



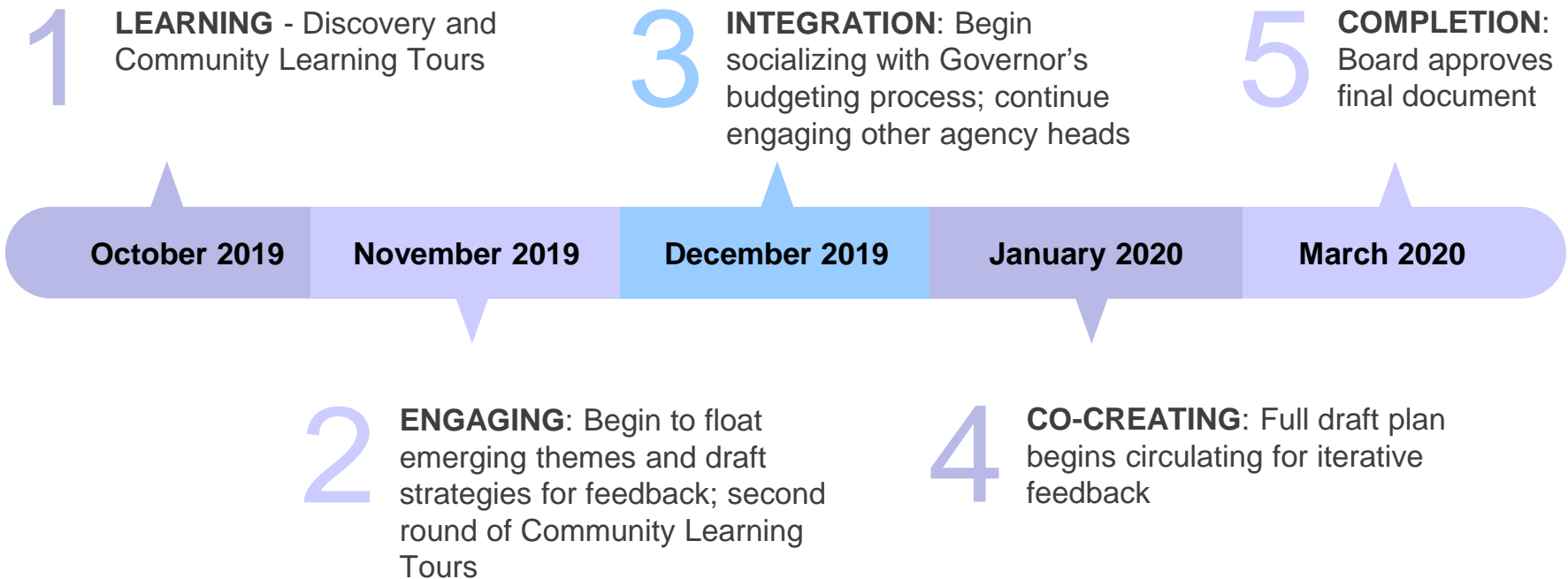
# Strategic Action Planning - Discovery Themes

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*EEC Board*  
*1.14.20*



# Strategic Planning Process Milestones



# What we know: early education and care delivers positive child outcomes and enables family economic mobility...



## It maximizes children's prospects to succeed in school and in life. (1)

- "High quality birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% per year return on investment. Significant gains are realized through **better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors, and employment.**



## It allows parents to go to work, gain skills and grow family income. (1)

- "High quality early education and care improves the "economic prospects of treated children and their mothers, allowing the latter to enter the workforce and increase earnings while their children gained the foundational skills to make them more productive in the future workforce....Childcare generates positive effects in **maternal education, labor force participation, and parental income.**"



## Quality Is Critical to Outcomes (2)

The evidence base suggests a higher rate of return on investments in quality birth to five programs.

Quality is defined as: starting at birth, providing continuous early education and care, engaging families, incorporating health and nutrition, empowering parents through affordable care, developing full range of skills, smooth transitions to K-12, and well-trained and supervised educators.



