

early matters

FRESNO

Thriving children. Secure families. Vibrant economy.

INVESTMENT PLAN

FOR IMPACT OVER THE NEXT THREE AND TEN YEARS

October 2024

**Over a Decade
in the Making:**



The well-being of children has been a community priority in Fresno for many years.

Building on the longstanding relationships and trust among those serving families and their young children, Fresno Cradle to Career (C2C), a multi-agency collaborative, led an effort in 2018 that included input from over 800 participants, resulting in the *Preconception to Age 5 Blueprint for Funding and Advocacy*. The Blueprint identifies the strategies needed to improve the health, education, and economic prospects for Fresno County's youngest children and their families. This collaborative work gave rise to the Preconception to Age 5 Network (P5 Network) in 2019. Both the Blueprint and the P5 Network were key contributors to Fresno County's ambitious 10-year community investment plan:

Developing the Region's Inclusive and Vibrant Economy (DRIVE).

The Preconception to Age 5 DRIVE portfolio is now branded **Early Matters Fresno** and the design of the portfolio is intended to bridge DRIVE's three strategic pillars—economic development, human development, and neighborhood development.



The success of the children and families represented in Early Matters Fresno is integral to the overall success of DRIVE. Early Matters Fresno is one of the largest investment portfolios in the DRIVE plan.

A Vision Shared By All

Fresno County has nearly 92,000 children between the ages of 0-5.* We know that geographic, racial, ethnic and economic disparities continue to shape far too many of their destinies.

Building on more than a decade of investment and trust, community leaders and partners have come together to embrace a shared vision for our collective future. Recognizing that our children are our greatest asset, Early Matters Fresno has united experts in the fields of maternal and child health to early childhood care and education around one goal:

**114,600
children**

**on a path to
economic mobility**

With philanthropic investment and the opportunity to leverage significant public funding, Early Matters Fresno will impact 114,600 children over the next ten years.

By 2035

Fresno County will have a well-functioning, culturally responsive two-generation model of family support in place that reduces pre-term births, promotes kindergarten readiness, and produces notable gains in 3rd grade reading and math assessments.

Progress Measurement

The Early Matters Fresno leadership team has selected nine key metrics that can be consistently measured and will indicate whether we are realizing our 2035 goal.

- **Improve maternal and infant health** by decreasing the preterm birth rate and reducing infant mortality.
- **Increase access to basic services and supports**, including food and health care, for those in need.
- **Increase the number of children who meet developmental milestones** through early screening, referral and individualized interventions.
- **Expand access to quality child care** to ensure all children receive appropriate early childhood education and support.
- **Strengthen the capacity of families and professionals** in developing the whole child to ensure school readiness and positive childhood outcomes.
- **Enhance community engagement** by increasing the number of residents, including youth, who contribute to problem-solving and policy-making efforts.
- **Strengthen leadership and align resources** to effectively address community needs and priorities.
- **Promote increased data sharing and integration** across organizations to improve decision-making and outcomes.
- **Facilitate better cross-sector coordination of system supports** to ensure a more cohesive and effective support network.
- **Build capacity for coordination and backbone support.**

*U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 5-Year American Community Survey

CHALLENGES

Limited Access

Fresno County's high poverty rates and deep history of socioeconomic and racial inequality mean young children—especially young children of color—face barriers to healthy growth and development before they are even born. Without access to the critical health and education resources that are available to higher-resource families, young children fall behind in ways that persist into adulthood. This lack of access results in disproportionately poor outcomes in prenatal health, early childhood development, and kindergarten readiness. Falling behind before kindergarten has ripple effects through K-12 and into adulthood.

Fragmented supports, reinforced by racism, classism, and intergenerational poverty, ultimately fail all residents of Fresno. Children are not ready to enter kindergarten, leading to poor K-12 outcomes and low post-secondary or credential enrollment leaving the region with a workforce not ready for 21st century jobs and persistently slow economic development.

Limited Coordination

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

QUALITY EARLY CARE
and
SCHOOL READINESS

With Challenges Come Opportunities

Early Matters Fresno has identified the approach and investment priorities necessary to help young children and their families reach their full potential and support inclusive economic mobility across our region.

A Place-Based Dual Generation Focus

Research on the geography of economic mobility has documented the power of place to positively impact an individual's health, academic achievement, and economic outcomes. Early Matters Fresno has made an evidence-based decision to reduce the predictability that birth geography has on opportunity and life success by employing a place-based approach where the needs of children and their families are supported in tandem (dual-generation model), as the most effective way to address the complex challenges associated with economic mobility in Fresno County.



Maternal and Child Health

Improving maternal and child health is crucial for the well-being of families and the community as a whole. It makes the best sense to focus on those strategies that support mothers and the early development of their children. The science shows that beginning pre-pregnancy and up to two years after birth, the brain and our basic physical systems develop at an explosive rate that is never again repeated in our lifetime. This is a time of both enormous vulnerability and enormous potential. This priority area includes expanding services and growing a highly trained and targeted maternal health and home visitation workforce. This intentionality, together with advocating for the policy changes needed to ensure sustainable workforce pipelines, will close service gaps, increase access, build health equity and set families on a trajectory for economic mobility.

