

Project Evaluation

Home Child Care Expansion in Central Ontario

ON21224

Winter 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation focuses on the implementation of GBA Plus practices within Home Child Care at Compass Early Learning and Care (CELC), specifically related to the project, Home Child Care Expansion in Central Ontario (ON21224). Home Child Care Expansion in Central Ontario was funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada's Feminist Response and Recovery Fund and aimed to address systemic barriers while licensing 30 new Home Child Care (HCC) Providers across Central Ontario. This project facilitated systemic change by easing entry into the career pathway for individuals identifying as low-income women, LGBTQIA2S+, and newcomers to Canada, aiming to address income security while fostering awareness among municipal partners and equity-seeking community organizations. The project aimed to address barriers faced while entering the childcare field, driving the provision of services tailored to their needs for income stability.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess what has been accomplished in terms and conditions of the defined objectives and expected results of the project. Furthermore, it provides audiences with important information regarding programs and structures that aid in contributing to a sustainable, high-quality, affordable child care system, through a lens of licenced home child care expansion. Audiences will gain a deeper understanding of the barriers faced when beginning and sustaining a licensed home child care program within Ontario, as well as retention strategies. By implementing recommendations, governments and organizations can further advance the goals of promoting gender equality, inclusivity, and child care accessibility within the licensed home child care sector, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable future for all Canadians. The evaluation considers identity demographics, continuance of barriers, individual impacts, and systemic impacts.

Key Themes

Participant Demographics & Licensed Home Child Care Growth Analyses

- The greatest identifying factors of participants included low-income cisgender women.
- Throughout the project period:
 - There was an 81% increase in the total number of home child care programs licensed with Compass ELC, beginning with 42 programs, and ending with 76 programs.
 - Participant retention increased with the implementation of new programs and systems aimed at reducing barriers and creating income stability.

Barriers To Licensed Home Child Care Provider Income Stability

- The most common barriers experienced throughout the onboarding phase (initial assessment) included financial (94%), health benefits (63%), the COVID-19 pandemic (44%), licensing insurance (44%), and additional barriers (44%).
- Overall, participants experienced fewer barriers related to their work after a six-month period of participating in the project compared to barriers experienced within the first month.
- All participants reported no barriers related to the COVID-19 pandemic within six months of becoming licensed (final assessment).

- Overall Improvement in Mean Scores: The overall mean scores show a shift towards a more positive experience, with an increase in the percentage of participants reporting positively across various categories from the initial assessment to the final assessment.

Overview Of New or Altered Programs and Initiatives as A Result Of The Project

- A culmination of data collection methods and GBA Plus analysis informed new programs and initiatives throughout the project period. These aligned with the project objectives. New Programs and systems are organized into the following five categories: (1) professional learning, (2) financial, (3) sustainability of internal Home Child Care team, (4) physical and mental health, and (5) individual and systemic barrier reduction tools.

Individual Impacts

- The project significantly benefited individual participants by enhancing their business skills, improving the sustainability of their businesses, aiding in income stability, and foster professional development and financial well-being. Additionally, it increased their understanding of barriers and community supports, empowering them with the knowledge and resources to navigate challenges effectively.

Systemic Impacts

- Contributions to systemic change: The majority of respondents agreed that the project contributed to systemic change, indicating its potential for broader impact beyond individual participants.
- Support for marginalized populations: Respondents agreed that the project aided in easing entry into the career pathway for marginalized populations such as newcomers, low-income women, indigenous, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, as well as driving services that reflect their needs for income stability.
- Impact on policies and practices: A significant majority agreed that the project resulted in positive changes in policies and practices and advanced inclusive policies and practices, suggesting its effectiveness in influencing organizational and systemic approaches.
- Enhancement of processes for HCC: Respondents unanimously agreed that the project positively impacted processes for HCC (Home Child Care) recruitment, onboarding and orientation, and ongoing supports, indicating its effectiveness in improving operational aspects.
- Promotion of equitable resource sharing: The majority of respondents agreed that the project encouraged more equitable and effective sharing of resources, highlighting its role in promoting fairness and collaboration.
- Addressing harmful gender norms: While the majority agreed that the project addressed persistent harmful gender norms and attitudes to support women's equality, there were also two respondents who disagreed, indicating some variability in perceptions regarding this aspect.
- COVID-19 response and recovery: Respondents largely agreed that the project provided access to programs, resources, and supports to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 on women's equality, aided in developing networks and collaborations, and facilitated the application of knowledge in policy and program work related to COVID-19 response and recovery.

- Instead of just one participant selecting ‘disagree’, a diverse range of participants chose the same option. Many of these individuals mentioned not having a full understanding the subject matter or language in their comments. This indicates the need for ongoing efforts to promote women and gender equality, in alignment with GBA Plus, to further educate the public on these priorities. This approach aims to broaden their perspective and deepen their understanding of inequities experienced by Women and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Recommendations

Building upon the successes and lessons learned from the evaluation, the following ten recommendations are proposed to further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of Licensed Home Child Care expansion:

1. **Hold A High Image of Licensed Home Child Care:** Given the opportunity for expansion of desperately needed child care spaces in a timely and cost-effective manner and the opportunity for provider income stability, we recommend governments and organizations recognize the important value of this sector as integral to building a child care system. This would mean that Home Child Care would be embedded in all relevant legislation, policies, and communication, highlighting how it provides regulated, home-like environments with small group sizes, fostering individualized care and close relationships between caregivers and children while offering accessibility, flexibility, and government funding. These factors make it an appealing option for families seeking high-quality child care that meets their diverse needs.
2. **Target Barrier Reduction:** We recommend that governments and licensing agencies develop policies and implement programs to reduce the barriers experienced by licensed home child care providers as identified in this report. Specifically, we recommend
 - a. an increase in home child care provider compensation,
 - b. Home child care providers have access to cost-effective health benefit plans for individuals or families, and
 - c. paid closure days to support with paid sick and vacation time.
3. **Continued Support for Marginalized Communities:** Maintain ongoing efforts to address the needs of marginalized communities, including newcomers, indigenous individuals, and 2SLGBTQIA+ populations, by providing targeted support programs and resources tailored to their unique challenges and circumstances.
4. **Strengthen Collaboration and Partnerships:** Foster increased collaboration and partnership among government agencies, non-profit organizations, community stakeholders, and home child care providers to address systemic barriers, share resources, and accelerate systemic change for gender equality and child care accessibility.
5. **Remove CWELCC Expansion Caps for Licensed Home Child Care** Compass ELC has approximately 15 potential providers waiting to become licensed which would provide 90 high-quality, affordable child care spaces. However, the number of active licensed homes is limited with no room currently to expand. To effectively expand licensed home child care in Ontario, governments must provide additional expansion funding.

6. **Investment in Professional Development, Capacity Building, and Supports:** Allocate resources and funding to support the professional development and training of home child care providers, home visitors, and other stakeholders within the licensed home child care system. Provide ongoing support and monitoring to ensure compliance with provincial regulations and standards. Invest in capacity building initiatives and professional development opportunities for home child care providers to enhance their skills, competencies, and knowledge in areas such as business management, child development, and diversity and inclusion practices.
7. **Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programs. Regularly assess progress towards objectives, identify challenges, and adapt strategies as needed to maximize impact and effectiveness. This includes regular assessments of participant satisfaction, demographic representation, and barrier reduction efforts to ensure continued success and accountability.
8. **Sustainable Agency Structures:** Licensing agencies carefully consider how new systems will embed themselves into the existing practices of Agency Teams. Allocate time to Team members to implement these initiatives and be accountable to continuing their implementation.
9. **Policy Advocacy and Awareness:** Advocate for policy changes and initiatives that promote gender equality, inclusivity, and child care accessibility at local, provincial, and federal levels. Raise awareness among policymakers, stakeholders, and the general public about the importance of investing in early childhood development and supporting the diverse needs of home child care providers and families.
10. **Continue Implementation of GBA Plus:** Encourage organizations within the child care sector to continue employing GBA Plus as an analytical framework to inform policy development, program design, and resource allocation. Provide training and support to ensure the effective implementation of GBA Plus practices across all phases of program and initiative lifecycles.

In conclusion, the evaluation of the Newcomer Home Child Care Expansion project has provided comprehensive insights into its implementation and impact within the context of licensed home child care at Compass Early Learning and Care (CELC). The project, funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada's Feminist Response and Recovery Fund, aimed to address systemic barriers while licensing 30 new Home Child Care (HCC) Providers across Central Ontario. Through collaborative efforts with various community organizations and stakeholders, the project facilitated systemic change by easing entry into the career pathway for individuals self-identifying as low-income women, LGBTQIA2S+, and newcomers to Canada, with a focus on income security and awareness-building.

