Joint Advisory and Workforce Councils Meeting
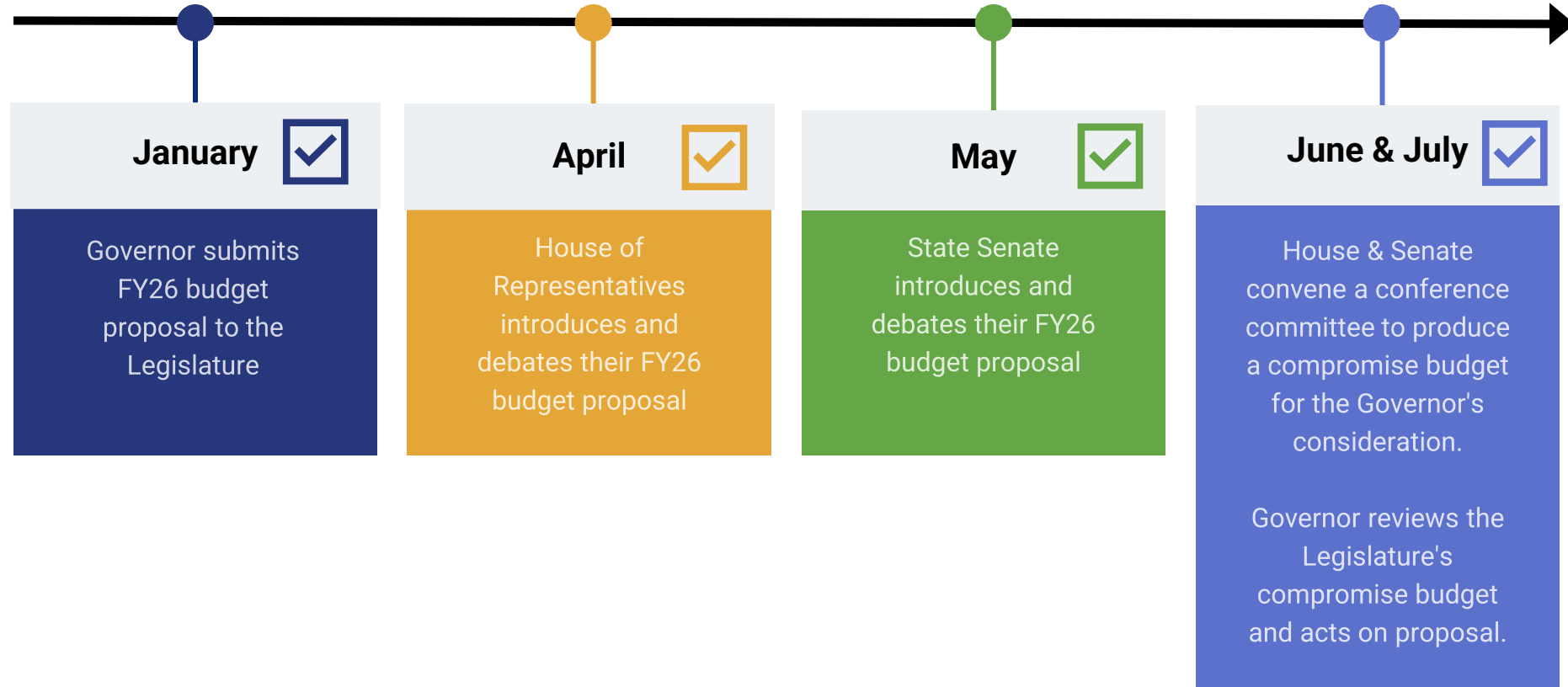
September 4, 2025

Agenda

Items for Discussion and Action

- Welcome, Introductions and Agency Updates
- Fiscal Year 2026 State Budget Overview
- 5-Year Strategic Acton Plan Development
- Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Program Updates
- Overview of FY26 Meeting Dates

Fiscal Year 2026 State Budget Overview

State Budget Process

January ✔
Governor submits FY26 budget proposal to the Legislature

April ✔
House of Representatives introduces and debates their FY26 budget proposal

May ✔
State Senate introduces and debates their FY26 budget proposal

June & July ✔
House & Senate convene a conference committee to produce a compromise budget for the Governor's consideration.

Governor reviews the Legislature's compromise budget and acts on proposal.

Gateway to Pre-K FY26 Budget Highlights

The Governor's H.1 budget continues to make progress in key areas of the Gateway to Pre-K agenda:

**Continued investment in the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI)**

The CPPI line item in FY26 will maintain and support all existing communities

Supporting continued access to affordable care for families through Child Care Financial Assistance

Investments in child care financial assistance line-items to maintain FY24 and FY25 caseload expansion

Sustaining $475M for Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3)

