Maryland Early Care and Education Workforce Registry Implementation Report

Commissioned by

montgomery moving forward

mobilizing leaders to solve our biggest problems together

nonprofits / business / philanthropy / government / education / community

Written by

Chris Swanson, Ed.D., Executive Director

IMPACT

February 2026

cswanson@c-impactnow.org

Acknowledgements

Montgomery Moving Forward is grateful for the generous support of these sponsors in funding this report:

The author would like to thank the many interviewees, focus group participants, and survey respondents for their time and input. Additionally, a number of stakeholders contributed valuable insights and expertise through both formal and informal meetings and information sessions.

Finally, this work was commissioned in the furtherance of Montgomery Moving Forward's (MMF) *Call to Action* recommendations to create a roadmap for implementation of strategies that strengthens Maryland's early care and education (ECE) system. MMF has brought a concerted, coordinated focus across sectors and partners to highlight the critical importance of a strong early childhood workforce toward Maryland's economic and social goals. They have succeeded in engaging the traditional contributors to Maryland's ECE policy and practices while expanding the coalition to include new partners equally invested in a strong ECE system. This was the result of many people's time and effort, but in no small part, due to the unwavering commitment of MMF's co-founder and executive director, Ms. Sharon Friedman.

Thank you, Sharon, and all the MMF Leadership Group, Advisory and Expert group members for championing change.

About the Author

Dr. Chris Swanson is a co-founder and executive director of C-IMPACT, a nonprofit cross-sector Collaborative of human service organizations committed to working together to improve lives and strengthen communities. C-IMPACT is currently serving as the backbone and founding member of the statewide Maryland Early Care and Education Coalition, bringing together a cadre of advocacy and implementation partners toward a more coordinated and aligned early childhood system. Prior to launching C-IMPACT, Swanson was research faculty at the Johns Hopkins School of Education, where he was one of the original creators of the Maryland EXCELS program among other early childhood policies and practices. Additionally, he developed workforce registries deployed in Tennessee and Alabama. Swanson believes strongly in ecological approaches to addressing entrenched social challenges that leverage the strengths and contributions of disparate organizations toward holistic outcomes.

Table of Contents

Maryland Early Care and Education Workforce Registry Implementation Report

Background: Local collective impact coordinating entity, Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF), issued a statewide Call to Action Recommendations report in 2025 to address the early care and education (ECE) workforce crisis impacting Maryland. This issue has profound implications for the health and well-being of Maryland's children, families, economy, and overall future from both the social-developmental outcomes of its citizens and financial growth perspective of its businesses. MMF recognized these dual, interdependent outcomes, hinged on the strength of Maryland's ECE workforce – the "workforce behind the workforce" across all other industries, and the critical drivers of high-quality practices that yield lifelong results for the state's youngest learners. As such, the *Call to Action* recommended three key imperatives for adoption:

1) **Implementation of a Birth – 5 Career Lattice** to guide ECE professionals along their career journeys; defining specific responsibilities and associated competencies and qualifications of requisite professional roles across the ECE continuum.
2) **Adoption of an ECE Workforce Registry** to provide an integrated data-driven approach to matching professionals' growth across the Career Lattice with specific recommended professional development and training; wrap-around supports and services that address the holistic needs of ECE professionals; simplified participation in the myriad of ECE initiatives and requirements in Maryland; and generated data that drives decision-making at the individual ECE educator, ECE program, jurisdiction, and overall state levels.
3) **Creation of a Statewide Cross-Sector Taskforce** focused on the ECE workforce; helping to bridge the strategic goals and contributions of both the social-developmental and economic inputs and outcomes associated with strong ECE systems.

Following the publication of these recommendations, MMF has engaged in a series of deeper activities designed to bring each to fruition. Related to the ECE Workforce Registry ("Registry"), two follow-up reports were commissioned:

1. A Registry "Benefits Report", by Charlie Rosemond, advisor with the national Data Quality Campaign, examining reported system-level improvements shared through interviews with several peer state adopters of Registry (see: *How workforce registries benefit the early care & education workforce: Stories of workforce data and data-informed decision-making across states*.)
2. Registry "Implementation Report," by Dr. Chris Swanson, executive director of C-IMPACT, and is the report summarized here.

Both of these documents are designed to support the adoption of an ECE Workforce Registry in Maryland. The following summarizes key aspects of the "Implementation Report."

Specifically, the Implementation Report answers the following:

- Recommended functions & features
- Estimated costs for start-up, annual maintenance, and funding strategies
- Identified connections to existing Maryland efforts, with suggested opportunities for alignment, and associated potential policy or legislative actions needed
- Suggested implementation operational model, inclusive of existing infrastructure
- Prescribed adoption timeline with key considered decision points

Introduction: A workforce Registry is a critical part of a strong ECE system. It serves as a database, answering key questions like who is working in child care and early education, where are they working, when did they work, and what skills, training, and education do they have and need. It is a professional growth tool; connecting the workforce with all the requisite knowledge and skills needed to perform their current job, while also showing them what is needed to grow into new roles or acquire new skills within their position. It is a powerful support resource, empowering the workforce with connections to mental health supports, financial resources, and even potentially access to health care benefits. And all the while it is a mechanism for collecting and generating data to answer significant policy, efficacy, and resource allocation questions at the state, district, and program levels. Despite how incredibly useful a Registry is, Maryland is currently one of four states[1] that currently does not have a Registry, though there have been several attempts to implement one in the past. This report attempts to provide the foundation for Maryland to advance in its efforts of implementing a Registry and ensuring we have a complete and comprehensive ECE system.

Methodology: A four-pronged data collection effort has been utilized to define the recommendations in this report.

1. **Background review**: including published literature on best-in-class aspects of registries; examination of data and research, and analysis of gap areas related to Maryland workforce data; review of historical RFP documents, CCDF plans, and previous Maryland reports/publications prescribing a workforce Registry; review of publicly available information related to major Registry vendors' product offerings. **In total, the following number of primary and secondary sources were reviewed:**
    a. 202 publications/reports/documents reviewed
    b. 9 commercial products reviewed

    The National Workforce Registry Alliance (NWRA) provided the bulk of source content for materials related to best practices in the design of registries; documentation of other states' systems; and guidance on developing programmatic infrastructure. Additionally,

[1] South Dakota, Mississippi, and Virginia are the other three, with Virginia having a Registry-like system. California is at risk of losing its funding effective June 2026 for its statewide Registry. Counties in the state are currently working to implement their own Registries in the event the statewide application ceases operating.

as part of the previous work in creating the original *Call to Action*, Rosemond and Swanson conducted interviews and analysis of eight peer Registry systems across the country, and materials and information gathered from those conversations helped to inform this analysis. Lastly, Swanson consulted documentation he created during his work in the development of registries in the states of Tennessee and Alabama.

