



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS in Michigan

SEPTEMBER 2024



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This report was supported by funding provided from the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP) utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.)

Acknowledgments

The School Readiness Consulting (SRC) team thanks colleagues and all reviewers of this report, including the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC). The SRC team is also grateful for the contributions of ECIC's grantees, who shared their stories and achievements. The innovative work of ECIC's grantees has shined a light on the exciting potential of early care and education registered apprenticeships in Michigan and ultimately made this report possible. Finally, SRC is proud to recognize the devotion of the many partners across Michigan dedicated to building stronger pipelines for exceptional early educators.

State and Regional Partners

- The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP)
- MiLEAP Child Care Licensing Bureau
- Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity Office of Employment and Training – Workforce Development
- The Michigan Works! Association
- The Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children – T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood® Michigan Scholarship Program
- Michigan Works! Apprenticeship Success Coaches and Business Service Specialists
- ECIC's Child Care Innovation Fund

ECIC's Child Care Innovation Fund Technical Assistance Partners for Early Care and Education Registered Apprenticeship

- Early Care Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS)
- Great Start to Quality Southwest Resource Center
- Steepletown Neighborhood Services
- YWCA Kalamazoo
- Kalamazoo Literacy Council
- Bank Street College of Education
- Early Childhood Workforce Connector

ABOUT SCHOOL READINESS CONSULTING

The Early Care and Education Registered Apprenticeships in Michigan report was prepared by School Readiness Consulting (SRC). As a consulting firm focused exclusively on children from birth through third grade, SRC partners to develop and implement strategies that improve outcomes for children in school and life. SRC believes that improving early childhood and affirming the right for all children to thrive represents the greatest opportunity to create a just society.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2023, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation published the **Early Care and Education Registered Apprenticeships in Michigan report**, a first of its kind “state of the state” report on Early Care and Education Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ECE RAPs) in Michigan.

Since the release of the 2023 Report, ECIC leveraged a \$4 million dollar investment from the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (Mi-LEAP) *Caring for MI Future* initiative to support two sets of grantees to design and scale up ECE RAPs.

This report provides an update to the 2023 report, examining the key accomplishments, lessons learned, and opportunities to continue to build a robust ECE RAP system across Michigan.

This report is intended for a diverse group of interest holders—policymakers, child care employers, and early childhood leaders—who are invested in building a highly skilled and well-compensated early care and education workforce. The recommendations in this report offer a guiding framework for interest holders in Michigan’s ECE RAPs to make informed collective decisions about how to continue to scale and advance this workforce strategy as resources and capacity become available.

Through engagement with child care employers, apprentices, and sponsoring agencies across Michigan, the SRC team identified three priority areas for the continued success of ECE RAPs. The priority areas include:



Fostering stronger child care employer partnerships and engagement



Strengthening ECE registered apprenticeship programs through enhanced apprentice support



Addressing systemic barriers to ECE workforce development in the early care and education sector



Progress Updates

The 2023 report outlined five key goals aimed at achieving equitable and sustainable expansion of ECE RAPs. The list below highlights the significant progress made toward achieving these goals in the last year, through strong partnerships, cross-sector engagement, and collaboration:

- **Strengthen the implementation of the existing seven ECE Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

- ✓ Offer one-time scale-up grants and cohort-based technical assistance
- ✓ Support the development of regional financing to maximize all available public workforce and early childhood resources

RESULTS

- » 95 child care employers are actively engaging in an ECE RAP
- » 215 apprentices are enrolled in an ECE RAP

- » 78 apprentices have completed their ECE RAP
- » 1M+ in State Apprenticeship Expansion funds to sustain and expand ECE RAPs

- **Offer design grants to all Michigan Works! agencies not covered in goal 1 above to complete the process of designing and registering an ECE apprenticeship with their regional apprenticeship partners. In areas of the state with “ready” ECE apprenticeship designs, complete the process of registering the apprenticeship.**

- ✓ Provide design grants and intensive technical assistance
- ✓ Identify a sponsoring agency and apprenticeship partnership

RESULTS

- » 7 Michigan Works! agencies designed and registered new ECE RAPs

- » Focus: HOPE successfully registered their “ready” ECE RAP design in Detroit

- **Continue and strengthen collaboration among the Michigan Departments of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential, Labor and Economic Opportunity and Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Child Care Bureau, the Michigan Works! Association, and the Early Childhood Investment Corporation – Child Care Innovation Fund.**

- ✓ Continue state efforts to realize more effective, long-term compensation strategies for early educators and include the recognition of apprenticeship certification on the ECE Career Pathway in MiRegistry

RESULTS

- » ECE Career Pathway in MiRegistry was updated to include and align with the ECE registered apprenticeship credential

- » Developed state-wide ECE RAP marketing materials for consistent and meaningful messaging to child care employers and early educators

Key Achievements

Michigan's approach, combining cross-sector partnerships, employer incentives, and innovative funding models, reflects a strategic commitment to creating sustainable, equitable opportunities for early educators.



Priority Area 1: Fostering Child Care Employer Partnerships and Engagement

- **Cross-Sector Engagement and Financing.** Sponsoring agencies and intermediaries in Michigan are innovating by collaborating across sectors to invest in the early care and education sector for the first time. This cross-sector partnership is fueling the growth of ECE RAPs statewide.
- **Targeted Outreach Strategies.** Direct, personalized outreach to child care employers has proven to be more effective than general marketing, allowing employers to understand the benefits and requirements of ECE RAPs, thereby increasing participation.
- **Peer Learning Community.** ECIC's Peer Learning Community, supported by Bank Street College of Education, brings sponsoring agencies together to share resources and innovate in response to child care employer needs, fostering collaboration across apprenticeship partnerships.
- **Marketing Campaign.** A statewide marketing campaign will launch in Fall 2024 to promote ECE RAPs, and a Child Care Employer Engagement Toolkit is being developed to help improve interactions between child care employers and sponsoring agencies, addressing key challenges.





Priority Area 2: Strengthening ECE Registered Apprenticeship Programs through Enhanced Apprentice Support Strategies

- **ECE Apprenticeship Partnerships.** Michigan's ECE RAPs are strengthened by collaborations between child care employers and various state, regional, and community-based organizations. These partnerships provide comprehensive support, including non-traditional services like housing stipends, which help attract and retain a diverse apprentice workforce, particularly from underserved communities.
- **Wraparound Services.** Sponsoring agencies in Michigan ensure apprentices receive critical wraparound services by identifying eligibility for U.S. Department of Labor supports like Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding. This ensures apprentices have equitable access to necessary resources that help address barriers to success.
- **Mentor Teachers.** Mentor teachers are vital to ECE RAPs, providing hands-on guidance and helping apprentices apply their academic learning in real-world settings. Supported by ECIC and Bank Street College of Education, these mentor-apprentice relationships are essential for building technical skills and meaningful professional connections.





Priority Area 3: Addressing Systemic Barriers to Workforce Development in the Early Care and Education Sector

- **Integration of the early care and education registered apprenticeship certificate within the [MiRegistry Career Pathway](#).** This integration reinforces the importance of stackable and portable credentials, giving apprentices a clear, structured pathway for career advancement. MiRegistry now provides early educators with a well-defined, structured path for career advancement, linking their education and training to recognized career pathway levels based on verified credentials.
- **Flexibility of the ECE Apprenticeship Pathway.** The apprenticeship pathway adapts to local workforce needs by allowing apprentices to earn credentials like the CDA or align their work with Associate's degree programs or other advanced certifications. This flexibility ensures the program meets both community-specific demands and broader workforce development goals.
- **ECE Wage Scale Pilot.** Michigan's first wage scale for ECE professionals, introduced through the "[Balancing the Scales Report](#)," is being tested in a nine-month pilot. The pilot aims to close the wage gap between what early educators should earn and what child care centers can afford to pay, with the goal of improving recruitment and retention.
- **Philanthropic and Private Sector Partnerships.** Michigan's collaborations with philanthropic and private sector funders are driving systemic change in ECE workforce development. These partnerships, alongside state funding commitments, help address barriers and build a more skilled early education workforce.



Key Opportunities



Priority Area 1: Fostering Child Care Employer Partnerships and Engagement

- **Relationship building between child care employers and ECE RAP partners.** Sponsoring agencies emphasize that establishing strong, ongoing relationships with child care employers is essential for effective employer engagement. Regular communication systems, including check-ins and on-site visits for rural employers, are critical to ensure that programs align with apprenticeship standards and address any emerging challenges.
- **Administrative support.** Child care employers face significant challenges due to tight budgets, understaffing, and the complexity of managing new apprenticeships. Establishing a new ECE RAP requires time and additional effort from already overstretched staff, especially when mentoring new apprentices.
- **Staff turnover at sponsoring agencies and child care employers.** Frequent staff turnover at both sponsoring agencies and child care employers disrupts relationship-building and makes it difficult to maintain momentum in the implementation of ECE RAPs.



Priority Area 2: Strengthening ECE Registered Apprenticeship Programs through Enhanced Apprentice Support Strategies

- **Resources and infrastructure to support apprentices consistently and equitably across MI.** While Michigan benefits from strong community relationships and localized leadership, there is a need to ensure that all apprentices across the state have access to consistent, high-quality support. Developing best practices that address diverse needs, such as those of dual language learners and people of color, is essential to maintain equity in the program.
- **Resources for child care employers to maintain qualified mentor teachers on staff and provide financial support for their enhanced role in the ECE program.** Mentor teachers play a pivotal role in ECE RAPs, but they often face extra demands without additional compensation or recognition. Establishing a mentor teacher credential and providing structured support and compensation would help retain experienced educators and ensure high-quality training for apprentices.

- **Creating and refining processes to prepare Apprentices for the ECE RAP.** It is essential for apprentices to have a clear understanding of ECE RAP requirements before enrollment to ensure their success. Some apprentices need additional preparation, and in response, apprenticeship readiness and pre-apprenticeship training programs have been developed to equip them with foundational knowledge and skills.



Priority Area 3: Addressing Systemic Barriers to Workforce Development in the Early Care and Education Sector

- **Early care and education is not recognized as a crucial driver of economic development.** The ECE sector's role in economic development is often overlooked, leading to underfunding for workforce compensation and training. This creates financial constraints for child care employers, limiting their ability to offer competitive wages and professional development opportunities, which negatively impacts recruitment and retention of skilled workers.
- **Regional variation in ECE RAP operations.** The decentralized structure of Michigan's ECE RAPs enables flexible, region-specific solutions that meet the unique needs of local communities. This flexibility fosters innovation and responsiveness to local workforce demands, allowing for tailored approaches. However, continued collaboration among partners can further streamline efforts to ensure consistency and quality improvement across the state while maintaining this adaptability.
- **Low compensation for early educators.** Although wage increases are built into ECE apprenticeship programs, overall compensation remains significantly lower than other sectors, making it hard to attract and retain early educators. This wage disparity is a major barrier to positioning ECE apprenticeships as a viable pathway to financial stability and professional growth.



Recommendations At-a-Glance

Recommendation 1: Build and enhance relationships with child care employers.

