

2017 VERMONT HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Vermont Head Start
Collaboration Office (VHSCO)



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U.S. Department of Health & Human
Services
Administration for Children and
Families
Office of Head Start

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 **VERMONT**
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
CHILD DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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2017 Vermont Head Start and Early Head Start Needs Assessment Report

Vermont Head Start Collaboration Office

Executive Summary

The Vermont Head Start Collaboration Office (VHSCO) is required under the Head Start Act to conduct and update annually a needs assessment of Head Start grantees in the State of Vermont in the areas of coordination, collaboration and alignment of services, curricula, assessments, and standards used in Head Start grantees, such as aligning the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* with the *Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS)*. The needs assessment report provides an overview of the VHSCO; describes Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont; outlines the needs assessment process; and presents the findings of the 2016-2017 VHSCO needs assessment web-survey of Head Start and Early Head Start program directors covering several OHS Priorities for the HSCOs: The report concludes by summarizing the findings. The findings informed the implementation of Year 5 of the VHSCO's Five-Year Strategic Plan (hereafter referred to as Strategic Plan 1.0) and the development of the VHSCO's baseline federal HSCO grant application and its Five-Year (2017-2022) Strategic Plan (hereafter referred to as Strategic Plan 1.0), and they described the VHSCO's plans to disseminate the report to strength collaboration with its partners.

The 2016-2017 need assessment web-survey revealed five sets of findings:

- 1) Head Start grantees have collaboration strengths and weaknesses with their state and community partners;
- 2) The VHSCO and its state and community partners achieved two outcomes in Strategic Plan 5.0:
 - a. CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start services that meet their needs and the needs of their families;
 - b. Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.
- 3) Head Start program directors shared their perspectives on two timely collaboration topics:
 - a. Benefits and challenges of Head Start-School-Based prekindergarten education partnerships and

- b. Top three professional development needs identified by each of seven Head Start program directors;
- 4) There are promising activities to improve Head Start-Reach Up collaboration;
- 5) The VHSCO's baseline federal HSCO grant application and Strategic Plan 1.0 considered the web-survey findings.

First, the VHSCO found higher proportions of Collaboration Strengths than Weaknesses in these arenas:

- School Transitions Goal Area and Priority:
 - Head Start – Prekindergarten Partnership Development Priority: 83 percent more
 - Head Start Partnerships with LEAs: 88 percent more
- CCECS Goal Area/Priority and Early Childhood Systems Priority: 25 percent more
- Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Welfare/Child Welfare Priority: 100 percent more.

Second, the web-survey data showed that the VHSCO, Head Start grantees, and their state and community partners achieved:

- CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start services that meet their needs and the needs of their families and
- ROP/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.

Third, the Head Start program directors provided their perspectives on the benefits and challenges of public school-based prekindergarten education partnerships and their top three professional development needs. Benefits of public school-based prekindergarten education partnerships included the cost effectiveness, the provision of high quality comprehensive services to Head Start-enrolled and non-Head Start-enrolled children, and easier access for parents with children already enrolled in public schools. On the other hand, Head Start directors shared challenges in forming or maintaining partnerships with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to deliver universal prekindergarten education in public school settings. The VHSCO categorized the Head Start directors' top professional development needs as: Trauma; Retaining/Recruiting Licensed Teachers; Challenging Behaviors; Mathematics; and Substance Abuse. By implementing its newly approved Strategic Plan 1.0, the VHSCO will work with its federal, state, and community partners to address these needs.

Fourth, the report supplied web-survey data about possible activities to improve Head Start-Reach Up collaboration regionally and statewide. Of eight activities asked of Head Start directors, the VHSCO categorized six as promising, one as neutral, and one as not promising.

Finally, the needs assessment web-survey findings and the policy priorities of the Child Development Division, Department for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services informed the implementation of VHSCO's Fifth-Year Work Plan and the drafting of the VHSCO Baseline Federal HSCO Grant Application and Strategic Plan 1.0. The Head Start directors provided their top priorities for the VHSCO's work over the next five years: Workforce, Alignment of Head Start with State Systems, Data Systems, Head Start and Children's Integrated Services (CIS), School Transitions, and Head Start-Reach Up Collaboration.

The VHSCO will share the results of this report publicly and with stakeholders. Through this process, the collaboration, coordination, and alignment of services, curricula, standards, and/or assessments between Head Start grantees and their partners will be strengthened for the benefit of young children and their families in Vermont.

Acknowledgements

The 2017 Vermont Head Start and Early Head Start Needs Assessment Report involved several individuals. The Vermont Head Start Collaboration Office thanks the Vermont Head Start Association members and the Child Development Division, Department for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services, State of Vermont for their commitment to and support of the annual needs assessment project and for posting the report online. We thank the Head Start program directors and their staff for completing the 2016-2017 web survey, the primary data collection tool. A complete list of Head Start and Early Head Start programs are included in Appendix A.



Overview of Vermont Head Start Collaboration Office

The Vermont Head Start Collaboration Office (VHSCO) is part of a network of state, territorial, and national offices. Each of the 50 States, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico has a Head Start-State Collaboration Office. The National Collaboration Offices are the Head Start State and National Collaboration Offices (HSSNCO), the American Indian/Alaskan Native Head Start Collaboration Office (AIANHSCO) and the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Collaboration Office (MSHSCO). Each of the State and national offices receive a federal Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) grant from the Office of Head Start (OHS), Administration for Children in Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For a five-year project period: September 30, 2012-September 29, 2017, OHS committed to the State of Vermont to award an annual HSSCO grant "to facilitate collaboration among Head Start agencies, including Early Head Start agencies, and entities that carry out activities designed to benefit low income children from birth to school entry, and their families,"¹

The VHSCO facilitates collaboration among Head Start agencies and State and local partners by

- Assisting in building early childhood systems;
- Providing access to comprehensive services and support for all low-income children;
- Encouraging widespread collaboration between Head Start and other appropriate programs, services, and initiatives;
- Augmenting Head Start's capacity to be a partner in state initiatives on behalf of children and their families; and
- Facilitating the involvement of Head Start in state policies, plans, processes, and decisions that affect target populations and other low-income families. (Office of Head Start, 2017a, see <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/head-start-collaboration-offices>).

The VHSCO works with the OHS in Washington, DC and the Regional OHS in Boston, Massachusetts.

Two sets of OHS Head Start State and National Collaboration Offices Frameworks/Priorities informed the content of the VHSCO's fifth-year work plan of Strategic Plan 5.0 during the 2016-2017 program year:

¹ Head Start Act Section 642B(a)(2)(A)

- OHS' 2011 Head Start State and National Collaboration Offices Framework which called upon the VHSCO to address four goal areas in its five-year strategic plan: 1) School Transitions, 2) Professional Development, 3) Child Care and Early Childhood Systems, and 4) Regional Office Priorities. The framework's four goals are reflected in the Strategic Plan 5.0.
- OHS' Head Start Collaboration Office Priorities 2015 (Office of Head Start, 2015a, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration/hssco-framework.html>). The six priorities include: 1) Partner with State child care systems emphasizing the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Initiatives, 2) Work with State efforts to collect data regarding early childhood programs and child outcomes, 3) Support the expansion and access of high quality, workforce, and career development weaknesses for staff, 4) Collaborate with State Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), 5) Work with State school systems to ensure continuity between Head Start and Kindergarten Entrance Assessment (KEA), and 6) Any additional regional priorities:
 - Welfare/Child Welfare and
 - Children with Disabilities.

The VHSCO's federally approved Year 5 workplan of Strategic Plan 5.0 retained the four goal areas and embedded content reflecting six new priorities. The federal Region I – Office of Head Start (OHS) approved the VHSCO's Strategic Plan 5.0 on August 26, 2016.

Under the Head Start Act, the Head Start State Collaboration Offices (HSCOs) are required to update annually, a statewide needs assessment. The VHSCO 2016-2017 needs assessment web-survey considered the four goal areas, the 2015 priorities, the progress made in addressing collaboration since 2012, and informed the development of the VHSCO's baseline HSCO grant application to the federal Office of Head Start, including the VHSCO's Strategic Plan 10. On September 1, 2017, the federal Region I – Office of Head Start (OHS) approved the VHSCO's baseline HSCO grant application and Strategic Plan 1.0.

