

PREPARED FOR THE SAINT PAUL CITY COUNCIL

**SAINT PAUL
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM**

PLAN

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Common Acronyms found in the Program Plan

CCAP	Child Care Assistance Program
CPS	Child Protective Services
DHS	Minnesota Department of Human Services
ECE	Early Care and Education
ELLAC	Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee
ELS	Early Learning Scholarship
FFN	Family, Friend, and Neighbor
FPL	Federal Poverty Line
LNL	Legal Non-Licensed
MDE	Minnesota Department of Education

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Saint Paul Early Childhood Program (the “Program”) plan offers a response to the needs of Saint Paul children in their earliest years by positioning the City to make early care and education accessible to more of its children, and earlier in life. The Program would assist in the cost of early care and education access by providing a subsidy that supports free or reduced out-of-pocket costs for families and would be designed so the benefit would not count as income and therefore potentially push a family off of the benefits cliff. The goal of the Program is to leverage Saint Paul’s resources to improve kindergarten entry experiences, as well as long term outcomes for children and their families.

The Program would scaffold early care and education for the more than 20k Saint Paul children aged birth through kindergarten entry, including the projected 10,549 children below the 185% Federal Poverty Line. Starting with a manageable population, the initial phase of the program would begin with infants, later expanding to toddlers in year two, followed by preschool-age children in the third year as it scales towards maturity in year ten. Based on projections, in the initial year the Program would serve 154 infants and in year 10, would have served approximately 4,042 children ages birth to kindergarten entry, most of whom are <185% FPL.

For families, participation in the Program would be based on eligibility, with income being the greatest determinant and having the greatest amount of influence in the weighted priority points. The initial phase of the program would prioritize children below 185% of the federal poverty line. In addition to income as a determinant, 9 other possible determinants would assist in prioritizing applications. These determinants would include, but are not limited to, children in foster care, children who are unhoused, and those of incarcerated parents.

The Program plan would allow funding to both follow the child and reserve seats at contracted care and education sites. The initial stages of the Program funding would follow the child, supporting family choice in their provider, allowing for less overhead in management costs and organizational time, while encouraging wider provider demographics. As the program scales, funds would both follow the child to approved providers, in addition to reserve seats at various contracted providers. In public programs, such as District pre-kindergarten programs, funding would be used to create more seats, rather than pay for existing seats.

For licensed and legal non-licensed providers (LNL), participation in the Program would encourage access to care for families who may not have had access prior, or who may have experienced interrupted care due to the inability to afford the cost of care. Partnership for licensed and LNL providers would require an agreement allowing the City of Saint Paul to collect and evaluate data that informs the continuous scale of the Program. Licensed providers would include both family and center locations.

With the awareness that many cultures prefer the care of family, the Program would also aim to acknowledge the investment of Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers in the lives of Saint Paul’s children. A significant portion of these providers are women of color who care for the children of family, friends, or neighbors, and are considered trusted caregivers in their

communities. Too often these providers have limited access to programs and materials for children when in their care. FFN provider partnerships would require an agreement, in addition to orientation and ongoing disclosure of demographics served. All providers – licensed, LNL, and FFN – would benefit from partnerships and access to communities of learning.

The Program would include the use of a centralized search and application tool to support family's independence in identifying and selecting a program that fits their family's preferences. The online tool would allow for translation in Saint Paul's most common languages, while customer service support would aid families in application completion as well as identifying other related services and financial resources beneficial to families.

By highlighting the growing demand for early care and education, the Program would stimulate the City of Saint Paul's employment and workforce. Working in tandem with local agencies to support entrepreneurship in early care and education, along with opportunities for addressing professional growth and culturally accepted approaches for teaching and learning, the Program would work to encourage the City of Saint Paul workforce by creating professional communities and investing in education and training opportunities as the program scales.

Marketing and outreach for the Program would be approached from three perspectives: targeting age-based populations, building relationships and leveraging partnerships, and paid marketing. In the initial phases where infants are enrolled, age-based marketing would occur in tandem with relationship and partnership marketing approaches in strategic locations such as clinics, hospitals, and cultural community organizations. As the program scales, paid marketing would be added to the strategy, while continuing to employ the prior two approaches. To coincide with existing Community Ambassador work in the Office of Financial Empowerment, marketing, and potentially enrollment assistance, would come from trusted messengers within communities.

Understanding the current expanse of opportunities offered in Saint Paul, the Program acknowledges and incorporates programs, partnerships, and resources that support early childhood development, early care professionals, and families. To that end, the Office of Financial Empowerment, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, Saint Paul Public Library, and other non-City entities, would have roles in governance, as partners or collaborators.

Set to begin supporting children and families in its first year, the Program plan has been thoughtfully designed by People of Victory LLC using the reports and recommendations of the Saint Paul 3K Design Team, the Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee (ELLAC), MetrixIQ and Emmy Liss Strategies data, in addition to ongoing community and partner conversations, individuals and organizations, workgroups, and councilmember feedback.

BACKGROUND ON THE WORK

2016 began a new era for local early care and education conversations as Councilmember Rebecca Noecker began engaging with stakeholders in Saint Paul about early care and education for children and families. She explored the idea of a citywide preschool initiative and approached the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative to create a vision, mission, and set of recommendations for the Saint Paul 3K idea.

In 2017, the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative convened a Saint Paul 3K Workgroup and Saint Paul 3K Advisory Committee that met over the course of the year and together created a report: Saint Paul 3K: A Blueprint with Recommendations to Ensure that All Saint Paul Children are Ready for Kindergarten ("the Blueprint").

