



# Investing Early: Community Child Care Scholarship Program Handbook



## About Let's Grow Kids

Let's Grow Kids is a statewide movement to secure affordable access to high-quality child care for all Vermont families by 2025. Let's Grow Kids is strengthening today's early care and education system to create immediate impact for families with children birth to five while simultaneously mobilizing Vermonters to call for policy change and public investment in child care to build a better Vermont for generations to come.

Let's Grow Kids

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## About this Report

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## Executive Summary

Early childhood education, particularly for children ages birth to five, has the potential to change our future: it's essential to building a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable society. Early child development, particularly from birth to five, is a foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society. Effective early childhood programs and policies can ensure that children have a solid foundation for a bright future.

However, three out of five of Vermont's youngest children don't have access to the child care they need. Furthermore, families who do have access to child care are spending up to 30% of their income on care, even with financial assistance, while early educators are earning more than \$20,000 less per year than their peers in public education and other professions. Even if a family receives full public assistance to pay for child care, it does not cover the true cost of care. Families suffer from lack of access, early educators suffer from insufficient compensation for their essential work, and child care programs suffer the challenge of recruiting and retaining high-quality staff.

Community child care scholarship programs are one way to provide financial support to families and to early educators, making child care more affordable for families while compensating early educators based on the true cost of care. While scholarships can depressurize the financial impact on families and early educators alike on an individual level, they can also be leveraged to impact society more broadly, changing the full child care industry. Let's Grow Kids, a statewide movement to secure affordable access to high-quality child care for all Vermont families, advocates for sustainable public funding to remedy this crisis statewide, and sees scholarship programs as a key tool in meeting immediate community needs, and modeling the impact of increased investment in child care.

In 2018, the City of Burlington, Vermont initiated the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) to increase access to and affordability of high-quality early care and learning for infants and toddlers from lower-income families. ELI first committed to building an adequate supply of spots in early learning programs through capacity building and quality improvement within child care programs. Over two years, the City granted funds and provided expert coaching to increase capacity for infants and toddlers at high-quality



"We can't raise the cost for parents to compensate for what we're spending because they might not be working full time, they might have reduced hours, they might be unemployed or looking for work ... they don't have the money. We were already taking about 30% of their income anyway for child care, so to raise it would not benefit the children or their families."

- Chris Nelson, home-based child care provider, North Troy, VT



child care in Burlington, and in 2020 it has continued to invest in creating new high-quality capacity.

At the end of the pilot year, the ELI had helped 20 families living in poverty to afford high-quality child care for the first time, and learned four lessons:

- Making child care affordable for families is only possible when a community can **leverage all available funding**.
- **Family engagement** is critical to the success of a community-based scholarship program. It's not enough just to build the program.
- **Active matchmaking** between families and child care programs is needed to connect new families to high-quality child care, and set expectations of both the early educators and the families.
- Piloting a new community-based program is a key strategy to **model sustained public investment**.

After 2 years of capacity building and a successful pilot year of community-based scholarship, three requisite ingredients were identified to build a successful community-based scholarship program:

1. a financial champion to secure sustained funding,
2. a culture of quality early education led by a responsive early childhood education sector, and
3. competent and dynamic leadership.

This handbook was created as an outcome from the experience of designing and launching a community-based scholarship program in Burlington, Vermont and is intended to help other communities benefit from Burlington's experience and amplify the impact of affordable access to high-quality child care for all families.

# Introduction

## Overview

This handbook is a guide for communities interested in creating a community child care scholarship program. A community child care scholarship program provides financial support to families and child care providers where the cost of child care is higher than the financial assistance available from the state. This handbook embodies Let's Grow Kids' commitment to securing affordable access to high-quality child care for all Vermont families by 2025, and recognizes community child care scholarship programs like the City of Burlington's Early Learning Initiative (ELI) and First Steps Scholarship as a successful example of such a program.

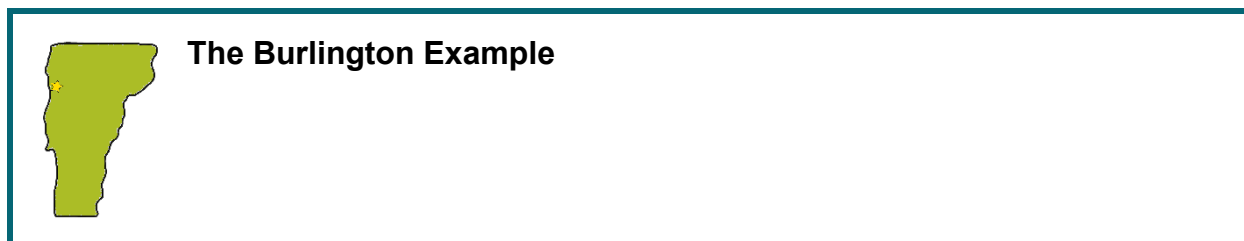
This handbook documents the process of creating and implementing the ELI to provide general guidance and action steps for implementation of a scholarship program, as well as specific examples from the experiences of the ELI. This information reflects Let's Grow Kids' work and learnings as of the time of publication.

## Navigating the Handbook

The handbook is organized into four sections that correspond to the chronological process for developing and implementing a community child care scholarship program. Within each section, you will find subsections to facilitate easier navigation.



Within each section, content related specifically to the Burlington ELI and its development and implementation will be indicated by the text box and the graphic, below:



There are a few callout boxes indicated by the brightly bordered text shown below. These include quotes and supplemental reference documents.

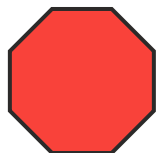


### Example Box

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There are several points in the design and implementation process when it is important to pause and reflect on the direction the project is headed and if a community scholarship program and/or the structure of your program is a good fit for the community you are serving. These are highlighted by a stop sign and include questions to consider at each juncture.



### Decision Point:

Throughout the handbook, you will also see references to relevant numbered appendices, which consist of templates, samples, process documents, and other documents to support the activity being described.

## What Is Let's Grow Kids?

Let's Grow Kids (LGK) is a statewide movement to secure affordable access to high-quality child care for Vermont families, and we have an urgent moral imperative to get families and children what they need to thrive, so we set ourselves a deadline to complete our mission by 2025. The movement has implemented two strategies to achieve its mission:



1. LGK works directly with child care programs and early educators to increase access to high-quality child care for families, providing them with grants, educational opportunities, and coaching. Through these efforts, LGK models what a publicly funded high-quality child care system could look like.
2. Recognizing that it is not enough just to treat the broken system, LGK is also building the system of the future through policy change and increased public



investment. By involving as many people as possible in the movement, LGK will secure a child care system that meets the needs of Vermont families long-term.

LGK is making strides for Vermont's children, families, and early educators with this strategy.

- In 2018 and 2019 alone, LGK helped early educators create more than 1,300 high-quality child care spaces, filling 15% of the gap between Vermont's supply and demand.
- LGK has 30,000 Vermonters—that's 5% of the state population—calling for change and increased public investment. In 2019, Vermont saw a historic 30% increase in public investment in child care.

LGK is funded by a combination of philanthropy from individuals and foundations as well as state and federal government funds. We rely on philanthropy to model the impact of public investment in the child care system and motivate policy change to sustain a full-scale system. When we achieve our mission in 2025, we will leave behind a well-supported, publicly funded high-quality system to help our youngest citizens thrive and carry forward the great legacy of our state.

### **What Is the Burlington Early Learning Initiative?**

In 2017, the City of Burlington, in partnership with LGK and an advisory group of early childhood, health, and education experts, launched the Burlington Early Learning Initiative (ELI) to address the achievement gap faced by low-income children in the city. Data shows that low-income Burlington children are disproportionately likely to be unready for school, experience a widening achievement gap as they age in the public school system, and experience a range of negative outcomes later in life, including reduced educational achievements, higher rates of chronic health problems, higher rates of incarceration and drug misuse, and lower lifetime earnings.

The ELI's goal is to increase access to and affordability of high-quality early care and learning for infants and toddlers from lower-income families. To achieve that goal, ELI first committed to building an adequate supply of spots in early learning programs through capacity building and quality improvement within child care programs. Over two years, the City granted funds and provided expert coaching to increase capacity for infants and toddlers at high-quality child care programs in Burlington and, in 2020, it has continued to invest in creating new high-quality capacity.



Building capacity was a necessary first step to achieve affordability and access to child care. The First Steps Scholarship Program (First Steps) is the community child care scholarship program used as an example throughout this handbook. Its goal is to identify low-income Burlington children not currently receiving Vermont Child Care Federal Assistance Program (CCFAP) benefits, provide them

scholarships to help access high-quality care, and provide them with CCFAP application assistance. The investment of City dollars and the leveraging of CCFAP help connect children with high-quality care, and ultimately, affordable access to high-quality early care and learning will improve educational and health outcomes and close the achievement gap faced by many lower-income children. Access to child care also means parents of these children can remain in, train for, or enter the workforce, and achieve improved family economic well-being.

The City of Burlington served as the **financial champion** for the ELI. The City identified “payment in lieu of taxes” funds as a revenue source for the program. These funds were designated to be used for educational purposes, but they were not designated to be used by the Burlington School District.

LGK and the City provided **dynamic leadership** for the development and implementation of this project, which was made possible by high-quality early educators serving Burlington families.

Given the **culture of high-quality early education** in Burlington, many of the child care programs that participated in ELI worked with LGK to build high-quality capacity, and participated in early education workforce development initiatives.



From 2018–2020, the ELI partnered with 10 high-quality early childhood programs to invest in high-quality capacity building.

- In 2018–2019, the ELI awarded \$662,424 to fund capacity building including, specifically, the:
  - Creation of 85 new high-quality spots
  - Preservation and stabilization of 166 high-quality spots
  - Quality improvement of 59 spots
  - Addition of 28 early educator staff positions
- The ELI continued to invest in building capacity in 2020, by granting funds to add 19 more high-quality slots.
- In 2019–2020, the pilot year of the First Steps Scholarship, the ELI:
  - Placed 23 infants and toddlers in high-quality child care programs
  - Provided \$48,000 of scholarship through just the first 9 months of the yearlong pilot in 2020

A brief overview of the ELI can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

## Phase 1: Research and Community Engagement

When designing a community scholarship program, the first step is to gather and analyze current data through a community needs assessment and to explore scholarship models from other communities. While states provide financial assistance for low-income families, this assistance often does not cover the whole cost of care and the amount may not be enough for families to afford high-quality care. The goal of a scholarship program is to help low- and middle-income families access high-quality, affordable child care, so they can experience better health, education, and economic outcomes associated with high-quality child care.

### Identify Your Community's Child Care Needs

The best community child care scholarship program will be informed by the child care needs in your community. If your community has identified a scholarship program as a strategy, you likely have already identified some of these needs. Communities should use existing demographic information and engage in a child care needs assessment process to understand the child care challenges faced by families, early childhood educators, employers, and other members of the community.

A community needs assessment may include feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders and may employ diverse tactics including online or mailed surveys, analysis of census or other population data, town hall meetings, community conversations, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders likely include early education experts, health care providers, families with young children, and community leaders. Broad stakeholder representation is essential, as is considering limitations to participation, including language barriers, work schedule and travel limitations, and access to child care during the conversations.



#### Sources of Community Needs Assessment Data in Vermont

- [2020 Stalled at the Start: Vermont's Child Care Challenge](#) – a biannual analysis of the supply of and demand for regulated child care for children birth through five in Vermont
- [Access: The Need for More Early Childhood Educators in Vermont](#) – An analysis of the early childhood educator workforce as it relates to regulated child care supply and demand
- [Young Children's Early Care and Learning in Vermont](#) – A brief from NORC at the University of Chicago that provides key insights into the early care and learning practices, needs, and perceptions of Vermont households with children under six



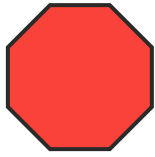
## Community Needs Assessment May Explore:

- Supply and Demand
  - What is the demand for child care?
  - Is there sufficient supply of high-quality child care to meet demand?
  - Are there differences in demand or supply by age of children?
  - Are there differences in demand or supply within geographic areas or neighborhoods?
- Affordability
  - What is the price of high-quality child care?
  - What do families contribute to child care cost?
  - What funding sources for families already exist?
  - Who is left out?
- Quality
  - Is there a culture of high-quality child care?
  - What concerns do early childhood educators and families with young children have about the child care in their community?
  - Are there bright spots to build upon?
  - What resources are available to support existing child care and early education programs to offer high-quality programming?
- Barriers
  - To expanding high-quality child care capacity
  - To finding high-quality child care
  - To affording high-quality child care
  - To funding investments in high-quality child care



### The Burlington Example

The Early Learning Initiative was the outcome of *Burlington Beginnings: A White Paper on a Comprehensive, Coordinated Sustainable Early Learning Initiative*, a 2015 white paper that assessed and documented the challenges families in Burlington, Vermont faced in securing and paying for child care for their young children. The white paper can be found in [Appendix 2](#).



**Decision Point:** If your community needs assessment reveals that scholarship is not the most critical investment, this is the moment to pivot and focus on another initiative to address early childhood education that is aligned with community needs.

### Research Existing Models

Communities across the country have implemented scholarship programs to supplement their state's child care financial assistance program or to address needs of a specific population. Examples of community supported child care scholarship programs can help inform the development and implementation of your scholarship program. The administrators of these programs can be a great resource in helping identify the strengths of their programs and avoiding missteps. Program elements to consider in research include community type, age eligibility, income eligibility, other eligibility, who administered the program, size or range of scholarship amount, funding source, and, if available, program outcomes.

### Requisite Ingredients for a Successful Program

While there are many different ways to implement a program, the three requisite ingredients for building a successful community-based scholarship program are:

- a financial champion to secure sustained funding,
- a culture of quality early education led by a responsive early childhood education sector, and
- competent and dynamic leadership.

A scholarship program requires sustained funding and, therefore, requires a financial champion to secure this funding. In the case of Burlington, the mayor prioritized increasing access to high-quality child care for low-income families and had the ability to prioritize a recurring municipal funding stream for the ELI. The financial champion could also be a philanthropist or an employer.

Quality early educators are the key to providing high-quality child care and advancing equity in care. A culture of quality early education and a responsive early childhood sector is key to building capacity of high-quality care for scholarship recipients and helping families understand the value of high-quality care. All child care programs that participated in the ELI are high-quality programs.

Competent and dynamic leadership for scholarship program design and implementation is critical. This leadership could come from the financial champion and/or an external design or implementation partner. This is a critical component to shaping a program that

meets community needs and is impactful for families and early educators. In the case of the ELI, this leadership was provided by the City and LGK, who was contracted to facilitate design and implementation of the program in partnership with the City.

### Scholarship Design Committee

Establishing a scholarship design committee ensures the program has broad community support and is informed by the needs of key stakeholders. The committee should represent important sectors of the community including health care, public education, early childhood education, parents, business, and local government. It is also important to engage individuals with expertise in monitoring and evaluation to ensure appropriate inclusion of evaluation of impact in the program design. Evaluation will be discussed in depth in [Phase 4: Evaluation and Continuous Improvement](#) but will be a critical aspect of each of the four phases of scholarship program design and implementation.

This committee contributes sector expertise to the design of the scholarship program and may also play a critical role in program implementation by identifying and securing funding sources or conducting outreach to prospective scholarship recipients. The design committee may become powerful advocates for public investment in high-quality, affordable child care.

The longevity and depth of engagement with this committee will vary community by community, but it is critical to convene early in the planning process. The design committee may also be able to support the community needs assessment process.

### Develop Your Plan

Use the community needs assessment and research of scholarship models to identify guiding principles and potential solutions and map out a plan to turn ideas into action. This is also a time to identify the resources, expertise, and funding sources for the program. This process is detailed in the following section, [Phase 2: Design Your Scholarship Program](#).



#### The Burlington Example

When recurring City of Burlington funds that were earmarked for educational purposes became available in 2017, the City chose to put these funds toward developing and implementing the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) and the First Steps Scholarship Program. The City distributed a Request for Proposal for early education consulting services to provide

advisement and leadership for the development and implementation of the ELI program. Let's Grow Kids (LGK) was chosen as the provider of these services.

The scholarship design committee used community needs assessment data to identify the main strategies to achieve the goals of ELI (close the widening achievement gap, improve educational and health outcomes and ultimately preserve public resources).

Based on the community needs assessment results, a scholarship program to increase affordability of high-quality child care for lower-income families was the primary strategy, but the design committee determined that before a scholarship program could be implemented, the City needed to increase the number of infant and toddler spaces available in Burlington, as well as help stabilize the spaces in existing high-quality child care programs. The capacity building program coupled grants to child care programs with technical assistance from LGK to increase the number of high-quality spaces available and to stabilize the spaces at high-quality programs.

The capacity building initiative was implemented while the scholarship program was being developed. A grant review committee that included members of the city council, community members, public school educators, and community agency leaders was established to review and evaluate each capacity grant application. This investment of \$660,000 in 2018 and 2019 resulted in 85 additional infant and toddler child care spaces in Burlington and helped secure 166 existing infant and toddler spaces. The City has continued to make investments in new slots in 2020, contributing \$19,000 of a total \$59,000 investment in a new center to offer up to 18 new high-quality spaces in Burlington.



## Phase 2: Design Your Scholarship Program

### Guiding Principles

Guiding principles serve as a vital tool when weighing decisions during the program design process and also support maintaining fidelity to the program goals. Guiding principles also help to orient stakeholders that come into the program after it is implemented.



#### The Burlington Example: Guiding Principles

- Program is child and family focused.
- Policies prioritize serving infants and toddlers living in poverty.
- Program structure prioritizes continuity of care to maximize impact for child.
- To ensure best outcomes, participating programs must be meeting or pursuing high-quality standards through state or national programs and be a Basic Specialized Care Provider.<sup>1</sup>
- Our partners who work and care for families and children will be included in development, review, and revision processes.
- Simplicity (administrative and for families) is an important consideration.
- A well-developed scholarship program can improve financial outcomes for early care and learning programs and leverage additional funding.
- Outcomes and evaluation will inform continuous improvement.

### Identify Target Populations

Clearly describing who the scholarship program is intended to benefit is important for both the program design as well as implementation and outreach phases of the program. Identifying the target population(s) early may also inform who participates in a scholarship design committee. Common demographics for targeting a community-based scholarship include residency in the community, family income, age of children, certain

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<sup>1</sup> A **Basic Specialized Care Provider** in Vermont is defined as someone who has completed the six-hour training for those who serve vulnerable children and their families in child care settings, provide intensive services in early childhood classrooms or in families' homes, or consult with teachers or directors who work with children and families.

risk factors, or specific funding gaps. The guiding principles can also help determine target populations.



