Developing Early Childhood Leaders to Support Strong, Equitable Systems

A REVIEW OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE

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Executive Summary

Researchers, providers, and others working in the early childhood education (ECE) sector in the United States have long recognized both the importance of effective leaders and the underinvestment in leadership development. The New Venture Fund, with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, commissioned Arabella Advisors to conduct research on ECE leadership development and to produce this report, which provides a review and analysis of leadership development in the formal ECE sector in the United States, with particular attention to California. It found that while strong leaders are critical to achieving many of the ECE sector's top priorities—providing quality education to young children, increasing equity, and strengthening organizations and systems—a lack of investment in leadership development means that few can access leadership development training. Funders can make a significant impact on ECE systems by scaling or strengthening existing leadership development programs, investing in new programs, and/or supporting informal leadership development—ultimately spurring better outcomes for children and their families.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Leadership development opportunities are scarce and scattered: There is not a coordinated ECE leadership development ecosystem to build and support a pipeline of leaders. A lack of sustained resources for leadership development has resulted in a small, fragmented field of programs that few people, and very few educators, access, and which has implications for educational quality, organizational and system health, and equity. The main barriers to a healthy leadership ecosystem are resource-related: there is little funding for programs and compensation for participants. Ultimately, leadership development is a luxury in this low-resourced industry that must contend first with compliance, compensation, and quality.

Investing in leaders helps strengthen organizations and systems: More and more data about the positive impacts of quality early education on children's life outcomes creates new urgency to invest in leadership. Capable leaders help build the strong, stable institutions and systems necessary to provide quality ECE to children and their families. Importantly, strong leaders also contribute to equity in the ECE workforce and for children, and improve child and community outcomes.

Effective leaders share common competencies: The ECE sector understands what makes a leader effective. Many organizations and researchers have identified a small set of leadership competencies, which we have organized into five categories: 1) content and pedagogy, 2) operational and management, 3) team and interpersonal, 4) individual, and 5) policy and community. Existing effective leadership development programs focus on developing at least some of these five competencies.

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Effective leadership training includes both formal and informal opportunities that are contextualized and provided over time: The sector also understands how to build those effective leaders. To develop strong leaders, the ECE sector needs to offer both formal and informal training opportunities that contextualize learning, build leaders' networks, and are accessible to all promising leaders, especially the mostly low-income women of color who work in ECE but are not advancing to decision-making roles. A handful of effective programs exist today, and top programs share two important similarities: an applied/contextualized learning opportunity or project, and an extended timeline of six months to three years during which participants can practice and apply what they learn.

Leadership development is an important strategy for funders interested in making ECE systems higher-quality and more equitable: While a small number of public and private funders support ECE leadership development, need outstrips supply. The result is an opportunity for funders who want to support both individuals and systems. When deciding how to invest in leadership development, we recommend that funders answer five questions to determine their approach:

1. What are the outcomes we are trying to achieve for systems and for children?

2. How do leaders help to achieve these outcomes?

3. What types of leaders can help achieve these outcomes?

4. What competencies do leaders need to achieve these outcomes?

5. What conditions must be present in the ECE ecosystem for leaders to succeed?

Quality early childhood education is critical for communities to thrive, and effective leaders are needed to deliver quality early childhood education. As funders develop, refresh, and implement their ECE strategies, we hope that they consider the roles leaders play in the success of the field—and of the children and families that depend on that leadership.

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Introduction

The need for and underinvestment in early childhood education (ECE) leadership development is not news: more than 20 years ago, researchers studying leadership in ECE described it as "critical to the field's advancement."[1] Today, more and more data about the positive impacts of quality early education on life outcomes create new urgency to invest in a pipeline of leaders.[2]

Professional associations, coalitions, universities, providers, and others across the ECE sector in the United States are speaking to the need to develop and support effective ECE leaders. Strong leaders build resilient systems and quality institutions, increase equity, and improve child and community outcomes—all pressing priorities within ECE. To develop strong leaders, the sector needs to provide formal and informal training opportunities that contextualize learning, build leaders' networks, and are accessible to all promising leaders.

However, a lack of sustained resources for leadership development has resulted in a small, fragmented field of programs that few can access. Those who are able to take advantage of these opportunities are typically not early childhood educators. Given this lack of funding and accessibility, private funders have a significant opportunity to make a difference by scaling or strengthening existing leadership development programs, making long-term commitments to invest in new programs, and/or supporting informal leadership development opportunities.

Such investments have the potential to help individuals advance professionally and build leadership skills. These leaders in turn can strengthen organizations by guiding teams to translate vision to action. Ultimately, these investments help create the strong, stable institutions necessary to provide quality ECE to children and their families.

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Leadership Development Opportunities are Scarce and Scattered, Which Weakens the ECE Sector

While there is growing momentum for supporting leaders in the ECE sector, demand for leadership development outstrips supply, and existing programs operate largely in isolation from one another. Those with access to formal leadership development training are most often already in positions of power, further exacerbating the inequities of the sector. Lastly, investment levels remain low, so there are not sufficient resources to expand or even sustain leadership development opportunities.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates that there were nearly 500,000 preschool teachers in the United States in 2016, which excludes much of the ECE field, including prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, special education providers, home-based care, advocates, and others. Further, BLS expects the field will grow by 10 percent over the next 8 to 10 years, outpacing the average growth rate of American occupations.[3] The supply of programs does not meet this demand. For example, despite the growth of the field, California has just three documented ECE leadership development programs, and more than half of US states have none.[4] Degree-granting programs in early education or child development that include leadership content enroll up to 7,000 participants per year, but most leadership development programs are much smaller, with cohorts of 12 to 20 participants. What's more, the total number of formal leadership development programs has remained flat since 2013, as program closures match program launches.[5] In the current landscape, leadership development programs can make incremental change at best, given that they are not reaching most current and potential leaders in the field.

Programs that do exist are fragmented and isolated and do not share resources or expertise with one another, sometimes leading to duplicated efforts. Programs likely lack coordination in part because most ECE leadership development programs are state-based, and most states have no more than a handful of programs.

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> *"Leadership development is kind of at the higher levels [of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs] from an organizational standpoint. To get to that higher level, you need it. But to get by, you don't. And a lot of really talented organizations are just trying to get by."*
>
> **—SCOTT MOORE**
>   *Kidango*

Fewer programs means that not only are fewer people trained in general, but also that there is less diversity in who does get trained—which destabilizes organizations and results in policies that are distanced from on-the-ground realities, valuable voices shut out from policy- and decision-making, and a thin pipeline of potential future leaders with ECE experience.

Providers and funders view leadership development as a luxury in a low-resourced industry that must contend first with compliance, compensation, and quality. One informant's organization had historically spent less than one percent of its budget on professional development—and leadership development was a subset of this broader category. Though it recognized the importance of leadership development, the organization was compelled to prioritize issues that felt more urgent, such as literacy and teacher-child engagement.

Despite the clear need, there are two primary barriers to increasing the supply of leadership development programs, and both are resource-related:

- **Sustained funding for programs:** Half of the ECE leadership development programs active in 2013 had closed by 2017. Programs closed for a range of reasons, including changes in organizational priorities, but many closures resulted from loss of funding.[6] Informants pointed to the Inquiry into Leadership for Early Childhood Professionals program at Mills College, which closed when funding ran out—despite the participant-reported benefits, including new ways of considering and responding to challenges, a renewed sense of unity and support, better ability to listen to others, more collegial relationships, and a deeper understanding of the courage that leadership requires.[7]

- **Compensation for participants:** Early childhood educators rarely see increases in compensation in recognition of the skills gained by their training. Even when they earn bachelor's degrees, which require significant time and expense, they receive only marginally higher compensation. Further, few receive compensated time to attend trainings, meaning they do so during nights and on weekends. Two exceptions are Service Employees International Union affiliated childcare centers and some private centers that serve higher-income populations, which do provide compensated time off for their staff members to participate in professional development.

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There is no statewide provision in California for paid time off for professional development,[8] and one child care provider, Kidango, which is developing a leadership development program for its staff, is considering slotting such training into naptime and lunch breaks. Without compensation, many in the ECE field simply cannot afford to invest their own resources and free time in leadership development. For example, 47 percent of ECE workers in California—and 46 percent of ECE workers nationwide—rely on public assistance, compared to 26 percent of the general population nationwide.[9]

Investing in Leaders Helps Strengthen Organizations and Systems

Leadership development can ultimately contribute to systems change, which is "change in the policies, processes, relationships, knowledge, power structures, values, or norms of participants"[10] within ECE systems. These changes in ECE systems, in turn, contribute to a broad range of positive outcomes for children, families, and communities. ECE leaders and leadership development experts see a clear connection between investing in individuals and strengthening systems. At a February 2018 meeting of 17 ECE leaders and experts in San Francisco, facilitated by Arabella Advisors, participants submitted responses to the question: "What results does good early education leadership provide to children and broader systems?" As shown in Figure 1 on the next page, 40 percent of their responses focused on benefits to the ECE system and workforce. Further, many of the responses suggested that good early education leadership can better align the ECE field with other sectors serving children and families, including health and K-12 education. This alignment yields a more holistic and integrated approach to child development.