2. **Practitioner Survey:** survey on desired key functionality of a Registry, along with feedback on a career ladder, has been collected from **208 Maryland respondents in both English and Spanish**. Surveys were distributed electronically, advertised through a variety of outlets frequented by ECE partners such as via Maryland State Child Care Association; local resource and referral agencies; and through the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) *Tuesday Tidbits* electronic newsletter; as well as shared at live presentations at various conferences over the summer/fall of 2025.
3. **Key Leaders Interviews:** focused conversations with "key leaders;" individuals who utilize ECE workforce data as part of their current daily work to drive systemic outcomes. Respondents were asked to identify gap areas with regard to existing data and/or workflows; enabled benefits of improved access to more timely and robust ECE data; and their specific suggestions for ways to strengthen the system. Additionally, these interviews helped surface potential areas of alignment, resource support, and barriers to adoption. Interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom using a standardized script, though 5 respondents submitted answers via email, and 2 were in-person interviews. Each interview lasted between 30-90 minutes. The majority were conducted individually, but in select cases at the respondents request, a joint/group interview was conducted. Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and any specific responses would be de-identified, but in total:
    a. 63 Interviews were planned; but some respondents needed to reschedule beyond the timeline of this report. A supplemental update will be made to include those if possible. At present, these data reflect 58 conversations:
        i. 6 legislators/staff
        ii. 12 state agencies representatives
        iii. 11 program operators
        iv. 6 higher education representatives
        v. 5 training organization representatives
        vi. 6 local government representatives
        vii. 8 advocates/system-leaders
        viii. 4 funders

4. **Focus Groups**: end-user conversations comprised of teachers and related staff across ECE settings; owners/operators/directors; and trainers were conducted across four meetings. Three meetings were conducted via Zoom and one was in-person, with sessions offered at varying times during the day to allow participation. These were structured conversations with the groups most directly benefitted by the Registry, to

understand specifically how to design a system that meets their needs, addresses areas of concern they have, and reduces burden. Focus groups were comprised of 43 participants in total:

a. 16 center-based instructional staff
b. 3 public school pre-k teachers
c. 11 family-child care educators/owners
d. 3 Early Head Start/Head Start personnel
e. 6 center-based directors
f. 4 MSDE approved trainers

Findings: Findings are summarized with recommendations by five major categories:

- Functions & Features
- Estimated Costs
- Identified Connections
- Implementation of Operational Model
- Timeline & Considerations

1. Functions & Features

Via the various data collection methods, Maryland users identified several key functions and features that would be desirable within a Registry. These elements all fit within the "12 Core Components" of Registries as defined by the National Workforce Registry Alliance (NWRA):

1. "Act as a hub for the early learning workforce
2. Communicate, connect, and support workforce opportunities
3. Backbone infrastructure for professional development systems
4. Support implementation of licensed/regulated child care
5. Track & report on workforce development, education, training, employment, and recognition
6. Facilitate career pathway placement
7. Facilitate access to workforce support
8. Critical information and timely announcements
9. Track/reporting of workforce compliance
10. Training and trainer approval
11. Professional recognition
12. Data collection and management" (NWRA, 2024)[2]

[2] National Workforce Registry Alliance (NWRA), (2024). Early Childhood and Out-of-School-Time Workforce Data: Examining Workforce Registry Infrastructure for Data Impact. The National Workforce Registry Alliance. Buffett Early Childhood Institute, University of Nebraska. https://www.Registryalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/NWRA-Workforce-Registry-Brief-2024-1.pdf

Based on survey data as shown in Figure 1, the highest desired functionality users want a Registry to include is the ability to connect with professional scholarships (69%) to advance their licensure and educational levels. This is seen in combination with the second most requested function, connectivity to a career lattice with professional development planning (64%). Alignment with a career lattice/ladder is a universal attribute across the 46 states that have implemented a workforce Registry. It is logical, as the lattice provides a backbone architecture for a professional journey – defining the various roles, associated responsibilities, and competencies within the early childhood profession, and detailing the requisite experience, certifications, and education levels necessary to perform each role. The Registry then provides the functional infrastructure to help users chart the pathways between roles or growth within a role and supports the development of professional learning plans to guide users along their desired path. The inclusion of easy identification of financial resources to access any necessary learning to achieve those professional goals makes sense as priority for the workforce in envisioning the Registry as a tool that benefits their growth. This is a critical point – building a Registry that is responsive to the needs of the workforce itself will promote adoption, which in turn generates the data system and program leaders need. Too often we design public policy initiatives with the end system goal driving design, and that creates implementation models that add burden and undermine attainment of the initial goals. These functions and more were discussed and defined through targeted focus groups and will be explored in further depth below.

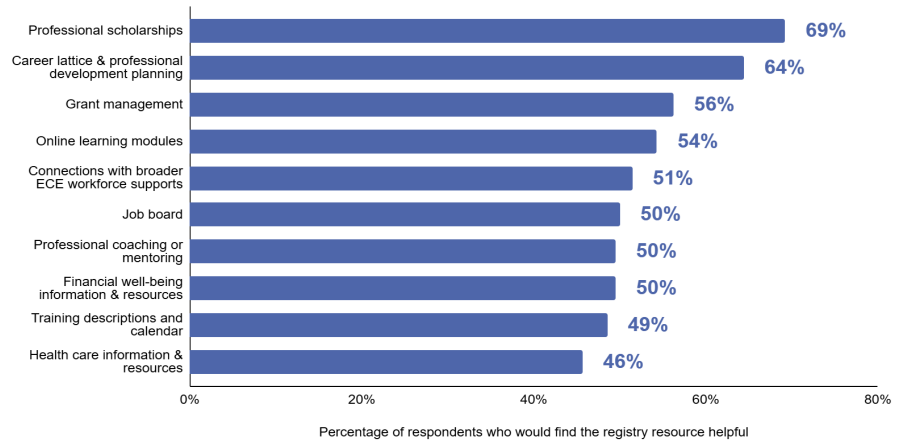

Figure 1. Highest rated desired Registry functionality from field survey.

Leader interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom. Leaders represented a wide range of "users" of early childhood data, including those who use it directly to shape policy and legislation; those who use it operationally in the provision of child care or early learning; those who use it to monitor, create, or enforce regulations; those who use it to specifically strengthen the knowledge and skills of the workforce; and those who use it to advocate for better systems – through lobbying, funding, or research. Interviewees were granted anonymity to promote candor in their responses in identifying gaps and needs of Maryland's current system.

Common themes emerged across leader interviews support the following design principles for a Maryland Registry:

1. A **"smart" system that proactively guides the workforce along career growth**, connects to resources and supports, and easily and intuitively generates data with insights from the macro to the micro level
2. **Reducing burden across the system** – empowering ECE professionals to have ownership of their credentials and information while removing current administrative process bottlenecks and freeing up those state level resources (i.e. licensing specialists) to focus on quality improvement over procedural aspects that can be automated or shifted to other personnel
3. **Stopping duplication of efforts and increasing accuracy of data**. Existing processes require multiple inputs of same information from the provider, directors, trainers, and even agency personnel, and require leadership, oversight, advocacy, and monitoring representatives to request data from multiple sources, have to reconcile sometimes conflicting data, and often struggle to find real-time information
4. **Building a "connected" Registry framework** that leverages existing components across Maryland's ECE system, while identifying gaps to be filled

A phenomenological analysis was conducted on interview transcripts. This is a qualitative analytical method that looks for common concepts or themes across interviews and then quantifies the frequency of occurrence in order to assess the patterns of perceptions by interviewees. It is a powerful analytical method for examining lived experiences by participants.

