



# COMMUNITY PLAN FOR UNIVERSAL PRE-K

EI PASO COUNTY, COLORADO



**Joint Initiatives**  
FOR YOUTH + FAMILIES

Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families is the  
Local Coordinating Organization for UPK



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# VISION + VALUES

## VISION STATEMENT

**Our Universal Pre-K (UPK) vision underpinning the decisions and directions outlined herein is as follows:**

*Every family with a child or children aged birth through age four who meets the state’s eligibility requirements has access to excellent developmental and educational supports and services regardless of status or background so that all our community’s children have the chance to thrive.*

## VALUES

The following are the shared values of the community members who participated in the development of this plan. The plan builds on the existing partnerships, structures, and systems, and addresses the changes that are needed to undertake Universal Pre-K implementation. These values provide a framework for the strategies and activities that will be utilized as we embark on achieving our goals.

## EXPANDED ACCESS

At every level of the organization—the community-based board, Alliance for Kids Council members, executive leadership, community partners, and program staff—we hold a passion for improving the lives of the children who live in the Pikes Peak region, especially our most vulnerable children and their families. We are committed to the mission of HB 22-1295 and strongly believe that implementation of UPK—and its future expansion—will impact thousands of families and their children now, and for decades to come.

We believe in the philosophy of a mixed delivery system as it prioritizes equitable access and affordability, ensures flexibility in care, promotes continuity, and leverages infrastructure, by allowing families the choice to find the program that meets their needs.



# VISION + VALUES

## VALUES

### EQUITY

Closely tied to access is equity. Equity is realized when membership in a category can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and when outcomes for all groups are improved. We aim to eliminate inequities and improve outcomes for all children regardless of their diverse backgrounds.

Incorporating equity into our planning and implementation takes many forms, including inviting families onto the UPK Steering Committee, surveying them about their needs before and during planning and implementation, offering training to early childhood (EC) providers on racial equity, and utilizing a racial equity lens in developing local policies and processes.

### EMBRACE THE FAMILY, EMBRACE THE CHILD

The relationship between children and their families is the foundation upon which children's lives depend. The care and support of the family is crucial to a child's overall successful development as families are a child's first and best teacher. By providing support and information to families, we strive to ensure that each family has the supports necessary to provide their child with a solid developmental foundation. JI believes parents and caregivers are changemakers. They are leaders.

We want and need family voices and strengths to be engaged. Accordingly, strategies and activities will place priority on ensuring that families are at the broader policy-making table as well as leading the way in terms of meeting the needs of their children. We know from research and experience, that often the best way to serve the child is to engage in interventions and services that consider the needs of the entire family, so we also employ the Two-Generational approach to services and supports.

*We will place priority on ensuring that **families are at the broader policy-making table** as well as leading the way in terms of meeting the needs of their children.*





# VISION + VALUES

## VALUES

### TRAUMA MATTERS

Studies relating to the impact of trauma have been peeling back the onion, revealing that trauma is often the driving force behind maladaptive behaviors and must be recognized and supported to move a child or family forward. The lack of understanding of how trauma can affect memory, behaviors, and recovery can present barriers to healthy development and learning. Research shows that emotional support and intervention by caring service providers can mitigate the negative effects of trauma and improve individuals' capacities to overcome the past. As such, we strive to provide outreach, engagement, training, and services to families and children that are empowerment-based and informed by the fundamental context of trauma-informed best practice.

### TOGETHER, WE ARE BETTER

Joint Initiatives (JI) was founded by local community leaders who saw value in the various agencies that serve youth and children communicating and collaborating. Decades later, the many partners that make up JI's network have a lengthy list of achievements to show for their work together. We recognize that organizations, individuals, and families are all valuable contributors to UPK implementation. While we set about the work of institutionalizing UPK systems and procedures, we will continue to make profound quality input and engagement a hallmark of our efforts.



*While we set about the work of institutionalizing UPK systems and procedures, we will continue to **make profound quality input and engagement a hallmark of our efforts.***

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## BACKGROUND

In 2022, Colorado leaders adopted HB22-1295 establishing the Universal Pre-K (UPK) program that voters approved to be funded through nicotine taxation. Under the legislation, Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs) would implement the program in their communities.

This plan is designed for Colorado's largest Universal Pre-K catchment area: El Paso County, Colorado. The county's systems and fast-growing population present unique challenges. The county includes fifteen school districts, five military installations and 400+ early childhood (EC) programs, more than any catchment area in the state, with approximately half of these EC programs categorized as Family Child Care Home (FCCH) providers. El Paso County also has the highest number of children/families enrolled in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP).

Joint Initiatives for Youth and Families, or JI, was selected as the Local Coordinating Organization (LCO) to develop and implement the state's Universal Pre-K Program in El Paso County. JI serves as a backbone agency uniting three state-required children-focused coalitions: El Paso County's Interagency Oversight Group (IOG), the 4th Judicial District's Juvenile Services Planning Committee (JSPC), and the county's early childhood council called Alliance for Kids (AFK). JI is the only organization in Colorado to house all three, providing a unique opportunity for coordinated impact.

The Alliance for Kids (AFK) Council has operated under JI's umbrella for 26 years. As a result, JI has a dedicated department—the Foundations Program—for early childhood programming with a team of 16 full-time staff members who focus exclusively on fulfilling the AFK's strategic plan and supporting the area's early childhood education providers and families. The Council includes representatives of community- and school-based ECE centers and other stakeholders.

## LOCAL GOVERNANCE

To provide community-based oversight of plan implementation, the UPK Committee will be established as an active standing committee within the Alliance for Kids Council. The committee will be comprised of representatives from school districts, community-based EC programs, family centers and other community stakeholders, most of whom will also serve as members of the AFK Council, though membership in both will not be required.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

**The plan includes six strategic directions:**

1. **By the Numbers:** ensure accurate counts of eligible children as well as track open EC slots.
2. **Family Focus:** inform families about UPK and engage them in the UPK Program.
3. **Mixed-Delivery Model:** ensure that the various provider types are participating in the program and communicating with each other.
4. **Collaborating for Capacity:** support the EC field's expansion so that there are sufficient UPK slots to meet local demand.
5. **Workforce Campaign:** recruit professionals into the EC field to address the workforce shortage and retain the professionals in the field.
6. **Resource Allocation:** prioritize equity and families with the least access to preschool.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## BY THE NUMBERS

We anticipate that 50-70% of local families with 4-year-olds will want to enroll their children in UPK; simultaneously, many segments of El Paso County are anticipating population growth. Stakeholders have reviewed estimates provided by the state and agree with the estimate that families of 6,500 4-year-olds will desire registration for UPK in the first year of implementation.

### **Data collection efforts will need to fulfill key functions going forward:**

- Provide a count of the estimated number of children who will sign up for UPK the following year. In future years, a variety of data source points will be utilized to determine this number. JI recommends that the state consider the use of a demographer to project trends as well as assigning an ID number to each child in the data system.
- Provide a count of the number of UPK slots open among EC programs, not only for the following year, but in real time. To ensure ease of data collection and monitoring of UPK allocation within the community, UPK providers will participate in the Pikes Peak region BridgeCare site, [PikesPeakEarlyChildhood.org](https://www.pikespeakearlychildhood.org), to track access and availability in real time.
- Utilize data to assess UPK participation and inform recruitment targeting and plan improvement needs.

## FAMILY FOCUS

Given local decentralization reflected, in part, by 15 school districts and five military installations, the strategies to support enrollment of families in UPK will require an intensity of services and coordination that may not be needed in other communities. By prioritizing outreach in pre-determined zip codes, services will be targeted to underserved neighborhoods to reach families living in areas with few quality child care options.

### **To ensure that families are adequately supported when accessing UPK and other needed resources within our community, our community will strive to:**

- Educate all families about UPK through a robust marketing and outreach campaign,
- Develop local systems to ensure placement of a child in a program best-suited to meet their needs,
- Increase JI staff capacity for direct family support, and
- Coordinate with local systems to ensure alignment of family support with legislation.

## MIXED-DELIVERY MODEL

El Paso County has a unique provider mix as 33% are center-based providers, 20% are school district programs, and almost half—47%—are family child care homes. We place importance on families in our community having access to providers of their choice. Our approach to ensuring mixed delivery focuses on:

- Deep provider engagement in the planning process as outlined in the Collaborating for Capacity section,
- Ongoing input from all provider types,
- Governance structure composed of all provider types (see Local Governance section),
- Surveying providers to determine interest in providing UPK,
- Varied mechanisms for disseminating UPK information, and
- Creating a network of support for providers to increase confidence and competence in meeting the programmatic and contractual requirements.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## COLLABORATING FOR CAPACITY

The early childhood landscape in El Paso County is recovering from a 7.5% loss in the number of programs through the pandemic, which primarily impacted small center-based programs and family childcare homes. The county has 195 family child care programs and 221 center-based programs for a total of 416 programs at the time of plan completion.