C3 continues to be a priority and state investment in the program maintains critical operational supports to early childhood programs
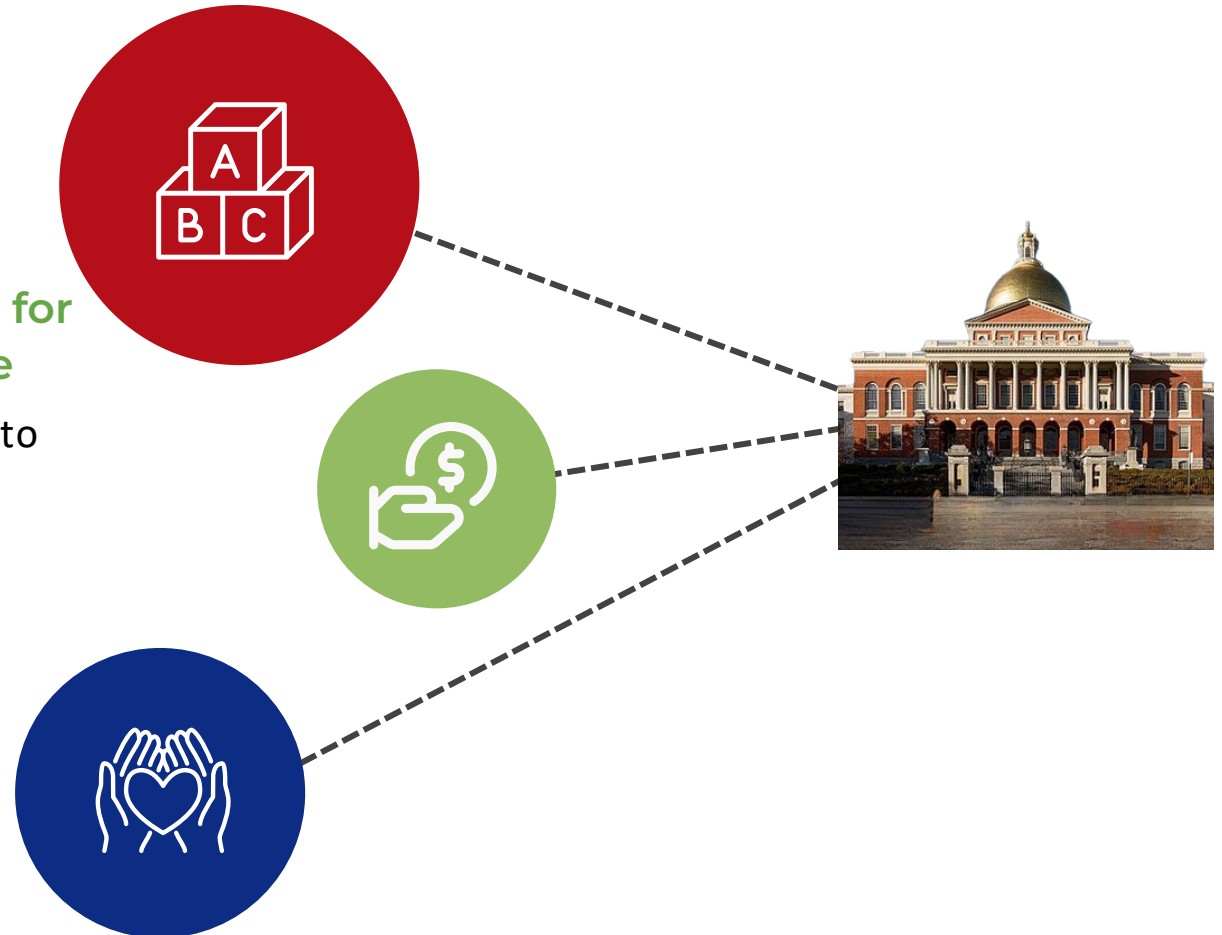
FY26 Agency Budget Highlights

Overall, the final FY26 budget funds EEC at $1.7679 billion, 10% increase from FY25 final enacted budget. The budget includes:

- **$475 million** for **Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3)**, funded from both general appropriations and Fair Share revenue
- **$1.06 billion** to support families receiving **Child Care Financial Assistance** (Income Eligible and DTA/DCF-Related)
- **$20.5 million** for the **Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI)**, supplemented by $50 million available for the program over 3 years through the Fair Share Supplemental budget, allocating **$25 million** for CPPI in FY26
- **$57 million** for EEC **Administration and Quality**, which includes $5 million earmarked for the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Scholarship.
- **$20 million** for **child care resource and referral services**
- **$20 million** for supplemental grants to **Head Start and Early Head Start** programs
- **$11.7 million** for the **Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE)** grant program
- **$3 million** for **Career Pathways** (EEC Board considering proposal to fund the program at $7.5 million at September Board Meeting)
- **$5 million** for **Early Childhood Mental Health grants**
- **$4.25 million** for the **ParentChild+** program
- **$1.75 million** for **Reach Out and Read**
- **$1 million** for **Neighborhood Villages**

EEC FY26 Budget (in millions)

GENERAL FUND LINE ITEMS

Line Item	Appropriation	FY25 GAA	FY26 H.1	FY26 GAA
3000-1000	Admin	$27.70	$8.00	$11.52
3000-1020	Quality Improvement	$52.60	$46.90	$45.45
3000-1045	C3 Stabilization Grants	$300.00	$200.00	$115.00
3000-1049	Employer-sponsored Child Care	$2.50	--	--
3000-2000	Access Management	$20.00	$20.00	$20.00
3000-3060	DCF/DTA Related Child Care	$356.60	$448.20	$448.21
3000-4060	Income-Eligible Child Care	$417.20	$517.60	$517.64
3000-5000	Grants to Head Start Programs	$18.50	$18.50	$20.00
3000-6025	CPPI Pre-K Initiative	$17.50	$17.70	$5.00
3000-6075	Early Childhood Mental Health	$5.00	$5.00	$5.00
3000-7050	Coordinated Family & Community Engagement	$11.90	$11.70	$11.74
3000-7052	Parent-Child Plus Program	$4.30	$4.30	$4.25
3000-7055	Neighborhood Villages	$1.00	$1.00	$1.00
3000-7066	Career Pathways	$5.00	$5.00	$3.00
3000-7070	Reach Out and Read	$1.80	$1.80	$1.75
	Total	**$1,241.60**	**$1,305.70**	**$1,209.56**

