

New Hampshire Preschool Development Grant: Sharing Best Practices

A Report of Workforce Professional Development:
Incentives

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PDG B–5 Sharing Best Practices: Incentives

Identify Opportunities and Options for Incentivizing Cross-Sector Early Childhood Professionals to Participate in the PD System

The Spark, NH Workforce and Professional Development (WFPD) Committee began its work on this activity by brainstorming what barriers exist for the workforce. We also considered possible solutions and what process may be needed to implement them. (Attachment A). The PDG Needs Assessment group results from the workforce survey identified many of the same barriers expressed by those in the field. The barriers identified in the needs assessment through focused interviews and the workplace survey include:

- Lack of access
- Cost
- Time
- Lack of substitutes, release time
- Content not relevant

Data Gathering

We decided to do a quick poll to gather feedback on our ideas and to test our options with four audiences: child care directors/administrators, child care teachers, family support program managers, and family support home visitors. The survey requested feedback on barriers and incentives that might encourage greater participation. (Attachment B). Child Care Aware of NH staff distributed copies to their leadership collaboratives. Four survey monkey electronic versions were created for family support and child care (one for each staff level). A few of the incentives were re-worded to reflect the home visiting environment. The survey links were emailed to the State Early Learning Alliance (SELA) members and program staff affiliated with the Maternal and Child Health home visiting programs. Seventy-five responses were received, 19 from family support, and a total of 56 from the child care community.

The first question asked which incentives are currently provided in their programs. See the summary of all responses for this question in Attachment C.

Of the 75 respondents, 66 provide or receive paid registration for professional development activities. Fifty have on-site training, and 30 offer tuition for college courses. Four other options were less available: time off to attend (28), PD allowed as part of work hours (21), coaching (20), and travel reimbursement (16).

The next question about barriers was open-ended. The barriers reported parallel those identified in the needs assessment with some additional ones. I include them in rank order by the number of responses.

1. Time (17)
2. Money (cost) (15)
3. Staff coverage (14)

4. Time away from work (12)
5. Lack of advanced content (11)
6. Scheduling nights and weekends (7)
7. Willingness to attend (4)
8. Availability in the local area (4)
9. Lack of wi-fi at work (to take online training) (2)
10. Travel reimbursement (2)
11. Child Care (1)

The committee identified 14 options for incentives and requested respondents rank the top three that would make a difference in their (or their staff) participation in professional development. More child care staff responded than family support. This report presents total counts and not the weighted ranking by profession (detail on Attachment C).

A significant number of employees in both fields feel **salary increases for pursuing professional development** (42) would make an impact on their participation. Also frequently chosen was **compensation for attending on nights and weekends** (24). Given the information from the workforce needs assessment on wages and salaries, it is not surprising that recommendations for financial support would be top priorities. **Free tuition for college courses** (32) was also ranked high – again, many child care staff are required by licensing to earn college credits, wages do not increase as a result of doing so. The current scholarships through the Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration (BCDHSC) apply to early childhood courses but not towards general education for degree attainment, which affects career advancement. Also, in this category, although selected by fewer individuals than the other financial incentives, were a **bonus for obtaining or renewing a credential** (17) and **reimbursement for travel** (6).

Coverage for teachers (21) and **money for paying for substitutes** (9) were options selected more by child care. Family support staff responded that attending PD was allowed during work hours, whereas staff coverage was a more significant issue in child care programs. Family support has more flexibility for daytime attendance; their concerns voiced in the open-ended questions were about making sure their client's needs were still being met.

More local offerings (24), **more online** (15), and **more advanced content** (14) were chosen by both groups as ways to increase their participation. We did ask a question on the location of their program, and all regions of the state were represented. We wondered if rural area residents would have more significant challenges in accessing training. However, our polling method was so informal that in-depth analysis based on geography would not be valid.

Every option was chosen, indicating that many incentives would appeal to the workforce. The WFPD Committee members in reflecting on the responses and their personal experience feel that individual circumstances vary based on personal life situations, motivation, and resources. Individuals would, therefore, select options that best address their specific needs.

The survey ended with a general comments question. Nineteen respondents added additional thoughts. They responded by providing more detail: challenges in accessing local opportunities, lack of financial resources and staff for coverage, and the desire for advanced content for long-time staff. Coaching was mentioned to support staff on the job with a tailored focus. A few requested training in specific content areas. One said the burden of student loans affects their employees. Another commented on how child care is financed (primarily through family tuition) and the restrictions that places on increased PD requirements versus covering the cost of providing care.

Recommendations¹

Financial Incentives

Research shows that staff working in professions supporting young children and families are underpaid. One way to mitigate the challenges of increasing participation in professional development is to provide benefits for subsidizing the cost and compensating employees for engaging in activities.

Assist Directors and Administrators to Budget for PD and Wage Increases for Staff who Successfully Increase their Knowledge and Skills

1. Fully implement the BCDHSC Business Practices Training – a focused emphasis on financial management for child care administrators. It will be piloted in 2020 by the Bureau. Include as part of QRIS consultations.
2. Expand the State Early Learning Alliance (SELA) to more child care programs – membership includes shared resources (cutting overall expenses), business planning, and scholarships to community colleges. The cost of membership deters some programs from participating. The NH Early Childhood Workforce Impact project is currently working on a recommendation for subsidized funding.

