

Reflecting on Progress

Shaping the Future of Early Childhood Education

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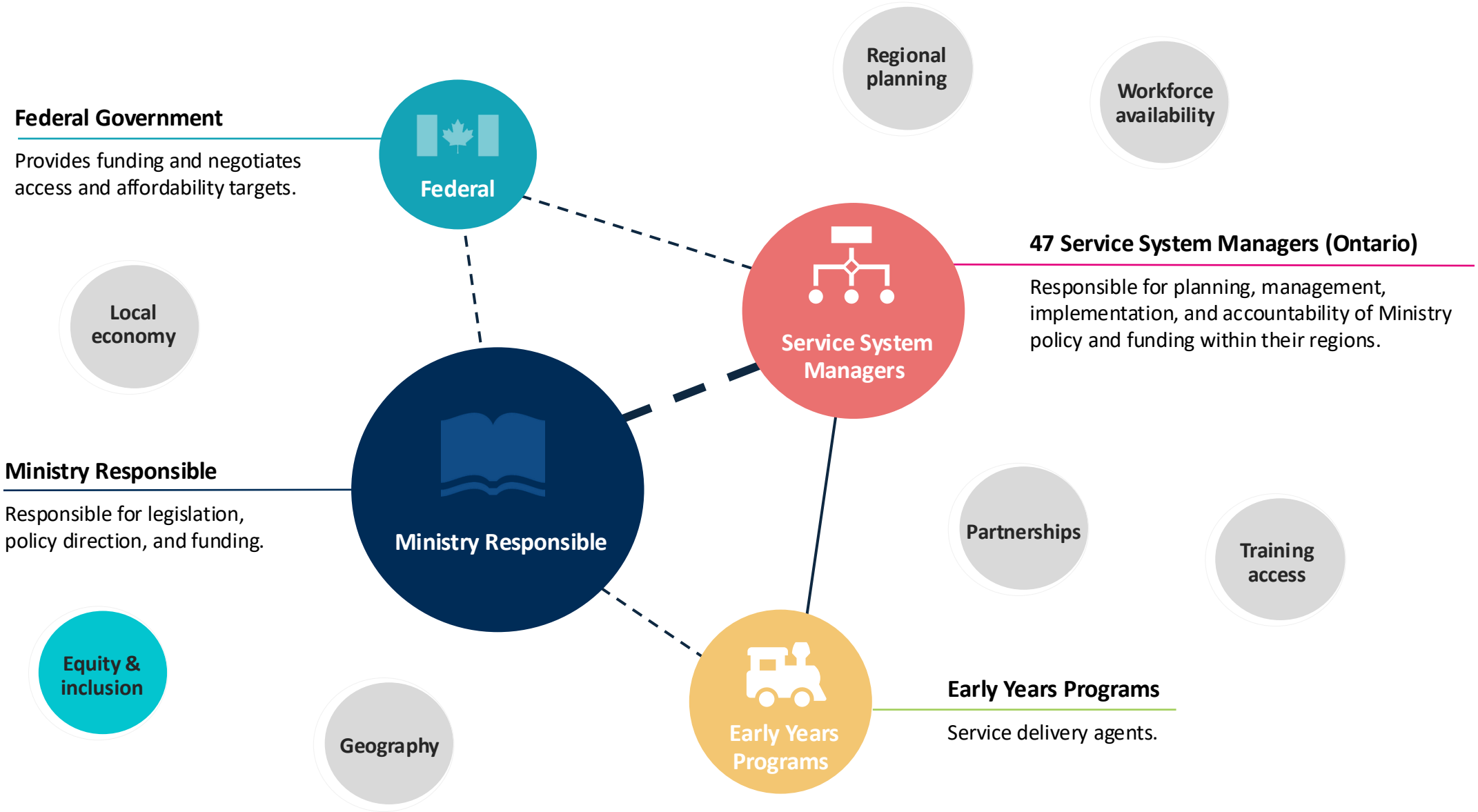
The Atkinson Centre
for Society and Child Development
OISE | University of Toronto

Yukon November 2026

Early Years Governance



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ECEC CAPACITY
FOR 2–4 YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

