
2024

FIRST UP ANNUAL REPORT

 **First Up**
Champions for Early Education

*Fulfilling Our
Mission*

First Up is a 501c3 Nonprofit Organization

OUR MISSION

We empower and equip early childhood professionals, families, and other adults influential in young children's lives through training, coaching, and advocating to positively impact educational and developmental outcomes for young children.

GROWING TOGETHER BY FULFILLING OUR MISSION

OUR VISION

We envision a society in which early childhood professionals are highly skilled and valued; families have the knowledge, capabilities, and resources to guide their children's learning; and every young child has a quality start that lasts a lifetime.



LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAROL AUSTIN



As we reflect on the past year, it is with great pride and gratitude that we present our annual report for 2024. This document serves not only as a summary of our achievements but also as a reminder of our enduring commitment to our vision of a society where early childhood professionals are highly skilled and valued, families are equipped to guide their children's learning, and every young child receives a quality start that lasts a lifetime.

This year has been transformative for us. On the organizational front, we have completed a 3-year strategic plan that charts a future which inspires us. We have also completed 18 months of training and facilitated conversations in Creating Presence to be certified as a trauma informed, trauma responsive and trauma resilient organization. On the programs front, we fully launched our family initiatives work with some bold

new initiatives. We also launched a brand new Hispanic public policy fellowship with an inaugural group of fierce ECE teachers and directors. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our team, stakeholders, and partners, we achieved key milestones, including providing professional development to more than 6,200 educators, graduating 34 educators from our college-credit-bearing Infant and Toddler Proficiency certificate, funding 93 programs to bring cultural and artistic experiences into their centers and homes benefitting 2,913 children, and supporting 435 educators in creating culturally responsive and inclusive environments through our anti-bias education trainings. Each of these accomplishments is not only a testament to our relentless pursuit of excellence and innovation, but to the deeply committed, passionate and highly competent staff I get to work alongside.

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to fostering a culture of collaboration which honors diversity and promotes growth. We are excited about the future and are committed to creating new partnerships and ensuring those we serve are centered in our work. With your continued support, we can build on our successes and navigate the path ahead.

We invite you to take a moment to review the attached report and learn about our accomplishments, ongoing initiatives, and the ways in which we are working together to support children and the critical adults who shape their lives. Your feedback is invaluable to us as we continue to drive progress in this important work.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey in shaping a brighter future for our early childhood education ecosystem. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and insights.

Warm regards,



Carol Austin
Executive Director

MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

STRATEGIC PLAN

In February, we completed a new Strategic Plan to guide our work over the next three years. An overview of our plan pathways and initiatives appears below. To see the full plan, including our vision for impact, [please review here!](#)

