



National
Early Care & Education
WORKFORCE CENTER

Driving Intentional Systems Change with and for the ECE Workforce

Anne Douglass, Brandy Jones Lawrence, Catherine Huddleston-Casas,
Sherri Castle & Yujin Lee
April 1, 2026

Housekeeping

- Turn on closed captions by clicking “More.”
- Please submit questions for our speakers in the Q&A section.
- We will share a recording of the presentation with all registrants.



National Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Center Funders

“This work is supported by Grant Number 90TA000004-01-00 from the Administration for Children and Families, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Neither the Administration for Children and Families nor any of its components operate, control, are responsible for, or necessarily endorse the information presented in this presentation. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Administration for Children and Families, including the Office of Early Childhood Development, the Office of Head Start, and the Office of Child Care.”



National ECE Workforce Center

Research and technical assistance to equip state and local leaders to drive change in early care and education (ECE) workforce policy.



Who Are the ECE Workforce?

The National ECE Workforce Center is focused on educators who provide direct care for children from birth to age five in licensed ECE settings, including center-based programs, family child care (FCC), preschool, and pre-K.



Purpose



Why Are You Here?

Maybe you...

- Are invested in improving conditions for the ECE workforce but don't know where to start?
- Have already tried to make changes to support the workforce and are looking to refine your current strategy?
- Have rolled out a successful compensation or career pathways initiative and want to do more for the ECE workforce?



Objectives

- Understand core components of the Change Framework
- Hear key insights from systems change leaders in Minnesota who have used the framework to inform their work
- Receive a high-level overview of the Center's interactive Change Framework exploration tool
- Explore the Center's Change Framework Reflection tool and how it can be used to plan and implement ECE workforce systems change efforts in your unique context

Introductions



Sherri Castle
Deputy Director



Anne Douglass
Research
Co-Director



**Cathey Huddleston-
Casas**
Technical Assistance
Specialist



**Brandy Jones
Lawrence**
Technical Assistance
Director



Yujin Lee
Systems Change
Framework Co-Lead



Systems Change Framework



What is the Systems Change Framework?

- A guide for state and community leaders creating lasting change
- Helps make progress toward:
 - Competitive and fair compensation
 - Clear and accessible career pathways
 - Positive working conditions



What is the Underlying Idea?

ECE workforce challenges are complex and interconnected.

Fixing one part in isolation doesn't create lasting change.

Lasting progress requires attention to practices, infrastructure, and principles.



How Did We Develop the Framework?

- Reviewed broader systems change literature
- Examined state-, community-, and program-level efforts
- Identified recurring drivers of change
- Distilled them to identify what to change and how to change it