Quality Child Care and School Readiness

The solution to limited access to family support services and limited coordination of these services is twofold: supporting current workers in their everyday challenges and developing the additional workforce required to meet the needs of our residents. The strategies within this investment priority aim to support working parents by expanding the availability of affordable quality childcare. This expansion will create new jobs for childcare providers and offer professional development and higher earning potential for the current childcare workforce.

Leverage Begins Now

Early Matters Fresno is uniquely positioned to leverage emerging systems and public funding being allocated toward proven community initiatives.

Examples include:

Community Schools

The California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) is a massive \$4.1 billion dollar state investment in Community Schools for the purpose of connecting community agencies, local government efforts, and community resources to improve student outcomes. These partnerships will focus on improving academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement. In 2023, the Office of Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS) became home to a CA Community Schools Regional Transformational Assistance Center (RTAC), one of only eight in the state. This department provides funding and technical assistance in the development of Community Schools across the Central Valley. The Early Matters Fresno leadership team now includes the Director of Community Schools RTAC and two Executive Leadership Coaches. This relationship allows for unprecedented access to the TK-12 system and the longstanding trusted relationships that the FCSS staff has with school administrators and the school sites needed for dual-generation place-based work.

Community Information Exchange

On December 11, 2023 community organizations came together to launch the initial phase of Fresno County's Community Information Exchange (CIE), a joint project that includes the County of Fresno, the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, and Fresno Cradle to Career. The Fresno County Community Information Exchange (CIE) is an ambitious initiative aimed at transforming the way data is collected and shared to improve the lives of Fresno County residents.

Early Matters Fresno will connect county departments, schools, and other relevant community organizations to ensure immediate access to information (the level of information is based on the role a person has within an organization) regarding services provided to students and families throughout the county. This expedited data sharing across sectors will allow for improved communication, reduced duplication, and coordinated services ensuring all Fresno County residents can access the support they need to thrive.

An Early Matters Fresno pilot project to coordinate county-wide home visitation services is underway including data collection and sharing to understand the impact that home visitation has on reducing preterm births and maternal depression.

Networked Improvement Communities

In Spring 2024 we launched the Early Matters Fresno Networked Improvement Community (NIC) in partnership with the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Departments of Community Schools and Data, Strategy and Improvement (DSI). The goal is to coordinate pre-pregnancy to age five strategies in two school districts so that these sites become anchors of place-based systems change. Maternal health, home visitation, early care and education, and parent leadership will all be purposefully coordinated using an improvement science model. Working with improvement specialists from the DSI team, the groups will identify and work on a common problem with a shared aim. Shared measures will be put in place to determine if changes are leading to improvement. This action-oriented model is intended to accelerate learning, simplify complex systems and identify system and practice improvements. Bringing community-based partners, community schools, and parents together in a facilitated improvement process is expected to reveal coordination opportunities that can be tested for viability.



Strategies for Impact

Maternal and Child Health

★ Expand the Doula Network with a focus on black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) needs

★ Expand the number of home visitors to deliver programming within high-need BIPOC zip codes

★ Continue to develop the Community Information Exchange to support data sharing across partners

★ Support policy development including compensation to achieve three developmental screenings by age three

★ Create partnerships to increase community awareness, parent education and supports for developmental screenings and early interventions for children identified with special needs and/or developmental delays

★ Advocate to stabilize and increase public funding levels for home visitation and higher doula reimbursement rates through Medi-Cal

★ Support cross-sector policies/programs to promote prosperity that include mental and physical wellness, living wage jobs, systems coordination and neighborhood improvement

★ Advocate that California adopt Medi-Cal group prenatal care reimbursement at adequate levels

★ Support funding of place-based community-driven collaborative efforts that address basic needs, increase parent engagement and peer support and increase referral coordination to needed services

★ **Allocations**

★ **Policies**

★ **Partnerships**

Quality Child Care and School Readiness

★ Increase the development and licensure of Early Care and Education (ECE) providers across the mixed delivery system to meet Fresno County families' child care needs

★ Increase capacity of ECE professionals via access to expanded professional development and higher education opportunities

★ Engage with current and potential Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers to conceptualize and implement a continuum of resources and service supports for FFN providers

★ Advocate for public policies and funding that increase workforce compensation, promote professional development and support recruiting qualified Early Care and Education professionals

★ Work with employers to develop organizational policies that support healthy starts including extended parent leave and access to affordable child care

