

**Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Renewal Grant  
Vermont Annual Performance Progress Report – 12/31/22 – 12/30/23**

Vermont's Early Childhood Education (ECE) system is a broad, robust, and complex array of services, resources, and supports dedicated to improving the well-being of children prenatal to age eight and their families. It includes, but is not limited to, services to support the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. It is a mixed delivery system with services offered through a combination of public and private partners, including Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care, public schools, and community-based organizations supported with a combination of public and private funding. Vermont's ECE system is supported by the leadership and efforts of multiple partners, including families and community members, ECE providers, schools, businesses, non-profits, early childhood advocates, and state government agencies, with support from federal efforts.

The Vermont Integration Project: Building Integration in Vermont's B-5 Early Childhood Systems (VIP B-5) arose out of the PDG Renewal Grant Opportunity and seeks to improve the well-being of children and families through comprehensive and coordinated supports, in alignment with our strategic plan and logic model. The long-term outcomes of Vermont's VIP B-5 are: 1. Ensuring all children have a healthy start; 2. Families and communities play a leading role in children's well-being; 3. Children and families have access to high quality opportunities that meet their needs; and 4. The ECE system is integrated, well-resourced, and data-informed. As we work to achieve these long-term goals, we will focus on short-term outcomes in the core project areas of 1. Program Quality Improvement; 2. Family Engagement; 3. Workforce Development; and 4. Data and Evaluation Improvements.

Vermont's current efforts under the VIP B-5 project include coordinated efforts by multiple state partners: the Agency of Human Services (AHS) through the Child Development Division (CDD), Agency of Education (AOE), Vermont Department of Health (VDH), and Department of Mental Health (DMH). It is also coordinated in partnership with Building Bright Futures (BBF): Vermont's early childhood public-private partnership, which is charged with monitoring and advising the state on the well-being of children in the prenatal period through age eight and their families.

When reviewing this report, please note that some of Vermont's project activities had a delayed start, as noted in our quarterly reports. Delays in activity implementation had three root causes: 1. Extended administrative timelines for getting Vermont's new PDG-funded positions posted in the state's hiring system; 2. Staff turnover and difficulty in attracting qualified candidates when filling new positions; 3. Extended administrative timelines when posting VIP B-5 related Requests for Proposals (RFPs).

**Section A. Strengthening the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECE) Workforce (Questions 1 - 5)**

Roughly one third of the activities in the VIP B-5 project support our **Core Project Area of Workforce Development**. These activities are dedicated to helping Vermont EC professionals to access professional development opportunities, with the goals of supporting their career ladder growth, and enriching their understanding of EC content so that they can better deliver quality programming to Vermont’s children. Year one work also sought to remove barriers to professional development for early childhood educators, and to increase early childhood professional development options and accessibility.

When reviewing licensed child care programs across the state, we found that Vermont's EC workforce held the following credentials:

Table 1. Workforce Credentials

<b>Members of the Workforce who hold CDA or college degree, as of September 2023</b>	
Child Development Associate (CDA)	229*
Associate degree in an Early Childhood Education field	238*
Bachelor's degree in an Early Childhood Education field	758*
Master or Doctorate Degree in Early Childhood Education field	342*
<b>Workforce members working towards credentials, as of September 2023</b>	
State Credential	184*
Registered Apprenticeships	18**
<b>Workforce actively employed by child care programs licensed by the State of Vermont, as of September 2023</b>	
Total Workforce	9,740*
Total workforce holding CDA, college degree, or working toward credentials as stated above	1,769*
Total workforce <u>without</u> CDA, college degree, or working towards credentials	7,791*

\*Source: ACF-218 QPR FFY 2023 for Vermont

\*\*Source: VTAEYC Data

Professional Development of Early Childhood Staff (Q.1, 5)

Within VIP B-5, Vermont took the following approaches to expanding and improving the state’s EC professional development system:

- Addressing Barriers to Professional Development:
  - a. **Small child care and education settings often lack the funding capacity to give their staff opportunities to access professional development.** During year one, partners at BBF awarded the first round of subgrants (see Table 3) for

the period of February 1-December 30, 2024. Among the 19 grantees, many used the grant funds for professional development of their staff, with examples including:

- A grantee who is making college level classes accessible by funding laptops, books, and tuition for up to 2 semesters for 3 staff members.
  - A grantee who is supporting members of the Vermont New American population by helping them enroll in early childhood courses and providing 900 hours of paid on-the-job training and mentorship.
- b. **Licensing is an important part of many early childhood professions but can also be a barrier to getting staff on board.** Provisional and emergency licenses are temporary licenses designed to assist school districts that have advertised and are unable to fill vacant positions with suitable licensed candidates. Universal Pre-kindergarten programs in Vermont require a licensed educator to be present in classrooms, and recently, Vermont opened up provisional licensing to include Universal Pre-K teachers. This allowed them to begin working under this license level, while being supported to take steps needed to achieve licensure. During 2021, the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) approved another two cohorts from private programs to work under provisional licensing. The first of these cohorts will run 2023 to 2025, and the second will run 2024 to 2026. Assisted by PDG B-5 funds, the first cohort accepted 19 applicants to the program and partners at the Agency of Education (AOE) launched the group during 2023 with two technical assistance sessions and the creation and sharing of multiple resources.

- Increasing Options and Access to Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development is a continuum of learning and supports activities to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. Offering a variety of opportunities with different ways to access them leads to improved knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early childhood professionals. Within VIP B-5, we have partnered with Northern Lights at the Community College of Vermont to expand the professional development opportunities that are available to the early childhood workforce. Northern Lights is the hub of the professional development system for the early childhood workforce in Vermont.

With year one funding from PDG B-5, Vermont was able to positively affect the following professional development topical areas.

- a. **Developmental Growth Monitoring:** AOE continued the updates to the professional development modules on Vermont's Early Learning Standards (VELS) and development of the website that houses that content. VELS is a set of standards that allows Vermonters to share a common understanding of the knowledge and abilities children should have from ages 3-8. Having common standards in Vermont has historically led to the development of a shared language and values for parents and educators, leaders and policy makers. Year one involved laying groundwork for early childhood educators to be able to

access the professional learning opportunities that will ensue once the development of the website and online learning modules are complete.

- b. **Developmental Screening:** An important role of Vermont's Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) is to implement routine screening of children for developmental concerns using programs' Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) screening tool of choice, communicate results with families, and refer for needed follow up or services. The statewide Online Enterprise system gives free access for ECE, health care and community providers and is hosted by activity 3.2 (Attachment 1) VIP partner, Help Me Grow Vermont (HMGVT). HMGVT also hosts the ASQ Online Family Access to engage families in the completion of the questionnaires. In this reporting period, HMGVT provided six trainings on: ASQ, ASQ-Third Edition, and the ASQ Social Emotional-2 tools (available for professional development credit through Northern Lights) and trained over 177 educators and providers from 51 different programs across the state. Finally, all HMGVT resource center staff completed the Training of the Trainers this year to become certified ASQ Trainers.
- c. **Strengthening Families:** Partners at VDH and the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP) at the University of Vermont (UVM) have begun engaging support for strong family-child relationships and building stronger community infrastructure by developing a cadre of Touchpoints (TP) facilitators and trainers. TP is an evidence-based approach to building strong family-child relationships from before birth through age five. During year one the new TP Learning Management System was approved through UVM Brightspace and is being utilized to increase access for ECE providers to asynchronous trainings. TP training is available for continuing education credit through VIP partners at Northern Lights. Two TP training sessions were offered to 27 professionals. Pre and post training assessment showed participants' relational and developmental knowledge and skills increased in both training sessions. All participants reported that the training met their expectations in some way, with 87% reporting the training was "very well" or "excellent" at meeting their expectations.
- d. **Health and Safety:** VDH, Activity 4.4 (Attachment 1) is focused on provision of health and safety consultation to the ECE workforce. In collaboration with Vermont Let's Grow Kids (LGK) and braiding PDG B-5 funding, they offered Q & A-style conversations on health and safety topics via webinar format accessed on the [LGK webinar resource webpage](#). These sessions included VDH nurses as well as VT American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) leadership. Sessions began during the COVID-19 pandemic when the ECE workforce needed operating guidance during a pandemic. Quarterly topics have moved from a focus on COVID-19 to general and seasonal health issues such as resources on safe sleep and car seats, general pediatric updates, epidemiology updates, and immunization updates. Both the announcement and recording of the session are posted on LGK's social media (Instagram and Facebook) and sent out through their extensive listserv. ECE providers use the recordings for reference and to communicate with parents. Live sessions in 2023 were attended by 47 ECE providers.