Change Framework Main Component

AIMS

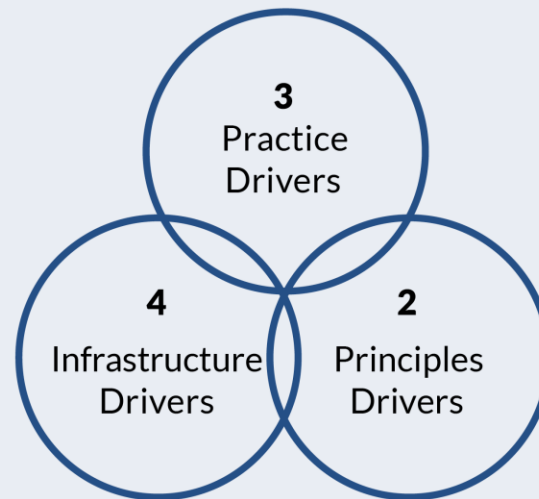
Competitive and fair compensation

Clear and accessible career pathways

Positive working conditions

PRIMARY DRIVERS

Levers for change that can lead to progress towards achieving the aims

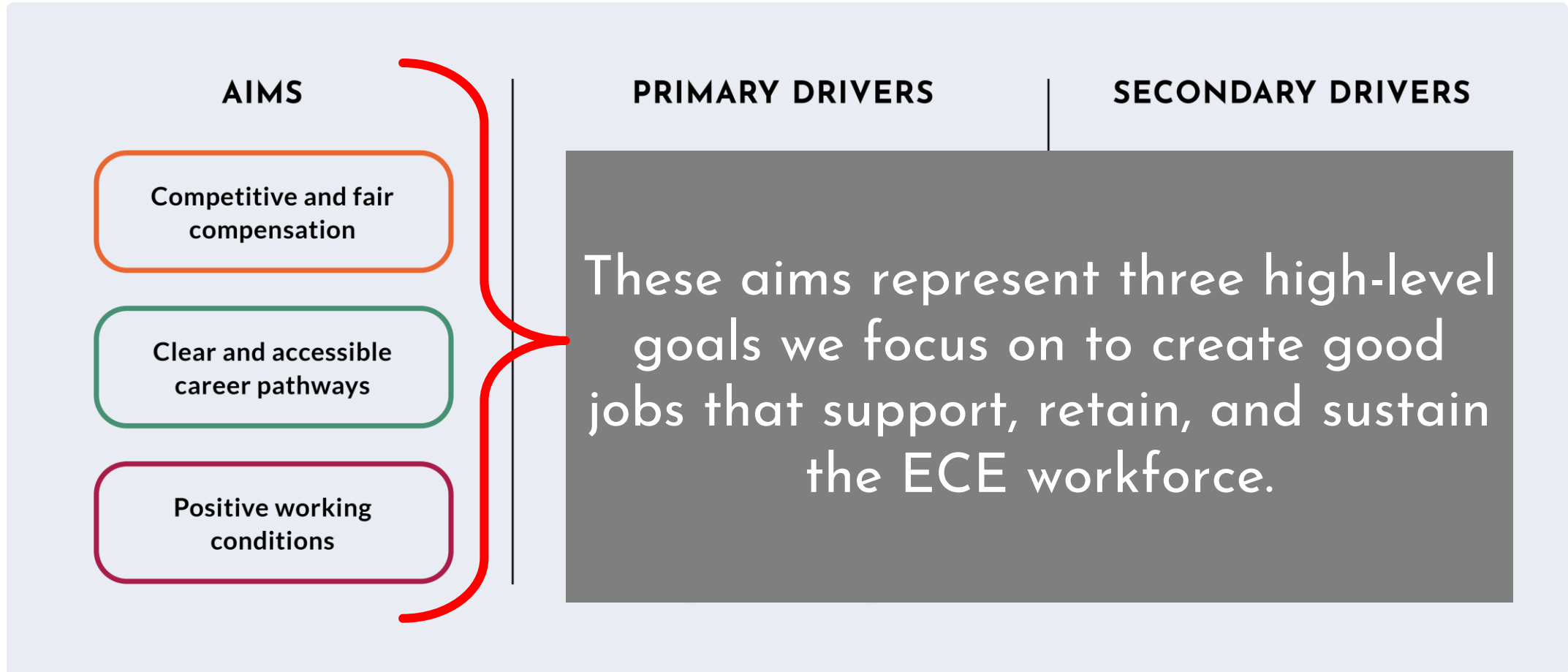


SECONDARY DRIVERS

Practices and strategies needed to put the primary drivers in place



Change Framework's Three Aims



What are Primary Drivers?

AIMS

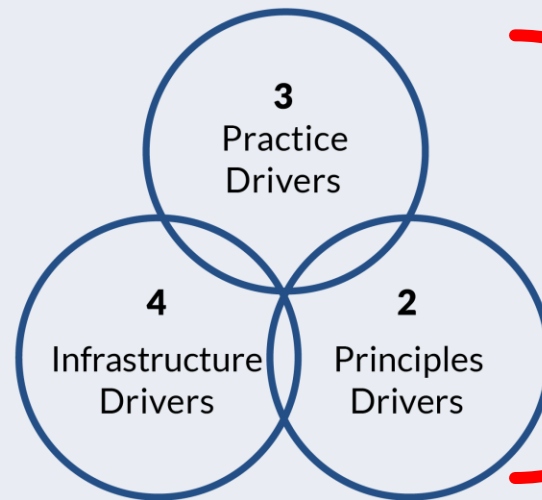
Competitive and fair compensation

Clear and accessible career pathways

Positive working conditions

PRIMARY DRIVERS

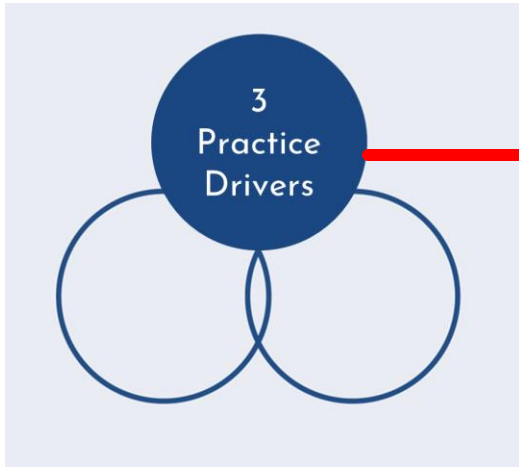
Levers for change that can lead to progress towards achieving the aims



- 9 drivers in total
- Across 3 types
- Need to put in place to make progress toward aims



What are Practice Drivers?

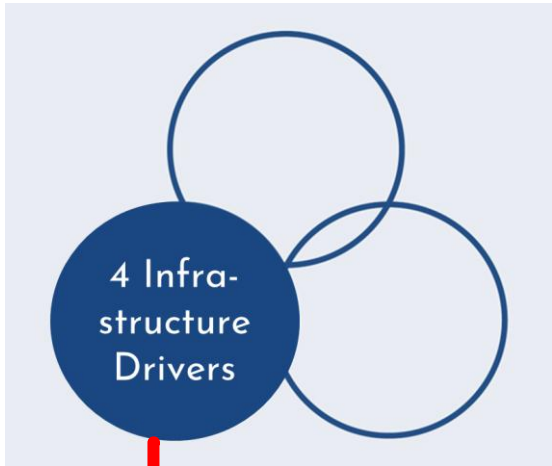


The programmatic and policy actions taken to achieve each aim.

Policy-specific promising practices	Programs and improvement strategies are effective, responsive, well-implemented, and tailored to community needs.
Targeted and aligned policies	State and local policy changes support target outcomes.
Data-driven decision making	Data are used to continuously learn, adapt, improve, and inform the broader community.



What are Infrastructure Drivers?

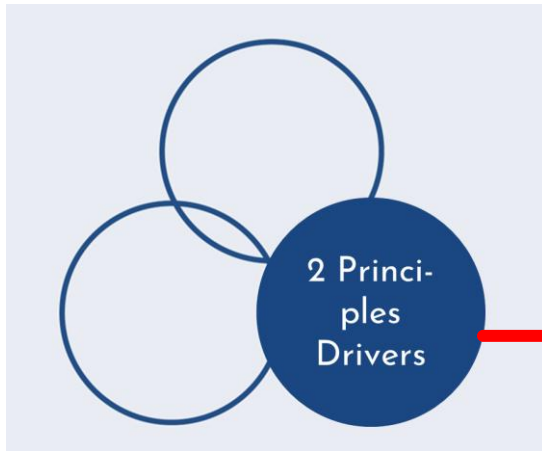


The structural aspects necessary for achieving and sustaining the aims.

