



ANNUAL REPORT  
STATE OF THE  
Council *for*  
Professional  
Recognition  
2025



# REFLECTING ON ACHIEVEMENT

## 2025 IN REVIEW

Early childhood education is shaped by those whose dedication sustains both their work and the children they serve. At the Council for Professional Recognition, we pause each year to reflect on what we have learned and to consider how we can advance our support for educators across the field. We made meaningful progress in 2025, reminding us how far the profession has come and how much opportunity still lies ahead.

This year carried special meaning for our early childhood education field and for the Council. We marked the 50th anniversary of the Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™, the 40th anniversary of the Council, and the 10th anniversary of the Early Educators Leadership Conference. These moments speak to decades of service to educators and children. Each anniversary is both an honoring of the past and an inspiration for moving forward. Finally, we are honored to share that in 2025 the Council issued more than 55,000 initial credentials and renewals. These numbers demonstrate the commitment and dedication of our ECE professionals and for their determination we say thank you!

In service of expanding professional pathways, we launched the Birth to Five CDA® credential, designed to reflect the full range of children early educators serve. This new credential equips educators with competence across infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in a single setting and strengthens alignment with how programs operate day to day. We also saw strong early uptake by professionals who are broadening their impact and advancing their careers.

Our work to support the early childhood community extended into new spaces. We debuted *The Council Table* podcast, which brought conversations on leadership, equity, and practice into the daily lives of thousands of listeners and invited voices from across the early childhood field to share insight and inspiration.

At the same time, the Council was recognized again as a Great Place to Work®, reaffirming our commitment to nurturing a culture of trust, inclusion, and engagement for all employees. This certification reflects a strong, shared purpose and the values that guide our service to the field.

While we paused to celebrate milestones, we continued to improve and refine our programs. In 2025, we also updated our CDA® process to streamline assessment access and launched new digital credentials that make it easier for educators to share their achievements with employers and communities. These steps reflect our ongoing resolve to eliminate barriers, expand opportunities, and maintain the integrity that makes the CDA and its associated pathways meaningful in the lives of professionals and the families they serve.

As we reflect on accomplishments, I am reminded that progress in early childhood education is neither quick nor easy. Yet, every credential awarded, every leader developed, and every conversation shared at the Council advances our collective ability to support children's early experiences. With each action, we reaffirm our belief that competence and care go hand in hand, and that educators deserve recognition and the tools they need to excel.

Thank you for your continued partnership and trust in the Council's work. As we move into 2026, reflection must give way to purposeful action, guided by what this year has taught us and by the responsibility we share to serve early educators and children.

Dr. Calvin E. Moore, Jr.  
Chief Executive Officer  
Council for Professional Recognition

## KEY CEO MOMENTS FROM 2025



# COUNCIL *for* PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

LEGACY | *40 Years*  
*of Leading Expertise in Early*  
Childhood Credentialing

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Founded in 1985, the Council for Professional Recognition continues to champion the professional growth of early childhood educators, fostering a future where every child has access to high-quality learning experiences.

## MISSION

OF THE COUNCIL

The Council for Professional Recognition advances career pathways for Early Childhood Educators through high-quality, competency-based credentialing.

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## VISION

OF THE COUNCIL

The Council for Professional Recognition envisions a society where all children learn and thrive in environments led by competent, valued early childhood educators.

## HISTORY OF THE CDA®

### C R E D E N T I A L

In 1971, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) brought a group of early childhood education leaders together to support the expanding teacher workforce needs of the Head Start program. This effort led to a formal feasibility study of a competency-based credential that required an understanding of child development through training and practical experience.

The meetings of these progressive thinkers led to the concept of a professional credential, and in 1975, Margaret E. Wright was awarded the first CDA. With federal funding, the CDA Consortium and then Bank Street College administered the CDA. Over the next decade, the demand for the CDA grew so much that the Department of Health and Human Services worked with the National Association for the Education of Young Children to set up a separate nonprofit charged with overseeing the credential.

Since then, the Council for Professional Recognition has ramped up the CDA to meet the changing demands of the ECE field. We've added more coursework and adapted it to be inclusive by filling the needs of diverse cultures and new immigrant groups.