During 2018 and 2019 Councilmember Noecker convened a Saint Paul 3K Steering Committee to establish a larger engagement effort about the ideas in the Blueprint. The Steering Committee wanted a group to engage the Saint Paul community about the ideas in the Blueprint and make recommendations for future implementation, so they created the Saint Paul 3K Design Team. This 3K Design Team was tasked to generate feedback and community engagement around the Saint Paul 3K vision. The Design Team engaged with community organizations and staff members from school districts and state agencies, learned about how these initiatives have been designed and implemented in other cities, and implemented a community engagement process which generated ideas, recommendations, and questions for consideration by the Steering Committee and future Saint Paul 3K administration. The result of this work was the Saint Paul 3K Design Team Report.

Moving from broad to narrow, the Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee was formed in 2022 when the City Council passed Resolution 22-1183 paving the way to evaluate a locally governed early care and education program. Composed of various members representing Saint Paul's early care and education community, cultural organizations, community and advocacy groups, and Councilmembers, the group convened from October 2022 through March 2023.

Tasked with exploring early care and education accessibility for all Saint Paul families and making recommendations to the City Council on the potential design and implementation of the Program, the ELLAC was presented with existing early learning program models from other cities and spoke with several experts from the field over a 12-week period. The ELLAC group concluded with the Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee Report in March of 2023. The results of the report recommended that St. Paul should have an early childhood program and offered a range of suggestions on topics including funding, governance, eligibility, workforce, outreach and marketing, and accountability.

In July of 2023, the City Council passed RES 23-1094, ordering a special election to be held on November 5, 2024, to add a ballot question on whether the City should create a dedicated fund for subsidies for children's early care and education through a property tax levy. During the same month, Mayor Carter vetoed the resolution and submitted a veto letter to the Council explaining his rationale. In August 2023, the City Council overrode the Mayor's veto.

Progressing from narrow to slim, in January of 2024, the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative contracted with MetrixIQ to build a cost model based on anticipated funds, providing scenarios for the different potential options to implement and administer a city early care and education program. Reported in May 2024, the results of this report were advisory with further and subsequently more narrow recommendations on governance, funding, service delivery, eligibility and scale, outreach and enrollment, program features and standards, data and evaluation, and the workforce. Not a formal implementation plan, the report provided leaders in Saint Paul further information to aid in their planning for a detailed program plan to be implemented following voter approval of the levy.

Advancing from slim to specific, in June of 2024 the Saint Paul City Council hired an Early Learning Consultant to further develop the recommendations from the Blueprint, 3K Design Team, Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee, and MetrixIQ into an implementable program plan. In the role of Early Learning Consultant, People of Victory LLC has reviewed all previous work, reports, and recommendations, engaged with individuals, organizations, and workgroups to further explore and draft a program plan for Saint Paul Early Childhood Initiative implementation. The designed program plan reflects the current and foreseeable experience, partnerships, and resources of Saint Paul residents and primarily focuses on the initial and growing phases, rather than mature phase, of implementation.

THE NEED

The Case for the Saint Paul Early Childhood Initiative Program

Children's early years are critical for their on-target development and future success. Children's brains develop rapidly in the first five years of their lives, acquiring language, motor skills, emotional capacities, problem-solving abilities, and pre-literacy skills. Early care and education in these critical years has been proven to have significant impacts on children's future success in school, including reductions in special education placement and higher rates of high school graduation.¹ When children lack access to quality early learning, they are more likely to struggle in school and life – and the outcomes for low-income children can be especially striking. By the start of kindergarten, poor children perform significantly worse on tests of cognitive ability than children from higher-income families.² Poverty can impact attention, language development, emotional development and even the structure of children's brains.³

The benefits of early care and education extend beyond the individual child to the broader community. Stable and dependable care is critical to our economy as a whole. Nationally, the Council for a Strong America reported that the childcare crisis has caused \$122 billion dollars in lowered earnings and productivity.⁴ Because this study looked solely at parents of children 0 - 3 and did not include children ages 4 and 5 who are not yet in kindergarten, the economic impact is even greater than reported. When families are unable to find or afford childcare, employers experience huge disruptions in their labor force from issues such as employee absences and turnover.⁵ Conversely, supporting early care for children can result in increased labor force participation. A study in Washington, DC, found that after the city began funding two years of universal preschool, labor force participation increased, particularly for women. Mothers of young children saw a 12% increase in workforce participation and women living below the poverty line saw an even greater increase – from 15% to 55%.

Despite the clear benefits of early care and education, many Saint Paul families are unable to access it. Twenty-seven percent of Saint Paul children live under the federal poverty level. Over half live under 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, a threshold used by the State of Minnesota to indicate the need for Early Learning Scholarships.