EEC FY26 Budget (in millions)

FAIR SHARE-FUNDED LINE ITEMS

Line Item	Appropriation	FY25 GAA	FY26 H.1	FY26 GAA
1596-2410	Child Care Grants to Providers	$175.00	$275.00	$360.00
1596-2411	Income Eligible Access (Waitlist Remediation)	$15.00	--	$10.70
1596-2412	CPPI Pre-K Initiative	$5.00	--	$15.50
1596-2429	Early Education & Care Provider Capital Grants	$15.00	--	--
1596-2434	Rate Increases for Early Education and Care	$65.00	--	--
1596-2435	EEC Affordability	$18.00	--	--
1596-2452	Child Care Supports	--	$98.00	$83.00
	Total	**$293.00**	**$373.00**	**$469.20**

To see the **full list of line items** and proposed funding levels, see the FY26 General Appropriation Act (GAA) here.

FY25 Fair Share Supplemental Budget

In January, Governor Healey proposed an **FY25 Fair Share Supplemental Budget** to complement her FY26 budget proposal. It included **$150 million to support**:

- Capacity building and workforce development

- Family access and affordability

- Implementation of the Early Education and Care Task Force recommendations

- Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) (over the next 3 years)

The final FY25 Fair Share Supplemental budget included $45.5 million in total for the agency, and our work, including:
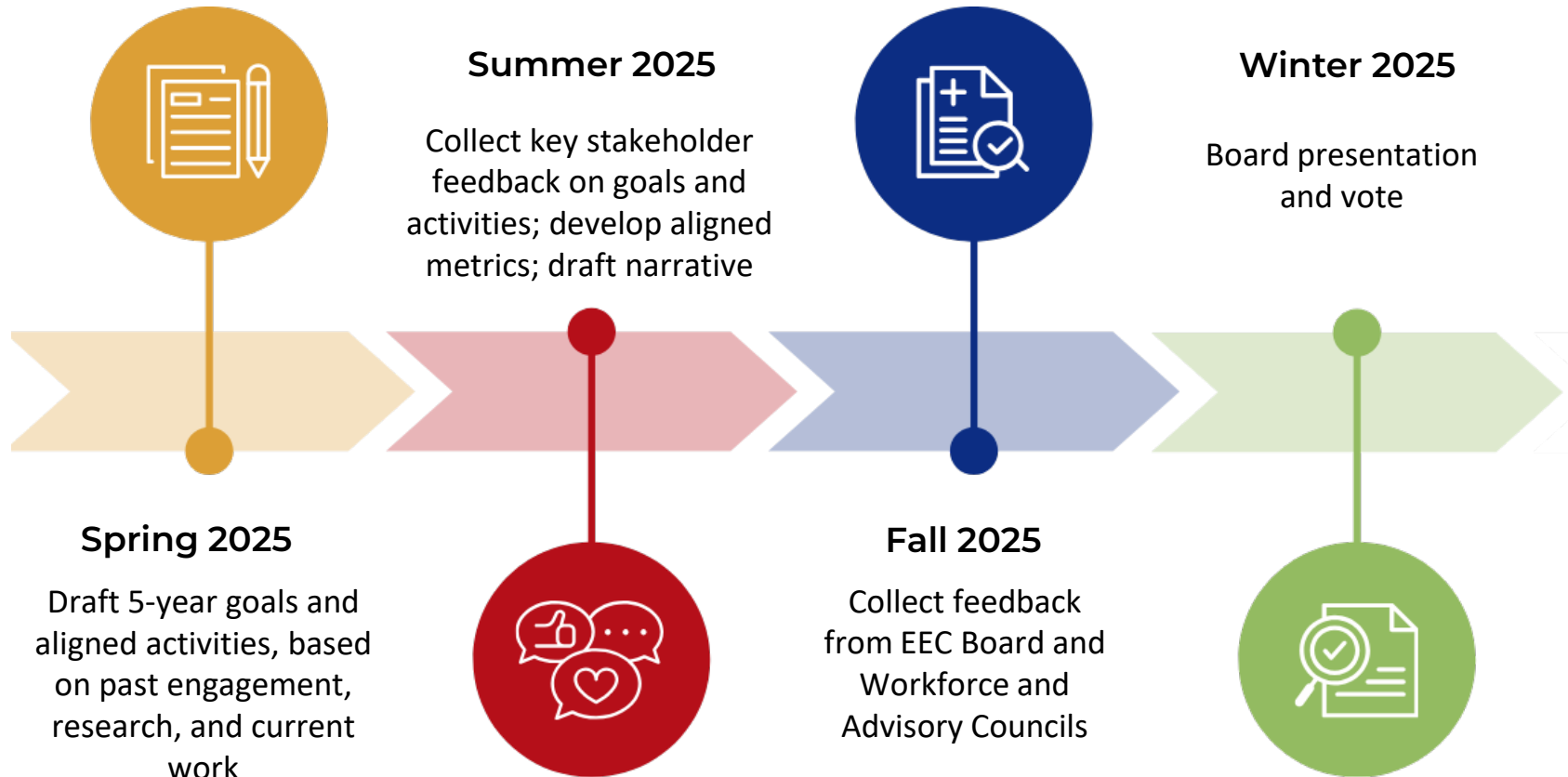
- **$20 million** for CCFA reimbursement rate increases in FY26.

