



WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER, CHILDREN SHINE



# Vermont's Early Childhood Needs and Strategic Vision

webinar hosted by the State Advisory Council

Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020





# Welcome

**Dr. Morgan Crossman**  
Executive Director,  
Building Bright Futures

**Representative Jessica Brumsted**  
Vermont House of Representatives







# Vermont's Updated Early Childhood Action Plan

*Vermont's comprehensive early childhood system depends on the accomplishment of these four overarching and interrelated goals*

1. All children have a healthy start
2. Families and communities play a leading role in a child's well-being
3. All children and families have access to high quality opportunities that meet their needs
4. The early childhood system will be integrated, well-resourced and data-informed

## Convening

Vermont's early childhood community to foster coordination and collaboration, communication, solidify feedback loops, share best practices and problem-solve.

## Responding

to fill the gaps in child and family need at the regional and systems level.

## Monitoring

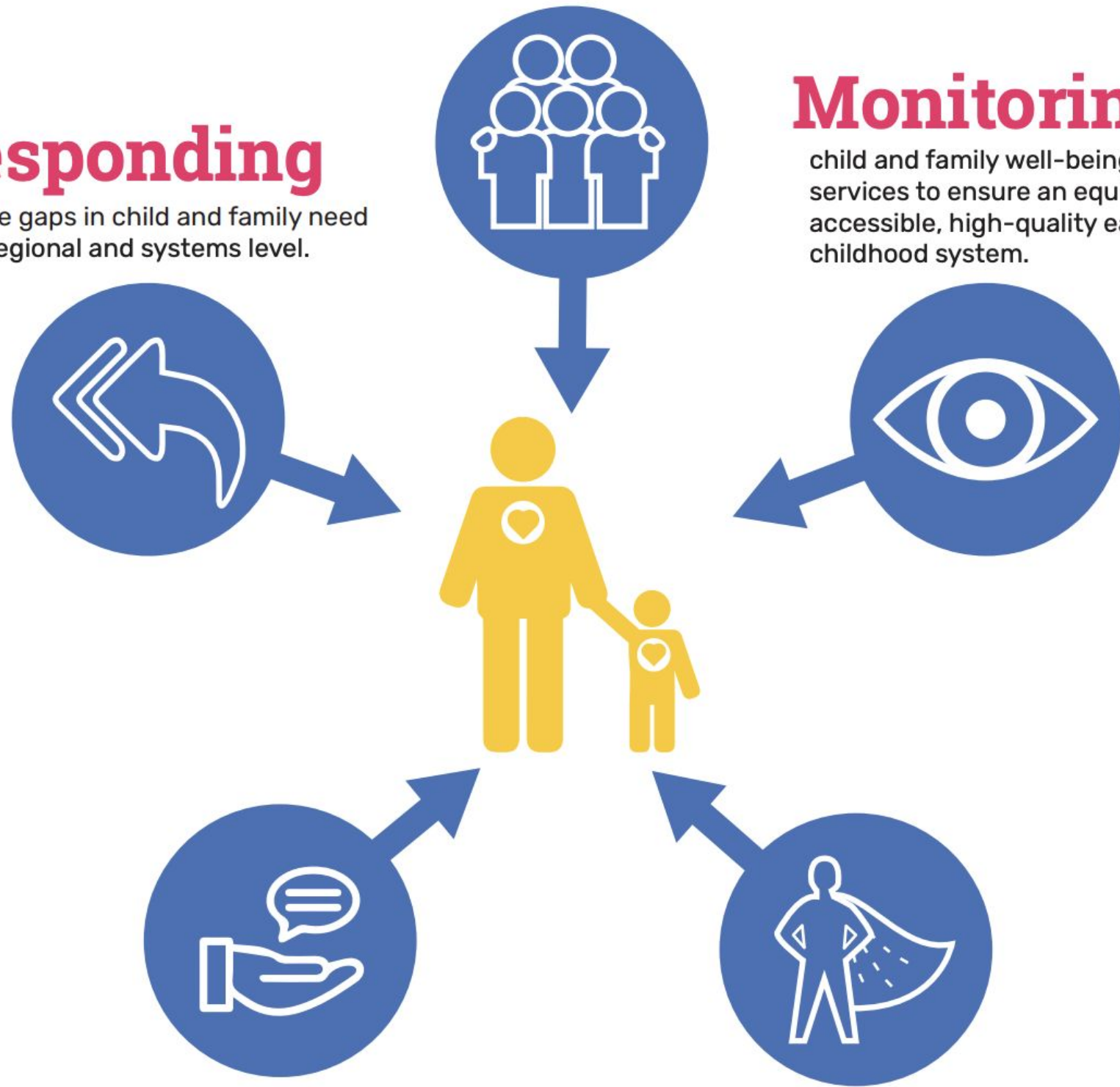
child and family well-being and services to ensure an equitable, accessible, high-quality early childhood system.

