COLORADO'S

Early Childhood Workforce 2020 PLAN

JUNE 2017

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Letter from the Early Childhood Leadership Commission

Dear Early Childhood Stakeholder,

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) is pleased to endorse Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan. Ensuring a high-quality, effective, and diverse early childhood workforce is a critical component in meeting our shared vision that all children are valued, healthy, and thriving by providing quality environments for thousands of young children who participate in Colorado's early care and learning system.

This plan provides an ambitious roadmap for a comprehensive professional development system designed to recruit, retain, compensate, develop, and support a high-quality early childhood workforce so Colorado's young children, families, and economies can thrive. Together we have developed an innovative plan designed to improve the effectiveness of the early childhood workforce and the systems that support them.

The ECLC is grateful to the Colorado Cohort and taskforces for the development of the plan and for their collaborative effort and commitment to this exciting work. We are also thankful to the Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory Working Group and the Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee for their guidance and feedback during this process.

We are committed to elevating Colorado's early childhood workforce and look forward to the work and the successful implementation of the plan in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Barbara Grogan
Co-Chair

Anna Jo Haynes
Co-Chair

Lt. Governor Donna Lynne
Co-Chair

Introduction

As Colorado continues to thrive, attracting new businesses and young professionals, the state must prioritize strategies to attract, retain, and support a strong early childhood workforce for children birth through age eight – both for the state's growing economy and for the growing and increasingly diverse population of young children. Building on the accomplishments of Colorado's 2010 plan to support the early childhood workforce, Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan (EC Workforce 2020 Plan) provides an ambitious roadmap for a comprehensive professional development system designed to achieve these priorities over the next three years.

NEED FOR A STRONG EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

Early childhood educators are significant contributors to children's healthy development; a myriad of short- and long-term benefits result from high-quality early learning experiences, and an effective, consistent, diverse, and skilled workforce is the key driver of quality. Therefore, it is essential that early childhood educators have the competencies needed to develop strong relationships with young children, to provide experiences that are supportive of their development and learning, and to equitably serve children from diverse backgrounds.

In Colorado, 63% of children under six live in households where all parents/caregivers are working[1]. Yet, many communities still lack an effective early childhood workforce in whom families can place their trust and with whom young children can thrive. This is more than a family matter; it impacts the health of communities and the state. The early childhood sector is a cornerstone of local and state economic health, enabling parents to work and financially provide for their families, while employing a large workforce of teachers, administrators, and other professionals.

Despite the necessity of this sector for families and to the economy, there are severe gaps in the availability of qualified professionals; these gaps are predicted to widen in the next eight years. Currently, more than 60% of Colorado's early childhood center directors report a top challenge to be finding qualified staff[2]. As the state's economy continues to grow, the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment predicts a substantial increase in the need for early childhood teachers and leaders – between 33-43% (depending on job category) through 2025[3]. Recruiting and retaining highly-qualified professionals will be an ever-increasing challenge if the state cannot find solutions to the compensation issues that plague the early childhood industry. Low wages, often at or near poverty levels, make it difficult to attract and keep experienced staff with higher levels of education.

Additionally, there is widespread agreement throughout the P-20 education pipeline that the more educators reflect the demographics of their students, the stronger the impact on children's optimal development. Serving a growing and changing population and reflecting the diversity of that population requires an intentional focus on building a highly-qualified, effective, and diverse early childhood workforce for Colorado.

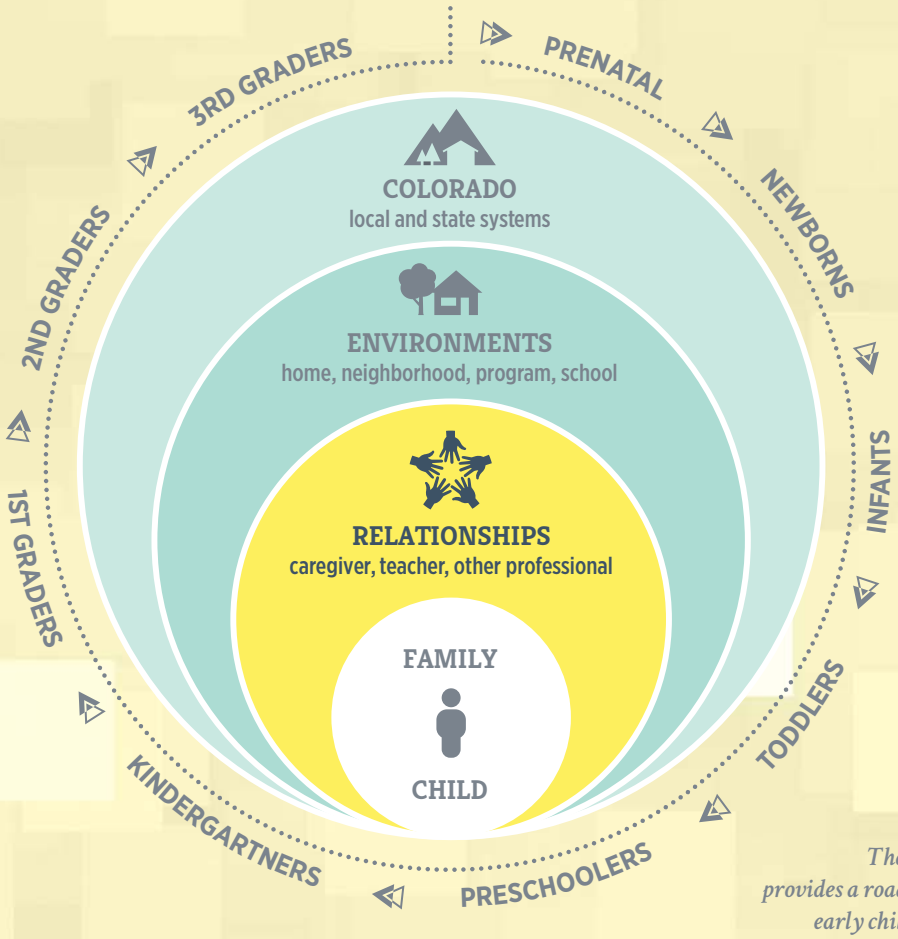
[1]U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2011 – 2015; Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov

[2]Qualistar, Leading Colorado's Early Care and Education Workforce, April 2016; Retrieved from https://www.qualistar.org/uploads/LeadingColoradosECEWorkforce.pdf

[3]Colorado Workforce Development Council, 2016 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report; Retrieved from https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cwdc/colorado-talent-pipeline-report

EARLY CHILDHOOD COLORADO FRAMEWORK

An effective early childhood workforce is a state priority, as indicated by the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*. The *Framework* calls for ensuring education, coaching, and training are available so that adults are equipped to develop strong relationships with children, engage them through positive interactions, and support their cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development. In addition, it calls for developing strategies to retain the early childhood workforce. These are key components of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.



The EC Workforce 2020 Plan provides a roadmap for securing a strong early childhood workforce to ensure children are valued, healthy, and thriving.

DEVELOPMENT OF COLORADO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE 2020 PLAN

In 2010, Colorado developed the Early Learning Professional Development System Plan (2010 Plan), a blueprint to ensure the preparation and support of a highly-qualified early childhood workforce. Having achieved most of the goals set forth in Colorado's 2010 Plan, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) charged the Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory Working Group (ECPD Advisory) to update the plan. The ECPD Advisory and Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee of the ECLC recruited a cohort of early childhood stakeholders, the Colorado Cohort, to organize and implement taskforces to update the plan. From September 2016 through June 2017, the Colorado Cohort and its four taskforces – comprised of over 50 cross-sector representatives from across the state – worked collaboratively to develop an innovative plan designed to improve the effectiveness of the early childhood workforce and the systems that support them. The development of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan was guided by the ECPD Advisory and the ECLC and informed through Colorado's participation in the Incubation to Innovation (i2I) project with the National Academy of Medicine.

COLORADO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE 2020 PLAN COMPONENTS

The EC Workforce 2020 Plan provides an ambitious three-year roadmap for a comprehensive professional development system designed to recruit, retain, compensate, develop, and support a high-quality, diverse, early childhood workforce so Colorado's young children from birth through age eight and their families can thrive. The first section of the plan outlines the shared vision and guiding principles that steered the development of the goals, which are designed to support early childhood professionals. Next, the plan provides detail about the following six aspiring and visionary goals, with key objectives and activities that will best support and advance the workforce.

The EC Workforce 2020 Plan is ambitious yet achievable. Implementing these goals will require significant work and coordination amongst state agencies, higher education, early childhood councils, community-based programs, and other key stakeholders. One of the first steps in implementing the plan will be prioritizing the activities and determining how these can be achieved. In some cases, activities and goals can be addressed through better coordination of current funding streams; in others, new investment from public and private sources will be needed to support the work. Through cross-system collaboration and the development of new partnerships, we can make great strides towards implementing the EC Workforce 2020 Plan and ensuring a strong early childhood workforce for Colorado's children and families.

EC WORKFORCE 2020 PLAN GOALS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Cultivate the competencies of a highly-qualified, diverse workforce.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
Recruit and retain effective, qualified, and diverse early childhood educators.

COMPENSATION
Ensure worthy and livable compensation for early childhood educators.

LEADERSHIP
Leverage comprehensive, collaborative, and responsive leadership to achieve the vision of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.

FINANCE
Finance the professional development system through efficient coordination of funding, innovative financing models, and an informed and engaged public.

DATA AND CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT
Continuously improve the effectiveness of the professional development system through the use of data.

CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

Colorado's 2010 Plan focused primarily on early childhood educators, those who care for young children birth through age eight in center-, school-, and home-based settings. The EC Workforce 2020 Plan, while focused largely on these same educators, provides for intentional outreach to the larger early childhood workforce, beyond early childhood educators. We recognize that the early childhood workforce is comprised of many adults who educate, care for, and support young children and their families, including home visitors, early intervention specialists, early childhood mental health specialists, family, friend, and neighbor caregivers, and others. All of these adults play a critical role in the lives of young children and their families. This is why the updated plan specifically and intentionally includes activities to find alignment, connections, synergy, and areas of support for the early childhood workforce beyond early childhood educators; some of these conversations have already begun. Additionally, while we know much of the early childhood field faces issues related to recruitment, retention, and compensation of the workforce, we have prioritized our activities in these areas to focus on early childhood educators working with young children birth to five, due to the urgent need in this sector.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 2010 EARLY LEARNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM PLAN

The 2010 Early Learning Professional Development System Plan (2010 Plan) included seven overarching goals. Colorado's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund grant provided funding to create the infrastructure of the early childhood professional development system and allowed the state to achieve most of the goals set forth in the 2010 Plan. Through ongoing partnerships across the state, major accomplishments of the plan include:

- **Implementation of research-based *Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators* (Competencies) serving young children birth to age eight, which provided the foundation for the early childhood professional development work.**
- **Development of the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS), an online learning management system and professional registry. Currently, the PDIS has over 33,000 registered early childhood professionals, who have completed over 157,000 online courses aligned with the Competencies.**
- **Creation of Colorado's Early Childhood Professional Credential 2.0, which recognizes formal education, ongoing professional development, experience, and demonstrated competencies. As of June 2017, over 10,000 new credentials were awarded through the PDIS.**
- **Incorporation of credentials, competency assessments, and professional development plans into Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).**
- **Expansion of the Statewide Coaching Network, with (as of June 2017) more than 200 professionals receiving the Colorado's Coaching Credential, more than 400 professionals completing the Relationship-Based Professional Development (RBPD) training, and more than 100 professionals participating in local reflective supervision groups.**
- **Alignment of higher education early childhood programs and professional development training programs with the Competencies.**
- **Implementation of a $2 Million Race to the Top funded scholarship and incentive program for early childhood professionals.**

> *We believe that the EC Workforce 2020 Plan continues to build upon the movement and support in Colorado to elevate the early childhood profession through innovative and collaborative work with key and diverse stakeholders.*

PAMELA HARRIS, REBECCA KANTOR, AND NANCIE LINVILLE – CHAIRS, ECPD ADVISORY

Vision & Guiding Principles

Building on the vision and guiding principles of Colorado's 2010 Plan, the Colorado Cohort adopted the following as a framework and shared vision around which the goals for EC Workforce 2020 Plan were developed.

VISION

Colorado's professional development system ensures positive outcomes for young children birth through age eight and their families by recruiting, preparing, and supporting highly-effective, caring, and diverse professionals, with a specific focus on race and ethnicity, in a variety of early childhood settings. Colorado's professional development system is accountable, innovative, accessible, inclusive, aligned, well-financed, and collaborative.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- An **accountable** professional development system collects and evaluates data to demonstrate effectiveness, tracks child progress, plans improvements, and assures quality through a continuous improvement process.
- An **innovative** professional development system is flexible, incorporates relevant research and research-based practices, and experiments with new approaches for preparing, credentialing, and rewarding early childhood professionals.
- An **accessible** professional development system offers affordable and convenient options for education, training, and coaching; it acknowledges multiple avenues towards teacher effectiveness, including college courses, prior experience, and alternative classroom and field-based training.
- An **inclusive** professional development system promotes culturally-sensitive practices, engages diverse stakeholders in a variety of settings, embraces individuals of all abilities, and actively seeks to diversify the early childhood profession.
- An **aligned** professional development system provides a coherent, easily navigable, and coordinated system for guiding early childhood professionals' college preparation, recruitment, and ongoing professional development activities across all early childhood settings.
- A **well-financed** professional development system provides equitable opportunities for early childhood professionals to achieve higher levels of competency through college education and ongoing professional development and is tied to increased compensation and benefits.
- A **collaborative** professional development system is developed by and built upon authentic partnerships among a diverse set of early childhood stakeholders.

The EC Workforce 2020 Plan sets forth an ambitious, yet achievable, plan to guide Colorado's work to develop, support, recruit, retain, and compensate the early childhood workforce. We are excited to work with partners around the state to continue to make progress in providing quality early care and education settings for all children.

ANNA JO HAYNES, ECLC CO-CHAIR

Goals, Objectives, and Activities

Workforce Development

Young children thrive when early childhood educators have the competencies needed to develop strong relationships with young children, to provide experiences that are supportive of their development and learning, and to equitably serve children from diverse backgrounds. Building upon the current professional development system, Colorado will support the development of an effective and diverse early childhood workforce through equitable access to high-quality professional development and educational experiences that directly impact professionals' ability to do their job well.

GOAL

Cultivate the competencies of a highly-qualified, diverse early childhood workforce.

OBJECTIVE 1

PROVIDE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS WITH A CLEAR CAREER PATHWAY ALIGNED TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Collaborate with Colorado state agencies (e.g., Education, Human Services, Higher Education) and early childhood experts to streamline workforce requirements, including those in program licensing, for early childhood educators.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Establish clearly-defined, shared terminology for different roles and credentials that cross settings and sectors.	YEAR **1** 2 3
c	Review and update *Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators* to confirm that they comprehensively include knowledge and skills, in a variety of domains, that professionals need to be successful.	YEAR **1** 2 3
d	Map existing and potential career pathways based on an analysis of *Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators* and the qualifications and required credentials for early childhood educators.	YEAR **1** 2 3
e	Ensure requirements and pathways for early childhood educators are aligned across systems and are clearly communicated to the field.	YEAR **1 2** 3
f	Enhance and expand articulation agreements to provide seamless, stackable pathways for students across high school, two-year, and four-year institutions.	YEAR **1 2 3**
g	Determine entry-level degree requirements for early childhood educators across settings, sectors, and roles.	YEAR 1 **2 3**
h	Strengthen career guidance through coordination of existing supports and systems and the establishment of a career pathway navigator.	YEAR 1 2 **3**

OBJECTIVE 2

ENSURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS ARE AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, EQUITABLE, AND PORTABLE ACROSS SETTINGS AND SECTORS.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Review findings from the CO Early Childhood Workforce Survey to assess and address barriers to workforce development.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Ensure a scholarship program is widely and equitably available to support early childhood educators to increase their qualifications, credentials, and degrees.	YEAR **1** **2** **3**
c	Ensure comprehensive, ongoing, competency-based professional development opportunities exist across settings, sectors, and regions of the state.	YEAR 1 2 **3**

