Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

AUGUST 2023

SCHOOL READINESS CONSULTING

EARLY EDUCATOR INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE
Professional Educators. Professional Compensation. Prepared Children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Introduction

Working Toward Systems Change

In 2021, the Early Educator Investment Collaborative (The Collaborative) awarded the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation grants to eight recipients, specifically partnerships between institutes of higher education (IHEs), as principal investigators (PIs), and states, territories, and tribal nations. The goal of this grant program is to support partnerships and activities that enable recipients to overcome systemic barriers in creating and strengthening opportunities for students in their early care and education (ECE) educator preparation programs. The Collaborative subsequently partnered with School Readiness Consulting (SRC) to lead a learning and technical support community for grantees.

Two years into this opportunity, The Collaborative and SRC provided grantees with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, especially their celebrations and lessons learned, guided by curiosity about an overarching question: How have the IHEs made meaningful, systemic changes to address barriers on their campuses, in their communities, and in the field at large?

Why Systems Change?

For grantees, breaking down systemic barriers in early childhood care and education entails identifying and dismantling the entrenched obstacles and inequities that hinder access, quality, and outcomes in teacher preparation programs. Breaking down those barriers involves challenging and transforming the structures, policies, and practices that perpetuate disparities and limit opportunities for future teachers who are farthest from resources by addressing underlying structures and dynamics. The strategies implemented by grantees not only emphasize the significance of interpersonal connections but also underscore the enduring impact that relationship-based strategies can have in driving systemic change over the long term.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

02

The levers of systems change encompass a diverse array of interconnected factors that drive structural transformation. For grantees to bring about sustainable change, it is imperative that they possess a deep understanding of the complex forces at play in the system they seek to transform. With an understanding of the deep-seated causes of issues in the system, interventions can be designed to tackle root causes and bring about fundamental transformations.

This Report

For this report, our team examined the grantees' reflections on their work using an equity and systems change framework to understand their challenges, their solutions to those challenges, and the overall impact of the solutions. The framework, adapted from FSG's The Water of Systems Change, breaks down possible strategies for systems change into explicit levers (readily apparent approaches and strategies that can be leveraged for immediate and impactful change) and underlying levers (connections and ways of thinking that create the conditions for change) that were employed by IHEs in their work. The following sections of this report describe the strategies grantees used for systems change in relation to these levers and their reflections on next steps and sustainability.

GATHERING INSIGHTS

In order to better understand grantees' experiences, SRC collected their reflections on several questions about their work:

- How did the grant investment impact their work?

- How did the grant investment help support new opportunities?

- What are their biggest lessons learned and best practices?

Our team engaged with grantees using a variety of methods, including learning community surveys, 1:1 interviews, and grant reporting. The team reviewed data, transcripts, and documents from these sources and developed common themes across the grantees' experiences. We also made note of experiences that were unique but critical for some grantees' success (e.g., engagement strategies used by tribal colleges).

