



Evaluation of Vermont's Early Childhood Professional Development System Final Report

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Executive Summary

Early childhood is a critically important period of development in individuals' lives. A wide range of developmental, educational, social, and health outcomes have been linked to children's early childhood experiences and relationships. It is therefore imperative that the adults employed in early childhood settings have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to provide high-quality experiences and to forge strong relationships with young children. Professional development plays a key role in helping members of the early childhood workforce hone the tools needed to support children's development.

Study Objective

Vermont's Early Childhood Professional Development System is comprised of numerous public and private entities working in concert to meet the professional development needs of professionals working with families, young children, and school-age children in a variety of settings and capacities. This study set out to identify the strengths of the Early Childhood Professional Development System (ECPDS); assess the challenges facing the ECPDS, and make recommendations to support the strengthening of the system. This evaluation marks a midpoint in a multi-phase effort to transform the ECPDS. Findings will be used to direct resources, future research, and programmatic and structural changes. This report should be viewed as a formative assessment, a tool for facilitating the growth and refinement of the ECPDS.

Key Findings

- The ECPDS has demonstrated numerous improvements since the 2011 evaluation. In general, Northern Lights appears to be better known and more highly utilized, the previously identified disconnect between the ECPDS and Higher Education is no longer reported, and providers generally perceive coordination between sponsors and agencies providing professional development.
- Overall, early childhood professionals agree that the quality of professional development offerings is high.
- Providers overwhelmingly select professional development trainings based on the evolving needs of their jobs.
- Professional development offerings are perceived to be accessible, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic expanded access to online training opportunities. The most significant barriers to access are cost, travel, and scheduling.

- The field's most educated and experienced professionals perceive themselves to be underserved by the ECPDS, which works hard to keep up with the professional development needs of a large and mobile entry-level workforce.
- Efforts are underway and making progress towards expanding the focus of the ECPDS beyond child care to include professionals serving children with special needs and school-age children.
- Opportunities remain to forge closer collaboration between the ECPDS and the Agency of Education's professional development systems, which have remained distinct despite significant overlap in the populations served.

Introduction

Early childhood is a critically important period of development in individuals' lives. A wide range of developmental, educational, social, and health outcomes have been linked to children's early childhood experiences and relationships. It is therefore imperative that the adults employed in early childhood settings have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to provide high-quality experiences and to forge strong relationships with young children.

Professional development plays a key role in helping members of the early childhood workforce hone the tools needed to support children's development. Because the early childhood system is not one-size-fits all, professional development within the early childhood field is complex. The diversity of programs and services that exist to address the needs of children and families requires differentiation and specialization. Because children may receive services from professionals with different specializations, early childhood professional development must go beyond promoting excellence among distinct groups of providers, instead establishing an integrated system of professional development that cultivates a common foundation of knowledge, skills, and competencies across sectors.

This report summarizes the results of an evaluation of Vermont's Early Childhood Professional Development System (ECPDS). The evaluation was commissioned by Vermont's Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division (CDD) - the principal funder and lead administrator of the ECPDS. It sets out to understand and document the system's offerings, availability, accessibility, affordability, quality, and pathways to credentials. Further, it seeks to evaluate the extent to which the ECPDS is clear and known; supportive of professional growth; research-based and relevant; integrated and aligned; accessible; financially supported; integrated with a broad early childhood system; and evaluated on all of the above criteria.

Historical Backdrop

The present moment in Vermont's Early Childhood Professional Development System is precipitated by several key historical periods and events.

The late 1990s and early 2000s were characterized by the rapid institutionalization of the ECPDS. Many of the contemporary system's core components were established during this time. These include an early childhood career ladder and lattice published within the 1998 Vermont Guide to Early Childhood Careers. The guide also introduced the Individual Professional Development Plan. The year 2000 marked the initial implementation of the Vermont Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program, then called the Child Care Apprenticeship Program. The Bright Futures Information System, BFIS, the state's comprehensive early childhood database, was launched in 2005 and the Northern Lights Career Development Center was established in 2003.

Roughly a decade later, two research and evaluation projects catalyzed a new wave of reform within Vermont's ECPDS. In 2011, an evaluation of the ECPDS found many system strengths, including committed stakeholders, strong local professional development hubs, and clear competencies, career ladders, and policies. However, despite the increased institutionalization of the ECPDS during the early 2000s, those in the early childhood and afterschool field for whom the system was developed (commonly referred to as 'providers') did not experience a "system", but rather a fragmented and localized approach to professional development. For some participants, local resources were abundant and tailored to their needs, but for others, professional development resources were scarce. Leadership of the ECPDS was unclear, connections to other agencies, especially Higher Education and the Agency of Education were weak, and participants perceived that professional development offerings failed to address the needs of more experienced members of the workforce and professionals outside of child care.

These challenges were not unique to Vermont's ECPDS. The 2015 *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8* report identified nationwide fragmentation of the early childhood field. The report laid out a blueprint for establishing a unified foundation for professionals serving children birth through age 8 backed by the science of childhood development. The report's recommendations included:

- Strengthen competency-based qualification requirements for all care and education professionals working with children from birth through age 8.
- Establish a minimum standard of a bachelor's degree in early childhood by 2025 for lead teachers across all settings and sectors who work with children from birth through age eight.
- Support the consistent quality and coherence of professional learning supports [...] for professionals working with children from birth through age 8.
- Improve consistency and continuity for children from birth through age 8 by strengthening collaboration and communication among professionals and systems

within the care and education sector and with closely related sectors, especially health and social services.

In 2016, CDD implemented revised regulations that increased both qualifications and the number of annual professional development hours required. These are still in place.

In guidance related to the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the federal Office of Child Care strongly advocated for the implementation of recommendations made by the Transforming the Workforce Report. In response, CDD committed in August of 2016 to the January 2017 launch of

a transformed system of training and professional development that is aligned with and incorporates established standards for programs and professionals in Vermont. [CDD sought] to enhance coordination among and within components of the system and increase consistent access to high quality, locally available learning opportunities that strengthen foundational knowledge and competencies while also supporting growth along identified career pathways toward expanding knowledge and competence and possibilities for career advancement. (Child Care Development Fund, state plan, 2016)

CDD issued a grant to the Community College of Vermont to administer the hub of the ECPDS. This agreement broadened the scope of Northern Lights' services to include trainings and career advising for the workforce in addition to the registry functions it held to date. With this agreement, the name of the program changed from the Northern Lights Career Development Center to Northern Lights at CCV. The transition plan also included Vermont Birth to 5, now Let's Grow Kids, as an interim provider of professional development across regions.

The transformation of Vermont's ECPDS highlighted a tension between statewide centralization and local knowledge and specialization. Although the Transforming the Workforce report was unequivocal in its recommendation that early childhood workforce systems move towards greater standardization, integration, and cohesion, some providers perceived that the transformation dismantled robust local professional development resources and networks while other providers experienced improved access and support. Balancing centralization and standardization with local specialization has been an important consideration for the rollout of the new ECPDS and as a theme it is recurrent throughout this report.

Study Objective

This study set out to assess and identify strengths and challenges of the Early Childhood Professional Development System (ECPDS). It attempts to understand how the principles of Vermont's Professional Development System: Clear and Known; Supportive of Professional Growth; Research-Based and Relevant; Integrated and Aligned; Accessible; Financially Supported; Integrated with the broader early childhood System; and Evaluated on all of the

above criteria are implemented within each of the ECPDS' 8 components: Governance; Leadership & Advisory; Funding; Policies, Standards, & Initiatives; Access; Outreach & Communications; Data; Quality Improvement and Assurance; and Integration with the broader Early Childhood System in Vermont.

This evaluation marks a midpoint in a multi-phase effort to improve the ECPDS. Findings will be used to direct resources, future research, and programmatic and structural changes. This report should be viewed as a formative assessment, a tool for facilitating the growth and refinement of the ECPDS. Tools offered in the evaluation toolkit may be used to guide the continuous improvement of the system.

COVID Impacts

Midway through this evaluation, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world and considerably altered the early childhood professional development landscape. Specifically, because in-person gatherings were prohibited, trainings and conferences were reformatted as online events. This increased the range and number of available online trainings, forced instructors to revise curricula and pedagogy, and challenged the Child Development Division to reevaluate previous criteria related to what training would be approved and entered in BFIS to meet regulatory requirements. Some of this rapid innovation has resulted in permanent change to the ECPDS; new criteria for Online Real-Time trainings were approved which have expanded the potential delivery modes for professional development.

Because this period of change occurred as data collection for this project was getting underway, we had the opportunity to evaluate not only the ECPDS as it existed when the study was proposed, but to evaluate the new ECPDS, as well. In some instances, this allowed for gathering nearly experimental real-time data. For example, the expansion of online training opportunities allowed us to learn about providers' perceptions of the format, and how the expansion of online options influenced the overall accessibility of professional development. These lessons, learned in real time, contributed to policy changes that established Online Real-Time trainings even before the report was written.

Data and Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating data from both qualitative and quantitative sources. The research team conducted interviews of key individuals in policy and program leadership roles, convened focus groups of early childhood professionals across multiple sectors, and collected survey data from 800 early childhood professionals across the field.

Interviews

Interviews informed answers to questions related to the structure, governance, funding, and alignment of the ECPDS. Interview protocols were designed collaboratively with CDD and, to a lesser extent, the Professional Preparation and Development (PPD) committee.¹ An early presentation about this evaluation at a PPD committee meeting included a discussion of important questions for inclusion in interviews and surveys. Interviewees were asked to describe their role and the role of their organization in the ECPDS, including how the organization was governed and funded, how decisions were made about professional development offerings and policies, quality assurance and monitoring, alignment of trainings with Vermont's Core Knowledge and Competencies, perceptions of cross-sector alignment, and recommendations for improving the system.

Interviewees were identified in consultation with the evaluation's advisory committee within CDD. Interviewees represented a wide range of organizations, agencies and programs, including Vermont's Child Development Division (including Children's Integrated Services); Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC); Northern Lights at CCV; Building Bright Futures (BBF); the Vermont Head Start Collaboration Office; Vermont Afterschool; Let's Grow Kids; Vermont Agency of Education; and the Community College of Vermont.

Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted to get a more nuanced understanding of early childhood professionals' experiences with the ECPDS than the survey alone could provide. Five focus groups were conducted, each with a different role group: Family Child Care Providers, center-based directors, center-based staff, afterschool directors and staff, and Children's Integrated Services professionals. Focus group participants were identified by CDD in collaboration with PPD committee members to represent geographic and organizational diversity within role groups.

Focus group protocols were developed in consultation with CDD and with members of the PPD committee. The protocol asked about participants' professional development experiences

¹ The Professional Preparation and Development (PPD) Committee is convened by Building Bright Futures, a public-private partnership that advises the governor and legislature in efforts to establish a more coordinated early childhood system. The PPD committee brings together representatives from all sectors of the early childhood system, including Afterschool, CIS, Head Start, Licensed child care, and others, to develop, coordinate, and promote a comprehensive and high quality professional development system for the broad early childhood field.

and their experiences with specific components of the ECPDS including the Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP). Participants were asked to reflect on the features of high-quality professional development as well as the alignment and redundancies in the system as a whole. Conversations lasted approximately 90 minutes and took place by video conference during the summer of 2020.

Surveys

Roughly 800 members of the early childhood workforce were surveyed about their engagement with and perceptions of professional development in the state. Survey respondents spanned across the state to include afterschool providers, CIS regional office staff, center-based and Family Child Care Providers, and included directors as well as staff from all ranks and experience levels. Using data from the state's workforce registry, we constructed a stratified random sample, in which the proportion of the survey sample comprised by each of six subgroups was the same as the proportion of the sampling universe comprised by that group. The six subgroups included afterschool directors, afterschool staff, Center Based Child Care and Preschool Programs (CBCCPP) directors, CBCCPP staff, Family Child Care Providers, and CIS providers. Table 1, below, includes descriptive information about the survey sample.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Survey Sample

Role Group	%	N
Afterschool Directors	3.7	29
Afterschool Staff	14.7	116
CBCCPP Directors	25.7	203
CBCCPP Staff	39.3	310
Family Child Care Providers	10.7	84
Children's Integrated Services	6.0	47
Education	%	N
High School or below	9.5	75
Some College	21.4	169
Associate's degree	11.4	90
Bachelor's degree	37.4	295
Master's degree and above	20.3	160
Experience	%	N
0-5 years	27.8	215
6-10 years	24.6	190
11-15 years	14.9	115
16-20 years	13.7	106
20 years +	19.1	148
Total		789

Analytic approach

Analysis of resultant data followed an iterative approach. Themes and ideas that emerged from focus groups and interviews (which were conducted first) were investigated further using survey data. In this report, focus group data are included to add depth to findings from the survey. Survey analyses were conducted on all available data. Because skip patterns were used to ask questions of specific sub-populations, and because respondents were not required to answer every question, some survey items have a smaller number of responses compared to the overall survey sample.

Key findings

- The ECPDS has demonstrated numerous improvements since the 2011 evaluation. In general, Northern Lights appears to be better known and more highly utilized, the previously identified disconnect between the ECPDS and Higher Education is no longer reported, and providers generally perceive coordination between sponsors and agencies providing professional development.
- Overall, early childhood professionals agree that the quality of professional development offerings is high.
- Providers overwhelmingly select professional development trainings based on the evolving needs of their jobs.
- Professional development trainings are perceived to be accessible, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic expanded access to online training opportunities. The most significant barriers to access are cost, travel, and scheduling.
- The field's most educated and experienced professionals perceive themselves to be underserved by the ECPDS, which works hard to keep up with the professional development needs of a large and mobile entry-level workforce.
- Opportunities remain to forge closer collaboration between the ECPDS and the Agency of Education's professional development systems, which have remained distinct despite significant overlap in the populations served.

System Governance, Alignment, and Integration

Key features of a well-integrated system

In support of state-level efforts to improve early childhood outcomes, national organizations invested in early childhood education have articulated frameworks outlining the key components of well-integrated professional development systems. Beyond preparing early childhood professionals to advance children’s learning and development, effectively designed professional development system can decrease duplicative activities, bolster career progression, and simplify the system for both users and administrators (National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives, 2014). Towards these ends, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) identifies six “essential policy areas” (Lemoine, 2008), while the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) (2009) similarly pinpoints five “system elements” for policymakers to oversee. Table 2 presents the components of both the NAEYC and NCCIC frameworks. Below, we describe how state policies can support each component to produce a well-designed early childhood development system.

Table 2. Components of the NAEYC and NCCIC Early Childhood Professional Development System Frameworks

NAEYC: Essential Policy Areas	NCCIC: System Elements
Professional standards	Core knowledge
Career pathways	Qualifications, credentials, and pathways
Articulation	Access and outreach
Advisory structure	Quality assurance
Data	Funding
Financing	

Professional standards and core knowledge

State policies should articulate competencies that set expectations for what early childhood educators know and are able to do. To ensure educators develop skills that ultimately support child outcomes, educator competencies should be based on the state’s early learning standards for children (Demma, 2010; Howes et al., 2008; Karoly, 2012). Ideally, both early learning standards and associated professional competencies would be informed by research on child development and instructional practices (Demma, 2010). To promote cross-sector

alignment, a single set of competency expectations should apply across all early childhood settings.

A state's early childhood educator competencies should form the foundation for professional development offerings, technical assistance, and higher education courses (Howes et al, 2008; Karoly, 2012.) As such, curriculum, learning objectives, and assessment activities should all be designed to advance educators' attainment of the competencies. With this in mind, state early childhood leaders and professional development providers may want to examine the extent to which existing courses incorporate activities likely to result in competency development. For example, some competencies—especially skill-based competencies—might be best learned through continuous professional development that is integrated daily classroom practice, such as regular observation or coaching (Karoly, 2012).

In addition to creating educator competencies, states might also consider establishing competency standards for early childhood professional development providers and coaches (Karoly, 2012). Rhode Island, for example, developed a *Workforce Knowledge and Competency (WKC) Framework for Early Childhood Education Professional Development Providers*, which defines competencies for PD/TA providers and higher education programs (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2015). Similarly, Colorado has identified competencies specific to early childhood education coaches (Colorado Coaching Consortium, 2020).

Career pathways, credentials, and articulation

State policies should establish early childhood career pathways (also known as career ladders or lattices) that specify the education and training requirements needed for educators to progress within the early childhood field (Cheng et al., 2018; Demma, 2010; Lemoine, 2008). Career pathways allow early childhood professionals to understand advancement options their and plan for professional learning. Pathways should detail the type of training/credentials, amount of experience, and job titles associated with each level of the pathway (Strategies for Children, 2010; Ullrich et al., 2017).

In establishing pathways and credential requirements, states should consider the realities of the labor market (Cheng et al, 2018; Ullrich et al., 2017). For each level or step of a career pathway, a sufficient number of jobs should exist for which compensation and position titles represent advancement from the next-lowest level. Absent this correlation between skill development and professional progress, there may not be sufficient incentives to outweigh the time, cost, and effort of completing additional coursework or degrees (Cheng et al., 2018).

To facilitate advancement along career pathways, states can implement or expand articulation agreements that allow early childhood educators to earn credit for prior learning or on-the-job experience (Cheng et al., 2018; Demma, 2010; Ullrich et al., 2017). In particular, statewide associate-to-baccalaureate degree articulation agreements specific to early childhood coursework, such as those established in Connecticut and Pennsylvania, can simplify the route

to a bachelor's degree by eliminating duplication of coursework (Administration for Children & Families, n.d.). States design career pathways that weigh educators' prior experience or knowledge when determining the educators' appropriate level. Ohio, for instance, awards points towards an educator's career pathway level for past experience in various early childhood education roles (Early Childhood Ohio, 2018; University of Florida, n.d.).

Access and Outreach

State policies should aim to improve access to and completion of professional development courses and programs (Cheng et al., 2018, Karoly, 2012; Strategies for Children, 2010). By removing barriers to access while expanding supports, states can help build a skilled early childhood workforce whose diversity reflects the children and families it serves (Karoly, 2012; NAYEC, 2016).

In addition to cost (addressed below under Funding) common barriers to accessing professional development include time and scheduling constraints (Cheng et al., 2018; Ullrich et al., 2017). This is especially true for the many early childhood professionals who work full- or part-time while balancing family obligations. Courses that include evening, weekend, and/or virtual options can enable professional development participation among such staff. Supportive workplace policies, such as access to substitutes and paid time off for professional development, can also improve access by allowing staff to attend trainings held during the day (Cheng et al., 2018). Further, states can implement or expand professional development options that combine coursework with on-the-job learning, such as registered apprenticeship models (Cheng et al., 2018; Karoly, 2012).

Early childhood professionals may also benefit from career and academic advising (Cheng et al., 2018; Karoly, 2012). Career advisors can guide educators in navigating potential career pathways and associated professional development programs. Similarly, for educators who enroll in degree-granting programs, academic advisors can match students with institution-specific supports, such as tutoring or counseling, to help them succeed in coursework. Professional development systems might even consider implementing a "case management approach" in which early childhood professionals in higher education programs receive regular career mentoring and assistance navigating other aspects of postsecondary programs, such as financial aid or admissions (Strategies for Children, 2010). Cohort models are also a promising strategy to support educators pursuing degrees (Karoly, 2012; Kipnis et al.; Strategies for Children, 2010). In cohort models, students receive both peer and institutional support by completing courses within a group of other early childhood education professionals.

