



**UCLA Center for
Healthier Children,
Families and
Communities**

**Strategic Audit:
The Brighter Futures
Initiative of the Hartford
Foundation for Public
Giving**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Brighter Futures Initiative

Just as new and important research about the importance of optimizing early child development was emerging in the early 1990's and commanding national attention, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG) launched the Brighter Futures Initiative (BFI). The BFI has two overarching goals - to strengthen the service system and to support the school readiness and early school success of Hartford's children, and four focus areas:

1. Early care and education;
2. Family support and parent education;
3. Child health and well-being; and
4. Responsive schools.

Launched in 1990 as a 10-year, \$10 million effort, in 2000 the HFPG reauthorized BFI for another 10-years for an additional \$15 million. The reauthorization of BFI was re-purposed to focus more on early childhood system-building and to extend its reach of services from an initial target on children ages 0-5 years to an expanded target population of children up to 8 years of age. This second ten year effort, authorizes BFI through 2010, and includes a greater focus on evaluation of program outcomes, and a strategic shift from building capacity through the funding of individual programs to an emphasis on multi-program capacity building initiatives and citywide early childhood planning.

Purpose of Strategic Audit

For the final four years of its current authorization (2007-2010), BFI is seeking to capitalize on past accomplishments, and strategically adjust funding priorities to institutionalize and expand its successful programs and continue to provide the impetus for fundamental improvements in Hartford's early childhood service system. The UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities (CHCFC) was contracted to assess the strategic direction and potential future impact of BFI, first in relationship to what BFI has accomplished over the past 15 years, second in relationship to the changing city and state early childhood development (ECD) program, policy, planning and financing contexts, and lastly in relationship to other comparable innovative initiatives nationally and internationally for young children. Using this analysis, the UCLA-CHCFC was asked to provide a set of options and priorities that can serve to adjust funding strategies, modify expectations and to position BFI in relationship to changing local and state policy contexts and other major early childhood initiatives with similar goals. The recommendations in this report are designed to enhance the sustainability and impact of the HFPG BFI investment. These recommendations also attempt to account for the needs and opportunities of young children and families in Hartford, the levels of annual and total discretionary resources available to BFI over the final four years of the current authorization, and the current and potential roles that the HFPG can play, given its mission, goals, and accomplishments.

From May to September 2006, UCLA-CHCFC conducted a "strategic audit" of BFI by interviewing key informants, reviewing documents and conducting focus groups of local and state leaders and stakeholders in early childhood. We sought to identify opportunities for BFI to increase its responsiveness to existing and changing community needs, and to enhance its ability to achieve its strategic goals of enhancing the development of a high performing early childhood system by leveraging new and emerging opportunities at the local, state and national levels.

We begin our report with a discussion of how a high performing system of services for ECD might be constructed to focus our analysis on how current and future BFI activities could be adjusted to create high impact system-building strategies. The report then summarizes the accomplishments of BFI to date, as well as the strengths and challenges BFI is currently facing in achieving its goals. These two sections lay a foundation for Section IV which offers a set of recommendations and strategic options for how BFI can institutionalize programs as it continues to support the development of a comprehensive and integrated early childhood service system in Hartford. Lastly, the report concludes with some ideas for how BFI might position itself with regard to the latest thinking in early childhood both nationally and internationally as it pertains to public policy and current best practices. To use an analogy from the computer industry and dot-com world, our goal is to review the strengths and challenges of BFI versions 1.0 launched in 1990 and 2.0 launched in 2000 in order to develop a set of recommendations for BFI version 3.0 which will take place over the next four years and potentially lay the foundation for a “fully-loaded” version 4.0 that could begin in 2011.

II. A FRAMEWORK FOR A HIGH PERFORMING EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

The BFI has served as an important catalyst for ECD service system improvement. Early childhood systems-building involves the coming together of several independent agencies, service sectors and institutions, around a common vision and set of goals for how they can align their efforts to achieve shared early childhood outcomes. This requires building new working relationships across traditional service sectors and the usual and customary service delivery pathways in order to provide a more comprehensive and integrated set of services to enable healthy development and learning. Effecting systems change for children and families requires stakeholders to approach old problems in new, creative ways. Changing existing systems requires improvements in the processes involved in administering and delivering services, and the relationships among the individuals, programs, and organizations involved in providing services. These efforts can lead to a highly functioning system that provides services that are: Effective, Efficient, Available, Appropriate, Capable, Acceptable, Coordinated, and Equitable. (IOM report)

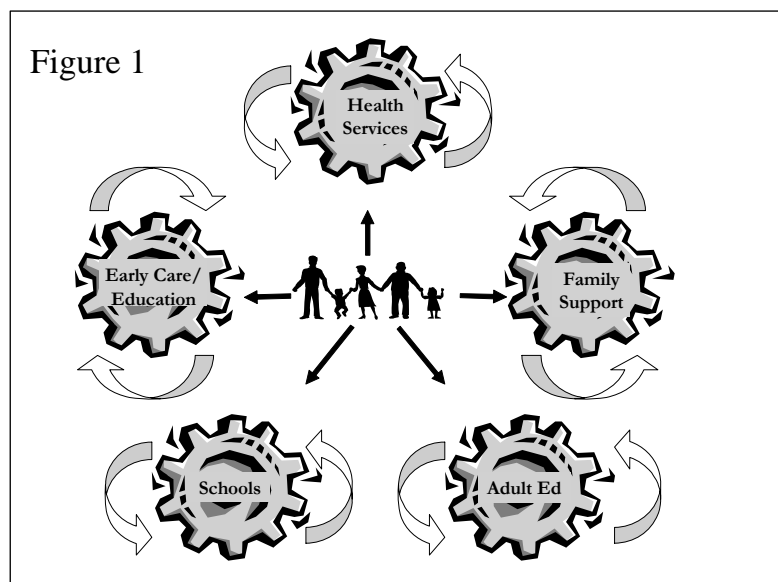
Increasing BFI support for system-building activities over the next four years is an important strategic adjustment that can enhance BFI’s ability to approach the challenges of optimizing ECD in new and creative ways. By focusing on improvements to the system, there is an implicit shift from an emphasis on “fixing” what is “wrong” with families to the recognition that the “system” (providers, administrators and policymakers at multiple levels and across multiple sectors including the health, family support, schools, early care and education, and adult education sectors) can do a better job at supporting families’ efforts to raise their children. Hartford is not unlike many other cities and states in the United States that are attempting to improve a fragmented set of early childhood services and enhance the capacity of these disjointed services to begin to function as a higher performing system. Typically, the major service providers within a community lack common goals and a sense of shared responsibility. Services tend to be overly complex and are delivered in an uncoordinated, duplicative and fragmented manner and the existing system is largely not informed by quality measurement or a performance improvement framework to guide change in policy and funding. It is also not uncommon for practitioners to use outdated service delivery models and to not have the most recent service delivery technologies at their disposal.

For instance, while there is wide spread agreement that pediatric clinics should be able to provide anticipatory guidance and developmental screening to identify learning and behavioral

problems at the point that they can maximally benefit from early intervention, most pediatric clinics across the U.S. are struggling to incorporate appropriate anticipatory guidance and to systematically use valid developmental screening instruments. They are also attempting to overcome their disciplinary and service system isolation by attempting to connect the services they provide with those provided at child care centers and early intervention programs that also serve the same population of children and families. Improving the performance of the early childhood system means that these systemic shortcomings must be addressed through sector-specific strategies focused on improving the capacity of, in this case, pediatric clinics to provide better developmental services, but also through cross-sector strategies designed to improve the service delivery pathways that cross sectors, in this case, by creating a more functional pathway between the services provided by the pediatric clinic and those provided in a preschool or child care center.

As a result of a number of system-level shortcomings, families must often identify providers on their own and navigate through a maze of multiple bureaucratic structures to obtain the services they need. For that reason, many children's needs often go unidentified or completely unaddressed. These and other early childhood service delivery challenges require a fundamental shift in how the system functions (i.e. how agencies organize, fund and administer services). This involves improvements to both the process of administering, and delivering services and improvements in relationships between service providers, programs and administering organizations. It also necessitates changes in governance, financing and organizational capacity. Changes to governance involve changing how individuals and organizations make decisions, allocate funding, and set policy within and across sectors at both state and local levels. Changes to financing involve changes in the amount and type of funding as well as changes in the mechanisms for drawing down and the flexibility in the use of these resources. Capacity building in a system's context involves leadership and workforce development, establishing new partnerships and an increase in the system's ability to measure and track its programs, services and systems in a coordinated, efficient and useful way so that it can inform a continual process of quality improvement.

In considering how to build a high performing ECD service system aimed at improving school readiness, a cog and wheel analogy can serve as a useful heuristic (see Figure 1). Service providers normally work within their own service delivery site or sector, functioning independently (cogs turning in isolation). Each site or sector may increase productivity (by increasing function of their cog), without necessarily improving the performance of the system. Without a productive and functional interface that optimizes potential relationships between one site or sector with another, the isolated improvement efforts have less than optimal impact.

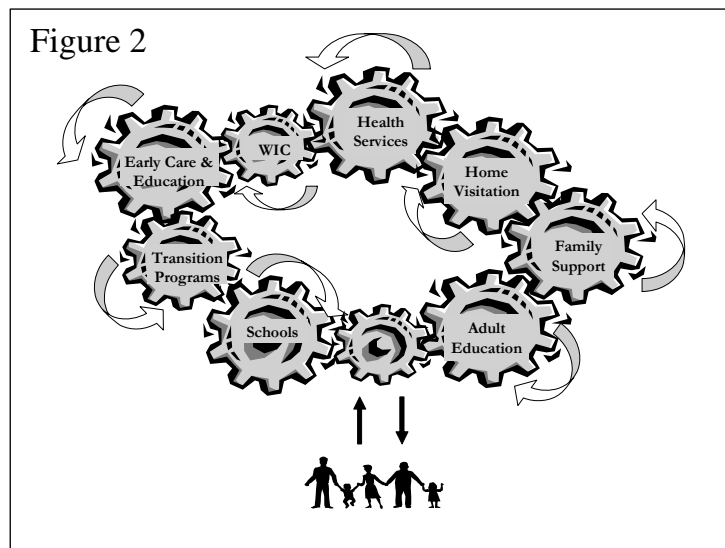


How does this simple analogy apply to BFI? An example can be illustrated with the Child Care Enhancement Project (CCEP), where for BFI to fully realize the impact of investments made to improve the quality of early childhood education (ECE), program activities and enhancements in

this sector must be connected and more fully integrated with other efforts and initiatives within the health, family support and education sectors.

