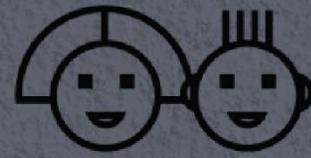




NATIVE AMERICAN  
BUDGET & POLICY  
INSTITUTE



New Mexico  
Early Childhood  
Development  
Partnership

**Native American Perspectives**  
Regarding a Needs Assessment for the  
**New Mexico Early Childhood**  
**Education and Care Department**



This publication is a product of The University of New Mexico Native American Budget and Policy Institute in collaboration with the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Native American Budget and Policy Institute, the University of New Mexico, collaborating organizations, or funders.

**Editor In-Chief:** Gabriel R. Sanchez, Ph.D.

**Location:** 1909 Las Lomas Road, Albuquerque, NM 87131

**Phone:** 505.277.0130

**Email:** center@unm.edu

Copyright @ University of New Mexico – November 2019.

## **Executive Summary - Overall Findings from Research**

The University of New Mexico Native American Budget and Policy Institute (NABPI) is an initiative funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and resides at the University of New Mexico to conduct research, budget and policy analysis, social justice advocacy, litigation, and community lawyering to help Native American communities create self-determined and systematic change. We approach with this project including Native American voices into the strategic planning process associated with the new Early Childhood Education and Care Department. To advance this aim, we convened community and stakeholder meetings with New Mexico's Tribal communities to collect opinions, positions, and specific recommendations for ensuring the expansion of early childhood programming considers the unique and important nuances associated with families and educators from Tribal communities.

Consistent with our overall goal to enhance the impact of our work with collaborating with other experts in the field, the UNM Native American Budget and Policy Institute (NABPI) worked alongside the NM Early Childhood Development Partnership of the United Way of Santa Fe County (NMECDP) to collect the data referenced in this report. This very effective partnership allowed our collective research team to collect qualitative interview data from a wide variety of participants across the diverse Tribal communities in New Mexico, as well as field two public opinion surveys: a New Mexico Family Survey and an Early Childhood Workforce Survey.

Some of the overall findings from our report include: the need to address improvement of existing early childhood infrastructure and build new classrooms, centers, and schools to accommodate an increase in programming across Tribal communities and rural communities more broadly; strong support for the integration of education and health systems across the state's infrastructure, which many noted is consistent with the ways in which Tribal communities view well-being for their youth and families; desire to see greater trust in Tribal communities to implement programming and curriculum without state or federal interference; and concerns about the potential for language and cultural loss with expansion of early childhood programs across the state. Several participants in our study interpreted the primary ideological focus on English-language programming in the Pre-K curriculums and inability to implement early childhood programming as independent Nations as structural racism assumes that acquisition of English has greater advantages than early learning in Native languages.

Major findings from the two surveys conducted in partnership with Latino Decisions included that the low compensation and benefits available to a large segment of the early education workforce is a major challenge for the recruitment and retention of quality professionals. The surveys also found that working families, those that live in rural areas of the state, and those who have lower income levels face significant challenges to obtaining affordable and convenient childcare.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

The UNM Native American Budget and Policy Institute worked alongside the NM Early Childhood Development Partnership of the United Way of Santa Fe County (NMECDP) to identify and recruit Native American early childhood experts, Tribal leaders, educators, community members, parents, grandparents, and other caregivers to provide input on early childhood development. We offered Tribal respondents opportunities to provide their input across community convenings, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Providing multiple venues for participation in our research process allowed our team to hear a total of 149 Native American voices across these qualitative approaches in a short period of time.

A major component of our team's effort was recruiting Native American participants to the large community events organized by NMECDP and facilitating discussions among those participants to ensure that these large events included some of the nuances associated with the Tribal communities in those regions of the state. This was a successful partnership, as our team incorporated Native American specific sessions in the following large events:

- September 24, 2019 – Farmington (14 of Native American participants)
- September 25, 2019 – Gallup (8 of Native American participants)
- October 2, 2019 – Espanola (5 of Native American participants)
- October 23, 2019 – Las Vegas (0 of Native American participants)
- October 8, 2019 – ABQ (7 of Native American participants)
- October 9, 2019 – Socorro (0 of Native American participants)

In addition to the large community events, the full research team worked together to identify and recruit a more focused set of individuals for focus groups and individual interviews to ensure inclusion of a wide variety of important voices from New Mexico’s Tribal communities. This was a key component of our overall research design, as we anticipated that many Tribal leaders, education experts, members of the early childhood workforce, and parents from this key sub-group of the larger population would find it challenging to travel to the large events. Below are the locations of each of the focus groups which the NAPBI research team organized and facilitated.

- Zuni Pueblo
- Mescalero Apache Tribe
- Santo Domingo Pueblo
- Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo
- Alamo Navajo
- Navajo Family Voices
- San Felipe Pueblo

Our team also identified a few experts whose input was valuable to this process. These experts’ comments were not attached to any particular Tribal nation.

- Regis Pecos, Co-Director and Founder of the Leadership Institute at Santa Fe Indian School
- Carmela M. Roybal, President of the New Mexico Head Start Association (Region VI, VVI), (NMHSA)
- Lana Garcia, Director, Walatowa Head Start Language Immersion Program
- Kevin Shendo, Director, Pueblo of Jemez Education Department
- Peter Garcia Jr., Ohkay Owingeh Board of Education
- Marsha Leno, Educational Services Manager, Pueblo of Zia Education Department
- Jeremy Oyenque, Director, Pueblo of Santa Clara Department of Education
- Trisha Moquino, Director of the Keres Children’s Learning Center
- Esther Barela Bemis, Pueblo of Zuni Tribal Member

The target audience for these sessions were elected and appointed Tribal leaders, experts in early childhood systems and programs specific to Native American communities, including pre-K and Head Start educators who serve predominantly Native American students. These sessions were similar to the overall format of the larger group sessions in terms of focus areas, as we wanted to maintain consistency across the overall themes that served as the foundation across the full team of researchers involved in this project. One of our NABPI researchers facilitated each of these sessions and also had participation from the NMECDP staff as a facilitator or note-taker in almost all cases to ensure synergy across all data collection. Our research team, who conducted the interviews and focus groups, has deep experience conducting qualitative research with Tribal communities in New Mexico, and all come from the communities that were the focus of the research. We provide the research team’s biographical information at the end of this report. In conjunction with NMECDP, the research team developed a semi-structured focus group guide to facilitate the first round of deliberations. See the appendix for this guide.

When considering all aspects of our research design collectively, we collected information from a wide and diverse set of Native American voices from across the state. It was vital that we protect the anonymity of our respondents to ensure confidentiality. This allowed respondents to provide honest and uncensored responses. Therefore, while we note the Tribal communities represented across the participants in our focus

groups or interviews below, we do not provide specific names of individuals or the social locations of respondents. There are a total of 24 Tribes across the state of New Mexico: 20 Pueblos, 3 Apache Tribes and Nations, and the Navajo Nation. It was imperative that we included the voices of as many nations as possible, as we recognize that many of the experiences of Tribal nations vary across the state. Although there are similarities regarding their relationships with the State of New Mexico, education in general, and geographic locations, each Tribe/nation provides unique insight and experience on each topic. Although we were not able to visit each of these communities, our team spanned each region of the spatially vast state of New Mexico to acquire interviews from members of most of its Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations.

We analyzed interviews with NVIVO, a qualitative relational database, to assist in organizing, coding, searching and retrieving textual data. The team followed standard, qualitative, iterative data collection and analysis feedback loops to focus the data collection. After coding the transcripts, the research team followed an editing approach to identify preliminary themes in the data that included multiple team members independently identifying themes before a small group discussion to finalize the overall themes emphasized in the report.

Finally, as part of the overall research projects, we developed a sub-contract with Pacific Marketing Research/Latino Decisions to conduct two web-based surveys intended to ensure that our report included perspectives from two key sub-groups, families (parents and other caregivers) and the early childhood workforce. We administered both surveys through the web in formats that would allow for participation across tablets, smart-phones, and computers. Although most participants opted to take the survey in English, both surveys were available in both English and Spanish. Although the qualitative data was the main goal and priority from these community engagement sessions, the survey provides useful information to complement what we found in the rich, qualitative data. NAPBI, NMECDP, and the UNM Cradle to Career Policy Institute (CCPI) staff implemented and analyzed the surveys, and Prof. Gabriel Sanchez, a nationally recognized expert in survey design and research who has implemented several early childhood focused surveys in New Mexico, oversaw the process. We provide a detailed discussion in this report of the main results of the survey, and the appendix include the full set of results.

The New Mexico Family Survey captured views of a wide segment of New Mexicans with an interest in the success of the new department, including parents and primary caregivers. Our goal with this survey was to ensure all voices were welcome, so we did not rely on a database or restrict participation with individualized links. Instead, we asked all of our research team to promote the invitation to the survey as widely as possible throughout the state, utilizing list-serves, social media, and distribution lists as much as possible. We also used email addresses from recent parent surveys that UNM's Center for Social Policy conducted in partnership with Latino Decisions in New Mexico. This effort was highly successful, as we had a total of 819 completed surveys, even without any incentive for participation. For a frame of reference, this was much higher than the 350 completed interviews from the consumer survey from our last research project with NMECDP, which had a very similar target population. The final question on the parent survey allowed all respondents to provide any response to the question of, "How can early childhood programs better meet the needs of parents and families in your community?" We have integrated the suggestions from the 145 respondents who provided their thoughts across related themes in our interpretation of the survey results.

The Early Child Workforce Survey focused on the professionals comprising the state's overall workforce. Our research design for this survey started with building a large database of educators and other professionals within the state that we utilized to recruit participants to the survey. This database included contact information provided by the state, and individuals each of our organizations and partners provided our team. We also allowed respondents to the survey to provide our team with the names and email addresses of other professionals that we should survey, allowing the database to expand as we were in the field. Individuals in the database were assigned a specific web-link sent in an invitation to participate in our survey, allowing our team to track participation and follow-up with potential respondents who received an invitation but had not yet completed our survey. We were able to secure a brief memo from Mariana Padilla, New Mexico Children's Cabinet Secretary (see appendix), inviting members of the state's workforce to

participate in the study and stressing the value of their input in the state's strategic planning process. This was a vital resource for our team that, along with a modest \$10 incentive for completing a survey, helped us reach our goal to have strong participation in the workforce survey. We were very successful in recruitment for the workforce survey, with 1,290 completed interviews, which was more than twice as many completed interviews as our original goal for the survey.

### **Challenges/Obstacles We Addressed in Our Research Design**

As we approached this project, our team built on lessons learned from our recent WKKF-funded, early childhood data collection across Tribal communities in the state. This included our insight that many Native American community members were less likely to provide their views and concerns in the presence of non-Native American participants with whom they have no connection. We, therefore, supplemented the larger group sessions with Native American specific interviews and focus groups and, when appropriate, included a breakout group of Tribal members during the large community events.

Given the very small network of early childhood experts, parents, educators, and other stake-holders in New Mexico (particularly from the Native American communities), we understood from the on-set that it would be highly likely that we would be contacting many of the same folks our team members interviewed over the past year as part of our efforts to get views about the Business Plan for Early Childhood. We, therefore, initiated contact with Tribal leadership, noting that our current research goals were distinct from the prior effort and aimed at the strategic planning effort for the new early childhood development department. We also noted that the input their community provided our team in the last set of discussions led to the establishment of the new department and assurance of a Deputy Director position specific to Tribal communities. We also provided a copy of our last report to all Tribal leaders and members of Tribes who requested it which provided some context on how our current effort was, in fact, different from the last. Although these steps in our research process had a positive impact on our ability to conduct the research described in our report, we want to point out that many Tribal members mentioned that we were not the only research team conducting early childhood research to contact them. This over-saturation of research was unfortunately unavoidable, given the salience of this topic across the state but is something we believe should be discussed further in the strategic planning process to avoid burdening these communities with multiple requests of similar information from various stakeholders.

Finally, and most importantly, we need to note that the steps required to conduct research with Tribal communities often requires much more time than contract timelines allow. Although we communicated to all of our participants that the extreme sense of urgency to begin the expansion of services to families in New Mexico drove the tight timeline required for this project, many participants let us know that the aggressive timeline made it difficult to ensure input from all voices in their communities. Despite this limitation, our team was proud of our ability to collect very rich data within the timeline provided without violating the best practices associated with community-engaged research to which we are committed. We provide a brief overview of those principles in our appendix with a summary of the process our team followed with this effort with hopes that future efforts will consider the time required to conduct research in partnership effectively with Tribal communities as best as possible.

Our research team initiated discussions with our research participants across all forms of qualitative data collection with the following general questions intended to get the discussions started:

- What's working right now in your view across the state and Tribal early childhood systems?
- What's not working and in need of attention during this strategic planning session?
- How do you want things to be? What would a successful early childhood system look like to you?
- What is getting in the way? Are there obstacles preventing your vision for a strong early childhood system that would best serve your communities children that strategic planning should address?

## Overall Findings – Major Themes That Emerged From Qualitative Research

### The Integration of Education and Health Systems Supported by Tribal Communities

When queried to provide our team with aspects of recent legislation passed to address early childhood development across our state that they felt would improve outcomes for our children, most participants referenced the integration of systems within the state to allow for health and education departments to work together. As reflected in the quotes below, many participants noted that the silos associated with the Public Education Department and Children, Youth, and Families Departments have been a significant obstacle that the community is hopeful the new department can address.

- “The integration of health and education by state is the best thing I have heard about the new department.”
- “This is how we think about early childhood, as language, learning, and wellness is all inter-related. I hope that this integration is successful so we see the wellness practices around nutrition and physical activity fully merged with educational goals. But again, who is providing the definition of health and wellness for early childhood? How we define and measure wellness and health in our program might be different than what the state uses. This is an area where some collaboration could happen early in the process to make sure the measures used for evaluation are inclusive.”
- “Many of our children have behavioral health needs but access to these programs in rural New Mexico is a major challenge. If the state is successful in reforming the health system for children in this process it will be a great outcome.”
- “Non-nutritious foods in schools compounds the communities’ lack of healthy foods (all franchise fast foods), creating generational diabetes and contributing to other special healthcare needs, including depression, behavioral issues, developmental delays, despair, suicide.”
- “Establishing gardening and animals programs in schools as essential early childhood programs for nutrition and traditional foods education, for life skills, and for returning to traditional relationships with land, nature and animals.”
- “The local community organizations, who support gaps for addressing individuals, needs to improve-better cross-collaboration processes towards services. Education system fails to listen to community voice.”

