

Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Annual Evaluation Report

July 2021



Executive Summary

Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) engages in 5-year planning cycles, and has just completed the first year of the 2020-2025 plan. Each 5-year plan reflects the priorities of Larimer County's early childhood community, and the 2020-2025 plan focuses on convening community partners to work collaboratively to:

- Broaden and diversify a qualified and well-compensated early childhood workforce
- Increase the number of families that can access and afford quality child care
- Elevate and support community involvement and investment in quality early childhood experiences
- Collaborate with families and community organizations to address and break down barriers to accessing services
- Support infant and early childhood mental health and social emotional development

Early Childhood Council of Larimer County made significant progress on the benchmarks set for our five year plan. Key highlights from FY2020-2021 include:

Early Childhood Workforce:

- ECCLC provided scholarships for higher education to 86 prospective early childhood education (ECE) providers during the 2020-2021 year totaling more than \$54,000. Additionally, ECCLC partnered with Front Range Community College Foundation to expand access with their scholarship matching program, which increased our scholarship giving by another \$15,000 in matching funds.

Child Care Quality and Affordability:

- Early Childhood Coaches supported quality child care for 40 early care and education programs with \$100,000+ in quality improvement funding and more than 800 hours of direct coaching. Twelve programs went through a virtual Colorado Shines rating during this fiscal year.
- For the third time, ECCLC was awarded an Early Milestones Early Childhood Workforce Innovation Grant to focus on policy-level solutions to ECE access and compensation.

Community Involvement and Investment:

- ECCLC partnered with the United Way of Larimer County to support the establishment of the Larimer County Childcare Fund, a scholarship program for families struggling to afford care. The fund has garnered more than \$500k from donors to support this effort.
- ECCLC partnered with consultants Cody Belzley and Lynea Hansen to lead a county-wide policy research process aimed at determining the feasibility of a local ballot campaign to fund the early childhood system. The 17-member cross-sector steering committee voted in June of 2021 to request that our County Commissioners refer a ballot measure in November of 2021, which if successful, would more than double our local investment in ECE.

Family Access:

- ECCLC launched Larimer Child Care Connect (LC3) in September of 2020 to support families with real-time access to child care openings county-wide. More than 1,000 local families have accessed the referral portal since its release last year.

Early Childhood Mental Health and Social Emotional Development:

- ECCLC integrated the Leap Coalition into a full-fledged program area of the Council, and increased the funding we dedicate to early childhood mental health in Larimer County by more than 400%.

Methodology

ECCLC Strategic Planning Process

The ECCLC strategic plan reflects the priorities of Larimer County’s early childhood community, with a focus on the work supported by ECCLC staff in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders. ECCLC engages in 5-year planning cycles, with annual reviews and updates in order to remain responsive to evolving community needs and priorities.

- The planning process starts with an analysis of community needs, and is informed by the data that are collected through ECCLC’s Evaluation Plan. Data include, but are not limited to, demographic data, child care data, and child health data.
- Data are analyzed and evaluated by the Advisory Board, using a “Factor Analysis” framework from the Results-Based Accountability approach.
- In accordance with ECCLC’s Evaluation Plan, data are also reviewed annually as part of the review and update process.
- ECCLC’s planning process is a highly collaborative, multi-month process, which incorporates input from Advisory Council members, ECCLC staff, and the ECCLC Board of Directors. ECCLC also released the strategic plan for public comment prior to full adoption.
- The Advisory Council presents a recommended plan to the ECCLC Board of Directors, which has final decision-making authority to adopt or modify the strategic plan.

Data Collection

Whenever possible, data targets are set for the strategies. Although many of the strategies are not easily answered purely by data, whenever specific data is identified and provided, the source is footnoted at the end of this report.

Annual Review and Update

Both the data in this report, and community assessment data identified in our community’s Assessment Plan are shared with the ECCLC Advisory Council every fall. The data is discussed at the Council meeting, with the lens of understanding the story behind the data, identifying emerging or changing needs, and making recommendations about any adjustments to the data that we track as part of our Assessment Plan.

