Leveraging Workforce Credentials as Pathways to Degrees

College Changes Everything

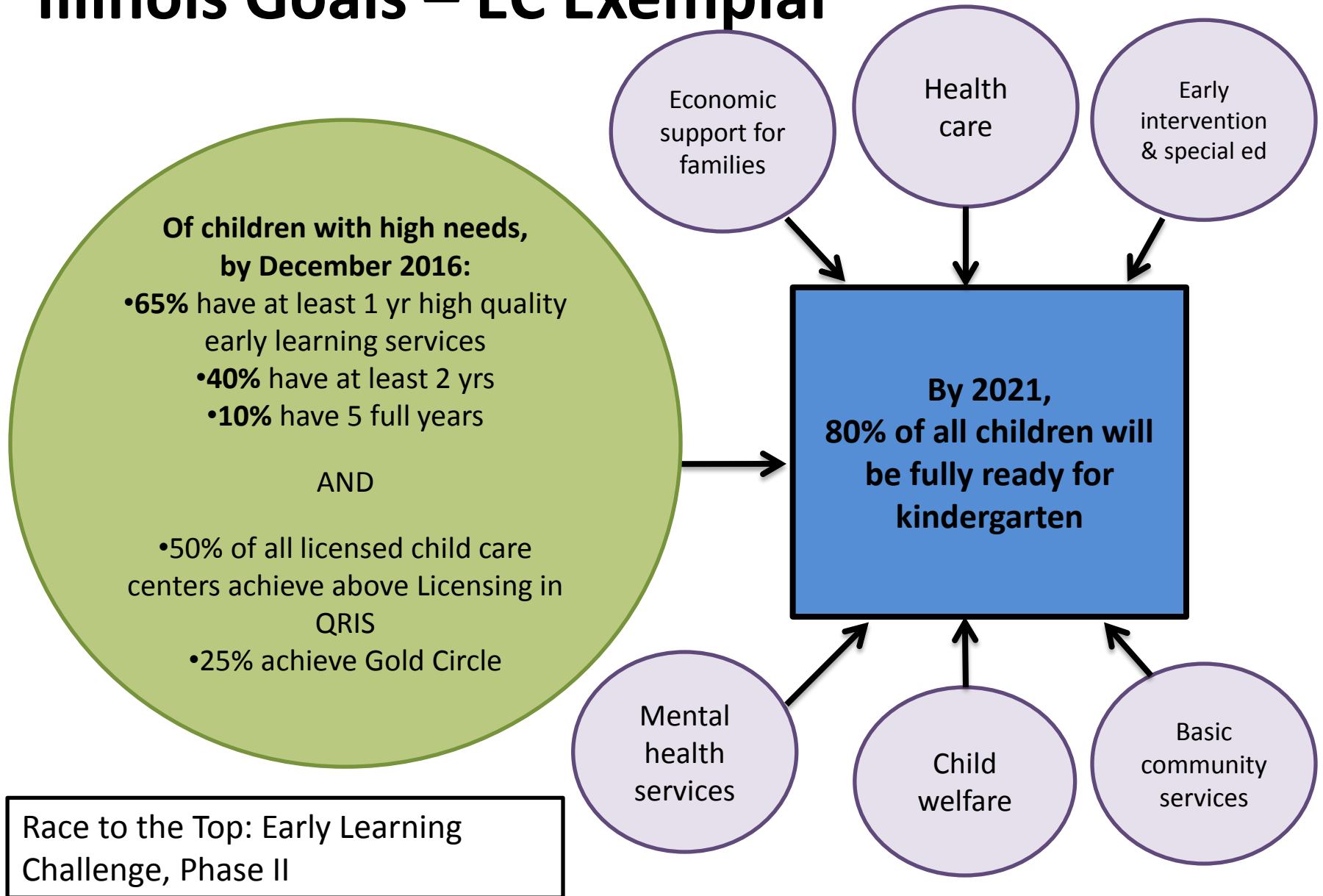### July 2016

Presenters

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    Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE)

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    Illinois Education Research Council (IERC)

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Session Aims – EC Project Exemplar

We will highlight the Illinois collaborative work to:

- **Analyze higher education systems and credentialing data to identify areas of misalignment**

- **Involve stakeholders to analyze alignment issues across systems and recommend evidence-based changes**

