



Date: April 11, 2025
To: Chair Lyons and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
CC: Representative Rey Garofano & Senator Martine Larocque Gulick, Legislative reps. on the State Advisory Council
From: Dr. Morgan Crossman, Executive Director, Building Bright Futures
Re: Building Bright Futures Budget Allocation

Overview

- The legislature has named Building Bright Futures in Title 33, Chapter 46 as the entity charged with providing accountability to insure that investments made in children have the intended impact and are implemented and adapted to meet the needs of children, families, and the system over time.
 - Collecting, analyzing and interpreting relevant, timely and accurate data to inform the legislature’s decision making
 - Providing direct advisement to the legislature using this data
 - Building capacity for members of the administration supporting children and families
 - Most importantly, support accountability for Vermont to do what’s best for children
- While BBF received an allocation specific to monitoring Act 76 and the child care system, the additional monitoring and advisement needs of the rest of the system (nutrition, housing, mental health, etc.) remain unfunded. At this time, **it is more critical than ever to have strong monitoring and accountability protocols in place to evaluate policy and system changes related to young children and their families, including monitoring potential implementation of transformation to our public school systems and structures.**
 - **In recent years, the legislature and administration have utilized BBF’s expertise and technical assistance more, requiring additional staff capacity and expertise (advisement over 150 times this past year).** This demand has most often NOT been tied to an increase in funding.
 - The state allocation has never come close to supporting 50% of the funding BBF requires to fully execute all of the responsibilities in statute, meaning the team must prioritize the concrete areas of statute demanded from us most often by the legislature and the administration (monitoring and accountability).
- BBF operates as a public-private partnership, ensuring nonpartisan strategic planning, monitoring, and advisement. To maintain this independence and effectiveness, BBF relies on a diverse funding portfolio that includes public, federal, and private philanthropic sources. BBF's current state appropriations do not sufficiently support the monitoring efforts required. **While we continue to pursue philanthropic, federal, and other forms of funding, without a state increase, BBF’s core operations and statutory work are in jeopardy and we will need to reduce our base staff** while also needing to take on additional work outside of our statuted role in order to make ends meet.

Answers to key questions:

1. What does an additional \$322,444 support?

603645 VT Alliance for Children \$798,707 base (FY2026 - pg 10): We are requesting an additional \$322,444 (a total of \$1,121,151 annual base allocation)

which will still be less than 50% of our total operating costs for our public-private partnership for FY26).

This additional funding is necessary to support personnel, overhead, and program expenses/contracts to support Building Bright Future’s ability to provide timely monitoring and accountability as required by state statute. Personnel required to execute the monitoring

	<i>Request for Base Increase in Gov.'s Recommended Budget</i>
Personnel (wage and fringe)	\$219,687
Program Expenses and Contracts	\$70,513
Overhead	\$32,244
Total Projected Expenditures	\$322,444



and accountability work currently represents a portion of at least 7 staff, not including Regional Managers who also play an instrumental role in on-the-ground monitoring efforts on behalf of families and communities statewide.

2. What is the value of funding systems level work when direct service work remains a priority?

Given the uncertainty of the federal budget at this time, it may be the inclination of policy makers to limit funding to programs providing direct services. However, **Building Bright Futures has well established systems and relationships in place that support early childhood partners with responding quickly to challenges and help to coordinate and direct resources to where they are needed and most impactful.** If the significant changes in the funding landscape that are currently being considered materialize, these systems would provide a critical tool to mitigating and understanding the negative impacts of cuts to children and families in Vermont. This modest budget allocation would allow BBF to be in a strong position to provide that advisement and coordination.

While BBF does not provide direct service, our board and network **represents all of the critical services needed by children and families.** It's our responsibility to hold the vision and strategic plan that supports all direct service work on behalf of kids and families, and make recommendations on how to improve and prioritize those direct services. We also **help the state bring in additional federal and philanthropic dollars to support direct service work** based on gaps left by state funding. While we do not do direct service work, our work helps prioritize and maintain the complex array of services, resources, and supports for children and families in Vermont.

3. What happens if we don't fund this?

Without an increase, it puts BBF's core operations and statutory work in jeopardy because we will need to reduce our base staff while also needing to take on additional work outside of our statuted role in order to make ends meet. BBF has, and will continue to write grants and seek federal and philanthropic funding to execute over 50% of the work required by state statute. Even if BBF received this additional state allocation as requested, we will still be underfunded for the capacity and resources required to meet our roles and responsibilities in state statute that we are committed to fulfilling.

4. How does BBF support monitoring and accountability?

Building Bright Futures is uniquely positioned to examine the impacts of early childhood policy and monitor key outcomes and conditions for young children and their families, including questions like:

- Are investments made in the early childhood system having the intended impact on the lived experience of children prenatal to age 8 in the state of Vermont?
- Are changes to Vermont's system of public schools working for young children, families, educators, and systems leaders?
- Do families with young children have access to safe and stable housing and the basic needs they need in order to thrive?
- Do children and their families have access to high quality early education programs that meet their needs?
- What more do we need to know in order to direct resources in the right places to improve the lives of vulnerable and at risk children and families?

To support these efforts, Building Bright Futures carries out a robust system of capacity building and advisement with our state agency partners that oversee Agencies/Departments/Divisions that administer programs for children and families. This includes:

- Elevating best practices for young children and their families and opportunities for continuous quality improvement in program delivery
- Supporting teams with analyzing qualitative and quantitative data to inform policy-making and program delivery