



Call for Letters of Interest for Evaluation of Family Child Care Home Navigator and Substitute Pool Fund Programs

Between 2021 and 2022, the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) received over \$465 million in federal stimulus funding to strengthen and expand the early childhood sector in Colorado and support families and the workforce to ensure all children have access to high-quality child care. CDEC has partnered with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab (Colorado Lab) at the University of Denver to serve as the early childhood evaluation hub for this stimulus funding. As part of this effort, the Colorado Lab is contracting with evaluation partners and accepting Letters of Interest for research teams interested in receiving funding to design and conduct an evaluation of CDEC's [Family Child Care Home \(FCCH\) Navigator](#) and [Substitute Pool Fund](#) activities.

The Substitute Pool Fund targets existing licensed EC programs to create a supportive work environment and retain a qualified and diverse workforce. It creates a fund so that licensed EC programs and FCCHs can receive a specified number of free days or hours from substitutes. Substitute placement agencies will ensure that working professionals meet licensing standards so substitutes can be placed in EC programs to do professional development. This should increase the number of EC professionals entering the substitute pool, increase professional development opportunities, offer providers increased coverage and paid time off, decrease closure days, and increase the pursuit of EC qualifications among substitute teachers. Funding is available for 2-3 substitute pools from July 2022 through September 2024.

The FCCH Navigator program targets new FCCH providers to incentivize the opening of and increase the availability of licensed EC programs (see [latest impact brief](#)). It funds EC Councils to hire navigators for FCCH providers to connect them with support and resources to improve business practices and support quality. It also supports the launch of a staffed network of up to 35 FCCH navigators based on experience from the All our Kin program. With sufficient uptake of navigator support, the program should allow existing FCCHs to remain open and thrive, increase availability of licensed FCCHs to meet family demand, and allow FCCHs to offer quality early learning experiences. EC Councils began hiring for the navigator roles in early 2022, with anticipated funding through September 2024.

Contracted teams will design and execute a study that helps build evidence for the two programs and will involve:

- Development of a theory of change for each program in collaboration with CDEC partners to identify primary goals and preconditions.

- Systems-level analysis of the program' goals, implementation design, needs of participant population, and success in targeting participants to achieve the goals.
- Purposeful sampling to examine the implementation experience.

Ultimately, the evaluation should help answer the following questions:

- Understanding goals & design of programs
 - What challenges are these programs intended to address?
 - What strategies have the programs put in place to meet their goals?
- Understanding outreach for programs
 - What was the outreach approach for each program?
 - Was program participation achieved by the intended/target audience?
 - What lessons learned can improve future outreach efforts?
- Understanding implementation of programs
 - Did the implementation of the programs roll out as expected?
 - What challenges did programs face that altered their goals or prevented success?

The evaluation work will begin in February 2023 and be completed by September 2024. There is a budget of up to \$150,000 for the contracted research team to complete this work. Letters of Interest should be no longer than two pages and submitted to Ellen@coloradolab.org no later than end of day Tuesday, January 31, 2023. Letters should include:

1. Approach: Describe your team's high-level approach to answering the evaluation questions stated above, highlighting your previous experiences implementing such approaches.
2. Team: Provide a brief description of relevant qualifications and experiences of the project team leads, and how the team is well-positioned to execute the proposed study within Colorado. Also identify any anticipated support that will be needed from the Colorado Lab to complete this work.
3. IRB: Indicate whether your team has an internal IRB that can be leveraged to submit requests for this evaluation work.
4. Timeline & Cost: Briefly comment on the feasibility of completing this evaluation work within the anticipated timeline and budget. A detailed scope of work with specific deliverables and budget will be requested should your team be selected for this opportunity.