



MONTANA EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCOUNT (MECA)

Evaluation Plan

Early Learning Development Support and Training Grant

EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which the MECA Early Learning Development Support and Training Grant expands access to professional development opportunities for early childhood teaching staff and strengthens their capacity to support children with developmental differences.

1. The evaluation will assess whether grant-funded training, technology, staffing supports, developmental screening resources, and related activities:
2. Increase teaching staff access to and participation in approved professional development opportunities.
3. Increase staff knowledge and confidence related to child development and developmental differences.
4. Increase staff knowledge and confidence in developmental screening practices.
5. Strengthen staff use of inclusive, developmentally responsive, and family-supportive practices.
6. Reduce barriers to participation in professional development, including technology and staffing barriers.
7. Support the application of training knowledge and skills within early childhood programs.
8. Build longer-term program capacity to serve children with developmental differences.

Evaluation findings will be used to document grant outcomes, demonstrate the effective use of MECA funds, identify ongoing professional development needs, and inform strategies to sustain training and implementation beyond the grant period.



EVALUATION QUESTIONS

PRIMARY EVALUATION QUESTION

To what extent did the MECA grant expand access to approved professional development opportunities for early childhood teaching staff?

SECONDARY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Participation and access

- How many teaching staff participated in grant-supported professional development?
- How many training hours and courses were completed?
- To what extent did grant funding reduce barriers to staff participation in training?

Developmental screening

- Did staff increase their knowledge and confidence related to developmental screening?
- To what extent did the grant support the implementation or strengthening of developmental screening practices?
- Are staff using screening information to inform classroom supports and communication with families?

Inclusion and Family Support

- Did staff increase their knowledge and confidence in implementing inclusive practices?
- Are staff applying strategies related to emotional regulation, behavior support, and inclusion?
- Did training strengthen staff confidence in communicating with and supporting families?

Technology and Training Access

- Did grant-funded technology increase staff access to virtual or hybrid professional development?
- To what extent did technology purchases reduce barriers to participation?
- application of learning
- To what extent are staff applying knowledge and skills gained through professional development in their daily practice?
- What changes in classroom or program practices can be attributed to grant-supported training?



Program Capacity and Sustainability

- Did grant-supported professional development strengthen the program's capacity to support children with developmental differences?
- What training, screening, inclusion, or family-support practices are likely to continue after grant funding ends?
- What additional professional development or resources are needed to sustain and build upon grant outcomes?

Suggested Primary Success Measure

At least 80% of participating teaching staff will report increased access to professional development and increased knowledge or confidence in one or more areas addressed through grant-supported training, including developmental differences, developmental screening, inclusion, or family support.

LOGIC MODEL

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes (0–6 Months)	Intermediate Outcomes (6–12 Months)	Long-Term Outcomes (1–3 Years)
MECA grant funding	Identify staff professional development needs and select approved training opportunities	# staff participating; # training hours completed	Increased access to professional development opportunities	Increased staff knowledge of child development and developmental differences	Increased program capacity to support children with developmental differences
MECA grant funding	Provide funding for staff to access approved professional development	Number of staff participating in training; number of training hours completed	Increased staff participation and completion of professional development	Increased staff confidence in recognizing and responding to developmental differences	More inclusive, developmentally responsive early childhood environments
Grant-funded technology	Purchase laptops, tablets, hotspots, webcams, headsets, and other technology	Number and type of technology items purchased and used for training	Reduced technology barriers to participation in virtual training	Increased access to ongoing virtual professional development	Sustained access to professional development and training resources



Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes (0–6 Months)	Intermediate Outcomes (6–12 Months)	Long-Term Outcomes (1–3 Years)
	needed for training				
Approved professional development opportunities	Provide training focused on child development and developmental differences	Number and type of child development trainings completed	Increased staff understanding of developmental milestones and differences	Staff apply developmental knowledge to classroom practices	Improved ability to identify and support children with developmental needs
Approved developmental screening training and tools	Provide training and resources to support developmental screening	Number of staff trained in developmental screening; number of screening resources accessed	Increased staff knowledge and confidence related to developmental screening	Increased consistency in developmental screening practices	Stronger program capacity to identify and respond to individual developmental needs
Approved inclusion and family-support training	Provide training related to inclusion, emotional regulation, behavior, and family communication	Number of staff completing inclusion/family-support training	Increased staff confidence using inclusive and family-supportive strategies	Increased use of inclusive practices and family engagement strategies	Stronger partnerships with families and more inclusive learning environments
Program leadership and staff time	Support staff in applying training content within the classroom and program	Number of implementation activities or practice changes documented	Increased awareness of how professional development can be applied in daily practice	Increased use of evidence-informed developmental and inclusion strategies	Sustained improvement in program practices and staff capacity
Training records, staff surveys, and program documentation	Monitor participation, knowledge, confidence, implementation, and grant expenditures	Completed training records, surveys, implementation documentation	Increased understanding of staff training needs and outcomes	Program uses evaluation findings to strengthen professional development and implementation	Continuous professional learning and sustained capacity to serve children ages 0–5



Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes (0–6 Months)	Intermediate Outcomes (6–12 Months)	Long-Term Outcomes (1–3 Years)
		, and expenditure records			
Staff time, substitute coverage, and program leadership	Support staff participation and application of training	# staff supported; # implementation activities documented	Increased staff participation and application of learning	Training is integrated into daily classroom/program practices	Sustained improvements in staff capacity and program quality
Evaluation and program records	Monitor training participation, outcomes, implementation, and expenditures	Training records, surveys, screening records, and expenditure documentation	Evidence of training access and immediate learning gains	Data used to identify ongoing professional development needs	Continuous improvement and sustained professional development capacity

ASSUMPTIONS

- Providers have a need for educator training.
- Grant funds are sufficient to cover technology costs for training staff.
- Technical support and assistance are available when needed.
- Providers can provide substitutes or otherwise create time for employee training that does not affect operations or caregiver ratios.
- Families want educators to be trained.
- Purchased assets directly contribute to an increase in employee knowledge, skills, and confidence.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Availability of a qualified early childhood workforce wanting further training and professional development.
- Training models and certification requirements.
- State licensing requirements and regulatory changes.



- Local demand for well-trained early childhood educators.
- Economic conditions affecting provider operations.
- Staffing issues affecting provider operations.
- Inflation, equipment costs, and training costs.
- Rural and frontier community workforce and infrastructure challenges.

THEORY OF CHANGE

If MECA provides targeted asset-based funding to child care providers for early learning development, support, and training, then providers will be better able to meet licensing requirements, establish appropriate and inclusive learning environments, increase collective knowledge of the facilities' educators, and increase the skills and abilities necessary to provide high-quality early childhood education. As a result, Montana will experience a measurable increase in wages, qualifications, certifications, and availability of qualified educators, improving access to quality care for families and strengthening the state's early childhood system.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

After you both review I will be making this section to look like the flex workforce eval plan.

1. Professional Development Access

- Number of teaching staff that participated in approved training - **APR**
- Percentage of teaching staff participating – **Calculated by Evaluator**
- Number of professional development courses completed - **APR**
- Total professional development hours completed - **APR**
- Number of staff who report that grant funding made training participation possible or more accessible - **Survey**

Target: Provide **100% of participating teaching staff** with access to approved professional development opportunities relevant to developmental differences and inclusive practice.

2. Staff Knowledge and Confidence

Staff will complete a brief **pre/post training survey** measuring confidence in areas such as:

- Understanding typical child development and developmental milestones
- Recognizing potential developmental differences
- Understanding developmental screening processes
- Supporting children with developmental differences
- Implementing inclusive classroom practices



- Supporting children's emotional regulation and behavior
- Communicating effectively with families about developmental concerns

Target: At least 80% of participating staff report increased knowledge or confidence in one or more targeted areas following professional development.

3. Developmental Screening Implementation

- Number/percentage of staff trained in developmental screening – **Submittable**
- Number of children screened, when applicable - **Submittable**
- Evidence that the program has a consistent developmental screening process- **Submittable**
- Staff confidence in administering or supporting screening - **Survey**
- Use of screening results to inform classroom supports and family communication - **Submittable**

Target: The program establishes or strengthens a consistent developmental screening process and staff report increased confidence using screening information to support individual children.

4. Inclusion and Family Support

- Number of staff completing inclusion, behavior, emotional regulation, or family-support training - **Submittable**
- Staff-reported use of inclusive strategies - **Survey**
- Staff-reported use of positive behavior and emotional regulation strategies - **Survey**
- Staff-reported confidence communicating with families about developmental concerns - **Survey**

Target: At least 80% of participating staff report increased confidence using one or more inclusion, behavior, or family-support strategies.

5. Technology and Training Access

- Technology purchased with grant funds - **Submittable**
- Number of staff using grant-funded technology for training - **Submittable**
- Number of virtual training opportunities accessed - **Submittable**
- Staff-reported reduction in technology barriers to participation - **Survey**

Target: Grant-funded technology is used to facilitate participation in approved professional development and remains available to support continued staff learning.

Proposed Evaluation Targets

By the end of the grant period, the program will aim to:

- Provide **100% of participating teaching staff** with access to approved professional development opportunities relevant to developmental differences and inclusive practice.



- Achieve **at least 80% training completion** among staff enrolled in grant-supported professional development.
- Increase staff-reported knowledge and confidence related to developmental differences, developmental screening, inclusion, and family support.
- Ensure **100% of grant-funded technology** is used to support professional development participation or related approved activities.
- Establish or strengthen a consistent developmental screening process within the program.
- Increase staff use of strategies that support inclusion, emotional regulation, positive behavior, and family engagement.
- Document how professional development is translated into classroom and program practices.
- Maintain documentation demonstrating that grant expenditures directly supported training access, technology, staffing support, and/or developmental screening activities.

OUTCOMES

Short-Term Outcomes	• Increased access to professional development opportunities; • increased staff knowledge of child development and developmental differences; • increased staff confidence in recognizing developmental differences and using screening resources; • increased awareness of inclusive and family-supportive practices	• Pre/post training knowledge or confidence ratings; • staff survey results; • Percent of staff reporting increased access to training; • Percent reporting increased confidence; • completion rates
Intermediate Outcomes	• Staff apply knowledge from training in daily practice; • staff use developmental screening processes more consistently; • staff strengthen strategies for inclusion, emotional regulation, behavior support, and communication with families; • program leadership supports continued professional learning	• Staff self-reports and supervisor observations; • evidence of screening implementation; • use of inclusive practices; • documentation of family communication strategies; • follow-up survey at 3–6 months



Long-Term Outcomes / Impact

- Increased program capacity to serve children with developmental differences and respond to individual developmental needs;
- stronger, more inclusive early childhood environments;
- improved ability of teaching staff to identify and support developmental needs;
- sustained access to professional development
- Sustained staff participation in professional development;
- continued use of screening and inclusion practices;
- program-level evidence of improved capacity;
- staff retention/continued implementation where data are available

DATA COLLECTION PLAN/REPORTING SCHEDULE

DATA COLLECTION PLAN

Data Source	Frequency	Purpose
Training registration/completion records	At Time of Invoicing	Measure participation and training completion
Staff attendance records	At Time of Invoicing	Document staff participation
Staff Training Survey	At Time of Invoicing	Measure changes in knowledge, confidence, application of skills learned, and perceived access
Training certificates/records	At Time of Invoicing	Verify completed professional development
Screening implementation records	At Time of Invoicing	Document use of developmental screening practices
Program purchasing records	At Time of Invoicing	Document technology purchases and implementation
Expenditure documentation	At Time of Invoicing	Verify grant funds directly supported allowable activities

DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

EVALUATION METHOD

The program will use a **mixed-method evaluation approach** combining participation data, expenditure documentation, brief staff surveys, training completion records, and



implementation evidence. Pre- and post-training measures will be used when feasible to assess changes in staff knowledge and confidence. Follow-up information will be collected to determine whether staff have applied the training content in their daily work.

Evaluation findings will be reviewed by program leadership to identify successful professional development strategies, remaining training needs, and opportunities to sustain developmental screening and inclusive practices beyond the grant period.

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