The interviews revealed that many Tribal communities need expanded health care resources for young families. Considerable research identifies the overall health care service shortages across New Mexico, and particularly rural areas and our qualitative interviews reveal that this issue is particularly pronounced for early childhood development providers in Tribal communities.

- “We need a good pre-natal care that helps with early intervention to screen consistently and accurately for physical therapy, behavioral health, and occupational therapy.”
- “Occupational therapy services that are needed, there aren’t any services locally. Gallup does not have a NICU, so women need to leave out of town to get these services.”
- “Psychiatrists are not seeing enough children and students locally. Only one provider for the entire tribal population. There are contracted services but not sustained.”
- “Here is a high turn-over rate for providers which causes constant regression because patients have to keep repeating tragic events to new providers. Health care system is not working. Regressing instead of progressing.”
- “One provider through IHS but the issue is the provider is not able to provide care for children ages 0-12 due to regulations.”
- “There’s high turn-over with the therapists. Waiting time is 3-4 months for emergencies to be seen.”
- “Not only has the lack of mental health providers caused early childhood centers to fall into non-compliance, it has left children and families without early intervention services.”
- “There is a need for qualified workforce that has knowledge and experience working with families and children with special needs.”
- “Educators/providers need to be open about issues about child health/social issues and learn to address and act on the issues appropriately and accurately.”

- “The current health infrastructure, which is Indian Health Services, mostly in our communities are not totally connected to Early Childhood. We lack services for our Early Childhood services. We lack therapists, early childhood mental health. We do have pediatricians but they are revolving all the time and consistency in health care is scattered.”
- “Need doctors who know or aware of child development milestones especially for the area. Need mental health psychologist and psychiatrists.”

### **The Demand for Early Childhood Programs is Not Universal but Can Be Increased with Improvements to the Options Available for Families**

We were somewhat surprised to hear that when asked whether they felt all families in their communities could access early childcare services, including Pre-K and infant care, in most cases, tribes do not have a challenge currently meeting the demand in their community. Many tribes noted that they were having trouble filling existing slots and, therefore, expanding the number of slots available for more children is not a high priority. When we asked for information on this topic, we learned that more families would utilize early childhood services if they were more convenient for families, perceived to be of high quality, consistent with cultural values, and available in native languages. Consistent with our last report, many participants noted that many young families prefer to have family members care for their young children, even if they had convenient and affordable childcare options. We believe that this finding could be considered during the strategic planning process to evaluate what the target enrollment rates should look like across tribal communities. Below are some of the quotes from our qualitative interviews connected to this theme in the data.

- “Our Tribe lacks an adequate number of children being served in our existing programs to be fully enrolled for childcare due to families not willing to pay for sliding scale fee.”
- “I do not think a lot of families would take advantage of these new programs at 3, 4, or 5 years old. The state is thinking about western ideals, where the early childhood models at the national level are the best way to educate kids at these young ages. I think that this assumption might not be based on what is best for New Mexico’s children and families. If we do not have capacity for language immersion and cultural immersion with our early childhood programs, we will not have 80% of our families wanting to take advantage.”
- “Is 80% a magic number? Why not go slower and make sure it is done right rather than going so fast and not having the right infrastructure in place to do it right.”
- [Why do you see under-enrollment in your Pre-K programs?] “Family and school issues are major factors that contribute to poor rate of participation in early learning programs. (i.e. truancy, domestic violence, alcoholism, unemployment, etc.) Also, our school board does not encourage community to give early learning priority, and families believe they can do a better job of teaching their children at home within the family. Another factor is night school families or those who are taking classes themselves are home with their pre-K age children during the day and attend school at night when there is no programming available.”
- “Many early childhood learning centers are under enrolled due to competing programs on and off the reservations. Programs are often challenged to maintain enrollment in order to keep funding.”
- “The education system fails to address the social determinants of health and the impacts in families and community health beyond the individual needs. Transportation, housing, multi-jurisdictional barriers, family economics, health and family stress, and adverse childhood experiences (ACES).”

### **Limitations in Infrastructure is a Serious Obstacle for Early Childhood Expansion**

One of the most dominant themes that emerged from discussions with participants is the need to address limitations in the facilities needed to provide young families with the high-quality programming that they desire. Several participants specifically mentioned the value of a high-quality environment available for programming and childcare is the impact those services have for families and providing services for access to these facilities. This was an important finding, given that we did not ask or cue the importance of facilities. Participants gave us these comments and quotes when we asked about obstacles to funding or

resources that needed to be addressed before expansion of programming in their community could take place. The following quote reflects this sentiment expressed by others interviewed by our team:

- “Because environment is everything, we need to make sure that we have a great building with nice classrooms to help with this part of the learning environment. If we want to have more families willing to put their youngest children in our care, having nice facilities will be very helpful, as it sends a message about the quality of what we have to offer them.”
- “Lack of transportation for families to take child/children to early childhood programs makes it difficult to access the services provided.”
- “A successful early childhood program is a beautiful building-space to grow in. A place that is homey with competent providers, with lessons in our language and culture.”
- “An early childhood learning center is one that looks more like a home, encompassing the whole family, a child’s home, centering on the child and focusing on their strengths.”

Unfortunately, we heard from many Native American respondents that the facilities they are working with are not at the level needed to serve the students currently enrolled in early childhood programs, much less for a greater number of children if the state expands the number of slots. Many noted that they are relying on temporary space, often portable buildings or rooms in buildings used for other purposes. It is key to note that this is not an issue that is limited to Tribal communities, but most rural communities across the state of New Mexico. A new perspective on this issue for our team was the link between facilities and workforce limitations. We heard from many that it is challenging to encourage high-quality professionals to work in sub-standard facilities when they have other options. Our team visited several of these facilities and agreed that they needed immediate attention. The quotes below reflect this overall theme seen across the qualitative data:

- “Here in our community, we are hoping to build a new building to address this, but we are in portable buildings which do not have enough space. We see many communities having to share space right now, so having more buildings that are nice and designed specifically for early childhood.”
- The physical building in our building needs refurbishing, and our poor facilities are not appropriate for proper childcare service provision. Our Head Start building is also in need of renovation.”
- “We need better facilities to attract more quality and qualified people.”
- “The facilities challenges make it harder for us to do our jobs, which I know has caused several teachers to quit and pursue other work.”
- “We need basic infrastructure – a new roof, a paved parking lot, new tile floor, a new playground for our children.”
- “Playground equipment is unsafe but too costly to replace.”
- “Our building is old, the roof leaks, and flooding occurs due to plumbing issues.”
- “The buildings are old, and we have issues with asbestos, so they get shut down without offer of alternative sites because there is a lack of buildings in our rural communities.”

Given the frequency in which our interview participants referenced infrastructure, we identified a few potential strategies to address this limitation. We believe that this is an area that should be a short-term focus of the strategic planning effort so that the facilities needed for expanding access to early childhood programming can be put in place while the longer-term efforts to address human capital shortages.

Several participants referenced the potential for using the capital outlay process to generate one-time funding to address facility needs. In fact, we heard from more than one participant that with the surplus in state funding generated from oil and gas, there should be opportunities to tap into one-time money to initiative revision of existing buildings and potentially building of new facilities.

- “The biggest concern currently is that there is a huge need for an early Head Start program but the current facility is not large enough to house both programs. Thus, there is a need for more capital outlays project funding for a larger facility. [Childcare Center Name] Childcare is run entirely by the [Community Name] and does not meet the needs of the community as there is constantly a long waitlist for children 0-3 years old.”

We heard that several Tribal communities have pending funding requests from the federal government through the Head Start program. In one of our large event discussions, we were fortunate to have representation from Senator Heinrich's office in attendance, who was very interested in the potential for leveraging federal funding to address this need in the state. They indicated that they would make an inquiry on the status of those funds for the Tribes who raised the issue.

Tribes identified that they could increase the amount of external funding for early education programs through external grants if they had the necessary infrastructure. Several Tribal communities noted that they could use funding for grant managers, grant writers, and accounting and administrative support to oversee the grants and support evaluation. This appears to be an area the state could consider addressing, as the high return on investment seems promising.

- “Around 2009/2010 the Tribe had a grants management office that was supported by a grant. It provided coordination and continuity with grants, but it was only a few years long.”
- “We need a grant manager and someone who could help oversee any grants we receive.”

### **Head Start Can Be a Model for the State to Consider When Considering Expansion of Programming**

A consistent theme across our qualitative interviews was the positive perception of the federal Head Start program across Tribal communities. Although there were significant issues associated with the on-set of Head Start for Native American families conveyed in our earlier report (loss of language and culture), it is clear that many Native American leaders and early childhood experts prefer the Head Start model to state-run programs based on current implementation. The flexibility the federal program provides to communities to adapt the curriculum and incorporate indigenous languages was a common theme across our interviews. Many respondents also noted that Head Start has a more comprehensive approach that includes health and well-being. Finally, many respondents suggested that their experience with Head Start reflects a system that is inclusive of the full family, where state-run programs offers less involvement for parents and other family members. Below are a few quotes that reflect the role of family engagement within the Head Start context.

Among this general theme, one frequently mentioned sub-theme was the ability of Tribal communities to engage families (parents, grand-parents) in the early childhood development process through Head Start. This is an area our team believes state-funded programs can incorporate during the strategic planning process.

- “I really think the office of Head Start is collecting data on family engagement to demonstrate the impact Head Start has on families and to help families understand how important their role is in their children's learning experience.”
- “Research shows that children who attend Head Start have greater rates of high school graduation. This is because of family engagement and parental involvement.”
- “For Pre-K, the restrictions are so rigid you can't hug the children or tie their shoes. Head Start is a different model which means you can have more interaction with kids in a meaningful way.”
- “Head Start is great, and you see kids with behavioral problems, and you can see the maturity the next year. Then they are ready for kindergarten.”
- “Head Start is a family-oriented model that can be family, community, and culturally centered. Pre-K seems to be centered narrowly on the child.”
- “Pre-K program in the public schools is more academic versus the social/emotional component of Head Start. This is a huge difference.”

### **There Are Many Successful Models and Programs Across Native American Communities That Can Be Expanded Through the Strategic Planning Process**

One of the most useful findings from our research are elements of existing programs within Tribal communities that work well which participants from our study believe should be implemented more broadly during the state's strategic planning process. When participants noted these examples, we asked follow-up questions intended to help the state learn how they might expand or scale-up these programs to reach a wider number of Native American families. In summary, provision of culturally grounded and relevant programming in indigenous languages and training for early childhood educators were two key principles embedded in successful early-childhood models specific to Native American communities. Below are some of the quotes generated from the discussions we had with community members that fit this general theme.

- “These programs can be scaled, but we need to start small and make sure that communities want them. These cannot be imposed on communities; it must be something that Tribes want to do in order to ensure that it is successful. Offer it to communities and Tribes that want to invest in these programs.”
- “We have good collaboration and training with programs in our community as well as with our language program. Two Head Start classrooms have language immersion program. All three of these programs have Keres language in curriculum. Collaboration-helps with transition into new programs: Head Start to Elementary.”
- “Collaborations with other tribal programs? Yes. Child Find program— early intervention program and services. Head Start has a similar program. Training for children with disabilities. NAPPR, PB & J, and Abrazos. Head Start is a part of the metro transition team who work with children w/disabilities and other children who need extra support. We meet quarterly, and there is a MOU in place with APS, Rio Rancho, and NM schools for the deaf and blind, and FIT program. We are willing to work with other Pueblos.”
- “Immersion and early language settings are the place to start. The higher education department needs to amplify and recognize the Indigenous Montessori Institute as a different but effective mechanism to train our educators across the state. This does not need to be either or; it should be both and complimentary. If the PED and HED were more collaborative in their approach, we could see some true partnership with training.”
- “Katishtya Language and Culture Committee (KLCC) does collaborate with Head Start programs. Through the NM Indian Education Act, we are pulling all language programs together and merging curriculums into one (Head Start curriculum and KLCC). We are focusing on home-based language and instructions into the curriculum.”
- “We see our educators having to leave their communities and lose touch with a lot of their cultural heritage to gain the education and accreditation they need, and when they come back there is a disconnect in cultural and linguistic wholeness. Our teachers need to be trained to feel as though they can educate our youth in a way that fits the needs of the indigenous communities. It's not new and a vicious circle that the state can break if they go about this process the right way. It will take time and will be hard, but if this is a long-term strategic planning process, it can be done.”
- “Programs need to understand the subtleties of healing through stories, recruit storytellers, develop stories and allow feedback during story-tellings, even from the littlest ones who, even though small, know how to apply the meanings to their own struggles.”
- “Support for and recognition of programs that engage in Tribal family renewal-- iina hoth'leth (renewal of life). Note that the Diné nuclear family often includes teachers and medical or social work professionals whose roles in the traditional nuclear family are invisible in the western model.”
- “Encompassing parental involvement especially with the language piece, if parents are not fluent in their language, then educating parents in addition to the child is necessary.”

Regis Pecos and other members of the NABPI research team lead several Tribes through a strategic planning process culminating in Blue Prints for Education within the context of the *Yazzie vs. Martinez* decision that include an inventory of needs defined by each community and an identification of the budget required to address those needs. Our research team integrated early childhood development into these broader discussions to provide a model for how Tribes can identify their specific needs and the solutions to improve outcomes in their communities. Although we integrated the feedback from these sessions in our

report, we suggest that the state incorporate what Mr. Pecos and his team learn from this on-going process in the strategic planning process.

### **There Is a Need for Greater Direct Partnership with Tribes at a Government-to-Government Level**

One of the dominant themes that emerged from our discussions with Native American participants across the state is the need for enhanced trust between Tribal nations and the state government, with an emphasis on enhancing the recognition and respect of Tribal sovereignty. In fact, many folks specifically mentioned the State Tribal Collaboration Act (STCA) in their concerns about government-to-government relationships. Given that we emphasized this issue prominently in our last report, we attempted to move beyond recognition of the need for enhanced trust to asking respondents for some concrete steps to address this issue in the future.