One interviewee working in a policy/advocacy role provided more detail about these benefits when she described her experience attending a national leadership development program. Through the program, she met peers from across the country and from them gained "a whole set of different talking points and advocacy tools" that she has since used to engage the support of members of the legislature and

business community who had not historically supported ECE-friendly policies. This training strengthened her advocacy capacity and expanded her network, which enables her to help achieve system-level change, including bringing on new supporters. Leadership development also contributes to equity in communities, as educators who have not traditionally taken on leadership roles step into them, and as the children they teach benefit from high-quality education that prepares them for further schooling.

Figure 1. ECE leaders' responses to "What results does good early education leadership provide to children and broader systems?" (San Francisco, February 2018)

Category	Examples	% of responses
System outcomes (ECE)	• Fair compensation • Respect for the profession • Consistency across ECE, including in defining and delivering "quality" programs	41%
Child outcomes	• Kindergarten readiness • A focus on the whole child	24%
System outcomes (other sectors)	• Integration with K-12 • Positive health outcomes • Improvements in economic indicators	18%
Community outcomes	• A more fair and equitable society • Stronger families • More diversity in community leadership	17%

Strong leaders helm steady and thriving organizations: Potential and emerging leaders who have been prepared for leadership roles have smoother onboarding and transitions,

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keeping their organizations stable during periods of change. One ECE leader described a first leadership role as "a bit of a baptism by fire." Had this leader received support and training in advance of stepping into such a role, both the leader and others in the organization would likely have been better equipped and felt more supported. Well-trained leaders are better equipped to support those they supervise, contributing to their retention. This multiplier effect increases overall organizational stability. For example, Kidango's internal leadership development program aims to increase retention of leaders and those they supervise. It expects staff members will feel better supported once their supervisors are trained, which in turn will improve their wellness and productivity, resulting in better service for children and families.

Investing in leaders at all levels can make an organization more effective: While some leadership skills require positional authority to practice, others are broadly relevant, and training potential leaders at other levels helps them in their current and future positions. Making this investment in a broader array of staff members shows support for their professional growth, boosts their management skills as well as their leadership know-how, and can increase their commitment.[11] Building the leadership bench within an organization also reduces pressure on senior leaders, who can further delegate responsibilities to staff members in a more dispersed leadership model.

Investing in leaders builds social capital and equity: Investment in leadership development is important to increase equity for at least three reasons: 1) a majority of early childhood educators are low-income women of color with limited social power, 2) research shows that current inequities in the ECE sector have "repercussions for children whose experiences are influenced by the well-being and competencies of their teachers,"[12] and 3) quality early education can itself contribute to equity and opportunity for children. By participating in leadership development programs, ECE leaders gain new knowledge, peer networks, and professional pedigrees.

Nearly all ECE leadership development programs employ a cohort model, bringing together leaders across organizations and geographies. These networks are important for information and resource sharing. They also provide leaders with a broader perspective beyond their organizations, and with professional peers who can provide them with guidance. Peer networks built through leadership development trainings can be long-

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lasting, often extending beyond and yielding benefits long after the program. Two of the most well-respected leadership development training programs, those provided by the Annie E. Casey and Temple Hoyne Buell foundations, even provide structured networks and/or other opportunities for their alumni to stay in touch. For more on these programs, see the case studies in Appendix B.

Leadership development that includes underrepresented participants can advance equity by contributing to leaders' social capital in a sector where those closest to the work do not have an equal voice in shaping and improving the system. Leadership development also builds confidence, making leaders more likely and able to advocate for themselves and for ECE more broadly.

Investing in leaders creates career pathways and a pipeline from the classroom to positions of authority: Today's ECE leaders have rarely followed a linear or common path, partly because those paths either do not exist or are hard to identify. One ECE leader and former educator contrasted a career in ECE to one in nursing, in which the credentials and training required for each step—from LPN to RN to advanced practice nurse—are clearly defined and consistent across the country. The credentials of those in ECE leadership positions, on the other hand, are wide-ranging. For example, our informants for this report alone included individuals with bachelor's degrees, JDs, PhDs in education and psychology, and one MBA. When asked to describe their career paths, they used words such as "zig zag," "diverging," "unknown path," and "not typical." One said she arrived in her leadership role at a national association because she "lucked out by being in the right place at the right time." Without the social capital and networks to access and navigate these pathways, only those with preexisting social capital or luck can navigate them, which is highly inequitable.

Not only can leadership development illuminate these pathways, but it can also expand them, as trained leaders use their power and skills to create pathways for others, particularly educators. Today, few ECE leaders begin as educators, which means those in top positions rarely have direct experience in the roles of those they supervise. As one ECE leader and former educator said, "Who writes the policies that govern our work? Leadership [exists] outside of the school building. When I started [working in policy], I quickly realized that I was a minority voice [as a former educator]. It's a little bit different when you read [policy]

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and when you practice it. I know because I've had firsthand experience trying to implement policy in [the classroom]." Participating in programs that help educators such as this interviewee understand how decisions are made enables them to then participate in those decision-making processes, ensuring decisions are informed by practice and addressing the inequity between teachers and leaders.

Leadership development provides distance from the day-to-day: Part of the value of leadership development is simply the opportunity for a leader to step away from the day-to-day to take a more strategic view of the work, which increases the leader's wellness and retention and shores up organizational sustainability. At scale, this contributes to more resilient early childhood systems that are better able to provide quality care and education and withstand funding or policy changes. For example, the Durfee Foundation has found that its sabbatical program for nonprofit leaders, which funds sabbaticals of at least three consecutive months for leaders of LA-based organizations, has created benefits for the leaders and their organizations, including:

• Increased leader retention

• Broadening of a leader's perspective from daily management to distributed leadership and generative thinking and activity

• Permanent shift in the culture of work/life balance for the leader and the organization's staff members

• Stronger preparation for eventual leader transitions[13]

Effective Leaders Share Common Competencies

Management theory and academic definitions of what makes great leaders and how to build and support them have evolved over time. Current management literature focuses on the importance of building transformational leaders who are capable of reforming organizations, and on dispersed leadership[14]—which speaks to a need for broader access to leadership development at every level. The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership summarizes a range of scholarship on effective ECE leaders by saying that "the

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most capable leaders are those who understand and address challenges from a systemwide perspective. They are the ones responsible for creating a climate that promotes the optimal growth and development of children as well as implementing systems to ensure that high quality is maintained."[15]

While the ECE field is fragmented, many organizations and researchers have pinpointed a small set of competencies that effective leaders possess. Nine of the more than 30 programs we researched published frameworks defining these competencies. Most of these frameworks are designed for broad use across the early childhood sector nationally, with a focus on advocates, policymakers, researchers, and program managers. About half, including McCormick's Whole Leadership framework and Child360's coaching model, are the basis for the programs those organizations run. (For a full list of these frameworks, see Appendix C.)

The frameworks include a range of competencies that programs aim to develop in leaders. We have organized them into five categories:

Content: Pedagogical and instructional competencies

Policy & community: Ability to work with community members, including families, and advocate on behalf of young children

Individual: Skills related to the leader's own identity and actions, including self-reflection and self-awareness

Operational: Administrative and business management competencies

Team & interpersonal: Skills related to leading, motivating, and collaborating with groups

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Figure 2. Competencies included in ECE leadership development frameworks

# of frameworks that include competencies in this category
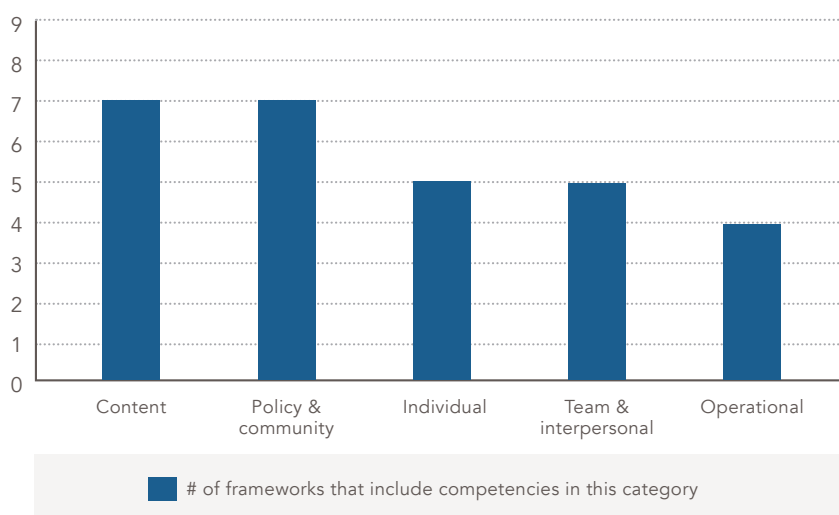
All nine frameworks include competencies in at least two of the five categories, indicating that the sector largely agrees on what it takes to be an effective ECE leader. In addition, two have explicit equity and/or social justice focuses, suggesting that at least some in the sector believe an effective ECE leader understands these issues and is equipped to work toward addressing them.

