



PLANTING SEEDS

Impact Report
2024-2025

Early
Childhood
Council
of LARIMER COUNTY



A SEASON OF GROWTH

Dear Early Childhood Champions,

Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) has been strategically and thoughtfully planting seeds of change for more than two decades. Grounded in collaboration and patience, we have intentionally listened and proactively responded to the needs of families, the challenges of early care and education providers, and the enthusiasm and limitations of our community partners.

Throughout the years, we have grown our impact by expanding our programs to include early childhood mental health, occupational therapy, and universal preschool, while continuing to drive resources and support to families and providers. We have also deepened our relationships locally, regionally, statewide, and with national partners to openly share our insights and learn from others. This reduces duplication, avoids barriers, and improves outcomes for everyone. Our leadership as an organization has established us as one of the most exceptional early childhood councils in Colorado and a trusted partner of Larimer County.

This year, we developed our new strategic framework. Through an intentional and iterative process, and heavily informed by our community, the plan ensures our values continue to align with our actions. We also continued to plant the seeds for public funding to support early care and education in our county through Larimer County Ballot Measure 1B this past August ('25-'26 fiscal year). Years in the making, the effort continues to underscore our unwavering commitment to solving the child care crisis locally.

Thank you for your continued support as we cultivate seeds of change for our children and our community. Together, we are making progress toward achieving our vision that all children in Larimer County are valued, healthy, and thriving.



Christina N. Taylor, MPH
Chief Executive Officer



Steve Kuehneman,
Board President

When you see the square icons, scan them with the camera on your phone to visit a webpage with more information.





AGENCY VALUES

Our team commits to incorporating our values into all facets of our work—from job descriptions to annual reviews. These values serve as a guidepost for how we approach our day-to-day work, helping us keep our "why" front and center.

COLLABORATION

We consistently and proactively collaborate with both internal and external partners and with individuals and organizations who represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives. We demonstrate respectful behavior toward others, regardless of their background.

RECOGNITION

We regularly offer recognition for others and seek out feedback and opportunities for growth. We work to ensure that ECCLC is recognized as a strong and respected partner in the community. We take initiative to understand and recognize how bias, both implicit and explicit, shows up in our work and throughout the early childhood system.

JOY

We proactively seek ways to find satisfaction and purpose in our day-to-day work and create space for fun and celebration with both internal and external partners.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We demonstrate ownership of our work, accountability to partners and peers, embody a solutions-focused attitude, and connect our work to the mission, vision and goals of ECCLC. We understand that work to advance our agency competencies in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is never complete and we are committed to being lifelong learners.

EXCELLENCE

We model integrity, take risks, learn from mistakes and strive to deliver undeniably good work in all aspects of our agency. We model work/life balance, and set appropriate boundaries to ensure success. We welcome opportunities to learn from mistakes and strive to hold ourselves accountable when it comes to advancing our DEI competency.

EarlyChildhoodCouncil
of LARIMER COUNTY

HIGHLIGHTS

- * Worked closely with Larimer County and the County Commissioners to help support their decision to refer **Measure 1B – Help Larimer Kids Thrive** – to the November 2025 ballot*
- * ECCLC Coaches supported **43** programs with quality improvement efforts
- * Helped spearhead the first **Northern Colorado Regional Child Care Summit**
- * Invested **\$483,552.95** in Larimer County families through the Larimer Child Care Fund
- * **Eliminated** the '24 Larimer Child Care Fund waitlist
- * Supported **160** programs and **2,270** Larimer County 4-year-olds in participating in Colorado Universal Preschool (UPK)
- * Hosted our **3rd Annual Provider Appreciation Awards**
- * Supported **8** programs in advancing to a Level 3-5 Colorado Shines rating
- * Developed a **new partnership** with the Town of Estes Park to help implement their Estes Valley Childcare Fund
- * Supported **7** providers through the All Our Kin cohort
- * Revamped the **Be Ready guide**
- * Welcomed **4** Colorado State University students into the ECMH Fellowship
- * Launched an updated **ecclc.org** website
- * Laid the groundwork for an **occupational therapy program**
- * Supported **42** programs with Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) consultation
- * Created a new **5-year Strategic Framework** through a highly-participatory, collaborative process
- * Provided **\$83,408** in quality improvement funding to programs
- * Introduced **Provider Socials**
- * Supported **16** programs in advancing from a Level 1 to a Level 2 Colorado Shines rating
- * Hosted **Governor Polis** at **Playcrafter Kids** to recognize their participation in Colorado Universal Preschool (UPK)
- * Provided **15** providers with updated technology through the Technology Fund
- * Hosted screenings of the **“Make a Circle”** documentary
- * Supported **17** programs with **\$288,161** in Emerging and Expanding Grants
- * Attended the **Children’s Funding Institute**
- * Supported **35** people with **\$17,195** in higher education and professional development scholarships
- * Presented at and participated in the **Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference**

