



Hello!

Transitions

Julie Coffey announced her resignation as Executive Director of Building Bright Futures (BBF) effective at the end of the calendar year. We wish her all the best in the future, and are grateful for the good work she's done over the last four years to strengthen BBF and improve outcomes for Vermont's young children. We are also sorry to lose Mary Burns as the chair of the BBF State Advisory Council (BBF SAC). Her tenure will also end with the calendar year. The BBF SAC will announce successors for these two leadership positions as soon as possible.

Timothy Cutler has been named the new Operations Director at CDD, replacing Karen Garbarino. In this position, he will take the lead on several Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grant projects. Tim previously served as the grants and contracts administrator for CDD. Welcome Tim!

Financial Management

Along with questions about the progress of the Early Learning Challenge grant, we are often asked, "How do you keep track of all that money?"

\$36.9M is a lot of funding, and it's important that it is tightly controlled and managed. The federal government has stringent requirements that we follow, along with the fiscal requirements of relevant state agencies. Diane Cummings, the fiscal manager for the grant, oversees the funding as a whole, as part of AHS' central office. The grantees are the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and Building Bright Futures. Each of these agencies then must adhere to federal requirements as well as their own internal financial controls.

Here are some examples of the processes we have put in place to meet federal requirements:

- The fiscal manager for the grant supplies a quarterly report to our federal program officers on spending by project to date, including obligations to date (meaning what we have committed to spend via contracts but is not actually out the door yet).
- Any significant variations from the federally approved budget have to be approved in advance by our federal program officers.
- Any variations in categories of spending (for example, moving a planned expenditure from a grant to a contract or vice versa) has to be approved in advance.
- The federal government requires a process called "sub-recipient monitoring" in which every contract or grant that we enter into has to be monitored based on level of risk determined through a process developed and approved by our federal partners. The monitoring involves our fiscal manager reviewing selected items at random from the expenditures and making sure



all appropriate documentation is in place to demonstrate why the Early Learning Challenge grant paid for this expenditure.

If you have any questions about the financial management of the grant overall, be sure to ask Diane or Julie.

National ELC Grantee Meeting

Several of us from Vermont's Early Learning Challenge team recently returned from the annual national meeting of all the Early Learning Challenge grantees from around the country. (No, there were no meals provided over the entire three-day conference...at least the feds are consistent!) Again and again, we heard that our work in Vermont is leading the way! Though we are in the third cohort of states, our progress is impressive even compared with states that received their grant ahead of us. Examples include:

- Our data governance work is ahead of most other states.
- Our rate of participation in our STARS program is comparable to or ahead of that of other states.
- Vermont's revised and updated early learning standards, VELs, have been approved and adopted by our State Board of Education, which is not the case in every state.
- Participants frequently commented on the high level of collaboration across all of our projects and partner agencies.

As you might guess, there was a lot of discussion about sustainability planning. The cohort 1 states are already sustaining many of the gains they've made. Cohort 2 and 3 states, like us, are in the process of developing sustainability plans. Again, we were ahead of the game, having started this planning from the very beginning of the grant. We will report on progress in sustainability planning in our next few monthly updates.

Enjoy the project specific updates that follow!

Updates:

These updates are meant to be responsive, and contact information for the grant Implementation Team can be found at the end of each update. We have grouped the updates into four main grant strategies: Improving Quality and Access, Investing in People, Empowering Communities, and Ensuring We Are Making a Difference. We also listed updates by project number, project name, and project lead to help you gain greater familiarity with the twenty-four projects of the grant.

Improving Quality and Access



Project 4 – Expand Strengthening Families Child Care Program (DCF/Jan Walker)

Update: The evaluation of the Strengthening Families expansion is underway. As a reminder, six organizations around the state serve as hosts to support ten family child care providers in their region to implement the Strengthening Families model. The evaluators review mid-year reports from the homes and host organizations, as well as other assessments, in order to give the evaluators a better picture of the impact of the Strengthening Families model. Having this concrete data is important in promoting the sustainability of the project.

Why it matters: The Strengthening Families model supports providers in building on families' assets and strengths, encourages parent understanding of the developmental needs of children, and links families with comprehensive services as needed.