OBJECTIVE 3

ACTIVELY PREPARE A WORKFORCE THAT REFLECTS AND IS PREPARED TO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REPRESENTING DIVERSITY OF RACE, ETHNICITY, CULTURE, LANGUAGE, GENDER, AND ABILITY.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Review Colorado's *Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators* to confirm they completely address working with children and families from diverse backgrounds, including diversity of race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, ability, place, income, and family structure.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Build upon best practices in Colorado and other states to increase access to professional development for underrepresented populations.	YEAR 1 2 **3**
c	Ensure professional development and education prepares and supports professionals to work with diverse groups of children and families.	YEAR 1 2 **3**

OBJECTIVE 4

IDENTIFY, ESTABLISH, AND SUSTAIN HIGH-QUALITY, ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT, CAREER ADVANCEMENT, AND CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Create a formal apprenticeship program that pairs education and training with work-based experiences across sectors and settings.	YEAR 1 2 **3**
b	Expand and improve high school programming that leads to entry-level requirements to work in licensed early childhood settings.	YEAR 1 2 **3**
c	Expand opportunities for competency-based evaluations and other innovative approaches that allow educators to earn college credit and/or points towards the Colorado Early Childhood Professional Credential 2.0.	YEAR 1 2 **3**

OBJECTIVE 5 — PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE IN CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Provide early childhood educators and leaders resources and professional learning to foster a culture of continuous quality improvement.	YEAR 1 **2** 3
b	Build the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System's (PDIS) capacity to provide online professional development opportunities, guided by the needs identified through Colorado Shines (i.e., QRIS data and self-assessment data from the PDIS).	YEAR 1 **2** 3
c	Strengthen and sustain a coaching system statewide.	YEAR 1 **2** **3**

OBJECTIVE 6 — IDENTIFY ROLES BEYOND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS, AND DETERMINE HOW BEST TO SUPPORT THEIR WORK.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Engage early childhood sector groups beyond educators to understand the needs, interests, and opportunities for alignment and potential supports through the professional development system, including professionals such as home visitors, family engagement specialists and liaisons, nurse consultants, itinerant special educators, early childhood mental health professionals, and others.	YEAR 1 **2** **3**
b	Identify how professionals, beyond early childhood educators, might be supported to ensure they have a shared, foundational set of competencies for working with young children, and implement recommendations.	YEAR 1 2 **3**

Recruitment and Retention

Colorado will recruit and retain effective, qualified, and diverse early childhood educators so young children in early care and education settings can thrive. Colorado will engage in understanding the needs and challenges faced by early childhood educators, focus on overcoming obstacles to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, provide leaders with resources to develop the competencies needed to support their staff, and implement strategies to enhance early childhood educator working conditions, well-being, and job satisfaction.

GOAL

Recruit and retain effective, qualified, and diverse early childhood educators.

OBJECTIVE 1

INCREASE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS THROUGH STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE THE WORKFORCE'S PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL WELL-BEING.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Review results from the CO Early Childhood Workforce Survey and the EC Workforce Policy and Program Scan to understand the recruitment, retention, educator support, and compensation needs around the state and to identify potential solutions.	YEAR 1 2 3
b	Explore and implement a loan-forgiveness program for early childhood educators.	YEAR 1 2 3
c	Collect data on reasons for workforce turnover and educator burnout through an exit survey, and use findings to inform recruitment and retention strategies.	YEAR 1 2 3
d	Research effective models, and implement a substitute pool(s) for early childhood programs.	YEAR 1 2 3
e	Identify and address barriers in policy and practice that delay the timely recruitment, hiring, and retention of staff (e.g., background checks, streamlining licensing regulations, time to award teacher/director qualifications, out of state qualifications).	YEAR 1 2 3
f	Develop and implement innovative strategies to recruit and retain early childhood educators, such as strengthening the pipeline from high school to employment, scholarships, rule waivers, mentoring and induction programs, and family-friendly business practices.	YEAR 1 2 3
g	Explore relationships with early childhood councils to develop professional learning communities to share effective strategies around recruitment, retention, and improving educator efficacy.	YEAR 1 2 3
h	Identify and adopt research-based tools or strategies that measure workplace environment and culture, staff well-being, educator burnout, and job satisfaction through current Colorado systems (e.g., PDIS or QRIS).	YEAR 1 2 3
i	Identify and implement promising practices that address workforce well-being and support enhanced executive functioning, resilience, and sense of efficacy.	YEAR 1 2 3

OBJECTIVE 2

IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATORS' ABILITY TO SERVE AS EFFECTIVE AND SUPPORTIVE LEADERS.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Identify and implement research-based models that increase early childhood instructional leadership and efficacy outcomes.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Provide ongoing training and resources to early childhood leaders on topics including instructional leadership, reflective supervision, inquiry and practice, educator stress and burnout, cultural proficiency, and business acumen.	YEAR **1 2 3**

OBJECTIVE 3

LAUNCH A POSITIVE MESSAGING CAMPAIGN ABOUT THE CRITICAL ROLE OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Use data from the CO Early Childhood Sector Economic Analysis to demonstrate early childhood educators' connection to the economic well-being of Colorado and the challenges programs in the state face in recruiting and retaining a highly-qualified workforce.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Collaborate with ECLC and connect with national efforts to support and elevate the early childhood workforce.	YEAR **1** 2 3
c	Explore partnerships with local workforce development centers as a recruitment strategy.	YEAR 1 **2** 3
d	Develop a coordinated and comprehensive strategy for communicating to various audiences about the critical role early childhood educators play in supporting a child's healthy development; the effect/cost of educator burnout and turnover on children, families, and programs; and the role compensation plays in recruiting and retaining professionals.	YEAR 1 **2 3**
e	Develop a communications strategy to recruit talented professionals into the workforce, including targeting groups currently underrepresented.	YEAR 1 **2 3**

A strong workforce that supports early childhood education is a cornerstone of local economies throughout Colorado, allowing parents to work and provide for their families. It's critical that we provide a foundation to our early childhood educators so that all families have access to safe, high-quality learning environments.