ECER 2026
Early Childhood Education Report

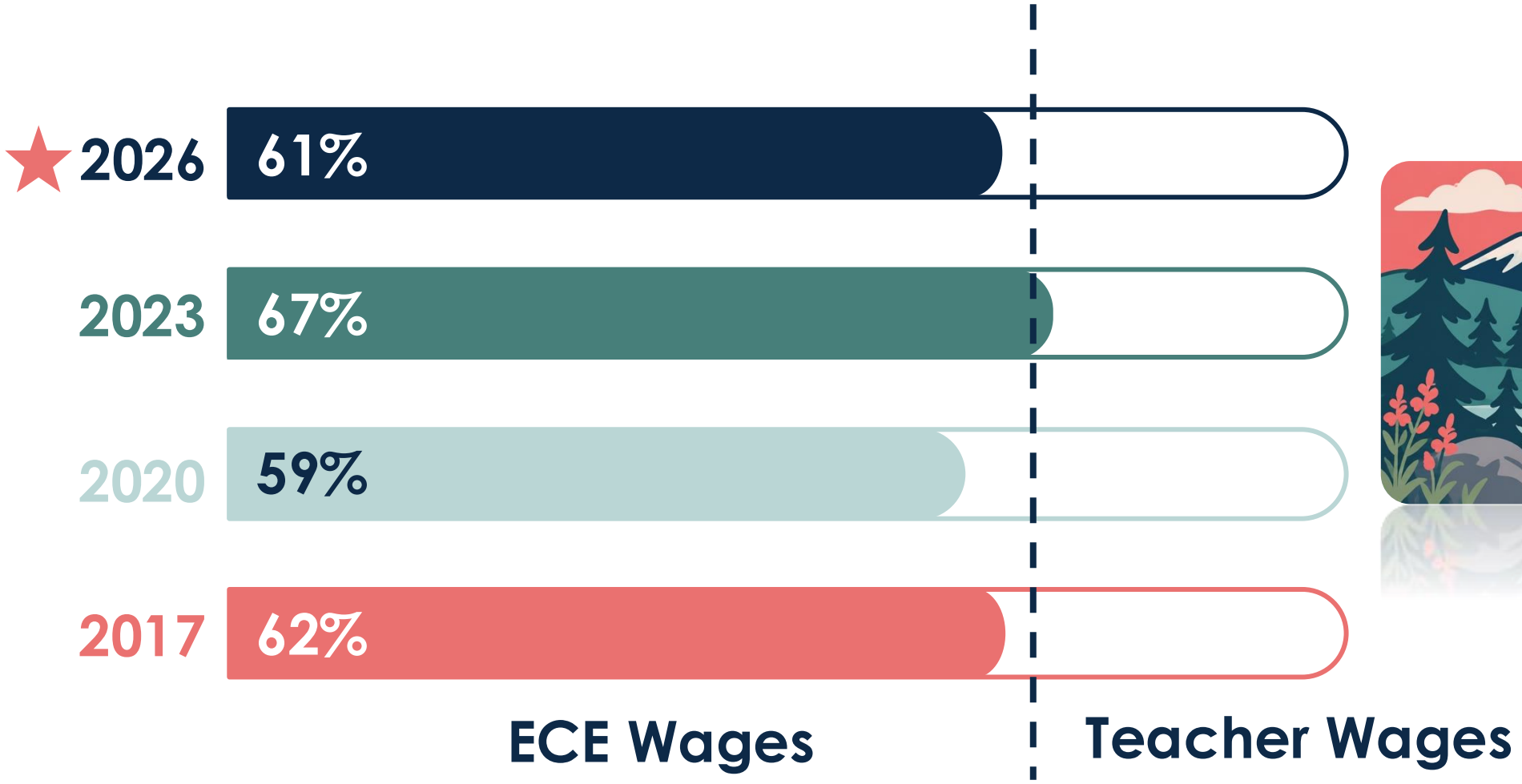


2017	50%
2020	42%
2023	67%
2026	—

Yukon Territory

ECE wages as a percent of teacer wages

ECER 2026
Early Childhood Education Report



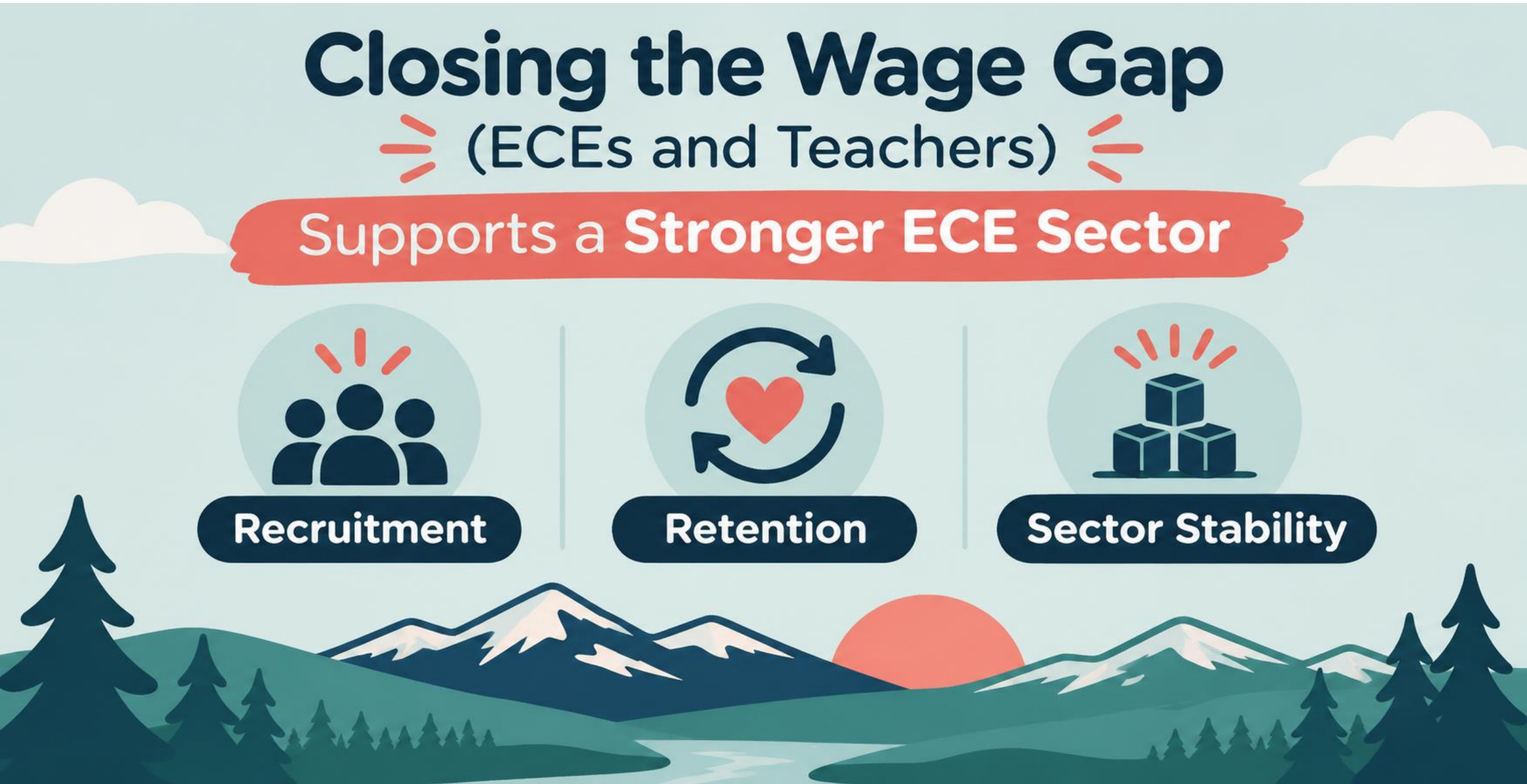


Source: Early Childhood Education Report | Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development

Closing the Wage Gap

(ECEs and Teachers)

Supports a **Stronger ECE Sector**



Provinces That Have Removed Low Income Parent Fee Subsidies

ECER 2026
Early Childhood Education Report

This is not equitable.

