



## Early Childhood Research Agenda Setting: Opportunity Area Work Sheet

### Guiding questions:

1. What are the current conditions related to the opportunity area? What are the key factors behind the challenges we face in this opportunity area?
2. What are the implications of *not* addressing this opportunity area?
3. How well are current solutions in this opportunity area working? What are promising solutions that have yet to be tried and tested?

### Opportunity Area 1: Access to and supply of quality early care and education

1. **Parent choice:** What do parents prioritize in their selection of care and education for their children?
  - a. Is the increase in funding for licensed center-based care meeting parent demands or preferences?
  - b. What outcomes matter for parents (e.g., health/safety, academic, social-emotional, economic burden of care)?

*Note:* Trust for Learning survey looked into these issues but could be improved and expanded in future. Also part of the PDG needs assessment.
2. **Infant/Toddler care:** What are the real or anticipated ramifications for licensed infant and toddler care with increased funding for pre-k slots?
3. **Licensing:** Why are over half of kids are being served by unlicensed caregivers? Why do parents select this option? Why do providers opt not to become licensed?
4. **Enrollment picture:** Where are children enrolled in early care and education prior to kindergarten entry? Can we create the capacity to routinely integrate and track this information based on Early Childhood Participation Project pilot work (or other national models)?
5. **Evaluation:** Can a rigorous evaluation approach be applied to current funding streams for early care and education (e.g., CPP, DPP, CCCAP)?



**Opportunity Area 2: Elevate the early childhood workforce**

**1. Compensation conditions:**

- a. How do we measure compensation in the early childhood workforce (e.g., wage, insurance, PTO, other benefits)?
- b. What is the variation in compensation by region, provider type, setting?
- c. Are there restrictions on being able to serve as an in-home licensed childcare provider if you are receiving public assistance (e.g., TANF)?

**2. Rethinking compensation:**

- a. What are current processes and rationale for determining compensation for the early childhood workforce in formal and informal settings?
- b. Are our current specialization distinctions in early education that relate to pay meaningful or could they be reconsidered?
- c. Can we develop a scale of compensation based on the contribution of an early childhood professional to the provider's overall quality of care and education?
- d. Is a shared services approach one way to reduce cost-burden of smaller (and rural) providers in order to increase compensation of workforce?

**3. Workforce retention:**

- a. How large is early childhood workforce turnover in Colorado and by region, setting, provider?
- b. What are the organizational and industry supports that are necessary to promote workforce retention?
- c. What are the personal and family supports (e.g., health, mental health, housing, childcare) of early childhood professionals that are related to greater workforce retention?

**4. Workforce development:**

- a. How many aspiring early childhood professionals are on the cusp of credentialing/certification but do not complete the process?
- b. What are some strategies for supporting these individuals such that they can enter the early childhood workforce?

*Note: Workforce 2020 Plan and Barton/OEC grant to study the workforce will also contribute to this agenda where appropriate*



**Opportunity Area 3: Promote family health and economic security**

1. **Underutilization of services:** What are the reasons why families are not participating in public services for which they are eligible (e.g., TANF, SNAP, Early Intervention)?
2. **Vulnerable but not eligible:** What happens for families who do not qualify for public services but still need support to promote wellbeing for their family?
3. **Unintended policy implications:** What are implications of short-term eligibility for public assistance (e.g., Medicaid while pregnant but not postpartum)?
4. **Substance exposed newborns:** How large is the population of substance exposed newborns, and what are the health and wellbeing outcomes for mom and child several years postpartum?
5. **Multigenerational trauma:** What are the implications of multigenerational child welfare involvement and are there reasons to serve these families differently?
6. **Support service deserts:**
  - a. Where are there local gaps in the needs and availability of public services to support family health and economic security?
  - b. What are the local conditions and political will required to improve access?
  - c. How can we support families to successfully match to necessary services?
  - d. Are there entry points (e.g., Early Intervention, CSS) for referrals to other social supports that are being underutilized?
7. **Funding actual needs:**
  - a. How well do our support programs fund services based on actual family needs as opposed to distributing an insufficient amount of money?
  - b. What are the simpler version of expensive evidence-based programs (e.g., Nurse Family Partnership) that could work for some families?
  - c. How can we maximize limited resources across systems effectively to focus on family- or person-centered needs?
8. **Moving Upstream:** How do we move from using proximal indicators of family health and economic security to identifying early opportunities to promote these outcomes?
9. **Data needs:**
  - a. Can we create routine ways of sharing critical data across systems AND fund the costs to do so?
  - b. What are the important family health and economic security outcomes and do they exist in any available administrative data? If not, what is required to routinely collect this information?