



# Vision for Strategic Action Planning in Massachusetts

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*October 2019*



- **Mission:** The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) provides the foundation that supports all children and their development as lifelong learners and contributing members of the community, and supports families in their essential work as parent and caregivers.
- **Vision:** Nine key aspirations for the Department's role in supporting the early childhood, out of school, and residential programs to meet family needs, in collaboration with communities and other state agencies.

# Five-Year Goals (2014-2019)

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- **All young children in the Commonwealth will be ready to enter the K-12 education system and be successful and their families will be provided with the opportunities to support their children's cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and physical development.**
- **Programs offered in early childhood, out of school time settings licensed or license exempt by EEC will promote and support the high-quality education and healthy development of children that enables all children to be successful as school members and citizens.**
- **The early childhood and out-of-school time workforce who works with children ad families in the Commonwealth is professional prepared, adequately compensated, and diverse.**
- **The Department and the Board of Early Education and Care will provide leadership, direction and resources to meet the mission of the agency with utmost integrity, transparency and accountability to the people of the Commonwealth.**

- **Across the Five-Year Goals, the following priorities were used to define objectives:**
  - Commitment to Quality
  - Increasing Access
  - Continuing Communications and Advocacy
  - Sustainable Infra-structure and Finance

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# **LEARNINGS TO DATE**

# Themes from the Field

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Through conversations and introductions to the stakeholders in Massachusetts, a few directional themes have emerged for EEC to consider in next steps and strategic direction:

- Evaluate the distribution of responsibilities across the Regional Offices and Central Office to better support programs across the Commonwealth.
- Provide leadership to track progress in the field and ensure effective implementation.
- Increase collaboration, engagement and transparency with stakeholders to build meaningful feedback loops to inform policy.
- Support alignment across EEC initiatives to ensure coordinated efforts on the ground.
- Work to align strategies across state agencies to create greater impact in the field.

# LOOKING AHEAD

# PROPOSED PATH FORWARD

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## **Proposed Plan:**

- **Affirm the existing Strategic Directions for EEC.**
- **Focus on engaging with the field and building *Strategic Road Map* that lays out implementation activities for EEC.**

## **Summary of Proposed Next Steps:**

- Robust internal and external engagement campaign designed to solicit key areas of focus for implementation.
- Result in a set of key benchmarks to support measuring the impact of implementation for key initiatives across the field.
- Support the initial phase of Preschool Development Grant (PDG) by setting goals and objectives for EEC with the field.



# Planning Process Overview

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## Learning

Collect information, data, and conduct Community Learning Tours to assemble a complete landscape of needs and opportunities