### **Jl will employ four strategies for building capacity:**

1. Provide direct technical training and coaching to EC programs.
2. Create and implement a short- and mid-range development plan to secure additional funding sources.
3. Explore and cultivate long-term sustainability and expansion strategies to fund UPK beyond 10 hours each week.
4. Employ workforce development strategies to support the area's need for EC workforce. The Workforce Campaign section of the plan provides the details for this strategic approach.

## WORKFORCE CAMPAIGN

Workforce shortages are creating barriers to both operations and programmatic quality as administrators struggle to hire and retain staff in the current workforce landscape. Children also need professionals who can connect with them and their families culturally and linguistically. This plan dovetails with the work of the El Paso County Early Childhood Workforce Taskforce, building upon the recruitment, retention and livable wage strategies outlined in its plan.

### **Workforce development efforts will be pursued on four fronts:**

1. Recruitment efforts include Earn + Learn apprenticeships, engagement with high school students, supporting technical and continuing education, and recruiting military spouses.
2. Retention strategies involve providing technical support and training to providers on retaining staff, offering a repository of wellness activities, creating a substitute pool, streamlining the process for becoming Early Education Teacher certified, and more.
3. Striving for living wages will involve technical assistance to providers on "stacking" funds and structuring business operations, partnering with the business community to support early childhood education, and exploring public funding.
4. Ensuring that workforce strategies are culturally and linguistically relevant by including languages spoken in the provider's profile, providing restorative practice and anti-bias training, encouraging the use of research-based diversity-focused curriculum, targeting programs offering diversity in UPK recruitment efforts, and hiring bilingual family navigators.

## RESOURCE ALLOCATION

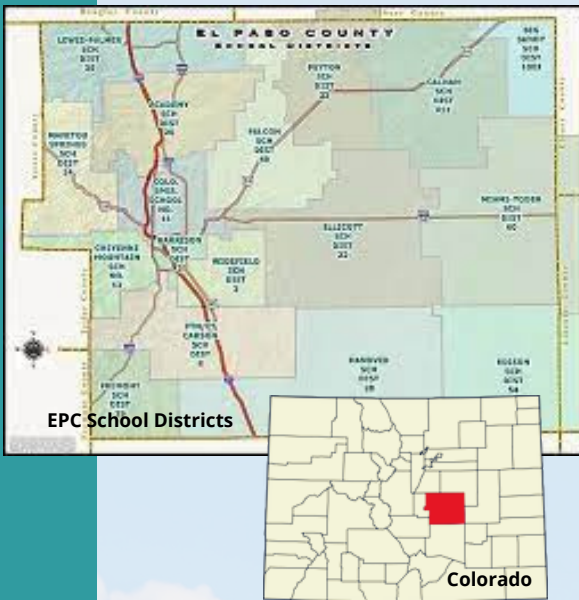
As part of the application to become the LCO for El Paso County, Jl chose for the state to distribute funds to UPK providers. As such, Jl will play the role of acting as a liaison between the state and local programs and will support successful allocation by:

1. Educating providers regarding funding allocation and providing technical assistance as necessary.
2. Providing direct support to families, especially those with the most need to ensure the successful completion of the UPK application.



# EL PASO COUNTY

## What makes EPC unique?



This plan is designed for Colorado's largest Universal Pre-K catchment area: **El Paso County, Colorado**. El Paso County is situated in central Colorado at the base of the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. The County's systems and fast-growing population present unique challenges. The county includes 15 school districts, five military installations, and more than 400 early childhood programs, more than any catchment area in the state, with approximately half of these EC programs categorized as Family Child Care Home (FCCH) providers. **El Paso County also has the highest number of children/families enrolled in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP).**

**730,395**  
**RESIDENTS**

**46,842**  
**CHILDREN UNDER AGE 5**

**15**  
**SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

**5**  
**MILITARY INSTALLATIONS**

**400+**  
**EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS**

El Paso County is the most populous county in Colorado, home to 730,395 residents including 46,842 children under age five. Of those children, **almost 19,000 (41%) are children of color, dual-language speakers and/or immigrants. Approximately 5,000 (11%) of all area children under five are Special Education eligible.** These children require early childhood professionals with deep skills in differentiated instruction in addition to an array of skills to support parents as their children's first/primary teacher.

The county **encompasses 2,130 square miles**, from mountains to desert plains. Resources tend to be centered in Colorado Springs, reflecting the city's dominance with 66% of the region's population. Even within the city, resources vary by location, frequently leaving large swathes of neighborhoods, particularly in southeast El Paso County, as service deserts. With decentralization of school districts, military installations, and organizations that serve them, the area's fragmentation creates communication barriers for families and agencies alike.



# THE LCO: JOINT INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH + FAMILIES

## MISSION

*Joint Initiatives for Youth and Families (JI) serves as the foundation and backbone agency for the purpose of bringing together agencies and systems that serve the region's children, youth, and families. JI serves to catalyze collaboration for positive, sustainable, and higher-impact services for young people birth-21 and their families.*

## JOINT INITIATIVES

Joint Initiatives for Youth and Families, or JI, serves as a backbone agency uniting three state-required children-focused coalitions: El Paso County's Interagency Oversight Group (IOG), the 4th Judicial District's Juvenile Services Planning Committee (JSPC), and the county's early childhood council called Alliance for Kids (AFK) Council. JI is the only organization in Colorado to house all three, providing a unique opportunity for coordinated impact.

## CAPACITY

JI is more than 30 years old and maintains 37 full-time employees and a budget in excess of \$4 million, with revenues exceeding \$5 million in FY21. Governed by a community-based board of directors, JI is the beneficiary of diverse and reliable sources of funding, including government grants from the Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Division of Youth Corrections, and El Paso County. JI is also the recipient of private funds from foundations including Colorado Springs Health Foundation, Colorado Health Foundation, Pikes Peak Community Foundation, and the Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation, with several of these organizations awarding six-figure grants to JI in the past 18 months.

JI has a strong history of launching and sustaining coordinated programs with multiple partners, including a domestic violence coordinated response program called Green Book as well as the Southeast Soccer Initiative that has flourished.

## PROGRAMMING

JI implements its work through three programs: Foundations, Pathways, and Voices.

## FOUNDATIONS

Foundations Program staff, working in coordination with the Alliance for Kids Council, improve environments that prepare young children to enter, and flourish in, preschool and kindergarten, to build families' resources and skills, and to ensure that families have access to social, physical, and mental health services in an equitable manner.

The Foundations Program has three components to strengthen the area's EC system:

- Learning + Development
- Family Support + Education
- Health + Well-Being



# THE LCO: JOINT INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH + FAMILIES

## FOUNDATIONS, CONTINUED

Aligned with Colorado's Early Learning Framework, these components provide structure for all JI's early childhood strategic goals, activities and outcomes. A committee of stakeholders supports each area.

Key 2020-21 outcomes include providing: outreach to 430 early childhood education (ECE) programs; 5,241 hours of direct Early Childhood Mental Health consultation; 608 coaching hours for ECE program providers and their workforces; early language and literacy coaching to 45 program providers; \$14,585 in scholarships to EC workforce candidates; and six trainings in healthy social-emotional development for 556 participants.

## PATHWAYS

Pathways Program serves children and teens experiencing challenges, including substance abuse, behavioral health, and parental abuse/neglect. Pathways incorporates a whole-family-centered approach and utilizes strengths-based problem-solving strategies. In 2020-21, Pathways and EPCDHS staff responded to families' increased needs by serving 1,461 children/youth. Of those served by Pathways teams, 100% of youth were diverted from commitment to Division of Youth Services, 75% reported improved school attendance, and 98% had no substantiated abuse findings.

## VOICES

The Voices Program ensures that JI's and our partners' services are guided by youth and families' input and perspectives. The program promotes effective approaches such as trauma-informed practice, racial equity, restorative practice, and two-generational programming, to foster a community where children, youth, and their families achieve their desired outcomes.

## SELECTION AS UPK-LCO

A local foundation, the Legacy Institute, served as a third-party facilitator, bringing representatives of school- and community-based EC programs together to engage them in dialogue and determine which organization is best suited to serve as the LCO. JI was the unanimous choice to serve in this role. Representatives determined that JI was best positioned to meet the list of critical criteria the community members established including cultural competency skills, management capacity, expertise in the field, and the ability to coordinate stakeholders.

Additionally, JI houses the Alliance for Kids (AFK) Council, the county's Early Childhood Council. These Councils, located throughout the state, facilitate coordination and communication among providers and engage the field in strategically planning to improve the overall quality of the early childhood education (ECE) system. Accordingly, serving in the Local Coordinating Organization role fits squarely within the mission and vision of the AFK Council. The Council has been dedicated to expanding and improving early childhood programs and services for children and families for almost three decades.



