

# Early Childhood Education and Care Transition Advisory Committee

February 27, 2024

5:30-7:00pm



# Welcome!

## Here are our virtual meeting protocols for TAC Members



- **Please be on video** as much as possible to help with overall engagement
- **Mute self** when not speaking
- Use **Chat feature** or **“raise hand” button** for questions or comments
- Technical issues can happen to anyone – **chat privately to Liz Garza for any needs**
- If you are experiencing an unstable connection - **switch to phone call or close other applications**

# Notes regarding this Meeting

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- **TAC Meetings are open to the public**
  - While not subject to Open Meetings Act, we will follow the intent of OMA as closely as possible
  - Meeting materials and a summary of minutes will be posted on the ELC website
- **Members of public are in “listen only” mode**
  - Public input will be gathered in Listening Sessions, held every other month, and in multiple other forums throughout the Transition process
  - An input/feedback form is available; a link will be shared in chat
  - TAC members can expect a summary of public input prior to each meeting
- **This meeting has Spanish translation**

# Today's Goals

- ✓ Build community amongst TAC members
- ✓ Continue getting to know consultants that will be supporting the work
- ✓ Review and begin to make meaning of stakeholder feedback
- ✓ Engage in a discussion around the TAC elevated priority of racial equity
- ✓ Build a shared understanding of early childhood governance and discuss opportunities to build on lessons learned
- ✓ Learn about the FY25 Proposed Budget and Department of Early Childhood Legislation

# Agenda

Welcome and Introductions	10 min
Reflections and Progress from the January Meeting	10 min
Voices from the Field	15 min
Small Group Discussion: Defining Equity	20 min
Early Childhood Governance: Lessons Learned from a National Perspective	20 min
Building Shared Knowledge: Overview of the FY25 Proposed Budget and Department of Early Childhood Legislation	10 min
Next Steps and Adjourn	5 min



# Welcome & Introductions

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## TAC Charge

The state has established the **Transition Advisory Committee (TAC)**, comprised of representatives with diverse perspectives from across the state, to serve as an external advisory committee as the state moves toward a single ECE agency.

The TAC will **seek and help the state make meaning of stakeholder input** in preparation for the transition, with a **particular emphasis on understanding families' goals and needs** from a comprehensive ECE system for Illinois children.

The Transition Advisory Committee will work with the State's Early Childhood Transition Director, Ann Whalen, to **release a report by December 31, 2025.**

# Community Agreements

## Engage in respectful dialogue

- Assume best intent and attend to impact
- Ask clarifying questions
- Step up, step back
- One mic
- Be curious and seek to clarify differences

## Actively participate

- Show up prepared
- Be fully present
- Be open-minded and respectful
- Think outside the box

## Make space for vulnerability

- Continually check we are centering families and equity
- Lean into discomfort
- Engage in self-reflection to understand our own reactions first

**Extend technology grace!**

# January Jamboard Feedback Summary

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What topics would you like to know more about as a TAC member?

- Lessons Learned, models, and strategies from other states
- Racial equity and continuing to understand diverse perspectives
- Understanding various state programs (DCFS Licensing, school-age programming, ECE programs)

What information would you like to receive and/or who would you like to hear from during TAC meetings?

- Representatives from other states
- Diverse stakeholders (vulnerable families, special education providers, experts support children with special needs)
- Program requirements
- National and state experts (Build Initiative, Funding Commission Report)



# Early Childhood Transition Updates

- FY 25 Proposed Budget & Department of Early Childhood Legislation
- Transition Listening Session & Survey
- Stakeholder Design Workshops (ChiByDesign)
- Data & Learning: Learning Sessions
  - Learning Series Session #1: ChildTrends' Equity Data Framework
    - Friday, February 23rd, 2-3 pm
  - Learning Series Session #2: South Carolina's First Steps Parent Portal
    - Friday, March 8th, 9-10 am
  - Learning Series Session #3: Using Analytics for More Equitable EC Policy
    - TBD Friday in April



# Voices from the Field

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## The Purpose of the Listening Sessions is to...

