



Evaluating Impact:

Pre-K *for* PA Campaign

Learning & Insights
From Eight Years of a
State-Based Advocacy Initiative

Note from the Evaluators

This report reflects the synthesis of a multi-year evaluation that was funded by a grant from the William Penn Foundation. The evaluation was primarily designed to generate ongoing learning and strategic insights for the Pre-K for PA Campaign, a collaborative effort intended to bolster public support for pre-K in Pennsylvania. The Campaign also received support from the William Penn Foundation, and previous reports have been shared with both the Foundation and the Campaign.

We are delighted to share these findings and insights from the Campaign with a broader audience in the hope that they will inform other funders and advocates pursuing large-scale state campaigns. The report captures a journey that started with the launch of the Campaign in 2014 and follows it through to the present day. We are grateful for the remarkable partnership we have had with both the Foundation and the Campaign over the course of the evaluation.

The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the William Penn Foundation or the Pre-K for PA Campaign and/or its individual members.



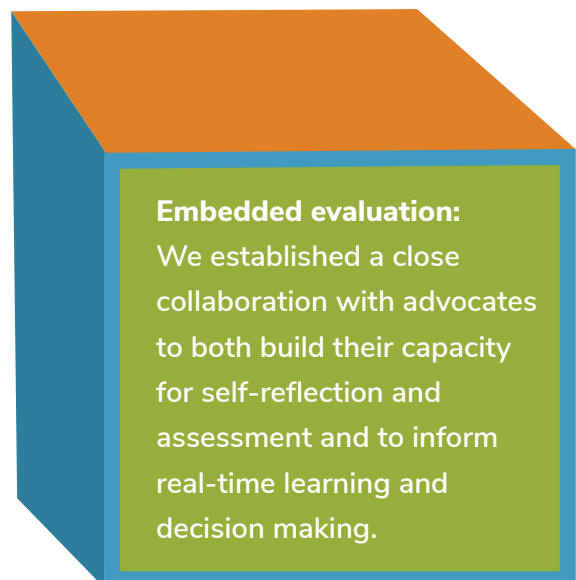
Introduction

Advocacy is a long game. Effective advocacy requires expansive and trusting relationships, robust financial support, skilled individuals and organizations, and perhaps above all, flexibility to focus on emerging needs. Building this infrastructure can take time, and not all foundations are willing to support advocacy campaigns throughout the timeframes they need to build effective capacity.

But it can be done.

In 2014, TCC Group was engaged by the William Penn Foundation to serve as an embedded evaluator to the Pre-K for PA Campaign, an advocacy campaign comprised of members throughout Pennsylvania working together to increase access to, and the affordability of, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs in the state. The Foundation and the advocacy organizations involved in the Campaign were interested in evaluation and chose an embedded approach for several reasons. First, it allowed for deep integration into the Campaign. We were present at many internal meetings and could observe and articulate assumptions and changes in strategies. Second, the amount of face time allowed us to build relationships with the Campaign's staff, allowing for a more candid relationship. Third, this allowed a fair amount of data collection to be conducted in the natural course of the work, reducing separate data collection demands. Fourth, there was a sense that an embedded, rather than an external, evaluator could help the Campaign to sustain focus on intended outcomes.

The embedded evaluation role was new to many in the Campaign, and it evolved in subtle but important ways over time. In the first couple of years, this role meant we participated in holding most of the internal campaign meetings, serving as observers focused on identifying assumptions around roles and alignment and setting up reporting systems. We conducted yearly data collection through surveys and interviews with the Campaign's leaders that focused on understanding capacity, trust, and functioning. And we were on call for any emerging questions advocates had as they worked through various forms of strategic shifts and staffing. As members found their stride, our role transitioned to active facilitation, helping them focus on regular reflection and learning with an eye towards strategy and future pivots. In the last three years of our evaluation partnership, the Campaign's staff themselves took ownership for implementing many evaluation and learning activities, such as managing tools to track campaign activity and reflection meetings. TCC Group continued to gather data for regular reporting and reflection. However, with the emergence of COVID-19, our role shifted to meeting the emergent needs of the Campaign.



While we observed the Campaign's internal dynamics at length, we also implemented rigorous methods focused on understanding progress and impact. The Pre-K for PA Campaign began its advocacy work in a year with such state gridlock that the newly elected governor, Tom Wolf, was not able to pass a state budget on time for the first time since 2009. From there, political winds shifted back and forth in a politically divided state. The shifting political landscape impacted the ways in which the Campaign advanced its advocacy goals, the ways in which it and the William Penn Foundation assessed the feasibility of goals, and how we thought about the best ways to collect data on its impact.