If these cogs (or sectors) are connected through formal relationships and processes, then their combined energy helps to enhance the overall system performance. Furthermore, once independent services become connected contributors to a functioning system, changes made in one service sector or by a single provider can have a significant impact on the whole system. This means that when BFI enhances the relationships and processes between sectors and services, it is enabling multiple leveraging opportunities. By catalyzing system-building efforts, BFI is helping to create a system that helps children and families enter through any door/sector and yet have a greater opportunity to receive needed, and more integrated services from all the other sectors and providers (see Figure 2).

The term “change agent” has been used most frequently in the business sector to describe an individual who purposefully makes changes in their organization, or an organization that purposefully makes changes in their sector. The BFI has played an important role as a change agent over the past 15 years, and has the potential to increasingly play a role that promotes collaboration and partnerships to provide services to children in better ways that will, as an end result, improve their readiness for school.



Building better early childhood service systems involves intensive collaboration and commitment from different sectors. As part of a community foundation, BFI has an objective and independent vantage point from which to see challenges and opportunities in Hartford with a history of strong and diverse partnerships and relationships that it can draw on to leverage future opportunities. This puts it in a unique position for being the catalyst for this important effort. This is not to suggest that BFI serve as the long-term funder of system change in Hartford but rather that it play a catalytic role as “change agent.” This might involve a strategic initiative where BFI dedicates an increased proportion of its resources to advocate for change, to serve as a source for or conduit to needed programmatic and policy expertise, and to serve as a convener, facilitator and host to new collaborative partnerships. Placing more emphasis on these types of activities may require a shift in funding strategies, with more resources allocated to developing in-house BFI staff capacity with expertise in policy, system-building, and advocacy, and providing system-building grants as seed money to support discrete capacity-building projects. As we will discuss in more detail later, BFI might capitalize on previous investments in the Family Centers by making grants for an enhanced and optimally functioning family center model in Hartford that demonstrates how to bring the cogs of the health, family support, early education and school sectors together (as depicted in Figure 2) by co-locating or linking to a coordinated and comprehensive array of child and family services. Demonstrating the role and function that a fully operational and connected family center can play as a hub of service delivery and connectivity would go along way towards “proof of concept” that is often

needed in order catalyze additional policy and financial support at the local, state and national levels.

By focusing efforts of BFI 3.0 over the next four years on serving as a change agent for a high performing ECD system in Hartford, the long-term goals of BFI are more likely to be achieved. By engaging state and local government agencies in ECD system-building activities and policy development, and by engaging the Hartford and greater Connecticut business community in the goal of enhancing the ECD system as a good economic investment, BFI can advocate for effective sustainability strategies. As we consider “sustainable system-building efforts,” we are not just referring to the maintenance of services that BFI helped to support and improve but to a set of strategies that can create an environment where government and the business sector are committed to a fully functioning and high performing early childhood system. Expanding BFI role to include advocating for the resources necessary to create the conditions for sustainable systems building, will potentially require a greater focus on action, leadership and communications strategies that will continue to build the community and political relationships that support long-term political viability.

III. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF BRIGHTER FUTURES INITIATIVE

This section begins with a description of the methods used to conduct the strategic audit and then provides an overview of how BFI has evolved over the last 15 years in terms of its program strategies and funding allocations. Next, this section outlines the strengths and challenges that BFI has faced in relationship to BFI’s two major goals and four focus areas and then concludes with a summary of the overall view of the initiative. This section is designed to lay the foundation for the strategic options that we offer in Section IV.

Methods Used to Conduct Strategic Audit

Our analysis was informed by information that we gathered on BFI and on issues related to early childhood at the local and state levels. This information came from a document review, one-on-one interviews, three focus groups and a site visit at a BFI-supported Family Center.

A complete list of the documents reviewed can be found in Appendix A and consisted of local and state reports on policy and planning, studies on children and families in Hartford, recent evaluations conducted of BFI by Philliber Research Associates, and reports and recommendations developed by BFI to its Board of Directors at the HFPG concerning the status of funded projects and future grant-making.

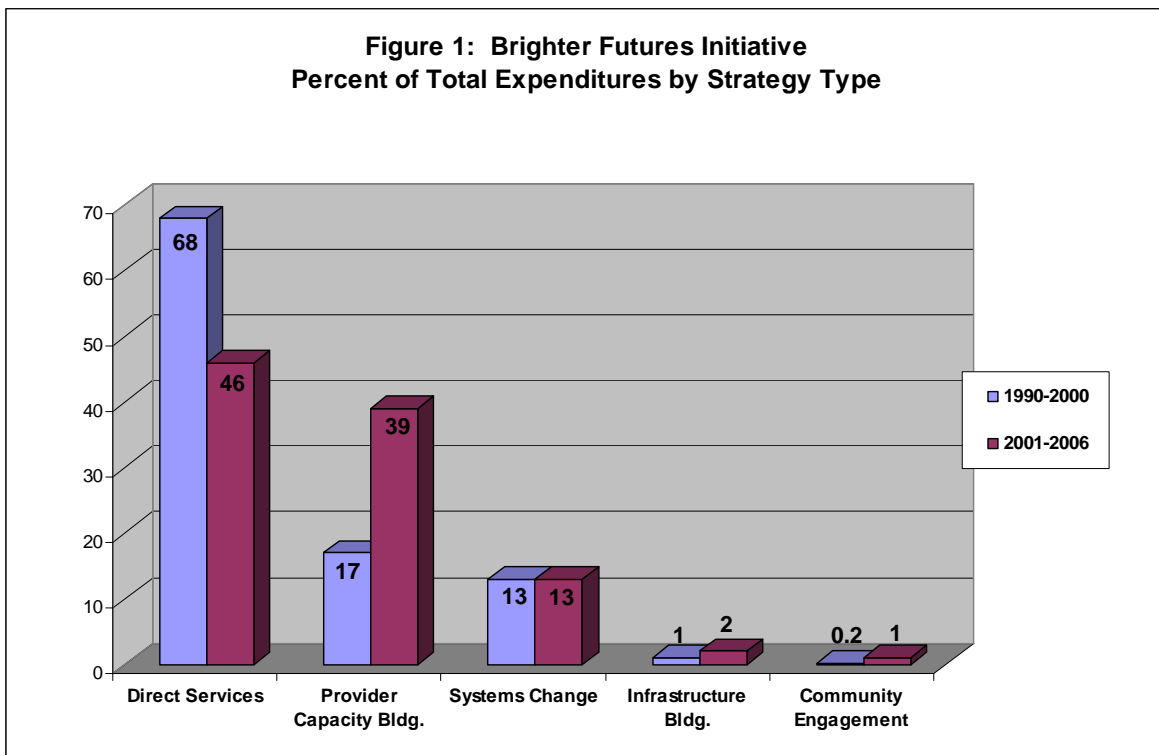
One-on-one interviews were held to inform the framing of the strategic audit, and to identify resources for review and potential stakeholders for the focus groups. These interviews as well as the subsequent focus groups represented an opportunity to identify leveraging opportunities and to generate and field support for recommendations to BFI. One-on-one interviews took place with the following individuals:

- ❖ Linda Kelly, President, HFPG
- ❖ Christopher H. Hall, Vice President for Programs and Special Projects, HFPG
- ❖ Richard Sussman, Director of BFI, HFPG
- ❖ Jose Colon-Rivas, Director of Mayor's Office for Young Children
- ❖ Janice Gruendel, Senior Advisor for Early Childhood, Governor's Office
- ❖ Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director of the State of Connecticut Commission on Children
- ❖ William Philliber, Senior Partner, Philliber Research Associates.
- ❖ Jeffrey Daniels, Consultant, Mayor's Office for Young Children

Three focus groups were held, each lasting approximately 2 hours involving between 7-10 participants (for a complete list of participants, refer to Appendix B). Focus group participants included BFI stakeholders from both public and private sectors involved in administration, research, planning, policy, and advocacy of early childhood programs, services and systems. Some focus group representatives were leaders of either past or current BFI funded projects and others were current and potential BFI partners/collaborators. The three focus groups were organized by early childhood service sector (Early care and education; Health; and Family support) and the discussions in each focus group varied according to the issues most relevant to the particular sector.

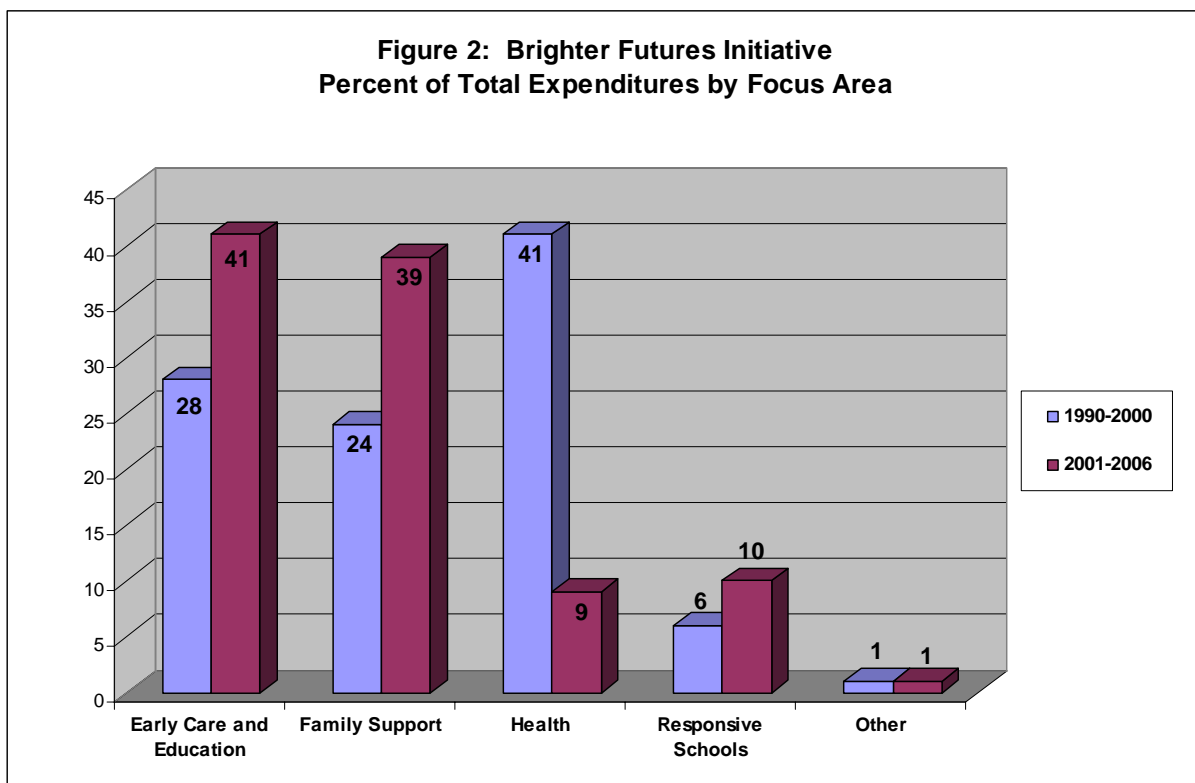
Evolution of BFI: Program Strategies and Allocation of Funds