## Advising

the Governor and legislature on the well-being of Vermont's children and families using the most up-to-date high-quality data to inform forward-thinking policy.

## Empowering

families and communities by providing the opportunity to lead and elevate their needs.



# Building Bright Futures' Role within this vision & principles: Vermont's Act 104 | Federal Head Start Act

- Mission: To improve the well-being of all children and families in Vermont by using evidence to inform policy and bringing voices together to discuss critical challenges and problem-solve.
- Vision: For early childhood to be an integrated, continuous, comprehensive, high quality system of services that is equitable, accessible and will improve outcomes for all children birth to age eight and their families in Vermont.



# Introduction of 2020 Early Childhood Needs Assessment

**Representative Jessica Brumsted**  
Vermont House of Representatives



# Vermont Early Childhood Needs and Strategic Vision

## Session Goals



- Present the birth-five systems needs assessment by exploring key themes and data
- Review alignment in needs assessment themes and integrated strategies in the Early Childhood Action Plan to support children and families





# Factors Impacting the 2020 Needs Assessment

- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Systemic Racial and Social Injustice
- Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG) Timeline



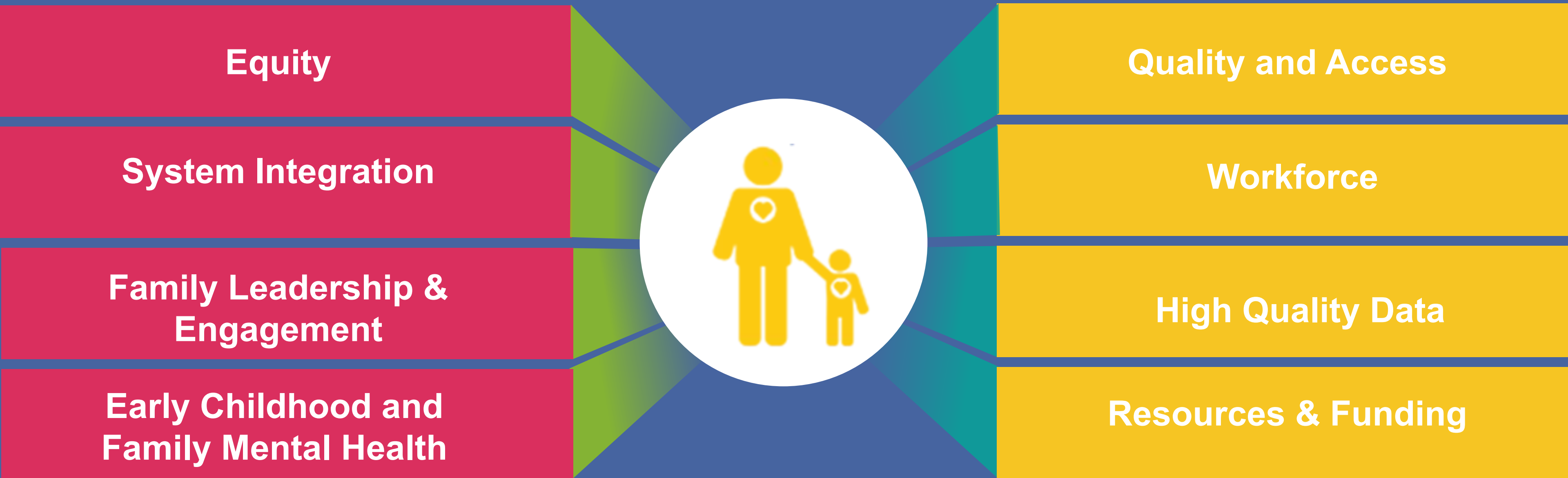
# Needs Assessment Method & Analysis

- Focus Groups
  - Early Childhood Action Plan Committee Focus Groups = 27 participants
  - State Advisory Council Focus Group = 12 participants
- Community Survey = 121 participants
- Unduplicated count of children receiving services (within programs)
- Compiling other reports and data including
  - Census data
  - BBF/CDD/AOE/LGK reports and testimony
  - MCH & HS Needs Assessments



