



THE HUNT INSTITUTE'S
**GROWTH & IMPACT
 IN EARLY CARE AND
 LEARNING SCALE**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED
 QUESTIONS**

What is the Growth and Impact Scale about?

The scale aims to support states' needs for data to plan and implement initiatives in child care and early learning. It synthesizes data from several reliable national databases to construct state snapshots of access, affordability, quality, and funding. The 2024 Growth and Impact Scale serves as a baseline and will help states assess their changes in their child care and early learning landscape over time. Please read the [State Snapshots](#) for a detailed description of the scale.

How was the scale developed?

The Hunt Institute first conducted a review of national early childhood databases including key access, affordability, quality, and funding indicators that are updated annually. The scope of available data helped define the parameters of the scale. Early learning experts reviewed the design of the scale.

What indicators are included in the scale?

There are four categories that compose the scale: 1) Access, 2) Affordability, 3) Quality, and 4) Public Funding. There are 20 indicators within these categories , as illustrated by the table below.

Access (3 Indicators)	Affordability (3 Indicators)	Quality (10 Indicators)	Funding (4 Indicators)
Licensed child care spaces compared to the number of children with all parents working	Center-based infant care as a percent of two income family	Children receiving early intervention (1) compared to children born underweight	Reach of the Child Care and Development Block Grant
Research of public early learning programs compared to all eligible children	Center-based infant care as a percent of single income family	Number of early intervention policy levers adopted (1)	Reach of Early Head Start
Average hourly wage of early childhood educator compared to the living wage for the state	Loss to the state economy as a ratio of the state GDP	Staff-child ratios (3) (infant/toddler/preschooler) compared to the NAEYC standard	Reach of Head Start
		Minimum credentials (3) (Director/Teacher/Assistant Teacher) compared to the NAEYC standard	Reach of public preschool
		Annual Training Hours (2) (Director/Staff) Compared to the NAEYC standard	(All of the above are compared to all eligible children)

Please read the [State Snapshots](#) for more information on the categories and indicators



Will the scale be updated annually?

The Hunt Institute aims to update the scale annually so that states can assess growth on the indicators year on year.

What are the sources informing the scale?

Databases informing the scale include the First Five Year Fact Sheets, Child Care Aware of America's Landscape Analysis and Price of Care Analysis, Prenatal to Three Policy Impact Center's Policy Roadmap, demographic data from the Kids Count Data Center, and the Living Wage Calculator. Sources were considered only if they included data on all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and if they were updated annually. Please review the [Scoring Guide](#) to learn more about the sources.

There are many scales. What is the value-add of this scale?

Developing a picture of strengths and needs across these specific areas and indicators would require states to combine and compile information from multiple data sources. State partners also often ask The Hunt Institute to develop data comparisons of states with similar demographic and cultural profiles. The Growth and Impact Scale will provide a data snapshot, state comparisons, and year-on-year comparisons of progress and challenges. The scale adopts a growth mindset and help states chart progress over time on the four-point scale spanning Emerging, Evolving, Expanding, and Excelling.

Why does the scale not include county or local level data?

County-level data are not typically part of national data sources that include the 50 states and District of Columbia. To provide states with a standardized scale, it was important to include only data sources that were consistent across states. Cities and counties vary greatly in what data they collect, what metrics they use, and how frequently and consistently data is updated, which precluded the use of local data in this scale.

We have great state data that provides more nuance than the national data used in the scale. Can we share this data with The Hunt Institute for the scale?

To enable apples-to-apples comparisons, we restrict data used in the scale to national sources that include all 50 states and the District of Columbia. However, data collected by state agencies and partners is a rich resource for evidence-based decision making. Here's an example from a state to show how the indicators of the scale and state data can work together to support planning.

- The state team studied the indicators that make up the scale to identify strengths and gaps yielded by national data sources.
- The team compared their state with neighboring states to understand similarities and differences in their early care and learning landscapes.
- The team studied data on the same or similar indicators from state sources to understand nuances in access, affordability, quality, and funding. Where possible, the team used disaggregated data to understand county-level and demographic differences.
- The team conducted focus groups with a representative cross-section of stakeholders to add nuance and identify specific corners.
- The team synthesized these varied sources of information to frame action plans.



What are the limitations of the scale?

The scale provides a snapshot of a state's child care and early learning landscape. It does not provide detailed information on county-based variation within a state. While we include 20 indicators, there are other important early education topics, such as early educator workforce attrition, mixed delivery systems, and braided funding, for which data are currently not available for all states from national databases. The Hunt Institute continues to monitor for emerging data on additional indicators that meet criteria for quality, consistency, and frequency of updates.

How do the policy considerations include the voices of families, educators, and other stakeholders?

The Growth and Impact Scale provides state stakeholders with a big picture analysis of where the state is on critical early education indicators and offers policy considerations that are aligned with the indicators. Many states have formed or are forming Early Childhood State Advisories including families, educators and other stakeholders to develop state policies and programs. As states advance in developing policies and programs, they typically collect qualitative and quantitative data to develop customized analyses and targeted policy priorities. The perspectives of families, educators, and other stakeholders are critical part of this process. The Hunt Institute provides technical assistance for planning state-level early education initiatives. Please contact javid.siddiqi@hunt-institute.org for more information.

Why is Early Intervention used as an indicator for quality?

Many developmental delays requiring intervention are best treated before the age of three. Access to early intervention is included as an indicator of quality as it can mitigate developmental delays and strengthen children's long-term social-emotional and educational outcomes. Research shows that children who receive early intervention services are less likely to need supplemental academic support in school than children who do not receive early intervention. Delays are often found when children are in child care settings, so integrating early intervention in those settings is beneficial to children's cognitive and social-emotional development.

Under the section on funding, does the preschool funding include funding for three- and four-year olds??

Yes, preschool funding includes funding for three- and four-year olds.

There is inaccurate data in my state's snapshot. How do we correct this?

While the data used in the scale are drawn from sources chosen for their consistency and reliability to measure the same data points across all U.S. states and DC, we understand that discrepancies in that data and data from other sources used by states to measure certain indicators may differ. We are open to feedback and discussion of your state-specific indicators where there appear to be inaccuracies. Please reach out to keppley@hunt-insitute.org for additional support

