



## State Policy Blueprint Planning Guide

Public policy work is often incremental. Sometimes successes are realized by steady movement along the same path. Sometimes great strides are made by starting over and doing something bold. There is not one single *right way* to approach policy work. But before any plans are made and actions are taken, it is crucial that all stakeholders are aware of the current policies and contexts. *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* (the Blueprint) provides a common framework that can help advocates and policy-makers take stock of existing workforce policies.

After a group has used the framework provided by the Blueprint to conduct an environmental scan, its guiding principles and essential policy areas can also assist with priority discussions given current opportunities and constraints. A shared vision of a competent and stable early childhood workforce offers an opportunity for state stakeholders to move forward rather than focusing on the negativity of what is not working.

The following provides five steps and guiding questions to help conduct an environmental scan of state early childhood workforce system policies and to begin planning action steps:

- Step 1. Gather and Describe: What are your current state workforce system policies?
- Step 2. Analyze: Do the policies apply or meet the policy-making principles?
- Step 3. Determine: What are your goals?
- Step 4. Discuss and Consider: What are your opportunities?
- Step 5. Plan: What are your priorities?

### Step 1. **Gather and Describe:** What are your current state workforce system policies?

With your cross-sector partners gather and list the workforce policies your state has in each of the six essential policy areas:

1. **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS:** the content of professional preparation and ongoing development.
2. **CAREER PATHWAYS:** routes of continuous progress for early childhood professionals, so they can plan the achievement of increased qualifications, understand the professional possibilities, and be appropriately compensated.
3. **ARTICULATION:** the transfer of professional development credentials, courses, credits, degrees, and student performance-based competencies from one program or institution to another, ideally without a loss of credits.
4. **ADVISORY STRUCTURE:** the coordination mechanism for an integrated early childhood professional development system, which should be free standing and have some authority or direct link to authority in the state's governance structure.
5. **DATA:** to gauge impacts and systems change, as well as to inform planning, evaluation, quality assurance, and accountability.

6. **FINANCING:** the funding that all professional development systems need in order to operate, including needs-based support for early childhood professionals to obtain education and ongoing development, support for programs/workplaces that facilitate professional development, explicit rewards and compensation parity for attainment of additional education and development, and financing of the professional development system infrastructure.

Include policies that affect or relate to your state early childhood workforce at the Federal, statewide, regional, and local levels.

### *Additional tools*

- ➔ See *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/pdf/Workforce\\_Designs.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/pdf/Workforce_Designs.pdf)) for more details on each of the essential policy areas.
- ➔ Use the state policy database (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/database.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/database.asp)) to help gather your state's policies in regulations, statutes, and executive orders. The database includes existing state policies in each of the six essential areas outlined by the Blueprint, and whether these policies meet the overarching principles. Users can access the actual language of policies in regulations, statutes, or executive orders. Policies can be viewed by state or by policy area. NAEYC will continue to update the database as states implement new statutes, regulations and other public policies.
- ➔ Record this information in this guide's companion Recording Tool for Environmental Scan.

## **Step 2. Analyze: Do the policies apply or meet the policy-making principles?**

Use the following criteria in each of the six essential policy areas to assess whether current policies apply the four overarching policy-making principles of (1) integration; (2) quality assurance; (3) diversity, inclusion, and access; and (4) compensation parity.

### **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

- ✓ **Integration:** Does the policy specify that standards for preparation and ongoing development are designed for all early childhood professionals regardless of role or work setting; and/or that the standards integrate or align existing teacher licensing, state-based credentials, Head Start, prekindergarten, and other related standards from the various early childhood education sectors, across agencies and quality initiatives?
- ✓ **Quality Assurance:** Does the policy specifically require mechanisms and processes to ensure that standards are appropriate and current (incorporate national research-based criteria; are required to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis; etc.)?
- ✓ **Diversity, Inclusion, and Access:** Does the policy specify that the standards address and support diversity, inclusion, and access (standards are required to include a focus on cultural competence and language acquisition; integrate general and special education; incorporate or value adult learners' previous knowledge and skill acquisition; etc.)?
- ✓ **Compensation Parity:** Does the policy explicitly tie adult learners' proficiency in or mastery of professional standards to increased compensation (with a connection to career pathways and/or salary scales; through wage supplements; via quality rating and improvement systems; etc.)?



***In your state's context:*** Are there additional questions that can help your group determine whether the professional standards policy(ies) meet the principles?

