



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO

The Future of Preschool in Colorado

BRIEF 1 OF 7

An Overview



Preschool for All

On November 3, 2020, Colorado voters passed a ballot measure (Proposition EE) that will pay for all children in their year before kindergarten to attend preschool at least 10 hours per week. Children from low-income families or those who may not be ready for kindergarten will have access to more preschool. The program starts in the fall of 2023.

Before then, legislators will need to pass bills about how the program will work and who will run it. State and local agencies will need to establish rules and processes to launch and operate the program well. Knowing this, Governor Polis asked the Colorado

Children's Campaign to lead a process to get the ideas and input of state and local leaders, early care and education advocates, preschool providers, early educators, and families. Early Milestones Colorado supported this process by conducting research, providing data, organizing learning topics, and securing expert speakers. That process began before Proposition EE even passed and is still ongoing.

This brief is one in a series that explores key topics related to preschool for all and summarizes input from stakeholders from across the state.

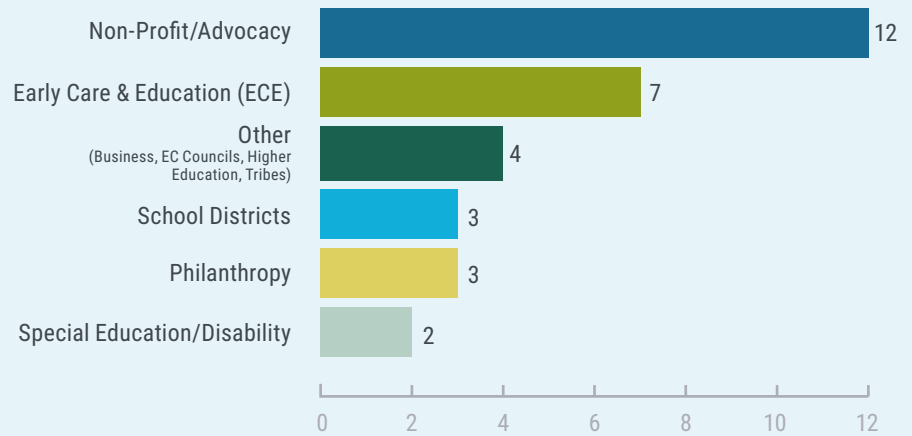
Engagement Process

OVERVIEW

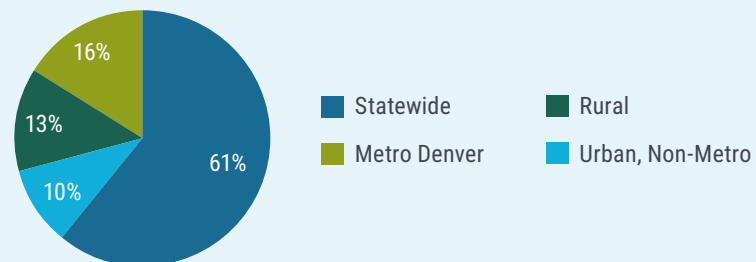
The Colorado Children's Campaign developed a three-part process to engage people interested in providing input on how a statewide, universal preschool program might be designed. The process includes a leadership committee, an advisory group, and community input sessions.

The **Preschool Policy Leadership Committee (PPLC)** includes thirty-one members, appointed by the governor, who represent a range of interests and areas of the state (see graphs). The primary purpose of the committee is to lead the development of preschool program design ideas for consideration by policymakers. Between July and December 2020, the committee met seven times to engage in shared learning and discuss key topics (described more below). Since January 2021, the committee has been meeting regularly to explore policy ideas related to program governance and funding.

