

## **Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater Strategic Plan FY20/21 – FY22/23**

### **Background and Context:**

Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater (SBWT) was founded in 2008 as a multi-jurisdictional nonprofit supported by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation as part of the statewide Smart Beginnings Initiative with additional support from the City of Franklin, Southampton County, and Isle of Wight County. SBWT serves as a convener for a community network representing various agencies and organizations that impact local early childhood development. Organizationally, it is at an important stage of its development and is positioned to leverage community support focused on early childhood systems building that further aligns to the VECF Smart Beginnings Core Principals and Strategic Framework. SBWT has a history of strong relationships with stakeholders in the community who are committed to building strong networks of support for young children. They have received funding from VECF in the past and have re-committed to strengthen the brand of Smart Beginnings in Western Tidewater. The strategic planning process included the following steps: 1) engagement of SBWT Board of Directors regarding the focus and goals of the Strategic Planning process; 2) review of updated community data primarily utilizing the Early Head Start/Head Start Community Assessment 2019-2020 and 2019 SBWT Organizational Assessment Report; 3) engagement of key community leaders representing business, local foundations, schools, local government, and faith community to review the SBWT vision and mission, identify organizational strengths, community needs, and brainstorm potential goals; 4) engagement of Board of Directors to review and synthesize data and community input; 5) solicitation of input from community partners regarding action steps to achieve draft goals; 6) engagement of Board leadership to refine the Strategic Plan to incorporate input from community leaders and organizational partners. The proposed plan will leverage SBWT's current success and relationships, move the community to a more collective impact, and contribute to the VECF vision of early childhood systems that ensure all children have an early foundation that prepares them for success in school, work, and life.

### **Organizational Strength**

Key community leaders identified the following as key organizational strengths that position SBWT to strengthen its role regarding early childhood systems building:

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- Knows how to bring people together
- Collaboration in the community is strong – SBWT has a history of convening stakeholders
- Strong staff leadership that is trusted in the community and has long history of relationships with both community leaders, business leaders, parents, and families
- Direct outreach which has produced trust among families and trust among funders that services will be delivered
- An understanding of the needs of the community and the community culture in general
- Community leadership and influence is represented at the table
- Able to execute the requested needs of the community
- Passion for results, enthusiasm, engaged
- Focus on Quality – Success of SBWT in engaging childcare centers in the Quality Initiative

### **Identification of Needs**

The following needs were identified by community leaders as “top of mind” based on their knowledge of the community data and their personal or professional experience regarding early childhood issues. Supporting documentation from community data is included as Appendix A.

- Identify the strengths and needs of parents. Perceived needs include promoting the value of education, not accessing available and existing resources whether school, health, or community resources. These are generational issues which are impacted by the mistrust between parents and providers, as well as by trauma experienced by parents and children.
- Infant Mortality – Statistical percentage is significantly higher for the Western Tidewater region compared to the State
- Availability of Quality Child Care – Including availability of Infant Child Care and Alternate Hours for Child Care
- Health Care – Shortage of Primary Care Physicians in the area
- Low % of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade boys reading at grade level – the discrepancy between the % of children who pass the PALS at Kindergarten versus the lower percentage of children who are reading at third grade level in tested in third grade.
- Reduce Barriers to Kindergarten Readiness - The 50% of children who do not participate in center-based childcare, Head Start, or VPI – and therefore are not ready to enter school. The gap between those receiving Preschool and PreK services and those who do will only widen.

## **Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater Strategic Action Plan FY20/21 – FY22/23**

### **Vision Statement**

“Children are born healthy and supported in nurturing environments to become lifelong learners.”

### **Mission Statement:**

“To convene and facilitate stakeholders building community capacity responsive to the needs of children birth through third grade.”

### **Guiding Principles**

Public and Private Partnerships – The mission and vision are community owned and resources are leveraged from both public and private sources recognizing that key leaders and decision makers share responsibility and accountability for breaking down barriers and developing a cohesive early childhood system.

Inclusion – Emphasis on authentic engagement of families who are recipients of early childhood services – especially prioritizing children and families who live in adverse circumstances.

Quality and Continuous Improvement - A commitment to evidence-based programs and practices that demonstrate knowledge of the best available research regarding children, families, and community.

Data-informed decision-making - Community level data, including both quantitative and qualitative data, is essential for making wise investments of resources in early childhood.

