

OUR FIRST FOUR YEARS & THE ROAD AHEAD

Early childhood is a pivotal life stage. The most important brain developmental period in a person’s life occurs from pregnancy to age 5 and the first few days, months, and years of a child’s life are crucial for health, language development, relationships, social and emotional skills, and more. Positive early childhood experiences (shaped by parents, caregivers, and communities) set the foundation for a child’s ability to achieve their promise - in terms of their future wellbeing, social mobility, opportunity, prosperity and life outcomes. For more visibility into the critical importance of early childhood, check out our [“Why Invest in ECD”](#) resource.

Frustratingly, due to structural racism and other systemic inequities, not all children are being set up to fulfill their promise. Across most early childhood development indicators, children of color, children experiencing poverty, and children with special needs face inequitable outcomes, as do the people who support them - their parents and caregivers.

BY THE NUMBERS

Maternal health: [Black](#) and [Indigenous](#) women and birthing people are 2.5 times more likely to die during childbirth compared to white women.²

Maternal health: Women of color are [twice as likely](#) to experience perinatal mood disorders as compared to White women.³

School readiness: [Fewer than half](#) of US children living in poverty are ready for kindergarten at age 5¹

High quality, affordable childcare: a [mere 10%](#) of childcare settings meet the definition of high quality and the US ranks [last](#) among developed countries on affordability.⁴

Equitable Compensation: childcare providers (who are disproportionately women of color) on average are [paid](#) less than half of what [Kindergarten and elementary teachers](#) make.⁵

While early childhood is recognized as a [key lever](#) to address structural racism and systemic inequities, the early childhood development (ECD) field is a complex, fragmented ecosystem with dramatic underinvestment.

It's characterized by:

- Less venture support for ECD social entrepreneurs (e.g. targeted accelerators, incubators, business coaching, and other supports)
- Less financial capital dedicated to ECD
- Difficulties attracting, compensating, and retaining talent
- Fewer resources to sustain and scale new ideas in the field.



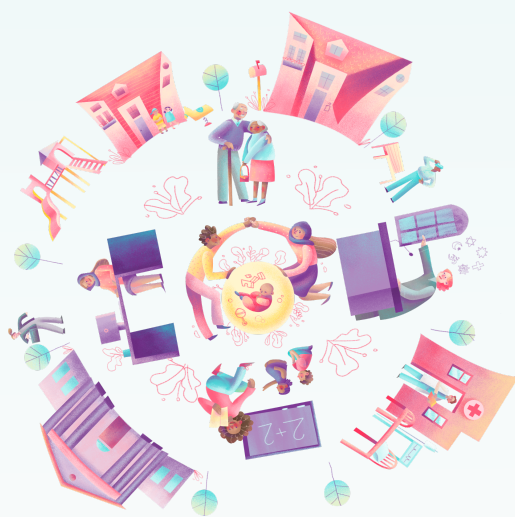
1. Issacs, "Starting School at a Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children", 2012.
 2. Sgaier et al., "What We See In the Shameful Trends on U.S. Maternal Health," 2021.
 3. Perinatal Mental Health Alliance for People of Color, "Our Why" 2022.
 4. "The NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development", 2006.
 5. US Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Occupational Outlook Handbook: Childcare Workers", 2021.

PROMISE'S ROLE

Our vision is that all children, no matter their background, can fulfill their innate promise.

Our commitment is not only to our kids but to their birthing people, families, caregivers & teachers.

In this work, we center on those who are the furthest from opportunity because of structural and systemic barriers. We know that when we do, outcomes for all groups improve.



WHAT DO WE DO?

We support and connect social entrepreneurs in the early childhood field, who are leading and innovating to drive positive outcomes from the prenatal stage through age 5.

We create [networks](#), [convenings](#), [programs](#), and [content](#) that are uniquely tailored for ECD social entrepreneurs and the funders, partners, and stakeholders who can help advance their work.

We believe that by building and nurturing relationships and critical connections across the early childhood ecosystem, we will foster opportunities to catalyze innovation and impact in the field.



We focus on influencing key, long-term outcomes in the early childhood ecosystem that will drive progress toward improving outcomes and eliminating opportunity gaps for children, caregivers, and communities.

WE STRIVE TO SEE:

- 1. Transformative and impactful ventures that improve outcomes for children and families at scale.**
- 2. A dramatic influx of capital and talent into the ecosystem that adequately meets the substantial and important needs of the field.**



OUR WORK AND IMPACT TO DATE

HEADLINES FROM OUR FIRST FOUR YEARS

Promise is a [dedicated team](#) of mission-driven social entrepreneurs with diverse backgrounds spanning birth equity, early childhood education, childcare, K-12 education, ed-tech, family engagement, media, technology and other categories of social impact. We are proud of what we've been able to accomplish over the last four years.