## ...is critical to powering a modern economy...

**Early Education and Care is foundational to a modern economy – with impact on family stability, economic opportunity, workforce participation, and the economy as a whole:**

- Despite significant positive employer impacts, ***early education and care is not part of our workforce infrastructure***
  - Most families need some form of early education and care
    - Nationally 65% of children under age six have 2 working parents
    - In MA, 74% of children live in households where all available parents are working (2)
  - Early education and care has positive impacts for employers and the economy
- Compared to other developed countries that use policies to support families more effectively—with paid family leave, facilitation of change to part-time work, and public options for early education and care—the *labor force participation rate of women in the United States has fallen behind* (1)
- Early education and care ‘breakdowns’ require parents to stay home from work – with an estimated cost to businesses of *\$3 billion annually in the US* (3)
- Positive effects of early education and care gleaned from employer surveying include *20-30% positive impact on employee attendance, and reduction in employer turnover of 37%-60%* (3)

In the U.S., *early education and care problems create an economic burden for families and employers that is estimated in the billions of dollars per year.* (1)



## **...and yet, the system is fragile & in need of support.**

### **Almost \$680M in state and federal funds to high quality early education and care**

- Most is for financial subsidies – but heavily reliant on federal funding
- Overall decrease in allocation to early education and care since FY01
- Licensing and oversight to 8,700 public and private organizations with capacity to serve only 236,000 of the 1 million children in MA birth to 12

### **Need still outstrips resources**

- Of ~134,500 children under age 6 living in low-income households, only 40% received early education and care assistance
- 25% were infants and toddlers
- Chronic under-funding of the system has cumulative effects

### **Fragility for the field has increased...**

- Evolving business model as universal preschool is implemented through a mixed delivery system
- Increased pressure to improve quality not always tied to funding increases to pay for increased costs
- Personnel and operational costs, paired with per child funding formulas, squeeze limited program budgets
- Compensation levels result in teacher shortages and turnover
- Accelerated rate of program closings – ex. 7,500 FCCs since 2010 and 769 in last two years alone

### **...and the needs of families are changing.**

- Increasing complexity of family need
- Changing state demographics and distribution of children 0-12 across regions
- Affordability a challenge for all families – MA is second highest childcare cost in US

# Discovery Phase – Final Reach

Community Learning Sessions across the Commonwealth have drawn 500 community providers, families, residents, and stakeholders.

Southeast MA Learning Session  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2019  
3:00 - 5:00 P.M.  
EEC's Taunton Office

Metro Boston Learning Session  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2019  
5:30 - 7:30 P.M.  
EEC's Quincy Office

Northeast MA Learning Session  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2019  
5:30 - 7:30 P.M.  
EEC's Lawrence Office

Western MA Learning Session  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2019  
4:00 - 6:00 P.M.  
[Community Foundation, Springfield](#)

Central MA Learning Session  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2019  
5:30 - 7:30 P.M.  
EEC's Worcester Office

Boston Learning Session  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2019  
2:00 - 4:00 P.M.  
EEC's Boston Office

