



2022-2025



COLORADO

STRATEGIC PLAN

Connected Families. Healthy Kids. Prepared for Success.

VISION

Connected families. Healthy kids. Prepared for success.

MISSION

Reach Out and Read Colorado gives young children a foundation for success by incorporating books into standard pediatric care and encouraging families to read aloud together.

METHODOLOGY

Reach Out and Read Colorado empowers health care providers to talk with families and caregivers of young children about the importance of reading together every day. At well-child visits from birth to age five, nearly one thousand “doses” of early literacy - through books, resources, and other supports - are dispensed by pediatric healthcare professionals across the state. With an emphasis on diversity and those experiencing poverty, we help families and communities encourage healthy relationships that make time for reading, so children can enter kindergarten prepared to thrive.



“I had a well check up for a 3 year old patient and I gave her the book My Friends / Mis Amigos. Immediately upon handing her the book and seeing the cover, she pointed to the picture and said “It’s me!!!” I was so touched to be able to experience that with her, and being able to witness that connection between herself and the book. Thanks to the curated list, we have continued to add more and more DEI books. All in all, I wanted to say thank you for helping us in being able to build even deeper connections with our patients using mirrors and windows, and having quality DEI books makes it possible.”

**ASHLEY FREDRICKSON, NP | KIDS FIRST PEDIATRICS
REACH OUT AND READ COLORADO PROVIDER ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Twenty-five years ago, Reach Out and Read Colorado began in a single pediatric clinic practice. Since then, the organization has continuously expanded by leveraging its critical community partnerships, earning the widespread support of generous community members and partners who share our vision.

As a member of a national network of affiliates, Reach Out and Read Colorado began by building strong relationships with statewide pediatric healthcare provider partners who deliver program implementation with fidelity that is consistently measured among the highest quality in the country.

Reach Out and Read Colorado works to ensure that all Colorado children under six and their families are supported in the healthy interactions and early literacy skills they need to prepare them to thrive. We do this as a learning organization centered in DEI and a Whole Child approach, and rooted in a strong evidence base. We prioritize families who need help equitably accessing resources, and provide the training, guidance and tools necessary to help our provider partners successfully deliver the program at every well-child visit from birth to age five.

In 2022, we are proud to support more than 2,000 pediatric providers in 326 clinics, who deliver our program at more than 260,000 well-child visits annually. Our waitlist currently represents another 44,000 well-child visits across dozens of clinics, all willing and ready to offer the program as soon as we can activate and support them. All clinics now participate in a small program support fee, helping to strengthen long term sustainability as we prepare for further expansion.

In the past two years, we have doubled the number of interventions in a child's most critical first year of life by adding the "Back to Birth" program enhancement to every clinic across the state and are among the first Reach Out and Read affiliates to complete this expansion statewide.

In our next phase, our strategic partnerships will help Reach Out and Read Colorado further accelerate our growth trajectory, always prioritizing those who need support the most. We will make the final preparations needed to be ready to truly scale exponentially - in order to serve every child under six in the state.

Over the next three years, Reach Out and Read Colorado seeks to further expand our program with the ultimate goal of transforming standard pediatric care across the state by ensuring that ALL Colorado children under six and their families and caregivers receive the books, information, and support they need to build healthy, nurturing relationships and the early literacy skills children need in order to start kindergarten ready to learn, and ready to thrive.

We are well-positioned to build on the three pillars we defined in our successfully implemented prior strategic plan: Impact, Growth and Innovation. In doing so, we'll lay the remaining groundwork to bring Reach Out and Read to every single child in Colorado, from day one.

STATEMENT OF NEED

The first six years of a child's life are an irreplaceable window of opportunity, with Harvard researchers estimating that children's brains form up to 1 million new neural connections every second during this period, meaning as much as 90% of brain development is complete by age 5.¹

It is essential to establish strong foundations for learning, language development, and building the essential, nurturing relationships that are critical for wellbeing during early childhood. Unfortunately, too many children and families in Colorado are not receiving the supports that they need to thrive during this period. This lack (or shortcoming) shows up in assessments of children entering kindergarten. Analysis conducted by the Colorado Department of Education² found that almost 30% of Colorado kids did not have age-appropriate literacy skills upon entering kindergarten. Similarly, about 25% had social-emotional delays. The numbers are even higher for children who come from low-income families and those from historically underserved racial and ethnic groups, but the problem exists for children from all backgrounds.

