



## **Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) Transparency and Equity Analysis: Progress, Gaps, and Recommendations**

January 2026

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2024, the We, the Village (WTV) coalition submitted [two sets](#) of transparency and equity recommendations to the Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) and its Transition Advisory Committee (TAC) to support the successful development of Illinois' new early childhood education and care (ECEC) agency. Grounded in WTV's commitment to transparency and equity as foundational principles of effective agency design, these recommendations acknowledged areas of alignment within the TAC's Draft Equity Framework while also identifying opportunities to strengthen communication practices, accountability structures, participant feedback loops, and measurable benchmarks. Collectively, WTV's recommendations sought to help operationalize equity and transparency through clear procedures, shared accountability, and outcome tracking for both children and the adults who care for them as early childhood services transition into a new agency structure.

Now, in 2026—more than a year into IDEC's development—WTV has revisited those 2024 recommendations to assess what progress has been made, what has been partially implemented, and where gaps remain. This review examines IDEC's efforts to date related to transparency and information dissemination, identifying areas of alignment, emerging progress, and aspects that would benefit from greater clarity or structure. The purpose of this document is to encourage continued improvement in IDEC's transparency and information-sharing practices, ensuring the early childhood field has access to robust, timely, and broadly understandable information and data as the agency continues to take shape.

### **IDEC ALIGNMENT WITH WTV RECOMMENDATIONS**

WTV recognizes IDEC's progress to date, including convening public workgroups with open interest forms (English/Spanish) and posted materials; holding budget and regional listening sessions and publishing a statewide findings report; advancing anti-racist, lived-expert co-design through Transforming Early Childhood Education and Care (ChiByDesign); launching a Data, Analytics & Insights (DAI) workgroup and signaling future public data products; hosting a TAC Learning Series on equity-centered data; and maintaining a Procurement Reports page. These steps align with WTV's calls for inclusive engagement, transparency, and equity-centered system design.

### **Participant Engagement**

WTV thanks IDEC for convening regional and budget listening sessions, which created public forums for providers, parents, and advocates to share input on funding priorities and other aspects of IDEC's development. Held in part in response to advocacy from WTV members and others in the field, these

sessions represent an important step toward transparent, participatory engagement. IDEC's publication of the Illinois ECEC Regional Listening Session Findings Report (July 2025)—summarizing input from approximately 1,700 participants across 72 sessions representing every county—aligns with WTV's call for transparent synthesis of participant feedback.<sup>1</sup> Maintaining regular, well-publicized budget and issue-specific listening sessions will be essential to ensuring participant voices continue to inform future funding and policy decisions.<sup>2</sup>

IDECA has also stood up a series of ad-hoc public workgroups—including Supporting Children with Disabilities & Developmental Delays, Supporting Multilingual Learners, Data, Analytics & Insights, and Funding Design—using open interest forms (available in English and Spanish), padlet feedback collection, public meetings, FAQs, and posted member lists. Many workgroups have made agendas, slide decks, and other materials publicly available beyond live participation, aligning with WTV's call for inclusive, statewide engagement and topic-specific design input.<sup>3</sup>

## Transparency and Public Accountability

IDECA has taken steps toward procurement transparency by maintaining a Procurement Reports page in connection with its partial procurement code exemption, reflecting progress toward public visibility into agency operations.<sup>4</sup>

## Data and Learning Infrastructure

The DAI workgroup is tasked with developing foundational building blocks and an implementation plan toward FY25–FY26, including potential future tools such as an annual report card and parent portal.<sup>5</sup> IDECA

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://idec.illinois.gov/idec-education-care-transition-planning/resources-materials-and-reports/reports.html>

<sup>2</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Participant Engagement](#)

- Sections emphasizing structured participant engagement, listening sessions, and ongoing consultations as core transparency practices.
- Calls for regular public reporting and synthesis of participant input, not just collection.

