

# Request For Information

## Early Childhood Teacher Talent Pipeline



**To:** Prospective Education Partners  
**From:** Early Learning Indiana and Ascend Indiana

Please respond by Wednesday, November 6th, 2019



## Introduction

Early Learning Indiana (ELI) and Ascend Indiana (Ascend) are partnering to identify an education partner to co-create a competency-based, bachelor's degree pathway that prepares 30 early childhood education (ECE) teachers annually. As a leading voice on early care and education issues, ELI envisions this talent pipeline as essential in fulfilling its mission of ensuring that Hoosier children have access to the highest quality teachers in its own centers as well as across the state of Indiana.

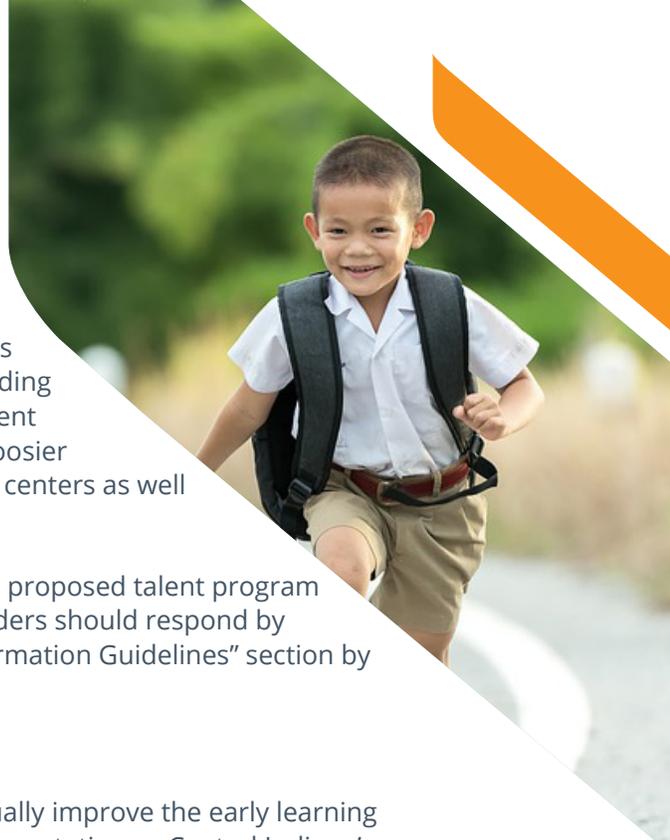
This Request for Information (RFI) provides an overview of the proposed talent program and the partner selection process. Interested education providers should respond by providing the information highlighted in the "Request for Information Guidelines" section by **Wednesday, November 6, 2019.**

## Partner Overviews

ELI provides leadership, advocacy, and ECE services to continually improve the early learning landscape in Indiana. For more than a century, ELI has built a reputation as Central Indiana's standard-bearer for excellent childcare. Currently, ELI's Day Early Learning program provides early care and education to more than 1,000 children annually, ranging from six weeks to six years of age, across nine Central Indiana-area locations. This network of premier community-based lab schools enables ELI to advance the science of early learning, train the next generation of teachers, and instill essential skills in the children it serves. As an expert partner working throughout the state of Indiana, ELI supports early learning providers in building capacity, transforming operations, and improving learning outcomes. ELI also administers Early Head Start programs for children ages birth to three years of age in three high-quality Indianapolis centers through a federal grant.

***ELI is dedicated to ensuring that children throughout the state have access to the highest quality of early care and education***

ELI engaged Ascend to support its talent pipeline efforts. Ascend is the talent and workforce development initiative of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP), a membership organization that brings together industry, higher education, and philanthropic leaders to advance the region's prosperity and growth. Ascend's vision is for every Indiana employer to have access to the skilled workforce necessary to thrive, and for every Indiana citizen to have the opportunity to pursue a meaningful career. To achieve this, Ascend bridges talent and communication gaps by creating connectivity between people and employers. Ascend has focused its efforts around three core priorities: connecting job seekers to career opportunities through the Ascend Network talent platform, providing strategic consulting to address labor market and talent development gaps through Ascend Services, and informing workforce research and public policy through thought leadership.