- **Develop and implement technical assistance**

- **Research partnership initiatives to improve workforce development pathways through the alignment of credentials and degrees**

Illinois Goals – EC Exemplar

Of children with high needs, by December 2016:
- **65%** have at least 1 yr high quality early learning services
- **40%** have at least 2 yrs
- **10%** have 5 full years

AND

- **50%** of all licensed child care centers achieve above Licensing in QRIS
- **25%** achieve Gold Circle

Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge, Phase II

Economic support for families

Health care

Early intervention & special ed

By 2021, 80% of all children will be fully ready for kindergarten

Mental health services

Child welfare

Basic community services

Workforce is Key to Quality

Support Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities

Key Strategy:
Embed the IL Gateways Credentials in ExceleRate® Illinois

GATEWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY®
Illinois Professional Development System

Key Strategy:
Engage higher education in Illinois, including the 80 two and four-year institutions with teacher preparation programs
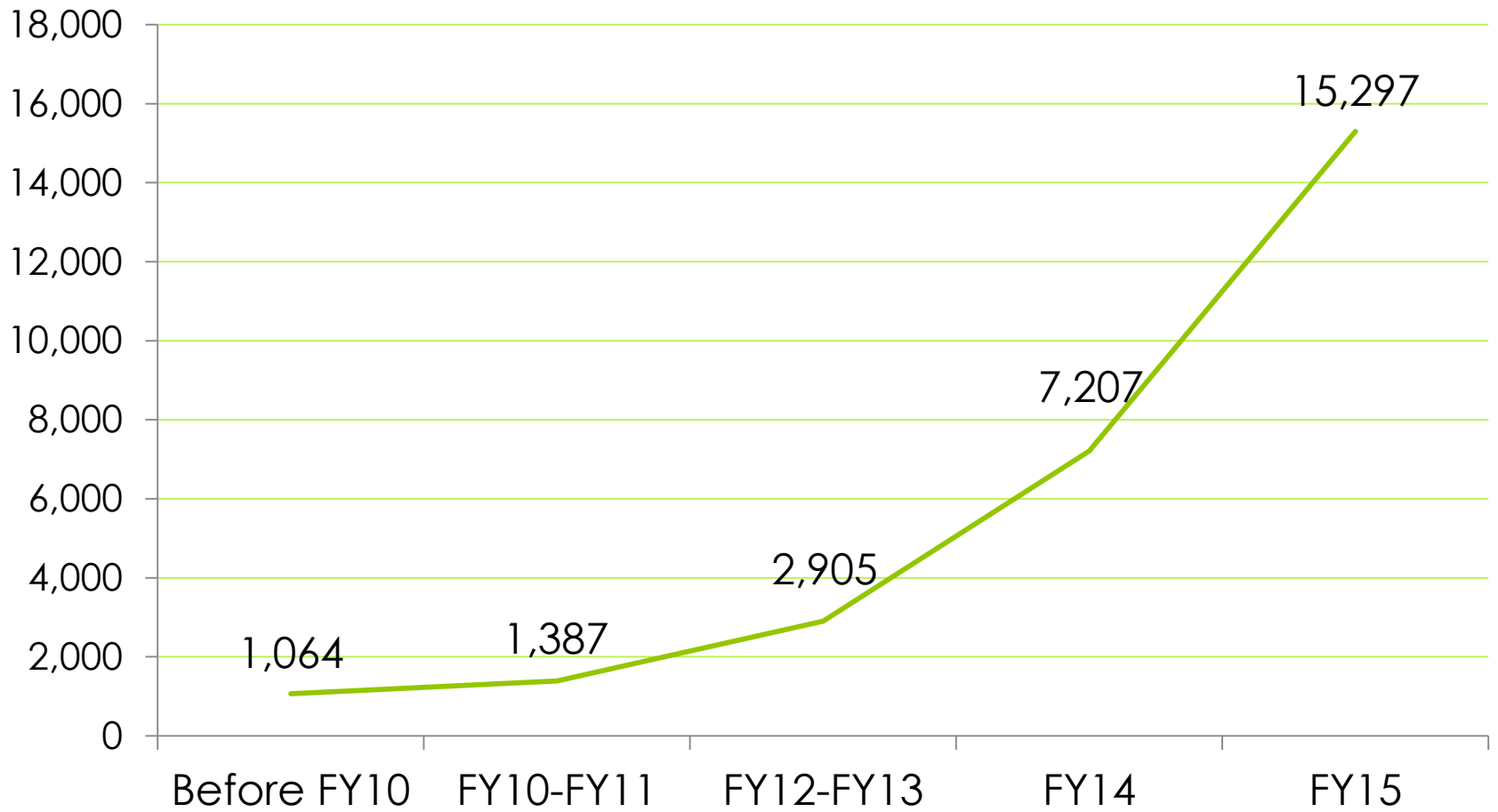
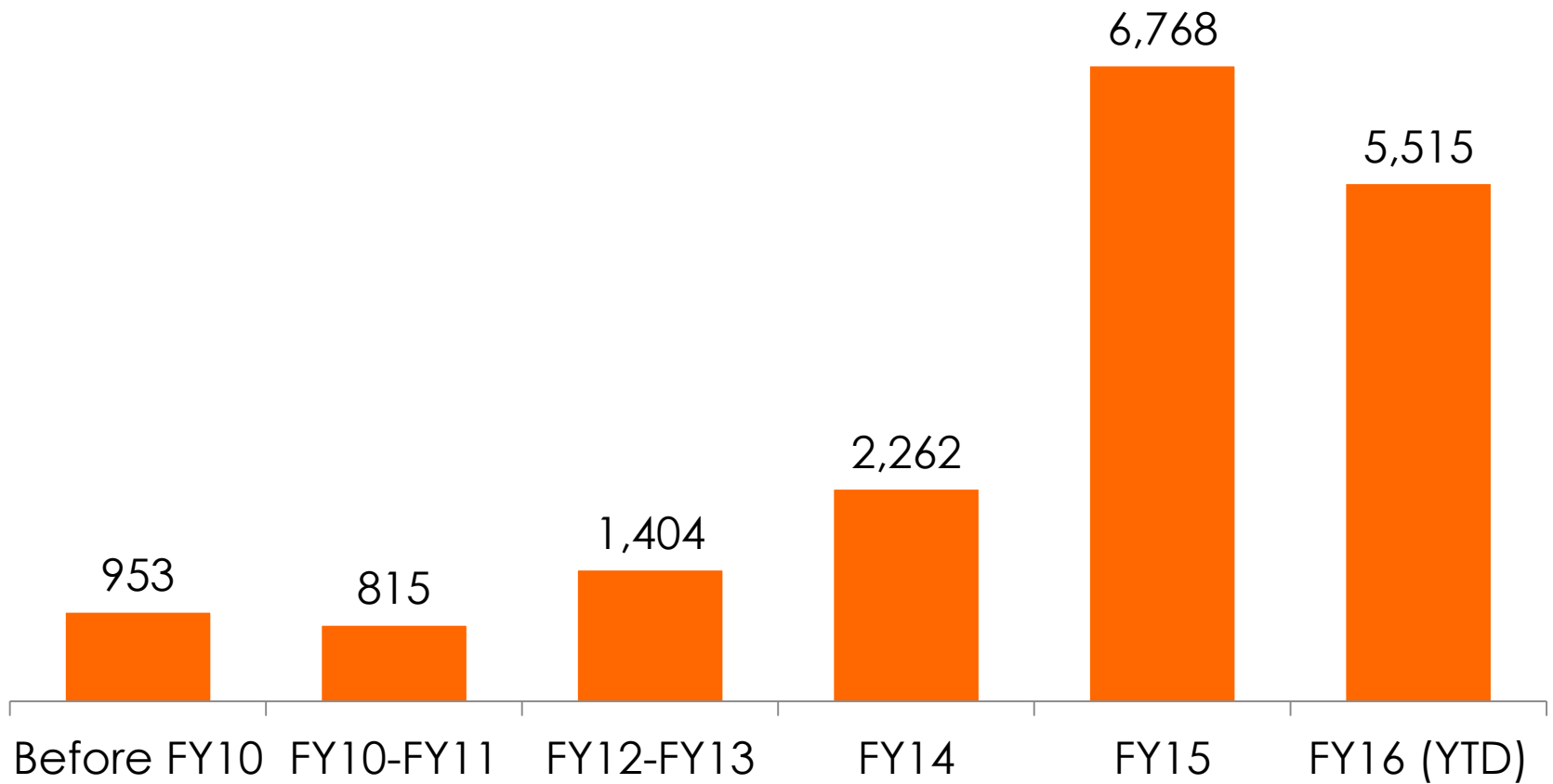**ExceleRate®** | ILLINOIS

