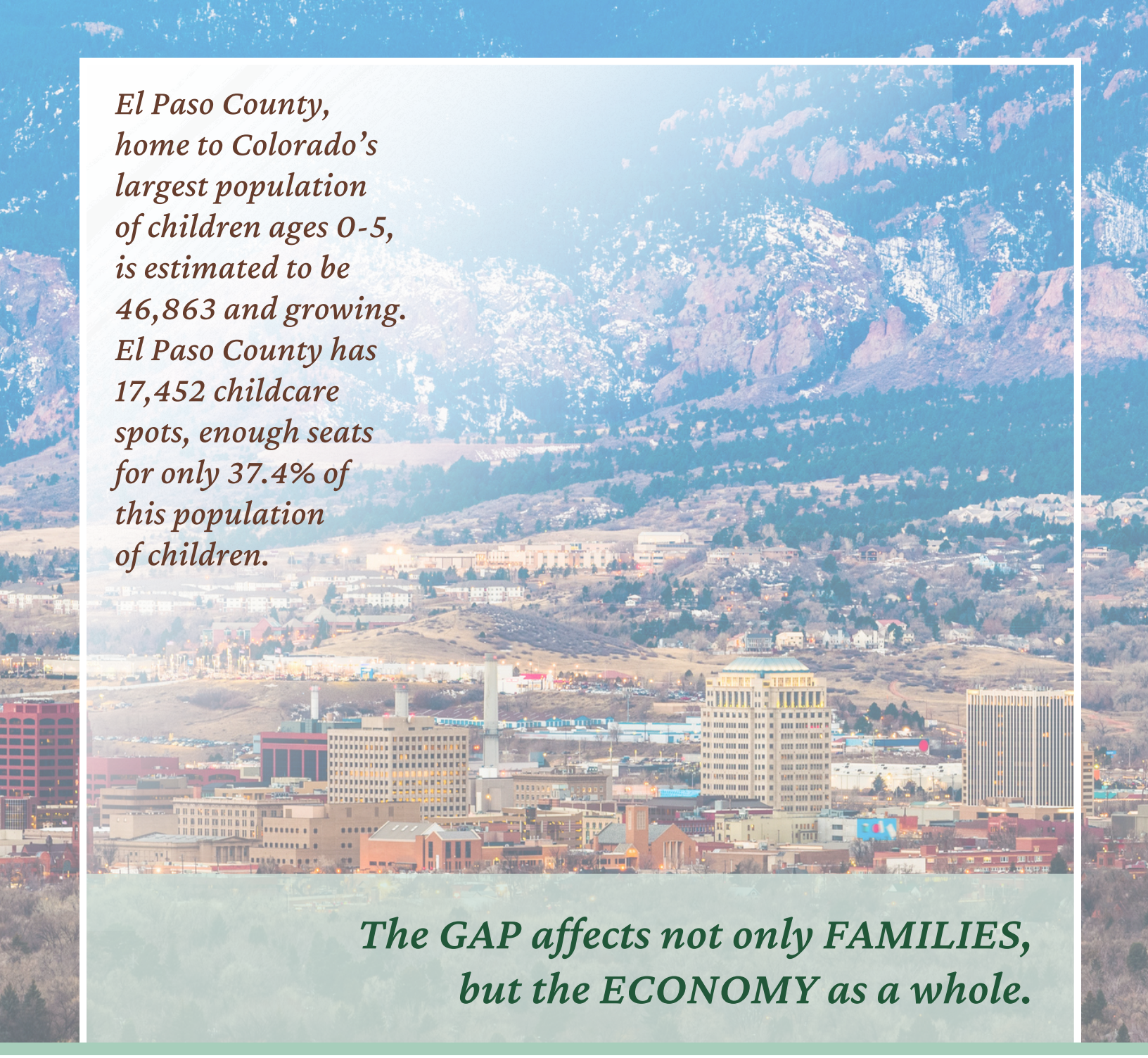


El Paso County, home to Colorado's largest population of children ages 0-5, is estimated to be 46,863 and growing. El Paso County has 17,452 childcare spots, enough seats for only 37.4% of this population of children.

The GAP affects not only FAMILIES, but the ECONOMY as a whole.

JOINT INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH + FAMILIES

United Way Pikes Peak United Way

EL POMAR FOUNDATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD BUSINESS COUNCIL

FAMILY FRIENDLY CITY SUMMIT

SUMMIT REPORT

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the **El Pomar Foundation**, **Joint Initiatives (JI), Pikes Peak United Way,** and the **Colorado Trust** for financial support of the Family Friendly City Summit.

Additionally, we appreciate the Summit Co-Chairs—**Doug Quimby and Johnna Reeder Kleymeyer**—as well as the leads of the various Summit delegations:

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Thank you.

Contents

Executive Summary | Page 3
ECE Impact | Page 4
The Challenges | Page 5
Vision | Page 7
Summit Process | Page 8
Strategic Priorities | Page 9

Tier 1 Community Initiatives
- **Public Awareness** | Page 10
- **Policy Advocacy** | Page 11
- **Public Investment** | Page 12
- **Community Collaboration** | Page 13

Tier 2 Strategies
- **Licensing** | Page 14
- **Business/ECE Partnerships** | Page 14
- **Recruiting Retirees** | Page 14
- **Teacher Pay** | Page 15
- **Teacher Education** | Page 15

Tier 3 Strategies
- **FFN Support** | Page 16
- **Nontraditional Hours** | Page 16
- **Resource Navigation** | Page 16
- **Flexible Hours** | Page 16
- **Students and Churches** | Page 16

Ideas to Note | Page 17
The Matrix: How the Pieces Fit | Page 18
Partnerships | Page 19
Implementation | Page 20
Community Infrastructure | Page 25
Evaluation Plan | Page 26
Conclusion | Page 27

Addendum I: Participants | Page 28
Addendum II: Resources | Page 33
Addendum III: Glossary of Terms | Page 34

Executive Summary



Community leaders are needed to champion a full range of sustained, strategic approaches.

Background

In El Paso County, families and employers need an additional 16,935 early childhood, or childcare, spots in addition to the 17,452 that exist today.

Creating childcare spots is only half the story. When childcare is high quality, children's lives are changed for the better. They are more likely to graduate high school and college, earn higher wages, and have better health outcomes. When a community's people do well, the overall economy thrives too.

Childcare programs need to be able to recruit and retain professional staff who have been trained on child development and early childhood behavioral health.

To meet the childcare crisis, every sector of the community is needed to play their part. Community leaders are needed to champion a full range of sustained, strategic approaches.

This report is the culmination of the work of 100+ Family Friendly City Summit delegates representing business, education, faith-based, government, healthcare, human services, media, and military organizations.

The delegates were called on to provide experience and expertise from their respective fields with the ultimate goal of co-creating recommended initiatives to address how the community can work together to create critical quality childcare programs.

Strategic Priorities

Common themes and shared community priorities emerged into what are divided into three categories or tiers.

- **Tier 1** reflects themes or strategies that were considered by **eight or more** groups.
- **Tier 2** strategies were endorsed by **four to seven** groups.
- **Tier 3** strategies were highlighted by **three groups**.

TIER 1

- **Public awareness campaign on the crisis and solutions**
- **Advocacy for policy changes primarily at the state level**
- **Community collaboration**
- **Public investment for sustainable, adequate funding**

TIER 2

- **Licensing regulations modified**
- **Businesses and local ECE providers form partnerships**
- **Engage retirees as caregivers**
- **Teacher pay and incentives**
- **Teacher education, including behavioral health training**

TIER 3

- **Technical support to caregivers, especially Family, Friends and Neighbor caregivers**
- **Childcare during nontraditional hours**
- **Resource navigation**
- **Employers support flexible hours**
- **Engage nontraditional partners including high school students as well as church leaders who have space**

Impact of Early Childhood Education

A child's cerebral development begins in utero, and their development in the first eight years of life establishes the foundation for future health and well-being. In fact, 90% of brain development is complete by age five. The rapid brain development in childhood is partially driven by a child's acquisition and integration of skills across many developmental areas.

