



Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force

Workforce Compensation and Supports Working Group Meeting

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

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

Virtual Meeting: WebEx

Working Group Members Present: Nicole Blissenbach, Lydia Boerboom, Oriane Casale, Meghan Caine, Ann McCully, Jenny Moses, Krystal Shatek, Michelle Trelstad, Melissa Wiklund

Working Group Members Absent: Adriana Lopez, Cyndi Cunningham, Nancy Hafner, Pat Ives

Task Force Consultants Present: Ellen Johnson, Afton Partners; Gerald Liu, Afton Partners

Welcome and Agenda

Working Group members reviewed virtual meeting protocols, Task Force Guiding Principles, and went over the agenda for the meeting. The agenda included finalizing financial relief and benefits package recommendations based on Task Force feedback, as well as discussion and aligning on recommendations for developing affordable, accessible, and aligned pathways for the ECE workforce.

Review

Members reviewed the Working Group Charge:

Define what a “qualified, diverse, supported, and equitably compensated” ECE workforce in Minnesota looks like and how it can be achieved.

Legislation determines that the Task Force must consider the following factors under the areas of the charge:

Qualified

- Develop affordable, accessible, and aligned pathways to support early childhood educators' career and educational advancement.

Diverse

- Increase racial and ethnic equity and diversity in the early care and education workforce and recognize the value of cultural competency and multilingualism.

Supported

- Consider the need for and development of a mechanism that ties childcare reimbursement rates to employee compensation.

Equitably Compensated

- Include a compensation framework that supports recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce in every early care and education setting.
- Set compensation for early childhood educators by reference to compensation for elementary school teachers.

The group must also:

- Consider the recommendations from previous work including the Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce project and other statewide reports on systemic issues in early care and education.

Short-Term Financial Relief Strategies, Benefits, and Time Off Recommendations

Working Group members reviewed slides 11 and 12, which include a reminder of the already-approved financial compensation recommendations and the draft fiscal impact recommendation. With that context, members reviewed slides 13-18. These slides include the draft financial relief strategies, benefits, and time off recommendations, feedback from Task Force members on these recommendations, and draft edits based on feedback received.

Discussion themes included:

- For time off, flexibility is good. This group doesn't need to be prescriptive about benefits – offering options allows for unique situations to be accounted for. The recommendations are to follow best practice guidance, not mandates.
 - It's good to have a frame of reference in the best practice guidance.
 - It would be good to call out areas for additional flexibility – it may be easier to provide one lump sum of paid time off, rather than separate vacation and sick time.
- Healthcare recommendations should be run by external experts, may need further review.
- It can be difficult to make recommendations that work well across program types. It is important to set a floor for best practices, and encourage programs to go beyond that baseline in adopting industry standards.
- Members are comfortable with the revised recommendations, incorporating their additional feedback, being brought forward for a vote at the July 26 Task Force meeting.

Qualified Workforce

The Working Group reviewed slides 21-25, which include an overview of Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Frameworks, a graphic that illustrates the many paths to a career in early care and education, and information regarding credit for prior learning. Members then participated in a brainstorm session around the below questions:

What are the **current challenges** with MN's ECE pathways? Discussion themes included:

- Transitions between levels are not seamless, and legislated transfer pathways are not consistent across institutes of higher education
- Classes and trainings aren't held at a time that works for people who are caring for children
- Current low wages prevent workers from entering higher education in the first place, and there is no guarantee of a higher level of pay after earning a degree or license
- Not all institutes of higher education feel welcoming to all people
- Pathways and options are unclear to the workforce (degrees, licensure, etc.)
 - Educational programs, scholarships, and grants may not be well promoted
 - Current faculty are approaching retirement without people in line to replace them

What **current solutions** exist to make MN's ECE pathways more aligned, affordable, and accessible?

Discussion themes included:

- Existing programs could be solutions
 - If used, the transfer pathways would support solutions
 - Advocates and professional organizations are aligned and active
 - Scholarship models and financial supports exist but need further promotion
- The ongoing Grow Your Own (GYO) pilot program will provide lessons learned
- Existing 2-year courses offer most courses online, accommodating geographic and scheduling issues
- Individual providers create solutions in their own programs to make a CDA free or low-cost for teachers
- Current exploration of an apprenticeship model for MN through the T.E.A.C.H. National Center

What **other solutions** might we consider? Discussion themes included:

- Broader use of credit for prior learning across all levels, including multiple ways to demonstrate prior learning (competency, skills test, portfolio, etc.)
- Paid internship/student teaching opportunities
- Student loan repayment for ECE programs/free two-year programming
- State funded wage floor + career ladder so teachers are in a better financial position to pursue higher education
- Cohort models that support the completion of education programs
- Robust and compensated mentorship programs
- Support for both individuals and the higher education system
- Coursework available nights, weekends, and in languages other than English
- Update licensure requirements, including by making experience in the field count toward student teaching

This brainstorm discussion will produce the first iteration of draft recommendations for the Task Force around a qualified workforce.

Next Steps and Close Out

Krystal Shatek will report out from this meeting at the next full Task Force meeting. Future meetings will occur on the second Wednesday of each month (listed below), from 6pm-8pm.

- Wednesday, August 10
- Wednesday, September 14

Next Working Group Meeting: August 10, 2022, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.