

Outcome Summary of ARPA-D Contracted Initiatives:

Strengthening New Hampshire's Child Care System

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Economic Stability



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I. Introduction

Background and Purpose

On April 14, 2021, NH DHHS was awarded \$29,736,767 in CCDF discretionary funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) 2021 [P.L. 117-002].

New Hampshire's plan to utilize \$29,796,854 the ARPA Discretionary Funds (ARPA-D) addressed four areas of critical need following guidance from the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The areas were identified by a broad array of stakeholders over a six-month period (see: [NH-DHHS_ARPA-Discretionary-Funds_Summary-Report_October-2021.pdf](https://www.nh-connections.org/files/2021/10/NH-DHHS_ARPA-Discretionary-Funds_Summary-Report_October-2021.pdf) ([nh-connections.org](https://www.nh-connections.org))):

THE OVERARCHING INTENT OF THE ARPA-D FUNDS WAS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACTION PLANS TO ACHIEVE THE INITIATIVES AND OBJECTIVES OUTLINED IN THE NH STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD.

1. Increase equitable access to affordable, quality child care for families;
2. Strengthen the child care workforce now and for the future by investing in evidence-based and promising practices and strategies designed for these purposes;
3. Strengthen program quality via continuous quality improvement (CQI); and
4. Strengthen the overall childcare system (state and local infrastructure building; program strengthening).

To address each priority area, DHHS explored evidence-based and promising practices, approaches and strategies by reviewing national and state research and reports, participating in ACF Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start webinars and technical assistance opportunities. DHHS also considered NH stakeholders' recommendations and identifying opportunities to leverage existing resources and efforts. DHHS generated preliminary cost estimates for each priority area to create an initial budget, which were refined over time.

ARPA-D funds were required to be encumbered by September 30, 2023, and expended by September 30, 2024. All unspent ARPA-D funds from these projects were distributed directly to licensed and license-exempt child care providers who met other criteria. It was decided that utilization of the funding would be for the following procurements and expenditures:

- ◆ **Data/Information System Development** supports the continued development and operation of the NH Connections Information System, which houses multiple modules to enable DHHS's Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration and the Child Care Licensing Unit to meet federal reporting and accountability requirements. NHCIS includes child care search for families, online access to applications

(grants, background checks) and the professional registry, and will include other important functions (e.g., online applications for credentials and Granite Steps for Quality, Pyramid Model module).

- ◆ **Early Childhood System Governance** provided funding for the Council for Thriving Children Birth-8 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Parent Advisors, led by NH Family Voices, to serve in an advisory role to the Council. The Parent Advisors group shares emerging trends for children, families, communities, workforce and businesses, and generates opportunities for learning and building capacity to provide supports and services across the ECCE system. This contract is managed by the DHHS Division of Long Term Supports and Services, Bureau of Family Centered Services, as part of a larger contract.
- ◆ **Provider Educational Services** provided funding for Out-of-School Time training and technical assistance. Services included basic, intermediate and advanced training and technical assistance and/or mentoring activities for school-age childcare providers and programs. These activities assisted school-age childcare providers and programs to meet staff professional development required by the NH Child Care Licensing Unit, and license-exempt school-age childcare providers and programs to meet the initial and annual staff professional development requirements to serve children enrolled in the NH Child Care Scholarship Program.
- ◆ **Absent Due to COVID** – Temporary policy change implemented from October 2020 through April 2023 that enabled providers to bill for serving children during COVID-19-related absences in accordance with the Department’s guidance (i.e., specified number of days per child).
- ◆ **GSQ and Other Provider Quality Incentive Payments** – Payments made directly to providers toward program quality enhancement and continuous quality improvement. Some payments were limited to programs participating in Granite Steps for Quality (GSQ), New Hampshire’s Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS), while others were provided on a one-time basis to all programs meeting basic eligibility criteria that submitted an application and agreed to the terms for expending the funds. One-time funds were based on availability.
- ◆ **Provider Quality Materials** – High quality, developmentally appropriate materials were procured and distributed to programs (infant/toddler, preschool, and out-school time) to enhance program quality. Infant/toddler and preschool kits (selected bundle of materials) were distributed with tips for providers on engaging children with the materials and promoting development through play.
- ◆ **Granite Steps for Quality (GSQ) Capacity Building Project** includes a broad array of projects, pilots and funding support to facilitate quality enhancement and continuous quality improvement for early childhood and out-of-school time programs associated with DHHS’s Granite Steps for Quality (GSQ), Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS). Funded projects range from professional development and career pathways (e.g., training, technical assistance, coaching; credentials, high quality program materials and assessments/tools) and pilot projects (e.g., mixed-delivery Pre-K program; tuition assistance; mental health consultation) to the continued development of the GSQ system (e.g., developing/implementing an evaluation plan and designing a system validation study).
- ◆ **Child Care Workforce Recruiting and Retention Project** focuses on the recruitment and retention of the child care workforce in New Hampshire by providing a study and pilot program for effective strategies that will

attract, retain and increase the quality of the early childhood and out-of-school time workforce. This project will provide a variety of self-help/wellness/mental health supports for staff, build workforce capacity through career pathways, and fund an effective multi-channel marketing program with a link to employers.

- ◆ **Child Care Business Improvement Project** will support child care providers in center-based programs to assess their business' "health" by reviewing the facility condition/use, operating expenses and finances, rent/mortgage arrangements, human resources, marketing, legal and tax, strategic planning and operational areas. Based on results, providers will be matched with professional development opportunities, business experts, mentors, prospective lenders, funders, and resources to meet their identified business and facility goals.
- ◆ **Family Child Care Expansion Project** was designed to address the state's family child care shortage by the development and management of a family child care (FCC) start-up and expansion initiative. The goal is to increase access to family child care programs across the state, with an emphasis on infant/toddler care by recruiting and supporting new providers and existing providers interested in expanding their services. Supports will include training and mentoring, use of a business health and readiness tool, and start-up/expansion funding grants. NOTE: DHHS is currently implementing a Preschool Development Grant-funded infant/toddler family child care start-up and expansion project, which will inform this ARPA-D project.
- ◆ **Provider/Program Facilities Improvement Grants** are part of both the Child Care Business Improvement Project and the Family Child Care Expansion project. Funds will support facility improvements and operational enhancements as recommended by the Business Health Assessment process. To be disbursed in association with the Child Care Business Improvement Project and the Family Child Care Expansion Project.
- ◆ **Business and Employee Partnership Program** will conduct a statewide employer/employee survey to assess the child care-related needs of NH employees/employers and then develop and pilot an employer and child care partnership program to identify best practices to address the identified needs and facilitate employee access to equitable, affordable child care during regular and non-traditional working hours. The program will also coordinate an employer/child care task force, to be embedded within an existing organization, and work with the Department to develop outreach materials to support employers and employees in applying for NH Child Care Scholarship Program funds and finding childcare.
- ◆ **Marketing and Outreach** activities are included within ARPA-D projects to promote projects' activities along with the NH Child Care Scholarship, as applicable.
- ◆ **Regional Leads Grant Program** will provide operational support to New Hampshire's Regional Leads statewide system of partnerships established over the past three years with support from the Preschool Development Grant. The Regional Leads system coordinates resources and services within identified regions through cross-sector partnerships among early childhood care and education, schools and family support.
- ◆ **Out-of-School Time Provider Support Services** increases support available to out-of-school time program providers to apply for Granite Steps for Quality.

Outcome Evaluation of ARPA-D Contracted Initiatives to Determine Effectiveness

Pear Associates, LLC was engaged by the University of New Hampshire (UNH) via the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) to conduct an external evaluation of contracts funded in whole or in part by American Rescue Plan Act Child Care Supplemental Discretionary (ARPA-D) funds. Funds were administered by the New Hampshire (NH) Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration (BCDHSC) as part of its Child Care Strengthening Plan. The overarching intent of the ARPA-D funds was to support the development of action plans to achieve the initiatives and objectives outlined in the NH Strategic Plan for Early Childhood (e.g., equitable access to affordable, quality child care; strengthened child care workforce; enhanced program quality; increased state and local infrastructure building). New Hampshire received \$29,736,767 in ARPA-D Funds to address four critical need areas identified in the report entitled, “New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services ARPA Discretionary Funds Recommendations, October 2021.”