★ **Allocations**

★ **Policies**

★ **Partnerships**

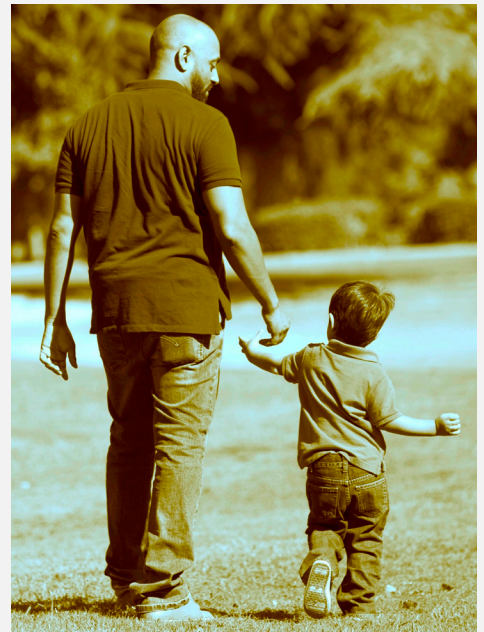
Civic Infrastructure

What infrastructure will support progress?

The coalition of anchor partners that make up the Fresno C2C Leadership Council creates a shared operating environment for partners serving families raising children. Together they create a relationship-rich city and county, uproot isolation between sectors and drive progress.

Fresno C2C Leadership Council:

- **Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher**, Superintendent
Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
- **Ketti Davis**, Superintendent
Central Unified School District
- **The Honorable Mary Dolas**, Superior Court Judge
Fresno County Juvenile Dependency Court
- **Coreen Campos**, Interim Executive Director
The Children's Movement of Fresno
- **Dr. Carole Goldsmith**, Chancellor
State Center Community College District
- **Fabiola González**, Executive Director
First 5 Fresno County
- **Misty Her**, Interim Superintendent
Fresno Unified School District
- **Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval**, President
Fresno State
- **Kurt Madden**, Executive Director
Career Nexus
- **Paul Nerland**, Chief Administrative Officer
County of Fresno
- **Jeffrey Nkansah**, Chief Executive Officer
CalViva Health
- **Lynne Ashbeck**, Senior Vice-President
Valley Children's Healthcare
- **Ashley Swearengin**, President and CEO
Central Valley Community Foundation
- **Tyrone Roderick Williams**, Chief Executive Officer
Fresno Housing



In addition to influential CEO-level leadership, Early Matters Fresno includes middle managers, program managers, practitioners, and grassroots leaders who work closely with families raising children.

Community-Based Partners

BLACK Wellness and Prosperity Center
California Health Collaborative
Central Valley Regional Center
Centro la Familia Advocacy Services
Children's Services Network
Comprehensive Youth Services
EasterSeals
Exceptional Parents Unlimited
Fresno American Indian Health Project
Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission
Reading and Beyond
The Children's Movement of Fresno
West Fresno Family Resource Center
Westside Family Preservation Center

Education and Health Partners

Anthem
CalViva Health
Career Nexus
Central Unified School District
Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
Fresno State
Fresno Unified School District
Parlier Unified School District
State Center Community College District
Valley Children's Healthcare

County and Regional Partners

Central Valley Community Foundation
First 5 Fresno County
Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health
Fresno County Department of Public Health
Fresno County Department of Social Services



Shared Commitment

All partners are committed to achieving Early Matters Fresno outcomes by participating in the following ways:

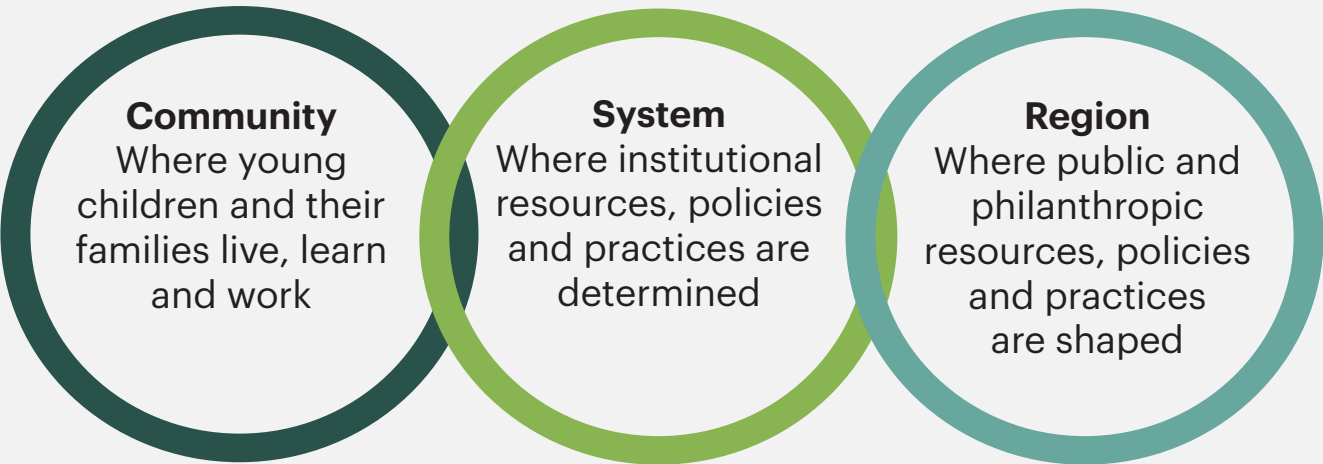
- Collect data and participate in the development of the Community Information Exchange.
- Use data to develop and refine programs and policies.
- Work with other Early Matters Fresno partners to strengthen community resources through purposeful coordination.
- Advocate for policy and practice changes where relevant and beneficial.
- Leverage financial and/or in-kind institutional resources to support implementation.
- Celebrate progress through shared messaging, spreading awareness about the work and advocating that others get involved.

