
Connecticut Early Childhood Funder Collaborative

A project of:



Mission:

To bring the collective voice and resources of philanthropy to build and sustain a comprehensive early childhood system that works for all children, families, communities and the workforce in Connecticut.

Our Vision

Connecticut's early care and education system is child & family-centered, racially & culturally respectful, high quality, accessible, equitable and accountable with ongoing and valued input by families, providers and local communities.

Guiding Principles

- **Aligned, supportive systems:** Children's cognitive, social and emotional development requires integrated, cross sector systems at the state and local levels. This means a fully integrated and responsive birth to age 5 system as well as alignment from early care through Kindergarten to Grade 3.
- **Equity:** Policies, practices and funding are implemented to address the needs of traditionally marginalized communities, especially Black and Brown children and families for high quality, accessible, affordable supports and to build an educated, properly compensated workforce that is reflective of the families they serve.
- **Early investments/big returns:** Early childhood investments are investments in Connecticut's social and economic future. Supporting parents through high quality, accessible childcare and services advances individual and community prosperity and well-being.
- **State-local coordination:** State policies should value and support input from local communities in recognition that local communities are closer to the real needs of children and families.
- **Whole-family approach:** Supporting parents and others involved in caregiving, respecting their different cultures, backgrounds and needs, and incorporating their voice in policies and programs are essential to better child outcomes.
- **High quality:** Investments in our early care and education workforce are needed in recognition of its critical importance to children, families and our state.
- **Accountability:** Strategic, efficient performance measures that are valued and inform program design, delivery and quality.

Progress to date

- **Creation of the CT Office of Early Childhood** including ongoing support for consultation to assist the new office in bringing together staff and programs from five different agencies and developing a multiyear action plan;
- **Launch of the state-local intermediary** (CT Children's Collective) with joint state and philanthropic funding and a governance structure that includes local early care and education (ECE) councils, OEC, SDE and philanthropy;
- **Integrated childcare financing** options developed to address the state's complicated system of childcare with different eligibility, reimbursement and reporting requirements;
- **Organized community input into the state's Every Student Succeeds federal education plan** followed by community pilots to develop models and best practice;
- **Continued state/philanthropic partnership** with CT ECFC the recipient of federal PDG grant dollars to support local ECE collaboratives and development of a common definition and framework for effective family engagement;
- **Development and adoption of a family engagement framework** with key state agencies and a broad coalition of parents, providers, educators and philanthropy and **ongoing efforts to develop a coordinated, central system for connecting parents to leadership training** and establishing best practices for parent engagement including a common system of stipends;
- Supporting consultation and information dissemination on best practices in **childcare business management and shared service models**;
- **Deeper connection to national policy** through the Alliance for Early Success and National ECFC

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Work Plan Development

The CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative (CT ECFC) advances its mission by bringing the knowledge, networks and funding of its 20 members to address key needs and opportunities. The Collaborative is strategic and deliberate in the development and execution of its work plan employing selection criteria that have been tested and reviewed over the ECFC's 8-year existence. These include:

- Readiness or ripeness of the opportunity
- Unique and appropriate for a funder collaborative
- Sufficiently defined to effect change; clear goals
- Feasible given resources, political realities and partner capacity/willingness
- Alignment with individual ECFC members' priorities

2021 Work Plan

The CT ECFC approved its 2021 work plan and budget on December 17, 2020 after a careful review of its existing initiatives and emerging opportunities. The work plan ensures that several ongoing efforts to improve Connecticut's early care and education system are continued while pursuing new opportunities that have the potential to engage new partners and state agencies.

The approved budget of \$301,000 would advance the following goals:

1. To promote local input into state ECE policy and strengthen local ECE collaboratives through more diverse & inclusive council leadership and active parent engagement
2. To build the capacity of family childcare networks in order to promote provider stability and more equitable access for children and families
3. To promote changes to CT's childcare financing system to ensure equity and access
4. To expand parent voice and leadership at state and local levels through more accessible, equitable parent leadership training and the promotion of best practices in parent engagement
5. To engage the business community in addressing childcare issues that impact both parents' ability to work and business productivity
6. To expand individual & collective funder knowledge of racial equity and advance changes to ECE systems and structures that result in inequity