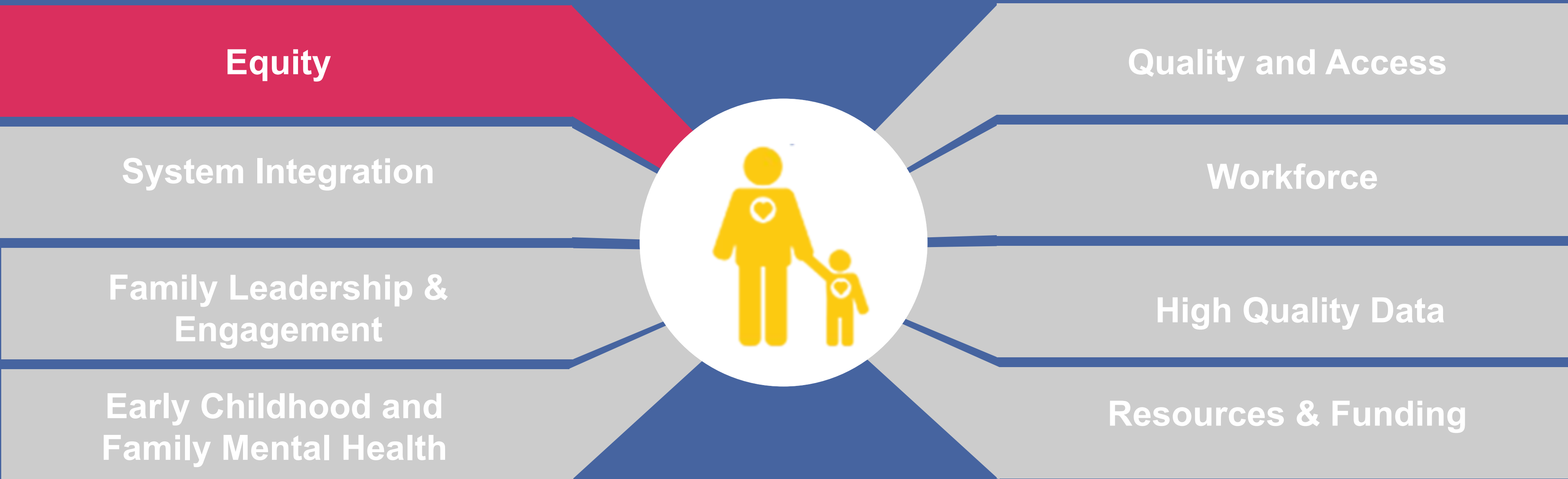


# Needs Assessment Themes Overview





# Needs Assessment Themes Overview





# Equity: Vermont's Data on Vulnerable Populations

## Children with Disabilities or Special Needs (2018-2019 data)

- 3,051 children ages 0 to 5 served under IDEA Part C or Part B Section 619
- 5,000 children are served by CIS annually
- 24.6% of preschool-age children served by Head Start and 15.7% of Early Head Start kids eligible for special education

## Children with DCF involvement (2019 data)

- 1 in 17 children have an incarcerated parent
- Approximately 500 children under 5 were in DCF custody

## Homelessness

- 1,008 children/youth in Vermont's public schools were homeless

## Children living in poverty (2018 data)

- 36% of children under age 6 lived in households with income below 200% of FPL

## Race (2018 data)

- 4.2% of the non white population under 10 identify as two or more races or multiracial,
- 2.6% of children under 10 identify as Hispanic or Latino

## Mental Health (2018 data)

- One in five children between 6 and 8 has a social, emotional, or behavioral health condition

## Household & Rural Status

- 30% live in single-parent families
- 70% live in rural areas



# Equity

## Sub-themes

- Statewide variability in access and resources
- Diverse voice to inform policy
- System-wide commitment to systemic reflection and accountability
- Funding for training and staffing
- COVID-19's impact

## DATA

- + 44% agree - Early Childhood programs provide equitable and inclusive support
- + 51% report the EC system works to embed anti-bias approaches in program delivery

*"I am seeing so many generous programs offering food pickup but the families with the highest need cannot access a lot of these programs because they cannot drive and don't have transportation."*