Progress on Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: Broaden and diversify a qualified and well-compensated early childhood workforce.

A. Support recruitment and retention of a qualified early childhood workforce.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
A-i. Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2025, recruit at least 20 new family child care (FCCH) providers into the field through recruitment events, licensing navigation and financial support.	22 new FCCH ¹ ; 3 received additional support from ECCLC, including licensing fees, pre-licensing and application support, and startup costs.	On Track
A-ii. On an annual basis, support at least 50 prospective and current ECE providers with scholarships for higher education.	86 prospective ECE providers ² received higher education scholarships over this past fiscal year.	On Track
A-iii. On an annual basis, support at least 75 current and prospective ECE providers with career navigation support, including support with licensing, credentialing and the Professional Development Information System (PDIS).	This particular goal has been challenging over the past year. We saw a precipitous drop in individuals seeking career navigation support during the pandemic.	At Risk
A-iv. By June 30, 2022, pilot an online ECCLC training series, to increase access to professional development for ECE providers.	ECCLC pivoted all trainings to online formats over the pandemic, with EQIT being a highlight of the past year. We have seen an uptick in enrollment for trainings that we offer online, and EQIT has been at full capacity for all three sessions we've offered over the last fiscal year.	Achieved
A-v. By June 30, 2023, establish a range of options for child care for participants of ECCLC training sessions and meetings, to support equity of access to professional development.	No updates	On Track

B. Explore local priorities of the early childhood workforce and innovative models to address compensation and other needs.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
B-i. By March 1, 2022 redesign and deploy a workforce survey that comprehensively captures local workforce needs, including recruitment and retention challenges.	No updates	On Track
B-ii. By June 30, 2022, use the results of the workforce survey to identify workforce priorities for year 2 of the ECCLC strategic plan.	No updates	On Track
B-iii. By June 30, 2021, establish a cross-sector work group to explore potential shared-service models for early care and education in Larimer County	ECCLC is partnering with United Way of Larimer County to explore shared services, and launched a free employee assistance program through ComPysch for ECE providers this year, which provides access	Achieved

¹Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Shines Salesforce database

² Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC)

	to mental health counseling, legal support, and financial counseling for all who choose to enroll.	
B-iv. By June 30, 2021, establish a cross-sector work group to explore the creation of an ECE provider substitute pool to support ECE programs and family child care homes in providing quality care and maintaining staff ratios in times of transition.	ECCLC received \$20k in start-up funding from the City of Fort Collins to launch a sub pool locally. The first year will focus on developing the model and back-end administrative processes with an anticipated launch in 2022.	Achieved

C. Advocate for increased clarity and timeliness of the qualification process for early childhood professionals.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
C-i. On an ongoing basis, continue participating in workforce advocacy at the state-level in order to support policies that streamline the qualification process for early care and education providers	ECCLC staff participate in the following state-level workgroups to support improvements in the ECE system, and play key roles in some of the ECE-focused legislation that was passed this year, including HB1222 that supported FCCH. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool Policy Advisory Group • Infant Toddler Taskforce (Raise Co.) • Removing Barriers • Raise Colorado Steering Committee • ECE Workforce Policy Coalition 	On Track
C-ii. By December 31, 2020, establish a plan to improve, expand and scale the Expanding Professional Possibilities in Early Childhood (EPPEC) project in Larimer County to ensure ongoing ECE workforce development support.	ECCLC worked for the past year on developing sweeping policy level changes to our county that would support the expansion of workforce recruitment and retention strategies, including EPPEC. We anticipate taking a funding measure to the ballot this year, which will create a sustainable, long-term funding source for this work if passed.	On Track

Goal 2: Increase the number of families that can access and afford quality child care.

