

**Building Bright Futures
Professional Preparation & Development (PPD) Committee**

2019 Program Director Credential Workgroup Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Between February and June 2019, a workgroup comprised of members of the PPD Committee was convened for this stated purpose:

To create a shared vision for the future of the Program Director Credential (PDC) and identify short-term and longer-term steps toward accomplishing that vision.

The workgroup was charged with making recommendations to the PPD Committee for its July 2019 meeting. The PPD Committee would then determine how/ whether to move those recommendations forward.

With facilitator support, the workgroup met five times, once in-person and four times virtually, for a total of 11.5 hours. The group used a strengths-based, modified SOAR approach for planning. (SOAR: Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) Consistent with PPD Committee practice, the workgroup used Modified Consensus for decision-making.

Workgroup membership, with constituency groups, included:

- *Carol Barbieri (Child Care Program Director)
- Sherry Carlson (Let's Grow Kids)
- Diane Hermann-Artim (CCV)
- Becky Millard (Northern Lights at CCV)
- Paula Nadeau (Child Care Program Director)
- *Nancy Noel (Child Care Program Director)
- *Lynne Robbins (CDD Systems Unit)
- *Sue Ryan (VCCICC)
- *Amelia Struthers (Northern Lights at CCV)
- Susan Titterton (Facilitator)

*Indicates member of the PDCC (Program Director Credential Committee)

Along with perspectives of workgroup members, interviews were conducted with some additional stakeholders in order to gather broader information about current strengths in the Career Ladder and opportunities others might see for its evolution.

The workgroup encountered limitations in its capacity to accomplish its purpose, including: variable meeting attendance, limited time for tasks between meetings, a time frame that did not easily lend itself to the scope of future visioning and transformative work, and drawbacks from using a virtual meeting platform for generative work.

APPROACH TO RECOMMENDATIONS

The workgroup began by exploring questions (see below) in two key areas, as well as posing these same questions to a cross-section of stakeholders in brief interviews. (Entire lists available upon request)

- *STRENGTHS: What are some strengths in the current Program Director Credential system? What can we build upon?*
- *OPPORTUNITIES: What are some opportunities for the Program Director Credential to best meet the needs of our stakeholders? What are some options and possibilities for what “could be”?*

These extensive lists were then narrowed by the workgroup, in response to the following questions. In addition, the group considered challenges and aspirations. (See Appendix A: *Strengths & Opportunities, Challenges & Aspirations*)

- *What is one strength you would highlight as most essential to preserve and build upon?*
- *What is one opportunity that you find most exciting?*
- *In your experience, what are some challenges in the current process?*
- *What are your greatest hopes/ aspirations for this credential?*

Interview data was narrowed for the opportunities different groups of stakeholders perceive for the Program Director Credential. (See Appendix B: *Opportunities Identified by Stakeholder Interviews*)

Drawing from these data sources, members of the workgroup focused on their view of the current Program Director Credential as being of high value and having many strengths. Emerging recommendations aimed at improvements in clarity and accessibility, rather than a major overhaul. At the same time, the group does make one important longer-term recommendation—to begin work toward national alignment for the portability and recognition which a nationally-aligned credential will bring.

The recommendations which follow grew from two processes. Some were drafted by Becky Millard, for the group’s consideration and refinement; some came as proposals from members of the workgroup. Some items were discussed, but no recommendations emerged. These items are described for further exploration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Emphasize Competencies

Rationale: This Program Director Credential is built on current Vermont Program Director competencies. It is important for candidates to understand that competencies, rather than particular courses, are the foundation of their learning and achievement.

Action: Emphasize the completion of competencies via college coursework, rather than emphasizing the completion of particular college courses.

New Description

Achieving Step 1 of the Program Director Credential requires successful completion of at least 9 credits of college coursework that meet the competencies in child development; curriculum development; and program management.

Achieving Step 2 of the Program Director Credential requires all of the above plus successful completion of at least 9 credits of college coursework that meet the competencies in leadership, mentoring, and supervision; human resources; and legal and financial issues.

Achieving Step 3 of the Program Director Credential requires all of the above plus successful completion of the Culminating Seminar training series and PDC portfolio. Completion of Step 3 results in the award of the Vermont Early Childhood and Afterschool Program Director Credential.

Recommendation #2: Recommended Pathways Chart

Rationale: It would be helpful to show more clearly the ways that different courses currently align with the Program Director Credential. This would provide a way for everyone to be on the same page in working together—those working toward a credential, those monitoring and approving coursework, and institutes of higher education that are offering the courses. It may be also helpful to director candidates coming from different backgrounds, including those from other states.

