

North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation

2024 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 and equitable care and education system, from prenatal through third grade.

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.

Change happens through coordinated action across communities. We help improve the health, education, and well-being of North Carolina's children, prenatally 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.



LETTER FROM NCECF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THERESA ROEDERSHEIMER



It is an honor and a privilege to serve as North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation's (NCECF) new Executive Director. Over the past few years, I have worked alongside many of the staff, and I am excited to support the work in this new capacity. The staff and I would like to thank Fawn Pattison for serving as our interim Executive Director and supporting my transition to NCECF.

Whether a child can read proficiently by the end of third grade is a powerful measurement for child and family well-being and a strong indicator of a child's future life success, career, and financial prosperity. To build a robust and equitable prenatal through third grade support system for our children, NCECF drives knowledge and action through our overarching framework, Pathways to Grade-Level Reading (Pathways). NCECF was created in 2013 with a simple premise: No one program or single organization can create social change alone.

NCECF convenes people across the state, from funders to business leaders, stakeholders, child care providers, clinicians, parents of young children, and early education advocates, to address the most pressing issues in early care and learning. By uplifting the voices of families and child care providers, we ensure their needs are front and center. We also share valuable data, policy analysis, and resources that can collectively fuel the campaign for public investment in a high-quality, equitable, mixed-delivery early care and learning system.

Our initiatives work together to help transform the early childhood ecosystem in North Carolina so that it is accessible, equitable, affordable, and informed by the children, parents, caregivers, and educators who experience it.

It is with great pleasure that I present this year's annual report, reflecting on a year of significant progress and dedication. Through our Family Forward NC® initiative, over thousands of North Carolinians' lives were improved by their employer's mission to embrace family-friendly policies. We also developed a set of three data dashboards that focus on visualizing racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in third grade reading proficiency and produced over 20 toolkits and policy briefs. This was made possible by your unwavering dedication and support, and I thank each of you for being part of this journey.

In the year ahead, we will continue to build upon our work by expanding our community outreach with the Family Forward NC® and Campaign for Grade-Level Reading initiatives. We will also increase our preventative focus to increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn.

I am excited about the future and our potential to create meaningful change. Thank you again for your continued partnership. With your support, we will continue to make a difference.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theresa Roedersheimer". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'T'.

Theresa Roedersheimer

Executive Director, North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation



Employees from Procter & Gamble's Greensboro locations celebrate their Family Forward Certification at the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce's annual State of the Community Luncheon in summer 2024.

In 2024, NCECF worked together with partners to help transform the early childhood ecosystem in North Carolina so that it is accessible, equitable, affordable, and informed by the children, parents, caregivers, and educators who experience it.

Here are some 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 while keeping North Carolina's businesses competitive by creating family-friendly workplace policies. 2024 marked significant growth and achievements for this initiative.

SNAPSHOT

From the launch of certification through the end of 2024, Family Forward NC® certified 105 employers, representing 40,157 employees working for certified employers from Jacksonville to Hendersonville. Forty of these organizations are women and/or minority owned or led.

IN 2024

**6 CASE STUDIES
PUBLISHED**

that highlighted employers'
family-friendly benefits

**1,800 EMPLOYEES
REACHED**

through presentations
and workshops

**22 MEDIA
FEATURES**

covering Family
Forward NC®

FUTURE READY GREENSBORO

We partnered with Action Greensboro and the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce to launch Future Ready Greensboro. This campaign aimed to make Greensboro the first Family Forward NC® Certified Community in our state by April 2025. This community-level designation is given when a meaningful number of employees in a local area are working for Family Forward NC® Certified Employers.

The goal for greater Greensboro is 50,000 employees working for certified employers: a third of the workforce. The campaign launched with high energy, creating excitement that swiftly moved through the community. NCECF Board Chair Dr. Marian Earls introduced the campaign at the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting, with hundreds in attendance. Throughout the campaign, Future Ready Greensboro was featured across local and regional media, and the team presented to dozens of organizations. We co-hosted programs to engage employers to become certified, including an economic update featuring our Board Member Christopher Chung.

"Future Ready Greensboro is proving what's possible when a community rallies around working families. Through our partnership with NCECF, we are not only shifting workplace culture across Greensboro — we are sparking statewide momentum that's improving the lives of thousands of North Carolinians."

— Cecelia Thompson, Executive Director, Action Greensboro - Greensboro Chamber of Commerce

LOOKING AHEAD

Our new contract with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will help determine the feasibility of extending the community certification strategy to other cities and counties in North Carolina. We met with organizations across the state to discuss this opportunity and will begin work with them in 2025.

EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT: POCKET PREP 131 EMPLOYEES • DURHAM, NC & SEATTLE, WA

A Family Forward NC® Certified Employer, Pocket Prep creates effective, convenient, and engaging test preparation apps for more than 130 standardized exams—from nursing to finance to the automotive industry.

Heidi Baggerman, Pocket Prep's Director of Design, leads a team of five. She knows the support she receives from Pocket Prep makes her role as a working mom possible. "Honestly, I think it's why I'm still in the workforce and have a job. If I wasn't supported, I don't think I'd be in the workforce at the moment," Heidi says.

She worked directly with cofounder Ken Gillette to establish Pocket Prep's first paid parental leave policy. Now, the company offers 14 weeks of paid parental leave for birthing parents and 8 weeks for non-birthing parents.

Devin Brooks, Senior Digital Marketing Analyst, had experience with the non-birthing parent policy. He says Pocket Prep's paid parental leave helped keep his family afloat financially while allowing him and his wife to spend time with their daughter after she was born. At the time, Devin's wife didn't have paid parental leave, so she had to take unpaid leave following the birth of their first daughter. Since Devin could take paid time off, he could care for his family while worrying a little less about finances.

Ravae Bobb, People Op Lead at Pocket Prep, says that as the company grows, it wants to be sure to offer the best benefits it can while keeping the business in mind. She sees that family-friendly policies give employees the confidence to be able to show up both in their personal and professional lives.

About Family Forward NC® Certification, Ravae said, "In order to apply for certification, we reviewed our current policies. As a scaling company, we want to be sure we can offer the best benefits we can while also keeping the business in mind. This review process allowed us to make sure our policy wasn't just the best we could offer, but that it actually made sense to our team!"



PATHWAYS TO GRADE-LEVEL READING



The Pathways to Grade-Level Reading (Pathways) initiative emerged from bringing together diverse stakeholders to work toward a shared vision of all North Carolina children reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Pathways has become a hub for policy analysis, ideas, and data, giving rise to many more projects across the state.

SNAPSHOT

By the end of 2024, Pathways had published two Pathways Toolkits, 10 Pathways Action Briefs, six End Early Exclusion Briefs, two Early Care & Learning Briefs, two equity-focused reports on reading proficiency, and three reading proficiency data dashboards.

HIGHLIGHTS

Through Pathways work, we brought renewed attention to the importance of equitable access to educational resources by examining the growth of educational disparities as children progress from kindergarten to the third grade. [Our interactive report](#), published in November, enables stakeholders to explore and understand how opportunity gaps in access to educational resources adversely affect the early literacy skills of North Carolina's most vulnerable children. In this report, we didn't just describe the problem; we also highlighted policies that can advance equitable access to good instruction.

We continued our commitment to transparency and impact by sharing disaggregated, actionable data through three equity-focused reading proficiency dashboards. These tools empower communities, policymakers, and partners with the insights needed to drive strategies that close literacy gaps and support all North Carolina children on the path to third-grade reading success: [Dashboard 1](#), [Dashboard 2](#), and [Dashboard 3](#).

In September 2023, we launched the Science of Reading Educator Fellowship. Six early-grade educators and school-wide reading instructional coaches completed a year-long fellowship. Each focused on a practical challenge to improve reading instruction in their classrooms and schools. Four North Carolina university professors who are literacy experts, and NC-DPI's Assistant Director of Early Literacy, participated in the bi-weekly meetings to guide the fellows' professional learning. We hosted an in-person writing retreat in July to strengthen community and collaboration among the fellows. This fellowship will culminate in the release of a set of eight policy and practice briefs in May 2025.

To strengthen the connection between Pathways and other initiatives that NCECF supports, we initiated an eight-brief series on Early Care & Learning to support the work of the Care and Learning (CandL) coalition. This brief series covers topics that range from discussing the need to take a systemic perspective ([A Stable System of Birth to Five Child Care and Early Learning](#)) to highlighting the business case for child care ([Child Care Availability: A Key Driver of Economic Health](#)) to bringing attention to the unique needs of rural families ([Strengthening Availability and Access to Child Care in Rural Communities](#)).