A. Support early care and education providers in consistently implementing quality practices.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
A-i. By June 30, 2023, at least 60% of licensed ECE programs in Larimer County will be engaged with the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (engagement is defined as Level 2 or higher).	As of June 30, 2021, 44% of licensed ECE programs ³ in Larimer County were at Level 2 or higher in Colorado Shines.	On Track
A-ii. By June 30, 2023, at least 27% of licensed ECE programs in Larimer County eligible for a quality rating will have a Colorado Shines rating of Level 3 or higher, with coaching, professional development opportunities and quality improvement support from the ECCLC.	As of June 30, 2021, 23% of QRIS eligible ECE programs in Larimer County ⁴ were at a Level 3 or higher in Colorado Shines.	On Track
A-iii. At least once a month, promote Colorado Shines and Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG) to ECE providers through the e-newsletter, provider email list and/or ECCLC Facebook page.	ECCLC continues to provide updates on Colorado Shines and ELDG through our various communication channels, including social media and newsletters on a monthly basis.	On Track
A-iv. On an ongoing basis, maintain a section of the ECCLC website with information about Colorado Shines, with a prominent link on the website homepage.	ECCLC continues to provide updates on Colorado Shines and ELDG through our various communication channels, including social media and newsletters on a monthly basis. We also maintain the following information on our website: https://ecclc.org/early-care-and-education-providers/colorado-shines-and-pdis/	On Track

B. Increase and diversify child care support across sectors and funding partners to ensure families have access to immediate, temporary, or long-term assistance.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
B-i. By June 30, 2021, in partnership with United Way of Larimer County, explore successful models for business support of family friendly workplace policies and child care access, and identify a plan for local advocacy efforts.	ECCLC received \$8,000 in funding from the Bohemian Foundation to support, in partnership with United Way and local employers in implementing family-friendly business practices. The remainder of the work in this space will occur within the next fiscal year.	On Track
B-ii. By June 30, 2023, identify funding sources to establish emergency assistance for child care costs, including enrollment fees, tuition, and other immediate child care needs, in order to support continuity of care.	ECCLC has strengthened partnerships with local funders of child care scholarships such as United Way and WomenGive to advocate for increased eligibility requirements and expanded access to scholarships, and anticipate building on	On Track

³ Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Shines Salesforce database

⁴ Ibid

	these partnership to achieve this goal moving forward.	
B-iii. By June 30, 2023, maintain the percentage of children (at least 80%) receiving CCAP subsidies that are being served in high-quality programs	As of June 30, 2021 74.1% of children receiving CCAP are in a Level 3 program or higher ⁵ . This is a drop from previous years, and we are working to partner with our local Department of Human Services to support CCAP promotion.	On Track

C. Support alternative types of child care in implementing quality practices to expand access to quality care in the community.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
C-i. By June 30, 2021, collaborate with Larimer County and partners to explore potential models of support for exempt care providers.	ECCLC strengthened partnerships with La Cocina to support their work in building up the Spanish-speaking FFN community and anticipate this work supporting our ability to grow FFN partnerships county-wide.	On Track

⁵ Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood

Goal 3: Elevate and support community involvement and investment in quality early childhood experiences.

A. Build advocates across sectors and the community who are willing to invest in early childhood as part of the overall continuum of education.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
A-i. By June 30, 2022, compile and distribute an early childhood advocacy toolkit to a broad range of community members and organizations in Larimer County.	No updates	On Track
A-ii. On an annual basis, provide at least one (1) in-person opportunity for community involvement in advocacy efforts for early childhood issues.	See A-iv.	On Track
A-iii. On an annual basis, organize a fall “Give to Kids” campaign through Colorado Gives to promote donations to child-serving organizations in Larimer County.	We promote Colorado Gives Day annually by sharing out with our myriad partners the list of early childhood serving nonprofits in Larimer County to whom they can donate.	On Track
A-iv. By early 2022, explore the inclusion of an early childhood subsidization tax proposal on a Larimer County ballot.	Understanding there was a new and increasingly urgent focus on child care, ECCLC convened a 17 member county-wide Steering Committee to explore the possibility of creating a dedicated local public funding stream to support early childhood care and education in our County. This group met for four months (March – June 2021) and conducted a thorough exploration and viability assessment process. Upon the conclusion of this work, the group recommended that Larimer County Commissioners refer a proposal to the November 2021 ballot to create a county-wide dedicated funding stream for early care and education supported by a 0.25% (25 cents on \$100 purchase) sales and use tax.	Achieved

