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SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

CAREER PATHWAYS

IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

REPORT PREPARED BY

THE COUNCIL FOR ADULT & EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

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INTRODUCTION

The availability and affordability of high-quality childcare can have a significant impact on the economy of a region. Childcare is an oft-cited barrier to long-term, sustainable employment by individuals across all industries, skill-levels, and geographic areas. Thus, having an abundance of qualified individuals in early childhood education (ECE) roles makes these services higher-quality without sacrificing affordability, and has a positive impact across all industries in a region.

The childcare industry in Santa Cruz County, similar to many other communities across the country, is struggling to attract and retain a qualified pipeline of workers. With wages that struggle to keep pace with the rising costs of living in the region, individuals may turn away from ECE in pursuit of more lucrative career opportunities.

In early 2019, the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board (SCWDB) contracted with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to scan the ECE ecosystem and develop career pathways that could serve as a tool to create greater career awareness and encourage job seekers to consider opportunities in this field.

CAEL worked in partnership with the SCWDB and local early childhood stakeholders in the county to develop resources that highlight opportunities in the industry. These resources will work to encourage individuals in the community to look beyond the entry-level positions and better envision what a long-term career in the industry could ultimately look like.

LOCAL CHILDCARE ECOSYSTEM

The analysis of the local childcare labor market began with an ecosystem and literature review of the industry in the region. Materials reviewed during this process included news articles, workforce reports, local childcare studies/needs assessments, and provider requirements.

The high cost of living was repeatedly referenced across the various resources reviewed. According to the Santa Cruz County Early Care & Education Needs Assessment, the county's cost of living index is more than twice the U.S. average (210, vs. average of 100). Additionally, nearly half of all children in the county live in households earning less than \$46,000 per year, which is 70% of the state's median income. The parents of most of these children would qualify for a childcare subsidy, however the lack of provider capacity in the county may still prevent them from accessing quality care.

Information gathered through the State of California's Department of Social Services provided insight regarding the state's requirements for in-home childcare providers. Guidelines on these requirements and capacity for in-home centers are featured in an attachment to this report entitled, "Entrepreneurial Opportunities."

The issues and challenges uncovered through the information and literature review are expanded upon further in the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Barriers section of the report.



LABOR MARKET ANALYSIS

Three primary sources of information informed the analysis of local demand for early childhood education occupations:

Real-Time Labor Market Information

Burning Glass Technologies' Labor Insight tool was heavily utilized to pull data regarding the various occupations in the industry. Labor Insight provides data based upon real-time job postings by employers on a variety of job search websites. The project team used this tool to provide information on wages, commonly requested skills, and education and experience requirements. The information pulled for many of the data points included in the occupational profiles was based on State of California job posting data over the past 12 months. This was done to ensure a larger and more accurate sample size, as the total number of job postings for many occupations was too low when only taking into account Santa Cruz County.

Traditional Labor Market Information

This data was pulled from traditional labor market information services such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), O*Net, or American Community Survey (ACS). Traditional labor market information serves as a solid foundation to a labor market analysis and can be further enhanced by the real-time data provided by tools such as Labor Insight. Occupations that are directly linked to SOC codes can be easily linked back to these traditional sources for wage data, occupational descriptions, common skill sets, and demand projections.

