

Vermont Statistics:

State Population..... 626,211
(as of 2012)

0-6 population..... 4.9% (262,211)

Poverty level:

For 2011, the federal poverty level is \$22,350 for a family of four. Children living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level are referred to as poor. But research suggests that, on average, families need an income of about twice the federal poverty level to meet their basic needs. 21% (7,783) of children under age 6 live in poor families.

of local collaboratives..... 12

Total Early Childhood Funding:

Roughly, 5% of total State of Vermont budget, two-thirds of that being maternal and child healthcare associated costs. An estimated 5 million dollars entered the state through myriad philanthropic organizations in 2012.

State/Local Collaborative

Total Funding:

An estimated \$230,000 goes toward State Council and 11 regional councils for coordination.

Table of Contents

State-Level Governance.....	2
Funding.....	3
Staffing.....	3
Advocacy.....	3
Local Collaborative Overview.....	4
Local Staffing.....	4
Local Collaborative Funding.....	4
Technical Assistance and Support to Regional Collaboratives.....	4
Local Collaborative "Snapshot"- BBF of Southeastern Vermont.....	4
Pros and Cons of Vermont's State/Local Model.....	6
Performance Measurement.....	7
Major Accomplishments.....	7
Key Components to Success at the State Level.....	7
Key Components to Success at the Local Level.....	7
Lessons Learned.....	8
Interviews.....	8
Resources.....	8

March 2014

Vermont's Building Bright Futures Initiative

The purpose and need for Building Bright Futures (BBF) is articulated in its mission statement: Through the coordination and restructuring of the existing system of early care, health, education and related family support services in Vermont, all Vermont families and young children will have access to a continuum of comprehensive, high quality early childhood programs that meet established standards, promote school readiness, and address the needs of the child and family.

Building Bright Futures has evolved since its inception by executive order under Governor Madeline Kunin in 1988 as the Governor's Partnership in Child Care Committee and, later, the Governor's Children and Youth Cabinet under Governor Howard Dean. In 1992, Vermont established an early childhood workgroup to bring together most sectors of the early childhood system including public school pre-kindergarten programs, Parent Child Centers, Early Head Start and Head Start and private early childhood providers to discuss how they could become a more cohesive group of early childhood providers. This work led to the establishment of common standards for all programs, the development of early learning standards, the establishment of the Professional Development committee that took and continues to take the lead on all things related to the early childhood workforce, and the formal recognition and support of early childhood councils in each of the 12 human services agencies in the state. Recognizing the Advisory Council had gone about as far as it could as an informal body, the group pursued and obtained a Smart Start technical assistance grant in 2001 to begin the process of transitioning to a more formal governance structure for the Early Childhood system in Vermont. In June 2006, Governor Jim Douglas signed an executive order creating the Building Bright Futures Early Childhood Advisory Council. The executive order was in place until June 30, 2010, when Building Bright Futures was established by Vermont statute, Act 104, protecting it from changing political climates.

In July 2011, Building Bright Futures became a nonprofit organization that now serves a dual role as the State Early Childhood Advisory Council and the governance structure for the early childhood system, aligning the work at



the state level with the work of 12 regional councils across Vermont to promote improvements in access, quality, and affordability of prevention and intervention services for families and young children 0-6. Soon the council and regional councils will broaden the scope to 0-8.

State-Level Governance

Building Bright Futures (BBF) serves a dual role as both the governor-appointed Vermont Early Childhood Advisory Council and 501(c)(3) statewide governance body for the early childhood system, aligning the work at the state level with the work of 12 regional early childhood advisory councils across Vermont to make improvements in access, quality, and affordability of early care, health, and education for families and young children 0-6.

Established by Act 104, The State Early Childhood Advisory Council is comprised of no more than 23 appointed members and charged with the support of 12 regional councils. Six members of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council are state agency heads leading Human Services, Commerce and Community Development, Education and the Departments of Health, Mental Health, and Children and Families. Other members include two state senators, two House representatives, the Head Start Collaboration Director, business representatives and a variety of community and early childhood representatives.

The work of Harvard's Center on the Developing Child on the healthy development of children serves as the foundation for the vision, mission and commitments that BBF established to guide and evaluate its work. The structure designed to carry out the work was formally established in Act 104, with defined responsibilities that include being charged with improving the quality of services for families and young children by establishing a system for planning, coordinating, integrating and developing evidence-informed early childhood interventions, forward-thinking policies, public information and resources at the state and regional levels.