## Project Context

### Teacher Talent Pipeline

Despite many efforts to support ECE across Indiana and throughout the country, there still remains an insufficient and diminishing supply of qualified ECE educators. This insufficient supply has its roots in inadequate compensation ranges resulting in shallow talent pools, teacher preparation methods that are time-consuming and relatively costly, and outdated workforce structures that emphasize regulatory compliance over classroom effectiveness.

Like many early learning providers, ELI faces a shortage of qualified early childhood educators and, as a result, encounters challenges in securing and retaining staff. While some teachers come to ELI classroom-ready, many of the teachers that ELI hires require significant on-the-job training and coaching to reach maximum effectiveness. Traditional education pathways can be cumbersome and costly for participants, taking an average of six years to complete and costing an average of \$22,333 annually in Indiana.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the return on this significant investment is diminished by high student debt and low career salaries, with early childhood educators making only 55% of wages earned by kindergarten teachers.<sup>2</sup> By all indications, current models of preparation, while well-intended, are not meeting the demands of the early learning industry.

Therefore, ELI envisions the teacher talent program as partnering with a progressive higher education institution to offer a competency-based bachelor's degree that is a more accessible, affordable, and efficacious alternative to a traditional degree program. The competency-based degree is envisioned to be delivered through curriculum modules by the selected education partner that are integrated with a robust job-embedded classroom experience.

An important consideration in choosing the higher education partner will be recognition of credit for demonstrated competencies and reflective practice that leads to effective mastering of competencies. During the development of the program, ELI is looking for a partner who is willing to co-develop a more innovative, engaging student experience that leverages online training modules or in-person courses at flexible times.

### Teacher Role

ELI has re-envisioned their workforce structure, building a talent model around a single, highly-qualified teacher supported by accompanying classroom support professionals. This model places an emphasis on supporting non-bachelor holding educators in obtaining a competency-based bachelor's degree, as this prepares effective early childhood teachers to be at the center of a high-quality early learning experience. As a result of this new structure, ELI ensures consistency is maintained for the children and families and allows ELI to more clearly target pay and benefits consistent with demands for the two distinct roles. For teachers, this means they receive elevated pay commensurate with their K-12 peers.

The teacher sets the vision for the classroom and is responsible for everything that drives the learning experience, including instructional activities, physical environment, parent communications, and assessment. ECE educators must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to adapt learning styles that meet the needs of all children during this critical developmental period. These educators develop a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs, which are the foundation for lifelong learning. Benefits of highly effective early learning are seen within the community through increased graduation rates, increased economic well being, and long-term development of a prepared workforce.

1 College Return on Investment : Report 2018. Report. Accessed October 7, 2019. <https://www.in.gov/che/files/2018 ROI FINAL 5-9-18.pdf>.

2. Retrieved from: <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-troubling-pay-gap-early-childhood-teachers>

To understand the workforce landscape for this role, outlined below is relevant information related to the demand, the current composition for these jobs, and the opportunity for growth.

## Demand

Demand for highly effective ECE educators in Indiana continues to grow. **By 2027, childcare worker jobs are expected to grow by approximately 30%**, or 37,528 jobs, surpassing the national projected increase of 6.9%.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, preschool teaching jobs are expected to increase from 7,680 (2017) to 10,778 jobs by 2027.<sup>4</sup> Aligning with trends at the state-level, ELI is expecting steady growth in ECE roles, as they are integral to fulfilling the organization's mission of providing high-quality early education.

## Supply

The number of educators in **Indiana's ECE workforce in 2014 totaled 19,584 pre-school teachers and childcare workers, with 22,048 expected to work in the field by 2024.**<sup>5</sup> Of the total workforce, 14,813 of these educators were working in high-quality programs. Even among those educators originating in high-quality programs, ELI continually struggles to recruit the caliber of candidates required to deliver the learning outcomes it seeks to achieve.

## Misalignment and Causes

While demand continues to grow for ECE, jobs continue to go unfilled even with the current supply of workers. **By 2024, if this misalignment continues, it could cause 90,000 children, or 20% of preschool-aged children, to go without access to a spot at a high-quality childcare provider.**<sup>6</sup> ELI points to the following causes of misalignment that drive challenges in securing and retaining staff across their centers.

- The level of teacher compensation is low, with childcare workers falling in the second-to-last percentile nationally.<sup>7</sup>
- Early childhood centers compete with other education institutions that provide a more attractive schedule, including breaks throughout the year.
- There is lack of clarity around the disposition and skills necessary for ECE roles teachers must possess to be successful.

