

## EMAN ADVANCED COHORT

CFLeads Economic Mobility Action Network Case Study

# Investing in home-based childcare in Rochester, New York

Once home to Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass and the epicenter of the heydays of Kodak and Xerox, this region of 1.1 million people is not content to relegate innovation and prosperity to its storied history—or take economic inequality into the future.



THE COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
ROCHESTER, NY

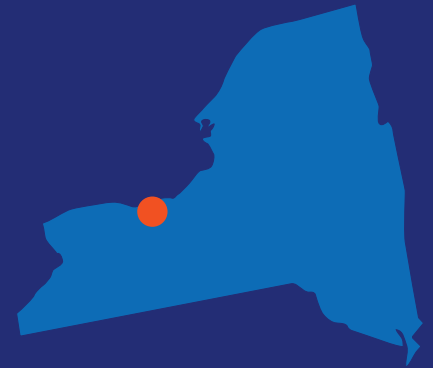
Leaders in Rochester, NY, and surrounding Monroe County have made home-based childcare the center of their economic mobility strategy, rather than a quiet backdrop to the economy. To advance their strategy, they're starting where justice begins: with the voices of providers and families.

In the future Rochester is building, the responsibility does not rest on children to arrive prepared for school. Instead, kindergarten classrooms are prepared for every child, honoring the languages, cultures, abilities, and lived experiences they bring with them. Families have access to childcare that is not only affordable, but stable and affirming, and home-based providers are seen not as peripheral actors in the local economy, but as central architects of its well-being. As a result, they are recognized and compensated as essential educators whose labor sustains children, families, and the broader community.

Led by [Rochester Area Community Foundation](#), the region was part of [CFLeads](#)' Economic Mobility Action Network (EMAN) Advanced Cohort in 2024–2025.

CFLeads

Community Foundations  
Leading Change



### COMMUNITY FOUNDATION:

Rochester Area Community Foundation

### COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES USED:

Commissioning and sharing local data, engaging residents, working across sectors, marshalling resources, and shaping public policy

### SUMMARY:

In a city once home to Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass, leaders are laser-focused on strengthening home-based childcare as a tool for economic mobility.



“If we’re truly motivated to build the best future for this community, that future starts with our children.”

**Simeon Banister**

*President and CEO, Rochester Area Foundation*

## The Vision

*“We want kids to get all the resources they need early on so they soar in kindergarten, thrive throughout school, and enter adulthood ready for post-secondary education and career paths that enable them to build the life they want for their own children and families,” says Erin Budd Barry, Vice President of Community Programs at Rochester Area Community Foundation.*

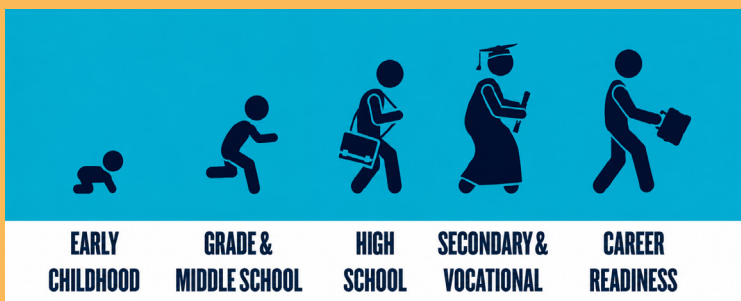
## The Strategy

Rochester Area Community Foundation aims to shift the early childhood landscape through a new level of partnership with nonprofit organizations. Its grantmaking strategy prioritizes fewer, larger, multi-year investments to promote stability and deep engagement with each nonprofit. By aligning sustained investment with ongoing refinement and cross-sector coordination, the Foundation strives to strengthen capacity and accountability across the early childhood system.

In addition, instead of allowing state checklists alone to define quality, the Foundation and

its partners are asking those who carry the daily labor of care what excellence requires. Providers have named relationships, cultural affirmation, language-rich play, and the ability to survive financially without constant strain as key factors. Families have said they need trust, safety, affordability, and an environment where children are known and loved.

