

The Connecticut Children's Collective: Building a Strong Local-State Early Childhood System

2022 Data Report

An initiative of the:





Our Vision

**Every child grows up safe, healthy, happy,
educated, connected, and employable.**

Our Mission

**The Connecticut Children's Collective helps people work
together locally to improve the lives of children and families.**

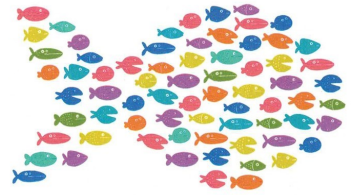
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The Connecticut Children's Collective:

Building a Strong Local-State Early Childhood System

Executive Summary



The Connecticut Children's Collective is a network of local partnerships creating positive outcomes for our state's children and families. We believe that when we're all swimming in the same direction and coordinating our efforts, great things can be accomplished. Together with state agencies, we are co-creating an effective early childhood system which:

- **Involves** parents, providers, schools, city/town government, health, and social/human services in governance & planning for services used by local families
- **Connects** families quickly to the services they need
- **Acts** as the resource hub & community "glue" building trust and relationships between parents/ providers
- **Identifies** specific gaps in services needed in their community, and works to fill the gaps
- **Engages** the public, especially parents, about local priorities and how best to meet them
- **Supports** quality improvements in services through professional development and relationship building
- **Distributes** funding and resources to best fit local needs and priorities
- **Provides** accountability for local results to state agencies

This executive summary of our first annual data report sets a baseline from which we can measure future progress, and focuses on the types of work that a majority of local collaboratives are currently undertaking: teaching child development, providing kindergarten readiness programs, ensuring positive pre-school experiences, strengthening parent engagement and encouraging community voice in addressing local needs and setting local priorities.

Funding for this system of local collaboratives comes from a variety of sources, including local government and school systems (25%), state and federal grants (20%), and community foundations/United Ways/private philanthropies (34%). Aggregate data however masks the fact that local collaboratives vary tremendously in terms of size, funding and capacity, due in part to the patchwork of funding available to them. Some of the stronger groups have significant funding and the capacity to both do the work and raise funds that allow them to continue. However, the majority (68%) of local collaboratives are more fragile as they do not have even a single full-time director.

Currently 24 local groups depend on funds from a federal Preschool Development Grant, which ends in December 2022, to ensure core staff functions can continue. However, based on our survey, we estimate that without additional philanthropic bridge funding and a significant state investment that one-third of local groups will lay off staff or dissolve completely by July 2023.



The Connecticut Children's Collective is an initiative of the Connecticut Network for Children and Youth formed in late 2018 to develop three components of a statewide early childhood system: formalizing a network of local partnerships; creating a statewide intermediary management agency; and designing supports for the local partnerships within the Office of Early Childhood and other child serving government agencies.

The Benefits of a Strong Local-State Early Childhood System

Aligned: Agreed upon goals get more buy-in and improve accountability

Effective: Better coordination of services leads to better results for kids and families

Efficient: Focus resources where the needs are, less duplication, less under-utilization

Equitable: Parent input & leadership promotes culturally sensitive solutions

Leveraged: Local collaboratives raise funding from other, non-OEC sources

Informed: Two-way feedback loops leads to better policy development and implementation

Independent: Less subject to political changes in city or district leadership

Strategic: Supports OEC's strategic goals of building partnerships and family-driven systems

Measures	Examples
Community Reach	
<p>34 organizations reach 59 cities/towns covering 1,962,326 people:</p> <p>51% of CT's total population and 62% of CT's births</p> <p>887 people participated in local governance/committees</p> <p>37,982 unique visitors to websites and 23,160 social media followers</p>	<p>Bristol: Over 200 families attended a Virtual Polar Express event.</p> <p>Enfield: Helped digitize and distribute a community resource guide that reached more than 230 families.</p> <p>Northeast CT: Holds community family events 4 times a year with average attendance of 250 people for each across seven multiple communities.</p> <p>Stamford: Hosted an Early Childhood Fair reaching about 500 people with early childhood information and resources including child care options.</p>
Child Care Enrollment	
<p>Collective communities child care centers and family child care centers have 16% greater capacity for school age programs 17% greater capacity for preschool programs</p> <p>Capacity for infant/toddler programs was evenly split at 50% for both Collective and non-Collective towns</p> <p>Family child care center providers in Collective communities have an average 38% more capacity than that of non-Collective communities statewide</p>	<p>Manchester: Distributes Manchester Preschool Resource guide, online resources, and provides individual support for families to increase enrollment.</p> <p>Wethersfield: Offers Preschool Scholarships, ESL Family Literacy, take all phone calls about preschool and make referrals.</p> <p>Windham: Provides a single point of entry online system where families can apply for all early childhood programs in town with just one application.</p>
Kindergarten Readiness	
<p>19 local collaboratives lead their school readiness council</p> <p>8 local collaboratives have a school readiness council member as part of the local collaborative</p> <p>3 local collaboratives do not have a school readiness council</p> <p>4 communities have other efforts</p>	<p>New London: Supports connecting families to School Readiness Programs and New London Public Preschool by hosting a transition to kindergarten event.</p> <p>Hamden: Facilitates Zoom calls for parents to learn from teachers about the day in the life of a Kindergarten student.</p> <p>Southington: Presented info session with Southington Public Schools and conducted marketing campaign to encourage timely kindergarten registration.</p>
Children's Development	
<p>35% higher use of Sparkler app in Collective communities, resulting in:</p> <p>30% more screenings using ASQ-2SE Behavioral Health Screening Tool</p> <p>38% more screenings using ASQ-3 Developmental Screening Tool</p>	<p>Colchester: Developing a campaign to reach even more families with the goal of screening half of all children ages 0-5 within the next year.</p> <p>Norwalk: Partners in the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) project that has expanded into the hospital, Community Health Center and Norwalk Housing Authority using Sparkler.</p> <p>Bridgeport: The Bridgeport Baby Bundle supports child development through several initiatives: Increasing Sparkler/The Basics through home visiting, pediatric well visits, kindergarten registration, and work with local partners.</p>
Parent Engagement	
<p>1,467 parents, guardians, and family members directly engaged through a mix of in-person and virtual meetings</p>	<p>West Haven: Parent ambassadors connect other parents with the ASQ through the Sparker app, with a large increase in developmental screenings.</p> <p>West Hartford: A site for the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) and have offered the program for the last 10 years- with almost 200 graduates.</p> <p>Naugatuck: Has an active PLTI alumni of over 100 parents that meet 5 times a year to do a community impact project, e.g. Raising Highly Capable Kids parent training currently.</p>
Emergency Response/COVID	
<p>86.7% were key local hubs during COVID, distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies, along with diapers, formula, masks, food, school supplies, and Internet access</p>	<p>Groton: Very active in food distribution during COVID, e.g. secured additional grant sources to extend services to help families, and deliver meals to homebound people.</p> <p>New Haven: Distributing PPE and supplies for the last year and a half, delivered directly to the child care programs.</p> <p>Andover, Hebron, Marlborough: Assists local families with a variety of basic needs and connections to other organizations if resources are needed.</p>

