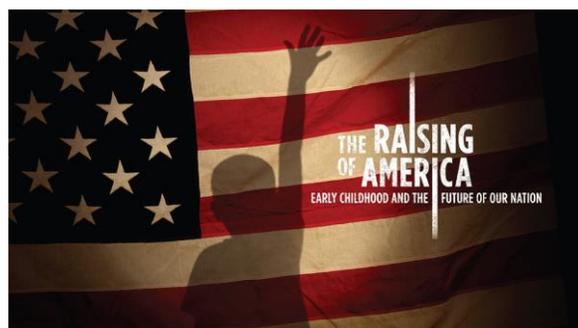


Early Childhood Colorado Partnership

The Raising of America

Mini-Grant Summary

August 2015



The Raising of America Mini-Grant Report

Background

The Early Childhood Colorado Partnership (Partnership) is a network of partners from state and local agencies, statewide nonprofits, local early childhood councils, foundations and universities committed to ensuring the vision of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* is effectively implemented in Colorado. The Partnership provides the tools, space and conditions for diverse partners across the comprehensive early childhood system – encompassing health, mental health, family support, and early learning – to come together, identify common results, share best practices, implement strategies, and track progress towards indicators of child and family well-being and systems performance improvement. The Partnership organizes its work around four shared results:

- Children live in safe, stable, and supportive families and communities;
- Families are engaged as leaders in their child's healthy development and education;
- Children's health and development are on track; and
- Children of all races and income levels are successful learners.

Additional information about the Partnership can be found on the website:

www.earlychildhoodcoloradopartnership.org

The Raising of America Mini-Grants

In early 2014, the Partnership identified *The Raising of America*¹ documentary series as a powerful tool to leverage and maximize conversations about young children in Colorado. The Partnership Steering Committee decided to fund a series of "mini-grants" for individuals, organizations, and networks to deepen conversations and take action to prevent adversity and buffer the impact of toxic stress in young children through hosting screenings and discussions of the documentary series.

The intended outcome of supporting screening events was two-fold:

1. To build statewide momentum and energy ahead of the nationwide airing of the series in 2015, and
2. To leverage the series as a tool to promote action within the Partnership's effort to raise awareness about the lifelong impact of early adversity and toxic stress on young children.

The Partnership awarded 15 mini-grants of \$500 each to offset convening costs to support projects from small community conversations to multi-partner community events. Thirteen of the fifteen recipients submitted reports on their mini-grants at the time of this analysis.

¹ Learn more at www.raisingofamerica.org

The Raising of America Mini-Grant Report

Mini-Grant Recipients²

The Raising of America Mini-Grantees



- Friends of the Haven
- Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County
- Huerfano-Las Animas (HULA) Early Childhood Council
- Kids First (Pitkin County)
- Early Childhood Options (Summit + Grand Counties)
- Promises for Children (Weld County)
- Broomfield Early Childhood Council
- Montelores Early Childhood Council
- Earlier is Easier
- The Raising of America Partnership – Boulder County
- Cooking Matters Colorado
- Routt County United Way
- Denver Early Childhood Council
- Gunnison-Hinsdale Early Childhood Council
- Early Childhood Council of Larimer County

Overview of screenings and outcomes

Attendance and Audiences

Almost 1,000 people viewed at least one of the 25 screenings hosted by the recipients of the mini-grants. The segments screened included: *Are We Crazy About Our Kids?*; *The Raising of America Signature Hour*; *Once Upon A Time*; and *Wounded Places*.

Many of the mini-grant recipients included audiences who were already invested in and/or supporting children and families. They discussed issues in early childhood with professionals in the field and those who are passionate about the issues presented in the documentary series. Examples of audience members include: teachers, directors, coaches, public health partners, parents and family support.

² For descriptions of each mini-grantee, see Attachment 1

The Raising of America Mini-Grant Report

A few mini-grant recipients were successful in attracting “unusual suspects” and engaged in conversation on issues pertaining to early childhood and the impacts of toxic stress on children. Examples include: business leaders, county commissioners, a group of teen parents from a local high school, Spanish-speaking families and elected officials.