Project 8: CIS Specialized Child Care Services (DCF)

Update: The CIS Specialized Child Care team and CDD are addressing several dimensions of Specialized Child Care Services in order to improve care for young children. CDD is working to address some structural issues that will allow them to successfully increase the financial incentive for specialized child care providers who will meet the new quality requirements. They are also working out the timeline for the roll out of the new requirements for providers. The Specialized Child Care team continues to address how best to transport eligible children to specialized child care services. CDD will be working in partnership with AOE around their discussions of inclusion in child care programs, which is critical to supporting the needs of children receiving specialized child care.

Why it matters: Specialized Child Care Providers care for our children who are most at risk; giving these providers the training and support they need will result in better outcomes for these children.

Project 9: Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) (AOE/Kate Rogers)

Update: The newly revised and adopted VELS are [posted on the AOE website](#). AOE is now working with members of the VELS Revision Committee and others to create professional development materials for the new VELS. Their goal is to have webinars on the standards for different age groups available in early 2016. Planning is underway for a VELS Institute in summer 2016. AOE is also working to develop an interactive web platform that will allow early childhood professionals to easily access the standards and get examples and activities to help them use the VELS in their classrooms. This website will be modeled in part on [the website for the Georgia Early Learnings and Development Standards](#).

Why it matters: Being able to track where Vermont's children are developmentally from an early age can help inform parents, educators and policymakers about how those children are doing and how we can better support their early development. The VELS represent a shared vision of what we want for young children birth to Grade 3.

Project 12 – Early Childhood Wellness (VDH/Breana Holmes)

Update: The *Help Me Grow Vermont* phone line at Vermont 2-1-1 had a soft launch on Sept 1 and a public launch on Oct 1, 2015. During the months of September and October there were 64 calls to the call center, involving 30 children. 17 families were fully connected to a community service, meaning that the child development specialists were able to follow up with the family and determine that they have actually accessed the service. Connections were made to services including early literacy programs, family and community medicine, early intervention, and parent/child activity groups. *Help Me Grow* also



includes training on the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) developmental screening tool through the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP) to help promote universal screening. Since September 2014, 164 providers, representing 66 early learning and development programs, both home and center-based, have been trained in developmental monitoring, screening, referral, and response. Families whose children attend these programs have shared that they feel that Parent Teacher Conference time has become more meaningful, particularly for infants, when the conversations are around developmental screening results. Families who have had the opportunity to complete the ASQ-3 at home reported that the time spent completing the activities was enjoyable for both the family member as well as the child.

Update: Project 12 also includes the RN Child Care Wellness Consultant program (CCWC). The program currently employs nine nurses throughout the state to do health and wellness consultation with early learning and development programs. The nurses have made 54 visits to 46 programs. The CCWC program has streamlined its process in response to informal focus groups with child care providers. The intake form is now completed on the phone when the provider calls in for the referral. Instead of waiting for the provider to complete a program review prior to the initial visit with the CCWC, the RN assists the provider with completion of the program review during the initial visit. The program has also added another visit to bring the individualized resource materials and recommendations to the provider in order to work toward a focused action plan. Each set of visits is focused on a specific topic like preventing infection, emergency planning, or nutrition and physical activity. In addition, CCWC has begun offering *on site* trainings to any provider seeking a staff training on a health or safety topic. Since July they have trained more than 100 child care program staff on the safe administration of medications and 11 more trainings are scheduled between now and the spring of 2016.

Why it matters: Early detection and connection to services lead to the best outcomes for children who are at risk for developmental or behavioral concerns. Training helps ensure that high quality programs address the health and safety needs of all children.

Project 13: Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports (EarlyMTSS)(AOE/Kate Rogers)

Update: AOE has identified the sites that will implement the Early MTSS model in cohort 2 of the project:

- Caledonia Central Barnet School
- Early Education Services-Canal Street Head Start in Brattleboro
- Shelburne Community School Preschool
- Starksboro Cooperative Preschool
- Windsor Southeast State Street PreK Program

Including the sites from cohort 1, there are now a total of 12 sites implementing the framework statewide.

Why it matters: Healthy social and emotional development is the best way to insure children's overall well-being. In programs that have implemented Early MTSS, children who struggle emotionally and/or socially are supported to develop these skills. Likewise, early childhood professionals are given



additional training and support so that they can better address the social and emotional wellness of the children in their care.

Investing in People

Project 15 – Implement and Evaluate M.A.T.C.H (Mentoring, Advising, Teaching, Coaching, Consulting, and Helping) (DCF/Jan Walker)

Update: Research questions for the MATCH evaluation are in place and the research methodology has been outlined. This work has been done ahead of the launch of the MATCH registry so that when it is in place we will be well-poised to understand if it is effective. The goal is to go live with the registry of MATCH professionals in 2016.

