

# A Portrait of School **READINESS**



**SMART  
BEGINNINGS**

*Virginia Early Childhood Foundation*



**VIRGINIA EARLY CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION**

1703 N. Parham Road, Suite 110

Richmond VA 23229

804 • 358 • 8323

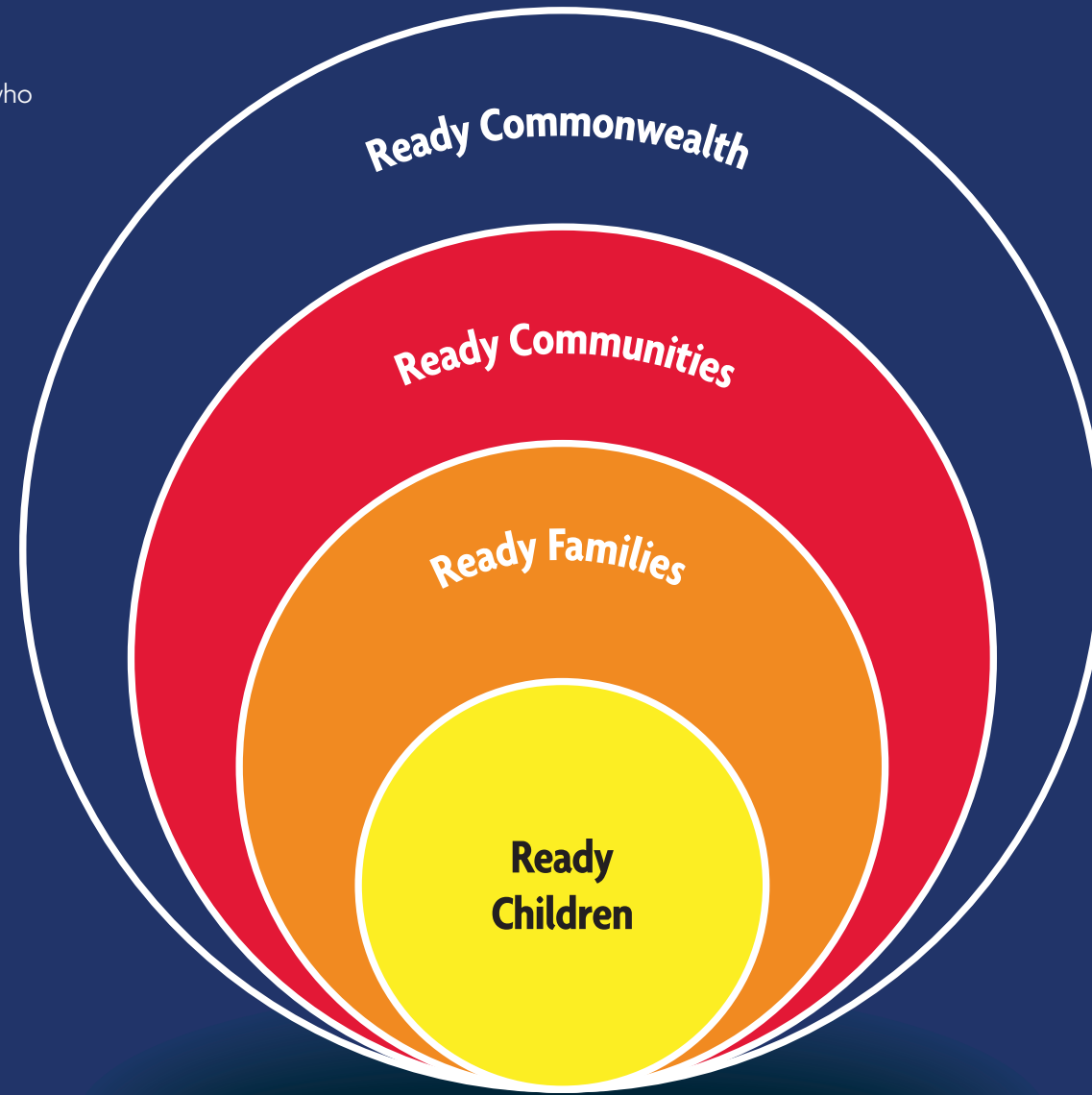
[info@vecf.org](mailto:info@vecf.org)

[www.smartbeginnings.org](http://www.smartbeginnings.org)

### What does it take, Virginia?

What does it take to build healthy, educated individuals who perform well throughout school and become productive members of society and the workforce?