Leadership & Governance	Leadership, decision makers, and coordinated governance structures are strong and adaptive.
Multi-sector & multi-partner collaboration	Sectors & partners are aligned to support targeted outcomes and goals.
Data infrastructure	Data Systems & Processes are in place to support decision making.
Sustainability	Sufficient funding and policy structures are in place to sustain initiatives.



What are Principles Drivers?



The underlying beliefs and mindsets necessary for achieving the aims.

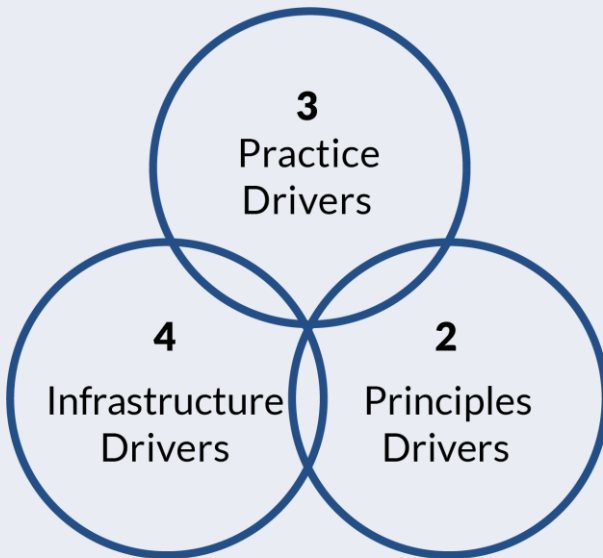
Engaging educators in systems change	Educators have representation in systems change & are meaningfully included.
Culture & narrative shift	Entrenched mindsets & typical ways of working are challenged.



How Driver Types Work Together

PRIMARY DRIVERS

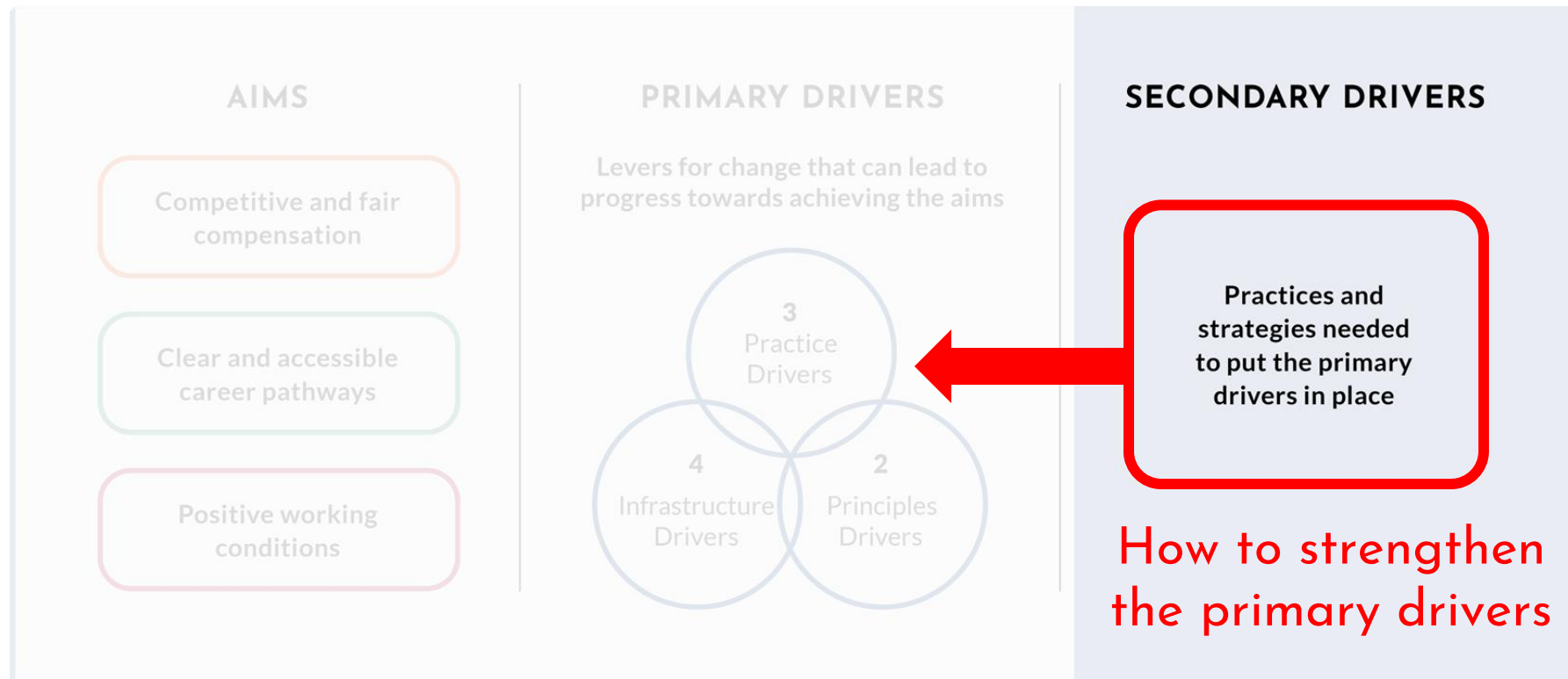
Levers for change that can lead to progress towards achieving the aims



