



North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation

2023 IMPACT REPORT





ABOUT THE NORTH CAROLINA EARLY CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION

VISION

Our vision is that each North Carolina child has a strong foundation for life-long health, education, and well-being, supported by a comprehensive, equitable birth-to-eight ecosystem.

MISSION

Our mission is to marshal North Carolina's great people, ideas, and achievements to ensure equitable access to opportunity and success for every child by the end of third grade.

Change happens through coordinated action across communities. We help improve the health, education, and well-being of North Carolina's children, from birth-to-age-eight, and their families by promoting understanding, spearheading collaboration, and advancing policies.

OUR PRINCIPLES

- We are boldly positive.
- We promote what works.
- We support state and local solutions.
- We are appreciative and inclusive leaders.
- We are intentional and grateful partners.





Special guests at NCECF's 10th anniversary event

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR

Dear Friends,

We are proud to present the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation's Impact Report for the year 2023. Your partnership and support have empowered us to make significant strides toward our vision that each North Carolina child has a strong foundation for life-long health, education, and well-being, supported by a comprehensive and equitable care and education system, from prenatal through third grade.

In 2023, we celebrated our tenth anniversary, looking back at some impressive accomplishments in our roles as conveners and collaborators for early childhood policy. We also bid a fond and grateful farewell to our previous Executive Director, Muffy Grant. Muffy joined NCECF in 2019, just in time to weather a global pandemic that reshaped all our lives, not least the world of early care and education. Muffy led with grace and kindness throughout, growing NCECF's team and our impact on early childhood systems during her tenure here.

As we look forward to welcoming NCECF's next Executive Director, we also look forward to the next ten years and a renewed focus on how the NC Early Childhood Foundation can have the greatest possible impact on young children and their families in our state. Thank you for traveling alongside us on a journey toward a future where North Carolina's great people, ideas, and achievements are deployed to bring about equitable access to opportunity and success for every child.

With gratitude,



Marian F. Earls, MD, FAAP
Chair, Board of Directors



Devonya Govan-Hunt, PhD
Vice-Chair, Board of Directors

In 2023, NCECF continued its commitment to early childhood development, focusing on programs and initiatives designed to create a strong foundation for our state's youngest learners.

Here are just a few highlights of what we've achieved with your support.





FAMILY FORWARD

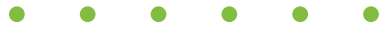


Family Forward NC® is an innovative initiative to improve children's health and well-being and keep North Carolina's businesses competitive by creating family-friendly workplace policies.

In 2023, Family Forward NC led 26 programs that reached more than 80 employers. We also sold licenses to organizations in Kansas and Colorado seeking to replicate this ground-breaking approach to increasing family-friendly benefits in the workplace.

Our Family Forward NC Employer Certification is one of only two in the country that recognizes employers whose policies and practices support the health and well-being of their employees and children. The certification is grounded in the principles of Pathways to Grade-Level Reading.

In 2023 the City of Greensboro became a Family Forward NC Certified Employer, leading the way towards a community-wide campaign with Action Greensboro and the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce.



FAMILY FORWARD NC CERTIFIED EMPLOYER: THE ENOLA GROUP, MORGANTON NC

The Enola Group became a Family Forward NC Certified Employer in June of 2023. Executive Director Linda Wilson shares what being a family-friendly workplace means to her organization and why this certification was important.

"We have always taken pride in being family-friendly and focused on employee well-being, and the Family Forward NC certification process allowed us to 'test' what we thought. It created an opportunity to reflect on our policies and practices.

For example, creating a policy regarding on-site child care discounts for employees allowed us to change a standing practice into a systematic approach to be shared with current and potential new employees.

Becoming Family Forward NC Certified was important to us as we continue to build a supportive work environment and workplace culture. In continuing to do so our hope is that we will create a competitive advantage to retain current and attract new employees.

The Enola Group wants to have a positive impact and show that we care about children, families, and employees. Being a certified employer by Family Forward NC is one way we can share this with others."



By the end of 2023, more than 6,000 employees in NC, from manufacturing, local government, health care, and nonprofits worked for 37 Family Forward NC Certified Employers—and the numbers are growing!



COLLABORATIVE IMPACT

NCECF collaborates with partners to co-lead two statewide coalitions: EarlyWell and Care and Learning (CandL).

EARLYWELL



The **EarlyWell initiative** is a statewide coalition dedicated to early childhood mental health, whose aim is to improve the system through specific practice and policy advocacy.

In 2023 EarlyWell finalized a 10-year advocacy roadmap that prioritizes our policy and practice recommendations. In October 2023, we released the first wave of [policy priorities](#) that the initiative's growing coalition is working to advance.