- Provide updates on the transition process
- Understand the opportunities for the new agency based on the lived experiences and perspectives of diverse voices
- Create a space for stakeholders to hear and learn from each other



# Listening Session Feedback

Stakeholder input was captured using multiple intake options:

- ✓ Zoom Polling
- ✓ Padlet
- ✓ Verbal
- ✓ Chat



# What are people excited about?

- **Streamlined** communication and processes that **reduce the burden** for ECE providers and other system partners.
- A system that is **simpler** and **easier** for families to access.
- Increased collaboration that results in more **consistency**.
- Increased **respect** and **value** for the ECE field.
- **Participating** and providing input for the creation of the new agency.
- Centering **equity** for the workforce and for families.

“Having one agency that specializes in ECE will mean having our voices heard and policies created that apply directly to us.”

– ECE Provider and Parent,  
Cook County



# What opportunities do you see to improve services to children and families through a unified early childhood agency?

- **Lack of consistency** and collaboration between the various agencies that work in ECE and a need for clearer communication.
- Challenging for families to **access** needed services, specifically addressing both the **complexity** and **timeliness** of services.
- Need more support for providers and workforce:
  - Supporting programs and providers to meet requirements
  - Strengthening the workforce through fair **compensation**

“Too often in the current state of things we don't know what each other are doing, and we are often unnecessarily duplicating services, reinventing the wheel, and not providing the best service or information to the individuals we're seeking to serve.”

– *ECE Provider and Parent,  
Cook County*

# How can we ensure this process centers equity?

- **Center parent and provider voices** and welcome everyone into the process.
- Support and **scaffold engagement** with underserved populations to **meet them where they are** and bring them along.
- **Invest in equitable data-driven approaches** that center priority populations to improve services.
- Ensure **pay equity** to attract and retain a **diverse** and **highly qualified** ECE workforce.
- Identify and **deconstruct** our own **biases**, particularly those that **impact program and system operations**.

“Within each community, parents have different challenges and barriers to accessing ECE resources. Moving forward, a unified agency should listen to parents at the community level at least to identify the different challenges in order to truly make this accessible.”

– *Anonymous*

# Large Group Discussion: Stakeholder Feedback Reflections



Based on what you heard from the field...

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What resonates with you?

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Were there any surprises or unexpected insights in the feedback?

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What would you like to explore further?

# Small Group Discussion: Defining Equity



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What from the pre-work reading or stakeholder feedback on centering equity resonated with you or stood out?

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How can we ensure that our definition is inclusive and considers the needs of those farthest from opportunity?

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What additional considerations should the TAC use to inform its definition of equity?



**Small groups in session. Meeting will resume momentarily.**





# Workgroup Request: Defining Equity

We are seeking 3-4 volunteers to:

- ✓ Review equity resources and recommendations
- ✓ Incorporate TAC feedback from discussions during the February and March meetings
- ✓ Develop a proposed equity definition
- ✓ Share proposal and reflections during the April TAC meeting for discussion

Please reach out to Aressa Coley ([acoley@aftonpartners.com](mailto:acoley@aftonpartners.com)) if you are interested in serving on the workgroup.



*Elliot Regenstein, Foresight Law + Policy*





**FORESIGHT** LAW+POLICY

Early Childhood Governance:  
National Perspective  
for the Illinois TAC

February 27, 2024

# Why This Matters

What we know for sure:

- The early years are incredibly important developmentally
- Adult-child interactions in the first five years really matter
- Program-level characteristics of early care and education programs that have a positive impact
- National K-12 data suggests it's very difficult to catch up

# Some Key Terms and Definitions

- *Governance*: Governance relates to the *exercise of authority* in the early childhood system – which can include state and local governments, and non-governmental actors.
- *Early childhood education and care (ECEC)* refers to home- and center-based services that are developmental and educational in nature.
- *Comprehensive early development services* is a broader term that includes ECEC services, but also refers to other health and human services.



# The Process of Transition

- Potential to engage key stakeholders
- There is a value to being inclusive – but the process benefits from leadership, and clarity about decision rights
- This is not easy! Everybody comes to the process with different perspectives. To name some common tensions:
  - Inside-outside
  - Inside-inside
  - Intra-agency
  - Change vs. status quo

# Defining critical functions

- Certain functions are common across states, including:
  - Money management (distributing funding, budgeting, resource allocation decisions)
  - Setting standards for and maintaining quality (learning standards, program quality, monitoring implementation, supporting improvement, data systems, research & evaluation)
  - Supporting professionals (licensing, pre-service, professional development)
  - Engaging and supporting families and stakeholders (eligibility, family & community engagement, building local capacity, enrollment, planning)
  - Communications & PR