- **Leverage the capacity of sponsoring agencies to foster relationships with child care employers through effective outreach, consistent communication, and personalized assistance to sustain engagement.** By strengthening outreach, marketing efforts, and clear communication around the benefits of participating in ECE RAPs, sponsoring agencies can facilitate strong, lasting partnerships with child care employers and simplify their participation.
- **Develop a statewide ECE RAP readiness toolkit of orientation materials for child care employers.** As a novel approach to building a stronger ECE workforce, child care employers are taking on additional short-term work when they partner with a sponsoring agency to launch an ECE RAP that will address their ECE workforce development needs. Developing orientation materials for these employers and providing direct administrative support during the early stages of adopting an ECE RAP may alleviate some of these burdens. In partnership with state-level leaders, ECE RAPs could mobilize pre-apprenticeship support, such as an employer toolkit, or other customizable resources that can ensure that child care employers are well-prepared to onboard and support apprentices, provide high-quality mentorship, and navigate administrative requirements in ways that maximize benefits to both the employer and the apprentice.
- **Develop a standardized evaluation framework that consistently collects key data points across all ECE RAPs to demonstrate their value to child care employers.** A standardized evaluation framework will allow for consistent data collection across all ECE RAPs so that they are able to demonstrate their impact and value to child care employers while systematizing the data gathering and reporting process. Child care employers need to understand the tangible benefits of apprenticeships, such as free or low-cost workforce development, reduced turnover, and financial incentives for them as employers. Aggregating data on key metrics like apprentice retention rates, workforce stability, and financial incentives, will make it easier to communicate success stories and provide measurable outcomes to potential and current employer partners and other important interest holder groups.



Recommendation 2: Enhance wraparound services, learning supports, and mentor teacher recognition to address the diverse needs of apprentices across Michiganders.

- **Strengthen the mentor teacher component of ECE RAPs through statewide training, incentives, and credentialing to ensure consistency and quality of support.** Mentorship is a cornerstone of successful apprenticeship programs, but inconsistent training, lack of financial recognition, and unclear expectations for mentors can hinder the quality of support apprentices receive. Developing a statewide mentor teacher credential, implementing a formal mentor training program or peer-to-peer learning model, and offering compensation incentives such as stipends or bonuses can ensure that mentors are equipped with the necessary skills and are fairly compensated for their additional responsibilities. This approach would align expectations, improve mentor engagement, and enhance the overall quality of support apprentices receive.
- **Understand and equitably meet the evolving needs of apprentices.** Gathering regular feedback from apprentices is essential to gaining insights into their experiences and ensuring they receive the comprehensive support necessary for their success. Establishing clear and robust communication channels empowers sponsoring agencies and their partners to remain proactive, identifying and addressing potential barriers before they hinder apprentices' progress. This ongoing dialogue not only helps resolve immediate challenges, it also informs the strategic allocation of resources, enhances effective practices, and eliminates inefficiencies. Initiatives such as quarterly apprentice satisfaction surveys, regular check-ins, and feedback mechanisms will ensure that apprentices have a direct voice in shaping the support they need, fostering a responsive and dynamic apprenticeship environment.
- **Address the needs of dual language learners (DLLs) and people of color in early care and education registered apprenticeship programs.** To build an inclusive and representative early childhood workforce, it is critical to provide targeted support for those who face additional challenges related to language barriers, cultural differences, and systemic inequities. Ensuring all apprentices are equitably supported within their ECE RAPs is essential for creating a diverse, culturally competent workforce. Michigan could expand programs like the Steepletown Neighborhood Services' pre-apprenticeship program for dual language learners by offering bilingual mentoring, interpretation services, and culturally responsive training modules across all ECE RAPs. Additionally, embedding culturally responsive mentor teaching into apprenticeship programs would help ensure that people of color and DLLs receive support tailored to their unique backgrounds, empowering them to thrive in early childhood education careers.
- **Offer potential apprentices an orientation and readiness experience to clarify ECE RAP expectations and support apprentices in developing foundational skills.** Apprentices may enter an ECE RAP without a clear understanding of its requirements or the foundational skills needed for success. An orientation and readiness experience can help bridge this gap, ensuring that potential apprentices can make an informed choice as to whether apprenticeship is the right career pathway for them. This might mean offering virtual workshops on program expectations, time management, and foundational technical skills, and creating a shared framework for all RAPs for an introductory 90-day onboarding process for apprentices.

Recommendation 3: Continue to sustain, embed, and expand ECE RAPs as a key ECE workforce development strategy

- **Increase compensation for early educators by advocating for compensation-first strategies to retain skilled educators and increasing the sustainability of the ECE sector.** Competitive compensation is critical for addressing the high turnover rates and attracting more individuals to early education careers. The *Balancing the Scales* pilot program could be expanded statewide and allocate additional funding to support wage increases based on the wage scale developed in the report.
- **Build on existing efforts to increase the coordination, alignment, and capacity of Michigan's early care and education workforce investments.** Early care and education workforce investments are an essential support for child care employers and early educators. Child care employers need information about the financial and human resources available to support the skill development and credentialing of their staff. Current and potential early educators need support to navigate their ECE career pathways and realize *their* professional goals at now or low cost to them.
- **Leverage existing partnerships, funding opportunities, and advocacy capacity to elevate ECE RAPs as a comprehensive workforce support strategy.** Collaborations with public and private sector partners, combined with the \$30 million allocation of Michigan School Aid funding to address ECE workforce issues, offer an unprecedented opportunity to create a more equitable, robust infrastructure that supports the long-term development and retention of a highly qualified early care and education workforce.



INTRODUCTION



In 2023, Early Childhood Investment Corporation published the *Early Care and Education Registered Apprenticeships in Michigan report*, a first of its kind state of the state report on early care and education registered apprenticeship (ECE RAPs) in Michigan.

Since the release of the 2023 report, ECIC leveraged a \$4 million dollar investment from the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential's (Mi-LEAP) *Caring for MI Future* initiative to support two sets of grantees to design and scale up ECE RAPs.

This report is intended for a diverse group of interest holders—policymakers, child care employers, and early childhood leaders—who are invested in building a highly skilled and well compensated early care and education workforce. The recommendations in this report offer a guiding framework for interest holders in Michigan's ECE RAPs to make informed collective decisions about how to continue to scale and advance this workforce strategy as resources and capacity become available.

Approach to the Report

ECIC partnered with SRC to lead an assessment process that would inform the future development of the ECE RAPs in Michigan. The process involved ...

- June 2024: Quantitative Data Collection**
A review of key documents and data related to who is being served by registered apprenticeship programs and efforts or progress underway related to registered apprenticeship program grantees.
- July–August 2024: Qualitative Data Collection**
Engagement of various leaders who are part of registered apprenticeship programs to learn more about the state of ECE registered apprenticeship programs across Michigan...
 - 7 interviews with sponsor agency leads
 - 2 facilitated sessions with broader state system apprenticeship partners
 - 4 focus groups that included 6 apprentices and 12 child care employers
- August–September 2024: Analysis and Reporting**
Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data sources collected to synthesize findings and develop actionable recommendations regarding Michigan's early care and education registered apprenticeship programs.



Through engagement with child care employers, apprentices, and sponsoring agencies across Michigan, the SRC team identified three priority areas for the continued success of ECE RAPs. This report delves into each of these areas in detail, discussing achievements to build on, identifying challenges, and outlining potential steps to strengthen early care and education registered apprenticeship systems in Michigan. The priority areas include:

1. Fostering stronger child care employer partnerships and engagement
2. Strengthening ECE registered apprenticeship programs through enhanced apprentice support strategies
3. Addressing systemic barriers to ECE workforce development in the early care and education sector.

Registered Apprenticeship

In 2022, the National Apprenticeship Act marked its 85th anniversary. This Act created the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Registered Apprenticeship Program, introducing regulations to protect apprentices' health, safety, and rights against discrimination.¹ The DOL defines registered apprenticeship as "an employer-driven, 'learn-while-you-earn' model that combines on-the-job training, provided by the employer that hires the apprentice, with job-related instruction in curricula tied to the attainment of national skills standards." Registered apprenticeships have five primary components: **employer involvement, structured on-the-job learning, related instruction, rewards for skill gains, and an industry-recognized credential**. Registered apprenticeship can be customized to meet the needs of specific industries. Every registered apprenticeship program must designate a sponsor or intermediary to oversee the program's administration. All sponsors are officially registered through the U.S. DOL.

Bringing Registered Apprenticeship to the Early Care and Education Sector

"The nation's success in meeting the need for quality child care depends on our ability to recruit and retain a competent workforce. By supporting investments in education and workforce development for child care, we can increase the supply and fill the child care gap. One innovative model has been well established in other industries for decades: Registered Apprenticeships."

— **Bipartisan Policy Center**, 2023

Traditionally, registered apprenticeships were in male-dominated trades, such as mechanics and plumbing, focusing on industry certifications. However, in Michigan and across the United States, early care and education apprenticeships are broadening the scope of these programs to include education. Now, early childhood education (ECE) is one of the nation's fastest-growing fields for apprenticeships, with more than 35 states, including Michigan, having active regional or statewide Early Care and Education Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ECE RAPs).²

The Opportunity for the Early Care and Education Sector

ECE RAPs offer a dual benefit: they help child care employers strengthen their workforce while providing apprentices with comprehensive support to build successful careers in early childhood education. By offering structured training, professional incentives, and collaborative opportunities, RAPs bridge the gap between theory and practice. RAPs uniquely support both employers and apprentices:

For Child Care Employers	For Apprentices
Access to a skilled, dedicated workforce Child care employers gain access to highly trained apprentices equipped with hands-on experience and industry-standard knowledge, ensuring that they can provide quality early education.	Hands-on, structured training Apprentices receive practical, on-the-job training with guidance from skilled mentor teachers, allowing them to apply the concepts they learn in coursework directly in the program.
Enhanced workforce stability RAPs help retain early educators by offering clear career progression and professional recognition, reducing turnover in the child care sector.	Competency-based coursework Apprentices benefit from accessible, competency-based curricula that blend theoretical knowledge with real-world application, ensuring they meet national early childhood education standards.
Reduced participation costs A well-funded ECE RAP reduces or eliminates employer participation costs, making it easier for child care employers to support the professional development of their staff without financial strain.	Wraparound support Apprentices can access non-academic supports like childcare, transportation, or financial assistance, ensuring they can focus on their professional growth and are more likely to complete their credentials.
Improved quality of education By investing in well-trained apprentices, child care employers help elevate the quality of care and education provided to children, directly benefiting the community.	Wage increases and national credential Apprentices are rewarded with at least one wage increase as they gain new skills, making early childhood education a viable and sustainable long-term career option. Apprentices also gain a nationally recognized apprentice credential.
	Low to no costs Most early educators receive their credentials at very low or no out-of-pocket costs.



“Generally, with an apprenticeship, the return on investment is much greater than if you have just a typical employee that you’re hiring off of the street due to the standardized training methods. Every apprentice is learning exactly the same thing, so then they can have confidence in their skills and abilities and just feel a little bit more ingrained in that particular company.”