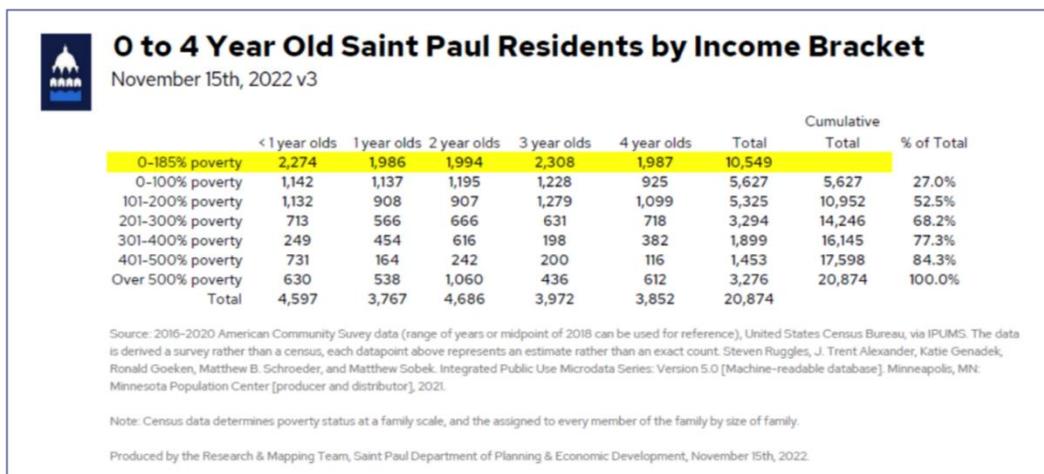


Chart 1

Finding childcare is difficult and expensive. Minnesota is the 4th most expensive state for childcare, and Ramsey County is the 6th most expensive county in Minnesota. Childcare costs put a strain on families and force some parents out of the workforce. According to Child Care Aware of Minnesota, the median monthly cost for childcare in Ramsey County is \$1,085 or \$13,021 annually. A family of three, living at the Federal Poverty line, would need to spend 63% of its income to place a child in care.⁶ Even families earning the median household income would need to spend 19% of their income for care. This is significantly over the 7% of income benchmark for affordability recommended by the U.S. Department of Human Services.⁷ Clearly, the cost of childcare is an enormous barrier for Saint Paul families.

Activation of a citywide early care and education program would have a direct impact on the workforce, allowing more families the ability to be employed. For Saint Paul's children, participating in early care and education programming is a preparation for their K-12 education experience, as well as for life beyond that timeframe. Early care and preschool programs would provide experiences in socialization for social and emotional development, early academics, health through physical and mental exercises, and introduce and support routines. Having a quality and early start contributes to productive citizenship and a healthy life.

Current Early Care and Education Funding

Current funding sources do not meet the exceptional need of children and families in Saint Paul. There are four early care and education programs that serve Saint Paul families. All are underfunded and often have families on waitlists.

Head Start/Early Head Start

Head Start and Early Head Start are free early childhood programs, funded by the federal government, that offer care to infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children in families that meet the income guidelines. Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington County operates 17 program sites, 15 of which are in Saint Paul, and has 3 collaboration sites with Saint Paul Public School. Early Head Start serves infants and toddlers through three programs, serving a total of 321 children. Head Start, for 3- to 5-year-old children, serves 820 children.⁸

Families are automatically eligible for Head Start if they meet one or more of the following criteria: receiving public assistance (MFIP, the Minnesota Family Investment Program) cash assistance or SSI (Supplemental Security Income), be a foster care family, be experiencing homelessness (lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing), or living at or below the current Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Saint Paul Public Schools

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) provides free pre-kindergarten classes to 4-year-olds in the City of Saint Paul. There are 65 school-based classrooms, across 35 different sites; each classroom can hold up to 20 students.⁹ SPPS Pre-K programs are funded by a variety of sources, including several state programs and local referendum dollars. Children are enrolled

for full-day, school-year programming (approximately 6.5 hours per day during the September - May school year).

To be eligible, children must be 4 years old, and one of the following: an English language learner; eligible for free and reduced-price meals; or receiving early childhood special education services.

Child Care Assistance Program

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is a state program that provides a benefit to families who meet program eligibility. To be eligible to receive CCAP, families must: have an income below 67% of the state median income (\$59,053) for a family of four; have children age 12 or younger, or up to 15 with special needs; cooperate with seeking child support; participate in authorized activities (such as work, school, job search, or employment plan); and have children who meet citizenship and immigration status requirements.¹⁰

Early Learning Scholarships

The Early Learning Scholarships (ELS) are a state program to increase access to high-quality early childhood programs for children ages birth to 4 years old with the highest needs. To be eligible for a scholarship, children must be age eligible (birth to 4 on September 1 of the current school year), and families must also meet eligibility requirements.

Children receiving ELS are prioritized if they are a child of a teen parent; currently in foster care; in need of child protective services; have experienced homelessness in the last 24 months; have experienced domestic violence; or have a child in a substance abuse or mental health treatment program.

Starting July 1, 2024, maximum award amounts are based on the child's age, program type, county where the program is located, and Parent Aware participation status. In Saint Paul, maximum award amounts can range from \$11,700.00 to \$20,716.80.¹¹

State and Federal Investments

Although there have been improved investments at the state level, particularly with the increase of Early Learning Scholarships for families and the Great Start Compensation Package for the early childhood workforce, this is not also true at the federal level. Deeper investments are needed to support Saint Paul's youngest children at this critical time in their early development, narrowing the gap between income and the cost of care that leaves so many families unable to access quality early care.

It is not possible to ascertain exactly how many families are unable to access care, however waitlists remain at our City's largest early care and education programs located at Head Start and Saint Paul Public Schools. These waitlists suggest there are many families, including those living at very low incomes, who are unable to access public funding to place their children in an

early care and education program. Prior to July 1, 2024, many families who received Early Learning Scholarships were forced to remove their children from early care and education programs when their scholarship funds ran out before fall, leaving children without a full year of support. Children who reached the cap of their Child Care Assistance Program, were required to remove their children or pay the out-of-pocket costs.

Current City Programs

The City of Saint Paul has existing programming that supports its youngest residents and their families. Saint Paul Public Library and Saint Paul Parks and Recreation offer programming in various locations across the city.

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation has 26 centers throughout the City of Saint Paul. Of these locations, Recreation for Preschoolers is offered at two locations: Edgumbe and Linwood. Recreation for Preschoolers engages children ages 3 to kindergarten entry in recreation and educational experiences with a purpose of providing a quality environment for the total development of the child with special emphasis on the development of a positive self-image.¹⁴ Both Edgumbe and Linwood Recreation Centers each serve 40-60 children a year when combining attendance from their school year and summer programs. The Parks and Recreation department has three additional locations able to implement a Recreation for Preschoolers program, but currently do not. Programs in both locations offer part-time programming with half or full day options.

