



Virginia Early Childhood
Funders Collaborative

Why and How the Collaborative Emerged

KATHY GLAZER

Virginia Funders Network Annual Conference

May 2024

WHY: VECFC FOUNDING TENETS

- Having built an effective statewide ECCE system/structure, Virginia is now in a position through which private funders can accelerate the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative's capacity to add value, fill gaps, achieve impact, and replicate/refine systemic processes and interventions.
- Why philanthropy? VECF has focused on convening philanthropic partners because of the unique role that philanthropic investment and leadership serve in Virginia, where public-private partnerships are highly valued.
- In addition, because the philanthropic sector has greater flexibility and capacity for risk than the public sector, there is great opportunity for this Collaborative to seed innovation to address intractable, challenging issues and push for policy changes in ways that other sectors cannot.

HOW: REFRESH ON VECFC INCEPTION

- A small group informally began exploration in 2019 and re-engaged in 2022, post-pandemic. Four of eight founding members of the VECFC contributed funding to recruit an expert consultant to help create a vision for Virginia's ECFC, including a structure with potential for growth and expansion, a plan for identifying and pursuing strategic priorities, and a clear sense of purpose/Theory of Change, leading to methods for identification of metrics for measurable results and anticipated impact.
- VECF convened representatives of the 8 founding members one year ago (April 2023) to hear and react to recommendations made by the consultant.

ECCE IN READY REGIONS AND STATEWIDE

2020 State Law: VDOE directed to oversee a public-private system of ECCE statewide

2022 State Law: Ready Regions protected in statute to coordinate key ECCE functions:

- build relationships
 - increase access
 - strengthen quality
 - engage families
- Considered part of core function of VA's public-private ECCE system; stable funding for the regional network
 - Serve as centers of gravity for Virginia Promise Partnership, Virginia Business Roundtable for Early Education, and **potentially VECFC**
 - Incubate innovations and foster partnerships to address and solve gaps

POTENTIAL FOR THE FUNDERS COLLABORATIVE

Bring characteristics of the private sector to help test innovations and solve gaps:

- Entrepreneurial approaches to incubate innovation
- Ability to calculate and assume reasonable risk/reward propositions
- Contribute funds to leverage and promote larger-scale publicly funded commitments
- Connect local/place-based commitments to broader/statewide impact

Utilize partnerships to support sustainable improvements in Virginia's ECCE System:

- Ready Region network
- VPP and VBREE (depending upon comfort level with policy/advocacy)

POTENTIAL FOR THE FUNDERS COLLABORATIVE

Areas ripe for public/private engagement and innovation:

- ✓ ECCE workforce: compensation, competencies, pipeline/recruitment and retention
- ✓ Facilities: brick & mortar, expansions, accelerate new supply
- ✓ Industry supports: statewide association for ECCE providers, strengthen business/operation practices; cost-sharing models for ECCE services
- ✓ Data: precision in understanding gaps in supply vs. family demand at local and regional levels
- ✓ Convening: engagement/collaboration across multiple constituencies to inform policy/budget decisions and systemic improvements among families, providers, community leaders, business, government, and philanthropy

EXPLORATION: SURVEY OF FUNDERS

In April 2023, the founding VECFC funders wondered about the current activities and investment in early childhood development in Virginia, as well as potential consideration in the future.

In partnership with VFN, a quick turnaround survey was launched in late 2023 under the leadership of the ECFC consultant. The VFN invited its full membership to respond to the survey; VECFC funders distributed the survey to additional potentially interested funders who were not VFN members.

SURVEY SAYS.....

Total Responses	40
Funding Summary	\$16,989,392 – Total current Early Childhood Investment from 31 foundations reporting
Strategic Focus	67% - Total Foundations with a strategic focus on Early Childhood
Early Childhood Staff	36% - Foundations with staff dedicated to Early Childhood strategies
Funding Early Childhood	82% - Number of foundations funding Early Childhood programs, projects, or initiatives
Interest in VECFC	83% - Foundations interested in participating in VECFC
Interest in Learning	86% - Foundations interested in Virginia’s Early Childhood system strategies
Support for Early Childhood	89% - Foundations expected to support Early Childhood in the next 3 years