



BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES RESOURCES DISCUSSION NOTES - March 28, 2016

NOTE: These notes only capture the portion of the March 28, 2016 BBF SAC meeting devoted to discussing FY17 available resources for BBF. This includes a brief overview of Gerry Cobb's presentation to the BBF SAC as well as ideas to increase revenue and reduce expenses.

ATTENDANCE (Note: If you do not see your name or if there are errors, please email dmclaughlin@buildingbrightfutures.org – thanks!)

BBF State Advisory Council Members

Ben Allen - Director, Head Start; **Charlie Biss** Director, Children's Mental Health, Agency of Human Services; **Julie Cadwallader-Staub** – Grant Director, ELC-RTT Grant, Governor's Office; **Kim Coe** – Director of Residential and Community Treatment Services, Lund Center and PCC Network representative; **Eddie Gale** – Program Director, A. D. Henderson Fund; **Breana Holmes** – Director, Maternal Child Health, VT Department of Health; **Christine Johnson** – Director of Program and Planning Integration, Agency of Human Services; **Kim Keiser** – VT Director, Turrell Fund; **Reeva Murphy** – Deputy Commissioner, CDD, Agency of Human Services; **Betsy Rathbun-Gunn** – Early Childhood Services Division Director, United Counseling Services; **Melissa Riegel-Garrett (for Rebecca Holcomb)** – Pre-K Coordinator, Agency of Education; **Aly Richards-Pepper** – CEO/President, The Permanent Fund, **Stacey Weinberger** – VT Board of Education representative, **David Young** – Superintendent, South Burlington School District.

BBF Regional Council Members

Linda January and **Barbara Saunders** (Addison), and **Michelle Maitri-Mudita** (Orleans/Northern Essex)

Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan Committee Leadership

Amy Bolger – [Insert Committee], **Ann Dillenbeck** – Co-Chair, Data and Evaluation Committee, **Mark Sustic** [Insert Committee].

BBF Staff

Steve Ames – Lamoille Valley Regional Coordinator; **Dana Anderson** - Addison Regional Coordinator; **Peg Bolgioni** – Rutland Regional Coordinator, **Martha Braithwaite** – Orleans/Northern Essex Regional Coordinator; **Sarah Buxton** – Northern Windsor/Orange Regional Coordinator; **Karen Conner** – Communications Manager; **Amy Johnson** – Franklin/Grand Isle Regional Coordinator, **Molly Lambert** – Interim Executive Director; **Debra McLaughlin** – Regions Manager; **Kathleen Paterson** – Co-Director, VT Insights; **Dawn Powers** – Caledonia/Southern Essex Regional Coordinator; **Becky Raymond** – Central Vermont Regional Coordinator; **Traci Sawyers** – Project LAUNCH Policy Expert; **Robin Stromgren** – Bennington Regional Coordinator, and **Beth Truzansky** – Chittenden Regional Coordinator.

Guests

Hank Lambert – Lambert Mediation; **Becky Gonyea** – Executive Director of VB5, **Emily Marshia**, Deputy Director of VB5, **Robyn Freedner-Maguire** – Campaign Director, LGK, **Matt Levin** – Executive Director, VT Early Childhood Alliance, **Julianne Nickerson** – Director, Promise Communities Initiative, CDD, Agency of Human Services; and **Carolyn Wesley** – Grant Manager, ELC-RTT.

FRAMING THE RESOURCES AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

Molly Lambert, BBF's Interim Executive Director, framed this part of the meeting by thanking attendees for their contributions to the early childhood field and their support of BBF. She reminded meeting participants of the three part process to envision BBF's successful future. She framed this conversation as Part #2 of a three part conversation. Part #1, was all about ideas, questions, and functions. That discussion was held on March 14, 2016. (Meeting notes are available upon request.) Today's discussion or Part #2 will be about resources and resource development. Part #3 will take place on May 23rd and will integrate Parts 1 and 2, resulting in a plan and budget for the next 18 months. **Hank Lambert**, of Lambert Mediation was once again on hand to facilitate the discussion after the numbers were presented. **H. Lambert** has a Masters in Political Science from George Washington University and a Certificate in Mediation from Woodbury College.

