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# Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Compensation

## Cohort III



# September 2019 – November 2020

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## Introduction and Background

Much has been written about the woefully low compensation of early childhood educators, those working in center and home-based settings. National and state workforce studies report hourly wages just more than \$11, with few benefits such as fully funded health insurance or retirement. These low wages are often seen as the reason for high turnover and workforce instability. The challenge states face is the competition between increasing access for children in need of early care and education and building high-quality programs for young children where teachers are well educated and compensated. Equitable compensation for the early childhood workforce is one of the most intractable and omnipresent barriers hanging over the profession. It is a problem with limited answers for securing the additional funds necessary to fully support the workforce.

The work of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center at Child Care Services Association (the Center) has long been about transforming the workforce in states. Since 2015, with the support of foundation funding, the Center has supported state teams as they move the needle on workforce compensation and address barriers to higher education.

This past year, COVID-19 was the challenge that no one anticipated. In spite of it, and in some ways because of it, state teams in Alabama, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio and Rhode Island made significant gains. While the scope of the project did not change as a result of the pandemic, the states and the Center needed to pivot quickly to address the immediate impact of COVID-19 on early childhood educators and early childhood education programs. Given all of this, it is truly remarkable how much progress these teams made.

### The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center at Child Care Services Association

**National Center at Child Care Services Association** provides leadership in the early childhood education field to states across the country and to our nation's policymakers on the critical importance and value of an educated, well-paid and stable early childhood workforce to ensure the long-term success of our nation's children in school and in life. For many years, the Center has developed strategies to address big policy and funding issues to ensure equity of access to higher education, improved compensation, stability and career pathways for the diverse early childhood workforce. Its largest national effort, the **T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Initiative**, provides the incumbent workforce the opportunity to attend community colleges and universities in their states to take coursework leading to early childhood education degrees. T.E.A.C.H. is also a systemic strategy that serves as a policy driver at the state and local levels, resulting in increased funding for early childhood workforce needs, increased awareness of workforce needs and more workforce support, including a more responsive higher education system. While this effort has not eliminated all of the barriers to higher education access for the workforce, it has leveraged change to remove obstacles to college completion for the incumbent workforce, allowing them to graduate debt-free.

Project reports on previous cohorts of *Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Compensation* can be found on the National Center's Initiatives – Compensation webpage. These reports include detailed information on the project's background, design and evaluation data and a summary of results from states that participated in two previous cohorts. This report includes a brief description of the project's background, but the main focus is the summary of results of the five state teams' work from September 2019-November 2020.

## About the Project

Building on the Center's experiences using a multi-state team approach and with funding from the Alliance for Early Success and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the project focused on creating new or significantly expanding policy, strategy development and/or expansion and funding to improve compensation in participating states and developing strategies that leverage the investments of T.E.A.C.H. scholarships and Child Care WAGE\$® supplements to facilitate the development and/or replication of solutions to identified barriers.

All states were selected through a Request for Information process based on their capacity to engage in this work. States were required to submit a compensation environment scan of the condition of their state's early workforce, their strengths and successes regarding compensation strategies to support the workforce, existing barriers and challenges for developing compensation strategies and past, current or proposed compensation funding strategies.

Each of the five states initially created policy, funding and strategy development/implementation action plans to guide their work. With the advent of the pandemic, all five states revised their action plans based on the changing realities and needs of the early childhood workforce and the early childhood industry, while remaining true to the overall goals of improving workforce compensation and leveraging investments to address policy solutions.

**Note:** During this project year, a similar project using a state team approach was supported by the T.E.A.C.H. National Center to address barriers to access to early childhood higher education. The two sets of teams received similar supports from the Center, created and implemented action plans and reported on their challenges, accomplishments, lessons learned and next steps. You will find some similarities throughout the reports. A report on that project, *Addressing Barriers in Higher Education*, can be found [here](#).

