

COMMUNITY OUTREACH REPORT

A Business Plan for Early Childhood



Prepared by the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership
in partnership with the Native American Budget and Policy Institute.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP) began a community and stakeholder engagement process in the Summer of 2018 with the support of a Funders' Group of foundations across the state. The goal was to gather authentic community input and information, with emphasis on tribal communities, about 'A Business Plan for Early Childhood' and the systems based approach it outlines for expanding early childhood programs in New Mexico.



NMECDP significantly partnered with the Native American Budget and Policy Institute (NABPI) to engage tribal communities during this process. NABPI will be completing a comprehensive report on the engagement process for tribal communities. Overall findings from NABPI, included in this report, include the need for reforming the system given the fragmentation of current funding, the lack of trust in state government, concerns about language and cultural loss, the need to inventory current resources and programs, the need to address issues around human capital for expansion (workforce), the need to address issues of systemic racism, and the importance of engaging the whole family in the work around early childhood. Some Native Americans raised concerns about the terminology of 'levers' as mechanisms to force certain actions.

The teams developed four key methods for engagement: community conversations, key informant interviews, a participant survey, and a voter poll. Overall findings include the need for better alignment and coordination of services provided across departments in the State of New Mexico, the need to expand and strengthen the workforce for improved early childhood services, the desire and benefits of greater local control – including for tribes and to strengthen language and culturally appropriate programs, and the overall need for more, high-quality, early childhood services. The voter poll also found broad support for greater public investment in early childhood services, and a better understanding of New Mexico Pre-K and Head Start, than home visiting and childcare services. Specifically, better coordination between agencies, improved pay and increased scholarships for workers, and more high-quality slots were valued by the voters.

NMECDP has developed a specific policy agenda based on the findings from this work and will be working first on a legislative agenda in 2019 to facilitate better coordination and alignment of services and provide for improved local determination through an Early Childhood Services Department. We will continue to pursue the policy agenda through a workforce plan which is a foundation for the overall expansion of high-quality early childhood services in New Mexico.

THE FOUNDATION AND GOALS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP) was contracted to conduct community outreach and education around 'A Business Plan for Early Childhood,' to gather authentic feedback on the plan, to increase awareness of the Plan with its framework for expanding early childhood services, and to begin to build a coalition of community based advocacy for early childhood policies. This report is intended to provide clear snapshots of some of the unique and specific issues facing communities around the state and to be an information rich resource to policy makers, advocates, administrators, or others engaged in the early childhood systems in New Mexico.



This report was often described in communities as an 'addendum' to 'A Business Plan for Early Childhood' in that it should provide additional information, context, and concerns about the Business Plan's approach to early childhood system expansion.

The underlying assumptions and approach to this process include the following:

- That over the years advocates have instilled a broad understanding of the benefits of early childhood services in New Mexico and that the Business Plan is a framework to maximize the effective use of increased funding.
- That funding/revenue source(s) can be identified, as can the mechanism/formula for funding distribution. Also, the amount of funding needed is best determined by budget experts and policymakers. The business plan provides a calculator as a tool for targeting, but specifics state budget amounts, and overall targets were not addressed in community outreach efforts nor were these issues significantly raised in conversations.
- That providers, workers, families, and other community members have critical on-the-ground knowledge of how early childhood programs are working and where the gaps are in local systems.
- That New Mexico is a large and diverse state and that an understanding of the different systemic and operational issues should be developed by gathering input from many different communities.

METHODOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

In order to get as representative and broad based input as possible, NMECDP partnered with three key organizations (listed below).

1. **The Native American Budget and Policy Institute (NABPI)** - This institute is a WKKF funded initiative that, without 501c3 status, resides at the University of New Mexico, under the supervision of Dr. Gabe Sanchez, in collaboration with the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty. WKKF provided supplemental funding to the Native American Institute to collaborate with the Partnership on outreach to tribal communities, convening facilitation and data collection, and to take a much deeper dive into the policy implications of the feedback from Native leaders and early childhood service providers.

FROM NABPI

It was vital to ensure that our research team was comprised of researchers who have experience working with Native American communities in the state of New Mexico. To address this need, the Native American Budget and Policy Institute (NABPI) staffed this project with individuals who are from Tribal communities themselves, who know how to conduct research in partnership with Tribal communities, and who have wide range of contacts in Tribal communities. This team is consistent with the overarching goal of the NABPI to ensure that our research is conducted with the highest standards of cultural competency possible and by Native American researchers. Important notes on NABPI methodology and short biographical profiles of our research team is provided in Appendix A.



2. **The Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations at New Mexico Highlands University (CESDP)** - Patricia Jimenez Latham and her CESDP team coordinated facilitation of our inclusive conversations in order to ensure full participation of our New Mexican communities and to offer culturally responsive facilitation, a specialty of CESDP.
3. **Ngage New Mexico** - As well-known leaders in both early childhood programming and collective impact efforts in Southern New Mexico, Executive Director, Lori Martinez and Ngage served as co-hosts and co-facilitators for our Las Cruces conversation.



METHODOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Significantly, the Native American Budget and Policy Institute (NABPI) worked alongside the NMECDP team throughout this project and elements of their research and findings are included throughout this report.

The Native American Budget and Policy Institute worked alongside NMECDP to help identify and recruit Native American early childhood experts, educators, and parents in large community events focused on gathering concerns, recommendations and responses from the wider community to the various approaches focused on developing a business plan for early childhood in New Mexico.



Four key methods for gathering input and information were established and the following were completed by the NMECDP team:

- **Community Conversations** – Four inclusive community conversations were targeted to the four metropolitan statistical areas in New Mexico, with Espanola selected to include the Santa Fe community and, in order to draw in more attendance from northern pueblos and other communities. The other conversations took place in Albuquerque, Farmington, and Las Cruces. Six additional conversations were conducted in smaller communities and are outlined below. The primary audience of invitees were community members engaged in early childhood services, advocacy, policy, or related work. Through these contacts, parents, grandparents, and other community members were invited and encouraged to attend.

