Early Childhood Investments as Economic Development

A Framework for Early Childhood Development Program and Policy Advocacy

Global Leaders for Young Children Advocacy Project

North American Region

May 2014

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Early childhood development (ECD) programs and advocacy groups can help achieve advocacy and fundraising goals by conveying the benefits to ECD investments as economic development. The moral case for investing in early childhood—investing in children is the right thing to do—may not be compelling enough for policymakers and funders to take action. The Framework is designed to serve as a guide for ECD programs and advocacy groups to formulate and articulate the economic case for investing in early childhood initiatives.

The economic development frame focuses on three key themes. First, investments in ECD help improve prospects for long-run economic growth by enhancing workforce productivity. Many policymakers and business leaders are concerned about economic development. Improving the education levels and skills of workers is a key ingredient of economic growth.

Second, fiscally conservative policymakers and business leaders are concerned about using public and private resources most efficiently. ECD investments save society money through reducing costs associated with remedial and special education, crime and social services, while increasing tax revenues. The present value of benefits is much higher than costs.

Third, policymakers can impact not only long-term economic returns, but also short-run effects on local economic development. High-quality child care programs allow parents to enter the workforce and help reduce parent employee absenteeism. In addition, research shows that ECD programs tend to have strong links to local economies. That is, in several countries child care providers, relative to many other businesses, tend to buy a greater share of services and materials from local businesses, and child care workers tend to spend more of their earnings locally.

The Framework covers the following:

- Summarizes the economic development case for investing in ECD.
- Presents the conditions for an ECD program to make claims of affecting economic development.
- Discusses strategies for recruiting business leaders as supporters and advocates.
- Presents case studies that demonstrate how a U.S. ECD program frames its impact on economic development and how an advocacy group in the United Arab Emirates uses the Framework for advocating for ECD policy.

A word about using the Framework. While the Framework is written primarily for ECD program staff and advocates, the content is applicable to policymakers, community and business leaders, and anyone interested in ECD. In addition, the Framework is not necessarily designed to be read from beginning to end, but rather for readers to skip to a section or case study of interest.
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Section 1: The economic case for investing in young children

This section reviews the arguments that comprise the economic case for investing in young children.

1. Investments in early childhood development (ECD) improve the long-run productivity of the workforce, a key to economic growth.
2. Investments in ECD have a high public return on investment by reducing costs to government and society.
3. A strong child care industry allows parents to enter the workforce and be more productive while at work.
4. The child care industry is a relatively large industry and employer. Furthermore, child care businesses tend to purchase goods and services from other local businesses and employees tend to spend their earnings locally, which stimulate economic activity.

The evidence for each of these arguments is supported by research conducted in the United States and a growing body of evidence from other countries.

Investments in ECD improve the long-run productivity of the workforce
Investments in the education and skills of young children can have a substantial impact on their success as students, workers and citizens. That is, one of the most efficient means to boost the productivity of the workforce in 15 to 20 years is to invest in today’s youngest children.

Early investments increase labor productivity as adults; that is, the amount produced per hour worked. Strong labor productivity in turn supports economic growth. Countries that have highly skilled workforces have stronger economic growth relative to countries with lower-skilled workforces. Within the United States, those states with a higher percentage of population with a college degree tend to have higher levels of per capita personal income.¹

However, demographic trends in many countries show that the growth in the working-age population is slowing and is expected to slow even more during the next few decades. In the United States, growth in the working-age population is expected to slow as the baby boom generation retires.² The same trend is expected for most developed countries, and even in China the growth of the working-age population is expected to slow in the near term and eventually shrink somewhat.

Meanwhile, the number of jobs that require higher levels of education and training are expected to grow faster than jobs that require lower levels of education and training. With a slower-growing labor force, it’s becoming more difficult and will continue to be more difficult for employers to find qualified workers to fill open positions.
According to the Manpower Group’s 2012 annual survey of global talent, respondents from 41 countries indicate growing difficulty finding applicants with the appropriate set of skills to fill open positions at their companies. The good news for educated workers now and in the future is jobs that require more skills pay higher annual wages. For example, in the United States a job that requires at least a bachelor’s degree on average pays three times more than a job that only requires on-the-job training.

The combination of a slower-growing workforce combined with anticipated increased demand for higher-skilled workers means schools and universities are under pressure to prepare more children to succeed in the workforce as adults.

However, the foundation for labor productivity begins well before children arrive at the elementary school door. A child’s quality of life and the contributions that child makes to society as an adult can be traced to his or her first years of life. During these first few years of life, 700 new neural connections are formed every second. When this sensitive period includes support for growth in language, motor skills, adaptive abilities and social-emotional functioning, the child is more likely to succeed in school and to later contribute to society.

The skills employers look for—including ability in math and language, working well on teams, critical thinking, self-motivation and persistence—are shaped during the first few years of life. According to James Heckman, Nobel laureate economist at the University of Chicago, skills learned later in life build on those learned as a young child; thus, “skills beget skills.” When a child is off to a good start, future investments pay larger benefits than if a child is not prepared early.

Investments in ECD have a high public return on investment

Because early childhood is a sensitive period for development, costs to government and society are high when a child is not prepared to succeed in school. Without support during the early years, a child is more likely to drop out of school, depend on government assistance and commit crime—thereby imposing significant costs on society.

The achievement gap observed in U.S. elementary and secondary schools between children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds is detected before children arrive at school. In Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children, researchers document that by the age of 3, children observed in families with college-educated parents had twice the vocabulary as children in families with very low income. Furthermore, early gaps associated with family income persist into school age. For example, gaps in U.S. math test scores by income quartile observed at age 12 are already present at age 6.
A study of early childhood cognitive development using data from Columbia, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Peru shows that children from about the ages of 3 to 6 from the wealthiest quartile of households had scores 0.57 to 1.23 standard deviations higher than children in the poorest quartile of households. Furthermore, in three of the countries where researchers followed children over time, the gaps in achievement did not appear to change substantively once children entered school through ages 8 to 13.\textsuperscript{11}

Not only do the early years have an impact on the degree to which children are ready to succeed in school, but a substantial body of research demonstrates that early environments have a lifelong impact on health. As articulated by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child at Harvard University, early experiences are built into the body (for better or worse), and significant adversity early in life can produce physiological disruptions that persist far into adulthood and lead to lifelong impairments in both physical and mental health.\textsuperscript{12} For example, according to analysis of data collected in the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, adults who suffered multiple adverse experiences in childhood were three times more likely to suffer from heart disease.\textsuperscript{13} Adverse experiences include excessive stressful environments, such as growing up in poverty; exposure to violence, abuse or neglect; a household member incarcerated or mentally ill; and parental separation or divorce.