<sup>3</sup> [May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Participant Engagement](#)

- *Participant Engagement:* Participant engagement is identified as an area where the TAC Framework aligns with WTV's transparency and equity recommendations.
- *Next Steps: Implement Structured Feedback Loops*  
Under the Next Steps section, WTV recommends implementing structured feedback loops, including the following actions:
  - Continued listening sessions.
  - Transparent documentation of how feedback informs decisions.

<sup>3</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Workgroups](#)

- Calls for **inclusive participation mechanisms**, **clear meeting structures**, and **accessible documentation**
- Emphasizes statewide engagement and visibility into decision-making processes.

<sup>3</sup> [May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Workgroups](#)

- Stakeholder Engagement and Communication and Accessibility sections
- Recommends transparent agendas, accessible materials, and multiple engagement pathways.

<sup>4</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Procurement Transparency](#)

- Defines transparency as including operational and administrative visibility.
- Recommends regular public reporting to build trust and accountability.

<sup>4</sup> [May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Procurement Transparency](#)

- *Communication and Accessibility and Explicit Goals and Oversight:* Calls for documentation that makes agency operations understandable to stakeholders.

<sup>5</sup>

See: <https://idec.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/idec/events/documents/data-analytics-and-insights-workgroup/2025/feb20-meeting-summary-dai.pdf>

has referenced possible up-front data commitments and public-facing tools, and meeting materials are posted or planned for posting.<sup>6</sup><sup>7</sup>

## **Equity-Centered Design and Oversight**

IDEc has advanced anti-racist, lived-expert co-design work through the publication of Transforming Early Childhood Education and Care (ChiByDesign), which outlines anti-racist and trauma-informed design principles and includes session share-outs. This work aligns with WTV's framing on racial equity and inclusive system design. At the same time, questions remain about the breadth and representativeness of participation in this process, particularly the relatively limited engagement of families and other directly impacted participants, as reflected in ChiByDesign reporting.<sup>8</sup>

## **Communications and Information Access**

IDEc has established a public-facing webpage, calendar, and newsletter that post information about agency activities, including public workgroups, meetings, and engagement opportunities. The existence of these communication tools reflects an important step toward more centralized and accessible information sharing and aligns with WTV's recommendations that IDEc maintain clear, publicly available channels for distributing information to the field.

As part of its capacity-building efforts, the DAI hosted a "Learning Series" focused on equity-centered data frameworks and the use of analytics to advance more equitable early childhood policy. Representatives from Massachusetts, Georgia, Washington, and Third Sector Intelligence shared how their states and organizations are leveraging data and analytics to inform policy design, identify inequities, and drive more equitable outcomes across early childhood systems. This series aligns with WTV's call for clear strategies, cross-state learning, and the intentional adoption of best practices to inform Illinois' system-building efforts.<sup>9</sup>

## **AREAS WHERE IDEC ALIGNMENT WITH WTV RECOMMENDATIONS IS PARTIAL OR UNCLEAR**

### **Participant Engagement**

WTV has recommended structured feedback loops that clearly demonstrate how public input informs decisions and leads to tangible change. While IDEc has expressed an intent to seek and make meaning of

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://idec.illinois.gov/idec-education-care-transition-planning/engagement-opportunities-and-listening-sessions/workgroups.html>

<sup>7</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Data & Learning Infrastructure](#)

- Explicit call for data transparency from inception.
- Recommendation for public-facing data tools, benchmarks, and reporting mechanisms (e.g., report-card style outputs).

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Data & Learning Infrastructure](#)

- *Data Transparency and Disaggregation*: Emphasizes the importance of data systems that inform equity analysis and policy decisions.

<sup>8</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Anti-Racist, Lived-Expert Co-Design Work](#)

- Strong emphasis on racial equity, lived experience, and anti-racist analysis.
- Calls for inclusive design processes and transparency around how input is used.

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Anti-Racist, Lived-Expert Co-Design Work](#)

- *Focus on Equity and Inclusivity*
- *Explicit Goals and Oversight*: Recommends clear feedback loops and accountability for how community input shapes outcomes.

<sup>9</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Capacity Building](#)

- Recommends **learning opportunities**, best-practice sharing, and cross-state examples to inform agency development.