During the community conversations, a member of the team provided a brief overview of the levers associated with the business plan, and outlined in handouts to participants. This served as an orientation to the content, then team facilitated dialogue in smaller groups of attendees using a series of questions as prompts to generate discussion.

Finally, each 'lever' group agreed on three priorities or 'advisement statements' and would present them to everyone in the room. Participants then voted with a colored dot on a first choice and second choice for the advisement statements generated for each of the five levers. The top choices from each of the four inclusive community conversations are listed below.

METHODOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to the large community events, the full research team worked together to identify and recruit a more focused set of individuals for small group or individual interviews to ensure that we heard from a wide variety of important voices from New Mexico's Tribal Communities. The target audience for these sessions were elected and appointed Tribal leaders, experts in early childhood systems and programs specific to Native American communities, and pre-K educators who serve predominately Native American students. These sessions were similar to the overall format from the larger group sessions. Each of these sessions were facilitated by an NABPI researcher and in almost all cases also had participation from the NMECDP staff as a facilitator or note-taker.

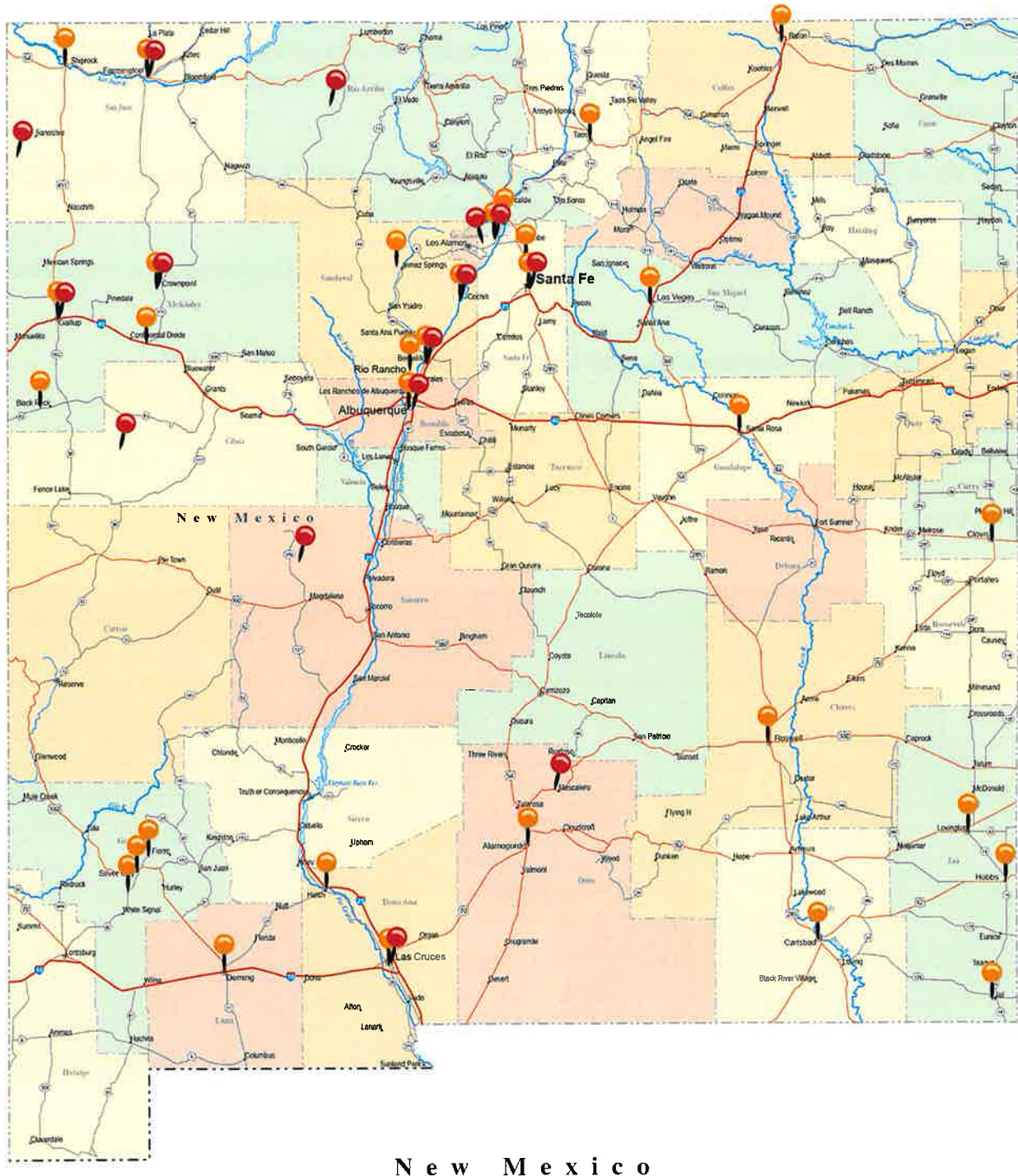


- **Key Informant Interviews** – Throughout the process the team interviewed key individuals with specialized knowledge about the early childhood systems throughout the state. A total of 30 key informant interviews were conducted by NMECDP. Notes from these interviews are included in Appendix B.
- **NABPI Survey** – A short survey was given to participants in community conversations and other selected conversations in order to compliment to more rich qualitative data. Overall 208 surveys were collected from across the state of New Mexico. The surveys were implemented by Professor Gabe Sanchez a nationally recognized expert in survey design and research. The participant survey and top line results are included in Appendix C.
- **Voter Poll** – In order to assess voter support for a variety of early childhood issues and programs, NMECDP contracted with Research & Polling for a statistically significant sampling of voters across New Mexico. Top line results from the voter poll are included in Appendix D.



LOCATIONS REPRESENTED

Outreach and engagement efforts targeted a diverse cross-section across the early childhood universe in New Mexico. Efforts were made to engage knowledgeable representatives in many arenas including different types of services, different locations, community sizes and characteristics. For a list of locations represented in the outreach and engagement efforts, plus brief biographies of the NMECDP team, and the timeline for the work see Appendix E.



