

## **Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force**

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

6:00p.m. to 8:00p.m.

Virtual Meeting: WebEx

Also available by livestream to the public.

**Task Force Members Present:** Janell Bentz, Lydia Boerboom, Shakira Bradshaw, Meghan Caine, Oriane Casale, Kath Church, Cyndi Cunningham, Siv Dobrovolny, Barb Fabre, Deb Fitzpatrick, Kraig Gratke, Nancy Hafner, Debbie Hewitt, Pat Ives, Brook LaFloe, Ann McCully, Jenny Moses, Missy Okeson, Suzanne Pearl, Clare Sanford, Laurena Schlottach-Ratcliff, Krystal Shatek, Sandy Simar, Tonia Villegas, Bharti Wahi

**Task Force Members Absent:** Representative Peggy Bennett, Representative Liz Boldon, Summer Bursch, Luciana Carballo, Karen Fogg, Senator Karin Housley, Lauryn Schothorst, Michelle Trelsted, Amy Walstien, Jayne Whiteford, Senator Melissa Wiklund, Early Childhood Educator – Licensed Center (vacant position)

**Task Force Consultants Present:** Katie Reed, Afton Partners; Kaitlyn McGovern, Afton Partners; Kate Ritter, Children’s Funding Project

**Children’s Cabinet Staff Present:** Erin Bailey, Hannah Quinn

### **Welcome and Agenda**

Task Force members reviewed virtual meeting protocols, voting protocols, and went over the agenda for the meeting. The agenda included one formal vote on recommendations for a compensation framework. The agenda also included updates from a recent co-chair listening session and discussion of the draft version of Task Force deliverables.

### **Meeting #12 Minutes**

Members took an informal vote to approve minutes from the October 25 meeting. The minutes were approved with 23 votes.

### **Voting Items**

Voting members took one formal vote to approve the below recommendation:

#### ***Compensation Framework Recommendations***

1. Currently, employers in the early care and education field are required to meet state and local minimum wage. This Task Force believes current hourly minimum wages are not adequate for workers in the ECE field, and current median wages for early educators reflect an undervaluing and under-compensation of a critical workforce whose work is highly demanded, supports the broader Minnesota economy, and supports the future of Minnesota’s youngest learners.
2. Minnesota believes that the early care and education workforce should be paid fair and appropriate wages that allow them to support themselves and their families; however, this Task Force respects the needs and rights of businesses to make their own business decisions. Therefore, the Task Force recommends a phased-in recommended base wage for ECE employees. The base wage recommendation is based on the DEED Cost of Living tool at the individual level and will be supported by additional funding to cover the additional costs of wages paid.

The recommended base wage will:

- Serve as a recommended floor for all members of the early care and education workforce
- Reflect the local geographies' individual living wage
- Reflect an appropriate wage for an entry level role in the ECE field
- Be updated no less than every two years based on the DEED Cost of Living tool, at the individual cost of living wage.

Minnesota recognizes that achieving substantial and sustained improvements in the education and experience levels of the early care and education workforce requires investments aimed at reducing inequities in pay. To support ECE programs in attracting, retaining, and supporting a qualified workforce, the state will implement a workforce compensation grant that provides financial resources to programs paying wages at the recommended base level. As programs opt into publicly funded compensation grants, documentation and submission of compliance would be required for accountability.

3. In addition to the recommended base wage, the recommended wage scale\* includes wages above and beyond the base wage. These higher wage recommendations are associated with higher levels of education and experience. The recommended wage scale should be included in cost modeling efforts (per this Task Force's cost modeling recommendation). Family Child Care providers should plan to pay themselves a recommended base annual wage (profit) equivalent to a lead role on the wage scale, to reflect their dual responsibilities as directors *and* providers of care and education. FCC providers who employ additional staff should follow the recommendations for employers, including the recommended wage scale. Increased per child rates for the increased costs associated with education and qualifications needed for higher quality programs would be provided through cost modeling and the family benefits program (Great Start MN Program). Employers hiring or retaining employees with the recommended levels of education and/or experience to provide quality care and education will be incentivized to pay those workers higher wages in alignment with the recommended wage scale. Wages at the highest level of the wage scale are commensurate with elementary school teacher salaries. Documentation of compliance would be required at the levels required for funding received. Rules for this implementation would need to be determined through the future program administrative agency.

\*The Proposed MN ECE Professional Wage Scale has been used as a starting point for the recommended wage scale, with edits made to:

- Adjust wages based on current cost of living
- Take out references to the ECE I, II, and III levels
- Align with the Achieve career lattice and include comparable competencies for the phased-in implementation period.

Further updates are needed to:

- Reflect regional variation, in alignment with regional cost modeling. Regional variation should be determined during the planning and implementation phase.
- Fill in the comparable competencies and experience guidelines, based on thorough process inclusive of stakeholders and end-users.

Implementation:

- Over the implementation timeline, as funding to providers increases through the long-term affordability recommendations, wages should be increased for the existing workforce and new members of the field. As programs opt-in to these systems of funding, they will be able to implement wage increases in alignment with additional funding.