01

Promise has centered Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in our work



02

We've supported leaders to envision and execute a bigger, bolder way of achieving impact and growth

03

We've catalyzed collaborations, providing support so partnerships gain real traction and scale impact



04

We've contributed to the dismantling of silos in ECD leading to an inflow of new ideas, funding, and talent around unsolved challenges in the field

OUR WORK & IMPACT TO DATE

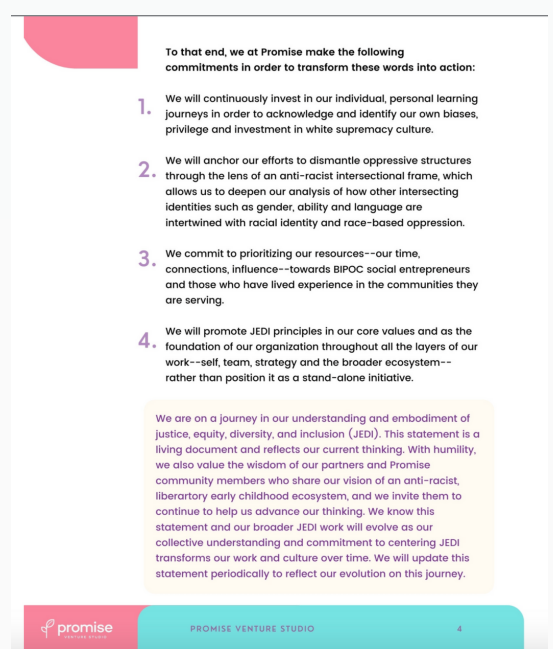
01

PROMISE HAS CENTERED JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN OUR WORK.

In order to create equitable outcomes for kids, caregivers, and the community, we have to be intentional about proactively building programs, a team, a venture community, and an innovation ecosystem that are anti-bias and anti-racist. Our work in this area is an ongoing journey, but we are encouraged by our progress.

Ourselves – Anti-Racist Institution Building

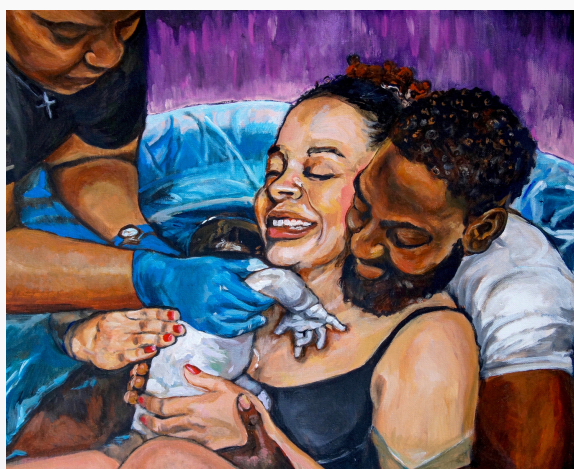
- **Values:** We defined and aligned on our organization’s [core values](#) and [formalized our commitment](#) to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- **Personal learning:** We created structures for personal and professional development on a variety of core topics such as anti-racism, white supremacy, indigeneity, and liberated gatekeeping.
- **Leadership:** We evolved from an all-white and male leadership team to one that is bigger and includes women and BIPOC identities.



Download our Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion statement [here](#).

Our Programming

- **Proximate Leaders:** We explicitly centered racial equity in our programming and are committed to working more closely with BIPOC and proximate leaders. We prioritized these identities in the selection process for our annual Promising Ventures Fellowship Program, Show+Tell Demo Series, and other programs.
- **Equity Advocacy:** We chose equity as the main theme for our last two Show+Tell events: [Equity & Justice In Early Care and Education](#) and [Birth Equity & Justice](#) and nationally promoted the work of 19 innovative ventures working in these spaces.



