

Research shows that supporting the healthy development of children from birth to age five is critical to their ability to be successful, engaged adults. Ninety percent of brain development occurs during the first five years of life and provides the foundation for development. When early childhood experiences are high quality and delivered in equitable and culturally responsive ways, children are more likely to develop the social, emotional, and cognitive skills needed to learn and thrive in the future.



## OUR ACTIONS

We work with the community to ensure that all young children and their families have support, resources, and access to quality care by:

- Strengthening the skills of caregivers – parents, teachers, childcare staff, family, friends, and neighbor (FFN) – so they can support the healthy development of children in their care
- Providing tuition assistance to help families access the quality childcare that works for them
- Expanding childcare capacity by providing financial support to providers for capital improvements, start-up funding, or the recruitment and retention of teachers
- Advocating for sustainable funding for early childhood education and development across the region

## OUR IMPACT IN 2024

### COMMUNITY GRANTMAKING

**\$250,500** was awarded to **fourteen** organizations through a competitive grantmaking process.

**Strategic investments impacted 7,097\*** children across priorities. (birth to 5 years)

\*represents the total number of child interactions with grantee programs.

### FUNDING BY FOCUS AREA

- **\$141,950 (57%)** - Strengthen caregiver skills
- **\$101,400 (40%)** - Tuition assistance
- **\$7,150 (3%)** - Expand capacity

### FUNDING BY GEOGRAPHY

- **5%** - Aspen to Old Snowmass
- **37%** - Basalt to Glenwood Springs
- **32%** - New Castle to Parachute

### FUNDING SUPPORTING DIVERSE

#### + LOW INCOME YOUTH

- **32%** - Hispanic/Latino
- **34%** - Low Income

## ★ OUR IMPACT IN 2024 CONT'D

### CONFLUENCE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (CECE) COALITION

The CECE Coalition comprises education, nonprofit, business, and parent leaders from Parachute to Aspen who share the vision of developing local, sustainable funding for early childhood education and development. Envisioned in 2017 through ACF's Cradle to Career Initiative and previously housed under Manaus, the CECE Coalition became ACF's Early Childhood focus area project in July 2024.

### PITKIN COUNTY CHILDCARE TEACHER STIPENDS

In 2023, Pitkin County and ACF launched a program to provide quarterly stipends to childcare teachers working at licensed facilities within the county. Funded using a portion of Pitkin County's American Rescue Plan Act dollars, **\$978,425 has been distributed to 10 childcare providers.**

The program runs through 2026.

### THRIVING PROVIDERS PROJECT

Impact Charitable, with funding from Aspen Community Foundation and in partnership with Early Childhood Network and Valley Settlement, launched the Thriving Providers Project from 2022-2024. The project provided direct cash grants to supplement family, friends, and neighbor (FFN) provider wages, offered language accessible and culturally-responsive mental health services, and supported peer resource navigation and referral.

#### CECE OUTCOMES

- ACF supports the Coalition as it builds the political and community will for a ballot measure in 2025 that will create sustainable funding for early childhood care and education.

#### STIPEND OUTCOMES

- **\$220,000 of additional funding was allocated for maintenance and equipment needs** at licensed facilities supporting playground improvements, structure upgrades, classroom equipment and supplies, and a new school bus.

#### THRIVING PROVIDERS OUTCOMES

- ACF's funding supported **25 FFN providers in the region, each receiving \$500 per month in cash assistance for 18 months.**
- Stability in their income, allowing them to purchase educational and material resources for children in their care.
- They also reported lower levels of stress, feeling more present and engaged in their caretaking, and valued as childcare providers.

## ✓ CONCLUSION

Since 2003, the Aspen Community Foundation has supported early childhood care and education in the Aspen to Parachute region. We are recognized not only as the primary local funder but also as a champion of efforts to increase quality, access, and affordability of childcare.

Our work in 2025 includes providing grants to early childhood partners and advocating for sustainable funding via the CECE Coalition.