## Engaging

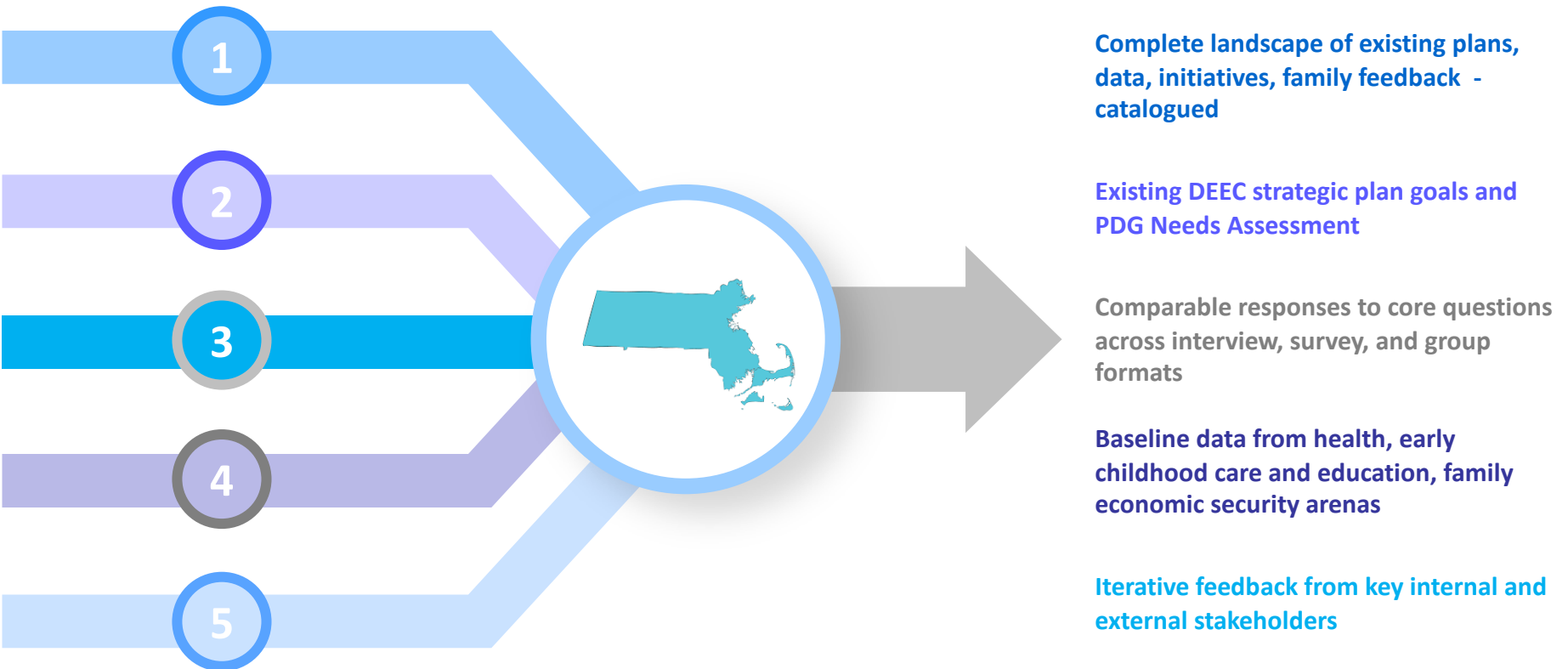
Articulate the problem we are trying to solve and a menu of potential solutions; engage internal and external stakeholders to pressure test and surface most promising strategies



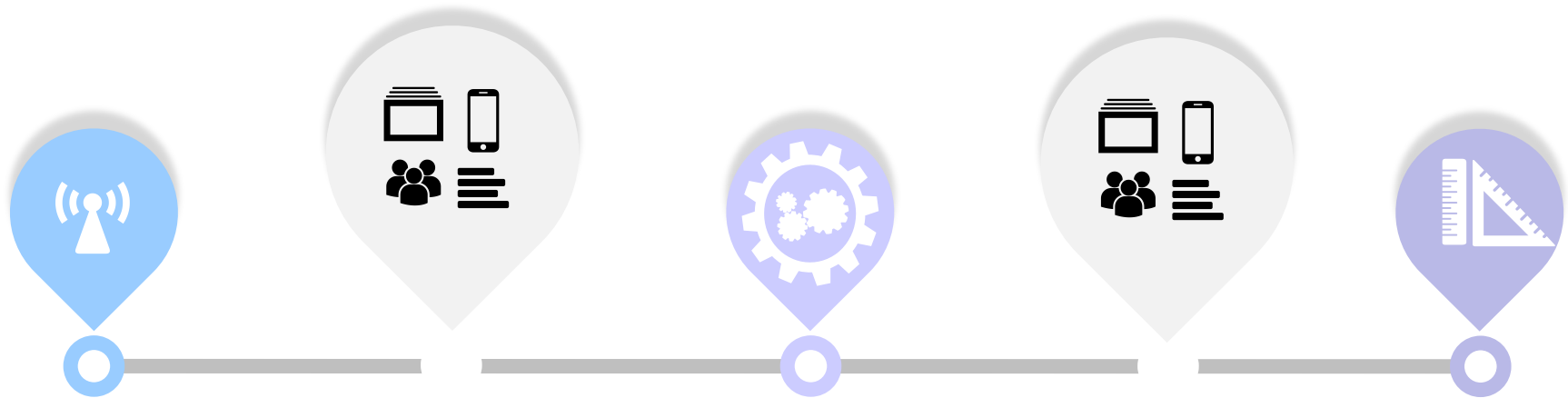
## Co-Creating

Define common impact objectives across efforts, establish concrete benchmarks to measure success, and publish the plan

