



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2024

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

In 2024, NICCA advanced its mission to empower Tribal child care with unparalleled momentum. From a record-breaking training year and historic funding increases to sharing the national stage with today's most influential leaders, NICCA continues to shape the future of Tribal child care and early learning. This report highlights the impactful strides we've taken in advocating for Indigenous children, uplifting Tribal sovereignty, and driving policy that honors the needs of Tribal communities across the country.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF TRIBAL CHILD CARE

As I reflect on the past year, I'm filled with immense gratitude for the progress we've made together and the unwavering commitment of our community to Tribal child care and early learning. This year has been one of tremendous growth, powerful advocacy, and impactful collaboration—a year that has brought NICCA to new heights as a leading voice in Tribal child care.

In the last 12 months, we've accomplished remarkable feats. Through our collective efforts, NICCA has trained 973 child care professionals, a milestone that strengthens our Tribal child care systems and supports the next generation of Native children. Our advocacy work also led to yet another increase in Tribal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funding, a culmination of 501% funding growth over the last decade. Each step forward represents another layer of security, empowerment, and opportunity for our Tribal Nations and our children.

This year, NICCA's voice reached the highest echelons of national discourse, as we shared our vision for child care at the Brookings Institution Care Economy event alongside leaders like Nobel laureate Claudia Goldin and Senator Tammy Duckworth. It was a profound honor to demonstrate how Tribal child care systems can inspire and inform a national model, one rooted in the values of community, resilience, and sovereignty.

Our impact this year is a testament to the strength of our partnerships. We've deepened collaborations with esteemed organizations like the Bipartisan Policy Center, Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, and National Association for Family Child Care, amplifying Tribal perspectives across key discussions and shaping policy principles that prioritize Indigenous voices.

Looking forward, I am excited about the path that lies ahead for NICCA. With plans to grow our online resource library, develop a Professional Development Registry, and establish a Tribal Credentialing System, we are committed to building resources and networks that will strengthen the foundation of Tribal child care for years to come. Our goals are ambitious, yet with the support of our dedicated Board, partners, supporters, and Tribal members, I am confident that NICCA will continue to elevate the future of early childhood education for Indigenous communities.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Your support and shared vision are vital as we continue to advocate, train, and strengthen Tribal child care across the country. Together, we are building a brighter, more equitable future for Indigenous children, families, and communities.

With appreciation and hope,

Jennifer Rackliff // Cherokee Nation
Executive Director
National Indian Child Care Association



OUR STORY

OUR HISTORY

Founded in 1993, the National Indian Child Care Association (NICCA) began as a small but determined group of Tribal child care administrators from Oklahoma, New Mexico, South Carolina, Washington, and Arizona. United by the need to address unique Tribal child care challenges, these leaders formed NICCA to advocate for Indigenous children's educational and developmental needs. With its incorporation soon after, NICCA set out to elevate Tribal voices within child care leadership, policy, and training.

Between 1993 and 1996, NICCA was instrumental in advancing Tribal provisions in the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). NICCA's advocacy secured mandatory Tribal child care funding, access to funds for construction, an expanded definition of family to honor cultural relevance, and a clearer outline of administrative cost allowances—all of which resulted in a substantial funding increase for Tribal programs. After this critical success, NICCA temporarily paused activities from 1997 to 2000, allowing time to reorganize and reinvigorate its vision.



OUR STORY

In 2000, NICCA resumed its work with renewed purpose, strengthening bylaws and policies, electing executive officers, and engaging in advocacy efforts at all levels. NICCA's reach grew as it began hosting biennial leadership conferences and workshops, empowering Tribal child care professionals and reinforcing its role as a national advocate for Indigenous child care.

A new chapter of growth began in 2013 when NICCA contracted professional support to enhance operational efficiency and increase program impact. This shift allowed NICCA to expand its scope, now reaching hundreds of Tribal child care professionals with leadership and development training, impacting child care programs across more than 500 Tribal Nations, and shaping policy in ways that support Indigenous children's futures.

Since its founding, NICCA has played an invaluable role in training over 2,800 individuals from Tribal communities nationwide. In 2018, NICCA's advocacy set an astounding record of a single year increase for Tribal CCDBG funding of 262%. But, it didn't stop there. In total, NICCA has championed a 501% funding increase for the Tribal CCDBG since 2015—a rare accomplishment among federally funded programs.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, NICCA's dedication remained steadfast. Serving on national steering committees, NICCA focused on ensuring Tribal child care programs and families received necessary support. In partnership with Lakeshore Learning, NICCA created at-home learning kits for young children and a grant-making toolkit to help Tribes distribute resources to community providers.

Today, NICCA remains a cornerstone of Tribal child care advocacy, leading national conversations on the future of child care, serving on working groups with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other organizations, and promoting the Tribal CCDF program as a model for care nationwide. Recognizing child care as essential for family well-being and economic resilience, NICCA continues to advocate for high-quality care and education for our youngest Indigenous learners.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the National Indian Child Care Association is to promote high quality culturally relevant child care and development and to unify Tribes and Tribal organizations by providing leadership, support and advocacy on behalf of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

OUR PURPOSE

Enhance the quality of life of Native Children through education, leadership, and advocacy.

OUR VISION

Tribal communities coming together to nurture & empower our children to lead our future.

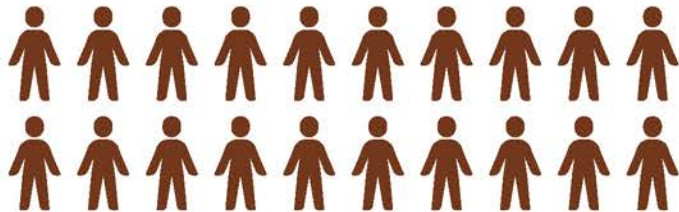


TRIBAL CCDF BY THE NUMBERS

The Tribal Child Care and Development Fund program provides funds to Tribes providing child care programs and services to their citizens, ensuring access to quality child care. This vital funding strengthens Tribal sovereignty by empowering communities to design and manage culturally responsive child care programs that address the unique needs of Indigenous families.

433,000

Native children to be served



546

Federal Recognized Tribes

264

Tribal Lead Agencies

597

Million dollars appropriated (FY24)

76

Million dollars for construction

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Defining Moments and Milestones of 2024

This year, NICCA continued to make substantial strides in Tribal child care advocacy, capacity building, and organizational growth. From landmark training initiatives to unparalleled advocacy achievements, our work has further solidified NICCA as a leading voice for Tribal sovereignty and child care.

HISTORIC TRAINING REACH

In the past year alone, NICCA provided training to **973 individuals**, empowering child care professionals across Tribal Nations with skills and resources to enhance early childhood care. This brings NICCA's lifetime total to **over 2,800 trained professionals**, a milestone that underscores our commitment to building resilient and well-supported Tribal child care systems.

UNPRECEDENTED FUNDING SUCCESS

NICCA's advocacy efforts led to yet another increase in Tribal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) allocations, continuing a decade-long trajectory of funding growth. Since 2015, NICCA's efforts have contributed to a remarkable **501% increase in Tribal child care funding**, an achievement that stands out as one of the most significant gains in federal support for Tribal child care.

793



Individuals trained in 2024

501



10-year % increase in Tribal CCDF



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

ELEVATED NATIONAL PLATFORM

This year, NICCA's voice was elevated to one of the most influential stages in the national discourse on child care and economic policy. At the **Brookings Institution Care Economy event** in June 2024, NICCA spoke to an audience of the nation's top economic and research leaders, alongside **Nobel Memorial Prize laureate Claudia Goldin** and **Senator Tammy Duckworth**. This platform enabled NICCA to highlight the strength and potential of Tribal child care as a model for universal care across the United States, gaining national recognition as an innovative leader in addressing child care challenges.

EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

NICCA expanded its collaborative reach through partnerships with influential organizations like the **Bipartisan Policy Center**, **National Association for Family Child Care**, and **Early Childhood Funders Collaborative**. These partnerships have allowed NICCA to bring Tribal perspectives to a national stage, shaping policy principles, quality standards, and funding structures that directly impact Indigenous communities.

2024 NATIONAL TRIBAL CHILD CARE CONFERENCE

A record-breaking **220 attendees** joined in Portland, Oregon, for the "Roots & Wings: Cultivating Courage and Uplifting Tribal Child Care" conference, engaging in transformative discussions on strengthening Tribal child care through cultural empowerment, innovation, and collaboration.

DEVELOPING CULTURALLY RELEVANT RESOURCES

NICCA launched several new toolkits and resources this year, including toolkits for **Policies and Procedures**, **Creative Curriculum**, **Advocacy 101**, and **Classroom Observations**. These resources provide Tribal child care providers with culturally relevant tools and guidance, supporting them in their mission to deliver high-quality, culturally grounded care to Indigenous children.





STRATEGY 01

PROMOTE

Collaborations for Advocacy and Capacity-Building

- Established a subcontract with the **Bipartisan Policy Center** to strengthen advocacy efforts and raise awareness for Tribal child care needs.
- Partnered with the **The Care for All with Respect and Equity (CARE) Fund** to support NICCA's organizational growth, ensuring sustained development and resources for Tribal communities.
- Collaborated with the **National Association for Family Child Care** to expand the Indigenous Caucus, supporting home-based providers who serve AIAN children or identify as AIAN, reinforcing culturally relevant care.

Key Achievements

Presentations and National Advocacy

- Shared insights at the **Brookings Institution Care Economy Event**, emphasizing Tribal child care as a potential model for universal care.
- Engaged with the **Early Childhood Funders Collaborative** to highlight the specific challenges and capacity-building needs within Tribal child care.
- Delivered sessions at the **National Indian Education Association Annual Convention** focusing on CCDF basics and hosting a dialogue on how Tribal CCDF can be strengthened and improved.
- Presented at the **National Indian Head Start Directors Association National Conference** with sessions on integrating Native cultures into curriculum and building early learning partnerships in Tribal communities, fostering culturally rooted educational practices.

Influence and Leadership in Early Childhood Initiatives

- Joined the **Early Childhood Leaders of Color Funders Advocacy Workgroup**, identifying opportunities for access to private funding for Tribal early childhood programs.
- Served as a **National Ally to the National CACFP Sponsorship Association**, supporting equitable access to child care nutrition resources.
- **Contributed to "Making the Ideal Real: A Gathering of National Early Learning Policy Influencers"** an invitation-only dialogue funded by the Bainum Foundation, joining 50 of the top early childhood professionals to shape innovative solutions to America's child care crisis and elevate Tribal perspectives in national discourse.

STRATEGIC ADVANCEMENTS



Guiding Our Mission: Four Strategic Goals for Tribal Child Care

NICCA's four strategic goals drive our mission to advance high-quality, culturally grounded child care for Indigenous communities. Through these priorities, we empower Tribal leaders, advocate for critical resources, and strengthen the future of Tribal child care.

01. Promote

Promote NICCA as a Data-Driven Research, Advocacy, and Capacity-Building Organization and a Voice for Tribal Sovereignty by elevating our role in research and advocacy to ensure Tribal voices lead in shaping child care policies that support sovereignty and culturally relevant care.

03. Educate

Build the Capacity of Child Care Leaders by equipping them with essential skills, tools, and networking opportunities to foster sustainable, high-quality care in their communities.

02. Advocate

Strengthen Tribal Early Childhood Education Systems by enhancing Tribal early childhood education by building networks, supporting policy solutions, and empowering Indigenous providers with resources and support.

04. Strengthen

Strengthen NICCA's Organizational Foundations by expanding our organizational capacity through board development, policy enhancements, and strategic partnerships to support long-term growth and resilience.

STRATEGY 01

PROMOTE

Notable Outcomes

Expanded Partnerships

NICCA has strengthened connections with Tribal leaders, federal agencies, foundations, and other stakeholders, positioning the organization as a trusted voice for Tribal sovereignty in early childhood.

National Recognition

NICCA is increasingly recognized as a leading expert in Tribal child care, frequently highlighting Tribal CCDF as a model for addressing the national child care crisis within existing funding structures.



Future Goals

Strategic Expansion and Advocacy

Enhance NICCA's presence among Tribes and Tribal organizations to further unify and amplify Tribal child care needs.

Build enduring partnerships with foundations, leveraging support for initiatives focused on Tribal child care.

Develop a Tribal Early Childhood Research Agenda to drive data-driven solutions and strengthen the field.

Strengthen partnerships with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—including the Office of Child Care and Office of Early Childhood Development—to expand Tribal child care programs and enhance flexibility within the Tribal CCDF program.

STRATEGY 02

ADVOCATE

Key Achievements



Policy Advocacy and Tribal Representation

- **Broad Engagement for Policy Feedback:** NICCA hosted events at national conferences, conducted webinars, and ran surveys to gather Tribal input on policy drafts, including the **Tribal Plan Preprint, the Tribal Request for Information**, comments for the **Tribal Consultation** related to early childhood programs in Tribal communities, and **Categorical Eligibility**. These efforts ensure that Tribal perspectives and needs are integrated into key policy documents.
- **Development of Policy Principles:** Collaborated with national partners through the Child Care for Every Working Family Network to **establish policy principles** focused on governance, programming, financing, and regulation, elevating the voices of Tribal child care leaders to the national stage.
- **Professional Excellence Advocacy:** NICCA actively participates on the Commission for Professional Excellence, working toward **equitable compensation, unified competencies, reciprocity, and professional autonomy** for early childhood educators across diverse systems.



STRATEGY 02

ADVOCATE

Building and Expanding Networks

- Strengthened relationships with the **Oklahoma Tribal Child Care Association** and initiated connections with the **Washington State Tribal Administrators** to foster collaboration and shared resources.
- **Convened early childhood education partners** working with Native children and families across Indian Country—including federal agencies and Indigenous organizations—to promote unity and align goals across diverse early education efforts.

Quality and Equity Leadership

- **Led policy discussions on child care quality** for Indigenous providers, ensuring Indigenous perspectives shape quality standards.
- Advised **Mathematica** on Home-Based Child Care Supply and Quality research, a project funded by the **Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation**, and offered expert guidance to the **Office of Child Care** and **Office of Early Childhood Development** on Tribal child care policy and implementation.
- Contributed to national child care legislative efforts, serving on steering committees and working groups to develop a vision bill for comprehensive child care support.

Notable Outcomes

Influential Advocacy

NICCA's active participation in national forums has amplified Tribal voices in early childhood policy, leading to frameworks that more accurately reflect Tribal needs, increased funding, and enhanced flexibility in CCDF regulations.

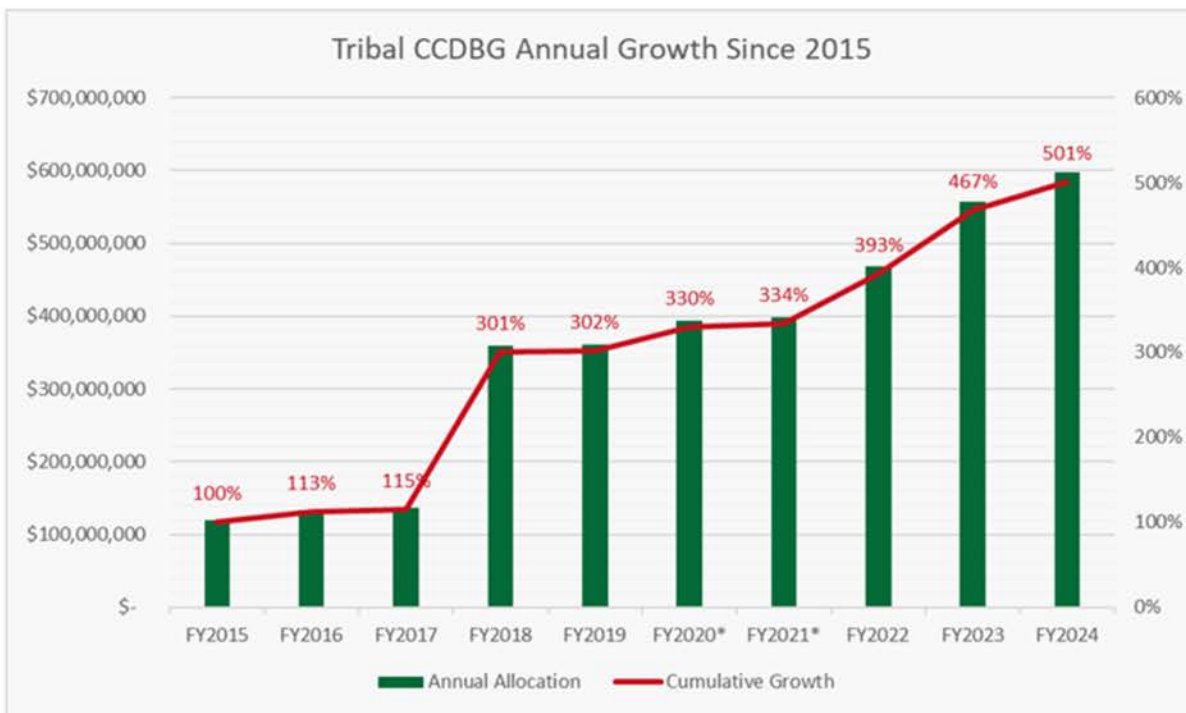


STRATEGY 02

ADVOCATE

Federal Funding Wins

NICCA's continued advocacy efforts contributed to federal funding increases that support Tribal child care programs, improving access and resources for Indigenous communities.



Future Goals

Professional Network Development

Create deeper, more robust professional networks among Tribal child care leaders to encourage knowledge sharing and resource access.

Policy and Funding Advocacy

Continue to advocate for increased Tribal representation and equitable funding in early childhood policy, ensuring sustained support for Tribal child care and early learning.



STRATEGY 03

EDUCATE

Key Achievements



Professional Development and Training Events

- Conducted a **Behavior Bootcamp** and **Program Planning Institute** in Denver, Colorado, offering specialized training to improve program management and behavior support.
- Held the **2024 National Tribal Child Care Conference** in Portland, Oregon, bringing together leaders from across the country to share insights, resources, and strategies.

Training and Networking Initiatives

- Launched a **Monthly Networking Event** for Tribal Child Care Administrators, creating a continuous support and knowledge-sharing platform.
- Hosted a **Tribal Child Care Advocacy 101 Webinar** with nearly 100 participants, equipping Tribal leaders, along with Native and non-Native partners, with essential advocacy skills to influence policy changes for Tribal programs.
- Organized **quarterly calls with home-based providers** in partnership with the National Association for Family Child Care, focusing on providers serving Native children.

Direct Program Support

- Provided **direct assistance to Tribes in Oklahoma and Iowa**, supporting the submission of construction applications and the opening of child care facilities, enhancing local child care infrastructure.



Development of Practical Toolkits

- Developed toolkits to support Tribal child care providers, including resources on **Policies and Procedures, Advocacy 101, Creative Curriculum, CDA Resource Guide, and Classroom Observations**. These toolkits offer Tribal providers practical guidance and training for daily operations and long-term planning.

STRATEGY 03

EDUCATE

Notable Outcomes

Professional Growth Impact

Trained 973 individuals this year, totaling over 2,800 professionals trained since NICCA's inception, equipping leaders with critical skills and resources to enhance Tribal child care programs.



Spotlight on the 2024 National Tribal Child Care Conference **Roots & Wings: Cultivating Courage and Uplifting Tribal Child Care**

NICCA hosted a record-tying **220 attendees** at the 2024 National Tribal Child Care Conference in Portland, Oregon. Under the theme “Roots & Wings: Cultivating Courage and Uplifting Tribal Child Care,” the conference celebrated the deep cultural foundations of Tribal communities and looked toward an empowered future for Tribal child care.

Participants engaged in two days of dynamic sessions, workshops, and keynotes focused on:

- **Strengthening Cultural Foundations:** Sessions on embedding Native values in child care curriculums and culturally sensitive practices.
- **Innovation and Advocacy:** Panels addressing child care policy, quality standards, and the role of Tribal child care as a model for national systems.
- **Community and Collaboration:** Opportunities to network and strategize, fostering unity across Tribal Nations and early childhood partners.

As a gathering place for Tribal child care leaders, the conference highlighted NICCA's ongoing commitment to uplifting Indigenous voices in the child care sector.



STRATEGY 03

EDUCATE

Future Goals

Resource Expansion and Access

Develop an online shared resource library to house NICCA's training materials and toolkits, making them accessible to Tribal child care leaders nationwide.

Continue providing targeted Training and Technical Assistance (TTA), both individually and in group settings, to support ongoing professional growth.

Professional Development Infrastructure

Implement a Professional Development Registry to formally document and recognize career advancements in Tribal early childhood education.

Establish a Tribal Credentialing System that can function independently or in conjunction with conventional credentialing, supporting culturally relevant professional recognition for Tribal child care providers.



STRATEGY 04 STRENGTHEN

Key Achievements

Board Development and Membership Growth

- Welcomed new Board member **Sarah Sand** from the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria in 2024, contributing to NICCA's vision and leadership. Although another newly appointed member had to resign shortly after joining, NICCA remains committed to Board growth and capacity.
- Hosted **quarterly Board meetings**, providing regular opportunities for strategic planning and decision-making.

Strengthening Organizational Foundations

- Enhanced policies and procedures to support NICCA's long-term success, refining operational practices for increased effectiveness and accountability.
- Expanded membership, broadening NICCA's reach and solidifying its role as a leader in Tribal child care advocacy and development.

Notable Outcomes

Board and Leadership Growth

NICCA's Board expanded with new members, strengthening the organization's leadership and positioning it to better support Tribal child care initiatives nationwide.



Future Goals

Expanding Partnerships and Influence

Cultivate relationships with Tribal child care partners and expand collaborations with other organizations in the field to amplify NICCA's impact.

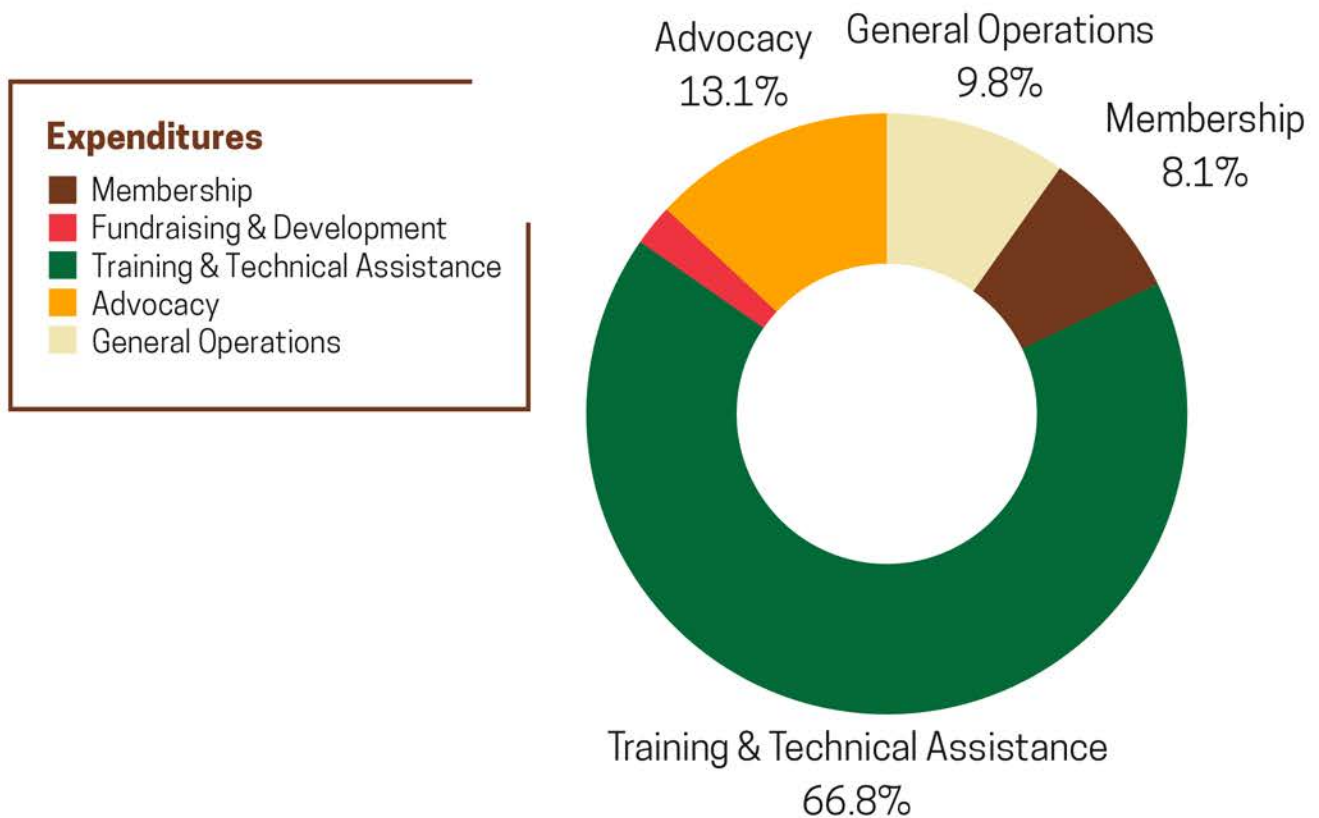
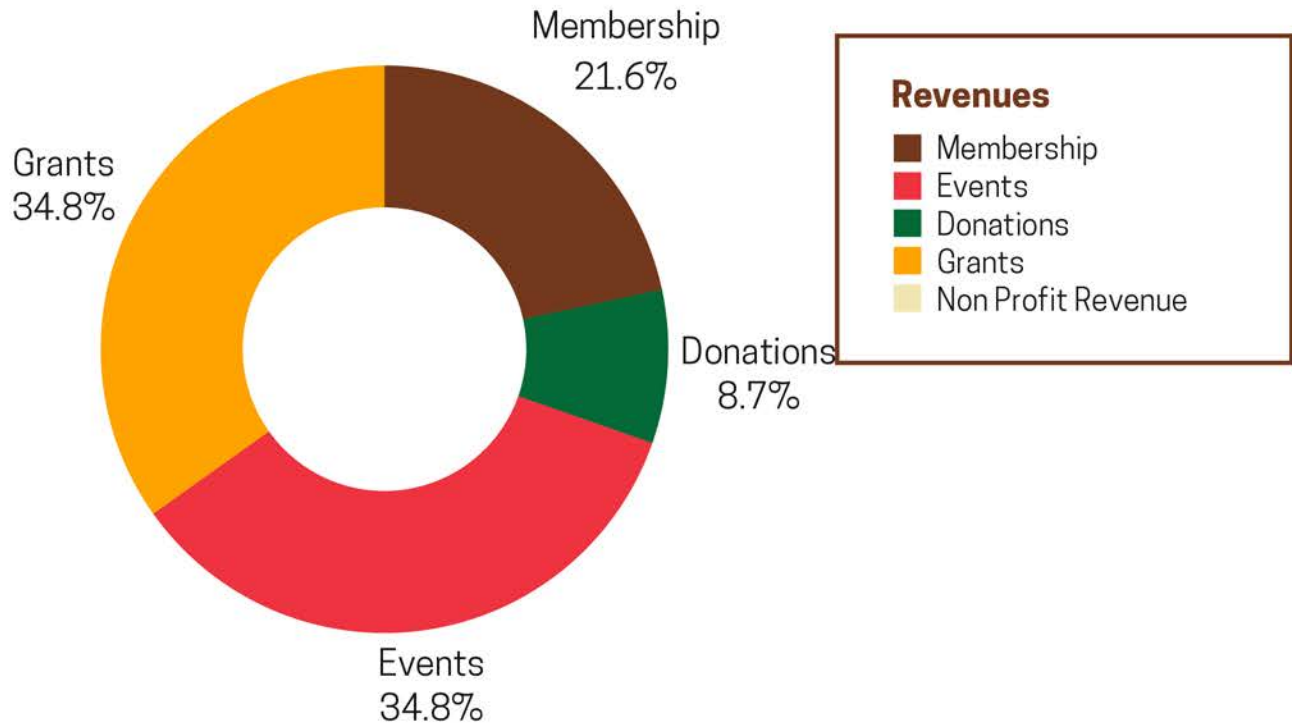
Establish an Advisory Board of experienced professionals to provide guidance and expertise, supporting NICCA's growth and influence in Tribal child care.

Organizational and Leadership Development

Continue to develop NICCA's Board of Directors, focusing on leadership growth and skill-building to enhance Board member contributions.

Invest in internal operations and best practices to strengthen organizational resilience and efficiency, supporting NICCA's mission long-term.

FINANCIAL REPORT





Empowering Tribal Child Care for a Thriving Future

Join us in shaping the future of Tribal child care. Together, we're building a brighter, more equitable future for Indigenous children and families.

MORE ABOUT US

Have questions or want to learn more about NICCA's work? Connect with us to explore how we can support Tribal child care together.



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