NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Quality Assurance

Early Childhood
National Centers

Early Care and Education Workforce Salary Scale Playbook: Implementation Guide

April 2024

Acknowledgments

The National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (NCECQA) would like to express sincere gratitude to its partners whose expertise was essential to developing the *Early Care and Education Workforce Salary Scale Playbook: Implementation Guide*. Over the course of several months, the following organizations made outstanding contributions to the content of the playbook:

- Administration for Children and Families, Office of Early Childhood Development

- Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care

- Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start

- National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment

- National Early Care and Education Workforce Center

- National Technical Assistance Center for Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five

ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Early Childhood Development

Table of Contents

Introduction

The *Early Care and Education Workforce Salary Scale Playbook: Implementation Guide* provides practical guidance on five essential actions in the process of building and implementing a comprehensive, equitable salary scale for early educators and caregivers.

The *Salary Scale Playbook* is designed for all ECE leaders and decisionmakers at the system and program levels. Whether you are just beginning to consider a salary scale or are well into the development process, this guide provides an extensive set of approaches and resources that can help inform your decisions in a manner that aligns with your context, goals, and requirements.

What is a salary scale?

A salary scale is a structured schedule that establishes guidelines for differentiation in employee compensation according to a predefined set of variables and characteristics. A salary scale serves as a transparent tool, clearly defining expectations for current and potential future earnings across workforce roles.

In the context of early care and education, salary scales are often structured based on qualifications and years of experience, such that certain education credentials and longer tenure lead to higher compensation. Salary scales also reflect minimum and maximum amounts that an employee in a specific position could expect to earn (McLean et al., 2021, p. 271).

Terminology

To be inclusive and simplify language when possible, the term "early childhood education" (ECE) program is used throughout the playbook to refer to the following:

- Child care centers
- School-age programs
- Family child care homes
- Head Start programs
- Early Head Start programs
- Faith-based programs
- Group child care homes
- School-based programs serving young children

Why is it important to develop a salary scale?

Research consistently shows that the ECE workforce is underpaid and has less access to employee benefits than others with comparable education and skills (Lloyd et al., 2021, p. 1). Within the ECE profession, there are clear discrepancies in earnings based on race (see Figure 1). Low wages negatively affect children, families, providers, and the ECE workforce broadly: ECE centers with wages below $10 an hour have a 23.1 percent attrition rate. By way of comparison, ECE centers that pay $25 an hour or higher have a 7.5 percent attrition rate (Grunewald et al., 2022).

When designed effectively, salary scales are an opportunity to address chronic challenges with low ECE workforce compensation. Further, the process of developing a salary scale is, in and of itself, valuable; this process creates a starting point for change, conversation, and analysis focused on systematic improvements in ECE workforce wages.

Building and using a strong salary scale can benefit the overall ECE system and help leaders support the following goals:

◆ Address inequities in compensation and decrease wage disparities across settings (e.g., child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start programs, schools), race and ethnicity of educators, or the ages of the children that programs serve (Smith & Lawrence, 2019, p. 8).

◆ Strategically and transparently incorporate differences in educator role, experience, degrees, or credentials in wage decisions or targets (Child Care Services Association, 2021, p. 2).

◆ Help decisionmakers understand the financing needed to provide more attractive jobs and equitable professional pathways and inform budget planning (Child Care Services Association, 2021, p. 3).

◆ Contribute to positive work conditions promoting educator well-being and increase educator recruitment and retention (Smith & Lawrence, 2019, p. 12).

◆ Serve as an input for cost modeling, payment rate setting for child care subsidies, other public funding strategies, and operational program budgeting.

Taken together, a salary scale can catalyze meaningful and lasting changes in ECE workforce compensation.
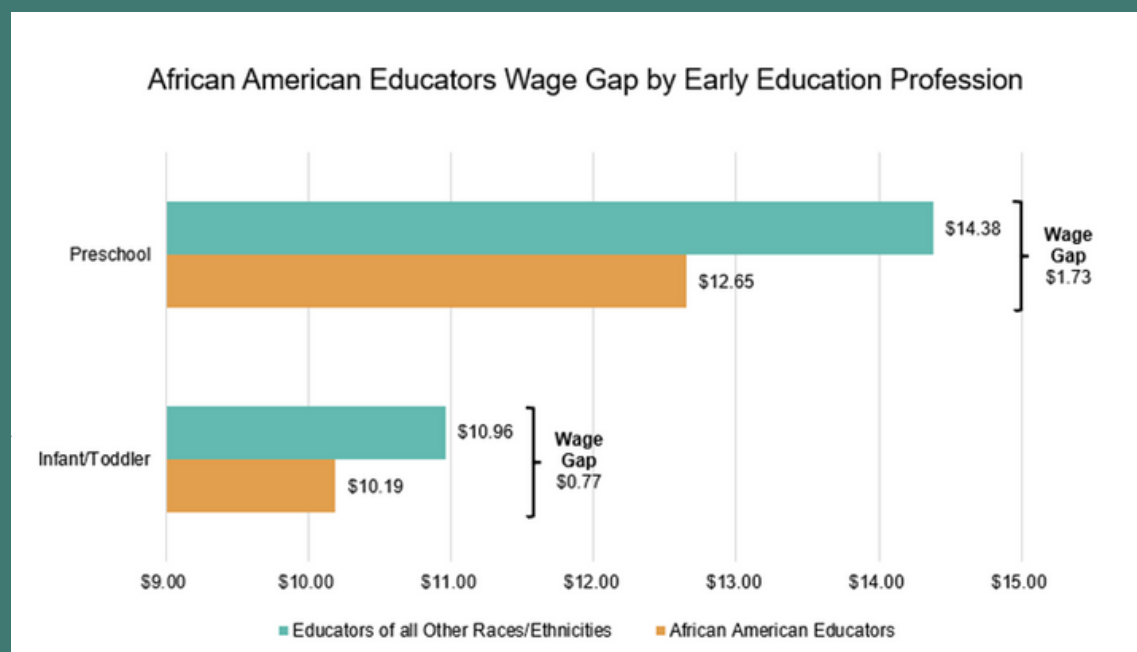

Figure 1. Earning Discrepancies Based on Race
Source: Austin, L. J. E., Edwards, B., Chávez, R., & Whitebook, M. (2019). Racial wage gaps in early education employment. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. https://escholarship.org/content/qt0vn9c11c/qt0vn9c11c.pdf

How should the Salary Scale Playbook be used?

The *Salary Scale Playbook* explores five essential actions that are part of the process of developing a salary scale (see Figure 2). These essential actions are not steps; they are not intended to be completed sequentially. Instead, consider the essential actions as strategies that are critical to developing a successful and effective salary scale to be visited and revisited as necessary throughout the process. The guidance in this document is designed to serve you well the first time you work through an essential action—and each time following. Further, the content in the *Salary Scale Playbook* should serve as a guide rather than a checklist to be truly effective. Every decision you make along the way to developing a salary scale should be tailored to your specific context, goals, and needs.

The *Salary Scale Playbook* is organized into sections based on the five essential actions. Each section follows a standardized format: It explores the What, Why, and How of that essential action, offering a detailed description of the action to inform decision-making. In addition, each section includes a one-page summary that outlines its purpose, provides a synopsis of the content, and offers links to related resources. These summaries serve as a quick reference guide, allowing for easy access to the information you will need to develop a salary scale. Click the tile icon at the beginning of each new Essential Action section for a one-page overview of the Essential Action.

The *Salary Scale Playbook* is a valuable resource for those seeking to develop a salary scale in the ECE profession. Its format and resources are tailored for those in leadership positions who are tasked with making informed decisions throughout the process of salary scale development.

Figure 2. Essential Actions for Developing a Salary Scale

Click the tile icon at the beginning of each new Essential Action section for a one-page overview of the Essential Action.

Articulate the need for and value of a salary scale.
Explore and define why a salary scale should be developed.

Convene key partners to guide salary scale development.
Convene a multisector group of collaborators to drive the salary scale development process. Plan for ongoing engagement.

Identify and use data.
Understand the current state of wages, which types of data elements need analysis, and data sources to consider.

Develop a salary scale structure.
Create the salary scale, differentiating base and target salaries by role, qualifications, and other factors.

Create an implementation plan.
Identify the next steps and key considerations for implementing the salary scale.

Articulate the Need for and Value of a Salary Scale

What is the process of articulating the need for and value of a salary scale?

We know that, broadly, salary scales play a critical role in creating systems-level change in compensation for early educators. In the face of competing priorities and limited resources, however, as a leader and decisionmaker in the ECE community, you must articulate why a salary scale must be a priority for the ECE workforce and at this moment in time.

In articulating the *need* for a salary scale, you will define the current circumstances that make it crucial to take on the work of a salary scale. The circumstances may be a critical problem that needs to be addressed or may be an opportunity that cannot be missed. On the other side of the coin, the *value* of a salary scale describes why a salary scale is the correct answer to the identified need and what a salary scale could accomplish under those circumstances.