While these varying frameworks all aim to provide consistent standards for leadership development and include overlapping content, there is no indication that they are informed by one another, which is further evidence of the sector's fragmentation. Furthermore, while these frameworks all use competency-based definitions, state licensure requirements for principals and center directors in many states, including California, instead focus on credentials and experience, which are easier to assess. This mismatch means there is a risk that competency-based leadership development programs may not be aligned with licensure requirements and may not further a participant's career today. The next step, therefore, for programs using competency-based definitions, is to coordinate to align their definitions with one another and with licensure requirements, and/or to advocate that states change requirements to align with the definitions used in the sector.

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Leadership Programs Come in All Shapes and Sizes

A healthy leadership development ecosystem should include diverse ways to build leadership ability. States, universities, and others across the ECE sector are increasingly formalizing their commitments to leadership development, and providers are fostering informal ways to nurture leaders.

Informal opportunities to apply and contextualize learning are essential to leadership development. Indeed, current leaders who joined the February 2018 workshop said that the most important factors in their development as leaders were informal: mentors and role models; networks and peer learning; and opportunities to take risks, lead, and challenge oneself. Such ongoing opportunities are important to contextualizing, applying, and practicing leadership skills on an ongoing basis. Interestingly, several also spoke to the importance of generally feeling supported and secure in developing as a leader. This underscores the importance of having encouraging, knowledgeable mentors and challenging opportunities, both of which build one's confidence in one's leadership skills. Funding effective leadership development that prepares leaders to mentor others could create a self-reinforcing chain of trained leaders.

Nevertheless, formal programs remain an important part of the larger leadership development ecosystem in ECE. While quality informal opportunities are not equally available to all leaders, particularly those who don't have the social capital to find mentors, formal programs can be more accessible, especially if they apply an equity lens in their recruiting. Unlike informal opportunities, which vary for each individual, formal training also establishes a common standard for what it means to be an effective leader. According to the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, shared language about quality early childhood education leadership is "a lever to increase the quality of early childhood programs and to advance the field in support of young children and families."[16] Further, several of the benefits of strong leadership and leadership development—integrating ECE with other sectors, building peer networks, and stepping away from the day-to-day to take a strategic

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MODES OF DELIVERY

None of the programs that interviewees identified as most effective in building ECE leadership skills are delivered primarily online, although the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership has some online offerings, and Child360 is exploring them in an effort to increase accessibility. Other researchers have found that an increasing number of leadership development programs are being delivered remotely, presumably online. Such online programs provide flexibility for participants, but there is a tradeoff in terms of opportunities to build peer networks.

perspective—are less likely without formal training. Achieving these benefits requires that leaders take intentional time away from their organizations.

Beyond informal and formal, we can generally divide the universe of leadership development programs into three categories:

- **Credit-bearing programs:** These are programs that yield a credential or credits toward a credential, such as programs through the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University and the Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program. These programs grant credits for equity reasons, as the value of credentials in the market ensures that participants are eventually compensated for the training they receive. For more information on these programs, see the case studies in Appendix B.

- **Targeted professional development trainings:** These are programs such as those hosted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that enhance professionals' skills and networks through trainings and projects over a 6- to 36-month period, without granting formal credit. Interestingly, proponents of this model of training argue that it is the more equitable option because these programs tend to be more accessible, less expensive, and require fewer total hours than credit-bearing programs do.

- **Time-limited professional development opportunities:** Associations and school districts in most states offer one-off opportunities such as conferences with leadership development content. Informants were glad to see leadership content included in these events but did not cite them as among those programs that were most effective in building leadership skills. This is likely in part because these engagements are low-intensity and do not have an extended time frame or opportunities to apply learning.

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Effective Programs are Grounded in the Day-to-Day but Last an Extended Amount of Time

It can be hard to evaluate the relative effectiveness of leadership development programs because they have different goals, funding models, time frames for impact, and target audiences. However, all the leadership development programs that informants identified as effective have two significant characteristics in common. First, they include an applied/contextualized learning component through which participants can practice the skills they are learning in the program. Second, they have an extended time frame of six months to three years, during which they hold multiple meetings ranging in length from several days to several weeks. Participants are expected to apply their skills in their own organizations during the time they are away from the program. These two characteristics work together to ensure the leadership skills participants are learning are relevant to leaders' day-to-day work, useful for their organizations and therefore worth the leaders' absence for training, and that the training and their work jointly reinforce the skills the leaders are building.

When asked to identify effective leadership development programs, ECE leaders tended to point to the same small set of programs, which feature applied learning and extended time frames. These programs include ECE-specific programs such as the P-3 Executive Leadership Certificate Program at the University of Washington; the Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program; the Ounce of Prevention Lead Learn Excel Program; and the McCormick Center. ECE leaders also cited programs that are not specific to ECE but that include ECE participants, such as the leadership development programs offered by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and a communications training program with Spitfire Communications. California has just one program that experts consider effective, technical assistance provider Child360. The state also has a few credential programs affiliated with universities, programs unique to particular systems (e.g., Head Start), and one-off conferences, but there is overall limited activity. The dearth of programs makes it clear that, as one interviewee characterized it, California is "not leading the way" on ECE leadership development. For a full list of programs interviewees identified as effective, see Appendix D.

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Informants agreed that leadership development is not a mature area of the ECE field, but they had mixed views about how much the ECE sector can learn from leadership development in other sectors. Most felt that the ECE leadership development sector was so small and under-resourced that, in the absence of investment, its leaders would benefit from other, flagship programs such as Teach For America and those hosted by the Aspen Institute, as well as regional or local cross-sector leadership programs like LA Chamber of Commerce leadership network. That said, a subset of interviewees felt that without the ECE context, such programs are unlikely to be meaningful. Ultimately, the relevance of these programs depends on the extent to which the outcomes programs seek to achieve are content-specific. Programs that focus on developing effective changemakers through building operational and management skills can benefit leaders regardless of their field. However, where the aim is to close a content knowledge gap (e.g., of ECE administrators without ECE background), participants need access to ECE-specific content and would likely not get what they need out of a more general, cross-field program.

The programs that informants most often identified as effective are the Annie E. Casey Foundation's leadership development programs, which is particularly interesting because they are not specific to early childhood but rather include a range of participants who work with children and families. When asked what makes the Annie E. Casey programs effective, past participants of the program talked about the value of contextualized and applied learning: participants are required to work on a project based on their own local data while at the program. They also pointed to Casey's cohort model, which helps participants build a network of support. Finally, respondents who attended its national programs (the foundation also offers local programs) highlighted how its geographically diverse participants helped broaden others' perspectives and shared strategies they have successfully employed in their own regions. Geographic diversity also gives participants more freedom to be candid, as they do not work with each other outside of the program.

The Scale of Philanthropic Investment is Small—but the Opportunity for Impact is Great

Most leadership development programs find achieving financial sustainability to be their greatest challenge. Many are funded by a single funder, which creates significant risk if that funder ceases to provide support. Others that receive public funding face strict limits and restrictions on how they can provide training and to whom, based on policy priorities. Even programs operated by endowed foundations face challenges of scale. In fact, one philanthropist, speaking of a program she supports, said "we think there probably needs to be more of these very in-depth programs. Twenty people is … not nearly enough to really, truly make a dent." It is noteworthy that the two factors that make programs effective—applied learning and extended time frame—also likely contribute to their funding challenges, since longer programs cannot serve as many participants and require more resources, especially when they focus on a particular context.