Strategies for Dismantling Systemic Barriers in Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Programs
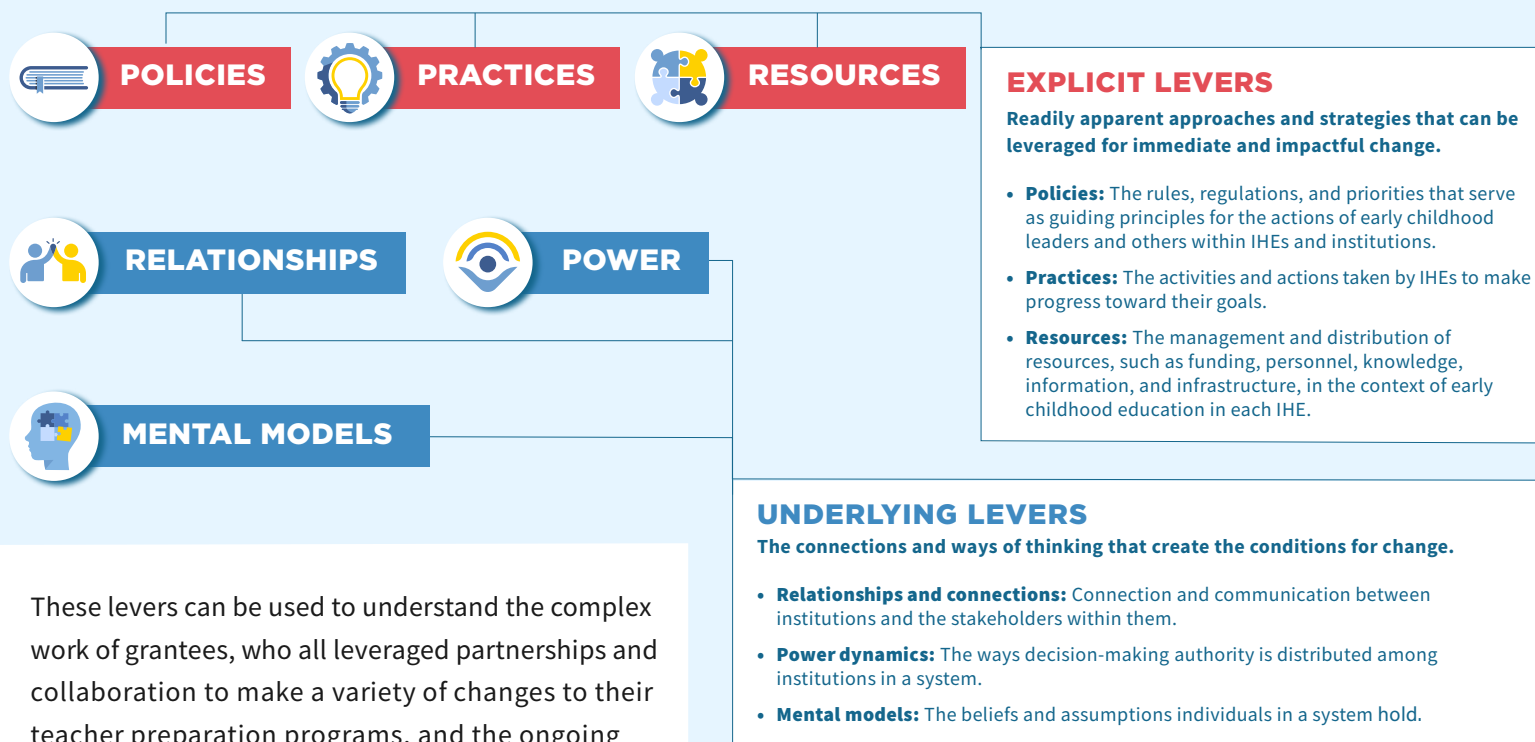
Key Components of Systems Change

The ongoing identification of systemic barriers and inequities students experience across early childhood higher education programs requires intentional effort. These barriers are often deeply embedded within the fabric of higher education programs and institutions and must be consistently uncovered and understood to foster more equitable opportunities for students and staff. Through this process, a greater understanding of the multifaceted nature of the system emerges, facilitating more effective navigation for grantees and their partners. From individual conversations with students, to meetings between IHEs, to surveys, to Photovoice, grantees have assessed the challenges and opportunities for change in their unique contexts. While no single individual or grantee can single-handedly pull on all the levers of systems change, understanding the landscape and their position within it empowers grantees to strategically engage with these levers.

The following systems change levers, adapted from FSG's The Water of Systems Change, demonstrate the necessary, interdependent, and multilevel strategies for sustainable systems change.

POLICIES PRACTICES RESOURCES

RELATIONSHIPS POWER

MENTAL MODELS

EXPLICIT LEVERS

Readily apparent approaches and strategies that can be leveraged for immediate and impactful change.

- **Policies:** The rules, regulations, and priorities that serve as guiding principles for the actions of early childhood leaders and others within IHEs and institutions.
- **Practices:** The activities and actions taken by IHEs to make progress toward their goals.
- **Resources:** The management and distribution of resources, such as funding, personnel, knowledge, information, and infrastructure, in the context of early childhood education in each IHE.