# Equity & ECAP

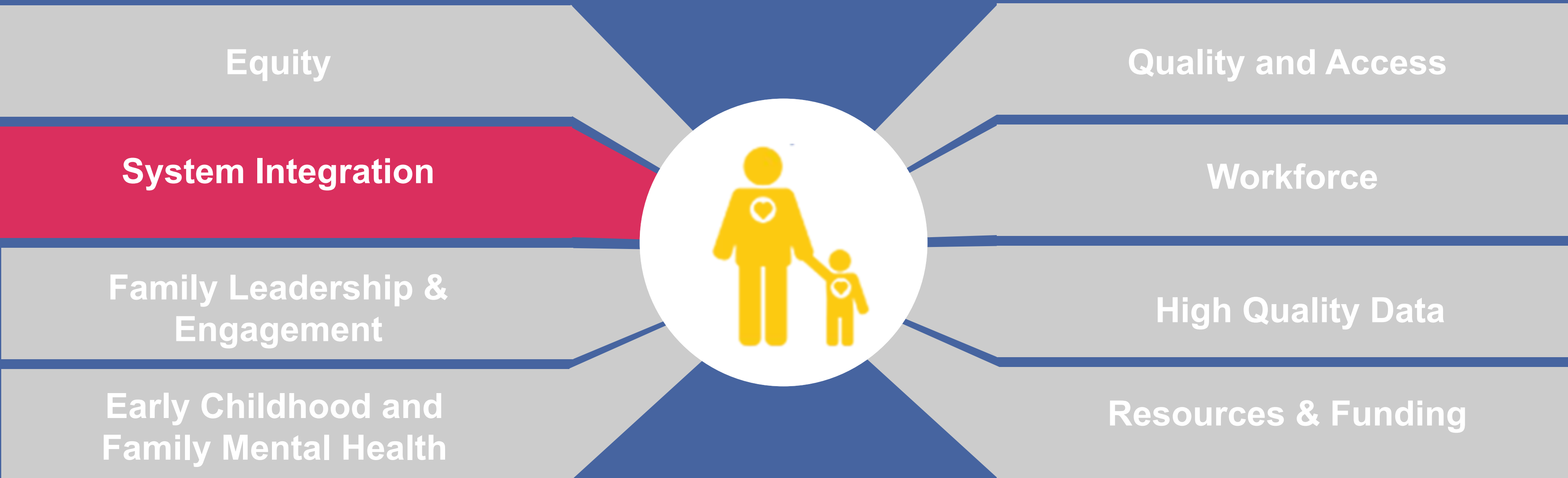


*“Prioritizing equity means an explicit and intentional change to practices and policies to create better conditions for health, mental health, safety, happiness and success now and into the future for each and every child and family.”*

Strategy: Build a system where families know where to go for help and support is provided in an accessible, culturally competent way and ensure families are involved in identifying the care their child needs



# Needs Assessment Themes Overview



# System Integration

## Sub-themes

- Successful integration seen in specific program models: CIS, BBF, HMG, Act 166, PCCs, HS
- Strong relationships & commitment to collaboration
- Lack of data and administrative integration
- Challenging service system transitions/lack of continuity
- Need for aligned messaging
- Siloed finances and resources
- COVID-19's Impact

## DATA

- + 90% agree - Positive and trustful relationships are established
- Only 5.5% of respondents rated the system as very well integrated

*“Funding is so limited agencies must compete against each other for minimal amounts. Collective case management and resource sharing is not valued from a funding perspective.”*





# System Integration

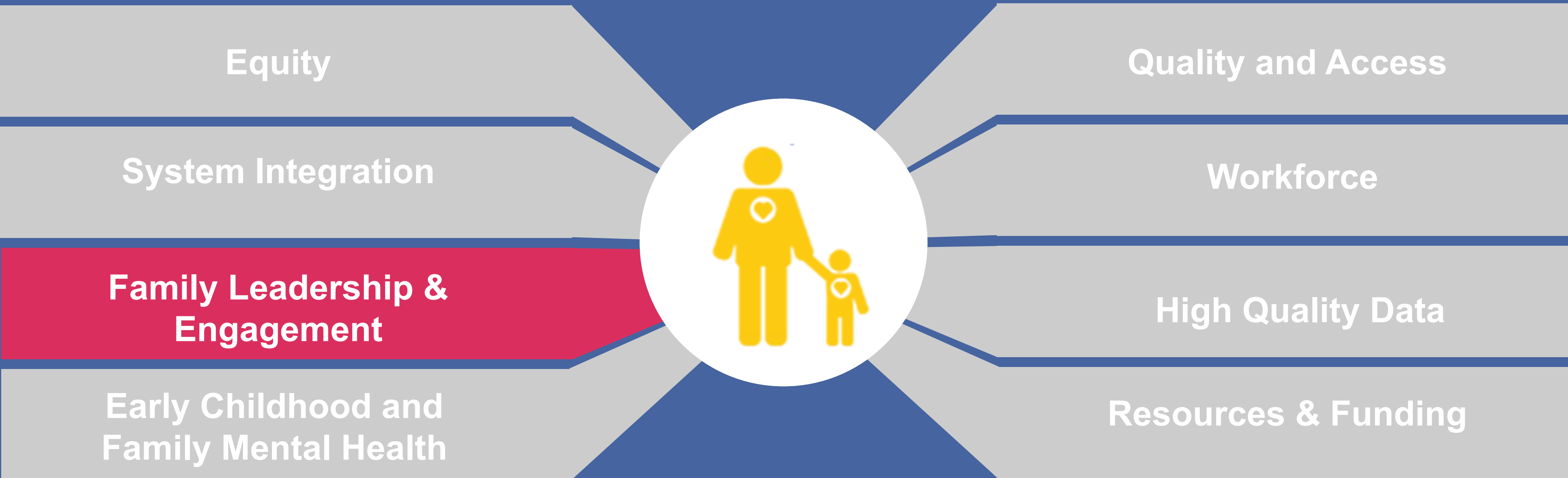
ECAP Goal 4: An integrated, well-resourced, and data-informed system

Strategy: Use data to promote efficiencies and streamline systems to create a seamless experience for families

*“To make integration a priority we need commitment and streamlining from across systems”*



# Needs Assessment Themes Overview





# Family Leadership & Engagement

## Sub-themes

- Value shift for organizations and families
- Barriers to participation
  - Funding & resources
  - Transportation
  - Professional development
  - Interpretation & translation
  - Lack of partnership & prioritization
- COVID-19's Impact

## DATA

- + 83% agree - agreed that “forming warm and trusting relationships with families” is a primary strategy to engage families
- + 75% of families strongly agreed that “My children and I are treated with kindness and are comfortable and welcomed.”