[\(NH-DHHS_ARPA-Discretionary-Funds_Summary-Report_October-2021.pdf\)](#):

New Hampshire received \$29,736,767 in ARPA-D Funds to address four critical need areas identified in the report entitled, “New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services ARPA Discretionary Funds Recommendations, October 2021.” (NH-DHHS_ARPA-Discretionary-Funds_Summary-Report_October-2021.pdf):

- ◆ Increase equitable access to affordable, quality child care for families;
- ◆ Strengthen the child care workforce now and for the future by investing in evidence-based and promising practices and strategies designed for these purposes;
- ◆ Strengthen program quality via continuous quality improvement; and
- ◆ Strengthen the overall child care system (state and local infrastructure building and program strengthening).

The funds were targeted to build capacity, strengthen the workforce, create dependability for parents, match supply and demand, and improve quality. Federal regulations required the ARPA-D funds to be committed by September 30, 2023, and spent by September 30, 2024. Six vendor contracts were awarded to address the critical need areas.

The purpose of the Final Report is to highlight successes and lessons learned in achieving the performance measures outlined in each vendor contract. Information gleaned from vendor experiences and pilot projects will inform future investments to strengthen the child care system in New Hampshire.

Process/Methods

Pear Associates, LLC was contracted to review project reports and other contractually required information from vendors about contract performance measures to distill meaningful and informative recommendations from the funded projects and pilots. All summarized information in this Final Report is based on self-reported data and

information shared by each vendor. Completing a programmatic evaluation of each pilot project was outside the scope and intent of this process and report. With cooperation and assistance from the NH DHHS, Pear Associates, LLC utilized three primary data sources:

- 1. Vendor Quarterly Reports:** The six vendors were required to submit quarterly reports to NH DHHS to detail project progress. Quarterly reports were submitted in January, April, and July of 2024. Quarterly reports captured activities towards achieving contract goals and deliverables, challenges encountered, public dissemination/promotion of project information and activities, advances in equity, and the upcoming slate of project activities.
- 2. Vendor Interviews/Surveys:** Pear Associates conducted interviews and surveys with five vendors to discuss leading success and lessons learned to inform future investment in the NH child care system. Topic areas included primary supportive factors for success, leading barriers or lessons learned about project implementation, resources needed for project sustainability, recommendations for enhancing the work, and any notable success stories.
- 3. Vendor Final Reports:** Five vendors submitted final reports in October 2024 to capture and summarize project achievements, identify lessons learned, and share any work products created during the grant period.

II. Project-Specific Reports

Six vendors were contracted to conduct priority projects aimed at strengthening the child care system in New Hampshire. The following summarizes reported accomplishments related to contract performance measures and recommendations to inform future investments.

VENDOR CONTRACT #1

GRANITE UNITED WAY

PROJECT TITLE

Child Care Business and Employer Partnership Project

PROJECT SUMMARY

Known as the Child Care Business and Employer Partnership Project (CCBEPP), Granite United Way designed a one-year pilot project to support businesses and their employees across the State seeking access to equitable, affordable, and quality child care during both traditional and nontraditional business hours. Recognizing that

child care is an essential service significantly bolstering community and economic stability, Granite United Way spearheaded efforts to help New Hampshire employers and industry leaders understand the impact of child care access and family-friendly policies on workforce recruitment and retention, revenue, and the overall economy.

One of the first components of the CCBEPP was a comprehensive study to examine the trends and impacts of child care access on workforce dynamics in New Hampshire. This study incorporated both statewide employer and employee surveys and an extensive literature review. These efforts were crucial in informing the selection of state and regional pilot projects to enhance child care accessibility and support for working families.


Granite United Way supported the needs of employers and working families by facilitating partnerships and innovative initiatives designed to enable parents and guardians to enter or remain in the workforce, achieve economic stability, and contribute to New Hampshire's economy. The primary goal was to engage business leaders as partners in developing innovative, sustainable solutions for New Hampshire's child care expansion efforts.



- 1. Family-Friendly Workplace Certification Program:** The Best Place for Working Parents® (BPWP) is a national network of businesses promoting the adoption of family-friendly workplace policies. BPWP recognizes and strategically positions businesses as pivotal agents of change in a movement to prioritize the well-being of working families. Key components included an online employer self-assessment tool to evaluate workplace policies, and a digital badging system to acknowledge and advertise family-friendly practices within NH businesses.
- 2. Employer-Sponsored Child Care Benefits:** Employer-sponsored child care benefits are designed to assist employees in managing their child care needs through various means, such as on-site facilities, partnerships with local centers, financial assistance, and referral services. The primary objective of the pilot was to offer employers a risk-free chance to trial child care benefits, thereby raising awareness of available resources and opportunities to offset costs, while encouraging the adoption of supportive policies. Key components included a turnkey child care benefits platform tailored for employers known as TOOTRIS, and federal Employer-Provided Child Care Tax Credits (45F).
- 3. Child Care Stability and Affordability Pilot & Gorham Community Learning Center (GCLC) Expansion Project:** An initiative led by the Coos County Directors Network to stabilize and enhance the financial viability of childcare centers. The GCLC Expansion Project, launched in January 2024, successfully brought together diverse stakeholders and secured in-kind, fiscal, and partnership investments to support the local child care center. Key objectives included ensuring tuition affordability, improving staff recruitment and retention through better compensation, and increasing public-private investment to establish an Affordability Subsidy Fund. Key components included technical guidance involving specialized business and finance consultations for participating child care centers and sustainability plans and reinvestment strategies for generated revenue.
- 4. NH Business Case Study Project:** A series of case studies were curated to highlight NH employers implementing innovative family-friendly policies and partnerships to enhance child care access. The primary objective was to share practical, family-friendly support options across the state to inspire other businesses to implement supportive measures for working families. Three businesses were profiled as case studies, and additional materials and resources were shared at business roundtables.
- 5. Work Well Business Roundtables:** The Work Well Business Roundtables were designed to engage businesses in discussions about child care accessibility and family-friendly workplace policies. Key components included hosting four in-person roundtables across the state (Manchester, Concord, Conway, and Portsmouth), completing business self-assessments for policy improvements, sharing information about the NH Child Care Scholarship Program for employee onboarding, and sharing information about federal tax credits for businesses that support employees with child care.
- 6. Family Child Care (FCC) Business Capacity Building Partnership:** In collaboration with the Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA), this initiative directed \$140,000 in resources to the Children's Museum of New Hampshire to facilitate the distribution of play-based learning kits, professional development, and coaching to family child care providers throughout the state. Key components included professional development and play-based learning kits for 100 Family Child Care Providers in all 10 counties in NH.

SELECTED PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Overall, the CCBEPP reported significant increases in awareness of the impact of child care access and family-friendly workplace policies on workforce recruitment and retention, seeding greater employer involvement in child care solutions. By leveraging data-driven strategies and New Hampshire-specific insights, the CCBEPP reported successful shifts in employer perceptions, underscoring businesses' vital role in supporting working families and framing child care as a critical public good.



WORK WELL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLES WILL BE SUSTAINED AS A KEY INITIATIVE AND COMPONENT OF GRANITE UNITED WAY'S MISSION TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY SUPPORT SYSTEMS.

In particular, the Work Well Business Roundtables served as an effective platform for engaging the business sector in collaborative solutions to improve child care access. Four in-person roundtable discussions were held in Manchester, Concord, Conway, and Portsmouth, with a total of 63 attendees from local businesses. Among attendees, 47% reported a better understanding of the challenges faced by working parents as the most valuable insight gained from participation in the Roundtables. In addition, 53% of attendees felt more informed about the impact of child care access and family-friendly policies on businesses.

Roundtable discussions laid a strong foundation for continued community investment and growth, as exemplified by the GCLC Expansion Project.

The GCLC Expansion Project involved purchasing and transforming a former Northeast Credit Union Branch into a modern child care center that will increase licensed child capacity in the region by 49 children. The Granite United Way plans to sustain the momentum of the Work Well Business Roundtables by integrating the pilot as a key initiative and component of its mission to enhance community support systems.

Additionally, The Best Place for Working Parents® Certification Program proved successful in enhancing corporate profiles through social responsibility. This program has become an invaluable tool for employer recruitment and retention, paving the way for deeper involvement in initiatives like the Work Well Business Roundtables that foster collaboration and the development of family-friendly policies. As of October 2024, seventy (70) businesses across 13 sectors applied for the designation. Policies related to paid time off (98% of applicants), flexible hours (98%), and employee healthcare (94%) were among the most cited by businesses in certification applications.