# Building on Existing Work with New Feedback



# Repeated Stakeholder Engagement



## Engagement will take many forms...

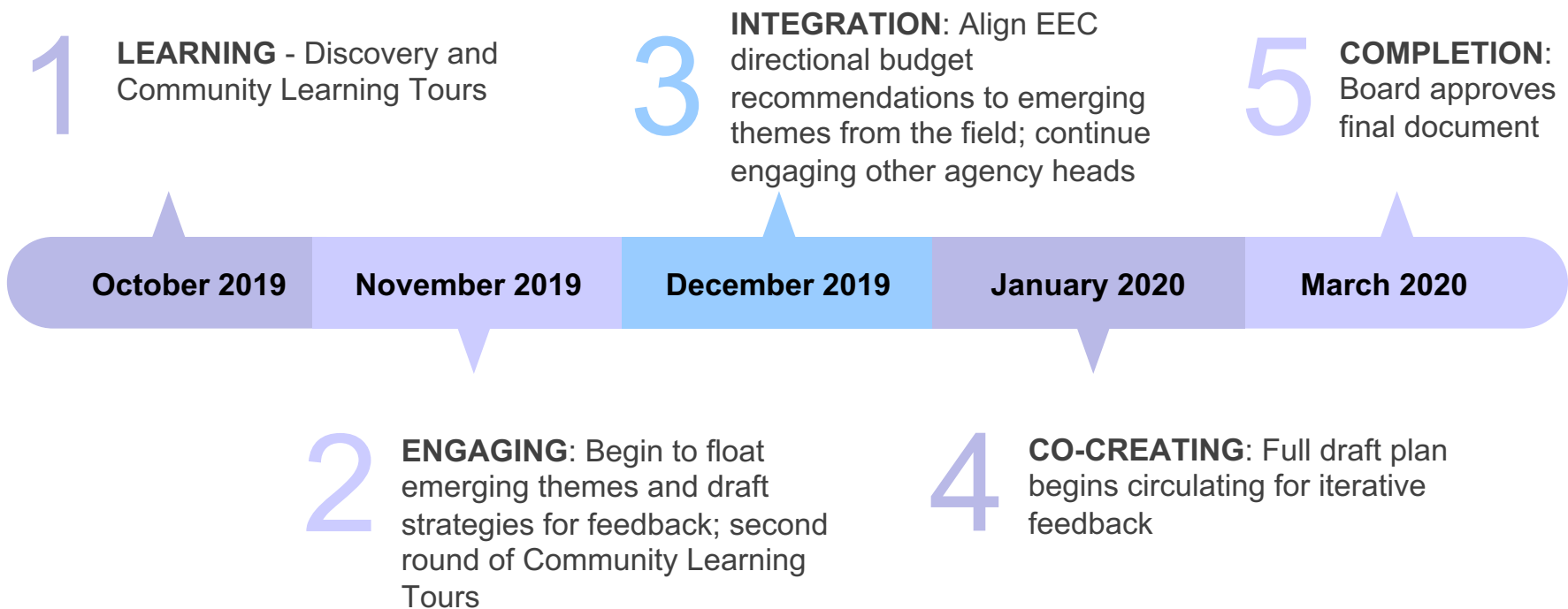
**STATEWIDE CROSS-SECTOR LEARNING:** 'Community Learning Tours' in each of the EEC 5 regions – inviting early childhood stakeholders, business interest groups, health and human service stakeholders, K-12 entities, elected officials

**FAMILY AND COMMUNITY VOICE:** '3 Questions' feedback from advisory councils and parent policy groups

**BOARD AND STAFF ENGAGEMENT:** Staff survey and interviews; EEC leadership team engage their departments through feedback processes; Board planning sessions / retreat; alignment with organizational structure work

**CROSS-AGENCY BUY IN:** Peer to peer agency engagement; Legislative briefings

# Process Milestones



***EEC will simultaneously be working on internal capacity analysis to successfully achieve the implementation plan.***

# Final Result: Action Plan and Benchmarks



## One Cohesive Frame for a Set of Interconnected Early Childhood Strategies



### Goal 1: Healthy Babies

Babies across North Carolina from all backgrounds will have a healthy start in their first year of life.



### Goal 2: Preventive Health Services

Babies, toddlers, young children and their families will have regular, ongoing access to high-quality health services.



### Goal 3: Food Security

Babies, toddlers, young children and their families across North Carolina will have access to enough healthy food every day.



### Goal 4: Safe and Secure Housing

Babies, toddlers, young children and their families across North Carolina will have access to safe, secure and affordable housing.



### Goal 5: Safe and Nurturing Relationships

Babies, toddlers and young children across North Carolina will grow up with safe and nurturing family and caregiver relationships.