“After our second daughter was born, we didn’t have a solid childcare plan after maternity leave. We knew that there was no way we could afford to enroll our children in a center and likely would have depended on friends and neighbors for support. Instead of relying on patchwork care, [because of the Larimer Child Care Fund] our daughters now thrive at the same center near our jobs, lifting a huge financial weight.”

– Parent of 2

*Please note that the actual referral to the ballot and passing of the measure occurred during the '25-'26 fiscal year.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

ECCLC continues to be proactive, thoughtful, and strategic in positioning our organization for the future.

'25-'30 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

In 2024, ECCLC launched a comprehensive strategic planning process to guide our work for the next five years. Partnering with Trebuchet Group, we designed an inclusive process that engaged our Leadership Team, Board of Directors, Advisory Council, staff, and community stakeholders. Using Trebuchet's Picturing the Future™ process, we facilitated multiple work sessions that helped participants develop a clear, shared vision for the future.

This highly-participatory approach ensured that our partners, parents, providers, and community leaders had a voice in shaping ECCLC's priorities. It laid the groundwork for an internal work plan and a robust evaluation framework to track meaningful outcomes and tell the story of ECCLC's impact. The plan reflects our community's needs and sets a bold, unified direction.

- GOAL 1** All Children in Larimer County Have Access to High Quality, Inclusive Early Childhood Environments and Relationships
- GOAL 2** The Early Childhood Workforce is Well-Supported to Provide High Quality Services in Our Community
- GOAL 3** The Early Childhood System in Larimer County is Community-Driven, Well-Funded, and Sustainable
- GOAL 4** Early Childhood Council of Larimer County is a Center of Excellence in Early Childhood Locally and at the State Level

ECCLC MISSION

We bring the community together to share knowledge and resources, build expertise and work collaboratively to ensure that all young children in Larimer County have the care, support and opportunities necessary to grow, learn and succeed.

ECCLC VISION

All children in Larimer County are valued, healthy, and thriving.



DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS

ECCLC has spent decades nurturing strategic relationships to ensure all children in Larimer County thrive. During the past year, several of our trusted partnerships reached news heights, elevating and sustaining our work for years to come.

LARIMER COUNTY

On June 23, ECCLC partnered with the Larimer County Board of County Commissioners and County staff for a dedicated work session to discuss the urgent need for sustainable funding to strengthen early childhood care and education. This collaborative session reflected the strong partnership between ECCLC and county leadership, grounded in shared priorities for children and families.

The Commissioners' willingness to engage deeply with the data, community input, and proposed solutions demonstrated their commitment to addressing the child care crisis.



This work session ultimately laid the groundwork for the Board's decision to refer Measure 1B – Help Larimer Kids Thrive – to the November 2025 ballot*, giving voters the opportunity to invest in transformational funding for early childhood programs and providers. This milestone underscores the power of ECCLC's role as a convener and trusted partner in shaping solutions that improve outcomes for children, families, and our local workforce.



*Please note that the actual referral to the ballot and passing of the measure occurred during the '25-'26 fiscal year.

Pictured: Liz Means, Honora Thompson, Josh Lee, Christina Taylor, Keiko Friar

GOVERNOR'S VISIT

Governor Polis visited Playcrafter Kids in August 2024, a standout child care program participating in Universal Preschool, Colorado's initiative to make early education more affordable and accessible. Known for nurturing young minds through imaginative play and creative exploration, Playcrafter Kids helps children discover their unique talents, build confidence, and develop collaboration skills. During his visit, the Governor celebrated the program's commitment to inspiring creativity, fostering a love of learning and the arts, and promoting mutual respect among children, families, and educators.



Pictured: Heather Blanco, Governor Jared Polis, Logan Mansanarez, Melia Goto, Jamie Stewart

"ECCLC has figured out the system and has a great team administering it for all UPK participating centers. Larimer County is fortunate to have our ECCLC team guiding the program for us!"