### **The Burlington Example: Target Population**

Relying on its goal and guiding principles, the City of Burlington determined that the target population was children under three who were not already enrolled in a high-quality child care program and not yet eligible for universal prekindergarten. The City targeted families that resided in Burlington whose family income was less than 65% of the area median income.

## **Scholarship Eligibility**

First Steps Scholarship eligibility criteria defines the specific requirements that must be met in order to participate in the program and helps to operationalize the goals and target population. There may be additional priority categories as well as application considerations.



### **The Burlington Example: Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible for a First Steps scholarship, families must:

- Have one or more children under 3 years of age and not yet be eligible for Vermont's universal prekindergarten
- Demonstrate income or family support eligibility (families eligible for Early Head Start are automatically eligible for First Steps)
- Apply for state child care financial assistance prior to or concurrent with the scholarship application
- Reside in Burlington

Priority is given to:

- Families with all available parents in the workforce
- Children ages birth to 2 who are not currently in high-quality, regulated child care
- Families living in poverty
- Families currently receiving a First Steps scholarship (renewing)
- Families needing full-time care (defined as 5 days a week for at least 26 hours a week)

## Engaging Early Care Programs in Design

A scholarship program has implications for the community-based child care programs, as well as the families. Child care programs should be engaged during the program design phase, specifically to consider:

- Implementation timeline
- Available capacity
- Barriers to increased enrollment
- Enrollment process
- The funding model
- Payment provisions



### **The Burlington Example: Considerations for Child Care Partner Programs**

- The City of Burlington committed to child care programs that the First Steps Scholarship program would be a sustained funding source to support the financial stability of participating programs.
- Participating programs are paid based on enrollment rather than attendance, so programs are not penalized for a child's low attendance.
- Even if a child leaves a program, funding continues, to allow programs time to fill the vacancy with a First Steps eligible child.
- First Steps Scholarships include a financial premium above the state financial assistance reimbursement rate, in part because child care in Burlington is more expensive than the rest of the state, so that high-quality programs prioritize scholarship enrollment. First Steps also can pay in advance to reserve a slot.

## Finance of Community-based Scholarships

### **Program Cost**

The amount of funds required is primarily a function of the program's goals and the size of the population to be served. In addition, the per child cost will depend on:

- Local market rates for child care
- Estimates of the true cost of child care, which often differ from the rates charged
- Any state financial assistance or other funding sources available to families

- Desired duration of scholarship
- Cost of program administration (including outreach and fund distribution)



### One of the Best Investments

“The Early Learning Initiative will give more of our youngest Burlingtonians a more equal start in life and strengthen the child care system for all parents, children, and child care providers. Expanding access to high-quality child care is one of the best investments we can make to not only ensure that Burlington is a city where every child has the opportunity to succeed but also to reduce future public spending.”

Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger

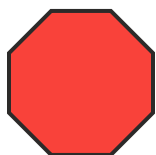


### Funding Sources

Finding a sustained pool of funds to support a community-based scholarship is challenging but several funding sources exist including philanthropic, corporate, and municipal funds (or some combination of these), as shown in **Table 1**. You likely identified some of these potential sources in your community needs assessment.

To secure a funding source for your scholarship program, you will need to demonstrate your case for investment through a financial model of the expected cost/benefit or impact of your program, as well as an estimate of the funds needed for program start-up and ongoing costs, including program administration costs and per-child annual scholarship amount.

The [Heckman Equation](#) is a widely used resource that details the return on investment of high-quality child care. The case for investment can also be made by illustrating how scholarships depressurize the financial impact on families and child care programs alike. Vermont created its own tool for articulating the financial return on investment for early care and learning in 2017: [Vermont's Early Care and Learning Dividend](#).



**Decision Point:** Do you have the funding needed to meet the identified needs of the scholarship program? Will you have to secure renewed funding for future years? If you are seeking to secure a scholarship program in perpetuity, have you considered the funds needed for establishing an endowment?

**Table 1: Potential Funding Sources for Scholarship Program**

Source	Benefits and Challenges	Examples
<b>Municipality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conveys community commitment to child care and demonstrates the impact of government investment in early care and learning, which may influence state investments longer term.</li> <li>Can be built into an annual budget, securing long-term funding.</li> <li>Many municipalities have tight budgets and competing priorities, so this may be a challenging funding source to secure.</li> <li>Funds allocated for educational or health-related purposes may be most appropriate, though in some communities, especially those with a workforce shortage, economic development funds might be a viable source.</li> </ul>	<p>In the case of Burlington, the City identified “payment in lieu of taxes” funds that were intended to be used for education but were not available to the school district. The City elected to use these funds for the Early Learning Initiative.</p>
<b>Philanthropy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philanthropic funding can be more flexible than municipal funding but requires skill and time to steward donors.</li> <li>You will need to ensure funding for this project includes administrative expenses in addition to scholarship dollars; some philanthropic donors will prefer to just contribute to the scholarships.</li> </ul>	<p>Several community scholarship programs across the United States are funded by United Way chapters. Given their mission of community-based and community-led solutions, there is likely strong alignment with a local child care scholarship initiative and close ties to other early care and education stakeholders. Another common funder is a Community Foundation, which serves as the body to pool philanthropic support from several philanthropists or family foundations.</p>
<b>Employers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding from employers is likely to result in smaller grants unless the employees of the business or organization directly benefit from the scholarship program.</li> <li>Scholarship programs can be designed as an employee benefit and/or serve lower wage earners. This option would likely require a certain number of scholarship spots to be reserved for specific employers. It is important to consider potential access and equity issues for any model that requires reserving spaces for employers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses can partner with a child care program and offer in-kind or capital support in exchange for spots for employees.</li> <li>Employers can provide scholarship funds directly to staff, allowing them to choose the child care program that works best for their family. The Alchemist Brewery in Stowe, VT provides \$26/day for any employee accessing child care.</li> <li>An employer could support an on-site child care center on their campus, a strategy employed by Patagonia.</li> </ul>

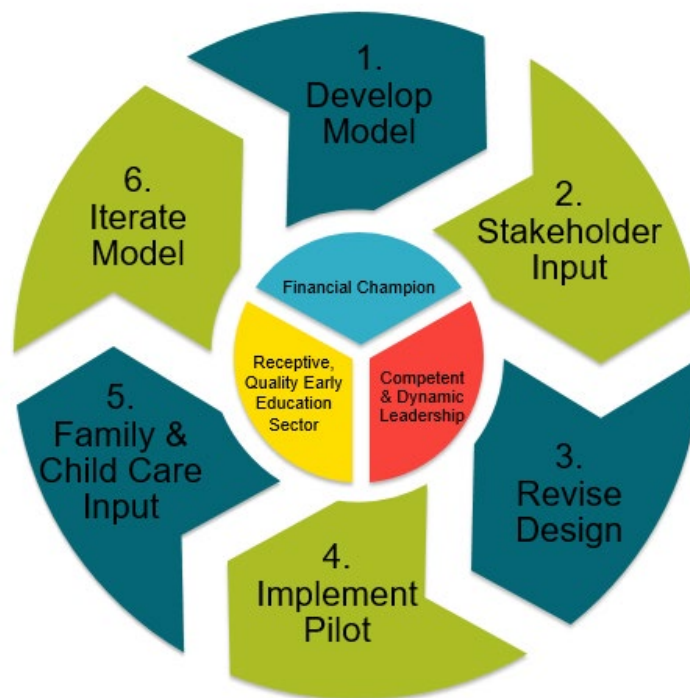


### The Burlington Example

- The First Steps Scholarship is funded by the City of Burlington, which had identified “payment in lieu of taxes” funds that should be used for educational purposes but were not available to the school district.
- The funding availability for First Steps is based on city council approval of annual budget allocation.
- The availability of scholarship funds enabled more low-income families to access Vermont’s CCFAP, whereas previously, the co-pay after a CCFAP benefit (resulting from the relatively high Burlington rates) made child care inaccessible.
- Programs receive payments approaching the true cost of high-quality care by layering publicly funded universal prekindergarten (UPK), CCFAP, and scholarship funding, making higher wages and benefits possible.
- To see a graph of First Steps Family Income and Scholarships Compared to State Child Care Financial Assistance, see [Figure 1](#).

### Phase 3: Pilot Implementation

Implementing a complex program, like a scholarship, requires a pilot phase to test all aspects of the program. A one-year pilot will allow you the opportunity to examine and refine your design, and determine any changes needed to bring the program to scale. Specifically, the pilot year will allow for testing the delivery model, the program partnerships, the family experience, and the enrollment and payment processes. The evaluation plan developed in the design phase will provide guidance for collecting stakeholder input and design revisions, as well as being one basis for making iterations to the model before implementing beyond a pilot phase. You'll understand if the idea is desirable and feasible, and begin to see if this program could be viable at scale.



#### Scholarship Delivery Model

The first step to launching a pilot program is the model for how the program will be brought to the target population. This scholarship delivery model encompasses a variety of administrative functions and an associated timeline.

You will need to identify an agency/organization(s) with the expertise and capacity to administer the scholarship program. Considerations for vendor selection should include administrative structure/experience, community engagement, service area, and successful experience with income-based financial assistance programs.

The timeline for the scholarship delivery should be based on a logical enrollment date, such as the beginning of the K–12 school year, the beginning of the calendar year, or some other meaningful date in your community. The scholarship design committee can likely be helpful in determining the logical enrollment date. This will improve the ease of administration and opportunities for family outreach and recruitment.



### **The Burlington Example**

As the ELI program began to take shape in late 2018, the City contracted with an agency that was already experienced in income verification and well-connected to the Burlington-area child care system to help administer the scholarship program. To see an annual implementation calendar of the ELI, see [Figure 2](#).

## **Partnerships with Child Care Programs**

A community-based scholarship program must establish partnerships with a variety of high-quality child care programs. The scholarship program should establish criteria for participating child care programs to ensure they are prepared to enroll children and receive scholarships.

Possible criteria include:

- Participation or established quality in the state child care regulatory and state or national quality standards (QRIS)<sup>2</sup>;
- regulatory compliance;
- high level of professional preparedness of staff;
- participation in state child care financial assistance programs;
- demonstrated use of services and resources to support children and families;
- willingness to prioritize enrollment of scholarship recipients;
- sufficient enrollment capacity for scholarship recipients; and
- program location, including access by public transportation.

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<sup>2</sup> Vermont's QRIS system for child care, preschool, and afterschool programs is the STep Ahead Recognition System, known as STARS. Stars range from 1 to 5, with 4 and 5 stars considered to be high-quality.





### The Burlington Example: Criteria for Child Care Partner Programs

The City of Burlington was fortunate to start with a culture of high-quality child care programs that were willing to participate in the First Steps program.

Partnering programs with the First Steps scholarship programs must:

- Be regulated by the Child Development Division (CDD)
- Be high-quality: 4 or 5 stars or accredited by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- Be designated as a Basic Specialized Care provider
- Accept Vermont CCFAP
- Implement Strengthening Families<sup>3</sup> Framework (or have evidence of family support and engagement)
- Be willing to enter a partnership agreement and meet required conditions
- Have experienced and knowledgeable administrative leadership
- Assist in recruitment and referral of eligible scholarship families

Outreach to potential partner programs should begin in the design phase, ideally with one or more programs on the scholarship committee, and as you prepare to implement the program, establish partnerships with a more diverse group of programs to ensure placements that meet the needs of the scholarship recipients. Outreach to these programs includes setting expectations and developing a shared understanding of the scholarship program. The following diagram illustrates expectations of partner programs.

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<sup>3</sup> **Strengthening Families** is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five key protective factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children.



For further detail on partner program roles and responsibilities, see the partner program agreement form and the enrollment template in [Appendix 3](#) and [Appendix 4](#), respectively.

### **Outreach to Families**

Working families who are eligible for scholarships may not have time, knowledge, or the connections to navigate the child care system or the scholarship program. By investing in family outreach, you increase the likelihood that families who most need the scholarship program will have access.

Family outreach will create awareness of the scholarship program and identify those who could potentially qualify for and benefit from the program. A compelling outreach strategy will include a variety of ways that families can become aware of your scholarship program, such as promotional materials, a case manager, a pediatrician, and a place of employment.

Key stakeholders and the scholarship design committee can help to reach out to community partners that have relationships with families that could be eligible for the scholarship. In many communities, language and culture will be important considerations for the outreach strategy. Translated written materials, translators, and community and cultural liaisons may be needed.



### **The Burlington Example: Equitable Family Outreach and Support**

The City of Burlington found it vital to have the Family Outreach and Engagement Coordinator available throughout the scholarship year, to help families with questions or concerns around their child's enrollment or funding. The Family Outreach and Engagement Coordinator was integral to helping families enroll their child and was key to implementing a more equitable program. This individual was able to provide as much or as little support as needed—whether it be for navigating a program visit; ensuring a family understood the program environment, routines, policies, and protocols; or completing relevant paperwork. The coordinator helped families connect with translators, access the internet, a printer, etc.

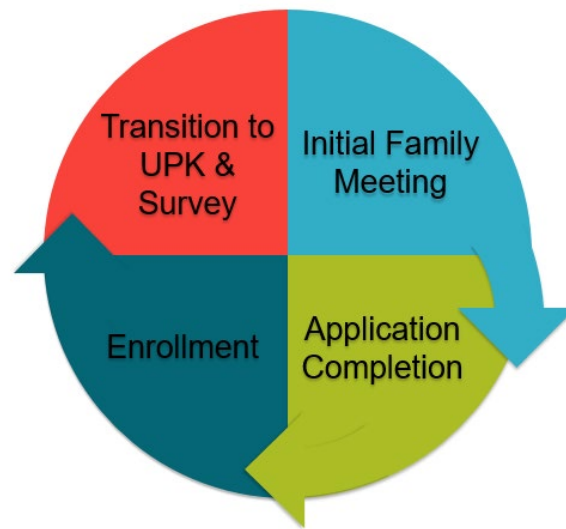
Working with case managers was another key tactic for ensuring families had the support needed to participate in the scholarship program and ensuring a good fit for the family.

Vermont has one of the largest refugee resettlement populations in the country compared to our state population, and Vermont minority populations tend to be concentrated in urban centers, including Burlington and the neighboring city of Winooski. It was particularly important to work with organizations serving these populations to recruit families for the scholarship program. The ELI benefitted greatly from partnership with community organizations that were able to provide translation services and share the opportunity with families already accessing their services. Partners included the Association of Africans Living in Vermont and the Janet S. Munt Family Room, a Parent Child Center.<sup>4</sup> Translated materials, specific neighborhood outreach, and out-of-the-box promotion helped reach families who were good candidates for the scholarship program.

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<sup>4</sup> **Parent Child Centers** are a network of 15 organizations across Vermont that help families make sure children get off to a healthy start. Services include early childhood services, home visits to families with young children, playgroups, parent education, parent support, and information and referral.

Beyond initial awareness building of the scholarship program, family engagement has four main stages, which are illustrated in the following graphic.



### **Initial Family Meeting**

Once a family self-identifies as eligible, an initial first meeting will help determine eligibility and if the scholarship will meet their needs. This meeting can be held over the phone, via video conference (like FaceTime or Zoom), or if conditions allow, in person.

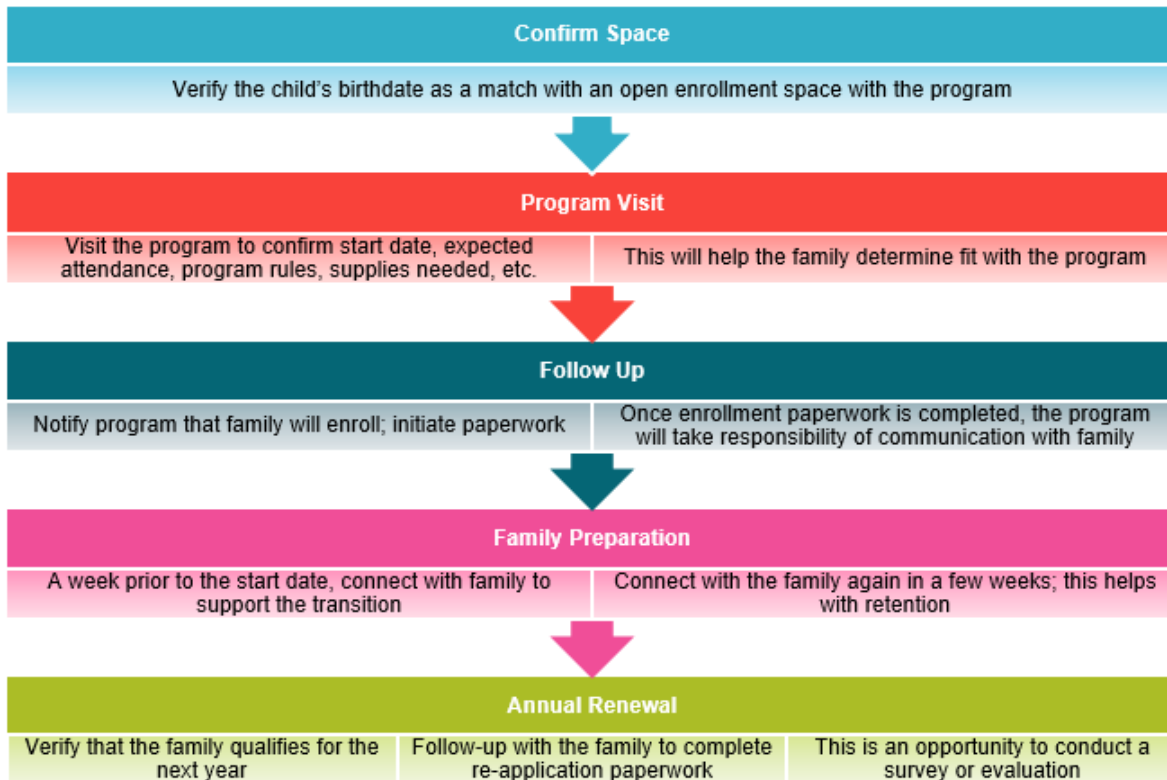
At the first meeting, families should receive all application materials and a visual of the scholarship process. Families should bring all supporting documentation needed to complete the application. Having a set of talking points, including the purpose of the scholarship, the process, eligibility, and timeline, will help ensure that all families understand the program.

### **Application Completion**

Often, the application can be completed at the first meeting, though families may need to provide additional information or documentation to complete the application. A sample application from the ELI can be found in [Appendix 5](#). After completion, families should be notified by both mail and phone when their application has been accepted or declined. The notification can also include any next steps and a timeline. A sample scholarship notification letter can be found in [Appendix 6](#). The follow-up phone call will ensure the family received the letter, understands the next steps and timeline, and plans to move forward with enrollment. If the family works with a case manager, the case manager should also be notified of the scholarship, next steps, and timeline.