It takes a Smart Beginning.



### I AM READY!

“My name is Maria and I am 5 years old. I started Kindergarten last month and I'm in Mrs. Porter's class. She says that I am ready for a great school year.”

READY CHILDREN

Family



“I am Sonia, Maria’s mother. I am so proud of Maria, and I’ve worked hard to make sure that she was ready to go to Kindergarten and do well in school. It is not always easy with my work schedule, but I try to provide nutritious meals and healthy routines for Maria. I’ve learned how important it is to read with Maria every day before she goes to bed, and I made sure that I chose a star-rated center when she was in child care while I worked. Most of all, I’ve made it a priority to spend time with Maria, talking, singing and playing with her, and showing her how to make good decisions.”

Child Care Provider



“I enjoyed having Maria in my class last year, and I was proud to work as a partner with her family, helping Maria learn and grow every day while her mother was working. I participate in the Star Quality initiative, and my mentor has helped me with organizing my center well for effective learning.”

Pediatrician



“It’s my job to help parents make sure that young children – like Maria – have the chance to grow in healthy ways. Starting before birth with prenatal care, regular attention to the health care needs of families and young children pays off in strong health outcomes all through life. Families have a big responsibility to ensure healthy eating habits and physical activity, as well as optimal dental, physical, and mental health services. I’m glad to be a partner with families like Maria’s in this significant role.”



Smart Beginnings Coordinator



“ I am the Smart Beginnings coordinator in Maria’s community. It’s my job to work with a coordinated team of leaders, providers and families in this community, all focused on making sure that every child – like Maria – has the chance for a healthy start and to be well prepared for school. Our community is ready to ensure that she and her family have access to regular, preventive health care; a quality rated child care center or preschool; and a smooth transition into her neighborhood elementary school. Some families in our community also benefit from having access to a home visitor, to services when a child has a developmental disability or delay, and to public preschool programs like the Virginia Preschool Initiative. If we all work together, committed to Smart Beginnings, we can make sure that Maria – and many other children in our community - are on a good solid path to success in school, the workforce, and life. ”

“ When children come to Kindergarten in good health and well prepared to learn, there is a good chance that they will be reading proficiently by third grade, transition well from elementary to middle to high school without need to repeat a grade, and will graduate from high school. Our school system benefits from reducing remediation and grade repetition – interventions that are costly on several levels. The best part of my job is supporting students like Maria to work well with peers; grow in confidence, persistence and motivation; and develop the competencies and skills that will help them thrive in higher education and the workplace. ”

School Superintendent



Business Executive and Employer



“ Virginia’s workforce pipeline begins with young children like Maria. She’s had the chance to develop her reading, math and social skills; interact with her peers; and problem-solve – the seeds of the skills we look for in the workplace. Setting children on a positive trajectory right out of the gate supports their progress from home to school to higher education or job training and to Virginia’s workforce. School readiness leads to a strong workforce and vital economy for Virginia’s communities. ”

# VECF and Smart Beginnings: Ensuring a Ready Commonwealth



**SYSTEMS BUILDING:**  
State-to-local infrastructure of state's school readiness efforts.

## What does it take, Virginia? It takes a Smart Beginning.

- **Smart Beginnings:** VECF supports a statewide network of Smart Beginnings collaborative partnerships that convene community leaders to build the capacity of local communities to create optimal environments for children's growth and development.
- **Smart Beginnings Leader Institute:** Aimed at strengthening the engagement and skills of local leaders, the Leader Institute convened community leaders from across the state to build local communities' leadership and capacity to support school readiness for young children.
- **Access to High Quality Preschool:** VECF works with Smart Beginnings partners across the state to understand barriers and promote opportunities for increasing access to high quality preschool.