- **$8 million** for CCFA access for staff working in early education and care.

- **$7.5 million** for loan repayment for staff working in early education and care.

- **$10 million** for capacity building to connect families to child care providers and support workforce development for early educators.

Additionally, the supplemental budget also establishes the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in Massachusetts, without designated funding.

5-Year Strategic Acton Plan Development

Strategic Action Plan Timeline

Summer 2025

Collect key stakeholder feedback on goals and activities; develop aligned metrics; draft narrative

Winter 2025

Board presentation and vote

Spring 2025

Draft 5-year goals and aligned activities, based on past engagement, research, and current work

Fall 2025

Collect feedback from EEC Board and Workforce and Advisory Councils

2026-30 Foundations: Strategic Objectives

FAMILY ACCESS

Families have equitable access to quality and affordable early education and care in the communities in which they live, learn, and work.

WORKFORCE SUPPORTS

A diverse field of educators, leaders, and program staff is competitively compensated and supported by clear professional pathways that promote quality, retention, and advancement.

PROGRAM QUALITY

Programs licensed or funded by EEC support children's health and safety and provide high quality environments that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and support children's learning and development in partnership with families.

PROGRAM STABILITY

Programs licensed or funded by EEC are operationally stable and financially sustainable.

AGENCY INFRASTRUCTURE

EEC has sufficient internal capacity, organizational structures, and diverse perspectives and expertise to carry out its mission and strategic objectives.

Engagement

2026-30 FOUNDATIONS

The agency has engaged with many stakeholders over the last few years and will use their input to inform our next Strategic Action Plan.

Inter-Agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force listening sessions

In the summer of 2024, the Task Force hosted 14 listening sessions across the state and virtually.

Regular stakeholder engagement opportunities

The agency regularly engages stakeholders through listening sessions, working groups, focus groups, and the 9:30 call.
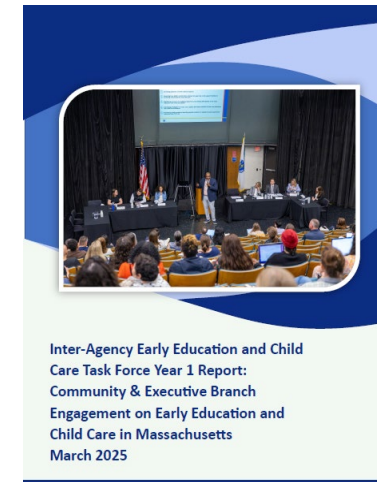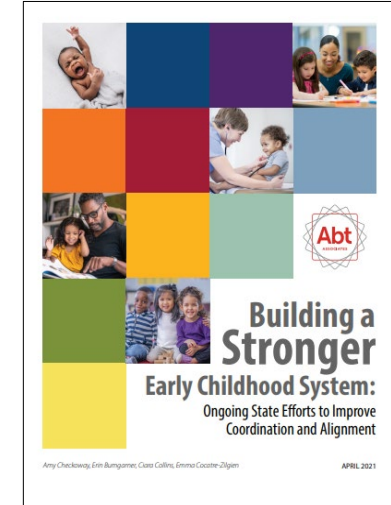
Advisory, Workforce, and Data Advisory Councils/Commissions

On a quarterly basis, we meet with our council members to gather input on agency initiatives.

Regulation Revision Engagements

It is required by statue to host public comment opportunities whenever the agency revises regulations.

External Research

2026-30 FOUNDATIONS

- [Building a Stronger Early Childhood System: Ongoing State Efforts to Improve Coordination and Alignment](#), Abt Associates, 2021

- MA Special Legislative Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission, 2022

- [An Economic Analysis of the Childcare and Early Education Market in MA](#), Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, 2024

- [Building Blocks: Status of Child Care Reform in Massachusetts and What Comes Next](#), Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2024

- [Inter-Agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force Year 1 Report](#), 2025

Special Legislative Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission

FINAL REPORT — MARCH 2022

Building a Stronger Early Childhood System: Ongoing State Efforts to Improve Coordination and Alignment

Inter-Agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force Year 1 Report: Community & Executive Branch Engagement on Early Education and Child Care in Massachusetts
March 2025

Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation

BUILDING BLOCKS
Status of Child Care Reform in Massachusetts and What Comes Next

EEC Research and Data Infrastructure

2026-30 FOUNDATIONS

EEC Research Priorities and Projects
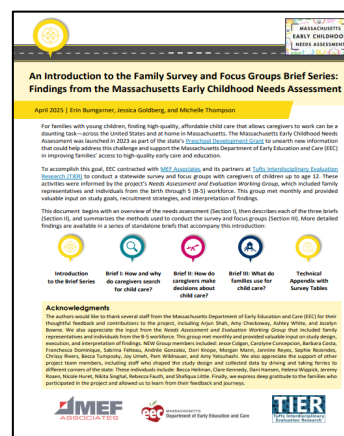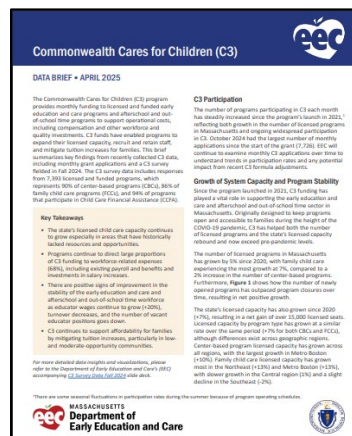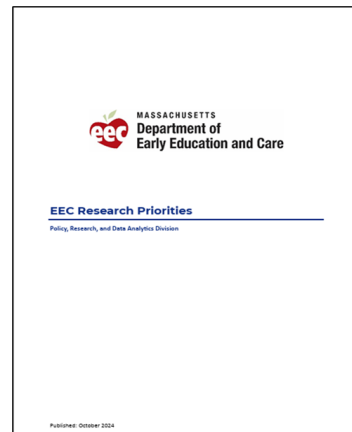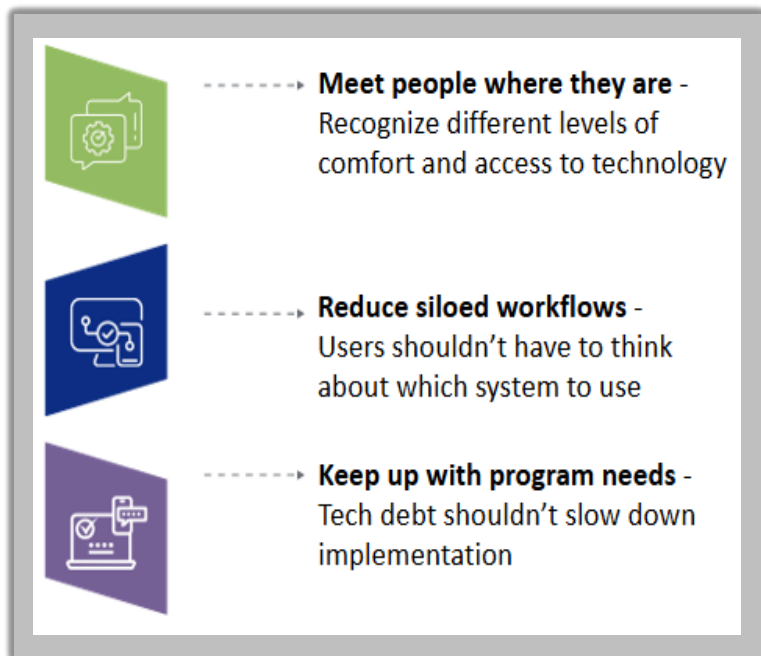