Action: Provide approved courses in a format that makes it easier for applicants to plan course progression based on their preferred institute of higher education. This allows the Program Director Credential Committee to list courses on the chart that best meet the competencies at various institutions. Ensure this chart is updated regularly, as needed.

New Description

<u>Step 1: Recommended Pathways</u> [There would also be a chart for Step 2.]			
The courses below have been evaluated by Northern Lights at CCV to meet the Step 1 competencies. Applicants who successfully complete one course in each column can submit their application with accompanying transcripts and will not need to provide any further documentation to demonstrate the Step 1 competencies were met.			
<i>College/ University</i>	<i>Child Development</i>	<i>Curriculum Development</i>	<i>Program Management</i>
Community College of Vermont (CCV)	PSY 2010 Child Development PSY 2025 Development of the Young Child Ages 3-8	EDU 2045 Curriculum Development for Early Childhood Education	EDU 2042 Early Childhood Education and Afterschool Program Management
Springfield College [etc.]	[all Springfield courses that meet child development step 1 competencies]	[all Springfield courses that meet curriculum development step 1 competencies]	[all Springfield courses that meet program management step 1 competencies]

[Note to the PPD Committee: These are examples. The entire chart will include additional course titles.]

Recommendation #3: Competencies Checklists

Rationale: Higher education courses completed at institutions outside of Vermont may not be listed in the Program Director Credential recommended pathways, but these courses may still meet some or all of the competencies for a particular Step in the Program Director Credential. Additionally, there are high-quality trainings that meet some of the competencies. Such trainings could supplement college courses the candidate has taken. In addition to adding flexibility, this may lower some costs for candidates who do not need course credit for those particular competencies.

Action: Provide a full checklist of all Step 1 and Step 2 competencies and space for applicants to provide detail about the courses and training they completed that meet each of the competencies. They would only complete the checklist for any courses they have completed that are not listed in the Recommended Pathways chart.

Note: We believe some more work will be needed to flesh out and identify the appropriate complementary interplay between college coursework, competencies, and core knowledge areas. Most likely, the PDC Committee could do this work in collaboration with the PPD Committee.

New Description**Step 1: Competencies Checklist**

[There would be a similar checklist for Step 2.]

If you have successfully completed courses or trainings that are not listed in the Recommended Pathways chart, you can submit them using the competencies checklist below.

Accompanying documentation for any courses or trainings listed below must be in your BFIS Quality and Credential account or must be submitted to Northern Lights at CCV for review and verification.

Content Area: Child Development

	<i>Competency</i>	<i>Course (or training) completed which included this competency</i>	<i>College/University (or training institution)</i>	<i>Year completed</i>
	1.1 Identifies and responds to the factors that influence children's growth and development from prenatal through early adolescence			

Content Area: Curriculum Development

	<i>Competency</i>	<i>Course completed which included this competency</i>	<i>College/University</i>	<i>Year completed</i>
	3.2 Evaluates the implementation of curriculum by staff and volunteers			

Content Area: Program Management

	<i>Competency</i>	<i>Course completed which included this competency</i>	<i>College/University</i>	<i>Year completed</i>
	5B.2 Develops and operates within a balanced budget			

[Note to PPD Committee: These are examples. The entire checklist would include all competencies for each subject area. Also important to note that this chart can be used to submit high-quality, non-credit trainings, which meet the competencies and are offered by entities other than institutes of higher education, such as the Small Business Development Center.]

Recommendation #4: Revise Culminating Seminar

Rationale: This change improves accessibility by lowering cost for candidates and allowing Culminating Seminar to be offered more often via its new format. Incorporating communities of practice will embed greater peer support.

Action: Remove requirement for completing three-credit college course and instead turn the Culminating Seminar into a training series with community of practice. Before making such a change, initiate conversations with partners in the field (Springfield College and others) about potential implications of dropping the three credits currently associated with this.

New Description

Step 3

To meet the criteria for Step 3 of the Program Director Credential, applicants must do the following:

- Demonstrate successful completion of at least one year direct care experience in an early childhood or afterschool program.
- Demonstrate successful completion of at least two years of administrative experience as a program director or three years supervised administrative practice.
- Participate in Culminating Seminar.
- Complete a Program Director Credential portfolio.

Culminating Seminar is offered annually in the spring and the fall via Northern Lights at CCV as an online, instructor-led training series with regional or virtual communities of practice, as follows:

- Online training series is designed to deepen and expand knowledge relevant for program directors.
- Online training series is offered to all community of practice groups simultaneously.
- Community of practice can be in person or virtual. It is designed to support professionals in deepening their knowledge through community conversations and portfolio development.