## Scholarship Enrollment

Once a family has received the scholarship notification, families may then need assistance finding a space that will be a good fit for their family as they begin the enrollment process. The graphic below shows several steps that will help ensure a good match between family and program.



## Transition to Universal Prekindergarten

In Vermont, all 3- and 4-year-olds have access to voluntary, publicly funded universal prekindergarten (UPK) for 10 hours a week for 35 weeks of the year. Families in the scholarship program may benefit from support from their child care program to enroll their child in UPK, either at their current child care program or through another program. This continuity of care provides additional support to the family and the child. [Appendix 7](#) provides a sample of the End of Funding Notification, which lets the child care program partner know that scholarship eligibility has ended, and the child is now qualified for universal prekindergarten. If a family chooses to end their participation in the scholarship program, [Appendix 8](#) provides a sample communication for the financial champion.

## Phase 4: Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

During the program design phase, the advisory committee should create an evaluation plan for the scholarship program. Focusing on evaluation from the beginning of the project helps establish a culture of continuous improvement for the scholarship program and ensure that data guides every step of the program design and implementation. The evaluation will yield results that could continue to inform and improve the scholarship program while also setting the stage for a larger and longer-term impact evaluation. A committee or subcommittee that includes partners with interest in each of the outcome areas (health, economic well-being, education, child development) as well as an evaluator will guide the committee to collect the relevant data in a timeframe that allows for continuous improvement.

### Evaluation Approach

Even though evaluation of the program is the last thing to complete, evaluation criteria, including qualitative and quantitative measures of success, must be established in Phase 2 (design) of the scholarship program. Designing the scholarship program with the evaluation in mind will ensure the program stays focused on its goals. As a new program, it will be important to evaluate both the process of how the program was implemented (What worked? What are the opportunities for the next round?), the outcomes (How many children are served? How many programs participate?), and the impacts (Are scholarship recipients better off? Are partner programs more financially stable?).

If possible, it is ideal to establish a partnership with an academic institution or other researcher that can guide the evaluation development and process and connect the program to the bigger body of research on equity, health and economic well-being, and income-based programming. For example, the research questions to measure the impact of the scholarship program could be:

1. Does a scholarship program help to bridge the equity gap in access to high-quality child care by increasing participation among low-income families?
2. Does participation in high-quality child care affect health and education outcomes for young children from low-income families? Can participating in high-quality care reduce income disparities as measured by developmental progression, immunizations, or emergency room visits?
3. Can access to high-quality child care impact economic circumstances at a household level? For example, does access to child care support parental employment and household earnings growth?

The process evaluation of capacity grants and scholarships was informed by a results-based accountability-style logic model to ensure that results were captured for each stakeholder group in each category. Results of the process evaluation have also been used to keep the stakeholders informed and engaged, as well as to attract research/impact evaluation partners and funders.

**Table 2: Process Evaluation Framework**

	How much?	How well?	Is anyone better off?
<b>Municipality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of scholarships provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % increase in CCFAP applications</li> <li>• % increase in CCFAP participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of new [income eligible] children in high-quality child care</li> </ul>
<b>Administrator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of scholarship applicants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of applicants that receive scholarship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of programs/families matched</li> <li>• % of participating programs satisfied</li> </ul>
<b>Child Care Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of slots reserved or available for scholarship recipients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of scholarship recipients who get a space</li> <li>• % of reserved spaces that are enrolled with a scholarship recipient</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of participating programs fully enrolled</li> <li>• % of participating programs that describe positive impact of scholarship on families</li> </ul>
<b>Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of days attendance</li> <li>• % of planned days attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % enrolled for a full year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and well-being indicators</li> <li>• Does child enroll in UPK at age 3?</li> </ul>



### **The Burlington Example**

Since the inception of the ELI, the City of Burlington has had a commitment to evaluation and continuous improvement.

In addition to collecting and using administrative data to evaluate the program, surveys of families can be conducted at the end of the first year, during the re-application process. The survey can help capture details around how the scholarship program is supporting the parents' ability to work, attend classes, and manage everyday challenges.

While the team was able to utilize a results-based accountability framework to collect information about the effectiveness of the investments, a true understanding of the impact will require an expert, unbiased evaluation partner. Throughout ELI, the City has brought economics, health care, and early childhood education experts to the initiative for their guidance not only in implementation but in demonstrating impact. Efforts are underway to find a funding source to support an unbiased third-party researcher to investigate the impact of the First Steps pilot on the families that it has served.

### Sharing Results

Evaluation results are best shared with three audiences: the direct stakeholders who participated in the evaluation (child care programs, families, program staff, direct funders), indirect stakeholders (evaluation and advisory committee members, policymakers, community members, indirect funders), and external audiences (through public meetings, conferences, publications, etc.).

Sharing evaluation results with direct stakeholders could be a fairly informal process where program feedback is considered as part of continuous improvement and ongoing review of scholarship program implementation and design. It might also be communicated in a relatively informal “roundtable” environment or presented more formally with a report and presentation.

Indirect stakeholders may be further removed from the day-to-day scholarship program, so a more thoughtful and formal sharing process is required. This might be done through an open meeting of the public that stakeholders are encouraged to attend or that the advisory committee hosts. An executive summary of results as well as a detailed evaluation report should accompany this.

Opportunities to share results with external audiences should be sought. Making child care affordable for families is an important policy issue nationally and many external audiences will want to learn from evaluations of community-based scholarship programs as they seek to create their own policy solutions to affordability.





### **The Burlington Example: Evaluation of the Pilot**

During the pilot year of the First Steps Scholarship, baseline data was collected from families during the application process. Not only did this give us information to compare to after the first year, but it also provided a helpful snapshot of who was being served by the First Steps program.

#### **Pilot Participants:**

- The average family income was \$21,816.
- Forty percent of pilot participants are enrolled in Reach Up, a program that helps eligible parents gain job skills and find work so they can support their minor, dependent children.
- The average family size was 3.87.
- The range of ages of children whose families applied for the pilot was 3 to 21 months.
- The average age of children whose families applied for the pilot was 13 months.
- Twenty out of 29 families that were offered a scholarship and placement at a high-quality center enrolled during the pilot.
- The typical range of scholarships was from \$2,300/year to \$6,000/year and the average scholarship amount awarded was \$3,334/year.
- Most of the applicants offered placement were headed by a single parent.
- In one in four families, English was not the primary language spoken.
- To see First Steps Scholarship Applicant Demographics and Enrollment, see [Figure 3](#).

### **Lessons Learned from the Early Learning Initiative Pilot**

#### **Takeaway 1: Leverage all available funding**

The program layers all available funding to make child care affordable for families and ensure that early care and learning programs are compensated for full tuition for their programs. Combining multiple funding sources helped close the funding gap for families and programs in a community where the market rate of child care is higher than the state average. The program also specifically focuses on infants and toddlers, as Vermont already provides 10 hours of universal, publicly funded prekindergarten for all 3- and 4-year-olds. In Vermont, CCFAP is dependent on attendance, not just enrollment.



### **Takeaway 2: Family Engagement is Critical**

First Steps has successfully enrolled families who would not otherwise have been able to enroll in full-time child care because it engaged a Family Outreach and Engagement Coordinator to work one-on-one with families to help them enroll in the scholarship program and connect to other support services. The Family Outreach and Engagement Coordinator helps families navigate communication, transportation, and other challenges. Family outreach was essential to get the word out about this new program, and provided so much value in helping families successfully navigate all aspects of child care that the role has become a cornerstone of the First Steps program.

### **Takeaway 3: Active Matchmaking**

The team used an active “matchmaking” process to match families with available child care programs to ensure that any space offered to a family would meet their needs. This included considerations such as:

- Accessibility: Affordable child care can still be a barrier if a family is unable to access the location. For example, if a space is on the far side of the city and requires multiple bus transfers, a family may not use the space.
- Culturally appropriate care: Ensuring that a child care program is able to meet any cultural considerations of the family. Examples encountered during the pilot year included:
  - Ensuring a program served food that meets a family’s religious, cultural, and dietary needs
  - Consideration of the family’s cultural perceptions of child care outside of the home and subsequent implications for retention
  - Family comfort with a non-religious program that was held in a place of worship

## **Takeaway 4: First Steps Scholarship Is Just the Beginning**

The Burlington ELI invests municipal dollars as an interim step to make high-quality child care accessible and affordable for all families while the state continues to strengthen and expand its Child Care Financial Assistance Program. Let's Grow Kids' goal is to secure affordable access to high-quality child care for all Vermont families, in which a majority of child care programs statewide are high-quality and no family pays more than 10% of their household income for child care. The ELI models what a publicly funded system could look like, as a hyper-local model that can be replicated in communities throughout the state.

### **Impact of the Early Learning Initiative Pilot**

#### **Impact on Families**

A pregnant mother seeking child care for her infant was connected with the ELI. Both she and her husband were employed full-time, but could not find child care. Through First Steps, they were able to enroll their infant in a high-quality child care program that was also able to welcome their older child, providing the family with full-time, high-quality child care for both of their children. This access to care enabled the mother to finish the final credits she had been working to complete alongside her full-time job and to find and accept a job in her field of study. Her husband, too, was able to leave his job for a new full-time position that afforded him a schedule that met the needs of their family, and offered better employee benefits.

A family with a child diagnosed with medical and developmental challenges was able to enroll their child in a child care program that facilitated support services for physical and occupational therapies. Within the first three months of attendance, the family and medical team were impressed with the child's progress in developing new skills and improved wellbeing. Through this coordinated care and guidance from the child's early educators, the family was able to incorporate new practices at home to support the developmental progress in the child's skills and overall well-being.

A family facing homelessness was connected to First Steps and received a scholarship for full-time child care. This enabled the parent to work with local support services on a job search and secure housing. With siblings in school, and the younger child in high-quality, affordable child care, this parent was able to work to relocate out of a local family shelter and into stable housing within a few months' time.

A young mother was able to prepare for the General Educational Development (GED) test, with the goal of securing a Certificate of High School Equivalency and continue her own education while her child was in a high-quality child care program.

### **Impact on Child Care Partner Programs**

Partner programs benefitted from the capacity building support that was a precursor to scholarship enrollment, which stabilized spaces, increased quality, and increased program capacity. One program expressed gratitude that the scholarship program helped them serve a more diverse population and provide a more inclusive educational experience.

Partner programs found that the scholarship provided a new, reliable funding stream, and supported their ability to draw down CCFAP funds as a reliable source of income. The layering of funding sources created by this program, enabled child care programs to receive payment for the true cost of care for scholarship recipients. At least two programs were able to provide their staff with wage increases due to this program. Several programs also began to pursue staff benefits, including retirement plans with employer contributions and health insurance.

## Conclusion

Making high-quality child care affordable and accessible to families will yield positive impacts on a community's economy, as well as the health and well-being of the families served. For some families, child care may be out of reach even with state financial assistance, either because prevailing rates in the community exceed state reimbursement rates, not all families are eligible, or the state funds may not be sufficient to provide assistance to all eligible families. For other families, the challenge may be one of access—finding an available space that meets the needs of the family may prove difficult and seem out of reach.

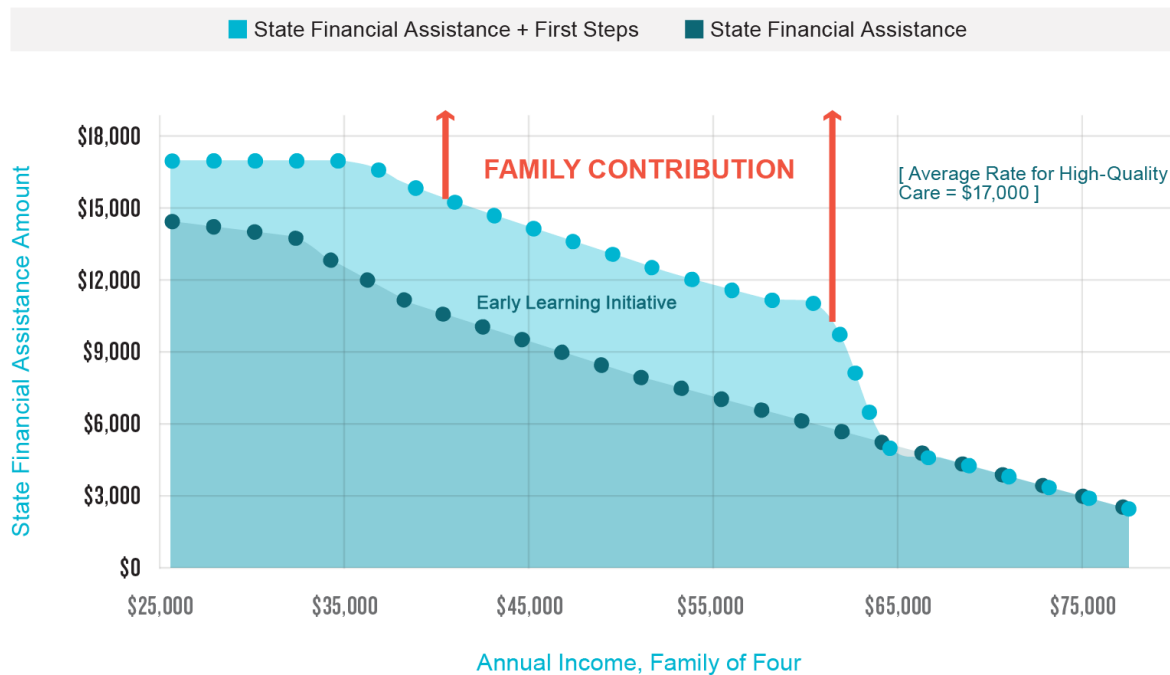
Because a scholarship program is a big investment of time and money, it is worth taking a thoughtful approach that considers the needs of the community and includes a committee of stakeholders. Creating a set of guiding principles and goals will help ensure focus and minimize scope creep. Partnerships with child care programs and outreach to families are needed to get participation from all eligible families. And a process for reflection on accomplishments and opportunities (i.e., evaluation) will garner improvements in forthcoming years.

A community-based scholarship program may be a sizeable and complex investment for a community, but the short- and long-term returns on the investment will reward both the community and the families served.

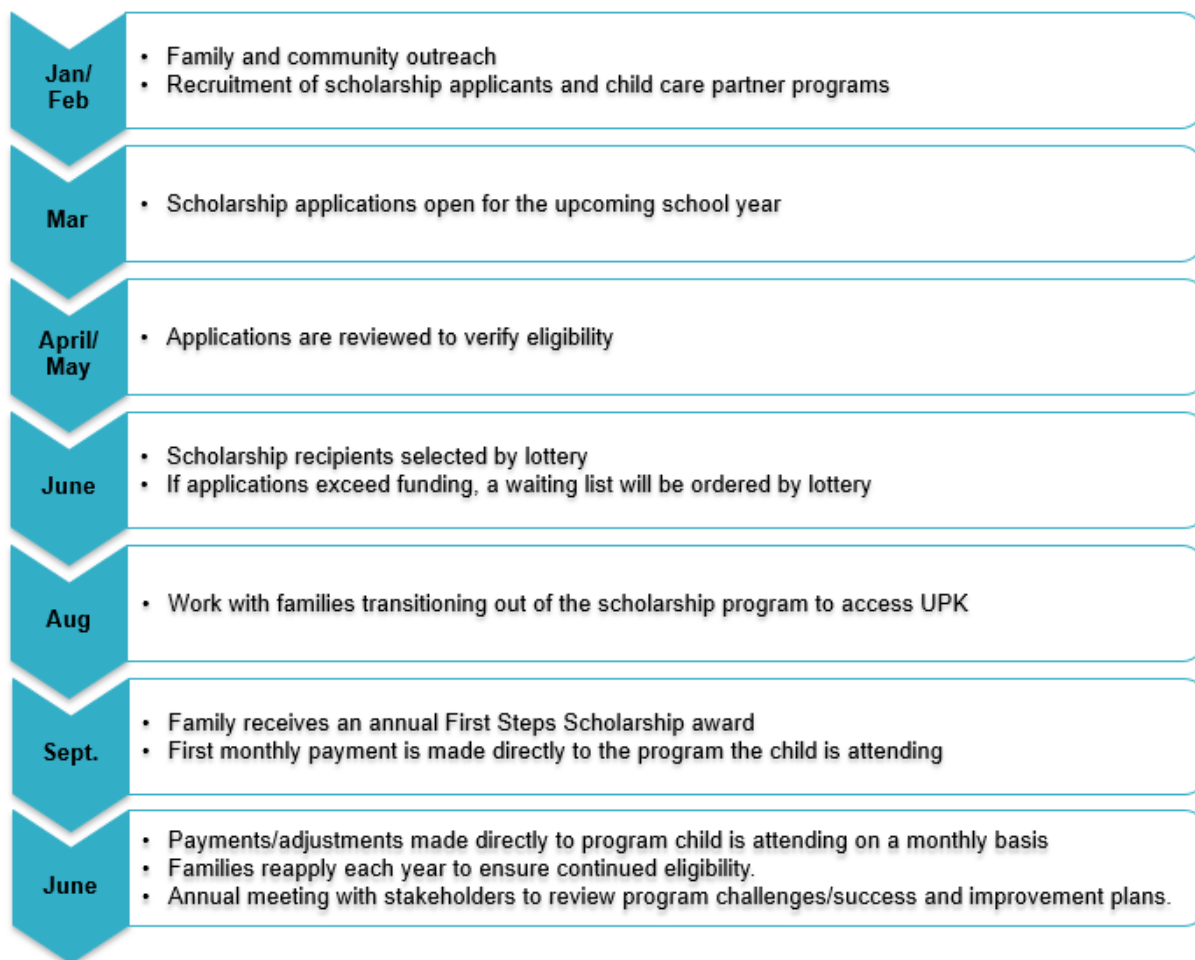
## Figures

### First Steps Family Income & Scholarships Compared to State Child Care Financial Assistance

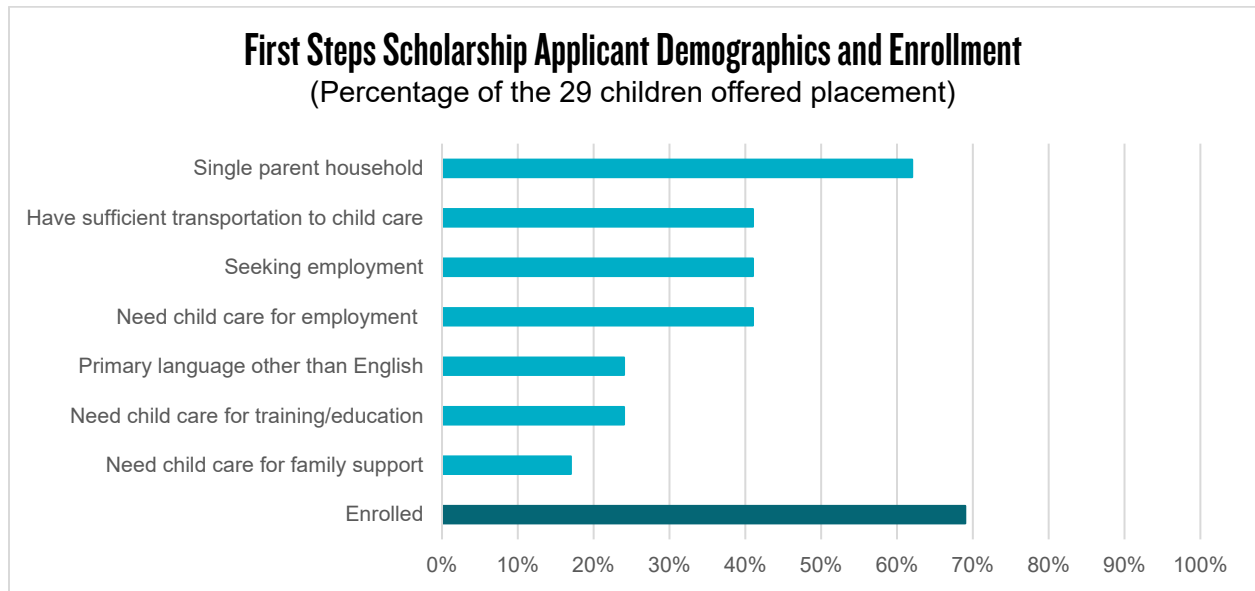
## FIRST STEPS FAMILY INCOME & SCHOLARSHIPS COMPARED TO STATE CHILD CARE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



## First Steps Scholarship Program Calendar of Activities



## First Steps Scholarship Applicant Demographics and Enrollment





## Appendices

### Burlington Early Learning Initiative Overview

# The Burlington Early Learning Initiative

Providing Our Youngest With A Healthy Start



**LET'S GROW KIDS** Let's Grow Kids is leading a movement for affordable access to high-quality child care for all Vermont families who need it by 2025. With its 30,000 supporters, Let's Grow Kids strengthens today's early care and learning system to create both immediate and long-term impact for families while simultaneously mobilizing Vermonters from all walks of life to call for policy change and public investment in our child care system to build a better Vermont for generations to come.