Overview of Local/State Early Childhood Initiatives - Presentation by Gerry Cobb, BUILD Initiative

Meeting participants heard from [Gerry Cobb](#), the State Services Director for the [BUILD Initiative](#). She provided an overview of the research BUILD conducted in 12 states, including Vermont, to better understand their local/state early childhood system-building efforts. She often refers to Vermont as a national model because it does have a state/regional infrastructure to support this work. From her perspective, the states that have such a model, are the most successful. To review her entire PowerPoint presentation, click [here](#).

After Cobb's presentation, a number of questions were posed as follows:

- Q. Aly Richards** – Since the range of state early childhood budgets profiled vary widely from \$1M to \$450M, what are the different roles between convener and provider of direct services?
- A. Gerry Cobb** – It depends on the level of direct services dollars available. Some engage in the direct services delivery due to the size of the budget. Others act as grant makers as the communities may have little or no capacity to act in this role themselves. But the goal is to help build the capacity of local/regional communities to act. Turf can also be a problem so decisions are made regarding which entity is the most neutral convener when politics are considered.
- Q. Aly Richards** – What are the pros/cons of the different structures highlighted in Cobb's presentation?
- A. Gerry Cobb** – Each state does this differently and largely based on what can be done politically. Personally she likes the public/private approach. Arizona has done this both at the state and local levels where each region created local public/private non-profits where they can more easily raise money.

Q. Aly Richards – What is the vision or mechanism these states have used to tell a state-wide story?

A. Gerry Cobb – Usually this is done through a common statewide process that does that planning to secure buy-in. Every state does this differently to enhance the vision at the local and regional levels. Buy-in is very important as sometimes the obvious answer is not always the right answer. It is not always automatic. She has found that states that do this both at the state/local/regional levels have been most effective.

Q. Julie Cadwallader-Staub – She is aware that Washington State has been working on sustainability as part of their ELC-RTT grant. Can you share what is happening there and other examples from states engaged in this transition from ELC-RTT funds to other sources of funding?

A. Gerry Cobb – Washington State got legislation passed which built in money for local systems building work, in addition to other early childhood system components. For example, \$100M will go annually into this effort. Some of the other ELC-RTT states are doing a version of this. For example, North Carolina has resources to implement local strategies to increase family engagement and support since it already has resources for local systems building efforts. Pennsylvania is starting to work on this now. Cobb is intrigued by the Iowa model as it is not funded by ELC. They used a ballot initiative to build public engagement and support. This helped them secure the necessary resources to do this work. Iowa has a great State Advisory Council, like Vermont, where there is a lot of buy-in. Local legislators are well-informed about this work too.

Q. Reeva Murphy – What are the feedback loops used in other states? What is working well?

A. Gerry Cobb – Washington State decided to have a representative from each of their Regional Councils sit on their State Council.

NOTE: At this point in the meeting, LifeSize failed. Attempts to get Gerry Cobb back on-line were unsuccessful. Cobb offered to answer any additional questions from the group, via email. Members were asked to jot down their questions on Post-It notes, which are listed below:

1. **Eddie Gale** – It looks like all the other states are big enough to have county governments. How does the scale of Vermont's local councils (population served 25,000-40,000) compare with the other states? What are the relevant comparisons?
2. Unknown – How are State Advisory Councils in other states working to influence the decision-making of state agencies?
3. Unknown – Is any state keeping track of child/family outcomes related to these systems level adjustments?
4. Unknown – Is there technical assistance available state to local? Any examples of local to state technical assistance?
5. Unknown – What is the impact of a positive or negative political climate/support at the state level? Is energy/advocacy affected by political change in the legislature and/or administration?

Presentation of BBF Finances/Small Group Work on Revenue Generation and Expense Cutting Ideas

Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, with **Molly Lambert**, provided an overview of the [available resources](#) for BBF for the period of July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017 as well as July 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017. This time frame corresponds with the ELC-RTT grant resources, which end on December 31, 2017 unless a no cost extension can be granted for a fifth year.

