



Request for Proposals

Getting Ready 1

January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2013

Proposals will be accepted from the following Smart Beginnings Planning Grantees:

- Smart Beginnings Southside
- Smart Beginnings Twin County
- Smart Beginnings Virginia Highlands
- Smart Beginnings Wythe Bland

Deadline for Receipt of Proposals: 12:00 noon (EDT), October 25, 2011

A mandatory, pre-application Webinar will be held on October 6, 2011 from 1:30-3:00 pm

1. Go to the web address below

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/join/834799326>

2. Join the conference call:

Dial 1-800-444-2801, access code 5893356

Meeting ID: 834-799-326

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I. INTRODUCTION

I-A. PURPOSE

The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) offers a continuum of grants for the purpose of establishing local public/private partnerships (Coalitions) that develop strategies and collaborations to improve the quality of early childhood development for young children prenatally to kindergarten, with the ultimate goal of helping children enter school ready to learn and succeed. The grants will bring together local stakeholders to design and develop a comprehensive infrastructure at the local level that expands, enhances and supports seamless high quality early childhood development.

Development of a collaborative local Coalition does not happen overnight, but is the result of months and maybe years of local leaders learning to trust and work together for the improvement of early childhood systems. To aid in this process, Foundation grants are offered on a continuum that allows for this incremental development. The first step in this continuum is the Planning Grant which provides a 15-18 months funding for local groups to form a leadership and governance structure, conduct a community assessment and complete strategic planning. The Planning Grant is followed by Getting Ready and Partnership grants that offer established Smart Beginnings coalitions an opportunity to implement and evaluation collaborative activities in one of more service area based on a community assessment and strategic plan. In the final stages of the continuum, grantees move into a Sustaining grant. After completion of this stage, grantees are considered “Sustaining Partners” of the Foundation.

The full scope of VECF grant making process and guidelines is outlined in the VECF Grants Manual. Coalitions, their fiscal agents and Leadership Councils must be familiar with, and operate according to, the VECF Grants Manual in conjunction with any award of VECF funds.

TIP 1: At each level in the grants continuum, grantees are expected to demonstrate an increased understanding and capacity to implement Smart Beginnings. The profile of Smart Beginnings in a community should increase from one level to the next and grantees should demonstrate their ability to serve as a catalyst for early childhood systems change. Applicant proposals will be evaluated on their progress over time, as well as compared to other grantees and applicants in the Smart Beginnings Learning Community.

TIP 2: The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation intends that its grants will lead to collaborative local systems that provide high visibility for Smart Beginnings and serve as a central point for addressing issues effecting children 0-5 years and families. Grantees should ultimately have a statewide impact through networking with the Foundation and other local initiatives.

I-B. FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND GRANT PERIOD

All grant awards are contingent upon funds available to the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation for *Smart Beginnings* grants.

It is the intent of the Foundation to fund one or more *Smart Beginnings Getting Ready I* grantees according to the following parameters:

- Proposals for projects in dollar amounts ranging from \$75,000 to \$100,000 depending on the strength of each proposal.
- A 24 month grant phase effective January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2013.
- Getting Ready grants require a 50% local match. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the match must be in cash while twenty-five percent (25%) of the match may be in-kind.
- **However, if your Smart Beginnings Coalition qualified for a match waiver during the Planning Grant phase, you may request a special match designation whereby up to 50% of the required match can be in-kind, with the remaining 50% in cash.** Page 10 of the VECF Grants Manual offers some examples of acceptable and unacceptable sources of in-kind match.

NOTE: While your community may qualify for the special match designation for Getting Ready 1, it is important that you attempt to raise as much cash match as possible. Lower levels of cash match impact your total project budget, thereby limiting the financial resources available to fund the activities of your Strategic Plan.

All VECF funds allocated during the grant continuum are factored into the maximum total allowance for one community. The total dollar allowance may not exceed \$500,000 during the Getting Ready and Partnership phases or a total of \$650,000 for any initiative over the course of all grants. See the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation Grants Manual page 3.

I-C. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

1. Applicants (also known as fiscal agent) must be a 501(c)(3), non-profit entity or public body that functions as an independent entity. Applicants should rely upon the advisory support of a Coalition's Leadership Council in meeting its grant requirements. Fiscal agents must demonstrate capacity to manage grant funds and have had at least one annual audit by a qualified auditor using Audit Standards for General Accounting in the United States.
2. Applicants must be Smart Beginnings Coalitions who have successfully completed the grant requirements of a Smart Beginnings Planning Grant.