## Types of Supports Offered to States

Among all of the tumult during the grant period, the Center was still able to provide policy guidance to address COVID-19-related barriers and ongoing technical assistance, training, monitoring and support to advance their progress and implementation of their policy, strategy and funding action plans to reduce barriers in early childhood workforce compensation. Staff

- attended virtual meetings with each state,
- reviewed quarterly progress reports,
- conducted webinars and invited state partners to conduct webinars,
- facilitated final state presentations, and
- conducted exit interview with each state.

In addition to these supports, a *Moving the Needle on EC Workforce Compensation Summit* was planned to bring the five teams together for two days of training to support implementation of their action plans. The dates and venue for the Summit were secured and an agenda was developed. Due to COVID-19, staff worked tirelessly over four weeks to pivot to a virtual event held April 23-24, 2020. The Summit offered a keynote address and five compensation-focused workshops.

## **Compensation Summit Evaluation**

Ninety-five percent of respondents indicated they gained knowledge that will improve their performance in their work with their compensation team.

- “I appreciate the T.E.A.C.H. National Center continuing to support the compensation work in our state by changing the format to a virtual forum. I appreciate the work that went into planning and designing the forum. The sessions and presenters were wonderful.”
- “Everyone did an amazing job. I never would have believed I would have benefitted as much from the virtual summit. I enjoyed the panel sessions with multiple presenters on a related topic.”

## **Vision Roadmaps**

Each team submitted a Vision Roadmap, including what they believe are the steps necessary for their Action Plan vision to be realized.

### **Alabama Team**

***Vision:*** Alabama’s early childhood educators will receive compensation in alignment with their qualifications. (Alabama did not submit a roadmap.)

### **Minnesota Team**

***Vision:*** Minnesota will have a qualified, diverse, supported and equitably compensated early childhood workforce as a critical component to providing early childhood care and education that supports Minnesota’s families, communities and industries.

#### **Roadmap**

1. Increase outreach and awareness.
2. Always center equity – use our Racial Equity Assessment tool to analyze recommendations.
3. Introduce and implement the plan for Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education and true Compensation Reform.
4. Partner with Minnesota’s Children’s Cabinet and state agencies.
5. Connect work to Economic Development efforts and partner with Workforce Boards.
6. Develop strategies specific to family providers.
7. Develop/support aligned legislative proposals for 2021.
8. Build strategic partnerships with other stakeholders.

### **New Jersey Team**

***Vision:*** New Jersey’s early childhood workforce will be adequately compensated by receiving a living wage that reflects each individual’s educational accomplishments and experiences.

#### **Roadmap**

1. Federal and state policymakers, K-12 educators, parents and the child care workforce themselves will recognize the critical role the child care community plays in laying the educational and social/emotional foundation for young children, and as they are responsible to achieve that end, will implement and fund a comprehensive set of workforce compensation policies.
2. Federal and state policymakers, K-12 educators, parents and the child care workforce themselves will recognize the critical link between parents’ access to quality early learning

- experiences and the recovery and strengthening of the economy, and as a result, will implement and fund policies to support that end.
3. The public will move beyond the view that child care is babysitting and will recognize its important role as children's first educators.
  4. K-12 educators will view the child care community as their partners in educating young children to be successful in school and in life.
  5. Advocacy for an adequately compensated workforce will go beyond those that are most directly affected and include parents, K-12 educators and policy leaders.
  6. Federal and state policymakers will recognize the urgency of supporting and strengthening a comprehensive system that provides for the education and care of children, supports their families and is integral to the recovery and growth of the economy and make it a policy priority moving forward.
  7. Federal and state policymakers will recognize the inability of families to pay for the costs attributed to high quality early learning experiences for their children, and as child care is a "public good," recognize their responsibility in adequately investing in the implementation of policies and funding to support that end.
  8. Federal and state legislation will be proposed and adopted that will provide commensurate compensation directly to child care staff, separate from funding needed for the implementation of quality child care programs.