UNDERLYING LEVERS

The connections and ways of thinking that create the conditions for change.

- **Relationships and connections:** Connection and communication between institutions and the stakeholders within them.
- **Power dynamics:** The ways decision-making authority is distributed among institutions in a system.
- **Mental models:** The beliefs and assumptions individuals in a system hold.

These levers can be used to understand the complex work of grantees, who all leveraged partnerships and collaboration to make a variety of changes to their teacher preparation programs, and the ongoing challenges that stand in the way of true systems change in their IHEs. Ultimately, breaking down systemic barriers and creating effective systems change require collaboration and coordination among diverse actors, with a shared vision and a collective understanding of the system's complexity.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

05

How Did Grantees Leverage Policies, Practices, and Resources?

As the IHEs described their successes and lessons learned, the use of these explicit levers (policies, practices, and resources) was readily apparent in their work. These explicit levers of systems change often create some of the most immediate and measurable impacts on IHEs and their students. The ways institutions define and implement best practices and resource their vision and values have a direct impact on IHE students and those who serve them.

Policies: The rules, regulations, and priorities that serve as guiding principles for the actions of early childhood leaders and others within IHEs and institutions.

Grantees focused on centering equity in student recruitment and retention by revising the rules and requirements governing the admissions process, degree completion, and student advising.

Grantees learned that one size does not fit all in regard to recruitment and retention and have designed approaches, informed by data from students' lived experiences, that contribute to a diverse pipeline. Many students in grantees' ECE programs do not take "traditional" paths to enrollment in these programs, which has pushed grantees to evaluate admissions requirements and work toward better alignment with nontraditional credits. Further, grantees are more closely examining institutional transfer agreements to ensure they are equitable and relevant to students' experiences while pursuing their degrees. Degree completion requirements and supports were also evaluated and revised, particularly completed credit requirements and student advising.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

06

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

Grantees leveraged rule changes to help remove barriers for their students.

North Seattle College

Staff recognized that Spanish-speaking and Somali students were disproportionately and negatively impacted by the college's previous "residency requirement," which required a student to take 50% of their credits at North Seattle to earn their credential. The college changed this policy by lowering the requirement to 33%. This change provided more flexibility for students and increased the number of certificates issued to students who would not have earned them otherwise.

North Seattle College

ECE faculty learned that their degree programs had many barrier classes (classes that students find particularly difficult and that often lead to dropouts), including math and English. As a result, the ECE faculty worked collaboratively with departments across campus to provide high levels of support and redesign these courses. These changes will allow students to navigate their degree or certification pathways with more confidence and ultimately earn their credentials.

Georgia State University

The University System of Georgia reviewed its admissions process and acknowledged that testing requirements often present barriers for marginalized students hoping to pursue higher education and result in lower application rates. As a result, the system enacted a policy change that included waiving admission requirements related to standardized tests, which GSU implemented as a participating school. Staff at GSU anticipate that this change will be especially helpful for prospective students interested in ECE studies.

University of Colorado, Denver

Each IHE in the Colorado consortium has a degree access strategy. These strategies include the state's first online BA for ECE and rural AA to BA program. This program brings the second two years of the BA directly to rural community colleges and leverages the supports and services at the state universities to help support navigation and mentorship.

Grantees evaluated their program supports and advising practices to help strengthen student retention.

California State University, Sacramento

Staff identified a need to better understand the demographics of their program in order to provide effective support for students. As part of this effort, CSU staff analyzed program data to build evidence and make the case for strengthening culturally responsive supports for students, especially culturally responsive counseling. Staff also used this data to better understand their prospective student pipeline. Staff hope students will benefit from more tailored support.

College of Menominee Nation

Several years ago, staff in the Teacher Education Department recognized the need for more individualized advising to meet students' needs. In response to this need, they implemented a process of using audit sheets to help create more tailored experiences. This practice led to greater retention and growth. Recently, the success of this practice was also recognized by the entire college, and faculty across departments modeled their advising practices on those of the Teacher Education Department.

