



# Whatcom Healthy Children's Fund



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# Investing in early childhood

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- 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

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## 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**

# Vision

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## Equity

- Decreased disparities by race, income, and geography
- Rural communities are better served with more resources
- Services are culturally appropriate

## Systemic

- County processes are efficient and easy to navigate
- An organized, easy-to-use system for accessing resources
- The fund is a model for government and partner accountability and transparency.

# Year 1 & 2 Fund Priorities

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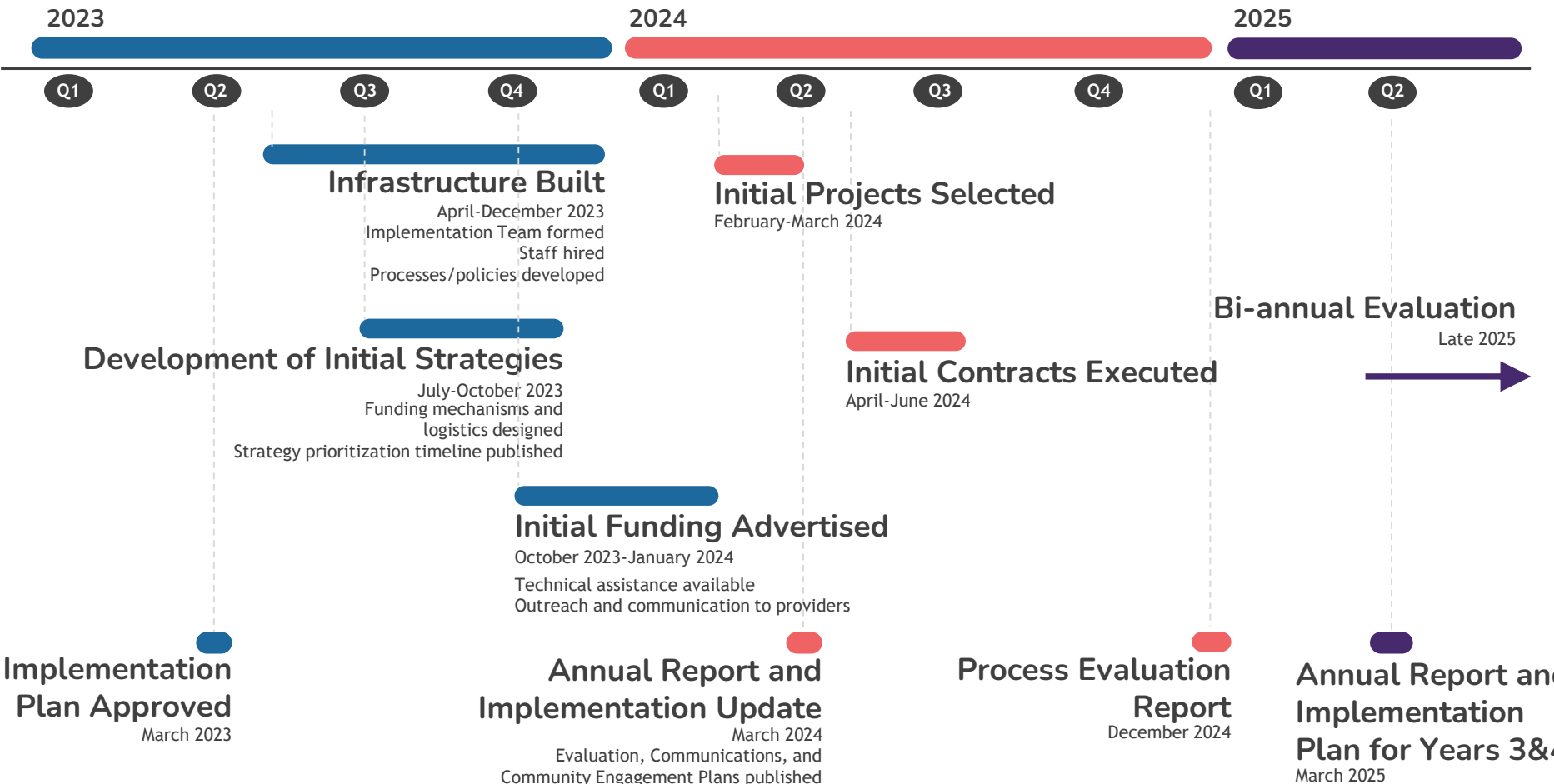
## Early Learning and Care