- e. **Finding Professional Development Support:** Subgrant recipient Northern Lights launched the MATCH registry designed to recognize individuals who provide relationship-based professional development in Vermont. This includes mentors, advisors, technical assistance providers, coaches, and consultants.
- f. **Apprenticeship Program Evaluation:** In year one CDD released an RFP and chose the vendor to evaluate the state’s early childhood apprenticeship program. The evaluation will include recommendations for changes to assist in making the program a pathway that:
  - o is well-aligned with best practices and Vermont's ECE system
  - o leverages available systems and resources
  - o attracts a robust number of apprentices and mentors
  - o plays an important role in building the diverse, dynamic, well-prepared early childhood education workforce that is needed in Vermont

Improving Workforce Compensation and Benefits (Q. 2 & 3)

PDG B-5 funds have allowed us to assist early childhood professionals on the ground to better compensate and/or reward their staff by distributing subgrants. Activity 6.1 (Attachment 1) awarded grants in December 2023 (see Table 5) for the February 1–December 30, 2024 funding period. Grant-funded staff compensation and/or benefits included:

- Increased wages and benefits including paid vacation, sick days, and holidays for staff that all have college degrees
- Retention bonuses for existing staff and sign-on bonuses to attract needed new staff members
- 900 hours of paid on-the-job training for New Americans entering the workforce
- Pre-opening salaries for staff in a new ECE center that are aligned with the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC) recommendations and results of the 2022 Common Good Wage and Benefits Report for non-profit workforce
- Start-up staff salaries for two ECE centers that are expanding

Table 2: Supports to ECE Educators

Activity/Strategy	Quantity/Reach	Quantity/Dollars
Scholarships	5 Awards	\$9,294
Financial Bonus/wage supplements TIED TO EDUCATION LEVELS	3 Awards	\$24,912
Financial bonus/wage supplements NOT TIED TO EDUCATION LEVELS	17 Awards	\$37,800
Career Advisors, mentors, coaches, or consultants	3 Awards	\$1,620
Subsidized Professional development opportunities	38 individuals	
Substitutes, leave (Paid or Unpaid) for PD. Note: funding		\$13,800

Activity/Strategy	Quantity/Reach	Quantity/Dollars
to assist paying subs when staff attend PD opportunities.		
Other: coach/consult/training to participants including EMTSS, Circle of Security™, Nonviolent Crisis Intervention®, SEED & SEW certification, & others.		\$114,361
Other: Curriculum by a Career & Tech Center for high school students interested in pursuing an ECE Career		\$11,000

Funding Dedicated to Workforce Initiatives (Q.4)

Workforce initiatives are a focal area of the project, and as such have considerable portions of our budget allocated to them. Table 3 highlights this distribution of funds.

Table 3: Workforce activities portion of the VT VIP B-5 budget.

Partner and Budget Purpose	Estimated % for Workforce	Budgeted Amount
CDD – (4.1) Sub/apprenticeship program evaluation	100%	\$60,000
CDD – Workforce G&C Salary	10%	\$31,699
CDD – (4.2) Sub/Prof Development	100%	\$150,000
CDD – (6.2) SAG Grants	80%	\$240,000
AOE – (4.3) MTSS	100%	\$350,000
AOE (4.5) – VELS	100%	\$35,000
AOE (4.6) - Teacher Mentor Project	100%	\$26,667
BBF/VDH (6.1) VECF Grants	34%	\$1,900,000

VDH used braided funding from sources other than PDG B-5 agencies to meet VIP B-5 goals with webinars conducted by LGK VT on the following related activities:

- A [shared services telehealth pilot](#) to support programs to offer health services to ECE staff in programs
- Partner project with VCHIP to support ECE professionals to be trained in using ASQ

## Support Professionals from Traditionally Marginalized or Underserved Communities (Q.5, 6, 9)

Vermont is the most rural state in the U.S., with approximately 64.9% of the population residing in rural areas<sup>1</sup>. With the exception of Chittenden County, all other areas of the state are considered rural. Activity 6.1 (Attachment 1) focused on allocating subgrants throughout the state, with 13 of the 19 grants being awarded to organizations in rural locations. Of the \$1,171,509 awarded in the first round of funding, 64% was allocated to projects serving rural areas of Vermont.

In addition, among the 19 subgrantees:

- One project is creating a supported pathway to ECE careers, with a specific focus on New Americans, by providing paid employment, training, and coaching in a high-quality child care setting
- One project is expanding access to assessments and supports for children with developmental delays, including ASD
- One project is surveying parents of children either diagnosed or suspected of having ASD to determine needs and develop support programs
- One project is offering Circle of Security™ mental health training to ECE providers and parents

Community mental health agencies across Vermont were granted funds through Activity 6.3 (Attachment 1) to fund Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) and Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). Each agency provides services and supports to marginalized and underserved communities in their catchment area. One agency's staff participated in a Diversity-Informed reflective supervision series focused on how to best implement CPP with communities who have been historically marginalized because of their identities and/or who as a result of intersectionality have been the target of systems of oppression. This agency will learn how to use reflective practice as a method to promote and sustain antiracist and diversity-informed practice, especially in the CPP consultation/supervision relationship.

In Activity 4.3 (Attachment 1), AOE and CDD are engaging Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (Early MTSS) with the long-term goal of aiding programs and teachers in understanding and supporting children's social-emotional and behavioral needs, increasing knowledge and use of inclusionary practices that support the safe and successful inclusion of children with or at risk of disabilities, and reducing incidences of exclusionary discipline. Culturally-responsive practices and trauma-informed approaches have been embedded within the training program.

In year one of this activity AOE and CDD set a strong foundation for Early MTSS. They convened a cross agency weekly workgroup consisting of members from AOE, VDMH and CDD. This group disseminated an RFP and secured Pyramid Model Consortium as the vendor to train Early MTSS implementation sites and coaches. They designed and accepted applications for state wide coaches (experienced and new), and for implementation sites across all ECE settings/age groups. The implementation site application included questions about the

populations that they served (Table 4). Programs with ECE educators who served in traditionally marginalized communities and across all settings and age groups were given priority, using a rubric co-developed by AOE, CDD, and BBF.

Table 4: Questions used to target key populations

<p>Does your program participate in the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP)?</p> <p>Does your program serve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children in low-income families (at or below 100% FPL)?</li><li>• Children with suspected or diagnosed developmental disabilities or delays?</li><li>• English language learners?</li><li>• Refugees/immigrants/asylees?</li><li>• Children experiencing homelessness?</li><li>• Children from rural areas?</li><li>• Children with a parent who is or has been incarcerated?</li><li>• Children or children with families who are involved with the Family Services Division?</li></ul>
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In Activity 3.2 (Appendix 1) VDH integrates efforts to reach priority populations and build diverse family leadership. This work also leverages additional funding through the Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems: Health Integration Prenatal-to-Three grant, known as Vermont’s Integration Project: Prenatal-to-Three (VIP-3), and funding through a Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Health Equity grant.

Using this braided funding, VDH also integrates efforts to reach priority populations and build diverse family leadership. In partnership with the Parent Child Center of Northwestern Counseling Support Services (NCSS), these funds added two Abenaki Community Health Workers (CHW) to design, build, and enhance outreach and programming for Abenaki families. The hiring and training of these CHWs resulted in increased perinatal home visiting services, monthly traveling playgroups, and a parent support group. On average in 2023, 20 adults and 40 children attended the monthly playgroups.

Additional braided funding between VIP-5 and VIP-3 provided support to Nepali and Somali/Maay Maay CHWs at the Janet S. Munt Family Room Parent Child Center. Both CHWs attend the on-site Pediatric New American Program’s Building Strong Families Clinic connecting refugee/immigrant families to basic needs resources, child development services, and perinatal treatment and recovery supports. Over 400 families were served in 2023 and 50% of families are immigrants and refugees or identify as BIPOC. Braided funding also supports bilingual HMGVT staff to be on-site at the Family Room and attend the weekly playgroup with about 15-20 families. Staff provided screening, referrals, and ongoing care coordination for nine families during 2023. During this period Family Room educators and providers also participated in Touchpoints training (Activity 3.3).



Finally, our sub-grantee Northern Lights offers professional development services and supports which are available to any individuals working in regulated ECE and afterschool programs, including Head Start and Early Head Start, the Children’s Integrated Services workforce, and early childhood educators working in public school settings. Many of their training events are subsidized to remove cost as a barrier to participation. Northern Lights places particular emphasis on understanding the timing and modality needs of family child care providers to ensure access to professional development opportunities. They base decisions about training topics, timing, and modality on the result of an annual survey of the field, which most recently showed that 82% of respondents were likely to attend online real-time trainings in the next year where only 39% of respondents were likely to attend in-person trainings.

