

A Decade of Change: Progress and Possibility in
Early Childhood Workforce and Finance



TAKING ACTION TO TRANSFORM THE WORKFORCE: The Good Jobs Challenge for Child Care

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

The Early Educator Investment Collaborative (The Collaborative) is a coalition of national funders committed to transforming the early childhood education (ECE) profession. Our goal is to help all early educators achieve their full potential as professionals so that every child is prepared for success in school and in life.

Grounded in the landmark 2015 report *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation* and the 2018 report *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education*, The Collaborative works to address systemic issues in the field by advancing pay equity, strengthening and professionalizing the ECE workforce, aligning early childhood and K–12 systems, and supporting a well-funded system that serves all children—not just those whose families can afford to pay.

Marking the 10-year anniversary of *Transforming the Workforce*, this series of reflection papers invites the field to look back on the progress and lessons of the past decade and to consider what is needed for the decade ahead. Developed in partnership with national organizations, the series elevates diverse perspectives and sparks dialogue to inspire collective action toward a stronger, more sustainable early childhood system.



The perspectives shared in these papers are those of the individual authors. They do not necessarily represent the views of The Early Educator Investment Collaborative, which shares them to elevate diverse voices and spark dialogue across the field.

Editing and preparation of the reflection papers was supported by School Readiness Consulting (SRC), with copyediting by Editcetera (Cathy Cambron and Mary Carman Barbosa) and design by Hey Darlin' (Danielle Ness).

FROM LANDMARK REPORTS TO TODAY

In 2015, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine issued their influential report *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. With its primary focus on “those professionals who are responsible for regular, daily care and education of young children from birth through age 8,” the 706-page report offered a comprehensive analysis of the field, concluding with 13 recommendations in its call for action.¹ Within the report were many sobering observations, including these four:

- 1 “Many of the challenges discussed in this report are not new.”²
- 2 “Complex, long-term systems change will be required to implement its recommendations.”³
- 3 “Comprehensive implementation of these recommendations will not happen quickly and will not come cheaply.”⁴
- 4 “Collaborative efforts at the state and local levels” and “the collective insight, expertise, and action of many stakeholders will also be needed.”⁵

In the context of these four observations, Recommendation 12 of the report urged support for comprehensive state- and local-level efforts to transform the professional workforce for children.

Recommendation 12 from *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*

“Support comprehensive state- and local-level efforts to transform the professional workforce for children from birth through age 8.”⁶

This paper highlights a unique initiative in metropolitan Boston, Massachusetts, to design and implement an intersectional, cross-sector model to strengthen and sustain the child care workforce through a recruitment, training, upskilling, and job placement initiative called the Good Jobs Challenge (GJC).



GROUNDING DEFINITIONS

PARTNERSHIP	DEFINITION
Metropolitan Boston	This initiative served approximately 57 towns across a broad region surrounding Boston, Massachusetts. The core of the metropolitan area included the cities of Boston and Cambridge. Although Boston itself is geographically relatively small, the greater metropolitan area is large and densely populated.
Sourcing partners	In this initiative, sourcing partners identified and engaged potential applicants who may become early childhood educators or advance within the profession. Sourcing partners played a key role in building a strong pipeline of candidates for the GJC initiative.
Upskill	In addition to identifying candidates without prior experience as child care staff, GJC provided resources to help existing staff advance (upskill) their careers through additional training, education, and certifications.
Navigators	GJC partners utilized career navigators to support candidate success. These navigators assisted learners in identifying the skills and education they already possessed, as well as those they needed to develop, to advance in their child care careers.