2 | Introduction

The Connecticut Children's Collective is the coming together of local-level collaboratives that coordinate services for children and families. For the most part these groups focus on younger children, although five of the largest include services from cradle to career, while including a significant focus on early childhood.

The Connecticut Children's Collective formed in late 2018, yet our local partners have a much longer history. Some of them were formed two decades ago as Discovery Communities funded by grants from the W. C. Graustein Memorial Fund. Some started as school readiness councils and grew to include a wider range of objectives. Others have been very consistent over the years, while others have grown and changed, such as those larger collaboratives, which also have a long history but more recently have adopted a systemic-change model originated in Cincinnati called STRIVE.

While the scope, size, and origins of these groups in Connecticut vary, they all have one thing in common: they understand that the best way to ensure services for children and families are meeting local needs is to convene service providers and coordinate at the city or town level, or in clusters of small towns that share common objectives; that by giving parents and local service providers a voice in the way services are provided improves the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of those services.

We come together as the Connecticut Children's Collective to learn from one another, to communicate with state policymakers about the needs we are seeing locally, and to raise our voices together more loudly to promote collective action on behalf of our state's kids and families. Our purpose is to create a more collaborative and intentionally designed system that will provide better outcomes for children and families across the state.

This report, while limited in scope, is one way in which the Collective can add value. As it is the first data report we have compiled, it serves as a baseline from which we can measure future progress, and we intend to update and expand upon this data annually. For this reason, we focused on the types of measures that meet two criteria: the data is collected by town, and relevant to the types of work that a majority of local collaboratives are currently undertaking.

The Connecticut Children's Collective convenes local and regional early childhood collaborative leaders to improve cross-sector collaboration, support parent engagement, and promote equity and inclusion. We promote bi-directional communication between state agencies and local groups, and facilitate collective action that brings us together, especially as we strive to expand this model of effective community voice to every part of the state.

The Connecticut Children's Collective hopes to continue to expand its reach across Connecticut to more cities and towns. Providing opportunities for young children is paramount to their success as older students and eventually adults in society. There has been amazing traction over the past four years with new communities coming on board. As the data show in this report, the communities that are part of the Collective have demonstrated that when they are supported they are able to improve the lives of children and families in their communities. They are hopeful that the support the Collective has provided will continue and that they are able to secure sustainable funding so that they may continue to successfully build on their successes.

3 | Underlying Principles

The Connecticut Children's Collective understands the importance of their work in reflecting the needs of the communities it serves, just as our local collaboratives know best the families and children in their communities. The very foundation of our work begins at home. We aim to build a system that provides wrap-around supports to our local collaboratives, so they in turn can do the same within their communities. Being a parent or caregiver is challenging, and often there isn't enough time in the day to find resources and services that will put food on the table or ease the stress of finding mental health supports. Local collaboratives help parents or caregivers by providing easy access to these supports.

Being locally grown, our grassroots efforts have been able to be responsive in times of need most recently during the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting Stay Home, Stay Safe order, while simultaneously trying to address tremendous increases in the needs of families in our communities, strained services and much needed connections. Being an intermediary organization, one of the Connecticut Children's Collectives primary roles is to support the capacity-building efforts of its local leaders with training and technical assistance. This support helped communities maintain services, assist those in need, and provide a sense of normalcy.

Coupled with this is family engagement. As a major point of contact in the community, local collaboratives are able to not only provide services and resources, but workshops and trainings on topics that are relevant to their local community. Local collaboratives provide numerous volunteer opportunities to foster local leadership that is inclusive of and responsive to the community served, including parent leadership opportunities such as their work engaging Parent Ambassadors to provide greater outreach to parents as well as to connect with others such as the OEC's Parent Cabinet members.