This report builds on eight years of partnership with this advocacy campaign. It aims to answer three big questions:



What effect did the Campaign have on public funding levels?



What are effective advocacy strategies in polarized and changing environments?



What can sustained financial support allow advocacy campaigns to achieve?

We hope this report will be helpful and encouraging to all of those involved in advocacy efforts, especially those working to enact policy and systems-change in polarized states and funders working to provide advocates with the long-term and robust funding they need to make a difference.

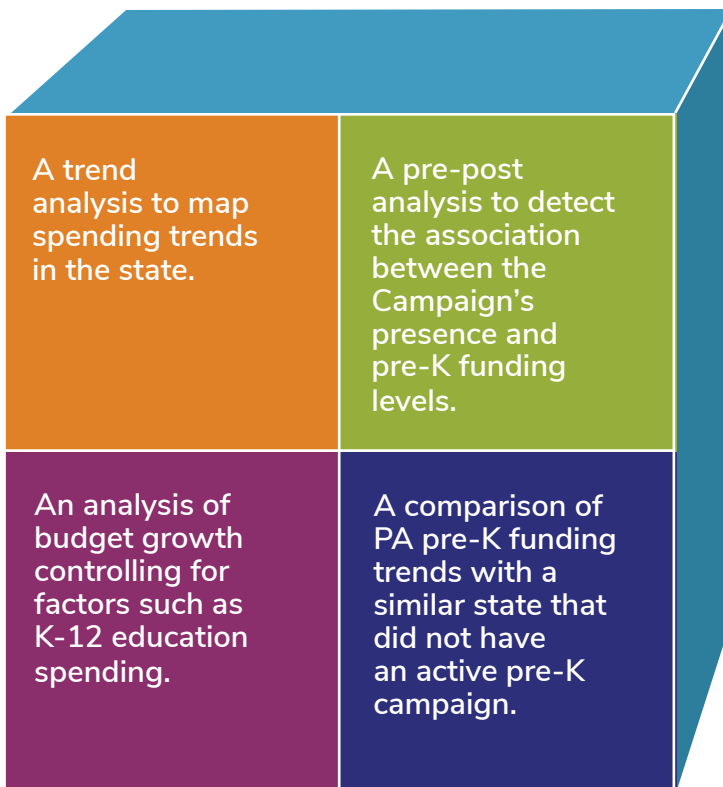
Big Question

What effect did the Campaign have on public funding levels?

Campaign Accomplishments

We conducted a four-part quantitative analysis to understand the effect of the Campaign on state funding for pre-K. The results suggest that the Pre-K for PA Campaign had a significant positive impact on state funding for pre-K programs in Pennsylvania.

The four-part quantitative analysis included:



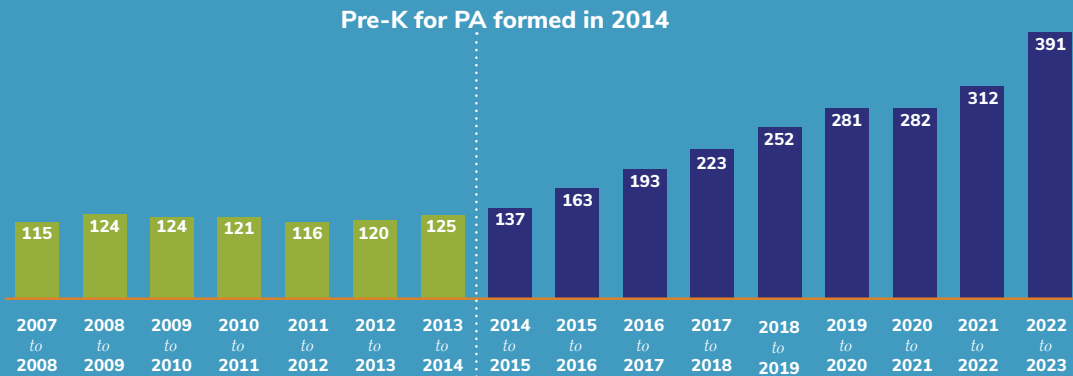
For additional details about the methodology, see Appendix A.

Trend Analysis

Since the Pre-K for PA Campaign began advocating for increased funding for pre-K in 2014, Pennsylvania has steadily increased new state spending on Pre-K Counts (PKC) and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP). A trend analysis of state spending on PKC and HSSAP indicates spending has increased annually by at least \$25 million each budget year since 2014-15, except for in 2020-21 when the programs were funded at the same level as the previous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However in 2020-21, \$9 million in discretionary federal funds were allocated to pre-K through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Collectively, this represents an increase in state spending on pre-K of over \$254 million over the course of eight budget cycles.

