

OAKLAND CHILDREN'S INITIATIVE (OCI) ROADMAP



UNDERSTANDING THE MOMENT

In Alameda County, the cost of childcare is unsustainable — nearly **one-third of a family's income goes toward child care**, exceeding the cost of housing [1]. At the same time, **~47% (11,000+) of Oakland's children ages 0–6 are eligible for Medi-Cal** [2], a clear indicator of the deep economic disparities facing families. Early educators are **struggling to earn a living wage and experience high burnout**, and decades of underinvestment in early education has led to a **fragmented system** that falls short of serving all families equitably.

While Oakland's early learning system serves thousands of families, significant gaps in access and affordability persist. Roughly 6,300 three- and four-year-olds are in families with low incomes and are eligible for subsidized care — yet **2,700+ children remain unserved** [3]. Addressing this gap requires a coordinated, citywide strategy that strengthens every layer of the early learning system — from enrollment and classroom quality to workforce and infrastructure.

The Oakland Children's Initiative (OCI also known as Measure AA), approved by voters in 2018, represents a 30-year, community-led commitment to addressing this crisis. The Early Education Fund generates approximately **\$30 million in annual revenue** through a parcel tax and is administered by **First 5 Alameda County** to the public system partners, **Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)** and **City of Oakland Early Childhood and Family Services (COOECFS)**, prioritized in the legislation.

THE OAKLAND CHILDREN'S INITIATIVE STRATEGIC GOALS

To advance OCI, systems leaders have identified **four interconnected goals of the Early Education Fund** that will guide investments and support for Oakland's early learning system. Together, they reflect a comprehensive, equity-centered approach, meeting urgent needs today while strengthening a more stable and accessible system for the future.

GOAL 1: EXPAND ACCESS AND ENROLLMENT

GOAL 2: ENHANCE QUALITY OF EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

GOAL 3: ELEVATE THE WORKFORCE

GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN THE SYSTEM

THE OAKLAND CHILDREN'S INITIATIVE ROADMAP FOR ACTION AND IMPACT

The following outlines a sustainable four-point roadmap to maximize the use of available resources in the Early Education Fund, with the vision of ensuring that all three- and four-year-olds in Oakland have access to affordable, high-quality preschool, with priority given to families with low incomes. Building on existing investments, these recommendations are guided by the legislative intent and center public systems, OUSD and COOECFS to ensure every child is reached. The roadmap is intended to directly inform implementation, contribute to the development of the 5-year guidelines, and shape future priorities, investments, and policy decisions that advance opportunity for Oakland's young children and families.

VISION

Every three- and four-year-old in Oakland has access to affordable, high-quality preschool, prioritizing families with low incomes first as mandated by legislation.

MISSION

Create an equitable, inclusive, and transformative early childhood system that centers Oakland's children and families, strengthens local economy, and shapes a vibrant future for our community.

← SHARED VALUES →

CHILD, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY-CENTERED	EQUITY	PARTNERSHIP	SUSTAINABILITY
Center children, families, and communities by ensuring their assets, priorities, and needs guide system design and implementation.	Commit to dismantling barriers and amplifying diverse voices to advance justice and opportunity for all children and families.	Strengthen partnerships across the early childhood system and with aligned sectors to meet the diverse needs of families and invest in the long-term well-being of Oakland's children.	Promote long-term stability through responsible stewardship of resources, clear accountability, and shared responsibility to sustain lasting impact.

GOAL 1: EXPAND ACCESS AND ENROLLMENT

OBJECTIVE

Close the estimated enrollment gap for 2,700 unserved eligible three-and four-year-olds.

STRATEGIES

1. **Maximize existing capacity and uptake of slots, expand capacity to increase slots,** and support classroom staffing in order to serve additional children and close the enrollment gap.
2. **Invest in facility expansion** and sequence based on equity, workforce readiness, program capacity and quality, and enrollment demand.
3. **Expand targeted outreach, navigation support, and coordinated enrollment** to streamline how families learn about, apply for, and secure care, including...
 - a. *Leveraging Measure C investments in coordinated eligibility and enrollment systems.*
 - b. *Applying data-driven and community-informed approaches to ensure enrollment targets and program design reflect family needs and preferences.*
4. **Advance efforts to reduce barriers and support access** to care that meets diverse family needs, including...
 - a. *Expanding extended care options to provide a full day of care for working families by leveraging partnerships with Family Child Care and Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers.*
 - b. *Exploring transportation supports for before and/or after care.*
5. **Expand access to transition supports** that prepare children and families to successfully enter Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Kindergarten, with a focus on children without prior preschool experience and those facing barriers to early learning opportunities.

OUTCOMES

1. **More children participate in OCI-funded programs,** contributing to a reduced enrollment gap.
2. **Public system capacity is fully utilized and expanded,** with budgets effectively spent down to maximize impact.
3. **Public system investments center equity** across geography and demographics including income, language, ability, immigration status, and race, ensuring equitable distribution of resources.