PRESCHOOL POLICY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBER AFFILIATION (N=31)



PRESCHOOL POLICY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE REGIONS OF FOCUS (N=31)



UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

The term "universal preschool" refers to preschool that is:

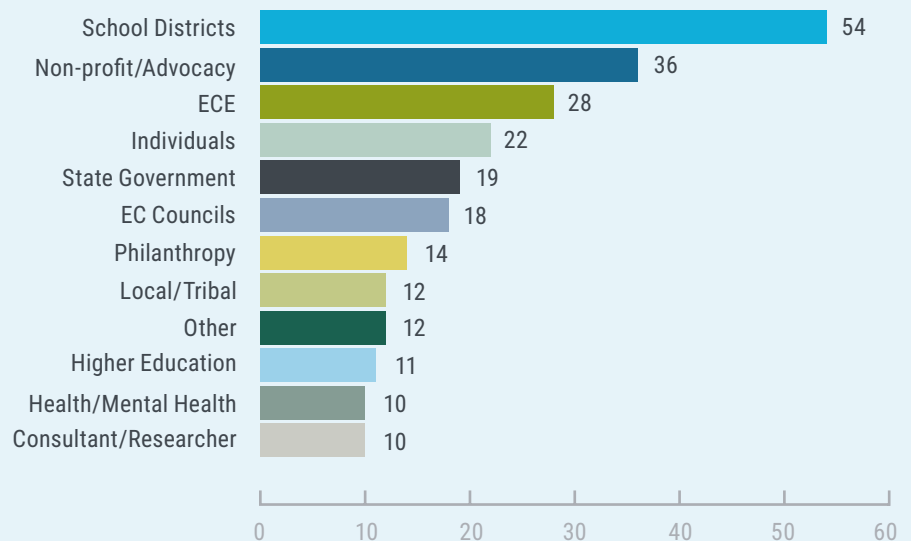
- ✓ available to all children who meet age criteria

AND

- ✓ funded for all who enroll

The **Preschool Policy Advisory Group (PPAG)** is open to anyone with an interest in informing the design of Colorado's universal preschool program. The group met seven times between August 2020 and February 2021, with an average of 180 people representing a wide variety of organizations attending each meeting.

PRESCHOOL POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEMBER AFFILIATIONS (N=246)

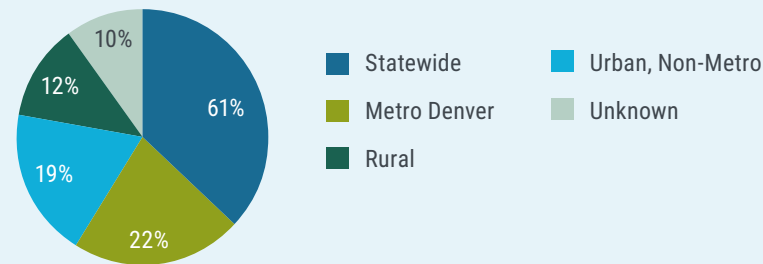


Other includes: federal government, business, Family Resource Centers, special education/disability interests.

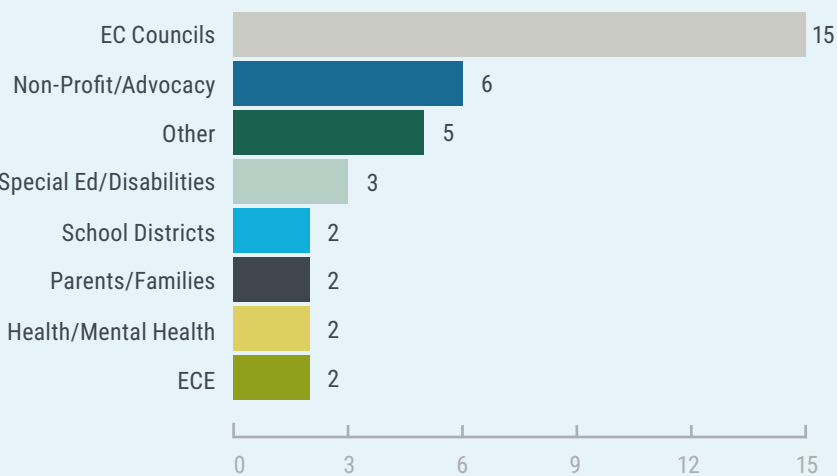
In total, 246 participants from across the state attended at least one meeting or requested to be part of the group's email list. The group's main purpose is to engage in shared learning and provide input on the same key topics that the PPLC has discussed.

