

Preschool Development Grant  
**Sharing Best Practices- Professional Development Recommendations**  
Spark NH Workforce and Professional Development Committee

**Activity 1. Develop a plan to coordinate/collaborate on and share cross-sector PD opportunities (e.g., training, Technical Assistance, coaching, mentoring) and resources.**

Research data collected from surveys conducted with 22 agencies and organizations that provide professional development present a picture of current professional developed in New Hampshire. Health, family support, and early care and education sectors were represented. Questions included collaboration, web presence, capacity, format, delivery, funding, presenters, content, registration, evaluation, completion/certificates, promotion, and audience. We gathered a wealth of information that will be valuable in future collaborative efforts.

Collaboration opens possibilities to meet the personal needs of professionals in the field. The cross-sector workforce faces different challenges in accessing professional development (PD). Schedules, cost, distance, family obligations, and limited offerings create barriers that restrict or prohibit participation. We learned that all 22 agencies and organizations we surveyed either do open their PD to multiple audiences or would be willing to do so. However, only a handful of providers currently have the mechanisms in place to advertise and market to a broad audience. Also, some are limited in their capacity to expand participation due to smaller venues.

For the PDG, we also researched several other elements that affect sharing PD cross-sectors – reciprocity, incentives, and a web presence. The recommendations we identify for those areas are essential parts of a successful plan to coordinate resources and enable participation. For PD opportunities to be made more available and accessible, we offer several recommendations for collaboration.

1. Raise awareness of existing resources and have conversations about effective professional development
  - Bring collaborating partners together
  - Bring awareness to groups about what others are doing
  - Complete and distribute the position statement about effective professional development drafted by the WFPD Committee (education, pre-service, in-service, technical assistance, consulting, internships)
  - Hold a cross-sector symposium involving at least 20 providers serving young children to explore evidence-based practice for professional development (WFPD Strategic Plan objective).
  
2. Provide guidance on how providers can reach cross-sector audiences
  - Publish a "Guide for Providers" – encourage them to indicate their willingness to open PD to other audiences and their willingness to promote. Give information on how to get PD approved by certifying boards (CEUs), a "Did you know" section.

- Share practices of those organizations who already have experience in reaching multiple audiences
  - Implement recommendations for reciprocity (Activity 2).
3. Facilitate planning to expand audiences and topics
- Share training topics that are of interest to multiple audiences, fill seats and not have to cancel
  - Consider expanding online/taped or live stream to promote distance participation
  - Ideas for expansion – offer the same topic in multiple locations, identify what day, time, and location meets the needs of different audiences
  - Co-sponsor training with other groups in different geographic areas which may expand member benefits for both groups
  - Consider a themed year, where different agencies offer sessions that focus on various aspects of the same topic
  - Sponsor a speakers series, maximizing economy of scale, share financial resources to bring in well-known speakers (ex. Trauma-Informed Care)
  - Create a directory of facilities that providers have used that includes fees and capacity.
  - Implement incentives for participating in PD (Activity 3).
4. Promote PD activities statewide
- Create a Collaboration Hub where information about providers of PD is in one place
  - Create a listserv to send information out, so the workforce does not have to seek out offerings, see recommendations for web site (Activity 4).
  - Visually display those groups who are most active in collaboration on a web site, share information about what is available, and how to access.

**Activity 2. Creating common criteria (standards) leading to the reciprocity of training where the identified standards are met.**

Our research shows that there are possibilities for training offered by one sector to meet the requirements for multiple audiences. The professions reviewed require clock hours with flexibility for the presenter who provides the training. The variety of methods range from training, conferences, observations, self-study, college courses, and online options.

The choice of what an individual selects as a professional development opportunity depends upon need, access, affordability, timing, and location. We also researched barriers and incentives in another Preschool Development Grant activity. We identified that the lack of opportunities was a barrier that impeded participation. By making more options available, with a range of cost, more local access, and shared learning, participation might increase.

We understand that while traditional training formats may not be the most effective way to improve practice on an ongoing basis, it can be an essential way to increase cross-sector learning. (WFPD unpublished, draft paper, 2019). If delivered with thoughtful design and based on principles of adult reflective learning, it will continue to meet the needs of some of our professional development populations. Training and conferences introduce content, provide opportunities to hear from experts in the fields, expose participants to emerging evidence-based practices, and encourage networking.