The consequences for children who reach age six without foundational skills in language, literacy and social-emotional health echo across a lifetime, with kids who start behind consistently experiencing worse health, education, and economic self-sufficiency outcomes than their peers.³

Colorado children have one chance at building a strong foundation, and access to Reach Out and Read is an invaluable tool for helping them to make the most of it. There is powerful evidence that Reach Out and Read is highly effective in supporting healthy socio-emotional, language and literacy development for children under six, by encouraging caregivers to read aloud more frequently with their children. The American Academy of Pediatrics has endorsed the program as an essential component of primary care that builds children's resilience and supports safe, stable, and nurturing relationships.⁴ Multiple peer-reviewed studies affirm that children who receive Reach Out and Read are more likely to read aloud regularly with loved ones.

As a growing member of this powerful national program, Reach Out and Read Colorado is committed to identifying pathways to exponential growth, so that as many children as possible, regardless of their circumstances, can benefit from the program during this critical period. We are passionate about ensuring that this program becomes part of the standard for great pediatric care so that our vision of connected families and healthy kids prepared for success can be realized for all children under six years of age in Colorado.

1 devhcdc.wpengine.com/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture

2 cde.state.co.us/cdedepcom/cap4klegislativeannualreport

3 rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9144.html

4 publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/148/2/e2021052582/179805/preventing-childhood-toxic-stress-partnering-with

WHY BOOKS? Because there's a lot of power between those pages.

- The most important activity for building knowledge for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.
- Access to books is the single most important indicator of academic success.

WHY NOW? The earlier the intervention, the greater the benefit.

- A child's brain undergoes an amazing period of development from birth to three—producing 700 new neural connections every second.
- 90% of a child's brain develops before age five.

WHY PROVIDERS? Health care providers have consistent and early access to families & are a trusted source of health information.

- Making books a part of preventative visits allows health care providers to observe fine motor skills, language, literacy, and parent-child interactions, and providers guide parents with the information they need to develop healthy habits for daily reading aloud.
- The unique intersection between trusted expert (doctor/healthcare provider) and a child's first and best teacher (parents) allows for the critical dialogue and modeling that can lead to a strong family daily reading practice.

PROGRAM MODEL

Reach Out and Read Colorado's model is made up of three components: **1) a brand new, developmentally- and language-appropriate book, 2) anticipatory guidance shared with parents by a health care provider and 3) a literacy-rich clinic environment.**

Reach Out and Read Colorado prioritizes partnerships and health care providers who serve a high percentage of children and families living in poverty. Once a health care practice becomes a part of Reach Out and Read Colorado, the program is a lever that fundamentally changes the way providers conduct a well visit, bringing a cultural shift that benefits all children within that clinic location.

Reach Out and Read Colorado's work begins in the clinic waiting room, by providing a literacy-rich environment, utilizing gently used books for family members that reinforce provider messages about the importance of early literacy and benefits of reading aloud. Books are offered to siblings to support shared reading time for the whole family. In the exam room, providers utilize the new book given as a diagnostic tool, using it to help parents understand their child's developmental growth and the value that reading together provides in their child's development and eventually, school readiness. The shared responsibility of program implementation - anticipatory guidance from the provider and practiced by each family is as unique and diverse as this great state. Together, with more than 300 clinics, from the mountains to the plains, we are creating change and possibility for Colorado families.

EVIDENCE BASE

Research shows that when pediatricians promote literacy readiness according to the Reach Out and Read model, there is a significant effect on parental behavior and attitudes toward reading aloud, as well as improvements in the language scores of young children who participate. These effects have been found in ethnically and economically diverse families nationwide.

Research shows that families served by Reach Out and Read have more books in their homes, are more likely to read with their children, and have greater language development than those without access to the Reach Out and Read model.

More about key findings: www.reachoutandread.org/our-impact/reach-out-and-read-the-evidence

