

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE LEADERS IN EARLY EDUCATION (NASLEE)

STRATEGIC PLAN

MAY 2022



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NASLEE's Strategic Plan has been developed with the support of a wide range of stakeholders. NASLEE's partners at School Readiness Consulting (SRC) acknowledge the considerable time, talent, and perspective offered by the early childhood community, who participated in a variety of ways throughout the strategic planning process.

A special appreciation is extended to the NASLEE Executive Committee, who worked with SRC to bring forth the vision of this plan.

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A letter from NASLEE's Executive Committee

Dear NASLEE members,

The Executive Committee is pleased to unveil the National Association of State Leaders in Early Education (NASLEE) Strategic Plan. This strategic plan is a culmination of the stories, challenges, and opportunities that the Executive Committee and members have shared. We thank all the members for their candor in sharing their perspectives as part of their commitment to the continuous growth and improvement of NASLEE.

NASLEE has a strong reputation and history of impact on state leaders in early education. This strategic plan grounds us in our history; celebrates our achievements; and provides a road map as we continue to grow our relationships, increase supports to members, and strengthen the organization's impact in the early childhood field. With our shared belief about the importance of young children as a starting point, this plan articulates the guiding vision, mission, and values that will lead the Executive Committee and NASLEE to ensure we are focusing on what matters most and the impact that NASLEE is best positioned to make.

This document reflects the voices of state leaders in early education and members who have affirmed the priorities and strategies laid out to address the needs of the organization. NASLEE's Executive Committee and School Readiness Consulting are grateful to the members, legacy members, and other early childhood system leaders who contributed to the development of this strategic plan. We could not have created this report without the opportunity to learn about the needs and experiences of early childhood state leaders. We are thankful to all members whose dedication to the early childhood system and commitment to supporting one another makes NASLEE such a meaningful place.

By carrying out the priorities and strategies outlined in this plan, NASLEE will grow and evolve into the next phase of its development. We are looking forward to new opportunities for connection and collaboration to come as we bring this strategic plan to life.

Sincerely,

The NASLEE Executive Committee

Mandy Sorge, Noel Kelty, Robin Wilkins, Nicole Madore, Michelle Levy, and Lauren Zbyszinski



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INTRODUCTION

SETTING THE STAGE

In recent decades, the role early childhood programs and supports play in improving the lives of children has gained the attention of state leaders. The research is clear that the first five years of a child’s life represent the most critical period in human development. During this time, a child’s brain is growing at an unmatched rate and creating the architecture for all future development and learning.¹ When children have a great start in life—that is, the opportunity to grow strong and healthy, build foundational skills and knowledge, and have their needs met during the early years—the benefits to themselves and to their communities reverberate throughout their lives.² For many children, early childhood care and education (ECE) programs play an essential role in supporting healthy development—offering rich learning experiences and a sense of belonging in the learning community.



Despite this evidence, however, inequitable policies and practices within the early childhood system have led to gaps and disparities in access to high-quality early childhood programs—particularly along the divides of income, race, and location. Due to chronic underfunding of early care and education programs and systems, many families are left to bear impossibly high costs or to be “priced out” of early learning settings altogether. While state and federal programs, such as child care subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and Head Start/Early Head Start, begin to narrow the affordability gap, their capacity is not nearly sufficient to serve all children and families who could benefit from these programs.³ Meanwhile, limited cross-agency infrastructure makes it challenging for states to administer the full range of education, health, and family support services impacting young children in a way that is streamlined and navigable by families. As a result, many families do not experience coordinated services that recognize and care for the whole child within the child’s family, community, and cultural context. This system fragmentation impacts all families but has an outsized negative impact on low-income communities, communities of color, and others who have historically been marginalized within our society and the systems that support it.⁴

Recognizing both the value of strong early childhood programming and the disparities in access, state leaders in early childhood support the needs of an expanding field. These positions are designed to provide leadership and oversight across the many ECE programs that states offer. Having dedicated leadership capacity enables states to focus on expanding and connecting a network of early childhood programs—supporting families as they work to build a strong foundation for their children’s learning and development. To date, the efforts of early childhood specialists within state departments of education have brought about considerable progress. They have

- expanded the reach and improved the quality of programs;
- engaged programs and communities in planning and innovation for continuous quality improvement;
- created the capacity to leverage essential state-federal partnerships;
- facilitated innovative solutions to maximize resources;
- engendered public-private partnerships that generate and channel resources to address state priorities; and
- created capacity for bidirectional communication with families, providers, and communities.⁵

All these efforts exist to enable programs to operate within a comprehensive network of early childhood services and supports—helping young children and their families to thrive in the early years.



As the presence and scope of state leaders in early childhood within state departments of education has increased, so has the need to connect and support them in their roles. Within states, early childhood state leaders take on the challenge of creating the conditions for more equitable early childhood systems. Among other things, their work involves administering and streamlining multiple early childhood programs supported through various funding streams and governed by various

oversight structures. This effort has proved to be tremendously complex and has surfaced the needs for advocacy, data systems, community engagement, cross-agency collaboration, and other factors to make equitable systems design possible.

In 1972, a small group of state early childhood specialists—recognizing the need for cross-state collaboration to share practices and converge influence—came together to form NASLEE, a membership organization known at the time as the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE). At that time, few state departments of education included dedicated early childhood specialist positions, but as state resources for early childhood programming (and the dedicated leadership within states to administer them) have expanded, so has the size and scope of this membership organization.⁶

NASLEE is positioned to make a unique and critical contribution to the national early childhood landscape. The organization is dedicated to convening and mobilizing a community of leaders who are in touch with the challenges and opportunities facing state early childhood systems and empowered to effect change in their own states. This enables a powerful exchange in which individuals' efforts are influenced by the collective “brain trust” of the larger organization, while the voice and presence of the organization in the national early childhood landscape is driven by the wisdom of state specialists. Therefore, NASLEE can bring clarity and perspective to core early childhood issues and act as a catalyst for state and national action for ECE. At the same time, the opportunity for connection among members, and between individual members and the collective, has helped to build member capacity and increase the effectiveness of individual specialists in their roles. As of 2022, NASLEE has grown to a membership of 228, representing 48 states and Washington, DC. The membership organization exists to leverage the expertise and influence of members toward a shared vision—a world where all children have access to a comprehensive and equitable early childhood system to reach their full potential.⁷

NAECS-SDE was originally founded to support early childhood state specialists in state departments of education. As NASLEE evolves alongside the broader early childhood field, so too does its language, to better represent the organization's membership. Throughout this document, the term “early childhood state leaders” will be used consistently to refer to those in state-level education roles with major responsibilities in the early childhood care and education field.