*“Specifically, with COVID-19, there has been a lot of uncertainty and I do not feel as if parents are being given many opportunities to share opinions.”*

*“We do not have any input and are not given much feedback about what is happening”*



# Family Leadership & Engagement

ECAP goal 2: Families and communities play a leading role in children's well-being

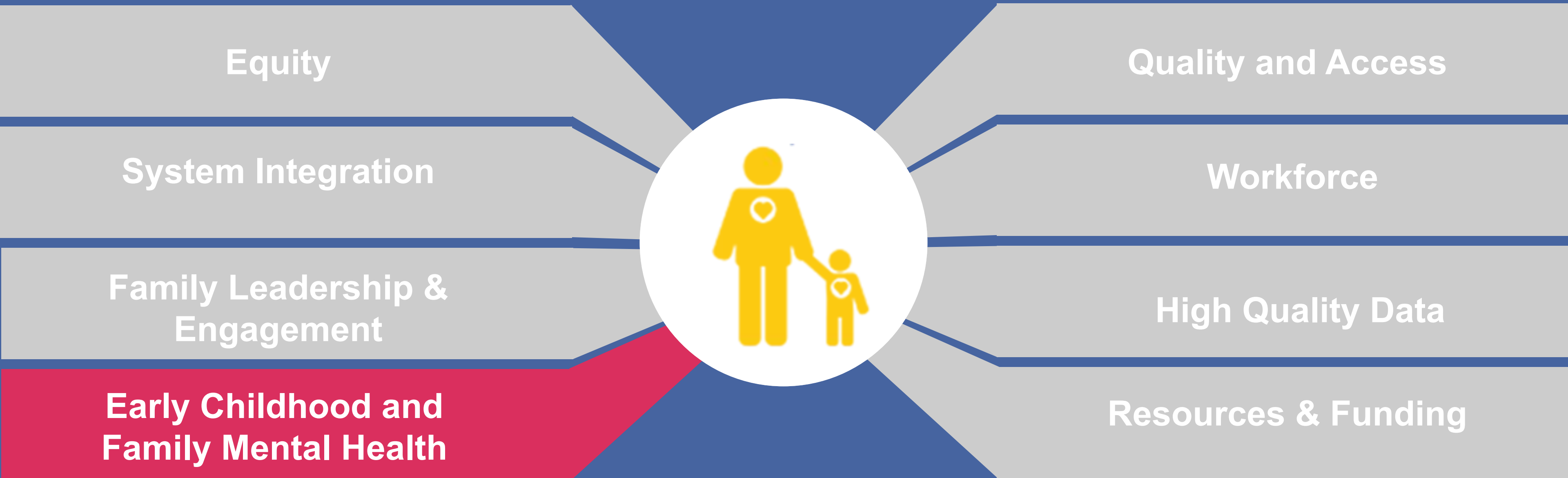
Strategy: Partner with families, understand needs, and identify leadership opportunities to include parent and caregiver voice in public policy and decision-making.

*"[The BBF Families and Communities Committee] is the one place I feel my voice is heard and it matters."*





# Needs Assessment Themes Overview



# Early Childhood and Mental Health

## Sub-themes

- Mental health prioritized by EC leadership
- Silos and fragmentation
- Increased utilization and need for mental health services
- Importance of prevention and building resilience
- COVID-19's impact on isolation, social emotional development and connection to supports

## DATA

- 3,322 children accessed mental health services from a Vermont Designated Agency and 265 children under the age of 9 used crisis services
- 89% of children assessed in VT have a history of trauma and only 50% report having a stable caregiver in their lives

*"We are concerned about the impact [COVID-19 and transition for young children] has had on our children emotionally and physically. The unrealistic expectations of children and child cares are unacceptable...The compounded stress is really just more than families can handle."*