### Goal 6: Permanent Families for Children in Foster Care

Babies, toddlers and young children in foster care will grow up in stable, consistent and nurturing families, whether that is with the child's birth family or through an adoptive family.



### Goal 7: Social-Emotional Health and Resilience

Babies, toddlers and young children across North Carolina will express, recognize and manage their emotions in a healthy way, especially under stress.



### Goal 8: High-Quality Early Learning

Babies, toddlers and young children across North Carolina will have access to high-quality opportunities to engage in early learning.



### Goal 9: On Track for School Success

Young children across North Carolina will enter kindergarten on track for reaching their developmental goals.



### Goal 10: Reading at Grade Level

Young children across North Carolina will read on grade-level in elementary school, with a particular focus on African American, American Indian and Hispanic children who face the greatest barriers to reading success.

**Goals are  
Naturally Derived  
from a Bold  
Vision and  
Commitments to  
Outcomes for  
Children and  
Families**

*Sample from North Carolina- for illustration only*

# Final Result: Action Plan and Benchmarks (2)



**Clearly Defined, Collectively Developed Definition of the Problem to Solve**

**Ambitious, Time-Bound Targets to Monitor Progress Towards Each Goal**

## Defining the Problem

High-quality early care and education programs help prepare children physically, academically, socially, and emotionally. While children from all backgrounds can benefit from attending high-quality and affordable child care and education programs, children facing challenges related to poverty, disabilities, or limited English proficiency often benefit the most from these programs.<sup>1</sup> A growing amount of evidence shows that high-quality child care programs help children become more on-track for school success, which supports them in becoming healthy, successful adults.<sup>2,3</sup> Research also shows that employers benefit when their employees' children are in quality child care arrangements.<sup>4</sup> When parents know their children are provided quality care that fosters healthy development, they are more productive and focused on work.

The NC Early Childhood Action Plan focuses on two measures of families' ability to access child care programs in North Carolina: rates of eligible families enrolled in NC Pre-K, and the affordability of child care programs. Affordability is defined based on the percent of a family's income spent on child care. Recognizing that more children under age five attend other child care and early learning programs, the plan includes sub-targets that track two other types of high-quality child care and learning programs: Head Start and 4- and 5-Star Programs for families who receive child care subsidy.

## Goal 8: High-Quality Early Learning

### Commitment

Babies, toddlers, and young children across North Carolina will be able to participate in high-quality early learning programs.

### 2025 Target

**Part 1)** By 2025, increase the percentage of income-eligible children enrolled in NC Pre-K statewide from 47% to 75%.

**Part 2)** By 2025, decrease the percent of family income spent on child care, according to data provided by [Child Care Aware America](#) .

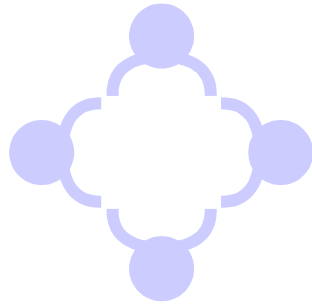
- Infant Care: Decrease from 11.6% to 7.0%
- Toddler Care: Decrease from 10.5% to 7.0%
- Four-Year-Olds: Decrease from 10.0% to 7.0%

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# **Structuring the Process Early Thoughts**

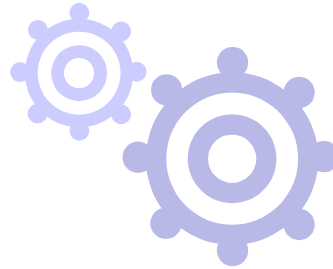
# Planning Principles and Goals



## **Broad Engagement**

Among leaders and practitioners across the statewide early childhood sector - to solicit insights, ideas, and feedback repeatedly as goals are developed

Across departments and sectors to capture the fullness of early childhood and all its intersecting issues (health, family economic stability, etc.)