H. Lambert broke up meeting participants into smaller groups to answer this question: **“BBF is the backbone organization that supports early childhood systems at the state and regional levels. What specific recommendations would you make or actions would you take to build the resources and structure of BBF to ensure success in this critical role?”** The groups were a mix of Council Members, Staff, Regional Council Members and partners. There was a group of people who were participating on LifeSize and they worked remotely as a separate group. **H. Lambert** provided the ground rules for the small group discussions:

- **All ideas are good ideas**
- **Focus on ideas that could generate revenue**
- **Focus on ideas that could cut expenses**

Key ideas were captured on Post-It notes, which were posted on the wall for review by the entire group. The ideas are organized in the four categories listed below and presented verbatim. Minor edits were made, when necessary, to clarify the purpose and meaning of the ideas.

- 1) Generating Revenue Ideas
- 2) Reducing Expenses Ideas
- 3) Clarifying Role of BBF State Advisory Council in This Process
- 4) Researching and Planning for BBF’s Sustainability

Generating Revenue Ideas

- 1) Identify different funding models to financially support BBF’s “core services” that ELC-RTT is paying for now (e.g. sponsorship model where different public and public partners pay a percentage for these core services such as data or the Action Plan.)
- 2) Identify how much we are going to invest since we are already investing considerable time and resources, aside from the ELC-RTT grant, into BBF.
- 3) Go directly to towns for seed funding for BBF.
- 4) Create and share consistent local stories to create a state-wide understanding of BBF’s role.
- 5) Determine what type of financial support is available from BBF’s public and private partners.
- 6) Identify how development capacity can become part of an administrative position or positions at BBF.

- 7) Vermont Insights to broaden its scope of services, including exploring fee for services.
- 8) Increase local level support for BBF; ask towns to contribute through their budgets.
- 9) Identify community-based creative fundraising strategies for BBF.
- 10) Regional Coordinators to review their past work, and now with wider support, ask the Vermont Legislature for support given the value of their work.
- 11) Ask state agencies to pool resources and use Regional Councils to implement their work.
- 12) Secure short, medium and long-term sponsorships of Vermont Insights.
- 13) Ask AOE, VDH and DOC to match CDD's annual contribution of \$184,000. What other state agencies might be missing?
- 14) Apply for grants, as medium and long-term strategies both for the regional and state, but watch for competition.
- 15) Actively pursue dollars from KidsVT and others in early childhood to help BBF dig out of the \$277K hole it is presently in.
- 16) Consider how BBF can partner with corporations such as Walmart, Price Chopper, etc. Identify sponsors. Market BBF through its Facebook page.
- 17) Have a legislative ask (long-term strategy).
- 18) Identify the projects that have been created that could come under the BBF umbrella. Realign and fund accordingly such as HMG and EMTSS (could be short or medium term strategy).
- 19) Increase regional collaboration to reduce costs by blending/braiding funds at the local level. Consider what can be de-siloed and how to share funding and personnel (medium to long term strategy).
- 20) Build BBF into state agency budgets beyond CDD/AHS.
- 21) Provide more anecdotes and real stories from the field that allow the BBF SAC to know what is happening and be ample to trumpet it.
- 22) Look at a partnership between LGK, BBF and the Alliance. Could this one day become the same organization?
- 23) Partners put money on the table for specific tasks. For example, a Permanent Fund grant to BBF to help with local business engagement, an Alliance grant for regional grassroots advocacy, or a CDD grant for data gathering and analysis.
- 24) Try to get corporations and organizations to underwrite what we do, on a state level. Bigger than regional-will.
- 25) Transitional funding (state and national) – bridge funding for institutional development – sustainability. Planning hasn't really happened so we need time. It's remarkable that we need to make this decision in such a short period of time.
- 26) VI use a service business model, generate paid services – technical, consultation and data analytics.
- 27) Early childhood system players contribute/invest to a system-building fund for BBF to carry out its work, in a neutral fashion. Budget approval at State Advisory Council.