– Sponsoring Agency

The Return on Investment (ROI) of ECE Registered Apprenticeships

The average ROI for employers engaging in apprenticeships is \$1.47 for every \$1 invested.³ One key factor is the reduction in recruitment and training costs, as apprenticeships provide a steady supply of skilled workers tailored to meet program-specific needs. This helps decrease turnover and the associated expenses of hiring and training new employees, as apprentices tend to be more loyal to programs that have invested in their development.⁴ Additionally, combining on-the-job training and related instruction allows apprentices to contribute to a program’s productivity early in their tenure, leading to increased output as they acquire more skills and responsibilities.

While ECE registered apprenticeships are not a new concept, there is limited available data specifically about their ROI. However, these burgeoning programs present a valuable opportunity for states like Michigan to foster collaboration among partners and collect comprehensive data to substantiate the case for strategic investments. Higher employee retention, customized training aligned with industry needs, and long-term workforce planning are crucial benefits of registered apprenticeships. Importantly, if compensation for early educators increases, the ROI could improve significantly toward a public return of \$28 for every \$1 invested.⁵ Higher wages would lead to increased tax contributions from educators and reduce the need for public assistance, creating broader economic benefits.⁶ Collecting and analyzing data on these aspects will help amplify the impact of early childhood apprenticeships and guide future investments in the workforce.

Michigan's ECE Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Through a strong network of partnerships, Michigan is working to design and scale Early Care and Education Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ECE RAPs) statewide. ECE RAPs have been established as a critical piece of Michigan's early care and education workforce development landscape—creating pathways and opening possibilities for hundreds of potential early learning professionals. **Michigan's approach, combining cross-sector partnerships, employer incentives, and innovative funding models, reflects a strategic commitment to creating sustainable, equitable opportunities for early educators.**

The strong cross-sector support for ECE registered apprenticeships in Michigan is demonstrated by the collaboration of key state agencies, workforce organizations, and ECIC's Child Care Innovation Fund. These partners are committed to expanding ECE registered apprenticeship opportunities, creating sustainable workforce solutions, and enhancing job support and compensation across multiple sectors. By pooling their expertise and resources, they ensure a unified approach to workforce development that benefits both child care employers and apprentices. **This collective commitment and buy-in from diverse interest holders is crucial for driving efforts towards a stronger early childhood system in Michigan.**

- **The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP)** focuses on building a qualified, stable workforce by funding the design and scale-up of early care and education registered apprenticeship through MI's *Caring for MI Future* Initiative. Additionally, MiLEAP led the effort to build and strengthen ECE career pathways through updating and aligning the ECE Career Pathway through MiRegistry to align and recognize the ECE RAP credential.
- **The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity Office of Employment and Training – Workforce Development (LEO-WD)** has contributed to ECE apprenticeship expansion through the support of sector partnerships, the establishment of an inaugural Apprenticeship Learning Network event focused on ECE RAPs, and the investment of State Apprenticeship Expansion dollars to support sustaining and expanding ECE RAPs.
- **The Michigan Works! Association** partners with LEO-WD to enhance Michigan's workforce through a network of 16 independent agencies. Michigan Works! Agencies serve as a key sponsoring agency for ECE RAPs across Michigan. They serve as the experts on register apprenticeship and their collaboration with child care employer partners and community-based early childhood organizations is essential for achieving equitable and sustainable workforce development financing.
- **ECIC's Child Care Innovation Fund (Innovation Fund)** has collaborated with national, state, regional, and community partners to secure funding to ECE RAPs in Michigan. The Fund serves as the lead for direct funding, providing technical assistance and facilitating a peer learning community to support the design, pilot and scale of 15 ECE RAPs across Michigan.
- **The Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children (MiAEOYC)** supports a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession through advocacy and professional development. They serve as the experts in providing resources to child care employers to support their early care and education workforce. They co-developed the state-wide ECE RAP marketing materials.

Meet the Sponsoring Agencies

The early care and education registered apprenticeship project through ECIC provided start-up and scale-up funding to support communities in launching, replicating, or sustaining early care and education registered apprenticeship models to address child care workforce challenges. Basic information about each sponsoring agency is included below. For more detailed information, see [Appendix A](#).

Scale-Up Grantees

UPPER PENINSULA MICHIGAN WORKS!

Child care employers: **3**
Apprentices: **4**

NORTHWEST MICHIGAN WORKS!

Child care employers: **3**
Apprentices: **14**

GST MICHIGAN WORKS!

Child care employers: **7**
Apprentices: **18**

CHILD CARE NETWORK

Child care employers: **9**
Apprentices: **32**

MICHIGAN WORKS! REGION 7B

Child care employers: **14**
Apprentices: **1**

GREAT START TO QUALITY SW RESOURCE CENTER

Child care employers: **39**
Apprentices: **93**

STEEPLETOWN NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

Child care employers: **20**
Apprentices: **50**

Design Grantees

● FOCUS: HOPE

Counties: Wayne

● CAPITAL AREA MICHIGAN WORKS!

Counties: Clinton, Eaton, Ingham

● GREAT LAKES BAY MICHIGAN WORKS!

Counties: Bay, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw

● MACOMB/ST. CLAIR MICHIGAN WORKS!

Counties: Macomb, St. Clair

● MICHIGAN WORKS! WEST CENTRAL

Counties: Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola

● OAKLAND COUNTY MICHIGAN WORKS!

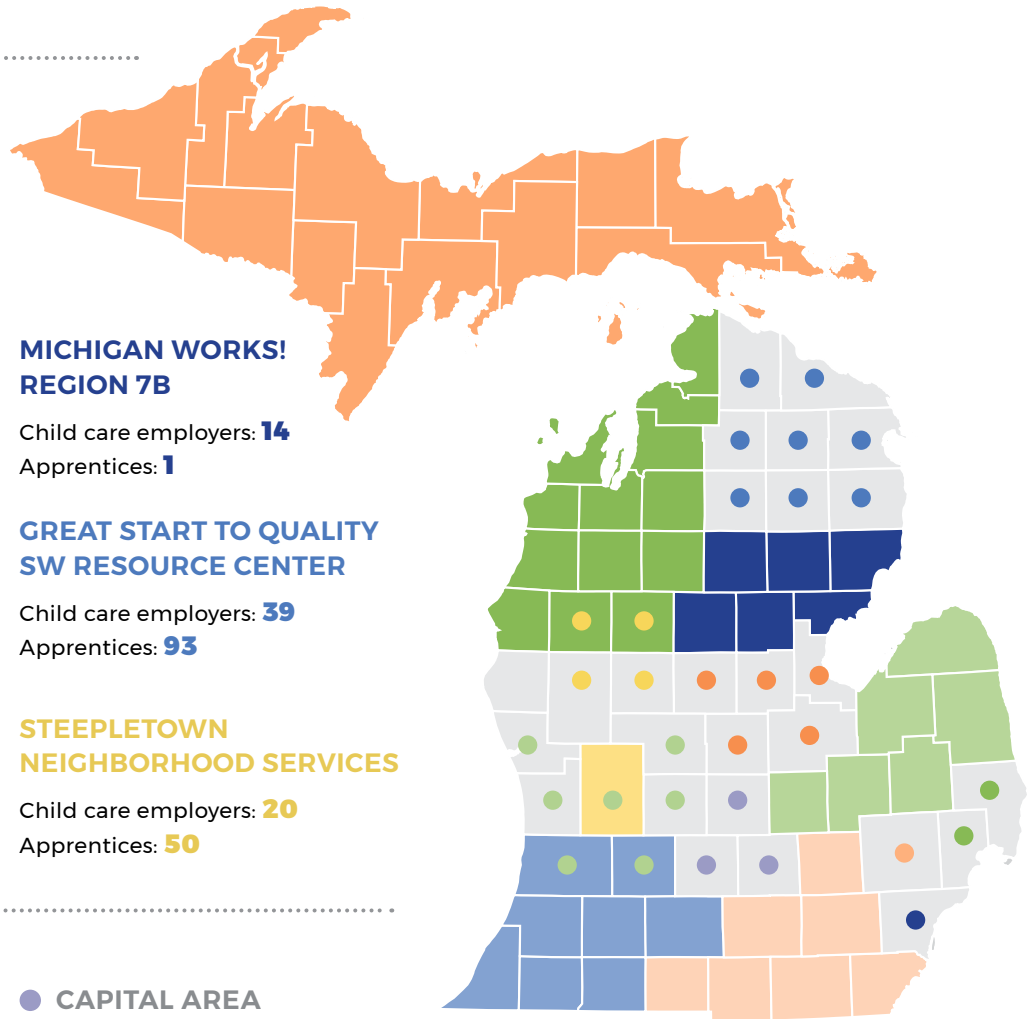
Counties: Oakland

● MICHIGAN WORKS! NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM

Counties: Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Ostego, Presque Isle

● WEST MICHIGAN WORKS!

Counties: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Ottawa



Priority Areas: Key Achievements and Opportunities



Priority Area 1: Fostering Child Care Employer Partnerships and Engagement

Successful registered apprenticeship programs depend on strong collaboration among a variety of partners, including partnerships between sponsoring agencies and child care employers. These partnerships are often initiated through outreach and marketing efforts led by sponsoring agencies to connect with child care employers. Once established, these relationships require ongoing support and resources to help child care employers take full advantage of what registered apprenticeship can offer them, including a reduction in the administrative burden and cost typically associated with credentialing early educators.

With strong marketing and sustained relationships with child care employers, sponsoring agencies can inspire other child care employers to seek out joining an ECE RAP, leading to organic expansion of the network of participating employers, which reflects the strength of a well-supported system.

Several states and organizations have demonstrated success in fostering strong child care employer partnerships. In Missouri, for example, the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment covers half of each apprentice's pay during the two-year program and pays for credentialing exam fees, significantly reducing the financial burden on child care employers.⁸ Additionally, to incentivize businesses to sponsor apprentices, some states have established tax breaks for companies offering registered apprenticeships.⁹ These initiatives have led to increased demand among child care employers, showing that when employers are well-supported and understand the benefits, they are more likely to participate in ECE RAPs.¹⁰

“

“Successful apprenticeships are born from collaboration among partners.”

– U.S. Department of Labor



Key Achievements

Cross-Sector Engagement and Financing: In Michigan, **sponsoring agencies and intermediaries are driving significant innovation by engaging and investing for the first time with the early care and education sector.** These partnerships between child care employers and the public workforce sector have led to 95 child care employers actively participating in an ECE RAP across MI.

“We are forming collaborations between education providers, business, and then ourselves as the intermediary with the U.S. Department of Labor. So we do bring together different subgroups that aren’t necessarily part of the original task force, but still have a need and still have a willingness to collaborate.”

— Sponsoring Agency

Targeted Outreach Strategies. Key to ECE RAP implementation to date have been targeted outreach strategies to child care employers, including **direct, one-on-one interactions that go beyond general marketing efforts.** These personalized approaches allow child care employers to fully understand the requirements and benefits of participating in an ECE RAP, leading to increased demand.