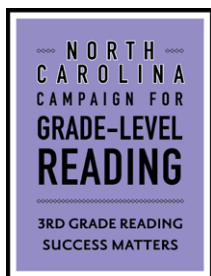
We culminated our series of [Policy & Practice Briefs to Eliminate Child Care & Preschool Exclusion](#) with a webinar on the Policies & Practices that Minimize Child Care and Preschool Exclusion in May. Our team partnered with Early Years to deliver a capacity-building webinar to more than 150 child care and preschool directors, family child care providers, and preschool teachers. Building on this success, we presented in person at PBS NC's Impact Early Childhood Education Summit in June. Both sessions focused on prevention-centered strategies to help educators more effectively manage challenging behaviors, supporting stronger, more nurturing learning environments across North Carolina.

LOOKING AHEAD

Pathways will take a more preventative focus to help more children start kindergarten ready to learn. In the year to come, we will continue to develop policy and practice resources that early educators, advocates, and families need to increase the number of children who become proficient readers.



NORTH CAROLINA CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING



NCECF is the state lead for the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (NC-CGLR). This initiative boosts the capacity of 12 community collaboratives across the state to strengthen children’s literacy skills, beginning at birth, and develop a love for reading.

This year, we worked with NC-CGLR communities to use our new tool, Pathways Equity Focused Early Literacy Data Dashboards, to identify and support economically disadvantaged children and high poverty schools in their communities. In July, we hosted our annual NC-CGLR meeting in Raleigh for community leaders to explore strategies to increase early childhood literacy, build upon our collective strengths, and discuss opportunities to grow our collaborative efforts.

We annually publish the Summer Learning Toolkit for camp counselors and program providers to support children’s learning all summer long. The 2024 Toolkit, themed “Leap Into Summer Learning,” was packed with resources to help communicate to families the importance of continued learning and share valuable activities they can do at home or on the go. It was downloaded over 300 times.

“We promote summer learning through our work with educational programs, camps, and sites that serve children breakfast and lunch. The NCECF Summer Learning Toolkit and the NC Department of Public Instruction resources are integral to our summer learning outreach to involve parents, children, and partners. Through this outreach, we work to improve the lives of children and integrate hope for a brighter future into the culture and fabric of our community.”

— Viola Barnes-Gray, Ready Communities Coordinator,
The Down East Partnership for Children



COLLABORATIVE IMPACT

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

EARLYWELL



NCECF continues to partner with NC Child to further the mission of the **EarlyWell Initiative**. Our team leads the Coalition's Coordinating Team, a group of experts and parents from around the state who serve as the coalition's decision-making body and collaborate to shape policy priorities.

During the summer, the EarlyWell Coalition launched its two action teams: the Policy Action Team and the Community Engagement Action Team. These teams began to meet monthly to work on strategies to advance the coalition's current policy priorities.

In October, we co hosted the EarlyWell Annual Gathering at the Duke Endowment in Charlotte, NC. With over 150 participants, the gathering highlighted the lived experiences of our family leaders and showcased our organizational partnerships through educational events focused on Kinship Care support and resources statewide.

As we enter the new year, the Coalition is dedicated to expanding its membership and collaborating with organizations to advance the EarlyWell Policy Agenda.

“As the lead for the NC Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) Program, I began work with Early Well at its inception in 2019 when Duke Endowment funded NC Child. The goal was to bring collaborators from across the state - pediatricians, families, early care and education providers, Early Intervention, Public Health, Mental Health, the Division of Child Development and Early Education...to assure processes and policies to promote healthy mental and emotional development for infants and young children and their families. NCECF has always been a partner with NC Child, and I am so pleased that we are continuing to promote the policies lifted up by the Early Well convenings.”