Relevant, timely contextual factors should drive both the need and value of a salary scale. Contextual factors driving the need for a salary scale might include:

◆ State, federal, or local regulations or legislation that require salary scale development

◆ Changes in compensation in competing labor markets or sectors

◆ Redefined professional standards and/or career lattices or ladders for early educators

◆ New funding dedicated to addressing workforce compensation

◆ Shifts in workforce shortages, recruitment, and/or retention challenges

The value of a salary scale can be defined as direct responses and solutions to these contextual factors.

> Washington, DC, passed the Birth-to-Three for All DC Amendment Act of 2018 and the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund Establishment Act of 2021, which required a salary scale for all early educators (including infant and toddler teachers) to achieve parity with public school elementary teachers and included recommendations for implementation (Dade & McLean, 2023b).

Why is it important to articulate the need for and value of a salary scale?

Clearly articulated needs for and values of salary scales provide you and your partners with a shared language and rationale, couched in specific contextual factors, to effectively communicate internally and externally throughout the development and implementation process.

Effective external communication allows for strong coalition building and advocacy. Effective internal communication helps ensure that needs and values serve as a "north star" for decisionmakers, creating the foundation that undergirds design choices as decisionmakers work through the process of developing a salary scale.

How would a decisionmaker articulate the need for and value of a salary scale?

Articulating the need for and value of a salary scale requires a careful look at the relevant contextual factors, collaboration with key partners, and understanding of the early care and education sector and related policies.

◆ *Identify any legislation or regulation that requires, or might otherwise govern, the salary scale development.* Policies may reflect existing perspectives on a salary scale's impetus, goals, and/or outcomes. There might also be clear parameters around the design of the salary scale, such as the target population (e.g., includes those serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers; lead teachers and assistants; all staff; etc.), setting (e.g., includes all or a subset of schools, child care centers, family child care, and Head Start), or aspects of compensation (e.g., includes both wages and benefits, is benchmarked to parity with K-3).

◆ *Identify past, current, and planned workforce efforts.* Support for the early childhood workforce, particularly in the context of compensation, continues to be a priority across the profession. The need for and value of a salary scale as developed through this process should complement—not duplicate or conflict with—any past, current, or planned efforts to further support early childhood workforce compensation. Efforts might include workgroups, funding and investments, data collection and evaluations, or initiative pilots.

◆ *Collaborate with key partners.* It is important to be familiar with any past conversations and dynamics that are part of the history of this salary scale development. Legislators, agency or program staff, advocates, members of the workforce, and other community partners can provide critical input on challenges, successes, and lessons learned. Providers and educators have first-hand experience with the need that a salary scale would help address.

◆ *Prepare to revisit your definitions of the need for and value of a salary scale.* The need for and value of a salary scale are context-dependent and time-bound. Over time, as circumstances change, the need for and value of a salary scale will evolve as well. Revisiting the needs and values definition is a critical step to ensure that the shared understanding of needs and values remains relevant.

Convene Key Partners to Guide Salary Scale Development

What is the role of key partners in salary scale development?

The tactical process of developing and implementing a salary scale, discussed further below, is a multistep endeavor that includes a range of critical decision points that will ultimately affect the design of the salary scale and its implications for the profession. These decisions cannot be made in isolation; instead, the decision-making process should be informed by a range of perspectives from across the profession. As such, it is critical to identify and engage a group of key partners to guide salary scale development. Through this work, key partners help lead and advise on the process of developing a salary scale and provide input into the salary scale's design along the way. When convened, these key partners form a recognized entity that has a clear charge and role in the salary scale development process. For the sake of simplicity, throughout this section we refer to this group of key partners as an advisory group, though others who have gone through this process have used different terminology (e.g., steering committee, task force, council).

The specific individuals who make up your advisory group depend on the context in which you are developing a salary scale. You may already have access to groups that exist to serve similar advising roles on early care and education issues, such as a state or local advisory committee, Head Start Policy Council, or Parent Advisory Group. In that scenario, consider if you can leverage those groups as a mechanism to convene key partners to provide input and support; doing so can facilitate greater alignment and efficiency in the development and implementation of the salary scale. On the other hand,

Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force

ECE advocates and legislators proposed the Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force, which Governor Walz signed into law in 2021. The purpose of the task force was to develop a state plan to accomplish the goal for "all families to have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education that enriches, nurtures, and supports children and their families." Read about how the task force addressed its goal to ensure Minnesota's early childhood educators are qualified, diverse, supported, and equitably compensated regardless of setting in the Final Report: Great Start for All Minnesota Children.

advising groups might not exist, or the groups that do exist might not offer the expertise or perspectives necessary to guide the salary scale development process. In that scenario, it may be more appropriate to bring together an advisory group specifically for this purpose.

Further, there might be clear requirements for those who are engaged as members of the advisory group or task force. Specifically, in cases where legislation catalyzed the creation of a salary scale, the legislation might define the perspectives that must be included in the task force.

Lived experience includes the "experiences of people on whom a social issue or combination of social issues has had a direct impact" (Sandhu, 2017, p. 6).

For more information on incorporating lived experience in human service programs, see the Lived Experience Starter Kit.

Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Stakeholder Communications (2021) provides information about the importance of communication plans and the value of communicating and engaging with partners. This guide discusses how to make the most of meetings and provides resources.

It is critical to ensure the key partners engaged in the advisory group include individuals affected by a salary scale and who can provide authentic input on their lived experience. These members must include early care and education workforce professionals (e.g., educators, home visitors, and family support staff), providers, and families from a range of different backgrounds and experiences. As such, consider comprehensive representation across, for example, care settings (e.g., family child care, centers, Head Start, schools), program operating schedules (e.g., part-day/year, full-day/year), ages of children served, geography (e.g., urban, rural), income levels, training and qualification levels or requirements, demographic diversity (e.g., race/ethnicity, primary language, gender), quality improvement system (QIS) or licensing standing, role and tenure of workforce members, as well as prospective workforce professionals.

An advisory group should also include "ecosystem" members. These individuals are key partners within the early care and education community who offer perspectives on the implications of a salary scale on the decisions and behaviors of relevant actors. For example, employers and businesses, researchers from relevant disciplines (e.g., early childhood, labor economists, cost modeling experts), policy experts, advocacy organizations, philanthropic foundations, and higher education and educator preparation programs could be important key partners.

Finally, for a salary scale to be successful, it is critical that the advisory group includes members who have the autonomy and agency to confirm that the final salary scale is viable in your specific context. "Viable" means different things in different contexts; these members, for example, might decide how resources are allocated, be responsible for writing the final set of recommendations, or determine and/or operationalize the ultimate decision about salary scale design. For system-level processes, these members will often represent government entities, such as a lead state or local agency, governor's office, mayor's office, or state or local legislative body. For program-level decisions, the executive director or CEO will likely serve in this role and draw on expertise of board members, program staff, and families. These individuals will often lead the advisory group and facilitate salary scale development, which includes convening and directing advisory group meetings, leading the strategic direction of the scale, and determining next steps on decision choices of the advisory group.

Why is it important to convene key partners to guide salary scale development?

The salary scale advisory group has two complementary goals: Maintain an effective decision-making process that produces a salary scale that can be successful in the state, local, or program context *and* incorporate the authentic lived experience from representative providers, workforce professionals, and families who are affected by challenges with and changes to the amount and structure of early educator compensation.

If the advisory group fails to meet either of these goals, the salary scale cannot be successful. The key partners engaged in the advisory group must reflect the experiences, expertise, and roles that ensure both goals are met.

How do you convene key partners and facilitate the development process?

A critical action in creating a salary scale advisory group is analyzing the context in which the salary scale will be developed. You should identify any parameters or requirements based on written legislation, regulation, or priorities that govern the salary scale task force.

The parameters governing the advisory group composition might clearly identify the entity or member that is ultimately responsible for reporting on or recommending the salary scale and will therefore lead the advisory group. Additionally, those

parameters might also define a required set of perspectives or individuals that must be included in the development of the scale. If that is not the case, the lead of the advisory group will likely be the entity or member that initiated the process.

The advisory group lead is then responsible for convening key partners to serve as advisory group members. Again, it is not necessary to develop an entirely new group of people at that point; instead, there are likely existing advising bodies in your context that may offer the necessary experience and expertise that are needed for the design and development of the salary scale. Leveraging existing groups may make a more efficient process and limit duplication or conflict across efforts.

At the same time, consider whether existing groups reflect the complete range of perspectives that the salary scale advisory group or task force needs. Creating a salary scale task force is an opportunity to reassess if underrepresented voices are engaged and contributing to policy and program development, identify any gaps in representation, then move toward filling in those gaps.

To ensure that a diverse group is engaged, create opportunities that ease the burden of participation (e.g., offer virtual or onsite options for participation, compensate participants for their time and expertise, offer transportation, translation/interpretation, support for child care or meals).

Finally, consider that the composition of the advisors and key partners engaged in the salary scale design and development may need to change over time as developing and implementing a salary scale is a dynamic process. Over time, as the development of the salary scale progresses, the needs of key partners will also evolve. Certain expertise may no longer be necessary, while other voices must be brought in. It is important to ensure that the group solicits the perspectives and input that are necessary to create a salary scale that best meets the needs of children, families, providers, and the workforce.

