

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2024



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A WORD FROM OUR ACTING DIRECTOR

State Fiscal Year 2024 (SFY 24) has been an exciting year for the Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (MRTQ PDN). The collective efforts of the Network Partners - **Maine Roads to Quality** (MRTQ), the **Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies** (CCIDS), and the **Maine Afterschool Network** (MASN) – have led to innovative approaches, effective initiatives, and comprehensive support to Maine's early care and education and out-of-school-time professionals. The dedication, expertise, and experience of Partner staff have strengthened MRTQ PDN as a whole, resulting in continued quality improvement of the supports to programs and providers that MRTQ PDN is tasked with serving.

Through its contract with Maine's Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) at the Department of Health and Human Services, MRTQ PDN has continued to provide high quality professional development opportunities, including facilitated and on-demand training, Maine Credentials, consultation and technical assistance to providers, Communities of Practice, and Professional Learning Communities. In addition, Maine's ECE Registered Apprenticeship Program continues to grow under the Intermediary Sponsorship of MRTQ PDN, with a second occupation, Early Childhood Education Specialist 2, receiving approval from the Maine Department of Labor. MRTQ PDN has also worked closely with OCFS to refine its Registry and revise its Career Lattices to increase ease of access and clarity of understanding for providers and a more equitable reflection of their education and experience.

MRTQ PDN has collaborated with OCFS and the Maine Department of Education to implement components of Maine's Preschool Development Grant (PDG). These include a statewide Inclusion Initiative, the *Leading Early Learning* professional learning series, Quality Improvement Award and Quality Incentives, and scholarships for early care and education professionals. Under the PDG, MRTQ PDN has also worked to establish alternative career pathways, including pursuing articulation agreements and establishing pathways for Career and Technical Education students with Maine institutes of higher education.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of SFY24 is MRTQ PDN collaboration with OCFS to implement Maine's new Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), Rising Stars for Maine. That project was significant in both scope and scale and required intensive work to revise the state previous QRIS, to identify and address other components of the early care and education and out-of-school-time system impacted by the revised QRIS, and to support providers as they transitioned to Rising Stars for Maine. The intensive coordination between OCFS and MRTQ PDN helped to mitigate some of the stress inherent to this transition.

This annual report represents the collective efforts of Network partners and the positive impact that those efforts have had on the field. It also serves as an acknowledgement and appreciation to the dedicated staff at MRTQ, CCIDS, and MASN. Without them, MRTQ PDN could not have overcome the challenges and achieved the successes that it has had in the past year.

ROY FOWLER
ACTING DIRECTOR



MRTQ PDN VISION & MISSION

Vision:

All early childhood and out-of-school time professionals in Maine provide high-quality care that meets the unique needs of each child they serve.

Mission:

MRTQ PDN supports early childhood and out-of-school-time professionals in developing the skills and expertise to provide high-quality, inclusive, and culturally responsive care to Maine's children.

MRTQ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK MAP

Early Childhood



- Registry
- Technical Assistance
- Professional Learning Communities
- Professional Development Training
- Higher Ed Coordination
- Statewide Communication
- Apprenticeship
- Credentials
- Child Care Choices

School Age

MAINE

Afterschool Network

- OST Program Quality
- Policy and Advocacy
- Network and Resource Sharing
- Coalition Building
- Healthy Eating, Physical Activity
- National Afterschool Association State Affiliate
- Youth Development Credential

*Early Childhood and
Out of School Time
Professionals
Supporting Maine's
Children & Families*

All Ages



Center for Community Inclusion
and Disability Studies

- Warm Line
- Individualized Supports
- Inclusion Training
- Inclusion Credential

Together, these three organizations support early childhood and out-of-school-time professionals in developing the skills and expertise to provide high-quality, inclusive, and culturally responsive care to Maine's children.

MRTQ REGISTRY



In fiscal year 2024, 3,556 new providers joined the Registry. This represents a total of over 30,000 existing Registry members. The number of active Registry members is represented by those providers who have (1) had active employment in the prior two years, (2) have updated their education, training, or work experience in the Registry, or (3) have logged into their Registry account. There were 21,220 active Registry members at the close of fiscal year 2024.

Per the MRTQ Registry procedures, and nationally recognized best practices for workforce registries, providers who no longer meet the above criteria are removed from "active" status at least once every two years. This process was done in January 2024, and 2,156 providers were switched to "inactive". Their status can be returned to "active" at any time by contacting the MRTQ Registry team. It is anticipated that in fiscal year 2025, this process will be automated, so providers will be able to simply log-in to their Registry account to be made "active" again rather than having to contact the Registry team via email or phone.

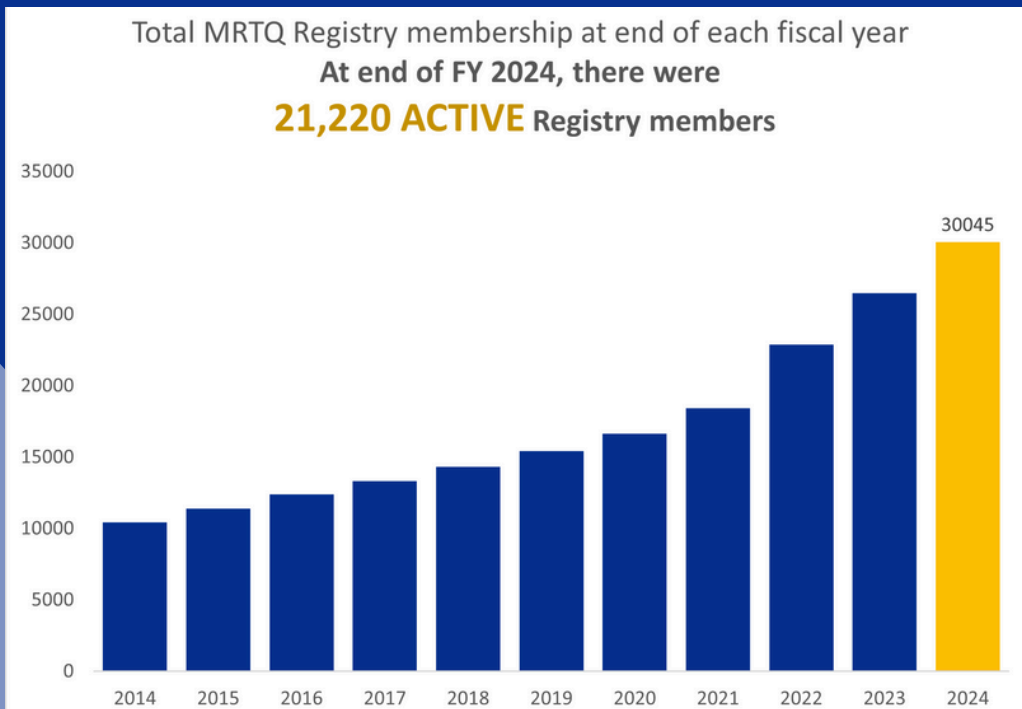


Chart 1. Total MRTQ Registry membership count at the end of each fiscal year for the last 10 years.

MRTQ is the statewide awarding body for the Certified Early Childhood Assistant (CECA) credential, and these credential applications are processed by the MRTQ Registry team. In fiscal year 2024, 60 CECA's were awarded to graduating high school students who completed Early Childhood Education CTE programs and met testing and portfolio requirements, representing about a 36% increase in applicants from FY 2023. Attainment of the CECA credential allows these students to begin at a Level 3 on the Direct Care Career Lattice as they enter employment in the field of early care and education.

Based on feedback from providers and with confirmation from the Licensing Team at OCFS, the MRTQ Registry Team updated the way the "Active Staff Training" page on the Registry displays completions of the required health and safety training. The display changed from a "yes" or "no" indicator for "Current Year H&S Renewal" to a date column indicating the date of completion for each provider's most recent health and safety training – either Health & Safety Orientation or Annual Renewal of Health & Safety.

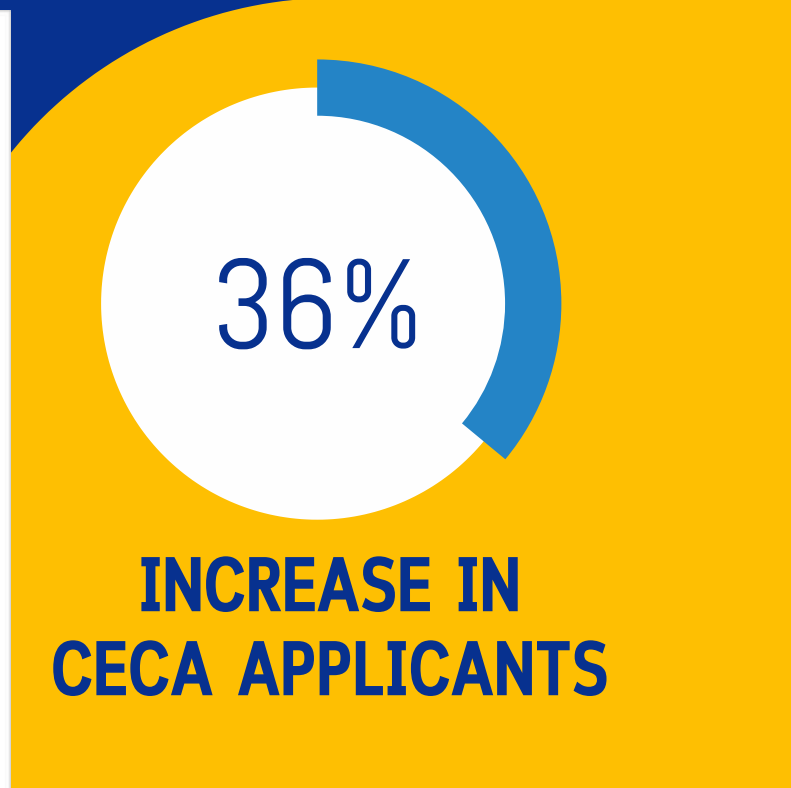
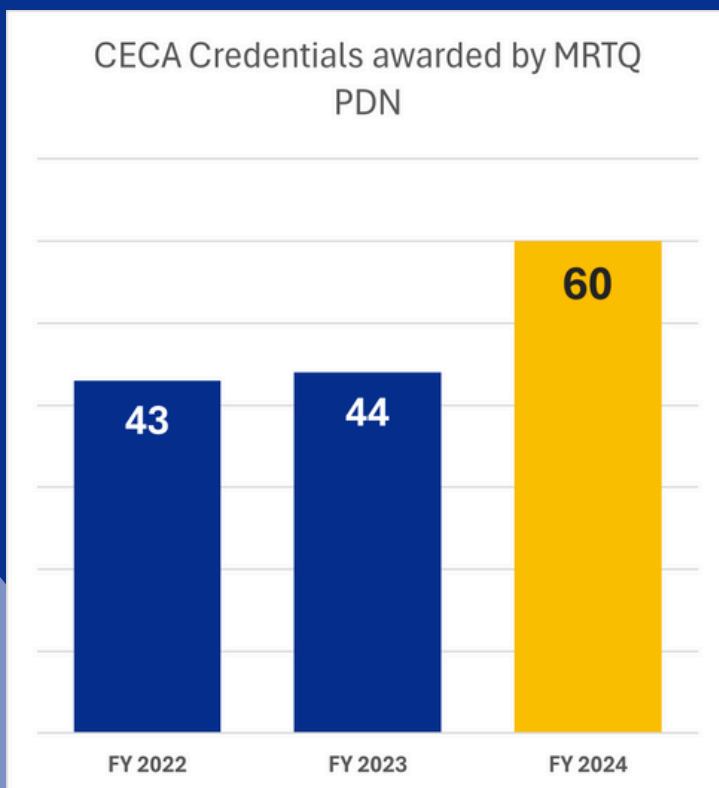
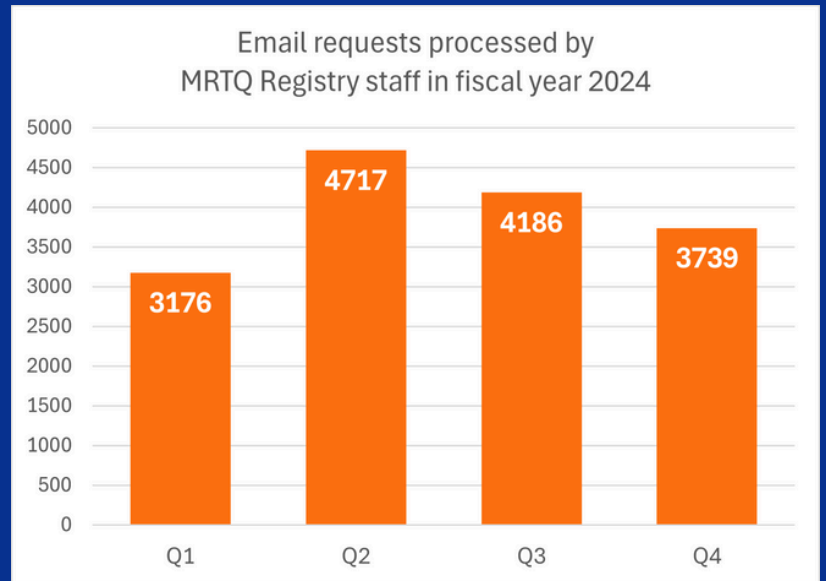


Chart 2. Number of CECA Credentials awarded by MRTQ PDN over the last three fiscal years

With the introduction of the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Salary Supplement program by OCFS, the MRTQ Registry experienced an influx of providers submitting education and training records to have their lattice level accurately reflect their experience and training. In addition, we received a large volume of email and phone calls from providers and Directors with questions about

Chart 3. Email requests processed by MRTQ Registry staff in fiscal year 2024



which career lattice and job titles qualified themselves and their staff for the salary supplement. The Registry Team worked through over 4,000 email requests in the quarters following the start of the wage supplement program. Since the roll-out of the wage supplement program, there has been about a 15% decrease of members in Level 0 in the Direct Care Career Lattice, which is excluded from the wage supplement.

