



Whatcom Healthy Children's Fund



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Investing in early childhood



- 90% of human brain development happens before the age of 5.
- Only 50% of kids in Whatcom County enter kindergarten fully ready to learn
- Children who attend high-quality early learning & care are more likely to be on track with their reading skills by third grade and graduate high school and attend college, technical school, or training program that lead to good jobs as adults.
- Whatcom County has 5000 fewer early learning & care slots than we need, especially in rural areas.
- Over 85% of Whatcom County businesses report staffing challenges from lack of early learning and care.
- For every dollar invested in early childhood programs, between \$7 and \$13 are saved through benefits like lower incarceration rates and lower healthcare costs.

Healthy Children's Fund



Early Learning & Care

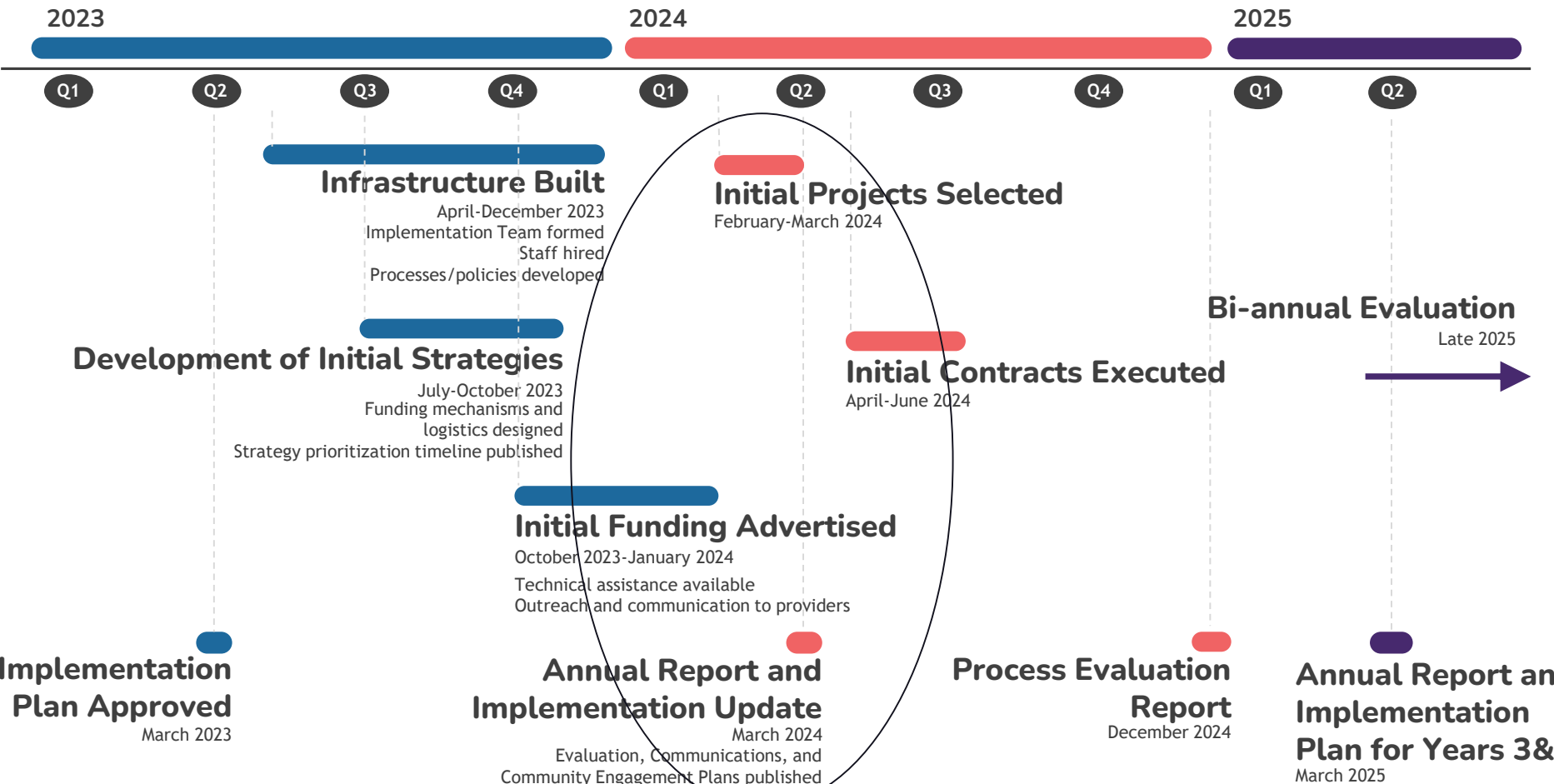
- Affordable
- Accessible
- High Quality
- Professional