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The scale of philanthropic investment is small relative to the size of the ECE sector. Some states publicly fund aspects of leadership development training through technical assistance funds focused on improving Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) ratings. While this funding has been important, it is limited to improving metrics included in the QRIS scale and can be used only in support of the lowest performing providers. In addition, the US Department of Education provides some funding for leadership and management training, specifically for public employees. For example, it funds the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO)'s Leadership Academy, which helps executives who oversee state departments of education or state early learning agencies build their capacity to drive change management. For more on this program, see the case study in Appendix B.

As mentioned above, a few private foundations, notably Annie E. Casey and Temple Hoyne Buell, both fund and run leadership development training programs. Their programs are among the longest-running, and despite their relatively small scale (Casey includes 40 people per cohort, and Buell 20 per year), they are the best-known among the ECE leaders we interviewed, who view them as prestigious and able to provide a "stamp of approval" for leaders.

In addition, a handful of foundations, listed in the table on the next page, either fund organizations or are exploring funding organizations to provide these programs.

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Figure 3. Private funders supporting ECE leadership development

Foundation	Support for ECE leadership development
Annie E. Casey Foundation	Leadership development is a core area of interest for the foundation, which both funds and operates leadership development programs for those serving children and families.
Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund	The fund, which has a general focus on leadership, has funded ECE leadership development in the Bay Area, including a 2015 grant to a leadership development firm for coaching and support of leadership teams in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), including in its Early Childhood Division.
Heising-Simons Foundation	As part of its broader early childhood education work, the foundation invests directly in family engagement programs and in networking for leaders to deepen family engagement.
Irving Harris Foundation	Within its broader early childhood giving area, the foundation funds leadership training specifically, including providing support to the Erikson Institute's Barbara Bowman Leadership Fellows program. (See Appendix D for more details on this program.)
Kenneth Rainin Foundation	The foundation, which both funds and operates programs, has taken a place-based approach to investing in early education in Oakland. Part of this holistic approach includes supporting leaders.
Ounce of Prevention Fund	The fund operates the Lead Learn Excel program, which helps early educators build leadership and continuous improvement skills. It also trains instructional leaders to support high-quality early learning environments and professional development providers to deliver their own Lead Learn Excel programs.
Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation	The foundation funds leadership activities across Colorado, including technical assistance provision for cross-sector early childhood councils. It also funds and co-manages the Buell Leadership Fellows program.
W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation	The foundation funds efforts to increase equity and educational and developmental opportunities for children and youth in several urban areas, including the Bay Area. Specifically, it seeks to strengthen the leadership skills of principals and improve the healthy development of children ages zero to eight. In service of these strategies, it has made grants, for example, to SFUSD PreK-3 Principal Leadership Development.
W. K. Kellogg Foundation	The Kellogg Foundation's education team is shifting its focus toward early education, and as part of this transition is exploring opportunities to support leadership.

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Finally, some providers are starting to self-fund leadership development. One example is for-profit child care company Bright Horizons, which offers a range of professional development to its staff, including a Leadership Institute focused on management skills, as well as tuition reimbursement for center directors attending credential programs at the McCormick Center.

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR FUNDERS

Leadership development is an important strategy for funders who are interested in making ECE systems higher-quality and more equitable. Given the need for clear pathways to leadership, the significant impact strong leaders can have on larger systems, and the lack of funding for ECE leadership development, funders have a multitude of opportunities to advance the ECE sector by investing in leadership. In general, funders have the opportunity to use three approaches: scaling or strengthening existing leadership development programs, making long-term commitments to investing in new programs, and/or supporting informal leadership development opportunities to supplement formal opportunities. (For a longer list of example strategies, see Figure 4 on page 25.)

Ultimately, funders' decisions must align with their own strategies, complement what is present already in the geographies in which they are investing (i.e., ensure their investment will contribute to the local leadership development ecosystem), and meet their needs for the amount and time frame of their investment. No matter what funders invest in, they should ensure that the programs they support include applied learning and happen over a somewhat extended time frame, as these are two attributes all successful ECE leadership development programs share.

Ultimately, we recommend that when deciding where and how to invest, funders should consider how investing in leaders will help to achieve the change they seek, which leaders can create that change, and what they need as individuals and from the system to be able to do so. Specifically, funders must answer these five questions:[17]

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1. **What are the outcomes we are trying to achieve, for systems and for children?**

Leadership development is not an outcome in and of itself. Rather, it is a strategy that can lead to a wide range of outcomes. Effective investments in leadership development must be clear on the ends they aim to achieve to ensure they support approaches that will actually yield those outcomes. Beginning with outcomes allows funders to pinpoint how they think leaders can make a difference, and then invest in leadership development programs that share that vision.

In our research, we encountered two outcomes-driven programs that are useful examples of how clarity about outcomes allows funders to use leadership development as a lever to create significant change.

• One Annie E. Casey Foundation program aims to support leaders to create measurable change in kindergarten readiness within the next two years. With that goal in mind, Casey selected participants with decision-making power and access to resources, and then designed a curriculum to target the gaps in that audience's development as leaders. Had Casey not started with this defined goal, it may have invited participants without the ability to act on the applied skills the program taught.

• The Buell Early Childhood Leadership Development Program, on the other hand, takes a longer-term approach to help ECE leaders "align their values, voice, and actions to create equity, opportunity, and educational excellence." To achieve its systems alignment and collaboration goals, it recognized that it needed a cross-sectoral cohort that included representation from education, health, mental health, etc. It also needed to cover competencies including policy and advocacy. Buell further aligned its operational model to its desired outcomes. Specifically, Buell believes that to increase early childhood voice and equity, the program must be accessible and advance participants' careers, so, together with its partners, it designed a scholarship-supported, credit-granting program.

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Too often, funders and leadership development program leaders see leadership development as valuable by definition and do not define specific outcomes they seek, which makes it difficult for them to define or capture their contributions. With the notable exceptions of Annie E. Casey and McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, few development programs rigorously define goals and track outcomes. This lack of data makes it difficult for programs to make the case for their value, which is necessary to securing continued funding.

2. **How do leaders and leadership help to achieve these outcomes?**
   All organizations and programs benefit from strong leaders, and leadership development can contribute to positive outcomes for individuals, organizations, and systems. Yet leadership development cannot solve all the problems in the ECE sector. Funders should ask themselves how leaders and leadership can help to achieve the outcomes they seek. For example, a funder interested in creating a unified, statewide QRIS system may decide to invest in the advocacy capacity of school leaders to demand and achieve this. Alternatively, the funder might decide this work is best done by grasstops advocates and so leadership development is not the right investment. In addition to consulting their own strategies, funders should also consider the need. For example, while the sector needs funding to deliver leadership training, there is no need for more study and design of programs.

3. **What types of leaders within or outside of the early childhood sector can help achieve these outcomes?**
   Funders must determine who in the sector has the power to create the change they seek—or who, with more power, could do so. For example, a funder seeking to improve the quality of ECE programs in low-income neighborhoods might decide to invest in parent engagement and leadership development because they believe that engaged parents will hold schools and their leaders accountable.

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4. **What competencies and/or resources do potential, emerging, or established leaders need to achieve these outcomes?**

   Funders should be clear on what competencies leaders need in order to achieve the specific outcomes they seek, and then develop or invest in programs that are structured to build these particular competencies. For example, a funder interested in improving alignment between prekindergarten and K-12 might decide to invest in leadership development for public elementary schools that have prekindergarten programs within them. This funder might determine that these leaders need to deepen their understanding of early education pedagogy, licensure, and regulations, and thus would invest in leadership development focused on building these competencies.

5. **What conditions must be present in the ECE ecosystem in order for leaders to succeed?**

   Funders must determine how the environment in which ECE leaders work needs to change in order to achieve larger systems change. For example, a funder interested in promoting equity in access to leadership opportunities might invest in a leadership development program for women of color, ECE educators without advanced formal education, or another population that is currently underrepresented in the ranks of leadership. This same funder should also make complementary investments in, for example, advocacy for fair compensation, early recruitment into ECE higher education, and more.

In Figure 4 on the next page, we offer some examples of strategies funders might use based on outcomes they may seek.