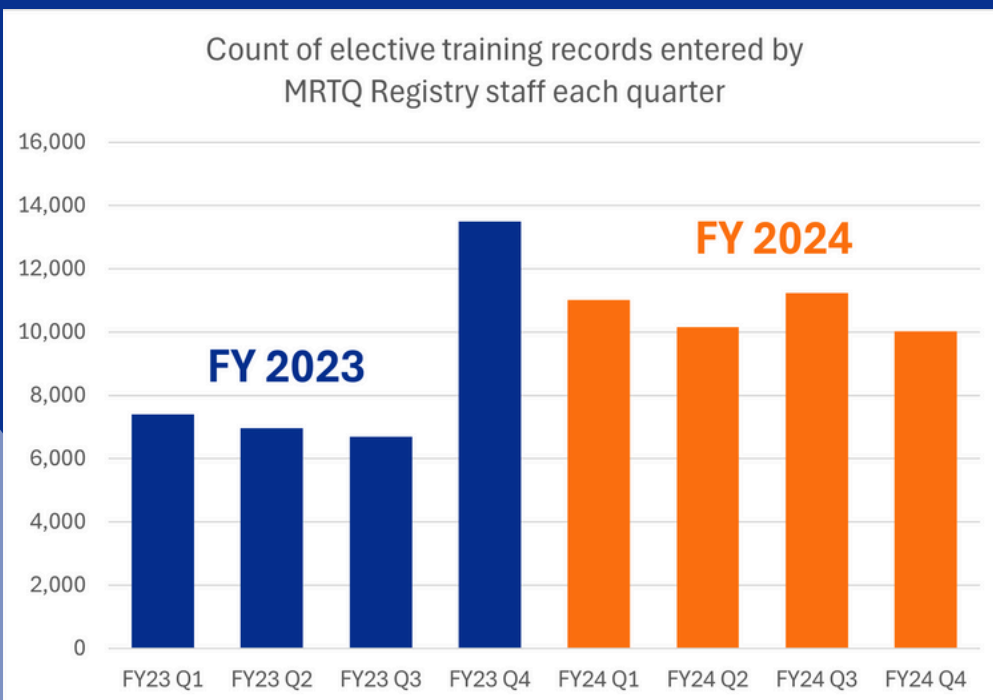


Chart 4. Count of elective training records entered by MRTQ Registry staff each quarter during FY 23 and FY 24

MRTQ TRAINING

During the last fiscal year, MRTQ Training released new on-demand training, **What the Tech!?** (2 hours), **Quality Improvement Toolkit: Family Child Care or Small Facility** (6 hours), and **Quality Improvement Toolkit: Center-Based or Out-of-School Time** (6 hours). We released full updates to the **Health and Safety On-Demand Training** with a complete rewrite of the **Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning module** and the addition of the **Overview of Child Development module**. Throughout the winter we completed the curriculum and development for the on-demand version of the **P-MELDS** for launch in **July 2024**.

While we had more providers sign up for training this past year, we also saw an increase in those who completed training. **97.5% of providers who registered for training completed it, compared to 97.2% of providers in FY22/23. In FY23/24, MRTQ had 20,028 completed training registrations, for both facilitated and on-demand training compared to 13,809 in FY22/23.** This includes providers who may have registered and completed more than one training.

In the last year MRTQ offered **113 facilitated trainings**, (compared to 95 in the previous year) which included 24 separate deliveries of Infant Toddler MELDS, as well as 20 deliveries of Maine's Early Learning and Development Standards. **We saw training engagement increase across the board this year**, as providers were committed to their professional development.



now
20,028

In **FY 23/24** MRTQ had 20,028 completed training registrations. **97.5%** of these **20,028** successfully completed their trainings.

then
13,809

In **FY 22/23** MRTQ had 13,809 completed training registrations. **97.2%** of these **13,809** successfully completed their trainings.



TRAINING TESTIMONIALS

Participant feedback about MRTQ Trainers:

"The people that teach the courses at MRTQ are very accommodating and helpful when you need support. I appreciate that as we are all busy and things pop up."

Participant feedback about MELDS training:

"I LOVE the variety of courses and formats for training that are available. I truly feel supported by the ability to obtain consultation to implement this training. There are live people to talk to about concerns and I love that."

Participant feedback about training offerings:

"I like that you are offering more of the same classes so you don't have to wait so long to take the training you want."

Participant feedback about support for new facility owners:

"I feel that they offer an entire multitude of classes, and nothing seems to be left out. It's been a great resource for me as a brand new facility owner who is getting ready to open. The support is there when you need them, and they respond in a very timely manner."

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Q4 Highlights

This final quarter for FY 2024 has seen an **uptick in level 3 consultation** (see Chart 5 below). Supporting programs in their engagement with **Rising Stars for ME** (RSM), Maine's Quality Rating and Improvement System, along with participation in **Quality Initiative Awards** related to moving up Maine's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) has prompted more opportunities to provide intensified TA with just one or two visits with programs. **District Coordinators** have been instrumental in helping programs navigate the RSM portal, identify goals, and form action steps to make gains across the standards resulting in a higher star level.

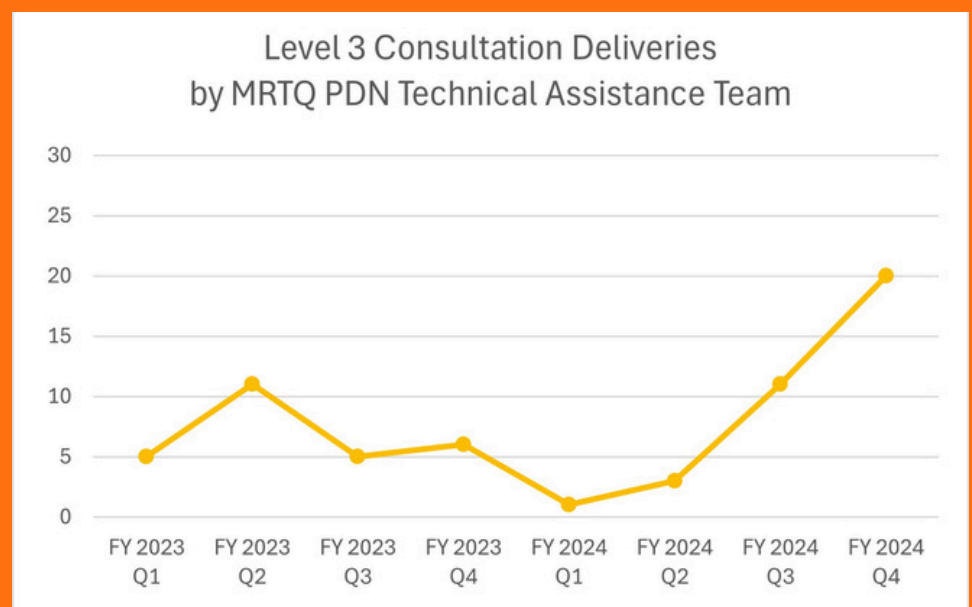


Chart 5. Graph showing an uptick in level 3 consultation deliveries by MRTQ PDN TA Team in FY 2024 in comparison to FY 2023

District Coordinators at the Table

This quarter we are highlighting an important aspect of the DC role – community, regional, and national collaborations. Numerous agencies, organizations, and partnerships have benefited from relationships with MRTQ PDN, frequently through our District Coordinators.

- *Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP)*
- *Down East Community Partners*
- *Early Childhood Consultation Partnership*
- *Family Child Care Association of Maine*
- *First 4 ME*
- *Healthy Eating Active Learning (HEAL)*
- *Help Me Grow*
- *Kennebec Valley Community Action Program (KVCAP)*
- *Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC)*
- *Maine Children's Trust, and Child Abuse and Neglect Councils*
- *Maine ECO*
- *National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*
- *National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)*
- *Starting Strong*
- *United Way of York County*

District Coordinators **Theresa Fisk** (Washington and Aroostook Counties) and **Tammy Dwyer** (York County) have been instrumental in coordinating ECE conferences in their regions. These professional development opportunities offered in hometown communities have been hugely successful in engaging early childhood professionals from across settings.



Theresa Fisk



Tammy Dwyer

Peer to Peer Networks

Communities of Practice – 53 CoPs with 403 attendees

PLCs – 5 offerings with 57 attendees

Cohorts (see credentials for more data)

NAEYC – 5 programs are currently participating in a cohort

COA- no new or renewing programs during this quarter

NAFCC -4 cohorts are being offered with a total of 9 programs participating

Consultation

District Coordinators and our **CCIDS** partners provide onsite and virtual consultation related to quality practices and inclusion that support early childhood and out-of-school time programs and providers through a collaborative process to achieve identified goals.

Level 4 is the most intensive level of consultation that MRTQ PDN provides which includes the development of a detailed plan outlining specific activities to meet desired outcomes. **37 programs engaged in level 4 TA with a total of 68 deliveries.**

Level 3 is a **targeted, one-time consultation** provided onsite or virtually specific to quality improvement related to *Rising Stars for ME* and the quality improvement initiatives offered through MRTQ PDN. **20 Deliveries**

Phone/Email (Level 1 and 2) technical assistance provides readily available resources and or connections to partner agencies or organizations. **334 contacts.** See **Chart 6** for the annual count of contacts.

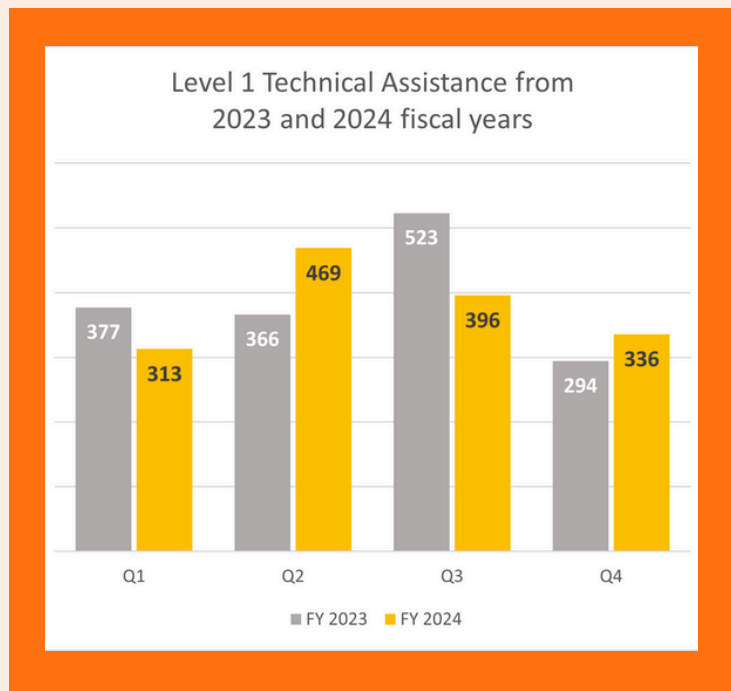


Chart 6. Number of contacts receiving Level 1 TA during FY 2024 and FY 2023 for comparison

Child Care Health Coordinator

This year, the **MRTQ Core Knowledge curriculum** related to **health and safety** was successfully reviewed and updated, ensuring compliance with the latest public health recommendations. The curriculum was updated with relevant information and recommended evidence-based practices, **including the inclusion of children with diagnosed healthcare needs, and readiness and responsiveness to public health emergencies.**

Revising this information will significantly enhance the overall safety of our child care environments.

A monthly **Community of Practice for Child Care Health Consultants** (CCHCs) took place over Zoom so that it was accessible for CCHCs statewide. During our time together we covered such topics as assisting with the creation of health policies and procedures, hygiene practices, emergency procedures and communicating with child care providers.