Covering the 2016-2017 program year, this report identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the ability of Head Start grantees to collaborate, coordinate and align services and programming of State and local entities and to align curricula and assessments used by Head Start grantees with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Ages Birth to Five* and the *Birth through Grade 3 Vermont Early Learning Standards* (VELS). The needs assessment results tracked the progress made in addressing collaboration since 2012, updated the VHSCO about timely collaboration issues facing the VHSCO, Head Start grantees and their partners, yielded insights about the level of promise regarding collaboration activities between Reach Up and Head Start grantees,

and informed the development of the VHSCO's baseline/Year 1 (2017-2018) federal HSCO grant application and Strategic Plan 1.0.

Head Start and Early Head Start in Vermont

Introduction

The Head Start Program promotes the school readiness of children from low-income families, from three-year olds up to five-year-olds not age-eligible for kindergarten. School readiness supports growth in five domains:

- Language and literacy,
- Cognitive (e.g., math, science, etc.)
- Social and emotional functioning,
- Physical skills, and
- Approaches to learning.

To achieve this goal, Head Start provides a comprehensive range of education, child development, health, nutrition, and family support services to Head Start enrolled children and their families.

The Early Head Start Program provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants and toddlers and their families, and pregnant women and their families. The Early Head Start Program goals are:

- Providing safe and developmentally enriching caregiving which promotes the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of infants and toddlers, and prepares them for future growth and development;
- Supporting parents, both mothers and fathers, in their role as primary caregivers and teachers of their children, and families in meeting personal goals and achieving self-sufficiency across a wide variety of domains;
- Mobilizing communities to provide the resources and environment necessary to ensure a comprehensive, integrated array of services and support for families;
Ensuring the provision of high quality responsive services to family through the development of trained and caring staff (Office of Head Start, 2017b, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/early-head-start-programs>).

Launched nationally in 2015, the Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships Program is designed to bring together the best of Early Head Start and child care programs by layering Early Head Start, child care, and other funding streams to provide comprehensive and continuous services to low-income infants, toddlers, and their families. The EHS-CC Partnerships program enhances and supports early learning settings to provide full-day, full-year, seamless, and comprehensive services that meet the needs of low-income working families

and those in school; increase access to high-quality, full-day child care (including family child care); support the development of infants and toddlers through strong relationship-based experiences; and prepare them for the transition into Head Start and other preschool settings. (Office of Head Start, 2015b, https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/im/2015/resour_ime_003.html).

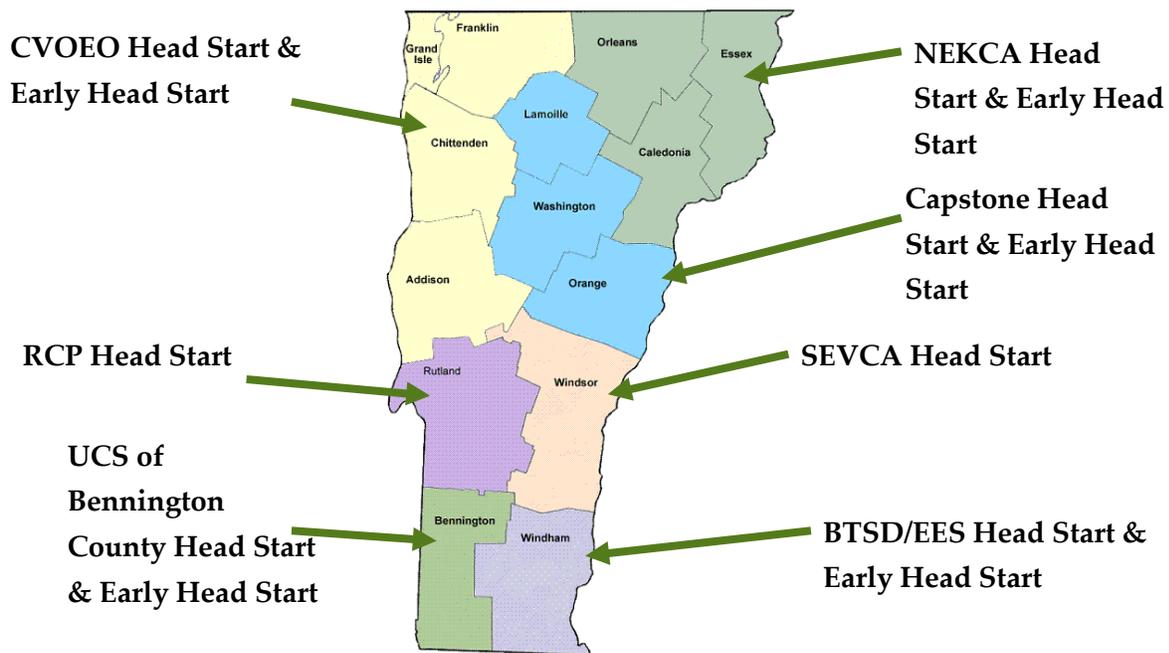
Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees

Head Start and Early Head Start grantees in Vermont are administered by community-based organizations. Seven community-based organizations receive federal grants from OHS to operate seven Head Start programs. Five of seven organizations receive federal grants from OHS to operate the four Early Head Start programs in Vermont. Three of four organizations receive federal grants from OHS to operate three Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs (see Figure 1). The types of organizations administering the programs are:

- Community Action Agencies: Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO), Capstone Community Action, and Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA) provide Head Start and Early Head Start services. CVOEO and Capstone Community Action provide Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership services. Southeast Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) provides Head Start services.
- Mental Health Agencies: Rutland Community Programs, Inc. (RCP) and United Children’s Service (UCS) of Bennington County provide Head Start and Early Head Start services.
- School District: Brattleboro Town School District/Early Education Services (BTSD/EES) provides Head Start and Early Head Start services.

Appendix A contains a list of the Head Start/Early Head Start directors and the counties served by Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Figure 1: Geographic Service Areas for Vermont's Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees



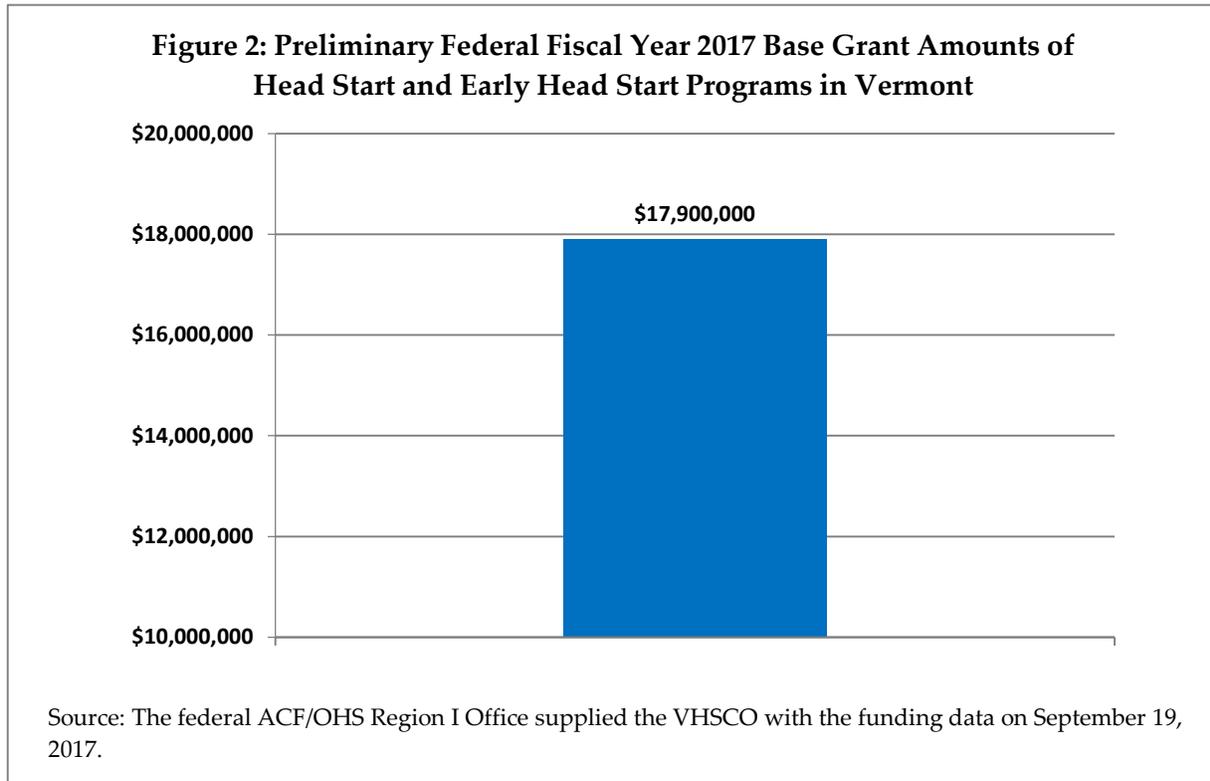
Oversight, Funding, Enrollment, and Program Options

OHS, located in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, oversees the operations of and provides the bulk of funding directly to Head Start programs. Under the Head Start Act, local public organizations, private non-profit agencies, and for-profit entities are eligible to receive federal grant funds and be a Head Start, Early Head Start, and EHS-CC Partnerships grantee/provider. States are also eligible to apply for and receive federal Early Head Start and EHS-CC Partnership grants.