4 | Our Local Collaborative Partners

The Connecticut Children's Collective currently includes 34 local collaborative partners, representing 59 towns across the state. Each of these groups is a separate collaborative of many local partners who come together to support children and families' needs holistically. They include volunteers, parents, educators, businesses, early childhood professionals, faith leaders, service providers and elected and appointed officials. Together local collaborations are able to more efficiently deliver resources and programs to the children and families in their community; they identify the needs and gaps in services locally and work to address them. Connecticut's current local/regional collaboratives are listed on the next page.

Connecticut's Local Collaboratives

Andover, Hebron, Marlborough

[AHM Youth & Family Services](#)

Bloomfield

[Alliance for Bloomfield Children \(ABC\)](#)

Bridgeport

[Bridgeport Prospers](#)

Bristol

[Bristol Early Childhood Alliance](#)

Colchester

[Collaborative for Colchester's Children](#)

Danbury, Bethel, Litchfield, Plymouth, Torrington

[EdAdvance Early Childhood and Family Programs](#)

Danbury, Bridgewater, Kent, New Milford,

Roxbury, Sherman, Warren, Washington

[Cora's Kids: Early Childhood Care and Education](#)

East Haven

[East Haven School Readiness Council](#)

Enfield

[Enfield KITE \(Key Initiatives to Early Education\)](#)

Haddam, Killingworth

[Youth & Family Services of Haddam-Killingworth, Inc. \(YFSHK\)](#)

Hamden

[Hamden's Partnership for Young Children](#)

Hartford

[Department of Families, Children, and Youth](#)

Killingly, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Plainfield,

Putnam, Sterling, Thompson

[Northeast Early Childhood Council \(NECC\)](#)

Manchester

[Manchester Early Childhood Collaborative](#)

Middletown, Clinton, Cromwell, Old Saybrook,

Portland, Westbrook

[Middletown Early Childhood Network](#)

Naugatuck, Beacon Falls

[Connecticut Partnership for Children](#)

New Britain

[Coalition for New Britain's Youth](#)

New Haven

[New Haven Early Childhood Council](#)

New London

[LEARN—Young Children and Families Department](#)

Norwalk

[Norwalk ACTS Early Childhood Council](#)

Norwich, Groton, Ledyard

[LEARN—Young Children and Families Department](#)

Plymouth

[Plymouth Family Resource Center – Ed Advance](#)

Old Saybrook

[Old Saybrook Early Childhood Council](#)

Southington

[Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington](#)

Stamford

[Stamford STRIVE Cradle to Career](#)

Torrington, North Canaan, Winchester

[Northwest Regional Early Childhood Alliance \(RECA\)](#)

Vernon

[Vernon Better Together Program: an initiative of the Vernon School Readiness Council](#)

Waterbury

[Bridge to Success](#)

West Hartford

[The Bridge Family Center](#)

West Haven

[West Haven Child Development Center](#)

Westbrook

[Westbrook Early Childhood Council](#)

Wethersfield

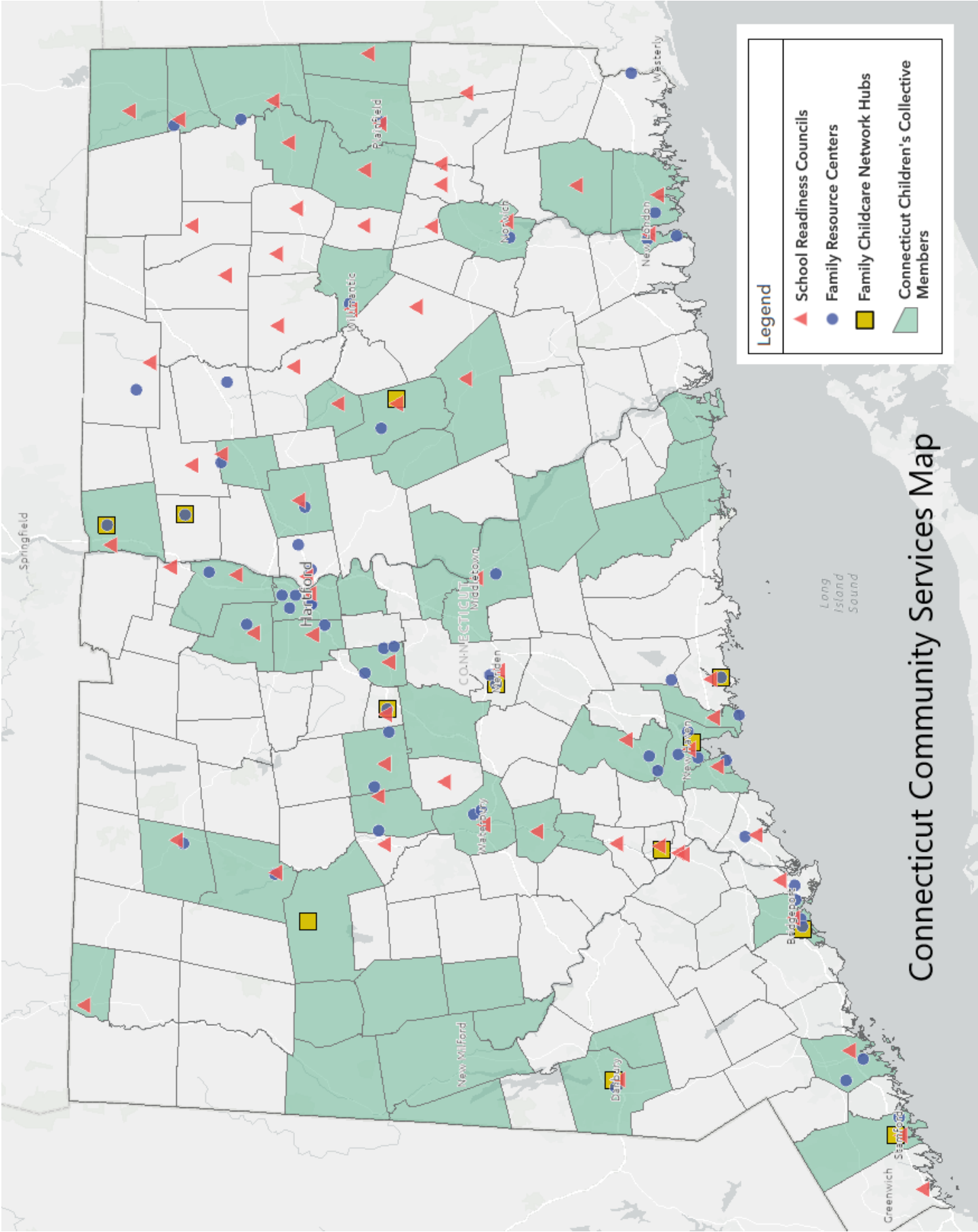
[Wethersfield Early Childhood Collaborative](#)