## Impact

The impact of the ECE workforce shortage is far-reaching and includes a reduction in quality of care and outcomes for children, increased emotional and physical distress on teachers, decreased workforce productivity due to unreliable childcare, employees dropping out of the workforce due to cost of care, and businesses struggling to attract and retain talent. Overall, **Indiana's economy loses an estimated \$1.1 billion each year as a result of employee absenteeism and turnover connected to childcare breakdowns**, which results in a loss of approximately \$119 million in tax revenue for the state.<sup>8</sup>

To address the ECE workforce shortage, ELI and Ascend are creating a dedicated teacher talent pathway that aims to address the misalignment within the workforce and provide Hoosier children with highly qualified educators. This pathway will serve incumbent ELI educators, newly recruited educators, and students participating in the prospective education partner's program to provide them with an affordable and accessible opportunity to obtain a bachelor's degree in ECE.

3. "Snapshot of Indiana's Early Childhood Education Workforce." <https://public.tableau.com/profile/elac#!/vizhome/Draft-IndianasECEWorkforce/Story1>.

4. Ibid

5. Ibid

6. Lopez, A., Anderson, S., DiOrio, M., Schortgen, A., & Wehmann, K. (n.d.). Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee 2017 Annual Report.

7. Ibid

8. Littlepage, Laura. Lost Opportunities: The Impact of Inadequate Child Care on Indiana's Workforce & Economy. Report no. 18-C16. Public Policy Institute, Indiana University.

## Program Overview

### Vision

To provide **Hoosier children with the highest level of early care and education** through a sustainable pipeline of highly qualified teachers.

### Mission

To redefine the pathway for early childhood educators through an **accessible, affordable, and accelerated degree program that embeds robust and intentional classroom teaching experiences** to provide teachers with a high-quality education.

The focus of this project is to develop a pathway for approximately 30 teachers annually who obtain a competency-based bachelor's degree in ECE. To achieve this goal, ELI will identify and partner with an education provider to co-develop a competency-based program with a defined scope and sequence of learning that integrates curriculum modules and job-embedded experiences. As a result, the learning is both instructor-led and collaborative through an extensive peer-to-peer mentorship between the teacher and a Master Teacher. Through this innovative learning approach, teachers will more successfully master core competencies through customized learning pathways based upon competency assessments.

To ensure the most effective training is being provided, ELI is looking for an education partner to tailor an ECE program more closely to the envisioned program model. Prospective students will complete an ELI teacher placement assessment that will be used to match the student with the necessary training experiences and provide credit for knowledge demonstrated through the assessment. The assessment is meant to meet participants where they currently are by enabling students to enter the program at higher levels of mastery that aligns with their current skills and knowledge. Students are further supported through flexible course offerings and job-embedded experiences, allowing them to receive credit and progress through courses as soon as they can exhibit mastery of the material.

In addition to the job-embedded learning component that is based on mastery of content and learning outcomes, the program will also include Master Teachers (of whom are practicing experts in the classroom with multiple years of experience) to provide coaching, training, and serve as mentors to teachers. This additional layer strengthens the workforce by enabling teachers to grow professionally while in the classroom. By building an effective teacher preparation model that embeds robust, intentional classroom teaching experiences with curriculum, ELI is developing highly qualified educators to better serve Hoosier students.



## Program Benefits

A successful partnership between ELI and an education provider will have significant benefits for both parties. The benefits to program participants include:

- Meeting participants where they currently are within their career through an ELI assessment process that determines skill gaps and identifies what additional training is required to obtain a bachelor's in ECE;
- Having access to a comprehensive program that will serve as a catalyst for participant success by applying learned competencies through training modules and demonstrating mastery through application within the classroom; and
- Preparing participants for success as an early childhood teacher and the ability to receive elevated pay commensurate with their K-12 peers.