EEC KPI Dashboard
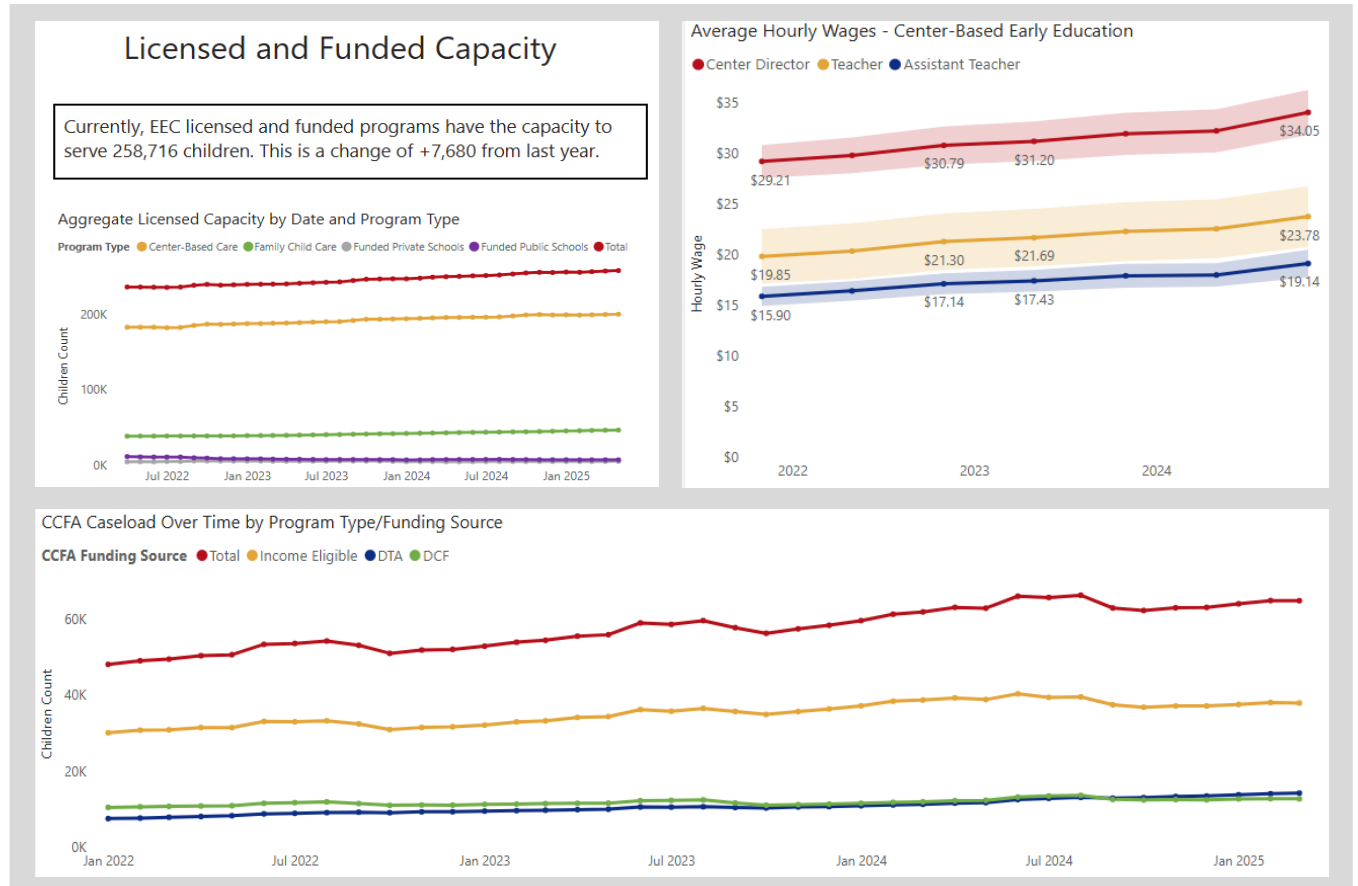
IT Modernization

2026-30 FOUNDATIONS

- Child Care Financial Assistance Family Portal

- Background Record Check Navigator Improvements

- Educator Portal

- Learning Management System (LMS)

Goals

Examples

Our Time Today

1. **Review draft 5-year goals with some example activities**
   - *The next few slides are packed!*

2. **Discuss:**
   - Do these goals feel reflective of your work, perspective, and collaborations with EEC? How do you see yourself in these goals?
   - What do you think is missing from these goals and related initiatives?

Family Access – DRAFT

Families have equitable access to quality and affordable early education and care in the communities in which they live, learn, and work

Goal 1: EEC systems are positioned to maximize the use of available funding to make early education and care more affordable for more families.

- Expand income eligibility for CCFA from 50% to 85% of SMI; use new Family Portal to identify and prioritize children <50% SMI
- Make progress towards CCFA reimbursement rates covering the true cost of care
- Reduce CCFA wait list time

Goal 2: Families will have a greater variety of early education and care options available in their communities that offer a wide range of services.

- Maintain and continue developing the C3 program, to support operational costs at center-based and FCC programs
- Maintain and continue developing the CPPI program, to support further expansion of universal Pre-K
- Regularly update CCFA contracts
- Strengthen training, technical assistance, and supports for FFN care

Goal 3: Families will be able to access information about early education and care programs and community resources, so they can find and enroll in the care they need.

- Create family guide to accessing child care
- Make EEC's child care search more user-friendly
- Prioritize language accessibility for family resources/systems
- Continue development, rebrand, and promotion of Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) offerings
- Continue to collaborate with CCRRs to ensure families have support navigating education and care options

Goal 4: Families who need assistance paying for early child care will have centralized access to the information they need to learn about and easily apply for financial assistance.

- Launch family portal
- Modernize the CCFA system, including updates to improve language accessibility and mobile compatibility
- Centralize and organize CCFA eligibility processing
- Support CCR&R's to align procedures across regions

Program Quality– DRAFT

Programs licensed or funded by EEC support children's health and safety and provide high quality environments that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and support children's learning and development in partnership with families.

Goal 1: Programs will have sufficient time and support to meet updated state standards for safety, responsive and appropriate practice, and partnerships with families

- Complete and implement new licensing regulations for FCC, GSA, OST, and residential programs
- Strengthen statewide and regional support systems to provide technical assistance and training to all programs on regulation and policy implementation
- External engagement during regulation updating process

Goal 2: Educators, direct care workers, program leadership, and FCC system staff will have access to and participate in training and technical assistance to support ongoing skill development.

Goal 3: Program leadership and FCC system staff will be supported in planning and organizing program-level professional learning and apply on-the-job supports towards ongoing continuous quality improvement

- Provide technical assistance, coaching, training, and mentoring opportunities for staff and educational leadership, in collaboration with higher education and other partners, to strengthen staff skills
- Continue development and implementation of Literacy Launch Institutes and PRISM grants
- Implement child care educator and education leadership credentials
- Pilot support systems within funding initiatives, identify most effective support systems and build out to system-wide participation
- Collaborate with partner agencies to identify and implement workforce development initiatives that enhance recruitment, training, and retention of staff in residential programs

Goal 4: EEC will manage funding strategically to support program investments in areas that drive quality, such as total compensation, professional development, curriculum, and comprehensive services.

- Review EEC funding to identify opportunities to fund quality investments and improvements

Program Stability – <mark>DRAFT</mark>

Programs licensed or funded by EEC are operationally stable and financially sustainable

Goal 1: Program directors and administrators will have access to trainings and resources that empower them to succeed as small businesses, supporting their effective management of operations and business administration.

- Continue and expand business and administration training, including through the Business Front Door
- Support new and aspiring FCC providers to launch programs
- Explore potential support of shared services

Goal 2: Programs will have access to predictable funding opportunities that help support priority investment areas, including infrastructure and staffing.

- Maintain and continue developing the C3 program
- Continue development and implementation of capital grant strategy
- Compliance with prospective payments for providers
- Pursue private/public partnerships

Goal 3: EEC will further analyze how current funding streams work together to support program operations and identify gaps to inform future funding opportunities.

- Build out and refine cost and revenue models, and use them to adjust all EEC funding for programs and systems
- Create funding map covering how the field's different funding streams come together

Workforce Support – ==DRAFT==

A diverse field of educators, leaders, and program staff is competitively compensated and supported by clear professional pathways that promote equity, retention, and advancement.

