



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

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Prevention Investment Strategy: A Roadmap Forward

Leveraging Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund Investments to Drive Prevention for Colorado Families

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

Sprint interviews with the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Board shed light on exploratory focus areas for future investments.

Next steps are to use data to develop policy and practice recommendations for:

- strategy for spending Trust Fund resources (**unique investments**);
- priorities for cross-system prevention investment overtime (**catalyzing the work of prevention partners**); and
- opportunities to grow Trust Fund resources (**long-term sustainability**).

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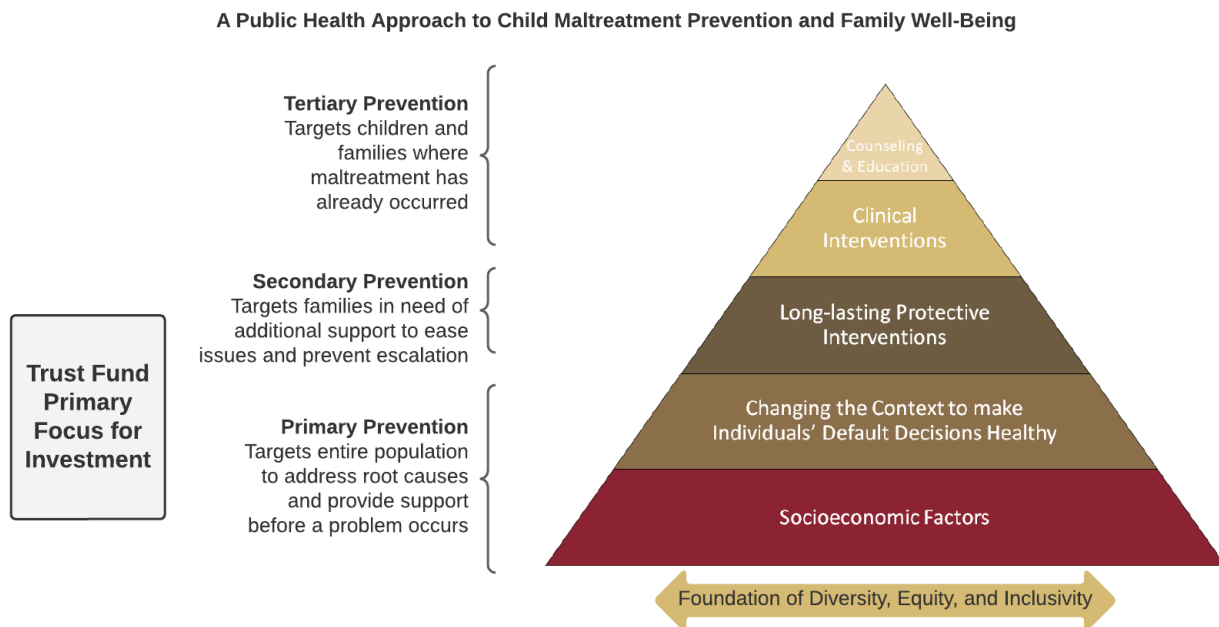
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Background

The Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund (“Trust Fund”) provides leadership, collaborative support, and advising and makes recommendations to the Governor, state agencies, and other stakeholders on child maltreatment prevention planning, implementation, alignment, and investments across Colorado. The Trust Fund has a statutorily defined focus on [primary and secondary prevention](#). Primary prevention are practices/programs targeted at the entire population (universal) to provide support before an issue occurs. Secondary prevention are practices/programs targeted at families identified as in need or at-risk, to alleviate identified issues and prevent further escalation. Tertiary prevention are practices/programs targeted at families where a family is already involved in child welfare and maltreatment has occurred (Figure 1). The work is governed by the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Board (“the Board”), which is a 19-member Board made up of cross-system representatives at county and state levels alongside family leadership. The Board is designated a Type II Board within the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC). The scope and structure of the Trust Fund and the Board is outlined in [C.R.S 26.5-3-201](#).

Figure 1. A Public Health Approach to Child Maltreatment Prevention



CDEC is partnering with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab (Colorado Lab) to develop a *Data-Informed Prevention Investment Strategy* (the “Strategy”). The strategy will promote better data-informed decision-making and smart state investments in child maltreatment prevention as the Trust Fund fulfills statutorily defined duties and accelerates alignment of prevention investments across Colorado. Policy and practice recommendations for investment will focus on:

- Strategy for spending resources that flow to the Trust Fund;
- Opportunities to build Trust Fund resources, as part of sustaining investments; and
- Priorities for cross-system prevention investment overtime.

