



FY22 ANNUAL REPORT

Taking Strides for Child Care

thread connecting
early care & education
to alaska



Dear Friends,

It's my privilege to present **thread's** Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22): Taking Strides for Child Care. As I look back at the year, two words come to mind: stabilization and transformation. As **thread** continued to support child care in the third year of the pandemic, we also took strides towards transforming

the child care system for our state. I'm proud of the work of our team as well as the many early childhood educators and programs that continued to support families while dealing with the impacts of the pandemic.

This year **thread** continued its partnership with the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office (CCPO) to distribute federal relief funding. The main objectives for this funding were to stabilize child care businesses and retain the early childhood education workforce. Stabilization efforts helped the majority of licensed child care programs remain open, supporting Alaska's economy as families returned to the workplace and school.

While stabilization was critical, **thread** also took steps to transform child care in Alaska. In December 2021, **thread** hosted its fourth Summit on the Economic Impact of Early Care & Learning: Taking BIG Strides for Child Care. Attendees heard from national and statewide leaders on how to achieve an effective system for high-quality child care. Additionally, **thread** increased its advocacy in support of child care investment and policy change. Legislators, hearing the child care crisis, made an investment in quality child care in the state budget. While both initiatives were a step in the right direction, more work is needed to ensure affordable, high-quality child care for all Alaskans.

This year **thread** also began an organizational transformation. In 2008, **thread** partnered with AEYC Southeast (SEA-AEYC) in Southeast Alaska and Thrivalaska in the Northern/Interior of Alaska to deliver **thread** services in a statewide Network. Through this three-sister organizational structure, **thread** services grew and expanded statewide. Through the pandemic we recognized the need to evolve our partnership by unifying our work under one organization. In 2021, **thread** began changing our business model to strengthen the connection between Alaskan families and early educators and **thread** services and expertise across the state.

thread could not make this progress without its partners and supporters. Every day, families come to **thread** seeking child care in order to support and build a future for their families. Early childhood educators and programs rely on **thread** for training and technical assistance so that they can be the best at the profession they love. Thank you all for supporting us in this work and recognizing the importance of child care for our state.

With 38 years of experience and insights gained, **thread** ends the year strong and ready to take bigger strides to ensure Alaska has a strong child care system for our young children and families in the future.

In gratitude,

Stephanie Berglund, **thread** CEO

vision & mission

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

VISION

All early care and learning is accessible, affordable, and high-quality to support positive outcomes for children and families.

MISSION

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

VALUES

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

a year of impact

Supporting Families

This year families began returning to the workplace and school, or were adapting to a permanent virtual/hybrid work life. Families continued to experience challenges finding quality child care to meet their changing needs. **thread** assisted families in finding child care resources and solutions virtually.

- Offered free child care referrals by phone and online. **thread's** online search tool was rebuilt to integrate with Salesforce, a new organization database, and improve search results which increased the number of online referrals.
- **thread's** online COVID-19 Resource Center highlighted community resources available to families.
- Connected families to child care financial assistance and other programs to help those families in need of special services.

11,237 total child care referrals:



1,029

phone referrals



10,208

web referrals

*"I needed help so I contacted my case worker with Child Care Assistance, who referred me to **thread**. I called **thread** and spoke to Wendy, who was so kind and understanding. We talked about how to visit programs and select the one that was right for my son. She offered advice as if she was offering it to her friend versus just another client. It was the best advice for me in that moment."*

— **thread** client, Anchorage

Investing in Early Childhood Educators

Alaska's early childhood educators continued to show up everyday, but experienced burn out at a new level due to the lack of benefits and low wages in the child care sector. Like many families, early educators juggled their own child care needs with work responsibilities. Alaska lost some early educators to other sectors with higher wages. To help with retention in the field, **thread** worked with the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office and Alaska SEED to offer support and resources.

- Offered free training all year to support and encourage early educators in their professional development. **thread** designed new training around health and wellness in response to the pandemic's impacts on the child care workforce.
- Awarded a \$3,000 wage benefit to individuals participating in Alaska SEED through the Alaska SEED ROOTs (Retaining Our Outstanding Teachers) Award program.
- Celebrated Provider Appreciation Day in May, by sending 1,000 early educators a Lakeshore gift card to purchase program/classroom supplies.