By creating and disseminating **a survey** to child care providers and CCHCs to better understand their needs, Natasha McCrum, *MRTQ PDN's Statewide Child Care Health Coordinator*, was able to establish **communication channels with CCHCs and child care providers.** This has led to the opportunity to provide updates on health policies and guidelines, provide guidance when concerns arise, and has begun to strengthen trust and cooperation between the Statewide Child Care Health Coordinator, Child Care Health Consultants, and child care providers.



Natasha McCrum



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TESTIMONIALS



Feedback from Active Supervision PLC Participant:

"Risky play has been a process for me to become comfortable with, but I'm getting better and see the benefits to the children."

Feedback from Active Supervision PLC Participant:

After this [PLC], what I would take away is to try different ways how to supervise the children during active play. For example, during transitions, singing songs, the buddy system (holding a friend's hand), jumping or crab walking down the ramp to the outside, etc. Also sharing this training with my center... and try to apply to my center for future teachers



CREDENTIALS

Credentials Awarded in Q4

Maine Director Credential

5 awards
1 renewal

Maine Infant Toddler Credential

9 awards
4 renewals

Maine Inclusion Credential

1 award

Maine Technical Assistance Credential

4 renewals

The Director and Infant Toddler Credentials had significant increase in award numbers in FY24

Credentials Awarded FY23 vs. FY24

Credential	FY23	FY24
Director	5	13
Infant Toddler	6	15
Inclusion	0	1
Family Child Care	1	1
Technical Assistance	4	4
Youth Development	0	0

Credential Cohorts in Q4

Director Credential Cohort began in April with 11 members

Infant Toddler Credential Cohort began in April with 10 members

Technical Assistance Credential Cohort began in April with 4 members

Alternative Pathways for Credential Training

The Maine Credentials are developed in alignment with the required MRTQ PDN training for each credential. Many practitioners have engaged in a variety of professional development activities that may also align with the competencies of the MRTQ PDN credentials. In response, MRTQ PDN has developed an **Alternative Credential Pathway** process for which practitioners may apply. As part of the process to waive any of the required MRTQ PDN credential training, the alternative training, coursework, classes and/or experience must be provided by an approved training organization or accredited institute of higher education and fully meet the learning objectives and competencies for which an Alternative Pathway is being requested. There was 1 request processed this quarter.



APPRENTICESHIP

Q4 Highlights



Group 1 Apprentices:

Four apprentices were awarded a **Maine Infant Toddler Credential** and two are continuing to participate in the **Maine Infant Toddler Credential Cohort**.

Group 2 Apprentices:

Two apprentices are pursuing their **Preschool CDA** and six are pursuing their **Maine Infant Toddler Credential**.

Six **Mentors** support the apprentices on the job and meet monthly with the *Coordinator of Apprenticeship and Credential Programs*.

Recruitment

In June, four Information Sessions were held regarding the application of new Sponsoring Employers, Registered Apprentices, and Mentors to begin in the Fall of 2024. **A new requirement** for becoming a permanent Intermediary Sponsor of the Registered Apprenticeship Program was the development of an **Affirmative Action Plan**. As a result of this plan, **information was sent out to 92 different people and agencies**, many from underrepresented groups.



Bank Street ECE Action Research Fellowship



In partnership with **CCIDS**, the MRTQ Apprenticeship Program was one of ten projects selected nationwide to participate in the inaugural cohort of the *Apprenticeship Action ECE Research Fellowship*, administered by **Bank Street College of Education** and **Learning Starts at Birth**. As fellows, our team applied a human-centered design framework and engaged in research that incorporated a new innovative idea into our apprenticeship program.

The team researched how we can improve access, connection, and success in the ECE apprenticeship program for all Maine residents. The results will be used to inform the development of a **pre-apprenticeship model** that could be designed to recruit new people into the ECE field using a **universal design** lens. We conducted focus groups, held interviews, and disseminated a survey to guide our work. As part of this project, MRTQ PDN's **Lori Moses**, the *Coordinator of Apprenticeship and Credential Programs* presented on a panel with other Fellows at the **T.E.A.C.H. conference** in North Carolina. Additionally, Lori was joined by her **CCIDS** partner, **Marnie Morneault**, *DEIB Research Associate*, to present a workshop regarding our project at the **Early Care and Education Pathways to Success** (ECEPTS) apprenticeship conference in California.

Image 1. Lori Moses, MRTQ PDN Coordinator of Apprenticeship and Credential Programs, at the **T.E.A.C.H.** conference in January 2024.



CHILD CARE CHOICES

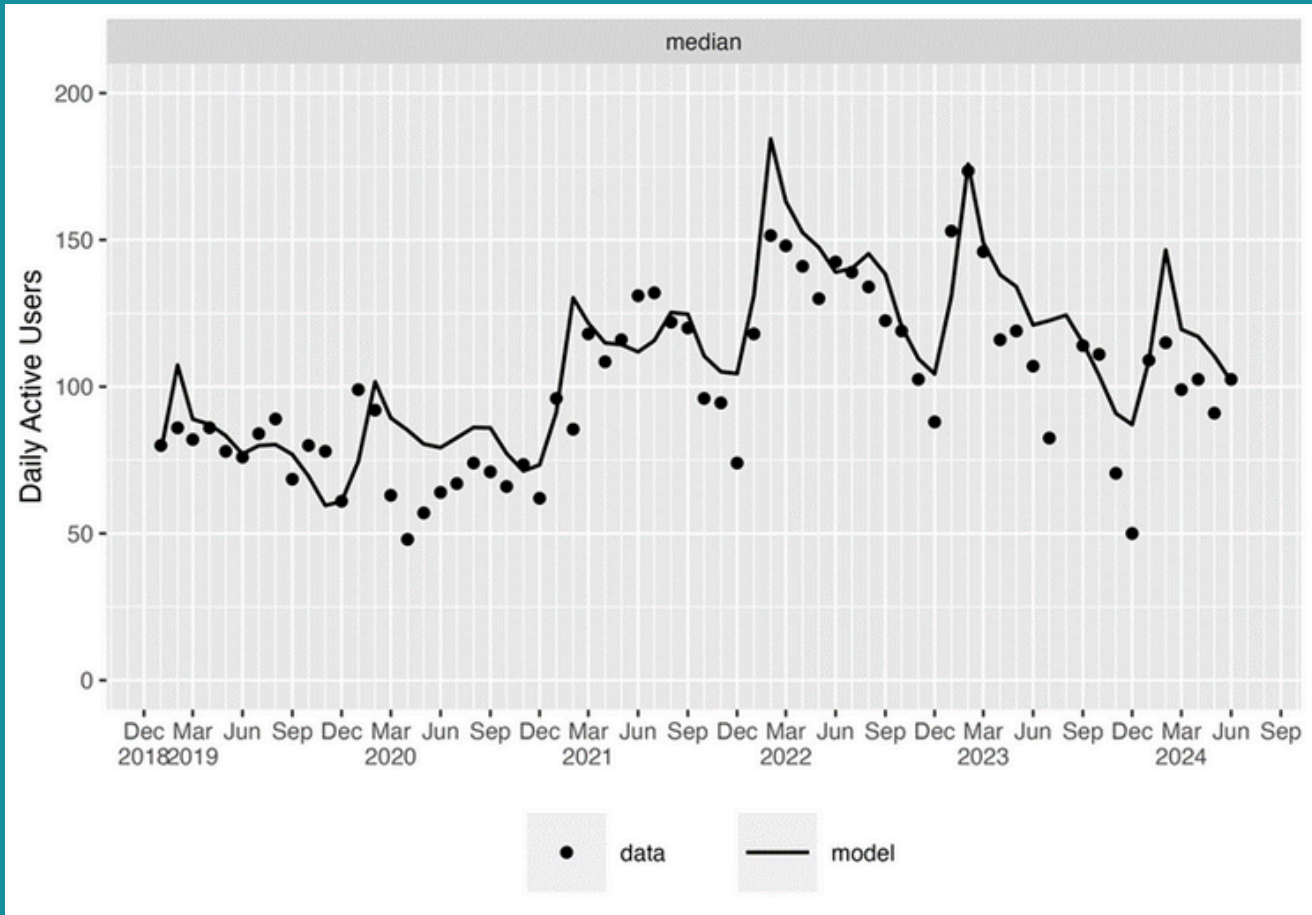


Chart 7. Median daily traffic (dots) and statistical model for summary and projections (line) by month starting Jan 1, 2019.

Traffic Report for Year Ending 06/30/2024

After two years of non-bot activity being elevated by 67% over pre-pandemic levels, non-bot activity in state FY 2024 was **elevated by 41%** over pre-pandemic levels.



Median daily users entered our analysis starting in quarter ending 10/31/2023 in order to ignore what may be bot-driven activity and to feed a statistical model for projections and data summary (**Chart 7**).

The model allows us to summarize estimated non-bot activity by time period (**Chart 8**). This model suggests that, after two years (SFYs 2022 and 2023) of traffic being elevated by 67% over pre-pandemic levels (SFYs 2016, 2017, 2018), in SFY 2024 traffic was **elevated over pre-pandemic levels by 41%**

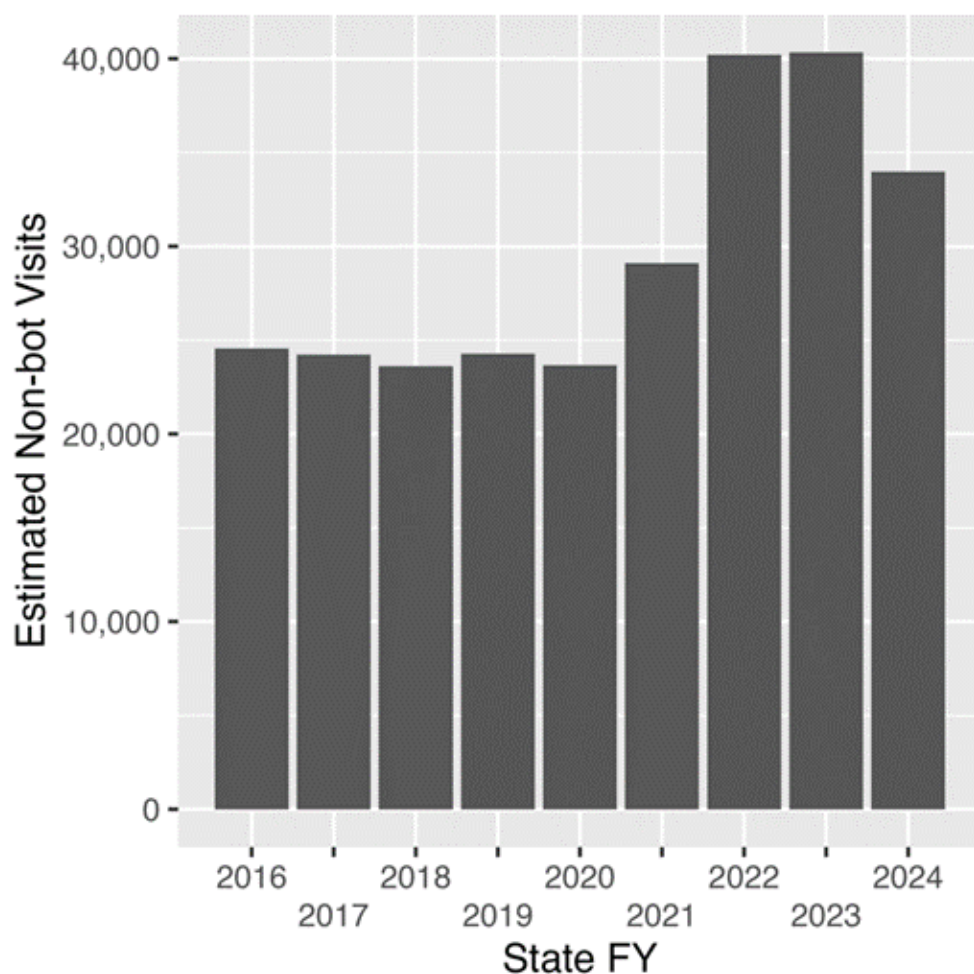


Chart 8.
Site visits by state fiscal year, estimated from a statistical model.

RISING STARS FOR ME



FY24 concluded the first full year of *Rising Stars for ME* implementation. The following data provides a baseline for future analysis of Star rating movement.