Relationship between The Trust Fund and the Board

The *Prevention Investment Strategy* is developed to guide the Trust Fund in prevention investments. The Board is the advising body for the Trust Fund and a primary actor. Other actors (state agencies, community providers, consultants, etc.) will also be responsible for activating the Trust Fund's *Prevention Investment Strategy*. Responsible actors will be identified as part of the final strategy.

Developing the prevention investment strategy occurs over State Fiscal Years (SFY) 2023 and 2024. SFY23 was a capacity-building period, with an emphasis on eliciting Board member perspectives on gaps and opportunities through sprint interviews. This report summarizes findings from initial capacity-building work. Activities for full strategy development will occur in SFY24 and are previewed at the end of this report.

Exploratory Focus Areas

Sprint interviews were grounded in the priority areas identified by the Board through previous work with Collective Progress. In total, 14 Board members were interviewed, yielding rich insights on gaps and opportunities. Narratives were analyzed for major themes and actionable insights.

The “What” of the Prevention Investment Strategy

Exploratory focus areas are the “what” of the investment strategy. In SFY24, each focus area will be further explored using a data-informed approach and specific goals identified.

Exploratory Focus Areas – The “What” of the Investment Strategy

- Build up **regional access** to existing services, including those in the Family First array. An [interactive map](#) (new tool!) of current geographic coverage for services in the Family First array was developed as part of initial capacity-building and is publicly available.
- Use data to refine **priority populations** as part of equity in prevention investments.
- Complete **scaling of child maltreatment prevention plans** to all 64 counties and **support** counties with existing plans in implementation.
- **Endorse partners** who work on the “big” issues like housing, child care, and behavioral health.

Why These Focus Areas are Positioned to Drive Change

Each exploratory focus area has the potential to fill unique gaps and promote promising opportunities identified by the Board.

Building up regional access to existing services helps to **maximize initial investments** through a focus on reach, access, and implementation supports. Family Resource Centers were of high priority for Board members, as they are often the central hub in communities to connect families to other needed supports. Services/programs in the Family First array were also of noted priority. For the Family First array, building up regional access will help the state maximize federal drawdown, which in turn can be used to build capacity to implement Colorado's Prevention Plan and expand evidence-based service availability.

Using data to refine priority populations can identify social/health disparities and under-resourced communities where **targeted investments can occur to advance equity**. Priority populations identified

during sprint interviews included: rural communities, Amish/Mennonite families, families with caregivers and/or children who have disabilities, families of color, sexual abuse prevention and treatment, families affected by perinatal substance use, fathers/fatherhood, multi-generational caregivers, caregivers involved in the criminal justice system, military families, and refugee and immigrant families.

Completing scaling of child maltreatment prevention plans to all 64 counties ensures Colorado is working in a **common prevention framework with shared measures** around progress. Supporting counties with existing plans in implementation helps to ensure resourcing is in place to **bridge the gap between initial visioning work and execution**.

Endorsing partners who work on the “big” issues like housing, child care, and behavioral health helps to **build momentum for cross-systems collaborations in tackling high-investment solutions**. The big issues identified in sprint interviews and through previous work with the Board by Collective Progress include:

- Accessible, affordable, quality **childcare**
- Accessible, affordable, safe, and stable **housing**
- Safe **family spaces** that address needs, support connection, and increase engagement
- Supportive services for different levels of acuity in **Behavioral Health**
- Provision of **quality education** and youth services
- Accessible and tailored **workforce development** strategies

The “How” of the Prevention Investment Strategy

Sprint interviews also revealed several approaches for exploring and implementing identified focus areas. These are the “how” of investment strategy development and planned action forward in strategy execution.

Approaches for Strategy Development and Execution – The “How” of the Investment Strategy

- **Grow funding streams** that flow to the Trust Fund and ensure there is a sustainability plan.
- Prioritize **streamlined, concentrated investments** in spending down the reserve fund
- Plan for **evidence-building on investments**
- Lean away from “doing” the big issues and **align with existing efforts**
- Support **clarity and shared understanding of Trust Fund structure**

Why These Approaches are Positioned to Drive Change

Each approach will help to ensure that any direct investments by the Trust Fund can make a measurable difference in the focus area and that Board influence is strategically applied to help coordinate and align cross-system investments.