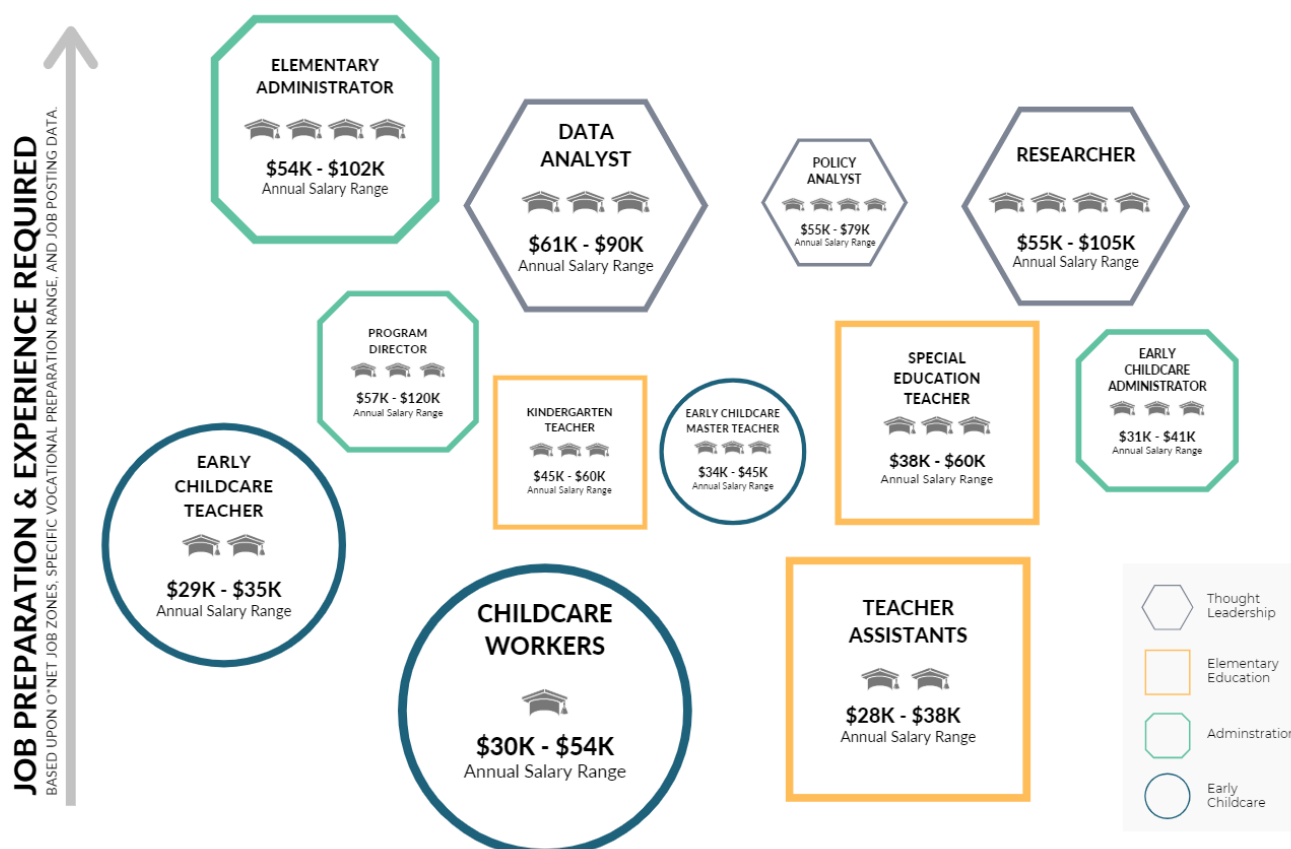
Qualitative Information from Stakeholders

Quantitative data from the sources highlighted above was validated by childcare providers and other stakeholders in the ECE space who are on the ground in the county, entrenched in the work on a daily basis. Through discussions with stakeholders, the initial list of childcare occupations grew and expanded beyond the typical SOC codes to more fully represent career opportunities in the industry locally. These conversations with stakeholders took place across two webinars and two in-person meetings.

Following the review of quantitative data and the validation from the local stakeholders in the industry, the following 12 occupations were determined to be reflective of the early childhood education opportunities available in the region.

- Childcare Worker
- Teacher Assistant
- Early Childcare Teacher
- Kindergarten Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Early Childcare Master Teacher
- Early Childcare Administrator
- Elementary Administrator
- Policy Analyst
- Data Analyst
- Researcher
- Program Director

Through meetings with stakeholders, the Early Childcare Master Teacher position and the thought leadership positions (policy analyst, data analyst, and researcher) emerged as additional occupations of focus. These occupations do not match directly with traditional SOC codes, and therefore the data for them was pulled from Burning Glass using a combination of related job titles.



The graphic above gives an overview of the occupational opportunities highlighted on the previous page. In this graphic, the size of the shape represents the number of job postings in California for that occupation over the past 12 months - the larger the shape, the more jobs there are. These occupations are also arranged by job preparation & experience requirements. The higher the occupation is on the vertical axis, the more preparation and experienced is required to gain employment.

EDUCATION ASSET INVENTORY OVERVIEW

A review of the education and training programs provided in and around Santa Cruz County.

Using publicly available data such as the Eligible Training Provider List, IPEDS, and school websites/course catalogs, the CAEL team developed an inventory of ECE career-related education and training programs in and around Santa Cruz County. The complete inventory includes program offerings by intuitions and credential level, program format, program duration, class times, and costs. The inventory currently contains more than 60 early childhood education programs in the Santa Cruz County area. The process of identifying programs involved exhaustive searches of local institutions websites and is not an exact science. This inventory is most effective when treated as a living document, updated consistently over time.

