

Identify the True Cost of Child Care in Your State!

Join Our New State Cost Modeling Cohort

April 2024 | Early and Middle Childhood

Do you ever wish you had a crystal ball that showed you how much it would cost to provide high-quality care for children ages 0–13 in your state? Do you want to use this information to guide strategic decisions for supporting children and funding the programs they need? Do you want to gain the skills, knowledge, and capacity to identify these costs yourself to better serve children statewide? Then we invite you to join [Children's Funding Project's](#) new national cohort designed to support state partners in building their own cost modeling capacity and expertise.

What Is a Cost Model?

A [cost model](#) is a powerful data-driven tool that allows you to understand the *true* cost of a program or service and how that cost changes under different scenarios. Cost modeling empowers state leaders and advocates to put an accurate price tag on how much funding your state needs to support children and ensure the ongoing sustainability of programs. It also allows you to discern the cost and equity impacts of policy or programmatic decisions and how best to invest your state's dollars to support children and families through high-quality services.

Who Should Participate?

We are seeking up to **six state partners** interested in building their cost modeling expertise by learning the following skills:

- Creating dynamic, data-driven, and flexible cost model tools.
- Maintaining and updating the cost model tool to ensure longevity.
- Incorporating data from interviews, surveys, and focus groups into a cost model.
- Understanding the true cost to implement, maintain, and/or expand child care services in a state.
- Assessing the cost and equity impact of different policy options or funding decisions.



The cohort will serve as a learning community to help state leaders and advocates build their own cost model through training from our team and collaboration with fellow cohort members. We encourage the following groups and entities to apply:

- **State budget holders** who want to understand how much money their state should invest in child care programs to ensure equitable access to high-quality services.
- State-based **nonprofit organizations** that advocate on behalf of kids, especially those that function as intermediaries, coalitions, or networks that serve and/or organize other nonprofit groups or providers.
- **State government agencies** that are responsible for managing comprehensive programs and services for children and youth.

Apply Today!

To learn more or apply to join our state cost modeling cohort, complete our [online application](#). Applications are due by **May 24**, and we will review them in the order in which we receive them. Participants accepted into the cohort will prepare a functional cost model for their state. Please note: For this initial cohort, partners will model the cost of **child care programs in their state that serve children ages 0–13**. We will offer future cost modeling cohorts focused on other programs, services, and ages.

Questions? Contact kate@childrensfundingproject.org.

Participants will begin working with our team in July 2024, under the direction of our [Senior Manager for Cost Modeling Kate Ritter](#). Ritter has eight years of experience creating comprehensive early childhood system cost models and is a [recognized expert](#) in the field of cost modeling. Cohort participants will spend one year learning the skills necessary to build and maintain their cost models. At the end of the year, participants who successfully complete the process will have a functional cost model for their state. (To see a sample cost model, view the [Illinois Cost Model for Early Childhood Education and Care Services](#).) State partners that participate in the cohort also will receive priority consideration for [fiscal mapping](#) and/or [revenue generation](#) support in subsequent years.

Partners can choose to model the cost of **child care centers, family child care homes, community-based preschool, and/or other similar types of child care programs in their state that serve children ages 0–13.** (Please note: Children’s Funding Project will offer future cost modeling cohorts focused on other programs, services, and ages.)

Participant Requirements

To qualify for the cohort, state partners must commit to the following:

- Designate a staff member to serve as the primary contact for the project. The staff member should have a working knowledge of child care-related policies and funding streams in the state; basic Microsoft Excel skills (including the ability to use functions such as SUM, AVERAGE, ROUND, IF-THEN); and the ability to identify and investigate state regulations such as licensing standards, and public data such as wages from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- The designated staff member will participate for the full cohort timeline, which will run from **July 2024 to June 2025**.
- The designated person will be required to dedicate up to 10 hours per month for the following:
 - Attend mandatory monthly meetings (60–90 minutes) to learn the foundational skills of cost modeling.
 - Support data collection, cleaning, and analysis for their cost model(s).
 - Build a cost model tool(s) in Excel.
 - Participate in **quarterly peer learning meetings (one hour per meeting)** to

collaborate with fellow cohort participants, Children’s Funding Project staff, and our partners. The purpose of the cohort is to allow participants to benefit from shared learning experiences. Therefore, it is essential that the designated staff member attend every cohort meeting.

- Attend Children’s Funding Project’s online office hours, as needed, for additional help or to work through problems.
- State partners agree to learn the cost modeling process, follow our standardized methodology during their time in the cohort, and provide feedback about our tools and process to inform future improvements. We will prioritize applicants who are committed to maintaining their state’s cost model after they conclude their training with us.
- State partners will allow Children’s Funding Project to publish a report that outlines different state approaches and lessons learned from this inaugural cost model cohort.

Application Instructions

- To join the cohort, prospective participants should complete our [online application](#) by **Friday, May 24**. The application requests responses to the following topics:
 - A. Experience, Need, and Barriers:** Summarize your state’s experience, if any, with child- and youth-focused cost modeling. Where relevant, identify the programs or services included in previous cost models and the benefits and/or limitations of prior cost modeling efforts. Additionally, please describe why your state needs a cost model now and what you hope to achieve by participating in our cohort. Be sure to note factors that might enhance or limit your ability to collect data from direct service providers, state agencies, budget offices, and/or legislative finance offices.
 - B. Cost Model Goal Statement:** Briefly describe the overall goals the cost model will help you accomplish. Please take the time to build a clear, specific, and measurable goal statement that includes **the program you would like to cost model, the ages the program serves, and what you aim to accomplish by understanding the true cost of that program**. Preference will be given to states that are interested in using cost modeling as part of a plan to build sustainable public funding for children in their state. Please explain your thoughts about how you will support

the cost model in this first year and then how you plan to sustain the cost model in the future.

- C. Partners and Staffing:** Identify the lead organization and potential partners who will support the cost modeling work, help coordinate data collection, and build internal capacity to maintain and promote the use of the cost model within the state. We are particularly interested in applications from state partners that include children’s cabinets, state agencies, legislative financing offices, intermediaries, universities, and/or advocacy groups. The lead organization must designate **at least one staff person** to serve as the primary contact for the project. Please specify if the partners or staff participated directly in prior cost modeling efforts.
- D. Acknowledgments:** Acknowledge that, if selected, you and your team will agree to the Participant Requirements outlined previously.

- E. Letter of Support (optional):** Submit any letters of support from proposed partners and other key groups.

Decision Notification Timeline

We will review applications on a rolling basis in the order in which we receive them. We will notify all applicants about our final selections no later than Friday, June 7. For additional information or questions, please contact kate@childrensfundingproject.org.




Children’s Funding Project is a nonprofit social impact organization that helps communities, states, and Native nations expand equitable opportunities for children and youth through strategic public financing. childrensfundingproject.org

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