



NGA Center for Best Practices Education Division

Policy Outcomes: Supporting States Policy Strategy to Improve the Early Care and Education Workforce

Background:

From May 2016 – June 2017, the NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) provided technical assistance and grants to support states with developing a policy agenda to strengthen the quality of their early care and education (ECE) professionals by using workforce investment resources and strategies. States received support to develop and carry out action plans focused on one or more specific state policy priorities related to improving their ECE Workforce. This project was intended to help governors connect workforce investment strategies and resources to improve training, effectiveness, and working conditions for early care and education professionals. The project led to improving the ECE Workforce in a variety of ways including white papers and public awareness campaigns, summits and convenings around the ECE workforce, and even cabinet level recommendations and legislation passage.

Policy Outcomes:

- **Washington:** The Washington team focused on increasing compensation for the ECE workforce. The team began by compiling data from multiple sources and working on a cost of quality model for their state. NGA staff wrote a TA Memo to help the state team think about strategies for increasing compensation, and the state team made recommendations to deliver to the state legislature, as well as drafting a position statement on compensation. Additionally, the team gathered key stakeholders to develop a communications strategy and plan for increasing public awareness on the issue of increasing compensation for the early care and education workforce.

During the course of this grant, a bill was introduced that would create an early childhood workforce advisory board that would include state leaders in early care and education, a representative from the state workforce board, a representative from higher education, and several representatives from the economic development office. This advisory board would make recommendations to policy makers on enhancing the early care and education workforce. Although the bill was not funded, Washington is moving forward with forming this workforce advisory board and developing these recommendations for the state legislature.

- **Utah:** On January 9, 2017, Utah's Lt. Governor Spencer Cox hosted a special convening on "The Impact of Environmental Factors and Experiences on Early Brain Development". Members of the convening included the Lt. Governor, legislators, school board members and staff, and early childhood experts, as well as a staff member from NGA. At this convening, State Senator Ann Milner announced that she was going to sponsor a bill in the 2017 Legislative Session entitled 'Early Childhood Services Coordination' to map the landscape of the early childhood field in Utah. The team attributes the coordination of multiple agencies and the Governor's office to achieving this level of elevation of ECE Workforce issues.



- **Minnesota:** The NGA Center staff worked closely with the Minnesota team through the development of a TA Memo that outlined strategies to increase compensation in the ECE Workforce. The Minnesota team then discussed and prioritized potential options from the TA memo, and evaluated their political feasibility. After ranking potential compensation strategies, the core team created an action plan with timelines to present to the Children’s Cabinet. The core team gathered feedback from a subcommittee of the Children’s Cabinet and the NGA Center before presenting the finalized action plan to the Children’s Cabinet. Recently, the Governor announced that the Children’s Cabinet will now focus on Early Childhood Workforce Development and how to create new opportunities for ECE Professionals.
- **New York:** The New York team engaged representatives across multiple sectors such as the Department of Labor to understand opportunities that might be available to help improve the quality of the ECE workforce in New York. In particular, the team discovered an opportunity to apply for an Apprenticeship grant through the state’s Department of Labor Apprenticeship Program. The team also engaged in multiple peer learning activities to understand how other states are addressing issues related to the ECE workforce. After gathering information from multiple sources, the New York team decided to present their findings to the Early Childhood Advisory Council at the council’s June 2017 meeting. During this meeting, the entire council was able to hear more about the possibility of using apprenticeship funding for the ECE workforce through the Department of Labor grants. Overall, the grant served to provide a lever for collaboration between New York’s early care and education stakeholders, business stakeholders, and state and local workforce development boards.
- **New Jersey:** The New Jersey team began gathering data on the status of professional development in the state by hearing directly from the field through focus groups. These focus groups comprised of specific sectors of the ECE workforce such as family child care providers, center-based child care providers, and Head Start providers. The purpose of these focus groups was to allow the team to identify the difference in professional development offerings in different sectors of ECE. Results from these focus groups influenced the team to create an early learning professional development summit using the NAEYC *Build It Better* indicators as a framework. A broader group was invited to participate in this effort to identify bridges and pathways towards alignment and coordination between the early learning sectors in the state.
- **Iowa:** After identifying state policies that affect the ECE workforce in Iowa, the Iowa team identified two major policy barriers that they could alleviate with the help of outside stakeholders in their state. With the help of a consultant, the team planned a series of events to engage relevant stakeholders in conversations around these specific policies. The state held sessions with multiple diverse stakeholders to make progress on these two major policy barriers: creating a more robust Child Care Assistance tiered reimbursement system, and moving towards a system in which all preschool and center directors attain minimum educational requirements that align with the program administrator career pathway. Finally, after stakeholder input, the Iowa team developed a coherent policy agenda with recommendations to break down the existing policy barriers and improve the quality of Iowa’s ECE workforce systems.