## **Ohio Team**

**Vision:** Early childhood educators are compensated commensurate with their education and equivalent to teachers in the public PK-12 system.

**Glossary** - Early Childhood Educators – Power to the Profession definitions for Educator 1, 2 and 3, inclusive of all age bands of children served (Infant-Toddler, Preschool and Afterschool) and all settings; Compensation – wage, benefits, paid planning time and other types of compensation.

## **Roadmap**

1. Further define and refine alignment among EC Educator levels (Power to the Profession) and comparable education, experience and responsibilities in the PK-12 System.
2. Increase public investment in early childhood.
3. Continue support of existing initiatives (T.E.A.C.H., POWER Ohio, local investments).
4. Leverage national, state and local efforts to include best practices and lessons learned.
5. Identify or create a sample wage scale and explore opportunities to reward programs for a comparable wage (possible Head Start and other state examples). Identify Ohio-specific data needed to complete the process.
6. Communicate in the field about career and pathway planning.
7. Provide training for program administrators who commit to increase wages and compensation, including, but not limited to, budget forecasting, financial planning, human resources and legal requirements.
8. Engage voices of early childhood educators and external experts (business, accounting, HR and legal) to assist in the development of priorities and avoid unintended consequences.

## Rhode Island Team

**Vision:** The Rhode Island state team will work together to identify needs and strategies for the infant-toddler, child care, early intervention and home visiting workforce to support quality improvement and compensation initiatives.

### Roadmap

1. Administration and leadership at each level will recognize the compensation crisis and develop wage enhancement strategies to improve recruitment and retention of effective early educators and incentivize completion of education credentials and improved practices.
2. Funding will be dedicated at the executive level and in legislation to improve compensation for infant and toddler teachers and family child care providers in child care programs on parity with state funded PreK.
3. The state will allocate resources to increasing the rates paid to child care providers, both increasing the base rate to the federal benchmark and increasing the rates to providers in the higher quality levels.
4. A comprehensive public relations and marketing campaign will be funded to educate the public about the compensation issue, with a focus on parents and the business community.
5. Work with the Department of Labor and Training to engage their support and resources in creating strategies for increased workforce compensation.

## Progress on Achievements

At the end of the year, all five states made measurable progress toward achieving their team's goals for improvements in policy, strategy development/implementation and/or funding to move the needle on early childhood workforce compensation, including how change was leveraged. The progress of each state team toward achieving their goals, including areas of change in each state and relevant data from states was captured through team presentations.

As mentioned previously, COVID-19 was an unprecedented challenge. The impact of the pandemic on the early childhood profession was, and continues to be, devastating at every level. Child care businesses closed, families lost services and staff jobs were lost or hours reduced. While T.E.A.C.H. states provided strategies to keep the workforce moving toward degree completion despite COVID-19, our higher education partners struggled, too. Faculty that had never taught an online course suddenly had only online options for course delivery. Course delivery became the primary goal, with quality content becoming a lower priority. In addition to teaching, online faculty had to provide additional technical and academic support to maintain enrollment.

Scholar access issues existed at every level and included lack of internet and hardware, little or no computer skills and a lack of time as adult students became home teachers for their own children. Scholars who were adept with a phone were lost without the computers and computer support routinely available on campus or at their center to complete assignments.

This project became a mechanism that helped the five participating states focus their efforts on these overwhelming barriers. By April 2020, each of the five states had redesigned their action plan to include at least one goal focused on supporting scholars through the pandemic. In the

process, other longtime barriers such as identifying strategies to complete field experiences were suddenly acute issues that required and found some promising answers.

In the end, while all five teams faced challenges, they all made significant progress on addressing higher education barriers, learned valuable lessons and identified next steps.

## Challenges, Accomplishments, Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Inevitably, at the end of any project, the question arises about whether the effort was worth it. Despite the challenges faced in any project of this nature, and the added bonus of COVID-19, the proof is in the outcomes, and the answer was “yes,” on two levels.

