



Stakeholder Perspectives on Universal Prekindergarten: Statewide Successes & Barriers

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Welcome

For today's presentation, all participants will be on mute.

We ask that you please pose questions using the chat function.





Building Bright Futures (BBF) is Vermont's foundational early childhood public-private partnership, mandated by state and federal law, to serve as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood

BBF's Mission: To improve the well-being of children and families in Vermont by using evidence to inform policy and bringing voices together to discuss critical challenges and problem-solve.

**Mandates
Under
Act 104**

CONVENE



BBF Structure

12 Regional Councils
Addressing statewide
communities needs

MONITOR



**Early Childhood
Action Plan &
7 Aligned Committees**

ADVISE

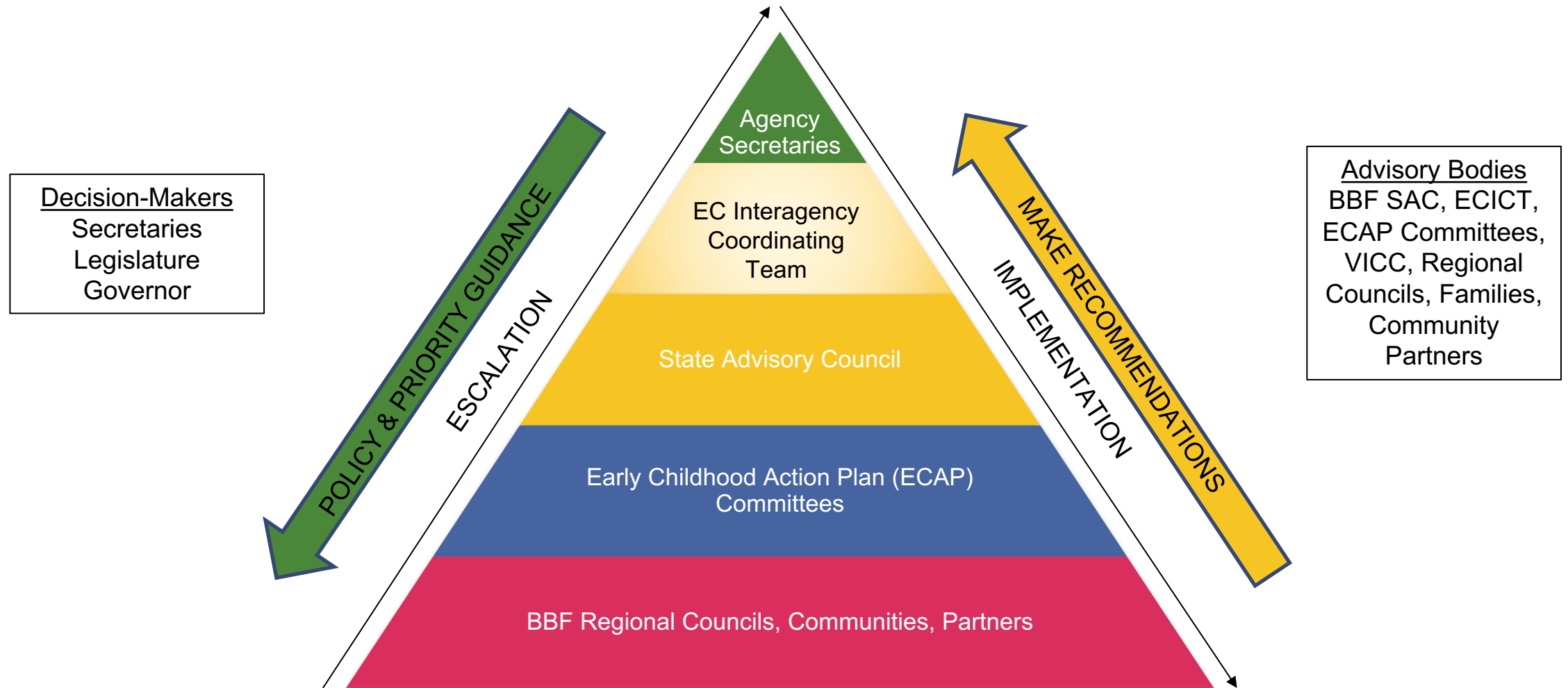


**State Advisory
Council (SAC)**
23 governor-appointed
and at-large members



Note: EC = Early childhood, ECICT = Early Childhood Interagency Coordination Team, PPD = Professional Preparation and Development

VERMONT'S EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Early Childhood Framework : Realizing the promise of every Vermont child.