OUR COMMITMENT IN ACTION

The Metropolitan Boston Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care

A 3-year federal program awarded 32 grants nationwide as part of the Good Jobs Challenge. The City of Boston, in collaboration with The CAYL Institute, received the only grant in the nation focused on the child care sector. The challenge was defined by two ambitious objectives:

1. Recruiting, training, upskilling, and placing participants in 850 child care jobs
2. Designing and implementing a child care workforce sourcing, development, and employment system to support the training and placement efforts



About the Good Jobs Challenge Grant

In July 2021, the second summer of COVID-19, the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) launched the **Good Jobs Challenge (GJC)**, a \$500 million grant program funded by the American Rescue Plan Act. The GJC was intended to support dual purposes:

1. Provide American workers with access to “good jobs,” with a focus on underserved communities that are most likely to struggle with low wages, inadequate benefits, and the other challenges of low-quality jobs.
2. Strengthen regional workforce training systems through the sectoral partnerships driven by employer demand and engagement.⁷

Through this initiative, The CAYL Institute sought to integrate professional learning, higher education, child care employers, and workforce development agencies to demonstrate an intersectoral system that would increase compensation.

Notably, to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, The CAYL Institute’s approach engaged in collaboration that was both

- **intersectional** (related to interconnected categories like workforce, child care, and economic development) and
- **cross-sectoral** (related to distinct sectors such as employers/businesses, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and government).

The CAYL Institute’s initiative intended to leverage systems-level approaches to fill gaps and add distinctive value to traditional workforce and economic development efforts that typically exist in disconnected silos. Through widespread collaboration among staff roles in various organizations, sectors, and communities, the initiative aimed to lay the groundwork for transformative change that is intersectional in nature.

Specifically, The CAYL Institute collaborated with six institutions of higher education, six sourcing and training partners, three family child care (FCC) partners, and 85 employer partners (private, nonprofit, and government-sponsored) to achieve key goals related to recruitment, retention, upskilling, and job placement.

Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care goals	Outcomes anticipated by June 2025
<p>Outcome 1: 500 new teachers</p>	<p>We expect 520 individuals to be hired and receive training to become child care teachers.</p>
<p>Outcome 2: 200 upskilled educators</p>	<p>We expect 223 individuals to qualify to become lead teachers or directors.</p>
<p>Outcome 3: 100 new FCC educators/owners</p>	<p>We expect 90 individuals to become new licensed FCC business owners.</p>
<p>Outcome 4: 50 upskilled FCCs</p>	<p>We expect 96 individuals to complete business training or achieve their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.</p>

Good Jobs Challenge project intentions	Outcomes anticipated by June 2025
<p>Project intention: Engage 50 employers</p>	<p>Letters of commitment were signed by 79 employer partner organizations, which include both single-site and multi-site programs.</p>
<p>Project intention: Improve compensation for the workforce</p>	<p>Preliminary data show that employers are paying (at a minimum) \$1–\$2 per hour above standard area rates for new assistant teachers.</p>
<p>Project intention: Emphasize opportunities for women, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, immigrants, and other underrepresented populations</p>	<p>Most participants (71%) enrolled were women of color. Data on immigration status and LGBTQ+ status were not collected.</p>

In addition to these outcomes, we worked to shift the mental model of early childhood education (ECE) staff recruitment and training by combining many innovative strategies used in other workforce and economic development initiatives. For example, our model

- Integrated training new child care employees, supported career advancement through upskilling opportunities, and assisted individuals in becoming new FCC owners
- Encouraged employers to meet and strive to exceed minimum salary and benefit requirements and recognize the value of hiring staff who have received training
- Centered practitioner transformation through onboarding and training, and supported it with mentorship that built knowledge and skill sets needed by child care educators
- Utilized multiple pathways to enter and advance in the early childhood field
- Supported individuals for whom English is not their primary language and was responsive to neighborhood/community needs
- Invited employers and sourcing partners to the community of practice to explore best practices in hiring, onboarding, and supporting staff



The Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care initiative shares a common vision with the *Transforming the Workforce* report in two significant ways:

1. An intention to recruit and upskill members of a profession with long-standing staffing challenges—challenges that, since 2015, have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic⁸
2. A strong focus on collaborative efforts among multiple partners