CONTRACT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The following measures were monitored for contract performance during the project’s duration. **Table A** contains a cumulative summary of the data reported via quarterly reports and a final project report submitted by the Granite United Way.

| Table A: Contract Performance Measures | | |
|---|---|---|
| Programs/Activities | Contract Performance Measures & Targets (When Defined) | Final Reported Performance Measures |
| Develop, conduct, complete, and submit a statewide Child Care Needs Study. | 10% survey response rate per county. Granite United Way worked with DHHS to establish a baseline to accurately measure survey response rates. | <p>A data dashboard with results can be found at: workwell.graniteuw.org</p> <p>Employee surveys:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,289 employees* • 2,289 employees* • 1,415 employed in NH and care for at least one child • One of ten NH counties had a response rate of 10% or higher (Grafton=13%) <p>Employer surveys:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 116 employers • 74 employers based in NH and employ at least one person caregiving for at least one child • Three (Hillsborough, Grafton, and Merrimack) of the ten NH counties had a response rate of 10% or higher (based on location of headquarters) |
| Develop and deploy one (1) statewide and four (4) regional child care pilot programs. | 100% of five (5) pilot programs will be identified by February 1, 2024. | DHHS approved pilot recommendations in January 2024. Six pilot projects were approved, exceeding the performance measure of at least five pilot projects. |
| | 100% of (5) pilot programs will be implemented by April 1, 2024. | All six pilots had entered the implementation phase as of April 2024. |
| | 100% of (5) pilot programs completed, with final reports submitted by October 14, 2024. | Six pilots were completed, and the final report was submitted in October 2024. |

**Data Note: 58% (577) of survey respondents reported working for Dartmouth-Hitchcock, which introduced potential bias and skewed preliminary findings. A professional statistician was contracted to apply weighted analysis techniques to correct demographic overrepresentation, and statistical data from the Department of Labor was integrated to ensure a comprehensive representation of child care needs across various sectors.*

PROJECT STRENGTHS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following information is organized based on the SOAR framework – Strengths, Opportunities and Aspirations, and Results. Information from vendor reports and the interviews/surveys conducted with vendor leads were utilized to identify these key project attributes.

Strengths – The Project’s Greatest Achievements

- ◆ **Research and Online Data Dashboard** – local insights on how family-friendly workplace policies and childcare accessibility impact workforce recruitment and retention. This proved to be a powerful tool because it captured NH-specific data from both employers and employees, informing real-time state and regional initiatives. A total of 2,289 employee surveys were conducted in all ten counties (1,415 respondents were employed in NH and caring for at least one child), and 116 employer surveys were conducted with representation from all ten counties (74 respondents were headquartered in NH and employed at least one individual who was caring for a child). (workwell.graniteuw.org)
- ◆ **The Best Place for Working Parents® Certification Program** – provided an online business assessment highlighting the top 10 research-backed policies for working parents and the economic viability of businesses. NH businesses received assessment results based on their workplace policies, and they joined a national network of business leaders who shared policies that are low- or no-cost and will boost employee attraction, retention, loyalty, productivity, and engagement. (bestplace4workingparents.com/new-hampshire)
- ◆ **Gorham Community Learning Center (GCLC) Expansion Project** – Successful public-private partnership resulting in expanded child care options within a region of the state grappling with child care shortages through a supportive financing model. The GCLC Expansion Project will transform a former Northeast Credit Union Branch into a modern child care center that will increase licensed child capacity in the region for 49 children/families.

Opportunities & Aspirations – Ways to Enhance and Expand Approaches



- ◆ **Target Workplace Policy Gaps:** – Among employer survey respondents, established workplace policies in NH businesses related to backup child care (17%), onsite child care (31%), and paternity leave (53%) were rare and may present opportunities for targeted support in the state. Maintaining NH’s membership to The Best Place for Working Parents® would bolster continued policy efforts and garner additional business engagement..
- ◆ **Sustain Work Well Business Roundtables** – NH Businesses are interested in ongoing work that fully engages them as partners, not solely investors, in systems change to leverage their skills and expertise. Work Well Business Roundtables provide a platform for business engagement that includes the ability for business partners to

allocate in-kind expertise and resources to address family child care needs, resulting in more creative problem-solving and strengthened business-community relationship building. Similar to the Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative, ongoing technical support for businesses is needed to drive family-friendly and business-friendly policy development for child care system improvements (e.g., federal tax-credit opportunities, child care scholarships for their workforce, workplace policy assessments).

- ◆ **Expand NH-Based Research to Inform Systems Change** – The employer/employee survey has the potential to serve as a sustainable mechanism for capturing the community’s voice in the state’s policy and systems change efforts to strengthen the child care system. An investment in continued research within NH provides data to inform local action.

Results – Notable Impact and Outcomes

- ◆ First-of-its-kind study launched in NH to gain both employer and employee perspectives about the needs, experiences, and challenges related to child care, including the creation of a Work Well website to host an interactive data dashboard with the survey results (workwell.graniteuw.org).
- ◆ 70 businesses across 13 sectors in NH completed the workplace policy assessments and applied for designation as part of The Best Place for Working Parents® Certification Program.
- ◆ Innovative public-private partnership that transformed a former Northeast Credit Union into a modern child care center, increasing child care access for 49 children and families in Coos County, a region of the state challenged by child care shortages
- ◆ Four in-person business roundtables presented region-specific data for 63 business leaders in Manchester, Concord, Conway, and Portsmouth.
- ◆ 100 play-based learning kits were distributed to family childcare providers throughout the state with professional development and coaching.

VENDOR CONTRACT #2

PUBLIC CONSULTING GROUP, LLC

PROJECT TITLE

Child Care Workforce Recruiting, Retention, and Effective Strategies

PROJECT SUMMARY

In support of the Child Care Workforce Recruiting, Retention, and Effective Practices Project, the Public Consulting Group (PCG) provided activities to support child care center providers and Head Start programs, serving children in early childhood and out-of-school time (EC/OST) programs, in the recruitment and retention of staff. This work

WHILE WE WERE ALREADY DOING A LOT FOR OUR STAFF, BEING A PART OF BE WELL CARE WELL HAS HELPED US BECOME MORE FOCUSED AND INTENTIONAL WITH WHAT WE CHOOSE TO DO.

THAT IS IN PART DUE TO THEIR TRAINING, THE MATERIALS PROVIDED, AND THE HANDS-ON APPROACH OF THE PROGRAM'S COACH."

CHILD CARE PROGRAM
LEADER

included a pilot program; a study to assess effective strategies for staff recruitment and retention; the expansion of existing marketing programs to recruit and retain child care staff; increasing access to self-help wellness mental health supports for staff through outreach and coordination; and expanding access to professional development opportunities in higher education and certification programs. These efforts were designed to enhance the overall quality and sustainability of child care services in the state.

SELECTED PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Be Well Care Well is an evidence-based program designed to bring well-being to the workplace by equipping employers with practical solutions to create thriving work environments that benefit both their employees and the clients they serve. The program's strategies promote positive change in overall well-being across 8 dimensions of wellness to lower stress, reduce burnout, increase job satisfaction, and promote sustained professional fulfillment.

The Be Well Care Well program received fifty applications from child care programs across the state, indicating a high degree of interest and need for this type of programming to support the child care workforce. Twelve were selected for initial follow-up via screening interviews. Eleven programs were chosen for the 12-month pilot program, and 10 programs moving forward with implementation. 249 participants from these sites enrolled in the Be Well Care Well program. A designated coach from the program supported 62 onsite activities at the 10 sites, such as



hydration challenges, smoothie days, nutrition classes, onsite yoga classes, and the creation of staff rooms. The child care programs have also become more connected to existing community health groups and outlets for healthy resources, like grocery stores and fitness organizations, for ongoing wellness-related support. Additionally, a Child Care Workforce Wellness and Self-Care webpage was launched in July 2024 via NH Connections. Based on the eight dimensions of wellness, the webpage

provides free and affordable tools, information, and strategies to promote wellness within the child care workforce.

Early childhood programs often encounter challenges related to business administration activities. With that in mind, PCG contracted with Opportunities Exchange, under the umbrella organization of Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs, Inc. (SEE), for content expertise to develop an early childhood compensation e-learning course on human resources and compensation strategies and structures. The course utilized and leveraged developed materials from Opportunities Exchange, including slide decks, resources, and templates. In addition, Opportunities Exchange helped develop the e-learning module script, including talking points and video-based narration. Once published, the course will be available to all providers through the NH e-learning platform.

