



Date: April 13, 2022
To: Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and House Committee on Human Services
From: Dr. Morgan Crossman, Executive Director, Building Bright Futures
Re: Vermont's Child Care and Early Childhood Education Systems Analysis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of Vermont's Child Care and Early Childhood Education Systems Analysis (ECSA) is to examine the systems that govern and administer child care and early childhood education and use this information to make recommendations for Vermont's approaches to improve functionality of services and systems that will promote optimal outcomes for children and families. **The Legislature identified Building Bright Futures to oversee and facilitate the Systems Analysis required under H.171/Act 45.**

In 2021, BBF contracted with Foresight Law + Policy and Watershed Advisors to conduct the ECSA which will conclude in June 2022. As Vermont's independent, early childhood public private partnership, BBF has executed the following scope of work to facilitate and monitor the analysis:

- Developed the request for proposals and ran a rigorous procurement process
- Identified and hired a national team of experts to conduct the analysis
- Compiled a comprehensive (80+) series of documents for the systematic document review
- Oriented the contractors to the project and consistently met with their team to discuss progress, monitor deliverables and timelines, and develop outreach and communication strategies for data collection and dissemination of information
- Convened an Advisory Committee of Vermont early childhood public and private experts and stakeholders to oversee and guide the project
- Facilitated 4 Works-in-progress presentations for the contractor to directly engage with and gather feedback from the Advisory Committee
- Facilitated interviews and focus groups with well over 100 early childhood stakeholders representing key constituencies throughout Vermont and hosted a series of forums for the contractors to present the initial themes identified
- Maintained consistent communication with stakeholders and developed a dedicated space on the website for stakeholders to provide written feedback and view all publicly available information

BBF is honored to facilitate the ECSA and ensure success in efforts to engage stakeholders, promote cross sector communication, and monitor progress that will result in a strong series of recommendations for how to transform Vermont's child care and early childhood education system to best meet the needs of children and families. Because the intent of H.171/Act 45 is for the Finance Study to build on the ECSA, we anticipate the need for close coordination and integration of the ECSA and the Finance Study that will be overseen by the Joint Fiscal Office. BBF will provide necessary documentation, orientation, and support to the JFO and the contractor they hire to ensure a rigorous study, alignment and integration with the ECSA, and appropriate stakeholder engagement.

BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES' ROLE IN VERMONT'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

BBF is Vermont's early childhood public-private partnership charged under Title 33, Chapter 46 and the federal Head Start Act to serve as Vermont's Early Childhood State Advisory Council, the mechanism used to advise the Governor and legislature on the status of children in the prenatal period through age eight and their families. State statute charges BBF with maintaining and monitoring the vision and strategic plan for Vermont's Early Childhood System. BBF's mission is to improve the well-being of children and families in



Vermont by using evidence to inform policy and bringing voices together across sectors and within regions to discuss critical challenges and problem-solve.

The Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council (SAC) does not directly support or oppose any specific proposal or bill. Instead, our role is to convene and elevate the voices of families and early childhood stakeholders; monitor the system by identifying and provide high-quality up-to-date data to inform policy and decision-making; and to advise the Governor and Legislature by making recommendations that move the early childhood system toward the 4 goals identified in Vermont’s Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP). These roles are fulfilled through BBF’s infrastructure which includes a network of over 450 early childhood stakeholders (figure to the left):



- A network of 12 Regional Councils convening early childhood experts throughout Vermont communities to move forward local and statewide early childhood priorities;
- 7 Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP) committees upholding and monitoring the Early Childhood vision and strategic plan for Vermont;
- The State Advisory Council (SAC) brings together cross-sector early childhood leaders to issue recommendations, increase coordination to advance a connected and evolving early childhood system, and advise the Governor and Legislature.

BBF’S ROLE IN VERMONT’S CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SYSTEMS ANALYSIS (ECSA)

GOAL & OVERVIEW: The goal of Vermont’s Child Care and Early Childhood Education Systems Analysis, referred to as ECSA or System Analysis for the remainder of the testimony, is to examine systems that govern and administer child care and early childhood education and use this information to make recommendations for Vermont’s approaches to improve functionality of services and systems that will promote optimal outcomes for children and families. **The Legislature identified Building Bright Futures to oversee and facilitate the Systems Analysis required under H.171/Act 45.**

BBF’s Work To Date

- BBF developed an Request for Proposals (RFP) Advisory Committee to oversee the process for developing an RFP for the ECSA and selecting a contractor. Membership included:
 - 1 Senator from the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
 - 1 Representative from the House Committee on Human Services
 - 1 leader from the Agency of Human Services
 - 1 leader from the Agency of Education
 - 1 faculty member from the University of Vermont’s Department of Education
 - 1 leader from Let’s Grow Kids
 - 1 leader from Building Bright Futures
 - Facilitated by the BBF ED & Deputy Director
- BBF developed and revised the Request for Proposals which clearly articulated the scope of work, areas of investigation, recommendation and final report requirements, the role of BBF in supporting/facilitating the process, the role of the contractor, and clear timelines and deliverables.