Many children growing up in developing countries face adverse conditions for child development, such as poverty, malnutrition, poor health and unstimulating home environments.\textsuperscript{14} A 2007 study estimates that over 200 million children under age 5 living in developing countries are not fulfilling their developmental potential based on the prevalence of early childhood stunting and the number of people living in poverty.\textsuperscript{15} The study authors estimate that the loss of human potential among these children is associated with more than a 20 percent deficit in adult income later in life.

Researchers associated with the University of Oxford recently documented a relationship between early childhood nutrition and cognition in Peru. Child-specific shocks in the form of food price changes during the critical period of development are used to show that a one standard deviation increase in a height-for-age score is associated with about a 20 percent standard deviation gain in a vocabulary test score.\textsuperscript{16}

In response to the science of early childhood, ECD programs seek to nurture healthy development from the earliest years. Programs that provide enriched experiences for children and involve parents provide benefits for all children, but they have the strongest impact on children from disadvantaged environments.
Four key longitudinal evaluations in the United States demonstrate that early interventions can have a positive impact on young children from disadvantaged environments that lasts well into adulthood. The studies used well-matched comparison groups and cost-benefit analysis to compare the estimated dollar value of benefits to the cost of the programs. Analyses of the Perry Preschool Program, the Abecedarian Project, the Chicago Child-Parent Centers and the Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project showed annual rates of return, adjusted for inflation, ranging from 7 percent to just over 20 percent. The Perry Preschool Program and Chicago Child-Parent Centers provided preschool at ages 3 and 4. Abecedarian provided full-day care and education for children a few months old through age 4 and the Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project provided home visits by a nurse to high-risk mothers during pregnancy until the child turned age 2.

The benefits attributed to these ECD programs include reductions in special education and crime, and increases in tax revenue. According to a study by Wilder Research, investment in early childhood education can save K-12 public schools money by reducing special education costs and grade retention and improving classroom productivity. A cost-benefit analysis in Minnesota suggests that the monetary benefits accrued to the school system come close to covering the cost of providing preschool.

Reductions in the cost of crime play a large role in boosting overall rates of return, particularly for the Perry Preschool Program which has a benefit-cost ratio of $16 returned for every $1 invested (see chart). Only the Abecedarian Project did not include cost reductions due to decreases in crime because differences in crime rates between the treatment and control groups were not statistically significant. In each study, the drop in crime led to reduced costs for incarceration, police protection and courts. Furthermore, the costs to the victims of crime decreased, including loss of property and suffering. Added together across all four longitudinal studies, the savings in crime alone could justify increased investment in high-quality ECD.
In addition to the longitudinal studies, a meta-analysis by Washington State Institute for Public Policy creates an average composite of 53 ECD programs to compare the return on investment with other intervention programs for youth. The results for early childhood education for 3- and 4-year-old children, the Nurse Family Partnership and home visiting programs for at-risk mothers and children compared favorably with other intervention program types reviewed by the authors, including several parole supervision programs for juvenile offenders.24

In addition to reductions in remedial education and crime costs, the longitudinal evaluations show that children who take part in ECD programs have higher earnings and pay more taxes once they reach working age. According to a cost-benefit analysis of the Perry Preschool study, a child who attended preschool will pay $38,000 to $75,000 more in taxes over his or her lifespan than a child who did not attend.25

However, the return to investment calculations have not captured a number of potential benefits from improving child and adult health. For example, a review of the Abecedarian study and recently collected biomedical data show that adults in their mid-30s who attended the ECD program as children have lower prevalence of risk factors for heart disease and diabetes compared with adults in the control group. The study notes the outcomes were particularly strong for males who had lower blood pressure and no incidences of metabolic syndrome whereas 25 percent of males in the control group were affected by metabolic syndrome.26

Finally, rates of return for the longitudinal early childhood education studies compare favorably with the U.S. stock market, which on average earned between 5 percent and 7 percent, adjusted
for inflation, over the past few decades. This suggests that vulnerable children are a better social investment than stock market equity. Finally, while children and their families benefit in the studies, the majority of financial benefits accrue to society. That is, everyday citizens (in many countries, taxpayers) receive proportionally more benefits than the individual children and families participating in ECD programs.

More recent studies show children benefit from preschool
While the return on investment calculations are based on studies that started 20 to 40 years ago, recent evidence from preschool assessments and child care studies provides additional corroboration that ECD programs help children prepare for school.

In the United States a five-state study shows that children who attended a state preschool program at age 4 showed overall gains in vocabulary, math and print awareness. Meanwhile, an analysis of New Mexico’s fourth year of offering preschool shows that vocabulary and math scores posted solid growth relative to the control group, while early literacy scores grew substantially. Similar gains are found in a study of Oklahoma’s universal preschool program in Tulsa, with low-income children posting larger test score gains than higher-income children.

Two U.S. studies, one that examines child care in poor communities and a second that includes a more diverse sample, both found that enrollment in center-based care was associated with positive cognitive outcomes for young children, particularly when child care providers had high levels of skill and education and child-teacher ratios were low. These positive effects were significant in both poor communities and more diverse communities even after other relevant factors such as family background and maternal education were controlled. However, an additional finding from these studies is an increase in children’s physically aggressive behavior after participating in center-based care, particularly for children who spend large amounts of time in these care arrangements.

In the Philippines researchers evaluated an ECD initiative that enabled local governments to deliver a broad set of ECD-related services to pregnant women and children under age 7. Comparing children in regions that provided the ECD program with a region not funded to provide the program, the study shows that the ECD program is associated with positive impacts on children’s cognitive, motor, language and social development and short-run nutrition status, with some suggestion that duration of exposure increases the program impacts.

A recent study of child care center quality in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, finds that the developmental age of children attending high-quality programs is greater than the developmental age of children attending low-quality programs. The authors note that improving the activities and program structure of child care centers is associated with an increase in child developmental age of 3 months at a 6 percent increase in cost.
A longitudinal study in Jamaica found that one-hour weekly visits from community health workers over a two year period who taught parenting skills and encouraged mothers to interact and play with their children in ways to develop cognitive and personality skills increased the average earnings of participants by 42 percent 20 years later. Children in the study were toddler age, stunted and living in poverty. Not only did participant wages exceed a randomly assigned control group, they also caught up to the earnings of a matched nonstunted group of children.\(^3^7\)

Achievement gaps can be reduced when high-quality ECD programs reach disadvantaged children. For example, an analysis of the Infant Health and Development Program in the United States, which provided a high-quality center-based early childhood education program between the ages of one and three showed much larger impacts among low-income children than high-income children. Trajectories suggest that such a program offered to low-income children would eliminate the income-based achievement gap at age 3 and between a third and three quarters of gaps at ages 5 and 8.\(^3^8\)

Finally, while many benefits to ECD programs accrue years later, several benefits are realized in the short-term and some are immediate. Home visiting programs, such as the Nurse Family Partnership, are associated with positive birth outcomes and reductions in child and social welfare costs.\(^3^9\) The Chicago Child-Parent Center program is associated with reductions in child maltreatment.\(^4^0\) As discussed, ECD programs can reduce remedial education costs during the first few years of primary school. For example, Utah’s Granite School District is using special education cost reductions to fund preschool through a results-based financing model.\(^4^1\)

The studies listed here are only an overview of ECD program research from the United States and throughout the world. The results from these studies and many others are consistent with the science of child development – early investments can have a strong positive impact on children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the most to gain.

