

Solving the Unsolvable

How Chambers Are Taking Action to
Address Child Care

Colorado Chamber Alliance Meeting

Chambers as Conveners track

Thursday, October 1, 2026



Our mission

To make Colorado the best place to raise kids, build a future and thrive for generations to come.



Transforming systems

across early childhood, education and economic mobility



Building family wealth

through homeownership, employee ownership and financial accounts

By 2035

Our founders, Sam and Nancy Gary, decided that Gary Community Ventures should not exist forever.

We have committed to transfer all of our resources to the community by 2035. That timeline drives our urgency.

How we work

“Business, policy and philanthropy can — and should — work together to solve the toughest challenges in our community.”

Gary Philanthropy

Catalytic grantmaking that expands partners' impact and launches new ventures.

Gary Advocacy

Advances policy, invests in the policy ecosystem and improves public systems for kids and families.

Gary Ventures

Puts our whole balance sheet to work: philanthropy plus below-market and market-rate investments.

FIVE STRATEGIES



Catalytic grantmaking

Funding that catalyzes lasting change



Policy & advocacy

Legislation that unlocks public dollars



New ventures

Incubating programs for public leadership



Impact investments

Capital for return and mission



Narrative strategies

Shifting public understanding

Meet EPIC



Executives Partnering to
Invest in Children

“EPIC enables the business community to build the workforce of tomorrow while supporting the workforce of today.”

EPIC mobilizes business leaders to champion family-friendly workplaces and policies that support affordable, quality child care and education.

200+

members engaged

65+

employers supported

195K+

employees impacted

Recent efforts include

- Tailored services and a Design Lab for employers
- Leading Colorado: policy advocacy and membership
- Research and resources on child care and the workforce

EPIC's role in the Business Innovation Labs

- Collects local child care data with each chamber
- Drafts the employer survey and analyzes results
- Facilitates solution brainstorming sessions
- Provides targeted support to Track 2 chambers

Child care is on the move

Stories are shifting the conversation

100+

original stories from the Narrative Change Cohort

- 340+ stories in a shared story bank
- 30+ media stories and an RMPBS documentary
- Child care rose from 7th to 1st in news visibility and engagement among 7 top issues

See the stories:
childcareworksco.com

On the November 2026 ballot

2

statewide measures that include child care

Proposition NN

Raises the TABOR cap

Amendment 87

Graduated income tax

Other states are expanding child care

2

states with new, dedicated child care funding

New Mexico

Oil and gas funds

Vermont

Payroll fee

Child care in the headlines

CPR NEWS · May 20, 2026

Raising Colorado: The untold costs of a broken childcare system

CPR NEWS · June 10, 2026

The mountain town that realized child care wasn't just a family problem

CPR NEWS · June 3, 2026

In-house daycare doesn't solve the cost problem, but does help one company practice what it sells

THE COLORADO SUN · May 1, 2026

Thousands of Colorado's poorest families have been waiting for a childcare slot. Relief could come in two years.

CPR NEWS · May 21, 2026

Double duty: When parents are on-call 24/7, who is watching the children?

COLORADO CHAMBER · May 18, 2026

New Alliance Aims to Improve Child Care Access, Affordability Across Colorado

CPR NEWS · May 28, 2026

Child care center owner scrapes to save \$5 raise that meant the world to often underpaid workers

CPR NEWS · June 4, 2026

A patchwork of child care in the Western Slope can come loose at the seams for some families

CPR NEWS · Sept. 5, 2026

Colorado families searching for childcare face exploding waitlists and years-long freezes



Child Care Access Alliance

Business Innovation Labs

Activating chambers of commerce and their partners to lead on child care

A partnership of the Colorado Chamber, EPIC and Gary Community Ventures

Child care is a business issue

The Colorado Chamber's Vision 2033 names workforce shortages as one of the state's most urgent challenges. Employers across sectors cite child care cost and availability as barriers to hiring and keeping parents.

\$20K+

a year for full-time,
center-based infant care

79%

of parents report work
disruptions due to child
care

4 in 5

infants and toddlers have
no licensed space
available

\$2.7B

estimated annual loss to
Colorado's economy

Source: Business Innovation Labs Invitation to Apply, 2026. Economic loss figure refers to the lack of infant and toddler care.

What the project set out to do

OBJECTIVES

- 1** Build knowledge about local child care challenges
- 2** Assess the local business impacts of too little affordable child care
- 3** Identify promising employer, local and statewide strategies

7

chamber-led partnerships
across Colorado

\$20K

grant to each partnership

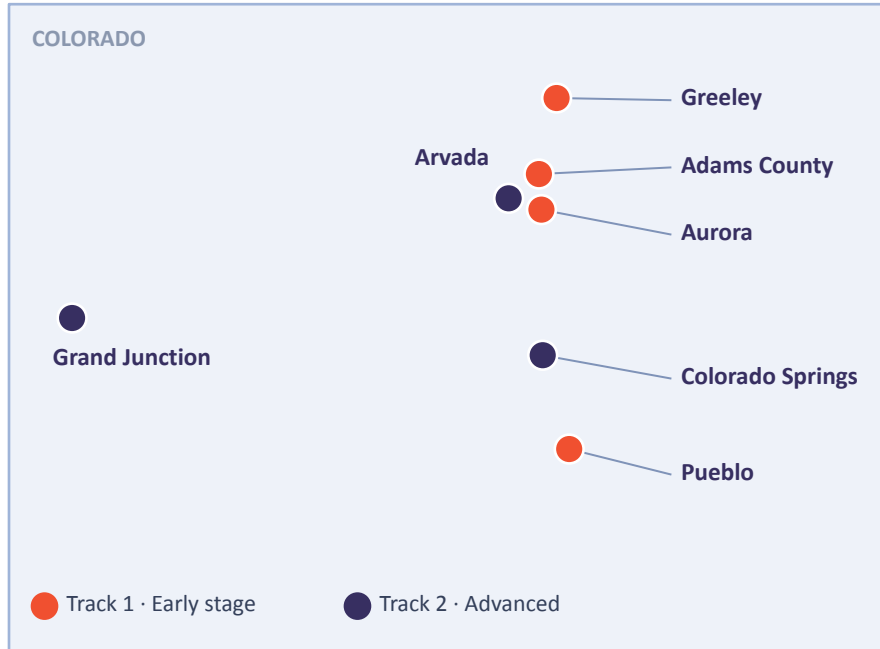
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grant period, May 2026 –
March 2027

