

A Unifying Foundation for the Early Childhood Workforce

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Transforming The Early Childhood Workforce In Nebraska

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Topics

- Overview of the IOM Report
- Recommendation #1
 - competency-based qualifications
- Recommendation #2
 - pathways to the BA

Study Sponsors

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
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 - Administration for Children and Families
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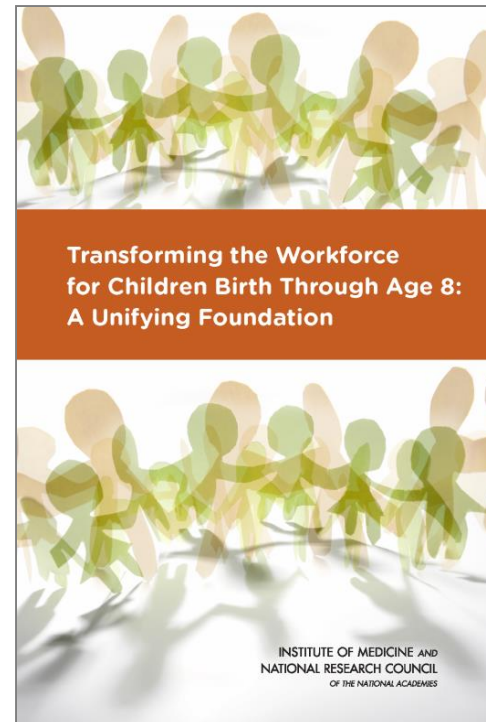
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Study Process and Approach



Information Gathering Sources

Document review

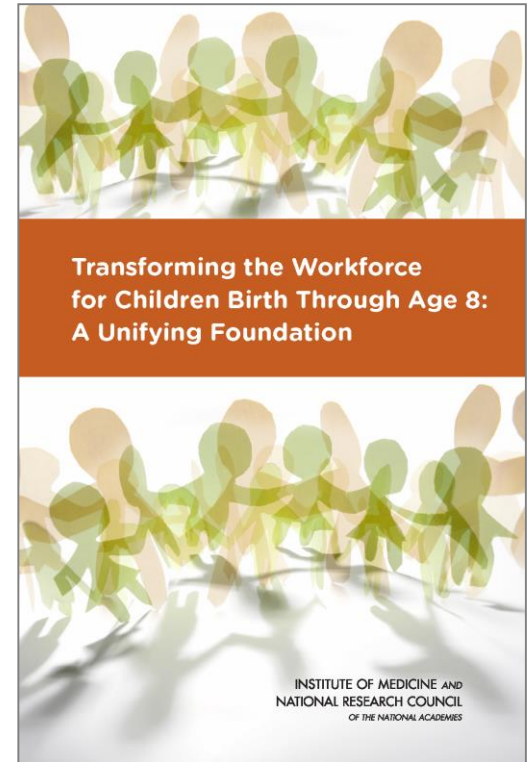
Public sessions

Site visits and interviews

Practitioner advisors

Abbreviated Statement of Task

How can the science of children's health, learning, and development inform how the workforce supports children from birth through age 8?





The Early Childhood Workforce(s)

No nationally agreed upon set of standards that define what early childhood professionals should know and be able to do

Theory of Action

Early Care & Education Workforce

Supporting the ECE workforce leads to:

- Higher quality of early learning experiences
- Improved opportunities for children to reach their full potential

Key Messages

Children are already learning at birth.

Development & learning in the early years is rapid and cumulative – and is the foundation for lifelong progress.

Adults who care for and educate children, from birth through age 8, bear a great responsibility for their health, development, and learning.

Just when consistent, continuous support is so important, systems & services for children – and systems that support the adults who work with them – are fragmented.

Key Messages

Practices and policies do not always reflect the knowledge and competencies indicated by the science.

High-quality practice requires more than individual mastery of competencies.