Practices: The activities and actions taken by IHEs to make progress toward their goals.

Grantees enhanced coursework offerings by creating alignment between coursework and professional experiences and by strengthening classes related to culturally relevant practices.

A key element of helping students feel prepared to begin their careers as professional educators is ensuring that their training has relevant, direct application to expectations they will face when they enter the workforce. Faculty at grantee institutions referenced available performance expectations and standards—for example, statewide teaching performance expectations and the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC's) Performance Standards and competencies. Faculty then reviewed the content of available courses to understand where to update content or create entirely new courses to meet gaps between the current curriculum and professional expectations.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

08

Grantees made efforts to better align their certification and degree programs with real-world professional experiences.

California State University, Sacramento

Faculty identified a need to strengthen their curriculum to align with broader preschool to third grade (P–3) efforts in the state, so their students can feel prepared as teachers to help children successfully transition to kindergarten and beyond. Using resources from the P–3 effort, faculty made adjustments to coursework and professional learning experiences. They plan to continue aligning with statewide efforts and hope these changes strengthen students' experiences.

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Faculty recognized the benefits of better aligning coursework with performance standards in the field, so their students enter the profession feeling more prepared. To achieve this improved alignment, faculty have been reviewing ECE workforce–related resources (especially NAEYC performance standards) and thinking about how to incorporate preparation to meet these standards into their coursework. They hope these updates lead to their students feeling more confident as they graduate from the program.

North Seattle College

As part of efforts to better understand the journeys of prospective students, staff learned that students—and especially working ECE professionals hoping to earn their credentials—take many paths to applying and enrolling in the program. To better serve these students, North Seattle worked with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families to launch a credit-bearing, community-based program that aligns with the 12-credit certificate that serves as the foundation of the higher education ECE pathway. They hope this can create another on-ramp for current and future teachers.

Many grantees focused on strengthening educator preparation for teaching dual language learner (DLL) students and embedding anti-racist teaching practices. This was accomplished at several levels of grantees' programs, including faculty training (preparing professors), course offerings (preparing students), and student evaluations (assessing whether these efforts are working). Grantees described how faculty and staff at their colleges and universities participated in training on culturally responsive and anti-racist teaching, and best practices for preparing DLL teachers. These trainings helped to prepare faculty to teach newly added upper-level courses that emphasize anti-racist teaching frameworks and teaching DLL children. One grantee shared that these efforts also led to developing a suite of tools designed to measure teaching competencies pertaining to DLL teaching and gauging where students need the most support.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

09

California State University, Sacramento

Staff recognized that many of their students go on to teach in DLL settings and multilingual communities. As a result, they wanted to strengthen their coursework so students felt more prepared to teach DLLs. They achieved this by adding several DLL-focused components to the program. The school began offering upper-level courses focused on supporting DLLs and literacy in multilingual contexts. The program now offers six degree options for students that emphasize anti-racist teaching frameworks and multilingual contexts: Teaching, Multilingual Teaching, Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP) Mild/Moderate, ITEP Extensive Support, Early Childhood Teaching, and P–3 Teaching. Faculty also developed an assessment tool for measuring DLL teacher competencies. CSU Sacramento hopes to see an increase in student confidence as a result of this programming.

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Faculty sought to strengthen the equity focus of their curriculum. They reviewed and updated their ECE courses to better align with the NAEYC's Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement, which prioritizes self-reflection and respectful listening on the part of those involved in preparing and developing ECE educators. Faculty also participated in an intensive, year-long professional development experience called Ho'ãla Hou. This experience focused on ways faculty could align their teaching and curriculum with Hawaiian culture and traditions to support student success and encourage degree completion.

University of Colorado, Denver

This grantee team has developed an IHE consortium of the four largest BA-granting institutions in the state and the overall community college system. As part of this consortium they have formed a faculty community of practice designed to enhance curriculum that builds from the strengths of each program and in alignment to the *Transforming the Workforce* report. This faculty learning community has focused on elements like inclusion, trauma-informed practices, understanding student challenges in praxis exams, and culturally responsive practices.

