



Start Early Funders Coalition

2017



White Earth Child Care

Annual Report

Our Coalition

Founded in 2011, the Start Early Funders Coalition represents 24 members of Minnesota's philanthropic community who each provide critical leadership for funding, research, program development, public policy and grant making to improve early childhood efforts in Minnesota.

Our Vision

Every child in Minnesota will be physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively prepared for school and lifelong success.

Our Mission

To leverage our unique perspective as early childhood funders to advance public policy and community support for affordable, accessible, high quality care and education in Minnesota so that all children have a strong and healthy start and are prepared to contribute to our state's vitality.

Our Unique Perspective

- The voice of Minnesota's philanthropic community
- Statewide leadership on early childhood issues
- A credible and unique perspective as funders
- A commitment to shared learning
- Dedication to capacity building
- A long-term comprehensive vision for children and our state

Coalition Area Focus

- 1) Public Policy – Advocating for enhanced leadership, accountability and funding to support a stronger, more effective early childhood care and education system in Minnesota.
- 2) Learning and Research – Facilitating research, best practices and sharing of knowledge to strengthen our individual and collective efforts to enhance the well-being of Minnesota children and families with a focus on the whole child.

Participating Organizations

Blandin Foundation, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Foundation, Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation, GHR Foundation, Greater Twin Cities United Way, Health Partners, Initiative Foundation, Knowledge Fund, Mardag Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, Medica Foundation, The Minneapolis Foundation, Morgan Family Foundation, Northland Foundation, Northwest Minnesota Foundation, Sauer Family Foundation, The Sheltering Arms Foundation, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, Southwest Initiative Foundation, The Saint Paul Foundation, United Ways of Greater Minnesota, West Central Initiative and The Women's Foundation of Minnesota.

Thank You to our Members



Greater Twin Cities
United Way



Mardag Foundation

A family legacy. A partner for Minnesota.

An affiliate of Minnesota Philanthropy Partners



**The Sheltering
Arms Foundation**



**BlueCross BlueShield
of Minnesota**

Morgan Family Foundation

DELTA DENTAL

DELTA DENTAL OF MINNESOTA FOUNDATION



Investing resources
in our communities
for regional success

THE SAINT PAUL FOUNDATION

An affiliate of Minnesota Philanthropy Partners



SOUTHERN MINNESOTA
INITIATIVE FOUNDATION



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA



**SAUER FAMILY
FOUNDATION**

**The MINNEAPOLIS
FOUNDATION**

**SOUTHWEST INITIATIVE
FOUNDATION**

**Northwest
Minnesota
Foundation**
Developing Community Assets

**JGHR
FOUNDATION®**



HealthPartners®



United Ways of Minnesota

**MEDICA®
FOUNDATION**

**WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION
OF
MINNESOTA**

**if Initiative
FOUNDATION**

**NORTHLAND
FOUNDATION**

THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

Creating a 5-Year Strategic Plan

Founded in 2011, Start Early has maintained strong participation over the past 6 years with 24 current member foundations. The coalition represents a tremendous breadth of diversity and expertise, which has been a key factor to its many successes.

Based on feedback and discussion from the coalition's 2016 strategic planning and refresh effort, led by Alfonso Wenker with MCF, we reaffirmed our commitment to our mission, while making several intentional adjustments to our strategies.

MISSION:

To advance public policy and community support for affordable, accessible, high quality care and education in Minnesota so that all children have a *strong, equitable* and *healthy* start.

After six years together as a coalition, this work helped us confirm our longer-term viability, and provided a framework to develop future goals and strategies.

Through this process we developed a five-year goal, taking us into 2021, where it was determined that our most important role as a unique funder coalition is to provide leadership such that we: ***“build and be leaders for a state-wide vision of child wellbeing”***.

Under this overarching goal, we identified the importance of including equity as a principal component and thematic thread in all that we do; recognizing this includes equity relating to ***race, place*** and ***economic means***.

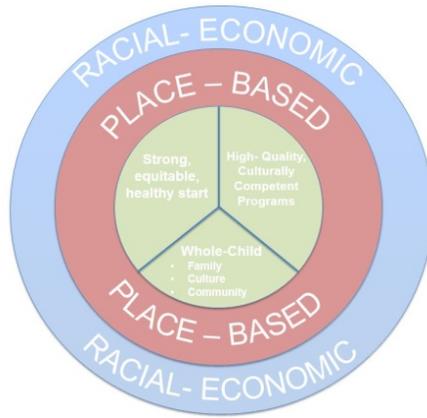
Additionally, we also wanted to underscore the critical importance of addressing the whole child in all that we do; emphasizing this focus in our convenings and learning and research work, and expanding our policy efforts to encompass a more dynamic two-generation, whole child approach.

