



Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington

Summary of Strategic Plan 2025 – 2028

In March 2025, the Board of the Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington (ECCS) decided to initiate a strategic planning process with three primary goals: 1) to ensure that ECCS continues to meet the needs of young children and their families; 2) to address how ECCS can incorporate the new roles and responsibilities as a Local Governance Partner of the OEC; and 3) to ensure a sustainable future for the organization through funding, board leadership and sufficient staffing.

Process: With funding from the CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative, Carol O'Donnell of The Duncannon Group was hired to facilitate the planning process.

- Issues underlying the planning were identified.
- The ECCS vision, mission, and values were confirmed.
- Key interview questions were developed.
- Nineteen Board members and community leaders were interviewed via phone.
- Community input from twenty-six individuals was collected at the ECCS State of Early Childhood event on May 29, 2025.
- At their Strategic Planning session in June, the ECCS Board reviewed findings and highlights from the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.
- The Board developed goals and strategies around its five key focus areas.
- The plan was reviewed, edited and approved at the ECCS October 2025 meeting.

SWOT Analysis: The strengths of ECCS are many: *visibility; experienced, committed leadership and staff; personal, professional, and community networks that have successfully supported and funded the organization; perception as the “go to” organization for information on programs and resources for children Birth to 12; technical and financial support of multiple foundations.* However, ECCS is facing a confluence of issues:

- High expectations from the community based on visibility and success to date.
- Expanded responsibilities as it transitions to an OEC LGP including monitoring of child care providers, managing a Community Table (CTab), conducting a community needs assessment and meeting OEC's evolving expectations.
- Uncertainty with a new state-wide intermediary and resultant accountability.
- A Board that is unclear about its new role with some members questioning alignment with their skills and availability.
- Highly qualified but insufficient staff capacity for additional roles and responsibilities.
- Need for succession planning.
- Uncertain funding from state and private sources and an overreliance on grant dollars coupled with untested fundraising capacity.
- Emerging interest in more tangible outcomes.

Strategic Plan Focus Areas:

Community engagement: *To connect childcare providers, social service agencies, health care professionals, schools, state agencies, families and policy makers to coordinate services, advance best practices and advocate for Southington's young children.*

- Develop the Community Table (CTab) to be an effective, highly respected vehicle for community collaboration & input to ECCS.
- Ensure Southington children are prepared for Kindergarten.
- Develop additional resources to address children's behavioral health needs.
- Improve childcare quality in partnership with community providers.
- Conduct a local needs assessment.
- Advocate for Southington's young children.
- Engage family input in policy & program development.
- Ensure adherence to OEC's Early Start CT requirements.

Sustainability: *To ensure ECCS has the necessary financial, physical and human resources to advance its mission and operate as a highly effective organization.*

- Develop a 5-year budget.
- Create a development plan.
- Establish clear policies for gift acceptance & acknowledgement.
- Expand advocacy efforts to support additional funding for ECCS.
- Maintain support from institutional funders.
- Determine future organizational structure.
- Explore options for alternative funding.

Outreach & Family Engagement: *To connect young children and their families to high quality information, resources and best practices on Kindergarten Readiness, Safety and Health, especially behavioral health and Quality Childcare.*

- Provide multiple opportunities for information dissemination & knowledge development.
- Implement different distribution modes for information dissemination & knowledge development.
- Expand opportunities so multiple individuals staff outreach events.
- Continue providing information to both Birth-6 & 6-12 age groups concentrating on the earlier cohort.
- Develop an outcomes dashboard to document the efficacy of outreach efforts & support future planning.

Staffing and Organizational Capacity: *To recruit and retain sufficient, highly qualified staff to implement ECCS's programs, promote community collaboration, and ensure Southington is accessing all requisite information, best practices and financial support.*

- Determine ideal staffing configuration.
- Ensure ongoing, highly committed staff leadership.
- Explore opportunities for joint ventures to enhance capacity.

Board and Governance: *To ensure ECCS is governed and organized so that it is inclusive, maximizes the skills, experiences and networks of its Board members, and ensures that ECCS is impactful and respected.*

- Expand the number of board members.
- Develop process for board recruitment.
- Promote new perspective.
- Ensure ongoing, committed leadership.

Approved by ECCS Board
October 2025