The goals of an early childhood education program can be split into four main development themes:

- Social
- Emotional
- Physical
- Intellectual and Academic

Source: asparis.org

Often, early childhood education (or ECE) is used interchangeably with childcare, daycare, and preschool.

Early childhood (EC) refers to the period when care is given to children between birth and 8 years of age, at which time a child's brain is highly sensitive to the environment around them. This time of remarkable growth requires a specialized educational approach to ensure that children learn key skills and foundational concepts to prepare them for later life.



Economic Impact

The economic case for investment in quality childcare (ECE) is clear.

CHILDCARE/ECE CAN:

Generate $7.30+ per dollar invested.

Improve labor productivity by allowing parents to work longer, miss fewer days, and pursue continuing education.

Attract homebuyers and increase property values by $13+ for every dollar invested in local programs.

Save school systems money for K-12 education.

Lower rates of incarceration and violent crime.

Source: ffyf.org; see page 29

*According to a report from StrongNation.org, the shortage of childcare results in an **estimated annual loss of $122 billion in revenue, earnings, and productivity** for employers, employees, and communities.*

QUALITY COUNTS

The early childhood environment is a key component of early childhood education, and creating consistent, responsive caregiving relationships and a supportive community can drastically limit the potential for detrimental factors like neglect and chronic stress, which can create a range of mental, behavioral, and health challenges, hindering a child in reaching their full potential. It is critical to develop a learning environment where students in the early years are supported, cared for, encouraged, and nurtured as they explore the world around them.

The Challenges

The magnitude of the childcare crisis is significant.

El Paso County, home to Colorado's largest population of children ages 0-5, is estimated to be **46,863** and growing. El Paso County has 17,452 childcare spots, enough seats for 37.4% of this population of children.

The majority of El Paso County is a childcare desert, with limited access and options for most families. Joint Initiatives estimates that roughly 70% of families would utilize childcare if the spots existed.

To meet this need, El Paso County needs 16,935 more seats.

The funding system is flawed.

Unlike the K-12 education system, which receives federal, state, and local funding, childcare businesses and nonprofits are built on parents' fees. As a result, families with low incomes spend a greater portion of their discretionary income on childcare, and public subsidies allow only a fraction of eligible families to access the services they need.

Nationwide, families shoulder 52 percent, the public sector covers 46 percent, and private and philanthropic entities cover 2 percent of total costs for early education and care.

Families that have more than one child under five can become overwhelmed, as the cost of childcare in Colorado averages $16,333 (the 5th most expensive state in the country). In other words, for households with multiple children, childcare costs often rival the cost of mortgage payments or tuition at a public university. This financial burden forces many parents to choose between work and childcare.

The community is not aware of the crisis.

While stories abound among parents about endless childcare wait lists, the general public has limited awareness of just how significant the childcare gap is and how the gap affects not only families but the economy as a whole.

The early childhood workforce shortage is a barrier to access.

Recruiting and retaining a qualified ECE workforce is another critical aspect of ensuring adequate childcare. Low wages, limited benefits, and demanding work conditions contribute to the shortage of skilled providers.

ECE professionals are underpaid.

The median wage for childcare workers in 2022 was $14.22 an hour or $29,570 annually, according to the most recent available data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. With rents averaging $1,500 in El Paso County, the average childcare salary does not cover necessary expenses to live a fulfilling life. With the overreliance on parent fees and few sources of outside funding, childcare centers struggle with chronic understaffing.



Currently, 17,452 childcare seats are available for 46,863 children five and under.

Colorado Springs needs more than 16,000 new childcare spots to meet the demand.

The Challenges

Programs do not have incentives to form and/or grow.

Since subsidies and tax credit programs rarely assist ECE/childcare programs directly and do not cover actual costs, there are few incentives to expand or start new childcare programs. Childcare providers require suitable infrastructure, including appropriate facilities and equipment, to operate effectively.

Perceptions of ECE professionals are often inaccurate.

Too often, the general public equates ECE with babysitting, which helps keep wages low. ECE is a profession, and quality programs hire certified teachers and teacher assistants who have obtained higher education training.

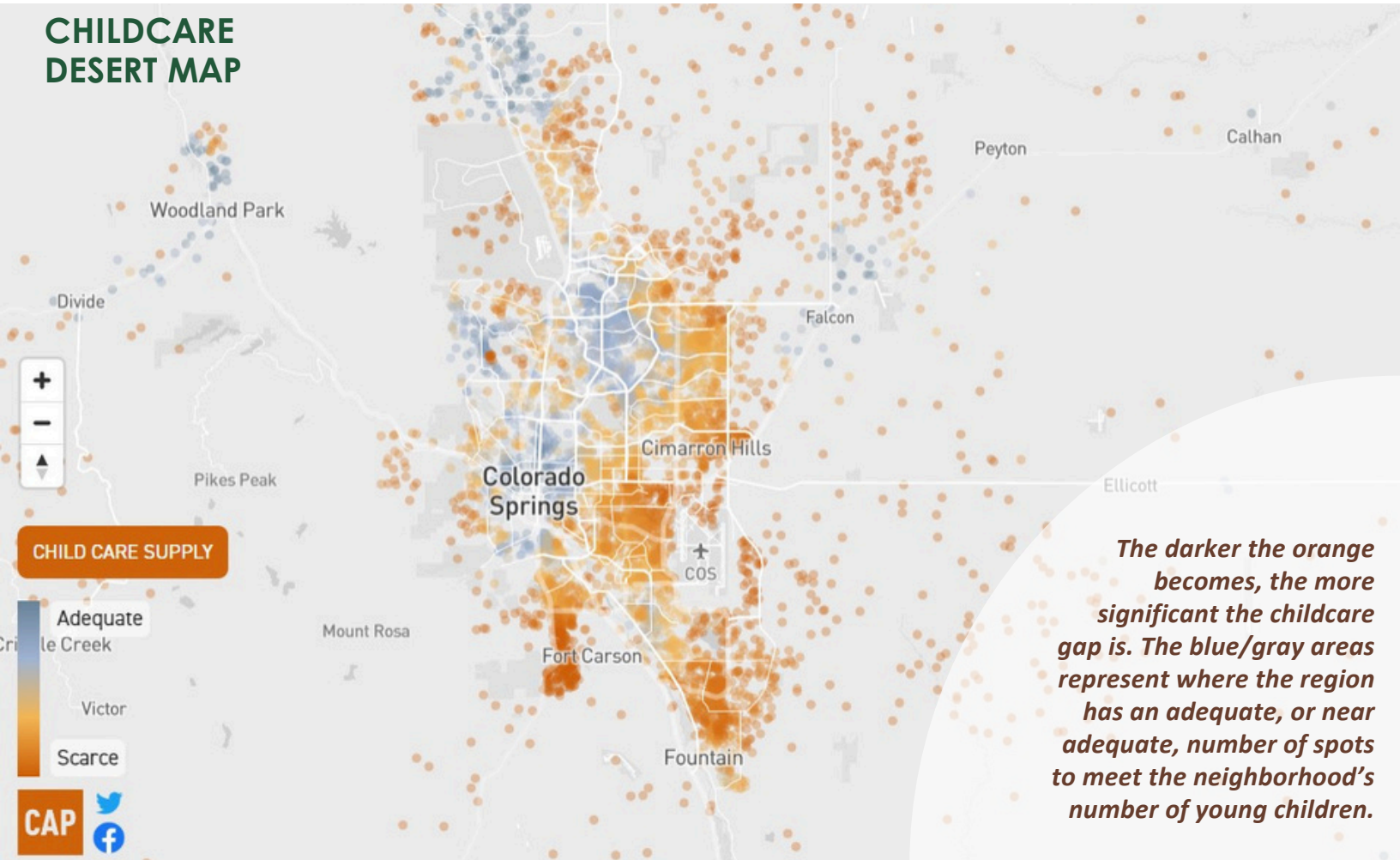
School districts need adequate special education funding.