Chart 1¹

Total Spending (dollars in millions) on PKC and HSSAP in Pennsylvania, 2007-2023²



¹ Campaign impact on the state budget is assumed to have begun with the 2015-16 budget.

² Self-reported state spending data for 2009-10 to 2013-14 and for 2015-16 to 2020-21 from the National Institute for Early Education Research. Data for 2014-15 and 2021-22 to 2022-23 was sourced from the budget line-item appropriations published by the Pennsylvania Office of the Budget.

Pre-Post Analysis

A pre-post analysis assessing mean spending amounts before and after the beginning of the Campaign efforts was conducted to assess if there was any association between campaign activity and spending levels. The aim of the analysis was to determine whether there was a significant change in pre-K spending before and after the Campaign's launch, but not to determine whether or not the Campaign caused the change.³ The pre-campaign period included the years 2007-08 to 2014-15, while the post-campaign period included the years 2015-16 to 2022-23. The analysis demonstrated that on average, total pre-K spending in Pennsylvania was \$139.5 million higher after the launch of the Campaign. Specifically, mean spending on pre-K increased from \$122.5 million during the pre-campaign period to \$262 million during the post-campaign period.

Multivariate Regression Analysis

A multivariate regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of K-12 education spending as a possible confounding variable between 2007-08 and 2022-23 that could have potentially impacted state funding for pre-K programs. The analysis showed that the Campaign continued to positively influence pre-K spending, even after controlling for K-12 spending. While K-12 spending showed a positive influence on the state's pre-K spending, this result was not statistically significant.^{4,5}

Difference-in-Difference Analysis

While these three analyses complement each other to provide evidence of the Campaign's effectiveness in improving state pre-K spending, there is still uncertainty about the level of impact attributable to its advocacy. The difference-in-difference analysis provides stronger evidence for causal impact by using longitudinal data to compare changes in outcomes over time between a population that receives the intervention (campaign) and a population that does not (comparison state). The regression model used for this analysis compared pre-K spending in Pennsylvania with a comparison state (Ohio) between 2009-10 to 2020-21. By using a comparison state that shares a similar pre-K policy landscape but did not have a publicly visible campaign like Pre-K for PA, the analysis partially isolates the impact of the campaign from other potential factors that may have influenced pre-K spending outcomes.⁶

³ The statistical analysis included conducting a Welch two-sample t-test ($t = 5.4894$, $p = 0.00086$).

⁴ The state's fiscal effort towards K-12 (% Gross State Product) data was sourced from the School Finance Indicators Database (SFID) published by the Albert Shanker Institute.

⁵ $\beta_1 = 110,963,235$; $p < 0.01$; $R^2 = 0.82$ (Beta weight for K12 Spending: 10,308,588,926. No statistical significance).

⁶ More information about how the control state was selected is included in Appendix A.

Holding state and year fixed effects constant, this analysis found that the presence of the Pre-K for PA Campaign increased total annual pre-K spending in Pennsylvania by \$70.4 million on average.⁷ This “treatment effect” comes the closest to establishing a cause-and-effect relationship between the Campaign’s advocacy efforts and the increase in state pre-K spending in Pennsylvania.

The Campaign appears to have been successful in increasing total pre-K spending in Pennsylvania, with the potential dollar impact ranging between \$70.4 million to \$139.5 million (Table 1).⁸

Table 1. Estimates of Campaign Impact by Type of Analysis

Analysis	Predicted Impact	Statistical Significance
Pre-Post Analysis: Mean Difference in Spending on Pre-K (Two sample t-test)	\$139.5 million	t = 5.4894; p-value = 0.00086
Multivariate Regression Analysis (K-12 Spending)	\$111.0 million	$\beta^1 = 110,963,235$; p < 0.01; R ² = 0.82
Difference-in-Difference Analysis	\$70.4 million	$\beta^1 = 70,394,609$; p < 0.001; R ² = 0.97

⁷ $\beta^1 = 70,394,609$; p < 0.001; R² = 0.97.

⁸ This wide range of estimates reflects the variability and imprecision across different models and analyses included in this study.

Big Question # 2

What are effective advocacy strategies in polarized and changing environments?