FOUR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

The inclusive community conversations targeted invitations to, and attendance of, people engaged in early childhood services, advocacy, policy, or related work. Everyone was encouraged to invite any engaged members of the community as well.

- Four notifications (invitation + three reminders) were sent via email for each of the inclusive community conversations.
- Each invitation included the ability for people to select an area of interest collated to one of the five levers. Follow up calls were made through much of every list of to reinforce the invitations.
- The email invitation process garnered an overall open rate of 67% on desktops, with 1806 unique users opening the email, and 140 individuals clicking through.
- Complete notes on input from each of the inclusive Community Conversations is included in Appendix F.

Attendance totaled approximately 180 for the events and broke down as follows:

Espanola – 30 attendees

Albuquerque – 70 attendees

Farmington – 20 attendees

Las Cruces – 60 attendees



FOUR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

The advisement statements receiving the most votes for each lever at each of the Community Conversations are as follows:

Lever 1 - Coordinate State and Local Community Capacity

- **Espanola**
Top Choice - Establish diverse senior leadership that reflects constituency. Leadership should know constituency and find out what works before rushing into implementation of anything new.
- **Albuquerque**
Top Choice - Early Learning Department in state government mixed delivery model (public-private early childhood services) which includes special education.
- **Farmington**
Top Choice - Thoughtful creation of educational system for Native American students, families, and community that supports fosters and respects language, culture and identity.
- **Las Cruces**
Top Choice - Respect the unified work of the early childhood education (ECE) Community in Southern NM and ensure complete transparency of ECE work (including policy).

Lever 2 - Leverage Local Community Capacity

- **Espanola**
Top Choice - Formalize collaborative networks - fund positions to coordinate these collaboratives.
- **Albuquerque**
Top Choice - Governance structure of the local lead agency ensures diverse and genuine participation of underserved community members (e.g. tribal, 0-3).
- **Farmington**
Top Choice - Local lead agencies should include the voices of a broad and diverse range of local stakeholders to encourage collaboration and match funds to local needs; meetings should occur regularly to maintain engagement.
- **Las Cruces**
Top Choice - One stop shop to provide comprehensive range of services and programs with priority given to parents' choice.

FOUR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Lever 3 - Build and Support a Highly Effective Early Childhood Workforce

- **Espanola**
Top Choice - Identify potential workers in communities, PLUS attract and retain.
- **Albuquerque**
Top Choice - Compensate early childhood educators at a wage that respects the well-being of all children and professionals.
- **Farmington**
Top Choice - In order to keep early childhood professionals in the early childhood field, a living wage must be provided that is commensurate to the required workload.
- **Las Cruces**
Top Choice - In order to compete and retain high-quality professionals, focus should be on more funding. This will allow for higher-wages, compensation, and retirement benefit packages.

Lever 4 - Conduct Outreach and Engagement

- **Espanola**
Top Choice - Engagement plans are necessary, but there needs to be accountability to ensure there is follow through.
 - Engagement needs to be supported by providing transportation, needs to relate to people's needs, gather feedback and have follow through.
 - Must be grassroots, not top down.
 - We need to define what engagement means to each community and their members.
 - Needs to be a meaningful plan, with action steps and follow through.
- **Albuquerque**
Top Choice - Sufficient, consistent funding - not incremental funding.
- **Farmington**
Top Choice - Family engagement plans must demonstrate flexibility - engage the family and teach families how to engage.
- **Las Cruces**
Top Choice - A central source of information that promotes collaboration is necessary.

FOUR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Lever 5 - Expand Programs with Quality

- **Espanola**

Top Choice - Need well trained staff who are culturally and linguistically responsive.

- How do we flexibly expand PreK learning?
- Take care of mothers for 1 year
- Fund grandparents as caregivers

- **Albuquerque**

A shift in the way we think about education that includes early childhood.

- **Farmington**

Top Choice - Need for overarching agency (non-profit) vs. Government that can match services to needs vs. special education.

- **Las Cruces**

Top Choice - We need leadership that truly understands early childhood education.



ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Six additional community conversations were conducted by the NMECDP team. Key themes from each of these are outlined below and the complete notes from the sessions are in Appendix G.

- **Silver City** - Community Partnership for Children Board – 12 participants - New Mexico should create a separate Department of Early Childhood. Training needs in the workforce are an issue, especially in rural communities.
- **Gallup** - McKinley County Early Childhood Coalition – Nine participants - There is an overall lack of services, plus an often transient workforce especially in medical jobs. Consistent funding is needed in early childhood.
- **Hobbs** – Lea County Early Childhood Coalition - 22 participants -Workforce and housing are related and huge issues for early childhood services. They have been made worse by the oil boom. A feeder program for workers can and should be developed from local high schools and colleges.
- **Roswell** – Seven participants - Roswell Independent School District, CASA for Chaves County, Tadpoles Daycare, Los Pasitos Early Intervention - The effects of the oil boom are reaching north and many organizations are seeing an explosion of abuse and domestic violence issues. The number of pre-k slots in Roswell doubled over the summer which has been an expansion challenge especially in finding workers. The schools are exploring innovative community partnerships and stronger play-based curriculum.
- **Jal** – Three participants – Bright Beginnings Early Childhood Center, and Jal School District – Simplifying goals, requirements deadlines, schedules for RFPs and other government applications for early childhood programs would help programs plan and run more smoothly. Start-up costs are an issue for any center and are necessary. Scheduling at an early childhood center is critical to operations.
- **Clovis** – Four participants - ENMRSH, Inc; MECA Therapies LLC, KidCare – Workforce is the limiting factor for all services. Providers are competing for the same pool of workers as PED. In rural areas, service providers, especially in home visiting spend a lot of time on the road .



ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

NABPI was able to include data from 21 interviews or small focus groups in this report. When taken collectively, we were able to collect information from 68 Native American voices across the sessions through the end of October 2018. It was vital that we protect the anonymity of our respondents to ensure that they would provide honest and uncensored responses to the questions that we raised, we therefore cannot provide the specific names of individuals we interviewed through these sessions. We have however summarized below the Native American communities we were able to hear from to this point in our research process. Complete notes on these conversations are included in Appendix H.



- **Dine/Navajo Nation**
 - o Interview with Alamo Navajo Behavioral Health and School Board Member
 - o Interview with Ramah Navajo/Pinehill School Board Member
 - o McKinley County Early Childhood Task Force, Focus Group
 - o Interview with Early Childhood expert from Navajo Technical University
- **Jicarilla Apache Nation**
 - o Interview with Jicarilla Apache Early Childhood Expert
- **Santa Clara Pueblo**
 - o Early Childhood Educators/Head Start Educators, Focus Group
- **Mescalero Apache Nation**
 - o Mescalero Apache Nation School Board Focus Group
 - o Mescalero Apache Nation President (Part of NABPI Governance Council Group)

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Key informant interviews were targeted across a broad spectrum of early childhood services and administration throughout the state. Interviewees were generally given an overview of the project to gather input and information throughout New Mexico on the early childhood systems in the context of the 'Business Plan for Early Childhood.' They were interviewed to get the substance of their knowledge area, ideas, and opinions on what is working and what needs improvements in the current systems.

Selected comments/concepts which were heard in multiple interviews are included below. Complete notes on the 31 Key Informant Interviews conducted are compiled in Appendix B.

“Early childhood should be considered a dual-generation economic development strategy; allowing parents to work while kids get a strong start.”



QUOTES FROM INTERVIEWS

“Early childhood should be considered a dual-generation economic development strategy; allowing parents to work while kids get a strong start.”

“We need to get the voices of all the people, paying attention to geographic diversity and rural areas and not just the Rio Grande corridor, plus listening to different types of people, teen mothers on opiates, single fathers, grandparents raising grandchildren, and more.”



“We should build upon the seal of bi-literacy and keep the richness, heritage, and identity that comes from our culture and we need to understand that diversity is our strength. Dual/multi language should be our hallmark in NM.”



“In urban areas, there is less concern about transportation than in rural areas but more issues about coordination among providers. There is a lack of trust (due to) a lack of familiarity among providers and organizations tend to co-exist rather than collaborate.”

QUOTES FROM INTERVIEWS

“Tribes must be able to determine what/how to teach their language. Language revitalization needs to be foundational to any expansion of ECE.”



“There are lots of strong organizations throughout the state, they should be leveraged and amplified.”

“We need to address issues of institutional racism.”

“Families can be overwhelmed by services, and there is often a stigma around these services for low-income people. It takes decades to change culture, lawmakers need to be patient and not focus on immediate results.”

“We need to ensure that there is an indigenous lens to expanding early childhood education, i.e. what is the goal? Is it more assimilation? How can we use the lessons from Head Start and not repeat mistakes with State funding.”



PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Results of Participant Survey

208 participants in the outreach and engagement process completed the survey drafted by NABPI. Those that completed the survey represented a diverse section of community members engaged in the early childhood arena. The full survey and top line results are in Appendix C.

Parent or primary caregiver.....	9%
School administrator.....	30%
Concerned community member.....	10%
Elected or appointed official/Tribal Leader.....	6%
Education Non-Profit Employee.....	19%
Educator/Teacher/Counselor/Home visitor.....	27%

Most respondents (46%) expressed the New Mexico needs “a new leadership position in our state government to coordinate early childhood programs across state and Tribal systems,” with a second choice (42%) being “a children’s cabinet or committee comprised of community experts should be re-established to coordinate early childhood programs.” The least popular choice (13%) was that “adding a new position to coordinate early childhood programs in New Mexico will just add another layer of bureaucracy and make things even more complicated than they are now.”

Also, lever three (Build and Support a Highly Effective Early Childhood Workforce) was most often chosen as important to participants with 60% of respondents rating this as a one or two on a scale where one was the most important and five was the least important.

MAJOR THEMES - NMECDP

Throughout the process more than 300 people provided input and information to NMECDP and NABPI teams. Many of these (excluding many from specific tribal communities) are listed in Appendix I. Listed below are the major themes the NMECDP and NABPI teams heard throughout the community engagement process. For NMECDP, these are the foundation of the Policy Recommendations beginning on page 34.

There is a Need for Better Alignment of Services

The current systems for administering early childhood services are fragmented and inefficient with programs being administered across at least four State of New Mexico departments. Many identified a unified leadership and administrative structure as key to achieving a variety of goals around expanding high-quality programs and improving the existing services. These ranged from coordination with tribal communities to embracing the business community, and ensuring play-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum. Below are some of the comments:

- “The vision needs to be an integrated system serving 0-5.”
- “There is a clear need for coordinated efforts. Different missions in organizations (PED and CYFD) are turning early childhood providers upside down.”
- “There is a perception that Pre-K is an institutional environment and a concern about putting young kids into that environment.”
- “The business community needs to have a stake in early childhood. Business tax credits could incentivize private sector participation.”
- “Services are too often reactive and not proactive.”

SOLUTION - Create a Department of Early Childhood Services – A coordinated, developmentally-appropriate system is needed separate from the issues and systemic priorities currently engrained in PED and CYFD.

