REPORT 7

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE IN GEORGIA

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Georgia's Preschool Development Grant | BIRTH THROUGH FIVE

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE IN GEORGIA
NEEDS ASSESSMENT: REPORT 7

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Key Terms	Definitions
PDG B-5	Preschool Development Grant, Birth through Five
ACES	Adverse childhood experiences
B-5	Birth through five
CACDS	Cross Agency Child Data System
CDA	Child Development Associate credential
DECAL	Department of Early Care and Learning, Bright from the Start
Dual language learner	Children whose home language is a language other than English
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
GaPDS	Georgia Professional Development System
GELDS	Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards
Georgia's Pre-K	Georgia's universal Pre-K program funded by the Lottery System of Georgia
GSE	Georgia Standards of Excellence
GTA	Georgia Training Approval
Head Start/ Early Head Start	Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide free learning and development services to children B-5 from low-income families.
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a federal act that provides funding for early education services to children with disabilities
LITTLE	Lifting Infants and Toddlers Through Language Rich Experiences
Mixed-delivery system	Infrastructure that recognizes the need for differentiation of services based on individual community needs
PEACH	Planning Educational Activities for CHildren
PLC	Professional learning community
PSN	Peer Support Network
Quality Rated	Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system
Rising K STP	Rising Kindergarten Summer Transition Program
Rising Pre-K STP	Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program
TARO	Temporary Alternate Rating Option

INTRODUCTION

In December 2018, Georgia was awarded an initial Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and the US Department of Education. This initial grant provided Georgia with a unique opportunity to strengthen its early childhood care and education system-level framework and better align and further expand critical birth-through-five services and programs. A key component of Georgia's initial PDG B-5 5 was a requirement for states to conduct a system-level Needs Assessment. The goal of the Needs Assessment was to analyze the state's existing mixed-delivery system of programs and services to determine how well Georgia was meeting the needs of families of children ages birth through five. In December 2019, Georgia was awarded a three-year renewal PDG B-5 through December 2023 to continue the activities started with the initial PDG B-5 and to address the gaps identified by the Needs Assessment.

Data collection for Georgia's Needs Assessment was conducted in the summer and fall of 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic began as the state's PDG B-5 leadership team was finalizing the results of the Needs Assessment. In addition to delaying publication of the Needs Assessment, the pandemic also delayed the state's ability to finish other projects in the initial grant and begin new projects in the renewal grant. State leaders used the PDG B-5 opportunity to collect additional data and conduct analyses to better understand the pandemic's impact on vital ECCE services.

The findings from Georgia's Needs Assessment are organized in seven distinct parts that highlight key topics. For convenience, these results are published in two forms: as a comprehensive, full report available at http://www.decal.ga.gov/BftS/PreschoolDevelopmentGrant.aspx and as seven standalone reports. This is the seventh of the seven standalone reports.

The Needs Assessment provides a snapshot of Georgia's understanding of its early childhood system. It encompasses the conditions and demographics of the state's birth-through-five population and the types of supports the state provides its youngest children and their families. It also details what is *known* about Georgia's early childhood system and, more importantly, what is *not known.*

This report details and identifies opportunities for strengthening Georgia's early childhood care and education (ECCE) workforce. This report begins by highlighting supports available to the ECCE workforce, such as the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS), followed by specific findings that illustrate challenges the workforce faces, such as low compensation and high turnover. This report concludes by discussing needs and challenges for specific populations identified during the stakeholder engagement sessions of the Needs Assessment.

The other six standalone reports cover other aspects of Georgia's Needs Assessment. Report 1 provides an overview of the Needs Assessment. It explains the methodology around the Needs Assessment and summarizes the key findings. Report 2 defines key terms in Georgia's PDG B-5 work and presents system-level findings. The other reports cover the following topics: family demographics and family engagement (Report 3), data and research (Report 4), access to early childhood programs and services in Georgia (Report 5), and the quality of early childhood programs and services in Georgia (Report 6). See the appendix for the Needs Assessment Crosswalk, which lists where among the seven reports each requirement of the Needs Assessment is addressed. The findings related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be issued in subsequent reports.

