's Executive Order No. 2019-14 created the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). The Council is charged with the execution of a statewide Strategic Plan to support the vision, mission, goals, and strategies for early education throughout Idaho. Through the ECAC's broad membership of key stakeholders, the Council is well positioned to successfully implement and operationalize this strategic plan.

As stated in the State of Idaho Executive Order No. 2019-14:

*"The long-term academic success of children is dependent on third grade reading proficiency with a foundation built on the language and literacy experiences of children from birth to age five."*

*"The deliberate coordination of Idaho's public and private early childhood services will allow for greater efficiencies, expand parent choice, and allow for a more accurate inventory of existing services, programs, and initiatives for use by families and policymakers."*

*"Idaho's quality of life and long-term economic prosperity depend on a well-educated workforce."*

The Executive Order includes eight core deliverables, and the contents of the Strategic Plan connects the ECAC to the key strategies to produce those deliverables. The details included in this strategic plan significantly expand and amplify current efforts to engage families, local communities, business partners, early childhood educators, schools, policy makers, and others to build a mixed delivery system to support Idaho families with young children. It will take the combined effort and support of all stakeholders to improve school readiness and ensure all Idaho children enter kindergarten with the foundational skills they need to be successful.

The foundation of this strategic plan is directly informed by Idaho's Needs Assessments, particularly the key needs identified in the Needs Assessment, the local needs assessments and strategic action plans, and statewide stakeholder feedback. It is important to note that while this strategic plan has statewide purview, its execution is locally created, community-led, and customized to the needs of Idaho's vast and varied communities. Local collaboratives are central, and the Strategic Plan focuses on expansion of locally-based, connected systems for high quality, early learning opportunities to support Idaho's youngest learners.

The Strategic Plan includes a detailed description of Idaho's vision, mission, and guiding principles that inform four key goals, 13 objectives, and 53 strategies. Also included is a description of the impacts of early childhood care and education (ECCE) in Idaho, both for individual children and families and economic impacts to the state. Finally, the strategic planning process is outlined, along with key recommendations for sustainability and relevant statutory requirements for the ECAC's consideration.

The proposed starting point for determining targets, timelines, and metrics is rooted in seven key questions listed in the Sustainability Plan and Next Steps section; a thorough understanding of the Needs Assessment is recommended. The Strategic Plan forms the foundation of an iterative process to build a better-connected early childhood system to prepare all Idaho children for a successful start in school and in life.



# Key Terms and Abbreviations

## ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)

ALICE households are households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level but not enough to afford basic needs, including housing, food, transportation, health care, and child care. Many people who are included in this definition are essential workers, such as cashiers, nursing assistants, servers, laborers, security guards, etc.

United for ALICE. (n.d). Meet ALICE.  
<https://www.unitedforalice.org/>

## Child Care Desert

A child care desert is defined as a community that either completely lacks child care options or where providers are so scarce that there are more than three children for every licensed child care space. Child care desert determinations do not include non-licensed providers, such as relatives, friends, and neighbors whom parents may rely on for child care.

Malik, R. and Hamm, K. (2017, August 30). Mapping America's child care deserts. Center for American Progress.  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2017/08/30/437988/mapping-americas-child-care-deserts/>

## Children in Rural Areas

Idaho defines rural school children as "fewer than twenty (20) enrolled students per square mile within the area encompassed by the school district's boundaries" or a "county in which a plurality of the school district's market value for assessment purposes is located contains less than twenty-five thousand (25,000) residents, based on the most recent decennial United States Census."

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012, July). Idaho: 2010 Population and housing unit counts.  
<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/2010/cph-2/cph-2-14.pdf>

## Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Availability

Availability of ECCE services is determined by whether the number of spaces for children in high quality child care programs meets the needs of the community. Programs include center-based care, licensed family child care, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, state pre-K programs, school-based ECCE programs, and other licensed-exempt programs as identified by the state. Calculations of availability do not include unpaid, unregulated care provided by relatives, babysitters, nannies, etc.

Friese, S., Lin, V., Forry, N. and Tout, K. (2017). Defining and measuring access to high quality early care and education: A guidebook for policymakers and researchers. OPRE Report #2017-08. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.  
<https://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/33432/pdf>

## Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)

Each local collaborative is governed by an Early Learning Advisory Council, which is responsible for ensuring the local collaborative increases access to quality early childhood systems at the community level. ELAC members include individuals from various agencies, organizations, professions, and backgrounds who contribute diverse perspectives and opinions to the shared vision of the community.

## Family Child Care (FCC)

Providers care for small groups of children in a residential building, such as a house, apartment, or condo unit. Other names for FCC include certified child care homes; family, friend, and neighbor care; legally exempt or license-exempt homes; licensed child care homes; licensed group family child care homes; and registered child care homes.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care (OCC).  
<https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/family-child-care-homes>

## Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI)

Every child in Idaho is given a literacy screening, the IRI, when they enter kindergarten. Scores from the IRI administered in the fall indicate literacy levels when children begin kindergarten. Scores from the IRI administered in the spring indicate literacy levels when children exit kindergarten. This is Idaho's only measure of early literacy.

## IdahoSTARS

IdahoSTARS is the leading expert, resource, and referral source for quality child care in Idaho. IdahoSTARS empowers parents, families, and early childhood professionals to make safe, healthy, nurturing, and educational child care a top priority. IdahoSTARS provides child care professionals development and training opportunities to improve their early care and education services. Since 2003, IdahoSTARS has managed the child care provider eligibility component of the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP); provided a fully coordinated statewide Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) network; implemented a statewide Professional Development System (PDS) for child care providers; developed and directed *Steps to Quality (STQ)*, a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS); and has partnered with several Idaho agencies and organizations to coordinate ECCE throughout the state.

## Local Collaborative

Local organizations, business leaders, school districts, child care providers, community leaders, and stakeholders form early learning collaboratives at the community level, with the focus of creating early learning opportunities to support the whole child, whole family, and whole community.

## Mixed Delivery System

A system of ECCE services that are delivered through a combination of programs, providers, public schools, and other community-based organizations that are supported by a combination of public and private funds.

Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301. (2015). Section 9212 (b)(5).  
<https://www.congress.gov/bills/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177>

## Quality ECCE

Licensed, early learning environments staffed by educated professionals that promote positive relationships; cultivate social, emotional, physical, and cognitive learning and development; empower parents to participate in their child's education; and create safe, nurturing, and inclusive learning experiences.

Idaho's Needs Assessment. (2021). Whitney, G., Callahan, C., Himes, K. *Early childhood care and education in Idaho: Idaho preschool development grant birth-age 5 needs assessment.*

## Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

*Steps to Quality (STQ)* is Idaho's child care QRIS, which measures the quality of care in center- and home-based ECCE settings. *STQ* is a voluntary, quality improvement program for Idaho's ECCE providers. Administered by IdahoSTARS, a joint project between the University of Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development and Idaho AEYC.

<https://idahoaeyc.org/steps-to-quality>

## READY! for Kindergarten

READY! for Kindergarten is an early learning program, led by Idaho AEYC, that is designed to support parents in their role as being their child's first and most influential teacher. READY! for Kindergarten offers free workshops that encourage parents and child care providers to engage children through talking, singing, reading, and playing. The workshop curriculum is provided by the Children's Reading Foundation and is based on current academic research.

<http://idahoaeyc.org/ready>

## RISE

Idaho's voluntary ECCE provider database.

<https://idahostars.org/>

## Vulnerable or Underserved

Children at greater risk of poor outcomes include those who live in poverty or income constrained households; experience homelessness or housing insecurity; have needs that require intervention services; are dual language learners; have, had, or are having traumatic experiences (including placement in foster care); live in rural areas or areas with limited access to services; and belong to populations that are otherwise disproportionately underserved.

Idaho's Needs Assessment. (2021). Whitney, G., Callahan, C., Himes, K. *Early childhood care and education in Idaho: Idaho preschool development grant birth-age 5 needs assessment.*



# Introduction: Multi-Sector Solutions Grounded in Science and Economics

Idaho's Strategic Plan is rooted in the science of child development, access, family choices, local collaboration, mixed delivery system, and a firm understanding that it takes leaders from ECCE, K-12, health, housing, and human services—together with families, communities, and the public and private sectors—partnering to offer high quality ECCE for all of Idaho's children.

During the first three years of a child's life, more than one million new neural connections form every second (Center on the Developing Child). The rapid pace of synapse formation in the brain forms the foundation that shapes learning, behavior, physical, social, and mental health for the rest of life (Center on the Developing Child). During these formative years, how babies and children interact with the world and how the world interacts with them is critically important.

Continuous access to high quality ECCE at an early age promotes strong relationships, positive interactions, enhanced social-emotional development, and advanced vocabulary, literacy, and math skills (Malik et al., 2018; Morrissey et al., 2014; Walsh, 2017). This is particularly true for vulnerable children and their families (World Health Organization, 2018). When children start behind, they stay behind.

The return on economic investment in child care is \$2 to \$4, for every dollar invested, with benefit-cost as high as 35:1 (RAND Corporation, 2017). High quality ECCE has long-term economic benefits, including higher likelihood of high school and college completion, increased lifetime earnings, improved health outcomes, increased workforce participation, and decreased incarceration (RAND Corporation, 2017). These outcomes are important to Idaho's financial health. Idaho's quality of life and long-term economic prosperity depend on a well-educated and healthy workforce.

Child care issues result in an estimated \$479 million loss annually for Idaho's economy (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry, 2020). This includes an estimated \$65 million annual loss of tax revenue and a \$414 million annual cost to Idaho employers due to absences and employee turnover.



# Approach to Strategic Planning

## How was the Strategic Plan created?

This strategic plan reflects comprehensive efforts by the ECAC to understand and address challenges facing children from birth to age five in Idaho. In December 2019, Idaho AEYC was awarded a \$3.3 million Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as part of a \$250 million federal grant program. The one-year grant focused on research, planning, collaboration, and coordination on early childhood systems (ECS) across Idaho.

The University of Idaho James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research and Danielle Horras Consulting created the Strategic Plan based on the Needs Assessment and input from educators, policymakers, business leaders, early learning advisory councils (ELACs), and the ECAC, representing many aspects of the ECS. The ECAC is committed to implementing the Strategic Plan to support the vision, mission, guiding principles, goals, objectives, and strategies for early education in Idaho.

FIGURE 1

## Developing Idaho's Strategic Plan

**1** Statewide  
Needs  
Assessment  
engaging nearly 30 partners.

**18** Idaho Early  
Childhood Advisory  
Council (ECAC)  
meetings

**8** Stakeholder discussion sessions,  
including Early Learning Advisory Councils (ELACs), economic development  
organizations and business groups, Head Start, and legislators. 13 hours of  
open dialogue with 75 attendees.

**15** Local  
collaboratives,  
locally created and  
community-led, focusing  
on the whole child,  
whole family, whole  
community approach.

**14** Local  
strategic  
action plans,  
which outline key  
actions to meet local  
collaborative and  
community needs.

**14** Local needs  
assessments,  
detailing the landscape and  
opportunities for ECCE in  
local communities.

**3** Meetings with  
state leadership:  
State Board of Education  
and Governor's Office

**2,500+** Idahoans,  
including families, educators, state  
agencies, lawmakers, and community  
and business leaders engaged in the  
development of the statewide Needs  
Assessment and Strategic Plan.

## What information was used to create the Strategic Plan?

Multiple sources of information informed this strategic plan. These include Idaho's comprehensive Needs Assessment published in February 2021, local needs assessments, local strategic action plans, stakeholder discussions held in January and February 2021 (described below), and feedback sessions with the ECAC and the Governor's Office.

In January and February 2021, eight stakeholder discussion sessions were held with representatives from various constituencies from across Idaho's early learning system, including ELACs, Head Start, economic development organizations, business groups, the ECAC, and members of the Idaho legislature. Stakeholder discussion sessions were held virtually, due to COVID-19. Discussions focused on the draft vision, guiding principles, and strategic action areas, as informed by the Needs Assessment.

### Consultation limitations

COVID-19 limited outreach to several stakeholder groups, including those focused on family and child care, those with minimal broadband access and/or virtual platform experience, and those not already highly engaged in the ECCE community. Outreach to Hispanic and Tribal communities also was limited. These perspectives must be included in the ECAC's implementation of Idaho's Strategic Plan. Further outreach to and engagement with these stakeholders needs to continue.