Reducing Expenses Ideas

- 1) Look at BBF's hard costs (e.g. overhead, contracts, travel) to see what savings could be achieved.
- 2) Consider how the current deficit could be shared. For example 50% of the deficit could be addressed by the BBF SAC and 50% by the BBF regions.
- 3) Reduce costs now by examining the details under travel, overhead (rent, etc.). Examine positions at the BBF Central Office, such as the Regions Manager, Action Plan Coordinator and Communications Manager; reduce the 3 current FTE's to 1.5 FTE. Reduce the Regional Coordinators line item by 20%.
- 4) For FY17, create a clear plan for a balanced budget. By fall 2016, have a concrete plan for the future that builds on BBF's mission and Act 104. Build from this foundation to what does it take? To consider these questions in making a plan for the future and setting priorities – How many regions? What is the role of BBF? What is the right size of the BBF Central Office staff? What is the cost and functionality of Vermont Insights related to Act 104?
- 5) Despite the current deficit, ensure that the ELC-RTT grant deliverables are met. Important to honor the “compact” entered into with the regions to strengthen the BBF Regional Councils, as outlined in the grant, from the beginning to the end of the grant period.
- 6) Vermont Insights moves to the University of Vermont.
- 7) Do not increase the geographic footprint of BBF Regional Coordinators when considering reduction of expenses. This will water down their scope and effectiveness.
- 8) Ask Regional Coordinators to come up with ideas to reduce the BBF budget by \$200,000.
- 9) Determine if full-time Regional Coordinators are needed.
- 10) Co-locate with another state office or the Permanent Fund. Determine if an in-kind space is available.
- 11) Go through an assessment process to determine how much staff is needed in each of the regions but keep all 12 Regional Councils.
- 12) Parallel efforts exist in early childhood around communications. Identify the opportunities to “right blend” the various messaging components.
- 13) Increase the messaging and marketing around the importance of BBF. Adopt practices that are successfully working for LGK and VB5.
- 14) Do a state and regional assessment of staffing. Make decisions regarding BBF's structure after this deep dive is reviewed.
- 15) Determine if a full-time communications manager and action plan coordinator positions are needed. LGK does communications well already. Who else can we partner with and reduce staff costs? VT Alliance?
- 16) Determine how much travel the Regional Coordinators should be doing. Face-to-face meetings important in the beginning but now after 2 years, may not be necessary.
- 17) Finding \$277K by 7/1 is a pipedream. What is the most marketable part of the work? What can we get people outside of BBF to pay for?
- 18) Reduce contracted services, especially out of state services.
- 19) Look to partners for technical assistance before BBF contracts for services (i.e. ELC-RTT, Head Start LAUNCH, and Regional Coordinators).

- 20) A) First, state to region feedback loop is crucial to figuring out BBF's proper organizational structure to avoid duplication and to provide value of the work. This could be a checklist of 10 basic things all Regional Councils must do. The checklist illuminates funding and needs needed in each region as the skills needed in each region may vary based on needs of community and phase of implementation of each Council. If this works, then B) Reduce state-level BBF infrastructure. Reduce/shift in administrative home with clarification of use/goal/value of VT Insights and finally C) Use the strength of BBF partners as these are the resources available to share: 1) In-kind contribution of communications needs for BBF from LGK; 2) Co-location in new office on Pine Street for Permanent Fund, VB5, LGK and Mobius. Reduced rent for BBF; and 3) Alliance collaboration as advocacy.
- 21) Is there a solution that looks at overhead and contractual services using a shared services approach (e.g. shared space, shared communications, shared data analytics).

Clarifying Role of BBF State Advisory Council in This Process

- 1) BBF needs a real Board of Directors as a 501 c 3 non-profit. The BBF State Advisory Council should be separate and create a Board that can do fundraising.
- 2) Representatives from foundations cannot sit on the Board of Directors without pledging funds.
- 3) If BBF has a marketing issue, the BBF SAC bears some responsibility.
- 4) SAC members need to be knowledgeable about BBF to address its PR problem.
- 5) Governance and sustainability: SAC form a small sub-committee (opportunity for membership beyond appointment by the state council) to focus on fund raising and sustainability. Buy-in and investment from SAC needed. Be really transparent going forward, regular agenda item. Political will? Longer term strategy/development. Like Washington state's legislation.
- 6) First, define principles and criteria that guide these fiscal decisions (like vision, mission, mandates/purpose of BBF).
- 7) Define grant (ELC, Launch) and statute (Act 104) requirements – what are we supposed to be delivering.