One level is the accomplishment of action plan goals, such as:

- An op-ed piece was published by the President of the NJ Business and Industry Association titled, “High Quality Child Care Must be a Top Priority in NJ’s COVID-19 Recovery.”
- The Ohio Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation successfully designated early childhood education as a “Critical Occupation,” lining this industry up to have access to WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) funding. Also worked with this office on a career pathway website tool for ECE Critical Occupations.
- Rhode Island secured funding from the federal Preschool Development Grant to pilot a Registered Apprenticeship Program beginning January 2021 to increase education and compensation for participating teachers using the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® model and provide a participation bonus for the program and a bonus stipend for the Lead Teacher in the classroom who will serve as a mentor.

The second level of accomplishment is in the lessons learned and the conversations in and across state teams in this project and another state-based project of this type, *Addressing Barriers in Higher Education*. These are the thoughts that help organizations learn to grow through difficult times and overcome long-term and systemic barriers. The list below is not new, but it reveals how instrumental the ideas and strategies are for creating change.

1. Intentional focus is key for systems change. It is the starting place for everything.
2. Having good data informs plans and policy decisions. Recognizing data needs and a way to obtain data are key strategies and may be the prelude to many other changes. T.E.A.C.H. states have rich data sources from our own systems to use.
3. Relationships among stakeholders are as essential as intention and focus and may need to exist before change or evolve as part of seeking change. More connection, communication and coordination is needed among ECE stakeholders, elected officials and policymakers.
4. Seize opportunities when they present themselves and be flexible and adaptable. The identification of the early childhood workforce as essential workers is a pandemic result that can lead to sustained change. Don’t let a good crisis go to waste.
5. Look for long-term solutions and not just quick fixes. There is a difference between true financing/compensation reform and workforce support such as salary supplements and tax credits where we generally focus first.
6. There is a saying that if it is not documented it did not happen. More importantly, if it is not documented it cannot be reliably shared. Sharing success stories from other states and

- other institutions is extremely valuable. It allows us to learn from other's successes and avoid similar mistakes.
7. It took a pandemic for early childhood education to be defined as a critical/essential occupation. We must take advantage of this opportunity to move toward adequately compensating and providing education for this essential workforce.
  8. Linking project efforts to national level leadership and voices is critical to earning recognition in individual states. Using efforts such as NAEYC's Power to the Profession as a beacon gives our states' efforts more credibility. National summits with opportunities to connect with national experts move state system work forward.
  9. Never stop questioning. How much of our struggle is due to the devaluation of our workforce, which is primarily female and predominately women of color? How will we change this mindset to ensure early childhood education is seen as a high demand occupation for those entering college and choosing a major, and gain appropriate respect for our workforce from the public and the electorate?

On the following pages are the challenges, accomplishments, some additional lessons learned and next steps for the five teams that addressed moving the needle on compensation for the early childhood education workforce.

## **Challenges**

### **Pandemic**

- COVID-19 and child care shutdown across the state. (AL)
- Pandemic, pandemic, pandemic (MN)
- Response to the COVID-19 closures, shortages and workforce crisis took away from original priorities. (NJ)
- There is a new normal during the pandemic with a lot of unknowns. (OH)
- The state is experiencing a decrease in the number of programs due to closures. (OH)

### **Policy**

- The legislative session moved into multiple special sessions and momentum for bills was lost. (MN)
- The General Assembly delayed passing legislation and the state budget until after Election Day. (RI)

### **Strategy**

- A perceived lack of urgency for the compensation crisis and child care in general when compared to other current health, education and economic dilemmas. (NJ)
- The workforce's perception of themselves as unable to advocate, as undeserving of more compensation, etc., continues to be a hurdle. (NJ)
- The workforce's lack of time for advocacy is a challenge, as many are still trying to care for children, work with their own children who may be doing school at home, caring for ill family members and sometimes having to hold a second job. (NJ)