Early Matters Fresno partners are set to benefit from increased alignment with one another, improvements in shared metrics and enhanced policy making. The Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Data, Strategy and Improvement Department is supporting partners to better coordinate with one another using a continuous improvement model. Partners will have easier access to publicly available data sets and gain new insights from original data collection. The collective insights captured through resident and youth involvement, led by The Children's Movement of Fresno, will create opportunities for better and more targeted policy and practice improvements.

These commitments help all partners undertake new levels of coordination toward shared results on an ongoing basis. Commitments will be monitored by the Fresno C2C staff and championed by the C2C Leadership Council.

How will this help young children and their families?

Through the aligned contributions of Early Matters Fresno partners, community and systems level outcomes will improve across Fresno County. As a result, families raising our youngest children will have access to better and more aligned support, which will improve their lives and the regional economy over time.



Interlocking Benefits of Early Matters Fresno by Level

Community-Level Benefits

Youth and Resident Leaders engaged in improvements with relevant leaders and useful data is guiding decisions

Supportive service pipelines are mapped onto child and family journeys pre-pregnancy to age 5

Systems-Level Benefits

Institutional role clarity

Breaking down of silos that are inhibiting progress

New and more effective partnerships

More effective use of public and private resources

Regional Benefits

Proven strategies from innovative partnerships are scaled and sustained

Policies and budgets aimed at families raising young children are strengthened and barriers are removed

Early Matters Fresno Backbone Support

Early Matters Fresno partners will benefit from increased alignment with one another, improvements in shared metrics and enhanced policy making. Fresno Cradle to Career and First 5 Fresno County will serve as the backbone organizations for convening, continuous improvement, data measurement, policy advocacy and coordination. The Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Data, Strategy and Improvement Department will assist partners in coordination using a continuous improvement model. As such, partners will have easier access to publicly available data sets and gain new insights from original data collection. The collective insights captured through resident and youth involvement, led by The Children's Movement of Fresno, will also create opportunities for more targeted policy and practice improvements.