Artwork by Lauren J. Turner
Featured Artist In Show+Tell Birth Equity & Justice

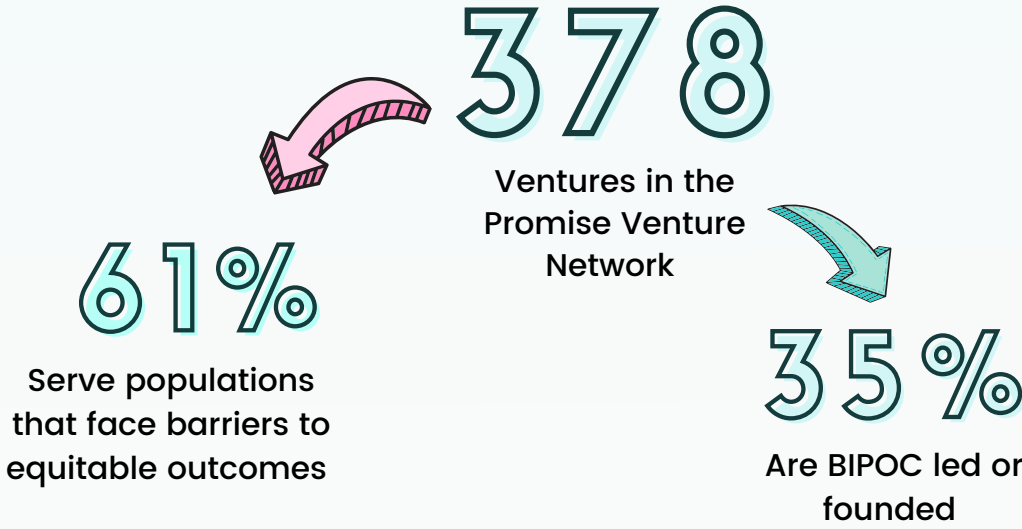
- **Need-finding & Co-Creation:** We collaborated with our partners - National Equity Project, Surge Institute, and Bridgespan - to better understand the equity challenges that early childhood nonprofit leaders of color (ECLOC) face. In that process, we convened 38 ECLOC and 17 capacity building providers (many of whom themselves were also BIPOC leaders) to understand their lived experience and the supports they identify as critical to achieving their aspirations for impact. We are in the process of developing programming to meet these needs.



02

WE'VE SUPPORTED LEADERS TO ENVISION AND EXECUTE A BIGGER, BOLDER WAY OF ACHIEVING IMPACT AND GROWTH.

We've built a vibrant community of social entrepreneurs with ambitious missions for transformational change in the ECD field.



We met ventures where they are, offering practical, actionable guidance, coaching, and connections to funders.



*"(Promise) gave the best advice anyone has given me in three years! You really helped me."
- Adam Stofsky, CEO, Briefly*

We launched the Promising Ventures Fellowship, with our partners Sesame Workshop and The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

Through our deepest level of personalized support, we accelerated 3 cohorts and more than 30 social entrepreneurs in achieving their goals for impact and growth.

Our impact: 94% of fellowship ventures were on track to achieve goals for growth, 100% were on track to achieve goals for impact, and 89% were on track to achieve annual funding goals. (data from 2020 fellowship)



*"As a direct result of work done and things I learned through the Promise Venture Studio Fellowship, I was instrumental in securing a 250K grant for Parent Corps!!!"
- Kai-ama Hammer, Parent Corps*

Year Three Fellowship Cohort:



Women



Black, Brown, and Indigenous Leaders



We've helped hundreds of ventures communicate their impact, potential and needs and generated over 4,000 direct connection offers for them.

103 ventures have participated in our signature [Show+Tell demo series](#) and through the process have clarified and communicated their visions into 3-5 minutes demos of their work. Equally important, they've gained transformative connections with funders, partners, buyers and other field stakeholders.



4000+

Connection requests generated through Show+Tell

45

average of total requests to connect per venture



*"In all my years as a nonprofit entrepreneur (now almost 20 years), I've never had access to such great feedback and training on pitching. It is so rare as an entrepreneur to have time to step back for learning, and even more rare as a nonprofit entrepreneur to have access to high-level business expertise. Already - I feel incredibly lucky to be part of this community."
- Bethany Robertson, Co-Founder & Co-Director, ParentsTogether*

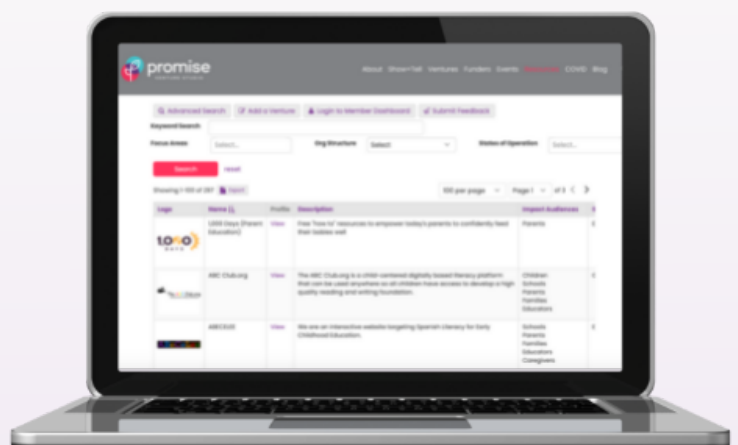
*"We continue to use our PVS pitch as an engagement tool; the framework we developed with the support of the PVS team has substantially advanced our communications with prospective investors and partners."
- Aly Richards, CEO Let's Grow Kids*

We've established a growing, comprehensive database of ventures in the early childhood ecosystem.