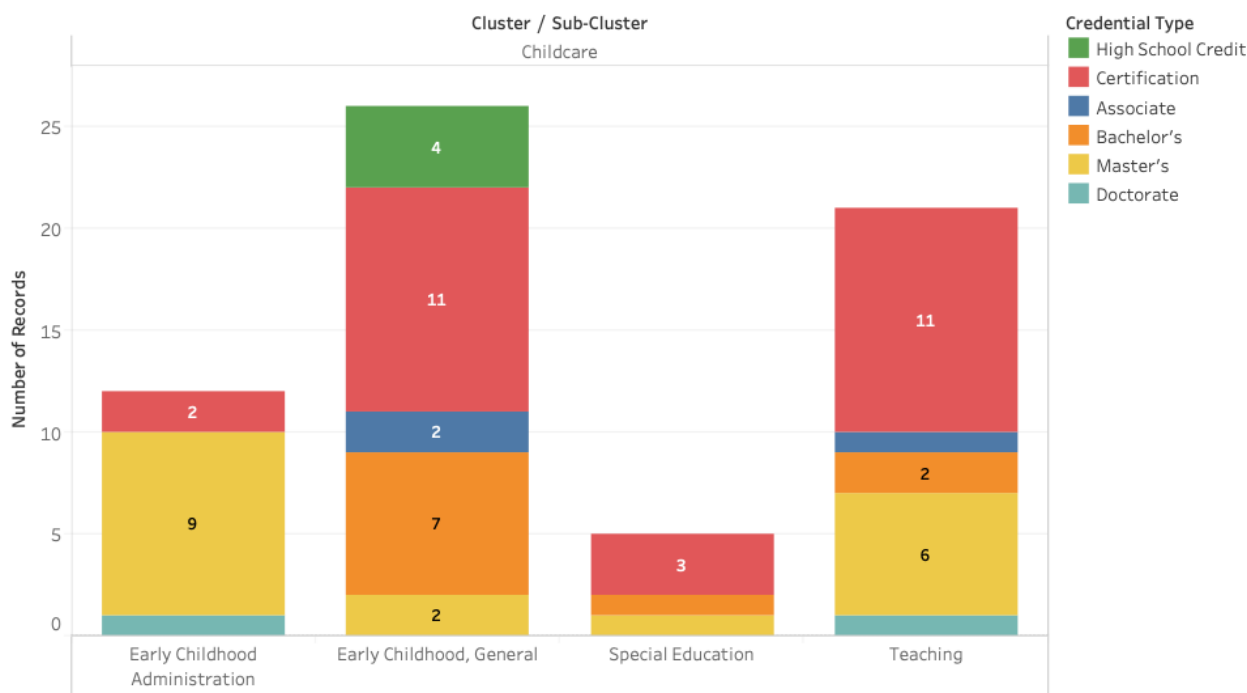
Type of Institution	Institution	Childcare			
		Early Childhood Administration	Early Childhood, General	Special Education	Teaching
High School	Costanoa High School		1		
	Natural Bridges		1		
	Pajaro Valley High School		2		
Public Technical Center	Watsonville-Aptos Adult School		1		
Craft-Training Organization	Child Development Resource Center		4		
	Childhood Advisory Council of Santa Cruz County		1		
Public 2-Year	Cabrillo College	1	3 2		5 1
	UCSC Silicon Valley Extension	1	2		
Public 4-Year	California State University-Monterey Bay			1	2
	San Jose State University	1 1	1 1	2 1	4 1
	University of California - Santa Cruz				1 1
Private 4-Year	Brandman University	6	2		1 3
	Pacific Oaks College	2	4 1	1	1 1

Credential Type

- High School Credit
- Certification
- Associate
- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Doctorate

Upon reviewing the findings of the education inventory, a few takeaways stood out:

- There are no Bachelor's-level teaching programs focused on early childhood education in the area. However, CSUMB and San Jose State do offer teaching credentials that individuals can earn alongside any Bachelor's degree.
- Six programs in the region focus specifically on early childhood administration and special education, the least of the four sub-clusters.
- There is little exposure to administration, teaching, or special education careers at the high school level, as the programs primarily focus on general early childhood education.
- Neither of the public two-year colleges offer programming specific to special education careers in childcare or elementary education.



