The Arizona Professional Development Roadmap for the Early Care and Education Workforce

October 2024

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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY
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FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction

The Challenge

Quality early care and education (ECE) is essential for the healthy development of young children, supporting cognitive, social, and emotional growth during their most formative years. For families in Arizona, access to high-quality ECE allows parents to work or pursue education, contributing to both family stability and the state's economy. High-quality ECE offers enriching and developmentally appropriate experiences for all children. Achieving quality depends on a well-trained, well-educated, and highly valued ECE workforce. As in most states, the ECE workforce in Arizona remains undervalued and under-resourced and is often not recognized as a profession, making it difficult to recruit and retain professionals. This historic undervaluing also has left ECE professionals struggling to understand available career pathways within the field, know how to shape their own professional pathway, and access and use resources that will help them achieve their professional goals.

Roadmap Vision:

An integrated early care and education professional development system that supports and empowers a skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and thriving workforce.

The Solution

Arizona has an opportunity to forge a common path forward and change this reality. The *Arizona Professional Development Roadmap for the Early Care and Education Workforce* articulates this way forward. The roadmap outlines the goals and strategies needed to **ensure the state has an integrated ECE professional development system that supports and empowers a skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and thriving workforce.** The roadmap serves as a guide to align resources, timelines, and priorities across the many committed stakeholders in Arizona and will support sustained focus on the overall vision for the ECE workforce while allowing for flexibility and adjustment as conditions change. Strengthening the ECE professional development system through roadmap implementation will better support the existing ECE workforce and help generate a sustainable talent pipeline for the future.

Key Terms

What is an "ECE professional"?

Individuals

- Working directly with young children ages birth to 12 in centers, homes, and schools, and their families, and/or
- Working on behalf of young children (in agencies, organizations, institutions of higher education, etc.)

with a primary mission of supporting children's development and learning.

Why is the focus on ages birth to 12?

The need for high-quality care doesn't end when children begin kindergarten. The roadmap includes professionals serving children ages birth to 12 to ensure resources and supports are available to out-of-school-time professionals, too, a group of educators who are often left out of the workforce conversation but play a critical role.

What is "professional development" (PD)?

A continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and their families. These opportunities lead to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and outlook of early education professionals. Professional development encompasses the categories of education, training, and technical assistance.

What is "early care and education professional development system"?

A set of organized programs, resources, and supports designed to help ECE professionals grow and improve in their careers. It includes the training, education, and opportunities for learning that help ECE professionals develop the skills and knowledge they need to effectively support young children's development and learning.

What is the "ECE workforce"?

The Early Care and Education (ECE) workforce includes all the people who work with or support the care and education of young children, from birth to age 12.

About the Roadmap

Who Created the Roadmap?

Early care and education organizations in Arizona first created a professional development framework in 2013, *Building Arizona's Early Childhood Professional Development System: System Roadmap and Two-Year Strategic Plan*. The plan was updated in 2018 as part of First Things First's 2018-2022 strategic plan. Much has changed in Arizona since these documents were published, including a global pandemic that showed the critical role early care and education plays in America's economic stability. In addition, three important national publications came out since Arizona's 2013 plan. In 2015, the Institutes of Medicine released *Transforming the Workforce for*

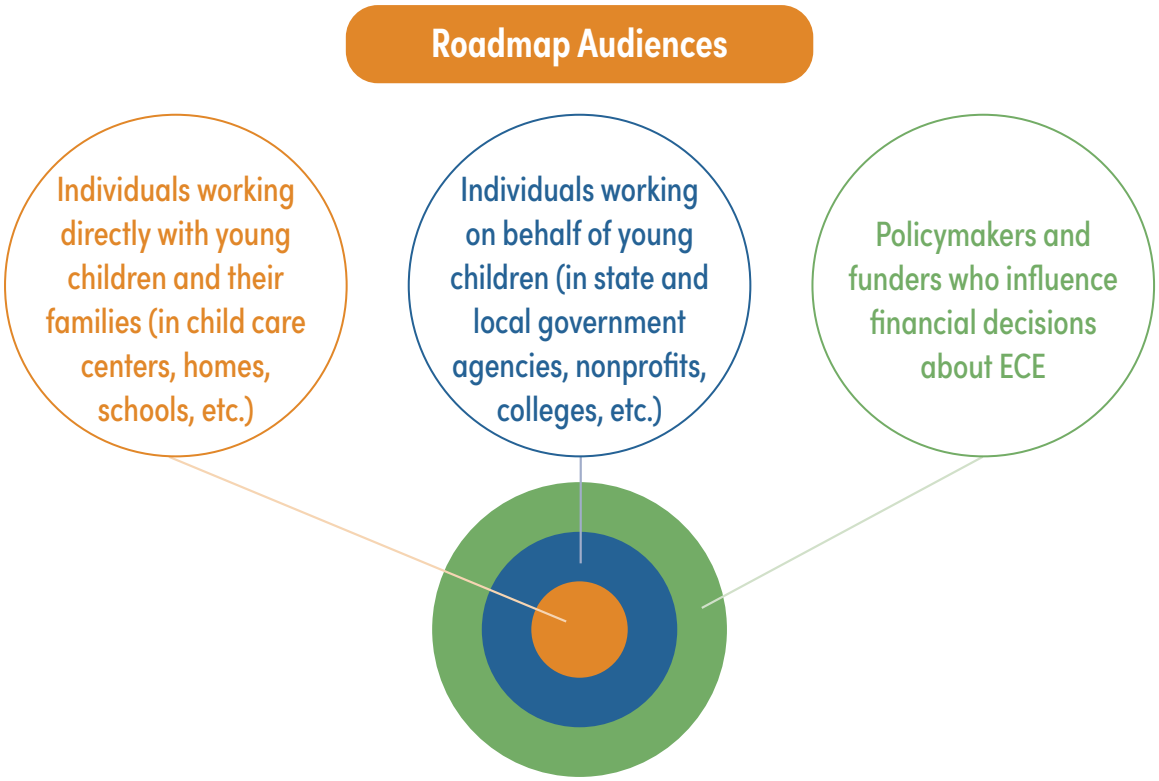
Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation containing a blueprint for action and 13 recommendations for policy and practice to improve outcomes for children. In 2016, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) released, *Build It Better: Indicators of Progress to Support Integrated Early Childhood Professional Development Systems*, outlining four core principles and six policy areas for ECE professional development (PD). In 2020, ECE experts and advocates around the country, led by NAEYC within its Power to the Profession initiative, published the *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*, which reflects many of the concepts in the 2016 report.

To reflect the shifting realities of Arizona's ECE system and updated national best practices, and to be responsive to federal Child Care & Development Block Grant requirements, in 2023 leaders within the four state agencies charged with overseeing ECE in Arizona (the Department of Economic Security, Department of Education, Department of Health Services, and First Things First) set out to create a new PD roadmap for the next three years (2025-2027). A statewide group of ECE experts, the Professional Development Advisory Committee, or PDAC, came together in 2023 to create a new PD roadmap (A list of PDAC members who contributed to the roadmap can be found in Appendix A. Many other Arizonans with expertise and passion for ECE also contributed ideas and information). PDAC is facilitated by long-time ECE professional development partner Central Arizona College. PDAC chose to use Build it Better and the Unifying Framework to guide the creation of Arizona's new PD roadmap because Arizona ECE experts historically have followed NAEYC's lead as the national expert in early care and education policy and system building. This document, *A Roadmap for Professional Development of the Early Care and Education Workforce in Arizona,* captures the resulting vision, goals, and strategies for Arizona's ECE PD system.

Who Should Use the Roadmap?

This roadmap is for everyone who cares about early care and education! There are multiple audiences for this roadmap, shown in the visual on page 4.

- The people working daily with young children and families are at the center of this roadmap—it is made to support them.
- The roadmap will be most relevant and useful to individuals who work with and on behalf of young children and who support individual educators/providers. These individuals, often based in government agencies, community programs, and nonprofits, focus much of their time on building and managing the systems that affect ECE. They will ensure the roadmap is implemented according to the vision and principles set forth in this document.
- Those who influence funding for the ECE PD system--policymakers and private philanthropic organizations—need this roadmap to understand Arizona's vision for a strong ECE PD system and where the need for investment is greatest.



What is in the Roadmap?

The roadmap is divided into **seven components, each with its own goal** (see page 8), based on the policy areas outlined in NAEYC's *Build it Better* and the *Unifying Framework* recommendations. Each component has a set of strategies that will support progress toward the goal. Key terms used throughout the roadmap can be found in the Glossary in Appendix B. Most components include a box highlighting another state's efforts within this component; these are included to show other states' approaches and spark ideas for Arizona.

There are many overlaps and similarities across the components, and all the strategies work together over time to achieve the collective goals. Some strategies must be done in a specific order—one thing cannot happen until another thing does—but in most cases, individual strategies do not have to be completed before others can begin. Instead, the work can and should happen at the same time to make progress.

Deciding the "how"—What tasks go into each strategy? Who will do them? When?—is the role of PDAC starting in late 2024 (see the Governance Component). Thus, that information is not in this roadmap.

How Do I Use the Roadmap?

If you are working directly with children ages 0-12 (or plan to soon):

The roadmap will help you understand how ECE experts in the state of Arizona are thinking about making positive change and supporting your professional growth. Click here to view resources to help you plan for your future in the ECE workforce.

If you are an ECE program owner or director:

The roadmap will give you a sense for where state ECE experts want to go when it comes to supporting your and your staff's professional growth. You may want to pay special attention to the Professional Standards and Career Pathways sections, which describe ideas for tools and activities that will directly support you and your organization. Click here to view resources to help you plan your future quality improvements *and* support for your staff.

If you work at the ECE system level in a government or tribal agency or nonprofit organization:

The roadmap will help you understand how your agency can become involved in the work of PDAC and bring the roadmap to life using your unique expertise.

If you work at a college or university:

The roadmap will help you identify ways your institution can support the strategies and the workforce. Pay special attention to Career Pathways, where there is a dedicated strategy for higher education partners.

If you're a parent or caregiver of young children:

The roadmap will help you understand how ECE experts in the state of Arizona are planning to support the people caring for and educating your children. Check this website often for updates on roadmap progress and ways you can offer feedback.