# Early Childhood and Mental Health

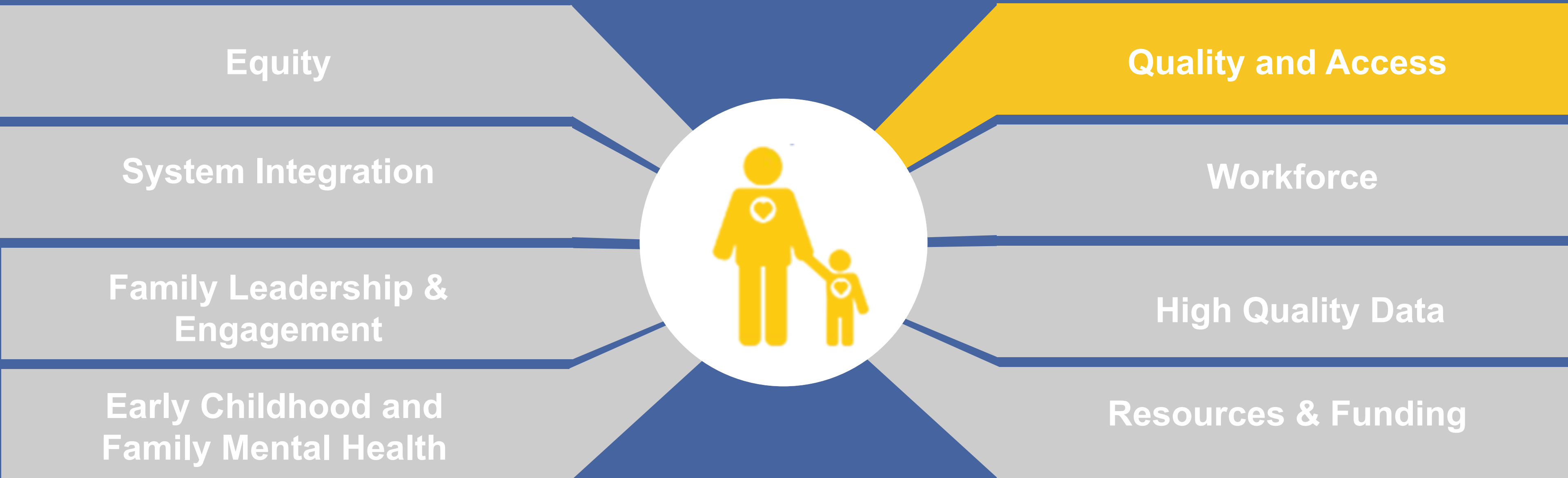
ECAP Goal 1: All children have a healthy start

Strategy: Commit to early detection and preventive approaches that will foster resilience and support the individualized needs of children and families through transitions and crisis situations.

*“If I could go back to make change to build a system that works better for my child, I would want a system that is flexible to the needs of each child; not one that asks kids and families to squish into a certain form.”*



# Needs Assessment Themes Overview





# Quality and Accessibility

## Sub-themes

- Many successful examples of high-quality and accessible programs
- Existing gaps
  - Child care
  - Remote & hybrid education
  - Connectivity
  - Variation based on geography, workforce, standards, vulnerable populations
  - Silos and lack of coordination
- COVID-19's Impact

## DATA

- 62% of infants lack access to a child care provider, up to 89% in rural counties (pre-COVID)
- 265 children under the age of 9 used crisis services (2019)

## COVID-19 DATA

- 50% of child cares spaces utilized in summer programs, 2% of reporting programs are closing and 25% of children attending reporting programs in the summer at new to care
- 55% of families of CSHCN reported challenges accessing special education services

*"We need to be able to provide the best care possible without the fear of not being able to pay our bills or make payroll; parents need to be able to navigate the needs of their families and reality of care situations without fear of losing a much-needed childcare spot."*



# Quality and Accessibility

ECAP Goal 3: All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs



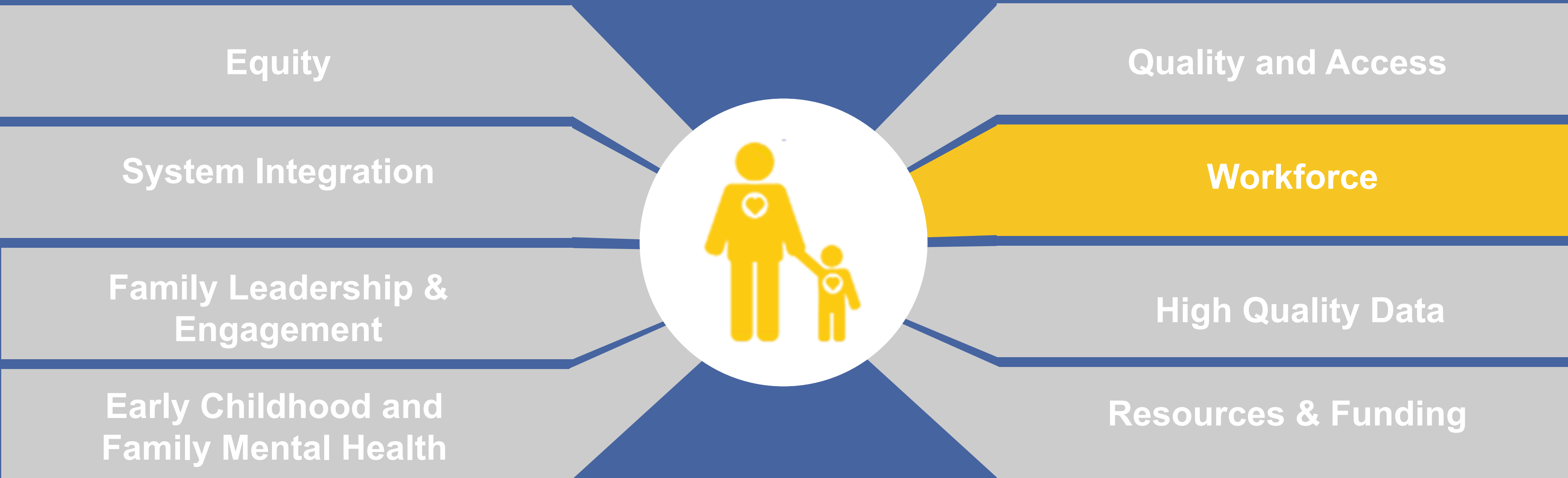
Strategy: Expand access to high-quality programs for all families with young children through greater public investment in existing successful programs: Child care Financial Assistance, Universal Pre-K, Children's Integrated Services, Head Start, and Help Me Grow.

