

Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation



Building Environments That
Enhance Program Quality

Spring 2025

Children's Investment Fund Newsletter



United South End Settlements (USES) students pose on a newly renovated playground with New England Patriots players. Photo courtesy of USES.

Dear Colleagues and Partners,

Much has happened since our last newsletter and we are excited to share some of our latest efforts with you! Several early education and out-of-school time providers have successfully completed their capital projects in recent months. We continue to provide training and technical assistance to support the field. We remain committed and steadfast in our goal to create more healthy spaces for young children in Massachusetts.

Best,



Theresa Jordan
Director



Program News

FY25 Early Education and Care Grants

The FY25 rounds of the [EEOST Capital Fund](#) and the [EECPG grant programs](#) are well underway. CIF has completed its review of the small grant applications and has submitted its recommendations to the Department of Early Education and Care. Awards will be announced this summer. For the large EEOST grants, in-person site visits began in May. We are enthusiastic about the proposals aimed at improving facilities for both children and educators.

This summer is a great time to plan for future rounds. If you are a provider planning a large-scale capital project and are interested in talking with our team about the EEOST Capital Fund, please reach out to us at cif@cif-ma.org to schedule a conversation.

"Let's Take It Outside" Training

In May, the CIF team hosted an in-person training at the [Boston Nature Center](#) for early education and out-of-school time programs interested in developing natural play spaces. Ten organizations attended the day-long event, which included a tour of the Boston Nature Center's preschool play space and presentations from several speakers. The goal of the training was to provide resources and a framework to providers looking to create nature-based outdoor play spaces. The afternoon session culminated in a hands-on visioning activity and one-on-one time with architects who specialize in outdoor play space design for early education and care.



Felice Silverman, an architect with STA Design, presenting at the "Let's Take It Outside" training.



Sharon Dolby-Capeless and Jessica Giarolo from the Busy Bee Learning Center in Lee work on their hands-on model of a natural play space design.

Inter-Agency Task Force

The Healey-Driscoll Administration's [Early Education and Child Care Task Force](#) released its Year 1 report in March. Theresa Jordan and Kira Wilke attended the release event and panel discussion hosted by Ellis Early Learning. Several recommendations from the report are relevant to CIF's work, and we look forward to collaborating with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, CEDAC, and the Department of Early Education and Care on those recommendations related to affordable housing development and early education and care.

Celebrating "The 9:30 Call"

Theresa Jordan and Kira Wilke from CIF joined other fellow fans of the "9:30 call" at the Worcester Public Library in March to celebrate the initiative's five-year anniversary. What began in March of 2020 by Strategies for Children, along with a small group of advocates, has become a crucial platform for the broader early education and care community in Massachusetts. Each week, from Monday to Thursday, Strategies for Children hosts a daily 30-minute call on various issues relevant to the field. Everyone is welcome. CIF has presented on the call multiple times and is a loyal participant. [Find out more about the 9:30 call here.](#)



Members of the early education community gather at the Worcester Public Library to celebrate five years of "The 9:30 Call."

Accessibility Training

In February, staff conducted a virtual training session on accessibility regulations for child care design, attended by design professionals and early education and out-of-school time providers. The training was co-presented by [KMA, LLC](#), a design firm specializing in accessibility. The session covered such topics as universal design, accessibility code compliance, and child care-specific challenges. The CIF team also shared "before" and "after" pictures of projects funded in Boston, with support from the Liberty Mutual Foundation, that focused on accessibility improvements.

Sponsor Gratitude

We would like to express our gratitude for recent grant contributions from the following donors:

- Eastern Bank Foundation
- The Klarman Family Foundation
- M&T Charitable Foundation
- Rockland Trust Charitable Foundation

Thank you!!

Project News

Little Folks Community Daycare Center

Thanks to a \$333,000 EEOST Capital Fund grant awarded by the Children's Investment Fund in 2023, Little Folks Community Daycare Center transformed an underutilized alleyway adjacent to the center into a renovated outdoor play space. In May, the team organized a mural painting event where volunteers came together to help create a vibrant mural for the play area. CIF's Yesenia Gil and Kira Wilke joined members of the project team, staff, and children who contributed to the new, bright and colorful mural featured in the play space.



CIF's Yesenia Gil and Kira Wilke and Little Folks' Executive Director Jenna Harrity, along with members of the project team from Arrowstreet and Redgate.

NorthStar Early Learning Centers



NorthStar Early Education Center in New Bedford renovated with partial funding from the EEOST Capital Fund. Photo credit: Dellbrook | JKS / Justin Valdez

With funding from an EEOST Capital Fund large grant, NorthStar Learning Centers completed the construction of a new 17,000+ square foot early education and community center on a formerly vacant lot in New Bedford's South End. Davis Square Architects designed the building as part of NorthStar Learning Centers' \$2.5 million capital campaign. The new space will feature an expanded food pantry for families and will also serve as a space for the wider community when it is not in use by NorthStar.

LEO Inc. Early Education Center

Leo opened its [new early education center](#) to families and children in March. The new facility, located on Broad Street in Lynn, allows LEO to consolidate three centers into one building and accommodate more children. The project has taken several years to

complete, and the CIF team has worked closely with LEO along the way, providing technical assistance and two EEOST grants. Congratulations!



Photo of a child in the new center courtesy of LEO. Photo credit: Plum + Port Photography.

United South End Settlements

In December, the United South End Settlements celebrated the completion of its updated outdoor play space in the South End. The new features are a basketball court and several new play structures. This project was made possible by an EEOST Capital Fund grant and an Inclusive Futures grant funded through the Liberty Mutual Foundation, as well as additional private funding.



United South End Settlements (USES) educators and children celebrated the new playground, a project partially funded by the EEOST FY21 grant round. From left: Josh Kraft, CEO of the New England Patriots Foundation, EEC Commissioner Amy Kershaw, CEO Jerrell Cox, COO Tyler Seever, Chief Program Officer Melody Valdes, New England Patriots players, USES educators and children, and USES board members. Photo courtesy of USES.

In the News

LISC Connecticut released a child care [facilities inventory report](#), similar to Children's Investment Fund's 2011 study on the quality of facilities across the state

A paper from NAEYC and LIIF explores the [impacts of climate change](#) on early education programs

LISC in Phoenix [pilots a program](#) to stabilize housing and facilities for Family Child Care providers



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