We've established a database of 378 ventures in our venture index and have created a searchable, sortable database tool used to identify partners, customers, and grantees. It has become a comprehensive list of leading organizations creating real change and impact in early childhood.

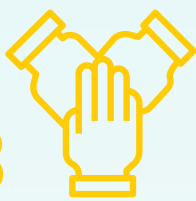
378

Venture Profiles



*"We just published a piece highlighting the opportunity in early childhood. I wanted to thank you for all the energy you've invested in the venture index! I used the company list there as a cross reference against Pitchbook for a more comprehensive slice of the ECE market."
- Chian Gong, Partner, Reach Capital*





WE'VE CATALYZED COLLABORATIONS, PROVIDING SUPPORT SO PARTNERSHIPS GAIN REAL TRACTION AND SCALE IMPACT

Story of Impact: LIFT was able to close \$50k in general operating funds from Arrow as a result of Promise. Gabe Scheck from LIFT just shared that, as a result of Show+Tell, they have meetings lined up with three funders that LIFT has been trying to get in front of for a long time, unsuccessfully. Show+Tell unlocked the door!

"Through the PVS pitch, we successfully cultivated a long time funding prospect and secured a multiyear commitment from their foundation. Our work with PVS provided the tools and external validation to secure a new partnership and advance our mission to secure affordable access to high-quality child care for all Vermont families. We continue to benefit from our work with PVS."

- Aly Richards, CEO Let's Grow Kids

We amplify the impact of funders.

We help funders understand the ECD landscape, source high-quality opportunities, amplify the impact of their portfolio, and connect with other funders for greater impact.

"(Promise offers) pragmatic, actionable advice directly to the real leaders in real situations"

- Amy Rodde, Valhalla

82%

of funders rate Promise as more helpful than other available resources when it comes to connecting with high-impact ventures.

91%

of funders rate Promise as more helpful than other available resources when it comes to showcasing innovation in early childhood

We create space for transformative partnerships.

100

high-quality examples of transformative venture growth or impact through partnership as a result of Promise Support

Then

"We would not have gotten a pilot with Avance were it not for this fellowship (it) led to a pilot with their family child care providers in the Valley (that is) significant because it's opened us up to a new market."

Tammy Kwan, CEO, Cognitive Toybox (2019)

Now

"We're still working with (Avance) and have expanded considerably to support their quality matters work - their work in supporting unlicensed and licensed providers in different cities in TX"

Tammy Kwan, CEO, Cognitive Toybox (2022)





WE'VE CONTRIBUTED TO THE DISMANTLING OF SILOS IN ECD LEADING TO AN INFLOW OF NEW IDEAS, FUNDING, AND TALENT AROUND UNSOLVED CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD.

*"Thank you for breaking down the walls in philanthropy and making the process of raising money more transparent and equitable."
Daisy Han, Embracing Equity*

*"I can't tell you how many of my work relationships trace back to Promise...(it) is so hard to measure in terms of impact, but I hope you know that your goal of building an early-childhood ecosystem is absolutely happening."
Bethany Robertson, Parents Together*

*"... today was divinely situated. YOU all were divinely positioned. I am feeling hope in gratitude. Thank you for collectively creating this space."
Early Childhood Leaders of Color Convening Participant*



THE ROAD AHEAD: WHAT'S NEXT FOR PROMISE

Promise exists to catalyze innovation and impact in the ECD ecosystem. We've learned what that commitment truly means since we began this journey in 2018.

With new funds flowing into the field and swelling energy around the importance of early childhood, now, more than ever is the time to deeply invest in this work.

For Promise, the road ahead includes:

- a. Continuing / deepening Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in building an anti-racist organization and in our programming
- b. Supporting BIPOC and proximate innovators in ECD
- c. Accelerating innovations that are poised to drive equity for children and families



Will you join our community as we envision a world where all children can achieve their full potential and promise?

- a. [Sign up for our newsletter](#) and stay tuned for our updates
- b. Get in touch with us if you have any thoughts / ideas / suggestions on how we might work together
- c. Join our network if you are an early childhood social entrepreneur
- d. Reach out if you're in our network and we can help!

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!



Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



THE
Early
Learning
Lab



GARY
COMMUNITY
INVESTMENTS
Working together
for Colorado's children



imaginable
futures