

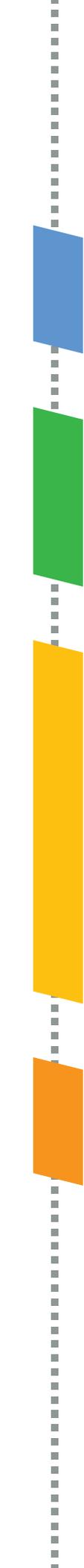


# Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program

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TALENT MODEL TOOLKIT





# Introduction

## TOOLKIT PURPOSE

This toolkit introduces a new talent model for early childhood educators and provides an in-depth roadmap **for practitioners and intermediaries** to develop and launch a similar model. Early learning and care are vital to the health, well-being, and success of children, families, and communities; yet, the early childhood workforce has faced long-standing challenges that impact the availability and quality of early learning care in every state. Early childhood providers, educational institutions, government agencies, and community intermediaries all recognize the need for an innovative solution to prepare, develop, and retain highly-qualified early childhood educators.

The talent model outlined in this toolkit is based on the **Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program**, co-developed by **Early Learning Indiana (ELI)** and **Butler University (Butler)**, with support from the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation (Fairbanks Foundation) and Ascend Indiana (Ascend). The model is an innovative early childhood teacher development program that combines online learning and job-embedded experiences, provides professional development and wraparound services, and culminates in a stackable credential, preparing up to 90 highly-qualified and work-ready early childhood teachers equipped to lead early childhood classrooms and continue their careers in the field.

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# Context

## THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LANDSCAPE

### The Challenge

Early learning and care are foundational to both individuals' and communities' academic and economic success. Eighty-five percent of a child's capacity to learn is developed by the age of five, and studies continue to show the meaningful impact early childhood experiences have on a child's future success in school and the workplace.<sup>1</sup> The United States, however, is under-equipped to provide high-quality early learning and care to all its children and families. Nearly 70 percent of U.S. households with young children depend on external childcare, but half of U.S. families live within childcare deserts, where there is only one available childcare seat for every three children in the community.<sup>2, 3</sup> This insufficient capacity is fueled by a growing shortage of qualified early childhood educators: too few individuals are entering the early childhood field and too many are leaving.<sup>4</sup>

The early childhood field's attraction and retention challenges stem from several systemic factors: chronically low compensation rates, high education costs, hectic year-round schedules, lack of classroom and instructional support, lack of visibility into career pathways, and poor perceptions of early childhood education in the education profession.<sup>5</sup> In 2020, the national median hourly wage for childcare workers is \$11.65, compared to \$26.95 for preschool teachers and \$34.43 for elementary teachers.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, traditional early childhood education pathways take an average of six years to complete and cost an average of \$22,333 annually.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, traditional early childhood education training models often do not fully connect theory and in-classroom application, leaving early-in-career early childhood teachers inadequately prepared for the classroom practice that translates to high-quality teaching.

The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated the field's attraction, retention, and capacity challenges: nearly 50% of U.S. early childhood centers closed during the pandemic's early shelter-in-place orders, according to a survey shared with thousands of childcare providers across the country in March 2020.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the significant impact on the millions of U.S. children and families who require early learning and care and the nearly one million early childcare workers, childcare-related absenteeism carries significant economic losses for the country, summing to \$6.9 billion in lost tax revenue, \$12.7 billion in lost business revenue, and \$36.9 billion in lost individual earnings each year.<sup>9</sup>

### The Solution

To address this widening talent gap, Early Learning Indiana (ELI), Indiana's oldest and largest early childhood education nonprofit, sought to restructure their teaching roles and innovate the traditional models of early childhood educator preparation that are time intensive, high-cost, and inadequately prepare teachers to deliver high-quality instruction and practice in the early childhood classroom.

First, ELI segmented their teaching staff into two classroom roles—teacher and classroom support professional. This segmentation enabled the definition of distinct job functions, education and

1 ["The Issue Explained."](#) Early Learning Indiana. 2022.

2 ["Children under age 6 with all available parents in the labor force in the United States."](#) Kids Count Data Center. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2020.

3 ["Childcare Deserts."](#) Center for American Progress. 2020.

4 The early childhood workforce sees an annual turnover rate over 30%. ["Strengthening the Pathways to the Early Childhood Profession."](#) Early Learning Indiana. 2020.

5 ["2022 State of Early Learning."](#) Early Learning Indiana.

6 ["Early Childhood Workforce Index 2020."](#) Report. University of California-Berkeley.

7 ["College Return on Investment."](#) Commission for Higher Education. 2018.

8 ["A State-by-State Look at the Ongoing Effects of the Pandemic on Child Care."](#) National Associate for the Education of Young Children. May 2020.

9 ["The Economic Impacts of Insufficient Child Care on Working Families."](#) ReadyNation and Council for a Strong America, with funding from the Pritzker Children's Initiative. September 2018.

experience requirements, and pay differential, elevating the role of teacher as the full-time leader in the classroom. This segmentation also paved the way for a new talent model to focus on preparing highly-qualified early childhood teachers.

The resulting talent model, the **Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program**, is a competency-based, scalable, and replicable solution that provides an accessible, affordable, and accelerated pathway to the early childhood field. Co-developed by **Early Learning Indiana** (ELI) and **Butler University** (Butler), with support from the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation (Fairbanks Foundation) and Ascend Indiana (Ascend), the program is an innovative early childhood teacher development program that combines online learning and job-embedded experiences, provides professional development and wraparound services, and culminates in a stackable credential. The program annually prepares up to 90 highly-qualified and work-ready early childhood educators equipped to lead early childhood classrooms and continue their careers in the field.

Over the course of a year, Ascend facilitated a process to support ELI and Butler's design and development of the program. This toolkit outlines that process, structuring the program's development into strategic phases, defining key actions and milestones across each phase, and sharing important learnings throughout the process. It has been produced to provide a roadmap of the program's design and support the development of similar early childhood teacher training programs.

## Development Phases

The program was developed across a series of four strategic phases: **Discover, Identify & Secure, Design, and Launch**. Each phase's objectives and key milestones are outlined below.

### PROJECT PHASES

#### Discover

The **Discover Phase** lays the foundation for the program by building a collective understanding of the “why” and “what” of the program. It includes a landscape analysis to quantify the talent need, discussion to understand the challenges creating the talent gap, and research to identify potential talent solutions.

#### Identify & Secure

The **Identify & Secure Phase** involves establishing a formal partnership with an education partner to co-develop the program alongside the employer. This phase begins by defining key criteria for the education partner, researching the existing early childhood teacher training landscape to identify potential education partners, engaging and assessing prospective education partners, and ultimately selecting the education partner.

#### Design

The **Design Phase** encompasses the build of the program alongside the education partner: its curriculum and how that curriculum is delivered; the wraparound supports available to program participants; what program completion means for graduate; and marketing, recruitment, and selection strategies.