Goal 1: Educators, direct care staff, and providers will have a transparent, efficient, and predictable background check experience

- Upgrade the BRC unit's capacity (staffing, training, and resources)
- Improve the efficiency of BRC processes to decrease wait-times
- Improve external communications about BRC processes

Goal 2: Educators of all levels will have access to multiple defined pathways to enter the field, advance in their careers, and demonstrate qualifications for increased compensation that reflect what programs seek

- Roll out new educator credentials and aligned regulations
- Strengthen and expand Professional Development Pathways & Apprenticeship Models
- Share salary scale model to inform future conversations around compensation
- Expand access to and knowledge about affordable professional development opportunities for all educators
- Develop and implement new Learning Management System (LMS)
- Create pipelines of qualified candidates for Residential and Placement programs
- Help residential programs create clear advancement tracks

Goal 3: Educators, direct care staff, and providers will have convenient, centralized access to the information and support they need to develop their skills and advance professionally

- Launch and regularly update educator portal
- Establish multiple navigation supports across settings (e.g. PDCs, community colleges, EEC staff)
- Help potential educators understand the early career education pathways and entry points available to them

Agency Infrastructure – <mark>DRAFT</mark>

EEC has sufficient internal capacity, organizational structures, and diverse perspectives and expertise to carry out its mission and strategic objectives

Goal 1: EEC staff will thrive as members of an inclusive EEC community, and have access to resources, information, and professional development opportunities to help them succeed in their roles, advance in their careers, and incorporate inclusion and equity in their work

- Implement internal diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging programming
- Expand internal programming and supports around the staff life cycle/ experience
- Develop and roll out internal EEC training/professional development unit
- Improve EEC staff access to information and procedure guides

Goal 2: EEC will use evidence and data to inform ongoing decision making and examine the effectiveness of its programs, policies, and investments

Goal 3: Providers, advocates, researchers, legislators, and families will be able to engage with data and research that helps them understand EEC's work and the early education field

- Identify analyses and supporting research needed to understand the landscape, inform policy decisions, evaluate program effectiveness, and track progress towards goals
- Identify additional data needs and streamline data collection to minimize burden and redundancy
- Improve data quality and modernize technology systems
- Expand public access to EEC data and analyses, including Residential and Placement program renewals, for external accountability.
- Build and use KPIs to track progress and engagement

Goal 4: Programs, educators, and families will have meaningful opportunities to engage with EEC and share their ideas, to better center their voices in EEC's services, policies, and initiatives.

- Continue to facilitate and utilize Family advisory council, Workforce council, Advisory council, Data advisory commission to share information and collect feedback
- Continue to develop and utilize EEC working groups (Residential & Placement, Workforce, Policy, CCFA) to deepen understanding of key challenges and needs
- Strengthen existing engagement channels and identify additional pathways for 2-way engagement with community
- Improve cadence and clarity of digital communications for all stakeholders

Goal 5: EEC will have updated technology systems that improve the user experience for both internal and external users, reduce administrative burden, and improve the agency's access to quality data.

- Build and maintain external portals (family, educator, Learning Management System)
- Build and maintain internal information-sharing systems (intranet)
- Update and improve existing technology/systems, and explore emerging technology

Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Program Updates

Planning and Approach for FY26

Goals: Maintain commitment to predictability and minimize disruptions after two significant changes in the past two fiscal years.

Recommendations in FY26 must remain cost neutral, which is challenging given growth in programs.

Build compliance to new statutory requirements

- Use **Board review** and public comment to "establish" formula
- Ensure that all programs receiving C3 demonstrate a **willingness to enroll children receiving child care financial assistance**
- Encourage programs to meet **salary benchmarks**

Ongoing analysis of C3 application and survey data identify

- 2,200+ new seats since Nov 2024
- 89% of programs meet benchmark of enrolling 75% of capacity (4% increase from Nov 2024)
- 69% of programs enroll children receiving CCFA (3% increase from Nov 2024)

FY26 Actions

1 **Establish (maintain) current formula in FY26**
- Allows FY26 to focus on integrating growth into the current budget
- Provides additional time to review and consider public/provider feedback
- Creates time and a process to develop and plan for formula and/or other adjustments in FY27

2 **Continue programmatic adjustments**
- Ensure all adjustments align with statutory requirements and manage funding
- Attestation of willingness to accept applications from children with CCFA
- Fund use requirements focusing funding on workforce investments
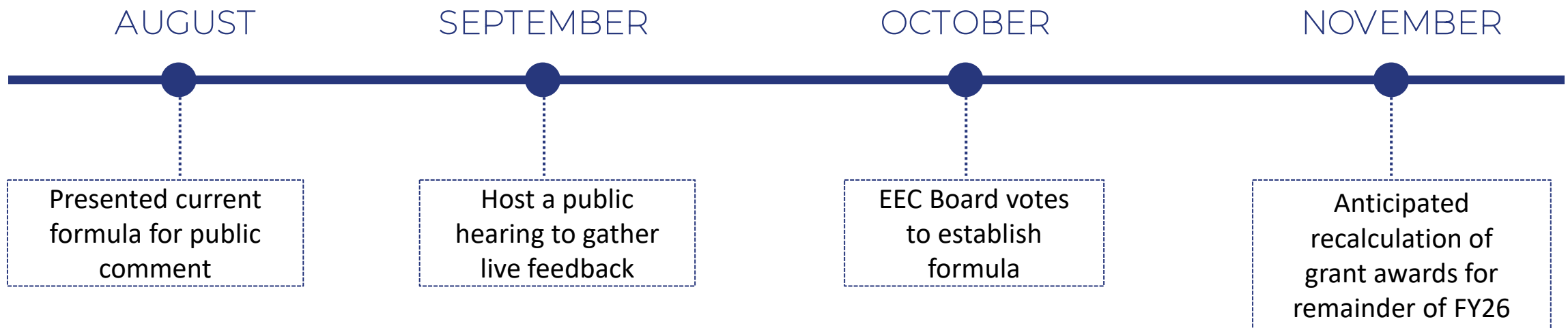- Manage access to new providers