Preschool children with a disability may be served in a variety of settings when the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team determines such placement. However, school districts carry the responsibility for special education.

Non-traditional hours are not adequately accommodated.

Employees of larger companies that run shifts for 24 hours/day may face scheduling conflicts. Licensed care overnight and throughout weekends is rare.

CHILDCARE DESERT MAP



The darker the orange becomes, the more significant the childcare gap is. The blue/gray areas represent where the region has an adequate, or near adequate, number of spots to meet the neighborhood's number of young children.

Vision

COMMUNITY VISION:

Access to quality childcare for every family that needs it in the Pikes Peak Region.



All FAMILIES and children have access to the resources and supports to thrive.



All CHILDREN have the resources, supports, and interactions early in life to thrive in school and life.



El Paso County is a COMMUNITY where children are valued and supported to thrive.

COMMUNITY GOALS

1. **All members of the El Paso County early care and education workforce have access to the resources and supports needed to enhance their professional knowledge and skills, health, and wellness to thrive.**
2. **Families have access to a coordinated mixed-delivery model of affordable quality early childhood education.**
3. **The region's private sector is engaged in expanding free preschool for the area's 46,000+ children 0-5.**
4. **Early childhood professionals are recruited, trained and retained to meet the ECE workforce needs.**

Source: Alliance for Kids (El Paso County's Early Childhood Council) 2023-26 Strategic Plan (jointinitiatives.org)

DID YOU KNOW?

Leading researchers, economists, and academicians agree there is one specific economic development strategy that will, by itself, do more than any other strategy to optimize future economic growth in the United States.

THE STRATEGY?

HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION.

Summit Process

Participants

This report is the culmination of the work of 110 Summit delegates representing the business, education, faith-based, government, health and human services, media, military, and nonprofit sectors.

Delegations

Ten delegations, or breakout groups, with an average of 10 members each met simultaneously to explore strategies of how the community can work together to ensure access to quality early childhood education, or childcare, for every family in the Colorado Springs metro area who needs childcare.

Co-Chairs

To provide assistance in this process, each delegation was provided a skilled chair or co-chairs along with the same broad questions to answer.



Process Questions

The questions addressed identifying the local childcare challenge, bold steps for working towards ensuring adequate quality childcare spots, identifying priorities, and engaging key stakeholders in forging new commitments.

The delegates were called on to provide experience and expertise from their respective fields with the ultimate goal of co-creating recommended initiatives to address how the various sectors can participate and collaborate to solve the childcare crisis. They were asked first to suggest strategies, provide a brief report out to the entire group of all 10 delegations, then prioritize recommendations where they were able to identify common ground among their delegations.

Summit Report

Staff, who were assigned to take notes for each group, provided a summary of the breakout sessions. The co-chairs were provided the opportunity to review and edit the summaries to ensure accuracy.

From the reports, the common themes and shared community priorities emerged. The themes were derived both from the priorities designated by the groups as well as by identifying strategies or solutions that were discussed by multiple groups, indicating broad interest.

A draft report was created and then sent to all Summit participants for their review and input. The feedback was incorporated, and the final draft is the culmination of this process.

Strategic Priorities

Following the Summit gathering on May 9, 2024, notes from all 10 groups were reviewed and integrated.

Common themes and shared community priorities emerged into what have been divided into three categories or tiers.

Tiers

- **Tier 1** reflects themes or strategies that were considered and endorsed by at least eight (8) of the groups.
- **Tier 2** strategies were endorsed by four to seven groups.
- **Tier 3** strategies were highlighted by three groups.

This report also highlights some interesting outside-the-box ideas a group emphasized or prioritized that others did not.

Group Contributions

In describing the strategies, a group may be highlighted for providing an interesting nuance, a persuasive justification, or a specific tactic. The groups are indicated based on their geography, that is, where they met. A list of the participants is provided on page 24.

These key themes do not stand in isolation, and they should be viewed as interdependent. For example, at least one group noted that a public awareness campaign would be necessary prior to embarking on a ballot initiative to create a voter fund.

TIER 1

- **Public awareness campaign**
- **Advocacy for public policy changes**
- **Public investment/voter fund**
- **Community collaboration**

TIER 2

- **Modify licensing regulations**
- **Forge partnerships between businesses and local ECE providers**
- **Engage retirees as providers**
- **Increase teacher pay and incentives**
- **Support teacher education generally; specific training for behavioral health**

TIER 3

- **Provide technical support to caregivers, especially Family, Friends and Neighbor caregivers.**
- **Provide solutions for childcare during nontraditional hours**
- **Build family resource navigation throughout systems**
- **Employers support flexible hours**
- **Engage nontraditional partners including high school students and churches who have space.**

TIER 1: Bold Action

I: Public Awareness Campaign

The theme that garnered overwhelming support among the groups was the need for public awareness and education about the childcare crisis. Every delegation at least touched on the theme and most listed public awareness as one of their highest priorities. Groups identified public awareness as a tool to create change for several key reasons:

- Help people make the connections between economic prosperity and availability of childcare;
- Generate broad community engagement;
- Shift perceptions about the ECE field;
- Set the stage for significant public investment, including a local voter initiative.

Several groups, such as the Pavilion 1, Pavilion 5, and the Pikes Peak groups, named this strategy as their top priority. The Trustee group agreed that a coordinated education and engagement program is needed to inform the community about the need, the impacts of inaction, and how the community can solve the crisis.

Pavilion 18 group also emphasized the importance of crafting a compelling narrative, showcasing the positive impacts that investment in ECE has on the local economy.

Pavilion 5 and Pavilion 15 groups both emphasized the need to shift public perceptions about the field and the important role EC educators play as they interact with children undergoing rapid brain development. Pavilion 5 group expressed the need to shift the perception of early childhood education from "a service industry to a professional industry."

The Broadmoor group suggested a "Shared Why" approach, and both Broadmoor and Pavilion 18 groups agreed that a campaign should include both stories and data to communicate why early childhood education is a long-term economic investment.

Some groups emphasized that before undertaking a voter or ballot initiative, a public awareness campaign would be needed to educate the community about the childcare crisis.

Implementation Tactics

The Trustee group saw an opportunity to leverage the "1,000 Neighborhood Gatherings Initiative" to raise awareness about the early childhood crisis.

The Lautrec group discussed the business sector as an important audience segment for communication and outreach efforts.

Pavilion 1 group noted that users and providers armed with information could make effective messengers.

Campaign Messengers

Several groups highlighted the need for local leaders to serve as champions, with the Hoyt group including policymakers as prospects.



The theme that garnered overwhelming support among the groups was the need for public awareness and education about the childcare crisis.

II: Policy Advocacy

Every group either prioritized or highlighted the need for certain policy changes. The changes that were most discussed are state-level initiatives.

Simplify Licensing

The most prominent policy issue, which was called out by five (5) groups, is the need to simplify ECE program licensing. Because of its popularity, this issue is discussed in more detail on page 14.

Pavilion 18 group put forward the need for reasonable and consistent insurance requirements. “Changes in these requirements have been the main reason for some providers to shutter their businesses,” one delegate stated.

Create State Tax Incentives

State tax incentives were highlighted by four of the breakout groups, with three groups calling for more tax breaks for early childhood professionals, and the Pikes Peak group emphasizing tax breaks for employers who assist their employees with meeting their childcare needs.