#### Launch

The **Launch Phase** sets the strategic plan in motion, finalizing the program's curriculum build, developing and distributing marketing materials, releasing the program application, and initiating recruitment strategies to support a successful launch.

# Toolkit Overview

## STRUCTURE

This toolkit outlines the approach and supporting action steps for each of the program's four strategic phases as well as key learnings gained by the employer and education partner within each phase. The key learnings elevate considerations for organizations seeking to develop a similar program.

## INITIAL SET-UP

There are three key first steps to take before beginning the program's Discover Phase: (i) establishing a project team, (ii) outlining a project plan, and (iii) gaining leadership approval. Each step is detailed below.

### Establish a Project Team

The project team will be responsible for implementing action steps across each strategic phase, making program decisions, managing project progress, communicating with leadership, and engaging additional key stakeholders as needed. It is important that the project team represents multiple areas of the business and can provide the following expertise:

- **Can speak directly to the talent challenges.** These are often individuals directly managing early childhood teachers and/or individuals responsible for running early childcare centers.
- **Understand current recruitment and training initiatives.** These are often individuals in the Human Resources and/or Talent Acquisition teams.
- **Know the current business strategy and future vision for the organization or department.** These are often senior leaders of the organization or department.
- **Recognize employee perspective and opinion.** These are current employees who can represent and advocate for employees' best interest.
- **Lead forward strong project management.** This is often a designated project manager with experience leading forward talent development projects or projects of similar complexity.

The project team structure will vary depending on who is leading development of the program. If a single organization/employer is leading the project, the project team will include key stakeholders from that organization. If a collection of organizations is leading development of the program through a regional or state-level collaborative, the project team will include key representatives from each engaged organization. As the program moves through the four strategic phases, project leadership should continuously evaluate the voices and expertise required at that stage in development and engage individuals as needed. This extends to stakeholders at the education partner organization.

### Develop a Project Plan

It is recommended that the project team develop a project plan to define owners and timelines across project management as well as key milestones within each project phase. The project development and launch timeline will vary, dependent on where the project team is in their understanding of the talent need, the time it takes to secure the right education partner, what infrastructure already exists around the program to be developed, and other factors. Assuming a team is starting at the beginning of this process, it is expected they will need between eight and twelve months to complete all steps outlined in this toolkit.

### Gain Leadership Approval

Project leadership should be sure to engage appropriate organization leadership before beginning the Discovery Phase to align on vision and approach for the program and key criteria for the education partner. Gaining this alignment, as well as approval, from organization leadership will ensure the project has the right foundation and direction as development begins.





# Discover

## SUMMARY

The Discover Phase lays the foundation for the program by building a collective understanding of the “why” and “what” of the program. It includes a landscape analysis to quantify the talent need, discussion to understand the challenges creating the talent gap, and research to identify potential talent solutions.

## APPROACH

The Discover Phase is characterized by a set of internal meetings with the newly-launched project team towards the following three activities:

- 1 Quantify Your Need for Early Childhood Teachers**
  - Evaluate current state of early childhood workforce
  - Determine future needs
  - Define the talent gap
- 2 Evaluate Workforce Barriers and Causes**
  - Confirm workforce preparation as leading barrier to address
- 3 Scope Talent Solution**
  - Research existing talent solutions for early childhood workforce
  - Define vision, mission, and outcomes for approach

## 1 QUANTIFY YOUR NEED FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

### Evaluate current state of early childhood workforce

To inform the project goals and strategies, it is important to understand the demand for early childhood teachers and the available talent supply to meet hiring needs.

**Supply** represents the number of available workers to fill the jobs, as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of the talent. The questions outlined below can help to define the current state of supply:

- What are the essential functions and skills necessary for early childhood teachers?
- Are there any required or desired credentials/degrees that individuals need to teach in your state? In your region? Or at a specific center?
- Who are your current recruitment partners? Approximately how many individuals do you hire from each partner?
- How many individuals are graduating from programs that prepare teachers for the workplace?

**Demand** is characterized by the number of individuals currently in the role, the level of turnover, and the average annual salary. Your HR Director or site leaders can help provide the following demand data for analysis:

- Number of teachers currently employed
- Number of teacher openings
- Time-to-fill open roles
- Percent turnover / average time for retention

In addition to quantitative demand data, qualitative data can help to support the understanding of the current state. For example, exit survey data can help provide context to retention and turnover data and employee satisfaction, or manager feedback surveys can help to provide insight into the working environment.

### Determine future needs

Understanding the future need for hiring early childhood teachers is equally as important to defining the current state as program goals need to not only support closing the current talent gap but also planning for future growth. To support defining future talent needs, consider the following questions:

- How many total openings do you typically need to fill each year? Consider policy changes or current events that might impact demand as well as future population growth trends.
- How many more children are you seeking to serve in the next five years? How many teachers will be needed to serve at that scale?
- How many individuals are you anticipating retiring or changing careers in the next five years?

The last two questions will enable the project team to plan for future demand above the traditional growth that has been experienced to-date.

The following sources can provide workforce data and insight on early childhood education trends: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CareerOneStop, O\*NET, HR Department, Early Learning Indiana, and University of California Berkely Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, as well as statewide agencies or committees that oversee early childhood education policy.

## Define the talent gap

The final step in quantifying the need for early childhood teachers is to compare the supply of teachers against demand and define the scale of the **talent gap**. It will be important to sum both the current demand or number of openings, with the expected future demand to represent the full scale of the need.

## ② EVALUATE WORKFORCE BARRIERS AND CAUSES

### Confirm workforce preparation as leading barrier to address

Once the project team has quantified the talent gap, it is important to identify the workforce barrier the project team seeks to solve. The early childhood field's workforce challenges are well-known to those in the field: chronically low compensation rates, high education costs, hectic year-round schedules, lack of classroom and instructional support, lack of visibility into career pathways, and poor perceptions of early childhood education in the education profession. Talent pipeline programs serve as a robust solution for developing qualified talent and connecting them directly with employers seeking to hire. Building a talent pipeline program will not solve all of the early childhood education field's barriers, however, and the project team should confirm that workforce preparation is the leading barrier to address and the build of a talent pipeline program is the right solution.

Once confirmed, the project team will have greater clarity on the “what” for which they are solving.

## ③ SCOPE TALENT SOLUTION

### Research existing talent solutions for early childhood workforce

Prior to defining vision, mission, and model for the talent pipeline program, it is important to scan the education and training landscape to consider design principles from other teacher training programs that can be replicated. The scope of research can be as broad as national and international models, such as apprenticeships, or as specific as how programs enable on-the-job learning. This initial research will also ensure that an existing program does not already exist and the build of something new is required.