Windham

[Windham School Readiness Council](#)

Windsor

[Family and Community Partnership](#)



Connecticut Community Services Map

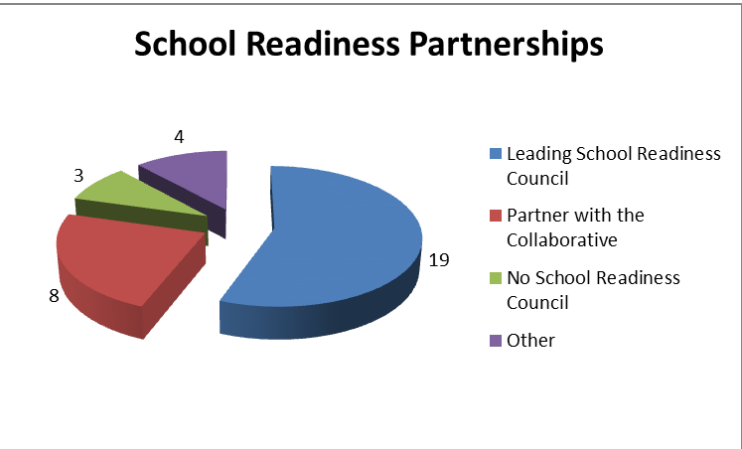
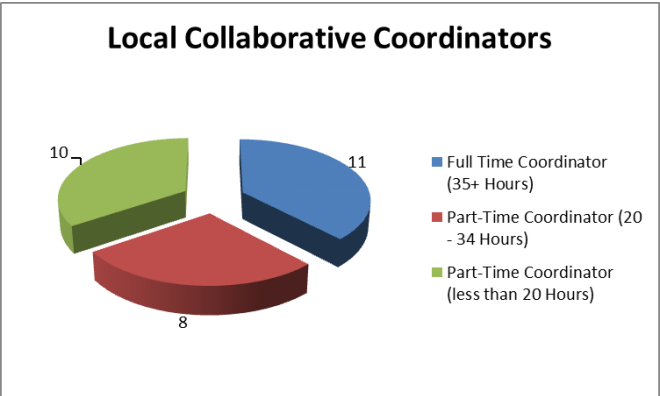
5 | Our Findings: Local Collaborative Feedback Survey and Statewide Data Analysis

For our first data report, we focused on measures that were available by town, and reflected the areas of impact where local collaboratives are making a difference. This report will serve as a baseline from which we can measure future progress, and also will help us begin to craft a data development agenda that will eventually help us measure the impact we are having in the lives of local families. The quantitative sources of the data in this report are from the Office of Early Childhood, State Department of Education, Department of Public Health, Sparkler and Infoline 2-1-1. Towns are shown in aggregate rather than individually, comparing data for the Collective communities versus those that are not served at this time. In addition, a survey of local collaborative leaders provided important information about the groups' activities, reach and funding. In all, 29 out of 34 local collaboratives responded to the survey.

The data findings are broken into eight sections: Collaborative Information, Community Reach, Preschool and Child Care Enrollment, Kindergarten Readiness, Children's Development, Parent Engagement, Emergency Response/COVID, and Funding Sources. Illustrative examples are included throughout, although every community has multiple success stories but we were unable to include them all for the sake of brevity.

Collaborative Information

Collaboratives vary in size from a single staff person working 10 hours a week to a director in a municipal or school office setting to a stand alone nonprofit with 28 employees. Different communities have developed over time and the size and scope of their work depends on the community, capacity, and local needs. Of the 29 communities answering the survey, 11 towns have a full time coordinator that works 35 hours or greater, 8 towns had a part time staff person that works between 20 and 34 hours, and 10 respondents indicated that there is a part time coordinator that works fewer than 20 hours per week. Additionally, there are 71 other paid staff positions: most are clustered in the largest organizations, 8 have one additional person, and 8 have only a coordinator.



In addition to staff, groups depend a great deal on volunteers and partners in their communities. An important part of this equation are parents themselves who connect with local collaboratives in a variety of ways; 66 parent ambassadors are actively engaged in supporting and advising local work. There is significant overlap and synergy between the work of school readiness councils, which focus specifically on that funding source, and the broader, holistic efforts focused on by local collaboratives: 19 local partners described themselves as leading their school readiness council, in 8 the school readiness council is a member of the local collaborative, three do not have a school readiness council, and four communities responded as other.