**CITY OF BURLINGTON** Burlington is Vermont's largest city, hosting 45,000 year-round residents and a daytime metro population of over 100,000 people. Seated along Lake Champlain, Burlington is frequently rated as one of America's most livable cities, and was the first U.S. city to source 100% of its electricity from renewables. Burlington has become a diverse community, thanks in part to a robust refugee resettlement program, with 20 languages and 52 dialects spoken in its school system alone, and it is also a center for higher education, hosting the University of Vermont and Champlain College, as well as the nationally recognized University of Vermont Medical Center.



## OUR APPROACH

The City of Burlington established the Early Learning Initiative to address the achievement gap faced by low-income children in Burlington. The mayor believes that expanding access to high-quality child care is one of the best investments the City can make and will help give every child in the community a better opportunity to thrive. Let's Grow Kids strengthens Vermont's child care system while it builds the movement for systemic changes in policy and investment.

### STRENGTHENING THE CHILD CARE SYSTEM

With our partners throughout Vermont, we are strengthening the child care system by increasing the capacity and quality of child care and supporting Vermont's early educator workforce through technical assistance, professional and leadership development, shared services, tools, resources and grants in order to meet the needs of Vermont children and families now, and prepare the system for significant state investment when our movement succeeds.



### BUILDING A MOVEMENT

- Our 30,000 supporters—including Vermont parents, early educators, health care professionals, elected officials, business leaders, philanthropists, and community leaders—are working with us to bring about systemic social change by advocating for local and state policy change, changing business practices, researching and testing innovative solutions, and investing philanthropic dollars to inspire innovative, and replicable solutions that drive positive change for children.

## THE CHALLENGE

**Low-income children are disproportionately likely to be developmentally behind their peers by the time they enter kindergarten, to experience a widening achievement gap in later grades, and are more likely to experience a range of negative outcomes later in life. The mayor and many others in the community concluded that **new approaches to break the cycle of multi-generational poverty or truly meet the shifting needs of working families in a changing marketplace are necessary.****

# 27%

of Burlington families with young children live in poverty. About 300 children under three live in poverty.

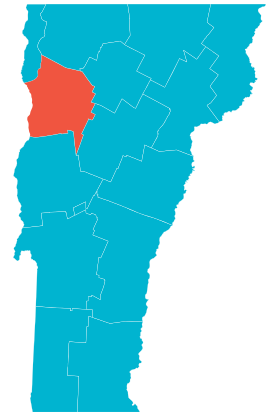
## THE SOLUTION

### THE EARLY LEARNING INITIATIVE

In 2017, the City of Burlington, in partnership with Let's Grow Kids and an advisory group of early childhood, health, and education experts, launched the Early Learning Initiative. The Early Learning Initiative will increase access to and affordability of high-quality early care and learning for infants and toddlers from lower-income families. Ultimately, this will improve educational and health outcomes, close the achievement gap faced by many lower-income children, and, in the long run, preserve public resources.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

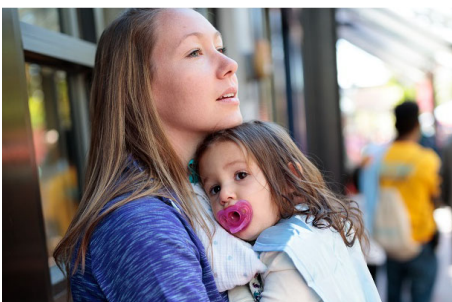
- Program is child and family focused.
- Policies prioritize serving infants and toddlers living in poverty.
- Program structure must maximize impact on lowest income children.
- To ensure best outcomes, participating programs must be meeting or pursuing high-quality standards through state or national programs and participate in Vermont's Specialized Care provider program.
- Our partners who work and care for families and children will be included in development, review and revision processes.
- Simplicity (administrative and for families) is an important consideration.
- A well-developed scholarship program can improve fiscal outcomes for early care and learning programs and is an important strategy for leveraging additional funding.
- Outcomes and evaluation will inform continuous improvement.



### IMPLEMENTATION

During the design phase, the program team ensured that scholarship funding was layered on top of any financial assistance a family may receive through Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP). CCFAP is available to children in protective custody and children whose families qualify based on income and a qualifying need such as work, education, or health status. Families receive financial assistance based on a sliding scale that accounts for family size. However, the reimbursement rates paid by CCFAP to early care and learning programs are often less than what high-quality programs actually charge for tuition. First Steps is designed to close the gap between the CCFAP payment rate and their child care program's tuition rate.

The team also created a Family Outreach & Engagement Coordinator role to work one-on-one with families interested in applying for the program who may have low reading proficiency, language barriers or need help to connect to other existing services, such as CCFAP, if the family was not already enrolled in the program.



## PROGRESS: STORIES

Support for First Steps demonstrated that child care is not just a concern for families, but is a high priority for municipal and state policymakers from across the political spectrum.



“ Affordable child care has been a struggle in my neighborhood, in the City of Burlington, VT, and across our entire state. As a city councilor, I’m glad to see a strong program developing that is focused on closing the achievement gap and creating new opportunities for some of the most vulnerable children in our community. Cities should be following this path and taking forceful steps like Burlington to address this critical challenge. ”

Burlington City Councilor | **Brian Pine**, Progressive



“ The Early Learning Initiative will give more of our youngest Burlingtonians a more equal start in life and strengthen the child care system for all parents, children, and childcare providers. Expanding access to high-quality child care is one of the best investments we can make to not only ensure that Burlington is a city where every child has the opportunity to succeed but also to reduce future public spending. ”

Burlington Mayor | **Miro Weinberger**, Democrat



“ I want to recognize Mayor Miro Weinberger for his leadership on this issue at the local level here in Burlington. The mayor’s Early Learning Initiative is creating new child care capacity and providing child care scholarships to low-income Burlington families. ”

Vermont Governor | **Phil Scott**, Republican

## PROGRESS: THE NUMBERS

### PROGRAM CAPACITY GRANTS:

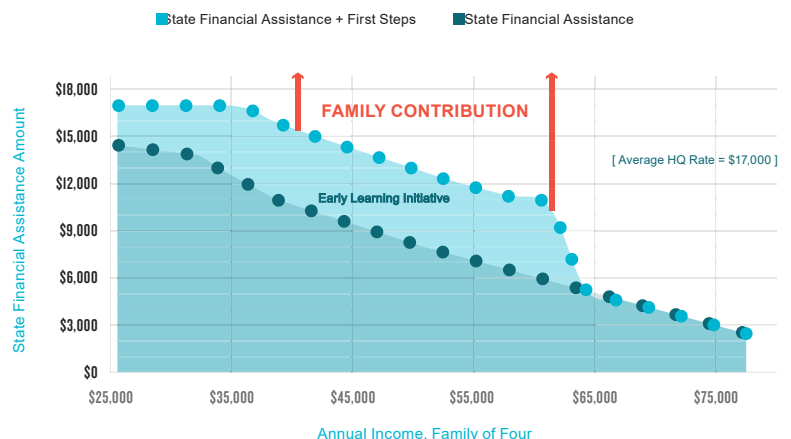
- As of December 2019, created 85 new high-quality spots, stabilized 166 high-quality spots, and improved the quality of 59 spots to 4 or 5 stars.
- Expected increase of 28 early educator staff positions by early 2020.

### PILOT APPLICANTS:

- Average family income: **\$21,816**
- Average family size: **3.87**
- **40% of pilot participants are enrolled in Reach Up** (a program that helps eligible parents gain job skills and find work so they can support their minor, dependent children)
- Range of ages of children whose families applied for the pilot: **3 to 21 months**
- Average age of children whose families applied for the pilot: **13 months**
- Typical range of scholarships: **\$2,300 to \$6,000**
- Average scholarship amount: **\$3,334**



### FIRST STEPS FAMILY INCOME & SCHOLARSHIPS COMPARED TO STATE CHILD CARE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE





# WHAT WE LEARNED

## TAKE-AWAY 1: Leverage all available funding

The program layers all available funding to make child care affordable for families and ensure that early care and learning programs are compensated for full tuition for their programs. State Dollars (CCFAP) + City Dollars (First Steps) + Private Philanthropic Support (LGK) = Affordability for Families and Financial Viability for Early Care & Learning Programs. This is especially important in Burlington where the cost of child care is often higher than the rest of the state.

The program also specifically focuses on infants and toddlers, because Vermont already provides 10 hours of universal, publicly-funded pre-K for all 3- and 4-year-olds.

## TAKE-AWAY 3: Active “Matchmaking”

The team used an active “matchmaking” process to match families with available child care programs to make sure that any space offered to a family would meet their needs. This includes considerations such as accessibility and culturally appropriate care.

Affordable child care can still be a barrier if a family is unable to access the location. If a space is on the far side of the city and requires multiple bus transfers, a family may not use the space.

It is critical to ensure that a child care program is able to meet any cultural considerations of the family such as food that meets a family’s dietary needs.

## TAKE-AWAY 2: Family Engagement is Critical

First Steps has successfully enrolled families who would not otherwise have been able to enroll in full-time child care because it engaged a Family Outreach and Engagement Coordinator to work one-on-one with families to help them enroll in the scholarship program and connect to other support services. The Family Outreach and Engagement Coordinator is well supported to help families navigate communication, transportation, and other challenges.

## TAKE-AWAY 4: First Steps is Only the Beginning

The Burlington Early Learning Initiative invests municipal dollars as an interim step to make high-quality child care accessible and affordable for all families while the state continues to strengthen and expand its Child Care Financial Assistance Program.



**Burlington Beginnings: A White Paper on a Comprehensive, Coordinated  
Sustainable Early Learning Initiative**

# **Burlington Beginnings: A White Paper on a Comprehensive, Coordinated Sustainable Early Learning Initiative**

Prepared for the Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger  
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With support from United Way of Chittenden County and funded through private donations.

## Introduction

Are all of Burlington's children on the path to a healthy and prosperous future? Compelling scientific research into the brain development of infants and young children shows that the early years of a child's life are critical to developing the skills necessary to become a thriving adult. A lack of household economic resources is the single largest indicator for a host of poor childhood educational and health outcomes. Historic approaches to the fight against poverty are not working; in the United States, we haven't succeeded in reducing multi-generational poverty or truly meeting the shifting needs of working families in a changing marketplace. Furthermore, reduced government funding has put an added strain on our social service sector to support low and moderate-income children and their families.

There are compelling economic arguments for communities to re-examine how they allocate resources to fight poverty, educate a workforce and create a strong and healthy citizenry. James J. Heckman, Professor of Economics at University of Chicago and Nobel Laureate, notes "what's missing in the current debate over economic inequality is enough serious discussion about investing in effective early childhood development from birth to

Improving the early environments of disadvantaged children is a promising way to reduce inequality."  
–Prof. James J. Heckman

age 5. This is not a big government boondoggle policy that would require a huge redistribution of wealth. Acting on it would, however, require us to rethink long-held notions of how we develop productive people and promote shared prosperity."<sup>1</sup>

Through a **scholarship approach to early education**, we can strengthen Burlington's future by providing our youngest with a healthy start:

- focusing on brain development;
- building the skills and capacity of adult caregivers (both family members and care providers) to help reduce adversity in the lives of children;
- supporting high quality early education and care programs; and
- continuing to support families as their children grow.

In other communities around the country, access to high quality early care and education has proven to be an effective means not only of educating children, but of counteracting some of the toxic stresses that children and families experience when living in strained financial circumstances. The research is longitudinal and compelling. Heckman cites the Perry Preschool Project (1962-67) and the Carolina Abecedarian (ABC) Project (1972-77) as two studies that focused on parent education and teaching cognitive and non-cognitive skills to very young children as well as providing health care (ABC Project). Outcomes were measured and analyzed for 4 decades after the children left the programs.

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<sup>1</sup> James J. Heckman, "Lifelines for Poor Children", *New York Times*, Sept 14, 2013.  
[http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/09/14/lifelines-for-poor-children/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&hp&r=3](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/09/14/lifelines-for-poor-children/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&hp&r=3)



While Perry participants did not see lasting I.Q. gains, “it did boost character skills that produced better education, economic and life outcomes.”<sup>2</sup> The ABC Project had a greater impact on I.Q.; this with improved parenting practices and child attachment helped participants achieve higher levels of education and more skilled employment. “Most dramatic were ABC’s effects on lifelong health. Now, over 30 years later, those treated in ABC have lower blood pressure, lower abdominal obesity, less hypertension and less likelihood of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular conditions as adults. This evidence clearly shows the power of quality early childhood programs for producing flourishing people with healthier lives, which increases productivity and lowers health care costs.”<sup>3</sup>

A comprehensive, coordinated approach to Burlington’s early education and care system will lead to a more prosperous, healthier and sustainable community. The City of Burlington can play an important role in ensuring every child has a healthy start.

## The Problem

Despite a robust network of service organizations and supportive programming in Burlington, we have not been able to break the cycle of poverty that so many families live in for generations.

### ***Burlington Children Living with Insufficient Resources, 2008-2012***

<b>Poverty Measure</b>	<b>% or # of Children</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Federal Poverty Level Estimate	35%	Conservative estimates are that greater than 35% of the young children in the city live in poverty. <sup>4</sup>
Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility (FRL)	55%	Families in the Burlington School District (BSD) qualify based on income, meaning they are living at or below 180% of the federal poverty line. <sup>5</sup>
Children in households with limited economic resources	2000-2500	Children between the ages of 0 and 18 make up 12% of Burlington’s population.

Research-based test cases have shown that supporting quality care and early experience gives children the strong foundation they need for learning when they enter Kindergarten.

<sup>2</sup> Heckman, “Lifelines for Poor Children”, *New York Times*, Sept 14, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Heckman, “Lifelines”.

<sup>4</sup> According to the American Community Survey Data from the US Census Bureau (2008-12), 26% of Burlington residents live below the federal poverty line. When those numbers are adjusted to account for university students living in off-campus housing, the community-wide poverty rate drops to 16%. However, the percentage of children ages 0-18 living in poverty is much higher: “*The Role of College Students in Burlington’s Poverty Rate*”, L. Black-Plumeau, Research and Communications Coordinator, Vermont Housing Finance Authority, July 14, 2014.

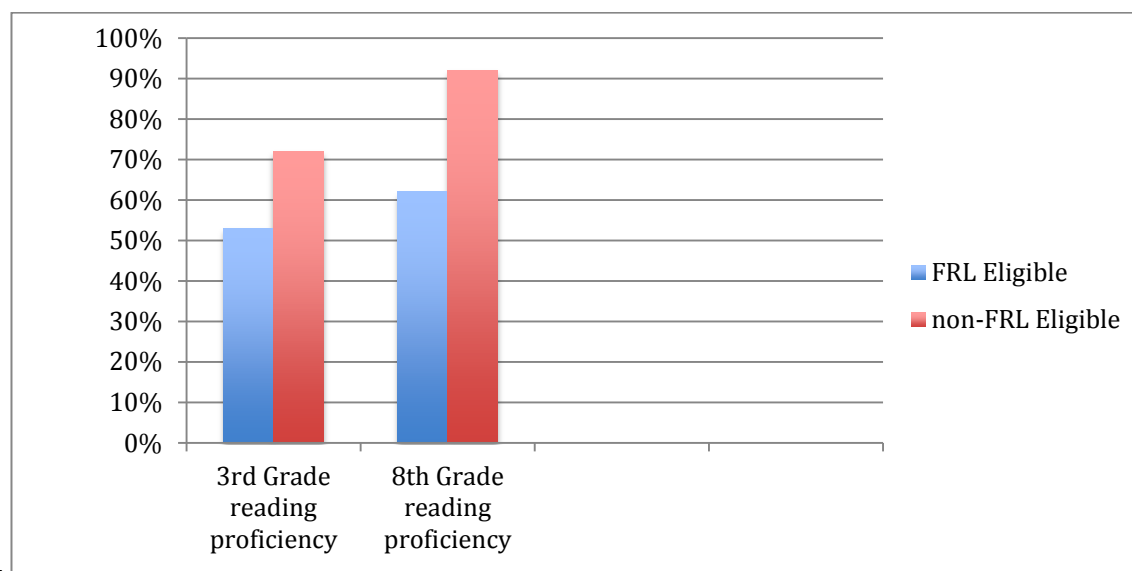
<sup>5</sup> A family of 4 qualified for reduced-price lunch in 2013-14 if their annual income was below \$43,580. A very small number of children receive reduced-price lunch—the vast majority qualifies for free lunch.

[http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Child\\_Nutrition\\_Eligibility\\_Report.pdf](http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Child_Nutrition_Eligibility_Report.pdf)

With continued support, this healthy start prepares them to meet important learning benchmarks including 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency.