“With all of the things that a director has to do, it’s really nice working with a sponsoring agency because I can just say, ‘Hey, I have this person interested,’ and they do everything.... it’s helped us attract and retain teachers without having all of the additional tasks and work that it would take to truly support the candidates well.”

— ECE Employer

Peer Learning Community. ECIC has created a Peer Learning Community for all ECE RAP sponsoring agencies. This group meets regularly to identify and solve the challenges inherent in bringing the registered apprenticeship model to a new industry. These meetings provide additional opportunities for sponsoring agencies to hear from experts in the ECE field such as Bank Street College of Education, and learn about lessons learned from ECE RAPs in other states. The peer-to-peer nature of the Learning Community also fosters collaboration across apprenticeship partnerships to learn about resources that may be available to all. The enduring benefit of the Peer Learning Communities is in guiding sponsoring agencies to innovate their approaches in response to the needs of child care employers.

Marketing Campaign. Looking forward, a coordinated statewide marketing campaign will roll out in Fall 2024, developed by ECIC, Michigan AEYC, and MiLEAP. These materials will help early educators and child care employers understand the value of ECE RAPs and further scale participation. Additionally, ECIC-CCIF is drafting a Child Care Employer Engagement Toolkit to support meaningful interactions with child care employers, addressing challenges that have surfaced.

Challenges and Opportunities

While many successes have been achieved, some common challenges in collaborating with child care employers reflect the natural complexities of onboarding new employees into any organization or program. Some child care employers expressed concerns about managing the additional time and effort involved in supporting new, inexperienced employees, which is a typical hurdle in workforce development. As expected with any new initiative, child care employers raised uncertainties around administrative processes, such as paperwork for licensing or scholarship applications. These concerns are part of the normal learning curve when navigating new systems, and sponsoring agencies have been proactive in clarifying the necessary steps and supports in place to help child care employers.

Some child care employers were initially reluctant to engage in the apprenticeship program, fearing it would require too much additional work. While some of this apprehension stemmed from growing pains—like rapid expansion and internal staffing issues within sponsoring agencies—proactive measures are helping to overcome them.

Develop stronger relationships between child care employers and ECE RAP partners. Sponsoring agencies consistently identify establishing relationships as a foundational element of building and sustaining child care employer engagement. Some sponsoring agencies have established an ongoing communication system—checking in with child care employers periodically to troubleshoot and ensure that the “program is working and functioning as they had anticipated” or that “on-site support services align with apprenticeship standards.” For child care employers located in remote rural areas, agency staff travel directly to them to ensure they have regular opportunities to address any challenges they may be encountering.

“*Having that human component and really human-centered barrier removal is absolutely the top of the heap customer service that you can possibly get. We are not transferring our apprentices or our employers to another team or another person. We manage every aspect of the apprenticeship program.*”

— Sponsoring Agency

The challenge to implementing these promising strategies more broadly is the availability of time and resources. Both sponsoring agencies and child care employers face staffing shortages that hinder promising relationship-building strategies.

Administrative Support. Child Care employers report that due to tight budgets, thin margins, and chronic understaffing, they have had limited capacity to pursue new partnerships or navigate a new approach to credentialing their early educators.

Additionally, the initial process to establish a brand new ECE RAP with the U.S. DOL takes time. While child care employers are in dire need of early educators, some are concerned that even with all the support offered by ECE RAPs, new apprentices will require more time and support from mentor teachers and directors, adding pressure to already overextended staff.

To address these issues, sponsoring agencies need to continue to reduce the administrative burden on child care employers and foster long-term partnerships. Building strong communication channels and providing ongoing support can alleviate these real and perceived administrative challenges.

Staff turnover at sponsoring agencies and child care employers. Staff turnover at sponsoring agencies and child care employers further disrupts relationship-building, making it difficult to maintain momentum and ensure the seamless implementation of these programs.



Recommendation 1: Build and enhance relationships with child care employers.

- **Leverage the capacity of sponsoring agencies to foster relationships with child care employers through effective outreach, consistent communication, and personalized assistance to sustain engagement.** By strengthening outreach, marketing efforts, and clear communication around the benefits of participating in ECE RAPs, sponsoring agencies can facilitate strong, lasting partnerships with child care employers and simplify their participation.
- **Develop a statewide ECE RAP readiness toolkit of orientation materials for child care employers.** As a novel approach to building a stronger ECE workforce, child care employers are taking on additional short-term work when they partner with a sponsoring agency to launch an ECE RAP that will address their ECE workforce development needs. Developing orientation materials for these employers and providing direct administrative support during the early stages of adopting an ECE RAP may alleviate some of these burdens. In partnership with state-level leaders, ECE RAPs could mobilize pre-apprenticeship support, such as an employer toolkit, or other customizable resources that can ensure that child care employers are well-prepared to onboard and support apprentices, provide high-quality mentorship, and navigate administrative requirements in ways that maximize benefits to both the employer and the apprentice.
- **Develop a standardized evaluation framework that consistently collects key data points across all ECE RAPs to demonstrate their value to child care employers.** A standardized evaluation framework will allow for consistent data collection across all ECE RAPs so that they are able to demonstrate their impact and value to child care employers while systematizing the data gathering and reporting process. Child care employers need to understand the tangible benefits of apprenticeships, such as free or low-cost workforce development, reduced turnover, and financial incentives for them as employers. Aggregating data on key metrics like apprentice retention rates, workforce stability, and financial incentives, will make it easier to communicate success stories and provide measurable outcomes to potential and current employer partners and other important interest holder groups.





Priority Area 2: Strengthening ECE Registered Apprenticeship Programs through Enhanced Apprentice Support Strategies

Apprentice support strategies are essential for the success of ECE RAPs, as they can address the full spectrum of apprentices' needs to successfully complete their ECE RAP. These support strategies include academic assistance and practical wraparound supports like child care, transportation, and flexible scheduling, which enable apprentices to work, complete their training and meet their personal and family responsibilities.

As early care and education is a “low barrier to entry” profession, apprentices often come from diverse backgrounds with varying levels of experience and education. To meet the diverse needs of all apprentices and ensure their success, ECE RAPs must tailor their support to reach those furthest from access to resources. For example, offering targeted tutoring for apprentices who may need help with foundational literacy or early childhood education concepts can bridge the gap for those lacking prior academic experience. Building strong relationships with mentor teachers, peers, and the families they work with, is essential to helping apprentices feel connected, supported, and confident in their roles. Health and wellness support, such as access to counseling or stress management workshops, can provide the emotional and mental health resources that are crucial for apprentices working in demanding environments. By implementing comprehensive apprentice supportive approaches, ECE RAPs can significantly boost retention and completion rates.



“So a lot of our parents are coming from a situation of transition where they need housing and they need child care and they need all the basics. So part of our program offers them that stabilization before they even get into the career pathway. Our program offers the incubator for community members who are in the Catch 22, ‘I need a job to get child care and I need child care to get a job.’ ”

– Early Childhood Employer

Key Achievements

ECE Apprenticeship Partnerships.

A key strength of Michigan's ECE RAPs is the collaboration each ECE RAP has with child care employers, state, regional, and community-based organizations to provide comprehensive services. Each sponsoring agency has established an apprenticeship partnership to ensure a well-rounded support system for ECE apprentices in their area.

Apprenticeship partnerships offer comprehensive services that apprentices and their child care employers may not typically associate with the early childhood sector, such as housing stipends through the GI Bill for veterans and their dependents.

For example, in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the sponsoring agency has successfully leveraged community partnerships to provide comprehensive support for ECE registered apprentices. These partnerships maximize the use of public workforce, adult education, and early childhood resources, creating a more integrated support system for apprentices. Kalamazoo has also emphasized the importance of engaging underserved populations, noting, *"Our program is designed, tailored to make sure that it is attracting a diverse group of participants, including those from underrepresented communities."* By pooling resources across sectors, these partnerships ensure that diverse apprentices—including those from underrepresented communities—receive the guidance and support they need to thrive in their programs and long-term careers. Similarly, the Kalamazoo Literacy Council has demonstrated the impact of wraparound services through its Edison ECE Career Pathway, the nation's first ECE Talent Pipeline Management model.

These partnerships illustrate how wraparound services are not just an add-on, but an essential component for attracting and retaining a diverse group of apprentices, especially from underserved communities.

Wraparound Services. Sponsoring agencies in Michigan recognize the need for and deliver wraparound services for ECE apprentices. Michigan Works! Agencies serving as sponsors carry out intake processes to identify which U.S. Department of Labor supports, such as Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding, apprentices are eligible for. This approach ensures that apprentices have equitable access to resources to address challenges which could otherwise hinder their success.



Mentor Teachers. Mentor teachers play a critical role in a successful ECE RAP, offering apprentices hands-on guidance and helping them apply their academic coursework in the ECE program. Mentor teacher-apprentice relationships are supported by ECIC's peer-to-peer learning community. ECIC partnered with the Bank Street College of Education, which provided training and consultation regarding effective mentor teacher practices to ECE RAP lead organizations. By prioritizing the development of mentor teachers and apprentice relationships, apprentices not only gain technical skills but also build meaningful connections with their mentors.

These key achievements illustrate the importance of a collaborative, community-based approach to building sustainable ECE career pathways, providing apprentices with the comprehensive support they need to succeed.

Challenges and Opportunities

While Michigan has made significant strides in implementing apprentice support strategies, opportunities to further strengthen the impact of these strategies remain.

Resources and infrastructure to support apprentices consistently and equitably across MI.

One of Michigan's greatest strengths lies in its deep community relationships and localized leadership. Apprenticeship partnerships have been an effective and equitable means of delivering comprehensive services to apprentices. By building on this foundation, MI can develop and disseminate best practices that ensure every ECE apprentice across the state has access to the same high-quality support.

Best practices include addressing the needs of dual language learners and people of color in ECE RAPs. Potential and current early educators who are dual language learners and people of color often face additional challenges related to language barriers, cultural differences, and systemic inequities. Ensuring that these groups are fully supported within ECE RAPs is essential for creating a diverse, culturally competent workforce. As an example, the ECE RAP at Steepletown Neighborhood Services has implemented a Pre-Apprenticeship program for dual language learners, launching its first cohort with 21 Spanish-speaking participants.

Resources for child care employers to maintain qualified mentor teachers on staff and provide financial support for their enhanced role in the ECE program. Mentor teachers are one of the greatest assets of ECE RAPs, offering apprentices the invaluable benefit of working closely with an experienced ECE teacher. High-quality early learning experiences are foundational to young children's development, and mentorship helps ensure that apprentices are equipped to provide the level of education and care that young children deserve.

It is important to recognize that serving as a mentor teacher also places additional demands on early educators, who are often already stretched thin. Unfortunately, mentor teachers often supervise, train, and co-teach with apprentices without additional compensation or credentials to recognize the added responsibility. To address these challenges and strengthen the impact of mentorship, there is growing interest in establishing a *mentor teacher credential* in Michigan. This credential would formally recognize the important work mentor teachers do and could provide a structured pathway for career advancement without requiring experienced teachers to move into administrative roles. By investing in the professional development and compensation of mentor teachers, Michigan can not only support the quality of instruction apprentices receive but also retain highly experienced qualified educators in the classroom. Moreover, providing management and coaching support to mentor teachers and supervisors could enhance the quality of on-the-job training apprentices receive.