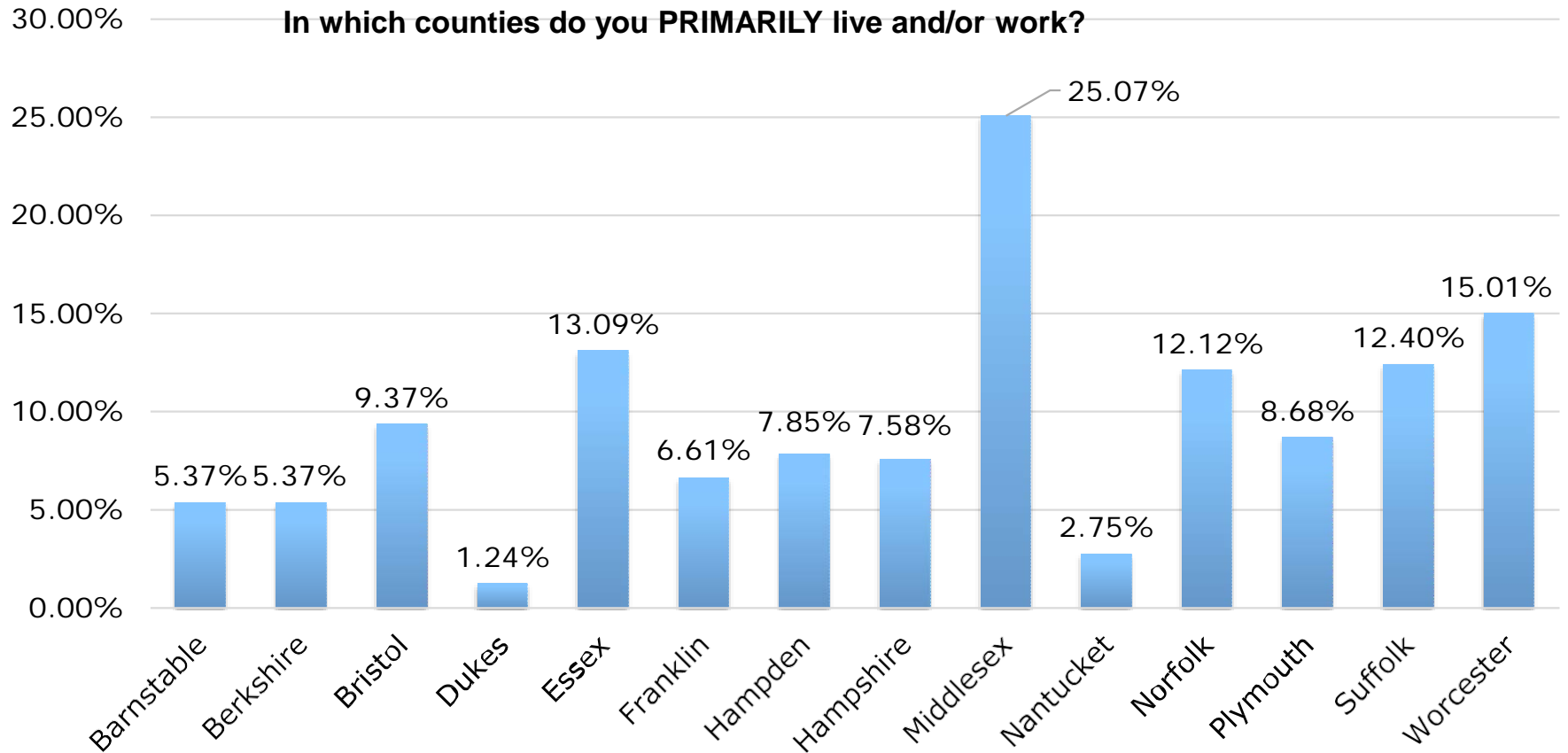
Survey responses from 700+ respondents whose submissions represent over 11,000 voices – from every part of the state and the sector.

+ 100 plans, research, and assessments submitted by community members for review





# Discovery Reach - Survey Representation



- 726 responses, including input from 567+ organizations
- Feedback representing input for over 11,000 MA constituents
- Responses from individuals who work/live in all counties
- Input from all identified stakeholder groups, including 10% of responses from families or organizations who primarily work with families