**A strong child care industry allows parents to enter the workforce and be more productive at their jobs.**

While much of the labor productivity gains and several government cost reductions from ECD investments occur years down the road, there are substantial economic development benefits that accrue in the near term.

Child care is a key component of economic development infrastructure alongside other important infrastructure, such as transportation and communication systems. In the United States, 65 percent of children under age 6 have all their parents in the workforce. A high-quality child care system helps parents enter the workforce, and once they find a job, makes it less likely that they
will be absent or less productive due to unreliable child care arrangements. Research shows that parent absenteeism and productivity reductions due to child care breakdowns cost U.S. businesses more than $3 billion annually.\textsuperscript{42} This is consistent with studies in other parts of the world. In the United Arab Emirates, Dubai Customs reported that after opening its own child care program, absenteeism and tardiness decreased 70 percent and productivity increased 71 percent among parent employees whose children enrolled.\textsuperscript{43} A high-quality child care system can help mitigate these employee-related costs, while increasing profitability.

The child care industry is a relatively large employer and tends to be more interconnected with the local economy than many other industries

The child care industry is a large employer with almost 2 million workers in the United States.\textsuperscript{44} Furthermore, relative to many other industries, U.S. child care providers tend to buy a greater share of services and materials from local businesses, and child care workers tend to spend more of their earnings locally.\textsuperscript{45} A similar result was found in a Canadian study.\textsuperscript{46} While other industries have been targets for economic development policy in the United States, such as receiving tax credits or subsidies, child care traditionally has not been. However, Mildred Warner notes that statewide surveys of economic developers in Wisconsin and New York found that more than 80 percent believe child care should be part of economic development policy, while 58 percent note that their communities face an inadequate supply of quality child care.\textsuperscript{47}

The economic case for investing in ECD, therefore, is found not only through benefits that accrue several years down the road, but through increased jobs and income in the near term. Tim Bartik concludes in his book, \textit{Investing in Kids: Early Childhood Programs and Local Economic Development}, that ECD investments provide local economic development benefits that significantly increase the near-term and long-run employment rates and wage rates of a state or local economy.\textsuperscript{48}
Section 2: How an ECD program can frame its impact on economic development

As discussed in Section 1, an ECD program can accrue long-run benefits by reducing social costs and increasing labor force productivity through helping children prepare for school. Longitudinal studies, like the Perry Preschool, have been able to demonstrate the long-run return on investment. However, it isn’t practical for an ECD program to embark on a 40-year study to show results. Nevertheless, an ECD program can use evaluation results to make an economic development case.

Note that in this section we use a broad definition for ECD program; that is, a program that provides services directly to children and families or indirectly by supporting programs that provide direct services.

Program evaluation
The first step in establishing near-term and potentially long-run impact is to conduct an evaluation to determine the extent to which the ECD program achieves its intended outcomes. Once an ECD program shows it can effectively prepare children for school, an ECD program can argue that the children served are on a trajectory consistent with the benefits achieved in the longitudinal studies. It may also be possible for an ECD program to estimate the value of near-term impacts, such as reductions in grade retention and special education assignments.

The following two resources describe how to set up an evaluation and the key features of such an evaluation. These guidelines are general and apply to ECD and non-ECD programs.


As Gilliam and Leiter note, process, outcome and impact studies provide strategies to evaluate an ECD program.

- If a program is implementing a new model, a process study can provide detailed information on what a program did, including measuring the scope and intensity of the program’s intervention. Information from the process study can lead to improvements that help successfully replicate the model in other locations.
- An outcome study evaluates program participants at the end of a program intervention on key variables of interest. However, an outcome study doesn’t
provide enough information to assess whether the ECD program was the cause of changes.

- An impact study uses scientifically rigorous quantitative techniques to demonstrate a causal relationship between participation in an ECD program and desired outcomes.

- A key feature of an impact study is developing a comparison group of children that is almost identical to the group of children who were treated by the program. By developing a comparison group, the study creates a counterfactual – that is, if the ECD program wasn’t implemented, what would have been the resulting condition of the children? Differences between the children in the ECD program and children in the comparison group represent the impact of the ECD program.

A key concern of evaluators is accounting for selection bias. That is, children who receive services from an ECD program may differ from eligible children who did not receive services because their family self-selected to participate in the ECD program. Families who choose to participate may have more motivation and resources than families who did not sign up to participate. If these differences are not accounted for, any variation in outcomes between children who participated and those who did not may be at least a partial result of differences in family characteristics, not whether they participated in the program.

If properly implemented, a randomized control trial can account for selection bias. The Perry Preschool, Abecedarian and Nurse Family Partnership studies cited in Section 1 all used randomized control trials. The differences between the children and families who participated and the respective control groups represent the impact of the ECD programs. Furthermore, randomized trials don’t have to be expensive, particularly if the study can use data typically collected on students and are made available through administrative databases.49

If a randomized control trial is not practical or ethical given the circumstances, other research designs may apply. If the program has a particular demarcation, such as an age or family income eligibility requirement not related to other child or family characteristics that separates one group of children from another, a regression discontinuity design might apply. For example, most U.S. state preschool programs use a stringent age cut-off for enrollment eligibility. This allows researchers to compare children who are just old enough to enroll with children who are just a little too young to enroll. Researchers can account for effects of age differences between the two groups and show the impact of attending preschool versus not attending. A number of U.S. state preschool studies have used regression discontinuity to evaluate their programs. For example, as mentioned in Section 1, a study of five state preschools uses a regression-discontinuity design to show overall gains in vocabulary, math and print awareness.50
When neither of these techniques is practical, evaluators can use a quasi-experimental design and compare participating children with similar nonparticipating children and control for a number of background characteristics, such as family income, parent education, and so on. However, not all family characteristics are observable in data; therefore, concerns of selection bias remain.

Evaluators can also use the pre- and post-test results of assessments that are age-referenced to account for effects of maturation. That is, differences in scores from year to year show changes in a child’s score relative to other children their age and not the effect of the child growing one year older. However, this study design is an example of an outcome study rather than an impact study. Nevertheless, age-referenced assessments provide suggestive data on whether the program has an effect. For example, if age-referenced scores typically stay level for children from year to year, but children in an ECD program show gains, there are initial, but not sufficient, results to claim the ECD program is the cause of the score gains.