Strategic Plan Initiatives Overview

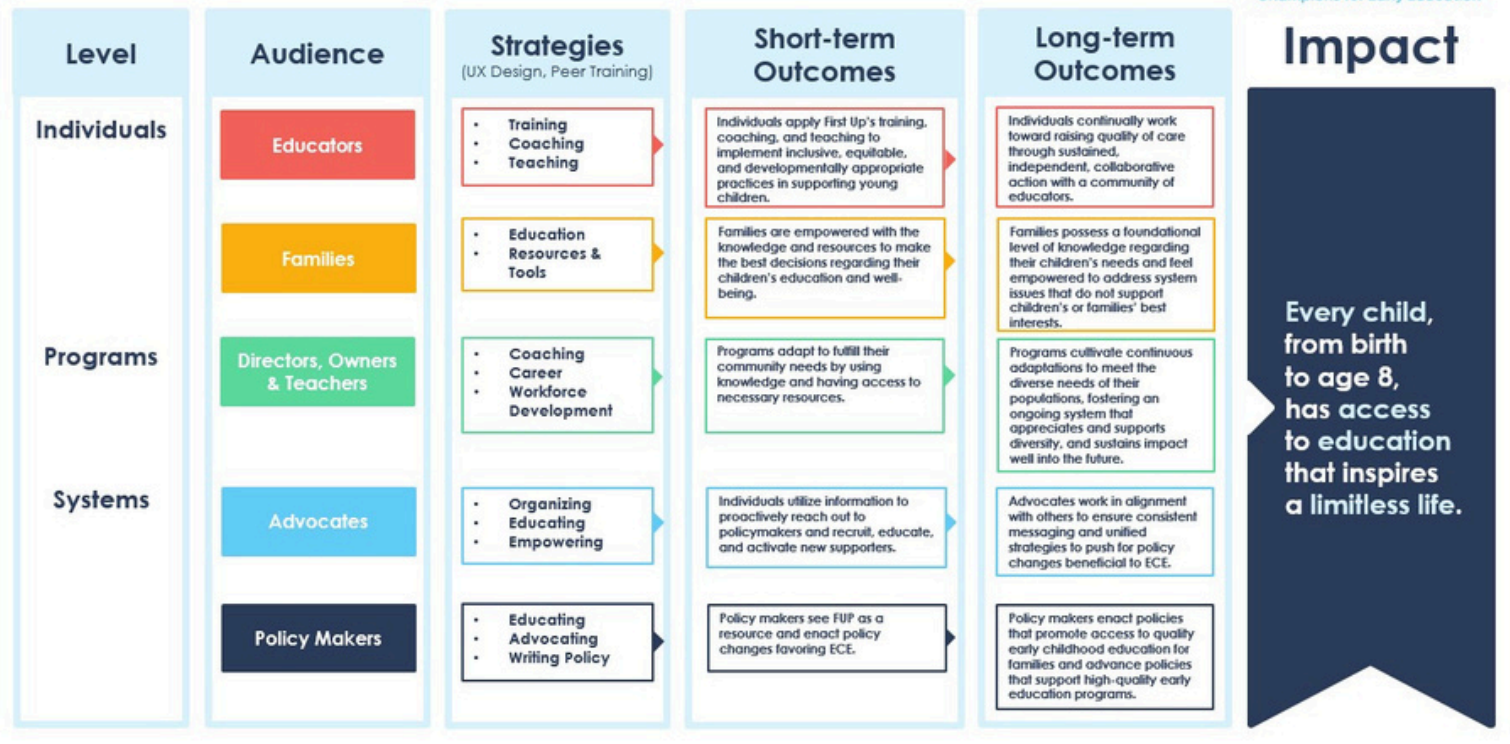
| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| PATHWAY 1 | ECE Programs & Families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Accessible & Attractive Offerings 1.2 Known & Trusted ECE Leadership 1.3 Framework That Guides Programming 1.4 Aligned Processes & Programs 1.5 Supporting Consumer Sustainability & Advancement |
| PATHWAY 2 | Staff & Organizational Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Trauma Informed 2.2 DEIB Centered (Externally & Internally) 2.3 Culturally Responsive Learning Organization 2.4 Communication for Success |
| PATHWAY 3 | Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Collaborative Development of Metrics 3.2 Data Collection & Analysis 3.3 Innovation Based on Data 3.4 Centering Clients' Stories |
| PATHWAY 4 | Advocacy & Partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Amplifying ECE's Value 4.2 Nurturing Advocates 4.3 Influential Change Agent 4.4 Leveraging Stakeholders 4.5 Building a Unified Voice |
| PATHWAY 5 | Workforce Development & Supports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Collaborative Communities 5.2 Programs That Prioritize the Underserved 5.3 High School Pipeline 5.4 Culturally Responsive Frameworks 5.5 Maximizing Learning Through Technology |

MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

STRATEGIC PLAN (CONT'D)

Additionally, we updated our theory of change and included families as a new audience.