A Head Start, Early Head Start, or EHS-CC Partnerships program receives a five-year federal grant for 80 percent of its funding from OHS and must raise a 20 percent match of their total program's funding from non-federal contributions. The federal government allows Head Start/Early Head Start programs to use private, local, municipal, and State funding sources as part of their 20 percent match.

Head Start, Early Head Start, and EHS-CC Partnerships programs in many States receive significant State funding from different sources to supplement their federal Head Start and Early Head Start grant funds. These State funding sources include: appropriations to fund state-funded Head Start and Early Head Start; state-funded pre-kindergarten dollars; and child care subsidy dollars.

The preliminary Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017 base grant amounts of Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont was \$17.9 million (see Figure 2). The ACF-funded enrollments of the seven Head Start programs, the five Early Head Start programs, and the three Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships programs were 991 slots, 366 slots, and 116 slots, respectively, for a total FFY 2017 ACF-funded enrollment of 1,473 slots.²



Based upon their respective community needs assessments and available annual funding, Head Start and Early Head Start grantees choose which program options to provide to meet the individual needs of young children and their families. The program options vary among the Head Start and Early Head Start grantees because individual grantees consider their community needs assessment data and choose program options which are best tailored to meet the needs of young children and families in their service areas. After the application, eligibility and enrollment processes are completed, families choose to enroll their children in available Head Start, Early Head Start, and EHS-CC Partnerships program options.

² The federal ACF/OHS Region I Office supplied the VHSCO with the funding and slots figures on September 19, 2017.

Head Start's Participation in Vermont's Regulated Early Childhood System

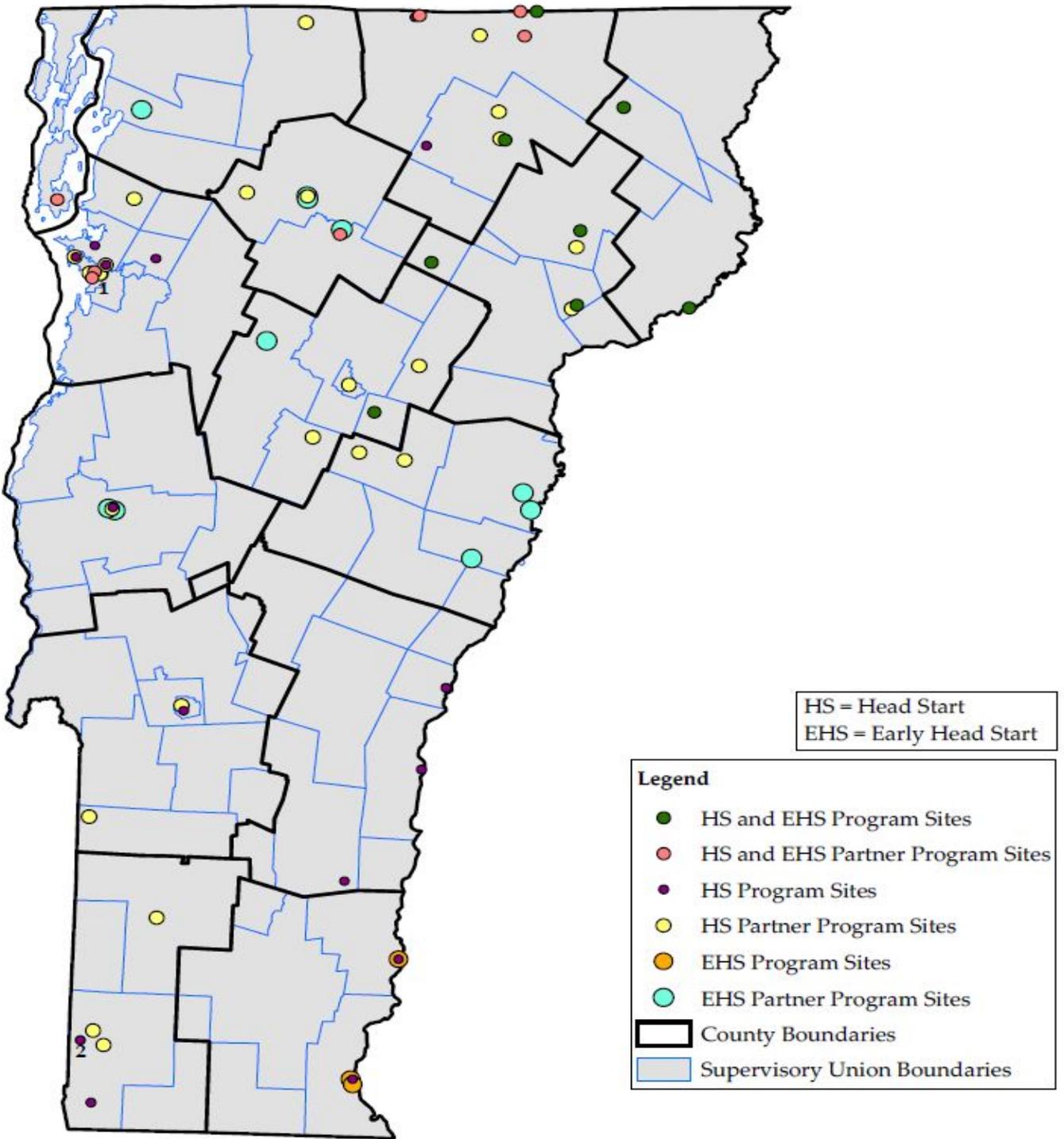
During the 2016-2017 program year, Head Start and Early Head Start programs at their 71 program and partner sites provided Head Start, Early Head Start, child care, prekindergarten education under Act 166, and/or Preschool Development Expansion Grant (PDEG) services (see Figure 3). All seven Head Start grantees have program sites participating in the STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS), and 89 percent of their grantee or partner sites depicted in the map are rated as having high-quality 4- or 5-star ratings.

During the 2016-2017 program year, Head Start grantees provided Head Start-enrolled and non-Head Start enrolled children with high quality preschool experiences through the federal Preschool Development Expansion Grant (PDEG) and State-funded prekindergarten education under Act 166. During Year 2 of Preschool Development Expansion Grant (PDEG), the Vermont Agency of Education awarded PDEG sub-grants to four Head Start grantees, and these Head Start grantees provided 107 PDEG-eligible children and their families with high-quality, full school day, full school year preschool programs (Vermont Agency of Education, 2017).

On July 1, 2016, the State of Vermont began statewide implementation of Act 166, its universal prekindergarten education statute, under which all three-, four-, and five-year-olds not already enrolled in kindergarten are entitled to 10 hours per week for 35 weeks of prekindergarten education. During the 2016-2017 school year, seven Head Start grantees partnered with 52 Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to provide universal prekindergarten education to 893 children in 62 classrooms at 38 Head Start-LEA prekindergarten education partnership sites.³ Of 893 children, 732 (82 percent) children were Head Start-enrolled and 161 (18 percent) children were non-Head Start enrolled.

³ The 38 sites consist of sites where the Head Start grantee is the licensee and where the public school is the licensee. One of seven Head Start grantees entered into one prekindergarten agreement with Rutland Central Supervisory Union for planning purposes only.

Figure 3: Head Start and Early Head Start Program and Partner Sites during the 2016-2017 School Year



1. There are three (3) HS Partner Program Sites in this general location that are not visible.
2. There are two (2) HS Program Sites in this location.

Needs Assessment Process

Introduction

The needs assessment process consisted of drafting the 2016-2017 web survey of Head Start grantees in consultation with the Head Start program directors, fielding the survey, and determining a methodology to analyze and describe the survey findings. This section of the report describes survey questionnaire's timing and topical content; types of survey questions; and methodology selected to analyze and patterns of collaboration from the survey findings. Head Start program directors completed the web-survey from April 3-20, 2017.