Vision

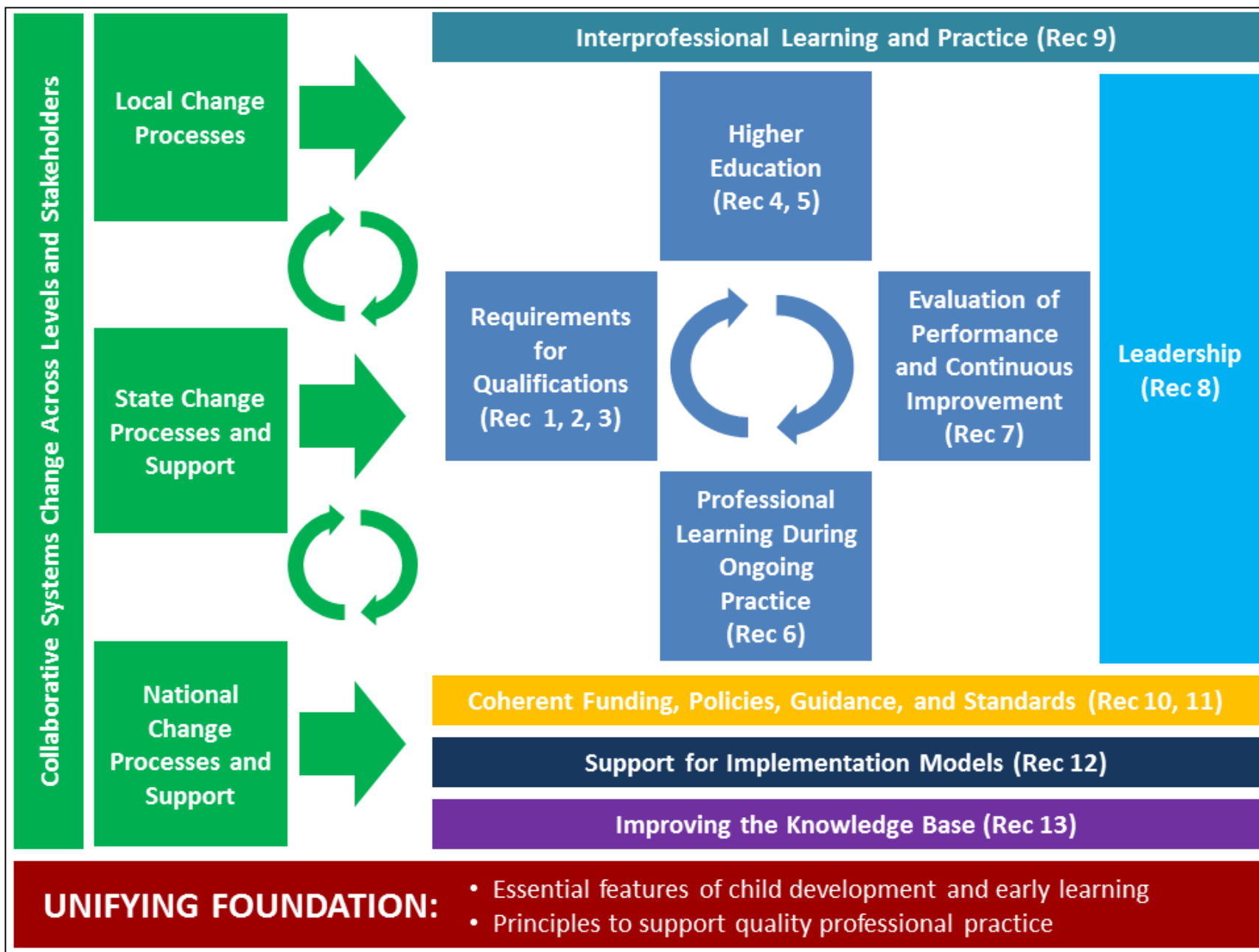
A care and education workforce for children birth through age 8 that is unified by:

- A foundation of the science of child development and early learning,
- Shared knowledge and competencies, and
- Principles to support quality professional practice at all levels.

Result

All children experience high-quality and continuity in support of their development and early learning

Overview of Recommendations: A Blueprint for Action



Recommendation 1

Strengthen competency-based qualifications requirements for all care and education professionals working with children from birth through age 8.