### **Funding**

- A state budget shortfall is looming. (MN)
- Financial support for a public-private partnership that could mean sustainability of our team in Minnesota is uncertain. (MN)
- The lack of adequate state/federal funding, not only during the COVID-19 crisis, but for ongoing funding of child care. (NJ)
- Annual minimum wage increases for NJ's entire workforce, now in place, create a crisis for child care financing and may reduce motivation for teachers with more education and experience to remain in the child care workforce. (NJ)

### **Messaging**

- Despite the fact that New Jersey's advocates shifted the narrative and included this workforce as essential, often they are not a priority in funding or resource allocation. (NJ)

### **Workforce**

- There is uncertainty of the future and how quickly business will return. (MN)
- The workforce is experiencing an increased level of stress related to their working conditions. (OH)
- Child care taking on virtual school in hybrid K-12 model is challenging for families and the workforce. (NJ)
- Programs are struggling in unheard of ways and have challenges engaging in any work beyond daily operations. (RI)

### **Project Implementation**

- The timing of project was difficult. We were getting started in October, and were gaining momentum when the pandemic caused shut-downs across the state. (AL)
- We had significant team member turnover in the last few months of the project, making it impossible to come together as a team to do the work. (AL)
- Not getting into a room together has been a challenge when we are so accustomed to doing work that way. (RI)

## **Accomplishments**

### **Policy**

- The Alabama Child Care Taskforce developed a set of recommendations for the Governor in support of the child care industry. (AL)
- Introduced comprehensive legislation that included all of these elements (T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®, REETAIN and business support). (MN)
- Introduced standalone T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship legislation in both bodies. (MN)
- The Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation successfully designated early childhood education as a "Critical Occupation," lining this industry up to have access to WIOA funding. Also worked with this office on a career pathway website tool for ECE Critical Occupations. (OH)
- Held numerous education sessions with state and federal elected officials on the impact of COVID-19 on child care and broader workforce issues. (NJ)
- A legislative hearing was held on the impact of COVID-19 on child care. (NJ)
- Expanded federal advocacy in response to COVID-19, empowering the workforce. (NJ)

- Encouraged NJ DHS to expand their work, now underway, to develop a new career lattice. (NJ)
- With the assistance of legislative staff, developed new state legislative proposals on behalf of workforce compensation in the areas of a Governor-appointed compensation task force, tax credits and response to minimum wage increases. (NJ)
- Participated in a press conference with the Governor in a child care center playground with a focus on the essential role of child care in the pandemic recovery. (NJ)
- Step Up to Quality met its goal of shifting eligibility, now requiring that all programs serving publicly funded children must be rated. (OH)
- Tiered reimbursement rates implemented, and while not tied to compensation directly, there is a push to use those funds for compensation. (RI)
- During COVID-19, customized and sent by snail mail a letter to each member of the General Assembly along with hand-written notes to ask for their continued support for children. Continued to build on existing relationships with bill sponsors to strategize how to advocate virtually for legislation. (RI)

### **Strategy**

- Developed and hosted a webinar series and developed resources to support the workforce during the pandemic in collaboration with partnering agencies. (AL)
- The Licensed Family Child Care Task Force began discussing needed business supports. (MN)
- Proposed an evaluation of Parent Aware and included a workforce component. An agreement was made to revisit compensation when Parent Aware standards and indicators are reviewed. (MN)
- Received Technical Assistance from BUILD on compensation in QRIS. (MN)
- Discussed Parent Aware, including upcoming CCDF planning opportunities, at the Licensed Family Child Care Task Force. (MN)
- Developed a salary scale with a connection to the Financing Plan efforts. (MN)
- Reviewed the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment Model Work Standards for possible application to this work. (MN)
- Rolled out a Power to the Profession plan and explored connections. (MN)
- Held meetings with Workforce Development Board staff with state and local/input into the WIOA plan. (MN)
- Strengthened connections with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). (MN)
- Advocates coalesced around CCAP rates, providing an opportunity to work together on ongoing issues. (MN)
- Positive media attention was given to the issues. (MN)
- NJ's Pritzker Children's Initiative Plan includes goal of improving the credentials and compensation of infant-toddler child care workers. (NJ)
- #Reimaginechildcare was formed by Advocated for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ), New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children (NJAECYC), the Nicholson Foundation and the Turrell Fund to challenge policymakers, business leaders, parents and communities to reimagine how accessible, affordable, high quality child care for infants and toddlers can help our state thrive in years to come. (NJ)
- An op-ed piece was published by the President of the NJ Business and Industry Association, titled, "High Quality Child Care Must be a Top Priority in NJ's COVID-19 Recovery." (NJ)