Timing and Topical Content of the Needs Assessment Survey

Using SurveyMonkey® software, the VHSCO emailed the 2016-2017 needs assessment web surveys on April 3, 2017 to the seven Head Start grantees. Between April 3 and 20, 2017, all seven Head Start program directors completed it. The VHSCO asked agencies that administered both Early Head Start and Head Start programs to complete one survey per program year.

The 2016-2017 web survey consisted of close-ended and open-ended questions addressing the four goals of the VHSCO's Strategic Plan 5.0:

- 1) School Transitions:
 - a. Head Start – Prekindergarten Partnership Development and
 - b. Partnerships with Local Educational Agencies
- 2) Professional Development
- 3) Child Care and Early Childhood Systems,
- 4) Regional Office Priorities
 - o Child Welfare/Welfare
 - o Services for Children with Disabilities

The 2016-2017 web survey contained five sets of questions. The survey responses helped the VHSCO monitor the progress of the VHSCO and its state partners during Year 5 of Strategic Plan 5.0 and informed the development of the VHSCO's baseline/Year 1 (2017-2018) federal HSCO grant application and Strategic Plan 1.0.

In its first set of questions, the VHSCO sought to learn about the *Extent of Involvement* of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees with State and local organizations and the *Degree of Difficulty* of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees engaging in a variety of activities in the School Transitions, Child Care and Early Childhood Systems, and ROPs on Child/Welfare goal areas. Most of these questions contained one of two scales to gauge the extent of collaboration between Head Start grantees and their partners. The two scales were:

- Five-point *Extent of Involvement* scale (Frey, Lohmeier, Lee and Tollefson, 2006, http://signetwork.org/content_page_assets/content_page_68/MeasuringCollaborationAmongGrantPartnersArticle.pdf) and
- Four-point *Degree of Difficulty* scale used in prior VHSCO needs assessment surveys.

Head Start directors were asked to rate their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with each partner as either:

- Networking - Aware of organization, loosely defined roles, little communication, all decisions are made independently,
- Cooperation- Provide information to each other, somewhat defined roles, formal communication, all decisions are made independently,
- Coordination - Share information and resources, defined roles, frequent communication, some shared decision making,
- Coalition – Share ideas, share resources, frequent and prioritized communication, all members have a vote in decision making, or
- Collaboration – Members belong to one system; frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust, and consensus is reached on all decisions.

Head Start directors were asked to rate their programs' *Degree of Difficulty* in engaging in a variety of activities with partners as either

- Extremely Difficult,
- Difficult,
- Somewhat Difficult, or
- Not at All Difficult.

The second set of web-survey questions concerned tracking the progress of the VHSCO and its partners in achieving two Expected Outcomes/Outcomes in the Strategic Plan 5.0:

- Child Care and Early Childhood Systems (CCECS) Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or HS/Early Head Start services that meet their needs and the needs of their families.
- Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.

The third set of questions asked by the VHSCO in the 2016-2017 web-survey were close- and open-ended questions on timely collaboration issues facing the VHSCO, Head Start grantees, and their partners in two HSSCO Priorities for HSSCOs:

- 1) School Transitions: Benefits and challenges of Head Start-LEA School-Based Prekindergarten Education Partnerships and
- 2) Professional Development: Top three professional development needs identified by Head Start program directors.

The fourth set of questions asked by the VHSCO were additional close- and open-ended questions to inform VHSCO improved collaboration between Head Start grantees and the Economic Services Division regarding coordination of Reach Up services.

In the fifth set, the Head Start program directors were each asked to list the top five priorities that the VHSCO and its partners should address in Strategic Plan 1.0. In an open-ended question, the directors had an opportunity to offer additional comments.

Methodology to Determine Collaboration Strengths and Collaboration Weaknesses

For the first set of findings in the report, the narrative was drafted and the survey responses were tallied and presented in the figures to highlight two patterns of collaboration:

- **Collaboration Strengths:** Patterns emerge when Head Start program directors have reported a high *Extent of Involvement* with service providers/organizations and/or a relatively low *Degree of Difficulty* in engaging in activities with partners.
 - High *Extent of Involvement* means at least four ($\leq 57\%$) of seven respondents selected Coordination, Coalition and/or Collaboration in the 2016-2017 program year survey.
 - Low *Degree of Difficulty* means four or more of possible seven responses selected were Somewhat Difficult and/or Not At All Difficult in the 2016-2017 program year survey.

- **Collaboration Weaknesses:** Patterns in which Head Start program directors have reported a relatively low *Extent of Involvement* with service providers/organizations and/or a relatively high *Degree of Difficulty* in engaging in activities with partners.
 - Low *Extent of Involvement* means four or more ($\leq 57\%$) of the seven respondents selected Networking, Cooperation, and/or Not Applicable in the 2016-2017 program year survey.
 - High *Degree of Difficulty* means four or more of the seven responses selected were Difficult, Extremely Difficult, and/or Not Applicable in the 2016-2017 program year survey.

In boxes of the Figures, Collaboration Strengths were highlighted in light green, and the Collaboration Weaknesses were highlighted in yellow.

Determining the Relative Amounts of Collaboration Strengths and Weaknesses for Each OHS Priority in Relevant Goal Areas in Strategic Plan 5.0

For each HSSCO Priority covered by this report, the VHSCO tabulated the numbers of Collaboration Strengths and Collaboration Needs from the *Extent of Involvement* and *Degree of Difficulty* questions and calculated corresponding percentages of Collaboration Weaknesses and Collaboration Strengths. This process enabled the VHSCO to determine the relative amounts of Collaboration Strengths and Collaboration Weaknesses for each HSSCO Priority. Using the data collected for the Early Childhood System Priority in the Child Care and Early Childhood Systems goal area as an example here, the VHSCO calculated that there were five Collaborations Strengths and three Collaboration Weaknesses for the Priority (see Figures 8 and 9) with corresponding percentages of 62.5 percent and 37.5 percent, respectively. By subtracting 62.5 percent from 37.5 percent, VHSCO determined that the Early Childhood System Priority has 25 percent more Collaboration Strengths than Collaboration Weaknesses.



Needs Assessment Survey Findings

Organization and Content of Findings

The 2016-2017 findings of the Head Start grantees are organized into five sets of findings corresponding to three sets of questions posed in the 2016-2017 web-survey. The first set of findings pertain to the set of questions in which the VHSCO asked Head Start directors to rate the *Extent of Involvement* of their Head Start/Early Head Start programs with service providers/organizations in the six HSSCO Priorities for HSSCOs and to rate the *Degree of Difficulty* of their Head Start/Early Head Start programs in engaging in activities in four of the OHS Priorities for HSCOs:

- 1) School Transitions Priorities:
 - Head Start – Prekindergarten Partnership Development and
 - Prekindergarten Education Partnerships with Local Educational Agencies
- 2) Professional Development Priority;
- 3) Child Care and Early Childhood Systems (CCECS) Priority;
- 4) Regional Office Priority: Welfare/Child Welfare

The second set of findings concerned progress of the VHSCO and its partners in achieving:

- Child Care and Early Childhood Systems (CCECS) Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or HS/Early Head Start services that meet their needs and the needs of their families.
- Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.

The third set of findings informed the VHSCO about timely collaboration issues facing the VHSCO, Head Start grantees, and their partners in two HSCO Priorities for HSCOs:

- 1) School Transitions: Benefits and challenges of Head Start-LEA School-Based Prekindergarten Education Partnerships and
- 2) Professional Development: Top three professional development needs identified by Head Start program directors.

The fourth set of findings informed the VHSCO about potential activities to improved collaboration between Reach Up programs and Head Start grantees throughout the State. The final set of findings summarize the top five priorities identified by Head Start program directors that the VHSCO and its partners should address in Strategic Plan 1.0.

First Set of Findings

For six HSCO Priorities, the VHSCO asked Head Start directors to rate the *Extent of Involvement* of their Head Start/Early Head Start programs with service providers/organizations and the *Degree of Difficulty* of their Head Start/Early Head Start programs in engaging in activities.