Since 1990, BFI has grown from an initial startup of 3 funded, collaborative projects to playing a major role as a key supporter, collaborator and catalyst for strategic initiatives for young children and their families in Hartford. From 1990 to 2000, BFI funded a total of 60 grants totaling \$13 million and between 2001 to 2006, BFI made an additional 72 grants totaling an additional \$10 million. BFI funding strategies have also evolved over the years. Figure 1 highlights BFI's expenditures (as a percent of total expenditures) by key strategy type (Direct Services, Provider Capacity Building, System Change, Infrastructure Building and Community Engagement) for two time periods (1990-2000 and 2001-2006). For the overall timeframe (last 15 years) which is not depicted in the figure, BFI has made the largest proportion of its expenditures toward direct services for children and families (57%), followed by provider capacity building strategies (28%), system change strategies (13%), infrastructure building (1%) and community engagement strategies (1%). Changes in BFI's funding patterns have been based on leveraging opportunities with other funders or initiatives, identified needs in the community, emerging research and results from BFI evaluations. As a result of these factors, Figure 1 shows the strategic shift in expenditures that took place with the reauthorization of BFI beginning in 2000 between these five strategy types over time. For instance, though direct services for children and families has continued to receive the largest proportion of support, there has been a relative



shift toward capacity building, particularly in regards to professional development activities for ECE providers. Direct services have decreased from 68% to 46% and provider capacity has increased from 17% of BFI expenditures to 39%. This demonstrates increasing support for BFI's goal to strengthening the service system. Aside from provider capacity building however, there has been a stable level of support (at 13%) for other types of “system change” activities geared toward strengthening the service system for children.

Figure 2 shows BFI expenditures by focus area (Early Care and Education, Family Support, Health and Responsive Schools). This graph shows that there has been a reduction in expenditures from the health focus area to an increase in expenditures for ECE and family support. Whereas for the first 10 years of the initiative, 41% of expenditures were dedicated to the health focus area, for the last six years, only 9% has been expended on health.¹ Correspondingly, there has been an increase in expenditures in the area of ECE (from 28% to 41%) and also in family support services (from 24% to 39% of total expenditures). As with most urban cities, there are many unmet needs within the health care sector in Hartford that are considered in the recommendations section of this report.



¹ Though this reduction may be somewhat inflated because during the early years of BFI, some family support activities were embedded within the health-related BFI-funded projects.

Strengths and Challenges of Goal 1: Strengthening the System

Although approximately 85% of BFI's expenditures have gone to fund direct services to children and families and to build the capacity of ECE providers, these activities have also potentially helped to enhance the system through improved partnerships, community engagement, access, etc. Further, BFI has supported a number of activities that more directly aim to improve the performance of the early childhood service system in Hartford. This has included funding improved governance, financing and capacity building. This next section outlines BFI's strengths and challenges that it faces in affecting further change in these three areas.

Governance Structures in Hartford

The BFI has worked to improve the governance of ECD services and systems at both the local and state levels. This has included work with local and state policy and advocacy groups, the Mayor's Office for Young Children (OFYC), and its ongoing collaborative relationship with the recently established Governor's Early Childhood Education Cabinet as well as Connecticut's Commission on Children.

Strengths

- ❖ Served as the catalyst for the creation of the Mayor's Hartford Blueprint for Young Children in collaboration with Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez, the Hartford Public Schools and the Connecticut Commission on Children. The Hartford Blueprint is a first ever five-year plan for Hartford that envisions and lays out action steps for an integrated early childhood service system. The Blueprint provides an important opportunity for implementing a coordinated, comprehensive, and sustainable early childhood service system in Hartford. The Blueprint has now set in motion the Mayor's OFYC which has the potential to become an ongoing administrative and organizational leader for early childhood systems building efforts.
- ❖ Designated by state Department of Education as the entity in Hartford with the capacity to serve as the initial convener of the Hartford School Readiness Council, charged with coordinating and overseeing state school readiness funds for the first three years of the statewide initiative (1998-2000) to increase ECE slots in Hartford. This role has since been folded into the Mayor's OFYC.
- ❖ Fostered state/local alignment by maintaining good relationships with key stakeholders at the State level, such as members of the Governor's Early Childhood Education Cabinet (referred to hereafter as the Governor's Cabinet) and the Legislature's Commission on Children.
- ❖ Supported state-level advocacy by funding agencies such as the Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative (HACCC), Hartford Health Track, CT Voices for Children, and the Parent Leadership Training Institute to advocate for policy changes at the state level, conduct research to influence policy, help bring in the business sector to support the early years and foster public engagement for ECE initiatives.
- ❖ Funded direct services and provider capacity building in such a way as to foster local service integration and cross-sector linkages. For example, BFI has required Family Centers to identify how they will connect with other services and sectors; BFI-funded ECE programs have co-located at two Family Centers; the Nurturing Families home visiting program, and the Homelinks quality improvement project for family day care providers have embedded their BFI-funded projects in the Family Centers; and the HACCC provides training and support to BFI-funded child care programs.

Challenges

- ❖ Implementing the Blueprint is challenged by the need for additional resources and staff within the Mayor's OFYC; a high level, cross-sector leadership team within both the Mayor's Cabinet and the Mayor's OFYC; an ordinance or other mechanism to help ensure the sustainability of the Blueprint effort; increased buy-in to and alignment of the Blueprint with key state and local stakeholders and other complementary policy efforts. Some prominent members of the Hartford EDC community expressed that the Blueprint implementation process is not transparent and that information is difficult to access regarding the process, progress, and future direction of the Blueprint.
- ❖ Building partnerships and alignment between state and city initiatives has been limited. In particular, the Governor's Cabinet and the leadership of the Mayor's OFYC have not yet determined how to align their efforts and maximize potential leveraging opportunities.
- ❖ Affecting state-level policy and legislation has been limited to a few BFI-funded policy, research and advocacy organizations. However, BFI has not consistently taken a major role in state-level advocacy on issues that are crucial to Hartford families and the sustainability of several BFI funded programs.
- ❖ Integrating local services has occurred to some extent with BFI-funded services but there is a need for more intensive and systematic links between BFI-funded programs and service sectors.
- ❖ Collaborating regionally is difficult in part because there is no county structure in Connecticut – only cities and the state. The BFI has funded the Capital and Manchester Community Colleges to help address regional ECE workforce issues. There is a need for increased regional collaboration because many of the challenges faced by children and families in Hartford are regional in nature (ECE workforce development and retention; quality of medical home; linkage of ECE, health care, and family support and schools).

Financing for Early Childhood Services and Systems

The following presents the strengths and challenges for BFI in making improvements to the financing of ECD services and systems in Hartford.

Strengths

- ❖ Provided long-term fiscal support for ECD programs and services. Since 1990, BFI has provided ongoing support to early childhood programs and systems through a variety of financing strategies including:
 - ❖ Start-up grants for new and innovative services,
 - ❖ Continued funding (3-year grants with extensions) for successful programs providing essential services,
 - ❖ Gap filling support when specific services such as case management are difficult to reimburse or when continuity of services is temporarily in jeopardy.This ability to strategically provide fiscal support to a range of programs through different granting mechanisms, over a long time period has played an important role in building the service delivery scaffolding for a more functional ECD system in Hartford. It should be noted that this type of long term strategic funding commitment by a foundation is unusual, since the demands of responsiveness often outweigh the benefit of a long term strategy.
- ❖ Encouraged funded projects to become increasingly self-reliant by providing grants that require increasing proportions of sustaining funds. A number of projects have also been successfully transitioned to sustainable funding sources or are built into the Blueprint's implementation plan as a potential mechanism to ensure continuity of support.
- ❖ Provided technical assistance and support services. The BFI director, Richard Sussman provides regular TA to funded programs on how to manage resources efficiently and effectively and sustain projects beyond the life of BFI support. Also, the HFPG's Nonprofit

Support Program (NSP) offers online resources, consultation and learning opportunities geared toward helping organizations start, build, and sustain their services. These resources are geared toward helping organizations with their fundraising, planning, financial management, human resources, technology, and board development among others. While we have noted that the HFPG's NSP provides this extensive set of resources, we were not able to evaluate whether these resources have been successfully used by BFI grantees.

Challenges

- ❖ Securing and drawing-down federal and state-level resources that are essential for creating a sustainable funding base for more integrated service delivery efforts and system-building activities. State-level barriers to accessing funds include a State spending cap on administrative funds and the inability to access Medicaid funds that have been drawn down from specific programs because they automatically go into the State General Fund. These and other funding barriers are potentially addressable through a set of legislative, administrative and local policy changes that have been successfully utilized in other states and cities.
- ❖ Establishing sustainable support for effective BFI-funded projects that will allow services to continue and to thrive beyond the life of any specific BFI grant or initiative. In a period of relative fiscal constraint, BFI will be challenged to identify new or potentially untapped sources of support and to employ new and creative mechanisms to draw down federal and state funds that could be utilized to fund existing BFI programs. Securing sustainable funding is not only essential for some BFI funded programs, but also for creating a secure fiscal foundation for further ECD system development.
- ❖ Developing potential partners to help identify and gather sustainable funding strategies. This strategy has not yet been fully exploited. Some of BFI's goals might be reached by partnering with other state and local agencies that are focused on local and regional workforce and economic development issues; especially around the role that building an ECE workforce and the development of additional center based child care can have on local economic productivity and poverty alleviation. Given the growing interest of many national business leaders in ECD, and the growing recognition that an investment in ECD can generate significant long-term fiscal returns, building the business case for ECD in Hartford and Connecticut is also a challenge that may be worthy of additional effort.

Building Capacity

Capacity building in a system's context involves enhancing leadership and workforce development, efforts to establish new partnerships and projects that increase in the system's ability to evaluate, measure and track its programs, services and systems. The following represents the strengths and challenges for BFI in further building the capacity of ECD services and systems in Hartford.

Strengths

- ❖ Evaluation: The BFI evaluation framework has progressed from a grant-by-grant and largely process-oriented evaluation in the early years of the initiative to a more strategic funding process with an outcome framework that has a unified system of evaluation within each initiative. It has successfully established performance standards for Family Centers and its early education programs to help ensure they meet the goals to improve school readiness. Evaluations of BFI programs conducted by Philliber Research Associates have produced useful results that have helped to improve the quality of BFI-funded projects, and to generate support and sustainability for its efforts.