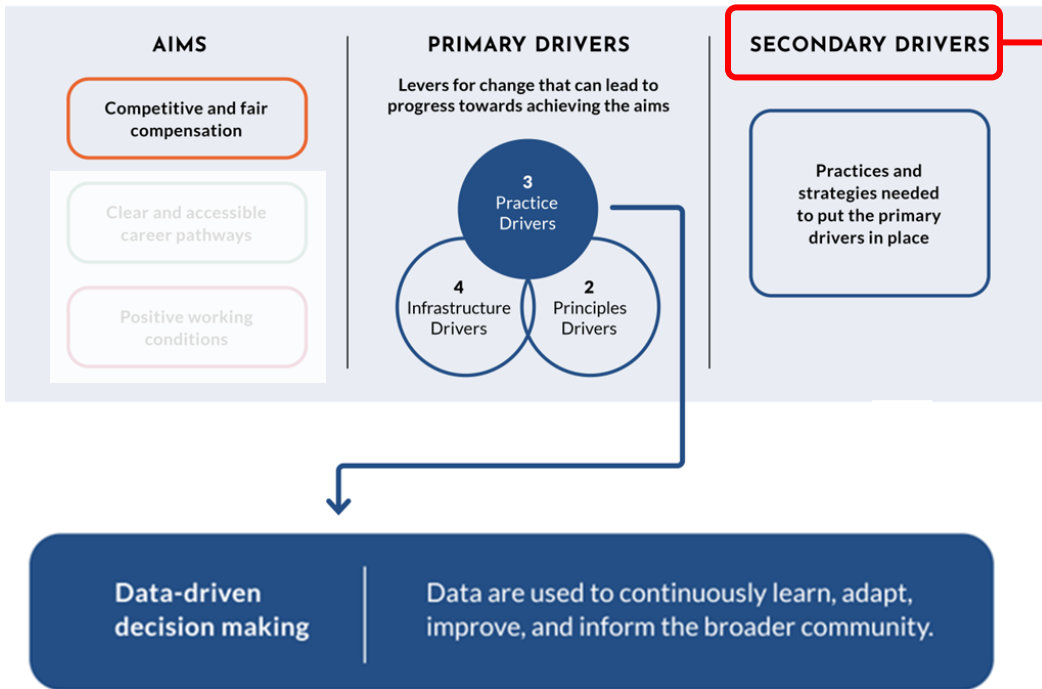
- Different types of drivers are interdependent
- Addressing workforce issues requires using all three types of drivers



What Are Secondary Drivers?



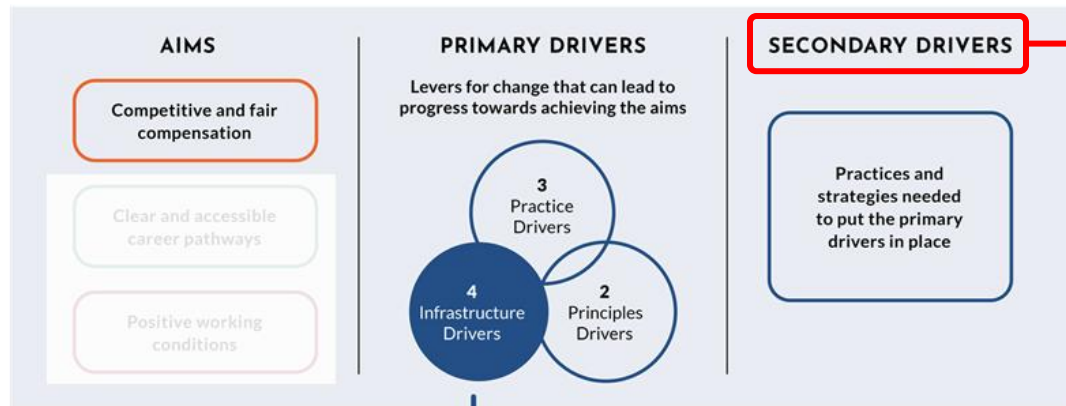
Secondary Driver - Example 1



- Programs and initiatives related to competitive and fair compensation are monitored, and their progress and impact data are used to inform and refine systems change efforts.
- Compensation data are shared and reviewed to assess the current state of compensation.
- Data regarding financial investments specific to supporting increased compensation are collected and analyzed at all phases of implementation to ensure sustained funding.



Secondary Driver - Example 2

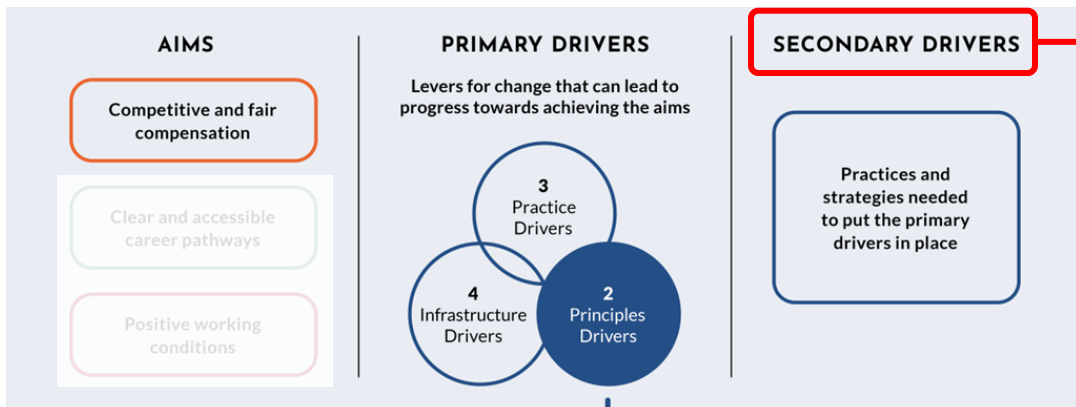


Multi-sector and multi-partner collaboration

Sectors and partners are aligned to support targeted outcomes and goals.