If you're a policy advocate:

The roadmap will help you identify opportunities to engage policymakers and elected officials in supporting implementation of the strategies, and perhaps most importantly, to push for sustained public investment in Arizona's ECE system.

If you're a policymaker:

The roadmap will help you understand the needs of the ECE workforce and create and pass legislation, propose rules, and/or identify funding that supports the "workforce behind the workforce"—the professionals who ensure parents of young children can enter and remain in the workforce and contribute to the economic success of Arizona.

If none of these apply but you really care about the success of Arizona's young children:

Read the roadmap and see what jumps out to you as areas of interest or where your personal skills and expertise could contribute to success. Then, reach out to PDAC to find out how you can become engaged in this important work.

Roadmap Principles

In developing the roadmap, PDAC identified the following five key principles or values that need to be present in every part of this work, from roadmap creation to implementation.

1. **Quality.** Connect ECE professionals to quality professional development that supports the creation of and progress along an intentional career pathway. ECE professionals deserve access to professional development that meets high standards and moves them forward on their own chosen path. Professional development should be delivered by highly qualified instructors; be based on evidence and research; reflect the context in which ECE professionals live and work; be coupled with practice-based support; and align with the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Knowledge and Competencies. These are key elements of quality professional development, but part of the work of implementing the roadmap entails developing and widely sharing a comprehensive definition of "quality professional development" (see page 16).

2. **Diversity.** Prioritize the accessibility, relevance, and usefulness of professional development for ECE professionals from diverse backgrounds, lived experiences, and levels of education. Arizona's ECE professionals have varied personal and professional backgrounds and experiences that influence their work and career goals. PD must reflect this diversity in terms of the content, who delivers it, and how people find and use it.

3. **Inclusivity.** Ensure all ECE professionals feel welcome and valued. Regardless of one's background, experience, education, or where they care for children, every ECE professional is playing a critical role in nurturing and educating the next generation and should know they are important and appreciated. Every ECE professional comes into the field with valuable skills, experiences, and perspectives that can be cultivated and developed through quality PD.

4. **Educator-centered.** Prioritize the needs and preferences of those who educate and care for young children. The dedicated professionals who educate, nurture, and care for young children are at the heart of the ECE workforce, and all aspects of the PD system must meet their needs first and foremost.

Inclusivity in Action

All roadmap components have relevance for ECE professionals regardless of where they work or who they serve. All professionals must be prepared to engage with young children of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds over the course of their career. At the same time, ECE professionals must be able to gain specialized knowledge to work with subpopulations of children (e.g., infants and toddlers, emergent bilinguals, or children with special needs) if that is part of their chosen career pathway.

Some strategies in the roadmap are more relevant for ECE professionals in certain settings like child care centers as compared to homes. The roadmap makes note of these nuances where relevant. It also separately addresses professional development implications for ECE professionals in tribal communities, out-of-school-time providers, and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

5. **Compensation.** Compensation must be top of mind when decisions are made about when, where, and how to offer and/or require PD. "Compensation" includes wages and an adequate benefits package with health insurance, paid vacation time, paid family and medical leave, and retirement benefits, among other benefits that support professionals' health and well-being. This includes considering the impact of compensation on ECE professionals' motivation and ability to access, use, and complete PD, as well as how implementation of the roadmap affects compensation.

Compensation at the Core

The *Unifying Framework* says it well: "As early childhood educators are professionally prepared, so must they be professionally compensated." As it currently stands, the vast majority of ECE professionals across the United States are not professionally compensated, regardless of their years of experience or education. At the workforce level, low compensation makes the field less attractive to new talent and undermines the ability for current professionals to stay in the work, develop their skills, and create the ECE career they want.

Without a doubt, low compensation is a major barrier to achieving the vision and goals set forward in this roadmap. At the same time, the underlying reasons for low compensation are complicated and long-standing, and there are no fast and easy fixes. The Financing component of the roadmap names several strategies that have the potential to increase workforce compensation over time, and all other roadmap components include recommendations about compensation. A well-trained, well-educated, and highly valued workforce will make the need for better compensation obvious because of the benefits it delivers.

Components of a Thriving ECE PD System

Summary of Goals

To progress toward the roadmap vision, PDAC identified the following components and their related goals.

Component	Goal
Professional Standards and Competencies	Ensure Arizona has professional standards that are evidence-informed, up-to-date, relevant, accessible, and utilized by the field.
Career Pathways	Ensure current and future ECE professionals in Arizona can plan and prioritize their professional development in a way that advances their career, grows their earning potential, and builds expertise in ECE over time.
Access	Ensure current and future ECE professionals have access to high-quality professional development that builds their expertise and meets their learning needs.
Outreach	Increase the number of current and future ECE professionals who are receiving high-quality professional development that meet their needs.
Data	Ensure that the right people have access to the right data they need at the right time to make informed decisions about their own and others' professional development.
Governance	Maintain a freestanding statewide advisory structure that aligns professional development efforts and fosters transparency and shared accountability for progress toward the roadmap vision.
Financing	Ensure Arizona's ECE professional development system is sufficiently, efficiently, equitably, and effectively funded.
Evaluation	Ensure the ECE roadmap is implemented as planned and supports progress toward the roadmap vision for a skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and thriving workforce.

Component 1: Professional Standards and Competencies

What ECE professionals should know and be able to do.

Professional **standards** are the norms, guidelines, and criteria that define expected skills, ethics, and behavior for ECE professionals. Professional **competencies** are the combination of skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviors necessary for effective performance as an ECE professional. Taken together, standards and competencies lay

out what ECE professionals are expected to know and be able to do in their work and at various points along their career pathways.

ECE professionals learn how to incorporate relevant professional standards and competencies into their work during initial training and education and through continued PD. Standards and competencies influence the decisions ECE professionals make in their daily work with young children regardless of the setting. Professional standards and competencies also contribute to the professionalism of the field (the excellence, integrity, and responsibility ECE professionals show in doing their work).

Arizona has and will continue to use national standards, such as NAEYC's 2019 *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*, to set the qualifications needed to start working in the ECE field and to keep developing professionally. Regardless of where someone works within the ECE field or their ultimate career goals, they need to understand how standards and competencies relate to their current job and will influence their professional development as they grow in their career over time. In 2024 ECE stakeholders created a tool illustrating available standards and competencies used by Arizona ECE professionals serving children of various ages (birth to 12) and in multiple settings. Visit azearlychildhood.org to see the tool.

Arizona's Professional Standards Goal: Ensure Arizona has professional standards that are evidence-informed, up-to-date, relevant, accessible, and utilized by the field.

Highlights from Other States: Minnesota

In 2021, Minnesota updated its *Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) for Early Childhood Professionals* of which they offer three versions: Working with Infants and Toddlers, Working with Family Childcare, and Working with Preschool Aged Children in Center and School Programs. All versions include the skills needed to work with young children, with more specific skills added for the area of specialization. The KCF also includes three new components: addressing cultural responsibilities, trauma-informed care, and support for multilingual learners.

The updated KCF aligns with the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board and the *Unifying Framework.* Each content area in the KCF has three simple levels of competencies, with each level building on the competencies of the level before it, designed to correspond with ECE I, II, and III in the *Unifying Framework.*

Arizona has adopted, adapted, and created strong, evidence-informed professional standards and competencies for ECE professionals. There is still more to do to ensure Arizona's standards reflect research and best practices, and that all ECE professionals know which standards relate to their work and how to use them in practice. The following strategies will help Arizona achieve this goal:

Strategies:

1. Update Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Knowledge and Competencies (WFKC) to maintain relevance and ensure alignment with national best practices. Arizona's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies, which focuses on children birth to age 8, was released in 2015 and will benefit from an update to reflect changing research on best practices over the past decade.

2. Market the existing standards and competencies to all ECE professionals. It can be challenging for ECE professionals to sort through various sets of standards and determine how these expectations show up in their daily work (if they know about these resources at all). Strategic marketing of the existing standards and competencies will maximize the number of ECE professionals who access and use the standards and competencies that relate to their work with young children. Marketing strategies should target professionals in all settings, including family, friend, and neighbor caregivers, so they can choose how to implement the standards in their unique child care environment.

Addressing Workforce Compensation: *ECE professionals should be compensated for completing professional development that is required by employers and the state of Arizona to meet professional standards and demonstrate expected competencies. In addition, compensation should be comparable for ECE professionals with comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities and relevant in the local context, regardless of the setting in which they work or ages of children served.*

Component 2: Career Pathways

How ECE professionals create and follow a blueprint for advancing their career.

An individualized professional development plan includes the skills and qualifications ECE professionals need to enhance their skillset, deepen their knowledge, and set themselves up for success no matter what position they hold or would like to hold in the future.

Historically, the career pathways available to ECE professionals have not always reflected the true aptitude of ECE professionals and have underestimated the ability for and interest among ECE professionals to secure the postsecondary degrees expected of most other educational professionals. This roadmap reflects a balance between strategies that ensure each professional can flexibly follow their own pathway and strategies that encourage ECE professionals to maximize their training and education.

Arizona has made significant progress in this component over the past decade, including:

- Launching its Educator Designations, which outline ECE I, II, III, IV, and V levels and associated milestones to achieve each designation. These are aligned to the *Unifying Framework*.
- Creating a course matrix for non-certification pathways that identifies coursework aligned with the *Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Knowledge and Competencies.*
- Creating Associate of Arts ECE degree pathways at 11 colleges around the state.
- Adding new transfer pathways for Associate of Science degrees to Bachelor of Applied Science degrees at two universities.

- Offering Prior Learning Assessments for the Child Development Associate® (CDA) credential at several colleges.
- Passing legislation to allow community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees.
- Aligning health and safety courses at eight colleges to the federal training requirements and submitting courses to DES for approval to be used to meet pre-service training requirements. These courses have been identified in the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry to meet DES training compliance requirements.
- Offering multiple scholarship programs for ECE students, including the Professional Career Pathway Project, First Things First's College Scholarships, the Arizona Community Foundation's scholarship program, Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children's "Honor the Past and Reimagine the Future" Early Childhood Scholarship, and through the Arizona Teachers Academy.
- Implementing the Arizona Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeship Pathway, a two-year program that provides job seekers and ECE professionals with college coursework, mentorship, and on-the-job experience.
- Aligning Department of Health Services required trainings to the *Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Knowledge and Competencies* wherever possible.
- Implementing programs and strategies, such as cohorts and mentoring, to retain ECE students at many Arizona college and universities.

