



COLORADO CHILDREN'S • CAMPAIGN •

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Request for Proposals: Colorado Early Childhood Governance & Financing Project

Project Overview

The Colorado Children's Campaign, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC), the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition (CSPC), Gary Community Ventures, and the Buell Foundation recently received a grant to evaluate the state's early childhood governance and financial infrastructure.

The goal of the grant is to undertake a system-level effort to strengthen early childhood governance and financing. Building on evaluations of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) and Universal Preschool (UPK), the process will begin with an evaluation of the existing system. This evaluation process will identify barriers to service delivery, center the lived experience of parents, providers, and other community members, and begin the process of co-designing governance reforms that improve access and outcomes for children and families within an efficient and appropriately financed system.

To this end, The Campaign is looking for a facilitator with a strong background in process mapping and human centered design thinking to help us undertake a comprehensive assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of our early childhood ecosystem, with an eye towards identifying and addressing barriers to creating an integrated, statewide 0-5 early childhood system that is accessible to all children and families.

Context

In recent years, Colorado has made impressive strides in the early childhood space. In 2020, voters approved a measure that led to the creation of the Colorado Universal Preschool Program (UPK), which launched during the 2023-2024 school year. In its second year, UPK has grown to serve 70% of the state's four-year-olds, rocketing Colorado from the twenty-seventh to the third highest state in preschool enrollment. During the ramp up to launching the UPK program, the state also established CDEC, becoming the seventh state to create a department dedicated to early childhood. The momentum of these changes continues to fuel Colorado's early childhood advocacy community and to drive local revenue raising measures for child care in localities throughout the state.

Despite these accomplishments, gaps persist. [A recent evaluation](#) of the department's developmental progress include recommendations to simplify program structures, break down silos, and improve feedback pathways. These identified growth areas, combined with the precarity of federally funded programs and revenue generation constraints created by [Colorado's Taxpayer Bill of Rights \(TABOR\)](#), have created challenges to realizing the governance system originally envisioned.

Thanks to Colorado's short timelines for launching CDEC and the UPK program, the past few years have been a time of unprecedented growth, leaving little room for reflection and strategy. For this reason, we are seeking a facilitator to guide us into the next stage of our department's growth.

Project Focus

We are seeking a facilitator able to help us meet our goal of improving outcomes for children and families by structuring and financing an efficient system. To this end, this project will focus on the following:

- **Access** – How do current governance structures, eligibility rules, and funding mechanisms shape how families, providers, and partners access programs? Where do policies or financing create barriers or inequities, and how can they be redesigned to expand and streamline access?
- **Service Experience** – How do program design, administrative requirements, and funding structures shape the day-to-day experience of families and providers? How can governance and financing decisions be redesigned to ensure interactions with the system are simple, welcoming, efficient, and responsive to user needs?

- **Infrastructure** – What staffing, systems, technology, and financial structures enable or constrain effective implementation? How can local, state, and federal funding streams and governance structures be better integrated to create a coherent, sustainable system?
- **Assessing Progress** – What systems and feedback loops are currently in place to track performance, measure impact, and create meaningful incentives for improvement? Where are they falling short, and how can they be strengthened or redesigned to drive continuous learning, accountability, and system-wide improvement?

Key Responsibilities

1. **Process mapping:** The consultant will synthesize the group’s knowledge, making use of two recently released evaluations on the department’s progress since its establishment, reviewing extensive documentation collected over the course of the agency’s lifetime, and conducting project management duties associated with this task. Using this research base, the facilitator will lead the expert collaborative in an exercise that maps identified processes to uncover barriers to access, excellent service experience, and effective strategies for assessing progress. This process will result in a summary report and PowerPoint of the findings. And will drive the work in #2 below.
2. **Design workshops:** Using the ideas generated from process mapping, the consultant will lead structured sessions with a targeted group of stakeholders, similar to an “accelerator” type approach that can lead to real breakthroughs in governance and finance. A strong design session or accelerator approach to co-designing public sector solutions would bring together frontline staff, impacted community members, subject-matter experts, and decision-makers in a structured, time-bound process that moves rapidly from problem framing to prototyping. It centers lived experience, uses data to ground the work, and emphasizes iterative testing, producing tangible, implementable solutions that are both community-informed and operationally feasible within public systems.
3. **Written report:** The consultant will produce a written report and accompanying presentation that summarizes the design process and recommendations for system changes.

The facilitator must have expertise in facilitation and have strong written skills so that the report and action plan can be used by the collaborative during the second year of the grant. The facilitator will utilize a human centered design framework and will conduct sessions that are accessible for all backgrounds.

Timeline & Budget

This work will be completed between June 1st, 2026 and December 31st, 2026. The timeline should include:

- At least four process mapping exercises of one day each and at least three design workshops of up to three days each.
- Time for reviewing documents around the Colorado context.
- Time for writing and submitting process mapping report and the final report with action steps.

Submission Guidelines

Please submit your proposal to carry out the scope of work. Please include a description of how you would approach and carry out the components of the scope of work, including:

- A calendar of design workshops.
- Goals, approach and outputs of each workshop.
- Potential participants for each design workshop.
- A timeline for report writing and submission.
- Proposed staffing and bios
- A total budget not to exceed \$40,000.

Proposals are due **April 15, 2026 at 5 pm MST**. Please submit to Dr. Mathangi Subramanian, Director of Early Childhood Policy at the Campaign at Mathangi@ColoradoKids.org.