Community Reach

It's important to understand the extent of the reach of the Collective's local partners. Community Reach focused on the internal governance structure of our local collaboratives, their planning committees, advisory committees, and the outward facing reach our local collaboratives had within their communities including websites and social media.

Birth Rates (source CT DPH 2019)

Statewide total births	34,260
Collective Communities Births	21,371 (62%)
Non-Collective Community Births	12,930 (38%)

Collective communities accounted for the majority of births statewide in 2019.

Locally: Colchester

The Collaborative for Colchester's Children (C3) continues to reach out to the community to build awareness of what we do and the importance of the early years through our Social Media, email distribution list, and attendance at local community events such as the Farmer's Market.

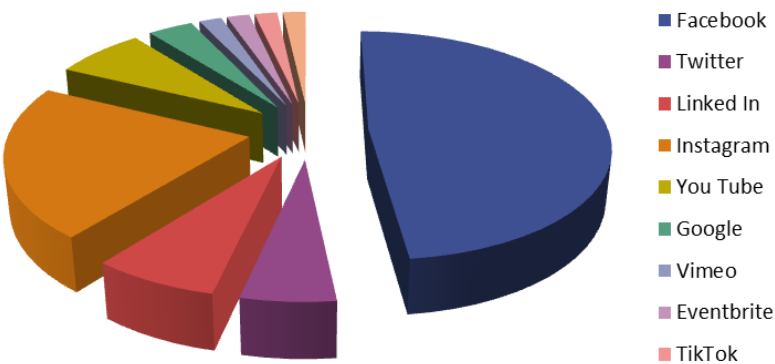
With regard to outreach and community involvement, local partners reported a total of 887 people are participating in governance or committees of their collaborative. These could be community members, partners, parents, business leaders, etc.

Many local partners also have websites that helped extend their reach. In all, 18 local partners have their own website, while 12 respondents did not have a dedicated site. Jointly between email and mailing lists, local partners reach 9,650 people in Connecticut Children's Collective communities. However with regard to unique visitors to web pages, local partners logged 37,982 people.

Locally: Manchester

Manchester Early Childhood Council distributes our monthly newsletter that highlights local services and events, key parenting facts and tips, and other pertinent information for parents and providers.

Local Collaborative Social Media



With innumerable social media platforms, local partners tend to use two primary sources. Facebook (27) and Instagram (12). Other well known apps were also mentioned including Twitter (3), LinkedIn (4), YouTube (4), Google (2), as well as Vimeo, Eventbrite, TikTok, and What's App (1). Overall local partners estimated approximately 23,160 followers/subscribers across social media platforms.

Preschool and Child Care Enrollment

(source United Way/2-1-1 2020 Enrollment Data)

2020 Child care center enrollment show that Collective communities in Connecticut have greater capacity for preschool and school age programs compared to non-collective communities statewide. Conversely, Collective communities have less capacity and enrollment for infant and toddler programs in these centers.

Locally: Andover, Hebron & Marlborough

AHM's Youth Services family resource center programs, including our preschool program continues to have full enrollment with a waiting list. These programs provide developmental information, resources, and education to our parents.

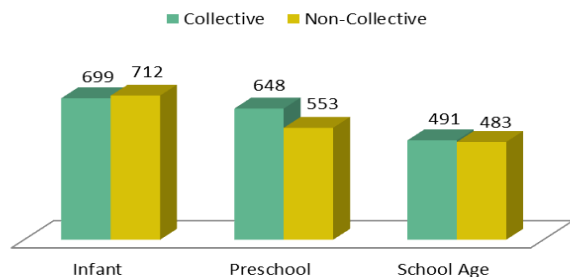
Locally: New London

New London supports connecting families to School Readiness Programs and New London Public Preschool. We hold a Transition to Kindergarten event where each family is provided free books related to the event topic to take home, including books in multiple languages.

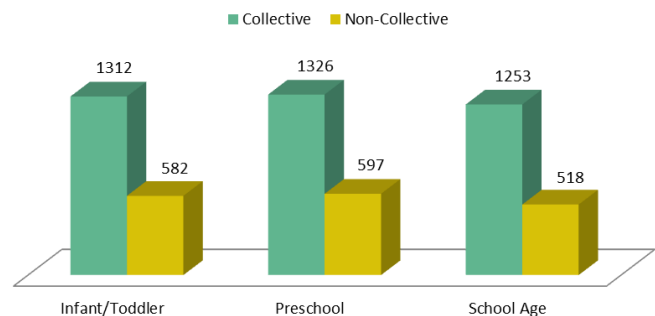
Family day care data show that Collective communities have a higher number of providers, capacity, enrollment and vacancies compared to non-Collective communities. Capacity of providers in Collective communities is more than double that of non-Collective communities statewide.

Once post-pandemic capacity and enrollment data is available, we will evaluate it and compare it to this baseline analysis to better understand the impact on child care.