- Throughout the phased-in implementation timeline, employers will be incentivized to pay workers at wages commensurate with both experience and education, and to hire workers who meet educational and/or competency guidelines.
- By the end of the implementation timeline, all members of the workforce whose employers opt-in to the compensation grant will be paid a base wage equal to or above the DEED cost of living. At this point, the corresponding competencies and experience guidelines for wage incentives should be re-evaluated.

Recommended Base Wage and Wage Scale:

	Hourly Wage (2021 numbers)	Annual Wage (2021 numbers)	Based On
Recommended base wage for all members of the workforce by 2031*	\$16.21	\$33,717	Individual Cost of Living (DEED)

\*Appropriate wage for an entry level role

	Educational Guidelines for Role <i>Aligned with MN Achieve Career Lattice</i>	OR Comparable Competency and Experience Guidelines for Role ** <i>(To be reevaluated at the end of the implementation period in 2031)</i>	Role Employees must meet statutory requirements	Hourly Wage (2021 numbers)	Annual Wage (2021 numbers)	Based On
Wage Incentivized	CDA Certificate Steps 6-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified apprenticeship program OR</li> <li>• X hours of professional training AND X years of experience</li> <li>• AND corresponding competencies</li> </ul>	<b>Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Educator in 0-5 settings</li> </ul>	\$19.40	\$40,352	Family Living Wage (DEED)
Wage Incentivized	Early Childhood-related Associate Degree Steps 8-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified apprenticeship program OR</li> <li>• X hours of professional training AND X years of experience</li> <li>• AND corresponding competencies</li> </ul>	<b>Lead I</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead Educator in 0 – 5 settings</li> <li>• Guide Support Roles</li> <li>• FCC enrolling fewer than 10 children</li> </ul>	\$24.25	\$50,440	125% of Support
Wage Incentivized	Early Childhood Ed BA Steps 10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X hours of professional training AND X years of experience and corresponding competencies</li> </ul>	<b>Lead II</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead Educator in 0 – 5 settings</li> <li>• Guide Support and Lead I Roles</li> </ul>	\$30.31	\$63,050	Parity with Elementary Teachers (125% of Lead I)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FCC enrolling 10 or more children</li> </ul>			
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\*\*Comparable competencies and experience, aligned with the MN Knowledge and Competency Frameworks, will be defined using a human-centered design process inclusive of relevant state agency representatives, all types of ECE providers, and other relevant end-users (i.e., parents, teachers in the ECE field).

These numbers reflect statewide median data. Per the recommendation, regional data would be used for implementation.

With 8 voting members present and one vacant voting member position, the vote passed with 8 votes in favor, no votes against, and no abstentions.

### Anticipated Vote Sequencing

Co-chairs presented slide 16, which includes a timeline of anticipated future votes for the Task Force through January 2023. This schedule may change as different needs arise or additional votes are brought forward by members.

### Listening Session Share-out

Task Force co-chairs held the fourth and final virtual listening session on Wednesday, November 2. Participants included representatives from non-profit organizations, a member of a school board, a Head Start employee, and public sector employees. Themes included:

- Workforce shortage issues continue to affect providers of all types, across the state.
  - Professionalization of the field is important, and members of the workforce need opportunities for advancement.
  - Long-term solutions for compensation and benefits should be competitive with other fields, in order to recruit and retain educators.
  - Appreciation for short-term financial support throughout pandemic, want to see that continued into a long-term solution.
- Consistent and simplified administration of benefits programs is important for providers. Consolidating funding streams into one process could help ECE settings of all types.
- It is important to look to outside research when exploring solutions.

### Deliverables Planning

The Task Force was charged by establishing legislation to “Develop a plan and implementation timeline that ensures all families have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education that enriches, nurtures, and supports children and their families.” Legislation identifies that “The implementation timeline must phase in the plan over a period of no more than six years, beginning in July 2025 and finishing no later than July 2031.”

Nine members reviewed and provided feedback on initial draft versions of these deliverables. Members who have volunteered for this process are listed on slide 22 and themes from their review process include:

- Requests to emphasize the urgency in implementing recommendations
- Language suggestions for clarity and longevity of the plan
- Suggestions for strategies on how to communicate the Task Force recommendations with external stakeholders

Small group feedback was incorporated and a revised draft was shared with the full Task Force on November 18, including proposed changes to voted language. Those proposed changes were summarized in the “Changes to Voted Language Tracker”. The full Task Force reviewed this document, and discussion themes included:

- The first sentence in the new family benefits system language may be confusing to read. Are edits needed?
- Appreciation for the work of the small group which read and provided edits in advance.
- Recognition of the benefits cliff effect and the work the Task Force did when considering that issue.
- Continued importance of urgency to address these issues.

#### **Timeline and Next Steps**

Members of the public and members of the Task Force are asked to provide written input. Input can be emailed to [GreatStart.TaskForce.MMB@state.mn.us](mailto:GreatStart.TaskForce.MMB@state.mn.us).

At the next meeting, Task Force co-chairs anticipate bringing forward one recommendation for a formal vote:

- Changes to Voted Language

**Next Task Force Meeting: December 13, 2022, 6:00-8:00 p.m.**