Year 2 Report

FAMILY, FRIEND, AND NEIGHBOR INITIATIVE

March 2026

PBS SoCal

Project Overview

Co-Design Sessions and Interviews with Southern California Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers (FFNs)

Through a grant from the California Community Foundation, PBS SoCal invited FFNs to participate in co-design sessions and one-on-one interviews. The purpose of our conversations was to better understand which resources and topics resonated with FFNs, so we could provide the most useful and relevant content in a curated resource box. We also wanted to better understand how a PBS SoCal WhatsApp group could best serve FFNs and what would motivate them to join.

- **Co-Design Sessions:** Sixteen FFNs participated in December 2025 co-design sessions to explore a Resource Box and a Digital Community on WhatsApp, both designed by PBS SoCal. Half of the FFNs were Spanish-speaking. The FFNs cared for children aged 7 months to 15 years. FFNs were aunts, grandparents, family friends, or neighbors of the children they cared for.
- **Interviews:** In January and February 2026, PBS SoCal staff conducted follow-up interviews with eight FFNs selected from the co-design sessions. Three interviews were facilitated in English and five in Spanish. The interviews delved into topics explored in the co-design sessions, enabling further reflections with participants.

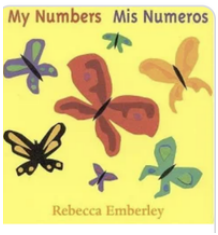
PBS SoCal utilized its in-house translation team to “transcreate” the co-design and interview protocol into Spanish so that the questions would resonate with and be accessible to Spanish speakers. Spanish-language transcripts were also transcreated by internal staff to ensure that the translations accurately reflected the conversations. All Spanish quotes have been translated into English.

The following report presents co-design and interview feedback from FFNs about the PBS SoCal Resource Box and Digital Community on WhatsApp. We also share how PBS SoCal plans to respond with a content and resource plan that helps meet the unique needs of FFNs.

PBS SoCal FFN Resource Box

We provided FFNs with a Resource Box during the co-design sessions, which included resources and tip cards on five topics (Social-Emotional Learning, Safety, STEAM, Literacy, and Self-Care for FFNs). Digital and Informational resources were accessed via QR Codes on the Tip Card. We presented the box as a sample of what a Resource Box might look like, with the intention of fine-tuning the offering to fit exactly what an FFN would like to use with the children in their care.









Tangible Resources

- An educational game, Rolling for Feelings, which had a die with emotions presented on each side
- My Numbers book
- Paper Plate Pizza Activity
- Car Seat Safety Mirror
- An envelope containing a small mirror with an inspiring motivational message

Digital Resources

- Sesame Street game that supports social-emotional learning
- PBS KIDS Work It Out Wombats game that promotes literacy skills
- PBS SoCal Hungry Papa game that promotes early math concepts
- Car Seat Safety Video
- Meditation Video





Informational Resources

- An article about how families can support socio-emotional learning
- Article about Family Storytelling
- Article on how to support STEAM with infants and toddlers
- Article on car seat and booster seat safety
- Article on wellness tips

Resource Box Feedback

Once FFNs opened the full resource box, they were delighted to see the variety of resources, with many commenting on the tip cards, the Rolling for Feelings game, and the car seat mirror. Here were some notable reactions:

- “This is the best thing because all of the materials are there”- about the Family Math activity
- “This is awesome. The tip card has all the information.”
- “How’d you know I needed this?” - about the car seat mirror
- “Feeling Dice! Oh, I like this!”
- “Love what you guys have, but it is limiting in age range and for kids on the spectrum.”
- “Tip card is the most important because we have all the information here in one place.”
- One provider said the mirror stood out - “Wow, to look at myself with that message made me feel good.”

After having the chance to use the box with children in their care, FFN interviewees praised the resources and enjoyed using them.

- FFNs loved the Emotions Die. Several mentioned that the die has been helpful in helping the children communicate their feelings and that they would like to receive more resources like this.
- Tip Cards were useful for having all resources in one place and for extending learning opportunities.





Resource Box Feedback

During interviews with FFNs, we learned more about what FFNs liked about the resource box and how they used it with children in their care.

“The tip cards were my favorite because they had extended learning you could click to learn more about that area. I think you guys are really on the right path. Here's an activity you can do. Here's the information behind it. I think that it's just great to have it all in one place for an FFN like me, who may not have the experience I have, to be able to facilitate an activity like that. Then ask questions, too, about what they're doing and what the activity is.”

