INVEST EARLY NC
A COLLABORATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD FUNDERS

Invest Early, Build Together

North Carolina 10-Year Advocacy Plan



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Invest Early, Build Together: A 10-Year Plan for North Carolina's Youngest Children

INVEST EARLY, BUILD TOGETHER

The Plan is:

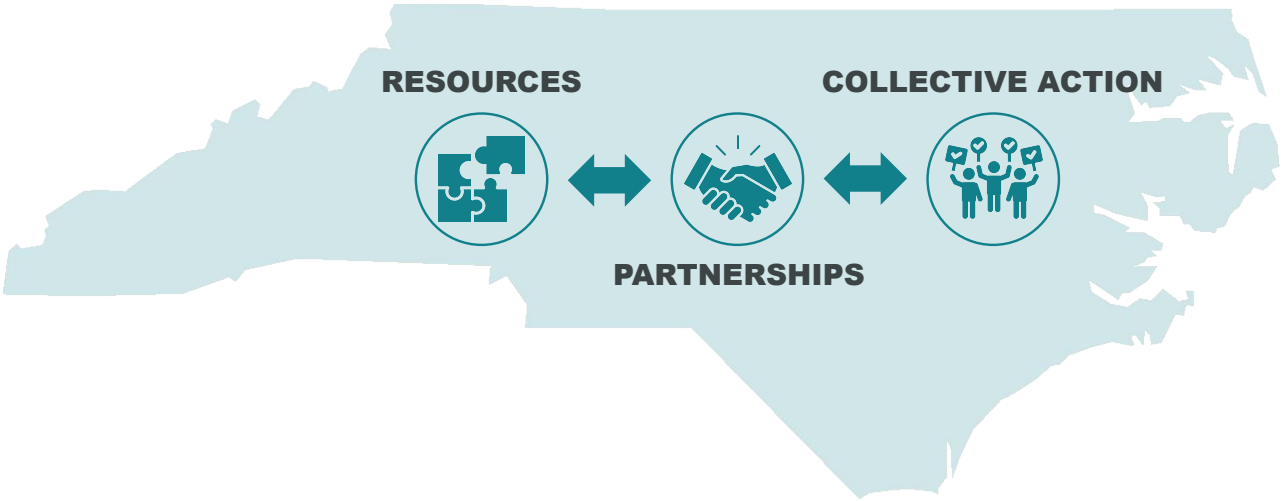
- **A shared, long-term direction** for improving outcomes for North Carolina's youngest children and families.
- **A focus on strengthening families' ability** to help every child arrive at kindergarten healthy, nurtured, learning, and ready to keep growing.
- **A way to connect and strengthen existing efforts** by aligning advocacy around policy change, public and private investment, and stronger systems.
- **A framework for collective action over time**, giving philanthropy a shared approach for aligning investments, relationships, and advocacy by building the infrastructure needed to sustain change.

North Carolina Has Strong Foundations to Build On

Across North Carolina, strong efforts are already supporting and strengthening children and families.

The Opportunity:

Build on and connect North Carolina's existing strengths while significantly expanding resources, partnerships, and collective action to drive greater, more consistent progress statewide.



Focus Areas of Plan

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FAMILY ECONOMIC STABILITY

Policy Focus Areas:

- Paid Family and Medical Leave
- Refundable Tax Credits
- Benefit Systems to Improve Access and Utilization

HEALTHY, NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS

Policy Focus Areas:

- Statewide Early Relational Health System
- Home Visiting and Relational Supports
- Maternal Mental Health Systems
- Relational Workforce

EARLY LEARNING

Policy Focus Areas:

- Early Childhood Workforce Compensation
- Early Childhood Workforce Pipeline
- Child Care Financing and Subsidy Systems
- Home-Based and Family, Friend and Neighbor Care

Support Improvements of System Governance and Alignment

Built Through Research, Listening and Partnership

Since 2024, we have:

- **LISTENED** to partners and communities across the state.
- **ALIGNED** around a shared vision and priority areas.
- **DEVELOPED** a draft policy agenda and action strategies.