MAJOR THEMES - NMECDP

Qualified Workers are Needed throughout New Mexico

Again and again, providers and other participants reported difficulty finding and keeping qualified workers in early childhood. In a number of locations including, Santa Fe, Roswell, Silver City, and Clovis, we heard about funded services/slots which were not filled because organizations were unable to hire the needed staff. Providers repeatedly identified the need for more scholarships and flexibility in training requirements. Below are some of the comments on workforce issues:

- “The biggest rock in the road is pay. Scholarships (TEACH) have made a big difference and greatly increased enrollment. However, because of the low wages many EC educators move to public schools for the wages and benefits creating a ‘brain drain’ in the EC workforce.”
- “The requirements and expectations in EC work have been increasing but not in proportion with pay.”
- “There need to be respect for early childhood workers as professionals. This is not just babysitting.”
- “Wage increases should be mandated...hybrid funding gets misaligned. Rules could be put in RFPs about minimum salaries and increases linked to increased ratings.”
- “We need training programs so that we can put high-school and college students on an early childhood career path and get them work experience with young children.”
- “Professional development requirements for staff should count as credit towards credentials, it's the same stuff.”
- “We need training in our community, it's too far to travel to Santa Fe or Albuquerque.”
- “Navajo students (interested in working in early childhood) are unlikely to leave families, we need distance learning opportunities to serve students that want to stay with their families.”
- “Workforce training should always include dealing with special needs, so that staff can recognize red flags.”
- “You can only stick to this work if you've got the passion.”

SOLUTION - Compensation increases and improved access to training are needed. A detailed workforce strategy is needed to address the statewide structural issues surrounding the early childhood workforce.

MAJOR THEMES - NMECDP

More Local Control Means More Culturally Appropriate and Targeted Services

Many participants identified the need for more local control in order to target fund to local needs and issues. This includes many tribal communities need to determine program goals and integration of native language and culture in the development of young children. Communities were often clear that the local knowledge is critical in determining the services to best serve the needs of families and where there are gaps. Below are some comments on local control:

- “There can’t be a cookie cutter approach, we must allow for the uniqueness in communities. There should be an ongoing feedback, listening, and improvement approach that is continually layering information onto programming.”
- “There is a need to train native language speakers to be EC teachers. How do we get assessments in languages other than English? For native communities, there needs to be self-determination and self-governance around multiple scenarios.”
- “Half day programs simply don’t work for laborers (and working families), all day programs meet the needs of parents and families.”
- “We are concerned about pushing academic curriculum down to younger children and want to ensure that developmentally, social emotional appropriate teaching is done, and believe that this could even inform upward into k-12 education.”
- “We need better and more consistent early childhood services. This needs to be integrated with other community issues including transportation, nutrition/health, especially those addressing the needs of teenage mothers”.

SOLUTION - Develop an implementation strategy for local lead agencies.



MAJOR THEMES - NMECDP

More High-Quality Early Child Services/Slots Are Needed

Especially in rural areas, the need for more services was repeatedly identified. At times providers reported having enough slots in one program, while too few in another, and thus reemphasizing the need for greater local control. Many also emphasized the need to ensure high-quality delivery of services.

- “Distance is a challenge when funding does not account for travel time and is one of the structural issues not addressed by funding streams. A rural differential would help. Cultural factors need to be considered in any planning for expansion of early childhood programs in Native and Hispanic communities especially.”
- “High quality home visiting matters and can hugely reduce instances of abuse and neglect. This is because these services mitigate stressful issues in families and with parents.”
- “Early childhood services and other services get cut in the counties that badly need services.”
- “There is a need for trauma informed responses and work to prevent ACEs (adverse childhood experiences). Let’s recognize that behavior issues are often a form of communication from young children about trauma.”

SOLUTION - Efficient and effective expansion of high-quality services.



Reform is Needed - The Current System is not Working

The most pressing concern participants in our study raised was the fragmented and complicated funding streams that currently support programming across Native American communities. Many participants noted that the unique relationships the Tribes have with both the federal and state government has led to a very complicated and hard to understand funding system that many noted they do not understand. There should be some in-depth analysis of current funding streams to allow for a more clear and transparent funding model to be created as new funds begin to be made available for Tribal communities.

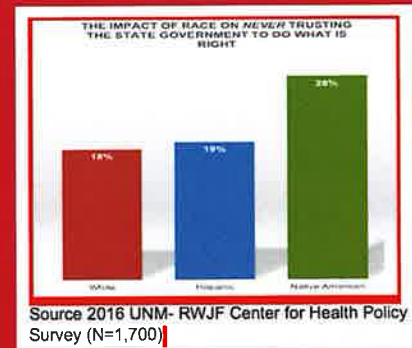
- NABPI Governing Council (GC) member notes that there is “high fragmentation in funding streams for early childhood across many layers of government. This leads to severe challenges in the existing system that if not addressed will be even more problematic if a greater amount of money flows through the existing systems.”
- “If we could create a leadership structure that oversaw all the fragmented aspects of the system how would this have to work with Tribes?”
- “If the infrastructure capacity is lacking we cannot make the same mistake we did in the 1940s to integrate most Native children into existing public schools, rather invest in Pueblo and Tribal schools so that we do not have to take generations to reverse that mistake in approach. We can end up in the back-end attempting to nickel and dime resources.”
- “Importance of strategic and flexible increases in funding. Educating the state legislators of the pros and cons of early learning. Make legislators understand importance of funding early childhood expansion. For example, California has funding from cigarette tax to support early childhood program. State needs to focus on investing in education including early childhood learning.”

MAJOR THEMES - NABPI



Trust in Government is an Obstacle That Will Influence Participation of Tribal Communities

One of the common themes across all interviews conducted was how much concern Tribal communities have with the goals of this plan given that it is perceived to be implemented by the state government in New Mexico. The implications of the lack of trust cannot be overlooked when evaluating the projected participation rates of Tribal communities in state funded, implemented, or evaluated programs. Many participants noted that their communities have been ignored in the policy discussions about early childhood education and development more broadly, leading many to suggest that this process of capturing their voices was not genuine. Some noted that if the input of Tribal communities was really desired this would have occurred prior to the completion of a Business Plan, not after the fact. This lack of trust led several research participants to suggest that Tribes may be better off not accepting any of the new funds to expand programming, as this funding comes with strings that may do more harm to Tribal communities than good.



