

**ANCHORAGE**  
CHILD CARE &  
EARLY EDUCATION **FUND**



In April of 2023, Proposition 14 – the Anchorage Child Care and Early Education Fund – passed with strong support from Anchorage voters, by a nearly 12-point margin. Proposition 14 dedicates the Municipality of Anchorage’s marijuana tax revenue to child care and early childhood education. The funds will start accumulating in January of 2024, with an estimated five million dollars available annually. The fund (ACCEEF) can be spent creating access to child care and early education programs; supporting reading programs; supporting child care or early education provider training, professional development, staffing, and/or livable wages; or funding facilities. Funding can be delivered in a variety of ways, including through the issuance of grants or the completion of studies or research related to child care and early education.

Proposition 14 also established an Accountability Board of Child Care and Early Education (Board), to be appointed by the Anchorage Mayor and confirmed by the Anchorage Assembly. The Board will advise the Mayor and Assembly on use of the funds and present a proposed budget to both annually. In the fall of 2024, the Board will propose its first budget. After it is reviewed and finalized by the Mayor and Assembly, funds will start being dispersed in 2025.

To ensure these funds are used effectively, a private and public partnership between the Municipality of Anchorage and the Alaska Children’s Trust has been formed to establish an Implementation Team. The Implementation Team will be responsible for analyzing child care and early education best practices, strategies, and trends; communicating and engaging with the public about the ACCEEF; participating in listening sessions and meeting with other stakeholders, such as providers, parents, businesses, and community partners; developing a draft three-year strategic plan detailing how best to use these funds immediately as well as how to build a sustainable system for our families; bringing forward an ordinance to the Anchorage Assembly that lays out the Board’s responsibilities, composition, and operations; and supporting the Board as it is seated.

While the Implementation Team plays a critical role in shaping the Anchorage Child Care and Early Education Fund, engagement with providers, parents, businesses, and our broader community is just as important. The Implementation Team plans to do broad engagement with stakeholders, including individual meetings, presentations, listening sessions, and participation in larger conversations with others also working to solve our community’s child care and early education challenges. This broad engagement will enable us to put together a program that meets immediate child care and early education needs in our community while also building a more sustainable system for years to come.

Please visit the ACCEEF website (<https://www.careforkidsanchorage.com/>) for more information, including how to apply to be a child care or early education provider or parent member of the Implementation Team. Applications are due on November 6, 2023. The website will also detail future convenings and engagement sessions. We hope you will participate and share your feedback and ideas!

The attached are notes from an engagement session held at the **Anchorage Association for the Education of Young Children Child Care Administrator Summit** on October 3, 2023. These notes are a summary of the feedback received from participants and do not reflect a word-for-word recording.

# Notes from AAEYC Summit

October 3, 2023

Jen Griffis and Austin Quinn-Davidson

## Three questions raised to the group:

1. What are your top three priorities/needs today that you would like to see the funds used to support?
2. What will you need over the next three years to succeed? (how can this be a more sustainable system?)
3. Who isn't in the room who needs to be part of this discussion? What other information do we need, or people do we need to talk with, to ensure we build an effective, functional program? What advice or direction do you have for us?

## **First question: What are your top three priorities/needs today that you would like to see the funds used to support?**

1. Workforce
  - a. Mentioned by every group – the biggest concern
  - b. Need support with recruitment and with retention
  - c. Want to see funding for workforce development
    - i. Pre-apprenticeship programs in high schools are needed
  - d. Fund staff incentive programs
  - e. Need funding to provide \*livable\* pay and benefits to employees. The wages and benefits they can pay aren't enough to keep employees. People do this work now because they love kids, but it's not typically a livable wage.
  - f. Staff need to get health benefits, including mental health support
  - g. Staff need support in managing behavioral health issues and disabilities children have. Sometimes spend too much of their time on one child. Used to get support from the State, but don't anymore.
  - h. Specific ideas:
    - i. Bonuses for staff who are employed for a certain period of time. Costly and time consuming to train new staff and have them cycle out often.
    - ii. Could we pay parents to work at centers? If these parents are already caring for their kids at home, could they bring their kid in for free and also work to care for other kids?
2. Financial supports
  - a. Subsidize infant and toddler rooms. Providers don't make money on these rooms (especially infant rooms). They have to close infant rooms to avoid losing money. Make it easier to keep infant rooms open by subsidizing them.
  - b. Give out grants to providers
    - i. Purpose

