



BOOST Early Educator Wage Enhancement Pilot

AT A GLANCE

675

Educator Applicants

122

Educators Selected by Lottery

41

Child Care Sites Participating

~\$1,000+

Per Month

87%

BOOST Participants Still Enrolled after 13 Months

WHAT IS BOOST? BOOST is a direct-to-educator wage supplement pilot launched in early 2025 in Contra Costa County to address the chronic gap between the essential work of early care and education professionals and their compensation. The program provides approximately \$1,000 per month directly to individual educators for 18 months. Designed by First 5 Contra Costa through nearly two years of community planning and administered by CocoKids, the program is funded through Measure X, a local half-cent sales tax voters approved to strengthen the county's social safety net.

WHO DOES IT SERVE? The program serves a total of 4 center directors, 60 center teaching staff, 35 FCC providers, and 23 FCC aides across 41 sites. Educators who work directly with children at least 20 hours per week in licensed programs serving infants and toddlers qualified for BOOST payments. The program prioritizes zip codes with the most severe infant and toddler supply shortages as identified by the Contra Costa Local Planning Council needs assessment. The pilot focuses on stabilizing the existing workforce in high-need areas and ensuring vital wage boosts reach educators without burdensome administrative requirements.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- Applicants were randomly selected through a lottery.
- Simple application: detailed paperwork required only from lottery winners, not all applicants.
- A dedicated Workforce Development Coordinator made in-person site visits to assist with enrollment.
- Monthly payments via direct deposit go straight to the educator; directors spend only minutes each month confirming staff changes, if any.

HOW DOES THIS BENEFIT CONTRA COSTA COUNTY?

The early care and education workforce is paid very low wages for the critical, professional work that they do; as a result, turnover in this sector is chronically high. Research has demonstrated that increasing pay is essential to improving retention.

- **Turnover is a constant challenge and low pay is a key reason educators leave their position.** According to the 2025 survey of BOOST program applicants, turnover rates were 27% among centers and 57% among FCCs.
- **Economic stress is high.** Among the BOOST applicants who participated in our 2025 survey, 63% worried about paying for housing and 73% worried about losing income if they or a family member became ill.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- A second cohort is planned for Summer 2026.
- With 675 educators applying for just 122 spots—a 18% acceptance rate—it is clear that sustained and expanded investment is needed to support the broader workforce.
- A full impact evaluation on workforce retention and well-being will be released in 2027.