### Data limitations and future data collection opportunities

Current data limitations prevent baselines, interim target dates, and target dates from being set in some cases. The ECAC will work in 2021 to overcome these limitations and finalize interim and end-date targets. The ECAC recognizes that this strategic plan will be updated based on emerging information, lessons learned, and new data.

### Idaho's Needs Assessment

In spring 2020, the McClure Center for Public Policy Research, funded by the federal PDG B-5 program, began conducting the Early Childhood Care and Education in Idaho Needs Assessment (Needs Assessment) with the following objectives:

- Define, specific to Idaho, children in rural areas, ECCE availability, ECS, quality ECCE, vulnerable or underserved children.
- Understand the demographics and geographic locations of children from birth through age five in Idaho, including vulnerable and underserved populations and children in rural areas, with an estimate of the unduplicated number of children from birth through age five being served in existing ECCE programs and the number of children awaiting services.
- Understand the current quality and availability of existing ECCE programs and facilities in Idaho, including availability for vulnerable or underserved children and children who live in rural areas.



- Identify gaps in data on quality and availability of programming and supports for children and families in Idaho.
- Identify gaps in data and/or research to support collaborations between programs and services and maximize family choices.
- Identify barriers to funding and provision of high quality ECCE services and supports and opportunities for more efficient uses of resources in Idaho, including system integration and interagency collaboration.
- Provide measurable indicators of progress that align with Idaho's vision for ECCE.
- Understand needs and gaps in supports for transitioning children from ECCE to elementary schools.

The Needs Assessment included an analysis of nearly 40 state and national needs assessments and reports from Idaho ECCE program and service providers, as well as agencies within Idaho's ECS. It also included an extensive literature review spanning more than 400 articles, books, and webpages; major studies: *Child Care Gap Analysis* (Bipartisan Policy Center), *Exploring the Strengths and Challenges of Early Care and Education Programs in Idaho* (Child Trends), *Supporting Access to Early Childhood Telehealth Services in Idaho* (Child Trends), *Understanding Steps to Quality* (Child Trends); surveys at the state and local level (GS Strategy Group and Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center); local needs assessments; and focus groups and town hall meetings, which engaged early childhood educators, early childhood organizations, community organizations and families, economic development organizations, and legislators. In total, over 2,500 Idahoans shared firsthand accounts of their experiences with ECS. Needs Assessment findings informed the four goals in this strategic plan.

Four main findings of the Needs Assessment (p. v):

1. Needs of Idaho families. "Many Idaho families face several critical challenges, including poverty, hunger and housing insecurity, lack of health care, and inconsistent access to the internet or a computer. Forty percent of Idaho households struggle to afford necessities, such as housing, food, child care, and utilities. Idahoans living in rural areas and minorities experience higher rates of poverty. In 2018, nearly 190,000, or 1 in 9 Idahoans, were food insecure. The rate for children was even higher with 1 in 8 facing food insecurity. Counties with the highest rates of food insecurity are disproportionately rural. In 2019, over 9,000 Idahoans experienced homelessness or sought homelessness support services in the previous year. Twenty seven percent were families with children."
2. Child care is unaffordable for many Idahoans. "Child care is one of the biggest expenses in a family's budget and affordability is a huge factor when it comes to ECCE, particularly for low-income families. Child care costs are on the rise in Idaho, increasing nearly 20% for a family with an infant and a 4-year-old from 2017 to 2018. As of October 2020, in Idaho, infant care costs a full-time minimum wage worker 50% of their salary and 13% of a median income family's budget. Families with two children face an even larger burden. Child care for two children—an infant and a 4-year-old costs \$13,927 annually. A typical family in Idaho will spend 25% of its annual income on child care for an infant and a 4-year-old."

3. ECCE is unavailable for nearly half of Idahoans. "Nearly 50% of Idahoans live in communities that either completely lack licensed child care providers or the providers are so scarce that there are more than three children for every child care space. The lack of availability is greater in rural and low-income communities and in communities with higher percentages of people of color. Moreover, if ECCE programs are available, it does not mean that all families have access to those programs. Circumstances such as cost, hours of operation, location, and the need for specialized services can prevent families from accessing child care, even if ECCE providers have child care spaces available. Idaho does not have a consolidated location for parents and families who provide ECCE in the home to access high quality educational materials."
4. Idaho lacks data that connect ECCE settings and early literacy outcomes. "Idaho does not have systems in place to understand which types of ECCE settings are most effective in increasing school readiness and early literacy. The state does not collect data on children before they enter elementary school, limiting information about how ECCE settings (either in the home or outside of the home) affect a child's educational foundation, future literacy, and educational attainment. Data collected through licensing are minimal, as only programs with seven or more children are required to be licensed. This leaves a large gap in understanding ECCE programs in Idaho. Collecting and using these data will help Idaho policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders to understand these connections, and make decisions so all of Idaho's children can access programs that help them develop the skills they need to be successful when starting school."



# Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

This strategic plan serves as a significant guide for ECAC decision-making, providing the foundation for exceptional progress and positive impact for Idaho's children and their families. The goals, objectives, and strategies included all reinforce a commitment to secure long-term sustainability to realize the vision, mission, and guiding principles for Idaho.



**Vision:** All Idaho families have the support they need to help their children have a successful start in school and life.



**Mission:** Energize communities to form collaborative and high quality early childhood care and education environments for all Idaho children.

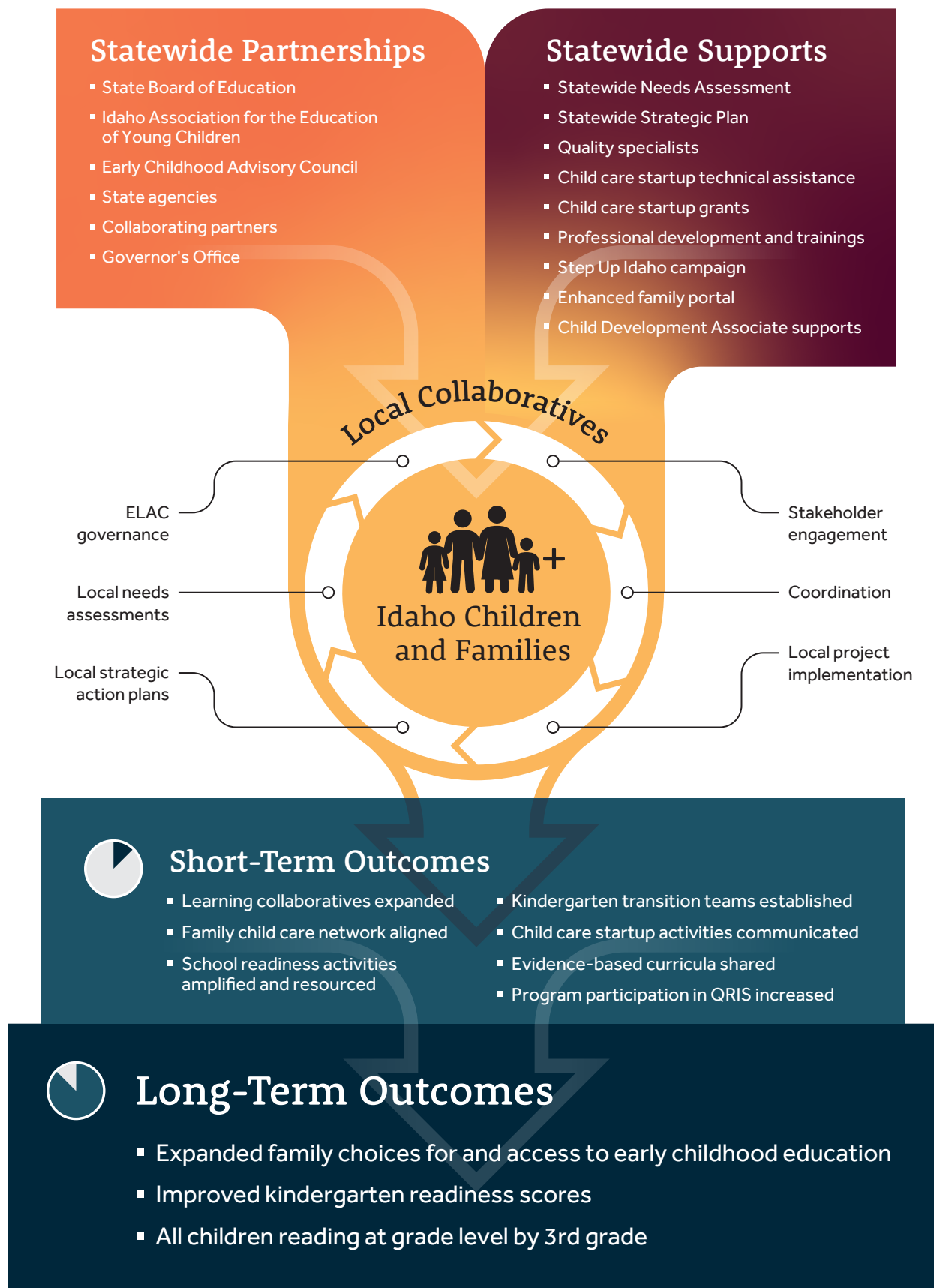
Three broad **guiding principles** guide ECCE in Idaho:

- **Equitable access:** Recruitment and outreach strategies are implemented and barriers to access are removed, ensuring those most in need of services connect to and obtain supports.
- **Successful implementation:** High quality service delivery implemented with fidelity, meeting the needs of those accessing programs, services, and other supports.
- **Improved outcomes:** Programs, services, and other supports delivered with the appropriate quality and intensity, achieving desired outcomes.

The Needs Assessment informed an updated logic model (Figure 2) that conveys the conceptual framework to the ECAC members, partners, and stakeholder groups. The Strategic Plan drives the key activities designed to increase state, local, and provider capacity to better serve children and families in Idaho. The logic model depicts the inputs, resources, and activities and aligns these with measurable short- and long-term outcomes, all of which culminate in preparing all Idaho children to read on grade level by third grade.

FIGURE 2

## Logic Model



SOURCE: Idaho State Board of Education. (2020). *Supporting early learning: Idaho's PDG B-5 renewal application*. [Grant application].

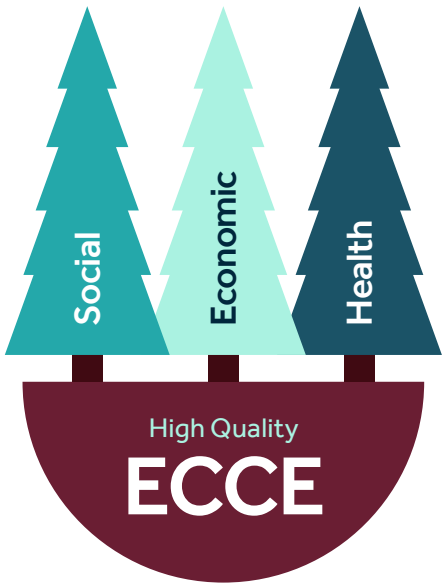


# Goal 1: Communities Engaged and Family-Focused

Access to child care is critical to Idaho families and to the state. In 2020, child care issues led to an estimated \$479 million loss to Idaho’s economy (Needs Assessment, p. 11). “Children who have strong ECCE foundations are better prepared to succeed in school and graduate. As adults, children who participated in high quality ECCE are also less likely to binge drink, smoke, and use illegal drugs, and are at lower risk for health issues, including heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. These outcomes are not only positive for children and families, they are also positive for Idaho’s communities and the state’s economy” (Needs Assessment, p. 11).

FIGURE 3  
Learning Foundation

Multiple studies have shown that high quality ECCE has long-term economic, social, and health benefits.



SOURCE: Idaho’s Needs Assessment (Whitney et al., 2021).  
DATA FROM: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry. (2020). ID untapped potential: How childcare impacts Idaho’s state economy. [https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/EarlyEd\\_UntappedPotential\\_Idaho.pdf](https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/EarlyEd_UntappedPotential_Idaho.pdf)

FIGURE 4  
Economic Loss (2020)

Child care issues create an estimated \$479 million loss to Idaho’s economy.



