

**PREPARED FOR THE SAINT PAUL CITY COUNCIL**

# **EVALUATING QUALITY WORKGROUP**

## **SAINT PAUL EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM**

### **Addendum 3**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Common Acronyms*

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Workgroup Need</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Workgroup Charge</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Workgroup Process and Composition</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Workgroup Outcomes and Recommendations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Evaluating Quality in the Initial Stages</b>	<b>11</b>

## **Common Acronyms**

CCAP	Childcare Assistance Program
DHS	Minnesota Department of Human Services
ECE	Early Care and Education
ELLAC	Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee
FaCET	Family and Community Engagement Tools
FFN	Family, Friend, and Neighbor
LNL	Legal Non-Licensed
QRIS	Quality Rating and Improvement System

## INTRODUCTION

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By positioning the City to make early care and education accessible to more of its children, and earlier in life, the Saint Paul Early Childhood Program (the “Program”) plan offers a reply to the question, “How do our children, families, and workforce thrive?” The recommended program design both reflects and responds to the growing needs of Saint Paul children and families, in addition to the workforce of Saint Paul Early Care and Education providers.

The primary plan document outlines 8 considerations to program design along with recommendations for initial implementation. Highlights of these considerations include:

Program Consideration	Consideration Overview
Funding and Budget	The proposed use of a special levy to fund early care and education subsidies
Governance, Administration, and Advisory	Recommendations on the City office to oversee the program, the short- and long- term program administrator, as well as the role of a Community Advisory Board*
Service Delivery	Identifies the families, providers, and settings that can participate in the program, as well as funding distribution recommendations
Eligibility and Scale	Highlights the recommendations for eligibility based on priority points in addition to the Program’s rate of scale
Outreach and Enrollment	Explores and recommends multiple ways to inform Saint Paul residents of the program, enrollment approaches, and needed materials
Program Standards and Features	Suggests provider and participant requirements along with unique program features reflective of Saint Paul
Workforce	Proposes Saint Paul curated education and training efforts for ECE providers
Data and Evaluation	Suggests timelines and content for data collection and considerations for evaluation

\*Community Advisory Board per Addendum 1 is titled Early Childhood Commission.

A review of the Program plan would provide a more thorough synopsis of each consideration along with recommendations during start up.

Among the benefits, the Program would scaffold early care and education for the more than 20k Saint Paul children aged birth through kindergarten entry, including the projected 10,549 children below the 185% Federal Poverty Line. In addition, the Program design intentionally works to connect Saint Paul families and providers with resources across sectors in an effort to better blend stronger networks of support in the early years, having a direct impact on families and the workforce.

## BACKGROUND

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The evolution of a Saint Paul Early Childhood Program has been on the horizon for nearly a decade. Beginning in 2016, Councilmember Noecker began engaging with Saint Paul stakeholders and interested parties in conversations regarding early care and education in the City and the possibility of a citywide preschool initiative. Since that time exploration, collaborations, and additional joint efforts have continued.

2017 produced the “Blueprint,” recommendations provided through a Saint Paul 3K Workgroup convened and facilitated by the Saint Paul Children’s Collaborative. 2018 and 2019 birthed a 3K Steering Committee which culminated in the Saint Paul 3K Design Team Report. The Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee (ELLAC) was formed in 2022 when the City Council passed Resolution 22-1183 paving the way to evaluate a locally governed early care and education program.

In July of 2023, the City Council passed RES 23-1094, ordering a special election to be held on November 5, 2024, to add a ballot question on whether the City should create a dedicated fund for subsidies for children’s early care and education through a property tax levy. During the same month, Mayor Carter vetoed the resolution and submitted a veto letter to the Council explaining his rationale. In August 2023, the City Council overrode the Mayor’s veto.

2024 experienced monumental growth in program planning and details with the progression of detail-oriented tasks and data by MetrixIQ and Emmy Liss, prompted by the Saint Paul Children’s Collaborative, as well as the Program plan designed by People of Victory LLC.

