



What is Smart Beginnings?

What it means to be a Smart Beginnings Community

Smart Beginnings communities commit to a goal of ensuring that all children in their community enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn. They agree to collaborate across public and private sectors, including K-12 education, early care and education, health, local government, family support agencies, social services, higher education, and the business community to make this happen. “Visionary,” “entrepreneurial,” “creative,” and “unified for a common purpose” characterize a thriving Smart Beginnings community.

Local leaders within a Smart Beginnings community agree to invest in the future by joining the growing number of Virginia communities committed to maximizing each child’s potential. Positive results for children and a brighter future for the community are the end point for a Smart Beginnings initiative.

Why Become a Smart Beginnings Community?

These local efforts are transforming children, their communities, and the commonwealth. They are building on the findings of numerous research studies that confirm the best return on investment in human capital is reached by investing in the early years. A kindergarten ready child is more likely to not repeat a grade and to graduate from high school. Children who thrive in the first 5 years are less likely to need remediation, special education or abuse alcohol and drugs. As adults, they are more likely to achieve their earning potential, have health coverage and avoid costly medical conditions. High quality early care experiences can lead to a 16% return on investment.

Brief History of Smart Beginnings

Virginia leaders developed a “Smart Beginnings” plan for Virginia’s children in 2007. Simultaneously, with the support of succeeding Governors and the General Assembly, funds were designated for the creation of VECF to serve as the private partner for the state’s early childhood efforts, funding early childhood initiatives in Virginia communities. Since 2007, VECF increased grant making, from 3 communities to 29, covering over 88% of Virginia’s population.

Local dollars are available to match Smart Beginnings Grants. Combining locally raised revenues and additional funds accessed by VECF, we have leveraged dollars \$4 for every \$1 appropriated by the General Assembly

Smart Beginnings gets results!

PALS scores are increasing in mature Smart Beginnings Communities as much as 20%.

How Smart Beginnings Funding Works

Funded by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF), Smart Beginnings communities are eligible for a series of grants to support their infrastructure development, strategic planning, and enhancements to early childhood systems. For up to 11 years, a qualifying community that reaches its objectives will continue to receive funds from VECF while they increase local match needed to sustain efforts.

VECF offers a trajectory of grants for communities beginning with a \$50,000 Planning Grant. With successful completion of grant requirements, communities advance through a trajectory that may total up to \$650,000 (see list on back page). Based on availability of funds, VECF has gradually created competitive opportunities for additional localities to apply for Smart Beginnings funding.

What are the Next Steps?

Localities interested in transforming their communities through investment in kindergarten readiness can contact Mylinda Moore, Mylinda@vecf.org, or Maria Brown, Maria@vecf.org. 804.358.8323



Current Grantees November 1, 2011)

Planning Grantees

Smart Beginnings Crater
Emporia, Dinwiddie, Greensville, Sussex

Smart Beginnings Wythe Bland
Wythe, Bland

Smart Beginnings Twin Counties
Grayson, Carroll, Galax

Smart Beginnings Virginia Highlands
Russell, Washington, Bristol

Smart Beginnings Southside
Halifax, Mecklenburg, Brunswick

Smart Beginnings Greater Prince William
Prince William, Manassas, Manassas Park

Getting Ready Grantees

Smart Beginnings Shenandoah Valley
Staunton, Waynesboro, Shenandoah,
Augusta, Page, Rockingham, Harrisonburg

Smart Beginnings Appalachia
Lee, Scott, Wise, Norton

Smart Beginnings Fluvanna Louisa
Fluvanna, Louisa

Smart Beginnings Heartland
Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland,
Lunenburg, Nottoway, Prince Edward

Smart Beginnings New River Valley
Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, Radford

Smart Beginnings Smyth Tazewell
Smyth, Tazewell

Smart Beginnings Virginia Peninsula
Hampton, Newport News

Smart Beginnings Rappahannock Area
Caroline, Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania,
King George, Stafford

Smart Beginnings Hopewell Prince George
Hopewell, Prince George, Ft. Lee

Smart Beginnings Alexandria Arlington
Alexandria, Arlington

Partnership Grantees

Smart Beginnings Danville Pittsylvania
Danville, Pittsylvania

Sustaining Grantees

Smart Beginnings Central Virginia
Bedford City & County, Lynchburg, Amherst,
Appomattox, Campbell

Smart Beginnings Martinsville Henry County
Martinsville, Henry

Smart Beginnings Western Tidewater
City of Franklin, Southampton, Isle of Wight

Smart Beginnings Greater Roanoke
Roanoke City & County, Botetourt, Craig,
Salem, Vinton

Sustaining Partners

Smart Beginnings Historic Triangle
James City County, Williamsburg, York County

Fairfax County Office for Children
Fairfax

Smart Beginnings South Hampton Roads
Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk,
Virginia Beach

Smart Beginnings Charlottesville Albemarle
Charlottesville, Albemarle

Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond
Richmond, Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico,
Petersburg

Smart Beginnings Communities

Smart Beginnings Franklin Patrick
Franklin, Patrick

Smart Beginnings Buchanan Dickenson
Buchanan, Dickenson

Smart Beginnings Northumberland Lancaster
Northumberland, Lancaster