Creating and refining processes to prepare Apprentices for the ECE RAP. Another important component of workforce development is ensuring that apprentices clearly understand ECE RAP requirements before enrollment. Insights gathered through engagement with apprentices and child care employers revealed that some apprentices will benefit from additional preparation before entering an ECE RAP. In response, several child care employers and agencies have implemented apprenticeship readiness and pre-apprenticeship training programs to provide potential apprentices with the foundational knowledge and skills necessary for success. For example, the Edison Early Childhood Career Pathway includes a 90-day orientation period, offering apprentices a preparatory phase to better equip them for the program and ensure a smoother transition. These initiatives help reduce barriers for those new to the field and promote better outcomes for apprentices and employers alike.

“We already have a crisis in child care programs. People are hiring people that don’t have experience and they’re coming into the classrooms. And a lot of times they don’t really know what to do because they don’t have that foundational knowledge. And we know that child care programs and directors are really overwhelmed with trying to keep up with turnover of their staff, that it’s oftentimes difficult for them to give them all of the foundational knowledge and training that they need to be successful in that classroom.”

– Sponsoring Agency



Recommendation 2: Enhance wraparound services, learning supports, and mentor teacher recognition to address the diverse needs of apprentices across Michiganers.

- **Strengthen the mentor teacher component of ECE RAPs through statewide training, incentives, and credentialing to ensure consistency and quality of support.** Mentorship is a cornerstone of successful apprenticeship programs, but inconsistent training, lack of financial recognition, and unclear expectations for mentors can hinder the quality of support apprentices receive. Developing a statewide mentor teacher credential, implementing a formal mentor training program or peer-to-peer learning model, and offering compensation incentives such as stipends or bonuses can ensure that mentors are equipped with the necessary skills and are fairly compensated for their additional responsibilities. This approach would align expectations, improve mentor engagement, and enhance the overall quality of support apprentices receive.
- **Understand and equitably meet the evolving needs of apprentices.** Gathering regular feedback from apprentices is essential to gaining insights into their experiences and ensuring they receive the comprehensive support necessary for their success. Establishing clear and robust communication channels empowers sponsoring agencies and their partners to remain proactive, identifying and addressing potential barriers before they hinder apprentices' progress. This ongoing dialogue not only helps resolve immediate challenges, it also informs the strategic allocation of resources, enhances effective practices, and eliminates inefficiencies. Initiatives such as quarterly apprentice satisfaction surveys, regular check-ins, and feedback mechanisms will ensure that apprentices have a direct voice in shaping the support they need, fostering a responsive and dynamic apprenticeship environment.
- **Address the needs of dual language learners (DLLs) and people of color in early care and education registered apprenticeship programs.** To build an inclusive and representative early childhood workforce, it is critical to provide targeted support for those who face additional challenges related to language barriers, cultural differences, and systemic inequities. Ensuring all apprentices are equitably supported within their ECE RAPs is essential for creating a diverse, culturally competent workforce. Michigan could expand programs like the Steepletown Neighborhood Services' pre-apprenticeship program for dual language learners by offering bilingual mentoring, interpretation services, and culturally responsive training modules across all ECE RAPs. Additionally, embedding culturally responsive mentor teaching into apprenticeship programs would help ensure that people of color and DLLs receive support tailored to their unique backgrounds, empowering them to thrive in early childhood education careers.
- **Offer potential apprentices an orientation and readiness experience to clarify ECE RAP expectations and support apprentices in developing foundational skills.** Apprentices may enter an ECE RAP without a clear understanding of its requirements or the foundational skills needed for success. An orientation and readiness experience can help bridge this gap, ensuring that potential apprentices can make an informed choice as to whether apprenticeship is the right career pathway for them. This might mean offering virtual workshops on program expectations, time management, and foundational technical skills and creating a shared framework for all RAPs for an introductory 90-day onboarding process for apprentices.



Priority Area 3: Addressing Systemic Barriers to Workforce Development in the Early Care and Education Sector

“Something that we’ve done with this grant is to develop a more consistent model for apprenticeship readiness or pre-apprenticeship and trying to develop a pipeline... [for a] subset of individuals and incentivize them to explore careers further as well as making sure that they’re prepared to enter either an apprenticeship or another type of educational track to be an early childhood professional.”

—Sponsoring Agency

The early care and education sector faces systemic barriers that hinder effective ECE workforce development. One of the most critical challenges is the issue of compensation, which affects recruitment, retention, and the long-term viability of career pathways in the sector. In 2024, the average hourly wage for early educators in Michigan was just \$11.13.¹¹ This means that 98% of all other jobs pay higher wages than early care and education.¹² This inadequate compensation makes it challenging for ECE RAPs to tap into state and federal grants meant for workforce development, as the financial incentives simply aren’t enough to attract and retain talented professionals. Addressing these broader workforce challenges, especially more equitable compensation, is crucial to ensuring ECE RAPs become viable long-term solutions for workforce development.

Key Achievements

ECE RAPs exist as a strong strategy within larger systems of support and advancement within the ECE workforce, as they seek to address the widespread and complex challenges that face the ECE profession. Thanks to key organizations like ECIC and MiLEAP, the upward mobility of the ECE workforce in Michigan is a top priority within the state early childhood system.

Integration of the early care and education registered apprenticeship certificate within the [MiRegistry Career Pathway](#). This update underscores the importance of stackable and portable credentials, making it easier for apprentices to advance their careers and reinforcing apprenticeships as a vital pathway for professional development. MiRegistry now provides early educators with a clear, structured path for career advancement, linking their education and training to recognized career pathway levels based on verified credentials. Michigan’s Career Pathway empowers apprentices to envision their future roles in the field and understand the concrete steps required to achieve them.

“As part of upfront training, we have access to vouchers to get apprentices fingerprinted first, CPR training, mandated reporter training, the health and safety training modules that are on MiRegistry. We get individuals through all those training components, so people can really discern, is this a good fit for me? Is this really what I want to do? That's been a very valuable piece.”

—Sponsoring Agency

Flexibility of the ECE apprenticeship pathway. As part of the ECE RAP, some apprentices earn their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, which can enhance their opportunities for upward mobility. However, the apprenticeship pathway is flexible, allowing for variation depending on local institutions of higher education and the specific needs of communities across Michigan. In some regions, apprenticeships may align with an Associate's degree program or other advanced certifications, reflecting a community-centered approach that addresses local workforce demands. This responsive, adaptable system strengthens Michigan's ability to meet local workforce needs while still building toward broader systemic goals.

ECE wage scale pilot. Michigan's commitment to advancing the ECE workforce is further demonstrated by the [Balancing the Scales Report](#), developed by ECIC in partnership with TalentFirst in October 2023. This report introduced Michigan's first wage scale for ECE professionals, which is now being implemented through a nine-month pilot program in two child care centers—one in rural Michigan and one in Detroit. The pilot aims to close the wage gap between what early educators should be paid based on their credentials and experience and what child care centers can afford to pay. By providing funding to bridge this gap, the pilot is expected to have a significant impact on early educator recruitment and retention, demonstrating the value of fair compensation for a sustainable ECE workforce.

Philanthropic and private sector partnerships. Michigan's strong partnerships with philanthropy and private sector funders present a valuable opportunity to address systemic barriers and further enhance ECE workforce development. These collaborations, coupled with significant state-level funding commitments, demonstrate Michigan's dedication to addressing systemic barriers and building a skilled workforce.

Michigan's evident commitment to workforce development is reflected in its ongoing efforts to support compensation-first strategies and tackle regional workforce needs. By continuing to leverage these partnerships and resources, Michigan can build a more equitable and robust infrastructure to support the long-term development and retention of a highly qualified workforce.

Challenges and Opportunities

Addressing the systemic challenges that impact the recruitment, retention, and ongoing professional development of early care and education apprentices requires a concerted effort across several key areas.

Early care and education is not recognized as a crucial driver of economic development. This lack of recognition leads to inadequate funding for ECE workforce compensation and training, perpetuating the cycle of underinvestment in early educators. Child care employers are often forced to charge families what they believe is affordable rather than the true cost of fairly compensating their staff. This creates financial constraints that limit the ability of employers to offer competitive wages, bonuses, or professional development opportunities, further hampering efforts to recruit and retain skilled workers in the field.

Regional variation in ECE RAP operations. As Michigan's ECE RAP system expands, it continues to prioritize the needs of apprentices by refining processes and ensuring that every region is equipped to provide comprehensive support. While innovation naturally takes time to scale, partners at all levels—state, regional, and community—are committed to building capacity in a way that directly benefits early childhood apprentices across the state. A strong foundation for Michigan's ECE RAPs is already in place, and ongoing efforts focus on gathering feedback from early childhood apprentices to further enhance the quality and consistency of support across the state.

Compensation for early educators is low. Although at least one wage increase is built into all registered apprenticeship programs, compensation remains a critical issue for the ECE sector. The overall pay scale for early educators is still significantly lower than what individuals can earn in other sectors, such as fast food or retail. This disparity presents a major challenge in positioning ECE apprenticeships as a pathway to financial stability, even though it offers clear benefits for professional growth. The lack of competitive wages not only hinders recruitment and retention within apprenticeship programs but also reflects a broader issue affecting the entire early childhood sector. Until compensation disparities are addressed, both apprenticeships and the ECE workforce will continue to face high turnover, instability, and difficulty attracting and retaining skilled professionals.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities to build on Michigan's existing strengths. By leveraging what is working well and advocating for compensation-first strategies, Michigan is poised to address the broader issue of wage disparities, making the field more attractive and sustainable for early educators.

Recommendation 3: Continue to sustain, embed, and expand ECE RAPs as a key ECE workforce development strategy

- **Increase compensation for early educators by advocating for compensation-first strategies to retain skilled educators and increasing the sustainability of the ECE sector.** Competitive compensation is critical for addressing the high turnover rates and attracting more individuals to early education careers. The Balancing the Scales pilot program could be expanded statewide and allocate additional funding to support wage increases based on the wage scale developed in the report.
- **Build on existing efforts to increase the coordination, alignment, and capacity of Michigan's early care and education workforce investments.** Early care and education workforce investments are an essential support for child care employers and early educators. Child care employers need information about the financial and human resources available to support the skill development and credentialing of their staff. Current and potential early educators need support to navigate their ECE career pathways and realize their professional goals at no or low cost to them.
- **Leverage existing partnerships, funding opportunities, and advocacy capacity to elevate ECE RAPs as a comprehensive workforce support system.** Collaborations with public and private sector partners, combined with the \$30 million allocation of Michigan School Aid funding to address ECE workforce issues, offer an unprecedented opportunity to create a more equitable, robust infrastructure that supports the long-term development and retention of a highly qualified early care and education workforce.