In response to the prompt: *What ECE workforce data are missing that will better inform the work you do?,* responses were analyzed and any with a frequency of greater than 50% (n= 29 respondents out of 58) mentions across separate interview subjects are reported by frequency in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of Identified Non-Available Workforce Data as Identified by Key Leaders

Data Element	Frequency	Data Element	Frequency
Demographics of the workforce	96% (n=56)	Connectivity between systems: individual workforce data; associated program data; child-level performance data; public investment data; measured and compared over time to answer what is working and what is contributing to child/student success	79% (n = 46)
Targeted gaps of the workforce by training/education needs	96% (n=56)	Accuracy of the data – confirmed and verified, current and correct information	74% (n=43)
Real-time employment status	87% (n=51)	Identified vacancies and projected vacancies based on both attrition and increased demand	65% (n=38)
Ease of access to existing data	86% (n=50)	Level of needs of the workforce – i.e. what other supports and services are they accessing, like TANF, SNAP, and/or would they want – i.e. health care, mental health supports, etc.	60% (n=35)
Availability of trainings/courses offered by content areas	86% (n=50)	Performance rates by trainee/students by class/course of offered professional learning.	58% (n=34)
Compensation/Benefits availability for the workforce	82% (n=48)	What is most associated with attracting and retaining professionals to the workforce	50% (n=29)
Educational/licensure status of all workforce (pre- and in-service)	82% (n=48)		

Closing these data gaps is critical to ensuring a strong and effective ECE system in Maryland. Per the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California, Berkeley, Maryland currently only has one out of five identified critical ECE workforce data associated with high-performing ECE systems[3]. Implementing a Registry that at minimum implements the 12 core functions identified by NWRA would see Maryland having all five data elements in place. Likewise, the Bipartisan Policy Center conducted analyses of each state's early childhood workforce status based on categories like compensation levels and years of experience and used data from Maryland current workforce data system, the Child Care Administrative Tracking System (CCATS), to produce Maryland's report. The Center could only complete six out of ten standardized reporting categories for Maryland, while states that have implemented registries could complete all[4].

[3] Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, (2024). "State Profiles: Maryland." University of Berkeley: CA.

[4] Bipartisan Policy Center, (2024) 10 Things to Know About Maryland's Child Care Workforce. Author. Washington: DC. https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/WEB_BPC_One-Pager_NWRA_Maryland_R01.pdf

Interviewees were asked what would having access to the types of data they noted as missing enable them to do in their current roles, and how would this help the workforce? A few select quotes are noted below.

"To know how to invest our resources more wisely – be it training, dollars, materials – without knowing the extent of the need, we can't quantify the how to really help."

"Better data means better policies. Better policies means better practices. Better practices means better outcomes for children."

"We know our workforce is in crisis, but who are our workforce? And what do they really need and want? There's a lot of decisions made that are guesses and estimates about how to help people without really knowing who they are, or by people who have never walked in their shoes. We not only need better data, we need a better communication system."

"To increase compensation… To provide benefits… To address the mental health of providers…"

"To stop burden on both providers and [agency staff]. There's so much duplication and inefficiency now, and nobody's happy.… Build a smarter system that stops a lot of the unnecessary tasks and work which speeds up the process of hiring, frees up providers to focus more on kids, and frees up [agency staff] to focus more on… technical assistance and support."

"Build professional learning that targets exactly what a person needs. Could see where there's systemic needs and ensure we're addressing that though course content."

"Answer what is working. Does a higher credential teacher working in a higher Maryland EXCELS program lead to a better school readiness outcome for a child? Right now, we don't have the pieces connected and I could connect the pieces to know where we need to increase our investments, strengthen our systems, and justify what's making a difference."

The focus groups offered an opportunity to discuss in greater detail functionality as identified through background research and the surveys, and in response to the defined gaps from the Key Leader interviews. In the focus groups, various functions, protocols, and operational models were presented for feedback and discussion, with each of the four groups having the opportunity to identify additional items. No items were identified for removal from the initial set of functions, but several items were added or expanded upon with input through the focus groups, and areas of caution or consideration were identified with regard to the implementation of a Registry. Below are the final set of high-level functions Maryland's Registry should perform at minimum. It is important to note, the next step in implementing a Registry would be to conduct a technical requirements process if the state agrees with the recommendation to proceed with developing its own system. This is a formal process for defining these functional ideas into actual specifications for design and coding. At that time, additional functionality may be identified or potentially modified based on technical feasibility and costs.

Recommend Registry Minimum Functional Specifications

The following key functions reflect NWRA's 12 core recommended roles and then extend beyond to position Maryland as a leader in the ECE field. It is assumed that the system would be based on core demographic data that at minimum aligns to the recommended profile collection as noted in Figure 2 from the NWRA.

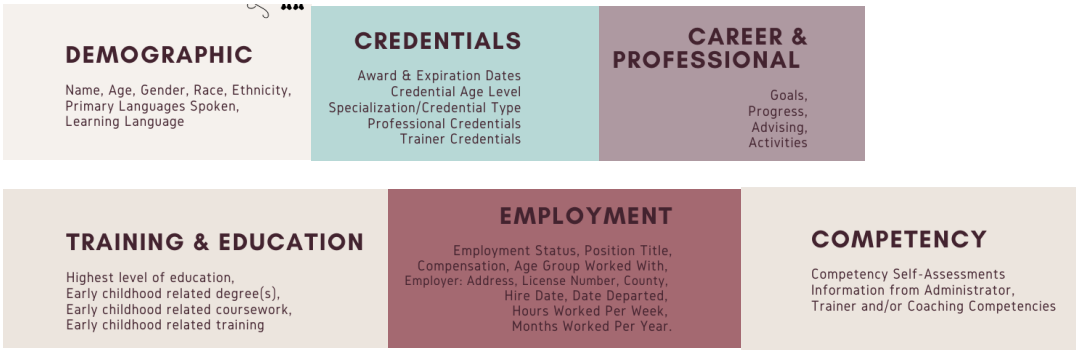

Figure 2. Recommended Registry Workforce Profile Data Elements[5](Belcher-Badal, 2023)

Additionally, the Maryland Registry should be able to perform the following functions:

a. **Provide a job board for future career opportunities*** with ability for employer and employee (current and future) to analyze how a potential/retained hire would increase/maintain program participation in initiatives like Maryland EXCELS, PreK Expansion, Accreditation, and Scholarship; with both parties able to see the associated estimated revenue increases gained from program participation in these initiatives. Enabling a built in "calculator" tool to support reasonable compensation negotiations by all parties.

b. **Enable guided creation and posting of digital profile* and resume**, with the ability for employers to search for candidates based on resume qualifications. Profiles would include all key demographic data, including current place of employment, position, salary, and benefits. Work and education experience would also be collected. Certain fields would only capture data for the backend system versus public display, and users would have the ability to control their data. As these are data that can be sensitive, demonstrated value for sharing must be obvious to users, and clear protection of their data must be in place.

