

“None of us can truly tap the potential that is out there until we become involved with the people of our communities in promoting the well-being of everyone's children.” ~ Con Hogan

## Mission

To support VT communities to realize the promise of every child

## Goal

The Promise Community Initiative will provide supports, such as the Promise Community coaches, financial supports, and information to help communities that include at least one elementary school to work together across sectors – health, education, human services and community planning. These collaborations will do ‘whatever it takes’ to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children in their communities. Communities will use Results Based Accountability to create and measure outcomes and the Strengthening Families framework to engage families.

## Strategy

### State Project Director

- Leadership
- Program oversight
- Community criteria and selection
- Evaluation
- Sustainability

### Statewide Advisory Team

- Project guidance
- Community criteria and selection
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Sustainability

### Promise Community Coaches

- Community level leadership

- Community criteria and selection
- Community support
- Evaluation

### Evaluator

- Program evaluation
- Continuous Improvement Feedback

### Community

- Engage Building Bright Futures regional councils and other key partners
- Build a community of support
- Evaluation
- Sustainability

## Outcomes

- Promise Communities will use a collective impact model, which means the community is making a commitment with a group of decision makers from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. The areas of focus in the Promise Communities are:
  - Young children being ready for school
  - Access to high quality early learning and development opportunities
  - Access to Medical Home
  - Access to services
  - Grade 3 assessments show children closing the achievement gap in literacy and math
  - Other areas identified by the community

To find out more about Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant go the Building Bright Futures Website <http://buildingbrightfutures.org/early-learning-challenge/>

### **Promise Community Opportunity**

Over the course of the next three years, communities in VT will have the opportunity to apply to be part of a Promise Community. In Vermont a range of early learning and development programs and services are being effectively delivered to children and families, including children with high needs, throughout this predominantly rural state. But delivery may not be consistent or reach children with high needs and their families in every community. Barriers like limited community resources in small rural towns, transportation, inter-generational poverty, inadequate affordable housing, lack of local employment opportunities, and incomplete education inhibit access to robust array of integrated services that provide the core of services for creating success for children birth to age 8. Promise communities will focus on the early years, birth to 6. Promise communities will leverage the state resources, initiatives and partnerships into targeted high-intensity supports to build local infrastructure and coalesce local and state resources to improve outcomes for young children in our highest need, rural communities.

Selected communities will have access to a coach, priority programming that is part of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, and financial support to initiate “whatever it takes” to help families with young children birth to 6. Each community will develop their own plan – a Promise Community Roadmap - for how they plan to increase school readiness and close the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade achievement gap. The plan will be monitored during implementation with the coach, community leaders and the Promise Community evaluation partners over two years.

### **What is a community?**

A Promise Community is identified by a coalition of people who are committed to serve the young children birth to age six who live in the catchment area of the local public school. More than one school can collaborate and communities can cross Supervisory Unions; there is an understanding that geographic boundaries can create a community or the local culture of an area can create a community. This can include more than one elementary public school, because Promise Communities must reach no less than 40 children.

### **What does the Promise Community get?**

In year one, the coaches will facilitate the development of each community’s Promise Community Roadmap , which includes compiling a community needs assessment and creating a plan using a Community Impact Model. Once the plan is in place, financial support (consisting of grants up to \$200,000) will be given to the community to support efforts to implement the plan. The coaches will remain in the community providing technical assistance to move forward with the plan until the end of year 2 for that cohort. Evaluation will continue to monitor long term outcomes for the community.

## What are the expectations of the Promise Community?

Communities will:

- Commit to doing “Whatever it takes” to turn the curve to serve young children and families of the community
- Attend regular meetings of the Promise Community collaborators to develop the Promise Community roadmap (weekly to monthly)
- Support the implementation of the plan
- Collaborate with an evaluation team to develop and collect short term data; and develop a longitudinal data plan to track the progress of the work, beyond the time of the coach participation
- Collaborate with the various partners to allow for sustainability of the Promise Community roadmap

## Promise Community Priorities

At a minimum, Promise Communities will be defined as a town with at least one elementary school, and never as big as an Agency of Human Services District or Vermont county.

Understanding the needs of the community is critical, as well as the desire of the community to make an impact. There are several required partners, which include:

- Building Bright Futures regional coordinator for your region;
- School representatives
  - principal (s)
  - superintendent (s);
- Agency of Human Services Field director for your region;
- Representative from a child health medical practice.

When considering the community we will look at community *need*, and based on the priorities, decide who will benefit the most. We know that not all children in Vermont are thriving, and despite our efforts, there are significant barriers that impact children’s success. Poverty is a critical factor in child achievement, so what is the impact of poverty in your community? How well are the children doing in preparing for school and achieving in school? Other key criteria are the numbers of high needs children in the community, such as children with disabilities or developmental delays, children in foster care, those children in which English is not the primary language of the home, and homeless or migrant families. What are the needs that are unique to your community? What resources does your community have to offer as a Promise Community? To help with this process data points on poverty (using Free and Reduced Lunch school data and census poverty data), Kindergarten Readiness survey results, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

achievement scores , and access to high quality child care, broken into supervisory union or school district, are included in the packet.

Community *will* is also being considered in the application. Why should your community be part of this initiative? How is the community coming together to make a difference for the young children to help with school outcomes? What is the plan for engaging families in the work ahead? Who are the partners to help make this work happen? As part of the *Race to The Top Early Learning Challenge grant* this model is a partnership between education, human services and health. Keeping those partners in mind, Promise Communities is looking to broaden the table of partners and want communities to look at other partners not generally involved in early childhood, as well as the early care and education community, to create a coalition. These *other partners* can include (not an extensive list):

- Families
- Town planners
- Parks and Recreation programs
- Arts councils
- Libraries
- Early Care and Education Providers
- Community action groups
- Faith based organizations
- Local law enforcement
- Head Start
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local service organizations such as Rotary, Lions club
- Others specific to your community

Community *impact* is about the difference you plan to make in the lives of children and families and how many children from birth to age 6 are in your community. The work of Promise Communities is focused on the Birth to 6 populations knowing the impact will reach the 6-8 year olds as we measure outcomes of Kindergarten readiness and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade achievement gaps over time. Due to the rural nature of VT, classrooms may only have 10 children. Promise Communities will reach communities that have at least 40 children; combining several small community schools may be the way to reach more children and have a greater community impact.

### Promise Community Application Submission Process

#### TIME LINE

ACTIVITY	DATE
Application information released	February 11, 2015
Webinar meeting to answer additional questions and prepare for applications	February 18, 2015
Application Deadline	March 18, 2015
Announce Communities	March 31, 2015

### **Relationship with Building Bright Futures:**

The Building Bright Futures (BBF) regional councils are doing collaborative work at the regional level. The Promise Communities are on a smaller scale, focusing on a specific community within the region. The efforts of the individual Promise Community will link to the strategic planning of the BBF regional council and to the overall statewide Action Plan for Vermont's young children.

### **Point of Contact**

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### **Promise Community WEBINAR session**

Please register for Promise Communities Information Session on Feb 18, 2015 2:00 PM EST at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6883236723938383617>

Information Session on the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Promise Communities-Hosted by Julianne Nickerson

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.