What's Next





ECIC has secured a grant through the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration Community Project to help sustain and expand the work of seven ECE RAPs to ultimately include 15 ECE RAPs across Michigan and ensure that child care employers in every county in Michigan have access to an ECE RAP. This additional funding, coupled with Michigan's strong culture of collaboration and partnerships, has laid a foundation for overcoming systemic challenges. Such efforts illustrate the state's commitment to improving compensation and working conditions in the ECE sector.

Michigan is focusing on scaling ECE RAPs as a strategy to support current and future early educators in becoming highly skilled with two nationally recognized credentials. By implementing an "earn while you learn" approach, ECE RAPs can provide early educators with opportunities for career advancement while building a more qualified ECE workforce. This approach can lead to improved teaching quality, better learning outcomes for young children, and meaningful career growth for early educators.

As Michigan works to help more early educators attain two- and four-year degrees, registered apprenticeships can play a vital role in overcoming barriers to higher education. Success in ECE RAPs depends on strong community partnerships and requires child care employers committed to investing in their staff. Given the low income nature of the ECE workforce, apprenticeship programs are particularly valuable because they provide an opportunity for early educators to develop highly specialized skills while benefiting from a mentor-mentee relationship with a seasoned teacher at little to no personal cost. This model not only fosters professional growth but also offers accessible, hands-on learning, which is essential for building a strong, capable workforce.

Appendix A

Early Care and Education Sponsoring Agencies: Scale-up Grantees

Upper Peninsula Michigan Works!

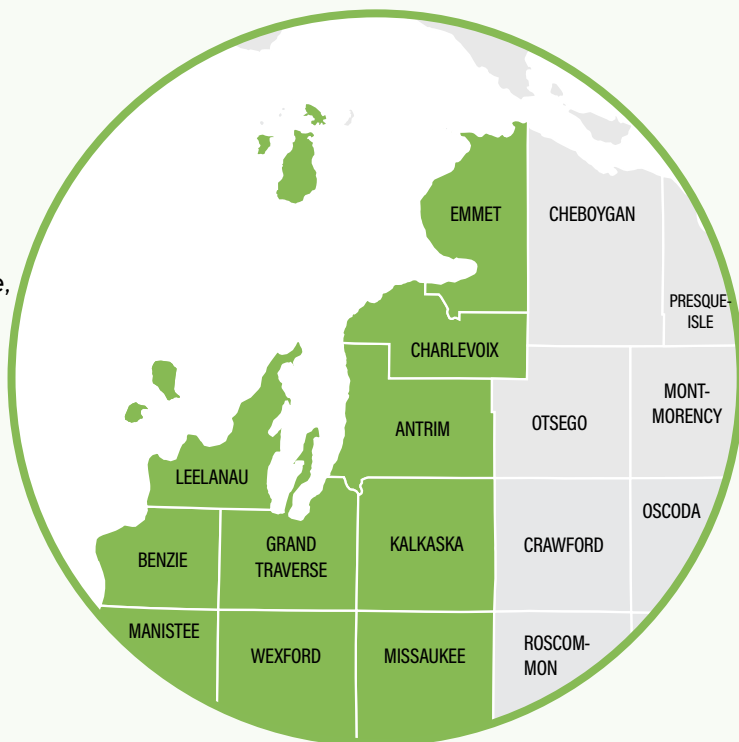
- **Counties:** Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon, Schoolcraft
- **Partners:** BHK Child Development Board, Grove-R Daycare and Preschool, Sault Cooperative Preschool, Bay Mills Community College, Great Start to Quality Upper Peninsula Resource Center, Marquette-Alger RESA, Early Childhood Education Task Force of the U.P., Delta-Schoolcraft ISD, Country Schoolhouse, Eastern Upper Peninsula ISD, ECIC
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance:**
 - Active since: **2021**
 - Child care employers: **3**
 - Apprentices: **4**
 - RAP occupation: Early Childhood Educator
 - Credentials and certificates: USDOL Journeyworker Card in Early Childhood Educator occupation, Child Development Associate (CDA), connection to continuing education in ECE. Apprenticeship Readiness certificate, Workplace Excellence certificate.
- **The Upper Peninsula Michigan Works! Story:** The U.P. Michigan Works! (UPMW) first RAP as an intermediary was in Early Childhood Education. The agency was one of the first in the state to focus on youth-registered apprenticeship opportunities. Currently, two of the four ECE apprentices are Youth apprentices, having started their program while still in high school. UPMW will continue to commit itself to the expansion of RAPs in the U.P. to meet the demands of child care employers and offer no- and low-cost options for postsecondary credentials to help meet the 60-by-30 goals in Michigan.



“We are most proud of... adapting as an organization to continue expanding RAPs in the U.P., and integrate the services into key roles. UPMW has found ways to braid and leverage significant resources to assist the sustainability efforts of apprenticeship expansion.”

Networks Northwest

- **Counties:** Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Wexford
- **Partners:** Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency (NMCAA), Whistle Stop Childcare, Benzie and Frankfort Schools Early Childhood Education, Manistee County Community Foundation, North Central Michigan College, United Way of Northwest Michigan, Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce, Northwest Education Services, Northwestern Michigan College, Wexford-Missaukee ISD, and West Shore Community College
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - Active since: **2022**
 - Child care employers: **3**
 - Apprentices: **14**
 - RAP occupation: Early Childcare Educator and Child Care Development Specialist
 - Credentials and Certificates: Child Development Associate (CDA), National Registered Apprenticeship Credential, and college credits
- **The Networks Northwest Story:** Networks Northwest has the largest intermediary program in the State of Michigan, which includes 88 occupations, over 200 apprentices, and 70 child care employers. The ECE RAP was the first early care and education apprenticeship initiative in the area to offer customized training to help fill a critical workforce gap. The agency has launched a youth apprenticeship program. Currently 14 apprentices are enrolled in the Early Care and Education Registered Apprenticeship program.

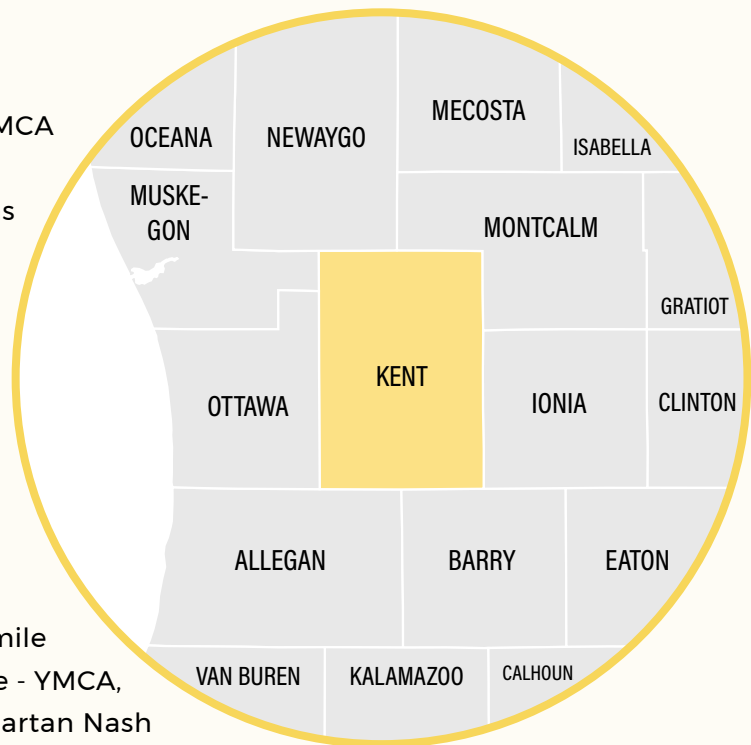


“We are most proud of... enrolling [14] childcare apprentices and providing them essential tangible supports.”



Steepletown Neighborhood Services

- **Counties:** Kent
- **Partners:** Baxter Child Development Center, Childcare at Duncan Lake, David D Hunting - YMCA Child Development Center, Education Beyond the Classroom LLC, First Steps Kent, Generations Child Development Center, Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Grand Rapids Early Discovery Center, Grand Rapids Public Schools, Great Start to Quality-Kent Resource Center, Hands Connected - Refugee Education Center, Jacqueline Baber-Bey Early Childhood Center, K-Connect, Kent County Head Start, La Escuelita-Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, Little Lights - The Other Way Ministries, Little Smile Bilingual Daycare, Monroe Community Childcare - YMCA, SECOM Little Steps, Sparta Adult Education, Spartan Nash YMCA Child Development Center, Steepletown Early Learning Center, United Methodist Community House CDC, Vibrant Futures, West Michigan Works!

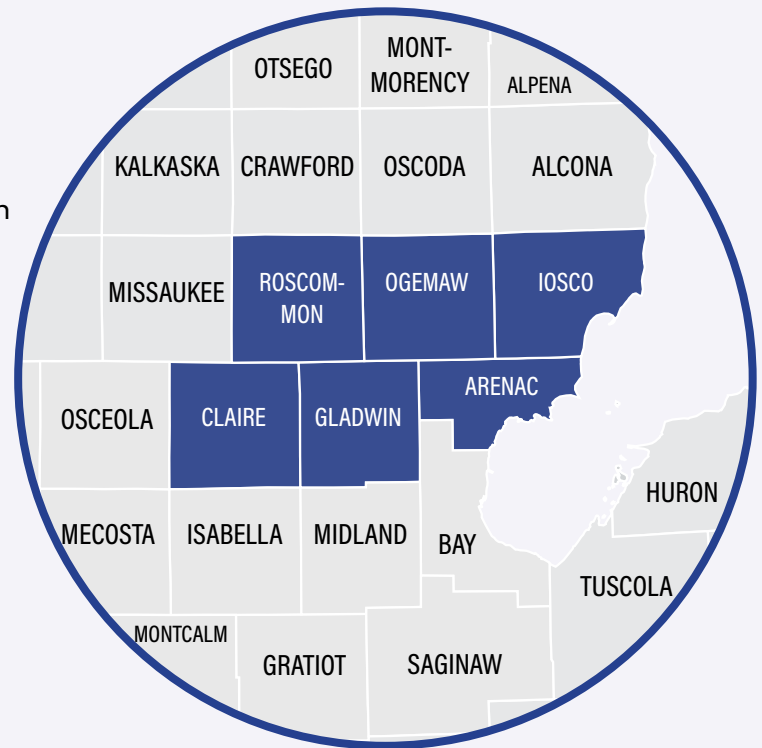


- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - Active since: **2019**
 - Child care employers: **20**
 - Apprentices: **50**
 - RAP occupation: Early Childhood Educator
 - Credentials and certificates: Child Development Associate (CDA) credential through Grand Rapids Community College and Vibrant Futures
- **The Steepletown Story:** Steepletown was approved by the U.S. DOL to be the intermediary of the ECE RAP in July of 2019. Originally there were eight apprentices who comprised the first cohort that began in August of 2019. Steepletown partners with an apprenticeship training program that provides support in various areas including coordinating mentor teachers, facilitation, and pre-apprenticeship training.

“We are most proud of ... Steepletown has been successful in recruiting Spanish-speaking adults who have participated in a pre-apprenticeship training. 13 participants are nearing completion of CDA (Spanish) training, 9 are registered as apprentices and are currently working to complete their On-the-Job Training.”