c. Allow **public recognition of spotlighted provider profiles*** to increase awareness and respect of the field. This can help increase professional recognition, akin to the 1980s "*those who can, teach*," public-service announcements, and can create financial sustainability and incentive models, inviting corporate sponsors (i.e. Target, Walmart, Kaplan, etc.) to underwrite the costs of

[5] Belcher-Badal, K., (2023). *The National ECE Workforce Dataset: What is it, what's in it, and who does it represent?* The National Workforce Registry Alliance. Buffett Early Childhood Institute, University of Nebraska. https://www.Registryalliance.org/the-national-ece-workforce-dataset-what-is-it-whats-in-it-and-who-does-it- represent/

Registry in exchange for branded promotion and developed ECE professional discount programs similar to what is available for K-12 teachers.

d. Increase **access to ECE professional scholarships** by recommending eligible scholarships based on user profiles and enabling direct application. Ability to track utilization of funding sources to inform policy makers and funders of which programs are most efficacious.

e. Provide **professional development planning tools in conjunction with a career lattice**, that both recommend/allow exploration of career pathways, associated roles, responsibilities, and competencies, and prescribed training/professional learning that is automatically presented to the user based on their selections.**An included Career-Self Assessment would help current members of the workforce evaluate their current position and qualifications compared to targeted desired positions, and provide structured feedback and resources needed to achieve that goal, and could also be used for pre-service individuals who are interested in entering the field through programs like apprenticeships, career technical education training, or traditional degree/certification.

f. **Connecting recommended professional training to associated child/student profiles*** with a given ECE educator, where the system analyzes gaps between the students' needs (i.e. low literacy scores) and ECE professional's competency/training areas (i.e. Science of Reading), and then makes recommended Professional Learning Plans with suggested courses/trainings and direct links to enroll.

g. Provide a **"one-stop-shop" portal with access to register/link to registrations for all available trainings/courses/technical assistance and other synchronous and asynchronous resources** (i.e. online modules, tools, external links, articles, etc.), with a **universal Training Calendar*** featuring descriptions, formats, and availability of various offerings. This function would also serve as the place to collect attendance for all approved Maryland trainings, issue certificates of completion, report on performance, and submit and approve new trainings.

h. **Allow competency assessment and management, and credit equivalency and articulation,** between non- and for-credit offerings, including defining specific competency standards, tracking evidence of attainment of competencies, creating competency badge credentials and establishing stackable credential models, with established credit articulation agreements between degree granting institutions. Defining equivalencies between awarded competencies and various other MSDE initiatives (i.e. Maryland EXCELS standards; Accreditation; Maryland Child Care Credentialing,**etc.)

i. Provide **access to online coaching/mentoring** – both synchronous and asynchronous, professional, peer, and automated, and through established communities of practice to enable professional support. Support can range from instructional practices to grant management and completion.

j. Enable **access to health care information and support**, including mental health, and potentially serve to **increase access to benefits by including all participants as a beneficiary pool**, and

then providing benefits through the Registry for health insurance, retirement savings, education savings etc.

k. Operate a **substitute* and centralized recruitment and hiring service through the Registry**. Commercial entities like the Nanny Network have this functionality in place but at limited scale for their customers already, and the Registry could enable centralizing all background screening and fingerprinting information, a repository of personnel seeking temporary work and/or looking to be hired who then serve as substitutes while awaiting openings. Regulatory changes could also enable pre-service or post-service candidates to pass background checks and be entered into a cadre of substitutes; with post-service providing a new career pathway and semi-paid retirement opportunity for the field that does not currently exist.

l. Provide **access to financial well-being information and support, including connecting to eligible financial assistance programs; establishing centralized professional lending programs; investment tools and resources; and compensation benchmarking based on generated aggregate data to enable employees to assess their current compensation relative to comparable characteristics in the marketplace; examine potential financial growth opportunities based on professional advancement and get guidance on return-on-investments when they do advance their professional certifications versus earning potential**. These could also serve as a direct payment vehicle to providers for Credentialing, Maryland EXCELS bonuses, and other financial incentives that are currently managed through the CCATS system with reported concerns about timeliness and accuracy.

m. Ensure all functions and features are able to be **provided in multiple languages; are accessible; and intuitive**. Providers talked about making systems that are easy to navigate; user-friendly; and like commercial products they use compared to typical government and education systems they find to be complex and obtuse.

n. **Increase reporting and repository capabilities**, including public facing dashboards and information, and then detailed reporting that is available at the state, local, program, and provider levels. Providers should be able to access all data on themselves and flag any information for change. Shifting the onus for verification from the state to ingrained layers – (i.e. the owner/director; the trainer/university; a dedicated Registry review team), with the state serving only to provide certain final verifications (i.e. fingerprinting). All records, course transcripts, certificates of completions will reside in each providers' profile like a digital portfolio, reducing time lags and burden in communicating with the state to obtain copies of information. As information flows up, using API data connectivity between systems, evidentiary pieces that fulfill requirements in multiple systems will be flagged, retained in the Registry, and then marked as completed in the other systems, and vice versa when appropriate. (NOTE – as stated, when proceeding, a technical requirements process will be needed to define all these relationships).

o. **Serve as a communication tool**, both for imparting key information to the Workforce, for gathering feedback through surveys and other data collection, and for establishing a forum for bi-

directional communication between professionals and agencies to generate trust and establish a mechanism for co-creating policy and practices.

*These functions are currently a part of and/or planned additions to the Maryland Family Network's (MFN) suite of tools offered through its LOCATE database, shared services subscription model, and/or training tools. Some of these are not fully available to the public, but require either a paid subscription, or are more robust for entities within the Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R) which MFN manages, but the base infrastructure is in place and MFN has recently received funding under Maryland's federally awarded Preschool Development Grant to enhance and expand some of these resources. In total, MFN has/plans to have at least 7 key functions of the 34 discrete elements identified. This is a critical step toward implementing a Registry in Maryland and speaks to the strategy of developing a system architecture that connects the existing components versus duplicating functionality and further bifurcating data collection efforts.

**The University of Maryland, Center for Early Childhood Education and Early Intervention (CECEI), at College Park, has recently been awarded a contract by MSDE to "redevelop" the Maryland Child Care Credentialing program. The full scope and scale that this entails is not known, but in interviews, CECEI leadership describe aspects of a career lattice, Registry, and competency-based model as their vision. CECEI recently hired key personnel with expertise in these areas and familiarity with the Call to Action. That said, Credentialing currently is not funded in the FY27 budget, though legislation is pending to try and address this. The Maryland Credentialing program as it currently exists would be an integrated part of the Registry; and potentially it could easily be modified to address the competency measurement needs of the field. Again, Maryland's Registry approach should seek to leverage existing assets versus creating competing and duplicative models.

Participants identified several considerations when designing the Registry.