“Overwhelmingly, most (92%) indicated that their commitment to help children increased ‘a lot’ or ‘some’ as a result of The Raising of America premiere showings held in Greeley, Colorado.” – Promises for Children, Weld County Report

A common theme throughout all screenings was the tremendous impact the documentary had on individuals in building awareness of the issues. With increased shared understanding and commitment comes the greater opportunity for change.

“The Raising of America Partnership-Boulder County (RoA-BC) originally convened in spring of 2014 to discuss what opportunities existed with the emerging documentary series. RoA-BC has developed a six-month charter, extending through October 2015 in order to continue to guide our efforts around community/family engagement, public/organizational policy, and engaging the business community.” – RoA-BC, Boulder County Report

Success Stories

The Raising of America screenings have supported increased awareness of issues in early childhood and the impact of toxic stress on young children. Many attendees committed to discussing the series with other people, viewing other segments of the documentary and building awareness of issues and the importance of early childhood.

Challenges and Barriers

Mini-grant recipients reported challenges and barriers including attracting more community members not already engaged in early childhood efforts to be part of the screening and discussion (i.e. business, family members, policymakers, other community members). Additionally, those who viewed the screenings reported feeling energized yet felt they wanted to see a clearer call to action. They questioned what is going to be done about the issues discussed in *The Raising of America* series and who will lead the way.

“It has been challenging to engage the business community in early childhood efforts, however hosting this screening and providing lunch worked as a first step in building that relationship.” – Kids First, Pitkin County Report

The Raising of America Mini-Grant Report

Next Steps and Commitments

Many mini-grant recipients collected contact information and followed up with individuals with reminders of future *The Raising of America* viewings and updates in order to continue to build awareness of the issues and importance of early childhood. Some have taken steps to plan future screenings with local businesses or other interested parties.

Listen to a radio interview about the Montelores Early Childhood Council screening with local public radio in Southwestern Colorado:
<http://ksjd.org/post/importance-early-childhood-development>

Recommendations for the Early Childhood Colorado Partnership and other partners promoting *The Raising of America* series

"A mother commented that she just assumed raising children is really hard and had no idea that it could or should be easier with community and legislative support. She felt very excited to be a part of this and was grateful to know there are others who recognize the difficulties of child care and trying to do what is best for their families."
-- highlight from Broomfield discussion

Overall, partners felt that the documentary series serves as a powerful tool for supporting conversations around young children and families in Colorado. A key theme from mini-grant reports is that many partners are engaging individuals and groups who are already aware of and/or invested in the issues children, families and the field of early childhood face. Targeting these groups is important to build shared understanding and motivation for action, yet there needs to be targeted outreach to those who are not already invested or

face challenges in engaging as these audiences are key in changing systems and policies that support children and families (i.e. families, business, policymakers, etc.). The following provides a list of other recommendations and opportunities as the nationwide airing approaches:

- Create, in collaboration with mini-grant recipients, a strategic outreach plan or "script" to follow when targeting non-traditional community members.
- Visit or ask to be invited to businesses or legislator activities to listen to their perspectives on early childhood issues. How would they be more/less inclined to be supportive? Utilize partners like Executives Partnering to Invest in Children and the Colorado Children's Campaign to support this work.
- Craft a universal message that supports early childhood issues, specifically around early childhood adversity and toxic stress.
- Utilize local community data in screenings and discussions to connect audiences to their community's needs.
- Include a call-to-action in all screenings and viewings. This could be simple, like connecting to a local early childhood council or writing letters to legislators. There also is a desire to build large scale support around issues like family-centric business policies and access to quality child care options.

