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# Vermont Early Childhood Fund (VECF) Announces Next Round of Funding Opportunities

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Michelle Kersey, Vermont Early Childhood Fund (VECF) Grant Manager

The [Vermont Early Childhood Fund \(VECF\)](#) supports creative solutions that will improve the well-being of children from the prenatal period to age 8, their families, and the Vermont communities where they live. In late 2022, Vermont was awarded a \$23 million federal grant to strengthen the state's early childhood system, support the early childhood workforce, and improve the quality and availability of services for family and children from the prenatal period to age 8. [The Vermont Integration Project: Building Integration in Vermont's Birth-5 Early Childhood Systems \(VIP B-5\)](#) will provide a total of \$7.5 million in subgrants over a three-year period to local communities.

BBF administers the subgrant program through VECF. Between December 2023 and December 2024, BBF awarded \$5 million in

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**The portal to apply for the next round of VECF funding will open on Monday, March 17.**

Grant award notifications will be made in late May for the July 1–December 30, 2025 funding period. Due to the short funding period, this round will only include Opportunity Grants. **Please note** that awards will be made to projects and programs with existing staff, and will not fund hiring new staff or staff that is not already in place.

## **VECF Opportunity Grant**

The VECF Opportunity Grant will provide one-time grants of \$10,000 to \$80,000 to about 25 projects.

BBF recognizes that a wide variety of factors impact children during the early stages of development. The goal of the Opportunity Grant is to support a broad range of projects and programs throughout Vermont that strengthen the early childhood system. Preference will be given to projects that address one or more of the following areas:

**Equitable Access:** To ensure that all children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs, projects will increase access to early childhood care and education programs (particularly for infants and toddlers), pediatric and mental health services, family supports, nutrition

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neglect, or trauma; and children who experience other risk factors such as poverty, homelessness, or immigrant/refugee status, or who have parents who are incarcerated), projects will increase access for these groups. Examples of potential projects include, but are not limited to:

- Staffing, training, and/or materials needed for inclusion of children with behavioral/developmental needs, disabilities, or special health needs
- Expansion or start-up of programs or services for children from the prenatal period to age 8. This could include, but is not limited to, pediatric and mental health services, family supports, nutrition, disability services, early childhood care & education programs (ECCE), Head Start and Early Head Start programs, Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) programs, and afterschool/out-of-school care.
- Supports for trauma-responsive care
- Increased access to developmental screening, pediatric care, and mental health services
- Programs that improve equity of access to basic necessities such as nutritious food and housing
- Language translation services and resources for non-English speakers
- Other projects that expand access to services and programs for families with children from the prenatal period to age 8

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Funding for capital expenditures, fundraising, and gift cards/stipends are also not allowed. Please review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to see additional items that are unallowable under this grant.

**Improved Quality:** To ensure that all children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs and that the early childhood system is well-resourced, projects will enhance the quality of existing programs to help promote child well-being, learning, and development. Quality enhancements can come in many forms and may include:

- Materials and supplies (for example, educational materials such as books and toys)
- Professional development, practice-based coaching, and coursework
- Other projects that improve the quality of existing programs and services for families with children from the prenatal period to age 8

**Workforce Development:** Vermont is experiencing a critical workforce shortage across the early child care and education system. Projects will ensure that the early childhood system is well-resourced by developing strategies to build a robust and stable workforce. Potential projects may include, but are not limited to:

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- or other benefits, etc.)
- Strengthening career pathways, promotion, and recruitment for a qualified and diverse workforce
- Refining and linking the wage scale and career ladder to competencies, credentials, and degrees
- Projects that address ECCE workforce data gaps
- Resource navigation
- Systems navigation to recruit a diverse workforce
- Professional development
- Other projects that help build a robust and stable workforce

### **Family Engagement and Leadership, and Connecting**

**Families to Services:** To ensure that families and communities play a leading role in children's well-being, and that the early childhood system will be well-integrated, projects will address barriers that prevent families from participating in planning, advising, and developing early childhood systems, as well as accessing services. Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Support for transitions between programs for families
- Piloting coordinated/universal enrollment forms
- Improving resource navigation
- Innovative family leadership recruitment and engagement practices
- Improving integration across the early childhood system with mental health, nutrition, child care, health, special

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- Targeting outreach and engagement strategies to families from historically underserved communities
- Other projects that help connect families to services and break down barriers to access

**Regional Priorities:** Each year, BBF's 12 Early Childhood Regional Councils gather input and identify the most pressing priorities for each region in the coming year. The current Regional Priorities (selected in 2024 to focus on in 2025-2026) are outlined on [this map](#).

Learn more about [Regional Councils](#).

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Vermont Early Childhood Fund (VECF)

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December 4, 2024

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600 Blair Park, Suite 160  
Williston, VT 05495

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