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Figure 4. Examples of outcomes and potential strategies for supporting ECE leadership development

Outcome you hope to achieve	Strategies you might employ
Increase the number of individuals in the ECE sector receiving leadership development training	• Support existing ECE leadership development programs to scale their number of participants or replicate in new geographies • Explore innovative funding models (e.g., in partnership with the public sector or private providers) • Develop a new local program to build leadership capacity in a particular community
Improve K-12 alignment and/or reduce ECE's isolation as a sector	• Enable non-ECE leadership development programs to serve ECE leaders • Fund efforts to grow pre-K–3 elementary school leaders as leaders in their schools • Invest in content- and administrative-focused development of pre-K–3 elementary school leaders without an ECE background
Contribute to equity in the ECE workforce	• Fund leaders in early education organizing and other forms of power building • Invest in developing leaders who advocate for fair compensation and paid professional development leave • Prioritize leadership development opportunities for participants with the least access to them today, especially educators and those in informal early childhood systems • Provide funding to employers to cover educators' paid leave and leadership development training participation
Strengthen the leadership development sector	• Develop a clearinghouse or coordinating mechanism for leadership development programs across the country to share information and resources

Despite this abundance of promising strategies for supporting leadership development, funders should be aware that there are challenges, as well. First, measuring impact is difficult for leadership development. While tracking outputs from leadership development trainings (e.g., number of participants) is straightforward, the time it takes for participants to use what they have learned makes it challenging to conclusively measure and attribute impact to these programs. It is also challenging because leaders' successes are likely the result of a range of supports over time, including mentors, networks, opportunities, and trainings. Furthermore, it is difficult to attribute systemic change to individual leaders, as system-level outcomes almost always result from the concerted efforts of many individuals and organizations.

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Second, this is a field that has long struggled with financial sustainability, meaning that for a funder to make a meaningful difference and play a role in the wider sector, it would need to commit to investing for the long term—especially if developing a new program (rather than investing in an existing program). Funders interested in establishing new programs should consider sustainability from the outset, and recruit partners who will also commit to long-term funding, so that the program is not dependent on a single funder for its survival.

Conclusion

Achieving ECE goals requires effective leaders, so as you develop, refresh, and implement your ECE strategies, think about the role leaders play in their success. Consider the five questions above to determine the areas in which you are best positioned to take action, and prioritize areas that align with both research about the landscape and your own strategy, desired outcomes, and values.

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Appendices

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Appendix A: Research Questions and Methodology

This report summarizes the findings of an investigation into the landscape of the early childhood education leadership development sector in the United States, with a particular focus on California. We identified organizations and approaches that effectively develop school and district leaders as well as other practitioners and advocates. We also identified leadership development gaps in the early childhood field. To structure our research, we set out to answer the following research questions:

1. **What are the most effective leadership development programs, both within California's early education field and beyond it?**

   What are the goals of these programs, and how do they define effective leadership? To what extent do they incorporate relevant content from related sectors, such as health?

   • What drives their success, and how do they measure it?

   • What are the target populations for these programs? What percentage of them serve district leaders? How many people are these programs serving?

   • To what extent and in what ways are these programs incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion in their curricula and/or in their selection of participants?

   • How might the successful models and/or approaches of California's early education programs be enhanced (e.g., through scaling existing programs or developing new ones)?

   • How might the successful models and/or approaches of other programs nationally be replicated and adapted to fit this context?

   • How are these programs structured operationally, including revenue and expenses?

2. **What are the gaps in early education leadership training, services, and supports in California and nationally?**

   • What new efforts are under way to address these?

   • How can current training, services, and supports be improved and/or enhanced?

   • What policies, programs, and interventions would help to fill these gaps?

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3. Which donors are investing in early education leadership development, and what are the opportunities for funders?

• What are their goals for investing in this work?

• How might collaboration help to achieve these goals? Are donors interested in collaborating?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our team conducted both primary and secondary research to answer the questions above.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Our primary research entailed interviewing 12 individuals with expertise in leadership development in the early childhood field. These interviewees were early education funders and advocates; staff of leadership development programs; experts in the education workforce or in leadership development; and practitioners in the early childhood field whom we identified as emerging or established leaders. Our interviewees are listed below:

Category	Name	Organization	Title
Emerging & established leaders in ECE	Dawn Kurtz	Child360 (formerly LAUP)	Chief Program Officer
	Scott Moore & Andrea Garcia	Kidango	Chief Executive Officer; Sr VP of Behavioral Health & Organizational Leadership
ECE funders	Barbara Squires	Annie E. Casey Foundation	Director, Leadership Development
	Carla Bryant	Kenneth Rainin Foundation	Director, Education Strategy & Ventures

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Category	Name	Organization	Title
Education workforce & leadership development experts	Gail Joseph	University of Washington, Early Childhood and Family Studies Program	Associate Professor and Director
	Kim Smith	Pahara Institute	Founder and CEO
	Marica Cox Mitchell	National Association for the Education of Young Children	Deputy Executive Director, Early Learning Systems
	Susan Steele	Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation	Executive Director
	Teri Talan	McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership	Director of Policy Initiatives and Professor of Early Childhood Education
ECE advocates	Aida Mariam	Early Learning Lab	Director
	Kim Pattillo Brownson	First 5 LA	Vice President of Policy and Strategy

In addition, we conducted a half-day stakeholder convening with 17 participants who are:
1) emerging and established leaders who work within formal early education; 2) leaders who work outside of formal early education; and/or 3) experts in leadership development. Our three objectives in the stakeholder convening were to:

1. Understand the current state of early childhood education leadership (gaps, opportunities, constraints, assets, etc.) from a leader's point of view

2. Enable leaders in the field to share their ideas and experience to support leadership

3. Identify promising emerging practices, as well as failed practices, in early childhood leadership development

As part of the convening, we asked participants to reflect on the following questions. Their responses to these questions provided valuable input for this report:

• What are the qualities and competencies of an effective early childhood education leader?

• What are the primary factors or events that have helped and/or would help you develop as a leader?

• What results does good early education leadership provide to the child and broader systems?

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We reviewed three types of secondary research inputs:

- ECE leadership development reports: These research inputs were published reports detailing leadership development programs in the early childhood field, needs in the early childhood workforce, evaluations of specific leadership development approaches, and approaches to systems change in the field.

- Program-specific research: We researched the programs interviewees identified as effective, looking at program descriptions, evaluations, and other published materials.

- Donor research: We also conducted desk research to identify donors investing in leadership development for early childhood education or related fields.

For a full list of works cited, see this report's endnotes.

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Appendix B: Effective Program Case Studies

This appendix contains case studies of four programs effectively building leadership skills among ECE leaders.

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Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) Leadership Academy

ENHANCING ECE PROGRAM DIRECTORS' CAPACITY FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT THROUGH JOB-EMBEDDED PROJECTS

CEELO is a national technical assistance center. Its Leadership Academy helps executives who oversee state departments of education (SEAs) or state early learning agencies (ELAs) grow as leaders and managers. Over the course of one year, participants complete job-embedded projects of their choosing toward improving: 1) the effectiveness of publicly funded programs for children from birth through age 5; 2) state policies and initiatives that govern prekindergarten to third grade teaching and learning; and 3) partnerships with state leaders and organizations to build a more unified, equitable, and effective early childhood system from birth through third grade.[1]

Given CEELO's focus on building change management capacity, its leadership academy helps leaders develop the content, operational, and individual competencies needed to effect policy and program change to improve the early learning system. Such competencies include results-based leadership, project management, change management, and systems thinking.[2]

CEELO's leadership academy helps leaders of SEAs and ELAs effect program and policy change by engaging them in job-embedded projects that are focused, achievable, and applicable to fellows' everyday work while also emphasizing the importance of working with others to think about their own systems through a comparative lens. For example, one job-embedded project entailed implementing a new results-based accountability format for reporting on the use of cross-agency state funds for children and family services. A 2015 evaluation of CEELO's leadership academy showed that fellows increased their knowledge of other programs, resources, and perspectives, and that they built a network of effective partnerships within the leadership academy, within their agency, and within other agencies in their early childhood system.[3]

CEELO fellows meet for four in-person meetings—totaling 7.5 days—in addition to participating in virtual meetings and coaching by phone over the course of one year. The academy includes guided reading, discussion and peer learning, and guest speakers.

1 CEELO Leadership Academy, *Overview of the CEELO Leadership Academy 2018-19 (2018)*, 1. http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/FAQ_Leadership_Academy_FINAL.pdf.
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3 Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, *State Early Learning Leadership Academy: Report on Year 1, 2014-2015* (November 2015), 5. http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ceelo_leadership_academy_1_report_final_web.pdf.