- **School Readiness Report Card & Interactive Tool:** VECF published the School Readiness Report Card examining the capacity and effectiveness of the state's system to support the school readiness of young children, providing trend data on indicators of risk and educational achievement by locality. A companion interactive mapping tool provides at-a-glance comparisons across localities in Virginia.
- **VECF Advisors Council:** Comprised of policy, research, and evaluation experts who advise VECF's President and board, the Council guides the direction of research and evaluation efforts of VECF, as well as the use of the findings to discern policy implications. VECF's Chewning Fellow, Dr. Deborah Jonas, provides in-house research and evaluation expertise.
- **4-VA Research Grant:** VECF's Chewning Fellow is leading a team of researchers from UVA, Virginia Tech, JMU and GMU to study the impact of participation in public preschool in Virginia. The team is tracking a cohort of participants to middle school, to discern characteristics and sustained gains beyond third grade; report expected by the end of the year.
- **VLDS:** VECF has convened conversations among the agency partners of the Virginia Longitudinal Data System and VDSS and VDH to facilitate the addition of important data sets to the VLDS. Work is underway to access VDSS data sets related to child care subsidy, foster care, SNAP, and TANF by fall of 2014. This achievement will make it possible for agencies and researchers to gain a clearer sense of the efficacy of publicly funded interventions on the long term health and achievement of Virginians, beginning from the earliest years.
- **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Pilot:** VECF conducted a Kindergarten readiness assessment pilot in the 2013-14 school year. The pilot provided evidence that teachers can successfully master authentic assessment, and gave insights that many of Virginia's kindergarten classrooms are not structured to support developmentally appropriate instructional approaches. The pilot provided evidence that authentic, observation-based assessment, while requiring significant professional development for teachers to master, offers the best opportunity to tailor instruction to meet the multi-dimensional learning needs of young children and to measure progress in students' growth and development over time.



**RESEARCH & DATA:**  
Driving evidence and data based decision making.

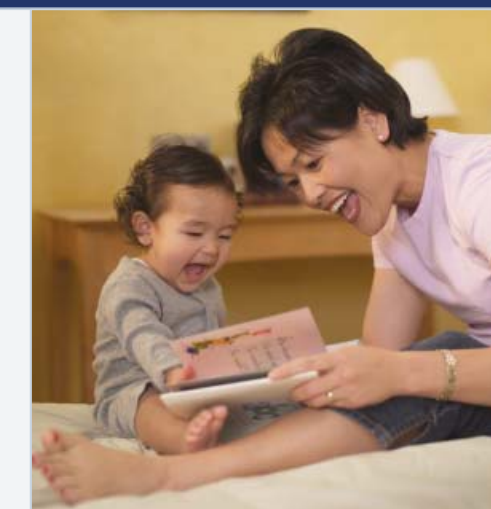
# VECF and Smart Beginnings: Our Value to the Commonwealth



**FOCUS ON QUALITY:**  
The research-proven driver of school readiness.

- **QRIS:** The Virginia Star Quality Initiative is jointly administered with the VDSS to publish quality ratings of early learning programs in all types of settings for parents. The initiative provides support so that programs can voluntarily improve the quality of the services they provide.
- **Teacher Quality:** VECF promotes strategies to support teacher quality in Virginia, including partnering with UVA to provide high quality online coursework on effective teacher-child interactions free of charge to teachers participating in the Star Quality Initiative.