Actions

Government agencies and nongovernmental organizations at the national, state, and local levels should:

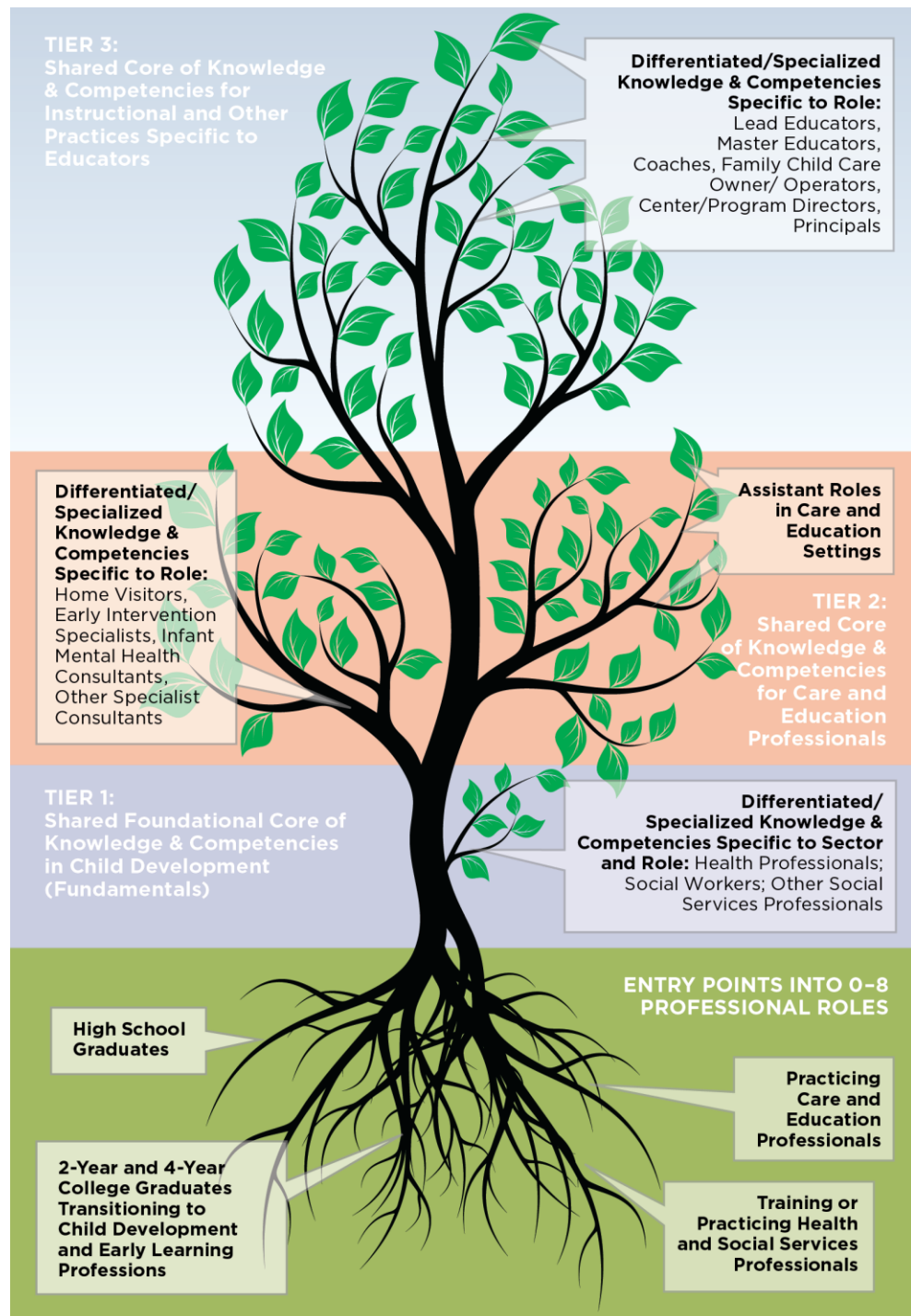
- review their standards and policies for workforce qualification requirements
- revise them as needed to ensure they are competency-based for all care and education professionals.

Actions

These requirements should ...

- Reflect *foundational* knowledge and competencies shared across professional roles working with children from birth through age 8
- Reflect *specific and differentiated* knowledge and competencies matched to the practice needs and expectations for specific roles.

Professional Roles in Care and Education: Shared and Specialized Competencies



A Unifying Foundation: Essential Features of Child Development

- Early foundations continuously inform future development and learning.
- A dynamic *interaction* among experiences, gene expression, and brain development underlies development and learning.
- Stress and adversity experienced by children can undermine learning and impair socioemotional and physical well-being.

A Unifying Foundation: Essential Features of Child Development

- Secure and responsive relationships with adults, **AND** high-quality, positive learning interactions and environments, are foundational for the healthy development of young children.
- Conversely, adults who are under-informed, underprepared, or subject to chronic stress themselves may contribute to children's experiences of adversity and stress and undermine their development and learning.