The two current, and three possible sites, are inaccessible to all children in the City. With all five sites on the western third of the City, program options are not available to children on the East Side, West Side, or Frogtown neighborhoods, all locations with high populations of BIPOC families. To date, neither program is eligible to receive Early Learning Scholarships because they are not Parent Aware rated. These two programs are eligible to accept CCAP.¹⁵

Saint Paul Public Library

The City of Saint Paul Public Library system consists of the George Latimer Central Library, 12 branches, and a mobile library. Each location offers programming and services for young children and their families. These services include weekly story times, Birth to K special events, and other programs specific to the branch. Each library has a dedicated children's area with books and seating appropriate for small children and their adults. To date, library programs are on a drop-in basis. The Saint Paul Public Library does not gather demographics for Storytime participants or library visitors.

The goal of the Program is to provide access to early care and education experiences for Saint Paul's youngest residents. The program plan is designed with the expectation that families would first apply for other public funding streams, including Child Care Assistance and Early Learning

Scholarships. Saint Paul Early Childhood Initiative funds would provide a last-dollar-in approach to make early care and education programming possible, prioritizing those who need it most.

Woven throughout Saint Paul's need for a citywide early care and education program are outcomes that simultaneously address the City's changing demographic, workforce and employment, financial empowerment and sustainability for families, in addition to early childhood development for more improved futures.

FUNDING AND BUDGET

Funding

The core revenue source from the Program would be special levy funding. The levy projected revenue is two million dollars in the initial year. Each subsequent year would add an additional two million dollars, with year two projections at four million, year three at six million and so on. See Graph 1. Per projection, revenue over the 10-year life of the levy would be an estimated \$110 million.



Graph 1

The special levy is secured through property taxes. The per property annual cost of the levy is based on the 2025 single family median home value of \$275,300. Each year the estimated cost is \$15.91 per household. See Graph 2 for projections through year 10.



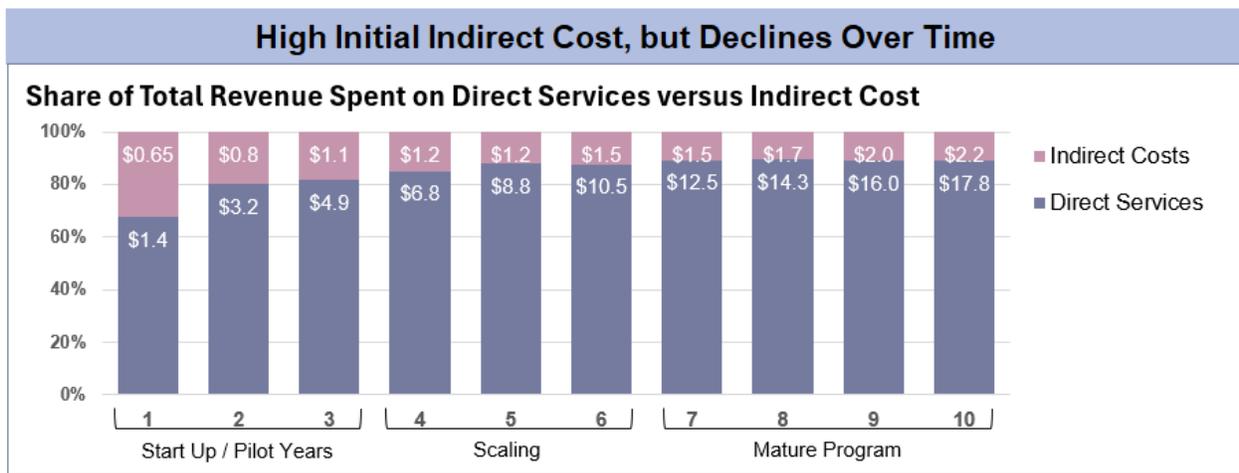
Projections are based on the 2025 median single family property value of \$275,300.

Graph 2

While special levy funding would be the primary source of revenue for the Program, philanthropic contributions and grant funding could be explored with limitations. Members of the ELLAC considered using these funds towards the indirect costs of the Program.

Budget

The initial years of the Program would require higher indirect costs due to start up needs typical for a new venture. These costs would not provide direct service to children and families and instead would be driven by core administrative functions needed to manage the program. In the initial stages indirect costs would be higher at nearly 30% of the budget. See Graph 3. As the program scales and moves towards maturity, indirect costs would decline over time, while remaining approximately below 10% of the overall revenue. See Tables 1 and 2.¹²



Graph 3

Modeled indirect costs are driven by core admin functions needed to manage the program.

Indirect Costs	Start Up / Pilot Years			Scaling			Mature Program			
	Year 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Initiative staff	\$380,000	\$445,000	\$510,000	\$600,000	\$510,000	\$530,000	\$560,000	\$590,000	\$620,000	\$650,000
Enrollment, eligibility and payments	\$75,000	\$125,000	\$350,000	\$325,000	\$325,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$475,000	\$475,000
Evaluation	\$100,000	\$125,000	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$185,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Marketing and outreach	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$110,000	\$121,000	\$133,100	\$146,410
Quality improvement							\$25,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Workforce development								\$50,000	\$50,000	\$75,000
Resource Library & discounted experiences	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Subtotal	\$615,000	\$755,000	\$1,070,000	\$1,235,000	\$1,120,000	\$1,215,000	\$1,290,000	\$1,471,000	\$1,588,100	\$1,656,410
Overhead	\$41,300	\$47,828	\$73,837	\$80,854	\$80,959	\$94,877	\$100,408	\$113,479	\$128,921	\$141,415
Total	\$656,300	\$802,828	\$1,143,837	\$1,315,854	\$1,200,959	\$1,309,877	\$1,390,408	\$1,584,479	\$1,717,021	\$1,797,825