SOURCE: Idaho’s Needs Assessment (Whitney et al., 2021).  
DATA FROM: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry. (2020). ID untapped potential: How childcare impacts Idaho’s state economy. [https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/EarlyEd\\_UntappedPotential\\_Idaho.pdf](https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/EarlyEd_UntappedPotential_Idaho.pdf)

The Needs Assessment revealed that families across Idaho often struggle with knowing what resources are available to them and how to access those services. Given the breadth of this need across a large, diverse, and mostly rural geography, local collaboratives (described below) seek to leverage strong statewide and local relationships that provide opportunities to strengthen connections to support families with multiple needs.

Communities across Idaho brought together local organizations, business leaders, school districts, child care providers, community leaders, and stakeholders to form local collaboratives, with the focus of creating early learning opportunities to support children’s school readiness. Using a local collaborative model, parents and families, leaders, and stakeholders work to improve access and affordability to quality ECCE to ensure Idaho’s children are successful in school and in life.



## Objective 1: Expand and strengthen local collaboratives.

*Idaho families need more local and customized support. Growing the total number of collaboratives in the state from 15 to 20 is a key step to delivering customized, high quality early childhood services to children and families.*

The primary vehicle to expand access to high quality ECCE programs and the development of a statewide ECCE system in Idaho is the enhancement of the statewide early learning local collaborative model.

Idaho’s 15 existing local collaboratives are located across the state and represent a cross-section of Idaho that includes rural, urban, and predominantly minority and high poverty communities that support vulnerable children and their families. The additional five local collaboratives are selected based on the locations of the other 15 local collaboratives and indicators from the Needs Assessment, including the number of vulnerable children and families, access to ECCE, and the need for coordinated services. A key role for local collaboratives is to identify family needs and implement comprehensive supports while building trusting relationships within the community setting.

### Strategy 1.1 Deploy grants to expand local collaboratives from 15 to 20 across the state.

- Sustain and expand access of local collaborative support to Idaho families by awarding three-year grants in the amount of \$40-70K per year. It is important to maintain these awards across all three years to ensure that local collaboratives have sufficient time and support to create/enhance their ELACs, build their internal capacity to assess and expand their ECCE system of supports, support school transition efforts, and ensure continuity of supports to families.

- Establish grant funding to the 5 new learning collaboratives focused on benefits to families and children in their communities. Local collaboratives should increase the number of ECCE slots in their community, increase the number of ECCE educators and families participating in professional development opportunities, and increase the total number of programs licensed to provide ECCE services for families. The results of these efforts lead to improved coordination of ECS and increased school readiness outcomes.

### Strategy 1.2 Provide technical assistance to local collaborative networks.

- Support local collaboratives so that they can support Idaho families and children. Make targeted technical assistance, as well as a series of resource tools and strategic activities designed to enhance and sustain local early learning governance structures, available to local collaboratives to expand their capacity to serve their communities.

### Strategy 1.3 Support and share best practices within local collaboratives.

- Grow local collaborative capacity and support best practices through a clearly articulated set of requirements as a condition of the grants described in Strategy 1.1.
- Provide templates and other resources to assist local collaboratives in budgeting and implementing to best serve the families in their community. Require quarterly reports from local collaboratives as part of the granting process to ensure efforts and activities are on track to achieve the desired outcomes.

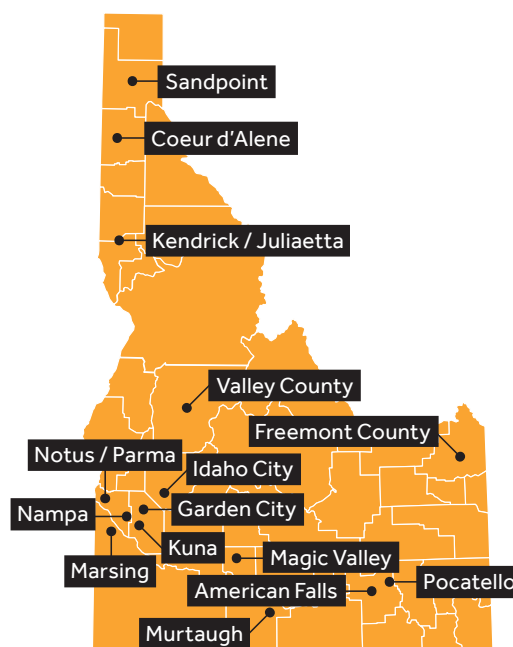
### Strategy 1.4 Leverage local collaboratives as family resource hubs.

- Address multi-generational family needs by networking community resources so that families can connect to other services through the local collaborative network.

FIGURE 5

### Idaho Early Learning Advisory Councils (2020)

ELACs conducted local early learning needs assessments to determine which ECCE services and resources are currently in place in their communities.



SOURCE: Idaho's Needs Assessment (Whitney et al., 2021).  
DATA FROM: Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020, October). *IAEYC early learning collaboratives October 2020 update*. [Report].

**Strategy 1.5 Increase family participation and engagement.**

- Encourage ELACs to ensure that families have opportunities to share their needs and contribute to solutions within their community.
- Strengthen the local collaborative network by bringing all local collaboratives together twice a year for virtual convenings to discuss progress on local systems building. Include panels of parents and families to discuss community progress from the family perspective. (Described in detail in Goal 2.)



**Objective 2: Serve vulnerable, underserved, and rural.**

While there are several initiatives in place to make high quality ECCE available for Idaho’s vulnerable, underserved, and rural families, there is not enough capacity to fulfill the needs of Idaho families (Needs Assessment, p. 71).

“To fully understand the challenges families face when accessing ECCE, it would be beneficial to hear directly from families about their experiences looking for child care, paying for child care, and applying for programs like Head Start and ICCP. Through interviews and firsthand accounts, the state can determine if and how family characteristics...affect preferences for and access to ECCE programs” (Needs Assessment, p. 71).

**Strategy 2.1 Leverage and expand on existing and effective statewide programming.**

- Continue expansion of programs, such as Early Head Start, Head Start, and Idaho Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, as they take a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of Idaho’s families. These programs serve children by providing education, health services, food assistance, parent involvement, and family outreach to engage families in determining additional services they may need.
- Connect more Idaho children to the Infant Toddler Program (ITP). This is a federally funded system of early intervention services to assist Idaho children 0-3 who have developmental delays or health conditions that may result in developmental delays.
- Grow access to Special Education Preschool. This federally funded program provides services to children 3-5 and focuses on the child’s educational needs. The program includes an Individual Education Program (IEP) plan with measurable annual goals and short-term objectives. The child’s family is regularly engaged and informed of their child’s progress.



## Goal 2: Children and Families Prepared, Empowered, and Thriving

*"The health and wellbeing of Idaho's vulnerable families and their children are directly tied to the ability of the state's ECS to provide services" (Needs Assessment, p. 30).*

"Idaho's families, particularly vulnerable families, often are unable to find resources that can help them. When individual organizations that make up Idaho's ECS collaborate, more families and children have access to the resources they need to thrive" (Needs Assessment, p. 30).

Child care is unaffordable, unavailable, and/or out of reach for many Idahoans. Nearly half of the families in the state live in communities that either completely lack licensed child care providers or the ratio of spots to applicants is 3:1. Forty-nine percent of Idaho families live in communities that either completely lack child care options or are child care deserts (Needs Assessment, p. v).

To keep Idaho's economy thriving, the next generation of Idahoans needs to be prepared to fill the jobs of the future. High quality ECCE is key to preparing each generation for success. Children and their families need an effective, coordinated, and accessible ECS that includes state and federal systems and community supports.

Forty percent of Idaho households struggle to make ends meet and 28% of Idaho households are ALICE households—above the federal poverty level but making too little to afford basic household necessities, such as food, housing, transportation, and health care. Idahoans living in rural areas and minorities experience higher rates of poverty compared to urban areas (Needs Assessment, p. 24).

"When families experience hunger, housing insecurity, or are sick but cannot afford to see a doctor, their children's ability to learn decreases" (Needs Assessment, p. 24).

FIGURE 6  
Early Childhood Systems and Supports



SOURCE: Idaho's Needs Assessment. (2021). Whitney, G., Callahan, C. and Himes, K. *Early Childhood Care and Education in Idaho: Idaho Preschool Development Grant Birth-Age 5 Needs Assessment*. Report submitted to Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children and Idaho Early Childhood Advisory Council, February 2021.



### Objective 3: Support collaborative transition and alignment from birth to the early grades.

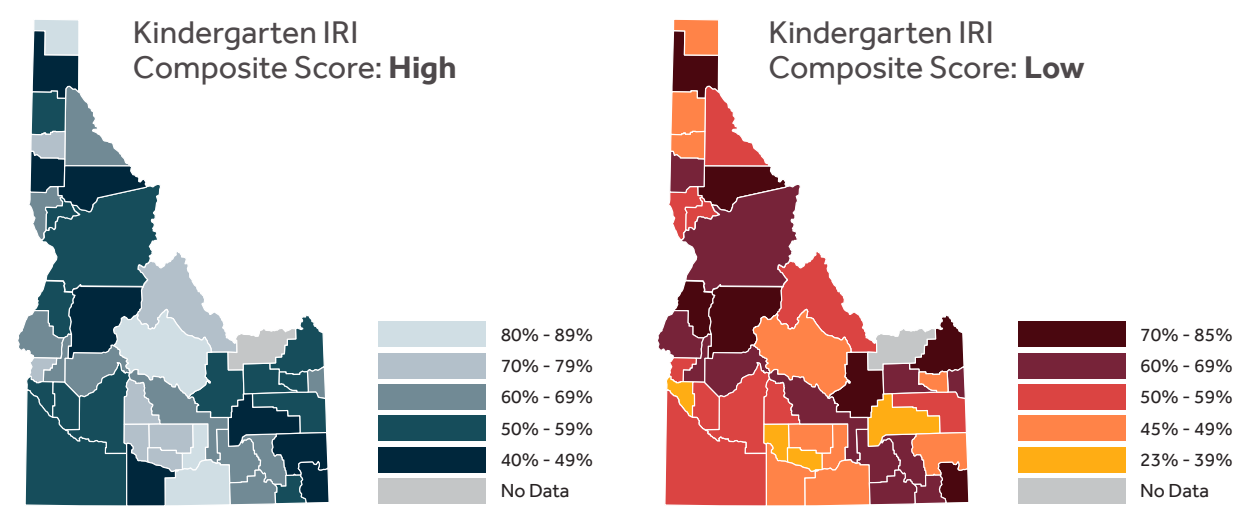
Idaho is committed to increasing the school readiness of Idaho's children, setting children on a trajectory to be on grade level in reading by third grade. To achieve this goal, it is critical that the benefits children receive from high quality ECCE services in a mixed delivery model are carried into the early elementary grades. Ensuring collaboration between ECCE settings and schools can help reduce the likelihood that children will fall behind academically and socially. Parents of young children indicate that they would like public schools to make resources available and that greater collaboration among public schools, ECCE programs, and families is needed (PDG B-5 Renewal Application, 2020).

ECCE educators play an important role in the transition to kindergarten. The Needs Assessment highlighted several examples of collaboration between ECCE programs and school districts, including Head Start and Early Head Start and community schools that have ECCE programs and preschools onsite (Needs Assessment, p. 83). In stakeholder engagement events, ECCE educators “identified stronger collaboration and communication among ECCE providers, school districts, and families as an opportunity for improvement” (Needs Assessment, p. 83).

The state has designed a series of projects to engage families, ECCE educators, kindergarten teachers, and school administrators in planning and implementing successful transitions between ECCE programs and kindergarten, focusing on connecting children, connecting families, connecting schools, and connecting communities. This is detailed in strategies listed below.

“Every child in Idaho is given a literacy screening when they enter kindergarten, the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI). The IRI is administered in the fall and in the spring. Scores from the IRI administered in the fall indicate literacy levels when children begin kindergarten. Scores from the IRI administered in the spring indicate literacy levels children have as they exit kindergarten. As Idaho’s only measure of early literacy, IRI scores are essential to understanding how children fare in terms of early literacy and school readiness” (Needs Assessment, p. 54).