*"There is a huge shortage of care and it is very difficult and expensive for families to access."*





# Needs Assessment Themes Overview



# Workforce

## Sub-themes

- Highly committed staff
- Creative collaboration
- Qualifications and standards
- Compensation
- Professional development
- Understaffing impacts programs and services

## DATA

- Only 2% reported the workforce is well-equipped to meet the needs of Vermont children and families
- 8,345 individuals worked in regulated care in positions that work directly with children (child care, preschool, after school - 2018)

*“The early education workforce is extremely fragile. We are expecting people to do this work with very little pay and rising educational expectations”*





# Workforce

ECAP Goal 3: All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs

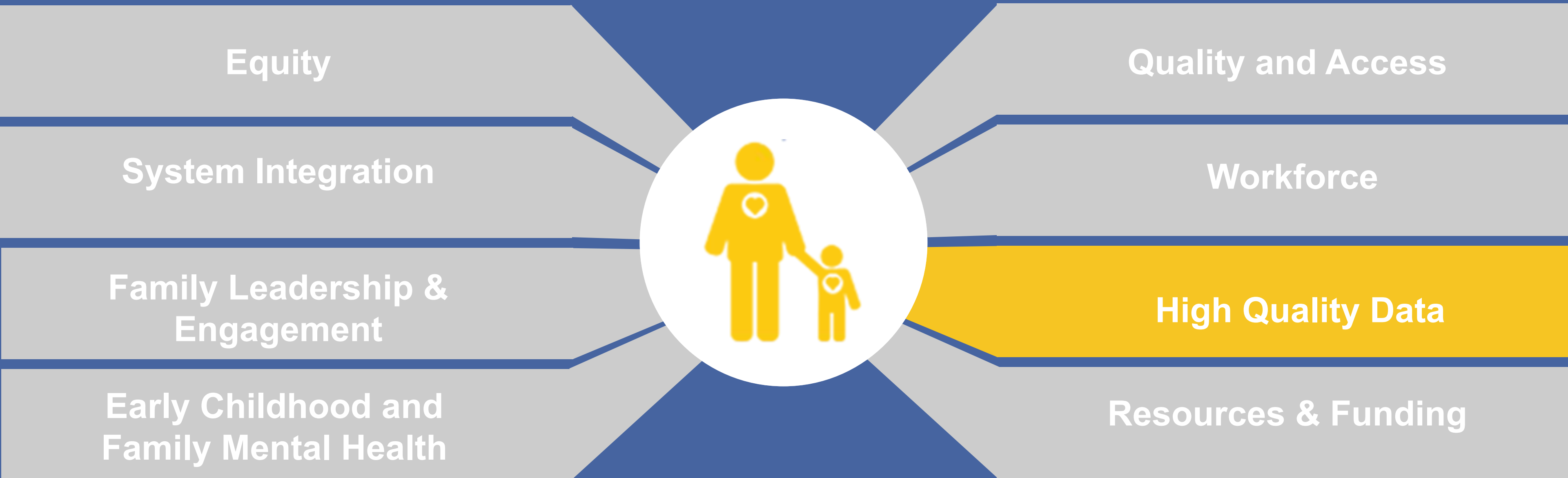
Strategy: Shift Vermont's collective value and investment in early childhood programs and services to attract and retain a qualified early childhood workforce.

*"Our center pays well beyond the standards of many others in our area...but the gravest needs are health insurance and the enormity of the college level training requirements. We simply cannot afford these costs."*





# Needs Assessment Themes Overview





# High Quality Data

## Sub-themes

- Prioritize resources
- Data integration
- Data literacy
- Data infrastructure
- Data gaps
- Progress & Opportunities

## DATA

*“Vermont’s primary challenge is that we lack coherent and cohesive data programs, infrastructure and personnel to implement programs to fidelity.”*

*“Different agencies gather different data that is difficult to crosswalk. The data we have is not informing best practice for kids.”*



# High Quality Data

ECAP Goal 4: An integrated, well-resourced, and data-informed system



Strategy: Create a state-wide culture that values high-quality data and promotes data literacy through collaborative and aligned initiatives.