School Transitions: Prekindergarten Partnership Development

All Head Start grantees partner with school districts to provide universal prekindergarten education. In these partnerships, prekindergarten education services are delivered in Head Start settings where Head Start is the licensee and school-based settings where the public school is the licensee. The Head Start Act requires each Head Start grantee to have one or more Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with the appropriate local entities, such as a school, school district, Supervisory District, or Supervisory Union, responsible for managing publicly funded preschool programs in the Head Start service area. The MOU must provide for a review of each of 10 activities and plans to coordinate these activities, as appropriate, as described in Section 642(e)(5)(A)(i-ii)(I-X) of the Head Start Act. Figures 4 and 5 list the 10 activities plus an 11th activity about agreeing to shared school readiness goals and strategies based on the Vermont Head Start Association School Readiness Agreement. The survey data revealed that there were 83 percent more strengths than weaknesses associated with partnerships or MOUs between Head Start grantees and LEAs to provide prekindergarten (see Figures 3-4).

Strengths

When Head Start programs have partnership agreements with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to provide prekindergarten education, Head Start directors generally view their prekindergarten partnerships with LEAs as a strength. The Figure 4 shows a high *Extent of Involvement* between Head Start grantees and their LEA partners for the 2016-2017 program year. For the MOU coordinating activities 1-8, 10-11 during the 2016-2017 program year (see Figure 5), most Head Start directors rated their programs as having a low *Degree of Difficulty* engaging with their partners.

Figure 4: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees and LEAs to Provide Prekindergarten during the 2016-2017 Program Year

Program Year	2016-2017	
	Response Percent	Response Count
Answer Choices		
Network (awareness)	0.0%	0
Cooperation (somewhat defined roles, formal communication)	14.3%	1
Coordination (shared resources, frequent communication, some shared decision making)	42.3%	3
Coalition (shared ideas, frequent/prioritized communication, all members vote on decisions)	14.3%	1
Collaboration (belong to one system, mutual trust in communication, consensus on decisions)	14.3%	1
Other (please specify)	14.3%	1

Figure 5: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage with LEAs in Coordinating MOU Activities during 2016-2017 Program Year

Answer Choices	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult	Not Applicable
1. Educational activities, curricular objectives and instruction	0	0	2	5	0
2. Public Information dissemination and access to programs for families contacting Head Start or another preschool program	0	0	3	4	0
3. Selection priorities for eligible children to be served by programs	0	0	4	3	0
4. Service areas	0	0	0	7	0
5. Staff training, including opportunities for joint staff training on topics such as academic content standards, instructional methods, curricula, and social and emotional development	0	0	4	2	1
6. Joint/shared program technical assistance (e.g., on mutual needs, or to develop partnership agreements)	0	0	3	3	1
7. Provision of services to meet needs of working parents, as applicable	0	1	4	2	1
8. Communications and parent outreach for smooth transitions to kindergarten	0	0	2	5	0
9. Provision and use of facilities, transportation, etc.	2	2	1	2	0
10. Other elements mutually agreed to by the parties to the MOU	0	0	3	2	2
11. Agreeing to shared school readiness goals and strategies based on the Vermont Head Start Association School Readiness Agreement (e.g. physical development and health, approaches to learning, cognitive development, activity, social-emotional development, and literacy/language development)	0	0	2	3	0

Weaknesses

During 2016-2017 program year, a majority (four of seven) of Head Start directors rated their programs as having high *Degree of Difficulty* engaging with their LEA partners regarding Activity 9: the provision and use of facilities, transportation, etc... (see Figure 5).

School Transitions: Partnerships with Local Educational Agencies

Strong collaborations between Head Start grantees and LEAs are essential to make seamless transitions for children and their families as the children graduate from Head Start and enter kindergarten. Transitions are individualized and ultimately each child will continue to develop and gain ground at their own pace. Their families are included in the process and supported as well. All parents and their children get their needs met and access community resources, services and programs. The survey findings indicated that there were 88 percent more Strengths than Weaknesses regarding partnerships between Head Start grantees and LEAs regarding the transitions of children from Head Start to kindergarten.

Strengths

During the 2016-2017 program year, five of seven Head Start directors rated as low their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with LEAs regarding the transitions of children from Head Start to kindergarten (see Figure 6). Head Start directors were asked to rate the *Degree of Difficulty* of their programs to engage with LEAS on 15 school transitions activities in the 2016-2017 program year. Majorities of Head Start directors rated their *Degree of Difficulty* as low for 14 of 15 activities (see Figure 7). Their coordination of transportation with LEAs is the exception.

Figure 6: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees and LEAs regarding the Transitions of Children from Head Start to Kindergarten during the 2016-2017 Program Year

Program Years	2016-2017	
	Response Percent	Response Count
Answer Choices		
Network (awareness)	0.0%	0
Cooperation (somewhat defined roles, formal communication)	0.0%	0
Coordination (shared resources, frequent communication, some shared decision making)	71.4%	5
Coalition (shared ideas, frequent/prioritized communication, all members vote on decisions)	0.0%	0
Collaboration (belong to one system, mutual trust in communication, consensus on decisions)	14.3%	0

Figure 7: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage in School Transitions Activities during the 2016-2017 Program Year

Answer Options	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult
A. Coordinating with LEAs to implement systematic procedures for transferring Head Start program records to school	0	0	3	4
B. Ongoing communication with LEAs to facilitate coordination of programs (including teachers, social workers, McKinney-Vento liaisons, etc.)	0	0	5	2
C. Establishing and implementing comprehensive transition policies and procedures with LEAs	0	0	6	1
D. Linking LEA and Head Start services relating to language, numeracy and literacy	1	0	3	4
E. Aligning Head Start curricula and assessments with the new <i>Birth through Grade Three Vermont Early Learning Standards</i>	0	0	3	4
F. Partnering with LEAs and parents to assist individual children/families to transition to school, including review of portfolio/records	0	1	4	2
G. Coordinating transportation with LEAs	3	2	0	3
H. Coordinating shared use of facilities with LEAs	1	2	2	3
I. Coordinating with LEAs regarding other support services for children and families	0	1	3	3
J. Conducting joint outreach to parents and LEA to discuss needs of children entering kindergarten	0	2	4	1
K. Establishing policies and procedures that support children's transition to school that includes engagement with LEA	0	0	7	0
L. Helping parents of limited English proficient children understand instructional and other information and services provided by the receiving school.	0	0	4	3
M. Exchanging information with LEAs on roles, resources and regulations	0	1	2	4
N. Aligning curricula and assessment practices with LEAs	0	0	3	4
O. Organizing and participating in joint training, including transition-related training for school staff and Head Start staff	0	0	5	2

Weaknesses

An opportunity exists for Head Start grantees to improve the coordination of transportation with public schools coordinating transportation with LEAs because five of seven directors rated as high their programs' *Degree of Difficulty* on this activity in the 2016-2017 survey (see Figure 7).

Child Care and Early Childhood Systems (CCECS)

The Head Start programs participate in varying degrees with State, regional and local organizations and service providers on early childhood systems activities in Vermont. The VHSCO works to integrate Head Start programs into the State's early childhood system. Overall, the findings indicated that there were 25 percent more Strengths than Weaknesses in Early Childhood Systems Priority.

Strengths

During the 2016-2017 program year, all seven Head Start directors rated as high their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with BBF Regional Councils, one of four Early Childhood Systems organizations/entities (see Figure 8). Majorities of Head Start directors rated as low their programs' *Degree of Difficulty* with all four activities (see Figure 9).

Figure 8: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees with Early Childhood System Organizations/Entities during the 2016-2017 Program Year

Answer Options	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration	Do Not know
A. BBF State Advisory Council	3	2	1	1	0	0
B. BBF Regional Council(s)	0	0	2	3	2	0
C. State Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) – STARS	0	4	0	2	1	0
D. State efforts to unify early childhood data systems (e.g., child/family/ program assessment data)	1	3	2	0	1	0

Figure 9: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage in Early Childhood System Activities during the 2016-2017 Program Year

Answer Options	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult	Do Not know
Exchanging information from and providing input to the BBF State Advisory Council	0	1	0	4	2
Exchanging information from and providing input to BBF Regional Council(s)	0	0	0	7	0
Participating in STARS, the state QRIS	0	1	0	6	0
Participating in state efforts to unify early childhood data systems using Vermont Insights-Early Childhood Data Reporting System	0	1	2	3	1

Weaknesses

During the 2016-2017 program year, at least four of seven Head Start directors rated as low their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with three of four Early Childhood Systems organizations/entities: BBF SAC, STARS, and State's efforts to unify early childhood data systems (see organizations highlighted in yellow in Figure 9).