FIGURE 7  
Spring IRI Composite Scores (School Year 2018–2019)



SOURCE: Idaho’s Needs Assessment (Whitney et al., 2021).  
DATA FROM: Idaho State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Assessment & graduation rate results*. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/assessment/accountability/results.html>

**Strategy 3.1 Create school readiness teams to facilitate smooth transitions for children and families from ECCE & K-12 systems.**

- Engage local collaboratives to obtain information on the specific supports and challenges for families and ECCE programs in transitioning children from ECCE to school within the local collaboratives.

**Strategy 3.2 Amplify kids of Idaho early literacy campaign.**

- Partner with Lakeshore Learning, to expand this statewide literacy campaign. The Kids of Idaho Love to Learn! children's activity book, with its accompanying bookbag and early learning materials, is distributed to children entering kindergarten in partnership with local schools.
- Create a second Kids of Idaho activity book with a focus on outdoor learning. Both Kids of Idaho children's activity books promote family engagement and enhance school readiness skills.

**Strategy 3.3 Launch the Steps to Kindergarten Outreach Project.**

- Hire a School Readiness Transition Specialist to coordinate the project.
- Engage families, ECCE programs and educators, local collaboratives, kindergarten teachers, school districts, and libraries in planning and implementing successful transitions through a focus on connecting children, connecting families, connecting schools, and connecting communities.
- Develop print/electronic materials, video-based modules, and public service announcement spots, among other communications.
- Support statewide effort through the expansion of Idaho Public Television's Idaho Ready to Learn Campaign.

**Strategy 3.4 Expand READY! for Kindergarten.**

- Partner with libraries, school districts, and local collaboratives throughout the state in this effort. This training series provides parents and ECCE programs with developmentally appropriate learning experiences and resources for young children, ages birth through five, to enhance school readiness skills.
- Increase access for families, particularly those who are vulnerable or underserved, to quality early learning materials and workshops through the READY! for Kindergarten program expansion.



**Strategy 3.5 Develop collaboratively the Step Up Kindergarten campaign.**

- Establish local school readiness teams, including kindergarten teachers and school administrators (public, private and charter schools), families, and ECCE educators.
- Integrate school readiness teams into the local collaborative network, supporting children at the community level.
- Work with kindergarten settings, establish recommendations for child/teacher visits in preparation for kindergarten, develop resources to ensure smooth transitions for vulnerable and underserved populations, and connect families with community resources.
- Explore options, needs, and costs through research and, possibly, pilot programs with the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) as described in their strategic plan.

**Strategy 3.6 Partner with Idaho Commission for Libraries for Outreach.**

- Partner with the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) and local libraries to continue serving as a source of community-based resources for families with young children. ICfL's Library Reading Challenges supports literacy outreach efforts while promoting the love of learning.
- Purchase children's books to enhance the inventory at libraries, library branches, and bookmobiles to encourage shared literacy experiences. Consider including materials to support multi-language learners.

**Strategy 3.7 Improve families' ability to identify disabilities and developmental delays.**

- Expand family engagement in developmental monitoring, resulting in developmental screening and referral for early intervention services.

**Strategy 3.8 Launch Idaho Public Television Early Learning Campaign.**

- Translate new and existing Ready to Learn public service announcements to serve a larger segment of the population.
- Create a documentary that features the history and importance of early learning in Idaho. Explore the possibility of creating a family-friendly app to encourage engagement in fun, early learning experiences.

**Strategy 3.9 Expand and leverage the framework of community school programming.**

- Explore local options to connect vulnerable and underserved families and communities to abundant resources via community school programming.
- Leverage public schools as resource hubs for parents and families who need local resources and support. Community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities.

**Strategy 3.10 Support families with newborns.**

- Connect with regional hospitals to provide a resource bag for parents that includes information about child development, local services, and a children's board book.

## Objective 4: Empower family choices.

The statewide and local collaborative needs assessments revealed that families often lack information on available ECCE resources and services to support them and their children. To make informed decisions about the best ECCE options for their children, families need a clear understanding of what constitutes a quality program and where to find it in their community. Through this objective, a unified approach to family resource and referral is created. This is possible through coordination of and access to services by mapping, developing, and disseminating information about a single point of access system.

"There are a few consolidated information points that direct families to ECCE providers" across Idaho (Needs Assessment, p. 79). Idaho organizations provide multiple web pages to help families explore their ECCE options. "However, not all the resources are coordinated and the path leading families to the appropriate ECCE services for their children may be unclear. Often, families are left navigating multiple websites, which can be confusing and frustrating" (Needs Assessment, p. 77).

One example of a consolidated information point is the IdahoSTARS online database and their resource specialists, which helps families find ECCE providers in the RISE database. Participation is voluntary; non-participating ECCE providers do not appear in these searches (Needs Assessment, p. 79). Another example is Idaho Careline (211), which offers access to local resource specialists that work with families over the phone to find the right care and education for their child (Needs Assessment, p. 76). As well, "the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) website includes comprehensive information that connects vulnerable families to a range of programs and services, including the Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program; the ICCP; screening and intervention services; and the ITP, which helps children with disabilities" (Needs Assessment, p. 76).

The proposed single point of access system provides families access to coordinated health, mental health, early intervention, early childhood special education, and social services, and streamlines necessary referrals to services.

### Strategy 4.1 Expand the family portal of the statewide Idaho STARS RISE database.

- Assist families in conducting advanced searches for child care, finding information related to child development, and participating in free professional development sessions to support early learning experiences for their young children.
- Incorporate non-participating providers.

**Strategy 4.2 Coordinate existing comprehensive websites.**

- Work with each comprehensive website, encouraging alignment with information from other comprehensive websites. This way, families can navigate a single website, and find easily the appropriate ECCE services for their child.

**Strategy 4.3 Map existing access points.**

- Create a map listing existing locally controlled, high quality, and family-focused programs and educators that support the optimal growth and development of young children.
- Include various types of support services for ECCE broadly, infant mental health, home visiting programs, young children with or at risk of developmental disabilities, and more.

**Strategy 4.4 Partner with United Way of the Treasure Valley to coordinate a single point of access system.**

- Leverage United Way of Treasure Valley's relationships to lead this effort through statewide collaboration and strategic partnerships.
- Integrate resources that have been identified through the mapping process. Examples of referral services and resources to explore for inclusion are child care; the ITP and preschool special education for young children with disabilities; home visiting programs; infant mental health supports; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs; and child protection and child support services.
- Build awareness of the single point of access system through a statewide outreach campaign.

**Strategy 4.5 Partner each local collaborative with their region's Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) office (connected with IdahoSTARS).**

- Connect families to available ECCE slots and share relevant information so families can more easily find openings through the IdahoSTARS family portal.
- Continue to build awareness of the single point of access system through the outreach campaign.

**Strategy 4.6 Launch the Step Up Idaho campaign.**

- Highlight the collaborative approach necessary to improve ECCE quality across Idaho through this new statewide initiative.
- Support families across the state and define their role in enhancing early learning through the messaging of this campaign.
- Increase family awareness of the importance of quality ECCE experiences, understanding of the continuum of developmentally appropriate school readiness skills, and ways families can promote smooth transitions from early childhood settings to school.



#### Strategy 4.7 Create access to early childhood mental health.

- Provide families with more access to mental health services. Through collaborative efforts with early intervention, pediatric health care providers, social service agencies, and child care programs, the early childhood mental health system is expanded with access to scholarships to cover infant mental health endorsement fees.
- Effectively serve disadvantaged and rural families and children through these efforts to increase capacity to support ECCE mental health needs.

#### Strategy 4.8 Engage the Idaho STEM Action Center.

- Partner with the Idaho STEM Action Center to bring developmentally appropriate curricula to families, including hands-on, inquiry-based learning experiences that support developmental growth in math, literacy, critical thinking, and social-emotional learning. These skills are powerful predictors of success in school and throughout life. (Also referenced in Strategy 10.5, with focus on educator engagement.)



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## Goal 3: Resources for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Educators Expanded

One of the major themes in Idaho's Needs Assessment is that the quality of ECCE is impacted negatively by limited access to ECCE educator professional development programs, credentials and certificates, higher education degrees, and workforce supports. Expanding resources for ECCE educators increases the quality of ECCE.

Resources include career development opportunities; credentials, certificates, and degrees; recruitment; quality and curriculum; regional and statewide networks; and professional respect and compensation. Each of these is necessary to keep Idaho's experienced ECCE educators in the profession, attract new ECCE educators, decrease the number of child care deserts, increase quality, expand family choices, and support communities.

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### Objective 5: Elevate the ECCE profession.

One of the three major themes that surfaced during every Needs Assessment stakeholder engagement event was professionalization of ECCE careers. Stakeholders felt that ECCE providers are not viewed as a valuable part of the education system. Substantial discussion centered around "the perception that ECCE educators are viewed as akin to 'babysitters'" (Needs Assessment, p. 89).

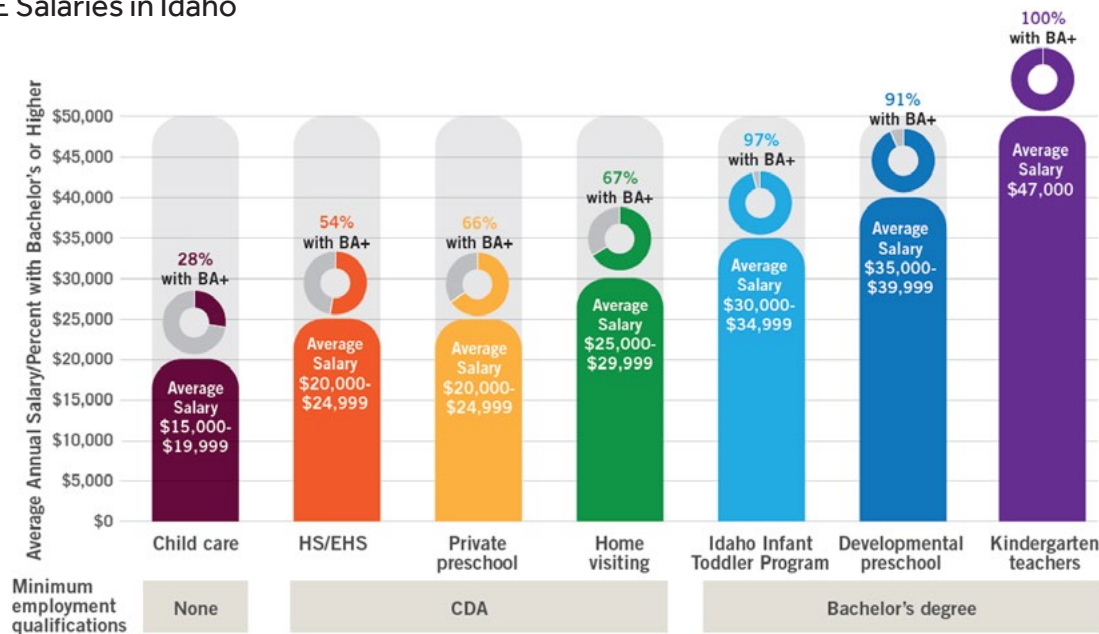
"In 2019, hourly wages for Idaho child care workers ranged from an entry wage of \$8.40 to \$14.07 (90<sup>th</sup> percentile) per hour. This equates to \$17,480 to \$29,270 annually. The median annual salary for a full-time child care worker was \$20,970" (Idaho Department of Labor; Needs Assessment, p. 72).



"Preschool teachers in Idaho earned slightly higher wages, from \$9.84 (entry) to \$17.55 (90<sup>th</sup> percentile) per hour, with a mean of \$11.52. This translates to \$20,470 to \$36,510 annually. The median annual salary for a full-time preschool teacher was \$23,960" (Idaho Department of Labor; Needs Assessment, p. 72).

FIGURE 8

### ECCE Salaries in Idaho



SOURCE: Higher Education Report. (2021). Etter, K., Dahlin, M., Schroeder, E. and Capizzano, J. *Mapping the landscape of early childhood credential programs in Idaho*. The Policy Equity Group. [Report].