Data and Quality Assurance

State policies should support ongoing development and use of data to assess system needs; monitor inputs and outcomes; and plan for improvement (Karoly, 2012). Early childhood professional development systems often collect and maintain such data through a workforce registry. The types and quality of data collected should be specific enough to support policy

and funding decisions related to professional development (Cheng et al, 2018). As such, registries should collect data on, at a minimum, the following elements for each member of the workforce:

- Compensation
- Demographic characteristics
- Education and credentials
- Level of career ladder/pathway
- Place of employment
- Professional development participation
- Retention/turnover

In addition to workforce registries, early childhood professional development systems should also aim to develop a professional development registry (Demma, 2010). Such a registry would track all professional development offering and include data on content, duration, instructions, and attendees. Linking the workforce and professional development registries can help system leaders understand how various workforce characteristics and specific professional development offerings are related.

To ensure the registry captures a complete picture of the workforce, it is important to collect data across all types of early childhood providers and settings (Cheng et al., 2018; NAEYC, 2016). Further, data collection tools and processes should be standardized such that data collected from staff in different settings maintains the same format and terminology (Cox et al., 2015). Consistency in data collection facilitates comparisons across settings and promotes use by making the data easier to analyze and interpret. Storing all data in a central database also simplifies data maintenance and access.

Beyond ongoing monitoring of the professional development system, registries can also play a critical role in quality assurance by collecting data on educator competencies and student outcomes (Howes et al., 2008). By including such data, professional development systems can explore key questions, such as: Do early childhood professionals who participated in a training demonstrate improvement in target competencies? To what extent are educator competencies associated with child outcomes? What educator competencies require further support by the professional development system? While the existence of valid and reliable measures of educator competencies is a demanding prerequisite to the goal of linking professional development with outcomes. Despite this hurdle, assessments of early childhood educators' knowledge and skills are critical to promoting quality professional development understanding system effectiveness. Data on educator competencies can also be used to match individuals with specific professional development offerings targeted to their learning needs.

Description of VT ECPDS' System Components and Processes

The following section outlines the roles, functions, funding, oversight, and interaction of the principal actors within the ECPDS:

Child Development Division

The Child Development Division (CDD) is a division under Vermont's Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families. CDD's goal is to increase access to high-quality, sustainable services that are developmentally beneficial for children, strengthen families, and meet their needs. CDD has a number of interdependent roles and functions related to the ECPDS:

- Funding

CDD is the primary funder of the Early Childhood Professional Development System. Funding for the ECPDS comes from both federal and state sources, as well as through competitive grants made by the federal government. Key funding streams include Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) dollars, Medicaid, Head Start and Early Head Start allocations, and state general funds. In recent years, the CDD has supplemented these funds with awards from the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant and the Preschool Development and Expansion Grant (PDG).

CDD distributes these funds to support the development of high-quality early childhood services across the state. Specifically related to professional development, CDD funds large programs including Northern Lights at CCV, Children's Integrated Services professional development opportunities, Vermont Afterschool, and the Vermont TEACH and Early Childhood Apprenticeship Programs; systemwide quality improvement initiatives including this and other evaluations; and individuals through small professional development grant programs like the CDA assessment fee grant program, the college tuition assistance program, and individual bonuses for achieving level certificates and credentials.

- Child Care Licensing

CDD oversees the licensing of child care programs in the state of Vermont. Child care licensing regulations stipulate that employees of licensed child care programs must meet qualification requirements prescribed by child care licensing regulations and meet annual professional development requirements. Child care licensing has the responsibility of developing the criteria for coursework and trainings required by child care licensing regulations, as well as informing decisions on broader policy and

programmatic questions, including what training formats are acceptable and what constitutes related coursework. Once providers submit their completed trainings to Northern Lights at CCV to be verified and entered into their BFIS quality and credential accounts, child care licensing reviews training records for the entire staff within each program to assess compliance with child care licensing regulations. When programs are found to be out of compliance with licensing regulations, child care licensing will require corrective action for child care staff who have not meet regulatory requirements. Northern Lights at CCV Resource Advisors are available to provide additional technical assistance and support to child care staff who need to complete corrective action that pertains to completing additional education or professional development.

- Children's Integrated Services

Children's Integrated Services (CIS) offers early intervention, family support, and prevention services that help ensure the healthy development and well-being of children, pre-birth to age 5. Services are available at low or no cost to families. These services are broad, including parenting support, help during pregnancy and after delivery, help finding family and children's services, nurse home visiting, assessments of your child and family situation, early intervention services, referrals to appropriate services and service coordination, speech, vision, and language services. CIS provides trainings on a range of topics and through a variety of modes to its broad network of providers. The annual CIS institute has been a foundational training event; it draws on information from Vermont's 12 regions to design an annual theme, pre-work and activities, and follow-up activities. Additionally, CIS indirectly contributes to the professional development of center based providers; CIS services are typically delivered within child care centers and CIS providers endeavor to strengthen partnerships and build capacity among child care providers so that children's complex needs can be met in high-quality child care settings. For example, CIS specialists sometimes coach child care staff on strategies that meet children's needs. CIS is funded through the IDEA Special Education Grant as well as through Medicaid.

- Head Start State Collaboration Office

The Head Start State Collaboration Office works to bridge the Federal Head Start system and the state-funded child care system to create an efficient and high-quality system for all providers. Examples of this effort include pooling Head Start and CDD resources to provide high quality trainings accessible to providers from any program, and influencing policy decisions, such as ensuring that online trainings offered by federal centers be accepted by child care licensing.

- Bright Futures Information System (BFIS)

The BFIS is the Vermont early childhood and afterschool data system owned by the State of Vermont. It has many public and state-facing functions. Most closely related to professional development, the BFIS houses early childhood professionals' quality-credential accounts, which store information about individuals' work experience, degrees and coursework, certificates and credentials, Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP), and training attendance. BFIS serves as the registry for the state and provides data related to the characteristics of the workforce. In addition, these Quality-Credential accounts inform child care licensing reviews of compliance with regulation requirements. BFIS also provides a listing of upcoming trainings. While the information in BFIS provides information on upcoming professional development opportunities, the Northern Lights at CCV professional development listing duplicates information available in BFIS in a more user-friendly format. In a 2020 report to the Vermont legislature, the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families explains that BFIS is out of date and requires a significant influx of resources for a modernization effort. The upgrade project was planned to begin in March of 2020, just as the COVID pandemic hit.

Building Bright Futures

Building Bright Futures is a public-private partnership that advises the governor and legislature in efforts to establish a more coordinated early childhood system. It was established by Act 104 and the Head Start Act which separately mandate that each state have an early childhood council. The State Advisory Council is charged with managing the Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan. Half of the members of BBF State Advisory Council are state representatives from agencies of commerce, education, human services, Head Start, and Health. The other half of members are government-appointed representatives of families or private or nonprofit partners.

Building Bright Futures also integrates the Professional Preparation and Development (PPD) Committee as an Action Plan Committee. The PPD committee brings together representatives from all sectors of the early childhood system, including Afterschool, CIS, Head Start, Licensed child care, and others, to develop, coordinate, and promote a comprehensive and high quality professional development system for the broad early childhood field.

Northern Lights at the Community College of Vermont

Northern Lights serves as the hub of the early childhood professional development system. Northern Lights at CCV works closely with key partners to improve and enhance a unified, statewide system of professional development for early childhood and afterschool professionals. The Director of Northern Lights at CCV co-chairs the PPD committee convened by BBF. Northern Lights at CCV performs a wide range of functions, including:

- Maintaining a searchable training calendar of offerings by Northern Lights and other sponsors.
- Working in close collaboration with child care licensing to review individuals' training and coursework information against established criteria to populate BFIS quality-credential accounts.
- Lending expertise to the Child Development Division to recommend the development or revision of professional development system components including core competencies, sponsor criteria, and others.
- Overseeing the system of sponsors that produce professional development offerings in Vermont. This includes reviewing applications of new sponsors and the proposed trainings of approved sponsors.
- Overseeing the instructor registry that provides a searchable registry of instructors who meet baseline requirements to provide professional development trainings and that helps connect sponsors to instructors when planning a training.
- Staffing regional Resource Advisors that provide career advising and technical assistance to providers across sectors and roles and coordinate regional and Online Real-Time training opportunities.
- Providing professional development trainings on a wide variety of topics, based on licensing and credential requirements, as well as the articulated needs of the field and recommendations from the PPD committee. When Northern Lights sponsors trainings, they attend to equity of access and opportunity by ensuring the same trainings are available across regions.

Let's Grow Kids

Let's Grow Kids is a non-profit organization that strives to ensure affordable access to high-quality childcare for all Vermont families by 2025. They are accomplishing this through advocacy work; customized technical assistance on programmatic and business practices and resources and grants; and policy change, culture change, and systems change initiatives. To achieve this, Let's Grow Kids staff serve on committees, and weigh-in on decision making processes in an effort to represent "the voice of the field".

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

NAEYC is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research. Most relevant to professional development in Vermont, NAEYC's Power to the Profession Task Force published a Unifying Framework and Professional Standard and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators in 2020. Competencies respond directly and explicitly to the 2015 *Transforming the Workforce: Birth through Age 8* report and include levels of competency within each of 6 standards. Within Vermont, conversations are ongoing

regarding whether these recently published Standards and Competencies will be adopted to replace the extant Core Knowledge and Competencies.

The Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC)

VTAEYC is state affiliate organization of NAEYC. It serves four principal professional development roles in the ECPDS.

- Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) scholarship program

The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship follows a national model that funds, in Vermont, Early Childhood Associate Degrees through Community College of Vermont (CCV); Early childhood apprenticeship Certificate coursework at CCV; and Pathways to Early Childhood Education Licensure.

- Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program (formerly the Child Care Apprenticeship Program)

The Early Childhood Apprenticeship program is a partnership between VTAEYC, the Department of Labor, and the Child Development Division. Presently, it is designed for current employees of child care centers. Apprentices receive T.E.A.C.H. scholarship funds to support college tuition, money for books, a travel stipend, on-the job mentorship, and release time for specific professional development. To be eligible, apprentices must already be employed within licensed childcare centers. Employers must match the apprentice with a qualified mentor, and agree to provide release time, though the Apprenticeship program offers modest resources to cover the cost of substitutes. The apprenticeship program supports on-the-job professional development and the formation of strong collegial relationships among center staff. Centers benefit by potentially increasing their STARS² ratings by having staff with higher credentials, and staff retention may be improved as T.E.A.C.H. requires recipients to commit to stay at least a year in their workplace beyond the end of their scholarship.

- Implementation of the State's Individual Grants and Bonuses system

VTAEYC currently receives grant funding from the CDD to review applications for individual grants and bonuses for completing recognized credentials following State-established criteria.

² Vermont STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) is a quality recognition system for child care, preschool, and afterschool programs. The system awards points to programs based on performance in five domains, including education and staff training

- **Advancing as a Recognized Profession**

Advancing as a recognized profession is a state-level effort to align a recently published set of national recommendations, the Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession. The Unifying Framework is the result of a 15-organization task force convened by NAEYC to define the standards, qualifications, roles, supports, and compensation for members of their profession working with children birth through age 8. Advancing as a Recognized Profession is a workforce-led effort to explore and potentially implement state-specific early childhood policy recommendations from the Unifying Framework.

Vermont Afterschool

Vermont Afterschool is a statewide nonprofit dedicated to providing high quality programming to school-age children and youth outside of school hours and during the summer. Related to professional development, Vermont Afterschool is the primary professional development provider for staff who work in these programs and also implement the field's core competencies. Because some afterschool programs are regulated by the CDD, individuals working in these programs are required by regulations to complete annual revisions to their IPDP, as well as obtain professional development hours in order for their programs to remain licensed. Vermont Afterschool plans and delivers many of these workshops and also offers trainings and consultation to individual programs. Additionally, Vermont Afterschool implements Afterschool Foundations Certificate, Afterschool Essentials, and the Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential, convenes communities of practice, and runs the L.E.A.D program, a 4-part professional development series for leaders of Afterschool programs. In partnership with CCV, Vermont Afterschool has recently developed and launched the Vermont Afterschool and Youth Work Certificate.

The Community College of Vermont (CCV)

CCV is the institutional home of Northern Lights, the hub of the ECPDS. Independent of that role, CCV offers Associate degrees, certificate programs, and coursework related to early childhood. CCV offers all of the coursework required by the Vermont Early Childhood T.E.A.C.H. and Apprenticeship Programs as well as the Vermont Afterschool and Youth Work Certificate. One of CCV's associate academic deans is an active part of the Northern Lights at CCV staff team, participates in the PPD committee, and co-chairs the Vermont Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium.

Vermont Early Childhood Networks (formerly Starting Points Networks)

Vermont's Early Childhood Networks are local groups of early childhood professionals in each of the state's 12 Agency of Human Service regions. Early Childhood Networks hold local meetings in which any child care providers can discuss and seek support for their work in early

childhood. The Early Childhood Networks are supported by Let's Grow Kids and funded by CDD. Grants are awarded to each region through the Child Development Division, and networks can use these funds to sponsor professional development or pursue other models of professional support. Before the 2017 overhaul of the ECPDS, the then Starting Points Networks were part of distinct regional and local hubs of professional development. This system contributed to highly localized, differentiated, and often unequal support across regions. The planned dissolution of Let's Grow Kids in 2025 raises questions about how these highly valued local networks will be sustained and supported beyond that date.

Agency of Education

Vermont's Agency of Education (AOE) is the state agency that oversees universal pre-kindergarten programs, as well as K-12 educational settings. AOE also has overarching responsibility for compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which covers early childhood special education (ages 3-6). While public PreK teachers serve the same populations of students as center-based preschool teachers, in many cases, the professional development systems for the two groups of educators are largely separate. AOE's professional development system is generally decentralized, with individual districts—and not a state-level entity-directing professional development support, except for certain topics such as Early Multi-tiered Systems of Support. Districts offer early childhood professional development opportunities that are inconsistently open or available to private center-based staff, and conversely, licensed teachers may not seek additional professional development through the ECPDS. Though AOE is a recognized stakeholder, the agency's participation in the PPD committee has varied over the years.

All staff working in regulated child care programs (including Public School Prekindergarten Programs) are required to maintain BFIS quality and credential accounts. Staff in CBCCPPs and FCCHs who hold one of the identified AOE teaching license endorsements (per child care licensing regulations) may use this license as proof that they have met IPDP and annual professional development requirements. While this initially stemmed from a goal of reducing duplication for public school licensed teachers, the child care licensing regulations applies it across settings for any professional that holds the named AOE teaching license endorsements. This allowance defers the IPDP and ongoing professional development oversight to the AOE teaching license system. As such, these documents aren't required to be submitted to BFIS quality and credential accounts – just the relevant AOE teaching license. Staff with AOE teaching licenses must populate their BFIS quality and credential accounts with educational documents (e.g., degree or college transcript along with the AOE teaching license), and resumes to demonstrate how they meet work experience qualifications required in child care licensing

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

The CSPD is a professional development system coordination model led by Children's Integrated Services using a framework created by the National Early Childhood Personnel TA

Center. The CSPD framework includes these key areas: personnel standards, preservice training, in-service training, recruitment and retention efforts, leadership coordination and sustainability efforts, and evaluation. While this model was developed to focus on supporting individuals working with children with special needs, Vermont has been working on using the CSPD framework to examine the strengths and goals for the broader ECPDS. The CSPD has a cross-sector core planning team charged with designing a strategic plan to be implemented with the broader ECPDS. CIS coordinates trainings as part of the State's CSPD.

The process of integrating CSPD with the ECPDS is actively underway. Efforts have been made by CIS and CSPD lead staff to expand the scope of the ECPDS beyond child care to include professionals who provide services to children with special needs. The perception of CSPD leadership is that significant progress has been made on this front. Continued investment in cross-sector partnerships, and better coordination, communication, and advance planning could improve integration.

System Overview

The below table graphically represents the roles and functions of the various system components. The columns align with the features of a well-aligned professional development system. Rows for each of the ECPDS System components are shaded if the component has responsibility related to each feature of a well aligned system. This representation may be one way to identify redundancy and gaps in the system.

This representation reveals that most components of the ECPDS have multiple functions related to the features of a well-integrated system, and that funding and data and accountability are the features with the sparsest collaboration between components.

Table 3: Mapping System Components to key features of well-integrated systems

System Components	Professional standards and core knowledge:	Career pathways, credentials, and articulation	Access and Outreach	Data and Quality Assurance	Funding
Building Bright Futures: PPD Committee	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Building Bright Futures: Regional networks	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Child Development Division: Child Care Licensing	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Child Development Division: Funding	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Child Development Division: Bright Futures Information System	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Child Development Division: CIS	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Northern Lights: Statewide functions	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Northern Lights: Training Calendar	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Northern Lights: Resource Advisor	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
National Afterschool Association	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
VT Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC): TEACH/Apprenticeship	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Let's Grow Kids	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Head Start State Collaboration Office	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Vermont Afterschool	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
CCV	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Agency of Education	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]
Vermont early childhood networks (formerly starting points)	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]	[Blue]

Stakeholder Perceptions: Are ECPDS Structures and Processes:

Clear and known

Across focus groups, participants demonstrated familiarity with many of the core structures and processes related to the ECPDS. For instance, all had understood the purpose of an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP); and all understood the process of submitting trainings to Northern Lights for entry into the Bright Futures Information System. These findings were generally supported by survey results; only 2.4% of respondents reported that they did not know who to ask or where to look for professional development. Nearly half of all survey respondents reported using Northern Lights' Training Calendar as a means of finding out about professional development and training opportunities, and this is even higher among center directors and Family Child Care Providers.

These findings suggest that progress has been made since the 2011 evaluation in terms of familiarizing the field with the ECPDS system, or that the 2017 overhaul of the ECPDS, and the communication about that overhaul, advanced understanding and user-friendliness of the system.

These are promising signs of progress, yet some aspects of the ECPDS remain unclear to certain participants. In focus groups, some providers expressed confusion about what trainings were accepted by childcare licensing and why. One afterschool provider described attending a training offered by the school district in which they worked and finding out afterwards that the documentation did not meet the established training criteria. The feeling of uncertainty around which trainings would be accepted, and the concern that one could invest time and money in a professional development opportunity only to be denied credit in the BFIS afterwards, was commonplace.

Additionally, some participants had information that was out of date or inaccurate. In an effort to problem solve with the respondent whose district training had not been accepted, another participant volunteered that documentation should be kept in the paper file onsite at the program – an ineffective solution because child care licensing regulations no longer review paper files, only verified documents in BFIS.

Among sectors outside of child care, there was also some confusion about the purpose of Northern Lights. Afterschool staff explained that they never or rarely go directly to Northern Lights looking for trainings. They reported not understanding exactly what it is, except that they “send their professional development paperwork to Northern Lights and wait for it to show up

in BFIS". Afterschool providers in the focus group referred to Vermont Afterschool, and not Northern Lights, as "the Mothership" of professional development.

Finally, there was some indication that the role of the Resource Advisor could be further clarified and/or advertised. Few respondents in either surveys or focus groups reported utilizing the Resource Advisor to plan professional development or receive career advising. While this may be a reflection of the questions we asked (and didn't ask), it could be worthwhile to investigate this further.

Aligned to ensure professional growth and cohesion across early childhood sectors

The ECPDS has multiple examples of cohesive partnerships that draw sectors and organizations together to improve efficiency and quality across the professional development system. For example, Vermont's Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) leverages federal Office of Head Start funding, childcare subsidy, public PreK dollars, and some private-pay funds, to provide trainings that are open to everyone. "As long as there is one Head Start Employee in the room, those Head Start dollars can be used to support professional development for providers who are unaffiliated with Head Start. It is a model that we're all aiming towards", the HSCO representative explained. Focus groups also uncovered more localized examples of cross-sector cohesion, for example, some Afterschool providers reported being invited to participate in school districts' professional development offerings. While encouraging, this practice was inconsistent; strategies for identifying and disseminating local models of cross-sector cohesion should be explored.