Identify and Use Data

While data systems vary by state and locality, gathering and analyzing existing workforce data can help create a well-informed salary scale. Using the right data can help ensure that a salary scale is both ambitious and practical. Identifying relevant data sources from within early childhood as well as other sectors is critical when understanding the impact of salary scale structures.

What data should inform the development of the salary scale?

In order to structure the salary scale, you'll need information on both the current status of the workforce you are targeting for the salary scale as well as salaries for other sectors that are competing for those same employees with similar qualifications. In most cases, administrative data already available can help prevent the need for extensive data collection processes. However, it is always good to get input from those in the ECE community to ensure that the administrative data you are using accurately reflect the reality.

The scope and the goals of your salary scale will determine what data are more important at each stage of the development and implementation process. For example, if one goal of the salary scale is to ensure that there is a career ladder that is rewarded financially, understanding the current qualifications for individuals in each position will be very important. If the goal is to create a more competitive wage for specific teaching positions, it will be important to gather data on the other types of positions that are recruiting individuals with the same qualifications. If the goal is to reach pay parity for educators in early childhood programs with K-12 educators in the community, you will need information on K-12 teacher salaries in that geographic area as well as the early childhood programs of interest. If your goal is to make progress toward pay parity across all early childhood settings, you will need data on salaries for staff in child care centers, family child care, Head Start, and schools. If your goal is to reduce disparities in pay by race/ethnicity or other factors, you will need data on pay alongside demographic information about the workforce. Defining the data that are needed to inform the specific salary scale you are creating will ensure that the scale can reach the goals it aims to achieve.

Why are accurate data important for salary scale?

Data are useful for each step of the salary scale development and implementation.

To understand ECE labor market trends and establish competitive pay rates, it is important to use accurate data on current wages and salary structures in the ECE workforce, including any requirements already in place in your state or local context. There are many datasets available to help build a baseline salary for the roles you choose to include in your salary scale.

To understand the current workforce:

The Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center released _Wage Comparability: A Guide for Conducting a Wage and Fringe Benefits Comparability Survey_ in 2023 to support Head Start programs as they conduct wage surveys. This tool is a valuable resource for Head Start programs that are developing salary scales as well as other ECE and out-of-school time (OST) programs.

◆ An initial review of online resources, industry reports, professional development registry reports, and government databases will help you gather an initial dataset of average salaries, benefits, and compensation packages already in place in your jurisdiction. Current labor contracts and business tax information for child care businesses can provide valuable inputs to develop a picture of current salaries.

◆ In addition to salary and benefits data, consider looking at data related to demographic characteristics of the workforce, such as race, age, and gender, as well as program characteristics, such as setting and funding source, that can help inform who makes up the current workforce and where disparities in pay may currently exist.

◆ Looking at education, credential level, and years of experience of those currently working in the positions included in your salary scale can help with understanding how pay may vary by qualification levels and by role when you develop your salary scale.

In addition to the current job structures and wages within the ECE sector, it is important to understand what other sectors and employers may be competing for employees with the same skills and qualifications. This will help identify what salaries are necessary to retain and attract a workforce into the positions included in the salary scale. Depending on the goals and the local landscape, the following analysis may be helpful:

◆ Look at the local education landscape, including school districts and other education nonprofits.

◆ Compare with other human service employers, including health care and home health aides.

◆ Examine any minimum-wage policies or sector-specific wage requirements in place at the local or state levels.

How would a decisionmaker gather accurate data?

◆ **Diverse data sources**—Try to obtain salary information from multiple sources and across similar service-related industries, such as through government databases, industry reports, and direct employer reports in similar service-related industries. This diversity can provide a more comprehensive picture of compensation trends. Look at the types of industries currently recruiting a similar workforce in your local context (e.g., look at job listings for home health care or social work) and compare the starting salaries and pay increases over time for that sector.

◆ **Research partnerships**—Partner with researchers or data experts who hold administrative data or have studied compensation in your specific state, territory, or Tribe to analyze external data that have already been collected, or when necessary, collect new data. For example, cost modeling experts or economists may be able to help provide an aggregated fiscal analysis of potential salary scales, studies from higher education institutions may include compensation information, and additional administrative or other data may be available from employment and economic development organizations, the Federal Reserve, labor and industry organizations, nonprofit organizations, or advocacy groups. See the Additional Resources section at the end of this playbook for example studies.

◆ **Existing models**—You may find existing compensation scales in local school systems, mixed-delivery universal prekindergarten initiatives, Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships, Head Start programs, or larger grants or contracts for early learning services. These existing models can offer valuable insights and benchmarks for developing your salary scale. See Appendix A for examples of salary scales.

Sources of Data

There is a range of administrative data currently available that you can access to enrich your data collection process. See below for potential sources to consider.

- ◆ **State early childhood workforce registries**—State workforce registries often contain valuable data on early childhood educators, including their qualifications, experience, and compensation. Accessing this registry or other state data can provide insights into workforce demographics and salary trends.
- ◆ **Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data**—The Head Start PIR data offer rich information on ECE programs, including staff compensation and qualifications. Analyzing these data can help benchmark salaries and assess disparities.
- ◆ **School district public data**—If you're comparing early childhood educator salaries with those in the K–12 education system, school district public data are essential. These data can provide a basis for understanding salary benchmarks and potential targets and can usually be found publicly available on either the district's human resources website or embedded within the contracts with the teachers' union.
- ◆ **Other state labor administrative data**—Additional relevant data may be available from state workforce oversight entities that capture regular information about jobs, job openings, and average wages across all industries. Identifying data that are unique to your state or local landscape will allow you to compare workforce data within and across programs, as well as across sectors. In addition, some information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) may be useful as a foundational reference point when used alongside other data to understand local wage trends.
- ◆ **Unions**—Educator unions can offer valuable insights into salary structures and workforce demographics. Union contracts often have delineated salary schedules, outlining qualifications and salary bands based on experience. These data can be particularly useful in understanding compensation standards for specific employers that may be setting predominant wages for employees in a community or state.
- ◆ **Job search websites**—Looking at public postings for jobs in a specific locality can help you assess the wages being offered to people with similar qualifications by different employers or sectors. Job search websites often allow for searching by degree or experience level and provide information on expected salary and competitiveness for the role. This can help you assess whether the salary bands contemplated for each role in the salary scale will be competitive enough in the local job market to retain and recruit new staff.
- ◆ **Early Educator Pay map**—The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment's Early Childhood Workforce Index includes a profile for every state and the District of Columbia with detailed information on early educator wages and state policies. Compare the states and territories using the interactive mapping tool (Mclean et al, 2021).
- ◆ **DataLab tool**—The National Center for Education Statistics has salary data for K–12 teachers in the National Teacher and Principal Surveys, which can be analyzed by teacher factors (e.g., teacher qualifications).

Develop a Salary Scale Structure

What is the process of developing a salary scale?

The process to develop a salary scale requires both defining the roles to be included in the scale as well as looking at the landscape to ensure that the salaries captured in the scale are representative of competitive salaries necessary to attract and retain the workforce. Developing a salary scale requires a series of decisions based on data from the specific context in which the scale will exist. A scale can be developed to encompass as many or as few positions as is relevant. The process of developing the scale itself will be greatly enhanced if the strategies listed throughout this guide are used in harmony with the scale development itself. In order to ensure that this process is meaningful, each decision should be informed by the data collected and calibrated with collaborators who can highlight any unintended consequences. The series of decisions outlined below offers a structure to use when developing a salary scale and can help provide a road map to structure the process.

Why is the salary scale development process important?

As previously established, a salary scale can help address structural issues and inequities in the profession of early care and education. However, without intentional consideration of each decision in developing the scale, the full potential of this tool will not be realized. The process outlined below helps provide a guide to ensure thoughtful deliberation around the structure of the scale as well as the salaries embedded within it. The scale must take into account internal considerations, such as how positions relate to each other in terms of qualifications and how people will move up the scale as they gain experience or credentials. In addition, a salary scale must take into account external factors, such as other sectors with similar qualification requirements that may be competing for the same workforce or regulations/requirements that are associated with specific funding streams. The process below outlines the steps that must be part of the scale development to integrate all relevant pieces of information into the development process.

The Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation (OACAC) Head Start designed a dual salary scale structure, where there are two distinct salary scales: one for new employees and another for existing staff. This differentiation allows the program to onboard new hires at a competitive but distinct rate from those who have been with the organization for longer, thereby acknowledging the value of tenure and experience.

How would a decisionmaker develop a salary scale?

1 Identify the roles that will be included in the salary scale.

It is important to begin the salary scale development process by clearly articulating its scope, specifically the roles that will be included in the scale and those that are not. These roles will be the ones that you will connect, in some form, with a salary range in the scale you create.