## Defining critical functions (continued)

- Illinois should consider impact of administrative burden
  - Providers
  - Families
- Idea that services should be simple, accessible, and respectful – minimize burdens while protecting important values, and consider who bears that burden
- Costs include: eligibility; compliance; psychological costs
- “Conservation of complexity”

# Comparative advantage (state/regional/local)

- State leadership does not mean doing the entire job itself
- Think about functions:
  - That benefit from the ongoing direct input of parents and families
  - That benefit from consistency and provide backbone
- What authority should they have?
- State role in supporting communities with the most limited resources and promoting equity
- IDEA/special education



## Comparative advantage (2 of 2)

- Local collaborative structures are deeply valued in many states
  - State role in establishing structures – what is their authority?
  - Role of key participants (school districts, private providers, Head Start, R&Rs)
- Collaborative structures need capacity
  - Does not always go well
  - Engage multiple (and new) stakeholders
  - Accountability and flexibility
- Maintaining the state-local relationship: Support local leadership but continue a consistent role.

# State personnel capacities

- Different kinds of state personnel capacity
  - Political leadership
  - Managerial leadership
  - Staff capacity

## State personnel capacities (continued)

- Common challenges:
  - Relationship between governor's office and agencies
  - Tension between the political and managerial mandates (senior agency staff)
  - Challenges for division managers – support and capacity
  - Interagency collaboration
  - Adequate staffing – personnel rules, defining roles, filling those roles

## State personnel capacities (continued)

- Public-private partnerships
- The hard truths
- Data and analytics
- Interagency connective tissue
  - Will be needed regardless and demands capacity
  - Gubernatorial leadership
  - Inside-outside and inside-inside

# Change management in governance transition

- Change management is hard for any organization
  - Engage the entire field
  - Acknowledge the value proposition of state government roles
  - Manage the process within state government
    - Practical challenges
    - Cultural challenges
    - Breaking down silos
    - Relationships with the sending agencies
  - Support for state government partners
  - Setting a timeline
  - Communicate, communicate, communicate
  - Anticipate evolution



# Some Recent State Changes

- Several states have unified governance in recent years, or are in the midst of the process:
  - Michigan
  - Minnesota
  - Colorado
  - North Dakota
  - Oregon
  - Missouri
  - New Mexico
- Other states may also have bills moving this spring
  - Idaho
  - Kansas

Thank you!

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**QUESTIONS?**

# Large Group Discussion

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Are there any insights or reflections that we can build on to inform our work?

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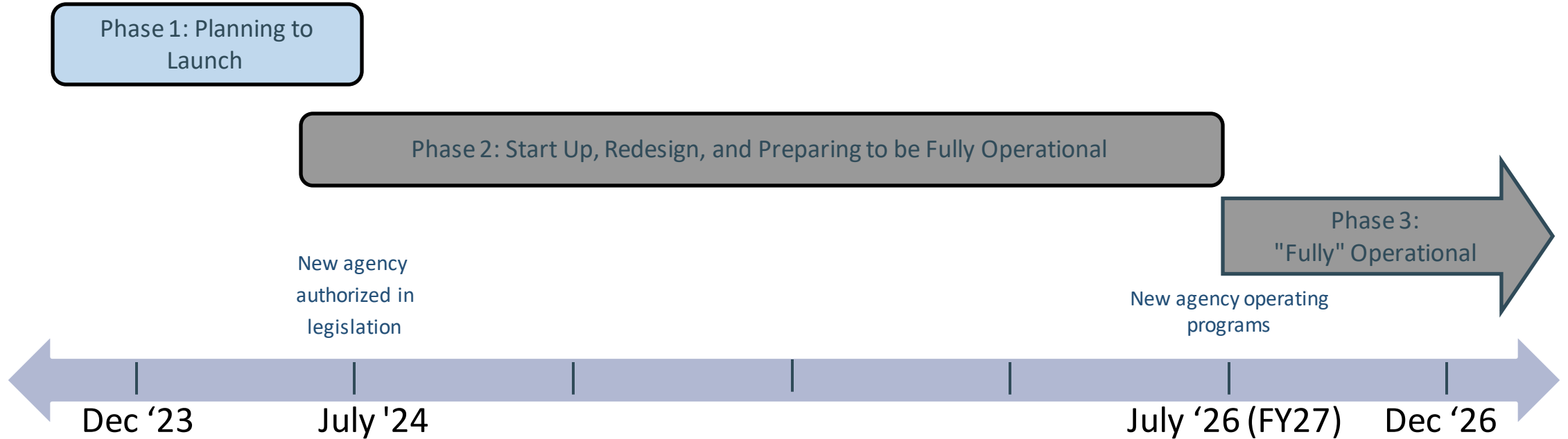
Are there any areas you would like to explore further?