There is often little financial incentive for ECCE educators to remain in their professions. ECCE educators often are lost "to other jobs with more competitive wages or benefits, such as retail and food service. Programs in certain areas of Idaho also lost ECCE educators to Montana and Washington, which offered better compensation" (Needs Assessment, p. 72). ECCE providers cannot "afford to pay employees more without passing the cost to families for whom the price of care is often already very high" (Needs Assessment, p. 72).

#### Strategy 5.1 Modify the language used to describe ECCE educators.

- Shift from "child care provider" to ECCE "teacher and educator."
- Reflect that ECCE educators are professionals that contribute significantly to early learning and education.

#### Strategy 5.2 Increase ECCE educator compensation, which is key to retaining teaching staff.

- Develop a partnership with state agencies and other sources to explore funding options, in order to offer ECCE quality and availability necessary to achieve Idaho's school readiness and early literacy goals.

### Strategy 5.3 Provide financial support for career advancement opportunities.

- Partner with local businesses, economic development organizations, and regional partners to support child care startup and expansion, cover ECCE licensing fees, and pay for training,
- Leverage additional opportunities through the local collaboratives and ELACs.

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## Objective 6: Expand professional development opportunities for ECCE educators.

The top three themes that emerged from stakeholder engagement events are captured in the Needs Assessment. Professional development for ECCE educators is the top theme, identified by families, parents, communities, ECCE professionals, the ECAC, business leaders, and legislators during every stakeholder engagement event. “Stakeholders also expressed the need to recruit, retain, and pay ECCE providers in a way that fosters professional development in the ECCE field” (Needs Assessment, p. 89).

Idaho ECCE providers identified particular professional development topics that would be of benefit, such as “special education and inclusion, working with dual language learners, and program administration or business practices” (Needs Assessment, p. 59). Home-based ECCE providers identified accounting, marketing, and other business skills (Child Trends, 2020b; Needs Assessment, p. 59).

It is important to note that ECCE providers and educators identified access to the internet and lack of experience with technology as obstacles to participating in online professional development and other offerings. As strategies are implemented, providing support in these areas, as well as access to broadband, is imperative.

### Strategy 6.1 Establish the Early Learning Institute.

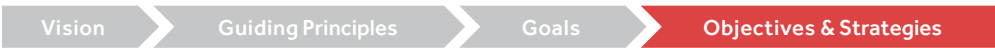
- Attract a full-time founding director.
- Work collaboratively with partners to develop interdisciplinary content, including Act Early Idaho; Early Childhood Special Education; Early Childhood Training Consultants; early learning consultants; Head Start/Early Head Start; Healthy Steps; Idaho Children’s Trust Fund; Idaho Commission for Libraries; IDHW; Idaho Parents Unlimited; Idaho Public Television; Idaho STARS; Idaho STEM Action Center; ISDE; K-12 education (public, private, and charter schools); the ITP; local collaboratives; Lee Pesky Learning Center; occupational and physical therapy; and speech-language-hearing representatives.

**Strategy 6.2 Expand virtual professional development programming through the Early Learning Institute.**

- Include the knowledge and skills of ECCE educators.
- Garner broad participation across the state, including rural ECCE educators.
- Connect ECCE educators and K-3 teachers through the Institute.
- Provide free, ongoing professional development opportunities through in-person classes, webinars, online modules, and a video-based training series. Interpretation and translation services provided.

**Strategy 6.3 Expand professional development opportunities focused on child development.**

- Include infant-toddler development, brain development, executive function skills, social-emotional development, trauma and resiliency broadly, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), developmental delays and developmental challenges, positive guidance, creative and visual arts, STEM, early literacy, supportive transitions to school, and other evidence-based ECCE topics.
- Strengthen educators' knowledge and ability to support the needs of children with sensory sensitivities, autism, developmental delays, and other disabilities.
- Offer training in developmental monitoring protocols to ECCE educators.
- Invite cohorts of ECCE educators, including non-licensed home-based child care providers, and families to access professional development offerings.



# Objective 7: Develop aligned credentials and certifications for ECCE educators.

As Idaho builds a comprehensive, mixed delivery ECCE system, it is important to ensure that ECCE educators have credentials and training that align with professional standards and provide career paths for advancement. At present, it is difficult for ECCE facilities to recruit qualified ECCE educators from within Idaho; credentialed ECCE educators typically are employed and not job seeking (PDG B-5 Renewal Application, 2020).

**Strategy 7.1 Create a competency-based credential system.**

- Recognize, reward, and center competency-based credentials in ECCE.
- Include achievement outside of attainment of college degree or certificate, such as participation in professional development, and hours/years of experience working in an ECCE setting.

Strategy 7.2 Offer a nationally-recognized credential, Child Development Associate® (CDA).

- Hire a full-time CDA specialist to create and lead CDA training cohorts in high-need areas of Idaho.
- Award 50 CDA credentials to ECCE educators, including Family Child Care (FCC) providers.
- Support participants with financial scholarships.
- Coordinate opportunities to take the online CDA exam.
- Work closely with IdahoSTARS, the FCC/Infant Toddler Network (described in Strategy 10.4), and local collaboratives.
- Utilize the IdahoSTARS registry to update provider credentials.

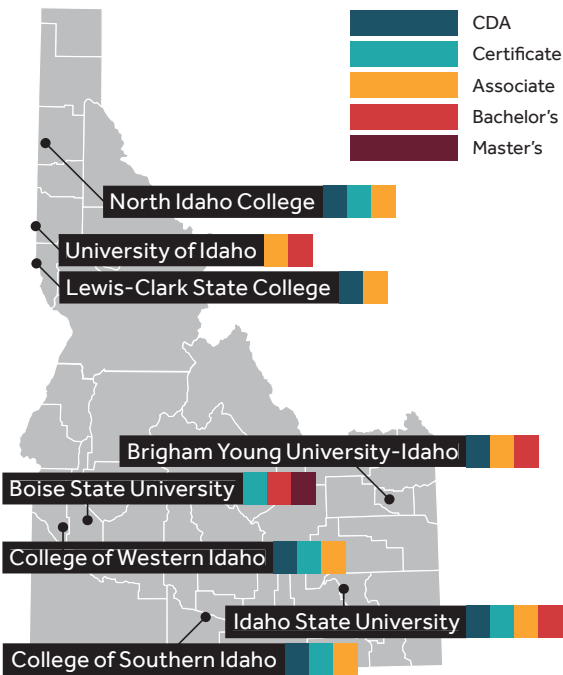


Objective 8: Increase the number of degreed ECCE educators in Idaho.

In Idaho, the projected return on investment (ROI) with respect to earning a degree in early childhood education is less than earning a degree in other fields (Higher Education Report, p. 15). Earning an associate or bachelor’s early childhood degree early in career is a cost-effective investment; however, earning a bachelor’s degree mid-career results in \$0.12 in return for every dollar invested (Higher Education Report, p. 15). For an associate degree, the ROI is negative, with a loss of \$0.05 on every dollar (Higher Education Report, p. 15).

“Idaho’s early childhood workforce has lower rates of college attainment than the state’s general population, which has one of the lowest rates of educational attainment in the country” (Higher Education Report, p. 7). Idaho’s early childhood degree programs at institutions of higher education report steady enrollment and supportive admissions policies; however, these programs have low overall graduation rates, as well as difficulty attracting and retaining

FIGURE 9  
Early Childhood Degree/Certificate Programs in Idaho



SOURCE: Higher Education Report. (2021). Etter, K., Dahlin, M., Schroeder, E. and Capizzano, J. Mapping the landscape of early childhood credential programs in Idaho. The Policy Equity Group. [Report].

diverse populations of students and adequately responding to the needs of non-traditional students (Higher Education Report, p. 21).

For Idaho institutions of higher education that grant ECCE credentials, “over half of students at the bachelor’s level and over two-thirds of students in other programs do not graduate within 150 percent of the expected time” (Higher Education Report, p. 11). “Credentials are granted to BIPOC early childhood professionals at lower rates than their white peers, and are more likely to be at lower levels of education (e.g., CDA, technical certificate, associate degree)” (Higher Education Report, p. 7).

**Strategy 8.1 Recognize multiple routes to degree attainment in ECCE.**

- Flip the classroom; rather than ask students to spend the majority of their time in higher education settings with a small amount of time spent in the ECCE classroom, those already employed in ECCE “earn while they learn” through on-the-job training.
- Explore programs that incorporate a mentor-coach and supplemental higher education curriculum, with scheduled time off, similar to an apprentice program.

**Strategy 8.2 Facilitate access to and completion of ECCE degree opportunities.**

- Expand financial support to attend institutions of higher education and complete ECCE degrees. Build on the IdahoSTARS scholarship program, with attention to limit work requirements, so full-time studies can be pursued.
- Support the recruitment and success of non-traditional students (e.g., part-time, currently working, older than 25) and students from groups that have been historically disenfranchised from higher education. Example of innovative models include the BYU-Pathways program and University of Idaho’s Indigenous Knowledge for Effective Education Program (IKEEP).
- Expand offerings via concurrent enrollment programs, which provide high school students the opportunity to enroll in college-level classes and earn college credits, with no tuition cost to the student.
- Encourage high school students to choose ECCE education as a career path, and place students with mentor-teachers in ECCE settings.



# Objective 9: Support ECCE educators through statewide and local networks.

Families, communities, educators, and stakeholders are connected through Idaho’s local collaboratives. As described in Goal 1, the collaboratives are designed by local experts and stakeholders, and deliver high quality ECCE that supports each community’s unique needs, incorporates locally-based approaches, and utilizes local solutions.



Over the next two years, the number of Idaho's local collaboratives will expand from 15 to 20 regions. Through this expansion and the concomitant creation of the Local Collaborative Network of Learners, a statewide network of ECCE educators, described in Strategy 9.2, ECCE educators will be able to share their experiences and best practices in both local and statewide manners.

#### **Strategy 9.1 Foster local convenings of ECCE educators.**

- Hold twice yearly, day-long convenings at the local level, including at least one local collaborative and the neighboring communities.
- Center the convenings around ECCE educators, and incorporate relevant programming, professional development, networking, and awards/recognition for outstanding ECCE educators.
- Provide opportunities for ECCE educators to share best practices, learn from other ECCE educators participating in local collaboratives, and connect with K-3 teachers.
- Invite and encourage ECCE educators in degree programs to attend.

#### **Strategy 9.2 Cultivate a statewide ECCE network.**

- Hold twice yearly, day-long statewide convenings, with in-person and remote participation options and financial support for travel.
- Center the convenings around ECCE educators participating in the local collaboratives, the Local Collaborative Network of Learners.
- Recognize ECCE educator outstanding contributions through an annual awards ceremony.
- Provide opportunities to share best practices, progress on local systems building, and examples of successful local partnerships.
- Invite and encourage ECCE educators not connected with a local collaborative, ECCE educators in degree programs, and K-3 teachers to attend.

#### **Strategy 9.3 Create a statewide FCC network in partnership with Wonderschool.**

- Support the startup and sustainability of home-based child care programs.
- Emphasize quality care for infants and toddlers.
- Encourage the sharing of best practices.

#### **Strategy 9.4 Formalize ECCE educator mentoring.**

- Develop opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring, connecting local collaboratives and regions of the state.
- Support mentoring that connects experienced and new ECCE educators.

## Objective 10: Expand opportunities to improve ECCE quality.

Idaho’s Needs Assessment defines quality ECCE as “licensed, early learning environments staffed by educated professionals that promote positive relationships; cultivate social, emotional, physical, and cognitive learning and development; empower families to participate in their child’s education; and create safe, nurturing, and inclusive learning experiences” (p. 52).

At present, participation in *STQ (Steps to Quality)*, a Quality Rating and Improvement Program (QRIS) for Idaho’s ECCE providers administered by IdahoSTARS, is voluntary. “The *STQ* program seeks to improve the physical space for ECCE programs by having facility benchmarks at each quality rating” (Need Assessment, p. 52). Very few of Idaho’s licensed ECCE providers participate in *STQ* (Needs Assessment, p. 52).

Table 1  
Providers Participating in *Steps to Quality* (2020)

Total Providers*	<i>Steps to Quality</i> Participants**	Lowest Level	Highest Level	Participating, Not Yet Rated
1,646	219	23	38	76

SOURCE: Idaho’s Needs Assessment (Whitney et al., 2021)  
\*DATA FROM: Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020). *Child care gap assessment – Idaho*. <https://childcaregap.org/>  
\*\*DATA FROM: Based on RISE database numbers provided by IdahoSTARS. November 2020.

