



MECA Board Meeting
February 19, 2026 10 a.m.-11 a.m.
Via Zoom Webinar

Welcome

Meeting called to order at 10:01 a.m.

Roll Call

Present: Beth Branam, Caitlin Jensen, Jackie Ronning, Kathy Deserly, Mackenzie Espeland, Tory Malek, Tracy Moseman, Lisa Malmquist, Louisa Libertelli-Dunn, Crystal Armstrong

Confirmation of quorum

Review and approve February 3 and 4, 2026 meeting minutes

Tory Malek motions to approve meeting minutes

Kathy Deserly seconds the motion

Unanimous approval by the board with no corrections to minutes to be made

Motion approved

Legislative Intent- Senator Laura Smith

“We worked so hard to get this bill across the finish line and it is exciting to see this board in action.”

Senator Smith was previously a federal prosecutor who saw that cards were stacked against defendants as children. She started thinking about how the community could help children have more support in their lives to prevent this outcome. She got hired at DPHHS and lobbied for ECFSD to be created. She was a part of a bipartisan coalition to leverage votes for HB 924. This all started out as forward thinking for infrastructure. In writing this bill, legislators wanted to provide the board with the ability to make investments into different projects, but they also wanted to highlight strategic investments. They also want to utilize the diversity of stakeholders while assessing gap areas (especially in rural areas). Legislators ask the board to pace themselves in this work because it was incredibly difficult to fund this venture. It is the board’s responsibility to get fiscal projections to notify people what will be sustained long term and what will not be. It is important for the board to be incredibly mindful about the decisions they make.

Review of Board Priority Work

Michelle Cusey guides the board through a review of priorities and how this work could be implemented

- Priority Levels Recap
 - Michelle distinguished activities that were the highest priority to the board.



- There are eight projects that were identified as high need for implementation. These were sorted by activities that were already being worked on by ECFSD and those that were not.
- Final Priority Areas
 - Michelle created a poll for each board member to select the five most important items to them
 - The final results of the poll are:
 - Quality Incentives for Providers - 9 votes
 - Incentives for Serving Children with High-Needs - 7 votes
 - Local Partnerships and Coalition Infrastructure - 7 votes
 - Child Care Deserts and Targeted Recruitment - 6 votes
 - Training for Serving Individuals with Special Needs - 5 votes
 - Public-Private Partnerships - 5 votes
- Discussion
 - Caitlin Jensen wants more clarification on where the board is in terms of critical decision making. She wants more information as far as inclusion of the Strategic Plan and fiscal analysis for each implementation objective to refine and learn the overall impacts of these.
 - Louisa Libertelli-Dunn is inquiring about Child Care Worker Pilot and where this would fall in the work. CCW could be extended. She is interested in reflecting on what the community is wanting from this board.
 - Lisa Malmquist advises taking Senator Smith's words into consideration as whatever is decided upon for implementation must be sustainable from year to year.
 - Michelle will be presenting proposals and CCW is included.

Proposal Overview

- Presentation of proposals
 - ECFSD to develop formal proposals with identified priority areas and present them at next meeting.
 - *Tory Malek motions to accept that strategies and implementation be presented by DPHHS at the next meeting*
 - *Louisa Libertelli - Dunn seconds the motion*
 - *Unanimous approval by the board*
 - *Motion passed.*
 - Michelle reviews on high level basis- wants to be clear that CCW will not be implemented in FY26 as it is too much of a heavy lift with systems. Administrative and fiscal processes slow this down.
- Discussion
 - There is a question posed about forming committees within the board to complete work.



- Once committees are made, work can be disseminated to complete.
- Committees to be distinguished in the next meeting.
- The board should be mindful of timeframes to get money out the door.
- *Crystal Armstrong motions to table proposals until the next meeting.*
Tory Malek seconds the motion
Unanimous approval by the board
Motion passed
 - March's board meeting will be extended to two hours to allow time to cover proposals.
 - Board members are to send Michelle other ideas for proposals if they have them.
- Board members have received public comments via email from Michelle. These will not be posted officially, but board members are still receiving them.

Public Comment

Four members of the public provided public comment.

Adjournment

Jackie Ronning motions to adjourn the meeting

Tory Malek seconds the motion

Unanimous approval by the board

Motion Passed

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.