Review of field feedback and consideration of proposals for FY27 during the fall
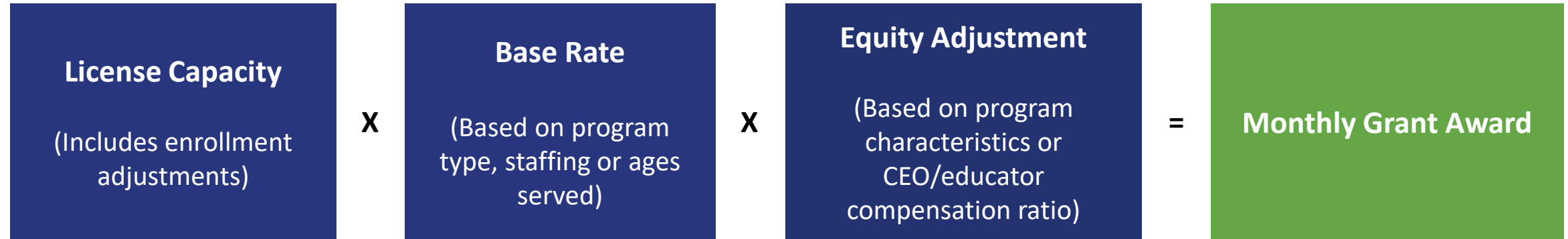
New Public Comment Requirements

Statutory obligation

"Annually, the department shall review and update the operational grant formula to ensure equity and effectiveness in the financial sustainability of early education and care providers. Prior to the establishment or a revision of the operational grant formula, the department shall conduct a public hearing under chapter 30A and submit the proposed updates to the board for its approval."
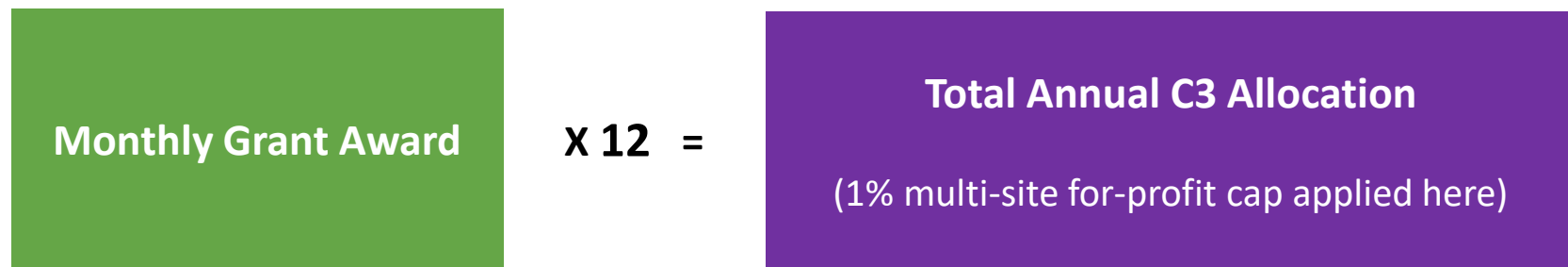
AUGUST
Presented current formula for public comment

SEPTEMBER
Host a public hearing to gather live feedback

OCTOBER
EEC Board votes to establish formula

NOVEMBER
Anticipated recalculation of grant awards for remainder of FY26

Current C3 Formula Calculations

Monthly C3 Funding Calculation

| License Capacity

(Includes enrollment adjustments) | X | Base Rate

(Based on program type, staffing or ages served) | X | Equity Adjustment

(Based on program characteristics or CEO/educator compensation ratio) | = | Monthly Grant Award |

Annual C3 Funding Calculation

Monthly Grant Award   **X 12**   =   Total Annual C3 Allocation

(1% multi-site for-profit cap applied here)

Public Comment Period

Public comments are accepted from August 13 through September 12 (until 5 PM).

The Department of Early Education and Care is holding a public comment period and a public hearing regarding its C3 Formula. You can participate and share feedback through:

Email

Send to
robert.p.orthman@mass.gov

Regular Mail

Send to
ATTN: C3 FORMULA - LEGAL
Department of Early
Education and Care
50 Milk Street, 14th Floor,
Boston, MA 02109

Attend the virtual public hearing

Will take place on **Monday, September 8th from 6 - 7:30 p.m.** on Zoom.

You can register for the session here.

Overview of FY26 Meeting Dates

FY26 Council Meeting Dates

Please note all meetings will be hosted virtually.

Advisory Council meeting dates:	Workforce Council meeting dates:
Thursday, September 4 at 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM *Combined Workforce and Advisory*	Thursday, September 4 at 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM *Combined Workforce and Advisory*
Thursday, December 4 at 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM	Thursday, December 4 at 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Thursday, March 5 at 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	Thursday, March 5 at 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Thursday, June 4 at 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM	Thursday, June 4 at 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

THANK YOU

View Agency KPI Dashboards (updated monthly) [here](#).