

SHARED SERVICES OF MASSACHUSETTS



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LICENSING SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAM REPORT January – June 2022



United Way of
Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley

SHARED SERVICES MA

An innovative approach to equip early childhood educators with the tools and resources they need to develop and sustain strong businesses in order to provide high quality early education and care to the children in their care.

The overarching goal of Shared Services MA is to stabilize and grow the FCC industry in Massachusetts and build the wealth and business success of family childcare business owner/educators with a focus on Black and Latina women.

Introduction

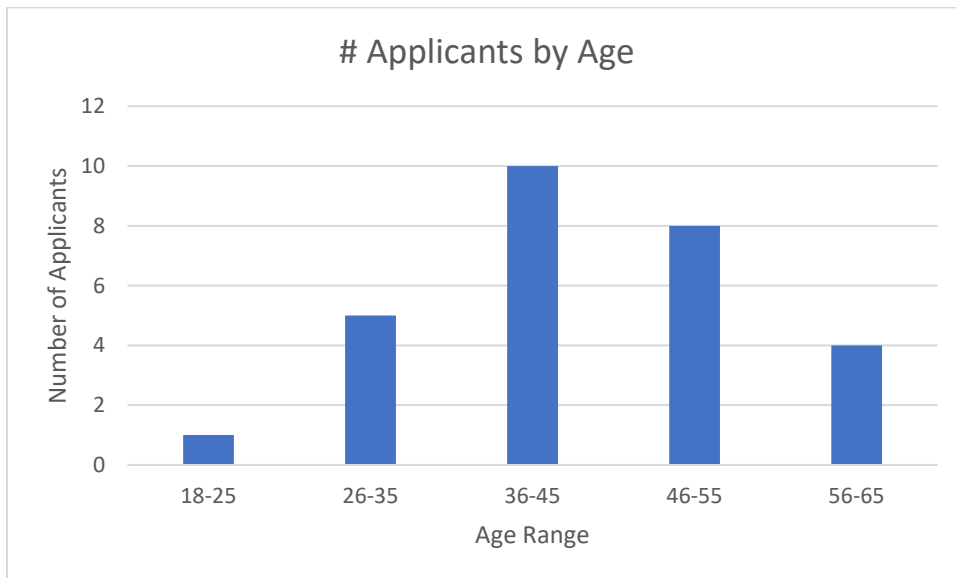
The Shared Services MA Family Childcare Bilingual Licensing Support pilot began in January 2022. The project was a small pilot to support 10 future family childcare educator/entrepreneurs in the city of Boston open childcare businesses in their homes. This initiative was funded by the Mayor’s Office of Women’s Advancement.

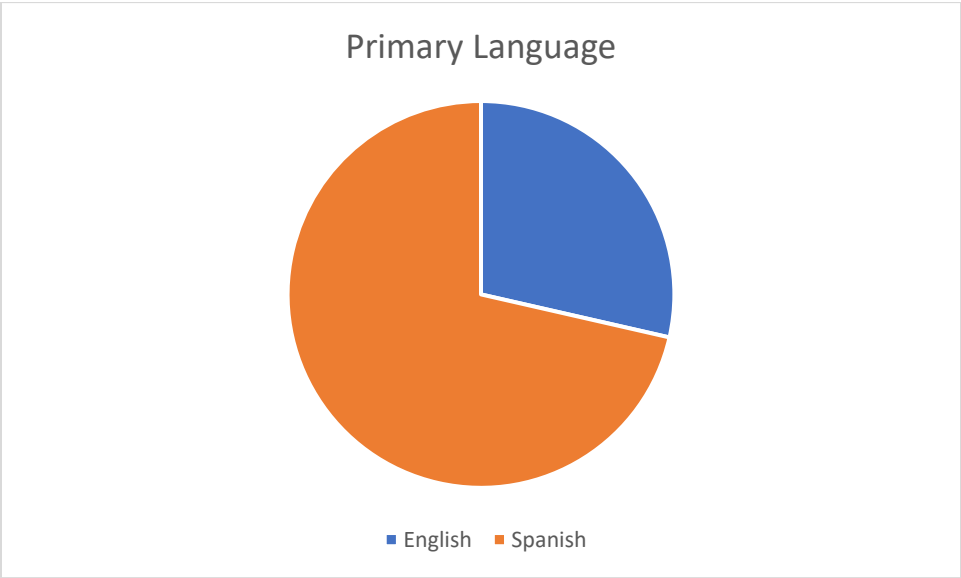
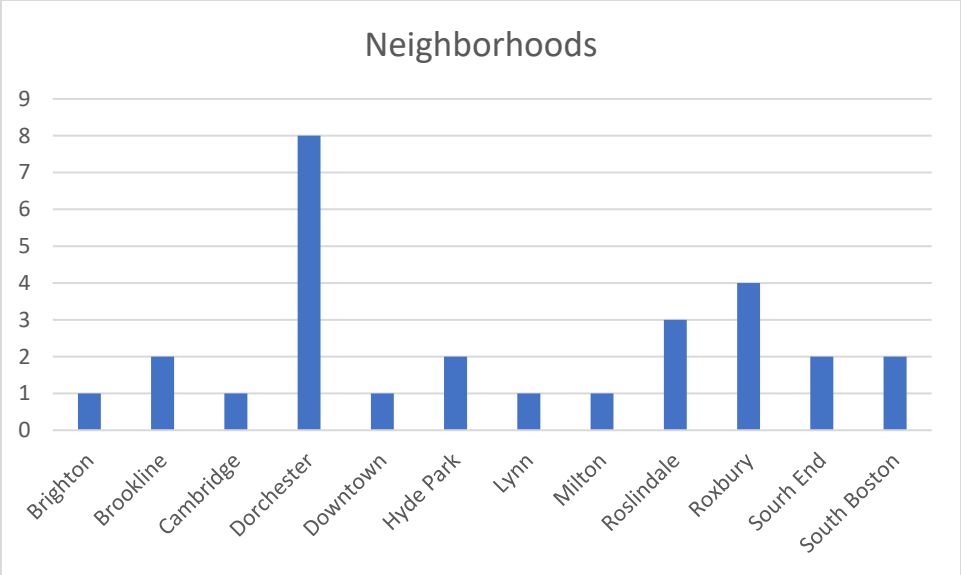
The goal was for each future educator/entrepreneur to receive a family childcare license from the MA Department of Early Education and care within 6 months of starting the program. Each new childcare business is to be licensed for either 6, 8 or 10 children: increasing the number of childcare seats in the City by 60 to 100.