The Context

There was a major development in Pennsylvania in 2007 with the inception of the state-funded Pre-K Counts program, a no-cost pre-K program for income-eligible families. However, initial state investments stagnated, and many states began surpassing Pennsylvania in terms of access to quality pre-K. Advocates mobilized to advocate for increased state support moving forward, which became the catalyst for the launch of the Pre-K for PA Campaign in 2014.

Many describe pre-K as an historically bipartisan issue in the legislature. As the Campaign was launching in 2014, the Democratic candidate Tom Wolf was running for governor of Pennsylvania against the incumbent Republican Tom Corbett. As a candidate, Wolf had already publicly stated his commitment to expanding pre-K in the state. In November 2014, Wolf defeated Corbett.

In this same election, Republicans held a majority in the state house and senate. This meant Pennsylvania was in similar political context as several other states that had Republican majorities in the legislative chambers and Democratic governors for most of the Campaign's existence (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Political Party Control of Pennsylvania State Government

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Governor	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Senate	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
House	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R

In November 2018, Governor Wolf won re-election for a second term. In this same election, several moderate Republicans lost their seats to Democratic candidates, resulting in a legislature that, while more evenly split than in previous years, was also more polarized given that a previous moderate base of Republicans were no longer in office. Despite the legislature becoming more polarized, pre-K continued to enjoy bipartisan support.

As Governor Wolf entered his second term without a re-election concern, there was optimism on the part of advocates that he would be ambitious on the pre-K issue. He proposed a \$50 million increase, an action perceived to be modest given a desire for a bolder move such as pushing for universal pre-K. Overall, however, as described above, the Campaign saw substantial and sustained increases for pre-K funding over the course of its existence.

In this section, we'll unpack some strategies the Campaign used to advance its goals in a divided and polarized state.

The Effective Strategies

Making pre-K a gubernatorial issue. Rather than waiting to see who was elected governor in the 2014 and 2018 elections, the Campaign worked to get pre-K on the platform of every gubernatorial candidate. This involved a lot of legwork – including getting a Campaign representative at every in-person event held by every candidate – to ensure that someone in the audience was poised to ask a question about commitments to pre-K. This paid off when Governor Wolf came into office in 2015 with a pre-established commitment to expanding pre-K seats and funding, and expressions of support for increasing pre-K education funding by both 2018 gubernatorial candidates.⁹ The Wolf campaign touted the Governor's past and future support for pre-K on the website for his 2018 reelection campaign, stating: "Governor Wolf knows that we need our students to start early in order to get a head start in life. Since he's taken office, Governor Wolf has increased the number of children able to attend pre-kindergarten by 64%."

Providing political cover. The Campaign commissioned several public opinion polls and focus groups that established desire for expanded pre-K as a nonpartisan issue, ringing true for individuals regardless of voting preferences and demographics. This allowed the Campaign to effectively portray pre-K as a winning issue regardless of political party and allowed legislative champions to advocate for an issue that had few detractors.

Maintaining a commitment to earned media. The Pre-K for PA Campaign benefited in its early years from plenty of earned media. The Campaign's contribution to increases in state funding were seen as exciting, and they were readily covered by the press. In later years, however, press attention waned. Knowing it couldn't afford the amount of paid media it would need to match its earned media presence, the Campaign focused on letters to the editor and

⁹ Retrieved from https://www.pennlive.com/politics/2018/10/school_funding_is_an_area_wher.html.

op-eds, and developing research reports that regained earned media attention. According to internal tracking tools, from 2016-2021, there were 188 op-eds/letters to the editor and 177 articles connected to research/data releases, representing 26% and 24% of the media attention the Campaign garnered respectively. Each of the research reports was released in a press conference that generated significant media attention for both the Campaign and its latest data findings. The portion of media coverage related to op-eds and research varied by year, with the greatest portion for op-eds being 40% in 2016 and 43% for research reports in 2018. The reports garnering significant media coverage included The Case for Pre-K in PA, Workforce Readiness – The National Security Threat From Within, and Pre-K Key to Cutting Pennsylvania Prison Costs and Boosting School Success.

Sharing data at the local level. Even with these narrative and earned media strategies, the Campaign had an uphill battle convincing some legislators to allocate additional funding for pre-K. One unique way they targeted legislators was to show them data related to available pre-K seats and the unmet need, as tied to their own voting districts. This allowed legislators to better understand that the demand for pre-K was not just among other communities but present across their own voters.