- Heightened concern about the potential misuse of personal data to identify individuals, particularly based on ethnicity or nationality – and wanting to ensure strict safeguards of data, policies and legal protections to prevent misuse, and limitations of collected data that could potentially compromise the safety and security of an individual
- While many users saw the value in having access to compensation data, and to be able to benchmark their compensation against averages in their area, they were concerned about sharing their personal information.
- Users liked the ability to have a portfolio record of all their completed courses and trainings and other professional records, but they worried about information potentially being used against them by future employers or for promotions – i.e. if they were not successful in a course or training, or if a personnel evaluation was visible within their Registry profile. It is worth noting that most Registries do not collect individual personnel performance evaluation data. It was discussed that there should be tiered permission levels for data access, with certain data defined as universally shared with the state/employers; certain data made optional as controlled by the provider, with the state incentivizing sharing if

desired, or allowing that information to exist purely for the benefit of a centralized repository for the professional.

- The theme of burden was frequent, with users often citing a perception that state initiatives are "done to them" not for or with them and seldom make their lives easier or better. It is paramount that the system's utility to the providers is self-evident first and foremost, and that must be the guiding design principle.
- The data needs to be transparent; this theme came up from different perspectives in both focus groups and leader interviews, with providers wanting to access their own data but also to easily see aggregate data about the workforce, and several leaders in various roles expressing a similar sentiment. They do not want to have to make multiple requests or go through "the agency" to see information; they want to be able to access dashboards and see the information directly themselves.
- It has to make life better. Many users understood that by virtue of using a Registry, which wouldn't automatically increase wages, but instead it created information models to help make arguments for wage increases. That said, they want to see real policy and practice changes that directly benefit their lives coming from using the Registry. They do not want to generate "data just for reports," but instead want there to actionable data that leads to observable improvements for them.

2. Estimated Costs

Implementing a Registry will require startup costs in both technology and infrastructure, and ongoing costs of operating and maintaining that system and utilizing the personnel necessary to support the workforce. Exact costs are difficult to specify at this time based on the following factors:

- Commercial vendors do not have defined pricing models.
- A technical requirements process is needed to accurately describe the level of new programming; integration with existing platforms; or customization of off-the-shelf products, and the subsequent associated level of effort.
- There are potential cost-savings available based on key policy and integration decisions governing Maryland's existing ECE efforts.

That said, this report's author led the development and operation of ECE Registries in the states of Tennessee and Alabama, along with the Maryland EXCELS QRIS system. An understanding of those costs helps provide insight into estimated costs for Maryland. Additionally, commercially available products were reviewed and pricing requested, though none was provided without setting up meetings with state officials. Still, the review of commercial products helped to inform the recommendation that Maryland should build its own system versus purchase a commercial product.

Based on the author's previous work and broadly corroborated by pricing details shared by peer states, it is estimated that the cost for implementing a workforce Registry in Maryland would be

about **$775K at full price**. In Tennessee and Alabama, they were able to reduce these costs by sharing in the development of a common data system. In Maryland, a similar strategy could be explored, both through partnership with other states, including those two as they no longer have dedicated expertise to maintain and upgrade their system, and potentially a state like California which is potentially losing its statewide Registry due to funding in the next year. Another way Maryland could likely reduce costs is by integrating aspects of Registry functionality which are currently developed but reside in disparate locations, under various points of management, across the state, into a comprehensive Registry system. This would reduce duplication of effort and leverage previous investments. Lastly, as mentioned earlier, there are novel strategies to consider, such as corporate sponsorships of the Registry, given access to a 40K market (and potentially expanding) of early childhood professionals. Other states have experimented with charging the workforce to utilize the Registry, charging programs, and/or charging professional learning providers. It is strongly recommended that Maryland not consider the first two options. During the research that informed the initial *Call to Action*, peer states that had utilized this model cautioned against it as it undercut their participation aims, and both states had abandoned that approach. Likewise, literature reviews showed states that maintain a user/program fee have lower Registry participation rates than states without one. The final fee strategy can be equally disincentivizing to the goals of implementing a Registry, as a key aim and request of the field is to increase professional growth, and to reduce burden and barriers by providing easier access to learning opportunities. Charging trainers, colleges, and other outlets to have their content featured may prevent those groups from providing access through the Registry; thus, undermining the functional objective. If anything, the state could consider a revenue share model wherein any promoted course/training within the Registry that collects tuition from participants pays a nominal fee to the Registry if an individual signs up and pays for the training by way of the link to the Registry. The main consideration with this approach is to ensure that the algorithm that recommends trainings and courses does so based on priority of best match by user need, content, geography, accessibility, and other elements, whether a learning opportunity is free or for fee, and not driven by generating revenue streams.

Ongoing costs are estimated in two categories:

1. **Technology** – base data system, associated maintenance and upkeep, and personnel associated with operations.
2. **Facilitation** – personnel who manage the processes, user engagement and item reviews, and all customer service aspects.

Ongoing technology costs should be estimated at approximately **$1 million/year**, inclusive of 70% maintenance and core operation and 30% new development and enhancements. New development costs are an area that can be reduced by sharing across multiple partners implementing the same system, with each equally splitting the total costs. For maintenance, the 70% could likely be reduced to approximately 40-50% dedicated annual cost to Maryland if at least one other state were to adopt the same Registry system. Those expenses could be further reduced by leveraging existing infrastructure.

For facilitation costs, the National Workforce Registry Alliance reports the average staffing model is 1 FTE/6,470 users. In Maryland, our ECE workforce has approximately 40,100 members. That yields an FTE of 6.2. Using the Maryland EXCELS program coordinator position as a model, which are personnel who work remotely, with subject expertise and depth of experience in early childhood, and conduct user-artifact review and analysis, coaching and communication with Maryland EXCELS programs, the average based salary is $75K, and with benefits brings to a personnel cost of $100K per FTE. This would be an estimated $620,000 in staffing costs. Additionally, direct marketing would be required to engage users and encourage participation. A recommended $150K marketing budget would be suggested for year 1 with the potential to reduce in subsequent years with adoption. As was previously recommended in the *Call to Action*, a state university is well positioned to assume these responsibilities. They have the personnel, infrastructure, and cross-institutional relationships to perform transcript reviews and award credit for both formal and informal learning. The average indirect cost rate for a public university is 15%, so the total estimated year 1 facilitation costs would be **$885,500**. Strategies to reduce these costs include leveraging existing personnel. Maryland EXCELS currently uses a two-tiered rating and review process split between Program Coordinators employed by Johns Hopkins University and Quality Assurance Specialists employed by MSDE. This model relies heavily on a *process* approach to rating the quality of child care and early learning environments. Some aspects of process are integral to ensuring a structural foundation, but research has demonstrated measures of *implemented* quality are a stronger indicator of the impact of programming on a child's long-term outcomes. Implemented quality is more effectively measured via direct observation of practices, actions, and interactions occurring within a classroom. Since the inception of Maryland EXCELS, Maryland has increased its infrastructure for onsite visits to programs. Between MSDE personnel conducting Instructional Quality Rating (IQR) visits; CLASS assessments; and licensing visits; there are multiple routine touchpoints for trained observers to enter programs. Additionally, other personnel across Maryland's ECE ecosystem, from trainers to technical assistant specialists and CCR&R professionals, to families themselves, all have regular and consistent insights into the implemented practices within ECE programs. Maryland could look to revamp the EXCELS system to adopt a matrix of review model that utilizes all of these potential observations toward calculating and verifying evidence of implemented quality. This could free up existing investments in personnel to be reallocated toward efforts like supporting the Registry. This is one example of what are potentially multiple cost-saving approaches by assuming a systemic view of Maryland ECE initiatives, examining all the currently allocated resources and assets, defining the targeted end-goals, and then assessing where there could be reallocations.