Preparing Children for Success

Illinois Gateways Registry

- Nearly 100,000 have joined since July 2009
  - DCFS mandated for licensed providers (Sept. 2012)
    - Majority of Head Start programs are licensed
  - Mandated for MIECHV home visitors/supervisors (Sept. 2015)
  - Working to ensure school-based professionals are included
- Approximately 77,000 "active members"
  - 58,000 in group settings

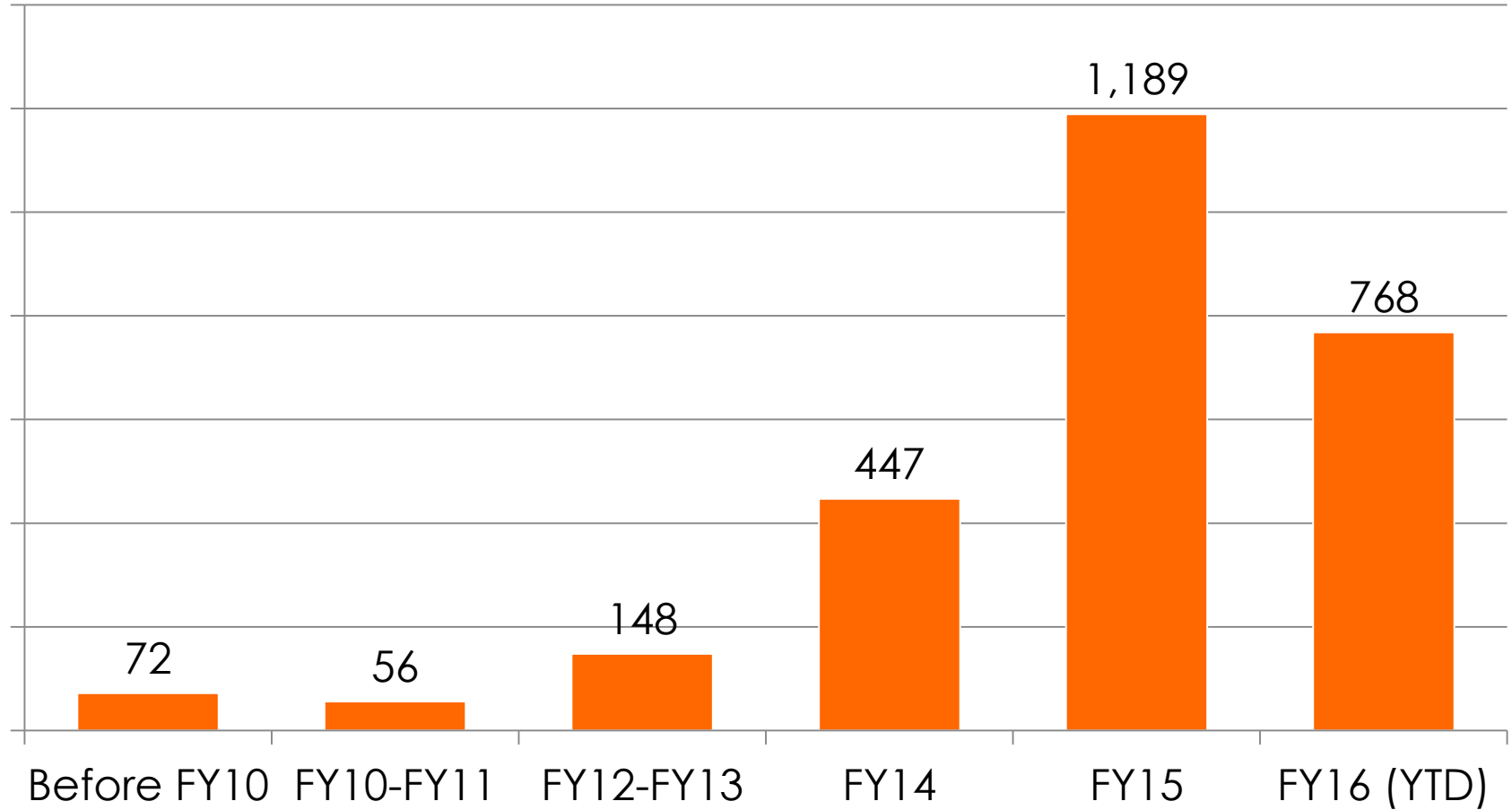# EC Gateways Credential Applications

EC Gateways Credentials Awarded

Bar chart showing EC Gateways Credentials Awarded:
- Before FY10: 953
- FY10-FY11: 815
- FY12-FY13: 1,404
- FY14: 2,262
- FY15: 6,768
- FY16 (YTD): 5,515

