

For Immediate Release

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Wood River Early Learning Collaborative Announces Strategic Action Plan

July 5, 2023—Ketchum, ID—The Wood River Women’s Foundation (WRWF), in conjunction with the Idaho Association for Education of Young Children (IAEYC), is pleased to announce the Wood River Early Learning Collaborative’s (WRELC) new Strategic Action Plan. The plan sets forth a bold vision for Blaine County’s young children by zeroing in on closing the gap to accessing quality, affordable childcare, and early learning opportunities; thereby creating a pathway for a successful transition into K-12 classrooms.

The [Wood River Early Learning Collaborative](#) was established using \$200,000 in seed funding from the WRWF’s inaugural two-year Focus Grant to the IAEYC. Convened in the fall of 2022, the WRELC comprises more than a dozen of Blaine County’s most influential and trusted leaders from the nonprofit sector, multiple libraries, the Blaine County School District, The Hunger Coalition, St. Luke’s Center for Community Health, The Advocates, YMCA and other collaborators.

In November 2022, the WRELC Advisory Council released a survey-based [Needs Assessment](#) documenting the many struggles faced by working parents and childcare providers in Blaine County.

“Not surprisingly, affordable childcare is in very short supply and in great demand, as evidenced by preschool programs waiting lists,” said Louisa Moats, WRWF Focus Grant Co-Chair and nationally recognized early-learning and education expert. “Furthermore, about half of our children are entering kindergarten not ready to learn, according to district standards and guidelines.”

In the spring of 2023, the WRELC developed its Strategic Action Plan in direct response to the Needs Assessment. The plan specifies numerous steps and strategies to ensure the Collaborative is meeting the needs of Blaine County’s youngest learners and their caretakers.

Some priorities identified in the Strategic Action Plan include hosting bilingual training sessions on child development at public schools and libraries; helping early-learning centers become licensed and procure funding to retain valuable staff members, expand

their seat capacity, and reduce waitlist time; implementing screening programs to identify children with learning differences at younger ages; and promoting employment policies to help working caregivers balance childcare with job duties.

“With a multi-pronged approach, the WRELC will be able to make a meaningful difference in the lives of young children,” Moats said of the plan.

The four pillars guiding the Collaborative as it navigates the next three years are:

1. Community-wide commitment to healthy child development
2. Access to quality services for all children and families
3. Neighborhoods where families can thrive
4. Policies that support and are responsive to families

“These pillars really focus on creating more buy-in and visibility in the community through education and engagement at appropriate community events,” said Kathryn Ivers, Project Director, Wood River Early Learning Collaborative. “The Collaborative will be educating families about positive steps that can be taken to support self-esteem, patience, teamwork, partnerships, policies and school readiness.” Read more about the Strategic Action Plan [here](#).

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About the Wood River Valley Early Learning Collaborative:

In its first year, the WRELC hired Kathryn Ivers as Project Director; the Advisory Council and membership were established; and surveys were conducted to better understand the struggles faced by working parents and childcare providers. To learn more about the WRELC please visit wrelc.org

About the Wood River Women’s Foundation:

Since its founding in 2005, the WRWF has collectively invested more than \$3.4 million in Blaine County nonprofits focused on the environment, health, recreation, the arts and social services. To date, the WRWF awarded more than \$500K of grants to organizations addressing education on all grade levels throughout the Wood River Valley. For more information, visit www.woodriverwomensfoundation.org.

About Idaho AEYC:

Since 2019, Idaho AEYC has been working with communities across the state to build a connective system of high-quality, early learning opportunities for Idaho’s youngest learners. Using a local collaborative model, leaders and stakeholders come together to improve access and affordability to quality care and early education to ensure our children are school-ready. To learn more, visit www.idahoaeyc.org.