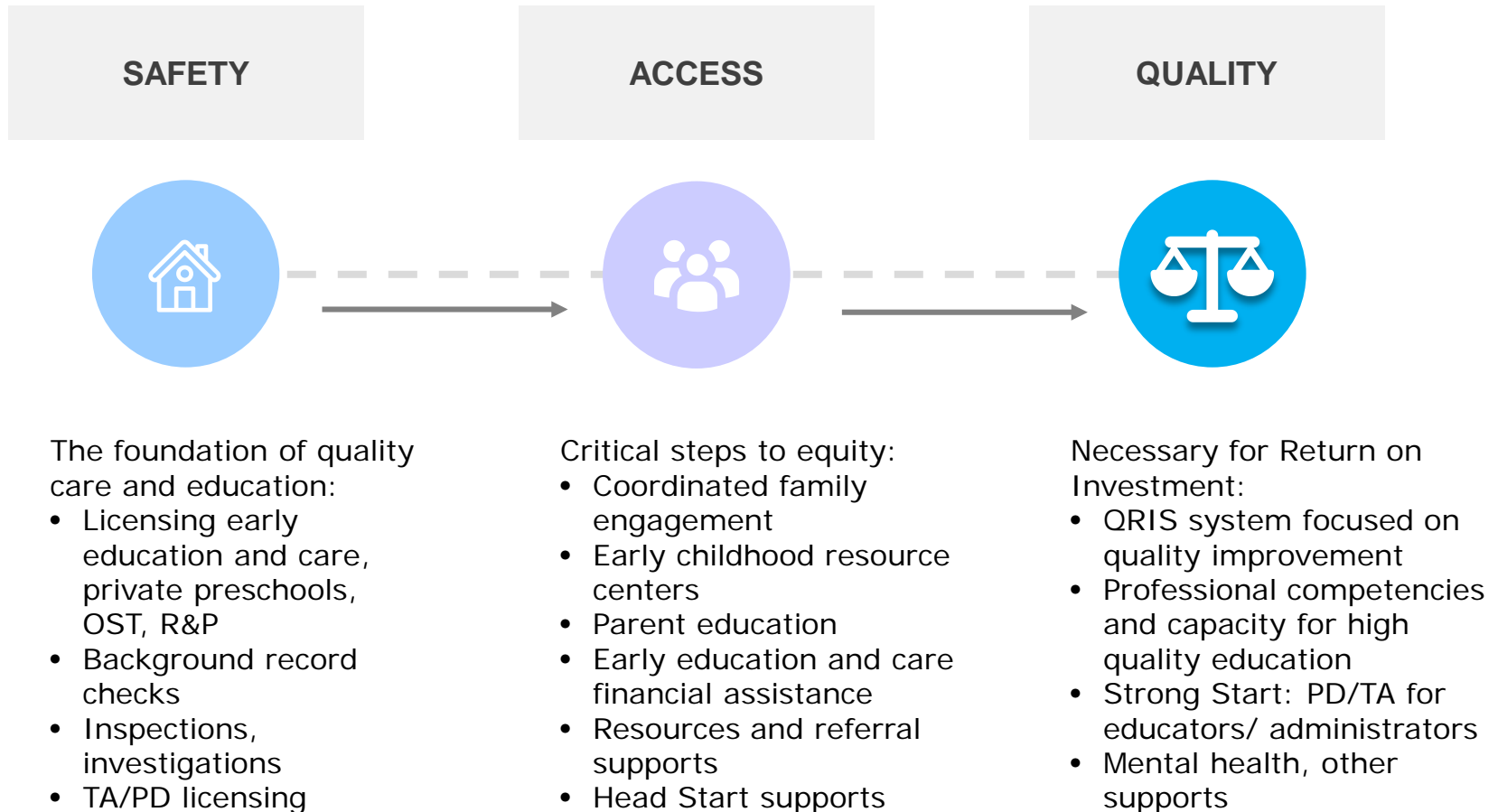
# Participants Saw Central Role for EEC to Ensure Safety, Access, Quality



*"Their primary purpose is to keep children safe. It's the most important thing they do." - Partner*

*"They help provide more affordable programs" -Worcester parent*

*"We have committed people working for the agency who understand quality and are out in the field everyday caring for children." -EEC Regional Director*