B. Strengthen awareness of the impact of the early years (prenatal to age 8) on a broad range of community outcomes.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
B-i. By June 30, 2021, establish a contract to collect data and create/distribute a comprehensive public information campaign on early childhood issues including, but not limited to, those that impact families, workforce, economy and business, and long-term societal outcomes.	With funding provided by our partners at Larimer County, we were able to launch a comprehensive public information campaign, Larimer Thrive by Five , in January 2021. Engagement stats ⁶ are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From December 1, 2021-June 30, 2021 	Achieved

⁶ Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website; 1,600 visitors; 1,400 unique visitors • Facebook: 14,727 reach (includes boosted posts); 17% engagement (average), 270 followers • Email: 99 contacts, 50% open rate, 5% click rate • Instagram: 205 followers • LinkedIn: 268 followers 	
<p>B-ii. By December 31, 2021, develop messaging for normalizing the use and promoting the benefit of early childhood resources and services for all young children.</p>	<p>See above.</p>	<p>On Track</p>

Goal 4: Collaborate with families and community organizations to address and break down barriers to accessing services.

A. Include family voice and lived experiences to ensure resources and services are community-driven.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
A-i. By June 30, 2021, partner with community stakeholders to establish ECCLC policy guidelines for board, committees and task force participation that incorporate intentional inclusion of family voice and lived experience in program planning.	ECCLC worked internally to revamp our job descriptions, as well as formalize the value of lived-experience among our board of directors. This will be ongoing work to support the elevation of lived experience in our internal work, but one the board has committed to. Additionally, ECCLC is partnering with Larimer County Department of Health and Environment to participate in a Culture of Equity learning series with other local nonprofit organizations to better incorporate intentional inclusion of family voice and lived experience in program planning in the coming year.	On Track

B. Support and advocate for accessible and equitable services for all children and families.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
B-i. By December 31, 2021, collaborate with local child-serving agencies and partners to expand and support at least one (1) cultural consciousness training for service providers, to promote equitable access to resources for families in our community.	No updates	On Track
B-ii. On an ongoing basis, continue to provide support and staff time, in partnership with United Way of Larimer County, for the Larimer Be Ready Campaign , to support kindergarten readiness and access to resources for families in our community.	ECCLC began conversations with United Way of Larimer County and other partners to determine how best to reinvigorate Be Ready work in Larimer County. We are currently strategizing ways to leverage early childhood navigators to support kindergarten readiness. Despite the pandemic, we distributed 1,700 English and 500 Spanish ⁷ Ready Set Kindergarten guides across the county this FY.	On Track
B-iii. On an ongoing basis, support the work of the Kids Initiative for Developmental Screening (KIDS) with staff time and facilitation assistance, to promote early intervention screening and referrals for Larimer County children.	On Track	On Track

⁷ Ibid

C. Increase professionals' cross-domain knowledge of up-to-date services and resources.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
<p>C-i. On an ongoing basis, participate in community coalitions aimed at connecting children, families and professionals to community resources, in order to enhance referral networks.</p>	<p>Staff participate on the following community groups for this purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larimer County Interagency Coordination Council • Larimer Navigation Group • Larimer County Child Care Fund • School District Advisory Groups • Connect First 	<p>On Track</p>
<p>C-ii. On an annual basis, provide a minimum of two (2) opportunities for Larimer County nonprofits that serve local families to share information at ECCLC Advisory Council meetings, to increase community knowledge of available resources.</p>	<p>ECCLC provided presentation time to 5 community partners on our Advisory Council meetings during this fiscal year, including: Summitstone Health Partners, DentaQuest, United Way of Larimer County, Colorado Spirit (Alliance for Suicide Prevention) and Foothills Gateway Early Intervention</p>	<p>On Track</p>

Goal 5: Support infant and early childhood mental health and social emotional development.