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# THE LCO: JOINT INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH + FAMILIES

## ALLIANCE FOR KIDS COUNCIL

The AFK Council has operated under JI's umbrella for 26 years. The Council was founded in 1996 under the auspices of the El Paso County Department of Human Services as a vehicle to ensure access to quality child care and in response to welfare reform. In 1997, AFK was one of twelve pilot communities in the Colorado Consolidated Child Care Pilot. This pilot project was established by the Colorado General Assembly (SB 97-174) and designed to help local communities address critical needs for full-day, full-year child care services in partnership and aligned with welfare reform.

Over 50 key stakeholders formed the initial 1997 AFK, including parents, early care and education providers, school districts, higher education institutions, health organizations, and community agencies. Since that time, AFK has served as El Paso County's Early Childhood Council (C.R.S. 26-6.5-103) charged with building a local early childhood system as a part of fulfilling its vision of "Making El Paso County the Best Place to Raise a Child."

The AFK Council's successes in the early childhood (EC) arena are noteworthy and focused on the areas of EC program quality, increased access for the most vulnerable children and families, workforce development, and governance structure. JI staff are currently supporting 100 EC programs in reaching and/or maintaining quality programs. Community-wide data shows a 40% level of quality engagement, defined as Colorado Shines Level 2 and above, even amid the pandemic. Through a contract with the El Paso County Department of Human Services, JI and AFK have increased access to EC programming to the most vulnerable children and families by increasing the quality at 24 EC programs who offer CCCAP and increasing the number of programs with CCCAP fiscal agreements by nine over the past year.





# PLANNING PROCESS

Jl committed to a very inclusive input process to ensure that stakeholders had the opportunity to provide meaningful input that resulted in a comprehensive, well-considered Universal Pre-K plan for the county.

Jl continued to convene and seek guidance from the UPK Advisory Committee that had assembled to select the LCO for our catchment area. With this committee, Jl devised a three-phase plan input and development process.

## **Phase 1: Steering Committee Engagement** **Phase 2: Community Input** **Phase 3: Plan Completion**

Dr. Wendy Birhanzel, Superintendent of Harrison School District 2, reported to Jl's board that "the school districts feel very good about this process and believe their voices have been valued and heard." Noreen Landis-Tyson, President and CEO of CPCD...giving kids a head start, remarked that "this has been the most inclusive process in which I have ever been involved."

## **PHASE 1: STEERING COMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT**

Jl invited more than 60 individuals representing 51 organizations to participate in the UPK Planning Steering Committee. Organizations included all 15 of the school districts in the El Paso County catchment area, Early Connections Learning Centers, CPCD...giving kids a head start, El Paso County Department of Human Services, and Pikes Peak BOCES. See Appendix A for the full list.

The full committee convened three times over a five-week period to brainstorm, prioritize and articulate the goals, strategies and activities for local UPK implementation. Between each

meeting, the Jl team compiled the feedback and updated the organic planning documents that was also available for input and editing in Google Docs. Jl emailed the more than 400 ECE programs to make them aware of the Google Docs planning instrument and invited comment from any interested party. Additionally, Jl posted all committee notes on a UPK-specific webpage established for planning purposes.

During the first two meetings, the committee work was accomplished by subcommittees that were established based on planning needs: Parent Engagement, Data Collection, Mixed-Delivery Integration, Workforce Development and School District Needs. During the third meeting, all subcommittees' members engaged in a "walk around" so that each subcommittee had the opportunity to review the input of the other subcommittees and make further comment and additions. In this way, all committee participants were able to provide suggestions for all plan components.



***The school districts feel very good about this process and believe their voices have been valued and heard.***

*Dr. Wendy Birhanzel, Superintendent of Harrison School District 2*

***This has been the most inclusive process in which I have ever been involved.***

*Noreen Landis-Tyson, President and CEO of CPCD...giving kids a head start*



# PLANNING PROCESS

## PHASE 2: COMMUNITY INPUT

The purpose of the second phase was to ensure that additional stakeholders were afforded the opportunity to have a voice in the planning process.

**Four input meetings focused on specific stakeholders:**

- **Owners and Administrators of ECE Programs**
- **Teachers and Caregivers**
- **Family Child Care Providers**
- **Families**

Part of the purpose for breaking out owners and administrators from teachers and caregivers was to give program staff a space to provide input with their peers and to share without the inhibitions that could come with having an employer present.

**At each meeting, the participants were asked for input utilizing probing questions that included:**

- What specific strategies or enrollment supports are needed to ensure that the children and families most in need have the information necessary to access UPK?
- How do we reduce the steps and burdens for families and providers and ensure that there is no wrong door for entering the early childhood care and education system?
- How do you see our community promoting Universal Pre-K to providers, such as yourselves?
- What steps should our community take to engage providers in offering UPK?
- How will we grow the number and capacity of UPK eligible programs?
- What steps should we take to recruit new staff into the field of early childhood locally?
- What steps should we take to retain current staff in our local early childhood workforce?
- Are you seeing families that speak other languages or are from other cultures than your staff enroll in your program?
- What needs to be done to ensure that your workforce is culturally and linguistically relevant to the community?

## PHASE 3: PLAN COMPLETION

Finally, after the seven meetings and plan draft distribution via Google Docs, the JI team had final meetings with the UPK Advisory Committee as well as the 60-member UPK Steering Committee. JI sought the guidance from the Advisory Committee for final process steps. Next, the team drafted a near-final document that was again available on Google Docs and emailed to Advisory Committee and Steering Committee members. JI emailed the 400+ EC programs with a link to the Google Doc and invited final comments. Finally, the team integrated the feedback and submitted this final plan.



# UNIVERSAL PRE-K GOALS

## GOAL 1

Create and institutionalize a steering committee to oversee Universal Pre-K implementation in El Paso County within the Alliance for Kids Council. This new committee will provide broad representation of early childhood education (ECE) providers and related stakeholders.

## GOAL 2

The LCO will collect accurate data to determine community need as well as to measure UPK implementation.

## GOAL 3

Families, particularly those with the greatest need, will be informed about the availability of Universal Pre-K in El Paso County and will have access to supports to aid them in enrollment.

## GOAL 4

A wide range of provider types, or a mixed-delivery system, will be recruited and supported in participating in Universal Pre-K so that families have access to the provider types of their choice.

## GOAL 5

The number of UPK slots in El Paso County will meet the needs of families with eligible children.

## GOAL 6

El Paso County ECE field has a stable and dependable workforce to meet families' need for early childhood education.

## GOAL 7

Funds allocated to the area by the state are distributed throughout the county as determined by key factors including equitable access, family choice, and area service gaps.



# LOCAL GOVERNANCE



Throughout the LCO planning process, the highly inclusive ad hoc steering committee of 60 community representatives was engaged to design the foundation and tenets of the plan. Going forward, JI will want to continue broad engagement and outreach to all interested parties, but also recognizes the need for streamlining and flexibility over the long term.

## ALIGNMENT WITH AFK'S MISSION

As described previously, Colorado's elected representatives passed HB-07-1062 to require local communities to establish early childhood councils to promote collaboration, build the area's EC system capacity, and provide community-wide strategic planning and financial oversight of Council funding. As a result, the Alliance for Kids Council was formed. AFK develops and monitors new and ongoing programs and projects as well as solicits and oversees funding. Creating Universal Pre-K protocols and implementing UPK activities fits squarely in the AFK mission.

The AFK Council has 26 years of experience coordinating with the broad range of EC providers and stakeholders whose representatives make up the Council membership. The Council has a strong background in developing strategic plans for the area's children ages birth to 8. Developing this UPK plan required broader engagement and processes, but the AFK Council members were critical leaders and participants, and the Council provides a solid foundation on which we can build. Broader community engagement and fundraising from the community will be outlined in the Collaborating for Capacity section of this plan.

## STREAMLINED COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION

JI has worked in the past three years to streamline its committees and input processes to save leaders' time as they were participating in two or more committees whose work and priorities often overlapped. Accordingly, merging the UPK oversight structure into AFK is the logical next step.

## UPK COMMITTEE

The UPK Committee will become an active standing committee of the Alliance for Kids Council. This section outlines the membership of that committee, its initial duties that may evolve over time, and the necessary changes that the AFK Council will need to make for a successful "merge."

The UPK Committee will not have a specific number of members but will aim for 17-25 members. While most of its membership will also be members of the Alliance for Kids, the committee may include members who do not also serve on the Alliance for Kids Council to ensure broader participation from needed representatives who may not wish to add two committees to already heavy community involvement.