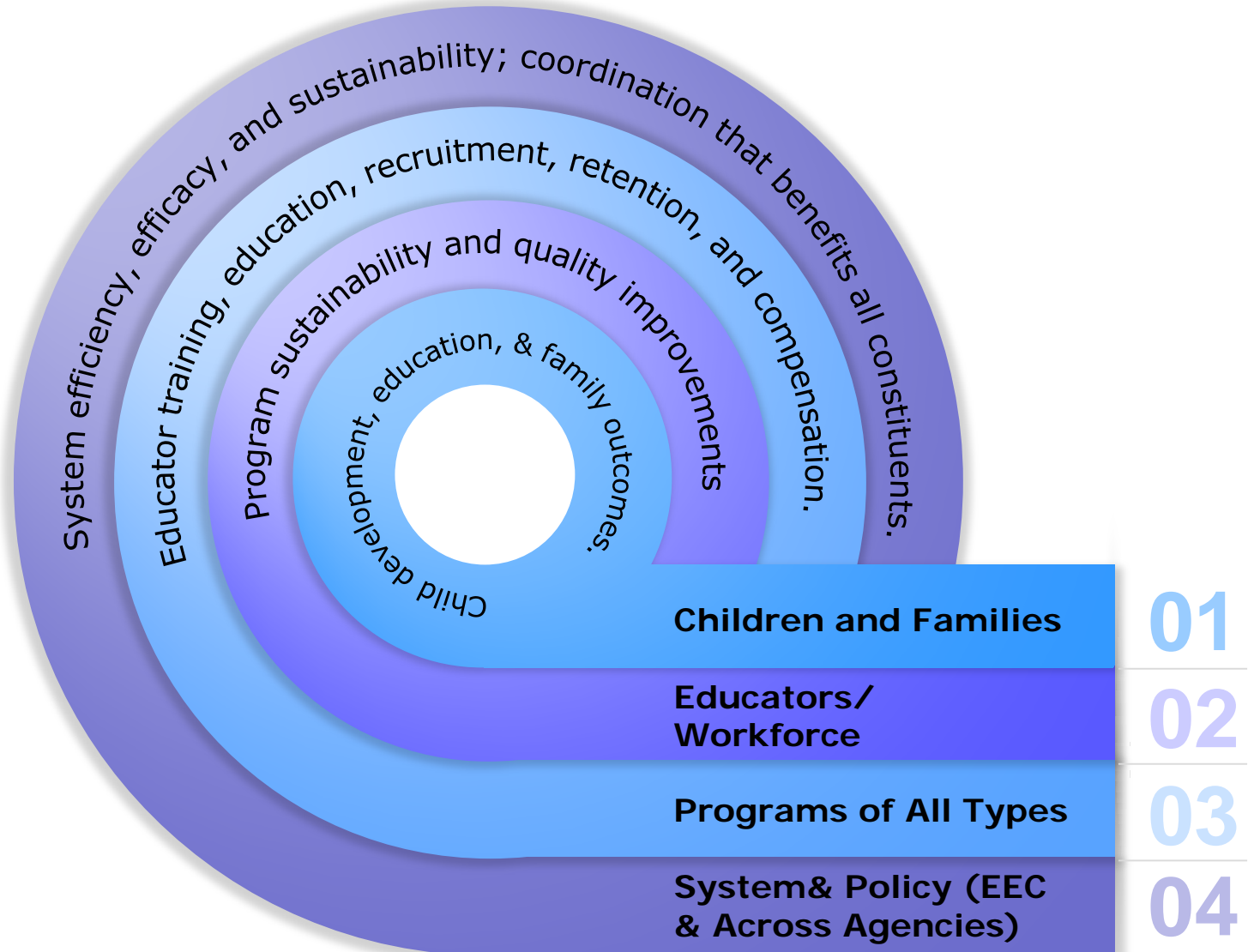


# Top Participant Recommendations for EEC

- 1 More TA and support for providers
- 2 Licensing and regulatory improvements
- 3 Grow public support and funding for ECE
- 4 Focus on caregiver recruitment, retention (\$)
- 5 Technology and system improvements
- 6 Re-organize EEC staffing structure to meet field needs
- 7 Ensure feedback loops with community, families, providers, regions
- 8 Equip field to respond to changing family needs (trauma, special needs)
- 9 Increased alignment between EEC and K-12
- 10 Increased family education and support
- 11 Data-driven decisions grounded in research



# Strategies Must Address All System Components





# Field Feedback and the Research Base

## 1: Children & Families

### More comprehensive support, coordination, and affordability

- Need for more comprehensive support to address increasing complexity of family needs; increased trauma cited in every region.
- Desire for more clear communication at the community level to better understand and assemble supports for children. Recommendations to build from existing supports to help communities engage parents.
- The gap between what families can afford and what care is available is too high, particularly for infants and toddlers. Subsidy policies do not currently meet family needs, and all families struggle with cost of care.
- More seamless coordination and transitions across systems, especially for early elementary and transportation.

Data supports that MA is second highest ranking state when it comes to the cost of care, next to DC. Estimated share of all families who can afford infant care is 5.4%. MA population shifts over last 25 years have also increased complexity and changed distribution of population.

EEC currently supports only 40% of children under 6 living in low-income households; 25% of all subsidies were for infants and toddlers.

“The cliff-effect is a real and unaddressed problem - it is detrimental not only to the children who are being withheld from quality early education programs, but to their parents (primarily their mothers) who have to stay removed from the workforce to care for their children.”