- “This strategic planning process is another example of the state not following the STCA by ensuring that Tribes have full participation. The Governor of the state should have a high-level discussion with Tribal leadership in a full-day discussion about early childhood. If this were a high priority, this would happen, not having your team collect information indirectly.”
- “The state is responsible for government-to-government consultations, but what is being done? They change the regulations and don’t consult with us, yet, we have to adopt these changes. What is the state going to do to include us?”
- “[Who is responsible for providing better infrastructure?] It is the states’ and the federal government’s. Due to colonialism, it is the federal government’s responsibility, in partnership with the state, to make sure we have what we need. Tribes lack the resources to pursue these funds, and often, Tribes get blamed for not being equipped. This is about truth and reconciliation.”
- “Make Tribes eligible for community schools, ACT braids funds, and other sources of revenue. Right now, Tribes are not eligible and should be eligible for early childhood and out-of-school education funds to provide them with the same resources other children have access to. Including Tribal schools would change the game for Tribes.”
- “Currently, WHLIP receives no state funding and very little tribal funding to sustain the program. The primary funding source is through the federal funding system of Head Start. But staff has expressed the need for supplemental funding from the state to help with cost.”
- “We are answering these questions... but will the state really listen to our voice?”

### **There Is a Need to Remove Obstacles that Impact Recruitment and Retention of the Workforce**

The educator shortage across the state was a highly salient issue for Native American participants. We heard often that, like the state overall, Native American communities face severe challenges recruiting and maintaining early childhood professionals. Participants referenced low wages, obstacles in receiving necessary credentials for educators, and limited training opportunities for residents of rural communities as problems that need to be addressed to enhance the quality workforce needed to expand access to early childhood programs to more families.

- “There is a hard time to recruit teachers and after they can get their degrees, once they get their degrees, there is a tendency to move to the school for better salary/benefits.”
- “They have teachers who make less than tribal minimal wage (not a living wage). To be a teacher, you need college degrees and certificates which should give you a much better income than it does now.”
- “We train teachers, but we lose them to the public schools because the public schools will pay them more with their AA or BA degrees.”
- “Our Tribe follows a Tribal code where Tribal members have first priority to positions. For these reasons, we have a high turn-over rate in these programs. The selection of applicants rarely has “qualified” individuals. Applicants that do get hired do not realize the extent of the job and what

it entails, so they leave after it gets challenging. The low wages are a major problem for how hard the job is.”

- “Many of our language teachers must be certified and go through a grueling process to become certified. With that being said, they deserve to be paid at a fair wage. A curriculum specifically designed for the Native American early childhood community would need to be created (which does cost money). As you and I both know, the impact of culture is super important.”
- “We have a severe teacher shortage - currently we need four more certified teachers. In the community, there are only five known members who are eligible to teach, so we would have to convince all of them to stay in the community for lower pay than they can make doing other work in order to fill our gap.”
- “Another concern is teacher recruitment. Many of the current teachers are of an older generation, and currently no one in the community is seeking to become ECE teachers. Increasing salaries for ECE teachers is a must to recruit for more teachers.
- “Some of the staff are non-traditional students, and they get discouraged about going back to school because of the lack of coordination between the funding for the Indian-focused programming.”
- “If Higher Education programs provided satellite programming closer to the communities, we may have more community members get education needed to be early childhood educators and providers. Also offer courses after work hours and even on the weekends!”
- “Pipeline programming that starts at the high school or younger levels in education needs to be implemented to show students that speaking Towa and understanding the culture could lead to a career in ECE. Staff is also interested in building up an internal accreditation program to get more interested Tribal members to become licensed in the language as a fluent speaker and knowledgeable in the culture. The trainings that teachers attend not organized by our tribe are not ever culturally relevant to the Towa language and culture, thus, building an internal program that a new generation of teacher could go through would be ideal.”
- “Dual-credit programs need to be implemented! Collaboration with the surrounding high school programs introduces the idea of the career earlier on in a young person’s mind. Having the experience makes all the difference. Santa Fe Indian School has dual-credit programs in early childhood education. Bernalillo Public Schools is also involved in these. Focus needs to be on the teaching profession.”

### Suggestions for the Strategic Planning Process - Structure of the New Department

To close our focus groups or interviews, we often asked respondents to identify any suggestions they had for the State that could be considered during this important strategic planning process. As reflected in the quotes below, we identified several specific and concrete suggestions that we believe should be considered. Many participants noted the challenge facing the state, as the sense of urgency for addressing limitations in the current systems is high, and they understand the political reality of needing to move quickly. However, many noted that the state has a unique opportunity to think deeply about the best approaches that can be taken within the context of *Yazzie* to improve the early childhood system for families across New Mexico. Many suggested that the state take their time and not rush to implementation.

- “Our families have homelands in three different states (NM, AZ, UT), and we do not recognize state boundaries. The state needs to collaborate with AZ and UT when providing services.”
- “The pay scale for educators and other professionals will need to be competitive across the K-12 system to address the teacher shortage we have now. We have to catch up to that of the federal scale; right now, we see it takes three years to catch up. We know our early education folks are not paid well enough to keep them in those professions and recruit more teachers, especially those from our own communities.”
- “Many statutorily required positions across key departments are empty, including the cabinet secretary. I wonder how these vacancies are impacting Tribes.”
- There is too much compartmentalization within the state PED; there is little communication among state department themselves. What will change with this new department?



- “Allocate funds for parent trainings, workforce training/education, infrastructure, and funds for services for children with special needs.”
- “Once the strategic plan is complete, what happens next?”
- “Leadership is key. They need an advisory council to support the secretary with several members of Tribal and Hispanic communities, not just one. This council needs to be large and inclusive of all of our communities, as there are important nuances each community faces that needs to be passed on to leadership. This council should be put in place before hiring a secretary so that they can inform the structure. Maybe there could be a different leadership model all together and at a minimum use the council to help inform potential candidates for the positions. This would also help the community.”
- “Parents are integral in what an early childhood care and education environment should look like. Asking parents what they want for their child while they are in the hands of nurturing caretakers is extremely important”
- “Stronger relationships, connections. People, power, place relevant to educational system. The educational systems between NM, AZ, UT, and tribe need to address the multi-jurisdiction patterns and family policies that have prevented community, families, and local organizations to partner.”

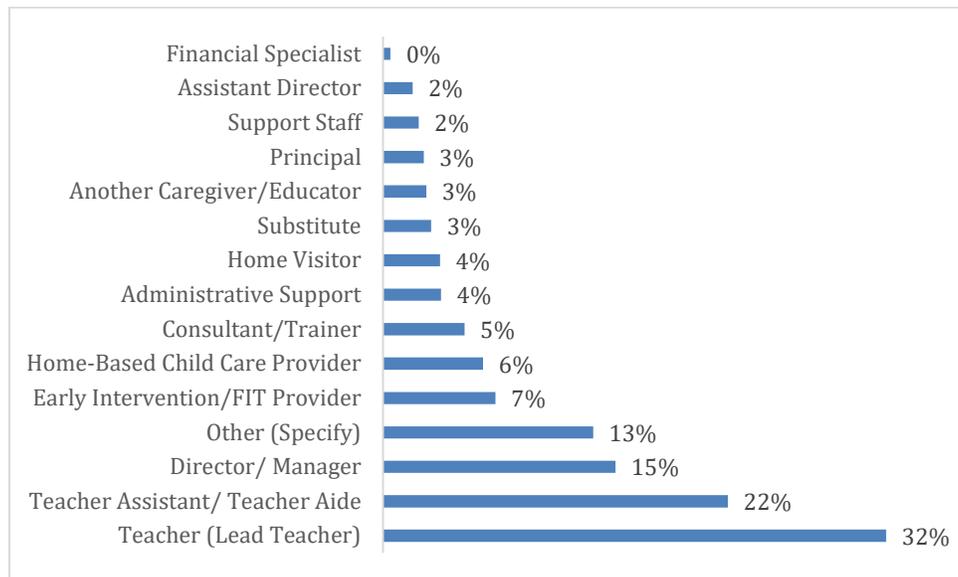
## Results from the Early Childhood Workforce Survey

### Background Information on the Sample

Our team conducted a short survey to identify some overall views from families and stakeholders more generally across the state. We summarize the key findings from this survey below, which reflect the overall percentages from the 1,290 completed interviews. With the large sample size we achieved for the survey, we can explore any meaningful differences in the survey across key demographic factors.

Among the group of community members who completed our survey, we found that the majority of participants were teachers who comprised roughly one-third of the overall sample of early childhood professionals.<sup>1</sup> Teaching assistants or teaching aids were also highly represented in the sample (22%). The sample also has a large number of administrators, with nearly 200 completed surveys from directors or managers and 33 completed interviews from principals.

### Primary Role within the Early Childhood Development Workforce

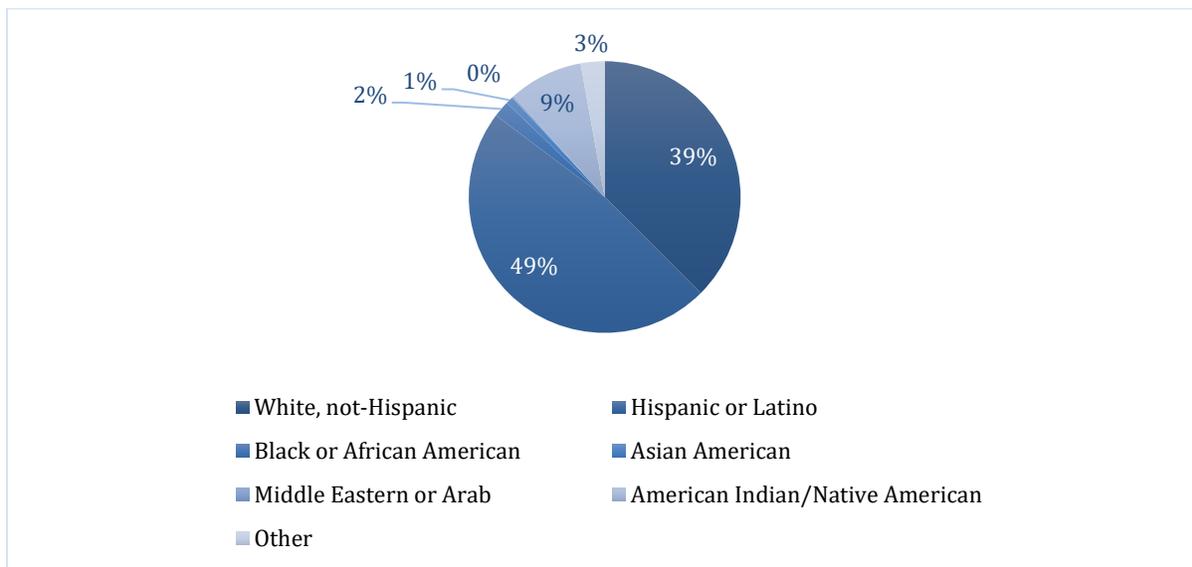


The survey collected demographic information from all respondents to the workforce study to compare responses based on these factors. In regard to race and ethnicity, the majority of early childhood professionals across the state are either Non-Hispanic White (39%), or Hispanic/Latino (49%). We were successful in ensuring that we had a large enough sample of Native American/American Indian members of the early childhood workforce (we had 118 completed surveys of NA professionals) to allow for comparisons between members of the workforce and those from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Consistent with other studies surveying the education workforce in New Mexico, the data is heavily skewed toward female respondents. Our sample had 94% female respondents compared to only 6% of men, which is consistent with past studies of the education workforce in New Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Given that many early childhood professionals have complex and often overlapping roles in their organizations, the survey was designed to allow respondents to answer questions from the perspective of more than one professional type. Consequently, the percentages provided in our table below could add up to greater than 100%.

<sup>2</sup> A study conducted in 2010 found 97% of the education workforce is female in New Mexico: [https://www.newmexicokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/CYFD\\_Child\\_Care\\_Workforce\\_in\\_NM.pdf](https://www.newmexicokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/CYFD_Child_Care_Workforce_in_NM.pdf)

### Racial and Ethnic Composition of Workforce Survey Sample



The survey also has strong variation in region across the state. While 43% of the full sample reported that they work primarily in the Albuquerque metro area, 10% work in counties in the northwest quadrant of the state, 13% in the northeast quadrant, 23% in the southwest, and 11% in the southeast quadrant. We included in our cross-tabulations a rural vs. urban comparison across the set of substantive questions in the survey to make comparisons with this important dimension in New Mexico.

### Experience Levels of New Mexico’s Early Childhood Development Workforce

One of the goals of the workforce survey was to provide an assessment of the variation in experience level across the state’s early childhood workforce. We, therefore, asked each respondent to provide their years of early childhood work experience as well as for managers to provide some assessments of the experience level of their employees. Below are some of the main findings from this aspect of the larger survey.

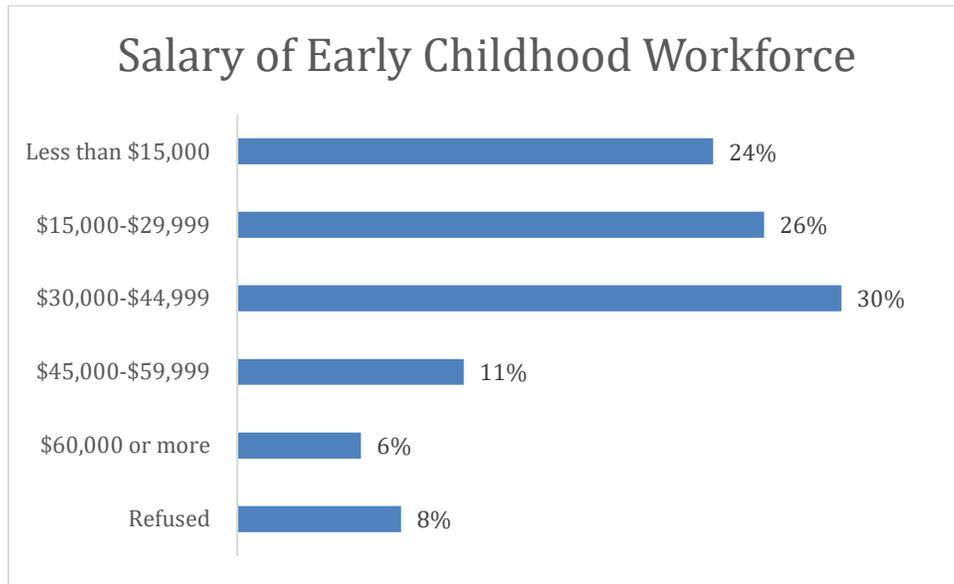
The majority of respondents (60%) have been in this field for more than five years, with the other 40% reporting that they have between one and five years of work experience in early childhood development. When we look closer into the responses, 19% indicated that they had worked in early childhood for six to ten years. Another 25% reported that they had worked in early childhood between 11 and 20 years, with the final 16% working in this area for 21 years or longer. Similarly, most (67%) of respondents have only worked in their current program for one and five years.