- Cross-sector state or community coalitions/partnerships are convened to jointly plan, make decisions, implement, and evaluate compensation initiatives.
- Diverse cross-sector coalitions/partnerships are in place and work together to establish and operate with shared understanding, goals, and vision to guide their efforts.
- Regular meetings and financial incentives are in place to promote active engagement and collaboration among cross-sector partners for compensation initiatives.

Secondary Driver - Example 3



Engaging educators in systems change

Educators have representation in systems change & are meaningfully included.

- Educators who represent a range of backgrounds and experiences are active leaders in designing and implementing the vision and plan for change related to compensation aims.
- Outreach strategies, capacity-building efforts, and information related to compensation initiatives are appropriate, available, and accessible to enable educator engagement.
- Educators have substantial influence and decision-making power in shaping and guiding compensation initiatives.



Download the Change Framework



[Download the Change Framework here](#)


Webinar Recording

Using the Systems Change Framework to Create Intention
National Early Care and Education Workforce Center
Why Accessible Career Pathways Matter

"The more knowledge, the more certifications you have, the better you're going to be with kids, the better you'll be able to do what is required of you."

"My opinion is that they shouldn't be requiring anybody to increase anything [credentials] if they're not going to make it equitable for everyone to actually access it."

○ Clear and accessible career pathways help educators grow in their careers and stay in the field longer.

Watch on  YouTube

FOC educators quoted in Hooper et al, 2025

[Watch the in-depth Change Framework webinar here](#)

CHANGE FRAMEWORK BRIEF SERIES

Introduction to the ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework

Anne Douglass, Rena Hallam, Yujin Lee, Lindsay Beatty, Kristy Sheffler, & Annette Pic


Aims | **Primary drivers** | **Secondary drivers**

Introduction

This brief describes the National Early Care & Education (ECE) Workforce Center's aims for improving conditions for the ECE workforce and explains how the ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework supports state and local leaders to achieve the aims. In this brief, we introduce this Change Framework (see Figure 1), including its grounding perspectives; give an overview of its aims, primary drivers and secondary drivers; and provide examples of how the Change Framework can guide efforts to make change across systems and programs.

Figure 1. ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework Structure

AIMS	PRIMARY DRIVERS	SECONDARY DRIVERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Competitive and fair compensationClear and accessible career pathwaysPositive working conditions	<p>Levers for change that can lead to progress towards achieving the aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">3 Practice Drivers4 Infrastructure Drivers2 Principles Drivers	<p>Practices and strategies needed to put the primary drivers in place</p>





State Insights



Insights from Minnesota



Jessica Richards

MN Dept of Children, Youth, and
Families

Child Care Wage Specialist



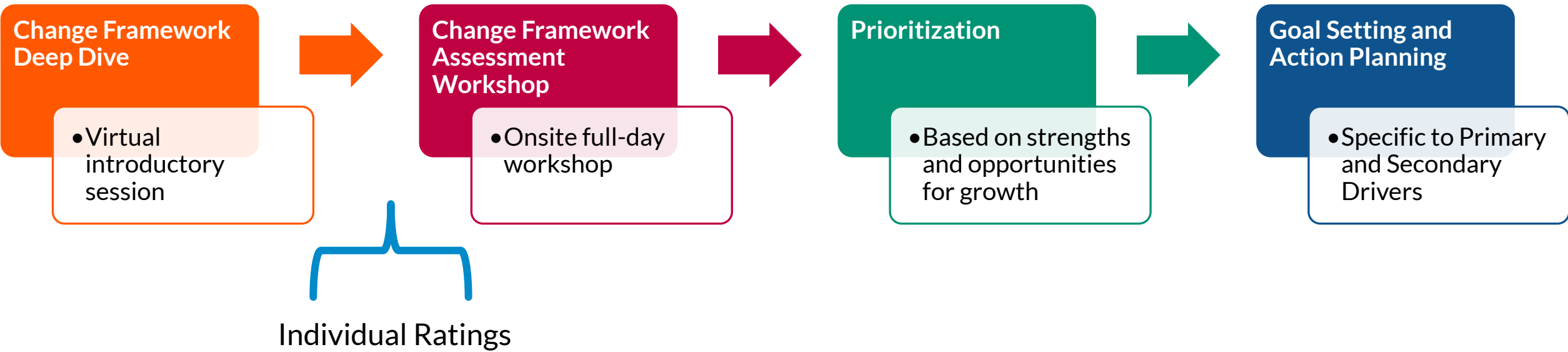
Candace Yates

Child Care Aware of Minnesota

Executive Director



TA Process



Insights from Minnesota



Jessica Richards

MN Dept of Children, Youth, and
Families

Child Care Wage Specialist



Candace Yates

Child Care Aware of Minnesota

Executive Director



The Center's System Change Tools



CF Interactive Web Tool

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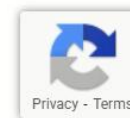


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Introduction to the ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework

 Anne Douglass, Rena Hallam, Yujin Lee, Lindsay Beatty, Kristy Sheffler, Annette Pic

This interactive describes the National Early Care & Education (ECE) Workforce



CF Interactive Web Tool

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ECE WORKFORCE SYSTEMS CHANGE FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE

Aims ⓘ

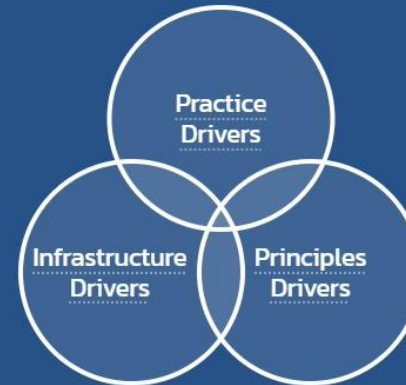
Competitive and fair compensation

Clear and accessible career pathways

Positive working conditions

Primary Drivers

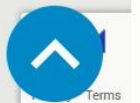
Levers for change that can lead to progress towards achieving the aims



Secondary Drivers

Practices and strategies needed to put the primary drivers in place

Explore the Framework



Terms



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ECE WORKFORCE SYSTEMS CHANGE FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE

Aims ⓘ

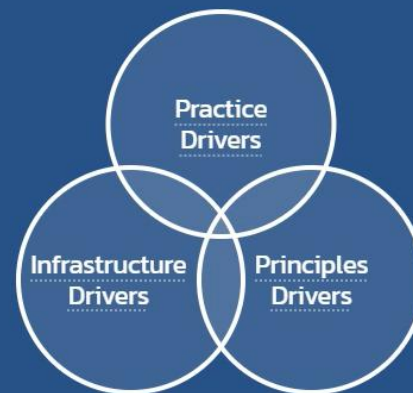
Competitive and fair compensation

Clear and accessible career pathways

Positive working conditions

Primary Drivers

Levers for change that can lead to progress towards achieving the aims



Secondary Drivers

Practices and strategies needed to put the primary drivers in place

Explore the Framework



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Clear and Accessible Career Pathways

Competitive and Fair Compensation

Positive Working Conditions

Competitive and fair compensation means that the wages and benefits for the ECE workforce reflect their professional skills and expertise. Additionally, wages and benefits should enable early educators to provide and save for themselves and their families. This can include clear wage scales that support consistent pay comparable to educators in the K-12 system and protections for essential supports and benefits. As wage scales are being developed and transitioned to, changes should not result in [lost supports](#) for early educators. Pick one of the primary driver types (below) to learn more about the concrete actions (i.e., secondary drivers) that support competitive and fair compensation, or pick a different aim (above) to explore.

Practice Drivers

Infrastructure Drivers

Principles Drivers



Policy-Specific Promising Practices



Targeted & Aligned Policies



Data-Driven Decision Making



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Practice Drivers

Infrastructure Drivers

Principles Drivers

Leadership & Governance

Governance structures enable cross-sector leaders to align compensation initiatives across ECE settings.

[Learn More](#)

ECE program leaders apply leadership and business management best practices to achieve competitive compensation.

Multi-Sector & Multi-Partner Collaboration

Cross-sector leaders meet to jointly plan, make decisions, implement, and evaluate compensation initiatives.

[Learn More](#)

Cross-sector leaders have a shared understanding, goals, and vision to guide their compensation initiatives.

[Learn More](#)

Data Infrastructure

Compensation data are accessible and allow key stakeholders to extract meaningful insights.

[Learn More](#)

Compensation-related data are collected across ECE settings.

[Learn More](#)

Sustainability

Formal policies and regulations protect and sustain standards for compensation.

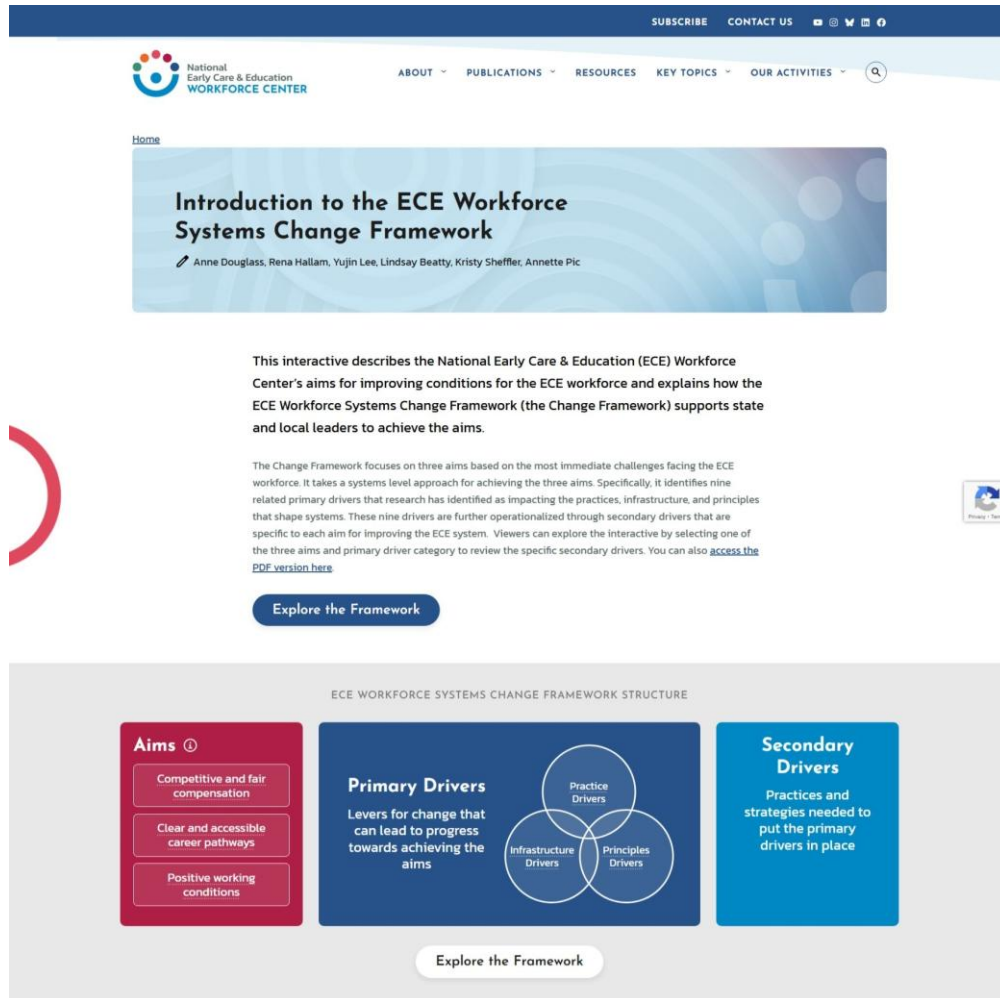
[Learn More](#)

Funding sources are dedicated for building and sustaining data systems for compensation initiatives.