# Overview of the FY25 Proposed State Budget and Department of Early Childhood Legislation





# The transition has a multi-year timeline with three phases.



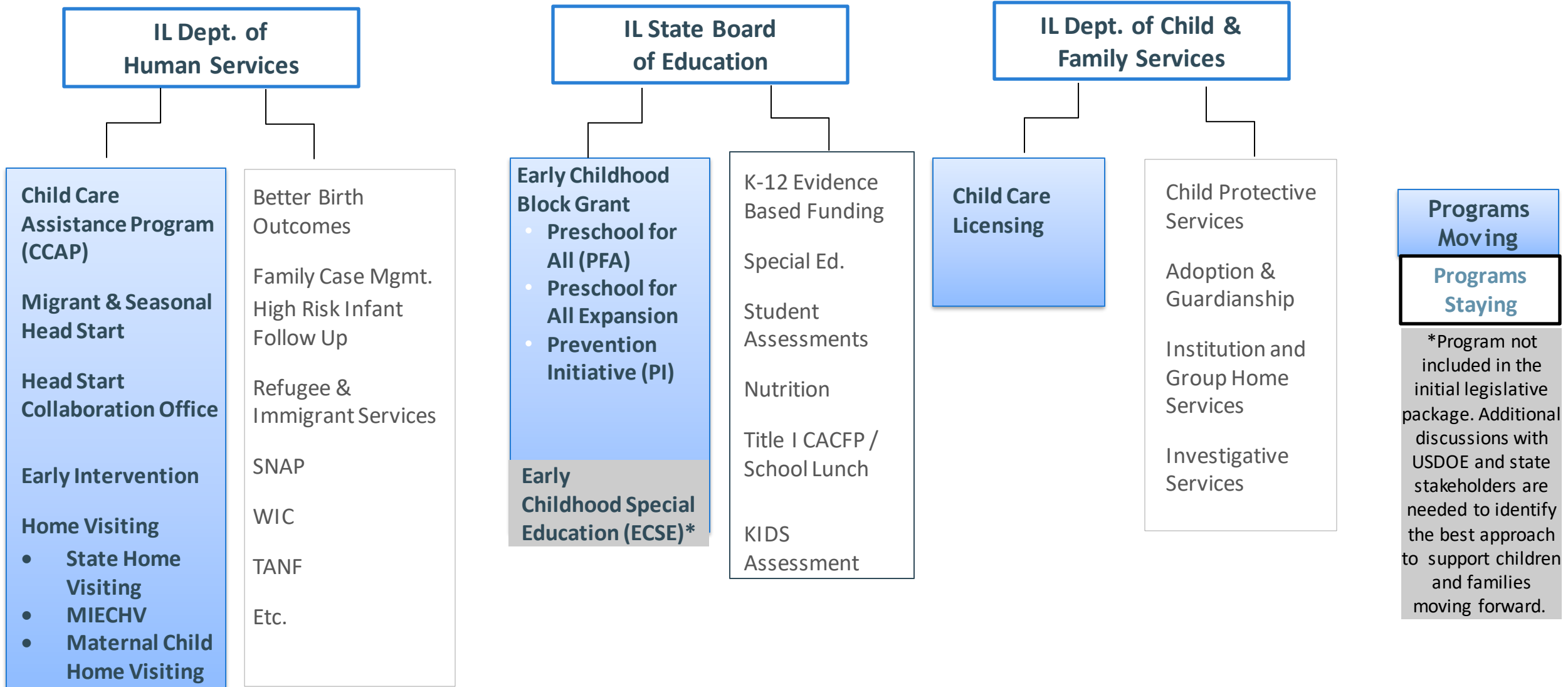
ISBE, IDHS, and DCFS continue to administer programs and lead continuous quality improvement

# FY25 Budget Request for the Department of Early Childhood



- Approximately \$13M
- The recommended fiscal year 2025 budget for the new agency includes:
  - **staffing and operations** support
  - resources to **evaluate data and learning infrastructure, funding mechanisms, program workflow, and budget outcomes**
  - funding to **engage parents, families, providers, educators, and other stakeholders** in systems design for the new agency
- The appropriation for the Department of Early Childhood appears as a standalone agency and as a "lump sum" format