Referring to the initial goals set for the salary scale can help identify which roles should be considered in the salary scale and what issues might be most pressing to address. Depending on the context and landscape, you may choose to address different roles in different phases of development of your salary scale, but keep in mind that looking at a specific subset of roles will have impact on other types of positions and the career progression of individuals in each role should be taken into account when the roles for the salary scale are developed.

As you define the scope of the salary scale, be sure to consider the range of roles within the early childhood workforce, including the following:

◆ Program leaders (e.g., center directors, family child care owners or directors, and elementary school principals)

◆ Education staff (e.g., lead teacher, assistant teacher, aide, instructional coaches, curriculum specialists, and home visitors)

◆ Other staff and specialists (e.g., mental health consultants, nutritionists, family support specialists, custodians, bus drivers, and administrative support staff)

For the inclusion of roles not directly interacting with children and families, such as fiscal staff, human resources staff, development directors, janitors, and so on, consider the following: Including these support roles in the scope can contribute to a holistic approach to improving the ECE system, promoting a collaborative work environment, and recognizing the value of all staff members. Developing a salary scale that includes all positions necessary for program operations will ensure that the salary scale accounts for all the resources and individuals needed for sustainability. It will also ensure that issues like career ladders, comparative credentials, and salary compression (when supervisors are making the same or less than their employees) are considered as decisions are made. While primary emphasis should be on roles directly interacting with

children and families, you should acknowledge the significance of support roles in enabling educators to perform their duties effectively.

2 Define the qualifications of each role.

For each of the roles selected for the salary scale, define the minimum required qualifications, experience, or credentials needed to serve in that role, as defined by current policy, regulation, or any standards set by the system or program (e.g., the program's quality goals, the state's quality improvement system, the state's career lattice or ladder, Head Start Program Performance Standards, labor agreements or union contracts, or other program-specific requirements). Effective practices at the program level require a well-prepared and well-supported workforce, so thinking through the skills and training necessary to perform each role effectively is important for achieving quality services for children and families. It is also important to think through how the qualifications defined in each role relate to each other, ensuring there is a career ladder for individuals that is practical and achievable across positions.

Using this information and the data collected during Essential Action: Identify and Use Data as a guide, it is important to engage collaborators as you define qualifications for each role. They can help assess whether these qualifications are appropriate for the purposes of a salary scale. In other words, do the qualifications reflect the educator characteristics that should drive salary decisions? How will the current workforce fit into these qualifications, and what options are there to acquire these qualifications in the local or state context? Are there other ways an educator could meet requirements not reflected in these qualifications?

Through these discussions, finalize the minimum qualifications required for each role, taking into account educators' educational attainment, credentials, experience, or competency measures.

At this point in the process, you will create a blank framework for the salary scale. In the framework, list out all roles that will be included in the salary scale and organize them based on the advisory group's perspectives on relative salaries. Starting with a blank framework focuses decisions on the tiers of roles rather than the specific dollar amount of a salary.

3 Identify competitive salaries for each role.

Target salaries reflect the ideal compensation level for a given role. When defining a target salary, it is best to consider the data collected and look to compare the qualifications defined for each role to jobs in other sectors or programs that may have the same type of qualifications. Pay parity with local school districts is often discussed as a strong target salary for early educators with a bachelor's degree, for example. Consider the broader labor market in the community or state for which you are building a salary scale. Consider where there are many jobs for individuals with specific qualifications and what the salaries are for those jobs. This may indicate the salary level that may be needed to compete with employers in other industries or sectors.

Make sure to take into account potential factors such as geography, program duration, and the impact on hours worked (i.e., part-time/full-time or full-year/part-year programming). The analysis used to determine competitive salaries for each role should take into consideration data from within the early education and care profession as well as those markets that may attract the same employees as early education programs. Any legal, regulatory, or funding requirements should also be mapped onto the competitive salaries to ensure that all factors are considered in the salary scale development.

In addition to identifying a target salary, checks should be made to ensure that the minimum salary for each role in the salary scale meets minimum cost-of-living standards, regardless of any other factors or characteristics. Many tools exist to ensure that salaries reflect economic indicators that account for fluctuations, such as inflation. Before determining a competitive salary for each role, consideration should be given to ensure the base salary suggested for each role meets minimum standards for the workforce to afford to live in the state or community being analyzed.

4   Build out salary bands for each role.

Using the target salaries as a guide, build out the salary bands for each role, considering minimum, midpoint, and maximum pay ranges based on increasing experience or credentials within each role. Pay grade ranges can overlap (e.g., the maximum salary for a role could match the target salary, one role's high-end salary might be the same as the low-end salary for the next level role, or all salaries for a role might be the same during this step, regardless of qualifications or experience).

Refer to the salary scales in Appendix A as well as others you collected during the data identification phase as examples of what others have done. When developing salary bands, it is important to keep in mind the potential equity implications:

◆   Do the salary bands mitigate or exacerbate pay inequities across diverse populations, care settings, ages served, or geographies?

◆   How does the salary scale account for career trajectories that reward individuals who increase their skills in the profession through training, credentials, and experience? Is there room in each band to incentivize individuals to stay in the profession without changing roles?

◆   How do the salaries of supervisors compare to those they supervise? Is there enough differentiation to prevent compression (i.e., where supervisors are making the same or less than the roles they oversee)? Is there enough progression in salaries to incentivize individuals to take on increasing responsibilities as they move forward in their career?

◆   How do the salary bands account for legal, regulatory, and existing labor contract considerations?

It is important to note that this step may take multiple iterations while various analyses are performed and additional collaborators are consulted. Building an understanding of the implications of implementing this salary scale during the design phase will ensure that the scale that is developed helps achieve the goals set forth for the process. It is also important to consider whether this scale will be required, suggested, or used to inform other policy decisions. Articulating how the scale is designed to be used will help ensure all the relevant analyses are performed during this phase before finalizing the scale for implementation.

5   Model the cost of the salary scale.

It may be beneficial to create financial scenarios to analyze the cost to ECE programs and the cost of implementation at the local, state, territory, or Tribal levels.

◆   **Estimating program-level costs**—You can use a cost modeling tool to estimate the effect of your salary scale on ECE program budgets. Create scenarios that represent the variety of program types your salary scale includes. If you plan to phase in your salary scale, develop scenarios that model increasing salaries over time. Be sure to update your model regularly to capture cost-of-living changes and other potential effects on compensation.

◆   **Estimating the cost of implementation**—After you've estimated the costs to programs, you can estimate the costs to implement your salary scale. You can begin by ensuring your fiscal goals align with the goals you developed through [Essential Action: Articulate the Need for and Value of a Salary Scale](). Next, project the number of programs needing funding and the short- and long-term costs of funding the salary scale. Then, compare your current funding with the total funding needed. You can provide details about this in your implementation plan (see [Essential Action: Create an Implementation Plan]()).

Understanding the impact of implementation on program budgets and financing needs will ensure salary scales can support wage increases for the sector. You may have staff within your agency or office who can take the lead on cost modeling, or you may opt to engage professional cost modeling experts to help you model both program-level costs and the cost of implementation.

The tables shown on the following pages highlight different ways states and local leaders have approached key decision points in developing a salary scale.

State and Local Salary Scale Examples

Colorado	District of Columbia	Georgia
Colorado House Bill 22-1295, which created the Department of Early Childhood, also called for the Department to develop a plan for recruiting, training, and retaining a well-compensated, well-prepared, high-quality statewide early childhood workforce. The Department launched Colorado's Early Childhood Compensation & Benefits Task Force. The Task Force aims to improve the financial well-being of early childhood educators by using a salary scale to make regionally based recommendations, analyze state and regional wage data for professionals working in ECE settings, and recommend continued funding for Colorado's Early Childhood Educator Income Tax Credit.	The Birth to Three for All DC Act of 2018 led to the development of the Early Childhood Educators Fund, a salary scale implemented by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Through the District's Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, OSSE makes quarterly payments directly to child care facilities through the CDF payroll funding formula (Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund: Information for Facility Leaders and Staff | osse [dc.gov]).	The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning administers Georgia's Pre-K Program, funded through the Georgia state lottery. Legislatively mandated, the salary scale is part of the Department's budget appropriated by the legislature. Georgia's Pre-K Program providers must pay 100% of the total salary funded by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (Georgia's Pre-K Program Operating Guidelines, p. 36).

San Francisco	Community Action Pioneer Valley Head Start	Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation Head Start
Led by the San Francisco Department of Early Childhood, the Early Educator Salary Support Grant aims to significantly enhance the compensation for over 2,000 city-funded early childhood educators and staff, with an investment of up to $70 million annually. This initiative, funded by a 2018 Commercial Rent Tax and the first of its kind nationwide, mandates ongoing wage increases for educators, targeting equitable wage distribution and setting a precedent for addressing wage disparities and promoting professional development in the sector.	CAPV leadership developed a salary scale to address the critical need to maintain high-quality, stable staffing to prevent relationship disruptions for vulnerable children and families. The Office of Head Start full enrollment initiative and staffing challenges during COVID-19 also played a role in prompting CAPV to develop a scale.	OACAC leadership developed a new salary scale in response to critical issues related to turnover and recruitment of staff, as well as to ensure competitiveness in the local labor market.