THE OPPORTUNITY

As NASLEE observes its 50th anniversary, the organization is taking stock of what it has accomplished, lessons learned along the way, and its greatest potential for impact in the coming years. Today, NASLEE is known and valued for its capacity to synthesize the perspectives of state leaders in early childhood and contribute to the national conversation around early childhood research, policy, and practice. The organization has played an immeasurably important role in disseminating information to members, facilitating cross-state relationships and collaboration, supporting the professional growth and effectiveness of members, and communicating to the broader field regarding the urgency of the need and pathways for progress in the ECE field. In light of increased national attention on the role of ECE as part of our nation’s social and economic infrastructure, *now is the time to refocus strategic efforts aimed at creating sustainability and growth, within both the national organization and the state early childhood systems represented by its membership.*

Over the past year, NASLEE has undertaken the work of strategic planning. To do so, the Executive Committee—the executive director and a group of members elected by their peers to lead the organization—has partnered with School Readiness Consulting (SRC). Over the course of several months, SRC has worked closely with the Executive Committee to understand the historical and current context of the organization and gather information to articulate a shared vision and set strategic directions for the next several years.

THIS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

LATE SPRING 2021-SUMMER 2021

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS AND CONTEXT BUILDING

SRC held interviews with NASLEE members and leaders within similar organizations and reviewed key documents. Through these efforts, SRC gathered information about the historical and current context of the organization and its accomplishments over the years.

FALL 2021

SETTING STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

During the second leadership retreat, the Executive Committee worked to establish priorities and opportunities. This collaborative effort integrated the learnings from the landscape analysis and aligned to the strategic framework—resulting in a set of proposed strategies for NASLEE in the coming years.



WINTER-SPRING 2022

DEVELOPING AND DISSEMINATING THE PLAN

Synthesizing all gathered information and feedback, SRC worked to develop this strategic plan as a road map to guide the work of the organization over the next five years and define the leadership role of the Executive Committee as catalysts and facilitators of the work. As such, the full plan is designed to be organization-facing, while the associated two-page brief is intended to communicate the process and outcomes of this strategic effort to the early childhood care and education field writ large.

SUMMER 2021

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Building on the landscape analysis and the organization's existing framework, SRC worked with the Executive Committee during the first of two leadership retreats to develop updated mission and vision statements, values, and overarching goals. This process was an opportunity to reflect on and articulate the unique role that NASLEE can play in the national early childhood care and education landscape, make a clear statement about the organization's identity, and align intentions for strategic directions.

FALL 2021-WINTER 2022

MEMBERSHIP FEEDBACK LOOPS

At each phase of the process, SRC and the Executive Committee worked to engage members through the Annual Roundtable meeting of the membership, a survey, and other outreach activities. Recognizing that member input and buy-in for strategic directions are in keeping with the values of the organization and essential for its success, members had multiple opportunities to weigh in, and their feedback was integrated in finalizing the framework and strategic directions.



THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK, PRIORITIES & DIRECTIONS

The following is an overview of the strategic framework, the priority areas designated by the Executive Committee, and the associated strategies. The framework includes an updated vision, or “North Star,” to which NASLEE seeks to contribute; a mission statement that defines the organization’s role in pursuing this vision alongside its peers; and a set of values to be held as guideposts for decision-making—and as standards for those entrusted with the leadership of this important work.

Our guiding belief: We believe it is vital to prioritize and share a collective commitment to serving young children and their families during their most essential years of development.

➔ IF WE PRIORITIZE...

- 1 Building and sustaining membership**
 - Establish a clearly defined and sustainable membership structure
 - Strengthen new member recruitment efforts
- 2 Strengthening communication and collaboration**
 - Improve bidirectional communication between members and NASLEE leadership
 - Expand opportunities for connection and collaboration
 - Increase engagement with the field to build awareness
- 3 Cultivating learning and knowledge-building opportunities**
 - Establish priorities for professional learning
 - Expand professional learning offerings
 - Disseminate tools and resources for members
- 4 Building leadership capacity**
 - Create and maintain leadership development opportunities for members
 - Identify and recruit future NASLEE leadership candidates
 - Promote and support early childhood state leaders of color
- 5 Participating in advancing the early childhood care and education field**
 - Monitor and communicate progress and opportunities
 - Establish a clear and consistent policy framework
 - Cultivate a unified voice on key early childhood issues

➔ WE WILL SUCCEED IN OUR MISSION—

To support early childhood state leaders to connect, learn, and exercise their collective influence to improve outcomes for all young children.

Together as members, we focus on prenatal-to-grade-3 initiatives to strengthen policy, advance research, and drive best practice in the field with an equity lens.

➔ AND CREATE PROGRESS TOWARD OUR VISION—

A world where all children have access to a comprehensive and equitable early childhood system to reach their full potential.



TO DO THIS WORK, WE GROUND IN SHARED VALUES OF...



Relationships

We see people at the center of all we do. We recognize the unique role early childhood state leaders play and create intentional opportunities for connection, sharing, and collaboration.



Equity

We stand firm in the belief that a focus on equity is essential. We commit to organizational practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion for early childhood state leaders and the systems in which they work.



Continuous Learning

We believe knowledge is necessary for systemic change. We commit to supporting early childhood state leaders to draw upon research and best practice as lifelong learners continuously working to improve.



Legacy and Innovation

We respect the past and look toward the future. We balance learning from the history and strong foundation built by state specialists before us with taking new actions for innovation.

HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

The sections that follow will discuss each priority area in detail, providing examples of prior and ongoing work that has created progress and laid a strong foundation for the strategies outlined in this plan. The discussion of each priority area will also highlight where efforts could be strengthened, refined, or redirected to respond to the current national landscape, meet the needs of members, and leverage new capacity within the organization. For each priority area, the discussion will create a clear and compelling case for a set of strategies. In addition, and in accord with discussions with the Executive Committee about the most urgent needs and opportunities, select strategies are identified as critical next steps to be prioritized in the first two years of implementation.

Strategies within this plan are intended to reflect the work of the organization as a whole. While the Executive Committee recognizes and assumes its particular role to lead and organize efforts, the plan has been developed in partnership with all members—and calls upon the partnership of all members to create progress and live into the commitments articulated here. As the strategic planning effort reaches its end and the organization turns toward implementation, the executive leadership team is hopeful that this plan will be energizing and illuminating for all members who have, time and time again, demonstrated their commitment to NASLEE and to its mission and vision.