- Growing funding streams that flow to the Trust Fund is **necessary for a multi-year strategy** to be **sustainable** and **responsive** to emergent needs. Ensuring there is a sustainability plan for investments made is a way to **proactively avoid losing critical infrastructure** built and pulling resources from families that they have come to rely on.
- Prioritizing streamlined, concentrated investments helps to **ensure investments of the Trust Fund are not overly diluted** to the point where no change is anticipated due to too-low resourcing.

- Planning for evidence-building can **help Colorado learn** from Trust Fund investments and **inform priorities** for new or continued investment.
- Leaning away from “doing” the big issues and aligning with existing work is a key ingredient in the Trust Fund fulfilling their role as **the statewide Prevention Board in Colorado statute**. Resources of the Trust Fund are finite and, alone, cannot tackle the “big” issues. This is also critical to the Board’s role in supporting cross-system collaboration in prevention.
- Supporting clarity and shared understanding of the Trust Fund structure will help to ensure **feasibility and efficacy of strategies** identified. This is particularly salient because the Board is a Type II Board of the CDEC, meaning CDEC has ultimate control over funding and which recommendations of the Board move forward. Also, as a working Board, it is important to grow infrastructure that already exists and right-size the work to be done to available hours and resources of the members.¹

Funding Map: Concentric Circles of Resources

We anchor the strategy in a funding map of concentric circles (Figure 2). The map visually display three levels of resources that, together, should be considered by the Board in thinking through unique direct investments paired with cross-system alignment for prevention resourcing.

Circle 1: Resources that flow to the Trust Fund

Circle 2: Resources held by CDEC that contribute to child maltreatment prevention

Circle 3: Resources held by other state agencies and non-governmental (philanthropic) partners that contribute to child maltreatment prevention

Each of these circles allow the Trust Fund to leverage funding sources across the [prevention continuum](#), while focusing on investment at the primary and secondary levels. This approach aligns with the [Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action](#) and outcomes identified in statute. This approach will better position the Board to leverage the work of cross-system partners in the prevention space, including the [Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families](#) and the [Child Welfare Prevention Task Group](#).

Special Considerations around Family First Federal Drawdown and Re-Investment of Funds

The federal reimbursement that Colorado can receive as part of Family First will be claimed by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) as the Title IV-E agency. Reimbursement received will be pooled and deposited into a subaccount of the Trust Fund, per [HB21-1248](#). Currently, Colorado’s [Five-Year Family First Prevention Services Plan](#) includes nine evidence-based services that the state can claim 50% reimbursement on. However, reimbursement can only be requested for families with open child welfare or juvenile justice involved cases. Initially, the intent is to reinvest funds into building capacity to implement Colorado’s Prevention Plan and expand the Family First service array for child welfare involved families. This makes the Family First subaccount a tertiary prevention fund. In developing the investment strategy, it will be important to explore when, if, and to what extent funds in the Family First subaccount can be re-invested upstream toward primary and secondary prevention – in shared commitment to meeting the evolving needs of children, youth, and families.

¹ The Trust Fund can use a portion of their resources to hire contractors to support implementation of the strategy.