Alongside the benefits for students, the selected education partner will:

- Co-develop a competency-based bachelor's degree to prepare ECE teachers and provide credit for demonstrated competencies;
- Serve as a thought partner in launching innovative delivery models and training experiences;
- Provide infrastructure to support model development; and
- Be a leader in developing creative talent solutions for Indiana employers

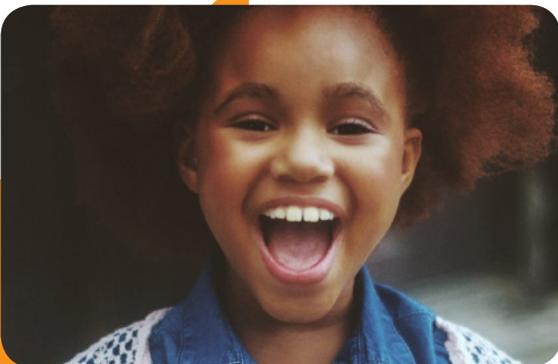
As a result, the teacher pipeline has the potential to enhance the Hoosier workforce and local economy by providing access to a broad talent pool of highly effective teachers within a high-demand field that is devoted to educating the workforce of the future.

## Request for Information Guidelines

### Education Partner Criteria

ELI has identified the criteria necessary for an education partner to successfully create a sustainable pipeline to develop teachers. These criteria fall into the categories of Coursework, Student Experience, Faculty and Administration, Partnerships, Financial, Location, and University Characteristics.

Notably, ELI would like partners to have aligned course offerings with the teacher role, infrastructure for job-embedded learning, and part-time offerings to enable employees to participate in educational programming.



**Please respond in a Word document or PDF by Wednesday, November 6, 2019** with an overview of your willingness to partner to co-develop a more accessible, affordable, and effective ECE program that includes evidence based on the criteria listed below. The body of your application **must not exceed seven pages**. Accompanying documents and evidence may be included as appendices.

Category	Criteria	Description	Sample Evidence
Coursework	Program in early childhood education	ELI seeks a bachelor's degree program, but will accept an associate's program or existing relevant assets to leverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course maps</li> <li>• Degree options</li> </ul>
	Course offerings in child development	These course offerings were identified through knowledge, skills, and abilities evaluation for the teacher role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course descriptions</li> <li>• Course syllabi</li> </ul>
	Course offerings in health, safety, and nutrition		
	Course offerings in observing, recording, and assessing children's development		
	Course offerings in planning ECE learning environments		
	Course offerings in family engagement and communication		
	Willingness to adapt or expand existing course offerings	ELI seeks an education partner who is willing to adapt or expand current coursework as it relates to the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement affirming willingness to adapt or expand course offerings</li> </ul>
	Online program/course offerings	ELI seeks an education partner to co-develop a more innovative, engaging student experience that leverages online training modules or in-person courses at flexible times (evening or weekend program opportunities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program offering options</li> <li>• Course offering schedules</li> </ul>
Flexible program offerings			



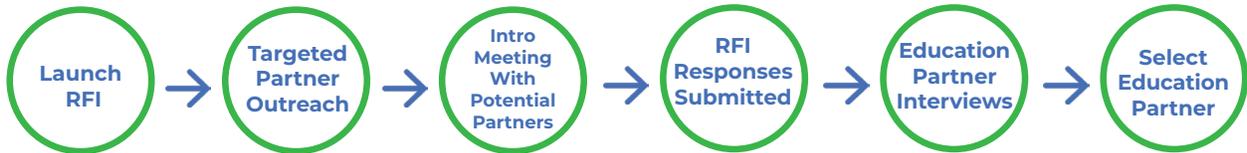
Category	Criteria	Description	Sample Evidence
<b>Student Experience</b>	Development of a professional learning community (PLC)	PLCs support a cohort experience, and meet regularly to share expertise and improve teaching skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience developing a PLC</li> <li>• Statement detailing commitment to developing PLCs</li> </ul>
	Willingness to develop a competency-based degree structure	ELI seeks an education partner who will provide recognition of credit for demonstrated competencies and reflective practice that leads to mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement detailing approach and commitment to collaborate and develop competency-based degree structure</li> </ul>
	Willingness to collaborate to develop job-embedded learning structure	ELI seeks an education partner who is willing to co-develop a competency-based program that combines curriculum modules and an intentional job-embedded component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement detailing approach and commitment to collaborate and develop job-embedded learning structure</li> </ul>
	Willingness to collaborate to develop Master Teacher infrastructure	Master Teachers are practicing experts in the classroom with multiple years of experience and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement detailing approach and commitment to collaborate and develop Master Teacher infrastructure</li> </ul>
	Willingness and ability to innovate around program model	ELI seeks a partner who will be a thought partner and bring forth innovative ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement detailing approach and commitment to innovate around program model</li> <li>• Partners that may be engaged to support efforts</li> </ul>
<b>Faculty &amp; Administration</b>	Faculty with diverse teaching experience	ELI seeks an education partner with diverse faculty that come from various educational backgrounds that strengthen student perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty biographies</li> <li>• Requirements for hiring tenured faculty</li> </ul>
	Openness to/utilization of adjunct faculty	ELI seeks an education partner who expresses openness to utilizing adjunct faculty, as they provide industry expertise within the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number or percent of adjunct faculty</li> <li>• Requirements for hiring adjunct faculty</li> </ul>
	Administration invested in pipeline development	ELI seeks an education partner with strong administrative support as it lends to long-term success and sustainability for the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement detailing administration investment in pipeline development</li> </ul>