- Completed and distributed results of a child care staff survey on COVID-19 and compensation. (NJ)
- Empowered many in the workforce to speak up for themselves, their programs and the families they serve, sometimes for the first time. (NJ)
- Participation by early educators in POWER Ohio, the state's wage supplement program, exceeded the number of participants expected. (OH)
- Used and continue to use the *Workforce Behind the Workforce* slogan in the state, and the Facebook campaign continues getting views, likes and comments. (OH)
- Continued focus on retention by the Subcommittee of the Early Learning Council that helped work through POWER. (OH)
- Groundwork Ohio, a policy advocate, released their workforce report, *The Workforce Behind the Workforce, Advancing the Early Childhood Education Profession in Ohio's Child Care System*, including a detailed section on compensation. (OH)
- Produced an advocacy video on the workforce. (RI)
- Former Campaign for Quality Child Care and PreK modified in structure to include a new name: Right from the Start. New branding and new social media presence created. RIAEYC and RI KIDS Count, in partnership with Advocacy Solutions, used the Digital Action Center to promote coalition activities and build the advocacy team to promote legislation for 2020. (RI)
- Created three campaign videos—one on child care rates, one on workforce compensation and one on home visiting—to help with advocacy and lobbying and have purchased Facebook ads to reach voters in key districts. (RI)
- Created a Worthy Wages video. (RI)

### **Funding**

- The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) continued subsidy payments to participating child care centers, both open and closed, and offered TASCC grant. (AL)
- The Women's Fund ROAR Grant provided funds to assist with wages and program operation. (AL)
- A Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Reimbursement rate increase finally passed (25% of 2018 Market Rate survey; a new market rate survey is underway). (MN)
- Secured Peacetime Emergency Child Care grants of \$40 million. (MN)
- Secured COVID-19 Public Health Support Grants of \$50 million and counting. (MN)
- NJ's Pritzker Children's Initiative Plan includes funding toward the goal of improving the credentials and compensation of infant-toddler child care workers (NJ)
- Continued Pandemic Support Grants for early childhood education from June-September 2020. (OH)
- Department of Human services increased child care assistance program reimbursement rates for all programs serving families eligible for child care subsidy, moving these programs to the 5-star QRIS tiered reimbursement rate, increasing resources for compensation and stability. It is their hope this can be continued post-pandemic, with the hope that higher tiers will have their rates increased even more rather than the lower tiers returning to the pre-pandemic levels that are well below federal guidelines. (RI)
- Secured funding from the federal Preschool Development Grant to pilot a Registered Apprenticeship Program beginning January 2021 to increase education and compensation for participating teachers using the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® model and provide a participation bonus for the program and a bonus stipend for the Lead Teacher in the classroom who will

serve as a mentor. It was recently learned that these PDG funds were to be doubled, bringing an increase in resources for their pilot. While it remains a pilot, there is hope that the project outcomes will provide data to advocate for sustained funding. (RI)