- ❖ Tracking Community-Level School Readiness Outcomes: The Mayor's report card and the school readiness assessments of a sample of children in kindergarten represent two key data collection and dissemination efforts in Hartford that can be built upon to inform policies and programs for young children and their families.
- ❖ State-Level Data Tracking of Child Health Insurance: Contributed to local and state health policy development by supporting the Children's Health Council's data collection and analysis activities aimed at assessing trends and needs in HUSKY (SCHIP in Connecticut) enrollment and utilization.
- ❖ Leadership development: BFI has helped to develop the leadership capacity for parents through the Parent Leadership Training Institute and the parent leadership activities in the Family Centers and has also built leadership within the ECE sector through the CCEP and the HACCC's ConnLeap. Some cross-sector leadership development has taken place in the Brighter Futures Consortium which represents mid-level managers from grantee organizations. Lastly, BFI-funded programs have received leadership building skills in the HFPG's NSP.
- ❖ Workforce development: The BFI has supported training of key providers in the child care sector. Also by supporting various new health care initiatives, BFI has indirectly supported the training of health care providers in Hartford's pediatric residency training programs. There is still a great deal that needs to be done to build an ECD workforce that can provide high quality services in child care, preschools, family centers and health care clinics. ECD workforce development needs are often stymied by an insufficient appreciation for what level of training is necessary, what the potential benefits are, and how such training efforts can lead to greater regional economic prosperity.

Challenges

- ❖ Evaluation: Though there is an increasingly unified and outcome-oriented evaluation framework now in place for BFI-funded projects, there is no uniform system for data collection across all funded projects. This limits the ability to track and aggregate data about clients, services and outcomes across BFI projects and focus areas and to examine the overall contribution of BFI to children and families in Hartford. Though there is no single data collection instrument that meets all data collection needs, there are systems, sets of instruments and software that can be put in place to more systematically collect program data.
- ❖ Tracking Community-Level School Readiness Outcomes: School readiness was measured in 2004 using a holistic community-level measurement strategy; however, this was a one-time effort funded by HFPG. Other more regular measurement of school readiness takes place as part of school district data collection processes but this measure is limited to reading readiness and does not contain a complete and holistic measure of children's readiness including physical health, and socio-emotional well-being that are now routinely used in most school districts that are adopting routine school readiness measures. Also, there are relatively few population-based measurement efforts taking place in Hartford to track the overall performance of the ECD system relative to what is taking place at a number of innovative sites elsewhere in the U.S. and abroad. As with most urban cities, the city of Hartford does not have a centralized data system to manage its administrative and outcome-related data across agencies.
- ❖ Leadership Development Across Sectors and with Business Community: Given that a high performing ECD system will require the participation of multiple sectors (health, early education, family support, schools and school districts) and the support of government and business, leadership for system change and improvement must be broad, cross-cutting and sustainable. Therefore, it will be important to create a leadership group, representing each of these key sectors that can work together both on the nuts and bolts of service

system development and implementation at the ground level, but also as advocates for policy, administrative and legislative changes that will be essential for long-term sustainability and success. The BFI can continue to play an instrumental role as convener, and facilitator of this leadership development effort by supporting specific activities and projects that have a successful track record in building multi-level (local, city, state) and cross-sector leadership.

- ❖ **Workforce Development:** Participants in the focus groups discussed how difficult it is to retain high quality ECE professionals in Hartford when there is broader regional need and the ability of outlying areas to recruit the best professionals away. Developing a regional approach to workforce development and a “farm team” or pathway approach might allow a greater focus on training local Hartford residents and parents to become preschool teachers and child care providers. Convincing business and both city and state governments that ECD workforce development is a viable regional economic development strategy will help to address the challenges associated with the recruitment and retention of ECD providers in Hartford.

Strengths and Challenges of Goal 2: School Readiness & Early School Success

From our analysis of key documents and the discussions that occurred during the one-on-one interviews and the focus groups, a number of key themes emerged in terms of BFI’s strengths and challenges. This section highlights these key themes to underpin the recommendations outlined in Section IV.

Child Care and Early Education

Strengths

- ❖ Fostered creativity and innovation for early care and education (ECE) in Hartford.
- ❖ Made significant contributions to improving the quality of early care and education (ECE) in Hartford and this has been found to improve the school readiness of children.
- ❖ Used evaluation results to identify and expand upon successful efforts. For instance, the CCEP has been expanded to municipally-managed, school-based ECE sites and the professional development approach taken by CCEP has been replicated in the Haskin’s Literacy Initiative being piloted with the school district at 5 sites in kindergarten to 2nd grade classrooms which aims to improve the skills of teachers and teach reading in the early grades.
- ❖ Encouraged substantial collaboration and alignment among funded projects within ECE sector. For instance, 24 non-profit and public sites are now using the same curriculum and assessment tool.
- ❖ Managed the Hartford School Readiness Council for the first three years of the statewide initiative and then transitioned it back to the City.
- ❖ Provided long-term support to the HACCC to improve the quality of ECE programs and conduct local- and state-level advocacy and policy development.

Challenges

The challenges faced by BFI in Hartford are similar to those faced in many urban cities.

- ❖ Retaining ECE staff once they have been trained and/or received increased credentials.
- ❖ Providing ample salaries, curriculum development, professionalization and accreditation of ECE staff.
- ❖ Upgrading ECE physical facilities so they are safe and offer a developmentally stimulating environment.
- ❖ Integrating or linking ECE with other sectors has not yet been maximized. Though linkages exist somewhat between ECE and Family Centers (e.g. ECE programs are co-located at

two centers), there is limited integration of ECE with the health sector amongst BFI funded projects and for the city as a whole. Collaborating with the health and family support sectors is an important strategy to help parents with the physical health and development of children and issues of immigration, multiple languages, low literacy, and lack of parenting skills.

Family support

Strengths

- ❖ Created Family Centers and expanded to six sites by 2002 which has increased access for families to family support services focused on literacy and school readiness in Hartford.
- ❖ Refined grant-making strategies using data-driven BFI evaluation results. For example, evaluation findings regarding low parent engagement and the need to reach higher risk families in Family Centers led to BFI intensifying some Family Center services and outreaching to higher risk families through the Nurturing Families home visiting program.
- ❖ Improved coordination of family support services by bringing providers together to collaborate and by linking BFI funded projects contractually. This has likely increased families' ability to navigate the multiple services that they may need.
- ❖ Incorporated the views of parents, increasingly over time, into community-based planning efforts. For instance, BFI built its Family Centers based on strong parent and community input and has customized each Family Center so that they are appropriate and responsive to the diversity of the communities they serve.
- ❖ Fostered sustainability of Family Centers by requiring contracts to demonstrate progressively larger percents of sustaining funds (i.e. from 100% BFI-supported at inception to 10%-25% BFI-funded in 2006).

Challenges

- ❖ Securing ample, sustainable, and flexible funding for family support and Family Center services, particularly when there is no single government structure responsible for this sector.
- ❖ Providing comprehensive services to children and families who are using the Family Centers by strategically co-locating services on site and/or by establishing formal linkages with other programs so that families can be referred to services nearby in the community.
- ❖ Finding the balance in Family Centers between providing structural programs that are curriculum driven, targeted, intensive and evidence-based and providing relational service encounters with parents that are flexible and responsive to the wide variety of changing parent needs.
- ❖ Coordinating family support services amongst providers. Due to competition for funding and specific mandates of funders, providers expressed that there are not always commonalities between their programs which can lead to a lack of alignment of goals and coordination of services and unfortunately, even creates some antagonism amongst providers around collaboration.

Health care

Strengths

- ❖ Contributed to improved access, utilization and the quality of pediatric care in Hartford by supporting innovative programs such as the first Regional Lead Treatment Center, Healthy Homes, and the Help Me Grow project that assists families and providers in identifying developmental concerns and finding appropriate resources.

- ❖ Transitioned a number of BFI-funded health projects to sustainable funding sources. For instance, the Regional Treatment Center became fully funded by the Connecticut Department of Public Health; the Children's Health Council effort to track well-child care grew into statewide effort through Connecticut Voices for Children and helped to dramatically increase the number of children enrolled into HUSKY. Help Me Grow has also moved to a State line-item, and discussion of the HOME project has been built into the Hartford Blueprint for Young Children (the Blueprint).
- ❖ Moved projects listed above to sustainable funding and therefore was able to shift from a focus on health care (during 1990-2000) to a focus on early care and education and family support (from 2001-2006).

Challenges

Hartford's challenges in regard to the health sector are typical of those in many cities.

- ❖ Shifting from a traditional model of pediatric care and medical home focused primarily on detecting disability to a more expanded developmental services model that is integrated with other sectors such as ECE and family support to be more comprehensive, integrated and preventative in focus.
- ❖ Providing the appropriate level of services and resources to address highly prevalent and high impact conditions that include: mental health, dental health, obesity and asthma.
- ❖ Identifying and coordinating existing funding streams and maximizing potential health funding to address significant gaps in care, and to facilitate the development of more appropriate care pathways across sectors. Though relatively narrow in focus with only a few members, there is a statewide funders' collaborative in which the Foundation might consider participating in the future.
- ❖ Establishing mechanisms to use Medicaid to reimburse for care coordination. Because federal payments through Connecticut's Medicaid program go directly into the State Capital General Fund, any changes in how those funds are directed would require legislative action.
- ❖ Addressing barriers to access in health care for families in HUSKY. In the last 14 months, 20,000 families were dropped from HUSKY due to changes in the eligibility requirements.

Responsive Schools

Strengths

- ❖ Made inroads and developed positive relationship with the Hartford Public Schools by supporting:
 - ❖ Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, which is a home visiting project administered out of the school district (2001-2004), has continued with some federal support;
 - ❖ A kindergarten transition program that brought ECE and Kindergarten teachers together to build a bridge between ECE and schools to help parents, children and teachers experience a successful transition to kindergarten ; and the
 - ❖ Haskin's Literacy Initiative, a professional development pilot literacy project at 5 sites in classrooms from kindergarten though 2nd grade.
- ❖ Conducted first ever school readiness assessments at kindergarten entry (conducted by Philliber Research Associates) on a random sample of 559 students and their parents in Hartford Public Schools in 2003. This provided important information to policymakers and demonstrated the feasibility of collecting population-based school readiness information citywide.