Strategies in Action



Integrating a Focus on Equity and Whole Child Development

Start Early has developed a more integrated vision around equity using a race, place and economic lens, in addition to building upon its whole child focus to ensure healthy, early childhood development. These have been an important backdrop to the work across the broader coalition in 2017, including the Learning & Research committee, as well as its policy work through MinneMinds.



Below are some highlights of how Start Early has implemented new strategies that embrace these focus areas:

1. Leveraging Convenings and Events

In 2017 Start Early hosted events that were attended by more than 2,000 early learning advocates and leaders. Start Early made a concerted effort to ensure its events more fully represented equitable voices and perspectives around whole child development, providing an important platform for discussion, sharing best practices and incubating new ideas.

Examples from its **Children & Youth Issues Briefing, Advocacy for Children Day, and Nancy Latimer Convening on Children & Youth** events this past year included:

- presenters and keynote speakers from diverse communities of color and rural Minnesota
- inclusion of unique and important voices by parents and early child care providers
- recognition of excellence for a parent advocate at the Nancy Latimer event
- inclusion of physical health, mental health and social-emotional development
- state-wide live-stream of CYIB event to facilitate rural participation

Specific topics highlighting important facets of whole child development included:

- Multi-generational approaches
- Home visiting
- Dental health
- Trauma-informed care
- Physical health
- Mental health/social-emotional development
- Early literacy

Additionally, Start Early has begun organizing and hosting one of its four annual convenings outside of the metro area to better promote rural priorities, foster new partnerships and increase awareness of best practices across rural communities. In August 2017, Start Early partnered with **White Earth** to participate in their annual **childhood brain development conference**. Attended by over 600 participants, this provided a positive partnership opportunity to:

- share the work of MinneMinds as a keynote presenter
- facilitate a parent and child care provider advocacy training session
- sponsor a keynote speaker from Children's Hospitals on the importance of positive social-emotional development in the context of stable relationships

- provide Start Early members with a unique and personal insight to the successes and challenges facing the White Earth Nation and its youngest children

2. Broadening the MinneMinds Vision

As a result of this effort, MinneMinds updated its vision to reflect its strategic goals more holistically. This is an important tool to be used with external partners and communities, as well as to inform ongoing internal strategic efforts. This includes MinneMinds' specific commitment to equity, a multi-generation approach, cultural-relevance, and a whole-child approach starting prenatally that meets the needs of both children and their families.

"To ensure all children in Minnesota are ready for kindergarten by assuring equitable access to high quality, culturally relevant, year-round, all-day early childhood programs that support the needs of both families and children from pre-natal to age 5."

3. Building Parent Engagement and Advocacy

The MinneMinds coalition is intentionally working to be inclusive of authentic parent engagement and voice.

As part of this work, MinneMinds and United Way conducted a state-wide scan of existing parent groups that are engaged in early childhood advocacy.

This work helped lead to more coordinated efforts around parent engagement. Through a recent grant, Way To Grow is now leading efforts focused on increasing engagement and advocacy by diverse, metro-area parents. So far this has included several community listening sessions, which have been used to inform multiple follow-up advocacy training sessions. These have been well-attended and well-received, with over 25 parent attendees at each event, representing a diversity of cultures and languages.

MinneMinds has been actively involved, and looks to continue its collaboration with Way to Grow and its many partners, including Children's Defense Fund, NAZ, Joyce Preschool, Think Small, Greater Twin Cities United Way, YWCA, and others.

Additionally, MinneMinds worked very closely with a metro-area parent, TraNeicia Sylvester, whose children were both recipients of early learning scholarships. TraNeicia testified on behalf of MinneMinds at several legislative hearings to share her personal story, as well as at several gubernatorial candidate events. She also authored an OpEd that was published in MinnPost during the 2017 legislative session. In appreciation for her efforts, Start Early recognized TraNeicia's important role supporting early childhood policy with our first-ever parent advocacy award, presented to her at our annual Nancy Latimer event. We hope to partner with more parent advocates in our work going forward, giving an important platform to parents as their children's most important champions.