1,000

early educators received a \$10 Lakeshore gift card for classroom purchases



2,608

early educators received free **thread** training statewide



\$4.4M

was distributed to 1,469 early educators via the Alaska SEED ROOTs Awards program to help retention in the field



\$68,490

in Alaska SEED professional development dollars to early childhood professionals for education expense reimbursement



Stabilizing Child Care Programs

This year many sectors in Alaska began to recover from the pandemic. Recovery for the child care sector was slower as child care programs continued to follow COVID-19 protocols, experienced workforce shortages and faced higher operating costs. Many programs struggled to remain open, and some Alaskan communities began to lose access to child care. **thread** continued its programming response to help programs find stability as they continued to mitigate COVID-19 and its impact.

- Provided child care stabilization grants to licensed child care programs, supported by the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office, the Department of Education and Early Development, the Rasmuson Foundation, and the Mat-Su Health Foundation.
- Provided targeted technical and financial assistance to licensed child care programs and early educators improving quality of care.
- Maintained the COVID-19 online resource center, sharing programming and financial resources available to child care programs.
- Participated in tracking data related to family needs, child care stabilization, statewide trends and child care's impact on Alaska's economy.
- Began exploring child care initiatives and potential support for rural Alaska, working with regions/cities like Nome to address child care deficits.
- Continued hosting the workshop series Thursdays with thread to bring information to the sector as well as the general public related to community and advocacy resources to strengthen child care.



\$20M

was distributed to licensed child care programs statewide via the COVID-19 Child Care Stabilization program and other quality improvements



\$163,672

in educational supplies were provided to child care programs to support the social-emotional development of children in care

Engaging Communities and Business

As part of our focus to transform child care, **thread** took steps to expand partnerships with communities and business.

thread also saw some communities and partner organizations begin returning to in-person meetings and events. This year, **thread** hosted its signature events virtually, and participated at several partner community events virtually and in-person.

- **thread's** annual awards program recognized Lupita Alvarez as the recipient of the 2021 Cindy Harrington Heart & Mind Award recipient, and Irma's Child Care and Discovery Preschool as the 2021 Quality Improvement Program of the Year Award recipients. The awards program was held virtually on Facebook Live with more than 70 people tuning in on the night of the program.
- **thread** hosted the 4th Summit on the Economic Impact of Early Care & Learning: Taking BIG Strides for Child Care in December 2021. The virtual meeting highlighted new research from the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, spark speeches from national leaders making progress on the issue, and child care initiatives across Alaska.
- **thread** formed a new relationship with the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce, partnering on the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation business survey (research presented at the Summit). **thread** also joined the State Chamber as participating members of an advisory group formed by the Bipartisan Policy Center and US Chamber of Commerce Foundation to progress child care/business partnership on this issue nationally.
- **thread** leadership participated in the Early Childhood Education Business Collaboratory project led by Children's First Finance (strengthening financing of child care in AK), the Early Childhood Governance Task Force—a workgroup focused on Goal 3 of the 2019 Alaska Early Childhood Strategic Direction (focused effort to inform an evolved early childhood state governance structure), and AECCC (work to align public/private early childhood goals).

Advocating to Transform Child Care

Public attention and awareness of child care issues grew this year. Inspired by the resilience of Alaska's early childhood educators and programs, **thread's** advocacy voice and policy work rose to a new level.

- Implemented an updated public policy plan for increasing access to affordable, high-quality child care. Advocacy efforts and internal capacity were increased to support this important work.
- National: **thread** joined Child Care Aware of America in supporting the proposed Build Back Better legislation and increased federal investment in child care. **thread** also met with Alaska's national delegation to keep them informed of the state of child care in Alaska.
- State: During the state's 32nd legislative session, **thread** made more than 20 virtual legislative visits, provided more invited testimony, lobbied the Governor's office, and endorsed proposed House Bill (HB) 149-Child Care Bargaining/Child Care Trust Fund to support and respond to the increased attention of child care needs.
- Local: **thread** increased its partnership with local governments and municipalities this year by providing testimony, information, and presentation to the Anchorage Municipal League/Conference of Mayors, the Anchorage Chamber Make it Monday forum, and the Municipality of Anchorage Assembly.
- **thread** advocated to the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Board of Regents to reinstate the Early Childhood Bachelor's degree program.
- Provided advocacy training to early educators so that they could share their story and advocate for their own needs. Several early educators from across the state joined **thread** in this year's legislative visits to share their stories firsthand.
- Told the story of child care through a record number of media news stories and five op-eds written by **thread** staff and Board members.