When managers and principals provided an average years of experience for their early childhood staff who provide direct service, the modal category was five to ten years, with another (31%) reporting one to four years of experience. There was a similar distribution in experience level for lead teachers, with 39% of administrators and principals responding with one to four years of experience in early childhood, and 35% between five and ten years of experience.

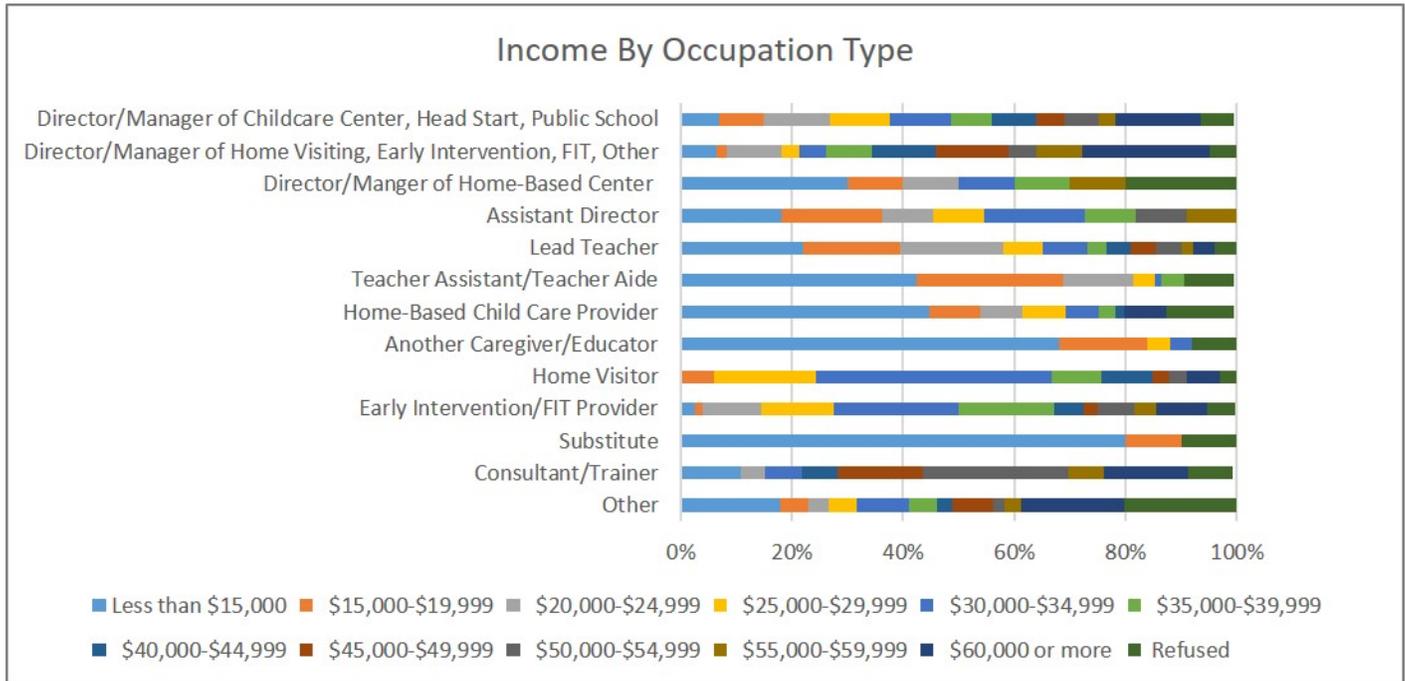
### Salary Levels of Early Childhood Development Workforce is in Need of Attention

One of the themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews was that salary levels of the early childhood workforce are low, and those salary levels impact the ability to recruit and retain high quality professionals. We, therefore, asked each respondent to provide their individual salary as well as those for administrative personnel to provide the average salaries of their employees across specific types of education professionals. Finally, we also asked all respondents about their satisfaction with their salary. The figures below provide some of the findings from that section of the survey.

When the full sample provided their annual salary specific to their job in early childhood, we find that 50% of the sample reported that they make less than \$30,000 annually. Conversely, only 6% of the sample reports making \$60,000 or more annually. Even when we consider that many of these professionals are not on a full 12 month contract, these salary levels confirm feedback from focus groups regarding comparatively low salaries being a problem for recruitment and retention of quality workforce.



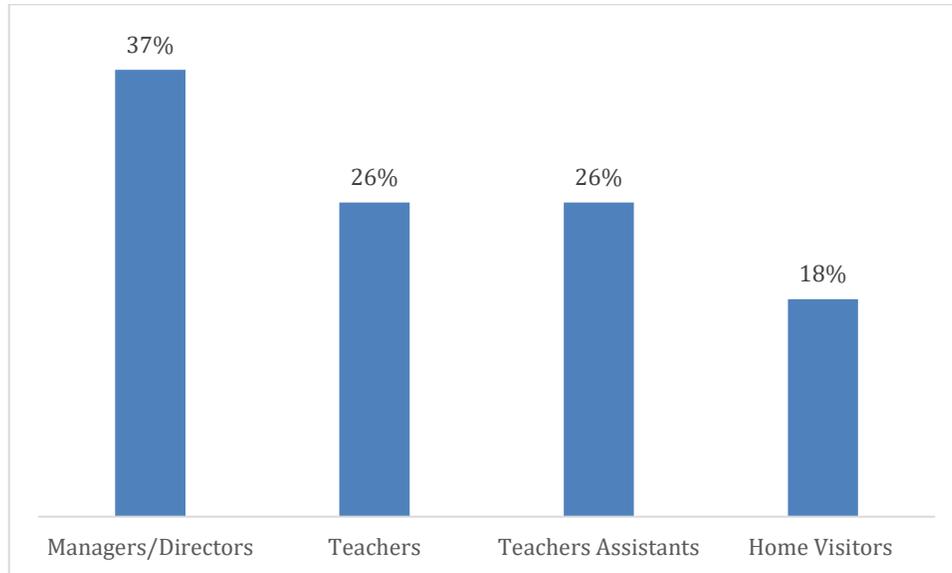
As reflected in the figure below, managers and directors, not surprisingly, make higher incomes than teachers. However, we also see significant inequality based on race, with Native American workforce members having significantly lower incomes. For example, while 7% of the full sample reported making less than \$15,000, 29% of Native Americans in the survey fall into this category.



In addition to asking members of the workforce about their salary and the salaries of their staff, we also asked respondents to tell us whether they were satisfied with their current salary. The survey reveals that only 28% of the workforce are satisfied with their salary; 22% agree and 6% strongly agree that they are satisfied with their salary. This is compared to 17% who strongly disagree, and another 27% who disagree that they are satisfied with their salary. The other 28% are neutral in their views regarding their own salary.

When we look at differences in salary satisfaction levels across the sample, we find perceptions of salary satisfaction across types of employees within the system are distinct from each other. While 37% of managers and directors report that they are satisfied with their current salary, only 26% of teachers, 24% of teaching assistants, 26% of home-based providers, and 18% of home visitors report that they are satisfied with their current salary. This finding identifies the need to address salary levels overall, but across specific areas of the early childhood workforce.

**Are You Satisfied With Your Current Salary?  
[% Who Report Satisfaction per Occupation Type]**

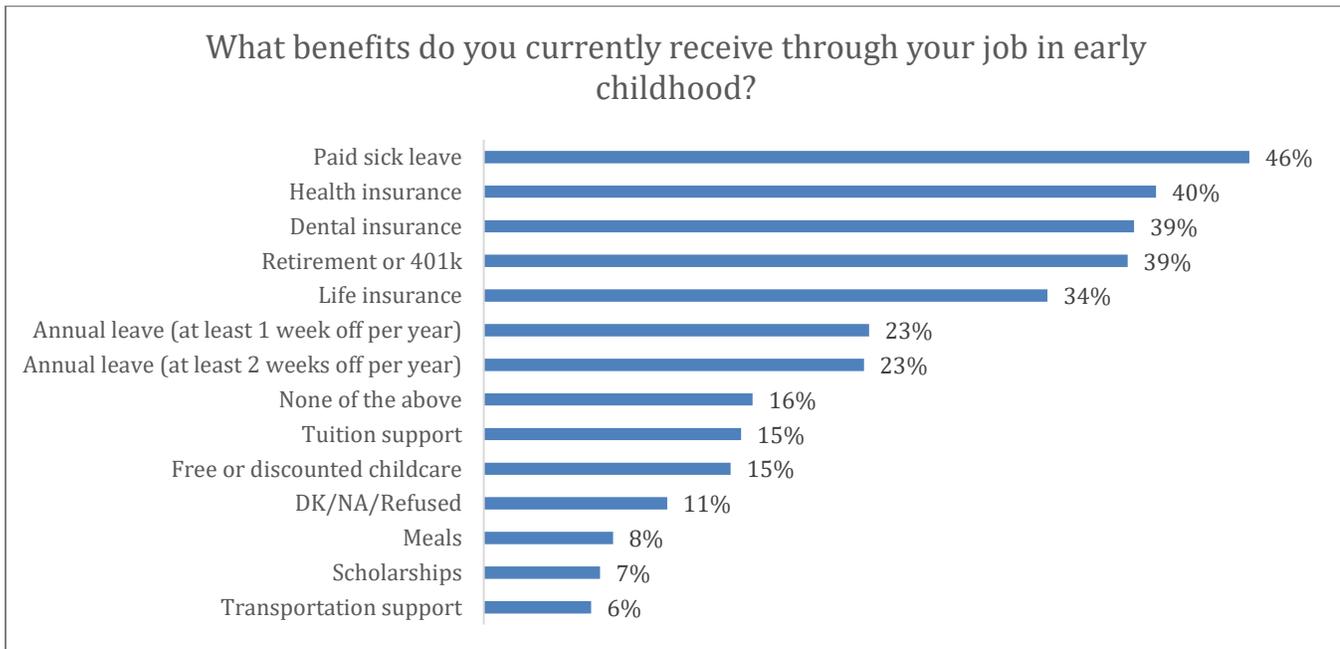


The survey also revealed that roughly a third (29%) of the early education workforce does not have a regular wage increase, with 23% noting that wage increases depend on funding availability. A smaller 8% of the sample reported that they do have regular wage increases for all staff, 10% have regular wage increases based on education and training levels, and 1% based on seniority.

To provide a comprehensive view of the role of compensation across the early childhood workforce in New Mexico, the survey also asked respondents to indicate whether they are provided with paid benefits and other incentives. As reflected in the figure below, there is a lot of variation across the early childhood workforce in New Mexico regarding access to benefits. This includes 16% of the workforce who report that they do not have access to any of the benefits we included in this question. In capturing views about benefits from both supervisors/administrators and individual members of the workforce in the same survey, we found that potential recipients of benefits reported lower rates of access than manager-level staff reported. This may be due to some participants not reporting access to benefits received through a spouse or partner.

Nearly half (46%) of the respondents noted that they currently receive paid sick leave, 40% reported that they have health insurance through their employment, 39% have dental insurance, and 34% have life insurance through their employment. The survey also reveals that 29% of the early childhood workforce have employer provided retirement or a 401K. Fewer early childhood professionals report having annual leave - 23% report that they have at least one or two weeks of paid time off annually.

Across other potential benefits the survey included, we found that 8% have meals reimbursed, 6% have some support for transportation through their employment, and 15% have access to free or discounted childcare. Finally, in regard to education-oriented benefits, 15% have access to tuition support for additional training or credentials, 7% have scholarships to support further training or education.



### Low Wages Lead to Hardships for the Education Workforce in New Mexico

The survey attempted to capture the potential hardships members of the early childhood workforce face as a result of their compensation levels through follow-up questions asked of the full sample. This section of the survey included asking members of the workforce if they have difficulties paying their bills, if they work an additional job to augment their primary salary as a member of the early childhood workforce, and if they or their family relies on any social services. This section of the survey is vital for the needs assessment, as members of the workforce who face economic insecurity are likely to bring some of this stress and anxiety with them to the workplace. Below are some high points from that aspect of the survey.

The survey identifies that a robust 63% of the early childhood workforce had difficulty paying their bills over the past three months, 18% reported that they had a very difficult time paying their bills. Consistent with the trends in salary levels, Native American members of the workforce report greater levels of difficulty paying their bills, with 29% of this sub-group sample reporting that they had a very difficult time paying their bills compared to 14% of White respondents and 19% of Hispanic respondents.

Finally, nearly a third (32%) of the full sample indicated that they work an additional job beyond their primary employment in early childhood to earn extra money. When we compare responses to this item across the types of professionals in the workforce, we see that 38% of teachers report that they worked a second job over the past year compared to 26% of directors or managers.

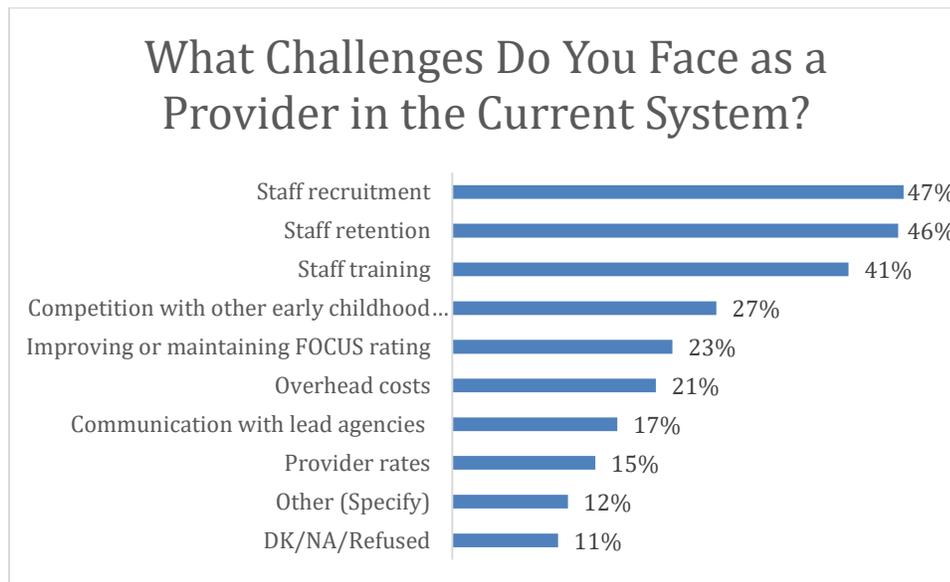
Finally, we asked the full sample if they or their family receive any financial support, another indicator of financial standing or insecurity. We found that 26% of the early childhood workforce currently uses Medicaid/Centennial Care for themselves, and 13% use Centennial Care for their children. In regard to other support services, 16% report that they receive support from the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), 11% from the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition program, and 11% report they receive free or reduced-priced lunches.