I-D. GRANT REQUIREMENTS

More detailed information on grant requirements can be found in the *Virginia Early Childhood Foundation Grants Manual*. The two key areas of grant requirements are the following:

- 1) Smart Beginning Infrastructure
 - Fiscal or host agency employs, or contracts with, a full time *Smart Beginnings* Coordinator (32 hour per week minimum)

- Serve as point-of-contact in community for school readiness
- Maintain an advisory Leadership Council including business members
- Serve community as local planning and advisory body for school readiness
- Maintain an organizational structure with appropriate workgroups, committees, etc.
- Identify Leadership Council membership (fiscal agent may not serve as an officer of the Leadership Council)
- Participate with VECF in a Learning Community
- Implement a local public engagement plan
- Support *Smart Beginnings* branding
- Plan for sustainability and resource development

2) Service Area Activities

- Implement systems change involving multiple systems and program areas (see Smart Beginnings Theory of Change, Grants Manual **Resource L**)
- Base collaborative, community level work on community assessment and strategic plan
- Use Evidenced Based or Evidenced Informed Practices (see Smart Beginnings Evidenced Based Directory at <http://www.smartbeginnings.org/Portals/5/PDFs/EvidenceBasedDirectory.pdf>)
- Demonstrate collaboration, sustainability, and streamlined services
- Implement an Evaluation Plan to support ongoing program improvement

TIP: Show a commitment and ability to form a local system for school readiness that will implement sustainable systems rather than temporarily fund services and programs. **Use the Smart Beginnings Theory of Change in your description of the activities outlined in your proposal. Describe how your proposal implements both a systems focus and a substantive focus within your communities. See Resource L in the VECF Grants Manual.**

II. OUTLINE FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

Proposals must be completed and received by the Foundation by 12:00 noon (EDT) on Tuesday, October 25, 2011. The following outline is provided to guide proposal structure and content. Please refer to the VECF Grants Manual for additional details.

II-A. GRANT PROPOSAL DOCUMENT ORDER AND CHECKLIST

Each proposal should begin with a completed Grant Proposal Document Order and Checklist, **Attachment A**.

II-B. GRANT PROPOSAL APPLICATION COVER SHEET

A Grant Application Cover Sheet, **Attachment B**, must be submitted as the cover page of the grant proposal. This application requires an original signature from the local Fiscal Agent as the responsible party. The Smart Beginnings Coordinator may also sign if designated this authority by the Fiscal or Host agency. An authorized representative of the Coalition's Leadership Council may sign to reflect the Coalition's approval of the Fiscal Agent's application. The foundation encourages each of these signatures, with the authorization of the Fiscal Agent. Proposals lacking the Fiscal Agent signature will not be considered. The signed Application Cover Sheet must be scanned and submitted as part of the grant proposal.

II-C. GRANT NARRATIVE

The Grant Narrative may be up to 12 pages in length and must be typed, single-spaced, single sided and use a minimum of a 12-point font. The Grant Narrative should demonstrate an understanding of the goals of Smart Beginnings and its role in the community. The Grant Narrative must include the following information numbered by section:

Section 1: Community Description: Provide a brief description of the community and the major findings of the Community Assessment.

Section 2: History: Briefly describe the history of the local Smart Beginnings initiative.

Section 3: Infrastructure and Governance: address the following areas -

A. Collaboration and Sustainability of the Coalition: Describe the role of Smart Beginnings as a local collaboration for school readiness. Address the strengths and challenges in Coalition development and your plans for ensuring the long-term capacity and sustainability of the Coalition as the venue for early childhood systems change in the community.

B. Role of the Leadership Council: Briefly describe the role of your Smart Beginnings Leadership Council and include any plans for additional development during this grant phase. Describe any challenges or successes in Leadership Council development.

C. Workgroups or Committees: Briefly describe the structure and role of Coalition Workgroups and/or Committees and include any plans for additional development during this grant phase.

D. Role and Supervision of Smart Beginnings Coordinator: Briefly describe the role and supervision of the Smart Beginnings Coordinator. Indicate the number of hours per week that the Coordinator is employed to work for Smart Beginnings.