- BBF developed a [rigorous proposal review process](#) including two rounds of independent review and a full team discussion to discuss the top three proposals. The process resulted in the receipt of 10 proposals.
- BBF's [procurement process](#) resulted in the execution of a contract with Foresight Law and Policy + Watershed Advisors to serve as the contractor for the ECSA for the period of August 15, 2021 - July 15, 2022. Foresight Law + Policy and Watershed Advisors was the strongest proposal for this contract based on a number of factors and criteria:
 - Most concrete in examples and deliverables of their work on the national stage supporting other states with similar projects and scopes of work
 - Great reputation, national experts trained in early childhood
 - Clear focus and experience with supporting states in examining early childhood governance
 - A fresh lens to approach our work in Vermont
 - Nationally known for their tools to examine early childhood governance (Other applicants referenced Foresight tools)
- BBF [developed a series of documents and slide decks to orient the contractors to the project](#). Documents provided significant background information, expectations of the methodology, and the proposed timeline for the work. BBF has also consistently met with the contractors to ensure appropriate progress, to answer questions, and to facilitate appropriate strategy and stakeholder engagement. Meetings initially took place weekly starting September 13th and during the first couple of months and have since moved to bi-weekly and monthly.
- BBF also [prepared all documentation and publications for the systematic document review](#) (80 Vermont-specific reports, assessments, and publications; 5 organizational charts, and 4 strategic plans) and held weekly meetings starting September 13th with the contractor to commence the ECSA project.
- [BBF identified membership for the advisory committee](#) including those who served on the RFP Advisory Committee, the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Team and the BBF VECAP Early Learning and Development Committee. Additional stakeholders were recruited including a business and an afterschool representative. There are [44 people serving on the ECSA Advisory Committee](#). BBF developed a presentation and a [3-page overview](#) to orient partners to the Systems Analysis. The orientation was held on August 19th and can be viewed [here](#).
- BBF required the contractors to present a series of Works-in-Progress presentations/discussions to the Advisory Committee. BBF held the meetings and supported facilitation for the contractors. Recordings of each Works-in-Progress presentation can be found here:
 - October 6, WIP #1 - Introductions and overview
 - [December 8, WIP #2](#) - Description of methodology and expectations
 - [February 11, WIP #3](#) - Overview of key themes and stakeholder feedback
 - April 11, WIP # 4 (in-person)- Overview of options for transformation and stakeholder feedback
- BBF worked closely with the contractor to [develop contact lists](#) for key informant interviews and focus groups. [The contractors conducted the first round of interviews and focus groups by December 22, 2021 gathering input from over 85 participants \(including the VECAP Data and Evaluation Committee\)](#). Consultants started with a list provided by BBF, and received referrals throughout the interview process. In December, the advisory committee reviewed the list of who had been interviewed or scheduled and identified additional people or groups. The consultants have been very responsive to these suggestions and additional interviews were scheduled. The contractors then analyzed and summarized stakeholder



feedback into key themes.

- In addition to the works-in-progress presentations, BBF also supported the contractor in hosting the following series of focus groups for the contractors to present the [initial themes identified](#), to get feedback from key stakeholders, and to ensure maximum public participation.
 - VECAP Child Outcomes Accountability Team (COAT), 2/24/22
 - Business Community through the VBSR Early Care and Learning Task Force, 3/9/22
 - Early Childhood Educators and Administrators forum co-hosted with VTAEYC, 3/23/22
 - 4 Early Childhood Regional Councils as public statewide forums
 - Rutland Regional Council, 2/17/22
 - Franklin Grand Isle Regional Council, 2/17/22
 - Southeast Vermont Regional Council, 3/9/22
 - Caledonia Southern Essex Regional Council, 3/21/22
- BBF is also supporting communication directly with the Governor’s Office, Agency Leaders, and the Legislature about the status of the ECSA, what to expect, and when to be actively engaged in meetings with the contractors.
- BBF is maintaining communication with all invested stakeholders about the process and how they can participate. BBF also maintained a [ECSA website](#) which included consistent project updates, reference documents, recordings of WIPs, and a place to submit additional written feedback and comments.

BBF’s Role Over the Next 3 Months and Once Recommendations are Issued

- BBF will support the contractors in public engagement and stakeholder feedback on the options presented between April 11th and June 30, 2022 through virtual forums and a brief survey. BBF will also facilitate targeted discussions about the options presented utilizing our existing network infrastructure.
- BBF will facilitate a final Works-in-Progress presentation in person on June 15th, for the contractors to present their final recommendations and draft report to the Advisory Committee and ensure the full report is submitted to the legislature by June 30, 2022.
- Because the intent of H.171/Act 45 is for the Finance Study to build on the ECSA, we anticipate the need for close coordination and integration of the ECSA and the Finance Study that will be overseen by the Joint Fiscal Office. BBF will provide necessary documentation, orientation, and support to the JFO and the contractor they hire to ensure a rigorous study, alignment and integration with the ECSA, and appropriate stakeholder engagement.
- BBF is well-positioned to support Vermont in using the recommendations from the forthcoming report to transform our system. BBF is the right entity to hold the state accountable to (1) creating change toward the vision articulated in the VECAP and doing what’s best for children and families; (2) using evidence to inform such decision-making, (3) facilitating stakeholder engagement when appropriate (4), and leading a strong change management process.
- As outlined in the 2021-2022 State Advisory Council Network’s formal recommendations to the Governor and Legislature, “the state should designate BBF as the entity to facilitate the development of a 3-year plan and process for how to move from the recommendations of the ECSA toward implementation.” This will be a significant undertaking, which will likely require an appropriation and the procurement of national content expertise similar to the systems analysis.