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Capacity Building](#)

- Encourages use of **external models** and evidence-informed approaches to equity and system design.

input and has created multiple engagement avenues, through workgroup interest forms, FAQs, and public meetings, the scope of feedback solicited in any individual engagement opportunity is often narrowly defined. This can make it challenging for participants to determine the appropriate forum and timing for sharing their perspectives. Even when feedback aligns with the stated scope of an engagement, there is limited public visibility into how that input is synthesized or incorporated into decision-making or acted upon. The absence of publicly available feedback-to-decision crosswalks—such as “You Said/We Did” summaries or response matrices addressing input from WTV and other stakeholders—limits transparency and makes it difficult for the field to understand how community feedback shapes outcomes.<sup>10 11 12</sup>

WTV has recommended that IDEC establish regular, accessible communications—such as a monthly newsletter—distributed across multiple channels and made available in plain language and in both English and Spanish, to ensure timely and equitable access to information. While newsletters currently exist, they are not posted on the IDEC website and do not consistently include information most relevant to the field, such as upcoming meetings, opportunities to provide feedback, or recent decisions and recommendations. IDEC also maintains social media accounts; however, these platforms have primarily been used for general parent education rather than for sharing timely updates or engagement opportunities related to the transition process. Although IDEC provides workgroup interest forms in English and Spanish, an events calendar, a resources hub, and TAC meeting pages, the absence of a centralized, easy-to-find updates hub limits accessibility. Strengthening and revising the newsletter and broader communications strategy to serve as a consistent, publicly posted source of updates—with archived content, Spanish parity, and coordinated use of social media—would improve awareness of engagement opportunities, support participation when meetings are scheduled or rescheduled on short notice, and expand meaningful involvement across the early childhood field.<sup>13</sup>

## Transparency and Public Accountability

To date, IDEC has shared partial outlines through the Data, Analytics & Insights workgroup (including references to an FY25-FY26 build and potential future tools such as an annual report card and parent portal) and through materials presented in the Funding Design work, [including the August 27 funding design slide deck](#). However, there is not yet a consolidated, publicly available timeline that integrates these efforts into a single, dated, end-to-end roadmap with visible milestone tracking. The absence of such a roadmap has contributed to confusion about both sequencing and scope, as well as uncertainty about when and how stakeholders can meaningfully engage. In particular, limited clarity around the focus, timing,

<sup>10</sup>

See: <https://idec.illinois.gov/idec-education-care-transition-planning/engagement-opportunities-and-listening-sessions/transition-advisory-committee-meetings.html>

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://idec.illinois.gov/idec-education-care-transition-planning/engagement-opportunities-and-listening-sessions/workgroups.html>

<sup>12</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Feedback Loops](#)

- Recommends structured feedback mechanisms and clear documentation of how stakeholder input informs decisions.
- Emphasizes transparency in decision updates and accountability to stakeholder input.

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Feedback Loops](#)

- Implement Structured Feedback Loops.
- Calls for regular consultations, transparent documentation of feedback received, and public explanation of how feedback is addressed.

<sup>13</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Communications with the Field](#)

- Recommends use of multiple communication channels, including newsletters, websites, and social media.
- Emphasizes clear, accessible, and regular communication to build trust and participation.

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Communications with the Field](#)

- Areas for Further Development → Communication and Accessibility.
- Enhance Communication Strategies: Calls for regular updates, newsletters, accessible language, and multiple modes of communication to reach a broader ECEC audience .

and formal establishment of anticipated workgroups—such as a workforce workgroup—has made it difficult for the field to plan engagement, allocate capacity, or understand when key decisions will be shaped.<sup>14 15</sup>