### Define vision, mission, and outcomes for approach

Prior to moving to the next step of selecting an education partner to co-develop the talent pipeline program, the project team should facilitate a discussion to define early a vision statement, a mission statement, and the desired outcomes for the program. The **vision statement** provides an aspirational description of what both organizations hope to be true as a result of the program. The **mission statement** outlines what potential partners are building to enable that vision. Desired outcomes can represent the number of teachers participating in the program as well as any critical design principles.

Vision, mission, and outcomes should be informed by the scale of the talent gap, the barriers needing to be addressed, and the design principles the project team wants to see as part of the final program. The vision, mission, and outcomes will be shared with the selected education partner and will be validated and/or adapted through the Design Phase.

Outlined in the table below is an example of these components as defined by ELI through their scoping process.

Example Program Components	
<b>Vision Statement</b>	Hoosier children receive the highest level of early care and education through a sustainable pipeline of highly effective early childhood education teachers.
<b>Mission Statement</b>	To redefine early childhood education training for new educators by building an accessible, competency-based curriculum that leverages job-embedded experiences, provides supportive services, and culminates in a stackable credential.
<b>Outcome</b>	To train up to 90 early childhood teachers annually.
<b>Design Principles</b>	Competency-based curriculum that is grounded in early childhood standards; supported by on-the-job learning experiences in an early childhood classroom; and more affordable and accessible as compared to current traditional education models.

## Discover Key Learnings

The following key learnings were identified by the ELI, Butler, and Ascend project teams to elevate strategic considerations for stakeholders seeking to develop a similar early childhood educator program.

**Current state data facilitates alignment to workforce needs.** Developing an accurate understanding of the current early childhood workforce's supply, demand, and misalignment ensures the program's vision, mission, and model are well aligned and scoped to today's workforce needs.

**Expert voices are critical.** Engaging expert voices across the early childhood ecosystem—including early childhood organizations, higher education institutions that provide early childhood training programs, government and policy officials, and key community partners—will inform an accurate understanding of the early childhood workforce and critical insight into talent solutions.

**Prioritization is necessary.** It is important to evaluate which barriers and causes are within the organization's control and recognize that the program will not solve all workforce challenges. The project team will need to prioritize which barriers to address through the program.

**Existing talent solutions may provide a starting place.** Researching existing talent solutions across the community and nationally provides the project team with potential approaches and models to consider.

**Goals will guide the program model, partnership, and design.** Clearly defined quantitative and qualitative outcomes for the program will guide all phases of program development and establish metrics to measure progress and success.



## Identify & Secure

### SUMMARY

The Identify & Secure Phase involves establishing a formal partnership with an education partner to develop the program alongside the project team. This phase begins by defining key criteria for the education partner, researching the existing early childhood teacher training landscape to identify potential partners, engaging and assessing prospective partners through a Request for Information (RFI) process, and ultimately selecting an education partner.

### APPROACH

The Identify & Secure Phase is characterized by a series of internal meetings to align on evaluation criteria for potential education partners and a series of external meetings to conduct outreach and interviews with interested educational institutions. The approach for the I&S Phase involves four key activities:

- 1 Determine Criteria for Education Partner**
  - Identify key qualities and criteria for education partner
  - Develop education partner evaluation rubric
- 2 Research Landscape of Existing & Potential Early Childhood Training Programs**
  - Identify existing training programs within local community
  - Expand research to national or non-traditional training providers (if needed)
  - Evaluate programs against key qualities and criteria
- 3 Identify & Engage Prospective Educational Institutions**
  - Draft Request for Information (RFI)
  - Send RFI to identified prospective education partners
  - Interview interested education partners
- 4 Evaluate & Select Education Partner**
  - Prepare Partner Assessment Report
  - Select education partner

## ① DETERMINE CRITERIA FOR EDUCATION PARTNER

### Identify key qualities and criteria for education partner

Prior to engaging potential education partners, the employer project team will need to define the key qualities and characteristics they are seeking in a partner to serve as **evaluation criteria** through the selection process. These evaluation criteria will be translated into a rubric to quantify evaluation. The evaluation criteria should align with the team's vision; mission; knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for the role; design principles for the program; and include additional criteria related to each educational institution's infrastructure and academics, such as programs of study, faculty, finances, orientation towards partnership, and location. For this type of training program, partnership and faculty and administration are critical because something new is being collaboratively created. Additionally, coursework should be considered to ensure there is a strong learning foundation upon which to build.

Once the team has a completed list of criteria, the next step is to assign a priority level to each criterion (high, medium, low). The priority levels will support the team in focusing on the most important criteria as well as guide the final rating for each potential partner.

Included below is a sample set of the criteria leveraged by ELI, organized by category and with assigned priority levels.

Education Partner Evaluation Criteria		
Category	Criteria	Priority Level
Partnerships	Experience building innovative programs	H
	Experience with building partnerships	H
	Alignment with vision and mission of the program	H
	Previous partnership with ELI	M
Student Experience	Willingness to develop a competency-based program structure	H
	Willingness to collaborate to develop a job-embedded learning	H
	Willingness to collaborate to develop a Cooperative Teacher	H
	Ability to innovate around program model	H
Faculty & Administration	Faculty with diverse teaching experience	M
	Administration invested in pipeline development	H
Coursework	Program in early childhood education	H
	Course offerings in child development	H
	Course offerings in health, safety, and nutrition	H
	Course offerings in observing, recording, and assessing child	H
	Course offerings in family engagement and communication	H
	Willingness to adapt or expand existing course offerings	H
	Online program and/or course offerings	M

Education Partner Evaluation Criteria		
Category	Criteria	Priority Level
Financial	Willingness to develop an affordable financial model for tuition	H
	Partner's ability to utilize TEACH funds	M
Location	Geographic location/proximity to ELI	M
Partner Characteristics	Year-to-year persistence in relevant program	H
	In-state retention post-graduation	M
	Student-to-faculty ratio	L
	Number of students in relevant program	L

### Develop education partner evaluation rubric

For each criterion developed, the project team will next need to develop a **rubric** to define how a partner will meet or not meet expectations across the criteria. The rubric will be utilized by the project team as they research potential partners and as they review materials submitted by educational institutions in response to the Request for Information and information shared in any interviews completed with partners. The rubric should define a scoring scale (i.e., 0, 1, 2) and outline what needs to be true for a partner to receive each respective score. The rubric can be adapted through the selection process as information is gathered and it becomes apparent that criteria need to evolve or benchmarks need to adapt.

Using one of the criterion examples from above, here are two samples of developed rubric entries that support the selection process:

Education Partner Evaluation Rubric				
Category	Criteria	0	1	2
Partnerships	Experience building innovative programs	No experience building innovative programs	Some experience building partnerships	Demonstrated experience building innovative partnerships
	<b>Rationale for criteria:</b> ELI has identified the need for a partner who exhibits innovation through developing new programs that work differently than the traditional model.			
	Experience with building partnerships	No		Yes
<b>Rationale for criteria:</b> ELI is looking for a strong partner, and the educational institutions' history of similar partnerships can help to indicate their willingness and ability to support a pipeline.				

