



# "Inside-Outside" Strategies for Integrating Home-Based Child Care Into Public Preschool: Introduction

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Home Grown is a national collaborative of philanthropic leaders committed to improving the quality of and access to home-based child care. We use numerous strategies to better understand and support various forms of home-based child care including regulated family child care, regulation-exempt care, and family, friend and neighbor care. Learn more on our [website](#).

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# Introduction

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Total state spending on preschool has more than doubled over the past 20 years, reaching nearly \$9 billion in 2021.<sup>1</sup> A growing number of localities have made investments in early childhood education on top of state spending, with dedicated new revenue sources imposed through ballot measures (like a soda tax in Philadelphia, sales taxes in San Antonio and Denver, and a new high-income earners' tax in Multnomah County, Oregon, for example) and the use of general city funds in places like Chicago and New York.<sup>2</sup>

Inclusion of home-based providers in these programs has at least nominally been a priority for some—24 states with publicly funded pre-K programs allow funding to go toward services provided in residential settings. However, in most places, a very small portion of publicly funded pre-K children are actually enrolled in home-based settings. In seven of the 24 states that allow it, zero home-based educators received pre-K funds in 2022.<sup>3</sup> It is no coincidence that participation is so low; most publicly funded early childhood education systems are not designed with home-based providers in mind. Many states and localities hold home-based providers to the same requirements as center-based providers, which may be untenable given the facilities and staffing model under which they operate.

Many advocates and researchers have made the compelling case for including home-based child care providers (HBCCs) in public preschool programs: Many families prefer the smaller, and often more culturally responsive approach offered in a home-based program. For a city or state to serve all children, the capacity from home-based providers is necessary; and home-based providers, who are small business owners who often serve as anchors of their communities, could see significant declines in enrollment if there is not an opportunity to participate. There is also a growing body of research about how to adapt preschool policies to meaningfully include home-based care providers, including the [Pre-K in Family Child Care Project \(PKFCC\)](#) at the Erikson Institute. [The National Institute for Early Education Research](#) has also written about the conditions for success when engaging home-based providers in state preschool programs.

However, many administrators may be stuck at an earlier stage in the planning process: How do administrators ensure that home-based providers are included at all? **Since public preschool programs are ultimately financed through processes like legislative budgets and executive decisions, the effort to incorporate home-based care into them successfully is, in part, a political one—so administrators will need to leverage strategies to influence decision-makers and the political process.**

One theme that emerged from this work is the importance of *inside-outside strategies* to help drive change in the sector. **An “inside-outside strategy” is one that combines outside pressure from advocates and providers with work within government by supportive insiders to change policy.**<sup>4</sup> In many of the cases in which localities are able to change their systems to work with home-based providers successfully, advocates and providers both push and work with government administrators to transform systems.

We hope this set of briefs can help policymakers and those leading implementation of early care and education programs with both sets of strategies.

## Why we developed this resource

Emmy Liss and Josh Wallack, two of the authors of this resource, helped lead the implementation of universal pre-K in New York City. After leaving New York City government in 2022, Liss and Wallack convened a learning community of the leaders of 18 municipal early childhood education programs from across the country to share implementation lessons.

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1 Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B. A., Jost, T. M. (2022). The State of Preschool 2021: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

2 Liss, E., Wallack, J., Weisenfeld, G. G. & Frede, E. (2023). Components to consider when planning city preschool programs. National Institute for Early Education Research.

3 Harmeyer, E., Weisenfeld, G., & Frede, E. (2023). Including family child care (FCC) programs in publicly-funded pre-K: Conditions for success. National Institute for Early Education Research.

4 See for example [“Governing Together: Layers and Lessons,”](#) Sarah Johnson and Elianne Farhat, The Forge, October 2021 and [“Countervailing Powers: Building Bottom-Up Democracy through Co-Governance,”](#) Ben Palmquist, The Forge, March 2023 for further explanation of this term in more general use.

This diverse, passionate, and deeply knowledgeable group identified common challenges that leaders of early childhood programs faced and discussed the different paths that leaders had taken to address them. Because New York City did not proactively include home-based providers in the rollout of universal pre-K, the city had to make changes in approach over time. Leaders in some other cities had approached this differently; they had been more inclusive from the outset and achieved a very different result. (Some even cited New York City's experience as a cautionary tale they sought to avoid!) Other leaders had experiences akin to New York City's and had made changes in the middle of implementation and learned from them.

A third group of leaders were still early enough in their planning that they could take lessons from others in the group and use them to inform their work.

To holistically reflect on the New York City story, Liss and Wallack teamed up with the leaders of ECE on the Move – an organization of 600-plus providers in residential settings in New York City advocating for policies that better support the needs of providers. ECE on the Move was founded for and by providers to fight against what often felt like harmful policies that threatened the livelihood of child care providers. Understandably, the relationship between government and ECE on the Move was at times fraught. Providers did not trust that the government would do the right thing, the result of years of disinvestment and disrespect. City government leaders tried to do better over time, but trust has to be earned and has to be matched with action and investment.

In the years since leaving government, we have all built a closer relationship and to realize that we all agree on the same overall strategic goal: the full and equal inclusion of home-based child care into public preschool so that children, families and communities can be fully served. Inside-outside coalitions will almost always approach the challenge of pre-K system administration with different perspectives and may disagree about strategy and tactics. What is most important is not who is "right" but whether the groups can come together, trust one another enough to share information and thinking, and establish a workable consensus about how each group will proceed in service of winning the fight for fully funded, equitable and inclusive pre-K systems. We share New York City's story to serve, we hope, as an instructive lesson.

The intent of this resource broadly is to support leaders and administrators of pre-K systems and other early care and education programs to plan to incorporate home-based child care into their publicly funded systems from the beginning, make the case to their stakeholders successfully to ensure equitable funding and support for home-based child care, and utilize best practices for incorporating provider voice in their planning and policy-making.

## Acknowledgments

These briefs were collaboratively developed by:

- Emmy Liss and Josh Wallack, former leaders of the New York City Department of Education's Early Childhood Division
- Shanita Bowen, Gladys Jones, and Doris Irizarry, leaders of ECE on the Move

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Alexandra Patterson, Director of Policy and Strategy at Home Grown, was instrumental in the development of these briefs.

## Briefs

- ["Inside-Outside" Strategies for Integrating Home-Based Child Care Into Public Preschool: the NYC Story](#)
- ["Inside-Outside" Strategies for Integrating Home-Based Child Care Into Public Preschool: The Role of Unions](#)
- ["Inside-Outside" Strategies for Integrating Home-Based Child Care Into Public Preschool: Nuts-and-Bolts Tactics](#)