Support for Vulnerable Children

- Expand mental and behavioral health services
- Prevent and reduce homelessness
- Support for parents/caregivers

Early Childhood Well-being

Healthy Children's Fund: Expected Timeline*



ARPA Funding - Birth to 5



Council-directed ARPA funding

- Capital Funding and Expansion
 - Award Letters - \$7M
 - Contracted - \$2.5M
 - Expanded Slots - 277
 - Preserved Slots - 84
- Stabilization and Emergency Childcare Vouchers
 - Contracted - \$2.75M
 - 32 childcare businesses countywide in partnership with City of Bellingham funds
- Home-based childcare businesses
 - Contract in progress to fund startup costs for 15 new home-based providers

**Total Childcare
Slots Created
with ARPA:
approx. 600**

ARPA & HCF Funding – Birth to 5



**Council-directed ARPA funding & Healthy Children's Fund
Second Round of Capital Funding-Award Letters sent in March 2024:**

- Slot expansion and preservation
- Improved Accessibility for playground equipment in Ferndale
- Transition a classroom from unused room to infant room (HCF)
- Expansion of child care in low-income housing

Year 1 & 2 Fund Priorities



Early Learning and Care

- Small Capital Projects
- Professional Development
- Subsidies
- Workforce Expansion & Retention
- Hubs
- Innovative Strategies

Vulnerable Children

- Behavioral Health
- Housing
- Early Parenting Supports
- Resource Navigation

Healthy Children's Fund Projects



Here and Now

- ARPA childcare expansion, family support, and stabilization programs (\$13M)
- Parent support groups “peer to peer” (\$600k)
- Doulas for Medicaid families (\$300k)
- Resources for families at risk of losing housing (\$2.8M)
- Basic Needs – diapers, formula, transportation, childproofing (\$800k)
- Single Entry Access Services for families with children with disabilities and/or complex medical needs (\$300k)
- Perinatal Mental Health Expansion (\$200k)
- Drop-in childcare (\$500k)

Healthy Children's Fund Projects



Coming Soon - Childcare

- Childcare-based services like OT, PT, Speech and Behavioral Health & New programs to promote Kindergarten Readiness (\$1.5M)
- Childcare facility expansion (\$1M)
- Professional development hub (\$1.5M)

Healthy Children's Fund Projects



Coming Soon – Vulnerable Children

- Embedded and community based social workers for pregnant and parenting families (\$750k)
- Behavioral Health workforce recruitment and training and services (\$1m)

Healthy Children's Fund Projects



Down the Road

- Addressing the gap between what childcare providers need and what families can afford (ex: subsidies for ALICE families, covering the “cost of quality care” (\$4M)
- Planning grants for more services in every school district (\$500k)

Project Summary



- About 600 childcare slots to be added from infants and up
- Funding mechanisms for nearly every HCF strategy
- Countywide support for families, early learning and care employees and childcare businesses

What's Coming



- **Evaluation, Communications, and Community Engagement Plans**
- **RFPs and Contracts for nearly every strategy**
- **Planning process for next implementation plan (due March 2025)**

Questions?



Learn more and sign-up for updates at
<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/4069/Healthy-Childrens-Fund>