A Unifying Foundation: Principles to Support Quality Practice

- Professionals need foundational and specific competencies.
- Professionals need to be able to support diverse populations.
- Professional learning systems need to develop and sustain professional competencies.

A Unifying Foundation: Essential Features of Child Development

- Practice environments need to enable high-quality practice.
- Systems and policies need to align with the aims of high-quality practice.
- Professional practice, systems, and policies need to be adaptive.

Recommendation 2

Develop and implement comprehensive pathways and multiyear timelines for transitioning to a minimum bachelor's degree qualification requirement, with specialized knowledge and competencies, for **all lead educators** working with children from birth through age 8.

The recommendations in this presentation are abbreviated; see Chapter 12 for complete recommendations and implementation considerations.

Degree Requirement for Lead Educators

Current Context

- Current disconnect between the science of early development and the workforce competencies
- Different degree requirement policies create a divided market
- Lower educational expectations imply less expertise

Rationale for the BA & Competencies

Existing research does not:

- Provide conclusive guidance
- Discount the potential that a high-quality college education can better provide positive outcomes for adults and children

Lower educational expectations for ece educators:

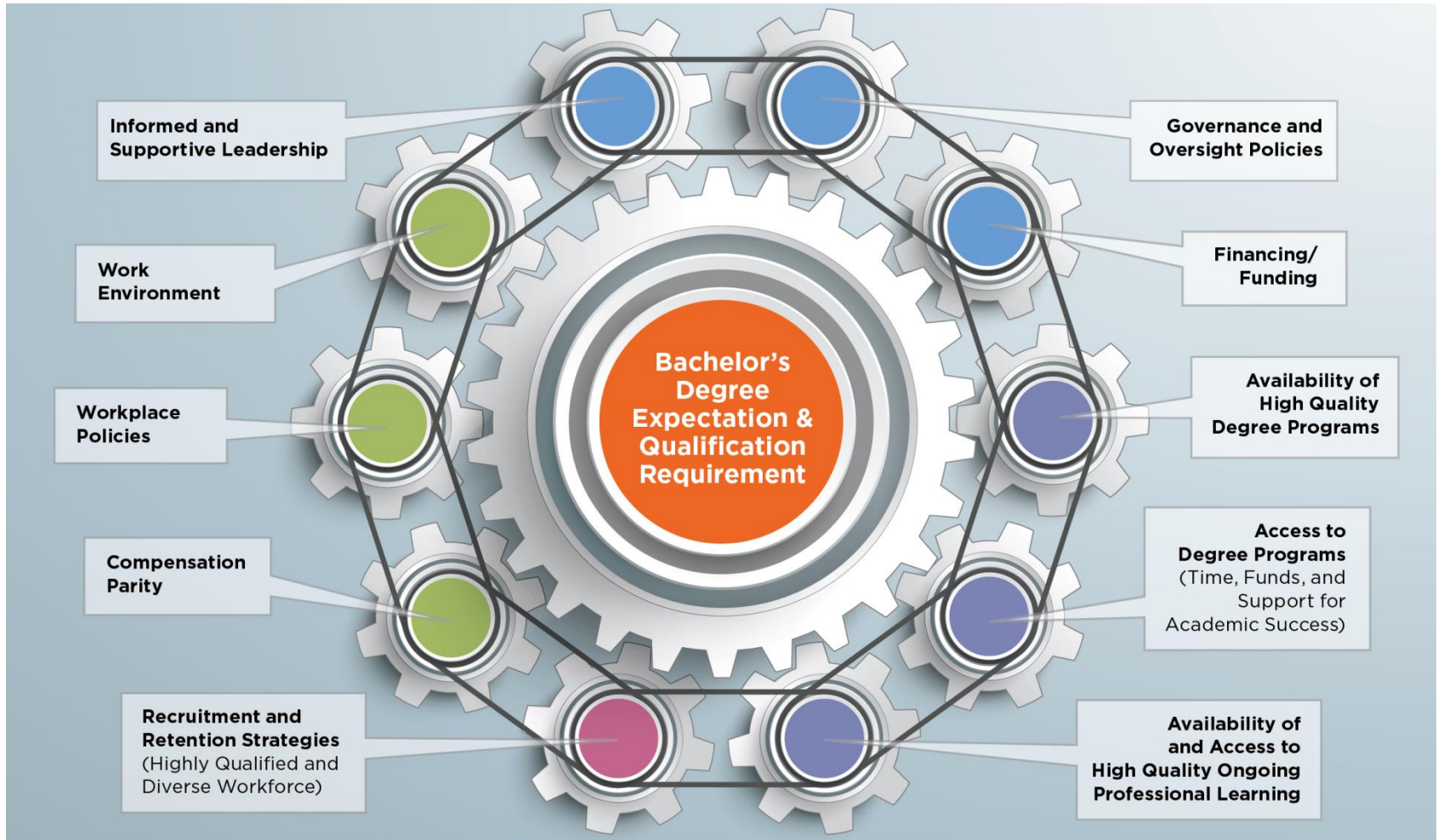
- Perpetuate the perception that less expertise is required to teach children birth - 5 than children 5 – 8.