# Early education and care services will move, and broader family and school support will remain at home agencies



# Initial Legislation Overview (SB 3777 and HB 5451)

## What the initial legislation does...

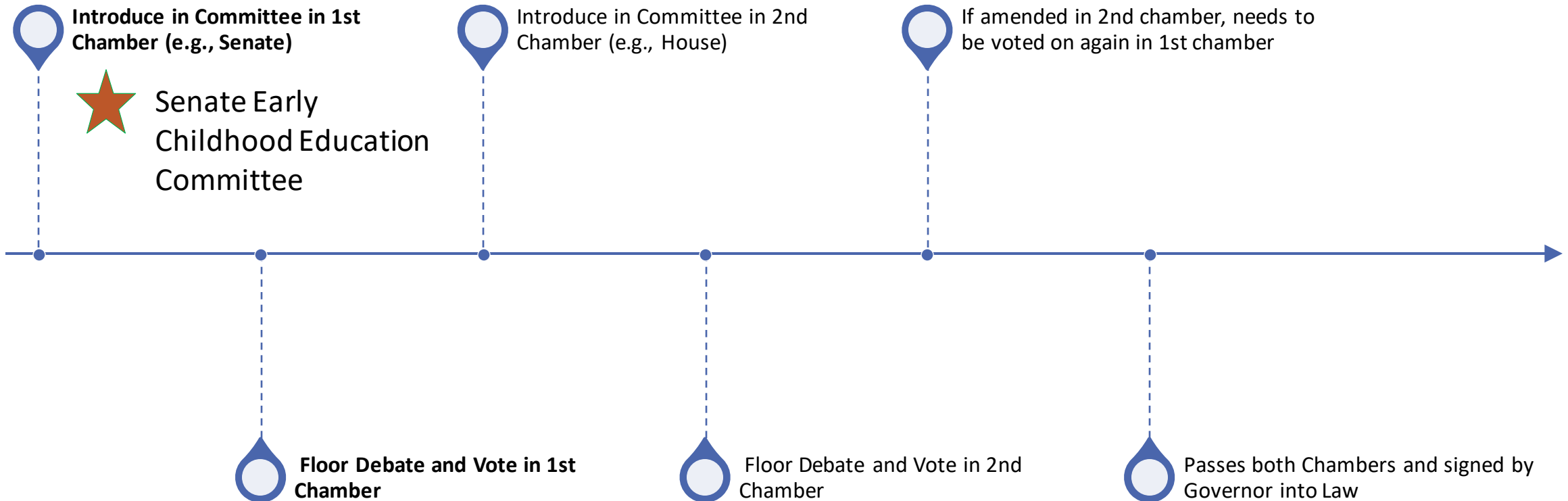
- ✓ Does propose the establishment of the new Department of Early Childhood on July 1, 2024
- ✓ Does propose to move early childhood programs and services from legacy agencies to the Department of Early Childhood on July 1, 2026
- ✓ Does propose to add the Department of Early Childhood to applicable State advisory councils
- ✓ Does propose to add the Department of Early Childhood to applicable Illinois code
  - (e.g., Civil Administrative Code of Illinois, etc)

## What the initial legislation doesn't do...

- Does not propose any policy changes to existing programs or services
- Does not propose any implementation changes to existing program or services (other than to move them to the new agency in 2026)
- Does not make any substantive adjustments to advisory groups or committees (e.g., Early Learning Council, Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention)

# Process Overview

A bill becomes a law when it passes both houses of the General Assembly with a majority vote in each house and is signed by the governor. This process can take time with committee debates, hearings, and amendments.





# Looking Ahead



Our next meeting will focus on:

- Deepening our shared understanding of racial equity.
- Developing goals and guiding principles to support the TAC's charge of centering equity and family experiences throughout the meaning making process.