Table 1

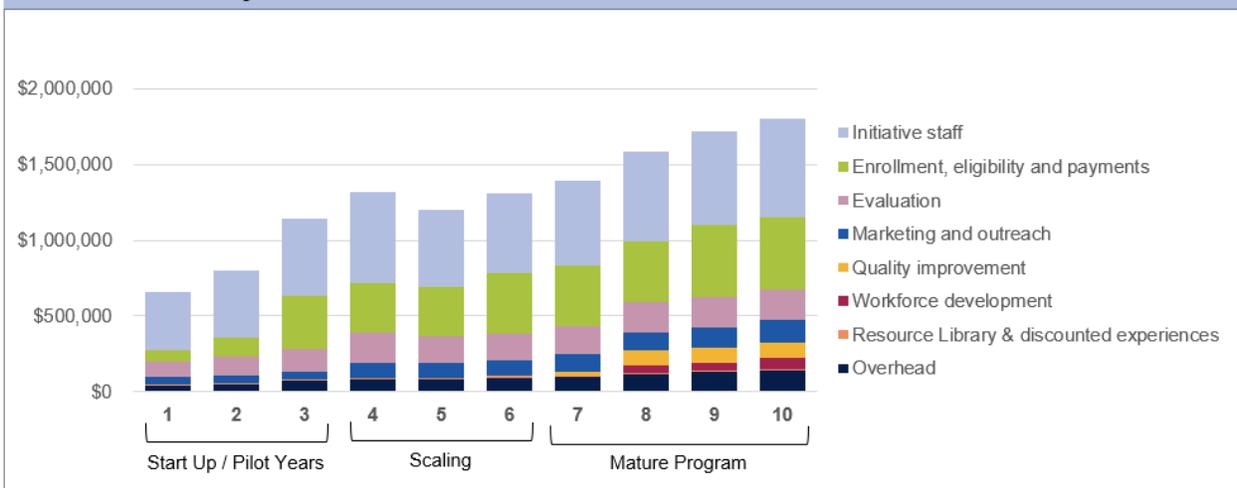
Financial Overview for Saint Paul Early Childhood Initiative

Total Program Cost and Revenue by Year (\$M)										
Year	Start Up / Pilot Years			Scaling			Mature Program			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total Funding	\$2.00	\$4.00	\$6.00	\$8.00	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$14.00	\$16.00	\$18.00	\$20.00
Direct Services	\$1.37	\$3.27	\$4.87	\$6.76	\$8.76	\$10.55	\$12.47	\$14.27	\$16.03	\$17.84
Indirect Costs	\$0.65	\$0.80	\$1.13	\$1.24	\$1.24	\$1.45	\$1.53	\$1.73	\$1.97	\$2.16
Indirect Percent	32.5%	20.0%	18.8%	15.5%	12.4%	12.1%	10.9%	10.8%	10.9%	10.8%

Table 2

While some indirect costs are fixed, such as staffing, evaluation, or workforce training investments, others would scale as the program grows. See Graph 4.

Some indirect costs are fixed; others will scale as the program grows. Indirect costs at year 10 remain under \$2M.



Overall projected staffing costs are a stable percentage of the program indirect costs. These costs temporarily increase during years 4 and 5 due to the transition in program administration and the short-term overlap in consultant and City staff.

Graph 4

Over the initiative’s lifetime, most indirect spending would go towards staffing and evaluation. Staffing costs are modeled in Table 3 and reflective of current OFE structures, positions, and salaries. See Table 4 outlining staff and their function.¹² See Figure 1 for a sample organizational chart aligned with the current OFE positions.

Detailed Indirect Cost Assumptions											
Initiative staff costs (in a model where program is administered by the city)											
Position	Base Salary	Projected FTE by Program Year									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Program Manager	\$130,000	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Coordinator (Customer Service and Outreach)	\$65,000		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Coordinator (Data and Evaluation)	\$65,000			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Financial Analyst	\$90,000				1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Translator / Interpreter	\$50,000	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Contractor	\$100,000	1	1	1	1	0.5					
Contractor	\$100,000	1	1	1	1	0.5					
Total FTE		4	5	6	7	6	5	5	5	5	5

Other Key Assumptions

- Titles and salaries are consistent with the current structures, roles, and salaries in the Office of Financial Empowerment.
- Customer service capacity (staff or vendor) is also included within enrollment and eligibility.

Table 3

Detailed Indirect Cost Assumptions: Initiative Staff Functions	
Role	Overview of Responsibilities
Program Manager *Responsibilities would shift from the start up years to the scaling years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program oversight and management • Fiscal oversight • Partnerships and relationship management • Communications, political relation
Coordinators (2) Customer Service and Outreach, Data and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment and eligibility • Online tool • Virtual sessions • Partner resources • Execution of data collection • Analysis of evaluation
Financial Analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments • Oversight of accounting, audit • Contracts management • Technology systems management
Translator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support translation in customer service
Early stages Contractors (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various deliverables per contract to include data collection and evaluation • Provider engagement • Enrollment, eligibility, and payments • Communication • Outreach and marketing • Contracts management • Technology systems management