E. Fiscal Agent: Provide a description of the Fiscal Agent, their history of managing grant funds and how they comply with the requirements of an annual audit. Indicate if a signed MOU is in place between the fiscal agent and the Leadership Council.

Section 4: Goals and Strategies: Describe the goals and strategies you will use to carry out the Theory of Change of the Smart Beginnings model (see Smart Beginnings Theory of Change, **Resource L** of the VECF Grants Manual). Focus on the Systems Focus and Substantive Focus area(s) you will impact. Include a description of how your proposed goals and strategies will contribute to systems change within early childhood in your community. Describe how the goals and strategies will change the way in which organizations work together to impact your Systems Focus and your Substantive Focus. Include a description of how your proposed activities are evidence-based or evidence-informed. This section should be consistent with your Activities and Outcomes form (see Section II-D below).

Section 5: Plans for evaluating grant activities: Describe plans to measure progress; how will you know when your goals and strategies have been accomplished? Goals and strategies should be measurable to the extent possible, with timelines and data sources identified. Research-based instruments should be used where available (ASQ, ECERS, etc.). This information should be consistent with the Activities and Outcomes form (See Section II-D below).

- **TIP:** Preference will be given to applicants with service area activities that are Evidenced Based or Evidenced Informed, innovative, collaborative, and sustainable or involve new partners. The Foundation seeks activities and systems change that is new to the community. See *Grants Manual*, **Resource G**. Also consult the VECF Evidence Based Directory, which can be found at <http://www.smartbeginnings.org/Portals/5/PDFs/EvidenceBasedDirectory.pdf>

It is the Foundation's intent that grantees work to build linkages at the local level among early childhood programs to improve access, eliminate duplication and maximize use of funding. The desired results are sustainable Coalitions that show measurable results in preparing children for school.

The Foundation seeks applicants with the ability to work with programs and partners in a wide variety of systems. By working in multiple systems, Coalitions will be able to reach children and develop or expand capacity to reach more children and the adults that care for them in different environments.

Applicants will find it helpful to refer to several resources provided in the *Grants Manual*. State Early Childhood Development Systems, **Resource J** provides a diagram of several major systems and how they overlap. The *Getting Ready Model*, *Grants Manual*, **Sections IV-B and IV-C** describes those components of a state's school readiness system that must be mobilized to impact school readiness. The *Smart*

Beginnings Logic Model and Theory of Change both offer a visual representation of the development of local Smart Beginnings early childhood systems.

II-D. ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

The Activities and Outcomes Planning and Reporting form, **Attachment C**, is designed to support development of an Action Plan for each strategy of the Smart Beginnings Strategic Plan. It also offers a means for tracking and reporting progress over time.

Applicants for a Getting Ready I grant must complete Activities and Outcomes Planning and Reporting forms, Attachment C, for the following:

1. The Coalition must propose service area activities in one (1) early childhood Substantive Area. See Smart Beginnings Theory of Change, Grants Manual **Resource L**.
2. The Coalition must develop a goal or goals, strategies and activities for Coalition Development. Your Program Officer can share examples of A&O forms for Coalition Development upon request. These should include activities such as:
 - Leadership Council maintenance and development
 - Coalition subcommittee or workgroup development that will support the execution of the SB Strategic Plan
 - Public Awareness and Engagement Activities
 - Resource Development Activities
 - Other Coalition development activities that create, sustain and serve as indications of systems building across sectors of early childhood

Using the Activities and Outcomes form, **Attachment C**, fully articulate Goals, Strategies, and Medium-term Outcomes for years one and two of the grant, Actions, Resources Needed, Responsible Parties, Timeline, and Activity Outcome and Output measures that will be funded under this grant. The final column, Progress Report, should be left blank to allow for future reporting to VECF. ***Submit only the activities for funding under this grant as the Activities and Outcomes section of this proposal. Include those funded with both VECF and match funds.***

It is important that you carefully follow the instructions that accompany the Activity and Outcomes form, **Attachment C**. Goals, strategies and actions, outcomes and output measures should be worded consistent with the instructions provided.

II-E. BUDGET SUMMARY AND JUSTIFICATION

Applicants must complete a 24-month, itemized, projected Budget Summary and Justification, **Attachment D**, which supports capacity to complete grant activities. Consult the *Grants Manual* for additional information about allowable expenditures. Proposals must provide very specific detail as to how line item totals were determined in the Justification Column.