### ***Stronger Training Programs Are Needed to Produce More Qualified Workforce***

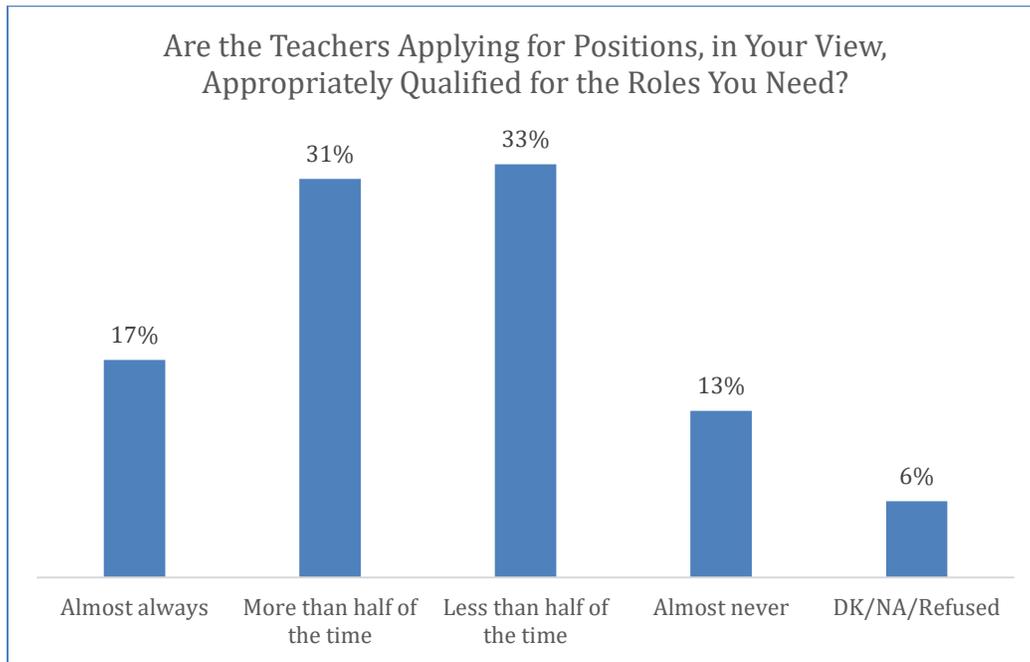
The survey assessed the skills of the early childhood development workforce through questions asked of the workforce directly, as well as items asked of directors and managers regarding the hiring process. Directors report that nearly half of all of their applicants are not qualified for the position for which they are

considered, and that they face challenges to recruit, train, and retain their workforce. The survey also reveals that the workforce has a high percentage of multilingually skilled workers which could increase the capacity of the state to expand language-immersion programs for families who want them. Some of the key findings in this area of the survey are provided below.

When asked what challenges they face as a provider in the current system, nearly half report challenges with staff retention (46%) and recruitment (47%). A high proportion also report challenges with training their staff (41%), with fewer also noting challenges with improving or maintaining FOCUS-rating levels (23%) or competition with other early childhood services for quality staff (27%). See the figure below for a full distribution of challenges providers face.



When asked if the teachers who applied for positions were appropriately qualified for the roles for which they applied, 31% report that they are appropriately qualified more than half of the time and 17% almost always. Conversely, 33% report that the applicants are not appropriately qualified more than half of the time, and 13% almost never appropriately qualified. The data reveals that New Mexico’s applicant pools for early childhood positions in rural areas of the state are more limited than in the urban areas of the state. More specifically, while 24% of managers or directors from urban areas of the state report that teachers who applied for positions were appropriately qualified for the roles for which they applied, less than half the time, the percentage is significantly higher (44%) for managers and directors in rural areas.



When asked directly if they have a hard time hiring teachers, (69%) of managers and directors report difficulties, with 26% stating it is very difficult. The survey suggests that, as a result of the difficulties with hiring qualified employees, 42% of managers/directors have had to fill a position with an unqualified staff member.

### **Training and Professional Development Opportunities Available to Members of the Workforce**

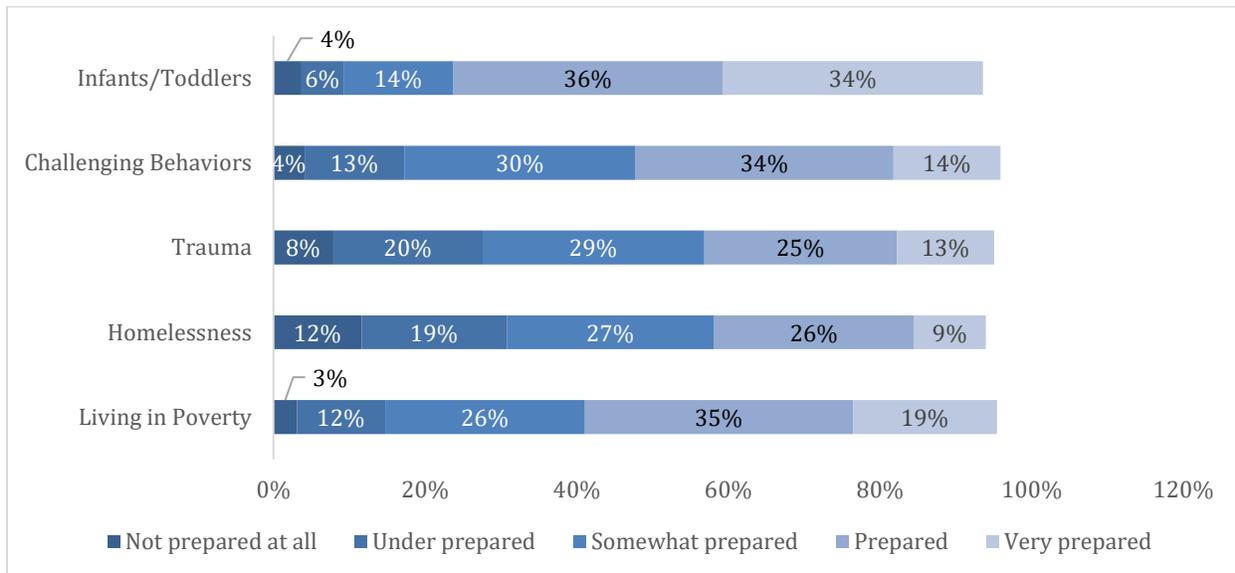
The survey also provided several indicators intended to identify any gaps in training and other professional development opportunities across the early childhood workforce in the state. As reflected in some of the findings highlighted below, most members of the workforce have access to opportunities to improve their skills. However, the workforce needs more training to support children with specific learning differences and disabilities or those who face severe challenges, including homelessness and traumatic stress.

Participation in professional development is high across the workforce. For example, the survey found that 75% of the full sample reported that they participated in professional development experiences in the past year. When asked what trainings or experiences they had, 48% report scheduled time for professional development, and 36% released time to attend professional development. Roughly one-third (34%) report that they acquired professional growth credits, CEUs or training hours. Only 12% report utilizing an instructional coach.

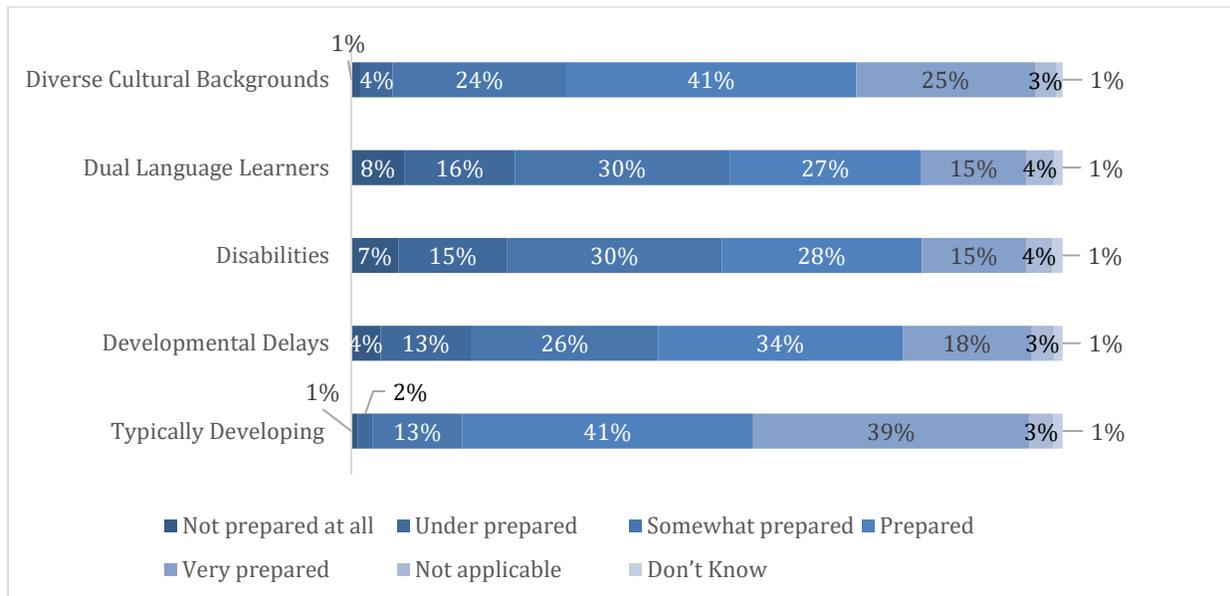
As reflected in the figure below, when asked how prepared they feel they are to provide children with different learning needs, large percentages feel that they are only somewhat prepared or unprepared to serve children with challenges. This is particularly apparent for children who face trauma in their homes and who are homeless. The survey reveals that 68% of the workforce in New Mexico report that they have training or experience working with children with special needs, which helps explain greater preparedness in this area.



**Please Rate How Prepared You Feel You Are to Support Different Learning Needs for Children:**



**Please Rate How Prepared You Feel You Are to Support Different Learning Needs for Children:**



The survey reveals the potential need for enhanced mentoring and orientation support, as only 44% of the sample received formal mentoring or support as a new employee to their school or center. Only 32% of the full sample are currently designated as a mentor or master teacher who provides training or mentoring for new employees.

**Results from the Family Survey**

**Background Information on the Survey**

In addition to the Workforce Survey, our research design included a short survey to identify some overall views from families and stakeholders more generally across the state. We summarize the key findings from this survey below, which reflect the overall percentages from the 819 completed interviews. With the large

sample size we achieved for the survey, we are also able to explore any meaningful differences in the survey across key demographic factors.

Among the population who completed our survey, we found that the majority of participants were parents and primary caregivers who comprised roughly half (49%) of the completed interviews for the Family Survey. The next largest sub-group of stakeholders is early childhood professionals (24%), which includes teachers, home visitors, and providers. The survey sample also includes 9% of concerned community members.

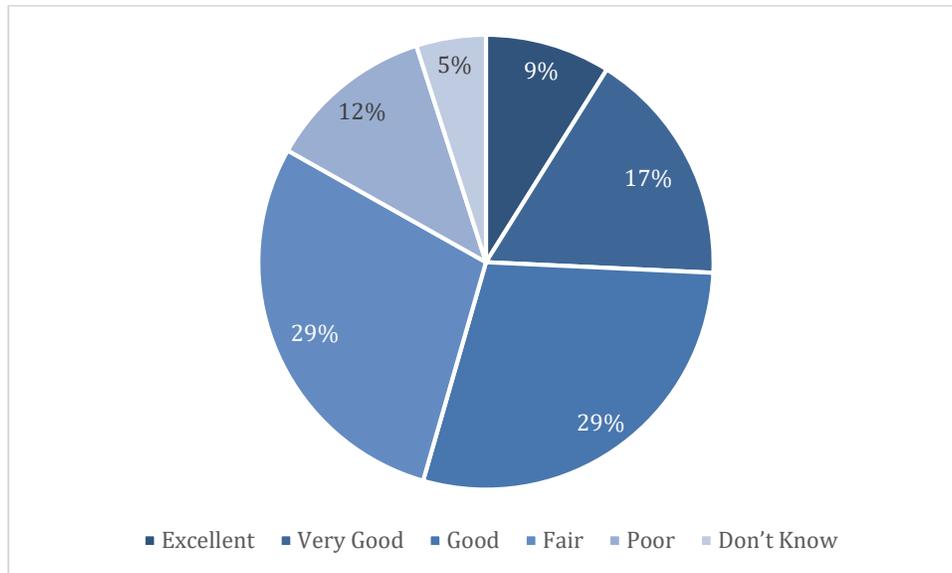
### **Perceived Quality of Early Childhood Programs and Services**

One of the goals of the Family Survey was identifying the saliency of early childhood development to the New Mexican population. The survey, therefore, asked respondents what they felt was the most important issue facing their community that the governor and state legislature should address. Respondents identified two issues so the overall percentages could total more than 100%.

The survey also asked respondents to compare the importance of the state addressing limitations in the current early childhood development infrastructure to other issues that they felt may need attention in New Mexico. New Mexican families and other stakeholders place a high priority on early childhood development, with 79% stating that it is very important, and another 15% somewhat important. Conversely, only 5% of the sample chose either not very important or not at all important. When taken together, the survey makes clear that the stakeholders who are familiar with the early childhood systems in the state place a high priority on addressing infrastructure needs across the state.

The survey asked the full sample of stakeholders how they would describe the quality of the overall system of early childhood education, health programs, and services in their community. As reflected in the figure below, 46% indicate that the current system is either good (29%) or very good (17%), compared to 41% who rate the system as either fair (29%) or poor (12%). Another 9% of the sample rated the system as excellent. The survey's sample believe that they are knowledgeable about New Mexico's early childhood programs and services, 85% of the full sample believes that they are either somewhat knowledgeable (55%) or very knowledgeable (30%).