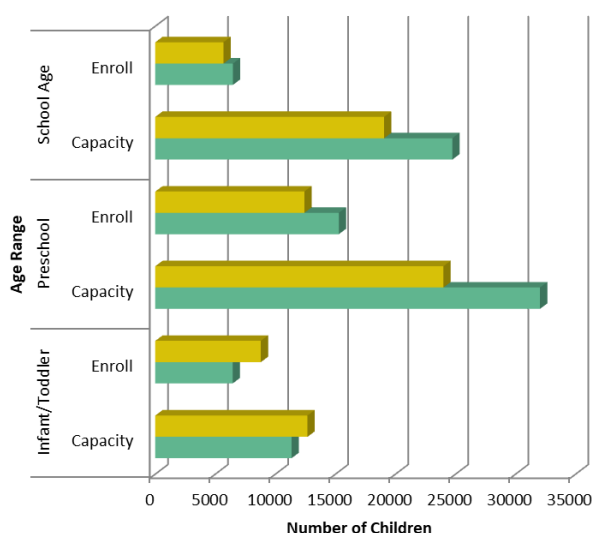
Number of Child Care Center Providers



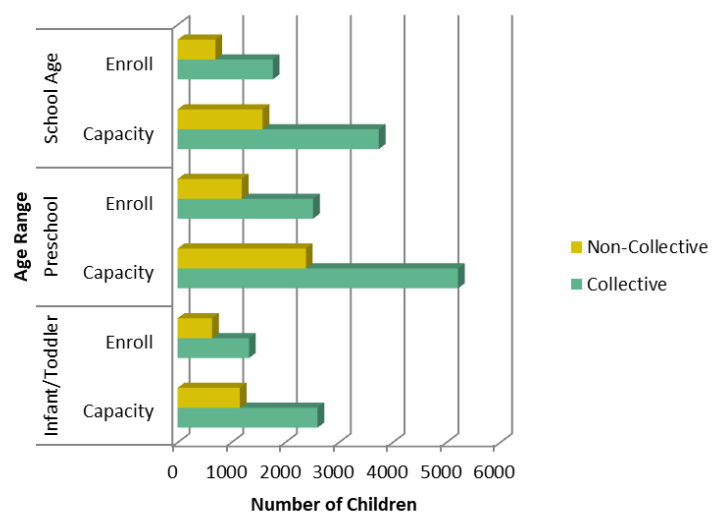
Number of Family Child Care Home Providers



Child Care Center Enrollment



Family Child Care Home Enrollment



Kindergarten Readiness

The Fall Kindergarten Entrance Inventory was designed to provide a statewide snapshot of the skills students demonstrate, based on teachers' observations, at the beginning of the kindergarten year. This instrument requires each teacher to classify each of the students in his/her class into one of three performance levels (1-Substantial Instructional Support is needed, 2-Some Support is needed, and 3-Minimal Support is needed) by domain. The domains of the tool include Creative/Aesthetic, Language, Literacy, Numeracy, Personal/Social and Physical/Motor.

In addition, the Fall Kindergarten Entrance Inventory was developed to provide kindergarten teachers with information about the level of skills and behaviors that students demonstrate at the beginning of kindergarten.

When compared to a statewide data set for the 2020-21 school year, Collective communities showed a higher need in level 1, moderate need in level 2 similar to non-Collective communities statewide, and exceeded the non-Collective communities in level 3. These findings were consistent across all domains with between a 2% to 12% difference with greater need for Kindergarten support in the first two levels, and between 18% to 21% higher in level 3 for Collective communities.

Performance Levels

Level 1 - Substantial Instructional Support Needed

Level 2 - Some Support Needed

Level 3 - Minimal Support Needed

Locally: Stamford

Stamford Cradle to Career attended both Kindergarten Play and Learn events and literacy skills testing sessions to share and support parents by downloading Sparkler. We also wrote a letter that the school district sent to all registered families encouraging the use of Sparkler. We also promote Sparkler in a variety of ways across all ages groups 0-5.

Locally: West Hartford

Our West Hartford, Great by 8 Coordinator planned and facilitated a kindergarten readiness evening for parents with participation by K teachers. The FRC offers a summer transition to kindergarten program for 30 children who will enter kindergarten in the fall.

Locally: Enfield

Enfield KITE has a strong partnership with our local school district. During COVID-19, when events could not be held in-person, the district looked to us to help inform parents. Using our Zoom platform, we were able to host a live Q&A with the Superintendent, Nursing Director, School Admins, and a Kindergarten teacher from each school to answer questions and concerns.

	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3	
Measure	Collective	Statewide	Collective	Statewide	Collective	Statewide
Creative/ Aesthetic	16%	9%	44%	39%	35%	56%
Language	27%	16%	39%	41%	29%	47%
Literacy	29%	18%	40%	41%	26%	45%
Numeracy	25%	14%	42%	42%	28%	48%
Personal/ Social	21%	12%	43%	42%	31%	50%
Physical/ Motor	15%	9%	44%	39%	37%	55%

Children's Development

Providing a level playing field for children starts in the early years. Developmental screening tools such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaires provide insight into the areas of communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem solving, and personal-social skills as it relates to the individual child. Results from these assessments can help families and caregivers learn strengths, needs and are used to identify children that would benefit from in-depth evaluation for developmental delays.

Applications such as Sparkler can reinforce learning at home to foster positive child experiences by allowing families to access developmentally appropriate lessons they can do with their child. Likewise, home visiting programs that use the app with families can be a valuable resource to get families involved and engaged in their child's learning and development.

Sparkler App Data (n=towns)	
Statewide Total (n=154)	10,969 users
Connecticut Children's Collective (n=46)	4905 users (45%)
Statewide Agencies* (n=3)	4,079 users (37%)
Statewide(non-Collective/home Visiting n=59)	1,014 users (10%)
OEC Home Visiting** (n=45)	871 users (8%)

ASQ-SE2: The Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional, Second Edition is focused on social-emotional development and behavioral challenges of young children.

ASQ-3: The Ages & Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition is a developmental screening tool that pinpoints developmental progress in children between the ages of one month to 5 1/2 years.