“In Idaho, a state license for an ECCE program is required only if a provider is paid to care for seven or more children. Cities can create their own licensing structure, as long as it meets minimum state licensing guidelines. Eight cities in Idaho have their own licensing requirements” (Needs Assessment, p. 52).

“Achieving Idaho state or city minimum licensing standards is burdensome for many ECCE providers, which may discourage providers from pursuing quality standards that require additional time and effort” (Needs Assessment, p. 53). “Idaho state and city licensing requirements and *STQ* help ECCE providers ensure that learning environments are safe and healthy for children” (Needs Assessment, p. 56). “Training is required only for ECCE providers that are licensed. Additional training requirements vary for ECCE providers, depending on their program’s participation in different state initiatives, such as *STQ* and the ICCP” (Needs Assessment, p. 52).

“One reason that providers might not participate in *STQ* is one of the standards for increasing quality ratings requires a child to staff ratio that is smaller than what state or city licensing requires. Increasing staff costs could extend to increased costs for families,” which could be problematic as many families have a difficult time affording ECCE (Needs Assessment, p. 53).

**Strategy 10.1 Expand Step Up Idaho, a statewide quality outreach campaign that focuses on elevating ECCE program quality.**

- Increase ECCE program participation in Idaho's QRIS, STQ.
- Grow the number of Successful Start grants, which support ECCE programs through stipends that are tied to Quality Improvement Action Plans. Fourteen grants awarded to date.

**Strategy 10.2 Offer quality coaching stipends.**

- Support ECCE educators (center-based and FCC) who develop and implement quality improvement action plans in partnership with quality coaches (through the CCRC office or early learning quality coordinators).
- Couple stipend level with tiered steps of engagement in STQ.
- Expand the quality coaching stipend budget (currently 25 ECCE educators per year, with quality stipend maximum of \$400, to be used for purchase of materials or equipment to support quality improvement efforts), increasing participation and impact.

**Strategy 10.3 Revise Idaho's QRIS to integrate the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) as a key quality indicator.**

*CLASS® is used in 23 state quality systems, and has been proven to help ECCE educators become more effective in closing early learning gaps and improving literacy, math, and social and emotional outcomes for children. All training is offered in English and Spanish.*

- Hire a full-time CLASS® Specialist, to work in partnership with IdahoSTARS to ensure integrated statewide coordination and implementation.
- Grow statewide capacity by increasing the number of ECCE programs and teachers who will be knowledgeable about and prepared to improve program quality.
  - » Provide CLASS® overview sessions to ECCE programs.
  - » Train ECCE educators in CLASS® Observation, building capacity to provide assessments. Participants will become observers for each tool.
  - » Increase the number of CLASS® Observers to prepare coaches, mentors, and administrators to conduct formal and informal classroom observations; support ECCE programs with respect to improving quality and school readiness; garner data on classroom quality to inform coaching approaches; and collect data to support quality improvement as part of QRIS.
- Offer CLASS® Pre-K and Infant/Toddler overview training to ECCE educators, CCRC, and Head Start/Early Head Start teams, including coaches, mentors, and administrators.
- Encourage CLASS® Observers to implement CLASS® Assessments in ECCE settings.
- Provide funding for the annual renewal of CLASS® Observers to ensure reliability and continuity.

**Strategy 10.4 Build capacity to serve infants and toddlers, particularly in rural areas.**

- Leverage the FCC/Infant Toddler Network to support ECCE educators (described in Strategy 7.2).
- Provide startup assistance, ongoing technical assistance, mentoring, and opportunities to share best practices.
- Work closely with the Infant Toddler Early Learning Quality Coordinator and early learning business coordinator, in partnership with local collaboratives and IdahoSTARS.
- Partner with Wonderschool to provide ongoing business infrastructure for the Infant Toddler Network.

**Strategy 10.5 Support curriculum-guided instruction.**

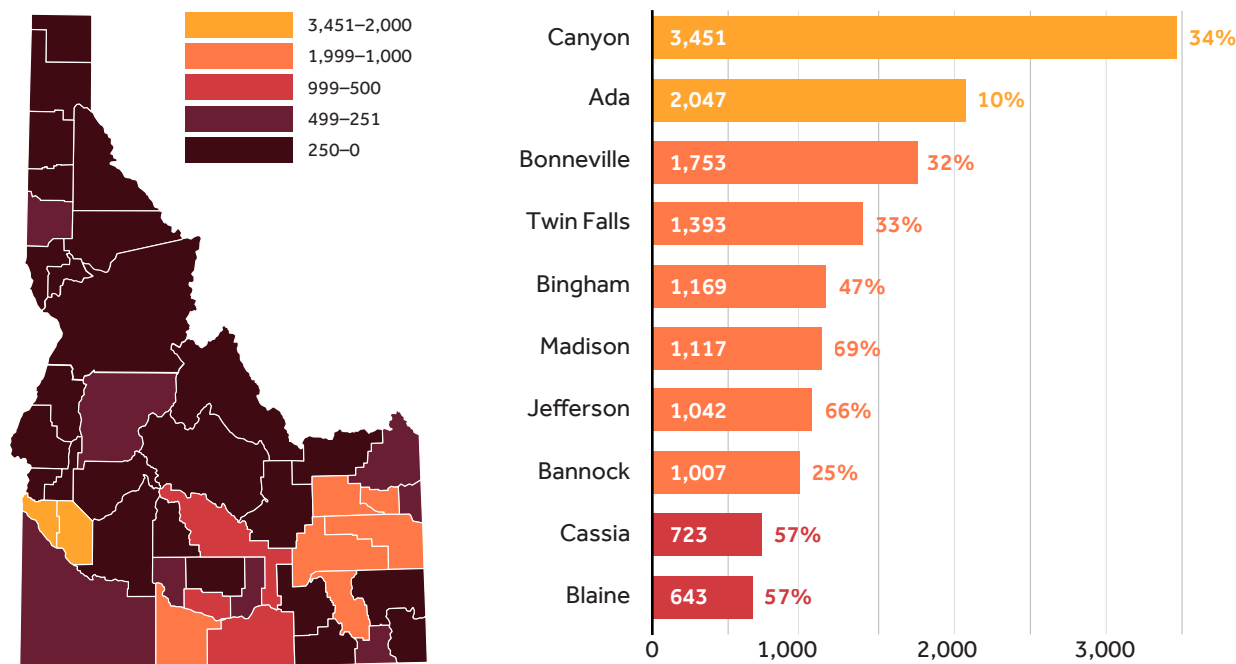
- Work with the Idaho STEM Action Center to bring developmentally appropriate curricula to ECCE educators and families, including hands-on, inquiry-based learning experiences that support developmental growth in math, literacy, critical thinking, and social-emotional learning.
- Expand evidence-based offerings. Examples are the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences What Works Clearinghouse and the Idaho AEYC/Children’s Reading Foundation READY! for Kindergarten.



**Objective 11: Offer financial assistance to ECCE providers to open, expand, and sustain ECCE programs.**

“Nearly 50% of Idahoans live in communities that either completely lack licensed child care providers, or the providers are so scarce that there are more than three children for every child care space. The lack of availability is greater in rural and low-income communities and in communities with higher percentages of people of color” (Bipartisan Policy Center; Malik et al., 2018; Needs Assessment, p. v).

FIGURE 10  
Child Care Gap by County (2020)



SOURCE: Idaho's Needs Assessment (Whitney et al., 2021).  
DATA FROM: Smith, L. & Bagley, A. (2020). *Child care gap assessment - Idaho*. Data supplied December 2020.

The Needs Assessment states that “lack of available ECCE programs and providers is, in part, related to overall funding for ECCE” (p. 73). “Without additional funding for ECCE...it is unlikely that ECCE providers will be able to offer the ECCE quality and availability that are necessary to achieve Idaho’s school readiness and early literacy goals” (Needs Assessment, p. 73).

**Strategy 11.1 Launch the child care startup grants program to increase and enhance the supply of quality ECCE options.**

- Focus on vulnerable, underserved, and rural.
- Grant maximums: \$25,000 per center-based program, \$10,000 per FCC program.

**Strategy 11.2 Provide training, mentoring, and ongoing technical assistance for starting and sustaining child care programs and businesses.**

- Hire two early learning business coordinators.
- Utilize small business development guides, such as the child care-specific guide, developed by Child Care Aware of America®.



**Strategy 11.3 Cultivate partnerships with local and state and business communities to support ECCE startups in high need areas, including rural communities.**

- Led by the early learning business coordinators.
- Leverage these partnerships to expand offerings in Strategies 8.1 and 8.2.

**Strategy 11.4 Support FCC networks.**

- Leverage the collaboration with Wonderschool, which offers business infrastructure for sustainable operations.



Vision

Guiding Principles

Goals

Objectives &amp; Strategies

## Goal 4: Timely, Actionable, and Accessible Data Available

The success of this strategic plan – the goals, objectives, and strategies – depends on effective use of data to drive decision-making and ensure that all Idaho children are ready for school and able to read by third grade. Idaho needs to increase its capacity to collect, integrate, analyze, and disseminate data to inform decisions at family, local, and state levels.

Currently, data are approached on a program-by-program basis. “To collect information about Idaho children and early education, researchers must rely on data from Idaho state agencies, such as IDHW and ISDE, nonprofit partners, city licensing authorities, and state licensing authorities” (Needs Assessment, p. 44).

“While estimates of the number of ECCE programs and educators working in Idaho are available, information about the number of children in and location of these programs is lacking. Idaho does not have a system to collect information about how all Idaho children experience ECCE, including non-licensed and early learning activities conducted in the home. There is no centralized way to understand which Idaho children and families access multiple services, such as Head Start and disability services, and which Idaho children and families access none. Because there is no way at present to create an unduplicated count of children and understand who is receiving service and who is not, some families receive an abundance of support and others receive none” (Needs Assessment, p. 44).

Idaho does not have an integrated data system that connects ECCE settings (either in or outside of the home), school readiness, early literacy skills, and the child’s ability to succeed in grade school, high school, and beyond (Needs Assessment, p. 44). The lack of an integrated data system means that databases cannot communicate with one another; it is impossible to know which children receive services and the impact of those services on development and well-being (Needs Assessment, p. vi, p. 44).

An integrated data system would foster supports for all Idaho children from early childhood through their K-12 education. Such a data infrastructure would enhance service delivery, community planning, systems building, and outcome reporting.



## Objective 12: Strengthen data-driven community planning.

Local collaboratives are an integral part of collecting community-level data. Utilizing local and state data and resources will result in strong local collaborative strategic plans that address community-level needs and achieve the greatest impact for Idaho’s children and families.

### Strategy 12.1 Support local collaboratives in identifying and implementing local approaches to data collection and use.

- Include family and ECCE educator needs, as well as ECCE program quality and availability.
  - » Connect these needs and data with the one-stop ECCE information portal, to further support families with respect to appropriate ECCE services for their child (Objective 4).
- Offer trainings on collecting and aggregating community-level data, with focus on data sharing and data governance barriers and protection of family privacy.
- Create a process of continuous quality improvement.

### Strategy 12.2 Increase access to local data resources.

- Bring community and state leaders together to understand how data can support the well-being of children and families at the community level.
- Facilitate collaboration across sectors and partners.
- Engage families through publicly available data.



## Objective 13: Create and use an ECCE dashboard to support Idaho’s young children and their families.

Idaho is working toward creating a way to capture an unduplicated count of children participating in ECCE programs. A primary aim in collecting and reporting data is to make data-informed decisions about policies, and instructional and professional development practices.

The ECAC has been charged with examining and making recommendations for an early childhood integrated data system, which will include recommendations for data governance and privacy protections in accordance with current best practices in data sharing and data use. The ECAC also will explore opportunities to connect ECCE data with the Idaho Statewide Longitudinal Data System (ISLDS).

### Strategy 13.1 Convene partners and stakeholders to chart a vision for ECCE dashboard.

- Conduct focus groups with parents and stakeholders, including local collaboratives, to collect input and identify key data elements.
- Conceptualize the appropriate data governance structure and identify a data system design.
- Explore visualization possibilities with respect to data.