Unfortunately, across the US, socio-economic status plays a prominent role in a child's school readiness and her subsequent academic proficiencies as measured by math and literacy achievement tests in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Vermont and Burlington are not exceptions to that trend. While the data are incomplete for the 2013 VT Kindergarten Readiness Survey, initial interpretation shows that fewer than 50% of Burlington Kindergartners surveyed were deemed ready to learn across all 5 domains surveyed.<sup>6</sup> Our NECAP scores are even starker, with the disparity between those who qualify for FRL and those who do not growing wider at 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

***Percentage of BSD Students Demonstrating Grade-level Reading Proficiency  
based on 2013-14 NECAP scores***



Importantly, of the 320 Burlington children who are eligible for state subsidy through the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP), **only 142—or 44%—attend a high quality program.**<sup>7</sup> (See Appendix I for a breakdown by program type and town).

Burlington's childhood poverty data indicates there is a population of very low income children not receiving subsidy who are even less likely to be receiving high quality early childhood education because they are not connected with an intentional program that helps refer them to resources, child care providers or family service agencies.

<sup>6</sup> "Kindergarten teachers around the state were asked to complete a Kindergarten Readiness Survey (KRS) for each of their students during the fall of 2013. The KRS consists of 30 items across the domains of "Social and Emotional Development," "Approaches to Learning," "Communication," "Cognitive Development and General Knowledge," and "Physical Development and Wellness." The teacher rates each child's skills as either "beginning", "practicing" or "performing independently" on the first 27 items and judges if hunger, illness, or fatigue inhibit the child's learning on the last three items. The KRS is not a direct assessment of children; rather it relies on the accumulated observational knowledge the teacher has developed about the child during the first few weeks of kindergarten." [http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Kindergarten\\_Readiness\\_Report\\_2013\\_2014\\_Burlington.pdf](http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Kindergarten_Readiness_Report_2013_2014_Burlington.pdf) (p.1)

<sup>7</sup> Source is Elizabeth Meyer at Child Care Resource, August 6, 2014.

## **Key Findings: Burlington**

From February through July of 2014, we researched the early childhood system in Burlington by conducting a data review and extensive interviews with policy makers and providers. We also convened and facilitated 3 stakeholder meetings on behalf of the Mayor and with support from the United Way of Chittenden County to initiate a collective impact conversation with those working in and funding ECE in Burlington. Over 60 stakeholders participated in the 3 meetings that encouraged a Results Based Accountability approach, solicited feedback about a St. Paul Scholarship model and heard from former Mayor David Pope about the efforts in Oak Park, IL to create a coordinated early education system. (For a full list of stakeholders invited to and participating in this process, see Appendix X.) While this investigation was not able to engage as many parents or informal care providers as we would have liked in order to understand fully the capacity and needs in our community, the historical perspective and asset/gap analysis the stakeholders brought to the table was critical to our findings.

While we have many excellent early education and care providers in and around Burlington, we found that high quality childcare and education isn't accessible to our families who struggle economically because of:

- a shortage of spots, especially for infants and toddlers;
- inability to cover the cost of tuition;
- insufficient transportation; and
- a state subsidy program that is a complex system, doesn't meet the scope of need, and is not always a consistent or easily accessible form of assistance.

Furthermore, not all eligible families are accessing VT Education Fund money (formerly through Act 62; soon to be Act 166) that pays for 10 hours of early education and care in a qualified BSD preschool or community partner program. We believe this is due both to insufficient recruitment of and a lack of awareness by families.

Early childhood providers report frustrations with being able to retain children in their

Our delivery system needs better coordination during the early years and beyond, we should be using consistent measurements to support improvements to our system, and we need to raise awareness about child development and the importance of high quality early care and education.

programs (either because families move or lose their childcare subsidy), the lack of space and money to expand their programs, and the inability to cover their costs—or in some cases to charge a true cost tuition, even to families with means. As one childcare provider says, “it’s a bad business plan.”

## **The Solution: Burlington Early Learning Initiative**

Early brain development lays the groundwork for strong academic, workforce and community life later. By investing in the early years, we should see indicative positive outcomes as early as entrance to Kindergarten and in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Our near-term goal, then,

should be to ensure that all 5 year-olds enter Kindergarten with the skills, knowledge and support they need to capitalize on Kindergarten learning opportunities and that all 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in Burlington are reading at (or above) a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. In order to reach this goal, we need to:

- provide support for parents through mentoring and education;
- make high quality early care and education more accessible and affordable;
- increase capacity in our early childhood system, especially for ages 0-3;
- provide increased support for providers and programs; and
- create continuity in our system that allows us to follow and support children and their families as they grow.

### **National, State and Local Efforts Support Recommendations**

National models are yielding promising results by providing comprehensive educational approaches to economic and community development. The Harlem Children's Zone, created by Geoffrey Canada, has become the model for President Obama's Promise Neighborhood grant program to support local cradle to career initiatives. Current research suggests that providing youth a healthy start to prepare for the future requires a community-wide, coordinated constellation of services and supports beginning before a child is born and continuing until he is grown. Burlington's Early Learning Initiative (the Initiative) will be most successful if considered in this context, both in terms of garnering resources and long term, sustained success.

Early education and care is the right place to start. Brain research in the early years is informing policy and funding decisions at federal, state and local levels. In 2013, Governor Shumlin unveiled his Early Childhood Framework and Action Plan. This year, the state was awarded a \$37 million federal Early Learning Race to the Top Challenge Grant that supports systems-level change with a small portion of sub-grants set aside for innovative pilot programs. Building Bright Futures (BBF) has been designated as the Governor's partner agency in managing the grant and coordinating the Action Plan work around the state through regional councils. Additionally, three of Vermont's major philanthropic entities have launched Let's Grow Kids, a public awareness campaign designed to address brain development and the importance of high quality learning in the early years.

Vermont moved ahead of many states in establishing an early childhood education (ECE) rating system to indicate quality. Providers may apply to The Step Ahead Recognition System (VT STARS) program and are assessed in 5 areas:

- Compliance with state regulations;
- Staff qualifications and training;
- Support of children, families and communities;
- Provider assessment and plan for improvements; and
- Strength of operating policies and business practices.

A 4 or 5-STAR rating denotes a high quality program. Coordinated by the Child Development Division of the Agency of Human Services, a program's STAR rating can

determine whether families qualify for state education funding for tuition and child care tax credits. Incentives exist for providers to apply for STARS.<sup>8</sup>

Mayors and municipalities are also looking for ways to support high quality early learning opportunities. San Antonio, Indianapolis and Memphis County mayors have been recognized for their efforts to create community-wide approaches despite diverse political affiliation and regional contexts. Community leaders have played a role in shifting the dialogue about quality early education from moral imperative to economic necessity. Economists like James Heckman and Art Rolnick have reframed the conversation to consider a long-term return on investment that has influenced thinking in both the public and private sectors. Rolnick, a professor at University of Minnesota who formerly served at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minnesota championed early education as an economic development tool.

Low income children living in St Paul, MN benefited from Rolnick's work with the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) in a pilot program that supported low-income parents of young children to advocate for high quality care and education settings. From 2008-2011, the St Paul program focused on a cohort of approximately 650 children in 3 high-poverty neighborhoods and resulted in impressive improvement in Kindergarten readiness as well as both increased capacity and quality of St Paul's ECE system. Parents and providers alike were pleased with the ease and efficacy of the pilot. The program included a combination of parent mentoring, early learning scholarships, and a quality rating system for programs and providers. (A summary of the St Paul program is detailed in Appendix II).

The return on investment in high quality early education and care, Heckman and Rolnick argue, is at least \$7:1—maybe as high as \$16:1. Therefore early learning is one of the best public investments that communities can make.

The St Paul market-driven scholarship program has become an important example of public-private partnerships in evidence-based community development work. St Paul can provide valuable information and data in our analysis; there are elements of the program that could meet Burlington's unique needs and bolster our strengths. Key elements recommended for the Burlington Early Learning Initiative include:

- Parent mentoring through home visiting;
- Scholarships for high quality early care and preschool; and
- Research and evaluation.

The City of Saint Paul included the Scholarship Program as part of its larger education initiative and provided leadership and coordination. Following the success of the MELF scholarship program the Minnesota legislature approved \$40 million in funding for early learning scholarships across the state. Mayor Betsy Hodges of Minneapolis established a Youth Cabinet with a pre-natal to age 3 focus and has adapted the St Paul program to

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<sup>8</sup> <http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars/>

connect home visiting nurses with school nurses in order to provide continuity to families once their children reach school age.

### **Burlington: Early Learning Landscape**

The St Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program offers insight into both the strengths and the shortcomings of our own current ECE system. If we overlay St Paul’s program on Burlington, we see the following pieces are currently in place:

*Home Visiting*—Several agencies provide some type of home visitation based upon specific criteria and need. The following chart describes the major home visiting programs currently available in Burlington.

***Home Visiting Offered to Families Who Demonstrate Certain Level of Need***

Agency	# Children (7/1/13-6/30/14)	Services
Visiting Nurse Association of Chittenden County (VNA)	310 (Burlington)	Maternal and child health home visits by nurses to mothers beginning during pregnancy and extending through age 6 (into the child’s Kindergarten year; if there is a medical need, home visits can continue into adulthood). Eligible families are considered high risk by Chittenden Children’s Integrated Services (CIS) and are living with multiple stressors. The VNA’s multidisciplinary team approach strives to offer parents information and support to help maximize each child’s physical and social/emotional development. The VNA serves both Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties, but the majority of their home visits are delivered in Burlington and Winooski.
Lund Center	54 (Chittenden County)	Social Worker home visit, if unable to travel to center. Referred by physicians, schools, social service agencies, faith community or self. Screened by CIS.
Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Child Health)	38 (Chittenden County)	Designed to promote child wellness through a the 5-year grant (currently in its second year) Project LAUNCH <sup>9</sup> uses the Parents as Teachers curriculum for evidence-based home visiting as one of its strategies. <sup>10</sup> Visits are provided for families with children ages 0-age 8 in Chittenden County. Project LAUNCH funds 1 FTE home visitor each at Lund . The VNA provides its LAUNCH-funded services at the VNA Family Room.
Howard Center & Vermont Family Network		Services may be provided for children with special needs—research into this area was beyond the scope of this investigation.

*Early Education and Care: Capacity*—There are a number of different kinds of care and education options for families in Burlington: center-based, home-based, school-based and informal (unregistered) care. However, the total number of spots does not meet the

<sup>9</sup> [http://cdn.buildingbrightfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/BBF\\_VERMONT\\_LAUNCH-copy.pdf](http://cdn.buildingbrightfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/BBF_VERMONT_LAUNCH-copy.pdf). Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Child Health) is a grant-funded initiative with authority shared jointly by Building Bright Futures Council, the Department of Health Division of Maternal and Child Health and the Department of Mental Health’s Division of Child, Adolescent and Family Services. It is designed to promote child wellness in all domains; the grant also funds social workers at the Community Health Center and University Pediatrics Immigrant and Refugee Clinic.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.parentsasteachers.org/>. This home visiting curriculum was used in the St Paul Scholarship Program.

demand—nor are all the options considered high quality. The following chart illustrates capacity in registered programs in the city of Burlington

***Ages, Schedule, and Daily Capacity by Type of Program<sup>11</sup>***

Type of Program	Number of programs	Ages served	Schedule offered	Daily child capacity
Center-based	9	Infant to age 5; sometimes to age 12	Full day/Full week; other options may be offered.	473
Family Child Care (home-based)	41	Infant to age 5; sometimes to age 12	Full day/Full week; other options may be offered	289
Private Preschool	5	3-5	Full day/full week	238
Private Preschool	2	3-5	School day/full week	45
Private Preschool	3	3-5	Half day or less/full or part week	78
Public Preschool (BSD)	5	3-5	Half day or less/full or part week	*102 <sup>12</sup> (51 per half day)
Total	65			1,225

Registration of a childcare program does not denote a high quality STARS rating. Of the 41 registered family child care programs (also referred to as home-based child care programs), only 2 have high quality recognition status and only 1 is able to offer Act 62 Pre-K funding to families (see *Early Education and Care: Cost*, below).

It is also important to note that while the chart indicates 1,225 childcare spots in the city, those are not all full-time or year-round spots. The 2010 Census counted 1,739 children under age 5 living in Burlington. In addition, ECE programs and providers serve the greater Burlington area, not exclusively Burlington children. Even accounting for families who choose not to send their children to childcare or preschool, our capacity does not meet our demand. Families report being on multiple waiting lists for spots and sometimes waiting years for one to open up.

Hardest to quantify is the capacity in informal care settings that many families are compelled to seek for their children. Anecdotally, patching together a network of care is a common experience for Burlington's working parents, especially those with infants and toddlers—and it is a continual, stressful and expensive prospect.

<sup>11</sup> Data and graphics provided by Elizabeth Meyer, Child Care Resource, April 2014. [emeyer@childcareresource.org](mailto:emeyer@childcareresource.org)

<sup>12</sup> Burlington School District reports 120 children enrolled in their preschool programs in the 2013-14 school year. Source: Diana Langston, Director of Early Education at BSD.



*Early Education and Care: Cost*—Multiple sources help fund our current ECE system. However, even when they are layered, they do not meet the need for subsidy for families, cover the true cost of existing programs, nor provide critical funding for necessary expansion and quality improvements. Several of these funding sources do not apply to families with more than the most limited means. More details about each of the following sources can be found in Appendix III.

### ***Current Funding Mechanisms for ECE***

<b>Federal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head Start: serves 114 children ages 3-4.</li> <li>• Early Head Start: serves 10 children ages 0-3.</li> <li>• Agency: Champlain Valley Head Start (CVHS)</li> </ul> <p>Eligible children receive a comprehensive package of services including health supports and family service supports as well as early education and care in both school-based (no tuition charged) and center-based (tuition) programs.</p>
<b>State</b> Agency of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act 62/166—Universal pre-K</li> <li>• Agency: BSD</li> </ul> <p>State Education Fund money pays for preschool tuition up to 10 hours/week (for 35 weeks/year) for all 3 &amp; 4 year-olds in BSD preschools or one of 31 community partner programs (must have 4-5 STAR rating).<sup>13</sup></p>
<b>State</b> Agency of Human Services, Dept of Children & Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP)</li> <li>• Agency: Child Care Resource</li> </ul> <p>Also known as childcare subsidy. Children are eligible from 6 weeks to 13 years old. Of the 323 Burlington children receiving CCFAP in 2014, 157 (almost half) are enrolled in programs in other towns. Note: if a Head Start eligible child is enrolled in a tuition-charging program, she may also be able to receive CCFAP subsidy.</p>
<b>Local</b> Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gifts &amp; Grants</li> </ul> <p>In the shortage of federal, state or tuition-based funds to support our already limited capacity, the philanthropic community, including the United Way of Chittenden County, foundations, banks, businesses and private donors are increasingly stepping up to try to fill the gap.</p>
<b>Local</b> Public (City)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Development Block Grants (CDBG—federal)</li> <li>• Mayor’s Regional Program Funds (local)</li> </ul>
<b>Individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuition</li> <li>• Family Contribution</li> <li>• Informal care</li> </ul>

*Research and Evaluation*—VT STARS is widely accepted as an option (or in addition) to national accreditation through National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Subsidy amounts, tax credits and Act 166 reimbursement for families are linked to how many STARS their child’s program has. 20 out of 24 center-based programs in

<sup>13</sup> The State of Vermont has recently applied for a federal pre-K Expansion Grant that would fund the expansion of preschool spots to full-time for 4 yo’s living below 200% of poverty level. BSD has partnered with the State in the competitive grant application; awards to be announced in mid-December, 2014.



Burlington are highly rated and/or accredited. One question that should be explored is how our STAR system criteria compare to St Paul's Parent Aware ratings, and how well they are understood by the community.

Current data collection takes on many forms, including: federal funding accountability reports with health and wellness indicators; Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework reports including “what are we doing; how well are we doing it; and are we better off” metrics; CIS at-risk screenings; Teaching Strategies Gold assessments; State of Vermont Kindergarten Readiness Survey; BBF statewide database to include Race to the Top outcomes; UVM's Vermont Center for Children, Youth & Families indicators; and K-12 standardized tests such as the New England Common Assessment Practice soon to be replaced by the Smarter Balanced Test. A more thorough treatment of indicators, assessments and accountability measurements can be found in Appendix IV.

### **Burlington Early Learning Initiative: The Pilot**

How will we improve outcomes for Burlingtonians? Mentoring for all parents and a market-driven scholarship program for children in low-income families is a critical piece of the answer. While we do many things well to serve young children in Burlington, we have

**The tension remains, however: how do we make sure those most in need are getting the appropriate support?**

yet to take a comprehensive approach—nor have we attempted to provide universal services beyond public education and partial pre-K subsidy. The argument that a universal program is the way to ensure that you have everyone invested in the process is a compelling one. And while socio-economic status is clearly a factor, there are many families, no matter their income level, who struggle with parenting and educating their young children.

A geographic pilot program (the Pilot) can resolve this tension. By focusing on all children living in a certain neighborhood or zone within the city, we can ensure that we provide universal coverage for home visiting and meet the needs of a significant number of struggling families. By choosing 3 mixed-income neighborhood zones in the city where families with young children live and where programs and services may exist currently, we can create a beta test for what a city-wide initiative might look like across geographical and economic sectors.

The Pilot should include:

*Home visiting: prenatal to age 8*—The home visiting part of the program should be offered to every pregnant mother and new parent or guardian living in the Pilot zones. The Initiative could contract with existing home visiting agencies but should add a module that incorporates information about brain development and parent mentoring about what is high quality early education and care—and how to advocate for it—as well as a list of enrichment opportunities (playgroups, parenting resources, museums, libraries, early education programs, etc.). Self-advocacy has been shown to be an important component of the success in the Minnesota model. Universal home visiting will allow the Initiative to

make contact with the greatest number of parents and babies, assess their needs, make referrals where necessary and determine the “dosage” of home visiting that each family needs. It will serve as an effective recruiting tool for families eligible for the scholarship portion of the program, and should continue for all families (at the determined appropriate dosage) after the child enters Kindergarten—until age 8 if feasible. Potential home visiting partners are listed in Appendix V.