ECE Professional Development in Tribal Communities

Tribal nations are recognized as sovereign entities, meaning they have the right to govern themselves. This affects how programs, including early care and education, are administered. For example, federal laws and programs must be implemented in ways that honor, protect, and support Tribal authority and self-determination. Developing strong government-to-government relationships with Tribal nations acknowledges and promotes self-governance and is critical to supporting the ECE workforce.

Historical trauma continues to affect many Tribal communities in Arizona, and cultural health is a prerequisite for overall health and well-being. This important context has implications for the professional development of ECE professionals whose identities are actively shaped through decolonization and the reclamation of indigeneity and/or those who work with Tribal families and children. Building trust and working in collaboration with Tribal communities to support the ECE workforce requires a respectful, relationship-based approach. The following considerations must be top of mind during PD roadmap implementation.

Arizona is home to nearly 300,000 Native Americans[1], including an estimated 26,000 children under the age of 5.[2] Across the state, there are 22 federally recognized tribes[3], and the state's rural population is 15 percent Native American.[4]

Professional Standards

- Professional standards should include trauma-informed care, recognize healing from generational trauma, and support children and families' emotional and social well-being in culturally sensitive ways.

Career Pathways

- Recruitment and retention strategies should include formal mentoring programs to help new or less experienced ECE professionals in Tribal communities grow their skills and confidence, especially in navigating culturally responsive educational approaches.

Access and Outreach

- Trainers, instructors, coaches, and consultants working in Tribal communities should be knowledgeable about the specific Tribal community's culture and traditions to ensure PD resonates with the community's worldview.
- When designing PD, organizations should collaborate with local Tribal leaders, elders, and community members to gain insights into the needs and preferences of the community. This ensures that PD aligns with Tribal values and beliefs.
- Whenever possible, PD should provide Tribal ECE professionals with strategies to revitalize mother language instruction to strengthen both cultural identity and early learning outcomes.
- Many Tribal ECE professionals may face challenges in accessing formal education, including geographic isolation, lack of access to reliable internet and transportation, financial constraints, and/or limited access to higher education institutions. Outreach and access strategies must explicitly address these barriers for Tribal ECE professionals.
- Organizations should offer flexible, community-based pathways for achieving necessary certifications or degrees, including distance learning options, which can help more Tribal ECE professionals advance their skills while remaining in their community.
- Given the potential emotional demands of working in communities healing from generational trauma, providing wellness and self-care training for ECE professionals is essential.
- PD must align with both Tribal governance structures and federal/state ECE policies to ensure compliance and respect for Tribal sovereignty while taking advantage of available resources.
- PD should help ECE professionals understand how to navigate and maximize federal, state, and Tribal funding for ECE programs, such as Head Start, Child Care Development Fund, and other relevant sources.
- PD should centralize indigenous knowledge by integrating Native languages, cultural practices, and traditions into the ECE curriculum to reflect the values and heritage of the community.
- Strengthening leadership among Tribal members involved in ECE can help build sustainable, community-driven programs. Available PD should include leadership training for current and future ECE professionals to ensure Tribal communities have local expertise to shape their ECE systems.

[1] https://bit.ly/3UeOHpQ

[2] 2020 U.S. Census

[3] www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/01/30/2020-01707/indian-entities-recognized-by-and-eligible-to-receive-services-from-the-united-states-bureau-of

[4] Center for Rural Health at the University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health

Data

- Data collection should include, whenever possible, the specific challenges and needs of the ECE workforce in Tribal communities to support a robust picture of this portion of the ECE workforce, identify inequities, and guide the design of effective, targeted PD.

Governance

- Representatives from Tribal communities and those with subject matter expertise should serve on PDAC.

Financing

- PD initiatives require consistent funding for long-term sustainability. This might involve advocating for federal, state, or Tribal funding sources specifically for ECE professional development in Tribal communities.

Evaluation

- PDAC's evaluation plan should include Tribal community-led research initiatives that evaluate the impact of PD in Tribal communities to ensure future efforts are effective and meet the needs of each community.

Arizona's Career Pathways Goal: Ensure current and future ECE professionals in Arizona can plan and prioritize their professional development in a way that advances their career, grows their earning potential, and builds expertise in ECE over time.

Arizona can keep momentum in this component and meet the needs of a changing ECE workforce using the following strategies:

Strategies:

1. Create a tool that illustrates all available ECE career pathways and the occupations and earning potential possible within each pathway. The ECE profession offers many ways to achieve career goals. However, some ECE professionals may be confused and discouraged as they struggle to see how their experiences and education fit together and how they can grow in their career over time. This tool will provide current and future ECE professionals with a comprehensive resource that brings together the ECE Educator Designations with required coursework, occupations, average salaries, and institutions of higher education offering relevant programs. Arizona can look to New Mexico's tool for an example of how this could look (box at right).

Highlights from Other States: New Mexico

In 2023, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department released the Professional Development Career Pathway guide that displays, in a clear, highly visual manner, how ECE professionals can advance throughout their career, the possible occupations associated with each level in the career lattice, and the specific coursework required for each level.

The career lattice is designed so that each level fully articulates with the next level. For example, the New Mexico Child Development Certificate counts toward work for the professional certificate. A professional certificate constitutes the equivalent of the first year of work toward an associate degree, and an associate degree transfers to any early childhood program at four-year institutions as the first two years of work toward a bachelor's degree. The guide also lists all available educator programs in the state and the degrees and credentials each offers. See the tool online at nmececd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ECECD_Pathways_January-2022_Final.pdf

2. Engage leaders within institutions of higher education to identify and implement programs and policies that increase degree and credential attainment for the ECE workforce (e.g., prior learning assessments, course alignment, recruitment, and retention). Success in this goal requires ongoing, sustained commitment from Arizona's college and universities, that decide the degrees and credentials available to ECE professionals, how much they cost, when and where they are offered, and who can access them. Institutions of higher education can create articulation agreements that allow students to transfer ECE credentials, courses, credits, and degrees based on proven student competencies from one institution to another without losing credits. College and universities play a critical role in developing the next generation of ECE professionals by recruiting students, providing a positive experience, and opening students' eyes to the many roles they can have within the ECE field.

3. Implement Arizona's Educator Designations, including clarifying the multiple ways ECE professionals can achieve each designation, where ECE specializations fit, and targeted compensation rates for each designation. Currently the Professional Career Pathways Program Apprenticeship pathway uses the Educator Designations, and the AZ Early Childhood Workforce Registry will be aligned to them in early 2025. However, the Educator Designations have not been widely shared with Arizona's ECE workforce or fully adopted by organizations and institutions offering professional development. Throughout the next three years, the Educator Designations will be implemented in greater detail to clarify how specializations, like special education and mental health, fit into each level. Arizona also has an opportunity to set baseline compensation amounts (salary scale) for each level in the Educator Designations that can support progress toward ensuring every ECE professional earns a family-sustaining wage and is paid commensurate with their experience and education.

4. Assess the need for more ECE credential options and explore ways to meet that need. Arizona offers various ECE-related credentials, but there may be other options that will meet specific workforce needs. These could relate to populations served (e.g., children with special needs, infants) or roles in the ECE system (e.g., leadership, advocacy, systems change). It will be important to understand the gaps from the perspective of the workforce and to partner with stakeholders to fill those gaps.

5. Align state agency-required trainings for ECE professionals to Arizona's EC Workforce Knowledge and Competencies. State agencies have begun this process and completing it will ensure ECE professionals are receiving consistent information about what they are expected to know and be able to do, regardless of which agency's requirements they must meet. This is also a way to *raise awareness about the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies, a strategy outlined above in the Professional Standards and Competencies* component.

6. Assess and expand career pipeline initiatives such as ECE career technical education, internships, and apprenticeships, among others. High school ECE courses can provide an introduction to ECE as a legitimate and promising career pathway and offer free access to initial education and training that will be required for entry into the field. This helps create a pipeline of knowledgeable and skilled practitioners who can enter the workforce with a foundation for success in their work with children and families. Collaborations between high schools and community colleges can allow students to graduate from high school with all or part of an associate's degree accomplished.

7. Identify and test promising initiatives to increase recruitment and retention of ECE professionals. Arizona is not alone in facing a shortage of ECE professionals in all roles. Strategies six and seven aim to address this stubborn challenge. Efforts are underway across the state to recruit new ECE professionals, beginning in high school, and these efforts must continue to ensure a robust, sustainable talent pipeline. At the same time, Arizona needs to keep its skilled, passionate ECE professionals in the workforce; given limited financial resources to pay people more, this takes innovative approaches. The first step is reviewing existing programs and learning what is working and testing ways to expand successful programs.

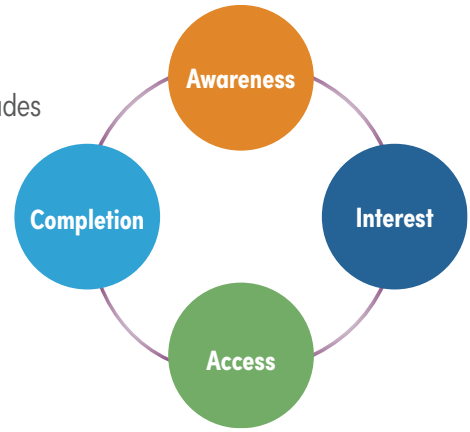
8. Review—at least annually—existing state agency policies, rules, and contracts to identify changes that would support this goal and implement changes. As the primary funding source, the four state agencies tasked with overseeing the ECE system in Arizona significantly influence how most ECE professionals access and experience professional development. It is important for these agencies to regularly examine how their internal policies, rules, and contracts are facilitating and/or hindering progress on the career pathway goal.

Addressing Workforce Compensation: *ECE professionals should understand the expected return on investment for completing professional development and pursuing the many available pathways within the ECE field, both in and out of direct service. One opportunity to collect and share this information with the ECE workforce is by reviewing Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry data on compensation and educator designations and assess if compensation is increasing and to what extent. Then, steps should be taken to ensure compensation does indeed increase with increased preparation and increased competency.*

Component 3: Access and Outreach

How ECE professionals learn about, get interested in, engage with, and complete professional development.