# LOCAL GOVERNANCE

## COMPOSITION

The members of the committee will include:

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	AFK COUNCIL MEMBER
AFK's liaison to the Joint Initiatives Board	Yes
Family Voice Representative (2 positions)	Yes (one is required)
Community-based program with 100+ FTEs	Yes
Community-based program with 20-99 FTEs	Yes
Community-based program with less than 20 FTEs	Yes
Family home representatives (2 positions)	Yes
Area Head Start program representative (currently CPCD)	Can be AFK's Head Start liaison or other CPCD staff
School district representative from the southeast section of the county	Yes (one is required)
School district representative from the northeast section of the county	Yes (one is required)
School district representative from the northwest section of the county	Yes (one is required)
School district representative from the southwest and west section of the county	Yes (one is required)
El Paso County Department of Human Services Representative	Yes
Lead or Chair Superintendent of the Superintendents' group or designee	Not required
Military representative—holds an EC-related position	Not required
At least three (3) community representatives who may come from foundations, business sector, hospital system, EC field, etc.	Not required



## MEMBERSHIP SELECTION

The AFK co-chairs, in consultation with JI's leadership, will appoint the UPK Committee chair or co-chairs.

The AFK Council will develop a slate of committee nominations; however, school districts will have a say in who will represent them. The school districts will convene at least annually, and at one of these meetings will nominate representatives from their ranks for consideration by the AFK Council. Also note that charter school administrators will be invited to participate in the school district meetings and may be nominated as a representative to the UPK Committee. The school districts' nominees will be added to the slate of members. The AFK Council will vote on the slate and will have final approval on all committee nominations.

## DUTIES

The duties of the committee will include but are not limited to:

- Recommending the funding levels and distribution formulas for funding EC programs with UPK appropriations in El Paso County.
- Prioritizing equity in the funding recommendations so that the community's most vulnerable families are given equitable access. For this purpose, "most vulnerable" is defined as the hardest-to-reach families who are below the federal poverty guidelines, those families who are experiencing homelessness, those who are racial or ethnic minorities, those with the least access to care, and those with special needs.
- Ensuring and monitoring implementation of this plan and revising the plan because of lessons learned and expanding need.
- Assessing and promoting quality in EC programs specifically and in the EC field generally.
- Reviewing monthly reports relating to number of slots filled, number of open slots, waiting list numbers, and progress of building capacity.
- Exploring and assisting with additional funding avenues to expand capacity and access.
- Continuing to support and pursue broad community input on UPK implementation.



# LOCAL GOVERNANCE

## COMMUNITY INPUT

The UPK Committee along with JI's leadership and UPK-specific staff will have the responsibility to ensure ongoing engagement and transparency in UPK implementation in El Paso County.

Throughout the planning process, JI has provided numerous avenues for meaningful input, and many of these efforts will continue including:

- Updating the LCO web pages with latest information including state communique, UPK Committee and AFK meeting minutes, and other key UPK documents.
- Document sharing to allow for direct stakeholder input as opportunities arise.
- Holding at least three "town hall" community meetings each year in the first two years of implementation to learn from the community and share information. Every EC program will be invited to attend these meetings. (If attendance is high, these meetings may be held several different times during the same month.)
- Convening at least one meeting each year specifically for school district representatives who will select their nominees to the UPK Committee (among other business items).

## AFK COUNCIL BY-LAWS CHANGES

The AFK Council will make the following changes to its structure to:

- Establish a standing UPK Committee.
- Expand the Council to include additional community representatives, including all community-based and school district EC representatives. Currently, the AFK composition includes 23 members, so it will need to expand to at least 30 members.
- Allow for community members to serve on the committee without having to also participate on the AFK Council.

## DECISION MAKING

Colorado law holds boards of directors for nonprofit organizations responsible for conducting the business of the organization. The statute establishing the state's early childhood education councils also grants authority to them to determine their own strategic planning and how to expend state funds granted to them. Since the AFK Council functions as an arm of JI, the JI Board monitors the Council's operations in keeping with its legal duties. The board will only intervene if Council decisions pose a threat to the organization. Should this situation arise, the JI board does not simply override Council decisions. Instead, mechanisms are in place for communication and resolution. By the same token, it is expected that the UPK Committee will provide general governance for UPK implementation but will link with the AFK Council who links with JI's board. Should any of these entities diverge in opinions, then communication and resolution are expected.





# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## BY THE NUMBERS

The El Paso County Advisory Committee and early childhood stakeholders reviewed data sets provided by the state to estimate the number of families with 4-year-olds desiring to enroll in UPK in the first year of implementation. They engaged in conversations regarding the number of providers and “slots” that may be available in our community.

While the estimate of demand has been determined, key information is needed at the time of print, including funding structure and programs’ requirements. Accordingly, with the many unknowns, we are not able to have a sense of UPK provider participation.

However, our emphasis on provider engagement throughout the community planning process, our community’s implementation of a local BridgeCare website, and our envisioned system of support for UPK providers leaves us hopeful as we plan for the first year of programming. Additionally, our planning process highlighted the importance of data to inform not only implementation but also the positive impact of this programming on children and families.

## ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CHILDREN REGISTERING FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

**Going forward, local data collection efforts will inform estimates:**

- JI recommends that a state-funded demographer be hired to assist with projecting population trends throughout Colorado.
- School districts will report their 2022-23 kindergarten enrollment as well as project kindergarten enrollment for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Our data collection will include the Woodland Park School District in Teller County because a substantial number of families live in Woodland Park but work in El Paso County.



*We estimate that approximately **families of 6,500 four-year-olds** will will desire registration for UPK in the first year of implementation.*



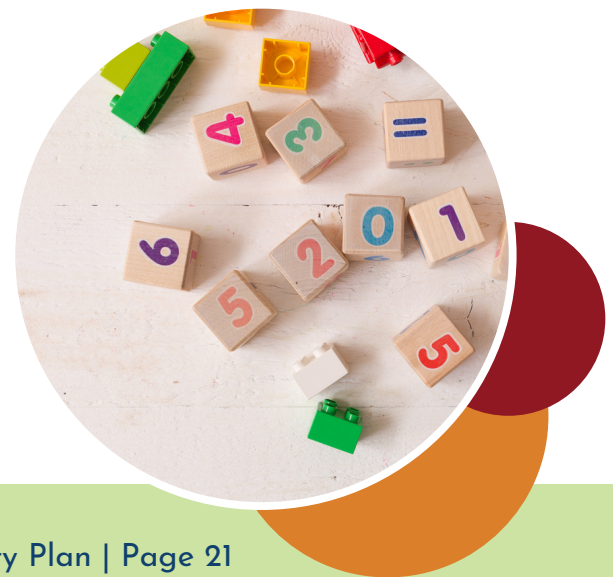
# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Local data collection efforts, continued:

- In the absence of (or in addition to) a state-funded demographer to assist with growth projections, staff will research census data and birth reports for use in projecting the number of children eligible for UPK.
- Additionally, staff will use the local BridgeCare website (PikesPeakEarlyChildhood.org) to collect data on children currently enrolled in early care and education programs in El Paso County, local UPK openings, and waitlist information.
- Additionally, a Data Collection Subcommittee will be formed, supported by JI staff, and will utilize these reported numbers, as well as past kindergarten rates and Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) reports by school district for the past five years, to determine the projected growth rates across the county with the aim of yielding more accurate estimates.
- To obtain an unduplicated count of children being served by public funding in El Paso County by December 1st of each school year, JI will determine the number of children through local data collection, or other process determined by the state, to include preschool children enrolled in publicly funded “slots” (as is the case now with CPP and Pre-K SPED).
- JI recommends that the state employ a data system that assigns an ID number to each child to track them in the system. By using the ID number, the state system can build an algorithm that accounts for duplicates, how stacked funding is being utilized, as well as provide the demographics of the children who are enrolled in publicly funded programs as part of the effort to ensure equitable access to UPK services.

## ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF SLOTS

Providers in El Paso County are eager to learn more about the state’s funding structure as well as what is required of programs to offer UPK. However, they remain uneasy with stating interest until the funding and standards-related information is shared. The high stakeholder engagement in the community planning process suggests a high level of interest in offering UPK. Once the funding and quality requirements are promulgated into rule, and no later than February 2023, JI will survey the 400+ licensed providers and all school districts regarding their interest in becoming a UPK provider as well as their estimated capacity.





# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES



*To ensure ease of data collection and monitoring of UPK allocation within the community, UPK providers will participate in the Pikes Peak region BridgeCare site, [PikesPeakEarlyChildhood.org](https://www.pikespeakearlychildhood.org), to track access and availability in real time.*

Jl, in partnership with Teller, Park and Elbert counties, invested in the development of a local BridgeCare website this year (2022) and is currently supporting providers in utilizing the platform. Additionally, Jl received grant funds to work with BridgeCare to begin tracking workforce data, which allows local needs to be quantified. BridgeCare training has taken place with staff from all three Councils as well as within the early childhood community. To incentivize participation, providers who complete their program profile and enter openings into BridgeCare by November 30, 2022, will be entered into a drawing for a \$250 gift card. In December 2022, an extensive digital marketing campaign will drive families to the BridgeCare website. Digital flyers will be sent to all licensed providers, and in-person outreach events will begin. See the Family Focus section for more details.