A. Support early care and education providers in implementing quality practices that promote the positive social emotional development of young children.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
A-i. Annually support ECE providers with at least two (2) training opportunities on practices and/or environments that promote social emotional well-being for the children they serve.	<p>ECCLC offered the following trainings⁸ this fiscal year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma-informed Care in the COVID Environment – 31 attendees • Parenting in a Pandemic – offered in multiple drop in sessions in English and Spanish, hosted by a licenses therapist and in partnership with Fort Collins Museum of Discovery alongside their Mind Matters mental health exhibit • Social Emotional Tips and Tools for Learning Pod Facilitators- 10 attendees • Self-Care in the time of COVID – 13 attendees • Virtual Service Delivery- to support providers working in the virtual space with maintaining key relationships – 17 attendees 	On Track
A-ii. By December 31, 2022, collaborate with the KIDS Initiative, and other partners to offer at least one (1) training to ECE providers on developmental screening and challenging behaviors.	No updates	On Track

B. Build and support a robust and well-connected early childhood workforce in Larimer County with specific expertise in infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH), health equity, and knowledge of local resources.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
B-i. By July 2025, there will be at least 50 early childhood professionals in Larimer County with the Colorado Association of Infant Mental Health (COAIMH) Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health® (IMH-E or “the endorsement”).	No updates	On Track
B-ii. By July 2025, build a pool of at least 10 COAIMH-endorsed reflective supervision/consultation (RS/C) providers in Larimer County who can provide COAIMH’s required RS/C hours for those seeking the IMH-E.	ECCLC supported the Colorado Association for Infant Mental Health (COAIMH) Infant Mental Health Endorsement (IMH-E) cohort: Eleven participants included six CSU interns (see B-iv) and five professionals in the ECE system. The 8-week course facilitated by COAIMH provided 18-22 hours of IECMH-focused training.	On Track

⁸ Ibid

	To date, ECCLC has supported 35 child-serving professionals in Larimer County to engage in the COAIMH endorsement process ⁹ .	
B-iii. On an ongoing basis, identify funding opportunities to expand access to infant and early childhood mental health consultation services in a wide range of settings where additional supports are needed	ECCLC spent the last half of FY21 negotiating with Summitstone Health Partners to bring the ECMHC team to our staff. This move will occur during FY22, and will allow us to begin growing those services in our county through increased funding and resources.	On Track
B-iv. By January 2021, connect with local higher education institutions to explore options for enhancing IECMH-specific career pathways, including expanded internship and mentoring opportunities with local IECMH providers.	ECCLC launched a CSU Early Childhood Mental Health Internship Pilot. This 16-week curriculum was developed with our core partners: CSU School of Social Work, Foothills Gateway, Poudre School District, Thompson School District, the Family Center/La Familia, and private practice ECMH therapists. The cohort of 6 students met for two hours each week, focusing on training, community networking, and reflective supervision. Students and professionals participating in the pilot program expressed deep value in the relationships they built during their coursework. In the post-survey, students indicated they had attained skills in trauma-informed care, how to work with a multidisciplinary team, communication skills, interview skills, increased confidence, and deepened reflective skills. Students were placed in child-serving agencies across the county for internship hours to complete their degrees. ECCLC will continue this project and relaunch it as the CSU ECMH Fellowship Program in FY22.	Achieved
B-v. By January 2022, explore options to incentivize IECMH workforce recruitment and retention, including scholarships and training subsidies in exchange for a time commitment to service in Larimer County	See above. ECCLC provided \$25k in scholarship/stipend funding to BSW/MSW students at CSU in exchange for a 1-year service agreement in Larimer County.	Achieved
B-vi. At least four times per year, provide free or low-cost professional development opportunities for family service professionals in Larimer County to increase IECMH knowledge and expertise, build professional connections, and share information.	See information in Goal 5A-i above.	On Track