### Strategy 13.2 Identify data gaps.

- Work with IDHW, ISDE, nonprofit partners, city licensing authorities, and state licensing authorities to ensure that counts of Idaho's young children are unduplicated.
- Partner with the Idaho State Board of Education to integrate school readiness data (i.e., number of students participating in early readiness opportunities facilitated by the state).
- Initiate collection of data on licensing violations, and include this in the dashboard.
- Address gaps in information as identified in the Needs Assessment:
  - » The needs of specific communities, including families experiencing homelessness, families with children who have or are at risk of having disabilities, and migrant, tribal, Hispanic, and refugee families.
  - » Unlicensed home-based child care programs.
  - » Number of children who are in the care of friends, family, and neighbors.
  - » Family and ECCE program/educator needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as ongoing, post-pandemic needs.

### Strategy 13.3 Determine an unduplicated count of children and families participating in state programs.

- Merge duplicate records of children and families across programs while the ECAC examines and makes recommendations for the early childhood integrated data system.
  - » State data encompass the child care subsidy program, Part C and Part B, Section 619 of IDEA, the MIECHV Program, and local Head Start grantees.

### Strategy 13.4 Support data literacy.

- Provide training and information to a variety of stakeholders on the use of data to inform and improve quality.
- Incorporate dashboard material into presentations to community leaders, legislators, and other interested parties.
- Assess technology and data literacy needs in the next iterations of the local and statewide needs assessments.

## Data and federal and state statutory requirements

Student data privacy statutes, rules, and regulations focus on what student data may be collected, and how that student data is collected, stored, and shared. These laws apply directly to educational institutions and may also apply directly, or indirectly, to other third parties, such as educational service providers and vendors.

The existing federal and state statutory and regulatory framework has been interpreted to only explicitly apply to data related to K-12 students. However, the U.S. Department of Education has suggested that these laws will “apply equally to education organizations at other levels” as more states continue to develop and implement early childhood education programs.

This indicates that compliance with federal student data privacy laws may be triggered through the receipt of federal funding or the use of shared data systems, such as the ISLDS.

There are four separate, but complementary, federal laws, and one state law, that should be considered when collecting, storing, and sharing information related to children.

- The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, [20 U.S.C. § 1232g](#); [34 C.F.R. § 99](#)
- The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, [20 U.S.C. § 1232h](#); [34 C.F.R. § 98](#)
- The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, [15 U.S.C. §§ 6501-6506](#), [16 C.F.R. § 312](#)
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, [20 U.S.C. § 1400](#); [34 C.F.R. § 300](#)
- The Idaho Transparency and Accountability Act of 2014, [Idaho Code § 33-133](#)

In addition to mandating the protection of personally identifiable information, as defined in each statute, these laws provide specific disclosure and notice requirements of which educational agencies, vendors, and other third parties must comply.





# Sustainability Plan and Next Steps

As stated in the State of Idaho Executive Order No. 2019-14:

*"The long-term academic success of children is dependent on third grade reading proficiency with a foundation built on the language and literacy experiences of children from birth to age five."*

*"The deliberate coordination of Idaho's public and private early childhood services will allow for greater efficiencies, expand parent choice, and allow for a more accurate inventory of existing services, programs, and initiatives for use by families and policymakers."*

*"Idaho's quality of life and long-term economic prosperity depend on a well-educated workforce."*

This Executive Order created the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) to oversee the execution of this strategic plan, which supports the vision, mission, goals, and strategies for early education in Idaho. The ECAC's role in both the conceptualization and implementation of the activities will ensure sustainability given the broad membership of key stakeholders as well as its statutory directives and gubernatorial support.

The cross-sector representation within this group is a key asset to achieving the following charge provided in the same Executive Order:

*"Develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing federal, state, and local childcare and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations."*

The ECAC should consider the responses to the following questions as they begin to operationalize this strategic plan for Idaho:

1. What structures and roles should be delineated within the ECAC to operationalize this plan?
2. What key measures will be used to gauge success?
3. On what timeline will success be measured?
4. Which activities require sustainability funding and how much funding is needed to sustain that work?
5. What potential sources of funding exist or can be leveraged?
6. What implications and detrimental effects on children and families can be expected in the absence of funding?
7. What opportunities exist for cross-collaboration with state agencies and the private sector?

The Needs Assessment identified several metrics to evaluate the success and opportunities for improvement in Idaho's ECCE system. These include the IRI, RISE, and STQ enrollment and use; website traffic; and the number of local collaboratives. The ECAC also should consider school readiness, early literacy, social-emotional health, and expansion of existing programs and services, as well as metrics connected to the goals, objectives, and strategies described in this strategic plan.

See pages 52 and 53 of the renewal grant to identify communicated performance indicators by project.

## Considerations for the ECAC: Federal, tribal, state, and local statutory requirements

- Current statutes in Idaho do not address the possibility of the addition of state-funded early childhood educational opportunities. A variety of statutes must be amended to allow for the existence of state-funded early childhood education. This reality will potentially impede the implementation and expansion of early childhood educational opportunities.
- Local school district boards of trustees may adopt their own curricular materials consistent with the guidelines as set forth by the Idaho State Board of Education. As the Idaho State Board of Education has not contemplated guidelines and standards for early childhood education, this suggests local learning collaboratives and school districts retain an independent ability to establish their own standards.
- The caveat is that should the Idaho State Board of Education ever promulgate early childhood education guidelines and standards, the local standards may require revision to ensure compliance.
- So long as the ECAC continues to operate and pursue its mission as described in Executive Order 2019-14 and the Governor approves of any changes, the language of the order suggests a near-unlimited capacity to expand membership in the ECAC.
- More information is needed on early childhood education offerings by Idaho's tribal nations. At least three tribes operate early childhood education centers in collaboration with Head Start, subjecting them to federal standards and requirements.
- Participation in the State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) grant program requires the recipient tribe to work in tandem with state and local education authorities in developing curricular standards and guidelines.
- Since tribal nations retain significant self-determination in their education systems, a cooperative approach may work best for establishing consistent educational standards and guidelines.

# Appendix A: Members of the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)

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# Appendix C: Federal, State, and Local Statutory Requirements and Potential Implications

## Federal, State, and Local Statutory Requirements and Their Impact on the Development of Early Childhood Education System – Student Data Privacy Laws

### Introduction

Student data privacy statutes, rules, and regulations focus on what student data may be collected, and how that student data is collected, stored, and shared. These statutes, rules, and regulations directly apply to educational institutions, including state and local school boards, districts, and individual schools. A narrow reading of these laws would make much of the existing statutory framework applicable only to data related to K-12 students. However, such a reading is cautioned for several reasons.

First, while early childhood education programs are not, in general, included under existing student data privacy laws, neither are they explicitly excluded from them. Each of the below noted statutes provides broad definitions of what constitutes an agency subject to compliance, what information is protected as personally identifiable information, what information education records may contain, and in what manner, education records may be used. Because an early education program will likely collect and maintain the information protected under these statutes, such a program may fall under the purview of the student data laws. This assertion is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, which indicated that applicability of student data privacy laws remains fluid as more states continue to develop and implement early childhood education programs. (PTAC-CL-5, July 2014, “the intended audience ... is K-12 institutions and agencies, many of the recommendations apply equally to education organizations at other levels”).

Further, although early childhood education programs may not directly trigger compliance with data privacy laws, they may do so indirectly. Education institutions often engage third parties to provide education related services, such as individual learning through websites, online services, and mobile applications. These services often collect, maintain, and use a student’s personal information.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, an early childhood education program engaging in such services, may nevertheless have a third-party responsibility to comply.

<sup>1</sup> Student Privacy State Laws for Education Service Providers Chart: Overview, Practical Law Practice Note Overview w-019-5587, <https://1.next.westlaw.com>.

Similarly, compliance may be triggered by federal funding, even if the program falls outside the definition of a responsible agency.

Finally, where a program seeks to utilize the state's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to transfer a student's data into the system upon entering the standard K-12 education program, compliance with both state and federal student data privacy laws will be required.

## High Likelihood of Applicability to the Development of an Early Childhood Education Program

### Federal Statutory Requirements

#### **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, [20 U.S.C. § 1232g](#); [34 C.F.R. § 99](#)**

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law, administered by the Family Policy Compliance Office in the U.S. Department of Education, and applies to all educational agencies and institutions that receive funding under any program administered by the Department of Education. In general, FERPA does not directly apply to third parties; however, its regulations will extend to third parties that contract with educational institutions receiving Department of Education funding.

FERPA is the primary federal student privacy law protecting student education records and the student personally identifiable information they contain from unauthorized disclosure.

FERPA protects, amongst other things, certain disclosures of education records and student personally identifiable information. Under the statute, education records are defined as any type of record, file, document, notation, or recording in any format, containing information that is directly related to a student, regardless of age, and maintained by an educational institution or by a party acting on its behalf.

[20 U.S.C. § 1232g\(a\)\(4\)\(A\)](#); [34 C.F.R. § 99.3](#). The statute also broadly defines personally identifiable information to include a student's name and address, parents' or other family members' names and addresses, personal identifier, including a Social Security number or student number, biometric records, including fingerprints, retina, and iris patterns, voiceprints, DNA sequence, facial characteristics, or handwriting, indirect identifiers, including a birth date and location or mother's maiden name, information directly linked to that student, information indirectly linkable to that student, alone or in combination, that may allow identification with reasonable certainty, and information the educational institution reasonably believes was requested by a person knowing that student's identity. [34 C.F.R. § 99.3](#).

Disclosure of education records or personally identifiable information requires the student's or parent's prior written consent - unless a statutory exception applies. Directly relevant here, is the outsourced educational functions or services exception. This exception permits disclosure to other school officials, such as teachers or other school employees, with legitimate educational interests.

Educational service providers may qualify under the other school officials exception only when they provide an outsourced service or function typically performed by educational institution employees, serve legitimate educational interests, allow the educational institution direct control over their educational records' use and maintenance, follow all use and re-disclosure requirements, use reasonable methods to restrict education record access, including physical and technological access controls, and use FERPA-protected information only for the reason it was provided. [20 U.S.C. § 1232g\(b\)\(1\)\(A\)](#); [34 C.F.R. § 99.1 - .3](#).

FERPA applicability is likely where an early childhood education program receives federal funding, and collects, stores, and uses student data.

### **Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, [20 U.S.C. § 1232h](#); [34 C.F.R. § 98](#)**

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), is a federal law administered by the [Family Policy Compliance Office](#) in the U.S. Department of Education, and applies to all state and local education agencies and institutions as well as any other recipient of Department of Education funding. [20 U.S.C. § 1232h](#); [34 C.F.R. § 98.5](#).

The PPRA protects student privacy in two ways. First, by restricting the administration of surveys, analyses, evaluations, or psychological exams covering sensitive categories of information. And second, by restricting the collection and use of student personally identifiable information for marketing purposes. This statute defines personally identifiable information consistent with the definition provided for in FERPA.

Like FERPA, PPRA does not directly apply to third parties, but its regulations extend to third parties that contract with educational institutions receiving Department of Education funding. Thus, like FERPA, and early childhood education program should consider the requirements of PPRA.

### **Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, [15 U.S.C. §§ 6501-6506](#), [16 C.F.R. § 312](#)**

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) is enforced by the Federal Trade Commission, and regulates the online collection, use, and disclosure of personally identifiable information from children under the age of 13 and applies to operators of commercial websites and online services that are directed to children under the age of 13 as well as general audience websites or online services that have actual knowledge that they are collecting personal information from children under the age of 13. Thus, COPPA necessarily applies to both educational institutions and third-party educational service providers. [15 U.S.C. § 6502](#); [16 C.F.R. § 312.2](#).

COPPA includes its own definition of personally identifiable information and provides for specific restrictions around collection, use, disclosure, and security. Most notably, under COPPA, providers must provide privacy notices, obtain verifiable parental consent, provide access and choice, not unnecessarily limit participation.

An early childhood education program should be cognizant of the requirements set forth by COPPA, as they will likely be applicable.