1. A teaching approach using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice.* Teachers College Press (p. 31)..

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

10

Grantees made investments in resources and supports that were driven by the actual needs of their students.

Nontraditional wraparound services and supports were cited as an area of innovation for grantees. Examples included monetary supports such as prepaid gas cards, prepaid general credit cards or gift certificates, stipends for academic success, and even nonmonetary items such as winter coats. Grantees shared that the decisions required to implement these resources and to revise their policies related to credits were possible only because of an investment in truly understanding barriers their students were facing.

SCALING UP, SCALING OUT, AND SCALING DEEP

"Scaling up" is focused on shifting policy, structures, and systems; "scaling out" is about replicating successful innovations; "scaling deep" involves bringing about change at the cultural and personal levels.[2] Scaling deep recognizes that culture plays a powerful role in shifting systemic barriers, and change must be deeply rooted in people, relationships, communities, and cultures. By centering the needs of students through deep and culturally relevant relational work, grantees are creating opportunities to establish new norms and approaches that better meet students' needs.

A key understanding that grantees developed was the acknowledgment that their students come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs. One of the biggest needs grantees tried to meet involved the language of instruction and supporting materials. Grantees described offering not only specific courses in students' home languages but also entire degree programs in a language other than English (mainly Spanish). Grantees also made efforts to translate all other materials associated with the degree program (recruitment materials, newsletters, handbooks, guidebooks, and so on) into students' home languages. While Spanish has been a primary focus for grantees, they are also working to offer courses and materials in other languages, such as Russian, Arabic, and Somali.

2. Riddell, D., & Moore, M. L. (2015, October). *Scaling out, scaling up, scaling deep: Advancing systemic social innovation and the learning processes to support it*. J. W. McConnell Family Foundation. https://mcconnellfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ScalingOut_Nov27A_AV_BrandedBleed.pdf

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

11

Grantees undertook several language and translation efforts.

North Seattle College

Staff identified a need to better serve students with home languages other than English, as students who were just learning English struggled to complete their degrees. Staff implemented several efforts to better serve these students. They redesigned the Washington State Early Learning Career Planning Portal to include a translate button located clearly on the page, allowing providers to access the tool in their preferred languages. They also created and distributed adoptable course shells for the statewide common courses that make up the initial certificate in Spanish and Somali and are completing packaging the course shells in Mandarin and Arabic. Lastly, the college library has translated key documents into multiple languages. These forms include instructions for accessing college email, activating and navigating the college's student management systems, accessing and using Zoom, and accessing the many services the library offers. Faculty are slated to begin instruction for the college's Spanish BA program in September 2023 with 25 students and are looking forward to their students' success.

A resounding highlight of the grant has been flexibility and autonomy to fund unorthodox, hyperlocal efforts to build trust. Grantees accomplished this through investment in culturally relevant support and resources for their programs, such as the employment of key community members to help students navigate challenges. Grantees also used funds to provide food at meetings and express gratitude to speakers and guests through honorary gifts.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

Grantees invested in culturally relevant features to help students feel at home and appreciated.

College of Menominee Nation

Staff wanted to implement more culturally relevant support for students, hoping that approaches that are more deeply rooted in their indigenous culture would resonate with students more deeply. The college used the following approaches. They created and hired for an indigenous wellness director position to provide students with culturally relevant health resources. Staff implemented talking circles with staff and students to help facilitate difficult conversations and form deeper connections. They also implemented an elder mentor model that supports students by creating culturally relevant accountability to help students balance their studies, family obligations, and traditional cultural obligations (such as extended funeral practices). Feedback on these efforts from both students and the community overall has been positive.

Salish Kootenai College

Similarly, staff felt there was more opportunity to infuse their program with elements that honor and appreciate students' cultures and community. The college highlighted the following investments as part of their efforts. Staff created a tribal policy coordinator position to bring Native voice to policymaking spaces. They also provided food and honorary gifts during meetings to build community and express gratitude. Staff shared that these efforts have been successful and appreciated by students and the community.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

12

How Did Grantees Navigate Relationships and Connections, Power Dynamics, and Mental Models?