[Learn More](#)



Explore the Interactive Web Tool



The screenshot shows the homepage of the National Early Care & Education Workforce Center. The header includes navigation links for 'ABOUT', 'PUBLICATIONS', 'RESOURCES', 'KEY TOPICS', and 'OUR ACTIVITIES', along with a search icon. The main content area features a large blue banner with the title 'Introduction to the ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework' and a list of authors: Anne Douglass, Rena Hallam, Yujin Lee, Lindsay Beatty, Kristy Sheffer, and Annette Pic. Below the banner, there is a paragraph of text explaining the interactive tool's purpose and a button labeled 'Explore the Framework'. At the bottom, a diagram titled 'ECE WORKFORCE SYSTEMS CHANGE FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE' illustrates the relationship between Aims, Primary Drivers, and Secondary Drivers.

Home

Introduction to the ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework

✍ Anne Douglass, Rena Hallam, Yujin Lee, Lindsay Beatty, Kristy Sheffer, Annette Pic

This interactive describes the National Early Care & Education (ECE) Workforce Center's aims for improving conditions for the ECE workforce and explains how the ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework (the Change Framework) supports state and local leaders to achieve the aims.

The Change Framework focuses on three aims based on the most immediate challenges facing the ECE workforce. It takes a systems level approach for achieving the three aims. Specifically, it identifies nine related primary drivers that research has identified as impacting the practices, infrastructure, and principles that shape systems. These nine drivers are further operationalized through secondary drivers that are specific to each aim for improving the ECE system. Viewers can explore the interactive by selecting one of the three aims and primary driver category to review the specific secondary drivers. You can also [access the PDF version here](#).

[Explore the Framework](#)

ECE WORKFORCE SYSTEMS CHANGE FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE

- Aims**
 - Competitive and fair compensation
 - Clear and accessible career pathways
 - Positive working conditions
- Primary Drivers**

Lever for change that can lead to progress towards achieving the aims

 - Practice Drivers
 - Infrastructure Drivers
 - Principles Drivers
- Secondary Drivers**

Practices and strategies needed to put the primary drivers in place

[Explore the Framework](#)



Change Framework Reflection Tool



Change Framework Reflection Tool

- Examine current system context
- Include diverse perspectives from multiple parts of systems
- Inform goals and action steps



CF Reflection Tool Structure

Practice Drivers	Policy-specific promising practices	Programs and improvement strategies are effective, responsive, well-implemented, and tailored to community needs.
	Targeted and aligned policies	State and local policy changes support target outcomes.
	Data-driven decision making	Data are used to continuously learn, adapt, improve, and inform the broader community.
Infrastructure Drivers	Leadership & Governance	Leadership, decision makers, and coordinated governance structures are strong and adaptive.
	Multi-sector & multi-partner collaboration	Sectors & partners are aligned to support targeted outcomes and goals.
	Data infrastructure	Data Systems & Processes are in place to support decision making.
	Sustainability	Sufficient funding and policy structures are in place to sustain initiatives.
Principles Drivers	Engaging educators in systems change	Educators have representation in systems change & are meaningfully included.
	Culture & narrative shift	Entrenched mindsets & typical ways of working are challenged.



Using the Reflection Tool

To what extent is each driver present in your system?

Not at all

This driver is not present or is very weak in the current system

Some

This driver is somewhat present but not yet functioning well in the current system.

A lot

The driver is strong and functioning well in the current system.

Not applicable

Select this if the item does not apply to your context or if you do not have enough information to assess it.



Reflection Tool Format

Targeted and Aligned Policies

SECONDARY DRIVERS	RATING				NOTES
Policies are designed to prevent benefit cliffs caused by wage increases.	Not at all	Some	All	Not Applicable	
Data-focused policies support effective data collection, data sharing and use, and individual privacy.	Not at all	Some	All	Not Applicable	