Table 4

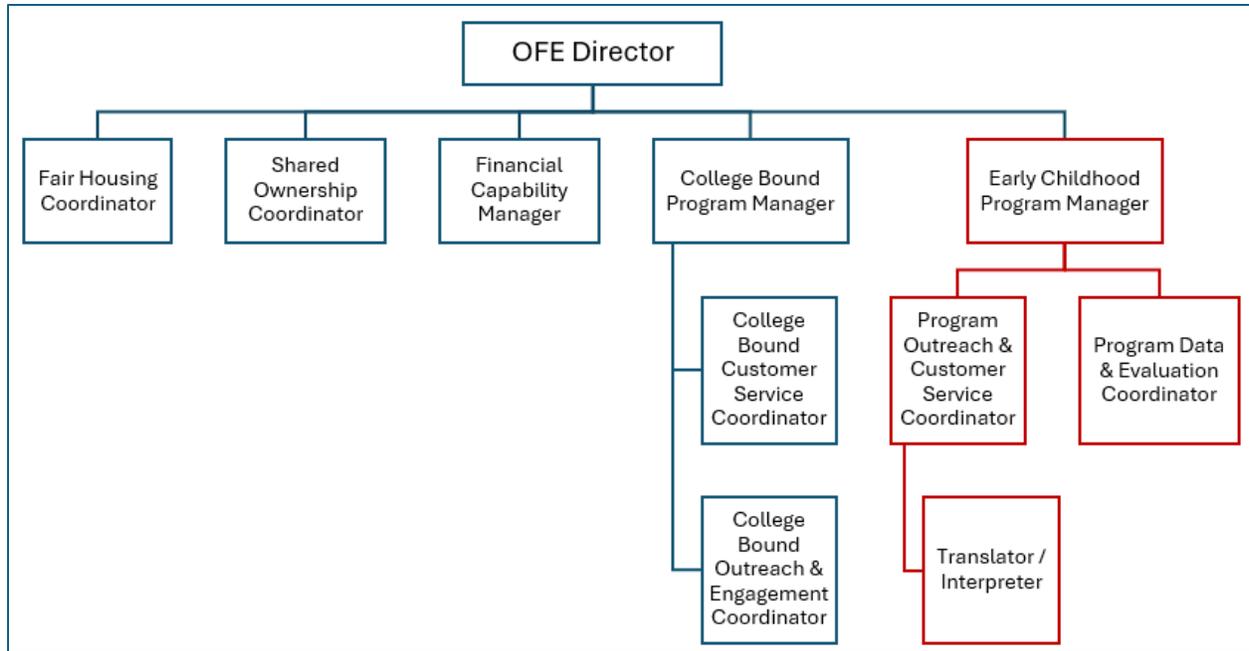


Figure 1

In addition to staffing and evaluation, indirect costs would include supports for enrollment, eligibility, and payments. Pertinent to the scale of the Program is an online search and application tool, ongoing customer service support, payment management and accounting systems. The cost of annual audits would be embedded in these indirect costs, as well, supporting accountability of levy funds. Reference tables 5, 6, and 7 for detailed indirect cost assumptions.¹²

Detailed Indirect Cost Assumptions: Enrollment, Eligibility and Payments										
	Start Up / Pilot Years			Scaling			Mature Program			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Search tool and online application		\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Customer Service			\$75,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$225,000	\$225,000	\$225,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Tech	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Payment management and accounting										
Audit	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Subtotal	\$75,000	\$125,000	\$350,000	\$325,000	\$325,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$475,000	\$475,000

• Other needs may exist as the program develops.

Table 5

Detailed Indirect Cost Assumptions: Explanation for Enrollment, Eligibility and Payments	
Search tool and online application	Includes cost to license and maintain a one-stop navigator tool for families
Customer Service	Includes cost for personnel to support families and providers in navigating applications, enrollments, and payments processes. Could be a part of initiative team or outsourced capacity
Tech	Includes cost for website, website integration with search tool and online application, CRM, hosting, maintenance, support
Payment management and accounting	No spend included in initial model - currently assumed to be handled by initiative staff; as program scales, may require a more robust internal or contracted payments infrastructure
Audit	Assumed flat annual cost in perpetuity for compliance purposes

Table 6

Detailed Indirect Cost Assumptions: Other Key Inputs	
Refer to Table 1	
Evaluation	Assumes student assessment, entry and exit surveys for families, provider surveys, analysis; evaluation includes 100% of participants in years 1 and 2, scales down to representative sample beginning in year 3. Assumes some evaluation of quality and workforce initiatives beginning in year 7
Marketing and Outreach	Limited funding for deployment and planning in years 1 and 2; ramp up in grassroots outreach over time. Assumes very limited big-scale marketing in early years; 10% annual increase starting in year 7
Quality Improvement	Assumes small investment beginning in year 7; could scale based on efficacy
Workforce development	Assumes small investment beginning in year 7; could scale based on efficacy
Overhead	Rent, supplies and materials, other admin fees; calculated at 7% of indirect cost subtotal

Table 7

Direct costs are a result of levy funding less indirect costs; these would be the dollars available to cover the cost of care for families. Per projections, each year the indirect costs would lessen proportionately, allowing more funds to cover the cost of care. The Program budget would be directly impacted by the cost of care and the age of the child receiving care.

Potential Partnerships

The Funding and Budget of the Program could be multilayered. In addition to a resident committed special levy possible avenues to explore include grants and philanthropic contributions.

Funding and Budget Summary

- The core revenue source for the Program would be special levy funding. Special levy funding is projected at \$2 million dollars in the initial year, with an additional \$2 million each year for 10 years.
- In the early stages of the Program, indirect costs would amount to approximately 30% of the budget due to start-up costs. Indirect costs would lessen as the program grows and matures.
- Most indirect costs are related to staffing and would be fixed, rather than fluctuate, over time. Other indirect costs would support technology, payment and billing platforms, audits, etc.
- Direct costs increase as the program scales and matures.