Non-partisan community “convener” - The recognition that the development of healthy children requires impartial engagement of multiple stakeholders including parents, business, faith community, government, and nonprofit sectors.

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**Goal #1: Increase the availability of quality child-care.**

**Goal 1 - Objective 1:** Maximize the use of publicly funded slots for early childhood education including Head Start, Early Head Start, Virginia Preschool Initiative, and subsidized childcare.

**Indicator of Success:** 100% of publicly funded slots will be filled throughout the year.

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23</b>
1.1a. Convene providers of publicly funded child-care slots including Virginia Preschool Initiative, Head Start, Early Head Start and registered providers receiving child-care subsidies to assess enrollment criteria and identified total number of publicly funded slots.	SBWT Director	FY20/21
1.1b. Identify barriers to access for publicly funded childcare including barriers regarding transportation.	SBWT Director as Convener. Executive Leadership of VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start; DSS; private providers and parents	FY20/21
1.1c. Develop action plan to reduce identified barriers	SBWT Director as Convener of Executive Leadership of VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start; DSS; and parents	FY20/21
1.1d. Develop an action plan that maximizes service options to determine best placement for eligible children.	SBWT as convener/facilitator; Key leaders from organizations/institutions with public funding; and parents	FY20/21

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**Goal 1 - Objective 2:** Establish a process for coordinated enrollment agreements and processes and eliminate attendance barriers to increase the number of 3 & 4-year-old children engaged in center based early care and education.

**Indicator of Success:** Increased percentage of 3 & 4-year-old children enrolled in center-based childcare

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23</b>
1.2a. Convene early childhood providers serving 3-year-old children to identify resources and reduce barriers to transportation.	SBWT Director as Convener Key Partners: School Divisions, DSS, Head Start, private providers	FY21/22
1.2b. Assess the number of 3-year-old children currently enrolled in center-based care	SBWT Director as Convener of Executive Leadership of VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start; DSS; and parents	FY21/22
1.2c. Assess the number of licensed family home day providers providing care to 3-year-old children	SBWT Director; DSS	FY21/22
1.2d. Convene school divisions, Head Start, and private providers to assess availability of space, quality staff, and resources for additional slots for 3 years old enrollment as part of VPI Enhancement and Expansion	SBWT Director as Convener of Executive Leadership of VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start; DSS	FY21/22
1.2e. Identify strategies for coordinated enrollment and increased utilization of available classroom space and staff among schools, Head Start, and private providers	SBWT Director as Convener of Executive Leadership of VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start; DSS	FY21/22

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**Goal 1 - Objective 3:** Increase the application of consistent quality standards amongst and between all quality improvement networks such as Toddler Specialist Network, Child Care Aware, VPI, Head Start, Registered Family Home Day Providers, and Centers involved in Virginia Quality.

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23</b>
1.3a. Facilitate the participation of Virginia Preschool Initiative Coordinators in Virginia Quality including assessment of VPI classrooms and coordination of professional development plans for VPI teachers.	SBWT Director, Executive Leadership of School Divisions	FY20/21
1.3b. Convene stakeholders to identify strategies for the recruitment and training of new Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observers	SBWT Director as Convener of Executive Leadership of VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start; DSS; and parents	FY20/21
1.3c. Convene stakeholders to identify strategies to increase CLASS aligned resources for use in centers and classrooms	SBWT Director as Convener of Executive Leadership of VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start; DSS; business leaders and private providers	FY20/21
1.3d. Convene VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start, and private providers to identify gaps in professional competencies and identify action plan to address gaps. (Example of a gap is integration of art and music from other cultures into VPI/preschool activities.)	SBWT Director as Convener of Leadership of VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start; DSS; and private providers	FY20/21
1.3e. Convene VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start and private providers to develop a uniform tracking system to document training hours for early childhood providers.	SBWT Director as Convener of Leadership of VPI, Head Start, Early Head Start; DSS; and private providers	FY20/21

**SBWT Draft Strategic Plan**

6.3.2020

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**Goal #2: Strengthen engagement of parents, licensed and unlicensed family home providers to increase kindergarten readiness of children not enrolled in center-based care.**

**Goal 2-Objective 1:** Increase the knowledge, skills, and abilities of licensed family home providers and those voluntarily registered regarding quality early care and education.

