



CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING TASK FORCE

SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2021

Present: Alicia Hanning, Anne Granberg, Astrid Newell, Beverly Porter, Samya Lutz, Carol Frazey, Chris Cochran, Escarleth DeLeon, Gregory Hansen, Jamie Desmul, Jen Wright, Keith Montoya, Mara Kelley, Mary Sewright, Melissa Isenhardt, Monica Koller, Ray Deck, Sarah Cook, Jed Holmes, Sterling Chick, Vesla Tonnesson, Yarrow Greer

Not Present: Brian Nelson, Debbie Ahl, Komal Shah, Mike Ford, Rosalva Santos-Guzman, Sarah Cook, Sativa Robertson, Silvia Johnson, Urvasi Graham

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
<p>Welcome</p>	<p>Introductions, land acknowledgement, housekeeping and review of agreements led by Lewin Consulting.</p> <p><u>Land Acknowledgement:</u> I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are here today on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples who have lived in the Salish Sea basin and the North Cascades watershed from time immemorial, in particular, the Lhaq'temish (LOCK-tuh-mish) people who we recognize today to be the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and Semiahmoo.</p> <p>May we be mindful of the inherent owners of this land, our children, who are our future. Our future stewards of the land and advocates for the generation to come. May that truth guide our work and efforts to improve the well-being of all families and children, native and non-native, living in this beautiful county.</p> <p>This land acknowledgment is not meant to be a substitute for authentic relationship-building and understanding. It is meant to introduce us to one way we can show respect and honor for the sacrifices of the first people of this land.</p> <p>Please join me in expressing the deepest respect for our indigenous neighbors, and gratitude for the enduring stewardship of our shared lands and waterways.</p> <p><u>Agreements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and self-care come first. • Be kind and gentle with yourself and others and assume everyone is coming from a positive place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone has the best intentions. ○ Listen with an open mind and heart. • Be mindful of this space. Step-in and step-out/Step-up and step-back. Offer your truth and insights and listen to others' truths and insights. • Treat each other with honor and grace. We are all working under difficult circumstances. • Embrace diversity. Remember that we all come from different backgrounds giving us different perspectives and only when we embrace that diversity can we develop creative solutions to address the child and family well-being needs in Whatcom County. • What is said here stays here. • Have fun.
<p>Approve Meeting Minutes</p>	<p>No amendments to discuss, minutes from August 23rd, 2021 were approved as presented.</p>
<p>Introduction Connection</p>	<p>As an adult, how has back to school impacted you? So much joy and gratitude to see all the work these organizations are doing cohesively for kids and teachers to get back to school safely; Some students navigating challenges including anxiety with socializing, routines, and time management; Anxiety about students unable to be vaccinated and be in the school environment; Proud of the students following the rules, while navigating controversy and push back from the adults</p>



Preview of the Fall

Fall is a great time to discuss what is coming, how we will be digging in and moving forward. The goal for Lewin Consulting is to step back gradually through the end of 2021 transitioning the task force to become member led. Throughout this remaining time with Kenesha she is working to ensure we are following our principles, centering equity, taking family led approaches, considering results-based approaches. An estimated timeline was shared.



We will invite your influence to shape this in the weeks to come.

Initial discussions about child care recommendations

Resources and Funding Work Group has been working both in this meeting space and other work sessions to build recommendations for the Whatcom County Council on child care solutions for Whatcom County. Members of this work group: Ray Deck, Astrid Newell, Jed Holmes, Greg Hansen, Anne Granberg, Jen Wright, Brian Nelson, Vesla Tonnessen, Jamie Desmul, Judy Ziels

Councilmembers Frazey and Browne recommended a large portion of County ARPA funds be used for solutions in Whatcom County for child care. It was decided that this task force would be best to make recommendations on this funding use. After identifying key issues and potential solutions through research and community interaction, this group narrowed down to 5 potential priority areas.

- Child care work force stabilization, development & compensation** – Prior to COVID-19 it was difficult to find and retain skilled workers and pay livable wages. With the onset of COVID-19 has only devastated this field further. A combination of low wages and certification/educational requirements in Washington State have impacted this. Staff are exposed to many risks, and organizations are limited on what wages they can offer due to what the families can be charged. This work force crisis effects everyone, and there are not incentives to stabilize this work force. Without qualified staff to run classrooms, capacity cannot be increased. A parent is quoted “Years of research in child development emphasized the importance in consistency of caregivers for children’s attachment and well-being. We cannot provide this consistency without paying child care workers a livable wage and benefits. We must supplement the income and provide other incentives to stay in the work force.”

Strategies: Offer retention bonuses to staff to reward longevity; Provide benefits for child care workers; Increase child care workers’ wages up to a living wage; Invest in programs which relieve workplace stressors for child care workers; Provide centralized administrative support for small child care providers; Invest in workforce development to encourage more people to enter the field
- Child care capacity** – Before the question was sent to this task force, the resolution attracted attention from child care providers in the community and feedback was provided, especially around the question on how to expand child care capacity. That feedback was utilized in this process, and after cataloging the ideas into quantity of mention, the leading ideas were grant and subsidize lending, which is where the group started.

