

NORTHWEST COLORADO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Regional Assessment of Child Care Industry



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



SPECIAL THANKS

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PURPOSE

This report is intended to be a tool and workbook for community leaders who may not be sure whether they or their organization has a role to play in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or who may not understand why it should matter to them. It is also for those who “get it” and are already active in supporting ECE and desire tools to take that support to the next level. High country leaders often focus on housing, transportation, economic development, community planning, health care, education, recreation and quality of life. For local leaders who are serious about comprehensively strengthening their communities, ECE deserves equal focus and attention from a policy standpoint.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is an industry with a mix of private and public support that presents many challenges for Northwest Colorado. The lack of a sufficient, affordable, and high-quality child care settings is negatively impacting our children, their families, and our businesses. In short, coordinated, decisive action is needed.

NWCCOG commissioned this report which was funded by member dues and a matching grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. The purpose was to evaluate the region’s ECE environment amid the COVID pandemic and present options for leaders and stakeholders to effectively address the myriad interrelated challenges facing providers, families, employers, advocates, and policymakers. Of the many public policy issues facing our region, ECE impacts (and is impacted by) K-12 education, workforce participation, economic development, affordable housing, physical and mental health, transportation, and many others. It drills down further from the state Early Milestones Report issued in 2020, and upon many excellent reports and studies on this topic at a national level cited within the report. There is not a national framework for early childhood the way there is for K-12 education, and although support has recently increased at a state level in Colorado, the work of making early childhood successful is a matter of local concern. If we want to have vibrant, growing communities, it is essential that the public have access to affordable early childhood services. Despite welcome investments from local governments, the business community, and non-profits, ECE remains an underfunded industry that often falls between the cracks. Moreover, it can determine whether young families remain and prosper in a challenging financial environment.

**Support for the local
ECE ecosystem
should be part of
your long-term
recovery planning.**

This report is a tool for our regional leaders and other stakeholders to utilize as they seek to plot an ambitious but practical path forward in supporting the industry, if they choose to. In short, this report:

- **RAISES AWARENESS:** It highlights the current state of the system, including available services, changes in terms of capacity, and structural challenges facing the system (both COVID-related and longstanding) and the negative impacts on children, families, and businesses.
- **OFFERS OPTIONS:** It shares practical, proven initiatives to relieve stress on individuals and the system, share solutions that have yielded results in the northwest region and beyond.
- **CALLS TO ACTION:** It shares both perspective and practical tools to use as leaders engage partners in the community to create a relevant portfolio of initiatives to execute in the near, mid-, and longer-term.
- **ESTABLISHES A FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:** It shares a framework for further discussion, providing both perspective and practical tools to use as leaders engage partners in the community to create a relevant portfolio of initiatives to execute in the near, mid-, and longer-term.

Local leaders should be aware that Colorado already has a network of regional support for early childhood endeavors through the 34 Early Childhood Councils. This project would not have gotten off the ground without active participation from the first three names listed below who head the three Early Childhood Councils in the NWCCOG region. Each has made it her job to be aware at ground-level what is going on in her territory, so you would be wise embarking on efforts recommended in this document to begin with them. The report also leaned heavily on the knowledge of Brian, Laura and Greg at Government Performance Solutions who held the focus groups, researched and drafted the report. It truly takes a village to address such issues. In particular, NWCCOG is grateful for and appreciates the expertise of those who have helped steer us:

- Lucinda Burns, Executive Director: Early Childhood Options, Summit County
- Stacy Petty, Director: Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council, Eagle, Pitkin, Garfield and Lake Counties
- Katy Hale, Executive Director: Grand Beginnings, Grand and Jackson Counties
- Jeanne McQueeney, Commissioner: Eagle County
- Patti Clapper, Commissioner: Pitkin County
- Greg Winkler, Regional Manager: Colorado Department of Local Affairs
- Greg Bellomo, Managing Partner: Government Performance Solutions, Inc.
- Brian Pool, Partner: Government Performance Solutions, Inc.
- Laura Sigrist, Principal Consultant: Government Performance Solutions, Inc.

Due to the myriad challenges facing our communities, this is a time of reflection and opportunity, and I would emphasize coordinated and decisive action at a national, state, regional and local level. Now is the time for bold action and I hope that this report will be useful to you as you collaborate to meet these challenges. NWCCOG is invested in (and committed to helping) you as you do so.



Jon Stavney,
Executive Director
Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early childhood care and education for each and every child is critical to Colorado's future. Research from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child confirms that significant and critical brain development occurs by year 5 and that stable nurturing environments ensure productive, secure young people who rely less on social services in their later years. Evidence from the Colorado Children's Campaign suggests that for every dollar spent in the Colorado early care and education sector, \$2.25 is contributed to the state's economy, and for every job created in the child care sector, 1.5 jobs are created in the state's economy. A robust childcare ecosystem is good for kids and the economy.

That said, the system does not meet the needs of many communities, whether in terms of quality, access, or equity. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated these challenges. The limited revenues available to ECE programs leave the early childhood workforce woefully underpaid and often restrict access to high-quality care to only the highest-income families. Data from the Center for American Progress and a November 2020 report from [Early Milestones Colorado](#) show:

- There are 403,927 children under the age of 6 in Colorado, representing 14% of the state population.
- A family with two children (including one infant) utilizing child care will spend \$27,055 on an annual average, representing an enormous burden for families at 33% of the statewide median income.
- 51% of Colorado's population lives in a child care desert, where there are more than three children for each available slot.
- 27% of Colorado's ECE teachers were furloughed due to COVID-related changes

Our analysis of the systems, strengths, and opportunities in our region identified three major barriers which must be addressed to ensure each family has options for securing high-quality care for our youngest Coloradans:

Affordability, Capacity, and Fit. Addressing these challenges, local innovations from businesses, policy makers, and child care leaders are driving change for our communities.

There is a misconception among many that ECE is a niche cause that would not receive broad support if put to a public vote. Recent experience has shown that when local leaders build a shared advocacy campaign, ballot measures for ECE often earn voter support. The recent passage of Proposition EE and full day kindergarten in Colorado (date) are just two indications of public demand for improvements in ECE. Public officials can and should gain political courage from public sentiment on these issues. While these solutions will help the situation, additional action is need both locally, and at the regional, statewide, and national level, like those highlighted in this report. To use this report to get started on an initiative in your community, consider pursuing ideas like those in the tables on the next page.

This report is structured so that local partners can select which innovations are most valuable to the community. We encourage leaders to assemble a powerful coalition and work together to select the most impactful options that are feasible given local assets and constraints. Refer to the quick-start actions in the table below, the [community discussion guide](#), the [regional innovations](#) section, and the [county fact sheet](#) appendix.

To have a conversation about getting started, contact your local county commissioner, or any of the contributors mentioned in the Purpose section above, or contact GPS (greg@governmentperformance.us or 303.601.7319).

BARRIERS & RELATED SOLUTIONS

PARTNERS	AFFORDABILITY	CAPACITY	FIT
<u>Employers</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer-funded Subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsored slots for employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site care
<u>Policy Makers</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxpayer-funded Subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center Space • New ECE Centers • ECE Workforce & Professional Development • Navigation Supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation Supports
<u>ECE Providers & EC Councils</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition Assistance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation Supports
<u>Community Partners</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Aid / Tuition Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of New Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Shared Advocacy / Navigation Support • Related Services

QUICK START ACTIONS

INNOVATE WITHIN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY...

- Determine the most pressing needs by:
 - Reading your county profile
 - Convening local providers, business owners, families, and advocates
- Assess support for different solutions presented in this guide, selecting those that are impactful and feasible
- Build the case for change and mobilize commitment to specific
- Collaborate on a plan that makes clear the benefits, actions, owners, timelines and resource
- Execute and address barriers

See Discussion Guide in the appendix

...WHILE CONTRIBUTING TO REGIONAL, STATEWIDE, & NATIONAL SOLUTIONS

- Determine which solutions your community can impact or require statewide support
- Contact your local, state, and national elected officials to make them aware of your community's needs and plans:
We will do _____ and you must do _____
- Contribute to policy analysis at a regional, statewide, and national level
- Help to craft policies that meet your communities needs while avoiding unintended consequences
- Build support within your local community for policy measures, ballot initiatives, etc.
- Optional: Draft letters to elected officials in the appendix

THE REPORT: WHY NOW?

NWCCOG collaborates with members to acknowledge and address the largest challenges facing the region. The COVID-19 crisis has brought to the forefront the challenges endemic in operating in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) ecosystem. ECE is not uniform: It is provided in a mixed-delivery system, comprised of licensed centers and family child care home providers, as well as unlicensed family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) environments. This fragmented approach presents advantages and disadvantages each of which must be considered in the context of specific community needs and resources.

To fully appreciate the early childhood education challenges facing Colorado's mountain communities in the middle of this pandemic, we ask you to read this report and put yourself in the shoes of those most impacted. You may not have children yourself, but whether you come from a viewpoint of competitive advantage for your business, long term thinking about future leadership, prioritizing of goodwill, economic benefits or combination of other societal values, we know that high quality early childhood care is vital to the health of each community in the region. Global events of 2020 have highlighted the deficiencies of the ECE system, but we know these challenges existed long before. Will we have the will to address them as we emerge to stronger and brighter days ahead?

Even without the pandemic, the region's ECE environment has many longstanding challenges, and these vary depending upon the perspective one takes:

- **COMMUNITY:** Insufficient number of spots with high costs and concerns about quality of education
- **PROVIDERS:** High turnover, workforce shortages, financial pressures, and regulatory expectations
- **WORKFORCE:** Low wages, prohibitive cost of education to support advancement, community and societal respect

In the Innovations section of this report, a variety of solutions tailored by businesses, municipalities and communities are outlined which address these challenges. Is there one that could be replicated to meet a need in another community or expanded? These are the questions local leaders should be asking.

JUST IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT...

You are a young, working mother of a two year old boy and four year old girl, waking up to another day of juggling responsibilities. Your child care center closed due to COVID and you are unable to find another provider with available slots, especially for your toddler. Your daughter has unique needs that require steady attention and thoughtful intervention. Since your husband was laid off in April from his position at the local resort, you have struggled to make ends meet.

Meanwhile, your local child care center operator is still unable to open their doors. This is partly because staff has been reluctant to work in a setting that may contract COVID and expose their elderly parents. Demand has dropped as parents can no longer afford the slots available, reducing revenue and eroding savings. Finally, the challenges of keeping up with the evolving regulations and sanitation practices prove too much to manage. Where do you turn? Will you choose to sacrifice your own career, your children's needs? How would you find a slot or compete for one? Will it impact your decision to raise your family in an already challenging place?

Existing early learning supports are inadequate. While public support for child is available in Colorado, current statewide subsidies do not completely cover the cost of high-quality care, and they fail to reach the majority of families in need. State preschool programs are underfunded and rarely provide universal access for 3- and 4-year-olds. While full day kindergarten is now a reality in Colorado, research shows that starting students on their academic path in kindergarten (ages 5-6) promotes children's enthusiasm, initiative, persistence, and engagement in learning and helps children enter schooling ready to succeed.

Is there something local leaders can be doing now to ensure that this vital community industry is able to survive the impacts of COVID-19? Now is the time to check in with those providers to see if their needs can be met through grants, direct aid or other means.

STATEWIDE SUBSIDY PROGRAMS

Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) is a state supervised, county administered program that provides access to reduced cost child care at licensed facilities for families meeting eligibility requirements.

Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) is a state-funded program that provides funding for eligible children to attend preschool in partnership with local school districts.

RECOVERING FROM COVID-19 IMPACTS

Many providers are at the brink of closing their doors. The pandemic has hit the statewide system hard, exploiting existing vulnerabilities and creating additional stress. Based on the November 2020 report from Early Milestones Colorado:

- 27% of ECE teachers were furloughed during 2020, with 10% not currently working or planning to return to the early childcare field
- 30% of families do not currently have the needed child care (most parents are caring for children themselves or have children in non-preferred arrangements)
- 16% of educators find it "difficult" or "very difficult" to pay bills

Considering these challenges, and the long-term challenges of this system, a new vision is needed. During the stakeholder engagement portion of this report research, communities shared their common goals:



INCREASE ACCESS

- Increase access, quality, & equity of early childhood services for children and families
- Expand access to evidence-based parent support and education
- Unify the efforts of many partners toward shared outcomes



SUPPORT COMMUNITIES

- Support child care providers to create quality environments that ensure children enter the K-12 system, ready to learn
- Build the pipeline of early childhood educators
- Build community capacity to open new ECE centers and sustain existing programs



ASSESS NEEDS & SOLUTIONS

- Test & evaluate new approaches
- Assess local needs, support strong partnerships, and align local resources and funding streams





STATE OF CHILD CARE

Early childhood care and education is critical to Colorado's future. Today's tots are tomorrow's front line workers, innovators, and taxpayers. It is critical that communities have leaders who embrace caring for them, and doing it well. Research from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child confirms that significant and critical brain development occurs by year 5 and that stable nurturing environments ensure productive, secure young people who rely less on social services in their adjust years.

Further, evidence from the Colorado Children's Campaign suggests that for every dollar spent in the Colorado early care and education sector, \$2.25 is contributed to the state's economy, and for every job created in the child care sector, 1.5 jobs are created in the state's economy.

That said, our system is not meeting our communities' needs, in terms of quality, access, and equity. The limited revenues available to early learning programs leave the early childhood workforce woefully underpaid and often restrict access to high-quality care to only the highest-income families. Despite laudable efforts by officials, system leaders, advocates, business owners, and families, we fall further behind each year. This section contains an overview of the state of child care in Colorado, including vital statistics, a summary of the barriers to access, and the impact of the COVID pandemic and other challenges.