The Hoyt group also included cash incentives as an approach for stimulating early childhood expansion.

Increase ECE Teacher Pay

Teacher pay and incentives were also prioritized by four groups, and this strategy is discussed further on page 15. The groups did not necessarily frame the issue as a policy issue, and some considered other funding mechanisms, including public investment and/or business partnerships. Because of the financial investment necessary to increase salaries across the field, public funding either from state appropriations or a local ballot initiative would be the most realistic avenues to achieve across-the-board pay increases.

Public Education Funding

The Bailey group envisioned the broadest funding approach, advocating that the state redefine public education so that early education would be funded at the same level as K-12. Public education would be redefined from K-12 to EC-12.

Government Loans

The Pavilion 18 group suggested government-funded loans to help support EC operations and expansion.

Zoning

The local policy change that drew participants’ attention was zoning. Local leaders could create a special category for people establishing home- or center-based ECE programs.

Implementation

As noted under Public Awareness Campaign, a couple of groups, such as Hoyt, called for policy champions among elected officials. Pavilion 5 group also described the need for a convergence of local leaders who would form a legislative committee or task force to tackle the need. The Colorado Springs Chamber of + EDC was suggested as playing a vital role.

Who Does What

Throughout the Summit conversations, participants suggested specific groups to perform key functions. As previously noted, Pavilion 5 group specifically promoted the engagement of the Colorado Springs Chamber + EDC’s Government Affairs Council. Some groups specifically mentioned other groups to take on leadership roles such as the ECBC and Joint Initiatives, with other participants envisioning the role their own organization could play. A full list of Summit participants can be found on page 24.

The most prominent policy issue, called out by five groups, is the need to simplify ECE program licensing.

III. Public Investment

While every group did not specifically prioritize a ballot initiative, most groups did, and those that did not still highlight the need for broad funding increases that would either need to be funded at the state or local level.

The Trustee group was one of the groups that prioritized sustainable funding that could pay for teacher salary increases, expanded teacher training, and capital for starting new childcare centers.

The members of the Lautrec group acknowledged that there may have been previous efforts to pursue a ballot initiative, but members called for "reviving community efforts" so that there would be "a single source of streamlined funding."

Early Childhood Development Special Districts

The Trustee group also noted that Colorado law already allows for the establishment of Early Childhood Development Special Districts.

Other members of the group favored establishing a voter-approved children's fund for El Paso County.

Pavilion 18 noted that "the childcare field operates on a thin margin" and identified funding as a significant challenge. This group also discussed local financial investment such as a "mill levy." Pavilion 18 group members also suggested establishing an "endowment fund."

Again, some groups did not go as far as suggesting a ballot measure, but almost all groups acknowledged that the sustainable funding challenge is a significant basis for the childcare crisis.



...the sustainable funding challenge is a significant basis for the childcare crisis.

IV: Community Collaboration

Every group either specifically called for formalized community engagement, including a community plan, or they described actions and approaches that strongly implied the need for community collaboration.

Several groups touched on the importance of a collaborative effort engaging a diversity of perspectives, especially families with young children.

Pavilion 5 group's report asserted that "community participation and input are essential to ensure that solutions are community-informed and meet the needs of each area."

Pavilion 15 delegates called for greater collaboration specifically among ECE providers. Pavilion 15 strongly recommended that the ECE providers establish a membership organization with the aim to further professionalize the field. The Pikes Peak group discussed the creation of a business cooperative of early childhood providers to create a community-wide infrastructure of EC providers to boost their spending power and negotiate lower costs for their organizations.

> ***...community participation and input are essential to ensure that solutions are community-informed and meet the needs of each area."***



TIER 2: Strategic Targets

Not surprisingly, the Tier 1 priorities provide broad frameworks for community solutions. They define strategic "prongs" under which more specific tactics can be grouped and pursued through similar means.

In contrast, the Tier 2 strategies take a deeper dive into greater specificity. Each of these would fall within a Tier 1 prong but were called out, suggesting these as priority strategies within the broader areas.

For example, licensing regulations fall under Tier 1 policy advocacy. Business and local ECE provider partnership is a community collaboration strategy, and teacher pay could be approached under both the policy and/or public investment prongs. Teacher education could also fall within several prongs: community collaboration, policy advocacy and public investment. These are all strategic modalities that could provide solutions from different angles.

While the tiers are based on the groups' prioritization of choices, interestingly enough, compared to Tier 3, these strategies tend to require broader engagement to implement. Naturally, the groups had more diversity as they offered more specific solutions.

1. Licensing and related regulations modified

Pavilion 1 and Pavilion 18 delegates highlighted the need to reduce red tape involved in childcare licensing. The Hoyt group proposed the idea of community-based waivers as one approach. Hoyt and Pavilion 5 both suggested that a task force would be useful to identifying and promoting an array of regulatory solutions.

Groups, such as Hoyt, agreed that there needs to be a balance between ensuring safe childcare and the time-consuming, expensive regulatory hurdles that exist today.

2. Businesses and local ECE providers forming partnerships

The Trustee group prioritized increased collaboration and partnership between early childhood providers and the business community.

Pavilion 1 discussed the importance of aligning resources and supporting efforts to develop the "right mix" of early childcare options, and the Hoyt members described the need to provide a "landscape of options."

Groups acknowledged that these partnerships would likely need support, noting that "businesses that are interested in providing childcare services need support and guidance."

3. Engage retirees as providers

At least four groups discussed engaging retirees as providers to help address the early childhood workforce shortage.

Retirees may be in a position to provide last-minute childcare or fill holes in non-traditional hours. The suggestion dovetails with other tactics such as employers establishing a pool of last-minute caregivers along with retired teachers providing mentorship within apprenticeship programs.



Retirees may be in a position to provide last-minute childcare or fill holes in non-traditional hours.

4. Teacher pay and incentives

The Lautrec group posited that early childhood salaries at least "need to be competitive with that of K-12 teachers." Pavilion 15 group noted that the teacher shortage has been caused by low wages, and this shortage affects quality.

In the Broadmoor group, whose priorities were largely shaped around the need for training and retaining qualified teachers, delegates discussed how many of the students in the Pikes Peak State College early education track view an early education job as a first job and not a career.

5. Teacher education

With a focus on education, the Broadmoor group placed a heavy priority on teacher training efficacy with teacher apprenticeships noted as a highly effective approach. The Broadmoor group put forward a Teacher Cadet program, offering a collaborative example of School District 11 partnering with CPCD…giving children a head start to place high school students at CPCD for experience and education credits.

Apprenticeships

Several groups appreciated the importance that apprenticeship programs could play, suggesting collaborations that would support ECE professional pipelines.

Behavioral Health

Several groups also touched on the need for teacher training that would support addressing trauma and skill-building around mental and behavioral health supports. It is also noteworthy that in a JI survey of programs conducted before the Summit, ECE program leaders stated that responding to behavioral health issues was their greatest challenge.

> ***…early childhood salaries at least "need to be competitive with that of K-12 teachers."***



TIER 3: Closing Gaps

The Tier 3 strategies were those brought forward by three groups. While more groups may have discussed these strategies as worthwhile, three groups paid special attention to these tactics.

Tiers 1 and 2 represent higher priorities, but the fact three groups discussed a specific strategy is still noteworthy. Additionally, if there had been time for more "cross-pollination" and discussion across all of the groups, these may have emerged with stronger support.

Technical support to caregivers, especially Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers

The Lautrec group advocated for encouraging current Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers and stay-at-home parents to become licensed providers. This priority also supports the goals of advancing quality as well as creating more solutions for employees working nontraditional hours. The Lautrec group members also suggested that FFN and other training could be held in churches. The Pikes Peak group and Pavilion 5 both expressed the opportunity churches might present with space-related solutions.