Michigan Works! Region 7B

- **Counties:** Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Iosco, Ogemaw, Roscommon
- **Partners:** Mid Michigan College, Clare/Gladwin Regional Educational School District, Middle Michigan Development Corporation, Mid Michigan Community Action Agency, Pkl Cares Child Care Center, First Children's Finance, Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency, Oscoda Area Schools, Bay-Arenac ISD, Great Start to Quality, and Development Iosco
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - Active since: **2023**
 - Child care employers: **14**
 - Apprentices: **1**
 - RAP occupation: Child Care Development Specialist
 - Credentials and certificates: AA, Child Care Development Associate (CDA), Registered Apprenticeship Certificate
- **The Michigan Works! Region 7B Story:** Michigan Works! Region 7B is home to many areas designated as child care deserts. The ECE RAP is employer-focused—prioritizing staff retention and training. Ongoing communication and support for child care employers has helped attract and retain these employers. The business services team builds relationships and helps them navigate the process. To support better retention, Michigan Works! 7B has developed an in-house pre-apprentice training that provides basic health and safety training, overview of careers in ECE, workforce readiness training, and reviews apprenticeship requirements. The goal is to place participants directly into child care programs to begin ECE RAP training.

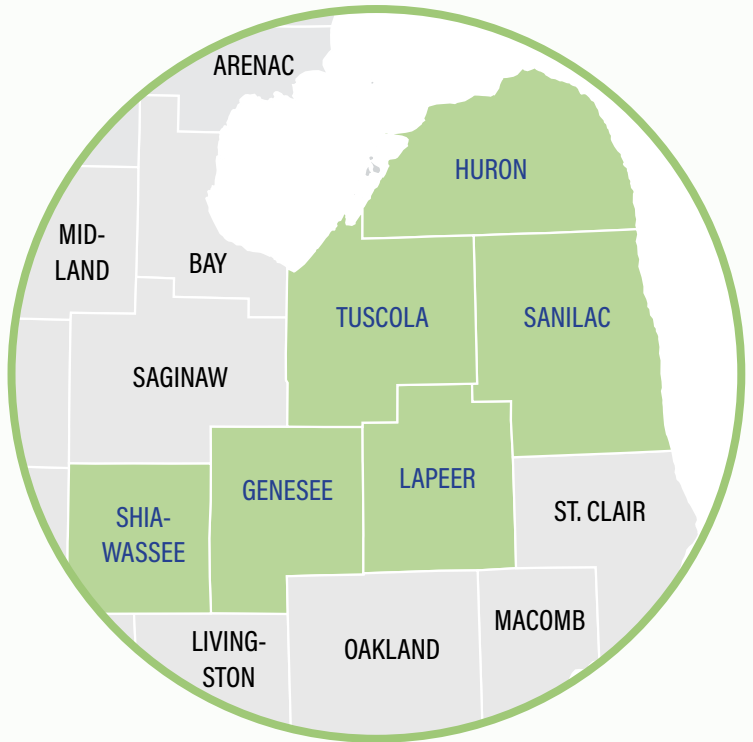


“We are most proud of ... It has taken far too long but we have finally gained some traction with childcare providers and are beginning to assist them.”



GST Michigan Works!

- **Counties:** Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, Shiawassee, Tuscola
- **Partners:** Mott Community College, Texas A&M Agrilife, Quorum By Teaching Strategies, Kiddie Time Daycare, Sunny Patch Learning Center - Clio, Sunny Patch Learning Center - Flint, S & S Family Childcare, Memorial Childcare Academy, Kingdom of Care, Hometown Childcare, Argentine Early Childhood Center, Byron Area Schools, Care Courses
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - Active since: **2024**
 - Child care employers: **7**
 - Apprentices: **18**
 - RAP occupation: Child Development Specialist
 - Credentials and certificates: Child Development Associate (CDA), Associate of Arts (AA), Registered Apprenticeship Certificate
- **The GST Michigan Works! Story:** GST Michigan Works! launched its ECE RAP program in 2024. Apprentices are primarily selected by employers looking for employees focused on a career in ECE. The long-term goal is to leverage the apprenticeship as a first step in an extended career pathway. GST Michigan Works! has invested efforts in outreach and recruitment of child care employers providing a number of supports to facilitate the process and reduce barriers by assuming much of the preliminary application and enrollment activities. These early efforts have resulted in an increase of interest among child care employers wishing to include apprenticeships in their programs.

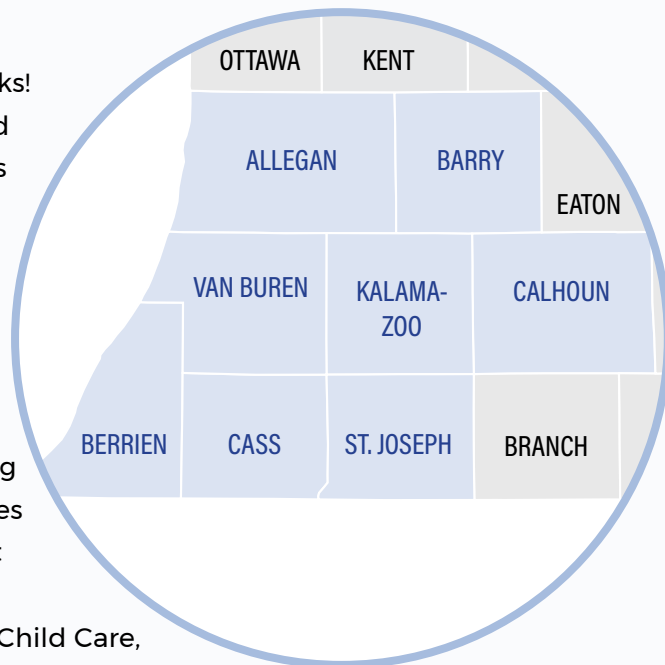


“We are most proud of... being able to help apprentices with funding for the employment barriers they have.”



Southwest Child Care Resource & Referral (SWCCR)

- **Counties:** Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, Van Buren
- **Partners:** Edison ECE Career Pathway, Michigan Works! Southwest, KRESA, Kellogg Community College, and Southwestern Michigan College, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, YDC – Youth Development Company/PAL, Stryker Johnston Foundation, KCReady4s, Busy Bee's Preschool and Childcare, Tri-County Head Start, YWCA, New Genesis Learning Center, Van Buren ISD, A Touch of Home Child Care Too, A Touch of Home Child Care, CDC House, Kalamazoo Country Day, The Discovery Center, Kazoo School, The Learning Village, Comstock Early Learning Academy, Little Tykes Learning Center, Kid's Court, Jennings Development Interplex, Community Learning Center, Battle Creek Christian Early Learning Center, Playschool Learning Child Care, Karin Wallace, Greening Country Daycare, Diana Mobley, Little Hawks Discovery Preschool, Karren's Kiddie Corner



- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**

- Active since: **2018**
- Child care employers: **39**
- Apprentices: **93**
- RAP occupation: Child Care Development Specialist
- Credentials and certificates: Child Development Associate (CDA), Registered Apprenticeship Certificate

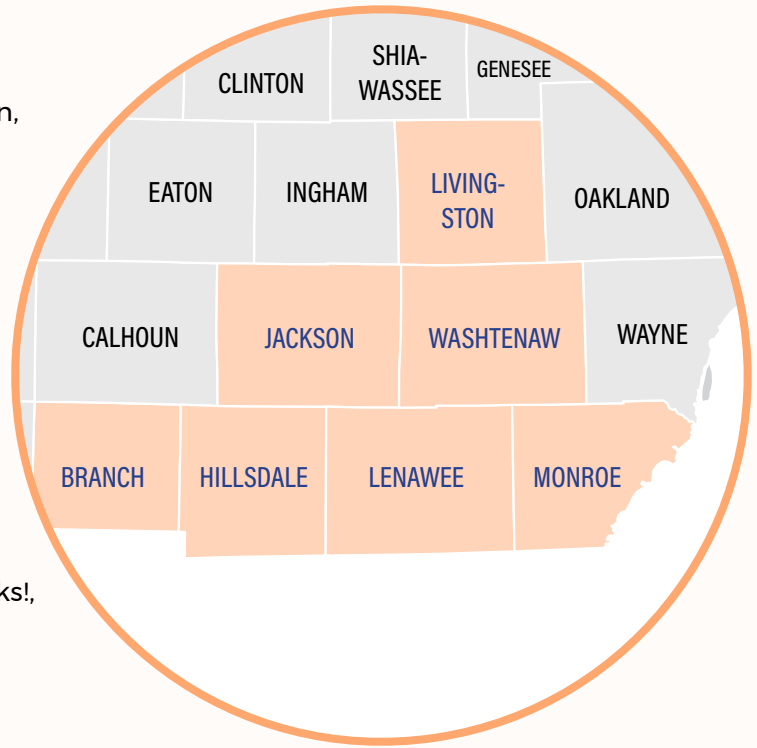
- **The Southwest Child Care Resource and Referral (SWCCR) Story:** SWCCR developed and applied for an apprenticeship for childcare providers in 2017. They were the first to offer an apprenticeship connected to the CDA training. At the completion of the CDA training apprentices are awarded the RAP certificate Through partnerships with two community colleges, apprentices also earn nine credit hours toward an Associate Degree in ECE. As a Resource Center, SWCCR is directly connected to child care employers, which has helped maintain high levels of recruitment of both employers and apprentices. Center staff understand the importance of engaging committed employers and they work closely with them to help them understand the value of apprenticeships as a way to retain and advance existing staff. Offering cohorts of 12-15 apprentices, the center currently maintains a waitlist.



"We are most proud of ... the way we designed our program. How the program is growing and expanding. Being able to offer the program free to our childcare providers."

Child Care Network

- **Counties:** Branch, Genesee, Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, Washtenaw
- **Partners:** Michigan Works! Southeast, ECIC, Washtenaw Community College, Early Childhood Workforce Connector, Hillsdale Economic Development Partnership, Lenawee Now, Monroe County Business Alliance, Apple Playschools, Community Day Care, Gretchen's House, Little People's Playhouse, Montessori Children's House of Lenawee, Morning Star Child Care, Phoenix Early Learning Center, SEMCA Michigan Works!, The U School, World of Wonder
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - Active since: **2023**
 - Child care employers: **9**
 - Apprentices: **32**
 - RAP occupation: Child Care Development Specialist
 - Credentials and certificates: Child Development Associate (CDA), Registered Apprenticeship Certificate
- **The Child Care Network Story:** Child Care Network is a registered training agency with programs across all eight counties served. Apprentices are trained "in house" and receive CDA training as well as additional post-CDA training designed to deepen understanding of child development and best practices in early learning. Other services offered include CPR certification, free consultation around recruitment/retention/policies and procedures in child care programs. Child Care Network supports a highly diverse group of apprentices including 3 Male, 31 Female, 2 did not identify. 4 Hispanic, 30 non-Hispanic, 2 did not identify. 5 Black, 29 White, 1 multi-race. 1 veteran. Ages 16-24= 15, Ages 25-34=11, Age 35+=11. 6 identified with a disability.