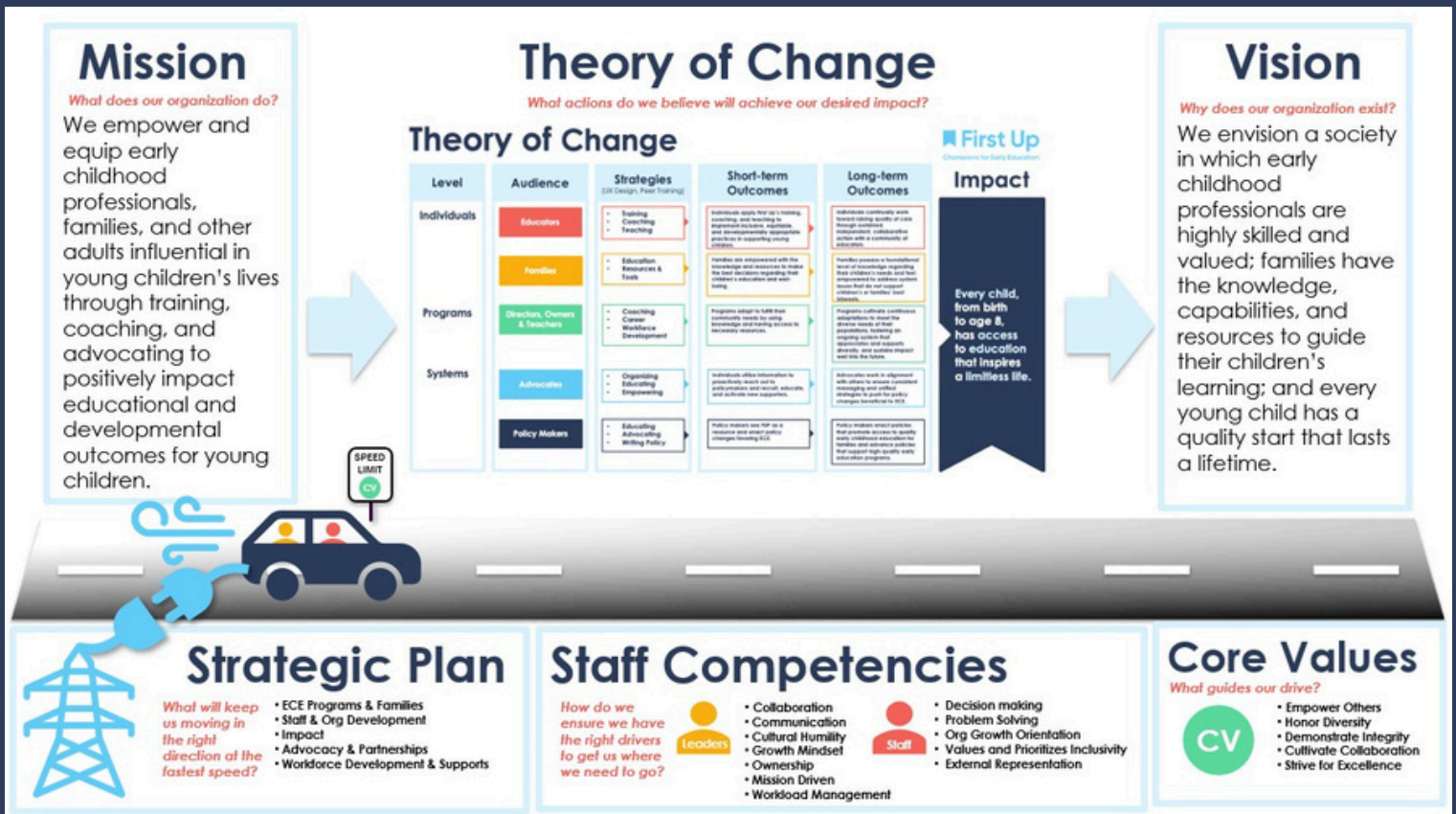
Theory of Change



MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

STRATEGIC PLAN (CONT'D)

Finally, we created an info graphic to show the interconnections of the elements that comprise our organizational identity.



MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

CREATING PRESENCE

After 18 months of training and facilitated conversations within our staff community, First Up received the [Creating Presence](#) certification from Dr. Sandra Bloom, as a certified trauma informed, trauma responsive and trauma resilient organization. For us, this is not the end, but the continuation of a journey to transform how organizations operate – starting with ours!



*Organizational
Certification*

This certificate is presented to:

First Up

Now having met all the requirements to become an organization that is:
TRAUMA INFORMED / TRAUMA RESPONSIVE / TRAUMA RESILIENT

MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

PUBLICATIONS

During Fiscal Year 2024, we were pleased to have our work recognized in the following publications.

The screenshot shows a document header with the ChildTrends logo on the left and the date 'June 2023' on the right. The main title is 'EQUIP Evaluation Highlights the Role of Coaching in Supporting Child Care Quality Improvement in Philadelphia'. Below the title are the authors 'Katherine Falletta, Julianna Carlson'. A section titled 'About EQUIP' contains a paragraph: 'In 2019, First Up launched the [Early Education Quality Improvement Program \(EQUIP\)](#), a quality improvement initiative providing tailored technical assistance and other resources to center- and home-based child care providers in Philadelphia. EQUIP is designed to support child care providers in improving the quality of their programs and moving up in levels in Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania's child care quality rating and improvement system (QRIS; see text box for additional details on Keystone STARS).¹' To the right of this text is a grey box titled 'Keystone STARS' which contains a definition: 'Keystone STARS (Standards, Training/Professional Development, Assistance, Resources, and Supports) is Pennsylvania's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). It includes quality standards in four areas:' followed by a bulleted list: '• Staff education', '• Learning environment', and '• Leadership/management'. Below the 'About EQUIP' text is another paragraph: 'EQUIP is a two-year program open to center- and home-based child care providers who are currently at a STAR level 2 and are interested in moving up in STAR levels. Participants in EQUIP have access to a range of quality improvement supports, including coaching, mentorship, case management, tailored professional development (PD), free program assessments, access to program improvement

The national research organization, [ChildTrends](#), published a [research brief](#) which was based on their evaluation of EQUIP (Early Education Quality Improvement Program) and our coaching model.

MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

PUBLICATIONS (CONT'D)

On Juneteenth, we released the [*P.R.I.D.E in Philly Environmental Scan*](#), a comprehensive research study centered on Philadelphia.



This scan was created to better understand racial disparities, attitudes, and awareness of positive racial identity among parents and educators who are seeking the knowledge and resources needed to support young Black children's positive racial identity development.

2024

WORKFORCE & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IMPACT
THROUGH
PROGRAMS



Up



LEARN AND EARN

The Lean and Earn Career Pathway Program was designed to offer multiple entry points and pathways based on the individual's educational background and career aspirations. First Up has established comprehensive pathways to enhance the early childhood workforce.

By integrating academic learning with on the job competencies, students earn 9 college credits while working in a participating early learning center. This program aims to bridge the gap between education and practical application, equipping participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in lead roles within the early childhood education community.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

- 55** Childcare programs participated in Learn and Earn
- 69** Coaches were mentored through Learn and Earn
- 88** Students received material stipends

IN PERSON & VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

First Up offers high-quality professional development for early childhood educators, meticulously aligned with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) competencies. Through a combination of research-based strategies, hands-on workshops, and expert-led sessions, First Up empowers educators to create enriching learning environments that support the holistic development of young children.