Access and outreach strategies work together to move individuals from initial awareness of and interest in professional development to access and completion.



Access is the ability for ECE professionals to interact with and use PD. It includes ensuring people have the infrastructure they need (physical space, technology devices, internet access) and that PD is designed to meet their needs (language, time, flexible delivery method).

Outreach refers to making ECE professionals aware of available PD, its value, and where and how to get it.

Arizona's Access Goal: Ensure current and future ECE professionals have access to high-quality professional development that builds their expertise and meets their learning needs.

ECE professionals hail from all parts of the state, speak various languages, work in all types of roles and settings, and work varied hours. As with any other industry, ECE professionals differ in how they prefer to learn and practice new skills. To meet diverse needs and preferences, it is critical that PD—inclusive of education, training and technical assistance—be:

- Available in multiple languages beyond English
- Available through various modalities (in-person and virtual)
- Offered in various locations around the state when it is in person
- Offered at various times to accommodate ECE professionals' demanding schedules
- Affordable
- Relevant to people with all levels of expertise and competency

The following strategies will strengthen and expand access to professional development:

Strategies:

1. Define "high-quality professional development" and create a process to ensure only PD meeting this definition appears in the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry (the Registry) and is promoted by agencies and ECE organizations around the state. No one knows better than ECE professionals the importance of a shared understanding of quality, and this extends to PD. Every ECE professional must be able to trust that the PD offered by Arizona agencies, organizations, and institutions of higher education and promoted in the Registry has been vetted by experts. The definition of high-quality must include who delivers the PD. Trainers, coaches, and educators must meet certain standards to appear in the Registry.

2. Standardize how professional development is described within the Registry and elsewhere. Efforts are underway to implement this strategy and reduce confusion among ECE professionals when choosing PD in the Registry and through community partners, institutions of higher education, and state agencies. Descriptions of PD should make clear which standards are being used, the relevant competencies, and the outcomes attendees can expect. Descriptions should also identify key accessibility factors like delivery mode, location, language, teaching approach, and appropriateness for professionals based on career stage. Defining "high-quality" also will inform the descriptions.

3. Assess available professional development based on a range of factors that affect professionals' ability to take full advantage of the PD they want and need. This includes factors like whether PD is offered virtually or in-person, is available in languages other than English, is offered at various times of day, and is related to competencies individuals want to build, among other things.

4. Create new professional development to fill gaps identified in the assessment described in strategy 3. Together, strategies 3 and 4 will improve available PD for ECE professionals in the state by answering the questions, "What do we have now?" and "What do we need?"

5. Assess and then share in one place all available scholarships for ECE credentials and degrees. Current and potential future ECE professionals have access to scholarships, but it can be hard to know which ones apply to what programs and the requirements for each. Reviewing all available scholarships (offered at the local, state, and federal levels) and bringing together the information in one place will help ECE professionals seeking these opportunities.

6. Provide information to professionals to help them assess the quality of professional development they come across on their own (outside of the Registry and other organizations in the state that provide PD). Many ECE professionals will find PD through formal state structures like the Registry, state agencies, and community organizations. But offers for PD and training come from all directions—email, social media, and direct mailings. Not all these offerings are high quality. ECE professionals in Arizona must be able to assess PD they come across and make informed decisions about its quality and value, including any financial return on investment, for themselves.

7. Review—at least annually—existing state agency policies, rules, and contracts to identify changes that would support this goal and implement changes. This repeated strategy ensures state agencies maximize their role in supporting the Access goal, including through the PD they provide and promote.

ECE Professional Development for Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers

Family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregiving refers to child care provided by individuals who are personally connected to the family of the child or children in their care, such as relatives, close friends, or trusted neighbors. Most states, including Arizona, allow FFN caregivers to be legally license exempt or legally non-licensed, meaning they are not required to pursue licensure to serve the four or fewer children in their care. These caregivers may be paid or unpaid and may or may not view themselves as "child care providers."[1] This type of child care arrangement is common in Arizona, particularly in diverse, low-income, and rural communities.

Family, friend, and neighbor caregivers, particularly in low-income communities, care for more than 50 percent of children with working parents. Many Hispanic, African American, Native American, recently arrived refugees, and others prefer this form of care due to cultural and language considerations.[2]

Many FFN caregivers care for children because of close personal relationships, such as caring for relatives or neighbors' children. Professional development should respect the informal nature of this care and avoid pushing formal care models that may not align with FFN caregivers' needs or preferences. Training and development opportunities should be voluntary and non-intrusive, recognizing that FFN caregivers may not view themselves as "professionals" in the same way formal, licensed child care providers do.

While many FFN caregivers operate informally and plan to continue that way, some may be interested in becoming licensed or regulated to access benefits like subsidies or food programs, to grow their own small business and income, and/or because they find joy in providing care to young children. Professional development can help these caregivers navigate the licensing process and understand what is required.

When thinking about the professional development of FFN caregivers, several unique factors come into play and must be considered when implementing the roadmap:

Professional Standards

- Because they fall outside state and federally mandated training requirements, FFN caregivers may not be aware of professional standards and competencies. It will be important to share these optional resources with FFN caregivers so those who wish to implement them with children in their care have what they need to do so.

Career Pathways

- FFN caregivers often have years of practical experience raising children in their own families or communities. Training programs should build on this experience rather than take a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Professional development should focus on enhancing the skills FFN caregivers already have, such as creating nurturing environments or managing daily routines, rather than assuming a lack of expertise and knowledge.
- Pairing less experienced FFN caregivers with experienced FFN caregiver mentors can help foster confidence, offer guidance, and promote the sharing of best practices within the community.
- Providing in-person and virtual opportunities for FFN caregivers to meet, share experiences, and support one another can reduce feelings of isolation and help build a sense of community.
- Establishing peer networks where FFN caregivers can share ideas, materials, and support can strengthen their professional growth and reduce isolation.

Access and Outreach

- Offering online, mobile-friendly professional development options allows FFN caregivers to access training at their convenience, without needing to travel to in-person sessions.
- To ensure accessibility, training should be available in multiple languages, especially in communities where FFN caregivers speak languages other than English.
- Many FFN caregivers have irregular hours and may care for children outside of traditional work schedules. Professional development should be flexible and available during evenings or weekends. It can be helpful to offer food and/or child care as well.
- FFN caregivers may not always have access to the same resources as formal child care providers, such as educational materials, toys, or information on child development. Professional development should include connections to local resources, libraries, or community centers.
- Many FFN caregivers come from diverse cultural backgrounds and may already incorporate important cultural traditions and languages into caregiving. Professional development should honor and integrate these practices.
- FFN caregivers may experience stress or burnout, especially if they are caring for children on a long-term basis. Professional development should include self-care strategies and mental health support for caregivers, emphasizing the importance of their well-being.

[1] homegrownchildcare.org/parents-choose-quality-when-they-use-family-friend-and-neighbor-care/
[2] candelen.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/KK-Partner-Packet-August-2023.pdf

Data

- Collecting data on FFN caregivers can be a challenge given their informal position in the ECE system and lack of connection to state agencies and other official structures. It is critical to find creative ways to identify and quantify FFN caregivers to better understand their role in the ECE system and ensure they have the support they need to continue serving children and families.

Governance

- FFN caregivers as well as those with subject matter expertise in providing professional development to FFN caregivers should serve on PDAC and be involved in roadmap implementation committees/workgroups. Whenever possible, FFN caregivers should receive compensation for this participation.

Financing

- As a key part of the ECE system in Arizona, it is critical that ECE stakeholders continue advocating for and dedicating resources to supporting and training FFN caregivers.

Evaluation

- PDAC's evaluation plan should explore methodologies to better understand the needs of FFN caregivers as it relates to professional development and the effectiveness of current strategies, like communities of practice, for this unique community of dedicated caregivers.

Resources for FFN Caregivers in Arizona

- Arizona Children's Association: arizonaschildren.org/services/kinship-support-services/
- Candelen: candelen.org/kith-kin/
- Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest: lss-sw.org/children-family
- United Way of Pinal County: unitedwayofpc.org/programs/

Given their unique role in the ECE system, FFN caregivers may especially benefit from PD that focuses on:

- Essential topics like first aid, CPR, childproofing, and safe sleep practices, especially if they do not have formal training in child care.
- Practical, hands-on strategies they can immediately apply in their caregiving, such as child safety, nutrition, early literacy, and age-appropriate learning activities.
- Home-based activities that foster child development using readily available materials.
- The importance of secure emotional attachments between caregivers and children and strategies for promoting social-emotional development.
- Guidance on effective communication and partnership with families.
- Information about child care subsidy programs, such as Child Care and Development Fund subsidies, so they know what is available and how they might qualify.

Addressing Workforce Compensation: *ECE professionals should have equitable access to paid time to complete professional development—no matter the setting in which they work. This directly relates to professionals' ability to access PD during daytime work hours, which many prefer but few can make work given their professional responsibilities. For home-based ECE professionals, policy changes at the state level that pay providers based on enrollment rather than attendance can go a long way in supporting these professionals in receiving compensation for time spent on PD.*

Arizona's Outreach Goal: Increase the number of current and future ECE professionals who are receiving high-quality PD that meet their needs.

The roadmap will only be successful if ECE professionals take advantage of available PD to further progress their own individual career pathways. ECE professionals must know their options, believe those options are relevant to their own journey, and take the steps necessary to complete PD. ECE partners across Arizona deploy many strategies and tactics—websites, the AZ Early Childhood Workforce Registry, communities of practices, social

media posts—to share information about PD and encourage its use. These local efforts should continue alongside statewide, evidence-informed efforts to promote PD and support completion. The following strategies will support progress on the Outreach goal over the next three years:

Strategies:

1. Review existing and/or conduct new research to understand effective strategies that help professionals find out about, access, and complete professional development. Given the existing outreach strategies occurring in Arizona, there is value in taking time to better understand what does and does not work for specific audiences, and then using those approaches to reach more ECE professionals. New research could use multiple methods, from surveys to focus groups, to hear from Arizona ECE professionals.