Provide Additional Resources for Staff to Attend College

1. Support for T.E.A.C.H. for child care staff – scholarships and pay increases are part of the program for enrolling in degree programs, covering general education courses as well as early childhood education. Current funding for a startup is from the BCDHSC; we understand there is discussion about increasing the pool through other government workforce sources and contributions from charitable foundations.
2. Pursue dedicated scholarships for family support workers, possibly through the NH Charitable Foundation. The recommendations so far have pertained to child care. Family support staff also indicated that tuition for college courses would be valuable. A dedicated fund administered through the foundation is an option to consider.

Access

Workers in the field indicate a lack of training in their local area, limited or repetitive content, or inability to attend daytime offerings because there are no substitutes to cover the work. To address these, we recommend the following.

Increase Opportunities to Attend During the Day

1. Create regional substitute pools of trained child care workers, with background checks in place, paid for by contributions from participating programs. These would be permanent staff who would rotate as needed as opposed to being paid only when called.
2. Senior home visitors are an option in family support environments. These are experienced staff who assume a senior role– provides upward mobility and coverage for other staff.

¹ Spark NH WFPD/TMc 11/9/19

Expand Access to Existing Opportunities

Implement a hub for professional development collaboration and a shared listserv email communication on statewide PD. In another activity for the current PDG on exploring greater collaboration, we found most organizations and agencies offering PD already do or are interested in opening their PD to other audiences. The workforce needs to know what is out there. There is a wealth of PD from multiple sources. What is needed is a well-coordinated infrastructure to collect and disseminate information to the broadest audience. Central coordination is a relevant function for continuing PDG funding.

Alternatives to Off-Site Training

Although single-session workshops and seminars, as well as several day conferences, are the traditional delivery modes for PD, research indicates that another model is more effective in making a difference in practice. On-going mentoring or coaching is proven to make lasting changes in performance. Several of the current PDG activities are using this model, and we recommend continuing expansion. In addition to the commitment to play-based kindergarten and other practice-based coaching opportunities relevant to ECCE professionals across sectors and implementing a QRIS coaching implementation guide, we recommend looking at two additional activities.

Promote the Head Start Coaching Based Model

Cohort training and support for implementation, reinforced by ongoing webinars, additional information and check-ins, and end of the year reflection and the CCA NH Cohort Model

iSocial Coaching Model

Embed iSocial coaching model in home visiting to expand further the successful work through the Department of Education.

Initial Brainstorming: Identifying Incentives for Participating in PD

Table A.1. Initial Brainstorming

| Research and needs Assessment | Process | Solution \$\$ | Need clarification |
|--|---|---|---|
| Survey through a needs assessment to determine motivation and need | Stackable credentials/certificates (pathways) | Pay increases and bonuses (5) | Career tracking to support pathways or advancement |
| | Ability – approval to collaborate cross-sector | Pay mileage; | Build a sustainable system |
| | Elaborate/expand on approved PD | Time off to complete PD, | NH Career Academies – 5 th year of high school |
| | Mentorships | Pay for substitutes (have a bank of subs) (2) | |
| | Resource sharing of PD opportunities cross-sector | Pay to attend | |
| | Partnering with other organizations | Free/no-cost scholarships (include fee, travel) (1) Free tuition for degrees | |

SOURCE: TMc 5/30/19

Survey to Employers: Identifying Incentives for Participating in PD

New Hampshire is engaged in a one-year planning initiative federally funded by the Preschool Development Grant. The goal is to use data on children and families, and data on systemic needs to create a strategic plan that will create a comprehensive, coordinated early childhood care and education system to achieve our vision that all children and families in New Hampshire are healthy, learning and thriving now and in the future.

NH’s vision is to create a fully integrated cross-sector professional development (PD) system that, through pre-service course work and in-service professional development, supports all early childhood professionals across health, early learning, and family support to be well-educated, highly skilled and culturally competent. The Spark WFPD Committee is gathering data on what currently exists for professional development, who is offering it, whether there is collaboration

among organizations offering PD, and what the barriers are to participation for professionals in the field.

We are interested in your opinion about what challenges you and your employees face around the ability to attend PD. We would appreciate your answers to a few questions that would give us insight into your perspective.

1. What support do you currently provide to your employees for their professional development (this can include college course work, conferences, workshops, online training, etc.)?
2. What barriers do you face as an employer to support participation in PD for your staff?
3. What are the top three incentives you feel would make a difference in greater participation by your employees? For data collection purposes, do not assume that the program would need to provide the funds; external money may be available. Make your selection based on what you feel would **best motivate the staff to participate**.
4. Rank order 1,2,3
 - Pay mileage to attend
 - Have a bank of substitutes that could cover staff while they attend PD opportunities.
 - Pay staff to attend at night and on the weekends
 - More coaching and mentoring
 - Free tuition for college courses
 - More opportunities online
 - More local offerings
 - Pay increases for continuing education
 - Bonus for obtaining and renewing a credential
 - Free training
 - Have money available to pay substitutes
 - Pay for books for college courses
 - Expand the level of content (introductory, intermediate, advanced)
 - Provide release time during the day to attend
5. Other suggestions or comments:
6. Community where your program is located _____