Executive Leadership

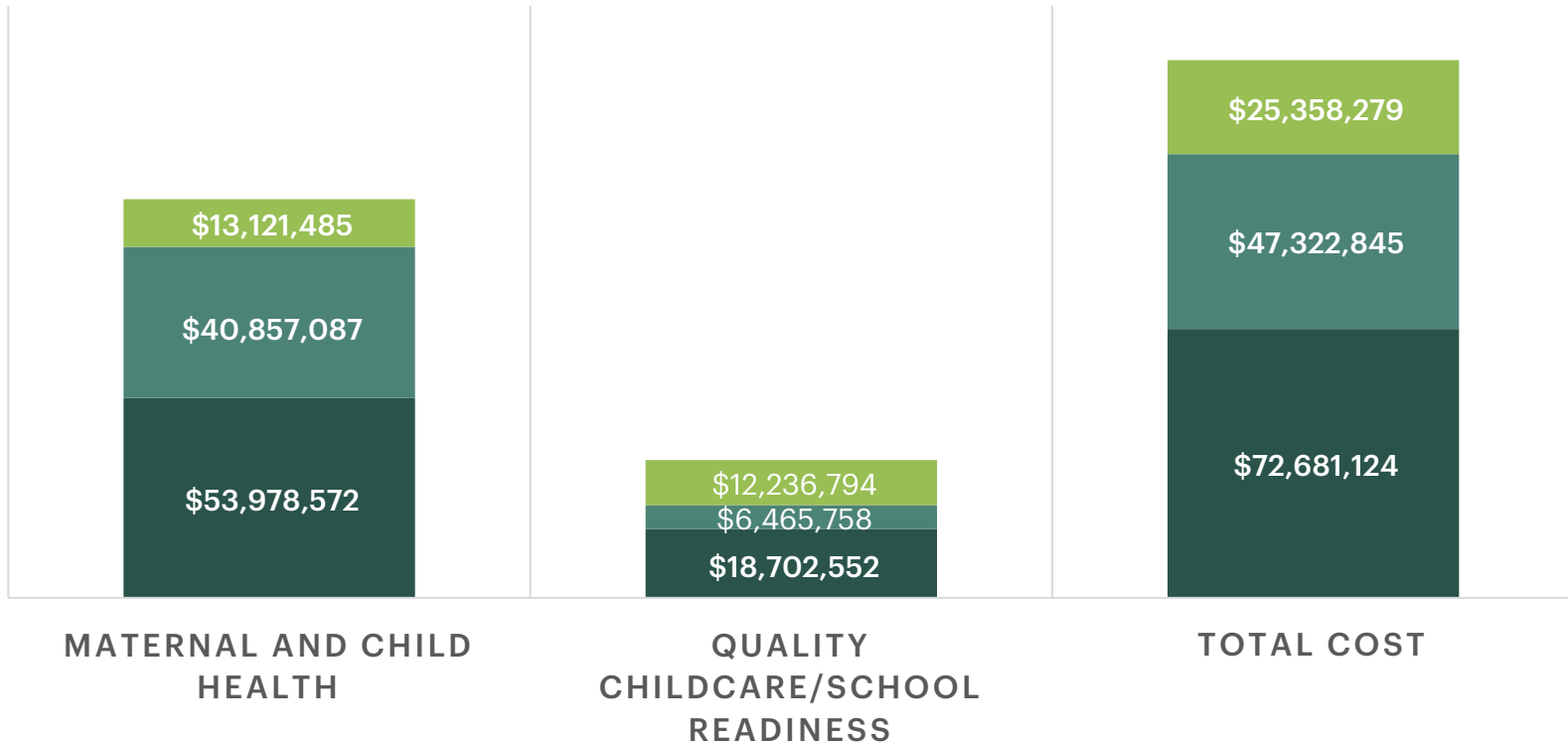


Three-Year Investment Overview:

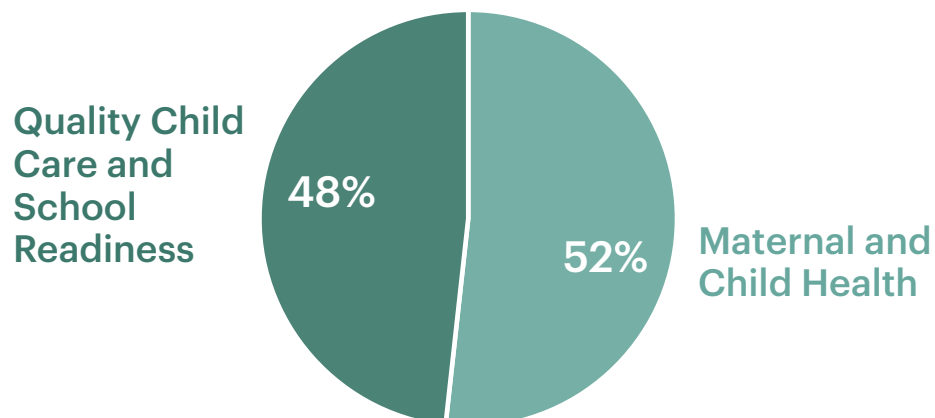
- The three-year total investment need is \$72,681,124
- Over \$47 million is currently being directed to the effort.
- The needed funding gap is \$25,358,279

EARLY MATTERS TOTAL INVESTMENT OVER 3 YEARS

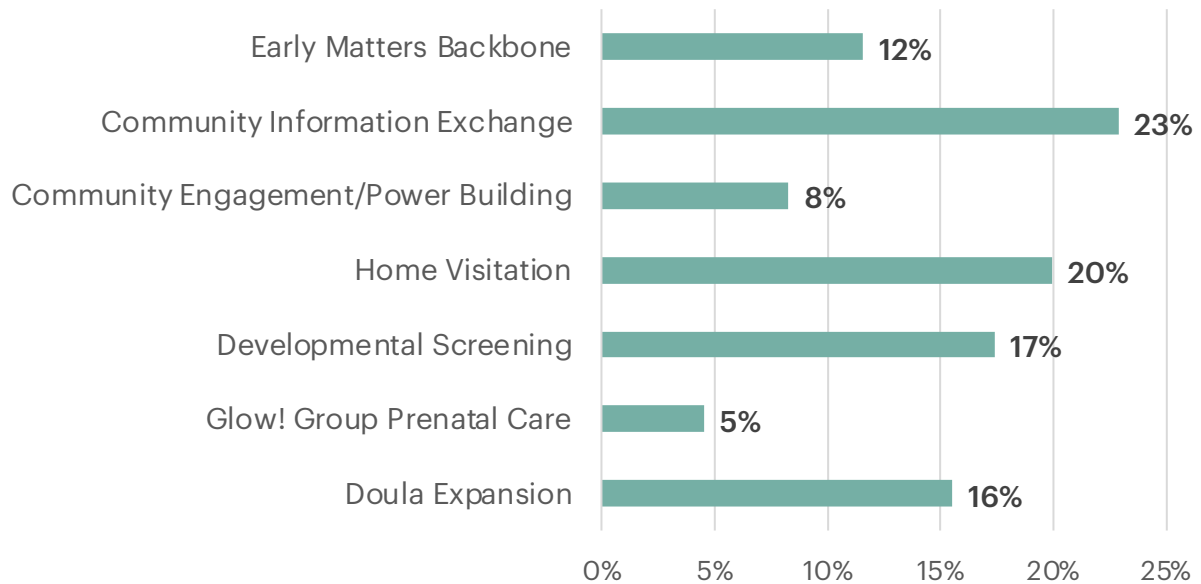
■ 3 Year Total Cost ■ 3 Year Existing Funds ■ 3 Year Gap