Much has changed since that group of early childhood leaders met in 1971. But one thing has stayed the same, the quest to increase the ranks of qualified early childhood educators where children are being served. The CDA is rooted in the core conviction that all young children have the basic right to a high-quality, equitable education. All children thrive by interacting with skilled educators, who have demonstrated their teaching competence through the attainment of the CDA a quality, competency-based credential.

## CDA® CREDENTIAL

### CREDIBILITY | *50 Years* of Excellence in Early Childhood Credentialing

The CDA® has been the trusted credentialing program for early educators for half a century, constantly evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of early care and education professionals. Over one million CDA credentials have been issued across the nation and internationally, building competency in the classroom and accessible career pathways.

# 2025 ACCOMPLISHMENT

## H I G H L I G H T S

### Build a diverse, highly-productive world-class team.

- **Exceptional Customer Service.** In 2025, the Council maintained responsive, high-quality support for early educators nationwide, ensuring timely assistance across multiple service channels.
- **Inaugural Leadership Development Program.** In 2025, the Council invested in strengthening internal leadership capacity to support long-term organizational excellence and sustainability.
- **Great Place to Work® Certification.** In 2025, the Council earned the Great Place to Work® Certification for a second consecutive year, reaffirming its commitment to a high-trust, high-engagement workplace. Results showed that 88 percent of employees rated the Council as a great place to work, exceeding the U.S. benchmark of 57 percent, and reflecting continued progress in employee experience, inclusion, and organizational culture.
- **Cultural Audit.** In 2025, the Council took steps to strengthen its commitment to inclusion and organizational excellence. Through a rigorous, internationally benchmarked assessment, the Council deepened its understanding of how to foster an inclusive, mission-driven culture that supports its work on behalf of early childhood educators. Insights from this effort are informing leadership decisions, strengthening people practices, and guiding strategic investments that enhance the Council's effectiveness, sustainability, and ability to serve the field with integrity and impact.



### Cultivate a culture of innovation.

- **CDA PD Specialist™ Endorsement.** Since the launch of the Birth to Five endorsement on August 1, the Council has endorsed 932 PD Specialists who demonstrated expertise across Infant, Toddler, and Preschool age groups. Their work ensures that candidates in Birth to Five settings receive high-quality verification visits grounded in developmental understanding and best practice. The Council values their partnership and professionalism and will continue expanding the initiative to empower more educators and advance excellence in early childhood education, recognizing the essential role PD Specialists play in shaping positive outcomes for children and families nationwide.
- **Job Task Analysis for Child Development Professional (CDP) Credential.** Between August and November 2025, the Research and Psychometrics Team completed the foundational Job Task Analysis for the forthcoming Child Development Professional credential. The team convened subject matter expert workshops with 17 experts representing lead teachers, directors, higher-education faculty, PD Specialists, and state licensure staff, which refined definitions for 13 functional areas and clarified 78 task statements. A national field survey reached more than 80,000 early childhood professionals and produced over 1,000 complete responses from every state, informing blueprint recommendations that included raising safety to approximately 10 percent and shaping the overall assessment strategy.



## IMPACT

- ★ **Launched and completed** its inaugural Leadership Development Program.
- ★ **Earned Great Place to Work® Certification** for a second consecutive year.
- ★ **In 2025, the Council conducted a comprehensive cultural audit** using an internationally benchmarked framework to assess and strengthen its inclusive workplace practices.

- **New CDA® Digital Credentials.** The Council implemented digital credentials to deliver faster access for candidates. The update improved record management, security, and credential delivery. With 165,496 CDA digital credentials issued in 2025 since the launch of the initiative in August 2025.



# IMPACT

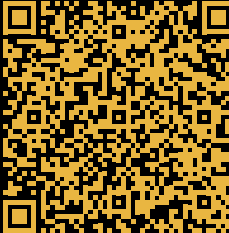
- **New CDA® E-Portfolio System.** In 2025, the Council piloted a new CDA® E-Portfolio system to support candidates in documenting their professional competencies in a digital format.