For a more in-depth history, access the following documents listed in order of their creation:

- The Blueprint
- Saint Paul 3K Design Report
- City Council resolution 22-1183
- Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee Report
- City Council resolution 23-1094
- Mayor Carter’s Early Childhood Program Veto
- MetrixIQ and Emmy Liss report
- Saint Paul Early Childhood Program plan

## WORKGROUP NEED

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The convening of community voices through each phase leading to the development of an early childhood program began in 2016 with conversations stimulated by Councilmember Noecker. A range of community voices has since informed each subsequent report and pivotal point of progression. The precedent for some form of collaborative ideation is at the core of the initiative and has continued into program design through the enactment of workgroups to address various details of the program that no one individual or group should inform independently.

The ELLAC structure itself – a composition of Early Care and Education (ECE) providers, Saint Paul residents, various community and education organizations, and council members – emphasized the value and necessity of community perspectives, as well as the power of collaborative ideation. The ELLAC included a range of voices, perspectives, and experiences to offer recommendations for a program designed to benefit the diverse population of Saint Paul. The 2023 report derived from this advisory committee offered recommendations to the Saint Paul City Council on the potential design and implementation of a citywide early childhood program. Their program recommendations gave thought to potential barriers to program access and participation; addressed income, cultural, and language diversity needs; examined access to resources and subsidies; dove into provider types, settings, and hours, among other considerations.

Due to the suggested use of a special levy to fund the Program, the ELLAC discussed transparency of process, information, and data with the public. Data collection and evaluation outcomes would be key to ongoing efforts, public trust, and potential future funding. In alignment, the Program plan has recommended seeking community input to identify quality across the program. For this, a workgroup inclusive of multiple perspectives and lived experiences was needed to define quality and the categories of evaluation that would suffice as evidence of this quality.

## WORKGROUP CHARGE

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The Evaluating Quality workgroup was charged with:

- Defining quality and creating a set of guiding principles for quality Early Care and Education in Saint Paul.
- Identifying evaluation categories for children, families, providers, and the Program.
- Suggesting
  - Timelines for evaluation
  - Mechanisms for evaluation
  - Who conducts evaluation

The workgroup task was to provide recommendations towards quality that would satisfy Saint Paul residents' desire for transparency with program development and implementation; outcomes with short-, middle-, and long- term goals; address apprehension regarding City involvement in an early learning program; and consider implications of an enacted City program on communities of color and low-income communities.

A discussion regarding quality in early childhood programs in Minnesota would be remiss without addressing the already established Parent Aware Rating system. The ELLAC report referenced some participant concerns regarding establishing and evaluating quality for potential provider partners. They explored the idea of imposing Parent Aware—Minnesota's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)—on participating partners wanting financial reimbursement. ELLAC members were divided in their views, resulting in no formal recommendation from the membership.

The Program designer has given consideration to the range of cultural, geographic, and language providers, as well as family participant needs; family choice; and current DHS licenses. Close inspection suggests imposing Parent Aware ratings would limit family choice, provider participants of varied cultural and language backgrounds, in addition to approaches to ECE. Not requiring a Parent Aware rating would incorporate legal non licensed (LNL) provider participants and allow reimbursement using a model similar to Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) reimbursements.

At the time of workgroup engagement, Parent Aware was under redesign. Conversations across the ECE field and state of Minnesota departments focused on the possibility of automatically providing a single rating to every licensed provider beginning in, or after, 2025. This idea gave concern regarding the validity of a rating when automatically provided to all, and awareness that change was in process and no determination had been made. Therefore, adding Parent Aware as a requirement was not ideal at the time, while it could be reconsidered at a later date following finalization of the redesign. Revisiting Parent Aware as a requirement would also need to consider the participation of LNL providers.

## WORKGROUP PROCESS AND COMPOSITION

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Participation in the Evaluating Quality Workgroup was an open invitation to the public. Targeted invitations were sent to the following types of participants:

- Saint Paul residents
- Saint Paul families of young children (0-5)
- ECE centers and home providers
- FFN providers
- Saint Paul elders
- Federal and Public Pre-kindergarten programs
- ECE professionals and professional organizations
- ECE teachers
- Kindergarten teachers

Organizations or individuals who chose to participate in one or more workgroup sessions include:

- Childcare center staff
- Culturally specific Family, Friend, and Neighbor organizations
- Public School staff
- Public School Pre-kindergarten staff
- Representatives of unhoused communities

Informing conversations about quality outside of workgroup sessions were representatives from Think Small, as well as Children' Defense Fund Minnesota, specifically Voices and Choices Steering Committee members.

