

# Accomplishment Highlights

## *Early Learning Challenge Grant*

[Vermont's Early Learning Challenge—Race to the Top Grant \(ELCG\)](#) is a \$36.9 million federally funded, five-year systems-level grant to help build a high quality, accessible early childhood system so all young children in Vermont succeed in kindergarten and beyond. The grant was a jumpstart for [Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan](#). Grant implementation was a partnership between the Governor's office, the Agency of Education, the Department for Children and Families, the Department of Health, Building Bright Futures, and philanthropic partners. This document describes the progress made by these partners with this grant funding from January 2014 through December 2017 based on the four focus categories. The grant will be completed as of December 31, 2018. Outcome information based on the grant's performance measures can be found here: [http://buildingbrightfutures.org/elc\\_grant/outcomes/](http://buildingbrightfutures.org/elc_grant/outcomes/)

### **Improve Quality of, and Access to, Early Learning and Development Programs**

- Standards were improved for approximately 875 [specialized child care](#) providers, who provide vulnerable children and high-risk families with quality child care and specific supports that builds upon their strengths, meets their needs and supports social-emotional development.
- Vermont's Early Learning Standards ([VELS](#)) were revised and age range expanded to provide a common set of research-based standards for birth through grade 3. Web-based materials, family friendly booklets, and statewide trainings in the new VELS have been completed. VELS forms the foundation for best practice in all early childhood programs, and for the education and training of early childhood educators in the early childhood field.
- The [Strengthening Families](#) framework expanded in six regions throughout the state reaching 52 child care homes and almost 500 children. The framework was adopted by the Agency of Human Services to guide its programs and services through engaging families, programs and communities in promoting the five protective factors: parental resilience; social connections; knowledge of parenting and child development; concrete support in times of need; and social and emotional competence of children. Evaluation of home- and center-based models will inform ongoing investment in this work.
- Participation in [STARS](#), Vermont's child care quality rating system, increased from [42% in 2013 to 81% in 2017](#).
- The nationally known and research-based [Help Me Grow](#) model was established in Vermont. Help Me Grow includes universal developmental screening for early detection of development delays; a centralized access point at VT 2-1-1 to connect families to existing services and to information on parenting and early childhood development; data collection; and community outreach and training. Statewide, over 4,000 children have been reached annually, screening rates have increased, and the average age of referral for Early Intervention has decreased from 26 months in 2014 to 18 months in 2017.
- [Early Multi-Tiered System of Support \(Early MTSS\)](#) is funded by the state personnel development grant as well as the Early Learning Challenge grant. Both grants support expansion, scale-up and sustainability of Early MTSS at the state, regional and local levels. There are now 22 Early MTSS cohort sites. Early MTSS utilizes the research-based Pyramid Model to promote social and emotional competence of all young children, including children who have persistent challenging behaviors. Professional development (training and coaching) is provided to cohort site staff, administrators/leaders and families.

- An inter-agency (AOE and AHS) PreK Monitoring System is underway to assure that Vermont's young children enrolled in public and private PreK programs receive a high quality PreK education. High quality early learning experiences matter--and desired results matter. The PreK Monitoring system builds on existing licensing and monitoring structures already in place.
- In the first three months of 2017, 64 families were served by the two evidence-based home visiting programs using funding through the RTT project. [Parents as Teachers](#) (PAT) and [Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-Visiting](#) (MECSH) programs are offered through Children's Integrated Services (CIS) and have demonstrated improved outcomes for families including early detection of developmental delays; increased parental knowledge of, and engagement in, child development; and improved maternal and child outcomes.

### **Invest in the Early Childhood Workforce**

- An [Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment system](#) was designed to assist practitioners in supporting children in developmentally appropriate ways.
- 66 early childhood practitioners combined college course work and mentoring through [Vermont's Child Care Apprenticeship Program](#) to improve their level of education and their practice. By the end of 2017, enrollment by early childhood professionals in credit-bearing courses sponsored through the apprenticeship program had increased by 90% from 2013.
- Over 100 early childhood practitioners furthered their education at the Early Childhood Summer Institute, with 10 institutions of higher education providing early childhood coursework at Associate, Bachelor's and Master's levels.
- 126 early childhood practitioners received scholarships towards an Associate's degree or licensure through the [TEACH scholarship](#) program.
- A survey of the [early childhood workforce](#) was completed. Key findings included information on educational attainment, wages and benefits, and job satisfaction.

