



# The ECE Business Collaboratory

Strengthening Child Care Systems

## ECE Business Collaboratory Convening 2022: Agenda

**Wednesday, September 28th, 2022**

**7:30 – 8:30 AM** Registration & Breakfast

**8:30 – 9:00 AM** Welcoming Remarks

- Heidi Hagel Braid, Chief Program Officer, First Children's Finance
- Jerry Cutts, President/CEO, First Children's Finance
- Molly Sullivan, Director of National Initiatives, First Children's Finance

**9:00 – 10:00 AM** Keynote

- Natalie Cofield, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist, and Former Assistant Administrator for the Office of Women's Business Ownership, at the U.S. Small Business Administration

**10 – 10:45 AM** Taking a Stand for Child Care Sustainability and Supply: 2021 State Team Action Plans

- Louisiana
- Washington, D.C.

**10:45 – 11:00 AM** Break

**11:00 AM – 12:00 PM** Making Cost Modeling Meaningful: How to Leverage Fiscal Consulting for State Decision-making

- Katie Reed, Managing Director, Afton Partners
- Mitch Mraz, Director, Afton Partners
- Alejandra Garcia, Associate, Afton Partners
- Kate Ritter, Early Childhood Advisor, Children's Funding Project

**12:00 – 01:00 PM** Lunch (Provided)

**1:00 – 2:30 PM** Sharing the Inside Story of Systems Change: State Team Implementation Updates

- Alaska
- New York
- Colorado
- Montana

**2:30 – 2:45 PM** Break

**2:45 – 3:45 PM** Fostering Community-Led Approaches to Child Care Supply Building

- Suzanne Pearl, Minnesota Director, First Children's Finance
- Jaime Odister, Business Development Specialist, First Children's Finance



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**3:45 – 4:00 PM** Reflections and Preview of Tomorrow

**4:00 – 5:00 PM** Connecting Across the State ECE Business Ecosystem

- State team networking and matchmaking (snack provided)

Dinner (on your own)

## Thursday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**7:30 – 8:30 AM** Breakfast

**8:00–8:30 AM** State Team Huddle (optional)

**8:30 – 10:15 AM** Sharing the Inside Story of Systems Change: State Team Implementation Updates

- Indiana
- Maryland
- Minnesota
- Texas
- South Carolina

**10:15 – 10:30 AM** Break

**10:30 – 11:30 AM** Activating New Partners and Innovations in Employer-Sponsored Care

- Charles Aull, Senior Policy Analyst, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Alethea Gomez, Director of Programs and Initiatives, Colorado Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)

**11:30 AM – 12:30 PM** Taking Action on Equity: Facilitated Reflection on State Action Plans

- Sherri Killins Stewart, Director of Systems Alignment and Integration, Co-Director of State Services, BUILD Initiative

**12:30 – 1:15 PM** Lunch

**1:15 – 2:15 PM** Access to Capital: Breaking Down Barriers for Child Care Entrepreneurs

- Laura Jackman, Deputy Director, Early Care & Education, Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)
- Jerry Cutts, President/CEO, First Children's Finance

**2:15–2:30** Closing



# The ECE Business Collaboratory

## 2022 Keynote Speaker



### **Natalie Madeira Cofield**

***Entrepreneur, Philanthropist, Former Assistant Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration***

Natalie has been named one of the most powerful women in business by Entrepreneur Magazine.

An award-winning entrepreneur, philanthropist, political appointee, and economic activist, Natalie has provided some of the nation's most prominent CEOs of billion-dollar organizations, executives of global brands, senior advisors to the White House,

mayors of leading national cities, and community activists and leaders with inspiration, insight, and advisement.

As a presidentially-appointed Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration, she advised on the deployment of \$1.2 trillion in funding and was directly responsible for architecting programs that distributed \$200 million in funding to ecosystems throughout the country during the greatest economic crisis in modern history.

As the former head of the Office of Women's Business Ownership at the U.S. Small Business Administration, she funded the largest expansion of the Women's Business Center network in the history of SBA, with a total of 146 centers located in every state in the US, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Natalie is the founder and former CEO of Walker's Legacy, the most prestigious digital platform to empower women through entrepreneurship, and its adjoined nonprofit arm, the Walker's Legacy Foundation, where she established a \$25,000 funded scholarship for enterprising women at her alma mater, Howard University.

In 2019, Cofield was named the inaugural Entrepreneur-in-Residence for the District of Columbia leading Mayor Muriel Bowser's 202Creates Program providing entrepreneurship advice to creative economy businesses within the District of Columbia.

An honors tech graduate (where she was mentored by CIOs of two of America's leading Fortune 500 companies) Natalie leveraged her coding experience to build a career centered on empowering businesses, entrepreneurs, women and underrepresented communities. Her work has been featured on and by Inc, Time, CNN, NYTimes, Fast Company, Forbes, Entrepreneur, BusinessInsider, Black Enterprise, Essence, and EBONY, among others.

She was named a Champion of Small Business by the Association of Enterprising Opportunity, was selected among 137 cover-story business leaders and entrepreneurs from across the nation for her response to COVID-19 where she graced Entrepreneur Magazine's July/August 2020 edition cover. She has also been named as one of the 100 Most Powerful Washingtonians by the Washington Business Journal.

An avid traveler, Cofield has visited more than 46 countries and counting.



# The ECE Business Collaboratory

## ***Making Cost-Modeling Meaningful: How to leverage fiscal consulting for State decision-making*** ***September 28, 2022***



### **Katie Reed**

#### ***Managing Director, Afton Partners***

Katie Reed is Managing Director at Afton. Since joining the team in 2014, Katie has supported state and local K12 and ECE agencies on initiatives at the intersection of finance, strategy, and governance, with a particular interest in engaging diverse stakeholders in major change initiatives. Katie has led Advisory Groups, Commissions, and Task Forces that ensure authentic and representative voice, center equity, and lead to actionable recommendations that move the field forward.

Highlights of Katie's work at Afton include facilitating the Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force and the Illinois Governor's Early Childhood Funding Commission, designing actionable financial transparency initiatives including Washington D.C.'s Common Financial Reporting and Illinois' ESSA Site-Based Expenditure Reporting, and developing equitable funding policies across K12 and ECE systems. Prior to joining Afton, Katie served as founding Chief of Staff for the Innovation Office at Chicago Public Schools. While at CPS, Katie led policy development for the conversion to student-based budgeting, an initiative that sought to ensure equitable and transparent distribution of resources to the district's 600+ direct-run and charter schools.

Earlier in her career, Katie spent nearly a decade in progressing roles in financial and operational management for Baxter Healthcare and Ford Motor Company. She earned an MBA from the University of Michigan Ross School of Business, and a BBA in finance from the University of Notre Dame.



### **Mitch Mraz**

#### ***Director, Afton Partners***

Mitch is a Director at Afton Partners. Over ten years at Afton, Mitch has led data analytics and financial modeling for school systems, state education agencies, early childhood agencies, and social impact investors around the country. As Afton's data analytics and scenario model build expert, he has conducted groundbreaking school funding formula studies, guided dozens of school systems on financial sustainability plans, developed early childhood cost models, and impacted both early childhood and K12 education funding policy with analytics that reveal equity and adequacy opportunities.

Highlights of Mitch's client engagements include the creation of an early childhood equity and access tool for the State of Illinois, a school funding study for the Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board, a Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) Study for the Deputy Mayor of Education in Washington, DC, and analytics that propelled a change to the Chicago Public Schools' school funding formula. Mitch has also led financial and technical support capacities for multiple school districts across the state of Texas as they planned to scale blended learning models across their network.

Mitch earned his BS in Finance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's College of Business and is a CFA Charter holder.



# The ECE Business Collaboratory

## ***Making Cost-Modeling Meaningful: How to leverage fiscal consulting for State decision-making*** ***September 28, 2022***



### **Alejandra Garcia**

***Associate, Afton Partners***

Alejandra is an Associate at Afton Partners. Alejandra performs data collection and analysis, stakeholder interviews, financial statement analysis, financial modeling, and project management activities for school systems and state education agencies. Highlights of Alejandra's work includes the development of numerous early childhood cost models for the State of Illinois, one of which includes the federally required Narrow Cost Analysis, which estimates the current cost for providers to offer child care to families. Alejandra, a first-generation Latina from the South Side of Chicago, prioritizes financial sustainability and the promotion of diversity and equity. Alejandra earned her BA in Economics from the University of Michigan, and she is an alum of the Noble Network of Charter Schools.



### **Kate Ritter**

***Early Childhood Advisor, Children's Funding Project***

Kate joined Children's Funding Project in 2021 as an Early Childhood Advisor. She specializes in early care and education finance, policy, and cost modeling.

Since 2001, Kate has been working with state and local governments, foundations, national policy organizations, early care and education providers, and child advocacy groups to provide strategic early childhood policy and finance recommendations. Prior to joining CFP, Kate consulted with cities and states on creating comprehensive early childhood system cost models. Kate worked in the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development where she created a cost model for the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and led the process to develop a QRIS for family child care. She was a senior policy associate at Illinois Action for Children where she negotiated legislative outcomes, developed administrative advocacy strategies, and managed statewide campaigns for policy change and increases in fiscal expenditures.

Kate has an undergraduate degree in psychology from Middlebury College and a master's degree in public policy from the University of Chicago. She is also a certified labor & postpartum doula and has the honor of assisting families entering parenthood. She lives in Vermont with her husband, two daughters, and two fur babies.



# The ECE Business Collaboratory

***Fostering Community-Led Approaches to Child Care Supply Building***  
***September 28, 2022***



## **Suzanne Pearl**

***Minnesota Director, First Children's Finance***

Suzanne Pearl has served as the Minnesota Director for First Children's Finance since 2019. She oversees a team of 24 staff who work with child care providers and communities across the state to increase the supply and financial sustainability of child care. With more than 20 years of experience in nonprofit management, Suzanne is a culturally agile leader with expertise in program strategy and in strengthening the alignment of organizational mission and operations. Suzanne previously held a nine-year position with the Minnesota-based Center for Victims of Torture, where, as International Services Program Manager, she oversaw mental health clinics for torture and war-trauma survivors in East Africa. Prior to CVT, Suzanne worked in Washington, DC for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, managing democratic governance programs in Bosnia and Serbia. A lawyer by training, Suzanne also has experience in public policy and nonprofit management consulting. She holds a Juris Doctor from Hamline University School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities.



## **Jaime Odister**

***Business Development Specialist Michigan, First Children's Finance***

Jaime has a passion for supporting early childhood programs as they maintain stability and quality. She has a master's degree in Information Resource Management from Central Michigan University and a bachelor's degree in information technology from the University of South Carolina. Prior to joining First Children's Finance in 2017, Jaime has served in numerous quality improvement and monitoring roles in and throughout Wayne County specifically with Head Start and Community Mental Health. Her unique experience is cupped from community engagement and outreach with children, youth, and families, financial literacy, program management, coaching and mentoring professionals and business administration.



# The ECE Business Collaboratory

**Activating New Partners and Innovations in Employer-Sponsored Care**  
**September 29, 2022**



## **Charles Aull, PhD.**

***Executive Director, Center for Policy & Research  
Kentucky Chamber of Commerce***

Charles Aull is the Executive Director of the Kentucky Chamber Center for Policy and Research where he leads the organization's public policy and economic research initiatives. He has previously served as the Chamber's Senior Policy Analyst and was the Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy Development for Greater Louisville Inc., the Metro Chamber of Commerce. He has given public talks and lectures and published papers and articles on a wide range of public policy, economic, and historical topics. He holds a PhD in History from Indiana University and has also studied at the University of Southern Indiana, Georgetown University, and Villanova University School of Law.

## **Alethea Gomez**

***Director of Programs and Initiatives, Colorado Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)***

Alethea has worked on both the early education and business stages for more than 15 years. Her undergraduate work focused on Business Administration & Early Cognition and Development, and she completed her Masters in Life and Developmental Sciences at CU Denver's Department of Human Development. She holds several licensures in Colorado in teaching, behavioral services and workforce coaching, and continues to pursue opportunities to deepen her experience and knowledge of the field.



Alethea's experience overseeing large educational institutions in both leadership and design capacities, working privately and professionally with families, and creating vision, structure and growth in the departments she has led has honed both her ability to support the needs and goals of complex projects, and make direct connections to the incredible benefit of the integration of family and business needs. Her past tenures include work with UCLA, Harvard University, Pixar, and Bright Horizons Family Solutions, specifically supporting the needs of children and families, equipping her with a unique ability to understand and represent the needs of business owners, educators and families. She is thrilled to continue this work supporting the goals and expanding the influence of EPIC across Colorado and beyond.



# The ECE Business Collaboratory

***Taking Action on Equity: Facilitated Reflection on State Action Plans  
September 29, 2022***



## **Sherri Killins Stewart**

***Director of Systems Alignment and Integration, Co-Director of State Services  
BUILD Initiative***

Sherri Killins Stewart, Ed. D is the Director of State Systems Alignment and Integration and Co-Director of State Services for the BUILD Initiative and an independent consultant. Within her BUILD Initiative work, she is responsible for working directly with state leaders to advance early childhood systems efforts in health, early learning, and family support. She is leading work to define and create intentional practice regarding equity in early childhood system practice, policy, and leadership within the BUILD Initiative. Her equity work includes co-leading a network of early childhood leaders to advance racial equity. Dr. Stewart has worked at multiple levels and in various states and communities. Dr. Stewart's former positions include Commissioner of Early Education and Care for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Vice President of Human Development and Operations at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and CEO of Empower New Haven. Her consulting clients have included BUILD, W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation, New Haven Public School System, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Ascend at the Aspen Institute, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, and Pearson Publishing.

Dr. Stewart is known for crossing organizational boundaries to create a child development lens on the work of informal organizations and other state agencies, including public health, housing, libraries, and museums.

Throughout her career, Dr. Stewart has been committed to creating opportunities for families, children, and adults, through workforce, housing, health, and education strategies. Her efforts seek to increase access for families and communities to high-quality formal and informal opportunities in health, early learning, and family wellbeing. Dr. Stewart holds a nursing degree from the University of Pittsburgh, a Master of Administrative Science from Johns Hopkins University, and a doctorate in counseling psychology from the University of Sarasota.

Several organizations have recognized Dr. Stewart; examples include the Massachusetts Reading Association Legislative Award for her leadership in promoting early childhood literacy and Horizons for Homeless Children Public Leadership Award. She is currently the Vice-Chair of NHChild and served as former co-chair and current New Haven Early Childhood Council member.





# The ECE Business Collaboratory

***Access to Capital: Breaking Down Barriers for Child Care Entrepreneurs***  
***September 29, 2022***



## **Gerald M. Cutts**

***President & CEO***

***First Children's Finance (FCF)***

Gerald M. Cutts is the founding President and CEO of First Children's Finance, a multi-state non-profit, established in 1991. FCF's mission is to grow the supply and business sustainability of excellent child care. FCF helps children, families, and communities thrive by increasing the availability, affordability, and quality of early care and education. FCF does this by providing business and financial supports to ECE business, by helping urban and rural communities create and implement childcare economic development plans, and by working on systems change and policy on the local, state, and federal levels. As President and CEO, he is responsible for strategic direction, financial oversight, resource development, national and local policy, and strategic business development. He holds a Master of City Planning from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law. Mr. Cutts was also on the National Academy of Sciences Engineering and Medicine Task Force on Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education.



## **Laura Jackman**

***Deputy Director, Early Care & Education***

***Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)***

Laura is the Deputy Director of Early Care and Education at LIIF. LIIF works to expand access to quality child care through grants to support facilities enhancement and expansion, the provision of business technical assistance and policy advocacy. Prior to working at LIIF, she spent her career in the field of early childhood education in DC. Laura has over 10 years' experience managing, training, and teaching within early care and education programs.



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## 2022 ECE Business Collaboratory Convening State Team Action Plans

Scan the QR codes below to access the state action plans.



**Alaska**



**Maryland**



**South Carolina**



**Colorado**



**Minnesota**



**Texas**



**Indiana**



**Montana**



**Washington, D.C.**



**Louisiana**



**New York**



# **The ECE Business Collaboratory**

*Notes, Thoughts, Reflections*

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## **2022 Collaboratory Convening Feedback**

We want to hear from you! Please  
fill out this quick feedback form so  
that we can improve the  
Convening and the ECE Business  
Collaboratory!



<https://tinyurl.com/2022convening>