Effectively prioritizing legislators. Each year, the Campaign maintained a list of legislators in the General Assembly to prioritize in their outreach, with member organizations assigned to each legislator. Data from the Campaign's legislative tracking tools shows that over 50% of prioritized legislators were visited more than once each year from 2015-2021. Through these meetings, advocates would invite legislators to visit a pre-K program in their district, bring along a pre-K parent or provider advocate, and/or provide factsheets about the need for pre-K in the legislator's district. Additionally, the Campaign was proactive with new legislators, regardless of their prior expressed interest in pre-K, and it made sure to set up an educational introduction meeting to talk about the need for pre-K in their specific districts.

At a Glance: History and Background of the ELPA Coalition¹⁰



The Pre-K for PA Campaign, launched in 2014, is comprised of nine organizations. Its goal is to increase access to, and the affordability of, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs. The Campaign was launched under the Early Learning Pennsylvania (ELPA) umbrella coalition. ELPA is self-defined as a “broad-based coalition that advocates for access to voluntary, high-quality early care and education and healthy development opportunities for all Pennsylvania children. ELPA’s public policy agenda focuses on five key components: pre-kindergarten, child care, home visitation, perinatal and child health, and early intervention.”

In 2019, Pre-K for PA campaign leadership felt there was a strategic opportunity around advocating for expanding access to, and improving the affordability of, child care in the state. After thinking through a variety of options, including integrating a child care ask into the Pre-K for PA campaign, they ultimately chose to create a new, but related campaign – Start Strong PA, focused explicitly on child care. Start Strong PA was included under the ELPA umbrella. This strategic decision proved fortunate as child care became a crisis issue during the COVID-19 pandemic [see case study about COVID-19 on page 18].

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Campaign Developments	Pre-K for PA launches					Complementary campaign, Start Strong PA, launches	Campaign adapts to COVID-19		
Additions to State Pre-K Funding	\$11.6M	\$26.7M	\$29.6M	\$30.6M	\$28.6M	\$29.5M	[\$9M in federal discretionary funds]	\$30.2M	\$79M

¹⁰ ELPA definition retrieved from: <https://earlylearningpa.org>.

Big Question

What can sustained financial support allow advocacy campaigns to achieve?

Before we go into what financial support allowed the Campaign to achieve, it's worth sharing what the actual grantmaking structure for the Campaign looked like, at least from its majority funder. While there were several funders of the Campaign, the Foundation provided the bulk of the funding. Grants were always multi-year in nature, and the Foundation was clear that while it couldn't make a 10-year funding commitment to the Campaign directly, it was willing to make a 10-year investment for early childhood advocacy. This allowed the Campaign to operate on an implicit assumption that if it continued to achieve success, it would be likely to be funded at some level.

Funding was not general operating support – rather, organizations were responsible for completing results, milestones, and activities (RMA) that they articulated in advance. However, the funding was flexible in nature, with the results able to be shifted when appropriate and adequate overhead funding for organizational needs, staffing, capacity-building, contractors, etc.

Originally the organizations were funded through one grantee who then funded the other Campaign members, but that approach blurred the lines of accountability and led to a perception that they were engaged in a “zero sum game” whereby some organizations would gain funding at another organization’s expense. Additionally, while the Campaign intended to follow a shared leadership model, it created a dynamic in which one organization was perceived to be the leader. After the first two years, funding was applied for, and awarded,



under a shared funding model in which each member organization received its own grant directly from the Foundation. This meant that while each organization received its own funds, the total pool of funding available for the Campaign was made clear in advance, and Campaign members were responsible for creating a shared workplan that made it clear how responsibilities and roles would be divided. This shift was intended to drive a level of accountability to shared outcomes while ensuring each organization remained ultimately accountable to the Foundation and to each other.

Here are some findings we'd like to share about what this robust and committed funding was able to accomplish.

Sustained financial support can build campaign infrastructure. With long-term and robust financial support, the Pre-K for PA Campaign was able to build infrastructure across several different areas:

- **Trust and relationships:** Without needing to run a campaign that was staffed as leanly as possible, the Campaign was able to adequately fund and support members' time for participation. This time – used to build relationships, have deep conversations (and arguments!) about strategy, and figure out how this group of organizations could best operate together – set the stage for a functional, long-term collaboration.
- **Staffing or consultant support:** The flexible funding model allowed the Campaign to flex staffing as needed over time. This sometimes included hiring staff and consultants unique to the Campaign (e.g. a campaign manager, a communications firm) and sometimes involved covering existing staff for robust time devoted to its work. This also allowed for less painful transitions; when major leadership transitions happened at member organizations, the Campaign as a whole was able to both cover outgoing roles and responsibilities and adequately onboard new staff (who were also able to continue to adequately support the Campaign's work with their dedicated funding).
- **Norms and procedures (e.g. clarity on decision-making process):** The Campaign maintained a consensus process for strategic decisions from the start, but norms and



procedures evolved over time to become more efficient. To circumvent rehashing arguments, leaders were primed for key decisions through prep work that was sent out in advance and conversations became more focused on specific decision points. As relationships and trust deepened, more reticent members asserted their viewpoints more readily and more dominant voices made space for differing perspectives. The Campaign also developed clear norms around

sending agendas in advance of meetings and circulating post-call notes that people were expected to review.