BUILDING MOMENTUM TOWARD THE FUTURE

The metropolitan Boston ECE landscape is similar to that in many communities across the nation. As documented in a 2023 report on Boston's ECE sector:

- Between 2017 and 2022, licensed child care supply trends indicated that Boston experienced a net loss of 15% of its child care programs, a trend driven by a 20% decline in FCC providers when examining only licensed child care supply, excluding school-based seats.
- By 2021, Massachusetts had about 5,000 fewer early childhood educators than before the pandemic.
- By 2021, Boston had lost 13% of its licensed child care programs, primarily driven by the closures of FCC programs.
- Statewide, the proportion of center-based providers unable to serve their full capacity had increased from 28% to 35% since spring 2022, and FCC capacity remained below pre-pandemic levels.
- By 2022, Boston had an average access gap of 39% for children from birth to age 5.⁹

Addressing the workforce supply needs of the profession requires focused attention on both recruitment and the retention of existing staff as well as the upskilling of existing early childhood educators. The CAYL Institute recognized that, despite the abundance of training programs aimed at the child care workforce, too often, efforts focus narrowly on training alone, overlooking the broader cross-sector systemic barriers that aspiring and current child care professionals face: access to higher education, employer engagement, compensation tied to professional advancement, and workforce development pathways.

The need for collaboration is gaining momentum in Boston, although significant silos, similar to those across the United States, continue to exist. For example, even in the face of its widespread child care challenge, and while Boston does have a highly regarded mixed-delivery “universal prekindergarten” (UPK) program led by the public schools,¹⁰ data show that “FCC and center-based programs made up 62% of all formal child care slots for children 0–5 in Boston.”¹¹

As a result of collaborative work by sectoral partners, activities for the Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care initiative included targeted recruitment efforts by sourcing partners, candidate support by navigators or coaches, employer identification of hiring needs, and strategically aligned training support by institutions of higher education.



The data reveal considerable success in training, upskilling, and placing staff in employment opportunities (see table on page 5 above). Indeed, by the grant’s end in fall 2025, it is anticipated that the collaborating sectors, with The CAYL Institute as the backbone organization, will do the following:

- Model a cross-sectional, government-sponsored approach to transforming the workforce
- Exceed its goal of hiring and upskilling 850 early childhood educators
- Contribute to sustaining the diversity of the workforce, a frequently mentioned concern for the field
- Achieve modest compensation increases for participants
- Address concerns about the decline in licensed FCC homes

Alignment of Good Jobs Challenge With *Transforming the Workforce*

As The CAYL Institute achieved its numerical goals to expand the child care workforce, further analysis of the intersectional, cross-sector model used is essential to understand who was served by the collaboration and how well they were served. This additional analysis is based on a stakeholder engagement process that included the following:

- Interviews with The CAYL Institute’s partners, including staff from sourcing partners, institutions of higher education, employers, the Boston Office of Workforce Development, and the Boston Department of Early Childhood Education
- Focus groups with Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care participants associated with various pathways and programs, including three Spanish-speaking focus groups (we offered a variety of approaches, including conducting focus groups virtually or on-site, by partner, embedded in classrooms, or during evening hours)
- A survey of all The CAYL Institute’s program participants

The nine lessons learned from stakeholder engagement have direct reference to the *Transforming the Workforce* blueprint:

Lesson From Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care	Reference in <i>Transforming the Workforce</i>
<p>1 The cost of the Boston initiative, as well as its unmet needs, reinforced concerns about the actual costs of transforming the workforce.</p>	<p>“Significant mobilization of resources will be required, and therefore assessments of resource needs, investments from government at all levels and from nongovernmental sources, and financing innovations will all be important.”¹²</p>

The Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care grant was funded at almost \$8 million to successfully recruit, train, upskill, and place 850 staff. Still, there were many unmet and unfunded needs:

- Language-accessible training and coursework in vernaculars other than Spanish
- Pre-training on-ramp services such as digital literacy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support, and information about how to navigate college

- Post-program support, including tuition-free guidance and support to pursue higher education pathways or other certifications

Transforming the Workforce advises that implementing the blueprint recommendations will not happen quickly and will not come cheaply.