Data and evaluation staff will analyze local data monthly and will provide a formal monthly report out to the community. The UPK Committee will review data and will ensure that sectors of El Paso County with the least access to care are prioritized. This work will require capacity and technical support, thus creating a need for 1.0 FTE data specialist to complete this work for the community (see proposed budget), which Jl may subcontract to a partnering entity. The community desires that this position will evolve to allow for not only supply and demand data monitoring and reporting, but also analysis of data to inform local implementation, and data collection and reporting related to child outcomes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE

- Jl recommends that a state-funded demographer be hired to assist with projecting population trends throughout Colorado.
- Jl recommends that the state employ a data system that assigns an ID number to each child to track them in the system. By using the ID number, the state system can build an algorithm that accounts for duplicates, how stacked funding is being utilized, as well as provide the demographics of the children who are enrolled in publicly funded programs as part of the effort to ensure equitable access to UPK services.
- For more accurate estimates, a 5-year review of school district and private provider kindergarten enrollment numbers might be helpful. (Back five years due to COVID-19 data impacts in recent years). The anticipated rapid growth in some sectors of our community needs to be considered as well.
- Provide information ASAP to LCOs on quality standards and funding specifics, as well as funding related to children with special needs and for 3-year-olds so that the LCO can provide better data on estimated slots.



# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## FAMILY FOCUS

El Paso County is home to 46,842 children under age five. As previously noted, of those children, almost 19,000 (41%) are children of color, dual-language speakers and/or immigrants. Approximately 5,000 (11%) of all area children under five are Special Education eligible. El Paso County has a large military presence, inclusive of five military installations—Fort Carson Army Base, Peterson Air Force Base, NORAD, Schriever Air Force Base, and the United States Air Force Academy. These installations employ 40,500 military personnel, and Fort Carson is an installation that provides an intensity of services to exceptional family members, often resulting in families with high needs being stationed in El Paso County.

Due to these demographics, our strategies to support enrollment of families in UPK will require an intensity of services and coordination that may not be needed in other communities.

### Our strategies focus on:


1. Ensuring families with the most need receive support in applying for UPK
2. Family service coordination to connect families with the programs best suited to meet the needs of their child
3. Resource navigation to connect families with any additional services needed

These services will be particularly targeted to underserved neighborhoods, reaching families living in areas with few high-quality child care options by prioritizing outreach in pre-determined zip codes. JI seeks to provide essential supports to ensure that families with children who have the highest level of need are provided with the support they need to access to UPK.

El Paso County has many services providers, offering resources to families who have the capacity to engage with organizations. Unfortunately, often families with the most need experience barriers to accessing resources.

To address this reality and ensure families are supported when accessing UPK and other needed resources within our community, JI will strive to:

- Educate all families about UPK through a robust marketing and outreach campaign,
- Develop local systems to ensure placement of a child in a program best suited to meet their needs,
- Increase JI staff capacity for direct family support, and
- Coordinate with local systems to ensure alignment of family support with legislation.



*By prioritizing outreach in pre-determined ZIP codes, **services will be targeted to underserved neighborhoods** to reach families living in areas with few quality child care options.*





# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY EDUCATION + AWARENESS OF UPK

A robust outreach and marketing campaign will educate families about UPK. This campaign will guide families to [PikesPeakEarlyChildhood.org](https://www.pikespeakearlychildhood.org) (our BridgeCare website) to access the UPK application. The media campaign will launch between December 1, 2022 and January 17, 2023, and will utilize a variety of tactics:

1. Direct digital marketing efforts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
2. Bright by Text
3. Earned media tactics including local news outlets
4. Partners will be provided with shared digital media content as well as printed materials. UPK providers (community- and school-based) as well as community partners will share posts on their platforms and make written information available in their locations. Targeted partners will include 2-1-1, COSILoveYou, community centers, military bases, the Pikes Peak Library District, pediatricians, pediatric dentists, non-profit organizations that serve young children and their families, and others.
5. Booths staffed at community events, with an emphasis on attending those located in underserved neighborhoods.
6. School district partners may incorporate “Pre-K Roundup” into their Kindergarten roundup activities to answer questions and assist with the application process as part of a “no wrong door” approach to connecting families with UPK information.
7. A UPK website will inform families and providers on UPK as well as provide a direct link to the BridgeCare application for easy access.
8. A speaker’s bureau may be established to provide speakers at events and meetings that families are likely to attend to explain UPK and how to enroll. Speakers who speak Spanish will be particularly targeted.
9. Additionally, JI will explore a variety of marketing options including robocalls, paid ads, flyers and pamphlets.

## STRATEGIES FOR INCREASED CAPACITY FOR DIRECT FAMILY SUPPORT

1. JI will request funds for two family resource navigators who will provide direct application support to families. Navigators will provide individualized family resources referrals if needs are identified through the application completion process.
2. This support will build upon the Family Support Phone Line already in existence and will be an expansion of the ECE and family support resource navigation efforts.
3. Additionally, the JI website will include a chat function to allow navigators to answer families’ questions in real time during business hours.
4. With the lens of continuous improvement regarding services for children and families locally, data collected through resource navigation will be utilized to inform the UPK Committee about local family service coordination as well as barriers and gaps they encounter.







# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## STRATEGIES FOR PLACEMENT OF CHOICE

1. If the state does not direct this process, JI will convene a committee that is made up of school district special education leads, a representative from The Resource Exchange (Part C provider) and representatives who are interested in serving children with special needs to agree upon a community-wide developmental screening process to ensure that children with special needs are placed in the most supportive settings from the start.
2. JI will ask all UPK providers to use the agreed-upon screening tool and process.
3. This committee will develop selection criteria that will be followed if demand is greater than capacity. The selection criteria can be point-based and those with the most points will be prioritized for enrollment. This process will be based on a principle of equitable access for all children.
4. JI will ask providers to identify the populations that they are equipped to serve based on the identified selection criteria (or eligibility factors), and the services they are able to provide (i.e., transportation, services for children with special needs, etc.).

## STRATEGIES FOR COORDINATION OF FAMILY SUPPORT

JI has a long-standing history of partnership with the El Paso County Department of Human Services and will continue to build upon this partnership to ensure the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 legislation is supported in family service provision in our community.

Efforts in this area will build upon the partnership with El Paso County DHS to focus on:

1. Ensuring representation of DHS, EC providers, and families on the UPK Committee to provide family support coordination and focus on addressing intergenerational cycles of trauma and poverty.
2. Increasing access to Child-ISST services, which offer a child and family a focused strengths-based approach to addressing the needs of families in crisis.
3. Offering trauma-informed training and coaching to UPK providers.

## STEPS TO ENSURE THAT PROVIDERS AND FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND RESOURCES TO MEET THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- JI will collaborate with Pikes Peak United Way's 211, CPCD (Head Start) and the Pikes Peak Library District to ensure that a community resource directory is available that can be accessed by both providers and families. The directory will be either web-based or printed, or both, and will be in at least English and Spanish.
- JI will offer a workshop twice each year to educate providers on resources available for families in the community.





# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- JI will collaborate with school districts, community partners, neighborhood associations and family resource centers to offer at least one event in which families can receive information and services that are available in the community. In lieu of one event, there could be several neighborhood-based events. In addition, JI will attend larger community events with the focus of connecting with families and educating them about UPK.
- JI will provide printed UPK materials for providers to hand out and will ensure that those materials emphasize the mixed delivery system of service provision.
- JI will make specific efforts to ensure that teachers and family child care providers are educated about UPK as they are often the main source of information for families.
- JI will utilize Bright by Text to communicate information regarding UPK with families.

Implementation of these strategies, as well as all strategies outlined in the plan, is contingent on public and private funding levels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE

- Develop a recruitment and enrollment tool kit that LCOs can customize to engage media, partners, parents, businesses in learning about the UPK program. Create web content that LCOs can use on their own web sites.
- Build a question into the enrollment process around how people heard about UPK. Allow LCOs access to that information so they can determine what outreach tactics are successful.
- Set a common school cut-off date for the year before kindergarten.
- Ensure that the family application process automatically filters out those providers whose skills or services do not match what the family wants or needs.

## MIXED-DELIVERY MODEL

El Paso County has a unique provider mix as 33% are center-based providers, 20% are school district programs, and almost half—47%—are family child care homes. We place importance on families in our community having access to providers of their choice. Our approach to ensuring mixed delivery focuses on:

1. Deep provider engagement in the planning process as outlined in the Collaborating for Capacity section,
2. Ongoing input from all provider types,
3. Governance structure composed of all provider types (see Local Governance section),
4. Surveying providers to determine interest in providing UPK,
5. Varied mechanisms for disseminating UPK information, and
6. Creating a network of support for providers to increase confidence and competence in meeting the programmatic and contractual requirements.

