

**Transition Advisory Committee  
Meeting 2**

**January 9, 2024, 5:30-7:00pm CT**

**Public attendee link:**

<https://aftonpartners.zoom.us/j/82612910057?pwd=bWNBRXdpQ01QUIRXRVZvZVMzWEpmUT09>,

**Passcode:** g+mG4BN.

**In attendance:**

**Transition Advisory Committee (TAC) members:** Bela Moté – Chair, Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro, Robin Steans, Mariana Osoria, Tonya Frehner, Marcy Mendenhall, Katie Cobb, Dara Munson, Keshia Harris, Sarah Ziemba, LaKeesha James-Smith, Janice Moenster, Shontae Fennoy, Makisha Binns, Angel Powell-Muldro, Johnna Darragh-Ernst, Rochelle Golliday.

**State Agency Members and Consultants:** Ann Whalen, Bethany Patton, Katie Reed (Afton Partners), Megan Bock (Afton Partners), Kristen Garcia (Afton Partners), Sri Raghunath (Afton Partners), Erin Arango-Escalante (All Children Thrive), Christina Krasov (CK Impact Strategies)

**Members of the public:** 53

Commented [KG1]: This is based on memory but would double check the Zoom report to confirm

**Minutes**

**1. Welcome and introductions – Bela Moté, Ann Whalen (20 minutes)**

Bela Moté (Chair of TAC and President and CEO of Carole Robertson Center for Learning) brought the meeting to a start. She provided a brief welcome to Transition Advisory Committee (TAC) members and participants from the public and introduced Ann Whalen (Early Childhood Transition Director) for housekeeping items.

Ann introduced Spanish interpretation and shared virtual meeting protocols for TAC members. She shared that the TAC is doing their best to adhere to the Public Meeting Act and meeting minutes and materials will be posted on the GOECD website. Members of the public are given opportunities to provide feedback on TAC meetings through a survey and bimonthly listening sessions. A summary of public input through the survey will also be posted. Ann turned it over to Bela to share the agenda.

Bela shared enthusiasm for the TAC having their second meeting and provided a brief recap of the first meeting. Bela shared the agenda and goals for the meeting, which were to build community amongst TAC members, continue getting to know consultants that will be supporting the Transition work, establish TAC community agreements and equity commitments, provide recommendations on the approach to family and provider engagement that will drive the work of the Transition, and learn about the State's budgeting process.

Bela expressed gratitude for the TAC, state leadership, and public participants for their engagement and dedication to this work. Bela acknowledged Rochelle Golliday (Cuddle Care) – a TAC member who was unable to join the first meeting. Rochelle mentioned that as a member of the Funding Commission, she

was excited to see their recommendations come to fruition and be a part of the TAC. The rest of the TAC went through rounds of roll call and introductions. Ann reintroduced herself and acknowledged Betheny Patten from the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and members of Afton Partners.

## 2. **Overview: TAC Charge and Year 1 Timeline and Priorities** – Bela Moté, Ann Whalen (10 minutes)

Bela reviewed the charge of the TAC as a reminder to the TAC and public participants. She acknowledged that the TAC will spend roughly two years together and provided a brief overview of the TAC's Year 1 Priorities. Months 1-3 are included in Phase 1 of the TAC Timeline. The priorities during Phase 1 are for TAC members to engage in relationship-building with one another and develop and build common knowledge and understandings, as well as get to know the transition consultants and understand their roles and their work. Months 4-8 are included in Phase 2 of the TAC Timeline. The priorities during Phase 2 are to make meaning and deep dive into family engagement findings from consultant Chris Rudd, unpack ongoing feedback and findings from transition by key areas (e.g., data and learning infrastructure), and identify further areas of inquiry. Months 9-12 are included in Phase 3 and are extension of Phase 2. The priorities during Phase 3 are to unpack ongoing feedback and findings from Transition key areas, reconcile data and stakeholder input, and begin to synthesize and make recommendations.