Lesson From Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care	Reference in <i>Transforming the Workforce</i>
<p>2 Funding was a decisive motivator for participants who enter or upskill in this profession.</p>	<p>“Many interviewees identified funding as a key lever for improving access to professional learning supports. Grants, scholarships, and tuition and loan forgiveness programs are key to making formal coursework in a higher education setting more accessible.”¹³</p>

Ninety-nine percent of GJC survey respondents indicated that funding for the training they received was a determining factor in their participation. Seventy-nine percent of GJC participants would not have taken the training without the funding, and 20% would have taken longer to enroll without this funding.

The Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care funding supports included:

- Tuition
- General case management, including mentoring and coaching support
- One-on-one support to address challenges and accountability
- Enrollment support, including review of previous credentials, obtaining domestic/foreign transcripts, and navigating online registration systems
- Academic resources, including technology, textbooks, tutoring, disability support, and nonfaculty academic coaching
- Referrals to mitigate financial challenges such as housing, utility/fuel/ food/transportation assistance, and child care
- Wraparound supports to assist with training completions, such as providing computers, life skills / soft skills support, ESOL support, career services and learning materials, support, and information about how to navigate college



Lesson From Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care	Reference in <i>Transforming the Workforce</i>
<p>3 Relationships were at the core of participant success.</p>	<p>“In addition to collaboration and coordination among professionals within sectors, connections are necessary among professionals across sectors, including information and data sharing, handoffs, referrals, case management, and shared professional learning.”¹⁴</p>

The invisible “human infrastructure” that provided critical support to Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care participants would need to be considered in scaling ongoing career pathways and workforce development programs. With these relationships in place, most participants stated that these training opportunities have been life-changing for them.

Several roles emerged through the training programs that provided high value to training participants while simultaneously creating new career opportunities for the individuals in those positions. Participants identified these sectoral partner roles—navigators, coaches, and sourcing partners—as powerful drivers of their success.

“
Wouldn’t have gotten through it without her [a navigator].
– PARTICIPANT

Lesson From Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care	Reference in <i>Transforming the Workforce</i>
<p>4 Understanding participants’ motivation to enter the field was critical.</p>	<p>Chapter 11 of <i>Transforming the Workforce</i> explores the work environment, the status and well-being of educators, staffing structures and career advancement pathways, retention, and health and well-being.¹⁵</p>

GJC survey participants reported that working with children is the strongest appeal of joining this profession. Many participants are following in the footsteps of family and friends or continuing careers they began in their home country. This motivation, along with the promise of training and support, proved to be a more significant motivator than wages or benefits.

Transforming the workforce would recognize that interest in child care is foundational but insufficient for success in the ECE workforce. Yet, efforts to expand the workforce can build upon this primary motivation as participants acquire a deeper understanding of the profession. Indeed, participants themselves are often an untapped resource that could be better leveraged in innovative recruitment strategies, including ambassador and referral approaches.

Building on those motivations, The CAYL Institute also found that most GJC survey respondents chose their program to advance their careers (39%), increase their pay (24%), or improve their skills (24%).

“
I learned how to create engaging, age-appropriate learning experiences while also supporting emotional and behavioral growth. This has helped me build stronger connections with children and support their early development in a meaningful, intentional way.
– PARTICIPANT

Perpetual challenges related to wages, working conditions, and growth opportunities continue to influence participants' desire to stay in the field. Notably, COVID-related changes in state policy also impacted decisions to seek training.



I was certified by the state with an online course during COVID. The state changed the requirements but didn't grandfather those who took the course during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, I was no longer considered certified and had to take this course.