## ② RESEARCH LANDSCAPE OF EXISTING & POTENTIAL EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINING PROGRAMS

### Identify existing training programs within local community

The next step toward identifying potential education partners is to complete research to learn about the institutions and to explore their alignment with the selection criteria. The project team will conduct

research to identify potential education partners within the local community that might be a good fit for the program. The partner evaluation criteria can be utilized to guide the research and ensure targeted educational institutions offer programs and courses that align with the desired KSAs and have the capabilities to meet the desired design principles.

For the type of program model that ELI was seeking to co-develop, it was important to identify education partners that not only had an existing early childhood education program but who were willing to adapt their traditional education model to be competency-based and incorporate on-the-job learning. This required the team to research information about the early childhood program as well as to expand the scope of the research to all types of programs offered by an educational institution to see if there was a parallel that could extend into the early childhood space. This resulted in looking at both education partners who had physical locations in Central Indiana and online-only educational institutions.

### **Expand research to national or non-traditional training providers (if needed)**

For many talent pipeline programs, a key component of having a strong education partner is being in close proximity to the employer. However, when considering alternative models of education, it may be necessary to broaden the search to national or non-higher educational institutions to ensure that the highest priority criteria for design principles are met. If the project team determines there is a need to broaden the search, best practice models reviewed in the Discover Phase can be a strong source of identifying other partners who might be interested in developing a similar type of program. It is important to note, however, that if there is a desire to influence early childhood educator state licensing requirements, the partner would need to be a state school or one approved by a state department of education.

### **Evaluate programs against key qualities and criteria**

After compiling research on potential education partners, the project team should convene to review the list of educational institutions and the corresponding research gathered to date. This will allow the team to eliminate certain institutions that do not meet baseline criteria and identify what additional information is needed about potential partners before conducting outreach through the RFI process outlined in the next step of this guide.

## **③ IDENTIFY & ENGAGE PROSPECTIVE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

### **Draft Request for Information (RFI)**

While not a mandatory step in the partner selection process, drafting a **Request for Information (RFI)** is a best practice for communicating the vision of the program with potential education partners and soliciting proposals. Launching an RFI also enables a consistent and objective selection process that can support ongoing buy-in and leadership approval.

When drafting an RFI, project teams should ensure to include the following key components: an overview of the project, a description of the education partner selection process, and an outline of the criteria for interested institutions. For ELI, it was important that they receive proposals that presented a draft program model that would accomplish the design principles they shared. This enabled ELI to have an early view of how innovative potential partners were and to learn new ways to conceptualize the program.

## Send RFI to identified prospective education partners

Once the RFI is drafted and target institutions have been identified, it is recommended to send the RFI directly to these education partners and request an introductory meeting. Introductory meetings allow the project team to share the talent pipeline project with potential education partners, establishing an early relationship, communicating what the project team is looking for in a proposal, and providing the space for interested partners to ask questions.

## Interview interested education partners

The interview process is a key step in selecting an education partner among those who submitted a proposal in response to the RFI. The interview enables the project team to further evaluate if an education partner is a good fit and establish the foundation of a working relationship. The interview is also a chance to ask strategic questions that build off of the institution's response to the RFI and gather necessary information for a final partner assessment.

In addition to asking follow-up questions, the interview is also an opportunity to sell the potential partner on your talent pipeline. Educational institutions will ask questions and want assurance that the partnership is worth pursuing. Emphasizing the vision and mission of the program as well as the benefits for both students and the educational institution will ensure you present your program effectively.

In some instances, one interview will provide the information necessary to complete a partner assessment; however, do not hesitate to facilitate a series of interview discussions if there is still not clarity around alignment of vision and potential for partnership. In the case of ELI, there were multiple partners where multiple discussions were scheduled to ensure all relevant stakeholders were engaged in the process, to provide partners with a chance to iterate on their proposal, and to have more in-depth discussions around high-priority criteria.

## ④ EVALUATE & SELECT EDUCATION PARTNER

### Prepare Partner Assessment Report

Once all potential partners have been interviewed and the necessary information collected, it is recommended that the project team draft a **Partner Assessment Report** to evaluate each potential partner against the evaluation criteria. The Partner Assessment Report is grounded in a rigorous scoring system. Utilizing the rubric developed early in the I&S process, each partner will be rated on a scale from 0-2 for each of the evaluation criteria, with any criteria not able to be evaluated not considered for score. Each partner will then receive a percentage score based on the sum of their points out of the total possible points. This percentage provides a single score to then compare across partners. Moreover, this approach clearly defines each potential education partner's strengths and weaknesses to guide the project team's selection decision-making.

### Select education partner

With a comprehensive Partner Assessment Report drafted, the project team is now well-positioned to make the final education partner selection. It is important to make the decision holistically, considering the educational institution's scores, interviews, and overall fit with the program. Evidence of a strong working relationship with the education partner should also factor into the decision.



Once an education partner is selected, the project team organization(s) and education partner may elect to solidify the partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU can serve to outline the scope, time, capacity, and expectations of the partnership, the distinct roles and responsibilities between the employer organization(s) and education partner, and legal necessities, such as the program's financial model and who owns the program curriculum's intellectual property.

The following are key steps for MOU development, if the project team organization(s) and education partner elect to utilize.

- Draft the MOU: A major component of the MOU includes clear and tangible commitments of each party in the partnership. The purpose of the MOU is to hold each party accountable throughout the partnership.
- Meet to review the MOU: Relevant parties meet to discuss commitments and outline the parameters of the document. Include key stakeholders from each organization involved in the partnership as well as upper-level leadership, if necessary. Be fully transparent and ensure that both parties are aligned on expectations.
- Finalize the MOU: Following the MOU meeting, update the MOU and send it to the education partner for review. Once both parties approve, necessary stakeholders should sign the document and enact the partnership.

## Identify & Secure Key Learnings

The following key learnings were identified by the ELI, Butler, and Ascend project teams to elevate strategic considerations for stakeholders seeking to develop a similar early childhood educator program.

**Identify non-negotiable program elements.** The desired program will include necessary, non-negotiable elements in order to achieve its vision and goals. Identifying and clearly outlining these elements will provide further clarity of the program's structure, guide the search and selection of the education partner, and ensure the right partner is selected.

**Research provides scope for outreach.** Researching the current landscape of teacher training programs will identify potential existing training programs to model the program after as well as a targeted pool of educational institutions to whom to extend outreach.