Category	Criteria	Description	Sample Evidence
<b>Financial</b>	Amount of debt the average student has upon graduating	These represent data points to understand the financial investment by students and the university that aligns with the new program model	• Data for average amount of debt
	Tuition rates		• Data around tuition rates
	School's ability to utilize TEACH funds		• Statement around school's ability to utilize TEACH funds
	Willingness to develop a financial model for tuition		• Statement detailing a willingness to develop a financial model for tuition
	School's ability to secure scholarships to support students in pipeline		• Data around number of scholarships and the average amount provided to students
<b>Location</b>	Geographic location/proximity to ELI	Based upon course offering options, close proximity between the education partner and ELI may be desirable	• Statement around distance to ELI
	Footprint statewide	ELI is interested in understanding any affiliated universities and the consistency among program offerings	• Statement regarding affiliated programs and alignment between programs
<b>University Characteristics</b>	Program's national ranking	These represent data points to understand the scale and ranking of programs	• Data regarding program's national ranking
	Number of applicants overall		• Data around annual applications in relevant program
	Number of accepted applicants to relevant program of study		• Data around number of accepted applicants into relevant program
	Number of enrolled students in relevant program of study		• Data around number of enrolled students in relevant program

Category	Criteria	Description	Sample Evidence
University Characteristics	Student to faculty ratio	These represent data points to understand the scale and ranking of programs	• Data around the student to faculty ratio in relevant program
	Year-to-year persistence		• Data around year-to-year persistence in relevant program
	Student GPA (25th, 50th, 75th percentile)		• Data around student GPA in relevant program
	Threshold for program acceptance		• Data around threshold for program acceptance in relevant program
	Average time to graduation		• Data around average time to graduation in relevant program
	Employment in field(s) of study post-graduation		• Data around employment in fields of study post-graduation
	Current in-state retention post-graduation		• Data around current in-state retention post-graduation
Partnerships	Experience with building partnerships	ELI has identified the need for a partner who has experience building partnerships, as this can help to indicate willingness and ability to support a pipeline	• Statement detailing previous examples of similar partnerships
	Experience building innovative programs	ELI has identified the need for a partner who exhibits innovation through developing new programs that work differently than the traditional model	• Statement around innovative instructional design samples and explanation of resources leveraged
	Prior relationship between education partner and ELI	The education institutions' history of partnership with ELI provides a foundation for building a strong pipeline	• Statement around past partnership with ELI

# Next Steps

## Selection Process



Potential education partners should submit their response to Erica Viar, Director of Consulting at Ascend Indiana ([erica.viar@ascendindiana.com](mailto:erica.viar@ascendindiana.com)) by Wednesday, November 6, 2019. Once responses have been received, Ascend will schedule a meeting with ELI and the interested party to review their candidacy. After Ascend and ELI review potential education partners, ELI will select the partner that best suits the needs of the teacher pipeline. The selected education provider will then meet with ELI to align on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to move forward with the partnership. **The selection process will be completed by December 2019.**

Once the MOU is signed, ELI and the education partner will enter a planning phase to develop the program, which will take approximately eight months beginning in January 2020. Ascend commits to planning and creating materials for meetings, thought partnership in program design, as well as project management. ELI and the education provider can expect to commit significant staff time to gathering data, attending planning meetings, securing internal investment and approval, and preparing for program launch. ELI is eager to begin developing the talent pipeline as soon as possible. Thank you for taking the time to review this document.

## Contact Information

Please send your questions and submit your responses to:

**Erica Viar**  
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