This alignment with NAEYC competencies guarantees that educators are not only meeting professional benchmarks, but also contributing to the broader goal of excellence in early childhood education.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

- Trainings Delivered** 392
- Training Hours** 1272
- Training Participants** 6283



INFANT TODDLER PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATION

First Up, in partnership with Delaware County Community College, Community College and Esperanza College (Bilingual program), offers an Infant and Toddler Proficiency Certificate

program, providing a 9-credit transferable certificate upon matriculation into a partnering college. This course serves as a steppingstone towards an associate degree, with the credits being fully transferable. Participants receive additional support through office hours, access to their own computer, textbooks, tutoring, and career advising.

Graduates By College In 2024:

- 11 Community College of Philadelphia
- 11 Delaware County Community College
- 12 Esperanza College of Eastern University

PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION TEST (PECT)

First Up offers virtual preparation courses for individuals pursuing Pennsylvania Educator Certification. These courses are designed to strengthen knowledge in key areas required for certification. The coursework focuses on:

1. **Content, Pedagogy, and Assessment (21 hours)** – Enhancing understanding of subject matter, teaching strategies, and student evaluation techniques.

2. **Educational Technology (14 hours)** –

Developing skills in using technology effectively in the classroom.

3. **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) (14 hours)** -

Supporting students' emotional well-being and social development.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

Hours Delivered **98**

Program Graduates **26**

2024

EQUITY INITIATIVES

A photograph of a woman with glasses and a headwrap hugging an older woman with white hair. The woman being hugged is wearing a blue shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a poster or sign with some text and graphics.

**IMPACT
THROUGH
PROGRAMS**

P.R.I.D.E. (POSITIVE RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY EDUCATION)

P.R.I.D.E. IN PHILLY TRAINING SESSIONS

Through the P.R.I.D.E. in Philly Training Series, we equip educators with the knowledge and tools needed to understand the impact of race on young children and the importance of engaging in conversations about race from an early age.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

130 Number of Participants

P.R.I.D.E. IN PHILLY TEACHER COHORT

Our current cohort of 15 dedicated educators, representing 15 early childhood programs across Philadelphia, is thriving as they engage deeply with P.R.I.D.E. principles. Through this program, they are learning how to incorporate positive racial identity development into their daily work with young children, fostering culturally affirming practices and creating supportive environments where every child can feel seen, valued, and empowered.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

Number of Cohorts **1**

Cohort Participants **15**



TRAUMA INFORMED INITIATIVES

In 2024, First Up’s Trauma Initiatives continued to equip educators with the essential tools needed to foster resilience in children and create nurturing, supportive learning

environments. Additionally, we convened a Community of Practice (CoP), bringing together trauma-competent professionals in the early childhood education community. This allowed participants to work toward systemic change in trauma-informed care.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

- 435** Number of Teachers Trained
- 22** Community of Practice Participants

R.O.O.T.S.: FAMILY OF BLACK CHILDREN AFFINITY GROUPS

In 2024, R.O.O.T.S. (Resistance, Opportunity, Ownership, Tradition, Solidarity) emerged as a vibrant and impactful series of monthly Affinity Groups designed specifically for families of Black children. R.O.O.T.S offered a unique opportunity for families to build community while fostering pride in their

children’s cultural identities. Each session featured interactive activities aligned with the principles of P.R.I.D.E.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

- Number of Cohorts** 1
- Cohort Participants** 15

ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION TRAININGS

In 2024, First Up’s Equity Initiatives Department expanded their reach, delivering more comprehensive Anti-Bias

Education trainings and establishing professional learning communities that empower hundreds of educators across the city. These initiatives have helped teachers cultivate culturally responsive and inclusive environments where all children feel valued and respected.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

- 435** Teachers Trained
- 32** Cohort Participants



2024

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS



**IMPACT
THROUGH
PROGRAMS**

EQUIP

This year EQUIP (Early Education Quality Improvement Program) has continued to significantly impact early childcare programs across Philadelphia. Through EQUIP, educators are provided the opportunity to learn new skills and improve business, leadership and

classroom practices. This year we celebrated 17 programs that successfully advanced in the Keystone STARS quality rating system.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

Programs Coached **35**

Programs That Moved Up in STAR Level **17**

MUSEUMS-TO-GO

The Museums-to-Go program is funded by an endowment started by Lois B. Cohan's husband, Bob Cohan, and their children. The program will run from March through November 30th annually. This exciting program awards up

to \$600 to Early Learning programs in Philadelphia to bring various cultural experiences in art, music, theater, and educational programs from outstanding local museums and institutions. Transportation awards are also available to qualifying programs.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

93 Participating Programs & Centers

2913 Children Reached

EARLY HEADSTART

First Up provided targeted coaching support to infant and toddler educators. The targeted supports, aimed at increasing the teachers' skills and confidence, have significantly improved their ability to respond to children's social and emotional needs. This has resulted in a stronger

teacher-child relationship and a reassuring reduction in behavioral challenges.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

Teachers Received Coaching **35**

Coaching Hours Provided **480**



PATHWAYS TO POSITIVE CONNECTION

First Up provided training and coaching based on the Pyramid Model Framework. An evidence-based approach designed to promote young children's social, emotional, and behavioral development. Teachers learned new strategies and developed

confidence in their ability to support children's social-emotional needs, resulting in fewer children demonstrating challenging behaviors.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

Educators Coached **38**

Children Served **270**

SLIDE INTO SUCCESS

Through Vanguard's Start Strong For Kids Program, First Up addressed the positive impacts of connecting young children living in urban neighborhoods to nature.

