

Connecticut Early Childhood Funder Collaborative

A project of:



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Children's Fund of Connecticut
The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
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Carol P. O'Donnell
Executive Director
CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative
75 Charter Oak Avenue, #1-205
Hartford, CT 06106
codonnell@ctphilanthropy.org

2019 Annual Report

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.

In 2019, several long term ECFC action items became reality. In addition, other efforts including cross agency collaboration and state/philanthropic coordination continued and were strengthened. Key accomplishments include:

- **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 with a three-year transition plan nearing completion with strong support from the OEC commissioner;
- **Ongoing OEC/SDE coordination** in supporting Birth to 5/K-3 continuum and family engagement; this coordination is expected to deepen given the priorities of the OEC and SDE commissioners;
- **Continued state/philanthropic partnership** with CT ECFC the recipient of Federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) grant dollars to support local ECE collaboratives;
- **Deeper connection to national funder networks** through the Alliance for Early Success and National ECFC which resulted in greater visibility (CT ECFC highlighted in panel presentations at two national conferences), consultative support on advocacy and resultant funder survey, connection to national funders and funding opportunities (Raising Child Care Fund);
- Greater clarity and focus for CT ECFC **advocacy efforts; increased visibility** (e.g., Ready Nation forum);
- Supporting consultation and information dissemination on best practices in **childcare business management and shared service models;**
- **Membership retention** of 18 funders and outreach to 5 prospective members; and
- Agreement on **new revenue and membership structure.**

2019 Work Plan Implementation

- 1. Develop a state-local infrastructure to connect communities to one another and to the state.**
Result: CT Children’s Collective was launched in early 2019 with 29 local ECE council members and CT After School Network serving as fiscal sponsor and backbone organization. Staffing secured, web site launched and work plan developed with both individual and group input. Strong support from OEC was evident with new commissioner attending quarterly meetings and actively seeking input. Delays were encountered in securing state funding due to state budgeting and contracting process. In addition to capacity building efforts being launched by the CT Children’s Collective, federal funding awarded to CT ECFC through OEC will provide both operating and project support to the local EC Councils. The CT Children’s Collective and the network of local EC councils were incorporated into the recently approved three-year federal grant.
- 2. Develop options for addressing Connecticut’s childcare financing system to address issues of equity and provider administrative burden and meet family needs for care.**
Result: Draft options and transition plan with associated legislative proposals are being finalized in early 2020. Consultative effort was instrumental in connecting various OEC divisions and staff to address needed changes. ECFC played a key role in working with OEC to move ahead on consultation being provided by Third Sector Capital Partners.
- 3. Provide consultation on developing shared service networks of childcare providers to advance quality and efficiencies.**
Result: In partnership with OEC, ECFC supported consultation to seven communities seeking to pilot shared service models. Several networks have made significant progress in recruiting provider members and organizing services.
- 4. Support improved alignment of early care and Kindergarten-Grade 3 as required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.**
Result: Partnering with SDE and OEC, ECFC helped to design and support a pilot effort in 6 communities to develop Kindergarten transition plans, common outcomes and aligned policies. Brief, practical tools developed for conducting a data landscape analysis and designing a Kindergarten transition process with active input from the participating communities. Continuation funding has been secured from Heising-Simons Foundation.
- 5. Explore opportunities for improved policy and practice across state agencies on family engagement.**
Result: ECFC, SDE, OEC and a broad, committed group of educators, parents, social service providers, funders and early childhood experts developed [Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement](#). Released in 2018, this document sets forth a definition, operating principles and concrete examples of high-quality family engagement and has been formally adopted by ECFC, OEC and SDE. A second state wide symposium was held in December 2019 to explore messaging options. OEC, SDE and ECFC have initiated discussions with the National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) to secure technical consultation on aligning efforts to build and strengthen parent voice.
- 6. Determine the most effective role and strategies for CT ECFC advocacy efforts.**
Result: CT ECFC led national effort to establish network of EC funder collaboratives across the country to share information and best practice on advocacy. As a result, CT ECFC was asked to join the Philanthropic Engagement Project convened by the Alliance for Early Success (AES). This resulted in a full day consultation by AES on advocacy for CT ECFC and the development and implementation of a CT funder survey to ascertain funders’ interest in joint advocacy. In addition, CT ECFC has been active in bringing new thinking and research to the state including: 1) convening a half day legislative forum on childcare and its importance to economic growth working with Ready Nation, a national coalition of business leaders committed to early childhood; 2) facilitating a philanthropic discussion group at the New England regional forum on childcare sponsored by the federal Administration for Children and Families; and 3) working with other CT ECE partners to develop a 2020 session on childcare and economic growth with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

7. Continue to **improve funder knowledge and practice** through structured information sharing.
Result: ECFC continued its effort to build funder knowledge through presentations by the OEC commissioner, Department of Public Health, state Department of Education as well as the full day facilitated workshop by the Alliance for Early Success on funder collaborative advocacy.