

# First4ME

## Early Care and Education Program



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# What is First4ME?

- A two-generation, community focused framework for a coordinated birth to kindergarten-entry program by providing quality early care and education to promote a healthy, positive transition to kindergarten for children and families.
- First4ME was included in LD 1712 (2021) “An Act to Support Children’s Healthy Development and School Success.”
- The program funds community contractors to convene efforts to provide intensive support to Child Care Providers (CCP), School Districts (SAU’s), the family and the child with a focus on families that have or are experiencing hardship.
- Highlights the benefits of an efficient system of coordinated resources for all stakeholders and how high-quality child care can support a strong workforce in the short and long term.

# History



Elevate  
Maine

Elevate Maine is an initiative that is facilitated by KVCAP/Educare in Somerset County. A comprehensive service model including support to providers and community interaction. An evaluation report came out in July 2020 indicating positive outcomes for children and families [Elevate Maine 2020 Report linked here](#). This is considered the demonstration model.



LD 1712

In the 2021 Legislative Session, LD 1712: An Act to Support Children's Healthy Development and School Success was enacted as [Section 2 22 M.R.S.A §1065](#). This is our guiding framework for the pilot. Funded through the Federal Child Care Block Grant (CCDF)

First4ME

With consultation from KVCAP, the Office of Child and Family Services built the pilot's goals and scope. This pilot is to pressure test the framework created through a third party evaluation and feedback from providers, families, schools and community members impacted by the pilot to inform future OCFS programs and support



# Implementation Sites



Aroostook County Action Program

Lewiston Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

Starting Strong/Portland ConnectED

York County Community Action Corporation

Anticipated pilot impact numbers

Eligible Children	Voluntary Children	Total Children	Providers
110	466	576	11

# First4ME Components

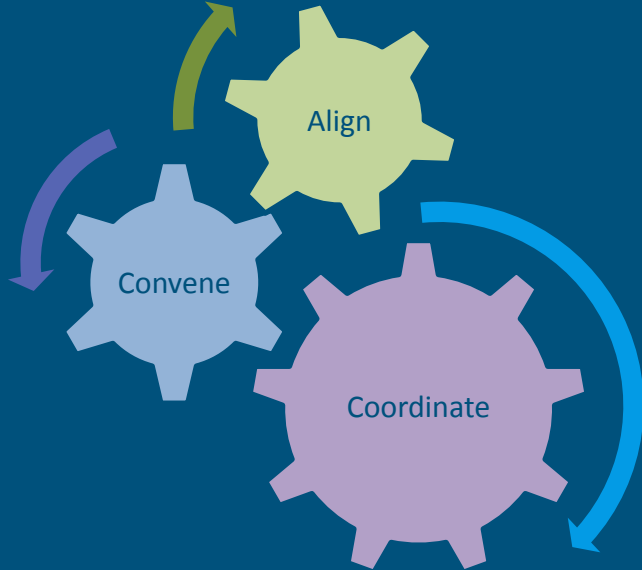
1. Non-Profit serve as the convenor of program efforts and fiscal oversight
2. Coalition with diverse membership for community engagement
3. Community Coach(es) to drive:
  - Support to child care providers
  - Service access to families
  - School District (SAU) and Community Provider communication
  - System alignment and coordination
4. Partnership with local SAUs for intentional system of alignment and cohesion for school transitions from the mixed delivery system
5. Early Screening and Intervention to support Kindergarten entry transition success
6. Two Generational Approach to engage families for consistent support across all settings
7. State level technical assistance and coordination to support coaches and quality assurance