—Dr. Marian Earls, EarlyWell Coordinating Team Member, NCECF Board Chair



CARE AND LEARNING

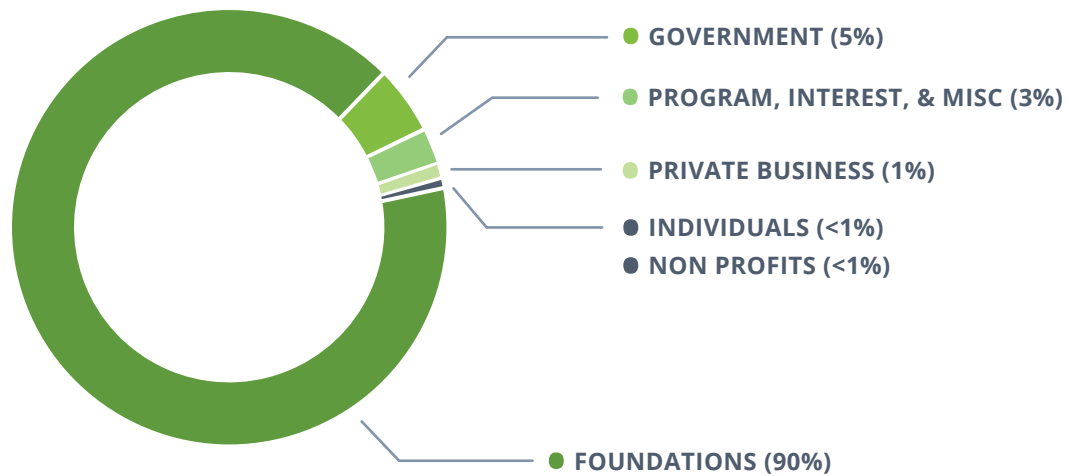
NCECF serves as the fiscal sponsor and on the Leadership Team of **Care and Learning (CandL)**, a coalition working to make North Carolina’s child care system more affordable, accessible, and equitable for families .

Since 2023, The NC Child Care Commission (the Commission) has been working to modernize the Quality Rating Improvement System that measures the quality of licensed child care in North Carolina. Mid-year, Governor Cooper signed into law the establishment of three pathways to earn star ratings, enacting the Commission to begin the rule-making process. While continuing to work on our policy agenda, CandL quickly pivoted to supporting the members in better understanding the rule-making process and supporting advocacy efforts. They did this by providing data and recommendations to the Commission and partnering with the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education and the Commission to host educational sessions with the child care workforce, families, and partners regarding the proposed changes to the QRIS system. During these sessions, we were able to have an open dialogue with the community to discuss their questions and concerns.

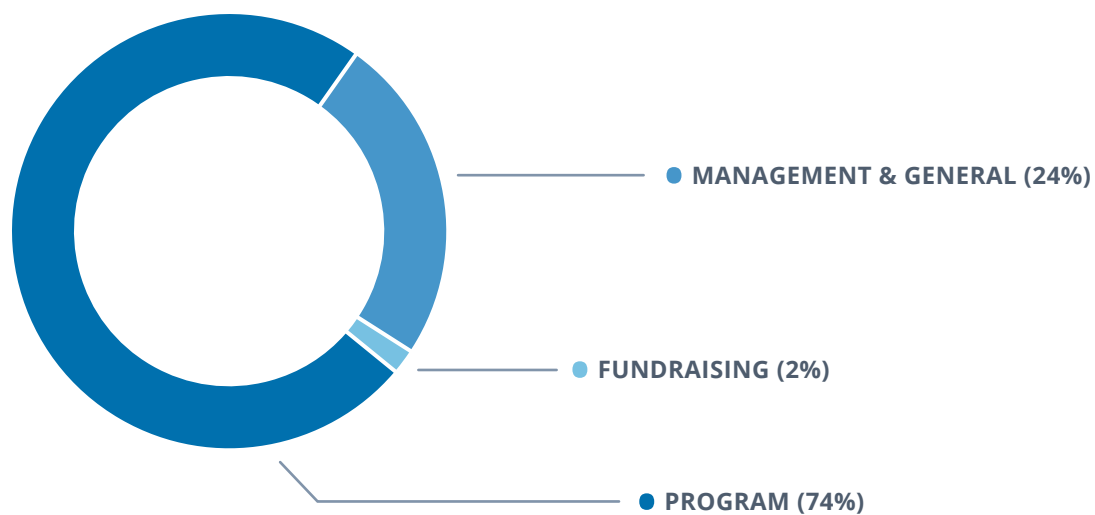
As we enter the new year, CandL will create and launch its own website to further engage and inform the state-wide community on its research, resources, and upcoming policy agenda.

2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

REVENUE



EXPENSES



HONORING OUR SUPPORTERS

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated donors whose commitment has fueled NCECF's success in 2024. 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.



The EarlyWell Coalition meets to discuss policy to improve mental health outcomes in young children at The Duke Endowment in Charlotte, NC.

Action Greensboro*

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation

Center for Early Success

ChildTrust Foundation

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Cone Health Foundation

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The Duke Endowment

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Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

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A heartfelt thank you to past Board member, Dr.

Margaret Annunziata, whose term ended in 2024!

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***In 2024, Board members donated over
139 hours of volunteer time to NCECF.***



YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF NCECF MATTERS



As we celebrate the achievements of 2024, 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 resources, 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



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