WTV has recommended that IDEC establish clear benchmarks and measurable metrics to advance transparency and equity and to enable public accountability. To date, IDEC has published a statewide listening session report that summarizes key themes and has articulated co-design principles to guide its work. However, IDEC has not yet released clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)—such as the percentage of disaggregated data made public, timelines for data release, language access coverage, or specific equity targets—making it difficult for stakeholders to assess progress or hold the agency accountable. By contrast, New Mexico’s recently established early childhood department has published a public strategic plan with clearly articulated goals and objectives, offering a potential model Illinois could adapt to strengthen transparency and engagement. While the Transition Advisory Committee (TAC) has developed an [equity framework](#), this work would be further strengthened by the inclusion of explicit, measurable KPIs and publicly shared goals aligned with that framework.<sup>16</sup>

## **Data and Learning Infrastructure**

WTV has recommended that IDEC commit to data transparency from the inception of the new agency, including the public release of disaggregated data to support accountability and equity. IDEC has signaled intent in this direction through references to a future annual report card and parent portal, and through the statutory requirement under HB3618 (2025) to establish an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS). However, ECIDS implementation remains in the early stages, with critical components—such as system design, funding strategy, technical development, data governance, and public-facing analytics—not yet fully completed or publicly launched. Although IDEC submitted a Preschool Development Grant (PDG) application on December 1, 2025, with a significant focus on building streamlined, web-based data infrastructure, the grant was not awarded, underscoring the need for IDEC to update the field with a revised scope, funding strategy, and timeline for ECIDS-related work. To date, there have been no early public data releases—such as initial dashboards, data schemas, governance policies, or a release calendar—nor is there a clearly defined process or point of contact for accessing the data IDEC is already collecting, limiting transparency and practical use during this formative phase.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Analysis here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1b8kEFD\\_09sY05caE5hi\\_S\\_4RNz1WarkGEuuC0BibPbw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1b8kEFD_09sY05caE5hi_S_4RNz1WarkGEuuC0BibPbw/edit?usp=sharing)

<sup>15</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Roadmap/Milestones](#)

- Calls for the new agency to “clearly articulate its development actions, achievable goals, and provide a comprehensive roadmap for its evolution.”
- Emphasizes regular public reporting and accountability during the transition process.

<sup>16</sup> [May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Roadmap/Milestones](#)

- Areas for Further Development → Communication and Accessibility.
- Enhance Communication Strategies section calls for comprehensive roadmaps and clearer sequencing of work to improve transparency and accessibility.

<sup>17</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Benchmarks/Metrics](#)

- Recommends “establishing benchmarks for regular meetings and communication updates.”
- Calls for explicit goals and metrics to address racial and systemic inequities and measure progress over time.

<sup>18</sup> [May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Benchmarks/Metrics](#)

- Areas for Further Development → Explicit Goals and Oversight.
- Next Steps → Develop Clear Benchmarks and Accountability Mechanisms.
- Explicitly calls for metrics, criteria, and measurable indicators to assess transparency and equity efforts.

<sup>19</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Data Transparency](#)

- Calls for commitment to data collection and public release from the inception of the agency.
- Emphasizes accessibility, disaggregation, and usability of data for stakeholders.

<sup>20</sup> [May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Data Transparency](#)

- *Data Transparency and Disaggregation:* Calls for open sharing of data and use of data to assess and advance equity outcomes.

## Equity-Centered Design and Oversight

WTV has recommended the establishment of an independent advisory or oversight body with a clear equity remit to support transparency, accountability, and inclusive governance during and beyond the agency transition. IDEC appears to be moving in this direction through the formation of an Advisory Workgroup, which last met in December 2025 and is expected to continue meeting from January through at least June 2026. [Materials from the December 17, 2025 Funding Design Workgroup](#) indicate that this Advisory Workgroup is actively engaged across multiple transition forums, including presentations to the Transition Advisory Committee (TAC) and to the Funding Design Workgroup, and December 2025 TAC materials reference “emerging recommendations.” While this activity suggests progress toward an ongoing advisory structure with an equity focus, key public-facing details remain under development. At this time, there is no single, easily accessible source that clearly documents the Advisory Workgroup’s formal charge, composition and selection criteria, decision-making authority, meeting cadence, reporting expectations, or how equity considerations will be operationalized and communicated, limiting the field’s ability to understand the scope and role of this oversight function.<sup>18</sup>