PRIORITY AREAS



PRIORITY AREA 1

Build and sustain membership

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

As a national organization focused on early childhood, NASLEE demonstrates how well it is meeting the needs of its members and the early childhood care and education field through the strength of its membership. Strong membership organizations have sufficient size and diversity to lean into all the aspects of the work to support their mission, strengthen their national presence and influence in the broader field, and ensure that the voices of early childhood state leaders are uplifted.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

NASLEE is positioned to meet a specific need that is common among early childhood state specialists and other state-level early childhood leaders. Members recognize the unique role and functions of early childhood state leaders and the need for tailored resources and opportunities for support. Members have shared that working in a state department of education has its own set of challenges,

“By virtue of NASLEE’s mission and scope, they already have a niche. When specialists hear about the organization, they say, ‘Oh wow—there is a group that does that?’”

- NASLEE LEGACY MEMBER

“Growing membership means being relevant to the people who need [NASLEE], who are looking for information and engagement. Be clear on the constituency you are serving.”

- NASLEE LEGACY MEMBER



often due to the size and decision-making structures of those departments. For decades, NASLEE has provided early childhood state leaders with an array of opportunities for learning, support, and connection highly specialized to these individuals’ roles—a benefit that members have expressed is not widely available elsewhere. For this reason, members come to NASLEE and value what the organization can offer.

NASLEE has dedicated membership, including many legacy members. As NASLEE celebrates its 50th anniversary, its membership is strong, with high member retention, dedicated legacy members, and new members. Legacy members demonstrate the dedication of state leaders in early childhood and the power of the organization to bring them together. Legacy members provide strong historical context for, and experience in, state early childhood systems, supporting current early childhood state leaders and contributing to NASLEE’s strong reputation in the national landscape. Members of all types and career levels uplifted their desire to stay involved with NASLEE and see the organization grow into its next phase, demonstrating NASLEE’s contribution to the early childhood field through its robust community of support for early childhood state leaders. The combination of a growing membership body and many long-standing members is an asset to NASLEE’s continued membership engagement efforts, as the density and breadth of membership encourages members to build relationships with one another and engage in membership activities.



**49 STATES WITH MEMBERS
+ WASHINGTON, DC**

WHAT ARE THE GAPS?

There is a need to distinguish and communicate the different purposes and levels of membership and engagement. The primary function of the organization has been to serve early childhood state leaders through relationship building and shared learning. As the broader early childhood care and education field continues to grow, shift, and diversify, so do the work of early childhood state leaders and their resulting needs for support. This evolution is evidence of progress within both NASLEE and the early childhood care and education field; however, it brings new questions and the need for decisions by the Executive Committee to determine who the organization's core members are and how to include other early childhood organizations that are interested in learning from and supporting early childhood state leaders. Members have shared the hope that NASLEE can continue to live into its unique role in the early childhood care and education field, while ensuring inclusivity across roles in state departments of education and other state-level organizations. To move forward with building and sustaining membership, the leadership team is charged to address the increasing diversity and inclusivity of early childhood leaders across roles and geographies, without losing focus on early childhood state specialists and other state-level leaders whom the organization was founded to support.

Diversity and inclusivity expand beyond roles in state departments of education. As states across the country increasingly become more racially diverse, the early childhood field continues to grapple with the lack of racial diversity in leadership and decision-making roles. Early childhood state leaders are not immune from this challenge. NASLEE can live into its equity value by elevating the lack of racial diversity in its membership as a concern and implementing specific supports that remove barriers for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color to join NASLEE and participate in the variety of relationship-building and learning opportunities that exist.

Cultivating active and sustained participation will require robust and strategic recruitment efforts. Members and the Executive Committee both uplifted the need to create specific processes to onboard new members, orient them to opportunities inside the organization, and make connections to existing members. Members shared that the organization needs a strategic focus on recruitment that includes clear incentives for participation, highlighted during the recruitment process. Members want to know what the levels of membership are and the correlating services and supports that accompany these levels, such as increased opportunities to connect to role-alike peers, specific leadership or professional development offerings, or having access to a mentor during onboarding. Recruitment and onboarding initiatives for new members should be streamlined and well-resourced so that future members are not only aware of the opportunities that exist for their participation but also well-connected and supported once they join.

“I question whether the goal of expanding membership will eventually dilute the organization’s focus by including too many outside of education agencies.”

- NASLEE MEMBER



STRATEGIES

Recognizing that the strength of the membership is the organization’s most important asset in pursuit of its mission and vision, NASLEE will commit effort and resources to build and sustain membership. To do so, the organization will redefine and strengthen the processes surrounding member recruitment and retention. Specifically, NASLEE has identified the following strategies:

★ **1.1 Establish a clearly defined and sustainable membership structure to engage and retain members**

A strong membership organization relies on a clearly defined membership structure so that current and future members have a clear understanding of the benefits to their participation. Current members need to know how to interact with the organization, and future members need to envision the benefits to their work and their state system. NASLEE has already begun the foundational work to define new membership and fee structures to provide new and existing members the information they need to stay involved and strengthen the organization through a clear lane for funding. An equity-conscious approach would ensure any associated fees are strategically leveraged in ways that support members with least access to resources and limit any barriers to participation, particularly for members of color and early and mid-career leaders.

1.2 Strengthen new member recruitment efforts to scale the organization and build diversity in the membership base

To grow membership, NASLEE must have a clear and comprehensive engagement strategy. This would include leveraging the upcoming updated membership structure as the basis for additional recruitment and onboarding resources such as virtual modules or mentorship with existing or legacy members. The Executive Committee could consider increasing member diversity through strategic recruitment efforts to encourage participation across race as well as other key factors, such as career level, gender, and geographical region.

★ *Strategies marked with a star are featured as priorities in the Appendix on page 32.*

PRIORITY AREA 2

Strengthen communication and collaboration

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

As a convener that brings early learning decision-makers and leaders together, NASLEE plays an important role in disseminating information, connecting members to one another, and facilitating cross-state collaboration to influence the broader early childhood care and education field. These are the hallmarks of NASLEE and represent the primary reasons why members join and stay within the organization's ranks.