- PARTICIPANT

Lesson From Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care	Reference in <i>Transforming the Workforce</i>
<p>5 Intentionality created opportunities to sustain a diverse workforce.</p>	<p>Among other factors, “research suggests that effective professional learning for instructional practices has several key features including that it ... addresses equity and diversity concerns in access to and participation in professional learning.”¹⁶</p>

Many critiques of efforts to transform the workforce have raised concerns that rising workforce qualifications could lead to a “whitening” of the diversity in the ECE workforce.

In alignment with the priorities of The CAYL Institute’s Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care, the majority of participants were women of color. Still, there were often complicating factors:

- In Boston, a city of immigrants, sourcing partners told us that they engaged with many women immigrants who are “often well educated in their home country and have to come here and restart ... which they find frustrating.”
- While the majority of participants were English or Spanish speakers, there was interest in supporting Amharic-speaking and Haitian Creole-speaking recruits. “When the language is more diverse in terms of ESL speakers ... it makes the [language barrier] problem harder to solve.”

Lesson From Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care	Reference in <i>Transforming the Workforce</i>
<p>6 Cross-sector collaboration was effective for recruiting, upskilling, and placing staff.</p>	<p>Appendix F of <i>Transforming the Workforce</i> provides examples of references, tools, and resources for best practices in implementing collaborative systems change.¹⁷</p>

The quality of the institutional partnerships between sourcing partners, institutions of higher education, employers, and the backbone organization was critical to every aspect of this work. Effective partnerships were evident in designing training programs to meet participants' needs, as well as in providing coordinated

support to help participants succeed in the programs and gain employment. Throughout this initiative, new connections among sectors, as well as existing networks, became crucial for sharing information and data, resolving participant challenges, and facilitating job placement.

Sourcing partners evolved their participant screening practices to align with what they observed as key barriers to success: capacity and support to navigate life challenges, baseline language and technology skills, responsiveness to communication, enthusiasm about learning beyond compliance, and persistence in navigating bureaucracy with support. The recruits' strong interest in the field, standing alone, could not overcome institutional and linguistic barriers, such as the skills, credentials, and fluency in systems needed for success. Indeed, screening practices were identified as a "shared problem of practice" among sectoral partners.

A Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care Community of Practice for employers facilitated dialogue about recruiting, onboarding, and retaining staff. While employers in the child care sector quickly began shifting their attention from recruitment to retention, they continued to struggle with the challenges of developing a workplace that provides opportunities for growth and supportive relationships.

Lesson From Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care	Reference in <i>Transforming the Workforce</i>
7 The capacity and effectiveness of institutions of higher education were leveraged with support from other sectoral partners.	Recommendation 5b: "Institutions of higher education should work with local practice communities to contribute a practice-based perspective to the design of higher education programs; to facilitate cross-institutional relationships that bolster the quality, availability, and accessibility of programs; and to facilitate the identification of appropriate and diverse field placements." ¹⁸

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) play a vital role in building the competencies of the early childhood workforce—a role that the *Transforming the Workforce* report seeks to strengthen. The Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care actively collaborated with education partners to offer and schedule specific coursework that participants needed.

For many participants—especially those with less experience in higher education—the individualized coaching or navigator support they received from dedicated staff at sourcing agencies was critical to navigating IHEs' processes, addressing technology and language barriers, and persevering despite personal obstacles. In many ways, these coaches and navigators provided the types of support that degree-seeking students typically receive from a variety of staff at IHEs, such as advisors, counselors, and student help centers.



Because it goes through [a sourcing partner], then through [a] college, there were some miscommunications with expectations and registration. They were eventually worked out.

– COLLABORATOR

Lesson From Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care	Reference in <i>Transforming the Workforce</i>
<p>8 Adult learning principles were valued, but they were not always evident in practice.</p>	<p>“Adjust the adult working environment to allow space for more ongoing practice supports like mentoring, coaching, and reflective practice to take place in a meaningful way.”¹⁹</p>

Participants reported success with individual support and adult learning experiences that were not always part of the formal design of the training experience. For example, participants desired but did not always have training experiences that included structured goal setting and reflection, flexible pacing, opportunities to apply knowledge to their current context, and learning with others.