- A Colorado UPK Teacher at Teaching Tree Early Learning Center

NORTHERN COLORADO REGIONAL CHILD CARE INNOVATION SUMMIT

ECCLC, together with the Boulder and Weld Early Childhood Councils, organized and hosted the Northern Colorado Child Care Innovation Summit on September 30, 2024 in Longmont, Colorado. More than 200 dedicated attendees were energized by the meaningful conversations and innovative solutions to addressing pressing child care challenges.

Highlights included discussing how sustainable public investment is essential to closing gaps in access and affordability, and reviewing several innovative initiatives in Northern Colorado that are already delivering impactful results.



Pictured: Liz Means, Heather Blanco, Franny McLampy, Christina Taylor, Letha Gillisse, Lauren Powers

ROOTED IN CARE

Our early childhood coaches and early childhood mental health consultants ensure directors, teachers, and families are supported in and out of the classroom.

TRAININGS

Our team of early childhood coaches and early childhood mental health consultants offer in-person and virtual trainings throughout the year. We also conduct training onsite at early care and education providers' facilities when appropriate. These trainings range from Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT) to the Power of Relationships, and from Community of Practice for Directors and Assistant Directors to refresher classes on the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG). This past year, our team provided more than **130 training hours** to more than **250 early care and education teachers, staff, and directors**.

TECHNOLOGY FUND

ECCLC introduced the Technology Fund for family child care home (FCCH) providers. The fund helped **15 providers** access technology, like laptops and printers, that will improve the quality and ease of their business operations.

EMERGING AND EXPANDING GRANTS

Now in its fourth year, Emerging and Expanding (E & E) Grants from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood were utilized by **17 early care and education providers totaling \$288,161** to improve their spaces and programs, purchase materials, update technology, and engage in coaching.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Funding from the Buell Foundation, Larimer County Behavioral Health Services, and an anonymous funder provided **\$17,195** in scholarships to **35 recipients** across higher education, professional development, and ECMH-specific training.



Pictured: Early Care and Education Training Participants

ECMH FELLOWSHIP

Now in its fifth year, the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Fellowship welcomed **4 Colorado State University students (2 graduate and 2 undergraduate) and one licensed professional counselor (LPC)** into the cohort this past spring. Each had a different site placement: Poudre School District, Thompson School District, Peaceful Birth Company, Willow Collective, and The Family Center/La Familia.

In addition to weekly didactics, fellows participated in a weekly reflective group hosted by local social work professionals (Laura Sidener and Jenny Woodard). Panels of parents, community-based professionals, and classroom-based professionals as well as presenters from ECCLC, CTRAC (CSU), Larimer County Department of Health and Environment Foothills Gateway/Early Intervention, 3HopefulHearts, and Matthew's House also enhanced the weekly meetings. Fellows met in person at the beginning and end of the semester. ECMH fellows received a \$3,000 stipend and sign a letter of service agreement to work in Larimer County for 2 years in return, helping the fellowship directly benefit Larimer County's early education workforce. The program is funded by a grant from Larimer County Behavioral Health Services.



COACHING AND CONSULTING

Programs that benefited from ECMH consultation 42

Programs supported by ECCLC coaches 43

Quality improvement funding provided \$83,408

Programs that went through a Colorado Shines rating process 24

Programs that advanced from Level 1 to Level 2 rating 16

Programs that advanced to a Level 3-5 rating 8

ALL OUR KIN (AOK)

In its second year, the All Our Kin (AOK) is a program for family child care home providers to improve their understanding of the business side of running a child care program and bolster their connections with other professionals in the field. The virtual training is 30 hours of professional development over 10 weeks and covers everything from budgeting to marketing and taxes. This year's cohort was primarily providers located in Larimer County and a few providers from Weld County. **Seven providers participated in AOK**, ranging in experience from brand new to the FCCH field to those who have been providing care for 30+ years, which created many opportunities for learning and idea sharing within the cohort.

Participants received their choice of incentives, including technology to utilize for business needs and business resources, as well as a \$300 stipend.

COLORADO UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL (UPK)

The 2024-2025 school year marked the second year of Colorado Universal Preschool (UPK). Colorado UPK offers voluntary, high-quality universal preschool to every Colorado child in the year before kindergarten. Research shows preschool helps children be more prepared for school and for life, enhancing their language, math, reading, and social-emotional skills, reducing behavioral issues, and more. From higher graduation rates to reduced crime rates, the benefits also extend to children's families and their communities.