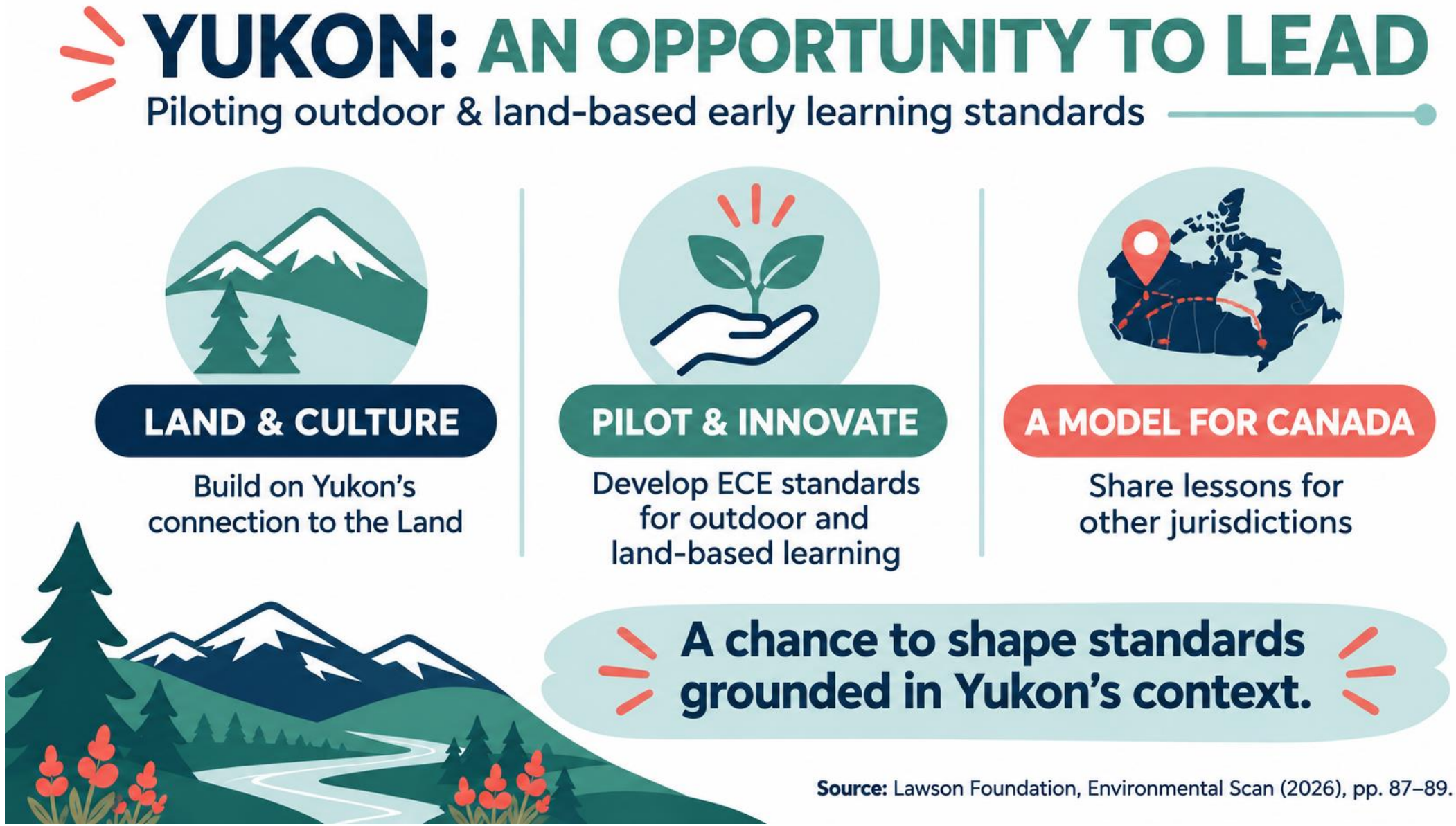


Alberta & Saskatchewan
Have removed low income parent fee subsidies.

Without income-based subsidies, many families face higher costs and fewer choices. This is not equitable.



Source: Early Childhood Education Report, Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development.



Yukon is identied as a priority jurisdiction for pilot standards development given both the urgency of the gap and the potential for meaningful reform in a smaller jurisdiction.

Care Is a Public Good

A Foundation for Equitable Early Childhood Education

A stronger, more inclusive workforce

→

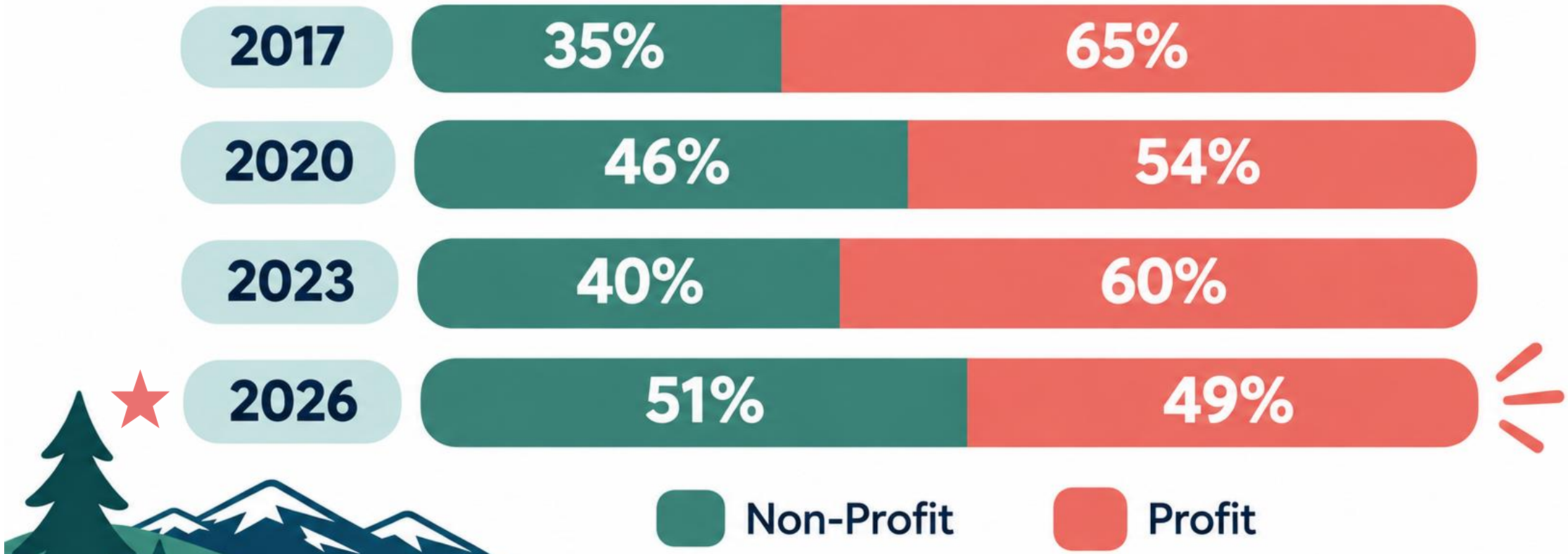
High-quality learning environments

→

Better outcomes for children, families and communities



PERCENTAGE OF ECE FACILITIES
(NON-PROFIT / PROFIT)