Together with our partners at NC Child, NCECF serves as the co-convenor of EarlyWell, serving on the Coordinating Team and other workgroups.



CARE AND LEARNING



The Care and Learning (CandL) coalition seeks to reimagine and rebuild early care and education in North Carolina for all children, regardless of their zip code, race, ethnicity, or disability status, by listening to families, providers, and communities.

In 2023 CandL completed an 18-month “listening tour” of North Carolina, partnering with local organizations in 34 counties to hear providers, teachers, and parents share what they want the early care and learning system to look like. CandL is using the data from those listening sessions to create an action plan that CandL partners will advocate for in the state legislature and beyond.

[Read the data report to find out more about what we learned.](#)

NCECF serves as the fiscal sponsor of CandL. We serve on the Leadership Team together with our partners at the Black Child Development Institute of the Carolinas, and Empowered Parents in Community (EPiC).





PATHWAYS TO GRADE-LEVEL READING



The Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative brings together diverse stakeholders to imagine what's possible and work towards a common vision where all NC children are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade.

Pathways is a data set, knowledge base, and hub of policy analysis and ideas that has given rise to many more projects across the state. The following are some of the related projects at NCECF.



PATHWAYS DATA DASHBOARD AND PATHWAYS ACTION MAP

In February 2023, NCECF released the full **Pathways Action Map** and its companion tool, the **Pathways Data Dashboard**. The Action Map provides detailed information about initiatives across the state whose work advances a shared vision where all North Carolina children, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade. The Data Dashboard includes data on more than 60 measures of child development that research shows influence third-grade reading scores. Find out more here.

NCECF published a series of **Pathways Action Briefs** and **Pathways Toolkits** throughout 2023. These briefs provide guidance for how policymakers, advocates, community non-profits, the business community, and other stakeholders can support the wellbeing of all NC children. These briefs also highlight organizations and initiatives across the state that are already taking action to move the needle forward. [Read the series.](#)



POLICY ANALYSIS: ELIMINATE CHILD CARE & PRESCHOOL EXPULSION

In collaboration with the Trauma-Responsive Education Practices Project, in 2023 NCECF began publishing a series of Policy & Practice Briefs to Eliminate Child Care & Preschool Exclusion.

North Carolina is among the states with a high rate of expulsion, with 13 per 1,000 children expelled from the state funded pre-kindergarten program, compared to the national average of 7 per 1,000 children. Children who are Black, boys, and/or have a disability are those most likely to be expelled from child care and early learning settings. The series of briefs lift up guidance for early care providers and policy-makers in how they can make resources available to early educators to better support children exhibiting behavior challenges, as well as using policies that limit the use of exclusion as a disciplinary measure in preschools. [Read the series here.](#)

SCIENCE OF READING FELLOWS

North Carolina's Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021 asks educators to align their instruction with the principles of the Science of Reading. In response to challenges reported with implementing the Act, NCECF launched an educator fellowship in September 2023. Eight early-grade educators and school-wide reading instructional coaches were selected to participate in this fellowship, which creates an opportunity for collaborative learning and professional development.

Four North Carolina university professors and a representative from the NC Department of Public Instruction are providing guidance. The lessons learned and insights gathered from this initiative will be shared broadly with stakeholders across the state. [Meet the fellows and learn more about this initiative.](#)



CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING

NCECF is the state lead for the NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. The project builds the capacity of community organizations to form strong and long-lasting collaborations with parents and teachers to advance literacy outcomes. We support 13 local collaboratives in their work to advance early literacy and Kindergarten transitions - including releasing an annual Summer Learning Toolkit to prevent “summer slide.”

In 2023, our community training focused on the development of strategies that diversify outreach and authentically engage community organizations using a racial equity lens.



EARLY CHILDHOOD DATA ADVISORY COUNCIL (ECDAC)