- **Systems (e.g. file sharing, data tracking tools):** Establishing systems took some trial and error to land on a platform that was satisfactory to capture campaign materials and documents in one, accessible place. The Campaign developed systems for tracking data about member activities, such as legislative visits and media coverage, along with guidelines for using the tracking tools, how often to enter data, and what data to enter. For instance, the legislative tracking tool evolved to include data about which legislators were visited, by whom, what was discussed, and the level of support the legislator expressed.

Shared financial support can bolster accountability. In the early years of the Campaign, while the partnering advocacy organizations were still building internal trust, relationships, and credibility, there were some issues with accountability. While some member organizations had internal cultures that were very deliverable-focused, others had a more relaxed sense of what was necessary. The lack of one overarching workplan complicated this dynamic, with no clear ability for the Campaign’s leadership to say, “this is what was committed to.” With the shift to a shared funding model that articulated results, milestones, and activities (RMAs) each organization was supposed to meet, a clear accountability mechanism was built directly into the grant. This provided two main arms of accountability; first, leaders were able to track progress against these RMAs and, secondly, meeting the RMAs was tied to future funding. While developing the RMAs took considerable effort and upfront legwork, they ensured that members had a clear sense of their responsibilities and contributions to the overall goals.

A multi-year commitment can clarify outcomes and the path to outcome achievement. The Campaign took advantage of its need to create a coordinated workplan for funding to ensure alignment on goals and strategies. Typically, grant funding was awarded for two or three years at a time. This timeframe was seen as sufficient for allowing the advocates to balance between immediate and medium-term goals and to have honest conversations about what strategic shifts were most likely to get them there. Workplans always took into account political structure; for example, activities before a gubernatorial election year were different than those during and those the year after, with the Campaign adapting both its goals and its strategies to account for those desired outcomes.

Sustained financial support can strengthen funder-advocate relationships. Within each grant cycle, the advocates and funders alike had to proactively communicate. There was little concern that changes would lead to a cut-off of funding because the Foundation had already committed money through the grant’s lifecycle. This allowed the foundation and advocates to set aside some traditional power dynamics and have more frank conversations around strategy.

Sustained financial support can allow for better meeting of internal and external emergent needs. Like many funders, William Penn Foundation allowed greater flexibility in the use of grant funds in light of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The Campaign almost immediately shifted its strategies into heavy advocacy focused on stabilizing the early childhood sector. It was able to do this by shifting its funding towards emergent needs. For example, it quickly pivoted to virtual visits with legislators and mobilizing advocates to contact their representatives through action alerts.



Key Lessons

While this report speaks specifically to the Pre-K for PA Campaign, there are a number of lessons that we believe are broadly applicable to other situations. We have pulled out these lessons for the benefit of those involved in advocacy efforts, including those working to enact policy and systems-change in polarized states, funders providing advocates with the long-term and robust funding they need to make a difference and evaluators of these efforts.

Lessons for Advocates

- **Invest time early on to build trust and establish campaign infrastructure.** Early efforts to build relationships among campaign members and create transparency and accountability can pay dividends in the long run. Establishing campaign infrastructure can take some trial and error, but it lays the groundwork to seize unexpected opportunities when they arise.
- **Adapt strategies to changing conditions.** To generate media coverage, Pre-K for PA pivoted to op-eds and releasing research reports. The Campaign also adapted its strategies based on the electoral cycle, such as by educating newly elected officials and committee chairs about early childhood education issues.
- **Ensure campaigns working towards distinct goals in the same sector complement each other.** The early success of Pre-K for PA led to the launch of Start Strong PA to advocate for expanded child care and built on the infrastructure of Pre-K for PA. However, there were challenges early on in clearly communicating the difference and value of each campaign and ensuring the campaigns were not competing against one another for public funding.
- **Be prepared to play defense.** In some years of economic uncertainty, like 2020, campaigns may have to switch to defending against funding cuts instead of funding wins. This can be especially important to ensure federal funds are not used to reduce state investments.

