



# Building the Early Childhood Movement in Ohio

## *Why & How Groundwork Ohio is Engaging Key Audiences*

Groundwork Ohio recognizes that the early childhood movement touches many aspects of society. As we consider how we are *Laying the Groundwork for Impact*, all of our strategies rely on engaging with a broad range of audiences that can drive systemic change—from policymakers to parents. We seek to connect people and organizations around the state to build unique coalitions of diverse stakeholders who share early childhood policy as a priority. We use innovative tactics and relevant messaging that is tailored for each audience.

### HERE'S HOW WE WORK WITH OUR KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS:



## State Policymakers

**IMPORTANCE:** State policymakers are Groundwork's primary audience. They are essential partners in creating and implementing policies that support early childhood development. Their decisions directly impact funding, regulations, and the overall framework for early childhood programs across the state.

### WHAT WE DO:

- **Policy Advocacy:** Groundwork works closely with state legislators and officials to advocate for policies that promote high-quality early childhood education, health, and family support services.
- **Budget Allocation:** Collaborating with policymakers helps secure state investments in early childhood programs, ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to meet the needs of young children and their families.
- **Legislative Support:** We build legislative champions who can advance public conversations and policies that address systemic barriers.

### KEY TACTICS:

- **Regular Briefings, Reports and Communications:** By providing state policymakers with up-to-date research, data, and analysis on the challenges faced by young children and families, we impact the solutions derived for these challenges.
- **Coalition Building:** Forming coalitions with other advocacy groups presents a united front and amplifies the message.
- **Legislative Engagement:** We meet directly with policymakers in Columbus and/or their district and support organized visits with early childhood stakeholders and programs to give policymakers a firsthand view of the issues and successes within their district.



## Business Leaders

**IMPORTANCE:** Business leaders are influential in advocating for early childhood investments as a critical component of workforce development and economic growth. Their support highlights the long-term benefits of investing in early childhood programs as well as the short-term benefits of investing in parents/caregivers (i.e. the workforce of today).

### WHAT WE DO:

- **Policy and Awareness:** Groundwork supports business leaders to help raise awareness about the importance of early childhood development among their peers, policymakers, and the broader community.
- **Funding and Influence:** Many business leaders provide financial support to early childhood partners or use their position to influence policymakers, which is unique from other audiences Groundwork engages. Groundwork can elevate these relationships and leverage this influence to advance shared objectives.
- **Workplace Policies:** Businesses can create private solutions for kids and families while advocating for public solutions. When they do so, they set examples for broader systemic changes that benefit families and children. Groundwork can learn from these examples and elevate influential champions to inform policy development and influence policymakers.

### KEY TACTICS:

- **Roundtable Discussions:** We co-host events and roundtable discussions with state and local business leaders to identify common goals and strategies for early childhood advocacy.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** By supporting the development of public-private partnerships, we can leverage state opportunities to fund and support early childhood initiatives—gleaning information from these partnerships to inform future state policy.
- **Media Campaigns:** Collaborating with businesses on media campaigns advances the business case for investments in early childhood and highlights the importance of child care and other workforce policies.
- **Peer-to-Peer Coalition Recruitment:** We use engaged business leaders and organizations to recruit new business leaders to the coalition using traditional and paid digital strategies.



## Families

**IMPORTANCE:** Families are at the heart of the early childhood system. Their experiences, needs, and challenges are essential in shaping effective early childhood policies and programs. Engaging families ensures that the early childhood system is supportive, accessible, and responsive.

### WHAT WE DO:

- **Family Engagement:** Groundwork actively involves families in policy discussions and the decision-making processes to ensure their perspectives and needs are central to early childhood policy development.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Families are empowered to advocate for increased investments and early childhood policy change, raising awareness about the importance of these issues among policymakers and the community.
- **Program Feedback:** By gathering feedback from families,

we can continuously improve early childhood programs to better meet the needs of children and parents, ensuring policies are effective and family-friendly.

### KEY TACTICS:

- **Surveys and Feedback Forms:** By using surveys, polling and feedback tools, we gather detailed information from families about their needs and experiences.
- **Family Action Network:** We engage Ohio families as experts in their own lives in coalition with one another to advance policies that meet their needs.