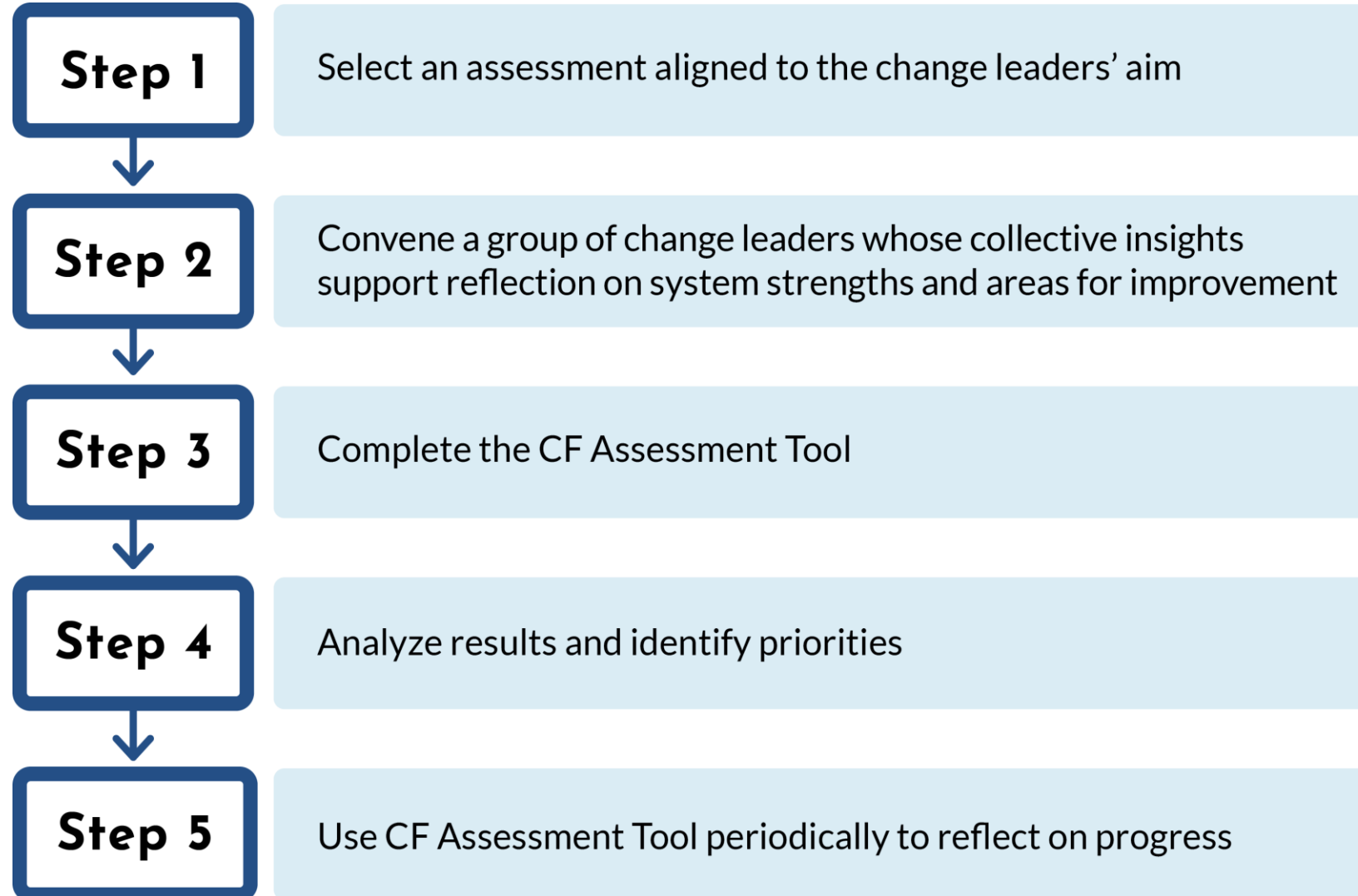


Key Features

- Collaborative tool – for use by groups/cross-role teams not individuals
- Designed for dialogue, reflection, and action planning, not adding up your "score"
- Builds deeper, shared understanding across stakeholders
- Prompts reflection across different parts of systems
- Can be used to identify priorities, set goals, and reflect on progress over time



Reflection Tool: Steps



Step 1: Select Your Focus



Step 2: Convene a Team

- Range of perspectives
- Key stakeholder groups
- Examples: Early educators, state and local agencies and organizations, higher education, workforce councils and labor groups, professional associations, research and data



Step 3: Reflect and Assess

- Assign ratings and make notes
- Collaborative dialogue
- Look for key insights, themes emerging, different perspectives, areas where information is lacking



Step 4: Reflect and Set Priorities

- Which drivers are already strong and can be leveraged?
- Which driver are feasible to strengthen given current capacity and momentum?
- Which drivers are not yet feasible or relevant to address?



Step 5: Track Progress

- What progress has been made since the last reflection?
- Which systems conditions have improved?
- Which systems conditions still need attention?
- What should the next round of change efforts focus on?



Download the CF Reflection Tool

The screenshot shows the website's navigation bar with 'SUBSCRIBE' and 'CONTACT US' links, and a search icon. The main header includes the logo and 'ABOUT', 'PUBLICATIONS', 'RESOURCES', 'KEY TOPICS', and 'OUR ACTIVITIES' menus. The breadcrumb trail reads 'Home » Publications » The ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework: Reflection Tool'. The main heading is 'The ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework: Reflection Tool'. Below it, a paragraph describes the tool's purpose. A 'Share:' section contains social media icons. A 'Published 2025' box lists 'Work Environment Standards', 'Compensation & Financial Relief Strategies', and 'Qualifications & Educational Support' as key topics, with a 'Toolkit' icon and social sharing options. A 'Links & Files' box contains a download link for 'The ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework: Reflection Tool'. A 'Privacy - Terms' icon is also visible.

Published 2025

- Work Environment Standards
- Compensation & Financial Relief Strategies
- Qualifications & Educational Support


Toolkit

Links & Files

The ECE Workforce Systems Change Framework: Reflection Tool


Privacy - Terms

Related Key Topics



Compensation & Financial Relief Strategies

Investments and initiatives to ensure compensation equal to that of a skilled professional, accounting for an educator's qualifications, expertise, and experience



Qualifications & Educational Support

Policies and pathways that strengthen career pathways and access to degrees and credentials and provide consistent standards for educators to achieve higher education



Any Questions?



<https://www.nationaleceworkforcecenter.org/>



workforcecenter@childtrends.org



Come Chat With Us!

- Coffee chat about the tools and applying the Change Framework in research: April 21 at 2 p.m. ET





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Thank you!