### **Section B. Expanding Access to High Quality ECE through Subgrants (Q. 6, 7, 8, 9)**

PDG VIP B-5 activities support children and families with being **engaged and able to access high quality opportunities** that meet their needs. In year one we:

- expanded opportunities for families to engage in leadership
- increased capacity
- provided new and improved pathways
- launched systems-level improvements
- provided training and coaching

#### Improving Service and Participation in a Mixed Delivery System (Q.6)

The VIP B-5 grant has supported growth and improvement in Vermont’s mixed delivery system across all project activities. Progress toward these goals is monitored by the BBF Early Learning and Development (ELD) Committee. As part of their charge, the ELD Committee focuses on increasing coordination and alignment in Vermont’s mixed delivery system by sharing information and best practices with both public and private partners. By ensuring that information is being shared with partners representing different levels of service provision, policy, and systems integration, the committee provides both public and private partners equitable access to the most up-to-date data and information and are informed about upcoming policy changes. Information sharing during 2023 included: 1) Implementation of Act 76: key legislation making changes to Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) eligibility and ECE funding 2) Changes to STARS, Vermont’s QRIS system; 3) Rollout of SPARQS, the new ECE program quality effort; and 4) Launch of First Children’s Finance’s Vermont office, which provides business technical assistance for private ECE programs.

BBF regularly collects feedback on the system via a statewide network of regional councils, as well as through BBF’s Families & Communities Committee (FCC), which is part of Activity 3.1 (Appendix 1). They document gaps and needs identified by family and community partners and present them to agency leaders bi-monthly.

Family engagement in the Vermont ECE system has seen expanded opportunities for family leaders to engage in the mixed delivery system. The 2022 Family Needs Assessment (FNA) was led by the FCC and supported by the State Advisory Council Network. The survey was conducted by parent ambassadors from around the state, who were recruited and trained to distribute and conduct the survey with a diverse group of Vermont families. In May 2023, the FCC co-chairs facilitated a virtual FNA briefing webinar. Findings and policy considerations from

the FNA will inform policy and decision-making throughout the state. FNA policy considerations emerging from the FNA include:

- Evaluate and align Vermont's strategies to inform and connect families to resources.
- Review national best practices to reduce administrative burden and promote equity of access to necessities (food, diapers, formula, etc.)
- Support the implementation of clear guidance on the full scope of kindergarten transitions.
- Pursue integration of mental health services throughout Vermont's early childhood systems that encourages ease of access for families with young children.

In our distribution of subgrants through VIP B-5 funded projects, several were targeted efforts to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families as defined in Vermont's VIP B-5 Application. These efforts will help families access and engage in services across the delivery system. Highlights of these projects include:

- The Northwestern Medical Center Pediatric Developmental Clinic Collaborative Pilot serves a particularly rural area of Vermont and will be able to **increase timely access to developmental assessments and coordination of support services** by addressing critical gaps in available resources for families with children with developmental differences, with an emphasis on supporting children with autism. This funding is braided with the CDC Health Equity and MCHB Title V grant to support additional pilot clinic staff—a NCSS early interventionist and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) --to provide two assessment clinics monthly for children waiting to be evaluated who have complex needs and/or co-occurring disorders. The collaborative pilot is currently completing eight assessments each month.
- Another project focuses on surveying families of children suspected of or diagnosed with ASD to **identify specific resource needs**.
- One project is providing a **caregiver-child enrichment program** for children ages birth-five at two locations. One is in the Old North End of Burlington, a densely urban neighborhood with diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds. This neighborhood was designated as an Enterprise Community in 1994 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, based on the neighborhood's poverty, high unemployment, and general distress.
- One ECE Center is **providing bus transportation** to its program and events for families with barriers to transportation, such as New American families without driver's licenses, and low-income families without access to a working vehicle.
- One Parent Child Center project is creating a **Community Orientation Program for migrant families** to address barriers to accessing critical services, to connect families, and to increase family engagement in current systems.

- One project is expanding access to early childhood music enrichment for children ages birth-five by integrating free music programs into area ECE centers, reducing barriers for rural and low-income families.

Additional subgrants were issued in 2023 with braided funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), contributing to overall participation and access for children with special needs. These grants will be partially covered by PDG funds in 2024. In 2023, 80 grants were issued for 109 child needs. These needs included funding to assist with staffing for individual assistants, equipment that benefitted the child's experience in the program setting, and for training and/or consultation with staff.

Developmental screening is a key Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP) and Healthy Vermonters 2030 indicator: *% of children who have had a developmental screening in the first three years of life*. To align early identification, screening, and referral practices, streamline access and reduce duplication in a mixed delivery system, HMGVT hosts the ASQ Online Enterprise system for all ECEs, medical providers, and families. To date, over 20,000 ASQ-3/ASQ:SE screens have been completed and 59 programs/medical practices are now using the ASQ online system.

#### 2023 data highlights:

- 5,276 ASQ-3 screens were completed
- 1,261 ASQ:SE-2 screens were completed
- 14 new programs were added to the ASQ Online
- ASQ online system users in 2023 included:
  - 37 early education programs
  - 15 medical practices
  - 6 Strong Family Nurse Home Visiting programs
  - 4 Child Intervention Services programs
  - 1 Parent Child Center

#### Subgrant Funds Distributed for Program Improvements (Q.7)

Vermont used a substantial percentage of its PDG B-5 funds for subgrants/contracts that expanded access to ECE programs and/or improved the quality of existing programs. Details of how we did this are in Table 5. The total amount used for subgrants was \$1,321,509, which represents 17% of the total year one award.

**Table 5. Communities served through PDG B-5 Funding Subgrants**

Local PDG-funded ECE program/entity	Type of ECE Programs Supported	County(ies) served by Program	Amount of funding	Brief description of how PDG funds were used
Northern Lights at CCV (CDD) PO Box 489 Montpelier, VT	Professional Development	Statewide	\$150,000	Expansion and improvement of PD opportunities.
ABC & LOL, LLC (BBF) 1448 Memorial Drive, St. Johnsbury, VT	Center-based	Caledonia	\$51,828	Funds are for additional training around diversity and inclusion, additional classroom materials, and to hire a home-to-school coordinator to provide behavioral assessments, work w/teachers to create plans, and support families. This should increase toddler and preschool capacity.
Alburgh Family Clubhouse, Inc (BBF) Missile Base Rd. Alburgh, VT	Nonprofit, Center-based	Grand Isle	\$80,000	The Alburgh Family Clubhouse (AFC) Child Care Center Project plans to open a community-owned, nonprofit full-day, year-round, high-quality ECE center by September 2024. It creates 20 new jobs with good pay and benefits, and service for 16 infants, 10 toddlers, 18 preschoolers, and 18 afterschool children. Funding will pay the project team to keep it moving forward.
Cabot Comm Assn - The Cabot Children's Ctr (BBF)	Nonprofit	Washington	\$32,360	The Cabot Community Association (CCA) is launching the Cabot Children's Center in November 2023. Funding will be used to recruit/train new staff, make training and college classes available to staff, support work with service providers in the region, and do community outreach.

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3053 Main St. Cabot, VT				
Billie Slade dba Wonder in the Woods (BBF) 565 Green Mtn Camp Rd Dummerston, VT	Family Child Care Home	Windham	\$34,233	Funding to support Wonder in the Woods' transition from being a small, 5 STAR family child care program to becoming a licensed group child care program, and also opening an additional registered family child care home. Wonder in the Woods will double the number of children they serve and will help meet the needs of more parents who have been unable to work or have been underemployed due to lack of quality child care options.
Evolution Prenatal & Yoga Center (GROW Prenatal & Family Center) (BBF) 48 Lakeview Terrace Burlington, VT	Business	Chittenden	\$14,850	Funding will provide three types of no-cost, low-barrier support groups to families with infants currently or previously in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). These support groups are tailored to the unique transitions in a family's journey: NICU admission, transition home, and transition to "regular" life.

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Hartford Area Career and Technology Center (BBF) 1 Gifford Rd White River Jct, VT	Public School	Windsor	\$11,000	To address the need for early educator preparation, the center will substantially modify an existing program to add training for ECE staff and further develop its curriculum. An expert ECE consultant will help develop program outcomes. A center teacher will continue this work over the summer, fully developing the lessons needed for a robust program, aiming for comprehensive lesson and unit plans to be ready for ECE staff by August 2024.
Kid Logic Learning (BBF) 530 Community Dr, Suite 4 South Burlington, VT	Center-based	Chittenden	\$80,000	This project will support expansion of Kid Logic Learning Center-Based Child Care program, creating 34 new child care slots. Funding will contribute to start-up costs such as supplies and materials, staff salaries, and training of three educators.
Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, Inc. (ECHO) (BBF) 1 College St Burlington, VT	Nonprofit	Chittenden	\$30,000	Funding will support ECHO's free, year-long caregiver-child enrichment program, training caregivers and supporting healthy development and school readiness for early learners outside the formal child care system. The program focuses on experiences that support children's physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development, and aims to lower the achievement gap between low-income and middle- to high-income children within Chittenden County.