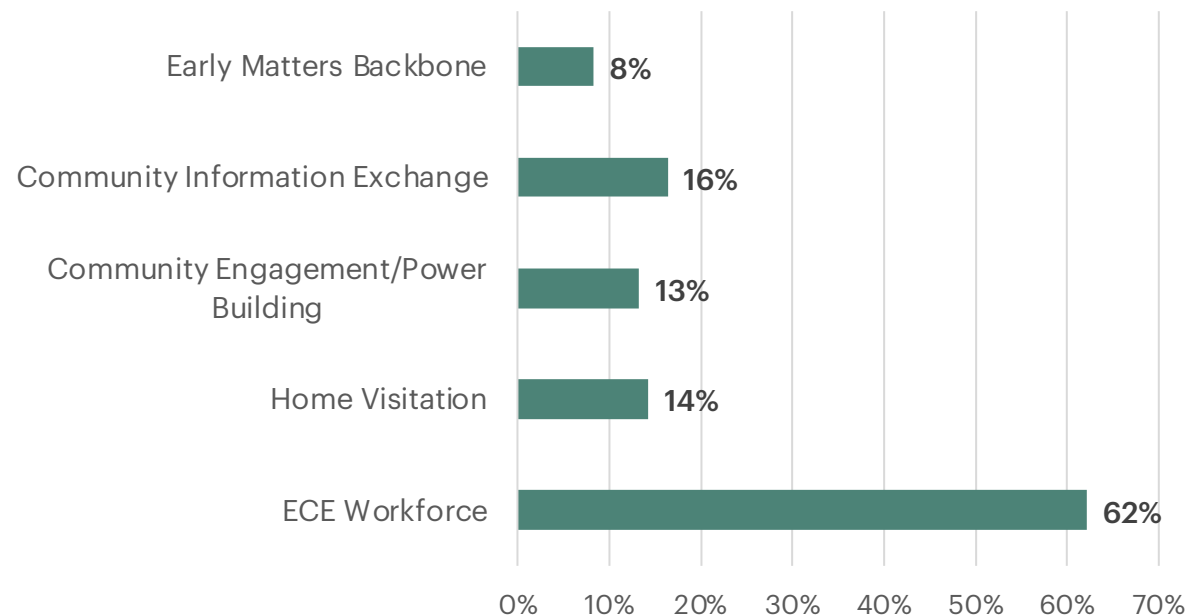
Early Matters 3 Year Investment Gap of \$25,358,279 by Category Percent



Maternal and Child Health Percent by Categories of \$13.1 M Gap Funding Over 3 Years



Quality Childcare/School Readiness Percent by Categories of \$12.3 M Gap Funding Over 3 Years

