

# APPENDIX F: CASE STUDY

from *Supporting Families, Children, and the Caregiving Workforce:  
A Local Financing Toolkit for Colorado*

## Local Early Childhood Initiative Case Study: Summit County: Right Start and Strong Future UPK

*Community:* Summit County

*Size/Type of Community:*

- Total population (2021): 30,970 people
- Children age 5 and under: 1,278
- Mountain, rural-resort, high-value vacation homes in and around Breckenridge and Keystone impacting property values and voter/tax base

Source: [KIDS COUNT! IN COLORADO Report 2023](#)

*Year Tax Established/Reauthorized and Vote:*

- Right Start EC Program: 2005 and reauthorized in 2013, both stand-alone measures, both passed with support in the 50% and greater range.
- Strong Future UPK: 2018—62% voter support  
Note: The UPK program was one component of a measure that also included funding for wildfire prevention and mitigation; mental health and suicide prevention; recycling and water diversion; and public building repairs and improvements. In all, it was an \$8.8 million/year ask of voters and the UPK component was projected to get \$2.5 million/year or about 28% of the revenue. Additionally, the “public building repairs and improvements” component of the package also benefited a child care center in Silverthorne that was completed in 2023.

*Tax Type:* Both are property taxes

- 2005 Right Start: .50 mill
- 2018: 4.7 mill levy, \$33.96 for every \$100,000 of property value; early childhood programs were one component that would receive about 28% of revenue generated by this significant tax increase

*Approximate Revenue Generated Annually:*

- Right Start (2005/2013): Just under \$1 million/year now is generated; it was about \$600,000/year when first approved in 2005. The increase is due entirely to rising property values in the county.
- Strong Future UPK (2018): This generates about \$2.5 million/year.



## *How Revenue is Allocated or Spent:*

### Right Start Program Components:

- Access to Child Care
  - Financial assistance: Tuition subsidies for lower income families
  - Capacity/debt buy-down: Capital construction costs for building and expanding programs
- Workforce recruitment/retention/support
  - Salary supplements
  - Scholarships for continuing education and training
  - EC Cares: Innovative partnership with local Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) to provide health care services to all teachers working in licensed child care settings with copays set based on average local teacher salary
- Quality initiatives
  - Coaching and training
  - Quality improvement plans
  - Shared back office services: Drive toward efficiency
- Home visitation/parent education: administered separately by Family Resource Center and County Human Services

### Strong Future UPK Program Components:

- Preschool for all children in the year before kindergarten (pre-K for 4-year-olds) and some preschool for 3-year-olds
- Mixed delivery: School district and community-based licensed providers
- Sliding scale tuition assistance built around family income: goal of ensuring families don't pay more than 7-10% of income on child care

## *Governance:*

### County is the Taxing Entity; the Board of County Commissioners is Ultimately Responsible:

- The Local Early Childhood Council (Early Childhood Options or ECO) has an MOU with the County to administer Right Start and Strong Future UPK program.
- ECO submits an annual budget request to Commissioners with interim supplemental requests as needed.
- The MOU between the County and the Council is revisited as needed/periodically.
  - The MOU outlines the responsibilities and services that Early Childhood Options provides to administer the programs funded by Right Start and Strong Futures UPK Programs; ECO manages almost all programmatic aspects except the home visiting programs, which are managed through the Family Resource Center and the County Human Services.
- There is one County Commissioner and one County staff member who sit on the Early Childhood Options Board.

#### *Sunset Provision:*

- Right Start Program: This included a sunset provision of 10 years in the initial measure; the sunset was eliminated in the 2013 reauthorization.
- Strong Future UPK: There is a 10-year sunset provision.

#### *Evaluation:*

- Early Childhood Options reports annually to BOCC on finances and expenditures, quality rating data, early childhood program capacity, and staff turnover.
- They have contracted periodically with external consultants to evaluate the program and make recommendations.

#### *Origin Story and Champions:*

##### 2005:

- Thomas Davidson worked for Vail Resorts and served on the Board of Early Childhood Options. He was a major champion and pushed ECO to go for local public funding. Davidson convinced Vail Resorts to get behind the idea early; the company was instrumental in getting the measure onto the ballot and in supporting the first campaign-provided funding. There was also other active community leadership (e.g., the head of Breckenridge Ski Resort authored op-eds and was publicly visible and supportive).
- The school district and Commissioners were both supportive in 2005. They were not sure as to whether it would pass, but they helped.
- Summit Foundation's Board of Trustees was visible and supportive during the campaign.

##### 2018:

- Davidson, who had since been elected as a County Commissioner, along with Julie McCluskie, who was working at the School District at the time (now serving in State Legislature) spearheaded policy planning efforts with ECO and Family Resource Center.

#### *Other Notes/Insights and Lessons Learned:*

- It's important to work out the details on the front end: ECO didn't have a formal agreement with Commissioners before going to the ballot regarding how the revenue would be administered. Lucinda doesn't think that the Commissioners were confident the measure would pass; they were supportive but not confident. As a result of ambiguity, there were some growing pains in working out the relationship between local funding sources and CCCAP. ECO got some surprises from the County attorneys and staff in the first year or so that required some rethinking while trying to implement. However, the Commissioners were essential in passage and the early days.
- Conduct polling and planning for campaign early: The pre-campaign benchmark voter survey was essential in both efforts. In 2005, much was learned about who supported them and why. They dropped "professional development" and talked instead about workforce recruitment and retention in the first campaign. Vail results hired a consultant in 2005 to develop a campaign strategy, and that person was essential to passage.

- Plan for revenue volatility: Most public funding sources have some volatility in their revenue, so build in reserves and policies to stabilize your revenue over time. ECO works very closely with County staff on revenue projections and planning.

Community Contacts for Further Information:

Early Childhood Options: <https://www.earlychildhoodoptions.org/>

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Sources:

- [2018 Council Commissioners Resolution and Ballot Question](#)
- Newspaper articles
  - [Summit Daily: Guide to Summit County Ballot Initiative 1A, Oct. 14, 2018](#)
  - [Summit Daily: Affordable Early Childhood Learning and Care Top Funded Issue on Summit County Ballot Initiative 1A, Oct. 6, 2018](#)

**Local efforts and potential grants should be discussed with the Senior Program Officer | Initiatives, Jason Callegari, [jcallegari@buellfoundation.org](mailto:jcallegari@buellfoundation.org). More information is available at <https://tinyurl.com/4bj4m2du> or scan the QR code for the online PDF of the toolkit.**

