



Philanthropy Engagement Project: Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the Alliance for Early Success?

The [Alliance for Early Success](http://www.earlysuccess.org) is a catalyst for bringing state leaders, national experts, and foundation partners together to improve health, family support, and learning for young children birth through age eight. In order to reach the largest number of children with the most effective programs and services, the Alliance focuses on state advocacy and policy. The Alliance operates from a pooled fund with investments from 11 private foundations. The Alliance currently invests in a range of supports in 30 states and reaches all 50 by sharing information, communications, and research through its powerful network of partners. You can learn more about the Alliance at www.earlysuccess.org.

What is the Philanthropy Engagement Project?

The Alliance model is based on the belief that foundations and advocates are “better and stronger together.” Many foundations support early childhood programs and direct services, but most grantmakers do not support policy and advocacy to sustain and expand them. Most advocates need strategies and tools for engaging new policy funders to expand their pool of potential funders. We want to change the way more private funders think about and engage in public policy. The Philanthropy Engagement Project, led by Frontera Strategy, will provide education, training, and technical assistance based on their successful model and track record in Texas.

How Can Advocates and Foundations Use the Birth Through Eight State Policy Framework?

The Alliance received input from over 200 experts to develop a Birth Through Eight State Policy Framework. Rather than an exhaustive laundry list, the Framework is based on the latest research and best practice. Foundations and policymakers can be confident that these “best-bet” policy options lead to good outcomes for young children. The policies address health, family support, and learning, because these are the areas that have the greatest impact on improving life chances, particularly of the most vulnerable children. The Framework includes crosscutting policies to reflect the reality that what children need does not always fit neatly into separate categories. Foundations can use the Framework as a guide for choosing proven policy options that fit their priorities and the economic, social, and political conditions in their states. The Framework gives foundations and advocates focus.

How Can Foundations Engage in Advocacy (Beyond Just Writing Checks)?

There are lots of ways all types of private foundations can engage in policy and advocacy. Many foundations do not understand the differences between advocacy and lobbying, making them hesitant to invest in policy and advocacy. Others understand they can support research and awareness building to inform decisions that lead to sustaining and expanding effective programs and services. Like many funders, the Alliance does not support lobbying. The Philanthropy Engagement Project will help interested foundations understand what they can and cannot do, and help them navigate the advocacy and policymaking process. Frontera Strategy can provide support on how foundations can engage in: forming philanthropic advocacy coalitions, funding and using research to inform policy, reaching out to media, engaging unusual messengers, influencing public opinion and awareness, participating in policymaker education, and influencing policy development.

Why Use Advocacy as a Grantmaking Strategy, and Why Engage in Advocacy with Other Funders?

The amount of private philanthropic dollars pales in comparison to public funding for education and health and human services. Foundation giving alone cannot meet current, let alone growing, needs of vulnerable children and families. Engaging in policy and advocacy is a way to leverage and increase the impact of both foundation and public sector investments. It can be one of the best tools in the philanthropy toolbox for effecting significant and long-lasting change. Like the Alliance, Frontera has shown that the impact is even greater when foundations work together and contribute to common advocacy and policy goals.

Sounds Interesting, but Where Do We Start?

Every foundation has a unique approach and will decide what feels most comfortable for them to do. The Philanthropy Engagement Project is designed to offer a range of supports that foundations can access. Frontera Strategy can:

- Conduct training for foundations, philanthropists, and advocates about the basics of legal rules for advocacy and lobbying;
- Survey and interview advocates, philanthropists, and foundation officers to determine common interests for early childhood policies;
- Conduct training on effective advocacy strategies for early childhood policies;
- Assist with forming and/or sustaining philanthropic consortia around policy and advocacy, including pooled funding and common policy priorities;
- Facilitate introductions to state administrators, legislators, governors' offices; and
- Provide ongoing technical assistance, as requested.

How do I learn more?

To express interest in Philanthropy Engagement Project, please contact Lisa Klein at the Alliance for Early Success (lklein@earlysuccess.org).

To learn more about Frontera Strategy, please contact Jason Sabo (sabo@fronterastrategy.com) or Jennifer Esterline (esterline@fronterastrategy.com).