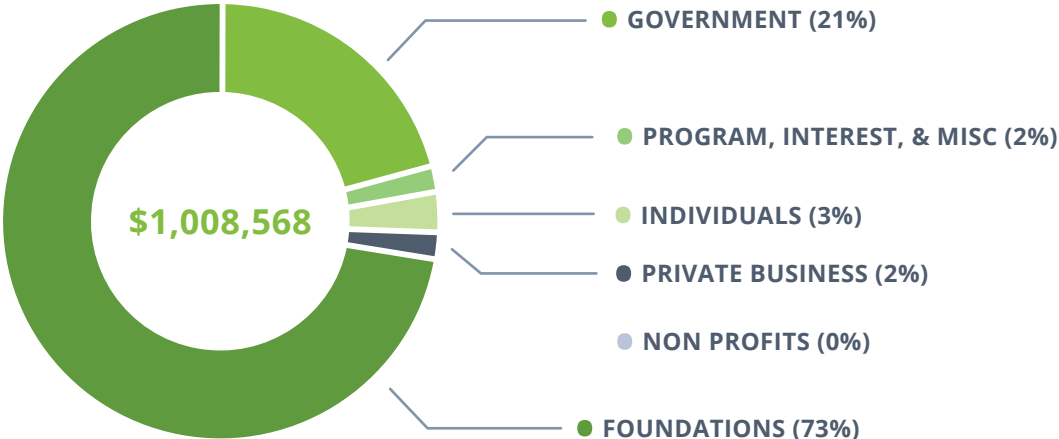
NCECF convened the final ECDAC meeting in November 2023. The ECDAC was a four-year collaborative effort between the NC Early Childhood Foundation and the Department of Health and Human Services, and includes members from DHHS divisions, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the Department of Information Technology, and data researchers and practitioners from outside state government.

The ECDAC was tasked with improving the quality and scope of early childhood data collection, and to support widespread analysis and use of early childhood data by policymakers and other decision-makers. From 2021 to 2023 the ECDAC was funded as an activity of a broader Preschool Development Grant B-5, administered by the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE). [Read the ECDAC's final report here.](#)

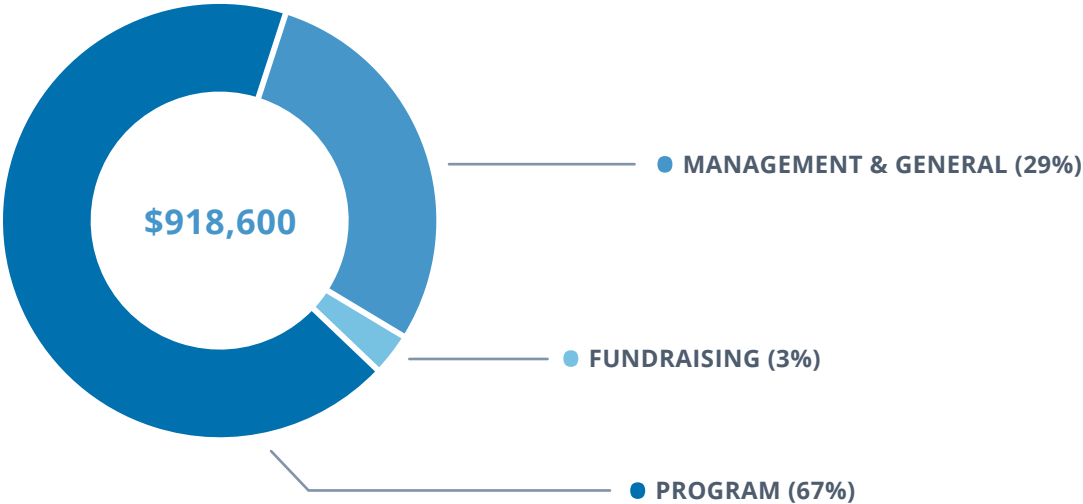


2023 FINANCIAL REPORT *unaudited*

REVENUE



EXPENSES





Current Board Chair Dr. Marian Earls (second from left) with Mandy Ableidinger, Sharon Hirsch, Theresa Roedersheimer, and Mary Mathew

HONORING OUR SUPPORTERS



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated donors whose commitment has fueled NCECF's success in 2023. Your generosity has made it possible for us to create meaningful change in policies and programs that serve North Carolina's youngest children and their families.

Devonya Govan-Hunt, Amy Cabbage, Safiyah Jackson, Nina Smith, Lisa Finaldi, and Muffy Grant at NCECF's 10th anniversary event



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Earls (center) with
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*In 2023, Board members donated over
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*A heartfelt thank you to past Board
members whose terms ended in 2023!*

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*Outgoing Board Chair Patti Gillenwater with
outgoing Executive Director Muffy Grant*



CALL TO ACTION: YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT MATTERS



As we celebrate the achievements of 2023, we invite you to join us in sustaining this momentum. Your ongoing support is crucial to our mission, and together, we can build an even stronger foundation for success, for the children of North Carolina. **Make a contribution today at buildthefoundation.org/support**





STAY CONNECTED: LEARN MORE, GET INVOLVED

Thank you for being a vital part of the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation. We are inspired and uplifted by your commitment to the well-being of our youngest community members.

Explore our website for more in-depth information, success stories, and ways to get involved in our ongoing efforts. Follow us on social media to stay updated on our latest initiatives and events.

Website buildthefoundation.org

 LinkedIn [@north-carolina-early-childhood-foundation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/north-carolina-early-childhood-foundation)

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