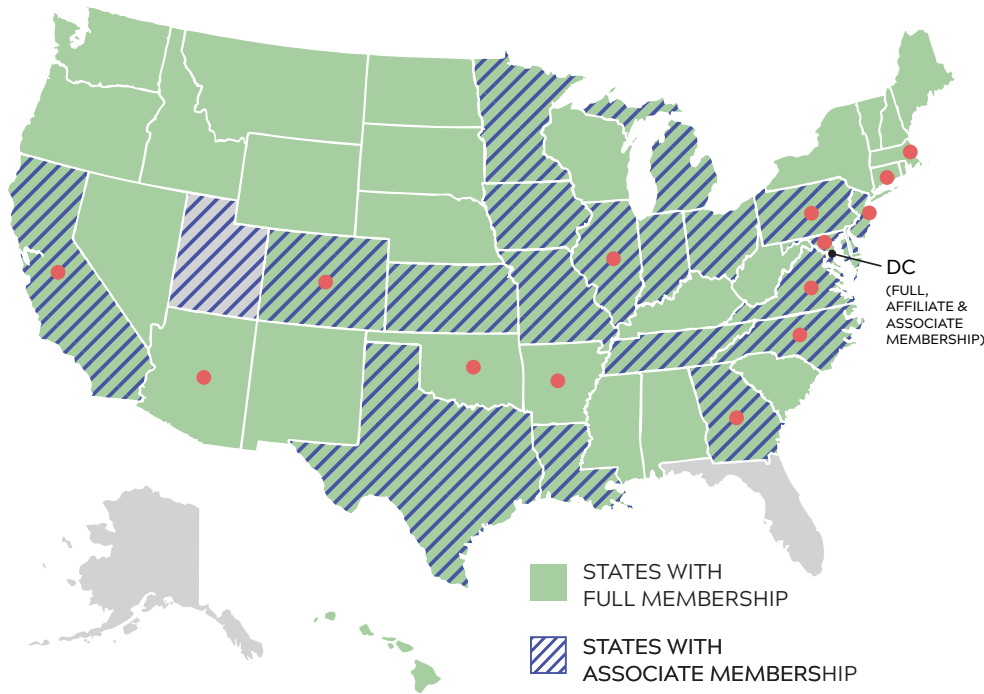
WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

NASLEE is best known among the field as the “go-to” organization to connect state early childhood specialists across the country.

Over its 50 years of existence, the membership organization has established a strong reputation among state education agencies and national organizations for creating vital opportunities for networking and peer support along with the many other ways members benefit from being a part of the NASLEE community. This reputation is evidenced by NASLEE membership spanning many state departments of education and the voices of NASLEE's peers, who speak to the unique niche that the

“Early childhood sits in different places across states, so we miss people if we look only [at specialists] in departments of education. We have to work with our counterparts on how the system [supporting children and families] is working. We need to figure out how to bring everyone to the table.”

- NASLEE MEMBER



*This image represents the available membership data as of May 2022.

Full Agency Membership. Active state agency employees with major responsibilities related to early childhood care and education.

Associate Membership. Retired or former full members. Any early childhood specialist holding Full Membership in the Association is eligible for Associate Membership after leaving state agency employment.

Affiliate Membership. Related professionals who hold a current state-focused position in, or provide services for, a national not-for-profit organization related to the purpose of the Association.

organization occupies. Members have shared how they value the opportunity for networking and relationship building with current and legacy members to find support for specific challenges experienced in state departments of education. As the organization continues to evolve, there are continued opportunities to solidify NASLEE's presence in the national landscape as the organization that best serves and uplifts early childhood state leaders. The Executive Committee and members envision increased collaboration between states to share best practices and effective strategies, to uplift more efficiently what is working well on behalf of young children and their families and drive change.



New leadership provides added capacity to ensure members are supported through communication and collaboration. Members find value in being part of the listserv and having opportunities to stay connected through updates and shared resources. Historically, NASLEE has relied on volunteering members and Executive Committee members to fulfill working groups and administer the strategic plan—meaning that the ability to strengthen the organization or drive programs and efforts depended on the capacity of the individual members in these roles, leaving strategic efforts for communication and collaboration to the Executive Committee. With an executive director and a new strategic plan, administering listservs, ad hoc communication, and new opportunities for communication and collaboration can be streamlined to better benefit members. Members have noted the opportunity to leverage this moment in the organization's history to strengthen NASLEE's organizational identity around the components that matter most to members. With the organization's first executive director and a strong Executive Committee, there is increased capacity to ensure connectivity between members and leaders to strengthen new pathways for members to connect, collaborate, and make the most of their participation.

WHAT ARE THE GAPS?

Building on the organization's strong reputation, there is an opportunity to refine NASLEE's voice and presence in the early childhood field. Many members shared that they were not aware of the organization until they assumed their current positions in state government. Through word of mouth, members have been informed by their predecessors about the value of the organization and the resources and support it provides. While word of mouth can be a powerful and authentic way to build awareness, NASLEE can strengthen its approach to communications, both within state agencies and through other channels that reach a broader audience. A more intentional and strategic approach would not only build awareness of the organization and its offerings among potential members, but also serve to better communicate important stances and accomplishments to the field as a catalyst

for partnership and progress. Through an emphasis on increased presence in national decision-making conversations, speaking opportunities for leaders and members, conference presentations, and promoting position papers and other collateral via online platforms, NASLEE can continue to refine its unique “voice” in the field.

There is a need to strengthen and expand opportunities for members to communicate with one another.

Members shared the desire to know what other members and their state agencies or organizations were doing in a more ongoing way. While the Annual Roundtable is known to the members as the organization’s marquee learning and networking opportunity, members expressed a need to connect with one another on a more ad hoc basis. Members value the existence of other more informal connection opportunities, such as coffee chats, the listserv, and office hours, but shared that they could benefit from greater access to one-on-one communication with other members to connect with one another for support. Efforts to support this communication could include “quick problem-solving exchanges,” so that members could discuss timely issues and questions, fostering connection and collaboration. Members have a desire to focus on smaller cohorts of role-alike peers and utilize problems of practice to generate support and new thinking. Members welcomed efforts to reinvigorate online discussion platforms that allow for these timely exchanges.

“I appreciate and want to see support networking continue. Giving us [members] space to come together, learn together, and make connections when working through problems.”

- NASLEE MEMBER



STRATEGIES

Strong, collaborative relationships are central to the success of NASLEE’s work, and therefore communication—both within the organization and facing the field—are profoundly important. Recognizing this, NASLEE is committed to strengthening communication as a way of increasing support to members and further establishing its presence as a national early childhood organization. Specifically, NASLEE will implement the following strategies:

★ **2.1 Improve bidirectional communication between members and NASLEE leadership**

Traditionally, the members in a formal membership organization have an important role in shaping organizational practices and setting directions for its future. At the same time, the Executive Committee has been entrusted with a particular responsibility to communicate to members about



upcoming opportunities, organizational shifts, and changes in the early childhood landscape that impact the respective and collective efforts of the Executive Committee and the membership. Improving bidirectional communication means ensuring open channels that allow for appropriate exchange and responsiveness.

★ 2.2 Expand opportunities for connection and collaboration between members

Members value the opportunity to network, collaborate, and problem solve with one another and across states, and NASLEE provides a conduit for these connections. Efforts to expand on these opportunities should be tailored to meet the specific needs of members so there is a balance between opportunities driven by the Executive Committee, such as the Annual Roundtable and coffee chats, and additional pathways for informal connections to share problems of practice and brainstorm solutions. These connections may include maintaining a directory of members, providing spaces for members to connect with one another via forums, holding virtual rapid ideation sessions, and making continued learning from legacy members available via newsletters.