PROCESS AND METHODS

In 2018, Governor Brian Kemp designated the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) as the lead agency for the state's PDG B-5 work. As the lead agency, DECAL managed the implementation of the Needs Assessment, including developing the methodology, reviewing existing research, managing and conducting data collection, analyzing data, and ensuring that federal guidelines for the Needs Assessment were met. Multiple methods and various sources were used to collect data for the Needs Assessment. Specific methods included conducting surveys and focus groups, analyzing administrative data, reviewing existing evaluation and research studies, and providing opportunities for overall stakeholder engagement. Specific data sources included Georgia's Cross-Agency Child Data System (CACDS), the American Community Survey from the US Census Bureau, and administrative data from state agencies that serve Georgia's B-5 population and their families. Workforce data from the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS) and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics were also used to inform this report.

CURRENT WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS

GEORGIA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

 GaPDS (www.gapds.decal.ga.gov) is a centralized repository for workforce data for early learning professionals. The workforce data in the system include credentials, higher education coursework, professional learning hours, and employment history for professionals who provide one of the following: (1) direct services to children and families: B-5 teachers (infant, toddler, preschool, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Georgia's Pre-K, child care directors, family learning home providers, school-age teachers, and home visitors) or (2) indirect services to the early learning workforce, including trainers, coaches, and state agency staff.

The system also includes Georgia Training Approval (GTA), the state's mechanism for approving trainers and their trainings. In Georgia, licensing regulations require staff working in

licensed child care centers or family child care learning homes to complete at least 10 hours of training annually. These trainings must be approved by GTA.

While enrolling in the GaPDS is voluntary for most audiences, as of March 30, 2020, there were 118,210 users in the system. Registration and use of the system benefits the enrolled professionals. Through GaPDS, early learning professionals can create and maintain a GaPDS profile, track their degrees and credentials, search for approved trainings, register for all DECAL and some non-DECAL trainings, and apply to become an approved trainer. Additionally, to be eligible to receive scholarships and financial bonuses from DECAL Scholars and for programs to participate in Quality Rated, Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system, professionals must have an active GaPDS profile.

DECAL SCHOLARS

Through federal Child Care and Development Block Grant funding, DECAL Scholars (www.decalscholars.com) supports early learning professionals in attaining degrees and credentials in early childhood education by providing free educational counseling, scholarships, and financial bonuses. DECAL Scholars includes three primary programs: scholarships, awards, and incentives. The Scholarships Program provides tuition assistance to eligible applicants participating in an approved degree or credential program. The Awards Program provides a one-time bonus upon completion of an approved credential or degree. The Incentives Program provides bonus payments after a participant completes a degree to encourage retention in the field. As shown in Table 1, DECAL Scholars awarded $3,678,306 to support 4,132 early learning professionals in state fiscal year (SFY) 2020.

Table 1. DECAL Scholars Awards for SFY 2020 (07/01/2019–06/30/2020)

Program	Number of Recipients	Amount Awarded
Scholarships	2,433	$2,060,156
Awards	500	$709,000
Incentives	1,199	$909,150
Total	**4,132**	**$3,678,306**

Source: DECAL administrative data

Workforce Resources

Georgia has invested significant resources in developing robust supports for the early learning workforce. Table 2 provides information on the resources and tools.

Table 2. Tools and Resources for the Early Learning Workforce

Tool / Resource	Description	Access
Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards	The GELDS are a continuum of skills, behaviors, and concepts that children develop birth to age five. They are divided into age groups and serve as a framework for learning. The GELDS are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) for K-12, and the Work Sampling System.	www.gelds.ga.gov
Workforce Knowledge and Competencies	Georgia's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies (WKCs) guide the development and delivery of quality professional learning opportunities for Georgia's early learning and school-age workforce. The WKCs answer the question, "What should early learning and school-age professionals working with young children know and do?" The WKCs provide a framework for trainers, coaches, and other professional learning specialists to create learning experiences that directly address the individual needs of each professional working with early learning and school-age children.	https://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/EarlyLearningSchoolAgeWKCs.pdf
Planning Education Activities for CHildren	Planning Educational Activities for CHildren (PEACH) is an interactive website with thousands of high-quality, developmentally appropriate activities available. The activities are designed for children from birth to age five and are directly linked to the GELDS. Users can create and share lesson plans.	http://peach.decal.ga.gov/app/
Professional Learning Community Facilitator Training Program	A professional learning community (PLC) is a group of people who come together to share their challenges or concerns about working with young children and their families and learn to improve their practices over time. The PLC Facilitator Training develops skilled facilitators who assist educator PLCs as they identify issues that affect children's outcomes, examine their own work, and try out new strategies. The PLC Facilitator Program equips facilitators with tools to effectively implement and sustain PLCs as a job-embedded professional learning strategy in various early care and education settings.	
Quality Rated Peer Support Network	The Peer Support Network (PSN) was created by child care providers to share ideas, success stories, and lessons learned during the Quality Rated experience. The PSN is open to all programs interested in earning or increasing their Quality Rated star rating. Topics of discussion are guided by the interests and needs of the participants.	