Educators from North and West Philadelphia participated in training, coaching, and on-site observations to learn about high-quality nature-based practices. The goal of this project was to increase the skill level of early childhood educators in using nature-based play to plan activities that support children's learning.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

175 Children Served

22 Early Childhood Educators Coached

ACTION FOR EARLY LEARNING

The West Philadelphia Action for Early Learning (AFEL) Initiative's overarching goal is Kindergarten readiness and to help children read at grade level by the end of third grade. The AFEL Alliance of Childcare Providers consists of family, group, and center-based childcare programs committed to continuous quality ECE improvement.

Managed by First Up, providers receive training, coaching, and resources to deliver high-quality care and become better equipped to offer affordable, high-quality services.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

Children Served **978**

Participating Sites **20**



NAEYC ACCREDITATION COHORT

First U

Champions for Early Ed



National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation helps teachers and other staff of early learning programs develop a shared understanding and commitment to quality.

With funding from the Early Learning Resource Center-18, First Up coaches created a supportive community for a cohort of six early childhood programs interested in achieving accreditation. Through a cohort model, six directors completed self-assessments and successfully developed improvement plans, preparing them to take the first step in the Accreditation Process.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

- 150** Hours of Coaching
- 14** Programs Received Coaching and Training

FAMILY CHILD CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Family Child Care Advisory Council was formed in January 2019 through a generous grant from Vanguard's Strong Start for Kids program. It was initially comprised of 23 family & group educators who worked to create a peer networking structure that supports the unique needs of home-based child care

programs. Through the organization's workgroups, these leaders prioritize the unique needs of home-based childcare professionals.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

- Members** 39
- Programs Achieved National Accreditation** 27

2024



ADVOCACY

**IMPACT
THROUGH
PROGRAMS**

MOBILIZATION & LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT:

CAPITAL CARAVANS

As part of our work in the Early Learning PA coalition, First Up supports the goal of ensuring every week our legislature is in session, they are seeing constituents demanding changes in our early education system. To that end, First Up travels to our state capital with

families, educators and other supporters to meet with legislators and conduct visibility events, such as rallies and displays in the main rotunda.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

Caravans **8**

Legislative Meetings **103**



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FELLOWSHIPS:

ENGLISH AND SPANISH ECE FELLOWSHIPS

Fellows embark on a transformative journey to unlock their full leadership potential and ignite change in the dynamic world of early childhood education. This immersive Fellowship begins with a deep exploration of personal leadership

strengths and growth areas, setting the stage for a profound learning experience. Throughout this empowering fellowship, fellows dive into the foundational pillars of leadership and advocacy within the early childhood education landscape. The fellowship has both English and Spanish language cohorts.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

12 Spanish Language Fellows

10 English Language Fellows

COMMUNITY & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:

GET OUT THE VOTE WORKSHOPS

Advocacy is about lifting your voice, and the best way to do that is by voting. We conduct workshops designed to help childcare providers and families create their own plan to vote, as well as inspire others to do so.

All workshops share tips as well as tangible resources like our "Kids Can't Vote, But You Can" stickers.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

Formal Workshops **2**

ORGANIZE AND INFORM ADVOCATES:

SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA EARLY CHILDHOOD COALITION

The Southeastern PA Early Childhood Coalition (SEPECC) is a supporter led coalition designed to provide useful resources and real time information

about the ECE field. SEPECC strives to ensure that early educators are informed about policies that affect them. Monthly meetings typically include policy makers, ensuring advocates have a direct line with those creating rules and controlling the budget.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

120 Average Attendance

10 Meetings

ORGANIZE AND INFORM ADVOCATES:

3P & CHILDCARE CHANGEMAKERS

Childcare Changemakers

First Up partners with Childcare Changemakers who are families, childcare providers, leaders, and organizers. They fight for parent affordability, provider stability, and living wages for all providers and caregivers of all types.

Public Policy Partners (3P)

3P is a way for all ECE advocacy groups in the Southeast to discuss common goals and ensure efficiency.

During Fiscal Year 2024:

Average Attendance **12**

Meetings **10**



SIGNATURE EVENTS



On **October 23rd, 2023**, **91 golfers** hit the links at the picturesque, **French Creek Golf Club** all in the name of raising money for early childhood education one putt at a time! So much fun took place this day, from the incredible golf, to raffle prizes, and whacky side contests like a putting challenge using only a hockey stick! This event directly benefitted early learning professionals and helped support First Up's **2024 Terri Lynne Lokoff Teacher Awards!**

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 34TH ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC | Money Raised: | Golfers Participated: |
| | \$41,355 | 91 |



The Terri Lynne Lokoff Teacher Awards is a celebration honoring early childhood educators from across the United States. On April 13, 2024, First Up celebrated **22 teachers from 7 states** representing **22 schools**. The prestigious **2024 Helene Marks Award** was given to **Taylor Schranghamer** from **Tender Care Learning Center in Allison Park, PA**. First Up was honored to congratulate these amazing educators for their years of hardwork and dedication!