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ORGANIZATION
Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation, University of Colorado at Denver, and Clayton Early Learning

LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE
Colorado

FOCUS
Equity and opportunity for all students in Colorado

TYPE
Credit-granting

PRIMARY INTENDED OUTCOME
System (ECE)
System (other sectors)

TARGET PARTICIPANTS
Emerging and existing leaders with bachelor's degrees across early childhood sectors including early childhood mental health, physical health, and parent engagement

FUNDING SOURCE
Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation

Early Childhood Leadership Program

CREATING LINKS BETWEEN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS ACROSS THE STATE TO IMPROVE EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

The Early Childhood Leadership Program (ECLP) is a collaboration between three organizations invested in quality early childhood education in Colorado:

• Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation, which has a bird's-eye view across the state of Colorado and supplies capital to support the program

• The University of Colorado at Denver, which brings teaching and research expertise

• Clayton Early Learning, an early childhood provider with applied classroom knowledge

The 20-person fellowship program aims to create equity, opportunity, and educational excellence for all young children and families.[4] In service of this goal, the ECLP brings together cohorts of fellows from education, health, mental health, and other fields to strengthen coordination and improve outcomes for children. The ECLP's leadership framework focuses on competencies related to content, including race and power; integrating early childhood services from education to health, policy, and community; and public policy development and implementation.[5] This content aligns with the program's goals by emphasizing the importance of understanding the full ECE system while possessing the cultural competence, public policy skills, and ability to gain community buy-in to achieve greater equity for students.

The 18-credit program provides master-level coursework through in-person and virtual learning experiences over the course of a year. In small project groups, fellows conduct participatory action research to learn from community members about a specific issue, collect other data, and work with community members to generate community-based action plans to address the issue. For example, the most recent ECLP cohort researched topics including early childhood within public systems, family engagement, and valuing ECE as a profession.[6] ECLP's emphasis on inquiry, collaboration, and community buy-in increases participants' research and collaboration skills and gives them a sense of belonging to a statewide cadre of leaders.

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[4] Buell Early Childhood Leaders Network, *Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program 2017 Annual Report* (2017), 2, http://buellecleadersnetwork.org/attachments/article/134/17-Clayton-Buell%20EC%20Leadership%20Report-final.pdf.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

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ORGANIZATION
Annie E. Casey Foundation

LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE
Based in MD, with programs run in various cities and states across the country

FOCUS
Casey aims to broadly improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and families in a community or jurisdiction

TYPE
Professional development

PRIMARY INTENDED OUTCOME
Child

TARGET PARTICIPANTS
Mid- to high-level staff members of public, private, and community organizations working to improve results for vulnerable children and families

FUNDING SOURCE
Annie E. Casey Foundation

Leadership in Action Program

DRIVING MEASURABLE IMPROVEMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THROUGH DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Using a framework called results-based leadership, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's leadership programs help leaders improve the well-being of children and families in the communities where they work.[7] The Leadership in Action Program (LAP), a core component of Casey's results-based leadership portfolio, brings together up to 40 cross-sector leaders to collaborate toward improving a single, measurable result for local children and families, such as increasing the rate at which Maryland children enter school ready to learn. The goal of each LAP cohort is to develop a critical mass of leaders who use collaborative leadership competencies and take aligned actions to accelerate change for children and families.

The LAP has helped leaders achieve improvements because of its emphasis on data, collaboration, applied learning, and accountability. To develop leaders' skills, it uses a results-based accountability framework that emphasizes tracking progress and outcomes. Additionally, Casey contends that population-level change is more likely to occur when leaders align their actions in service of a shared goal, so its leadership framework also focuses on developing team and interpersonal skills.

In addition to a curriculum that features collaborative leadership and relationship-building skills, each LAP partners with a community organization that holds the group accountable for achieving a specific result for children and families. Additionally, participants hold themselves accountable by creating performance measures to track the effectiveness of their work. Participants co-create performance-management systems that enable them to continuously assess and improve their work during and after the program.

Casey selects program participants based on their positional authority to make decisions and allocate resources that help achieve each LAP's desired goal. They meet for nine two-day, in-person sessions over the course of a year. This cadence allows participants need to reflect and learn outside of their day-to-day jobs, while interspersing opportunities for them to apply the skills they are learning within their own organizations.

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[7]   The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Leading for Results* (Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013), http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-LeadingforResults-2013.pdf.

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ORGANIZATION
McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University

LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE
Illinois

FOCUS
Employing quality improvement plans and building strong organizational climates in early childhood programs

TYPE
Credit-granting

PRIMARY INTENDED OUTCOME
System (ECE)

TARGET PARTICIPANTS
Directors and assistant directors of center-based early childhood programs in Illinois

FUNDING SOURCE
Illinois Department of Human Services

The Pritzker Family Foundation also awarded a grant to McCormick to disseminate the TCC model to other states.

Taking Charge of Change

STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS AND PROGRAMS THROUGH CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND TRAINING LEADERS TO TRAIN OTHERS

The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership's Taking Charge of Change (TCC) program, embedded within National Louis University, is a leadership training program for leaders of center-based early childhood programs. TCC aims to improve the quality of early childhood programs by providing participants with structured opportunities for community building, tools for creating data-driven program improvement plans, opportunities to apply their learning in the workplace, and mentorship to bridge theory to practice.[8] The program has adapted its approach into a national TCC train-the-trainer model that other states have adopted. These states share the goal of developing a cadre of ECE program leaders who are ready to implement quality improvement plans and build strong organizations.[9]

TCC is based on McCormick's Whole Leadership framework, which emphasizes the importance of pedagogical leadership, administrative leadership, and personal leadership skills that together help leaders drive systems change.[10] Interestingly, much of its framework focuses on individual competencies such as empathy, creativity, humility, and adaptability—as these qualities must go together with more concrete operational skills for leaders to be effective change agents. A 2013 evaluation of the program showed that participants had the greatest growth in the knowledge of 1) how systems theory applies to early childhood organizations, and 2) how to implement an individualized model of staff development. Additionally, 65 percent of alumni indicated they had mentored other directors, thus multiplying the effects of their training.[11]

Participants of the program meet for a weeklong residency and two in-person meetings over 10 months. In addition to receiving small- and large-group instruction, participants also receive individual instruction and mentorship to help them implement program improvement plans (PIPs) for their centers. Each participant receives a $500 mini-grant to spend on specific recommendations from his or her PIP to improve the quality of his or her early childhood center.[12] Participants are also eligible for up to six semester hours of credit.

8   Bloom, P. J., Jackson, S., Talan, T. N., & Kelton, R. *Taking Charge of Change: A 20-year review of empowering early childhood administrators through leadership training* (Wheeling, IL: 2013), 1. http://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/TCCExecutiveSummary.pdf.
9   Ibid.
10 McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, *Whole Leadership Framework for Early Childhood Programs (Birth to Third Grade)*. http://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/WholeLeadership_Framework.pdf.
11 Ibid.
12 Bloom.

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Appendix C: Leadership Development Frameworks

In our research, we identified the following nine early childhood leadership development frameworks used and/or published by organizations or consortia across the country—mostly industry associations, coalitions, funders, and leadership development programs. All are designed to communicate the competencies of an effective ECE leader.

FRAMEWORK	**Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program**
TYPE OF LEADERS INCLUDED	Early childhood leaders in education and beyond from a diverse range of organizations across Colorado

COMPETENCIES THAT THE FRAMEWORK USES TO DEFINE EFFECTIVE LEADERS	**CONTENT**
	• Best practices in your classroom or organization
	• Using data to inform leadership
	• Alignment to Colorado early childhood framework:
	  - Early learning,
	  - Physical and mental health
	  - Family engagement and support
	
	TEAM & INTERPERSONAL
	• Collaboration
	
	INDIVIDUAL
	• Reflective leadership
	
	POLICY & COMMUNITY
	• Policy & advocacy
	• Equity

FRAMEWORK	**District leader competencies (Kenneth Rainin Foundation)**
TYPE OF LEADERS INCLUDED	District leaders
COMPETENCIES THAT THE FRAMEWORK USES TO DEFINE EFFECTIVE LEADERS	**CONTENT** • Understanding of special education parts B and C • Literacy models and approaches **OPERATIONAL** • Fiscal literacy **POLICY & COMMUNITY** • Legislative process and policy • State licensing requirements and process

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FRAMEWORK	**[Early Childhood Leadership Framework](#)**
TYPE OF LEADERS INCLUDED	Early childhood leaders
COMPETENCIES THAT THE FRAMEWORK USES TO DEFINE EFFECTIVE LEADERS	**OPERATIONAL** • Execution • Business judgment • Competitive edge • Building talent **TEAM & INTERPERSONAL** • Inspiration leadership • Influence • Collaboration • Direction

FRAMEWORK	**[Knowledge and competencies for leadership in settings with children birth through age 8](#) (Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8)**
TYPE OF LEADERS INCLUDED	Center directors, child care owners, principals, and other leaders and administrators
COMPETENCIES THAT THE FRAMEWORK USES TO DEFINE EFFECTIVE LEADERS	**CONTENT** • Practices to help children learn • Assessment of children • Assessment of educators **OPERATIONAL** • Fostering a professional workforce • Organizational development and management **POLICY & COMMUNITY** • Developing and fostering partnerships

FRAMEWORK	**[LAUP Coaching model](#)**
TYPE OF LEADERS INCLUDED	Preschool providers
COMPETENCIES THAT THE FRAMEWORK USES TO DEFINE EFFECTIVE LEADERS	**TEAM & INTERPERSONAL** • Appreciative inquiry • Process consultation **INDIVIDUAL** • Servant leadership

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FRAMEWORK	[Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Pre-K–3rd Grade Approaches](#) (National P-3 Center)

TYPE OF LEADERS INCLUDED

Schools, school districts, early learning programs, and other community partners developing K-3rd grade approaches. It is designed for a broad audience, focusing on collaboration and alignment between K-12 systems and programs serving younger children.