- **Diversified Funding for School Readiness:** VECF works to identify and secure diverse funding for school readiness efforts, including providing technical assistance and leadership to secure federal grants. VECF convened a partnership with VDSS, VDH, CCA-VA, and Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth to earn funding for Virginia from Nemours/CDC for an early childhood obesity prevention initiative.
- **VA Chamber of Commerce/Blueprint Virginia:** Early childhood education was highlighted as a critical investment priority to help ensure a competitive workforce for Virginia's future in the Chamber's Blueprint Virginia. VECF and its Smart Beginnings partners, as business-led, public/private partnerships, are working side-by-side with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and local Chambers across the state to ensure that children start school ready to learn and on track to workforce success.
- **Smart Beginnings Starts with Families:** During the period between Mother's Day and Father's Day, VECF partnered with the Library of Virginia to recognize the role that parents and families serve in their young children's lives.



**PARTNERSHIPS:**  
Strategic Collaboration & Leveraging of Resources.

READY COMMONWEALTH

# Smart Beginnings: Readiness in Virginia

Ready Communities + Ready Schools + Ready Families = Ready Children

	Partnership Initiated	Number of Jurisdictions	Leveraged Funds	Creating Community Commitment	Promoting Healthy Development	Strengthening Families	Ensuring Access to Quality Early Learning	Grade Promotion Rates Improved	Kindergarten Reading Readiness Improved
<b>SUSTAINABLE</b>									
Fairfax	FY 2005	1	\$536,492	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑
Historic Triangle	FY 2005	3	\$854,795	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑
Central Virginia	FY 2007	5	\$216,606	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑
Greater Richmond	FY 2007	10	\$514,245	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑
Greater Roanoke	FY 2007	6	\$320,197	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↓
Martinsville Henry	FY 2007	2	\$293,732	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	→
Western Tidewater	FY 2007	3	\$201,200	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↓
Danville Pittsylvania	FY 2009	2	\$783,478	✓	✓	✓	✓	→	↑
<b>FULL IMPLEMENTATION</b>									
Hopewell Prince George	FY 2007	2	\$131,221	✓	✓	✓	✓	→	↓
Rappahannock Area	FY 2007	5	\$372,016	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑
Virginia Peninsula	FY 2007	2	\$553,697	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑
<b>IN DEVELOPMENT</b>									
New River Valley	FY 2007	5	\$603,088	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↓
Shenandoah Valley	FY 2007	7	\$143,242	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑
Crater	FY 2009	5	\$80,983	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Southside	FY 2010	3	\$10,324			✓	✓		
Greater Prince William	FY 2012	3	\$72,285	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Thomas Jefferson Area*	FY 2014	6	\$315,301	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Southwest Virginia Region**	FY 2014		\$158,866	✓			✓		
Appalachian Region	FY 2009	5	\$80,593	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Twin County	FY 2010	3	\$42,754	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Virginia Highlands	FY 2010	5	\$70,736	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Wythe Bland	FY 2010	3	\$56,468	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>86</b>	<b>\$6,412,319.00</b>						

\*Charlottesville Albemarle merged with Fluvanna Louisa and expanded to Nelson and Greene Counties

\*\* A regional system of 4 initiatives (Appalachian, Twin County, Virginia Highlands and Wythe Bland) covering 16 jurisdictions.

# Smart Beginnings: Readiness in Virginia: Key

**Partnership Initiated** - indicates the fiscal year that the first Virginia Early Childhood Foundation or Virginia Department of Social Services Investing in Virginia's Children grant was awarded.

**# of Jurisdictions** - indicates the number of counties and cities covered by the Smart Beginnings (SB) initiative.

**Leveraged Funds** - indicates cash and in-kind resources raised to meet VECF match requirements, as well as additional funding and resources committed to support the community's collaborative effort.

**Creating Community Commitment** - indicates implementation of strategies to build strong, diverse leadership; a sustainable, diverse base of funding investment; a cohesive strategic plan; and a solid accountability system.

**Promoting Healthy Development** - indicates a systems approach to health insurance coverage, maternal and child nutrition, early childhood immunizations, developmental screening and early identification and intervention services..