## Lessons Learned

### Policy

- A year or so ago, nobody came when I went to the legislature. Now, we have leadership building stronger relationships. Trust is part of this work and it has percolated up. There is this incredible increase in legislative interest. Two years ago, they would give lip service to early childhood. Recently, a legislator called and asked the team leader if they could get a budget resolution to fund child care. There is a whole group saying we have to do something about this. Recognition by legislators has fueled confidence in early childhood educators. (NJ)
- We have new allies now. In testimony at the Legislature recently we had data from the state's Department of Labor. This was the first time I ever had DOL data in my testimony. (NJ)

### Strategy

- This opportunity provided us with intentionality. We knew compensation was an issue, but there was never enough room on the plate. This project allowed us to integrate this issue with other policy issues. (NJ)

### Public Awareness

- When child care was opened for essential workers, there was the recognition that child care needed to be paid more because they were open. (NJ)
- What seems to be important now is that the workforce and quality are seen as one in the same. We cannot do one without the other. This is now an objective and we will not get where we want to be without the intentionality of pushing this forward. (NJ)

### Collaboration/Partnerships

- The national contacts and partners help us work toward a national child care system that will recognize the value of child care providers with federal money. The more states can be aligned, the more this helps build a national system. (MN)
- Tying this work to other efforts (Birth-8 workgroup) helped us focus on this work since we knew others were working on the other pieces. (MN)
- The business community got it and has endorsed the fact that a living wage is critical. (JN)
- While Power to the Profession is still looking for focus and there are still many gray areas around how to make this work, it has helped our compensation team dig deeper. (OH)
- Partnerships were a key to much of our work. One partner brought the Department of Labor and Training to the table. We hoped to access funds from DOLT, and while that did not happen, we hope it will now that we have made a connection. (RI)
- Think Babies money helped form RIght from the Start, the RI legislative and budget campaign to advance policies for young children and their families. We were able to mesh this project with Think Babies, which also has a compensation piece. This also brought new people to the table. (RI)

## **Engaging the Workforce**

- We recognize how the workforce is engaging in this work at a level they never have before. Because of COVID-19, we met virtually with every single representative, and each virtual meeting included a child care person to speak about what was going on. The providers (70) who participated in these meetings are now able to articulate their needs and their confidence level has grown. (NJ)
- We must engage the workforce in our legislative efforts. (NJ)

## **COVID-19**

- COVID-19 has heightened awareness of child care, which is now being considered an essential workforce and the implications of this designation can be an opportunity. (OH)

## **Next Steps**

### **Alabama**

- Continue working with team members to ensure provider compensation is a priority and included in conversations.
- Continue work on the project goals as the state returns to normal.
- Complete the Workforce Study and report the results.
- Use the Workforce Study results to develop a campaign around the need for increased compensation for child care providers.
- Work with new leadership at the Alabama Department of Early Childhood and with staff to continue apprenticeship work.
- Work with team members and the Alabama Child Care Taskforce members to continue developing tax credit legislation.

### **Minnesota**

- The Moving the Needle on Compensation Committee will dissolve, but the work will live on through other committees like the B-8 initiative (Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce).
- Move the salary scale work through the system and to implementation.
- It is necessary to build Power to the Profession into this work to move compensation and the salary scale forward.
- Continue to build messaging and secure funding to support that messaging around compensation, reframe the field and broader audience's understanding of the issue and build buy-in (teacher and parent buy-in), because we need those voices to make the case and build support.
- Continue this conversation on compensation with a group at Minnesota Department of Education working on compensation and retention on K-12.
- This foundational report and work will continue to be a resource for our finance team, looking at modeling the costs of quality and government and family shares of that. Compensation is not specific in the PDG grant, but it could become more important as we figure out the impact of COVID-19 and how to maintain a strong and viable workforce
- Compensation will live on in the salary scale. As we work to implement Power to the Profession, it will be key to tie it to the salary scales we developed to move compensation.
- Create messages in a way that gets people thinking about it differently.

- Seek funding to support strategies and activities that get parent and teacher buy-in.
- Think beyond teacher support to gender support.
- Messaging we were able to create about COVID-19.