Funding and Budget in the Initial Stages

In the initial year the Program would gather an estimated \$2 million dollars from the approved special levy. Funds allocated towards indirect costs would be spent to hire staff, both City and contractors, support technology development, and establish evaluation mechanisms and protocols.

As the program rolls out to families, funds would be allocated to providers for reimbursement for services.

GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION AND ADVISORY BODY

Governance

Aligned with the recommendations of the ELLAC, the Office of Financial Empowerment would be the City office best positioned to support the Saint Paul Early Childhood Initiative. Beginning with its 2019 work of envisioning College Bound Saint Paul, followed by implementation in 2020, the Office of Financial Empowerment has designed initiatives to support Saint Paul families with young children, and has experience with contracting and outsourcing tasks.

Dedicated to investing in the lives of our children, the Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE), College Bound, specifically, helps to provide a pathway to a brighter future for both families and the city. According to their website, the purpose of the program is to connect families and their children to early childhood resources as well as financial education and tools to be financially healthy. This ongoing work has developed a body of knowledge, public awareness, early childhood partners, and practices that are aligned with the target audience, growth patterns, and common goals of the Program.

Many ELLAC members noted that a program funded by tax dollars should be housed within the City and that being within the City would provide the most transparency. Throughout the initiative stages, OFE would maintain a position as the governing body. In this role OFE would have oversight over the Program, working to provide direction, timelines and deliverables, monitor the implementation of the program, oversee the program administration, and ultimately establish further vision. Other oversight functions would include accountability of finances, program design, timelines, outcomes, marketing, partnerships, and customer service.

Administration

In the initial stages OFE would contract with an independent organization(s) to administer the Program. OFE has extensive experience with outsourcing and contracting experts for various programs, projects, and ongoing research. Less costly in the initial stages, contracting for administration would allow work on the Program to begin more promptly, limiting the amount of time it takes for the City to establish structures when there are potential experienced partners with existing approaches and systems. Contracting initial administrative work would add fewer staff to the City budget at the onset, while also creating the opportunity for contracts to be structured with clear benchmarks, deliverables, and accountability measures.

OFE would contract for administrative tasks, having complete oversight. The contracted administrator(s) would not independently manage the Program, instead contract to perform specific functions. The functions of the contracted program administrator would include, but may not be limited to, data collection and evaluation, provider engagement, contracts management, and development and maintenance of a search tool and technology systems management. See Table 8 for further details.

City Oversight and Contracted Tasks		
Workstream	City Tasks	Contracted Tasks
Program oversight and management	X	
Fiscal management	X	
Partnerships and relationship management	X	
Political relations	X	
Provider engagement	X	
Family engagement and support	X	
Communications		X
Outreach and marketing		X
Technology systems and management		X
Data collection and evaluation		X
Enrollment, eligibility, and payments		X
Contracts and management		X

Table 8

In search of a Program administrator, an RFP would be drafted following the election. Potential interested contractors would submit interest, and the selection process would be completed shortly thereafter.

Beginning in year four, during the growing stage of the program, the governance and administrative model would shift as contracted administrator(s) begin to offset their functions to City staff, onboarding them to assume responsibility for formerly contracted tasks. This transition would occur over a two-year term, during years four and five specifically, having City staff in position and groomed to assume all Program functions in year 6. See Table 9.

Transition of City Oversight & Contracted Administrative Functions			
Workstream	Oversight by the City	Transitions from contractor to the City year 4	Transitions from contractor to the City year 5
Program oversight and management	x		
Fiscal management	x		
Partnerships and relationship management	x		
Political relations	x		
Provider engagement	x		
Family engagement and support	x		
Communications		x	
Outreach and marketing		x	
Technology systems and management		x	
Data collection and evaluation			x
Enrollment, eligibility, and payments			x
Contracts and management			x

Table 9

Advisory Body

ELLAC Recommendation: The program should include strong parent, provider and community voices in policy decision-making through appropriate structures like a governing board, advisory committee, or other structure. (95% agreed)

Aligned with the recommendations of the ELLAC, the Program would have an advisory body. The goal of this group would be to monitor, advise, provide feedback and recommendation, review program effectiveness, and ensure implementation is aligned with the Program goals. Their voice would be shared with the OFE Director. In addition, the group would model public interest and accountability for the use of newly raised funds, ensure family and childcare provider needs are considered, and support alignment between the varied early childhood education efforts across the City.

The Advisory Body should represent 21 roles, both individuals and organizations, with differing durations of participation to ensure a constant overlap of experienced and new participant voices. Community input would be considered in determining the group's functions, participant roles and durations, and approval of a position description, with one role to include informing the Program standards for partner providers. Open positions would be announced publicly.

Potential Partnerships

Governance and Administration of the Program is multilayered. Possible partnerships in this work would include, but are not limited to, the Office of Financial Empowerment, Community Ambassadors, Saint Paul City Council.

Governance and Administration Summary

The Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) would be the City office best suited to govern the Program. An outside organization would contract to administer the program in the early years. The OFE would have oversight of the contracted Administrator of the Program. An advisory group would monitor, provide feedback and recommendations, and hold the governance accountable.

Governance and Administration in the Initial Stages

The Office of Financial Empowerment would house the Program as the governing body. An RFP for contracted administration of the Program would be made available following the election. Following responses and selection, tasks would begin in 2025.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Provider and Family Participants

ELLAC Recommendation: If the revenue for the program is raised solely by Saint Paul taxpayers, program funding should only go to providers located in Saint Paul. (89% agreed)

Members of the Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee recommended funds raised through a special levy by Saint Paul taxpayers, should remain with providers in the City. In alignment with this recommendation, to be eligible for payment reimbursement and use of resources the Program would require participating early care and education (formerly 'childcare') providers to sign a partnership agreement and have a business address within the City of Saint Paul boundaries.