We recommend the following ways that training can be more readily used by cross-sector populations to meet ongoing professional expectations.

### *1. Documentation*

Providers of training provide certificates (hard copy or online) that contain title and brief description of topic, date, the number of hours, name and credential of the presenter, signed to verify attendance.

### *2. Qualifications of presenters*

Providers ensure that those who lead the training have expertise in the content area. Competence is demonstrated by one or more of the following criteria:

- an appropriate degree in the content
- lived experiences
- participation in a "train the trainer" series
- certification or specialized training in the content

### *3. Commitment to collaboration*

Organizations and agencies that seek to engage broader audiences understand there is a need to be clear for whom the content will be appropriate - in planning, marketing, and advertising.

Providers would work with the presenter to identify:

- the appropriate participants (not all content will be relevant for all sectors)
- the level of training (introductory, intermediate, advanced)
- a description that includes language that invites cross-sector participants
- a clear statement of content and expected outcomes

The provider distributes advertising and registration information to cross-sector partners for dissemination.

### *4. Design of the training*

Based on principles of research-based effective professional development, and an appreciation of adult learning and engagement, we believe the following elements be advanced:

- inclusion of reflective analysis realistic to the format of the session
- strategies to engage participants in an interactive component

- connection of theory to practice with an application to the workplace

#### 5. *Shared content that addresses competencies*

There are specified content areas for most professions, and there is a similarity in some of those areas. We do not include all the details on subject areas with this report, although we have collected that information. We recommend that future work include an analysis of content as related to the Spark NH Shared Professional Early Childhood Core Competencies (SPECCEC). The SPECCEC is intended as a resource for all professionals who work with and on behalf of expectant families, children from birth through grade 3, and their families with a particular focus on the fields of family support, health, and early learning. These competencies apply to the work professionals engage in with respect for each family's race, religion, language, ethnicity, culture, literacy, socioeconomic status, family configuration, and any other aspect of the family dynamic.

This work has begun a process that provides direction for additional collaboration. Having collected documentation on cross-sector requirements, we have a better understanding of what we have in common and where we might expand our partnerships. The Spark NH WFPD Committee commits our work to continue promoting shared effective professional development for those who work with and on behalf of young children and their families.

### **Activity 3. Identify opportunities and options for incentivizing cross-sector early childhood professionals to participate in the PD system.**

#### *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.

- 1) Assist directors and administrators to budget for PD and wage increases for staff who successfully increase their knowledge and skills
  - a) 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.
  - b) 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.
- 2) Provide additional resources for staff to attend college
  - a) Support for TEACH 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.

- b) 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.

#### 3) Increase opportunities to attend during the day

- a) 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.
- b) 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.

#### 4) 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 required 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. Ongoing 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.

- 5) 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

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

**Activity Four. Create a plan for a single website that integrates the currently dispersed PD systems that provide information about PD opportunities, job opportunities, and professional learning communities, and tracking of PD, licensing, and credentials.**

The committee evaluated each of the options. Based on our experiences with media trends and observations of colleagues' habits, we frequently choose professional development opportunities through direct notification. Email and listservs, from reliable and recognized sources, are read more than searching for offerings through viewing websites. Most of the organizations we reviewed send periodic emails to their constituencies with information and links to register. In most cases, they have websites that provide details and ways to register. Priorities in our work are to avoid duplication and capitalize on what our collaborators bring to the table. We feel that a viable alternative to the options examined is to manage a listserv process.

Several members currently manage listservs for their agencies. One that is popular is the platform Mailman <https://list.org/>. In our survey responses regarding collaboration done for another PDG area, the majority of respondents are interested in greater cooperation and sharing their professional development with other audiences. The process of participating in a listserv is less time consuming than entering data on a website. It is more efficient than creating and maintaining a new website. In our initial thinking, it would require investing in a staff person (part-time, perhaps a Spark employee who could add this to their responsibilities), who would set up, advertise, and manage the communications.

Hosting by a known entity with a cross-sector scope will help with reliability and reach to all early childhood professionals. Partners would send their PD content every month, and guidelines would set expectations (addressing our identified preferences, page one). Child Care Aware NH will continue to bring in groups who wish to avail themselves of that venue. The email will contain listings for each organization with direct links to information about the PD. Our research shows that many organizations currently have the information readily available on their sites and can quickly summarize each week's offerings.