CONTRACT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

| Table A: Contract Performance Measures | | |
|---|--|---|
| Programs/Activities | Contract Performance Measures & Targets (When Defined) | Final Reported Performance Measures |
| Develop, Statewide Child Care Workforce Recruiting and Retention Plan | 50% participation rate in the Survey statewide.* | 4,282 responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,110 from active NH providers • 1,172 from inactive providers |
| Marketing and Outreach to Recruit & Retain Child Care Workforce | 20% response rate statewide to marketing efforts. | The response rate was not reported. Outreach activities included: 14 job fairs with 126 attendees (4 in-person events and 10 virtual sessions) resulting in 47 job applicants |
| Child Care Provider Workforce | 15% increase in child care provider workforce statewide.** | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,630 child care educators in May 2023 • 9,309 total active/eligible users in NHCIS on 9/3/2024 (253.95% increase) |
| | 10% decrease in the statewide recidivism rate in child care workforce providers.** | |

*Based on NHCIS data as of the contract effective date; **Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Report

PROJECT STRENGTHS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following information is organized based on the SOAR framework – Strengths, Opportunities and Aspirations, and Results. Information from vendor reports and the interviews/surveys conducted with vendor leads were utilized to identify these key project attributes.

Strengths – The Project’s Greatest Achievements

- ◆ **Family Child Care Start-Up with the United Way Exceeded Expectations** – In partnership with the United Way of Greater Nashua, PCG recruited an ethnically diverse group to participate in the FCC Start-Up pilot program, which aimed to increase the availability of child care by assisting FCC providers with business practices for training and licensure. 90 participants completed the training program (original target was 15 participants), which was offered in English, Spanish, Swahili, Arabic, and Portuguese. The training program will be sustained by the United Way and PCG via braided philanthropic funds.
- ◆ **Tailored Strategies and Established Local Connections**—Strong community connections and local collaboration are critical to workforce recruitment and the development of effective strategies. Each region has unique strengths and assets that were utilized to tailor strategies for each respective community.

Opportunities & Aspirations – Ways to Enhance and Expand Approaches

- ◆ **Expand the Be Well Care Well Program** – With fifty child care programs in NH showing initial interest, there is an opportunity to continue to build on and expand the reach of this program. To support the continuation of the Be Well Care Well program, investment opportunities should be explored to permanently employ a dedicated coach to serve as the program’s coordinator for ongoing implementation.
- ◆ **Build and Strengthen Child Care Workforce Development Strategies and Pathways** – Low compensation remains a barrier to effective workforce recruitment efforts. Continued promotion and distribution of the Compensation Series developed as part of the HR Hub Professional Development pilot should be supported. This series of three e-learning modules trains program owners to create an impactful and affordable compensation package for their employees, as well as financial business practices such as budgeting. Additionally, high school career pipelines should be strengthened to identify students interested in early education, and internships for field-based work at child care programs should be established to support credentialing for new educators.
- ◆ **Sustain the Family Child Care Start-Up Training** – Educating prospective FCC providers about the licensure process, child care scholarships, types of child care programs, NH state regulations and rules, and providing CPR and First Aid certification proved to be a successful strategy for engaging and potentially recruiting the workforce. Currently, the United Way of Greater Nashua is scheduling coaches to work directly with participants to support them in achieving licensure, exploring co-working space to partner with other prospective FCC providers, or securing employment at a licensed child care center.

Results – Notable Impact and Outcomes

- ◆ PCG collected 4,282 responses to the Child Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention Survey to inform workforce recruitment and retention efforts in the state. Of these, 3,110 responses came from active providers in the NH workforce. Additionally, 1,172 inactive providers who have left the field completed the survey tool.
- ◆ The majority of respondents are driven by passion, purpose, and a desire to make a difference in the lives of children.
- ◆ Over one-quarter of the respondents found their current employment position through networking and personal connections, with online job boards also commonly used.
- ◆ Approximately 40% of respondents indicated they are satisfied with the wages and benefits they currently receive.
- ◆ Respondents indicated that a better benefits package, such as paid holidays, paid vacation, and paid sick leave, could lead to increased workforce recruitment and retention.
- ◆ Greater opportunities for professional development and workforce credentialing are an area of interest among respondents (Early Childhood Teacher Levels 1-6 and the Child Development Association credential).
- ◆ Respondents cited higher salaries, better benefits packages, and improved working conditions as the leading reasons for leaving the EC/OST field.
- ◆ Seven focus group sessions were conducted with child care program staff and leaders. Directors cited the need for state investment in child care programs to support workforce recruitment and retention, in particular workforce benefits packages to offer group health care coverage and retirement assistance.

VENDOR CONTRACT #3

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY

PROJECT TITLE

Family Child Care Establish and Expand

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) is a statewide, nonprofit authority whose mission is to maximize the value and impact of community development, economic development, and clean energy initiatives throughout the state of New Hampshire. In New Hampshire, there are 76,004 children aged 5 and under with 70% of those children having all available parents in the workforce. This leaves approximately 53,202 children eligible for child care; with only 599 licensed child care centers and 112 licensed family child care homes, this creates a 24% gap in the supply versus the demand for child care (First Five Years Fund, 2024). Access to quality, affordable child care is critical for New Hampshire's working families as it sets the foundation for them to grow and prosper within our communities.



In 2024, CDFA launched the Family Child Care (FCC) Project to build statewide and regional capacity to serve family child care providers across New Hampshire. The approach of the FCC was designed to leverage funds to develop resources that would have long-term impacts, while building on existing and emerging regional capacity to support family-based child care providers with services. The overall goal of the FCC Project was to increase the capacity to serve family child care providers while strengthening the sustainability of the family child care provider network through various

statewide and regional programmatic elements. Specifically, the FCC Project engaged new and existing family child care providers to deliver services and support, including:

- ◆ Assessing the health and readiness of the provider for start-up or expansion;
- ◆ Delivering business technical assistance and training.
- ◆ Creating connections to sector-specific resources for training and mentoring;
- ◆ Resourcing agencies providing leadership in supporting family childcare providers in each of the seven Early Childhood Regions;
- ◆ Focusing intentionally on a community-based, culturally grounded, and equity-centered service delivery; and

61% OF FCC PROVIDERS (139 OUT OF 225) UTILIZED ONE OR MORE PROJECT SERVICES, WITH AN ADDITIONAL 10% EXPRESSING INTEREST IN USING ONE OR MORE SERVICES IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

- ◆ Providing access to a family child care provider start-up or expansion funding grant program.

In addition, CDFA developed resources to be utilized statewide in supporting family child care providers in 2024 and beyond, including:

- ◆ NH Guide to Becoming a Family Child Care Provider
- ◆ Small Business Pathways for Family Child Care Providers
- ◆ Business Health Assessment
- ◆ Family Child Care Provider Resource Library
- ◆ Thrive Pathway Child Care Business Coach Training
- ◆ Statewide Zoning Study on Home-Based Care Regulations
- ◆ Play-Based Learning for NH Family-Based Child Care Providers

The FCC Project was an effort, informed by the results and experiences of many other programs, to advance CDFA's mission by engaging and delivering services and support to new and existing family-based child care providers. To examine the efforts and impact of the FCC Project, Civitas Strategies partnered with CDFA to work with their grantees, identify lessons learned, and capture best practices to inform future program implementation and long-term support for family child care providers across the state.

SELECTED PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

By implementing a centralized support system, enhancing outreach efforts with culturally sensitive approaches, and aligning support with long-term sustainability goals, CDFA can play a pivotal role in strengthening the child care ecosystem in NH.

Outreach and engagement activities yielded significant interest from those looking to start up as a family-based child care provider, reaching 185 potential providers. From mid-April to September 2024, a total of 224 outreach activities were conducted. These efforts provided significant momentum in expanding the number of providers throughout NH, as well as an opportunity for future investments intentionally focused on expanding the number of family child care providers. Outreach efforts also engaged 39 existing licensed or licensed exempt providers with support to strengthen their resiliency as small business owners and educators. Overall, the FCC Project successfully engaged about 32% (n=121) of existing licensed or licensed-exempt family child care providers.

As of September 2024, 61% of FCC providers (139 out of 225) utilized one or more project services, with an additional 10% expressing interest in using one or more services in the near future. Key highlights of FCC provider engagement included:

- ◆ 22 providers completing business health assessments;
- ◆ 16 providers participating in Technical Assistance or Coaching;
- ◆ 133 providers participating in Training Programs; and
- ◆ 139 providers engaging in regular cohort meetings.