“The one I use daily is the dice one. I've already gotten them used to the fact that when they come, they come looking for the dice. I ask them: "So, how are you all doing today?" What are your emotions today? They take it and put it according to how they feel: if they feel angry, if they feel sleepy. It has been extremely helpful.”

“We all like to get the materials because you would send us the most up-to-date educational materials. Because I have old stuff from when my kids were little in my home that the grandchildren play with now. The materials are so valuable, I would have to say, just because we don't make a lot of money and we don't have a lot of money.”

“Self-care is very important for both us and the children. I am very careful about that, because even though I am not a licensed provider, I try to do things the same way licensed providers do. As they tell you on the plane: "You need to be protected so that you can support the children." Don't put the mask on the child immediately, put it on yourself, because that way you can save the little person you're carrying next to you."

“For me, it was the [motivational message on] the mirror, a daily reminder that I'm the one who will give my children the tools they need most, or the support they need. I think it's a daily reminder that I'm here for them.”

Resource Box Feedback

During co-design sessions and interviews, we explored whether FFNs preferred caregiver-facing or child-facing resources, which resource types were most useful, which topics were most desired, and the timing of distribution. We found the following themes.

Audience

Most FFNs would like to see resources for both the caregivers and children, especially because FFNs are often not formally trained in childcare.

Types of Resources

- Educational activities and games to support the different age groups they work with
- Books, especially bilingual books
- Hands-on activities and crafts that appeal to multiple ages (i.e., the pizza activity was popular among different ages)
- Materials that can be used repeatedly: crayons, playdough, paint, markers, coloring sheets, math manipulatives, puzzles

Resource Topics

- Academic subjects (Science, Math, Literacy, Art)
- SEL and emotional regulation
- Safety: babyproofing, car seat laws, etc.
- Self-care
- Developmental progressions and milestones, and their complementary activities

Cadence and Organization

- Smaller, themed, or seasonal boxes delivered 3-4 times a year seemed most desired by FFNs, who noted that a large box might feel overwhelming.
- Smaller boxes would also allow for more intentional exploration and alignment with seasons or upcoming holidays (e.g., Mother's Day or Thanksgiving crafts).





Resource Box: Next Steps

Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers play a critical role in childcare, yet many lack access to the resources, guidance, and support needed to strengthen the care they provide. Based on the feedback we received, we believe the following curated resource box may support FFNs.

The PBS SoCal Family, Friend, and Neighbor Resource Box brings learning to life with engaging books, playful hands-on activities, and helpful resources. Each box also includes a tip card, making it easy to create fun, meaningful moments together. PBS SoCal will pack and ship the themed box, which will be delivered quarterly.

Themes

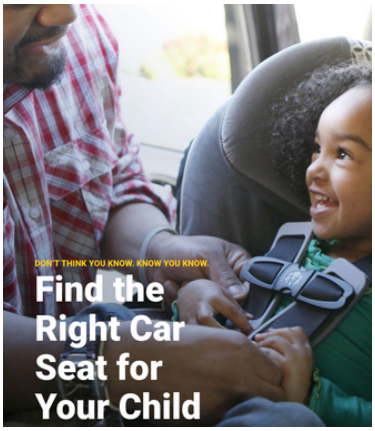
- Based on the findings from the FFN needs assessment and focus groups, the most prevalent topics of interest were SEL, STEAM, Literacy, and FFN Self-care.
- Seasonal themes will be woven into each kit and aligned to our 5 topics. Examples include back-to-school, holidays, and weather.

Distribution Plan

- FFNs can learn about the resource kit through our internal communications (email, socials, website, etc.), partner organizations, and community outreach.
- FFNs can hear about new boxes through the digital WhatsApp community, our partnerships, a landing page (to be created), our website, and via broadcast.







Resource Box: Next Steps

Content

Each quarterly Resource Box will feature a tip card and items connected to each of the core topics (SEL, STEAM, Literacy, and Self-Care).

Here are some examples of what future Resource Boxes may provide:

- Quarter 1: Book (Literacy), Family Math Raincloud Activity (STEAM), Journal (FFN Self-care), Emotions Go Fish (SEL)
- Quarter 2: Book (Literacy), Family Math Button Snake Activity (STEAM), Self-care kit (FFN Self-care), hand puppets (SEL)
- Quarter 3: Book (Literacy), Family Math Pipe Cleaner Flowers Activity (STEAM), adult coloring book (FFN Self-care), Breathing Mazes (SEL)
- Quarter 4: Book (Literacy), Family Math Stick Puppets Activity (STEAM), yoga cards (FFN Self-care), sensory stones (SEL)









WhatsApp Digital Community for FFNs

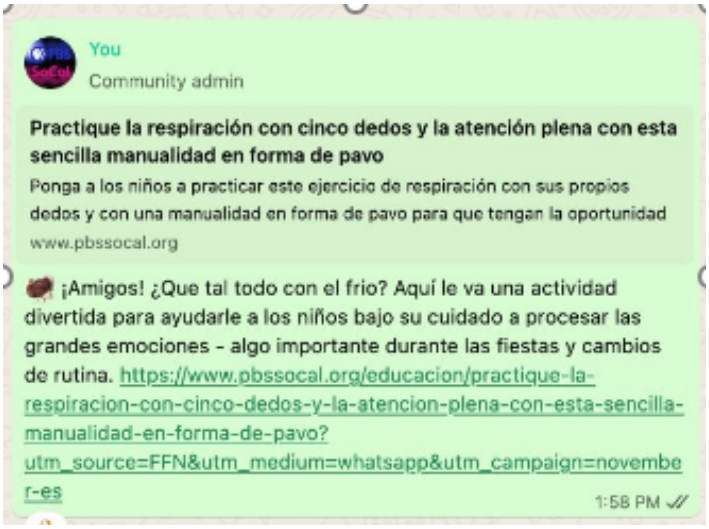
We learned from conversations during the co-design session that most FFNs are part of various existing networks and communities, both in person and virtually. Some of these groups are not designed specifically for FFNs—they are primarily community spaces for early childhood educators. This paves the way for PBS SoCal to create a digital community on WhatsApp to serve and recognize FFNs, providing a safe, moderated space where they can stay up to date on the latest childcare updates, resources, and laws.

Motivations for FFNs to join PBS SoCal Digital Community

- **Community Building:** FFNs said they would join the PBS SoCal WhatsApp community to have a safe space to connect with other FFNs and share their unique concerns and feelings as childcare providers.
- **Voicing and Learning New Ideas**: FFNs want to learn from one another in a space that enables the exchange of ideas and opinions. They enjoyed reading responses and getting ideas from other FFNs in the community.
- **Professional Development:** FFNs were interested in attending expert-led conversations around specific childcare topics (e.g., growth and development, behavior at home and school, supporting SEL, special needs, and developmentally appropriate activities).

In a digital community, FFNs would like to receive information on:

- Workshops
- Community events
- Childcare safety updates
- News articles related to changes in childcare law
- Recipes
- PBS resources and hands-on activities
- How to adapt activities for multiple ages and stages



Feedback on Digital Community

During interviews with FFNs, we learned more about what type of digital community would best serve their unique needs for information and connection.

A Hub for Resources and Information

“I think in [the WhatsApp] group, maybe that can be the information. Anything pertaining to the car seats, or if there's something going on in the community that the FFNs or anybody can take the kids to go and see, or things that caregivers can do with their kids at home. Recipes, arts and crafts, that kind of stuff. Or just having a forum to build friendships with other FFNs. I know the community that I have, especially those out here, is very, very small. To build a bigger community, I think that would be good.”

“I would like to receive resources, articles that are just to update the community, and news. Maybe information on gatherings or somewhere to take the kids for a weekend, if there's a good resource for them, like a science festival, or the STEM festival coming up, things like that. Because I'm really busy, sometimes those things will slip my mind. I have to keep track of it, but if I see an update or a reminder, and I'm like, "Oh, yes, we can do that this weekend, too," or we can readjust our plans.”- Maria

A Place for Connection and Learning from other FFNs

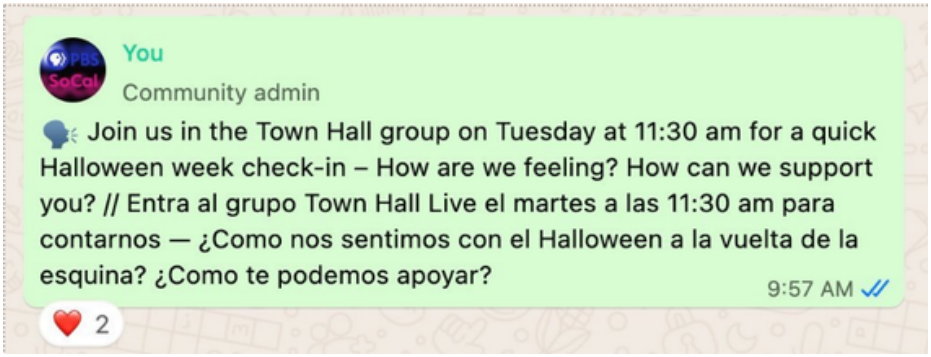
“Sometimes a day with the kids can be really stressful. There are days when they are calm, but there are days when they become very intense and leave you completely exhausted when they leave. It's good to interact [with other providers], because when you talk and start talking about the things that happen, it's like you vent. It would be good if all of that were discussed in a group of exempt [unlicensed] providers.” (Translated from Spanish)

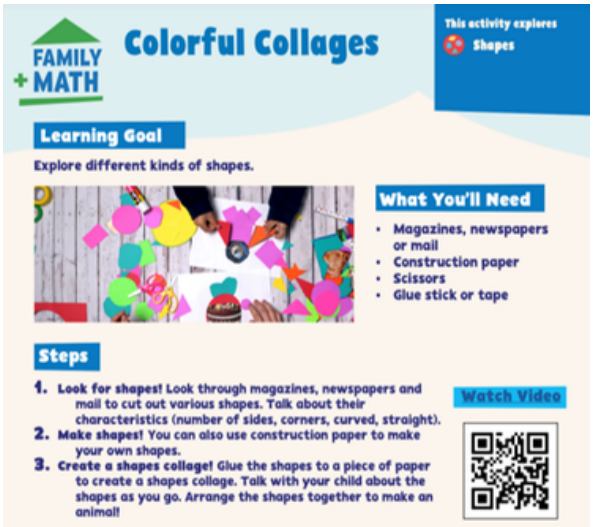
““[The WhatsApp group] is very dynamic and very respectful, very courteous. I like that, that as a community we can do that, and the energy and dynamics with which that group is working there. I loved it. I did feel part of the community, I felt part of the group. The resources we shared were also for everyone. It's not that this is only mine or only works for me. Because what we do is something we all have in common. I loved everything. In fact, I'm learning right now, and it's already given me ideas for things we can talk about here with my wife to move forward.” (Translated from Spanish)

Feedback on Digital Community

Content and Messaging Preferences

- **Messaging style:** Caregivers preferred separate messages for each language to ensure everyone received the information they needed. There was a preference for brief messages that highlighted one resource in each.
- **Audience:** Everyone preferred content for both kids and adults.
- **Content type:** Brief 3–5-minute news articles directly related to caregivers and childcare, information about community events and relevant organizations, updated health and safety regulations and laws, activities including how-to videos, workshops, and advocacy.
- **Extensions:** FFNs were interested in Polls and Live Chats to connect with other FFNs.
- **Frequency:** Most FFNs preferred to receive messages once a week or a couple of times per week.





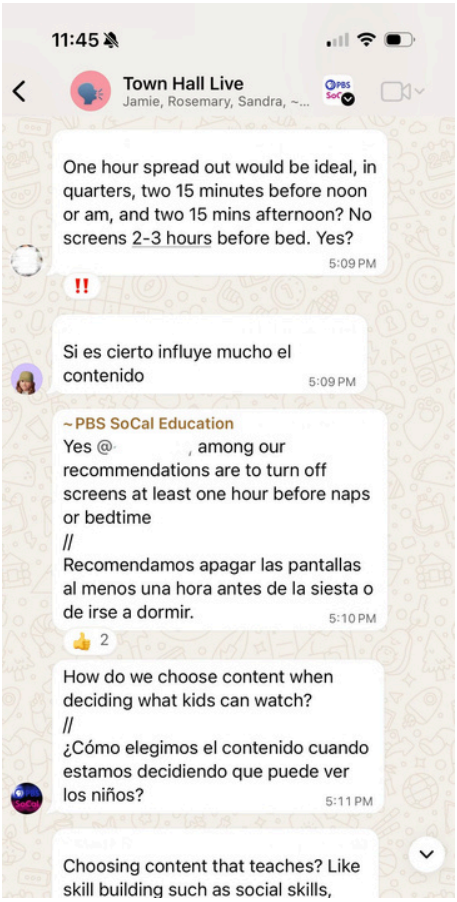


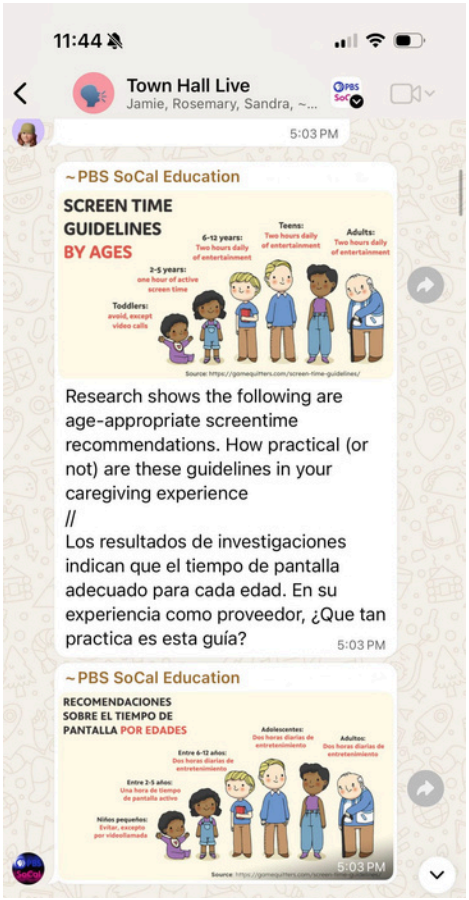
Feedback on Digital Community

Piloting Live Q&A Session

PBS SoCal facilitated three Live Q&A sessions during the month following the co-design sessions. Members of the group chat responded to our questions about childcare topics, such as screen time recommendations and ways to use games for educational purposes, and had the chance to read and respond to one another's messages.

- 82% of FFNs participated in the Live Q&A, noting that it flowed well and that it was great to read people's insights and get feedback instantly.
- They enjoyed reading other people's opinions and learning from them; however, some found it hard to keep up with all the incoming messages.
- 100% of participants said they would participate in another Live session. Some FFNs mentioned they would also attend scheduled Zoom conversations.







Digital Community: Next Steps

Based on feedback we received, we plan to build a PBS SoCal community on WhatsApp, a bilingual digital space where FFNs can build relationships and exchange resources. Expanding on our long-standing public media commitment to respond to the needs of families with high-quality early childhood resources, in-person and online, the Community will meet an FFN interest in receiving educational activities via text or email. This platform gives PBS SoCal the opportunity to share relevant tips and resources in group chats, on a platform that many FFNs already use. We will also create open discussion groups within the Community, building on a benefit that surfaced during our pilot — an FFN-specific space where they can lean on each other for support.

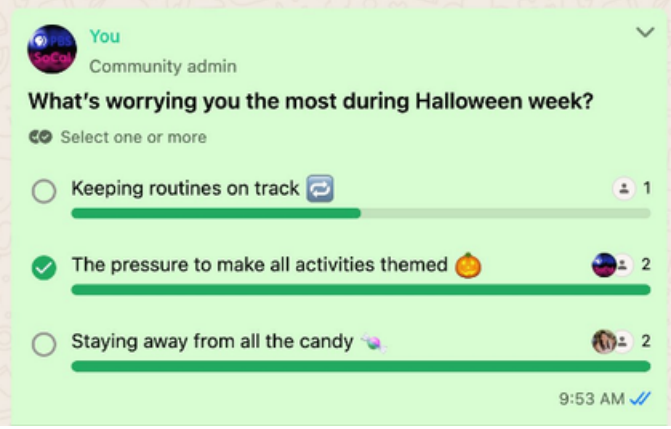
To start, the Community will consist of one monthly update and one monthly live session. With added capacity, we can expand our content calendar and community moderation to meet the 1-2 touchpoints per week that FFNs prefer. Extensions of the community could also include moderated Zoom conversations, panel discussions, curated resource bundles, and live sessions with experts.

Themes

- PBS SoCal's WhatsApp Community focuses on content for caregivers and ideas they can implement with the children under their care. Subjects covered include hands-on activities, workshops, community events, developmental milestones, childcare safety, and PBS KIDS resources.

- The Community is a safe, moderated space where FFNs can also share their own updates and ideas. PBS SoCal shares trusted, credible resources along with real-world context to make them more relatable. Adding a personal touch and examples of what has worked for us as educators, parents, or caregivers reminds FFNs that they are more than capable of applying these ideas in their day-to-day.





Digital Community: Next Steps

Messaging Frequency

We plan to communicate with FFNs in the Community throughout the month with the following seasonal and timely updates:

- Resources - PBS SoCal shares a resource with an opportunity for further engagement, such as an open-ended question, a poll, or an invitation to share results from the activity (including photos).
- Discussion Questions – This could be a scheduled live chat via text, a virtual workshop, a Zoom coffee chat, or other opportunities to discuss the theme of the month.

Communications and Outreach

- We will continue building rapport with existing members of the pilot group and establish a consistent communication schedule. We will create digital fliers with a link and QR code for existing members to promote the Community and its benefits with their FFN networks. We will also promote the Community to partners who work with FFNs and via our digital and broadcast channels.

- As the Community grows, we can segment communication into discussion groups and live sessions by preferred language (English and Spanish), topics (e.g., developmental milestones, safety), locations (e.g., Antelope Valley, Orange County), and availability (e.g., midday text chats, evening Zoom conversations). For example, we can start a conversation via text in a discussion group and then continue it over Zoom the following evening. In Zoom workshops, we can have bilingual introductions and then open breakout rooms. These can be for FFNs who prefer Spanish or English conversations. We also plan to poll the audience on the topics they would prefer to discuss, and we will lead breakout rooms accordingly.

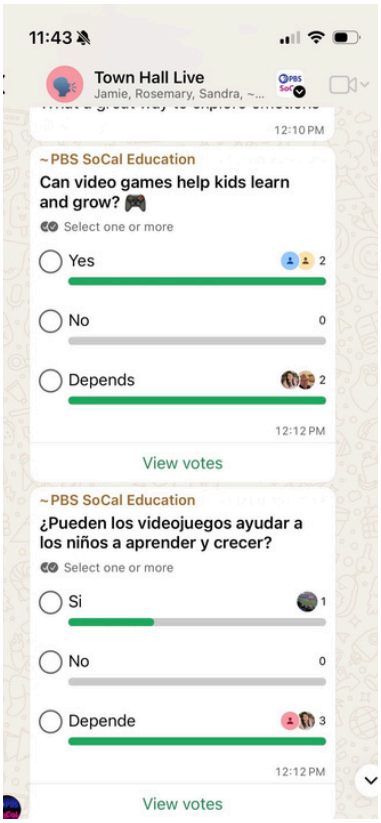
Digital Community: Next Steps

Content

Using our library of resources, including our resource box, workshops, activities, articles, videos on YouTube and Instagram, and games, along with links to PBS KIDS and partner resources, we will build out themes for each month. We will tap our internal team of experts, as well as community partners, to answer questions and host live sessions or dedicated workshops for FFNs and the kids in their care.

Here is a sample content theme:

- ***Theme:*** Spring / Primavera
- ***Resource in Announcements:*** How to make a bug hotel with recycled items / Cómo hacer una casita para insectos con objetos reciclados (4/1)
- ***Question:*** What are some ways to inspire curiosity in kids about nature? / ¿De qué manera podemos inspirar curiosidad en los niños acerca de la naturaleza? (4/1)
- ***Live chat topic:*** How to Talk to Little Ones About Climate Change with Khrystal Alas / Cómo hablar con los niños sobre el cambio climático con Khrystal Alas (announce 4/22, schedule for 4/29)
- ***News:*** Can be shared in individual language groups as it happens.





Looking Ahead

In Year 2 of this initiative, PBS SoCal made meaningful progress in deepening its understanding of and responding to the needs of Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers. Through co-design sessions, interviews, and pilot activations, we not only validated the value of tangible resources like the Resource Box but also demonstrated the power of connection through a culturally responsive digital community. Caregivers engaged enthusiastically, applied what they learned, and expressed a clear desire for continued support—affirming that this work is both impactful and necessary.

At the same time, this phase illuminated opportunities to expand our reach, refine our offerings, and increase the frequency and depth of engagement. With a clear, evidence-based plan to scale both the Resource Box and the WhatsApp Community—including expanded content, partnerships, and consistent touchpoints—we are well-positioned to build on this momentum. As we continue this work, we see a powerful opportunity not only to better support FFNs in their day-to-day caregiving, but also to help shape a more intentional pathway for their professional growth and recognition within the broader childcare workforce. By creating a safe, trusted digital space that meets FFNs where they are, we can reduce the isolation many experience and foster meaningful connections that strengthen their sense of community. We will also continue to connect caregivers to relevant resources and information that can make a tangible difference in their lives, from health and education to economic stability.

With continued support, we can extend these efforts to more caregivers, deepen impact, and ensure FFNs have the tools, knowledge, and connections they need to support children and families while also thriving themselves.