Established in Act 104, the specific legislative charges to the State Early Childhood Advisory Council are to:



The State Early Childhood Advisory Council is comprised of no more than 23 appointed members and charged with the support of 12 regional councils.

- advise the Governor, administration, and general assembly on the status and needs of the early care, health, and education system;
- monitor overall system performance by regularly tracking and reporting system data on the well-being of young children and the performance of the system of care related to the council's commitments to children and selected indicators;
 - develop a system action plan to serve as the basis for state policy and funding recommendations and work with secretaries/commissioners to ensure coordination of existing budgets and policies;
 - disburse funds raised in accordance with priorities defined in system plans;
- report to the Governor and legislative committees during the first month of each biennium on council's finding and recommendations, and progress toward outcomes;
- coordinate and integrate the development of an early childhood budget that reflects alignment of funding with priorities identified in the early childhood system plan;
- contract with state agencies and departments to deliver services as agreed upon; and
- pursue and accept funding from diverse sources outside of state government to sustain, expand, and enhance the early care, health and education system.

The BBF State Council serves as the umbrella organization to 12 regional councils of indigenous leaders who work “on the ground” within their respective communities, reaching, connecting, and engaging all young children and their families and providing important linkages to those in need of proven effective community supports, both formal and informal.

Funding

An annual \$184,000 contract through the Child Development Division (CDD), Department of Children & Families, Agency of Human Services, maintains a full-time executive director, some state council operations, and \$7-10,000 grants to 11 regional councils expressly for part-time coordinators. Through a state contract resulting from a national five-year grant, SAMHSA’s Linking Actions of Unmet Needs (LAUNCH), the 12th council receives funding for a full time regional council coordinator and the state council receives a part-time administrative assistant, child and family indicators data reporting system support, and an early childhood health policy expert for an estimated \$200,000.

Additional funding from the State of Vermont, Child Development Division supports the local councils further with Building Bright Future direct service seed grants, ranging from \$50,000-\$200,000, for prevention activities.

Staffing

The BBF state office includes three staff members and two contractual staff, and their duties are as follows:

- **Full-Time Executive Director - 1**
 - Manage 501(c)(3) organization;
 - Report to a non-profit board of directors;
 - Negotiate the prudent stewardship of a non-profit organization but also steer its direction strategically with a governor-appointed council of public-private sector stakeholders;
 - Raise funds to ensure BBF’s fiscal sustainability;
 - Facilitate the development of policy and funding recommendations and monitor their implementation;
 - Engage in marketing and build public relations;
 - Organize, convene, and bring people together;
 - Gain the attention of individual BBF Council members and the community at large;
 - Articulate BBF’s vision; and
 - Serve as “the face of BBF.”

- **Part-Time Office Manager/Administrator -1**
 - Answer phones;
 - Schedule appointments through multiple conference lines for committee and workgroup meetings;
 - Handle day-to-day operations and act as accounts payable/receivable;
 - Schedule events;
 - Order supplies/materials; and
 - Set up prior to board/council meetings.
- **Full-Time Grant-Funded Young Child Wellness Expert - 1**
 - Coordinate Project LAUNCH, grant funded project requiring early childhood content expertise;
 - Manage all sub-contracts related to the Project LAUNCH grant and State Department of Health;
 - Publish monthly policy briefs through website; and
 - Facilitate statewide Early Childhood list serv.
- **Early Childhood Data Reporting System (ECDRS) Project Directors - 2**
 - Design, develop, and maintain data reporting system as statewide “go to” platform and repository of key data indicators within the following domains: Economic and Family Well Being, Health, Community, Early Learning & Education, Safety, and Demography.

Advocacy

The role of the state Building Bright Futures is to form BBF policies, to inform state policies, and to educate policy makers, legislators and the public about early childhood issues and best practices. An advocacy plan is currently under development. The state office does not have a paid lobbyist.



At the local level, most councils imbed their advocacy objectives within their annual work plan. Some councils hold annual legislative forums in November or December each year where members of their legislative delegation are invited to come and learn about their region's most pressing issues affecting young children and their families.

The Vermont Early Childhood Alliance, an entity that advocates for early care and education state-wide, is a partner with BBF on legislative matters and advocacy issues. Both BBF and the Alliance co-sponsor an annual Early Childhood Day at the Legislature, a lobbying event held every March. Local councils link their advocacy objectives and their legislative forums work toward this statewide effort.