Meanwhile, many of the performance tasks that have become common in traditional higher education, primarily through the use of learning management systems, may not be a good fit for these adult learners.



Technology and completing work in an appropriate manner (plagiarism, AI tools) ... becomes more profound at the non-degree level when students don't understand the expectations of an online student.

– IHE PARTNER



Some of this is for compliance—it's always a good reminder. But some of this information I've never been exposed to before, and it's helping me think about it more deeply.

– PARTICIPANT

Lesson From Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care	Reference in <i>Transforming the Workforce</i>
<p>9 FCC business growth opportunities were highly valued.</p>	<p>“Because family childcare educators are often owners of their own business, work long hours, and do not have someone to substitute for them, they face significant barriers in accessing trainings and workshops even when they are made available. Additionally, the content of trainings are often redundant and do not necessarily build on each other. For the most part, family childcare educators are the most isolated of their peers and thus do not have access to the ‘built in’ professional supports that come with working with other educators in a center-based setting.”²⁰</p>

FCC providers face unique professional and personal challenges that contribute to burnout, turnover, and isolation, and may serve as barriers to training and success. As a result, mentoring became a crucial component of the FCC model, particularly because it can be provided in the participant's primary language.

Most participants were pursuing FCC licensing or business training for several reasons, including desires to be their own boss, to create pathways to employ others (family and friends), and to scale services for children who need them.

Participants greatly benefited from accessible, practical training that builds their capacity as small business owners and builds community with peers.

“

This training has helped me so well that, when I went to see my accountant to complete my taxes, I was so well organized with all my documents—receipts, invoices, expenses, etc. I even took a portfolio. He was so impressed that he asked me what was going on. I explained to him, “I was able to take a series of business training courses, and they taught me about how to take care of my finances.

– PARTICIPANT

“

Training time demands are particularly challenging for FCC providers. “As an FCC provider, I have limited time to do the training because I am a full-time teacher who works over 55 hours a week and a student at the same time.”

– PARTICIPANT



WHAT STILL STANDS IN THE WAY

The Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care initiative has demonstrated that the field can attract a diverse ECE staff by utilizing targeted financial resources and community collaboration. As workforce challenges persist, The CAYL Institute suggests three considerations from the Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care to address what still stands in the way of progress.

1 Recruitment

The Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care recruitment efforts succeeded by leveraging social media and community events, along with the initiative’s engagement with employers. Also effective was the initiative’s ability to tap into candidates’ passion for working with children—often rooted in their cultural traditions—and align it with meaningful career paths that reflect their values. In this way, word of mouth and community connections, as well as trust and credibility, played important roles.



To address issues that still stand in the way of effective recruitment, the field must do the following:

- Increase wages
- Incentivize and support peer recruitment roles with stipends, leadership development, and outreach tools to expand reach and trust; the field can connect with community engagement teams or organizations serving targeted populations
- Engage workforce development, municipal, and business sectors to amplify recruitment efforts, celebrate training milestones, offer ongoing support, collectively impact goals, and develop a coordinated branding and communications campaign to elevate early childhood careers as “good jobs” and unify messaging across partners
- Utilize state or community data strategically to target outreach where workforce gaps and candidate readiness intersect

2 Educator-centric Training Systems

The Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care demonstrated that training is most effective when paired with strong, sustained support systems and designed with the realities of working adults in mind. Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care graduates arrived with confidence, applied skills, support networks, and realistic expectations about the job.