Degree Requirement for Lead Educators

Implementation Considerations

- Carefully over time
- Multiyear, phased, multicomponent, and coordinated strategy
- Tailored to local circumstances
- Coordinated at individual, institutional, and policy levels
- Larger context of interrelated factors

Implement in the context of efforts to address other interrelated factors:



The BA Requirement Alone Is Not Sufficient

Degree Requirements for Lead Educators

Actions

Collaborative strategy across:

- State leadership
- Licensure and accreditation agencies
- State and local early childhood stakeholders
- Institutions of higher education

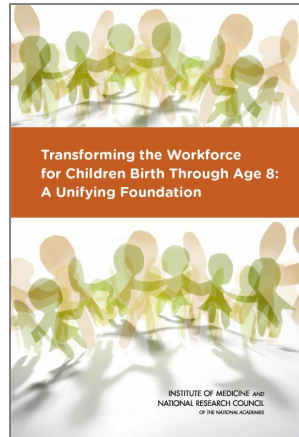
Degree Requirements for Lead Educators

Actions

Federal government agencies and nongovernmental organizations:

- Alignment of program policies, transition pathways, and timelines
- Incentives for the transition
- Fund the transition

Call to Action



Commit to pathways that will lead us to the systems and policies that we *need* (rather than making do within what we *have*).

This is not fast, easy, or cheap. It will require a strategic, progressive trajectory to transform the professional landscape, accompanied by significant commitment, mobilization of resources, and innovations in financing.

But the status quo will perpetuate today's fragmented approach, resulting in less than adequate support for children's development and learning.

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

Higher Education: Interdisciplinary Foundation

Recommendation 4:

Build an interdisciplinary foundation in higher education for child development.

The recommendations in this presentation are abbreviated; see Chapter 12 for complete recommendations and implementation considerations.

Higher Education: Interdisciplinary Foundation

Actions

- **Create shared interdisciplinary foundation** for professionals in education, social services, and health/allied health professions.
 - Core requirements for coursework, other learning activities, and field-based learning experiences
- **Provide funding to incentivize interdisciplinary** approaches
- **Revise accreditation and review criteria** for institutions to include an interdisciplinary approach.

Recommendation 5:

Develop and enhance programs in higher education for care and education professionals working with children from birth through age 8.

The recommendations in this presentation are abbreviated; see Chapter 12 for complete recommendations and implementation considerations.