**Be prepared to build something new.** Researching the current training landscape may also reveal, however, a gap in the ecosystem, demonstrating the need for a new, first-of-its-kind teacher training program. For example, if the employer organization(s) are seeking a traditional competency-based program, there is currently low implementation of these types of programs given high start-up costs and capacity investment, complex accreditation processes, and the requirement of U.S. Department of Education approval in order to qualify for federal financial aid. It is important to recognize existing challenges like these and be prepared for the development process ahead.

**The selection process requires time.** Securing the right education partner requires time, including multiple rounds of discussion to establish a relationship across teams, build trust, and engage in forthright conversations. Establish a generous runway for this phase.

**Ask the hard questions.** It will be critical that the project team clearly outline what they are looking for and what they need from the education partner. Proactively and intentionally asking potential partners what their capabilities and capacity are will help to set early expectations, foster honest lines of communication, and inform the dynamics of the potential partnership.



## SUMMARY

The Design Phase encompasses the build of the program alongside the education partner: its curriculum and how that curriculum is delivered; the wraparound supports available to program participants; what program completion means for graduates; and marketing, recruitment, and selection strategies.

## APPROACH

The Design Phase is characterized by a series of strategic planning meetings between the employer and education partner to determine the goals and strategies for the program. The approach for the Design Phase includes five key activities:

- 1 Facilitate Design Kick-off with Education Partner**
  - Align on program vision, mission, and design principles
  - Draft program pathway
  - Determine stakeholders across both organizations to engage in design
- 2 Design Program Components**
  - Develop student support structure
  - Identify selection process
  - Define marketing and recruitment strategies
  - Determine what program completion means for graduates
- 3 Develop Program Budget & Sustainability Strategies**
  - Identify budget implications of strategies and determine financial model
  - Summarize existing financial supports and resources
  - Define strategies to enable program sustainability
- 4 Prepare Strategic Plan**
  - Document outcomes, strategies, and tactics
  - Confirm owners to execute goals and strategies
  - Draft supporting deliverables
  - Finalize partner agreement
- 5 Align on Program Launch Timeline**
  - Develop timeline for program development and launch

## ① FACILITATE DESIGN KICK-OFF WITH EDUCATION PARTNER

### Align on program vision, mission, and design principles

Once an education partner is selected and an MOU is signed, the employer and education partner then begin the Design Phase together. This phase kicks-off by re-grounding in the program's vision and mission and ensuring both organizations are in alignment surrounding the why for the program, its key principles and features, and what they are solving for together.

The ELI and Butler project team affirmed the vision and mission statements developed in the project's Discover Phase for the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program. As a reminder, the vision statement provides an aspirational description of what both organizations hope to be true as a result of the program; the mission statement outlines what ELI and Butler are building to enable that vision.

**Vision:** Hoosier children receive the highest level of early care and education through a sustainable pipeline of highly-effective early childhood education teachers.

**Mission:** To redefine early childhood education training for new educators by building an accessible, competency-based curriculum that leverages job-embedded experiences, provides supportive services, and culminates in a stackable credential.

Additionally, ELI and Butler aligned on the following key **design principles** for the program: it would be delivered online and asynchronously and include a Cooperative Teacher Model.

At the onset of the project, it is also helpful to develop a candidate persona, outlining key characteristics of individuals interested in the program might have, such as their education and experience, their current work status and employment, their motivations for participating in the program, and what obstacles they might face. Alongside the vision and mission statements and key design principles, this candidate persona provides a clear definition of who the program is being built for and establishes essential elements to guide strategic planning discussions throughout the Design Phase.

### Draft program pathway

Next, both organizations will draft the **program pathway**, identifying key priority areas that will define the structure of the talent pipeline program. These priority areas provide the framework for the strategic planning process throughout the Design Phase, representing the key components of the program for which to develop goals and enabling strategies. Examples of recommended priority areas include Marketing & Recruitment, Selection, Program Experience, and Program Completion, as well as the supporting priority areas of Governance and Sustainability.

The visual to the right outlines a draft program pathway.



Each priority area is defined below.

**Marketing and Recruitment** consists of the strategies to raise awareness about the program across a broad range of audiences and efforts to recruit individuals to apply and enroll.

**Selection** outlines the process by which individuals apply to the program, applications are evaluated, and candidates are selected and notified of acceptance.

**Program Experience** represents the candidate's experience within the program: the curriculum they will learn, how that curriculum will be delivered and assessed, and what supports are in place throughout the program.

**Program Completion** defines what completion of the program means for a candidate's future.

**Governance** defines the program's infrastructure and systems across both the employer and education partner organizations to ensure effective implementation, oversight, and program success.

**Sustainability** strategies ensure the program's continuity and success over time, including the program budget and any plans for program expansion.

### Determine stakeholders across both organizations to engage in design

Given these priority areas, the employer and education partner will then identify key stakeholders in their organizations to comprise the **design project team**, the group of stakeholders that will engage in the strategic planning discussions around each priority area. These stakeholders should be expert voices who can provide strategic insight and input as goals, strategies, and tactics for each priority area are developed. The employer and education partner program leads should continuously evaluate the voices and expertise required within each priority area and engage specific stakeholders as needed.

### Develop program goals

Once the Design project team is established, these key voices will define goals for the program across each priority area. The **goals** are quantifiable targets that are associated with specific outcomes of a series of strategies or activities. The funnel below can be used as a guide for the goal drafting process. Talent pipeline program goals are built with the end in mind. The ultimate goal of a talent pipeline program is to employ a defined number of early childhood teachers, so the example funnel and corresponding goals above are built from the bottom up, considering the likely conversion rates. Each priority area is built in succession to support the final employment goal.



Outlined below are example goal statements developed for the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program across each priority area.

Example Program Goals	
Priority Area	Draft Goals
Marketing and Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of applications received</li> </ul>
Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of accepted applicants</li> <li># of accepted applicants enrolling in the program</li> </ul>
Program Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of enrolled candidates starting the program</li> </ul>
Program Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of candidates who complete the program</li> <li># of program graduates retained at their current early childhood center one-year post program</li> <li># of program graduates in a teacher role within 1-year post program</li> </ul>

Partners may also want to set goals for student satisfaction metrics, to be collected and evaluated throughout students' time in the program and upon program completion.

Once targeted goals for each priority area are established, the project team can then develop strategies toward those goals. **Strategies** are typically a set of high-level actions that yield the desired outcome. Tactics can also be developed to further support the desired outcomes. A tactic is a specific activity that can be executed to carry out a high-level strategy. The next activity, Design Program Components, outlines the strategy development process.

## 2 DESIGN PROGRAM COMPONENTS

### Develop student support structure

Program experience is the largest and most complex priority area, encompassing the program's **curriculum and delivery**, in-classroom application through a **Cooperative Teacher Model**, as well as the **structures and resources in place to support program candidates' journey**. For this reason, it is the first priority area the project team should address within strategic planning. Decisions made within the program experience priority area will inform strategic planning discussions within marketing and recruitment, selection, and program completion.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum is the program's content: **what and how students will learn** throughout the program.