*Scholarships for high quality early education and care: infancy through preschool—*

Participating families who have an annual income less than or equal to 185% of the federal poverty level<sup>14</sup> should have the opportunity to enroll their children (starting in infancy, if the need exists and the parents choose) in a high quality program for at least 12 and up to 35 hours/week, year-round. The Initiative scholarship fund will cover the gap in cost between any CCFAP subsidy the family may receive and the full cost of the program or tuition set by the program, with a guarantee that the scholarship amount will be adjusted so the full tuition will be paid if subsidy is lost or reduced during the year. As in the St Paul Scholarship program, the formula should allow for additional funds to go to the programs in the form of a quality improvement grant. Any type of registered program (home-based, center-based, school-based, Early Head Start or Head Start) with a 4 or 5 STAR rating should be eligible to accept scholarship students. School-based and Head Start programs, which do not charge tuition to families, will not receive scholarship money but should receive quality improvement grants or other grants to support high quality work (e.g. ELL teachers for preschool). Scholarships should follow the child, should guarantee placement of that child for the full year no matter their subsidy eligibility status and should be administered by the Initiative. Programs outside of pilot zones and/or the City of Burlington should be eligible as long as the enrolled child lives in one of the Pilot zones.<sup>15</sup> Potential scholarship partners are detailed in Appendix VI.

*Measurement—*It will be important to make sure that the Pilot and other phases of the Initiative are having the impact that we expect and creating the outcomes we have selected as our goals. Kindergarten readiness is a nationally accepted benchmark, as is 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency, but we must ensure that the tools we are using are measuring the right things. Ease of use for children, parents and programs is also important. The Initiative should examine current assessments and standards and decide if they meet needs and criteria. Important measurement partners are included in Appendix VI.

*Cradle to Career Framework as second phase—*The Pilot program focuses on the early years, but a larger, longitudinal framework and approach will allow us to follow and support children beyond the start of Kindergarten, through the important 3<sup>rd</sup> grade year, into middle and high school, and beyond. Without an initial focus on the long-term outcomes we

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<sup>14</sup> This income qualification level was chosen because it is in line with BSD’s Free and Reduced-price lunch eligibility criteria, making for ease of data gathering. If funding and need both exist, the Initiative should consider raising the eligibility level to 200% of federal poverty line.

<sup>15</sup> For purposes of the Pilot, it may be most effective to partner with several active and comprehensive programs initially, expanding the scope of eligible programs as the Initiative grows.

want, we will lack the coordinated effort to achieve our goals. The Initiative should examine StriveTogether<sup>16</sup> as an excellent national model for a cradle-to-career framework.

### **Burlington Early Learning Initiative Pilot Implementation—Structures**

Several critical steps have been taken toward implementation already. With the creation of a Mayor's Task Force on Early Learning (the Task Force), we have a structure that can continue the investigation, set goals for the Initiative and the Pilot, create a sustainable governance structure and timeline, generate political will, design and oversee the implementation of the Pilot, and steer efforts to fund the Pilot program and the transition into meeting the long-term goals of the Initiative. The Task Force should be broadly representative and include providers, parents, educators, community partners, funders, policy makers, advocates and City staff. The Task Force could continue to serve in an advisory role well after the launch of the Pilot.

Fundraising will be an important role of the Task Force—important enough to warrant forming a subcommittee; members should be tapped from the business community, the philanthropic community and leadership of United Way of Chittenden County or other prominent partner organizations. This group needs to understand the market-driven nature of the scholarship program and be able to act as the bridge between policy-makers, funders and providers.

The Task Force should be free-standing but act as a point of connection between the City, Burlington Schools and the community—and should work closely with all entities and partners. One of the roles of the Task Force should be to consider what kind of backbone organization will be needed to move the Pilot into the next phase of implementation by:

- administering scholarships;
- ensuring eligible programs maintain their quality ratings;
- centralizing a city-wide waiting list for early education programs;
- acting as a resource for families moving into the city;
- collecting Burlington-specific data and tracking outcomes;
- maintaining Burlington's connection with the State and national early education community; and
- exploring the potential for a cradle-to-career framework.

Some of these functions and roles might be performed by the existing organization Child Care Resource. Others might more appropriately fall within the City or other entity.

### **Burlington Early Learning Pilot Implementation—Funding**

Funding a comprehensive early learning initiative with a home visiting component as well as a scholarship program will take a collaborative, collective and creative approach to the financial plan. We will need to muster our resources and create the political will to take

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.strivetogogether.org/>

reasonable risks. For too long, the business of early childhood education has operated on a bad business model. We have an opportunity to change that.

The authors of the *Hartford Blueprint for Young Children* (2005) dispelled the myth that services for children necessarily live in a moral imperative universe.<sup>17</sup> By focusing on a market-driven approach, we shift the conversation about fighting poverty from a service-provision orientation to one that empowers and educates children

and their families *and* is set in an accepted economic framework. The RBA approach allows us to determine that funds are going to programs and activities proven to work and achieve desired outcomes. It will be crucial that we use our existing funds wisely, that any new funds brought to the initiative layer rather than supplant others, and that we frame our financial thinking in the language of investment.

“The loose and informal network of services affecting young children [in Hartford] is a \$106 million business; it is not a cottage industry. ***This kind of investment demands a more unified way to set public policy, to assure expenditures are effective, and lead to positive outcomes for children***”

-Hartford Blueprint for Young Children

Initial funding for the Pilot phase should be primarily private money, although a commitment of federal and local resources allocated by the City will provide seed money as well as demonstrate the high priority of this Initiative. It may prove necessary to create a parallel funding structure through the Pilot years in order to assure that existing funding is not compromised and no services are disrupted. The Task Force should investigate setting up a collaborative funding structure as the Pilot transitions into a city-wide approach. A funding collaborative seems the most promising method to ensure a coordinated approach and collective impact, both. Funding could also be secured through public education dollars or health returns.

The Task Force will be charged with creating the Burlington-specific formula for the scholarship program that takes into account local market costs. The St Paul Program estimated their total cost to be close to \$10,000/child/year (with home visiting 0-6; scholarships ages 3-4 and quality improvement grants for programs). Using that figure as a benchmark, we calculate that we would need roughly \$1 million/year to serve all the children in Burlington ages 0-5 who would qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (below 180-200% of poverty level). Once the boundaries of the Pilot zones are determined and an accurate estimate of children living in those zones is made, the amount needed to fund the Pilot will be lower, even adjusted for universal home visiting and 0-5 scholarships.

Scholarship funding will be layered over:

- CCFAP subsidy if the family qualifies;
- Act 166 funds (likely \$3000/child/35 weeks) for all 3 or 4 year-olds; and
- pre-K Expansion Grant funds for eligible 4 year-olds.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.hartfordinfo.org/issues/documents/education/projectreportBlueprint.pdf>

A comprehensive list of promising, time-sensitive, and future funding sources to explore are provided in Appendix VII.

### **Burlington Early Learning Pilot Implementation—Timeline**

<i>December 2014</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Name Task Force members and Announce Initiative</i></li> </ul>
<i>Dec 2014-Aug 2015</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Task Force meets to design details of implementation using RBA</i></li> </ul>
<i>Fall-Winter 2014</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Create Task Force sub-committee to drive the funding of the Pilot</i></li> <li>• <i>Fundraising: private matching funds, startup funding</i></li> <li>• <i>Public comment on pre-K expansion grant (State)?</i></li> </ul>
<i>Nov/Dec 2014</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Early Head Start expansion grant decision likely (would create 26 additional 0-3 spots in BTV)</i></li> </ul>
<i>Jan 2015</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>CDBG grant application due</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayor's Regional Programs applications due</i></li> </ul>
<i>Jan-June 2015</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Design backbone organization that can sustain the work and drive future collaborations with the goal of a cradle-to-career framework.</i></li> </ul>
<i>Sept 2015</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Pilot launches in 3 neighborhood zones: NNE; ONE; SE.</i></li> </ul>

### **Summary**

The time is now for Burlington to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive, coordinated, early childhood initiative to ensure our children overcome the obstacles posed by insufficient economic resources and put our community on the path to prosperity. The early years of a child's life are critical to developing the skills necessary to become a productive adult. In Burlington, being born to a family that lacks adequate economic resources should not pre-destine a youth to poor educational and health outcomes and limited opportunities.

Ensuring a prosperous future for all of Burlington's residents is my top priority – this work must be rooted in providing all of our children with a healthy start.  
-Mayor Weinberger,  
Burlington, VT

A comprehensive Early Learning Initiative will provide value to Burlington in a number of ways. It provides both near term- and long-term economic development opportunities:

- increases quality and expands capacity of child care services;
- enhances professional development and improves skills in teaching work force;
- enables parents to enter the work force;
- attracts existing businesses looking for family-friendly environments;
- supports entrepreneurship and business start-ups;
- creates a better educated, more stable and productive workforce; and
- creates a healthier and more prosperous community.

Successful models throughout the U.S. point to a critical role for local leadership. As such, the Office of the Mayor can engage residents in the development of a Burlington Early Learning Initiative, share the brain research, outline the economic imperative, provide

support and make an impact critical to the success of the Pilot. (Further suggestions detailed in Appendix VIII).

James Heckman reminds us that “high-quality early childhood programs are great economic and social equalizers — they supplement the family lives of disadvantaged children by teaching consistent parenting and by giving children the mentoring,

encouragement and support available to functioning middle-class families.”<sup>18</sup> By focusing on **parent mentoring** in combination with a **market-driven scholarship approach to early education**, we can we can strengthen Burlington’s future by providing our youngest with a healthy start.

“Education is my crime prevention strategy, my neighborhood development strategy, my workforce development strategy and my economic development strategy.”

-Mayor Coleman,  
St Paul, MN

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<sup>18</sup> Heckman, “Lifelines for Poor Children”, *New York Times*, Sept 14, 2013.

## Appendices

### Appendix I: Number of Burlington Children Eligible for CCFAP: by Town and STAR Rating of Program

Provider Town	Type Of Care	Number of STARS	Number of Burlington Children
Burlington	Family Child Care	1	6
Colchester	Child Care Center	1	15
Essex	Child Care Center	1	9
Burlington	Family Child Care	2	8
Burlington	Preschool Program	2	1
Essex	Child Care Center	2	6
Milton	Family Child Care	2	1
South Burlington	Family Child Care	2	2
Colchester	Child Care Center	3	3
Essex Junction	Family Child Care	3	2
Shelburne	Child Care Center	3	2
Shelburne	Preschool Program	3	1
South Burlington	Child Care Center	3	4
South Burlington	Family Child Care	3	1
South Burlington	Preschool Program	3	1
Burlington	Child Care Center	4	12
Burlington	Child Care Center	5	45
Burlington	Preschool Program	5	39
Shelburne	Child Care Center	4	22
Shelburne	Child Care Center	5	1
South Burlington	Child Care Center	5	13
Williston	Child Care Center	4	6
Winooski	Child Care Center	5	4
Burlington	Child Care Center		4
Burlington	Family Child Care		34
Burlington	Preschool Program		17
Colchester	Child Care Center		13
Colchester	Family Child Care		2
Essex	Child Care Center		3
Milton	Child Care Center		3
South Burlington	Child Care Center		7
Williston	Child Care Center		3
Winooski	Family Child Care		6
Winooski	Preschool Program		1
Various places	Legally Exempt Provider		23

Total =320

## Appendix II: The St Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program

Piloted from 2008-2011 with a cohort of 650 children, the program consisted of the following elements:

*Parent mentoring through home visiting.* Enrolled families received visits starting before the birth of the child if possible and continuing until the child entered Kindergarten. The primary goal of home visiting was to build parent advocacy skills in lower income families in order to help them identify and access high quality education and care settings once their children were ready for preschool. Secondly, home visiting helped build parents' skills and knowledge to promote school readiness and provide access to community resources to support their family's education and health needs. MELF partnered with various agencies that were already delivering home visiting services, but provided a "what is high quality early education" module and the necessary support materials. MELF did extensive recruitment of families for the program.

*Scholarships for high quality preschool.* Once enrolled children turned 3, they received scholarships to attend high quality ECE programs for 12-35 hours/week. Eligible programs included community programs (both for- and not-for-profit), school-based programs, Head Start, and family childcare settings. Family eligibility was based on geography and income (185% of poverty level to qualify). The scholarships were financed through \$20M of private funds raised by MELF, and the formula allowed for the scholarships to finance the gap between MN state subsidy and the full cost of tuition. While scholarships were assigned to the child, the formula also allowed for quality improvement grants to be given to programs once tuition was met.

*Research and evaluation.* MELF spent 20% of the \$20M in funds raised on a research and evaluation system. The development of Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR) provided a quality rating system, similar to Vermont's STARS, which helped families determine which preschools or in-home care providers met quality criteria.<sup>19</sup> PASR appears to play a public engagement and awareness role in the Twin Cities still, continues to invest in research, and makes the MELF research available on its website.<sup>20</sup>

MELF reported encouraging results from the St Paul Scholarship Program pilot:<sup>21</sup>

- Kindergarten readiness showed significant improvement based on incoming Kindergarten assessments; the most progress was found in early literacy and early math skills. Assessments also showed improvements in social skills and attention.
- Developmental trajectories improved significantly from age 3 to Kindergarten entry. St Paul conducted assessments each year the child was enrolled in the program.

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<sup>19</sup>[https://s3.amazonaws.com/Omnera/VerV/s3finder/38/pdf/Parent\\_Aware\\_Year\\_4\\_Final\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_Dec\\_1\\_1.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/Omnera/VerV/s3finder/38/pdf/Parent_Aware_Year_4_Final_Fact_Sheet_Dec_1_1.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.pasrmn.org/MELF/index>

<sup>21</sup> [https://s3.amazonaws.com/Omnera/VerV/s3finder/38/pdf/Scholarship\\_2008-2011Final\\_Summary.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/Omnera/VerV/s3finder/38/pdf/Scholarship_2008-2011Final_Summary.pdf)



- By the end of 2011, MELF had collected data on 1100 children who had participated in MELF-supported programs. Through extensive partnerships with organizations in Minnesota, MELF intends to track the progress of children in their programs through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Data on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency, a common early benchmark, will be available in 2016.<sup>22</sup> Positive outcomes have translated into school improvement and reform efforts in three Midwestern states.<sup>23</sup>
- MELF reports that the Scholarship Program not only increased ECE program capacity in the targeted St Paul neighborhoods, but also improved the quality of programs.
- Parents of children enrolled in the program reported:
  - the program was easy to use;
  - quality was the driving factor in their choice of an ECE setting for their child;
  - their children started school with the cognitive and social skills to take advantage of learning opportunities in Kindergarten; and
  - they wanted a Parent Aware stars rating to continue in grades K-3.<sup>24</sup>

## Appendix III: Funding Mechanisms

### Head Start

Champlain Valley Head Start (CVHS) estimates its costs<sup>25</sup> on an annual per family basis at an average of: \$8,500 for Head Start and \$14,400 for Early Head Start<sup>26</sup>. If a HS or EHS-eligible child is enrolled in a community (tuition-charging) program, Head Start pays the program a stipend to help cover the cost of educating that child. Stipends provide insufficient coverage related to costs, however Head Start provides in-kind support such as salary and benefits for a Family Care Advocate who works in the classroom alongside the teacher to help provide needed services and referrals to children and families.<sup>27</sup>

Currently in Burlington, due to the limited funding available, there is insufficient school district and private pre-school capacity to enroll all Head Start and Early Head Start eligible families. Of the 124 families that CVHS serves, 30 of those children attend BSD preschools (an additional 10 potential spots will be opening at Flynn Elementary School next year). CVHS is in a competitive Early Head Start grant application process that—if awarded—

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<sup>22</sup> A feasibility report of a longitudinal progress study can be found at:  
<https://s3.amazonaws.com/Omnera/VerV/s3finder/38/pdf/MinnLinkSummaryFINAL.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <http://humancapitalrc.org/midwestcpc/>

<sup>24</sup> Phone conversation with Art Rolnick, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Phone conversation with Paul Behrman, Executive Director Champlain Valley Head Start, July 24, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Despite costs that are nearly twice as expensive, the federal government funds Early Head Start at a significantly lower level than Head Start.

<sup>27</sup> According to one partner program that provides preschool services to Early Head Start eligible children, the program receives a stipend of \$2,000/child/year for Early Head Start and less than \$1,000/child/year for Head Start spots.

would add 26 infant and toddler spots in Burlington, 16 of those are planned for King Street Center. Grant awards should be made by November or December of 2014.

### **Act 62/Act 166**

In 2013-14, 286 preschoolers received Act 62 funds of \$2600/child/35 weeks. Set to start in September of 2016, Act 166 will replace Act 62, still providing 10 hours/week/35weeks. Under 166, the rate paid to community partner programs will now be set by the state and will be approximately \$3000/year/student. Under Act 62, families were selected by lottery if there was more demand than funding available for our district (this has not been the case in recent years). Because the pre-K funding applies universally, parents of preschoolers are not asked to report their family economic information.

Act 166 is a step in the right direction toward supporting pre-K costs, but it falls short of covering tuition and providing adequate hours, particularly for families with limited economic means. Nor does it cover the “true cost” of provider expenses for high quality early care and education. One criticism of the legislation is that Act 166 rules define “full time” pre-K as “at least 10 hours/week”, thus reducing incentive for school districts to offer more hours as it would impact local budgets significantly.

With only 286 preschoolers receiving 62/166 funds, we know we have not reached universal saturation (estimates are that there are 640 3 and 4 year-olds living in Burlington). This could be due to insufficient awareness of and recruitment to the program, insufficient capacity and high price of high quality settings, or parents choosing not to send their children to preschool.

### **Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP)**

Low household income is one of the criteria to qualify for CCFAP. A family of 4 with a household income of \$47,700 receives the lowest percentage of subsidy (10%). To receive 100% subsidy, annual income for a family of 4 cannot exceed \$23,856. Full subsidy rates are for 2013-14 are:

- \$9,700/year for preschool;
- \$10,000 for toddlers; and
- \$10,700 for infants.

There are other restrictions on CCFAP eligibility as noted in the following chart showing the number of children eligible for subsidy and where they are enrolled:

#### **CCFAP Eligible Burlington Children pre-K age (as of 2/11/2014) by Type of Program**

*A child's eligibility depends upon a family's service need. Parents must be employed, in an education or training program including Reach-up, have special health needs or other circumstances that indicate a risk of child abuse or neglect. The program must charge tuition to the general population.*

Type of Program	Number enrolled	As Percent of Capacity	Percent of Eligible Children
Center-based	61	12.9%	18.8%
Family Child Care	48	16.6%	14.9%
Private Preschool – Full Day	44	18.5%	13.6%
Private Preschool – School Day	2	4.4%	.6%

Private Preschool – Half day or less	11	14.1%	3.4%
Public Preschool – Half day or less	0	N/A	0.0%
Total Enrolled in Burlington Program	166		51.4%
Enrolled in a program in another town	157		48.6%
Total	323 <sup>28</sup>		100.0%

Parents and providers alike report that CCFAP is difficult to use and easy to lose. Excessive paperwork, a change in income or job status, a child's low attendance record or the end of a parent's vocational training program can all threaten a family's eligibility status. Often children leave a childcare setting when they lose subsidy, creating a revenue disruption for programs and a far greater social and educational disruption for children, families and employers. It is notable for our purposes that such a large percentage of Burlington children who qualify for CCFAP are enrolled in programs in other towns. This could be due to limited capacity in Burlington, the high cost of care, or need to have children close to a workplace or school.