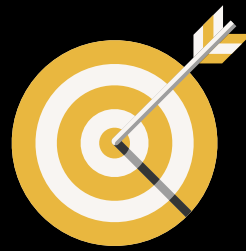
- ★ **932 PD Specialist endorsed** in the new Birth to Five CDA setting
- ★ **Release of the Birth to Five CDA® credential,** marking the Council’s first new credential in more than a decade. To date, 473 PD Specialists have enrolled in the course, and 315 have successfully completed it.
- ★ **165,496 digital credentials issued** since the launch of the initiative in August 2025.
- ★ **Since the CDA® E-Portfolio soft launch, more than 300 accounts have been created,** and the platform is scheduled for a public launch at the start of 2026.

## Elevate the utility of the National CDA® Competency Standards.

- **CDA® Recognition Expansion.** The ECE Competence and Practice team expanded CDA recognition across state regulations, quality rating systems, and career pathway programs through 57 stakeholder engagements. These included 28 sessions at 14 professional conferences with 21 delivered in English and seven in Spanish, along with 10 webinars, 10 Café Q&As, and 9 CDP concept events.
- **Impact of the CDA® Study.** The ECE Competence and Practice team wrote and published 307 posts, including 295 for the Council Alumni Network and 12 Council blogs. Content highlighted new resources and offerings that elevate the CDA Competency Standards and integrate the CDA into career pathways such as home visiting, career and technical education (CTE), apprenticeships, and higher education.
- **New Birth to Five CDA® Credential.** Between January and August 2025, the Council developed the Birth to Five credential and launched its exam on August 1. The Birth to Five CDA® credential was developed using rigorous, nationally validated processes to ensure reliability, fairness, and readiness for broad implementation. The initiative expanded the Council’s credentials to the birth-to-five age range and relied on a rigorous development process that included SME recruitment, pilot testing, and bilingual form assembly to ensure the assessments were psychometrically sound and ready for national use.
- **Birth to Five CDA® PD Specialist Training.** The Innovations team led development and release of the Birth to Five CDA® credential, marking the Council’s first new credential in more than a decade. The team also partnered with Learning Design and Experience to launch Birth to Five training for Professional Development Specialists, and to date 932 PD Specialists have earned the endorsement.
- **Remotely Proctored CDA® Exams Piloted.** In 2025, the Quality Assurance and Research team piloted remotely proctored CDA exams in nine languages including Amharic, Arabic, French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Mandarin, Portuguese, Somali, and Yiddish to expand access for candidates in Head Start programs. The pilot demonstrated the Council’s commitment to equity and innovation by removing language and location barriers while generating performance data in a remote, multilingual testing environment.



- **State Convenings.** The Partner Relations team planned and completed five state convenings in Puerto Rico, Nebraska, Delaware, Michigan, and Indiana to strengthen CDA workforce initiatives and career pathways within each state. The gatherings brought together educators, employers, advocates, and other stakeholders to highlight past, current, and future efforts while discussing the value of CDA credentials, apprenticeships, and employer engagement.
- **A Milestone Year.** During a milestone year marking the 50th anniversary of the CDA, the 40th anniversary of the Council, and the 10th anniversary of the Early Educators Leadership Conference, the Brand Experience and Marketing team launched a paid promotion campaign reaching nearly one million subscribers. The team also introduced an updated website to support the year's commemorative tone and published *The First Two Decades: A Tribute to the Council as told by Carol Brunson Day, Ph.D.*, which served as a meaningful gift to the community.
- **CDA® Credentials Issued.** Over 30,024 initial credentials issued in 2025. Over 25,858 renewal credentials issued in 2025.



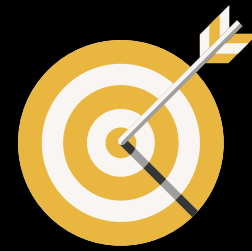
## IMPACT

- ★ **Expanded CDA recognition** across state regulations, quality rating systems, and career pathway programs through 57 stakeholder engagements, which included 28 sessions at 14 professional conferences.
- ★ **95% of all CDA tests were being taken on updated forms**, phasing out the older exams and improving assessment integrity through current, validated content and acceptable reliability across the new exams.
- ★ **In 2025, the team piloted remotely proctored CDA exams** in nine languages including Amharic, Arabic, French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Mandarin, Portuguese, Somali, and Yiddish to expand access for candidates in Head Start programs.