The Foundation and its partners are working to close the gap between compliance and lived reality by directing funding and nonprofit support toward the forms of care the community recognizes as sustaining dignity, autonomy, and collective well-being.



*Rochester Area Community Foundation envisions a continuum of support that resources children through every life stage.*



### CONSIDER THIS:

**What can you do to provide training and support to early childhood providers in your community? Who could help?**

#### **The EMAN Challenge**

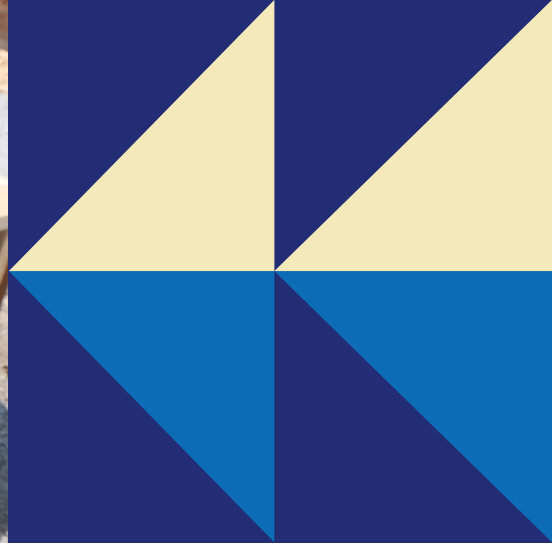
As a member of the EMAN Advanced Cohort, Rochester Area Community Foundation and its partners refined their approach to direct evidence-informed, community-shaped funding to local organizations. These investments expand service capacity, supply essential goods and materials that strengthen home-based environments, and provide tailored professional learning and curriculum support to providers. Rather than distributing resources in isolation, the Foundation aligns funding with ongoing technical assistance and shared learning, so organizations can deepen practice and increase stability in ways defined by providers and families.

The Foundation has also partnered with the Rochester City School District to study how children from home-based programs enter kindergarten. The study will inform what early literacy supports the Rochester partners provide and help schools better understand and respond to the strengths and needs of these learners.

#### **How Rochester Area Community Foundation Is Leveraging a Community Leadership Approach**

Rochester Area Community Foundation is **engaging residents**, including the home-based providers who are central to their economic mobility strategy. In one-on-one interviews, 90 Monroe County providers shared their day-to-day opportunities and struggles. Then, the Foundation identified a spectrum of organizations that could help the providers.

Among those groups: licensing agencies, community libraries that offer literacy support, screening practitioners who can connect children to interventions, and coaches who deliver professional development tailored to home-based settings. By reaching out to those organizations and inviting them to apply for funding so they can continue and expand their work, the Foundation is **leading across sectors** and **marshalling resources**.



## The Partners

Among the groups collaborating and leading in Rochester and partnering with the Rochester Area Community Foundation on a region-wide, children- and family-centered economic mobility strategy are:

- [Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council](#)
- [Rochester School District](#), [Wayne County Community Schools](#) and district leaders, [Greece Community Schools](#) and district leaders
- [Child Care Council](#), which provides resources for childcare providers and families
- [Rochester Childfirst Network](#), a nonprofit that advances the quality of early education and care in Western New York
- [Rochester Public Library](#)
- [Literacy Volunteers of Wayne County](#)
- [Wayne County Action Program](#), a nonprofit social services provider
- [The Children's Agenda](#), which advocates for policies that improve the lives of children and families, especially those most impacted by poverty, racism, health inequities, and trauma
- [Liftoff WNY](#), a coalition of early childhood funders and leaders
- [Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative](#), a coalition that addresses the root causes of poverty
- [ROC the Future Alliance](#), a community-wide coalition working to ensure academic success for every child

## The Journey

Rochester Area Community Foundation staff say the EMAN Advanced Cohort introduced them to the rich evidence base on what makes economic mobility possible for people. The Foundation is now using [Urban Institute's upward mobility predictors](#) and [Results for America's catalog of evidence-based practices that improve economic mobility](#) to guide its work and its grantmaking.