What roles are included in the salary scale?		
Colorado	**District of Columbia**	**Georgia**
Large center directors, community-based organizations (CBOs) and small center directors, family child care home owners, infant program supervisors, early childhood teacher, toddler program staff, CBO assistant early childhood teacher, and family child care home aide	Lead teachers and assistant teachers in District of Columbia facilities that receive public funding	Lead teachers in programs that receive Georgia Pre-K funding (The state also defines a minimum salary for assistant teachers.)
San Francisco	**Community Action Pioneer Valley Head Start**	**Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation Head Start**
Early educators involved in direct classroom teaching activities at least 50% of their scheduled hours in city-supported ELS center-based programs Other early education-related positions providing direct support to children, families, and/or teachers (e.g., home visitors, behavioral therapists, inclusion specialists)	The salary scale is comprehensive and includes a wide range of roles, including lead teacher, teacher, teacher assistant, practice-based coach, developmental specialist for mental health, site director, family services manager, education manager, disabilities specialist, executive director, and more.	The salary scale is comprehensive and includes a wide range of roles, including teacher, teacher assistant, lead teacher, inclusion coordinator, education leader, operations manager, education manager, inclusion specialist, director of training and assessment, and executive director.

How do salaries vary based on educator characteristics?		
Colorado	**District of Columbia**	**Georgia**
• Role • Care setting (*large centers, CBOs or small centers, and family child care homes*) • Credential (*levels I–VI based on educational attainment and experience with pay increments that honor increased responsibility required as early childhood professionals move through the credential system*) • Cost of living and geography *(developed three zones within the state to address geographic variation in cost of living)*	• Role • Care setting • Credential	• Years of experience • Credential
San Francisco	**Community Action Pioneer Valley Head Start**	**Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation Head Start**
• Role/position/title • Permit level • Education (degree and ECE units) • Full-time or part-time status • Other factors as defined by DEC	• Salaries vary based on experience and qualifications (e.g., degree attainment). • Performance influences career progression rather than direct salary changes, with promotions to higher-paying roles as a potential outcome for good performance. • The structure is step-based, encouraging advancement in qualifications for salary increases. • The program now offers substantial sign-on bonuses for all or select positions, based on current needs, rather than singling out these roles.	• Incorporates a "Starting Salary Scale" for new hires and an "Existing Staff Salary Scale" for seasoned employees to reward tenure. • Salaries are determined by a combination of experience, qualifications (e.g., degree qualifications), and performance. • The structure is step-based, designed to encourage educators to further their education and ascend the scale. • Differentiates between part-day and full-day staff, with special incentives for full-day, full-year roles.

What is the target salary based on?

Colorado	District of Columbia	Georgia
Parity with salary of comparable role in K-12 (*elementary school principal for large center director, assistant principal for CBO or small center director or family child care home owner, K-12 teacher with 20% increase to account for 12-month calendar for early childhood teacher*)	District of Columbia Public Schools' teacher salary schedule	Not applicable

San Francisco	Community Action Pioneer Valley Head Start	Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation Head Start
A minimum hourly "living wage" of $28 an hour for teachers in the classroom Hourly wages comparable to noncredentialled transitional kindergarten teachers at SFUSD for lead teachers with equivalent educational qualifications and permit levels Varies depending on title/position, education background, permit level, and agency policies	• Market rates determined through professional compensation studies and benchmarking against state and local data • Internal equity considerations, aiming to elevate the salary scale's bottom, ensuring competitive compensation in the labor market • Efforts to align salaries with comparable positions in local school districts, particularly for teacher assistants and paraprofessionals, to ensure competitiveness in the labor market and improve staff retention and satisfaction	• Market rates determined through professional compensation studies and benchmarking against state and local data • Internal equity considerations aiming to drive the bottom of the salary scale up • Strategic analysis to ensure the scale remains competitive, addressing labor market demands, and supporting staff retention and satisfaction

Create an Implementation Plan

What should be included in an implementation plan?

Implementation plans can be as comprehensive or as streamlined as you need, depending on the goals set for the salary scale. In some cases, implementation plans are detailed workplans, clearly articulating which steps need to be taken and what needs to be done, how it will be executed, by whom, on what timeline, and contingent upon what dependencies. Other implementation plans act more as a directional guide used to help socialize or integrate the salary scale into existing work. The criteria for the implementation plan should align with how the salary scale is intended to be used. For example, if it is being used to raise salaries at the program level, planning for the needed revenue to implement compensation increases may need to be taken into consideration, along with approvals from any boards or regulatory bodies. If a state child care system is using a salary scale to help define adequate compensation for the sector, identifying a mechanism for communicating with collaborators and program leaders may need to be the focus of implementation. Regardless of the objective, the following components should be considered:

Examples of Funding Sources

- Government funding from local, state, and federal sources
- Public-private partnerships
- Corporate or business support

◆ **Cost analysis**—It is vital to understand the cost of implementing the salary scale, even if it serves as a suggestion or incentive for programs. A cost analysis can help inform your timeline, helping you understand the need to phase in the salary scale over time and how long it may take to achieve full implementation based on available resources. It is also critical that you consider the future costs of the salary scale to allow for increases as individuals attain more experience and education and to build in cost-of-living adjustments.

◆ **Communication strategy**—In partnership with the advisory who helped develop the salary scale, a strategy to communicate with relevant collaborators will be critical. The communication strategy should both explain what information was used to help develop the scale and what impact you intend for it to have for the workforce. Defining whether the salary scale will be required or incorporated into other systems or incentives will be key to ensure communication is clear and prepares the workforce with reasonable expectations. Communication will help build support for the new scale and ensure that everyone is aware of upcoming changes and their potential impact. Working with trusted messengers such as partners with lived experience can be effective in sharing information in a meaningful way. The communication strategy should include a plan for communication over time throughout the implementation process and offer opportunities to highlight successes of and improvements to the salary scale.

◆ **Timeline**—Implementation plans must include a timeline that illustrates how the scale will be put in place and when changes will occur. The timeline should relate back to the goals set for the salary scale and build in opportunities to evaluate progress toward those goals. It should also outline any phasing in of these salary increases that will be achieved over time. As you create a timeline, consider if the salary scale will be executed in phases and how those phases will be broken down—By roles? With incremental increases over time? Aligned with credential or qualification requirements? If a phased in approach is chosen, what conditions would suggest that the system or program is ready for the next phase of implementation?

◆ **Training and support**—ECE educators, professionals, and administrators may need training and support to fully understand the new salary scales and how they will be implemented. Providing training and support can help build buy-in and ensure that the new scales are implemented effectively.

◆ **Monitoring and evaluation**—It is important to monitor and evaluate the effect of the new salary scale over time. This may involve collecting data on changes in educator retention rates, turnover rates, recruitment, job satisfaction, and overall program quality and equitable implementation. Determine the cycle for evaluation and update the salary scale. Establish benchmarks for success. This information can be used to adjust the salary scales as needed and demonstrate their effectiveness to constituents.

◆ **System ownership**—Implementing the early childhood salary scale requires a clear system owner with the support of policymakers, practitioners, and other community partners. The system owner must be responsible for developing and implementing the salary scale, monitoring and evaluating its impact, and ensuring that the salary scale remains relevant and current. System ownership is essential for ensuring accountability and sustainability of the salary scale's implementation.

◆ **Small-scale pilots**—Piloting all or pieces of the salary scale in small-scale settings can help provide valuable insights and identify potential challenges and barriers to successful implementation. Pilots can also help build support for the salary scale by demonstrating its effectiveness and impact. Make sure that any pilots planned allow time for learning to be integrated back into the salary scale policies or implementation plan, and plan for structured feedback to leverage the full potential of a pilot opportunity. It will also be important to choose partners who are enthusiastic about the salary scale and have the right structures in place to implement the scale effectively in their setting.

Why is an implementation plan needed?

The scale development process will inevitably surface questions and considerations for implementation. Elevating potential implementation challenges is a key function of the key partner group and why it is so critical to incorporate the lived experiences of directors, owners, managers, and educators as well as engage with data and meaningful technical assistance on key decision points.

An implementation plan allows you to map out how the salary scale will come to life. In the process of creating an implementation plan, you will anticipate the potential barriers to success that may arise and identify strategies to mitigate any negative consequences. Having realistic expectations for the roll-out timelines and financing available will help set up the salary scale for success. An implementation plan is essential for ensuring the success of the salary scale by providing direction, structure, and a framework for effective collaboration and risk management.

How does a decisionmaker develop an implementation plan?

The implementation plan should consider the context and goals of the salary scale. The implementation plan necessary for a program looking to increase salaries for their staff may differ from the implementation plan needed for a state leader looking to embed the salary scale in existing state systems. Regardless of the goals for the salary scale itself, the development of an implementation plan should engage relevant collaborators to ensure all perspectives are taken into consideration and accounted for in implementation. At the program level, for example, it is critical to communicate any potential salary changes proactively and continuously with your staff. For Head Start providers, is important to communicate the new salary scales to all relevant partners, including Parent Advisory Groups, the Policy Council, parents, and funders. At the system level, implementation planning may need to take into account legislative engagement or coordination with other systems that intersect with the early childhood programs.