2.3 Continuously engage with the field to build awareness of the organization among state education agencies and across the national early childhood community

Building and sustaining a strong membership body is in part supported by comprehensive messaging and outreach to showcase the organization’s offerings and accomplishments. Additionally, the broader early childhood field benefits from knowledge about NASLEE’s work and value proposition for the national early childhood landscape—bringing new partnership opportunities and creating synergy with other national organizations. NASLEE could prioritize field-facing activities, such as speaking engagements, publications, and participation at national tables, while strengthening its online presence through social media, revitalizing its website, strategic dissemination of position statements and other collateral, and more.

PRIORITY AREA 3

Cultivate learning and knowledge-building opportunities

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In an environment as ever-changing as the national ECE landscape, responsive, on-time professional learning is critical for those leading the way in states. Early childhood state leaders need spaces where they can lift their attention from their daily work to build the kinds of cross-cutting skills, awareness, and mindsets that engender more effectiveness and efficiency in these individuals' roles. In turn, as members become more skilled in their work, they are better equipped to contribute to the growth of their peers and the organization as a whole.

“For those outside of the organization, [NASLEE] can establish itself as a membership organization with a strong networking component. [You want people to say], ‘I can go to the Roundtable where all these people from across the country are gathering, and I can get something to them.’”

- NASLEE PARTNER

“Through the Roundtable, NASLEE is the catalyst for other organizations [wanting to connect with state policy leaders] to distribute information.”

- NASLEE LEGACY MEMBER

WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

NASLEE has a stated and lived commitment to offering professional learning that is tailored to the needs of its membership. Early childhood state leaders have unique roles requiring an eclectic set of knowledge and skills—from program implementation, to policy and systems design, to development and sustainability. Their work takes place within the complex and evolving “system of systems” that forms the fabric of state-led supports for young children and their families. Therefore, members noted that opportunities for timely, role-specific professional development aligned to their goals can be challenging to find. As an organization with a special focus on early childhood state leaders, NASLEE provides a niche opportunity to respond to the interests and most pressing professional learning needs of its members.

WHAT ARE THE GAPS?

As the organization grows, there is an opportunity to consider new strategies to ensure tailored and balanced professional learning approaches. Recent growth has brought about an expansion of attendance and content at the Annual Roundtable meetings, creating relevancy for a broader audience of early childhood state leaders and leading to more role-diverse attendance. While members recognize the benefits of expanded participation, some also noted the potential risk of

“watering down” the highly tailored content and networking opportunities that they have come to expect from the Annual Roundtable event. In looking toward the future of the Annual Roundtable, some members suggested that to ensure the event is able to grow with the organization, there is a need for a conscious balance between policy discussions, topical training, and leadership development experiences—and more opportunities for members to prioritize and choose from topics of interest.

Members also discussed opportunities for professional learning practices to grow with the organization in terms of format and dosage. In recent years, the early childhood community writ large has come to rely on and appreciate the flexibility and reach that virtual learning spaces can offer—which could present an opportunity to increase the frequency of professional learning offerings. While it may be unrealistic to hold an in-person event at the scale of the Annual Roundtable on a more frequent basis, members shared that they would benefit from additional, smaller-scale touch points throughout the year—suggesting that this could be feasible in a virtual format.



“The biggest threat is that the needs are so great, the opportunities are so great, it will be important to narrow and focus by picking just a few things [to target].”

- NASLEE PARTNER

“We need to be looking at what we are doing for [ECE state specialists who are] new, mid-career, and those just exiting the profession, so we are building out the organization long term—and building connections so people see value in it for themselves.”

- NASLEE MEMBER

Beyond the quantity and content of offerings, there are opportunities to ensure a systematic approach to professional learning. The most effective professional learning experiences are those that have clear connections to individuals’ roles within their states, to the goals and values of the organization, and to the current national early childhood landscape. Members noted their hopes for additional tools and resources linked with professional learning to provide support as members apply new learnings in the context of their daily work. Also, as NASLEE continues in its efforts to define and ground its efforts in a commitment to equity, early childhood state leaders and their respective departments of education across the nation are doing the same. Therefore, there is an important opportunity to offer professional learning that is attuned to the historical and current inequities underpinning early childhood systems and that center equity in proposed pathways forward for states. As NASLEE refines its approach, it is important to recognize that in addition to meeting the needs of individual members, professional learning can be a powerful mechanism to sustain and grow the organization—considering that increased capacity of members translates directly to increased capacity of the membership organization.

STRATEGIES

Looking ahead, NASLEE is charged to plan and implement professional learning that is responsive to the needs of members and the field, multidirectional, and aligned in service of organizational goals. Specifically, to cultivate a more systematic and impactful professional learning experience for its members, NASLEE has identified the following strategies:

★ 3.1 Establish priorities for professional learning that align with and support the overarching goals and values of the organization

In order to ensure that NASLEE continues to target professional learning opportunities for early childhood state leaders, the organization must be clear about what opportunities exist and who they are for. Creating a systematic approach to professional learning means setting clear goals and priorities that can help guide decisions about what opportunities to offer, for whom, and toward what broader purpose. This could potentially include tiered supports for early childhood state leaders with differing levels of experience, to ensure that the organization is sustaining its relationships with members over time. A systematic approach would also include a flexible yet bounded approach to setting professional learning priorities so that offerings can be responsive to current issues without spreading organizational resources too thin. In addition to responding to the needs of members, priorities for professional learning should be grounded in NASLEE's values, driving toward the advancement and sustainability of the organization, and contributing to progress in the early childhood care and education field.

★ 3.2 Expand professional learning offerings to build the capacity of members

Professional learning opportunities and experiences are a pillar of NASLEE's commitment to its membership and an important way that the organization contributes to progress in the early childhood care and education field. Expanded opportunities for learning could include additional in-person or virtual convenings, webinars, office hours, speaker series, member-led communities of practice, and more. In addition to drawing on the expertise of external leaders in the field, these offerings can leverage the learning, experiences, and insights of members—and include opportunities for members to collaborate to build strategies that work.



3.3 Disseminate tools and resources for members that aid in professional learning and translate learning to action

As a convener with national perspective and reach, NASLEE can seek out and/or create up-to-date resources. These resources would be responsive to professional learning content and trends in early childhood research, policy, and discourse and would include toolkits, research, policy briefs, guiding frameworks, innovation highlights, and more. In aligning to its values, this is also an opportunity for NASLEE to deepen its collective understanding of equity by providing specific resources to members that encourage equity-focused learning and action. NASLEE could draw on and curate seminal resources developed by other organizations or commission working groups within the membership to develop materials.