## Communications and Information Access

WTV has recommended that IDEC establish regular, accessible communications—such as a monthly newsletter—distributed across multiple channels and made available in plain language and in both English and Spanish, to ensure timely and equitable access to information. While newsletters currently exist, they are not posted on the IDEC website and do not consistently include information most relevant to the field, such as upcoming meetings, opportunities to provide feedback, or recent decisions and recommendations. IDEC also maintains social media accounts; however, these platforms have primarily been used for general parent education rather than for sharing timely updates or engagement opportunities related to the transition process. Although IDEC provides workgroup interest forms in English and Spanish, an events calendar, a resources hub, and TAC meeting pages, language accessibility remains inconsistent: meetings are translated into Spanish, but meeting materials and registration pages are not available in Spanish, and reliance on website translation toggles and occasional email translation is insufficient to meaningfully reach monolingual Spanish-speaking communities. The absence of a centralized, easy-to-find updates hub further limits accessibility. Strengthening and revising the newsletter and broader communications strategy to serve as a consistent, publicly posted source of updates—with archived content, Spanish parity, and coordinated use of social media—would improve awareness of engagement opportunities, support participation when meetings are scheduled or rescheduled on short notice, and expand meaningful involvement across the early childhood field.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Independent Oversight/Advisory Body](#)

- Recommends independent oversight where necessary and regular public reporting to ensure transparency and equity.
- Emphasizes accountability structures beyond internal agency processes.

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines:Independent Oversight/Advisory Body](#)

- Establish Independent Oversight: Explicitly supports the creation of an independent advisory body (per SB1) with a clear role in transparency, equity, and accountability.
- Calls for clarity on the advisory body’s structure, function, and relationship to the agency.

<sup>19</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Communications with the Field](#)

- Recommends use of multiple communication channels, including newsletters, websites, and social media.
- Emphasizes clear, accessible, and regular communication to build trust and participation.

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines:Communications with the Field](#)

- Areas for Further Development → Communication and Accessibility.
- Enhance Communication Strategies: Calls for regular updates, newsletters, accessible language, and multiple modes of communication to reach a broader ECEC audience.

## **AREAS WHERE WTV RECOMMENDATIONS APPEAR NOT YET ADDRESSED**

### **Participant Engagement**

IDEС has not yet established a regular practice of issuing public responses to major participant submissions or consolidated responses to questions raised in public forums, limiting clarity about how input is considered and acted upon. For example, IDEС could issue public response memos to major participant submissions—such as a written summary addressing recommendations with indications of alignment, partial alignment, or areas not being advanced, accompanied by brief rationale—and provide consolidated responses to questions submitted to the agency, including for questions raised by the field in public forums. This approach would help close the feedback loop and promote clarity and trust.<sup>20</sup>

### **Transparency and Public Accountability**

A transition dashboard tracking progress, risks, mitigations, and next decisions (with dates) would go a long way in supporting transparent, accessible information – providing greater clarity for the field. The August and September 2025 IDEС Transition Update and Listening Session pages demonstrate that IDEС is sharing information primarily through discrete, event-based updates rather than through a consistent, structured tracking mechanism, which reinforces WTV’s call for a uniform public dashboard. While both sessions are designed to provide transition updates and solicit participant input, the publicly posted materials do not include standardized indicators of progress, identified risks, mitigation strategies, or a forward-looking schedule of key decisions with dates. As a result, participants are required to piece together information across multiple meetings and documents, with limited ability to understand how work is advancing over time or how feedback informs next steps. A single, publicly accessible dashboard tracking progress, risks, mitigations, and upcoming decisions would complement these listening sessions by providing continuity, transparency, and accountability between meetings, while making it easier for the field to stay informed and meaningfully engaged.<sup>21</sup>

### **Equity-Centered Design and Oversight**

IDEС should commit to creating and publishing equity impact assessments tied to major design decisions—such as funding formulas, program realignments, and data policies—once those proposals reach sufficient maturity for meaningful analysis. While the agency appears to be in the early stages of developing many of these decisions, establishing a clear expectation and process now for producing and

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<sup>20</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Public Responses to Participant Submissions](#)

- Emphasizes transparent decision-making, clear documentation, and public explanation of how input is used.
- Supports practices that build trust through accountability and responsiveness.