[Note to PPD: The online training series and communities of practice design has not been fully developed at this time; pending PPD's determination about whether or not to adopt this recommendation, Northern Lights at CCV is prepared to move forward with this proposed model during the 2019-2020 year.

Recommendation #5: Streamline Portfolio Process

Rationale: A streamlined process for creating and submitting a portfolio would encourage more directors to complete Step 3 of the Program Director Credential.

Action: Provide options and examples for how candidates can streamline their portfolio work, including:

- Which and how many documents are needed
- Offer optional use of online platforms (i.e. *Watermark*, *CCV*)
- Portfolio examples for candidates to draw from

New Description

Program Director Credential portfolio is structured to demonstrate how a director meets the Program Director Credential competencies.

- Emphasis placed on selecting items for inclusion that can meet multiple competencies at once
- As a broad estimate, there should be one page of material per competency

Recommendation #6: Early Identification of Candidates

Rationale: Provide supports to those who are interested in pursuing the Program Director Credential. Give them the context and knowledge that someone is aware of they are working toward the credential. Ensure they feel connected and have someone to talk to about their work. In addition, this may provide more data about those interested.

Action: Identify candidates who enter Level 1 with an interest in pursuing a Program Director Credential. Provide them with early guidance about how they can be gathering portfolio documentation as they move through Steps 1 & 2.

Suggested logistics include:

- A form for candidates to complete early on, if interested in pursuing the PDC
- Someone talking with potential candidates during their first courses for Steps 1 and 2
- PPD Committee keeping data on those working on Levels 1 and 2 who have expressed interest in pursuing the PDC
- Building in a mechanism to notify Northern Lights Resource Advisors (RAs) about new directors (in new or existing programs), so RAs can introduce them to available supports

Recommendation #7: Communicate Value of Credential

Rationale: There is confusion about the difference between the credential and child care program licensing regulations. People may question: “What is this about? Why am I doing this?” The credential is voluntary and many don’t even start. They don’t understand the value of earning a credential. More marketing is needed to get information about credential out to people.

Action: Include language in all informational materials that helps people to understand the Program Director Credential and its great value.

New Description

In your work to earn this credential, you will demonstrate that you have the knowledge, skills and abilities to be a program director. The credential signifies that you have completed the coursework, mastered the required competencies and proven that you can apply them into practice. Through earning this credential, you will achieve the distinction of becoming recognized as a professional Program Director in the early childhood field.

IMPORTANT TOPICS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

The following important topics were discussed, but have not reached the point of specific recommendations at this time. Further in-depth consideration is needed.

1. **Align with national credentials**

Note: This connects to aspirations for the future of the PDC.

Rationale: NAEYC, the primary professional organization for early educators and a leader in best practices, has existing standards and competencies for administrators. By aligning completion of Step 3 with these national standards, the Vermont credential will become portable and will meet the standard for NAEYC accredited programs. Alignment will lead to recognition and credibility for the credential. Link (p. 82)

<https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/early-learning/standards>

Actions: Remain actively aware of the national conversation to bring it into the PPD Committee’s conversations about Vermont credentials. As changes are made in Vermont’s credential, consider implications relative to this national lens. Gather “current state” data on the highest degree achieved by those who have achieved Step 3 in the Program Director Credential.

2. Consider making credential applicable for family child care providers

The credential is currently designed for center directors and afterschool program directors. If a decision is made to make the credential applicable for family child care providers, it is important to keep credential requirements consistent across settings. This include family child care providers, one reason being that some family child care providers eventually move from home-based to center-based programs.

As work is done on this, ask family child care providers, including those who have gone through the PDC process, for their input about modifications to the credential requirements.

3. Adjust the completion threshold for the portfolio

While the workgroup expressed support for reconsidering the threshold, there was not agreement about what percentage might be appropriate. (80% was discussed, but not agreed to.)

Reference points mentioned were Bachelor's degrees and the Praxis exam which do not require 100% for passing, and NAEYC's "formula" in which 100% is not required for passing, but an applicant may not miss all of a particular category.

Such a change would need to be done thoughtfully, cautiously and creatively to identify which items are most important, which are mandatory, and who makes those decisions.

4. Streamline for candidates with degree in early childhood administration

Explore a streamlined application process for professionals who have already earned a degree in early childhood administration. These are candidates whose initial application for the PDC would be at Step 3.

5. Update the competencies

Develop a process to examine and recommend updates of the competencies. Give attention to connecting this with national work.