Funding

- **Funding sources and mechanisms**—Identifying the financing needs to implement the new salary scale is an important step. It is critical to consider sustainable, robust, dependable sources of funding that are resistant to fluctuations or changes in enrollment. Without the revenue needed to sustain increased salaries over time, long-term implementation success could be jeopardized. Consider which financing strategies will be used to support the implementation strategy of the new salary scale. Ask how grants, contracts, subsidy rates, quality enhancements and incentives, or new funding will be used. For program-level initiatives, consider how partnerships and braided funding sources will support financing for a new salary scale.

Several considerations when discussing potential funding mechanisms include the following:

- **Dedicated funding stream for compensation**—Identifying a funding source specifically for salaries can be one mechanism to ensure consistent revenue is available for employers seeking to increase employee salaries.

◆ **Identifying funding for operations**—Grants or contracts targeted to the costs of operating early childhood services—independent of revenue provided through enrollment—can help create a more reliable revenue source to target salary increases. To invest revenue into fixed costs, such as salaries, early childhood programs must be able to rely on that funding regardless of any gaps in enrollment or changes in family situations. While this approach can provide an infusion of stable funds that aren't reliant on family stability, it may not guarantee a long-term solution because grants can be time-limited and subject to changes in availability of funding.

◆ **Increased public funding**—It is important to recognize that increasing salaries for the workforce will increase the costs of delivering early childhood services for families and children. Working through a cost model to understand the impact of implementation can help ensure public investments reflect appropriate increases that account for higher salaries. This may include adjusting child care subsidy rates for eligible families, building or restructuring quality incentives to align with the new salary scale, or creating new public funding streams that can be targeted explicitly toward workforce investments.

◆ **Program restructuring**—At the program level, programs can look holistically at their organizational structure to identify sustainable ways to support and compensate staff. The Office of Head Start provided guidance to Head Start programs on how to do this that may be applicable to other ECE programs as well. The guidance encouraged considering consolidating grants, restructuring management or organizations, and reducing the overall capacity to increase staff compensation to serve a smaller number of children while continuing to prioritize high-quality services to children and families.

Ultimately, the established goals of the salary scale should be used to identify revenue sources that can support implementation in its specific context. Leaders at any level must prepare for the effects of the salary scale on families paying private tuition, employers' ability to recruit and retain staff at the local level, and partnerships across child- and family-serving entities with different funding requirements. Sustaining an increased salary scale requires identifying financing strategies and funding sources that cannot be easily reversed or reduced once increased salaries are implemented.

Conditions for a Successful Implementation

Implementing an ECE salary scale is a long-term strategy that can provide a crucial step toward achieving equity in the ECE workforce, enhance teacher retention, and improve the quality of ECE programs. ECE educators, who are predominantly women and people of color, have been historically underpaid, and implementing a salary scale that values their work can help build a more equitable ECE system.

Executing an ECE salary scale at a systems level requires a comprehensive strategy to ensure its successful adoption by local programs. Therefore, consider this set of supportive conditions for effective implementation and sustainability of the salary scale.

◆ **Adequate funding**—Adequate funding is a critical factor in ensuring the sustainability of the salary scale. Inventory available funding for ECE services and look for revenue sources that are relatively stable, lasting, equitable, and that can adequately support the implementation of the salary scale. A combination of federal, state, and local government funding, public-private partnerships, corporate support, and philanthropic funding may be necessary to fully fund the salary scale.

◆ **Enthusiastic change agents and message carriers**—Effective change agents and message carriers are critical for successful implementation of an early childhood salary scale. These individuals must be knowledgeable and passionate about the benefits of the salary scale and be able to communicate effectively about its importance with community partners, policymakers, funders, and administrators. They must also have the skills to lead and manage the change process and be committed to achieving the goals of the salary scale. Realizing the goals for the salary scale may include increased requirements in child care licensing, funding from government or private sources, or policy changes that support ECE and workforce development. Including the advocacy community as message carriers can be helpful in ensuring effective structures are put in place for implementation.

◆ **Transparency and open communication**—Open communication is essential for building trust and ensuring that community partners are engaged and informed throughout the implementation process. Communication should be two-way and should include regular updates, feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for dialogue and input. This includes providing regular updates to all community partners about the progress of the initiative, any challenges encountered, and potential solutions. Feedback from partners should be used to adjust and improve the salary scale and associated policies, as needed.

◆ **Documenting the process**—Documenting the process is crucial for tracking how the salary scale is being implemented and can be evaluated effectively. Documentation of the development of the new salary scale, community partner engagement, and any challenges faced during implementation will help decisionmakers be able to track the process over time. Given that the development of a salary scale can take time, documenting the process can help you efficiently build on each stage of development and avoid duplicating efforts over time. It can also identify areas for improvement and ensure that best practices are shared with other system- and program-level leaders who are also developing salary scales.

Appendix A. Additional State and Local Program Examples of Salary Scale Development Efforts

Arizona has an early childhood educator salary scale (see Figure 3). In *Arizona's Preschool Development B-5 Renewal Grant application*, the Arizona Department of Education proposed that it would pilot an ECE workforce wage enhancement strategy for identified subgrantees—the programs in communities with high needs that will receive Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) funding to increase access to infant and toddler child care—which would include requiring those programs to compensate staff based on the salary scale (Arizona Department of Education, 2022, p. 25). **Delaware** also plans to use opportunities made possible with PDG B-5 funding to increase awareness and use of its wage scale.

In **Georgia's** *Pre-K Program: 2023–2024 School Year: Pre-K Providers' Operating Guidelines*, lead teacher salaries are based on two components: base salary and supplemental compensation. The base salary is based on the teacher's verified credential(s). The supplemental compensation is based on the teacher's creditable years of experience.

Creditable Years of Experience		Insufficient	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Certified (T4)	Certified (T5) or Higher
0 - 1	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
2 - 3	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$853.50	$1,029.47	$1,284.62	$1,420.29
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$29,303.36	$35,345.07	$44,105.35	$48,763.33
4 - 5	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$1,732.60	$2,089.82	$2,607.78	$2,883.19
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$30,182.46	$36,405.42	$45,428.51	$50,226.23
6 - 7	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$2,638.07	$3,181.98	$3,970.64	$4,389.98
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$31,087.93	$37,497.58	$46,791.37	$51,733.02
8 - 9	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$3,570.71	$4,306.91	$5,374.38	$5,941.97
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$32,020.57	$38,622.51	$48,195.11	$53,285.01
10 - 11	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$4,531.33	$5,465.59	$6,820.23	$7,540.52
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$32,981.19	$39,781.19	$49,640.96	$54,883.56
12 - 13	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$5,520.77	$6,659.03	$8,309.46	$9,187.03
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$33,970.63	$40,974.63	$51,130.19	$56,530.07
14 - 15	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$6,539.89	$7,888.27	$9,843.37	$10,882.93
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$34,989.75	$42,203.87	$52,664.10	$58,225.97
16 - 17	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$7,589.58	$9,154.39	$11,423.29	$12,629.71
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$36,039.44	$43,469.99	$54,244.02	$59,972.75
18 - 19	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$8,670.76	$10,458.49	$13,050.61	$14,428.89
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$37,120.62	$44,774.09	$55,871.34	$61,771.93
20+	Base Salary	$20,190.35	$28,449.86	$34,315.60	$42,820.73	$47,343.04
	Supplement	$0.00	$9,784.38	$11,801.71	$14,726.75	$16,282.05
	Total Salary	$20,190.35	$38,234.24	$46,117.31	$57,547.48	$63,625.09

Source: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (n.d.). *2023–2024 salary schedule for pre-k lead teachers.* https://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/2024TeacherSchedule.pdf

Kentucky's PDG B-5 renewal grant includes a plan to align its early educator career lattice with national models and other evidence-based salary scales. The new career lattice will reflect increases in workforce compensation, ultimately working toward a salary scale that keeps pace with professional experience, qualifications, and parity across types of sites. This work advances efforts to structurally sustain compensation that meets living wage standards and includes occupational reciprocity and professional benefits.

Minnesota intends to use funds made available through its PDG B-5 planning grant to gain a clear understanding from family child care providers on their perceptions of the wage scale (Portillo, 2022, p. 10). Family child care providers have helped the Minnesota Department of Education understand that the existing wage scale framework is ill-suited to family child care, which often prioritizes profit margins over hourly wages. Funding will be dedicated to supporting family child care providers to cocreate and participate in focus groups about how a revised wage scale might better support the needs of their settings.

Washington, DC established minimum salaries by role and credential that child development facilities must pay lead teachers and assistant teachers. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education is required to publish the Recommended Salary Schedule for Early Childhood Educators. The early childhood educator salary schedule differentiates salaries by early educator role and credentials; It also includes pay bands or steps based on experience or time in a position.