## Leverage the Council's expertise, legacy, & resources to benefit the ECE field.

- **New Additions to Council Resource Library.** The ECE Competence and Practice team developed nine new publications for the Council Resource Library to support credential alignment and provide guidance for education and training programs, including career and technical education (CTE) and institutions of higher education.
- **Major Enhancements to the CDA® Renewal Process.** The Council implemented major enhancements to the CDA® renewal process that improved efficiency, accessibility, and the overall candidate experience. Removing the First Aid and CPR requirement eliminated a longstanding barrier for candidates facing financial, scheduling, or geographic challenges while maintaining safety expectations through state licensing requirements. Automated renewals now allow applicants with complete submissions to receive immediate approval, reducing processing time and staff workload, and a randomized Renewal Quality Assurance Audit reinforces credential integrity through consistent and transparent documentation review.
- **Incorporating CDA® into Teacher Preparation Programs.** The ECE Competence and Practice team provided consultation through more than 60 meetings, committees, and workgroups with education and training providers to expand and strengthen the incorporation of the CDA into teacher preparation programs.



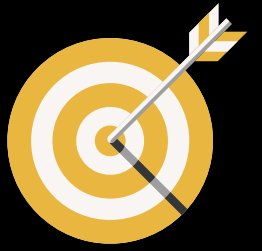
## IMPACT

- ★ **The First Two Decades: A Tribute to the Council as Told by Carol Brunson Day, Ph.D.**, which served as a meaningful gift to the community.
- ★ **Issued over 55,000 CDA® credentials** - initial and renewed

- **CDA PD Specialist™ Honorarium.** In Fall 2025, the Council announced that the PD Specialist honorarium will increase from \$100 to \$200 in 2026. The decision recognizes the expertise and time PD Specialists bring to verification visits, portfolio reviews, classroom observations, and reflective conversations with candidates. By doubling the honorarium, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to the PD Specialist role while strengthening the candidate experience across the field.
- **CDA® Impact Study with Stanford University.** In 2025, Quality Assurance and Research team launched a significant research study with Stanford University to examine how earning a CDA credential affects educators' career trajectories and outcomes. A survey was sent to approximately 182,000 current and former CDA holders that generated approximately 5,000 valid submissions nationwide by midyear. About 11 percent of respondents completed the survey in Spanish, supporting broad representation across the field. This unprecedented study for the Council is designed to answer strategic questions about the credential's value and will inform leadership decisions.
- **Comprehensive Alignment of the CDA® Competency Standards.** In 2025, the Quality Assurance and Research team completed a comprehensive alignment of the CDA Competency Standards with 10 external early childhood education standards and assessment tools, with five subject matter experts evaluating 88 pairings of CDA indicators against external frameworks that included NAEYC Professional Standards, CLASS, ECERS-3, and ITERS-3. Findings demonstrated strong alignment between the CDA® Competency Standards and widely recognized early childhood education frameworks, reinforcing the credential's credibility and relevance.
- **Improved Denial and Appeal Process.** In 2025, the Credentialing and Programs team improved its denial and appeals process to give candidates clearer, more actionable explanations. Updated communications now outline specific reasons for denial and next steps for improvement. These changes strengthen transparency, support fairness, and provide a more efficient and informative credentialing experience for candidates.
- **Accommodation Requests and Multilingual Assessments.** The Credentialing and Programs team approved over 500 accommodation requests and multilingual assessments to support equitable access to the CDA pathway. These efforts ensured that candidates from diverse linguistic and ability backgrounds received appropriate support throughout the credentialing process.



- **The Council Alumni Network (CAN).** The Council Alumni Network (CAN) reached 5,459 members, a 30 percent increase from the prior year
- **The Early Educators Leadership Conference (EELC).** The Early Educators Leadership Conference drew 310 attendees from 40 states, Puerto Rico, and the United Arab Emirates and achieved a 93.5 percent satisfaction rate. The strong response reflects the success of a more focused, high-impact conference experience following a deliberate reduction in overall registration.
- **The Council Table Podcast.** In October 2025, the Council launched *The Council Table* podcast, hosted by Dr. Calvin E. Moore Jr., as a storytelling platform that connects policy, practice, and lived experience and generated an 81 percent share rate in early feedback.
- **CDA 50th Anniversary Gala.** The Council also delivered the CDA 50th Anniversary Gala, a cultural event honoring the organization's legacy and long-standing impact across the early childhood field.