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Public Responses to Participant Submissions](#)

- *Explicit Goals and Oversight and Implement Structured Feedback Loops.*
- Recommends transparent sharing of feedback received and how it is addressed by TAC and the agency.

<sup>21</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Unified Transition Dashboard](#)

- Calls for regular public reporting, comprehensive roadmaps, and accessible information to track agency development and accountability.

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Unified Transition Dashboard](#)

- *Enhance Communication Strategies and Develop Clear Benchmarks and Accountability Mechanisms.*
- Supports structured, consistent public reporting mechanisms that allow stakeholders to track progress over time.

publicly sharing equity impact assessments would help ensure that equity considerations are systematically embedded in decision-making and transparently communicated as policies are finalized.<sup>22</sup>

### **ADDITIONAL WTV RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN IDEC EQUITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

These recommendations are intended to improve public trust, advance meaningful engagement, and ensure equity is embedded in IDEC's system-building work.

#### **Participant Engagement**

WTV suggests strengthening public engagement and transparency by providing clear advance notice, agendas, and proactive outreach for workgroups and listening sessions, supported by timely, accessible communications across email, social media, and the IDEC website. IDEC should publish forward-looking calendars, explain how feedback will be used, and close the loop through public response memos and shared participation data to improve accountability, trust, and equitable statewide participation.

- Strengthen public workgroup engagement through clearer advance notice, agenda transparency, and proactive outreach; publishing aggregate, de-identified participation data; and establishing continuity plans for listening sessions that explain how feedback will be used and who is being reached.
- Improve accessibility and meaningful participation through clearer, more timely communication, including advance notice of meetings and materials, proactive outreach beyond placement on a difficult-to-navigate calendar, and greater transparency about the specific topics to be discussed in each workgroup. Providing agendas and topic areas several days in advance would allow advocates to prepare targeted, substantive feedback. Regular newsletter or email updates highlighting upcoming meetings, engagement opportunities, and newly posted materials could further improve awareness and participation across the field.
- Utilize email newsletter, social media, and website to share opportunities to engage, with details about what subject matter the opportunity will cover and how engagement will be used. For meetings, share how public attendees will be invited to engage. Publicly share TAC, workgroup, and subcommittee demographics (e.g., race/ethnicity, role in the early childhood system, region) and de-identified data on public attendees at meetings/listening sessions to support identification/recruitment of voices missing from the table.
- Continue field engagement, including future Listening Sessions. IDEC should publish a forward-looking calendar for the next engagement cycle alongside a clear plan for closing the feedback loop with members of the early childhood community who have shared input. This plan should explain how feedback will be synthesized, communicated back to participants, and used to

<sup>22</sup> [January 2024 - WTV Equity Framework Recommendations: Published Equity Impact Assessments](#)

- Calls for proactive racial equity analysis and elimination of systemic barriers.
- Emphasizes using data and analysis to guide equitable decision-making.

[May 2024 - WTV TAC Transparency and Equity Guidelines: Published Equity Impact Assessments](#)

- Focus on Equity and Inclusivity and Explicit Goals and Oversight.
- Recommends thorough racial equity analysis at each stage of agency design and policy development.

inform decisions, while also committing to reviewing participation data to identify gaps in reach. By examining who is—and is not—being engaged across geography, roles within the early childhood system, race/ethnicity, and other relevant factors, IDEC can intentionally plan targeted outreach to communities and participants who have been underrepresented in past listening sessions and ensure more equitable statewide engagement.