**In General, How Would You Describe the Quality of Overall Early Childhood Education and Health Programs and Services in Your Community?**



**Stakeholders Identify the Need for Greater Collaboration and Local Control**

Half of all respondents to the survey do not believe there is currently strong collaboration between government agencies and other organizations across the state doing work in early childhood, compared to 20% who believe that there is, and 30% who were not informed enough to provide a direct response. Exhibiting consistent attitudes regarding calibration, the survey had the same distribution to a follow-up item that asked about the strength of collaboration between state government agencies and programs that focus on early childhood education and those that focus on health and well-being.

Below are a couple of quotes taken from the open-ended survey question that allowed participants to provide any input beyond what the survey asked specific to collaboration.

- “Braid federal and state dollars to deliver early childhood educational options that include Early Head Start, Head Start, Home Visiting, PreK (3s and 4s) and case management, mental health for early childhood.”
- “Address the concern that the expansion of the Pre-K program in the public schools has done to the child care centers that have lost enrollment due to these programs. This has caused a major blow to many child care centers.”
- “Work collaboratively to offer necessary services (hearing, speech, developmental delays, etc.) for all children in need. There needs to be more partnership to make sure we are not duplicating resources or services.”

The survey also asked respondents whether they believed that there are currently mechanisms in place to allow local communities to control the decisions made regarding early childhood development needs and priorities, including where funding should be invested. The survey reveals that the majority of stakeholders across New Mexico believe that there is a need to increase local control over decision-making, as only 13% responded that there are existing mechanisms to provide this outcome, compared to 59% who do not believe these mechanisms exist and 29% who were unsure based on their knowledge of the existing systems.

Several of the responses from the survey's open-ended question focused on the need for greater local control, particularly for Tribal communities, who many noted should have greater control of the programs offered for children in their community.

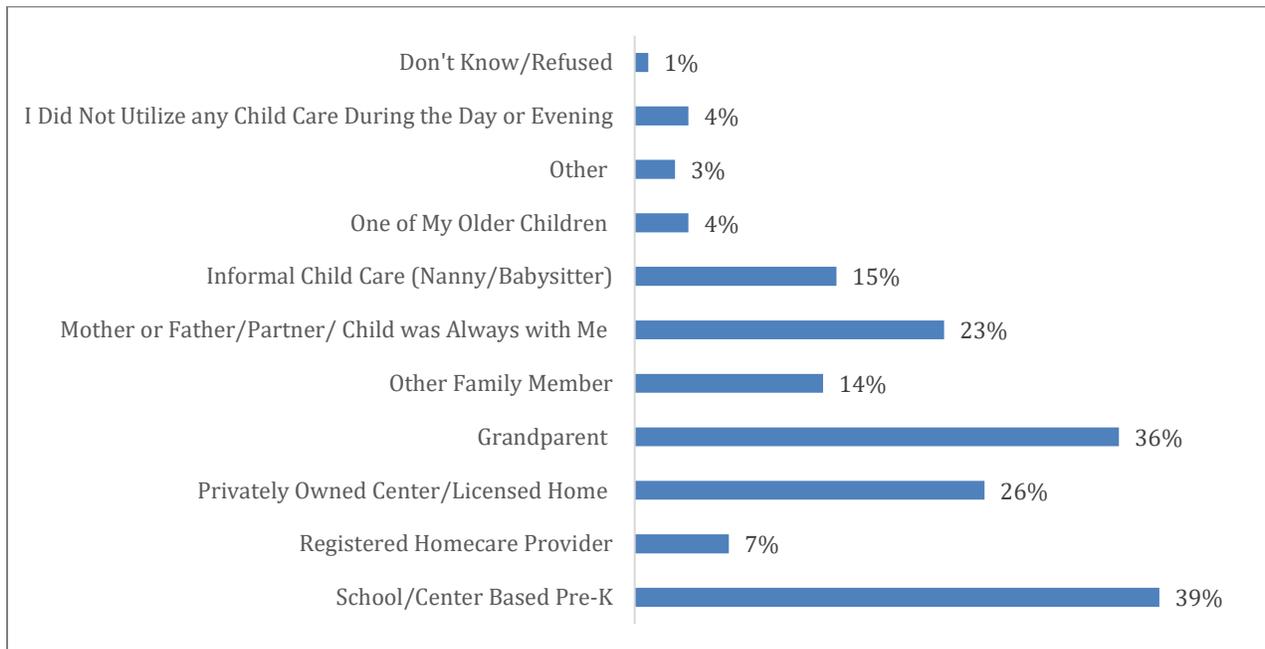
- “Providing for culturally appropriate methodologies in the schools that are developed at whole or in part (depending on the community being served) with input from the community. If speaking to Native American Tribal communities they should have the freedom to be able to help create those programs and evaluate the methodologies that will be used to evaluate their success.”
- “Tribes should have full autonomy to spend resources provided to them by the state or federal government how they feel is needed in their communities.”

### **Utilization of Child Care Options and Desired Options among Parents/Primary Caregivers**

The survey included several items specific to the parents and primary givers intended to gauge their current utilization of child care and their experience with the current systems in the state. As reflected in the figure below, 39% of parents and primary caregivers utilize school-based or center-based childcare including Head Start or Even Start. This is higher than the 26% who utilize privately owned childcare, such as group or licensed homes that provide this service. Consistent with our last survey of parents, a large percentage of New Mexico families rely on grandparents (36%) or other family members (14%) to take care of their children. Roughly one in four (28%) of the survey's sub-sample of parents and primary caregivers stated that the child was always with them or their partner or they did not utilize childcare. Finally, 4% stated that one of the family's older children takes care of the younger child when childcare is required.

The high number of families with young children who choose to rely on family members to provide support as needed for childcare is consistent with what we heard in our qualitative interviews, with many early childhood development programs in Native American communities indicating that they are currently serving all of the families who want childcare. Our last early childhood survey also found that a large percentage of young families across the state would prefer to utilize their family for childcare, even if state programs were more convenient and affordable. We believe that the state should consider this trend from multiple studies as it moves forward with its strategic plan, as it may take some time for the demand for early childhood services to become nearly universal across the state's young families.

**Did You Use Any of the Following Childcare Options During the Day or Evening to Help with Childcare?**

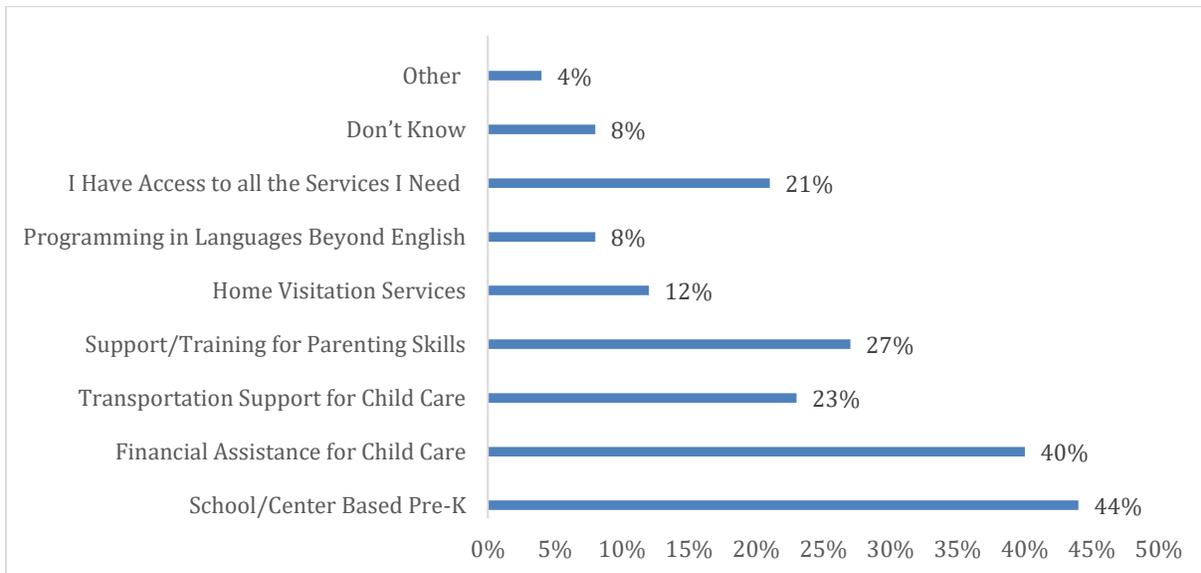


The final question on the Family Survey allowed respondents to provide any other suggestions or comments that were not covered in the survey. A theme that emerged from the responses to the question was the need for improved communication and marketing of existing programs. The quotes below suggest that enrollments in existing programs could be improved through improved outreach to families.

- “Tener un poco más de promoción en la información del programa. Muchas personas no saben que existen.”
- “It would be helpful if there was one place to go to find out what programs would work best for any given child.”
- “Having more advertising for phone numbers and contacts and employees that give call backs to unanswered calls that have left messages. I have left several messages to the contact lines from the state that have never been returned.”
- “Make information available for families who are not aware of affordable early childhood programs that already exist.”

The survey also asked the same sub-group of parents and primary care givers if there were any services or programs that they would like to utilize if it were available to them in their communities. As reflected in the figure below, 21% of families across the state have access to all of the early childhood services that they need in their community. However, 44% of the consumers of early childhood services noted that pre-school education is something that they would utilize. Furthermore, 40% of this sub-sample noted that they would utilize financial assistance for childcare, if it were provided in their community, and 23% noted transportation support for childcare. The data from this item of survey identifies that young families will utilize Pre-K services if they included financial assistance and transportation support. The survey also revealed that 27% of families would like access to parenting-skills support and training, with 12% noting that they would take advantage of home visitation services if they were available in their community. Finally, 8% of this sub-group of the overall survey sample would like programming made available in a language other than English.

### Are There Any Services or Programs that You Would Like to Utilize If They Were Available to You in Your Community?



Many of the survey's participants took time to provide suggestions in the open ended item of the survey that expressed their preferences for programs or services, some of which are listed below. Many parents who expressed a desire for more part-time childcare options.

- “Providing transportation in a real way. Providing before and after school care with hours that actually help the parents, by being accessible and educated on disabled kids.”
- “Better access to quality daycare. The centers I can afford I would NEVER send my child too. They are atrocious.”
- “More training and community outreach activities to involve all families.”
- “Extended trainings for parents who have children with challenging behaviors.”
- “Increase access to families by providing more options in the form of more classes. We started applying to early Pre-K in April and still didn't get into a free program. Make part-time programs an option for parents who stay at home and don't want to put their children in full-time care.”
- “Have more part-time care/school options for parents that don't need (or want) to place their child in full-time programs. Ideally, be able to expand existing Pre-K programs to be able to accept every child/family that is applying for the program.”
- “Have more part time care/school options for parents that don't need (or want) to place their child in full time programs. Ideally, be able to expand existing Pre-K programs to be able to accept every child/family that is applying for the program.”

### Perceived Access to Affordable and Accessible Programs for New Mexican Families

The survey provides some information regarding the public's perceptions of how affordable and accessible early childhood development programs are for New Mexican families who want to take advantage of these programs for their children. While only 15% of the full sample believes that the programs are very affordable and accessible, 41% believe that they are somewhat affordable and accessible. Conversely, 28% believe that these programs are not very affordable or accessible, with 10% stating that they are not at all affordable and accessible. Despite a somewhat positive perception of the affordability and accessibility of these programs for families, a robust 74% of the sample responded that either they themselves or someone in their family or network struggles with finding convenient and affordable early childhood programs. A similarly high 78% of

the sample believes that lack of access to childcare, Pre-K and other early childhood programs is a problem for parents and their children in New Mexico.

Many of the responses to the open-ended question at the end of the Family Survey focused on the challenge of affordable childcare for too many families across the state. Below are some of those quotes that support the findings from the survey noted above. One of the themes that emerged across the responses specific to cost was that many working families that need financial support are just above the income thresholds for subsidies.

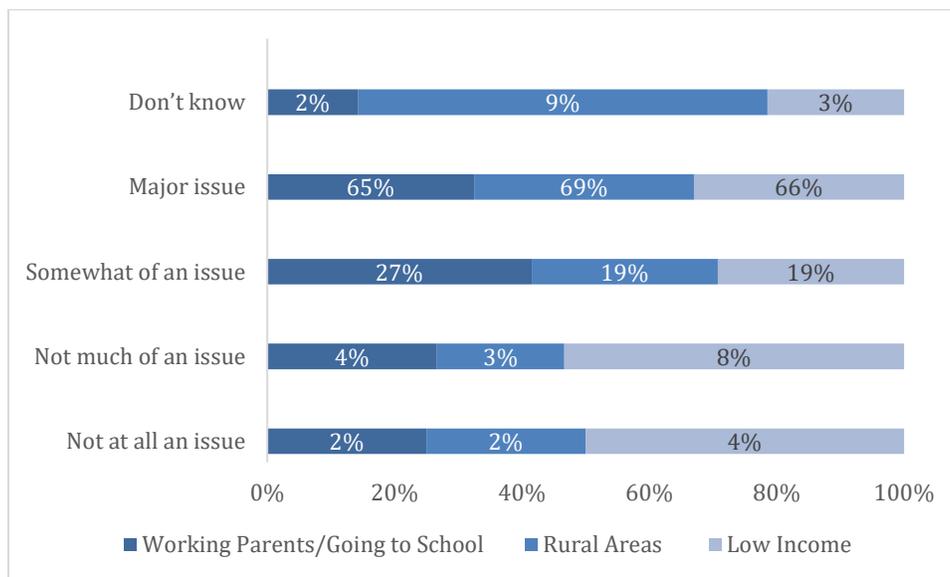
- “Lower the cost. Many parents have informed me the cost of early childhood programs are so high, having one of the parents not working actually saves them money. Sad when ECE programs cost more than a parent’s income.”
- “There is definitely a shortage of quality providers/programs. Often times, these programs are so expensive that, when coupled with low wages and high housing costs, it’s not cost effective for a parent/caregiver to participate in the workforce and pay for programs to improve their parenting skills.”
- “It would be helpful to have affordable or free healthcare for all children so that nobody has to suffer financially just to keep their children healthy. Many people skip the doctors for their children so that they can afford other things that are necessary.”
- “As a lower, middle-class family, we do not qualify for CYFD subsidies for daycare—we are a couple hundred dollars over the income threshold. If my daughter (2) was enrolled in full-time daycare, it would eat up one and a half of my two paychecks per month.”
- “We are excluded from some programming because we make too much money. We would still like to access that programming even if we would have to pay a higher price.”
- “There needs to be more of them, especially daycare, and the income bracket needs to change. Right now, my husband is working two jobs, and we are just screeching by, BUT WE MAKE TOO MUCH MONEY TO QUALIFY FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.”