Bela described the TAC's timeline, charge, and priorities as a living document and purposely nimble as they are purposely trying to build their capacity and arch of work to be responsive to what they hear from stakeholders, parents, and caregivers across the whole ecosystem. She asked TAC if they had any questions, reflections, or additions to these priorities.

Robin Steans (Advance Illinois, TAC member) asked about the timing for having the TAC's first round of recommendations and how that timing meshes with the legislative decision-making or regulatory process. Ann replied that they intentionally built the timeline to allow the TAC to listen, iterate, and reimagine as they go through the transition work. She also referenced the first TAC meeting's slides as it had a timeline of the larger process for the new agency – pending legislation this spring in the general assembly, the new agency will stand up July 1, 2024. Assuming they receive that authority, the proposal is to transition programs or services from current agencies until FY27. This will allow for a full 1-2 years for the TAC to refine their recommendations knowing that they will not pause to wait until they get to the final recommendations. ISBE and IDHS' continuous improvement work will continue along the way and will be an area where the TAC can make recommendations for things that are immediately actionable.

Janice Moenster (Brightpoint, TAC member) asked at what point in each of these phases will TAC members be able to unpack lessons learned from other states who also have a unified ECE department and recommended the use of BUILD resources as Illinois is a BUILD state. Bela replied that she and Ann have a few conversations slated with other states to get a feel of what they did, how they did it, and how it's working for them, but also stressed the importance of TAC members to build relationships with one another and understand the consultants' work. It was also mentioned that during this TAC meeting, members will have an opportunity to provide feedback on individuals, areas and issues they want to learn more about – including work in other states. Bela welcomed anyone to reach out with any ideas of people to talk to as they are learning as they go as well.

Marcy Mendenhall (SAL Family and Community Services, TAC member) asked how the TAC can build a feedback loop between the TAC and other stakeholders in the state who are not on the TAC to continue to synthesize information from the field that TAC members may not hear or see directly. Bela replied that Illinois is lucky because there are so many tables and passionate people who hope to advance the field and it's important to not duplicate efforts. During this meeting, TAC members will be able to directly inform the expansion of our stakeholder list and voices we need to ensure we engaged. She mentioned upcoming listening sessions and the TAC's work is nimble because the work is complex and needs to be iterative to be equitable and effective. She encouraged Marcy and other members of the TAC to continue to share their good ideas to herself and to Ann and to let them know where they must be to receive and reciprocate feedback.

Marcy asked for time to dive into the Funding Commission's work and to recap all of the accomplishments the State has had to date in order to level-set the conversations moving forward and ensure that all TAC members are on equal footing and have the same level of understanding. Bela welcomed this idea and said that building knowledge across the TAC was part of the budget conversation today.

TAC members also expressed appreciation for the focus on intentional relationship building and grounding of roles and common language.

### **3. December Meeting Recap – Bela Moté (5 minutes)**

Bela reviewed the materials sent to TAC members ahead of the meeting, including the draft community agreements, survey response summary, and December Meeting Minutes. She asked if the TAC had any questions about the materials and a member of the TAC flagged that these materials are hard to find on the GOECD page for non-TAC members. Ann expressed that they are trying to have things located in one page on the GOECD website and hopefully will have it by the next meeting, but didn't want to overpromise.

Bela recapped last month's meeting and emphasized how integral racial equity is to how the Transition launches their work. She also emphasized that everyone on the TAC has different lived experiences and they need to build a shared understanding of equity and consistently pulse-check to ensure they are grounded in racial equity, parent voice, and participation in all decisions and processes. Bela went over the processes of how the TAC thinks about racial equity as a process and an outcome (see slide 10).