1. To onboard new employees – pay for fingerprints, CPR certification, etc. Then neither providers nor employees would have to pay for this; would reduce this barrier to recruitment.
  2. For security, outdoor play capital projects, beautification, inspections (fire), and facility improvements. These are all difficult to fund.
  3. Support just to keep the doors open: to pay staff and rent and utilities. Providers are still hurting from COVID.
  4. Support to pay for supplies to support families, especially those in transition: formula, carseats, diapers, furniture
  5. For provider training, including rentals of venues like the Dena'ina center.
  6. Pay for employees to get free care for their children. A great way to attract employees.
  7. For trainings for parents/caregivers, such as early literacy, to support readiness for kindergarten
  8. For a provider appreciation event, like a party or gala.
- ii. Structure of grants
    1. Noncompetitive – everyone who applies and is providing services gets them. Don't waste applicants' time or pick favorites.
    2. Unrestricted. Trust child care providers to use them as needed.
    3. Per child for child care providers, based on enrollment or maybe instead based on licensed capacity, since that's easier to document and sets a goal for those who aren't at full capacity
    4. Don't make them complicated. No new forms. Making grants complicated keeps providers spending time on this instead of with kids or providing knowledge and support to providers.
  - c. Work to alleviate the discrepancy in pay between federally-funded centers and the others
  - d. Provide scholarships to families. The need is great. Make sure we provide scholarships to all types of families, not just those who qualify for CCA or Alaska In.
3. Structural, regulatory, or big picture challenges
    - a. Help increase enrollment and access to care
    - b. Decrease administrative burden on providers
    - c. Increase training opportunities
      - i. Especially needed so that providers can support kids with special needs
      - ii. Support leadership training, including at the early childhood development associates degree level
    - d. Could look at increasing ratios for school-ages kids, but definitely NOT for younger kids
    - e. Need behavioral and mental health supports for children

- f. Need support for programs that aren't technically early childhood or child care programs but that support kids: for example, library programs, Dena A. Coy residential program, etc.
- g. Look into how to alleviate burdens associated with the 12 credit requirement for the certification program

**Second question: What will you need over the next three years to succeed? (how can this be a more sustainable system?)**

1. Workforce
  - a. Focus on developing the workforce pipeline
    - i. UAA, King Tech
    - ii. Need a early childhood development associate degree program specifically for school-age kids
    - iii. Especially needed in mental health arena
  - b. Explore workforce retention strategies
  - c. Long-term wage supplements
    - i. Especially for those with certain accreditations
    - ii. Needs to come without charging parents more, because that will just make things worse
  - d. Put aside funding for building new facilities
  - e. Provide more training, including for paraprofessionals (aides)
  - f. Make it so that staff with an early childhood development associates degree OR 12 credits of something else (related field?) can be a child care administrator – more flexibility
2. Structural and financial supports
  - a. Working with State or others to build a system whereby professionals can come to providers' rooms and help kids with behavioral health challenges or special needs
  - b. Fund facility improvements and maintaining and improving playgrounds – big one lots of groups raised.
  - c. Any grants should benefit all parents – not just those accessing supports. Too many non-subsidized kids are leaving because it's too expensive.
3. Regulatory
  - a. Reduce barriers (fingerprinting, for example)
    - i. Could pay for it, but also explore how to reduce barriers
  - b. Raise school-age kid ratios (but not younger kids)
  - c. Make it easier to get licensed
    - i. Credits for the accreditation program are too expensive. People don't want to pay for this out of pocket. Why do they need these 12 credits (at \$800 per credit)? Alternatives?
    - ii. Ensure consistency. If there is a new licensing staff, things can change unexpectedly
  - d. Explore long-term revenue sources other than just registration costs.

**Third question: Who isn't in the room who needs to be part of this discussion? What other information do we need, or people do we need to talk with, to ensure we build an effective, functional program? What advice or direction do you have for us?**

1. School-age providers
2. Make sure we're talking with for profit vs nonprofit providers
3. Need to hear from large centers vs. small centers
4. Home-based providers not well-represented at this event because it's hard to get time off
5. University early childhood development
6. King center
7. CCPO and Muni licensing
8. Mental health providers and others that support special needs
  - a. Hope Community Resources and Denali Family Services used to send one-on-one supports to work with kids with special needs. Can we bring this back?
9. Anchorage School District
  - a. Their decision-making is having impacts on the child care industry (school starting later, teenagers working at Campfire, etc.)
10. Parents
11. High school guidance counselors
12. Corporations: hospitals, Credit Union One, Chamber who might be able to make different types of contributions, like space for new centers?
13. Girl Scouts, YMCA, Bear Valley, Rabbit Creek, Trailside and other summer providers
14. Alaska Club
15. Businesses whose employees need childcare so they can be part of the solution
16. Early childhood education teachers