In summary, Maryland can expect approximately $775K to develop and implement a Registry.

Ongoing annual costs would be about $1.885 million, and typically there was 5% estimated inflation; though that rate is higher presently. There are multiple strategies to reduce costs, including sharing across a coalition of states; leveraging existing assets within Maryland; seeking corporate sponsorships; and examining how to reallocate personnel across various initiatives. As noted in the *Call to Action*, the majority of states co-locate their registries with their quality rating

improvement systems (QRIS). This strategy often leads to economies of scale by sharing operating infrastructure and personnel. In Maryland, Johns Hopkins is currently the operational partner for Maryland EXCELS, the state's QRIS. The university divested from its projects in Registry. Recommendations for an operational home for Registry will be made under the *Implementation of an Operational Model* section of this report.

These development costs represent Maryland creating/operating its own system. As mentioned, there are multiple commercial products available, though they did not disclose pricing. A review of eight commercial products was conducted. These products, compared by available features, are listed in Table 2, with Quickbase and Schoology being used in tandem in Washington, DC, but performing separate functions. Care Connect by MCT Technologies was also reviewed. MCT currently works throughout California primarily, but also in several other locations, and mainly provides child care program management software. They have been approached by the counties of San Bernadino, Los Angeles, and San Diego about developing a Registry. While MCT does not have a specific Registry, they are receptive to helping develop one across multiple state/county adopters. They also have a reported history of working with Sarah Neville-Morgan. IDEALS 360 is the Registry previously developed by this author's team while at Johns Hopkins University, but the software has been transferred to Tennessee State University. It has a restricted license by the university to not be used in its current iteration with any other entities. Many of the technology development experts who contributed to that system are still available here in Maryland, and they expertise would be invaluable in helping Maryland develop its own system or working in conjunction with Tennessee to rebuild a new shared system. Salesforce is not another specific Registry product, but a universal modular software management system utilized by many data collection enterprise systems. It is highly configurable, but a common complaint by end-users is because it is not specifically designed for a given use-case, it is not intuitive, user-friendly, and sometimes limited in the resulting functionality. Salesforce is used across much of Maryland governmental data systems, enabling easier integration, and it is the platform which the University of Maryland will use as they rebuild the Maryland Child Care Credentialing System.

Table 2. Commercial Registry Products by Available Functions & Features

Functions/Features	Vendors						
	New World Insights	Cornerstone	Salesforce	Registry One	Quickbase/ Schoology	TCC Ascend	IDEALS 360
Career Ladder / Lattice Assignment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Credential Approval	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Director/ Head Teacher/ Sponsoring Agency Approval	X	X	X	X			X
Trainer/Training/Training Organization Approval	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Training Calendar	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Registration / Payment Services for Trainings	X	X	X	X		X	X
Learning Management System	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Scholarship Administration	X		X	X		X	X
Conference/Sessions Approval	X		X	X			X
Competencies Self-Assessment	X		X				X
Professional Development Planning Tool	X		X	X	X	X	X
Training & Professional Development Transcripts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Verify Training Attendance, History, & Education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Employment History Verification	X	X	X	X			X
Workforce Data Reports	X	X	X	X		X	X
Substitute Pool			X	X			
Provider Communication System			X	X			X
Multi-Language/Accessibility	X		X	X			X
Guided Learning/Training Recommendations			X				X
Portal Access to External Registration Systems			X				X
Integrated Supports/Resources for Workforce Wellness			X				X
Job Board	X		X	X			X
Resume Maker	X		X	X	X		X

3. Identified Connections

As mentioned, Maryland's efforts to implement a Registry are greatly benefitted by existing or planned related infrastructure. The following provides an overview of several points of alignment between current technological systems, policies, programmatic initiatives, and support structures and a workforce Registry.

Maryland Family Network (MFN) has multiple elements of a desired workforce Registry established. Namely:

a. Job Board
b. User Profile
c. Plans to initiate a "Spotlight" series
d. Plans to bring in child-level assessment data to create student profiles which are then associated to a given teacher profile
e. Statewide training calendar, and access to registration for all "MFN" trainers
f. Substitute pool available to subscribers of their shared service model
g. Degree of reporting capabilities

University of Maryland, CECEI, is rebuilding the Maryland Credentialing System. While specific details are not clear, CECEI has indicated they would develop a career ladder and Registry-like system as part of their scope of work. Credentialing as it currently stands would be an integrated part of the Registry, in alignment with Maryland's to be defined B-5 Career Lattice. The Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program also has the core infrastructure in place to expand/shift its focus to include competency measurement, standardization, tracking, and credit equalization, particularly if managed by a public university. Competency measurement and integration is a core functional requirement of registries nationally, and a top priority as requested specifically by Maryland users.

Senate Bill 359 – Child Care Facilities Criminal History Background Check Requirement

Introduced legislation in the 2026 Maryland Session requiring MSDE to establish a centralized unit for the processing and management of information about criminal history records checks. While not specified as a Registry; it has a structural similarity. The bill has additional aspects to it, but this element would be a core functional use-case for the Registry, is a key data element to include as part of the user profile and would help solidify a legislative basis for the Registry.

Maryland EXCELS – the majority of states co-locate their QRIS and Registry work together. In part, this is because there is significant overlap between evidence of quality that is measured for the program, and artifacts individual ECE educators submit to demonstrate their professional standing along a career lattice. As Maryland Accreditation already has overlap with EXCELS, and a frequent complaint by providers is the lack of recognized credit for attaining Accreditation status at the highest level of Maryland EXCELS, this is another area where there is overlap between the work efforts. At minimum, evidence that is submitted by individuals tracking their professional advancements should automatically award credit under the "Staff Qualifications" standards within

Maryland EXCELS for the associated program in which those individuals are employed. At the same time, as noted by many of the leader interviewees, there is a need to answer the relationship between staff experience and professional levels, with program quality, with child outcomes, with return on public investments. This is ultimately the synthesized formula of Maryland's ECE system: strong personnel + strong environments = children ready for success in school and life; but currently the infrastructure is not in place to accurately and effectively measure this hypothesis. Arguably, the strength of the family and community have mitigating effects on that child's trajectory as well, so being able to create a data model that connects holistic workforce information with holistic child and family information and comprehensive environmental/ecosystem information would most effectively identify causal relationships.