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Lund (BBF) 50 Joy Dr South Burlington, VT	Nonprofit	Chittenden	\$71,299	Lund’s Early Childhood Education Program (LECP) is a 5 STAR, high-quality, trauma-focused program that benefits all families, especially those who are low to moderate-income. This project will allow Lund to strengthen the ECE workforce by creating a supported pathway to the profession, with a specific focus on New Americans. The funding will also support diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training for current staff and translation of the parent handbook and recruitment materials into Maay-Maay, Vietnamese, Spanish, and French.
Middlebury Community Music Center (MCMC) (BBF) 6 Main St, Middlebury, VT	Nonprofit	Addison	\$60,698	Middlebury Community Music Center (MCMC) will grow their Early Childhood Music program via expanded training, administering and new, in-school workshops. It will allow them to train and deploy instructors from their Music Together® curriculum into local preschools and daycare programs. With a suite of school-specific offerings, trainings, and professional development courses, the Music Together® program will provide access to the developmental benefits and early childhood enrichment that MCMC currently offers through their paid classes to all youth in partner schools and centers.
Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District	Public School	Chittenden	\$75,196	Early MTSS supports building an inclusive and equitable school system. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) helps accommodate the needs and abilities of all learners and to eliminate unnecessary barriers in the learning process. Mount

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(BBF) 10 River Rd, Jericho, VT				Mansfield Unified Union School District will hire an Early MTSS and UDL coach who will support teachers to build positive relationships, create supportive environments, teach social emotional health, determine the meaning of behavior, and develop appropriate responses.
Northshire Day School (BBF) 5484 Main Street, Manchester Center, VT	Nonprofit, Center-based	Bennington	\$25,000	Northshire Day School will expand equitable access to early childhood education by offering transportation to families who are unable to transport their children. This project aims to increase engagement with their Family Tree Program and help families access community events.
Northwestern Medical Center (BBF) 133 Fairfield Street, St Albans, VT	Nonprofit Healthcare Provider	Franklin	\$199,575	The Northwestern Medical Center's (NMC) Pediatric Developmental Clinic Collaboration Pilot is an innovative approach to increase timely access to developmental assessments and coordination of support services by addressing critical gaps in available resources for Vermont families with children with developmental differences. This pilot project aims to increase opportunities for developmental assessment, follow-up appointments, and comprehensive care for children of all ages throughout Vermont. This would be achieved through thoughtful increase in clinic days, additional staff (including speech and language pathology), care coordination, and consultative psychology services.



**Table 5. Communities served through PDG B-5 Funding Subgrants**

Local PDG-funded ECE program/entity	Type of ECE Programs Supported	County(ies) served by Program	Amount of funding	Brief description of how PDG funds were used
Oak Hill Children's Center (BBF) 72 School House Rd, Pownal, VT	Nonprofit, Center-based	Bennington	\$39,495	Oak Hill Children's Center will work to increase staffing to pre-pandemic levels so that they can serve as many families as their license allows. One of their continuing/long-term goals is to pay their staff livable wages, and they are approaching the Minimum Compensation Standards proposed by VTAEYC and LGK. This project will provide workforce retention bonuses for existing staff and sign-on bonuses to attract new staff.
Orange County Parent Child Center (BBF) Route 66, Randolph, VT	Parent Child Center	Orange and Windsor	\$80,000	In partnership with the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation, the Orange County Parent Child Center is renovating and repurposing a building in Randolph into an ECE center. This will create 88 new high-quality, affordable ECE spaces. The design includes an adult space dedicated to ECE workforce training and education, and child and family support services. The new center will provide full-year ECE services ten hours a day, five days a week for 32 infants, 22 toddlers, and 34 preschoolers. Funding will support start-up costs including staff salaries, training, and materials and supplies.
Rutland Mental Health Services Early Childhood Family Mental Health Program (BBF)	Nonprofit	Rutland	\$27,170	Funding will provide training, coaching, and consultation for ECE providers, mental health services for families utilizing the Circle of Security™ Parenting and Classroom models. additional training for Early Childhood and Family Mental Health staff, and a separate one-to-one coaching project.

**Table 5. Communities served through PDG B-5 Funding Subgrants**

Local PDG-funded ECE program/entity	Type of ECE Programs Supported	County(ies) served by Program	Amount of funding	Brief description of how PDG funds were used
78 South Main St, Rutland, VT				
Stay & Play Daycare Center (BBF) 214 Charles St, Lyndonville, VT	Center-based	Caledonia	\$80,000	Stay & Play Daycare Center provides affordable, high-quality ECE to children in Caledonia County. After a fire destroyed their building in May 2023, they decided to rebuild in a new location and expand their capacity from 23 to 51 children. The Center's director is in the process of becoming a licensed Universal Pre-kindergarten educator. Funding will help the Center purchase new materials and supplies, hire additional staff, and cover some costs connected with becoming a UPK provider.
The Janet S. Munt Family Room (BBF) 20 Allen St, Burlington, VT	Nonprofit	Chittenden	\$151,745	In response to the rapid increase in Spanish-speaking migrant families across the state and particularly in Chittenden County, The Janet S. Munt Family Room Parent Child Center and UVM Extension's Bridges to Health will create a replicable Community Orientation Program to address barriers to accessing critical services, connect families, and increase family engagement in current systems. This project will hire a full-time educator to strengthen connections between providers, build workforce capacity in regards to culturally appropriate care, and increase the equity and quality of ECE services.

**Table 5. Communities served through PDG B-5 Funding Subgrants**

Local PDG-funded ECE program/entity	Type of ECE Programs Supported	County(ies) served by Program	Amount of funding	Brief description of how PDG funds were used
Vital Partnerships (BBF) 145 Pine Haven Shores, St 1000-A, Shelburne, VT	Business/ Social Enterprise	Windham	\$27,060	Vital Partnerships will hold group sessions for parents and caregivers of children with ASD ages birth-five. In year 1 of this three-year program, funding will allow them to survey at least 60% of parents and caregivers of children with a possible or confirmed ASD diagnosis in Windham County to identify specific resource needs. This data will be used to design the opportunities and resources to be coordinated in the two to five years following this assessment through future funding.

Increasing Access to Quality Services and Programs (Q.8)

Vermont experienced the following increases in statewide child care capacity as a result of VIP B-5 Activity 6.1:

Table 6: Early Childhood slots/capacity

Baseline Data 2023	Monthly Average Capacity:	Infant/Toddler: 6,977
		Preschool: 12,192
		School Age: 14,216
<b>New Slots in Existing Programs (Activity 6.1) - 104 Total</b>	Infant/Toddler	37
	Preschool	21
	School Age	46
<b>New Slots in New Programs (Activity 6.1) 150 Total</b>	Infant/Toddler	80
	Preschool	52
	School Age	18

- Quality Improvement Efforts - New and Existing Slots: Under the PDG funding, two activities provided direct support to **improving the quality of existing child care slots**. These activities were the expansion of Early MTSS (Activity 4.3), and providing health and safety consultation from VDH, Family and Child Health to ECE Organizations (Activity 4.4). Under Activity 4.3, Early MTSS, additional ECE settings applied for and have been accepted into a new learning cohort and will receive training, coaching, and practice and systems level feedback on implementing an Early MTSS framework within their settings.
- Under activity 4.4, ECE Health Consultation, efforts are underway to survey ECE providers about the kinds of **safety and health** information and professional development they need to provide high-quality care to the families and children they serve.

As we continue to monitor the trends in slot capacity, we will refer to the trends of the past few years, noting that the COVID pandemic impacted the trend (Appendix 2).

### Quality Improvement Efforts - Without Direct Impact on Slots:

Vermont is also utilizing PDG funding to address state-level systems quality improvement efforts. While these efforts do not impact current or new child care slots directly, they are designed to strengthen the early childhood systems overall. Specific examples include:

- Joint Monitoring (AOE and CDD) and CQI in Universal PreK Education (Activity 5.1): During year one, despite state hiring policy challenges and delays, a monitoring position was filled within AOE in October 2023. This position builds capacity within the AOE to better meet the needs of UPK providers, and to ensure that AOE has the resources and training necessary to perform its monitoring work more effectively (i.e. supporting programs in increasing inclusion in UPK classrooms, reducing suspensions and expulsions, supporting the development and implementation of high-quality UPK data collection and analysis, supporting quality improvement efforts within UPK programs).
- To align joint UPK monitoring and supports to the field, AOE and CDD are co-leading a new workgroup—the CDD/AOE Utilization Team. This team reviews all UPK compliance co-monitoring cases requiring coordination from both state teams. The team is currently working to identify gaps or points of confusion around current joint compliance monitoring processes and is developing new protocols to fill those gaps. The goal of this work is to increase collaboration across state institutions, and to improve the processes supporting each agency’s co-monitoring requirements. This work intersects with the efforts occurring under Act 76, which requires the AOE and CDD to explore expanding universal PreK from 10 hours a week to a full-day, full-school year model for all four-year-olds, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year.
- As part of VIP B-5 Activity 5.2, Vermont launched a revised Quality and Recognition Improvement System (QRIS), known as STARS, in July 2023. The program quality standards focus on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), improving adult-child interactions, family engagement, and responsive practices. VIP B-5 funds the STARS Program Administrator position, which leads the STARS Team and provides training and guidance on the revised system’s model and tools. Since the revision launch, at least 165 participants engaged in STARS online webinars and in-person training, and received 1:1 support.
- Quality improvement activities use braided funding from other sources to provide additional ECE supports, including free program assessments, and coaching and mentoring services. They receive support from VTAEYC under an initiative called the System for Program Access to Resources for Quality Supports (SPARQS). A tiered launch of SPARQS services began in September, 2023 , with 31 programs receiving scored STARS assessments, 84 programs developing service plans for ECE support, 65 programs receiving training and coaching, and the delivery of 25 ECE network trainings within this reporting period. . This work is aligned with the goals of Vermont’s Child Care and Development Fund, which funds expanded equitable access to high quality ECE settings statewide.
- Quality improvement of Vermont’s early childhood data monitoring and integration systems is the focus of Activity 5.3 (Appendix 1). This activity is an interagency effort led by BBF. Vermont has a complicated system of early childhood governance and administration. Consequently, the data collected by the range of entities is not centralized, coordinated, or integrated, which makes it difficult to understand a full picture of the well-being of children and families across sectors. The lack of integrated

data limits continuous quality improvement efforts. To address this need, BBF is working together with partners across Vermont's early childhood landscape to collect and house data at [Vermont's Early Childhood Data and Policy Center](#). This effort is part of our commitment to increasing transparency by making data publicly available. One mechanism for doing this is by reporting on data through the [State of Vermont's Children annual report](#). These efforts represent first steps in centralizing cross-sector data in a clear, accessible way.

- In the subgrants awarded through Activity 6.1 (Table 5), 9 include quality improvement efforts for existing child care programs. While we did not track the number of slots being affected, the following approaches are being used by grant recipients:
  - Expand the offerings of family events and workshops that benefit our parents and strengthen the community, focusing on parent interests such as sleep challenges, positive discipline, and how to access services
  - Provide professional development opportunities, including training on DEI, Early MTSS and UDL, and college level classes
  - Increase access to art programs, music enrichment, and infant/toddler gross motor spaces
  - Increase staffing of existing programs
  - Increase access to quality teaching materials and equipment

#### Expanded Access for Traditionally Marginalized or Underserved Communities (Q.9, 11, 12)

In the PDG B-5 Planning Grant, Vermont conducted a Needs Assessment that led to our defining the grant's target population of vulnerable children as children from birth - third grade who reflect any of the following criteria: 1. Are in low-income families; 2. Have developmental disabilities or delays; 3. Are English language learners; 4. Are former refugees; 5. Are migrant and/or undocumented; 6. Are experiencing homelessness; 7. Are geographically isolated; 8. Have parents who are incarcerated; and/or 9. Are at risk of, or have experienced abuse, neglect or trauma including children in foster care. Any of these children would be considered underserved when economic or environmental challenges, or a lack of family or public resources, limit access to services and supports that are developmentally beneficial for the child and strengthen their family. Since this needs assessment, the definition of vulnerable children has been expanded to include infants and toddlers, as well as children and families in need of mental health and emotional support.

Moving forward, and ensuring we are adequately identifying and reaching the populations who are the most underserved, Activity 2.1 (Appendix 1) has allowed partners at BBF to establish a contract with The Creative Discourse Group (TCDG) for equity consulting work through the length of the PDG grant. This will provide the project team with increased understanding of how to identify, expand access, and monitor progress of ECE programs in traditionally marginalized or underserved communities. TCDG began working with BBF staff in January 2024, and began a landscape analysis to identify traditionally underserved communities in Vermont. Much of this focus will include strategically seeking out the perspectives of individuals and communities who identify as belonging to one of the populations mentioned earlier, and who identified as underserved during the PDG B-5 Planning Grant Needs Assessment in Vermont.

As stated earlier, approximately resides in rural areas. With the exception of one county, Chittenden, all other areas of the state are considered rural. Activity 6.1 (Appendix 1), led by BBF, focuses on allocating subgrants throughout the state, with 13 of the 19 grants being awarded to organizations in rural locations. Of the \$1,171,509 awarded in year one, 64% was allocated to projects serving rural areas of Vermont.

The Vermont team has begun conversations about what our options are for examining our state data by demographic characteristics, especially examining available data by race and ethnic identity. Because Vermont does not have a centralized or integrated early childhood data system, data on the demographic characteristics of Vermont's children exists in isolated silos, often at the level of individual ECE centers or providers. In year one, while we were able to identify some useful demographic information, we recognize that additional efforts are needed to ensure that the data being collected is accurate and reliable. This will be a focus area in year 2, where we will continue our outreach and collection efforts, and simultaneously work to ensure that data is as accurate and reliable as it can be. This work is being done with the goal of presenting more quantitative data to demonstrate our reach and service with racially diverse populations. These efforts will be supported through the work of this grant and Act 76, allowing Vermont to better understand if we are moving closer to our goal of building equitable early childhood systems in which we eliminate disparate impacts across race and ethnicity.

### **Section C. Improving ECE Program Quality (Q.10)**

#### Improving Vermont Program Quality (Q.10)

Vermont used PDG B-5 funds to improve program quality in the following ways.

- Expanding or revising program quality standards
- Monitoring, or continuous quality improvement efforts
- Developmental, social-emotional, health, and behavioral health supports
- Inclusion of children with or at risk of disabilities
- Implementing culturally and/or linguistically responsive practices for children, families, and/or providers
- Addressing suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary practices
- Trauma informed approaches for ECE programs
- Efforts to improve health and safety

Additional information on these activities is below.

- Program Quality Activities (Q.10)

PDG Activity 7 (Appendix 1) embeds monitoring, data use, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement into the implementation of VIP B-5 grant activities. To monitor and support activity implementation, the Early Childhood Systems Evaluator at BBF supported each activity team in creating a work plan that outlines their activity objectives, articulates the milestone achievements and tasks necessary to fulfill those objectives, and the process and outcome measures they will record to document activity progress and impact. While not all activities touch upon ECE program quality, embedding evaluation support across all activities ensures that all partners are thinking about

measurable outcomes, including how to define and measure “high quality” and the impact of “high-quality” programs.

The Early Childhood Systems Evaluator is currently working with the grant team to define “high quality” in various programmatic contexts within the grant, with the goal of ensuring valid and reliable measurement in Vermont’s grant evaluation efforts. These conversations are ongoing.

STARS requires ECE programs to become familiar with and use tools that support developmental, social emotional, and behavioral health, and training in inclusion and responsive practices. Programs monitor their quality improvement work via a CQI plan that they submit to the state for review and evaluation annually.

- Relevant activities under 6.1 subgrants (Table 5) (Q.10)
  - a. **Developmental, social-emotional, health, and behavioral health supports:** Funding provides Circle of Security™ training to ECE providers and parents, expands developmental assessments and supports for children with developmental delays and ASD, and offers support groups for families with infants currently or previously in the neonatal intensive care unit.
  - b. **Inclusion of children with or at risk of disabilities:** This activity also includes funding to expand developmental assessments and supports for children with developmental delays and ASD and offering support groups for families with infants currently or previously in the neonatal intensive care unit.
  - c. **Implementing culturally responsive practices:** This work created a supported pathway to ECE careers with specific focus on New Americans that includes training in a 5 STAR, high-quality, trauma-focused program; translation of a parent handbook and recruitment materials into Maay-Maay, Vietnamese, Spanish, and French; and creating a Community Orientation Program to address barriers to accessing critical services for migrant families, including hiring a multilingual Community Health Worker.
  - d. **Addressing exclusionary practice & practicing trauma informed approaches:** The activity created a supported pathway to ECE careers with specific focus on New Americans and includes training in a 5 STAR, high-quality, trauma-focused program.

## **Section D. Engaging Families & Increasing Family Voice and Choice in Systems and Program Decisions (Q. 11 & 12)**

### Maximizing Family Involvement in Vermont’s Mixed Delivery System (Q.11 & 12)

Under Activity 3.1 (Appendix 1), BBF has undergone a process of formalizing parent and caregiver stipends within their organization, so there is a clear process of compensating individuals for providing their perspective and their time. This work addresses an inequity in our system in which some individuals who provide input through committee attendance and other similar opportunities are able to participate as part of their professional work and others are not.



By instituting a parent and caregiver stipend policy, all individuals who are participating in such work are compensated for their time. As part of this policy, anyone who identifies as a parent of a child aged eight or younger, and who are not in roles where they are already being compensated for their time, are eligible for the parent and caregiver stipend. BBF hopes this transparent process will serve to welcome parents and caregivers from all families to step into leadership roles where policy and systems-level change are addressed.