Challenges

- ❖ Improving the quality of instruction in kindergarten and beyond so that children who have benefited from high quality BFI-funded ECE services can continue to excel throughout grade schools.
- ❖ Expanding schools' ability to link with ECE services and other sectors such as family support and health so that schools can help children with a successful transition to school and provide needed community services in order to help ensure the long-term developmental trajectories of children from kindergarten and beyond.
- ❖ Instituting regular and on-going, population-based school readiness assessments that are comprehensive in nature (that include all components of school readiness as articulated by the National Education Goals Panel).

Summary of Strengths and Challenges

From our analysis of BFI strengths and challenges, it is evident that BFI has emerged as a major supporter for ECD in Hartford. The BFI has allowed the Hartford community to be at the forefront nationally of creating a more integrated approach to providing early childhood services, and bringing a number of service delivery enhancements and innovations to Hartford. Continuously focusing on its overarching goals, BFI has built upon initial investments, and utilized programmatic successes to leverage opportunities, learn from its experiences and refine itself along the way. It has done this by being responsive to the needs of the Hartford community and by adopting cutting edge evidence-based approaches to improving ECD services and systems.

The BFI has also served as the catalyst for the development of the Hartford Blueprint which created a common vision for the city and the building blocks necessary to energize a broader system-building process in the future. This important city wide planning effort has begun the process of aligning goals, strategies and funding mechanisms across levels of government (vertical integration) and has also helped to integrate or link services across service sectors (horizontal integration). However, as the next section will describe, there is much more that can be done to promote the development of a high performing ECD system and to promote greater vertical and horizontal integration. The next section outlines a strategic set of options on how to further develop the platforms and processes necessary to continue to get other sectors and key players involved (business sector, community economic development sector).

IV. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Brighter Futures Initiative is now seeking, through this strategic audit, to further refine its efforts in order to maximize its impact and sustain its gains. Based on the analysis presented in this report and what is known about other innovative efforts in the U.S. and elsewhere, this section offers recommendations to BFI concerning refinements to its funding strategies for the last four years of the current set-aside for the Initiative. The recommendations are organized by the three key change areas for enhancing early childhood systems: improved governance, financing and capacity.

Context

Recommendations in this section consider the particular context of BFI including the leveraging opportunities within Hartford and elsewhere. Therefore, recommendations take into consideration that:

- ❖ Though BFI is a \$2 million per year initiative through 2010, its discretionary funds are more realistically limited to about \$1.25-\$1.5 million per year because BFI may likely continue to provide grants to a number of its effective and core projects in the community such as the Family Centers.
- ❖ As an initiative of a local foundation, BFI is generally not suited to directly operate large-scale programs in-house and therefore future strategies must build upon existing approaches to grant-making and the resources that the HFPG has at its disposal including using a combination of different grant-making approaches, retaining consultants, hiring a few new staff internally for targeted projects and using existing staff in new ways.
- ❖ Given limited resources and a four-year window for BFI in its current authorization, some strategies may be more essential than others and some have a logical sequencing for implementation.
- ❖ Though BFI has traditionally had a local focus, increasing its role and presence at the state and national levels can allow it to benefit from and align with a broader set of leveraging opportunities and emerging innovation.

Recommendations

Improved Governance

This set of strategic options is designed to facilitate alignment of goals, and coordination and integration of strategies, services and systems across and within sectors at both the state and local levels. Below is a discussion of how BFI might work, simultaneously with the Mayor's OFYC, the State Legislatures Commission on Children, the Governor's Early Childhood Education Cabinet, the Hartford Public Schools and local providers in the family support, early education and health sectors.

Mayor's Office

Because the Blueprint represents a major vehicle for sustaining and forwarding BFI's goals, successful implementation of the strategic plan outlined in the Hartford Blueprint for Young Children and the long-term sustainability of the Blueprint's initiatives may be one of the most important objectives for BFI over the next four years. Also, BFI should help ensure that there is, in fact, a process in place to create a next edition of the Blueprint so that it can continue to serve as a dynamic and ongoing process and fulcrum for change. The Blueprint development, implementation and revision process represents a major vehicle for sustaining and forwarding BFI's goals and focus areas. The BFI can support these efforts by helping to address some of the implementation challenges that the Mayor's OFYC is facing in the areas of capacity building, implementation, sustainability and public support. For instance, BFI may wish to consider providing support to the Mayor's OFYC:

- ❖ Appropriate staffing and expertise within the Mayor's OFYC and in each of the Blueprint task forces is necessary to assure that the Blueprint can be implemented in a timely and effective manner. The BFI could help by augmenting the current staffing, providing resources to the Mayor's OFYC so they can hire additional positions.
- ❖ Enhancing community engagement in the Blueprint implementation effort. The success and sustainability of the Blueprint is in part dependent on the level of stakeholder engagement and buy-in to the process. The BFI could help garner support for the Blueprint by enhancing the marketing and communication of the Blueprint, and the work of the building block task groups and the ongoing implementation efforts. There are many new web-based platforms that could be used to enhance communication, coordination, sharing and learning across sectors and levels of government. One tool that we have had experience

developing and using is called the Virtual Children's Resource Network. This is a web-based workstation that offers a customizable set of tools and content as well as communication and evaluation functions for early childhood system-building initiatives. The UCLA-CHCFC in partnership with the University of Kansas Work Group for Health Promotion and Community Development (KU) and Community Systems Group has created the workstation that can be customized for specific initiatives in an effort to support organizations that work to improve the lives of children and families. A workstation for the Mayor's OFYC could be customized for various stakeholders such as parents, providers, administrators and policymakers, as well as for the Blueprint task force members as a means to access information about the Blueprint's progress and future activities, share resources and tools for carrying out the work of implementation team, and communicate targeted updates and messages to market the successes and garner broader public support. Varying levels of access to the workstation could be designated depending on the stakeholder type. For instance, Blueprint task force groups could have the ability to post documents, tools, web links and other background materials and to designate whether these are shared with the general public or whether access is limited to internal working groups. Parents and other community members could view and download materials of interest that are open to the public.

- ❖ The Mayors Early Childhood Cabinet provides an important opportunity to develop effective cross-sector leadership and to enhance the capacity of the OFYC to build new strategic partnerships across sectors and levels of government to implement the Blueprint. Since each of the separate building blocks has a designated task force implementing their portion of the Blueprint, much of the current work is largely sector-specific in focus. Therefore, if a broader and more integrated vision and plan is to emerge and operate, a broad and representative set of leaders will need to play key roles. The BFI could help to strengthen the composition, vision, esprit de corps, commitment and skills of the Cabinet and OFYC by creating a leadership training program for the Cabinet and task force members. This program might include a component that would allow leaders from across sectors to visit key sites where innovative state-of-the-art early childhood system-building practices have been put in place. BFI could also sponsor visits by national or international ECD experts to share resources and lessons learned. Additionally, by offering these "perks", BFI might be able to influence the composition of the Cabinet and OFYC. By using these and other strategies as recruiting tools, BFI can help to assure that the Mayors team has access to and participation by key leaders that can help assure success. This approach could also help to foster greater buy-in for the Blueprint goals, and create strong partnerships that can be called upon well-beyond the duration of this targeted leadership development effort.
- ❖ Quality data to inform a continuous process of improvement, planning and policy development. To enhance the Mayor's OFYC's capacity to measure performance and outcomes and conduct ongoing citywide planning and policymaking, BFI could support the development of a school readiness assessment and data mapping system that is both aligned with state activities and meets local needs. Examples of successful school readiness measurement and mapping efforts can be found in Canada and Australia. Using the Early Development Instrument (EDI), developed by researchers at McMaster's University in Ottawa Canada, these two countries have successfully used the EDI and mapping technologies to help decision makers understand school readiness across neighborhoods and develop policy to address needs and assets (Appendix C). In Vancouver the Canadian EDI has been used to create new regional partnerships around common ECD goals across diverse communities. As a result of the Canadian success, the Australian EDI was launched in 2005 and is now being used across Australian states and

communities. Although lower income neighborhoods tend to have the highest proportion of children with poor developmental outcomes, more affluent neighborhoods still have large numbers of children that are underperforming in certain area of their development. Several states and counties in the U.S. are creating a U.S.-EDI project to conduct school readiness assessment and mapping and to provide results by neighborhood and community.

- ❖ Alignment with State School Readiness Activities. As will be discussed further in the next section, the Mayor's OFYC has not yet identified opportunities to align with and leverage the resources of the Governor's Cabinet. By engaging in a process to identify areas for collaboration, it should be possible to leverage additional state-level resources to support Hartford's efforts at ECD system-building. The BFI could consider how to support the Governor's Cabinet and the Blueprint could potentially serve as a model and template for a statewide school readiness effort that encourages all cities in Connecticut to develop their own citywide ECD vision and implementation plan.

Though we feel that these suggestions are of equal importance and should, ideally, be initiated simultaneously, we recognize that a dialogue with the leadership of the Mayor's OFYC will be an important step in determining which ones are of most interest and relevance to them at this point in time. Also, in order to establish some early gains, BFI might want to consider implementing those that are "easy wins" as the first of two phases of collaboration with the Mayor's OFYC over the next four years. The two activities that can be most easily and quickly implemented are the first two bullets which deal with augmenting the Mayor's OFYC staffing and developing a web-based communication platform, respectively. The remaining three activities require longer and more intensive collaboration and planning and therefore, although it would be helpful to begin this dialogue now, might be implemented as the second phase of the next four years of collaboration with the Mayor's OFYC and might then grow into continued collaborative activities in the event of future BFI authorizations.

Commission on Children

Created in 1985, the Connecticut Legislature's Commission on Children is comprised of representatives from the State Legislature, Executive, and Judicial branches as well as the private sector. The goal of the Commission is to promote public policies that are in the best interest of children. To this end, the Commission conducts research, disseminates information and helps to build cross-sector partnerships as they relate to children and children's programs in Connecticut. They also assess how all state agency programs and practices affect children and make recommendations on behalf of Connecticut's children to the Legislature and the Governor each year. Though not a direct funder of services, the Commission was a partner in the development of the Blueprint and is therefore committed to its success. Furthermore, the Commission represents a stable entity with the resources and ability to forge new partnerships, communicate needs to policy makers, and carry out collaborative projects to affect legislative change that can help the successful implementation of the Blueprint. These activities also serve the interests of the Commission such that by staying connected to local issues, challenges and opportunities, it can develop state-level recommendations and policy that are relevant to and implementable at the local level.