Moving forward, this inventory will be most effective as a “living” document that is regularly revisited and updated; ideally on an annual basis as new programs are created and others come off line.

For additional information regarding methodology and sustainability recommendations for the Education Asset Inventory, please see Appendix A which begins on Page 20 of this document.

STRENGTHS **WEAKNESSES** **OPPORTUNITIES** **& BARRIERS**

A SWOB analysis was conducted to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and barriers, and how they pertain to the creation of a robust early childhood education workforce in Santa Cruz County. By understanding these four areas, community and workforce leaders are in a better position to make high-level decisions and strategy recommendations to move the industry forward.

STRENGTHS

STRENGTHS

While conversations with local stakeholders surfaced a number challenges and barriers related to increasing the ECE workforce in Santa Cruz County, there are also a number of strengths the region can capitalize and build on.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

- There are a number of high-quality ECE-related education and training resources available to Santa Cruz County residents.
- Cabrillo College is seeing high enrollment numbers in ECE courses offered in Spanish. They are working to increase access to these training opportunities by offering an array of class times at their campuses and offering more classes.
- Learning cohorts work well. Cabrillo is also experimenting with learning cohorts that will create camaraderie among participants and ideally lead to higher program completion rates.

CAREER EXPOSURE AND EXPERIENCE

- The Childcare Helper position that helps out in classrooms for the school district is allowing people to gain valuable, hands-on experience in the industry and funneling more people into training programs.
- Most people staying in the industry are doing so because of the inherent value of the work.

FUNDING, RESOURCES, AND POLICIES

- First 5 Santa Cruz County has been able to subsidize classes at Cabrillo College so that they can run even if they have low enrollment and may otherwise be cancelled.
- Thrive by Three offers limited Early Learning Scholarships (ELS) that provide assistance to childcare providers that serve low-income families receiving state child care subsidies.
- The City of Capitola waives city fees for businesses that choose to open childcare centers onsite for their employees. The City has also made zoning changes to support the development of more childcare centers.
- Stakeholders throughout the county, are well aware of the challenges within the industry and are being innovative in their approaches to addressing these issues.

WEAKNESSES

WEAKNESSES

Santa Cruz County faces numerous challenges to increasing the ECE talent pool, largely around coordination that would allow current efforts to be scaled and/or replicated.

COORDINATION OF EFFORTS

- During conversations with stakeholders, one of the primary weaknesses that was brought to the forefront was the lack of coordination between the various stakeholders. There are several groups working on projects to advance the industry in the region, however many times these groups aren't coordinating and are missing out on valuable collaborative opportunities
- There also isn't a coordinated system in place to market opportunities in the region, which could prove to be more enticing than one-off campaigns by individuals organizations.

CAREER AWARENESS AND EXPOSURE

- One weakness, that this project is attempting to remedy, is the lack of clear and concise opportunities and pathways within the industry.
- Some of the education institutions have developed education/career pathways, but these may be limited in scope to the types of programs the school offers and related career opportunities.
- Childcare providers may also have internal career pathways that don't necessarily match up with the education options in the area.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Childcare centers and other providers in the region are having difficulty attracting and retaining a workforce, particularly in areas like infant and toddler work which requires specialized skills.
- Offering ongoing training and professional development helps with retention, but that is often incumbent upon the employer and employee to navigate.
- ECE jobs can be challenging, especially when working with families experiencing challenges. Mental health and other support for staff could help decrease burnout.

WEAKNESSES

LOW WAGES

- One of the most severe and pressing weaknesses plaguing the region's efforts to increase the talent pipeline in the early childcare industry is the industry's low wages. Low wages in early childcare jobs is an ongoing problem across the country, however these issues are amplified when combined with the incredibly high cost of living in Santa Cruz county.

OPPORTUNITIES

OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the weaknesses and barriers, there is great opportunity to move the local childcare industry forward in a positive direction.