The workgroup met on three occasions from early August through September, 2024. Over the course of these sessions workgroup members referenced their program data, professional experience, and client feedback to provide recommendations for quality categories in the areas of children, families, providers, and a program. Foundational to workgroup sessions was the sharing of program examples and client preferences, with consideration of developmental trajectories and family experiences.

During workgroup sessions, pertinent and similar themes related to program practices and expectations arose, despite the ECE setting or professional experience of the participant. Workgroup participants worked to categorize these themes and practices into large buckets for evaluation while acknowledging the need for an advisory body to determine indicators within each category, at a later date.



## WORKGROUP OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Guiding Principles for Program Quality

The Evaluating Quality Workgroup developed the following guiding principles of quality for participating Saint Paul ECE providers. The developed principles were the foundation for all workgroup tasks to follow, and would be an expectation for further conversation and consideration.

Guiding Principles:

- Includes a child's family, peers, and community, as well as their perspectives;
- Encourages growth across developmental domains and is holistic; and
- Is inclusive, culturally and developmentally appropriate, and mirrors its community.

The guiding principles would be expounded upon or revised through a process of community engagement inclusive of Saint Paul demographics.

### Evaluation Categories

Through a process of collaborative ideation, the workgroup identified the following categories as having primary importance for evaluation and resident transparency. Categories are measurable and can inform program development, implementation, and sustainability.

### Child Categories

Child categories are areas that would provide information about participating children and are related to areas of early development. The workgroup identified the following categories which are not all-inclusive of measurement possibilities but rose to the top of their priorities. Additional categories would be considered by the advisory body.

Child Categories	Description
Autonomy	Self-awareness, self-help skills, progressive independence, and gradual decision-making
Early Academics	Early reading, writing, mathematic, and critical thinking skills
Social Emotional	A child's ability to understand, express, and manage their emotions, as well as to form and maintain relationships with others and make decisions
Transition and Adjustment	Adjustment to new environments, people, or ways of being

## Family Category

The family category would provide information regarding the family experience, family participation and awareness, the impact of program participation on the family, and the expansion or building of community connections through access or use of resources.

Family Category	Description
Knowledgeable	The family is knowledgeable of or shows evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate child development</li><li>• Community resources or groups</li><li>• Kindergarten preparedness including screening, school options, etc.</li></ul>

## Provider Categories

Provider categories would collect and evaluate information about providers in an effort to identify similarities in provider approaches, professional experiences, and training with an outcome of growing professional communities and providing curated supports for participating Saint Paul providers. The identified categories below are not all-inclusive.

Provider Categories	Description
Community Inclusions	A provider's efforts to grow the child's ecosystem by connecting children, their families, and the provider's programming to the community.
Knowledge	Evidence of a provider's knowledge of child development, families, community resources, Program expectations, etc.
Professional Practices	Professional policies a provider has in place, in addition to methods and frequency of communication, offered family engagement experiences, and the ability to be culturally responsive and address family uniqueness.
Professional Teaching and Learning	A provider's background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education</li><li>• Experience</li></ul> A provider's learning environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Type of instructional environment (mixed age, single age, Montessori, language immersion, etc.)</li></ul> A provider's teaching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Curriculum used</li></ul>
Supports Transitions	The provider supports early transitions for children and their families, executing a plan for success.  Transitions include moving settings, age groups, or classrooms, adjusting to new adults, spaces, or ways of doing.

## Program Categories

Program categories aim to collect data on, and evaluate, the quality of the Program as a whole.

Category	Description
Culturally Accepted	The Program is widely accepted as a trusted resource among cultural communities in Saint Paul.
Engaged Families	The Program supports, both in theory and in practice, engaging families in the early processes by supporting families by way of their provider and community resources.
Family Knowledge of the Program	Families in the City of Saint Paul are aware of the Program, its benefits, processes for becoming connected, and their own eligibility.
Provider Knowledge of the Program	Providers in the City of Saint Paul are aware of the program, its benefits to their business and families, processes for becoming a partner of the Program, how to support families by way of the Program, as well as registration, payment, billing, and reimbursement methods.
Use of Community Resources	The Program is aware of, and partners with, community resources and other City programs for a more blended and holistic set of services.