# IMPACT

- ★ **9 new publications developed** for the Council Resource Library to support credential alignment and provide guidance for education and training programs.
- ★ **Completed a comprehensive alignment of the CDA® Competency Standards** with 10 external early childhood education standards and assessment tools, with five subject matter experts evaluating 88 pairings of CDA indicators against external frameworks.

- **Hill Weeks.** In 2025, the Government Relations team organized recurring Hill weeks and engaged 47 congressional offices, including 22 Senate offices and 25 House offices, across committees focused on the early childhood, workforce, and appropriations. These meetings advanced the Council's Policy Agenda, reinforced the CDA as an entry point into the early childhood workforce, and generated follow-up requests from committee staff, along with continued collaboration with Sen. Warnock's office on CDA-related Pathways to Prosperity language and co-sponsorship strategy. These efforts strengthened the Council's engagement with policymakers and advanced awareness of early childhood workforce priorities.
- **Website Improvements for Policy and Advocacy Pathways.** In 2025, the Government Relations team updated the website to improve access to policy information and action tools by adding an interactive State Legislation and Regulations Map that is updated daily and aligning Policy Note reporting with the live map and tracker for real-time updates. The team also strengthened the Policy Spotlight newsletter and related policy resources, sustaining audience engagement and expanding the reach of federal and state policy work.
- **CDA PD Specialist™ Renewal Training Course.** The Learning Design and Experience team, in partnership with the ECE Observations team, launched a renewal training course for existing PD Specialists focused on recent updates to standard operating procedures and scenario-based learning to strengthen observation skills. To date, 473 PD Specialists have enrolled in the course, and 315 have successfully completed it.



## IMPACT

- ★ **Stanford University Research Study** to examine how earning a CDA® credential affects educators' career trajectories and outcomes--182,000 current and former CDA holders surveyed, generated 5,000 submissions, 11% completed the survey in Spanish.
- ★ **Approved over 500 accommodation requests** and multilingual assessments.
- ★ **The Council Alumni Network reached 5,459 members**, a 30 percent increase from the prior year.
- ★ **The Early Educators Leadership Conference** drew 310 attendees from 40 states, Puerto Rico, and the United Arab Emirates.

- **Strategic Collaborations.** Strategic collaborations included renewed work with the National Workforce Registry Alliance to support data exchange and credential alignment and a new partnership with the National Family Child Care Association to broaden engagement with family child care providers nationwide. The Council also introduced its first Strategic Board of Directors Dashboard and formalized agreements with 14 state registries, with 25 states expected to participate by the end of 2026, strengthening governance transparency and long-term system alignment.
- **The Online Council Store.** Online Council Store offering ECE publications and branded merchandise, generated over \$2.8M in revenue. The Council Store had a significant pop-up presence at national conferences. New branded items were introduced, celebrating educators' accomplishments and milestones, such as CDA graduations, as well merchandise that celebrated our 50th CDA anniversary, the store continues to meet stakeholder needs while supporting the Council's mission.