Survey respondents generally agreed that professional development offered by different sponsors and agencies was aligned, with consistent standards and expectations (61%); a common evidence base (58%), complementarity (57%). Fewer, though still a sizeable plurality, agreed that trainings from different agencies and sponsors were well coordinated (42%). Notably, an average of nearly 40% of respondents reported that they "didn't know" whether sponsors and agencies were aligned in these domains; the proportion of respondents who disagree that professional development is aligned is below 10% across items. The prevalence of "I don't know" may indicate that certain providers have not taken professional development from multiple agencies and sponsors.

FIGURE 1.

Over half of participants agree that trainings from different agencies and sponsors are consistent and complementary, but agreement that trainings are well coordinated across agencies and sponsors is less consistent.

Percent agree or strongly agree that trainings from different agencies or sponsors:



Note: Total N=784

There is also evidence that the movement towards the centralization of the system is advancing alignment and professional growth. Close collaboration between Vermont Afterschool and Northern Lights at CCV through the PPD committee led to the creation of the Afterschool & Youth Work Certificate, a new credential at CCV. This example is especially illuminating in light of the 2011 evaluation. One of the areas for growth noted in that report was the distance between the ECPDS and higher education. This theme was completely absent from focus groups; with Northern Lights anchored at CCV, access to higher education seems improved. The Vermont T.E.A.C.H. and Early Childhood Apprenticeship Programs provide additional examples of professional development programs that rely on alignment and collaboration between multiple programs, organizations, and agencies to promote professional growth and access to higher education.

There remain areas, however, where support for professional growth and cross sector alignment could be improved. As was the case at the time of the 2011 evaluation, more experienced members of the child care workforce struggle to find professional development opportunities that advance their practice. This is in part because there are many more entry-level providers in the field than experienced providers, and the ECPDS must ensure that those

novice workers have access to required trainings. More attention should be paid to ensuring that there are affordable and accessible professional growth and development opportunities for the most experienced members of the workforce. Part of a strategy to achieve this goal could include leveraging stronger cross-sector partnerships to advance professional growth. Another relevant suggestion from focus group participants is that trainings listed in the Northern Lights calendar could be tagged by level or by intended audience.

Building cross-sector cohesion and opportunities for growth simultaneously also poses a challenge because sectors' career ladders are unique. Providers from different sectors are, or perceive themselves to be, different from one another. For instance, focus group participants from the afterschool sector reported feeling as though there was no career ladder in afterschool. On the other hand, CIS employees noted that it was impossible to progress up their career ladder without a master's degree. Likewise, AOE representatives explained that the educational differences between early childhood providers with and without a Vermont teaching license were too large to be addressed by a common professional development system. A careful mapping of the professional roles in the ECE and AOE workforces may reveal more groups with overlapping needs and levels of expertise. This is especially true in light of a recommendation from Transforming the Workforce that lead teachers in child care settings hold at least a bachelor's degree, the same degree that is required for the Vermont teaching licensure.

Differences in the structure of how professional development is provided can also impede cross-sector cohesion. Professional development for public preK and special educators is provided by districts, who have some autonomy over how professional development resources are directed. These opportunities are communicated through district channels. The ECPDS' statewide model, even in collaboration with the Agency of Education, may not be able to track and share these district-level opportunities unless districts, as sponsors, submit events to the Northern Lights calendar themselves.

Some participants also perceived that cohesion came at a cost. Some focus group participants felt that centralizing the system compromised local knowledge and infrastructure built up over years, and imposed a structure that may not have fit local needs, norms, and systems. Instead, they argued, the statewide system should highlight and uplift local infrastructures that have evolved to provide robust and high-quality professional development to early childhood professionals in their own communities.

There already exist opportunities for connecting local professional development needs to the statewide ECPDS. For instance, the State provides funding to the Vermont Early Childhood Networks (formerly Starting Points) which can help target professional development resources to help meet specific local needs. The system may continue to build goodwill and improve

practice by identifying, evaluating, and sharing successful local models between regions and with the PPD Committee or other governing bodies.

Data and evidence-based

Focus group participants and interviewees described several ways that data and evidence influenced the ECPDS. First, the PPD Committee and Northern Lights at CCV utilize multiple sources of data to assess what professional development is needed in the upcoming year. These data sources include a Northern Lights survey of the field completed every summer, STARS data, and a new CDD workforce report. This evaluation represents another example of CDD gathering data for the purpose of informing the direction of the ECPDS. Although the development of new trainings to meet the needs expressed by the field can take a while, Northern Lights has shown responsiveness to these requests; for example, by developing new trainings on ethics and equity in early childhood settings to address providers' articulated needs as well as responding to trauma as a result of the COVID pandemic.

Trainings also require participants to complete an evaluation at the conclusion of the training, but multiple interviewees noted that these didn't offer much useful data either because responses are overwhelmingly positive or because there was insufficient bandwidth to really do any analyses of the results.

Focus group participants also noted that trainings themselves were infused with research. This was often a difficult balance for instructors to strike, as participants felt they benefited most from trainings that imparted tools and strategies for them to use immediately and were less engaged by repeated explanations of the science of trauma and its impact on child development, for example.

There are three data-related concerns pertaining to the ECPDS. First, respondents across the system noted challenges related to the BFIS. Providers found the system to be not user-friendly, and systems-level interviewees noted that the digital infrastructure of the BFIS required a complete rebuild in order to function. Funds had been set aside to complete this project, but those allocations were delayed or potentially cancelled as a result of COVID.

Second, the Director of Northern Lights at CCV noted that evaluations of individual trainings fail to measure the most important thing, namely whether a specific training altered a provider's practice. This can be very difficult to capture, as many forget which training is which, or are unable to specify which of the many trainings they took actually precipitated change, but it is a priority to try to understand.

Finally, the ECPDS has, to date, lacked a unified statewide evaluation system for sponsors. This has been a product of its structure; the large number of sponsors makes it difficult to evaluate all of them comprehensively and efficiently. The development of a unified statewide evaluation system for sponsors is a priority of the Northern Lights evaluation to be completed in 2021.

Financially supported

The 2011 evaluation of the ECPDS noted that the system could always use more funding. While the same is true a decade later, the ECPDS has also demonstrated commitment to securing funding from sources outside its traditional funding streams, including the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant and the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5).

Evidence also suggests that progress has been made towards the achievement of several of the goals identified in the 2011 report. For example, funds are available to promote access to college coursework through CDD's Tuition Assistance Grant, which awards up to \$1000 per provider per semester to offset the cost of college tuition, and the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program, which supports the Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program, Associate's Degrees, and teacher licensure. In partnership with CDD, Vermont Afterschool also provides access to free 3-credit online college courses for afterschool professionals through the Community College of Vermont. The Early Childhood Educators Institute (ECEI) at Castleton University provides another model for providing low-cost access to college coursework.

Also in line with the 2011 recommendations, free and low-cost trainings, particularly at the entry level, are widely available through Northern Lights at CCV and preapproved organizations like Better Kid Care.

Yet, the ECPDS has unmet needs that sustained or additional funding could address. Efforts to meet the system's greatest needs may include:

- expanding high-quality and affordable professional development opportunities geared towards the field's most experienced professionals. ECEI and the Vermont Higher Education Collaborative represent successful models of this type of training and the possibility of expanding or replicating it should be considered.
- developing a financially and professionally supported mentor or coaching program that develops leadership skills among mentors, provides professional development to novice professionals, and provides compensation to both. The Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program, which uses PDG B-5 money to train and support mentors, may be a model to borrow from.

- seeking additional ways to support the cost of higher education for professionals working in child care through tax credits, loan forgiveness, or other types of solutions.
- aligning compensation with early childhood professionals' level of education and position on the career ladder.
- Rebuilding the BFIS.

Professional Development Offerings

Perceptions of Professional Development Offerings

The majority of survey respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of professional development offerings. Asked to think back to professional development before the COVID-19 pandemic, 86% of survey respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with the quality of professional development offerings. Similarly, 90% of respondents reported that professional development had changed their practice. Together, these results suggest that overall, professional development offerings within the ECPDS are perceived to be high quality and effective.

Though these perceptions are overwhelmingly positive overall, there is some variation in the way that early childhood professionals in different sectors and with different levels of educational attainment perceive professional development.

Satisfaction with the quality of professional development offerings was lower among professionals with higher levels of educational attainment. At least 90 percent of survey respondents who held less than a bachelor's degree were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of professional development offerings before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this proportion was 85% among respondents with bachelor's degrees, and 77% amongst respondents with master's degrees or above (figure 2). Respondents with master's degrees also report the lowest rates of satisfaction with the quality of professional development offered during the pandemic (72%). This may not reflect the actual quality of trainings, but rather a poor match between the educational needs of the field's most educated professionals and the trainings available to them.

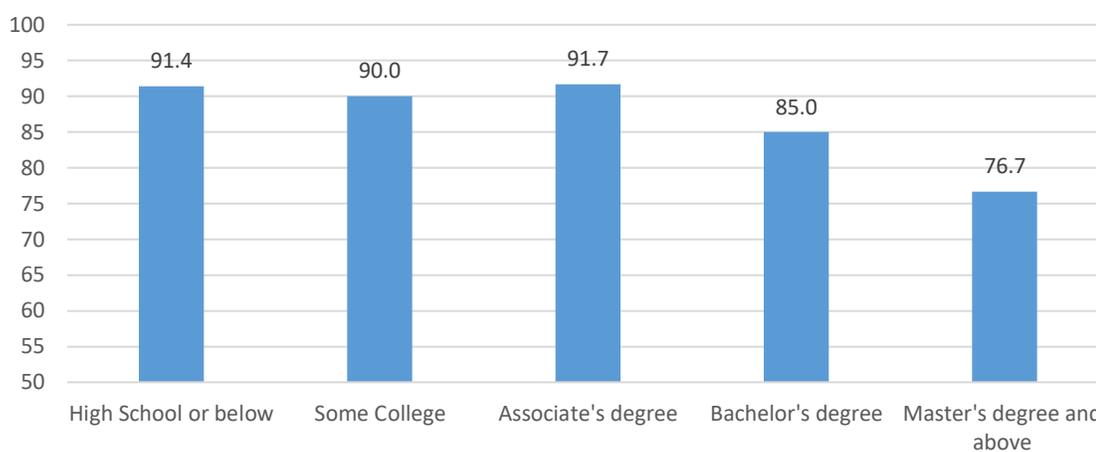
These findings are consistent with the accounts of focus group participants. Participants with the most experience noted that it was harder to find trainings that expanded their knowledge base or developed new skills or tools. One focus group participant explained it this way:

“The biggest challenge is meeting the PD needs of my teachers with college degrees or my colleagues with Master's degrees. There are now a lot of Tier 1 trainings, but that higher-level professional development is just harder to find. Teachers get it mostly through college coursework – even if they already have masters' degrees. Or through the VT higher education collaborative. The challenge is that college coursework is not affordable, especially in a field where pay is so low.”

FIGURE 2.

Satisfaction with the quality of professional development offerings was lower among respondents with higher educational attainment.

Percent satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of professional development offerings



Note: High school diploma or less $N=75$, Some college $N=169$, Associate's degree $N=90$, Bachelor's degree $N=295$, and Master's degree and above $N=160$.

When asked which professional development offerings did the best job of addressing the needs of more experienced and educated professionals, numerous focus group participants nominated the Early Childhood Education Institute (ECEI) at Castleton University, which offers trainings for early childhood professionals from across the sector in a variety of strands over a three-day period each summer. ECEI allows participants to choose whether they receive training or college credit for participating (college credit requires additional work). ECEI represents an opportunity for early childhood professionals to obtain inexpensive college credits.

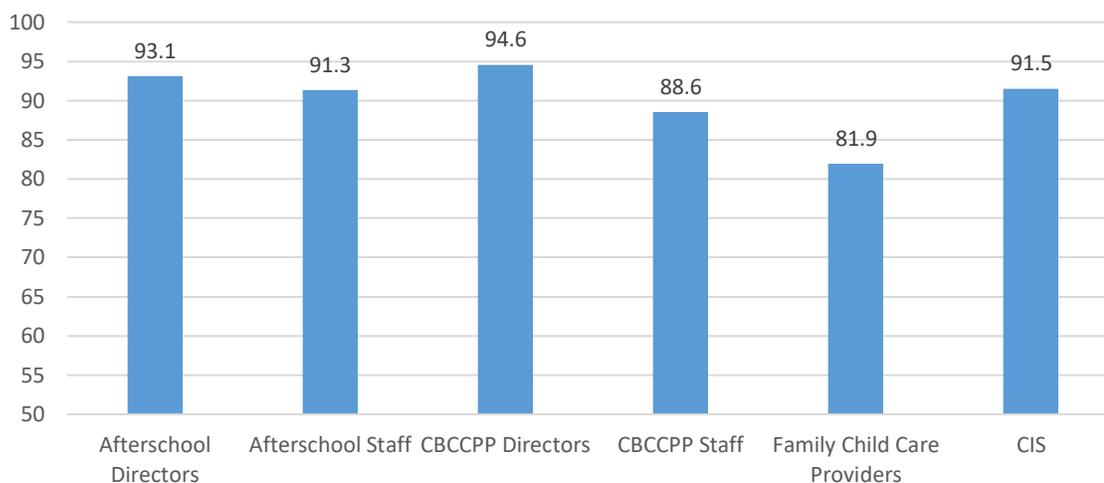
Focus group participants also identified trainings offered by the Vermont Higher Education Collaborative. Like ECEI, these trainings also took place over a number of days, providing an opportunity for participants and instructors to get to know each other and establish a learning community. This mutual trust allowed for each participant to learn something, either from the instructor or from their peers in the group.

Directors of CBCCPPs were most likely to report that professional development changed their practice, while Family Child Care Providers were least likely to make the same report. Across role groups who completed the survey, CBCCPP directors most frequently agreed or strongly agreed that professional development improved their practice (95%). Family Child Care Providers were significantly less likely to report that professional development improved their practice (81%), however, they were no less likely to report satisfaction with the quality of professional development.

FIGURE 3.

Agreement that professional development improved practice, by role group.

Percent agree or strongly agree that “professional development improved my practice”



Note: Family Child Care Providers $N=84$, CBCPP Directors $N=203$, Afterschool Directors $N=29$, CBCCPP Staff $N=310$, Afterschool Staff $N=116$, and CIS $N=47$.

More research is needed to understand why Family Child Care Providers are less likely than CBCCPP directors to agree that professional development improved their practice. CDD may consider undertaking additional data collection efforts that target the experiences and needs of Family Child Care Providers.

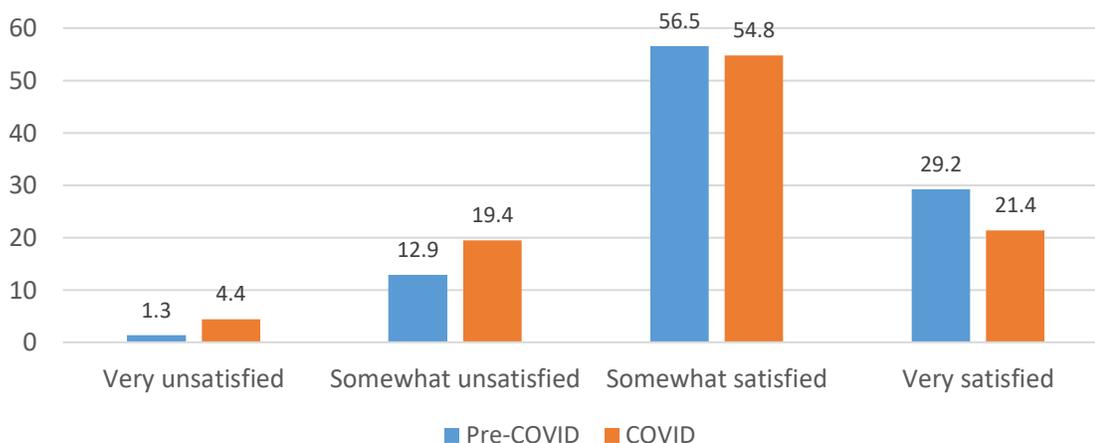
Participants were less satisfied with the quality of professional development offerings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated significant changes in the ECPDS. Specifically, limitations on in-person gatherings forced sponsors to explore ways to provide professional development online. CDD also expanded the availability of

approved online trainings that it would accept towards meeting professional development requirements. Survey participants’ overall satisfaction with the quality of professional development dropped by about 10% between the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods. Reflecting upon the quality of professional development offerings they accessed during the pandemic, 76% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of professional development opportunities offered during the pandemic (figure 4), compared to 86% reporting satisfaction when reflecting upon pre-COVID offerings.

FIGURE 4.

Satisfaction with the quality of professional development offerings pre-COVID and during the pandemic.

Percent agree or strongly agree that “professional development improved my practice”



Note: Total N=750

This drop in satisfaction was somewhat surprising, as focus group participants from across early childhood sectors reported that the increased availability of online trainings during the COVID-19 pandemic improved the overall accessibility of trainings by eliminating travel requirements. This pattern may be driven, at least in part, by a subset of survey respondents who strongly prefer in-person trainings and couldn’t access them during the pandemic. Indeed, individuals who reported a strong preference for in-person trainings as a barrier to accessing trainings during the pandemic were more frequently dissatisfied with the quality of offerings (44%) than were those who did not report a preference for in-person trainings(21%). Additionally, improvements in accessibility may not translate directly to improvements in

quality, as many sponsors and instructors were navigating unfamiliar territory and a new and challenging instructional environment in the transition to remote professional development.

Scope of offerings: Topics, Levels, Providers

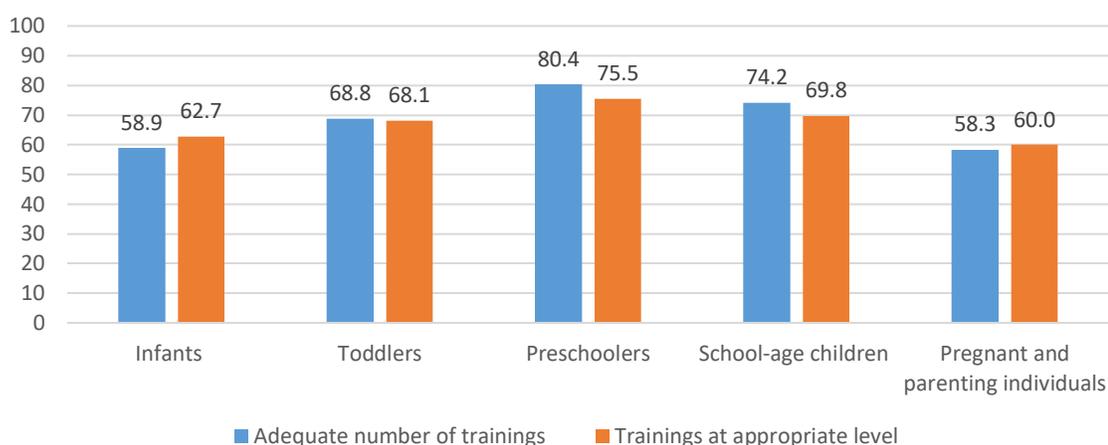
Providers serving preschool and school-aged children were more satisfied with the number and level of training opportunities addressing the needs of their age group than were providers serving other populations. Eighty percent of providers working primarily with preschoolers, and 74 % of providers working with school aged children agreed or strongly agreed that there was an adequate number of trainings geared towards the needs of providers serving their age groups. Comparatively, only 59% of providers working primarily with infants and 58% of providers working primarily with pregnant and parenting individuals agree that the number of trainings geared towards them is adequate.