NOW, we're engaging the field to strengthen how this work moves forward.

Plan Aims to Address the Ecosystem Surrounding a Child

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Resources that support economically stable families with young children

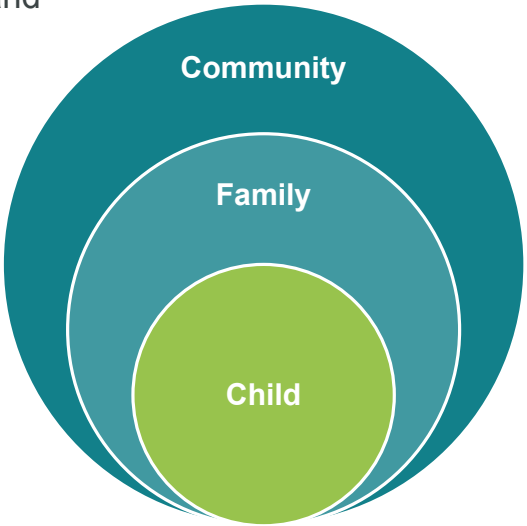
Vision: Families have resources to promote a healthy, stable home environment and enrichment that supports their child's development. Families know where to find the resources they are eligible for.

Healthy, nurturing relationships between caregivers and children

Vision: Families receive supportive services to foster their child's health birth and development. Parents and the early childhood workforce are supported with their own well-being.

Early learning opportunities that meet the unique needs of families

Vision: Families can access early learning and care in a way that works best for their family, including in both unlicensed and licensed settings.



Ecosystem of the child draws from the Center on the Developing Child's Place Matters framework.

Action Strategies

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Build the Conditions for Change

- Advance Narrative Change and Build Narrative Power
- Deploy Strategic Communications to Build Public Will
- Lead Locally

Strengthen the Field

- Strengthen Statewide Advocacy Infrastructure
- Build and Promote Coordination Across the State

Win and Sustain Policy Change

- Anchor in Flagship Policy Change
- Develop a Financing Strategy that Maximizes Public Dollars

Guiding Principles

- Dignity & Opportunity for All
- Family Voice & Choice
- Local Leadership & Community Knowledge
- Broad, Durable Support
- Evidence & Accountability



A Shared Direction, Built to Evolve

What's established

- A long-term commitment to improving outcomes for young children across family economic stability, healthy relationships, and early learning opportunities
- A shared direction for collective action

What we'll shape together

- How the field organizes, coordinates, and advances the work
- Roles, partnerships, and collective infrastructure
- An implementation approach that can adapt as priorities, opportunities, and evidence evolve

Progress Will Take All of Us

Different partners bring different strengths.

- Providers
- Advocates
- Funders
- Policymakers
- Public Agencies
- Families
- Educators
- Business Leaders
- Communities

The opportunity is to connect those contributions so they reinforce one another, while partners continue to lead from their own expertise, relationships, and mission.

About Invest Early NC

Invest Early NC is a statewide philanthropic collaborative bringing North Carolina funders together to engage, invest, and advocate for young children and families.

Invest Early NC released the first public overview of **Invest Early, Build Together: A 10-Year Plan for North Carolina's Youngest Children** on **InvestEarlyNC.org**.

Invest Early, Build Together is anchored in a shared vision: more North Carolina children arriving at kindergarten healthy, nurtured, learning, and ready to keep growing.

Who is Part of Invest Early NC

National, state, and local organizations

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation

Bissell Ballantyne Legacy Foundation

Burroughs Wellcome Fund

The Cemala Foundation

ChildTrust Foundation

Dogwood Health Trust

The Duke Endowment

HopeStar Foundation

Impact Alamance

John Rex Endowment

The Joseph M. Bryan Foundation of Greater Greensboro

Kate B. Reynolds

Leon Levine Foundation

PNC

PPS Charities

Pritzker Children's Initiative

Q Card Trust

Stephen L. Cornwell Foundation

Vanguard

Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

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Thank You

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