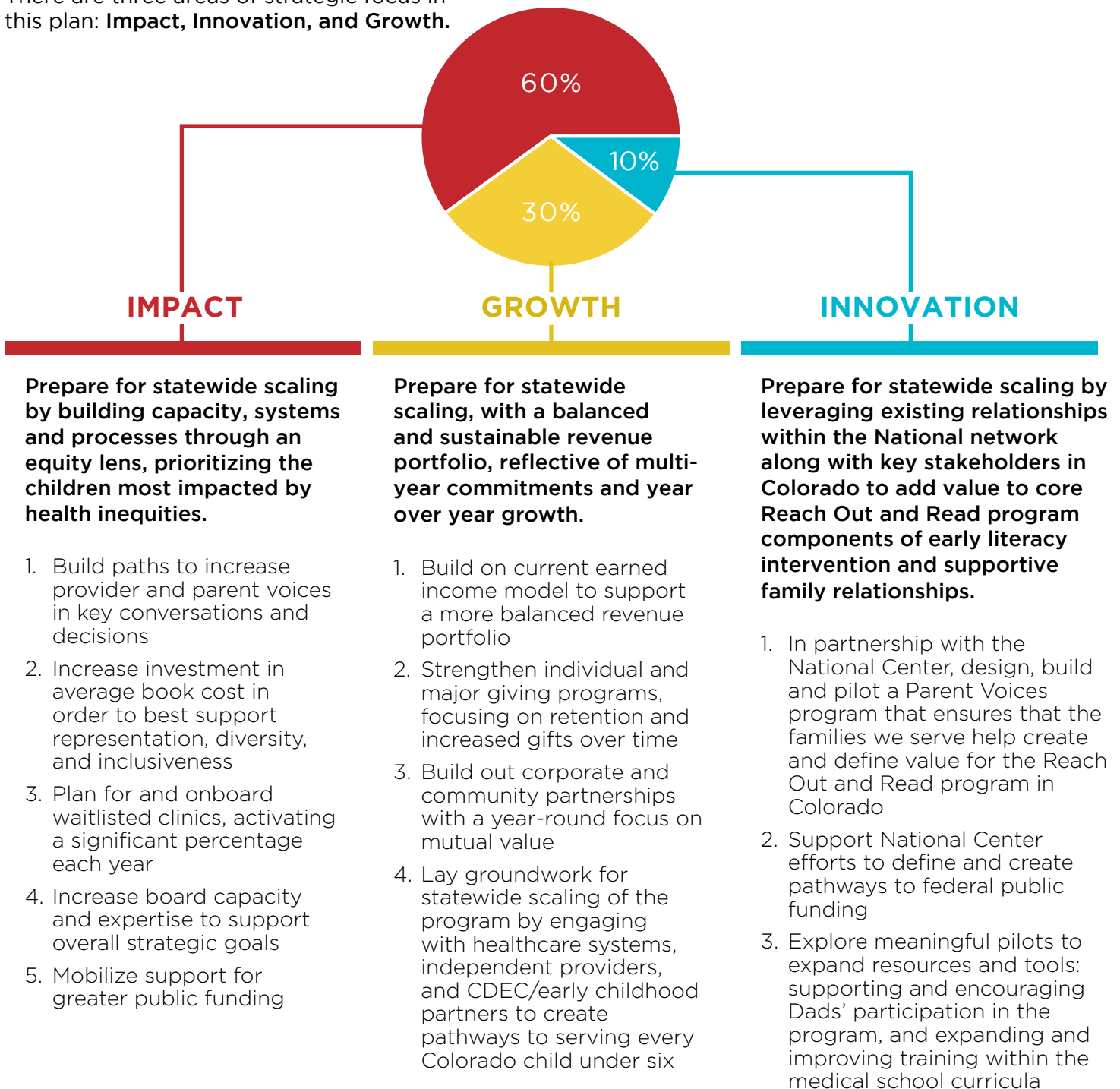
OUR NEXT CHAPTER

As we begin to move beyond the COVID-19 crisis, we look forward to expanding our program and deepening our impact through equitable practices that support our sites and provider partners as changemakers, leveraging the healthy caregiver-child and family relationships that are the cornerstone of early childhood success.

In partnership with our national network of affiliates and leadership, we stand on the shoulders of those who have implemented the program in millions of routine well-child visits over the years. Our program is proven, accessible, and completely scalable. Here’s how we’ll grow from 300,000 well-child visits in FY 2022-2023 to nearly 500,000 in the next several years.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

There are three areas of strategic focus in this plan: **Impact, Innovation, and Growth.**



IMPACT GOALS: Prepare for statewide scaling by building capacity, systems and processes through an equity lens, prioritizing the children most impacted by health inequities.

Our ambitious goal of serving ALL Colorado children under six will require us to be thoughtful about the ways we can offer, support and improve Reach Out and Read program implementation in order to provide the strongest possible value for the families we serve. That means inviting parents and caregivers to help us create that value by offering them ways and means to become stronger stakeholders. It means consistent year over year increases in our investment in high quality books that best represent and include the Windows and Mirrors framework of inclusion, and providing the training our partners need to support the consistent selection of books that represent a diverse community. It means creating space for a broader array of voices, expertise and supporters to help us grow sustainably.

- Build paths to increase provider and parent voices in key conversations and decisions
- Continue to increase investment in average book cost in order to best support representation, diversity, and inclusiveness
- Plan for and onboard waitlisted clinics, engaging them early and activating a significant percentage each year
- Increase board capacity and expertise to support overall strategic goals
- Engage with key stakeholders statewide to gather greater support for public funding

With a strong and aligned infrastructure in place, we're ready to expand on the work of the last several years in support of all Colorado kids.