Indirect costs are not an allowable expenditure of VECF funds. However, direct costs related to Fiscal Agent fees are allowable provided that an itemized justification of these costs is included. For example, a percentage of salary and benefits of a Fiscal Agent employee to manage grant funds and reporting may

be itemized in the Direct Costs line item. Generally, VECF does not support direct Fiscal Agent costs above 10%.

II-F. MATCH DOCUMENTATION

- Getting Ready grants have a 50% match requirement. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the match must be in cash while twenty-five percent (25%) of the match may be in-kind.
- **However, if your Smart Beginnings Coalition qualified for a match waiver during the Planning Grant phase, you may request a special match designation whereby up to 50% of the required match can be in-kind, with the remaining 50% in cash.** Page 10 of the VECF Grants Manual offers some examples of acceptable and unacceptable sources of in-kind match.
- One quarter (1/4) of the total required cash match amount for this 24-month period must be documented as secured at the time of application submission.

For example, total required cash match for \$100,000 grant request = \$37,500 in cash. One quarter of the cash match, \$9375, must be secured at the time of proposal.

If your community qualified for a special match designation, and requested a \$100,000 award, the cash match would be \$25,000. One quarter of the cash match, \$6250, must be secured at the time of proposal submission.

Documentation of secured cash and in-kind match must be provided on the Match Documentation Form, **Attachment E**. Letters from sources of secured cash and in-kind match must be submitted with this proposal. Applicants are encouraged to list prospective sources for the remaining match funds to the extent possible. Any changes during the grant period should be updated on a revised Match Documentation Form, **Attachment E**.

II-G. MEMBERSHIP ROSTERS AND GOVERNANCE

At the Getting Ready level, Coalitions should have a governance structure that includes both a Leadership Council and committees. Committees or workgroups may consist of program experts and advocates and should be organized in a manner consistent with the local Smart Beginnings Strategic Plan.

Attach a Leadership Council and Coalition roster using **Attachments F and G**. Indicate committee membership if applicable. Be sure to include all the requested information for each member. For the Leadership Council roster, the Chair of the Leadership Council must be identified on this **Attachment F**. Other officers such as Vice Chair, Secretary, or Treasurer should also be noted when available.

VECF encourages Coalitions to request both Leadership Council and Coalition Committee members to verify their commitment to the Leadership Council or Coalition in writing. For Leadership Council Members, evidence of commitment to serve may be indicated in one of several ways (signed by-laws, Leadership Council Membership agreement, Letter of Support indicating willingness to serve). For

Coalition members, evidence of commitment is generally given through a signed Membership Agreement, such as the sample provided in the VECF Grants Manual, **Resource I**.

Signed evidence of participation should be noted by checking the far right column of **Attachments F and G**, Written Agreement Rec'd. Participation Agreements or other evidence of commitment to the Leadership Council or Coalition should not be submitted with the proposal but kept with the Coalition's local records.

II-H. GENERAL CONDITIONS AND ASSURANCES

All grant proposals must include a signed copy of the General Conditions and Assurances Form, **Attachment H**, which demonstrates the Fiscal Agent's agreement to grant requirements. This application requires an original signature from the local Fiscal Agent as the responsible party. The Smart Beginnings Coordinator may also sign if designated this authority by the Fiscal Agent. An authorized representative of the Coalition's Leadership Council may sign to reflect the Coalition's approval of the Fiscal Agent's application. The foundation encourages each of these signatures, with the authorization of the Fiscal Agent. Proposals lacking the Fiscal Agent signature will not be considered. The signed General Conditions and Assurances must be scanned and submitted as part of the grant proposal.

II-I. COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIC PLAN

A complete copy of a *Smart Beginnings* Community Assessment must be included with the proposal. The Community assessment must include a completed copy of *Getting Ready* Community Indicators Form, **Attachment I**, in addition to other data relevant to the community.

A copy of the current Strategic Plan, labeled as **Attachment J**, and even if not complete, should be included. The Strategic Plan format from the Toolkit for Effective Coalitions should be used, including the Activities and Outcomes form. A Smart Beginnings Strategic Plan will include goals and strategies to be funded under this proposal as well as those that are planned for future grant phases. Note: For the purposes of this Getting Ready 1 grant, action steps and other categories on the Activities and Outcomes form only have to be fully completed for activities to be funded under this current grant.