⁹ Ibid

C. Increase community understanding of early childhood development, with an emphasis on the long-term societal impact of early childhood experiences.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
C-i. By July 2022, establish a workgroup to explore new ways to engage with parents and caregivers in order to increase their understanding of early childhood development; the relationship between trauma, challenging behaviors, race, and bias; and how to access support when concerns arise.	No updates	On Track
C-ii. By July 2025, increase caregiver understanding of the long-term negative impacts of preschool suspension and expulsion (including the “preschool to prison pipeline”) in an effort to mitigate these practices.	No updates	On Track

D. Support a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach to prevention, early identification and intervention for mental health concerns in young children.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
D-i. On an ongoing basis, work in collaboration with ECCLC’s early childhood coaches to support ECE providers in consistently implementing quality practices that support IECMH, and provide tools for understanding and mitigating challenging behaviors.	Three ECE centers were selected to participate in the site-wide implementation of the Pyramid Model with the ECCLC Early Childhood Coaching (ECC) team. Site-specific Pyramid trainings were offered and each site conducted pre-TPOT/TPITOS assessments. Implementing social-emotional programming in ECE settings is a primary prevention strategy because it reduces risk factors that lead to poor mental health outcomes later in life. When implemented with fidelity, social-emotional programming can reduce the use of inappropriate discipline practices, promote family engagement, use data for decision-making, integrate early childhood and infant mental health consultation and early intervention, and foster inclusion	On Track
D-ii. On an ongoing basis, according to community need, work with local family and child serving agencies to identify training needs and provide targeted workforce supports to increase IECMH knowledge and expertise.	ECCLC covered the costs of the Colorado Foundations of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health for Early Childhood Professionals and Partners for 32 individuals from March to May 2021.	On Track

E. A multi-generational approach is utilized in all mental health and substance use prevention and treatment work in Larimer County, with a strong focus on providing wrap-around support for the children and families of primary adult consumers.

Objectives	As of 6/30/2021	Status
E-i. On an ongoing basis, provide outreach and training to increase awareness and understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), including the immediate and long-term physical, mental, behavioral, and societal consequences.		On Track
E-ii. On an ongoing basis, according to community need, support partner agencies in identifying where their programs intersect with the ACEs landscape and provide recommendations for how they can intervene to support the children of primary adult consumers	ECCLC provided community presentations on the ACEs landscape to the Mental Health and Substance Use Alliance in FY21 to increase community awareness of the impact of ACEs on community outcomes	On Track
E-iii. On an ongoing basis, according to community need, provide technical support and consultation for partner agencies in reviewing, designing, implementing, and/or expanding programs and policies focused on disrupting the intergenerational impact of trauma.	ECCLC launched a comprehensive consultation package targeted toward adult-serving agencies that are engaged in work related to risk and/or protective factors (housing, substance use, mental health, corrections, etc.). This project supported local agencies to expand their organizational capacity for providing a “whole family” approach to support services by supporting more trauma-informed, family-friendly practices. This consultation project experienced incredible success in the first round, and we ultimately received more applicants than we could support. The selected agencies included Homeward Alliance, Housing Catalyst, Neighbor to Neighbor, and Larimer County Community Corrections, which serve to highlight the broad outreach and positive impact that this project will have in Larimer County.	On Track
E-iv. On an ongoing basis, work in collaboration with community partners to provide support and technical assistance to physicians and other professional community designated screeners. Include referral resources and culturally-appropriate information for how to talk to a parent when there is a concern.	No Updates	On Track
E-v. By July 2023, explore examples of successful community programs utilizing an ACEs screening tool, and generate recommendations for a tool or program that could be piloted in Larimer County.	No Updates	On Track
E-vi. By July 2022, connect with a Heathy Steps representative to learn more about the model. Determine if this model for integrated behavioral/physical care would be appropriate for development in Larimer County	No Updates	On Track