

**Early Childhood Alliance**  
**Strategic Plan – Preliminary Outline**  
DRAFT August 23, 2019

## **Purpose**

The Early Childhood Alliance aims to ensure that all children in Summit County have sufficient opportunities in the years through age three to thrive, learn, and grow into participating, contributing members of our community.

## **The Need**

The years from birth through age three are critical to a child's development and lifelong success. When a child is not given the opportunity to develop to their full potential in these early years, the harm and consequent costs are borne over many years by the individual, the family, and the whole community.

Not all children in Summit County have access to quality early childhood care and education. 20-28% of children in Park City School District fail to meet readiness standards as they enter kindergarten, and there are significant disparities in readiness based on income, minority status, and English language fluency.

We estimate the number of children to be reached as about 1800. This includes children in Summit County under one, one year old, two years old, and three years old; we estimate about 450 children in each age cohort, or 1800 overall from zero through age three. This number may be higher if we include children of people who work (but do not live) in Summit County.

While we are concentrating efforts on children from zero through three, we may take advantage of opportunities to support programs and services aimed at four- and five-year-olds as well to help ensure kindergarten readiness.

We also expect to seek ways to connect with parents-to-be in the prenatal stage, as an early way to connect families with the early childhood resources they may need once the child is born.

The value—both intrinsic and economic—of early childhood care and education is not adequately understood or acknowledged in public discourse, resulting in lack of services and challenges in covering the true costs of providing high quality services.

## **Intended Outcomes**

1. Every child in Summit County is kindergarten-ready by kindergarten age. (Exceptions are other-abled children; our goal is to ensure families have access to resources so that all children reach their potential.)
2. Organizations, services, and systems that ensure early childhood development are sustainably financed and operating at the highest possible standards and impact.

As a key Indicator, we propose to use the Kindergarten Entry and Exit Profile (KEEP), the standard statewide measure of kindergarten readiness. Additional indicators may include the results of the Brigance Early Childhood Screening and similar assessments implemented by specific early childhood providers in our community.

**The research is clear: when a child has access to quality early childhood care and education, they have the best prospects to excel in school and in the community. The economics are also clear: each dollar invested now saves a community anywhere from \$4 to \$12 later in remedial education, productivity, justice system costs, healthcare, and more.**

### **Areas of Intervention**

All of the areas of intervention listed below assume the creation of an effective and staffed Early Childhood Alliance, which will bring together the needed partners, create cohesive and comprehensive plans, and spearhead fundraising.

### Services

- Expand and strengthen center-based care and education.
  - Help raise funds to expand existing programs such as PC Tots' center-based early childhood education and care, Holy Cross Ministries' three-year-old classroom program, and others.
  - Increase availability of early childhood care and education services; e.g., by helping underrepresented people start early childhood businesses (this is also related to addressing equity gaps, below), by finding additional financial resources to support childcare, and more.
  - Support childcare models and businesses that offer higher wages for community members who work with our young children.
  - Encourage creation or expansion of full-day pre-kindergarten programs to make them available to all three- and four-year-olds who could potentially use them.
  - Improve quality and availability through provider education, networking, and other support services.
  - Ensure early childhood staff know how to provide trauma-informed care.
  - Expand availability of special needs services.
- Expand support to parents through home visiting, referrals, services, and information.
  - Help raise funds to expand existing programs such as Holy Cross Ministries' Parents as Teachers home visiting program.
  - Create a new countywide, universal postnatal home visiting program to provide an early touchpoint and referrals for all parents and their young children.
  - Explore pathways to reach families at the prenatal stage.
  - Add programs to further support at-home parents/caregivers and for families of children with different abilities.
  - Create more early English-language acquisition programs and services.
  - Make available regular mental health screenings for young children and their caregivers.