Empoyer-supported child care

United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

The Initiative

Free child care as an employer benefits

All staff working in licensed child care are eligible

GOAL

Improve recruitment & retention and help help stabilize

At a Glance

110 employees supported

12% of median employee income

177 children supported

Key Findings

Reduces staff turnover

Supports regions with acute shortages

Promising results to scale up

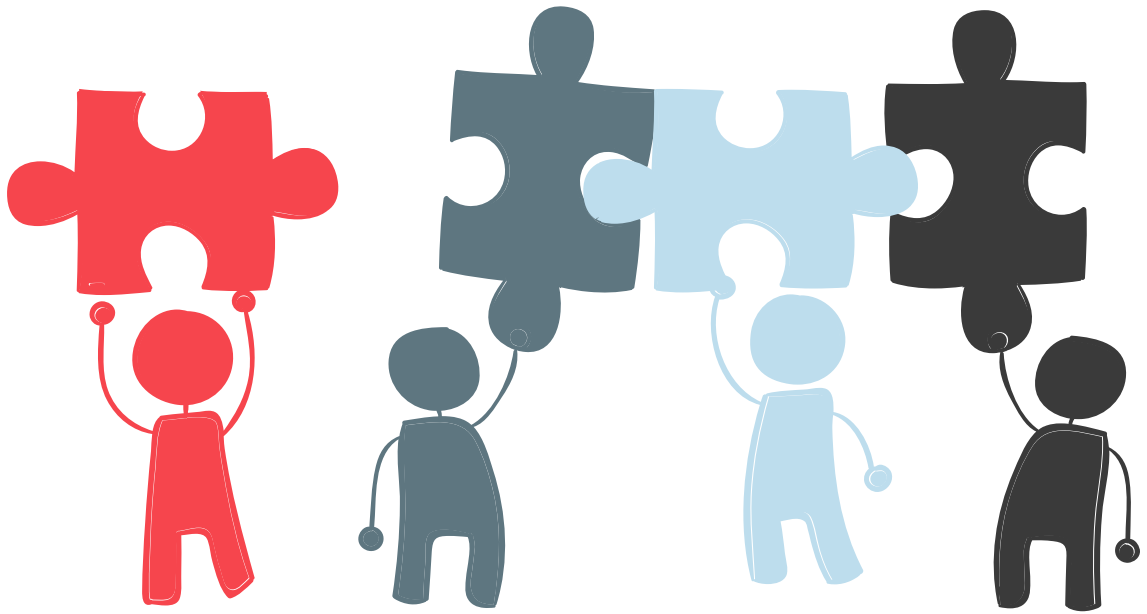


Evidence Informed Mentorship Framework

Better TOGETHER

Shared Visions, Shared Objectives

Better Together
For Early Years





https://www.bt4ey.ca/

Our Portfolio of Work

This evolving collection of projects is dedicated to advancing early learning and childcare across Ontario and beyond. Rooted in collaboration and designed to be shared, these resources aim to inspire, inform, and support communities as they explore opportunities in early learning and childcare. As the work continues to grow, so too does our hope that it will mobilize and empower others to create lasting impact. If you're interested in exploring or using any of these materials, please reach out.



New Models

BT to Present May 14 as part of OMSSA Speakers Series

May 14th between 12–1, join BT Founder Michelle



New Models

BT4EY 2026 Mentorship Project

As part of BT's New Models work in 2026, municipal Service System Managers have come together to begin



New Narratives, New Allies

November 2025: A Better Together Webinar Series: Beyond The Podcast

Project Summary

- This year 12 Service System Managers from 12 Ontario communities have come together to develop an implementation-ready, mentorship framework for the ECE workforce

- Grounded in the shared need to build capacity for mentorship within the ECE workforce, exploring evaluation of promising practices, and developing a proposed framework to support program decisions

- Many mentorship ‘packages’ exist. What are the factors that research shows makes mentorship effective and how can we monitor the impact?



Better TOGETHER

Mentorship Programs:
Evidence-Informed Guidance for Government Implementation

Evidence-Informed Guidance
For Government Implementation



Better TOGETHER

What Effective Programs Include

Well-prepared mentors with formal training and ongoing support.

Thoughtful matching based on compatibility, shared goals, and communication style.