Maryland Child Care Provider Portal – Managed by MSDE, this site allows providers to renew their child care licensure, view invoices and payment history, manage child attendance, view scholarship requests, and request transcripts and training information. This is the basis for much of the current existing workforce data. As identified in the interviews and focus groups, there are challenges with the current system. Some are workflow oriented; some are process; and some are actual functionality and defined data elements, but there are aspects that can be built upon and leveraged toward an improved system.

Local Universities/Training Organizations - Maryland Institutes of Higher Education operate degree granting programs, apprenticeship models, and informal learning programs. These are all accessed through a variety of different enrollment systems and mechanisms. Additionally, Maryland's Child Care Resource and Referral Network, and independent approved trainers, all offer a variety of trainings fulfilling various clock hour and topic requirements. Currently, there is not a strong, single coordination model that pulls these all together; there are multiple registration processes; from formalized enrollments to less structured "sign-ups," and the completion tracking and award process is not uniform and varies in sophistication. MFN has infrastructure in place that is serving some of this need, currently mostly for the CCR&R network they manage, but could be expanded to include all training entities, and new functionality within the Registry could build on this to create a single access entry point that connects users to the various registration systems that do exist, and creates a uniform registration, tracking, and certificate award system for those entities that currently do not have their own system in place.

Maryland State Child Care Association/Family Child Care Alliance – these organizations are leading efforts to provide grant support and management to PreK applicants. Additionally, they, and many other associations, provide training, technical assistance, mentoring and coaching. As defined under the Provider Hubs within HB 1441, these entities would be ideal coaching infrastructure providers to encourage and guide usage of the Registry, serve as mentors and coaches, and to support centralized hiring and placement models.

4. Implementation of Operational Model

In this section, a vision for an operational model for a Maryland Registry will be shared. In lieu of naming specific organizations, the overarching model and associated rationale is presented. There are organizations that readily meet these criteria now, and while preparing this report, the author had discussions with specific organizations to discuss their capacity and interest in serving in these roles. But as additional organizations could be considered by the state that meet the structural criteria, specific entities are not being publicly named. Fundamentally, Maryland will be best served by developing an operational model that leverages existing infrastructure and partners under a coordinated and connected Registry system.

This approach establishes a Coordination Coalition, which may logically be the evolution of the cross-sector taskforce, to guide the implementation and ongoing operation of the Registry under the purview of the state agency. (NOTE – presently this is included at no cost, though conceivably such an entity would be better served by having a budget and paid time for its members to ensure focused availability. That would be an additional cost to what was previously outlined.) It is important to note, while the Registry is a state system, the most successful ones are "owned" by the field itself, with the data generated being beneficial to the state. A public university would be the lead organization, responsible for being the direct point of contact for system users and performing all processes within the Registry. Multiple community partners would be engaged to contribute assets they currently have developed; connect systems/training/courses they operate; and to help promote the adoption of the Registry. Finally, a Technology Team, reporting to the Coordination Coalition, would develop and maintain the technology infrastructure.

Utilizing this framework, the following approach is recommended:

State Agency – defines policy and requirements, establishes and manages funding administration

Public University – leads direct transcript reviews and evidentiary submission; facilitates processes and procedures for advancing professional growth of individuals. Serve as "lead organization."

Coordination Coalition – a cross-sector body comprised of both governmental and community partners who oversee the implementation, utilization, and performance of the Registry. Representatives from key contributing organizations that connect/use/support the Registry all participate along with affiliated stakeholders from business, consumer, and the workforce sectors.

Community Partner(s) – existing organizations operating system elements that contribute to the Registry. This could be in a technological or an operational adoption capacity.

Technology System Team – likely a combination of hired, allocated government, university, and/or partner resources, focused on defining how the component parts of the Registry connect to existing elements; what new aspects need to be built or purchased; and then having responsibility for ongoing operation and maintenance.

To assist the state in implementation, key roles are further defined below:

Public University: As was previously cited in the *Call to Action,* housing the Registry within a public university is the second most common operational model in the nation with 12 states opting for this structure. In conducting this report, a secondary analysis was completed, and of the 19 states which operate the Registry within a governmental agency, at least 6 of those are in partnership with a public college or university where the state agency has established an operational relationship through a cooperative agreement.[6] This means a public university as the primary operating entity is really the predominant model in practice with 18 states using this approach compared to 13 completely operated by a state agency, and the rest by a nonprofit, CCR&R, or some other entity.

The strengths of a public university are the ability to conduct transcript reviews and make professional learning recommendations; engage in articulation and reciprocal credit agreements – particularly from 2-year to 4-year institutions; to equally conduct research, customer service, operations, and outreach; and to leverage state resources and infrastructure while maintaining a semblance of independence and autonomy.

The ideal public university would have an established infrastructure and experience to perform the above duties. Should the state consider integration of their QRIS and Registry systems, it would have the capacity to absorb that team and effort. It would have strong fiscal and operational management processes and capabilities, with the ability to effectively track and monitor its own performance as well as sub-awards to partner organizations. It should have the capacity and track record of procuring funding, both grant and philanthropic, in the ECE implementation and/or research space, with an expectation of helping to do so toward the sustainability of the Registry. It should have personnel with credibility in ECE workforce issues, policies, and practices, and a demonstrated record of contributing to Maryland's ECE system. It needs to be an effective collaborator and team player, willing to work across institutions, both other IHEs, government, and community partners, and in close consultation with the state agency and Coordination Coalition.

Coordination Coalition – the third workforce recommendation described by MMF was for Maryland to convene a cross-sector taskforce designed to elevate the needs of the ECE workforce as both a social and economic imperative. Tremendous progress has been made in this regard, in part laying the groundwork for the formation of the Maryland Early Care and Education Coalition, and more broadly synergistic efforts between the state's general workforce initiatives and early childhood. Likewise, MMF itself built an infrastructure of expert, advisory, and leadership stakeholders who have varying connectivity to Maryland's ECE system and workforce efforts. Any and all of these entities could comprise the Coordination Coalition, which in essence will be a multi-entity, cross-sector group tasked with ensuring the Registry's implementation is reflective of the various constituencies being served. At minimum, the Coalition should have user, state agency, lead public university, and each contributing community partner representatives. Additional organizational

[6] Based on "Member Profiles" reported on the NWRA website: https://www.Registryalliance.org/member-profiles/ unless interviewee provided more current numbers.

representatives, such as from the Early Care and Education Coalition, Governor's Workforce Development Board, Governor's Innovation Team, related state agencies like the Governor's Office of Children, and legislators, would be advised.

Technology System Team – it is recommended that Maryland develop its own Registry, either independently or in collaboration with other states/jurisdictions via a shared service model. As such, the state will want to employ a technology team. The Governor's Innovation Team could potentially be an internal state resource to support this effort. As mentioned, there are available experts within Maryland with experience designing and building these systems who could be a resource. Technology representatives from each contributing system from community partners and any other leveraged infrastructure would join this team, and collectively they would report to the Coordination Coalition, which would feature representation from the lead public university. Fundamentally, the team will want access to expertise in conducting technical requirements for Registry systems; experience with APIs and Salesforce; experience developing SSO; understanding and experience with XAPI and SCORM; understanding of AI integration; and familiarity with designing cross-platform for web and mobile applications.