PRIORITY AREA 4

Build leadership capacity

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Building the capacity of members to lead inside and outside of NASLEE strengthens the organization and the broader early childhood field. Taking meaningful action to scale on behalf of young children and families will require a diverse cohort of early childhood leaders with the knowledge to navigate state systems and the skills to be a catalyst for change.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

There is significant capacity for leadership among members, along with embedded opportunities to lead. State early childhood specialists bring vision and passion to their work and recognize the need for strong leadership to move the early childhood system forward. As such, members seek and value opportunities to lead and often find these opportunities within NASLEE. Membership in NASLEE, in and of itself, creates opportunities for members to assume leadership roles, whether informally in support of their peers or formally by administering key functions of the organization or participating on the Executive Committee. The continued sustenance and growth of NASLEE over the years is a testament to the willingness and capacity of members to step into leadership roles. Through interviews, members shared that they value the leadership opportunities that currently exist and recognize the connection between opportunities to lead within the organization and the leadership skills needed to advance best practices in their respective roles and the field writ large. NASLEE can better meet members' needs for leadership development with increased offerings and support, which may include new partnerships to connect members with opportunities across the early childhood landscape.



NASLEE has committed to creating leadership development opportunities for its members through essential partnerships. Leadership education is most effective when tailored to specific contexts, which makes NASLEE an ideal platform to support state-level early childhood leaders to develop the skills and knowledge needed to lead in the early childhood field. To make good on its commitment, the organization maintains strong partnerships with its peers across the early childhood field who can offer fresh perspectives on leadership development in alignment with NASLEE’s mission and vision. For example, the opportunity to participate in the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) cohorts was seen as an important resource and growth opportunity for members. The CEELO cohorts provide specific leadership and management skills to state early childhood administrators to be better able to navigate and promote program and system goals. By extension from NASLEE’s partnerships, members have access to various perspectives on leadership, knowledge-building resources from a variety of leading early childhood education organizations, leadership-building opportunities, and exposure to role models. As the Executive Committee enacts this strategic plan, NASLEE has the opportunity not only to maintain and build on key partnerships that make leadership opportunities available, but also to prepare members for increasing leadership responsibility.

WHAT ARE THE GAPS?

The highest tiers of leadership in the national early childhood landscape continue to be occupied primarily by White women.

As states across the country increasingly become more racially diverse, the early childhood field continues to grapple with the lack of racial diversity in leadership and decision-making roles. This is evidenced within the organization as the membership of early childhood state leaders remains predominantly White and reflects the reality of the national collective of leaders in early childhood. This reality is due to a lack of accessible pathways to

leadership for early childhood professionals who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color—including exposure to early childhood policy, state-led career pathways to leadership positions, and connections to leadership development opportunities such as internships and fellowships. As a result, decision-making at the national level, and organizations such as NASLEE that influence decision-making on a national scale, remain predominantly White.⁸ Acknowledging this phenomenon and the limitations it places on progress toward more equitable and inclusive early childhood systems, NASLEE can leverage its influence to help turn the tide.



Providing clear opportunities for members to take on leadership roles within NASLEE will strengthen the leadership pipeline.

Currently, despite the many contributions of members, NASLEE is often challenged by a lack of sufficient participation to adequately fill the work groups that have historically been the key pathway of the organization’s work. As the Executive Committee plans for the implementation of the strategic plan, key decisions will need to be made about who will lead the work and what decisions and supports will be needed. By identifying resources and developing strategic approaches to integrate leadership development into programming, NASLEE will better equip members to play leadership roles within their own agencies as well as inside NASLEE.

“NASLEE should consider establishing partnerships with organizations with skills that can be leveraged to create collective voice. [That’s] a way to broaden opportunities for state leaders to be at the table.”

- NASLEE PARTNER

STRATEGIES

Continued leadership development will be essential to sustaining the work of NASLEE and preparing visionary leaders to advance the early childhood field. NASLEE is committed to building leadership capacity by focusing on delivering leadership development opportunities for members and supporting equitable pathways to leadership in the state and national early childhood communities. To do so, NASLEE has identified the following strategies:

4.1 Create and maintain leadership development opportunities for members

Leadership development opportunities, such as participation in the CEELO Leadership Academy, leadership positions within the organization, and exposure to a variety of leaders and influencers in the field, can provide members with targeted supports to build transferable leadership skills. Building on current offerings, NASLEE can continue to partner with other organizations to expand the scope of opportunities, including linking and sponsoring members to fellowships, expert panels, conferences, national working groups, and more.

4.2 Identify and recruit future NASLEE leadership candidates

Elevating members to leadership positions within the organization not only bolsters the leadership capacity of individuals, but also fills a need for sustained leadership within the organization. In conjunction with other leadership development efforts, a focus on cultivating the Executive Committee pipeline will set the organization up for success in the coming years. Considering NASLEE’s commitment to equity, this effort would include specific strategies to prioritize and support members of color and others who have had the least amount of access to leadership positions.



★ **4.3 Promote and support early childhood state leaders of color through partnership with members and other national organizations**

Acknowledging the national problem of White dominance in the early childhood care and education field, NASLEE can leverage its influence to address barriers for leaders who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color in accessing leadership development and other professional opportunities. Utilizing existing and expanded communication platforms, NASLEE’s leadership can partner with members who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color to uplift their voices, keep equity issues at the forefront, and seek timely organizational actions. The organization could also commit to prioritizing nominations to leadership opportunities to members who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color and who have an interest in leading within or outside of the organization, as well as similarly prioritizing sponsorships for fellowships and other leadership development offerings.



PRIORITY AREA 5

Participate in progress in the early childhood field

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In order for NASLEE to be the “go-to” organization for early childhood state leaders, NASLEE’s role, relevancy, and influence on the national ECE landscape must be clear to members and the broader ECE community. Increased visibility and recognition can strengthen NASLEE’s ability to support state specialists in the most meaningful ways—increasing the longevity and effectiveness of members and, in turn, building the sustainability of the membership organization.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

NASLEE is a trusted source of information that guides the efforts of early childhood specialists.

Over the years, NASLEE has prioritized and delivered in its role of monitoring and communicating changes in the early childhood care and education landscape. Members have shared that they have come to expect NASLEE to offer timely and accurate communication surrounding emerging research and best practices, policy trends impacting state early childhood systems, funding opportunities, and more. This expectation is based on NASLEE's lived commitment to stand behind policy and practice that are good for young children and families by helping to bring key knowledge and resources to bear in state departments of education. At the same time, NASLEE plays a key role in bringing state perspectives and efforts to the table to inform national discourse. As a membership organization with national perspective and reach, NASLEE is well-positioned to act as a conduit for multidirectional communication—linking state efforts and the national ECE landscape in a dynamic, co-influential relationship.