COLORADO VITAL STATISTICS

Colorado is an economic leader, but our early child care and education system is not robust. [Statewide statistics](#) paint an important picture:

- 403,927 children under the age of 6.
- 62% of children under the age of 6 have all available parents in the workforce, limiting daily parental support for early childhood education and development.
- \$27,055 is the average annual child care tuition for two children (an infant and a four year old), representing 33% of the statewide median income. This is not viable for average income workers, limiting ability to attract talent to the field.
- 51% of Colorado's population lives in a child care desert, where there are more than three children for each available slot. These are places where new families face significant barriers
- 51,996 parents report making career sacrifices due to issues with child care.
- More than 12% of Colorado children under 6 had a parent who reported that they or another family member had to quit a job, not take a job, or greatly change their job because of problems with child care. This was a workforce challenge that existed pre-COVID and has been exacerbated by the challenges of COVID-driven quarantines, school and child care closures, and significant economic and employment changes.

Without decisive action from local leaders to help the industry financially bridge impacts due to COVID the problems facing the industry will only be more daunting on the other side. Visionary leaders have long been working to improve systems of early care and learning, nationally and in Colorado, tackling system-wide challenges like high demand for services, low capacity, provider recruitment, retention, and professional development. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed deeper challenges impacting communities, resulting in closures and further access issues:

- Child-care centers across the country, from large chains, small in-home operations, and nonprofits, are teetering. Enrollment slumped in the spring and never fully recovered. Extra expenses, like protective gear and deep cleaning, are piling up. By some estimates, some 40% of U.S. day cares were closed in August. Many of those that are open have 50% fewer children than in February. [Coronavirus Threatens to Push the Child-Care Industry Over the Edge - WSJ](#)
- According to a [November 2020 Report](#) by the US Chamber of Commerce, of factors contributing to employees leaving workforce, 50% cited concerns about child care.
- Nationally, as of October 2020, 2 million women across the country dropped out of the labor force and more than a third of women ages 25-44 are not working due to child care issues. Too often, women are making decisions to leave the workforce based on the arithmetic calculation of economic earning potential versus the cost of child care.
- In June 2020, [Early Milestones](#) collected survey responses from 1,207 licensed child care providers in Colorado. Through this research, we learned that nearly 10% of Colorado's providers have closed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and enrollment has decreased by more than 30%. Though many providers have reopened, many others are uncertain about their future.



Community leaders, parents, early childhood professionals in the five-county NWCCOG region along with representatives from Garfield and Lake Counties shared challenges they are facing and prioritized them through a series of focus groups in the building of this report.

Regarding family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care: data for this study focuses heavily on licensed child care programs due to availability. However, the [Colorado Children's Campaign](#) estimates that nearly 50% of children across state (including school aged children) are cared for in unlicensed or informal settings. Lack of consistent data about the number of young children cared for in these settings makes a comprehensive picture of all child care in the region challenging. Stakeholders shared that there is strong desire across the region to increase support for FFN providers, and an acknowledgement that some licensed providers are abandoning their licenses in favor of the unregulated system of FFN care.

Do local leaders understand the mix of care and the deficits of child care in their community, and do they see a role for themselves in addressing it?

INCREASED BARRIERS TO ACCESS

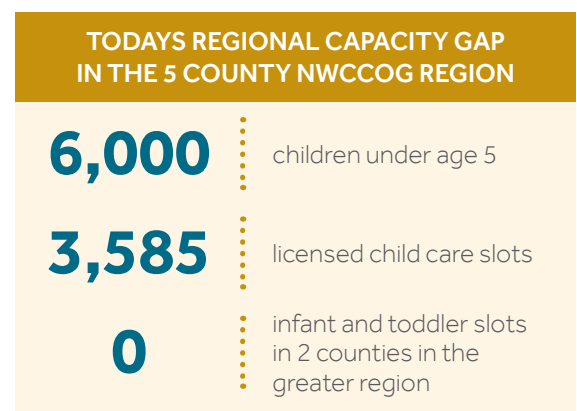
Analysis of the systems, strengths, and opportunities identifies three major barriers which must be addressed to ensure that each family has options for securing high-quality care for our youngest Coloradans those are: **Affordability**, **Capacity**, and **Fit**.

AFFORDABILITY

The cost of child care can be prohibitive, for both the professionals providing services and for families seeking care. Average wages and cost of living are challenges for both child care providers as employers and families trying to cover the cost of care. Many privately funded child care facilities calculate tuition based on what the market will bear rather than on the cost of actual services. A 2018 report from [Early Learning Nation](#) suggests that approximately 60 to 80 percent of early childhood education program income goes toward staff salaries

and benefits. Maintaining required teacher-child ratios and providing safe and high-quality care often result in providers seeking grants and other sources to address funding gaps. Despite these efforts, resources often fall short, resulting in low wages and challenges in meeting basic operating costs for providers. Indeed, many professionals in the early childhood workforce earn less than a living wage and rely on public support programs. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics suggest that the median average wage for employees in early child

care across the NWCCOG five-county region is \$32,060 (based on estimates by NAICS code). The computed median living wage in the same region for an individual supporting one child is \$60,715. Low wages compounded with lack of benefits make recruiting and retaining providers very challenging. From a purely income perspective, it is difficult to envision why anyone chooses this work over other options. If this is to be a vibrant, healthy ECE ecosystem, it is not realistic to rely upon such low compensation and goodwill to the best and brightest talent. Further, expanding or creating new facilities, additional slots, and/or services to meet high demand for child care requires even more funding, jeopardizing the viability and health of child care businesses.



At the same time, child care expenses often represent a significant portion of families' income, up to one-third of median income. When factoring in other costs of living, families find that child care is unaffordable, resulting in children being cared for in unpreferred settings or one parent leaving the workforce to care for his or her own children. In some cases, families are reporting that they are leaving the region to seek more affordable arrangements. If the region wants to retain talent and workers, these are significant barriers to that goal.

While some statewide publicly funded programs like the [Colorado Child Care Assistance Program](#) are available to offset a portion of the cost of child care, benefits are often calculated based on federal poverty rate levels and limitations on income, limiting access to these benefits for families whose economic reality may require these supports. The county by county pages in this report note how many families in each access CCAP. Understanding this data is important to understanding the affordability gap and tailoring programs to address those specific needs.

CAPACITY

In the NWCCOG five-county region, there are nearly 6,000 children under age 5. As of October 2020, there are 3,585 slots available for these children in licensed child care programs. While not every young child requires or receives care in licensed programs, for those working families who seek licensed child care, there is a wide disparity between demand and available slots. When factoring in the availability of child care slots specific to infants and toddlers (ages 0-36 months), the availability is even lower. Indeed, there are several counties in the northwest region who have no licensed capacity for infants and toddlers (Jackson and Lake, October 2020). For families with multiple children of varying ages, this often means that they have to seek and then enroll their children in different programs/ locations to meet child care needs, compounding barriers like transportation, cost, and time commitments. The county by county pages in this report list the number of facilities by county

Talent retention is a high priority in workforce development for communities. Child care plays an important role in insuring that the talent pipeline is expanded. While anecdotal evidence suggests that current residents of the region may be relocating to more affordable locations, additional anecdotal evidence points to more families requiring child care moving out of the Denver metro region and relocating to mountain communities, driving additional capacity challenges. Will those with child care needs who relocate stay if there is insufficient infrastructure in Mountain communities to support their needs? Though the net result of those who leave and those arriving may not be dramatic, the lack of child care points to this often leading to a net out-migration of those just established in their careers and an in-migration of those at the far ends of the age spectrum. Making it possible for working families to remain in communities where they are just becoming a part of the local work and community networks is important to long term talent retention and developing the next leadership in smaller communities. The combined impact of these changes is not well understood.

FIT

Not all child care is equal. While child care providers strive to provide high-quality and supportive care for all families, resources may not be available to meet all needs of families within the region. The system does not provide a full spectrum of services to families with different expectations of the care and learning their children receive. For a robust system, broader choice of options meeting those needs at different cost structures is important. For example:

- In several counties in the region, there are no licensed providers who offer non-traditional or extended hours during early mornings, nights, and weekends (no providers in Grand, Jackson, Eagle, Pitkin Counties and one provider in neighboring Garfield County). This is important to many front-line service workers who do not work 9-5.
- For communities employing many individuals in resort and hospitality roles, and for hospital staff and emergency responders, this significantly limits child care options for families who need support during days and hours outside of the traditional schedule.
- Further, many residents commute 10-50 miles across the region's mountainous terrain (and tough winter weather). As a result, finding conveniently located care with accommodating schedules is challenging. That care may be proximate to home or proximate to work leading to challenges in either case. Exacerbating the transportation challenge, most ECE places have strict pick up the child times with penalties, forcing families to juggle schedules even more. A number of innovations in this report involve employers including child care as a benefit, often at or near the place of work.

In the NWCCOG region, the Hispanic population is a large percentage of the workforce. Additional barriers for some families in the region include the availability of multilingual providers and communication support for families whose primary language is other than English. Many families prioritize care for their children by providers who are able to communicate in the family's home language. While licensed providers who participate in the statewide Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) program have a policy to offer translation services for families related on at least an as-needed basis, there are limited numbers of licensed providers with bilingual capabilities. This is an area which could use focused attention for improvement.



COVID-RELATED CONCERNS

Recent surveys across the state by Early Milestones Colorado point to unique challenges introduced by the pandemic and public health requirements. New requirements, health concerns, and challenges with maintaining sufficient staff to remain open have resulted in sudden closures and cohort quarantining. This is very challenging for families who face immediate changes in child care access as well as for programs and providers who follow the same guidelines (e.g., 14-day quarantine period). In some cases, families continue paying to retain their slot, even when children are not attending.

At the same time, programs and providers report feeling overwhelmed with the changes and increased expenses related to new safety and sanitation protocols. Moreover, existing recruiting and retention challenges are exacerbated by COVID-related fears, frustrations, and fatigue. Statewide, over 30% of the ECE workforce who responded to these surveys have indicated that they are not returning to work due to health and safety concerns. Further, across the NWCCOG five-county region, between 20-40% of the ECE workforce has been furloughed during 2020, and between 25-50% of survey respondents indicate that they do not intend to remain in the ECE workforce.

ECE WORKFORCE IMPACTS



30% of the statewide ECE workforce are not returning to work due to health and safety concerns



In the region, 20-40% of ECE workforce has been furloughed during 2020



25-50% of EC employees in the region do not intend to remain in the ECE field

INNOVATIONS IN OUR REGION

For better or worse, this report did not identify any single county-level “complete package” which comprehensively addresses each of the challenges noted above. That said, for local leaders wishing to make a positive changes in their community to support the early childhood industry, there are many innovations which can be replicated to fit specific needs once they are understood.

VISION STATEMENT

Families, children, childhood education councils, providers, employers, policymakers and taxpayers honor our Early Childhood Education system’s critical role as basic community infrastructure. This results in more ECE options, opportunities, and equitable access to affordable, high quality care. It also ensures our ability to attract and retain enough high-quality professionals who can offer the best education and care possible to prepare our children for school and life.

Through the struggles related to the pandemic and those that existed before, it has become clear how vitally important a strong early childhood system is to the functioning of our region. As mountain communities move beyond the immediate impacts of the crisis, local communities can now benefit from the sharing of ideas, templates, and experiences from local solutions to the various challenges. Local experts in their local communities with a finger on the pulse of what families need, local providers, councils, employers, and policymakers are collectively well-positioned to inform policy decisions related to families with young children. If there is political

and community will, these solutions can provide guideposts for a path forward for other communities.

Employers, policy makers, ECE providers and community partners have shown great creativity in meeting the three major challenges: affordability, capacity, and fit. This section contains a summary of a selection of the innovations recognized, along with sections detailing examples of each innovation in action. Each innovation has leveraged willing partners from these various sectors to break down barriers to progress. The [appendix](#) contains additional examples.

BARRIERS ADDRESSED

PARTNERS	AFFORDABILITY	CAPACITY	FIT
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer-funded Subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsored slots for employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site care
Policy Makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxpayer-funded Subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center Space • New ECE Centers • ECE Workforce & Professional Development • Navigation Supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation Supports
ECE Providers & EC Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition Assistance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation Supports
Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Aid / Tuition Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of New Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Shared Advocacy / Navigation Support • Related Services



EMPLOYER DRIVER SOLUTIONS

Employers across the region are innovating to meet the needs of their employees, knowing that consistency, productivity, and retention each depend upon convenient, affordable, high-quality care for children. Below is a sample of an innovation by one of our region's leading employers along with a listing of other innovations by employers that are addressing affordability, capacity, and fit.

SPOTLIGHT: High-Impact Employer Innovation

INNOVATION: Securing Slots at Local Centers



The Sonnenalp is one of Vail's premier hotels and differentiates itself through service. Delivering that service is improved by long-term employees who are comfortable with the quality, consistency, and reliability of care their children they receive during work hours. Employees struggled to find such child care on their own, so the The Sonnenalp took action.

In response, The Sonnenalp has partnered with one child care center in the area to reserve spots by paying the employee's deposit. Employees benefit by knowing there are reserved spots and the child care provider can rely on steady income. The resort also looked into partnering with facilities to add child care providers to their healthcare plan as The Sonnenalp employees in order to create a partnership and incentivize the child care facility to prioritize The Sonnenalp employees.

OTHER EXAMPLES FOR CONSIDERATION

Sponsored On-site Slots:

- Winter Park Resort provides child care at the resort for kids 2 months – 5 years

Secured Slots at Local Centers

- The Viceroy Hotel in The Town of Snowmass Village sponsors a space and individual pursuing licensure to provide child care for employees

Employer-funded Subsidies

- The Viceroy Hotel contributes \$30 per day to offset the cost of child care.
- Vail Health provides an annual child care subsidy and contracts directly with a child care organization (EVCCA) that has locations mid and up valley to reserve spots for employees' children and subsidize cost

POLICY DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Innovations by employers are complemented by government sponsored or supported programs. Below is a sample of an innovation in one of our regions along with a listing of other innovations by policy makers that are addressing affordability, capacity, and fit.

SPOTLIGHT: High-Impact Policy Innovation

INNOVATION: Tax-payer Funded Programs



The City of Aspen voters recognized the need for long term funding to support child care and affordable housing, passing a .45% city sales tax in 1990. This tax has renewed until 2038.