- We have “already given up our children in accepting funding.”
- “There are some opportunities to use funds to address some small needs that can be helpful, but there must be consideration of whether the pros outweigh what we lose by accepting funds.”
- “A consolidated model with Tribes would require giving Tribes authority to develop and own their own programs and their own accreditation system to evaluate this curriculum. We cannot trust the state to get this right on their own without our oversight.”
- NABPI GC member notes that we must also consider that “many Native American families and leaders are resistant to expansion of early childhood due to concerns with outside progressives “telling us what to do with their kids.” We cannot assume that the communities want what we might believe that they should. “
- Questions around the issue of trust/mistrust in allowing non-tribal organizations/agencies have access to tribal data - “What would data sharing agreements look like?” “Not all tribes have data infrastructures established, how would that happen in these communities?” “How will the data be used and for what?”

As reflected in the figure below, when asked to evaluate how often they trust the state government to do what is right (a common measure of trust in government), we see that Native Americans in New Mexico have a much lower level of trust in our state’s government. It is clear that there will need to be some outreach aimed at improving trust in the state government and its various departments who will be responsible for overseeing early childhood programming.

Language and Cultural Loss is Major Concern for Tribal Communities

Concerns of the trade-offs associated with enrolling children in non-Native programming were consistently identified in our interviews. One of the major take-away messages was that we need to learn from unintended consequences of head start programs in the last century. Many respondents, expressed that having Native American children participate in head start led to a loss of language and cultural knowledge across a generation or two of Native youth. Some participants went as far to say that Tribes are often faced with a terrible decision of accepting much needed funding for programs knowing that this might mean losing many of their children.

- NABPI GC member (mental health expert) noted that all childhood programs must be trauma focused and sensitive to the notion that historical trauma contextualizes all aspects of education. Trauma must be addressed at all levels of early childhood with training for teachers, counselors, and administrators on what this means and how to address it with Native American children.
- This others noted is what is distinct from any curriculum that is not Native based, we need to consider how factors that happen well before birth impact Native American children!
- “Can there be after school programs that are run by the Tribe that address cultural and language needs?”
- “The topic of culture and language is sensitive now especially for parents who don't want their child(ren) to learn the culture and language. Early childhood professionals should be taught to teach children language during early years. If the focus is on native-speaking professionals only, this weeds out Natives who don't speak their language to work in their native communities even if they are well qualified. Not speaking language does not mean one does not understand their community and land because I do know my culture and the land, I just do not speak the language because I was not taught the language.”
- “We also need to create a community shift in consciousness to value that language focused curriculum, as many parents believe that learning English is key to getting a good job.”

MAJOR THEMES - NABPI



Need for Inventory of Existing Programs/Resources Across Tribal Nations Needed

We heard from several participants that their Pueblo or Tribe was already engaged in pre-K programming for children in their community, however they did not have a full picture of what was in place in terms of infrastructure.

- Beyond programming, there appears to be a need to explore further what state and federal funding may be available but not already leveraged through capital outlay and our federal delegation.
 - “Can we leverage state capital outlay to begin building new classrooms or remodel existing spaces now while we prepare for expansion of programming?”
 - Renegotiate the tribal gaming compacts to support early childhood related to traditional education such as language and culture education.
 - “Each Tribe or Pueblo has their own unique sets of programs and funding streams to support those programs.”
 - This discussion concluded with a consensus among the group that analysis be conducted to identify what funding streams already exist for early childhood development for Tribes in NM before new funding is released across these communities.
- NABPI GC member questions “if Tribes are already moving forward with expansion of early childhood programming/services at their level independent of these discussions?”
- There is a lot already in place but it is disconnected and there is a need to develop a holistic team to forge connections and coordinate services. Can we use existing models and invest in those existing models rather than look to re-build this?
- Another GC member noted that Santa Clara recently took over a BIA school and what they are looking at now is how to integrate multiple programs so that they have one linear education/development program.
- NABPI GC member noted that there are multiple streams to invest in early childhood that could be leveraged if there was strategic planning including capital outlay. *He suggested that our report include a note that while likely late for this legislative session, we should explore these sources of outlay funding for specific purposes, including new classrooms, schools, and renovations to existing spaces for this purpose.*

MAJOR THEMES - NABPI



Reforms Needed to Increase Human Capital Needed for Expansion

While some resources are already available across communities that could be tapped into to staff an expansion of programs, Tribal participants identified several obstacles that will need to be addressed. Below are some of those that were identified by multiple respondents.

- Traditional academic institutions could be leveraged better to provide more training certification to Native American students.
 - “Too expensive and there is little funding for students looking to come back to school”
 - “We rely on out of state programs to train our folks because UNM and other schools do not have flexible schedules”
 - “We have many elders in our community who have the language skills we could use to make sure our kids do not lose their language in the process of having Pre-K but they do not have the credentials to teach in these programs.”
 - “Integrate early childhood development to include elderly teachers like foster grandparents programs”
 - “Establish educational opportunities so early childhood professions/students are provided with assistance for tuition, books- like the Title 2 program that provided scholarships and stipends to continue education. This continues the early learning in areas of cultural values and traditions.”
 - “Consider traditional educators who provide language and cultural education and provide compensation/salary for their time.”
 - “If early childhood is to be expanded, pay or compensation for professionals in this field needs to be increased or in line with other educators in order to be competitive in the workforce. We compete with all other tribes in this area for Head Start teachers, for example we currently have 7 positions that have been open for a very long time because it is a small pool of professionals for northern region.”
 - “Keep early childhood teaching programs in communities especially the rural parts of the state. Majority of students in the early childhood programs are native, living in their communities, land, and raising families and they do not have ability to move to major cities like Albuquerque to go to school.”
- Another NABPI GC member identified that the successful examples of Tribes who have set up programs have relied on external teams to ensure that the capacity was there before programs started. This member talks about how to build capacity for early childhood programs and asks if “teams” like this would be provided to assist Tribes as needed?
- “Tribes are already relying on their community to provide informal early childhood development to the children but they are not given respect and authority and pay in line with what they provide.”