-Berkshire Parent, Survey



# Field Feedback and the Research Base (cont'd)

## 2: Educators/ Workforce

### Improved preparation for more complex family needs; compensation

- Educator compensation, shortage/retention challenges, and the need to equip the workforce to address more comprehensive family needs and manage increasingly challenging classroom behaviors.
- Many calls to build cohesive and consistent messages that will improve public perception of the field's professionalism and value, including alignment with elementary school teachers.
- Need to build the workforce by increasing the pipeline, reducing barriers to degree/credential attainment, and supporting recruitment of educators. Desire for consistent accreditation and PD across systems to support a shared workforce.

Data suggests that educator shortages challenge program ability to operate at capacity, and that the role of an educator has expanded as family needs have changed. Compensation limits educator economic mobility and, sometimes, their ability to support their own families effectively.

2017 median wage was \$12.74. Infant care for one child would require 76% of an early educator's earnings.

There are not enough specialists to go around – and they are never on site when you need them.”

-Early Education and Care Provider, Southeast MA Cape Listening Session



## Field Feedback and the Research Base (cont'd)

### 3. Programs of All Types

#### Need increased investment and more flexible supports

- The field is currently quite fragile – with increasing pressures as minimum wage increases take effect, operational costs rise, and small businesses, in particular, face funding volatility. Changing landscape in public schools requires adjustments for provider models at the community-level.
- Providers seek more meaningful / supportive - and less bureaucratic - interactions with EEC. Feedback that the outsized focus on compliance, with inconsistent, sometimes conflicting, and confusing regulations take attention away from the classroom. Requests for more regulatory flexibility by program and population type.
- Calls for more coherent expectations regarding how to improve quality, with ties to meaningful funding increases that will enable providers to increase educator pay.

Recent data shows closures of 7,500 FCCs since 2010 and 769 in last two years alone. National studies show increased pressures on providers to improve quality, but without funding to cover associated costs.

Studies from key states suggest that implementing a common definition of quality requires integration across all supports and compliance mechanisms, beginning with licensing.

“Licensors are on the front lines of quality – incorporating quality more into their focus and interactions will make a huge difference. We need mentorship and support.”

-FCC Provider, Central MA Listening Session



## Field Feedback and the Research Base (cont'd)

### 4. EEC and Cross-Agency Systems

#### Increased coordination, alignment, and efficacy

- Need for user-centered systems to decrease resource burden among constituents to participate in compliance and other EEC functions. Requests to ensure technology is user-centric and accompanied by adequate support for programs with varying technology capacity.
- A multitude of regulatory challenges including challenges with new regulations to meet federal requirements that need to be reconciled with existing ones, and inconsistent application of policies. Requests to better align areas of regulation with quality incentives for programs.
- Significant gaps between rate levels and the funding required to sustain and build strong programs that serve subsidized children.
- Providers asked for better coordination across state agencies, particularly with K-12.

Data supports that EEC's responsibilities have grown at a faster pace than its capacity, which challenges its ability to overcome silos and conduct process improvements for the field.

A number of services, regardless of what oversight they need, are disconnected from customers. There is more time navigating bureaucracy than working with children."

-EEC Staff Member, Western MA Listening Session



# Hoped for Outcomes as a Result of Plan Strategies



**When the system aligns to support a shared rubric for high quality, accessible, affordable early education and care, there are benefits for educators and the workforce, for programs, and – most importantly - for children and families.**



# Next Steps for Strategic Action Plan

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1. Workshops underway to
  - Engage Workforce Council and Advisory Council in developing program and workforce quality strategies
  - Survey the field to get better metrics on the true cost of quality care across program types and region
  - Map out a sequencing of strategies that is interlocking, feasible, and has the potential to make a comprehensive impact
2. February Board Retreat
  - Opportunity areas and strategies across families, educators, programs and systems
  - Updates on quality, cost of quality, and strategy development work/ validation and direction
  - Mission/vision adjustments/ recommendations and refinement
  - Considering governance models to support execution/ workshop
3. Community Listening Tours in February and March
  - Pressure test plan strategies and add additional feedback
4. Board approval March 10<sup>th</sup>