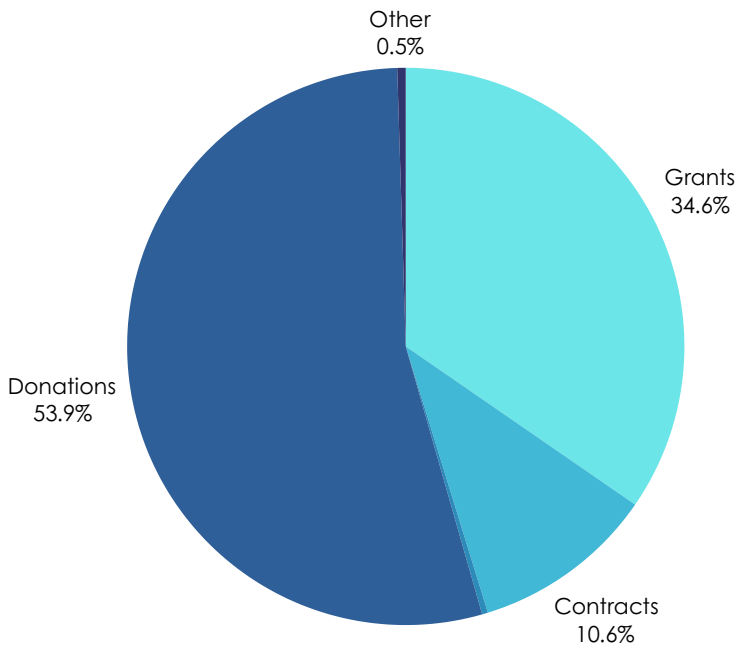
2024 Terri Lynne Lokoff Teacher Awards winners:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Priscella Ammon | Sarah Curtin | Keltouma Sahali |
| Natasha Anderson | Keisha Dyke | Brittany Schaeffer |
| Devon Berfeldt | Lynne Ehrman | Taylor Schranghamer |
| Shelly Boelter | Christine Elkin | Shasta Westaby |
| Kim Browne | Jewely Hill | Sarah Westland |
| Heather Campbell | Thomasina Lee | Aimee Wyatt |
| Jennifer Cready | Nicole Phillips | Taylor Zareck |
| Katrina Carlyle | | |

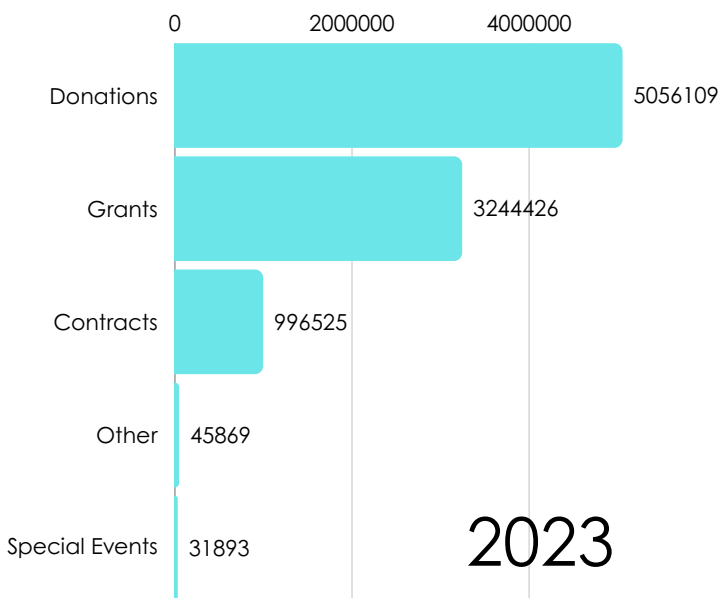
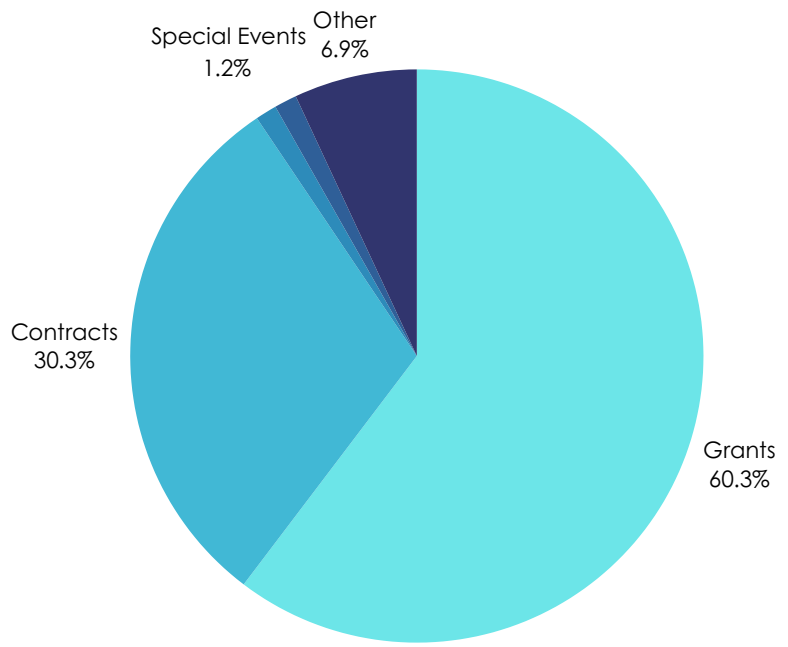
| | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| TERRI LYNNE LOKOFF TEACHER AWARDS | Teachers Awarded: | States Represented: |
| | 22 | 7 |