The organization benefits from a new, enhanced leadership structure. Leveraging the newly established executive director role, the organization is better positioned than ever to be strategic in forming new relationships and inroads—increasing its visibility and reach. This critical boost in leadership capacity brings new opportunities to advance NASLEE's mission through its presence and contributions at key policy- and decision-making tables. The new structure provides the necessary catalyst for ongoing efforts, along with the perspective of a leader who is removed from state bureaucracies and able to help the organization to see the “big picture” of what it will take to move early childhood systems forward. Members have shared the perspective that the addition of the executive director position is particularly important and timely, as the current presidential administration continues to provide states with new resources and opportunities for early childhood care and education. Indeed, now is the time to be focused and strategic in setting and pursuing goals that benefit the organization, state systems, and—most important—young children. Therefore, due in part to additional leadership capacity, NASLEE is prepared to live into this strategic plan and move the organization forward with enhanced urgency, strategy, and accountability.

WHAT ARE THE GAPS?

Despite recent progress, there remains untapped potential to advance child-centered, equity-informed policy at the state and national levels. To drive beneficial policies and practices that make sense within each state context, early childhood specialists work in partnership with advocates, decision-makers, and other stakeholders. Within their respective spheres of influence, early childhood state leaders have opportunities to offer community- and program-informed perspectives on what is



most important and urgent for children and families. To be most effective in this work, specialists can benefit from tools and resources to help refine and deliver key messages to a variety of audiences. This is especially critical for members representing states where the early childhood platform has historically been weak or politically polarized. There is a need for NASLEE, as a nonpartisan, nationally recognized organization, to be strategic about “providing cover” through position statements and other means of cultivating a consistent presence and voice within the national early childhood conversation. In addition, the coming years will bring increased need and opportunity to form strategic partnerships with peers on the national front to advance shared priorities and raise awareness of key issues.

Taking its place as a national thought leader in early childhood will require targeted effort to refine NASLEE’s stated and lived commitment to advancing equity. As the opportunity and outcome gaps in ECE continue to widen along lines of income, race, and place, leaders in the field are increasingly charged to generate solutions. Building on the ever-expanding set of resources and collective knowledge generated by local, state, and national organizations—and gleaning the wisdom and perspectives of members—NASLEE must commit to continuously refining its own voice for equity. Taking a clear stance on equity topics and accepting accountability to state and local communities is a risk. However, it is a risk that national early childhood organizations must take to be responsible and relevant in the context of sweeping inequities impacting young children and their families.

STRATEGIES

Building on the organization’s increased capacity, institutional advantages, and commitments to its members and the field, NASLEE is prepared to strengthen its contribution to progress in the early childhood care and education landscape. This includes creating strong linkages between state and national ECE contexts and refining the organization’s approach to child-centered, equity-informed policy. To do so, NASLEE has identified the following strategies:



★ 5.1 Monitor and communicate progress and opportunities impacting early childhood efforts at the national and state levels

Leadership development opportunities, such as participation in the CEELo Leadership Academy, leadership positions within the organization, and exposure to a variety of leaders and influencers in the field, can provide members with targeted supports to build transferable leadership skills. Building on current offerings, NASLEE can continue to partner with other organizations to expand the scope of opportunities, including linking and sponsoring members to fellowships, expert panels, conferences, national working groups, and more.

★ 5.2 Identify and recruit future NASLEE leadership candidates

Elevating members to leadership positions within the organization not only bolsters the leadership capacity of individuals, but also fills a need for sustained leadership within the organization. In conjunction with other leadership development efforts, a focus on cultivating the Executive Committee pipeline will set the organization up for success in the coming years. Considering NASLEE’s commitment to equity, this effort would include specific strategies to prioritize and support members of color and others who have had the least amount of access to leadership positions.

★ 5.3 Cultivate a unified voice on key early childhood issues to support state and national efforts where values and priorities align

As a national organization of early childhood state leaders, NASLEE is uniquely poised to support best practice—but will need a focused and targeted agenda to be most effective. An equity-informed policy framework will be an essential first step and tool to support NASLEE in prioritizing and focusing policy and support efforts. Such efforts could include backing states as they take bold steps to build more equitable state systems, along with opportunities to lead or support similar organizations in advancing and influencing the national ECE policy landscape. Key levers for cultivating a unified voice to support advocacy include position statements, interviews, blogs, speaking engagements, and ongoing participation in public discourse to advance evidence-based messaging about early childhood issues.

WHAT'S AHEAD



As NASLEE moves forward in its commitment to early childhood state leaders and the early childhood system in which they operate, this plan provides priorities and strategies for advancing the association's mission and vision. A successful approach to implementation and ongoing strategic planning will involve an effort to continue to strengthen the organization and a continued commitment to membership. To advance its vision, NASLEE will continue to leverage its leadership, resources, and commitment to equity to build the capacity and center the needs of early childhood state leaders, so that one day **all children have access to a comprehensive and equitable early childhood system to reach their full potential.**

APPENDIX

As the Executive Committee considers the next steps for implementing the strategic plan, the following considerations and action planning template will support the committee's efforts.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the strategic plan, there are important considerations for the Executive Committee to keep in mind to ensure NASLEE's organizational health and wellness. While not exhaustive, the following list offers key considerations, derived from the leadership retreats, that should guide the Executive Committee and executive director as they move into action planning.



Equity

Equity is an outcome—it is not an effort or an intention. Advancing equity in early childhood care and education means undoing the conditions that have historically prevented many children from reaching their full potential based on race, income, and

other social factors. As a result of this undoing, these factors would no longer predict how successful children can be in school and life. Equity is also about generating power with families, organizations, and communities to create and advocate for solutions that work. Equity involves the collective work of elevating the standard of access and outcomes for all children by prioritizing those whose interests the system has historically overlooked. NASLEE has the opportunity to deepen its commitment to equity in each strategy and action step of this plan.

In order to consistently approach the committee's work from an equity perspective and to center equity as a guiding value, the Executive Committee must establish a baseline understanding of both the meaning of equity in the early childhood field and the organizational practices and policies that ensure equity for members. Successful efforts to create equity inside and outside the organization will require examination of where NASLEE and the broader early childhood system are falling short.



Funding

A successful organization both leverages existing resources and also actively seeks new opportunities for resource development. NASLEE's ability to strengthen the organization will require dedicated financial resources to sustain and grow the efforts proposed in this plan and ensure ongoing alignment to member needs. Each of the proposed priority areas and subsequent strategies and actions will necessitate some level of funding and resources. Through action planning, the Executive Committee will have a clearer understanding of the specific funding needs to enact the next 5 years of the organization's priorities. The Executive Committee is encouraged to consider new funding mechanisms through a redefined membership and fee structure, to seek new grants as a 501(c)3 organization, and to source new partnerships.