EC Credentials Awarded - Completion of Entitled Programs

EC Credential State Workgroup

Opportunity to examine early childhood professional preparation in Illinois in order to address some of the following questions:

- How has early childhood teacher and administrator preparation, including the Gateways Credentials, shifted to meet new state and federal mandates, as well as continue to meet the changing needs and constraints of the field?

- How can we cohesively build on this work to create an even stronger system of professional preparation to meet these future challenges?

EC Credential Workgroup Process

In the Fall of 2014 the ECE Credential State Team convened an advisory group comprised of community college and four-year institution partners.

- This group met for a two-day retreat in December of 2014 to begin examining strengths and challenges related to Illinois early childhood education preparation and specifically to:
    - identify specific programmatic strategies to more fully align programs, course series, certificates, etc. with the Gateways Credentials;
    - provide logistical and systems recommendations for Gateways and institutional procedures to enhance the institutional/Gateways partnership for candidates/ practitioners; and
    - recommend a communications strategy for sharing recommendations of the panel to all early childhood constituencies including employers, government agencies, and candidates/ practitioners.

EC Credential Workgroup Process

Two substantive issues were identified as driving this process:

- the number of early childhood professionals in the field with wide-ranging hours of completed coursework that do not lead to a degree or a credential.

- the number of candidates/practitioners fully completing degree requirements and/or credential requirements but never "officially" becoming program completers or obtaining the appropriate Gateways Credentials.

- Data were collected and analyzed to help contextualize and better understand the multiple layers of this problem from the employer, candidate/ practitioner, higher education preparation, and agency perspectives.

EC Credential Workgroup Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Increasing candidate/ practitioner credentialing and completion through calibration of systems.

Administering the Credential system to enhance seamless transitions through the credential levels for early childhood practitioners and employers.

- Eliminating Barriers and Issues
- Stackability, Embedding & Articulation
- Benchmarks to Competencies
- Entitlement Processes

EC Credential Workgroup Recommendations

Recommendation 2:

Increasing candidate/ practitioner credentialing and completion through aligned programs.

*Encourage and support **IHE** program design to more comprehensively and systematically align with the Gateways credential system providing seamless transitions through credential levels and degrees for early childhood practitioners and employers.*

- Technical Assistance /Coaching Project
- Competency development, vetting
    - Rubric & assessment toolbox
- Tandem Work with ECE course articulation efforts (IAI)
- Gateways ECE Competency Process Project

EC Credential Workgroup Recommendations

Recommendation 3:

Increasing candidate/ practitioner credentialing and completion through communication and partnership.
The ECE Credential State Team should systematically undertake a significant communication strategy to ensure stakeholders fully understand the revised credential system, process, and requirements.

- *HERO Website*
- *Annual Higher Ed Symposium*
- *State Committees & Constituent Groups*
- *Conference & Agency Presentations*

EC Credential Stackability and System Alignment

Example Issues:

Alignment with teacher licensure

Certificates vs. Credentials

Transferable Math

Financial Aid

Gateways ECE Credential

L6: Master's

L5: Bachelor's

L4: Associate's /60 hrs.

L3: 27 hours

L2: 12 hours

Entitlement Process

Communication

EC Gateways Credential Changes

Level 2: Change from 12 to 16 points
- Align with federal financial aid requirements
- Additional 4 points can be in any non-developmental coursework (i.e., Gen Ed, ECE, etc.)

Level 3: Change from Transferable to "Any" Math
- Required math can be a Gen Ed or an ECE course
- Can be focused on what teachers need to know or how to teach concepts to young children.