- Address equity gaps among parents/caregivers that currently limit opportunities for young children to learn and develop.
- Create multi-generation programs – provide services to both the children and the caregivers to ensure the child’s full range of needs will be met.
- Strengthen connections among all early childhood providers.
  - Encourage collaboration and cross-referrals by creating more connections among early childhood providers and other related people and institutions (such as medical professionals).
  - Build more systematic communication channels between early childhood providers and schools, especially about incoming kindergarten students.
  - Ensure that health clinics have tools and referral information to ensure that they can support parents/caregivers in getting their children all needed early childhood services and/or opportunities.

#### Advocacy and Community Education

- Make early childhood care and education a community priority by creating a public outreach and communications campaign.
- Advocate for more state, county, city, school, and business funding of early childhood programs (e.g., sales tax to support early childhood programs; significant annual budget allocations to support early childhood care and education; corporate policies, benefit packages, and philanthropy targeted at early childhood).
- Advocate for parental/family leave for all (including people without documentation); this may be a combination of legislation and creating a new norm among businesses.
- Advocate for better access to early childhood learning resources; e.g., free library cards for all young children and their caregivers, regardless of place of residence.
- Advocate for better pay for early childhood program staff.

#### Data and Tracking

- Track KEEP results disparities by income, minority status, and English language fluency.
- Find and track all 1800 or so Summit County children in the target age range.
- Determine which children and families are at higher risk and prioritize interventions accordingly.
- Map and share partners’ existing assessment and screening data.

#### **Phases of Intervention**

##### Year 1

- Organize the Early Childhood Alliance, bringing together providers, funders, and other interested people and organizations.
- Raise seed funding to support startup activities.
- Gather key data and explore how best to track children from zero to three.
- Take early action to expand and/or strengthen existing early childhood services:
  - Holy Cross Ministries: expand Parents as Teachers to 20 more families.

- PC Tots: raise funding and create family connections to increase the proportion of low-income families; hire paid executive director and possibly additional development staff to build long-term fundraising program.
- Create provider roundtables or similar provider networking program.
- Increase outreach to families of young children through resource lists, library programs, and leveraging the trust built up by existing programs.
- Create a pilot community education and advocacy campaign around the importance of early childhood and how the community can do better.
- Begin to explore the advisability and feasibility of new, additional programs and services that will help build the community's overall ability to ensure excellent early childhood outcomes.

### Years 2-3

- Services – Center-Based
  - Plan, design, and fundraise for one or more additional PC Tots centers.
  - Reinforce training opportunities for early childhood service providers at all levels (informal, home-based, center-based, and others).
  - Continue provider networking programs.
  - Create programs and pathways to support entrepreneurs (especially those from underrepresented communities) in creating early childhood care and education businesses.
  - Seek opportunities to provide higher childcare worker wages and to direct added financial support to childcare businesses.
  - Promote creation or expansion of pre-kindergarten programs.
  - Work with provider training organizations to provide training to early childhood staff in trauma-informed care.
- Services – Home-Based
  - Further expand Parents as Teachers program in Summit County. Potential number of children to serve countywide: 187.
  - Create new countywide, universal postnatal home visiting program.
  - Explore pathways to reach families at the prenatal stage.
  - Design and deliver effective, affordable services to support and enhance the care and education provided to their children by at-home parents, and for families of children with different abilities.
  - Research and implement efficient methods to ensure mental health screenings and services are regularly available for young children and their parents.
- Services – Equity Gaps
  - Research and design a multi-generation service model, where parents/caregivers are given educational and career opportunities that also increase opportunities for their young children to thrive.
- Services – Provider Connections
  - Collaborate with school districts to create more systematic communication channels between early childhood providers and schools about incoming

kindergarten students, and to expand early English-language acquisition programs and services.

- Create checklists and referral lists for clinics to check all children to see if they need early childhood services and/or opportunities; ensure consistent messaging to parents/caregivers from all touchpoints they may encounter.
- Expand access to special needs services through a more universal referral process and possibly providing services directly at childcare locations.
- Advocacy and Community Education
  - Expand community outreach and communications campaign.
  - Create and implement an early childhood policy advocacy strategy that targets the state, county, cities, schools, and businesses.