The evaluation revealed significant achievements, including notable growth in licensed home child care providers, reduction of barriers to income stability, and positive individual and systemic impacts. Participants reported increased business skills, enhanced sustainability of their businesses, and improved income stability. Moreover, the project contributed to systemic change by advancing inclusive policies and practices, enhancing recruitment and support processes, and promoting equitable resource sharing.

The evaluation of GBA Plus practices within Home Child Care at Compass Early Learning and Care (CELC) has demonstrated the significant alignment with and contribution to federal government priorities and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, inclusivity, and child care accessibility. By employing a comprehensive analytical framework of GBA Plus, organizations can effectively address the diverse needs and experiences of individuals across various intersecting identity aspects, thereby enhancing the development, implementation, and assessment of initiatives within the home child care sector.

The findings of this evaluation underscore the importance of initiatives such as Women and Gender Equality Canada's Feminist Response and Recovery Fund, which seeks to accelerate systemic change for underrepresented women and address existing inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through targeted funding and support, these initiatives have the potential to create meaningful impacts, remove systemic barriers, and advance gender equality across economic, social, and political spheres.

Moreover, the introduction of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan (CWELCC) reflects the government's commitment to enhancing early learning and childhood development, supporting workforce participation, and contributing to economic recovery. By investing in a national child care system and addressing barriers to inclusive child care, the CWELCC Plan aims to create high-quality, affordable child care spaces and value the early childhood workforce.

The project effectively met its objectives by addressing various action areas outlined in the call for proposals. It advanced inclusive policies and practices by implementing GBA Plus practices within Home Child Care at Compass Early Learning and Care (CELC), aiming to reduce systemic barriers for underrepresented women, LGBTQIA2S+, and newcomers to Canada entering the child care field. By partnering with organizations like the New Canadian Centre and Indigenize.ca, the project encouraged more effective and equitable sharing of resources, leveraging knowledge and funding to support diverse communities' needs. Additionally, through collaboration with municipal partners and equity-seeking community organizations, the project facilitated networking and collaboration to accelerate systemic change, breaking down silos and increasing the reach and impact of gender equality efforts. By addressing persistent harmful gender norms and attitudes, the project challenged stereotypes and fostered a more inclusive and equitable child care environment for all.

We express our gratitude to Women and Gender Equality Canada's Feminist Response and Recovery Fund for their generous funding of the Newcomer Home Child Care Expansion in Central Ontario project (ON21224) implemented by Compass Early Learning and Care (CELC). This evaluation reflects our commitment to assessing the impact of GBA Plus practices within Home Child Care at CELC, striving to address systemic barriers and facilitate entry into the childcare career pathway for marginalized individuals. Special thanks to our esteemed partners and stakeholders, including the New Canadian Centre, Nijkiwendidaa Anishnaabekwewag Service Circle, Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, Indigenize.ca, PFlag Canada (Durham Region), Community Counselling Resource Centre, the City of Kawartha Lakes, Region of Durham, Northumberland County, City of Peterborough, Association of Early Childhood Educators (AECEO), Home Child Care Association of Ontario (HCCAO), and Andrew Fleck Children's Services whose support has been invaluable in driving forward this important initiative.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This section discusses the purpose and scope of the evaluation, as well as the main issues that it addresses.

This evaluation focuses on the implementation of GBA Plus practices within Home Child Care at Compass Early Learning and Care (CELC), specifically related to the project, Newcomer Home Child Care Expansion in Central Ontario (ON21224). Newcomer Home Child Care Expansion in Central Ontario was funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada’s Feminist Response and Recovery Fund and aimed to address systemic barriers while licensing 30 new Home Child Care (HCC) Providers across Central Ontario. This project facilitated systemic change by easing entry into the career pathway for individuals identifying as low-income women, LGBTQIA2S+, and newcomers to Canada, aiming to address income security while fostering awareness among municipal partners and equity-seeking community organizations. The project aimed to address barriers faced while entering the childcare field, driving the provision of services tailored to their needs for income stability.

To support the work’s processes and address intersectional needs, Compass Early Learning and Care worked with the New Canadian Centre, Nijkiwendidaa Anishnaabekwegaw Service Circle, Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, Indigenize.ca, PFlag Canada (Durham Region), and Community Counselling Resource Centre. Additionally, the City of Kawartha Lakes, Region of Durham, Northumberland County, City of Peterborough, Association of Early Childhood Educators, Home Child Care Association of Ontario, and Andrew Fleck Children’s Services have been identified as key partners and stakeholders.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess what has been accomplished in terms and conditions of the defined objectives and expected results of the project. Furthermore, it provides audiences with important information regarding programs and structures that aid in contributing to a sustainable, high-quality, affordable child care system, through a lens of licenced home child care expansion. Audiences will gain a deeper understanding of the barriers faced when beginning and sustaining a licensed home child care program within Ontario, as well as retention strategies.

The evaluation considers identity demographics, continuance of barriers, individual impacts, and systemic impacts. Specifically, it addresses the 31 evaluation questions presented in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Identity Demographics | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In which municipality are you located? 2. Do you identify as a Newcomer to Canada? 3. Do you identify as an Indigenous person? 4. Do you identify as a racialized person? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If yes, identify. 5. How do you define your gender identity? 6. Do you identify as low-income? |
| Continuance of Barriers | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. I continue to face the following barriers related to my work as a Home Child Care Provider: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Language b. Financial |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Housing d. Health Benefits e. Interview Process f. Licensing Process g. Insurance h. Policies and Procedures i. Technology j. Professional Learning k. Business Development l. Family Onboarding m. Relationships with Families n. Communication to Families o. Covid-19 p. Additional Barriers <p>8. Please identify which of the overall barriers (up to three) are a top priority for you, should we be able to allocate additional support in the future.</p> |
| Individual Impacts | <p>9. While participating in the project, there were opportunities for me to express my needs.</p> <p>10. These needs were taken into consideration moving forward.</p> <p>11. Participating in the project increased my business skills.</p> <p>12. Participating in the project increased the sustainability of my business.</p> <p>13. Participating in the project aided in my income stability.</p> <p>14. Participating in the project increased my understanding of the barriers facing newcomer, low-income women, indigenous, and/or 2SLGBTQIA+ populations entering the field of child care the sustainability of my Home Child Care Program.</p> <p>15. Participating in the project increased my understanding of supports that are offered to me within the community.</p> <p>16. Participating in the project increased my understanding of supports that are offered to me through Compass ELC.</p> |
| Systemic Impacts | <p>17. The project contributed to systemic change.</p> <p>18. The project aided in easing entry into this career pathway for newcomer, low-income women, indigenous, and 2SLGBTQIA+ populations.</p> <p>19. The project aided in driving services that reflect newcomer, low-income women, indigenous, and 2SLGBTQIA+ populations' needs for income stability.</p> <p>20. The project resulted in a positive change in policies and/practices.</p> <p>21. The project advanced inclusive policies and practices.</p> <p>22. The project positively impacted processes for HCC recruitment.</p> <p>23. The project positively impacted processes for HCC onboarding and orientation.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>24. The project positively impacted processes for HCC ongoing supports</p> <p>25. The project encouraged more equitable and effective sharing of resources.</p> <p>26. The project addressed persistent harmful gender norms and attitudes to support women's equality.</p> <p>27. The project provided access to programs, resources, and supports to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 on women's equality.</p> <p>28. The project aided in developing networks and collaborations to increase the reach, impact, and sustainability of efforts to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 on women's equality.</p> <p>29. The project aided in the intended audiences to use/apply knowledge in their policy and program work to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID- 19 on women's equality.</p> <p>30. The project positively impacted inclusive policies and practices to address barriers to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19.</p> <p>31. The project built understanding in municipal partners and equity-seeking community organizations of the barriers facing low-income and newcomer women entering the field of child care, in order to drive services that reflect their needs for income stability.</p> |
|--|---|

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methods used to collect data, to inform the project evaluation.

Policy review. The evaluation included a detailed analysis of several internal policies and external policies. The objective of this review was to analyze the policies with a GBA Plus lens, i.e., how intersectional identities influence a person's experience with policies, asking questions, challenging assumptions, and identifying potential impacts of these policies, considering the diversity of Canadians.

Literature review and comparative study. This method was used to analyze Licensed Home Child Care sustainability practices in similar organizations to identify best practices and draw inspiration from them. The analysis focused on Licensed Home Child Care Agencies based within Ontario, Canada. The data collected came from information provided by agencies, government and non-for-profit websites, evaluation reports, and journal articles and publications.

Internal home child care team and administrative staff interviews. Semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted with HCC Team members and administrative staff to identify leading causes to HCC income instability. Staff engaged in internal HCC program reviews, identifying perceived successes and barriers to program delivery and policy adherence.