### **Empower Communities**

- Vermont's early childhood backbone organization, [Building Bright Futures](#), was strengthened to demonstrate the power of collective impact between agencies and partners, and was re-structured for long-term sustainability. Building Bright Futures designed and implemented [Vermont Insights](#), Vermont's early childhood data hub.
- 75 early childhood practitioners graduated from the [Snelling Center's Early Childhood Leadership Institute](#); 25 more are expected to complete the Institute during 2018.
- 24 Promise Communities were funded to support local leadership, strategies, and activities to improve school readiness for young children and to strengthen families.

### **Improve Accountability in the Early Childhood System**

- The kindergarten readiness survey was evaluated, updated, piloted and validated. It was fully implemented in the fall of 2016, including training kindergarten teachers throughout the state to implement the survey to fidelity; 90% of kindergarten teachers received the training. The new [Ready For Kindergarten Survey \(R4K!S\)](#) results are available online.
- A cross-agency structure between the Agency of Human Services and Agency of Education for Prenatal – Grade 12 data governance is being developed to enable longitudinal analysis for early

childhood outcomes. Given staffing shortages, AOE cannot participate but AHS departments are aligning to facilitate collaboration with AOE until they have positions to staff this work.

- Vermont's quality rating and improvement system for child care, preschool and after school programs, [STARS](#), was evaluated and validated. These findings will guide the revision of STARS during 2018-19 and beyond.

## Web Index:

Vermont's Early Learning Challenge—Race to the Top Grant (ELCG): <http://buildingbrightfutures.org/early-learning-challenge/>

Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan: <http://buildingbrightfutures.org/the-early-childhood-action-plan/>

Outcomes Information: [http://buildingbrightfutures.org/elc\\_grant/outcomes/](http://buildingbrightfutures.org/elc_grant/outcomes/)

### *Improve Quality of, and Access to, Early Learning and Development Programs*

- Specialized Child Care: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers/specialized>
- Vermont's Early Learning Standards (VELS): <http://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-early-education-early-learning-standards.pdf>
- Strengthening Families: <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies/about>
- STARS: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers/stars>; 42% in 2013 to 81% in 2017: [http://buildingbrightfutures.org/elc\\_grant/outcomes/](http://buildingbrightfutures.org/elc_grant/outcomes/)
- Help Me Grow : <http://helpmegrowvt.org/>
- Early Multi-Tiered System of Support (Early MTSS): <http://education.vermont.gov/student-support/multi-tiered-system-supports>
- Parents as Teachers: <https://parentsasteachers.org/evidence-based-model/>; Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-Visiting: <https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/Model/1/Maternal-Early-Childhood-Sustained-Home-Visiting-Program--MECSH-47/1>

### *Invest in the Early Childhood Workforce*

- Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System: <http://education.vermont.gov/student-support/early-education/assessment>
- Vermont's Child Care Apprenticeship Program: <http://www.vtchildcareindustry.org/apprenticeship.html>
- TEACH scholarship: <http://teachecnationalcenter.org/t-e-a-c-h-early-childhood/>
- Early childhood workforce: [http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Reports/VT\\_Workforce\\_Survey\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_12.31.2015.pdf](http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Reports/VT_Workforce_Survey_Report_FINAL_12.31.2015.pdf)

### *Empower Communities*

- Building Bright Futures: <http://buildingbrightfutures.org/>; Vermont Insights: <http://www.vermontinsights.org/>
- Snelling Center's Early Childhood Leadership Institute: <https://snellingcenter.org/early-childhood-leadership-institute/>

### *Improve Accountability in the Early Childhood System*

- Ready For Kindergarten Survey (R4K!S): <http://vermontinsights.org/r4ks-percent-ready> OR <http://education.vermont.gov/documents/early-education-ready-for-kindergarten-survey-report-2016-2017>
- Vermont Insights: <http://www.vermontinsights.org/>