**Linking evaluation results to longitudinal studies and near-term impacts**

Once an ECD program establishes its impact on children, it can likely claim that future benefits may have some of the characteristics of the long-term ECD studies, particularly if the program serves children from disadvantaged backgrounds. That is, impacting school preparation can serve as a near-term marker to demonstrate that an ECD program can achieve long-term benefits. However, these claims would be suggestive, not definitive. In addition, ECD programs should be conservative in generalizing results from the studies of ECD programs decades earlier to the current time period and different regions of the country.

An ECD program may also establish its own return on investment value as opposed to comparing its outcomes to the longitudinal studies. To achieve this, a study needs to follow children long enough to show that near-term benefits have monetary values or near-term benefits are linked to long-term benefits which have monetary values. For example, Jeane Brooks-Gunn and colleagues offer a method that links improvements in early childhood test scores with adult earnings. However, generally the methods available to link near-term benefits of ECD programs to long-term benefits are limited.

**ECD programs indirectly serving children and families**

Some ECD initiatives or advocacy groups may not directly serve children and families, but rather indirectly support ECD programs by helping to improve facilities, teacher practices and curriculum, or to provide parent education. School preparation may be the end goal, but these initiatives focus on an intermediate outcome.

When the goal of the program is an intermediate outcome, such as improvements in teacher practices or dissemination of curriculum, the program can substantiate its impact on these measures with a rigorous evaluation. The evaluation may also be able to link the intermediate
measure with school preparation outcomes. The program can then demonstrate that the program affects school preparation by contributing to the enhanced quality in programming or ECD program operations. This link could enable the program to describe its impact in the context of ECD programs that directly serve children with a demonstrated long-run return on investment.

**Measuring child outcomes**

In the case of both ECD programs and initiatives that support ECD programs, when an investment positively impacts school preparation, the organization may be in a position to show that results are consistent with outcomes in long-run ECD program studies.

One way to compare child outcome measures is to convert raw test scores into standardized measures of effect. For example, vocabulary scores in the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test have a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. Therefore, a 5 point test score increase represents a gain of 0.33 standard deviations.52

An ECD program could compare its test score gains with those observed in long-term studies. Barnett presents ranges of effect sizes for long-term studies of ECD programs, such as the Chicago Child-Parent program, which had estimated effects on test scores at kindergarten between 0.35 to 0.77 standard deviations, depending on the measure.53

While a similar test score gain is not sufficient to claim that the ECD program would produce the same long-term results as those in the long-term studies, an ECD program can point out that its initial impact is consistent with previously conducted valid and reliable long-term studies.

**Demonstrating near-term benefits**

Some ECD programs may demonstrate the near-term impacts of early childhood services in terms of monetary values. For example, an ECD program may be able to demonstrate that it reduces rates of abuse and neglect in the home, special education services or grade retention in the k-12 school system.

The near-term benefits also have monetary benefits. Reductions in abuse and neglect save costs to the child protection system, and reducing special education and grade retention in the early grades can reduce costs to elementary schools. For example, the Granite School District in Utah has developed measures to demonstrate the impact its preschool program has on reducing special education costs.54

While short-term benefits have some monetary value, long-term benefits need to be included to capture the full range of ECD investment benefits. Nevertheless, initial measures of short-term monetary benefits can be helpful in advocating to funders and policymakers.
**Economic development impact**

In addition to ECD programs demonstrating an impact on child outcomes, programs can describe their economic development impact. Immediate economic development benefits include supporting parents to enter the workforce, which can result in increases in local jobs and income. Furthermore, ECD programs create jobs and income by hiring workers.\(^55\) ECD programs also have an impact on the local community as their employees buy goods and services in the local area and as ECD programs purchase goods and services from local businesses.

As discussed in Section 1, U.S. studies of the early childhood development industry have established that the ECD industry is connected equally or more so to local businesses than other industries. The economic impact multipliers calculated for the ECD industry are as large or larger than retail and tourism and other social infrastructure sectors such as hospitals, job training, elementary and secondary schools and colleges and universities.\(^56\) Yet, specifically quantifying economic development impact is difficult for a single ECD program. For example, it is difficult to determine if the ECD program did not exist how many fewer parents would be working. It is also difficult to quantify the impact of a single ECD program on the number of jobs and income levels in the region. Nevertheless, an ECD program has an economic development story to tell, including enabling parents to work and an impact on jobs and income.

**Enabling parents to work**

ECD programs that provide full-day services for children give parents the opportunity to enter the workforce. Furthermore, when children are cared for in reliable programs, parents are less likely to be distracted or need to leave work due to issues that arise in unreliable child care arrangements.\(^57\) Child care programs provide an important piece of economic development infrastructure. While ECD programs probably can’t claim that for every child in their program a parent can enter the workforce, ECD programs have methods to show their impact on working parents.

ECD programs with a waiting list could survey parents on the list to document families’ child care arrangements. Such a survey might reveal that some waiting list parents will only enter the workforce once a space opens at the ECD program. A survey might also reveal that parents are already working, but their children are cared for in informal child care arrangements. This information could show that the ECD program helps parents enter the workforce and be more effective at their jobs by providing reliable, quality child care.

ECD programs that don’t work directly with children but support child care programs that do, such as providing teacher training, can describe the impact they have on child care quality. These efforts support the provision of reliable child care so parents are more productive at work.
Impact on jobs and income

While it is difficult for an ECD program to calculate a specific numeric value regarding its economic development impact, it can document the number of employees at the ECD program and the program’s links with businesses in the community. An ECD program often has a number of local vendor relationships and program partnerships. If it is appropriate to share this information publicly, it may be helpful to highlight these local linkages in advocating for the ECD program.

ECD programs that don’t directly provide services to children, but support the work of programs that do, can provide statistics on the number of ECD programs and ECD workers reached. For example, programs that provide ECD workforce training can note the number of ECD workers who received training and the impact the training has on workers’ ability to retain employment at an ECD program and provide high-quality teaching to children.
Section 3: Recruiting business leaders as supporters and advocates

After establishing the economic case for investing in an ECD program or advocacy campaign, ECD program directors and advocates are in a solid position to recruit business leaders as key supporters and advocates. Business leaders are keenly aware of the need for a well-trained workforce to enhance economic growth. Furthermore, these individuals think in terms of return on investment and can see how investments in ECD benefit society in monetary values.

As ECD supporters and advocates, business leaders grab the attention of community leaders and policymakers as the “unlikely messengers,” providing a more credible investment argument. In the United States, organized and mobilized groups of business leaders have helped move the ECD agenda forward in a number of states, such as the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission, New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership, the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation and the Business Council of Alabama. This section discusses strategies to recruit business leaders as supporters and advocates, roles for business leaders in ECD and methods for continuous engagement.

