



To: Community Development and Neighborhood Revitalization Committee  
From: Mary Danko, Library Director  
Date: 5/30/19  
Re: Early Literacy Outreach Program

The Library requests \$17,332 from the ELI Capacity Grant Funds to help fund and establish the Early Literacy Outreach Program Coordinator as a Limited Services Position for FY20. This funding complements \$30,500 in already secured grant funding for the program as outlined below. I believe that this opportunity will meet the guideline to “help to deliver on the administration priority” of improving Early Childhood education. This key initiative of the Mayor and the Library provides support to early learners not served through other programs to boost kindergarten readiness. It was the Mayor’s recommendation to develop ELOP as a volunteer program that created this unique opportunity to meet an urgent defined need while also providing outreach and community engagement. This will also expand the library’s community outreach to serving early learners in new and different environments.

**Early Literacy Outreach Program (ELOP):**

ELOP is an innovative pilot program at the Fletcher Free Library that addresses both the need for increased literacy and kindergarten readiness skills for Burlington children (Burlington has a 68.9% readiness compared to neighboring South Burlington’s 95.7%) and the quality crisis in home child cares in Vermont. In Chittenden County, 81% of home child cares have a 3 or lower rating from the Vermont Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS). There are no programs other than ELOP currently working to support the 0-3 star home child cares and the children within them; the opportunity gap for those children is likely to increase. These home care providers had not been able to access trainings and other resources that support larger child cares due to numerous factors including lack of transportation, no substitute staffing, and long working hours to accommodate parent schedules. These child cares then do not have access to the additional funds and resources available to 4 and 5 star child cares, further exacerbating the quality divide.

**The Early Literacy Outreach Program (ELOP)**

- Brings early literacy teaching, planning support, and quality improvement to home-based child cares in Burlington.
- Addresses each of the five domains of kindergarten readiness, including math and cognitive skills such as numeric literacy, gross and fine motor skills practiced during movement and manipulative activities, and social and emotional skills such as sharing, turn-taking, and listening.
- Takes Library strengths—early literacy and story times—out to children and providers who are unable to access library resources by matching trained volunteers one-to-one with a home child care.
- Provides a curriculum-based story time complete with early literacy books, manipulatives, activities, and active engagement with the children for the volunteers.
- Strengthens the teaching skills of the providers, impacting children beyond the scope of the program.
- Supports a feedback loop to the library with connecting library programming.
- Expands connections to other areas for Early Learning including Family Room, Parent University and soon, local laundromats.



### **Financial Overview**

Grade 10, Step 1: \$17.10/hour, 40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year: \$34,200

FICA & Medicare @7.65%: \$2600.00

Worker's Comp@4.26%: \$1456.00

Health@26.5%: \$9,063.00

Dental@1.5%: \$513.00

Limited service has no Retirement benefits

Total: \$47,832.00    Secured Grants starting 7/1/19: \$ 30,500.00    Balance: \$17,332.00

### **History:**

ELOP arose in early 2018 through the request of a city councilor to address the child care crisis. The Library designed a sustainable program to bring early literacy programming to home day cares in Burlington and hired an AmeriCorp volunteer to explore the community perception, acceptance and need for such a program. The ELOP coordinator met with home child care providers and identified providers in Burlington with 0-3 star ratings. The excitement of children, families and providers during this exploratory phase moved the Fletcher Free Library to create a pilot program (phase 2) that recruits and trains volunteers to increase outreach and create a sustainable, cost-effective, and reproducible program. These trained volunteers are matched to the home child cares, visiting children on a weekly basis with specially curated early literacy materials and conducting a curriculum-based story-time program. This program is modeled after successful volunteer-based models such as Meals on Wheels and Reach Out and Read. Volunteers give a one-year commitment, receive background checks and training, are matched with a home day care, and provide literacy outreach once per week to the identified home day care. They are also given supervision and program support throughout the year. Support includes ongoing training and mentoring. In addition to the ELOP Coordinator, the Library Director and Head Youth Services Librarian also provide supervision. The existing volunteers represent our diverse community and include experienced teachers. Each brings enthusiasm and ideas to the program. One volunteer now visits her assigned child care twice weekly since the children that attend are different depending on the day of the week. She wants to reach as many as possible. Another went back to make butter with the children as a supplemental activity. It is impossible to quantify the bonds and development that is already occurring through this program.

