

Alaska Early Childhood Strategic Plan Workgroup Report

Background

In January 2020, members of the Joint Task Force (JTF) volunteered to participate in 3 work groups, each focused on the draft goal areas of the strategic plan. An in-depth briefing paper was provided for each workgroup prior to the meetings, outlining some draft objectives and actions, and tying to relevant information from the needs assessment.

Each workgroup met for one 3-hour session and provided input on draft objective and action statements for the strategic plan. After each work group meeting, input was incorporated into updated comments. Two workgroups provided additional written comments via email and held a second meeting. The January 2020 workgroups were a critical step in the stakeholder engagement process, and the resulting strategic plan content is significantly based on this important work.

Workgroup 1: Alaska's Children and Families are Healthy, Safe and Stable

This workgroup met on January 13, 2020 from 2-5PM. Participants included Chelsea Burke, Jimael Johnson, Meghan Johnson and Trevor Storrs; with Tamar Ben-Josef and Carmen Wenger joining about midway through, and Lori Grassgreen and Betsy Brenneman on the phone. Due to low number of participants initially, this workgroup stayed as one group and did not move into breakouts. Work group results summary:

- The scope of this Goal Area is sizeable, and there was discussion about how to best frame and approach this work appropriately through the early childhood plan.
- A first action focused on merging two health related objectives into one, and the objective statement and some actions were drafted.
- There was interest in redesigning the framework around the "Strengthening Families" approach. New objective statements and some actions were drafted around this concept, with the intention of replacing the already drafted objective statements.
- A new document was produced recapping the work in this meeting, and it was distributed to all workgroup members. There was some follow up confusion by workgroup members that could not attend about the extent of reworking done to the original documents. A follow up meeting was held on January 25, 2020 to bring others to discuss next steps with the JTF, and it was decided to put the question of this framework on hold until after the statewide stakeholder engagement process.
- The workgroup document reflects significant post-meeting edits using the workgroup's initial work, however this content was not vetted back to the workgroup.
- Use of the "Strengthening Families" approach with updated proposed content should be considered against the originally proposed content.

Post workgroup activity: DDA drafted plan language based on new strengthening families framework.

Workgroup 2: Alaska's Children Have Quality Early Learning Experiences

This workgroup met on January 13, 2020 from 9-12PM. Participants included Stephanie Bergland, Chelsea Burke, Lindsey Earnest, Abbe Hensley, Meghan Johnson and Jimael Johnson;

with Maureen Harwood, Christina Hulquist (part of the time) and Betsy Brenneman on the phone. Following are summary level results of this workgroup:

- Two groups spent the majority of the meeting time providing input on the drafted objectives, actions and performance measures. Each group worked on 3 of the 6 objectives.
- A new document was produced recapping the work in this meeting. The general framework for this Goal Area remained in place, with significant wording input, and actions for most objectives. A follow up meeting was held on January 22, 2020 via teleconference to review and discuss the edited version. The format of the teleconference meeting was challenging for this task and group word-smithing without clear consensus occurred. The group covered 3 of the 6 objectives, and comments via email on the remaining 3 were requested and several edited versions were received.
- The workgroup document reflects those edits that consultants felt could be easily incorporated without further clarification or discussion.

Post workgroup activity: DDA incorporated follow up input received after second meeting via email which is included in materials for reference.

Workgroup 3: Alaska's Children and Families are supported by functional system infrastructure

This workgroup met on January 27, 2020 from 9-12PM, the morning prior to an 1-5PM full Joint Task Force meeting. Participants included Stephanie Bergland, Betsy Brenneman, Chelsea Burke, Lindsey Earnest, Maureen Harwood, Abbe Hensley, Christina Hulquist, Jimael Johnson, Meghan Johnson, Ira Slomski – Pritz (confirming others on phone).

Work group summary:

- Work was done on all 5 objectives, with the groups breaking out and working on the separately. Each group then presented to the larger group and reviewed their ideas and strategies in each goal area.
- There were several discussions about where different aspects of the plan, strategies and actions, fit best. Adjustments were made to some of the objectives in order to position them in a better category.
- During the workgroup session, the participants came up with a plan for governance in Alaska's early childhood system. According to the plan, an advisory group of representatives from all sectors of the system. The group would begin work immediately, with the goal of completing an action plan with further strategies and objectives. The first steps will be: bring in an expert consultant to help with designing the system, develop a framework that included structure, form, function & funding. The group advocated for delaying other planned actions (such as further developing and empowering the AECCC) until the overall governance structure is decided upon. The advisory group would plan to have this governance framework and action plan developed by October 1, 2020. This plan was shared later in the afternoon with the full Joint Task Force, and there was consensus in proceeding with this effort, and that the plan document should reflect this activity would be occurring.

- The input from this workgroup was shared with the full Joint Task Force in the same room that afternoon, however the final plan document content was not sent back to the workgroup for further input.

Post workgroup activity: DDA drafted revised plan language based on breakout group share-back. Longhand notes are included in workgroup packets for reference.