## CAREER PATHWAYS

- ✓ **Integration:** Does the policy specify that pathways include and link or align professional opportunities across early childhood sectors and roles?
- ✓ **Quality Assurance:** Does the policy include specifications for systems to verify, record, update, and track individuals' qualifications and ongoing development; placement on career pathways; and/or evaluate such efforts?
- ✓ **Diversity, Inclusion, and Access:** Does the policy specifically require processes to inform professionals about and advise them on professional growth and career opportunities, and/or include varied entry points and qualification alternatives?
- ✓ **Compensation parity:** Does the policy specify advancement on career pathways linked to increased compensation or compensation comparable to other professions with similar requirements?



***In your state's context:*** Are there additional questions that can help your group determine whether the career pathway policy(ies) meet the principles?

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## ARTICULATION

- ✓ **Integration:** Does the policy specify that articulation agreements support qualification requirements for all sectors—Head Start, child care programs, prekindergarten, and others; and/or that the agreements or systems connect institutions of higher education to each other and to community-based or non-credit training (including the acceptance of credit for prior learning, etc.)?
- ✓ **Quality assurance:** Does the policy include time specifications for implementation of agreements, requirements for review and revision of courses or agreements, reports on progress, and/or evaluations of progress or efficacy (e.g., review of student outcomes; matriculation rates; number/percentage of programs, departments, or institutions involved in agreements, etc.)?
- ✓ **Diversity, inclusion, and access:** Does the policy specifically require processes to inform students about and advise them on education options and requirements (e.g., student counseling/advising); include alternative methods of course and degree completion; and/or include other requirements specifically aimed at supporting, recruiting, or retaining minority student populations?
- ✓ **Compensation parity:** Does the policy specify attention to student financial aid, scholarships, attendance and degree completion incentives and other monetary supports; and/or attention to career placement/opportunities and salary prospectives?



***In your state's context:*** Are there additional questions that can help your group determine whether the articulation policy(ies) meet the principles?

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## ADVISORY STRUCTURE

- ✓ **Integration:** Does the policy specify that the advisory structure include representatives from the various early childhood education sectors, across agencies and quality initiatives?

- ✓ **Quality Assurance:** Does the policy specifically require mechanisms and processes to ensure accountability (strategic planning; research and/or evaluation tied to planning processes; regular reviews of, or reports on progress; stakeholder/public input tied to planning and recommendations; etc.)?
- ✓ **Diversity, Inclusion, and Access:** Does the policy specify composition requirements for the advisory structure that include perspectives representing the diversity of the field (racial, ethnic, ability, role, etc.)?
- ✓ **Compensation Parity:** Does the policy explicitly state that the advisory structure address compensation related issues (as part of planning, as an objective, etc.)?



***In your state's context:*** Are there additional questions that can help your group determine whether the advisory structure policy(ies) meet the principles?

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## DATA

- ✓ **Integration:** Does the policy specify that there be methods for collecting, sharing, and disseminating cross-sector data to stakeholders, funders, and the public?
- ✓ **Quality assurance:** Does the policy include specifications for systems to verify, record, update, and track individuals' qualifications and ongoing development; placement on career pathways; professional development offerings; and/or evaluate such efforts?
- ✓ **Diversity, inclusion, and access:** Does the policy specify the collection of workforce data by role, program setting, credential, demographic characteristics, experience in the field, population and age of children served, and/or compensation; data related to program sustainability, stability, and other access and support related issues; and/or that data systems be intentional in sharing data with those it represents and who need it?
- ✓ **Compensation parity:** Does the policy specify the collection and analysis of data on compensation (salaries and benefits); that data are collected on other professions for which parity is sought for early childhood professionals; and/or collection includes retention data by role and in the early education field?



***In your state's context:*** Are there additional questions that can help your group determine whether the data policy(ies) meet the principles?

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## FINANCING

- ✓ **Integration:** Does the policy specify that Federal, state, and/or private sources are coordinated to fund professional development system needs?
- ✓ **Quality Assurance:** Does the policy specify that there be transparency in where and how resources are being directed and why; and/or that review processes and/or other accountability measures are tied to financial programs or spending?
- ✓ **Diversity, Inclusion, and Access:** Does the policy specify that funders, administrators, participants, and families know what fiscal resources are available; that barriers to financial aid and scholarships are examined and relevant access policies are crafted; and/or does it include financing of the governance and institutional aid to higher education and to early childhood programs?

- ✓ **Compensation Parity:** Does the policy explicitly address workforce compensation and/or include specific financing in all sectors of the system to support compensation equivalent to positions within and across fields requiring similar preparation and experience?



*In your state's context:* Are there additional questions that can help your group determine whether the financing policy(ies) meet the principles?