COMPETENCIES THAT THE FRAMEWORK USES TO DEFINE EFFECTIVE LEADERS

CONTENT

- Ability to collaborate across K-12 and ECE for governance, strategy, and funding
- Ability to provide continuity and pathways for children from ECE to K-12
- Effective instruction and instructional leadership
- Continuous improvement based on observation and data
- Use of standards, curricula, and assessments

POLICY & COMMUNITY

- Engagement of families in dialogue and decision making
- Creation of culturally inclusive environments that support diverse learners

TEAM & INTERPERSONAL

- Administrator modeling of importance of Pre-K–3rd
- Teamwork

FRAMEWORK

Power to the Profession

TYPE OF LEADERS INCLUDED

Early childhood educators

COMPETENCIES THAT THE FRAMEWORK USES TO DEFINE EFFECTIVE LEADERS

CONTENT

- Promoting child development and learning
- Observing, documenting, and assessing to support young children and families
- Using developmentally effective approaches to connect with children and families
- Using content knowledge to build meaningful curriculum

INDIVIDUAL

- Becoming a professional

POLICY & COMMUNITY

- Building family and community relationships

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Results-Based Leadership Development
(Annie E. Casey Foundation)

FRAMEWORK

TYPE OF LEADERS INCLUDED

Executives and managers working to improve outcomes for children, families, and communities

COMPETENCIES THAT THE FRAMEWORK USES TO DEFINE EFFECTIVE LEADERS

CONTENT
- Results-based accountability

TEAM & INTERPERSONAL
- Collaboration
- Measurable population-level change occurs when the right group of leaders use specific skills to align their actions and make contributions to a specific result.
- Person-Role-System framework
- Results-based facilitation

INDIVIDUAL
- Be results-based and data-driven
- Use oneself as an instrument of change
- Adaptive leadership

POLICY & COMMUNITY
- Bring attention to and act on disparities, recognizing that race, class, and culture impact outcomes and opportunities for vulnerable children

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FRAMEWORK

Whole Leadership
(McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership)

TYPE OF LEADERS INCLUDED

Individual leaders and leadership teams implementing early childhood programs in schools, centers, and homes

COMPETENCIES THAT THE FRAMEWORK USES TO DEFINE EFFECTIVE LEADERS

CONTENT
- Instructional leadership: Supporting classroom teachers in implementing curriculum

OPERATIONAL
- Operational leadership
- Strategic leadership

INDIVIDUAL
- Self-efficacy
- Empathy
- Creativity
- Authenticity
- Humility
- Transparency
- Adaptability
- Learning orientation

POLICY & COMMUNITY
- Advocacy leadership: Acting as an ambassador for the needs of children, families, and programs
- Family engagement
- Community leadership

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Appendix D: Programs Building ECE Leadership Capacity

In our research, we identified the following 39 programs that build leadership capacity in early childhood education, early childhood broadly, K-12 education, and other sectors from which we can learn. This list is not an exhaustive list of all ECE leadership development programs in the country, but rather a catalog of those identified by one or more sources as effective in building leadership skills.

Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
Annie E. Casey Foundation	Leadership in Action Program*	Yes	One-year professional development program that aims to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and families in a community or jurisdiction. Tasks cross-sector leaders with collaborating to improve a single, measurable result for children and families.	Maryland (national scope)	Mid- to high-level staff members of public, private, and community organizations working to improve results for vulnerable children and families
Annie E. Casey Foundation	Child and Family Fellowship	No	16-month fellowship that helps child- and family-serving professionals gain confidence and competence to lead major system reforms and community change initiatives by forging partnerships across organizations and communities.	Maryland (national scope)	Accomplished cross-sector executives serving vulnerable children and families
Aspen Institute	Ascend Fellowship	No	18-month fellowship that focuses on creating and expanding two-generation approaches to move parents and children out of poverty. Participants create individual or collaborative action plans to ensure that policies and programs improve equity for children and families.	Colorado (national scope)	Cross-sector leaders with ideas and solutions for building an intergenerational cycle of opportunity for children and families

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
Barr Foundation	Barr Fellowship	No	Two-year fellowship that aims to strengthen organizations and build a strong network of leaders to promote civic leadership in Boston. Includes peer learning, a three-month sabbatical, facilitated retreats, and significant grant funding to participants' organizations to support exploratory projects as well as leadership and organizational development.	Massachusetts	Nonprofit and public-sector executives selected for their significant leadership and contributions at their organizations and in the Boston community
The Broad Center	The Broad Academy	No	Two-year fellowship program that strengthens leaders' ability to lead and grow high-performing organizations that drive excellence and equity for all students. In addition to meeting for five in-person, weeklong sessions, fellows each design and initiate an action learning project to pilot improvement strategies within their current systems.	California	Emerging and established system leaders and cabinet-level leaders of K-12 education. Elected officials, military officers, and nonprofit leaders also considered.
Buffett Early Childhood Institute	Early Childhood Workforce Development Program	Yes	Partnership between the Buffett Institute and Nebraska's institutions of higher education; public, private, and community colleges; and local school districts to provide professional preparation for early childhood professionals. Focuses on improving professional preparation programs and making sure early childhood and elementary teachers and providers have access to them.	Nebraska	Early childhood and elementary teachers and providers

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
California Child Development Administrators Association	Leadership Institute	Yes	Three-day conference with keynote speakers and workshops focused on managing program operations, planning for organization stability, creating staff development plans, and developing early childhood education leadership opportunities.	California	Early childhood program administrators
California Teachers Association (CTA)	Ethnic Minority Leadership Development Program	No	One-day program of the CTA Human Rights Department that aims to increase the number of minorities in leadership roles within the CTA. Four training components include: understanding the system; communication for effective leadership; obstacles to association involvement; empowerment for leaders.	California	Members of the California Teachers Association who identify as ethnic minorities
California Teachers Association (CTA)	Women's Leadership Training Program	No	One-day program of the CTA Human Rights Department designed to ensure that women CTA members will be prepared for leadership roles. Trainings focus on personal assessment of leadership skills, organizational analysis skills, and group process skills.	California	Members of the California Teachers Association who identify as women
California Teachers Association (CTA)	GLBT Leadership Development Program	No	One-day program of the CTA Human Rights Department that aims to promote the value of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender CTA members' involvement at all levels of the association. Four training components include: understanding the system; communication for effective leadership; obstacles to association involvement; empowerment for leaders.	California	Members of the California Teachers Association who identify as LGBTQ

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO)	CEELO Leadership Academy*	Yes	One-year professional development program that promotes improved learning outcomes for young children. Engages SEA and ELA leaders in job-embedded projects that improve programs, policies, and state partnerships to build a more unified, equitable, and effective state EC system.	New Jersey (national scope)	State department agency executives overseeing ECE programs
Child360 (formerly LAUP)	Enhancing Early Education Quality for Program Success	Yes	A range of services aimed at improving all aspects of program quality for children ages 0-5. Includes trainings and coaching on quality improvement, family engagement, and administration. Trainings are for up to 20 to 50 participants. Child360 also consults early learning providers on QRIS implementation and quality assessment tools.	California	Early learning program directors, administrators, owners, and teachers
Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation	Leadership Denver	No	Eleven-month leadership development program that builds leaders' skills in and commitment to voluntary civic responsibility while teaching them about community issues facing Denver. Topics include education, economic development, politics, criminal justice, and poverty. Participants collaborate on a group community action project throughout the program.	Colorado	Established professionals in business, government, and the community who have a track record of giving back to their communities
Diablo Valley Community College	Emerging Leader Pipeline Project	Yes	A roundtable series of monthly reflective practice seminars. Peer learning group model of facilitated small group discussion, reflection, and application.	California	Early childhood educators across diverse settings