Lessons for Funders

- **Building consensus across members takes time and trust.** It takes time and work to become a well-oiled machine and requires funding to develop the coalition and establish readiness. Fewer outcomes may be apparent in early years as a campaign develops, significant wins can take time, and overall gains can ebb and flow from year to year.
- **Shared grant funding can improve strategic clarity and accountability.** Developing a shared funding model can require more up-front work to establish workplans, but it ensures members have a clear understanding of their piece of the collective work.
- **Build longer-term board commitment by setting realistic goals early on and demonstrating success.** Advocacy is a long game that requires many years of commitment to bring about systems change. Early advocacy wins can make the case for the return on investment of campaign funds when specific and achievable goals are developed and met in the first few years.
- **Adaptation and responsive capability have to be in place before they are needed.** It is often impossible to predict when a significant need or opportunity will emerge. A funder that has supported long-term infrastructure building for its fields of interest will be more efficiently and effectively able to respond in these times than if it tries to build in the moment.

Lessons for Evaluators

- **Commit to meeting the advocates where they are.** Evaluators will need to engage advocates to understand what types of learning will most benefit their work at any given time, as campaign needs will change. Evaluators will need to reflect on their own role and gather feedback proactively about how they can support learning.
- **Commit to delivering value to both the funding partner and the advocates.** Evaluators will need to be clear about and stick to their own values as well as be transparent about their dual roles in supporting both funder and campaign learning and how those two roles will be balanced throughout the evaluation.

Capacity Case Study: Start Strong PA's Response to COVID



Pre-K for PA has worked since its launch in 2014 to increase access to and the affordability of high-quality pre-K, and the complementary Start Strong PA campaign was launched in 2019 to explicitly focus on increasing access to and the affordability of high-quality child care. When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in early 2020 and child care came to the fore, campaign leaders had a strong infrastructure in place from years of previous work to respond to the child care crisis. In March of 2020, Governor Wolf ordered the statewide shutdown of non-essential businesses, including most child care providers. Campaign leaders made a strategic decision to shift their advocacy focus to child care in response to the unprecedented crisis the sector faced in 2020. The Campaign immediately shifted from its original budget asks to focus on utilizing the federal relief funding allocated to the state in the CARES Act that was passed on March 27, 2020 and preserving state funds. In 2020, the state allocated \$116 million of discretionary funding in the CARES Act to stabilize child care, in addition to receiving \$106 million through the Child Care and Development Block Grant, for a total of \$222 million in CARES Act funds going to programs from June to October 2020.¹¹

The Start Strong PA campaign's ability to quickly adapt its approach to the unique challenges presented by COVID-19 was enabled by the infrastructure, working relationships, and reputations that took years to build.

Among the most important enablers of the successful reaction were:

- **Streamlining decision-making and leveraging existing structures and relationships.** Leaders began meeting much more frequently to respond quickly to new developments, share information as it was released, and make decisions. The existing committee structure was used to deploy new strategies rapidly without needing to create any new structures. Relationships and trust were well-established among members from their years of work together.
- **Switching to virtual tactics.** Start Strong PA quickly adapted its advocacy work to virtual implementation. In the aftermath of the shutdown, Campaign members reported a smooth transition to getting on the calendars of lawmakers for virtual meetings. The webinars the Campaign hosted were well attended by providers and demonstrated a collective need in the sector.

¹¹ <https://startstrongpa.org/take-action/federal-child-care-relief-the-american-rescue-plan>.

- **Leveraging the increased focus on child care.** Start Strong PA leveraged media focus on the child care crisis to earn media. The Campaign secured earned media through press events and opinion pieces and established itself as a source of expertise for reporters. It engaged advocates through email and social media and connected reporters to providers for coverage. Both traditional media and social media coverage spiked in the spring of 2020 as child care centers closed. In 2021, the Campaign highlighted child care providers' struggles with staffing shortages and its effects, but found it increasingly challenging to mobilize child care providers as advocates because many of them were overwhelmed by staffing shortages.
- **Framing child care as a bipartisan issue.** Start Strong PA cultivated Democrats and Republicans as champions and built bipartisan support each year. As the child care crisis worsened throughout 2020 and 2021, the Campaign continued to work with elected officials in both parties to get relief directed to child care providers.
- **Developing clear and reasonable funding asks.** The Campaign's leaders cited the experience and expertise of those involved as crucial to making informed decisions about what to ask for from legislators and the Governor's office. Their asks were ambitious and in competition with other priorities for funding but were reasonable. The Campaign received feedback from lawmakers and their staff that the specificity of its asks for relief funding with clear justification helped them make the case.
- **Flexibility and support from funders.** The Campaign's leaders felt it was vital to have the flexibility to respond quickly with the support of funders to adapt as needed. Funders proactively communicated with them and provided additional funding to stabilize the sector outside of the Campaign's efforts. For instance, the Foundation helped fund the Philadelphia Emergency Fund for Stabilization of Early Education, which awarded a total of \$8.3 million in grant awards to 416 child care providers, early intervention, and home visiting services to weather the COVID-19 pandemic.¹²
- **Using the Foundation's own voice.** Foundation staff publicly supported the child care sector in the media through op-eds by highlighting the existing challenges the sector faced that were exacerbated by the pandemic¹³ and advocating for federal investment.¹⁴