Accessibility was also a major point of emphasis across the open-ended responses provided in the Family Survey. Many participants specifically noted the challenges with the lottery system and having to sit on a wait list for a long period of time to acquire the services that they desire. Below are some of those statements taken from the open-ended survey question.

- “More accessibility; I work in a FOCUS center and we DAILY get calls but have a huge waitlist. We don’t have the capacity to expand building-wise or the staff.”
- “Provide more access to the state Pre-K programs. There are not enough in areas that need them the most. Now, students are only allowed to attend their neighborhood school programs, and often, there is not enough access. This is especially true in the large programs.”
- “I would have loved to send my son to preschool, but because he doesn’t have a developmental disability, he wasn’t eligible. It makes me so disappointed.”
- “We should have secured spots without having to wait until the last minute for enrollment. Peace of mind for parents, no lottery process to get in. Easy registration for parents, flexible schedules for parents to leave children (part-time, full-time, pick up times).”
- “Lottery spots for twins should grant access to both twins at the same school.”
- “Make them accessible to all who need it! Wait lists in Santa Fe are years long and lottery programs only accept the numbers they can. These situations cause people without a family support network to watch young kids to resort to finding caregivers on Craigslist.”
- “Having respite option other than family members. Both my husband and I are not from this state, so our families are not here to help. We have lost almost 2 years of respite, given that daycares do not accept respite as payment, and providers are scarce at best.”
- “Early childhood programs should be accessible to all. You shouldn’t have to lottery for a chance for your child to have access to Pre-K.”

Many of New Mexico’s families face obstacles that may impact their ability to utilize early childhood programs or services. The survey, therefore, asked respondents to provide their assessment of how much of an issue they believe finding convenient and affordable childcare is for parents who work or attend school, families living in rural New Mexico, and those with low incomes. As reflected in the figure below, the majority of New Mexicans believe that finding convenient and affordable childcare is a major issue for families in all three situations; 69% for parents who live in rural New Mexico, 66% for parents with low incomes, and 65% for parents who work or attend school. This information strongly suggests that the state focus its strategic planning efforts on facilitating these three sub-groups’ access to affordable childcare in their communities.

**How Much of an Issue Do You Believe Finding Convenient and Affordable Childcare Here in New Mexico Is for Parents Who [Insert Scenario] Across the State?**



The Family Survey also included several suggestions specific to these sub-groups’ wider population from the open-ended question that concluded the survey. Below are some quotes from that section of the survey that emphasize the challenges low-income, working and rural families face in acquiring childcare.

- “Rural areas need DD services for 3-5 year-olds to help them get prepared for kindergarten. Kids in urban settings have a lot more resources available to them, even once they start school.”
- “For many years, I had to pay for private Pre-K programs for my two kids (because there was nothing available in public education) while paying off my college loans while being heavily underpaid for work in this state. I would absolutely love to see state-funded programs that are free for people like me.”
- “Provide ALL at-risk parents with the tools and information to give their children the best possible childhood and themselves the best parenting experience possible. Quality home visiting and family planning services are the best way to do this.”
- “These programs should be made available around work and school schedules as much as possible, as they typically do not match the time demands of young parents.”
- “Que haya mas fondos estatales para que los padres puedan trabajar y contar con una ayuda para el cuidado de sus hijos.”
- “More full-day services in rural and frontier areas of the state without having to drive long distances.”
- “We need high-quality programs that provide care the entire work day. The majority of free Pre-K programs are partial-day programs. This does not help working parents. This does not decrease child care costs. Moreover, parents need help with transportation.”

- “Making programs more affordable for people to get their children in. It’s hard to pay for when you’re a single parent.”
- “More affordable high-quality care and education programs available during non-traditional working hours.”
- “Not really a whole lot because parents have jobs and to leave work for workshops or classes just isn’t a possibility. Every parent loves their little time they get when they don’t have work but to replace that with classes is a problem...”
- “Expand hours to accommodate different kinds of jobs. Most of the folks I know who do shift work especially in lower-paid industries struggle to find childcare that accommodates unusual hours. The kids then end up in less desirable situations just to accommodate the time that programs are available.”
- “We need access in rural areas. No transportation.”
- “Have more programs available in rural communities!”
- “We have several daycare preschools here perhaps some should be on the Rez, closer to home.”
- “We need more programs in order to help the very rural areas of the Navajo Nation.”
- “We need services beyond educational supports. Families need access to an array of behavioral health supports. We need to focus on reducing trauma and adverse childhood experiences. We need to understand that children grow up in the context of their family.”
- “Access for services regardless the parents’ income. Head Start programs are known by accepting low-income families only and some children are missing out the early intervention because a family member has to assist with the childcare while the parents work.”
- “Before and after-care for working families.”
- “I would like a full-day Pre-K option for my child. I do not have the ability to transport from one program to the next mid-day. Both my husband and myself work.”

The survey also revealed strong support for expansion of home visitation programs. For example, 77% of the sample supports legislation to increase funding for home visiting programs so all parents of babies and toddlers have access to home visiting programs. An even higher percentage (90%) of the full sample believes that all families who want to have their three-year-old children enrolled in either full- or part-time Pre-K should be able to do so. Below are some of the direct quotes from participants in the survey specific to this theme who provided input to the open-ended question in the survey.

- “The three-year-old and Pre-K programs are very accessible in my community, but care for younger children is often costly and lower quality (kids watch tv, sugary snacks, etc).”
- “Early interventions starting at birth, coordinating health services directly with educational and social services, reflective of what Nadine Burke Harris did in CA.”
- “Clases universales y programas para la primera infancia auspiciados por el gobierno. La educacion es un derecho universal, Educacion gratuita empezando en la primera infancia. Horarios de tiempo completo. Maestros capacitados y en NM bilingues.”

### **New Mexicans Place High Value on Early Childhood Development Programs**

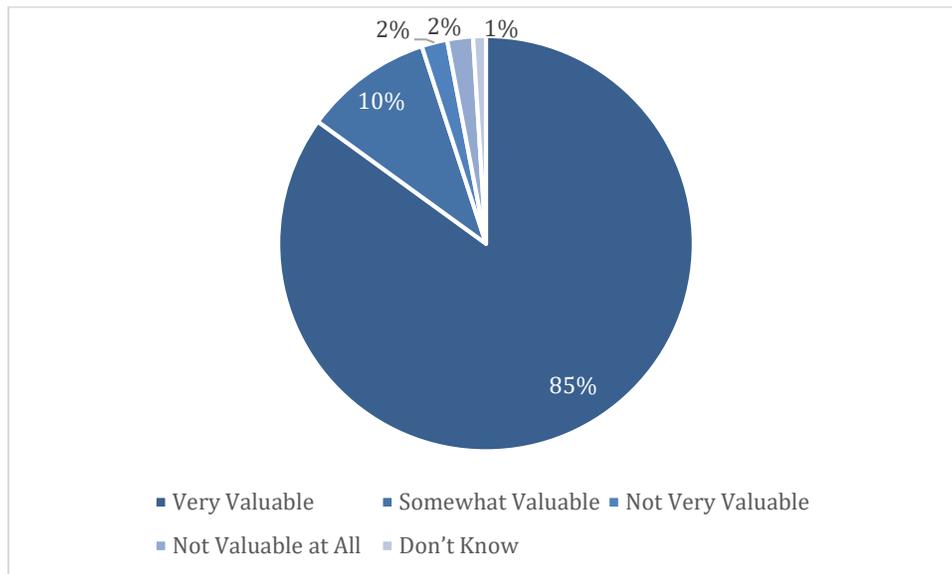
After a reminder that Governor Lujan Grisham and the state legislature passed a budget with an additional \$500 million for the education system in the New Mexico which included pay raises for teachers, a robust 70% of the full sample responded that there needs to be a lot more investment. Only 5% reported that the state has done enough, with the remaining respondents either being unsure or having no strong opinion. The open-ended survey item that closed out our survey provided the following quotes that support this finding in the survey regarding the need for greater investment from the state.

- “The 500 million is a great start but their needs to be better auditing of where the money is going. It is too top-heavy in my opinion. Use more funding to make the programs more affordable. Pay higher wages so there is better trained staff and less turnover. I am all for more spending on schools but let’s set up a better tracking system.”

- “It was great to see the increase in teacher salaries from the legislature and the new governor. However, with so many years of lost financial ground, that should only be the start and not the end of our investment in our teachers.”

The survey makes clear that New Mexico’s stakeholders understand that the high return on investment in early childhood development programs lasts into adulthood. As reflected in the figure below, a robust 85% of the sample believes that early childhood development programs are very important to children’s future academic and adulthood success.

**How Valuable Do You Believe Early Childhood Development Programs Are for Children in New Mexico’s Future Academic Success and Ability to Succeed as Adults?**



**Need-Prioritization Among Stakeholders**

The survey closed with some items intended to address directly which needs the state should prioritize as they begin building the new department. When asked to identify the greatest area of need, 30% of stakeholders identify affordable infant or toddler care as the areas of greatest need the state should prioritize as they build the new department, compared to 19% for Pre-K programming, which had the second-highest percentage. Improving the connection between the education and health infrastructures was next with 12%, and giving local communities more control followed with 10%. Eight percent of the sample identified expanding home visiting programs, and addressing workforce development had 7%.

**Attitudes Regarding Addressing Workforce Limitations**

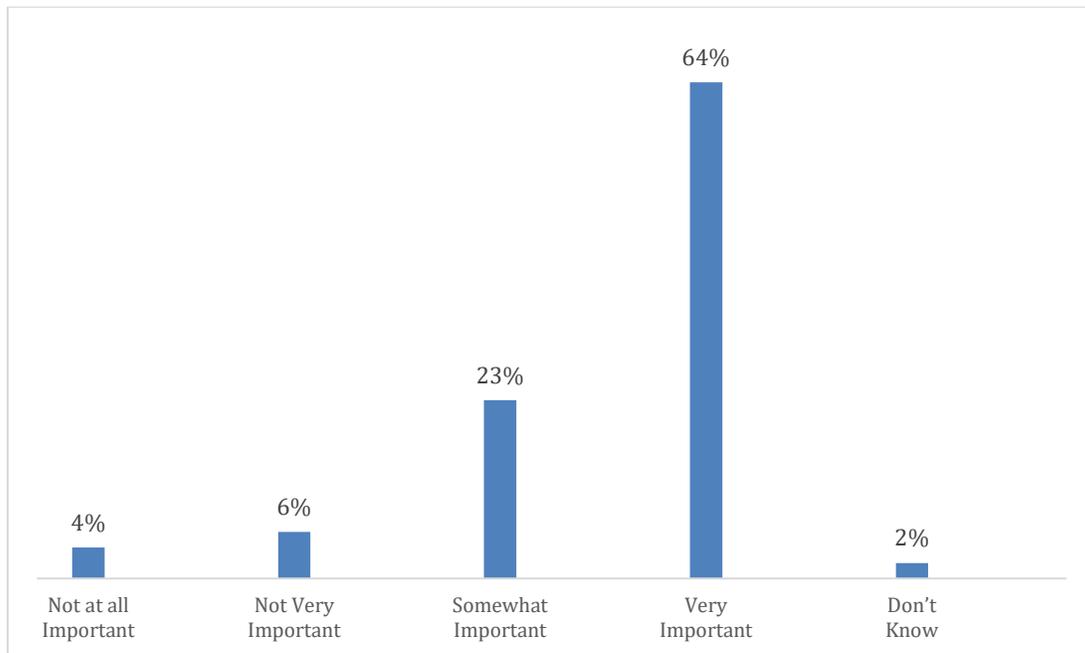
The survey included a few questions specifically aimed at providing information specific to expansion of the early childhood workforce and the skills that the community believes the workforce should have. In regard to specific approaches that could expand the early childhood workforce, a robust 85% of the sample supports aligning state training requirements and professional development with each other and with higher education institutions in the state. An even higher 92% supports increasing scholarships available for educators who wish to increase their credentials to become early childhood educators. Finally, and consistent with the overall finding from our report regarding the need to address low wages of the workforce, nearly all respondents (94%) support improving salaries for early childhood educators and other professionals and increasing the workforce needed to expand services.

The survey’s open-ended question that allowed participants to voice any other concerns or suggestions that they might have also provided several comments specific to the workforce limitations. Below are some of the quotes that reflect the wider set of comments provided by respondents.

- “Making sure communities grow their own professionals to serve within their community. Universal Pre-K and Head Start program for all families regardless of SES and learning abilities.”
- “Getting higher qualified teachers would be great.”
- “We need qualified staff who understand how to build relationships in order for children for children to be successful. More programs for infants and toddlers.”
- “If teachers and directors were to take the Transgender 101 class offered by the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico that would help better meet the needs of families in my community.”

As the state continues with the strategic planning process, expanding access to programs that provide bilingual programming should be a priority, according to the survey. More specifically, 64% of the survey’s sample indicated that it was very important that their child and children of other families have access to teachers who can speak the languages that children speak at home if that language is not English. Another 24% of the sample indicated that having teachers with language skills was somewhat important.

**How Important Is It to You That Your Child, and Children of Other Families, Have Access to Teachers Who Are Able to Speak the Same Language That the Children Speak in Their Home?**



Below are several quotes taken from participants of the Family Survey who took time to provide input to the open-ended question that concluded the survey specific to bilingual educators and programming, as well as the value of culturally competent programming for our state’s diverse population.

- “Que sean bilingües y que sean culturalmente apropiados.”
- “Siendo más accesibles y económicos para las familias de bajos recursos. También apoyando la educación bilingüe y la biliteracidad.”
- “We need more bilingual options for families who do not speak English at home.”
- “Provide racial equity and inclusion trainings for teachers and schools.”

- “Instead of a curriculum that is biased and developmentally inappropriate, we need to be able to teach children the ways they need to be taught that is appropriate to their culture.”
- “It [cultural training] can help by raising awareness of the diversity in the child’s life that might be hurting the students performance in school that are not being understood as sources of trauma.”

Although expanding the workforce to serve a significantly higher percentage of young children will be challenging, the survey indicates that removing obstacles could create a greater pipeline of early childhood professionals. As reflected below, a sizable segment of the stakeholders who participated in the survey know someone in their personal network interested in a career in this sector, if they could acquire the necessary credentials and if those jobs paid a higher wage.