2

cohort convenings:
midpoint (Aug. 2026) and
results (Mar. 2027)

Seven chambers, from the metro to the Western Slope



TRACK 1 · EARLY STAGE

Adams County Regional Economic Partnership

Adams County

Aurora Chamber of Commerce

Eastern metro

Greeley Area Chamber of Commerce

Greeley / Weld County

Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce

Pueblo County / Southern Colorado

TRACK 2 · ADVANCED

Greater Arvada Chamber of Commerce

Jefferson & Adams Counties

Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC

Pikes Peak region

Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce

Mesa County / Western Slope

Two tracks: start where you are

TRACK 1 • EARLY STAGE

A

Build shared awareness

Convene members and partners. Gather data on cost, capacity, supply gaps and employee care needs.

B

Assess local business impacts

Survey or interview employers on recruitment, retention, attendance and productivity, and what they have tried.

C

Identify potential solutions

Brainstorm employer, chamber, local and statewide actions. Explore pilots such as the federal 45F tax credit.

End products with EPIC: a local child care affordability and supply profile, employer survey findings, and a curated set of solutions.

TRACK 2 • ADVANCED

Take existing work to the next phase

- For chambers already collecting data and defining the problem
- Deeper employer engagement and pilot development
- Targeted EPIC support based on each chamber's needs
- Share proven models with the cohort

Partners in the Labs



Colorado Chamber

Leads outreach and communications across its statewide business network. The work is part of its Vision 2033 plan.



EPIC

Technical assistance partner. Leads engagement with chamber grantees on data, the employer survey and solution sessions.



Gary Community Ventures

Funds the grants and is the grant point of contact. Connects the work to Gary's broader child care and policy efforts.



Local chambers

Lead each partnership with local EDCs, nonprofits, government and child care partners, and engage employers.

Table conversations

1

What are you learning from your data or experience?

2

What are you learning or hearing from employers about how child care is affecting businesses?

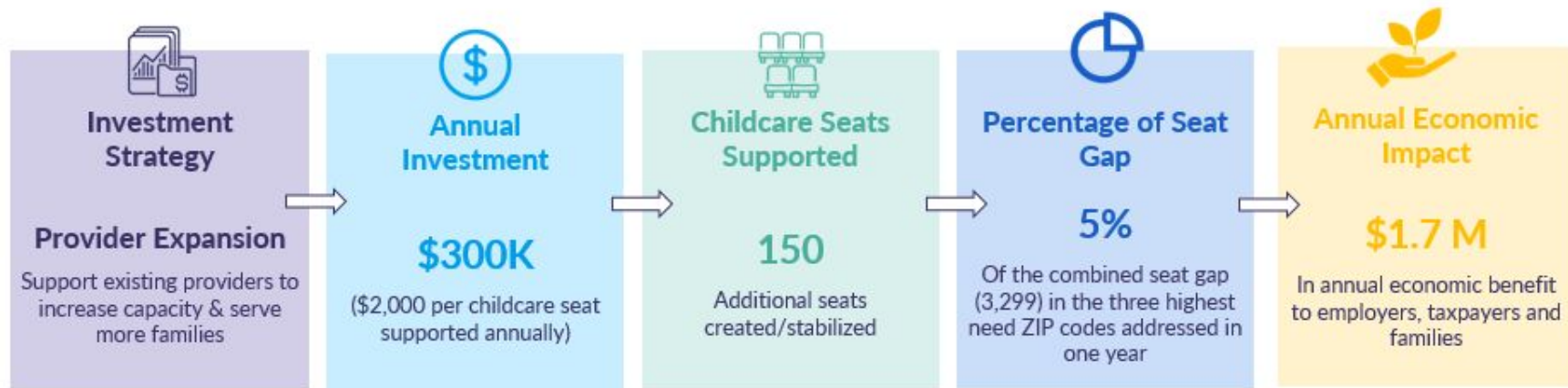
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Do you have emerging ideas you are planning to explore?

15–20 minutes. Cohort chambers, share what's working. New chambers, bring your questions. Pick one person to share a takeaway.

Potential Impact of Employer Investment

This planning scenario illustrates how a **\$300K employer investment** in provider expansion could support **150 childcare seats**, reducing the seat gap in the three highest need ZIP codes by approximately **5%** and generating an estimated **\$1.7 million in annual economic impact**.



Data Note: The childcare seat gap analysis focuses on the three ZIP codes with the greatest unmet need (81503, 81504, and 81507), representing a combined seat gap of 3,299. The employer ROI scenario uses EPIC's ROI Calculator and is based on publicly available data for the healthcare industry in Mesa County. Results are intended as planning-level estimates and should be interpreted as illustrative scenarios rather than predictions.

Planning assumption: \$2,000 per childcare seat supported annually. This reflects a planning level employer/community investment assumption and should not be interpreted as the full capital or operating cost of creating a new childcare seat.