#### Year 4 and Beyond

- Start one or more additional PC Tots centers.
- Continue service programs that are proving to have significant results.
- Implement multi-generation education/career programs.
- Ensure new institutional funding (government, business, etc.) is committed for the long term.
- Evaluate results to date and focus any new efforts on meeting persistent or newly emerging gaps.

#### **Structure**

The Early Childhood Alliance is a voluntary association of interested organizations, institutions, and individuals.

- Governed by an Early Childhood Steering Committee (which will evolve from the current Early Childhood Task Force).
- Staffed by the new position of Early Childhood Alliance Coordinator.
- Housed at one of the existing early childhood service providers (organization TBD).
- Funded by a combination of government, business, and philanthropy.

#### **Financial Resources**

##### Annual Funding

Government, business, and philanthropy will need to provide a total of \$7 million in new funding phased over the next five years, as outlined in the attached preliminary budget.

Earned revenues will provide a total of \$2 million over five years, mostly consisting of PC Tots tuition payments.

##### Endowment

We will seek to raise a \$2 million endowment to provide \$90,000 per year in perpetuity, helping ensure long-term resources are available to sustain and continue to improve early childhood care and education and related efforts over time.

Please see attached draft budget for a preliminary listing of likely expenses.

## **Details of Proposed Action – Why and How**

### **1. Services**

#### **A. Expand and strengthen center-based care and education.**

Many families – especially those with modest incomes – need to have every adult in the household working. These families often need center-based childcare to ensure the safety and development of their young children while the caregivers are working. By expanding and strengthening center-based care, we ensure positive early childhood outcomes, a vibrant workforce, and better family income potential.

- i. Help raise funds to expand existing programs such as PC Tots’ center-based early childhood education and care, Holy Cross Ministries’ three-year-old classroom program, and others.

It makes sense to build on the community’s strengths in existing programs.

- ii. Increase availability of early childhood care and education services; e.g., by helping underrepresented people start early childhood businesses (this is also related to addressing equity gaps, below).

Early childhood service businesses can serve both to expand the number of children served and to increase the incomes of new providers. Building this approach will mean working with partners such as PandoLabs, Utah’s Care About Childcare office (our local office is based in Orem), and others. This effort will likely be designed in Year 2 and started in Year 3, as funding allows.

- iii. Improve quality and availability through provider education, networking, and other support services.

We plan to work with the Utah Care About Childcare office to provide free or low-cost provider education opportunities. In addition, we will explore ways to increase quality even in informal childcare settings. Bringing providers together (see also 2.D.i below) through roundtables, forums, and similar activities is also a relatively easy way to help enhance program quality.

- iv. Ensure early childhood staff know how to provide trauma-informed care.

Some of the most critical obstacles to a young child’s development revolve around adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). We need to ensure that providers know how to serve children who have experienced traumas of various kinds. Peace House is highly experienced in this area and other local providers such as PC Tots train their

staff in trauma-informed care. We will seek to make trauma-informed care training as universal as possible among Summit County area providers.

- v. Expand availability of special needs services.

The county's Early Intervention program serves families whose young children are referred as having special needs. We will explore the best ways to ensure all children with special needs are being served and that the services are easily available.

- B. Expand support to parents through home visiting, referrals, services, and information.

Many families have a caregiver who stays home with a young child part- or full-time. Individual caregivers can feel isolated, don't know what services are available, and often lack fully effective tools to encourage full early development for their child. We can and must support these caregivers in their success.

- i. Help raise funds to expand existing programs such as Holy Cross Ministries' Parents as Teachers home visiting program.

Again, it makes sense to build on the community's existing strengths. Holy Cross Ministries currently serves 20 children with Parents as Teachers, a nationally recognized, evidence-based home visiting program. They estimate a total population to be served at 187 children, an expansion of 167 from current service levels. This expansion could happen over a period of three years.