II-J. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Attach a Smart Beginnings Coalition Organizational Chart which includes Smart Beginnings Coordinator, Fiscal Agent, Host Agency if applicable, Leadership Council and Coalition Workgroups /Committees. Label this Organizational Chart **Attachment K**.

II-K. BYLAWS OF LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Attach the Bylaws of your Leadership Council, labeled as **Attachment L**. If Bylaws are not completed, write a brief narrative summary of your Leadership Council's plan for completion of Bylaws and label it as **Attachment L**.

II-L. LIST OF LEADERSHIP COUNCIL AND COALITION MEETINGS

Attach a list of the dates and number in attendance for each Leadership Council and Coalition meeting, including workgroups/subcommittees for the last 12 months. Label this list, **Attachment M**.

II-M. LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Five (5) or more letters of support from local leaders and programs should be included with each proposal. The letters should indicate support for the coalition, a statement about the importance of school readiness for the locality and commitment to collaboration related to the service area activity outlined in the grant proposal. Suggested leaders are as follows:

- Superintendent of Schools
- School Board Member
- Director of Department of Social Services
- Director of Health Department
- Workforce: Chamber Chair, Workforce Board/Employment Commission Director
- Business Leader
- College or University President or Dean
- County or City Government Mayor or Administrator
- CEO of Major Non-Profit
- Director/ CEO of service area Partner agency

At least one letter should come from each jurisdiction joining in the proposal. Others may be included to demonstrate community support. Letters of Support indicating cash or in-kind match should be included here. Letters of Support indicating willingness to serve on Leadership Council should be included here.

III. SUBMISSION SPECIFICATIONS

Unless otherwise specified in the Request for Proposals, all grants must adhere to the following specifications:

- Proposals should be single spaced in a single WORD or PDF document. Pages should be letter sized (8 ½ x 11 inch)
- Font should be no smaller than 12-point except in tables or attachments
- Margins should be 1" on all sides
- Proposals should adhere to page limits specified in the Request for Proposal
- Incomplete proposals will not be considered
- Pages requiring signatures must be signed and scanned for submission via email.
- Faxed proposals will not be considered
- The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation must receive a proposal by 12:00 noon (EDT) on Tuesday, October 25, 2011 –late proposals will not be accepted
- Email a copy of the proposal and all attachments to *mylinda@vecf.org*

For questions or additional information, contact:

Myllinda Moore, Senior Program Officer
The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
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Richmond, VA 23229
(804) 358-8323
myllinda@vecf.org

IV. GRANT REVIEW PROCESS

The Grant review process is outlined in the VECF *Grants Manual*. Initial review of proposals will be completed the second week in May. Changes and clarification of proposals are often required after the initial review. Following the initial review, Program Officers will provide feedback to applicants and offer an opportunity for revisions. Revisions will not be accepted after 12:00 noon on November 23, 2011 at 12:00 noon. Revisions to proposals should be returned to the Coalition’s Program Officer.

V. GRANT AWARDS

Applicants will be notified of grant awards by mid-December. Letters of Agreement will be issued by the Foundation at that time. Signed Letters of Agreement and an initial invoice must be returned to the Foundation before the first grant payment will be made.

VI. LIST OF REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

A full list of all components of a complete Grant Proposal is available on the Grant Proposal Document Order and Checklist, **Attachment A**. As part of a complete proposal, the following attachments should be included and labeled as follows:

Attachment A: Grant Proposal Document Order and Checklist	– VECF document
Attachment B: Grant Application Cover Sheet	– VECF document
Attachment C: Activities and Outcomes Reporting Form	– VECF document
Attachment D: Budget Summary and Justification Form	– VECF document
Attachment E: Match Documentation Form	– VECF document
Attachment F: Leadership Council Roster	– VECF document
Attachment G: Coalition Roster	– VECF document
Attachment H: General Conditions and Assurances	– VECF document
Attachment I: Community Assessment	– Coalition generated document
Attachment J: Strategic Plan	– Coalition generated document
Attachment K: Organizational Chart	– Coalition generated document
Attachment L: Bylaws of Leadership Council	– Coalition generated document
Attachment M: List of Leadership Council and Coalition meetings	– Coalition generated document

The Grant Narrative and Letters of Support are also required as part of a full proposal but are not considered attachments.