ReadyNation/America’s Edge (www.readynation.org) is the preeminent business leader organization in the United States working to strengthen business through better policies for children and youth. They educate policymakers and the public about effective investments that will help businesses compete in today’s global marketplace, build a foundation for lasting economic security, and help children get on the right track to succeed in school and in life. With more than 1,000 business members, they have worked in most U.S. states and are beginning to work in three other countries outside the United States. The organization’s website provides a number of tools that provide further information on and support the following strategies for business engagement, including the publication, Mobilizing Business Champions for Children – A Guide for Advocates. 

Section 3 is written primarily for ECD advocates and program directors.

Strategies for identifying business leaders

Identify businesses with the potential to invest in ECD. Some businesses have a philanthropic mission to support education or community development. Other businesses may not have this particular focus, but are interested in the long-term prospects for the community and boosting their company’s credibility and brand.

Research businesses you approach. Also prepare a description of how their business connects with your organization’s work and shared objectives. In doing so, use the language of business, such as describing how a partnership would be effective and efficient in meeting your shared goals.
Identify and make a connection with a community liaison – someone well connected and known in the community to introduce you to business leaders. A liaison can help validate the capacity of your organization and that your organization’s services are beneficial to the community. The liaison can provide information about business leaders you plan to meet, such as whether they are parents or grandparents, their involvement in the community and their approach to meeting with community leaders like yourself.

Develop a strategic plan for cultivating relationships. Successful business engagement is about relationship-building, and relationships take time to develop. Work with your community liaison, business champion and/or your leadership team to develop a plan for meeting with business leaders. Questions to consider include:

- Who will make the initial contact?
- What is the purpose of the meeting(s)?
- How long should the meeting(s) last?
- Will there be a series of meetings or just one?
- What does follow-up look like (e.g., thank you card or email, personal phone call)?
- Can the business leader refer you to other business leaders?

Strategies for asking a business leader to support your cause
A business leader will instinctively conduct his or her own cost-benefit analysis on whether to participate in your efforts, and at what level. Here are the type of questions a business leader might be considering:

- Do the goals of the ECD organization provide benefits to the community? Do these goals align with my company’s mission and/or my personal aspirations for the community?
- Does the ECD program or advocacy organization have the capacity to achieve these goals? What is the program’s history of concrete outcomes? How effective is the leadership? Is the organization financially stable?
- How much time or financial contributions are expected of me?
- If I volunteer my time, will I be supported by the sponsoring organization, such as by providing background materials and scheduling meetings?
- Which other business leaders are participating in this effort?
- Will this effort advance my company’s or my personal goals, such as developing community connections, networking with other business and community leaders, or enhancing the company’s appeal to customers?

Reflecting on these questions will help you see from the perspective of your prospective advocate. Below are some themes to consider in developing and implementing your recruitment strategy:
Keep your pitch concise

The initial meeting is about sharing, learning and building the relationship. Understand their business first, such as their products and services and their service area. Match the background of the contact with your organization’s needs.

Convey the value of ECD. Most business leaders are not exposed to research on the impact of ECD or the economic impact of ECD programs. Provide a document with key research results and economic indicators.

In making your pitch to business leaders, present the key facts you want them to know about your ECD program or advocacy goals. Share information regarding your program (i.e., history and community, local, state, and national work) and align the summary to their work or the communities they serve. Business leaders are used to processing data and concise pieces of information. Presenting data in chart form can often help convey key statistics. Don’t overload business leaders with details. Rather, inform them that you are willing to provide additional data and help clarify issues.

Be prepared to present information in various time frames, from as short as the 30-second elevator speech to just two or three minutes to a 10- to 15-minute presentation. Consider the audience in preparing for your conversation to personalize the information. Your role is not only to educate the business leader, but to inspire him or her to share information with other business leaders.

Provide clear objectives and time commitment

When you ask a business leader to participate in your efforts, provide clear objectives and time commitment. A project that has clear objectives and a moderate time commitment is more attractive to business leaders than an exploratory project that has an undefined time commitment. Describe the goals and where the program currently is in reaching the goals. The “ask” should include two or three options. Discuss a concrete timeline for you to follow up with a business leader regarding his or her engagement interests. Also ask for the names of other business leaders who might be interested in participating with your cause.

Once you engage business leaders, use their time sparingly. Provide staff support to business leaders, such as background information, meeting minutes and tools so they can give their own presentations. Also research answers when they ask questions about ECD issues.

Tour an Early Childhood Development program

When business leaders see firsthand a skilled teacher engaging children at a center or a home visitor counseling parents on child development, they can tangibly make the connection between investment and impact. Such a tour will also often take business leaders into an unfamiliar neighborhood, allowing leaders to experience some of the challenges and assets in these communities. Organizations such as Child Care Network in Ann Arbor, Mich., annually have a program called “Teacher For A Day” where
business leaders work in a child care program. Business leaders will likely refer back to these experiences when considering their own role in ECD.

Give business leaders ownership
Empowering business leaders to offer their perspective and talents requires letting go of at least some control over where the initiative leads. Be transparent about operations and be open to business leader observations and recommendations. It’s a good sign when business leaders tell you what they want when investing in your program; it means they are interested.

In advocacy efforts, avoid using business leaders to advocate for a preselected set of policy goals. Instead, allow business leaders to draw conclusions after providing information about issues facing ECD in your community or state. ECD advocates play an important role in providing information and guidance to business leaders, but the more hands-off advocates are and the more independent business leaders are perceived by policymakers, the more influence business leaders will have when advocating for change.

Involve another business leader in the “ask”
Business leaders know the best strategies to engage other business leaders. One business leader asking another to join an effort increases the chances of buy-in. Ideally, a business champion emerges whose passion for ECD brings other business leaders to the table. When a business leader is willing to participate in the “ask,” be sure to support him or her with talking points and materials about the ECD program or advocacy effort. Business leaders can also contribute to the cause by participating in a business engagement committee to develop strategies for community engagement. Business leaders can also host events to share information about brain development and the economic impact of ECD (e.g., business black tie events, business roundtables or ECD learning meetings).

Approach business membership networks and service clubs
Chambers of commerce, business partnership organizations and service clubs such as Kiwanis and Rotary are often involved in initiatives to improve educational outcomes in communities and states. A number of these organizations already support community- or state-level ECD initiatives. Approaching these organizations provides access to a broad array of community and business leaders. Early childhood programs can also join the membership of a local chamber of commerce or service club. ReadyNation provides a number of suggestions on approaching specific business membership networks.