FINDINGS

Findings from the Needs Assessment highlight four specific challenges related to the early learning workforce: (1) difficulty in credentialing, hiring, and retaining professionals; (2) low workforce compensation; (3) specific workforce development needs; and (4) professional learning needs.

WORKFORCE CREDENTIALS

Overall, the early childhood care and education workforce has relatively low levels of formal educational attainment in child care. As reported in 2016, 47% of Georgia's early childhood educators are estimated not to have any credential.[1] Among the 53% of early learning professionals who are credentialed, the majority have attained an entry-level credential or a Career Level 4–7 (ranging from a Child Development Associate, or CDA, to an associate degree) or they possess a non-ECCE degree (see Table 3). GaPDS career levels can be accessed at https://gapds.decal.ga.gov/Documents/CareerLevels.pdf.

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[1] Estimate from DECAL administrative data, with baseline data from: Georgia State University: Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, & The University of Georgia: Carl Vinson Institute of Government. (2016). *Economic impact of the early care and education industry in Georgia.* http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/EconImpactReport.pdf

Table 3. Professionals Registered in GaPDS by Career Level

	Directors	Assistant Directors	Lead Teachers	Assistant Teachers	Family Child Care Providers	Home Visitors
Career Level 1–3 • Less than 3 years of experience • No formal credential	28%	35%	22%	37%	41%	11%
Career Level 4–7 • Unrelated degree • CDA or Paraprofessional Certification • Technical Certificate of Credit (EC/CD) • Technical Certificate Diploma (EC/CD) • Associate (EC/CD))	52%	54%	40%	54%	50%	72%
Career Level 8–9 • Bachelor's degree (EC/CD) • Teaching Certification (EC/CD)	10%	8%	23%	7%	4%	17%
Career Level 10–12 • Master's degree (EC/CD) • Specialist degree (EC/CD) • Doctoral degree (PhD, EdD)	10%	3%	15%	2%	5%	0%

Based on career level information from GaPDS, it is important to note that most teachers are meeting the minimal credentialing requirements for their job position; however, they are not exploring options beyond the minimum requirement. This includes pursuing credentials specific to their roles and the populations they support. For example, only 8.5% of infant and toddler teachers in GaPDS report having a credential specific to the development of infants and toddlers (see Figure 1A). To plan high-quality learning experiences for children, professionals need credentials specific to the age, background, and specific needs of the children they serve. Further, while lead teachers in Georgia's Pre-K Program and center directors are likely to be in

higher career level categories, lead infant and toddler teachers often have fewer credentials, thus placing them in far lower career level categories (see Figure 1B).

Figure 1A. Number of Infant and Toddler Teachers by Credentials or Degrees

Legend: ■ Infant Toddler Specific Credentials   ■ Credentials in Another Specialty Area

Values by category:
- CDA in Infant Toddler: 952
- TCC in Infant Toddler: 5
- CDA in Another Area: 718
- Parapro Certificate: 1110
- TCC in Another Area: 2118
- Associate Degree: 1150
- Bachelor's Degree: 1722
- Master's Degree: 632
- Specialist Degree: 51
- Doctorate: 19
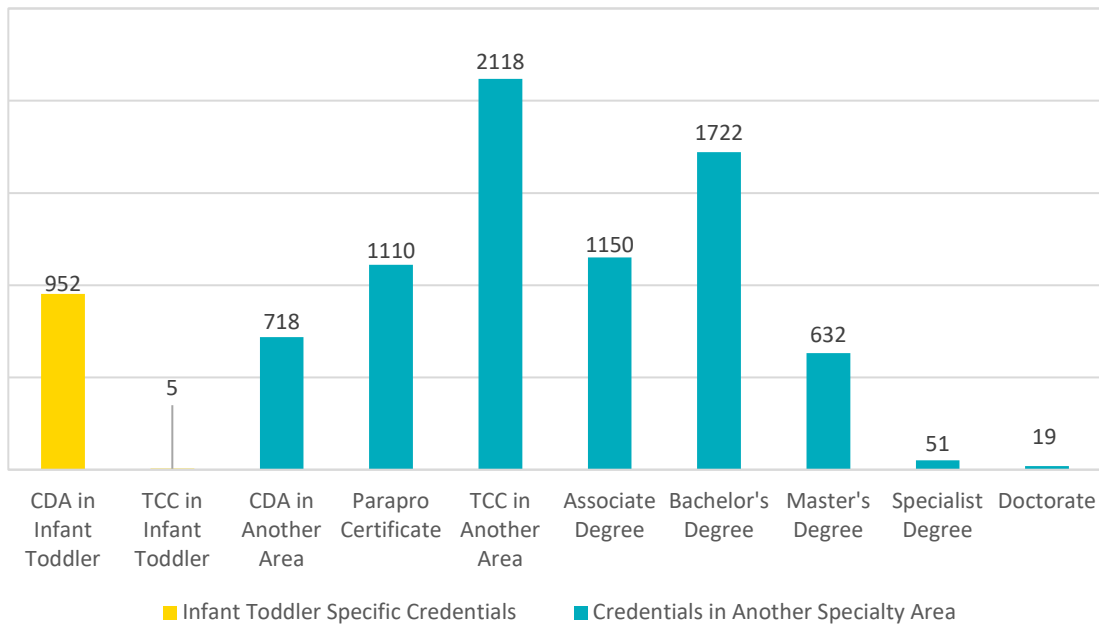
Figure 1B. Lead Teacher Career Levels by Age Group Served