Provide solutions for childcare during non-traditional hours

Pavilion 15 group highlighted that the childcare industry caters to parents who work traditional hours. Participants suggested that hospitals, military spaces, and other facilities open during overnight or weekend hours could be explored to house childcare facilities.

Hoyt members also urged that the community explore the use of 24-hour businesses and proposed commencing a study to learn more about the opportunities there.

The Pikes Peak group discussed that businesses might explore contracting with providers who could provide nontraditional hours.

Support resource navigation across systems

The Hoyt group prioritize paid navigators throughout the community who could help guide families and employers in accessing childcare options.

Pavilion 5 group advocated for resource navigation as well, and suggested a map of tools and resources that are already available, such as ensuring that more families and employers are aware of all of the services offered by Joint Initiatives, which serves as a community "hub."

Employers offer flexible hours

Several delegations supported employer action to meet employees' childcare needs. Providing flexible hours garnered the most discussion.

The Lautrec group was one of the delegations that prioritized flexible hours and offered additional suggestions for employer support:

- Provide back-up caretakers, maintaining a pool of retired and part-time teachers, and FFNs.
- Create a toolkit for family-friendly business practices geared towards employers.

Engage nontraditional partners

As suggested in other sections, several groups advocated for engaging high school students (Teacher Cadets) as apprentices as well as engaging churches that have space.



Participants suggested that hospitals, military spaces, and other facilities open during overnight or weekend hours could be explored to house childcare facilities.

Noteworthy

Most groups favored some ideas that were unique or specific to that group. The following are ideas that a group appeared to favor, but perhaps other groups didn't have the opportunity to consider.

The goal moving forward is that the Summit priorities will offer a framework for initial collaboration, but that community priorities will evolve. These are a few suggested solutions that the community could explore further.

Note: Many of these were mentioned previously as an example of a tactic for a broader strategy.

- Teacher Cadets: train and utilize high school students within childcare programs for credit (Broadmoor)
- Partner retired teachers as mentors/coaches with apprentices (Broadmoor)
- Professional organization: ECE providers develop a local chapter to further professionalize the field (Pavilion 15)
- Promote the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit (Pavilion 15)
- Open centers in hospitals and other locations that operate 24/7 (Pavilion 15, Hoyt)
- Create a private fund for teacher continuing education (Pavilion 15)
- Explore utilizing School District 2's before and after school model throughout the community (Hoyt)
- Include use of poverty simulator as part of messaging in public awareness efforts (Hoyt)
- Partner with 2-1-1 to provide childcare navigation for families (Hoyt)
- Companies identify and maintain a pool of "back-up" providers for employees' last-minute issues. (Lautrec)
- Engage the National Society for Human Resource Managers (Lautrec)
- Utilize churches for training opportunities (Lautrec)
- ECE providers form a consortium for group discounts (Lautrec)
- Establish an Early Childhood Special District (Trustee)
- Address the lengthy background check process to make it more efficient (Pavilion 18)
- Include diverse family voices and perspectives in the community engagement efforts (Pavilion 18)
- Establish an endowment fund for early childhood education (Pavilion 18)
- Create a clearinghouse and/or map of available local resources (Pavilion 5)
- Provide business development for childcare centers (Pavilion 5)
- Cooperative models utilized for childcare (Pikes Peak)
- Consortium degrees between community and state colleges (Pikes Peak)



THE MATRIX: HOW THE PIECES FIT TOGETHER

Tier 1 Broad Priorities	Public Awareness Campaign	Public Policy **Advocacy**	Public investment	Community Collaboration
Tier 2 Priorities and Tier 1 Favored Strategies	Public understanding of the crisis Shift public perception of ECE field Set the stage for a voter/ballot initiative	Licensing simplified ECE teacher pay ECE teacher training Fund EC at the same level as K-12	Funds to pay for ECE operations that are quality and affordable Fund ECE teacher pay Fund ECE teacher training	Businesses + local ECE providers collaborate Employer toolkit to support employees Apprenticeships
Tier 3 Priorities		Grant funding for new new/expanded childcare spots (supporting business + local ECE partnerships) Tax incentives for ECE teachers Tax incentives for employers	Funding for new program builds and expansion	Resource navigators Engage/incentivize/ skill building: home care givers and FFNs Engage/train high school students and retired people Match space opportunities (churches, hospitals, etc) with businesses and EC providers
Family Survey		Free all-day preschool (currently 10 hours/week)	Free all-day preschool	
Program Survey		Funding for mental health training and services		Mental/behavioral health training
Specific group priorities	Connect with 1,000 Neighborhood Gatherings	Funding for Teacher Cadets		ECE programs form a membership organization/ chapter Harrison School District 2 model

Partnership

Approximately 100 organizations or offices signed up to participate in the Summit.

A list of Summit participants can be found on page 24.

Black Chamber of Commerce
Bright Horizons
Buell Foundation
Catamount Institute
Colorado Department of Early Childhood
City of Colorado Springs
Colorado Charter School Institute
Colorado Children's Academy
Colorado Media Group, Inc.
Colorado Springs Chamber + EDC
Colorado Springs City Council
Colorado Springs Conservatory
Colorado Springs Housing and Community Vitality
Colorado Springs Leadership Institute
Colorado Springs Police Department
Colorado Springs School District 11
Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority
Colorado Springs Utilities
COS City Hub
COSILoveYou
Council for a Strong America
CPCD…giving children a head start
Creative Kids College
Design Rangers
Early Childhood Business Council
Early Connections Learning Centers
El Paso County Board of County Commissioners
El Paso County Department of Human Services
El Paso County Economic Development Dept.
El Pomar Foundation
eLearning Consortium of Colorado (ELCC)
Ellicott School District 22 Preschool
Ent Credit Union
Entegris
Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)
Generation Wild
Goodwill of Colorado
Harrison School District 2
US Senator John Hickenlooper's Office
HugSpeak
Inclusive Early Childhood Education
InnovaFlex
Joint Initiatives for Youth and Families
KKTV
La Plata Communities
Congressman Doug Lamborn's Office
Lighthouse Early Care and Education
Little Tykes Learning Center
Microchip
Mountain Willow Montessori
Norwood
Opus Creative Industries
Peak Age
Penrose St. Francis
Pikes Peak Community Foundation
Pikes Peak Library District
Pikes Peak Real Estate Foundation
Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center
Pikes Peak State College
Pikes Peak United Way
Pikes Peak Workforce Center
Polly's Preschool
Pikes Peak State College
Raymond James
Red Gravy
RISE Southeast
Rocky Mountain PBS
Sachs Foundation
Salvation Army
Sparrow Hawk Cookware
TESSA
The Broadmoor
The Gazette
The Lane Foundation
The Learning Experience
The Platinum Group Realtors
The Sports Corp
Thrivers Foundation
The Resource Exchange
US Olympic + Paralympic Museum
University of Colorado Colorado Springs
UCHealth
Unique Play Place
USAA
We Fortify

Implementation

Public Awareness Campaign

Groups' discussions acknowledged that a campaign requires an organization with staff resources and expertise supported by a community-based leadership group that can spearhead a multi-level campaign employing an array of strategies.

Once identified, preliminary steps would likely involve determining plan components such as audience targeting and segmentation, messaging with clear calls to action, appropriate messengers, and media partnerships. Not only were "champion" local leaders suggested as issue messengers, but many participants spoke to the need for local providers to share their stories.

Strategic outlets would likely include social media outreach driving to a website, videos, TV and radio PSAs, promotional materials, and speakers' bureau.

Additionally, a major feature of the campaign will be its specificity defined by overarching numerical goals to provide benchmarks against which progress can be measured.

Public Policy Advocacy

Summit participants clearly expected that a policy group composed of community leaders and early childhood professionals would be formed to develop a legislative agenda. Some groups anticipated including public officials on the task force. ECBC, the Chamber, and JI were groups suggested to coordinate a legislative committee/task force.

A policy committee could assess the Summit policy recommendations as well as consider new ones. Policy initiatives could be prioritized and then, based on the priorities, analyzed and thoroughly considered for specific approaches as the current Summit policy recommendations reflect broad strokes.

A liaison or liaisons would need to be determined to identify legislative sponsors and champions. champions as well as to negotiate revisions and amendments. These and/or other leaders would need to be identified to coordinate advocacy efforts (communique) from the committee and partnering organizations.

Public Investment

As previously described, some participants strongly recommended that any public investment initiative follow a public awareness campaign, particularly members of the Trustee group.

Since not all groups prioritized this issue, it would make sense that there would need to be:

- exploration as to whether there is community support for such an initiative, and if so,
- an effort to create a foundation of support.

Accordingly, a campaign could include different phases with a first phase creating general awareness and a second phase focused on community investment.

A useful tool for both the public awareness campaign and public financing effort will be benchmark polling to determine public attitudes before and after a campaign.

Community Collaboration

Every group either specifically called for formalized community engagement, including a community plan, or they described actions and approaches that strongly implied the need for community collaboration.

While a "backbone" organization would be needed for coordination, collaboration was suggested for a wide range of strategies. As such, the community would likely benefit from the creation of affinity groups who share mutual goals and complementary resources.

Implementation: Public Awareness Campaign

POSSIBLE STEPS

1. Establish a working task force that includes key perspectives: media organizations, organizational leadership with public relations experience, organizations who convene community partners, early childcare professionals and family representatives.
2. Identify key "champions" or ambassadors who would be willing spokespeople.
3. Recruit funding partners and sponsorships.
4. Interview and hire a media firm.
5. Develop a communications plan that includes the range of earned and paid media strategies.
6. Determine key audience segments and develop draft messages.
7. Engage focus groups to test messaging.
8. Refine messaging (the story) and create promotional materials, such as videos, TV and radio PSAs, billboards, flyers, social media content, and website.
9. Finalize the campaign calendar.
10. Launch!



CAMPAIGN COMPONENTS

A public awareness campaign does not have to be high budget and can proactively utilize:

1. **Targeting:** A marketing firm can support market segmentation/key audience targets; some Summit participants emphasized that the business community would be a key audience. To bolster legislative and public finance efforts, likely voters might be another key audience.
2. **Messaging:** Some of the messaging concepts that groups discussed included:
    - Educate the community about the crisis
    - Enhance the perceptions about the ECE field.
    - Create positive messages to promote desired solutions.
3. **Social media:** A social media calendar with prepared content can be created.
    - Content includes infographics, surveys, personal stories (link to video), and calls to action
    - Posts are provided to and shared by partners.
    - Can drive audience to campaign website for calls to action choices.
4. **Earned media and PSAs**: The Campaign creates a steady flow of newsworthy events as well as 15- and 30-second spots with TV and radio media partners.
5. **Paid Media:** The campaign can consider whether to pay to promote the PSAs and/or video content. Today paid media includes not only TV and radio, but Google, FaceBook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.
6. **Calls to action**: Sign up for newsletter, share your childcare story, take a survey, volunteer on the task force, donate, learn how you can start a home childcare business, and more.
7. **Strategic partnership**: Partners who reach a large audience, such as sports company partners, could help spread the message.

Implementation: Public Policy Advocacy

Step 1: The Early Childhood Business Council is positioned to take the lead. The ECBC could establish a Policy Council (or other name) that brings together business leaders and EC providers. Alliance for Kids could implement a process for selecting the ECE representatives and/or providing policy review and recommendations to ECBC.

Step 2: Select one or more lobbying partners. (ECBC's own lobbyist, Children's Campaign, EPIC, and ECCLA are some possibilities).

Step 3: Determine a multi-year legislative agenda.

Step 4: Develop fact sheets on each agenda item.

Step 5: Conduct one-on-one and/or in person meetings between ECBC leaders and local elected officials to request sponsorship and/or support of the legislative items.

Step 6: Coordinate with public awareness campaign to garner media attention.

Step 7: Track legislation and provide updates to community.

Step 8: Coordinate communications: local leaders to provide testimony, make phone calls, and send emails.

Possible Multi-Year Legislative Agenda:

The committee would deliberate and make the decisions with regard to a legislative agenda, but the following were highlights of the priorities and ideas that surfaced during the Summit.

- **Reduce licensing red tape,** including reasonable insurance requirements.
- **Teacher Pay/Funding**: Include ECE as part of the K-12 funding commitment and pay EC teachers as K-12 teachers are paid.
- **Teacher Education**: Free EC teacher higher education and teacher certification for EC teachers who commit to teach or serve in a preschool or childcare program for at least five years
- **Grant funding** for:
    - new childcare spots (facilities, start-up, operations)
    - Teacher Cadets high school program and apprenticeship programs
    - Early childhood behavioral health training and services
- **Tax incentives** for early childhood professionals
- **Tax incentives** for employers who work with ECE partners to establish childcare
- **Local: zoning** requirements are eased and expedited processes with fire and safety are established.



Implementation: Public Investment Exploration

Source: Buell Foundation Toolkit

Step 1: Establish a leadership group

"While one person or one organization may serve as the convenor or backbone of this effort, this is not a one-person or one-organization job." The Buell toolkit points out that many local initiatives have been spearheaded by early childhood councils, which in El Paso County is Alliance for Kids (AFK). AFK, comprised of early childhood providers, could serve as the foundation, and the group would grow to include members who offer expertise in:

- Communications and public relations
- Political campaigns
- Fundraising

It would also be important to ensure family voices are part of the group. Ideally, the group would have less than 25 members.

Step 2: Learn the fundamentals

Expertise is needed on how to get on the ballot with legally-compliant language, public opinion research, taxation approaches, identifying revenue, and planning what is in essence a political campaign. An initial budget of $130,000 to $170,000 is anticipated.

Step 3: Identify the need and focus

Identifying the greatest needs and where financing will have the most impact is an important early step. Both quantitative and qualitative data can be helpful to determine where to focus. The campaign will need to identify who will be eligible for funding, what programming will be targeted, who will administer funding and other policy choices.

Step 4: Conduct opinion research

Determine what data would be helpful and conduct research regarding what financing approach would be most appealing and what needs the community identifies with most. These datapoints can be used to craft both financing method and campaign messaging.

Step 5: Engage the community

Stakeholders are important for fine-tuning the campaign plans as well as providing support throughout the community. Stakeholders include parents/families, businesses and business organizations, early childhood providers, elected officials, government agencies, and community service organizations.

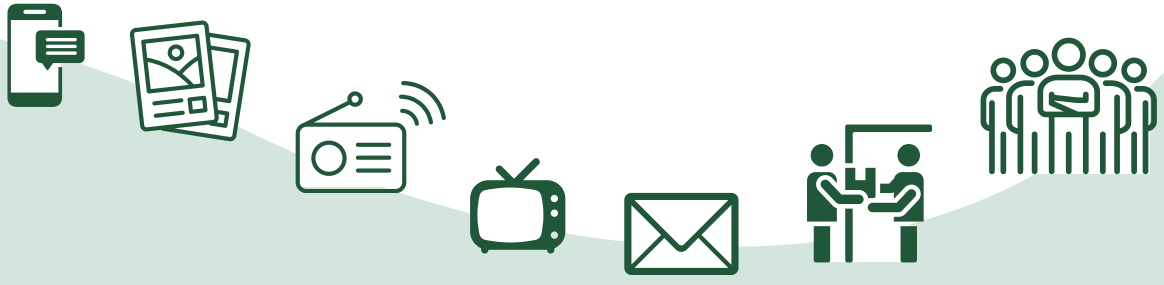
Step 6: Create the campaign structure

Through stakeholder engagement, a broad array of champions—both individuals and organizations—can be identified and plugged into the campaign. Supporters can be helpful in door-to-door campaigning, sharing social media posts, and speaking to groups.

Step 7: CAMPAIGN

Once an initiative is on the ballot, a variety of campaign tactics are typically employed:

- Direct mail
- Digital marketing
- Print advertising
- Door-to-door knocking and literature drops
- Radio
- Earned media, such as press events
- PSAs for TV and radio
- Yard signs
- Text messages
- Rapid response teams



Implementation: Community Collaboration

The Community Collaboration initiative will engage local partners within affinity groups that could be organized with an ad hoc committee structure. A number of specific priorities fall within this initiative, and these will form the basis of committee structures.

- Engaging retirees as emergency caregivers or after-hours caregivers
- Partnership between local early childhood providers and businesses
- Apprenticeships that embed high school and college students into programs
- Behavioral health education and trauma-informed practice
- Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) supports
- Resource navigation (including military supports)

SUGGESTED STEPS

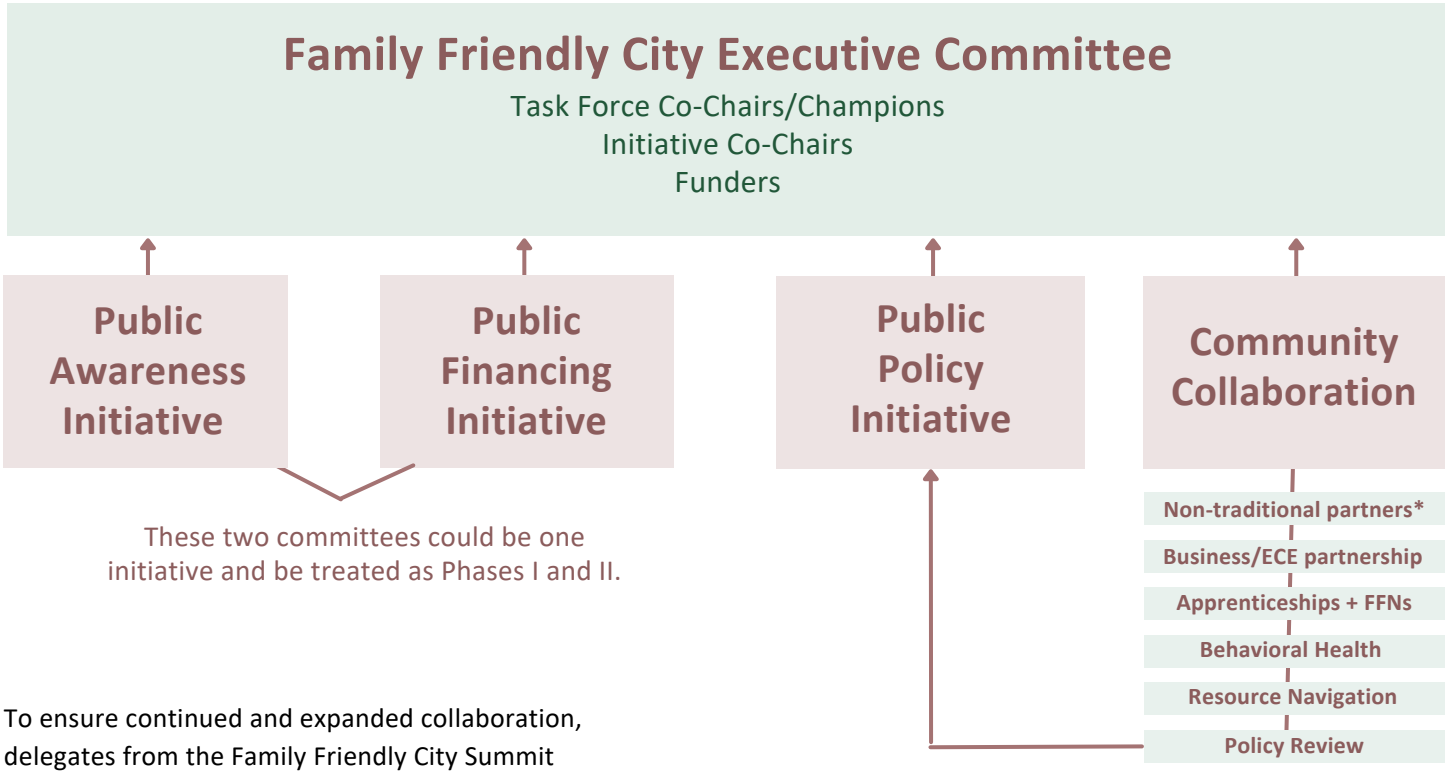
- Host a hybrid organizing meeting where Summit delegates determine the best fit for them across initiatives, including whether to join one of the community collaboration committees.
- Leaders of the committees are selected.
- Delegates determine which other organizations and individuals need to be involved in their groups.
- Each committee agrees on goals and develops tactics for the goals.
- Committee members are assigned the various tasks. Leaders provide follow-up action lists.

Additionally, as mentioned on page 22 under Public Policy Advocacy, Alliance for Kids could establish a process, which could be a committee, for policy review and recommendations to ECBC. All of the aforementioned groups could also connect with Alliance for Kids.

Each committee would be well served by having early childhood provider representation, diverse community engagement, and family/parent voices.



Community Task Force Structure



To ensure continued and expanded collaboration, delegates from the Family Friendly City Summit prioritized the creation of a community task force and/or plan that would ensure the development and implementation of Summit strategies.

The Tier 1 priorities could serve as the high-level framework:

- A public awareness campaign
- Public financing exploratory committee
- Legislative advocacy
- Community collaboration with affinity groups

Leaders of these efforts will need to take the long view—that the work of the committee will take a multi-year commitment.

Delegates also discussed the need to include leaders or "champions" who may not have participated in the Summit who will bring visibility, diversity of viewpoints and expertise that would add value to the community task force's ability to carry out its goals.

**Non-traditional partners include retirees, churches and others identified by the group.*

Creating institutionalized infrastructure would provide the following benefits:

- Broad support and inclusion across the community
- Clear roles and responsibilities for participating groups and individuals
- Clear lines of communications inside and outside the infrastructure
- Engaging members of the target audience in the planning and implementation

Following the example of other successful community-based campaigns, Pikes Peak Region leaders will forge an umbrella coalition, or council, with committed funding partners to create the task force and identify enthusiastic working committees to carry out the operational plans of the four initiatives.

The JI, ECBC, ECLC, and Pikes Peak United Way Summit leadership will identify and convene those Summit participants and other parties who have expressed an interest in playing a role in the community effort.

Evaluation Plan

The oversight consortium could be tasked with establishing an evaluation process to gauge the effectiveness of the initiatives and the many elements that make up the regional strategy. Simplicity and efficacy would be important.

Data

The project could include formative and summative evaluation processes that utilize both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The formative evaluation will describe and assess what has transpired in the activities implemented, the participants involved, and the obstacles or successes experienced. Quantitative measures will examine scope and breadth of participation and will assess process effectiveness.

Process

The oversight task force could hold the responsibility of developing the goals of the initiatives as well as the specific measures to be utilized to evaluate progress.

Then each initiative's committee could develop and implement tactical plans to reach the stated goals, including assessment tools and processes to capture data needed to determine whether measures are obtained.

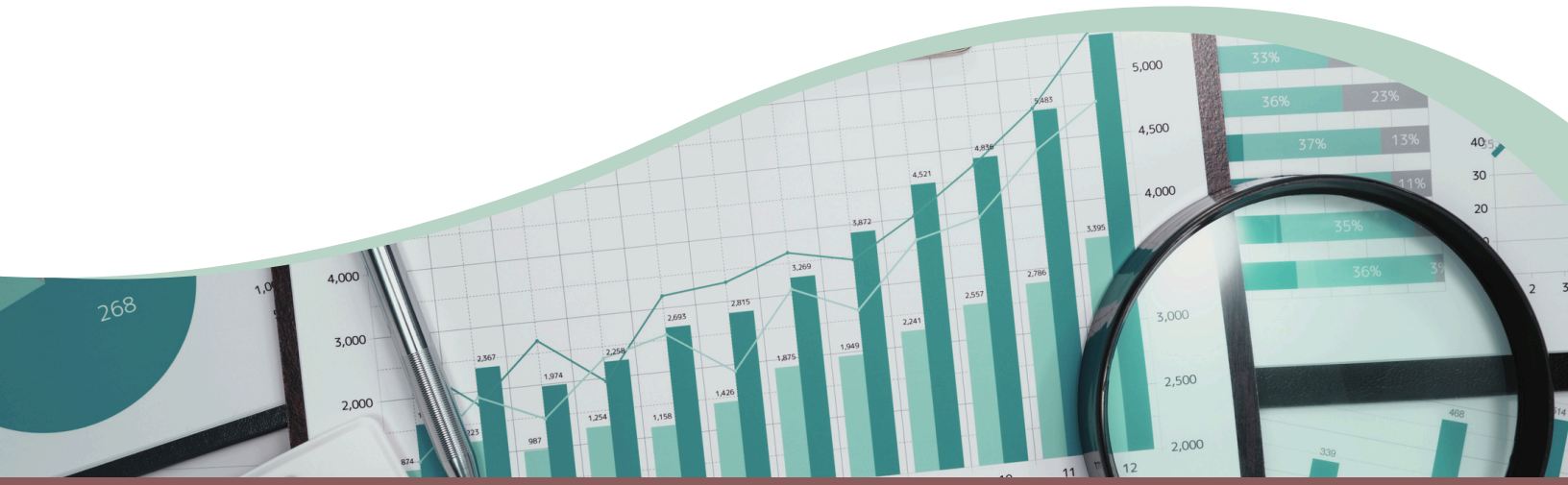
Each initiative's designees will report progress back to the Task Force every month for evaluation to identify opportunities for improvement.

Data Collection

Uniform processes to capture data will also be established. For example, an easy-to-use online form could be used to report on a variety of data points, from the number of monthly social media posts and impressions to new groups signed on to support a public finance campaign.

A public education campaign would pose bigger evaluation challenges as it is desirable to understand shifts in public perceptions. For example, the campaign might obtain funding to conduct a random poll or survey of the general public to measure knowledge as well as attitudes. Then the poll or survey could be conducted again on an annual basis to measure shifts.

If funding were available, a project evaluator would be secured to assist in designing measures, tools, and processes. Without one, there is capable talent among the Summit participants who can participate in designing an effective and comprehensive plan.



Conclusion

In summary, the Summit initiatives provide a starting point for community engagement to stimulate a wide variety of actions in the Pikes Peak Region to catalyze the creation of quality childcare spots. Reaching the goal of creating as many as 17,000 new spots will not be easy. It will require a new and more constructive level of civic engagement and dialogue on the part of an increasingly concerned public.

It will require a sea of change in values and attitudes about early childhood education/childcare field and how ECE is funded. The Family Friendly City Summit is the launching pad for a commitment to move forward to achieve these goals.

The challenge is great, but we believe that meeting the need can be done…together.



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Bright Horizons

Shay Almonte
Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families

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Pikes Peak Library District

David Ames
Pikes Peak United Way

Jeff Anderson
Office of Congressman Doug Lamborn

Jax Armendariz Unzueta
Rocky Mountain PBS

Jonah Attenbury
Red Gravy

Cindy Aubrey
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Matthew Ayers
Dream Centers

Colleen Batchelor
The Resource Exchange

Samantha Baumgartner
Microchip

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Office of US Senator John Hickenlooper

Jackie Lujan
Lighthouse Early Care and Education

Judy Mackey
Garden of the Gods Club and Resort

Anne Markley
TESSA

Becky Medved
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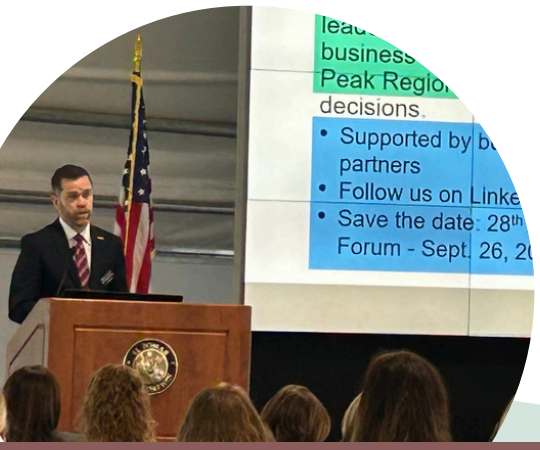
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Laura Quinn
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Erma Williams
Little Tykes Learning Center

Austin Wilson
Downtown Colorado Springs

Barb Winter
Consultant

Jessica Wise
Colorado Springs School District 11



Addendum II: Resources

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- NAEYC
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- Social and Emotional Development in Early Learning Settings (ncsl.org)
- Initiatives & Special Projects - Buell Foundation (buellfoundation.org)
- Universal Preschool and Special Education (Colorado Department of Early Childhood)

Addendum III: Glossary of Terms

Affordability — The ability for a family to reasonably pay for and use high-quality services. The average annual cost for childcare in Colorado in 2023 was $16,333, the 5th most expensive in the nation.

AFK—Alliance for Kids. The El Paso County early childhood council is called the Alliance for Kids Council and is a statutorily required coalition that brings agencies together that serve young children through early childhood education programming to build the local ECE system. It is housed by Joint Initiatives.

Blended Funding — Refers to a way of paying for a set of program services to a group of children that combines funding sources. Costs are not required to be tracked by individual funding sources with blended funding.

Braided Funding — Refers to a way of paying for a set of program services to a group of children that coordinates funds from two or more sources to support the cost of services. Costs are required to be tracked and attributed per each funding stream.

CCCAP—Colorado Child Care Assistance Program ("C-Cap") subsidizes childcare costs for low-income families.

Childcare Center — Licensed centers that provide comprehensive care for children. Colorado law defines **9 different categories of childcare centers.**

Childcare Desert — An area where there are an insufficient number of licensed slots for the number of children who need care. More than half of the children in the US live in childcare deserts

CDEC — **Colorado Department of Early Childhood,** established in 2022, the department oversees a diverse array of programs for Colorado's youngest children and their families, including the state's Universal Preschool Program.

Colorado Shines — A quality rating and improvement system for early learning programs in Colorado. Early learning programs are rated on a scale of 1 to 5 based on 5 factors

EC—Early Childhood

ECBC—Early Childhood Business Council

ECE—Early Childhood Education

ECMH—Early Childhood Mental Health

JI—Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families, see also AFK

Microcenter—A childcare center owned and housed by another type of business to provide childcare to their employees

QI—Quality Improvement

UPK—Universal Pre-Kindergarten (program); aka **Colorado Universal Preschool** offers up to 10 hours of free preschool per week to all children in Colorado in their year before preschool. Some families qualify for additional funding based on qualifying factors.



El Pomar Foundation

Joint Initiatives for Youth + Families

United Way Pikes Peak United Way

La Plata Communities

Pikes Peak Community Foundation

earlyconnections Learning Centers

Goodwill of Colorado

The Colorado Trust — A Health Equity Foundation

Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC

Thrivers Foundation

Opus Creative Industries

Innovaflex Foundry

Downtown Colorado Springs

Norwood

The O'Neil Group