Rising Stars for ME Enrollment, Facilities

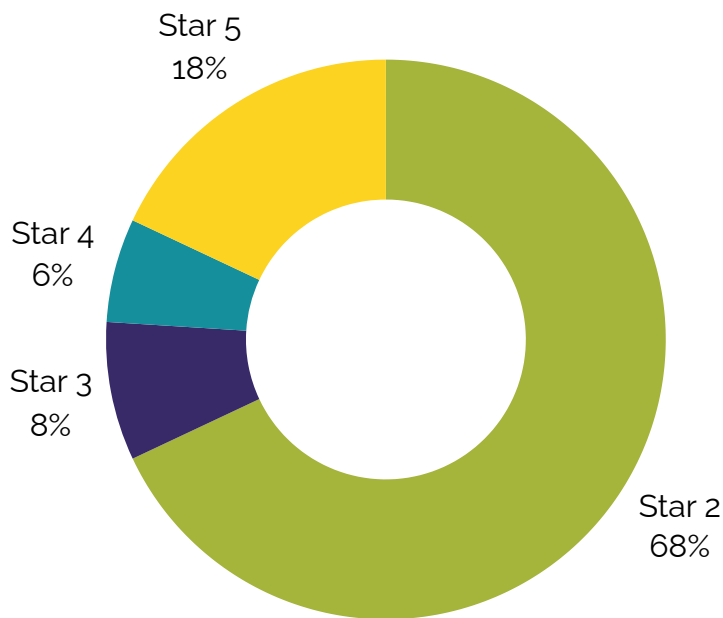


Chart 9. *Rising Stars for ME enrollment in FY24 for facilities*

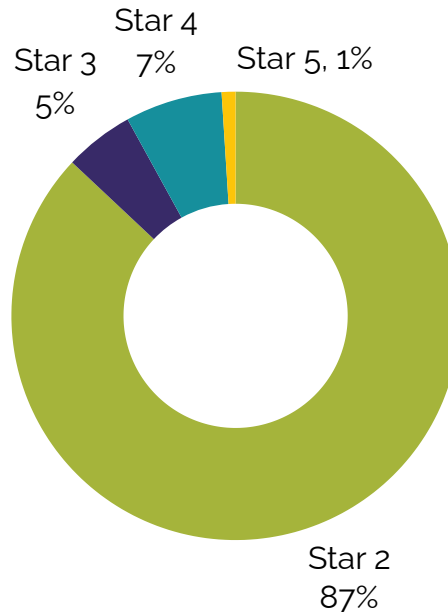
Current Rising Stars Enrollment Numbers: Facilities/Centers

Note: *Charts are inclusive of nursery schools, but do not include Star 1 (license exempt) providers.*

STAR 2	535
STAR 3	64
STAR 4	51
STAR 5	139

Chart 10. Rising Stars for ME enrollment in FY24 for family child care.

Rising Stars for ME Enrollment, Family Child Care



Current Rising Stars Enrollment Numbers: Family Child Care

Note: Charts are inclusive of nursery schools, but do not include Star 1 (license exempt) providers.

STAR 2	571
STAR 3	32
STAR 4	44
STAR 5	7

Accomplishments | FY24:

- The *Rising Stars for ME* application now saves certain documentation in the E-Portfolio so programs do not have to re-upload evidence that has not changed (e.g. job descriptions or curriculum framework).
- Improvements to the Recommendations page of the *Rising Stars for ME* application facilitate programs applying for QIAs.
- On-site monitoring began in late 2023.

Goals | FY25:

- Implement the improved Program Profile in Child Care Choices showing additional program information.
- Plan for validation study.



QUALITY INITIATIVES

FY 24 Quality Improvement Awards (QIA) and Mini-Grants

Quality Improvement Awards and Mini-Grants were offered to early childhood and out-of-school time programs. The goal of this funding is to support and reward programs for making quality changes and increasing their status on the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS, *Rising Stars for ME*).



FY 23 | *Quality Improvement Awards and Mini-Grants for Quality for ME: \$22,700*

FY 24 | *Quality Improvement Awards (QIAs) for Rising Stars for ME: \$143,234*

Q4 Highlights

- **30 programs** have engaged in the QIA process. Of these,
 - 26 are programs working to increase their Star rating from a 2 to a 3
 - 2 are programs working to increase their Star rating from a 3 to a 4
 - 1 program is working toward Star 5
- **22 Programs** have had their funding request approved
 - Initial funding approved: \$54,178.
 - Anticipated cash payments: \$69,000.
- **3 Programs have successfully increased their Star rating** after being provided funding
- At least **25 additional programs** have shown interest in preparing to submit a Quality Improvement Plan

Funding Use

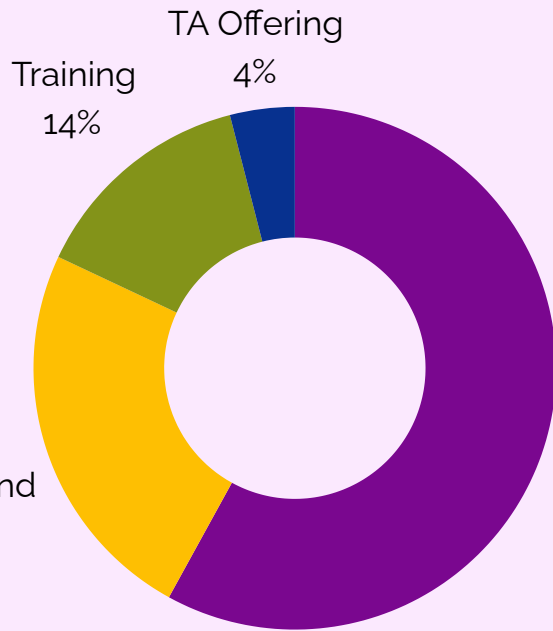


Chart 11. The percentages of QIA funding used by programs, as defined by use type. The majority of QIA funding is being put toward materials, equipment, and supplies.

FY24 | Credential Quality Improvement Awards: **\$20,150**

In Maine State Fiscal Year 2024, **30 individuals** received a Quality Improvement Award for earning a Maine Credential totaling \$20,150. See below for the breakdown by credential type.

11

Director

0

Youth Development

1

Family Child Care

1

Inclusion

13

Infant Toddler

4

Technical Assistance

QUALITY INITIATIVE FUNDED TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

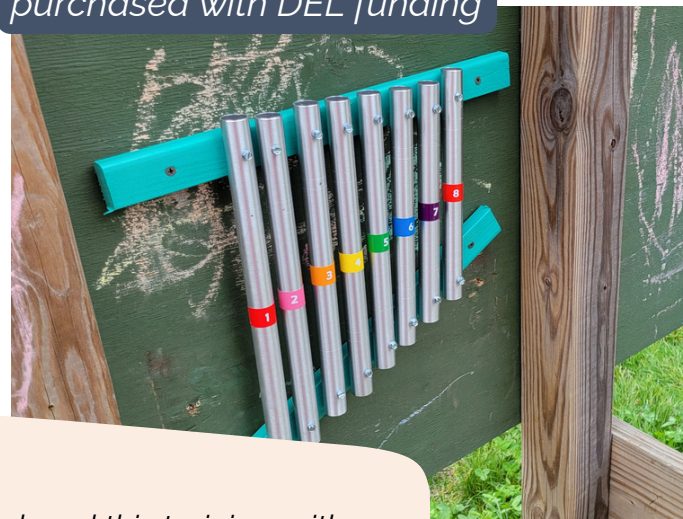
Designing Early Learning: Curriculum and Assessment in Preschool (DEL): \$62,561

Designing Early Learning was offered 3 times during State Fiscal Year 2024. This is a 10-module online training with 3 Professional Learning Community (PLC) Meetings via Zoom. Participants who completed the 10 modules and attended the 3 Zoom sessions received a Quality Improvement **Mini-Grant** of up to **\$1500** to purchase materials and items related to curriculum or assessment. In state fiscal year 2024, MRTQ PDN processed 40 QIAs for DEL, totaling \$62,560.58

Image 2. Garden bed purchased with DEL funding



Image 3. Outdoor music area purchased with DEL funding



"It was a great course. It helped me to remember things I had stopped doing for one reason or another and now am doing again. Thank you for this opportunity!"

"I really loved this training, with or without the grant opportunity. There were so many wonderful ideas and the activities and discussions really made me stop and consider ways to improve the quality of our curriculum offerings."

Strengthening Business Practices for Child Care Programs (SBP): \$34,020

SBP was offered two times during State Fiscal Year 2024. This 4 Module training is offered via Zoom only and has added sessions dedicated to Maine resources. Guest speakers discussed the Child Care Affordability Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Department of Labor information, and Rising Stars for ME, just to name a few. Participants who completed the SBP training received a Quality Improvement Award of a Dell laptop with Microsoft operating system and Office software.

"The laptop has allowed me to access curriculum materials with ease, streamline income and expense tracking with a spreadsheet, and much more."

"One of my big goals in being awarded this laptop was to streamline our onboarding process. I use the laptop for everything from recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and managing staff information."



GO NAPSACC



Go NAPSACC is a free online tool that provides programs with a resource for making changes in their physical activity, nutrition practices, and environment. Programs can use this tool to complete a self-assessment, create an action plan, and find resources and professional development to support the identified changes.

Go NAPSACC is a recommended tool for **helping programs meet Standard 7 on Rising Stars for ME**. Programs can use the tool to complete an annual nutrition/physical activity baseline self-assessment and then develop and implement an action plan.



In State Fiscal Year 2024, there has been an increase in the usage of Go NAPSACC with **55 newly registered programs** and a slight increase in the number of programs engaging in at least one activity. **The biggest increase this past year was the number of overall activities programs engaged in which jumped by 73%**. Future focus will be to encourage more programs to complete the full cycle of the Go NAPSACC change cycle.

The number of overall Go NAPSACC activities that programs engaged in jumped by 73%

73%

CCIDS

Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies

Partnership Narrative

As Maine's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) the **Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies** brings together the resources of the university and Maine communities to enhance the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Our statewide mission is met through interdisciplinary education, research and evaluation, community engagement, and dissemination of state-of-the-art information that reflects the guiding principles of inclusion, diversity, universal design and access, and social justice.

As a partner in the **Maine Roads to Quality Professional Network** (MRTQ PDN) **staff from CCIDS support each of the core components of the network.** In the area of **technical assistance**, CCIDS staff directly respond to requests from early care (ECE) and out of school time (OST) professionals to increase their knowledge and skill in providing high-quality inclusive care to meet the needs of the children and families in the multiple and diverse communities of Maine. In the area of **training** CCIDS staff collaborate with MRTQ PDN staff to embed principles of universal design (UD) within training offerings as well as support ECE and OST professionals to access content, participate in offerings and individualize responsiveness to meet the specific learning style needs of these professionals.



Center for Community Inclusion
and Disability Studies

CCIDS in Partnership with MRTQ: Technical Assistance

In FY24, CCIDS partnered with MRTQ District Coordinators in responding to **100 requests** for consultation focusing on inclusion (25 warmline consultations, and 75 Level 3 and 4 consultations). The numbers below highlight some of the most requested consultation types.

19

Inclusion,
Diversity, and
Equity focused
consultations

9

Accessibility &
Leadership
focused
consultations

8

Challenging
Behavior
focused
consultations

As part of the offerings to support the **Maine Registered ECE Apprenticeship**, CCIDS staff and the **MRTQ PDN Coordinator of Apprenticeship and Credential Programs** continue to leverage the knowledge and expertise of both partners towards increasing access for apprenticeship. (See the **Apprenticeship** section for more information). The partners continue to participate in **Bank Street's Apprenticeship Action Research Fellowship** to research a Pre-Apprenticeship pathway, with goals of dually understanding how apprenticeship can be a vehicle to mitigate the workforce crisis, as well as how to support providers to have the skills and resources to join the ECE workforce in a culturally responsive way.

Click to view: [ECEPTS \(Early Care and Education Pathways to Success\) 2024 Conference Presentation](#)



Shilo Goodhue

PDG PLC

7 Practitioners
5 Meetings

RSM PLC

20 Practitioners
8 Weeks

As part of the offerings to support the **Preschool Development Grant (PDB)**, CCIDS staff **Shilo Goodhue** partnered with an **MRTQ PDN District Coordinator** in facilitating a **professional learning community (PLC)** to support increased knowledge in and skill of ECE professionals to create inclusive care and education settings. Additionally, CCIDS partnered with MRTQ PDN District Coordinators to offer an ongoing PLC to support ECE and OST professionals in utilizing the **Rising Stars Inclusive Practices Checklist**.

CCIDS in Partnership with MRTQ: Training

As part of the offerings to support the **Preschool Development Grant**, CCIDS staff partnered with the **MRTQ Leadership and Training** team to support **50 ECE and OST** professionals to participate in the UMS Inclusive Education Prek-12 Microcredential. **Micro-credentials** are short, focused credentials that provide in-demand skills, know-how, and experience.

In addition to collaborating with the **MRTQ Training** team to ensure training content reflects principles of **universal design** and individualized access to training, CCIDS also presented the following workshops at statewide ECE and OST conferences:

Connecting ECE Birth through 8 Across the State - Resilience Through Reflective Practice | May 2024

Positive Youth Development Institute - Recognizing Diversity and Supporting Inclusion | September 2023

*This conference was organized by the PYDI, and in large part by our MRTQ partner, **The Maine Afterschool Network**.*



CCIDS in Partnership with MRTQ: Individualized Support

For FY 2023-2024, CCIDS partnered with MRTQ PDN staff to provide **33**

Individualized Supports to providers.