As Larimer County's Local Coordinating Organization (LCO) for Colorado UPK, ECCLC continues to work closely with families and providers to make preschool possible for more children.



"By alleviating some of the cost, we have seen more families be able to achieve their own goals as well. For example, we had a mom that was able to go back to school and finish her degree. We've also had families tell us about time they get to spend together and appreciate the reliable care they receive."

– A Colorado UPK Teacher at Teaching Tree Early Learning Center

'24-'25 BY THE NUMBERS

Percentage of Larimer County 4-year-olds in Colorado UPK **73%**

Larimer County 4-year-olds who participated in Colorado UPK **2,270**

Larimer County providers who offered Colorado UPK **160**

Average Amount Larimer County families received in UPK funding over 10 months (for 15 hours of Colorado UPK) **\$6,094**

Average Amount Larimer County families received who qualified for supplemental UPK funding over 10 months (for 30 hours of Colorado UPK) **\$10,822**

Millions in savings for Larimer County families thanks to Colorado UPK funding **\$14.7**



Pictured: Logan Mansanarez, Melia Goto

PROVIDER SOCIALS

In 2024, we launched our first-ever Provider Socials to strengthen relationships and create space for connection among early childhood professionals. These gatherings offer providers an opportunity to network, share resources, and engage directly with ECCLC staff. More than 80 providers attended the socials throughout the year. By regularly hosting these events, we hope to foster a more inclusive, supportive community for everyone.

PROVIDER AWARDS

On Thursday, December 5, 2024, we hosted our 3rd Annual Early Childhood Provider Appreciation Awards, which celebrate early childhood providers and champions across Larimer County. The event took place at Sweet Heart Winery in Loveland, Colorado, and welcomed 120 guests.

Attendees enjoyed drinks, dinner, and gift bags, while providers were honored throughout the evening with awards, recognition from the Council, and raffle prizes.



AWARD WINNERS

Miriam B Harris Lifetime Achievement Award	Anne Lance
Early Childhood Community Advocate Award	Fort Collins Chamber-Yvonne Meyers
Early Childhood Educator of the Year	Holly Huckfeldt Rachel Silva Taylor Bass
Early Childhood Systems Builder Award	Thad Paul - LCDHS
Early Childhood Workforce Development Award	Jamie Rasmussen BIPOC Alliance
Early Childhood Community Collaboration Award	Carlie Bangs - Town of Estes Park
Early Childhood Innovator Award	Loveland YMCA Becky Fase
Family Friendly Employer Award	Habitat for Humanity Waypoint Realty
Whole Child Award	Joe Ziegler
Early Childhood Provider Appreciation Awards	Deb's Kids, Alvarium, Irene Gilman, Thompson Valley Preschool, Teaching Tree Loveland

IMPLEMENTING AND ENHANCING

True to our innovative spirit, ECCLC is always testing, improving, and exploring new ways to make lasting change in early care and education.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

As part of our five-year strategic plan, ECCLC launched an occupational therapy program in 2025. This initiative expands the Specialist Consultant Team and advances efforts to strengthen child, family, and educator supports throughout the community.

The team will integrate occupational therapy expertise into early childhood settings by building relationships with children, families, teachers, and administrators. Unlike traditional models in which occupational therapy is provided to individual children, the embedded approach supports entire site communities, focusing on inclusive practices, daily routines, and collaborative problem-solving.

During the program's initial three-month exploratory phase, early childhood sites will engage in recurring consultation with an occupational therapist. Activities will include site visits, needs assessments, and classroom-based support. Teachers and families will contribute input through surveys and focus groups, providing insights into existing views on child development, access to developmental supports, and the effectiveness of embedded services. **Sites participating in the pilot will receive a \$3,000 stipend to obtain materials that strengthen and sustain occupational therapy in their programs.**

The program also creates pathways for connecting families to additional resources like Colorado Early Intervention and the school district's Child Find. Through this integrated model, occupational therapy expertise becomes a consistent part of the early learning environment, supporting stronger outcomes for children, educators, and families.



LARIMER CHILD CARE FUND

The Larimer Child Care Fund (LCCF) is a program that was created by United Way of Larimer County (UWLC) and is administered by the ECCLC. The fund helps low and moderate-income families who are not eligible for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) afford high-quality care for their children at the licensed providers of their choice. Recipients of the fund do not pay more than 15% of their income on child care for an entire year.

“With four kids, starting a new career seemed impossible—until LCCF. The childcare support let me focus on studies while knowing my children were safe. It also freed me from the financial burden and anxiety. Now I’m graduating as a medical assistant and can finally provide a better future for my children.