CONTRACT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

| Table A: Contract Performance Measures | | |
|---|---|---|
| Programs/Activities | Contract Performance Measures & Targets (When Defined) | Final Reported Performance Measures |
| Family Child Care Business Health Assessment (FCCBHA) | 25% of qualifying existing licensed FCCPs enroll in FCCPBHA. | 40.91% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34 enrolled/interested • 11 participating |
| | 10% of qualifying existing LE Home-based providers enroll in FCCPBHA. | 0.91% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 program demonstrated interest in FY2024 Q4 |
| | Minimum of 21 participating providers (3 per region) in FCCPBHA. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34 enrolled/interested • 11 participating |
| | 65% of qualifying FCCPs successfully complete the FCCPBHA. | 17.89% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 FCCPs |
| | 40% of FCCPs utilize business experts and facilities experts. | 21.14% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 engaged in business TA or coaching • 4 engaged in facilities |
| | 35% of FCCPs have improved report scores at the FCCPBHA retake. | 100% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 programs completed BHA retake, and both had improved scores |
| Resources & Training | 40% of FCCPs participate in referred training. | 117.27% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 129 participants including FCCPs and licensed exempt home-based providers |
| DISP | 65% of FCCPs have a DISP plan. | 6.25% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 FCCPs |
| Business Experts | 40% of FCCPs engage with mentors. | 117.27% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 129 participants |

PROJECT STRENGTHS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following information is organized based on the SOAR framework – Strengths, Opportunities and Aspirations, and Results. Information from vendor reports and the interviews/surveys conducted with vendor leads were utilized to identify these key project attributes.

Strengths – The Project’s Greatest Achievements

- ◆ **Built on Existing Resources and Approaches** – The FCC Project built upon a number of efforts undertaken by CDFA and was heavily influenced by CDFA’s twenty-five-year commitment to small business technical assistance and two recent projects: the [Community Navigator Program](#) and the [2024 Small Business Ecosystem Assessment](#).
- ◆ **Successful Outreach Efforts to Engage FCC Providers** – From mid-April to September 2024, a total of 224 outreach activities were conducted. Overall, the FCC Project successfully engaged about 32% (n=121) of existing licensed or licensed-exempt family child care providers. Building provider trust to enter an individual’s home environment and intentionally planning for limited provider availability/time due to child care service delivery during the typical workday are two important facets of successful engagement.

Opportunities & Aspirations – Ways to Enhance and Expand Approaches

- ◆ **Sustained Partnership is Critical** – The vast majority of family-based child care providers do not consider themselves small businesses. Therefore, the success of FCC-focused initiatives requires sustained commitment, adaptive strategies, and collaborative efforts between the State of New Hampshire, local organizations, and the FCC providers themselves. By fostering a resilient network of family child care businesses, NH families will have access to high-quality, sustainable child care options that meet their diverse needs.
- ◆ **Implement a Statewide Staffed Family Child Care Network (FCCN)** – In an FCCN model, a central staff creates economies of scale and scope, while regional and local efforts meet the specific needs of FCC businesses. This dual-level approach allows for both broad-based support and tailored assistance. By sustaining staff at both the central and regional levels, momentum can be gained by providing the time necessary to build trust and work with child care business owners for extended periods. This is especially crucial in communities of new Americans, where cultural understanding and long-term engagement are vital.
- ◆ **Accelerate Outreach through Shared Best Practices and Consistent Assessment** – Create a statewide guide for outreach best practices and conduct an evaluation of outreach strategies. The guide should be a living document, continuously updated as new strategies prove effective. The existing Community of Practice can be utilized to continue to exchange ideas and facilitate cross-mentoring among regions. This structured approach to sharing knowledge could result in faster, sustained engagement with FCC providers in the future. Additionally, continuing business health assessments with training and coaching support is a successful tool for engaging and supporting businesses to thrive.

- ◆ **Provide Targeted, Ongoing Financial Resources for FCCs with Streamlined Access** – Financial support for FCC businesses needs to be more flexible, accessible, and timely. Future initiatives should consider alternative funding models (e.g., partial upfront payments or forgivable loans), streamlined processes, and targeted support at critical business junctures (e.g., during startup, facility infrastructure expenses).

Results – Notable Impact and Outcomes

- ◆ Investment in the FCC sector extends far beyond the individual providers. A robust FCC sector contributes to the economic vitality of communities, supports workforce participation, and most importantly, provides nurturing environments for the growth and development of New Hampshire’s children.
- ◆ CDFA launched a funding opportunity in February 2024 to accept applications from organizations interested in advancing the goals of the FCC Project.
 - Up to \$120,000 was allocated to each of the seven Early Childhood regions, with the goal of supporting these geographies in bolstering current capacities and initiatives already underway or emerging.
- ◆ CDFA received funding applications from 27 FCC providers across the spectrum of start-ups to existing providers. Ten providers met the eligibility criteria outlined by NH DHHS and received a total of approximately \$160,000 in funding.
- ◆ The [NH Guide to Becoming a Family Child Care Provider](#) provides a resource for those at all stages of small business ownership – explorative, preparation, and sustainability.
- ◆ The NH Family Child Care Provider [Business Health Assessment Tool](#) (available in English and Spanish) is an intuitive and user-friendly resource for FCC providers to conduct a thorough self-assessment of their business operations, identifying strengths, and areas for improvement.
- ◆ The [Family Child Care Provider Resource Library](#) includes 32 tools in English and Spanish for assisting FCC providers in moving to action to strengthen their small businesses.
- ◆ The NH Zoning Atlas team, led by the Center for Ethics in Society at Saint Anselm College, analyzed zoning regulations governing home-based child care in every community across the state. The findings were compiled in a report entitled [2024 Zoning Atlas Study of Home-Based Childcare in NH](#) to inform community leaders and policymakers about legislative impacts on the FCC Provider sector and how zoning can facilitate the creation of home-based care options in local communities.
- ◆ 61% of FCC providers in NH (139 out of 225) utilized one or more services offered by the FCC Project, with an additional 10% expressing interest in using one or more services in the near future.

VENDOR CONTRACT #4

KSC — BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT INSTITUTE

PROJECT TITLE

Granite Steps for Capacity Building

PROJECT SUMMARY

Keene State College (KSC) served as an internal project evaluator, working in collaboration with the Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC). Together, they coordinated provider access to Pyramid model coaches, trainers, and consultants, developed criteria for the Granite Steps for Quality (GSQ) Family Child Care Pyramid Model pathway, and aligned the processes of various GSQ pathways.

TRAINING, COACHING, AND DATA SYSTEMS WERE SIGNIFICANTLY BOLSTERED TO SUPPORT THE ENVIRONMENTAL RATING SCALES, AS PART OF NEW HAMPSHIRE'S QUALITY RECOGNITION AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM KNOWN AS GRANITE STEPS FOR QUALITY.

As part of NH's Child Care Strengthening Plan, the Granite Steps for Quality Capacity Building (GSQCB) Project focused on enhancing early childhood and out-of-school time (OST) programs through the GSQ system. Key objectives included facilitating continuous quality improvement, providing professional development opportunities, and supporting providers in progressing through the GSQ system by distributing quality materials, tools, and incentives. The project also designed an evaluation plan for GSQ system components, conducted a system validation study, and aligned the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) pathway with the Pyramid Model Pathway. Additionally, the GSQCB Project updated the NH Early Childhood and Family Mental Health (ECFMH) Credential, expanded the number of professionals with intermediate or advanced ECFMH credentials, and offered criteria and recommendations for GSQ Endorsements in various areas.

Additionally, five pilot programs were launched to explore tuition assistance, credential incentives, national accreditation, mental health consultation, and a mixed delivery community-based Pre-K model:

- 1. Tuition Assistance:** This pilot program was designed to provide approximately 500 tuition assistance grants, with each grant covering up to \$2,000 per course, for teachers in early childhood and out-of-school time programs. Participants could take up to three approved courses per term, with the program covering 100% of the tuition costs for each course. To facilitate this, the number of approved courses was expanded. Additionally, collaboration with other institutes of higher education was facilitated to create participation agreements for the tuition assistance program.

2. **Credential Incentive Program:** This pilot program developed a credential incentive program that includes financial support for credential fees and related costs.
3. **National Accreditation:** This pilot program offered technical assistance to help programs attain or maintain accreditation and identified potential sources of sustainable funding.
4. **Access to Mental Health Consultation and Support:** This pilot program organized collaboration among Community Mental Health Centers, the NH Association for Infant Mental Health, the Pyramid Model Consortium, the Children’s Behavioral Health at NH DHHS, and other qualified professionals to provide consultation and resources for addressing child-specific behavioral health needs. The overall goal of this collaborative effort aimed to improve program quality by offering intensive mental health support for children and their families.
5. **Mixed Delivery Community-Based Pre-Kindergarten Model:** This pilot program tested a pre-kindergarten model for implementation in NH.