Leadership

During action planning, the Executive Committee is charged to consider the outcomes of the work and who will take the lead. To take on the set of strategies proposed, the Executive Committee will need to clearly define roles so that members have a clear pathway to participate, learn, and act. These roles include a distributed leadership structure that both represents the full diversity of the early childhood field and includes the skill and expertise to support implementation of strategies, grounded in an unwavering commitment to the identified core values. The Executive Committee should consider what resources are needed to advance each strategy and the conditions that are needed to ensure sufficient leadership to implement them. These resources and conditions might include increased active participation of members to lead work groups, additional staff or support for the executive director, or new partnerships.

STRATEGY MAP

This strategy map outlines NASLEE’s priority areas and priority strategies for the first year of its implementation. These priorities will lead the Executive Committee’s next steps in action planning, so that each priority strategy has a clearly defined and actionable set of next steps.



PRIORITY AREA	STRATEGY	YEAR 1
1. Build and sustain membership	1.1 Establish a clearly defined and sustainable membership structure to engage and retain members	●
	1.2 Strengthen new member recruitment efforts to scale the organization and build diversity in the membership base	
2. Strengthen communication and collaboration	2.1 Improve bidirectional communication between members and NASLEE leadership	●
	2.2 Expand opportunities for connection and collaboration between members	●
	2.3 Continuously engage with the field to build awareness of the organization among state education agencies and across the national early childhood care and education community	
3. Cultivate learning and knowledge-building opportunities	3.1 Establish priorities for professional learning that align with and support the overarching goals and values of the organization	●
	3.2 Expand professional learning offerings to build the capacity of members	●
	3.3 Disseminate tools and resources for members that aid in professional learning and translate learning to action	

PRIORITY AREA	STRATEGY	YEAR 1
4. Build leadership capacity	4.1 Create and maintain leadership development opportunities for members	
	4.2 Identify and recruit future NASLEE leadership candidates	
	4.3 Promote and support early childhood state leaders of color through partnership with members and other national organizations	●
5. Enhance the connection between states and the national early childhood landscape	5.1 Monitor and communicate progress and opportunities impacting early childhood efforts at the national and state levels	●
	5.2 Establish a clear and consistent policy framework to support equity-informed practices	●
	5.3 Cultivate a unified voice on key early childhood issues to support state and national efforts where values and priorities align	●



IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

The strategic plan provides an overview of priority areas and strategies needed to advance the association’s strategic priorities over the next 5 years. This plan should be treated as a living document. While the priority areas will always guide NASLEE’s work, the strategies and action steps will change over time as the organization grows and evolves. Across these five priority areas, the Executive Committee prioritized the following strategies to focus on during the first year of implementation. The next step for the Executive Committee will be to determine the specific action steps for each of these priorities, who will lead them, and what outcomes are expected.

Build and Sustain Membership	1.1 Establish a clearly defined and sustainable membership structure to engage and retain members
Why is it a priority?	

What are the specific action steps needed to implement this strategy?

What do we need to move forward? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What funding is needed to implement this action step? What is the current or potential funding stream for this effort?• Who will provide leadership for the implementation of these action steps?• What is the intended outcome? How will we know this effort has been successful?• Have we ensured equity is at the center of this effort?	
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Strengthen Communication and Collaboration

2.1 Improve bidirectional communication between members and NASLEE leadership

Why is it a priority?

What do we need to move forward?

- What funding is needed to implement this action step? What is the current or potential funding stream for this effort?
- Who will provide leadership for the implementation of this action step?
- What is the intended outcome? How will we know this effort has been successful?
- Have we ensured equity is at the center of this effort?

Strengthen Communication and Collaboration

2.2 Expand opportunities for connection and collaboration between members

Why is it a priority?

What do we need to move forward?

- What funding is needed to implement this action step? What is the current or potential funding stream for this effort?
- Who will provide leadership for the implementation of this action step?
- What is the intended outcome? How will we know this effort has been successful?
- Have we ensured equity is at the center of this effort?

Cultivate Learning and Knowledge-Building Opportunities

3.1 Establish priorities for professional learning that align with and support the overarching goals and values of the organization

Why is it a priority?

What are the specific action steps needed to implement this strategy?

What do we need to move forward?

- What funding is needed to implement this action step? What is the current or potential funding stream for this effort?
- Who will provide leadership for the implementation of this action step?
- What is the intended outcome? How will we know this effort has been successful?
- Have we ensured equity is at the center of this effort?

Cultivate Learning and Knowledge-Building Opportunities

3.2 Expand professional learning offerings to build the capacity of members

Why is it a priority?

What are the specific action steps needed to implement this strategy?

What do we need to move forward?

- What funding is needed to implement this action step? What is the current or potential funding stream for this effort?
- Who will provide leadership for the implementation of this action step?
- What is the intended outcome? How will we know this effort has been successful?
- Have we ensured equity is at the center of this effort?

Build Leadership Capacity

4.3 Promote and support early childhood state leaders of color through partnership with members and other national organizations

Why is it a priority?

What are the specific action steps needed to implement this strategy?

What do we need to move forward?

- What funding is needed to implement this action step? What is the current or potential funding stream for this effort?
- Who will provide leadership for the implementation of this action step?
- What is the intended outcome? How will we know this effort has been successful?
- Have we ensured equity is at the center of this effort?

**Enhance Connections
Between States and the
National Landscape**

**5.1 Monitor and communicate progress and opportunities
impacting early childhood efforts at the national and state
levels**

Why is it a priority?

What are the specific action steps needed to implement this strategy?

What do we need to move forward?

- What funding is needed to implement this action step? What is the current or potential funding stream for this effort?
- Who will provide leadership for the implementation of this action step?
- What is the intended outcome? How will we know this effort has been successful?
- Have we ensured equity is at the center of this effort?

**Enhance Connections
Between States and the
National Landscape**

5.2 Establish a clear and consistent policy framework to support equity-informed practices

Why is it a priority?

What are the specific action steps needed to implement this strategy?

What do we need to move forward?

- What funding is needed to implement this action step? What is the current or potential funding stream for this effort?
- Who will provide leadership for the implementation of this action step?
- What is the intended outcome? How will we know this effort has been successful?
- Have we ensured equity is at the center of this effort?

**Enhance Connections
Between States and the
National Landscape**

**5.3 Cultivate a unified voice on key early childhood issues
to support state and national efforts where values and
priorities align**

Why is it a priority?

What are the specific action steps needed to implement this strategy?

What do we need to move forward?

- What funding is needed to implement this action step? What is the current or potential funding stream for this effort?
- Who will provide leadership for the implementation of this action step?
- What is the intended outcome? How will we know this effort has been successful?
- Have we ensured equity is at the center of this effort?

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