– Vanessa, Mother of 4



'24-'25 BY THE NUMBERS

Families Served	57
Children Served	75
Children Who Benefited from LCCF and Colorado Universal Preschool	17
Providers Who Participated	75
Amount Invested in Larimer County Families	\$483,552.95

Thanks to improvements to the application process and funding, the entire 2024 waitlist was cleared!

ESTES VALLEY CHILDCARE FUND

The Estes Valley Childcare Fund (EVCF) was established to provide tuition assistance to middle-income families. ECCLC has partnered with the Town of Estes Park to administer the program, starting in July 2025. We will be using our existing LCCF system, providing a simple, user-friendly process for families to apply for, renew, and monitor their tuition assistance. The streamlined process allows a household to apply annually for the program year, calculate their fee that they pay the provider of their choice, and then the tuition assistance subsidy is directly transferred to the provider.

“This is an exciting time for families in the Estes Valley, We’re growing the Estes Valley’s childcare community and removing obstacles by welcoming new providers and making sure families have financial support.”

– Carlie Bangs, Estes Park Housing and Childcare Manager

BE READY GUIDE REVAMP

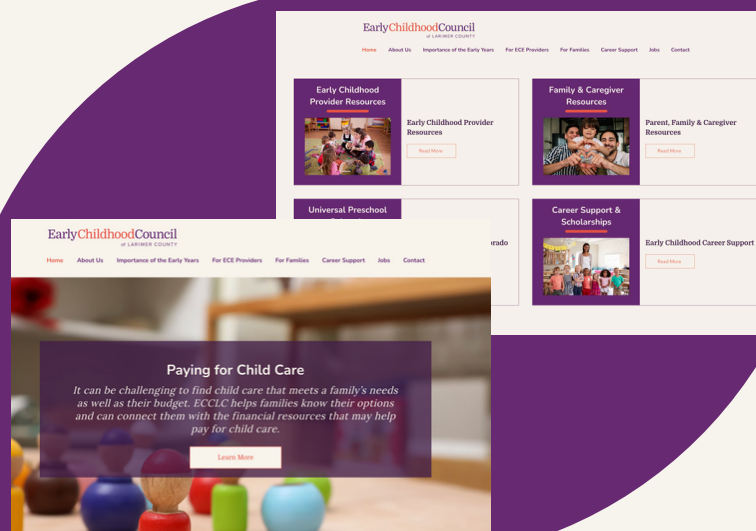
Last fall, ECCLC participated in a Transitions to Kindergarten Summit hosted by the National P-3 Center. The conversations and information shared at this event sparked discussion around updating our Be Ready guides. In response, we hosted a local Transition to Kindergarten summit at the Loveland Public Library that brought together early childhood teachers, administrators, and advocates to discuss how we can improve the conversation between early childhood educators, families, and kindergarten teachers.

Through this collaborative effort, we developed an interactive workbook and added it to each Be Ready guide. We hope this workbook will positively impact the transition to kindergarten for many children and their families.



NEW WEBSITE

This past year, we launched our new website. The user-friendly design aims to make it easier for families, child care providers, and community supporters to access all of our resources and learn more about our programs. Visit ecclc.org.



LEARNING AND SHARING

We take pride in learning, connecting, and growing. This past year, we prioritized outreach in our community in support of public funding for early care and education.

RMECC CONFERENCE

At the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference in March, ECCLC staff played a leading role in shaping the conversation about early childhood systems and solutions. Our CEO sat on a panel for a featured session designed to elevate local insights and statewide collaboration around improving outcomes for young children and families. ECCLC staff also contributed throughout the conference with presentations and participation in multiple sessions, sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches. This presence not only highlighted ECCLC's leadership in early childhood systems-building, but also strengthened our connections with partners across Colorado, reinforcing our role as a trusted convener and thought leader in the field.

MAKE A CIRCLE

ECCLC hosted two screenings of the documentary "Make a Circle" on May 14th and 15th. The screening on May 14th was designated as an ECE Provider Night, while the screening on May 15th was open to the public. "Make a Circle" captures the lives of early childhood educators and a provides a promising blueprint for fixing our broken child care system.

CHILDREN'S FUNDING INSTITUTE

ECCLC's Christina Taylor and Liz Means attended the Children's Funding Institute in Seattle the week of June 2nd. The Children's Funding Institute, hosted by the Children's Funding Project and Funding the Next Generation, is a biennial training focused on strategies for securing dedicated local funding for children's services.