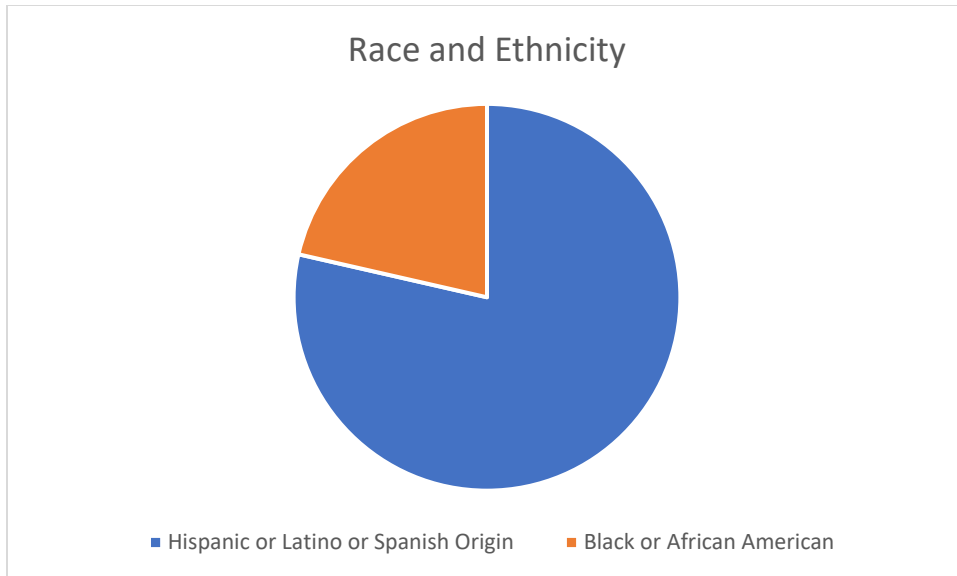
These educators will be serving low-income families. Many speak a primary language other than English which increases their ability to provide culturally responsive childcare to young children from families of similar ethnicities who speak the same language.

Demographics of Participants

Demographics of Applicant Pool







Recruitment (Outreach and Marketing)

Recruitment was accomplished in partnership with:

MA Department of Early Education and Care – Boston area licensors shared our recruitment flier with potential educators.

Project Hope – a family childcare support system, shared our flier with their list of potential educators.

Networking with family childcare educator/entrepreneurs who had completed the Shared Services MA business training program.

Registration/ Readiness Assessment

Potential program participants were screened for success with a Google forms application. Pertinent questions included:

- Anticipated timeframe to open your business?
- Do you rent or own your home?
- If you rent, have you notified your landlord or management company that you are planning to open a family childcare business in your home?
- Do you have sufficient space in your home for a variety of activities, including eating, active and quiet playing, and napping?

- Will all persons over age 15, regularly in your home, agree to undergo Background Record Checks: CORI (Criminal Record Check), SORI (Sexual Offender Record Check), & fingerprints?
- How much is your budget to open your new business?

Barriers to Entry

Appropriate/Affordable Housing

The rising cost of purchasing or renting a home, in addition to licensing and local zoning and permit requirements and a lack of technical assistance for navigating the process are all hurdles too difficult for many future educators/entrepreneurs to clear.

Several women who were interested in opening a home childcare program lived with extended family and finding suitable, affordable space for opening their own program was a barrier.

Landlord/Housing Management Approval

Many landlords are hesitant to rent to anyone who will be operating a family childcare business in their home, and some have a lack of understanding, particularly in public housing, about the regulations. Leases may include restrictive language or landlords may withhold permission needed for licensing. The most common reasons cited for refusing to allow a family childcare business in a rental unit is risk of liability, fear of losing insurance coverage, noise and traffic.