Continuous, Comprehensive, Integrated, Accessible,
High Quality EC System



High quality, up-to-date data to inform policy



History of Act 166

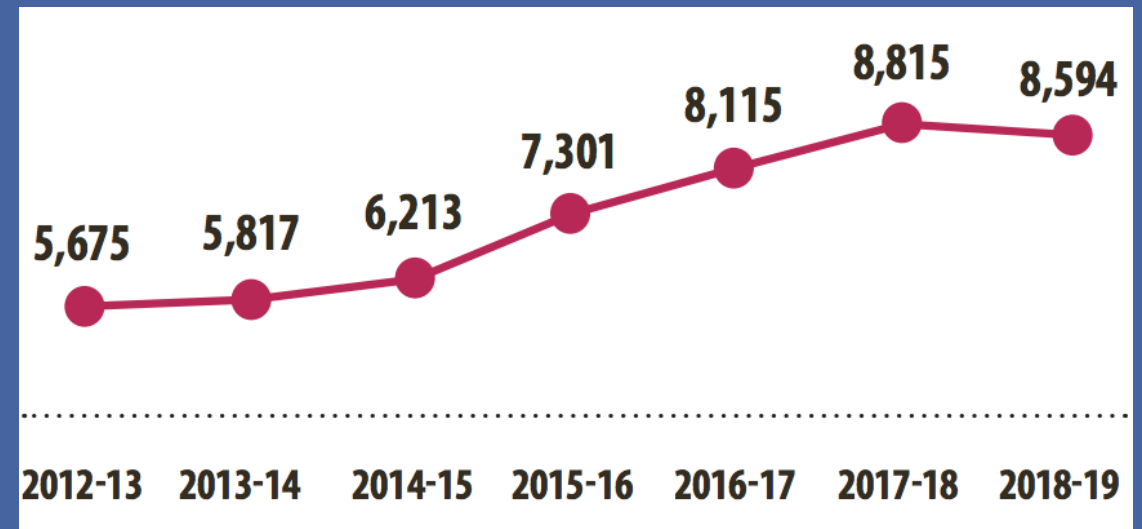
Vermont's Universal Prekindergarten Education Law

- In 2014, VT legislature passed Act 166: provided access to publicly-funded prekindergarten education for 3, 4, & 5-year-olds not age-eligible for kindergarten
- In 2018, BBF gathered community feedback on 8 recommendations for changes to the law
- No changes have been made as of February 14, 2020

Act 166 Universal Pre-kindergarten (UPK)

Since 2014, the number of children enrolled in UPK has increased by more than 2,000.

Trends in UPK utilization over time



<https://vermontinsights.org/19-prek-enrollment/>





Purpose

To utilize BBF's statewide and regional networks to ask those directly impacted by Act 166 UPK to identify:

1. Perceptions of successes
2. Mechanisms of Success (where and why it's been successful and to share best practices)
3. Outline persistent barriers



2 Methods of Collecting Statewide Perspectives

In-Person Regional Forums/Focus Groups

Semi-structured focus groups during regional forums to collect qualitative information on UPK statewide during November and December 2019.

13 Total Forums in 11 Regions = 199 Participants

Electronic Feedback Form

Widely disseminated online feedback form targeting participation from those unable to attend in person.

169 Total Feedback Form Participants



Forums & Focus Groups Participation

- 199 Vermonters participated
- 26 unique sectors or organizations were represented