Why it matters: Relationship-based Professional Development has proved particularly effective for providers in getting the skills and training they need to provide high quality care and education for children.

Project 17 – Early Childhood Workforce Survey (DCF/Jan Walker)

Update: The stakeholders who helped craft the survey met in late October to discuss the preliminary data. A final report will be shared with the Building Bright Futures Professional Preparation and Development (PPD) committee in early December before being shared with the general public. The PPD will use the data along with the [recent national study on Transforming the Workforce](#) to consider policy recommendations going forward. It is important to remember that the Early Childhood Workforce Survey was a point in time effort to capture baseline data. The survey included questions about job satisfaction and hopes for the future as well as professional development and achievements. In the future, much of the professional development data will be gathered through the Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) at the Child Development Division. There are additional funds in Project 17 to help support providers in learning how to use BFIS and those efforts are getting underway.

Why it matters: This information will help us chart a course to build a stronger workforce and identify information that will inform workforce surveys in the future.

Empowering Communities

Project 2: Empowering 12 Regional Councils (BBF/Julie Coffey)

Update: Building Bright Futures (BBF) brought together a group of over 100 state and regional stakeholders on November 4 to discuss critical issues in the early childhood field that impact the successful implementation of Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan. For more information on this event, please contact Cynthia Greene, Action Plan Coordinator, and Deb McLaughlin, Regions Manager, at BBF. A conference report will be released before the end of November. The 12 BBF Regional Councils will be completing their updated Regional Action Plans by the end of 2015. In early 2016, all the regional action plans will be pulled into a central document that offers an aggregate picture of early childhood needs and strategies at the regional level. These will include up-to-date regional profiles from Vermont Insights. ActKnowledge, based out of the City University of New York (CUNY), has been working on a first draft of BBF's first year evaluation. These preliminary findings will be shared at the November 23, 2015 joint BBF State Advisory Council and ELC-RTT Advisory Council meeting.



Why it matters: As the 12 BBF regional councils develop capacity to impact services that affect young children and their families in their local communities, they will support the successful implementation of the Early Learning Challenge grant and the larger statewide Early Childhood Framework and Action Plan.

Project 3: Early Childhood Leadership Institute (ECLI)(GOV/Julie Cadwallader Staub)

Update: The Snelling Center for Government's Early Childhood Leadership Institute graduated their first cohort! These twenty-five leaders came together from across public, private, and nonprofit early childhood and family sectors, with different experiences and backgrounds, to gain a better understanding of who they are as leaders, grow their understanding of early childhood issues across the state, and build leadership capacity. They met for six 2 day sessions over 6 months, May through October. The participant's final session, at the Essex Resort and Spa October 30 and 31, ended with a commencement luncheon with keynote speaker Rick Davis. The Snelling Center for Government and the Early Childhood Leadership Institute Advisory Committee could not be more excited about this group of new graduates and continuing the institute in 2016 with a second cohort. The ECLI 2016 application will be on the Snelling Center ECLI webpage late November.

Why it matters: The ECLI will train a diverse group of Vermonters to be knowledgeable advocates for early childhood policies and programs.

Project 24: Promise Communities (DCF/Julianne Nickerson)

Update: Julianne Nickerson, Promise Community Director, and Reeva Murphy, recently traveled to Philadelphia for a conference with Casey Family Foundation's Communities of Hope. They heard stories and successes from other Place Based Initiatives and look forward to this growing collaboration. Promise Communities sponsored a Community Cafe training with national trainer, Robin Higa, on November 16th and 17th. They have invited partners from Headstart, CIS, Vermont Birth to Five, and the BBF regional councils to recruit teams of families and professionals to learn more about this powerful model of having intimate, trusting, engaging, community conversations-- focused on the same five protective factors framework used in the Strengthening Families model. The communities continue to build and broaden their Promise Community coalitions and gather data about community assets and needs. For example, Brattleboro's Green Street Neighborhood Promise Community has decided to extend evening meetings so they can share dinner together. At their last meeting, the coalition went on a community walk and spoke of assets that they observed. They then moved from that discussion of the lived experience of the neighborhood, to the measured experience of the neighborhood—looking at some demographics and asking four key questions (based on Results Based Accountability.) They will use this data to tell the story of their community and, in turn, shape their Promise Community road map. The Green Street Community also meets informally every Friday morning at a local coffee shop to touch base without agendas, and is forming outreach teams, called Pods, to have deeper community conversations.