The BFI might consider ways to engage and develop more formal partnerships or projects with the Commission to leverage its strengths and resources towards improvements in the early childhood service system in Hartford. BFI might engage in this process by working directly with the Commission or by funding a third party such as the Mayor's OFYC, Connecticut Voices for Children or the HACCC to engage in specific agreed upon activities. Collaborative projects with the Commission could:

- ❖ Engage the Commission in considering how some of the key BFI strategies and services (e.g. Using Family Centers as an important building block/platform for providing ECD services in underserved communities) could be adopted by the Commission as state-level initiatives using projects in Hartford and perhaps other needy cities like Bridgeport and New Haven as demonstration sites for a new approach.
- ❖ Partner with the Commission to address state-level administrative barriers to securing and drawing-down resources that are essential to creating a sustainable funding base for more integrated service delivery efforts and system-building activities. This might be facilitated by hiring a consultant that specializes in identifying sustainable short and long term financing strategies for early childhood initiatives. One such consulting group is the Finance Project in Washington D.C. They provide technical assistance about strategic financing for major national initiatives including the Carnegie Corporation's Starting Points Initiative and other local efforts to help identify potentially untapped sources of revenues, new mechanisms for drawing down resources and the best process for matching strategies to resources.
- ❖ Invite the Commission to become a more full-fledged partner in local (Hartford) and regional ECD system-building planning and implementation efforts so that they might assist in raising visibility of the planning efforts (e.g. Hartford Blueprint), in sustaining and boosting the movement and expectations around the planning efforts, and in funding administrative costs associated with planning efforts.
- ❖ Foster regional collaboration efforts in areas that are regional in nature such as ECE workforce development and recruitment and retention, the quality of the medical home, linkage of ECE, health care, family support and schools.
- ❖ Improve availability of school readiness data and the alignment of population-based measures of system performance and school readiness. According to State School Readiness Legislation, by Oct 2007 local boards of education and preschool programs will participate in the statewide public school information system for purposes of reporting on ECE experiences, readiness of students entering kindergarten and student progress in kindergarten. BFI might work with the Mayor's Office and the Commission to help ensure that the school readiness data collected under this legislation will serve the needs of policymakers in Hartford. For instance, such a collaborative could help to ensure that school readiness measures are holistic, population-based and comparable at local, regional, and state levels. Again, the Vancouver, trans-Canadian and Australian efforts in developing the EDI based school readiness assessment and mapping process serve as an innovative and impactful approach to accomplishing this goal. This is an important capacity-building role for BFI because it has experience with school readiness assessment activities in Hartford, it has an interest in aligning state-mandated school readiness measurement with the goals of BFI and the Blueprint, and it has the ability to link these players with international experts who have also used mapping technologies to make this data useful to policymakers. Thus, BFI may want to consider convening these groups and providing seed money to launch Hartford as local school readiness assessment and mapping pilot of a statewide school readiness effort.
- ❖ Improve availability of data that measure the performance of early childhood services and systems. For instance, BFI could work with the Mayor's OFYC and the Commission to implement the Promoting Healthy Development Survey (PHDS) both locally and statewide. The PHDS has been used in national, state and local measurement efforts in the U.S. and

is helpful in monitoring health, health needs and health care system performance. (Appendix D) Efforts are currently underway to also adapt the PHDS to other early childhood service sectors such as ECE and family support services. The ability to link a systems performance measure like the PHDS with a child performance measure like the EDI and then to map those results in relationship to local needs and resources, could provide the State with a powerful tool for planning and resource allocation. This would also help the Commission demonstrate that it is helping Connecticut take a leadership role using data to increase the potential for results-based accountability and data-driven policy development and planning.

Governor's Early Childhood Education Cabinet

In 2005, Governor M. Jodi Rell convened the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and in February 2006, the Governor created the Early Childhood Research and Policy Council charged with taking lead responsibility for creating the Cabinet's Early Childhood Investment Plan. The draft plan contains three goals which deal with the optimal development and success of children from birth to 3rd grade, 10 urgent action priorities and 40 additional action items (<http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/>). Once the Investment Plan is completed in late 2006, the Council will engage in a number of activities throughout 2007 aimed at identifying the financing strategies, best practices, strategic partnerships and governance structures that will be needed to implement and monitor the Investment Plan. In addition, the Council will be working on a number of other deliverables including engaging the business community to strengthen the ECE "industry" and designing longitudinal studies of young children's development in Connecticut.

It appears that many elements of the Governor's draft Investment Plan are closely aligned with the goals of BFI and the Mayor's Blueprint and therefore the Governor's Plan represents a potential opportunity for BFI to leverage state-level activities and resources. However, the leadership of the Mayor's OFYC and the Governor's Cabinet (which has as its Commissioners, the heads of the state-level departments that deal with early childhood issues) has not yet engaged in a process to align and leverage each other's efforts and the long-term sustainability of the Governor's efforts are somewhat unknown.

Depending on how the activities of the Governor's Cabinet and its Council move forward, BFI and/or the Mayor's OFYC might consider ways of engaging in more formal collaborations with them in order to stay apprised of the extent to which they develop the capacity to carry-out the numerous initiatives embedded within the Investment Plan and to identify areas for aligning goals and strategies, developing collaborative initiatives and leveraging each group's respective resources. With the involvement of BFI and the Mayor's OFYC in the activities of the Governor's Cabinet, state initiatives could be influenced to better address local needs in Hartford. Furthermore, Hartford could serve a vanguard and pilot site for any local-state collaboration which may evolve from the Governor's efforts. Based on our initial assessment of common goals and priorities between the Blueprint and the Governor's Investment Plan, collaborative activities between BFI, the Mayor's Office and the Governor's Cabinet might involve the following:

- ❖ Improve the availability and alignment of data at the local and state levels on school readiness measures and system performance in the health, ECE and family support sectors.
- ❖ Strengthen the quality of the ECE workforce by helping to build champions within the business community that advocate for making ECE as an economic and workforce development issue worthy of major private investment. The BFI and the Governor's

Cabinet might help the business sector implement a “10-point” plan that aims to increase ECE salaries, recruit, train and retain the workforce, and improve the physical environment of ECE facilities. This could be tied to a task force or learning collaborative that seeks to examine other innovative approaches and resources for enabling a more robust and productive ECE sector.

- ❖ Establish a developmental surveillance and screening system to assure that all children are screened for developmental, behavioral and mental health problems, as part of a statewide surveillance in medical homes.
- ❖ Expand and deepen the number of Family Centers and/or Family Resource Centers so that they become a universal platform for service delivery statewide.

Hartford Public Schools

With approximately 8,500 children ages five to eight in Hartford and about 650 Pre-K spaces at 25 of the 27 elementary schools within the school district (Blueprint Team 2005), Hartford Public Schools is a major player in ECD and potentially a key partner in implementing a statewide focus to shore up zero to 8 educational opportunities. The school district, however, faces a number of challenges associated with widespread urban poverty. For instance, 40% of families with very young children live in poverty and about half of the students do not speak English. Measures of academic achievement indicate that test scores in Hartford are far lower than state scores and even somewhat lower than other school districts with comparable demographics. Other challenges include multiple changes in leadership for the school district. From the time that Robert Henry resigned as Superintendent in June 2006 until November 2006, the Hartford Public Schools had an acting Superintendent, Jacqueline J. Jacoby. Starting in November 2006, a new Superintendent arrived, Steven J. Adamowski, however, it is not yet known what his position will be on school readiness issues and strategies and it will take some time for BFI to develop a working relationship with him.

Hartford Public Schools also has a number of important assets and opportunities for improving the quality of education in Hartford. Mayor Eddie A. Perez, who serves as both the Chairman of the Board of Education and also guides the development and the implementation of the Blueprint, has the potential to provide strong and visionary leadership and to serve as a champion for collaborative efforts with the school district to improve the quality of instruction, and to create a more integrated zero to eight educational enhancement strategy. Also, BFI has developed a positive relationship with the school district through a number of past grants and the successful implementation of citywide school readiness assessments at kindergarten entry. The Hartford Public Schools is currently implementing a BFI- funded professional development project, the Haskin’s Literacy Initiative, at 5 schools. There is now an opportunity for BFI to leverage these assets and expand its work with the school district in order to improve:

- ❖ Transition for children and their families into kindergarten and to support primary education with additional programmatic and performance improvement strategies
- ❖ Quality of instruction
- ❖ Leadership capacity at the schools, with strong buy-in to a new vision for how schools can function as neighborhood hubs for ECD services through the creation of school-based or school-linked School Readiness & Family Resource Centers.
- ❖ Linkages that exist between the school district with other ECE, health and family support services and sectors
- ❖ Availability of reliable and useful school readiness data.

In addition to the implementation of the Hartford Public Schools' BFI-funded Haskin's Literacy Initiative, BFI might begin a dialogue to expand this collaboration to other more comprehensive school readiness projects. This might include several BFI-funded school readiness coordinators placed within the school district that could develop and coordinate programs to integrate school- and community-based services, assess school readiness on an annual basis, and ensure a smooth transition to Kindergarten for parents and children.

Family Support Service Providers

BFI has made a significant contribution to increasing access to family support services focused on improving literacy and school readiness in Hartford and has steadily improved the integration of these services through its Family Center program. Family resource/school readiness centers have the potential to be an effective and potentially universal platform for service delivery in Hartford. Additional refinement of this approach is also underway within the Blueprint family support task force. For instance, the task force is currently working on building common performance standards and measurement strategies between Family Centers and Family Resource Centers. Still, many challenges remain. Families need effective, accessible, comprehensive, coordinated, culturally appropriate family support services while Family Centers are challenged with securing sustainable support for existing Family Center services.

The BFI can help to sustain and strengthen the effectiveness of these efforts by working with the Blueprint task force, BFI-funded Family Centers and the school district's Family Resource Centers to build common performance standards, enhance access, expand the comprehensiveness of or links to services and further integrate and coordinate services through these centers. To this end, BFI might consider the following strategies:

- ❖ The release of a Request for Proposal to existing BFI-funded Family Centers to pilot an integrated and comprehensive Family Center model (proof of concept) in one or several neighborhoods that either co-locates or links to a comprehensive set of services as a strategy to develop a citywide platform for integrated service delivery. While we did not have the opportunity or ability to assess the functionality and performance of existing BFI-funded Family Centers, it has been our experience that a "model program" that is fully functioning at a B+ or better level, can provide a very compelling argument to policymakers and funders for how and why Family Centers can serve as the platform from which to anchor and launch a full array of ECD services, and system-building service delivery pathways. The Family Centers in Hartford that are good candidates for an enhanced center model should currently be able to demonstrate success in the provision of ECE and school readiness services, connection and coordination with local health centers, the ability to improve performance and measure that improvement over time.