6. Update BFIS

Update BFIS system to provide an IPDP format that aligns with the Program Director Credential.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Strengths & Opportunities Highlighted by Workgroup With Challenges & Aspirations

STRENGTHS: *What is one strength from our first meeting that you would highlight as most essential to preserve and to build on?*

1. Clarity
 - a) Steps are clear and prescribed
2. Flexibility
 - a) Options for prior learning and “course challenges”
 - b) Some flexibility in terms of “equivalency”
3. Competencies
 - a) Credentials built around need to prove competencies, not just around bachelor’s degree
 - b) Credential works; they are better directors than when they started
4. Meshing/ alignment
 - a) Step 1 meshes easily with licensing for small programs;
 - b) Step 2 meshes easily with licensing programs of 60+

OPPORTUNITIES: *What is one opportunity from our first meeting that you find most exciting?*

- **COHORTS:** Create cohorts to work together as “communities of practice” especially for portfolio
- **FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS:** Focus on alternatives and ways to include / support family child care providers
- **NON-CREDIT OPTIONS:** Accept some non-credit learning, e.g. workshops at Small Business Development Center
- **CULMINATING SEMINAR:** Revise culminating seminar (crafted to needs, costing less, like Fundamentals structure); explore whether to continue it as a college credit-bearing course
- **ENTERING THE PROCESS:** Create an application for those wishing to enter the PDC process

- **STREAMLINE STEP 3:** Streamline the process for those who have master's in EC administration or similar credential
- **ALIGNMENT WITH LICENSING:** Better align with Licensing; use the same Licensing coding criteria for courses, or list the competencies with very different, separate language
- **ALIGNMENT WITH IPDP:** Better align with IPDP format and Program Director competencies; make it all one document aligned within BFIS
- **ALIGNMENT WITH NAEYC:** Consider benefits of aligning with national credential

CHALLENGES: *In your experience, what are some challenges in the current process?*

Marketing / Information / Understanding

- People don't understand the difference between credential and licensing regulations. "What is this about? Why am I doing this?" Many don't even start.
- People don't understand the value of a "credential"
- Need to do more marketing; get more information about credential out to people.
- Credential is voluntary; licensing regulations are required. In both, must meet the right competencies. Having the same wording/ language is confusing when they are two different systems. Align, but differentiate by using different wording?
- Last night of Apprenticeship class, they have Career Ladder Level applications and Director application. May not be interested in Director and only do Step 1. Why is that happening? How is that useful?

Coursework

- Coursework—dates, knowing what's available when
- Coursework—access to Legal/Financial, should we have to get out of work to attend?
- Courses not all offered through CCV
- Some courses of value and lower cost could be added / accessed, e.g. through Center for Business Enterprise

Culminating Seminar & Portfolio

- Not enjoying culminating seminar
- Portfolio—unclear usefulness; what gaining? Just to satisfy requirement?
- Cohort structure is good, but don't always know who is in my cohort

Other

- Entry into PDC is a challenge
- Cos, including cost vs. reward

ASPIRATIONS: What are your greatest hopes for the Program Director Credential?

- It shows you are a professional in your chosen field.
- It provides foundational learning for directors. It aligns with director competencies.
- It goes beyond licensing regulations, is evidence-based, requires showing knowledge and application of over 75 competencies. It is broad and deep in what it measures. It is measurable.
- By going through the process, the individual would have high level abilities to be a successful early childhood education administrator.
- It is built around proving how competencies are met, not just classroom grades.
- It recognizes the specialized set of skills needed to direct a program (elevated language above what it now says about “meeting director qualifications”).
- It emphasizes the value of working with a cohort to build and reflect on skills.
- It highlights the professional portfolio as relatable to portfolios in other industries in terms of investment and achievement.
- It encompasses skills that work over multiple sectors—childcare and after school.
- It becomes a credential that is recognized nationally and is portable.

APPENDIX B**Opportunities Identified by Stakeholder Interviews**Local providers and staff (# interviewees?)

- Ensure required classes are available when candidates need them, as well as affordable
- Build portfolio work into all classes
- Market the credential more; provide people with more information

CCV advisors (3 interviewees) and Northern Lights RA (1 interviewee)

- Possibility of one institution offering all the courses needed for the credential; could offer a Program Director micro-credential
- Make information on equivalencies and exceptions more transparent and easier to find

Higher Education (1 interviewee)

- Create a marketing campaign on the nature of the credential and the positive (even transformational) outcomes for those who have earned it
- Consider different formats (weeklong, typical evening course, four consecutive Saturdays, etc.)
- Consider scholarships or grants outside of the current VSAC / CDD funding sources

Apprenticeship Program participant (1 interviewee)

- Explore additional ways to provide additional support for completing portfolio requirement