¹² Retrieved from <https://www.reinvestment.com/grants/pefsee/>.

¹³ <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/childcare-coronavirus-funding-daycare-programs-20200422.html>.

¹⁴ <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/biden-childcare-plan-american-families-philadelphia-pre-k-20210913.html>.

Appendix A: Methodology

This report draws on data and analysis conducted over the eight years TCC Group served as the embedded evaluator for the Campaign as well as new qualitative and quantitative analysis conducted for this report. Data sources include but are not limited to:

Theory of change: The development of a theory of change outlining campaign strategies, expected short- and medium-term outcomes, and impact.

Annual survey of campaign members: The administration of an online survey to all members to understand overall perceptions of the Campaign's work, context, and changes over time.

Campaign tracking tools: Online databases tracking activities and progress, including meetings with legislators, media presence, and mobilization activities.

Policy reviews: Periodic review of policies relevant to the Campaign, including the Governor's budget proposal and approved state budgets.

Meeting observations: Observations of committee meetings to understand strategies and key decision-making points.

Interviews with campaign members, leaders, and foundation staff: Interviews with campaign leadership, members, and staff at WPF to understand strategy, advantages and challenges of funding an advocacy coalition, and the impact of the Campaign and future work.

Ad hoc analyses: As needed, TCC Group has conducted analyses to allow for a deeper understanding about specific aspects of the Campaign's work, including bellwether interviews, interviews with former legislators, social media analysis, and after-action reviews.

Four-part inferential quantitative analysis: To evaluate the Pre-K for PA Campaign and draw inferences on its causal impact, four different quantitative analyses were employed. First, a trend analysis was conducted to map and analyze the changes in state funding for Pre-K Counts and Head Start before and after the Campaign was launched. Second, a pre-post analysis was conducted to assess if there was any association between campaign activity and spending levels by measuring pre-K spending before and after the launch of the Campaign. The statistical analysis included conducting a Welch two-sample t-test and a univariate regression analysis using the R programming language, version [4.1.2]. Third, the study incorporated the effect of K-12 spending as a possible confounding variable through a multivariate regression analysis. Finally, a difference-in-difference design was employed to

isolate the causal impact of the Campaign on pre-K spending in Pennsylvania. The regression model used for this analysis accounted for unchanging variables across states and years (state and year fixed effects) to compare pre-K spending in the treatment state Pennsylvania and a comparison state (Ohio) in the pre-and post-campaign period.

The identification process of the comparison state was twofold. First was the satisfaction of the parallel trend assumption, which asserts that the trend in the outcome variable of interest for the treatment group and the comparison group would have been the same in the absence of the treatment. If this assumption holds, then any difference in the outcome for the treatment group and the comparison group after the intervention can be more confidently attributed to the treatment. Also, a strict criterion was used to ensure the comparability of the comparison group to the treatment group in relevant characteristics, such as population of children aged three or four, geographic proximity, demographic composition, political affiliation, K-12 spending trends, and the presence of other public pre-K advocacy campaigns. Ohio was the comparison state identified through this process.

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About TCC Group

TCC Group collaborates with leaders to solve complex social problems. As a certified B Corporation and with nearly 40 years of experience as a mission-driven firm, TCC Group partners with foundations, nonprofits, and companies to propel positive social change through strategy, capacity building, initiative design, strategic communication, management, and evaluation. We design and implement solutions for social impact by immersing ourselves in interconnected communities and systems, co-creating innovative and effective processes, and applying and sharing our experience with the field.

About the William Penn Foundation

The William Penn Foundation, founded in 1945 by Otto and Phoebe Haas, is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through efforts that increase educational opportunities for children from low-income families, ensure a sustainable environment, foster creativity that enhances civic life, and advance philanthropy in the Philadelphia region. Since inception, the Foundation has made nearly 10,000 grants totaling over \$1.6 billion.



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