- 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: Expected Timeline\*



# Progress and Challenges

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## Progress

- Child and Family Supervisor hired (Jun 2023)
- Child and Family Well-being Task Force HCF sub-team forms (summer 2023)
- Two key RFPs in draft form - housing for vulnerable families and innovation fund
- Three to four more will be in process in the next month

## Challenges

- Scope and scale
- Speed vs. system change (not doing things the way we've always done them)
- New lines of business for County / supporting an industry sector in an effort to help the broader community
- Recruitment of health and community services staff
- Building in program evaluation more deliberately into contracts
- Simultaneous delivery of \$13M in ARPA childcare funding and \$12.7M in ARPA housing/homelessness funding, in addition to other pandemic relief money.

# Other Funding - Birth to 5

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## Early Learning & Care

- Initial ARPA capital RFP contracts coming forward to Council creating 272+ new childcare slots, including in childcare desserts
- 32 grants to stabilize existing child care slots (in partnership with OC and COB)
- Emergency childcare vouchers, scholarships, and new technology platform funded
- Releasing next ARPA capital RFP today!
- Working now on a home-based childcare startup program and drop-in care pilot



# Other Funding - Birth to 5

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## Family Homelessness

- Since 2021, funded five affordable housing capital projects for families (Bellis, Evergreen Ridge, Habitat Everson, Samish Commons, Thornton Street). \$7.2M invested, preserving 145 apartments and creating 185 new affordable homes.
- \$1M in new federal funding still to contract; will prioritize this funding to address family homelessness.
- Moteling/sheltering approximately 50 additional families over the winter months
- Supporting families at Hart House, Trailview Apartments, and Millworks
- Rapid rehousing, eviction prevention, and rental assistance on an ongoing basis
- Identified a provider interested in opening a new interim housing program for families with children. County will be a potential large funder of this program.

# Status - Early Learning

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Strategy	Update	Timing of Funds
Capital Funds	Prioritizing ARPA RFP/Contracts	Late 2024
Pathways to a Stable Early Learning and Care Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="523 484 1251 601">● Solicited feedback from local providers for input on gaps and assets in our current professional development systems.</li><li data-bbox="523 637 1219 754">● Working with partners in local higher ed institutions on establishing an Interlocal Agreement</li></ul>	Early to mid 2024
Innovation	Working on RFP	Q1 2024

# Status - Early Learning



Strategy	Update	Timing of Funds
Tuition Subsidies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Initiating Working Connections outreach and navigation campaign</li><li>● Work with Council &amp; Child and Family Well-Being Task Force to determine subsidy program parameters and make policy choices</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● WCCC campaign - Q4 2023/Q1 2024</li><li>● RFP for subsidy administrator - mid 2024</li><li>● Funds flow to families - Q4 2024/Q1 2025</li></ul>
Workforce Expansion	Research phase of how to build economic stability for ELC providers	TBD
Regional Early Learning and Care Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Researching components of successful ELC Hubs to inform creation of RFP</li><li>● Provider and caregiver feedback sessions to determine needs and priorities</li></ul>	Q1-Q2 2024  TBD

# Status - Vulnerable Children



Strategy	Update	Timing of Funds
Behavioral health	Working to refine implementation plan goals related to service expansion, training, and workforce recruitment.	Q3 2024
Housing	RFP to create and expand services to prevent and divert families from homelessness before it occurs (e.g., wraparound mental & behavioral health and parenting supports)	Q1 - Q2 2024
Early parenting supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● RFP Doula services</li><li>● Peer to peer parent/caregiver supports</li><li>● Diaper distribution</li></ul>	Q1 - Q4 2024
Resource navigation	Implementing the CFWBTF recommendation to pilot Help Me Grow, which connects families to resources.	Phase 1: Q3 2024

# Further Engagement

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## Council

- approving budget and contracts
- speed vs. system change
- scoping large programs
- prioritizing strategies
- approving Implementation Plans for years 3 and beyond

*where (committee? COW?) and how often would you like updates? where would you like to dig in?*

## Community

- re-invigorating implementation team, including family voice
- prioritizing strategies
- capacity building opportunities and technical assistance
- planning new services
- applying for funding

# Questions?

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