Support areas of focus included barriers related to language, ability, and structural components of offerings.

100% of people who engaged in the individualized support process followed through to completion or have a plan for completion.



CCIDS : Connected Work Outside of MRTQ PDN

CCIDS staff serve on state, regional and national committees in support of expanding access for children with disabilities and their families and increasing high quality inclusive practices. The following represent CCIDS staff contributions:

Council for Exceptional Children Division of Early Childhood Equity,
Inclusion and Social Justice Subcommittee representation - J.Maeverde
Leading Early Learning Advisory Committee - J.Maeverde
Interagency Coordinating Council-(ICC)-Chair- M.Morneault
Lend Family Discipline Network-LEND - M.Morneault
LEND Family Discipline Network-LEND - M.Morneault

CCIDS staff presented a poster session at the Council for Exceptional Children National Conference focusing on the intersection of the UMS Inclusive Education Prek-12 Microcredential and Maine Inclusion Credential.

MAINE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

Our Focus

The Maine Afterschool Network serves Maine's youth, families, and communities.



HAPPY



SAFE



STABLE



HEALTHY

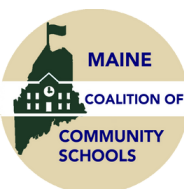
Our Projects

The Maine Afterschool Network is proud to leverage project funding to help support Maine's Out-of-School-Time field.

\$467,000

**50 STATE
AFTERSCHOOL
NETWORK**

PYDI
POSITIVE YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



Out-of-School-Time
Career Exploration



NATIONAL
AfterSchool
ASSOCIATION STATE AFFILIATE

Supporting Maine OST Programs

Program Quality

- Created Mizzen Education & Career Exploration PLC
- Trained Dimensions of Success Observers
- Launched Maine STEM Career Learning Portal

Child Nutrition

- Oakhurst Afterschool Meals Grants
- CACFP
- Afterschool and Summer Meals

Advancing Program Advocacy

- Lights ON! Afterschool
- National Summer Learning Week
- Afterschool Professionals Appreciation Week
- Community Schools Coordinator Appreciation Week
- I LOVE Afterschool

Leveraging State and National Networks

- 50 Statewide Afterschool Network
- Afterschool Alliance
- Count ME In
- Educate Maine OST Hubs
- Full Plates Full Potential
- Let's Go 5210
- Maine Roads to Quality
- Maine Resilience Building Network
- Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance
- National Afterschool Association
- National Summer Learning Association

Our Reach

With help from our partners, we have an estimated monthly reach of **20,000** youth-serving professionals.

20K

Our Funders



MAINE

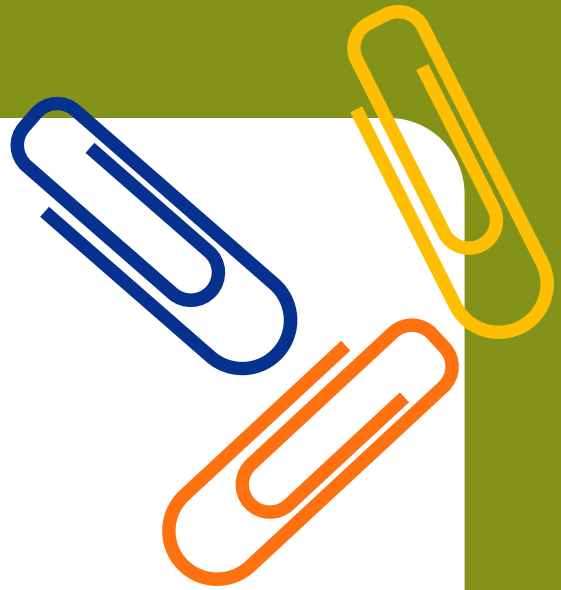
Afterschool Network

In FY24, we are proud to celebrate 20 years of work

APPENDIX

Contents

*a. MTQ PDN Professional
Development Needs Assessment*



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Overview

Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (MRTQ PDN) conducts a biennial Professional Development Needs Assessment to better understand the training, technical assistance, and overall needs of early childhood education (ECE) and out-of-school time (OST) professionals in the state of Maine. The Needs Assessment is conducted via an electronic survey which is disseminated across several platforms during the month of April. In 2024, information and the link to the survey was shared with providers weekly in the SHORTcuts newsletter; via several MRTQ PDN social media posts that were further shared by MAEYC, FCCAM, and other ECE organizations in Maine; and shared via the OCFS listserv that reaches providers across the state. A final push for respondents was done in person at the Statewide ECE Conference in Portland the first weekend in May.

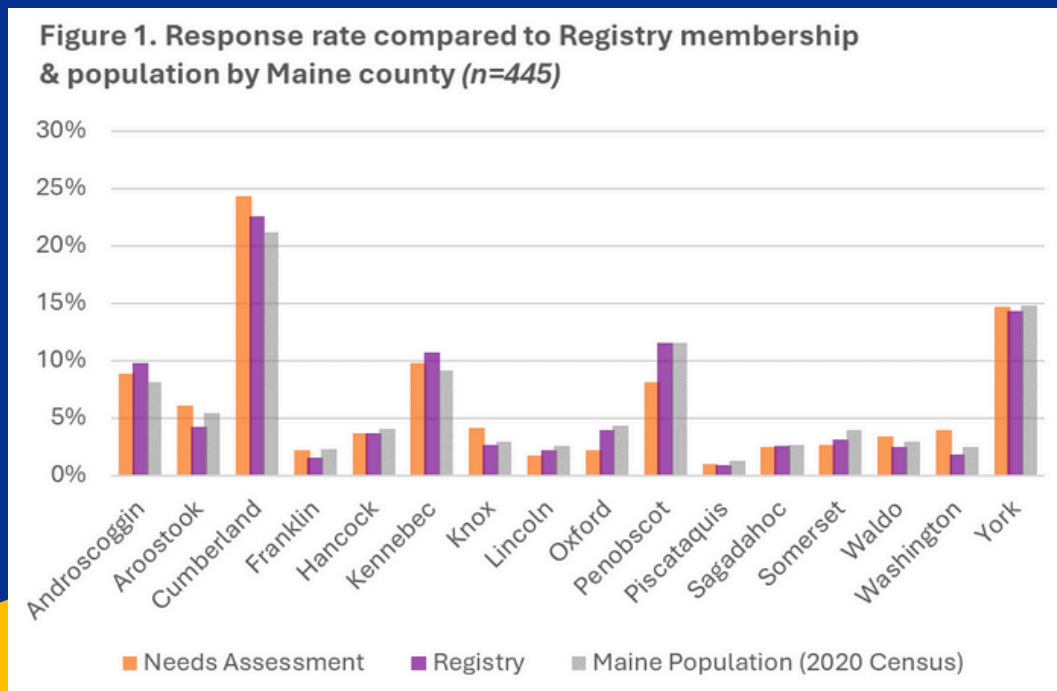
The Professional Development Needs Assessment survey consisted of seven sections which were compiled and reviewed by MRTQ PDN staff, MRTQ PDN Advisory Council, and state partners.

- Work setting, role and MRTQ Registry membership - 4 questions
- Facility information (for Directors and Owners only) - 10 questions
- Technical Assistance - 14 questions
- Peer to Peer Networks -5 questions
- Training - 8 questions
- MRTQ communications and customer service - 6 questions
- Demographic information - 11 questions

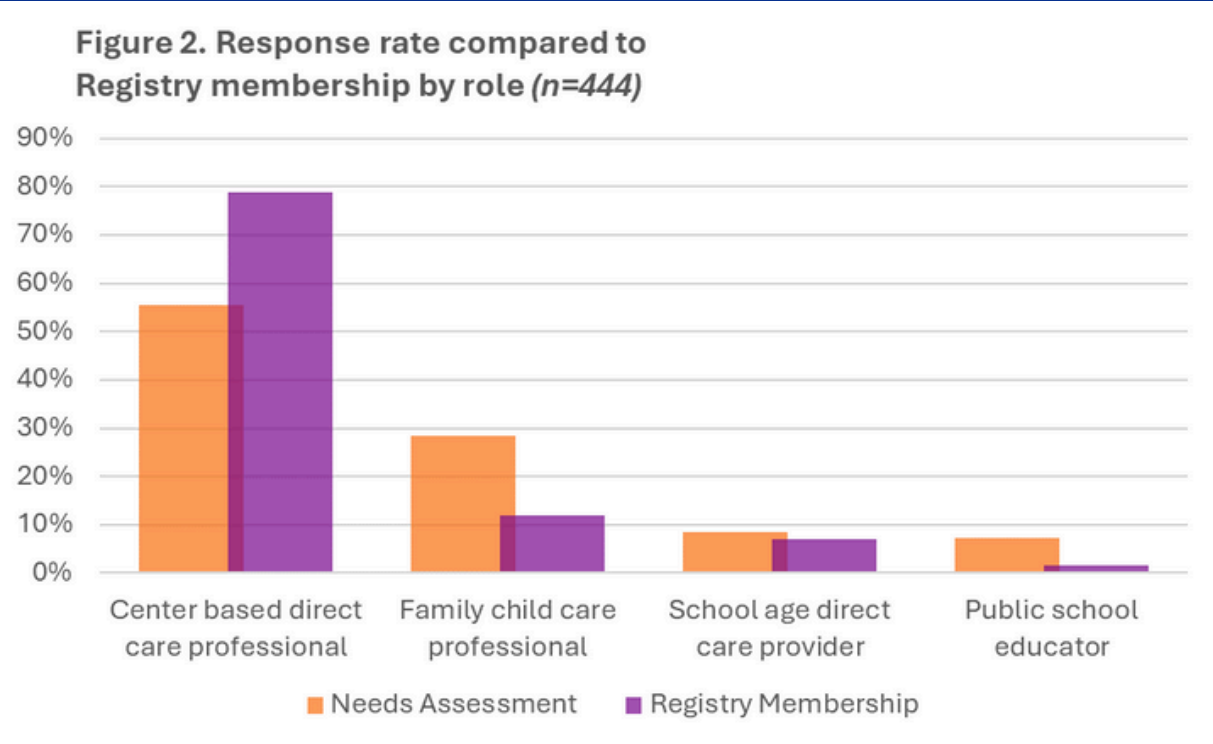
The Professional Development Needs Assessment survey consisted of seven sections which were compiled and reviewed by MRTQ PDN staff, MRTQ PDN Advisory Council, and state partners. Respondents spent an average of 19 minutes completing the survey. MRTQ PDN received 645 responses, however only 445 met the required threshold of sixty percent or more complete to be used towards analysis in this report. Of these 445 respondents, 91% fully completed the survey. The 2024 Needs Assessment survey was professionally translated into five languages: Arabic, French, Portuguese, Somali, and Spanish. Two respondents took the complete survey in Spanish, and one took the complete survey in Arabic. It is not possible to track respondents who moved back and forth between English and other languages on individual survey pages as users can move between languages throughout the survey.

THE RESPONDENTS

Respondents represented Maine's 16 counties and the response rate was closely aligned with Maine's population and the breakdown of Registry membership from each county (Figure 1). Cumberland and York counties represented the largest proportion of responses and Piscataquis County represented the smallest.



Center-based direct care professionals were the largest group of respondents, but proportional to Registry membership were less likely than family child care professionals to complete the needs assessment (Figure 2).



Directors and owners represented over 50% of responses, and Lead Teachers and Assistant Teachers represented an additional 30% (Table 1). Women represented 98% of responses, with non-binary individuals and men representing 1% each of respondents (n=398). Race/ethnicity of respondents was predominately white (93%), with 1% each for American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, and Hispanic or Latino. Of the total 445 responses, 97.3% were Registry Members.

Table 1. *Percent of responses for each position title (n=444)*

ROLE	PERCENT
Program director or coordinator	27.6%
Family child care owner/operator	25.1%
Lead teacher	19.3%
Assistant teacher	10.6%
Education technician (Ed Tech)	4.5%
Assistant director	3.3%
Technical assistance provider/consultant or coach	2.8%
Family child care teacher or assistant	2.0%
Public preschool teacher	< 2%
Public preschool administrator	< 2%
Curriculum coordinator	< 2%
License exempt provider	< 2%

There were a variety of languages represented for respondents when asked which languages they use most commonly at work or at home. English was most popular (99%), followed by American Sign Language, French, and Spanish (Table 2). Some additional languages that were written in were Maltese, Italian, Hebrew, Korean, and German.