Legend: ■ Infant   ■ Toddler   ■ Preschool   ■ Georgia's Pre-K   ■ School Age
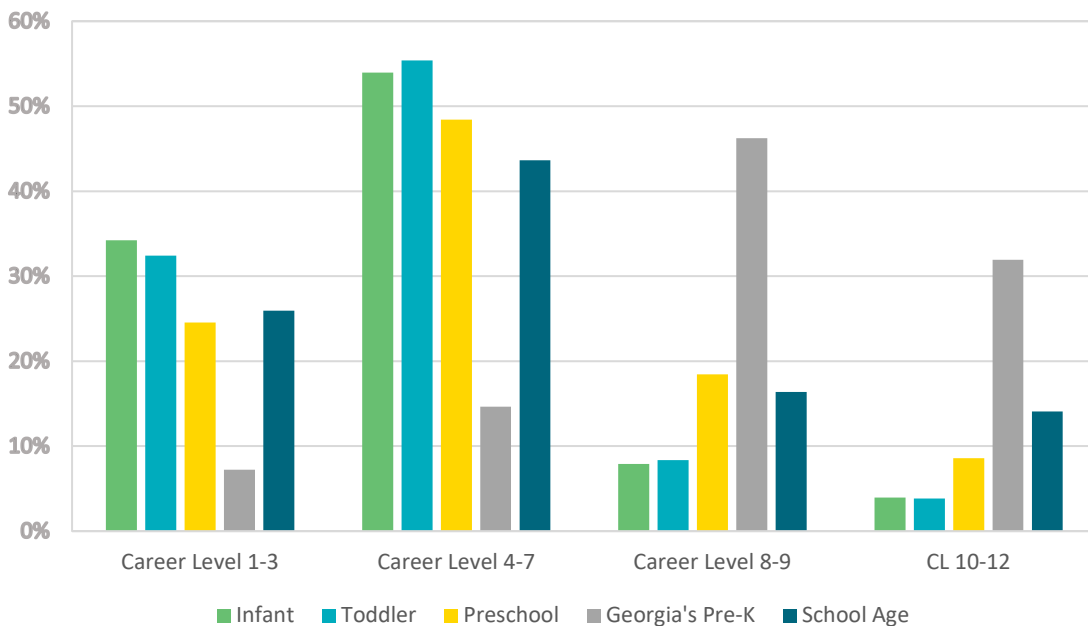
These findings highlight a need to develop policies and funding structures to support career pathways, both for supporting early learning professionals to gain initial credentials and for providing opportunities to increase the number of specialized credentials. Stakeholder feedback, especially from program administrators, child care resource and referral staff, and families, also supports the need to increase professional learning opportunities targeted to professionals working with specific populations: infants and toddlers, dual language learners, and school-age children.

WORKFORCE COMPENSATION

Low compensation is an ongoing challenge for early childhood professionals and continues to be an issue because compensation is often tied to families' ability to cover the cost of care and to insufficient public funds. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics,[2] the average estimated income for those in child care occupations ("childcare workers"[3]) was $21,510 per year; hotel desk clerks and restaurant cooks earn similar wages. Moreover, child care workers—which excludes preschool teachers, teaching assistants, and administrators— received about 34% less than manicurists and pedicurists, 34% less than preschool teachers, and 30% less than health care support workers. Preschool teachers earn $32,540 per year compared to kindergarten teachers, who average $57,490 each year (see Table 4).