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
Durfee Foundation	Stanton Fellowship	No	Two-year professional development program that focuses on peer learning and building a cross-sector network to tackle challenges specific to Los Angeles. The program provides up to six fellows with $100,000 each to think about big questions in their sector and test approaches that will improve life for Los Angeles residents.	California	Cross-sector leaders from a variety of disciplines
Erikson Institute	Barbara Bowman Leadership Fellows	Yes	One-year program funded by the Irving Harris Foundation that helps advocates influence early childhood policy to improve racial equity in the field. Engages fellows in applied learning projects focused on the impact of policy and systems on children and families in Illinois.	Illinois	Child advocates who work at nonprofits or government agencies in Illinois and are interested in early childhood
Institute for Educational Leadership	Early Childhood Collaborative Leadership Institutes	Yes	Professional development program that promotes co-learning about effective strategies for creating strong linkages with families, early childhood programs, community schools, libraries, and public health services.	District of Columbia (national scope)	Leaders across a spectrum of education, education policy, and related fields
Kellogg Foundation	WKKF Community Leadership Network	No	Three-year fellowship that aims to create a cadre of community and civic leaders who can bring diverse communities together as advocates for children and families. Year 1 focuses on individual development, Year 2 focuses on building networks, and Year 3 consists of an applied project.	Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico	Emerging and existing leaders working to solve problems in their communities

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
LA Chamber	Leadership LA	No	Eight-month fellowship that focuses on personal leadership development and explores topics critical to the future of Los Angeles. Classroom discussion and experiential learning focus on education, health care, business, natural resources, and more.	California	Early- to mid-level professionals from business, government, and nonprofit sectors who want to pursue more well-informed and influential leadership roles
LA Chamber	Leadership Southern California	No	Eight-month fellowship that focuses on regional issues affecting Southern California, such as economy, education, transportation, goods movement, and natural resources. Fellows learn to build strategic partnerships across sectors with diverse stakeholders.	California	Mid- to senior-level professionals from business, nonprofit, philanthropic, and government sectors
McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University	Taking Charge of Change*	Yes	Ten-month credit-granting program that aims to improve quality and strengthen organizational climates of EC programs. Gives leaders applied opportunities to create data-driven program improvement plans for their centers.	Illinois	Directors and assistant directors of center-based early childhood programs in Illinois
Mills College	Master of Arts in Early Childhood Leadership	Yes	Two-year master's degree program that develops leaders who can work toward coordinated and equitable early learning systems at local, state, and federal levels. The program assigns students to field placements that teach them about the vital connection between public policy and program delivery.	California	Working professionals with five years of experience in early childhood or related educational disciplines, representing diverse roles and sectors

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
National Head Start Association (NHSA)	Winter and fall leadership institutes	Yes	The NHSA hosts two four-day leadership conferences per year that provide opportunities for Head Start leaders to plan for Head Start's future. The conference programs address whatever challenges are currently relevant to Head Start, such as strengthening the workforce and influencing policy.	District of Columbia	Leaders of the Head Start community
New Leaders for New Schools	Emerging Leaders Program	No	On-the-job training that prepares teacher leaders, coaches, and assistant principals to boost achievement across multiple classrooms. Includes in-person and virtual instruction. Participants lead teacher teams and complete job-embedded assignments.	National scope (offices across country)	Teacher leaders, instructional coaches, and assistant principals
New Leaders for New Schools	Principal Institute	No	Program that extends New Leaders' leadership training across a district or charter network, delivering school-centered professional development targeted to address local priorities and individual growth areas. Includes in-person and virtual instruction. Participants engage in role playing, job-embedded assignments, advisor training, and leadership walks.	National scope (offices across country)	Assistant principals and principals
North Carolina State University	Master of School Administration: Educational Leadership, Policy, and Human Development	No	Two-year master's degree program that is committed to social justice advocacy in education and society. Students can participate in the program while maintaining full-time positions in North Carolina counties.	North Carolina	Working professionals with three years of experience teaching in a K-12 public or private school

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
Ounce of Prevention Fund	Lead Learn Excel	Yes	Nine- or 16-month on-the-job training promoting excellent instructional leadership and continuous quality improvement in early childhood classrooms. Approach combines training, coaching, peer learning communities, and access to practical tools and resources.	Illinois	Instructional leaders and professional development providers
Rockwood Leadership Institute	Rockwood Leadership Institute	No	Has multiple five-day, retreat-style programs and eight fellowships focused on different topics. One such fellowship is "Lead Now: California," designed to connect California leaders working across issue areas that are essential to promoting equity and justice.	California (national scope)	Anyone who is interested in deepening and strengthening their leadership skills
San Francisco State University	Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership	No	Three-year doctoral program that focuses on transformative leadership, social justice, and equity for diverse learners in P-12 education. Program includes student learning within a cohort community where students attend class and work on projects together year-round.	California	Individuals who have a background, experience, and/or potential in educational leadership
Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Early Educator Training Center	Early Educator Apprenticeship	Yes	Professional development program for center-based child care workers that includes paid on-the-job training, college coursework, professional learning communities, and individualized guidance to help participants advance on the Child Development Permit Matrix. Participants are eligible to receive wage increases as they meet various professional targets.	California	Center-based child care workers

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
Stanford University	Executive Program for Education Leaders	No	One-year joint program of Stanford Graduate School of Education and Stanford Graduate School of Business that builds the leadership capacity of superintendents and other central office leaders. Provides opportunities for cohort learning and group work within and across district teams. Superintendents must attend with teams that include curriculum and instructional leaders.	California	Superintendents and central office leaders
Stanford University	Principal Fellows Program	No	Three-year fellowship of the Stanford School of Education in which fellows choose and track their progress on goals such as gains in academic achievement, attendance, behavior, teacher engagement, and graduation rates.	California	Early-career secondary principals
Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation	Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program*	Yes	One-year credit-granting program partnered with a university and an early learning center. Aims to create equity, opportunity, and educational excellence for all young children and families by helping leaders across education, health, and mental health sectors create community-based action plans.	Colorado	Emerging and existing leaders with bachelor's degrees across EC sectors including EC mental health, physical health, and parent engagement
UCLA School of Management	Head Start Management Fellows Program	Yes	Twelve-day intensive training session taught by UCLA faculty to strengthen entrepreneurial management and leadership skills of Head Start executives.	California	Head Start program administrators

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
UCLA/ Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access Center	Principal Leadership Institute	No	Fifteen-month credit-granting program aligned with the California Administrative Professional Expectations (CAPEs) to prepare the next generation of urban school leaders. The program focuses on racial equity and social justice, and participants receive a master's degree and complete the courses required for the California Tier 1 Administrative Credential.	California	Outstanding educators who have administrative interests and recognized potential
University of California, Berkeley	Policy, Politics and Power for Early Childhood Leaders Training	Yes	Professional development program that focuses on policy and advocacy and helps participants become subject-matter specialists about the early care and education system.	California	Leaders in a range of ECE roles
University of Washington	Washington P-3 Executive Leadership Certificate Program	Yes	Ten-month credit-granting program designed to build a cadre of administrators who ensure a high-quality continuum of learning for all students. The program focuses on reducing the achievement gap and improving equity in early childhood.	Washington	Elementary school and pre-K through age 8 school principals and assistant principals; and site-based EL program directors in state of Washington
Zero to Three	Leadership Development Institute	Yes	Eighteen-month fellowship program that develops leaders committed to ensuring that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. Helps each fellow develop and implement a strategic plan of action to address a unique system, program, or policy issue in that fellow's professional or community context.	District of Columbia (national scope)	Emerging and experienced leaders across diverse disciplines, sectors, geographies, and perspectives

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Organization	Program	ECE Only?	Focus And Approach	Location	Target Participants
Zero to Three	Zero to Three Fellowship	Yes	Two-year fellowship program that aims to empower cross-sector leaders to make program, system, and policy change on critical issues relating to early childhood. Through experiential retreats, coaching, and webinars, participants focus on adaptive leadership, parent engagement, social justice, communications, public policy, and early childhood mental and behavioral health.	District of Columbia (national scope)	Early and mid-career cross-sector leaders with a passion to advance change in early childhood programs, systems, and policies

*Indicates a program we have profiled in a case study in Appendix A of this report

Correction:

An earlier version of this report misattributed the Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Pre-K–3rd Grade Approaches and misstated the framework's priorities. The framework was written by Kristie Kauerz and Julia Coffman; the updated information can be found on page 40.

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