Local Collaborative Overview

The local collaboratives or councils were created almost 30 years ago. The Chittenden Council, for example, has been in existence since the 1980s and later embraced the work of Building Bright Futures. Only one of the 12 BBF local councils is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation and was formed because of problems between the regional council and its fiscal agent. The other 11 councils all have fiscal agents and are housed with their fiscal agents, usually an early childhood provider. However, this proves a conflict of interest at times if the fiscal agent is also receiving funding from the state seed grants, which the regional council oversees and grants to local recipients. This framework may change if Vermont is awarded a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. In that case, the state council would likely co-hire and oversee all 12 regional council coordinators.

The statewide network of 12 regional councils was fully funded with the passage of Act 104. Then, one year later, suddenly and without much notice or reason, the funding was cut from the state budget. Despite the fact that the goal of this infrastructure was not achieved, the network has stayed together for the last six years, mainly due to active volunteer leadership from local communities, a small amount of patchwork funding (i.e., .25 PTE staffing per council from a small state grant), and, most of all, the passion of advocates who patiently await the day when funding will allow full re-invigoration.

Local Staffing

Eleven of the councils, with funding ranging from \$7-10,000 allocated toward coordination, have part-time staff. Scopes of work vary but due to the small amount of funding, little more than coordination, networking, and collaboration can take place. One council, the Chittenden Regional Council, received funding through the LAUNCH grant to hire a full-time coordinator through October 2017.



Both BBF and the Vermont Early Childhood Alliance co-sponsor an annual Early Childhood Day at the Legislature, a lobbying event held every March.

Local Collaborative Funding

State funding to the local councils ranges from \$7-\$10,000 per year to pay for coordination. Additional funding is raised locally through grants and private donations.

Technical Assistance and Support to Regional Collaboratives

Building Bright Futures State Council staff coordinates monthly conference calls, face-to-face meetings on a quarterly basis, and an annual day-long retreat. Staff will soon begin a 'buddy system' approach in which new and veteran regional council coordinators are paired in a peer-to-peer network. Meeting topics include strategizing about making improvements in building the capacity of regional councils to impact the quality, access, and equity of services in each region.

Members of both the state and local councils have expressed that the technical assistance they are able to provide is inadequate to meet the needs of the local councils. They are planning to create greater learning opportunities for regional coordinators in the future.

Three BBF coordinators serve as representatives on state-wide coalitions and councils. They communicate with the other BBF coordinators to get their input to help inform policy decisions and discussions.

Local Collaborative "Snapshot"- Building Bright Futures of Southeastern Vermont

Building Bright Futures of Southeastern Vermont (BBF SEVT) is located in the southeastern corner of the state. BBF SEVT operates within Windham County, Vermont and is not a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. It is one of the 12 regional councils affiliated with the



state-wide office of Building Bright Futures (BBF), and the Windham Child Care Association (WCCA) acts as its fiscal agent. BBF SEVT operates as a voluntary association and has adopted a set of operating guidelines that governs its operations, including the coordination at the regional level to help support the early childhood system in Vermont, as directed by Act 104.

BBF SEVT has an advisory board that meets monthly. It uses a collaborative leadership model and members serve voluntarily. There are no appointments and no elected officers. Advisory board members serve on a variety of standing or ad hoc groups, based on BBF SEVT's FY12-14 Action Plan to help meet its identified goals and objectives. BBF SEVT has a part-time regional coordinator, funded by the BBF State Council, to help staff its efforts. It should be noted that while other members of the community serve on the BBF SEVT Advisory Council, they do so voluntarily and their salaries are paid by other organizations.

While BBF SEVT's fiscal agent resides and regular meetings are held in Brattleboro, Vermont, its work is county-wide and also operates within the Agency of Human Services district geographic parameters. BBF SEVT focuses on the coordination and integration of early education and care services for children, ages 0 to 8 years, and their families.

BBF-SEVT's FY14 budget is \$13,800. This could increase to \$20,800 by January 1, 2014 if anticipated private funding comes through. The BBF SEVT's Ad Hoc Oversight Committee assists with local fundraising efforts.

Because of Windham County's rural nature, BBF SEVT utilizes efforts such as Transition Teas, Teddy Bear Teas and Month of the Young Child activities to help reach out and inform parents of young children about available services and activities. BBF SEVT also works in collaboration with existing community-based coalitions, such as the Hunger Council, to leverage and build off existing efforts to increase food security, provide parenting education classes and other endeavors. The Teddy Bear Teas are funded by BBF SEVT's Direct Services Grant, which is a separate strand of funding by the State of Vermont, but BBF SEVT also uses its meetings to help promote and share information about this important service in the community.