Roles for business leaders
Business leaders will want to use their background in the most effective way and gravitate toward opportunities where they can leverage resources, expertise and volunteerism. There are five primary roles for business leaders: building awareness, volunteering expertise to ECD programs, implementing best practices for parent employees, participating in policy development and advocacy and helping raise funds.
Build awareness among peers, the public and policymakers
Once business leaders are aware of the importance of ECD, they can encourage their staff and other business leaders to promote ECD. As an unlikely messenger, business leaders can also effectively build awareness among the public and policymakers on ECD issues. Activities include writing articles for local papers, giving speeches on ECD, hosting events, inviting other business leaders to participate and bringing the topic up during informal networking. The more business leaders talk and write about the importance of investing in ECD, the more ECD becomes accepted as an economic and business-related issue.

Volunteer expertise to ECD programs
Business leaders can help advise ECD program directors about best business practices, including business planning, financial management, leadership, marketing, personnel management and governance. For example, First Children’s Finance is a nonprofit organization that works to stabilize, improve and expand high-quality childcare businesses serving low- and moderate-income families in a number of states. First Children’s builds partnerships that connect child care businesses with the resources and expertise of the private sector. For example, First Children’s sponsors a project that recruits volunteers from the business community to advise child care program directors in addressing business challenges. Not only do program directors benefit from business leaders’ expertise, business leaders learn about the challenges ECD programs face and the impact of policy at the ground level. Business leaders can then speak to policymakers about their experience with an ECD program.

Implement best practices for parent employees
In the United States, almost two-thirds of children under age 6 have all of their parents in the workforce. Family-friendly workplace policies and settings can help parents with young children succeed at work and at home as parents.

Examples include offering flexible work schedules, paid time off for parents and pretax dependent child care spending accounts, sponsoring a lunch and learn program with a parent educator, and establishing an on-site child care program or assisting families with paying for child care. Chambers of commerce or other business associations could provide incentives for their own member businesses to adopt family-friendly policies by periodically recognizing outstanding employers that implement these types of practices.

Participate in policy development and advocacy
The private sector perspective can be helpful in developing ECD policy and moving the policy agenda forward. Business leaders ask good questions about system organization and cost effectiveness. In some states business leaders have participated in developing policy initiatives and have funded demonstration
projects that offer new knowledge about investing in ECD. Business leaders who help craft early childhood policy are more invested in advocacy efforts. Furthermore, policymakers often take more notice when business leaders have participated in developing policy.

Raise funds
Businesses are solicited for donations by a number of organizations for a myriad of causes. However, ECD is unique because of its high return on investment. Private sector funds can help an ECD program several ways, such as providing scholarships for children from low-income families, expanding or updating facilities or providing training for staff. Private funds are also a primary source of support for advocacy efforts. Furthermore, public-private partnerships can leverage funds to help support a specific aspect of the ECD system, such as professional development or expanding a quality assessment system. Aside from financial contributions, businesses can make in-kind donations of materials, equipment and professional services.

A number of U.S. businesses and foundations have funded ECD efforts, including PNC Financial Services’s “Grow Up Great” program, a $350 million initiative which began in 2004 that targets investments to underserved children. PNC also encourages employees to volunteer for ECD efforts on company time. Business leaders in Minnesota raised $20 million to fund ECD initiatives and research through the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation. Furthermore, the First Five Years Fund, which helps elected officials, business leaders and philanthropists through knowledge, advocacy and collaboration, is funded by major U.S. foundations.

Keeping business leaders engaged
Finally, the process of engaging the business community is not a one-time event, but a sustained effort in developing relationships. The goal is to keep business leaders actively involved by creating continuous opportunities for leaders to participate, support and advocate for ECD. One strategy for maintaining business leader engagement is to involve them in applied activities at the ECD program or community level and periodically engage them in community or state level policy issues.

A second strategy, specifically for advocacy efforts, is to keeping business leaders engaged at the policy level and communicating with elected officials. The Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission is an example of business leaders, predominately CEOs of companies, who annually convene to learn about new ECD research and policy issues facing the state. During the year they meet with state representatives to advocate for an ECD policy agenda adopted by the commission. This strategy has helped preserve Pennsylvania’s investments in ECD during times of declining tax revenue and budget cuts.

Regardless the approach, provide business leaders data and ongoing information about the ECD industry and the state of children in the community and state. Business leaders should know how the ECD system
operates, how much it costs to provide high-quality ECD and the local benefits from ECD investments. Business leaders will also be interested in developments at the national level and may be willing to contact their representatives to support ECD legislation.

Develop practices to keep business leaders informed about the positive impact they are having on the ECD program and/or community. Business leaders appreciate progress reports, and like all of us, appreciate being appreciated. Finally, recognize that in cultivating long-term relationships miscommunications, misunderstandings and even mistakes can happen along the way. By staying genuinely interested in business leaders, committed to working with them and being open-minded and flexible, the relationship will enrich over time and help both your program and business leaders achieve common goals. Ultimately, children and the community will benefit.
First Children’s Finance Case Study

About the Program
First Children’s Finance is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Minneapolis, Minn., whose mission is to help children, families and communities thrive by increasing the availability and quality of early care and education. First Children’s works to stabilize and expand high-quality child care businesses serving low- and moderate-income families by helping providers improve business practices and achieve financial sustainability. The organization provides financing, training and consulting services, and develops partnerships that connect child care businesses with expertise and resources in the public and private sectors.

First Children’s makes the case that sustaining the business side helps early childhood development (ECD) providers deliver a high-quality experience for children. Many directors have training in education, but often not in business. Troubles with financial practices, budgeting, marketing and so on, can detract from providing high-quality education to children. With efficient and effective business practices, ECD providers deliver better early childhood education and programming for children and parents.

The work of First Children’s is funded through a variety of public and private sources. The organization is also involved with ECD policy discussions at the state and federal level. Many of First Children’s programs involve recruiting volunteers from the private sector to mentor ECD providers on business practices. Therefore, First Children’s is often in a position to inform funders, policymakers and potential collaborators about the impact of its work. One of First Children’s key messages is that supporting the business side of ECD providers promotes economic development.

As an example, First Children’s makes the case on its website that improving access to high-quality care and education helps drive economic development:

- **Working parents** cannot access and maintain productive employment today without access to affordable, high-quality care and education for their children.
- **Tomorrow’s workforce** will not be prepared to compete and succeed in the global economy unless all children receive high-quality care and education today.

First Children’s has sponsored four Global Leaders, including the authors. The organization’s president and CEO, Jerry Cutts, is also a past participant in the World Forum. As such, First Children’s was particularly interested in partnering on a project to help develop the economic case, arguing that ECD providers themselves are important local businesses that provide employment opportunities and intersect with other local businesses by purchasing supplies. First
Children’s links these three elements – that ECD providers support working parents, help children prepare for school and life, and provide employment and economic development – to economic development. Making the economic development case has been a strategy for First Children’s to make inroads at the state and local levels to build partnerships and secure funding.