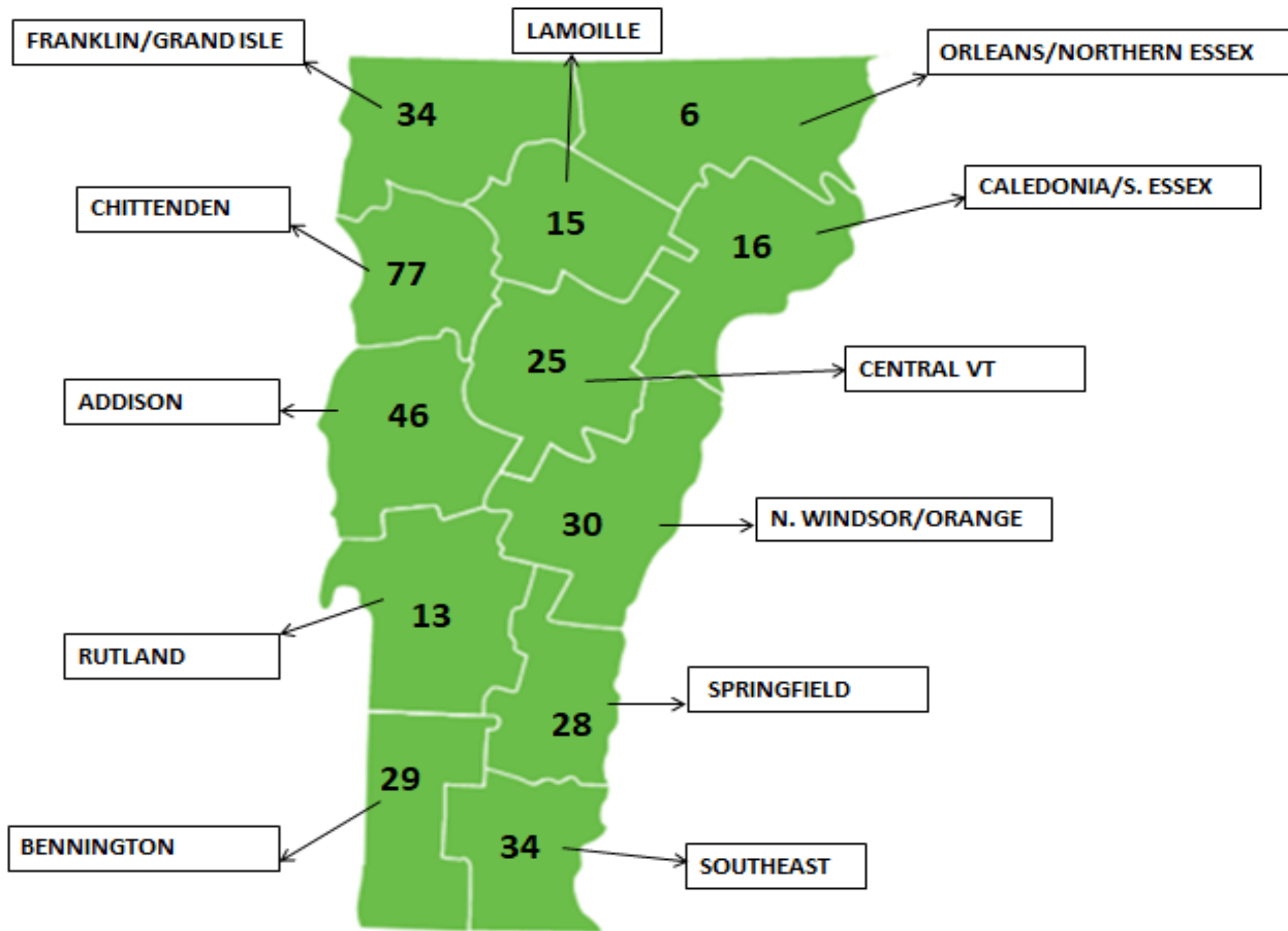
168
Vermonters

Electronic Feedback Form Participants

- 113 parents
- 24 private preK program directors
- 22 child care providers
- 20 private preK teachers
- 16 public preK teachers
- 14 superintendents/principles
- 12 preK coordinators



368
Total
Vermonters



Qualitative Analysis

- Team of 4 reviewed all data from each forum and the electronic feedback form
- Each region was reviewed by at least 2 members of the analysis team
- We then developed themes that reflected the data and identified quotes

RESULTS OVERVIEW

Vermont's ACT 166

Statewide Successes

Enhancing development | Partnership | Enrollment | Access to Quality | Awareness

Statewide Mechanisms of Successes

Point Person / UPK
Coordinator

Partnerships &
Collaboration

Regional Innovations & Mechanisms of Successes

Partnership &
Collaboration

Integration &
Continuous
Improvement

Protocols &
Standardization

Innovations

Statewide Persistent Barriers

Administrative | Equitable Access | Transitions

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RESULT THEME 1:

Statewide Success-Positive Initial Investment

**ENHANCING
DEVELOPMENT
LEARNING AND
KINDERGARTEN
READINESS**

**PUBLIC AND
PRIVATE
PARTNERSHIPS**

**INCREASED
UPK
ENROLLMENT
ACROSS THE
STATE**

**INCREASED
ACCESS TO HIGH
QUALITY
LEARNING
EXPERIENCES**

**INCREASED
AWARENESS OF
THE IMPORTANCE
OF EARLY
LEARNING BEFORE
AGE 5**

Theme One: Statewide Successes in Universal PreK

Illustrative Quotes

“I have seen [success] in in-home preschool programs, center-based programs, and Head Start programs. I think having a variety of structures allows parents to choose a program that best meets the needs of their family and their child's learning style.”