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23</b>
2.1a. Expand/customize/maintain data from the Department of Social Services providers database to reflect specifics of the SBWT communities.	SBWT Director; DSS;	FY20/21
2.1b. Coordinate the professional development for licensed family home providers to align with Virginia Quality, CLASS and ERS	SBWT Director; DSS, Family Home Day Providers	FY20/21
2.1c. Maintain database of professional development hours per provider to ensure 15 hours of Professional Development per year.	SBWT Director	FY20/21
2.1d. Identify and coordinate provision of educational resources aligned with Virginia Quality, CLASS and ERS for licensed family home providers	SBWT Director; DSS	FY20/21

**Goal 2 - Objective 2:** Increase the engagement of parents and unlicensed family home day providers regarding kindergarten readiness.

**SBWT Draft Strategic Plan**

6.3.2020

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Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23
2.2a Engage parents and unlicensed family home care providers to identify most effective means of outreach and educational needs.	SBWT Director; Parents; Non-custodial caregivers; CACFP, Planning Council; Children’s Harbor	FY21/22
2.2b Convene key partners to identify community access points serving parents, e.g. SNAP, WIC, Immunization, faith-based organizations.	SBWT Director, Convener DSS, Health Department, Faith Based Organizations, School Divisions	FY21/22
2.2c Develop and/or identify kindergarten readiness material/information for distribution to parents through community access points.	SBWT Director Schools Divisions, Head Start	FY21/22
2.2d Develop a coordinated data base of parents and unlicensed family home care providers.	SBWT Director	FY21/22
2.2e Develop a coordinated system of referral and outreach to engage parents and unlicensed family home care providers in community-based kindergarten readiness activities.	SBWT Director, Convener DSS, Health Department, Faith Based Organizations, School Divisions	FY21/22

**Goal #3: Increase utilization of early childhood resources by creating innovative access points for the efficient delivery of services in community deserts.**

**Goal 3 - Objective 1:** Identify types of goods and services both wanted and needed by parents as well as preferred means of service delivery.

**SBWT Draft Strategic Plan**

6.3.2020

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<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23</b>
3.1a Identify community deserts, e.g. food deserts, childcare deserts, transportation deserts based on most recent community data.	SBWT Staff and Board	FY22/23
3.1b. Identify a champion or advocate who has the trust of the residents/parents to assist in engaging parents/families who live in community deserts.	SBWT Director, Faith Based Organizations, Key Community Partners, e.g. Food Bank	FY22/23
3.1c Develop strategies to engage parents/families who live in community deserts to gain input regarding their needs and wants.	SBWT Director, Faith Based Organizations, Key Community Partners, e.g. Food Bank	FY22/23
3.1d Solicit and analyze parent/family input regarding needs/wants	SBWT Director, Faith Based Organizations, Key Community Partners	
3.1e Identify gaps in services based on families' needs and wants.	SBWT Director and key partners	FY22/23

**Goal 3 – Objective 2: Increase coordinated service delivery for families of young children in one community desert**

**SBWT Draft Strategic Plan**

6.3.2020

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<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23</b>
3.2a Establish a parent/community advisory board in an underserved community for early input into the decision-making process.	SBWT staff and Board	FY 20/21
3.2b Research and identify innovative best practices/case studies for service delivery in community deserts in rural communities	SBWT Staff and Board	FY22/23
3.2c Identify providers of services needed in community deserts based on most recent community data and parent/family input.	SBWT Staff and Board	FY22/23
3.2d Convene service providers to review best practices and develop pilot project for provision of efficient and effective delivery of needed/wanted goods and services	SBWT and Key Partners	FY22/23
3.2e Evaluate the implementation of the pilot project to determine 1) increase utilization of services by families; 2) parent satisfaction with services; and 3) provider satisfaction with delivery method.	SBWT Staff and Key Partners	FY22/23

**Goal #4: Develop and maintain a funded and sustainable model that leads early childhood systems building in Western Tidewater.**

**Goal 4 - Objective 1:** Increase the capacity of the community to access state and federal funds to support a comprehensive early childhood system.

