



Virginia Early Childhood Foundation Awards
Six Innovative Partnership Grants for FY19
Funds support collaborative local initiatives to improve early education

Richmond, Va. (Sept. 17, 2018) – The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation has awarded Innovative Partnership grants to six Smart Beginnings entities that are engaged in collaborative initiatives designed to improve access to high-quality early childhood education for young children in their respective communities.

First launched in 2015, Innovative Partnership grants are funded by a state appropriation to support local communities as they implement and document – and potentially replicate – local, data-informed innovations for improving access to high quality early education for at-risk children, thereby readying children, families and schools for kindergarten success. Grants for fiscal year 2019 are:

- An Innovative Partnership grant was awarded to **Smart Beginnings Central Virginia** to implement the **Early Education System Alignment Project (EESAP)**. The EESAP creates partnerships with public and private early childhood programs to ensure that children from all racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds have equitable access to high quality learning experiences. Among other strategies, the partnerships will provide training and coaching; implement kindergarten transition practices between private early childhood settings and public schools; and bring early learning programming into targeted neighborhoods identified by school divisions.
- An Innovative Partnership grant was awarded to **Smart Beginnings Greater Roanoke** to provide funding for the **Data Partnership and Capacity Builder** project, which pairs child- and program-level assessment data with training on the use of these data for ongoing programmatic quality improvement. Working in partnership with Virginia Quality and Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, the project will measure the correlation between teacher-child interactions, school readiness, and program quality, and will use the findings to make data-informed decisions at the community level.
- An Innovative Partnership grant was awarded to **Smart Beginnings New River Valley** for the **NRV School Readiness Action Plan**. This project will develop the region's first school readiness strategic plan in collaboration with key stakeholders engaged in early childhood systems-building. The project will include the creation of a data-sharing agreement with all NRV school divisions, which will position the community to establish connections between and make informed decisions about early childhood experiences, the quality of those experiences and school readiness outcomes.

- An Innovative Partnership grant was awarded to **Smart Beginnings Thomas Jefferson Area** for the **FY19 Innovative Partnership Project** with the goal to increase data-sharing among and between agencies serving young children to drive systems-level change. The project will pair data from community partners serving young children with data collected in public schools. This collaboration will provide support to service providers in making informed decisions about practices that balance quality, affordability, and access, and that ultimately lead to improved school readiness.
- An Innovative Partnership grant was awarded to **Smart Beginnings Rappahannock Area** for the **Kindergarten Readiness Project** in partnership with the University of Virginia’s Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) office. This collaborative effort will provide supplemental literacy curriculum with on-site training and coaching at three participating private early childhood programs. These interventions are designed to increase the quality of instruction and improve school readiness for young children; assist programs in moving into higher levels in Virginia Quality; and lead to replicable strategies for providing technical assistance for quality improvement.
- An Innovative Partnership grant was awarded to **Smart Beginnings Virginia Peninsula** for the **PD4PK: Raising Quality through Pre-K CLASS Instruction** project. This project will create a cohort of teachers from Hampton City Schools, Newport News Public Schools, and private early childhood programs that are participating in Virginia Quality. These teachers will participate in training aligned with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a tool that measures teacher-child interactions which are correlated to positive child outcomes. Participating teachers will be well-prepared to provide rich instructional practices that lead to improved school readiness in young children.

Note: Grantees will receive technical assistance from VECF in addition to grant funds.

“Children and families deserve access to high quality education across the Commonwealth regardless of their background or zip code,” said Pamela Northam, First Lady of the Commonwealth of Virginia. “Local communities are leading the way with innovative approaches to early childhood education and we want to do everything we can to support them at the state level.”

“The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation was very impressed with the community-driven innovations and collaborations proposed by applicants for the Innovative Partnership grants,” said Kathy Glazer, president of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. “The projects that received funding in FY19 continue our collective work to build capacity and improve quality in order to better serve the children of Virginia. We look forward to sharing the results with our state and local partners across the Commonwealth.”

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About the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation: VECF creates results-oriented partnerships to ensure that young children are healthy and prepared for school, life and workforce success. To learn more about VECF and the Smart Beginnings initiative, visit www.vecf.org.