*“We don’t need to count things more. We need to figure out the quality.”*





# Needs Assessment Themes Overview



# Resources and Funding

## Sub-themes

- Successful investments and recognition
- Chronic underfunding
- Not funding to fidelity
- COVID-19's impact

## DATA

+ 10% of respondents stated that funding is “adequate”

*“There are some high quality programs that have worked very hard to pull together enough funding to pay qualified staff, create excellent programming, and offer additional supports. However, all ECCE programs struggle to afford to do the work they do with a budget based on subsidies and tuition, and very little public support.”*

*“It feels like we are at a tipping point, where everyone is working hard, and funding has increased, but it doesn't come close to meeting the needs.”*





# Resources and Funding

ECAP Goal 4: An integrated, well resourced, and data-informed system

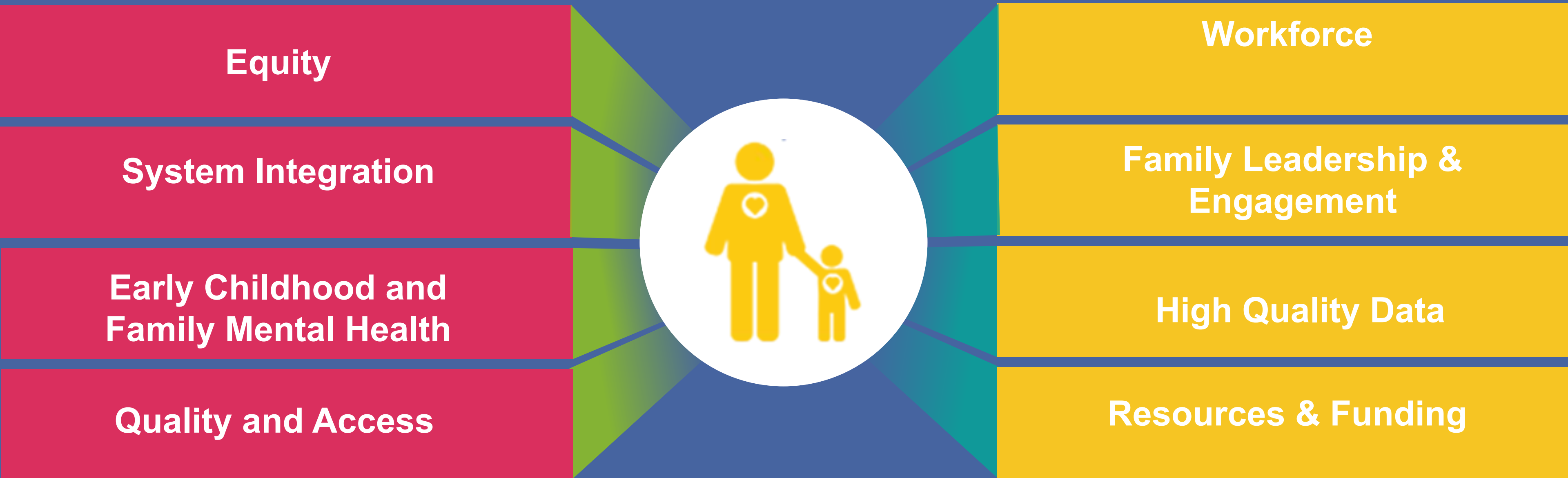


Strategy: Create an integrated early childhood budget

*“This chronic lack of funding undermines the quality of supports we provide.”*



# Needs Assessment Themes Overview







# Looking ahead

- BBF will finalize the PDG Needs Assessment report and Early Childhood Action Plan
- Final policy recommendations will be presented at the September 28<sup>th</sup> SAC and will be published in the How Are Vermont's Young Children and Families? report
  - COVID impacts on family economic stability and mental health
  - Chronic inequities and racism as a public health crisis
  - Childcare capacity and workforce development
  - Family voice to rebuild a stronger system
  - Evolve our data system to address gaps
- Informing legislative decisions
- Moving Early Childhood strategies forward







# How you can take action now

- Commit to cross-sector, public private partnership and strengthening relationships
- Keep asking hard questions about equity, diversity, social justice and inclusion
- Acknowledge COVID-19's continued role in limiting resources and funding as we prioritize and align efforts
- Join a BBF Early Childhood Action Plan Committee or Regional Council
- Complete the 2020 BBF Stakeholder Impact Survey





## With appreciation

A special thank you to: Noonmark Services, SOV agency data stewards, community partners, the State Advisory Council, ECAP Committees and Regional Councils for collectively creating this vision, compiling the data and developing and carrying this strategic plan.

Thank you, all, for your continued collaboration and dedication to Vermont's children and families.







Presented by Building Bright Futures

[buildingbrightfutures.org/](https://buildingbrightfutures.org/)

Ask a question

[bit.ly/AskBBFVermont](https://bit.ly/AskBBFVermont)

BBF 2020 Stakeholder Survey

[bit.ly/VTbbf20](https://bit.ly/VTbbf20)

