



thread connecting
early care & education
to alaska

FY21 ANNUAL REPORT

Strengthening the threads of change

From the CEO



Stephanie Berglund

Dear Friends,

This year marks a year and a half of living and working in a pandemic. While the world has rapidly changed, families' need and desire for affordable, high-quality child care has not.

Alaska's economic recovery depends on child care being there for families as they return to the workplace. We're celebrating **your support** and our work to help stabilize Alaska's child care sector to ensure families continue to have access to child care.

Every day we have been inspired by the heroes working in child care. Alaska's child care program owners and administrators have faced ever-changing conditions and they have adapted and found creative solutions to continue operating. They have also helped their families with food, clothing, and even paying bills. And they've done this work not knowing if their business will survive. Early educators have given endless hours to keep child care doors open. They have shown up despite making \$12/hour and risking their own health.

The silver lining is that attention is being given to the importance of child care. A broader understanding has been gained of the complex issues of access, affordability, and workforce in the child care system. With raised awareness our nation and state can begin to focus on solutions. **thread** has proposed recommendations for policies, investment and partnerships that will strengthen the child care system.

Providing rapid response support and advocacy to help keep child care open and retain the workforce was a main focus for **thread** this year. But our first priority was the well being of our team. In order to take care of others, we must take care of ourselves. By investing in our own organizational development, we have been able to strengthen **thread** during a time of change, and expand the services that take care of our clients.

Together we are continuing to make it through and advocating for the support that the child care system needs right now—and in the future. Thank you for supporting us.

Stephanie Berglund
thread CEO

Overview & Mission

thread is Alaska's Child Care Resource and Referral Network offering services to families, early childhood educators, early childhood education programs, and communities statewide.

Our mission is to advance the quality of early education and child development by empowering parents, educating child care professionals, and collaborating with our communities.



A Year of Impact

Strengthening the threads of change –
Child care is open to meet families’
needs and support economic recovery.

RAPID RESPONSE FOR CHILD CARE

At the onset of the pandemic, many of Alaska’s child care businesses experienced an immediate change in their business model. With reduced revenue and rising costs they struggled to stay open. **thread** responded by securing funding to provide rapid response to child care programs and early educators to help keep them afloat.

FUNDING | **thread** secured \$1.4 million from private and public partners to provide rapid response support in several phases:

- September 2020: \$415,000 to 300 licensed child care programs
- Fall 2020: \$308,000 to 616 early educators to support retention in the field
- January 2021: \$940,000 to 260 licensed child care programs

PPE & SUPPLIES | **thread** partnered with the Rasmuson Foundation and the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) College of Health to survey programs on their Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)/supply needs. Many needed the basic supplies to mitigate COVID-19 in their programs. Participating programs received supplies and support.

NEW TRAINING | **thread** launched a new workshop series, “*Thursdays with thread*,” to connect early childhood educators and business owners with health, legal, and business experts. The information shared at these workshops helped them to navigate the evolving changes brought on by the pandemic.

*“We truly appreciate that **thread** has continued their support and availability as an educational resource during this global crisis. The courses our staff have taken have proven beneficial to our school community and our specific classroom.”*

Program Owner
Northern Interior

At a glance



\$1,355,000 awarded to child care programs



Delivered 8 *Thursdays with thread* workshops, bringing COVID experts and information to the field



\$300,000 awarded to early educators to help with retention and their personal costs

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT FOR THE FIELD

TRAINING & SUPPORT | In addition to financial assistance, **thread** increased training opportunities and communications and introduced new supports to programs and early educators.

- **Technical Assistance:** **thread** continued to provide one-on-one coaching and technical assistance to programs virtually.
- **Understanding Needs:** **thread** conducted a survey of programs to understand their emerging needs. Results showed a sector concerned about the future.
- **Free Training:** **thread** offered free training and introduced new trainings, including *Thursdays with thread*, to encourage early educators in their professional development.
- **Communications:** **thread** increased communications to stay in touch with the sector, including check-ins by phone, weekly e-newsletters with pertinent information relative to child care, and a COVID-19 online resource center.

QUALITY INITIATIVES | **thread** provided professional development reimbursements to programs and early educators to help cover their educational expenses.