### **Assessment:**

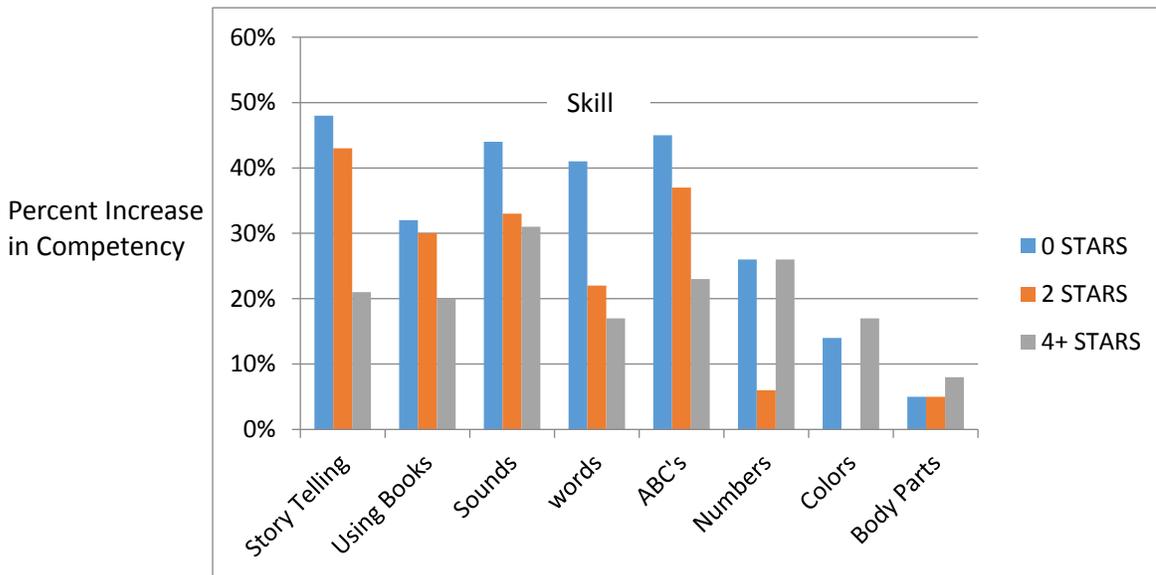
During the exploratory phase, ELOP developed and implemented detailed assessment tools, including age-specific rubrics to measure impact on targeted early literacy skills. The data for the rubrics was taken from the Vermont Department of Education Early Learning Standards. We use these rubrics to evaluate impacts of the program on participating children. Additionally, the program will use qualitative data including testimonials from providers and families, as well as program participation numbers to determine success. We plan to survey participating families regarding Library use at intervals throughout the program and plan to work with the Burlington School District to determine program impacts once participating children reach kindergarten.

For providers, ELOP will determine success based on a variety of factors. Primarily, ELOP will consider the achievement of at least one STAR significant success. ELOP will continue to work closely with Let's

Grow Kids (formerly Vermont Birth to Five) to improve support networks for home-based providers. ELOP will consider provider engagement with Let’s Grow Kids mentoring resources a successful outcome of the program. Furthermore, ELOP will conduct a reflective practice survey for providers to gain a qualitative understanding of how the program can better serve provider needs.

ELOP reaches marginalized young children (0-5 years of age) where they spend their day, in poorly performing home child care settings, to nurture and stimulate early learning. In addition to stimulating and nurturing the children, the providers will also gain support, encouragement, and new ideas from the materials, activities, and support bag that arrives with volunteers each week. The program also includes a parent/provider component, offering two events during the year that will include parent/guardians, providers, and children, to create a connection between home, child care and library for early literacy and development. ELOP coordinator is conducting further outreach to build relationships with children not served by registered home providers. The goal of this outreach is to provide early literacy support to children who are not accessing other resources, and to build community trust to eventually bring ELOP to unregistered, family-style home childcares. These sites include: Family Room Drop-in program, Northgate Community Playgroup, Parent University. A laundromat story time program is also in development as part of this outreach.

Kindergarten Readiness Skill Impacts at STAR levels (Pilot Phase One included a comparison between children in home childcares with zero, 2, and 4 or more STAR ratings (\*ratings have changed since this data was finalized in August, 2018)



- i. Children in these home childcares with the lowest STAR ratings demonstrated the highest levels of improvement.
- ii. **ALL** participating children in home childcares demonstrated improvement of targeted skills on some level.