GROWTH GOALS: Prepare for statewide scaling, with a balanced and sustainable revenue portfolio, reflective of multi-year commitments and year over year growth.

In order to serve all Colorado children under six years of age, we'll need to nearly triple in size and scale. This means we need to seek and build upon relationships both long-term and newly formed, that share our long view and our vision of transforming standard pediatric care to include early literacy and early healthy family relationship supports. Every donor, every partnership must collectively believe in our Statement of Need in order to scale and sustain it. Rather than building a revenue budget from “near zero” every year, we seek long-term, reliable commitments that enhance our ability to deliver an equitable, evidence-based intervention year after year, on a growth trajectory that will ultimately allow families everywhere in Colorado to benefit from Reach Out and Read and prepare their children to thrive.

- Build on current earned income model to support a more balanced revenue portfolio
- strengthen individual and major giving programs, focusing on retention and increased gifts over time
- Build out corporate and community partnerships with a year-round focus on mutual value
- Lay groundwork for statewide scaling of the program, with a goal of reaching every child under six in Colorado

As we expand, our provider partners' investment in Reach Out and Read will shift to a more equitable model that allows our legacy clinics with the highest need for support to continue to contribute at very modest levels, while “scaling partners,” whether housed within larger health systems, or as independent clinics, are positioned to invest at higher levels, understanding that the value that the Reach Out and Read program creates in their practices serves their own mission and desire to provide children and families the best possible tools and resources for healthy, happy children, ready to succeed in life.

As part of our wider community outreach, we'll seek the expansion of our local partnership networks, to ensure that Reach Out and Read Colorado is deeply embedded in communities across the state, and enjoys robust local investment and engagement.

Robust, statewide public support will be needed to complete our journey to serving all of Colorado's youngest children. As a program already thoroughly aligned with the [State of Colorado's Early Learning and Development Guidelines](#), we will work to earn long-term, baseline support for every child in Colorado from the time they are born until they're ready to start kindergarten.

INNOVATION GOALS: Prepare for statewide scaling by leveraging existing relationships within the National network along with key stakeholders in Colorado to add value to core Reach Out and Read program components of early literacy intervention and supportive family relationships.

The Reach Out and Read program is a long-proven, AAP-endorsed intervention that now starts from birth in Colorado. Innovation is not needed to make the core program better. Innovation is needed to leverage additional value from other aligned programs and resources that will help us efficiently support healthy daily reading habits and family relationships even more effectively. Innovation is also important to ensure that the program is responsive to the changing needs and preferences of caregivers of young children, including the growing demand for high quality representation of diverse characters, authors and illustrators in the program. We're strongly positioned to add this value, without sacrificing program quality or focus, thereby reducing the need for more costly, later interventions within educational systems and school structures.

- In partnership with the National Center, design, build and pilot a Parent Voices program that ensures that the families we serve help create and define value for the Reach Out and Read program in Colorado
- Support National Center efforts to define and create pathways to federal public funding
- Explore meaningful pilots to expand resources and tools that support and encourage daily participation in the program, especially with Dads, along with substantive enhancements to educational and training programs, within clinics and within the medical school curricula

There is tremendous strength and power in the national Reach Out and Read network of affiliates. Every tiny program improvement, whether in data capture, parent resources, or program delivery, is accessible to Reach Out and Read Colorado through this network of aligned partners. As we prepare for a new level of collaboration with our network colleagues, we will create the efficiencies and enhancements to the program and its delivery that will allow us to meet our transformative goal of achieving true scale across Colorado.

BUDGET

The investments we make over the next three years will position us to achieve the strategic goals in this plan. We are planning for consistent year over year expansion, focused on intentional, decisive growth where it provides the most value, positioning us for exponential growth in Colorado.

Diversifying our revenue is also critical to the success of this plan. Building on the success of our philanthropic fundraising, we will continue to refine and enhance our effectiveness in attracting investments from individuals and other partners, along with actively pursuing growth in public funding and earned income to ensure that Reach Out and Read Colorado has a balanced revenue portfolio capable of sustaining exponential growth by the end of the plan.

	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	3 Year Total
Program	\$1,439,300	\$1,675,425	\$1,925,308	\$5,040,033
Outreach & Fundraising	\$307,100	\$357,481	\$410,798	\$1,075,379
Administrative	\$105,450	\$122,750	\$141,057	\$369,257
TOTALS	\$1,850,000	\$2,153,503	\$2,474,689	\$6,478,192