“Our son has completely blossomed in so many ways since he started attending Pre-K. He is more interactively social; he thrives in a structured environment; he is learning to navigate challenging situations; expression of his imagination has flourished; he is completely engaged in learning and singing. These are only a handful of examples of how our son has immersed himself in his Pre-K program. We are so proud of him and the amazing teachers who help guide him every day.”

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RESULT THEME 2:

Statewide Innovations and Mechanisms of success

TWO MAJOR SUB-THEMES:

1. Having a UPK liason or point person
2. Partnerships among public and private community entities.



RESULT THEME 2:

Statewide Innovations and Mechanisms of SUCCESS

UPK POINT PERSON	<p>“When school districts have an Act 166 Coordinator who understand and know the law”</p> <p><u>“Having a Regional Coordinator is helpful for both the district and partner program. A consistent system using common contracts, forms, and other information has been very successful. It has also been positive for partner programs that may have more than one of the 11 districts to contract with”</u></p>
Partnerships among public and private community entities	<p>“Meetings with preK and K teachers [facilitate] better transitions to K and more professional respect”</p> <p><u>Building strong relationships between partner providers, public pre-k teachers, and the local school district administration is a huge change maker.</u> When the supervisory union reaches out to share resources, training opportunities, and partner staff, the benefits for children increase and trust among adults builds to create better outcomes.</p>

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RESULT THEME 3

Regional Innovations & Mechanisms of Successes

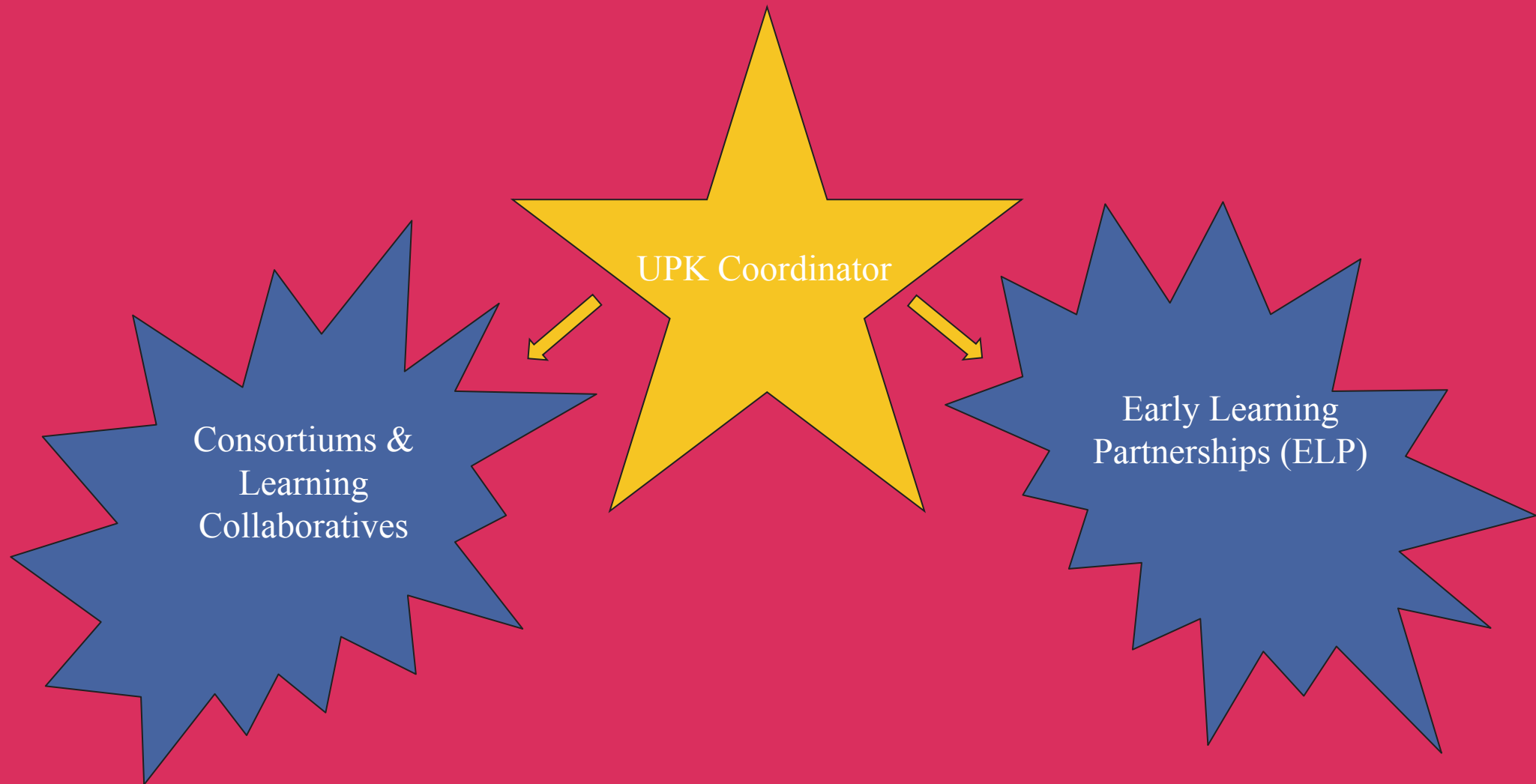
This theme reflects the current methods individual regions and districts have developed to smooth transitions and implement UPK.