## Families

### KEY TACTICS, CONTINUED:

- **Leadership Training:** Groundwork provides leadership and advocacy training to families that empower them to take active roles in early childhood advocacy.
- **Listening Sessions:** We engage in deep listening sessions with families based on a certain policy issues (i.e. infant mortality, experiences with asthma) to seek targeted feedback and stories. We also engage with families more broadly to allow them to share what issues are creating the most barriers to realizing their hopes and dreams for their families.
- **Family Advisory Council:** Our Family Advisory Council will provide ongoing input and guidance on early childhood policies and programs, while also informing programming for Groundwork's Family Action Network.
- **Storytelling Campaigns:** By developing print and digital storytelling campaigns, we feature family experiences to humanize and highlight the importance of early childhood policies.



## Local Early Childhood Experts, Professionals and Community Leaders

**IMPORTANCE:** Local early childhood experts and community leaders have direct knowledge and experience working with children and families in diverse communities across Ohio. Their insights are invaluable in shaping effective and responsive early childhood policies and programs.

### WHAT WE DO:

- **Program Implementation:** These partners help design, implement, and evaluate early childhood programs, ensuring they meet the needs of local communities and adhere to best practices. We engage professionals and leaders that are implementing state policies daily to inform of our policy agenda and ensure it supports the needs of families and the professionals that serve them.
- **Community Engagement:** Community leaders facilitate engagement with families and professionals, providing a bridge between Groundwork and the communities it serves. We work with them to help gather input and feedback to inform policy decisions.
- **Advocacy and Representation:** By representing diverse community voices, local experts and leaders advocate for access to early childhood services and work to address disparities in education and health outcomes. Groundwork leverages these natural advocates and experts as foundational members of the early childhood movement.
- **Advocacy Leadership Training:** Providing leadership training to early childhood professionals (through Groundwork's Early Childhood Fellowship) empowers them to take active roles in local and state early childhood advocacy.

### KEY TACTICS:

- **Community Engagement:** We meet and convene in local communities to keep a strong feedback loop on the challenges and opportunities in the community. Working with local experts and community leaders allows us to gather insight and feedback on early childhood policies at the state level.
- **Advisory Councils:** Groundwork's Advisory Councils on Early Learning and Maternal and Young Child Health consist of dedicated local experts to provide ongoing guidance and support for policy initiatives.
- **Community Listening Sessions & Events:** We organize events to listen to and educate community leaders about the importance of early childhood and how they can advocate for better policies.



## Local Elected Leaders

**IMPORTANCE:** Local elected leaders play a crucial role in shaping community-specific early childhood policies and allocating resources for early childhood initiatives. Their engagement and support can drive significant improvements in local early childhood programming.

### WHAT WE DO:

- **Policy Advocacy:** Groundwork works with local elected officials to advocate for policies that improve early childhood services, ensuring Ohio's youngest remain a priority at the local level.
- **Community Investment:** Collaborating with local leaders helps secure funding and resources for early childhood programs, directly benefiting families and children.
- **Legislative Support:** We identify and support local champions who can advance early childhood policies and initiatives that address specific community needs and barriers.

### KEY TACTICS:

- **Community Engagement:** We support the relationships of local early childhood stakeholders and elected officials.
- **Policy Briefs:** By providing local elected leaders with policy briefs and research, we help inform their decision making and their ability to impact and implement local policies and investments.
- **Convene:** With the support of associations of local elected officials, we convene cohorts of peer groups to engage in a learning community where we support their growth in becoming early childhood leaders. We recognize local leaders and elevate them in our programming as they grow in this space.



## Women

**IMPORTANCE:** Women—particularly those caring for young children, and regardless of if they currently benefit from publicly funded programs—provide invaluable insights and firsthand experiences. Their involvement ensures that policies and programs are responsive to their needs and realities. Organizations and leaders that have advanced gender equity are ripe to convene and build the advocacy infrastructure to advance early childhood policy.

### WHAT WE DO:

- **Community Engagement:** Groundwork will actively engage women in conversations and decision-making processes to ensure their voices are heard and their experiences inform early childhood policy development.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Women are empowered to advocate for the needs of their children and the needs of other women, raising awareness about critical issues and influencing policymakers.
- **Program Development:** By involving women in the design and implementation of early childhood policy, we ensure that these initiatives meet the needs of families and leverage the unique inadequate early childhood policy has on gender equity issues through coalitions focused on broader agendas responsive to the needs of women.

### KEY TACTICS:

- **Collaborative Campaigns:** We partner with women's organizations on grassroots communication campaigns that highlight the intersection of early childhood policies and gender equity to recruit organizational and individual coalition members.
- **Polling:** We organize focus groups to collect data and hear directly from women about their challenges and needs.
- **Engage with Business Groups:** By working at the intersection of business engagement and women-focused organizations, we engage working women to contribute to and fight for solutions that overcome workforce barriers (i.e. child care access).