Strategies: Create a subsidized loan program specific to the child care industry; Offer grants for facility startup and/or expansion; Build new, expand existing, or re-purpose buildings for child care; Create a dedicated position within the city/county to assist in navigating the regulations and obstacles in new construction permits; Provide technical assistance around financing and business sustainability; Establish a property tax credit for families who operate child care in their homes; Provide down payment grants for family-based providers
- Child care affordability** – One quote from community survey is, “child care is in a state of crisis”. COVID-19 community health impact study and child care demand study both reported maintaining child care is difficult, many families report one parent works in a household as the other has to stay home to cover child care. Many families not eligible for child care subsidy routinely pay more than 30% of their income for child care.

Strategies: Expand paid family leave for parents of infants, reducing the need for parents to find infant child care; Offer subsidies for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families until the Fair Start for Kids Act kicks in; Create an emergency child care program for families when experiencing a crisis

- **Family supports for early childhood well-being** – School success, mental wellness, and the ability to form healthy relationships are foundational to overall well-being. Holistic approach begins in the family. By focusing on emotional and physical health in the home, including access to services, increases long term success.

Strategies: Support development of family resource centers with co-located services and resource navigation; Expand peer support programs throughout systems as an approach to center families and build racial equity

- **County infrastructure** – To help coordinate funding, and manage to achieve the goals, it was decided forming an infrastructure would be necessary.

Strategies: Create a Child Care Funding Coordinator position responsible for identifying funding sources, coordinating with partners, collecting data to analyze effectiveness, and identifying opportunities to leverage with other funds; Establish an Office of Family and Child Well Being to provide on-going leadership and capacity at the County level to prioritize young children and their families

Next steps include this task force's feedback, either now or in another format. The shared feedback will be written into the draft proposal, and that will be brought back to this task force for consensus-building. The [survey](#) is still open (only for task force members), we have heard from over half the members, but it would be ideal to hear from everyone.

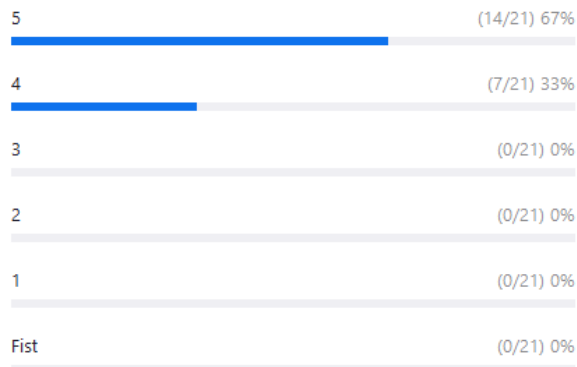
A poll was asked for Fist to Five to gauge comfort level with the priorities.

Fist to Five

Poll ended | 1 question | 21 of 25 (84%) participated

1. Please indicate your comfort level with approving. (Single Choice) *

21/21 (100%) answered



The work group identified two questions for the members to give space for everyone's voice.

1. What questions do you have about how we arrived at our draft proposal?
 - a. *Was the feedback survey analyzed by stakeholder group? And if so, were there strategies that were specifically prioritized by child care consumers?* The group put it out there to solicit comments. As a group it was a question of "how does this inform the request by council" and used as a tool. We want to provide this information to other committees and organizations, but need to meet as the group and determine how we put that back out into the community. All of the stakeholders fully understood the interconnectedness of the three areas of child care upholding and recruiting workforce, affordability, and expanding capacity.
2. What questions do you have about the content of our draft proposal?
 - a. *Are we needing to figure out what we find the most important pieces to present, or is all of it presenting to council?* The next steps will be looking at the data, research and factors to identify what form to present and whether to prioritize. Open to ideas about that.
 - b. *I think of opportunities rather than priorities, if you prioritize one over another it can take away from the other.* That is the challenge.

	<p>c. <i>The tricky thing about this process is how complicated it is and the number of stake holders involved. When you do not identify all of the needs, the rest crumbles. The reason this has been so challenging is because of the complexity and work that will need to continue to go into it. The more educated in the community the more we can make change. There is not a one size fits all answer to fix child care in Whatcom County.</i></p> <p>d. <i>Another complicating factor is if these strategies are even ARPA eligible.</i></p> <p>e. <i>It would be great to identify what can be used for ARPA funds, and include the rest of the strategies in the package as well.</i> The request brings up the question of the role of the advisory group in comparison to the role of council. The funding allocation has shifted and the recommendations would align with the amount of funding. Work force is a foundational component, and makes the rest of the work very difficult. Choosing amongst these five essentials is scary as they are all important. The strategies are going to be project specific to determine if ARPA funds can be used and how to achieve it.</p> <p>f. <i>MOU's can be helpful to create slots for marginalized families.</i></p> <p>The responsibility of this work group is the why and the what, some of the how will be filled in by the experts. We are working on not getting into the details with the programmatic values of this recommendation.</p> <p>The members expressed a lot of gratitude to the work and time put into the outcome, identifying such clear strategies.</p> <p>Kenesha worked with Island County on similar recommendations. The Island County recommendations on child care.</p>
Public Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care community is eager and hopeful to also be champions of this work being done by this task force, rally behind the recommendations. • Appreciate Samya's comment to align with results-based accountability. • Decision filter centered around equity and results-based accountability would be great. • So thankful for the deep work.
Closing	5:30 pm
Next Meeting	<p style="text-align: center;">Next regular meeting: September 27th, 2021</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Location: Virtual</u></p>