

Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five: Opportunities to Align with the Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession

The federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF), along with the Department of Education (ED) is offering another round of Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) grant opportunities to support states in developing coordinated, high quality early childhood systems.¹

This round of PDG B-5 grants has a strong emphasis on investing in the early childhood workforce – improving educators’ compensation, preparation, and wellbeing – in order for states to build robust, mixed-delivery early childhood systems where all children have access to high quality early learning opportunities and enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Many of the workforce goals outlined in the PDG B-5 grants are shared by the [Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession](#). As states prepare to finalize and submit their applications, they can take a few simple steps to ensure their plans and priorities align with the Unifying Framework’s recommendations to center the expertise of early childhood educators and collectively advance a diverse, equitable, well-prepared, and well-compensated early childhood education profession.

Compensation

Unifying Framework Recommendation: Compensation for early childhood educators will be at least comparable to public school salaries and comparable across all settings, include an adequate benefits package, and increase commensurate with increased preparation and competency.

PDG B-5 Activity Four: Support the B-5 Workforce and Disseminate Best Practices explicitly encourages states to use these funds to “develop initiatives, studies, or analyses to support the recruitment into and retention of individuals into the ECCE workforce,” including increasing compensation to reach parity, offering financial incentives, and expanding access to benefits. Additionally, those applying for Renewal Grant dollars have the option to develop a pilot or expand an existing initiative to improve compensation; states could earn up to 3 bonus points for this.

To increase compensation in alignment with the Unifying Framework, states can:

- **Develop and implement wage scales and career pathways that align with the ECE I, II, and III designations established in the Unifying Framework, promote pay parity, and lay the groundwork for cost of quality studies that accurately reflect what’s needed for ECE compensation.**
 - Create a compensation scale that is based on a simplified, clarified, and equitably accessible ECE I, II, and III career pathway that leads to K-12 parity for educators working in all settings and with all ages.
 - State Examples: [Minnesota](#) and [Delaware](#)

- Ensure wage scales address the need for professional benefits, include cost of living increases, and consider the implications of differentiating salary increases at different levels to incentivize educational attainment, based on the current needs and future goals for the workforce.
 - Establish goals and plans for implementation for the wage scale – including interim goals and a timeline for full implementation and funding considerations.
 - Employ strategies for ensuring wage increases take place across the early childhood system, e.g., that self-employed family child care providers and programs not receiving public funds are also able to create and implement wage scales.
- **Offer or expand access to professional benefits, including paid leave, health insurance, retirement, loan forgiveness, child care assistance, and substitute pools.**
 - Develop or leverage federal, state, and employer-supported systems to offer and increase access to compensation that includes benefits, including by:
 - increasing the utilization of contracts and grants
 - paying for health insurance costs
 - increasing access to navigators specifically focused on the early childhood workforce
 - establishing categorical eligibility for early childhood educators to receive child care assistance
 - developing a community-level system for qualified substitute pools that allow educators to take advantage of professional development.
 - supporting debt-free college through comprehensive scholarships and/or loan forgiveness
 - State Examples: [Washington](#), [Washington, D.C.](#), [Kentucky](#), [Vermont](#)

Related resources:

- [Compensation Matters Most: Why and How States Should Use Child Care Relief Funding to Increase Compensation for the Early Childhood Education Workforce](#), NAEYC 2021
- [Webinar: Compensation Schedules: What They Are, Why They Matter & How To Use Them In Your States](#), NAEYC 2022 Public Policy Forum and [A Look at Salary / Wage Scales for the Early Childhood Educator Workforce](#), T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center, 2021
- [Webinar: Washington Wins: Compensation Successes in Washington, DC and Washington State](#), NAEYC 2022 Public Policy Forum
- [Webinar: How the American Rescue Plan Can Increase Compensation for Early Childhood Educators](#), NAEYC, Center for the Study on Child Care Employment, and the Alliance for Early Success, 2021
- [Fund Contracts and Grants for Stability and Compensation](#), NAEYC and NHSA, 2021
- [Using Contracts to Support the Child Care Workforce](#), Urban Institute, 2021
- [How States Can Spend \\$10 Billion for Child Care Well, Wisely & With Urgency](#), NAEYC, Education Counsel, CLASP 2021
- [Information Memorandum on Competitive Bonuses for the Head Start Workforce](#), ACF 2022
- [Investing American Rescue Plan Act and PDG Funds to Address the Early Childhood Workforce Shortage](#), ACF 2022

Professional Preparation & Career Pathways

Unifying Framework Recommendations: The Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators will serve as the core standards for the profession. As public funding, resources, and supports are increased, professional preparation programs must earn programmatic accreditation or recognition, ensure graduates are proficient in the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, and provide seamless pathways through postsecondary education. The Task Force recognizes that there are multiple and flexible approaches in professional preparation programs, and it seeks to encourage effective innovations that are, in particular, designed to reach non-traditional students, eliminate the existing barriers to higher education, and maintain a commitment to quality.