Table 2. *Languages spoken at work or at home (n=399)*

LANGUAGE	PERCENT
English	99%
American Sign Language (ASL)	5%
French	3%
Spanish	2%
Portuguese	1%
Lingala	1%
Passamaquoddy	1%

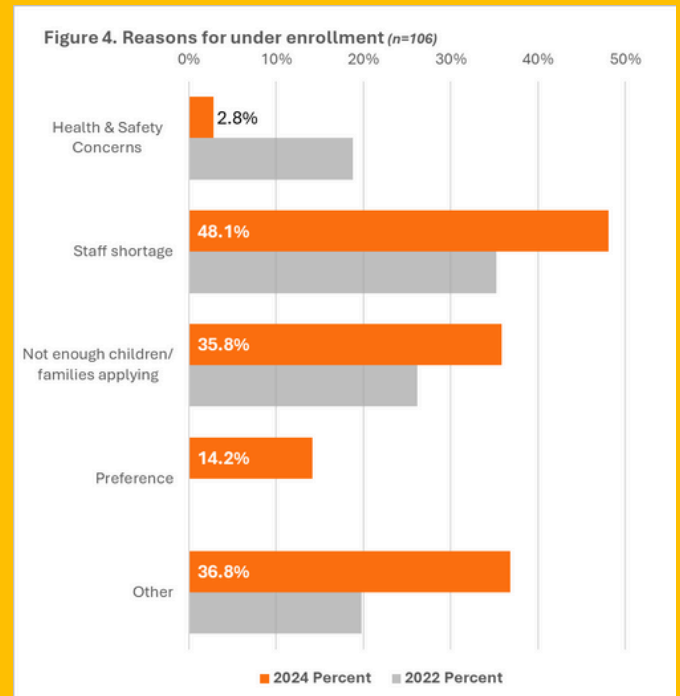
FACILITY INFORMATION

SETTING & ACCREDITATION

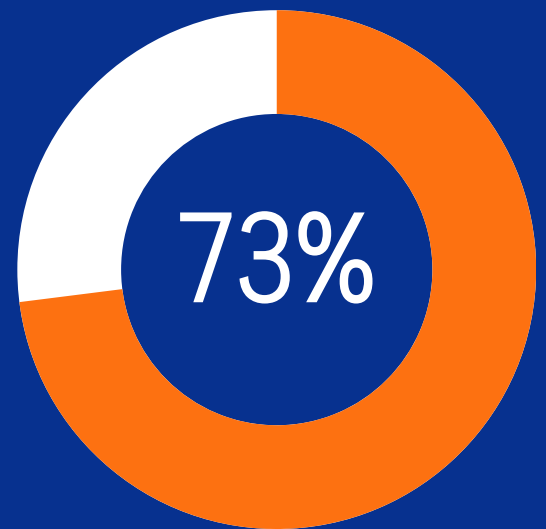
Center-based facilities represented the largest proportion of work setting for respondents (40%), with family child care the second most common (25%), school-age providers represented 7% (n=444). When directors and owners were asked if their programs were accredited, only 13% were, and 5% were in the process of becoming accredited (n=221). Of those who were accredited, the most common accrediting body was the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

CAPACITY & ENROLLMENT

Directors and owners were asked about their licensed capacity and if their current enrollment matched or fell short of that number. Over half of directors and owners (52%) were enrolled at capacity, while 48% were enrolled under capacity. When broken down by facility type, family child care programs were slightly less likely to be under enrolled (42%) (Figure 3). Reasons for being under-enrolled varied, but staff shortages represented one reason for nearly half of respondents (48%), a number that is up from the 2022 Needs Assessment where 35% of respondents reported that staff shortage was a reason for being under-enrolled (Figure 4).



Center-based programs reported staff shortages as the most common reason for being under-enrolled (73%), and the next most common reason was not having enough children[RF1] to fill spots (29%). Family child care owners were most likely to report the reason for under enrollment to be “other” (50%), and of those, many indicated preference. One provider said they were “happy with the number of kids I have,” another said “[I] do not want to take on any more.” Staff shortage was only an enrollment-related problem for 18% of family child care owners.

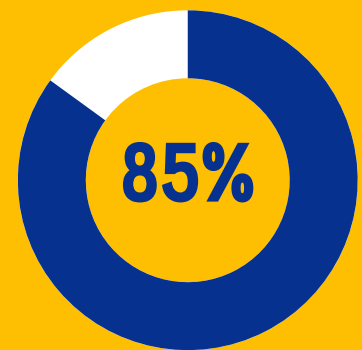


**CENTER-BASED PROGRAMS SAY
STAFF SHORTAGES ARE TOP
REASON FOR UNDER-ENROLLMENT**

TRAINING

MRTQ PDN continues to be an increasingly common place for respondents to access training. In the 12 months preceding the 2024 Needs Assessment survey, 85% of respondents had taken training from MRTQ, which is up from 74% in the 2022 Needs Assessment (Figure 5).

When asked why they may not have taken MRTQ training in the prior year, around a third said it was due to timing and personal schedule (Figure 6). About a quarter (26%) said they felt they had already completed all the relevant MRTQ training that was available. While some acknowledged barriers to training existing, a vast majority of respondents (85%) still felt satisfied with the training offered by MRTQ PDN.



**SATISFIED WITH
TRAINING OFFERED BY
MRTQ PDN**

Figure 5. Where respondents accessed training

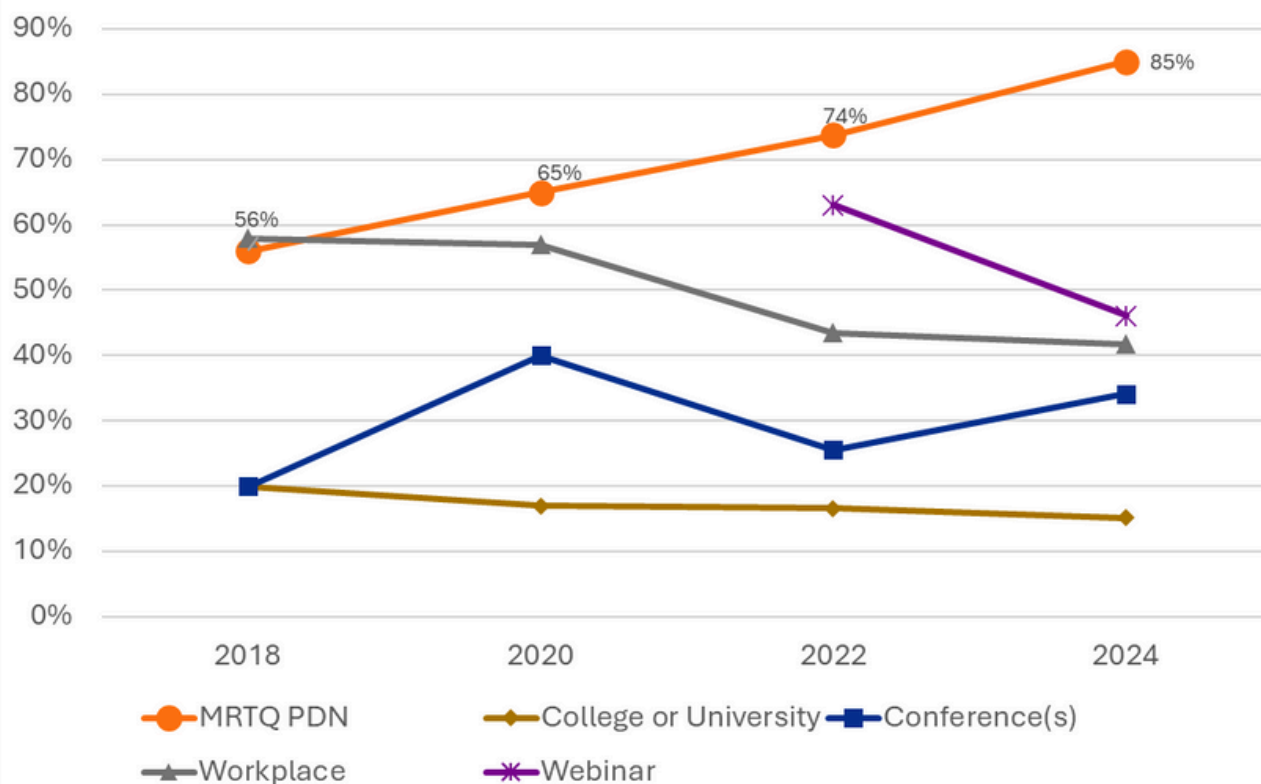
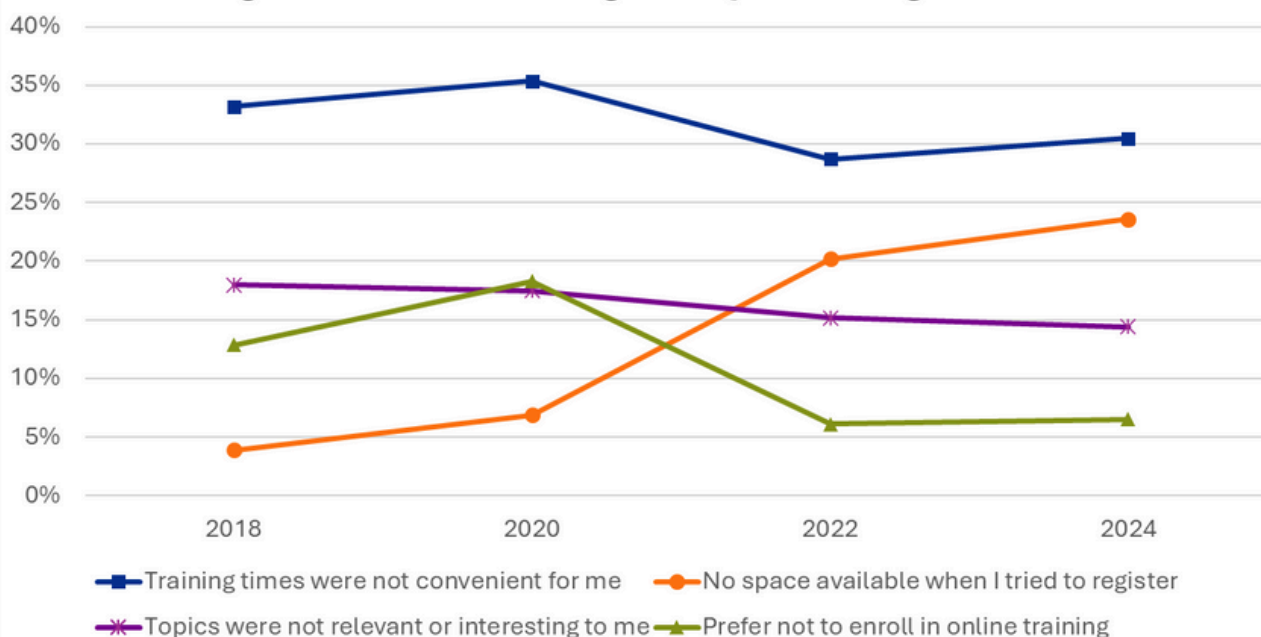
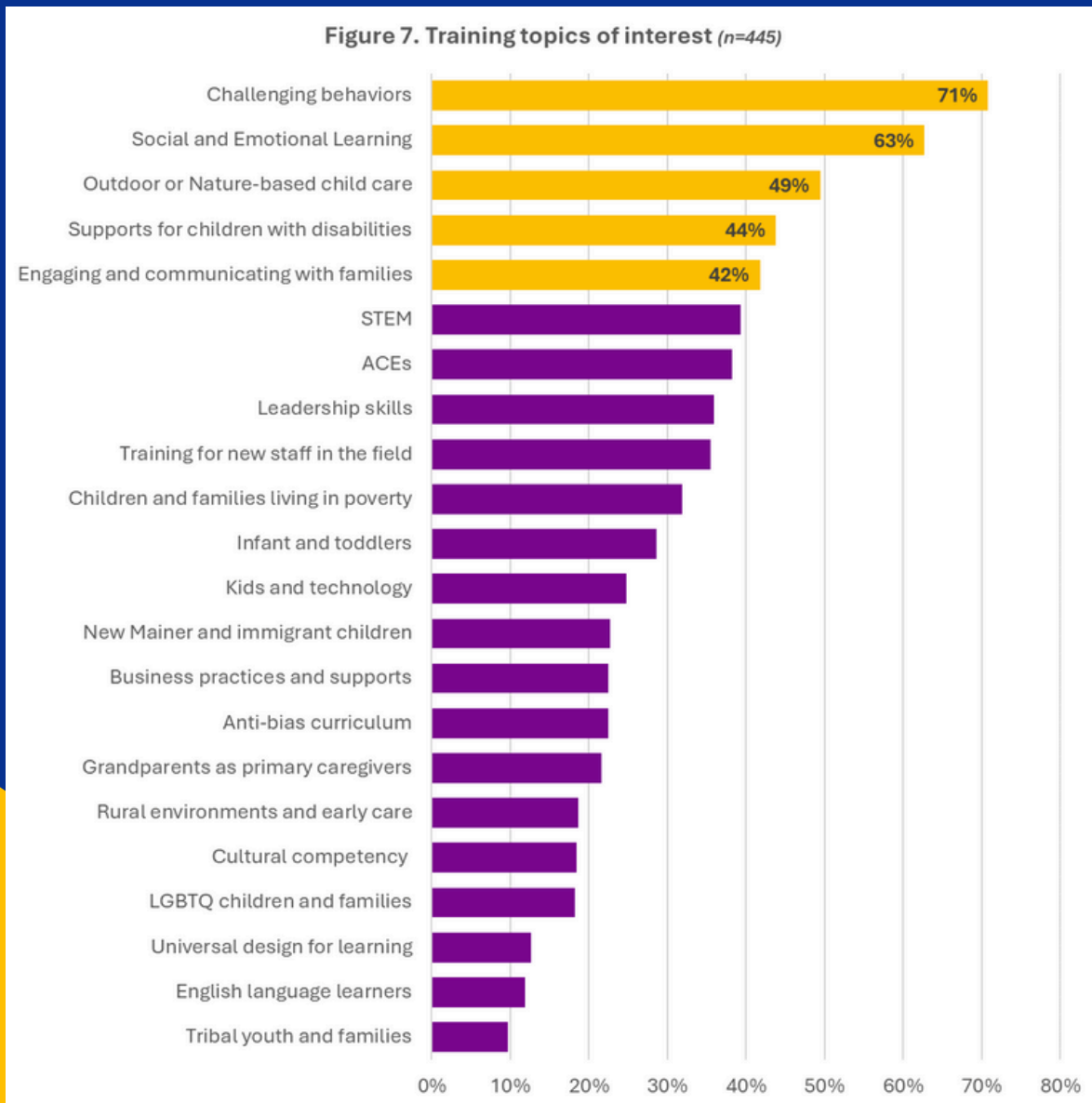