*Thirty-three percent (33%) are center-based providers, 20% are school district programs, and almost half—47%—are family child care homes.*





# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## MIXED-DELIVERY MODEL SYSTEM STRATEGIES, CONTINUED

### PLANNING PROCESS

*Planning Process:* As previously described, during the planning process a broad group of 60+ community partners were invited to shape this community plan, and a series of input meetings were held for additional stakeholders. See the Planning Process section for more details.

### ONGOING INPUT

*Ongoing Input:* JI will continue to seek input as implementation unfolds. This engagement process will not only inform our community plan but also build an engaged sector of providers. JI will continue to hold community meetings as we implement UPK strategies and will hold our town hall meetings beginning as early as November 2022 to keep providers informed. Input sessions from owners/administrators, teachers/caregivers, and families were part of the development of this plan, and key partnerships will be maintained to involve providers where they are already engaging in EC systems (at Pikes Peak Region Family Child Care Association meetings, home network meetings, school district leadership meetings, committee meetings, etc.). This level of engagement allows for a fluid plan reflective of the needs and desires of our community.

### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

*Governance Structure:* This plan is meant to be an organic, living plan—one that continues to evolve as more information arrives from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) as well as by assessing and evaluating our progress and making changes based on lessons learned. Accordingly, as described in more detail in the Local Governance section, implementation of UPK in El Paso County will be guided by the UPK Committee made up of the various provider types including:

- Representatives from community-based programs of various sizes,
- School district representatives nominated from each geographic quadrant as well as a designee from the Superintendents Group,
- Several family center representatives,
- Specific organizational representatives from CPCD...giving kids a head start, El Paso County Department of Human Services, community representatives, and Catholic Charities, which is the local family resource center,
- Family representatives to ensure that voices from the population being served are at the table,
- At-large community representatives to provide broader community engagement and to provide some flexibility to determine membership or input gaps.





# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## SURVEY ASSESSMENT

*Survey Assessment:* In January 2023, JI will survey the 400+ licensed providers and all school districts regarding their interest in becoming a UPK provider as well as their estimated capacity and will update the community plan to reflect estimates for each provider type. As an effort to ensure equity in UPK availability in El Paso County, the zip codes with the least access/greatest need combination will be prioritized for support.

## INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND RECRUITMENT

*Information Dissemination and Recruitment:* Once quality standard requirements are released, all qualified providers will be contacted with information about UPK, the benefits of becoming a UPK provider, the benefits for the families that they serve, and the support that will be available for them from JI. Outreach efforts will include all components of a mixed-delivery system—school district providers, center-based providers, family child care providers, and licensed exempt providers.

Strategies will include, but are not limited to, mailing and emailing a frequently-asked UPK questions flyer, digital marketing outreach, and regional informational meetings, all with the aim to continue to educate providers and engage those who are ready as UPK providers. The current LCO website will provide more information to not only parents but providers too.

## UPK PROGRAM ENROLLMENT SUPPORT

*UPK Program Enrollment Support:* To build a network of mixed delivery UPK providers, given sufficient funding, three early childhood coaches will be hired to provide specialized coaching and technical assistance for providers to meet the contractual and quality-related requirements for UPK programming.



*We place importance on families in our community having access to providers of their choice.*





# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## COLLABORATING FOR CAPACITY

The early childhood landscape in El Paso County is recovering from a 7.5% loss in the number of programs through the pandemic, which mostly impacted small center-based programs and family childcare homes. The county has 195 family child care programs and 221 center-based programs for a total of 416 programs at the time of completion.

### JI will employ four strategies for building capacity:

1. Provide direct technical training and coaching to EC programs.
2. Create and implement a short- and mid-range development plan to secure additional funding sources.
3. Explore and cultivate long-term sustainability and expansion strategies to fund UPK beyond 10 hours each week.
4. Employ workforce development strategies to support the area's need for EC workforce. The Workforce Campaign section provides the details for this strategic approach.

## TECHNICAL TRAINING AND COACHING

- **Licensing:** Continue to offer the Pre-Licensing course, technical assistance and coaching to become licensed.
- **BridgeCare Use:** Provide robust technical assistance, training, and supports to programs in navigating BridgeCare site (PikesPeakEarlyChildhood.org).
- **Business Operations/Stacking Funds:** Offer professional workshops with consultants/experts designed to support current high-quality programs to expand by focusing on business skills and strategies for stacking funding, applying for CCCAP, and creating budgeting and staffing efficiencies.
- **Quality Improvement Coaching:** Provide quality improvement coaching and professional development opportunities to increase quality in all types of programs, aimed at ensuring strong mixed delivery options for UPK.
- **Partnerships in EC Deserts:** Expand partnerships with school districts and community partners (such as libraries) that are in child care deserts to educate families, as well as Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers regarding UPK.

*The county has  
195 family child care  
programs and  
221 center-based  
programs for a  
total of 416 programs  
at the time of plan completion.*



# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## TECHNICAL TRAINING AND COACHING, CONTINUED

- **Family, Friends and Neighbors Program Support:**
  1. Expand the network of Family, Friend and Neighbor providers with the goal of increasing licensed childcare capacity. Convene gatherings for peer support, best practices education, and licensing information.
  2. Share best practice information in JI's monthly newsletter.
  3. Offer free or subsidized best practices training. Training topics may include Licensing, Trauma-Informed Care, Restorative Practice, Growing Your Business, and Family Engagement.
- **Streamlining Processes:** The UPK Committee along with the JI team will make every effort to streamline communications and processes to reduce the administrative burden of being a UPK provider.
- **UPK Information Toolkit:** If the state does not direct this process, create an education and information toolkit around UPK to support providers.
- **Micro-Center Support:** JI will navigate the rules waiver process to allow for the development of micro-centers in El Paso County. Businesses, school districts, and local cooperatives will be targeted for early childhood expansion efforts. JI will provide the necessary coaching and technical assistance to support the startup of these centers.

## EXPANDING UPK FUNDING

JI is pleased to add UPK to its development priority list, but given that JI is funded largely by government grants, JI's development capacity is modest and focused on supporting the internal programming prioritized by the Alliance for Kids Council and REACH Committee (made up of the IOG and JSPC).

The community fundraising needs reach well beyond one organization; funds are needed to support an entire segment of the community—the EC field. The AFK Council and UPK Committee will consider big-picture strategies that leverage the consortium of partners. In the meantime, there are still funding opportunities that JI can and will pursue in partnership with the UPK Committee and EC providers to benefit the field.

### Grant applications will be focused on:

- Mini grants to UPK providers when a one-time sum to a program could result in creating new slots.
- UPK scholarships to families in the greatest need.
- Mini grants to UPK providers to attempt innovative retention strategies with their results tracked and shared with the broader EC field.
- Other workforce development related strategies (see Workforce Campaign section) such as scholarships for continuing education, funding for Earn + Learn apprenticeships, provision of career navigation as well as active workforce recruitment efforts.
- Business coaching to train more programs how to stack funds and create more efficiencies in staffing and other operations.



# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## EXPANDING UPK FUNDING, CONTINUED

### Shorter-term funding sources include:

- Federal grants/agencies
- Foundations: Colorado based and national
- Business consortiums such as EPIC that is comprised of business executives who support early childhood education.

### Long-range Strategies

Our shared vision for Universal Pre-K is that every family with a 3- and/or 4-year-old can enroll their child(ren) in a program of their choice with the financial supports to cover the family's need up to 40 hours each week.

#### *A Multi-Million-Dollar EC Advancement Campaign*

Like a capital campaign but for program expansion, the campaign programming could be modeled after fully-funded UPK initiatives.

#### Components of a campaign would include:

- A campaign steering committee comprised of EC stakeholders including program, philanthropic and business leaders.
- Written and digital materials
- Program Naming Opportunities for Lead and Major Gifts
- The following are examples—and only examples:
  1. Lead Gift: Name El Paso County's Overall Pre-K Program
  2. Major Gift Option 1: Name the scholarship program for EC professionals to enroll in and complete higher education coursework.
  3. Major Gift 2: Name the Earn + Learn Apprenticeship Program
  4. Major Gift 3: Name the initiative that would provide grants that would enable them to create more UPK slots
  5. Major Gift 4: Name the initiative that would award funds to the neediest families to select a UPK program of their choice.
- A small gift campaign which could include events, point-of-sale giving, public service announcements, and digital donation opportunities.

Advancement campaigns require seed funds for staff and educational materials, so the UPK Committee and JI would need to identify and pursue a shared effort.