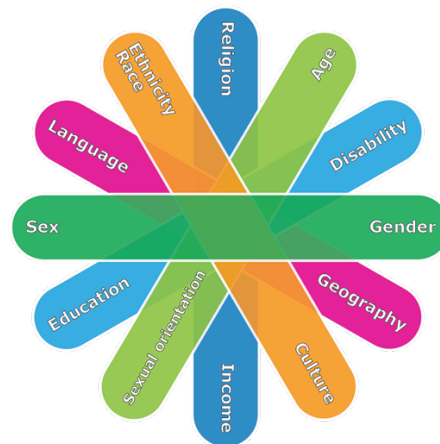
HCC provider and participant surveys. (a) An environmental scan survey was conducted and targeted all Home Child Care providers licensed with CELC. This method proved to be useful in collecting a wide variety of data from a sample of respondents and provided a foundational scope of CELC Home Child Care providers' identity demographics and barriers to income stability. A total of 42 individuals were asked to complete the survey. Of these, 15 providers completed it (29%). (b) Three surveys were conducted to target the individual barriers of participants. These included a baseline survey which was initiated upon becoming licensed, as well as three and six month follow up surveys. A total of 30 individuals were asked to complete the survey. Of these, 30 providers completed it (100%). (c) A final evaluation survey was conducted to provide an overall scope of project impacts. A total of 25 individuals were asked to complete the survey. Of these, 18 providers completed it (72%). Please see Table 1: Evaluation Questions for further detail of the questions asked in these surveys.

Participant interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to identify participants overall barriers to income stability related to their work as a licensed Home Child Care provider. These contributed to identifying individual and systemic barriers throughout the project period, particularly throughout the onboarding/licensing phase. The first was conducted during the licensing process, and the second was initiated within the following months of becoming licenced. A total of 30 individuals were consulted through 60 individual interviews.

RELEVANCE AND ALIGNMENT WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

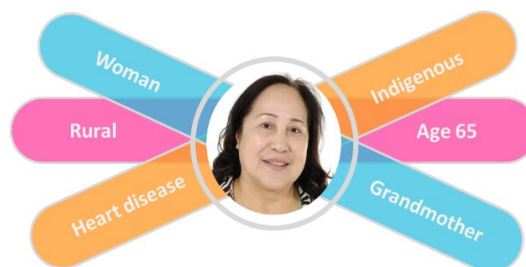
About Gender Based Analysis Plus

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) serves as an analytical framework employed to bolster the formulation of inclusive policies, programs, and initiatives. It entails comprehensively assessing the demographic impact of an issue or opportunity, tailoring initiatives to accommodate diverse needs, and proactively addressing potential barriers to access or benefits. GBA Plus encompasses an intersectional examination, extending beyond biological and socio-cultural differences to encompass variables such as age, disability, education, ethnicity, economic status, geography, language, race, religion, and sexual orientation, aligning with the Government of Canada's dedication to a gender and diversity sensitive approach across all endeavors.



Credit: WAGE

Organizations may utilize GBA Plus to examine the various intersecting identity aspects of diverse groups comprising women, men, and gender-diverse individuals, thereby enhancing inclusivity in the development, implementation, and assessment of initiatives.



Credit: WAGE

Without GBA Plus, there is a risk of overlooking or misinterpreting the experiences of a substantial quantity of the Canadian populace, potentially leading to the inadvertent exacerbation of inequalities through policy and initiative development. Hence, it is imperative to employ GBA Plus to maximize the impact and efficacy of all endeavors. Visit [Women and Gender Equality's website](#) to learn more about GBA Plus.

At each phase of program and initiative lifecycle, it's crucial to address fundamental considerations. Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) has devised the steps depicted in Figure 1 to assist federal employees and organizations in seamlessly integrating GBA Plus into their workflow. Proper documentation of the analysis and findings is emphasized as essential by WAGE (2021).

FIGURE 1: STEPS TO DOING GBA+



Credit: WAGE

About Women and Gender Equality Canada's Feminist Response and Recovery Fund

The following is Women and Gender Equality Canada's description of their Feminist Response and Recovery Fund:

The Department works to advance equality with respect to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression through the inclusion of people of all genders, including women, in Canada's economic, social, and political life. One way that the Department does this is through the [Women's Program](#).

Context for the call for proposals

The purpose of the Women's Program is to address or remove systemic barriers impeding the progress and advancement of women, in all their diversity, in three priority areas:

- Encouraging women and girls in leadership and decision-making positions
- Improving women's and girls' economic security and prosperity
- Ending gender-based violence

Since the COVID-19 virus took hold in Canada, the impacts of the pandemic have exposed gaps in our systems and amplified existing inequalities for women across the country. Women have faced increased job losses, reduced hours of work, have shouldered the majority of additional unpaid care responsibilities at home and continue to be on the front lines of the pandemic. At a time of greater confinement, there have also been widespread reports of increased intimate partner and other forms of violence. These impacts have been further compounded for Indigenous women, racialized women, and other underrepresented groups of women.

With the COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, recent funding has supported critical needs related to women's safety through \$100 million in emergency funding for organizations

providing supports and vital services to those experiencing gender-based violence. To ensure that progress on gender equality is not rolled back as a result of the pandemic, there is a need to accelerate systemic change for women across economic, social and political spheres.

This call for proposals provides the flexibility for organizations to be responsive to the broad and diverse systemic issues that need to be tackled to build back better, support a feminist response and recovery from the pandemic that is inclusive of diverse women, and advance gender equality across Canada.

Objective of the call for proposals

The objective of this call for proposals is to fund eligible organizations to support a feminist response and recovery from the current impacts of COVID-19, particularly for underrepresented women, through systemic change projects across the Women's Program three priority areas.

What is systemic change?

Under this Feminist Response and Recovery Fund, systemic change for women refers to modifying one or more elements within a system in a way that allow women and girls to fully participate in the economic, social, democratic, and political life of Canada. Elements within a system include policies and practices; resource distribution; networks and collaborations; authority, voices, and decision-making; and gender norms and attitudes.

Systemic change addresses or removes the root barriers preventing gender equality, rather than seeking to change women to adapt to discriminatory systems.

Key action areas

In this call for proposals, the Department is supporting projects that seek to address gender inequality for women through one or more of the following action areas that touch upon elements within a system:

- Advancing inclusive policies and practices: Address sexism and other barriers to gender equality at the organizational, governmental, legislative, and sectoral levels through the creation, modification or the removal of policies and practices
- Encouraging more effective and equitable sharing of resources: Address how key resources such as knowledge, information and funding are shared, mobilized, and redistributed to address barriers to equality
- Increasing networks and collaboration to accelerate systemic change: Build and strengthen partnerships to work across sectors and break down silos, with an aim to increase the reach, impact, and sustainability of gender equality efforts
- Supporting positive distribution of authority, voices, and decision-making power: Address unequal power structures to ensure those directly affected by gender inequality and with lived experiences are part of the dialogue and solution
- Addressing persistent harmful gender norms and attitudes: Challenge standard beliefs and assumptions (e.g. stereotypes) on how people should think, and act based on their gender and other intersecting identity factors

It is not necessary for projects to address all of the elements noted above, but rather to find and tackle those that will lead to meaningful change. Projects funded under this call for proposals will serve as building blocks toward systemic change and will lay the

groundwork for future efforts to advance women's equality (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2021).

About Licensed Home Child Care in Ontario Canada

Licensed home child care within Ontario operates through individual home child care providers who are contracted by licensed home child care agencies overseen by the Ministry of Education. These providers cater to a diverse range of children, including infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-aged children. Services provided encompass full-day care, before and after school care, extended hours, and even overnight care. The regulations stipulate that an individual provider can care for up to six children under 13 years old, with specific limitations on the number of children under two years old and including the provider's own children under four.

The benefits of licensed home child care are manifold. It ensures government-regulated and inspected homes meeting stringent standards, facilitates keeping siblings together, maintains small group sizes and a home-like environment, and potentially allows families to access child care fee subsidies. Moreover, licensed home child care agencies offer professional development, support, and monitoring for home child care providers, ensuring continuous improvement and adherence to standards. Compass Early Learning and Care serves as a licensing agency, serving Peterborough Region, the City of Kawartha Lakes, Durham Region, and Northumberland County.

Home visitors play a pivotal role in licensed home child care, working for these agencies to screen and monitor home providers. They ensure the safety of homes before enrollment, conduct routine inspections to uphold provincial regulations and agency policies, and assist families in finding suitable home child care providers. Home visitors also offer valuable support to providers, aiding in program development, nutrition planning, and selecting safe and appropriate toys and equipment. Additionally, regular inspections conducted by the Ministry of Education ensure that licensed home child care agencies and affiliated locations consistently meet stringent provincial health, safety, and program standards.

Introduction of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan (CWELCC)

The Government of Canada has identified child care as a national priority to enhance early learning and childhood development, support workforce participation and contribute to economic recovery.