# First4ME Cornerstones

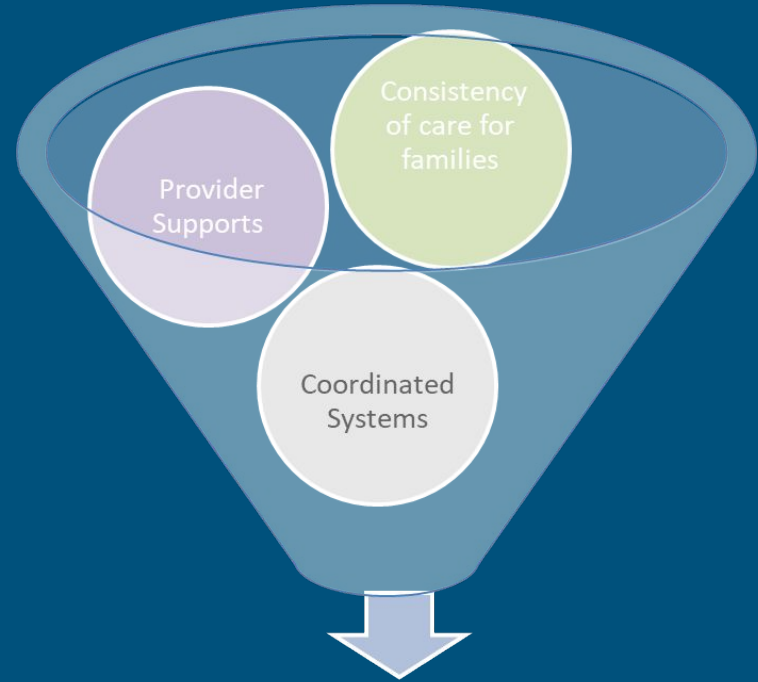
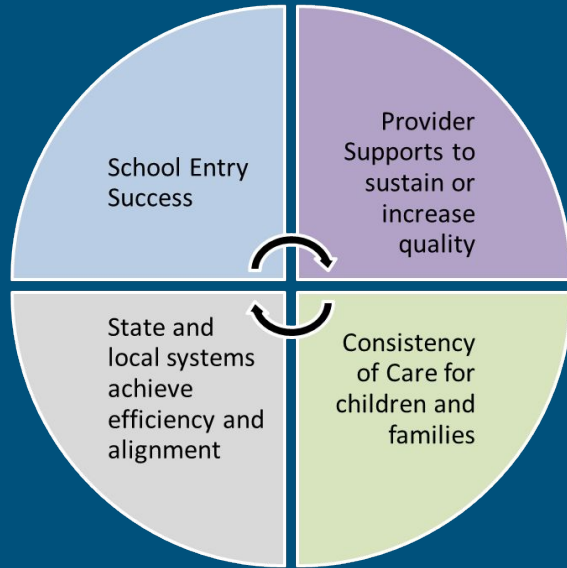
- Mixed Delivery System of Early Care and Education
- Two Gen Engagement & Family Stabilization
- Kindergarten Success (Transitions)

## First4ME Goals



1. Increase successful early learning transitions for children regardless of risk factors leading into kindergarten entry
2. Increase sustained, high-quality child care and early childhood education across the mixed delivery system
3. Develop a coordinated system of support both statewide and local for families, providers, schools, and communities
4. Strengthen the consistent continuity of care for families birth to school aged with community support to all participants

# First4ME Goals



School Entry Success



# Role of Starting Strong

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- Starting Strong will be an early childhood hub of support for Portland
- Starting Strong is the grantee, facilitating a Community Coalition
- Starting Strong will hire and/or contract with staff to support children, families, and child care programs in Portland
- Starting Strong will receive the grant funds and disseminate funds and stipends to child care programs who participate in the project and contract with them

# First4ME Structure

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## Four key participants

- Child : a child that meets at-risk criteria, who is enrolled in a child care program that is contracting with Starting Strong
- Family: the parent(s), legal guardian(s), or authorized caregiver(s) of the child
- Provider: licensed child care (family child care or center-based) who contracts with Starting Strong
- Local School Administrative Units (SAUs): Portland Public Schools

# First4ME Eligibility

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## “At-Risk” child/family

The child (participant) or a family member within the home with one or more of the following:

- economically disadvantaged (not exceeding 185% of Federal poverty level), child welfare involvement or past involvement, in foster care, experiencing homelessness, exposed to substance use disorder, identified as special needs, has a physical or mental disability, and/or a person with limited English proficiency.

