



Montana Early Childhood Account Board

August 27, 2026
1:00p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Zoom

WELCOME

- Call to Order
 - Meeting called to order by Lisa Malmquist at 1:02 p.m.
- Roll Call
 - Board Members Present:
 - Tory Malek
 - Caitlin Jensen
 - Crystal Armstrong
 - Tracy Moseman
 - Mackenzie Espeland
 - Lisa Malmquist
 - Louisa Libertelli-Dunn
 - Kathy Deserly
 - Jewel Sullivan
 - ECFSD Staff Present:
 - Austin Waldbillig
 - Kathy Rich
 - Nicole Quirino
 - Amber Tipton
- Review and approve prior meeting minutes
 - Tory Malek Motions to approve the meeting minutes
 - Louisa Libertelli-Dunn seconds the motion.
 - Minutes are unanimously approved by the board.
 - Motion Passed

INTRODUCTION OF NEW ECFSD MECA PROGRAM STAFF

- Austin Waldbillig started as the Meca program specialist with ECFSD on August 8, 2026. Previous work experience with the Department of Health and Human services in Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division and the Bright Futures Birth to Five Grant. Prior to his roles within the Department he was a High School English Teacher in the State of Montana.

REVIEW FUNDING INTEREST AND EXPENSES

Nicole Quirino from ECFSD joined the meeting to overview the current available funding after Fiscal Year 2026 closed.



- **\$10M** seed trust and that the trust earned **\$2.9M** in interest; those interest proceeds were deposited and carried into State Fiscal Year 27, producing a **\$12.8M** cash balance currently available.
- State Fiscal Year 2026 actual operating expenditures were small (personnel not capturing a full 12 months due to openings) and total operating expenses reported over **\$97,000** for State Fiscal Year 2026.

GRANT PROJECT UPDATE

GRANT APPLICATION OVERVIEW TIMELINE AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Proposed timeline email advance notice to all providers, initial notice target would be prior to 9/8/2026. Host informational webinar for applicants 9/8/2026. Open application window for submitting application of Three weeks 9/25/2026–10/17/2026 with post-launch reminder notifications when application goes live, the ECFSD program staff to host office hours during this whole period for users experiencing technical difficulties. Application would close at 11:59 p.m. on 10/17/2026.
- The requirement for an updated **UEI number** was highlighted as mandatory for applicant eligibility.
- Communication objectives: ensure timely, understandable information reaches all eligible providers; offer multiple communication pathways and reduce language/access barriers.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Concern raised by board members: three-week application window may be so small; expanding the window or adding additional targeted outreach channels (mailers, phone calls, tribal outreach) would reduce the risk of missing eligible providers. Outreach strategy discussed: webinar recording, provider lists, partner redistribution, social media campaign, and possibly a targeted mailer/postcard campaign to reach providers who do not reliably check email or social media (especially rural and home-based providers). ECFSD staff will prepare outreach options (including cost estimates) and produce shareable assets and resources. MECA webpage will serve as the centralized information hub. Communication sources would include CCDF publication partner networks Zero to Five MT, SPARK MT, ECP, CCT, UM Western, OPI, local coalitions, social media, press release, printed materials and translated materials as requested. Board requested clarity on what data will be collected, how it will be used for program evaluation and legislative reporting, and that evaluator inputs be included in the grant materials.



GRANT APPLICATION DEMONSTRATION

Austin Waldbillig shared his screen to go through the application that was created and what it would look like to providers when live for the board's recommendations and changes needed.

- Submittable will present a general information page and then branch applicants into the specific grant sections they select; only relevant fields will display for the grant(s) chosen.
- Required elements: general information, program/license type, owner/director/street & mailing addresses, EIN and UEI, uploaded ID, implementation plan, budget narrative, budget table, and attestations.
- Applicants without UEI will be guided to an organization search to locate or obtain their UEI; UEI/SAM registration is required to complete applications.
- For unlicensed providers who intend to pursue licensure, the application will capture a plan to become licensed and supporting documentation; staff will clarify labels (e.g., "unlicensed" vs "pre-licensed") to avoid confusion and ensure data tracking does not treat those as funded licensure slots.
- For training grants, allowable trainings will be listed, and attendance documentation will be required for reimbursement requests.

EVALUATION

- Evaluation plans are currently in draft; staff are scheduling time with the evaluator to finalize monitoring and evaluation deliverables for board review (targeting discussion in September).
- Award agreements will include data collection and language reporting; discussion recommended mirroring this in the application and in the award contract to make expectations clear to recipients.
- Board requested clarity on what data will be collected, how it will be used for program evaluation and legislative reporting, and that evaluator inputs be included in the grant materials.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND VOTES

VOTES

- Vote to accept and approve the Application with additional board recommendations (including adding data-use attestation and clarifications)
 - Tory Malek Motions to approve the application with additional recommendations
 - Louisa Libertelli-Dunn seconds the motion.
 - Unanimously approved by the board.
 - Motion passed.



PUBLIC COMMENT

- Two members of the public made comments.
- One member of the public's question was read from the chat

ADJOURNMENT

- The board will schedule an additional meeting in two weeks on Zoom.
- Vote to Adjourn
 - Crystal Armstrong motions to adjourn the meeting.
 - Torey Malek seconds the motion.
 - Unanimously approved by the board.
 - Motion passed.
 - Meeting Adjourned at 2:03 p.m.