EC Technical Assistance Project

- Key goals: supporting stackability and alignment with Gateways Credentials
  - Anticipated outcomes
    - Seamless pathway for students
    - Increased completion rates at institutions
    - Increased attainment of Gateways Credentials
- TA model provided direct coaching and support to faculty from team of colleagues
  - Developed and disseminated model design
  - Provided exemplars for marketing and connection to varied stakeholders

EC Technical Assistance Project

- Previously disparate system moved to fairly continuous
    - Key levers
        - Dissemination of developed model
        - Provision of direct coaching and mentoring
        - Support in capitalizing on concrete strategies supporting institutional development (automatic completion, clarity in pathways)
- Flexibility, responsiveness and collaboration catalyst for opportunity
    - Created new solutions and opportunities around math
    - Increased flexibility and infrastructure support for articulation
    - Operationalized idea of clear, cohesive pathway to professionalism in the field

EC EPPI Higher Education Grants

2014-2015 & 2015-2016 Partnerships
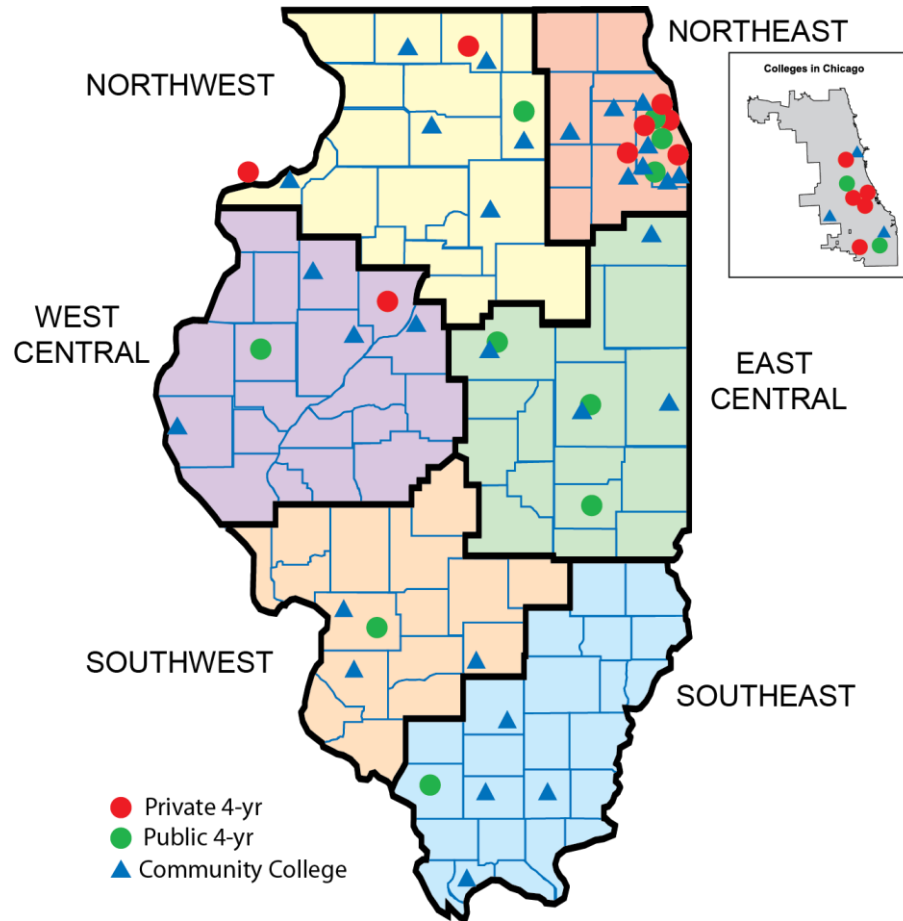
IERC Research Study

- IBHE Early Childhood Educator Innovation Grant: Promising Practices

- 2yr and 4yr institutional partnership to develop models for ECE preparation and to build capacity in key areas of need:
    - Flexible pathways for degree/credential attainment
    - Supporting/advising transfer students
    - Early math curricula
    - Working with English language learners

Study Goals

- Using case-study approach, examine the innovative and promising practices implemented by the grantees

- Determine what progress the EPPI grant recipients are making, with particular attention to partnership activities

- Determine challenges and strategies to overcome them

- Establish policy recommendations for promising practices for future early childhood partnerships