# Next Steps & Close



- Follow up email to be sent next week with meeting summary.
- TAC members should reach out to Ann Whalen or Bela Moté with any feedback.
- Pre-work Workgroups
  - Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
  - Multilingual Families
  - Data and Learning Infrastructure
- Learning Series Session #2: South Carolina's First Steps Parent Portal
  - Friday, March 8th, 9-10 am
- Listening Session: Friday, March 17, 2024 12 – 1 pm
- Next Meeting:  
**Tuesday, March 12, 2024**  
**5:30-7pm**

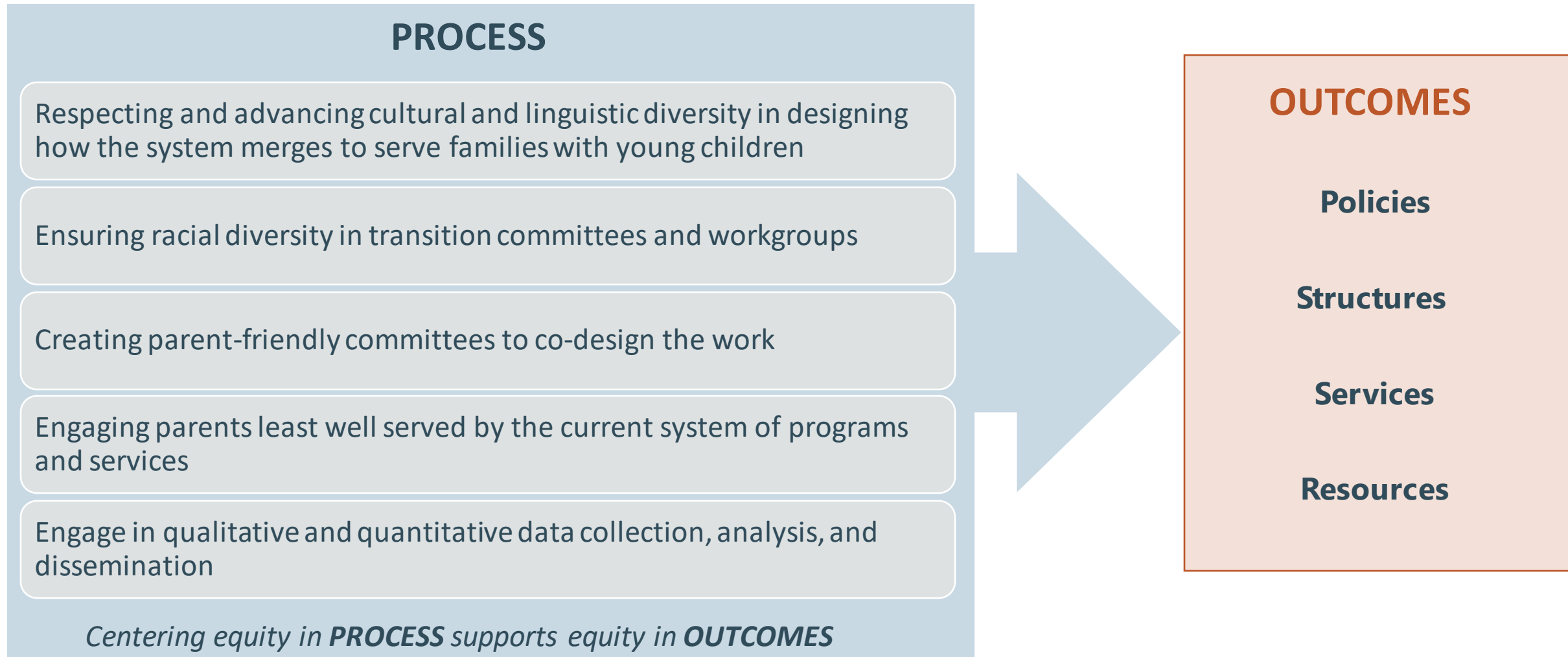
**Thank you!**

# Appendix

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# Our efforts to improve the system must center racial equity and parent participation

The transition will center racial equity in process, vision for system, and outcomes of programs and services.



# TAC Year 1 Timeline and Priorities

Year 1: December 2023 – December 2024

## TAC relationship-building

Norm and build common knowledge and language

Get to know the transition consultants and understand their roles

Phase 1: Months 1 – 3

## Meaning making

Deep dive into family engagement findings

Unpack ongoing feedback and findings from transition key areas (ex: data and learning infrastructure)

Identify further areas of inquiry

Phase 2: Months 4-8

## Meaning making (continued)

Unpack ongoing feedback and findings from transition key areas (ex: data and learning infrastructure)

Reconcile data & stakeholder input

Begin to synthesize and make recommendations

Phase 3: Months 9-12