FINANCIAL REVIEW REVENUE

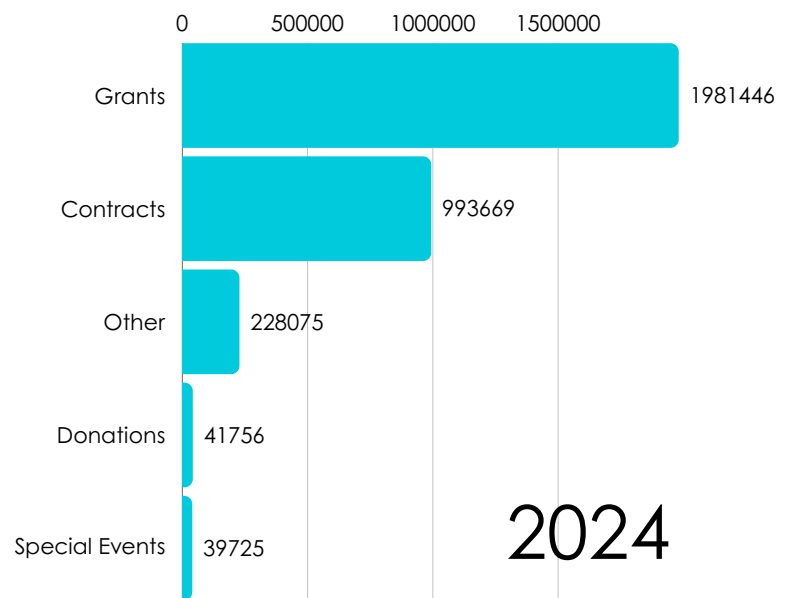
FISCAL YEAR 2023



FISCAL YEAR 2024



2023



2024

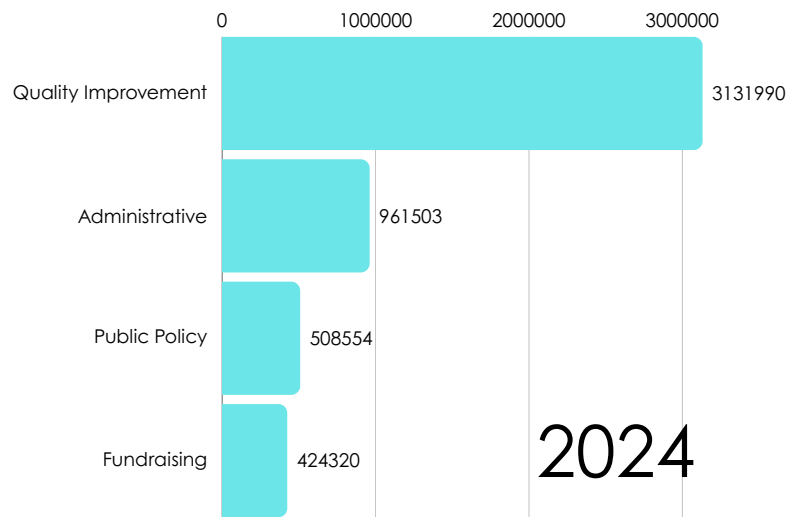
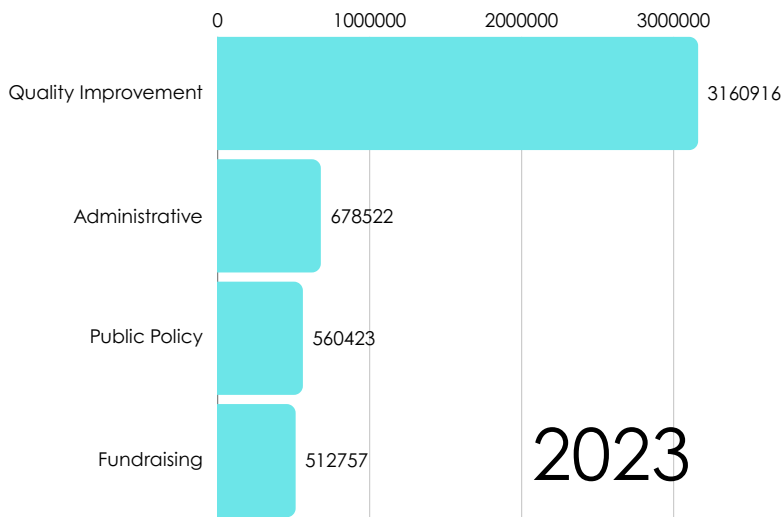
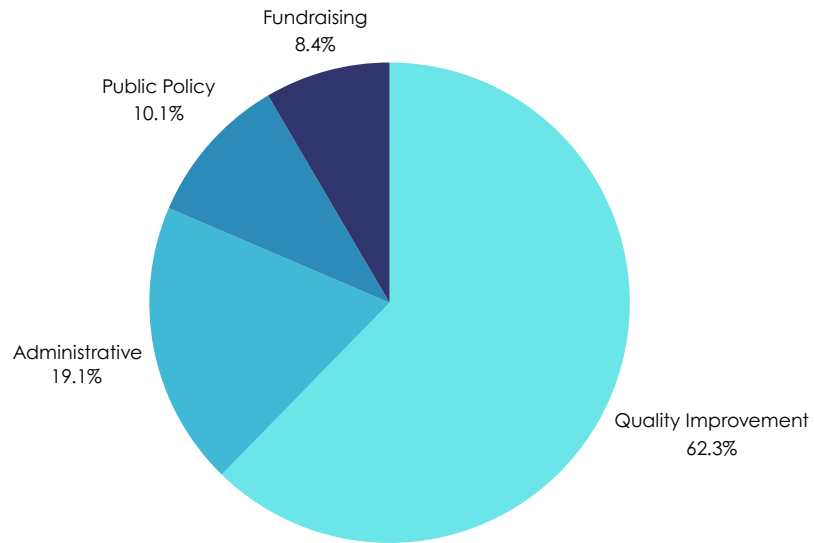
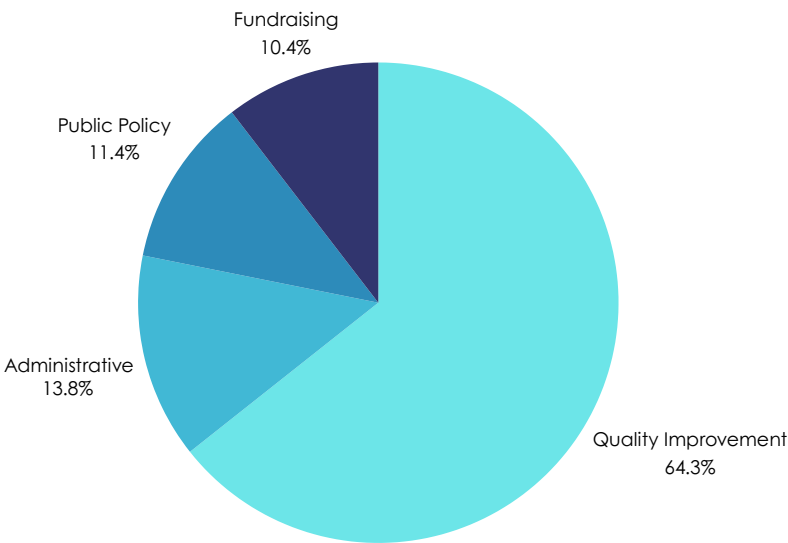
* First Up received a single source donation of \$5 million dollars in FY23 which has been invested for future growth and operations. Donations received in FY24 followed historical trends for donations received.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

EXPENSES

FISCAL YEAR 2023

FISCAL YEAR 2024



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

FOUNDATION FUNDERS

Armanino Foundation

Childcare Changemakers

Christian R. & Mary F. Lindback Foundation

Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center

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Early Childhood Funders Collaborative

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Up to \$99

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Michelle Tagliatela (President)
President, **Tag Strategies**

Donald Wargo, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Economics,
Temple University

Carol Wong
Owner, Executive Director,
Chinatown Learning Center

Robyn Younger
Owner, **Younger Days Childcare & Youth
Development Center**

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

2025 FIRST UP CONFERENCE

Registration is now **OPEN!** Join us **April 25-26, 2025** and Learn Strategies That Will Influence Your Work in the Classroom and Beyond! Our Conference titled: **Beyond the Classroom: Inspiring Lifelong Learning and Development**, will take place at **The Hilton Philadelphia City Avenue** (4200 City Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19131) and will include Keynote Speakers **Denisha Jones: Executive Director of Defending the Early Years**, and **Josh Robinson: percussionist and educator!**

WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO AT THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE!

REGISTER TODAY!

<https://shorturl.at/7Evad>



Engaging Workshops

- Breakout sessions
- Workshops available in Spanish

Featured Presenters

- **Veirdre Jackson** will speak on our Sense of Belonging
- **Essence Allen Presley** brings a thought-provoking session on early intervention

Networking Opportunities And More!



DON'T MISS THIS AMAZING OPPORTUNITY!