Innovative/Promising Practices

- Flexible pathways for degree/credential attainment
- Supporting/advising transfer students
- Early math curricula
- Working with English language learners
- Alignment of Assessment
- Field Placements
- Infant/Toddler
- Special Education

Study Participants

- Case study
- Each 4yr principal investigator was invited to be interviewed
  - Asked for at least 1 additional member to interview
- Participants
  - 35 individuals from 17 separate partnerships
    - 16 = PIs from 4yr
    - 18 = partners from 2yr
    - 1 = community agency
  - 6 partnerships from public institutions; 11 from non-public institutions

Methodology

- Reviewed proposal narratives and project artifacts
- Semi-structured interviews (50-90 minutes)
  - Brief description of major activities
  - Catalysts, barriers, strategies
  - Core components needed for success
  - Sustainability of grant activities
  - Policy and practice implications
  - Tailored questions to match innovation
- Interviews summarized; reviewed for accuracy
- Coding and analysis for overarching themes

Today's Focus

- Flexible pathways for degree/credential attainment
  - Brief description of major activities
  - Core components needed for success
  - Examples of innovative practices
- 7 partnerships
  - 4 partnerships with 1 yr funding
  - 3 partnerships with 2 yrs funding

Example of Activities

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
Align 2yr & 4yr curriculum to find mismatches and holes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Field placements	X		X				
Bridge course/program						X	
Pathway to BA non-licensure degree		X		X		X	X
Pathway to ECE BA degree with Teacher certification		X		X		X	
Gateways credentials		X	X			X	X
Community partnership			X	X		X	
Regional EC advisory board			X				
Advising support (guide)			X		X		X
Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) preparation assistance			X				

Core Components Needed for Success

- Goal of aligning 2yr and 4yr programs that meet standards and Gateways requirements –
  - AAS transfer as a junior with "no questions asked"
- Buy-in from all stakeholders
  - Partners
  - Institutions
  - Faculty in other disciplines
- Funding to support time and travel needed to do grant work
- Communication about availability of the transfer pathway
- Support from others with previous experience with grant (technical assistance)

Quotes

- *"Buy-in is critical."*

- *"Don't expect to sit down and write an articulation plan overnight."*

- *"Be patient and persistent...this is complex work and it takes time for all to understand."*

- *"It was very helpful to have SB and CC to visit to share information and other resources and program models."*

Core Components Needed for Success

- Authentic Partnerships
  - Open mind for understanding
  - Trust relationship
  - Respect work of partners
  - Necessary players at the table
  - Time to build relationships
  - Consistency of members
  - Group emphasis, rather than 1 key player
- Discipline expert driven – deep understanding of the field and variations in job/career options
- Commitment to regular face-to-face meetings

Quotes

- *"Instead of starting with a solution right away, we tried to start with an understanding."*

- *"I'm not going to tell them what to do and I don't expect them to tell me what to do."*

- *"The core of all this work is the trust in the relationship."*

- *"Coming to respect my CC colleagues and their work…The trust that developed was the critical piece."*

- *"Key is to be able to meet consistently."*

Innovative Practice #1: Summer Bridge Course

- 4yr and 2yr partners reviewed all their courses to see where things aligned

- No expectation for either program to redesign, however, 2yr partners agreed to course changes

- Partnership developed summer bridge course to fill in the gaps from the AAS for the ECE licensure program without losing credits; also have option for BS without licensure

- Assessment alignment - final exam in summer bridge course is the same for regular courses at 4yr

- 4yr faculty will co-teach summer course which will be helpful for students as they transfer to 4yr environment

Innovative Practice #2: Advising Guide

- Builds on previous year's grant work to create multiple entry and exit pathways through programs for degree and credentials
- Utilized expertise of graphic designer to improve communication of advising process for numerous pathways options
- Deep knowledge of program is still needed to use the advising sheets well
- Shared throughout 4yr and with CC partners

Innovative Practice #3: Tapping Local Resources

- Created ECE Advisory Board to provide input
  - Community organizations
  - School district
  - 12 community service providers (private, for-profit, non-profit)
- Stackable credentials beginning with a high school pathway
- Enhanced field placements
- Improved advising process for seamless pathway

Summary

- Many innovative approaches to completing grant goals

- Collaborative efforts with authentic partnerships

- Critical components are needed to replicate efforts

- More to come – final report this Fall 2016

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