INCREASE THE TALENT POOL

- One of the key themes that emerged when discussing potential opportunities with local stakeholders was centered on the idea of being non-traditional in addressing the issues that exist. By recruiting non-traditional participants (such as CalWorks clients) the region has an opportunity to strengthen the talent pipeline and access untapped talent that may have been overlooked in the past.
- Think non-traditionally when it comes to training programs offered to students in the region. Creating earn and learn training programs such as on-the-job training, apprenticeships, or incumbent worker training could give further access to individuals to enter or continue in the industry and learn in an experiential, hands-on setting while earning a paycheck. Local education and training providers could also increase access by providing accelerated programs and further expanding their courses to weekends and alternative locations.
- Expand upon the career pathway model created through this project to better engage middle and high school students. Allowing students the opportunity to begin embarking upon a career path in the industry at an earlier age could lead to a stronger talent pipeline in the future.

INCREASE SUPPORT TO CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE ECE WORKERS

- Another theme in these conversations focused on the opportunity to create and expand upon support services that allow individuals in the industry and pursuing education to stay engaged in their work.
- Mental health services are vitally important to individuals working in the field, as childcare providers and teachers are often stressed with the demands of managing classrooms and dealing with behavioral issues all while meeting standards and expectations set forth by state and federal education governing bodies.
- Due to the high cost of living in the area, support services such as housing assistance, student loan repayment, or stipends could also encourage more people to enter (or continue in) the field.

BARRIERS

BARRIERS

The childcare industry in Santa Cruz County faces some significant barriers to recruiting and retaining talent.

COST OF LIVING

- The high cost of living (more than twice the U.S. average) paired with low wages for most entry-level positions, leads to many individuals either leaving the field after only a short time or not choosing to pursue a career in the industry at all.
- Operating a Family Child Care Home offers an excellent entrepreneurial opportunity to individuals, but the area's housing costs make this option out of reach for many.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Cabrillo's ECE classes offered in Spanish are experiencing high enrollment. Some stakeholders also expressed concern that language barriers still exist and that access to monolingual entry-level Spanish classes must increase. Requiring English 101 requirement for admission into high-level programs creates an additional hurdle.
- Access would increase if more classes were held outside of traditional working hours on evenings and weekends and at alternate sites - both north and south county.
- Individuals interested in pursuing ECE careers may not have time to invest in two-year programs before they work in the field.

CAREER AWARENESS AND NAVIGATION

- The childcare landscape's confusing nature has also proven to be a significant barrier in recruiting talent. Often times, there are differing licensing requirements and inconsistent benefits packages across providers making it difficult for people looking to enter the field to understand the nuances that exist.
- Additionally, there are certain positions and providers that require varying levels of early childhood credits, creating another barrier to entry.
- The current early childcare career matrix, created by the Child Development Training Consortium (CDTC) through the State of California's Department of Education, is difficult to locate online and can be confusing to people pursuing a career in this space.

BARRIERS

CHANGING LANDSCAPE

- Local providers expressed concerns that the impending arrival of Bright Horizons to the county could compromise overall quality of care. This national model for childcare could prove detrimental to many of the local providers if the company begins to command a larger share of the childcare market in Santa Cruz county.
- Increasing credential (e.g. some ECE positions now require Associate and Bachelor's degrees) and/or CEU requirements can present a barrier to entry and moving up the ladder in this field.
- Cabrillo is seeing an increase in students pursuing A.S.T degrees that allow them to transfer to a university to pursue a Bachelor's degree in teaching, essentially bypassing the entry-level childcare positions in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

Increasing the ECE talent pipeline will not be a quick fix. There are many complex environmental factors that will take significant time and resources to address. However, there are a number of existing practices and models the region can build on to enhance the ECE workforce in the shorter-term.

CREATE A VENUE WHERE ECE STAKEHOLDERS CAN REGULARLY MEET TO ADDRESS WORKFORCE CHALLENGES.

- Bring together a diverse group of representatives from the Childhood Advisory Committee, Thrive by Three, First 5, municipalities, the public workforce system, and other key stakeholders to form an ECE workforce task force.
- Ensure there is a consistent, coordinated effort to enhance the ECE talent pipeline by leveraging existing resources, replicating and/or scaling existing efforts, and creating shared messaging across the county.
- Develop local and state-level policy recommendations such as municipal zoning, fee forgiveness and state reimbursement rates.

PROMOTE ECE CAREER PATHWAYS ACROSS THE REGION.

- Promote expansive career awareness across the county. Move beyond pathways specific to individual schools and other training providers to draw more people to the ECE field.
- Provide those responsible for guiding career and education decision-making at the K-12 and postsecondary levels as well as through the Workforce Santa Cruz County Career Centers with the ECE pathway documents and guidance created through this project. These materials are intended to build broader awareness of opportunities and encourage individuals to take the next step.
- Though important, complex matrices with details about the number of hours and credits needed to move along a career in publicly-funded childcare centers, for example, do not necessarily encourage individuals to pursue ECE programs or careers.