MAJOR THEMES - NABPI



Several participants made clear that race and racism must be directly addressed in the process to expand funding, as “brown kids are most likely to be impacted by expansion”. There were not any direct statements focused on what to do to address the underlying racism or role that the race of children and families projected to benefit from expansion of early childhood program, yet this came up enough in our dialogues to include in our main findings.

- The session concluded with a great discussion of how the racial and ethnic diversity in the state complicates the expansion of programs. One GC member noted that this is the “elephant in the room”.
- *“A statewide program is by definition a Native American and Hispanic program. However, the role of race and racism cannot be overlooked in how some, even progressives, look at this issue – will our kids benefit from this or only the brown kids?”*
- Another NABPI GC member noted that we must also consider that many Native American families and leaders are resistant to expansion of early childhood due to concerns with outside progressives “telling us what to do with their kids.” We cannot assume that the communities want what we might believe that they should.



MAJOR THEMES - NABPI



Programming Must Address the Entire Family not Just Children

One of the major themes that emerged was the need to ensure that programs and curriculum take a holistic approach to include the entire family and not just the children in the household. Multiple participants noted that while early childhood programs can address development for children during the hours that the student are participating, this does not address the longer period of the day and evening when the children are at home. Ensuring that parents are equipped to build on what the children are learning at home is key. We also heard from many participants, and particularly those who are parents, that the hours for Pre-K programs are not conducive to work schedules. Our analysis suggests that the schedules of early childhood programs should take into consideration the work schedules of parents who may find half-day services to be problematic.

- “As we consider an inventory of programs we need to think more broadly than the children into the full family.”
- “We rely on children to solve challenges with language loss etc. but we must be conscious that when we leave the students they go home to parents who cannot speak the language.”
- “As a parent her children do not go to the head start at Jemez Pueblo due to the limited space and hours of function which do not line up with her work schedule. The capacity of head start does not cover a full work day.”
- “Have an early childhood professional/coordinator at local health centers to provide information, refer to resources for learning and services-this provides coordinated services integrated with early childhood systems and programs.”
- “Hold events like health fairs where all resources are in one place for parents to receive services in one spot or location and time. This makes it easy to enroll children into services like Head Start and provides access to specialty health care, and obtain vaccinations.”
- “Creating spaces for families for their healing from historical trauma experienced. There are systems and programs that provide an environment where families are not treated well: they feel unwelcomed/judged.”

POLLING

In order to enhance the outreach and engagement process with clear, quantitative information, NMECDP commissioned two polls. One is being conducted by Pacific Marketing Research/Latino Decisions targeting consumers of early childhood services, i.e. families/parents/caregivers (see NABPI inset below). The other was conducted by Research & Polling targeting voters in New Mexico. Topline results of the Research & Polling work are included in Appendix D, the Executive Summary from Research & Polling is included below:



Perceived Effectiveness of Early Child Programs in New Mexico

Voters were read a list of early childhood education programs in New Mexico and were asked to rate how effective they believe each one is using a five-point scale where a score of five is very effective and a score of one is not effective at all. Overall, the majority of voters rate each education program as effective (a score of four or five), while fewer voters rate childcare and home visiting programs as being effective. However, this is partially due to the fact that few voters have enough knowledge or information to form an opinion on the effectiveness of childcare programs and home visiting programs.

- Kindergarten - 73% effective (a score of four or five) (53% very effective [a score of five])
- Head start and early start programs - 65% effective (42% very effective)
- New Mexico Pre-K 53% - effective (35% very effective)
- Childcare programs - 41% effective (23% very effective)
- Home visiting programs - 30% effective (19% very effective)

Few voters rate any of the above programs as ineffective, ranging from 7% to 14%. United Way and other social service organizations should focus on educating New Mexicans regarding the early childcare programs and home visiting programs that are available to parents and guardians in New Mexico.

Importance of Various Issues Facing New Mexico

Voters were read various issues facing New Mexico and were asked to rate the importance of each one using a five-point scale where a score of five is extremely important and a score of one is not important at all. Overall, all but one issue was rated as extremely important (a score of 5) by the majority of voters; when combining scores of four and five, between approximately six-in-ten and nine-in-ten voters rate each of the issues tested as important. Generally speaking, females, Hispanics, Democrats, those in Northwestern New Mexico, and those of higher socio-economic status are more likely than others to say each issue is extremely important.

Nearly nine-in-ten voters rated each of the following issues as important (a score of four or five):

- Improving parenting skills - 89% important (76% extremely important [a score of five])
- More active engagement of families in the development of young children as important - 87% important (74% extremely important)

Approximately eight-in-ten voters rate each of the following as important (a score of four or five):

- Increasing pay and/or scholarships for workers in early childhood programs - 80% important (62% extremely important)
- Better coordination between the various agencies that provide early childhood services - 80% important (61% extremely important)
- Improving prenatal care - 78% important (60% extremely important)
- Increasing the number of slots available in high quality early childhood programs - 78% important (60% extremely important)

Approximately seven-in-ten voters rate the following issues as important, with over half who say each of these issues is extremely important:

- Making full-day Pre-K available to all families who want it - 70% important (56% extremely important)
- Having more childcare available with flexible hours including around the clock care for night and off-hour workers - 72% important (54% extremely important)
- Having more local control of how State funds are used for early childhood services - 75% important (52% extremely important)

Sixty-two percent of statewide voters rate having a local, culturally relevant and language appropriate curriculum for young children as important, with 46% who say this is extremely important.

Impression of New Mexico CYFD and the PED

Registered voters statewide were asked to rate their impression of the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) and the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) using a five-point scale where a score of five is very positive and a score of one is very negative. Interestingly, voters are more likely to have a negative impression than they are a positive impression of both agencies, as 26% have a positive impression of CYFD compared to 37% with a negative impression, and 27% have a positive impression of PED compared to 32% who have a negative impression.