To address issues that still stand in the way of educator-centric training systems, the field must do the following:

- Adopt recruitment and screening approaches that help participants, sourcing partners, and higher education better assess personal and professional readiness, not just interest
- Incentivize training programs designed for working adults with flexible scheduling, embedded foundational skills support, peer learning, and relevant, applied learning
- Define “Day 1 readiness”—including job awareness, soft skills, personal mindsets, support systems, and executive functioning skills—and build support into training and education pathways to develop these skills
- Formalize and embed critical support roles such as coaching, academic support, navigation, and mentoring as core, funded components of all workforce initiatives, including IHE’s course-based pathways for non-degree students
- Expand dual-learning strategies that support participants to conduct their training in their preferred learning language, while simultaneously improving their English skills for the world of work
- Sustain structured peer learning and professional network communities beyond training, especially for FCC providers, to support retention and continued growth



3 Coordinating Infrastructure

A thriving early childhood workforce requires more than isolated programs; it needs a shared system for recruitment, training, employer engagement, and ongoing support. The Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care demonstrated that having entities in place to coordinate recruitment, liaise with employers, and design and manage training pipelines created significant efficiencies and better outcomes.

To address issues that still stand in the way, the field must do the following:

- Explore options to support and sustain a coordinating regional or statewide infrastructure, which should ensure that multiple organizations can access and contribute to it, with a “no wrong door” approach for candidates that reduces competition among partners

SHAPING THE NEXT DECADE

The *Transforming the Workforce* report advises:

“Appropriate income, resources, support, and opportunities for career development are essential for bringing excellent candidates into the workforce, retaining them as they further develop their knowledge and skills, and ensuring that they advance their knowledge and skills through professional learning opportunities.”²¹

The *Transforming the Workforce* report further concluded that “the early care and education workforce is at risk financially, emotionally, and physically, subject to a vicious cycle of inadequate resources, low qualification expectations, low education levels, and low wages that is difficult to break.”²²

As predicted by the *Transforming the Workforce* report, many of the issues addressed by the Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care, while complex, are not new, easy to fix, or inexpensive to resolve. Nevertheless, the Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care’s intersectional, cross-sector approach successfully leveraged resources and skills for the benefit of participants, improved the effectiveness of the services delivered, delivered the promised 850 workforce additions, and tackled the complex challenge of expanding the ECE workforce in metropolitan Boston, a major urban community.

Follow-up efforts could include retention studies, examination of cross-sector collaboration strategies, and analysis of the impact of business skills training on FCC providers.



STRATEGIES TO DRIVE CHANGE

Overall, the ongoing need to take action and call for change must include the following:

- 1. REFORMING** higher education systems to make them more responsive to diverse and nontraditional students
- 2. CREATING** intersectional, cross-sector partnerships rather than relying on training alone
- 3. FUNDING** workforce pathways that more comprehensively address staff needs

The Good Jobs Challenge–Child Care initiative envisioned and successfully demonstrated the viability of a cross-sectoral model in creating a “self-perpetuating cycle of excellence” as envisioned in the *Transforming the Workforce* report in 2015.²³ These preliminary accomplishments point to an optimistic path forward for creating and implementing a cross-system model that can strengthen and sustain the ECE workforce.

EXPLORE THE SERIES

This document is part of a series of opinion papers developed to mark the 10-year anniversary of Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation and the subsequent report on financing, Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education. The series was created to reflect on the impact of these landmark reports, analyze the current state of the early childhood workforce and financing, and amplify diverse perspectives on challenges, progress, and opportunities shaping the field.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

READ

A DECADE OF CHANGE: PROGRESS AND POSSIBILITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE AND FINANCE OVERVIEW

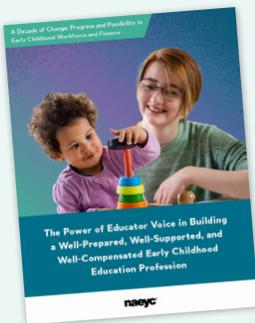


EARLY EDUCATOR INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE

EXPLORE

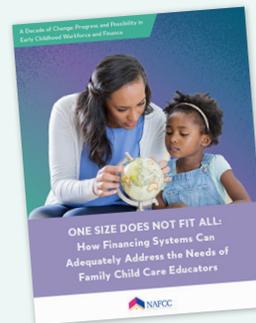
THE EARLY EDUCATOR INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE'S A DECADE OF CHANGE: PROGRESS AND POSSIBILITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE AND FINANCE SERIES