# First4ME Portland Goals

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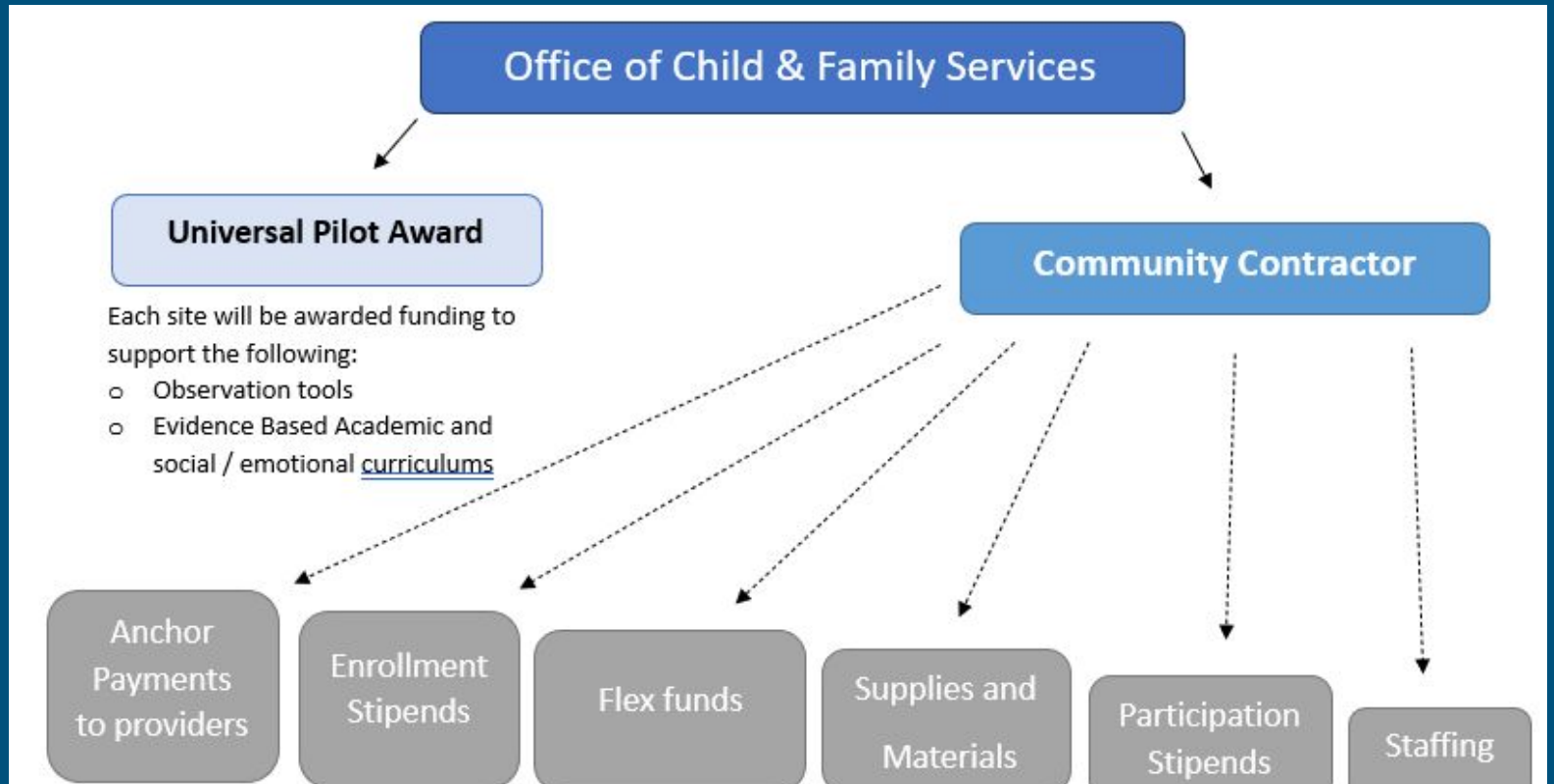
- Inclusive of the diversity of Portland's families with specific supports for multilingual families and immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker families
- Inclusive of the variety of early care and education programming with program components for family child care programs and child care centers
- Selection of child care program partners will prioritize strategies to maximize the number of at-risk children served by First4ME

# First4ME Portland Goals

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- Increase publicly-funded PreK partnerships between Portland Public schools and licensed child care programs and Head Start
- Begin public PreK partnerships with new partners, multilingual programs, those currently at QRIS 1, 2, & 3, and family child care programs (may take some innovation, policy changes, and/or provisional partnerships to start)
- Focus on shared services such as group health insurance, a substitute pool, and a broader hub of support for Portland child care programs
- Focus on ECE workforce retention and development

# First4ME Funding



# Pilot Timeline

**Pilot Timeline: 08/01/2023-07/30/2026**



August 2023-June 2024 (11)

July 2024-July 2025 (13)

August 2025-July 2026 (12)



**January 2025**  
DHHS will report to Legislative  
Committee progress and potential  
recommendations

**Fall 2026**  
Anticipated  
Evaluation  
Final Report

# First4ME Portland Participants: Year 1

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Portland Public Schools

The Opportunity Alliance

Youth and Family Outreach

Children's Odyssey

Catherine Morrill Day Nursery

Sasha Shunk



# Benefits to Early Care and Education Providers

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Access to Teaching Strategies Suite including Creative Curriculum, Noni, and PD Cloud

CLASS Observations and supports

Coaching for classrooms

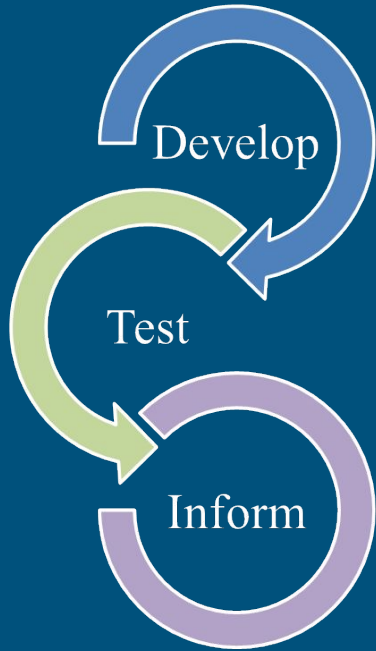
Coaching for Families\*

Funds for PD, technology, program needs, family engagement

Access to Mental Health Clinician for consult and clinician support

# A True Pilot Mindset

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- ✓ Learn from each unique community
- ✓ Pressure test First4ME Program Components
- ✓ Course Correct as needed
- ✓ Seek understanding of limitations or pain points
- ✓ Communicate wins and challenges to inform further supports

# Next Steps and Questions

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