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2 US Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). May 2019 state occupational employment and wage estimates: Georgia. https://www.bls.gov/oes/2019/may/oes_ga.htm

3 Note that "childcare workers" excludes preschool teachers, assistant teachers, and administrative staff.

Table 4. Average Annual Wages in Georgia by Occupation

Occupation	Mean Annual Wage
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	$21,440
Childcare Workers[a]	$21,510
Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	$22,360
Cooks, Restaurant	$26,030
Healthcare Support Occupations	$30,880
Manicurists and Pedicurists	$32,350
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	$32,540
Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	$42,780
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	$45,410
Career/Technical Education Teachers, Postsecondary	$51,120
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	$54,440
Architectural and Civil Drafters	$55,360
Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education	$57,490
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	$58,190
Registered Nurses	$69,590
Education Administrators, Kindergarten through Secondary	$96,110
Electrical Engineers	$98,240
Information Security Analysts	$99,420

[a] Note that "childcare workers" excludes preschool teachers, assistant teachers, and administrative staff.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2019. May 2019 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates: Georgia. https://www.bls.gov/oes/2019/may/oes_ga.htm

Georgia's Pre-K Program has been a state leader in providing compensation comparable to credentials. The program has also made significant strides in increasing wage and credential requirements for lead teachers. In school year 2020, 95% of lead teachers had a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or higher, and the average salary was $38,987.50.[4]

WORKFORCE RETENTION

According to the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council, the national turnover rate for preschool teachers remains relatively consistent at 28.1%, while the turnover rate for

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4 DECAL administrative data

child care workers is 29.4%.[5] Most early childhood professionals cite low compensation as the reason for leaving the industry.

In Georgia, research shows that such usual high rates of turnover are not as commonplace in higher Quality Rated centers and in Georgia's Pre-K Program.[6] It is likely that increased compensation and access to benefits in higher-rated centers contributes to improved rates of retention. Additionally, as part of a strategy to increase retention of lead teachers in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms, the state introduced salary supplements based on experience and credentials and was able to achieve salary parity with K-12 teachers.[7]

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Needs Assessment highlighted the following areas for critical workforce development: (1) early intervention service providers, particularly in rural areas, (2) infant and toddler teachers, (3) infant early childhood mental health professionals, and (4) culturally and linguistically diverse teachers and home visitors.

There is a large shortage in the number of early intervention service providers, particularly in rural areas. Stakeholders recommended exploring telehealth services as a potential solution to greater access in rural areas and to counter challenges associated with complex payment mechanisms.

As discussed above in the Workforce Credentials findings, the majority of teachers working in Georgia's infant and toddler classrooms do not have credentials specific to infant/toddler development. Further, only 14 of Georgia's 22 technical colleges offer a credential specializing in infant and toddler care. Additionally, the state does not have specific workforce knowledge and competencies developed for infant and toddler early care and education.

As highlighted in *Report 5: Access to Early Childhood Programs and Services*, stakeholders reported the critical need for the mental health professionals who have received training and are credentialed to serve very young children and their families. Georgia needs to develop a system

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5 Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation* (p. 472). Washington, DC: National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/19401

6 Early, D. M., Maxwell, K. L., Blasberg, A., Miranda, B., Orfali, N. S., Li, W., Bultinck, E., & Gebhart, T. (2019). *Quality Rated Validation Study Report #4: Quality Rated star ratings and independent measures of quality, children's growth, and work climate*. Bethesda, MD: Child Trends. http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/ QRValidationReport4.pdf

7 McLean, C., Dichter, H., & Whitebook, M. (2017). Strategies in pursuit of pre-K teacher compensation parity: Lessons from seven states and cities. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley & New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2017/10/Strategies-in-Pursuit-of-Pre-K.pdf

for credentialing and ongoing professional development for infant early childhood mental health professionals.

Additionally, it is crucial for early childhood professionals to support the growing population of dual language learners. *Report 3: Demographics of Georgia's Families and Findings Related to Family Engagement* highlights the diversity of Georgia's families, including that approximately 16% of children are dual language learners. Currently, only 2,644 out of 118,210 professionals in GaPDS report speaking a primary language other than English, of which 1,612 speak Spanish and 133 speak French (second highest).[8] Georgia has started investing in resources and financial supports through the DECAL Scholars program to encourage individuals who speak a language other than English to enter the early childhood workforce. However, there is a need to develop specific pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse professionals.