Across providers serving different age groups, agreement that trainings were at an appropriate level fell below agreement that there was an adequate number of trainings. Providers working with preschoolers were again the most satisfied with the levels of professional development offerings provided (76%), while providers serving infants and pregnant and parenting individuals agreed less often that the level of trainings geared towards their age groups was appropriate (63% and 60% respectively).

FIGURE 5.

Perceptions of training adequacy by age group served.

Percent agree or strongly agree that “there is an adequate number of professional development opportunities geared towards providers who work with [e.g.: infants], and “The professional development opportunities geared towards providers who work with specific populations are at the appropriate level”



Note: Professionals serving infants $N=207$, toddlers $N=311$, preschoolers $N=424$, school-age children $N=252$, and pregnant and parenting individuals $N=24$. Numbers sum to more than the total sample size because categories are not mutually exclusive.

The perceived adequacy of trainings geared towards providers serving marginalized groups lagged behind that of training opportunities by age group. Across groups of providers serving different age groups, an average of 68% agreed or strongly agreed that there was an adequate number of trainings geared towards providers serving their age group or population. Comparatively, 48% of all providers agreed that there was an adequate number of trainings for providers working with children with special needs; 42% agreed that there was an adequate number of trainings for providers working with economically disadvantaged children; 35% agreed there was an adequate number of trainings for providers working with children with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and 39% agreed there was an adequate number of trainings for providers working with children with diverse family structures.

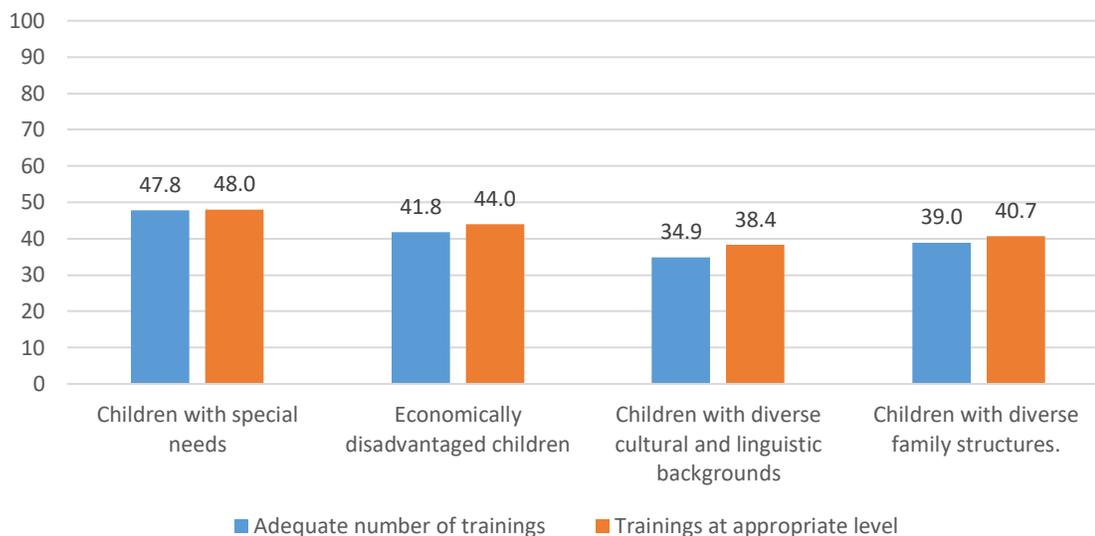
Similarly, survey participants were less likely to report that trainings geared towards providers who work with marginalized groups were at the appropriate level. On average, 67% of respondents by age group reported that trainings were at the appropriate level, while only 48%

agreed that trainings for providers working with children with special needs were at the appropriate level; 44% agreed that trainings for providers working with economically disadvantaged children were at the appropriate level; 35% agreed that trainings for providers working with children with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds were at the appropriate level, and 41% agreed that trainings for providers working with children with diverse family structures were at the appropriate level.

FIGURE 6.

Perceptions of professional development adequacy for providers serving marginalized populations.

Percent agree or strongly agree that “there is an adequate number of professional development opportunities geared towards providers who work with [marginalized population], and “The professional development opportunities geared towards providers who work with specific populations are at the appropriate level”



Note: Total N=748-761.

It should be noted that this lower rate of agreement may reflect a smaller proportion of the overall sample who serve marginalized populations and therefore hold an opinion on the adequacy of trainings. However, it could also be argued that it is the responsibility of all providers to meet the needs of marginalized children. Notably, there are no significant differences in the perceptions of training adequacy for marginalized groups by age group served.

Focus group data lend credence to these findings. Across focus groups, participants reported feeling that trainings geared towards providers who work with infants were difficult to find. One participant in the CPCCPP director's focus group explained that the Early Head Start conference was one of the only professional development opportunities truly designed for providers who work with infants and young toddlers. Participants also explained that there was a need for more trainings that addressed issues related to equity, family engagement across linguistic and cultural barriers, and an opportunity to go into greater depth around topics related to race and gender.

Trauma and leadership-focused professional development present an opportunity to scaffold additional training levels. Focus group participants frequently described trauma-related trainings as being abundant and/or redundant. They appreciated the availability of trainings on this important topic but found that each training covered the same content. One participant explains “I am not an expert in trauma, by any extent, but I’ve been going to these trauma trainings and they repeat one another. Every one of them starts with a review of brain development – and I need the trainings that get to the next level”. Because there does not appear to be a shortage in the number of trauma-related trainings, it may be possible to convert some portion of existing trainings to higher-level professional development opportunities.

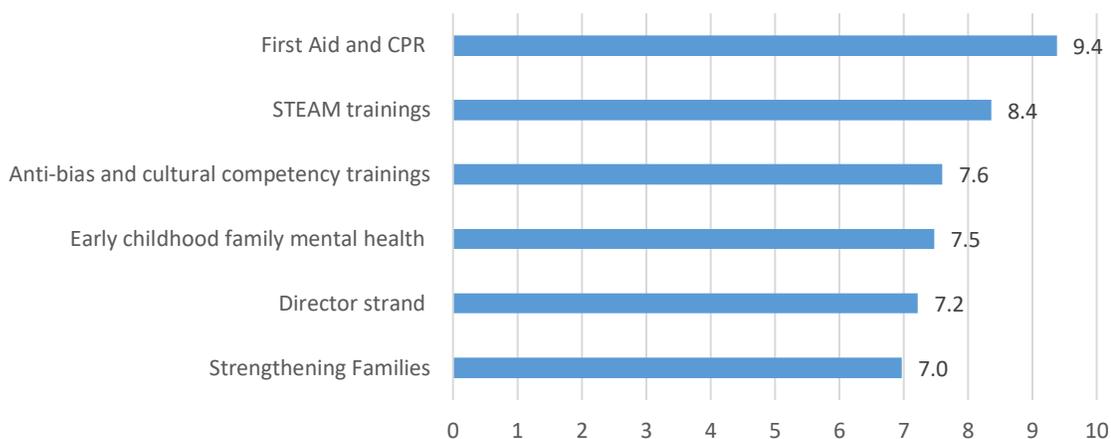
Focus group participants offered similar observations of trainings related to leadership. One participant offered: “Not everyone is in the same place in their leadership development – but for me – the early childhood leadership institute is the top – and I don’t know where to go from there to get better”. A more deliberate scaffolding of training levels within topics where trainings are already abundant may be a first step towards expanding the depth of trainings to meet the needs of early childhood professionals with higher levels of experience and education.

Of a range of professional development topics, First Aid and CPR trainings were most often found to be unavailable. Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals, What is Child Sexual Abuse, and Afterschool Essentials were least often identified as unavailable. Nine percent of survey respondents reported that First Aid and CPR trainings were unavailable to them when they needed them. Several other training topics were nearly as often found to be unavailable: STEAM trainings (8%), Anti-bias and cultural competency trainings (8%), and Early Childhood Family Mental Health (7%).

FIGURE 7.

Trainings most commonly identified as being unavailable.

Percent of respondents who indicate that trainings on a certain topic were unavailable.



Note: Total N=789.

Just over two percent of respondents indicated that Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals, What is Child Sexual Abuse, and Afterschool Essentials trainings were unavailable. Several of the trainings least commonly identified as unavailable are required trainings for entrants to the field. The small proportions of respondents reporting that these trainings were unavailable suggests that the ECPDS is largely meeting the child care licensing-related professional development needs of early career professionals. This is no small accomplishment, especially given the disproportionate size of the entry-level workforce and the high turnover within this group.

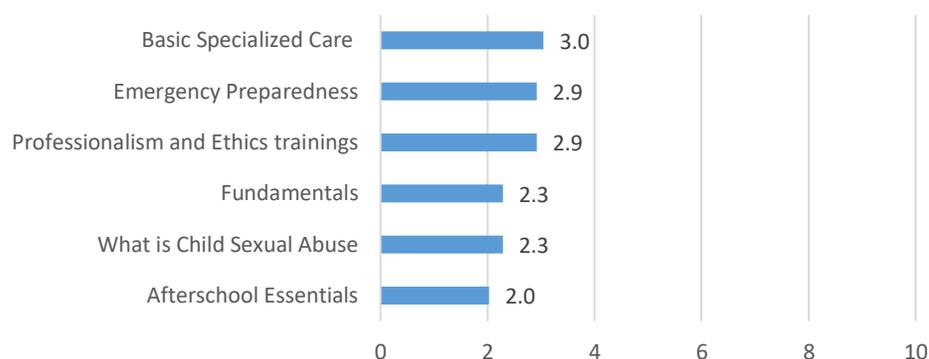
Frequent reports that First Aid and CPR trainings were unavailable marks an exception to this pattern. In follow-up interviews, representatives from CDD including child care licensing indicated that the lack of availability of First Aid and CPR was a pain point within the ECPDS. Northern Lights can't offer First Aid or CPR due to the way these trainers would need to be hired. One way that some Early Childhood Networks have been addressing this shortfall is to use CDD funding to offer these trainings locally. Spurred by the challenges associated with providing CPR and First Aid training remotely – a training that typically relies on practicing physical skills through in-person contact – child care licensing had recently undertaken a review of other early childhood associations' criteria for First Aid and CPR trainings, including criteria and goals used by NAEYC and the Agency of Education. Due to the pandemic, child

care licensing has temporarily waived the in-person skills component from the criteria for approving Online First Aid and CPR trainings. CDD is working towards expanding the acceptance of training sponsors (which is currently limited to 3 sponsors) and once in-person trainings are safe again plans to resume the requirement of the in-person skills component.

FIGURE 8.

Trainings least frequently identified as being unavailable.

Percent of respondents who indicate that trainings on a certain topic were unavailable



Note: Total N=789.

While topic-specific indicators of training availability are important for informing the planning of future professional development offerings, there are other ways to measure patterns in training availability. Because the centralization of ECPDS components within Northern Lights at CCV was motivated largely by research and regional equity, it is also important to understand how patterns in overall training availability vary by region. Each respondents' reports of unavailable trainings/topics were tallied, and these tallies were tabulated by region. For example, if a respondent noted that 6 of the 31 trainings/topics asked about on the survey were unavailable, their tally was 6, and that 6 was averaged with all other respondents in their region.

Across the state, on average, respondents reported that 1.6 training topics were unavailable to them. This varied somewhat by region. Respondents who worked in Bennington and Middlebury reported that, on average, less than one training topic was unavailable (0.8 and 0.9, respectively), whereas in the Brattleboro area the average number

of unavailable training topics per respondent was 3.7, and in the Springfield area this number was 2.3. Differences between these regions are statistically significant.

Early Childhood Professionals leveraged the structure of the Northern Lights system to fill gaps in training availability. Some participants in focus groups with afterschool and center-based providers described filling professional development needs within their own centers and programs. When trainings on particular topics were too costly or unavailable, some center directors, program directors, and early childhood professionals in other roles were approved to offer trainings through the Northern Lights' instructor registry and provided this training within their own programs. This structure empowered centers and programs to identify and meet local professional development needs. Northern Lights should consider reviewing the in-house trainings provided by registered instructors as another approach to assessing local need in addition to the annual survey.

Communication, Information, and Access

The 2017 restructuring of Vermont's ECPDS aimed to improve the coordination, alignment, and accessibility of professional development across the state. Prior to this transformation, individual regions had developed unique local professional development ecosystems that differed considerably from one another. While the understanding of local context and need was very valuable, some regions had much better access to professional development than others. Writing about the transformation on the CDD blog, the then DCF Deputy Commissioner for Child Development writes: "We seek to enhance coordination among and within components of the system and increase consistent access to high quality, locally available learning opportunities."

The transition to a more centralized structure changed communication pathways within the ECPDS. A better understanding of how early childhood professionals access information about and select professional development opportunities is necessary to understand how the transformed ECPDS can make progress towards its objective of being "known".

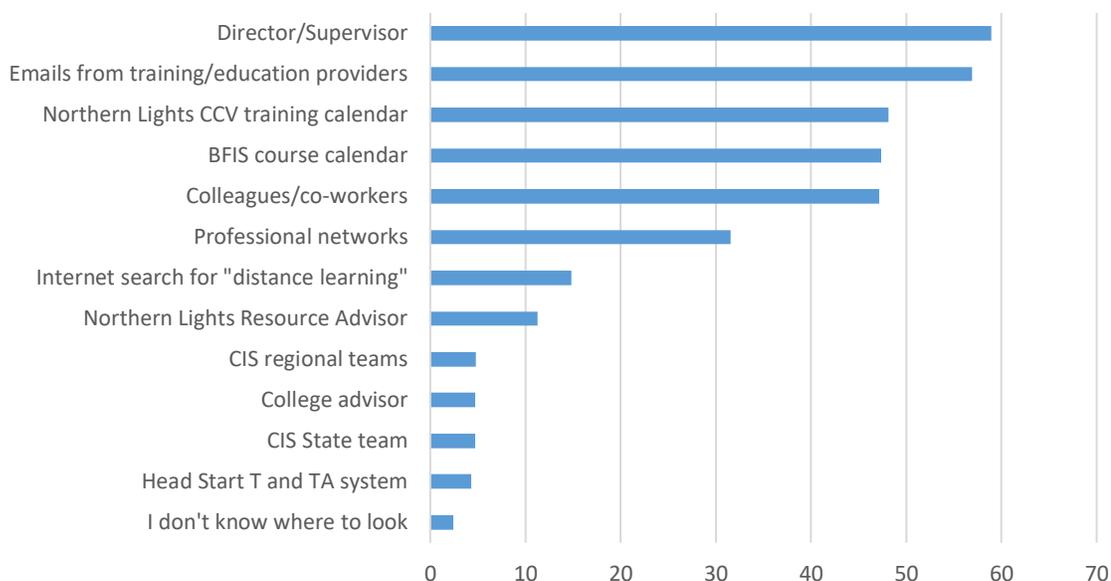
Nearly half of survey respondents report using the Northern Lights and BFIS calendars, though this proportion is much higher among directors of regulated programs and Family Child Care Providers. Asked how they typically find out about professional development opportunities, 48% of survey respondents noted that they used the Northern Lights at CCV training calendar. Notably, this was not the most prevalent source of information about training opportunities.

Directors and supervisors and direct communications from trainers and educators are important sources of information about professional development across all respondents. Fifty-nine percent of all respondents reported that they heard about trainings from their director or supervisor, and 57% heard about trainings directly from training providers. Focus group data support this finding; participants described receiving emails from their directors or supervisors outlining the professional development topics that they needed to take. Others had a more interactive experience, discussing professional development goals and potential trainings with their directors during annual goals-setting conversations. In either scenario, directors and supervisors demonstrated familiarity with the wide range of offerings and/or the information structure of the ECPDS. They also assumed responsibility for connecting their employees to these opportunities. The ECPDS may consider whether an effort to increase this familiarity among child care center and afterschool staff would be beneficial.

FIGURE 9.

Sources of Information about Early Childhood and Afterschool Professional Development.

Percent of all respondents who indicate finding out about professional development through...



Note: Total N=789.

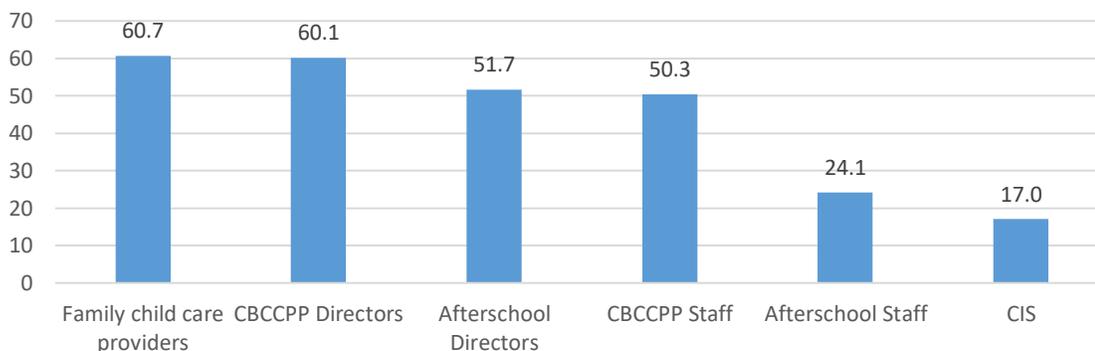
Two questions are worthy of further inquiry: first, if directors and supervisors are key conduits of information about professional development, where are they getting their information? And second, if the transformation of the ECPDS was motivated, in part, by the desire to integrate professional development systems for early childhood professionals across sectors, does connection to the Northern Lights training calendar vary by role group or sector?

CBCCPP directors and Family Child Care Providers are more likely to use the Northern Lights training calendar and their regional Resource Advisor to find out about professional development than other groups. Sixty percent of CBCCPP directors and 61% of Family Child Care Providers reported using the Northern Lights training calendar to find out about professional development opportunities. For directors, this was the most frequently reported source of information about professional development, alongside direct emails from training providers (59%). This implies that CBCCPP staff who receive information about professional development from their director are likely receiving information indirectly from Northern Lights. CBCCPP directors were also twice as likely as any other group to find out about professional development opportunities through their Northern Lights Resource Advisor. Nineteen percent of CBCCPP directors reported accessing information through their Resource Advisor, compared to 9.5% of Family Child Care Providers, the next most prevalent users of Resource Advisors.

FIGURE 10.

Use of Northern Lights Training Calendar by role group.

Percent of respondents who report finding out about professional development through the Northern Lights training calendar, by role group



Note: Family Child Care Providers N= 84, CBCPP Directors N=203, Afterschool Directors N=29, CBCCPP Staff N= 310, Afterschool Staff N=116, and CIS N=47.

Family Child Care Providers relied primarily upon direct emails from training providers (76% reported getting information this way). However, Northern Lights, the BFIS Course Calendar, and their professional networks comprised a substantial source of information about professional development opportunities. The prevalence of Northern Lights training calendar usage among CBCCPP directors and Family Child Care Providers suggest that child care program administrators recognize and utilize Northern Lights as a primary source of information about professional development opportunities.

CIS professionals and afterschool staff were least likely to report using the Northern Lights Training Calendar to find out about professional development opportunities. Seventeen percent of CIS providers and 24% of afterschool staff found out about professional development opportunities through the Northern Lights training calendar. Afterschool directors were more frequent users of the training calendar, however, and may have passed down information accessed there to their teams.