20+
virtual legislative
visits made
by thread
accompanied by
early educators



\$1M
child care
investment in
the state budget
by the State of
Alaska legislature

- Stephanie Berglund, **thread's** CEO, served on the Public Policy Committee for Child Care Aware of America
- **thread's** first endorsement of a legislative bill proposed by a State of Alaska Representative
- University of Alaska Anchorage's decision to reinstate the Early Childhood Bachelor's degree program





early childhood systems take strides for quality

thread houses and manages two statewide early childhood systems to advance quality in child care. The Alaska System for 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. Together, these two systems ensure the critical components of high-quality are available in Alaska's child care professionals and programs.



thread connecting
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to alaska



Supporting professional development
for early educators

FY22 Active Members: 1,522

\$4.4M

was distributed to 1,469 early
educators via the Alaska SEED
ROOTS Awards program to help
retention in the field.



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

Improving the child care environment
for young children

FY22 Enrolled Programs: 130

3,617

children served in 130 programs
enrolled in Learn & Grow. Of the
children being served by these
programs, 1,114 children were
receiving child care financial
assistance.

This year, **thread** increased capacity for system development by promoting Meghan Johnson to Early Childhood Systems Director. Previously Meghan served as the Learn & Grow Director, helping to launch Learn & Grow in 2016 and manage its implementation. In her new role Meghan is responsible for growing both systems through policy, fund development, and partnerships.



Highlights

- Hired Cassie Hulse as the new Alaska SEED Manager. Cassie previously served as **thread's** training and education lead with experience supporting Alaska's early educators.
- Imported Alaska SEED data into the new Salesforce system, ensuring early educators will have access to their information when the system goes live.
- Updated activities for Alaska SEED professional development. The Alaska SEED Steering Committee updated the Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKCs) and implemented an updated Alaska SEED Career Ladder for the field. The CKCs and career ladder provide early educators with a clear pathway for career progression and development.



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

Highlights

- Promoted Mischellean Smith as the new Quality Services Manager. Mischellean previously supported programs as a **thread** Professional Development Specialist. In her new role, she works closely with Meghan Johnson to implement Learn & Grow, and a new cohort service delivery model.
- Piloted a new cohort service delivery model for delivering Learn & Grow. Programs were invited to participate in the pilot beginning September 2021. Program administrators met in peer groups and worked through the Learn & Grow Level activities together with a thread Specialist. The first "Advancing to Level 2 Cohort" was held in November 2021.
- Learn & Grow opened Level 3 supports to programs that achieved Level 2 in the new cohort model. This was the first time Level 3 supports and resources were open to programs.



Panu Lucier, Alaska SEED Director, Retires

Following a long career of public service and leadership in the early childhood education sector, Panu Lucier, director of Alaska System for the Early Education Development (SEED), retired in December 2021.

Lucier was pivotal in leading the statewide efforts in the development and implementation of the Alaska SEED system and was a leading voice for the important role of early educators. Lucier's vision for early childhood education was that all families have access to high quality, affordable child care and that early educators are fairly compensated for their work. Read more about Panu's contributions at threadalaska.org.



transforming thread

Organizational Growth

In the third year of the pandemic, **thread** successfully continued to operate and deliver services virtually. The organization invested in new technology to support a flexible and remote work environment permanently, and the unification of **thread** from a three-organizational structure toward one for improved service delivery.

- Made the strategic decision to move **thread** to one unified organization from three statewide organizations operating as a Network. This decision was made in partnership with AEYC-SEA in Juneau and Thrivalaska in Fairbanks. It was determined unification would gain efficiencies, strengthen services and increase equity in the delivery of services statewide. In summer 2021, **thread** transitioned staff and services previously delivered by AEYC-SEA in Juneau to the main **thread** office. Throughout this year, **thread** met with southeast program owners/administrators to support this continued quality improvement change. With Thrivalaska, **thread** planned for the final transition for unification in 2023.
- Continued **thread's** internal initiative, Continuous Upward Progress and Strengthening (CUPS), which included the implementation of eight team work plans.
- Continued **thread's** Digital Infrastructure project, building its new service delivery application using Salesforce. The project target launch was extended to 2023 due to the pandemic. When complete, the new database will make it easier for early educators and programs to participate in both Alaska SEED and Learn & Grow and request **thread** services. Work to integrate client access to Salesforce via the **thread** website began and will go live in FY24.

Leadership Support

thread's FY22 Board of Directors provided leadership and support through the continued pandemic and Network transition.