Securing support for two programs
Making the economic case was an important strategy in securing funding and community support for two particular projects: the Growth Fund and Greater Than Minnesota project. The Growth Fund provides business development and some funding to cohorts of four to eight ECD providers that emphasize serving low-income children in three states. Directors participate in a business planning process that includes one-on-one consulting and coaching. Community business leaders and other collaborators review program business plans and serve as advisers to program directors.

The Greater Than Minnesota project provides a community-level strategic planning and implementation process to increase access to high-quality child care in rural communities in the state. First Children’s and other organizations have helped raise awareness in rural communities that early care and education is a key ingredient to attracting businesses and families.

The strategic planning process starts with a Town Hall with local elected officials, business leaders, bankers, teachers and other concerned community members. This meeting leads to a community plan and an advisory council of business leaders to review the plan and start implementing solutions. As in the Growth Fund, local business leaders provide expertise to early care and education business owners.

As noted in a news release about the Greater Than Minnesota program, First Children’s makes the case that “a sustainable supply of affordable, high-quality child care is absolutely essential to a community,” said Heidi Hagel Braid, Minnesota director at First Children’s. “It enables parents to go to and be productive at work, prepares children for success in school and in life, and is vital to a thriving local economy.”

Demonstrating impact
First Children’s illustrates how its work has led to increases in access to and supply of high-quality early childhood education at the program and community levels. On the web site a “Why It Matters” page describes how “Quality Care Drives Economic Growth” and is the “Best Deal in Town: The Return on Investment.” The page also includes “Success Stories: The Community Impact of Our Work,” which features articles, pictures and a few brief videos. The following are examples of success stories:
In a major city, a child care center that primarily serves low-income children participated in a business development program and received a loan from First Children’s for a renovation project that is now completed.

First Children’s participated in a community planning project in a fast-growing oil and gas production town in North Dakota to facilitate creating over 1,000 new spaces in high-quality child care programs.

In a rural Minnesota community, First Children’s supported a child care program’s move into a vacated elementary school, which at the time was the only child care center in the community.

First Children’s has taken steps to quantify the impact of its programs, including a study by Wilder Research, which conducted an evaluation of grants, loans and technical assistance to ECD providers. The study included a survey of program participants regarding their reach into special populations and program participants’ perceived impact of First Children’s. First Children’s partnered with local external evaluators to gather qualitative and quantitative data on program participants and the impact of programs on ECD providers. First Children’s also developed an oversight committee to guide the work of the study. Although well thought out and planned for, the study did not use an experimental design, such as a randomized trial or quasi-experimental design and therefore is considered an outcome study as opposed to an impact study.

The study does compare outcomes to benchmarks in order to provide context for the results. For example, among 51 child care business participants, the number of new slots, or spaces, for children increased 15 percent from 2006 to 2011, while no significant growth was observed among all child care centers in Minnesota during this time period. In addition, the number of jobs at these programs increased 25 percent compared with 13 percent growth in the industry in Minnesota.

The study also provided data on children reached by ECD providers and the impact on business practices. Almost 90 percent of respondents created at least one financial policy or procedure since participating in the First Children’s program, and almost 80 percent said participating contributed “a lot” or “some” to an increase in overall service quality. About half of respondents indicated that they increased enrollment with at least one special population, such as low-income children, those with special needs or those from ethnic or culturally specific populations.

First Children’s is able to use results from the study to show potential funders program outcomes and responses from ECD providers who participated. The study also provides guidance regarding additional data to gather and follow-up questions to ask participants to make a stronger connection between First Children’s work and regional economic impact.
Making the economic case going forward
Through the Growth Fund, Greater Than Minnesota, Wilder Research study and success stories, First Children’s can connect its programs to regional and community development goals. First Children’s is to eventually describe the relationship between the availability of high-quality early care and education and job growth, housing, family mobility and other regional economic development factors. A challenge is to measure impacts consistently across regions since First Children’s services are often customized to particular regions and/or states within those regions.

A key component of First Children’s work is partnership with local business leaders. Once business leaders are engaged in a hands-on role, such as assisting in loan review, mentoring an ECD provider director or serving on a business plan review committee, business leaders learn firsthand the day-to-day challenges the sector faces. These volunteers often become important spokespersons for First Children’s and for ECD policy generally. First Children’s will continue to cultivate relationships with business leaders.

A next step is to broaden the scope in which early care and education is administered. In most U.S. states, ECD is administered in departments that provide programs in education, health and human services. However, ECD has large implications for the current and future workforce, which means potential roles for departments that work with economic development, business development and job creation in ECD. First Children’s is investigating opportunities to partner with state or local economic development agencies on projects to support the business practices of ECD providers.

Key learnings:
• Find key themes that resonate with stakeholders regarding the economic impact of your program or advocacy effort.
• Collect data regarding program reach and impacts in order to show outcomes to policymakers and potential funders. As much as possible, compare outcomes with benchmarks and if possible evaluate programs using an experimental design.
• Develop information channels so that results from ECD programs on the ground inform public policy.
• Give business leaders hands-on experience with the day-to-day challenges of ECD providers. This may be as simple as a tour of a facility or meeting with a director or as involved as mentoring a provider on business and finance practices. Find ways to keep business leaders meaningfully engaged – they will then likely serve as advocates for your program and ECD generally. Business leaders can also assist in developing communication strategies and financing mechanisms.
Arabian Child Case Study

Based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Arabian Child focuses on advancing the health, education and well-being of young children in the UAE and the Arab region. Arabian Child’s mission is to support quality early childhood development (ECD) in the Arab region by working with policy makers, early childhood professionals and parents. Arabian Child serves as an advocate and resource for providing high-quality early care and education. The organization develops and provides training for teachers and other professionals on ECD, including an accredited international training program for early childhood teachers, national child protection training for law enforcement, and assessment and licensing of early childhood teachers.

In spring 2011, Arabian Child began collaborating with the World Forum Foundation through the Global Leaders program. The intent was to develop leadership within Arabian Child on ECD and also support the work of other Global Leaders in the Arab region to serve as change-agents and advocates for ECD.

In May 2011, Arabian Child’s founders and Global Leaders participants, Tariq Kashmiri and Samia Kazi, attended a presentation by the authors on making the economic case for investing in young children at the World Forum Foundation Early Childhood Conference. When they returned to UAE, they used key themes and data from the presentation and research from other countries as they approached policy makers and business people about the strong return from investing in young children. The economic case was an impactful component of these presentations and helped Arabian Child build connections.

Presentations included the third Abu Dhabi Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) conference held at Emirates Palace. In attendance was Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan, His Highness Prince Al Walid bin Talal of Saudi Arabia, as well as business leaders and decision makers from across the Arab world. Arabian Child discussed the role of CSR in the education of young children and emphasized the high return from early investments. Arabian Child also took part in the Crime Prevention Conference sponsored by the Ministry of Interior, and discussed the return on investment, specifically the reduction in crime and rehabilitation. In addition, Arabian Child spoke at the TEDx conference in Dubai, advocating for the importance of early childhood education for the future prosperity of children in the Arab region. Over two years Arabian Child presented speeches and lectures at over 15 conferences, each one using a different element of the economic case for ECD investments.