To engage community members who might not have the time to participate in the advisory group meetings, the Children's Campaign created a **Community Engagement Toolkit**, which was used by over three dozen local groups to hold more than 50

PRESCHOOL POLICY ADVISORY GROUP REGIONS OF FOCUS (N=246)

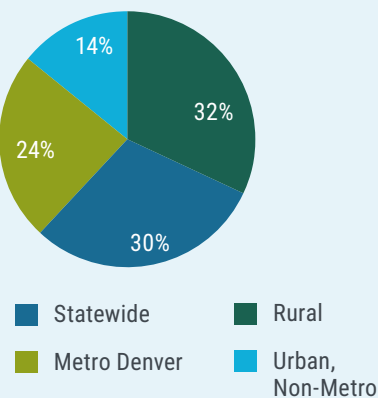


TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS HOLDING COMMUNITY INPUT SESSIONS (N=37)



Other includes: state government, tribal organizations, local child care associations, immigrant services, and Family Resource Centers

REGIONS OF FOCUS OF COMMUNITY INPUT SESSIONS (N=37)



engagement sessions across the state between October 2020 and March 2021. Almost half of the state's early childhood councils held input sessions. One third of community engagement opportunities were in rural parts of the state. Another third included statewide interests. The rest were held in Metro Denver or other urban areas of the state (see graphs above). Community input sessions were one-time opportunities that each lasted 90 minutes to two hours. Each session addressed: 1) participants' hopes and fears for universal preschool in Colorado, 2) their goals for children in the year before kindergarten, 3) their definition of quality preschool, and 4) what they think will make an expansion of preschool successful.



KEY TOPICS

The PPLC and PPAG each focused on five topics central to launching a universal preschool program:

PROGRAM QUALITY: Classroom and teacher characteristics that create an excellent learning environment for young children. This can include factors such as group sizes and ratios, curriculum choices, teacher education, and how classrooms are assessed.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY: Criteria that children and preschool programs need to meet to participate in universal preschool. Criteria can include child age and residency, and preschool licensing status or programming.

FUNDING: How money might flow from the state to preschool programs and/or families and how money might be divided across different types of preschool programs and regions of the state.

GOVERNANCE: Operation of the state's universal preschool program, including distributing funds, coordinating with community partners and school districts, and monitoring program effectiveness.

WORKFORCE: Recruitment and retention of preschool teachers who are well-prepared to nurture and educate young children. Factors include teacher training, pay, professional coaching, and working conditions.

The Community Input sessions sought opinions more broadly on participants' hopes and goals for universal preschool and how to realize those at the community level.

Cornerstones of the Work

Participants from all three input opportunities have identified core values that they want to see embedded in the design of a universal preschool program. Most of the “fundamental cornerstones” described here came out of the PPLC, but reflect similar values that the PPAG and the Community Input sessions also raised.

Provide preschool for all with additional programming for those who need it:

All preschoolers in their year before kindergarten are invited and welcomed into Colorado's universal preschool program. Children who need extra support can get it.

Promote equity: Children and families who have historically experienced barriers can easily access the preschool

programs that meet their needs and cultures. All early educators have equitable access to training, jobs, and fair pay.

Ensure age-appropriate programming that addresses the whole child: Children are welcomed into a joyful environment that supports all aspects of their growth and development.

Make things easy for families and preschools: Governing and coordinating agencies take on funding and administrative details so families and preschools can focus on the children.

Connect preschool with child care options that families want and need: Families have access to programs that fit their lives, support their work schedules, and align with their culture.

Support and raise up early childhood educators: All early childhood educators have access to convenient and affordable training, fair pay and benefits, and respect for the work that they do.

Encourage promising and evidence-based practices: Governing and coordinating agencies promote a learning culture that values innovation.

Collect and use data to get results for children: Meaningful data about children's outcomes are used to make timely programming and policy decisions so that all children are ready for kindergarten.

Create a better system of early care and education for children of all ages: Families and service providers experience smooth connections and transitions across a strong system of services.



This brief was produced by Early Milestones Colorado, a non-partisan organization that advances success for young children by accelerating innovation, the use of best practices, and systemic change. The views and opinions offered in this document were collected through the Future of Preschool in Colorado engagement process.

VISIT [EARLYMILESTONES.ORG/FUTUREOFPRESCHOOL](https://www.earlymilestones.org/futureofpreschool) FOR MORE INFORMATION