WORKFORCE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

During the Needs Assessment, there were several opportunities to provide feedback on the professional learning needs of early learning professionals. These opportunities were provided through feedback sessions with stakeholders, including child care resource and referral staff, teachers, administrators, and families. Table 5 provides a summary of the feedback.

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8 DECAL administrative data

Table 5. Professional Learning Topics with Target Audiences Identified

Topic	Target Audience
Child development and developmentally-appropriate environments, instruction, and child assessment	K-3 school administrators and teachers, infant and toddler teachers, families
Social-emotional development and appropriate tier 1 and tier 2 supports	B-5 teachers, kindergarten–2nd-grade teachers, elementary school principals, child care and Head Start directors, early intervention therapists, preschool special education teachers
Trauma-responsive care, adverse childhood experiences (ACES)	ALL: B-5 teachers, kindergarten–2nd-grade teachers, elementary school principals, child care and Head Start directors, state agency staff, child care resource and referral staff, trainers and coaches, early intervention therapists, preschool special education teachers, home visitors
Transitions: transition to kindergarten, transitions from early intervention to special education preschool	B-5 teachers, kindergarten teachers, elementary school principals, child care and Head Start directors, early intervention therapists, preschool special education teachers, home visitors, families
Developmental surveillance and referrals for services	B-5 teachers, families, child care and Head Start directors, home visitors
Leadership in B-5	Administrators in child care, elementary school, preschool programs, and Head Start
Strategies for supporting dual language learners	B-5 teachers, kindergarten–2nd-grade teachers, elementary school principals, child care and Head Start directors, state agency staff, child care resource and referral staff, trainers and coaches, early intervention therapists, preschool special education teachers, home visitors

CONCLUSION

Georgia has invested significant resources to develop a robust professional development system—the Georgia Professional Development System—which allows for the state to collect, track, and analyze early learning workforce data. The state has also supported credential attainment and workforce retention through DECAL Scholars. Furthermore, professionals are supported through a variety of in-service tools and resources including GELDS and Workforce Knowledge and Competencies. However, there are opportunities for Georgia to further invest in and support early learning professionals by developing additional career pathways, supporting entry into and retention within the workforce for bilingual professionals and those working with infants and toddlers, and considering ways to boost workforce compensation.

APPENDIX. NEEDS ASSESSMENT CROSSWALK

Needs Assessment Domain	Corresponding Part of Report
Definitions: quality early childhood care and education (ECCE), ECCE availability, vulnerable or underserved children, children in rural areas, ECCE system as a whole	Report 2: Key Terms; Georgia's Mixed Delivery System
Focal Populations for the Grant: vulnerable or underserved children in your state/territory, and children who live in rural areas in your state/territory	Report 2: Focal Populations, Table 4
Quality and Availability: current quality and availability of ECCE, including availability for vulnerable or underserved children and children in rural areas	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 5: all sections Report 6: all sections
Children Being Served and Awaiting Service: data available and/or plan for identifying the unduplicated number of children being served in existing programs and unduplicated number of children awaiting services in existing programs	Report 4: Introduction; Georgia's Cross-Agency Child Level Data System (CACDS); Unduplicated Counts of Children
Gaps in data on quality and availability of programming and supports for children and families	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 2: System Level Findings
Gaps in data or research to support collaboration between programs/services and maximize parental choice	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 2: System Level Findings
Measurable indicators of progress that align with the state/territory's vision and desired outcomes for the project	Report 4: Introduction; Measurable Indicators of Progress
Issues involving early childhood care and education facilities	Report 6: Findings from Administrative Data Analyses

	Corresponding Section
Barriers to the funding and provision of high-quality early childhood care and education services and supports and opportunities for more efficient use of resources	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 2: System Level Findings
Transition supports and gaps	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 3: Findings Related to Family Engagement Report 5: Transitions and Access
System integration and interagency collaboration	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 2: System-Level Findings

Stakeholder Input	Corresponding Section
Parents/family members or guardians	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
Child care providers from different settings (e.g., center-based, Head Start, home-based)	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
Child care providers from different parts of the state including rural areas and areas with diverse populations	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
Other early childhood service providers	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
State/Local Early Childhood Advisory Council(s) or other collaborative governance entity	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
Key partner agencies	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1