GOAL 2: ENHANCE QUALITY OF EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

OBJECTIVE

Co-create a **shared, citywide framework for preschool quality** that ensures equitable, developmentally appropriate learning environments.

STRATEGIES

1. **Establish a community-informed and equity-centered quality measurement framework** to evolve the current system, Quality Counts/QRIS, which all OUSD and COOECFS classrooms participate in.
2. **Integrate facility design standards** including safety, accessibility, indoor and outdoor spaces for early learners.
3. **Advance high-quality early learning environments** through developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and anti-bias curricula, educational materials, and classroom practices that support children's learning and development.
4. **Leverage comprehensive care** e.g.: nutrition, health, education and family engagement via COOECFS and Measure C for families and children that need additional support.
5. **Expand supports for children's behavioral health and inclusive learning environments** through trauma-informed practices, social-emotional and mental health supports, and coordination with early intervention and early childhood special education.

OUTCOMES

1. **All OCI-funded programs** achieve a four-star rating or higher, or equivalent under a successor system.
2. Quality measurement reflects **equity-informed metrics** to ensure inclusion and continuous improvement.
3. Funding and program resources for quality, such as Quality Counts California, are intentionally **integrated and leveraged** to deliver consistent, high-quality supports.

GOAL 3: ELEVATE THE WORKFORCE

OBJECTIVE

Expand and retain a **qualified, well-compensated early education workforce** reflective of Oakland's diversity.

STRATEGIES

1. **Improve recruitment and retention of early childhood workforce** to offset high turnover rates for early educators and meet increased demand.

2. **Expand career pathways** through apprenticeship and credentialing partnerships, leveraging Measure C, Alameda County Office of Education, and OUSD workforce investments.
3. **Increase educator wages** by implementing \$25/hour Measure C wage floor for providers participating in Measure C.
4. **Coordinate ongoing professional development and instructional coaching** across systems, including a focus on trauma-informed and healing-centered practices, inclusion, and equity-centered topics

OUTCOMES

1. **The ECE workforce grows** annually, expanding capacity to meet classroom needs.
2. **Increased retention of early educators**, supported by professional development and career pathways strengthening ECE workforce stability and program quality.
3. **A \$25-per-hour minimum wage floor** is achieved for Measure C participating providers, advancing fair compensation.

GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN THE SYSTEM

OBJECTIVE

Build and sustain an **integrated, transparent, and accountable early learning system**.

STRATEGIES

1. Strengthen collaboration to **build infrastructure, systems and practices** that align with public partner capacity and strengthen it over time, including...
 - a. *Staffing systems with expertise in finance, planning, program design, and administration to strengthen capacity, infrastructure, accountability, and impact.*
2. **Advance systems coordination and leverage existing funding** to maximize resources and support effective implementation, including...
 - a. *Documenting formal system commitments, including agreements for fiscal oversight and evaluation to maintain accountability across administrations and track progress.*
 - b. *Partnering through ECE coordinating structures including the OUSD–City Council Education Partnership Committee, Oakland Starting Smart and Strong, Oakland Thrives, RISE East, and similar collaboratives.*
 - c. *Leveraging and coordinating with federal, state, county, and city ECE investments, including Measure C, California State Preschool Program, Special Education and others.*
3. **Expand proven family and community partnership models**, such as Oakland Promise and those currently used in OUSD and COOECFS, including family navigators, home visitors, the COOECFS family survey, and insights from the WestEd facilitated community listening sessions.

4. **Advance data and evaluation efforts** to track progress, inform equity-driven decision-making, and guide continuous improvement, including...
 - a. *Applying equity analysis in funding and policy decisions through upfront assessments of intended beneficiaries, community needs, and post-investment review of who benefits and where investments are.*
 - b. *Develop a public accountability dashboard with real-time reporting on enrollment, workforce, and quality outcomes tied to system goals, and a transparent evaluation framework.*
5. **Develop a strategic communications plan** linking early education to broader city outcomes, such as economic mobility, workforce participation, and community stability.

OUTCOMES

1. Public systems demonstrate **greater impact, responsiveness, and alignment** of resources with community needs.
2. **Shared governance and coordinated fiscal and data oversight** are established to strengthen accountability and collaboration.
3. **Audits are clean, reporting is transparent, and strategic communications** elevate public understanding of outcomes and impact.
4. **Fiscal leveraging increases** with expanded resources dedicated to the ECE system.

CITATIONS

[1] Insight Center for Community Economic Development.

[2] Alameda County Social Services.

[3] Population estimates from 2023 5-Year ACS-PUMS; estimates have a high margin of error, and First 5 Alameda population estimate methodology is subject to revision. Children served include OCI OUSD and COOECFS programs (24-25 data reporting and performance targets) and a mixed delivery system estimate for children with Oakland addresses.