Women's Agenda Department Action Plan
Department of Early Childhood
FY 2026–27 through FY 2028–29

Women's Agenda Vision

The Department of Early Childhood (DEC) leads the City's comprehensive early childhood strategy, advancing equitable access to early learning, strengthening the early educator workforce, and improving maternal and child health outcomes. DEC will partner with the Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) to advance the City's commitment to gender equity, family economic security, and an integrated early childhood system.

Department Priority Areas & Alignment with the San Francisco Women's Agenda

DEC's portfolio directly advances the Women's Agenda in the priority areas of Health and Economic Mobility and Security through targeted investments and system-building efforts. DEC reduces barriers disproportionately faced by women, particularly women of color, by expanding access to affordable childcare and early learning for San Franciscans, strengthening workforce compensation and career pathways for all, and improving maternal and infant health outcomes to support economic security and long-term opportunity.

Key Initiatives

A. **Early Learning for All (ELFA)**

ELFA expands access to publicly funded early learning by removing cost barriers and making high-quality care and early learning more available to families with young children. Children who attend high-quality early learning programs start kindergarten better prepared and better positioned for continued success in school and life.

ELFA also supports the whole family. Affordable, reliable care allows parents, including mothers balancing caregiving responsibilities, to enter and stay in the workforce, pursue education, and build long-term economic mobility.

B. **Workforce Initiative: Educator Pathways & Compensation**

This initiative advances a sustainable, professional early educator workforce by investing in competitive wages, higher-education pathways, and high-quality professional development. These investments strengthen workforce retention, stabilize the field, and reinforce wage equity in a sector historically undervalued and predominantly staffed by women.

C. **Strong Starts & Little Lift Initiative**

Strong Starts is the City's coordinated strategy to improve maternal, perinatal, and infant health outcomes by aligning early learning, public health, and family support systems. Through expanded wraparound supports that address the social drivers of health, Strong Starts works to ensure positive perinatal experiences, full-term and healthy births, and a strong first year of life. The initiative focuses on reducing disparities in preterm birth, infant mortality, and maternal morbidity,, including for but not limited to Black, American Indian, Latino/a, Pacific Islander, and immigrant families.

Little Lift is DEC's early relational health and maternal health initiative, designed to improve birth outcomes and early childhood well-being through trauma-informed supports, community connection, and financial stability. Little Lift includes DEC's leadership in the City's Guaranteed Income Program for birthing people, which provides unconditional, reliable cash to reduce toxic stress, improve engagement in prenatal care, and strengthen family autonomy during pregnancy and early infancy. By integrating guaranteed income with health supports, Little Lift advances equitable, healthy births and early development.

Goal 1: Expand Access to High-Quality Early Learning
FY 2026–29 | Ongoing

Build on ELFA's foundation by expanding enrollment in neighborhoods with unmet demand and increasing provider capacity in underserved areas. Expand access helps parents, especially mothers, enter and stay in the workforce or pursue education. DEC will use enrollment and access data to refine strategies and support long-term sustainability.

Annual Data Review

- Number of children enrolled in ELFA-funded early learning
- Percentage of ELFA parents, including single-parent and female-headed
- Percentage of new enrollment in neighborhoods with unmet demand

Goal 2: Economic Mobility and Security: Workforce Initiative: Educator Pathways & Compensation
FY 2026–29 | Ongoing

DEC will sustain educator compensation supports that recognize early educators' value and improve workforce recruitment and retention. DEC will deepen partnerships with City College of San Francisco, San Francisco State University, and other higher education institutions to expand access to coursework, credentials, and degrees for working

educators. Professional development and leadership pathways will help educators advance in their careers and prepare the next generation of early childhood teachers.

Annual Data Review

- Number of educators receiving compensation supports
- Average annual wage growth for educators receiving compensation supports
- Number of educators participating in higher education pathways, including those earning a new permit, credential, or degree.
- Number of teachers advancing into lead teacher, director, or leadership roles. The data review will include demographic information about the teachers.

Goal 3: Improve Maternal and Infant Health Through Economic Security and Holistic Support

Phase 1 | FY 2026–27: Planning & Alignment
Design the Guaranteed Income Program for birthing people, including eligibility, enrollment, and payment systems. Align cross-agency partners around shared perinatal health goals and, with research and public health partners, establish an evaluation framework and baseline measures.

Phase 2 | FY 2027–28: Implementation
Launch the Guaranteed Income Program and enroll participants. Integrate social, developmental, and maternal health supports within early childhood systems, connect participants to coordinated services, and strengthen referral pathways across agencies.

Phase 3 | FY 2028–29: Sustainability & Continuous Improvement
Use early evaluation findings and community input to refine program design, address health disparities, and inform long-term sustainability.

Annual Data Review

- Number of birthing people enrolled in the Guaranteed Income Program, including demographic information.
- Prenatal and postpartum care engagement among participants
- Participant-reported financial stress and ability to meet basic needs

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I certify that this report accurately reflects the department's implementation of its Women's Agenda Action Plan during the reporting period.

Department Head

Name: Ingrid X. Mezquita

Signature: _____ Date: 11/2/2026