The Council works in partnership with other family services in the county. For example, BBF SEVT was a member of the Brattleboro Celebrates Food Day Planning Committee. It was able to offer \$100 towards the printing of posters to help inform the community about the importance of healthy eating and sustainable local food systems. It staffed an information table for the afternoon and gave away free children's books with BBF SEVT bookmarks, raffled off items, and distributed WIC information and Parent in Your Pocket Resource Guides to promote awareness of early childhood resources in Windham County.

Significant support exists to ensure the success of BBF SEVT's collaborative efforts. Windham Child Care Association (WCCA) provides office space, support staff, and office supplies/copying services, when needed, for the BBF SEVT Regional Council's activities and support of its part-time regional coordinator. Early Education Services (EES) provides meeting space and use of its technology. BBF SEVT advisory board members volunteer their time and serve on a myriad of work groups to ensure the goals of BBF SEVT are being met. They also have leveraged their contacts to help secure additional funding in FY14, due to a funding reduction in this calendar year.

While there is a part-time regional coordinator, members of the BBF SEVT Advisory Board contribute their time, influence, resources, and networks to help ensure BBF SEVT's success and to oversee the regional coordinator's work. Their participation and impact has been proven time and again as different members take turns facilitating

the monthly advisory board meetings, participate in ad hoc working groups to ensure BBF SEVT's goals and objectives are being met, represent BBF at other community coalition meetings and leverage their networks to maximize BBF SEVT's impact. Particularly with limited paid staffing, this model ensures that everyone is contributing to the well-being of young children and their families in a rural region of Vermont.

Pros and Cons of Vermont's State/Local Model

Pros

- The Statewide Network is a system of early childhood supports for young children and their families, which helps to eliminate fragmentation and leads to better coordination.
- The demand for health, education and human services far exceeds available resources, so unless a statewide system has institutionalized them by integrating them into its policies and approaches, programs will come and go and fragmentation and siloing will continue.
- Spending funding on improving systems, rather than supporting discreet programs, is a key way to sustain lasting change. In the future, Vermont regional councils will raise funding and disburse it; therefore, the money invested in improving systems can also result in increased funding for programs.
- BBF SEVT is a model for collaborative leadership and decision-making. This shared method of making decisions and sharing leadership is so effective and ingrained that it was formalized in the latest revision of BBF SEVT's Operating Guidelines.



Spending funding on improving systems, rather than supporting discreet programs, is a key way to sustain lasting change.

Cons

- Currently, limited funding is a huge challenge.
- Turf, habit and culture can get in the way of providing quality services to children and families. There should be safe ways to examine institutional barriers and how they prevent effective delivery of services to vulnerable children and families.
- Funding needs to be allocated specifically for systems building and maintenance of the system. It is the absence of value, i.e., systems funding, approach, and attention, that is the cause of service silos. Social and health problems are complex; the system itself needs to be properly defined; it has gaps and isn't comprehensive enough; parts of it aren't high quality and often there are no measurements or outcomes. We must know when progress is being made or not.
- A huge obstacle is the lack of federal and state value placed on systems and infrastructure.
 - There is too much work for BBF SEVT's current capacity. The BBF SEVT regional coordinator's position is part-time. The position is funded at approximately 15 hours per month but the work load often exceeds that.
 - An improvement to the model can be made by finding ways to make it possible for unlikely allies and other stakeholders to participate in BBF SEVT without attending regular meetings. Other channels of participation need to be developed to help these supporters of early care and education participate in meaningful ways.
- Improved communication and coordination needs to occur at the state level between and among existing state entities devoted to early education and care. In the past year, it was not unusual to get competing requests from state organizations that often put local BBF regional councils in the middle.
- Advocates need to speak with one voice at the state and local levels to all legislators. The inability to coordinate efforts and messages divided the early childhood community in the last legislative session, which ultimately hurt young children and their families.



Performance Measurement

The last evaluation report is five years old. State funding for evaluation was completely cut from the budget following that report.

Developing performance measures for 'systems' is a challenge for BBF and an area where TA is needed. The question of how to know that BBF is making a difference is important yet difficult to quantify, and the staff and board are considering ways to measure this.