The Raising of America Mini-Grant Report

Attachment 1: Overview of Mini-Grant Recipients

1. United Way of Weld County's Promises for Children -- located in north-central Colorado, Promises for Children is one of the 31 Early Childhood Councils in Colorado with a focus on advancing programs, resources and support around early learning, emotional, and mental health. They work to bring together local partners to improve the quality and availability of early childhood services for children and families in Weld County.
www.unitedway-weld.org/promisesforchildren
2. Gunnison-Hinsdale Early Childhood Council -- Gunnison is located in the central part of Colorado, 200 miles southwest of Denver. Gunnison-Hinsdale Early Childhood Council's vision is to improve and expand quality early childhood services and education in an effort to help children succeed in life. The Council builds collaborative efforts and support in the four domains of the Early Childhood Colorado Framework: early Learning, social emotional and mental health, family support and parent education, and health.
www.gunnisoncounty.org/247/Gunnison-Hinsdale-Early-Childhood-Council
3. Huerfano-Las Animas Counties Early Childhood Advisory Council (HuLA) -- Huerfano County is located in southeastern Colorado and shares a border with New Mexico. HuLA's mission is to support children and families through partnerships which promote healthy kids, families, and communication through self-sufficiency. HuLA is a place to develop collaborative initiatives to optimize the use of resources and opportunities.
www.hulaearlychildhoodadvisorycouncil.org
4. The Rural Resort Region –Northeast – spanning two rural resort counties in western Colorado, the Rural Resort Region-Northeast Early Childhood Council's mission is to promote a child centered school readiness system that fosters early learning, facilitates healthy child development and promotes family success.
<https://sites.google.com/site/ruralresortregion/home/about>
5. The Earlier is Easier Collaborative supports efforts in the Denver Metro area to promote early childhood literacy. This collaborate effort includes professionals from more than 20 early childhood organizations in the area.
www.earlieriseasier.org
6. Share Our Strength-Cooking Matters Colorado is a statewide organization supporting families and child care settings to shop for and cook healthy meals on a budget.
7. Denver's Early Childhood Council – Denver's Early Childhood Council's mission is to serve as Denver's early childhood hub, leveraging resources, opportunities and connections to create a quality system that positively impacts the lives of children and their families.
www.denverearlychildhood.org
8. Broomfield Early Childhood Council – in the northern front-range, Broomfield Early Childhood Council is an organization seeking to develop an integrated system of care that promotes the health and well-being of young children, their families, and their providers.
www.broomfieldecc.org

The Raising of America Mini-Grant Report

9. Routt County United Way is located in Steamboat Springs, Colorado in the northwest part of the state, approximately three hours from Denver. Routt County United Way envisions their community as one where all children and adults can succeed through education, income stability, and healthy lives.
www.routtcountyunitedway.org
10. Be Ready Campaign of Larimer County – Located in northern Colorado, the BE READY Campaign for School Readiness is the result of a partnership among Larimer County schools and community organizations. The intent is that all of Larimer County including parents, the medical community, employers, child care providers, libraries, school districts, and beyond will share the responsibility to make certain all children will be ready to be successful when they start school.
www.bereadylarimercounty.org
11. Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) – ECPAC, the early childhood council serving Adams County, creates an early childhood system to overcome risk factors through collective impact. They build and support partnerships of all groups working with young children and families.
www.ecpac.org
12. Kids First -- Kids First is the early childhood council serving Pitkin County, Colorado. Kids First is an early childhood resource center that supports quality, affordable child care choices through sharing information about choosing child care, assistance with paying for child care, and many other ways to support young children, their families and the early childhood programs that support them.
www.aspenpitkin.com/Departments/Kids-First
13. The Raising of America Partnership, Boulder County -- The Raising of America Partnership-Boulder County (RoA-BC) originally convened in spring of 2014 to discuss what opportunities existed with the emerging documentary series. Over time, that partnership grew, bringing new and motivated voices to the table. By December 2014, RoA-BC had grown to eight interested organizations, with the concept for an event that would change the way the community engages around families and young children.
www.bouldercounty.org/dept/publichealth/pages/roapartnership
14. Montelores Early Childhood Council (MECC)—MECC, located in southwestern Colorado, envisions a community in which kids have healthy, nurturing early family and education environments; families and early childhood professionals have the supports they need to promote healthy development; and all community members work together to make this vision a reality. (note, data from this project not included in the report)
www.monteloresecc.org
15. Friends of the Haven -- Friends of the Haven aim to restore the hopes and dreams of women learning to live in recovery by raising awareness and funds for the Haven while engaging the community through volunteerism. (note, data from this project not included in the report)
<http://www.havenfriends.org/>

The Early Childhood Colorado Partnership, and related projects and resources, is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant, grant number H25MC26226. The information, content and conclusions in this literature review are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.