---

*“What we learned in the EMAN cohort has really influenced our strategies and how we deploy our resources,” says Vice President of Community Programs Erin Budd Barry. “It touches our policy work, research, data analysis, indicators website, initiatives portfolio, discretionary grantmaking, and discussions with donors and other local foundations.”*

The Foundation is also proud that its Director of Early Childhood, Dr. Tyana Velazquez-Smith, was selected for a 2025 Zaentz Community Fellowship from Stanford University, which supports her community-led research on Rochester's children and families and its home childcare providers.

“In a study we conducted, 82% of Black women reported feeling stressed out about childcare three or more times a week. It’s a huge issue in any community to have a group of people made invisible because of a lack of services and support. We have to show them ‘We’ve got you,’ at the bare minimum by providing safe and consistent childcare so they can have gainful employment.”

**Dr. Tyana Velazquez-Smith**

*Director of Early Childhood, Rochester Area Community Foundation*

## Wins So Far

- Rochester Area Community Foundation’s board has adopted upward mobility as one of the Foundation’s three “community impact pillars.”
- Led by Dr. Velazquez-Smith, the Foundation also created a ten-pillar Early Childhood Upward Mobility Framework.
- In 2025, the Foundation’s board approved \$450,000 in grants to support home-based childcare across Monroe and Wayne Counties. The portfolio will provide coaching, materials, and business and economic support to more than 250 licensed providers and is expected to impact 1,700 children.

## What’s Next

- The Foundation and its partners are working with state leaders to identify early childhood priorities that align with the area’s needs and shape a unified policy agenda.
- The Foundation is partnering with the Rochester City School District to launch a study, led by Dr. Velazquez-Smith, of the efficacy of early childhood education in home-based childcare. The study will compare the literacy development of the 1,200 children who enter kindergarten from home-based programs to that of their peers who attended preschools or daycare centers.



### CONSIDER THIS:

**What support do families, especially those headed by single mothers, need in your community?**

# Why Economic Mobility Matters



No matter where you live or what background you come from, we all want—and deserve—to build a better future for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors.

But not everyone in every community has the same access to quality education, good life-sustaining jobs, housing they can afford in the places they want to live, a safe environment, and civic participation and justice.

“True economic mobility comes when communities work together to remove barriers and create pathways for people to succeed. The EMAN community foundations and their partners are showing how local leadership, collaboration, and trust can create lasting change for everyone.”

**Mary L. Thomas**  
*President and CEO, CFLeads*

CFLeads utilizes [Urban Institute's three-part definition](#) and defines economic mobility as the ability of people to improve their economic status, have power and autonomy over their lives, and be engaged in and valued by their community.

To communities, economic mobility means that people are able to put food on the table and have more time to spend with their kids or doing things they love. It means kids have good education options, and adults can build generational wealth through buying a home, leave a legacy, and retire comfortably. It means people feel at home in their community, can find good jobs there, and have the power to shape a brighter future for everyone who lives there.

Economic mobility means people have enough, however they define it.

## CFLeads Economic Mobility Action Network (EMAN)

Community foundations catalyze change and are trusted place-based partners who work across the nonprofit, public, and private sectors to create thriving communities where all people can prosper.

In that spirit, from September 2024 to October 2025, CFLeads brought together 19 communities to learn from each other as they worked to boost economic mobility over the long term.

The 19 community foundations represented in EMAN are leading the way toward economic mobility by engaging residents, sharing data, working across sectors, marshalling resources, and shaping public policy.

## How will YOU advance economic mobility in your community?

Start your journey by learning more about [CFLeads' work on this issue](#) and exploring economic mobility resources from Urban Institute, Results for America, and Opportunity Insights.