Welfare/Child Welfare

The VHSCO asked Head Start directors to rate the *Extent of Involvement* of their Head Start programs with welfare/child welfare service providers/organizations at this point in their Head Start/Early Head Start grantee service areas (see Figure 10). Then, the VHSCO asked the Head Start directors to rate the *Degree of Difficulty* of their Head Start programs to engage in welfare/child welfare service activities with the Economic Service Division (ESD)'s Reach Up Program and the Family Service Division (FSD)'s Child Protective Services Program (see Figure 11). Overall, findings indicated that there were 100 percent more Strengths than Weaknesses.

Strengths

A majority (four of seven) Head Start directors rated as high the *Extent of Involvement* of their Head Start programs with Economic Services Division Reach Up Program staff and Family Services Division Child Protective Services Foster Care staff during the 2016-2017 program year (see Figure 10). At least five of seven Head Start directors rated as low the *Degree of Difficulty* of their Head Start programs to engage in the following activities with the Economic Service Division (ESD)'s Reach Up Program and the Family Service Division (FSD)'s Child Protective Services Program during the 2016-2017 Program Year (see Figure 11):

- Coordination with ESD's Reach Up staff of Reach Up Program services for families based upon the family's goals,
- Collaboration on outreach and referrals with ESD's Reach Up Program staff,
- Coordination with FSD's Child Protective Services staff of Foster Care services for families based upon the family's goals, and
- Collaboration on outreach and referrals with FSD's Child Protective Services Foster Care staff.

Figure 10: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees and Economic Services Division and Family Services Division during the 2016-2017 Program Year

Answer Options	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration	Do Not Know
Economic Services Division (ESD)'s Reach Up Program staff	0	3	2	1	1	0
Family Services Division (FSD)'s Child Protective Services Foster Care staff	1	2	1	1	2	0

Figure 11: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage in Activities with the Economic Service Division (ESD)'s Reach Up Program and the Family Service Division (FSD)'s Child Protective Services Program during the 2016-2017 Program Year

Answer Options	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult	Do Not Know
Coordination with ESD's Reach Up staff of Reach Up Program services for families based upon the family's goals	0	0	3	4	0
Collaboration on outreach and referrals with ESD's Reach Up Program staff	0	1	2	4	0
Coordination with FSD's Child Protective Services staff of Foster Care services for families based upon the family's goals	0	2	2	3	0
Collaboration on outreach and referrals with FSD's Child Protective Services Foster Care staff	0	2	1	3	1

Weaknesses

While the methodology used to determine Collaboration Strengths and Collaboration Weaknesses indicates there are no weaknesses, three of seven Head Start program directors rated the *Extent of Involvement* between Head Start grantees and Economic Services Division and Family Services Division as either Network and/or Cooperation.

Second Set of Findings

In the web-survey, Head Start program directors were asked to rate the progress of the VHSCO and its partners in achieving two Expected Outcomes in Strategic Plan 5.0:

- CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or HS/Early Head Start services that meet their needs and the needs of their families.
- Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.

Perceptions on the Consistency of Referral Processes between Head Start/Early Head Start Programs and CIS to Ensure Children Gain Access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start Services

During the 2015-2016 program year, 21 percent (114 of 534) of infants and toddlers served by Early Head Start programs were children with disabilities (Office of Head Start, 2017c). Children with developmental delays receive early intervention services that Head Start/Early Head Start provides or arranges through referrals to its State and community partners. In Vermont, CIS determines whether a child from birth up to age three is eligible for Part C Early

Intervention (EI) services under IDEA. Early Head Start may refer an infant or toddler to the regional CIS program or the child may already be receiving EI services upon entering Early Head Start program.

To track the VHSCO’s progress to achieve Expected Outcome 3.4, the VHSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2016-2017 web-survey to consider the status of referral processes between their Head Start/Early Head Start program and CIS in their Head Start/Early Head Start program’s service area and to rate overall how consistent the referral processes are between their Head Start/Early Head Start program and CIS in their Head Start/Early Head Start program’s service area to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start services to meet the needs of the children and their families. A majority of Head Start program directors reported that consistency of referral processes is either consistent or very consistent (see the boxes highlighted in light blue in Figure 12).

Figure 12: Level of Consistency of Referral Processes between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and CIS to Ensure Children Gain Access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start Services to Meet the Needs of the Children and Families during the 2016-2017 Program Year

	Program Year
Answer Options	2016-2017
Very consistent	1
Consistent	3
Inconsistent	3
Very inconsistent	0

Level of Understanding about Services, Systems, and Standards across Partners Serving Preschool-Aged Children with Disabilities

During the 2015-2016 program year, 23 percent (275 of 1,177) of preschool-aged children served by Head Start programs were children with disabilities (Office of Head Start, 2017d). Within 45 days of a child’s enrollment in Head Start and in collaboration with the child’s parent, Head Start grantees must conduct a developmental screening of the child to identify concerns regarding a child’s development. If the Head Start program identifies a possible developmental concern for the child, the child is referred to a LEA that administers Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services. ECSE services are early childhood special education services and supports for eligible children provided in accordance with Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

To track their progress toward completing Expected Outcome 4.1, the VHSCO in the 2016-2017 web-survey asked Head Start directors, as a result of recent progress with relevant stakeholders toward updating the 2010 *Supporting Children with Disabilities and Their Families: An Interagency Agreement Among Early Care, Health, and Education Programs and Agencies in Vermont*, to indicate whether the following statement is True or False: "There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners." A majority of (five of seven) Head Start directors rated as "True" that there is a greater understanding about services, systems, and standards across partners (see the boxes highlighted in light blue in Figure 13).

Figure 13: Understanding about Services, Systems, and Standards across Partners Serving Preschool-Aged Children with Disabilities during the 2016-2017 Program Year

Answer Options	Response Count
True	5
False	2

Third Set of Findings

The third set of findings pertained to timely collaboration issues facing the VHSCO, Head Start grantees, and their partners in two HSCO Priorities:

- 1) School Transitions: Benefits and challenges of Head Start-LEA School-Based Prekindergarten Education Partnerships, and
- 2) Professional Development: Head Start directors listed each of their top three professional development needs.

Benefits and Challenges of Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Education Partnerships during the 2016-2017 Program Year

Head Start-School-based Prekindergarten Education partnerships are those in which the public school is the licensee and the Head Start program partners with the public school or the Head Start grantee is the licensee and the public school partners with the Head Start grantee at its sites. When parents choose to send their children to prekindergarten education programs provided in tandem with Head Start in school-based settings, the public schools and Head Start leverage and optimize federal, state and local resources to assure equity, access and benefits for young, vulnerable children from low-income families. Leveraging and optimizing funding streams enables programs to expand services to unserved children, provide prekindergarten education in a socioeconomically diverse setting, add additional hours of service, enhance systems and services consistent with federal Head Start quality standards, and/or provide wrap-around, comprehensive child and family development services.

Benefits

In completing the 2016-2017 survey, Head Start program directors listed benefits of Head Start-public-school-based partnerships delivering prekindergarten education in a school-based setting. This is a list of all the benefits identified by the Head Start directors:

- Ensures health and safety monitoring and oversight;
- Links parents to public schools is cost effective and is easier for parents with children already in school to access;
- Presence of Head Start provides increased access to comprehensive services for families at these partnership locations because the entire classroom (Head Start and non-Head Start-enrolled children) receives benefits from Head Start contracted mental health observations and consultations;
- Opens Head Start staff up to a larger professional learning community;
- Head Start-school-based partnerships are aligned in terms of preparing children for elementary school;
- Head Start provides support that school-based programs need for family engagement;
- Increases opportunities for children and families to be better integrated in public schools;
- Improves transition to kindergarten procedures, better prepares children for Kindergarten, and better prepares kindergarten teachers for preschoolers.
- Integrated classrooms reduce high levels of children with challenging behaviors (HS);
- Funding per child helps support quality initiatives in the classroom-Networking support and resources -Educational support team meetings as needed -Transition to kindergarten activities and support,
- Public school can receive a licensed teacher at no cost and furnishings and consumables at split cost,
- Training opportunities at no cost and retain Act 166 funds.
- Families - Individualized education and wrap around family support services. Become familiar with the school building.
- Head Start - Facility at no cost, teaching assistant at no cost, furnishings and consumables at split cost.