Those of lower socio-economic status and those in the Las Cruces/Southwest region are more likely than others to have a positive impression of CYFD, while those of higher socio-economic status, those ages 50 to 64, and Republicans are more likely than others to have a negative impression of CYFD. Hispanics and Democrats are more likely than others to have a positive impression of the PED, while Anglos and those of higher socio-economic status are more likely to have a negative impression of the PED.

State Government Involvement

When asked if State government should be doing more, doing less, or if State government is doing enough when it comes to ensuring that children in New Mexico begin kindergarten with the knowledge and skills they need to do their best in school, two-thirds (65%) of voters say State government should be doing more, compared to just 9% who say it should be doing less.

Those more likely to say State government should be doing more include females, Democrats, those ages 35 to 49, and those in North Central New Mexico. Those more likely to say State government should be doing less include males, Republicans, and those in the Albuquerque Metro area.

Voters were asked to rate their level of support or opposition to dedicating more funds from the state budget to expand New Mexico Pre-K programs throughout New Mexico using a five-point scale where a score of five is strongly support and a score of one is strongly oppose. The vast majority (75%) of voters generally support dedicating more funds to expand NM Pre-K, with 55% who strongly support this, while just 9% are opposed. Females, Hispanics, Democrats, and those in North Central New Mexico and the Las Cruces/Southwest region are more likely than others to say they strongly support dedicating more funds from the State budget to expand Pre-K programs.

When asked, in an unaided, open-ended manner, to give the underlying reasons for their support for, or opposition to, dedicating more funds from the State budget to expand New Mexico Pre-K programs, 34% of voters say it will give children the head start they need for future education, 32% say Pre-K programs are important, 21% say it will improve the education system, 14% say money should be spent on children, and 13% say Pre-K programs are effective.

Final Thoughts

Overall, it is clear that voters in New Mexico feel more needs to be done in terms of early childhood programs. In fact, three-quarters of New Mexico's registered voters support dedicating more funds from the State budget to expand New Mexico Pre-K programs and two-thirds think State government needs to be doing more to ensure children in New Mexico begin kindergarten with the knowledge and skills they need to do their best in school.

Furthermore, when asked in an unaided, open-ended manner what the State of New Mexico can do to better support families raising children, over one-quarter (26%) of voters say improve public schools, while 14% mention more higher wage jobs, 12% say increase affordable daycare, one-in-ten mention providing more early childhood programs or increasing parent support programs.

It is also clear that there is concern among some voters with State agencies that are tasked with managing the State's education system and the child welfare programs. This, in addition to the fact that voters believe it is important to have better coordination between the various agencies that provide early childhood services, and have more local control of how State funds are used for early childhood services, presents an opportunity for organizations such as United Way.

NABPI and NMECDP developed a sub-contract with Pacific Marketing Research/Latino Decisions to conduct a survey of consumers of early childhood programming. This survey has a very specific target population of parents of children ages 0-4 and focuses on capturing participation rates in pre-K programming, obstacles to accessing programming, and attitudes toward several dimensions of the Business Plan for Early Childhood. Although results from this survey were not ready for inclusion of this report, the survey instrument is included in Appendix J and results of the survey will be included in the NABPI final report for this project.



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MEDIA AND PUBLICITY

- A reporter from the Rio Grande Sun attended the Española Community Conversation on August 1, 2018.
 - A Letter to the Editor by Ron Martinez was published in the Rio Grande Sun on September 13, 2018
 - Three radio interviews were conducted in Santa Fe ahead of the Community Conversations on KTRC, KSFR, and KSWV. Links to podcasts:
- KTRC Interview
 - KSFR Interview
 - KRWG Television attended the Las Cruces Community Conversation
 - A column was published in the Las Cruces Sun News ahead of the conversation there



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM NMECDP

As a result of the community knowledge and information gained through the community engagement process, NMECDP has developed the following policy recommendations:

1. Creation of a new state agency to govern early childhood programs and services,
2. The need for a strategic workforce development and planning,
3. The need to expand programs with quality.

These themes arose across the state and it was clear that each needs to be addressed in a manner that ensures cultural and linguistic appropriateness.

1. A new **Department of Early Childhood Services** would address the two main issues that early childhood stakeholders identified with the present governance structure – trust/mistrust in the current system and lack of alignment of programming.

The majority of early childhood programs are administered by the CYFD and the PED. Each of these agencies has an important mission. CYFD is tasked with child protective services, and PED focuses on K-12 education. However, neither focuses on early childhood development. Stakeholders overwhelmingly voiced the opinion that a department that focuses on early childhood programs will lead to improved understanding, quality, and use of best practices, while ensuring that programming is developmentally appropriate.

Additionally, stakeholders voiced the opinion that housing all early childhood programs in new department would align early childhood programs and create a more efficient system. Better alignment 1) results in less duplication of services, 2) produces improved coordination

between programs, and 3) connects accountability with governance authority.

2) The need for **strategic workforce development and planning**. One barrier to expansion of programs with quality is the shortage of a well-trained and credentialed workforce. The major issue on this front is that early childhood professionals receive low pay and little to no benefits in most instances. This discourages individuals from putting in the time and money required to become credentialed as an early childhood professional. Stakeholders around that state pointed out that it is possible to make higher wages as a barista or working in a travel center than you can in early childhood. Simply put, wages are not adequate to hire, train and retain the early childhood workforce. Therefore, there is a serious need to create innovative strategies that will address this issue.

3) **Early childhood programs must be expanded with quality**. The return on investment for early childhood programs depends on ensuring that expansion of programs does not outpace the ability to ensure the quality of programs. New Mexico should stay on its current path of expanding slots in a way that does not sacrifice quality, and a new governance structure, as well as workforce development, are critical to accomplish this end.

Finally, it was clear during our community outreach efforts that these policy recommendations should all be implemented through a lens of cultural and linguistic appropriateness. This can be accomplished in part through local control to the fullest extent possible, since local program providers and families know the needs of their communities better than anyone else.



Prepared by the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership
in partnership with the Native American Budget and Policy Institute.