Highlights from Other States: New Mexico

In 2022, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) launched Developing Futures, an advertising campaign designed to recruit people into the early learning field, including TV, online commercials, and a website. The website highlights the scholarships and wage supplements available for ECE teachers in New Mexico, links to job opportunities, and features stories from early childhood educators across the state. About the campaign, ECECD Cabinet Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky said, "We wanted to showcase that early childhood education and care is a profession to be proud of. We know there are New Mexicans out there who would be incredible in these roles, but who haven't considered turning their love for children into a fulfilling career. By telling the stories of these accomplished and passionate professionals, we hope to inspire more people to follow in their footsteps."

2. Conduct a statewide marketing and communication campaign to raise awareness about what professional development is, why it is valuable, and how to find and access PD. A comprehensive campaign at the state level with targeted messages and an attractive look could help make the case to more ECE professionals that there is value in completing PD and point them in the right direction. The campaign should feature audience-specific messages and materials, given differing PD expectations and goals for subsets of ECE professionals. The campaign should use a variety of strategies to reach ECE professionals where they live, learn, and work.

3. Create a PD planning tool that helps professionals find the right PD for them based on where they work in the ECE system and their career goals. When developing the roadmap, it became clear that ECE professionals are hungry for a "one-stop shop" where they can view their professional progress in the context of their long-term goals—a tool that helps an individual say, "Wow, I've come so far, and I know where I am going next." A user-friendly, interactive PD planning tool, ideally housed in the Registry, would offer this type of detail for all ECE professionals, regardless of ECE setting and career progression. This new tool, whatever format it takes, would align with Arizona's Educator Designations.

4. Gather input from ECE professionals about Registry enhancements that would increase Registry use and implement enhancements where possible. The Registry offers robust functions that can support ECE professionals from all backgrounds and on all career pathways. Upgrades have already been implemented to better meet the needs of Registry users, and other enhancements could entice more ECE professionals to log in and use this resource. It will be important to learn what on-the-ground ECE professionals need and want in the Registry, through surveys, focus groups, and/or interviews, before investing time and money in technological enhancements.

5. Review—at least annually—existing state agency policies, rules, and contracts to identify changes that would support this goal and implement changes. There are opportunities for state agencies to align existing outreach efforts with a new statewide campaign to get unified messages and materials into the hands of the different audiences each agency serves.

Registry enhancements could include:

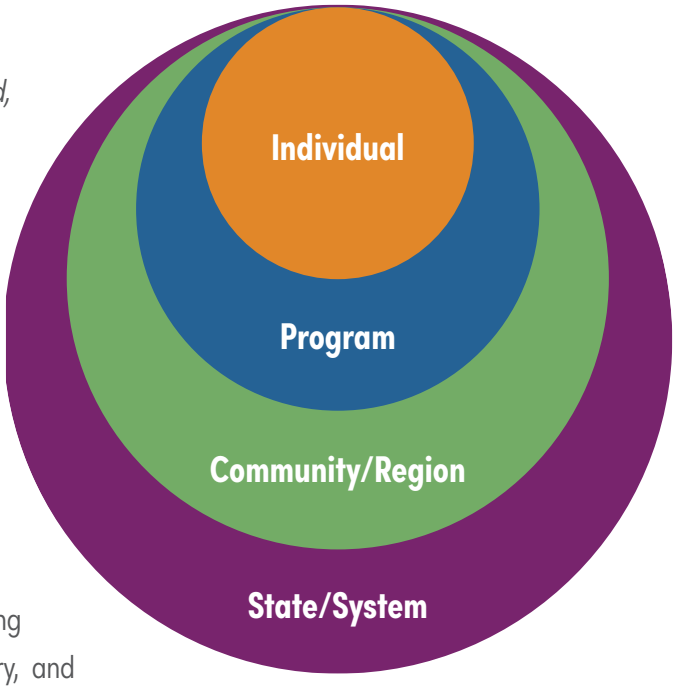
- Updates to make it more user-friendly
- Registry use analytics for Registry staff
- Micro-credentials or badging
- Pre- and post-tests/assessments
- PD planning tool
- Workforce survey
- Trainer approval, training approval, and training calendar
- Coaching and technical assistance tracking

Addressing Workforce Compensation: *ECE professionals must understand the cost of professional development and its impact—or lack thereof—on their compensation. A robust PD planning tool can help outline the compensation someone can expect to earn based on their level of education, credentialing, and years of experience. This supports informed decision making about what, when, and how to pursue PD.*

Component 4: Data

How information about the ECE workforce is collected, organized, analyzed, and interpreted.

ECE workforce data is crucial for planning, evaluating, ensuring quality, and maintaining accountability in a professional development system. In Arizona, it is critical to ensure that ECE workforce data is collected and shared with stakeholders, funders, and the public. There are many types and levels of workforce-related data, which can be envisioned as a set of nested circles (see diagram):



Individual data is about each ECE professional, including demographic information, employment and PD history, and

career goals. Having correct demographic information about as many individuals as possible allows ECE stakeholders to see and address inequities. It is critical to collect individual data about *all* ECE professionals regardless of the setting in which they work.

Program: ECE program directors and owners, regardless of the ECE setting, must understand what is happening with their own employees to make informed decisions about where to focus their PD resources. Having program-level data also ensures programs are meeting state requirements.

Community/Region: Seeing workforce trends at a city, county, and/or regional level helps uncover effective strategies and informs equitable decision making about where PD resources and workforce supports should go in a geographically and culturally diverse state like Arizona.

State/System: Understanding ECE workforce trends at the state level supports decision making about how and where to direct limited financial and personnel resources. Knowing the size, level of education and training, and gaps in Arizona's ECE workforce helps advocates make the case for sustained investment in ECE PD.

Currently Arizona has some data at all these levels, but it is not consistently defined, collected, stored, or analyzed, making it impossible to understand the holistic needs of the workforce and the effectiveness of PD strategies. Having multiple digital platforms for inputting and viewing workforce data also leads to confusion and frustration for ECE professionals. The AZ Early Childhood Workforce Registry is an opportunity to bring together some of these disparate platforms into one place where ECE professionals can input their own data and access everything they need related to PD, from required trainings to college scholarships. (For more on the Registry, see Appendix C.) By creating this roadmap, PDAC seeks to encourage as many ECE professionals as possible to use the Registry as the "hub" for professional data. At the same time, PDAC recognizes the Registry will remain, especially in the immediate term, one of many data sources for telling the story of the ECE workforce. All relevant data—from the Registry, state agencies, funders, nonprofits, and individual programs—must be brought together and analyzed by skilled experts.

Arizona's Data Goal: Ensure that the right people have access to the right data they need at the right time to make informed decisions about their own and others' professional development.

The following strategies will move Arizona closer to this bold goal.

Strategies:

1. Identify, define, and determine the process to collect and share a priority set of statewide ECE workforce data points. There are thousands of data points relevant to the ECE workforce. Creating a narrow list of state-level data points will help get everyone on the same page—from programs to grantees to state agencies—about what is most important to collect and track and how to do this using existing structures. This will also feed into the Evaluation component (Component 7) mentioned below, as it will allow the state to track changes over time.

2. Position the Registry as the primary hub for ECE professionals to input and use data and information about their professional development and career planning. The Registry is still unknown to many ECE professionals. There is an opportunity to raise awareness about its existence and explain the value of the Registry for all ECE professionals, so it is seen as a trusted, necessary resource in their day-to-day lives, regardless of where they work or their long-term goals.

3. Explore ways to integrate existing public and private workforce-related data systems with the Registry. Efforts are underway to link existing state agency data systems to the Registry. For example, DHS has a licensing portal embedded in the Registry so programs can upload required documentation in one place. Nonprofits and institutions of higher education also should explore ways to set up two-way data sharing with the Registry to maximize the information available in one easy-to-use place.

4. Review existing and implement new data use agreements between and among agencies and organizations and update for consistency. Data use agreements (DUAs) are legal documents that outline how data can be shared, while still protecting individuals' privacy. Some state agencies have DUAs in place with one another, and many have DUAs with their grantees, who collect data on behalf of state programs. Now is the time to take stock of existing DUAs, ensure they are serving their purpose for streamlining data sharing, and create new DUAs to support a cohesive ECE workforce data system in Arizona.

5. Explore implementation of a statewide ECE workforce survey that captures the education, experience, compensation, turnover, and demographics of all ECE professionals in Arizona. Conducting workforce surveys is a best practice in the field and helps paint a full picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the ECE workforce from the perspective of the professionals themselves. Eventually, it will be most effective to replace the existing surveys given by various organizations in the state with a single comprehensive survey that collects individual and program- and community-level data. This would ease the burden on the workforce that is being asked to complete multiple surveys throughout the year, while supporting evaluation by using a consistent and streamlined survey instrument.

ECE Professional Development for Out-of-School-Time Providers

Out-of-School Time (OST) programs are supervised programs that children regularly attend when school is not in session. This can include before/after-school or summer programs on a school campus or facilities such as academic programs (e.g., reading or math focused programs), specialty programs (e.g., sports teams, STEM, arts enrichment), and multipurpose programs that provide an array of activities (e.g., 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs).[1] These programs serve children of all ages, but within the context of the roadmap, the focus is on OST programs serving children ages 5-12.

OST providers play a critical role in supporting children's development outside of traditional school hours, and their professional development should be tailored to the unique aspects of OST settings.

Professional Standards

- PD for OST providers should be built upon the Arizona Quality Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs professional standards, available at https://azafterschool.org/promoting-quality/quality-standards/.

Career Pathways

- PD planning tools should include structured career ladders within OST programs and clear pathways for advancement (e.g., from part-time staff to site coordinators or program directors).
- PD should be intentionally planned and, when possible, aligned with OST-related credentialing and certification like School-Age Credential offered through the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence.
- Higher Education institutions should partner with existing credentialing/certification and PD providers to develop a plan for working OST professionals to align or apply professional development toward a degree in a related field.
- Stakeholders should establish or expand mentorship programs that pair experienced OST providers with new or less experienced staff. Mentors can provide ongoing support and guidance with relevance to OST settings.
- Stakeholders should set up communities of practice where OST providers can share knowledge, resources, and support. These forums can offer ongoing, informal learning and networking. When offered virtually, they can also help reduce the isolation faced by providers in geographically remote areas.

Why is Out-of-School Time in an ECE Roadmap?