"We are most proud of... building an Apprenticeship program that provides a variety of supports and personal relationships to ensure the Apprentice has what they need to stay in the program and be successful in the program."

Early Care and Education Sponsoring Agencies: Design Grantees

Design grantees worked to design and register their ECE RAP with the U.S. DOL in 2024.

Focus: HOPE

- **Counties:** Wayne
- **Partners:** Henry Ford College, Detroit Head Start Providers Network, Visionary Learners, Kristen Rolf LLC, Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - ECE RAP status: Registered with U.S. DOL
 - RAP occupation: Early Childhood Educator
 - Credentials and certificates: Child Development Associate (CDA), ITBA - Customer Service, Registered Apprenticeship Certificate



“We are most proud of... our ability to work with ECIC to ensure those individuals working with Detroit-based childcare providers will have access to a Detroit-based Early Child Care Apprenticeship program”

Oakland County Michigan Works!

- **Counties:** Oakland
- **Partners:** Alliance for Housing, Geniuses on Board, Heartfelt Impressions, Leaps and Bounds Family Services, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), Oakland Community College, Oakland Family Services, Oakland Literacy Council, Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLHSA), Troy Continuing Education, and Workforce Intelligence Network
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - ECE RAP status: Registered with U.S. DOL
 - RAP occupation: Child Care Development Specialist
 - Credentials and certificates: Child Development Associate (CDA), Registered Apprenticeship Certificate



“We are most proud of... Successfully enrolling 17 apprentices in the short window between when the program was approved by the USDOL and when the ECIC grant ended.”

Capital Area Michigan Works!

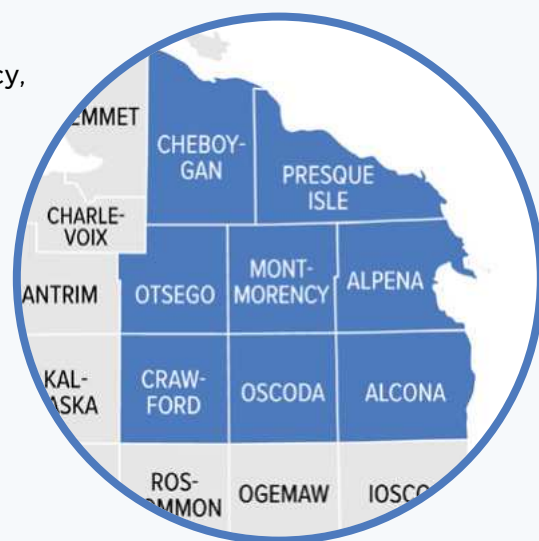
- **Counties:** Clinton, Eaton, Ingham
- **Partners:** Lansing Community College, Lansing Economic Area Partnership, Peoples Church Preschool, Luv4Kidz, K's Precious Learning Center, CAPCAN
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - ECE RAP status: Working with child care employers to register with U.S. DOL



"We are most proud of... the expanded relationships that have been built with regional ECE employers and partners, given that childcare is a barrier that is faced by many in the Capital region and across the state. While the ECE employers that we worked with may not have been ready during the design grant to submit an apprenticeship program to USDOL, we are confident that the relationships that have been built with the CAMW! team and the CAMW! apprenticeship officers will continue to offer opportunities to support apprenticeship work with ECE employers as they are positioned to do so."

Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium

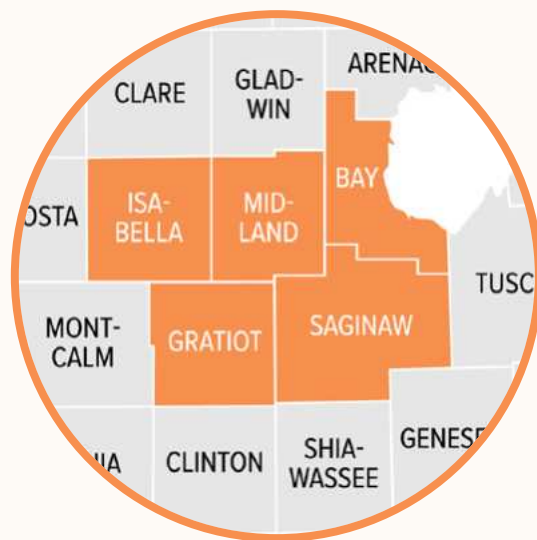
- **Counties:** Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego, and Presque Isle
- **Partners:** Great Start to Quality Resource Center - Northeast, Northeast Michigan Community Services Agency (NEMCSA), Networks Northwest, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG)
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - ECE RAP status: Registered with U.S. DOL
 - RAP Occupation: Child Care Development Specialist
 - Credentials and certificates: CPR, Associate of Arts (AA), Registered Apprenticeship Certificate



"We are most proud of... our first official registered apprenticeship and that we hold the standards! This is a big step for us, and we are excited to start serving apprentices and to see where this will take us, our partners, area employers, and apprentices in the future."

Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works!

- **Counties:** Bay, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw
- **Partners:** Eduplay Discovery Center, MidlandESA, Dow Bay Area YMCA, Children's Discovery Academy, Creative Beginnings, Kindercare Day Care Centers, Heavens Elect: Christian Learning Center, Bay Arenac ISD, Delta College, Mid-Michigan College, Saginaw ISD, Gratiot Isabella RESD, Bay Foundation, Saginaw Future, Middle Michigan Development Center
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - ECE RAP status: Registered with U.S. DOL
 - RAP occupation: Early Childhood Educator
 - Credentials and certificates: Registered Apprenticeship Certificate



"We are most proud of... The proudest accomplishment of the past year of designing the ECE RAP was getting the Early Childhood [Educator] one year RAP submitted and approved by the USDOL. We are also proud of the unity in purpose of the partners on our ECIC team. Finally, we are proud that we had more early childhood employers join the group as we progressed and were great contributors to the establishment of the RAP."

Michigan Works! Macomb-St. Clair

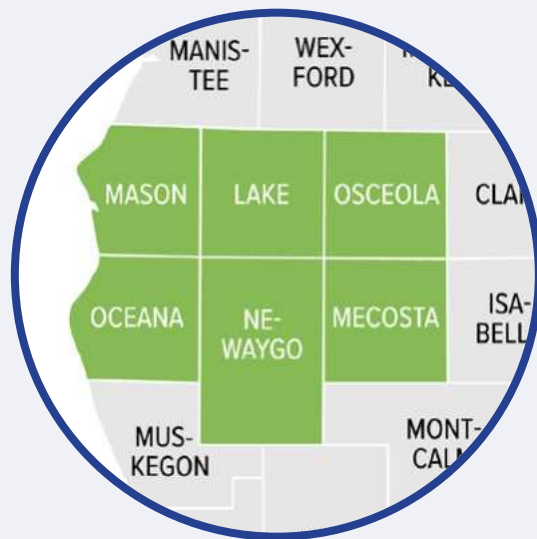
- **Counties:** Macomb, St. Clair
- **Partners:** Macomb Community College, The Poverty and Social Reform Institute, Leaps and Bounds Family Services, Macomb County Planning and Economic Development, Kid Cave Learning Center, Little Owl Tree House
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - ECE RAP status: Registered with U.S. DOL
 - RAP occupation: Early Childhood Educator
 - Credentials and certificates: Child Development Associate (CDA), Registered Apprenticeship Certificate



"We are most proud of... Launching our intermediary services for employers in March 2024"

Michigan Works! West Central

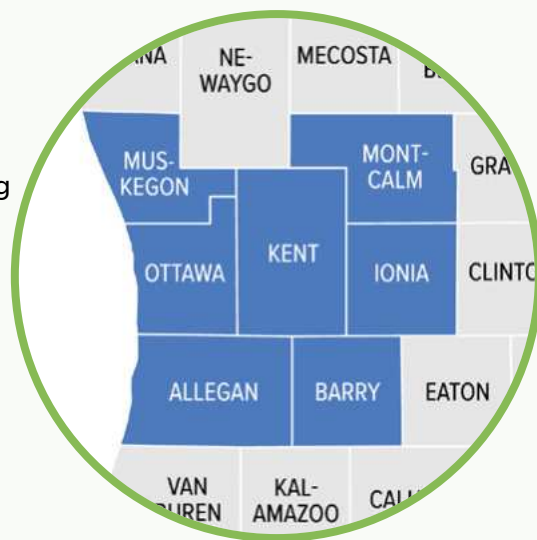
- **Counties:** Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola
- **Partners:** Great Start Newaygo County RESA, FiveCap, Kiddies Klubhouse, Ferris Early Learning Center, West Shore Community College, Oceana County Foundation, Lake County Economic Development Alliance, Chamber Alliance of Mason County, Fremont Area Chamber, Fremont Area Community Foundation, Oceana College Access Network, Reed City Chamber, Central Michigan University
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - ECE RAP status: Registered with US DOL
 - RAP occupation: Early Childhood Educator
 - Credentials and certificates: Registered Apprenticeship Certificate



"We are most proud of... *The board recognizing the importance of creating a culture around apprenticeships, serving apprentices, and hiring a full time apprenticeship success coordinator."*

West Michigan Works!

- **Counties:** Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Ottawa
- **Partners:** Vibrant Futures, Grand Rapids Community College, Muskegon Community College, Orchard Hill Christian Learning Center and Preschool, Discovery School, MaBecky's Daycare, Outdoor Discovery Center, Milestones Learning Center, Horizon Daycare, The Other Way Ministries, United Methodist Community House, Little Dreamers Daycare, Orchard View Childcare Programs, Explorers Learning Center, Steepletown Neighborhood Services
- **Apprenticeship at a Glance**
 - ECE RAP status: Registered with U.S. DOL
 - RAP occupation: Early Childhood Educator
 - Credentials and certificates: Child Development Associate (CDA) and Registered Apprenticeship Certificate



"We are most proud of..." *Providing opportunities to earn while they learn, gain skills, achieve certifications and career pathways leading to higher pay and stability for them and their families. "*

Endnotes

1. <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/naw-2022-report.pdf>
2. https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/BPC_WOIA_Apprenticeship_Report_RV2.pdf
3. <https://nationalapprenticeship.org/roi>
4. <https://ecwconnector.org/>
5. <https://www.mathematica.org/publications/an-effectiveness-assessment-and-costbenefit-analysis-of-registered-apprenticeship-in-10-states>
6. <https://nationalapprenticeship.org/roi>
7. <https://www.ffyf.org/policy-priorities/apprenticeships/>
8. <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/slate/slate-mo-career-center/lume-early-childhood.cfm>
9. <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/State-incentives-to-promote-and-support-apprenticeship-final-v2-508.pdf>
10. <https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2023/09/the-promise-of-apprenticeships-to-strengthen-the-child-care-workforce/>
11. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/states/michigan/>
12. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/fact-sheet-The-Early-Educator-Workforce-Crisis-How-Legislators-Can-Make-a-Difference-for-Kids-Families-and-Educators-2023-03-13.pdf>