Focus groups with CIS and afterschool providers support these findings. Afterschool professionals understood Northern Lights' registry processes to have their professional development documentation uploaded into BFIS: they sent in documentation of their trainings and Northern Lights verified and entered approved documentation into BFIS. Afterschool providers were less aware that Northern Lights provided trainings or served as a professional development hub for the field. This lack of awareness may have been emergent from the fact that afterschool providers are affiliated with another organization (Vermont Afterschool) to which they turn first for information about professional development. One participant described it this way: "Vermont Afterschool is like our mothership. If I am looking for a training, I go to them first". The interview with Vermont Afterschool's leadership supported this characterization:

"If an Afterschool director needs a training for their staff, they call us to talk through the menu of trainings we provide and to schedule a time that we could come out and do that workshop for them. You know, if a child care program were in the same position, they would call Northern Lights, but an Afterschool Program calls us."

Lower rates of engagement with Northern Lights' training calendar among afterschool staff and CIS providers may signal an opportunity to undertake additional communication and integration efforts. Northern Lights may target some outreach to these populations and work with CDD and the host organizations (CIS and Vermont Afterschool) on clarifying roles and responsibilities within the system. This campaign could be broadened to include other role groups in the field, such as CBCCPP staff. Ensuring that child care staff feel able to access Northern Lights' resources directly could contribute to stronger integration and knowledge of the ECPDS.

Across the field, providers select professional development based on the evolving needs of their jobs. Seventy percent of respondents reported choosing particular trainings to meet the evolving needs of their jobs. One center-based provider explained that at her center, educators “change classrooms every year, so it’s always new and my PD aligns with what I need for my new setting – I’m teaching preschool this year for the first time, so all the professional development I’m doing is about preschool-aged kids”. Another described working in a child-centered program and seeking out professional development that enabled her to address her students’ needs and engage their interests.

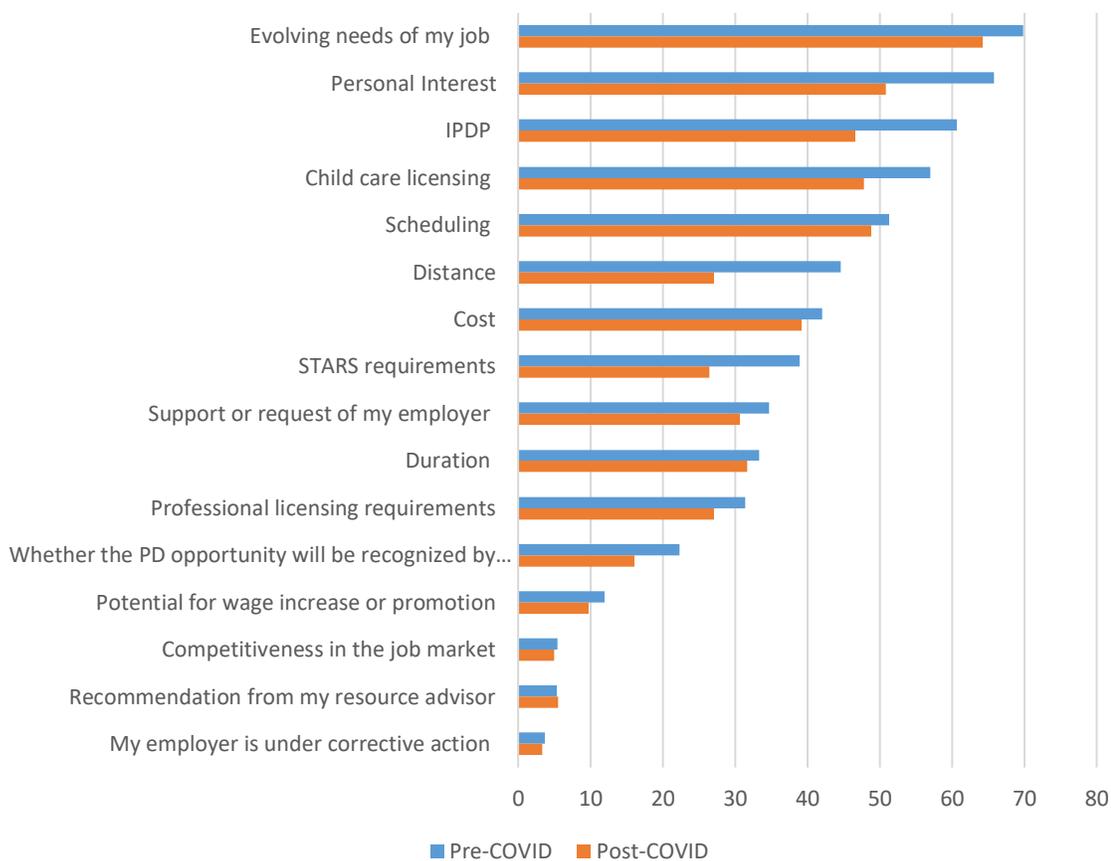
“I run an emergent curriculum for the children, so need a similarly emergent curriculum for myself. One year I had a cohort of kids with a lot of trauma, so I needed to seek out trainings on trauma-informed practices. This year my students are very advanced, some of them were reading at a level I didn’t feel comfortable teaching them – so I took Building Blocks for Literacy.” (from the Stern Center).

Other common factors survey respondents reported considering when they selected professional development opportunities include personal interest (66%) and their professional goals identified in their IPDP (61%), child care licensing requirements (57%), and convenience factors like scheduling (51%) and distance (45%). Professional advancement seemed less important to respondents as they considered which professional development opportunities to take; potential for a wage increase and competitiveness in the job market were factors for only 12% and 5% of respondents.

FIGURE 11.

Factors considered when selecting professional development offerings.

Percent of respondents who report considering...



Note: Total N=789.

Family Child Care Providers considered different factors than other role groups when selecting professional development offerings. Family Child Care Providers were more attentive to child care licensing and STARS requirements than other groups; 87% percent reported considering child care licensing requirements, and 69% considered STARS requirements when selecting professional development offerings. This is much higher than in other groups: 72% of afterschool directors and 68% of CBCCPP directors factor in child care licensing requirements, and 55% of afterschool directors and 48% CBCCPP directors reported

considering STARS requirements. Family Child Care Providers were also much more likely to consider scheduling (71%), and much less likely to consider the evolving needs of their jobs (56%), compared to other groups. These differences suggest that the ECPDS may need to learn more about what appear to be a unique set of constraints and considerations that Family Child Care Providers face when selecting professional development offerings.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed few factors informing respondents' selection of professional development offerings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the same factors topped the list for participants as they chose which professional development offerings to take. Evolving needs of participants' jobs and personal interest remained important considerations for participants. Less important during the pandemic was distance – as all professional development moved online and no one was travelling. The proportion of respondents who considered distance a factor dropped from 45% to 27%. Respondents reported considering fewer factors overall during the pandemic. On average, individuals went from considering 5.8 factors to 4.9 factors when choosing which professional development to take. This may reflect many providers efforts to take as much professional development as possible during the pandemic. Numerous focus group participants reported enrolling in anything and everything they could while their programs were closed. Some attested that this was a requirement of their center director. Less selectivity may have translated into fewer factors considered in selecting professional development opportunities.

Professional and personal networks inform how early childhood professionals select professional development. Focus group participants described the importance of personal and professional networks for sharing information about professional development. Several were members of Facebook groups where notices of upcoming trainings were circulated. Providers also talked to one another about which trainers were particularly dynamic and which trainings were especially interesting. Trainers' reputations for delivering engaging and high-quality training often informed focus group participants' enrollment decisions. Relationships between trainers and participants also flowed the other way. One focus group participant described the importance of feeding information about the professional development needs of the field and the region to especially talented instructors to ensure high quality trainings on topics of most relevance.

The vast majority of early childhood professionals reported that overall, trainings are somewhat or very accessible. Asked to reflect on the overall accessibility of trainings: the location, cost, time of day, time of year, and delivery method, 60% of survey respondents reported that trainings were somewhat accessible, and an additional 36% indicated that they were very accessible. There were no significant differences in the perceptions of overall accessibility by role group or region.

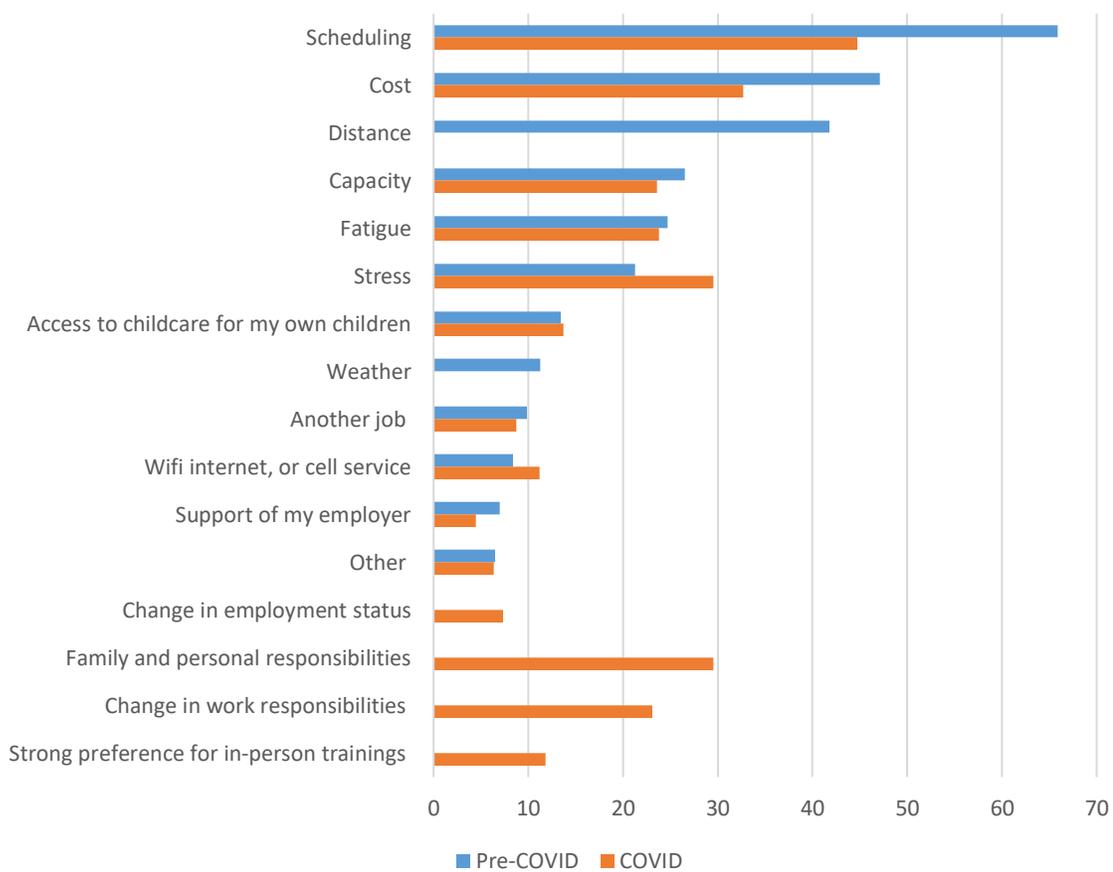
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, scheduling, cost, and distance were the most prevalent barriers to accessing professional development. Two-thirds of survey respondents identified that the time of day, day of week, or time of year that a training was scheduled mounted barriers to accessing professional development. Related to this, 42% indicated that the distance of a training from their home or work impeded their access. Focus group participants echoed these sentiments. In the child care sector especially, participants described the challenges associated with working a full day before attending a training scheduled from 6 to 8 pm. Add to this the rural nature of Vermont and the expansive distances between communities, and many Vermonters are unable to attend trainings because they occur too far away and/or too late to allow their participation.

Just under half of respondents (47%) found cost to be a barrier to access. Trainings range in cost across the system. Many offerings are provided free of charge; Northern Lights trainings charge a small fee; and college courses can cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars. While survey data cannot tell us exactly what price point providers perceive to be too high, focus group participants do offer some insight. One explained: “I love the Kindergarten conference, but when I was there last year, I was like, why aren’t there more center-based teachers here – these are all school-based folks. Oh wait- the conference costs \$130 and center-based folks can’t afford that”. Another commented on her love of trainings offered by the Vermont Higher Education Collaborative, but noted that the cost had recently increased, making it untenable. “I am even with the school district, so I have a budget, but without that budget it would be impossible”. Together, these comments may indicate that it is not the lower-cost Northern Lights trainings that are priced out of reach for early childhood professionals, but those costing upwards of a hundred dollars. Even when a reimbursement from an employer was guaranteed, one participant offered, “it’s a lot out of pocket”.

FIGURE 12.

Barriers to accessing professional development

Percent of respondents who report that the following are barriers to accessing professional development



Note: Total N=789.

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted participants' perceptions of barriers to accessing professional development. With the turn towards fully virtual professional development, many fewer respondents noted scheduling as a barrier (45% compared to 66% pre-pandemic). However, stress and family and personal responsibilities emerged as significant concerns, impeding 30% of respondents' access to trainings. Significantly, only 11% of respondents found that

WIFI or cell access was a barrier to accessing professional development in the fully virtual professional development environment. This may be because Vermont made significant investments in its infrastructure in the early phases of the pandemic.

Focus group participants were unequivocal that the expansion of online training opportunities improved their access to professional development and reduced the demands associated with travel. One participant explained: “I used to have to work a full day, then figure out what to do with my own kids, drive an hour each way to a two hour training. I’d get home after 9 or 10 at night. Now I just jump on webinar for a couple of hours in the middle of my day.”

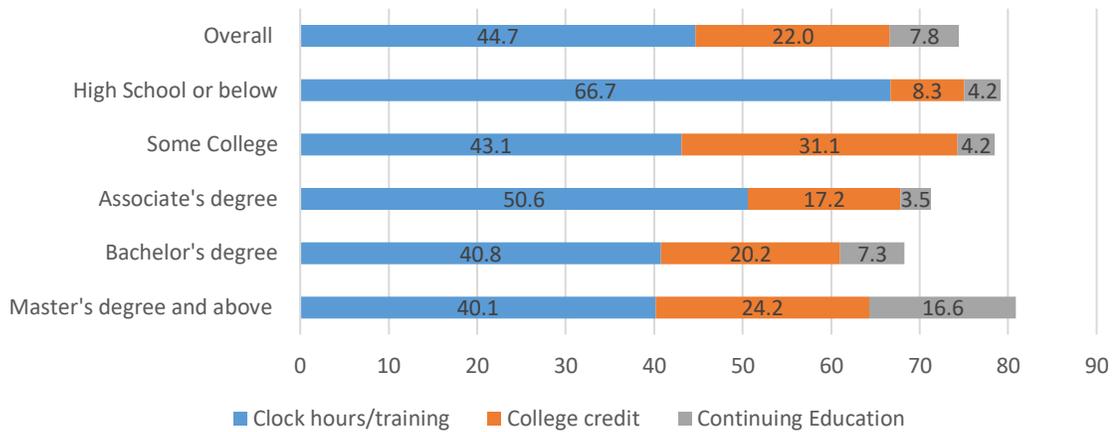
Professional Development Preferences and Features of High Quality Offerings

Overall, respondents preferred for trainings to confer credit in the form of clock or training hours, though this varied by education level. Forty-five percent of respondents preferred to receive clock or training hours for their professional development trainings. Roughly half as many, 22% preferred to receive college credit, and 8% preferred Continuing Education Credits. This varied by role group. Respondents with less than a high school diploma preferred clock hours at much higher rates (67%); respondents with some college preferred college credits at higher rates (31%), and Master’s degree holders preferred continuing education credits at more than twice the rate (17%), of respondents overall.

FIGURE 13.

Preferred credit format

Percent of respondents who report that they prefer course credits in the following formats, by educational attainment



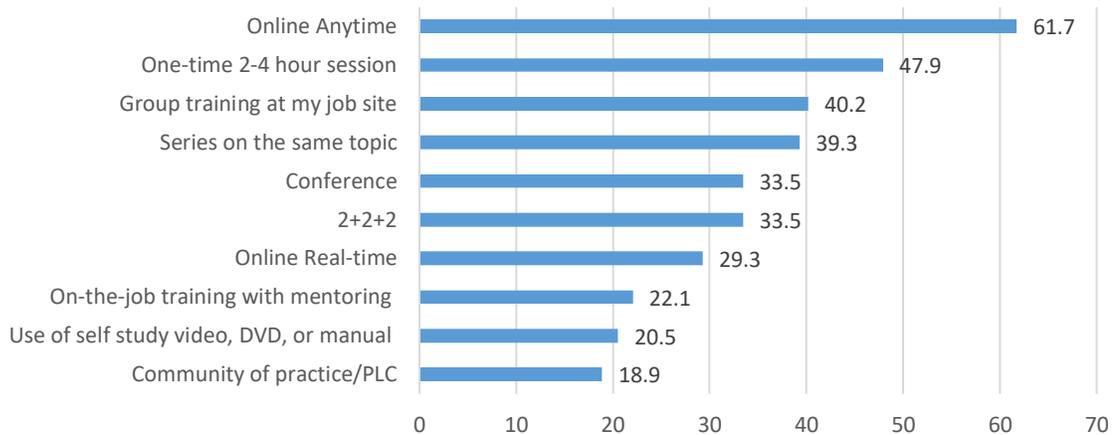
Note: Note: High school diploma or less N=75, Some college N=169, Associate's degree N=90, Bachelor's degree N=295, and Master's degree and above N=160.

Online Anytime was the most preferred training format among survey respondents. Nearly two thirds of survey respondents (62%) ranked Online Anytime trainings among their top-three preferred modes of training. Just under half (48%) ranked single-session trainings among their top three preferred formats. Respondents also favored group trainings at their job sites (40%), and training series on the same topics (39%). These results may be skewed by the prevalence of these training formats. For example, because communities of practice are less common, fewer survey respondents would be able to rank that option among their preferences.

FIGURE 14.

Preferred mode of training

Percent of respondents who ranked a training format among their top-three preferred formats

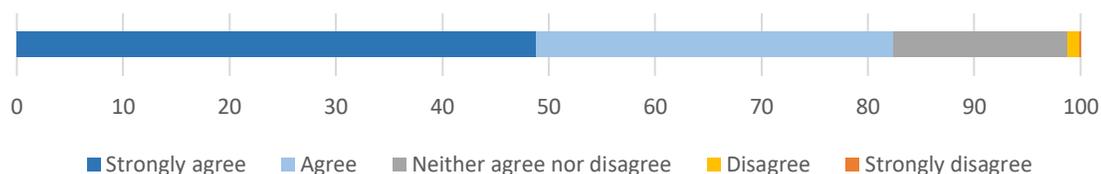


Note: Total N=789

The majority of survey respondents want Online Real-Time trainings to continue. A large majority of survey respondents (83%) agreed or strongly agreed that they hoped Online Real-Time trainings would continue to be available even when the COVID-19 pandemic had abated, and in-person trainings became possible again. This is consistent with feedback from focus group participants, who appreciated the range of options that Online Real-Time trainings made available to them.

FIGURE 15.

Online Real-Time trainings should be available beyond the COVID-19 pandemic's restrictions on in-person gatherings.



Note: Total $N=776$.

Masters-level respondents were more enthusiastic about the continuation of Online Real-Time trainings than were respondents with lower levels of educational attainment.