The fiscal year 2024 early childhood educator salary schedule below is based on the District of Columbia Public Schools salary schedule. Child development facilities are not required to adopt the below early childhood educator salary schedule or pay individual staff at specific steps or band levels based on experience. Child development facilities may choose to adopt the recommended salary schedule or develop their own salary schedule that differentiates pay based on years of experience, provided that the minimum salary paid to educators in each covered role meets or exceeds the minimum for that educator's credentials.

Figure 3.

Recommended Salary Schedule for Early Childhood Educators, FY24

	Step 1 (Minimum)	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10	Step 11	Step 12-15	Step 16
Assistant Teacher-Education Level													
No CDA	$43,865	$43,999	$44,813	$46,300	$47,778	$49,265	$51,154	$53,026	$54,912	$56,784	$58,666	$62,433	$66,952
CDA	$51,006	$51,161	$52,108	$53,838	$55,556	$57,285	$59,481	$61,658	$63,852	$66,028	$68,216	$72,596	$77,851
Associate degree	$54,262	$54,427	$55,434	$57,274	$59,102	$60,941	$63,278	$65,594	$67,927	$70,242	$72,570	$77,230	$82,820
Teacher-Education Level													
CDA	$54,262	$54,427	$55,434	$57,274	$59,102	$60,941	$63,278	$65,594	$67,927	$70,242	$72,570	$77,230	$82,820
Associate degree	$63,838	$64,031	$65,216	$67,381	$69,532	$71,696	$74,445	$77,169	$79,914	$82,638	$85,377	$90,859	$97,436
Bachelor's degree or higher	$75,103	$75,331	$76,725	$79,272	$81,802	$84,348	$87,582	$90,787	$94,017	$97,221	$100,443	$106,893	$114,630

Source: District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education. (n.d.). *Fiscal year 2024 minimum salaries and salary schedule for early childhood educators*, p. 3.
https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/FY24%20Minimum%20Salaries%20and%20Salary%20Schedule%20for%20Early%20Childhood%20Educators.pdf

In **San Francisco**, the Department of Early Childhood (DEC) launched an Early Educator Salary Support Grant (EESSG), which invests up to $70 million annually in enhancing the pay, benefits, working conditions, and educational achievements of over 2,000 city-funded early educators. This wage initiative, the first of its kind nationwide, aims to increase each educator's salary by $8,000 to $30,000 annually, with the goal of supporting a minimum wage of $28 per hour. Funded by a Commercial Rent Tax passed in 2018, the initiative emphasizes the importance of early childhood education and the need for fair compensation for educators, a workforce predominantly consisting of women of color. This two-phase initiative targets educators in direct teaching roles and "non-teaching" staff working directly with children and families in programs with high subsidy-eligible children, focusing on equitable wage distribution based on position, responsibilities, education, and employment status. Key to this initiative is the verification of educational qualifications through the California ECE Workforce Registry, ensuring that funding is allocated based on accurate and up-to-date educator credentials. Key to this initiative is the verification of educational qualifications through the California ECE Workforce Registry, ensuring that funding is allocated based on accurate and up-to-date educator credentials. Additionally, DEC provides these funds directly to early care and education agencies through the grant, mandating ongoing wage increases for eligible educators. This grant specifies a minimum "living wage" and adjusts compensation based on educational background and permit level, aligning wages with those of non-credentialed transitional kindergarten teachers at SFUSD for equivalent roles. San Francisco's approach, detailed in a comprehensive matrix, sets a precedent in addressing wage disparities and promoting professional and career development in the early childhood education sector.

Community Action Pioneer Valley Head Start in Massachusetts developed a salary scale to address the critical need to maintain high-quality, stable staffing. The salary scale includes a wide range of roles, including Lead Teacher, Teacher, Assistant, Practice-based Coach, Developmental Specialist for Mental Health, Side Director, Family Services Manager, and more. Salaries are based on experience and qualifications, and performance influences career progression rather than salary changes. The salary scale is based on compensation studies with state and local data, internal equity considerations, and efforts to align with comparable positions in local school districts.

Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation Head Start designed a dual salary scale structure, where there are two distinct salary scales: one for new employees and another for existing staff. This differentiation allows the program to onboard new hires at a competitive but distinct rate from those who have been with the organization longer, thereby acknowledging the value of tenure and experience.

Appendix B. SWOT Analysis Template

Strengths	Weaknesses

Opportunties	Threats

Appendix C. Elements of Effective Job Descriptions

◆ Title

◆ Brief summary of the position

◆ Information about the position's essential functions, tasks to be performed, and frequency

◆ Qualifications, which include the skills, knowledge, and abilities employees must possess in order to successfully perform the job's essential functions (Qualifications should also include requirements and preferences for education level, credentials, and years of experience.)

◆ Type of position (e.g., full- versus part-time, typical work hours and work shifts, work days of the week, and overtime expectations)

- Classification—exempt or nonexempt

- Nonexempt employees—eligible for overtime pay (The majority of child care positions are nonexempt and eligible for overtime.)

- Exempt employees—not eligible for overtime pay

- Determination of exempt versus nonexempt status—based on Fair Labor Standards Act guidelines, including salary level and job duties

◆ Information about the work environment (e.g., time inside versus outside)

◆ Who the position reports to within the center

◆ A standard disclaimer (e.g., "Additional related duties are assigned as needed." Job descriptions can't include absolutely every possible expectation.)

◆ Optional inclusion of the salary or salary range and a description of your organization

Appendix D. Sample Job Description

The following job description has been adapted from Head Start of Lane County.

Title	Head Teacher
Brief summary of the position	Ensure our youngest children have a solid foundation for life. Encourage the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of Head Start children and attend to their safety and welfare. Promote family engagement in all aspects of the program. Meet requirements of federal Head Start Program Performance Standards and any local, state, and agency policies and procedures. Abide by the Head Start of Lane County code of conduct and ethics statement written within the employee handbook.
Essential functions	**Classroom Time and School Readiness** • Supervise and monitor children at all times and respond appropriately to crisis or emergency situations that may occur. • Establish a positive classroom climate. • Guide the behavior of children in positive, effective ways.

- Encourage experimentation, exploration, problem-solving, cooperation, socialization, and choice-making; Ask open-ended questions and follow-up questions to promote further learning and thinking.
- Promote English-language acquisition of children who are English- and dual-language learners.
- Release children only to individuals with appropriate signed consent.

Individualization, Curriculum, and Assessment

- Follow agency-adopted curricula using effective strategies to guide learning.
- Prepare the classroom environment and materials to support developmentally appropriate curriculum plans and learning experiences.
- Assess individual and group needs, attending to specific interests, strengths, and concerns.
- Work with appropriate agencies to develop specialized planning for children and families as needed.
- Coordinate with support staff when indicated, developing a collaborative approach that benefits all children in the classroom.
- Adapt curriculum to address and meet individual goals for children as identified in their individualized family service plans.
- Develop and use integrated curriculum plans that reflect mandated elements, components, and familial and cultural influences and promote the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children in Head Start.

- Establish weekly goals that promote individual and group educational plans and include other Head start components.
- Participate in integrated services meetings to plan for and deliver collaborative services across all components.

Family Engagement and Community Partnerships

- Provide an atmosphere that promotes and reinforces family and volunteer engagement.
- Support the role of families as the first and primary teachers of their children.
- Support families' safety, health, financial stability, life goals, and aspirations.
- Maintain regular communication with families based on their individual needs.
- Conduct the required parent-teacher conferences and home visits for the purposes of assessment and support and to share information on classroom progress and educational strategies at school and at home. Provide additional home visits if needed.
- Help plan and participate in family activity events.
- Coordinate with the Family Support Coordinator (FSC) as needed to help families complete follow-up activities (i.e., dental, medical, physical, and mental health needs of families, etc.).
- Coordinate with the Early Childhood Education Coordinator and FSC to provide families with timely information and referrals appropriate to their needs.
- Monitor and document attendance concerns.
- Provide learning opportunities for dual-language learners in the home.

Documentation

- Use agency-adopted tools for ongoing assessment and documentation.
- Ensure all federal, local, state, and agency documentation is completed accurately.
- Document all family contacts and home visits.
- Monitor and report child abuse.

Professional Development

- Attend and participate in training and appropriate professional development activities.
- Attend and participate in meetings.
- Engage in ongoing self-assessment about job performance.

Additional Job Responsibilities

- Assist with breaks, food service, and bus monitoring as needed for the program and other classroom needs as requested.
- Work with other staff to ensure general maintenance and security of facility.
- Assist with inventory of equipment and supplies.
- Assume the Substitute Director role as requested.