4. Increasing Diverse Perspectives and Coalition Leadership

Through its strategic evaluation process, the need for a more diverse perspectives and leadership was also identified. This included both the membership of its executive committee, and its hired consultant teams. The MinneMinds executive committee led a RFP process to interview, select and hire contracted support in preparation for the 2017 legislative session.

This resulted in significant changes, most notably in its hiring of New Publica, a Latino-owned and led communications firm. CEO and co-founder Alberto Monserrate became the new campaign manager for MinneMinds in late 2016, and also took over its communications and media work.

Similarly, the MinneMinds executive committee has also continued to evolve, expanding its membership to be more inclusive of leaders from communities of color, rural Minnesota, and to more fully represent the breadth and scope of the MinneMinds agenda. Current executive committee members include:

Andre Dukes, Northside Achievement Zone

Ann Mulholland, St. Paul Foundation

Barb Fabre, White Earth

Bev Turner, Catholic Charities

Bharti Wahi, Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota

Carolyn Smallwood, Way To Grow

Daniel Gumnit, People Serving People

Denise Mayotte, The Sheltering Arms Foundation

Frank Forsberg (Chair), Greater Twin Cities United Way

Gertrude Matemba-Mutasa, First Children's Finance

Jim Bartholomew, Minnesota Business Partnership

Kazoua Kong-Thao, Hmong American Partnership

Kelly Wolfe, Children's Minnesota

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn, Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting

Nancy Jost, West Central Initiative

Patina Park, Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center



Bloom Early Learning & Child Care

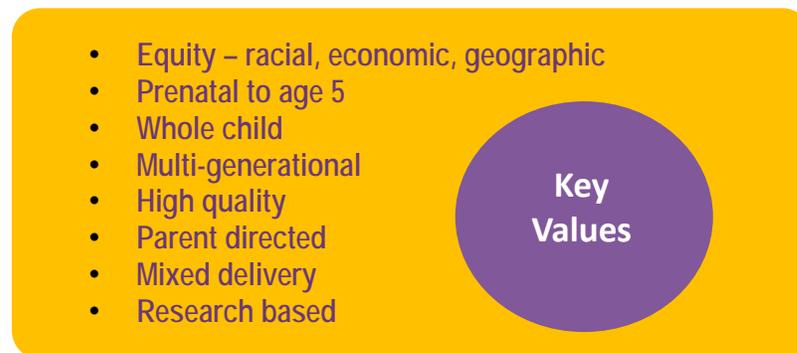
2017 Legislative Outcomes

The Start Early Funders Coalition has worked diligently to advocate for young children with the highest needs to have equitable access high quality early learning and care programs across the state and metro areas.

We know that child's trajectory for life is set in early childhood. Disparities start early, with 90% of brain development occurring by the age of 5. Unacceptably, 1 in 3 infants and toddlers currently lives in poverty in Minnesota, which can have significant and adverse impacts on healthy child development. We are seeing the results of these pressures, with nearly 50% of children in Minnesota entering kindergarten not fully prepared to succeed.

Preparing Minnesota's children for a successful future begins before kindergarten; children who are school ready by age 5 are more likely to successfully participate in the workforce. By 2018, 70% of all living-wage jobs in the state will require some post-secondary education, yet 25% of our future workforce will fail to graduate high school.

To address solutions to these challenges, our coalition has embraced a foundation of **key values** and a **child-centered approach** that includes:



MinneMinds continues to be broadly supported across the state by more than 100 member organizations including philanthropic organizations, business, the education community and non profits. Bringing forward a clear agenda with a state-wide, unified voice has proven a successful model for achieving positive results at the state's legislature.

In 2017, its policy efforts through MinneMinds moved more deeply into Phase 2, which expanded its focus to include a more holistic, "whole child" vision around a pre-natal to age five continuum. These efforts received strong bi-partisan support at the legislature and focused on the themes of "**QUALITY**" and "**ACCESS**".

Significant policy gains for in 2017 included:

- the targeting and prioritization of early learning scholarships for children with the highest needs, including those facing homelessness, in foster care, child protection, or have teen parents
- expanding scholarship eligibility to include children birth to 2 years
- robustly expanding the inclusion and growth of home visiting
- continued funding and support for Parent Aware
- allowing for 1 and 2-star Parent Aware rated programs to receive scholarship funding until 2022

Significant funding gains in 2017 included (per biennium):

- additional \$20 million for early learning scholarships
- new funding of \$33 million for home visiting
- State funding of Parent Aware

The substantial investment in home visiting was particularly historic, reflecting a growing understanding of the importance of supporting young children and families prenatally through the earliest years.