UPDATE ECE EDUCATION AND TRAINING ASSET INVENTORY ANNUALLY

- To ensure sustainability, solicit feedback from stakeholders on the contents of the inventory on an annual basis. This could be done through a survey distributed to the various education and training institutions or by someone in a centralized role.
- By keeping this information in front of community and education leaders, it can be consistently critiqued and revised, ultimately becoming more precise in its representation of the education assets in Santa Cruz County and that these assets are aligned with industry needs.

INCREASE ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

- Work with education and training providers to increase Spanish language offerings, courses offered on evenings and/or weekends, and in alternative locations.
- Provide supportive services such as transportation, childcare assistance, scholarships, and other financial assistance to those who pursue ECE education and training programs. Look for additional opportunities such as loan forgiveness to incentivize graduates to work and remain in ECE careers.
- Scale or replicate models that subsidize ECE courses so that they will not be cancelled due to low enrollment.
- Promote ECE careers and education and training programs through Workforce Santa Cruz County Career Centers.
- Develop accelerated education programs, promote publicly-funded OJT models, develop regional pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program, and explore other experiential and earn and learn models.

ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF HOUSING COSTS AND LOW WAGES

- Explore possibilities to put in place housing subsidies or vouchers for those who want to become Family Child Care Home Providers or work elsewhere within the ECE field.
- Replicate initiatives like the City of Capitola's city fee waivers for businesses that open onsite childcare centers and zoning changes to support the development of more childcare centers. Create similar programs to support Family Child Care Homes.
- Work with local ECE employers to upskill incumbent workforce, to provide incremental wages increases, and to provide better and more consistent benefits.
- Advocate for policy changes at the State and Local levels that lead to increased wages for for childcare workers in Santa Cruz county.

WORK DIRECTLY WITH LOCAL EMPLOYERS TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE WAYS TO OFFSET OR SUPPLEMENT CHILDCARE COSTS FOR THEIR EMPLOYEES

- Employers should be encouraged and incentivized to open on-site childcare centers that can lead to more affordable opportunities for their employees. Development of new, employer-funded childcare centers will also lead to increased career opportunities for individuals working in or looking to begin a career in the childcare field.

CREATE AN ELL PATHWAY THAT CAN FEED DIRECTLY INTO THE GREATER CHILDCARE CAREER LADDER

- Creating an ELL pathway will increase access for English Language Learners to enter the industry and continue along a pathway with opportunity for upward mobility. Ensuring English Language Learners have these opportunities is integral to the long-term viability of the industry as the local pool of talent is further developed and expanded. Learning these English-language skills will also prove invaluable as these individuals pursue postsecondary opportunities at local training institutions.

METHODOLOGY

The process for collecting the information contained in the inventory began by compiling a list of institutions in the Santa Cruz County area. CAEL worked with SCWDB to finalize the list encompassing all of the local institutions and training providers offering programs related to early childhood education.

The next step in the inventory development process was to begin researching each of the institutions included on the list. This process consisted of visiting each institution's website and combing through course catalogs to identify programs that relate to the childcare industry.

Once a program was identified, we answered each of the following questions:

- What type of credential does successful completion of this program result in?
- What industry cluster and sub-cluster does this program fit into?
- Is the program offered online?

All of this information for each identified program was logged into an Excel spreadsheet and uploaded into Tableau for data visualization purposes. At the conclusion of the research, the data set contained information on more than 60 programs in the area.

SUSTAINABILITY

A crucial piece of this inventory is sustaining it over time. This inventory will be most effective as a “living” document that is continuously updated. This will never be an exact science, however by making consistent updates and allowing education and training institutions to submit edits and additions, it can serve as a useful tool moving forward.

This inventory was created using Excel and Tableau. The two documents are linked together, and any changes made in the Excel document will automatically update the charts in Tableau upon saving, closing and re-opening. Excel updates should be made on the Master Program List sheet in the Excel workbook and follow the same formatting. To make updates to the charts in Tableau, the user must have a Tableau subscription, however for view-only access to the charts a free download of Tableau Reader will suffice.

Other organizations have found success embedding Tableau workbooks into their website, creating an interactive dashboard accessible to the community.

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