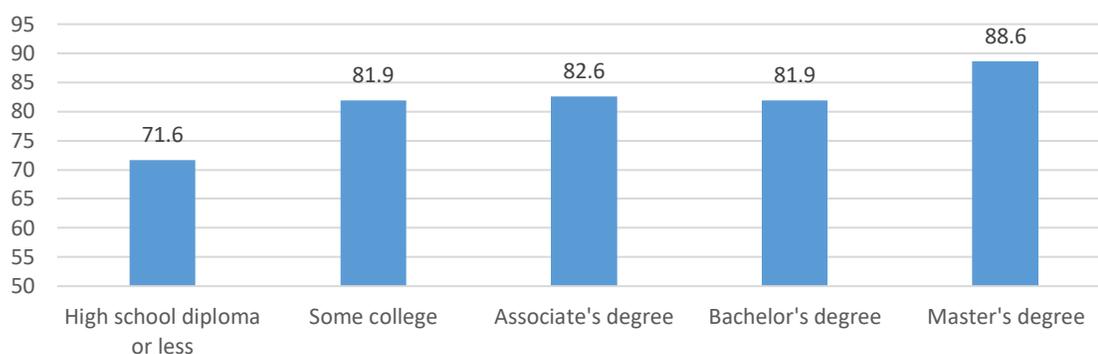
Nearly 89% of masters-level early childhood professionals surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that they hoped that of Online Real-Time trainings would continue. This proportion was higher than any other educational attainment group; roughly 82% of respondents with some college, associate degrees, or bachelor's degrees agreed or strongly agreed that they hoped that Online Real-time trainings would continue. This suggests that the flexibility and breadth of Online Real-Time trainings may be an important resource for meeting the professional development.

Interestingly, Family Child Care Providers were less enthusiastic about the continuation of Online-Real Time trainings compared to other role groups. Seventy-three percent of Family Child Care Providers hoped that Online Real-Time trainings would continue, compared to roughly 83% across other role groups. Given Family Child Care Providers' descriptions of the constraints around taking time off for professional development, this was surprising. It may reflect the degree of constraint on Family Child Care Providers' time; even a short real-time workshop is difficult to attend during certain hours when you are the sole staff person, or one of very few employees. Relatedly, it may signal how highly Family Child Care Providers value the opportunity to meet and talk, in person, with other professionals in their field-an opportunity not often afforded them in their day-to-day work.

FIGURE 16.

Providers with higher levels of educational attainment are more supportive of Online Real-Time trainings.

Percent of respondents who agree or strongly agree that Online Real-Time trainings should be available beyond the COVID-19 pandemic's restrictions on in-person gatherings, by educational attainment



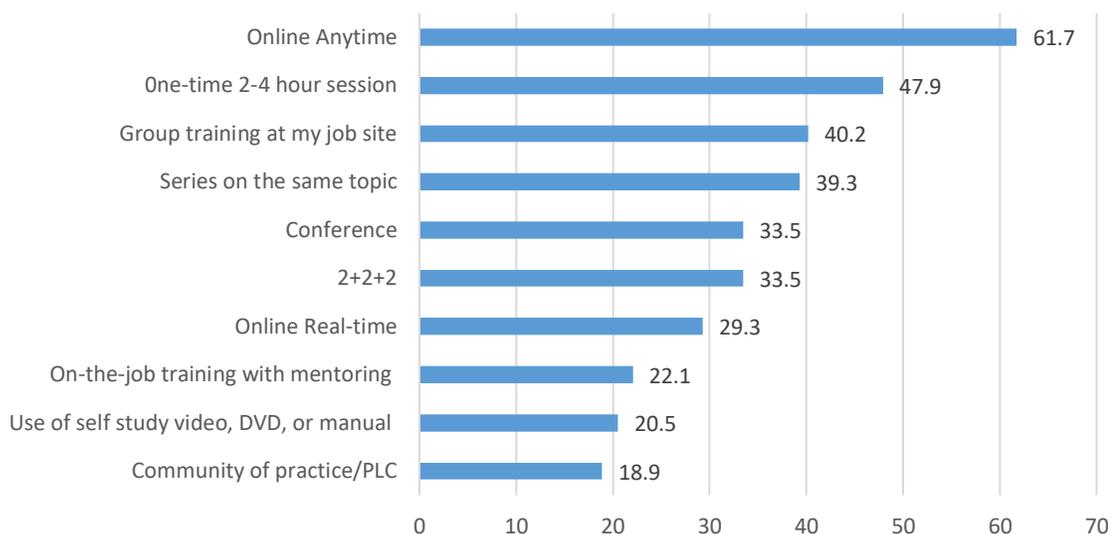
Note: High school diploma or less $N=75$, Some college $N=169$, Associate's degree $N=90$, Bachelor's degree $N=295$, and Master's degree and above $N=160$.

Online Anytime trainings were even more popular than Online Real-Time trainings. More than 60% of respondents ranked Online Anytime trainings in their top three preferred modes of training (62%). Other highly ranked modes of training included one-time 2-4 hour sessions (48%), Group training at respondents' job sites (40%), and a series of trainings on the same topic (39%). The 2+2+2 model, which groups a 2 hour training session, a structured time for skills practice and reflection, and a 2 hour follow up session was ranked among the top three training modes by a third of respondents (34%). The least-preferred modes of training were use of self-study materials (21%) and communities of practice (19%). This may reflect the fact that this is a new model with relatively low prevalence of these types of trainings across the system as well as inexperience with this model of professional development.

FIGURE 17.

Accessible training formats are the most preferred.

Percent of respondents who ranked training modes among their top three preferences



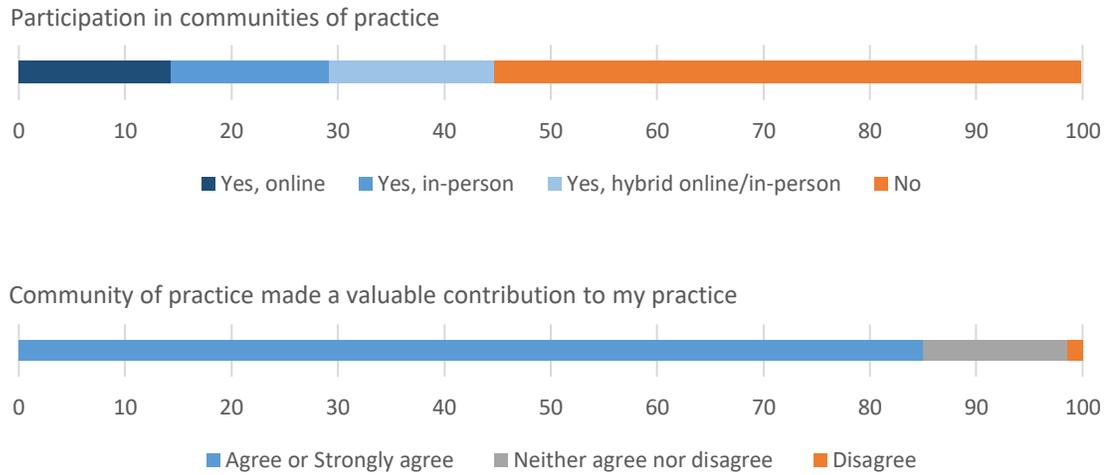
Note: Total N=789

Early childhood professionals who have participated in communities of practice have found them to be valuable. Forty-five percent of survey respondents reported participating in in-person, online, or hybrid communities of practice. Among participants, 85% agreed or strongly agreed that the community of practice made a valuable contribution to their practice. The value of communities of practice was echoed by focus group participants. One center director explained it this way:

“One of the things that has been most beneficial for me is participating in a community of practice – a group of providers caring for children in the same way, training our staff the same way, according to the same principles. If there are 45 programs in that, that’s 45 programs using best practices widely. And then my staff and I get to see how different centers are doing things differently.”

FIGURE 18.

Participation in and reflections on communities of practice.



Note: First panel, total N=782; second panel (participants in communities of practice) N=353

More than half of participants (53%) who had not yet had the opportunity to participate in a community of practice would like to engage in this type of professional development. Only a small minority were not interested in participating in a community of practice (7%). Importantly, almost 20% of respondents who had not participated in a community of practice didn't know what a community of practice was, and an additional 20% didn't know whether they wanted to participate in one. Together, participants' positive impressions of communities of practice, nonparticipants' desire to participate in communities of practice, and the lack of understanding about communities of practice among a sizeable minority of survey respondents suggests that the ECPDS may invest in both providing more opportunities for communities of practice, and in communication

FIGURE 19.

Non-participants' desire to participate in communities of practice.



Note: Total N=432

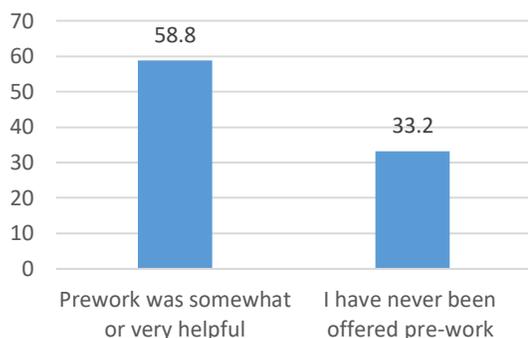
campaigns that explain the structure and purpose of communities of practice to the field.

Respondents reported that pre-work and follow-up work were helpful, but many haven't been invited to complete either. Over half of survey respondents agreed that pre-work (59%), and follow-up work (56.3%) were helpful in advancing their professional development. However helpful, though, the assignment of pre-work and follow up work was not consistent. Roughly a third of survey respondents reported that they had never been offered the opportunity to complete pre-work (33%), and over a quarter (28%) reported that they had never been assigned follow-up work. The PPD committee should consider ways to encourage the assignment of pre-work and follow up work. This may include allocating additional training hours to trainings where instructors assign, and can verify the completion of, work outside of training hours, and expanding the number of trainings using the 2+2+2 model, which builds in opportunities for follow-up and reflection on initial training sessions.

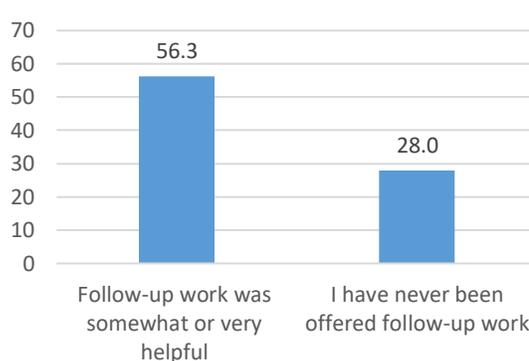
FIGURE 20.

Perceptions of and Participation in work before and after trainings.

Pre-work before trainings



Follow-up work after trainings



Note: Total N=786

Follow-up activities were generally desired, with more respondents interested in virtual and online formats. Thirty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they wanted to participate in virtual meetups, 27% reported interest in an online discussion or Facebook group, and 24% desired virtual coaching. These preferences for online formats are not surprising given barriers associated with travel and the positive perceptions of online professional development. Providers' preferences aren't exclusively for online follow up activities. In-person coaching was of interest to 26% of respondents. Focus group participants

described a range of follow up activities. One CIS provider noted the preferred approach to follow-up at their CIS office has been to have a training for the whole region, and then to have the trainer come back to the agency level and help support an individual plan.

FIGURE 21.

Follow-up activities of interest



Note: Total N=789

Interactive pedagogy, concrete, applicable tools and strategies, and a culture of respect and mutual learning were key features of high-quality professional development opportunities. Focus group participants were asked to describe, in broad terms, what factors contributed to the quality of professional development opportunities. Across role groups, respondents explained that high quality professional development trainings had one or more of the following attributes.

- Interactive

Trainings provided opportunities for participants to interact with one another or with the content in a dynamic way. Examples included engaging providers in the STEM or play-based activities that they were training to implement in their classrooms, to utilizing breakout rooms to facilitate small-group discussion during online trainings.

- Provided concrete, applicable tools and strategies

The trainings that providers appreciated the most left them with new skills or tools that they could apply to their job immediately. These included strategies for managing challenging behaviors, hands-on activities for exploring nature, or implementing assessments.

- Cultivated a culture of mutual respect and learning

Participants were positively impacted by professional development opportunities where the expectation was that everyone had something to contribute to the group. For the most part, this culture emerged from sustained contact with the same group of people through trainings such as the ECEI, the Early Childhood Leadership Institute, and Vermont Higher Education Collaborative (VT-HEC) trainings. One participant explained it this way:

“Leadership institute was a really impactful experience – we were part of a cohort that built strong relationships, we listened to each other. It profoundly absolutely changed me as a human and an educator. It’s just the type of training where the instructor doesn’t feel like in an instructor- everyone in the room has equal power and a voice – you’re there to learn from each other.”

Recommendations

Overall

Continue and advance lobbying efforts to improve compensation across the early childhood sector. Many of the challenges faced by the ECPDS are related to issues of low pay that have plagued the field for decades. For instance, low compensation in the field of early childhood contributes to high rates of turnover among early childhood professionals, which in turn creates the need to provide frequent entry-level trainings at the expense of trainings for more experienced professionals. Improving compensation across the field could incentivize retention as well as professional development, if sufficient numbers of higher-paying jobs were available to professionals who pursued additional training and higher credentials.

The Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP), stewarded by Building Bright Futures, includes a goal to promote professional advancement and economic security. One of the strategies identified in the plan includes collecting more data on the workforce compensation and exploring funding sources for a wage supplement program (VECAP, 2020). A VT Early Childhood Workforce Wage and Fringe Benefit Comparability study, sponsored by the Head Start Collaboration Office, is currently underway – marking significant progress in this area. VTAEYC’s Advancing as a Recognized Profession initiative, which engages Vermont early childhood professionals in a process of reading and interpreting the local implications of NAEYC’s Power to the Profession framework, represents another effort to lobby for better wages and recognition across the field. Leveraging these data and frameworks, as well as resources like *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education*, stakeholders should continue to advocate for policies and programs that yield better compensation across the early childhood sector.

Alignment and Integration

Continue efforts to integrate systems serving afterschool and CIS providers with the professional development system serving child care providers. Focus group and survey data suggest that much progress has been made in recent years to more fully incorporate CIS and afterschool professionals into the ECPDS. The PPD committee, cross-representation and collaboration between the PPD committee and CSPD, and the development of afterschool credentials at CCV represent structures and initiatives that are improving the integration of the ECPDS across sectors. These efforts could be advanced by

- A broad-reaching campaign to communicate the roles, resources, and responsibilities of different systems components (Vermont Afterschool, CIS, CDD, CSPD, etc.) across sectors. This communication campaign should specifically target professionals in staff and not director roles, as their familiarity and engagement with Northern Lights lags behind their supervisors’.
- Mapping core knowledge and competencies across sectors in order to design or identify trainings that address the needs of multiple types of professionals.

Explore opportunities to build stronger integration and collaboration between Vermont’s Agency of Education and the ECPDS. There is considerable overlap between the work of public and PreK teachers and center-based preschool teachers, between afterschool providers and elementary educators, and between CIS providers, providers of specialized child care, and early childhood special educators in school settings. Across the system, adults staffed in a wide range of programs will require comparable knowledge and skills, yet professional development systems offered by Vermont’s public schools and the ECPDS remain largely distinct. Efforts to better integrate the ECPDS with the pk-12 professional development system may include

- Mapping the required knowledge and skills of different roles within each sector. While licensed PreK classroom teachers will likely not need the same training as an entry-level early childhood educator, the professional development needs of a paraprofessional in a public PreK classroom may be more aligned with certain groups within the child care sector. Identifying these areas of overlap may enable the development and piloting of specific integration and alignment initiatives.
- Convening a summit of district leaders and ECPDS affiliates to forge cross-sector understanding of both professional development systems and identify points and strategies for collaboration.
- Establish and communicate policies and procedures for documenting early childhood professionals’ participation in district-led professional development for the purposes of entering these training data into the BFIS account.

Seek opportunities to preserve regional resources. The 2017 transformation of the ECPDS shifted the organization of the system from a localized to a centralized design. While the equity and coordination of the new system are noted and appreciated, some regions perceive that the more centralized ECPDS comes at a cost to what was strong local professional development infrastructure. Vermont Early Childhood Networks play a large part in filling this need for regional and local professional development opportunities. These Networks are funded by the CDD and Let’s Grow Kids has been a contributor to that system. With LGK gradually phasing out support and ending their work in 2025, early childhood system leaders should consider:

- Finding additional funding sources to support regional and local groups in offering professional development that meets their identified priorities
- Partnering with a new host organization(s) to support network and leadership development after LGK ends their commitment

Professional Development Offerings

Expand the breadth and depth of training and professional development related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Survey results indicated that respondents were less satisfied with the number and level of trainings related to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Focus group participants also reported wanting deeper knowledge and skills related to honoring difference, addressing bias and discrimination, and engaging youth and families from diverse backgrounds.

Expand access to online professional development opportunities. Widespread appreciation for the accessibility of online professional development opportunities, and the degree of challenge previously posed by travel and scheduling constraints urge the ECPDS to increase the range and number of remote professional development offerings. In so doing, the ECPDS should continue to evaluate best practices for remote instruction, especially given the key features of high-quality professional development. This work is already underway, with criteria for Online Real-Time trainings having been developed and adopted by CDD.

Expand, define, and evaluate alternative approaches to delivering professional development, such as communities of practice, mentoring, and coaching. Participants' positive impressions of communities of practice, alongside the relatively sparse engagement with this model suggest that communities of practice and other alternative models for delivering professional development could change professional practice at scale if there was more widespread availability. An expansion of these alternative modes of delivery should include:

- a detailed plan for how, whether, and under what conditions to approve communities of practice, coaching, and other alternative professional development activities as meeting child care licensing professional development requirements.
- a communication campaign to help potential participants understand the requirements and potential benefits of the approach.
- training and supports for mentors and coaches that cultivate high-quality mentoring and coaching skills.
- compensation for mentors and coaches.
- evaluation of early rollout efforts for the purposes of continuous improvement. Efforts aligned with this recommendation are already underway: EDC is presently evaluating

non-participation in communities of practice planned for late 2020, as well as the experiences of participants in equity and inclusion book clubs.

A robust and compensated system that incorporates mentoring, coaching, communities of practice, and other alternative approaches to professional development may have the downstream effect of cultivating cultures of observation, feedback, and continuous improvement within programs, a need articulated by the PPD committee during the presentation of interim findings from this study.

Improve professional development offerings for the field's most experienced providers.

Across sectors, the most experienced early childhood professionals noted a dearth of affordable and high-quality training options. This is in large part because there are considerable demands placed on the ECPDS to meet the professional development needs of a large and mobile entry-level workforce. One strategy for improving professional development offerings for the most experienced, and often most-educated professionals is to support advanced-level professional development opportunities such as the ECEI and Higher Education Collaborative.

Consider ways to encourage the assignment of pre-work before and follow-up work after trainings. Survey respondents found these aspects of trainings to be helpful, but not consistently implemented. This is perhaps, in part, because hours spent on these activities do not count toward licensing requirements. The ECPDS may encourage sponsors and instructors to assign pre- and follow-up work by allocating additional training hours to trainings where instructors assign, and can verify the completion of, work outside of training hours, and expanding the number of trainings using the 2+2+2 model, which builds in opportunities for follow-up and reflection on initial training sessions.

System Monitoring and Evaluation

Recommendations related to system monitoring and evaluation are intended to help the ECPDS refine its data collection protocols to enable ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement, and to identify areas where more research is warranted.

Design and implement a process for ongoing annual monitoring, and undertake more formal formative evaluations every 3 to 4 years. The 2011 evaluation of the ECPDS suggested a range of metrics that could be used to track the system's progress. These included the number of quarterly visitors to the Northern Lights website; the number of trainings offered annually, by region, level (see below), core competency, and target population (infant, toddler, CIS, etc.); the number of sponsors and instructors across the system. Suggestions

below highlight additional measures and evaluation activities that may be useful to the ongoing monitoring of the ECPDS.

Collect longitudinal data to measure providers' perceptions of alignment, integration, and transformation of the ECPDS. The results presented here may be viewed as a baseline assessment of providers' perceptions of the transformed ECPDS. Ongoing data collection efforts should track the evolution of these perceptions as refinements are made, professional development offerings are expanded, and new initiatives are rolled out. The survey used in this evaluation and included in the appendix that follows (or sections of it) may be administered again, or a new instrument mapped to the recommendations of Transforming the Workforce could track ECPDS' progress towards its goals of alignment and integration.