Many other ECD system-building initiatives in the U.S. and in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia are in the process of developing real or virtual comprehensive family resource centers as the basic building block and hub for their neighborhood-based early childhood systems building activities. In the UK, the success of their national Sure Start initiative has resulted in a plan to create 3-4000 Sure Start Centers in schools and low income neighborhoods throughout the UK. The Hope Street Family Center in Los Angeles, California is an example of a model program that employs an ecological approach to service delivery by focusing on both the child and family and social environment and by providing an impressive continuum of on-site and home-based educational, medical, and developmental services that guide and support children and families from birth through adulthood (Appendix E). Hope Street Family has served as a model for California's First 5's efforts to launch a \$400 million school readiness initiative in 2003.

- ❖ Sponsor systematic cross-training between Family Centers and Family Resource Centers so that each model can learn from the other and begin to build a common framework using best practices. We recognize that there are barriers to collaboration and building a common framework because though Family Centers are flexible local models built on the ability to be responsive to changing needs, Family Resource Centers are state models built on maintaining quality standards and fidelity to specific models through uniformity. Nevertheless, each model has its strengths and challenges and therefore would be well-served by learning from one another as a starting point for further dialogue.
- ❖ Work with funders and key stakeholders such as the school district, the Mayor's Office, the Commission on Children and Governor's Cabinet to explore the potential for a coordinated plan to expand the number of Family Centers or Family Resource Centers so that it becomes a universal platform for service delivery in Hartford.

Early Care and Education

BFI has increased the percent of its total expenditures in the area of ECE from 28% during the period from 1990-2000 to 41% for the period from 2001-2006. These investments have made an important contribution to improving the quality of ECE in Hartford and this has been found to improve the school readiness of children. Further, BFI has fostered the alignment of ECE standards and performance measurement throughout Hartford and has helped to integrate ECE with other service sectors through the Family Center model. Still, as with many other cities, BFI faces a number of challenges that include recruiting and retaining qualified staff, upgrading ECE facilities and improving the integration of ECE with the health and family support sectors.

The business community represents an untapped resource for supporting ECE development strategies in general and workforce development issues in particular. For instance, the business community can support ECE through:

- ❖ Investing in or sponsoring targeted children's initiatives that aim to improve the credentials, skills and salaries of ECE providers and to improve ECE facilities so that they are safe and offer developmentally stimulating environments.
- ❖ Creating places of employment that have on-site /near-site child care centers
- ❖ Increasing child care subsidies and after school programs
- ❖ Improving parental networks, information and referral services

Efforts to identify and nurture champions within the business community who will buy-in and potentially even take the lead on these activities will first require that:

- ❖ A collaborative communication strategy at both state and local levels be developed and employed to help the business community understand why this is an important issue. This communication strategy should aim to reframe ECE from solely an educational and ECD issue to focus on the role that expanding ECE can play as an engine of economic development that can lead to a more prosperous, world-class workforce. There is a reasonable business case that can be communicated to the business world that investment in high quality early education leads to short and long-term returns because it enables parents to be more productive and builds a future productive workforce.
- ❖ Develop a public-private partnership to implement a comprehensive ECE-10-point plan. Such a plan would seek to address legislative barriers, and improve the governance, financing and capacity of ECE at local, regional and state levels. This partnership should include the business sector, the Mayor's Office, local advocacy agencies such as the

HACCC, the State Department of Education, the Hartford Public Schools, the Governor's Cabinet and the Commission on Children.

- ❖ While the long term goal is to have the private sector take a greater role in driving this effort, it may be necessary, in the early stages, for BFI to kick-off such an effort by staffing or hiring a contractor to staff this project. Staff roles would involve developing messaging and communication strategies, conducting advocacy and planning, convening and facilitating collaborative efforts and coordinating the development and implementation of a business-sector supported, ECE 10-point plan.

Health Care Providers

Though BFI has decreased the percent of its total expenditures in the area of health from an average of 41% from 1990-2000 to 9% for the period from 2001-2006, it has been successful in supporting several innovations like Help me Grow and moving a number of its BFI-funded health projects to other sustainable funding sources. These projects have improved access, utilization and the quality of pediatric care in Hartford. Nevertheless, Hartford faces a number of challenges in regard to the health sector that are typical of those found in many cities. For instance, Hartford is attempting to develop a more integrated and collaborative model of pediatric care that links child health centers with other sectors and services in order to enable a more comprehensive and prevention-focused approach. The goal is to help pediatric providers develop more formal linkages to community-based organizations including ECE and family centers, to improve the level and type of information and guidance provided on ECD issues, to conduct regular developmental screenings and to connect parents with necessary services.

Additionally, there is a shortage of services and resources for mental health, oral health, obesity and asthma and a lack of funding and reimbursement mechanisms for care coordination and other services. There is also no system in Hartford to assure that all young children in Hartford are screened for developmental, behavioral and mental health problems and referred to appropriate services in the community. Thus, there is still a great deal that needs to be done to meet the needs of children and families.

To address these issues, BFI might consider strategic partnerships that facilitate a shift to a more collaborative and integrated model of pediatric care. This might include:

- ❖ Creating a stronger functional connection between pediatric providers and the family centers, and even going further to embed more prevent health intervention in the operations of the Family Centers.
- ❖ Funding one or more Family Centers to implement a model of service delivery that provides comprehensive services to families either by providing developmental health services that are co-located at the Family Center sites or by linking Family Centers in a more systematic way to other neighborhood health and developmental resources.
- ❖ Developing a community-based, pediatric residency program that would be better able to serve BFI Family Centers and foster a preventive model of care which creates a more comprehensive and integrated community-based system. State of the art training programs such as the Community Health and Advocacy Training Program in Pediatrics (CHAT) at UCLA or the Anne E. Dyson Community Pediatrics Training Initiative have successfully enhanced services, service pathways, and physician skills. A key component of a successful community-focused training effort is to build the training experience and the service delivery approach around a well-functioning and sustainable delivery model that

becomes an attractive place for residents to stay as staff physicians or to continue to advance work as research or policy fellows. By developing community-based training sites as centers of collaborative research, service, and programmatic development, they can become important and sustainable engines of innovation, knowledge production and sources of enhanced service delivery. Given the role that the University of Connecticut's pediatric training programs play in preparing the next generation of pediatricians to provide appropriate and high quality services to the State's children, there is an important and yet untapped alliance that BFI might forge with them in order to take a much more forceful and innovative role in transforming the training process, and at the same time enhancing service delivery model.

- ❖ Creating a citywide developmental surveillance and screening system in Hartford to assure that all children in Hartford are screened for developmental, behavioral and mental health problems, as part of a community wide surveillance initiative. As a first step, BFI might build on its success with the screening instrument; "Ages and Stages" that has being used in the Family Centers and the Homelinks projects and expand this effort to HOME and other BFI projects. BFI could learn from successful developmental screening initiatives in other localities such as those taking place in Rhode Island, Vermont; Orange County, California and in North Carolina.
- ❖ Engaging the Connecticut Department of Social Services and the Medicaid program in these ventures as they have the ability to fund a range of programmatic expansions and quality improvement initiatives that can have significant impacts. It will also be important to work with the Legislature's Commission on Children to address state-level barriers to accessing Medicaid funds because as mentioned, even if programs are able to draw down Medicaid funds they cannot access them as they are currently required by the State to go directly to the State General Fund.

Financing

As a 20-year initiative, BFI has provided long-term support to early childhood programs and systems through a variety of financing strategies and has successfully transitioned a number of its projects to sustainable sources of support. It has also fostered sustainability by requiring that programs demonstrate increased sustaining funds and by building a number of successful efforts into the implementation plan of the Hartford Blueprint. Given a national environment of fiscal constraint and the fact that BFI is in the final phase of its initiative, it will be important for BFI to increase its efforts at securing sustainable funding for effective BFI-funded projects that not only maintain current efforts but also allow projects to continue to thrive through enhanced and integrated funding sources. We suggest the following four-staged strategy for identifying potentially new or untapped sources of support as well as new and creative mechanisms to draw down existing resources:

- ❖ Provide a financing consultant to the Mayor's OFYC to help it create a short and long-term fiscal strategy and operational business plan to support the implementation of the Blueprint.
- ❖ Convene a Hartford-based funders group to initiate new and strengthen existing partnerships with foundations state and local funding agencies and the business community to gain support for regional ECE workforce and economic development issues, and to help make child development central to health funding.

- ❖ Help to identify new sources and mechanisms to draw down resources at national, state and local levels. BFI might retain the Finance Project to develop a state and/or local-level financing plan that can help identify sources and mechanisms for funding BFI and other ECD projects. For instance, the Finance Project could explore mechanisms to draw down Medicaid funding for medical home improvements, care coordination, outreach, or screening and health services at community-based Family Centers and school-based Family Resource Centers. Depending on the how the Federal Early and Periodic Screening and Diagnostic and Treatment services (EPSDT) program operates in Connecticut, BFI might also retain a consultant to work with the State Medicaid agency to develop protocols and financing mechanisms to maximize EPSDT's reimbursement capacity.
- ❖ Once potential sources of funding are identified, BFI might provide support to funded projects so that each program could develop and carry-out sustainability action plans. This might include the provision of training and TA on drafting and executing sustainability plans, methods for augmenting and maximizing funding streams, conducting program-level evaluation and grant-writing.

Capacity Building

BFI has built some measurement and tracking capacity among funded projects for the purposes of program evaluation. It has also assessed school readiness at kindergarten entry for use in citywide cross-sector planning and policy development. There are a number of ways that BFI can continue to build this measurement and tracking capacity:

- ❖ Enhance Capacity of BFI Evaluation: Though there is no single data collection instrument that meets all data collection needs, there are systems, sets of instruments and software that can be put in place to more systematically collect program-level data to enhance performance monitoring. Examples of uniform data collection systems can be found with the state and local-level First 5 evaluation efforts in California. Statewide, there is a uniform set of data collection instruments and processes for collecting information about clients, services and outcomes so that information can be aggregated at a state level. Local-level First 5 evaluations such as that found in Ventura County have built on the state data collection system to develop additional measures and instruments to track more targeted outcomes locally. First 5 Ventura County asks all of its funded projects to collect a core set of outcome measures. For instance, First 5 Ventura's ECE programs are all provided with the same data collection instrument to collect pre- and post parent reports of the frequency of reading to children. Such a system might also include software that can assign unique identifiers to clients so that an unduplicated count of individuals can be calculated even when clients receive services from multiple program funded by BFI. Unique identifiers also help to track outcomes for individuals being served by multiple programs. Though implementing uniform data collection instruments and processes for tracking clients and services could be done in a relatively short period of time (one year), establishing common outcome measures and building software that generates unique identifiers can be quite costly and time consuming and therefore should only be considered in the event that BFI is expanded beyond 2010.
- ❖ Establish population-based tracking for school readiness: BFI might enter into a partnership with the Hartford Public Schools and state-level stakeholders to institute annual school readiness assessments that yield holistic, population-based measures that can be tracked overtime and with other local and state jurisdictions. BFI can build on its success with the Early Screening Profile or it may wish to consider other instruments such as the

Early Development Instrument (EDI) which is being implemented with GIS mapping technology throughout Canada and Australia and being piloted as at number of sites in the US. This approach has the enormous benefit of creating local and neighborhood-level data that can be used to hold service providers more accountable, and stimulate policy makers to consider additional investment.