Through its 2021 Budget, the federal government committed to investing in a national child care system with all provinces and territories. As part of this agreement, Ontario will receive \$13.2 billion over six years, which began in 2021-22.

Funding under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC) will be used to build and leverage the success of Ontario's existing early learning and child care system by increasing quality, accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity in early learning and child care, towards achieving the objectives of:

1. Providing a 25% fee reduction retroactive to April 1, 2022, building to a 50% reduction in average parent costs (based on 2020 levels) for licensed early learning and child care by the end of calendar year 2022 and reaching an average fee of \$10 a day by 2025-26 for licensed child care spaces.
2. Creating 86,000 new high-quality, affordable licensed child care spaces (relative to 2019 levels), predominantly through not-for-profit licensed child care.



3. Addressing barriers to provide inclusive child care.
4. Valuing the early childhood workforce and providing them with training and development opportunities.



RESULTS

Participant Demographics & Licensed Home Child Care Growth Analyses

This subsection describes the demographics of project participants, who are Home Child Care Providers Licensed by Compass Early Learning and Care. Our guiding question within this subsection is: *what do we know about demographic characteristics of the WAGE Project participants?* Statistics are based on percentages of WAGE Project participants.

TABLE 2: PROJECT PARTICIPANT IDENTITY DEMOGRAPHICS

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|-----|
| <i>Newcomer to Canada</i> ¹ | 11% | 89% |
| <i>Indigenous Person</i> ² | 12% | 89% |
| <i>Racialized Person</i> ³ | 17% (17% South Asian) | 83% |
| <i>Low Income</i> ⁴ | 78% | 22% |

Gender Identities included 3% transgender male and 97% cisgender female.

Compass Early Learning and Care Licenses Home Child Cares across four regions in Central Ontario: Northumberland County, Region of Durham, City of Kawartha Lakes, and the City of Peterborough. The following table displays the net growth in the total number of Home Child Care Providers Licensed with Compass Early Learning and Care between the project period (2022-2024):

¹For the purpose of this questionnaire, a Newcomer includes immigrants or refugees. There is no standard definition of a newcomer in Canada. Definitions vary from someone who arrived in the last three years, to someone who arrived a decade ago.

² For the purpose of this questionnaire, an Indigenous person is a person who identifies as a First Nation, Metis, Inuit, or Mixed Origin). Indigenous persons include status, treaty or registered persons, as well as non-status and non-registered persons.

³ For the purpose of this questionnaire, an Indigenous person is a person who identifies as a First Nation, Metis, Inuit, or Mixed Origin). Indigenous persons include status, treaty or registered persons, as well as non-status and non-registered persons.

⁴ For the purpose of this questionnaire, the term racialized identity is used as a generalized term to refer to people who are not Indigenous or White. 'Racialization' is the 'process by which societies construct races as real, different, and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life' (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022).

TABLE 3: LOCATION DEMOGRAPHICS AND LICENSED HOME CHILD CARE RETENTION AND GROWTH

| | Number of Active HCC Providers in Spring 2022 | Number of Active HCC Providers in Spring 2024 | +/- Growth Percentage |
|------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| City of Peterborough | 24 | 26 | +8.3 (2) |
| Region of Durham | 10 | 26 | + 160% (16) |
| City of Kawartha Lakes | 8 | 19 | + 138% (11) |
| Northumberland County | 0 | 5 | n/a (5) |
| Total | 42 | 76 | + 81% |

The project included 6 cohorts of 5 participants. Table 4 captures overall project participant retention, by analysis of the number of participants from each cohort that remain licensed with CELC at the end of the project period.

TABLE 4: PROJECT PARTICIPANT RETENTION

| Cohort Number (5 Participants per Cohort) | Number of participants licensed with CELC at the end of project (March 2024) |
|--|--|
| Cohort 1 | 2 |
| Cohort 2 | 4 |
| Cohort 3 | 4 |
| Cohort 4 | 4 |
| Cohort 5 | 5 |
| Cohort 6 | 5 |
| Total | 24 |

Trends: Demographics and Growth Analysis

- The greatest identifying factors of participants included low-income cisgender women.
- Almost all participants approached the licensing agency Compass ELC to begin a licensed home child care, rather than Compass ELC actively recruiting within the community.
- Throughout the project period:
 - The net number of active home child care programs within all four regions grew throughout the project period.

- There was an 81% increase in the total number of home child care programs licensed with Compass ELC, beginning with 42 programs, and ending with 76 programs.
- Regionally, the greatest increase was Durham Region (16), City of Kawartha Lakes (11), Northumberland County (5), followed by the City of Peterborough (2).
- Participant retention increased with the implementation of new programs and systems aimed at reducing barriers and creating income stability. From Cohort 1, two of five participants remained licensed with Compass ELC at the end of the project, whereas all five participants from Cohort 6 remained licensed with Compass ELC at the end of the project.



Barriers to Licensed Home Child Care Income Stability

The following subsection details barriers experienced by Home Child Care providers who are licensed by Compass Early Learning and Care. A barrier is defined as, a circumstance or obstacle that keeps people or things apart or prevents communication or progress” (Marriam-Webster, 2022). The guiding questions of this subsection are: *What are the barriers experienced by Home Child Care providers licenced by Compass Early Learning and Care? If so, how have these barriers been reduced throughout the project period?*

Throughout the project, participants completed ongoing assessments regarding the barriers they experience related to their work as Licensed Home Child Care Providers. These assessments were distributed during the first six months of participants becoming Licensed with Compass Early Learning and Care. The initial assessment was distributed to WAGE Project participants during their onboarding process, and the final assessment was conducted 6-months in to them being Licensed with Compass Early Learning and Care. Table 5 captures WAGE Participants’ responses to the barriers they experienced at the time of their initial assessment and final assessment, as well as the percentage of change between the 6-month response period. Participants responded ‘yes’ if they continued to experience barriers related to the corresponding topic.

TABLE 5: BARRIERS TO LICENSED HOME CHILD CARE INCOME STABILITY

| | Initial Assessment | | Final Assessment | | % Change | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----|------------------|------|----------|--------|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Health Benefits | 63% | 37% | 22% | 78% | - 65% | + 111% |
| Financial | 94% | 6% | 78% | 22% | - 17% | + 267% |
| COVID-19 Pandemic | 44% | 56% | 22% | 78% | - 50% | + 39% |
| Professional Development | 31% | 69% | 0% | 100% | - 100% | + 845% |
| Technology | 31% | 69% | 11% | 89% | - 65% | + 29% |
| Licensing Insurance | 44% | 56% | 0% | 100% | - 100% | + 79% |
| Communication with Families | 19% | 81% | 11% | 89% | - 42% | + 10% |
| Relationships with Families | 19% | 81% | 11% | 89% | - 42% | + 10% |
| Policies and Procedures | 6% | 94% | 22% | 78% | + 227% | - 17% |
| Business Development | 31% | 69% | 11% | 89% | - 65% | + 29% |
| Housing | 38% | 69% | 22% | 78% | - 42% | + 13% |
| Family Onboarding | 19% | 81% | 11% | 89% | - 42% | + 10% |
| Licensing Process | 25% | 75% | 0% | 100% | - 100% | + 33% |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------|---------|
| Additional Barriers | 44% | 56% | 44% | 56% | 0% | 0% |
| Language | 0% | 100% | 0% | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| Interview Process | 25% | 75% | 11% | 89% | - 56% | + 18.7% |
| Overall Mean | 33% | 67% | 17% | 83% | | |

Trends: Barriers to Licensed Home Child Care Income Stability

- Overall, participants experienced fewer barriers related to their work after a six-month period of participating in the project compared to barriers experienced within the first month.
- The most common barriers experienced throughout the onboarding phase (initial assessment) included financial (94%), health benefits (63%), the COVID-19 pandemic (44%), licensing insurance (44%), and additional barriers (44%).
- All participants reported no barriers related to the COVID-19 pandemic within six months after becoming licensed (final assessment).
- Participants continue to face barriers related to their work, most commonly financial barriers (78%).
- Improvement in Health Benefits: There's a significant increase in participants reporting access to health benefits from the initial assessment to the final assessment, with a percentage change of +111%.
- Reduction in Financial Barriers: The percentage of participants experiencing financial barriers decreased notably from the initial assessment to the final assessment, showing a percentage change of +267%.
- Decrease in COVID-19 Pandemic-related Barriers: There was a considerable decrease in participants reporting barriers related to the COVID-19 pandemic from the initial assessment to the final assessment, with a percentage change of -50%.
- Increase in Professional Development Opportunities: While initially, only 31% of participants reported access to professional development, this increased to 100% in the final assessment, indicating a percentage change of +845%.
- Decline in Technology Barriers: Participants facing technology barriers decreased significantly from the initial assessment to the final assessment, with a percentage change of -65%.
- Elimination of Licensing Insurance Barriers: Participants reporting barriers related to licensing insurance dropped to zero in the final assessment, resulting in a percentage change of -100%.
- Improvement in Policies and Procedures Accessibility: There was a notable increase in participants reporting access to policies and procedures, with a percentage change of +227%.
- Decline in Housing Barriers: While initially 38% of participants faced housing barriers, this decreased to 22% in the final assessment, showing a percentage change of -42%.
- Consistency in Additional Barriers: The percentage of participants reporting additional barriers remained unchanged from the initial assessment to the final assessment.