- **Reimbursements for Learning:** **thread** awarded \$69,641 in reimbursements to programs for supporting their staff's professional development and training

RECOGNITION | **thread** celebrated and recognized achievements in child care throughout the year.

- **2021 thread AWARDS** program delivered on Facebook Live for the first time in its history.
 - The Cindy Harrington Heart & Mind Award went to Lupita Alvarez of Montessori Borealis Children's House in Juneau.
 - Learn & Grow's Quality Improvement was awarded to Irma's Child Care, Anchorage, and Discovery Preschool, Juneau.
- **Provider Appreciation Day** celebrated with a virtual "gratitude wall" and \$5 coffee gift card delivered digitally to 1,000 early educators statewide.
- **Week of the Young Child** was a week-long social media campaign to celebrate the Week of the Young Child. Learn & Grow announced the completion of the five-level framework for Alaska's Quality Improvement and Recognition System (QRIS) for early childhood education programs.

At a glance



\$69K awarded in reimbursements for professional development



1,006 early educators trained and 94% reported an increase in knowledge



613 hours of technical assistance delivered to programs

FAMILY SERVICES

Families experienced a new level of stress this year as they juggled work, school, and child care. **thread** continued to help families find child care resources and solutions virtually.

- Parent TALK, **thread's** parenting series, went virtual and statewide to offer 10 workshops throughout the year focused on family health and wellness.
- **thread's** online COVID-19 Resource Center highlighted community resources available to families.
- To spread the word that child care was open and ready to help families, **thread** ran a statewide media campaign.



Remembering The Children's Place

After 20 years of serving Alaska's families, The Children's Place (TCP) early childhood education program closed its doors in March 2020.

Operated by **thread** as a drop-in child care center, TCP was available at no cost to families accessing services at the State of Alaska's Division of Public Assistance Office on Gambell Street in Anchorage.

While serving more than 60 families per month, TCP was also a training ground for early childhood educators beginning their careers.

thread is honored to have served Anchorage by providing child care services at TCP for 20 years.

Thank you to all the families, children, and teachers who made the program a special place to play and learn!

At a glance



11,000 Child Care Referrals



10 virtual Parent TALK workshops



"Child Care is Open" media campaign ran statewide

ADVOCATING FOR CHILD CARE

This year, the pandemic turned a spotlight on the complex issues facing Alaska's child care system – and **thread** was ready to respond.

UPDATED POLICY DIRECTION | **thread** launched an updated policy direction during COVID-19 and raised its voice in support of child care programs and early educators

FEDERAL FUNDING | **thread** worked closely with state and local governments to advocate for CARES Act money to directly support child care. As a result of this advocacy, local governments allocated a total investment of \$18M to child care.

thread also advocated at a national level for dedicated child care relief funding. In December 2020, the US Congress passed the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and in March 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Over \$95 million was dedicated to child care in Alaska. **thread** engaged with the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office to act as the intermediary for distributing this funding beginning in mid-2021.

LEGISLATIVE VISITS | During the state legislative session, a team of **thread** staff and Board members met with over 23 legislators to inform them of the status of child care. Additionally, **thread** met with

Alaska's national delegation and participated in a town hall with Senator Sullivan to raise awareness of child care needs.

ADVOCACY TRAINING | Many early educators stepped up to share their story and advocate for the system as well. **thread** designed and delivered an advocacy training to support early educators advocating on their own behalf.

TELLING THE STORY | To bring the issues to life, **thread** produced a video that told the story of child care. The video was shared with legislators, partners, and the general public. **thread** also shared information with the media in a record number of news stories.



At a glance



Issued new policy statement with solutions for access, affordability, and quality



23+ virtual legislative visits with state legislators



More than 400 messages were sent to legislators by advocates in support of increased investment in child care

Statewide Early Childhood Systems Advance High-Quality Care

thread houses and manages two statewide early childhood systems to advance quality in child care. The Alaska System for the Early Education Development (SEED) supports the professional development of Alaska's early educators. Learn & Grow, Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System, provides early childhood education programs with supports and resources to improve their quality of care. Through the pandemic, more awareness has been gained on the importance of high-quality child care. Working together, these two systems ensure the critical components of high-quality are available in Alaska's child care programs.