READ THE REST OF THE SERIES:



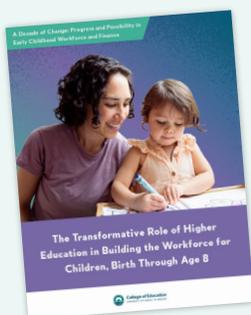
DOWNLOAD

THE POWER OF EDUCATOR VOICE IN BUILDING A WELL-PREPARED, WELL-SUPPORTED, AND WELL-COMPENSATED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROFESSION



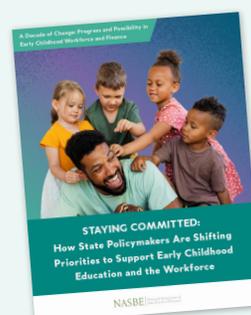
DOWNLOAD

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL: HOW FINANCING SYSTEMS CAN ADEQUATELY ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF FAMILY CHILD CARE EDUCATORS



DOWNLOAD

THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN BUILDING THE WORKFORCE FOR CHILDREN, BIRTH THROUGH AGE 8



DOWNLOAD

STAYING COMMITTED: HOW POLICYMAKERS ARE SHIFTING PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

ENDNOTES

- 1 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 3.
- 2 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 15.
- 3 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 5.
- 4 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 15.
- 5 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 13.
- 6 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, pp. 12, 550–552.
- 7 U.S. Economic Development Administration (n.d.).
- 8 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 1.
- 9 Boston Opportunity Agenda & Birth to Eight Collaborative. (2023).
- 10 Boston Public Schools Department of Early Childhood. (n.d.).
- 11 Boston Opportunity Agenda & Birth to Eight Collaborative. (2023).
- 12 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 492. See also “Appendix G: Funding and Financing Examples,” pp. 667–689.
- 13 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 631.
- 14 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 229.
- 15 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press.
- 16 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, pp. 380–383. See also commentary on the diversity of faculty and students.
- 17 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, pp. 667–676.
- 18 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 526.
- 19 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, pp. 631–632.
- 20 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, pp. 615–616.
- 21 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 478.

22 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 478.

23 Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press, p. 15.

OTHER RESOURCES CONSULTED FOR THIS PUBLICATION

Boston Opportunity Agenda and Birth to Eight Collaborative. (2023, May 3). *(Re)building Boston's early education and care sector: Supply, affordability and quality needed*. The Boston Foundation. <https://www.tbf.org/news-and-insights/reports/2023/may/rebuilding-bostons-early-education-and-care-sector-2023>

Boston Public Schools Department of Early Childhood. (n.d.). *About Boston Universal Pre-K*. Focus on Early Learning. Retrieved July 23, 2025, from <https://www.bpsearlylearning.org/boston-upk>

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. (2025, March 12). *Five years after COVID-19, a struggling child care workforce faces new threats* [Press release]. UC Berkeley. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/press-release/five-years-after-covid-19-a-struggling-child-care-workforce-faces-new-threats/>

Cook, K. D. (2025, May 4). *Shaping the future of early childhood research policy*. Boston University Wheelock College of Education & Human Development. <https://www.bu.edu/wheelock/news/articles/2025/shaping-the-future-of-early-childhood-research-policy/>

Harrington, K., Capote, A., Schuster, L., & Kallick, D. D. (2024, February 14). *Global Greater Boston: Immigrants in a changing region*. Boston Indicators and Immigration Research Initiative. <https://www.bostonindicators.org/reports/report-detail-pages/global-greater-boston>

Institute of Medicine & National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/19401/transforming-the-workforce-for-children-birth-through-age-8-a>

U.S. Economic Development Administration. (n.d.). *Good Jobs Challenge*. U.S. Department of Commerce. <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/good-jobs-challenge>