SELECTED PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

NH’s quality rating and improvement system is known as Granite Steps for Quality (GSQ). The system’s hallmark



features are local control, which allows for choice in the quality pathways for improvement undertaken by organizations, and a robust coaching approach for participating organizations to bolster improvement efforts and sustain momentum. Aligning the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) and Pyramid Model (PM) pathways was a key component of the GSQ Capacity Building Project. At the outset of this project, the PM pathway was well-established, with training, coaching, program resources, and a widely utilized data system. Although the ERS pathway has been an available alternative to PM in the GSQ system, lack of funding has significantly hindered its development, making it a less robust

pathway option. This limitation has ultimately impacted ERS support and resources available to programs.

This project successfully bolstered training, coaching, and data collection for the ERS pathway at both system and program levels. For example, to build ERS coach capacity, seven regional coaches were hired during the project period. Prior to this project, there were no ERS coaching templates to scaffold coaching to programs. This led to inconsistencies in coaching and a lack of clear expectations on how to document coaching and improvement efforts. To address this, templates were created to standardize documentation and support coaching practice at the teacher and program levels. In addition, monthly meetings with coaches were held to provide consultation support and facilitate their integration into the broader GSQ system. Finally, to ensure that coaches across pathways are equally prepared for their responsibilities, ERS coaches independently completed LearnERS training modules for all ERS tools. Training hours earned are applied toward obtaining the Professional Development Specialist Credential with a Coach Endorsement, aligning ERS coach criteria with existing PM criteria.

The Mixed Delivery pilot program sought to support a mix of quality early childhood education program types in progressing to even higher levels of quality (i.e., progress from GSQ Step 3 to Step 4), and in the process, learn what supports are most effective and generate recommendations for possible scale-up in the future. Nineteen programs applied for the pilot and of those, six programs were selected. Selected programs were diverse in geography, license capacity, percentage of children using the NH Child Care Scholarship Program, and GSQ pathway designation. Overall, the Mixed Delivery pilot program achieved its goal of improving program quality, evidenced by an increase in the number of credentialed staff and subsequent progress toward GSQ Step 4, investment in more creative play for children, environmental improvements, commitment to coaching and teacher observations, and improvements in selected quality improvement areas.

In particular, flexible funding from the Mixed Delivery Pilot was transformative for participating programs, enabling them to achieve significant, previously unattainable improvements in multiple areas. The funding facilitated major environmental upgrades, enhanced workforce morale and retention through staff compensation, and supported previously out-of-reach credentialing.

CONTRACT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Table A: Contract Performance Measures

| Programs/Activities | Contract Performance Measures & Targets (When Defined) | Final Reported Performance Measures |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Tuition Assistance | 500 tuition assistance grants, not to exceed \$2,000/course | 765 awards to early childhood and OST program teachers |
| | Determine feasibility of participation agreements for the Tuition Assistance Program | \$100,000 awarded to Keene State College and Rivier College to launch tuition assistance programs |
| | Detail process/cost to implement the Tuition Assistance Program | Final Report Submitted |
| | Future recommendations or investments in this project | Submitted as part of the Final Report |
| Credential Incentive Program (CIP) | Develop a CIP | Developed by July 1, 2023 |
| | Include financial support for credential fees and costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 441 teachers received \$100 incentive for a total of \$44,100 42 teachers received \$200 incentive with the Gwen and Henry Morgan award for a total of \$8,400 |
| | Demonstrated impact on participation and enhanced quality of care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recipients increased from 207 pre-pilot to 257 during pilot Number of credentials earned increased from 380 pre-pilot to 454 during pilot |

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| Table A: Contract Performance Measures | | |
|--|---|--|
| Programs/Activities | Contract Performance Measures & Targets (When Defined) | Final Reported Performance Measures |
| Credential Incentive Program (CIP) — <i>continued</i> | Detail process/cost to implement CIP | Submitted |
| | Future recommendations or investments in this project | Submitted as part of the Final Report |
| NH Early Childhood and Family Mental Health (ECFMH) Credential | Update/revise NH ECFMH Credential | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated credential requirements • Foundational Level credential added |
| | Expand the number of professionals receiving their immediate or advanced ECFMH credential (6 to 10 individuals) | 12 professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 intermediate credentials • 1 advanced renewal • 6 Reflective Practice Consultants 3 new cohorts launched September 2024 |
| National Accreditation | Provide technical assistance to programs to attain and maintain accreditation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 programs • 30.5 TA hours provided |
| | Anticipated participation rate in the number of programs attaining or maintaining national accreditation | Not reported |
| | Detail process/cost to implement a National Accreditation Pilot | Final Report Submitted |
| | Future recommendations or investments in this project | Submitted with the Final Report |
| Access to Mental Health Consultation and Support | Collaborate and coordinate with community mental health centers, the NH Association for Infant Mental Health, the Pyramid Model Consortium, the Department of Children’s Behavioral Health, and/or other qualified early childhood and school-age children’s mental health professionals. | Community team established |
| | Provide consultation and resources regarding child-specific behavioral health needs requiring intensive support. | Final products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Sharing Form for DCF and ECE site • ECE Placement Status Checklist • Training Modules for ECE staff |

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| Table A: Contract Performance Measures | | |
|--|--|---|
| Programs/Activities | Contract Performance Measures & Targets (When Defined) | Final Reported Performance Measures |
| Access to Mental Health Consultation and Support <i>continued</i> | Current and anticipated early childhood and OST programs receiving mental health consultation and support regarding children’s behavioral health needs. | Three programs |
| | The number of early childhood and OST programs receiving mental health consultation and support in which children’s behavioral health needs were addressed and retained in the program (not suspended or expelled) | |
| | Detail process/cost and results for the mental health consultation and pilot | Final Report Submitted |
| | Future recommendations or investments in this project | Submitted with the Final Report |
| Mixed Delivery Community-Based Pre-K Model | Current and anticipated impact on the participation rate | 8 programs within 6 agencies participated in pilot |
| | Final report of the processes and costs to implement a Community Based Pre-K | Final Report Submitted |
| | Future recommendations or investments in this project | Submitted with the Final Report |
| ERS and Pyramid Model with ProSolutions | Expand and fund online access to professional development modules and courses for early childhood and OST program professionals, students, interns and affiliates, as applicable via ProSolutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pyramid Model partnered with The Brangah Group to develop e-module courses offered by ERSI to develop e-modules All collaborations documented in the Final Report |
| | Add course/module content and/or pay the cost of online access for interested participants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased 21 e-modules set to expire in 2023 Purchased 420 e-module training spaces to support Eco-Healthy Child Care Endorsement Covered ProSolutions hosting and maintenance fees through June 2025 |

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Table A: Contract Performance Measures

| Programs/Activities | Contract Performance Measures & Targets (When Defined) | Final Reported Performance Measures |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| GSQ System Evaluation Plan | Complete Evaluation Plan subject to Department approval | Submitted “GSQ Evaluation & Validation Plan” in October 2024 |
| GSQ System Validation Plan | Complete Validation Study Plan subject to Department approval | |
| GSQ System | Provide/collaborate with other relevant professional development activities, as defined by the Department, associated with the Department’s quality improvement efforts for GSQ and non-GSQ programs | Submitted GSQ Continued System and Pathway Development report in September 2024 |

PROJECT STRENGTHS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following information is organized based on the SOAR fra^htps://flytehcm.lh1ondemand.com/Login.aspxmework – Strengths, Opportunities and Aspirations, and Results. Information from vendor reports and the interviews/surveys conducted with vendor leads were utilized to identify these key project attributes.

Strengths – The Project’s Greatest Achievements

- ◆ **Granite Steps for Quality** – GSQ is the culmination of over ten years of task force meetings and collaborations between the child care and Head Start community, public and private entities, and the Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration. The purpose of this new system was to replace the previous two-tiered QRIS, Licensed Plus and NAEYC Accreditation, with an updated, more robust set of criteria for Early Childhood and Out-of-School Time (OST) programs to engage beyond required Child Care Licensing health and safety standards. NH’s approach to quality improvement is considered a model that other states are interested in replicating.