While strategies focused on policy, practice, and resources have clear impact, sustainable change will not happen without addressing the underlying connections and ways of thinking in a system. The work of changing early childhood higher education systems often means changing the relationships and dynamics between the early childhood leaders who make up that system. In addition to pulling the more explicit levers of systems change available to them, grantees identified strategies they are using to grow the foundations and create the conditions needed to maintain progress and enable further changes to best support their students. These strategies include strengthening and creating connections, shifting power dynamics, and changing mental models.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

13

Grantees recognized the importance of capacity, structure, and inclusion in sustaining the momentum of their partnerships.

Through their efforts to both build and sustain partnerships, grantees learned that partnerships must have a "home"—specifically, there must be a structure in which they exist and the capacity to bolster this structure. Many grantees found success with forming committees or similar structures to house their partnerships, which allowed for easier, more straightforward communication and scheduling for meetings. Meetings were particularly effective when they occurred in a reliable cadence, so members of these partnerships could plan accordingly and hold time in their busy schedules. Grantees described that these committees and other structures were most effective when there was capacity to keep them organized, usually in the form of a staff person responsible for managing the details, and when committees were inclusive of stakeholders in key organizations and positions.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

Grantees invested in culturally relevant features to help students feel at home and appreciated.

University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

Faculty across the University of Hawai'i system desired to connect in a more substantial way to sustain the partnerships needed to be effective in strengthening their ECE programs and departments. Members across four different ECE departments have been able to connect via the Program Curriculum Committee structure, and ECE programs also participate in communities of practice. This has led to stronger connections and knowledge sharing.

University of Nebraska

Staff are ramping up their efforts related to the grant and wanted to start developing an effective apprenticeship program for students. They began partnering across many different entities (Advisory Board, ECE organizations, community colleges, and regulatory bodies). These partnerships will allow staff to create meaningful apprenticeship experiences in ECE programs and ensure there's a favorable policy environment for students to have success with the apprenticeship program.

California State University, Sacramento

Staff acknowledged that multiple levels of connection would help enhance partnerships. They highlighted that collaborations need to be both external (state universities, community feeder colleagues, and clinical partners) and internal (campus teams and professional partners). This helps ideas and funding move in all the directions needed to build momentum for change.

University of Colorado, Denver

Legislative efforts such as a new Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool have allowed early childhood leaders in Colorado to work with bipartisan legislators and IHEs to make systemic changes to Colorado's early childhood landscape and particularly preschool.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

14

Grantees learned many lessons about how to balance competing priorities and keep partners meaningfully engaged.

Competing priorities among faculty members and between partners posed a challenge as grantees tried to make decisions regarding their work. These misalignments often revolved around different ideas of what their most critical challenges were and how to solve them. Grantees described how stepping back and developing a shared understanding of priorities, solutions, and timelines was key for moving forward.

Grantees also described challenges with keeping partners on track. They acknowledged that, at first, they did not consider their work a project in the traditional sense and consequently did not establish the appropriate project management structures. This made it difficult for them to keep track of delays and other disruptions along the way.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

Grantees advocated for decision-making power and learned how to negotiate between individuals and institutions while forming effective partnerships.

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa; California State University, Sacramento

Both of these IHEs referenced situations when partners did not align on next steps and priorities, and they had to find ways to renew their focus and re-create alignment. The IHEs allowed partners to speak about their individual needs, while noting the common issues they faced. Highlighting these issues allowed partners to see what they did have in common and take steps forward in alignment.

Georgia State University

Staff identified the need to review transfer agreements between IHEs, as these documents are imperfect and require reflection to make sure they best serve students and minimize discrepancies in transfer students' credits. The GSU team is working with the University System of Georgia to begin to review their institutional transfer agreements and ensure they are current and equitable.