### **Additional tools**

- ➔ See *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/pdf/Workforce\\_Designs.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/pdf/Workforce_Designs.pdf)) for more details on each of the principles for policy-making.
- ➔ Use the state policy database (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/database.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/database.asp)) to determine whether your state's policies in regulations, statutes, and executive orders meet the criteria for each of the overarching principles.
- ➔ Record this information in this guide's companion Recording Tool for Environmental Scan.

**\*NOTE:** Since the next three steps are related to strategic planning, groups might want to consider engaging or designating a facilitator. Facilitation at this point in the process can help the group establish ground rules and keep the group and work focused and goal oriented.

## **Step 3. Determine: What are your goals?**

State policies should create an integrated system of professional development uniting the early childhood sectors of child care, Head Start, prekindergarten, public schools, early intervention and special education services. The goal of such a system is to develop and retain a competent and stable early childhood workforce—a skilled cadre of effective, diverse, and adequately compensated professionals.

Does the above statement articulate your system's goal? If not, discuss and record your additional state system goals.

### **Additional tools**

- ➔ Gain ideas, tips, and resources from the NAEYC Advocacy Toolkit (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox/pdf/toolkit.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox/pdf/toolkit.pdf)).

## **Step 4. Discuss and Consider: What are your opportunities?**

In your cross-sector group, discuss and consider your state's current opportunities and related state and local contexts.

“Effective public policy advocacy work requires intentionality, which in turn requires organization. If all of us work independently without a well-defined

vision and capacity to act and react to changing political, social and economic contexts, we will not make the progress that is needed. If we work together strategically, we can cause the changes that we seek for children, families and the professionals in the field” (NAEYC Advocacy Toolkit, 2004).



Can all of your state policies be put together to support an integrated system?



Are key policies missing? If so, what are they and why are they missing?



Are there policies that could or should be revised?

**Apply the Principles.** Every time a policy is examined—for development, revision, or any other purpose—there should be reflection on whether the four policy-making principles are being addressed. Step 2 focused on analyzing whether current policies meet the four policy-making principles. For the policies that did not meet the principles, consider and discuss how policies can be created or revised to incorporate them.

### Additional tools

- ➔ See *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/pdf/Workforce\\_Designs.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/pdf/Workforce_Designs.pdf)) for more details on each of the principles for policy-making.
- ➔ Use the state policy database (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/database.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/database.asp)) as a tool to examine other states’ policies in the essential areas.
- ➔ Gain ideas, tips, and resources from the NAEYC Advocacy Toolkit (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox/pdf/toolkit.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox/pdf/toolkit.pdf)).

## Step 5. Plan: What are your priorities?

Steps 1 through 4 should provide your group with foundational information, direction, and next step ideas that need to be prioritized. Given your state’s current status, context, and goals, discuss and determine your immediate, mid- and long-term priorities. In these discussions, include the “w” questions of *what, why, when, who, where, and with what*.

- ✓ **What:** What objective are you prioritizing? Which essential policy area(s) does it address?
- ✓ **Why:** How does this priority tie to your overall goal(s)? Why is it a priority? Your group should be able to clearly articulate the impetus and importance of any desired policy change or revision (importance often includes expected outcomes).
- ✓ **Where:** Does this priority require action at the local-, regional-, or state-level, or does it require action at all levels?
- ✓ **When:** Is it an immediate, mid- or long-term priority, or does it require attention and action at all stages? Are there specific times that this work or focus should occur (e.g., are there other efforts or legislative processes that it should coincide with, avoid, or follow)?
- ✓ **Who:** Which partners can leverage the most resources, relationships, and public will related to this priority? Which entity(ies) will take the lead on this priority and which will

lend a second tier of support? As possible, identify individuals and their specific responsibilities.

- ✓ **With what:** What resources are needed to undertake the actions related to this priority? Consider in-kind, fiscal, human, and other resources.

### *Additional tools*

- Gain ideas, tips, and resources from the NAEYC Advocacy Toolkit (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox/pdf/toolkit.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox/pdf/toolkit.pdf)).
- Use the state policy database (available at [www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/database.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/database.asp)) as a tool to examine other states' policies in the essential areas.
- Record this information in this guide's companion Plan Recording Tool.

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This tool is intended to serve as a starting point and guide for state analysis, discussions and actions. It is part of NAEYC's Early Childhood Workforce Systems Initiative work to assist states in creating a common understanding of the current system and in moving policy efforts related to integrated professional development systems forward. NAEYC suggests that the steps included in this guide are revisited and reconsidered on a regular basis as state and local partners and contexts change.

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Comments and questions regarding this guide and related work are welcomed. Please direct your comments to Sarah LeMoine, NAEYC Director of the Early Childhood Workforce Systems Initiative at [slemoine@naeyc.org](mailto:slemoine@naeyc.org).