Both the early care and education and OST fields aim to foster children's growth and development through supportive, enriching environments. ECE programs typically focus on children from birth through age 5, while OST programs typically serve school-aged children (ages 5-12). Both fields emphasize creating nurturing environments that support children's learning and social-emotional development. While ECE lays the groundwork for children's early learning experiences, OST programs build on these foundations by providing continued learning opportunities as children grow older.

From a workforce perspective, both fields face common challenges, such as low wages, high turnover rates, and a need for accessible, high-quality professional development. ECE and OST providers often work in part-time or under-resourced positions, leading to challenges in staff retention and professional growth. The skills required for effective ECE and OST work overlap in areas such as child development, behavior management, and family engagement. Both fields benefit from shared professional development opportunities that focus on these core skills. Given these overlaps, it is valuable to have voices and perspectives from the OST field at the table when planning PD for the ECE workforce to maximize limited PD resources and enhance system-level collaboration.

Access and Outreach

- PD should be available at various times, including evenings, weekends, or during OST program hours when staff are available. Self-paced online courses or asynchronous learning can also help providers access training at their convenience.
- When possible, PD providers should go on-site to OST programs, allowing providers to participate during work hours without needing to travel. In some cases, providers can receive coaching or mentoring on-site, which integrates professional development into their day-to-day activities.
- PD should be designed specifically for the OST context, focusing on topics like behavioral guidance, social-emotional learning, academic enrichment, and youth development. Training should be practical and immediately applicable to OST settings.
- PD should be available for professionals with different roles within OST programs (e.g., front-line staff, coordinators, and directors) to ensure content is relevant to each role's responsibilities.
- Instead of one-off workshops, PD should include ongoing coaching, peer-learning groups, or professional learning communities where staff can regularly reflect on and improve their practices. This ensures PD is not only relevant but also sustained over time.
- PD providers should ensure offerings reflect the cultural backgrounds and experiences of OST providers and the youth they serve. Culturally responsive training can ensure that providers feel respected and understood, while equipping them to better serve diverse communities.

[1] cdc.gov/healthyschools/ost.htm

Data

- PDAC should partner with organizations like AzCASE to collect data on OST providers across Arizona, including by ages served and setting where they deliver care. This will provide a fuller picture of the composition of the OST workforce and its PD needs.

Governance

- OST providers and those with subject matter expertise in providing PD to OST providers should serve on PDAC and be involved in roadmap implementation committees/workgroups. This will maximize collaboration and avoid duplicating efforts where the scope of the ECE field (ages 0-5) overlaps with the OST field (ages 5-12). This will also ensure the unique perspective of OST providers is considered throughout roadmap implementation.

Financing

- Whenever possible, employers should consider offering stipends or paid time for OST providers to complete PD. Programs that fund professional development as part of their operational budgets or through grants can ensure that providers do not face financial hardship when completing PD.
- PD providers should continue to seek public and private funding to cover the costs of developing and delivering OST-specific PD.

Evaluation

- PDAC's evaluation plan should include methodologies to evaluate the impact of the roadmap on OST providers.

6. Produce and widely share, including with funders and policymakers, an annual workforce report that summarizes the size and key features of the ECE workforce (education, experience, compensation, turnover, and demographics). This annual report would use data from multiple sources—including the Registry, workforce survey, state agency databases, nonprofit organization surveys and grant reports, and enrollment data and research from institutions of higher education—to tell the story of the workforce. An online dashboard could help make this information accessible to a wide audience and allow for regular updates throughout the year. The workforce report can be used for state, regional, and local decision making and can show policymakers and funders where investment is needed to ensure the ECE workforce is stable and reliable.

Highlights from Other States: Oregon

Government and higher education partners in Oregon have integrated licensing data at the child care program level, workforce registry system data, and quality rating system monitoring data to develop a robust early childhood data ecosystem. The data system can answer workforce questions at both the worker and facility level.

- Annual workforce reports show trends in worker demographics, qualifications, and compensation. The state legislature uses these annual workforce reports and other workforce data every session.
- The state legislature used data to inform investments in educator retention and policy changes to child care licensing requirements.
- The state ECE agency uses monthly, quarterly, and annual workforce data to address equity and access to workforce resources and programs.

7. Review—at least annually—existing state agency policies, rules, and contracts to identify changes that would support this goal and implement changes. State agencies already share data with one another and with many other organizations across Arizona, but there are opportunities to make data sharing more seamless and automated to save time and money and increase the availability of data and information.

One strategy for agency exploration is choosing a single identifier that individuals can use to log in to all ECE-related databases. This would make it easier for ECE professionals to access the information they need and would support evaluation by allowing researchers to combine and analyze data from multiple databases.

Addressing Workforce Compensation: *There is not consistent, accurate data on what ECE professionals are paid in Arizona, let alone data that includes benefits or speaks to how compensation varies based on experience and education. State ECE leaders must have this data to effectively advocate for changes in practice and policy that will ensure every ECE professional in the state earns a fair, family sustaining wage. An intentional effort to encourage ECE professionals to add their wage and compensation information, and for program directors/owners to verify it in the Registry, would go a long way in addressing this systemic data gap.*

Component 5: Governance

How the ECE professional development system is coordinated and led.

Arizona has several governance structures charged with overseeing different parts of the ECE system. This includes four state agencies:

1. The **Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES)**, is the designated lead agency for implementation of the Child Care and Development Fund State Plan. DES provides child care assistance to eligible families with child care services delivered by a network of child care providers including centers, child care homes, and individual family members who contract or have an agreement with DES. DES provides funding to support professional development, quality initiatives, and programs serving specific populations such as infants and toddlers, families experiencing homelessness, and children with special needs. DES also administers the Arizona Early Intervention Program, established by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and is Arizona's statewide interagency system of services and supports for families of infants and toddlers, birth through 2 years of age, with disabilities or delays.
2. The **Arizona Department of Education** oversees the Preschool Development Grant, the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant, birth-to-8 teaching certification, Arizona Early Learning Standards, Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines, preschool special education services, and early childhood professional learning opportunities, among other key ECE programs.
3. **First Things First**, whose board serves as the federally mandated Early Childhood State Advisory Council, manages the ECE quality improvement and rating system (Quality First), the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry, the FTF College Scholarship program, and other ECE initiatives in the areas of family support and children's health.

4. Within the **Arizona Department of Health Services**, the Bureau of Child Care Licensing, part of the Division of Licensing Services, regulates and monitors licensed child care facilities, public school child care programs, and certified child care group homes statewide. The Bureau's mission is to monitor the health, safety, and well-being of children in licensed child care facilities and certified child care group homes throughout Arizona by establishing appropriate rules, monitoring for compliance, offering technical assistance and training to caregivers, and providing consumer education.

Leaders within the four state agencies regularly convene to support the advancement of professional development for the ECE workforce through intentional coordination, alignment, and system building. In addition, the Professional Development Advisory Committee, which convened in 2023 and authored this roadmap (for more on PDAC, see Appendix A), meets every other month. Workforce forums, open to anyone, are held twice a year to share updates on workforce-related activities and the work of PDAC. Across the state, there are other local- and regional-level groups of ECE experts who collaborate to support the ECE workforce in formal and informal ways.

Arizona's Governance Goal: Maintain a freestanding statewide advisory structure that aligns professional development efforts and fosters transparency and shared accountability for progress toward the roadmap vision.

The statewide advisory structure will ensure Arizona takes an intentional approach to roadmap implementation, resource allocation, and program evaluation, and that the PD work remains aligned with the state's overarching ECE system plan. This structure will facilitate stakeholder engagement, gathering input from educators, families, and communities to inform decision making and build consensus.

Strategies:

1. Convene a diverse advisory committee (PDAC) to review progress on roadmap implementation, foster communication, and celebrate shared success. The advisory committee must be diverse demographically (including people from different racial, ethnic, socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds) and professionally (including ECE professionals who care for children in many settings and those who work in organizations and agencies that support ECE professionals and young children). A diverse advisory committee is essential because it ensures that a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and needs are represented in decision-making processes. Diversity also promotes inclusivity and equity, helping to address the unique challenges faced by various communities. The advisory committee should include representatives from all four state agencies, nonprofit organizations across the state, all child care settings, institutions of higher education, and philanthropic organizations.

2. Utilize subcommittees/workgroups as needed for implementation of all components of the roadmap. The roadmap is expansive and will require "all hands on deck" for strong implementation. A subcommittee or workgroup approach within the larger advisory committee can help support implementation and flexibility over time. Groups/Committees can come and go as tasks are completed, goals are met, and

needs shift. Individuals with expertise and lived experience who do not sit on PDAC can work on relevant subcommittees/workgroups, expanding the breadth and depth of the conversation.

3. Proactively and consistently provide updates—including in writing—to ECE stakeholders (not just PDAC members) about PDAC's work and progress on roadmap implementation. The roadmap has wide-reaching implications for ECE professionals in Arizona, so the work of implementing the roadmap should be shared widely and made available for public viewing. Updates should be given verbally (at conferences, virtual meetings, town halls, etc.) and in writing. PDAC should post online and share via email lists the documents and materials produced in the process of implementing the roadmap. PDAC meeting agendas, notes, and documents should also be shared publicly.

4. Establish and publicize a process for any interested individuals to provide feedback and input to PDAC about roadmap implementation. To ensure roadmap implementation stays professional-centered, PDAC must hear from ECE professionals who live and breathe the work every day. A two-way engagement mechanism ensures this feedback is part of PDAC decision making, so the work is responsive to the needs of the workforce. The field should be given multiple methods for sharing input and feedback, so they can engage ways that work best for them.

Highlights from Other States: Minnesota

Minnesota has a standalone advisory structure devoted to the ECE workforce and professional development outside of the federally required State Advisory Council. The work of Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce, described as the "catalyst" for recent innovations in the state's PD roadmap, is led by a team that includes leaders from the following organizations and agencies:

- Bemidji State University
- Child Care Aware of Minnesota
- Governor Tim Walz's Children's Cabinet
- Metro State University
- Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children
- Minnesota Children's Cabinet
- Minnesota Department of Education
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Minnesota Office of Higher Education
- Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board
- St. Kate's University
- The Family Partnership
- Think Small
- Tri-Valley Opportunity Council / Head Start
- Voices and Choices for Children and Children's Defense Fund MN
- West Central Initiative

5. Review—at least annually—existing state agency policies, rules, and contracts to identify changes that would support this goal and implement changes. State agency leadership and staff changes over time, and this strategy will help ensure agency support stays strong over time as individual champions of the work come and go.