University of Colorado, Denver

This IHE leveraged the grant to have higher education at all decision-making tables. The grant funded the Director of ECE Workforce Policy, who is seated at the Department of Higher Education and all policy tables, supporting the formation of the creation of the new Department of Early Education and Universal Preschool.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

15

Grantees shifted toward seeing their students and communities as sources of knowledge, innovation, and strength for their programs.

In the systems change framework, the mental models held by members of the system are the foundation for all other levers and are usually the hardest to shift. In achieving the successes and using the strategies described earlier, grantees demonstrated that they are ready and willing to shift their ways of thinking.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

Grantees normalized centering students' unique cultural identities and seeing their needs as ways to strengthen their programs instead of detracting from their success.

College of Menominee Nation, Salish Kootenai College

Both these IHEs highlighted the importance of making investments that supported their students' indigenous cultures. Some of those strategies were highlighted previously in the report (hiring staff from the community such as the indigenous wellness director and tribal policy coordinator). The IHEs also made additional, less orthodox investments to support students, such as providing tuition and book support assistance, computer/technology access, and a life/work balance stipend to support childcare, gas, and other school-related expenses. These efforts help reduce the barriers students face in completing their degrees.

North Seattle College

Previously in the report, North Seattle's translation efforts were highlighted and also serve as examples of shifting mental models about instruction in English and valuing students' home languages.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

16

Grantees recognize that communities hold funds of knowledge and that community members are the experts of their own experiences.

University of Nebraska

Participants in the Responsive Equitable System for Preparing Early Childhood Teachers—RESPECT effort (a strategic effort across Nebraska to increase the number of diverse and well-prepared ECE educators by addressing the barriers they face in entering their careers) sought to ensure their work is anchoring in the actual needs of ECE students and communities as they ramp up. They implemented a co-constructed research protocol that includes Photovoice,[3] domain analysis, focus groups, and interviews, in which community partner researchers from local communities are identified, trained, and compensated for their work. This has resulted in a plan that is a responsive, with buy-in from stakeholders and communities.

College of Menominee Nation

As previously shared, the college made many efforts to add culturally responsive supports for students. Specifically, the college implemented an elder mentor model for students, rather than bringing in outside counseling support, which honors the knowledge already present in the community. The college's project director has involved both the Head Start director and the tribal education director in discussions about offering more expansive professional development support and training opportunities to ensure decisions are made with consideration of the community's indigenous culture.

As evidenced by the many approaches grantees have taken toward systems change, ultimately multiple points of intervention are most effective for creating change. All levers described in this model of systems change are critical for achieving shifts that are meaningful and sustainable, but in the end, doing so is possible only through true collaboration and community-building around a shared strategic vision.

3. Photovoice is a participatory-action method initially developed by Carol C. Wang and Mary Ann Burris in 1993. Photovoice seeks to address a particular issue by giving cameras to people who are directly affected by that issue, so that they can document and communicate their experience through their own lens. The resulting photographs are exhibited for public display in an effort to engage the community in dialogue and facilitate positive social change.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

17

Moving
Forward

Lingering Challenges

As grantees experienced success with the strategies described earlier, they also reflected on challenges they continue to face and hope to solve in the future. Although ECE workforce shortages have been a lingering issue in the field overall, grantees described challenges posed by shortages exacerbated by the pandemic. Students hoping to become early childhood educators are met with low wages and nonexistent benefits, which are made all the more jarring by comparison to K–12 compensation packages. Current educators hoping to further their education or earn additional credentials face overwhelming workloads in their ECE programs, with little room to pursue anything else. Consequently, grantees must continue to innovate and find ways to ensure that their degree programs are relevant and accessible. Grantees also highlighted staff shortages at their colleges and universities, especially for administrative positions that are critical for keeping operations afloat. Like ECE educator shortages, these shortages increase the workloads of existing faculty and staff, causing grantees to focus on maintaining day-to-day tasks rather than investing time and resources in innovation.