- Opportunity for scalability
- Highlights progress made within regions



RESULT THEME 3:

3 Ways Regions have Formalized Partnership and Collaborations



RESULT THEME 3:

Partnership and Collaborations – preK Coordinator Quotes

Having a Regional Coordinator is helpful for both the district and partner program.

Pre- K Coordinator

Districts manage to create relationships with partner programs to support: observing children, providing feedback and training

Building strong relationships between partner providers, public pre-k teachers and the local school districts

RESULT THEME 3:

Integration & Continuous Improvement



Photo of original team implementing the Same Page Initiative in Springfield:
From left to right are Ellen Taetzsch, Molly Oglesby, Rachel Hunter, and Stacey Sanderson. Photo provided

Examples of Integration & Continuous Improvement

- The Same Page Initiative (Springfield)
 - Building bridges
 - Connection among teachers, families and community resources
 - Support understanding of assessment tools
- Resource Sharing (e.g. professional development)

RESULT THEME 3:

Protocols and Standardization

Regions have developed individual protocols and ways to standardize administrative practices

Examples:

- Universal common enrollment forms
- Standardized invoices



RESULT THEME 3: Innovations & Existing Programs/Models

Transportation & flexible models of care	“We’ve had children take the bus in order to attend a program outside of their town which better meets their needs. For part day programs, a bus to local child care was successful. Providing before and after care also removes barriers for parents.”
Wrap-around Care	“Having private child care and public preK in the same building.”

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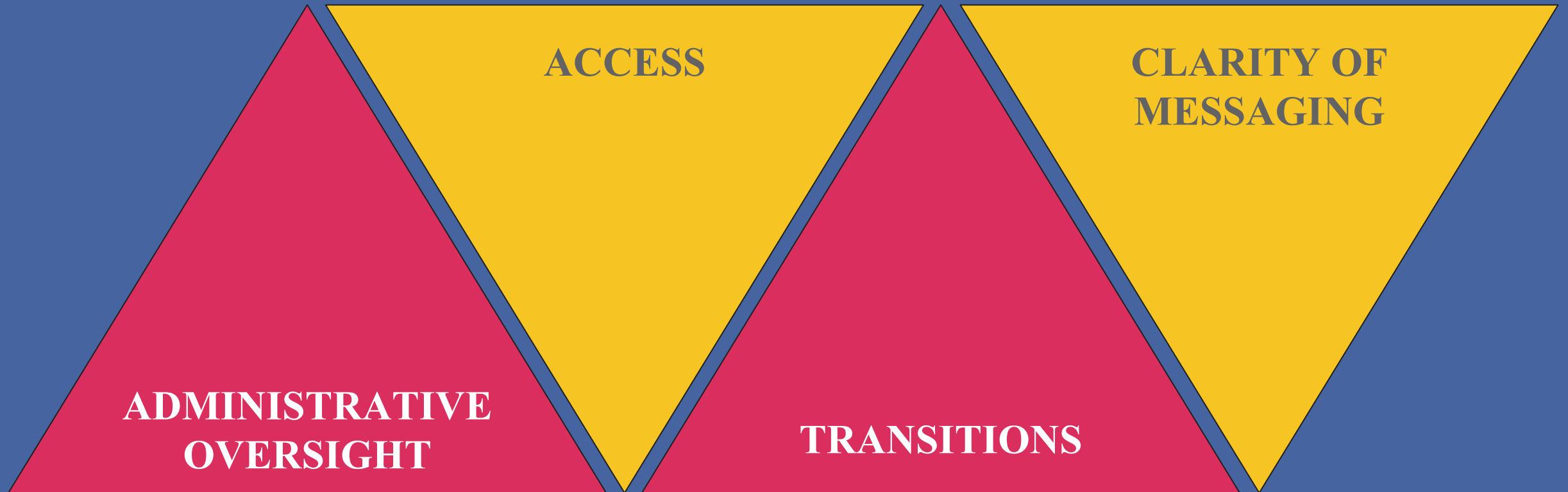
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RESULT THEME 4:

Locally perceived barriers in UPK implementation



RESULT THEME 4:

Barrier: Administrative Oversight



“AHS and AOE need to communicate. There should be no redundancies between them about licensing, certification, etc”



“Variation in regional perceptions of agency partnership and oversight”



“Effective Professional Development for providers based on research would also assist us in building a stronger system”

RESULT THEME 4:

Barrier: Access & Capacity



- a. Transportation - not specific to UPK. Given our rural state, transportation is a challenge we need to address.



- a. Financial barriers for families and children



- a. Capacity
 - i. Concern from providers about maintaining their ability/capacity to serve children
 - ii. Concern about the # of spots for kids
 - iii. Concern about the availability and quality of the EC workforce

RESULT THEME 4:

Barrier: Equitable Access for Children



- **Specific sub-groups of the larger population are struggling to access UPK**
 - Children with special health care needs, religious affiliations, and residing in families in poverty
- **Overall # of hours**
 - 10 hrs not enough, but no consensus on how many would meet the needs of children
- **Awareness & Messaging**

RESULT THEME 4:

Barrier: Transitions

Transition-related barriers include 2 types of transitions

1. Daily transitions for children across programs/sectors
2. Transitions as the child ages
 - From child care to preK
 - From early intervention (EI) to preschool special education services
 - From preK in to Kindergarten



RESULT THEME 4:

Barrier: Clarity of Messaging



- **Lack of clear information disseminated to families and the field**
 - “More outreach to parents and information about this act. It is hard to find information when you are a new parent and unaware of Act 166!”
 - “Lack of information about the pre-K enrollment process and timeline”
 - “Challenges for families to understand how it works if your child goes to daycare outside of your town”

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SOME LIMITATIONS TO CONSIDER...

- There was no way to determine whether or not the individuals participated in the electronic feedback form also participated in an in-person forum.
- Rutland did not have an in-person forum.
- Identified quotes may have been from notes vs. a verbatim transcription, however, quotes from survey respondents were pulled verbatim.
- Voluntary/self-selection bias: only those who opted to participate provided feedback
- Although BBF distributed information as widely as possible to elicit feedback, the data is not representative of all individuals statewide.

Conclusions

1. Continued investment in improving the quality of UPK (Administration & implementation)
2. Monitoring & Evaluation
3. Investment in collaboration
4. Clarity and consistent messaging



Conclusions continued...



- 5. Standardization
- 6. Access for sub-populations
- 7. Transportation
- 8. Workforce development



Current Status of UPK & BBF Next Steps



- BBF's Executive Director provided testimony on these findings to a joint hearing of the House Education and House Human Services Committee
- House Ed committee is taking additional testimony and revising the bill
- BBF will be publishing a report with the full results of the UPK information gathering effort

BBF's Final Message



KEEP THE CHILD AT THE
CENTER OF ALL
DECISION-MAKING!



WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more on what's happening around UPK and early childhood in your region, please contact your BBF Regional Coordinator!

- Addison:
- Bennington :
- Caledonia & So. Essex :
- Central Vermont :
- Chittenden:
- Franklin Grand Isle:
- Lamoille Valley :
- No. Windsor & Orange :
- Orleans No. Essex:
- Rutland:
- Springfield Area:
- Southeast Vermont :

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THANK YOU!

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