Research and Planning for BBF's Sustainability

- 1) Identify the sustainability plan that was originally submitted as part of the ELC-RTT grant, review it to see what is still relevant and what needs to be re-calibrated.
- 2) Alert philanthropy and make sure they are working in concert with BBF and not separately.
- 3) Conduct a needs assessment to determine the effectiveness of Vermont Insights.
- 4) Continue to build strong relationships with local legislators that could culminate into a legislative "ask" for BBF. Look at increasing this local legislative support to build buy-in from state support in terms of additional money for BBF.
- 5) Determine what could happen without any money. BBF grew out of a grassroots effort. What could be achieved by going to pre- ELC-RTT funding levels?

- 6) Determine if the Regional Councils are the appropriate size and correctly geographically located across the state. This could help determine the appropriate funding levels going forward.
- 7) How is Vermont Insights being used by the regions? What is its value to the regions?
- 8) Presently BBF has been only managing the ELC-RTT grant it has received. Important to look at what is coming around the corner and seek diversification of funding.
- 9) Create a broad long range plan to sustain BBF as an organization.
- 10) Identify the barriers to BBF being the “go-to-place” for issues that affect communities.
- 11) Identify pieces of infrastructure that might not be needed next year that can be cut.
- 12) Have a strategic idea of what can be put off.
- 13) Identify what facts are marketable.
- 14) BBF’s value is the local to state connection in a systemic way. If this is BBF’s core mission, then assess each person’s role. Does it meet that mission? For example, the question about the role of “Action Plan Coordinator: does the plan speak for itself and owned already by independent groups?
- 15) Assess what is happening at each Regional Council. Is the work happening? Look at Regional Councils that have and have not had funding. What was it that made some Regional Councils still meet even when funding was minimal?
- 16) BBF needs to be seen as a value to all.
- 17) Have an evaluation process for all contracts (before and after using RBA).
- 18) Identify a consultant for sustainability.
- 19) Transform BBF into the totally state arm of early childhood that is led by deputy secretaries at AHS and AOE and regional coordinators are field staff.

POPCORN SESSION

Meeting participants were asked to share a key highlight from their small group work. They are as follows:

- What can the feedback loop tell us about the necessary structure between the state and the region to achieve this work? What TA is needed to help prepare the organization for this transition?
- Take a look at the whole organization to see what BBF does not have to do now to set it up for long-term success.
- Consider a combination of revenue generation and expense reduction strategies. Could BBF co-locate with another entity? Would the work of the Action Plan Coordinator and the Communications Manager be accomplished otherwise?
- Identify how other state agencies could match CDD’s annual contribution to BBF of \$184K (such as AOE, VDH, Department of Corrections).
- Look at how Vermont Insights could be used as a broader tool to generate fees for their services.

- Revisit the sustainability plan originally submitted at the beginning of the grant and during the APR for further ideas.
- Look at the current budget and look at cutting expenses now. Go to Act 104 and look at the functions there and build the organization to carry out those functions. There could be a Plan A and a Plan B but a concrete plan is needed by the fall for FY18.

NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS FOR THIS SECTION OF MEETING

Reeva Murphy, Betsy Rathbun-Gunn as Co-Chairs of the BBF SAC and **M. Lambert** closed this section of the meeting by thanking members for their participation. They appreciated how the difficult discussions were handled today by the BBF staff. Based on what was discussed, BBF will do the following:

- 1) **Between March 28, 2016 and May 23, 2016** – BBF will take all the input and type it up into a summary document. This document will be shared with the BBF SAC, the BBF Regional Councils and the BBF staff for further consideration of all the ideas.
- 2) **By May 23, 2016** – A firm proposal will be provided to the BBF SAC for their approval in order to meet the contractual deadline for AHS to execute a contract for BBF by July 1, 2016.
- 3) **By July 1, 2016** - An executed contract will be in place.
- 4) **Sustainability** – Will be an ongoing agenda item on the subsequent BBF SAC meeting agendas.