- **Stability in Language Barriers:** There were no changes in the percentage of participants reporting language barriers from the initial assessment to the final assessment.
- **Improvement in Interview Process Experience:** Participants reporting barriers related to the interview process decreased significantly from the initial assessment to the final assessment, with a percentage change of -56%.
- **Overall Improvement in Mean Scores:** The overall mean scores show a shift towards a more positive experience, with an increase in the percentage of participants reporting positively across various categories from the initial assessment to the final assessment.



Overview of new or altered programs and Initiatives as a result of the Project

A culmination of data collection methods and GBA Plus analysis informed new programs and initiatives throughout the project period. Furthermore, these aligned with the project objectives. Table 6 describes the new or altered programs as a result of the project and is organized into 5 categories: (1) professional learning, (2) financial, (3) sustainability of internal Home Child Care team, (4) physical and mental health, and (5) individual and systemic barrier reduction tools.

TABLE 6: OVERVIEW OF NEW OR ALTERED PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT

| | |
|--|--|
| Professional Learning | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing mentorship program 2. Ongoing professional learning led by HCC Providers 3. Ongoing professional learning tailored to the needs of Licensed HCC Providers (including business development) 4. Professional learning for HCC Providers to promote diverse, equitable, and inclusive practices 5. Internal professional learning with a focus on GBA+ and DEI priorities 6. Introduction of one Pedagogical Lead per region to engage HCC Providers in pedagogical visits and curriculum development |
| Financial | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual compensation incentive to support (a) Health benefits, (b) RRSP contributions, (c) unpaid closure days, and/or (d) HCC food purchasing. 2. Emergency Hardship Fund 3. Reimbursements for start-up qualifications for low-income providers 4. Welcome toys and equipment package for incoming providers 5. Increased materials and accessibility to Lending Library |
| Sustainability of Internal Home Child Care Team | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hire 3 full time administrative leads, one for each active region 2. Hire a full time home visitor for Northumberland County 3. Hire a second Home Visitor for Durham and City of Kawartha Lakes 4. Establish cross-regional networks to support cohesion and consistency |
| Physical and Mental Health | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Option to opt-into Family or individual health benefits |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Plan includes option for virtual care for physical and mental health (Telus Health Virtual Care; EAP Counselling Programs) 2. Introduction of 20 paid closure days per annum |
| <p>Individual and Systemic Barrier Reduction Tools</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full-scope conversation regarding barriers to income stability for all incoming licensed HCC providers 2. Ongoing check-ins with all providers regarding barriers and progress of barrier reduction 3. Monthly wellness hour for providers, covered by home visitor 4. Backup care for medical appointments 5. Exit Interviews |



Individual Impacts

TABLE 7: EVALUATIVE SURVEY RESPONSES REGARDING INDIVIDUAL IMPACTS

| Question | Agree | Disagree |
|---|-------|----------|
| While participating in the project, there were opportunities for me to express my needs | 17 | 1 |
| These needs were taken into consideration moving forward | 18 | 0 |
| Participating in the project increased my business skills | 16 | 2 |
| Participating in the project increased the sustainability of my business | 18 | 0 |
| Participating in the project aided in my income stability | 18 | 0 |
| Participating in the project increased my understanding of the barriers facing newcomer, low-income women, indigenous, and/or 2SLGBTQIA+ populations entering the field of child care | 15 | 3 |
| Participating in the project increased my understanding of supports that are offered to me within the community | 15 | 3 |
| Participating in the project increased my understanding of supports that are offered to me through Compass ELC | 18 | 0 |

Trends: Individual Impacts

- Overall, project participants expressed the project had a positive on individuals.
- Opportunities for expressing needs: The majority of respondents (17 out of 18) agreed that there were opportunities for them to express their needs while participating in the project.
- Consideration of expressed needs: Similarly, the majority of respondents (18 out of 18) agreed that their needs were taken into consideration moving forward, indicating a high level of responsiveness from the project organizers.
- Increase in business skills: A significant majority (16 out of 18) agreed that participating in the project increased their business skills, suggesting that the project had a positive impact on their professional development in this aspect.
- Improvement in business sustainability: All respondents (18 out of 18) agreed that participating in the project increased the sustainability of their business, indicating that the project had a beneficial effect on the long-term viability of their ventures.
- Aid in income stability: All respondents (18 out of 18) agreed that participating in the project aided in their income stability, suggesting that the project contributed positively to their financial well-being.

- Enhanced understanding of barriers: The majority of respondents (15 out of 18) agreed that participating in the project increased their understanding of the barriers facing newcomer, low-income women, indigenous, and/or 2SLGBTQIA+ populations entering the field of child care.
- Increased awareness of community supports: A significant majority (15 out of 18) agreed that participating in the project increased their understanding of supports offered within the community, indicating that the project facilitated greater awareness of available resources.
- Awareness of Compass ELC supports: Similarly, all respondents (18 out of 18) agreed that participating in the project increased their understanding of supports offered through Compass ELC, suggesting that the project effectively communicated the resources available through this organization.
- Instead of just one participant selecting ‘disagree’, a diverse range of participants chose the same option. Many of these individuals mentioned not having a full understanding the subject or language in their comments. This indicates the need for ongoing efforts to promote women and gender equality, in alignment with GBA Plus, to further educate providers on these priorities. This approach aims to broaden their perspective and deepen their understanding of inequities experienced by Women and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Stories of Individual Impact

Project Participant (Survey): I'm not sure how I would have made it through some difficult times without the assistance of this project. I think the rent increases and increase in grocery prices came as a shock to us all. I am a single parent and the only provider for my family. I do not have a back-up income for my family. If my home childcare were to close, I'm not sure how I would be able to provide for my family. Also, during this time, I have been able to build a solid foundation from which to continue to grow my business. If times become difficult again, at least I know that I have the essentials in place.

Project Participant (Survey): This project helped the stability of my home-based child care business. It helped me think that our voices are being heard, we are treated equal, and important as other professionals. And that childcare is in demand, it's important to understand the needs of the provider and that they can be addressed, which is directly linked to their wellbeing.

Project Participant (Survey): The compensation incentive that I received from Compass truly helped me to be able to open. My maternity leave ended sooner than expected so I didn't have any form of money coming in whatsoever. It helped tremendously with opening costs. I needed a fence in my yard, and without the funding I wouldn't have been able to do it.

Project Participant (Survey): I feel way more supported now than when I was a private daycare provider. Right when I became licensed, I learned about the WAGE project. I was given financial support to buy things my group would enjoy, and I've had endless support from the Compass team.



Project Participant (Survey): Before joining Compass, I had a difficult time keeping my income stable, as my schedule was always different. Since joining Compass my schedule has become consistent and so has my income, allowing me to continue on this business path.

Project Participant (Survey): The families of the children in my care have noticed the positive changes over the last year. I have made changes to the learning environment in my home, which has minimized transitions throughout the day and have promoted the children to explore independently, yet safely. This has allowed for more adult-led learning times as well as self-guided learning opportunities. The children are growing and flourishing. Quite a few parents have now enrolled younger siblings as space becomes available. The parents have also recommended my home childcare to other families, but since space is limited, I often have to direct people to the waitlist. The financial assistance, moral support, and information provided has helped me build my business for the future, so I can continue to provide care for this next group of siblings.

Project Participant (Survey): Through the WAGE project, I was given the opportunity to ask for supplies that would aid me in my program development and the general day to day running of my business. I was able to spend money (granted to me) on specific things that I found beneficial to my program and home and was supported by Sara the entire way through. She offered suggestions, asked details questions to make sure she understood my wants/needs, and checked in over the last several months to see where I needed support.

Project Participant (Survey): Because of participating in the project, I had all of the items needed to run a home daycare and I was completely prepared and started meeting with families. This provided me with income stability within a few weeks.

Project Participant (Survey): I am a newcomer, low income myself I can totally understand the hardships we face but I am so glad because I found Compass who helps me.

Project Participant (Survey): Right from the very beginning, this project has help to open my eyes to the struggle of others. This journey began with compiling stories of our struggles for the information session. I was happy to share my story and also to hear the story of others, so I can better understand their perspectives.

Project Participant (Survey): I am an immigrant from Pakistan and moved to Canada in 2018. I initially lived in Pickering, then I moved to Peterborough in 2022, so my experiences in starting and running daycare have been unique. My own struggles include adapting to a new culture, understanding the rules and regulations around childcare, earning an income needed to run a childcare while also earning an income for myself and my family, and also convincing families that in spite of being new in the country and having no previous work experience in Canada, they can still trust me with their own child, has been challenging. I am able to empathize with other groups in the community who have their unique perspectives.

Project Participant (Survey): Yes, Compass identified the needs of daycare providers first then they met the needs like health benefits, wellness hours, insurance payment, 3000\$ to support the program, vacations (working on it). They are great support, without them I wouldn't have done this.

Project Participant (Survey): Sara worked closely with the HCC Consultants, and we all had numerous discussions about what my needs are, what the needs are of home child care providers in general and also the steps that Compass is taking to offer support.

Project Participant (Survey): The team at Compass ELC has constantly kept up with providers' requests. I have been able to access the equipment and toy library, attend trainings and workshops, address concerns and always received the needed support.



Systemic Impacts

TABLE 8: EVALUATIVE SURVEY RESPONSES REGARDING SYSTEMIC IMPACTS

| Question | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| The project contributed to systemic change | 17 | 1 |
| The project aided in easing entry into this career pathway for newcomer, low-income women, indigenous, and 2SLGBTQIA+ populations | 17 | 1 |
| The project aided in driving services that reflect newcomer, low-income women, indigenous, and 2SLGBTQIA+ populations' needs for income stability | 17 | 1 |
| The project resulted in a positive change in policies and/practices | 17 | 1 |
| The project advanced inclusive policies and practices | 17 | 1 |
| The project positively impacted processes for HCC recruitment | 18 | 0 |
| The project positively impacted processes for HCC onboarding and orientation | 18 | 0 |
| The project positively impacted processes for HCC ongoing supports | 18 | 0 |
| The project encouraged more equitable and effective sharing of resources | 17 | 1 |
| The project addressed persistent harmful gender norms and attitudes to support women's equality | 16 | 2 |
| The project provided access to programs, resources and supports to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 on women's equality | 17 | 1 |
| The project aided in developing networks and collaborations to increase the reach, impact, and sustainability of efforts to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 on women's equality | 17 | 1 |
| The project aided in the intended audiences to use/apply knowledge in their policy and program work to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID- 19 on women's equality | 17 | 1 |
| The project positively impacted inclusive policies and practices to address barriers to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 | 18 | 0 |

| | | |
|--|----|---|
| The project built understanding in municipal partners and equity-seeking community organizations of the barriers facing low-income and newcomer women entering the field of child care, in order to drive services that reflect their needs for income stability | 15 | 3 |
|--|----|---|

Trends: Systemic Impacts

- Contributions to systemic change: The majority of respondents (17 out of 18) agreed that the project contributed to systemic change, indicating its potential for broader impact beyond individual participants.
- Support for marginalized populations: Respondents (17 out of 18) agreed that the project aided in easing entry into the career pathway for marginalized populations such as newcomers, low-income women, indigenous, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, as well as driving services that reflect their needs for income stability.
- Impact on policies and practices: A significant majority (17 out of 18) agreed that the project resulted in positive changes in policies and practices and advanced inclusive policies and practices, suggesting its effectiveness in influencing organizational and systemic approaches.
- Enhancement of processes for HCC: Respondents unanimously agreed that the project positively impacted processes for HCC (Home Child Care) recruitment, onboarding and orientation, and ongoing supports, indicating its effectiveness in improving operational aspects.
- Promotion of equitable resource sharing: The majority of respondents (17 out of 18) agreed that the project encouraged more equitable and effective sharing of resources, highlighting its role in promoting fairness and collaboration.
- Addressing harmful gender norms: While the majority (16 out of 18) agreed that the project addressed persistent harmful gender norms and attitudes to support women's equality, there were also two respondents who disagreed, indicating some variability in perceptions regarding this aspect.
- COVID-19 response and recovery: Respondents largely agreed that the project provided access to programs, resources, and supports to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 on women's equality, aided in developing networks and collaborations, and facilitated the application of knowledge in policy and program work related to COVID-19 response and recovery.
- Impact on municipal partners and community organizations: A majority (15 out of 18) agreed that the project built understanding among municipal partners and equity-seeking community organizations regarding the barriers facing low-income and newcomer women entering the child care field, emphasizing its role in fostering collaboration and awareness.
- Instead of just one participant selecting 'disagree', a diverse range of participants chose the same option. Many of these individuals mentioned not having a full understanding the subject or language in their comments. This indicates the need for ongoing efforts to promote women and gender equality, in alignment with GBA Plus, to further educate providers on these priorities. This approach aims to broaden

their perspective and deepen their understanding of inequities experienced by Women and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Stories of Systemic Impact

Project Participant (Survey): As with any business, it is essential that some investment is made before starting out. Women, especially women who are primary caregivers at home, struggle to leave their homes and earn an income. The WAGE program provided many such women, including myself, to get the resources needed to start earning an income.

Project Participant (Survey): I felt the program addressed the barriers at the source to help remove them instead of only addressing symptoms. In my opinion, this created sustainable systemic change.

Project Participant (Survey): Women's issues were brought to light that I don't think we even realized we faced.

Project Participant (Survey): Health benefits and paid time-off will positively impact home childcare providers greatly, particularly those of us who are marginalized with few supports. Also, I have been able to provide care for a wide variety of families, supporting them in their unique situations. Overall, helping to keep those of us who might not have made it through the last year in business, you are providing our community with the richness of many different child care providers from many different backgrounds.

Project Participant (Survey): The project allows for increased awareness and understanding of impacts on equality and COVID-19 Response and Recovery. The need for awareness and understanding is the first step towards systematic change.

Project Participant (Survey): Being a newcomer to this country I totally support such projects because it eases the financial burden from the person. making there settling down a bit easier because settling down in another country can be rough without such supports.

Project Participant (Survey): As a transgender man, I have faced many barriers to becoming the man and educator that I am today. I am also a single parent, which comes with additional barriers to starting your own business from home. I have less security, supports and financial stability than some other people. The WAGE project helped me build a foundation from which to build a stable business that I hope will continue to grow from here.

Project Participant (Survey): This change is fundamental and affected how the whole systems functions. It's a gradual reform and it is based on and aimed at the transformation of the life of child care providers. The root cause of a problem is being identified.

Project Participant (Survey): Sara brought our issues to light and made changes that make our jobs better. She has been working with municipalities and advocating for us.



Project Participant (Survey): I think we will always have to fight for what we deserve. This project has helped providers to be heard and helped financially as well. And hopefully it will continue to help others in the future. As a primarily female driven career, we are not paid what we should be. Typically, male driven career paths receive better pay. I am hopeful that the barriers will continue to grow smaller with time. Hopefully this project will help to continue with this in the future.

Project Participant (Survey): I see a lot of positive change in practices. Health insurance has come into effect.

Project Participant (Survey): Sara personally visited me in my house, and we discussed my situation, including my financial situation (which isn't easy to share with anyone, but she was very kind and professional). She made a list of everything I needed to set up my home daycare.

Project Participant (Survey): Sara checked in several times over the past 6 months, to see what my wishes/wants/needs were. Even when I was hesitant to say where my barriers were, or stated that "others have it worse" so I didn't want to seem like I was asking for things or complaining, Sara talked me through those emotions and essentially gave me "permission" to have needs like everyone else, and to acknowledge them and express them when it comes to my business and my barriers.

Project Participant (Survey): I feel I am always heard, and that many issues that we face have been addressed. I feel very grateful to work for such wonderful organization that cares about how we feel and tries to make things better

Project Participant (Survey): Whether the answer was yes, or no. We were able to have an honest open conversation that was completely judgment free and helped make me feel at ease. I greatly appreciate Sara's assistance.

Project Participant (Survey): Yes, I have found from the very beginning that I have been listened to and that steps were taken to help me overcome barriers. I was provided with information about government programs, I was given funding for materials, technology and groceries, and I had a supportive ear to listen to the struggles that are not possible to alleviate at this time. Compass has started programs for health benefits and paid time off. The HCC Consultants have had a positive view of the WAGE project and have done what they can to support as well.

Project Participant (Survey): This project was good for minority communities.

Project Participant (Survey): I believe that the benefits, compensation incentive money and vacation time will one hundred percent attract new providers.

Project Participant (Survey): the project recruited so many more child care providers, impacting lives of many like me.

Project Participant (Survey): Overall I had a very positive and in resulting less anxiety when onboarding and when started orientation. I hope this continues. The partnership has been very beneficial.

Project Participant (Survey): I think it may have made some people realize how much this project helped. And maybe how thankful people were for the help it did provide. Since the project it seems that there's more and more things coming out every year where HCC's are receiving money and other things to help with things that may be related to their business or things in their personal life. As someone who struggled for so long so I didn't have to have my children in daycare it's.... very much appreciated to have continued financial support or just as simple as being able to have a conversation about things and getting support through suggestions, etc. I can't explain how helpful it's been.

Project Participant (Survey): It has been over a year since I have been on the receiving end of benefits provided by the WAGE program, therefore, the support has been ongoing and consistent.

Project Participant (Survey): It has addressed the issue [of persistent harmful gender norms and attitudes] and hopefully it will continue to support change. We will always have to advocate.

Project Participant (Survey): COVID-19 impacted a lot of women, jobs were gone. The project has helped to identify the problem of daycare providers and tried to address them in a timely manner. follows up are done.

Project Participant (Survey): Shortly after moving from an apartment into a home, I began my journey of opening a home childcare. As a single parent, I was excited for my small family, but also overwhelmed. The costs of setting up a home for my family as well as a home childcare in the middle of a pandemic was adding up quickly. Then, not long after opening, I was met with a number of challenges with covid closures, rent and utility increases and an ever-growing grocery bill. As a single parent and transgender man, I wasn't sure what supports were available and if I would be met with discrimination if I tried to access them. Sara reached out about the WAGE project. I had reservations at first due to past experiences where people would try to exploit my transgender experience for their own gain. Sara was very kind, reassuring, and patient. I'm glad she didn't give up on offering her support. In fact, it was her kindness that was the first step in building a solid foundation for my home childcare. She believed in me. She knew I was transgender and saw this as a strength to the childcare community rather than a hindrance. I became confident and worked with Sara and the HCC Consultants to build that solid foundation that I needed for my business through collaboration, funding, and information about community supports. My home childcare is flourishing, and the children are flourishing right along with it. I am truly grateful.

Project Participant (Survey): We moved to Peterborough in June 2022, and we were very excited because it's a beautiful city and because it's the first house we ever bought. I was working as a customer service rep online, but my heart was in daycare. I was previously running my home daycare in my old house and wanted to continue running my home daycare in my new house, but between COVID-19, moving cities, and switching jobs, we had to downgrade and sell a lot of daycare equipment and toys. I felt I was back to square one and had to stick out my customer service job for as long as I could and decided I will save enough to "restart" daycare. Unfortunately,



I couldn't. My husband also lost his job, as COVID-19 had disrupted his company's business operations. We both worried if purchasing a new house was a mistake and soon found out credit cards being maxed out. I did not want to lose my customer service job, so I thought about running a home daycare for families who needed overnight care. That way, I wouldn't have to invest in large equipment. The children could sleep on the beds we already had and play with my children's toys. I googled what agencies operated in Peterborough and met Amanda and Lisa. The meeting went well but they encouraged me to look into daytime care instead of overnight because they did not hear from families who needed overnight care. I discussed that with my husband and we both agreed we couldn't invest in equipment for daytime care. The next day, I received an email from Lisa who attached a WAGE Project recruitment flyer. That was a light bulb moment. I asked her if it was possible I could participate. Before I knew it, I was having a meeting with Sara! Within one month, all the paperwork and courses I needed to prepare for daycare was done, and the costs were reimbursed, and all this time, I did not have to quit my customer service job. I was working on my desk during the day, then meeting with potential families in the evening. I couldn't wait to get off that desk so I could freely go for walks with my daycare children. Finally, the day arrived! The only time I sit on my desk now is for writing my menu, filling surveys or working on my daycare budget. These initiatives seem small, but they mean so much and have long lasting impacts on our community. Through the WAGE project, I have been able to get back on my feet and support my family while also bringing joy to the little children who look forward to coming here every day so their own parents can go out and work and support their families :)

Project Participant (Survey): The process helped to relieve some of the financial burden and provide supports. I think we will continue to deal with the aftermath of Covid for a long time to come. But this has helped with the process, and I hope it will continue to help in the future.

Project Participant (Survey): Women, now more than ever it seems, are continuing to experience pay disparity. Throughout the pandemic I feel this only got worse. The imbalance of women having to leave work to care for children when centres and schools closed along with so many other factors have only made the gender pay gap larger. This program did support my income along with many other women who enrolled and enabled us to sustainably change our programs for the better to help secure future income as well.

Project Participant (Survey): This project provided support and resources to help me restart my business after COVID-19.

Project Participant (Survey): The staff has worked so hard in developing a well-rounded program that has positive effect, sometimes on people that are not even in the program like our families

Project Participant (Survey): These are ongoing issues that have to ultimately be dealt with at the government level, but by spreading awareness within our community, and by encouraging people like us to share our stories then change can begin. As for immediate supports, Sara would listen to the barriers impacting you and do research to connect you to the right supports that are currently available.

Project Participant (Survey): I had lost daycare families when COVID-19 hit. This resulted in me accessing COVID benefits provided by the government but they weren't sufficient enough to cover



the income loss. I had to shut my home daycare and find another job that allowed the flexibility to work from home because my own children are school-going and I was unable to find before/after school care for them. During that time, my vulnerable sector clearance and CPR training expired. Thanks to the support provided by the WAGE program, I was able to restart my home daycare.

Project Participant (Survey): I believe this project helped get providers more vacation days. We don't get paid when we are sick or for vacation normally... This was a huge step in the right direction. Sara has done so much for us. She helped me purchase toys and needed items for my program. Sara listened to all the things that I think we need help with and she addressed them all. This was an amazing opportunity and I'm grateful.

Project Participant (Survey): By fostering supportive relationships and providing guidance, the project not only empowered these women but also contributed to building a more inclusive and equitable workplace environment.

Project Participant (Survey): I feel like I was able to have a platform to voice my feelings in regards to barriers I face. I was able to advocate for paid time off and the importance of this is overall wellness and retention in the field. I was able to purchase additional accessories for my play couch with is hands down the most used piece of equipment in my program.

Project Participant (Survey): I am a newcomer in this country moved from India in 2012, I was having a lot of problem managing my finances. compass helped me in a lot of ways, project is so empowering, made me feel proud of myself, made me less dependent on spouses income, made me go a little extra for my children, made me fulfill my small dreams. THANK YOU!

Project Participant (Survey): Initially meeting with Sara and being able to express openly my personal struggles without being judged was huge for me. It felt good to be able to supply my kiddos with things that I could not afford. Seems small but it's one less thing to worry about in the day. The mentoring partnered with this project that was definitely something that is worth doing again. I would not have been able to start to so quickly without the help of my mentor. I also think the check ins were good. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to be included in this project.

Project Participant (Survey): This project helped with my transition into being a provider. I have been an educator for many years, and making the change to become a provider was a difficult one at first. This project helped me with the beginning process of this and has remained helpful throughout. I'm not sure I would have been able to make the transition to becoming a provider without it.

Project Participant (Survey): I was able to purchase an entire wish list of items to support the inclusion of younger children in my program which not only increased my potential income but directly aided two other women to return to work in new post-pandemic positions.

Project Participant (Survey): I feel like by now you would be able to understand my story and how difficult it was for me to start up, but how thankful I was to have some financial help when starting up. It was a long two years of bumps in the road every time I got close to being licensed and starting to make money to contribute to my family. From my son getting sick, to COVID, to losing

family pets, to vaccine mandates. It was a very long and sometimes painful process where every time I got close to thinking I could accomplish my goal, it was all taken away from me again. Having no money and trying to find some to accomplish your goal is difficult. When COVID-19 mandates were gone and everything else was good to go for finally getting licensed...this project helped cover the final costs of some big items for me to be able to start up. Whether it be shelves or toys or you name it, it was a large chunk of the cost for me that I didn't have to struggle with. It made it so I could finally start up and start making some money so we didn't have to struggle anymore, so we could actually do things with my own children and at the same time help out other families that weren't able to stay home with their children for as long as I did.

Project Participant (Survey): I came from a different agency during the Covid timeframe. The meeting I had with Sara for WAGE not only was very relaxing and productive, but a lot of information that I would not have thought of she was able to share. My [licensing] time was delayed, and financial reasons were big factor. They helped me fill out the emergency hardship fund applications for twice to help pay for the insurance I needed in order to work. Not only was that very helpful, but we had multiple conversations about updating more that were more diverse. I felt comfortable to reach out to Sara on multiple occasions to have, questions answered, or requiring assistance. Shortly after I on boarded with compass, they offered the program of mentorship. I had 18 years of unlearning to do so that I could learn properly the compass way. Through the mentorship, I was able to do some of that unlearning that's been in the program a while. I know that Sara was available by phone or email when I needed her and everything was always done with respect and no question was too silly. I greatly appreciate it all the assistance I could get. I hope it continues and I'm able to learn more about the program is available and participate more. Thank you to all those that have put this project in place. It helped make my transition much easier.