During year one, the VIP B-5 project engaged at least 32 family representatives as leaders in state-level early childhood initiatives. BBF also onboarded a full-time leadership coordinator to provide administrative and infrastructure support as well as provide deeper coaching and leader support to members. Vermont is maximizing family involvement by:

- Compensating parents through stipends, gift cards or other support for participation in the development or updating of the statewide Needs Assessment and/or Strategic Plan.
  - a. The FCC co-created the 2022 Family Needs Assessment (FNA). The FNA informs policy and decision-making in Vermont's early childhood systems. The F&CC co-chairs hosted and facilitated a virtual FNA briefing in May 2023.
  - b. Compensating parents and caregivers for participating in state/local-level advisory or policy development or implementation bodies.
    - The FCC co-created policy recommendations to represent actionable priorities to ensure families and communities play a leading role in children's well-being.
    - One family leader attended the ECCS annual meeting with BBF staff and presented the findings of the FNA to the federal delegation.
    - VT family leads connected with family leads from Pennsylvania which drove the Family Photography projects. Photos of families from across Vermont were taken to be used in BBF publications. Participating families were compensated for their time and travel to the photo shoots.
    - The FCC hosts free, quarterly learning sessions for parents and caregivers. Session topics include advocacy, leadership and parent well-being. Partners throughout the network promoted sessions to clients. Sessions are well attended and bring new voices and members to our committee.
    - Activity 3.1 (Appendix 1) focuses on increasing family leadership and engagement. During year one the FCC Co-chairs and Family Leadership Coordinator created a committee presentation outlining the many accomplishments of the committee and family representatives during 2023. The presentation was given at the December 2023 committee meeting and written as a blog post that was shared throughout the network in January 2024. Highlights included:
      - 32 family leaders participated in network engagement activities in 2023
      - two family leaders serve as FCC co-chairs with clear contracts and job descriptions
      - two family leaders serve on the State Advisory Council

- two family leaders serve on the legislatively mandated PreK implementation committee
- one family leader served on the VT Early Childhood fund grant review committee
- Family leaders in our network join FCC, regional and state meetings. They also participate in learning development opportunities, respond to surveys and join other committee initiatives.
- seven new members joined the FCC including parents and community organization representatives.

Other project activities engaging family leaders have included the following.

- Partners at the Department of Mental Health (DMH) have funds that have been distributed through subgrants and the services provided have been for direct service evidence-based therapies for parents and caregivers. DMH has family representatives involved early in the RFP process for the consultation and education and will have additional activity to report in 2023.
- The Touchpoints Training center expanded the cadre of trainers to include a family leader who is also the VDH Family Child Health (FCH) staff and Family and Community Partnerships Coordinator, member of the BBF Families and Communities Committee, and works closely with the VIP-5 BBF team to increase and map family leadership initiatives and opportunities.

## **Section E. PDG B-5 Program Implementation and Systems Coordination (Q.13 - 16)**

### Development of ECE System; Barriers and Challenges (Q.13)

Several processes were put in place under VIP B-5 to improve systems coordination and interagency collaboration. Detailed below, the processes primarily focused on increasing opportunities to integrate and coordinate across activities and participating organizations.

- Under Activity 2.1 - Updating the Statewide Strategic Plan, BBF is responsible for convening the State Advisory Council and network, which includes the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Team. This group of agency leaders is charged with building an integrated continuum of comprehensive, high-quality services that is equitable and accessible, and that will improve outcomes for each and every child in the prenatal period to age 8 and their family in Vermont. The group meets monthly to identify and eliminate barriers to achieve the VECAP. The Team's efforts result in a more cohesive voice of state government in Vermont's early childhood systems. During 2023, the team focused on Act 76 implementation and the VIP B-5 grant and resulting changes to the ECE system.
- Under Activity 5.3 (Appendix 1), Data Monitoring and Data Integration, efforts in year one have been dedicated to increasing the capacity of state agencies by adding 4 staff across State of Vermont entities to focus on data alignment, monitoring, and evaluation.

While awaiting the approval, hiring, and onboarding of BBF and agency personnel, the BBF Monitoring and Evaluation team developed the work plan for Activity 5.3. More detailed information on Activity 5.3 can be found in the section on Expansion of Vermont's Integrated Data System on page 30 .

- To coordinate grant management, implementation, and evaluation, each core partner on the grant sends one or more representatives to the VIP B-5 Directors' Team Meeting. Meetings are held once a month to review overarching issues and questions, and to share successes. In year one, meetings focused on setting the vision for how we want to work together, discussing questions related to grant management, and keeping all team members on track to meet federal reporting requirements. The EC Systems Evaluator also used these meetings as an opportunity to collect baseline qualitative and quantitative data on the state of interagency collaboration across Vermont's early childhood systems. That data will help inform upcoming conversations and plans for the vision for more integrated efforts across the EC Systems and agency partnerships.
- Under Activity 7 (Appendix 1) and to support overall management of grant activities, the project director and lead evaluation set a plan to ensure timely and transparent communication and coordination. The lead evaluator for the grant was hired into her role as the Early Childhood Systems Evaluator at BBF as of June 2023, and the Project Director position at Child Development Division was hired in Dec 2023. Together, they provide support to all the activities under the grant and share responsibility (albeit in different areas) for holding activity implementation teams accountable for moving the work forward. Although the positions are housed in different organizations, they agreed that communication and coordination of their efforts was critical to create and maintain clarity with the implementation teams regarding scopes of work, expectations for performance and reporting, and data and information sharing. Therefore, the pair implemented weekly check-in calls to discuss concerns about implementation progress, share updates from teams that touch upon both areas of responsibility, and align efforts on report writing and task management.
- Under Activity 7 - Monitoring, Data Use, Evaluation, and Continuous Quality Improvement, each activity is receiving evaluation consultation and technical assistance from the lead evaluator. In year one, the efforts of Activity 7 focused on increasing the state's capacity to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate the VIP B-5 activities. As part of Activity 7, each activity implementation team completed a work plan that includes their primary goals, milestones, specific activities, and performance measures. Using a development evaluation framework, the EC Systems Evaluator provides support to teams in mapping out their performance measures based on their stated goals, milestones, and activities. This work also includes making connections across activities, and facilitation of cross-agency communication and alignment. For example, to reduce survey burden on ECE providers we brought together representatives from multiple agencies to combine survey efforts. We also reviewed the metrics identified in each of the activity work plans and cross-walked them with other data collection and monitoring

efforts, including the monitoring of Act 76, Vermont's new child care law, to determine overlaps in reporting requirements or the need to develop data collection mechanisms.

### Barriers and/or Challenges (Q.13)

In reviewing our progress on program implementation and system coordination, significant barriers or challenges were noted. Activity 5.1 (Appendix 1) requires coordination between AOE and CDD, with steps taken this year to improve the joint administration of Universal Pre-K. For state-specific background information, in 2014, Vermont passed Act 166, ensuring that all 3-and 4-year-olds, as well as 5-year-olds not enrolled in kindergarten, are eligible to receive up to 10 hours a week of publicly-funded prekindergarten education for 35 weeks within the academic year in school-based programs, prequalified UPK centers, and family child care programs. Under the VIP B-5 project, a workgroup convened and began meeting regularly at the start of the summer, and a draft work plan was developed. As referred to earlier in this report, the team is working to identify gaps or points of confusion around current joint compliance efforts. Though the goal is commonly understood, the processes to get there are still being ironed out. As a way to move the work forward, monthly leadership team meetings were convened to strategize the joint monitoring efforts. As of the end of year one of VIP B-5, coordinated joint monitoring of the UPK program continues to be challenging, as each agency is responsible for monitoring certain program requirements as well as monitoring the system as a whole.

Lastly, the technology platform for sharing files within the state system does not support effective and efficient collaboration, especially for partners that are outside the state system.

### Improving the Coordination and Delivery of EC Care and Education in Vermont (Q.14)

While Vermont is not currently working towards a coordinated application, eligibility, or enrollment system across sectors of the ECE system, several of our grant activities are helping to build coordination across programs. Overall, the VIP B-5 project has facilitated coordination in each of the four core areas, three of which are relevant here: Program Quality Improvement, Family Engagement, and Data and Evaluation Improvements. Each of these efforts are described below.

- Program Quality Improvement
  - a. **Coordinated Intake and Referral**, led by VDH and HMGVT, resource hub staff regularly attended the 12 BBF Regional Council meetings across the state to better integrate efforts and promote knowledge of HMG and the ASQ Online system (see more information on the ASQ on page 3, #2). HMGVT and FCH staff also partnered with the AOE Early Childhood Team to align efforts to ensure all children are routinely screened for developmental delays through access to and use of the ASQ Online system by all Early MTSS programs. Training on the ASQ Online system will be expanded to all prequalified UPK programs in the coming year. This example highlights coordination efforts across three of the grant partners (AOE, BBF, and VDH).