#### **Pre-K Expansion Grant**

A competitive federal grant recently awarded to the State of Vermont could provide short-term support for the expansion of pre-K spots serving low-income 4 year-olds. Expansion is defined as either creating more full-time spots or increasing the hours of part-time spots to full-time. Burlington School District partnered with the State in its application. At the time of this writing, the scope of the grant awarded and its impact on the children of Burlington is unavailable. However, a grant of this nature is seen as a positive step toward increasing the number of children served, lessening the amount of scholarship money needed, and building a culture of support for early learning.

#### **Appendix IV: Current Indicators, Assessments and Accountability Metrics**

Funders ask for accountability reports that cover different outcomes and ask for measurement in varying degrees of depth. Federal grants for evidence-based outcomes like Project LAUNCH require extensive reporting and include intensive health and wellness indicators. CDBG grants also require annual reporting. United Way asks its grantees to adhere to a Results Based Accountability (RBA) model and report on: "what are we doing; how well are we doing it; and are we better off." (The State of VT is also moving toward an RBA framework.)

Burlington School District collects economic data about families when children enter school in order to determine eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch. Because the State

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<sup>28</sup> This number excludes children in informal care settings. It includes Head Start and Early Head Start enrollees if they are in a tuition-charging program. Source: Elizabeth Meyer, Child Care Resource.

does not require it to access Act 62 and Act 166 funds, they do not collect economic information on preschool students. The Early Education Division of BSD partners with CIS to screen children who might be identified as at-risk or need educational support services and BSD asks community partner programs to use Teaching Strategies Gold (TS Gold) as the assessment system for those children.

The Vermont Agency of Education developed a Kindergarten Readiness Survey that they ask Kindergarten teachers to complete within the first 10 weeks of the school year. Data are incomplete for Fall 2013 for BSD; only half the elementary school recorded results of the survey. Until this year, Vermont has measured 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency (another important early benchmark) using the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). In the next school year, Vermont will be switching to the Smarter Balanced Test. It is unclear what carryover will exist for the purpose of comparing data.

Building Bright Futures is developing a statewide early childhood database that can provide easily accessible information at the county level. The database will expand as Race to the Top outcomes are collected and BBF welcomes any data inputs from the local level. BBF can potentially provide support to a Burlington initiative in measuring outcomes.

The Vermont Center for Children, Youth and Families at UVM, led by Dr. James Hudziak, is also a potential resource for health and wellness indicators in our community.

## **Appendix V: Potential Burlington Early Learning Initiative Home Visiting Partners**

- Project LAUNCH
- Vermont Department of Health
- Agencies that already provide home visiting services (Lund, VNA, Howard)
- ECHO and Fletcher Free Library in the creation of a “lifelong learning” program that encourages science education, early literacy, preschool programming, health and wellness, and parent advocacy
- Let’s Grow Kids (support of the parent mentoring module)<sup>29</sup>
- Burlington School District (information about school-based preschool programs, family opportunities at local schools, “welcome to the Class of ...” letter from the Superintendent, opportunities to develop home-visiting policies for K-3 teachers)
- Fletcher Allen Community Health Benefits Team
- Vermont Center for Children Youth and Families (wellness coaches could be home visitors and could assess families need for deeper services)
- Local businesses who could provide material support or in-kind contributions (diapers for a “baby bundle”, information about breastfeeding-friendly employers) and gain employee recruitment opportunities
- BBF (data collection; RTT grant home visiting coordination)

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<sup>29</sup> [http://www.letsgrowkids.org/sites/www.letsgrowkids.org/files/Brain Science %26Take Action Handout.pdf](http://www.letsgrowkids.org/sites/www.letsgrowkids.org/files/Brain_Science_%26Take_Action_Handout.pdf)

## Appendix VI: Potential Scholarship and Measurement Partners

### *Scholarship Partners List:*

- Child Care Resource, the organization that is charged with overseeing CCFAP subsidy and the registration of childcare programs. They are also currently training a cohort of New American women to be registered home-care providers.
- ECE programs
- Agency of Human Services, Division of Children and Families (administer the STARS program)
- Burlington School Department, Early Education Dept.
- Champlain Valley Head Start (new EHS programs may be opening in Franklin Square and King St Center)

### *Measurement Partners List:*

- Building Bright Futures: explore promised assistance with the data collection and analysis during Pilot, and potentially beyond
- Burlington School District
- State Agency of Education
- StriveTogether and Oak Park Collaborative: eliminating level benchmarks and creating non-cognitive indicators
- National studies, like those conducted by MELF and Parent Aware, as well as ongoing data collection and research by Arthur Reynolds<sup>30</sup> and Art Rolnick.<sup>31</sup>
- UVM College of Education
- UVM Center for Children Youth and Families
- Project LAUNCH
- ECHO

## Appendix VII: Potential Funding Sources

- Federal
  - CDBG funds: the next cycle of the public services portion of the allotment (July 1, 2015-June 30, 2017) is focused on education, childcare and youth services. If we are successful in our collective impact approach, and the Task Force applies as a funder of direct service scholarships, CDBG public service grants could amount to as much as \$100,000/year. CDBG applications are due on January 15, 2015.
  - Pre-K expansion grant
  - Champlain Valley Head Start is involved in an Early Head Start competitive grant application that would provide 26 additional 0-3 spots in Burlington (16 of those at King Street Center). That grant will be awarded in November or December of 2014. While the funds will not be accessible for scholarship

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<sup>30</sup> Chicago Longitudinal Study <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/icd/people/faculty/cpsy/reynolds.html>

<sup>31</sup> Human Capital Research Collaborative <http://humancapitalrc.org/midwestcpc/>

money, the widespread support that Head Start offers, as well as the increase in capacity will certainly impact the Pilot.

- The Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS) offers National Leadership Grants. The ECHO Center and Fletcher Free Library are discussing applying jointly, in partnership with the YMCA and a home-visiting agency to fund a lifelong learning initiative that would focus on Science education and early learning (ECHO), early literacy (FFL) and welcome baby/parent mentoring modules that could help fund a portion the Pilot's home visiting program. \$500,000 is available through this 2-3 year grant program and it is a 1:1 matching grant (with non-federal funds).
- State
  - Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, Promise Communities funds are sub-grants designated for communities in need piloting innovative pre-K to grade 3 approaches showing sustained early learning effects
  - In-kind support from RTT-ELC Grant funded home-visiting coordinator
  - Building Bright Futures: data and measurement
  - Agency of Education support: Kindergarten readiness; English Language Learning
- Local
  - City Support
    - Mayor's Regional Program money currently going to early education or other youth-serving programming should be allocated to scholarships and to support the Initiative
    - PLoT funds?
    - In-kind (staffing, materials and interpretation)
    - Marketing/recruitment (enrollment letter from Mayor)
  - Burlington School Department
    - In-kind (staffing)
    - Allocation of school resources
    - Coordination of data
    - Marketing/recruitment ("welcome baby" letter from Superintendent)
- Private
  - Philanthropy
    - UWCC
    - Youth-focused foundations and donors
    - Let's Grow Kids
      - Develop module/materials for home visiting
      - City Department Head presentation/Speaker's Bureau/pledge
  - Business community-local
    - Banks—local investment requirement
    - On-site child care programs
    - Grants/subsidy as employee benefit
    - Corporate gifts
    - VT Business Roundtable
  - Business community—state or federal
    - Corporate giving and corporate foundation grants

- Ready Nation<sup>32</sup>
- Hybrid
  - Pay for Success/Grant model: ask grantors to make an investment in a program that either pays a dividend (if benchmarks are met) or is converted to a grant (if they are not)
  - GMCB/SIM (ACEs) in partnership with FAHC and Blueprint for Health

*Possible future sources to explore are:*

- Federal
  - Promise Neighborhoods Grant
  - Social Innovation Fund sub-grants (through UWCC and VT Community Foundation)
- Private/non-profit
  - League of Cities and Towns membership
  - National philanthropy (Gates; Besos)
- Local
  - City
    - Allocation of City resources (local budget)
    - Taxation/revenue adjustments
    - Economic development approaches and standards that support family-friendly workplace policies in local businesses.
  - BSD
    - Reallocation of school resources to capture return on investment (e.g.: capture savings from reduced special education needs and reinvest in early learning)
    - Create educational policies that support lifelong learning, out of school learning and early learning as essential supports for Burlington's children in a cradle to career framework.

## **Appendix VIII: Recommendations for the Office of the Mayor:**

As the only elected official in the City, the Office of the Mayor can make an impact critical to the success of the Initiative. The Mayor can use the podium to engage residents in the process, inform parents of the importance of early learning, and convince the business community that it is in their economic interest to support a market-driven scholarship program. The Mayor could provide support to the Initiative in the following areas:

- US Conference of Mayor's Early Learning Nation Resolution
- Recruitment of families/awareness of Act 166 funds
  - Letter from Mayor inviting participation in Pilot

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<sup>32</sup> 500 CEOs from around country looking at how to support early learning—Lisa Ventriss involved, profiled as business champion: <http://www.readynation.org/>

- Nurture and build partnerships with providers, agencies, funders, business community
- Empower and encourage City Departments to engage in the Initiative
  - Coordinate with Strategic planning at FFL/Master Plan at Parks & Rec
  - Include long-term early learning funding in resource allocation conversations during City budget process (e.g. what budgetary impacts do BPD and CJC interactions with youth have on the community? Can costs be shared between FFL and BSD to staff youth-serving positions? Can Parks & Rec support an Extended Learning Coordinator as a way of capturing additional grant-sourced revenue?)
  - In the future, it may prove impactful to consider:
    - departmental reorganizations to accommodate staffing needs
    - creating/revitalizing a City Office of Youth and/or Mayor's Cabinet on Youth
    - funding a City staff position

## **Appendix IX: Task Force Considerations & Challenges**

### *For Task Force Consideration:*

1. Can we use scholarships to extend care through summer for families who need year-round care?
2. Can we use the scholarship model to finance more infant and toddler care spots as well as fund the parent mentoring through home visiting?
3. Does our STARS rating system capture the information we want and need to determine high quality?
4. Can the scholarship system be designed to provide enough flexibility to create sliding scales so that families who are caught in the middle get some benefit? And families who can afford it pay true cost? Consider intersection of Burlington Early Learning Initiative home visiting program with Children's Integrative Services and Project LAUNCH. [How many children in BTV will LAUNCH serve? "2840 unduplicated in CCty" over 5 years, "approx. 660/yr after startup"] Can ELI home visiting help identify children with special needs before they reach school?
5. What assessment tools serve children and families best, are easy for providers to use and offer us consistent, reliable and valuable data?
6. How does this program serve in-home care providers?
7. How can this program support culturally specific and competent care settings?
8. Can the City create a centralized waiting list to assist parents with locating programs and help the City keep track of need?
9. To support school readiness, can we include transition planning and support for families as children move into Kindergarten
10. How can a market-driven model be best used by non-tuition programs like Head Start and BSD? And what are the strategies to make sure we have high participation by family-based programs?

### *Challenges to Address:*



1. We currently don't collect socio-economic information about children until they enter Kindergarten (magnet school application carries those questions—are all K registration forms the same?). We believe we need this data to determine if parent mentoring and high quality ECE work equally well for lower-income children and upper-income children.
2. BSD currently does not fund ELL instruction or support before Kindergarten
3. Existing high-quality programs do not have the physical space to support more capacity.
4. Family transportation in and around the city and to other towns (care near jobs, e.g)

#### **Appendix X: Mayor's ELI Stakeholder List with Affiliations (attached)**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Position, Organization</u></b>	<b><u>Email</u></b>
CITY		
Miro Weinberger	Mayor, City of Burlington	miro@burlingtonvt.gov
Marcy Krumbine	Asst Dir for Comm'y Development, CEDO	mkrumbine@burlingtonvt.gov
Kesha Ram	Comm'y Engagement Specialist, CEDO	kram@burlingtonvt.gov
Peter Owen	Director, CEDO	peter@burlingtonvt.gov
Jesse Bridges	Director, Parks & Rec	jbridges@burlingtonvt.gov
Rubi Simon	Director, FFL	rsimon@burlingtonvt.gov
Beth Truzansky	We All Belong, CEDO	btruzansky@burlingtonvt.gov
Mike Kanarick	Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office	mike@burlingtonvt.gov
COMMUNITY PARTNERS		
Martha Maksym	ED, UWCC	martha@unitedwaycc.org
Amy Carmola	UWCC	amy@unitedwaycc.org
Diana Carminati	UWCC	diana@unitedwaycc.org
Raquel Aronhime	UWCC	raquel@unitedwaycc.org
Julie Coffey	ED, Building Bright Futures	jcoffey@buildingbrightfutures.org
Julianne Nickerson	Director, BBF Chitt Regional Council	juliannebbfdsc@gmail.com
Paul Berhman	ED, Head Start	pbehrman@cvoeo.org
Elizabeth Meyer	ED, Child Care Resource	emeyer@childcareresource.org
Barbara Rachelson	ED, Lund	barbarar@lundvt.org
Kim Coe	Lund	kimc@lundvt.org
Courtney Farrell	Lund	courtneyf@lundvt.org
Phelan Fretz	ED, ECHO	pfretz@echovermont.org
Molly Loomis	Director of Education, ECHO	mloomis@echovermont.org
Mark Redmond	ED, Spectrum	mredmond@spectrumvt.org

Dawn Moskowitz	Parents for Change, Voices for VT's Children	partner4kids@gmail.com
Judy Peterson	ED, VNA	peterson@vnacares.org
Bev Boget	VNA	boget@vnacares.org
Kristin Fontaine	Pediatric Outreach, FAHC Comm'y Health Improvement	kristin.fontaine@vtmednet.org
Shayla Livingston	Dept of Health--MS in Maternal Child Health	xelafox@gmail.com
Rebecca Gurney	Consultant	rebecca.s.gurney@gmail.com
Jeetan Khadka	Youth in Transition	jeetankhadka@gmail.com
Jessica Nordhaus	Facilitator, Mayor's Early Learning Initiative	jsnordhaus@gmail.com
Karen Hewitt	Learning Materials Workshop	karen@learningmaterialswork.com
AFTER SCHOOL/PRESCHOOL		
Mary Alice McKenzie	ED, Boys & Girls Club	mmckenzie@bandgclub.org
Vicky Smith	ED, King Street Center	vicky@kingstreetcenter.org
Kelli Shonter	King Street Center	kelli@kingstreetcenter.org
Susannah Kerest	King Street Center	susannah@kingstreetcenter.org
Leisa Pollander	ED, Sara Holbrook Center	LPollander@saraholbrookcc.org
BSD		
Jeanne Collins	Former Superintendent, BSD	jcollins@bsdvt.org
Julie Cadwallader - Staub	Grants Director, BSD	JCStaub@bsdvt.org
Diana Langston	Director EEE, BSD	dlangsto@bsdvt.org
Victor Prussack	Coordinator of BSD Magnet Schools & enrollment	vprussac@bsdvt.org
Bobby Riley	Principal, IAA	briley@bsdvt.org
Brian Williams and SA Team	Principal, SA	bewillia@bsdvt.org
Barb Juenker	Special Ed, Early Ed	bjuenker@bsdvt.org
Kathy Mathis	FSP, BSD	kmathis@bsdvt.org
Ali Dieng	Outreach Coordinator, Burlington Kids BSD	adieng@bsdvt.org
HEALTH		
Theresa Alberghini DiPalma	Sr VP of Marketing & External Affairs, FAHC	tad@vtmednet.org
Jason Williams	Sr. Govt Relations Strategist	<a href="mailto:jason.williams@vtmednet.org">jason.williams@vtmednet.org</a>
Breena Holmes	Dept of Health/LAUNCH	Breena.holmes@state.vt.us
Al Gobeille	Chair, GMCB	gobeilleal52@gmail.com

HIGHER ED		
President Sullivan designee	President's Office, UVM	
Jennifer Hurley	Early Childhood Special Ed Program UVM College of Ed	jennifer.hurley@uvm.edu
Susan Ryan	ED, Center for Disability and Inclusion	sryan1@uvm.edu
Susan Torncello	Co-cordinator, UVM Early Childhood PreK-3 Program	Susan.Torncello@uvm.edu
PROVIDERS		
Sarah Adams-Kollitz	The Children's Space	sadamskollitz@burlingtonchildrensspace.org
Maureen Danielczyk	Director, Trinity	danielczykm@yahoo.com
Megan Godfrey	Asst Director, Trinity	megan.trinitychildrenscenter@gmail.com
Samantha Stevens	VNA Family Room	stevens@vnacares.org
Siobhan Henry-Hooker	Stepping Stones	siobhan981@gmail.com
Liz Rogers	Stepping Stones	lizzirogers@myfairpoint.net
Mary Burns	YMCA	mburns@gbymca.org
Liz Shayne	The Schoolhouse Learning Center	eshayne@theschoolhousevt.org
Kelly Story	The Schoolhouse Learning Center	kellyrps@earthlink.net
Jeanne Goldhaber	Faculty, UVM EC Program	jgoldhab@uvm.edu
Tanya LaChapelle	ED, Robin's Nest	<a href="mailto:rnchildrensctr@aol.com">rnchildrensctr@aol.com</a>
Colleen Christman	in-home provider, SB?	christman.colleen@gmail.com
Beth Sanders	Comm'y Dev Coordinator, BBF-Burlington; home provider	sandersarmywife@gmail.com
Sheila Quenneville	Leader, Starting Points Network; home provider,SB	Sheila3640@aol.com
Trish Shabazz	Director, UVM Campus Children's Center	trish.shabazz@uvm.edu
PHILANTHROPY		
Rick Davis	Permanent Fund	ddavis8957@aol.com
Kim Keiser	ED, Turrell Foundation	keiserkim@gmail.com
Eddie Gale	ED, Henderson	egale@hendersonfdn.org
Meg Smith	Vermont Women's Fund, VCF	msmith@vermontcf.org
ADVOCACY		
Robyn Freedner-Maguire	Campaign Manager, Let's Grow Kids	robyn@letsgrowkids.org

Megan Stearns	Comm Director, The Campaign	megan.campaign.vt@gmail.com
Ryan Emerson	Field Director, The Campaign	ryan.campaign.vt@gmail.com
Carlen Finn	Voices for VT's Children	carlenf@voicesforvtkids.org
Lindsay Deslaurier	Interim ED, VT Early Childhood Alliance	Lindsay.vtalliance@gmail.com
Lou Ann Beninati	Program Specialist, Vermont Birth to Three	lbeninati@gmail.com
Barbara Postman	Policy & Devel., Vermont Birth to Three	barbara.postman@gmail.com
Mark Sustic	Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative	mark.sustic@gmail.com
Gov. Howard Dean	Point person on exploratory ONE 0-3	
Amanda McKay	Contact: Gov. Dean	amckay26@gmail.com
Jason Lorber	Exploratory, ONE 0-3	jasonplorber@gmail.com
POLICY MAKERS		
Joey Donovan	State Rep, Chair House Education Comm	jdonovan@burlingtontelecom.net
Kesha Ram	State Rep, Ways & Means	kesha.ram@gmail.com
Barbara Rachelson	State Rep, House Ed Committee	barbara.rachelson@gmail.com
Stacy Weinberger	Commissioner, State Board of Ed	stacysw@comcast.net
BUSINESS		
Lisa Ventriss	President, VT Business Roundtable	
Mary Barrosse Schwartz	ED, VBR Research and Education Foudnation	prek@comcast.net
C2C		
Hal Colston	ED, Partnership for Change	hal@partnershipvt.org
Lindsey Cox	Project Manager, Partnership for Change	partnershipforchangevt@gmail.com

## ELI Scholarship Partner Program Agreement



### Partner Program Agreement 2020

The ELI First Steps Scholarship Program strives to increase access for lower-income Burlington children to high-quality infant and toddler early care and learning programs as a strategy to close the achievement gap, improve education and health outcomes throughout childhood, and preserve future public resources.