Over the past 5 years, MinneMinds has effectively advocated for:

\$140 million invested in early learning scholarships = over 9,000 children
\$33 million invested in home visiting = 2,750 families



Success: A Work in Progress



But there is more work to do, with far too many children in the state unable to access a high quality early childhood program that meets their needs:



The Access Gap Still Remains

BUT...
more than
35,000 children
still need access to quality care
and education



Keeping ECCE A Top Priority

Going forward, MinneMinds will continue its advocacy on behalf of Minnesota's most vulnerable children as a means to aggressively address, and begin to close, Minnesota's pervasive and unacceptable opportunity gap. To achieve its goals, MinneMinds is committed to elevate early childhood as a top tier priority at the legislature.

Gubernatorial Candidate Conversations

With upcoming elections in November 2018 for the Governor and all seats within the House of Representatives, MinneMinds hosted a series of gubernatorial candidate forums focused on early childhood as a means to keep this issue front and center early in the race, and to help educate candidates on its importance, intricacies and critical issue as a state economic issue.

In late 2017, MinneMinds partnered with People Serving People's Center of Excellence in Minneapolis to host both DFL and GOP candidate community conversations, which included a tour of their high-quality, 4-star Parent Aware rated program that focuses on serving low-income children through trauma-informed care. In early 2018, we are partnering with several of our rural members in St. Cloud to host an event as well.

These events targeted a small, intimate audience of about 50-60 attendees to discuss the importance of supporting early childhood in Minnesota, and its many facets including increasing access, home visiting, Parent Aware (quality), workforce, child care crisis, state systems, multi-generational approaches, CCAP, etc. All events were also live-streamed on the MinneMinds Facebook page.

- October 2017: DFL Candidate Conversation
 - Mayor Chris Coleman
 - U. S. Representative Tim Walz
- December 2017: GOP Candidate Conversation
 - Representative Matt Dean
 - County Commissioner Jeff Johnson
- January 2018: Candidate Conversation, St. Cloud
 - Representative Tina Liebling
 - Representative Erin Murphy
- February 2018 – Children & Youth Issues Briefing
 - Participating candidates to be confirmed

Sharing Success Stories

Starting in late 2017, MinneMinds is developing an outcomes-based media campaign highlighting partners and programs across the state that exemplify the values of the MinneMinds coalition. It will incorporate qualitative and quantitative data to illustrate the success and positive benefits of providing equitable access to high quality, culturally relevant, early childhood programs that support the needs of both families and children from prenatal to age 5.

The goals of this campaign are to:

1. Promote importance of policies to improve access to high-quality early childhood care and education
2. Communicate the positive impacts it has on children, families, and our state
3. Keep early childhood as a top five issue for legislators and the governor

Our very first posting in late 2017 had a very strong click and response rate, and was re-tweeted by Senator Carla Nelson - further indicating we are effectively reaching leaders of influence, and they are paying attention to our messaging.

Re-imagining MinneMinds and Social Media

In early 2017, working with its new communications consultant New Publica, MinneMinds re-imagined its logo in tandem with its more expanded, whole-child focus. The new logo:

- Changed the color to purple, which is very bi-partisan
- Included a focus on a multi-generation approach embedding an adult hand and child hand together
- Simplified the tag line for greater clarity



MinneMinds also continued to grow its presence on social media, expanding its use of Twitter and Facebook. Its website was also redesigned to be more dynamic and child-focused www.minneminds.org.



October Gubernatorial Candidate Conversation – Program Tour

Networking & Alignment

The goal of the Start Early Funders Coalition Learning and Research Committee is to facilitate research, best practices and sharing of knowledge to strengthen our individual and collective efforts to enhance the well-being of Minnesota children and families with a focus on the whole child.

Convenings

The L&R Committee identified timely topics of critical importance to Minnesota's children and developed meaningful convenings to bring key stakeholders together for important information sharing and networking. The objective of these convenings was to raise awareness for emerging issues, share relevant research, profile innovative programs and spur conversation and action among stakeholders based on the lessons and information shared by experts.