- ii. Create a new countywide, universal postnatal home visiting program to provide an early touchpoint and referrals for all parents and their young children.

One approach successfully used in other communities that aim to reach all young children is to universally visit all families soon after a child is born. The visit can provide direct information and support to parents, as well as referrals to whatever programs can be helpful to that child and family.

An example is the Family Connects program ([familyconnects.org](http://familyconnects.org)) created in North Carolina and now available for implementation anywhere. The program's goal is to increase child well-being by bridging the gap between parent needs and community resources. A program like this may be expensive at first consideration, but can be a very cost-efficient way to ensure that every child that needs help is served.

- iii. Explore pathways to reach families at the prenatal stage.

Both Wasatch Pediatrics and Holy Cross Ministries have seen the benefit of working with families before a child is born. Prenatal visits or contacts can help set a parent or caregiver up for better success once the child is born. They also foster a trusting

relationship that can lead to the family accessing the resources they need; trust has been identified as a significant barrier to families accessing care. It may be possible to combine this with the universal post-natal home visiting program, or this may need a different approach. This area needs further exploration, most likely in Year 2 of this initiative and beyond.

- iv. Add programs to further support at-home parents/caregivers and for families of children with different abilities.

As we better understand the needs of all Summit County families with young children, we will be able to identify opportunities to fill gaps and enhance services available to at-home parents and caregivers.

The county's Early Intervention program offers services to at-home families with children having special needs. We expect to work with Early Intervention staff and others to explore how these services can be further enhanced and their reach expanded to all children in need. The universal post-natal home visiting program mentioned in 2.B.ii above will help ensure more complete coverage.

- v. Create more early English-language acquisition programs and services.

One of the key factors in kindergarten readiness as measure by the KEEP assessment has already proven to be English-language proficiency. Few programs currently exist in Summit County to facilitate English language acquisition by the young children of parents or caregivers whose first language is not English. We expect to explore how best to resolve this need in Years 2 and/or 3 of this initiative.

- vi. Make available regular mental health screenings for young children and their caregivers.

A key barrier to early childhood development can be the mental health of young children and, perhaps even more often, their parents or caregivers. The Summit County Mental Wellness Alliance is helping to expand mental health services countywide. We will collaborate with them and with early childhood providers to find ways to expand mental health screenings and services for this population.

- vii. Address equity gaps among parents/caregivers that currently limit opportunities for young children to learn and develop.

In many cases, serving an individual child is not enough. If the child's family lacks resources and education, the child may not have access to adequate opportunities for maximum development. Along with point viii, below, we will seek ways to support parents in improving their family's overall situation.



- viii. Create multi-generation programs – provide services to both the children and the caregivers to ensure the child’s full range of needs will be met.

Nationally, there are so-called “two-generation” programs that provide education, skills, and assistance to low-income families to help ensure they have the tools and income necessary to foster early childhood development. Given that in some families, a grandparent or other senior is the primary caregiver, we intend to broaden the approach to a multi-generation (or three-generation) strategy. This area of intervention will likely intersect with the work of the Park City Social Equity convening currently being led by Park City Community Foundation. This may be a longer-term endeavor, with program design around Year 3 and startup around Year 4 of this initiative.

C. Strengthen connections among all early childhood providers.

Some of our local early childhood service providers already collaborate closely. However, many do not, whether through a protective stance toward their competitive advantage, or lack of time, or lack of connections to other providers. Creating better connections should be useful with respect to cross-referrals, knowledge sharing, and building of the overall early childhood coalition.

- i. Encourage collaboration and cross-referrals by creating more connections among early childhood providers and other related people and institutions.

It should be fairly straightforward and not very cost-intensive to create things like provider roundtables, referral lists, website listings, and so on. Slightly more elaborate will be building the practice of cross-referral among providers. These activities can start as soon as Year 1 of this initiative and continue to be built over time.

- ii. Build more systematic communication channels between early childhood providers and schools, especially about incoming kindergarten students.

We plan to work directly with schools and early childhood providers to ensure that there are appropriate, privacy-protecting, effective, and regularly used channels to communicate about children coming from an early childhood provider to a school and vice versa.

- iii. Ensure that health clinics have tools and referral information to ensure that they can support parents/caregivers in getting their children all needed early childhood services and/or opportunities.

Wasatch Pediatrics and similar providers of healthcare for young children and families are in an excellent position to understand family and child needs that may

otherwise go undetected. We can build tools and referral lists that will facilitate those clinics ensuring that resources and services get to the children and families that need them. These tools and lists will continue to evolve as the overall early childhood services ecosystem is built out.

## 2. Advocacy and Community Education

- A. Make early childhood care and education a community priority by creating a public outreach and communications campaign.

If we intend to make broad and systemic improvements in early childhood outcomes across Summit County, we will need public awareness and support. We plan to build that awareness and support through a public outreach and communications campaign. Early efforts in this direction can begin in Year 1, with more robust implementation in Years 2 and beyond.

- B. Advocate for more state, county, city, school, and business funding of early childhood programs (e.g., sales tax to support early childhood programs; significant annual budget allocations to support early childhood care and education; corporate policies, benefit packages, and philanthropy targeted at early childhood).

To truly ensure that all young children have the best opportunities to grow and develop, public funding must be a key piece of the financial model. We will work closely with elected and administrative public officials to encourage allocation of adequate resources to early childhood. We will also dig deeper in the search for existing funding pools that can be brought to bear in Summit County.

- C. Advocate for parental/family leave for all (including people without documentation); this may be a combination of legislation and creating a new norm among businesses.

Parental/family leave can be a critical factor in a child receiving the early care they need, especially in infancy but also later, if health or other developmental issues arise. We intend to advocate for better legislation and/or business norms around paid parental/family leave.

- D. Advocate for better access to early childhood learning resources; e.g., free library cards for all young children and their caregivers, regardless of place of residence.

Given that some parents work in one place but live in another, it would be very helpful for those parents to have access to early childhood resources both where they live and where they work. This may require expansion of the boundaries currently in force for various services, even if the expansion is only made available to parents or caregivers of young children.

- E. Advocate for better pay for early childhood program staff.

A critical factor that limits the effectiveness of many early childhood programs and services is the low rate of pay for staff. This leads to frequent staff turnover and reduces the number of people who would consider a career in early childhood. Even with the existing low salaries, parents are often hard-pressed to personally pay for childcare services; the true cost outstrips parents' ability to pay. To succeed in increasing pay for early childhood program staff, we will need to mobilize resources beyond parental fees; this ties back to the other points in this section on advocacy and community education. We need more public and philanthropic funds to flow into early childhood, something that will only happen with powerful encouragement and public pressure. As we build the case for greater funding, we should build it based on what early childhood program staff salaries should be, not what they currently are.

### 3. Data and Tracking

- A. Track KEEP results disparities by income, minority status, and English language fluency.

We are best served by tracking outcomes on all children in Summit County. The first universal assessment performed through the county (and the state) is the Kindergarten Entry and Exit Profile (KEEP), first administered when children are entering kindergarten at about age five. Disaggregating the data by income, minority status, and English language fluency will help uncover any ongoing disparities that need extra action to resolve.

Given that KEEP data aren't available until a child is about five, we also intend to consider other assessments done by individual organizations and entities in the county. Examples include Brigance, Battelle, ASQ, BBI, Life Skills Progression, and more, which are administered earlier in a child's life. Since these assessments are not universally administered to all children, they may provide more of a snapshot of how a particular group of children are doing in a particular setting.

- B. Find and track all 1800 or so Summit County children in the target age range.

Our goal is to take responsibility for ensuring positive early childhood results for all children in Summit County. Finding and tracking them all – to the extent possible – will have benefits in ensuring all children are reached, in prioritizing the greatest needs, and in keeping us accountable to our target outcomes.