Higher Education for Care and Education Professionals

Actions

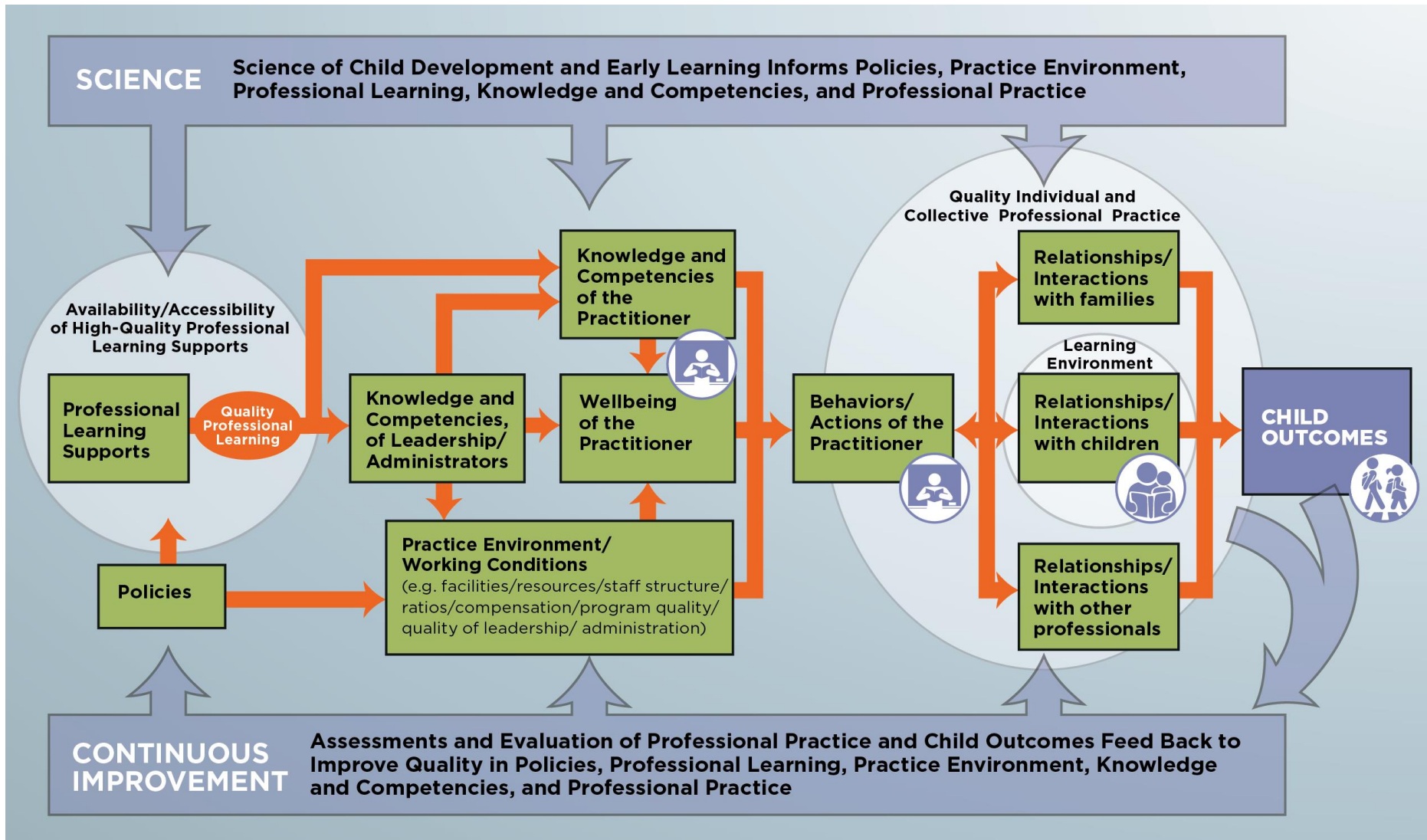
- **Enhance the content of higher education programs**
 - course of study includes and integrates child development/early learning, subject matter content, instructional and other practices, field experiences, and methods to document mastery of practice
 - programs that differ by age range, subject matter, or specialized roles should ensure adequate knowledge of birth through age 8
 - curricula pay attention to concurrent learning, not just sequential experiences
- **Work with local practice communities**
 - contribute a practice-based perspective to the design of programs
 - identify and develop appropriate and diverse field placements

Higher Education for Care and Education Professionals

Will Not Be Business as Usual

- Establish cross-institutional relationships to bolster the quality, availability, and accessibility of higher education programs for care and education professionals
 - Develop professional learning communities across disciplines and departments
 - Incentivize cross-departmental preparation
 - Use teaching teams from different disciplines to provide core content
 - Facilitate knowledge-sharing among faculty of varying disciplines
 - Educate graduate students to be rooted in the sciences of child development and pedagogy who are also interdisciplinary in their training and approach
 - Hire new faculty who are interdisciplinary

Many Factors Contribute to Quality Practice



Rationale for the BA & Competencies

- Unequal degree requirement policies create a bifurcated job market
(e.g. elementary schools vs. early care & education; Head Start vs. publicly funded prekindergarten programs)
- The high level of complex knowledge and competencies necessary for educators working with young children birth – 8 requires equal footing among those who share similar lead educator roles and responsibilities for children.