A SNAPSHOT OF REAL-WORLD CHALLENGES

As part of this grant, Hawai'i partnered with the RAND Corporation to conduct **a study of Hawai'i's ECE workforce** and found evidence that sharply reflects the challenges grantees outlined in their reports and interviews. Some of the main findings include:

- When accounting for the cost of living in Hawai'i, wages for ECE workers are not competitive with careers requiring similar education and experience.
- ECE workers shared concerns about long hours and limited time for planning.
- The workforce faces limited recruitment and retention, mostly spurred by limited incentives and support for ECE workers to obtain credentials and degrees.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

19

Notes on Sustainability

Finally, the grantees are each at different stages of progress with their programs and grant-funded initiatives; some are on the cusp of sunsetting their funds, while others are just ramping up. Grantees who are thinking about the next steps after their grant funds are spent down took some time to reflect with us about the future.

GRANTEES PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

Several grantees shared how they are thinking about the sustainability of their work and their next steps. While they will have to seek additional funding to continue some of their activities, many have been thoughtfully embedded into their work:

- The grant helped fund work to improve and strengthen curricula and courses; this work has already been implemented and carried on by existing faculty, embedding changes and improving their sustainability.
- The grant also funded professional development time for faculty and staff that greatly increased their knowledge, which gives faculty the tools to carry their work forward and generate new ideas.
- Some new positions were funded in partnership with other sources, allowing these positions to be maintained regardless of funding source.
- The leveraging of funds of knowledge in local communities means that many of the culturally relevant practices grantees implemented can be maintained and carried on by existing faculty and staff regardless of funding source.
- Their experience with this grant helped grantees prepare to apply for other funding, creating an opportunity to focus on the sustainability of these systems change efforts.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

20

APPENDIX: The Grantees and Their Work

The eight colleges and universities participating in this grant program are incredibly diverse and are located across the country. The table that follows shares more information about the grantees and their work. **While all grantees are working on areas of impact for this grant, we have highlighted the areas where they have surfaced as leaders and innovators.**

PROFESSIONAL ALIGNMENT

Ensuring curricula and coursework are aligned with the actual professional experiences students will have when they graduate the program and move into teaching positions.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM

Ensuring the program curriculum is responsive to students' needs and, in turn, prepares them to be responsive to their own students' needs as teachers.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SUPPORTS

Ensuring support and resources available to students in the program meet students' needs.

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND LISTENING

Ensuring partnerships at all levels are effective and maintained and that stakeholders feel their voices are being heard.

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

21

Grantee	About the Grantee	Current Focus Areas and Strengths			
		Professional Alignment	Culturally Responsive Curriculum	Culturally Responsive Supports	Building Community and Listening
College of Menominee Nation	The College of Menominee Nation is a Land Grant IHE chartered by the Menominee People. **Kenesha, WI** **173 students** **16 faculty**			X	X
Salish Kootenai College	Salish Kootenai College is an IHE grounded in the cultures of the Séliš, Ksanka, and Qlispé People of the Flathead Nation. **Pablo, MT** **621 students** **135 faculty**			X	X
Georgia State University	Georgia State University is a public IHE. **Atlanta metro area, GA** **44,000+ students** **1,600+ faculty**			X	
California State University, Sacramento	CSU Sacramento is a public IHE. **Sacramento, CA** **30,000+ students** **1,706 faculty**	X	X		
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa	The University of Hawai'i at Mãnoa is a public IHE. **Honolulu, HI** **19,074 students** **1,345 faculty**	X	X		
North Seattle College	North Seattle is an IHE and part of the Seattle Colleges network. **Seattle, WA** **6,217 students** **551 faculty**		X	X	
University of Colorado, Denver	The University of Colorado, Denver is a public research IHE. **Denver, CO** **15,000 students** **2,000 faculty**	X			X
University of Nebraska	The University of Nebraska is a public IHE. **Lincoln, NE** **19,000+ students** **1,000+ faculty**				X

Strategies for Systems Change: Lessons Learned from the Transforming Early Educator Lead Teacher Preparation Programs Through Multi-Partner Innovation Grant Program

22

SCHOOL
READINESS
CONSULTING

EARLY EDUCATOR
INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE
Professional Educators. Professional Compensation. Prepared Children.