COOPERATIVE  
TEACHER

The Cooperative Teacher (CT) Model defines the program's **CT roles and responsibilities**, how CTs will be identified, recruited, and trained, and outlines the necessary tools and resources to support their success.

WRAPAROUND  
SUPPORTS

Wraparound supports outlines the strategies the early childhood education employer and higher education partner will take **to eliminate barriers and support students' success**.

## Curriculum Map

To begin, the project team should scope the program's curriculum, identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities program candidates should learn and develop throughout their time in the program. It is helpful to revisit the program's key design principles to inform this scoping, grounding in elements critical to the curriculum's structure. For the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program, it was critical that the curriculum be competency-based, grounded in early childhood standards, and supported by on-the-job learning experiences in an early childhood classroom.

Additionally, it is helpful to leverage a guiding framework when building the program's curriculum, such as a set of early childhood competencies and standards. ELI and Butler leveraged ELI's early childhood teacher job tasks, which ELI developed and utilized to define the roles and responsibilities of their teachers, as well as national and state early childhood education standards and competencies. Utilizing this framework, the project team can then develop a curriculum map, outlining the critical content program candidates should learn and develop, organizing that content into distinct program modules and units, and then sequencing units and modules.

A curriculum map may look like a set number of modules across distinct units. ELI and Butler identified 12 modules across 4 units for the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program. An example of one of those units is included below.

Example Program Unit	
Unit	Modules
1. An Equity Framework for Teaching and Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Becoming Culturally Responsive Educators</li><li>ii. Children Learning Through Play and Inquiry</li></ol>

Once the scope and sequence of the curriculum are determined, the project team can then identify learning objectives for each module. **Learning objectives** outline what the candidate will be able to do as a result of participating in and completing the module; for example, "Unit 1 Module 2: Children Learning Through Play and Inquiry" learning objectives include:

- Consider the layout and conceptualize classroom spaces that create places big enough for the whole class and small enough for one child, positioning furniture and materials in ways that become invitations for inquiry-driven learning and guided play.
- Ensure that materials, toys, and books made available for play reflect the cultures, languages, and experiences of the children/families in the classroom and school community.
- Keep records of what children say and/or do during guided play and free play to share with families/ school community and to inform planning.

It is important to note that development of the curriculum map and learning objectives will largely take place outside of project team workshops through independent worktime conducted by curriculum experts at both organizations. Curriculum development is an iterative process, relying on engagement and feedback from the employer and education partner.



Once the curriculum map and key learning objectives have been identified, the project team can then **crosswalk** the developed curriculum to key early childhood competencies and standards. This review ensures the developed curriculum addresses each early childhood standard and competency the project team has identified as critical to the program. At this stage of curriculum design, the project team might also develop a timeline for the program overall, identifying a set number of weeks for each module to gain a sense of the program's duration.

### Curriculum Delivery

Next, the project team can further determine the necessary actions and strategies to support **curriculum delivery**. Early in the Design Phase, the employer and education partner will have determined if the curriculum will be delivered in-person, online, or via a hybrid approach and if the curriculum is meant to occur synchronously or asynchronously. ELI and Butler agreed that the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program would be delivered online and asynchronously, as this was critical to ensure the program's accessibility. Moreover, this structure enabled in-person, job-embedded learning opportunities and application in an early childhood classroom.

### Cooperative Teacher Model

To support the in-person learning opportunities, ELI and Butler developed the **Cooperative Teacher Model**. A Cooperative Teacher is an experienced early childhood educator employed at the candidate's early childhood center who creates opportunities for candidates to connect curriculum and practice and to apply new learnings. Every candidate in the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program will be paired with a Cooperative Teacher (CT) to support their professional journey. Together, ELI and Butler scoped the CT's roles and responsibilities, determined the training, support, and compensation CTs will receive, and outlined strategies to secure and onboard CTs. Project teams will need to determine if their respective programs should include a Cooperative Teacher Model, how that model fits within curriculum delivery, what the CT roles and responsibilities will be, their compensation structure, and what selection, onboarding, training, and resources are needed to support CTs.

Additionally, the project team will need to determine the **curriculum delivery mechanism** or system and which organization will own and manage that system. ELI and Butler agreed that Butler will own and deliver the program's curriculum via their Learning Management System (LMS). Butler faculty will continue and finalize the curriculum build, including modules lessons, activities, and assessments, as well as Cooperative Teacher onboarding and resources, and then provide content instruction via their LMS.

### Wraparound Supports

The final component within this priority area is the wraparound supports program candidates will have throughout their time in the program. Wraparound supports include the strategies and resources both the employer and education partner will provide candidates to address common barriers and support success and completion of the program. Project teams should consider potential barriers program candidates might face around cost, time, access to technology and high-speed internet, and hesitations to return to school and develop specific strategies to address those barriers. Additionally, project teams should identify financial aid resources, as the program may not qualify for federal aid.

## Identify selection process

Once the program experience has been developed, the project team can further identify the talent pools the program was designed for and build the selection process. ELI and Butler approached this priority area by revisiting the candidate persona they developed, considering the education and experience a candidate might have, what their current work status and employment looks like, their motivations for participating in the program, and what obstacles they might face. ELI and Butler also considered a key design principle for the program—that it is accessible to as many potential candidates as possible. **Application components** to consider include transcripts (official or unofficial) OR high diploma/equivalency, character references, a personal statement, and a signed acknowledgment of program expectations.

The project team will then need to determine who will review program applications and what criteria will guide the evaluation of applications and selection of candidates. ELI and Butler elected to accept all candidates who met their application requirements, in order of application date. If the number of accepted applicants exceeds the next cohort's capacity, accepted applicants will be placed on a waitlist. This approach was designed intentionally to increase access to the program and ensure as many interested individuals can participate in the program. Additionally, to increase program access, ELI and Butler determined that the program selection will operate on a rolling process, with the program application continuously available via the program's landing page on Butler's website. Project teams will need to identify their selection approach, how to manage cohort capacity / a program waitlist, and if the selection will be rolling or within set timeframes throughout the year.

## Define marketing and recruitment strategies

Once the program selection process has been identified, the project team can develop the program's marketing and recruitment strategies. To begin, the project team should identify the different talent pools they seek to market the program to and recruit individuals. ELI and Butler identified two specific **talent pools**—existing early childhood professionals, both at ELI-engaged early childhood sites and those at other providers, and individuals new to the early childhood field, including recent high school graduates, career changers, and those re-entering the workforce. The project team should then develop the **key messages** around the program they want to communicate to the identified talent pools. For example, ELI and Butler identified the following messaging for existing talent—"competency-based curriculum designed to further skills and practice and prepare early childhood professionals ready to lead a classroom" and "results in a credential stackable to a Butler College of Education Bachelor's degree." For new talent, they highlighted that the program is an "experiential training program designed to launch one's career in the early childhood field" and is "accelerated and affordable compared to traditional teacher development pathways."