*Our shared vision for Universal Pre-K is that every family with a 3- and/or 4-year-old can enroll their child(ren) in a program of their choice with the financial supports to cover the family's need up to 40 hours each week.*



# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## PUBLIC FUNDING


In 2020, voters easily approved a nicotine tax increase to fund universal preschool for Colorado's 4-year-olds. The 67% vote in favor of Proposition EE indicates bipartisan support and signals that the state's residents have an appreciation that a child's early developmental years can shape their whole life's trajectory. In fact, research reveals that 90% of brain development occurs from birth to age 5 and that children who attend high-quality preschool, on average, get a significant leap forward in every developmental category compared to children who do not. They are more likely to graduate college, less likely to become a teen parent, and less likely to enter the criminal justice system or experience poverty as an adult.

The bill, HB 22-1295, recently passed and enacted by Colorado lawmakers provides a solid foundation for fulfilling the need of access to quality preschool for families with limited options. The new law provides 10 hours of preschool to 4-year-olds statewide regardless of family income.

Communities have embraced public funding mechanisms, such as bond programs, which do not require new taxation. Other communities have chosen to earmark specific tax dollars for their priorities. JI and our partners intend to explore and support options that would garner broad community support that would achieve our vision of every family, every child having access to quality early childhood education for the number of hours they need each week.

Some examples include:

- In 2012, San Antonio, Texas voters approved a ¼ cent sales tax increase to provide roughly \$31 million for UPK. The initiative was reapproved by voters in 2020.
- In 2006, Denver, Colorado voters approved a 12% sales tax on \$100+ purchases to fund tuition for approved preschool programs and increased the tax on \$100+ purchases by .15% in 2014. These funds subsidize tuition costs.
- In 2005, Summit County, Colorado the Right Start fund was established by a county-wide vote and created a dedicated Early Childhood Care and Learning fund using countywide property tax funds. The fund provides money for seven different programs: capacity building; quality initiatives; recruitment and retention; school readiness and home visitation; financial assistance; and administration and evaluation.



*JI and our partners intend to explore and support options that would **garner broad community support that would achieve our vision of every family, every child having access to quality early childhood education for the number of hours they need each week.***







# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## WORKFORCE CAMPAIGN

Per the Colorado ECE Workforce Data Dashboard, El Paso County has one ECE professional for every 22.5 children ages birth to five with a 20% annual turnover rate. Workforce shortages are creating barriers to both operations and programmatic quality as administrators struggle to hire staff and retain staff in the current workforce landscape. JI launched an entire department focused on early childhood workforce development over the past year and a half, and will continue to build upon the recruitment, retention and livable wage strategies to ensure the success of UPK in our community—while focusing on promoting supports that are culturally and linguistically relevant.

### JIS WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT EFFORTS:

1. Partner with entities such as Pikes Peak United Way and Early Childhood Service Corps to create a volunteer program that specifically recruits and places volunteers with UPK providers. Follow up with those volunteers to encourage them to gain credentials to become paid professionals.
2. Continue the development and maintenance of Earn + Learn models of qualification that allow new professionals to become qualified during the traditional working day, free of cost.
3. Explore Earn and Learn options and systems for Family Child Care Providers.
4. Engage with the Pikes Peak Business and Education Alliance to promote a virtual internship experience for high school students to introduce them to the field, as well as offer training for providers on how to effectively utilize volunteers, interns, and apprentices.
5. Create school district partnerships to engage with students in the middle and high school years to build knowledge of the field and to construct early childhood coursework that will articulate into qualification in the EC field post high school.
6. Continue to collaborate with UCCS and Pikes Peak State College to create and offer internship and apprenticeship programs for those who are in an ECE degree program.
7. Work with school district Career and Technical Education leaders to increase early childhood options throughout El Paso County, addressing gaps in teaching capacity that currently pose barriers to these course offerings.
8. Continue the partnership with the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, El Paso County DHS, Family Resource Center, and more to connect well-suited job seekers into the field.
9. Link with Ft. Carson Army Post to become a military spouse employment partner.
10. Expand digital marketing efforts to change the narrative around the field of early childhood and to direct prospects to the existing career navigation that JI provides.



*JI launched an  
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# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## WORKFORCE RETENTION EFFORTS:

1. Provide workshops for providers on recruitment and retention strategies including topics such as creating a positive workplace environment, conflict resolution, and meeting the needs of today's workforce.
2. Create a repository of provider wellness activities and opportunities; offer funding for providers to implement these resources for use in their own ECE setting.
3. Consider creating a substitute pool that would allow for providers to participate in professional development opportunities during work hours.
4. Continue career navigation to reduce complexities of forward progression within the field, connect with scholarship and other funding opportunities, and streamline the process of becoming Early Childhood Teacher qualified.
5. Track retention strategies used by ECE providers to determine what works for the current workforce and disseminate this information to the provider community.
6. The UPK Committee will facilitate conversations with providers regarding retention strategies and trainings.
7. Build real-time workforce data to inform local need in partnership with BridgeCare.
8. Create a mentorship program for family childcare teachers to support other providers.
9. Continue to build upon the system of Early Childhood Mental Health supports, working to increase the number of EMCH practitioners in El Paso County as well as the number of programs who have embedded ECMH programming.

## LIVING WAGE EFFORTS:

1. Offer technical assistance on stacking funds to support increased salaries and benefits.
2. Develop a local Executive Partners to Invest in Children (EPIC) chapter.
3. Partner with the Chamber and Economic Development Commission, as well as with EPIC, to build local business support for Early Childhood Education.
4. Gather data from programs who have been able to increase wages and publish a white paper on those strategies that were successful.



# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## LIVING WAGE EFFORTS, CONTINUED:

5. Partner with the Legacy Institute to explore a local initiative to support ECE.
6. Build advocacy around loan repayment.
7. Develop a business campaign to promote long-term sustainable funding for UPK including the creation of an EPIC charter.
8. Apply for federal grants that fund program supports, UPK scholarships, workforce development, and more.

## TO ENSURE WORKFORCE STRATEGIES ARE CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RELEVANT, JI WILL:

1. Include languages spoken on the provider's web profile.
2. Offer anti-bias and restorative practice training for all UPK providers.
3. Encourage use of research-based diversity-focused curriculum.
4. Reach out to a diverse group of potential providers as part of the recruitment process, including current FFN and FCCH providers who are in underserved communities.
5. Hire bilingual family navigators.
6. Explore grant opportunities to provide scholarships for people from diverse backgrounds.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE

- Continue to simplify professional qualifications and progression in the field.
- Continue to support apprenticeship programs and internships, and continue free education opportunities.
- Create a digital marketing toolkit that LCOs can use in their own communities to recruit early childhood professionals.



## ALLOCATING RESOURCES

As part of the application to become the LCO for El Paso County, JI chose for the state to distribute funds to UPK providers. As such, JI will play the role of acting as the liaison between the CDEC and local providers. JI will support successful allocation by 1) educating providers regarding funding allocation and providing technical assistance if necessary; 2) providing technical assistance to families, especially those with most need to ensure the successful completion of the UPK application.

To ensure the equitable allocation of UPK seats among school- and community-based providers, with the goal of maximizing the use of funding to meet community needs (including the need for full-day care), JI will:

- Ensure a process that is in line with the State funding structure that allows children and their families to be matched with the program best suited to meet their needs.
- Educate providers on the funding structure and provide technical assistance and /or coaching to support programmatic success.
- Offer direct support to families to apply for and access the care they need.
- Monitor community-wide UPK enrollment and create systems in line with state guidelines once these are released.

To meet the department requirement to maintain transparency within the community regarding the amount of funding available and used to support EC programs and family support programs, including all funding sources, the UPK Committee will explore:

- Establishing a finance group for UPK to include representatives from organizations who administer public funds.
- Posting all UPK Committee and finance group meeting notes along with financial information on the [JI LCO/UPK website](#).
- Creating financial policies specific to the administration of UPK.
- The JI's Finance Committee will monitor UPK/LCO spending against policies.
- JI will publish an annual report that will include child outcomes and a financial report, including a list of providers and how many each served.
- JI's funding and spending of LCO funds will be included in JI's independent audit, published annually.

Additionally, JI will work with local agencies to ensure that the public funding available to families is coordinated to seamlessly provide early childhood and family support programs and services by employing the following strategies:

- Systems-level conversations will take place at the AFK Council and/or subcommittee meetings, which will inform implementation of UPK.
- Providing technical assistance and training on stacking funds.
- Employing two family navigators who will connect families with resources to meet their needs in a coordinated and individualized manner. Data from navigation sessions will help to inform local coordination of child and family programming and will be reported annually.





## GOING FORWARD | TIMELINE

The El Paso County community, led by Joint Initiatives as the LCO, will implement a rigorous timeline to ensure effective and grounded UPK execution. This timeline is intended to outline desired community processes and will evolve as information is shared that supersedes community knowledge at the time of drafting.