Figure 2. Funding Map: Concentric Circles of Resources for Prevention

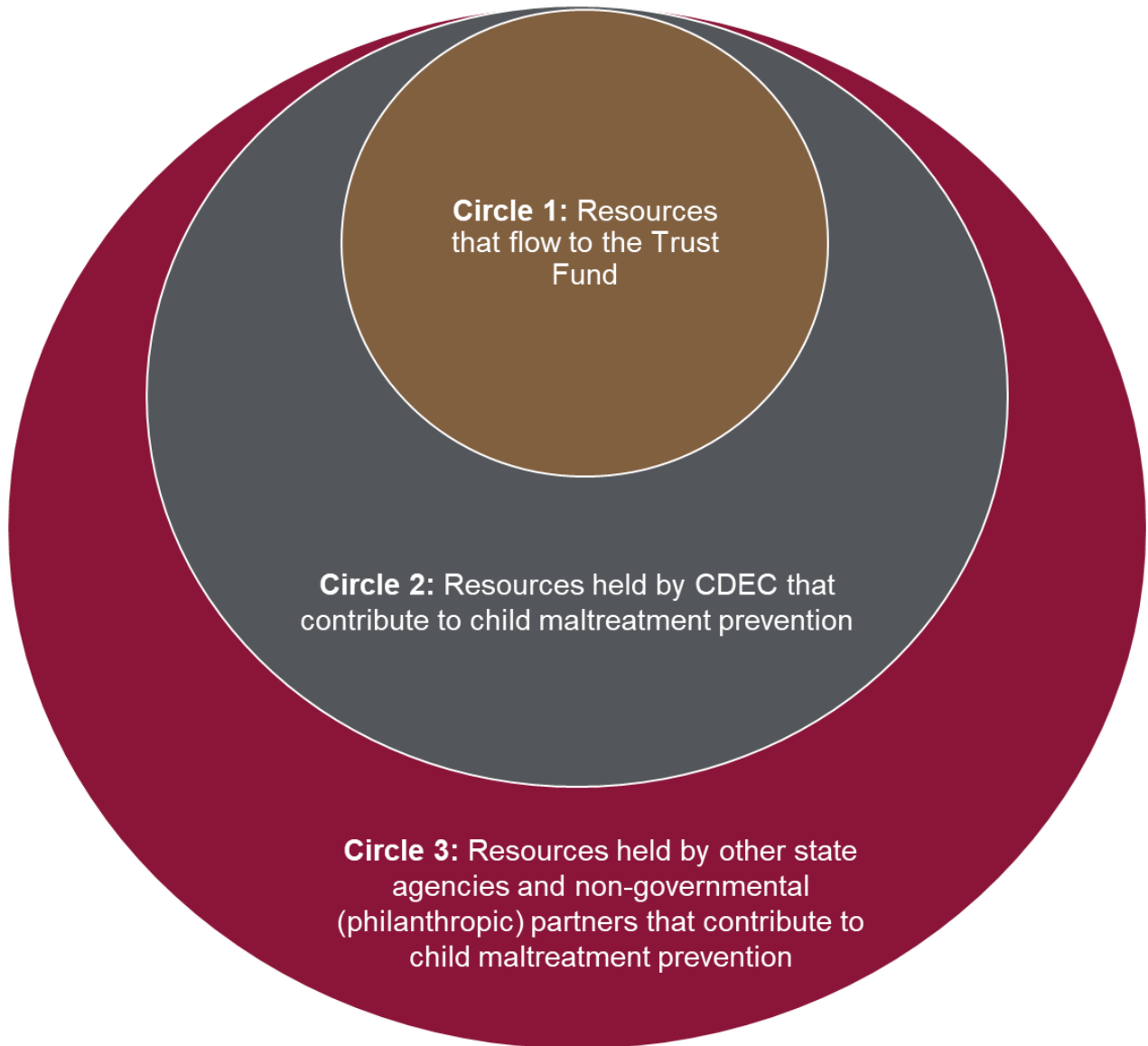


Table 1 provides a more detailed view of resources that belong to each circle. Circle 1 are resources that flow to the Trust Fund. Circle 2 are resources held by CDEC that the Board has the ability to influence. Circle 3 are resources held by other state agencies and non-governmental partners. As part of next steps in strategy development, specific goals for each focus area will be defined. This exercise will also help inform which Circle 3 resources and partnerships are most salient. Unpacking Circle 3 will help will Board members reflect on what their agency/organization/community is doing around prevention of child maltreatment and where they want to see Trust Fund alignment and influence.

These figures reflect 2022-2023 budgets and annual appropriations fluctuate. The Colorado Lab will work with CDEC Trust Fund staff to identify a replicable process for regularly updating numbers in Circles 1 and 2 and communicating results to the Board.

Table 1. Unpacking Resources in the Funding Map

Circle Level	Sources of Funding within Circle	Funding Amount
Circle 1: Resources that Flow to the Trust Fund		
	FY22-23 Long Fill General Fund, restricted use for child sexual abuse prevention training.	\$150,000
	FY22-23 Long Bill Cash Fund - Divorce Docket Fees ¹	\$271,816
	Reserve Fund	\$2,443,539 ²
	Family First Reimbursement Claims	\$0
	Total Funding in First Circle (as of 1/30/2023)	\$2,865,355.00
Circle 2: Resources held by CDEC that contribute to child maltreatment prevention		
	Early Intervention (EI)	\$69,072,067
	Early Childhood Mental Health Promotion and Prevention (ECMH)	\$14,451,566
	Home Visiting	\$51,010,803
	Family Support, Child Maltreatment Prevention, Fatherhood, Family Resource Centers, Colorado Community Response	\$10,262,336
	Preschool Development Grant (PDG)	\$18,600,996
	Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)	\$1,132,332
	Child care: Division of Early Learning, Access and Quality (DELAQ); Division of Early Learning, Licensing and Administration (DELLA); Division of Early Childhood Workforce (DECW)	\$721,600,000
	Total Funding in Second Circle³	\$889,130,000.00
Circle 3: Resources held by other state agencies and non-governmental (philanthropic) partners that contribute to child maltreatment prevention		
	Other State Agencies (including both state funds and federal funds that flow through state agencies)	To be explored
	Philanthropic	To be explored
	Total Funding in Third Circle	To be explored

¹ Denotes recurring funds with variable funding amounts.