Figure 6. Barriers to enrolling in MRTQ PDN trainings



TRAINING TOPICS

In the 2024 Needs Assessment, as in 2022, “challenging behaviors” topped the list of training topics respondents were most interested in pursuing, with nearly three quarters of respondents being interested (Figure 7). In a focus group conversation, Aroostook County providers provided details about what they need for support with “challenging behaviors.” Examples from these providers included support with documentation for special needs, creating programming that meets individual children and full classroom needs, strategies for helping children complete full days in child care, and how to incorporate the family into conversations about support for their child.



The remaining training topics in the top five were social and emotional learning (63%), outdoor and nature-based child care (49%), supports for children with disabilities (44%), and engaging and communicating with families. Outdoor and nature-based child care was a new top topic this year and is something that MRTQ PDN has already begun to address with two new Communities of Practice (CoP) starting in fiscal year 2024 which have seen a cumulative 173 participants to date.

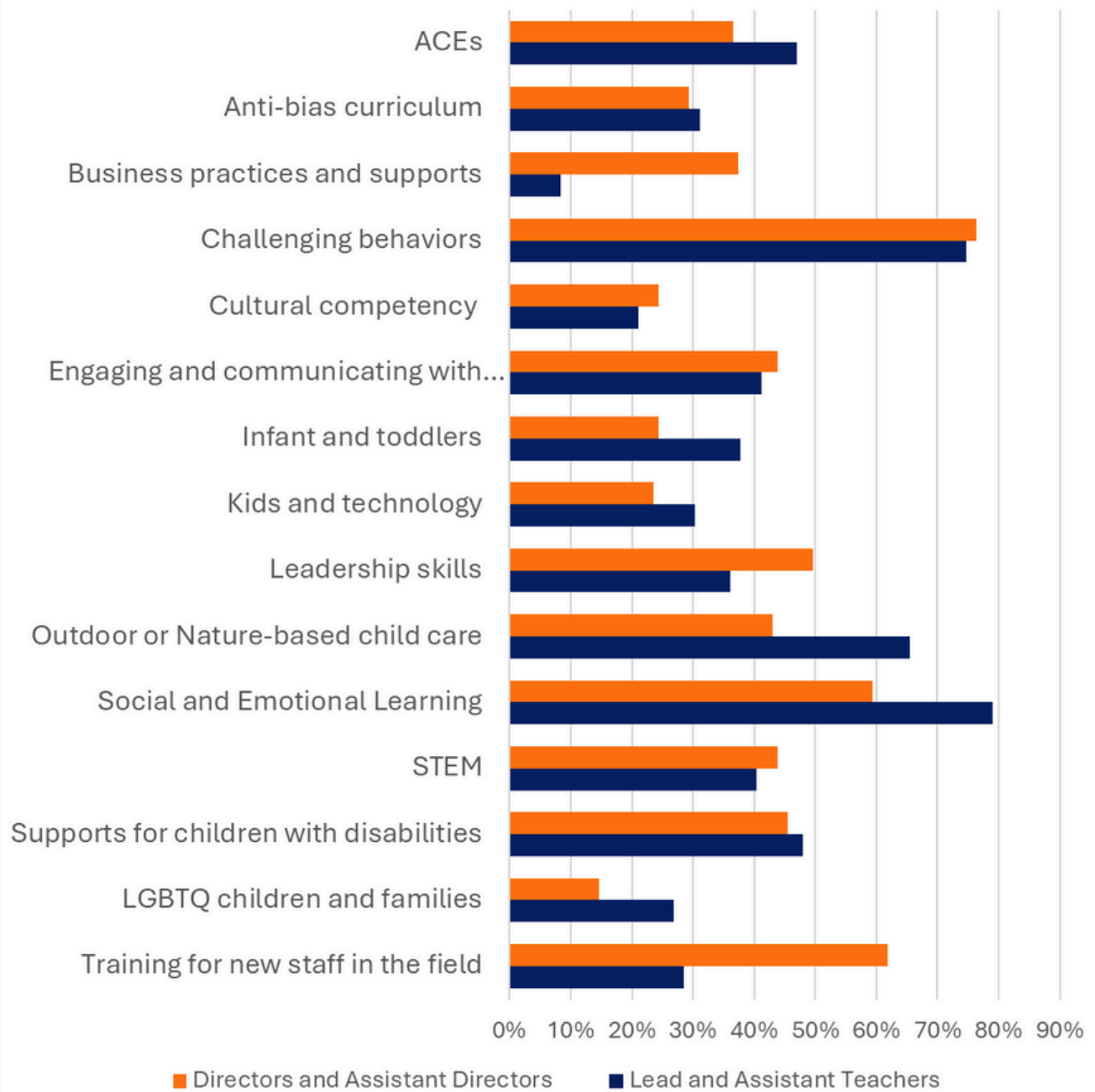


Training topics of interest varied somewhat between respondents who were directors or owners and respondents who identified as lead or assistant teachers (Figure 8). Directors and owners were most likely to be interested in training on challenging behaviors (76%) and training for new staff (62%), whereas lead and assistant teachers were most interested in training on social and emotional learning (79%), followed by challenging behaviors (75%), and outdoor/nature-based child care (66%).

TECHNOLOGY & TRAINING

The most common way respondents accessed MRTQ training was via a computer or laptop (78%), with 14% accessing training via a smart phone. On-demand training continues to be the preferred training format preference (85%), with facilitated training or in-person training to be of interest each to about a third of respondents. This aligns with efforts of MRTQ PDN to continue to meet the on-demand training needs of the field. The MRTQ Training team added an additional 3 on-demand trainings, totaling 14 hours, to the MRTQ training catalog in fiscal year 2024.

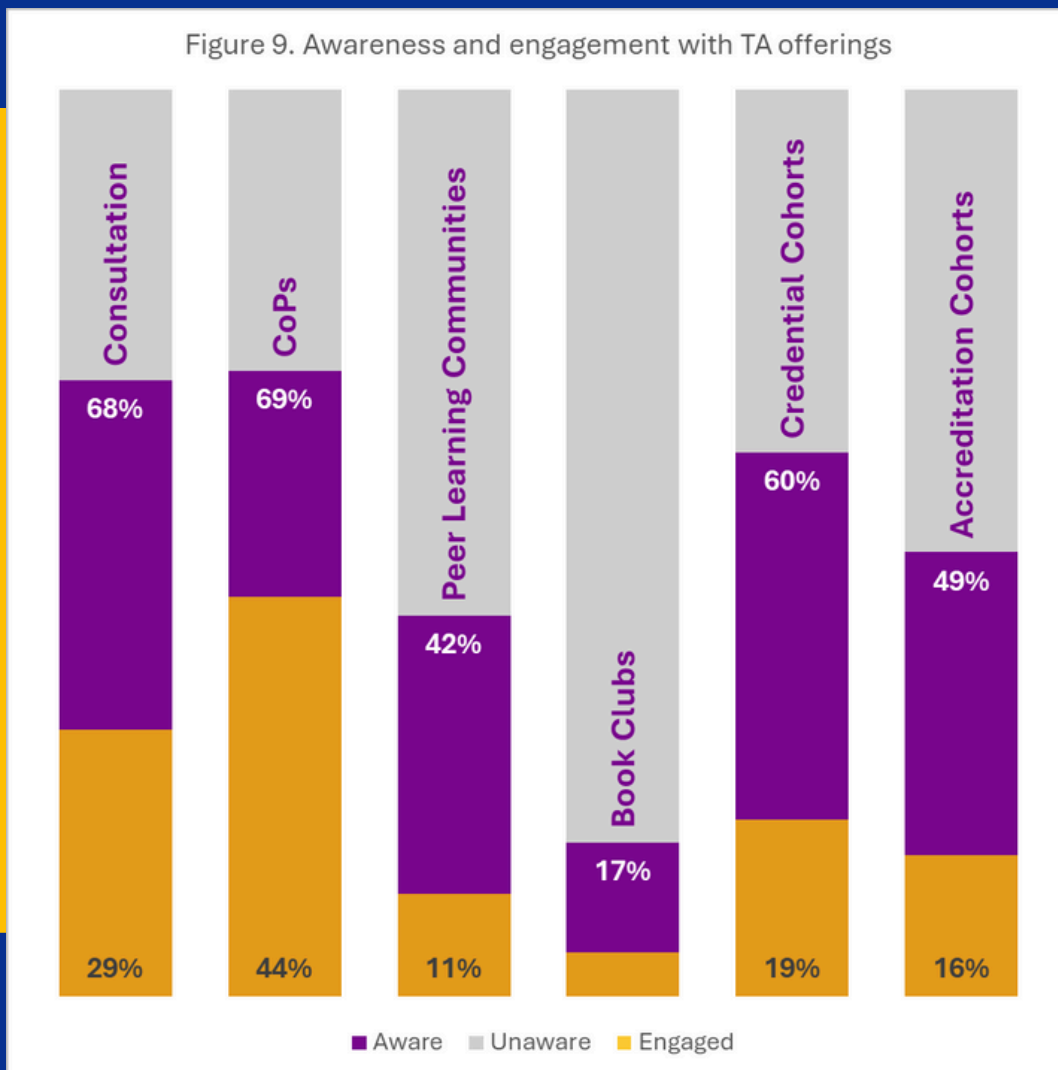
Figure 8. Interest in selected topics varies for respondents in director (*n* =123) and teacher (*n*=119) roles



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The MRTQ PDN Technical Assistance (TA) team had a goal of using the 2024 Needs Assessment to determine what providers know about the meaning of TA and the services offered by the MRTQ PDN TA team to better market their services and reach more providers. The Needs Assessment found that only 20% of respondents were unaware of technical assistance; 80% of respondents knew about TA, and almost half of those felt they had a strong understanding of what TA was offered through MRTQ PDN.