**Strengthening Families** - indicates systemic strategies for parent education and engagement, a network of home visiting services, and access to child care subsidy for low-income working parents.

**Access to Quality Early Learning** - indicates coordination of quality improvement in a diverse array of early learning options for families such as center, home, and faith-based settings, Head Start, publicly funded preschool, and preschool special education services.

**Grade Promotion Rates Improved** - indicates a higher percentage of children promoted from kindergarten to third grade on-time in SY2013-14 compared to the SB's first VECF grant year (when available). More children promoted on-time means decreased costs for grade repetition.

**Kindergarten Reading Readiness Improved** - indicates a higher percentage of children meeting the PALS-K benchmark in fall of SY2013-14 compared to the SB's first VECF grant year (when available). More children meeting the benchmark means decreased costs for reading intervention. Note: *Fairfax uses DRA2-Word Analysis in lieu of the PALS-K.*



# Virginia Early Childhood Foundation: Statement of Financial Position

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION JUNE 30, 2014

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$1,524,201
Accounts Receivable	
Grants Receivable Net	847,322
Prepaid Expenses	10,718
Other Assets	3,834
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$2,386,075</b>

#### Property and Equipment

Furniture and Fixtures	18,135
Accumulated Depreciation	(17,471)
	664

**Total Assets** **\$2,386,739**

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

#### Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$28,474
Grants Payable	317,810
Accrued Expenses	39,005
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$385,289</b>

#### NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	\$269,173
Temporarily restricted	1,732,277
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$2,001,450</b>

**Total Liabilities & Net Assets** **\$2,386,739**

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2014

	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
<b>Public Support and Revenue</b>			
Public Support			
Contributions			
Individual & Board Contributions	\$ 78,685	15,000	93,685
Corporations	35,000	255,000	290,000
Foundations & Organizations	2,493	102,846	105,339
<b>Total Public Support</b>	<b>\$116,178</b>	<b>\$372,846</b>	<b>\$489,024</b>
<b>Revenue</b>			
Government Grants	\$ -	1,946,394	1,946,394
Interest Revenue	828	4,344	5,172
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$828</b>	<b>\$1,950,738</b>	<b>\$1,951,566</b>
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	\$ 3,185,622	(3,185,622)	-
<b>Total Support &amp; Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,302,628</b>	<b>(862,038)</b>	<b>\$2,440,590</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Program Services	\$ 3,013,801	-	3,013,801
Fund Raising	90,646	-	90,646
Lobbying	3,268	-	3,268
Management & General	77,907	-	77,907
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,185,622</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,185,622</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$117,006</b>	<b>(862,038)</b>	<b>(745,032)</b>
<b>Net Assets, Beginning</b>	<b>\$152,167</b>	<b>2,594,315</b>	<b>2,746,482</b>
<b>Net Assets, Ending</b>	<b>\$269,173</b>	<b>1,732,277</b>	<b>2,001,450</b>

## 2014: Donors



### PUBLIC SUPPORT

Nemours, National Office of Policy & Prevention via a cooperative agreement from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Virginia Department of Social Services  
Virginia General Assembly  
Virginia Tobacco Indemnification & Revitalization Commission

### CORPORATE & FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Capital One Services, LLC  
Danville Regional Foundation  
Dominion Resources  
Ferguson Enterprises, Inc.  
MeadWestvaco  
NiSource Charitable Foundation  
Norfolk Southern Foundation  
Robins Foundation  
Virginia Business Publications, LLC  
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Katherine Schutt  
Susan Bailey & Sidney Buford Scott  
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*If we have overlooked your name or made an error of any kind please accept our apologies and call us at (804) 358-8323.*

# VECF and Smart Beginnings: Executive Summary

### What is our goal?

Promoting the school readiness of Virginia's young children.