Once messaging is established, the project team can then determine the strategies and owners to develop marketing and recruitment collateral, build broad-based awareness for the program, launch recruitment campaigns, and engage other key partners in the community to drive ongoing recruitment. As both ELI and Butler are well-established leaders in the early childhood and higher education spaces and have expertise in marketing and recruiting for new programs, they were able to leverage existing strategies, processes, and resources within their organizations for this priority area.

## Determine what program completion means for graduates

The project team will also determine what program completion means for a graduate's future, including **credentials gained** and **impact on employment, role eligibility, and compensation**. Butler determined that the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program is a stackable credential to a Butler College of Education Bachelor of Arts in Youth and Community Development, meaning that program graduates can apply credits earned in the program towards that Bachelor's degree, should they wish to continue their education. ELI determined that all individuals who complete the program will be eligible to apply for a teacher role (if they are not already in a teaching role) and after one year in a teacher role, will be eligible to apply for the program's Cooperative Teacher role.

## ③ DEVELOP PROGRAM BUDGET & SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

### Identify budget implications of strategies and determine financial model

Throughout strategic planning, it will be critical for both the employer and education partner to identify the **budget implications** of developed strategies to inform program costs for each organization as well as for program candidates. If an MOU is signed between the employer and education partner, the program's financial components and model will have been defined between the two organizations. As the higher education partner who owns the program and its curriculum, it was determined that Butler will execute the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program's financial model to ensure program sustainability and success. The following factors shaped the program's cost:

- Students per cohort
- Curriculum development and refreshes
- Instructional design
- Faculty/instruction
- Cooperative Teacher stipends
- Student Support Services, including academic advising and technical support
- Administrative support
- Marketing expenses

Maintaining fidelity to the program's key design principle that it is an affordable alternative to traditional early childhood teacher preparation pathways, Butler and ELI were conscientious to keep the total program cost for each candidate under a set amount.

### Define strategies to enable program sustainability

The project team will also need to define strategies toward developed goals for **program sustainability**. This will include strategies to scale and/or expand the program. ELI and Butler decided to launch the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program with a pilot cohort composed of candidates from ELI-engaged early childhood sites. They then established a plan to expand the program to additional early childhood providers across the program's second and third cohorts, defining a steady state of candidates per cohort as well as a target goal for the number of additional early childhood organizations across the state participating in the program.

ELI and Butler recognized the pilot cohort will inform their expansion approach and will formalize expansion strategies following the first cohort. ELI will support Butler in identifying additional early childhood centers to potentially participate in the program. Additionally, ELI will support Butler in developing a list of alignment factors for new early childhood organizations and sites to inform Butler's understanding of a center's readiness to support program candidates. Potential factors for this list include the type of center, teaching philosophy, number of classrooms, Cooperative Teacher capacity, and ability of centers to provide needed program resources.

## ④ PREPARE STRATEGIC PLAN

### Document outcomes, strategies, and tactics

Throughout strategic planning, the project team should document priority areas' goals, strategies, and tactics as they are developed. This documentation will provide a working draft of the program's strategic plan, capturing vital decisions and creating a space for iteration and feedback between both organizations.

Once all priority areas have been addressed in strategic planning sessions, the project team will finalize the program's **strategic plan**, which is the comprehensive written account of the operational goals developed and the actions needed to achieve the desired outcomes. The strategic plan also includes an overview of the need, causes, vision, priorities, goals, strategies, governance, structure, budget, and timeline.

### Confirm owners to execute goals and strategies

In addition to documenting goals, strategies, and tactics, the project team will need to align on owners between their organizations to execute strategies. ELI and Butler identified owners for different strategies throughout the strategic design process, which enabled both organizations to move forward with strategy implementation for some priority areas as strategies within other priority areas were finalized.

Organizations should also designate respective **lead points of contact** to support continued communications and project management as the project shifts from Design to Launch Phase. These individuals will be responsible for managing ongoing communication between organizations and monitoring workstreams and due dates.

### Draft supporting deliverables

In addition to developing the program's strategic plan, the project team might consider developing the following supporting deliverables to support ongoing program development and sharing the program with other key stakeholders.

**Executive Summary:** A condensed, written account of the program's strategic plan, including a summary of the need, causes, vision, priorities, goals, and corresponding strategies.

**Overview Presentation:** A presentation with visuals and graphics outlining the same concepts as the strategic narrative, but utilizing visuals and organized text as opposed to written formats.

**Program Dashboard:** A project management tool that includes priorities, goals, and activities agreed to by the employer. Goals will be broken down on an annual, quarterly, and/or semester basis and will align to the time frames outlined within the strategic plan.

### Finalize partner agreement

Having finalized the program's strategic plan, the employer organization(s) and education partner can codify their ongoing partnership, including expectations, commitments, roles, and responsibilities as the program is launched and implemented, through a **partnership agreement**. This partnership agreement can also serve as a template for future agreements with other early childhood organizations as the program expands.

## ⑤ ALIGN ON PROGRAM LAUNCH TIMELINE

### Develop timeline for program development and launch

Before concluding the Design Phase, the project team should align on a timeline for the program's continued development and key dates surrounding the program launch. This timeline will guide both organizations' continued work on the program in the Launch phase and establish dates for key milestones up to the start of the program's first cohort.

## Design Key Learnings

The following key learnings were identified by the ELI, Butler, and Ascend project teams to elevate strategic considerations for stakeholders seeking to develop a similar early childhood educator program.

**Identify guiding frameworks for curriculum design.** Both the employer and education partner will likely have pre-existing approaches to curriculum design. To support a co-development process, it is helpful to use common frameworks, such as existing sets of early childhood education competencies or standards. These common frameworks provide a strong starting point for curriculum development as well as illuminate curriculum gaps the project team will need to develop.

**Be prepared to continue program design outside of project meetings.** Many program components—such as curriculum content and delivery, selection criteria and processes, recruitment audiences and strategies, marketing collateral ad channels—will require additional work time and internal organization discussions outside of project meetings. Account for work time outside of project meetings, including clear tasks, owners, and deadlines, in the project plan.

**Establish common tools to support co-development.** Utilizing common tools and/or templates for curriculum design will enable successful co-development across organizations, both in and outside of project meetings.

**Leverage existing processes and capacity.** Both organizations will likely have existing strategies, mechanisms, and resources around curriculum delivery, talent recruitment, and program marketing. Leveraging these processes and capacity will strengthen the program's construction and implementation, as organizations are already equipped to execute.

**Align on the program launch date early.** It is critical that the employer and education partner align on the program's launch date. This alignment creates transparency for each organization and equips teams to carry out outstanding implementation steps.



