Advancing the Design and Development of ECE Apprenticeships: Implementation Evaluation of an ECEPTS Home Visitor Apprenticeship

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2021, a new Registered Apprenticeship program, the Home Visitor Apprenticeship (HVA), was launched in the Antelope Valley region of California. Due to the unique and novel nature of the program, First 5 Los Angeles County provided funding for an implementation evaluation to Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS), the apprenticeship sponsor, to document how the HVA was planned and implemented from its conception during the summer of 2019 to graduation of its first cohort in early 2023.

The main intention of the evaluation was to support advocacy and replication for future apprenticeships geared to the ECE workforce by identifying what worked well, what challenges were faced, and what lessons were learned while planning and implementing the HVA. As such, the report articulates essential aspects of the HVA, tracks how the program evolved during the planning and implementation phases, and identifies factors that impeded or enhanced program implementation, in order to address or capitalize on such factors in future programs.

The apprenticeship cohort consisted of 15 participants who were assigned to one of two employer partners: Antelope Valley Partners for Health and Child Care Resource Center. The employer partners prioritized recruiting applicants whose backgrounds and experiences were similar to the families they would serve as home visitors, in order to foster trust and a stronger connection between them. In the end, the program participants were reflective of the communities they served: about three quarters of them had received home visitation services in the past, 20% identified as Black and 80% identified as Hispanic.

The HVA program design is comprised of 288 hours of Related Supplemental Instruction (RSI), 2,000 hours of On-the-Job Training (OJT), and a research-based set of participant supports and services aimed at ensuring higher rates of program completion. The RSI component consisted of two college courses in Sociology and four college courses in Child & Family Education, provided by Antelope Valley College. The OJT component was comprised of paid, supervised employment, job shadowing with experienced home visitors, field placement in a Head Start classroom, and professional skills training. The participant supports and services included coverage of all program-related costs (e.g., tuition, transportation, laptop computers), a cohort learning community, flexible class schedules and locations, mentoring and reflective supervision, technology access and training, transportation stipends, access to child care, and dedicated program staff who could track the apprentices and support their success.

Several factors contributed to the program’s overall success. One such factor was the partners’ ability to lean on each other to solve problems and pick up slack, when necessary, throughout the planning and implementation phases. This happened both within and across agencies. Had there been more of
an individualistic approach rather than one based on teamwork, the program would not have been as successful. Another factor that contributed to program success were the supports and services embedded into the apprenticeship design that fostered participant achievement (e.g., cohort learning community, mentoring, coverage of program-related costs). Based on feedback from the apprentices, without such supports many of them might not have been able to complete the program.

Various significant challenges arose during the planning and implementation of the HVA. Most of them were related to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated consequences (e.g., scheduling delays, learning how to virtually deliver college courses and on-the-job training). Some challenges were those commonly faced in developing new apprenticeship programs, but exacerbated by the pandemic (e.g., increased staff shortages, insufficient funding for training and professional development). Others were unrelated to the pandemic, and were attributable to the learning curve that accompanies the launch of any new apprenticeship program. For example, employer partners needed to revise institutional policies, procedures, and expectations to provide the necessary training and meet the professional development needs of apprentices, some of which were distinctly different than the needs of new employees or more traditional college students.

Many lessons were learned about how to improve the Home Visitor Apprenticeship, in particular, and how to use what was learned more broadly in order to improve the implementation of apprenticeship programs aimed at other sectors of the ECE workforce (e.g., center-based ECE teachers). Most of these lessons fell into at least one of the following categories:

- The need for more time for planning and refinement of program design and details.
- The need for additional training for mentors, college instructors, and some English Language Learner candidates prior to program implementation.
- The benefits of more intensive collaboration and partnership development during the planning and implementation phases.
- The essential necessity for partners to be nimble in dealing with unexpected circumstances.
- The recognition that securing sustainable funding streams for ECE apprenticeships requires systems change, and that addressing program-level improvements alone is insufficient.

Overall, the model used for the Home Visitor Apprenticeship proved to be successful in giving the apprentices the support, academic training and work-based learning opportunities needed to become competent, qualified home visitors and ECE practitioners. The lessons that this implementation evaluation unveiled will be valuable for improving future replications of the HVA and for other stakeholders interested in designing, developing, and launching ECE Apprenticeships more broadly.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the following colleagues and project staff for their contributions, insight, and willingness to share their knowledge about the Home Visitor Apprenticeship: Claudia Aguilar, Yecenia Benitez, Victoria Bibby, Ellen Cervantes, LaRiesha Floyd, Vanessa Gonzalez, Tara Henriquez, Kelly Morehouse-Smith, Maria Moya, and Randi Wolfe, Ph.D. Thanks also to Maral Petrus for design support.

Thank you to First 5 Los Angeles for its generous support as part of its work to strengthen families, communities, and systems of services and supports so all children in Los Angeles County reach their full developmental potential throughout the critical years of prenatal to age 5. The views in this report do not necessarily represent the views of First 5 Los Angeles.

Finally, thank you to the apprentices who participated in this pilot project and allowed us to learn from their experiences.
In 2019, a Registered Apprenticeship program was created to address the unique professional training needs of home visitors who work with families with children from birth to age 5. The initial pilot of the Home Visitor Apprenticeship (HVA) was developed as a collaboration between Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS), an apprenticeship sponsor and industry intermediary, Antelope Valley College (AVC), a community college, and Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) and Antelope Valley Partners for Health (AVPH), community-based employers that provide a variety of family-serving services including home visiting.

In 2021, First 5 Los Angeles County (F5LA) funded an implementation evaluation of the HVA to document how the pilot project was developed and implemented. F5LA hoped to use the information to support Los Angeles County’s intention to expand home visitation services by providing a training model with the potential for replication and expansion of the home visitation workforce.

Beyond this, the goals of the implementation evaluation were to articulate essential aspects of the HVA, document how the program evolved during the planning and implementation phases, including what modifications were made to the original plan and why, and identify factors that impeded or enhanced program implementation, and how to address or capitalize on such factors in future programs.

The research questions that guided the implementation evaluation had five key themes:

- **Content:** What was developed and what key decisions were made?
- **Process:** What happened during each phase of program development and implementation, and how were decisions made?
- **People:** Who was involved and what roles did they play?
- **Modifications:** What key features or plans changed, and how and why did they change?
- **Influencing Factors:** What barriers and enablers or facilitators were encountered? What adjustments were made in response?

The implementation evaluation employed mixed methods to answer these questions. Data sources included interviews with ECEPTS leadership and employer administrators, focus groups with project staff from partner employers, program-related documents and materials such as outreach materials and meeting notes, and survey data collected each semester to provide apprentices’ feedback on their experiences.
This report summarizes how the HVA was developed and implemented, what major challenges were faced, what factors encouraged success, and what lessons were learned throughout the planning and implementation phases. It begins with background and description of the HVA, then lays out findings on the primary components of the HVA (i.e., Outreach, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment; Related Supplemental Instruction; On-the-Job Training), and concludes with analysis of the lessons learned. Reflecting the interests of First 5 Los Angeles in commissioning the implementation evaluation, this report does not address or evaluate outcomes of the HVA.

The audience for this report is primarily Early Care and Education (ECE) employers, Home Visitor employers, and institutions of higher education interested in serving as training providers for such programs. The hope that this report will inform the design and implementation of similar professional training programs, taking lessons both from what worked well and from challenges that arose during HVA planning and implementation. Secondarily, this report aims to inform leaders, advocates, policymakers, and funders focused on ECE workforce development and Registered Apprenticeships on the unique benefits and challenges of implementing Home Visitor Apprenticeships specifically, and ECE Apprenticeships more broadly.
BACKGROUND
**EARLY CARE & EDUCATION PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS (ECEPTS)**

Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) is an apprenticeship sponsor and industry intermediary with a mission to advance the rigorous professional development and economic well-being of those who teach, nurture, and support young children and families. Primary strategies include creating and expanding Registered Apprenticeship for various sectors within the ECE workforce, providing far-reaching field building opportunities, and advocating for policy and systems change to advance the economic and professional stature and sustainability of the ECE industry.

ECEPTS promotes apprenticeship as a vehicle for ECE workforce development because research has firmly established that teacher quality is the essential component to successful early learning experiences, and developing workers’ skills, knowledge, and competencies is the essential focus of apprenticeship. So, it follows that high quality apprenticeships lead to high quality teachers, which leads to better child outcomes.

In addition to the HVA, ECEPTS sponsors a variety of Registered Apprenticeships (e.g., ECE Teacher, Expanded Learning Program Leader) and a state-registered On-the-Job Training Program for Family Child Care Providers. As an industry intermediary, ECEPTS provides intensive technical assistance to community-based partnerships in designing, implementing, and sustaining Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). (More information about ECEPTS can be found [here](#).)

The ECE workforce includes large numbers of recent immigrants, working mothers, and first-generation college students who face challenges and barriers to success common among non-traditional students and workers. ECEPTS adapts the traditional apprenticeship model to meet the unique needs of this workforce. In particular, ECEPTS incorporates research-based participant supports and services that lead to high rates of program completion and low rates of attrition. These supports, which are not inherently part of apprenticeship programs, distinguish the design and success of the ECEPTS model. They include:

- **Program provided at no-cost to participants**: Apprentices do not acquire any debt or expenses as program participants. ECEPTS supports partners in making plans to cover all program-related costs.

- **Flexible class location and schedule**: ECEPTS works with colleges to ensure that access to courses is not a barrier to participation, encouraging colleges to provide courses in community-based settings as much as possible. ECEPTS engages employers and instructors in reflective conversations about the impact of online vs. hybrid learning, and course sequencing, timing, and location.
Mentoring and reflective feedback opportunities: Mentoring allows apprentices to learn from seasoned early educators. Reflective feedback opportunities allow apprentices to learn from peers with similar lived experiences who can help them apply what is taught in college courses to their workplace experience.

Cohort learning community: Being part of a cohort gives apprentices a sense of belonging and community. They lean on each other for academic, professional, and personal support, and find inspiration and motivation when they see their peers succeeding.

Dedicated program staff: Partners are encouraged to hire staff who can relate to the apprentices and support their success. The model also incorporates embedded tutors who sit in class with students, and success coordinators who ensure apprentices have access to the support services and materials needed to be successful.

Additional supports: Depending on the needs of the cohort, additional supports may include child-care services, transportation stipends, access to mental health support, and technology access and training.

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS

The Registered Apprenticeship Program was established in 1937 when the National Apprenticeship Act (NAA), or the Fitzgerald Act, was signed into law. The NAA permitted the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to issue regulations protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of apprentices (29 CFR Part 29) as well as preventing racial, ethnic, religious, age and gender discrimination in apprenticeship programs (29 CFR Part 30).

Traditionally, apprenticeship primarily supported workers in the skilled trades. More recently, apprenticeship has been used to support increasing numbers of workers in “non-traditional” sectors such as technology, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, energy, and education. In 2022, there were almost 600,000 active apprentices in nearly 27,000 Registered Apprenticeship programs across industries nationally.

Registered apprenticeship enables employers to address labor market demand and prepare the future workforce, while allowing individuals to obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and industry-recognized credentials. The following graphic depicts the five components DOL requires of every Registered Apprenticeship:

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1 https://www.apprenticeship.gov/about-us/our-history
2 Ibid
HOME VISITING

Home visitors support new parents from pregnancy through the time children enter kindergarten by meeting with families in their homes to encourage healthy development, help to form strong parent-child attachments, and access resources and referrals to meet families' needs. They monitor and address risk factors (i.e., parental substance abuse, homelessness, inadequate pre-natal care) that can lead to developmental, behavioral or learning delays in young children. The role is an on-ramp to career ladders in ECE and social work.

While home visiting has been conducted across the country for decades, there has been increased focus and funding initiatives for home visiting programs in recent years, as research continues to demonstrate its impact. Rigorous evaluations have shown that home visiting has a high impact on improving birth outcomes and school readiness, while reducing incidences of child abuse and child neglect. Furthermore, it has been shown to be cost effective, with returns on investment ranging from $1.75 to $5.70 for every dollar spent. It is for these reasons that Los Angeles County has made a commitment to growing an enhanced and greatly expanded home visiting program.

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4 Ibid
HOME VISITOR APPRENTICESHIP

The Home Visitor Apprenticeship (HVA) was initially developed in response to the growing need for a larger, well-qualified home visiting workforce in LA County, specifically reflecting the demographic makeup and composition of the families and communities being served. The overarching goal of the HVA was to prepare new home visitors by providing the professional training needed to develop a community-based perspective and build the essential competencies needed to work in this rapidly expanding field. The HVA was registered with the U.S. Department of Labor and the CA Division of Apprenticeship Standards, and designed to provide an earn-and-learn model with supports embedded to overcome the challenges and barriers commonly faced by non-traditional students and workers, and put program completers on a professional pathway to a range of jobs, including home visiting, early care and education, and social services.

APPRENTICESHIP PARTNERSHIP

Initially, the Executive Director of ECEPTS and the Vice President/Chief Operating Officer of CCRC had the idea to develop an apprenticeship for ECE home visitors based on their prior collaboration to create an apprenticeship program for Family Child Care (FCC) providers. When the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office announced a new round of California Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI) grants in 2019, they recognized that this was the opportunity they had been waiting for. From the start, it was assumed that CCRC would be one of the employer partners for the HVA apprenticeship, both because of their commitment and history around providing home visiting services and their previous experience in supporting the implementation of the FCC apprenticeship.

The next partner to be contacted was a faculty member at Antelope Valley College (AVC) who had successfully taught courses for the FCC apprenticeship to assess the possibility of bringing the college into the apprenticeship partnership. The faculty member was key in moving the idea forward because while she had been directly involved in the FCC apprenticeship as adjunct faculty, AVC had not been directly involved. Expressing great interest and willingness, the faculty member invited several AVC leaders to meet with ECEPTS and CCRC to discuss the CAI grant opportunity and determine AVC’s interest and capacity to join the collaboration. The AVC leaders included three Deans who would be important in attaining institutional approval and buy-in from the impacted departments and faculty members, as well as the Department Chair of Child and Family Education.
The common experience and existing relationships between ECEPTS, CCRC, and AVC were critical in quickly establishing a common understanding, philosophy, and approach to the creation of the HVA. After several conversations, representatives from the three agencies agreed to the idea, constructed the initial design of the HVA, and began working on the grant proposal.

At that point, CCRC reached out to Antelope Valley Partners for Health (AVPH) to join the apprenticeship partnership as a second home visiting employer. AVPH was chosen based on a 25-year history of working alongside CCRC as fellow community-based organizations offering home visiting services in the Antelope Valley - an under-resourced, underserved area of Los Angeles County.

Having established the basic apprenticeship partnership and hammered out the essential design of the HVA, ECEPTS developed the CAI grant application and AVC submitted it in September 2019. The 3-year grant of $500,000 was awarded in December 2019. The plan was for ECEPTS to provide overall leadership, program design guidance and technical assistance, AVC to provide academic coursework, training and support, and CCRC and AVPH to provide on-the-job training, mentoring and program coordination.

Over the course of four sequential semesters, apprentices would complete Related Supplemental Instruction (RSI) in the form of six college courses, earn California Child Development Associate Teacher Permits, engage in 2000 hours of paid, supervised on-the-job training (OJT), and receive periodic wage increases. Upon successful completion of the apprenticeship program - provided at no cost to the apprentices - graduates would be eligible for positions as Home Visitors or Assistant Teachers in ECE programs.
SPRING/SUMMER 2021
• Conduct outreach, recruitment, selection, and enrollment of apprentices

FALL 2021
• On-the-Job Training
  » Orientation and Skills Training
  » Home Visitor Job Shadowing
  » Mentoring and Reflective Feedback
• Related Supplemental Instruction
  » CFE 102: The Developing Child
  » SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology

SPRING 2022
• On-the-Job Training
  » Professional Training (e.g., CPR, First Aid, Preventative Health)
  » Home Visitor Job Shadowing
  » Early Care & Education Field Placement
  » Mentoring and Reflective Feedback

SUMMER 2022
• On-the-Job Training
  » Home Visitor Job Shadowing
  » Mentoring and Reflective Feedback
• Related Supplemental Instruction
  » CFE 110: Ethnic Relations
  » SOC 103: Child in Family and Community Relationships

FALL 2022
• Full-time Salaried Employment
OUTREACH, RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, ENROLLMENT (ORSE)

The agencies involved in planning and implementing the Outreach, Recruitment, Selection and Enrollment (ORSE) component of the HVA were Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS), Child Care Resource Center (CCRC), and Antelope Valley Partners for Health (AVPH). As community-based organizations, CCRC and AVPH were very familiar with the community in which the HVA would be implemented and they understood both the strengths and challenges faced by community members in general, and by families with young children in particular. This knowledge, coupled with ECEPTS’ understanding of how to design and implement a successful apprenticeship program, meant that in designing the ORSE aspects of the HVA, the planning group was not starting from a blank slate. Rather, they came together as a team with significant experience and insight that could inform the myriad decisions that had to be made.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

▶ Eligibility Criteria

In designing the HVA, one of the first tasks was determining the target population for participation in the program. To guide the process of identifying and selecting apprentices, the following eligibility criteria were established:

» Must have a High School Diploma or equivalent.

» Must have adequate English fluency (i.e., ability to read, write, and speak), to successfully complete college coursework taught in English.

» Must be available to work and attend classes from 8AM to 3PM, Monday through Friday.

» Must be available to work full-time beginning August 2022.

» Must pass the state-required drug test and background check.

» Must be eligible to work in the United States.

In addition to the required eligibility criteria, preferred characteristics were considered. Research confirms that home visitors are most effective when they have both professional training and a community-based perspective. Professional training refers to an understanding of child development, trauma-informed care, and/or early identification of developmental and environmental challenges. A community-based perspective means that workers come from the same communities that they serve, allowing them to more easily connect and empathize with the families, based on shared lived experiences and cultural backgrounds. Reflecting this research, the following preferred characteristics were established:
Applicants with prior experience as home visiting program participants.

Applicants who reflect the demographics (e.g., cultural, racial, economic) of families eligible to receive home visiting services, particularly African American families (representing about 20% of eligible families).

Bilingual applicants, particularly those with Spanish fluency.

### Outreach

The first major step in ORSE was outreach, to get the word out about the Home Visitor Apprenticeship (HVA) opportunity. Outreach strategies included creating a job description and flyer about the program, advertising the information on AVPH and CCRC websites and social media accounts, and circulating the information across local job development centers. The flyer was also provided to Child & Family Education faculty at Antelope Valley College who could distribute the information to students likely to meet the eligibility criteria.

In order to attract applicants with prior experience as home visiting participants, AVPH and CCRC contacted former home visiting participants, and asked other local home visiting programs to reach out to their former participants. Presentations about the apprenticeship were also made at regional meetings of home visiting agencies and providers.

### Recruitment

The recruitment process focused on those who attended virtual information sessions and expressed interest in the apprenticeship. Attendees were asked to complete a digital Interest and Eligibility Form. Following the information sessions, CCRC and AVPH staff reviewed the completed forms and followed up with individuals who indicated that they met the eligibility criteria and encouraged them to submit an online HVA Application. If needed, staff provided technical assistance to candidates who needed help to complete the application.

### Selection

The employers worked together to develop the selection process to assess applicants’ eligibility, qualifications, and fit. But the selection process was implemented by each employer independently. An initial phone interview was conducted to screen out applicants who were deemed ineligible or unprepared to handle the responsibilities of the program, and the most promising candidates were invited to participate in a formal interview.

Interviews were conducted by AVPH and CCRC staff and included questions about candidates’ background and experience as well as hypothetical scenarios. Interviews were scored using the same metrics that the agencies generally used in hiring new employees. Each employer partner
interviewed roughly 15 candidates and extended an invitation to participate to the eight candidates who ranked highest in the interviews. A waitlist was created for those candidates who were eligible but did not score as high as the finalists.

Accepted candidates confirmed their commitment to participating in the HVA before proceeding to the hiring process. The hiring process consisted of completing Human Resources paperwork and a background check. If any candidates did not pass the background check, invitations were extended to the next highest scoring candidates on the waitlist.

▶ Enrollment

Enrolling in the HVA consisted of registering with ECEPTS, Antelope Valley College (AVC) and the local American Jobs Center of California (AJCC). Enrolling with ECEPTS involved entering apprentices’ information into the online databases of the CA Division of Apprenticeship Standards and the US Department of Labor. Enrolling as a student at AVC required attending an in person or virtual orientation, enrolling in the college and registering for the first course of the HVA. Finally, apprentices enrolled with the AJCC if they qualified to receive additional benefits, such as career counseling and transportation subsidies. Taken together, the enrollment process was multi-faceted and somewhat complicated but deemed essential, given the collaborative number of agencies, institutions, and systems involved in implementing the HVA, each with their own requirements.

In the end, 15 candidates were successfully enrolled in the HVA across the two employer partners. The apprentices met all of the eligibility criteria and were drawn from the Antelope Valley area of Los Angeles County. As intended, program participants were representative of the families they would serve as home visitors. About three quarters of the group had received home visitation services in the past, all participants identified as female, 20% identified as Black and 80% identified as Hispanic.
CHALLENGES AND MODIFICATIONS

Throughout the ORSE process, a variety of challenges arose that led to important modifications and learnings. Many of these challenges emerged as a result of multiple contributing factors. What follows is an explanation of the most significant and widespread challenges, with a focus on why they occurred, and modifications made to overcome them.

▶ Smaller-than-Expected Applicant Pool

Perhaps the most significant challenge encountered during ORSE was a smaller than expected applicant pool that did not represent as many of the desired characteristics originally imagined. During outreach, the initial focus was on previous graduates of home visiting programs. However, fewer graduates applied than was expected. This was partially because those who had graduated several years earlier were often hard to reach, as their phone numbers and addresses were outdated. Those who had graduated more recently were easier to reach, but were often caring for their young children and therefore not as available to make the commitment that the HVA requires. Additionally, because AVC was experiencing a hiring freeze that resulted in fewer staff available to work on the HVA, the college was unable to undertake recruitment as intensively as had been planned. This resulted in fewer applicants from the college, which contributed to the smaller applicant pool overall.

Once CCRC and AVPH staff recognized that the applicant pool from past graduates would not be as large as anticipated, they expanded recruitment efforts to the wider community. The planning team thought about what other experience would be beneficial for apprentices beyond having participated in a home visiting program. They devised a list of equivalent life experiences, including working with one’s own or others’ children and families, successfully accessing community services for oneself or others, or being a part of or working with ethnically and racially diverse communities.

▶ Ineligibility of Candidates

Although applicants were asked in phone interviews if they met the eligibility requirements, in some cases that turned out not to be the case and invitations to participate had to be rescinded. The reasons for being deemed ineligible varied. Some applicants did not pass the background check or did not have a high school diploma. Others did not yet possess the level of English language skills necessary to complete college coursework offered only in English. In these cases, employer partner staff encouraged applicants to pursue additional ESL instruction and reapply for a future cohort of the HVA. Several candidates had already completed several of the required HVA college courses or a BA or MA degree, making them overqualified for the apprenticeship.
In these cases, staff encouraged applicants to apply for home visitor positions, as they were already qualified to do so and did not need the training and coursework provided through the HVA to prepare them.

Some applicants who had been waitlisted were extended offers in place of those who were deemed ineligible. In the end, the recruited cohort included 15 apprentices - one short of the 16 intended.

▶ Selection Process Delays
One of the agencies experienced several personnel losses in their human resources department, which slowed down the screening and application review process significantly. Additionally, the external agency responsible for conducting background checks took longer than expected, adding to the delay. In response to these challenges, the home visiting program manager reviewed applications herself, thereby relieving some of the screening backlog. This allowed the employer to meet the hiring deadline, but it was unusually rushed and stressful. Although eight weeks were allotted for the ORSE process, another 2-4 weeks added to the timeline would have given the partners the extra flexibility needed to deal with these unexpected hurdles.

▶ COVID-19 Impact
The closures and restrictions that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic created significant challenges related to ORSE. In particular, many activities had to be conducted online rather than in person. This not only created the need for logistical modifications, but also raised concern about the viability of recruiting the intended audience for the HVA. Given that the job announcement, information sessions, and application were largely online, HVA partners were concerned that low-income applicants would not hear about or apply for the program.

The employer partner staff tried to address this challenge by doing as much word-of-mouth outreach and recruitment as possible in order to reach those who might not have access to online platforms and virtual communication methods. They also provided assistance with technical aspects of the application process to those who were challenged by the online format.

▶ Constraints on Collaboration
The collaboration between the partner agencies was challenged in significant ways during ORSE. For example, the hiring freeze at the college constrained the amount of time and resources they could dedicate to the ORSE process. In an effort to be sensitive to the situation, the ECEPTS Project Manager and employer project staff assumed primary responsibility for the planning process, including college staff only in planning meetings that directly impacted their roles and
responsibilities. But this resulted in less communication between the college and the employer partners, less opportunity to build strong relationships across institutions, and an overall impression that the college was unable to engage at the level originally anticipated.

Separately, additional collaboration between the employer partners and the AJCC would have been beneficial. Because ECEPTS had not previously worked with an AJCC, the planning team was unaware that apprentices would need to complete a substantial amount of paperwork in person before starting the HVA. This was difficult to coordinate within the time frame allotted for ORSE activities. Advanced understanding and planning together would have made the process smoother and less stressful for everyone involved.

An additional challenge related to collaboration between partners was around sharing information about HVA applicants across agencies during the ORSE process. The AJCC and the college requested information about the apprentices from the employer agencies during the hiring phase. But such information could not be shared without a formal business agreement or a signed release from the applicants. Because such arrangements were not in place ahead of time, the agencies were unable to access certain information within the necessary time frame.

▶ Complicated Application Process

During the application process, many applicants did not understand that the interest form and HVA application were two separate steps and not one and the same. While many indicated on the interest form that they were qualified and interested in the apprenticeship, they did not complete the online application because they did not realize that was a separate step. In response, employer partner staff proactively reached out and encouraged those applicants to complete their full application.

Employer partner staff reported that a challenge arose because some of the interview questions were worded in ways too complicated for applicants to understand. Because working with apprentices was something new for the employer partners, they made assumptions about applicants’ ability to engage in typical hiring processes like job interviews. (Indeed, apprenticeships often include job skills and soft skills training to ensure that apprenticeship graduates are well-prepared for job interviews.) But the HVA interviews included standard questions used with new hires, and the HVA applicants did not necessarily have the background and experience of new hires. In response, the interviewers reworded some of the questions to make them clearer and more relatable for applicants with little prior job interview experience.
SUCCESS FACTORS

Primary factors that helped to facilitate the ORSE process and enabled its success included:

» Using working subgroups within the planning team to divide up tasks and encourage cross-organization collaboration.

» Practicing good communication between staff members to enhance cooperation and a feeling of unity and commitment to the project.

» Exercising flexibility during all stages of ORSE by nearly everyone, from the communications team who had to revise the dates and details on the information session flyers multiple times, to employer partner staff who had to quickly switch hats and provide Human Resources support at times, to the apprentices themselves who had to be amenable to last minute changes that are often inevitable when participating in a pilot program.

» Ensuring apprentices have support from their families to enter into and complete the program. Family members were invited to the information sessions so they could get an understanding of the size of the commitment and what their support would mean.

» Having ECEPTS available to ground the process, keep track of what needs to be done and by whom, and ensure that all aspects of ORSE are being implemented as planned and/or being adapted to satisfactorily meet new circumstances and overcome unforeseen challenges.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE

The challenges faced during ORSE resulted in important lessons learned. What follows is a summary of the recommendations made by ECEPTS and employer partner staff with respect to what they would do differently in the future.

» In general, allow for more time in the ORSE process. Specifically, begin program enrollment earlier to provide more of a buffer if things do not go as planned. While eight weeks were allotted for recruitment, selection, and enrollment, 10-12 weeks would have been optimal.

» Use clearer and more precise wording in outreach materials and interview questions to minimize confusion and better assess applicants’ qualifications during the selection process.

» Request unofficial transcripts during the selection phase to avoid extending invitations to applicants who have already completed the required college courses. As well, outreach materials should clearly state that anyone who has taken the required courses is ineligible.
» Develop pre-apprenticeship programs for candidates with excellent qualifications who need ESL assistance to bring their English skills to the level of proficiency necessary to succeed in college coursework and on-the-job training delivered in English.

» Provide bilingual program staff and college instructors to support applicants for whom English is not a first language to successfully navigate the HVA and its components parts.

» Streamline the enrollment process so that required forms and procedures from all partners are available and coordinated in advance, and applicants can complete all aspects of program enrollment during a one-time coordinated event.

» Establish a business agreement between all apprenticeship partners so that applicant information can be shared between them in a timely manner.

» Ensure that all employer and college partners regularly attend planning meetings to be kept aware of plans, expectations, and timelines, and to contribute to addressing unexpected ORSE challenges and any related impacts on HVA program design and implementation.

» Make sure that employer partners have a clear understanding of the apprenticeship model and realistic expectations of apprentices. In particular, make sure that during the selection and hiring processes apprenticeship candidates are not inappropriately compared to incumbent staff or job applicants with respect to skills levels, prior job experience, etc.
RELATED SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

► College Coursework

The RSI design included six college courses taken over three semesters through Antelope Valley College (AVC). Four courses were in the Child & Family Education (CFE) Department and two courses were in the Sociology (SOC) Department.

» First Semester
  □ CFE 102: The Developing Child
  □ SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology

» Second Semester
  □ CFE 101: Introduction to Early Childhood Education
  □ CFE 105: Discovery-based Education for Children

» Third Semester
  □ CFE 103: Child in Family and Community Relationships
  □ SOC 110: Ethnic Relations

The CFE courses were chosen, in part, because they fulfill the educational requirements to earn the CA Child Development Associate Teacher Permit that qualifies permit holders to work in publicly funded ECE programs as Assistants or Associate Teachers. The four courses also provide a solid academic foundation in child development, working with children in the context of families and communities, and other areas essential in working with families, whether in an ECE setting or a family-focused social service program such as home visitation.

The Ethnic Relations course was chosen to give apprentices basic knowledge and understanding of the socioeconomic conditions, disparities, and barriers that families receiving home visiting services would likely face. The Introduction to Sociology course is a prerequisite for the Ethnic Relations course and also provides an introduction to those who may eventually choose to pursue careers in social work or human services. In concert with the apprentices’ first-hand knowledge and familiarity with the communities being served, the goal of taking Sociology courses was to strengthen apprentices’ cultural competence, professional skills, and ability to work successfully with families from low income, diverse communities. While ECE courses typically include a focus on working with children within the context of family and community, a social work orientation expands that focus both in perspective and skills.
The course sequence was designed to align with the on-the-job training (OJT) elements of the HVA. For example, the courses that delve into early childhood education (CFE 101) and curriculum planning (CFE 105) were taken during the semester in which apprentices completed the ECE field placement portion of their OJT. In that way, course assignments could build upon and reflect the apprentices’ field experience and integrate their academic learning with their on-the-job experience.

**Implementation.** The order in which the college courses were offered had to be altered, due to the availability of the instructors. The spring 2022 courses were swapped with the courses planned for summer 2022 which meant the courses that focused on ECE (CFE 101 and CFE 105) were offered after the ECE field placement was complete. The courses were taught as a cohort and open only to the HVA apprentices. Although the plan was to provide all courses in person, some courses had to be moved to an online format in response to the COVID-19 restrictions instituted by the college. All apprentices completed the required courses.

▶ **Participant Supports and Services**

The set of participant supports and services included in the design of the RSI included a cohort-based learning community, community-based locations, careful selection and onboarding of instructors, embedded tutoring and language support in the delivery of the classes, technology training and support, and tuition funding and/or fee waivers. These supports and services were included based on the following considerations:

- Established research on what supports and services non-traditional students in ECE need to successfully complete rigorous professional development programs.  

- ECEPTS’ prior experience implementing similar apprenticeship programs for Family Child Care providers, center-based ECE workers, and Head Start teachers. Like the HVA, these apprenticeships serve mainly low-income, non-traditional students, so the ECEPTS team drew on their experience of identifying and addressing the needs of former apprentices to design which supports to include for the RSI component of the HVA.

- Input from CCRC, based on their extensive experience working with the populations from which the apprentices would be recruited and their knowledge of the target communities’ needs and challenges (e.g., lack of widely accessible public transportation).

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5 e.g., “Chutes and Ladders: Creating Support Services to Help EC Students Succeed in Higher Education” and “Strengthening the Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Identity of Early Educators: The Impact of the California SEIU Early Educator Apprenticeship Program” by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment)
1. **Cohort-based Learning Community:** The RSI courses were planned to be provided in the context of a cohort-based learning community to encourage the formation of strong peer relationships and a sense of common purpose. This decision was based on research showing that for first generation college students, taking courses as part of a cohort can create opportunities for the kind of support needed to overcome personal, academic, and professional challenges. It can also create opportunities for concrete assistance such as carpooling, study groups, sharing of resources, and language support from peers for those for whom English is a second language.

**Implementation.** Apprentices experienced the benefits of being in a cohort during the courses that were able to meet in person, but they expressed feelings of isolation and frustration during periods of remote learning. Courses met virtually roughly half of the time, depending on the college's COVID-19 policy and the rates of community spread.

2. **Community-based Locations:** Classes were planned to meet in convenient, accessible community-based locations because of the distinct advantages over meeting on the college campus. For example, navigating a college campus can be intimidating to first-time college students, particularly for non-native English speakers. Additionally, many campuses are not easily accessible by public transportation or require the purchase of a parking permit. Finally, some campuses are located in areas that may not be safe for women to be walking alone to and from evening classes. Holding classes in familiar, accessible, convenient settings was designed to allow apprentices to more easily overcome logistical barriers and minimize potential apprehension about being on campus.

**Implementation.** Most of the courses that met in-person were held at a community-based location. One course had to be moved to the college campus, but apprentices were asked if they would have any problems getting there and everyone said they would be able to access it. Overall, meeting at the community-based location was appreciated by the apprentices.
3. **Careful Selection and Onboarding of Instructors:** Careful selection and onboarding of college instructors was intended to ensure that instructors had an accurate understanding of the apprentices' backgrounds, their communities, and the type of teaching, class structure and content, and supports needed for them to be successful. The onboarding process aimed to prepare instructors to maintain a welcoming and flexible classroom environment with a particular focus on meeting the needs of adult learners who are working and taking college coursework, while also balancing family responsibilities.

**Implementation.** ECEPTS had onboarding meetings with the CFE instructors to provide program orientation, but several conflicts and timing issues made it impossible to fully onboard the Sociology instructors. All instructors were invited to full partnership meetings with ECEPTS and employer project staff to help them learn about the program and understand the goals and strategies. The CFE course instructor had experience teaching ECE apprentices in the past, so she was very aware of the challenges and potential barriers facing apprentices and was successful in supporting their learning needs. By contrast, the Sociology instructor had no prior experience with ECEPTS or apprenticeships and had received less onboarding due to scheduling conflicts. The fact that apprentices’ evaluations revealed they did not find the Sociology courses to be as relevant to the program nor the instructor to be as responsive to their needs, suggests that thorough onboarding is critical, especially for instructors with no prior experience with ECE or apprenticeships.

4. **Embedded Tutoring and Language Support:** The purpose of embedded tutoring and language support was to help students better understand course concepts and assignments, enhance student engagement, and foster student achievement. Because Spanish was the first language of many of the apprentices, identifying Spanish-speaking tutors was essential to being able to provide language support for any students who needed it.

**Implementation.** Although the RSI design and the HVA budget included funding for an embedded tutor and language support, the college was never able to provide these supports. This was partially because the college had limited personnel to support the apprenticeship due to challenges related to the pandemic and a college-wide hiring freeze. In addition, there was some pushback from the college administration about whether these supports were truly needed. As an alternative, the CFE instructor offered drop-in hours at CCRC, which allowed
apprentices to receive individualized support if they needed it. However, this alternative did not address the need for language support in CFE or Sociology courses, nor for tutoring in the Sociology courses.

5. **Technology Support:** The RSI design provided every apprentice with their own laptop that they could keep if they successfully completed the HVA. In addition, by providing technology training at the outset, it was expected that apprentices would learn to use programs and applications needed for their coursework (e.g., Word, Excel, Canvas). And tutors would be available to provide ongoing technology support throughout the three semesters of coursework.

**Implementation.** The college offered a one-day technology training as part of the program orientation, but over time it became clear that front-loading technology training is not as effective as providing initial technology training along with ongoing technology support over the course of the program. As noted in Section 4, tutors were unavailable to help with ongoing technology questions, creating a gap in a critical area of needed support. CCRC and AVPH mentors stepped in to help apprentices with technology-related questions as best they could, but the full benefit of the planned technology support was not realized.

6. **Tuition Funding and Fee Waivers:** Key to the success and benefit of apprenticeships geared to low-income participants from historically marginalized communities is the idea that they can earn college credit, professional certifications, and college degrees at no cost. Therefore, it was non-negotiable that in the RSI design the cost of tuition, student fees, textbooks, and materials would be covered by the college so that the academic portion of the apprenticeship could be provided at no cost to the apprentices.

**Implementation.** Tuition, textbooks, and materials were provided at no cost to the apprentices by accessing grant funding, tuition reimbursement and financial aid through the college, and targeted funding through the community college system. However, the college did not have a system in place to automatically waive student fees, so apprentices were asked to apply for financial aid to cover this cost. Unfortunately, the process was lengthy and somewhat cumbersome, and the resulting financial aid did not necessarily cover all costs for all apprentices. As a result, some apprentices had to pay for student fees out of pocket, and were later reimbursed by their employer.
CHALLENGES AND MODIFICATIONS

Most of the challenges faced in the context of implementing the RSI component were connected to the larger challenges faced by the college. The combination of a pandemic, a campuswide hiring freeze, and major personnel changes, resulted in the college not having the resources necessary to fully support the apprenticeship program in the ways envisioned. While all the apprentices were able to pass their courses despite these extra hurdles, some expressed frustration when the advertised supports were unable to be provided.

In addition to being unable to provide the planned supports such as embedded tutors and ongoing language and technology support, the college was also less engaged in the HVA partnership and collaboration than intended. For example, they did not have the capacity to attend the monthly planning meetings with ECEPTS and the employer partners before the launch of the program, which made it difficult to effectively plan the RSI component and address challenges that emerged over the course of project implementation.

The difficulties in communication eased when the college was eventually able to hire an administrative assistant to the Dean who had dedicated time to support the apprenticeship. Funding for a project coordinator had been included in the grant that provided start-up funding for the HVA, but could not be accessed due to the campuswide hiring freeze. The end of the hiring freeze coincided with when the HVA planning phase ended and the program launched. At that point the college representative began regularly attending monthly partnership meetings. The availability of a consistent point person at the college and their capacity to reliably participate in HVA partnership meetings significantly improved communication and collaboration efforts between ECEPTS, employer partners, and the college.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Factors that contributed to the success of the RSI component were the background knowledge ECEPTS and CCRC brought to the design process, and the following modifications made in response to challenges faced during implementation:

- The ability of the CFE instructor to provide drop-in academic support, in lieu of embedded tutoring;
- The willingness of employer partners to provide ad hoc technology, academic, and English language support to apprentices, particularly with respect to completing college projects;
- Hiring a program coordinator at the college to better manage the collaboration and work involved in implementing RSI.
LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Many important lessons were learned through the planning and implementation of RSI. What follows are major takeaways that might inform the design and implementation of RSI in future apprenticeships:

» The community college partner needs to have dedicated staff with the capacity (i.e., time and resources) to fulfill the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of an RSI provider in a Registered Apprenticeship partnership.

» College administrators and instructors need a clear understanding and acceptance of the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the RSI provider. They need to understand the challenges and unique needs of the apprentices and to be responsive and committed to ensuring participant success despite those challenges.

» Participating employers and college partners need to work together to plan and prepare the RSI component of the apprenticeship program long before the college courses begin, in order to establish successful working relationships, strengthen the collaboration, and foster communication and agreement about how best to support apprentices and the program.

» While a one-day technology training can be useful at the start of a program, technology support needs to be ongoing. This is because apprentices need the opportunity to develop technology skills in context and to apply them in practical hands-on situations. Given the core necessity for workers to have technological competency, this is an area of support that apprenticeship programs cannot afford to ignore or undervalue.

» In promoting an apprenticeship program to potential applicants, it needs to be made clear that challenges might arise over the course of the program that will necessitate changes in the project structure or available resources. But apprentices also need to be assured that they will receive the necessary support to adapt to any changes and to successfully complete their program. Being upfront with program applicants in this way will help apprentices to manage expectations and adapt to unforeseen circumstances more comfortably.
ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

ECEPTS, CCRC, and Antelope Valley Partners in Health (AVPH) collaborated on the design and planning of the on-the-job training (OJT) component of the HVA. The Vice President/Chief Operating Officer of CCRC and the Executive Director of ECEPTS crafted the basic design, and staff from ECEPTS and the employer partners worked together on implementation planning and final refining of the OJT components.

The OJT component of the HVA consisted of five elements and 2000 hours of paid, supervised employment, as required of all Registered Apprenticeships. Components included:

- **Phase 1**: Home Visitor Job Shadowing (part-time employment; 1144 hours)
- **Phase 2**: ECE Field Placement (part-time employment; 176 hours)
- **Phase 3**: Full-time Supervised Employment (600 hours)
- Professional Skills Trainings (80 hours)
- Participant Supports and Services (ongoing)

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

**Phase 1: Home Visitor Job Shadowing**

The first phase of OJT implementation involved job shadowing with seasoned home visitors who could train and mentor the apprentices. During this time apprentices worked 20 hours per week and received the regional minimum wage (e.g., $15/hour). Each apprentice shadowed multiple home visitors to gain insights about different styles and perspectives towards providing home visiting, and to reap the benefit of having multiple mentors.

At the start of this phase, apprentices observed various aspects of home visiting, such as how to interact with parents and children, how to assess needs and build trust with families, how to utilize resources, materials, activities, and teaching tools, and how home visits are generally conducted. Apprentices were also involved in preparing for visits and documenting visits afterwards. As Phase 1 progressed, apprentices began taking increased responsibility and became more active participants in the home visiting sessions. Such responsibilities included assisting in providing information about a variety of resources parents needed and making referrals to such resources.

*Implementation.* Because of the pandemic, home visits were done virtually throughout Phase 1. As a result, the ways that home visitors typically connect with families and build trust had to be recreated in a virtual format and apprentices had to learn along with their mentors. By definition, meetings with families in person for
home visitation is fundamental to the process and its impact. So figuring out how to meaningfully engage with families in a virtual environment was a very significant undertaking.

All apprentices successfully completed their required hours of OJT. Apprentices rotated to a new mentor about once a month, which helped apprentices learn different styles and approaches to home visiting. Mentors reported that waiting a month before rotating worked well because it provided enough time to build trust between mentors and apprentices, which was key to apprentices feeling comfortable enough to ask questions and practice their new skills. The previous mentor shared details with the new mentor about the apprentice’s strengths, weaknesses, and progress being made in order to create continuity and support the transition.

One challenge that arose was ensuring that apprentices reached the required number of job shadowing hours, due to the limited number of families receiving home visits and scheduling conflicts for both mentors and apprentices. In order to work around this, employers shifted the apprentices’ job shadowing schedule from being two set days per week to a more flexible schedule so that whenever a home visit was occurring, they would be able to attend. They also started pairing more than one apprentice with mentors when there were not enough mentors available for shadowing, in order to avoid losing requisite training hours.

Both employers made up for limited job shadowing hours by offering online trainings for the apprentices to complete during work hours. Apprentices reported mixed feedback on this approach, as it was less engaging than interacting with people in real time. Some mentors also supplemented job shadowing with role playing in mock home visits with apprentices.

A second challenge that began in Phase 1 and continued to play out in subsequent phases of OJT centered on how to operate an apprenticeship program that involved more than one employer. Each employer had its own group of apprentices to manage and their own styles and policies for operating the program. But given the program’s cohort model, apprentices shared information and compared experiences, which sometimes led to feelings of confusion, disappointment or even resentment on behalf of apprentices who believed their experience was somehow inferior to the other group’s experience.
Staff tried to manage this dynamic among apprentices by coordinating communication across employers as much as possible so that the two groups of apprentices received the same information at the same time. Each employer also met with its group of apprentices whenever these issues arose to clear up why these differences were occurring and respond to apprentices’ concerns as best they could.

Another aspect of this challenge was that one employer served as “lead employer” in terms of certain administrative responsibilities (e.g., communication with ECEPTS about overall program administration), which created potential power imbalances that had to be considered and resolved. Furthermore, the lead employer had to decide when to dictate the terms of the apprenticeship for the sake of consistency, and when to give the other employer autonomy over its own decisions. This came into play in determining when and how information about program timelines or changes would be shared with apprentices, for example.

► Phase 2: ECE Field Placement

The second phase of OJT was an early care and education (ECE) field placement in which apprentices spent nine weeks working in a Head Start classroom operated by CCRC. During this phase, apprentices worked 20 hours per week and received the regional minimum wage. The intent of the ECE field placement was twofold. The first was for apprentices to begin developing the knowledge and competencies necessary to be successful as ECE professionals through hands-on experience. Such knowledge and competencies included understanding child development, developmentally appropriate practice, how to talk to children, how to read to children, how to encourage child-directed learning through play, the benefits of center-based care, and the significance of language development.

The second intent of the ECE field placement was to provide exposure to an additional ECE career option. The ECE field placement was designed to give apprentices the on-the-job experience and hours needed to earn a Child Development Associate Teacher Permit, the credential required for entry-level ECE jobs in publicly-funded childcare programs in California. Regardless of whether apprentices would eventually choose to work in ECE classrooms or as home visitors, what they gained through the ECE field placement would be valuable in any context of working with young children and helping parents to support children’s development.

**Implementation.** The apprentices were divided into two groups and each group worked in a different Head Start center. Three apprentices were assigned to each
classroom. The Head Start teachers were informed of the competencies that the apprentices were supposed to achieve during this phase, so they could make sure that each competency was addressed sufficiently over the course of the nine weeks. Head Start managers reported that it was sometimes difficult for one teacher to incorporate three apprentices into the classroom dynamics, while also providing care and education to the children.

This phase was successful in meeting its goals from the perspective of the apprentices, employers, and the Head Start partner. The apprentices were able to determine from this experience whether working in an ECE setting would be a good fit for them, and they completed the requirements to earn their Associate Teacher Permits.

▶ Phase 3: Full-Time Supervised Employment

Once apprentices completed all college coursework, they began the final phase of their OJT experience during which they became full-time employees at an ECE center or a community-based agency that provides home visiting. During this time, apprentices continued to receive support from the apprenticeship program through mentoring and supervision, but as full-time employees they received full wages and benefits from the employer, consistent with the salaries and benefits received by other new employees. Once apprentices completed at least 2,000 hours of OJT, the plan was that they would continue to work in their positions on a permanent basis, assuming such positions were available.

**Implementation.** Two apprentices decided they were unable to begin working full-time, but everyone else eventually secured a full-time position. About half of the cohort was hired by CCRC or AVPH as home visitors. The others were hired by another home visiting agency, other ECE centers, and a community-based social service agency.

Because CCRC and AVPH did not have the capacity to hire all of the eligible apprentices, they supported the remaining apprentices in their job search by reviewing resumes, doing mock interviews, networking with partner agencies, and hosting a job fair through which apprentices could meet prospective employers. For a variety of reasons, including the lingering impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the nature of the ECE industry, job openings were limited at the time they were applying, so securing full-time employment for all eligible apprentices took more time and effort than anticipated.
Professional Skills Training

Non-credit skills trainings were provided throughout OJT to help apprentices build skills needed to be effective in the workplace and in ECE classrooms, in particular. Trainings included:

- New World of Work, a soft skills curriculum initially rolled out by the California Community College system, focused on basic workplace skills and employment expectations. Content included creating resumes, communicating in job interviews, and dressing appropriately in a work environment. The program had been offered in other ECEPTS apprenticeships and was consistently well received.

- Health training, including preventative health, CPR, and First Aid certification, all of which are required for working in licensed ECE centers.

**Implementation.** These trainings went as planned and presented no major challenges. The apprentices largely had positive feedback on both of them. New World of Work was led by CCRC supervisors and held at the college campus. The health trainings were coordinated and delivered by AVPH.

Participant Supports and Services

1. Mentoring. Mentoring was planned to begin during job shadowing in Phase 1 and continue throughout their OJT experience. Mentors were to meet one-on-one with their assigned apprentices before and after each home visit. It was time set aside for the apprentices to ask questions of home visitors about what was done, why it was done, and how it was done. It was also a time for mentors to offer perspective on what apprentices learned and observed, and to provide feedback on apprentices’ skills and professional development.

**Implementation.** Despite their confidence at the outset, one challenge that mentors faced with job shadowing was feeling unprepared and unsure of how to spend their time with the apprentices. While the mentors were experienced in training new employees, they had never mentored apprentices before, and it turned out that more planning was needed for this unique scenario. The mentors were aware of the goals and milestones that they were supposed to help apprentices achieve, but the details and timeline of how and when they would do so was not sufficiently fleshed out in advance. Mentors dealt with this by asking supervisors for help when needed, which they reported was very useful. They also did most of their planning as the program unfolded, or as they put it, “building the plane while
you fly it.” Apprentices reported feeling generally supported by their mentors and appreciated the relationships they built together, suggesting that mentoring was a useful component despite the challenges.

2. **Supervision and Reflective Feedback Opportunities.** Apprentices participated in monthly sessions led by CCRC and AVPH program supervisors. Each cohort met together in person to discuss their apprenticeship experiences, what they were learning, and any concerns they had.

*Implementation.* This was the only portion of Phase 1 OJT conducted in person, so it was an important opportunity to build relationships among the cohort and with the program supervisors. Because of this, each employer decided to meet weekly instead of monthly. Supervisors reported that these meetings were useful because they demonstrated to apprentices that they were not alone in what they were experiencing and how they were feeling.

3. **Other Supports.** Other participant supports were provided throughout the OJT component to help ensure successful completion of the program. These supports included:

- Technology support to give apprentices the technology devices and skills needed to complete OJT. This included having access to a laptop and learning how to use email, computer software applications, and electronic databases.

- Transportation support to cover the cost of getting to and from home visiting sites or other work-related travel. This was provided through gas cards and transportation stipends.

- Childcare support to ensure that apprentices could be assured of reliable childcare while participating in the HVA. Apprentices could also receive assistance in obtaining a childcare subsidy through CCRC to cover the costs and secure a spot for their children.
Implementation. Each of these supports were offered during the apprenticeship but faced implementation challenges. For example, a technology training took place at the start of the program, but employer staff found many of the skills covered were not retained in future months, and follow-up support became necessary. Transportation stipends were offered through the local workforce jobs center, but accessing them proved difficult since the stipends had to be picked up in person within timeframes that often conflicted with the apprentices’ college class or work schedules. Child care support was offered through CCRC, but as state-subsidized child care it was based on financial need and not guaranteed. Because some apprentices did not initially understand how the system worked, they were frustrated by the lengthy application process and disappointed if deemed ineligible to participate.

CHALLENGES AND MODIFICATIONS

The planning process for OJT revealed several challenges that required modifications to the overall design. Without question, the onset and ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges. But even accounting for the pandemic, the challenges encountered are widespread in family- and child-serving industries like ECE and bear examination.

► Complicated Application Process

Perhaps the greatest challenge in planning OJT was how to fund wages for the apprentices during Phases 1 and 2 when they were not yet eligible to be hired as full-time employees. In the ECE industry, licensing regulations dictate strict adult-to-children ratios to ensure quality care and safety. To be counted toward meeting those ratios, adults in the classroom must meet specific professional requirements. Apprentices, by definition, do not yet possess such professional requirements so they cannot be counted in the ratio equation.

Apprenticeship programs in well-funded industries (e.g., construction trades, information technology, healthcare) typically have the resources to pay apprentices' wages. But in non-profit, under-resourced industries like ECE, employers operate on very thin financial margins so they can only budget for staff who can be counted toward ratio requirements. The challenge of paying apprentices’ wages was compounded by the fact that the California Apprenticeship Initiative grant that provided two years of startup funding for the HVA specifically disallowed funding for apprentices’ wages.
Recognizing that a dedicated funding source would be needed for apprentices' wages in Phases 1 and 2 of OJT, the HVA program had been developed with the understanding that the LA County Department of Public Health (DPH) would underwrite those costs. Unfortunately, the strain placed on the DPH because of the pandemic made it unlikely and eventually impossible for those funds to be provided. As a result, ECEPTS and CCRC spent eight months in search of alternative funding sources.

ECEPTS and CCRC pursued many avenues and encountered multiple roadblocks. While funding through local Workforce Development Boards seemed like a logical choice, many of their funding streams (e.g., WIOA) are geared toward supporting individuals in attaining job skills and employment, rather than programs serving groups of workers in earn-and-learn programs such as Registered Apprenticeship. This misalignment between apprenticeships that are trying to support groups of workers versus the workforce development system that is designed to support unemployed individuals is a widespread and significant barrier to accessing local workforce development funding, and the HVA experience is a case in point.

Ultimately, the HVA received funding from the LA County Workforce Development Board from a grant that did not present the typical constraints. While that grant provided the funding needed to pay apprentices' wages during the months in which they were ineligible to be hired as full-time employees, it did not provide a sustainable solution to the larger problem. And that lack of sustainable funding for apprentices' wages became a key deterrent to launching subsequent cohorts of the HVA.
▶ Aligning with Human Resources Policies and Requirements

A second challenge faced in the OJT planning stage was aligning the requirements and expectations of an apprenticeship program with the Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures of the employer agencies. HR representatives from CCRC and AVPH were included in the OJT planning process to ensure that their hiring requirements and procedures were reflected in the U.S. DOL Registered Apprenticeship standards governing the HVA.

While both agencies had experience recruiting, hiring, and training home visitors, it took much discussion and collaboration to come to full agreement about the HR-related differences between regular employees and apprentices and to develop policies and procedures that satisfied both the needs of employers and the dictates of the apprenticeship system. Key areas of tension included:

» Developing a system for establishing and evaluating qualifications and selection criteria for potential apprentices applying to be trained as home visitors, as opposed to qualifications and criteria for new workers applying to be hired as home visitors.

» Determining whether and how apprentices fit into existing pay grades, and whether employers needed to add an additional pay grade specifically for apprentices.

» Clarifying the legal liability of employers for apprentices working in their agencies.

Ultimately, both of the employers' HR departments came to understand the requirements of a Registered Apprenticeship and adapted their policies accordingly - developing a new job description, clarifying position requirements, and establishing pay grades for apprentices. It was also understood that relevant Equal Employment Opportunity laws would apply to apprentices who sought full-time employment in Phase 3, ensuring they would not get special treatment over other potential candidates.

▶ Incorporating Home Visiting Program Models

In providing home visitation services, CCRC and AVPH implement two research-based, widely recognized home visiting models (i.e., Parents as Teachers and Healthy Families America). Typically, newly hired home visitors are trained on the respective program curriculum as part of the onboarding process.

During the OJT planning process, the partners considered whether training on the program curricula should be incorporated into the apprenticeship. One consideration was that doing so would present a significant logistical and financial burden because the training is resource intensive in terms of travel and cost. As well, the two models required significantly different amounts of training time, so establishing OJT and RSI schedules that would work for all apprentices, would become difficult, if not impossible.
In the end, the HVA partners decided that training on a specific home visiting program model was not necessary because apprentices eventually hired as home visitors would receive that training after completing their apprenticeship and becoming employed as a home visitor. And apprentices who obtained employment as Assistant or Associate Teachers in ECE settings after completing their apprenticeship would not need such training.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Planning

The main factor that led to the success of the OJT planning process was the prior experience and reputation of ECEPTS and CCRC in planning and implementing successful apprenticeship programs. With respect to obtaining funding for apprentices’ part-time wages, it was the networks, relationships, and reputations of both ECEPTS and CCRC that allowed them to explore several possible funding alternatives and finally secure one that worked. Without knowing the right people, pulling together the right meetings, and having reputations as respected, credible ECE industry and apprenticeship leaders, it might not have been possible to overcome this challenge.

The experience and knowledge that ECEPTS and CCRC gained while collaborating on prior ECE apprenticeship programs played a significant role in informing the design for the HVA. For example, their past experience guided the planning team in determining the training, resources, and support that would be embedded in the HVA. As well, given the demographic and socio-economic similarities between the HVA target population and populations they had worked with previously, their past experience informed the onboarding information passed onto college instructors on the life experience, skills, education, challenges, and strengths the apprenticeship candidates would likely bring to their apprenticeship experience. Finally, the well-established ECEPTS apprenticeship model provided guardrails to ensure that the US Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Standards were not compromised.

ECEPTS also helped to facilitate the planning process. The ECEPTS Project Manager led the team through complicated group dynamics, sensitive issues, and personnel challenges (e.g., pandemic-related personnel policies, staff turnover). Considerable time was spent learning about the two employer partners and their respective organizational challenges in order to support them and strengthen the overall collaboration. Flexible strategies were employed to accommodate the schedules and availability of employer staff such as small sub-committees for specific tasks, creating opportunities for written communication instead of in-person meetings when possible, and utilizing a digital, interactive whiteboard to facilitate group input.
Implementation

Several factors contributed to the success of OJT implementation. Given that most of OJT was implemented virtually, the partners staying connected and working together was even more important than in a more typical scenario. Some of the success factors included:

» Monthly “learning community” meetings with mentors from both employers allowed apprentices to exchange ideas and support each other.

» ECEPTS was able to troubleshoot problems as they arose and assist employer partners as needed. Employer partners also appreciated that ECEPTS was there for accountability purposes to ensure fidelity between what was planned and what was executed.

» The relationships that mentors built with apprentices helped apprentices feel comfortable asking questions and practicing new skills during job shadowing. Mentors also checked in with apprentices during Phases 2 and 3 so they continued to feel supported and connected throughout the program.

» ECE field placement staff coordinated with college instructors to help apprentices integrate what they were learning in class with what they were doing in their field placement.

» The ongoing support from supervisors helped mentors when they felt unprepared or overly burdened.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Because of the unique and multi-faceted nature of the OJT component in the ECEPTS apprenticeship model, the OJT planning process for the HVA was complex and challenging, as well as more time consuming and less straightforward than the RSI planning process. However, due to the well-established networks and reputation of ECEPTS as an apprenticeship intermediary, as well as the experience, relationships, and credibility of the HVA employer partners, many challenges were successfully addressed.

The HVA partners consider the need for long-term, reliable funding for OJT part-time wages as one of the most critical obstacles to the success and sustainability of home visiting apprenticeships. Securing such funding required hours of relationship-building, research, meetings, and negotiations that might not be easily replicated. It is not reasonable to expect future apprenticeships to undertake the complicated and time-consuming work that was needed to secure funding for OJT part-time wages in the HVA. One bright spot in overcoming this obstacle was that it strengthened the relationship between the HVA partners, the County Workforce Development Board, and the local jobs center, paving the way for additional collaboration and potential funding in the future.
When it came to implementing OJT, major hurdles could have been remedied with more advanced or more detailed planning. In the job shadowing phase (Phase 1), more detailed planning on how to train the apprentices could have better prepared mentors with concrete methods for how to best utilize the time they spent with apprentices. For the ECE field placement (Phase 2), starting the planning process earlier could have helped avoid the last-minute rush to ensure apprentices met the necessary requirements for working in licensed ECE programs. For the full-time job placement (Phase 3), allowing more time for apprentices to start their job searches could have allowed apprentices to secure full-time jobs sooner, which would have led to shorter or nonexistent income gaps.

Beyond allowing more time for planning OJT, several other important lessons were uncovered while addressing the challenges related to the OJT component.

» Roles and responsibilities of each apprenticeship partner (e.g., employers, colleges, program sponsors such as ECEPTS) need to be clearly delineated and formally agreed upon early in the planning process to avoid unnecessary power struggles and confusion.

» Training needs to be provided to the mentors before the job shadowing begins so they feel prepared and clear about their new roles. A well-constructed curriculum for mentors needs to be implemented during the job shadowing phase, to provide structure and logical sequence to the information and competencies that need to be achieved by the apprentices.

» The ECE field placement staff need to be included from the beginning and throughout the OJT planning process so that the field placement component is well-coordinated with the other OJT components.

» If possible, only one apprentice should be assigned to each ECE classroom in Phase 2, so that apprentices have more opportunities to interact with the children and teachers are not overburdened by the responsibility of incorporating too many adults into their classrooms.

» If participating employers will not have the capacity to hire all of the apprentices as full-time workers after they complete their college coursework, they need to plan well in advance to expand the employer network so that apprentices can be assured of the likelihood of full-time placement. Likewise, apprentices need ample time to secure full-time employment such that they are not faced with gaps in employment and wages.
ANALYSIS OF LESSONS LEARNED
After analyzing the lessons learned in implementing the Home Visitor Apprenticeship, five themes emerged across the program components (ORSE, RSI, OJT). While not every lesson fits neatly into these categories, the overarching themes can be understood as follows:

- More time was needed for planning, understanding that many details and challenges might not emerge until well into the process of implementation.
- Additional training for mentors, college instructors, and apprentices was needed prior to program implementation.
- Further collaboration and partnership development would have been beneficial during the planning and implementation phases.
- The ability for all partners to be nimble in dealing with unexpected circumstances was essential.
- Sustainable funding streams for ECE apprenticeships will require systems change; program-level improvements are not sufficient.

The following examples help to illustrate each theme.

**MORE TIME FOR PLANNING**

Although an extensive amount of planning was done by all partners involved in the HVA, the amount of time needed to prepare for and launch a new apprenticeship program was significantly underestimated. Needing more time to iron out planning details and implementation challenges was a common reflection echoed by ECEPTS, employers, and project staff. For example, employers felt that having two to four more weeks for outreach, recruitment and selection of participants would have provided a better buffer to deal with unforeseen challenges during the enrollment process.

Likewise, ECE field placement staff should have been included in planning meetings much sooner so that preparations for this component were not rushed and tasks did not have to be tackled at the last minute. Finally, employers needed to begin networking with other agencies several months earlier to ensure that all apprentices had secured full-time employment before the final phase of OJT began.

**ADDITIONAL TRAINING**

Although a lot of training was done prior to the HVA program launch, in retrospect, even more training was needed. This was particularly true with respect to training OJT mentors. Several mentors reported that, while they had experience training new employees, mentoring apprentices turned out to be a significantly different task. For example, it was not always clear how to foster the skills apprentices needed to master nor how to sequence the introduction and training of those skills.
RSI instructors could have benefitted from more extensive onboarding prior to implementation. The Sociology instructors had no previous experience with ECEPTS apprenticeships and it became clear once the program began that they underestimated the support the apprentices would need to overcome common academic and professional challenges.

Finally, there were several candidates who applied for the apprenticeship but could not be accepted because they lacked sufficient English and/or writing skills to successfully complete college coursework delivered in English. In such cases, providing a pre-apprenticeship training program geared to the needs of English Language Learners could have prepared those candidates so that they could eventually qualify for and succeed in the apprenticeship program.

**FURTHER COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

The success of an apprenticeship program relies on the program partners’ commitment to achieving program success, their active support of the apprenticeship model, and their ability to work together. The core partners in the HVA were two employers (CCRC and AVPH), one college (AVC), and an apprenticeship intermediary and sponsor (ECEPTS). From the beginning, the level of commitment across all partners was strong and resolute. But the experience of implementing the HVA made clear that more time and intention in developing the partnership could have strengthened the program and its potential outcomes.

ECEPTS is somewhat unique as an apprenticeship intermediary and sponsor because it promotes a specific model that requires an unusual degree of flexibility and innovation from the partners. For example, the expectation that college coursework will be offered at community-based settings rather than on campus can be a new idea for faculty and challenging to fulfill. Likewise, the ECEPTS model requires that employers provide more staff and targeted supports than might be expected in a more traditional apprenticeship program. This expectation often means partners need to break with organizational tradition to replicate the ECEPTS model. As such, additional program orientation and onboarding would have helped to ensure that the college and employers had sufficient depth of understanding of the model as well as the willingness and capacity to make necessary organizational or institutional adaptations.
The partnership could have also been strengthened by ensuring that partners had more time and opportunity to understand each other’s perspectives, strengths, and organizational challenges. All partnerships experience points of disagreement and conflict, but if parties have the chance to get to know and understand each other early on, they will be more willing to negotiate and compromise for the greater good when challenges arise, particularly when it comes to changing organizational culture, policies, and practices.

In practical terms, strengthening the partnership means requiring all partners to attend all planning meetings, both so that program details and decisions can be worked out together, and to create opportunities for partners to have enough contact to develop trusting relationships. In this regard, convening in-person meetings should be considered to the extent possible. It also means valuing employers and colleges as equal partners, making space for each to voice their opinions and make decisions in a collaborative manner. As well, the roles and responsibilities of each apprenticeship partner need to be clearly delineated and formally agreed upon early in the planning process to avoid unnecessary power struggles and confusion.

**BEING NIMBLE WITH UNEXPECTED CIRCUMSTANCES**

When the idea for this apprenticeship first emerged, the HVA partners could not have imagined the formidable obstacles they would encounter prior to the program launch. To begin with, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the launch, significantly impacted implementation plans, and led to a complete reconceptualization of college coursework delivery (i.e., online instead of in person). In addition, the HVA partnership was impacted by extraordinary staffing issues that were unusual and unforeseeable - a hiring freeze at the college, the death of one dean and the retirement of another, and staff turnover exacerbated by the pandemic.

There was nothing the HVA partners could have done to prevent these circumstances. However, they soon realized that being nimble in the face of such challenges and learning to “expect the unexpected” were key to not letting such obstacles consume and undermine the viability and success of the apprenticeship program.
SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR ECE APPRENTICESHIPS

COVID-19 was the surface-level cause of the challenge around funding OJT wages for the apprentices. However, the larger systemic issue at play must be addressed to expand and sustain ECE apprenticeships in the future. Unlike more traditional apprenticeship sectors, non-profit agencies cannot raise the price of their product to cover extra spending or costs such as apprentices' wages. Instead, these agencies rely almost entirely on government or public funding and operate on extremely thin margins.

To achieve the conditions necessary to enable large scale replication of the HVA model, both workforce system and apprenticeship funding regulations need to be adapted to address the needs of non-traditional, underfunded sectors that provide essential services and engage a diverse and under-represented workforce, such as home visiting, child care, and non-profit community-based service organizations. If apprenticeships are to become a viable, scalable method through which to train home visitors and others, government budgets and policies on funding apprenticeship wages must be adjusted to meet this need.
Despite the significant challenges that were faced in launching the Home Visitor Apprenticeship, the partners were able to successfully implement the program. The factors that contributed to this success included the apprenticeship model that centered on supports and services designed to foster participant achievement, the partners’ ability to work together to overcome or adapt to the challenges that arose, and the flexibility that both the partners and apprentices exhibited when dealing with unexpected circumstances.

While the COVID-19 pandemic presented the greatest challenge to planning and implementing the HVA, many of the challenges faced were unrelated to, or at least not caused by, the pandemic. Examining how these challenges, in particular, were addressed and what lessons were learned in the process could inform future efforts to launch ECE apprenticeship programs. Furthermore, as national interest in developing and expanding ECE apprenticeships has significantly increased since the HVA launched in 2019, the lessons learned from the HVA planning and implementation processes have become even more noteworthy.

Registered Apprenticeships have a long history in some industries (e.g., construction trades), but they are still fairly new in ECE. That said, research suggests that Registered Apprenticeship can be an effective approach to ECE workforce development. But the composition of the ECE workforce presents unique opportunities and challenges in designing apprenticeships that can effectively and reliably result in participant success and program completion. As such, while the basic apprenticeship model utilized by more traditional industries with a long-standing connection to the apprenticeship system is valuable as a starting point, it is vital that apprenticeships for ECE workers are specifically designed for, and responsive to, the ECE industry and its workforce.

The results of this evaluation suggest that the apprenticeship model used for the HVA is well-suited for training home visitors and other sub-sectors of the ECE industry (e.g., center-based teachers). The model integrates academic preparation with on-the-job training, addresses access and equity needs of the ECE workforce, and fosters the essential component of high quality ECE: developing well-trained professionals with the skills, knowledge and competencies to be effective caregivers and early educators.

Developing Registered Apprenticeship programs for industries new to the apprenticeship system is complicated and labor intensive. Enlisting an industry intermediary familiar with ECE and the workforce system was a significant benefit to the HVA in terms of ensuring that the design and implementation of the program addressed the unique needs of the ECE workforce. For example,
ECEPTS’ familiarity with the demographics of the ECE workforce informed decisions about the participant supports that would be necessary for English Language Learners. Likewise, recognizing that entry-level ECE workers often lack easy access to technology led to ensuring that every apprentice received a laptop computer as part of supporting their academic success.

As ECEPTS continues to expand its role as a national industry intermediary, it will support initiatives around the country in developing, implementing, and sustaining ECE Registered Apprenticeship programs. In that effort, lessons learned in the planning and implementation of the Home Visitor Apprenticeship will undoubtedly inform and strengthen the technical assistance ECEPTS provides. And as such, the lessons learned will lead to better outcomes in the design and delivery of ECE apprenticeships more broadly.