LT. GOVERNOR DONNA LYNNE, ECLC CO-CHAIR

OBJECTIVE 4

ACTIVELY RECRUIT AND RETAIN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS THAT REFLECT DIVERSITY OF RACE, ETHNICITY, CULTURE, LANGUAGE, GENDER, AND ABILITY.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Identify best practices for recruiting and retaining individuals into the field of early childhood education, with an emphasis on underrepresented groups.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Identify barriers and convene a roundtable to identify solutions to successfully recruit and retain people of color in leadership roles.	YEAR **1** 2 3
c	Regularly monitor the Colorado Shines PDIS data on the diversity of early childhood educators in various sectors, settings, and roles.	YEAR **1 2 3**
d	Develop and implement strategies to strengthen the talent pipeline and increase the diversity of the workforce, such as career navigation, advising, mentoring, and targeted recruitment efforts.	YEAR 1 **2 3**
e	Partner with colleges and universities to recruit students of color into the early childhood education field.	YEAR 1 **2 3**
f	Translate information and tools designed to support early childhood educators into several commonly spoken languages in Colorado other than English, including the Colorado Shines PDIS, requirements for credentials, and professional development opportunities.	YEAR 1 **2 3**

Compensation

To recruit and retain qualified, effective, and diverse early childhood educators, the workforce must have worthy compensation, which includes wages comparable to other industries and workplace benefits. Colorado will increase compensation to early childhood educators, align compensation with education and experience, and ensure compensation parity across settings and roles.

GOAL

Ensure worthy and livable compensation for early childhood educators.

OBJECTIVE 1

ENHANCE COMPENSATION, INCLUDING BENEFITS, FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Research compensation, and make regionally-based recommendations for wages tied to roles, educational qualifications, and experience.	YEAR 1 2 3
b	Work with state partners to explore and recommend strategies using state programs, the market rate survey, the Talent Pipeline Report, and policy and/or rule changes to enhance compensation and benefits.	YEAR 1 2 3
c	Develop and implement innovative community collaborations to address compensation issues through strategies such as collaboration with early childhood councils, local workforce boards, chambers of commerce, economic development boards, and local businesses.	YEAR 1 2 3
d	Develop and implement innovative strategies to expand funding for wage and benefit enhancement programs (e.g., WAGE$, tax credits, loan forgiveness, wage supplements).	YEAR 1 2 3
e	Explore and expand successful shared services models to achieve efficiencies and to improve compensation and benefits for early childhood educators (e.g., substitute pools, insurance cooperatives).	YEAR 1 2 3
f	Explore relationships with early childhood councils to develop professional learning communities to share effective strategies around enhancing compensation, including wages and benefits.	YEAR 1 2 3
g	Develop and share recommendations for employers related to family-friendly business practices and comprehensive benefits packages (e.g., flexible schedules, paid time off, insurance).	YEAR 1 2 3

> *Early childhood education programs in the state, like ours, are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain highly-qualified professionals. The EC Workforce 2020 Plan outlines actionable steps the state can take to address things like better compensation and workforce well-being, so we have strong educators for the state's youngest children.*

DIANE PRICE, EARLY CONNECTIONS LEARNING CENTERS AND RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND COMPENSATION TASKFORCE CO-CHAIR

OBJECTIVE 2

CREATE COMPENSATION PARITY BETWEEN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS ACROSS SETTINGS, SECTORS, AND AGE OF CHILDREN SERVED.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Analyze state and regional wage data for professionals working in early childhood education settings (e.g., family child care, centers, Head Start, school-based preschools, and K-12 classrooms), and make recommendations to enhance compensation equity.	YEAR 1 2 3
b	Implement recommendations to policies, procedures, rules, or programs that would enhance compensation equity.	YEAR 1 2 3

Compensation, including benefits, is one of the most critical challenges we need to address in Colorado to ensure our state has a strong, stable, early childhood workforce and children have safe places to learn, grow, and thrive.

BARBARA GROGAN, ECLC CO-CHAIR

Leadership

Successful implementation of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan will require multiple stakeholders to take ownership and responsibility for guiding implementation of various sections of the plan. Identifying leadership will be critical to determining clearly-defined roles, processes of interaction, and decision making among key stakeholders. Colorado will build and sustain a coordinated and collaborative leadership structure to ensure the EC Workforce 2020 Plan is implemented and that the professional development system is continuously monitored to identify and address strengths, gaps, needs, opportunities, and areas for improvement.

GOAL

Leverage comprehensive, collaborative, and responsive leadership to achieve the vision of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.

OBJECTIVE 1

DEFINE THE LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EC WORKFORCE 2020 PLAN.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Identify relevant groups to guide, lead, and participate in the implementation of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan through the ECPD Advisory Working Group of the ECLC, including but not limited to: state agencies, early childhood councils, elected officials, workforce development councils, institutions of higher education, and organizations that are focused on addressing equity for people of color.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Define roles and responsibilities for effective implementation of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.	YEAR **1** 2 3
c	ECLC will appoint ECPD Advisory Working Group members to three-year terms with expertise to inform and guide implementation of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.	YEAR **1** 2 3
d	Identify shared priorities of early childhood professionals across the early childhood domains of the *Framework* (e.g., health and well-being, family support), and determine areas to align, leverage, and coordinate work.	YEAR **1** 2 3
e	Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan through effective, collaborative data sharing across all relevant stakeholders.	YEAR 1 **2** 3
f	Review the leadership structure, and make necessary adjustments to advance the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.	YEAR 1 **2** **3**