² The reserve fund collects ongoing interest; this total is as of 1/30/2023.

³ These figures include stimulus funding, which is a time-limited funding source; when stimulus funds end (spend date of no later than September 30, 2024), these figures will reduce drastically.

Recommended Actions

Below, we outline five actions that make up the Prevention Investment Strategy. Within each action, we provide **strategies to be explored** and refined further, in collaboration with the Board. The final strategy is intended to be multi-year and guide the Trust Fund in investing both current resources as well as future resources obtained to maximize sustainability.

Action 1: Set Goals Within Focus Areas

- Further **define focus areas** using a data-informed approach. This will follow the [analytical approach](#) outlined for SFY24.
- **Develop goals** within refined focus areas to guide investment strategies. Goal development will help the Board be concrete and specific within broader focus areas. Subsequent actions (below) will anchor these goals and provide guardrails for investment recommendations.
- Use existing **evaluation resources** to help identify what is working and where the Trust Fund can help catalyze impact of effective practices and approaches to prevention.

Action 2: Advise CDEC to Gain Authority to Spend Circle 1

- **Secure spending authority** for the reserve fund during the 2025 legislative session. Policy and practice recommendations developed will be used to advise CDEC and make the case for unlocking the reserve through General Assembly processes. The CDEC procurement process will be used to invest all authorized funds, as aligned with the final investment strategy.
- Proactively **explore procurement strategies** within CDEC so that spending can be done efficiently when authority is unlocked. It will be important that once the reserve fund is unlocked, funds can move out the door to activate the policy and practice recommendations without unnecessary delay or cumbers that could dampen anticipated impact of the investment.

Action 3: Grow Circle 1 Funds

- Assess the **feasibility of becoming a depositing ground for unspent funds** aligned with the focus areas and goals of the Trust Fund. This would mean the Trust Fund receives unspent funds that remain at the end of a funding source's spend by date. Only funds that initially aligned with child maltreatment and family strengthening efforts would be eligible, so as to ensure original intent of the funds stays intact. Notable opportunities include end of SFY general funds and stimulus funds. This strategy will likely require legislation, which will be included in the feasibility assessment.
- Promote strategies to **step up claiming around Family First**. There are currently nine approved services in Colorado's Title IV-E Prevention Services Plan. Paired with the current plan is an [evidence-building pipeline](#) to guide how and when new services get added to the Plan and ensure that the Family First service array continues to meet the needs of children, youth, and families. Key strategies to maximize federal drawdown include: a) supporting counties and providers in documenting and submitting the necessary data for the state to claim on the service provided; b) expanding reach, access, and uptake so that more families are receiving approved programs/services in the Prevention Plan; and c) investing in activities that would allow for continuously adding new programs/services to the Plan.

- Explore strategies to **expand allowable claiming in Family First**. Currently, Colorado can only claim on families with open child welfare or juvenile justice involved cases and who receive one of the nine approved services. Federal guidance and the prevention plans of other states should be monitored to guide Colorado as to how they can allow claiming on families without open child welfare cases, which will help to move both reimbursement claiming and re-investment of the Family First subaccount toward primary and secondary prevention levels.
- Explore opportunities to **increase endowments**. For example, work with fiscal experts (such as the National Council of Nonprofits) to develop a business plan to secure endowments into the Trust Fund. Concrete strategies of the business plan may include issuing estate planning guidance and networking with key potential donors to proactively write the Trust Fund into their estate.
- Assess **feasibility of using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds** for prevention investment. For example, consider how the [Maintenance of Effort \(MOE\)](#) requirement may be leveraged to federally draw down a percentage of every dollar invested through the MOE funds.
- Explore adding the Trust Fund to the [Colorado Combined Campaign \(workplace giving\)](#) as a mechanism to accept individual donations from Colorado state government employees.