PDG B-5 Activity Four: Support the B-5 Workforce and Disseminate Best Practices calls for building “statewide workforce infrastructure that ensures providers are professionally prepared and well-supported by strengthening career pathways and professional development opportunities to build a pipeline of effective early educators (including those who serve infants and toddlers), maintain the diversity of the workforce, and provide more equitable access to qualified teachers for children across settings and ages.” The grants encourage states to partner with institutions of higher education to develop and improve degree programs, articulation agreements, and aligned credentials.

To address equitable professional preparation and career pathways in alignment with the Unifying Framework, states can:

- **Adopt and align with the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators**
 - Adopt the leveled competencies as the state professional standards to support continuity, quality, and consistency across all ECE workforce settings, policies, and supports. Note that the Standards and Competencies can be expanded to address state and local priorities.
 - Align with institutes of higher education, professional development, credentialing, and quality improvement systems to ensure a baseline mastery among educators at the different designation levels and professional preparation programs, and support simplified articulation and transfer policies between and among programs and institutions to increase equitable access to degrees and credentials.
 - State Example: [Pennsylvania](#)
- **Strengthen and expand existing credit for prior learning policies and offerings across institutions, as well as other equitable pathways, including the use of registered apprenticeships**
 - Support and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives including but not limited to: use of prior learning assessments for awarding credit; providing standard approaches to granting credit for CDA holders across IHEs; implementing a system that recognizes competencies acquired through degree attainment in another country; cohort models; partnerships between preparation programs and early childhood programs to address work-based supervised practicum/clinical experiences; and intensive degree programs with shorter duration.
 - State Examples: [Vermont](#) and [Wisconsin](#)
- **Support and fund institutions of higher education to complete NAEYC higher education accreditation**
 - Subsidize accreditation fees, provide funds to institutions for release time so that faculty have time to devote to preparing the program for accreditation, and fund professional development related to accreditation to increase quality and position programs for success.
 - State Examples: [Alabama](#), Connecticut

Resources:

- [Join NAEYC Peer Learning Cohorts on Credit for Prior Learning and Professional Licensure](#) (including support for states interested in exploring occupational licensing, reciprocity, and implementation of model legislation).
- [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#) (including recommendations for implementation)
- [Ensuring Quality in Early Childhood Education Professional Preparation Programs: NAEYC’s Higher Education Accreditation Standards](#)
- [State Policy Approaches to Support Prior Learning Assessment](#), Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2015.

Program Quality Improvement

Well-prepared and well-supported early childhood educators thrive in the context of high-quality programs. To increase and support programs' continuous quality improvement, states can use this opportunity to rethink their QRIS to align with accreditation (see [Connecticut's new ELEVATE model](#)), and provide funding and support to early learning programs and facilitation projects for accreditation fees and processes, ensuring programs are prepared to maintain high quality and support educators' development and advancement. NAEYC is available to partner with states who have an interest in changing QRIS to align with accreditation and free up funds to invest in the education and compensation of the workforce.

- Resources:
 - [NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation](#)
 - [Early Learning Program Standards](#)
 - [Developmentally Appropriate Practice resources](#)

As an organization and a member of the [Commission for Professional Excellence in Early Childhood Education](#), NAEYC is excited about the opportunity for states to invest strategically and leverage new and existing resources to stabilize and support the current workforce and lay the groundwork for an equitable future. We encourage states to:

- allocate PDG B-5 funds for a full-time employee dedicated to workforce,
- participate in the PDG B-5 Early Childhood Workforce TA Peer Learning Initiative and Community of Practice, and
- reach out to NAEYC to receive support in planning for or implementing ECE workforce initiatives that align with the Unifying Framework and advance an equitable, diverse, well-prepared and well-compensated early childhood education profession that supports children and families to thrive across all states and settings.

For more information or questions about partnerships or technical assistance support, please contact Maria Estlund, NAEYC's State Policy Specialist, at mestlund@naeyc.org.

FOOTNOTES

1. The PDG B-5 Planning Grant is open to states and territories that either have not previously received a PDG B-5 grant or are current PDG B-5 Renewal Grant recipients whose 3rd year of funding ends in December 2022 or April 2023. The PDG B-5 Renewal Grant is open to states and territories that have previously received a PDG B-5 Planning Grant (or "Initial Grant") but have not previously received and implemented a Renewal Grant. The PDG B-5 grants total \$266 million in available funding, and applications for both grants are due November 7, 2022.