OBJECTIVE 2

IDENTIFY ALL STATUTORY, RULE, REGULATION, AND POLICY CHANGES NECESSARY TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT THE EC WORKFORCE 2020 PLAN.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Analyze the EC Workforce Policy and Program Scan, CO Early Childhood Workforce Survey, and CO Early Childhood Sector Economic Analysis research results to identify opportunities and barriers.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Identify the top three to five actionable opportunities and barriers to address to further the implementation of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.	YEAR 1 **2** 3
c	Work across early childhood sectors of the *Framework* to leverage shared priorities and action for statutory, rule, regulation, and policy change.	YEAR 1 **2** 3
d	Prioritize statutory, rule, and practice changes to advance sustainability of effective compensation, recruitment, and retention strategies.	YEAR 1 2 **3**

OBJECTIVE 3

DEFINE AND LAUNCH TRANSPARENT, TIMELY, AND RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING PROCESSES.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Use data and information-driven processes to monitor progress on the EC Workforce 2020 Plan implementation and identify areas for further focus.	YEAR 1 **2** 3
b	Develop a communications and reporting process to document and share progress on the EC Workforce 2020 Plan implementation.	YEAR 1 **2** 3

OBJECTIVE 4

PARTNER WITH THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP COMMISSION AND PROGRAM QUALITY AND ALIGNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIES TO ELEVATE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Partner with the Colorado Department of Higher Education, the Colorado Workforce Development Council, and other stakeholders to enhance understanding of the early childhood workforce and develop plans to strengthen the sector.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Engage legislators, policy makers, and business leaders in understanding and expanding awareness of the essential importance and needs of the early childhood industry and workforce.	YEAR **1 2 3**
c	Increase the voices and participation of early childhood educators who reflect the diversity of the workforce in leadership and advocacy opportunities at the local, regional, and state level.	YEAR **1 2 3**

Finance

A focus on financing is required to ensure that Colorado's early childhood professional development system is sufficiently, efficiently, equitably, and effectively funded. Colorado will explore the use of innovative financing approaches and public and private resources to advance the development and compensation of early childhood educators and the professional development system that supports them.

GOAL

Finance the professional development system through efficient coordination of funding, innovative financing models, and an informed and engaged public.

OBJECTIVE 1

EXAMINE INVESTMENTS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM, AND RECOMMEND IMPROVEMENTS.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Establish a finance taskforce.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Conduct a funding analysis to identify current and potential public and private funding for the early childhood professional development system, with an emphasis on expanding funding for recruitment, retention, and compensation.	YEAR **1** 2 3
c	Finance continuous quality improvement efforts for the professional development system, including enhanced functionality for Colorado Shines (including QRIS and PDIS) and ecConnect to allow for on-going data analysis and reporting.	YEAR **1 2 3**
d	Based on funding analyses and in collaboration with state agencies and other key stakeholders, create a plan to fill programmatic and systemic funding gaps, including identifying new resources and leveraging and aligning existing resources.	YEAR 1 **2** 3

OBJECTIVE 2

ENSURE ACCESS TO AND AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER PATHWAYS.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Based on the CO Early Childhood Workforce Survey results, develop funding priorities to strengthen the early childhood educator pipeline, with an emphasis on attracting and retaining early childhood professionals of color.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Ensure funding to support the development of early childhood educators, including funding for scholarships, professional development, coaching, and career advising.	YEAR **1 2 3**
c	Identify funding to support early childhood educators to earn college credit for demonstrated competencies, leading to increased certificate, credential, and degree completion.	YEAR 1 **2** 3
d	Identify and fund promising alternative pathways to competency development and credential and degree completion.	YEAR 1 **2** 3

OBJECTIVE 3

IMPLEMENT INNOVATIVE FINANCING MODELS TO FUND THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Explore and implement successful local, state, or national financing models to advance elements of the early childhood professional development system.	YEAR **1** **2** **3**
b	Assess the impact of Colorado's minimum wage law, and make recommendations for mitigation.	YEAR **1** 2 3
c	Identify and implement promising practices or targeted financing solutions, with an emphasis on increasing compensation, recruitment, and retention.	YEAR 1 **2** **3**
d	Explore repurposing current public subsidy investments towards direct individual compensation of early childhood educators.	YEAR 1 2 **3**

Data and Continuous Quality Improvement

Data on early childhood educators and the professional development system that supports them are essential to inform planning, accountability, and continuous quality improvement and to gauge progress of the implementation of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan. Colorado will strengthen its data foundation and create a culture where data is shared, privacy is protected, and stakeholder input is incorporated to strengthen systems that support early childhood educators. See a list of key questions the state plans to answer through the use of data on page 24.

GOAL

Continuously improve the effectiveness of the professional development system through the use of data.

OBJECTIVE 1

STRENGTHEN THE FOUNDATION FOR THE USE OF DATA THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Establish governance of early childhood workforce data to set policies for the collection, sharing, access, and use of data.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Explore opportunities for alignment in data governance and implementation through the ECLC Data Subcommittee and other relevant groups.	YEAR **1** 2 3
c	Build processes and agreements that protect privacy and allow stakeholders to access information for decision-making.	YEAR **1 2 3**

OBJECTIVE 2

CAPTURE THE DATA REQUIRED TO ANSWER KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE AND THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM THAT SUPPORTS THEM.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Capture data to determine total number of early childhood educators in Colorado, by sector and setting, and assess the percentage participating in Colorado Shines PDIS.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Expand compensation-related information captured through the Colorado Shines PDIS registration process (e.g., loan forgiveness, release time, insurance, paid time off).	YEAR **1** 2 3
c	Strengthen sector and setting information in the Colorado Shines QRIS data system.	YEAR **1** 2 3

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
d	Capture the time between submission and award for the Early Childhood Professional Credential, Early Childhood Teacher Qualifications, and Director Qualifications, and reduce time between submission and award.	YEAR **1** 2 3
e	Convene a taskforce to determine how best to capture data on early childhood educator retention and turnover.	YEAR **1** 2 3
f	Identify needed and/or missing data, and implement strategies to capture high-quality data, building on current systems where possible.	YEAR **1 2** 3
g	Increase Colorado Shines PDIS participation, especially for early childhood roles not currently represented.	YEAR **1 2 3**
h	Conduct a regular early childhood workforce survey.	YEAR **1 2 3**

OBJECTIVE 3

LINK THE DATA REQUIRED TO ANSWER KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE AND THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM THAT SUPPORTS THEM.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Modify the data feed in Colorado Shines from QRIS to PDIS to include information related to sector and setting of early childhood educators.	YEAR **1** 2 3
b	Identify systems that hold key data about early childhood educators and the professional development system, and develop appropriate integration strategies, including data share agreements and updates to business processes, to allow for the sharing and linking of data.	YEAR **1 2** 3

OBJECTIVE 4

PROVIDE ANSWERS TO KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE AND THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM THAT SUPPORTS THEM.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Provide regular early childhood workforce reports, including available data from Colorado Shines PDIS and surveys, to inform continuous quality improvement of the early childhood professional development system.	YEAR **1 2 3**
b	Provide publicly-accessible information on the award times for credentials and qualifications.	YEAR 1 **2** 3
c	Provide real-time, easily-accessed information from Colorado Shines (QRIS and PDIS) on frequently-used data points.	YEAR 1 **2 3**
d	Provide support to stakeholders on how to access and use workforce data to maximize data use.	YEAR 1 **2 3**

OBJECTIVE 5

ASSESS THE STRENGTH OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM, AND MAKE NEEDED ADJUSTMENTS TO INCREASE ITS EFFECTIVENESS.

	[ACTIVITIES]	[TIMELINE]
a	Convene a team of stakeholders to regularly monitor the progress, quality, and effectiveness of the early childhood professional development system and the implementation of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.	YEAR **1 2 3**
b	Address identified areas for growth and improvement of the professional development system.	YEAR 1 **2 3**

Key Questions about the Early Childhood Workforce

An important component of the EC Workforce 2020 Plan is to ensure data and information are available to answer key questions about the early childhood workforce and the professional development system that supports them. Some of those key questions are below. By answering these questions and looking at the data over time, the state can monitor how the EC Workforce 2020 Plan is being implemented and the effects of implementation on both the early childhood workforce and the professional development system.

1. **What are the demographics of Colorado's early childhood educators, and how do they vary by role, sector, setting, age of children served, and region of the state?**
2. **What education, preparation, and training have early childhood educators received?**
3. **How long have early childhood educators been in their current program and in the field?**
4. **Why do early childhood educators stay and leave their early childhood programs, where do they go, and what are the characteristics of those who stay and leave? What is the turnover rate for early childhood educators, and how does it vary by role, sector, setting, age of children served, and region of the state?**
5. **What does coaching look like in early childhood programs and for early childhood professionals?**
6. **What education and career pathways do early childhood students most commonly pursue, and are there opportunities to streamline pathways?**
7. **What is the race, ethnicity, gender, and primary language of students enrolled in and/or who graduate from early childhood two- and four- year institutions of higher education?**
8. **How does the diversity of Colorado's early childhood educators compare to the diversity of the children and families served both statewide and regionally?**
9. **What is the state's total scholarship investment annually?**
10. **How do students pursuing early childhood certificates and degrees pay for school (e.g., financial aid, scholarships, self-pay)?**
11. **What are the current wages of early childhood educators, and how does this vary regionally and by sector, setting, educator demographics, and age of children served?**
12. **To what degree do early childhood educators have access to workplace benefits, such as health insurance and paid time off?**
13. **Are high-quality professional development experiences (preservice and in-service) available equitably throughout the state and by role, sector, and setting?**
14. **How has funding changed to support early childhood educators and the professional development system?**
15. **What progress has the state made on implementing the EC Workforce 2020 Plan?**

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Glossary of Terms Used in the Plan

Alternative pathways provide unique and innovative ways to achieve job attainment and advancement. They support multiple entry points and exit points to the field and acknowledge the myriad of ways professionals learn and demonstrate knowledge, skills, and competencies. These pathways are expected to meet comparable expectations of rigor, accountability, and transparency as traditional pathways. They are to be competency-based, avoid conflicts of interest among systems of professional preparation, and encourage collaboration among higher education, training, technical assistance, coaching, and other systems.

Articulation in this context refers to the transfer of professional development credentials, credits, courses, or degrees from one institution to another, ideally without a loss of credit. Articulation can be from high school to college, and/or between and among two- and four-year institutions of higher education.

Career pathways are comprehensive education and training systems that provide a clear sequence of coursework and training credentials aligned with employer and industry needs.

Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators provide clear descriptions of what educators need to know and be able to do to provide quality care and education in a variety of settings.

The **Colorado Early Childhood Professional Credential**, awarded by the Colorado Department of Education, is a voluntary, tiered system of credentials that recognizes increased knowledge and experience for those who care for and educate young children birth through age eight. The credential provides a common system for all Colorado early childhood professionals to document and quantify their professional growth and accomplishments. Individuals accumulate points along four pathways—Formal Education, Ongoing Professional Development, Experience, and Demonstrated Competencies.

The **Colorado Early Childhood Sector Economic Analysis** is a research study completed by University of Denver and Brodsky Research & Consulting that details the impact of the early care and education industry and the early childhood workforce within Colorado.

The **Colorado Early Childhood Workforce Survey**, conducted by the University of Colorado, Denver and NORC at the University of Chicago, was completed by over 6,500 professionals in the winter of 2016. The survey asked questions related to access to professional development, working conditions, compensation, and workforce well-being.

Colorado Shines refers to the two aligned and coordinated systems (QRIS and PDIS) in the state designed to rate and improve the quality of early childhood programs and to develop and support the early childhood educators who work within those programs. See Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and Professional Development Information System (PDIS) for more information.

Compensation in the EC Workforce 2020 Plan is defined broadly to include wages and workplace benefits, such as health insurance, paid time off, retirement, and other benefits.

Competencies are the abilities or skills needed to effectively fulfill job duties of specific positions or roles.

Competency-based evaluation or assessment is a way to demonstrate mastery of a set of predefined knowledge and skills, or competencies.

A **diverse** early childhood workforce is one that reflects diversity of race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, and ability.

Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance (ECCLA), a nonprofit membership organization formed to support Colorado's local early childhood councils, is dedicated to providing leadership, innovation, influence, and local perspectives at the state level to ensure Colorado has a comprehensive, quality early childhood system.

Early childhood councils are regionally-based entities that focus on advancing programs, resources and support around early learning, family support and parent education, and social, emotional, and mental health. They work to bring together local partners to improve the quality and availability of early childhood services for children and families in their communities. Early childhood councils support the implementation of Colorado Shines and distribution of quality incentives to licensed early care and learning programs.

Early childhood educators are those who work with children birth through age eight and are responsible and accountable for planning and implementing developmentally appropriate experiences that advance their cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development. Also included are those who provide support and/or leadership for these activities. Early childhood educators may work in schools, centers, or family child care settings and may include teachers, assistant teachers, directors, family child care professionals, and others.

The **Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC)** is a 20-person body, appointed by the Governor, and charged with improving outcomes for pregnant women and young children in Colorado birth to age eight and their families by advancing the alignment, coordination, and efficiency of programs and services.

The **Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory Working Group (ECPD Advisory)**, a working group under the Program Quality Alignment Subcommittee of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, is a group of cross-sector stakeholders charged with coordinating the implementation of the Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan and providing guidance around the early childhood professional development system.

The **early childhood workforce** includes those who provide services to support young children birth through age eight and their families. This may include, but is not limited to, early childhood educators, home visitors, early intervention specialists, early childhood mental health providers, preschool teachers, kindergarten through third grade teachers, infant-toddler teachers, family child care professionals, and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

ecConnect is a data system administered by ECCLA on behalf of Colorado's early childhood councils. The system, initially developed by Denver's Early Childhood Council, is used by councils to administer the full life cycle of quality improvement initiatives including the application and award process for early learning programs and the related activities including coaching, technical assistance, and quality purchases driven by each site's Colorado Shines quality improvement plan.

The **EC Workforce Program and Policy Scan**, completed by Clayton Early Learning in 2016, provides a comprehensive index of early childhood funding sources in Colorado. Additionally, it provides a detailed list of initiatives, in and outside of Colorado, targeting recruitment, retention, and/or compensation of early childhood educators.

The **P-20 education pipeline** refers to the education system from birth through college, including infant-toddler settings, preschool, K-12 schools, and colleges and universities.

Professional development includes both professional preparation and ongoing professional development and can take the form of college coursework, training, technical assistance, mentoring, coaching, or other job-related support to increase the competencies, knowledge, and skills of early childhood educators.

The Colorado Shines **Professional Development Information System (PDIS)** is an online, competency-based system supporting professional development and career pathways for Colorado's early childhood workforce. It tracks training and education, provides high-quality online professional development, and supports individuals to choose professional development according to their competency level, their professional development goals, their job role, and their geographic location.

The early childhood **professional development system** refers to a comprehensive system of preparation and ongoing development and support for the early childhood workforce working with and on behalf of young children from birth through age eight across sectors, settings, and roles. Such roles may be in Head Start, for-profit, and nonprofit child care programs in centers and homes, preschool programs in community-based and school settings, early grades in public and private schools, early intervention and special education services, resource and referral agencies, higher education institutions, and state departments related to early childhood education (e.g., education, licensing, health).

The **Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee** is an advisory group of diverse representatives formed under the direction of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission to identify opportunities for, and barriers to, the alignment of standards, rules, policies, and procedures across programs and agencies that support young children and to enhance the alignment and provision of services and supports for young children.

The Colorado Shines **Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)** is a program that rates, monitors, and supports early learning programs. Its primary functions are to connect Colorado families with quality child care and to help participating programs and professionals improve their quality through assessment, training, and tools.

Sector refers to the funding sector or system that delivers early childhood education, such as child care, Head Start, or preschool, including public, private, and faith-based.

Setting refers to the location in which early childhood education occurs, such as schools, centers, or homes, which may be public or private, for-profit or nonprofit.

The **Talent Pipeline Report**, published by the Colorado Workforce Development Council, analyzes "top jobs" – high-demand, high-growth jobs that pay a living wage. Additionally, it highlights key information about top talent issues in the state, such as the gig economy, the impact of demographics on our future workforce, and the impact of postsecondary education on employment outcomes.

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Transforming the **Early Childhood Workforce** *in Colorado*