



PROFILES: SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

State:	Maine
Partnership name:	Maine Early Childhood Funders Group (MECFG)
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1. Background



The Maine Early Childhood Funders Group (MECFG) was formed in 2011. The initial intent of the group was to create opportunities to learn about early childhood and, in particular, about the early childhood systems and services in Maine. Since those first meetings, the MECFG has developed a formal mission statement, created a consultant staff position to support the work of the group, and collaborated in funding projects that represent the interests of the group. Membership is comprised of private foundations, representatives from the Maine Community Foundation, and three United Ways. The Maine Philanthropy Center also participates in the group.

2. Mission and Goals

The Group's mission is to encourage and advance strategic systemic changes that will improve results for large numbers of young children ages birth to 8 throughout the State. Among the result areas of interest to the group are:

- More Maine children born healthy and developing on track with access to family-centered parent and child health programs;
- More Maine parents supported as their child's first teacher with access to family support and prevention programs;

- More Maine families with access to and participating in high-quality early care and education services;
- More schools, families, and communities promoting successful transitions to school;
- More children and their families experiencing success in the early grades; and
- More children reading at grade level by the fourth grade as an outcome of the preceding five results.

Toward this end, the Group also promotes increased coordination among the multiple groups across the State whose efforts are focused on this important population.

3. Governance and Partnership Members

Membership in the MECFG is open to funders with an interest and stake in the success of this important population. At the same time, given the range and comprehensiveness of the identified result areas, as well as the complex and myriad issues that impact the success of young children, the Group, where appropriate, invites key constituents from the public and private sector (such as early childhood and elementary educators, health care experts, state and local policymakers, advocates, the business community, the media, etc.) to participate in its discussions and activities.

Membership is comprised of both general and supporting members. General Members learn from one another and provide information, expertise, and advice to the group, but do not provide financial support for joint activities. Supporting Members, in addition to the general member activities, make financial contributions to fund activities including but not limited to consultants, aligned funding strategies, and other collaborative efforts. The MECFG meets quarterly.



4. Funding and Other Resources

As an affinity group, the MECFG approaches funding early childhood initiatives both as individual organizations and, at times, with an aligned funding approach. The group does not pool funds, but instead shares concept papers and aligns funding for specific projects. Potential grantees can submit concept papers to the staff or consultant, or be invited to do so by a group member. Members of the group who are interested in developing the project further consult with one another and the potential grantee. Although each funder requires an individual proposal for funding a project, the aligned funding includes common reporting and project outcomes.

5. Activities

The MECFG is a private group and seeks to create aligned funding that often includes state and local government efforts. Their aligned funding activities to date include:

- **Start ME Right:** a coalition of statewide advocates for improving early childhood policy with a focus on home visiting, child care, pre-k, and Head Start-Early Head Start.
- **Count ME In:** a technical assistance and policy initiative to help schools focus on attendance in the early elementary grades. The initiative features a structured approach to using data for individualizing outreach and supports for children with chronic absenteeism., and a policy effort focused on improving state Department of Education collection and analysis of attendance data. Linked to national Attendance Works, this initiative began in 2012.

- **Maine State Shared Services Alliance:** the largest aligned funding effort of the group to date, this is a 5-year project that establishes a Web-based platform for a statewide shared services alliance as well as support for local provider groups to develop local alliances. A statewide steering committee includes representation from state government, the statewide professional development system, child care providers, early childhood advocates, and private business.
- **Home Visiting Initiative:** a local initiative to align three different home visiting models—Early Head Start; Maine Families (publicly funded home visiting program); and a locally designed program for shared referrals, coordinated programming with the local hospital, and expanded services. The mission of this initiative is to establish home visiting as a norm for all families in the mid-coast region of Maine. This initiative includes programs from two different counties.

6. Evaluation and Outcomes

An evaluation strategy and determination of outcomes is under discussion.

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