Each council is required to submit an annual report to the state BBF that captures annual performance measures the state requires. These include attendance at 12 monthly calls or meetings, organizing an annual legislative forum, participating in Early Childhood Day at the legislature, and developing an Action Plan.

Both at a state and local level, it is anticipated that outcome measures will change, given that Governor Peter Shumlin recently released the state's first Early Childhood Framework. A Framework Action Plan is currently being developed and this plan should have important outcome measurements for BBF and its regional councils as key stakeholders. The Action Plan will be finalized by the end of January 2014. BBF, along with the Governor's Office, the Agency of Human Services and the Agency of Education, will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that will determine how they will work together to implement the Action Plan.

Major Accomplishments

- The work of BBF helped inform the creation of Vermont's Early Childhood Framework and action plan.
- BBF has been flexible enough to transform itself to meet new challenges and opportunities in order to make improvements in population health, education, social, and economic indicators on child/family/community well-being.
- Despite a potentially crippling funding reduction, BBF SEVT persevered by adopting a collaborative leadership model and has continued to thrive.
- The funding crisis allowed BBF SEVT, in some key ways, to grow stronger through the relationships individuals and agencies had to create to survive. This has produced a strong foundation upon which many other BBF SEVT activities continue to flourish.



Key Components to Success at the State Level

There exists:

- A public-private governance structure (local and state) in which private and public sectors govern together, meeting, sharing, and acting on the vision;
- Strong leadership by the governor, which trickles down to the cabinet and state programs;
- An ethos of collaboration and accountability and the resulting mechanisms and policies;
- Data-backed decision making;
- Sustainable funding for the entire early childhood system of services and infrastructure;
- A longitudinal service and education population data tracking system;
- Accompanying and sustained public education and awareness campaigning;
- A family-centered approach to services as well as governance; and
- A whole-child and family, integrated approach to services.

Key Components to Success at the Local Level

- The work is anchored by a collective belief in the mission of serving young children and their families first. "Research shows that toxic stress and other factors, such as poverty, have lingering effects upon developing minds that can follow children into adulthood. As caring and responsible adults, it is our moral imperative to look to the developmental needs of young children and support of their families. This belief allows our

local council members to look beyond organizational identities and work within and outside the confines of bureaucracies to design programs, collaborations and other interventions that help fulfill the promise of every Vermont child.”

- Having a state level organization, the BBF State Council, and staff to renew and expand their capacity at the state level is critical for local councils to thrive. “Coffey’s persistent and steady leadership on this front at the state level has been key to helping renew faith in the potential of BBF statewide to ensure the needs of young children and their families are being met.”



Lessons Learned

- “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.” Have diversified funding from several sources and braid it into a single stream.
 - You need champions both at the state and local level.
 - Relationship building can take a long time. The relationships between the state council and regional councils should be a priority of every statewide network. The regional councils should realize they can’t do it without the state council and the statewide network can’t exist without trust and collaboration of the regional councils. An early childhood system is far more effective as a single, yet autonomous statewide network than fragmented leadership.
 - There is a need for a larger learning community among peer-to-peer states and paid technical assistance for states on many issues related to systems building.
 - Keep young children and their families at the heart of everything the collaboration does.
 - Seek the input of parents and other caregivers.
 - Create operating principles to make clear the organizational mission and purpose of the council, and how it is to function; make decisions and hold each other accountable.
 - Create an Action Plan that clearly outlines strategic goals, objectives, measures and timelines for these goals to be met. Review this Action Plan regularly – either quarterly or semi-annually.
 - Ensure a safe and respectful meeting environment that allows for everyone to contribute ideas and be heard.
 - Document what has been done; it is often more than you think.
 - Reach out to likely and unlikely allies for support.
- Thank everyone for their contributions.
 - Tell your story through social media and newsletters.
 - Stay focused on the big picture but identify actions that are doable. Success breeds success.
 - Have fun! Don’t forget humor.
 - Consider the power of informal and formal networks and support for this work. Remind stakeholders that this model of community collaboration can yield great rewards, even though it may not be commonly accepted or appreciated.

Interviews

Julie Coffey, *Executive Director*
Building Bright Futures

Debra McLaughlin, *Regional Coordinator*
Building Bright Futures of Southeastern Vermont

Resources

- [Building Bright Futures website](#)
- [Work plan from Southeastern Vermont Building Bright Futures](#)
- [Vermont Legislation](#)
- [Building Bright Futures Data Reporting System](#)