Sparkler app use is 36% higher in Connecticut Children's Collective communities compared to non-CTCC communities. This translates into families having access to information to help them understand and navigate the various developmental stages of their children. Aligned with the local collaboratives efforts and resources, families in Collective communities are also provided support using behavioral screening tools such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaires.

Connecticut Children's Collective communities had 28% more ASQ-SE2 and 34% more ASQ-3 questionnaires administered than statewide non-CTCC communities.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire	ASQ-SE2 and ASQ-3
Statewide number administered Total 10,774	4,124 ASQ-SE2 6,650 ASQ-3
Connecticut Children's Collective Communities	44% ASQ-SE2 49% ASQ-3
Statewide (Non-Collective/ Non-Home Visiting)	14% ASQ-SE2 11% ASQ-3
State Agencies*	24% ASQ-SE2 21% ASQ-3
OEC Home Visiting**	16% ASQ-SE2 18% ASQ-3

*Birth to Three, CT Dept. of Children and Families, Statewide Family Hubs

**Home visiting support provided by local nonprofit organizations, health centers, or networks

Parent Engagement

A particular focus of the Collective's work and technical assistance has been to help local groups expand parent engagement. Through a grant in 2021-22, local partners have been able to provide stipends for parents to act as Parent Ambassadors and help reach out to other parents in the community as well as coordinate statewide with the OEC's Parent Cabinet. In the survey, local collaboratives were asked to identify how many people they connected with directly over the course of the past year. This included how many parents and guardians participated in programs, parenting education classes, parent advisory meetings or strategic planning meeting. Through a mix of in-person and virtual meetings, local partners connected directly with 1,467 people. For a more comprehensive assessment of the Connecticut Children's Collective parent engagement efforts, please visit our website to see the [Local Collaborative Partners Parent Survey Summary 2022](https://bit.ly/3s3aBh9), available here: <https://bit.ly/3s3aBh9>

Locally: Enfield

Enfield KITE's Parent Ambassadors have a passion to support the mental health of families and care-givers given the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are working to create a free self-care series for families to highlight support and resources that Enfield has to offer.

Locally: West Haven

West Haven Child Development Center has connected with a former member of Sesame Street who is doing a project with our parents. Parents will be writing their stories and creating lullabies to use with their children. We have a Farm to ECE grant where biweekly food shares delivered for parents and we also have a garden for children. In addition, we set up a free little library for parents and children.

Locally: West Haven

We work closely with our local health department and have helped pick up masks at central distribution sites and delivered them to child care programs in West Haven. We also made tests and masks available at the West Haven Child Development Center for pick up when needed.

Locally: Wethersfield

The Wethersfield Early Childhood Collaborative distributed the following:

- 460 N95 masks and
- 412 test kits to
- 9 in-home child care providers
- 3 Spanish-speaking providers and
- 5 child care centers

Emergency Response/Covid-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, local services were pushed to their limits as the needs for services dramatically increased at the same time as accessing services became much more difficult. The survey addressed the local collaboratives' central coordinating role during the pandemic in the providing of basic human needs like food and diapers.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, having parents/guardians/family members attend meetings and training sessions was a challenge. Even so, local partners were still able to connect with 1,467 people, which is a significant baseline from which to grow. Additionally, the majority of collaboratives (26 out of 29 respondents) were able to serve as a key local network or resource during the height of the pandemic.

Being responsive to the needs of the communities as a hallmark of a strong local-state early childhood system. This was illustrated best during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when the Collective organized the statewide distribution of 80,000 clear masks that allowed children to continue learning from adults faces while still helping child care providers to remain protected.