The funding supports Kids First - Child Care Resource Center, a department of the City of Aspen. Among many other supports, Kids First offers infant and toddler subsidies, quality improvement funding for child care providers, and incentive funding for professional development. Kids First also offers quality improvement coaches, nurse consulting, and a resource teacher who acts as a substitute in the child care programs.

Kids First offers financial aid to families that are over the CCCAP max household income and is providing emergency assistance for families who are out of work, seeking work, and need to keep a space in a child care program.

OTHER EXAMPLES FOR CONSIDERATION

Establishing New ECE Centers

- Middle Park Health and West Grand School District partnered to open the West Grand Early Childhood Center strictly for infants/toddlers
- The Town of Silverthorne will be building a new child care center in their new attainable housing development

ECE Workforce and Professional Development

- Eagle County offers a salary supplement program based on a teacher's credential level and time they have been in the center
- Grand County Library District offers Career Online High School Program, which is an accredited diploma program, including the CDA certification for employment as a child care worker in a professional setting

EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL & PROVIDER DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Councils and providers collaborate on both navigation supports and tuition assistance to ensure that high-quality care is affordable, available, and suitable. Below is a sample of an innovation in our region along with a listing of other innovations.

SPOTLIGHT: High-Impact Early Childhood Council Innovation

INNOVATION: Tuition Assistance



Grand Beginnings, the Early Childhood Council for Grand and Jackson Counties, improves the collaboration and coordination of comprehensive early childhood services throughout the area.

Recognizing that many families in the region do not qualify for statewide assistance through the CCCAP program, Grand Beginnings identified funding to offer a Tuition Reimbursement Program targeted to families who don't qualify for CCCAP but have less income than sufficient per cost of living in the community.

Further, licensed child care programs in the community receive an allotment of tuition money based on enrollment and quality indicators and then receive that tuition money from Grand Beginnings to help families stay enrolled. This funding assistance helps families directly and incentivizes quality improvement for child care providers.

OTHER EXAMPLES FOR CONSIDERATION

Navigation supports

- The Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council has launched a Resource Roadmap for providers, children and families
- Bright Horizons is an agency that works directly with employers to provide a variety of support programs, including various child care solutions (backup care, onsite care, etc.)

Tuition Assistance

- Early Childhood Options offers child care tuition credits for 4-year old children

COMMUNITY PARTNER DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

A vibrant non-profit network is providing support to the ECE system in a variety of ways. Below is a sample that highlights an innovation among community partners along with samples of other innovations in the region.

SPOTLIGHT: High-Impact Early Community Partner Innovation

INNOVATION: Community Outreach



A decade ago, only 1% of Latinx immigrant families' preschool-age children were enrolled in preschool in the Roaring Fork Valley, and families reported being disconnected from schools, services, and jobs. In response, [Valley Settlement](#) created a pipeline of early childhood and parent engagement programs designed to eliminate barriers to participation.

Valley Settlement supports the Roaring Fork Valley with a variety of programs including the [El Busesito](#) program, with a fleet of three "Little Buses" that travel to 12 neighborhoods to provide bilingual preschool education to nearly 100 children who would otherwise have no access to preschool.

OTHER EXAMPLES FOR CONSIDERATION

Facilitation of New Centers

- [Basalt Childcare Coalition](#) secured employee housing for child care teachers and are working on building a new child care center in Basalt, funded by the Town of Basalt.

Financial Aid to Programs

- The [Summit Foundation](#) provided funds to pay teachers during COVID closures.

Shared Advocacy

- The [Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance](#) works closely with the Colorado Children's Campaign to advocate for more funding for Early Childhood Councils. Last year, this resulted in an additional \$2.19M in quality improvement funding.



GLOBAL, NATIONAL & STATEWIDE SOLUTIONS

As regional impacts of COVID play out, it is worth taking a step back to evaluate international, national, and statewide approaches to these challenges. While local innovations and state funding are very important as a lifeline to the service needs of the community, it is worthwhile to zoom back and realize that national policy solutions may be the best bang for our buck in the long run. The long history of K-12 in Colorado, and even the challenge of providing full day kindergarten in the state reveals a complex web of funding, organizations, and needs that are not fully met. Other nations approach child care differently. In time it may be possible for a more comprehensive approach to this challenge to emerge in the U.S. By looking at other models and understanding the impact long-term strategic public investment can have on ECE systems, we gain inspiration to build a better system for our working families, communities and economies. We have highlighted several key examples below, with additional models and solutions detailed in the [appendix](#).

GERMANY

German policy-makers have been trying to make it easier for women and men to reconcile their work and family-life. Since 2013 in Germany, all children aged 1 and over have a legal right to education, early learning and care at a day nursery/ preschool or with a childminder. Germany's federal states have invested heavily in the expansion of child care for infants and children.

- Short for Kindertagesstätte, Kita is a collective term for various forms of child care, grouped into four types:
 - Nurseries (Kinderkrippe) - For children aged < 3
 - Preschools (Kindergärten) - For children aged 3 - 7
 - Childminders / Nannies (Tagespflege) - For all children
 - After-school care (Schulhort) - For children attending primary school
- More than 10 years ago Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth introduced their first „Aktionsprogramm Kindertagespflege“ focused on the care of children under age three. The main goal of this program was to improve the availability of quality child care for children under the age of three by non-parental persons all over the Germany. In that time the availability of care for children under the age of three was approximately 20% for Germany as a whole. By 2017 this number had substantially increased to 33%.
- The main focus was to expand child care services both at an institutional level – support for the construction of new child care facilities for children under the age of three, as well as support for non-institutional forms of child care for children up to three years of age by a qualified caregiver, the so-called Tagesmutter or childminder.
- Despite rights and subsidies, wide variation in costs are normally set by local government, meaning that even within a state the costs are highly variable.

VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Benefits:

- Legal rights for ages 1-6
- Increased equity

Costs:

- Variable by state
- Waitlists common

Relevance to My Community:

- High
- Medium
- Low

Notes:

NATIONAL

UNITED STATES

In the US, without financing to support the provision of high-quality child care, supply will continue to be an issue for families who cannot afford high tuition rates. Here is a summary of recent and pending action at a national level.

- Congress recently increased funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which states are using to increase the number of families served through the child care subsidy system. While this increase is already improving access to quality child care, a much larger investment is needed to fully fund high-quality child care.
- CARES Act included \$3.5B in dedicated funding through Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBGs). Many child care advocacy groups have cited a need for at least \$50 billion in child care funding to stabilize and adequately provide for the industry as a whole a COVID-19 pandemic wears on. This COULD be accomplished through an upcoming COVID-supplemental stimulus package if one could be passed by the US Congress.
- Written and introduced in 2019 by Senator Bennet, the American Family Act would overhaul the existing Child Tax Credit to make it a more effective tool for supporting middle-class families with kids and reducing child poverty. The bill would create a new \$300 per-month, per-child credit for children under 6 years of age and a \$250 per-month, per-child credit for older children – increase the credit for all children, and, for the first time, making credit fully refundable.
- Conducting a cost-of-quality study can help states determine the actual costs to operate a high-quality early childhood program, including sufficient teacher compensation. States can then set reimbursement rates based on this study, including variations by quality, ensuring that programs are not disincentivized from serving child care subsidy-eligible children and that programs serving primarily low-income children are able to generate sufficient revenue to operate at a high-quality level. Such studies should also consider additional costs associated with serving infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and families who need child care during nonstandard hours.
- The National Children's Facilities Network estimates that the cost of upgrading child care facilities, including Head Start facilities, to current professional quality standards is \$10 billion. This includes updating building space to address health and safety issues, repair structures, upgrade utilities, and ensure classrooms are developmentally appropriate for children. Federal funds for facilities upgrades should be distributed via the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, designated by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.
- Investing in child care infrastructure also means supporting licensing and monitoring systems, as well as taking steps to support the early childhood workforce. Importantly, infrastructure investments must be paired with long-term financing strategies to ensure that programs can afford to operate.

VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Benefits:

- Wide variety of options

Costs:

- High & variable

Relevance to My Community:

- High
- Medium
- Low

Notes:

STATEWIDE

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado's General Assembly, state departments, and other statewide organizations have developed innovations that could improve access. Here's a brief summary:

- Colorado is working on developing a universal preschool system that is available to all 4 year-old children. Funding comes from a voter-approved nicotine tax and will begin in fall 2023.
- Full Day Kindergarten – While Kindergarten is currently not a requirement in Colorado, research shows that starting students on their academic path in Kindergarten (ages 5-6) promotes children's enthusiasm, initiative, persistence, and engagement in learning and helps children enter schooling ready to succeed.
- The 2021-2022 budget released by the Governor's Office with a proposed \$5 million in grants for on-site employer child care projects and another \$10 million to support start-up capital and mentorship for community child care projects.
- Child Find ensures every school district or Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) has professionals trained to evaluate young children's development including cognitive functioning, motor skills, hearing and vision, speech and language and social emotional development for early intervention or special education services.

According to the Center for American Progress, expanding the child care subsidy system to cover all low- and middle-income families and providing universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds are two critical steps Colorado can take to support working families. Increasing public investment in ECE in this way would lead to substantial benefits for children, families, and the broader state economy.

- 314,106 young children could be served by expanded child care subsidy system
- The median family with two children would save \$24,542 if child care costs were capped at 7 percent of family income
- Estimated annual state economic benefit of affordable child care \$3.1 B
- Estimated annual state economic benefit of universal preschool \$1.24 B

VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Benefits:

- Wide variety of options

Costs:

- High & variable

Relevance to My Community:

- High
- Medium
- Low

Notes:



CHARTING YOUR COURSE

QUICK START ACTIONS

As a local leader reading this report, if you are motivated to take action, there is evidence that community support is growing. The recent passage of Proposition EE and full day kindergarten are just two indications of public demand for improvements in ECE. Public officials can gain “political courage” from indications of public sentiment on this issue. While these solutions will help the situation, additional action is needed both locally, and at the regional, statewide, and national level.

For now, there are no national or statewide one-size-fits all solutions. However, we recognize that we must both innovate in our local communities AND contribute to statewide and national solutions. Below is a table that highlights the general actions needed in each domain.

It is up to local partners, however, to select which innovations are most valuable to your community. We encourage you to assemble a powerful coalition and work together to select the most impactful options that are feasible given your assets and constraints. To help you along, refer to the quick-start actions in the table below, the [community discussion guide](#), the [regional innovations](#) section, and the [county fact sheet appendix](#).

QUICK START ACTIONS

INNOVATE WITHIN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY...

- Determine the most pressing needs by:
 - Reading your county profile
 - Convening local providers, business owners, families, and advocates
- Assess support for different solutions presented in this guide, selecting those that are impactful and feasible
- Build the case for change and mobilize commitment to specific
- Collaborate on a plan that makes clear the benefits, actions, owners, timelines and resource
- Execute and address barriers

See Discussion Guide in the appendix

...WHILE CONTRIBUTING TO REGIONAL, STATEWIDE, & NATIONAL SOLUTIONS

- Determine which solutions your community can impact or require statewide support
- Contact your local, state, and national elected officials to make them aware of your community's needs and plans:
We will do _____ and you must do _____
- Contribute to policy analysis at a regional, statewide, and national level
- Help to craft policies that meet your communities needs while avoiding unintended consequences
- Build support within your local community for policy measures, ballot initiatives, etc.
- Optional: Draft letters to elected officials in the appendix



I APPENDIX

DISCUSSION GUIDE: Community Early Child Care & Education Action Plan

We hope that the guide below is helpful to you as you convene your partners and chart your common course forward. Each phase is outlined below with guiding questions.

BUILD THE COALITION

- Which community and business leaders want to be or should be at the table?
- Which child care and education providers can contribute expertise and data?
- Which families or communities must be represented to ensure coverage and equity?
- What does each partner bring to the table?
- When and how can we convene to begin building a community plan?

NOTES

DETERMINE THE NEEDS

- What challenges are made clear from your county profile?
- What community challenges do you face and what is the scale of each?
- Which needs are most urgent?
- For which need is there strong support?
- What are our consensus goals?

DEBATE OPTIONS & SELECT SOLUTIONS

- Which options have you considered?
- What are the financial costs of each option?
- What are the costs of NOT acting?
- How long would each idea take to make a difference?
- What degree of support is there for each?
- Which solution or solutions do you agree should be acted upon, locally?

MOBILIZE COMMITMENT

- Which stakeholders must be on-board with the proposed changes?
- What benefits will each stakeholder receive from the change? What challenges must be overcome?
- Based upon existing relationships, who will reach out to make the case for change?
- How will we address barriers?

BUILD THE PLAN

- Who will steer the effort?
- What are the boundaries for the effort—in scope versus out of scope?
- What specific benefits do we seek?
- Which actions must we take, and who is best able to execute each? By when?
- Which risks are most significant and how can we mitigate each?

EXECUTE & ADDRESS BARRIERS

- Communicate the purpose to all concerned
- Orient action owners on the governance model (each person's role, how often we'll meet, how we will report progress, etc.)
- Complete tasks and surface barriers to success
- Test solutions, if possible, and respond to lessons learned.

NOTES

COUNTY FACT SHEETS

The following pages contain point-in-time snapshots of demographic, economic, and early childhood information for each of the five counties in the NWCCOG. Community resources vary widely and those included in the following pages represent only a sample. Information and research related to early childhood shifts rapidly, so we encourage you to use the [references and resources](#) cited.

Eagle County • Grand County • Jackson County • Pitkin County • Summit County

EAGLE COUNTY

54,537	Total Population
7%	Change since 2010
3,145	Children under age 5
\$86,896	Median household income
10.8%	Enrolled in Colorado Health First
48.1%	Attained bachelor's degree or higher



1,684 square miles

Early Childhood Care



43 Licensed Providers
Centers – 74%
FCCH – 26%



1,792 Licensed Capacity

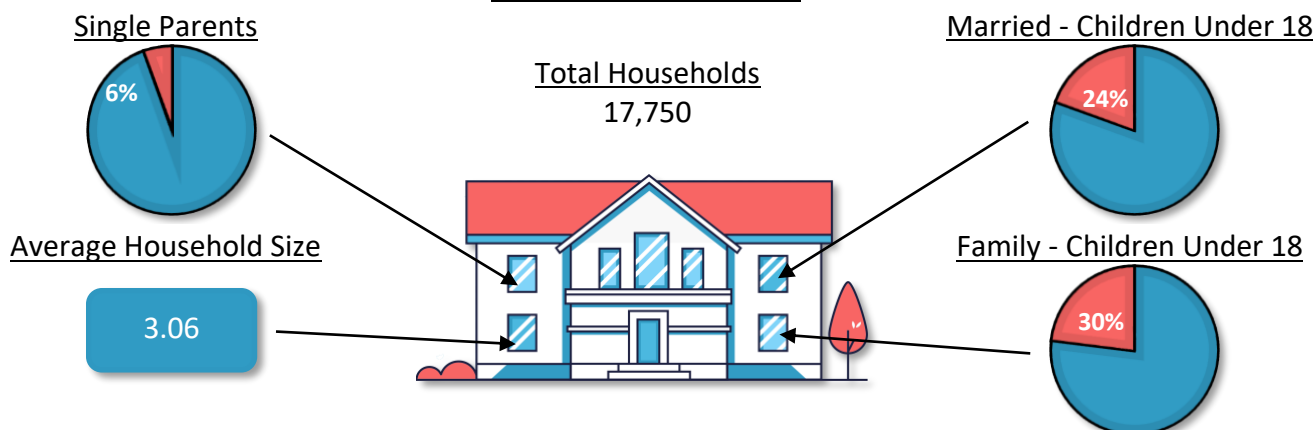


145 CCCAP
Authorizations



Average daily rate
per child (birth-
five)
\$54

Household Information



Community Involvement in ECE

- Eagle County Government invests in early childhood, providing subsidies, internships, incentives, and facilities
- Several large employers in the county, including Vail Resorts, Vail Health, and others, offer programs and funding supports to their employees for child care
- The Town of Vail provides space and capital resources in partnership with the Eagle Valley Child Care Association
- Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council, provides professional development and community support services for providers, children, and families in the county
- Valley Settlement offers supports for family, friend, and neighbor care, along with mobile preschool services for the Roaring Fork Valley (Pitkin and Eagle Counties)

COVID Challenges

Since Spring 2020:



39% decline in ECE
enrollment

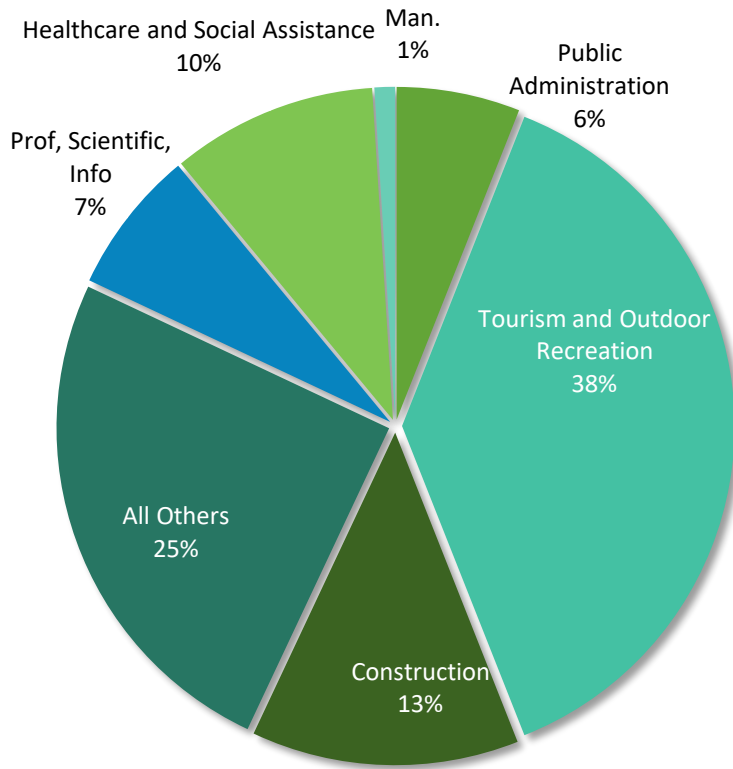


13% decline in ECE
workforce

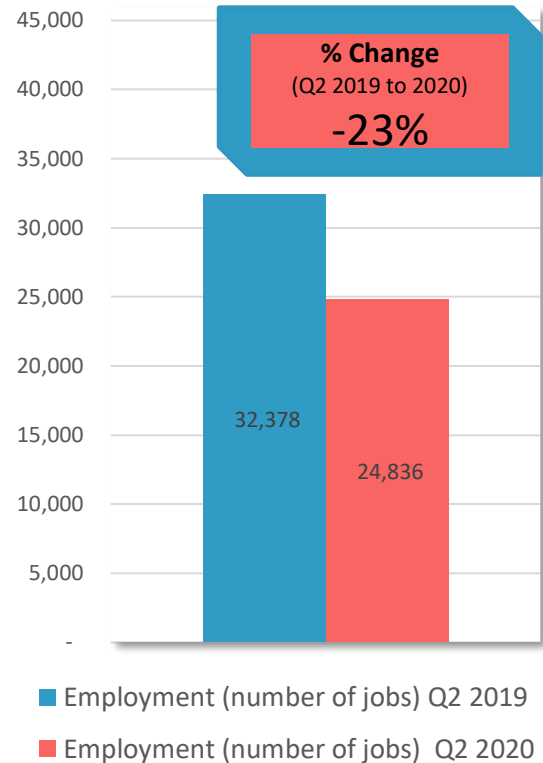


23% families report
inadequate care for
children under 5

Industry Mix



Employment



Average Annual Wages



Community Resources

- [Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council](#)
- [Our Community Foundation](#)
- [Early Childhood Partners](#)
- [Eagle County Schools Early Childhood Education](#)
- [Eagle County](#)
 - Infant/Toddler Subsidy
 - EC Educators Salary Supplement
 - Recruitment and New Hire Incentives
- [Town of Vail](#)
- [Eagle Valley Child Care Association](#)

Data Sources: US Census [2018 American Community Survey](#); Bureau of Labor Statistics Q2 2020 [Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#) Q2 2020; Colorado Department of Human Services: October 2020 Licensed Child Care Facilities Report, 2017 Market Survey (CPI adjusted); Early Milestones Colorado [COVID-19 Research Partnership](#)

GRAND COUNTY

15,066	Total Population
4%	Change since 2010
563	Children under age 5
\$69,214	Median household income
10.8%	Enrolled in Colorado Health First
37.8%	Attained bachelor's degree or higher



1,846 square miles

Early Childhood Care



12 Licensed Providers
Centers – 83%
FCCH – 17%



314 Licensed Capacity

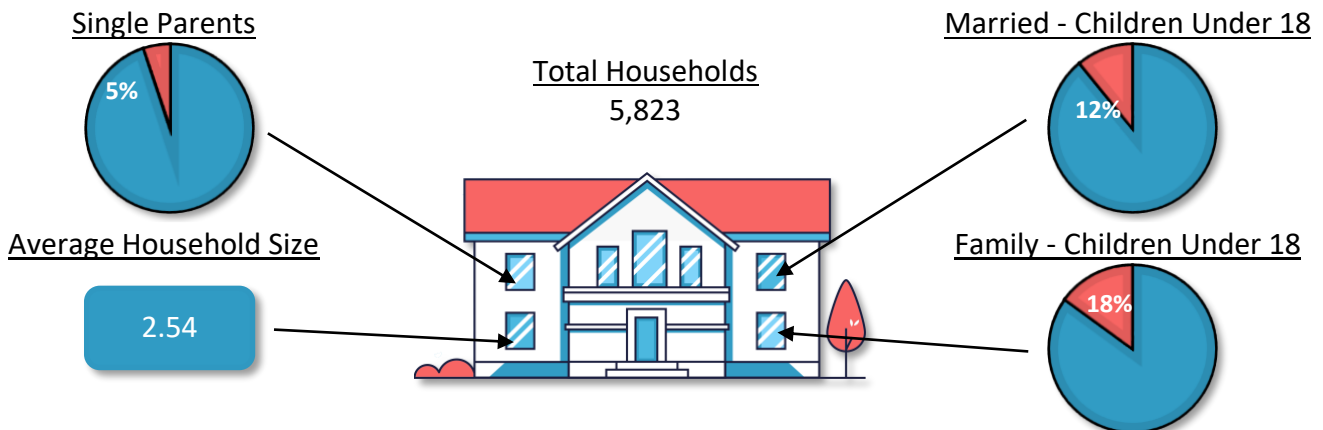


24 CCCAP
Authorizations



\$51 Average daily rate
per child (birth-
five)

Household Information



Community Involvement in ECE

- Grand Beginnings serves as the Early Childhood Council for Grand and Jackson Counties, providing professional development and community support services for providers, children, and families in the county
- Grand County Library District offers supports and resources to early childhood education career seekers, and family, friend, and neighbor providers (and more!)
- Middle Park Health and West Grand School District partnered to open the West Grand Early Childhood Center
- Winter Park Resorts offers onsite child care for employees and makes unused slots available to the broader community

COVID Challenges

Since Spring 2020:



36% decline in ECE
enrollment



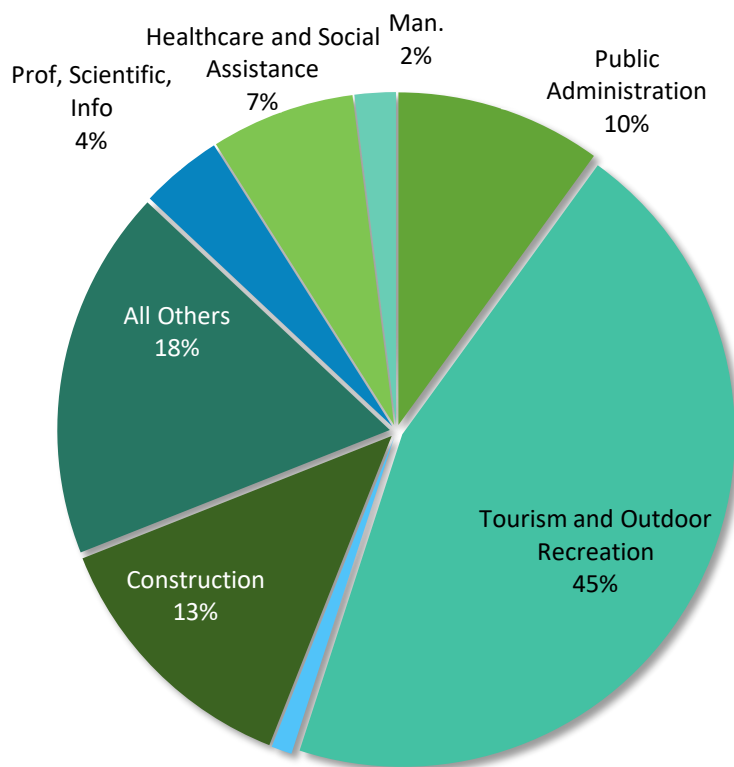
29% decline in ECE
workforce



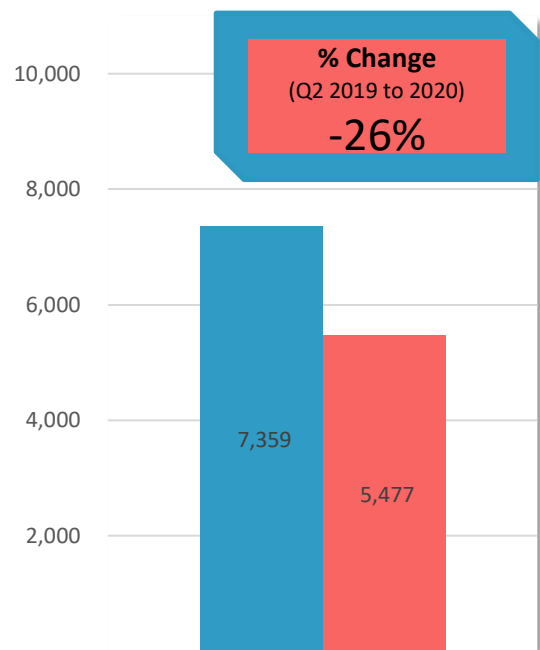
21% families report
inadequate care for
children under 5

GRAND COUNTY

Industry Mix



Employment



- Employment (number of jobs) Q2 2019
- Employment (number of jobs) Q2 2020

Average Annual Wages



Community Resources

- [Grand Beginnings](#)
- [Mountain Family Center](#)
- [Grand County Library District](#)
- [Grand County CCCAP](#)

Data Sources: US Census [2018 American Community Survey](#); Bureau of Labor Statistics Q2 2020 [Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#) Q2 2020; Colorado Department of Human Services: October 2020 Licensed Child Care Facilities Report, 2017 Market Survey (CPI adjusted); Early Milestones Colorado [COVID-19 Research Partnership](#)

JACKSON COUNTY

1,395	Total Population
-5%	Change since 2010
83	Children under age 5
\$51,457	Median household income
19.8%	Enrolled in Colorado Health First
16.8%	Attained bachelor's degree or higher



1,613 square miles

Early Childhood Providers



1 Licensed Providers
Centers – 100%
FCCH – 0%

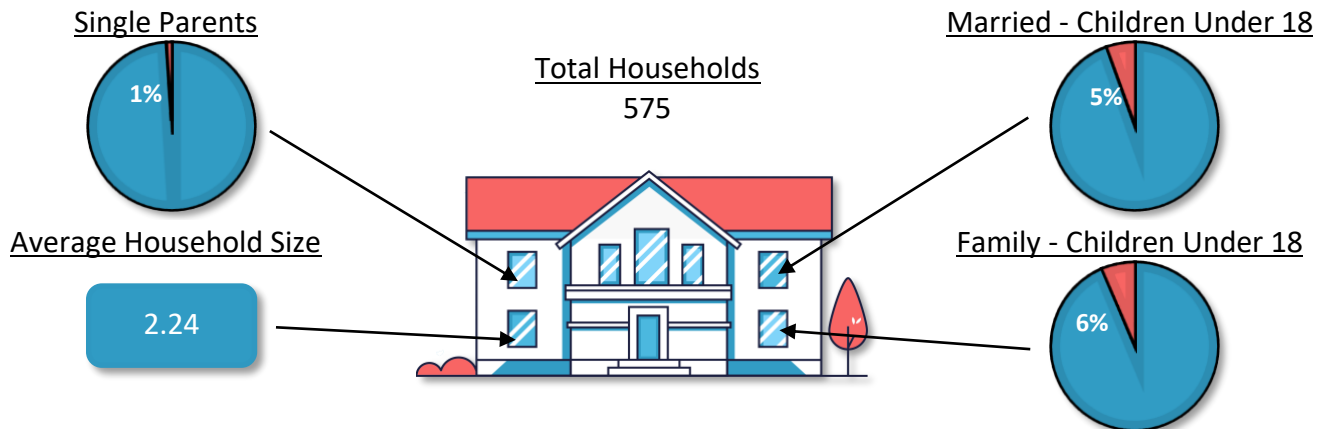


15 Licensed Capacity



0 CCCAP
Authorizations

Household Information



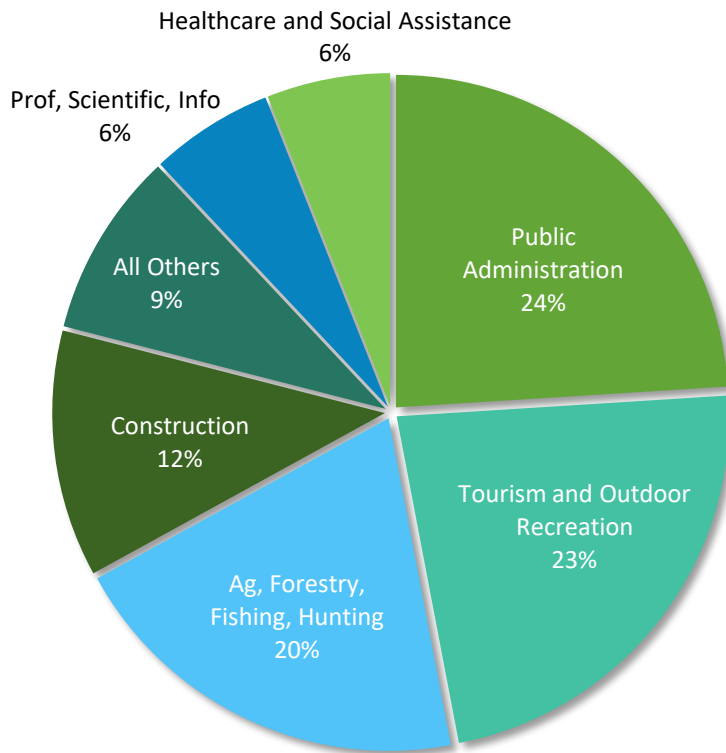
Community Involvement in ECE

- Jackson County is home to one licensed child care provider
- Grand Beginnings, the Early Childhood Council for Jackson County, provides professional development and community support service
- Child Care Network provides child care resource and referral services for Jackson County

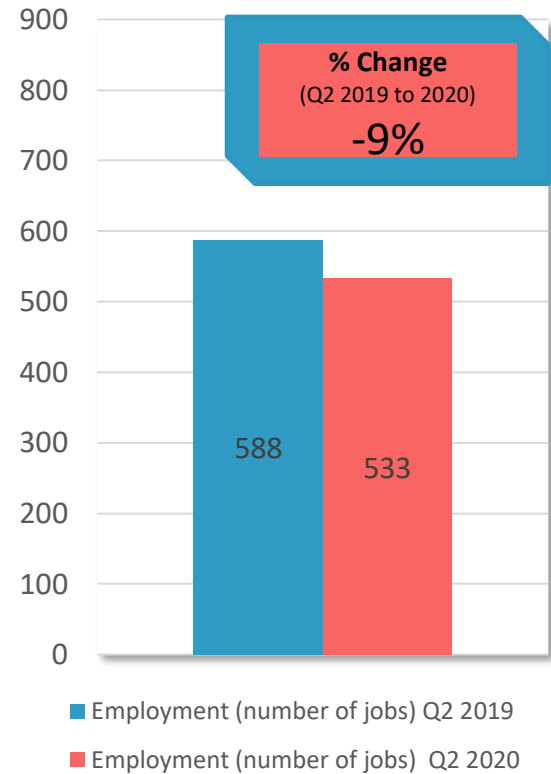
Note: some data unavailable for Jackson County (e.g., Early Milestones Colorado COVID-19 survey responses, 2017 Market Survey and adjusted average daily rate)

JACKSON COUNTY

Industry Mix



Employment



Average Annual Wages



Community Resources

- [Grand Beginnings](#)
- [Child Care Network](#)
- [Jackson County CCCAP \(administered by Grand County\)](#)

Data Sources: US Census [2018 American Community Survey](#); Bureau of Labor Statistics Q2 2020 [Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#) Q2 2020; Colorado Department of Human Services, October 2020 Licensed Child Care Facilities Report

PITKIN COUNTY

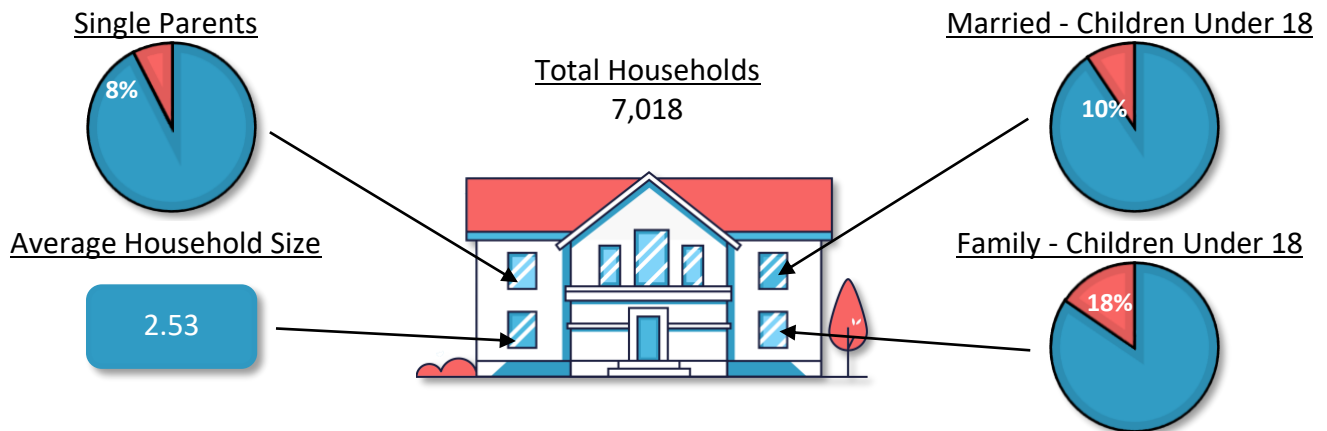
17,909	Total Population
9%	Change since 2010
823	Children under age 5
\$89,034	Median household income
7.9%	Enrolled in Colorado Health First
63.1%	Attained bachelor's degree or higher



Early Childhood Care

	16	Licensed Providers Centers – 83% FCCH – 17%
	634	Licensed Capacity
	34	CCCAP Authorizations
	\$75	Average daily rate per child (birth-five)

Household Information



Community Involvement in ECE

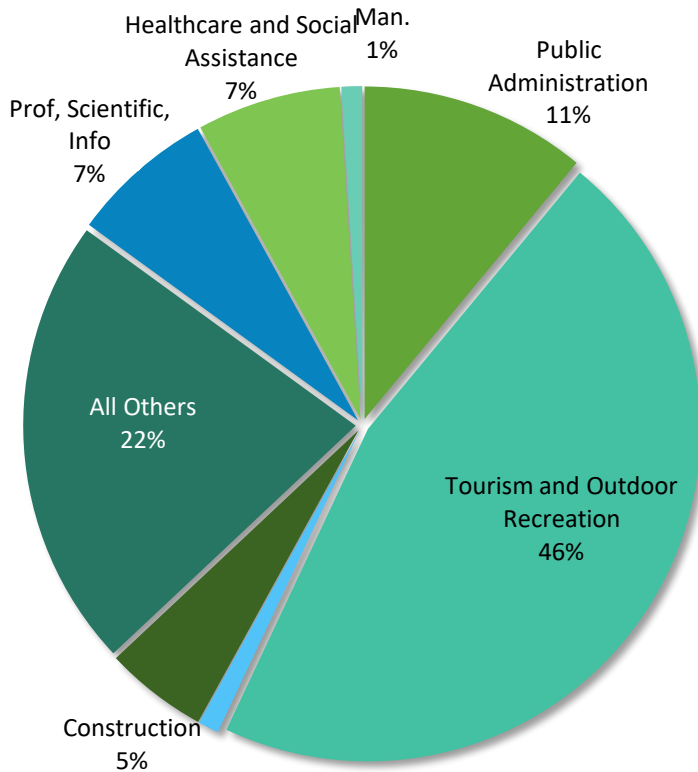
- Kids First a department of the City of Aspen, provides a wide variety of resources, financial services, and program support for families, early childhood professionals, and programs
- The Aspen Community Foundation provides funding and grant support for family child care home providers and families
- Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council, providing professional development and community support services for providers, children, and families in the county
- The Basalt Early Childhood Coalition, supported by the Town of Basalt offers tuition assistance, housing support, and coaching programs for early childhood providers in Eagle and Pitkin Counties

COVID Challenges

Since Spring 2020:

	27% decline in household income
	38% furloughed ECE workforce
	25% families report inadequate care for children under 5

Industry Mix



Employment

Average Annual Wages



Community Resources

- [Kids First](#), City of Aspen
- [Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council](#)
- [Town of Basalt](#)
- [Pitkin County](#)

Data Sources: US Census [2018 American Community Survey](#); Bureau of Labor Statistics Q2 2020 [Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#) Q2 2020; Colorado Department of Human Services: October 2020 Licensed Child Care Facilities Report, 2017 Market Survey (CPI adjusted); Early Milestones Colorado [COVID-19 Research Partnership](#)

SUMMIT COUNTY

30,429	Total Population
12%	Change since 2010
1,310	Children under age 5
\$80,078	Median household income
10.4%	Enrolled in Colorado Health First
51%	Attained bachelor's degree or higher



608 square miles

Early Childhood Care



26 Licensed Providers
Centers – 83%
FCCH – 17%



830 Licensed Capacity

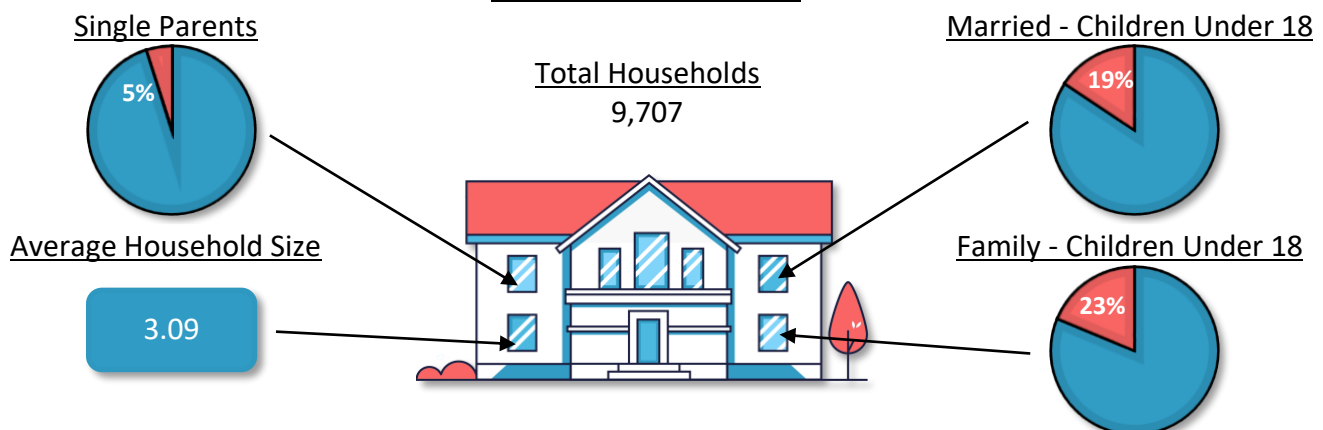


52 CCCAP Authorizations



Average daily rate
per child (birth-five)
\$74

Household Information



Community Involvement in ECE

- The Summit Foundation provided financial resources and grants for early childhood providers
- Voters approved sustainable funding for affordable child care and support services, including a new facility and the Summit Pre-K Program
- Early Childhood Option is Summit County's Early Childhood Council, providing professional development and community support services for providers, children, and families in the county
- The Town of Silverthorne has invested in the development of a child care center in a new housing development
- The EC Cares program and the Summit Community Care Clinic provide basic health services to all early childhood educators

COVID Challenges

Since Spring 2020:



5% decline in ECE enrollment



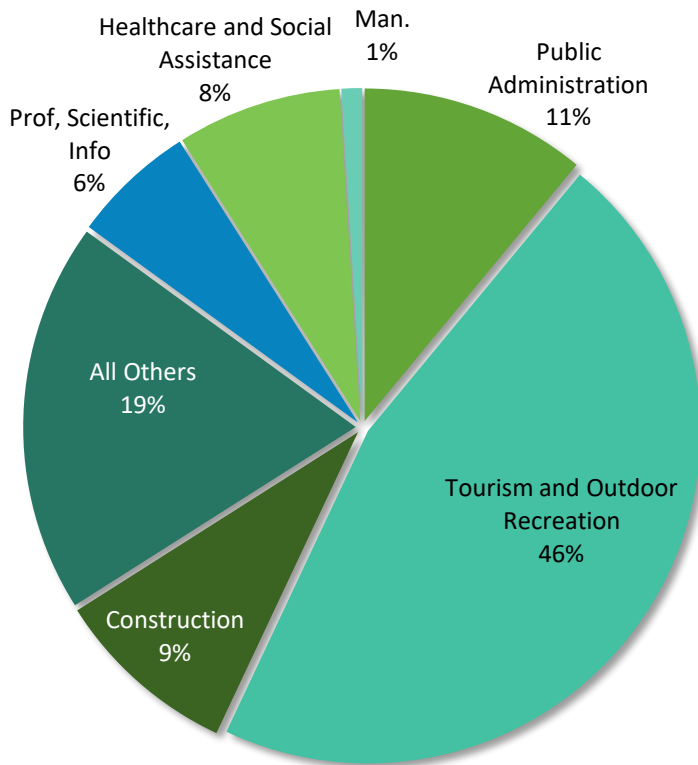
3% decline in ECE workforce



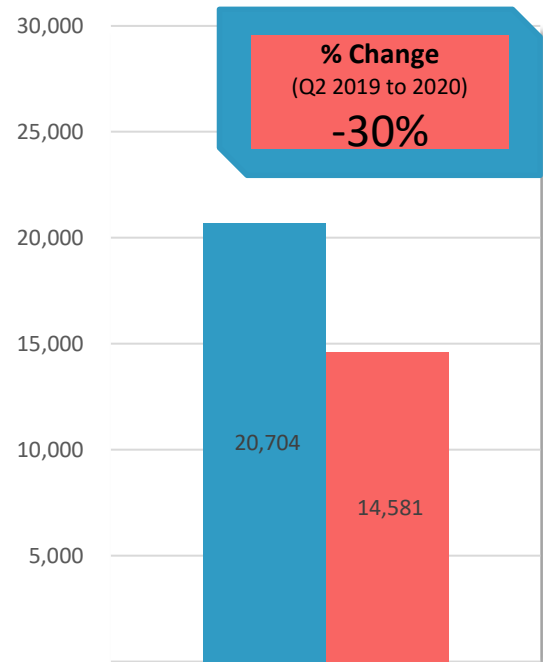
25% families report inadequate care for children under 5

SUMMIT COUNTY

Industry Mix



Employment



■ Employment (number of jobs) Q2 2019
■ Employment (number of jobs) Q2 2020

Average Annual Wages



Community Resources

- [Early Childhood Options](#)
- [The Right Start Project](#)
- [Family & Intercultural Resource Center](#)
- [Summit Foundation](#)
- [Summit County](#)

Data Sources: US Census [2018 American Community Survey](#); Bureau of Labor Statistics Q2 2020 [Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#) Q2 2020; Colorado Department of Human Services: October 2020 Licensed Child Care Facilities Report, 2017 Market Survey (CPI adjusted); Early Milestones Colorado [COVID-19 Research Partnership](#)

INNOVATIONS IN THE NWCCOG REGION

Employers, policy makers, ECE providers and community partners have shown great creativity in meeting the major challenges described in the preceding sections: affordability, capacity, and fit. This section contains a summary table of a selection of the innovations recognized, along with sections detailing examples of each innovation in action. As you review each section, consider the relevance of this to your local community in the section provided.

PARTNERS	AFFORDABILITY	CAPACITY	FIT
<u>Employers</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer-funded Subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsored slots for employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site care
<u>Policy Makers</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxpayer-funded Subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center Space • New ECE Centers • ECE Workforce & Professional Development • Navigation Supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation Supports
<u>ECE Providers & EC Councils</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition Assistance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation Supports
<u>Community Partners</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Aid / Tuition Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of New Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Shared Advocacy / Navigation Support • Related Services



EMPLOYER DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Employers across the region are innovating to meet the needs of their employees, knowing that consistency, productivity, and retention each depend upon convenient, affordable, high-quality care for children. What follows is a summary of the levers local businesses are pulling to deliver. As you review each section, consider the relevance of this concept to your local community in the section provided. The following is not an exhaustive list and includes examples provided during study focus groups.

SPONSORED ON-SITE SLOTS

- Winter Park Resort provides child care available on a space available basis for infants, toddlers and pre-school ages 2 months to 5 years through the Early Education Center (EEC). Slots unused are available to the broader community.

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

SECURED SLOTS AT LOCAL CENTERS

- Viceroy Hotel in SMV sponsors a space and person getting licensed for child care for their employees. Finding space for a longer term is a real concern and is in progress.
- Sonnenalp is partnering with one child care center to reserve spots by paying the employee's deposit. Looked into partnering with facilities to get child care providers on their healthcare plan as Sonnenalp employees in order to create a partnership and incent the child care facility to prioritize Sonnenalp employees.

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

EMPLOYER-FUNDED SUBSIDIES

- The Viceroy Hotel contributes \$30 per day to offset the cost of child care.
- Eagle Valley Child Care Association - EVCCA provides priority waitlist for business partners Town of Vail and Vail Health. Both employers provide discounts to employees using their "spots". Eagle County government used to subsidize a portion of the care; employees had to get on a waitlist.
- Vail Health provides an annual child care subsidy. They also contract directly with a child care organization (EVCCA) that has locations mid and up valley to reserve spots for employees' children and subsidize cost.

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

COVID-RELATED INNOVATIONS

- Flexibility, working from home, remote technologies

POLICY DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Innovations by employers are complemented by government sponsored or supported programs. The table below highlights innovative programs that are helping to address affordability, capacity, and fit. Room is provided for you to make notes on the potential relevance to your community.

PROVIDING SPACE AT NOMINAL COST

- The Town of Vail (TOV) provides space and capital resources to the 2 ECE centers operating in the community
 - » Children's Garden of Learning - TOV built space and is currently building new space for them to allow housing on their current site. TOV provides funding annually for use towards capital needs to maintain facility.
 - » Eagle Valley Child Care - TOV facilitated space built as part of development agreement of project. Only infant care facility in Vail and TOV provides funding towards offsetting the extra expense of providing infant care. Located in the Edwards Miller Ranch neighborhood, the center, which will be run by the Eagle Valley Child Care Association (which also runs the Vail Child Care Center), will have about 80 spots. Factor in that most families don't need full-time child care, and county officials expect to accommodate about 140 kids a week.
- Lake County School District offered space for The Center program to operate. (Note: they were also offering space for the Bright Start Center but are working to re-open since COVID.)
- Eagle County offered an unused building to be used for ECE.

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

ESTABLISHING NEW ECE CENTERS

- Early Childhood Program is a blended, center-based program that includes Head Start, Colorado Preschool, Early Childhood Special Education, and traditional preschool programming. Recognizing the importance of early childhood experiences on school success, Eagle County Schools continues to take an active role in fully integrating early childhood programs into the district.
- Town of Silverthorne will be building a new child care center in their new attainable housing development (Smith Ranch), in partnership with Summit County Government.
- Middle Park Health (local clinic/hospital) and West Grand School District partnered to open the West Grand Early Childhood Center (WGECC) strictly for infants/toddlers addressing the biggest slot shortage. The Center is licensed to accommodate 5 spots for infants and 10 spots for toddlers, more than doubling the current licensed infant/toddler day-care capacity in Kremmling.
 - » Have 3 slots dedicated for District staff (helps their employee/teacher retention) and then broader community is able to enroll in unused slots.
 - » Monetary support from grant funding through the Colorado Department of Education helps stabilize child care program.
- Pitkin County has been promoting Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) for school age programs to help provide safe places for older children when they are not in school on an alternating day schedule.

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

- Eagle County
 - » Offers a salary supplement program based on a teacher's Early Childhood Professional Credential level and time they have been in the center. Offered twice a year.
 - » Offers new hire and recruiter incentives for those who haven't been previously in the profession; Eagle County provides subsidies to programs for infant and toddler slots.
- Eagle County Schools
 - » Partnering with Valley Settlement to provide paid internships for Child Development Associate (CDA)
 - » Prior to COVID, ECS and the County partnered to Provide two Paid Training days with workshops and other programs.
 - » Has a pay structure where teachers get salary increases based on education completion.
- Grand County Library District
 - » Offers Career Online High School Program which is an accredited diploma program. Career certificates include the CDA certification for employment as a child care worker in a professional setting.
 - » Offers the Growing Readers Together Program, a Buell Foundation Grant, to target family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care.
 - » Focused on 5 characteristics of reading (write, talk, sing, play, read) with skills and books/manipulatives to FFN caregivers. With COVID, we've seen an increase in child care sharing.
- CMC Early Childhood Dept, helps students qualify for a career in the classroom or in administration. Students meet the educational requirements for Early Childhood Teacher and Director per the Colorado Department of Human Services.
 - » Offers 4 Certificates and 2 Degrees, providing training and credentials for those who want to become involved in the care of young children from birth to age eight.
 - » Courses in theory and lab experience are combined to provide a comprehensive base of growth and development, with a strong emphasis on field experiences. Early intervention, high risk, gifted and developmentally delayed issues are included.
 - » Rifle CMC is offering Career Academy with ECE as a focus career choice. Collaborating on bringing together interested programs/providers/teachers who are interested in serving as mentors to students participating in dual enrollment program. CMC is looking into offering a focused on preparing mentor teachers who wish to participate. The ultimate goal is to have lab school connected with CMC/partnership with Garfield County
 - » Katz Amsterdam Foundation supported a scholarship at CMC for people working toward their ECE
 - » Some high schools holding CDA courses to their students. When the student graduates, they are lead teacher qualified
 - Yampa Teen , Eagle County HS, 2 Garfield County HS & Carbondale HS
- Other Workforce Supports
 - » Colorado Office of Early Education has a child care specific track, built in partnership.
 - » Colorado Shines Brighter Business supports for providers

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

TAXPAYER-FUNDED SUBSIDIES

- Eagle County Government
 - » Offers an Infant toddler subsidy to licensed centers covering about 75% of the cost of care for those slots.
 - » Offering a preschool slot subsidy in response to COVID
 - » Expanded the number of CCCAP families it funds & increased the income level
 - » Teacher Salary Supplement
 - » New CHF grant for Family Friends & Neighbors work
 - » Working with Roaring Fork on Spanish CDA classes
 - » Eagle County Services
- Eagle County Schools provided extended hours and summer/break care through Mill Levy Dollars
- City of Aspen
 - » Kids First - Child Care Resource Center is a department of the City of Aspen, funded through a .45% city sales tax for Affordable Housing and Child Care. This tax was initially passed by Aspen voters in 1990 and has renewed until 2038. It offers infant and toddler subsidies, QI funding, incentive funding for professional development. Also offers quality improvement coaches, and a resource teacher who acts as a sub in the child care programs. There is a fee for the substitute and the nurse consultations, but it is heavily subsidized.
 - » Kids First offers financial aid to families that are over the CCCAP max household income. Emergency assistance right now for families who are out of work, seeking work, and need to keep a space in a child care program. This site has info and a calculator to see if you qualify: <https://www.cityofaspen.com/316/Financial-Aid>
 - » Provide nurse consulting to the child care programs that has been a lifesaver as a liaison between public health and child care programs.
 - » Aspen Family Connections (part of the Aspen School District) is working with the City of Aspen to use tobacco tax funding for prevention programming - including an early childhood connector that is coming soon.
 - » City of Aspen is working with CMC Aspen to start an infant room on their campus, able to accommodate as many as 10 babies and two staff members
 - » Offered flu shots to child care staff for no charge, in partnership with Pitkin County and Community Health.
- Summit County
 - » Voters approved their Ballot Measure 1A in November 2020, allowing county commissioners to adjust the county's mill levy rate in order to maintain the revenue that would otherwise be lost. \$2.5 million is earmarked for affordable early childhood care and learning. This will enable the construction of a new child care facility and the Summit Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Program. This will provide preschool tuition credits for children who are 4 years old by October 1. Credits will be offered on a sliding scale, based on household income.
 - » Summit County's Right Start Program provides:
 - ECE workforce supplements
 - College scholarships
 - Quality improvement supports (coaching, training, etc.)
 - CCCAP supplements
 - Home visitation
 - Limited access to health care through the Community CARE Clinic

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

TAXPAYER-FUNDED SUBSIDIES (Continued)

- Summit County (continued)
 - » Early Head Start in Summit County is funded by the county but managed by Early Childhood Options as a mixed delivery model, with community child care sites and school district preschool options.
- Town of Basalt offers Tuition Assistance dependent on the availability of funds, family gross income, the cost of child care, the number of days a child attends child care, and the number of children in child care. Other assistance includes:
 - Financial aid and tuition assistance
 - Coaching to programs in their area
 - Employee Housing

Relevance to My Community:

NAVIGATION ASSISTANCE

- Garfield County DHS has an outreach consultant who can help families braid available ECE funding resources (e.g., CCAP & CPP). She can meet families who have transportation or other issues at a convenient location. Monica De La Espriella, Child Care Outreach Consultant, Garfield County DHS Child Care Program, (970) 945-9191 EXT. 3064, mdelaespriellamoreno@garfield-county.com
- Steamboat Springs is working on a family friendly policy handbook to distribute to local businesses where they can pull sample policies to add to their handbook

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

COVID-RELATED INNOVATIONS

- Eagle County offered a 1x payment to ECE professionals for COVID shutdown (hazard pay)
- Eagle County Schools increased staff/families Mental Support Services via HS CARES grant
- CCCAP extending their absence policies to centers from 3 to 10. Helps support families and centers to still get paid if kids get sick or need to stay home because of COVID
- City of Aspen - applies to all programs in Pitkin County.
 - » Rent relief - 1/3 paid for 3 months
 - » Enrollment subsidy - to support staff during low enrollment
 - » Emergency supply funding to reimburse programs for PPE and cleaning supplies
 - » Emergency funding in the event of closure due to COVID
 - » Bi-weekly zoom meetings with child care programs, public health, and licensing

EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL & PROVIDER DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Councils and providers collaborate on both navigation supports and tuition assistance to ensure that high-quality care is affordable, available, and suitable. The table below contains a few examples along with room for you to record your thoughts on relevance to your community.

NAVIGATION SUPPORTS

- The Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council has launched a Resource Roadmap for providers, children and families in our region with the hope to connect people to needed supports. According to state legislation (HB 07-1062), Early Childhood Councils were established "for the purpose of developing and ultimately implementing a comprehensive system of early childhood services to ensure the school readiness of children five years of age or younger in the community."
 - » Supports Lake, Eagle, Pitkin and Garfield Counties as the CCR&R and also as the implementer of Colorado Shines funding. Colorado Shines funding covers some coaching and quality improvement funding.
 - » Professional Development funding available through the Rocky Mountain ECC.
 - » Buell Foundation funding supports trainings around social/emotional supports through the RMECC.
- Early Childhood Partners in Edwards, CO has a Family Resource Center by the name of Family Connect, which connects families with resources based on individual needs, mental health support, and parenting support.
 - » The majority of clients are at risk, and Latino. Family Connect also helps Spanish speaking families with applications for things like rent assistance
 - » Helps families complete CCCAP applications and helps them follow up, especially when there are special circumstances, like language barriers, or non-traditional families, extended work hours etc.
- Bright Horizons is an agency that works directly with employers to provide a variety of support programs, including various child care solutions (backup care, onsite care, etc.)

Barriers Addressed:

- ☐ Affordability
- ☐ Capacity
- ☒ Fit

Relevance to My Community:

TUITION ASSISTANCE

- Grand Beginnings improves the collaboration and coordination of comprehensive early childhood services throughout Grand and Jackson County.
 - » Offers a Tuition Reimbursement Program targeted to families who don't qualify for CCCAP but have less income than sufficient per cost of living in community.
 - » Licensed child care programs in community get allotment of tuition money based on enrollment and quality indicators and then get that tuition money from Grand Beginnings to help families stay enrolled (helps families & incentivizes quality improvement)

Barriers Addressed:

- ☒ Affordability
- ☐ Capacity
- ☐ Fit

Relevance to My Community:

TUITION ASSISTANCE (Continued)

- Early Childhood Options, Summit Pre-K Program paying for child care tuition credits for 4-year old children.
 - » Funding comes from Summit County Mill Levy on property tax, while the programs are managed by ECO Right Start Project.
 - » Pre-K program Scholarships for teachers, and salary supplements are managed through Early Childhood Options, with the application here <https://eco1.smapply.org/>

Relevance to My Community:

COVID-RELATED INNOVATIONS

- » FRCs and Councils partnered to distribute FEMA supplies to programs.
- » Early Childhood Options offers shared HR services to providers – onboarding staff, staff training, helping directors navigate HR regulations related to COVID, guiding staff through HR questions, etc.



COMMUNITY PARTNER DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

A vibrant non-profit network is providing support to the ECE system in a variety of ways. The table below contains a summary along with space for you to note which of these innovations might be suitable for application in your community.

FACILITATION OF NEW CENTERS

- Basalt Childcare Coalition secured employee housing for child care teachers and are working on building a new child care center in Basalt, funded by the Town of Basalt.
- Eagle Valley Religious Foundation- potential for a partnership for a new child care center. Zoning has already been approved for another building at the Edwards Interfaith Church & licensing has been approved
- EPIC (Executives Partnering to Invest in Children)- Eagle county consultant trying to create a new child care center and operate similar to a co-op. Trying to find a location & determine if local businesses would financially support it.

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

SHARED ADVOCACY

- Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance works closely with the Colorado Children's Campaign and a lobbyist to advocate for more funding for Councils so they can fully meet their legislative intent. Last year, this resulted in an additional \$2.19M in quality improvement funding.
- Family Development Center in Steamboat Springs provides a suite of services to families and programs
 - » The Newborn Network is a parent support system that serves all families living in Steamboat and Routt County with children from birth to 3 years.
 - » Child Care Network promotes quality child care that is affordable and available to all families in Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco and Routt Counties. They provide information, resources, referrals, training and advocacy for child care and other children's issues and programs. Services are developed for child care professionals, employers, agencies and organizations.
- Early Child Network in Glenwood Springs provides local resources for parents connecting to child care, training and educational opportunities, coaching, assessments, EHS, business planning, and other services.
 - » EQIT classes - English and Spanish
 - » CDA - English and Spanish
 - » Bring in qualified presenters
 - » Help with Professional development planning
 - » Certified in business, classroom environment, interactions and social/emotional resiliency
 - » Offers coaches in Garfield, Mesa and Western Eagle Counties
 - » Works to support over 60 FFN programs in Garfield County (unlicensed child care programs)
 - » Collaborates with Early Learning Ventures to provide Early Head Start

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

FINANCIAL AID TO PROGRAMS

- Aspen Community Foundation partners with Garfield County and ECN to provide family child care program start up grants for programs from Aspen to Parachute.
- The Summit Foundation provided funds to pay teachers during closures / COVID.
- Colorado Health Foundation
 - » Working to give local dollars to help fund Friend, Family, and Neighbor care in Eagle County. At very preliminary stage, but this is to support our growing community need and desire for this type of care.
 - » Pre-COVID, gave Grand and Jackson similar funds, dedicated to caregiver supports. This helps give broad support to both early childhood teachers and families not able to access programs. Ex. for families, providing "pop-up playgroups" to access resources, play with other FFN children, get screenings, etc. During COVID, this became drive through resource fairs with multiple community orgs participating to get resources to families.
- Early Childhood Partners (nonprofit) provides programs for child care in the Eagle River Valley
 - » Coaching and Consultation
 - » Child Care Teacher Training (EQIT, Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management, Incredible Years Dinosaur School, and trainings upon request for individual child care programs, averaging about 30 child care teacher trainings a year)
 - » Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
 - » Reflective Supervision for teachers
- The Aspen Institute is working from Aspen to Parachute with community outreach specific to equity, inclusion and diversity. They understand that child care is an essential part of that conversation.

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES

- Catholic Charities and Salvation Army- transportation support and more.
- Youth Power 365 is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with support from the Vail Valley Foundation and a large network of partners, providing year-round extended programs for more than 4,000 youth, from infants through K-12. YP leads on the Colorado Child Care Tax Credit in Eagle
- Building Hope (Summit County) offers support groups for child care teachers
- Early Childhood Options provides Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation.
- Raising a Reader in Eagle supports early childhood programs by providing books in English and Spanish.
- Early Childhood Partners (nonprofit) provides the following for families in the Eagle River Valley:
 - » Healthy Families Home Visitation (focuses on infant mental health & caregiver attachment)
 - » Family Resource Center (Family Connect)
 - » Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
 - » Parenting classes in English and Spanish (Incredible Years, Five 14 week sessions a year)

Barriers Addressed:

- Affordability
- Capacity
- Fit

Relevance to My Community:

COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES (Continued)

- Olivia's Fund provide financial assistance to anyone who lives or works in Eagle County to help pay for mental health and/or substance use services for up to six sessions per person per year.
- Our Community Foundation (Eagle County) provides scholarships for early childhood classes, and food for people experiencing food insecurity
- Early Learning Ventures online platform has helped programs streamlining attendance, payment, etc. making things more efficient and convenient for both EC programs and families using those programs. Early Head Start Quality Child Care Partnerships is made possible by Early Head Start Child Care Partnership (EHS–CCP) grants, supporting vulnerable children and families in underserved areas across Colorado.
- Focused Kids provides a simple curriculum of mindful exercises developed for kids age 3-8. Children, parents, and teachers learn about the brain, and then the skills of focusing and calming for self-control.
- Foundations that fund early childhood across the state are critical to our system and supports, specifically Colorado Health Foundation, Caring for Colorado, Temple Hoyne Buell, etc.
- Transportation and Mobile Preschool Support
 - » Valley Settlement supports the El Busesito program, with a fleet of three "Little Buses" travels to neighborhoods to provide bilingual preschool education to children who would otherwise have no access to preschool.
 - » Mira Bus programming through Vail Health
 - » Blue Lake has its own bus to provide transportation for children.
 - » In Aspen, Wildwood School and Woody Creek Kids provide transportation to their programs
 - » The Center in Leadville has bus transportation for preschoolers in Lake County as long as the family lives further than 1 mile away.
 - » Summit County has a home provider that was able to purchase a large van (using quality improvement funds) so she is able to pick up kids for before and after school care.

Relevance to My Community:

COVID-RELATED INNOVATIONS

- » The Summit Foundation has made child care a priority for many years; they helped our large centers with emergency COVID funding awards to offset cost of increased PTO for teachers.

GLOBAL, NATIONAL & STATE MODELS

GERMANY

German policy-makers have been trying to make it easier for women and men to reconcile their work and family-life. Since 2013 in Germany, all children aged 1 and over have a legal right to education, early learning and care at a day nursery/preschool or with a childminder. Germany's federal states have invested heavily in the expansion of child care for infants and children.

- Short for Kindertagesstätte, Kita is a collective term for various forms of child care, grouped into four types:
 - Nurseries (Kinderkrippe) - For children aged < 3
 - Preschools (Kindergärten) - For children aged 3 - 7
 - Childminders / Nannies (Tagespflege) - For all children
 - After-school care (Schulhort) - For children attending primary school
- More than 10 years ago Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth introduced their first „Aktionsprogramm Kindertagespflege“ focused on the care of children under age three. The main goal of this program was to improve the availability of quality child care for children under the age of three by non-parental persons all over the Germany. In that time the availability of care for children under the age of three was approximately 20% for Germany as a whole. By 2017 this number had substantially increased to 33%.
- The main focus was to expand child care services both at an institutional level – support for the construction of new child care facilities for children under the age of three, as well as support for non-institutional forms of child care for children up to three years of age by a qualified caregiver, the so-called Tagesmutter or childminder.
- Despite rights and subsidies, wide variation in costs are normally set by local government, meaning that even within a state the costs are highly variable.

VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Benefits:

- Legal rights for ages 1-6
- Increased equity

Costs:

- Variable by state
- Waitlists common

Relevance to my Community:

- High
- Medium
- Low

Notes:

SWEDEN

In Sweden the parents have the right to leave their children at preschool from ages 1-6.

- The children begin school in autumn the year they turn six when the compulsory school attendance begins. 83% of all children are enrolled in the preschool.
- The cost of child care in Sweden is set by law, the highest rate is for the 1st child and the rate is smaller for the 2nd and 3rd child. Child number four is free of charge. The fee is also limited by the maximum rate compared to the gross income of the family. Child number one in a family costs 1382 SEK a month or a maximum of 3% of the guardians' gross income. Child number two costs 922 SEK or a maximum of 2 % of the gross income. Child number three costs 451 SEK or a maximum of 1% of the gross income. Child number four is free of charge.
- Each preschool receives a subsidy for each child enrolled at the preschool. This also applies to the private preschools. The subsidy is being paid out by the municipality and is revised once a month. 9800 SEK/month is paid out for each 3-, 4- or 5-year-old. 11211 SEK/month for children who are one or two years old. This money should cover everything, the staff's salaries, premises, meals, cleaning staff, kitchen staff, water and electricity, further training, movables, toys and the expense for children with special needs.

VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Benefits:

- Legal rights for ages 1-6
- Increased equity

Costs:

- Set by state
- Subsidy varies by income

Relevance to my Community:

- High
- Medium
- Low

Notes:

UNITED KINGDOM

The overall structure of ECE in the United Kingdom (England) has been transformed in the last 20 years.

- Previous governments established universal free provision of 15 hours per week early education and care from age 3 to the start of school and the current administration is expanding provision for disadvantaged 2-year-olds.
- Availability of child care for working parents has been expanded and local authorities now have a duty to ensure adequate provision, either directly through local government or by private or third sector agencies.
- Parents can use their free 15 hours per week in any registered setting. Hours above this limit are paid by parents with support through tax credits for low-income families. The 15 hours a week is used by over 95 % of 3- and 4-year-olds.

VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Benefits:

- Free 15 hours/week for ages 2-6
- Used by 95% of ages 3-4
-

Costs:

- Variable tax credits

Relevance to my Community:

- High
- Medium
- Low

Notes:

FRANCE

In France, pre-elementary education, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education, is carried out in "nursery school". Children are welcomed there from 3 years old and up to 6 years old. Children from 2 years old can also be admitted, subject to availability. The law of July 26, 2019 for a school of trust sets the obligation of education from the age of 3 years from the start of the 2019 school year.

- Children are mainly educated in nursery school. However, parents can also opt for kindergartens or home schooling, under the supervision of state officials.
- Nursery school is secular and free when it is public. From a legal point of view, nursery schools are not autonomous public establishments. They do not have an operating budget like secondary schools (colleges and high schools). The municipality is responsible for the buildings and finances the material expenses.
- During the 1960s and 1970s large-scale expansion led to the enrollment of 3-year-olds increasing from 35% to 90 % and of 4-year-olds from 60% to 100 %.
- Preschool also appeared to reduce socioeconomic inequalities as children from less advantaged backgrounds benefitted more than the more advantaged.

VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Benefits:

- Free for ages 3-6, age 2 if slots open
- 100% of age 4
- Increased equity

Costs:

- Free for public nursery schools

Relevance to my Community:

- High
- Medium
- Low

Notes:

UNITED STATES

In the US, without financing to support the provision of high-quality child care, supply will continue to be an issue for families who cannot afford high tuition rates. Here is a summary of recent and pending action at a national level.

- Congress recently increased funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which states are using to increase the number of families served through the child care subsidy system. While this increase is already improving access to quality child care, a much larger investment is needed to fully fund high-quality child care.

VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Benefits:

- Wide variety of options

Costs:

- High & variable

Relevance to my Community:

- High
- Medium
- Low

UNITED STATES *(continued)*

Notes:

- Written and introduced in 2019 by Senator Bennet, the American Family Act would overhaul the existing Child Tax Credit to make it a more effective tool for supporting middle-class families with kids and reducing child poverty. The bill would create a new \$300 per-month, per-child credit for children under 6 years of age and a \$250 per-month, per-child credit for older children -- increase the credit for all children, and, for the first time, making credit fully refundable.
- In 2017, Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA) introduced the Child Care for Working Families Act, which would make affordable, quality child care a reality for all families by limiting parents' child care payments to 7 percent of their annual income, or about \$45 a week for the average family. This legislation would also improve child care quality and increase pay for early educators.
- Early Head Start and Head Start programs are administered by the Office of Head Start (OHS), within the Administration for Children and Families and Dept. of Health and Human Services. OHS administers grant funding and oversight to the 1,600 public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies that provide Head Start services. Eligibility is based largely on the Federal Poverty Line for income; being in the central mount resort communities, very often family's that need the assistance fail to qualify. Whiles are bound by capacity, each local program administrator has the ability to apply for extra spaces, if the capacity were to exist.
- CARES Act included \$3.5B in dedicated funding through Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBGs). Many child care advocacy groups have cited a need for at least \$50 billion in child care funding to stabilize and adequately provide for the industry as a whole a COVID-19 pandemic wears on. This COULD be accomplished through an upcoming COVID-supplemental stimulus package if one could be passed by the US Congress.
- Senators, Warren, Smith, Murray, Casey and Gillibrand have laid out a plan to fund the CCDBG, part of the Child Care is Essential Act
- Use of TANF funding to assist ECE provider with salaries and to achieve higher quality ratings
- Improve ECE data collection - Analyzing supply and demand data will help policymakers determine the policy solutions needed to address the child care supply gap. States should prioritize data collection that allows policymakers, advocates, and researchers to accurately assesses the number of children, by age group, that licensed child care providers serve. Accurate data on the local child care market can help advocates and provider networks design nuanced interventions to ensure they are meeting the needs of families. For example, a thorough data analysis can determine if a state has a need for increased supply serving infants and toddlers, child care subsidy-eligible children, children with disabilities, parents with nonstandard hours, children of immigrants, or English-language learners.
- A key way to increase access to high-quality programs is to increase child care subsidy reimbursement rates based on the real costs of operating a program. Currently child care subsidy payments cover only a fraction of market rates—or the amount that child care programs charge parents paying out of pocket. The recent increase in CCDBG funding is helping many states increase payments to child care providers. Unfortunately, this rate still reflects the current realities of the child care market, where early educators are underpaid, and programs struggle to cover the costs of operation.
- Conducting a cost-of-quality study can help states determine the actual costs to operate a high-quality early childhood program, including sufficient teacher compensation. States can then set reimbursement rates based on this study, including variations by quality, ensuring that programs are not disincentivized from

UNITED STATES *(continued)*

serving child care subsidy-eligible children and that programs serving primarily low-income children are able to generate sufficient revenue to operate at a high-quality level. Such studies should also consider additional costs associated with serving infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and families who need child care during nonstandard hours.

- The National Children's Facilities Network estimates that the cost of upgrading child care facilities, including Head Start facilities, to current professional quality standards is \$10 billion. This includes updating building space to address health and safety issues, repair structures, upgrade utilities, and ensure classrooms are developmentally appropriate for children. Federal funds for facilities upgrades should be distributed via the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, designated by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.
- Investing in child care infrastructure also means supporting licensing and monitoring systems, as well as taking steps to support the early childhood workforce. Importantly, infrastructure investments must be paired with long-term financing strategies to ensure that programs can afford to operate.

Notes:

COLORADO

Colorado's General Assembly, state departments, and other statewide organizations have developed innovations that could improve access. Here's a brief summary:

- State of Colorado
 - » Colorado is working on developing a universal preschool system that is available to all 4 year-old children. Funding comes from a voter-approved nicotine tax and will begin in fall 2023.
 - » 2021-2022 budget released by the Governor's Office. They have proposed \$5 million in grants for on-site employer child care projects and another \$10 million to support start-up capital and mentorship for community child care projects.
 - » Full Day Kindergarten While Kindergarten is currently not a requirement in Colorado, research shows that starting students on their academic path in Kindergarten (ages 5-6) promotes children's enthusiasm, initiative, persistence, and engagement in learning and helps children enter schooling ready to succeed.
 - » Child Find ensures every school district or Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) has professionals trained to evaluate young children's development including cognitive functioning, motor skills, hearing and vision, speech and language and social emotional development for early intervention or special education services.
 - » The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) is a state-funded early childhood education program administered by the Colorado Department of Education. It provides funding for up to 29,360 children considered to be at-risk for later school failure to attend half- or full-day preschool. CPP is managed by local school districts and their preschool advisory councils. Each participating school district is given a predetermined number of half-day positions to serve eligible children. These are used in either half- or full-day programs in school district settings, local child care centers, community preschools or Head Start programs.

VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

Benefits:

- Wide variety of options

Costs:

- High & variables

Relevance to my Community:

- High
- Medium
- Low

Notes:

COLORADO *(continued)*

Notes:

- Through rule waivers, which are evaluated by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission to ensure the health and safety of children, Councils are able to request changes to rules, policies or regulations that impede the Council from pursuing its strategies or that create barriers for local families and children.
 - » Some of the earliest rule waivers requested by Councils focused on the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP): using slots to serve younger children or change how/when kids are counted.
 - » Other early waivers sought to impact child care reimbursement rates and to raise the family income eligibility for child care assistance in expensive resort communities.
 - » Early Childhood Council of Larimer County, Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council and the Mesa County Partnership for Children and Families all received rule waivers to create a pilot program that allows qualified child care centers and preschools to hire Provisional Early Childhood Teacher candidates with a grace period of 12 months to complete their coursework and qualifications. For example, eight Provisional Early Childhood Teachers in Eagle, Lake, Garfield and Pitkin counties have resulted in an increased capacity of 120 high-quality early care and learning slots in those communities just since 2019.
- Denver's Council serves the largest number of children, families and early childhood providers and entities of the state's 34 Early Childhood Councils. This puts the Denver Council in a unique position to conceptualize, pilot, refine and share solutions that support the work of all Early Childhood Councils across the state.
 - » Per the Buell Foundation, Denver created a proprietary data information system, eConnect, to address the challenge and allow for tracking of activities, expenses and reporting, or a "one-stop online marketplace for early childhood.
 - » The ecConnect system is owned and administered by Denver's Early Childhood Council and licensed to the other 33 Early Childhood Councils for use to more effectively operationalize quality-improvement investments. The ecConnect system includes 2,000 individual users (representing about 900 unique licensed programs) on the front-end of the database platform, and over 80 users of the data-rich back-end functionality.
- According to the Center for American Progress, expanding the child care subsidy system to cover all low- and middle-income families and providing universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds are two critical steps Colorado can take to support working families. Increasing public investment in ECE in this way would lead to substantial benefits for children, families, and the broader state economy.
 - » 314,106 young children could be served by expanded child care subsidy system
 - » The median family with two children would save \$24,542 if child care costs were capped at 7 percent of family income
 - » Estimated annual state economic benefit of affordable child care \$3.1 B
 - » Estimated annual state economic benefit of universal preschool \$1.24 B
- Over the longer term, communities may consider a development requirement for developers who propose more than (for example 100 or 500 units) to also add child care slots in/near the development. This could be framed as part of the development process for any PUD.

PROJECT PROCESSES

This project was focused on gathering a broad and deep array of perspectives and data to develop the recommendations. We referenced a variety of sources to develop an initial understanding of the environment. These are listed below with links to the original data.

We convened a Steering Committee members, to sponsor (and help fund) this effort, engage our diverse community to provide feedback.

- Lucinda Burns, Executive Director: Early Childhood Options
- Stacy Petty, Director: Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council
- Katy Hale, Executive Director: Grand Beginnings
- Jon Stavney, Executive Director, NWCCOG
- Jeanne McQueeney, Commissioner: Eagle County
- Greg Winkler, Regional Manager: Colorado Department of Local Affairs

With the support of our Steering Committee, we invited 69 individuals from across the region (details below) to join one of four workshops in early November 2020. These were actively facilitated Zoom meetings, ensuring social distance during the pandemic, and that our process was enriched by current, relevant and practical data informed by local stakeholder insights, experiences and ideas.

Children & Families: 13 representatives

- Eagle County Child Care - Licensing Specialist
- Eagle County Human Services - Supervisor
- Early Childhood Options - Program Manager
- Early Childhood Partners - Mental Health Specialist
- Family Connect - Director
- Full Circle - Executive Director
- Grand County Library District - Director
- Kids First - Director
- Mountain Family Center - Executive Director
- Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council - Director
- The Family & Intercultural Resource Center
- Town of Breckenridge Child Care & Housing Admin - Manager

ECE Educators/Providers: 18 representatives

- Basalt Education Foundation
- Blue Lake Preschool
- Children Garden of Learning - Director
- Eagle County school district - Director of Preschools
- Early Childhood Network
- Early Childhood Options - Executive Director
- Early Childhood Partners - Mental Health Specialist
- Grand Beginnings - Co-Executive Directors (2)
- Little Sprouts Learning Center - Program Manager
- Mountain Tots - Director
- NJS Hobby Farm / Kinder Cottage
- Prater Lane - Director
- Summit County - Licensing Specialist
- Summit County Preschool - Director
- The Center Early Childhood Programs - Director
- Vail Valley Foundation

Employers/Business Leaders: 18 representatives

- Alpine Bank
- Basalt Chamber
- Copper Mountain - Director of Employee Experience
- Grand County Economic Development - Champion
- Grand Enterprise Initiative
- Lake County - Commissioners
- Leadville Lake County Chamber - President
- Northwest SBDC - Regional Director

- Sonnenalp Hotel – Director of HR
- Steamboat Chamber - CEO
- Summit Chamber - President
- The Grazing Fox - Founder
- Vail Chamber – Executive Director
- Vail Health
- Vail Resorts – Director Community Engagement
- Vail Valley Partnership

Policy Makers/Elected Officials: 20 representatives

- Basalt - Town Council member
- Dillon – Mayor
- Eagle County School District
- Fraser River Valley Lion's Club - Leader
- Lake County - Commissioner
- Lake County - Dept of Human Services Director
- Pitkin County - Commissioner
- Sen. Bennet - Regional Representative
- Routt County - Commissioner
- Snowmass - Council, NWCCOG Council Member
- Steamboat - City Council
- Summit County – Assistant County Manager
- Summit County Schools - Superintendent
- The Summit Foundation
- Town of Breckenridge – Town Council member
- Town of Silverthorne – Town Manager
- Town of Vail – Assistant Town Manager, HR Risk Director
- Vail Valley Foundation

At the heart of each 4 workshops' agendas, we facilitated two discussion breakouts using a virtual sticky board called NoteApp to prompt the team with the topics below and capture their thoughts and feedback. This required participants to join on their computer with internet access to fully participate and share ideas. We discussed challenges based key categories driving the root causes for stakeholders. These included:

- Increasing barriers to access (cost, slots, distance, fit, quality etc.)
- COVID-related unpredictability (closures, restrictions, staffing levels, etc.)
- Contributing challenges (housing, transportation, employment, etc.)

We focused most of our time discussing solutions in the five key areas outlined below and asked each participant to come prepared with specific examples, (organizations, agencies, programs, policies, grants, funding methods, innovative partnerships, etc.) that could help overcome the myriad challenges in the region.

- Employer sponsored/supported programs: funding subsidies, and direct employment benefits
- Government (city, school district, county, state, federal) sponsored/supported programs and subsidies
- Early Childhood Councils, Family Resource Centers, CCR&Rs: matching providers to families, matching funding sources to families/providers
- Community partners, non-profit organizations, foundation, advocacy orgs
- Private sector providers: discounts, extended hours, transportation support, online resources

■ RESOURCES & REFERENCES

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC INFORMATION

US Census

- [2018 American Community Survey 5-Yr](#)

Bureau of Labor Statistics

- [Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#)

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

- [Data Center](#)

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

- Living Wage Calculator: Glasmeier, Amy K. Living Wage Calculator. 2020. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. livingwage.mit.edu

Colorado State Demographer's Office

- <https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>
- COVID Series (employment, sectors, mobility, etc.): <http://dola-online.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=56f85bf2c38e4483ad7345fc651a6458>

COLORADO EARLY CHILDHOOD INFORMATION

Regional Early Childhood Councils

- [Grand Beginnings \(Grand and Jackson Counties\)](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council \(Eagle, Garfield, Lake, Pitkin, Counties\)](#)
- [Early Childhood Options \(Summit County\) Council](#)

Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood

- Licensed child care facilities report <https://data.colorado.gov/Early-childhood/Colorado-Licensed-Child-Care-Facilities-Report/a9rr-k8mu>
- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/child-care-assistance>

Colorado Children's Campaign

- [Kids Count Report](#)
- [Policy Positions](#)

Center for American Progress (Colorado data)

- [Colorado Early Childhood Care Fact Sheet](#)

Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University

- Center on the Developing Child (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development* (InBrief). Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu

Economic Policy Institute

- [Colorado Child Care Costs](#)

Child Care Aware

- [Colorado Cost of Care Fact Sheet](#)

Early Learning Nation

- [ECE Program Costs and Financial Viability](#)

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Early Milestones Colorado

- Colorado COVID Research: <https://earlymilestones.org/project/covid-ec-research/>

National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

- <https://www.naeyc.org/pandemic-surveys>
- https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/blog/raise_tuition_or_close_naeyc.pdf
- Colorado Challenge Map June 2020

GovTech: COVID and Early Childhood Development

- [Early Childhood Development Post-COVID](#)

Univ of Oregon RAPID-EC pulse surveys and briefs: <https://www.uorapidresponse.com/reports-policy-briefs>

Bipartisan Policy Center Nationwide Child Care Survey <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/nationwide-survey-child-care-in-the-time-of-coronavirus/>

The Cut, [The Children of Quarantine](#)



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