### **4. Consultant Introduction: CK Impact Strategies– Christina Krasov (10 minutes)**

Ann introduced Christina Krasov (CK Impact Strategies, Transition Consultant) as a consultant who is joining the Transition Team. Christina introduced herself as young at heart but old in soul and old in data. She's spent most of her career bringing data insights to leaders in early childhood. She interacts with the system in various ways – currently by activating and enabling champions of early childhood with data insights and previously in roles working with an ECE program provider and with Collective Impact to advance their missions with data. Her hope for the TAC is to elevate data and learning together. Christina shared that Illinois is not alone in embarking on integrating data across the ECE landscape. Over 80% of other states are doing something similar and she's had the privilege of working with and learning from them throughout her career as a consultant. Her hope is to bring data to conversations and build an infrastructure where everyone collectively uses data to shift Illinois away from only using data for compliance and reporting.

Her scope includes building a data-learning strategy that is informed by the TAC and building a data-learning culture. She will incorporate national best practices so Illinois can be in a cohort of other states across the country who are doing data integration learning as well. She planned an interactive activity with the TAC members to understand what data and learning culture means to them, but for the sake of time, took that out of her presentation. She promises to come back to a future meeting to do the activity with the TAC members. Christina will join the TAC meetings as much as she can to learn about data needs, continuous quality improvement needs, and other needs as she does her Transition work. She shared her email with TAC members and invited them to reach out with any questions or feedback.

**5. Consultant Introduction: All Children Thrive – Erin Arango-Escalante (10 minutes)**

Ann introduced Erin Arango-Escalante (All Children Thrive, Transition Consultant). Erin started her career as a high school special education teacher in Illinois. She shared that the goal of All Children Thrive is to support local and state policymakers to ensure that all communities are offering children and their families the services and supports to be economically secure, equipped to lifelong learning, and connected, safe, and healthy. Previously Erin was an appointee in Wisconsin and oversaw their childcare systems and programs. In that role, she realized that too often, decisions that impact children and families are often made without their input, which results in wasted time, funding, misaligned services, and underutilization of programs during children's most critical development period and exacerbates inequities. All Children Thrive was founded to better connect the needs of children, families, and communities into policy related to ECE. Erin does not have specific activities yet because aspects of her scope will be informed by those with lived experiences who have been furthest from opportunity. She is here as a resource and is excited to work closely with the TAC moving forward.

**6. Community Agreements Recap – Bela Moté, Erin Arango-Escalante (15 minutes)**

Bela thanked Erin and let the TAC members know that Erin will facilitate a short discussion on the community agreements that were drafted during last month's meeting. She shared their goal of this activity is to come to a consensus on the TAC's Community Agreements. Erin asked the TAC to think about the ideas within the first two pillars of the draft community agreements and asked two questions: What does it look like to put these agreements into practice? In what ways can we hold ourselves accountable to practicing these agreements?

Janice Moenster mentioned that showing up to meeting prepared, reading materials beforehand, and having conversations with stakeholders they work with about some of the agenda items to bring more voices into the meeting are ways they can hold themselves accountable to the agreements. In addition, to be fully present, Robin Steans shared that having their videos on and putting their phones away are ways they can be fully present during meetings. Angel Powell-Muldrow (Early Childhood Center Principal, TAC member) and Mariana Osoria (Chicago of Chicago, TAC member) also shared that coming to the meetings with a positive attitude and reminding each other of the community agreements and iterating as needed are ways they can hold each other accountable to the agreements.

A TAC member also expressed the desire for an in-person meeting to foster relationship-building and expressed gratitude to Bela and Ann for holding space to connect with each other during these meetings. Bela assured that an in-person meeting is being contemplated and more details will be shared as they get finalized.

Erin shifted the focus to the final pillar of the community agreements, “make space for vulnerability.” She asked the group what it meant to continually lean into discomfort and engage in their own self-reflection especially as they are centering families and equity, and how they are defining equity in this context.