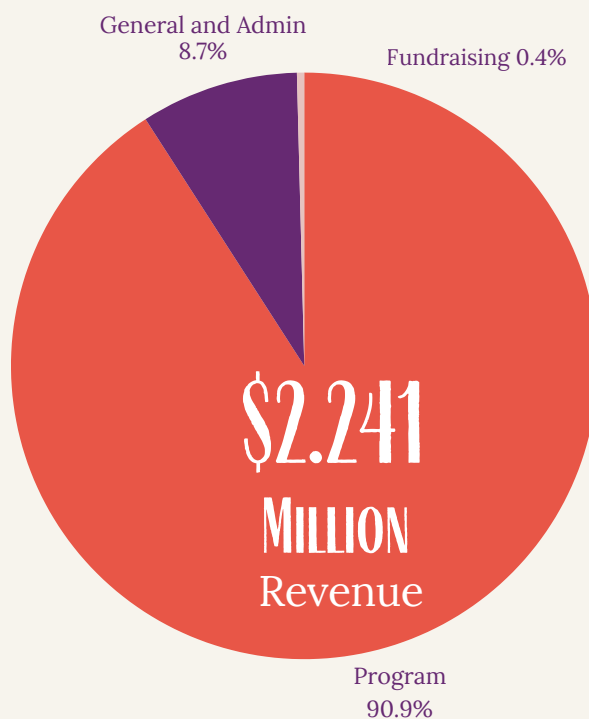
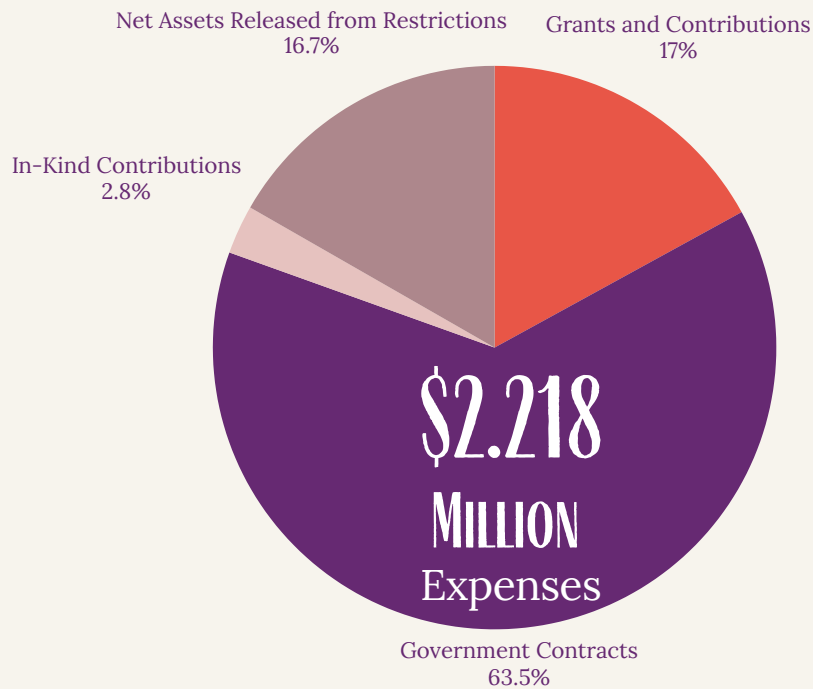
Liz and Christina joined intensive working groups focused on designing ballot campaign strategies and identifying funding sources, and partnered with peers from jurisdictions across the country that have established children's funds to explore best practices and pitfalls—information highly relevant as ECCLC began planning for dedicated funding advocacy.



Pictured: Lynea Hansen (Consultant), Liz Means, Christina Taylor, and Jason Callegari (Buell Foundation)

MAINTAINING STABILITY

Year after year, ECCLC continues to receive clean independent audits and remains committed to ensuring more than 90% of our expenses are directly related to programs





GROUNDING IN GRATITUDE

ECCLC is able to plant seeds of change thanks to the support of our funders, staff, and board of directors. Scan the QR code below for a full list of ECCLC staff and board members.

2024-2025 Funders

Anonymous Private Foundation
Bohemian Foundation
Buell Foundation
Colorado Department of Early Childhood
Gary Community Ventures
Larimer County Department of Behavioral Health Services
Nordson Corporation Foundation
United Way of Larimer County