Background Record Checks

Any individuals who are regularly on the premise of the family childcare home who are 15 year or older MUST pass a background record check.

Background record checks include:

- CORI – MA (criminal offender records)
- DCF Records (Department of Children and Families)
- SORI (sex offender records)
- National Fingerprint Record

Readiness

Many of the potential educators who applied for the program reported not being ready to open their family childcare business until after the program end date. Several also noted a lack of financial resources as barriers to entry.

Orientation

A mandatory orientation was held for all applicants who were deemed well positioned for success. The orientation contained detailed information about the commitment to the program and included a question-and-answer period for potential program participants.

Program Design

We designed a 6-month curriculum with community of practice meetings held every other week in a workshop format. Meetings were held in the evening where participants were guided through:

- creating an account on the MA Professional Qualifications Registry
- completing the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care's required Potential Provider Meeting
- completing the EEC Essentials 12 module required training
- completing the MA EEC readiness self-assessment
- required health documents
- scheduling a pre-licensing visit

Coaching was available and visits to homes could be scheduled with the instructors as needed. In addition, we hired a peer mentor who has owned her family childcare business for 19 years to guide the newly licensed educator/entrepreneurs through the first few months of opening their childcare business.

Educators also received membership to the [Shared Services MA web platform](#) where over 2000 vetted early childhood resources are housed.

We partnered with [Tech Goes Home](#) who provided free PCs to the educators and instructors.

Enrollment is an important component of the program. Joining a family childcare support system can be beneficial for enrollment and other supports. Family childcare support systems in MA administer financial assistance to income eligible families and connect parents to a network of family childcare providers.

The System contracts with family childcare providers who wish to take advantage of resources and supports such as training, technical assistance and consultation, monitoring, and referrals to health and social services for children in their care.

There are several Family Child Care Systems in each region of the state.

Family childcare support systems for the Boston area were invited to speak with the licensing candidates. Educators were given guidance on the proper questions to ask a system before joining. Three educators joined Project Hope, one joined Child Development and another joined JPNDC. Others were still interviewing.

Additionally, the new educators were guided through how to build a website using WIX personal website builder and using social media for an on-line presence.

Post-Licensing Support

Upon receiving their license, educators were given \$1,000 worth of materials and equipment (a printer, ink, paper, Loose Parts Curriculum Series of books, business cards and more).

Educators were also accepted into Boston's Child Care Entrepreneur Fund grant program and automatically enrolled the Shared Services MA business training program (a 12-week business curriculum designed specifically for family childcare educators.)

Qualifications of Instructors

Djena Jacques, Program Director, Shared Services MA

25 years of experience in family and childcare services including staff training and development, process improvement measures, evaluating program effectiveness, increasing community awareness, supporting program goals, developing strategic plans and relationship building.

Celia (Millie) Garcia, Shared Services MA Licensing Support Trainer

Over 20 years of experience supporting family childcare educators in multiple capacities.

Program Successes

At this writing, 7 out of 10 of the educators in the pilot program have received their license.

Educators identified the group meetings and the opportunity to network with one another as being very important. Celebrating each other's successful milestones and working through challenges together was also valued as was the sharing of ideas and opinions with others.

Educators found the pre-licensing readiness guide checklist to be very helpful in preparing for their licensing visit. Additionally, they cited the home visits by the instructors as an invaluable benefit.

The knowledge and experience of the instructors as well as their availability was recognized as being tremendously helpful, "To have people like us working with us and understanding us is amazing."

Participants also identified the sequencing of instruction as a success. "The way the class is set up, sending the PowerPoint after class, the order of the program, the checklist, and the weekly communication."

Finally, the laptops from Tech Goes Home and the Shared Services MA website were highlighted as being invaluable tools, "The shared services website (I love it)."

Program Challenges

Educators identified time as a challenge as some were holding full time jobs while participating in the program although nearly everyone mentioned that meeting once a week, instead of every other week, would have been helpful.

Organizational challenges and the volume of paperwork were also mentioned.

Technology was cited as a challenge, including meeting over Zoom and navigating the EEC LEAD portal as well as remembering numerous passwords. Practicing the required computer skills was, however, noted as helpful.

Testimonials from Participating Educators

“Honestly, everything about this process works and helps me tremendously like; the laptop, the constant help when I reach out, the perseverance, the checklist, the patience the instructors have to teach us, to have people like us working with us and understanding us is amazing. Representation matters. It would be frightening going through the process by myself.” Altagracia De Los Santos

“I found that having our group meetings were very important. It gave us the information and the tools needed to accomplish the tasks before us. Being able to hear other testimonials on the process and things that worked or areas they struggled with. To share ideas and opinions with others. To not only help each other but learn from one another. The laptop form TGH.” Tanika O’Dell

“The process is very good, the communication, the Spanish translation, the support and attention that the instructors give us. Thank you Thank you Thank you!” Norka Hurtado

Written by Melinda Weber, VP Shared Services MA

August 21, 2022