

REPORT ON ACT 76 MONITORING

In Accordance with No. 76, Section 19
January 15, 2024

Executive Summary

Act 76 (H.217) is an act related to child care and early education that became law on June 20, 2023. In accordance with our legislative mandate under Title 33, Chapter 46, and now Act 76 to monitor the early childhood system and support accountability, Building Bright Futures (BBF) has collaboratively developed the following vision and strategy for monitoring Act 76.

Early Childhood System Engagement in Monitoring: BBF executed a six-month partner engagement process to compile feedback from partners. The goal was to develop collective agreement on what success looks like for Act 76, determine what to measure, and develop strong mechanisms to monitor this data over the next 10 years to understand the impact of the investment on children, families, educators, and the early childhood system. We asked partners two key questions:

1. What would success look like across each area of legislative intent?
2. What are the top three things we would need to measure in order to understand the impact across each area of legislative intent?

We held 13 focus group convenings with a total of over 80 partners with content expertise and active engagement. We also fielded a statewide survey that yielded 79 cross sector responses.

Analysis and Review of Data: We analyzed all data and feedback through an iterative thematic coding process resulting in nine final themes and a snapshot of priority indicators. Future qualitative data will be analyzed thematically, and quantitative data will be compiled and reviewed annually.

Accountability and Measuring Success: Partners brainstormed over 150 indicators that could be used as baseline measures of the impact of Act 76 across all areas of legislative intent. Of the over 150 indicators, we only have existing data on approximately one third to support monitoring efforts. The partner engagement process showed us that no singular indicator was sufficient to measure the overall impact. Through thematic analysis and a prioritization process, an indicator snapshot was developed across nine themes: equitable access, experiences of those most impacted, early childhood workforce, affordability, quality, fiscal implications, program stability, economic impact, and child outcomes.

BBF has committed to maintaining a robust tracker of all indicators in partnership with key data stewards. The goal is to compile collected data across the nine themes and make it publicly available in 2024, and work with partners to develop mechanisms to capture data that does not exist.



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Implementation Progress: Act 76 (H.217) became law on June 20, 2023; however, the law becomes effective in phases, with policy changes and required reporting occurring between July 2023 and January 2026.

Implementation Successes: While implementation has just gotten underway for many components of the law, initial qualitative data suggests that early educators, child care program directors, and other early childhood partners are overall impressed with the level and clarity of communication coming from the Child Development Division. This strengthened communication has included things like a continuously updated Implementation Status and Summary chart outlining important milestones in policy and investment changes. At the time of this report, the Readiness Payment program is the most significant of investments and changes implemented from the law. We know from qualitative data that this program has resulted in some notable changes for child care programs, including expanding capacity, upgrading facilities, increasing compensation and benefits for staff, and more. Additionally, providers have noted that the application for the program was remarkably simple.

Challenges and Unintended Consequences: While for the most part, initial feedback suggests the impact of law has been positive, partners have also shared challenges to be aware of when monitoring progress and making future policy decisions. Some of these challenges include unrealistic implementation or report timelines, concerns about the potential burden of a rate cap, and confusion about the current status and upcoming changes expected to the Universal Prekindergarten Education program. As with any significant package of investments and policy changes, a number of necessary technical corrections are also anticipated.

Strengthening Data Systems: In order to successfully monitor the impact of this law over the next 10 years (and beyond), Vermont must collectively prioritize strengthening our data systems.

Priorities Underway: This includes key work that BBF is charged with to collaborate with state agencies to determine data availability and build capacity of agency data stewards; develop or strengthen systems to collect, compile and share key indicators with support from the Data and Evaluation Committee; and compile and make baseline data publicly available. BBF has many strategies through which these efforts are underway, including formalizing data sharing with key data stewards; making data publicly available through VermontKidsData.org; developing strategies to continuously collect needed data; and partnering with national experts.

Priorities Limited by Financial Resources: While significant progress has been made, barriers continue to challenge our ability to strengthen data systems in Vermont, including limited financial resources for building state data stewards' staffing capacity, continued needs for technological infrastructure for the state, and a need for increased support to strengthen and fund additional programmatic data collection.

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