- Issue public response memos to major participant submissions. IDEC should establish a practice of publishing public response memos to major participant submissions and recurring questions from the field. These memos could include a concise written summary indicating areas of alignment, partial alignment, or decisions not being advanced, along with brief rationale, and consolidated responses to commonly raised questions. Adopting this approach would help close the feedback loop, increase clarity about how input is being considered, and build trust, while maintaining a constructive and forward-looking tone.

### **Transparency and Public Accountability**

WTV recommends publishing a dated master roadmap, establishing “You Said / We Did” accountability matrices, creating a unified transition dashboard, and strengthening procurement and vendor transparency through regular, substantive updates.

- IDEC should develop and publish a dated master roadmap that clearly outlines upcoming workgroups, listening sessions, and major deliverables—such as recommendations, reports, legislative proposals, and data or application portals—organized by topic area and accompanied by expected decision points and timelines. A transparent roadmap would be particularly valuable for advocates and researchers, who currently struggle to understand where their work should be submitted within IDEC and how it will inform decisions related to licensing, grants, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) updates, or other policy levers. Regularly updating this roadmap on at least a quarterly basis, or more frequently as plans evolve, would significantly improve clarity, coordination, and meaningful engagement across the field.
- IDEC has taken steps toward procurement transparency by maintaining a Procurement Reports page in connection with its partial procurement code exemption, which aligns with WTV’s recommendations for public visibility into agency operations. However, the information currently available on this page is limited in substance. Regularly updating procurement reports to include meaningful detail—such as vendor scope, timelines, and alignment with major system-building efforts—and publishing them on a predictable cadence (for example, alongside any broader progress or implementation updates) would strengthen this transparency measure and improve its usefulness to the field.
- IDEC, in coordination with the Transition Advisory Committee (TAC), should establish a regular practice of publishing a “You Said / We Did” participant feedback matrix that maps major inputs—such as recommendations from listening sessions, WTV feedback, and reports like Transforming Early Childhood—to decisions taken or planned, including timing and a responsible owner. While it may not be feasible to respond to every individual comment raised in open meetings, a structured “You Said / We Did” approach focused on major themes and formal

submissions would provide meaningful accountability and clarity about how participant input and data collected through listening sessions, submitted recommendations, etc., are informing cost models, adequacy targets, policy development, and other key decisions. Embedding this practice within the advisory body framework going forward would help normalize transparency, strengthen trust, and demonstrate how community engagement leads to tangible outcomes.

- Establish clear, public benchmarks and equity KPIs with a disaggregation and governance plan. IDEC should define and publish a clear set of measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess transparency and equity across its work, including metrics such as the percentage of data released in disaggregated form, turnaround times for key processes, language access coverage, and explicit equity targets. These KPIs should specify the indicators IDEC will report and require disaggregation by race/ethnicity, income, primary language, geography, and disability, alongside a clear cadence for data release and an accessible public data dictionary and governance framework aligned with privacy best practices (e.g., GDPR-style standards). While listening session reports and co-design principles provide valuable qualitative insight, and the Data, Analytics, and Insights (DAI) Workgroup is actively applying an Equity Reflection Tool to inform metric development, IDEC has not yet made concrete reporting commitments [public](#). Aligning these KPIs with the Transition Advisory Committee's equity framework—and drawing on models such as [New Mexico's publicly available early childhood strategic plan](#), which pairs goals with measurable benchmarks—would enable the field to track progress, assess accountability, and better understand how data outputs are supporting equity-focused decision-making in Illinois.
- Develop a unified, publicly accessible, transition dashboard that tracks progress across transition work, including key milestones, identified risks, mitigation strategies, and upcoming decisions with associated dates. While current listening sessions provide valuable updates and opportunities for input, reliance on event-based materials requires participants to piece together information across meetings and documents. A unified dashboard would provide continuity between sessions, improve transparency and accountability, and make it easier for the field to understand how work is advancing and how feedback informs next steps.
- Review the posted Procurement Reports for vendor scope, equity criteria in RFPs, and timelines tied to the data stack, portals, and engagement supports. Ask for supplier diversity metrics. Update procurement reports regularly, perhaps [quarterly](#).