A Note on Compensation: *For many ECE professionals, especially those providing daily care to young children, participating in PDAC and its subcommittees and providing feedback requires time, attention, and energy beyond their day jobs. PDAC should explore options to compensate ECE professionals when this added commitment falls outside of paid work responsibilities.*

Component 6: Financing

How the ECE PD system is financially sustained over time.

Funding for professional development in the early care and education workforce is a complex issue, as it comes from a variety of sources including federal, state, and local governments, private foundations, and individual employers. The visual on the next page illustrates key funding sources at the federal and state levels for professional development efforts.

Despite these multiple funding streams, the resources available are insufficient to meet the true needs of the workforce. In many cases, resources that are available are not provided over a sufficient amount of time for measurable change to occur. In addition, chronic underinvestment in the ECE workforce limits the potential of ECE professionals to fully support the development and well-being of young children. It also puts ECE stakeholders into the unfortunate position of competing for limited dollars in a resource-poor environment, rather than being empowered to work together, try new things, and fail together in service of growth. Arizona needs stable funding from multiple sources to grow and sustain the ECE workforce.

Arizona's Financing Goal: Ensure Arizona's ECE professional development system is sufficiently, efficiently, equitably, and effectively funded.

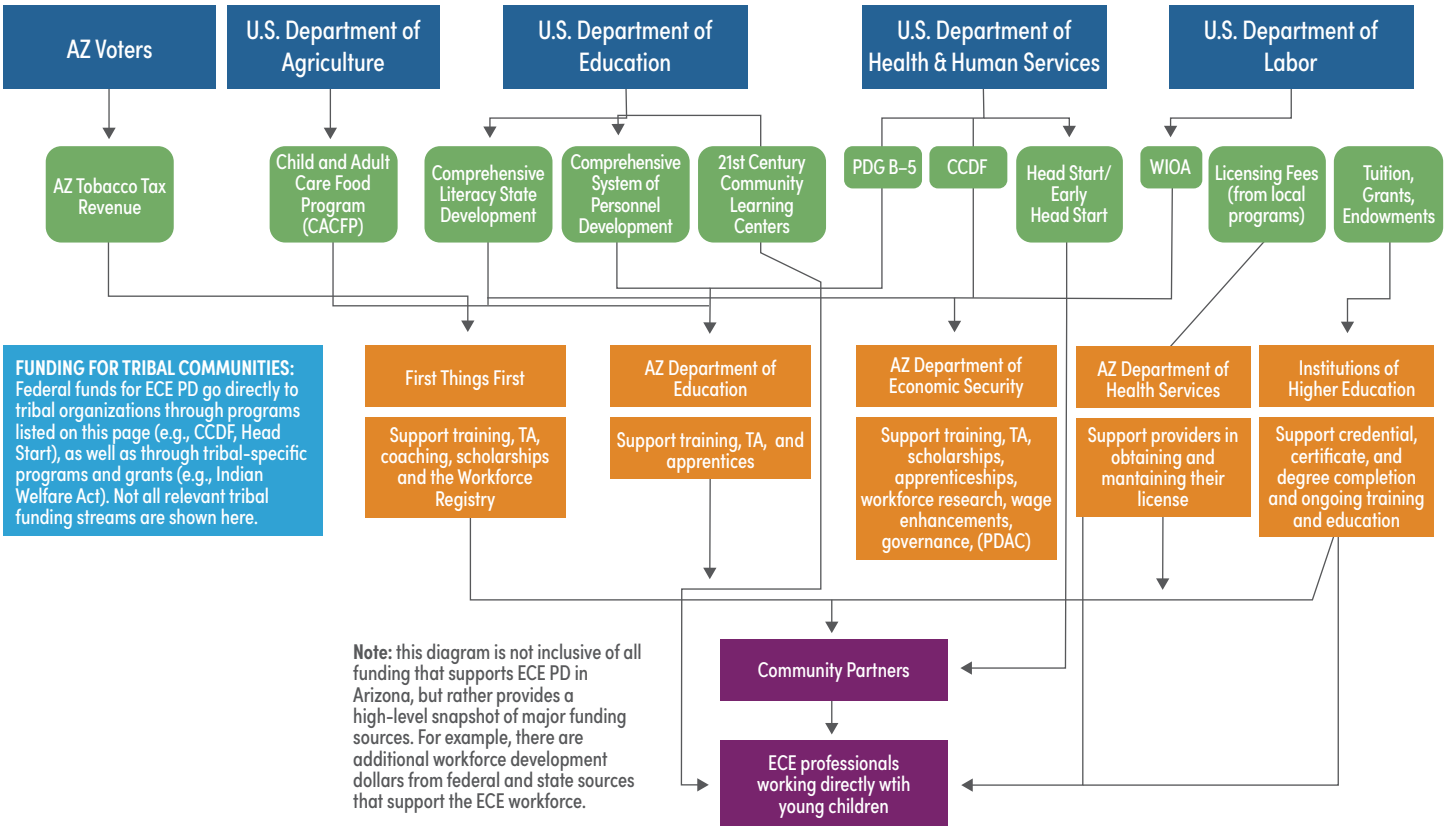
The strategies below will help Arizona secure funding from multiple sources to ensure there is enough money to support the ECE workforce and that every available dollar is spent fairly and wisely.

Strategies:

1. Assess current available funding for ECE professional development and existing relationships among PDAC members with individuals charged with funding-related decision making. To make the most effective use of limited resources, it is critical to understand what dollars are currently available for PD, where they are being spent, and who is influencing those decisions. An "environmental scan" or "network map" of this part of the ECE system will inform all other financial strategies.

2. Maximize currently available federal, state, and local dollars by aligning efforts and ending redundancies across funders and state agencies. By coordinating efforts among the various ECE professional development funders and state agencies, resources (including federal grants) can be pooled and directed toward common goals, eliminating overlap and redundant spending. This will ensure that every dollar is used effectively to support PD. This can also help change the culture from one in which stakeholders have to be defensive to one in which true collaboration is valued.

ECE Professional Development Snapshot



3. Prioritize the roadmap strategies to effectively direct future funding. To make the most of future funding opportunities, it is important to decide which roadmap strategies should be completed first. This targeted approach will ensure future funds have the greatest impact.

4. Identify future federal, state, and local public funds to promote the professional growth and compensation of the ECE workforce. ECE remains a financially unstable industry due to inadequate public funding and high operational costs. Public investments in ECE are insufficient to cover the true costs of providing high-quality care and education, which includes PD for the ECE workforce. Given these financial realities, Arizona must continue to look for and secure public funds to successfully implement this roadmap and reach the bold vision for the ECE workforce.

Highlights from Other States: Maine

In 2022 Maine Governor Janet Mills signed a bipartisan budget bill that included $12 million in state general funds to provide $200 monthly stipends for direct early care and education workers. This was a continuation of funding for stipends, launched in 2021 with money from the federal American Rescue Plan Act, that had already supported over 7,000 ECE workers at the time of passage. In July 2023, the state's stipend model transitioned to a tiered system based on experience and education.

5. Identify current and new private funds to support roadmap implementation. In addition to public funds, private funding sources can and should support the implementation of the roadmap. Engaging with private donors, foundations, and corporations to understand what motivates them to become involved and then securing their support can help to diversify funding streams and ensure a steady flow of financial support for this work.

6. Identify and educate audiences, including advocates, donors, and elected officials, on the roadmap to secure support. Building broad-based support for the roadmap requires ongoing communication about its importance—including for the long-term economic stability of Arizona—for key audiences with the power to direct public and private resources.

Component 7: Evaluation

How progress is tracked and measured.

The seventh component is unique to Arizona's roadmap. Prioritizing evaluation will ensure that Arizona remains focused on the shared goals outlined in the roadmap, supports ongoing learning and adaptation, and enhances accountability and stakeholder engagement.

At the state level, a comprehensive evaluation of ECE professional development efforts in Arizona to understand the impact on the workforce has never been done. In 2024, Arizona State University's Center for Child Well-being conducted a statewide ECE workforce needs assessment that captured the experience of a subset

of the workforce (view key findings in Appendix C). In addition, individual state agencies, institutions of higher education, nonprofits, and ECE providers collect data on their PD and workforce development activities and programs at various frequencies, and some conduct formal outcome evaluations. However, these efforts are not coordinated, nor is standard data collected and shared to allow for a holistic view of the ECE workforce and the impact of various PD initiatives.

Arizona's Evaluation Goal: Ensure the ECE roadmap is implemented as planned and supports progress toward the roadmap vision for a skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and thriving workforce.

ECE stakeholders must be able to answer two questions about the work outlined in this roadmap: "Are we implementing the strategies we said we would implement?" and "Are we making a difference for the ECE workforce, per our Goals and Vision?"

The following strategies will help answer these questions.

Strategies:

1. Develop and execute an implementation plan for the roadmap that lays out roles, timelines, and tasks. To ensure each strategy in the roadmap is being implemented, each roadmap component should have a dedicated work plan detailing the tasks that must be completed for each strategy, when the work will be completed, and who will lead each task. Work plan progress should be shared at every PDAC meeting, so any challenges can be addressed with the group.

2. Create a comprehensive evaluation plan to assess whether the roadmap is being implemented as intended (process evaluation) and progress on the roadmap goals (outcome evaluation). PDAC and ECE stakeholders want and need to understand if the roadmap is positively impacting the ECE workforce—is this work supporting and empowering a skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and thriving workforce? Answering that question is no small feat and will require an evaluation plan to measure short- and long-term progress on the roadmap vision and goals.

Addressing Workforce Compensation: *In the near-term, evaluation efforts should include collecting and analyzing consistent data on compensation for ECE professionals in all roles and settings across the state of Arizona. In considering the long-term impact of the roadmap on the ECE workforce, evaluators should explore the relationship between roadmap strategies and changes in workforce compensation over time.*

Supporting Workforce Well-Being

A child's early brain development depends absolutely on the quality of relationships with that child's adult caregivers, and the bonds formed between young children and their ECE classroom teachers is no exception. Therefore, it is critical that ECE professionals bring their "best selves" to their daily work—not only in terms of attentiveness, focus, perception, and creativity—to make meaningful, human connections with the children in their care and to maintain a healthy spirit of ongoing professional inquiry and collegiality with their coworkers and peers.

