



Building Bright Futures

600 Blair Park, Suite 306, Williston, VT 05495

802-876-5010 | buildingbrightfutures.org

Build Our Future

A statewide community process to design Vermont's Future early care and learning system

Vermont's Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality, Affordable Child Care reported that equitable early care and learning for all children ages birth to five is the most significant investment Vermont can make to foster economic development, advance social and community wellbeing, and provide the greatest positive impact for future generations. The Commission's research revealed that Vermont needs to increase investments in the state's early care and learning system and to identify new opportunities in the way Vermont delivers, funds and governs early care and education to meet the needs of Vermont's children and their families. The Commission recommended engaging diverse stakeholders in a design process to develop a, comprehensive, equitable, high-quality, integrated, and affordable system of early care and learning for all children birth to five.

Building Bright Futures, Vermont's early childhood public-private partnership and advisor to the Administration and Legislature, was charged by the Commission to undertake this process. There are many complex elements to the early childhood system, as captured in Vermont's Early Childhood Framework and Action Plan. Build Our Future is an opportunity to focus on Goal 3 from the Early Childhood Action Plan: "High-Quality Opportunities for All Children." **Build Our Future will address this goal by leading diverse stakeholders through an Appreciative Inquiry process to design and implement Vermont's future early care and learning system.** This focus has several benefits: addressing the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendation, accelerating momentum from the passage of Act 166, and leading to transformative change for Vermont children and families.

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to complex systems change that emphasizes working from strengths to find new directions for growth, rather than focusing on weaknesses or problems to be solved. Appreciative Inquiry works through an inclusive and iterative cycle of identifying what's working, imagining what's possible, and designing for the desired result. Organizations from Walmart to Keurig Green Mountain have used the process to collaborate, innovate, and leverage human possibility toward positive change.

Build Our Future will be led by Building Bright Futures in collaboration with the David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry at Champlain College. It will engage statewide, cross-sector stakeholders in a collaborative design process of Vermont's future early care and learning system. The process will launch in May, 2017 and conclude in time to deliver proposed legislation to the state legislature no later than January 2019. As a result, Vermont will have a clear path to achieve an integrated system of early care and learning, all young children and their families will have access to high-quality, affordable opportunities that meet their needs, and the state will demonstrate that investing in children and families is the pathway to economic and community wellbeing.

Building Bright Futures statewide network:

Addison Building Bright Futures, **Bennington** Building Bright Futures, **Caledonia and Southern Essex** Building Bright Futures, **Central Vermont** Building Bright Futures, **Chittenden** Building Bright Futures, **Franklin Grand Isle** Building Bright Futures, **Lamoille Valley** Building Bright Futures, **Northern Windsor and Orange** Building Bright Futures, **Orleans and Northern Essex** Building Bright Futures, **Rutland** Building Bright Futures, **Southeast Vermont** Building Bright Futures and **Springfield Area** Building Bright Futures

Goals

Build Our Future will address the following goals:

1. Create an integrated blueprint for Vermont's equitable, high-quality, and affordable early care and learning system for all Vermont children birth to five;
2. Generate a collective vision for how the early care and learning system supports and integrates with Vermont's K-12 and higher education systems;
3. Enhance the capacity for stakeholders in Vermont's early care and learning system to partner and integrate across sectors;
4. Promote a growth mindset among stakeholders in Vermont's early care and learning system to accelerate positive change from a strengths-based perspective.

Stakeholders

Early care and learning is a complex arena with many cross-sector stakeholders. It is a cross agency and community issue that involves multiple disciplines including health, mental health, education, child nutrition, special needs services, and social services. Broad stakeholder groups and family and community engagement are needed to design a birth to five system that supports and connects to public and higher education systems, including:

- **Early childhood care and learning professionals;**
- **Families** of young children;
- Members of **Blue Ribbon Commission;**
- Representatives from **K-12 education**, including EEE staff;
- Representatives from **higher education**, including Vermont State Colleges;
- Participants from the **Green Mountain Imperative** steering committee;
- Representatives from other **early childhood organizations** (e.g. Afterschool Alliance and Vermont Library Association);
- Representatives from **health, including mental health**, including pediatricians and other providers serving children and families;
- Representatives from the Agency of Human Services;
- Representatives from Vermont's **administration and state legislature;**
- **Business leaders** and members of the Early Childhood Business Council; and
- Participants not represented in above groups, including **community members** and leaders with broad geographic distribution.

Activities

Stakeholders will engage in the following activities:

1. **Steering Committee (June 2017 – December 2017)** – A group of key stakeholders will serve as the core planning team. This team will meet monthly to define the process, recruit and coordinate stakeholders, plan the Design Summit, coordinate Implementation Teams and track project progress.
2. **Stakeholder Outreach (June 2017 – August 2017)** – To build engagement and ensure inclusion of stakeholder groups, stakeholders across the state will participate in community meetings, facilitated interviews, and surveys to collect feedback on successes and opportunities in the early care and learning system, which will be captured in an online database. Feedback will be analyzed to identify key themes to inform the Design Summit. Summit outcomes will also be shared through community meetings and an online platform to engage Stakeholders in implementation, communicate successes, and integrate additional feedback.

3. **Build Our Future Summit (Fall 2017)** – The Build Our Future Summit will convene 300 participants in a two-day, intensive co-design session. An Appreciative Inquiry Summit is a large group planning and design meeting that brings a whole system of internal and external stakeholders together to work on a task of strategic and innovative importance. These roll-up-the-sleeves sessions engage relevant and affected stakeholders as co-designers to share leadership, create an alignment of strengths, and take ownership for making the future opportunity successful. In advance of Summits, the Steering Committee will define the task of the Summit, design the best stakeholder mix to match the demands and opportunities of the task, and develop the creative communications and community outreach to engage stakeholders outside the Summit. As a result of the Design Summit, stakeholders will agree on a blueprint for Vermont’s future early care and learning system, and Implementation Teams will be charged with carrying out the design.
4. **Implementation Teams (Ongoing)** – There are currently ongoing efforts to improve Vermont’s early care and learning system, including Building Bright Futures’ Implementation Teams and existing committees under the Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP). Community Outreach will capture the successes and opportunities related to these efforts to inform the Design Summit. At the Design Summit, additional successes and opportunities areas will be identified and prioritized alongside ongoing efforts. As a result of the Design Summit, and in coordination with the ECAP, the Implementation Teams and initiatives will be reoriented to accelerate successes toward implementation of the new early care and learning system. Implementation Teams will report progress during virtual or in-person sessions under the framework of the ECAP.

Timeline

Month	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Steering Committee	Define Process		Coordinate Stakeholders			Plan Summit		Coordinate implementation		Capture lessons		
Stakeholder Outreach	Develop Strategy		Train teams	Collect Stories		Identify themes		Communicate successes				
Summit	Define task & participants		Plan event		Prepare Participants	SUMMIT		Report advances		Asses advances		
Implementation Teams	Continue existing projects					Prioritize opportunities		Advance prioritized opportunities				