- **2017 Children and Youth Issues Briefing** (January): Close to 1,000 individuals joined the Start Early Funders Coalition for a half day event, including more than 100 attendees that joined via the live webcast from around the state. This year's event focused on the emerging legislative issues expected to significantly impact our state's children and youth heading into the 2017 legislative session through an equity lens. The event was highlighted by presenters including a panel discussion with four state legislators moderated by Lori Sturdevant with the Star Tribune, remarks by Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt, and office of the Governor. Topics addressed included multi-generational approaches to build success for children prenatal to age 5, building career pathways for high school students, and an overview of the national political and economic landscapes.

Special thanks to Greater Twin Cities United Way, The Sheltering Arms Foundation, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and Minnesota Council on Foundations as sponsors of this event.

- **Advocacy for Children Day** (March): This was MinneMinds first year hosting this advocacy event at the capitol that gathered a diverse group of over 700 advocates, providers, parents and community members to show their support for early childhood in the state. Many childcare providers brought their children to "rally" legislative support, including Way To Grow, Joyce Preschool, ECFE, Head Start, and our Montessori partners. Sen. Carla Nelson shared with the audience was "the biggest rally at the Capitol so far this year." The event gave Minnesota children and advocates an opportunity to meet legislators, to celebrate the introduction of the House and Senate bills supported by MinneMinds, and to serve as a call to action for supporters of the movement to increase access to quality early development and education programs. The event began with a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives reading to the preschoolers in attendance, followed by brief remarks by several legislators, advocates and funders.
- **2017 Nancy Latimer Convening** (June): This convening honors the commitment and legacy of the late Nancy Latimer and provides an opportunity to bring leaders, champions and supporters of early childhood together to discuss critical issues affecting children, youth and families. The 2017 Nancy Award was presented to Carol Miller with Hennepin County, and Todd Otis with Think Small. Additional awards recognized Representatives Jenifer Loon and Dave Pinto, along with our first parent advocate, TraNeicia Sylvester. The event focused on building successful outcomes for

children through whole child health with a keynote presentation by Dr. Heather Winesett, Duluth, and included a state-wide panel discussion. The event was attended by more than 150 members of the early childhood community, including non-profits, advocates, and state agencies.

- **Convening on Children & Brain Development, White Earth** (August): Start Early has begun organizing and hosting one of its four annual convenings outside of the metro area to better promote rural priorities, foster new partnerships and increase awareness of best practices across rural communities. In August 2017, Start Early partnered with **White Earth** to participate in their annual **childhood brain development conference**. Attended by over 700 participants, Start Early partnered with White Earth in a multi-faceted approach. This included sponsoring Dr. Michael Troy with Children's Hospitals to present a keynote addressing the importance of relationships and attachment to social-emotional well-being; sponsoring MinneMinds partners to present a workshop on parent and provider advocacy; hosting Frank Forsberg, chair of MinneMinds to provide opening remarks for the event, highlighting the importance of early childhood and the work of MinneMinds; organizing a private tour for Start Early members of the White Earth reservation, child care centers, and community.

Sharing and Highlighting Best Practices

The coalition provides networking opportunities and facilitates the sharing best practices during member meetings and provide opportunities for alignments between funders as well as the work of the coalition's policy efforts.

A key tenet of the L&R Committee, this plays an important role in convening robust discussions and efforts around innovative programming, key learnings, ongoing challenges, and identifiable gaps.

Special meeting guests, presenters and discussions in 2017 included:

Minnesota Early Learning Council, Nancy Jost
Center for Family and Community Data, Knowledge and Well Being, Betty Emarita and Richard Chase
Department of Human Services (Parent Aware), Deb Swenson-Klatt, Nara Topp, Michelle Lenhart
Department of Human Services (Early Childhood Systems Reform), Jim Koppel
Minnesota Comeback, Patrice Relerford and Meg Nodzon
Minnesota Department of Education (Kindergarten Entry Profile), Hue Nguyen and Bobbie Burnham
Minnesota Department of Education (Early Childhood Access), June Reineke and Amanda Varley
Birth to Eight Workforce, Christa Anders and Ann McCully
Center for Reflective Practice - CEED, Christopher Watson, Deborah Ottman, Mary Harrison
MinneMinds, New Publica, Hylden Advocacy & Law, Frank Forsberg
Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting, Laura LaCroix Dalluhn

For more information about the Start Early Funders Coalition, please contact Kristen Rosenberger at kristen.rosenberger@gtcuw.org