#### Program Qualifications for ECE Programs Accepting ELI Scholarships

- Program regulated by the Child Development Division (center or home)
- 4- or 5-star (high-quality), NAEYC/NAFCC accredited, or agreed upon plan to achieve 4 stars
- Designated as a Basic Specialized Care provider
- Accept Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP)
- Located in or nearby Burlington, VT
- Implement a family support framework, such as Strengthening Families
- Provide documentation of program policies and practices that follow a family support framework, such as the Strengthening Families Action Plan, or Therapeutic Child Care Program staff have received or plan to access trainings related to a family support framework, such as Strengthening Families or EMTSS
  - Provide training documentation OR provide a plan to access SF training

#### Delivery Model

- The scholarship application process opens March 2, 2020, and scholarship awards are effective by September 2020 (or sooner if program space is available).
- Scholarships are awarded by lottery if more applications are received than spots available and, once available funds have been allocated and lottery enrollment is complete, a waiting list will be maintained. Applying to the program does not guarantee funding.
- Families will receive a First Steps Scholarship award for the 2020-2021 school year, ending August 2021, with monthly payments/adjustments made directly to the program where child is attending with the support of Child Care Resource.

- Families must reapply each year for the Early Learning Initiative First Steps Scholarship. Receipt of this scholarship in one year does not guarantee the awarding of the scholarship in future years.
- Children retain scholarship eligibility until eligible for universal pre-K.

**All Parties Agree to:**

- Maintain open and consistent dialogue with Child Care Resource (CCR), the City of Burlington, Let's Grow Kids (LGK), and partner program throughout the term of this agreement.
- Safeguard sensitive data (e.g., Personally Identifiable Information (PII), etc.)
- Provide information about the ELI Scholarship Program to families and the community.

**Partner Program Agrees to:**

- Adhere to all federal and state laws including, but not limited to:
  - Non-discrimination: Accept students without discrimination based on gender, race, nationality, disability, economic status, religion, crime victim status, parental marital status, or any other protected class or characteristic.
  - Confidentiality according to FERPA.
  - Mandated reporting: Report any suspicion of abuse or neglect immediately to the Department for Children and Families.
- Expulsion policy: Attach a current copy of program expulsion policy as required by Vermont state licensing regulations for home-based and center-based programs.
- Provide opportunities for parental participation and engagement in the program.
- Review tuition cost break-out showing parents/guardians how CCFAP scholarship funding is applied to their child's tuition.
- Submit monthly attendance records to CCR which will equip the partner program with templates for attendance tracking, invoicing, child exit forms and other related documents. Exit forms will include guidelines for notification and payment processing during a student transition from the program.
- Participate in data collection, including the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, to measure scholarship outcomes in coordination with the City, LGK, and mutually agreed up on third parties conducting research.
- Enrollment packet and tuition information: Attach a current copy of the program tuition information and enrollment packet to the City of Burlington and Let's Grow Kids.
- Complete ELI Scholarship 2020 Enrollment Inventory form to reflect committed enrollment spaces for upcoming year.

**Enrollment**

- Once a lottery family has been connected to a program director, the program will provide a tour and complete the enrollment process with each family – providing all paperwork and handbooks.
- A \$325 deposit will be paid to the program, per child, per space. This will be applied to the child's tuition upon enrollment.

- First Steps scholarship awards are determined based on family income and CCFAP allocation. Programs will receive an annual tuition ranging between \$15,000 and up to \$17,300, based on a combination of CCFAP award, First Steps Scholarship funding, and family copay.
- Copays will be based on the First Steps Scholarship model.
- For children currently enrolled, their tuition award will be calculated accordingly for 2020.
- Upon enrollment, the program will provide each family with an LGK developmental survey, to be completed and returned to the LGK enrollment coordinator (LGK will provide the chosen assessment tool).
- As new enrollment space becomes available, the program agrees to inform the First Steps enrollment coordinator, giving first option to families on the scholarship waiting list.
- When a family ends enrollment, the program will allow 2 weeks for the First Steps program to re-enroll the space from their scholarship waiting list.
  - The program will notify LGK when a family gives notice or discontinues enrollment – exit form submitted to LGK and CCR.
  - The First Steps funding paid for that month will be used to hold the slot for those 2 weeks. If the 2-week period enters into the next month, the First Steps Scholarship will fund \$115 per week in the new month (only as needed to cover the 2-week period).
  - If First Steps does not have new families to place at that time, the enrollment coordinator will notify the program and release the space.
- The City and LGK will cease taking applications for enrollment on October 31, 2020, but the City retains the right to extend this deadline at its sole discretion.

#### **TERMINATION OF THIS CONTRACT:**

Any party, stated in writing, may terminate this agreement at any time with 60 days' notice in writing to the other party. Without limiting the foregoing, a material or substantial breach of terms of this contract shall constitute cause for termination. This agreement shall abide by applicable laws of the State of Vermont; constitutes the entire agreement of the parties hereto with respect to the subject matter hereof; and shall be binding upon and inure to the benefit of the parties hereto and their respective successors and assigns.

This agreement remains in effect from the date of signature below through August 31, 2021. This includes the timeframe for the application, lottery, and placement of awardees as part of the second year of the scholarship program. Placements are expected to run from September 1, 2020 thru August 31, 2021, though can begin earlier subject to the mutual agreement of the parties. The agreement can be terminated earlier in accordance with the termination provisions set for above.

**SIGNATURES:**

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**Partner Program Name**

---

**Partner Program Representative Signature**

**Date**

---

**Partner Program Representative Printed Name**

**Program Contact Information:**

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Address (if different):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fax:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Early Learning Initiative Reserved Enrollment Template

### Early Learning Initiative First Steps Scholarship 2020 Enrollments

**CHILD CARE PROGRAM NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

Current 2019 Enrollments (full-time):

NOTES:

Infant (8 wks-1 year)		Reserved for 2020:	
Toddler (1-2 years)		Reserved for 2020:	
2 Year (2-3 years)		Reserved for 2020:	

**ADDITIONAL SPACES FOR 2020 Enrollments:**

**Transition Spaces (full-time)**

NOTES:

Infant	Reserved for 2020:	
Toddler	Reserved for 2020:	
2 Year	Reserved for 2020:	

**Newly Committed Spaces (full-time):**

NOTES:

Infant	Reserved for 2020:	
Toddler	Reserved for 2020:	
2 Year	Reserved for 2020:	

Anticipated Number Funded Spaces: \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated Enrollment Date for 2020: \_\_\_\_\_

(\*Note: Once scholarship lottery is complete, enrollments may begin as space is available)

Director Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ELI Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## First Steps Scholarship Application



# Burlington First Steps Scholarship Application 2020

### Who Can Apply



#### Reapplication

To qualify for the scholarship, you must meet the following:

1. Be a Burlington resident
2. Your child qualifies if she/he is born after 3/31/2018 and is at least 8 weeks of age when enrolling in child care. *\*If your child is older than 2 ½ but younger than 3 years by September 1, 2020, contact Paula Bonnie – [paula@letsgrowkids.org](mailto:paula@letsgrowkids.org) - to ask about eligibility.*
3. Must not be currently enrolled in the state's Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) and willing to apply (we will assist if needed), and must not be currently enrolled in a 4 or 5 Star child care program. **\*\*SEE COVID-19 Note Below.**
4. Scholarships are for FULL-TIME child care (26 or more hours weekly). Families applying **MUST** be needing full-time care and able to commit to full-time program attendance.
5. APPLICATION TIMELINE:
  - a. ROUND 1 - Applications being accepted **June 8 thru June 25** – lottery to be held **June 26, 2020.**
  - b. ROUND 2 – Applications being accepted **June 26 thru July 15** – lottery to be held **July 22, 2020.**
  - c. **DUE TO COVID-19**, the scholarship program will allow families to apply for tuition assistance, who are already enrolled in a qualifying/partnering child care program, for the 2020/2021 scholarship year. To receive First Steps Scholarship, families **must** also qualify for the State's Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP).
6. **APPLICATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO BE ACCEPTED THROUGH 2020.**  
**Qualifying applicants will be placed on a waiting list and offered scholarship & assistance with enrollment, as program spaces become available.**
7. Applicants must meet the family household income guidelines **listed below:**

Household Members	2-person	3-person	4-person	5-person	6-person	7-person
Household Income at 65% AMI	\$47,645	\$53,625	\$59,540	\$64,350	\$69,095	\$73,840

## Child Information

Name – First & Last		
Date of Birth (or expected)		
Street Address		
City, State, Zip Code		
Child is a Burlington Resident	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Primary Language		
Have you applied for Head Start?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

## Parent/Guardian Information

### Parent/Guardian #1

Name – First & Last		
Street Address		
City, State, Zip Code		
Phone	Cell:	Home:
Email		
Primary Language		
Relationship to Child		

### Parent/Guardian #2

Name – First & Last		
Street Address		
City, State, Zip Code		
Phone	Cell:	Home:
Email		
Primary Language		

Relationship to Child
-----------------------

## Need for Care

Reasons full-time child care services are needed (check all that apply):

- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Self-Employment
- ☐ Seeking Employment
- ☐ Training/Education
- ☐ Special Health Need – Parent
- ☐ Special Health Need – Child (including physical and mental health)
- ☐ Family Support (extreme stress such as homelessness, safety, emotional stability, substance abuse)
- ☐ Reach-Up

**Case Manager Contact Information** (such as Reach-Up and other support staff):

Name	Phone	Email

Location/Area you prefer for a child care program (although not guaranteed)?
Do you have access to transportation (some child care availability may be located outside of the downtown Burlington area)? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Is your child currently enrolled in a child care program? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If YES, name of program:
Are you currently on any program waiting lists? If YES, which programs? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

## Household Information

Is your household <input type="checkbox"/> Single-Parent Household <input type="checkbox"/> Two-Parent Household <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Do you <input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Rent <input type="checkbox"/> Live with Relatives <input type="checkbox"/> Live with Someone Else <input type="checkbox"/> Other

### Other Children in Household

Other Child #1 Name:	Date of Birth:
Other Child #2 Name:	Date of Birth:
Other Child #3 Name:	Date of Birth:
Other Child #4 Name:	Date of Birth:

### Household Income

Documents to verify income **MUST** be included when submitting your application (see page 7 for details).

#### Earned Income received by adult member of household:

##### Earned Income #1

Name of Individual Earning Income
Source of Income (include <b><u>employer name</u></b> or list as <b><u>self-employed</u></b> )
Gross Monthly Amount (before deductions)

##### Earned Income #2

Name of Individual Earning Income
Source of Income (include <b><u>employer name</u></b> or list as <b><u>self-employed</u></b> )
Gross Monthly Amount (before deductions)

##### Earned Income #3

Name of Individual Earning Income
Source of Income (include <b><u>employer name</u></b> or list as <b><u>self-employed</u></b> )
Gross Monthly Amount (before deductions)

**Unearned Income** received by adult members of household (EXAMPLES include – child support, insurance benefits, SSI, unemployment benefits, veteran’s benefits):

**Unearned Income #1**

Name of Individual Earning Income
Source of Income
Gross Monthly Amount (before deductions)

**Unearned Income #2**

Name of Individual Earning Income
Source of Income
Gross Monthly Amount (before deductions)

**Unearned Income #3**

Name of Individual Earning Income
Source of Income
Gross Monthly Amount (before deductions)

**Child Support** paid out for children NOT LIVING in the home:

**Child Support #1**

Name of Individual Being Paid
Gross Monthly Amount (before deductions)

**Child Support #2**

Name of Individual Being Paid
Gross Monthly Amount (before deductions)

## **Documentation**

**NOTE:** Proof of Burlington Residency and Income Eligibility **are required** when submitting this application. Copies of verification documents can include:

### **Proof of Income – Include ONE from the following list:**

- Copies of two current, consecutive pay receipts
- A copy of a 2019 income tax return
- A statement/letter from a new employer
- A copy of a court order for child support
- Reach-Up funding certificate

### **Proof of Burlington Residency – Include ONE from the following list:**

- Copies of two, current utility bills (electric, gas, land-line phone) – this must show your current, home address
- Copy of a mortgage statement
- Copy of a rental agreement
- Letter from landlord

**NOTE:** If pay receipts or tax return show your current physical, Burlington address, this document may be used to verify BOTH income & residency.

## **Authorizations**

**By signing this application,** I give permission for the ELI enrollment coordinators to exchange information needed, to determine my/our eligibility for a First Steps Scholarship, with the organizations below:

- City of Burlington
- Chittenden Economic Development Office (CEDO)
- Let's Grow Kids
- Child Care Resource
- Head Start
- Reach-Up
- Listed Case Managers
- Partnering Child Care Programs (will share names and dates of birth for enrollments)

Other (list any additional agencies):

Agency Name	Contact Name, Phone, Email

**By signing this application**, I give permission for Child Care Resource to share funding details for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) and/or any subsidy funding being received, with ELI enrollment coordinators. This information will determine the amount of the First Steps Scholarship to be awarded.

NOTE: In some cases, funding and scholarship being received, may not cover the full cost of child care tuition.

**By signing this application**, I agree to allow the child care program where I enroll my child, to share the completed Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) with the First Steps Scholarship Program, for data purposes (a developmental screening completed each year).

I understand I will also be asked to complete a voluntary family survey with First Steps or child care program staff.

**OPTIONAL:** **By signing this application**, I give permission for the City of Burlington or Let's Grow Kids to share identification information and other data collected on this form with the University of Vermont Medical Center, the Burlington School District, and other health care providers, to evaluate and potentially expand services.

☐ NO, I decline    ☐ YES, I authorize with

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

This application MUST be signed and dated to be accepted & required verification documents MUST be included.

Parent/Guardian Signature	Date
Child's Name	Date of Birth



## ELI Scholarship Award Letter

Parent Name  
Address  
City, VT Zip

July 20, 2020

### First Steps Scholarship Certificate

We are pleased to inform you that your child is receiving a First Steps Scholarship award through the City of Burlington. This letter confirms that the City and Let's Grow Kids have helped secure a full-time child care space for you in a high-quality 4 to 5 star program. This award is to be used with your Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) funding to assist with childcare tuition costs. This award will be paid directly to the approved childcare program you've chosen (listed below). ***If you decide to attend a different childcare program in the future, the First Steps Scholarship award will not automatically transfer to enrollment with a new program. Funding for a new program will need to be approved by the First Steps enrollment coordinators.***

Child's Name:

Child Date of Birth:

Program Name:

First Steps Scholarship Weekly Award:

Weekly Family Copayment:

To be determined between you and NAME  
OF PROGRAM CHILD WILL ATTEND

Scholarship Award Period:

September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2021

\*Your child's CCFAP weekly award may fluctuate throughout the year, causing the First Steps Scholarship weekly award to be adjusted accordingly. The First Steps Scholarship is meant to be combined with your CCFAP funding, and so it will be important to keep your CCFAP in place, and your application renewed prior to the end date.

You will need to reapply for the First Steps Scholarship each year. **Applications must be submitted & received thirty (30) days before the end of your scholarship award period, listed above.**

To continue receiving the First Steps Scholarship, your child will need to remain enrolled full-time at the approved program and you will need to meet all requirements to keep your CCFAP funding in place. If you have changes to your CCFAP award amount, or if you no longer qualify for funding, this may also affect the amount of your First Steps Scholarship and your overall eligibility for the award.

Congratulations on being a recipient of a First Steps Scholarship! Please contact (NAME OF PROGRAM OUTREACH CONTACT) with any questions.

## First Steps Scholarship Program End of Funding Notification

DATE

Hi (PROGRAM DIRECTOR NAME),

A First Steps Scholarship family currently enrolled in your program, will soon reach the end of their scholarship and no longer qualify for funding:

**Child's Name:**

**Scholarship End Date:** August 31, 2020

**Note:** Child now eligible for UPK funding, no longer qualifying for First Steps.

The family has been notified and should follow up with you to be sure Universal Prekindergarten funding is in place. The opportunity to enroll at (PROGRAM NAME) has been a great start for them – thank you.

Please let us know if you have questions.

NAME OF PROGRAM COORDINATOR

CONTACT INFORMATION

## First Steps Scholarship Exit Form

### First Steps Scholarship Enrollment Exit Form

#### Purpose:

- This form is used to notify Child Care Resource and the City of Burlington if a First Steps scholarship recipient is exiting or has exited their child care placement.

#### Instructions:

- Please complete this form within 2 business days upon notification from a family that a child will be exiting the program or of the child's final exit from the program.
- Form should be submitted to Rebecca Reese, City of Burlington, [reese@burlingtonvt.gov](mailto:reese@burlingtonvt.gov) and Dawn Machia, CCR, [dmachia@childcareresource.org](mailto:dmachia@childcareresource.org)
- Program must complete data collection surveys with the family, unless timing and circumstance do not allow. Surveys are submitted to Rebecca Reese, City of Burlington: [reese@burlingtonvt.gov](mailto:reese@burlingtonvt.gov)

#### Payment during exit:

- All scholarship tuition payments are paid one month in advance. When children exit, pre-paid tuition payments are used to hold the vacant spot and/or be applied to the tuition of the newly enrolled scholarship recipient. The City of Burlington and Let's Grow Kids intend to place an eligible child from the waitlist into that spot within two weeks in order not to lose the spot.

#### Please Provide the following Information

Program Name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Exit \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Exit \_\_\_\_\_

Person Completing Exit Form \_\_\_\_\_

Date form submitted \_\_\_\_\_