Not only did Arabian Child reach out to the community through presentations and meetings, Arabian Child conducted research to better describe the current state of affairs of ECD in the
UAE. With the support of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), Arabian Child administered a short survey of staff at 249 nurseries. The study led to the publication of “Who is taking care of our children?” which described the state of the early childhood workforce and their training needs, their qualifications, and the frequency with which they enroll in professional development training. The results showed that the early childhood sector would benefit from increasing the qualifications and training of the workforce.

We approached Arabian Child during Fall 2012 to partner on the Framework project. We sought feedback from Arabian Child on the content of the Framework, while Arabian Child was interested in applying some of the ideas in the Framework to their advocacy efforts. Arabian Child was particularly interested in the content of Section 3 on “Recruiting business leaders as supporters and advocates.” During 2013 we shared ideas about the Framework and how Arabian Child applied the concepts in the Framework to their advocacy efforts.

Arabian Child presented information from the Framework as part of a training session for early childhood professionals to explain how early childhood investments achieve a high rate of return and how to talk about the economic case with business and community leaders. Arabian Child also used ideas from Section 3 to reach out to business leaders and encourage them to support early childhood investments by the government and also to focus on ECD as a CSR project.

During 2013, the information gathering and advocacy work of Arabian Child led to success – collaborations with the MOSA and the Ministry of Interior (MOI). First, the MOSA worked with Arabian Child to develop early learning curriculum and professional development training for teachers and teacher assistants at ECD programs. Teachers are now required to have a minimum of 30 hours of training, which includes curriculum on child protection, CPR and emergency preparedness. As a result of the partnership, Arabian Child coordinates the training offerings and topics for the 30-hour required program, a 120-hour program, and a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™, which is granted by the CDA Council in Washington DC.

Second, the MOI contracted with Arabian Child to develop training materials for police officers on child protection. Police officers are provided information about child protection screening, strategies for effectively interviewing young children, basic child development, as well as an overview of the economic impact of ECD programs on society.

Third, as building awareness for the importance of early childhood is a vital need in the Middle East, Arabian Child created a customized training course for all early childhood teachers and embedded the course within the nationally recognized training program which is recognized by the MOSA. Today, all early childhood teachers attending level 2 training have a 4.5 hour module about advocating for early childhood education.
In reflection, Arabian Child considers the following as key reasons for success:

- **Reaching out and giving presentations to policymakers and community leaders on the importance of ECD investments to children and society.** Arabian Child didn’t hesitate to set up meetings with anyone who would listen. These sessions planted seeds in the minds of leaders about the importance of ECD.

- **Connecting investments in ECD to decision makers’ decision making style and personal experience.** Arabian Child learned to customize its communication strategy according to the audience. They spent time considering the decision making style, educational background, motives, and personal and professional goals of the decision maker they were scheduled to talk with. While this information was difficult to collect, even a little information helped design the message in a way that made decision makers feel comfortable. For example, one decision maker was more visually oriented, so Arabian Child prepared pictures and graphs and even brought toys and blocks to put on the table. In addition, many key decision makers are parents or have siblings, and in Arab culture, parents and older siblings hold a strong notion of protecting children and providing them with the best possible experiences. Relating early investments to their own children and encouraging them to reflect on whether an early learning setting “is good enough for my children” can help persuade decision markers’ hearts as well as their minds.

- **Ensuring stakeholders that Arabian Child is in the business of working for children for the long-run.** The partnering Ministries understood that Arabian Child is committed to its mission of serving young children for many years going forward.

- **Staying positive and inclusive.** Arabian Child found it important to be clear they wanted to help because they cared for young children and weren’t there to criticize others. They also worked hard to make their reach expansive so that all felt included and supported.

- **Persistence – taking time to lay the groundwork for partnerships by building trust with Ministries and other leaders.** Arabian Child invested time, energy, and financial resources to validate outcomes. Arabian Child also established integrity of intention and by often providing services for young children without compensation. Relationships take time, and sometimes that includes allowing decision makers to test intentions. One organization delayed partnership until data and research results of Arabian Child’s programs were available. Arabian Child found it important to allow this process to happen, to be transparent and allow decision makers to test their motives so they could find out for themselves Arabian Child’s sincerity to the cause. Arabian Child also noted that some of their calculated risks and good intentions were not always met positively. “We failed several times, possibly as many times as we won and more.”

- **Demonstrating to stakeholders that Arabian Child is an expert in the field of ECD and has the capacity to effectively deliver services.** That is, effectively developing curriculum, coordinating trainings, and working with ECD programs and their staff. Advocates should research issues thoroughly and never compensate on quality. It’s also important to
not be afraid of saying “I don’t know, but I will find out,” or “I made a mistake and I will fix it.”

Going forward Arabian Child will continue to advocate for:

- Funding for teachers from all nationalities to attend training.
- Providing more resources, curriculum, mentorship, and coaching to assist programs with improving quality experiences for young children.
- Encouraging corporations to focus on ECD for their community and CSR projects.

Financial sustainability is always an important concern for advocacy efforts and ECD programs. Arabian Child started with substantial personal funds and is now receiving funding to provide services through contracts with Ministries. Arabian Child has also positioned itself to raise funds to support broad ECD education and advocacy efforts and secure grants to provide more training services.

Organizations like Arabian Child straddle the work of advocacy, program implementation, coordination and service delivery. Advocacy is often an initial task – to make the case for investing in early childhood development – followed by a combination of program work and continued advocacy. Both programming and advocacy benefit from an organization’s reputation as a content expert and its effectiveness and commitment to young children.
Notes

1 There is a strong correlation between the percentage of population with a college degree and per-capita income at the state level. Data from U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis.
5 Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. In Brief: The Science of Early Childhood Development.
15 Ibid.
23 The lack of a crime effect is likely due to relatively low crime rates in the study area compared with other parts of the country. See Jean Burr and Rob Grunewald. “Lessons Learned: A Review of Early Childhood Development Studies,” Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, April 2006.

Heckman, Grunewald, and Reynolds.

Ibid.


Burr and Grunewald.


Arthur J. Reynolds, Judy A. Temple, Dylan L. Robertson, and Emily A. Mann.


United States Government Accountability Office. *Early Child Care and Education. HHS and Education are Taking Steps to Improve Workforce Data and Enhance Worker Quality*. Report to the Chairman, Committee on Finance, U.S. Senate. February 2012.


Ibid.


See information about Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test:
http://psychcorp.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=PAA30700


See Invest-in-Kids Working Group meeting on October 25, 2011 on this ReadyNation web page:

Tim Bartik.


Information about the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation’s research projects:
