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News from the Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund



October eNEWS

***Announcing an Exciting New Opportunity!  
Request for Proposals –  
Outdoor Play Interventions***



The benefits of a well-designed outdoor play space are endless. For children participating in child care programs the time spent outside while at those programs may constitute the majority of their outdoor time each week. Thus, child care facilities play a critical role in offering play environments that support children’s learning, promote active play, and

provide exposure to an array of natural elements. Research has shown that even small interventions that add natural elements, sensory variety, and open ended play to children's environments can have an important impact on child development.

**At this time the RICCELFF is seeking three to four licensed child care centers from across Rhode Island to participate in a pilot project to help develop, design, and implement small scale outdoor play components that increase the value of outdoor play.** These components are also viewed as design "interventions" and could include changes such as adding unique sand and water play, art elements, loose parts play, natural elements, or simple cosmetic changes to the space. It will also focus on strategic space planning to promote increased and enhanced interaction between children, children and their teachers, and children and their physical environment. We hope to use the pilot sites as case studies and to create a resource that will give Rhode Island child care centers access to proven strategies to improve their outdoor environments in incremental, achievable steps. As a participant in this program you will receive, at no cost to your center, conceptual design, intensive support, and up to \$5,000 to implement these small scale strategies on your play space. All proposals will be due November 15th!

For more information about how to apply, please click the button below.

Learn More

## Center Spotlight – Cornerstone School



Play space fencing with no vehicular barriers



Composite play structure likely over 20 years old has an inadequate use zone, with shade awning too close. Also heavy mechanical unit fencing, though kept locked, due to 4' height is potentially accessible to children.

The Cornerstone School was built in 1972 and has been a resource for families for over 40 years providing a variety of services including an integrated early childhood program. After years of wear and tear, Cornerstone School was faced with an outdoor play space that had many challenges. Most significant were a worn and heaving playground surface, an aging play structure and the need for better playground fencing, all to improve safety and the children's enjoyment of the playground. The school's focus on serving children with a range of special needs and abilities created particular issues with the space, which lacked accessibility in a number of ways. Cornerstone was committed to re-modeling the playground, but lacked the funding to do so. In addition, they just weren't sure where to begin! Cornerstone received an Early Learning Facility Planning Grant that allowed them to conduct a full safety audit on the space and to create a prioritized plan to redevelop the space into something that better met their needs.



New fencing with new vehicular barriers

New imaginative play  
"Fish Shack" with repurposed slideCity of Cranston Mayor, Allan Fung, with Cornerstone  
students at opening of the playground

With their plans in hand, Cornerstone applied for and received capital funding through RICCELFF to get their project underway. Renovations included site work to address drainage issues, installing appropriate surfacing, refurbishing the fencing, adding vehicular barriers to the perimeter of the playground, adding landscaping features, and having a custom climbing structure "Fish Shack" and accessible sandbox area built on site. Cornerstone School successfully leveraged additional community support with donations from the RI Tree Council and the local law office, Cameron and Mittleman, providing gorgeous playground plantings to enhance the space and add natural shade. With this work complete, the stage has been set for future phases of work which will include continued improvements to the site such as the addition of rolling planter boxes, water play features, and refurbished storage for materials and equipment. Congratulations to Cornerstone – who just had their official ribbon cutting – we were thrilled to play a role in the successful completion of this project!

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## Changes to Our eNews

Starting next month we are going to include three new sections in our eNews that highlight specific information relevant to infant/toddler spaces, health and safety concerns, and business management strategies. These topics all align well with priorities laid out in the 2014 Congressional Reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant. We hope that these special features will help all of you as we all look to strengthen and support programs state wide. In addition to these feature areas, we will continue to provide you with timely information about our work here at the RICCELFF and information that will support you in your work to provide quality environments, indoors and out! These new sections are as follows:

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## ***Infant/Toddler Corner***

This dedicated section will focus on best practice facility considerations for our youngest Rhode Islanders. For instance, check out this awesome article called *“Landscape for Learning: The Impact of Classroom Design on Infants and Toddlers”* here:



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## ***What's New in Health and Safety?***

This section will provide a relevant article about what trends there are in health and safety as it relates to childcare. It could include topics specific to outdoor play, interior building systems, changes to regulations or quality improvements systems, or even information about outside surfacing, like this article here:



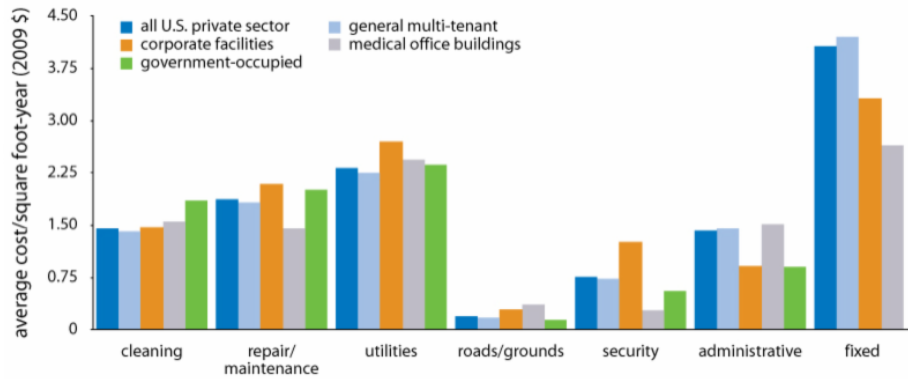
[Read More](#)

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## ***Building a Better Business***

One of facets of childcare that can sometimes be neglected is discussing how best to manage and operate the business. This section will be useful to help learn more about how to improve efficiencies and grow your business acumen. We may even include useful charts that help you better understand how much money you should be budgeting to the general repair and maintenance of facilities, like this:

Major commercial building category expenses by building type



Rocky Mountain Institute © 2011. For more information see [www.RMLorg/ReinventingFire](http://www.RMLorg/ReinventingFire).

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***About RICCELFF***

*The Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund (RICCELFF) is an innovative public-private partnership dedicated to expanding access to quality child care and early education opportunities throughout Rhode Island. The RICCELFF provides the capital and technical expertise that child care and early learning centers need to improve the quality and capacity of their physical space. The RICCELFF provides a combination of training, technical assistance, grant funding and flexible, affordable financing for a wide range of indoor and outdoor projects including minor renovations or construction of new, state-of-the-art facilities and playground spaces. [Click here](#) to learn more about what the RICCELFF can offer your program.*

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