5. Timeline & Considerations

Given the financial realities Maryland faces, there is not a likely investment of unallocated funding in the coming years to realize this critical resource. Instead, the state is more likely to achieve this goal through leveraging existing efforts.

1. **2026 Maryland Session** – add a budget note seeking to expand upon MMF's efforts to bring a Registry to Maryland; building upon the legislative and economic benefit momentum MMF has established via outreach and advocacy and leveraging the Registry Benefits and Implementation reports; the note will seek to support a Legislative Workgroup to build upon the collective MMF recommendations and materials toward defining ways current state initiatives, efforts, and funding could be better aligned in support of implementing a Registry.
2. **2026 Maryland Session** – seek to add language to SB 359 that connects that database explicitly to a Registry
3. **2026 Maryland Session** – seek a to analyze the Maryland EXCELS process and standards, and determine if a revamped model would achieve the same intended aims, without disruption, and could free resources to be reallocated toward Registry.
4. **FY26** – Work with the Governor's office to identify ways a Registry strengthens the early childhood system in support of ENOUGH's aims to end childhood poverty.
5. **FY27** – Work with MSDE to identify ways the Registry aligns with the state's awarded Preschool Development Grant priorities.
6. **Consideration** – a use-case of the Registry is to help guide currently non-licensed providers into becoming licensed. While there is a movement to advocate for recognition of these professionals, Maryland currently considers this illegal care. Any mandatory reporting entity – which public universities, most nonprofits, and government agencies are – would not be

allowed to knowingly enroll an individual who is actively providing illegal care. Either there needs to be an exploration of legislation to address this issue, a narrowing of the audience being served, or some other solution discussed with MSDE.

Summary Recommendations

In conclusion, the following recommendations for Maryland's Workforce Registry are made:

Functionality

1. Data Profile aligned with NWRA recommendations
2. Job Board
3. Compensation Calculator
4. Employee Credentials/Program State Initiative Participation Analysis Hiring & Valuation Tool
5. Digital Profile
6. Resume Builder
7. Resume Display, Search, & Recommendation
8. Public Recognition Program
9. Corporate Sponsorship & Professional Discount Program
10. Access to ECE Professional Scholarships
11. Integrated Career Lattice
12. Professional Development Planning Tools
13. Career Self-Assessment
14. Recommended Professional Training
15. Associated Professional Profile with Child/Student Profile
16. Suggested Professional Learning Plan & Completion Tracking
17. One-Stop-Shop Portal Access to Registrations for All Trainings/Courses/TA
18. Universal Training Calendar
19. Competency Assessment, Management, and Credit Articulation
20. Access to Online Coaching/Mentoring
21. Health Care Information & Support
22. Benefits Pooled Enrollment for Health, Retirement, Education, etc.
23. Substitute Pool
24. Centralized Recruitment & Hiring
25. Centralized Background Checks
26. Financial Well-Being Tools & Resources
27. Compensation Benchmarking
28. Professional Lending Programs
29. Direct Payment to Providers
30. Multi-lingual, Accessible, & Intuitive Functionality
31. Web and Mobile Applications
32. Increased Reporting, including Public Dashboards
33. Certificate/File Repository/Portfolio
34. Bi-Directional Communication Tool

Costs

Expect approximately $775K to develop and implement a Registry.
Ongoing annual costs would be about $1.885 million, with 5% estimated annual inflation.

Strategies to mitigate costs include: shared service operation with other states/counties; corporate sponsorships; leveraging existing infrastructure initiatives; examining initiatives like Maryland EXCELS for efficiencies and aligning the initiatives.

Connections

Maryland Family Network has at least 7/34 functions of the Registry established or planned, so integrating their work and leveraging their systems instead of duplicating efforts is a logical and cost-effective approach.

University of Maryland, Center for Early Childhood Education and Early Intervention (CECEI), at College Park, has a contract for rebuild the Maryland Child Care Credentialing program, which has inherent alignment to a Registry and Career Lattice, so collaborating with them and integrating their work would also be an effective and efficient approach.

The state child care associations and alliances, training organizations, resource and referral networks all provide critical content, support, and services to the workforce. They are integral to aligning their training/course offerings, enlisting their services as coaches and mentors, and overall conduits to engaging the workforce in adopting and benefiting from the Registry.

Implementation Model

The State Agency defines the policies, procedures, and allocates and monitors the funding.
A public university serves as the lead organization for operational management, providing personnel to conduct customer service, research, direct service to the workforce, outreach, and management. They will work with identified community partners that contribute aspects of their systems and/or services toward a seamless and integrated model. A Coordination Coalition, comprised of representatives from each of these organizations, and additional stakeholders, will help govern and guide the entire implementation, including overseeing a Technology Team that works across all partners to design, develop, and maintain the Registry technology infrastructure.

Timelines & Considerations

In 2026: Seeking a Budget Note in Maryland General Assembly to Convene a Legislative Taskgroup that will expand upon MMF's recommendations and seek to create alignment across various state initiatives, policies, and funding priorities toward defining a consensus plan for launching a Registry. Additional strategies include working with MSDE to seek alignment with the Governor's ENOUGH Initiative, and making connections to SB 359 which calls for the establishment of a background check database at MSDE.

2026/2027 – work with MSDE to seek alignment with the state's awarded PDG grant.

Registry use case initially called for creating pathways of support for unlicensed care providers, but due to Maryland's Mandatory Reporter laws, any nonprofit/university/government entity would be obligated to report those individuals to the state. We need to seek a solution to that in order to support their participation.

Conclusion

ECE professionals are the "workforce behind the workforce," and Maryland needs to demonstrate we are behind them 100% by implementing a Workforce Registry. MSDE's Division of Early Childhood has a projected $966.1 million operating budget for FY27[7]. The proposed implementation cost of Registry at $775K equals less than .0008% of the budget. Even at the cost of implementation plus operation, it is .0027% of the budget. The long sought CCATS modernization project, which currently houses what workforce data Maryland does collect, has been paused again due to procurement challenges. This further reinforces the need for a Registry, as waiting for the other systems, which have been plagued by operational and customer service problems for years and rife with deeply entrenched vendor interests, will continue to prioritize business needs before the needs of Maryland's ECE workforce, which in turn is what drives our children, families, and economy. All the investments being made – from the $284 million for Public PreK to the $544 million for the Child Care Scholarship Program to the $8 million for Workforce Program Quality Development to the funding for ENOUGH – they are all strengthened when the ECE workforce is. Quality begins with workforce, so we need to have the tools in place to attract, retain, and support our ECE professionals. Currently, Maryland has significant gaps in this regard. We are behind our peers across the nation, but if we implement a Registry, we stand not only to catch up but move ahead as the leader we have historically been. The time is now.

[7] Maryland Legislative Services (2026). Early Childhood Development. Maryland State Department of Education. R00A99. https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2027fy-budget-docs-operating-R00A99-MSDE-Early-Childhood-Development.pdf#:~:text=The%20largest%20cost%20driver%20is%20the%20Maryland,share%20of%20overall%20Blueprint%20early%20childhood%20spending.