Project Participant (Survey): For the last six months Sara has made it clear that she can assist me financially through WAGE, by offering me a budget to spend on ANYTHING business related, to help me continue to run a quality program, and reduce financial barriers related to my job. It has taken me the entire six months to spend this money, because I have a very hard time not only accepting help from others but admitting that I could use the help. From intake, to the projects upcoming completion, I have expressed how "icky" it makes me feel to spend this money she is offering. During our initial phone meeting I expressed although I am a low income single mum, I do not like the idea of accepting this money as I am sure there are others who could use it more. Sara validated this feeling, but expressed very confidently that not only is this money available for times like this, and people like me, but I DO deserve it as much as the person next to me who is just trying to thrive in their business and life the same way I am. In the last six months (after some convincing), I have used the wage money to piece together elements of my business and classroom that I would not have been able to do so without this financial help. It has not only relieved personal stress, but has given me a "pep in my step" as a daycare provider as I feel these new materials, new technology etc. has made our days easier, more exciting, and given us more options in our play and development.

Internal Administrative Staff Interview, CEO: “The project funded by the Federal Women and Gender Equality grant has given our organization a unique opportunity to really dive deep into systemic barriers for women entering the workforce, in particular as home child care



providers in the early learning and care sector. Many of the learning outcomes from this project have informed the evolution of our practices that will remain for years to come with the goal of breaking down barriers and valuing the important contribution women make to society and the lives of children and families every day.”

Internal HCC Team Interview, Home Visitor: “The WAGE project has helped create a new awareness, when we look at onboarding new providers. Looking at all the possible barriers and what resources CELC has available to offer as support. Not just financially either, barriers could be around language (offer to send out information in a different language), experience (discuss the resources that CELC has to offer new providers and offer additional supports when setting up their HCC environments). All of these were available before, but I think it was if/when a provider requested these things. Now it has become an everyday practice, as we now ask providers from the very beginning how we can support them in their journey on becoming a licensed HCC provider with Compass.”

Internal HCC Team Interview, Home Visitor: “It has been incredible to reflect on our Home Child Care division over the last year and all that we have been able to accomplish together with the help of the WAGE project. With this project I have noticed a marked improvement in well-being, satisfaction, and confidence in the important work that home childcare providers have for their work but also with the home visitors that work with them. I believe that because we were able to identify the areas of need through this project and develop sustainable practices to continue to address these needs in Home Childcare, we now have a strong foundation to continue to grow and develop new initiatives to continue to support HCC.”



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the evaluation of the Newcomer Home Child Care Expansion project has provided comprehensive insights into its implementation and impact within the context of licensed home child care at Compass Early Learning and Care (CELC). The project, funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada's Feminist Response and Recovery Fund, aimed to address systemic barriers while licensing 30 new Home Child Care (HCC) Providers across Central Ontario. Through collaborative efforts with various community organizations and stakeholders, the project facilitated systemic change by easing entry into the career pathway for individuals self-identifying as women, LGBTQIA2S+, and newcomers to Canada, with a focus on income security and awareness-building.

The evaluation revealed significant achievements, including notable growth in licensed home child care providers, reduction of barriers to income stability, and positive individual and systemic impacts. Participants reported increased business skills, enhanced sustainability of their businesses, and improved income stability. Moreover, the project contributed to systemic change by advancing inclusive policies and practices, enhancing recruitment and support processes, and promoting equitable resource sharing.

The evaluation of GBA Plus practices within Home Child Care at Compass Early Learning and Care (CELC) has demonstrated the significant alignment with and contribution to federal government priorities and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, inclusivity, and child care accessibility. By employing a comprehensive analytical framework of GBA Plus, organizations can effectively address the diverse needs and experiences of individuals across various intersecting identity aspects, thereby enhancing the development, implementation, and assessment of initiatives within the home child care sector.

The findings of this evaluation underscore the importance of initiatives such as Women and Gender Equality Canada's Feminist Response and Recovery Fund, which seeks to accelerate systemic change for underrepresented women and address existing inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through targeted funding and support, these initiatives have the potential to create meaningful impacts, remove systemic barriers, and advance gender equality across economic, social, and political spheres.

Moreover, the introduction of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan (CWELCC) reflects the government's commitment to enhancing early learning and childhood development, supporting workforce participation, and contributing to economic recovery. By investing in a national child care system and addressing barriers to inclusive child care, the CWELCC Plan aims to create high-quality, affordable child care spaces and value the early childhood workforce.

The project effectively met its objectives by addressing various action areas outlined in the call for proposals. It advanced inclusive policies and practices by implementing GBA Plus practices within Home Child Care at Compass Early Learning and Care (CELC), aiming to reduce systemic barriers for underrepresented women, LGBTQIA2S+, and newcomers to Canada entering the child care field. By partnering with organizations like the New Canadian Centre and Indigenize.ca, the project encouraged more effective and equitable sharing of resources, leveraging knowledge and funding to support diverse communities' needs. Additionally, through collaboration with municipal partners and equity-seeking community organizations, the project facilitated networking and collaboration to accelerate systemic change, breaking down silos and increasing the reach and impact of gender equality efforts. By addressing persistent harmful gender

norms and attitudes, the project challenged stereotypes and fostered a more inclusive and equitable child care environment for all.

Recommendations

Building upon the successes and lessons learned from the evaluation, the following recommendations are proposed to further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of Home Child Care expansion:

- 11. Hold A High Image of Licensed Home Child Care:** Given the opportunity for expansion of desperately needed child care spaces in a timely and cost-effective manner and the opportunity for provider income stability, we recommend governments and organizations recognize the important value of this sector as integral to building a child care system. This would mean that Home Child Care would be embedded in all relevant legislation, policies, and communication, highlighting how it provides regulated, home-like environments with small group sizes, fostering individualized care and close relationships between caregivers and children while offering accessibility, flexibility, and government funding. These factors make it an appealing option for families seeking high-quality child care that meets their diverse needs.
- 12. Target Barrier Reduction:** We recommend that governments and licensing agencies develop policies and implement programs to reduce the barriers experienced by licensed home child care providers as identified in this report. Specifically, we recommend
 - a. an increase in home child care provider compensation,
 - b. Home child care providers have access to cost-effective health benefit plans for individuals or families, and
 - c. paid closure days to support with paid sick and vacation time.
- 13. Continued Support for Marginalized Communities:** Maintain ongoing efforts to address the needs of marginalized communities, including newcomers, indigenous individuals, and 2SLGBTQIA+ populations, by providing targeted support programs and resources tailored to their unique challenges and circumstances.
- 14. Strengthen Collaboration and Partnerships:** Foster increased collaboration and partnership among government agencies, non-profit organizations, community stakeholders, and home child care providers to address systemic barriers, share resources, and accelerate systemic change for gender equality and child care accessibility.
- 15. Remove CWELCC Expansion Caps for Licensed Home Child Care** Compass ELC has approximately 15 potential providers waiting to become licensed which would provide 90 high-quality, affordable child care spaces. However, the number of active licensed homes is limited with no room currently to expand. To effectively expand licensed home child care in Ontario, governments must provide additional expansion funding.
- 16. Investment in Professional Development, Capacity Building, and Supports:** Allocate resources and funding to support the professional development and training of home child

care providers, home visitors, and other stakeholders within the licensed home child care system. Provide ongoing support and monitoring to ensure compliance with provincial regulations and standards. Invest in capacity building initiatives and professional development opportunities for home child care providers to enhance their skills, competencies, and knowledge in areas such as business management, child development, and diversity and inclusion practices.

- 17. Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programs. Regularly assess progress towards objectives, identify challenges, and adapt strategies as needed to maximize impact and effectiveness. This includes regular assessments of participant satisfaction, demographic representation, and barrier reduction efforts to ensure continued success and accountability.
- 18. Sustainable Agency Structures:** Licensing agencies carefully consider how new systems will embed themselves into the existing practices of Agency Teams. Allocate time to Team members to implement these initiatives and be accountable to continuing their implementation.
- 19. Policy Advocacy and Awareness:** Advocate for policy changes and initiatives that promote gender equality, inclusivity, and child care accessibility at local, provincial, and federal levels. Raise awareness among policymakers, stakeholders, and the general public about the importance of investing in early childhood development and supporting the diverse needs of home child care providers and families.
- 20. Continue Implementation of GBA Plus:** Encourage organizations within the child care sector to continue employing GBA Plus as an analytical framework to inform policy development, program design, and resource allocation. Provide training and support to ensure the effective implementation of GBA Plus practices across all phases of program and initiative lifecycles.

By implementing these recommendations, governments and organizations can further advance the goals of promoting gender equality, inclusivity, and child care accessibility within the licensed home child care sector, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable future for all Canadians.

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