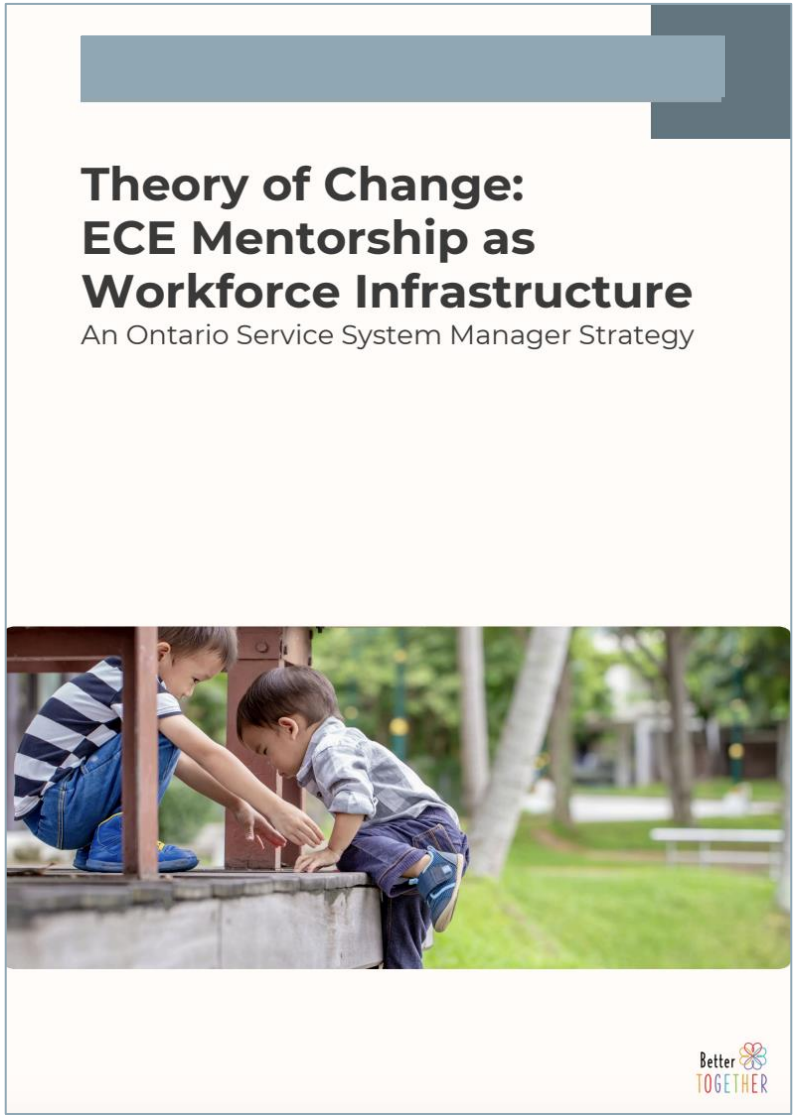
Regular, predictable meetings to maintain relationship quality and engagement.

Clear structure, goals, and expectations that guide the relationship and ensure consistency.

Dedicated coordination for matching, monitoring, and troubleshooting.

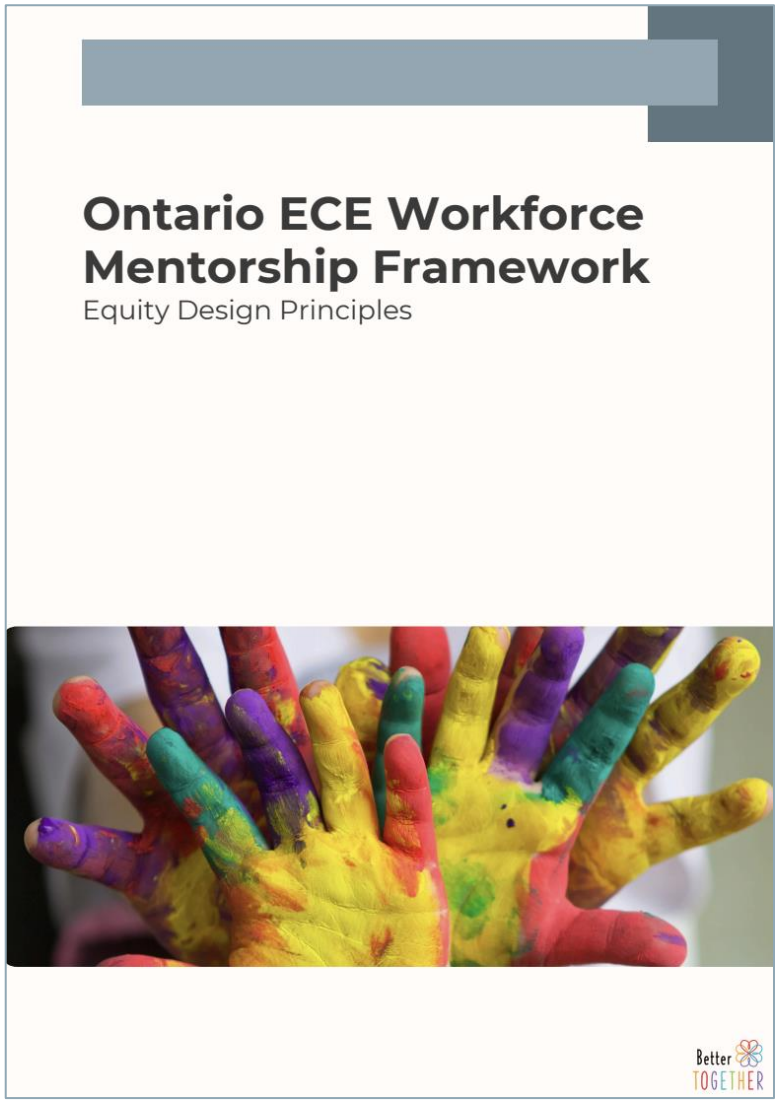
Strong organizational and leadership support, including protected time and recognition for the work.