Expand tags in Northern Lights' and BFIS training calendars to include domains of interest for longitudinal tracking. Trainings listed in the Northern Lights or BFIS calendar are tagged with indicators related to content area, age group focus, and training hours. These indicators should be expanded to capture additional information of interest to CDD, AOE, PPD, or other stakeholders. For example, trainings should be tagged with an indicator for training level. The three Early Childhood Educator designations (I, II, III) delineated in the Power to the Profession Unifying Framework may adequately capture the varying levels of trainings. By tagging trainings with a level indicator, the ECPDS will be able to track, over time, the number of trainings geared towards the field's most senior professionals. Additional domains of interest may include whether a training addresses themes directly related to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Revise training evaluation tools and procedures to focus on practice change. One of the shortcomings of present training evaluations is that they do not assess how trainings affected participants' practice. Evaluations of trainings could be refined in multiple ways to better address this important question.

- **Rather than at the conclusion of the training, evaluations could be distributed weeks later.** The lag time introduced by this evaluation schedule would make it possible to ask questions like: "have you used the knowledge or skills you gained from this training in your day-to-day practice". Although the lag time may also decrease the likelihood of receiving a completed evaluation, receiving a completed evaluation could be a prerequisite for having training hours entered into their quality and credential accounts.
- **Someone adjacent to the training participant could complete a non-evaluative attestation about changes to the participants' practice.** Training participants could nominate supervisors, colleagues, or even families to complete an assessment of how the participants' practice has changed since attending the training. The assessment

might ask, for example: “NAME attended a training on TOPIC on DATE. Since that time, have you noticed any change in the way they (manage behavior/engage families/demonstrate knowledge of child or youth development)? These assessments would not be suitable for all trainings, and would have to make clear that it is not the participant being evaluated, but rather the training’s effect on the participant’s practice.

The evaluation of Northern Lights at CCV presently underway is prioritizing the development of a new approach to evaluating trainings. These recommendations should be seen as a starting point relative to the recommendations that emerge from that more comprehensive evaluation.

Conduct additional research to understand participants’ cost-related barriers to accessing professional development. While this evaluation reveals that cost is a prevalent barrier to accessing professional development, additional research is needed to better understand the specific amount or the circumstances under which cost impedes access. This information could be used to design grantmaking efforts that support access to higher-cost trainings, or to subsidize opportunities geared toward participants with more cost-related barriers to access.

Conduct additional research to understand the particular professional development needs of Family Child Care Providers. Family Child Care Providers reported facing different constraints and weighing different considerations related to accessing professional development compared to other center-based providers. More information from Family Child Care Providers is necessary to ensure that the ECPDS is aligned with their needs and interests.

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Appendix

1. Interview Guide
2. Focus Group Protocol
3. Survey

Interview Protocol

Research Question: Describe EC Professional Development organizational operations. How is the EC Professional Development System governed, funded, structured, and monitored?

From the proposal: Interviews will be semi-structured and tailored to the expertise of the interviewee, for example, focusing on decision-making mechanisms, oversight procedures, or funding streams as appropriate. Interview protocols will be designed to draw out information about the degree to which these structures and processes are clear and known, aligned to ensure both professional growth and cohesion across early childhood sectors, data- and evidence-based, and financially supported.

I want to begin by thanking you for taking the time to have this conversation today. We know you are busy and that there are many competing demands, so we're grateful that you've chosen to share your insight with us.

This interview is part of a study that is attempting to better understand the professional development landscape for early childhood and after school providers. The purpose of these interviews is to learn about the overarching structures and processes that shape the professional development system as a whole. The primary focus of these interviews is on non-credit-bearing training, and not coursework. We're talking to people who have unique perspectives at the structural level, or a very detailed understanding of how particular pieces fit into the puzzle.

Introduction:

- Tell me about your role with early childhood professional development in the state? [take note of key organizations, committees, etc.]
- Can you talk a little bit about [the organization/committee – (ask about each individually)] and the work they do related to early childhood professional development?
 - Describe your organization and what services are provided? For profit or not for profit?
 - How are your organization(s) funded?
 - How are they overseen and governed? Who are the representatives of the oversight body (if applicable)?
 - What link is there (if any) between your organization(s) and the state government?
 - [If multiple] How do they fit together?

Offerings:

- Describe the range and depth of professional development offerings your organization(s) provide
- How are decisions made in your organization(s) about what professional development opportunities to offer?
- How are decisions made about what the offerings cover, what level they're offered at, and what mode of delivery they use?
- What role does research and evidence play in directing professional development?
- Do you offer coursework that aligns closely with Vermont Core Knowledge and Competencies?
- How does your organization(s) fund these offerings?
- How do you recruit participants for professional development?
 - Are the trainings you offer typically fully enrolled?
 - What implications does this have?
- How do you monitor and ensure the quality of offerings?
 - What data do you collect? How do you analyze it and translate findings into quality improvement?
- Do you charge for your services?
- What training formats do you use? (conferences, in-person, online)

Cross-sector alignment

- To what extent, if at all, do you coordinate with other organizations around professional development offerings? If so, how do you coordinate? Does a representative of your organization participate in the statewide Professional Preparation and Development Committee?
- In your opinion, is the statewide system of professional development aligned across agencies and providers? In other words, do different agencies and providers' trainings compliment or duplicate each other's?
 - What makes you answer that way?
 - What are the levers of success and barriers to alignment?

Professional growth

- (How) does your organization structure opportunities for professional growth among individuals who take your trainings?

Recommendations

- What changes or improvements would you like to make to your organization or the professional development offerings it provides?

- What supports or resources would be required in order for these changes to be possible?

Closing

- Is there anything else you'd like to share? Or other topics you hoped we would discuss about early childhood professional development in Vermont?

Focus group protocol

Research Question: What Professional Development offerings are currently provided? How do stakeholders discover and access Professional Development opportunities?

From the proposal: Focus groups will investigate what professional development activities educators have engaged in, how they learned about these opportunities, how these programs were aligned to advance professional growth, what they thought the strengths and areas for growth were in each of the professional development activities, and how access to individual professional development opportunities, as well as professional development opportunities more generally, was facilitated and/or hindered.

I want to begin by thanking you all for taking the time to have this conversation today. We know you are busy and that there are many competing demands, so we're grateful that you've chosen to share your insight with us.

This focus group is part of a study that is attempting to better understand the professional development landscape for early childhood and after school providers. When I say professional development landscape, I mean of course the trainings promoted through Northern Lights and the BFIS database, but also any professional development you might have access to through other agencies or providers: children's integrated services, local school districts, private sponsors. There is one question related to higher education, but in general, this project is interested in the non-credit-bearing opportunities offered throughout the state. The point of the focus groups is to better understand how different subgroups within the early childhood and after school workforce find out about professional development opportunities, how you experience the alignment of professional development opportunities across sponsors, the factors that stand in the way of your accessing professional development, and your perceptions of the professional development offerings you have taken.

Introduction:

- Please share your name, a brief description of your role and where you work and a recent delightful moment you shared with a child in your program.

Professional development activities

- Tell us a little bit about the most recent professional development activity you took part in:
 - How did you find out about it?
 - Why did you decide to participate in that particular option?
- How do you usually find out about professional development opportunities?
- Why do you usually choose one professional development opportunity over others?
 - When there are multiple opportunities that could meet your needs, what factors do you consider when choosing between them?
- What role does your individual professional development plan (IPDP) play in guiding how you choose a professional development opportunity?
 - Are there any certification or coursework requirements you are trying to meet?
 - Do you use the IPDP as a 'self-assessment' and use the competencies to help identify a professional development opportunity?
- Describe the quality of the professional development opportunities you have engaged in?
 - Which have been the highest-quality experiences you've participated in?
 - What makes them good?
 - Which experiences have had the most room for growth and improvement?
 - In what ways do they fall short of expectations?
 - What aspects require improvement?
 - How has the format of professional development, like whether it's a one-time in-person training, a class, a webinar, impacted quality?
- Thinking about trainings that have been offered through the Northern Lights training calendar or BFIS, to what extent have the professional development offerings you've participated in matched your expectations?
 - How well does the actual offering align with the written description?
- Within the last year or two, are there any topics related to the core knowledge areas that you would have liked to take but that weren't available? (such as, to help with a child or family you are working with, curriculum, etc.)
 - How about other trainings that may not be specific to core knowledge areas?

- Are there any topic areas you feel are overrepresented, covered by multiple organizations, or offered too frequently? If these are topics required by regulations, did you need to take them?
- What factors make professional development more accessible?
- Have you participated in any 'non-traditional' professional development offerings?
 - Coaching?
 - Mentoring?
 - Communities of practice or peer learning communities (online or in person)
 - What has been your experience with these types of learning approaches?
 - How do you think they should be recognized in the system?
- Thinking about the formats of professional development (in-person, online), how have these formats worked for you? What made them more and less successful?
 - Would virtual trainings (trainings taught by a live person but over a web format like Zoom) be of interest?
 - What topic areas would be well suited to these non-traditional formats?
- What are barriers you have experienced to accessing professional development? (such as work hours, transportation, online access, cost, etc.)
- Can you describe how professional development has changed your practice?
 - After you attend a professional development offering, do you have opportunities to talk with other teachers/directors about what you learned and how you might use the new strategies or ideas?
 - Do you generally have access to any other resources or supports for bringing those new ideas into your work with children?
 - What barriers or challenges do you face in using new strategies or ideas you may have learned in professional development offerings?
- To what extent would you say the professional development system supports your professional growth? For instance, how well does it enable you to expand your knowledge and skill-set into new areas?
- Have you taken coursework to progress on the career ladder? How well does the system of higher education help you meet your career goals?

Integration

- Overall, how well coordinated are different organizations that offer professional development? Are organizations duplicative? Complimentary?

Recommendations

- What recommendations would you make to improve the overall professional development system? Remember – when I ask this, I’m asking about more than just Northern Lights, but all the trainings offered by all the sponsors across the state.

Closing

- Is there anything else you’d like to share? Or other topics you hoped we would discuss about your professional development experiences?

Survey

VT Early Childhood Professional Development System Survey

The Vermont Child Development Division is conducting an evaluation of the early childhood and afterschool professional development system. The evaluation includes a survey of early childhood and afterschool practitioners in the field. These include people working for early childhood programs, afterschool programs, public preK education programs, Head Start programs, Children's Integrated Services and more. You were chosen as someone who could provide important information related to the system.

As you know, we have had a huge shift in how our system is working due to COVID-19. A few questions ask specifically about changes in your experience with professional development related to COVID-19. For most questions, though, please keep a full year of professional development services in mind as you complete the survey.

The survey will be open until September 30th and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you complete the survey, you will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card as a thank you for your time. The gift card will be emailed to you at this address within 48 hours. Your responses will be confidential and will greatly help our understanding of how well the early childhood professional development system is responding to the various needs of those for whom it is intended to serve.

If you have any technical questions about the survey, please contact Meg Caven, the researcher conducting the study, at mcaven@edc.org.

Q2 What type of program do you work at or operate? If multiple, please choose your primary employment.

- Family Child Care Home (FCCH)
- After-school (ASP)
- Summer Recreation Program
- Center Based Child Care and Preschool Program (CBCCPP): Head Start
- Center Based Child Care and Preschool Program (CBCCPP): Community-based program
- Center Based Child Care and Preschool Program (CBCCPP): Public PreK
- Early intervention agency (such as PCC, community child care support agency, or other community-based agency)
- Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Agency
- CIS Health Agency
- Other local organization/agency (please specify): _____

Q3 Given the following job categories, what is your primary role at your primary job working with children or pregnant/parenting adults? For those working in regulated care, use the title of the position from the regulations that applies to your role.

- CBCCPP Program Director
 - Family Child Care Provider
 - Afterschool Child Care Program Administrator
 - Afterschool Site Director
 - Teacher
 - Teacher Associate
 - Teacher Assistant
 - Family Child Care Assistant
 - Afterschool Program Staff
 - Substitute
 - Trainee
 - Aide
 - Other (please specify): _____
-

Q4 Given the following job categories, what is your primary role at your primary job working with children or pregnant/parenting adults? For those working in regulated care, use the title of the position from the regulations that applies to your role.

- CIS Administrator
 - CIS Service Provider
 - Specialist (OT, PT, Speech, etc. not from CIS)
 - Home visitor
 - Education/curriculum manager/coordinator
 - Family/parent engagement manager/coordinator
 - Health Manager/Coordinator
 - Other (please specify): _____
-

Q5 Which of the following affiliations apply to your licensed child care program? (Check all that apply)

- Privately operated prequalified Prekindergarten education program
 - Publicly operated prequalified Prekindergarten education program
 - Public school licensee
 - 21st Century Community Learning Center program
 - Specialized Child Care Program
 - Head Start Program
 - Early Head Start Program
 - Head Start partner program
 - Early Head Start partner program
 - Parent Child Center
 - Non-Recurring Care Program
-

Q6 Does your program have any of the following accreditations?

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
 - National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC)
 - National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)
 - Other (please specify): _____
 - I don't know
 - None
-

Q7 What is the licensed capacity of your program as noted on the licensing certificate?

- 12 or fewer children
 - 13 – 59 children
 - 60 or more children
 - I don't know
-

Q8 What is your program's current star level?

- 1 star
 - 2 stars
 - 3 stars
 - 4 stars
 - 5 stars
 - I don't know
 - My program has a provisional license.
-

Q9 Where in Vermont is your primary job working with children or pregnant or parenting adults?

- Barre area (Washington County)
 - Bennington area (Bennington County)
 - Brattleboro area (Windham County)
 - Burlington area (Chittenden County)
 - Hartford area (Orange/North Windsor Counties)
 - Middlebury area (Addison County)
 - Morrisville area (Lamoille County)
 - Newport area (Orleans/North Essex Counties)
 - Rutland area (Rutland County)
 - Springfield area (South Windsor/North Windham Counties)
 - St. Albans area (Franklin & Grand Isle Counties)
 - St. Johnsbury area (Caledonia/South Essex Counties)
 - Statewide (no specific region)
 - Other (please specify): _____
-

Q10 Which of the following age groups does your program serve? (Check all that apply.)

- Infants
 - Toddlers
 - Preschoolers
 - School Age (kindergarten +)
 - Pregnant or parenting individuals
-

Q11 With what age groups do you work most often? (Check all that apply.)

- Infants
 - Toddlers
 - Preschoolers
 - School Age (kindergarten +)
 - Pregnant or parenting individuals
-

Q12 How many years of formal experience do you have working with children under age 13. Please do not count any experience raising your own children, nanny work experience, or babysitting experience. (Enter 0 if you have never worked with children under age 13).

- Number of years: _____
 - Number of months: _____
-

Q13 How many years of formal experience do you have working with pregnant and parenting adults? Please do not count any experience raising your own children. (Enter 0 if you have never worked with pregnant and parenting adults).

- Number of years: _____
 - Number of months: _____
-

Q14 Approximately, how long have you worked in your current program/agency?

- Number of years: _____
- Number of months: _____

Q15 Approximately, how long have you worked in your current role at your program/agency?

- Number of years: _____
- Number of months: _____

Q16 Approximately how many hours per week do you work in your program/agency?

0 8 16 24 32 40 48 56 64 72 80

Number of hours:	
------------------	--

Q17 What portion of the year does your program operate?

- All year
- School calendar only
- Summer only
- Vacation weeks only
- Summer and vacation weeks

Q18 Does your program operate overnight or on weekends?

- Yes
- No

End of Block: Employment

Start of Block: Overall PD

Q19 How do you currently find out about professional development? (Check all that apply)

- Check the Bright Futures Information System course calendar
 - Check the Northern Lights at CCV course calendar
 - From my Northern Lights resource advisor
 - From my director/supervisor/principal, etc.
 - Talk to my advisor at the college I attend
 - Search the internet for “distance” learning through colleges or other organizations that provide training (in and out of state)
 - Hear from my colleagues/co-workers
 - Learn about training through professional networks, formerly Starting Points Network (for example, Vermont Early Childhood Network groups, VNEA, VAEYC, etc.)
 - Receive emails from various training/education providers
 - Head Start Training and Technical Assistance System
 - CIS regional teams
 - CIS state team (weekly emails, blog posts, etc.)
 - I don't know who to ask or where to go for professional development
 - Other (please specify): _____
-

Q20 Before COVID-19, what factors did you consider when choosing which professional development offerings to take? (Check all that apply)

- Evolving needs of my job required new skills/knowledge
 - My individual professional development plan and the competencies addressed by the offering
 - Child care licensing requirements
 - Professional licensing requirements (e.g.: nursing, social work, teaching)
 - STARS requirements
 - Cost
 - Distance from home or work
 - Duration of session or course
 - Scheduling of session or course (day/evening/weekend)
 - Personal interest
 - Support or request of my employer
 - My employer is under a corrective action plan that requires me to take specific training
 - Whether the professional development activity will be recognized by my certifying agency or child care licensing
 - Recommendation from my resource advisor
 - Potential for a wage increase or promotion
 - Competitiveness in the job market
-

Q21 During the COVID-19 pandemic, what factors have you considered when choosing which professional development offerings to take? (Check all that apply)

- Evolving needs of my job required new skills/knowledge
- My individual professional development plan and the competencies addressed by the offering
- Child care licensing requirements
- Professional licensing requirements (e.g.: nursing, social work, teaching)
- STARS requirements
- Cost
- Distance from home or work
- Duration of session or course
- Scheduling of session or course (day/evening/weekend)
- Personal interest
- Support or request of my employer
- My employer is under a corrective action plan that requires me to take specific training
- Whether the professional development activity will be recognized by my certifying agency or child care licensing
- Recommendation from my resource advisor
- Recommendation from a mentor or colleague
- Potential for a wage increase or promotion
- Competitiveness in the job market

Q22 Reflecting on the general accessibility of trainings in terms of location, cost, time of day, time of year, and delivery method (in-person, Online Anytime, Online Real-Time), professional development offerings are:

- Very accessible to me
 - Somewhat accessible to me
 - Not accessible to me
 - Not at all accessible to me
-

Q23 Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, which of the following factors have prevented you from accessing professional development you were interested in? (Check all that apply)

- Cost
 - Access to childcare for my own children
 - WiFi, internet, or cellular access
 - Support of my employer
 - Another job
 - Time of day/day of week/time of year that professional development has been offered
 - Capacity- training is full
 - Fatigue
 - Stress
 - Weather
 - Distance from home or work
 - Other (Please specify): _____
-

Q24 During the pandemic, which of the following factors have prevented you from accessing professional development you were interested in? (Check all that apply)

- Cost
- Access to childcare for my own children
- WiFi, internet, or cellular access
- Support of my employer
- Another job
- Time of day/day of week/time of year that professional development has been offered
- Capacity – training is full
- Fatigue
- Stress
- Change in employment status
- Family and personal responsibilities
- Change in work responsibilities related to COVID-19 response
- Strong preference for in-person trainings
- Other (please specify): _____

Q25 Which credit/hours of offerings do you prefer?