Figure 9. Awareness and engagement with TA offerings



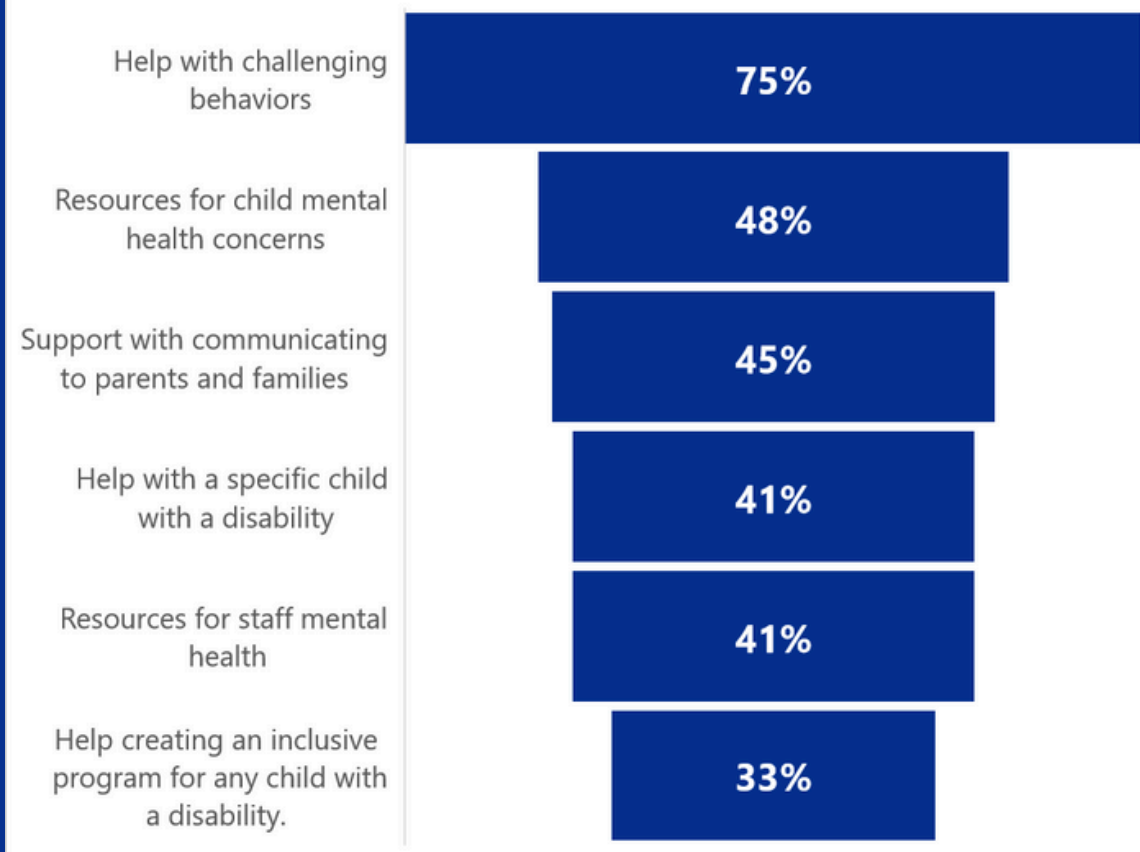
Respondents were most familiar with consultation (68%) and communities of practice (CoP, 69%), which also had the highest engagement rate (Figure 9). When asked what areas they most need support, overall training was the most common, followed by challenging behaviors (62%), and Rising Stars for ME (33%).

WARM LINE

MRTQ PDN offers the Warm Line as a way for providers to obtain preventative support from inclusion specialists. It can be accessed via phone and email to connect providers with experts on the MRTQ PDN team. Only about a third of respondents had heard of the Warm Line (31%). Again, in an effort to use the Needs Assessment both as an information gathering tool and an information dispersal tool, the Warm Line was thoroughly explained in the Needs Assessment with the below description.

***The MRTQ PDN Warm Line** is a confidential service that allows practitioners to call or email with non-emergency questions and receive a response from a trained Technical Assistance (TA) consultant. The Warm Line is meant to serve as the first step in providing practical, accurate information to support the successful inclusion of children with special health needs, disabilities, mental health concerns, or challenging behaviors.*

Figure 11. The areas respondents were most likely to use the Warm Line for in the future after learning about the service.



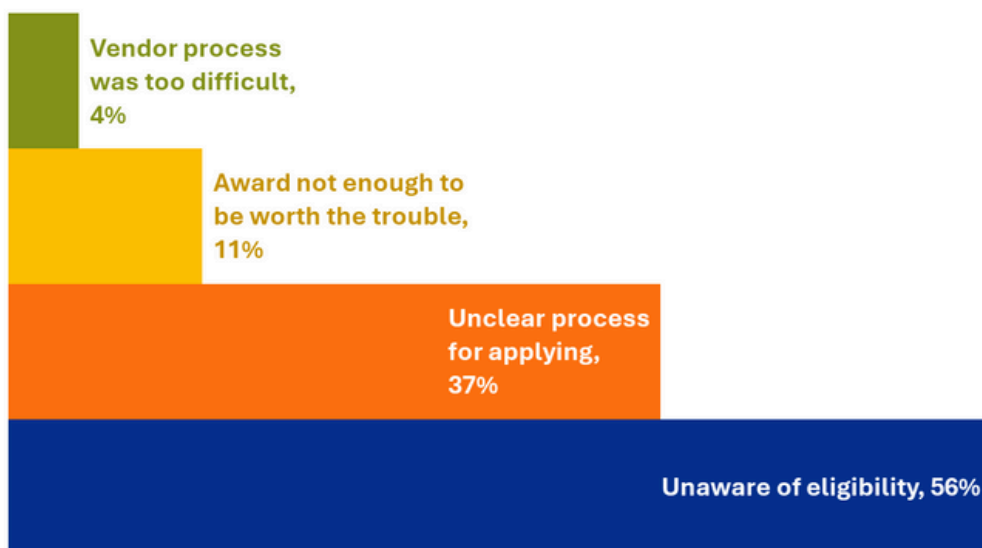
Following reading this description, providers rated the areas in which they needed support and would seek out the Warm Line as a resource in the future (Figure 11). The most common was challenging behaviors (75%), followed by resources for child mental health concerns (48%).

In a focus group conversation with Lewiston/Auburn providers, their recommendations for TA support around “challenging behaviors” were: opportunities to have conversations with other providers in a case-study approach, access to information about appropriate behavior at each age/stage, and basic behavior modification techniques they could share with fellow staff members.

QUALITY INITIATIVES

MRTQ PDN offered several quality improvement awards and mini-grants in fiscal year 2024, including a quality awards for Rising Stars for ME star movement, participation in the Strengthening Business Practices training, and Designing Early Learning. When looking at only respondents who identified as Directors, Assistant Directors, or Owners (n=203), around three quarters (76%) of respondents had heard of the initiatives, but only 21% indicated they had accessed them. For the respondents who knew about quality initiatives and mini-grants but had not yet accessed them, 56% said they were not aware if they were eligible for the awards, other barriers were also indicated (Figure 12). Already in response, MRTQ PDN has increased marketing of quality initiatives via SHORTcuts and social media to encourage engagement and understanding.

Figure 12. For respondents who were aware of QIAs and mini-grants but had not accessed them, the most common reason for not yet applying was not being aware of their eligibility. (n=100)



MRTQ SUPPORT & COMMUNICATIONS

In the Needs Assessment, providers are also asked about the usefulness of communication and marketing efforts from MRTQ PDN. SHORTcuts weekly newsletter was the most used communication with 88% of respondents saying they receive the newsletter and find it useful (Figure 13). The MRTQ PDN Instagram account was just created in fiscal year 2024, and already 20% of respondents indicate they receive communication via this platform and find it useful. Since May 2024, MRTQ PDN Instagram followers have increased 23%. An overwhelming majority of respondents also indicated they were satisfied with their communication and interactions with MRTQ PDN staff across all areas (Figure 14).

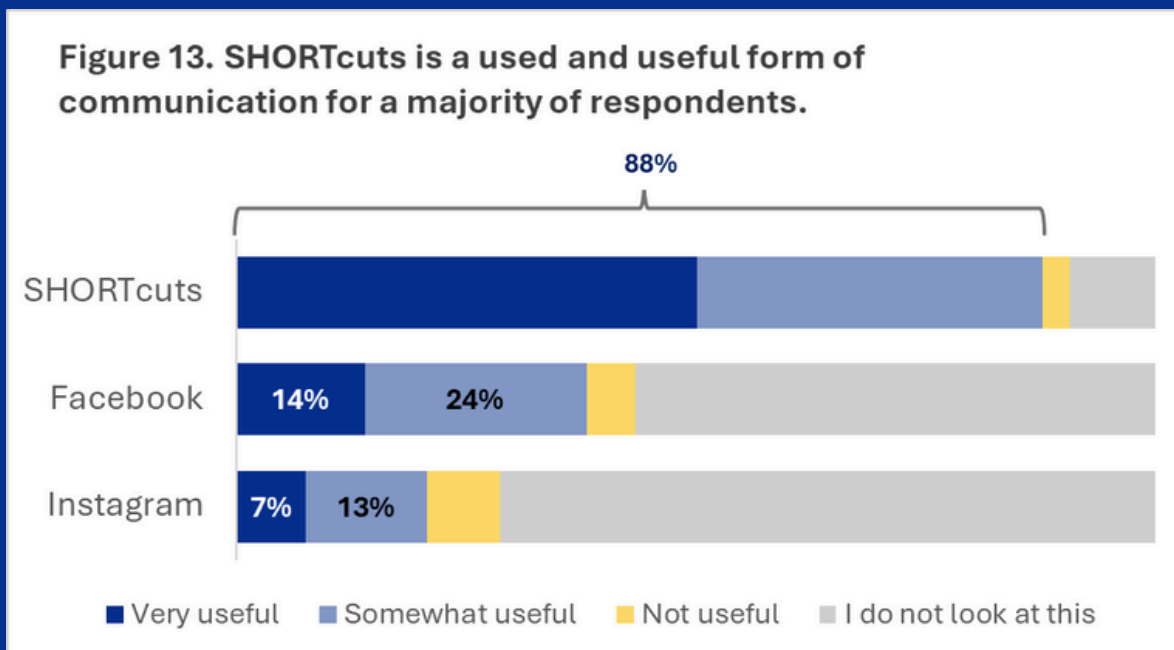
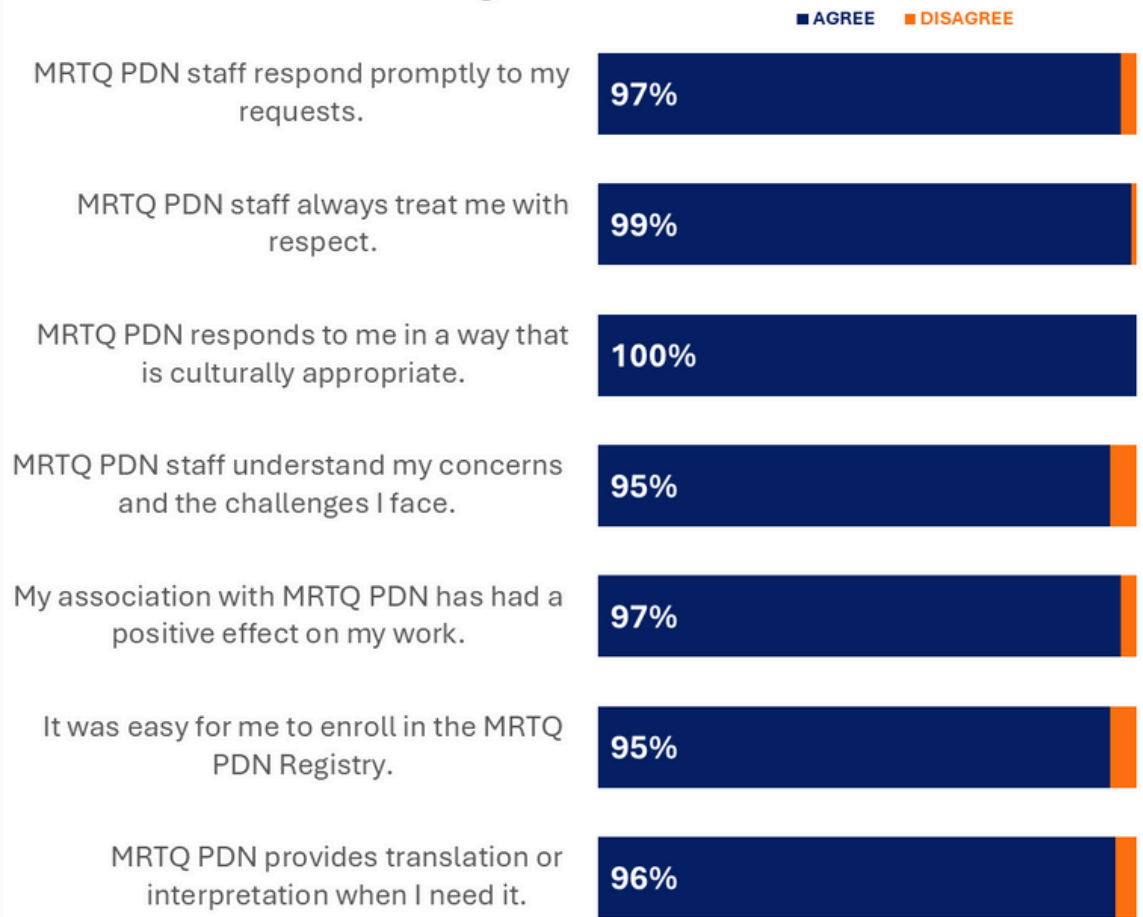
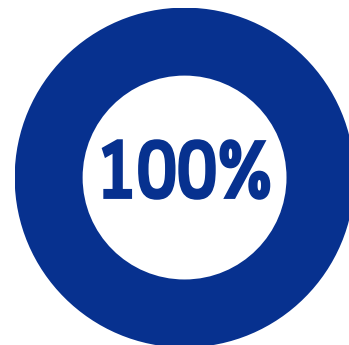


Figure 14. Satisfaction ratings for MRTQ PDN communication and interactions with staff were high in all areas.



“MRTQ Responds to me in a way that is culturally appropriate.”



MRTQ PDN | August 2024

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