



Montana Early Childhood Account Board (MECA)

July 16, 2026
10 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Zoom

WELCOME

- Call to Order
 - Meeting called to order by Caitlin Jensen at 9:04 a.m.
- Roll Call
 - Board Members Present:
 - Tory Malek
 - Caitlin Jensen
 - Tracy Moseman
 - Mackenzie Espeland
 - Louisa Libertelli-Dunn
 - Kathy Deserly
 - Jewel Sullivan
 - ECFSD Staff Present:
 - Sally Tilleman
 - Kathy Rich
 - Nathan Miller
 - Nicole Quirino
 - Tanner Dempsey
 - Amber Tipton
- Review and approve prior meeting minutes
 - Tory Malek Motions to approve the meeting minutes
 - Tracy Moseman seconds the motion.
 - Minutes are unanimously approved by the board.
 - Motion Passed

INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF AND SUBCOMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

- Tanner Dempsey joined the evaluation subcommittee per the May 21, 2026, vote of the Board to add a .25 evaluator. He will be starting as the internal evaluator. He is employed with DPHHS Early Childhood and Family Support Division (ECFSD). Kathy Rich, also from ECFSD, introduced herself as the new Quality Unit Manager. The opening for the MECA Program Specialist position within ECFSD has been filled with a start date of August 10, 2026; his name was not provided since the state hiring process is still being completed.
- Incoming Board member Jewel Sullivan replaced outgoing Board member Jackie Ronning on the evaluation subcommittee.



REVIEW FUNDING INDIRECT EXPENSES

Nicole Quirino from ECFSD joined the meeting to provide an overview of rent allocation costs for the ECFSD internal evaluator position.

- **Internal Evaluator; quarter-time allocation for space (25%)** 868.44/ year
72/month for rent.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND VOTES

PUBLIC COMMENT

- One member of the public made comment.

VOTES

- After the opportunity for discussion, the Board voted to approve indirect rent allocation
 - Tracy Moseman motions to approve this.
 - Torey Malek seconds the motion.
 - Unanimously approved by the board.
 - Motion passed.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

QUALITY INITIATIVES FOR PROVIDERS SUBCOMMITTEE

- Subcommittee recommended to the Board for consideration a maximum grant size of \$10,000 for infant and toddler quality supports (replacing a prior higher per-award discussion).
- They proposed to the Board for consideration a one-month application window (4 weeks) and emphasized the need for external communication prior to opening applications, so providers understand allowable uses.
- The requirement for an updated unique entity identifier (UEI) number was highlighted as mandatory for applicant eligibility.

FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE SUBCOMMITTEE

- The Flexible Workforce Subcommittee recommended to the Board for consideration that the application be open for five weeks and emphasized wide promotion so providers can prepare.
- The subcommittee recommended to the Board for consideration a two-year application option so funds (and associated evaluation/data collection) can be used for the same purposes across two years.



- The subcommittee recommended that facilities applying for continued funding must acknowledge intent to continue into year two and submit a current registered UEI.
- The department was asked by the Board to integrate these requirements into the Submittable system and to report any additional administrative needs back to the Board. The subcommittee recommends to the Board that the Department publish guidance and set up the Submittable application workflow with the recommended durations.
- Incoming Board member Jewel Sullivan, who replaced outgoing Board member Jackie Ronning on this subcommittee.

EVALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORKFORCE STUDY

- The Evaluation Subcommittee is reconvening after a short hiatus to align evaluation activities with subcommittee priorities and upcoming grants.
- At the direction of the Board, the Evaluation Subcommittee's work will include working with Tanner Dempsey, the internal evaluator, to ensure evaluation aligns with other subcommittee as grants launch.
- Incoming Board member Jewel Sullivan will be added to this subcommittee to replace outgoing Board member Jackie Ronning.
- A separate workforce study workgroup was proposed by the subcommittee to the Board to consolidate data from other sources (e.g., Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Public Instruction) and to support priorities of the workforce study. Louisa Libertelli-Dunn and Torey Malek from the board volunteered for this subcommittee.

PROJECT UPDATE: SUBMITTABLE AND APPLICATION TIMEFRAMES

- Following the Board's decision to have the grants be noncompetitive, the Department advised that Submittable is the grant mechanism to be used to administer these funds. The Department confirmed submission of necessary initial procurement paperwork to move projects forward, and projects are in process within DPHHS.
- Processing timelines remain subject to internal review; subcommittees requested prioritized timing for grants and clarity on staggered application windows. DPHHS will report back on whether all three grants can be run simultaneously and other administrative aspects of the grant launch.
- Per the board's direction to the Department to implement the grants through a noncompetitive approach using Submittable, the Department will finalize Submittable configuration, incorporate UEI and application-window rules, and share timelines for coordinated outreach back to the Board.
- DPHHS suggested to the Board a 3-week window for applications.



- The Board members highlighted the need for early, timely, and ongoing communication about the grant opportunities.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND VOTES

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Two members of the public made comments.

BOARD VOTE

- After hearing the subcommittee recommendations in the subcommittee reports, the Board considered the recommendations and then voted. Board voted unanimously on DPHHS recommendations as follows: 1) all three grants should be open during the same period, 2) providers can apply for all three grants opportunities, 3) UEI numbers must be provided by applicants, 4) grants will be open for three weeks, 5) money will be issued to providers on a reimbursement basis, and 6) the board will hold meetings to vote and approve the grantees.
 - Motion- Louisa Libertelli-Dunn
 - Second- Tory Malek
 - Unanimously approved by the board
 - Motion passed

ADJOURNMENT

- The next board meeting is Aug. 27, 2026, on Zoom.
- Vote to Adjourn
 - Caitlin Jensen motions to adjourn the meeting.
 - Tracy Moseman seconds the motion.
 - Unanimously approved by the board.
 - Motion passed.
 - Meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.