Challenges

Meanwhile, Head Start directors offered presented the challenges of their respective seven Head Start grantees partnering with a LEA to deliver prekindergarten education in a public school-based setting. This list represents all the benefits provided by the Head Start directors:

- Assuring that key stakeholders (superintendents, other school administrators, school boards and others) understand and value Head Start services for low-income children and families;
- Changes year to year in enrollment in the primary grades, affect the ability for the schools to provide space in pre-k programs;
- Smaller, rural areas have fewer eligible children to sustain a caseload based on residency;
- Changes in leadership affect partnerships;
- Difficult when transportation is not available to all children
- Competing for children in some areas;
- Parity with salaries when you mix Head Start and public school teachers.
- Public school understanding of early childhood best practices;
- Attendance policy is the same as K-12 and funding is cut to the program when children have exceeded absences and/or the LEA Director has suggested we terminate children from pre-K contract when exceeded absences, also one child that a one-month visitation.
- Cumbersome registration packet (12 pages) -Children not accepted until all documents- packet and proofs (2) and birth certificates received -Landlord statements needed and must be notarized;
- Having like cultures of safety, family service, etc;
- Enrollment can be a struggle when classrooms aren't mirrored in SU based pre-K classroom;
- The Pre-K coordinators are not all functioning on the same understanding or abilities, so this can be very challenging at times; and
- We have one classroom that is located in a high school. Now, the public school charges us rent for this space, so there are not many benefits to this arrangement. We are looking to setup our classroom in our own space.

Top Three Professional Development Needs Identified in the 2016-2017 Program Year

The VHSCO asked Head Start directors in its 2016-2017 web-survey to list their top three professional development needs. The Head Start program directors provided their top three professional development needs, and the VHSCO categorized their 18 responses into these clusters of professional development needs: Trauma; Retaining/Recruiting Licensed Teachers; Challenging Behaviors; Mathematics; Substance Abuse; and Other.

Trauma (3):

- Trauma informed practice
- Dealing with trauma
- Impact of trauma on young children

Retaining/Recruiting Licensed Teachers (3):

- Having licensed teachers/not provisionally licensed
- Retaining fully licensed teachers
- Helping teachers maintain licensure (PD opportunities)

Challenging Behaviors (3):

- Social-Emotional/Challenging Behavior Strategies for teachers and families
- Working with developmentally challenged parents
- Challenging Behaviors

Mathematics (2):

- Mathematics in Early Childhood
- Mathematics domain

Substance Abuse (2):

- Working with families with substance abuse issues
- Understanding the effects on children of parental opiate addiction

Other (5):

- Using data to improve outcomes
- Fidelity to research-based curriculum
- Coaching and TPOT training
- Active supervision of children
- Phonological awareness

Fourth Set of Findings

The fourth set of findings inform possible VHSCO collaboration activities between Reach Up and Head Start grantees throughout the State and the development of a Collaboration Protocol between the Vermont Head Start Association and the Vermont Department for Children and Families during the Fifth Year of Strategic Plan 5.0 and/or the First Year of Strategic Plan 1.0.

The VHSCO asked the Head Start program directors to rate the experiences of their Head Start programs partnering with Reach Up Regional Offices in eight different collaboration activities.

The questions mirror those posed during the winter 2017 by Reach Up Supervisors in Agency of

Human Services (AHS) District Offices about the extent of their collaboration with Head Start grantees in AHS Districts.

Based upon the distribution of the survey responses for each question, the VHSCO categorized ratings of the eight activities according to three levels of promise that all seven Head Start grantees would be able to jointly engage in the activities with all AHS District Offices:

- Promising
- Neutral
- Not as Promising

Promising

Five Head Start-Reach Up activities are promising (see Figures 13-18). Hundred percent of Head Start program directors reported that either they:

- Worked jointly to create referral processes between Reach Up and Head Start programs or
- Jointly created such processes once/or a few times with success, but could do more (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Proportion of Head Start Grantees Reporting That They Have Worked to Jointly Establish Referral Processes between Reach Up and Head Start Programs (Including Early Head Start Programs, Where Available)

Answer Options	
We could do this on a regular basis and could share information with other Head Start grantees to help them be successful.	57%
We did this once/a few times with success, but could do more.	43%
We have never been able to get this off the ground.	0%

Eighty-six percent of Head Start program directors reported that they could develop regularly cross-training opportunities with Reach Up and Head Start staff to educate each other about program language, goals, objectives, policies, and available services and shared the information with Head Start grantees to assist them to be successful or they have developed these cross-training opportunities at least once with success and could do more. Meanwhile, 14 percent of Head Start program directors indicated that they have never been able to get this activity off the ground (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Proportion of Head Start Grantees Reporting That They Have Developed Opportunities for Cross-Training with Reach Up and Head Start Staff to Educate Each Other about Program Language, Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Available Services

Answer Options	
We could do this on a regular basis and could share information with other Head Start grantees to help them be successful.	14%
We did this once/a few times with success, but could do more.	72%
We have never been able to get this off the ground.	14%

Eighty-six percent of Head Start program directors reported that their Head Start programs have at least once built upon and aligned family engagement, parent involvement, and case planning goals with Reach Up programs. Meanwhile, 14 percent of directors indicated that they have never been able to get this off the ground. (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Proportion of Head Start Grantees Reporting That They Are Building Upon and Aligning Family Engagement, Parent Involvement, and Case Planning Goals with Reach Up

Answer Options	
We could do this on a regular basis and could share information with other Head Start grantees to help them be successful.	43%
We did this once/a few times with success, but could do more.	43%
We have never been able to get this off the ground.	14%

Seventy-one percent of Head Start program directors reported that their Head Start programs have one or more times developed strategies to communicate to parents about the benefits of high quality care, education, and the comprehensive services available through Reach Up. Meanwhile, 29 percent of directors indicated that they have never been able to get this off the ground. (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Proportion of Head Start Grantees Reporting That They Have Developed Strategies to Communicate to Parents about the Benefits of High Quality Care, Education, and The Comprehensive Services Available through Reach Up

Answer Options	
We could do this on a regular basis and could share information with other Head Start grantees to help them be successful.	42%
We did this once/a few times with success, but could do more.	29%
We have never been able to get this off the ground.	29%

Seventy-one percent of Head Start program directors reported that their Head Start programs have at least once coordinated home visits (when appropriate) so families may benefit from

coordinated services and supports. Meanwhile, 29 percent of directors indicated that they have never been able to get coordinated home visits, when appropriate, off the ground. (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Proportion of Head Start Grantees Reporting That They Have Coordinated Home Visits (When Appropriate) So That Families May Benefit from Coordinated Services and Supports

Answer Options	
We could do this on a regular basis and could share information with other Head Start grantees to help them be successful.	42%
We did this once/a few times with success, but could do more.	29%
We have never been able to get this off the ground.	29%

Seventy-one percent of Head Start program directors reported that their Head Start programs have at least once assessed opportunities for further collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Human Services' efforts, including Children's Integrated Services for children prenatal to age six. Meanwhile, 29 percent of directors indicated that they have never been able to get this activity off the ground. (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: Proportion of Head Start Grantees Reporting That They Have Assessed Opportunities for Further Collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Human Services' Efforts (Including Children's Integrated Services for Children Prenatal to Age Six)

Answer Options	
We could do this on a regular basis and could share information with other Head Start grantees to help them be successful.	42%
We did this once/a few times with success, but could do more.	29%
We have never been able to get this off the ground.	29%

Neutral

The VHSCO classifies as neutral one Head Start-Reach Up activity (see Figure 20). Thirty percent of Head Start program directors reported that their Head Start staff could regularly hold joint case planning meetings with regional Reach Up staff, in accordance with local protocols, to share family objectives and goals and to discuss the progress of families who are receiving services from both Reach Up and Head Start programs. Forty-one percent of Head Start program directors reported that their Head Start staff have been able to hold joint case planning meetings with Reach Up staff at least once with success and could do more. Twenty-nine percent of directors indicated that their Head Start programs have never been able to get this activity off the ground (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Proportion of Head Start Grantees Reporting That They Have Held Joint Case Planning Meetings (in Accordance with Local Protocols) to Share Family Objectives and Goals and to Discuss the Progress of Families Who Are Receiving Services from Both Reach Up and Head Start

Answer Options	
We could do this on a regular basis and could share information with other Head Start grantees to help them be successful.	30%
We did this once/a few times with success, but could do more.	41%
We have never been able to get this off the ground.	29%

Not as Promising

The VHSCO classified one Head Start-Reach Up activity as not promising. Fifty-seven percent of Head Start program directors reported that their Head Start programs have never been able to develop with Reach Up staff joint trainings on topics of mutual interest. On the other hand, 43 percent of Head Start program directors shared that the Head Start programs either:

- Could do this on a regular basis and could share information with other Head Start grantees to help them be successful or
- Did this activity at least once with success and could do more (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Proportion of Head Start Grantees Reporting That They Have Developed with Reach Up Staff Joint Trainings on Topics of Mutual Interest

Answer Options	
We could do this on a regular basis and could share information with other Head Start grantees to help them be successful.	29%
We did this once/a few times with success, but could do more.	14%
We have never been able to get this off the ground.	57%

Fifth Set of Findings

The Head Start program directors were each asked to list the top five priorities that the VHSCO and its partners should address in Strategic Plan 1.0. Their categorized responses were:

- *Workforce (6)*:
 - Workforce Development: Early Head Start credentialing, Family Service credentialing, recruitment, retention, coordination with higher education to ensure degree programs /curriculum include Head Start/Early Head Start qualification requirements
 - Infant/Toddler Credential
 - Workforce challenges
 - Move the state forward to assist with higher salaries for ECE employees

- Increase the number of qualified early childhood professionals
- Increase the number of articulation agreements for degrees in ECE in VT
- *Alignment of Head Start w/State Systems (4):*
 - Aligning the new performance standards with the state systems
 - Align Child Care Financial Assistance Program Policies with Head Start/Early Head Start requirements
 - aligning the professional development system with new Head Start requirements
 - Background Checks and Alignment with Head Start Requirements
- *Data Systems (3):*
 - Data systems
 - Longitudinal data tracking of Head Start children in the k-12 school system
 - Data: continued improvement on VT Insights to better inform community assessment (including disabilities info, languages spoken)
- *Head Start and Children's Integrated Services (3):*
 - Continue to improve collaboration with Head Start and Children's Integrated Services
 - Strengthen referral process between Children's Integrated Services and Head Start
 - Collaborate with VHSA directors to clarify gaps in services for children and identify if Children's Integrated Services can fill these gaps.
- *School Transitions (3):*
 - Transition system
 - Statewide K-12 Transition Summit rebooted
 - Advocate & Support Annual Transition Planning
- *Head Start-Reach Up (2):*
 - Aligning reach up and Head Start
 - Better Coordination with Reach Up and Other State Services for parents
- *Other (6):*
 - Pre-K Coordination
 - Help providers to understand Parts B and C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
 - Transportation Services
 - Fatherhood Initiative
 - Continue to support the work and priorities of VHSA
 - Partnering with network providers to increase access to high-quality programs.

Conclusion

Five Sets of Findings

The five sets of findings from the 2016-2017 need assessment web-survey revealed:

- 6) Head Start grantees have collaboration strengths and weaknesses with their state, community partners;
- 7) The VHSCO and its state and community partners achieved two outcomes in Strategic Plan 5.0:
 - a. CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start services that meet their needs and the needs of their families;
 - b. ROP/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.
- 8) Head Start program directors shared their perspectives on two timely collaboration topics:
 - a. Benefits and challenges of Head Start-School-Based prekindergarten education partnerships and
 - b. Top three professional development needs identified by each of seven Head Start program directors;
- 9) There are promising activities to improve Head Start-Reach Up collaboration;
- 10) The VHSCO's baseline federal HSCO grant application and Strategic Plan 1.0 considered the web-survey findings.

Collaboration Strengths and Weaknesses

From analyzing the first set of data-web survey questions with *Extent of Involvement* and *Degree of Difficulty* scales, the VHSCO found that all Goal Areas and Priorities with these questions had higher proportions of strengths than weaknesses:

- School Transitions Goal Area and Priority:
 - Head Start – Prekindergarten Partnership Development Priority: 83 percent more
 - Head Start Partnerships with LEAs: 88 percent more
- CCECS Goal Area/Priority and Early Childhood Systems Priority: 25 percent more
- ROP/Welfare/Child Welfare Priority: 100 percent more.

Progress toward Achieving Outcomes in Strategic Plan 5.0

The second set of findings revealed that Head Start grantees and their state and community partners achieved:

- CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start services that meet their needs and the needs of their families;
- ROP/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.

Timely Collaboration Issues

The third set of findings concern two timely collaboration issues: Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Partnerships and top professional development needs of Head Start grantees.

Benefits and Challenges of Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Partnerships

Head Start directors described several benefits of public school-based prekindergarten education partnerships, including the cost effectiveness, the provision of high quality comprehensive services to Head Start-enrolled and non-Head Start-enrolled children, and easier access for parents with children already enrolled in public schools. On the other hand, Head Start directors shared challenges in forming or maintaining partnerships with LEAs to deliver universal prekindergarten education in public school settings including: key stakeholders understanding the value of the partnerships, variation in teacher compensation among Head Start grantees and public schools, small economies of scale in rural areas, differing philosophies of education, teaching styles, and attendance policies, and variation in local partnership requirements. The VHSCO will continue to work with CDD/DCF, AOE, school districts, and Head Start grantees to highlight the benefits and address the challenges of Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Partnerships.

Top Professional Development Needs of Head Start Grantees

Based upon the 18 responses of the seven Head Start directors, the VHSCO categorized their responses into these clusters of professional development needs: Trauma; Retaining/Recruiting Licensed Teachers; Challenging Behaviors; Mathematics; Substance Abuse; and Other. Trauma, Retaining/Recruiting Licensed Teachers, and Challenging Behaviors tied for having the highest number of needs per category. By implementing its newly approved Strategic Plan 1.0, the VHSCO will work with its federal, state, and community partners to address these needs.

Head Start-Reach Up Collaboration

The fourth set web-survey findings dealt with possible activities to improve Head Start-Reach Up collaboration regionally and statewide. Of eight activities, the VHSCO categorized six as promising, one as neutral, and one as not promising.

VHSA Priorities for the VHSCO Baseline Federal HSCO Grant Application and Its Strategic Plan 1.0

The VHSCO categorized the web survey responses of the seven Head Start program directors as follows from highest to lowest number of responses: Head Start Workforce, alignment of Head Start with State systems, data systems, Head Start and CIS, school transitions, Head Start-Reach Up; and Other Issues. By implementing its newly approved Strategic Plan 1.0, the VHSCO will work with its federal, state, and community partners to address these needs.

VHSCO's Baseline Federal HSCO Grant Application and Its Strategic Plan 1.0

The VHSCO used the fifth set of findings and analyses of the data gathered from the 2016-2017 needs assessment surveys to draft its Baseline Federal HSCO Grant Application and Strategic Plan 1.0. In drafting its work plan, the VHSCO considered additional factors including:

- Policy priorities of the Child Development Division, Department for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services and
- Input from the Vermont Head Start Association.

Dissemination of Report to Strengthen Collaboration

The VHSCO will share the results of this report publicly particularly with stakeholders, including Vermont Head Start Association; CDD, DCF, AHS; AOE; and the BBF State Advisory Council, Inc. Through this process, the collaboration, coordination, and alignment of services, curricula, standards, and/or assessments between Head Start grantees and their partners will be strengthened for the benefit of young children and their families in Vermont.

Appendix A

Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

Paul Behrman, Director
Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) Head Start and Early Head Start
431 Pine Street
Burlington, VT 05401
802-651-4180
Counties Served: Addison, Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle

Lori Canfield, Director
Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) Head Start
107 Park Street, Suite 1
Springfield, VT 05156
802-885-6669
County Served: Windsor

Debra Gass, Executive Director
Brattleboro Town School District-Early Education Services (BTSD-EES) Head Start and Early Head Start
130 Birge St.
Brattleboro, VT 05301
802-254-3742
County Served: Windham

Marie Gilmond, Director
Rutland Community Programs, Inc. (Rutland County Head Start)
78 Meadow Street, P.O. Box 222
Rutland, VT 05702
802-665-2620
County Served: Rutland

Katie Watts, Interim Director
Northeast Kingdom Community Action, Inc. (NEKCA) Head Start and Early Head Start
191 High Street
Barton, VT 05822
802-525-3362
Counties Served: Essex, Orleans, Caledonia

Christy Swenson-Robertson, Director
Capstone Community Action Head Start and Early Head Start
20 Gable Place
Barre, VT 05641
802-479-1053
Counties Served: Lamoille, Orange, Washington

Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, Director
United Children's Service of Bennington County Head Start and Early Head Start
P.O. Box 588
Bennington, VT 05201
802-442-3686
County Served: Bennington

Appendix B

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