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400; 34 C.F.R. § 300**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is a federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.<sup>2</sup> Applicability of IDEA Parts B and C is inclusive of infants, toddlers and children. See, Part B § 611 (Grants to States), Part B § 619 (Preschool Grants), and Part C (Grants for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities).

Although there are some distinctions, both Part B and Part C provide confidentiality of information protections. In general, these protections require that state educational agencies, lead agencies, early intervention service providers, and any other individual or entity that collects, maintains, or uses personally identifiable information, or from which information is obtained, must adhere to the confidentiality of information regulations of IDEA. See, 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.610 - .626; 34 C.F.R. §§ 303.400 - .17. IDEA largely mirrors the definitions set forth in FERPA for both 'education record' and 'personally identifiable information'. However, a detailed comparison between the requirements of Part B and Part C may be found here. (This side by side also includes FERPA).

The statutory obligations imposed by IDEA are limited. Pursuant to 20 U.S.C. § 1412(B)(i), such obligations "will not apply with respect to children aged 3 through 5 ... in a State to the extent that its application to those children would be inconsistent with State law or practice respecting the provision of public education to children in those age ranges." Thus, notwithstanding applicability addressed in the introduction, because Idaho does not currently provide "a free appropriate public education available to all children ... aged 3 to 5" it is unlikely that IDEA Part B and C will require immediate compliance.

## **State Statutory Requirements**

### **The Idaho Const. art. IX, § 2**

This vests authority over state educational institutions in the Idaho State Board of Education. Pursuant to that authority, the Idaho Legislature has charged the State Board of Education with the collection and safeguarding of student data for the purpose of complying with federal privacy standards for student records. I.C. § 33-133(2)-(3).

<sup>2</sup> About IDEA, U.S. Department of Education, <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea>.

Consistent with such authority, the State Board of Education has promulgated rules delegating the collection of such data to the Department of Education under [IDAPA 08.02.03.115](#). Additionally, under the authority of the State Board of Education, the Statewide Longitudinal Data System was created as a means to evaluate and improve the process by which a student progresses through Idaho's education system. The State Board of Education Data Management Council Policies and Procedures defines and provides policies for data standards. These policies and procedures comply with FERPA, (see, *supra* at a.) and the Idaho Student Data Accessibility, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2014, referenced *infra*.

### **The Transparency and Accountability Act of 2014, [Idaho Code § 33-133](#)**

The Transparency and Accountability Act of 2014 (Act), protects students' personal information by limiting the use of student data and data systems. The Act applies to agencies, including the state board, commission, department, office, or institution educational or otherwise, of the state of Idaho. State agency means any city, county, district, or other political subdivision of the state, as well as private vendors that contract to provide database, online, assessment, special education, or instructional support services. It encompasses student data collected at the individual student level and student educational records, including related personally identifiable information. The Act's definition of personally identifiable data aligns with FERPA's definition of personally identifiable information. Under the Act, vendors must safeguard student privacy and data security, to utilize information only for permitted purposes, and to destroy information on a contractually agreed timeline.



## Resources – Student Data Privacy and FERPA Security Guidance Documents

The U.S. Department of Education's Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO) is responsible for the administration and enforcement of federal laws relating to the privacy of students' education records, and for the provision of technical assistance on student privacy issues for the broader education community. The SPPO provides several guidance documents to help educational institutions engage education service providers and explain FERPA's requirements. Examples of service provider guidance documents on the student privacy [portal](#) include:

[Responsibilities of Third-Party Service Providers under FERPA](#) (August 2015), a FERPA compliance guide for education service providers.

Protecting Student Privacy While Using Online Educational Services: [Requirements and Best Practices](#) (February 2014), [Model Terms of Service](#) (March 2016), and [Written Agreement Checklist](#) (July 2015), for use when evaluating or developing contracts with education service providers.

[Best Practices for Data Destruction](#) (March 2019), a guide on properly destroying sensitive data after it is no longer needed.

[Data Breach Response Training Kit](#) (June 2017), which includes a series of exercises to assist educational institutions with internal information security training.

[Letter to Wachter Regarding Surveillance Video of Multiple Students](#) (December 2017), a published finding by OCPO in response to a parent's request for surveillance video of a hazing incident involving multiple students.

[Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of FERPA Enforcement](#) (December 2018), a guide on the Department of Education's investigatory practices.

[Data Transfer in the Larger Education Ecosystem](#) (June 2020).

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

<http://www.communityschools.org/resources/default.aspx>

[https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource\\_document/file/LEA\\_Year12\\_CombinedReport%20Summary\\_12-9-20\\_508.pdf](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/LEA_Year12_CombinedReport%20Summary_12-9-20_508.pdf)

The Federal Trade Commission has issued guidance and clarification on COPPA compliance, including an extensive frequently asked questions resource, [Complying with COPPA](#):

[A Guide for Business and Parents and Small Entity Compliance Guide](#).

# Federal, State, and Local Statutory Requirements and their Impact on the Development of Early Childhood Education Systems – Learning Collaboratives and Tribal Participation

## Current Statutory Frameworks

Current Idaho statutory frameworks do not contemplate the addition of state-funded early childhood educational opportunities. Title 33 of the Idaho Code deals exclusively with the educational requirements as mandated by the state legislature. Its companion regulatory framework, the Idaho Administrative Procedures Act (IDAPA) [08.02.01-03](#) outlines the umbrella framework provided under Title 33. At present, there are several notable legislative guideposts that the Idaho State Board of Education and local education authorities must follow.

To begin with, the State Board of Education retains supervision, through its executive departments and offices, of all entities of public education supported in whole or in part by state funds. [I.C. § 33-107\(3\)](#). The State Board shall prescribe the minimum courses to be taught in all public elementary and secondary schools, and shall also aid in the issuance and preparation of syllabi, study guides and other instructional aids as the board shall deem necessary. [I.C. § 33-118\(1\)](#). The state legislature has mandated that “school-aged children” are to be defined as children between 5 and 21 years of age. [I.C. § 33-201](#). However, the definition of “school-aged children” differs for children with disabilities that qualify under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and is prescribed as ages 3 to 21. The state of Idaho only mandates compulsory attendance for students aged 7 to 16, and if an individual school district establishes a kindergarten program, it shall not be mandatory for a child who is eligible by age for attendance to enroll in that program. [I.C. §§ 33-202; 33-208](#). It is clear from a cursory overview of the various statutes enacted by the state legislature that early childhood education is not currently contemplated. What is clear, is that there appears to exist an opportunity for the State Board of Education to provide regulatory frameworks for early childhood education programs.

However, should the State Board of Education choose not to pursue the establishment of rules and regulations with respect to early childhood education opportunities, there appears to exist an avenue for local school districts to tackle the problem head on. Local school districts and their boards of trustees may adopt their own curricular materials consistent with the guidelines as set forth by the State Board of Education. [I.C. § 33-118\(4\)](#). The IDAPA mandates that all students will meet standards established locally through rigorous accountability, which includes challenging exams, demonstrations of achievement, and other appropriate tests and measures. [IDAPA § .08.02.03\(102\)\(01\)](#). These two regulatory prescriptions can be read and interpreted in one of two ways. First, since standards for early childhood education have not been contemplated by the State Board of Education and not written into current regulatory law, local learning collaboratives and school districts reasonably may not have the authority to author their own set of guidelines. However, one can reasonably interpret the lack of statutory dictates as a liberating force, paving the way for local learning collaboratives, school districts, and their boards of trustees, to promulgate

their own rules, regulations and standards with respect to early childhood education. The important caveat for enterprising school districts and boards of trustees is that should the State Board of Education ever promulgate early childhood education guidelines and standards, the local standards may require revision to ensure complete compliance.

## Expansion of the Early Childhood Advisory Council, Early Learning Advisory Councils, and Affiliated Learning Collaboratives

On December 31, 2019, Governor Brad Little signed [Executive Order 2019-14](#) officially establishing the Idaho Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) pursuant to the federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. 42 U.S.C. § 9837(b)(1). The establishment of the ECAC was required by the federal Head Start for School Readiness Act and the ECAC was tasked with a multitude of vital duties. These duties included conducting a statewide needs assessment of the quality and availability of early childhood education, identifying opportunities for and barriers to collaboration and coordination among state- and federally-funded child development and education programs, developing recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in early childhood education programs, developing recommendations regarding the establishment of a data collection system, making recommendations for improvement in state early learning standards, among other enumerated tasks. The ECAC also was tasked with adopting “bylaws governing its operations” to support its efforts in “the development and sustainability of this council and early childhood programs and services.” This sweeping language demonstrates the Governor’s intention to provide the ECAC with the necessary latitude it requires to meet the stated goals of the executive order.

The executive order further provides that ECAC’s members shall be appointed by the Governor whose activities will then be coordinated and staffed by the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children.<sup>3</sup> The [bylaws of the ECAC](#) provide that “membership shall consist of at least the following ... as well as representatives of other entities determined to be relevant to the Governor.”<sup>4</sup> This suggests a near-unlimited capacity to expand the ECAC so long as the council stays within the purview of the mandate as described in Executive Order 2019-14, and the Governor approves of the additional entities.

Additionally, there appears to be little to no statutory language restricting the creation and use of learning collaboratives. The term “learning collaborative” appears nowhere within Title 33 of the Idaho Code. Learning collaboratives appear to have first arisen out of a program initiated by the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children called “Preschool the Idaho Way” in 2019. The Idaho AEYC furnished grants of up to \$70,000 to ten communities to establish learning collaboratives focused on building partnerships among existing local experts in early childhood education. A cursory review of membership in these learning collaboratives reveals a mix of local community businesses and leaders, as well as members from programs

<sup>3</sup> Establishing the Early Childhood Advisory Council, Executive Order No. 2019-14, December 31, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Early Childhood Advisory Council, Bylaws, Art. IV, 4.3(k).

such as Head Start, family, group and center-based providers, faith-based organizations, and school districts.<sup>5</sup> Governor Little has repeatedly expressed his support for learning collaboratives as a critical tool in ensuring Idaho students receive educational opportunities best suited to the community's needs.

As there appears to be no legally mandated requirements for the formation of these learning collaboratives, it is reasonable to suggest that their ability to promulgate guidelines and standards for early childhood education is fairly broad. However, given the state requirements with respect to local school districts and boards of trustees, it is likely that any policy decisions must receive approval before implementation.

## Participation and Inclusion of Idaho's Native American Tribes

Native American tribes retain inherent tribal sovereignty, which largely allows the tribes to promulgate their own rules and regulations for governing day-to-day life. Because tribes retain significant self-determination for educational approaches, consistent educational standards and guidelines may be supported through cooperative partnerships and funding mechanisms to support tribal implementation. Particular attention must be paid to ensuring all educational authorities remain committed to establishing consistent standards and guidelines for early childhood education while still respecting and preserving tribal cultural identities. Moreover, Idaho's tribal nations are not mentioned as possible members of the governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). There is a catch-all category which provides for "representatives of other entities determined to be relevant by the Governor," which may allow for the inclusion of representatives from each of the tribes.

The Indian Education Department within the Idaho State Department of Education works with Idaho's tribes and educational stakeholders to give every American Indian student the opportunity to learn and achieve academic success. The Indian Education department exists to remove educational barriers for the American Indian population, as well as to increase communication among the state, local, and tribal education agencies regarding policies, procedures, and financial regulations.<sup>6</sup> Continued reliance on the Indian Education department is vital to the goal of establishing a consistent regulatory framework for early childhood education.

Idaho's tribes offer a variety of educational opportunities for their students. Tribes may utilize the State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) program for K-12 students.<sup>7</sup> These programs receive federal funds to help sustain operations, and as such, the tribe must work in coordination with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Department of Education to ensure compliance with federal regulatory requirements. In particular, participants in the STEP program requires the grant recipient to work in tandem with state and local education authorities in developing curricular standards and guidelines. Utilizing programs that administer state and federal funds to tribal education authorities and inclusion on the ECAC are two ways to encourage a consistent regulatory framework for early childhood education.

<sup>5</sup> What is an Early Learning Collaborative, IDAEOYC, <https://idahoeoyc.org/elc-what-we-do>.

<sup>6</sup> Indian Education, Idaho State Department of Education, <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/indian-ed/>.

<sup>7</sup> Indian Education, Idaho State Department of Education, <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/indian-ed/>.