## **Data Driven**

Strongly guided by current data and anchored by time-bound benchmarks that can be broadly understood and articulated

Built from a foundation of current initiatives and plans – but unafraid of innovation and big ideas

Based in a strong understanding of children and families in MA right now



## **Visionary and Actionable**

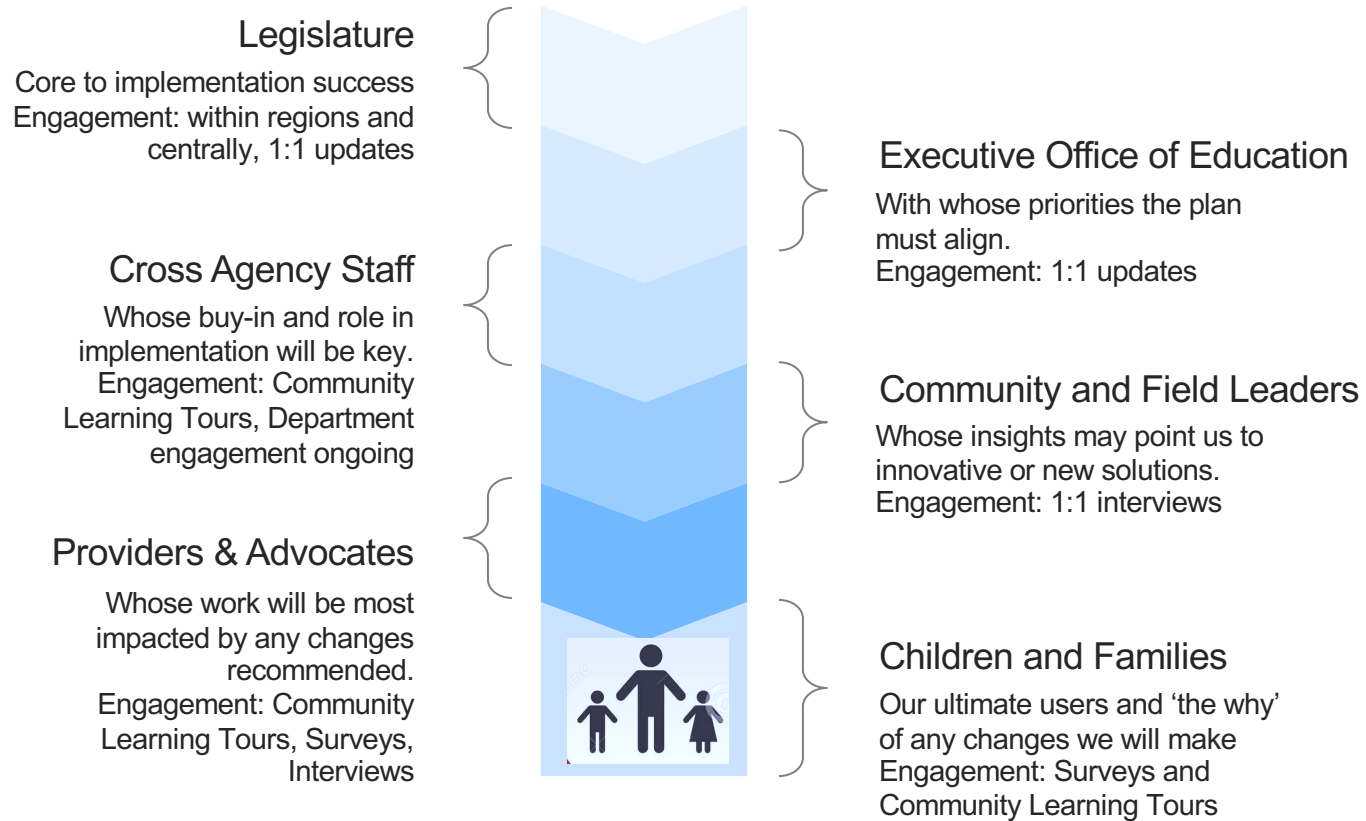
Balancing visionary goals with feasible policy recommendations, and changes to structures and mechanisms within the field at large.

**Additions?**

**Revisions?**



# Key Audiences



# Methods of Engagement



## ONGOING 1:1 CULTIVATION AND UPDATES

Every three weeks, issued by the Commissioner

## DATA ANALYSIS

Across early childhood and intersecting fields

## INTERVIEWS

With leadership staff, other agency representatives, leaders and practitioners

## COMMUNITY LEARNING TOURS

Hosted in each of 5 regions – 2 times – for staff, elected officials, providers, advocates

## INVENTORY OF PLANS

All documents, plans, initiatives, and other relevant items reviewed and catalogues/considered for input

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Through partners – focus groups and meetings with families and communities

## SURVEY

Distributed broadly – 3 simple questions