Categories for children, families, providers, and the Program are not exhaustive or all-inclusive. The Evaluating Quality Workgroup recommends further specifics including identifying performance indicators within each category, as well as any additional revisions, to be a process of engagement directly facilitated by, and involving, the advisory body.

## Evaluation Specifics

The Evaluating Quality Workgroup collectively determined an evaluation timeline based on typical ebb and flows of ECE cycles, child transitions, and professional expertise. The identified short-, middle-, and long- term measurement time frames correspond to the Program's anticipated start up, scaling, and maturity phases outlined in the primary Program plan, for which this document is an addendum. Recommendations in the following chart include the preferred measurement types and suggestions on the stakeholder best positioned to inform the data.

<b>Child Categories</b>	<b>Short term (1-3yrs)</b>	<b>Middle term (4-6yrs)</b>	<b>Long term (7-10yrs)</b>	<b>Measurement Type</b>	<b>Recommended stakeholder to inform the data</b>
Autonomy		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation</li> <li>• Checklist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Consultant/External Evaluation</li> </ul>
Early Academics		X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checklist</li> <li>• Rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Consultant/External Evaluation</li> </ul>
Social Emotional	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation</li> <li>• Checklist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Consultant/External Evaluation</li> </ul>
Transition and Adjustment	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation</li> <li>• Checklist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Consultant/External Evaluation</li> </ul>

<b>Family Category</b>	<b>Short term (1-3yrs)</b>	<b>Middle term (4-6yrs)</b>	<b>Long term (7-10yrs)</b>	<b>Measurement Type</b>	<b>Who should conduct the measurement?</b>
Knowledgeable	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider</li> <li>• The Program (City staff)</li> </ul>

<b>Provider Categories</b>	<b>Short term (1-3yrs)</b>	<b>Middle term (4-6yrs)</b>	<b>Long term (7-10yrs)</b>	<b>Measurement Type</b>	<b>Who should conduct the measurement?</b>
Community Inclusions	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program self reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Program (City staff)</li> </ul>
Knowledgeable		X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program self reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Program (City staff)</li> </ul>
Professional Practices		X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program self reporting</li> <li>• Observation checklist tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Consultant/ External Evaluation</li> </ul>
Professional Teaching and Learning	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program self reporting</li> <li>• Observation checklist tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultant/ External Evaluation</li> </ul>
Supports Transitions	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program self reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Program (City staff)</li> </ul>

Program Categories	Short term (1-3yrs)	Middle term (4-6yrs)	Long term (7-10yrs)	Measurement Type	Who should conduct the measurement?
Culturally Accepted	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community and family feedback/survey (sampling)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultant/External Evaluation</li> </ul>
Engaged Families		X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family survey/family feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider</li> <li>Consultant/External Evaluation</li> </ul>
Family Knowledge of the Program	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider</li> <li>Consultant/External Evaluation</li> </ul>
Provider Knowledge of the Program		X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultant/External Evaluation</li> </ul>
Use of Community Resources	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program self reporting</li> <li>Provider and family reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family</li> <li>Provider</li> <li>Consultant/External Evaluation</li> </ul>

## Potential Partnerships

A review of trusted networks and partners to support the recommendations from the Evaluating Quality workgroup include, but are not limited to the advisory body, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Betty Emarita of Development and Training, Inc. with the use of the FaCET (Family and Community Engagement Tools), and Think Small.

## EVALUATING QUALITY IN THE INITIAL STAGES

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In the initial stages of the Program, the ELLAC recommended the community advisory body to review and further establish the evaluation categories by determining any additional categories and identifying specific indicators within each category. This community advisory body would consult with experts in each field, families, and residents, to collectively confirm a final working definition of quality in which to base their work and immediately commence to identifying indicators for ready use upon program implementation. Suggestions for evaluation timelines, including potential tools, are available in the chart and are worth ongoing exploration. These evaluation recommendations should be considered alongside larger data collection suggestions identified in the primary Program plan on page 39.