Alaska SEED – Professional Development
for Early Educators
FY21 Active Members: 1,710

PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT | This year, early childhood educators continued to work on their professional development despite the pandemic challenges. Alaska SEED updated some of its supporting resources.

GUIDING EDUCATORS | Alaska SEED updated Alaska's Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKC) to align with the latest edition of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators. The Alaska CKC booklet now also includes an addendum on the Alaska Early Childhood Administrator Credential and Administrator Core Knowledge and Competencies. The CKCs provide guidelines for early educators working with children on how to facilitate child learning and development, and work closely with families.



Learn & Grow
Alaska's Commitment to Quality Early Care & Learning

Learn & Grow – Improving the child care
environment for young children
FY21 Enrolled Programs: 130

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION | 130 programs were enrolled in Learn & Grow statewide, giving programs more support for ensuring their program's quality through COVID. Learn & Grow is Alaska's Quality Improvement and Recognition System (QRIS). Research shows that high-quality child care experiences prepare children for school and life.

5-LEVEL QRIS FRAMEWORK COMPLETE | In 2016, Learn & Grow launched with Levels 1 and 2 available out of a five-level framework of quality activities.

In April, Learn & Grow announced the completion of the system's full framework of Levels 1-5. The framework is a roadmap for early childhood education programs developing high-quality learning environments. With Levels 3-5 of the framework complete, programs will be able to progress to offer high-quality services in the future. Learn & Grow is planning to make Level 3 activities available later this year.

Strengthening thread

Strengthening the threads of change —
A year of working virtually results in more efficiency.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

In March 2020, **thread** transitioned to a virtual office place to keep its staff and clients safe and healthy. That pivot helped **thread** to sustain its operations, staff, and services as the pandemic continued.

This year, **thread's** organization further defined its approach to remote work and delivering its services virtually. **thread** continued to deliver virtual services to families, early educators, and programs uninterrupted.

NETWORK TRANSITIONS BEGIN

In summer 2021, **thread** transitioned its services previously delivered by AEYC-SEA in Juneau to the main **thread** office. This move was done in partnership with AEYC-SEA, in order to gain efficiencies and strengthen **thread's** services and expertise across the state. As part of the change, AEYC-SEA staff working on **thread** services were also transitioned under the direction of the main **thread** office. **thread** held several meetings with local program owners and seamlessly continued the delivery of services in the Southeast region.

CONTINUED GROWTH

ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH | **thread's** organization continued to evolve and grow despite the challenges of the pandemic.

- Continued **thread's** internal initiative, Continuous Upward Progress and Strengthening (CUPs), which included the implementation of eight team work plans.
- Digital Infrastructure project — **thread** continued to build its new service delivery application using Salesforce. The project target launch is 2022, and

will provide self-service opportunities for **thread** clients. This new database will make it easier for early educators and programs to participate in both Alaska SEED and Learn & Grow.

INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE | With net assets from the previous fiscal year, **thread** invested in its endowment, Early Education Fund for Alaska's Children, growing long-term support for quality child care.

LEADERSHIP FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

thread's Board of Directors provided leadership and support through the continued crisis.

- **Board President:** Elena Romerdahl, Perkins Coie LLP
- **Board Vice President:** Lindsie Mills, Providence Alaska Foundation
- **Board Treasurer:** Jonathan King, Halcyon Consulting Group
- **Board Secretary:** Margo Fliss, UA Center for Economic Development
- **Board Member:** Olivia Foster, Providence Valdez Medical Center
- **Board Member:** Monica Garcia-Iltchoak, Rasmuson Foundation
- **Board Member:** Starr Marsett, Dwell Realty, ASD School Board
- **Board Member:** Amrita McSharry, Merrill Lynch
- **Board Member:** Shirley Pittz, Retired
- **Board Member:** Sen Kwang Tan, Retired

Our Core Values

- Empowerment
- Access
- Child Care Professionalism
- Children's Rights
- Entrepreneurial Incubator



Supporters & Partners

Strengthening the threads of change —
Recognizing the many partners that have supported thread this year to ensure child care is there!

