



Budget Request: Restoration of the Early Learning and Care Workforce Development Grants Program

Background

The Budget Act of 2019-20 established the Early Learning and Care Workforce Development Grants Program and appropriated \$195 million to expand the number of qualified early learning and care professionals and increase the educational credentials of existing early learning and care professionals across the state. These funds were to be dispersed over a 4 year period by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to local, regional, or local and regional quality improvement partnerships, consistent with the Quality Rating and Improvement System local consortia.

Problem

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020, California was in the midst of the 2020-21 state budget negotiations. As concerns about economic instability due to the pandemic grew, the state swept the \$195 million appropriated to fund the Early Learning and Care Workforce Development Grants Program. The pandemic has only exacerbated the challenges facing the Early Learning and Care workforce. According to statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, California's child care workforce is about [10 percent](#) smaller than it was pre-pandemic. California families need access to high-quality care and education options, which are diminished when the Early Learning and Care workforce is depleted and under-invested in.

Solution

While livable wages, compensation, and lack of benefits are some of the largest barriers to recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce, the Early Learning and Care workforce also needs access to career pathways and professional development that support their growth and skill sets. The Grants Program would both support caregivers and educators and support California's diverse population of young children and families. The intended outcomes of reinstating and expanding the Early Learning and Care Workforce Development Grants Program are to equitably support the workforce in achieving their educational and professional aspirations, expand the number of early care and education professionals, and ensure that it has access to training, coursework and professional development opportunities and resources that will help prepare them to meet the diverse caregiving needs of California families in a developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and culturally responsive way.

Major investments are needed to support the Early Learning and Care workforce as it recovers, rebuilds, and adjusts to accommodate a changed and growing landscape. Early Edge California requests that the Early Learning and Care Workforce Development Grants Program state appropriation be reinstated and increased from \$195 million to \$250 million.

Of the \$250 million investment, Early Edge also proposes \$50 million be earmarked for two important workforce needs:



- \$25 million of funds within the Grant Program be specifically earmarked to fund professional development for caregivers and educators to increase competencies that support Dual Language Learner children and families, as 60 percent of children 0-5 in California are Dual Language Learners.
- \$25 million to fund professional development for license-exempt or Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care providers, who are estimated to provide care for nearly 23 percent of California children ages 0-5, and nearly 40 percent of care for children under 3-years-olds. Funds should help build capacity for existing networks and agencies that work with FFNs to provide additional professional development opportunities, such as trainings, peer mentorship, parent cafes, and play groups. These funds should also be able to be used to cover the cost of providing stipends, incentives, transportation, child care, and technology needs, as well as conducting outreach, to make professional development opportunities more accessible to license-exempt care providers. Additionally, the allocation schedule of these funds should build upon the \$40 million allocated to the Child Care Providers Union Training Fund to ensure that funds are maximized and spent effectively.

Additionally, we propose to remove references to QRIS in the program language and instead require that the development of the plans for these grants include at least the following stakeholders: local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, county First 5 Commission, and the County Office of Education or Local Planning Council, if the local planning council is not run by the County Office of Education. This is consistent with the changes the Coalition proposed to the grant program last year.

Lastly, the Early Learning and Care Workforce Development Grants Program was moved from the Education Code to the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) in the budget last year. However, the code still specifies that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction would oversee this grant program. To make oversight consistent, we propose moving oversight of this program to the Director of CDSS.