Successful professional development cannot stop with "checking the box" on a training or credential. It must also consider the supports professionals need to safeguard their own well-being. Providing early education can be stressful. Educators often deal with family trauma surrounding the children in their care and cover for absent or unfilled caregiver positions, while juggling the daily challenges of caring for young children. All of this is done, while also balancing their own needs and the needs of their families.

The financial challenges that go with their underpaid positions make it difficult, if not impossible, for early childhood educators to access many of the supports that other professionals take for granted—health insurance (including mental health services), healthful food, and housing that is safe, stable, and affordable. These factors, coupled with the demands of teaching and lack of advancement opportunities, lead to burnout and turnover. In fact, Arizona has the highest percent of ECE teacher turnover in the United States at nearly 25 percent.[1]

Appropriate compensation would allow ECE professionals to address many of these challenges effectively. Nevertheless, PD in Arizona should include clear connections to state, county, and local agencies that can provide needed supports. The following is a partial list of potential resources.

Mental Health

- 211 Arizona https://211arizona.org/
- (For state employees only) Arizona Department of Administration/Benefits Wellness Mental Health Resources https://wellness.az.gov/mentalhealth

Physical Heath

- Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (Arizona's Medicaid agency) https://www.azahcccs.gov/Members/GetCovered/apply.html
- Health-e-Arizona Plus https://www.healthearizonaplus.gov/Login/Default

Nutrition and Income Assistance

- Arizona Department of Economic Security
  - Nutrition Assistance https://des.az.gov/na
  - TANF https://des.az.gov/ca
- Arizona Department of Health Services (WIC) https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/azwic/

Housing

- Arizona Department of Economic Security Rental Assistance Program https://des.az.gov/ARAP
- Arizona Department of Housing/Public Housing https://housing.az.gov/general-public/arizona-public-housing-authority-section-8-0

[1] PraxisExam.org, accessed July 16, 2024, https://praxisexam.org/early-education-state-turnover-rate/#:~:text=Turnover%20Rates%20by%20State&text=Turnover%20rates%20were%20highest%20in,turnover%20rate%20is%20nearly%2025%25.

Appendix A: List of PDAC Members Involved in the Creation of the Roadmap

Madison Anderson	First Things First
Kathy Balderama	Children's Safari
Margaret Bernal	Arizona Department of Health Services
Kavita Bernstein	Candelen
Ena Binns	Arizona Early Intervention Program
Monica Brinkerhoff	United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona
Melissa Busby	Arizona Department of Economic Security
Veronica Chacon	Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry
Abby Cole	Arizona Department of Economic Security
Denice Contreras	United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona
Chantelle Curtis	Arizona Early Intervention Program
Lou Durant	Candelen
Diane Fellows	Child and Family Resources
Hiroko Flores	Arizona Department of Economic Security
Jessica Flowers	Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
Wendy Flynn	Arizona Department of Education
Michelle Genaro	Arizona Department of Economic Security
Kirsten Gray	Valley of the Sun YMCA
Laura Lee	Arizona Department of Education
Renee Manning	Rio Salado College
Erica Melies	Arizona Early Intervention Program
Barbara Milner	Central Arizona College
Cassie Morwood	Tempe Christian Preschool
Elisa Mongeluzzi	Arizona State University
Jamie Murello	Learning Care Group
Albert Murrieta	Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children
Tami Philips	Arizona Department of Education
Amy Pico	Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry
Barbie Prinster	Arizona Early Childhood Education Association
Andrea Rach	Arizona Department of Health Services
Stacy Reinstein	Arizona Department of Economic Security
Lizzie Renaud	Arizona Western College
Michelle St. Hilarie	Arizona Child Care Resource & Referral
Ginger Sandweg	First Things First
Meaghan Sherwood	Building Kidz
Angela Tapia	Candelen
Ginger Ward	Southwest Human Development
Megan Wills	Easterseals Blake Foundation
Angela Zilch	Southwest Human Development

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Articulation	The transfer of professional development credentials, courses, credits, degrees, and so on—based on demonstrated student competencies—from one program or institution to another, ideally without a loss of credits.
Career Pathway	Per the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), a "career pathway" is a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that 1) align with the skill demands of the state and local economy; 2) prepare individuals to be successful in a range of secondary and postsecondary education options; 3) include academic and career counseling, as well as non-academic supports; 4) provide, as appropriate, concurrent and accelerated program designs; and 5) help individuals to enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster. Career pathway approaches to workforce development offer articulated education and training steps between occupations in an industry sector, combined with support services, to enable individuals to enter and exit at various levels and to advance over time to higher skills, recognized credentials, and better jobs with higher pay.
Credentials	Official documents or certificates that verify a person's education, training, skills, or achievements. Examples include diplomas, degrees, certifications, and licenses.
Coaching	A relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the recipient(s). Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills and behaviors and is focused on goal setting and achievement for an individual or group.
Compensation	The total monetary and non-monetary benefits provided to employees in exchange for their work and contributions to an organization. It includes base salary, bonuses and incentives, benefits (health insurance, retirement plans, paid time off, paid family and medical leave, etc.), and overtime pay.
Data System	A structured collection of processes, tools, and technologies designed to collect, store, manage, process, and analyze data.
Early Care and Education System	The comprehensive network of programs, policies, services, and regulations designed to support the development, care, and education of young children.
Early Care and Education Professional	Individuals working with young children (infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children) in centers, homes, and schools, and their families or on their behalf (in agencies, organizations, institutions of higher education, etc.), with a primary mission of supporting children's development and learning.
Family, Friend, or Neighbor Caregiver (FFN)	Individuals providing child care who are personally connected to the family of the child or children in their care, such as relatives, close friends, or trusted neighbors.
Formal Education	Education offered through a state-approved, professionally accredited secondary school, college, or university.
Home-based Child Care	Child care provided in a home setting and inclusive of a spectrum of provider types. Home-based providers are sometimes categorized by level of certification or motivation for providing child care. In Arizona, home-based providers can 1) be licensed and/or certified as a family child care home, 2) register as a non-certified relative provider, or 3) provide care to up to four children as an unlicensed family child care home or as a family member, friend, or neighbor (FFN).

Mentoring	A relationship-based process between colleagues in similar professional roles, with a more experienced individual with adult learning knowledge and skills (the mentor) providing guidance and example to the less-experienced individual (the mentee). Mentoring is intended to increase an individual's personal or professional capacity, resulting in greater professional effectiveness.
Outcome Evaluation	Assesses the extent to which an initiative, program, or approach has achieved its intended outcomes and the effects it has had on the target population. The main goal is to determine the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals.
Out-of-School-Time Program	Supervised programs that children regularly attend when school is not in session.
Prior Learning Assessment	The evaluation and assessment of an individual's life learning (learning and knowledge acquired while working, participating in employer training programs, serving in the military, studying independently, volunteering or doing community service, and studying open-source courseware) for college credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training.
Process Evaluation	The documentation of whether a program has been implemented as intended—and why or why not. Process evaluations may examine whether the activities are taking place, who is conducting the activities, who is reached through the activities, and whether sufficient inputs have been allocated or mobilized.
Professional Competencies	The knowledge, skills, and abilities ECE professionals need to provide high-quality services.
Professional Development	A continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. These opportunities lead to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early education professionals. Professional development encompasses the categories of education, training, and technical assistance.
Professional Development System	A set of organized programs, resources, and supports designed to help ECE professionals grow and improve in their careers. It includes the training, education, and opportunities for learning that help ECE professionals develop the skills and knowledge they need to effectively support young children's development and learning.
Professional Learning	Ongoing education and development opportunities that help individuals enhance their skills, knowledge, and competencies.
Professional Standards	The established guidelines, principles, and expectations that define the ethical conduct, skills, and quality of work required in a particular profession. These standards outline the knowledge, behavior, and competencies that professionals must demonstrate to maintain credibility, accountability, and integrity in their field.
Qualifications	The skills, knowledge, experience, and attributes a person has that make them suitable for a particular job or activity. Qualifications can be proven through official documents, but they also include informal experiences and abilities that may not be officially documented.
Technical Assistance	The provision of targeted and customized supports to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of practices by recipients.
Training	A learning experience or series of experiences that address a specific area of inquiry or related set of skills or dispositions.
Trauma-Informed Care	Care that recognizes that traumatic experiences terrify, overwhelm, and violate individuals. Trauma-informed care is a commitment not to repeat these experiences and, in whatever way possible, to restore a sense of safety, power, and self-worth.

Appendix C: About the AZ Workforce Registry

The Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry (Registry) is a critical component of the Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network (Network). It provides a place for ECE professionals to:

- Create a confidential personal online profile that can be accessed and updated 24/7 and always ready to apply to a professional resume.
- Track work experience, education, and professional development hours that will be calculated into a lattice level.
- Search and register for professional development opportunities anywhere in the state.
- Maintain a running record of professional development, available as an education and professional development certificate suitable for printing and emailing.
- Apply for program administrator access to assist with program management.
- Apply to become a professional development instructor to register participants and track professional development offerings.
- Apply for scholarships to earn a Child Development Associate Credential, College Certificate of Completion in ECE, associate degree, and bachelor's degree.

The Registry is managed by Arizona PBS through a grant from First Things First using best practices in technology and data confidentiality. Personal information entered into the Registry will not be sold or shared without permission; registry data may be reported as statistical data. Each person's record belongs to them and is password protected.

Current Registry Features and Functions

- Open to all providers (licensed and unlicensed)
- Follows individual throughout career
- Captures provider age, race/ethnicity, primary language spoken, geographic location (based on address)
- Tracks verified formal education; credential, certificates, and professional license; professional development and training
- Tracks background checks
- Captures employment information (status, wages, hours, title, benefits)
- Verifies employment history
- Captures ages served
- Displays available trainings and trainers
- Tracks career lattice placement and potential next steps
- Supports applications for scholarships and bonuses for completed milestones
- Syncs with DHS licensing dashboard; can upload key documents
- Allows owners/directors to edit program details, confirm staff, edit employee pay and role, and pull training reports
- Mobile-friendly
- Dashboard
- Resume-maker