INDIVIDUALS

Thank you to these individuals and many more unnamed donors:

- Amrita McSharry
- C Richardson
- Dan and Janus Reyes
- David and Sherry Borer
- Elena Romerdahl
- Hayley Anderson
- Jen Clark
- Jenni Pollard
- Jonathan King
- Lindsie Mills
- Margo Fliss
- Monica Garcia-Itchoak
- Olivia Foster
- Representative Harriet Drummond
- Sen Tan
- Sherri Douglas
- Shirley Pittz
- Starr Marsett
- Stefanie O'Brien
- Stephanie and Sven Berglund

ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS

It was a year of support! Thank you to our wonderful community partners who supported **thread's** efforts to stabilize child care across Alaska in FY21:

- Alaska Children's Trust
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
- AmazonSmile
- Asthma & Allergy Foundation
- Bagoy's Florist & Home
- ConocoPhillips Alaska
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council
- Credit Union One
- Department of Education & Early Development
- Department of Health and Social Services
- Infant Learning Program
- Mat-Su Health Foundation
- Rasmuson Foundation
- The Alaska Community Foundation
- The Kroger Co Foundation
- United Way of Anchorage
- Wells Fargo

*"The mission of **thread**, to advance the quality of early education and child development, is pivotal to the health and strength of Alaska's communities. The sector is critically under resourced yet crucial for ensuring the current and future success of our state. I give to **thread** because the impacts, such as the opportunity for parents to work, an early educator to provide quality care and make a livable wage, and our youngest Alaskans to be prepared for school, are far-reaching. These are my friends and neighbors and the children of my friends and neighbors. These are members of my community. It's one of the easiest checks I write."*



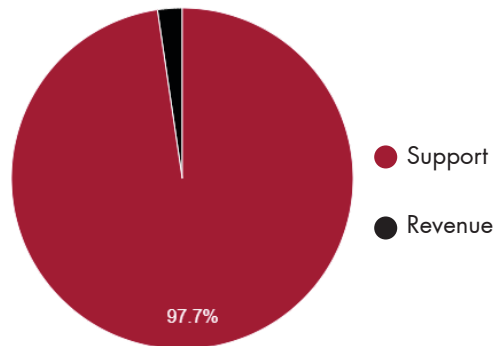
Lindsie Mills
thread Board member

Financial Position

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

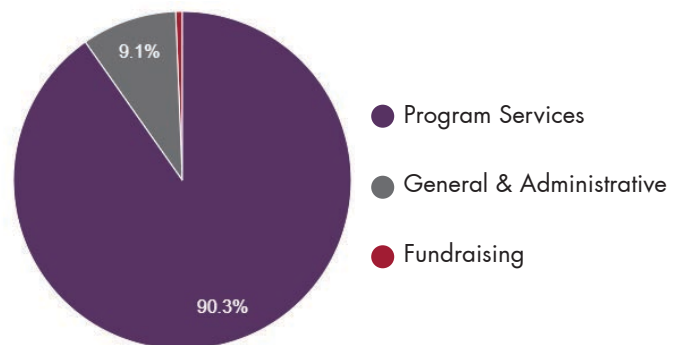
Revenue

Support (government, foundation, corporation, individual)	\$6,762,310
Revenue (training, contract, other)	\$161,225
Total Support & Revenue	\$6,923,535



Expenses

Program Services	\$6,278,135
General and Administrative	\$633,961
Fundraising	\$43,852
Total Expenses	\$6,955,948



Statement of Financial Position (June 30, 2021)

ASSETS	
Current Assets	\$2,087,590
Non-Current Assets	\$337,677
Total Assets	\$2,425,267

LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS	
LIABILITIES	
Current Liabilities	\$473,629
Non-Current Liabilities	\$140,085
Total Liabilities	\$613,714
NET ASSETS	
Without Donor Restrictions	\$1,686,186
With Donor Restriction	\$125,367
Total Net Assets	\$1,811,553
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$6,955,948

To request the full FY21 audited financial statements, please contact [thread](mailto:finance@threadalaska.org) at finance@threadalaska.org