Action 4: Target Investments Made by the Trust Fund (Circle 1)

- Investments will **focus on primary and secondary prevention** and be anchored in the [Child Maltreatment Framework for Action](#) and outcomes in statute. These outcomes can be summarized in five major categories: 1) increases in child well-being and achievement; 2) increases in caregiver well-being and achievement; 3) increases in consistent high-quality caregiving; 4) increases in safe, supportive neighborhoods and communities; and 5) decreases in the incidence of child maltreatment and child maltreatment fatalities. A focus on primary and secondary prevention is both aligned with the statutory focus of the Trust Fund and promotes an upstream investment lens.
- Investments will **go beyond direct service** to also include policy, data, and funding solutions. While the Trust Fund has historically funded direct programming, largely to community- and county-based organizations, there is appetite to explore how investments could be made in other approaches to prevention (e.g., aligning data systems to help coordinate care for families). Moving beyond direct services will also help the Board achieve their aim of promoting cross-system collaboration.
- In prioritizing investments, **consider the magnitude of resources needed** to achieve each goal. This will inform what circle(s) of resources to leverage. If the investment need is high in both dollar amount and partners that need to participate, the investment may most appropriately belong to Circle 3. If the investment is mid-range, reasonable to sustain for several years, and filling a unique gap, the investment may most appropriately belong to Circle 1. If the investment aligns with CDEC strategies and is already being lifted, the investment may most appropriately belong to Circle 2.

Action 5: Maximize the Value of Circle 1 Funds by Leveraging Circles 2 and 3

- **Inventory opportunities to leverage cross-system funding** toward prevention in identified focus areas, as aligned with specified goals. The inventory will lean into the cross-system expertise of the Board and provide a pathway for members to bring forward funding opportunities and priorities of the sectors/communities they represent. This will help answer the question “What is possible?”
- Develop a plan for **activating cross-system resources and increasing Trust Fund influence** on investments. After the inventory is complete, a plan should be developed to specify the *why, what, who, and how* of activating cross-system resources. This may include equipping individual Board

members with talking points they can use as leaders when prevention funding is being discussed, increasing the visibility of the Trust Fund through an awareness campaign, and ensuring policy and practice recommendations are strategically elevated in key spaces where decisions are made.

- Situate the Board in an **advising capacity** when other groups are developing recommendations that could strengthen families and prevent child maltreatment and fatalities.
- Select and **endorse recommendations of partners in the prevention ecosystem** as aligned with focus areas. As part of strategy development, an inventory of existing recommendations from prevention partners (e.g., recommendations of the [ECLC Home Visiting Investment Task Force](#), [recommendations of the Delivery of Child Welfare Services Task Force](#)) will be conducted and mapped to the specified goals. Those with alignment will be brought forward for Board endorsement and public elevation.

Next Steps in Development: A Data-Informed Approach

Strategy development will continue in SFY24 and will build on the exploratory focus areas and recommended actions identified above. Three primary activities will guide the data-informed approach used to arrive at the final prevention investment strategy:

1. **Analysis and synthesis of key data that informs the child maltreatment prevention landscape** in Colorado, using publicly available sources. The goal of this review is to help match needs of Colorado children and families to investment recommendations made by the Board, and to identify existing recommendations by prevention partners that can be endorsed and promoted by the Board.
2. **Crosswalk of data findings to the exploratory focus areas** identified by the Board. The crosswalk will apply a data-informed lens to further define the focus areas and inform development of concrete goals within each area.
3. **Development of policy and practice recommendations** based on collective findings. These recommendations will encompass (a) where the Trust Fund can uniquely invest; (b) where the Trust Fund can endorse existing recommendations by prevention partners; and (c) how the Trust Fund can grow resources for long-term sustainability in investments.

Policy and practice recommendations will be packaged into two key deliverables: (1) an approximately two-page synthesis of data-informed policy and practice recommendations, targeted at policymakers; and (2) an accompanying technical report that summarizes the data that align with (or might prompt further consideration) for each recommendation, targeted at the Board. The technical report will also include a template for a responsibility matrix with guidance on how to activate recommendations, including responsible actors. This responsibility matrix template can be paired with the Board functioning work facilitated by Collective Progress.

In Common Commitment to Upstream Prevention

Exploratory interviews alongside dialogue with the Board made clear the passion members have for upstream prevention and family well-being. As the Prevention Board in statute, the Trust Fund is well-positioned to guide Colorado in aligning, coordinating, and maximizing prevention resources across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels to meet families where they are at, while building capacity at a systems level to focus on the presence of family well-being from the start.