



# Strengthening Colorado's Early Childhood Sector

**T**he Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) is dedicated to creating a state in which all children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving. In support of this vision, CDEC received over \$700 million in federal and state stimulus funding in 2021-2022 to address pandemic recovery needs and advance efforts to strengthen and grow Colorado's early childhood sector.

More than 2,300 child care providers, the parents of young children, and other key stakeholders identified three main areas in which funding is needed, with the success of each area dependent on the success of the other areas. Together, the stimulus-funded activities strengthen our ability to provide an accessible, quality early learning and care system that serves all young children in Colorado.

**All Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving.**

Families thrive when caregivers have the skills and knowledge they need to raise healthy, happy children.

**Family Strengthening**  
Accessibility  
Choice & Enrollment  
Resilience & Support

Better access to quality, culturally responsive early childhood programs provides children with an equal chance to succeed.

**Access & Quality**  
Availability  
Quality  
Sustainability

Children thrive when all families have equal access to a comprehensive system of early childhood services.

Early childhood professionals thrive when they are supported across early childhood care and education settings.

**Workforce**  
Preparation  
Retention  
Advancement

More qualified early childhood professionals increase availability of quality early childhood services.

Improved and aligned early childhood systems, policies, resources, data, and infrastructure lay the foundation to better support children, families, and communities

Stimulus funds are being distributed by CDEC to early childhood programs and services, professionals, families, and others. The Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver is overseeing multiple, high-quality evaluations to ensure the goals of the funds are met and to identify opportunities for ongoing learning, scalability, and sustainability.

# Stimulus Goals & Strategy Examples



## Access & Quality

Children thrive when all families have equal access to a comprehensive system of early childhood services.

### Availability

*Open, operate, and expand early childhood programs and services.*

*Examples:*

- [Grants](#) fund construction of employer-based child care centers.
- [Bonuses](#) incentivize providers to become licensed or CCCAP Qualified Exempt.

### Quality

*Improve quality of programs and services. Examples:*

- [Bonuses](#) to providers enhance quality level through Colorado Shines system.
- [Grants](#) to update heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems provide clean, filtered air for children.

### Sustainability

*Sustain early childhood programs and services; improve financial viability. Examples:*

- [CCCAP policy](#) increases payments to CCCAP providers based on child enrollment, regardless of attendance.
- [Business training](#) and consulting sessions support providers throughout the year.



## Workforce

Early childhood professionals thrive when they are supported across early childhood care and education settings.

### Preparation

*Provide diverse pathways to bring knowledgeable workforce into the field. Examples:*

- [Scholarships](#) support students in pursuing certificates and degrees in early childhood.
- [Apprenticeships](#) provide an alternate career pathway for new and developing early childhood professionals.

### Retention

*Improve wages; provide a supportive work environment. Examples:*

- [Teacher Wage Increase Pilot](#) boosts early childhood teacher salaries to provide a livable wage.
- [Substitute teacher fund](#) allows staff teachers to take time for personal needs and professional development.

### Advancement

*Expand professional development opportunities. Examples:*

- [Free online training](#) supports new child care center directors.
- [Pilot program](#) creates statewide mentor network to support new teachers and develop leadership.



## Family Strengthening

Families thrive when caregivers have the skills and knowledge they need to raise healthy, happy children.

### Accessibility

*Reduce barriers; help more families afford programs and services. Examples:*

*Examples:*

- [New formula](#) lowers CCCAP co-pays for families and prevents sharp fluctuations.
- Providers receiving [Stabilization Grants](#) share relief with families by maintaining or lowering tuition.

### Choice & Enrollment

*Support families to select and enroll in high-quality programs. Examples:*

*Examples:*

- [Expanded income threshold](#) increases family eligibility for CCCAP.
- [Navigators](#) support caregivers with real-time open enrollment data.

### Resilience & Support

*Tailor support to equip families to care for young children. Examples:*

- [Counseling and consultation](#) support health and well-being of providers, families, and children.
- [Information](#) provided through trusted community settings helps families access early childhood supports.

View all [stimulus-funded strategies](#) and the outcomes they are helping to achieve.