Rebecca Vonderlueck-Navarro (Latino Policy Forum, TAC member) and Johnna Darragh-Ernst (Heartland Community College, TAC member) were both inquisitive about whether the TAC had defined or adopted a definition of racial equity. Bela responded by explaining that part of the Transition’s nimbleness is that they don’t want to be prescriptive. There is a working definition that the Early Learning Council developed and is available to discuss. The ELC’s definition of racial equity was shared and TAC members were asked if that definition resonates or if they need to think differently given the nature of the charge of the Committee. Mariana noted that a core way of thinking should be considered as they have conversations that center families, so they need to have a common understanding of what the core elements are of that work. In addition, Rebecca mentioned that they want to include that folks are included regardless of their citizenship status and that language diversity is not an afterthought.

Marcy asked for another meeting where they can dive into and digest racial equity and come from a starting point. Instead of popcorning the idea around now, can they have more materials to guide them so they can use their agreements to make an informed decision. Time will be carved out in a future meeting and Ann encouraged TAC members to send racial equity definitions that are used in their work to share during the next meeting.

Dara Munson (Family Focus, TAC member) expressed that she hopes the TAC continues to question the status quo and question why different children and families face different inequities in their communities. With the community agreements, they can be unapologetic about ensuring that those who benefit from their work will do so knowing the TAC has done the work of leaning into discomfort knowing that everything is not equitable in society. It should be uncomfortable and once we adopt a racial equity definition, we can begin the work of undoing those injustices.

Bela thanked Erin for leading the discussion and will carve out time at a future meeting to work through a living definition of equity. She also congratulated the TAC members for finalizing their community agreements.

**7. Facilitated Activity: Planning for Stakeholder Input Meaning Making – Megan Bock (10 minutes)**

Megan shared a diagram of stakeholders the TAC plans to engage with families at the center, which included providers, workforce, state and local agencies, K12 and higher education, businesses, and communities. She asked the TAC members to think about what stakeholders or perspectives should be added to the list, who else they need to engage, what topics they would like to know more about to support them in their roles as TAC members, and what information they would like to receive and who they want to hear from during TAC meetings. The TAC filled out their responses on a Jamboard. Megan thanked them for their participation and reminded them that the Jamboard will be open for some time after the meeting for members to go back and add additional thoughts or responses. Bela also reminded everyone on the call that the first listening session is next Friday, January 19, from 12-1pm CT and will recur every other month. Information is posted on the GOECD webpage.

**8. State Budgeting Process Overview – Ann Whalen (5 minutes)**

Ann expressed the importance of the TAC to be grounded in common language and understanding, especially how the State budget comes together and what the process entails as Illinois enters a new budget season. The State starts developing a budget request in the fall and the Governor delivers the State of the State and Budget Address on the third Wednesday in February. This year it will be on February 21, 2024. During the Budget Address, the Governor will introduce the FY25 Budget Request. February through May, the General Assembly holds a Committee Hearing where State team members, advocates, and the public inform priorities for the budget across the State. By May, the General Assembly passes the Appropriations Bill which the Governor will sign or veto. The new fiscal year begins July 1, 2024. Ann shared the reason why they wanted to share this in the January TAC meeting is because their next TAC meeting will take place after the Governor gives the Budget Address, on February 27, 2024.

Ann reminded the TAC that they are in the planning phase of the Transition work. All of the programs and services currently running will remain in the current agency. Smart Start and other programs are expected to be in the current agency budgets, in addition to a modest request of a stand-up agency. This is still in the works. She encouraged TAC members to reach out with any process-related questions offline.

**9. Closing – Bela Moté (1 minute)**

Bela closed the meeting by reminding TAC members to reach out to her or Ann with any questions. The first listening session is on Friday, January 19, 2024 from 12-1pm and is posted on the OECD website. All materials and minutes will be sent to the TAC members and will be posted on the OECD website for the public. The State of the State and Budget Address is on February 21, 2024 and the next TAC meeting will be on February 27, 2024. She thanked everyone for their engagement and thoughtful ideas.

**Next meeting:**

Friday, February 27, 2024

5:30-7pm CT.