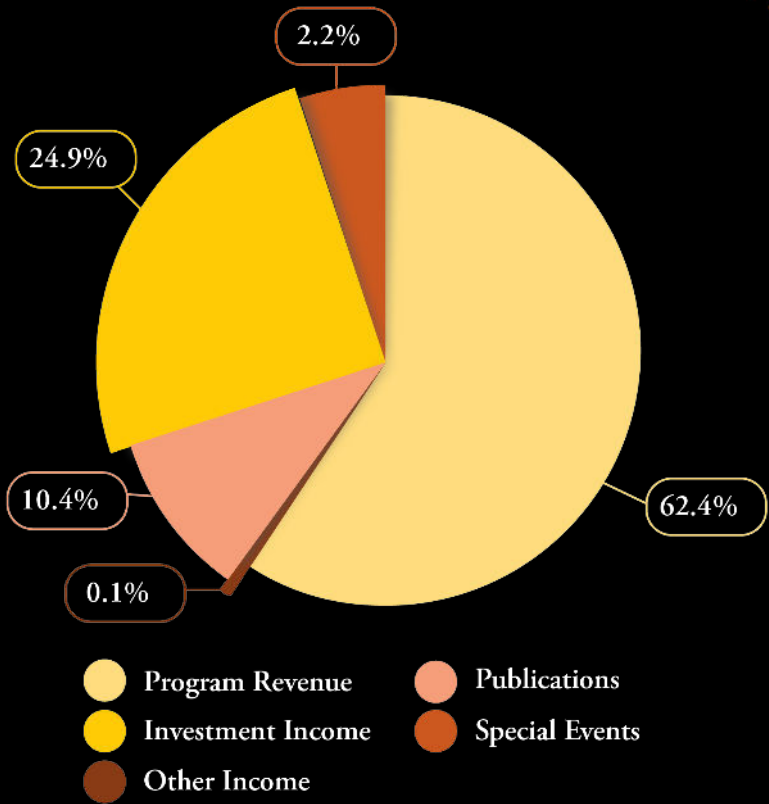
## IMPACT

- ★ **Engaged 47 congressional offices**, including 22 Senate offices and 25 House offices, across committees focused on early childhood, workforce, and appropriations.
- ★ **473 CDA PD Specialists™ have enrolled** in the new renewal training course and 315 have successfully completed it.
- ★ **The Online Council Store has generated over \$2.8M in revenue** and introduced new branded items to celebrate early educators and the CDA 50th anniversary.



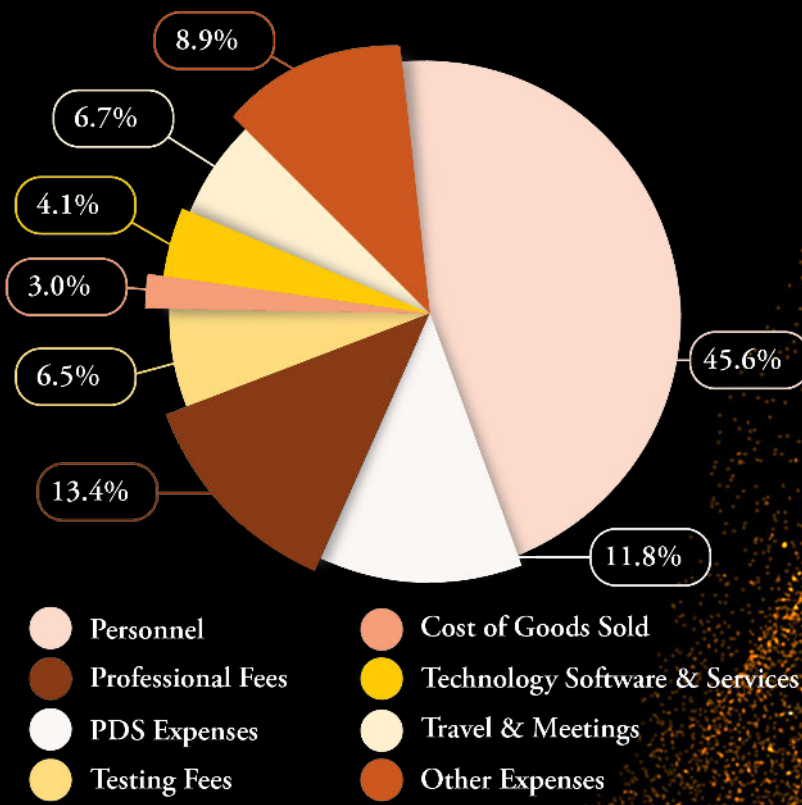
OPERATING REVENUE

|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Program Revenue   | 17,558,800 |
| Publications      | 2,927,100  |
| Investment Income | 7,014,500  |
| Special Events    | 620,300    |
| Other Income      | 13,400     |
| Total             | 28,134,100 |



OPERATING EXPENSES

|                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Personnel                      | 10,990,500 |
| PDS Expenses                   | 2,854,000  |
| Professional Fees              | 3,238,092  |
| Testing Fees                   | 1,561,600  |
| Cost of Goods Sold             | 711,100    |
| Technology Software & Services | 975,700    |
| Travel & Meetings              | 1,624,209  |
| Other Expenses                 | 2,139,709  |
| Total                          | 24,094,910 |



COUNCIL FOR PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

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**COUNCIL**  
*for*  
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