- Do you know anyone in your network who would be interested in a career in this sector if those jobs paid a higher wage? **76% Yes**
- Do you know anyone in your network who would be interested in a career in this sector if they were able to acquire the necessary credentials? **58% Yes**

***Content Specific to Children With Developmental Delays or Disabilities***

The final section of the survey focused on the state’s children who have development delays or disabilities. Exactly half of the sample reported that they either have or work with a developmentally delayed child or a child with a disability. This speaks to the high number of children with one of these challenges. The quotes below reflect the major themes from the open-ended questions that asked parents and providers what they need to help these children reach their developmental and educational goals.

**[For Providers] What support services or programs do you need from the state in order to ensure that this child or children reach their developmental and educational goals?**

- “As an early childhood educator, I believe that when a child gets enrolled and I diagnose them with a delay, they should receive services immediately. The services need to continue throughout their years while in school.”
- “Professional development for staff, paid tuition for educators that want to go back to school specifically in the SPED field.”
- “I have been a teacher for 22 years. I feel that extra training for SPED students would be helpful.”
- “Periodical trainings for teachers reflecting current and on-going research about inclusive practices. Trainings and resources for teachers about specific supports for children with specific developmental delays.”
- “Participation and communication with goal and progress. Better training on developmental delays and disabilities so they are better prepared to help them while in their care.”
- “More collaboration between systems. When a child graduates from Early Intervention, they go to Child Find. The child may have more than a delay and need stronger interventions. A child with autism, for example, may not even be ready for Pre-K at three years old.”
- “I’m a teacher. Students with disabilities need a variety of services. Some need OT, PT, counselors, psychologists, social workers, speech, language and articulation, modified PE, qualified SPED teachers who aren’t spread so thin, smaller classroom sizes.”
- “Training on handling disabled kids, understanding how their behavior is different from typically developing kids, accessible facilities, educating them on how to handle the emotions of a disabled child really would go a long way. Centers should have someone who is trained in these areas on their full-time staff.”
- “Early interventions starting at birth, coordinating health services directly with educational and social services, reflective of what Nadine Burke Harris did in CA.”

### **[For Parents] What support services or programs do you need from your childcare provider in order to ensure that this child or children reach their developmental and educational goals?**

- “Occupational therapy, speech therapy, early intervention access. I personally need assistance in order to learn how to help my son.”
- “Early childhood mental health consultants to support child care centers to provide trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate services and not expel children with challenging behaviors.”
- “We need greater access to speech therapy, speech language therapists.”
- “My child has hearing loss. She needs speech therapy, expensive equipment (hearing aids & fm system for teachers).”
- “Dysgraphia training supporting emotional needs of the gifted (SENG). There are NO gifted schools in NM. The gifted program in APS is almost non-existent in lower elementary school. Two hours a week! The rest of the time the child is restless in a classroom.”
- “Knowledge/training/experience with all autism spectrum issues and the best way to handle autistic spectrum children.”
- “I need access to play-based, developmentally-appropriate childcare for my developmentally delayed two year old so that I can attend school for early childhood education. We are very low-income and transportation is sometimes an issue.”
- “Mas terapistas capacitadas y cuidadores con algo de experiencia en salud mental.”
- “Having providers who can diagnose developmental delays without fighting and begging schools or waiting two years for UNM would be a good start.”
- “Support services available to the child in their school setting more than once or twice a week. Also support for teachers by reducing class size when children with developmental delays are enrolled in their classes so each student can have their needs met.”

### **Overall Conclusions - Recommendations**

The following overarching conclusions and recommendations emerged from our analysis of the qualitative and survey data we collected through our research process.

There is a need to address limitations in the physical infrastructure required to expand the number of children served in early childhood programming across the state. Our data suggests that the existing classrooms, buildings centers, playgrounds etc. are incapable of meeting the current demand, much less an expanded demand for services. This is particularly the case in rural areas of the state and in Tribal communities.

- We recommend that the state consider conducting a space audit to identify where the most significant challenges exist and what spaces might be utilized for early childhood if they were remodeled and re-envisioned as well as where new physical infrastructure may be needed.
- We also identified some potential funding streams for this effort, including the utilization of one-time state funding generated from the increased oil and gas revenue.

The data in our report makes clear that the early childhood workforce is underpaid with many skilled employees lacking access to a living wage and benefits. The data suggests that the low wages is a strong contributor to the limitations in qualified applicants for early childhood staff positions reported in our Workforce Survey and the challenges noted in retaining quality staff and educators. The survey data highlights support for increasing the salary levels of our high quality education workforce, and a large number of survey respondents and qualitative interview participants noted that they know members of our community who would be motivated to pursue careers in early childhood if the wages were better and accessing credentials was easier.

One of the dominant themes that emerged from our research was that many families across the state do not want to have their young kids enrolled in early childhood programming, preferring to have their children with family members when childcare is needed. This, we believe, should be considered when defining

targets for enrollment during the strategic planning process. However, the research we conducted identifies several opportunities to increase demand for programming and utilization of programming, if it were more accessible and affordable.

- Many working families noted that the availability for childcare outside of traditional work hours is very limited in their communities. Many families noted that financial assistance and transportation were resources they would use if these were made available to them.
- Many families noted that while they are not in a position to afford quality childcare, they make just enough to be ineligible for financial support. We believe that taking a closer look at the thresholds for financial support could significantly increase the number of eligible families who would utilize early childhood programming.

Another major finding was the strong desire from Native American communities across the state to see greater trust in Tribal communities to develop and implement programming and curriculum without state or federal interference as well as a desire for the state to address concerns about the potential for language and cultural loss with expansion of early childhood programs across the state. Regis Pecos and members of our research team worked directly with several tribes to define their needs in a process of creating education blueprints that include budget analysis to address the needs the community defines. This, in our view, is a model of how Tribal communities can create greater capacity to develop their own programs and models if the state and federal provided the funding, that communities are able to intertwine without penalties and autonomy for it.

Finally, there is a strong desire for early childhood services and programs that are culturally grounded and provide families with dual-language opportunities for their children. This was a major finding in our discussions with Tribes across the state, many of whom noted that an assumption that learning English in these early years is more important than retaining indigenous language skills is a form of structural racism. The surveys revealed that there is strong support for expanding bilingual programming, and the state's workforce has a significant number of professionals who have the skills to make this a reality. The data supports recommendations for identifying paths for communities to train and retain their own professionals in this area and increasing the training available for the existing workforce to address challenges many young children face outside of school (poverty, homelessness, trauma etc.).

## Our Research Team

The data in this report could not be collected without the collective knowledge of our research team and their long-standing relationships and networks among Tribal communities in New Mexico. The Native American Budget and Policy Institute (NABPI) staffed this project with individuals who are from Tribal communities themselves, who have knowledge of how to conduct research in partnership with Tribal communities, and who have wide range of contacts within Tribal communities. We were able to keep many of the same researchers from the last early childhood education project on board for this effort, as we knew that that focus of the current research project would need to build upon the prior work in order for the communities to see the value of their time investment.

**Lia Abeita Sanchez** is a Marketing Assistant with the UNM Center for Social Policy and UNM Native American Budget & Policy Institute. Lia led the development of the final reports and graphic design for this project. She is from Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico.

**Christy Chapman** hails from the Pueblo of Zuni. She earned her undergraduate in nursing and law degree from the University of New Mexico. She joined the Native American Budget and Policy Institute (NABPI) as a contract attorney focusing on education, child welfare, health, and economics. She brings an indigenous lens to address transforming education, promoting health sovereignty, and empowering Native communities to thrive economically.

**Violette Cloud** is a JD/PhD candidate at the University of New Mexico studying Law and Clinical Psychology. Violette is also a UNM Center for Social Policy Fellow and a Native American Budget and Policy Institute research assistant. Violette is from Southwest Colorado; she is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and a descendant of the Southern Ute Tribe.

**Sheri Lesansee** is a Program Manager for the UNM Center for Social Policy and Native American Budget and Policy Institute, also at UNM. She has experience working in community-based settings in areas of prevention and intervention related to health disparities in tribal communities and has a Master's degree in Public Health. She also has experience working on community-based research programs and research in university settings including oversight of NABPI's most recent early childhood research project. Sheri is a native New Mexican from Zuni, New Mexico.

**Maria Livaudais** is a PhD candidate with the Department of Political Science and a UNM Center for Health Policy Fellow. Maria's specialization is in health inequities, race and ethnicity, and the role of political and social institutions. She has worked with several early childhood projects through the UNM Center for Social Policy. Her current research assesses the role of racism on attitudes towards healthcare and healthcare reform.

**Carmela Roybal** is a PhD candidate with the Department of Sociology and an RWJF Center for Health Policy Fellow and Native American Budget Policy Institute Research Analyst. A native New Mexican from Ohkay Ohwingeh, Carmela's specialization is in the sociology of health, race and ethnicity, with an emphasis on the social determinants of mental health of American Indians and Latinos. Her current research examines substance abuse patterns and suicide among American Indians and Latinos, in which she incorporates indigenous approaches to mental health and hopes to develop effective mental health and addiction interventions for indigenous communities, early childhood being her current focal point

**Gabriel R. Sanchez** is the Executive Director of the UNM Center for Social Policy, a Professor of Political Science, and Director of Graduate Studies for the department of political science at the University of New Mexico. Professor Sanchez is also a Principal at Latino Decisions who conducted the survey-based data collection for this report. Professor Sanchez is a native New Mexican with a national reputation as the leading expert on New Mexico politics and policy and a nationally recognized scholar of survey research and methods who has led early childhood projects both nationally and in New Mexico.

**Jeremiah Simmons** is a UNM Center for Health Policy Fellow, a Native American Budget Policy Institute Research Analyst and a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology with a concentration in Clinical Psychology. He graduated from Stanford University with a bachelor's degree in Human Biology. Jeremiah, a native New Mexican, who was raised in Mescalero, New Mexico, and while he associates himself with the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation, his family originates from the Lakota and Navajo Tribes.

**Nora Yazzie** is a Research Consultant of the UNM Native American Budget and Policy Institute with a depth of experience as both an early childhood educator and facilitator/researcher in this policy area. Nora was one of the lead researchers on NABPI's most recent early childhood education report. Nora has a BA in Elementary Education from NMSU and an MA in English from UNM and is a native of New Mexico from Farmington/Navajo Nation.

**Jasmine Yepa** is a tribal member of the Pueblo of Jemez, born and raised in the Pueblo. Yepa is an alumni of Mount Holyoke College where she received her Bachelor's Degree in Politics in 2013. She subsequently received her Juris Doctorate Degree from the University of New Mexico School of Law in 2017. Ms. Yepa currently works as a policy analyst for the Native American Budget and Policy Institute, focusing primarily on state education policy affecting the lives of Native American students and families.

## Appendix

### *Best Practices for Research Process with Native American Communities Summary of Research Process for Native American Research for This Report*

The process we identify is strongly recommend when conducting community focus groups and when working with Tribal communities to ensure that the sovereignty of these communities is respected. This process can add significantly to the timeline for the data collection process, but is a vital component to the overall process. These protocols are in place to ensure that the research process is collaborative with Tribes, and does not harm or disrespect Tribal members. Any scope of work created for future research in this area should be created with this timeline in mind. In short, it will not be feasible for any research team who conducts research focused on Tribal communities to turn this work around quickly if they follow the best practices we outline below. Although challenging, our team seeks to execute the goals of any project without deviating from the following best practices that have been established for NABPI.

The protocol for engaging in community-based focus groups and interviews with tribal communities include multiple sectors that should be regarded. These sectors include informing and obtaining approval from the tribal leadership and/or tribal research infrastructures and report the research findings back to the tribal communities.

#### *Tribal Leadership Contact and Approval*

Respecting that tribal governments are legal sovereign nations, contacting tribal leadership to inform about the projected research is an important step to begin with before any part of the research is started. Communication through a formal letter that is mailed, and followed up with an email message or telephone call is the first step in seeking approval. Communication should be addressed to the tribal Governor, President, Lieutenant Governors, Vice President, and tribal administrators. Tribal administrators should be included in the communication because they are the first point of contact for the tribes. It is also important to note, some tribes are divided into local community leadership, for example, Navajo Nation has community Chapters that have a leadership structure in place so it is important to also include these leaders in the communication.

Communication about the research with the tribal leadership should include information on the purpose of the research, who will be conducting the research, the benefits of conducting the research and possible risks, inform how data collected will be shared with the communities, and offer to meet with the leadership to present in person at a time that is suitable with their schedules.

#### *Obtain Approval from Tribal Research Infrastructures*

Some tribes have human research review boards that lead their community's research agendas. In addition to obtaining tribal leadership approval to conduct research in their communities, approval from these boards is another step when conducting research in tribal communities. It is important to include time on the project timeline to include approval of research from review boards. With this research, we will need to obtain research review approval from the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board that is based in Window Rock, AZ. The board meets monthly and requires a process to submit research proposal for review and approval. The proposals are due one month in advance to the board. The board determines when the research will be on the meeting agenda and when invited, the principal investigator and the research team should be available to travel to the meeting site to present the research to the board.

#### *Reporting Research Findings to Tribal Communities*

After the research findings have been collected and analyzed, these findings should be shared with the communities in form of a formal presentation or a report. Allowing time to present the research findings to

tribal leadership and communities is an important step in closing the research process. We plan to utilize the contact information for all participants of our study to send them the final report as a means of addressing this important final step in the research process.

Attached is also a survey invitation memo from Mariana Padilla, Director of the New Mexico Children's Cabinet.



## State of New Mexico

Michelle Lujan Grisham  
*Governor*

October 1, 2019

Dear Early Childhood Professionals:

On behalf of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and the Children's Cabinet of New Mexico, I am writing to request your participation in an important and confidential survey. The results of this survey will help us map the future of policymaking that will benefit and boost children across this state. We're eager for your feedback.

The information you provide will help us understand the reality on the ground. The strategic plan we hope to compile using your feedback will inform the operations of the new Early Childhood Education and Care Department. Your voice will guide us.

We know that in order to improve early childhood programs in New Mexico, we must emphasize our workforce. We must start with the dedicated professionals who do this crucial work every day. We need to build upon our strengths and remove barriers wherever possible. With your contributions in this survey, we will have the best possible information in order to make the best possible decisions moving forward.

Please reach out to our team if you have questions or know other early childhood professionals who should take this survey.

Thank you for your work for New Mexico's youngest children. There is nothing more important in our society than supporting families and raising children to thrive.

Sincerely,

Mariana Padilla  
Director  
Children's Cabinet