- b. As previously mentioned, Vermont released a revised version of its QRIS to **implement CQI in three elements of quality** that drive positive child outcomes: adult-child interactions, family and youth engagement, and responsive practice. The new QRIS model was designed with stakeholder collaboration. It provides a consistent and equitable roadmap to quality through the coordination of assessment, coaching, and professional development over five increasing levels of quality. The STARS administrator provides on-going training and support to ECE programs as they learn the new system. The STARS administrator also aligns subgrant services for coaching and assessment within a structure of tools, strategies, and professional development for ECE success in the STARS framework. STARS assures that all Vermont ECE programs have a reliable toolbox to meet their goals and build a culture of CQI.
- Family Engagement
  - a. As mentioned above, under activity 3.1 (Attachment 1), BBF is bringing **alignment to the area of family engagement** and leadership by creating a formalized process for providing parent and caregiver stipends across early childhood systems. BBF hopes this transparent process serves as a model for other organizations across Vermont's early childhood systems to follow. Additionally, in year one of the grant, BBF laid the groundwork for collecting information on family leadership opportunities across our state, with the goal of publishing the Family Leadership Inventory by the end of the grant period and creating a replicable process for updating the inventory on an ongoing basis.
- Data and Evaluation Improvements
  - a. Under Activity 2.1 (see Appendix 1), BBF is leading the efforts to **update Vermont's Early Childhood Statewide Strategic Plan (VECAP)**. BBF serves a critical role for Vermont's ECE system, operating as a broker of data and information to guide policy decisions and statewide strategy related to children, families, and the early childhood systems, as well as functioning as an accountability infrastructure. BBF's infrastructure consists of (1) 12 regional councils, (2) VECAP and 7 aligned committees, and (3) the State Advisory Council (SAC). This network is fully engaged in the PDG B-5 grant implementation, ensuring that all early childhood partners have a common reference point to understand our goals for Vermont's ECE systems.
  - b. Several VIP B-5 activities, including activities 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 (Attachment 1) are dedicated **to improving coordination and delivery of care** in Vermont's ECE system by aligning monitoring, data, CQI, and evaluation efforts. These activities give the grant partners opportunity to work together to agree on processes of administrative oversight and data reporting on child care and UPK. Activity 5.3 has work underway to centralize the data points from the complex array of early childhood partners and make that data publicly available. With these activities, we are moving closer to producing unique child counts in each sector of the early childhood systems and to being able to link data across sectors. For more information on activities 5.1 and 5.2, see the answer to question 8. For more information on activity 5.3, see Expansion of Vermont's Integrated Data System on page 28 (below).

- c. Under Activity 7 - Monitoring, Data Use, Evaluation, and Continuous Quality Improvement, the evaluation consultation and technical assistance being provided as part of the grant has opened the door for conversations across state agencies and other community partners about ways in which we can strategically align monitoring, data, evaluation, and CQI efforts. For example, the group has met to work on alignment of survey efforts to the ECE field by examining together how the implementation of project activities may impact one another and how such impacts can be taken into account through evaluation planning.

These examples highlight ways in which Vermont is utilizing the opportunities created through the PDG funding to ensure alignment across Vermont's ECE mixed delivery system.

#### Expansion of Vermont's Integrated Data System (Q.15)

In data management and integration, year one has focused on orienting new state leaders to relatively recent data integration efforts, increasing state agency capacity to engage in data work, and working across sectors and agencies to create an early childhood data development agenda. Vermont's Early Childhood data monitoring and integration efforts are being pushed forward through multiple statewide efforts, including the VIP B-5 project, [requirements from Act 76](#) (which includes significant monitoring and evaluation requirements), and continued legislative discussion about the structure and funding mechanisms of Vermont's education system. Although all of the work referenced below is supported by PDG funding, it is ultimately made possible through blended efforts across multiple funding sources. The data monitoring and integration work is referred to as Activity 5.3, and more details are provided below.

Among the project partners, there was recognition that a long-standing barrier to timely progress in data management and integration was a lack of staff capacity. Therefore, the VIP B-5 project included funding dedicated to hiring new data-centric positions in multiple state agencies. In total four positions are, at least in part, specific to improving the State of Vermont's data capacity. While awaiting the approval, hiring, and onboarding of personnel, the BBF Monitoring and Evaluation team developed the work plan for Activity 5.3, Data Monitoring and Data Integration. This activity is focused on improving the integration of data systems, monitoring, and reporting, and continuous quality improvement for Vermont's ECE systems.

Vermont has a complicated system of governance and administration (i.e. multiple departments, divisions, agencies, private community partners such as health care providers, child care programs, and Parent Child Centers, are responsible for service delivery and administration). Consequently, the data collected by the range of entities administering and overseeing these services, resources, and supports is not centralized, coordinated, or integrated, which makes it difficult to easily understand a full picture of the well-being of children and families across sectors. The lack of integrated data limits continuous quality improvement efforts and Vermont's ability to answer critical policy questions about the impact of programs and policies. As Vermont's Early Childhood State Advisory Council, BBF is committed to using and producing the most up-to-date, high-quality data to inform decision-making and serves a critical role in Vermont, operating as a broker of data and information to guide policy decisions and strategy related to children, families, and the early childhood systems. While Vermont does not yet have an early childhood integrated data system (ECIDS), in which data across all

sectors is integrated and housed within and across state agencies, Vermont's [Early Childhood Data and Policy Center](#) and the State of Vermont's Children annual report, are first steps in centralizing cross-sector data in a clear, accessible way.

[The State of Vermont's Children: 2023 Year in Review](#) was published by Building Bright Futures in January 2024 and presented to statewide partners in a [briefing on January 18, 2024](#). This report provides an objective, data-driven assessment of the well-being of young children and families in Vermont and includes over 100 contextualized indicators and the 2024 Policy Recommendations from Vermont's Early Childhood State Advisory Council Network. BBF also launched an [Early Childhood Data Portal](#) as part of VermontKidsData.org. The portal has indicators across all sectors that impact children and families: basic needs, child care, child development, demographics, economics, education, housing, mental health, physical health, resilience, Pre-kindergarten education, and workforce. You can search by topic, geographic region, or goal of the VECAP, which is one clear way of monitoring population-level outcomes associated with the state's strategic plan. This is a tool for policymakers and early childhood partners to easily access high-quality, up-to-date data on Vermont's children, families, and the early childhood systems. The portal allows partners to visualize data across all sectors in a straightforward way, with the ability for anyone to download full datasets for additional analysis. This tool puts data in context by analyzing trends over time, providing a snapshot, often comparing Vermont to the U.S., and highlighting disparities and inequities. While the portal prioritizes data for children from the prenatal period to age 8, limitations in data availability may mean that some indicators have a more limited or wider focus extending into middle childhood and adolescence. Indicators reflect both population-level outcomes and more specific program indicators. Data is continuously being added to the portal. Indicators are ever-evolving and compiled through partnership with state agencies and direct service providers in Vermont, alongside indicators from national datasets to understand the drivers of well-being and the impact of relevant programs and policies. Contributions and sources are named on each indicator page.

Another significant data effort that will improve Vermont's ability to monitor children and families served across the mixed delivery system is "Act 76 Monitoring", also led by BBF in partnership with CDD and partners statewide. During year one, BBF executed the following work related to monitoring child care, pre-kindergarten education, and afterschool programming within Vermont's mixed delivery system:

- Met with key stakeholders to understand how the legislation passed in 2023 aligns with data that is currently available, and surveyed the broad early childhood systems to get feedback and buy-in around what is most important to monitor across the ECE system
- Held focus group convenings with a total of over 80 partners with content expertise. We also fielded a statewide survey that yielded 79 cross sector responses
- Developed a list of data limitations/gaps within the early learning system
- Partnered with data stewards to determine what data is available, capacity of data teams, and the cadence/frequency of data sharing.
- Brainstormed with partners over 150 indicators that could be used as baseline measures of the impact of Act 76 across all areas of legislative intent.
  - a) Of the over 150 indicators, we only have existing data on approximately one third to support monitoring efforts

- b) The partner engagement process showed us that no singular indicator was sufficient to measure the overall impact
- c) Through thematic analysis and a prioritization process, an indicator snapshot was developed across nine themes: equitable access, experiences of those most impacted, early childhood workforce, affordability, quality, fiscal implications, program stability, economic impact, and child outcomes.
- Submitted a report on year one activities of Act 76 monitoring to the legislature in January 2024 just after the completion of VIP year one.

In Year 2 of Activity 5.3, data stewards and agency leaders will convene on a regular basis to determine the successes, failures, strengths, and opportunities for data integration and alignment with leadership from BBF.