**SBWT Draft Strategic Plan**

6.3.2020

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<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23</b>
4.1.a Convene school divisions, local government, Head Start, and local foundations to access their organizational capacity and interest to apply for and manage state and federal funds.	SBWT Director and key leadership of community partners	FY20/21
4.1b Identify organizational and systems gaps that serve as barrier to accessing state and federal funds.	SBWT Director and key leadership of community partners	FY20/21
4.1c Develop action plan to address barriers	SBWT Director and key leadership of community partners	FY22/23

**Goal 4 – Objective 2:** Increase staff capacity to convene, facilitate, collect/evaluate data and research best practices

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23</b>
4.2a Develop a staffing model that supports convening, facilitating, data management, research, and development activities.	SBWT Executive Director and Board of Directors	FY22/23
4.2b Identify financial and organizational needs to sustain a staffing model	SBWT Executive Director and Board of Directors	FY22/23
4.2c Engage community leaders including business leaders to increase buy-in for financial support of organizational needs.	SBWT Executive Director and Board of Directors	FY 22/23 and ongoing
4.2d Recruit at least one parent and/or caregiver to serve on SBWT Board of Directors.	SBWT Board of Directors	FY20/21

**Goal 4- Objective 3:** Develop a succession plan for Executive Leadership of SBWT.

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline - FY20/21; FY21/22; FY22/23</b>

**SBWT Draft Strategic Plan**

6.3.2020

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4.3a Develop job description, salary, and benefits for full time Director's position	SBWT Executive Director and Board of Directors	FY20/21
4.3.b Develop fund development plan to support new position	SBWT Executive Director and Board of Directors	FY20/21
4.3c Develop professional development plan that addresses key competencies required for new Executive Director.	SBWT Director and key leadership of community partners	FY21/22

**Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater Strategic Plan – Appendix A**

**Supporting Documentation**

**Goal #1: Supportive Data:**

- Trends cited in “THE CHILDREN’S CENTER EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT 2019-2020”:
  - An increase in population of children under age 5 in Isle of Wight and Southampton.
  - Projected population growth for children under age 5 in Isle of Wight through the year 2040.
  - An increase in number of Hispanic children in Isle of Wight and Southampton
  - The number of childcare subsidies through the local Departments of Social Services has decreased in all localities.
  - Childhood poverty has decreased with the exception of Franklin. Franklin is more than double the state average
  - Percentage of children under 6 with all parents in the household working: Franklin: 66.2%; Southampton 69.2%; Isle of Wight: 74.2%.
  - In 2017-2018, all areas, except Franklin, saw a drop off in children who passed the PALS-K test. Isle of Wight and Southampton both saw their worst score since at least 2008-2009. Southampton and Franklin were behind the state average in children who were prepared for kindergarten.
  - In 2018-2019, all areas saw a drop off in children who passed the PALS-K, except Southampton.
  - Children enrolled in Pre-school (3 years old and up to kindergarten): Franklin 6.1%; Southampton 5.2%; Isle of Wight: 5.1% (Virginia 5.9%)

**Goal #2: Additional Supportive Data:**

- Trends cited in “THE CHILDREN’S CENTER EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT 2019-2020”:
  - Children enrolled in Pre-school (3 years old and up to kindergarten): Franklin 6.1%; Southampton 5.2%; Isle of Wight: 5.1% (Virginia 5.9%)
  - In 2017-2018, all areas, except Franklin, saw a drop off in children who passed the PALS-K test. Isle of Wight and Southampton both saw their worst score since at least 2008-2009. Southampton and Franklin were behind the state average in children who were prepared for kindergarten.
  - In 2018-2019, all areas saw a drop off in children who passed the PALS-K, except Southampton.

**Goal #3: Supportive Data:**

Trends cites in “THE CHILDREN’S CENTER EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT 2019-2020”:

- Households in Franklin are less likely to have a vehicle available than other localities in Western Tidewater.
- As of 2019, Western Tidewater Community Transportation Cooperative had yet to solve the problem of connecting Southampton, Franklin, and Isle of Wight to Suffolk and points east.
- In 2017, all areas of Western Tidewater were above the state average in child food insecurity rate. All areas but Franklin have seen improvement in this area. 2017 VA percentage-13.2%; Franklin-17.2%; Southampton-13.9%; Franklin-14.1%.
- Children with low access to a grocery store (1-mile distance in urban setting; 10 miles in rural setting): Franklin – 13.4%; Southampton – 3.2%; Isle of Wight – 3.8%
- The food environment index combines two measures of food access: the percentage of the population that is low-income and has low access to a grocery store, and the percentage of the population that did not have access to a reliable source of food during the past year (food insecurity). The index ranges from 0 (worst) to 10 (best) and equally weights the two measures. Franklin – 4.4; Southampton – 6.9; Isle of Wight – 8.6.
- According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, the latest statistics on adult illiteracy (2003), all localities in Western Tidewater were above the state average except Isle of Wight