## **Data and Learning Infrastructure**

WTV recommends establishing public benchmarks and equity KPIs, releasing early previews of key data products, and clarifying governance, access, and timelines for ECIDS-related work.

- IDEC should publish aggregate, de-identified data on workgroup membership and participation—including participants' roles in the early childhood system, geographic distribution, and race/ethnicity—and similarly share de-identified summary data from Zoom registrations. Making this information publicly available would allow the field to assess whether information and engagement opportunities are reaching a diverse and representative set of participants across

regions and roles and would support accountability and continuous improvement in outreach and equity.

- Release data products for early preview, such as alpha mockups or public prototypes of the annual EC report card and parent portal (even if incomplete) for ECEC field members to comment on content, usability, and equity framing before build-lock.<sup>23</sup>

## **Equity-Centered Design and Oversight**

WTV recommends embedding equity impact assessments in major decisions, strengthening the role and visibility of the advisory body, and ensuring lived-experience input consistently informs outcomes across all engagement channels.

- Strengthening a consistent "You Said, We Did" accountability approach across all engagement touchpoints, not only pre-defined processes, would help ensure that diverse lived-experience input meaningfully informs decision-making.
- Commit to publishing equity impact assessments for major design decisions. IDEC should commit to creating and publicly sharing equity impact assessments tied to significant design choices, such as funding formulas, program realignments, and data policies, once proposals reach sufficient maturity for meaningful analysis. Establishing this expectation and process now would help ensure equity considerations are systematically embedded in decision-making and transparently communicated as policies are finalized, even as many design elements are still under development.

## **Communications and Information Access**

WTV recommends strengthening newsletter and social media use for meeting transparency, improving language access parity, and adopting a continuous quality improvement approach to communications and engagement.

- IDEC should more consistently use social media to share clear, advance information about upcoming meetings, including the purpose of each meeting, draft or high-level agendas, dates and times, and specific ways the public can engage (e.g., how to register, submit questions, or provide feedback). Proactive, accessible social media communication would help reach providers and families where they already are, improve awareness of engagement opportunities, and reduce barriers created by short notice or hard-to-navigate web postings.
- To advance language access and accessibility parity, IDEC should conduct a comprehensive audit to assess whether Spanish and other commonly spoken Illinois languages are consistently available across meetings, materials, and web pages, and establish clear language access KPIs (for example, the percentage of materials translated within a defined timeframe). Data from UIC indicates that the most widely spoken non-English languages in Illinois include Spanish, Chinese, Polish, Tagalog, and Arabic<sup>24</sup>, underscoring the importance of prioritizing translation and interpretation in the top

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://idec.illinois.gov/idec-education-care-transition-planning/engagement-opportunities-and-listening-sessions/workgroups.html>

<sup>24</sup> See: [UIC-Language-Needs-Assessment-Final-6-11-25.pdf](https://uic.edu/assessment/2019-2020-language-needs-assessment-report.pdf)

languages spoken statewide. At the same time, given potential changes to the Illinois Language Access Act and the lack of clarity on whether IDEC will issue quarterly, annual, or combined public reporting, tying language access metrics to IDEC's overall transparency and reporting approach may maintain flexibility while ensuring accountability.

## **CONCLUSION**

WTV offers this review in the spirit of partnership and shared responsibility for building a strong, equitable, and transparent Illinois Department of Early Childhood.

IDEc has taken meaningful steps to engage the field and advance equity-centered system design, and those efforts provide an important foundation. At the same time, as the transition moves from planning to implementation, greater clarity, consistency, and public accountability will be essential to ensure that stakeholder engagement meaningfully informs decisions and that equity commitments are translated into practice. By strengthening roadmaps, benchmarks, feedback loops, communications, and data transparency, IDEC can deepen trust, improve participation, and support more effective system-building.

WTV looks forward to continued collaboration with IDEC and the TAC as this work progresses and stands ready to support the development of a system that truly reflects the voices, needs, and experiences of Illinois' families, providers, and early childhood workforce.