- Clock hours/training hours
 - College credit
 - Continuing Education Unit (CEU)
 - No preference
-

Q26 Please drag and drop to select your three most-preferred of the following formats for professional development offerings (Rank 1 is most preferred)

Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
_____ A series of training sessions on the same topic (about 6 – 12 hours)	_____ A series of training sessions on the same topic (about 6 – 12 hours)	_____ A series of training sessions on the same topic (about 6 – 12 hours)
_____ 2+2+2 model (two-hour training, two-hour independent practice assignment, then another two-hour training)	_____ 2+2+2 model (two-hour training, two-hour independent practice assignment, then another two-hour training)	_____ 2+2+2 model (two-hour training, two-hour independent practice assignment, then another two-hour training)
_____ One time 2 – 4-hour training session at a location other than my job site	_____ One time 2 – 4-hour training session at a location other than my job site	_____ One time 2 – 4-hour training session at a location other than my job site
_____ Conference	_____ Conference	_____ Conference
_____ Online Anytime training	_____ Online Anytime training	_____ Online Anytime training
_____ Online Real-Time training	_____ Online Real-Time training	_____ Online Real-Time training
_____ On-the-job training with mentoring	_____ On-the-job training with mentoring	_____ On-the-job training with mentoring
_____ Group training at my job site	_____ Group training at my job site	_____ Group training at my job site
_____ Community of practice/Professional learning community	_____ Community of practice/Professional learning community	_____ Community of practice/Professional learning community
_____ Using a self-study video or DVD and manual	_____ Using a self-study video or DVD and manual	_____ Using a self-study video or DVD and manual
_____ Other (please specify):	_____ Other (please specify):	_____ Other (please specify):



Q27 Do you prefer in-person or virtual trainings?

- In-person
 - Online Anytime Trainings
 - Online Real-Time Trainings
 - It depends on the topic
-

Q28 In general, where do you prefer to get your in-person professional development? (Check all that apply)

- Barre area (Washington County)
 - Bennington area (Bennington County)
 - Brattleboro area (Windham County)
 - Burlington area (Chittenden County)
 - Hartford area (Orange/North Windsor Counties)
 - Middlebury area (Addison County)
 - Morrisville area (Lamoille County)
 - Newport area (Orleans/North Essex Counties)
 - Rutland area (Rutland County)
 - Springfield area (South Windsor/North Windham Counties)
 - St. Albans area (Franklin & Grand Isle Counties)
 - St. Johnsbury area (Caledonia/South Essex Counties)
 - Statewide (not specific to a region)
 - Out-of-state (e.g.: national conference)
 - Online Anytime Trainings
 - Online Real-Time training
 - Other (please specify): _____
-

Q29 What timing do you prefer for professional development activities? (Check all that apply.)

- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening
- Weekdays
- Weekends
- Online Anytime: Independent work without structured time (e.g.: an online course with virtual modules and homework)

Q30 What are your professional development goals for the next 5 years? (Check all that apply)

- Meet licensing regulations
- Obtain Vermont Early Childhood Career Ladder Certificate
- Obtain Vermont Afterschool Pathways certificate
- Complete college coursework
- Obtain college degree
- Obtain credential
- Obtain teacher license
- Obtain endorsement for teacher license
- Obtain other professional license
- No specific goals identified
- Other (Please specify: _____)

Q31 Within the last year, has training in any of the following topic areas been unavailable to you, either through the course calendars or other local resources ? (Check all that apply)

- Medication Administration
- Basic Specialized Care
- First Aid and CPR
- Emergency Preparedness
- Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals
- Afterschool Essentials
- What is Child Sexual Abuse (Act 1)
- Trainings on writing and using Individual Professional Development Plans
- Strengthening Families (17 hour toolbox training) and Youth Thrive Trainings
- Social-Emotional Development and Learning trainings [CSEFEL, Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Rock Solid Foundations]
- Professionalism and Ethics trainings
- Curriculum and learning
- Nutrition and Physical Activity trainings [could include I am Moving I am Learning]
- Trauma Informed Practice trainings [including focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences]
- Introduction to Assessment trainings [including the purpose of assessment and a brief introduction to various tools used in Vermont systems]
- Trainings on Vermont Early Learning Standards
- Child Care apprenticeship related trainings
- Anti-bias and cultural competency trainings
- Assessment Tool Trainings [program assessment tools, child-focused assessment tools]
- Special topics focused on trauma [e.g. homelessness, poverty, family mental health, addiction]
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) trainings
- Director strand [business practices, grant writing, staff supervision]
- Afterschool strand [youth voice, social-emotional learning, workforce development]
- Infant/Toddler strand [developmentally appropriate practices, play, brain development]
- Family Child Care Provider strand [multi-age settings, business practices, supporting families with complex needs]
- Supporting Children with Diverse Needs strand [include laws/requirements]
- Leadership strand [coaching, mentoring, advocacy]
- Special education/early intervention
- Early childhood family mental health (ECFMH) related training
- Reflective supervision
- Provider self-care
- Substance misuse

Other (please specify) _____



Q32 There is an adequate number of professional development opportunities geared towards providers who work with:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
Infants	<input type="radio"/>				
Toddlers	<input type="radio"/>				
Preschoolers	<input type="radio"/>				
School-aged children (K-3)	<input type="radio"/>				
Pregnant or parenting individuals	<input type="radio"/>				
Children with special needs	<input type="radio"/>				
Economically disadvantaged children	<input type="radio"/>				
Children with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>				
Children with diverse family structures	<input type="radio"/>				

Q33 The professional development opportunities geared towards providers who work with specific populations are at the appropriate level:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
Infants	<input type="radio"/>				
Toddlers	<input type="radio"/>				
Preschoolers	<input type="radio"/>				
School-aged children (K-3)	<input type="radio"/>				
Pregnant or parenting individuals	<input type="radio"/>				
Children with special needs	<input type="radio"/>				
Economically disadvantaged children	<input type="radio"/>				
Children with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>				
Children with diverse family structures	<input type="radio"/>				

Q34 Overall, how satisfied have you been with the quality of professional development offerings?

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Prior to COVID-19	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After COVID-19	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q35 I hope that the availability of online Real-Time training opportunities will continue after the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q36 Which of the following topics would not be appropriate for a virtual training format?

- Medication Administration
- Basic Specialized Care
- First Aid and CPR
- Emergency Preparedness
- Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals
- Afterschool Essentials
- What is Child Sexual Abuse (Act 1)
- Trainings on writing and using Individual Professional Development Plans
- Strengthening Families (17 hour toolbox training) and Youth Thrive Trainings
- Social-Emotional Development and Learning trainings [CSEFEL, Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Rock Solid Foundations]
- Professionalism and Ethics trainings
- Curriculum and learning
- Nutrition and Physical Activity trainings [could include I am Moving I am Learning]
- Trauma Informed Practice trainings [including focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences]
- Introduction to Assessment trainings [including the purpose of assessment and a brief introduction to various tools used in Vermont systems]
- Trainings on Vermont Early Learning Standards
- Child Care apprenticeship related trainings
- Anti-bias and cultural competency trainings
- Assessment Tool Trainings [program assessment tools, child-focused assessment tools]
- Special topics focused on trauma [e.g. homelessness, poverty, family mental health, addiction]
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) trainings
- Director strand [business practices, grant writing, staff supervision]
- Afterschool strand [youth voice, social-emotional learning, workforce development]
- Infant/Toddler strand [developmentally appropriate practices, play, brain development]
- Family Child Care Provider strand [multi-age settings, business practices, supporting families with complex needs]
- Supporting Children with Diverse Needs strand [include laws/requirements]
- Leadership strand [coaching, mentoring, advocacy]
- Special education/early intervention
- Early childhood family mental health (ECFMH) related training
- Reflective supervision
- Provider self-care
- Substance misuse
- Other (please specify) _____

Q37 In general, professional development has improved my practice.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q38 In general, pre-work assigned before professional development has been

- Very helpful
 - Somewhat helpful
 - Not at all helpful
 - I have never or rarely been assigned pre-work
-

Q39 In general, follow up work, contact, or coaching after professional development sessions has been

- Very helpful
 - Somewhat helpful
 - Not at all helpful
 - I have never or rarely been offered follow up contact, coaching, or work after professional development
 - I have not chosen to have follow up with someone after the session
-

Q40 What type of follow-up activities would you like to participate in after trainings and professional development activities? (Check all that apply)

- In-person coaching
- In-person community of practice within my center or region
- Virtual coaching
- Virtual community of practice
- Online forum or Facebook group
- Conference calls
- Virtual meetups (using technology like Zoom)
- Journal or other independent reflective practice
- Other (please specify): _____
- I do not wish to participate in any follow-up activities

Q41 Have you participated in a community of practice or professional learning community related to your professional development?

- No
- Yes, online
- Yes, in-person
- Yes, a combination of online and in-person

Q42 I would like to have the opportunity to participate in an online or in-person community of practice or professional learning community related to my work

- Disagree
- Agree (online)
- Agree (in person when available)
- I don't know what this is
- I don't know

Q43 The community of practice/professional learning community has made a valuable contribution to my professional growth.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q44 Which (other) topics would you like to see represented in professional learning communities or communities of practice? (Check all that apply)

- Medication Administration
- Basic Specialized Care
- First Aid and CPR
- Emergency Preparedness
- Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals
- Afterschool Essentials
- What is Child Sexual Abuse (Act 1)
- Trainings on writing and using Individual Professional Development Plans
- Strengthening Families (17 hour toolbox training) and Youth Thrive Trainings
- Social-Emotional Development and Learning trainings [CSEFEL, Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Rock Solid Foundations]
- Professionalism and Ethics trainings
- Curriculum and learning
- Nutrition and Physical Activity trainings [could include I am Moving I am Learning]
- Trauma Informed Practice trainings [including focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences]
- Introduction to Assessment trainings [including the purpose of assessment and a brief introduction to various tools used in Vermont systems]
- Trainings on Vermont Early Learning Standards
- Child Care apprenticeship related trainings
- Anti-bias and cultural competency trainings
- Assessment Tool Trainings [program assessment tools, child-focused assessment tools]
- Special topics focused on trauma [e.g. homelessness, poverty, family mental health, addiction]
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) trainings
- Director strand [business practices, grant writing, staff supervision]
- Afterschool strand [youth voice, social-emotional learning, workforce development]
- Infant/Toddler strand [developmentally appropriate practices, play, brain development]
- Family Child Care Provider strand [multi-age settings, business practices, supporting families with complex needs]
- Supporting Children with Diverse Needs strand [include laws/requirements]
- Leadership strand [coaching, mentoring, advocacy]
- Special education/early intervention
- Early childhood family mental health (ECFMH) related training
- Reflective supervision
- Provider self-care
- Substance misuse
- Other (please specify) _____

Q45 Have you participated in one-on-one coaching related to your professional development goals or development of key competencies?

- Yes
 - No
-

Q46 I would like to have the opportunity to participate in one-on-one mentoring/coaching related to my professional development

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q47 One-on-one mentoring/coaching has made a valuable contribution to my professional development.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q49 Trainings from different agencies/sponsors appear to be based on the same evidence and data.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q50 Trainings from different agencies/sponsors have consistent expectations and standards.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q51 Trainings from different agencies/sponsors complement each other.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q52 Trainings from different agencies/sponsors seem to be well coordinated with one another.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

End of Block: Overall PD

Start of Block: Individual PD

Q53 For the next section of this survey, we'd like you to answer some questions about **one** of the professional development trainings you've taken recently. For example, you might decide to focus on the training you completed most recently. Or, you might select the most helpful or least helpful training you completed recently. **When responding to the next set of questions, please consider only the one training you selected.**

Q54 What topic area was the training focused on?

- Medication Administration
- Basic Specialized Care
- First Aid and CPR
- Emergency Preparedness
- Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals
- Afterschool Essentials
- What is Child Sexual Abuse (Act 1)
- Trainings on writing and using Individual Professional Development Plans
- Strengthening Families (17 hour toolbox training) and Youth Thrive Trainings
- Social-Emotional Development and Learning trainings [CSEFEL, Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Rock Solid Foundations]
- Professionalism and Ethics trainings
- Curriculum and learning
- Nutrition and Physical Activity trainings [could include I am Moving I am Learning]
- Trauma Informed Practice trainings [including focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences]
- Introduction to Assessment trainings [including the purpose of assessment and a brief introduction to various tools used in Vermont systems]
- Trainings on Vermont Early Learning Standards
- Child Care apprenticeship related trainings
- Anti-bias and cultural competency trainings
- Assessment Tool Trainings [program assessment tools, child-focused assessment tools]
- Special topics focused on trauma [e.g. homelessness, poverty, family mental health, addiction]
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) trainings
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- Family Child Care Provider strand [multi-age settings, business practices, supporting families with complex needs]
- Supporting Children with Diverse Needs strand [include laws/requirements]
- Leadership strand [coaching, mentoring, advocacy]
- Special education/early intervention
- Early childhood family mental health (ECFMH) related training
- Reflective supervision
- Provider self-care
- Substance misuse
- Other (please specify) _____

Q55 I am telling you about this professional development training because (Check all that apply)

- I took it recently
- It exceeded expectations
- It fell short of expectations
- It changed my practice
- It is the one I remember best
- Other: _____

Q56 How did you find out about this professional development training? (Check all that apply)

- Check the Bright Futures Information System course calendar
 - Check the Northern Lights at CCV course calendar
 - From my Northern Lights resource advisor
 - From my director/supervisor/principal, etc.
 - Talk to my advisor at the college I attend
 - Search the Internet for “distance” learning through colleges or other organizations that provide training (in and out of state)
 - Hear from my colleagues/co-workers
 - Learn about training through professional networks, formerly Starting Points Network (for example, Vermont Early Childhood Network groups, VNEA, VAEYC, etc.)
 - Receive emails from various training/education providers
 - Head Start Training and Technical Assistance System
 - CIS regional teams
 - CIS state team (weekly emails, blog posts, etc.)
 - I don't know who to ask or where to go for professional development
 - Other (please specify): _____
-

Q57 Please click and drag to rank your top three reasons for choosing to enroll in this professional development training.

Reason 1	Reason 2	Reason 3
<input type="text"/> Evolving needs of my job required new skills/knowledge	<input type="text"/> Evolving needs of my job required new skills/knowledge	<input type="text"/> Evolving needs of my job required new skills/knowledge
<input type="text"/> To gain competencies I identified in my individual professional development plan	<input type="text"/> To gain competencies I identified in my individual professional development plan	<input type="text"/> To gain competencies I identified in my individual professional development plan
<input type="text"/> Licensing requirements	<input type="text"/> Licensing requirements	<input type="text"/> Licensing requirements
<input type="text"/> Personal interest	<input type="text"/> Personal interest	<input type="text"/> Personal interest
<input type="text"/> Required by my employer	<input type="text"/> Required by my employer	<input type="text"/> Required by my employer
<input type="text"/> Recommended by my employer	<input type="text"/> Recommended by my employer	<input type="text"/> Recommended by my employer
<input type="text"/> Opportunities for follow up/coaching (I value these)	<input type="text"/> Opportunities for follow up/coaching (I value these)	<input type="text"/> Opportunities for follow up/coaching (I value these)
<input type="text"/> No obligations for pre- or follow-up work (I prefer not to have these)	<input type="text"/> No obligations for pre- or follow-up work (I prefer not to have these)	<input type="text"/> No obligations for pre- or follow-up work (I prefer not to have these)

Q58 During your selected training about how much time did you spend listening to a presentation or lecture?

- No time at all
- Less than half the time
- About half the time
- More than half the time
- The entire time

Q59 During this professional development training, did you learn about specific skills or practices?

- Yes
 - No
-

Q60 Overall, how clear were the learning objectives (descriptions of skills or practices) included in your selected training?

- Not at all clear
 - Only a little clear
 - Somewhat clear
 - Very clear
-

Q61 After participating in your selected training how prepared did you feel to implement the skills or practices?

- Not at all prepared
 - Only a little prepared
 - Somewhat prepared
 - Very prepared
-

Q62 About how many hours did you spend on learning activities related to your selected training? In your response, please include time spent attending the training, studying, reading, writing, or completing assignments. Do not include time spent traveling to or registering for the training.

- 0
 - 1-4
 - 5-9
 - 10-14
 - 15-30
 - 31-44
 - 45-60
 - 61 or more
-

Q63 Did you attend your selected training with any co-workers?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure or don't remember

Q64 How many other co-workers attended your selected training with you?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

Q65 Please indicate whether your selected training included opportunities for you to engage in the following activities. If the activity was not relevant to the type of training you took (e.g., analyzing student assessment data as part of CPR training), select N/A.

	No	Yes	Don't know/ Don't remember	N/A
Receive feedback from peers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Receive feedback from instructors/trainers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaborate with or share ideas with other participants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analyze video examples of teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analyze written examples of teaching methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analyze sample lesson plans or unit plans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analyze assessment data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reflect on my current classroom practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reflect on how to apply what I've learned to my teaching practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Practice or role play new strategies or ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Review observational tools (e.g., CLASS, TS Gold, TPOT, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and describe high-quality teacher-child interactions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Observe the instructor modeling specific strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q66 This professional development opportunity:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Was affordable	<input type="radio"/>				
Was accessible	<input type="radio"/>				
Was high quality	<input type="radio"/>				
Helped me grow professionally	<input type="radio"/>				
Was aligned with other trainings I have taken with <i>this</i> sponsor	<input type="radio"/>				
Was aligned with trainings I have taken through <i>other</i> sponsors	<input type="radio"/>				

End of Block: Individual PD

Start of Block: Demographics

Q67 What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Nonbinary
- Prefer not to answer



Q68 What is your age?

- Under 18-years-old
 - 18- to 25-years-old
 - 26- to 35-years-old
 - 36- to 45-years-old
 - 46- to 60-years-old
 - Over 60-years-old
 - Prefer not to answer
-

Q69 Please specify your race. (Check all that apply)

- White
 - Black or African American
 - Latino or Hispanic
 - Asian
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Other
 - Prefer not to answer
-

Q115 How many children of the following ages are living in your household?

- Ages 0-5 _____
 - Ages 6-12 _____
 - Ages 13-18 _____
-

Q71 Please describe your marital status.

- Single, never married
 - Married or domestic partnership
 - Widowed
 - Divorced
 - Separated
-

Q72 What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

- Up to 8th grade
 - Some high school, no diploma
 - High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
 - Some college
 - Associate's degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's Degree (e.g.: MA, MPH, MSW, M.Ed)
 - Doctoral degree (e.g.: Ph.D., Ed.D)
 - Professional degree (e.g.: JD, MBA)
-

Q73 Which of the following certifications and licenses do you hold? (Please select all that apply.)

- Current Child Development Associate (CDA) – Infant/Toddler
- Current Child Development Associate (CDA) – Preschool
- Current Child Development Associate (CDA) – Family Child Care
- Current Child Development Associate (CDA) – Home Visitor
- Child Care Certificate from Community College of Vermont (CCV)
- Registered Child Care Apprenticeship Certificate of Completion
- Early Childhood Career Ladder Level I Certificate
- Early Childhood Career Ladder Level II Certificate
- Early Childhood Career Ladder Level IIIA Certificate
- Early Childhood Career Ladder Level IIIB Certificate
- Early Childhood Career Ladder Level IVA Certificate
- Early Childhood Career Ladder Level IVB Certificate
- Early Childhood Career Ladder Level V Certificate
- Vermont Afterschool Foundations Certificate
- Vermont Afterschool Essentials Certificate
- Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential
- Vermont teaching license – Early Childhood endorsement
- Vermont teaching license – Early Childhood Special Education endorsement
- Vermont teaching license – Elementary Education endorsement
- Vermont teaching license – Other type of endorsement
- Teaching license from another state – Early Childhood endorsement
- Teaching license from another state – Early Childhood Special Education endorsement
- Teaching license from another state – Elementary Education endorsement
- Teaching license from another state – other type of endorsement
- Other (Please specify: _____)

Q116 Thank you so much for taking the time to complete the survey. Your answers will be used to help improve the early childhood professional development system in Vermont. You will receive your \$20 egift card within 48 hours.



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