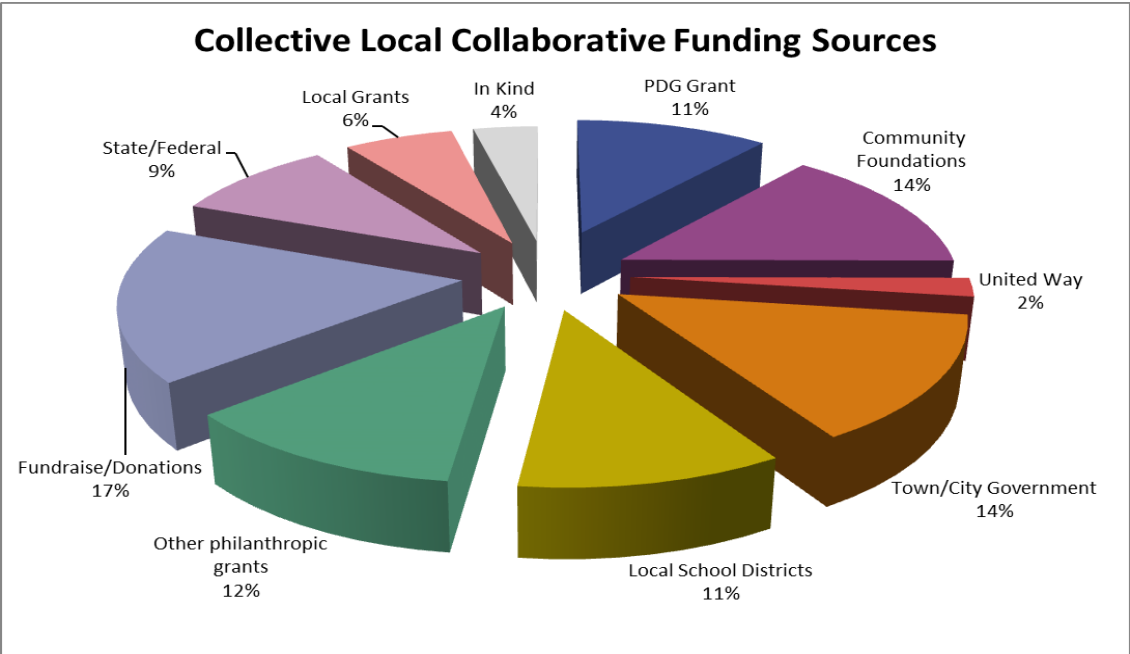
Funding

Funding varies tremendously between local collaboratives, with annual budgets varying from a low of \$500 with all in-kind staffing to a high of over \$5 million. Some collaboratives also manage their city’s school readiness dollars, which greatly increases their overall budget; not including these funds would show that most budgets are between \$10,000 and \$100,000. The work of a collaborative requires dedicated staff to build the partnerships, call the meetings, run the programs, coordinate the services, communicate with parents and generally act as the community glue that holds it all together. Maintaining adequate staffing levels for collaboratives, and in many cases expanding staffing to include at least a full-time staff person, is a primary focus of collaboratives’ sustainability efforts. We are at an inflection point as we look to secure funding for core staff functions and to expand the number of regional networks made up of small rural communities so that the network to cover the entire state and truly become a strong, local-state early childhood system for all of Connecticut.

From the 29 local collectives that responded to the survey, we are able to provide a snapshot of the overall current funding: the total aggregate funding for all 29 groups coming to \$10.5 million. Most significantly, we are able to determine the extent to which local collaboratives are able to leverage the investment by state agencies by securing funding from many different sources (see chart below). While there is a patchwork of funding which makes this work possible, further investments are needed to stabilize these groups and allow them to hire staff knowing that funding will be available for more than just the short-term.

Number of Local Collaboratives	Budget Amount
3	Greater than \$1 Million
12	Greater than \$100,000
8	Less than \$100,000
2	Less than \$10,000
9	Data not provided

Through this baseline survey, we are able to use these data to provide insight on the strengths and needs of the communities partnerships of the Connecticut Children’s Collective. This current data reflects the potential and opportunities that local groups provide to the communities they serve. Understanding the full scope of services, reach within the community, and fiscal health are all essential in order to sustain and support the work happening across Connecticut. In the coming year, the Connecticut Children’s Collective intends to gather and analyze further funding information from all 34 local groups to better understand the differences between larger, mid-size and smaller organizations, and also the intersection with school readiness funding.



6 | The Benefits of a Strong Local-State Early Childhood System

Aligned: Agreed upon goals get more buy-in and improve accountability

Effective: Better coordination of services leads to better results for kids and families

Efficient: Focus resources where the needs are, less duplication, less under-utilization

Equitable: Parent input & leadership promotes culturally sensitive solutions

Leveraged: Local collaboratives raise funding from other, non-OEC sources

Informed: Two-way feedback loops leads to better policy development

Independent: Less subject to political changes in city or district leadership

Strategic: Supports OEC's strategic goals of building partnerships and family-driven systems

7 | Looking Ahead

Connecticut's local collaboratives that make up the Children's Collective are the lynchpin in an effective early childhood system. They ensure that parent and community voices identify local needs, and help to find the best solutions. They provide essential feedback to state agencies setting policy priorities, and support quality improvement efforts. They help break down the silos that for so many decades early childhood and community-based programs have worked in.

We are at an inflection point as we look ahead to rebuilding systems post-pandemic. Never before have so many understood the essential nature of the early child care system in terms of both child development and necessary workforce support, and public support for systemic improvements is high. Any efforts to expand child care access or systemic improvements will be both more effective and more efficient if we build in infrastructure funding to provide secure funding for core staffing for local collaboratives along with adequate support to expand regional collaboratives in rural areas which are significantly underserved to build out the network to cover the entire state.

With robust philanthropic, federal, state, and local funding, we have the opportunity to strengthen the very fabric that is the early childhood landscape, thereby increasing children well-being and academic success, ensuring support for mental and physical health, and providing opportunities for parents and caregivers to become strong, capable leaders.

"The early care and education system is made up of a multitude of systems, policies, and bureaucratic mazes that create numerous barriers to accessing services.

...But there are bright spots. Many states have tested a variety of state-local models of early childhood governance to bolster their efforts to support families in developing their young children's skills, abilities, and health and mental health before they enter school. Additionally, many state and community leaders are actively seeking solutions to the persistent disparities by race, ethnicity, home language, immigration status, and income."

*-- Karen Ponder and Gretchen Ames in *The Nuts and Bolts of Building Early Childhood Systems**

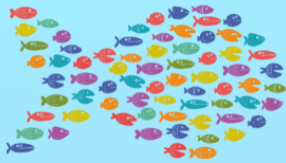
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About this survey: The Local Collaborative Leader Survey was conducted in the summer of 2022. 29 communities out of 36 responded to the survey in total. Survey respondents were leaders of their local early childhood collaborative.

Sparkler app use is 31% higher in Connecticut Children's Collective communities compared to non-CTCC communities.

Connecticut Children's Collective communities had 30% more ASQ-SE2 and 38% more ASQ-3 questionnaires administered than statewide non-CTCC communities.

Connecticut Children's Collective communities account for 62% of births statewide.

90% of CTCC communities served as key local networks and resources during the pandemic, distributing PPE and basic human needs.

Local communities were able to connect directly with 1,467 parents and families through unique trainings and educational workshops.

CTCC communities reported having 37,982 unique visitors to their websites.

In all, 18 local partners showed the capacity to have their own website, which provided valuable resources like COVID relief.

27 of our communities have the capacity for social media accounts or platforms.