

The Children's Funding Project





Fact Sheet for Policymakers

The Forum for Youth Investment's Children's Funding Project works with communities in their efforts to find, align, generate and evaluate sustainable funding for children and youth and expand investments that meet local needs.

Over the past decade, the amount and focus of federal and state funding for children have become increasingly uncertain. Across the nation, local leaders are increasingly taking on the task of ensuring sustained financial support for critical children's programs and services in their community by better managing local funding sources.

The Children's Funding Project at the Forum for Youth Investment was established to track, document and provide technical assistance to communities employing strategies to more effectively leverage existing local funding sources or to generate new revenues. Through this work, the Forum has identified four key tasks related to the most successful and sustained local children's funding efforts, and examples local policymakers can advance efforts to establish local children's funds.

The role of policymakers – how can you most effectively contribute?

Lever	How policymakers can support comprehensive financing of children's services
 <p>FIND</p> <p>Develop the capacity to rigorously identify, track, analyze and forecast funding sources and funding needs for services that support children and youth.</p>	<p>Convene and/or engage key budget holders.</p> <p>Conduct a fiscal scan to understand the purpose and amounts of existing federal, state and local resources and create a baseline.</p>
 <p>ALIGN</p> <p>Address gaps and overlaps in the existing funding landscape; local government must be prepared to make adjustments in how funding is allocated, managed and accounted for within agencies.</p>	<p>Identify ways to blend and braid funding streams to fill gaps and capitalize on existing resources.</p> <p>Communicate about opportunities and gaps in existing resources.</p> <p>Allow flexibility with local dollars whenever possible.</p> <p>Establish common language and shared measures between local departments when discussing youth investment.</p>
 <p>GENERATE</p> <p>Assess need, explore feasibility, facilitate community engagement, launch a campaign and plan the administration of new locally generated funds to address gaps in meeting the needs of all children and youth.</p>	<p>Research viability of various taxing options and review history of ballot measures.</p> <p>Propose an initiative and lead a campaign to qualify for inclusion on the ballot.</p> <p>Act as a champion for the passage of this ballot measure by using targeted messages to communicate your support publicly.</p>
 <p>EVALUATE</p> <p>Adopt methods to measure the impact of local investments.</p>	<p>Offer continuous equality improvement opportunities to all funded agencies.</p> <p>Implement a manageable system for reporting and tracking performance that supports transparency and accountability.</p> <p>Conduct evaluations so that voters will be able to see with concrete data that there is a tangible return on investment and their dollars are being put to good use.</p>

GENERATE: At the forefront of localities effectively leveraging local children’s funding are jurisdictions that are making the case directly to the voters for generating new funds. Cities and counties across the nation are asking voters to pass ballot initiatives that levy taxes to create dedicated local children’s funds. A dedicated fund is a pool of funds obtained by the government that is intentionally set up to provide funding for a specific purpose; our focus is on funds set up to benefit youth services and programs.

These ballot initiatives are being mounted and passed in a wide range of communities, from small to large and conservative to liberal. Presently, more than 30 communities across the nation have established dedicated children’s funds, many of which have sustained years of political changes and the hurdle of voter reauthorization.

Potential for Success

Locally-generated children’s funds have immense potential to provide stable and sustainable financing to children’s programs. Everyone – local funders, policymakers, providers and the public – plays a role in incubating the success of campaigns to establish such a fund, and the payout can be tremendous.



1 BILLION DOLLARS
of revenue for child-serving programs generated annually



The same amount as the federal \$ allocated to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program - dollars at risk of being defunded!



100 IF 100 ADDITIONAL LOCALITIES
launch similar successful campaigns



4 BILLION DOLLARS IN NEW FUNDS
could be generated



These funds can then be used to leverage additional federal, state and private dollars.

Examples of policymaker success in developing children’s funds

A variety of policymakers nationwide have launched successful campaigns to develop dedicated local children’s funds.

In San Antonio, Texas:

Mayor Julian Castro championed a 1/8 cent sales tax that now generates up to **\$31 million** per year to fund pre-K.

“For the purpose of education in a state that ranks about 45th or 47th in terms of per-pupil spending... it made a lot of sense to invest this small amount for a big reward in the future.” –Mayor Julian Castro

In King County, Washington:

County Executive Dow Constantine championed a property tax that generates up to **\$65 million** annually to fund “Best Starts for Kids.”

“We are ready to deliver on the commitment I made to the people of King County that we will help put every child and youth in our region on a path toward lifelong success.” –County Executive Dow Constantine

In Baltimore, Maryland:

City Council President Bernard C. “Jack” Young championed a tax of three cents per \$100 of assessed property value that yields **\$12 million** per year for the ‘Children and Youth of Baltimore’ Fund.

“This Fund is going to have an incredible impact on the programs that affect our youth. It is a big step in the right direction.” –City Council President Bernard C. “Jack” Young

The Children’s Funding Project is the Forum for Youth Investment’s commitment to work with citizens and local policymakers to find, align, generate, and evaluate funding streams in their communities to support dedicated children’s funds. We are able to help communities link to reliable resources and partners; facilitate hard discussions around fiscal maps which illustrate the current fiscal health of a community and contribute years of experience to community discussions around Children’s Funds.

Interested in championing the development of a dedicated local children’s fund in your community?
Contact Elizabeth Gaines at Elizabeth@forumfyi.org or 202.207.3335