Qualifications

Educational requirements include the following: associate degree in early childhood education (prekindergarten) or a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (prekindergarten) or a related bachelor's degree or higher that includes coursework equivalent to a major, including 300 hours of instruction (30 quarter or 20 semester

	credits) in early childhood education. Transcripts are required to validate educational requirements. Related degree holders must have prekindergarten classroom (ages 3–5) experience, and a 1-year minimum is preferred. Experience should include the ability to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all children, including populations who are at-risk, have special needs, are gifted, and are culturally diverse.
Type of Position	Full day: Monday–Friday, 7 a.m.–3:30 p.m. ET, non-exempt status
Information about the work environment	Happy Day Preschool is a non-profit organization serving over 1,000 children ages 0 to 5. We base our curriculum on child development science and tailor our approach to the needs of the children, families, and the community. Teaching staff are valued as experts and are given 14 days of paid time off, health insurance, and mental health supports.
Who the position reports to	Supervised by Regional Manager
General Disclaimer	Job responsibilities may vary depending upon program model, site needs, and locations.
Salary range (optional)	Not applicable

Appendix E. Profiles

	Delaware Early Childhood Educator Compensation Scale and Professional Pathway
Workforce data	- Number of early childhood educators—19,220 - Number of children (0 to 5)—520,646
Pathway design	- Delaware's salary scale articulates qualification levels along with recommendations for annual salaries that are tied to each level. - The professional pathway is based on years of experience, competencies, credentials, and degrees and includes alternative routes and multiple pathways. "The proposed framework is not tied to a specific role or job title." - The professional pathway incorporates salary guidelines in a proposed annual salary (which presumes paid time off) as well as equivalent hourly wages.
Benefits	The report does not include benefits, scholarships, or professional development incentives, which were mentioned in the resolution, and will be implemented by the state in tandem with early childhood programs adopting this framework.

Policy	• Initial Framework: Early Childhood Educator Target Compensation Scale and Professional Pathway • Legislation Resolution (06/2021): Directing the Department of Education and the Delaware Early Childhood Council to create a state target compensation scale and professional career pathway for early childhood care educators who teach ages 0 through 5
Funding	The framework states that implementation is contingent on state investment.
PDG B-5 support	Communications—Delaware is using PDG B-5 funding to increase awareness and use of its wage scale.
Data	Delaware recently legislated an annual workforce study including demographics and estimated cost to close the gap between current compensation and a target wage scale.
References	Amis, M. (2021). Reinforcements forthcoming for embattled early childhood workforce. Rodel. https://rodelde.org/reinforcements-forthcoming-for-embattled-early-childhood-workforce Dade, A., & McLean, C. (2023a). Bold on early educator compensation learning community 2022: Lessons from state actions. University of California, Berkeley. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/brief/learning-community-lessons-from-state-actions/

References

Amis, M. (2021). Reinforcements forthcoming for embattled early childhood workforce. Rodel.
https://rodelde.org/reinforcements-forthcoming-for-embattled-early-childhood-workforce/

Arizona Department of Education. (2022). Arizona's Preschool Development B-5 renewal grant (HHS-2022-ACF-OCC-TP-0180-PKG00276762). https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/media/AZ%20PDG%20B5%20Application_Final.pdf

Austin, L. J. E., Edwards, B., Chávez, R., & Whitebook, M. (2019). Racial wage gaps in early education employment. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.
https://escholarship.org/content/qt0vn9c11c/qt0vn9c11c.pdf

Child Care Services Association. (2021). A look at salary/wage scales for the early educator workforce.
https://www.childcareservices.org/2021/11/09/a-look-at-salary-wage-scales-for-the-early-childhood-educator-workforce/

Dade, A., & McLean, C. (2023a). Bold on early educator compensation learning community 2022: Lessons from state actions. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.
https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/brief/learning-community-lessons-from-state-actions/

Dade, A., & McLean, C. (2023b). Solutions to the early educator workforce crisis: How legislators can make a difference for kids, families, and educators. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.
https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/fact-sheet/how-legislators-can-make-a-difference/

District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education. (n.d.). Fiscal year 2024 minimum salaries and salary schedule for early childhood educators.
https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/FY24%20Minimum%20Salaries%20and%20Salary%20Schedule%20for%20Early%20Childhood%20Educators.pdf

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (n.d.). 2023–2024 salary schedule for pre-k lead teachers. https://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/2024TeacherSchedule.pdf

Grunewald, R., Nunn, R., & Palmer, V. (2022). Examining teacher turnover in early care and education. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2022/examining-teacher-turnover-in-early-care-and-education

Lloyd, C. M., Carlson, J., Barnett, H., Shaw, S., & Logan, D. (2021). Mary Pauper: A historical exploration of early care and education compensation, policy, and solutions. Child Trends. https://earlyedcollaborative.org/assets/2022/04/Mary-Pauper-updated-4_4_2022_FINAL.pdf

McLean, C., Austin, L. J. E., Whitebook, M., & Olson, K. L. (2021). Early childhood workforce index 2020. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/report-pdf/

Minnesota Management and Budget. (2023). Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force final report. https://mn.gov/mmb/childrens-cabinet/great-start-childrens-task-force/

Portillo, M. (2022). Salary scales: Early childhood education and care workforce. Center for Early Learning Funding Equity. https://celfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Salary-Schedule-September-2022.pdf

Sandhu, B. (2017). The value of lived experience in social change: The need for leadership and organizational development in in the social sector. The Lived Experience. https://thelivedexperience.org/report

Smith, S., & Lawrence, S. (2019). Early care and education teacher well-being: Associations with children's experience, outcomes, and workplace conditions: A research-to-policy brief. Child Care & Early Education Research Connections. https://www.nccp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/text_1224.pdf

Additional Resources

Explore additional resources to support salary scale development.

Forming a Commitee of Key Partners

Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Stakeholder Communications (2021) shares the importance of communication plans and the value of communicating and engaging with partners.

Find Your Local Chamber of Commerce (n.d.) with this index.

Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force (n.d.) report demonstrates an example of convening and sustaining a steering committee.

Lived Experience Starter Kit (2022) is a resource that can help child support agencies, grant recipients, and other partners identify and recruit individuals with lived experience, determine equitable compensation for people with lived experience, and engage respectfully and effectively with people with lived experience.

Developing a Salary Scale

ALICE (Asset, Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) Essentials Index tracks changes in the cost of essential goods and services required to live and maintain employment (e.g., housing, child care, transportation). This information defines the ALICE threshold: the average income a household needs to afford the basic necessities.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator incorporates data on households' estimated minimum expenditures on basic necessities and the effects of payroll and income taxes. The living wage reflects a household's minimum employment earnings necessary to meet a family's basic needs while also maintaining self-sufficiency.

University of Washington Self-Sufficiency Standard is a budget-based living wage and economic security measure that determines the amount of income required for working families to meet basic needs at minimally adequate level, taking into account family composition, ages of children, and geographic differences in costs.

Minimum wage is the amount an employer is required to compensate workers during a given period of time and cannot be reduced by collective agreement or individual contract (with select exceptions). At the federal level, the Fair Labor Standards Act defines the minimum wage amount; states may also have minimum wage laws in effect.

Compensation and Benefits Strategies

An Integrated Stage-Based Framework for Implementation of Early Childhood Programs and Systems (2015) defines common elements of successful implementation and describes their roles and functions at each implementation stage. It also offers examples of how early childhood program developers, researchers, and policymakers can use the framework.

Financing Prenatal-to-Three Services: Local Approaches (2020) profiles communities who have used different strategies to make progress in creating prenatal-to-three financing solutions.

Funding Our Future: Generating State and Local Tax Revenue for Quality Early Care and Education (2019) provides early childhood leaders with funding strategies for increasing the revenue from state and local sources that can be directed to high-quality ECE.

Improving Child Care Compensation Backgrounder (2021) offers leaders information to understand policy levers available to improve ECE compensation as well as examples of implementation from states and counties.

Solutions to the Early Educator Workforce Crisis: How Legislators Can Make a Difference for Kids, Families, and Educators (2023) offers legislators an explanation of key issues facing ECE, state-based solutions, and four action steps they can take to champion workforce policies.

Compensation Data

DataLab (n.d.) uses PowerStats to create online analyses with public data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Early Educator Pay (n.d.) map includes a profile for every state and the District of Columbia with detailed information on early educator wages and state policies; compare the states and territories using the interactive mapping tool.

Overview of BLS Wage Data by Area and Occupation (n.d.) makes wage data from BLS available by states, regions, and more.

Statistical Programs & Standards (n.d.) provides an overview of the federal statistical system, legislation, related policy guidance, and more.

Unworthy Wages: State-funded Preschool Teacher Salaries and Benefits (2022) assesses compensation parity between state-funded preschool lead teachers and public-school K-12 teachers.

Wage Comparability: A Guide for Conducting a Wage and Benefit Comparability Survey (2023) contains information about federal Head Start regulations related to employee compensation and considerations during the various phases of conducting a wage and fringe benefit survey.

Other Tools

Delaware Cost of Quality Child Care Estimator Tool (2022) provides a financial model that estimates the cost to deliver care.

Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Project Management (2022) contains tools, resources, and considerations for project management through an early childhood systems-building lens.

Living Wage Calculator (n.d.) estimates local wage rates that a full-time worker requires to cover the cost of their family's basic needs where they live.

Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Professional (2020) incorporates recommendations related to educator roles and responsibilities, compensation, and supportive infrastructure with shared accountability.

ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES