
Robert R. McCormick Foundation Commits to Invest in US Challenge

Chicago Foundations Band Together for Early Care and Education Programs across Illinois

CHICAGO, December 11, 2014 – The [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#) joined other Chicago-based Foundations – including the Irving Harris Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Pritzker Family Foundation and Grand Victoria Foundation – for the launch of [Invest in US](#), a national campaign and challenge issued Wednesday by President Barack Obama at the White House Summit on Early Education. The Summit served as a national call for business leaders, philanthropists, advocates and public officials to build a better nation through high-quality early childhood programs for children from birth to age five.

As part of the McCormick Foundation’s \$6 million annual investments in education, in 2015 the McCormick Foundation will anticipate allocating at least \$2 million for new **Invest in US** initiatives in Illinois. These investments will leverage federal initiatives such as the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, Early Head Start/Child Care partnerships, and home visiting expansion to ensure children and their families in Illinois have access to high-quality early learning services that support success in school and life. The Foundation’s 2015 investments will consist of funding in priority areas that include the following:

- improving program quality by supporting the Illinois Early Learning Challenge Fund’s quality rating system for early childhood programs, with a special focus on the quality of programs serving children and families in Chicago;
- supporting parents as their child’s first teacher through innovative programs that support language acquisition for low-income children and boosts the involvement of fathers in their children’s lives;
- supporting access to comprehensive services for birth to three and preschool services for children and their families;
- supporting children’s museums in the Chicagoland area; and
- supporting early math training and other professional development opportunities for teachers and higher education faculty.

“Over the past 20 years, the McCormick Foundation has invested more than \$100 million towards building a system of high-quality early care and education for children ages birth to eight in Illinois,” said Sara Slaughter, Director of the Education Program at the McCormick Foundation. “The returns on these investments are clear. Not only are these investments critically important to our youngest learners and hard-working families, they will also produce better education, health, social and economic outcomes, as well as reduce the need for social spending.”

The McCormick Foundation’s long term commitment, along with support from other funders, has supported Illinois in its journey to becoming a leading state in the field of early care and education.

Along the way, Illinois has developed a strong, coordinated approach, to hit ambitious milestones and has had many “firsts:”

- Illinois passed Preschool For All and was the first state to design a voluntary, public preschool program informed by research to serve both three and four year olds.
- Illinois was the first state to mandate English language learning (ELL) opportunities starting in preschool.
- Illinois was one of the first states to design a preschool through 12th grade principal certificate.

At the Summit, Illinois was awarded a \$20 million Preschool Development Expansion Grant from the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The grant, renewable for three additional years, will allow for expanded access to comprehensive full-day preschool services for four year olds in 18 communities. This plan for the Expansion Grant was built upon the work coordinated by the Early Learning Council of Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development with a focus on those children and families with the highest needs.

Organized by multiple philanthropic partners, **Invest in US** catalyzes the overwhelming cross-sector support for early care and education. In his last two State of the Union addresses, the President made early care and education a key policy priority. Since his initial call to expand access to high-quality programs to every child in America in his 2013 State of the Union Address, the President has proposed a series of new investments in early care and education, and more than 30 states and cities have established new programs or expanded access to preschool.

Invest in US also comes on the heels of growing public and private investment in early childhood development. In addition to the announcement of significant new private sector funding, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services announced \$750 million in new grants for early learning programs. Numerous public leaders at the state and local level have also committed to making early care and education programs a policy priority.

Invest in US commitments are intended to:

- Strengthen public systems at the federal, state and local levels to ensure continuous quality improvements in parental education, home visiting, Early Head Start, quality child care, Head Start and preschool programs;
- Integrate health and developmental screenings with early learning to provide parents with the information they need to optimize their child’s physical, emotional and intellectual development;
- Improve the training, continuing education, professional development and living wages of early childhood educators;
- Support greater access to evidence-based programs that support parents and families in fostering their children’s development; and

- Promote and share ongoing program innovation and improvement, especially for those programs supporting parents and informal caregivers.

A full list of commitments announced Wednesday can be found at <http://investinus.org/>.

About the Robert R. McCormick Foundation

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is committed to fostering communities of educated, informed and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic programs, Cantigny Park and museums, the Foundation helps develop citizen leaders and works to make life better in our communities. The Foundation was established as a charitable trust in 1955, upon the death of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the Chicago Tribune. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is one of the nation's largest foundations, with more than \$1.5 billion in assets. For more information, please visit www.McCormickFoundation.org, follow us on [Twitter](#), or like us on [Facebook](#).

About Invest in US

Invest in US is a challenge to public and private partners, business leaders, philanthropists, advocates, elected officials and you to build a better nation by expanding high-quality early childhood education programs for children from birth through age five. When we invest in them, we invest in us.

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