- **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-Itchoak, Rasmuson Foundation
- **Board Member:** Shirley Pittz, Retired
- **Board Member:** Chris Sturm, UAA's Center for Human Development
- **Board Member:** Sen Kwang Tan, Retired



supporters and partners

Transformation requires many partners at the table sharing ideas and resources, and taking action. **thread** appreciates the community of partners, organizations and individuals who took strides for child care this year by supporting **thread's** work. Thank you!

Organizations & Partners

Alaska Communications (ACS)
Alaska Airlines
Alaska Community Foundation
Alaska Children's Trust
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
All Alaska Pediatric Partnership
AmazonSmile
Anchorage East Rotary
AT&T
Bagoy's Florist & Home
Bright Road Wealth Management
Business Insurance Associates
Chinook BPW

ConocoPhillips Alaska
Cook Inlet Tribal Council
Credit Union One
Denali Daniels + Associates
First National Bank of Alaska
Halcyon Consulting
Infant Learning Program
Juneau Economic Development Council
Lakeshore Learning
Mat-Su Health Foundation
NEC
Perkins Coie

Providence Alaska
Program for Infants and Children
Rasmuson Foundation
State of Alaska Department of Health & Social Services
State of Alaska Department of Education & Early Development
The Kroger Company
The McKinley Group
United Way of Anchorage
Wells Fargo
Wilson Albers
Valley Hospital Association

Individuals

Thank you to the many individuals, Pick.Click.Give., Combined Federal Campaign, and United Way donors who support **thread**!

Barbara Dubovich
Casie Warner
Chris Sturm
Elena Romerdahl
Harriet Drummond
Hayley Anderson
Jennifer Clark

Jennifer Pollard
Jonathan King
Lindsie Mills
Margo Fliss
Monica Garcia-Itchoak
Olivia Foster
Sen Tan

Sheryl Douglas
Shirley Pittz
Stefanie O'Brien
Stephanie & Sven Berglund
Thompson Family
Trevor Storrs & Steve Smith
... and many more anonymous donors!

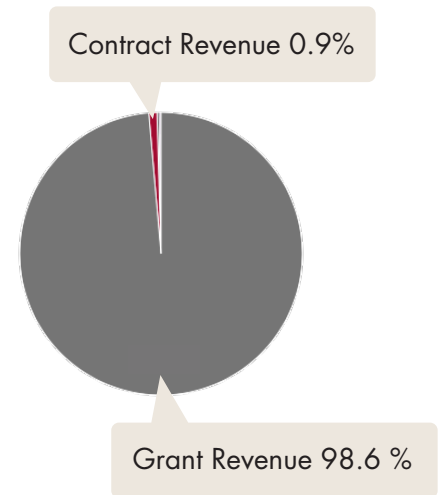
*"When our children were small we couldn't find child care that we felt comfortable with. **thread** helped us find the child care my family needed at the time. We are grateful for that experience because having good care made our everyday life a little easier and our children happier. We support **thread's** work because they are working to make sure all families have a child care experience like ours."*

donor, Anchorage

financial position

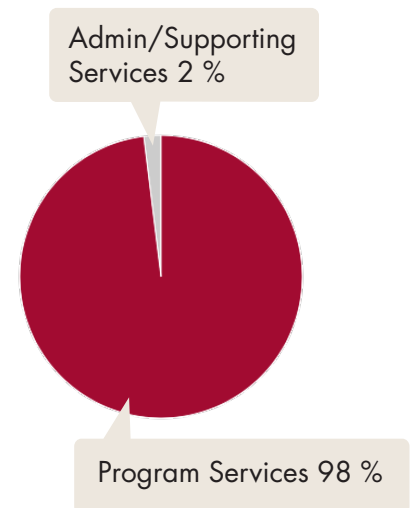
Support & Revenue

Grant Revenue	\$29,960,401
Contract Revenue	\$281,651
Digital Infrastructure Only — Foundation	\$62,989
Program Income From Training & Consultations	\$9,246
Individual & Corporate Contributions	\$68,710
Investment Income	\$(93,255)
Miscellaneous Income	\$1
Total Support & Revenue	\$30,289,743



Operating Expenses

Program Services	\$29,636,675
Administrative / Supporting Services	\$589,888
Total Operating Expenses	\$30,226,563



To request the full FY22 audited financial statements, please contact **thread** at finance@threadalaska.org