### Improving Coordination and Referral for Underserved Populations (Q.16)

The partners under the VIP B-5 project are embedding a DEI lens in all of the project activities, with the aim of fulfilling vision of VECAP by ensuring that the early childhood systems are an integrated, continuous, comprehensive, high-quality system of services that is equitable, accessible, and will improve outcomes for children. With that in mind, there are four activity specific efforts that address improving the coordination and referral of programs across the state's ECE system for children and their families from traditionally underserved or marginalized groups. These activities are:

- Activity 1, The Needs Assessment: Activity 1 is being led by BBF, who was aware of multiple needs assessments and similar efforts across Vermont's early childhood landscape that had occurred over the past five years. Therefore, the team identified an opportunity to conduct a meta-analysis of the existing documentation in which common early childhood needs and strategies to meet those needs could be identified. The team created a replicable protocol that includes attending to information about the needs of children and families from traditionally underserved groups and documentation of known disparate impacts across demographic groups. Ultimately, this information will help inform system-level change efforts, including where additional outreach, referral, and coordination of services is needed for these families.
- Activity 3.2, Coordinated Intake and Referral through Help Me Grow VT (HMGVT): Under this activity, HMGVT has implemented weekly outreach to New American families, utilizing bilingual staff to build relationships and community connections with this population through weekly playgroups. Skilled staff have been able to provide referrals and care coordination to New American families through these connections.
- Activity 6,1, Vermont Early Childhood Fund Access and Quality Subgrants: Under the subgrants issued through the Vermont Early Childhood Fund, administered by BBF, one sub-grant awardee is creating a replicable Community Orientation Program to address barriers to accessing critical services, to connect families, and to increase family engagement in current systems for Spanish speaking migrant families across the state.



## **Conclusion**

As the Vermont team moves into year 2, we celebrate our successes and recognize the work we have done to build a strong foundation for our work across agencies and activities. We also recognize that there is still a great deal of work ahead of us, with additional opportunities to build toward the integrated, well-resourced, data informed ECE system that puts the experiences and outcomes of children, families, and communities at the center of the work we do. We renew our commitment to listen to ECE providers across our mixed delivery system, and the children and families we all serve, to best understand what systems changes are needed.

## ATTACHMENT 1

Function or Activity	Y 1				Y 2	Y 3
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
<b>Activity One: Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment</b>						
1.0 Meta analysis	✓	✓	✓	✓		
1.0 Development of replicable NA	✓	✓	✓	✓		
1.0 Conduct updated, replicable NA					✓	
<b>Activity Two: B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan</b>						
2.0 Continued implementation of 2020 VECAP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2.0 Communicating the vision and plan				✓	✓	✓
2.0 Strategic Plan update						✓
<b>Activity Three: Maximize Parent and Family Engagement in the B-5 System</b>						
<b>3.1 Supporting Family Leadership to Improve Vermont's EC System</b>						
Training and support for the Families and Communities Committee			✓	✓	✓	✓
Identifying & utilizing family ambassadors and cultural liaisons			✓	✓	✓	✓
Inventory of Family Engagement/Leadership Programs					✓	
<b>3.2 Coordinated Intake and Referral (Help Me Grow)</b>						
Better connection to services through HMG CIRS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increase screening through ASQ Online	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>3.3 Building Strong Family-Child Relationships</b>						
Build infrastructure and training capacity			✓	✓	✓	✓
Improve the Touchpoints implementation plan		✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Activity Four: Support the B-5 Workforce and Disseminate Best Practices</b>						
<b>4.1 Identifying Barriers to Recruiting the Early Childhood Workforce</b>						
Evaluate the ECE Apprenticeship Program				✓	✓	
Strategize, reduce duplication in background checks			✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>4.2 Expanding Access to High Quality Professional Development</b>						
Review and revise curricula with equity lens		✓	✓	✓	✓	

## ATTACHMENT 1

Function or Activity	Y 1				Y 2	Y 3
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Develop a MATCH registry			✓	✓	✓	
Offer professional development to promote DEI		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>4.3 Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (Early MTSS) Implementation</b>						
Establish state/region Leadership Teams		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Develop infrastructure needed to support the expansion of Early MTSS			✓	✓	✓	✓
Expand demonstration and implementation sites				✓	✓	✓
Conduct a robust evaluation					✓	✓
<b>4.4 Early Childhood Care and Education Health Consultation</b>						
Expand ECEs trained or receiving consultation in health and safety			✓	✓	✓	
Updating the Vermont Early Learning Standards		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Communication about VELs to the field					✓	✓
<b>4.5 Improving Professional Development &amp; Quality with Vermont Early Learning Standards</b>						
Update the Vermont Early Learning Standards		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Communicate about VELs to the field					✓	✓
<b>4.6 Provisional License Mentoring</b>						
Recruit and retain mentors & admn support		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mentorship & TA for ECEs to support educator licensing			✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Activity Five: Support Program Quality Improvement</b>						
<b>5.1 Continuous Quality Improvement and Monitoring in Universal Prekindergarten Education</b>						
Cross-agency collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitor UPK using CQI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## ATTACHMENT 1

Function or Activity	Y 1				Y 2	Y 3
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
<b>5.2 Continuous Quality Improvement and Monitoring in Child Care</b>						
Continuous stakeholder engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pilot of revised system & evaluation through CQI			✓	✓	✓	
Revision of Vermont's QRIS						✓
<b>5.3 Early Childhood Data Monitoring and Integration</b>						
Convene cross-sector data stewards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Build agency data capacity				✓	✓	✓
Develop strategy to link EC data across sectors				✓	✓	
<b>Activity Six: Subgrants to Enhance Quality and Expand Access</b>						
<b>6.1 Vermont Early Childhood Fund - Access and Quality Subgrants</b>						
Develop new grant mechanism, RFP, and review committee	✓	✓				
RFP, Review Proposals, execute grant agreements		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Project Evaluations and CQI				✓	✓	✓
<b>6.2 Support For Children With Disabilities And Specialized Needs</b>						
Develop standardized MOU processes	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Administer financial supports for inclusion program					✓	✓
Evaluate financial supports for inclusion program using CQI						✓
<b>6.3 Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health</b>						
Building trauma-informed workforce capacity through IECMHC			✓	✓	✓	✓
Expanding access to Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)			✓	✓	✓	✓
Expanding Child-Parent Psychotherapy clinicians and supervisors		✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>6.4 Supporting Family Child Care Homes (FCCH)</b>						
Train and mentor Early Childhood Networks & FCCH			✓	✓	✓	✓

**ATTACHMENT 1**

Function or Activity	Y 1				Y 2	Y 3
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Execute statewide subgrants to expand and facilitate region-specific and FCCH Early Childhood Networks and connect and support				✓	✓	✓
Activity 7: Monitoring, Data Use, Evaluation, and Continuous Quality Improvement						
Compile baseline data for evaluation and cross-sector indicators	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reconvene the Early Childhood Data Governance Board and meet quarterly				✓	✓	✓
Support data integration (DSA, MOU, common definitions etc)			✓	✓	✓	✓
Rigorous VIP B-5 monitoring and evaluation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## ATTACHMENT 2

### EC SYSTEMIC CAPACITY AND TRENDS

Total Capacity for Each Period			
Period	Infant + Toddler	Preschool	School Age
12/1/2018 - 1/1/2019	6958	12436	15303
3/1/2019 - 4/1/2019	6908	12373	14994
6/1/2019 - 7/1/2019	6798	12316	14993
9/1/2019 - 10/1/2019	6846	12231	14610
12/1/2019 - 1/1/2020	6862	12094	14797
3/1/2020 - 4/1/2020	6637	11659	14378
6/1/2020 - 7/1/2020	6883	11902	14398
9/1/2020 - 10/1/2020	6941	11870	14599
12/1/2020 - 1/1/2021	6936	11857	14422
3/1/2021 - 4/1/2021	6902	11957	14607
6/1/2021 - 7/1/2021	6955	11856	14758
9/1/2021 - 10/1/2021	7042	11984	14331
12/1/2021 - 1/1/2022	7112	12196	14382
3/1/2022 - 4/1/2022	7125	12183	14372
6/1/2022 - 7/1/2022	7114	12295	14333
9/1/2022 - 10/1/2022	7040	12397	13925
12/1/2022 - 1/1/2023	7222	12563	13137
3/1/2023 - 4/1/2023	7074	12525	13161
6/1/2023 - 7/1/2023	7047	12415	13200
9/1/2023 - 10/1/2023	7068	12528	13125
12/1/2023 - 1/1/2024	7053	12388	12719
<b>Monthly Average</b>	<b>6977</b>	<b>12192</b>	<b>14216</b>

The above table shows the sum of capacities of all unduplicated licensed providers in Vermont during the given time period and broken up into 3 age categories: Infant + Toddler (ages 0-3), Preschool (ages 3-5), and School Age (ages 6-13). At the bottom of the table is the monthly average for capacities from December 2019 to December 2023.

## ATTACHMENT 2 CONTINUED

### CAPACITY TRENDS LEADING INTO PROJECT PERIOD