- ❖ Improve availability of data that measures the performance of early childhood services and system. BFI might collaborate with the Mayor's OFYC and or state-level stakeholders to implement the Promoting Healthy Development Survey (PHDS) both locally and statewide. The PHDS has been used in national, state and local measurement efforts in the U.S. and is helpful in monitoring health, health needs and system performance and engaging parents, providers, health system and community leaders in identifying and implementing strategies to improve system performance in promoting the healthy development of young children. Efforts are currently underway to also adapt the PHDS to other early childhood service sectors such as ECE and family support services.

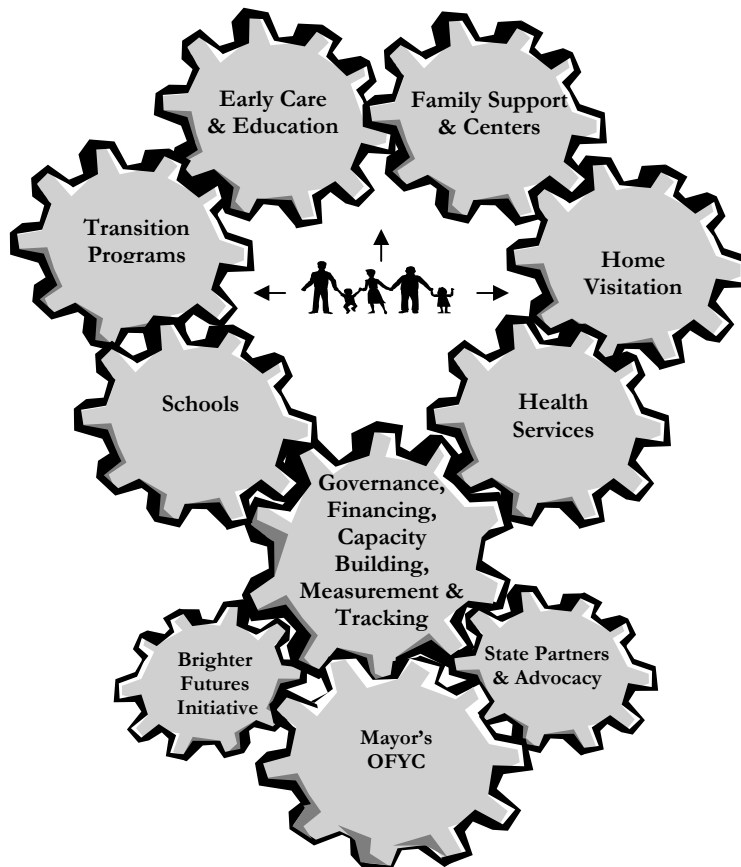
Priority Setting

With four years remaining in the current authorization, and about \$2 million per year in available funding (recognizing that due to some on-going commitments, that number may be reduced to about \$1.25 million per year), BFI has a limited number of new activities and initiatives that it can tackle. Therefore, it is very important for BFI to identify the priority activities that have the potential to yield the largest return on its investment. Below, we propose four areas as the top priorities for BFI system-building activities over the next four years. We place equal weight on these important areas and suggest that they be pursued simultaneously rather than in any particular sequence.

1. Create a fully operational, state-of-the-art Family Center over the next 3 years that provides or offers formalized links to high quality, comprehensive and integrated ECD services in the areas of family support, ECE and health. To enhance the capacity of this site, BFI might consider formally connecting a health care center with the Family Center in order to increase families' access to well-child care and help BFI show the value of a more prevention-focused and integrated model of pediatric care. This could eventually become a training site for a more community focused residency training effort.
2. Support Mayor's efforts to permanently establish the Office for Young Children in statute, to successfully implement the Hartford Blueprint, and to gear up for a second edition of the Hartford Blueprint. The BFI support can help integrate efforts within the family support sector, health sector and ECE sector, and support the implementation and sustainability of the Blueprint effort. This could be accomplished in a number of ways, including augmenting key staff, providing access to key consultants, developing a web-based communication and marketing tool and supporting strategic task forces and learning collaboratives that can also help build cross-sector and multi-level alignment.
3. Collaborate with the State and conduct state-level advocacy to align funding and service strategies with the Blueprint and BFI goals. This advocacy effort can help to create sustainable sources of funding. The BFI might want to contract with the Finance Project or a similar consultant to identify state and local sources and mechanisms for enhancing available funding.
4. Build increased capacity to measure and track school readiness and the performance of family support, ECE and health services and systems through adaptation of existing

population-based instruments such as the EDI and the PHDS already being used widely in the US, Canada and Australia.

The figure below, which builds on the cog and wheel analogy, depicts an integrated set of services and sectors for families with young children (as they correspond roughly to the Blueprint building blocks), and describes how these elements, in a well-performing early childhood service system, are driven by the “cog” of coordinated governance, financing and capacity building, including system-wide measurement and tracking efforts. The figure also depicts how the four priority recommendations in this report fit into this picture. For instance, the figure shows how support of a state-of-the-art Family Center helps to synchronize the service cogs, how support of measurement and tracking of school readiness and system performance helps to build system capacity, and how BFI can support the Mayor’s OFYC and serve as a convener between the Mayor’s OFYC and state-level partners such as the Commission on Children and the Governor’s Early Childhood Education Cabinet to build leadership and help to align governance and financing strategies. Together, these efforts will help to create a seamless system that helps children and families in Hartford enter through any door/sector to receive needed, and more comprehensive and integrated services.



BFI's role in these activities is one of "change agent", not long-term funder. This implies that BFI serve as an advocate for change, a source for or conduit to expertise, a convener and facilitator to kick-off new initiatives and secure ongoing commitments long-term support from key stakeholders. The BFI can do this through a combination of hiring additional staff in-house and making grants to organizations specializing in policy/advocacy, and providing system-building seed money to support discrete capacity-building projects.

The set of strategic options and recommendations outlined in this report, and in particular the four priority areas discussed on page 28 are important for laying the groundwork for improving Hartford's ECD system of services and in order to achieve BFI's goals. The strategic options to improve governance, financing and capacity building can lead to increased funding and improved alignment of state and city goals, strategies and funding streams. These efforts could help to create a permanent Office for Young Children within the Mayor's office and the successful implementation of the Blueprint with an effective implementation team that is in place to develop the next iteration of the Blueprint. With at least one Family Center fully functioning that provides or links to a comprehensive and integrated set of health, ECE and family support services, BFI will have the ability to showcase this model program and engage local, state and national policy makers and funders in an effort to expand and spread this approach city and statewide. All of this can be supported by a data collection and analysis infrastructure which can demonstrate the effectiveness of these efforts and continually inform and improve future efforts. Together these efforts will move BFI from its current version 2.0 to version 3.0 and will position BFI for expanding ECD system-building efforts starting in 2011 with BFI version 4.0. By 2010 the city of Hartford will be able to map and track reductions in school readiness disparities and improvements in academic achievement for children who have been able to benefit from BFI's portfolio of projects. It will also stand poised to continue the important systems building work that BFI launched in 1990.

BFI and the Broader Policy Arena

There are a number of ways in which BFI could be positioned in relationship to other cutting edge efforts in ECD systems building, both nationally and internationally. First, BFI might want to help the Mayor's OFYC and its implementation task force groups to build national and international relationships with other early childhood systems building innovators by inviting leaders to visit Hartford and by sending local policy makers to leading innovative sites. The BFI can also facilitate this type of relationship building by convening meetings in Hartford with key national and international players.

Furthermore, by developing innovative, collaborative, and visible projects that position and demonstrate how BFI is out ahead of the curve, it will begin to draw national and international attention. For instance, BFI might deploy the EDI school readiness measurement and mapping strategy in partnership with other leading sites in the U.S. such as in Rhode Island and in Orange County, CA, and with other national (UCLA-CHCFC) and international (Australian, Canadian) partners. BFI might also serve as a test site for new and innovative approaches to measuring the system's performance. For instance, BFI might partner with UCLA-CHCFC and the creators of the PHDS, the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI) at the Oregon Health and Sciences University, along with other pilot sites in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom on a project to adapt the PHDS for use in Family Centers.

By engaging in an intensive and dynamic dialogue with the leadership of BFI and other early childhood stakeholders in Hartford, consultants at UCLA-CHCFC have gained important insights into the creation and evolution of this innovative early childhood initiative and feel strongly that an ongoing dialogue and partnership with BFI will forward the collective thinking on how to

optimize early childhood service systems. For this reason, UCLA-CHCFC is interested in continuing to work with BFI on a number of potential collaborative projects that can help to optimize child development and school readiness in Hartford. UCLA-CHCFC could also continue to work with BFI on its capacity building efforts such as the development of a web-based workstation for the various stakeholders in the Mayor's Blueprint implementation effort and an enhanced data collection system for BFI evaluation activities. UCLA-CHCFC can also provide consultation to the Mayor's OFYC task force groups on model practices within the ECE, health and family support service models and facilitate BFI-sponsored study tours or connections with a number of national and international experts. Lastly, the UCLA-CHCFC can provide ongoing strategic consultation and updates, including, meeting with the State commissions and cabinets and brokering other key relationships.

V. CONCLUSION

The U.S. is in the midst of a major ECD paradigm shift. A new approach to promoting optimal early childhood development is emerging. This new approach is seeking to integrate the disparate efforts of health, ECE and family support services into a more coordinated approach to achieving desired ECD outcomes. The significance and magnitude of this policy, program and service shift will require sustained efforts and a collaborative, non-linear, learning process.

The Brighter Futures Initiative is positioned to help facilitate and play a leadership role in this paradigm shift, and to provide important lessons to many other cities about what it takes to build a high performing early childhood system that can improve the school readiness outcomes for young children, and promote optimal life long learning trajectories. The BFI has already played an important part in this effort. To realize the full potential of its 20-year investment, BFI will want to continue its future oriented vision by considering the priority areas discussed in this report and by extending its commitment to building the early childhood system that Hartford needs beyond the current authorization period which ends in 2010.

VI. APPENDIX

- A. List of Documents Reviewed
- B. List of Focus Group Participants
- C. Early Development Instrument (EDI) Fact Sheet
- D. Promoting Healthy Development Survey Fact Sheet (PHDS)
- E. Hope Street Family Center