Timetable	Implementation Strategy	Activity
<b>November 2022</b>	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Providers will enter their profile information onto BridgeCare and start entering openings in the system
	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Provider interest and capacity survey developed
	Family Focus	Begin development of family outreach campaign
	Family Focus	Family resource navigation data collection system determined
	Mixed Delivery	Hold the first El Paso County UPK Town Hall meeting; link with school district meeting to secure nominations
	Workforce Campaign	Continue to partner with UCCS and Pikes Peak State College to create and offer internship and apprenticeship programs for those who are in an ECE degree program

# GOING FORWARD | TIMELINE

Timetable	Implementation Strategy	Activity
December 2022	Governance	Amend the AFK Council bylaws to establish the UPK Committee and related AFK membership requirements
	Governance	AFK Council develops a slate of UPK Committee members
	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Families will be directed to the BridgeCare website through an extensive digital marketing campaign and the provision of digital flyers that will be sent to all licensed providers; begin in-person outreach events
	Family Focus	Onboard Family Resource Navigators
	Family Focus	Information given to school district providers to be shared with families at kindergarten round-up events
	Family Focus	Family chat function built and enabled
	Family Focus	Developmental screening meetings begun
	Workforce Campaign	Continue the development and maintenance of Earn + Learn models
	Workforce Campaign	Create school district partnerships that build upon CTE systems of education and workforce readiness
	Workforce Campaign	Explore Earn + Learn options and systems for Family Child Care Providers
	Workforce Campaign	Continue the partnership with the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, El Paso County DHS, Family Resource Center, and more to connect well-suited job seekers into the field

# GOING FORWARD | TIMELINE

Timetable	Implementation Strategy	Activity
January 2023	Governance	AFK Council establishes and elects UPK Committee members
	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Jl will survey the 400+ licensed providers and all school districts regarding their interest in becoming a UPK provider as well as their estimated capacity
	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Provider interest and capacity data will be summarized and reported out to the community
	Family Focus	Family application and resource navigation supports begin
	Family Focus	Developmental screening committee determines community-wide screening tool
	Mixed Delivery	All eligible ECE programs will be contacted through multiple strategies including mailing and emailing a frequently asked UPK questions flyer, digital marketing outreach, and regional informational meetings
	Mixed Delivery	LCO website built out to provide more information to providers
	Mixed Delivery	Coaches hired to support UPK providers
	Workforce Campaign	Partner with entities such as Pikes Peak United Way and Early Childhood Service Corps to create a volunteer program that specifically recruits and places volunteers with UPK providers
	Workforce Campaign	Partner with Ft. Carson Army Post to become a military spouse employment partner
	Workforce Campaign	Engage in EPIC chapter discussions to work towards boosting compensation
	Workforce Campaign	Engage in advocacy efforts aimed at living wage strategies

# GOING FORWARD | TIMELINE

Timetable	Implementation Strategy	Activity
<b>February 2023</b>	Governance	UPK Committee begins consistent meetings
	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Family application and/or child enrollment data will be analyzed and shared out with the community
	Family Focus	Work group established to develop selection criteria that will be followed if demand is greater than capacity + criteria determined
	Mixed Delivery	Professional Learning Community content developed and marketed to UPK providers
	Capacity	Offer professional workshops with consultants/experts designed to support and expand current high-quality programs by focusing on business skills and strategies for stacking of funding, applying for CCCAP, and creating budgeting and staffing efficiencies
	Workforce Campaign	Collect retention data from participating programs
	Resource Allocation	A finance group will be created for UPK that includes representatives from organizations who administer public funds
<b>Spring (Q2) '23</b>	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Provider interest and capacity data will be summarized monthly and reported out to the community quarterly
	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Family application and/or child enrollment data will be analyzed monthly and shared out with the community quarterly
	Mixed Delivery	Professional Learning Communities begin to support UPK providers with meeting contractual requirements
	Capacity	Technical assistance and UPK coaching begin
	Capacity	Jl will embark on effort to navigate the rules waiver process to allow for the development of micro-centers in El Paso County. Businesses, school districts and local cooperatives will be targeted for early childhood expansion efforts



# GOING FORWARD | TIMELINE

Timetable	Implementation Strategy	Activity
Spring (Q2) '23	Workforce Campaign	Gather data from programs who have been able to increase wages and publish a white paper on those strategies that were successful
	Workforce Campaign	Begin anti-bias and restorative practice training for all UPK providers
Summer (Q3) '23	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Provider interest and capacity data will be summarized monthly and reported out to the community quarterly
	Capacity	Council and UPK Committee to develop short- and long-range plans to secure additional funding
	Workforce Campaign	Partner with the Legacy Institute to explore a local initiative to support ECE
	Workforce Campaign	Provide workforce retention data analysis and present to Council and UPK Committee
	Workforce Campaign	Explore creating a health insurance pool and access to child care for early childhood teachers
	Resource Allocation	Jl will publish an annual report that will include child outcomes, along with a financial report, including a list of providers and how many each served
	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Family application and/or child enrollment data will be analyzed monthly and shared out with the community quarterly
Fall (Q4) '23	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	To obtain an unduplicated count of children being served by public funding in El Paso County by December 1 each year, Jl will determine the number of children through local data collection, or other process determined by the state, to include preschool children enrolled in publicly funded "slots" (as is the case now with CPP and Pre-K SPED)
	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Provider interest and capacity data will be summarized monthly and reported out to the community quarterly

# GOING FORWARD | TIMELINE

Timetable	Implementation Strategy	Activity
Fall (Q4) '23	By the Numbers (Data Collection)	Family application and/or child enrollment data will be analyzed monthly and shared out with the community quarterly
	Capacity	Council and UPK Committee to explore and cultivate long-term sustainability and expansion strategies to fund UPK beyond 10 hours each week
	Workforce Campaign	Council and UPK Committee to determine workforce retention strategies based upon data provided
January - June '24	Governance	UPK Committee member slate reviewed, and membership determined as per AFK Bylaws
	Workforce Campaign	Engage in advocacy efforts aimed at living wage compensation

# Thank You!

## APPENDIX A

### El Paso County's Universal Pre-K Community Plan represents tremendous collaboration among many stakeholders dedicated to children and families!



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# APPENDIX B

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CDEC

### BY THE NUMBERS

- JI recommends that a state-funded demographer be hired to assist with projecting population trends throughout Colorado.
- JI recommends that the state employ a data system that assigns an ID number to each child to track them in the system. By using the ID number, the state system can build an algorithm that accounts for duplicates, how stacked funding is being utilized, as well as provide the demographics of the children who are enrolled in publicly funded programs as part of the effort to ensure equitable access to UPK services.
- For more accurate estimates, a 5-year review of school district and private provider kindergarten enrollment numbers might be helpful. (Back five years due to COVID-19 data impacts in recent years.) The anticipated rapid growth in some geographies of our community needs to be considered as well.
- Provide information ASAP to LCOs on quality standards and funding specifics, as well as funding related to children with special needs and for 3-year-olds so that the LCO can provide better data on estimated slots.

### FAMILY FOCUS

- Develop a recruitment and enrollment tool kit that LCOs can customize to engage media, partners, parents, businesses in learning about the UPK program. Create web content that LCOs can use on their own web sites.
- Build a question into the enrollment process around how people heard about UPK. Allow LCOs access to that information so they can determine what outreach tactics are successful.
- Set a common school cut-off date for the year before kindergarten.
- Ensure that the family application process automatically filters out those providers whose skills or services do not match what the family wants or needs.

### WORKFORCE CAMPAIGN

- Continue to simplify professional qualifications and progression in the field.
- Continue to support apprenticeship programs and internships, and continue free education opportunities.
- Create a digital marketing toolkit that LCOs can use in their own communities specific to recruiting early childhood professionals.







# APPENDIX C

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**AFK**—Alliance for Kids. The El Paso County Early Childhood Council is called the Alliance for Kids Council and is a statutorily-required coalition to bring agencies together who serve young children through early childhood education programming.

**Buell**—Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation, a private foundation

**BOCES**—Boards of Cooperative Educational Services; they supply educational services to two or more school districts when it makes sense for districts to work together. School districts are members.

**CCCAP**—Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (this grant from the county is now called Early Childhood Education Quality Improvement, ECEQI. But CCCAP term is used in other areas.)

**CDEC**—Colorado Department of Early Childhood

**Colorado Shines**—the state’s quality rating system for early childhood learning programs

**CPCD**—local nonprofit organization that provides EC services, including the area’s Head Start programming

**EC**—Early Childhood

**ECE**—Early Childhood Education

**ECHO**—Early Childhood Health Outdoors

**FCCH**—Family Child Care Homes

**FFNs**—Family, Friends + Neighbors (FFN) child care

**FREE**—Fostering Resilience in Early Education

**IOG**—Interagency Oversight Group

**JSPC**—Juvenile Services Planning Committee

**LCO**—Local Coordinating Organization for Universal Pre-Kindergarten administration

**QI**—Quality Improvement

**REACH Committee**—the committee resulting from the merger of the IOG and the JSPC

**SPED**—Special Education

**UPK**—Universal Pre-Kindergarten





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