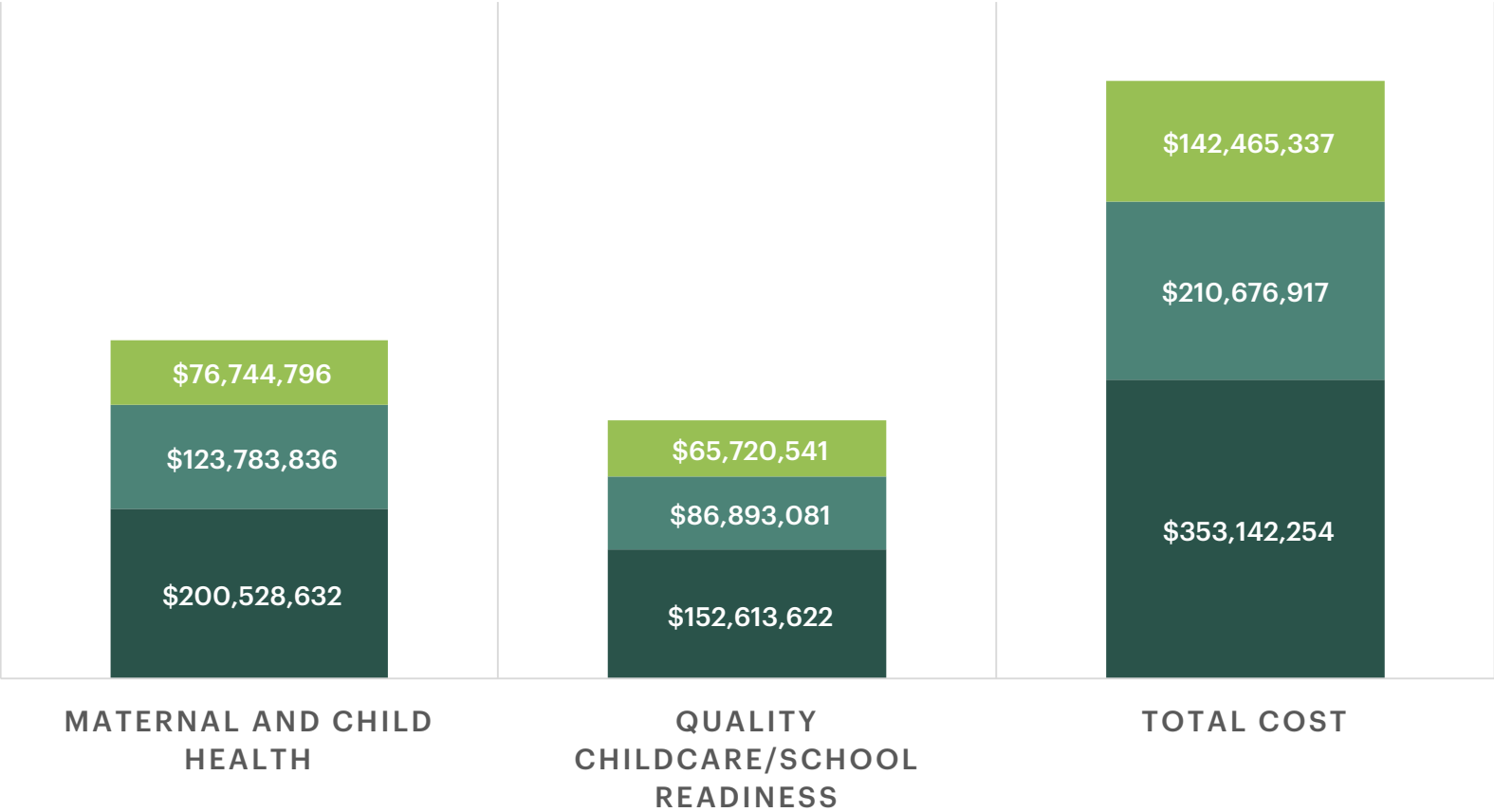


Ten-Year Investment Overview

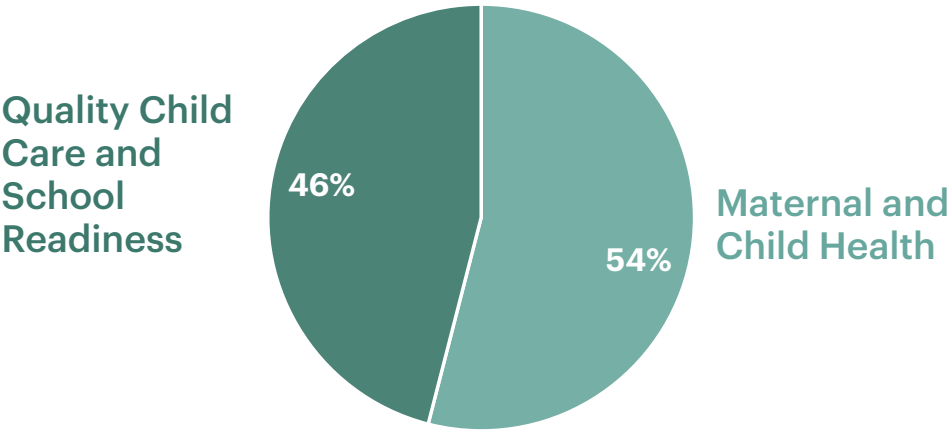
- The ten-year total investment need is \$353,142,254
- Over \$210.5 million is currently being directed to the effort
- The needed funding gap is \$142,465,337