Shared Theory of Change



- Clarifies *why* mentorship is needed, *who* it serves, and *how* it improves workforce outcomes
- Anchored in Ontario policy and workforce evidence
- Produces a defensible, case for mentorship

Embedded Equity Design Principles



- Guidance note for use in proposals, reports, RFPs, funding requests
- Valued work, participation paid
- Cultural, linguistic, and inclusion responsive
- Strengths-based framing of educators

Equity Design Principles – ECE Mentorship Framework

Embedding equity in mentorship so participation and leadership opportunities are accessible across the diverse Ontario ECE workforce.

Mentorship strengthens professional learning and workforce wellbeing but must operate alongside adequate compensation, working conditions, and qualified staffing levels.

Valued Professional Work

Mentorship is recognized as skilled labour and supported through stipends, release time, or formal recognition.

Cultural & Linguistic Responsiveness

Mentorship values the diverse cultural, linguistic, and professional backgrounds of educators.

Inclusive Relationships

Mentorship environments promote trust, respect, and psychological safety.

Continuous Learning

Reflection and feedback strengthen mentorship practices and improve equity over time.

Accessible Participation

Flexible mentorship formats support educators across varied schedules, program types, and regions.

Strengths-Based Learning

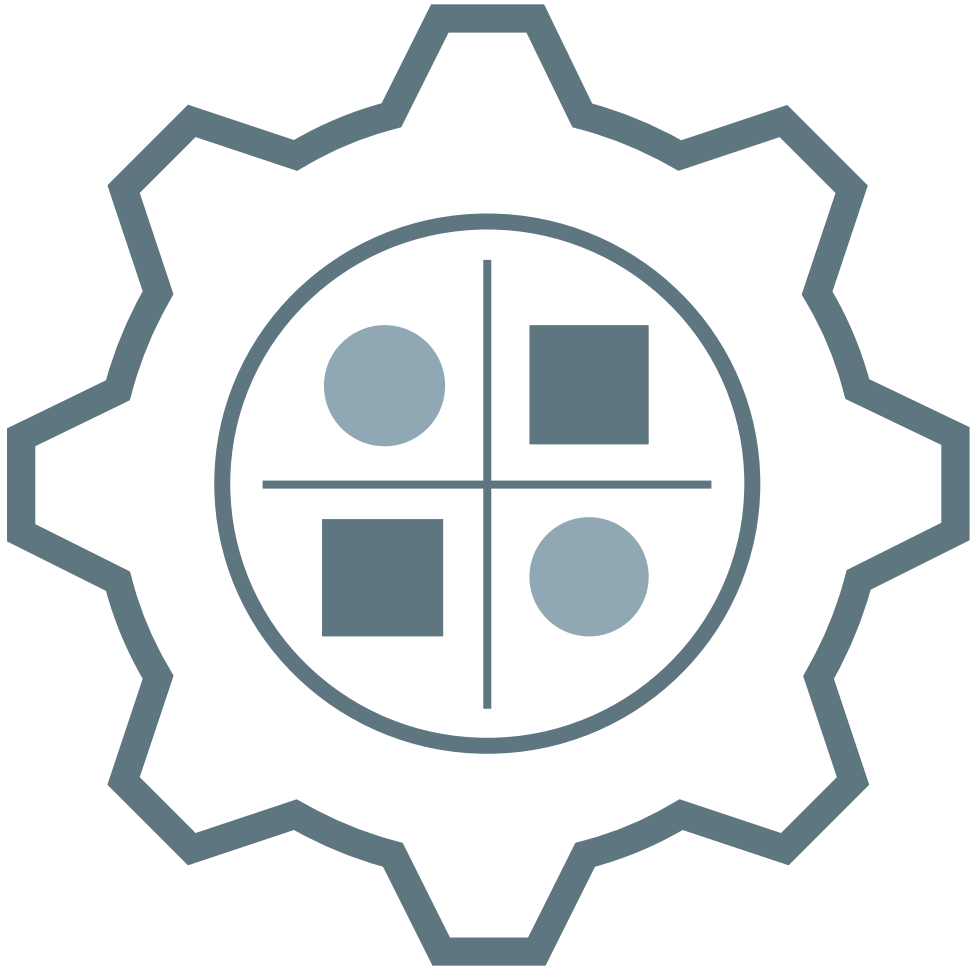
Mentorship builds on educators' existing knowledge, skills, and professional experience.