Why it matters: This project will mobilize rural communities with a concentration of children with high needs to work towards the transformation of every aspect of the environment that supports young children and families in order to achieve a high level of school readiness and success.

Ensuring We Are Making a Difference



Project 18 – Measuring Kindergarten Readiness (AOE/Karin Edwards)

Update: The newly revised Kindergarten Readiness Survey opened Oct 15 and kindergarten teachers throughout the state administered it through November 13. Lori Meyer at UVM created a training webinar on how to administer the new survey and it will be posted on the AOE website so that others can learn more about it. AOE has worked to answer questions and offer support to teachers implementing the new survey. To date, over 5,000 kindergarten students have been entered in the KRS. Thank you to all kindergarten teachers for taking time to complete this most important survey!

Why it matters: The Kindergarten Readiness Survey is one of the key measures of success of Vermont's early childhood system, as well as of the grant. Having a valid and reliable assessment is critical to making sure we know that all Vermont's children are ready to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Project 20: Vermont Insights (Formerly ECDRS)(BBF/Julie Coffey)

Update: [Vermont Insights](#) is developing *Community Data Profiles*, a tool to help users organize data by location, visual type (chart, table or map), and time, with accompanying text prepared by data and content experts. To see a recent Community Data Profile created using the prototype of this new tool, [click here](#). This Community Data Profile is called the [Con Hogan Trend Line Collection](#). The trend lines in Vermont Insights reflect some of those that Con Hogan, former Secretary of Vermont's Agency of Human Services (AHS), used over a decade ago as a consultant and trainer both nationally and internationally with governments, public agencies, and communities. New profiles under development are Head Start Community Assessment, BBF Regional Action Plans, and Promising Communities.

Why it matters: Vermont Insights is an integrated online toolbox that equips Vermonters to leverage meaningful data to guide policies that improve the well-being of children, families and communities.

Project 21 – Data Governance Structure (GOV/Julie Cadwallader Staub)

Update: Dr. Nancy Smith of Data Smith Solutions visited Vermont for the third time in late October. She continued to meet with stakeholders, including higher education representatives and the BBF Regional Council Coordinators, to vet policy questions and talk about the structure of the future Data Governance program. She presented a proposed outline of an early childhood data governance structure to data stewards and owners from the Agencies of Education and Human Services. She also reviewed this proposal with the ELC grant leadership team and the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Team.

Why it matters: When an effective data governance structure is established, the quality and security of data reported, collected and used is enhanced; and communication and collaboration across agencies, programs and information technology staff is improved. This means more access to reliable and useful data to evaluate the effectiveness of early childhood services.

If you or the organization with which you are affiliated would like more information or would like to discuss the grant with grant leadership directly, please contact Julie.cadwallader-staub@vermont.gov.

For more information on the grant visit <http://buildingbrightfutures.org/early-learning-challenge/>.

Thank you for your continued interest in supporting our youngest Vermonters!



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GLOSSARY:

AHS – Agency of Human Services

AOE – Agency of Education

ASQ – Ages and Stages Questionnaire (developmental screening, Projects 11, 12, 13)

ASQ-SE – Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social and Emotional

BBF – Building Bright Futures

BBF SAC – Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council

CDD – Child Development Division (within CDD)

CIS – Children’s Integrated Services (within CDD)

CLASS – Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Project 10)

DCF – Department for Children and Families (within AHS)

ECLI – Early Childhood Leadership Institute (Project 3)

ELC – Early Learning Challenge Grant

ERS – Environmental Rating Scales (Projects 7 and 10)

GOV – Governor’s Office

HMG – Help Me Grow (Project 12)

KRS – Kindergarten Readiness Survey (Project 18)

M.A.T.C.H. – Mentoring, Advising, Teaching, Coaching, Consulting, and Helping (Project 15)

PAT – Parents As Teachers (Project 11)

RBA – Results Based Accountability

RFP – Request for Proposals

T.E.A.C.H. – Teacher Education And Compensation Helps (Project 16)

TS Gold – Teaching Strategies Gold (Formative assessment under Project 10)

VCCICC – Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council

VAEYC – Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children

VDH – Vermont Department of Health (within AHS)

VELS – Vermont Early Learning Standards