

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Media Contact**

Dylan Tyne  
360-509-3431  
[Dylan.Tyne@gmmb.com](mailto:Dylan.Tyne@gmmb.com)

## **Early Educator Investment Collaborative Makes \$9 Million in Grants to Address Unjust Compensation for Early Childhood Education Workforce**

*Grantees seek long-term, sustainable increases in salaries and benefits for early childhood education professionals*

**WASHINGTON, DC, November 15, 2023** – Today the Early Educator Investment Collaborative (The Collaborative) [awarded \\$9M in grants to support public systems innovations](#) in increasing wages and benefits for the early childhood education (ECE) workforce. Colorado Department of Early Childhood, the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and Louisiana Policy Institute for Children will work with state and local partners to explore unique approaches to boost early educator compensation.

“With the end of the American Rescue Plan’s emergency childcare funding on September 30, it’s more important than ever to find innovative approaches to bring early educators the professional-level compensation they deserve and that reflects their critical knowledge and skills,” said Dr. Ola J. Friday, director of the Early Educator Investment Collaborative. “These grants support state and local government agencies working to implement durable, sustainable ways to raise early educator compensation, which we know leads directly to better learning outcomes for children.”

Inadequate compensation and benefits continue to plague the ECE workforce, with compensation for early educators remaining low and far behind other occupations with similar credentials. Compared with their K-8 colleagues, early educators face poverty rates an average of 7.7 times higher. This is especially troubling when the ECE workforce is made up disproportionately of women of color.

Low wages result in high staff turnover, increased program costs, and an unstable learning environment, and serve as a barrier for recruiting new teachers for our youngest students at a key time in their development.

These grants will support partnerships between fiscal agencies and program departments to catalyze transformative change in ECE workforce compensation. The grantees will focus on innovations in financial systems, including new dedicated revenue streams and revamped spending, enhanced data collection and modeling to inform policy, and greater collaboration between agencies in support of improving workforce compensation.

"Existing public sector systems tend to be under resourced and siloed – conditions which make it challenging to explore how to maximize available funding streams to increase compensation for early childhood educators," said Lis Stevens, chair of the Early Educator Investment Collaborative and senior program officer at the Bezos Family Foundation. "Through these grants, we hope to encourage collaboration and innovations that other communities can learn from and follow."

The Collaborative selected organizations that demonstrated systemic, innovative, and equitable solutions for the ECE workforce and the families and communities they serve. The lead grantees partnering with state and local organizations ([view all here](#)) and their focus areas are as follows:

- **Colorado Department of Early Childhood:**
  - Enhance the Colorado Early Childhood Teacher Salary Increase Pilot by gathering data on compensation parity for early childhood teachers.
  - Conduct a study to articulate the true cost of quality child care and design a financing mechanism to ensure that increased funding is passed through to ECE staff.
  - Submit a state budget request for a universal salary increase for all early childhood educators.
  - Establish new CDEC positions (such as a compensation analyst and budget analyst) and liaison positions across key state agencies.
- **DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education:**
  - Implement, evaluate, and document the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund through outreach, data systems enhancement, and development of new supports and resources.
  - Expand health insurance for early educators through data enhancements, education, and outreach efforts.
  - Support continuing education for early childhood educators by reducing barriers to completion and analyzing funding and scholarship sources.
  - Explore new funding streams to ensure OSSE is making use of all possible sources.
- **Louisiana Policy Institute for Children:**
  - Implement compensation demonstration projects in key local communities that can be scaled across the state.
  - Collect data on early childhood educators to track their progress and identify what works best to improve their pay.
  - Advance statewide policies to improve compensation.

Created in 2017, the Early Educator Investment Collaborative aims to accelerate progress in the early childhood education profession and ensure early educators have the supports they need to be well-prepared and appropriately compensated.

Contributing members of The Collaborative include the [Ballmer Group](#), [Bezos Family Foundation](#), [Buffett Early Childhood Fund](#), [David and Lucile Packard Foundation](#), [Foundation for Child Development](#), [Heising-Simons Foundation](#), and [Stranahan Foundation](#). [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) is a partner funder to The Collaborative.

### **Grantee Quotes**

**Dr. Lisa Roy, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Early Childhood:** "Colorado is honored to again be selected as a Collaborative grantee, so we can continue our pursuit of innovative opportunities to increase compensation and improve access to benefits for early childhood educators in our state. This funding allows us to create deeper cross-agency partnerships, conduct new research and cost modeling, and pursue new ways of thinking about how to best support early childhood educators in a time when our programs are not only still recovering from the pandemic, but also starting to implement our newly launched Universal Preschool Program."

**Dr. Christina Grant, State Superintendent, DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education:** "DC is a national leader in early childhood education and is committed to providing early childhood educators the supports they need to do their jobs to the fullest. OSSE's innovative programs help early childhood educators to attain degrees and credentials, access health insurance coverage, and earn equitable pay. With the support of The Collaborative, we're excited to build upon our success and collaborate with states to strengthen the early childhood force nationally."

**Dr. Libbie Sonnier, Executive Director, Louisiana Policy Institute for Children:** "We've known for some time that high-quality early care and education supports developing minds and enables caregivers to work, and that low-quality experiences can be damaging to children. But the issue the early care and education field is grappling with is how to continually provide high-quality experiences for children when it's so difficult to retain and recruit high-quality staff. We are thrilled to be awarded these grant funds to start addressing this issue."

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### **About Early Educator Investment Collaborative**

Our goal is to help all early educators achieve their full potential as professionals to ensure that each child is prepared for success in school and life. Our vision is a country where there is no opportunity gap among children, where every child makes lasting gains in cognitive, social, and emotional development through their early care and education experience. We are working to

link early educator professional competencies with professional compensation and to transform the preparation of early educators. Learn more at [earlyedcollaborative.org](http://earlyedcollaborative.org).

### **About Colorado Department of Early Childhood**

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood ensures the delivery of a comprehensive, community-informed, data-driven, high-quality, and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education and well-being of all Colorado's young children, their families, and early childhood professionals in all settings. Learn more about the Colorado Department of Early Childhood at [cdec.colorado.gov](http://cdec.colorado.gov).

Partnering agencies for this grant are: Colorado Office of the Governor, Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Economic Security, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Office of Economic Development and International Trade

### **About DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education**

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is the state education agency for the District of Columbia charged with raising the quality of education for all DC residents. OSSE serves DC learners of all ages, and oversees standard setting, capacity building, grants, data collection and direct service provision. Learn more at [osse.dc.gov](http://osse.dc.gov).

Partnering agencies for this grant are: Office of Budget and Performance Management, and DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority

### **About Louisiana Policy Institute for Children**

Louisiana Policy Institute for Children is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that Louisiana's young children, from birth to age four, are best prepared for success in school and in life. The Policy Institute develops policy proposals informed by data, research, best practices and the experiences of other states to improve the outcomes of Louisiana's youngest citizens, and further provides educational and outreach activities based on recommended policy solutions. The organization works to ensure children are safe, healthy, and have the opportunity to reach their full potential. For more information, visit [policyinstitutela.org](http://policyinstitutela.org) and follow the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children on Facebook and Twitter.

Partnering agencies and organizations for this grant are: Louisiana Office of the Governor, Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), Louisiana Board of Regents, City of New Orleans Mayor's Office of Youth and Families, Point Coupée Early Childhood Community Network, Agenda for Children / New Orleans Early Education Network, Louisiana Association for the Education of Young Children, For Providers by Providers, Children's Coalition for Northeast Louisiana