Opportunities & Aspirations – Ways to Enhance and Expand Approaches

- ◆ **Coaching and Online Training are Key Contributors to Quality Successes** – Coaching proved to be a critical component of quality improvement by providing shoulder-to-shoulder guidance to support the practical application of quality measures. Additionally, the online format of training via ProSolutions improved the overall accessibility to essential training content and reduced the costs associated with in-person programming.

Funding sources should be explored to sustain and expand coaching, allowing programs to receive two years of support with a choice of the quality track that best fits their needs/interests.

- ◆ **Scale-Up for the Mixed Delivery Pre-Kindergarten Model** – Consider creating regional quality hubs to support classrooms and programs with specific standards and quality improvement targets. Regional hubs could provide TA specialists and coaches to prepare for the implementation of a larger statewide mixed delivery system.

Results – Notable Impact and Outcomes

- ◆ **Mixed Delivery Pilot** – In participating sites increased the number of credentialed staff and subsequent progress toward GSQ Step 4, increased investment in more creative play for children, implemented environmental improvements, provided coaching and teacher observations, and made progress in selected quality improvement areas.
- ◆ **Tuition assistance** – The Community College System of NH awarded tuition for 765 courses to a total of 395 students. Thus far, 61% of courses were completed successfully with another 30% of courses still in progress as of this report (Fall 2024 term courses).
- ◆ **Credential Incentive Program** – Between July 2023 and September 2024, professionals credentialed by the Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration (BCDHSC) received a \$100 Amazon E-Gift Card for individual use. Of those completing a credential, 65% stated their decision to earn a credential was influenced at least partially by the financial incentive.
- ◆ **National Accreditation** – Helping programs effectively navigate the complexities of accreditation and the GSQ system requires a significant investment in the capacity of the NH Chapter of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NHAEYC). However, there are low-lift opportunities to provide immediate support to programs, including the development of materials (“How to” guide) and provision of targeted supports (follow-up, report cards).
- ◆ **Access to Mental Health Consultation and Support** – Protocols and tools were developed to facilitate collaboration between DCYF, childcare providers, and other involved parties during and following urgent placement events. Additionally, professional development webinars were created to help providers enhance their understanding of NH DCYF procedures and successfully implement trauma-informed strategies to support DCYF-involved children in their care.

VENDOR CONTRACT #5

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF CENTRAL NH, ACROSS NH

PROJECT TITLE

Out-of-School-Time Provider Support Services

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Boys & Girls Club (BCG) of Central NH/ACROSS NH provided services to Out-of-School Time (OST) child care providers in NH, including those licensed as center-based or home-based programs and license-exempt programs. These services focused on children from four years and eight months to twelve years old. Project activities included offering training and technical assistance aligned with licensing requirements and quality programming benchmarks in areas such as:

BY PROVIDING SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE RELATED TO SACERS STANDARDS, WE ARE ABLE TO BREAK THE BARRIERS OF ACCESS TO MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT WITHIN OUR PROGRAM.

OST PROGRAM

- ◆ Program management;
- ◆ Supervision;
- ◆ Academic support;
- ◆ Character and social skill development;
- ◆ Prevention of suspension and expulsion;
- ◆ Meeting credentialing requirements;
- ◆ Improving program quality; and
- ◆ Conducting needs assessments

Additionally, a statewide OST network was established to promote resource sharing, capacity building, and workforce recruitment and retention. During state fiscal years 2024 and 2025, the network served approximately 325 providers.



SELECTED PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

As part of the statewide OST network efforts, the ACROSS NH Storage Solutions project was implemented to enhance the organization, accessibility, and compliance with School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) standards in OST programs throughout NH. ACROSS NH supported 30 programs with high-quality storage solutions provided by Lakeshore Learning Materials. Participating programs reported:

- ◆ Improved Organization: Efficient storage solutions led to a structured environment where educational materials were neatly organized, fostering an effective learning space.
- ◆ Increased Accessibility: By placing educational materials within reach, children were able to independently engage in their learning.
- ◆ Compliance with SACERS Standards: Storage solutions supported improvements in key SACERS standards related to Granite Steps for Quality – safety, organization, and efficient space management.

CONTRACT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

| Table A: Contract Performance Measures | | |
|---|--|--|
| Programs/Activities | Contract Performance Measures & Targets (When Defined) | Final Reported Performance Measures |
| Capacity building & workforce development | 15% increase in the number of OST CCP slots through expansion and/or establishment efforts, based on NHCIS data as of contract effective date (3567) | 4147 slots (16.26% increase) |
| | 10% of OST workforce participate in one (1) or more training opportunities annually, based on NHCIS data as of contract effective date (320) | 362 participants (13.13%) |
| | Fifteen percent (15%) increase in OST COP awarded a GSQ step, based on the number of Department awards as of contract effective date (16) | 19 (18.75% increase) |
| | 15% increase in new OST credentials based on the number of Department awards as of the contract effective date (225) | 399 (77.33% increase) |
| | 25% increase in renewed OST Credentials, based on the number of Department awards as of contract effective date (25) | 46 (84% increase) |
| Training and TA | 60% of OST CCP utilizing technical assistance report | 50 total positive results out of 51 returned surveys (98%) |
| | 60% of OST workforce participating in training report | 549 total positive results out of 644 returned surveys (85%) |

PROJECT STRENGTHS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following information is organized based on the SOAR framework – Strengths, Opportunities and Aspirations, and Results. Information from vendor reports and the interviews/surveys conducted with vendor leads were utilized to identify these key project attributes.

Strengths – The Project's Greatest Achievements

- ◆ **Solid Foundation** – This project was implemented through an existing initiative known as ACROSS NH, dedicated to supporting OST professionals in their work to create high-quality, innovative programs for NH's school-age children. The ACROSS NH team specializes in providing training and technical assistance for OST providers specifically, such as consultation, coaching and mentoring, and program design and review. All trainers and consultants hold a NH After School Master Professional credential.

Opportunities & Aspirations – Ways to Enhance and Expand Approaches

- ◆ **Continue Investing in OST Programming as part of the Early Childhood System** – The OST field is often overlooked and under-resourced, yet it plays a critical role in providing extended learning opportunities for children and supporting working parents with quality child care. Ongoing professional development and technical assistance are an important component for ensuring access to quality programming for NH families.
- ◆ **Increase Virtual Training Capabilities to Increase Accessibility for OST Providers** – Explore ways to offer standard training via virtual modalities, such as video recordings, to increase accessibility to professional content. Workforce shortages resulting in limited time availability and lack of training reimbursement among employers were cited as the leading barriers to in-person training.
- ◆ **Enhance Support for Mental Health and Behavior Intervention** – Much like school classrooms, handling behavioral challenges can be a real struggle in OST programming. This project successfully offered Life Space Crisis Intervention training to OST providers to teach verbal de-escalation strategies for resolving crisis situations with children. These types of training opportunities should be expanded across the state to build the competencies necessary for managing behavioral challenges and turning them into teaching opportunities.

Results – Notable Impact and Outcomes

- ◆ Enhanced organization, accessibility, and compliance with SACERS standards in 30 OST programs throughout NH, an important aspect of Granite Steps for Quality.
- ◆ To date, 362 OST providers in NH (13% increase) have participated in at least one training opportunity annually, demonstrating a commitment to professional development within the OST field.
- ◆ Achieved a percent increase of 77% in the number of OST providers with new credentials, and a percent increase of 84% in the number of OST providers with renewed credentials.



VENDOR CONTRACT #6

SEED COLLECTIVE, LLC

PROJECT TITLE

Child Care Accelerate Program

PROJECT SUMMARY

The SEED Collective, LLC was contracted by NH DHHS to perform Business Health Assessments (BHAs) for Child Care Providers (CCPs) that would lead to facility improvements and operational enhancements as part of the DHHS Child Care Strengthening Plan (2022), to aid in long-term sustainable solutions to strengthen child care.