### Why is school readiness so important?

A child's experiences during the earliest years have the potential to impact the trajectory of his or her entire life. When a child is born with risks, such as low birth weight, or to a mother who has not completed high school, or in a family living in poverty, positive interactions with caring parents and adults and access to high quality care and learning environments can buffer those risks. Children in supportive families, living in communities where there is access to health care and responsive caregivers, are better prepared for kindergarten. Children who are better prepared are able to make the most of school once they arrive and remain motivated to be successful throughout their lives.

### Why does school readiness matter to Virginians?

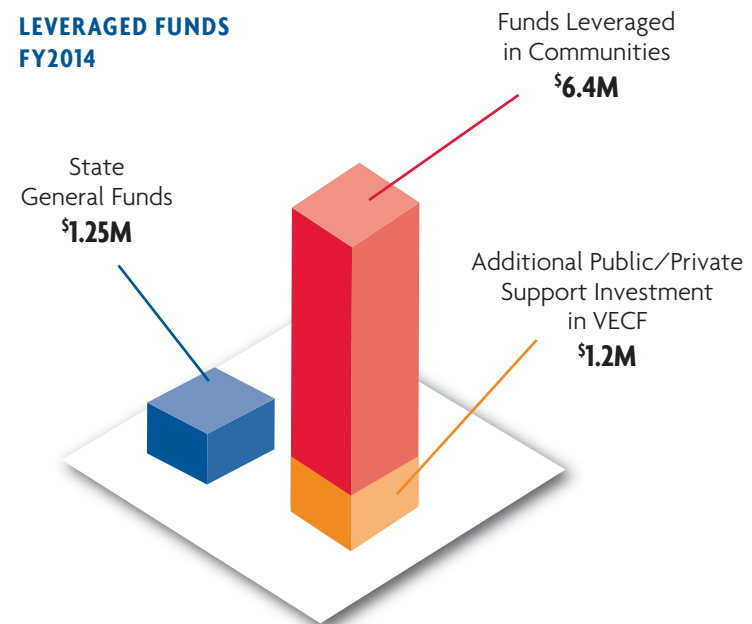
School readiness produces economic and social benefits including a productive workforce for Virginia. To learn more, see [Early Childhood Development and Returns on Investment](#).

### What is VECF's charge?

Virginia's Appropriation Act charges VECF, through a contract with the Virginia Department of Social Services, to support communities across the state as they develop proactive systems to promote school readiness for all children in Virginia, and to leverage one local or private dollar for every dollar of the state funding.

### How has VECF demonstrated stewardship of its funding?

- Invested in 30 Smart Beginnings school readiness initiatives, encompassing nearly 100 counties and cities and 90% of the state's population
- Operated with general administration costs at under 7% of total expenses
- Exceeded required ratio, leveraging \$6 for every \$1 of state funding
- \$7.6 million were attracted by the \$1.25 million appropriation from state general funds.
- Since FY07, Virginia has invested more than \$11 million in Smart Beginnings. VECF and its partners have leveraged nearly \$60 million in additional funding for school readiness efforts in the Commonwealth.



“ I'M READY! ”





October 1, 2014



Fellow Virginians,

I am proud to serve as chairman of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. Since 2006, Virginia has invested in the Foundation's flagship effort - Smart Beginnings. Our goal is to create and sustain community commitment for preparing children for school, resulting in both short-term savings for K-12 schools and long-term savings for communities.

Getting children ready for school may sound simple, but it requires a complex system of many moving parts. School readiness involves partners including parents and families, child care and health providers, schools, the faith community, higher education, business, and other community assets such as libraries and social services. Smart Beginnings serves as the catalytic connector, harnessing the system and driving its coordinated functioning.

Smart Beginnings helps local communities deliver on creating conditions for optimal child development for their families and young children, laying the foundation for school success, a strong workforce, and prosperous communities across this great Commonwealth.

There is no more important and long-lasting investment that we can make than in Smart Beginnings for our youngest citizens.

Sincerely,

Ben Davenport

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