# Launch

## SUMMARY

The Launch Phase sets the strategic plan in motion, finalizing the program's curriculum build, developing and distributing marketing materials, releasing the program application, and initiating recruitment strategies, to support a successful launch.

## APPROACH

The Launch Phase involve a series of meetings between the employer and education partner to begin implementation strategies. The approach for the Launch Phase includes three key activities:

### 1 Complete Curriculum Build

- Develop coursework
- Create onboarding materials
- Build program in learning management system

### 2 Develop Marketing Materials

- Finalize marketing messages and channels
- Create marketing collateral, including program landing page

### 3 Launch Recruitment Efforts

- Announce the program
- Initiate strategies
- Launch program landing page and application portal

## 1 COMPLETE CURRICULUM BUILD

### Develop coursework

In the Design Phase, the project team will prepare a curriculum map that scopes and sequences the knowledge, skills, and abilities candidates will learn and develop throughout the program. The construction of the curriculum map represents the first step of many in building the program's curriculum. Immediate next steps include the development of learning objectives across defined units and modules and crosswalking of curriculum against key early childhood standards and competencies. ELI and Butler completed those next steps together in the Design Phase; other project teams may choose to complete together or define as a next step for one organization to carry forward. Additional next steps include the **development of the program's coursework**: the module lessons, activities, and resources. For the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program, Butler faculty were identified to lead forward the rest of curriculum development, given their expertise and role in delivering the curriculum. Once developed, Butler faculty will share program coursework with ELI curriculum stakeholders for their feedback.

### Create onboarding materials

The project team will also need to determine and develop materials to support **candidate and Cooperative Teacher onboarding**. Onboarding components commonly include a program overview and curriculum map, program expectations, program timeline and key dates, available resources, including academic, financial, and wraparound, Frequently Asked Questions, and key points of contact at the education partner. If the program includes an online component, onboarding could also include technical support for the program's learning management system.

Project teams will need to consider how onboarding should be delivered and designed accordingly. For the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program, since it is designed to be delivered entirely online and asynchronously, onboarding is also designed to be delivered online and asynchronously.

### Build program in learning management system

Once curriculum and onboarding materials are developed, the program will need to be constructed within the **program's delivery system**; for the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program, the curriculum delivery system is Butler's learning management system (LMS). Butler's instructional design team will build the program within the learning management system, including onboarding modules for both candidates and Cooperative Teachers, coursework, resources, and assessments, and other program tools and supports. Program candidates, faculty, and Cooperative Teachers all will have access to the modules within the LMS pertaining to their respective roles.

Project teams will need to consider how their program will be delivered as well as what resources, capacity, and funding are needed to enable the program's build in the delivery system.

## 2 DEVELOP MARKETING MATERIALS

### Finalize marketing messages and channels

Once program curriculum is finalized, the project team should revisit the program messaging drafted in the Design Phase to ensure it still aligns and reflects the program developed. After making any necessary updates, the project team should outline **each organization's marketing approach**, identifying the audiences they seek to share the program with, the channels they will leverage to

share the program, and what materials are needed to support communications. Additionally, both organizations should identify owners and timelines for marketing strategies.

ELI and Butler will both lead efforts to build awareness of the program across key audiences, including ELI and Butler staff, existing early childhood professionals, key agencies and leaders in the early childhood field, other early childhood organizations and providers, and the general public. ELI will leverage existing channels, including their website, appearances at conferences, and upcoming communications, to share this program with their partners and peers. Similarly, Butler will leverage its marketing, communications, and strategic partnership teams to announce and share the program across multiple communication platforms.

### **Create marketing collateral, including program landing page**

The project team will identify which organization will lead development of the **marketing collateral** needed to market the program and support recruitment. For the Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program, Butler will lead marketing material development, as well as the build of the program's landing page within the Butler University website, as the organization owning and offering the program. Butler will supply ELI, as well as any other early childhood education organizations participating in the program, with marketing materials to support their respective marketing roles and responsibilities.

## **③ LAUNCH RECRUITMENT EFFORTS**

### **Announce the program**

Having developed the program's marketing collateral, including landing page within the education partner's website, the project team can now announce the program to key audiences, including staff within both of their organizations, early childhood organizations and providers, key agencies and leaders in the early childhood field, and general public. The project team should leverage the communications plan previously developed, sharing the program across digital, print, and in-person channels.

### **Initiate recruitment strategies**

In the Design Phase, the project team will have identified strategies to connect with the identified talent pools. At this time, appropriate owners should launch those strategies, pursuing the identified mechanisms to connect with potential candidates across the communities. ELI plans to embed the program into their onboarding process for new staff members, ensuring all new employees are aware of the program, as well as into professional development discussions.

### **Launch program landing page and application portal**

The final step in launching the program is unveiling the program's landing page and application portal. Once launched, the education partner can begin selecting candidates, notifying them of acceptance, and filling the program's first cohort.

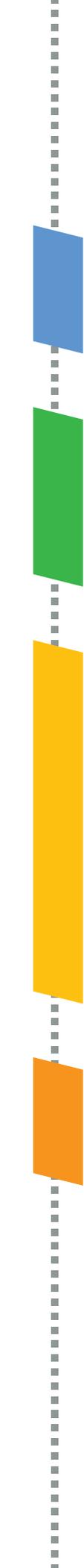
## Launch Key Learnings

The following key learnings were identified by the ELI, Butler, and Ascend project teams to elevate strategic considerations for stakeholders seeking to develop a similar early childhood educator program.

**Utilize an implementation plan.** Translate the implementation steps identified throughout the design process to an implementation plan, outlining clear owners and timelines for outstanding action steps. This plan will support the program's continued development and a successful launch.

**Identify single points of contact at each organization to manage implementation.** Following the conclusion of project meetings, identify a primary point of contact at both the employer and education partner to manage the implementation plan and coordinate communication.

**Market the program broadly.** Both the employer and education partner should leverage existing relationships and communication channels to announce the program and initiate recruitment efforts. It will be important to share the program broadly to create awareness, spark interest, and generate applications.

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## Conclusion

The early childhood workforce has faced long-standing challenges in recruiting and training highly qualified teachers, directly impacting the early learning and care that are vital for our communities' children and families to thrive. The Early Childhood Educator Certificate Program was intentionally designed to address those challenges, providing an accelerated, accessible, and affordable training program that provides competency-based curriculum and job-embedded learning opportunities. The program also demonstrates the necessary and invaluable role of collaboration between early childhood organizations and training providers when designing early childhood educator workforce solutions.

This toolkit was developed to provide an in-depth roadmap for practitioners and intermediaries to develop and launch a similar early childhood educator talent model. Ascend would like to thank the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation for their generous support to create this toolkit. Should you need additional support in the creation of your talent pipeline, Ascend Services is available to serve as a resource. To learn more and get in touch with us, visit [ascendindiana.com](http://ascendindiana.com).