#### **New Jersey**

- Release the workforce survey report.
- Continue to draw attention to the current child care landscape and the impact of the upcoming minimum wage increase on the workforce.
- Advocate for proposed legislation and work with members of the state legislature to develop other legislation.
- Continue to support the development of the career lattice and complete the wage scale.
- Think through ideas for tax credits to stabilize the workforce and improve quality through education.

#### **Ohio**

- Continue to advocate for wage supplements using data collected.
- Continue to learn about the potential possibilities inherent in the new *Critical Occupations* designation for early childhood education and seek out opportunities for the workforce and educate workforce board members about this.
- Continue to explore funding opportunities.
- Create an implementation plan for continuation of this compensation work.

#### **Rhode Island**

- Continue the work to pass the Early Educator Investment Act to establish a statewide target wage scale.
- Advocate to make the current child care rates increase permanent and advocate to launch a comprehensive wage enhancement strategy for child care educators (maybe through hazard pay or contracts).
- Advocate to increase funding for Early Intervention and Home Visiting with attention to stabilizing the workforce through improved wages.
- Partnerships have helped us focus. Compensation will not be the sole focus but it will be included in everything we talk about. RIGHT from the Start is still funded for another year. We are seeking additional funding. The group will not go away, but it will morph.
- Developing and implementing the Registered Apprenticeship program. It will be developed under the T.E.A.C.H. umbrella.
- Starting conversation about using framework for QRIS.

## **Return on Investment**

Each team was encouraged to increase funding for the workforce and some states were able to do that. We learned once again that the return on investment for a project like this is significant. States collectively leveraged \$200,000 to support teamwork and \$1.3 million to support the workforce. In addition, several states reported funding that had been applied for and/or was expected by the end of the project, in the amount of \$731,000. Finally, states identified pandemic relief funds received by their state to support the workforce in the amount of \$551 million.

## Conclusions

We continue to learn from this work. Great things can happen with multi-state teams, when provided a combination of *requirements* (to convene a team of diverse partners and create and implement an action plan) and *supports* (webinars and summit workshops featuring state and national content experts, newsletters, team leader meetings, and staff time to attend team meetings and track down resources specific to team needs). We also continue to see progress with policymakers, legislation drafted, reports compiled and released and video testimonials created and shared on social media. We hear from team members that they took the information they learned from the work on a given topic like moving the needle on compensation for the diverse workforce, which spreads out back at their tables.

It may come as a surprise that COVID-19 was instrumental in pushing states involved in the project to positive actions that seemed impossible before the pandemic. States scrambled, reacted, refined and ultimately pursued goals that were a blend of original goals and responses to COVID-19.

As the world shut down but the needs of the workforce became ever more urgent, we learned, or perhaps were reminded of some things we may have taken for granted in an ordinary year. One thing is certain. Since the pandemic began, these state team leaders and their organizations were, and continue to be, on the front lines in their states, responding to the needs of the early childhood industry and the workforce. They significantly revised and shifted their work. In addition to the crisis drawing time and resources away from the compensation work, team members also found themselves engaged in efforts to provide grants to the workforce, support provider and program sustainability and lead advocacy efforts to ensure adequate stimulus funding was directed to child care. We heard often that this crisis provided a chance to take advantage of the realization of the critical nature of child care, which was shown by the \$39 billion for child care relief funding in the America Rescue Plan Act. There has also been an increased focus on equity. Many public schools remained virtual, while child care was expected to be open. How much of this is related to the devaluation of this child care workforce, primarily women, often women of color and always poorly compensated?

The resolve of the team leaders and members to double down on their efforts to support the early childhood industry in general and the workforce specifically was evident. We were reminded of the flexibility necessary for the work we do. The ability of these folks to pivot as the pandemic unfolded and the only thing that was certain was daily uncertainty, demonstrated a tenacious commitment to the workforce and the systems that serve them. It should come as no surprise that this is how the work unfolded. We are certain the work will continue to unfold in promising ways.