



Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger

OVERVIEW DOCUMENT

BURLINGTON EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING INITIATIVE

MAY 18, 2017

City seeks to ensure that all Burlington children have the opportunity to succeed

After several years of planning, in Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) the City of Burlington will launch a new Early Learning Initiative (ELI) with the short-term goal of expanding the number of high-quality child care opportunities available in Burlington for children ages 0-3, and the long-term goal of ensuring that all Burlington children have the opportunity to succeed regardless of family income level. The program seeks to address the fact that low-income Burlington children are disproportionately likely to be behind by the time they enter the school system, experience a widening achievement gap in later grades, and are more likely to experience a range of negative outcomes later in life including reduced educational achievements, higher rates of chronic health problems, higher rates of incarceration and drug misuse, and lower lifetime earnings.

The initiative will begin with the City, led by the Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO), making grants with municipal funds to high-quality child care providers to expand existing capacity. Over time the City intends to leverage significant additional funding from other private, institutional and public sources to provide scholarships for high quality early care to young children living in poverty.

Investment in early learning is expected to reduce future public education and health spending and success will be rigorously evaluated

A recent study released by the Vermont Business Roundtable found that every dollar invested to expand Vermont's high-quality early care and learning programs will yield a return of \$3.08. Other studies across the country put the return even higher per dollar invested. These returns are generated by healthier children and healthier families better able to learn and contribute to our community.

The program will be rigorously evaluated in order to document and test the expected downstream savings in education, public health, and social services. The City has formed partnerships with the nationally-recognized Sorenson Impact Center and University of Vermont Medical Center to design and implement a strong evaluation effort.

Mayor's FY 18 budget includes \$500,000 to launch program

Mayor Miro Weinberger is including in his FY 2018 budget \$500,000 of budget authorization to launch the new ELI program. The initiative will be funded by existing payment in lieu of taxes

(PILOT) revenues. PILOT revenues are recurring, and the Mayor anticipates this City investment will leverage other funding sources.

Preliminary grant guidelines

Following City Council budget approval, the CEDO office, working with key partners University of Vermont Medical Center, the Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children, United Way of Northwest Vermont, and others, will design and implement the grant program. In advance of that program design and refinement, the City has developed these preliminary guidelines for grant applications:

1. Participating organizations shall be located in Burlington.
2. The primary focus of the grants will be for expanding capacity to deliver programs for children from birth to 3 years old.
3. Grants may be made available to enhance quality and preserve existing capacity of 0-3 programs.
4. Children in the program will be low-income as defined by family income at or below approximately 200 percent of the poverty level.
5. Partner organizations will be high quality providers (4 or 5 stars) or providers with a clear plan to achieve at least 4 stars.
6. Partners may have existing 0-3 programs or have plans to expand to include them. Funding will be flexible and may include capital investments that result in the near-term creation of new high-quality slots.
7. Partner organizations shall agree to participate in rigorous long-term evaluation and will assure that children and their families covered by the grant agree to participate in evaluations on an ongoing basis.
8. Wages for providers in the partner organizations will be paid a livable wage, consistent with City policy.
9. Grants will be made available as soon possible following the conclusion of the selection process, based upon a detailed multi-year plan and budget.
10. A selection committee comprised of the United Way, the Permanent Fund, the University of Vermont, and the City of Burlington will provide an advisory recommendation to the Mayor and City Council regarding grant allocations.

Burlington ELI beginnings

The launch of ELI is a long-standing goal of Mayor Miro Weinberger. In February 2015, Mayor Miro Weinberger announced an effort to design an ELI pilot in partnership with the Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children, the State Department of Health, the Burlington School District (BSD), and the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA). The support of the Permanent Fund was crucial to allow for extensive work on the program design and to define a program that could be implemented effectively within Burlington.

That work, building on the success of other communities like Minneapolis, MN, developed a scholarship model that provided scholarships to specific students to help defray the cost of high-quality child care. Such a model remains the ultimate goal of the Burlington ELI – but in order to demonstrate the value of such investments, the City is first seeking to expand the available high-quality child care slots by providing grants to Burlington early care and learning programs and rigorously tracking the results of this investment.