

July 2023

# Nevada Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Framework

*"When deployed well, ECE investments can advance both economic efficiency and equity. The return on these investments manifests not only as improved individual life chances but also as societal benefits."*

- [Economic Report of the President \(2023\)](#)

The objective of this framework is twofold: to outline a comprehensive plan of action and to increase public awareness, thereby mobilizing support for sustained investments in the ECE workforce in Nevada.



## Priority 1: Support a well-prepared, qualified, diverse, equitably compensated, and thriving early childhood workforce in Nevada.

The first crucial way to support a thriving ECE workforce is by developing and aligning professional pathways that establish a coordinated pipeline of well-qualified ECE professionals who are supported in their career growth and advancement.

For Nevada's children to be safe, healthy, and thriving during their first eight years of life, so must be the adults who care for them.

ECE professionals in Nevada are better positioned to provide high-quality learning experiences for children when they:

- Are supported in their professional development and career advancement
- Are equitably compensated and valued
- Do not have to worry about their financial security
- Have access to a supportive work environment that promotes their physical and mental well-being, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life

ECE professionals in Nevada are essential to the economy. The provision of early care and education is a public responsibility that needs our collective attention and sustained investment at the federal and state levels.

## Priority 2: Ensure early childhood professionals have access to a living wage and affordable benefits package.

The second way to support a thriving ECE workforce is by engaging in advocacy and policy improvement to ensure ECE professionals have access to a living wage and benefits packages that reward their hard work, allow them to take pride in what they do, and afford them the financial stability to provide for their families and plan for their economic futures without having to worry about food insecurity and poverty.

Competitive compensation and financial incentives help to stabilize the ECE workforce, recruit and retain dedicated and qualified ECE professionals, and support the well-being, empowerment, and professionalization of the field. Compensation and incentives are important for showing the workforce that we respect and value what they do.

While federal grants have been vital over the last few years, it remains crucial to address the long-term sustainability of funding for the ECE sector. Ensuring a stable and reliable funding stream is necessary to support the ongoing needs of ECE professionals, sustain quality programs, and promote equitable access to ECE for all children in Nevada.

*"Early experiences affect the development of brain architecture, which provides the foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health."*

- [Center on the Developing Child](#)



Because the ECE system in the U.S. is not publicly funded, the resulting infrastructure is a fragmented patchwork of programs and braided funding streams at the federal, state, and local levels.

For parents and families, the system is a maze to navigate, understand, and access.

For the ECE workforce, while resilient and passionate, the lack of public funding corresponds to low pay and benefits, high turnover, and limited opportunities for professional development and career advancement.

*"I have often said that a job is about more than a paycheck; it is about dignity and respect."*  
- President Joe Biden, [Economic Report of the President \(2023\)](#)





### Priority 3: Strengthen and enforce program standards and policies (e.g., QRIS and child care licensing standards) intended to ensure positive work environments.

Quality care for young children depends on the quality of the relationships with the adults in their lives, as well as access to safe and nurturing learning environments.

For ECE professionals to deliver high-quality care, they too must have access to a supportive work environment that promotes their physical and mental well-being. To ensure the working environments ECE professionals inhabit and the conditions they face are productive and supportive, quality must be reflected and clearly articulated in program standards and policies.



### Priority 4: Ensure leaders and stakeholders have access to and use timely and accurate data about the ECE workforce to inform decision making.

Leaders and other stakeholders need access to timely and accurate data about the ECE workforce to:

- Understand the composition of the ECE workforce in Nevada
- Assess whether the ECE workforce meets community needs
- Identify gaps and resources needed to address gaps
- Advocate for resources and change

Data are needed to:

- Drive decision-making
- Inform the equitable allocation of resources
- Support alignment and coordination across systems and programs
- Evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to recruit, retain, and professionalize the ECE workforce



### Priority 5: Develop a policy agenda and public awareness campaign.

The fifth way Nevada can support a thriving ECE workforce is by tying these priorities together to develop a policy agenda and public awareness campaign to advocate for increased and sustained funding in early childhood. There is an urgent need for shared accountability and early childhood investments at the federal level, as current investments are simply not sufficient.

Increasing base salaries and providing financial incentives for ECE professionals is particularly difficult when much of the child care system is privatized. ECE programs do not receive consistent, reliable public funding the way K–12 public school systems do. Because public funding is limited, ECE programs depend largely on family tuition.

The child care sector poses a perplexing contradiction when families are met with mounting and unaffordable tuition rates while ECE professionals can barely make a living wage, need to take on a second job, or leave the workforce altogether because the pay and benefits are better elsewhere. It is an issue when the ECE field cannot compete with other businesses.

As observed at a national policy level, ECE is still not prioritized nor is it recognized as an infrastructural need and public good. There is much work to be done to shift the public mindset around early childhood and professionalizing the ECE field.



### A Message from Marty Elquist

Supporting Early Education & Development  
Department Director, The Children's Cabinet

"In order to grow our child care capacity to meet the needs of Nevada's working parents and employers, as well as to support Nevada's entire economy, we must ensure that we have a strong early childhood workforce. The collective effort to identify workforce goals and strategies outlined in this Framework is only the first step. We must now identify costs, implementation steps, and advocacy efforts to address these needs so we can build a strong early childhood workforce to fill our child care programs to capacity."

### A Message from Shelly Nye

Program Director, The Nevada Registry

"This is an incredibly exciting time for the ECE profession at the local, state and national level, and an equally exciting time for The Nevada Registry! As a data repository, The Nevada Registry is uniquely positioned to provide the workforce data needed to inform policy, investments, and data-driven decisions for Early Childhood in Nevada.

Our shared vision and commitment to engage in critical conversations about early care and education, coupled with essential workforce data, will help us better understand the early childhood landscape in Nevada, the needs of our workforce and where to direct targeted support to make the greatest impact. It is through this shared commitment to continuous growth that we can elevate the ECE profession in Nevada to new and exciting heights."