The contractor developed an eight-week business support program to help qualifying child care providers improve the health of their business. Licensed and licensed-exempt programs qualified to participate during the contract period. Providers who successfully completed program metrics were eligible to apply for grant funding to execute business improvement recommendations given in the assessment. Areas of business assessed included:

- ◆ Business Foundations
- ◆ Management Team and Staff
- ◆ Administration and Operations
- ◆ Marketing and Business Development
- ◆ Finance
- ◆ Legal, Tax, and Regulatory Compliance
- ◆ Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies
- ◆ Center Sustainability

CONTRACT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

| Table A: Contract Performance Measures | | |
|--|---|---|
| Programs/Activities | Contract Performance Measures & Targets (When Defined) | Final Reported Performance Measures |
| Child Care Accelerate Program | 40% of 616 qualifying CCPs enroll in Business Health Assessments (BHAs) | 11.53% (71 CCPs) |
| | 65% of qualifying CCPs successfully complete BHAs | 54 CCPs of the 71 enrolled in BHA (8.7%) |
| | 40% of CCP utilizing business experts and facilities experts | 1,348 mentor and back-office support hours utilized |
| | 65% of 616 CCPs with a DISP plan | 11.53% (71 CCPs) |
| | 40% of 616 CCPs engaging with mentors | 11.36% (70 CCPs) for a total of 1,348 hours |
| | 35% of CCPs with improved scores at BHA retake | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70 providers were sent a Reassessment • 78% completion rate. • Seven of the eight areas showed growth • One of the eight areas stayed the same |

The Opportunity to Succeed Grant Program provided grant awards to child care providers that completed a Business Health Assessment (BHA) to address business goals and growth opportunities, as well as facility improvements, identified through the BHA assessments.

The NH DHHS completed the grant administration. Of \$5,250,000, a total of \$1,996,618.19 was awarded to 71 providers.

III. Recommendations

The following section provides a summary of key recommendations gleaned from the vendor projects for improving the child care system within New Hampshire.

- ◆ **Target Workplace Policy Gaps** – Among employer survey respondents, established workplace policies in NH businesses related to backup child care (17%), onsite child care (31%), and paternity leave (53%) were rare and may present opportunities for targeted support in the state. Maintaining NH’s membership to The Best Place for Working Parents® (BPWP) would bolster continued policy efforts and garner additional business engagement. BPWP is a national network of businesses promoting the adoption of family-friendly workplace policies. BPWP recognizes and strategically positions businesses as pivotal agents of change in a movement to prioritize the well-being of working families. Key components included an online employer self-assessment tool to evaluate workplace policies, and a digital badging system to acknowledge and advertise family-friendly practices within NH businesses.



- ◆ **Sustain Work Well Business Roundtables** – NH Businesses are interested in ongoing work that fully engages them as partners, not solely investors, in systems change to leverage their skills and expertise. Work Well Business Roundtables provide a platform for business engagement that includes the ability for business partners to allocate in-kind expertise and resources to address family child care needs, resulting in more creative problem-solving and strengthened business-community relationship building. Similar to the Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative, ongoing technical support for businesses is needed to drive family-friendly and business-friendly policy development for child care system improvements (e.g., federal tax-credit opportunities, child care scholarships for their workforce, workplace policy assessments).
- ◆ **Expand NH-Based Research to Inform Systems Change** – An employer/employee survey was conducted to gain local insights on how family-friendly workplace policies and child care accessibility impact workforce recruitment and retention. This data collection method has the potential to serve as a sustainable mechanism for capturing the community’s voice in the state’s policy and systems change efforts to strengthen the child care system. An investment in continued research within NH provides data to inform local action. (workwell.graniteuw.org)
- ◆ **Sustain and Expand the Be Well Care Well Program** – Be Well Care Well is an evidence-based program designed to bring well-being to the workplace by promoting positive change in overall well-being across 8 dimensions of wellness to lower stress, reduce burnout, increase job satisfaction, and promote sustained

professional fulfillment. With fifty child care programs in NH showing initial interest in the program, there is an opportunity to continue to build on and expand the reach of Be Well Care Well. To support the continuation of the program, investment opportunities should be explored to permanently employ a dedicated coach to serve as the program's coordinator for ongoing implementation across the state.

- ◆ **Build and Strengthen Child Care Workforce Development Strategies and Pathways** – Low compensation remains a barrier to effective workforce recruitment efforts. Continued promotion and distribution of the Compensation Series developed as part of the HR Hub Professional Development pilot should be supported. This series of three e-learning modules trains program owners to create an impactful and affordable compensation package for their employees, as well as financial business practices such as budgeting. Additionally, high school career pipelines should be strengthened to identify students interested in early education, and internships for field-based work at child care programs should be established to support credentialing for new educators.
- ◆ **Sustain the Family Child Care Start-Up Training** – Educating prospective Family Child Care (FCC) providers about the licensure process, child care scholarships, types of child care programs, NH state regulations and rules, and providing CPR and First Aid certification proved to be a successful strategy for engaging and potentially recruiting the workforce. Currently, the United Way of Greater Nashua is utilizing coaches to work directly with participants to support them in achieving licensure, exploring co-working space to partner with other prospective FCC providers, or securing employment at a licensed child care center.
- ◆ **Strengthen and Sustain Partnerships with Family Child Care Providers** – The vast majority of FCC providers do not consider themselves small businesses. Therefore, the success of FCC-focused initiatives requires sustained commitment, adaptive strategies, and collaborative efforts between the State of New Hampshire, local organizations, and the FCC providers themselves. By fostering a resilient network of family child care businesses, NH families will have access to high-quality, sustainable child care options that meet their diverse needs.
- ◆ **Implement a Statewide Staffed Family Child Care Network (FCCN)** – In an FCCN model, a central staff creates economies of scale and scope, while regional and local efforts meet the specific needs of FCC businesses. This dual-level approach allows for both broad-based support and tailored assistance. By sustaining staff at both the central and regional levels, momentum can be gained by providing the time necessary to build trust and work with child care business owners for extended periods. This is especially crucial in communities of new Americans, where cultural understanding and long-term engagement are vital.
- ◆ **Accelerate Family Child Care Provider Outreach through Shared Best Practices and Consistent Assessment** – Create a statewide guide for outreach best practices and conduct an evaluation of outreach strategies. The guide should be a living document, continuously updated as new strategies prove effective. The existing Community of Practice can be utilized to continue to exchange ideas and facilitate cross-mentoring among



regions. This structured approach to sharing knowledge could result in faster, sustained engagement with FCC providers in the future. Additionally, continuing business health assessments with training and coaching support is a successful tool for engaging and supporting businesses to thrive.

- ◆ **Provide Targeted, Ongoing Financial Resources for Family Child Care Settings with Streamlined Access –** Financial support for FCC businesses can be improved with greater flexibility, accessibility, and timeliness. Future initiatives should consider alternative funding models (e.g., partial upfront payments or forgivable loans), streamlined processes, and targeted support at critical business junctures (e.g., during startup, facility infrastructure expenses) to optimize these investments in critical infrastructure.
- ◆ **Coaching and Online Training are Key Contributors to Successes in Quality Improvement –** NH’s quality rating and improvement system is known as Granite Steps for Quality. The system’s hallmark features are local control, which allows for choice in the quality pathways for improvement undertaken by organizations, and a robust coaching approach for participating organizations to bolster improvement efforts and sustain momentum. Coaching proved to be a critical component of quality improvement by providing shoulder-to-shoulder guidance to support the practical application of quality measures. Additionally, the online format of training via ProSolutions improved the overall accessibility to essential training content and reduced the costs associated with in-person programming. Funding sources should be explored to sustain and expand coaching, allowing programs to receive two years of support with a choice of the quality track that best fits their needs/interests.
- ◆ **Scale-Up for the Mixed Delivery Pre-Kindergarten Model –** Consider creating regional quality hubs to support classrooms and programs with specific standards and quality improvement targets. Regional hubs could provide technical assistance specialists and coaches to prepare for the implementation of a larger statewide mixed delivery system.
- ◆ **Continue Investing in Out of School Time (OST) Programming as part of the Early Childhood System –** The OST field is often overlooked and under-resourced, yet it plays a critical role in providing extended learning opportunities for children and supporting working parents with quality child care. Ongoing professional development and technical assistance are an important component for ensuring access to quality programming for NH families.
- ◆ **Expand Virtual Training Capabilities to Increase Accessibility for Out of School Time Providers –** Explore ways to offer standard training via virtual modalities, such as video recordings, to increase accessibility to professional content. Workforce shortages resulting in limited time availability and lack of training reimbursement among employers were cited as the leading barriers to in-person training.
- ◆ **Enhance Support for Mental Health and Behavior Intervention –** Much like school classrooms, handling behavioral challenges can be a real struggle in OST programming. Life Space Crisis Intervention training was successfully offered to OST providers to teach verbal de-escalation strategies for resolving crisis situations with children. These types of training opportunities should be expanded across the state to build the competencies necessary for managing behavioral challenges and turning them into teaching opportunities.