Equitable Leadership Pathways

Mentorship supports leadership development and career progression across the workforce.

Embedded Equity Design Principles





The mentorship framework within the ECE workforce is based on the principle that it is not a singular intervention, but a set of differentiated approaches aligned to distinct workforce objectives. A **decision matrix** supports Service System Managers in selecting and sequencing mentorship models based on local workforce conditions, while reinforcing that **mentorship must operate alongside, not in place of, foundational workforce investments such as compensation, working conditions, and staff density**.

Primary Objective	Target Group	Mentorship Model	Key Features	When to Use	ROI Considerations / Risks
Workforce Entry & Early Retention	• New graduates (RECEs) •New hires • Untrained staff (non-RECEs) • Pre-service students (placements) • New Canadians	**Onboarding Mentorship**	• Structured onboarding period • Focus on role clarity, expectations + confidence-building • Skills + emotional support • Shadowing + gradual release • Alignment with regulatory requirements (CECE)	• First 0–12 months in role • High turnover environments • Settings hiring non-RECEs • Early career exits + transitions	**ROI:** Reduces early exit (highest attrition window) **Risk:** If poorly structured, becomes informal "buddy system" with no measurable impact **Mitigation:** Define duration, outcomes, and accountability
Practice Quality Improvement	• All educators (mixed experience) • Mid-career RECEs • Non-RECE staff • Licensed home child care providers	**Pedagogical Mentorship**	• Reflective practice • Focus on educator-child interactions • Peer-based and embedded in practice + coaching cycles • Observation	• Inconsistent pedagogy • Goal of quality improvement • Interpersonal differences about pedagogical approaches • Retention issues not tied to career progression	**ROI:** Reduced quality compromises benefits of ELCC system **Risk:** Misframed as "extra work" rather than support + perception as evaluative or punitive **Mitigation:** Integrate into paid time; align with quality frameworks; improve workplace culture
Leadership Pipeline & Succession	• Supervisors • Emerging leaders • Program leads	**Leadership Succession Mentorship**	• Intentional pipeline development • Financial/admin + HR skill-building • Exposure to system-level decision-making • Shadowing + system knowledge	• Anticipated retirements • Expansion of system (new sites) • Difficulty recruiting supervisors • Changes in policy or structure (e.g., unionization), new curriculum • Responding to current issues and pressures such as bullying/racism in the workplace	**ROI:** Reduces costly external recruitment, leadership gaps + program closures **Risk:** Limited uptake if compensation gaps remain; reinforces existing inequities if limited access **Mitigation:** Align with compensation + role clarity
Career Navigation &	• RECEs exploring next steps	**Career Pathway**	• Focus on movement *within* sector (not exit)	• High workforce mobility	**ROI:** Retains talent within sector vs. losing to other industries + Improves job satisfaction →

If the primary issue is early attrition → prioritize *Onboarding Mentorship*
If the issue is quality inconsistency → prioritize *Pedagogical Mentorship*
If leadership gaps are emerging → prioritize *Leadership Succession Mentorship*
If experienced staff are leaving or stagnating → prioritize *Career Pathway Mentorship*

Example Use Case

A rural area is experiencing closure risk + difficulty recruiting RECEs:

- Primary model: **Onboarding Mentorship**
- Complementary: **Career Pathway Mentorship** (to retain those who stay)

A large urban system expanding school-based programs:

- Primary model: **Interdisciplinary Mentorship**
- Complementary: **Leadership Succession Mentorship**



Collective Value

- Attribution
- Positions the framework as shared provincial infrastructure
- Strengthens influence with government and funders

This work has been undertaken in collaboration with a group of collaborating Service System Managers (SSMs) who have contributed to both the development and resourcing of the mentorship framework.

Their collective engagement reflects a shared commitment to strengthening the early childhood workforce through evidence-informed, practice-relevant approaches. The framework has been shaped through ongoing discussions and refinement with these collaborating SSMs, ensuring it is responsive to diverse regional contexts and grounded in implementation realities.

With the agreement of the partners, the framework will be publicly available to support system-wide learning, enable adaptation across jurisdictions, and contribute to more coordinated and scalable approaches to workforce development.

THANK YOU

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