EARLY MATTERS TOTAL INVESTMENT OVER 10 YEARS

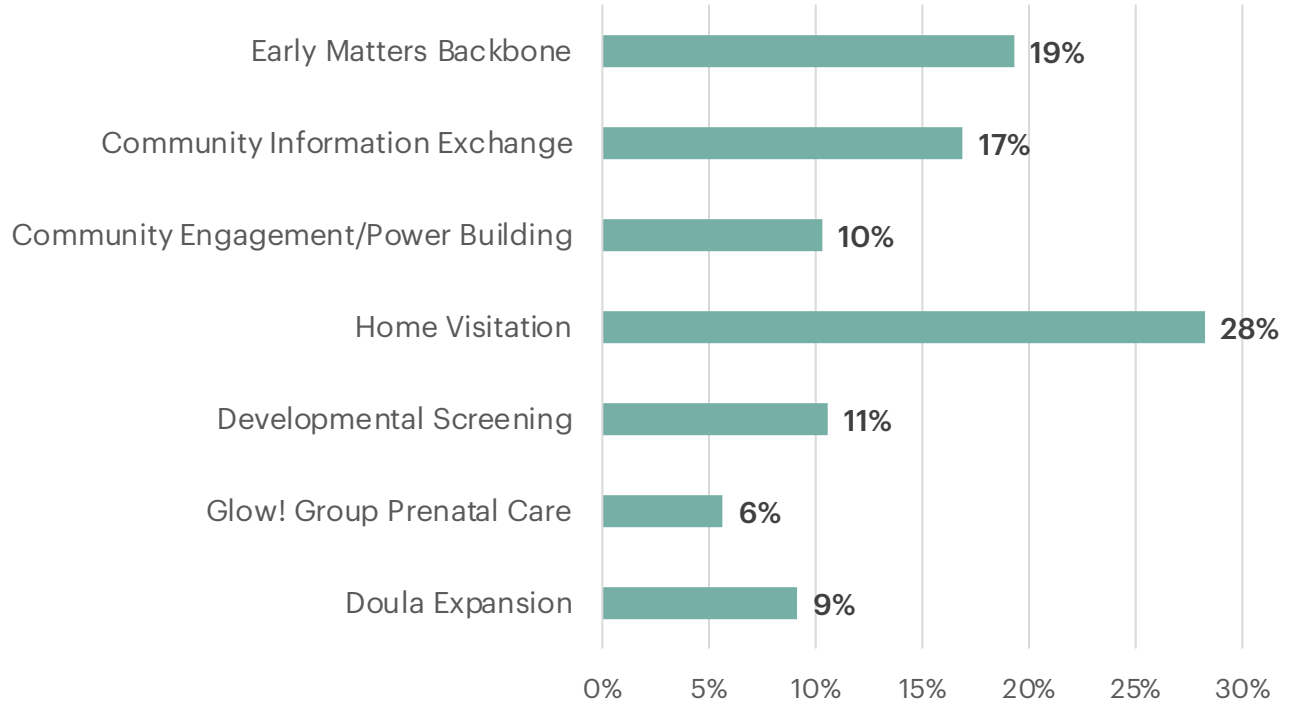
■ 10 Year Total Cost ■ 10 Yr Existing Funds ■ 10 yr Investment Gap



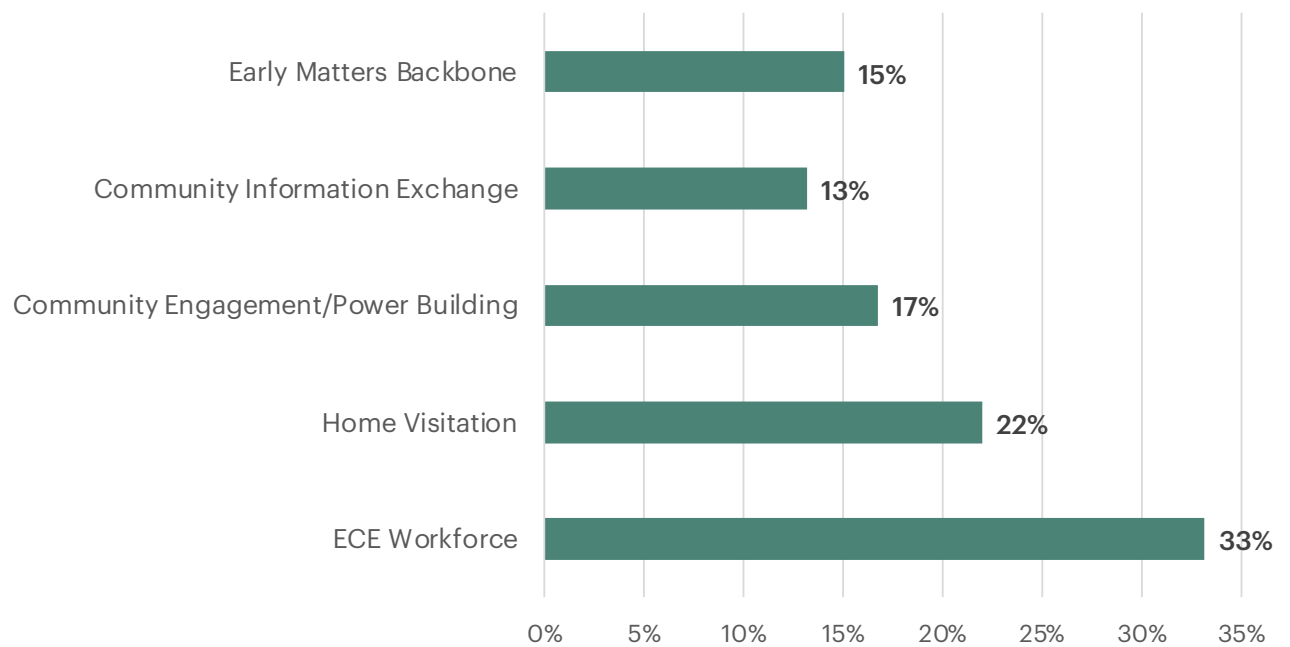
Early Matters 10 Year Investment Gap of \$142,465,337 by Category Percent



Maternal and Child Health Percent by Categories of \$76.7 M Gap Funding Over 10 Years



Quality Childcare/School Readiness Percent by Categories of \$65.7 M Gap Funding Over 10 Years





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