In addition to providers, all Program family participants would be residents at a Saint Paul address at the time of participating and receiving reimbursable funds.

Waivers

ELLAC Recommendation: A process or waiver should be developed for granting program funding to a provider outside of Saint Paul in extenuating circumstances. (83% agreed)

Congruent to the recommendation and concerns of the ELLAC, the Program would require Saint Paul families desiring to use initiative funds to use them at providers within the City of Saint Paul. The program acknowledges there may be extenuating circumstances where a family is unable to use these funds within these parameters. In these circumstances a waiver would be provided on a case-by-case basis, for a predetermined period of time before re-evaluation.

These circumstances include:

- Children with special needs who require highly trained care and there is no such provider with availability within the City of Saint Paul.
- Children who are involved in Child Protection Services who may be temporarily displaced for safety purposes. These children's primary guardian was caring for them in the City of Saint Paul where the case is under investigation.
- Children whose families are unhoused whose residence was in the City of Saint Paul immediately prior to displacement and cannot locate housing or shelter within the City. The family may receive or participate in other services in St. Paul.

Licensed and Legal Non-Licensed Providers

ELLAC Recommendation: Providers receiving program funding, must, at a minimum, be licensed or a legal non-licensed provider. (89% agreed)

Per ELLAC members, providers participating in the Program would be licensed or hold a legal non-licensed (LNL) status if seeking reimbursement for services. This status guarantees providers are actively registered with the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services and meet the minimum requirements for health and safety in quality care for young children.

For both effectiveness and broad reach, the Program would expect to connect interested providers with local agencies and programs that support non-licensed providers who elect to become licensed, or current providers who seek support in maintaining their license. Some of these partners include Think Small, Ramsey County Early Childhood Academy, and Child Care Aware of Minnesota.

Setting Options

ELLAC Recommendation: Program funding can cover tuition or costs at the following settings: Saint Paul Public Schools (89% agreed), Head Start and Early Head Start (78% agreed), licensed family child care (89% agreed), and child care centers (89% agreed).

As diverse as the population and terrain of the City of Saint Paul, so too, are the range of early care programming options. In response to the varied needs and preferences of working families, while acknowledging different early approaches are necessary, the ELLAC recommended program funds dispensable at both childcare and school-based programs. As last-dollar-in, program funds would activate after all other financial eligibility and pathways have been identified per the type of setting. See Year One At A Glance for a visual map of the family enrollment process.

Funding Distribution

ELLAC Recommendation: Program funding should follow the child or fund seats as providers for any child to use (similar to Pathway I and II Early Learning Scholarships). Both ways should be included. (78% agreed)

There are multiple approaches for working with private providers in publicly funded early care and education programs. One approach, where funds follow the child, allows families to select and enroll their child in an approved care program. The program then receives funding for the duration the child is both eligible and attends the program. A second approach would allow the City to enter into contracts with specific early care and education providers to offer services. Providers reserve spots in their program for any eligible child to fill.

In the initial stages of implementation, the Program would exclusively allow funds to follow the child. In this model:

- Families would have the greatest amount of voice and flexibility in their selection, while using an array of providers located in various City locations.
- Administration costs would be kept lower as families seek providers and the development of larger contracts would not be required.
- As the Program develops, management would be done with greater ease due to a smaller quantity of participants.
- Many of the larger systems needed for the Program would not need to be developed to execute this model.
- Larger systems including technology, data collection, and evaluations, would have time to be developed and tested.

Beginning in year three as the program grows, the City would execute contracts to reserve spots with eligible providers in addition to funds following the child. It is anticipated that families of infants and toddlers would prefer funds to follow their child at greater rates than parents of preschool children.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Providers

ELLAC Recommendation: Saint Paul should continue to evaluate how best to support unpaid family, friend, and neighbor care. (94% agreed)

Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers are an essential aspect of the care ecosystem for many families. Providers may include grandparents, other relatives and non-relatives. According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, care may be full or part-time, paid or unpaid, occurring in the child's home or in the caregiver's home.¹³ FFN providers are often accessible, flexible in the schedule, and share similar values, cultures, and child rearing practices as the families who select them.

FFN care is difficult to both quantify and evaluate because it is non-licensed care and therefore not registered or regulated by any particular state or federal agency; this is also true of Saint Paul FFNs. According to the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), US Department of Human Services' National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) the number of "unlisted" (aka FFN) providers in Minnesota in 2019 was 82,700. In Saint Paul, many of these providers are both women and BIPOC people chosen and entrusted by family, friends, or neighbors to provide aligned care for their child.¹³

Because the Program would require a license for provider reimbursement and FFNs are not licensed, alternatives are necessary to proactively reduce further disparities in the early years. As such, the ELLAC recommended exploring ways to better support this population.

City of Saint Paul partnerships with FFN providers would aim to acknowledge the contribution of these trusted community members to children and families while providing access to resources and partnerships that would enhance the early learning experiences of children in their care. While FFN providers would not be eligible to receive tuition reimbursement, they would be supported by the Program through a partnership that would include greater access to existing City programs, along with virtual information and learning sessions. Additional outreach to, and support for FFN providers would be made in consultation with community advisors.

Potential Partnerships

Service delivery of the Program is multilayered. Possible partnerships in this work would include, but are not limited to, Think Small, Ramsey County Early Childhood Academy, Child Care Aware of Minnesota, Head Start, Saint Paul Public Schools, Saint Paul Public Library, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, various Early Care and Education (ECE) sites, both in family and center locations.

As an example, a partnership with the Ramsey County Early Childhood Academy could include connecting and funneling LNL or FNN providers for support in beginning an ECE business.

Service Delivery Summary

- Program funds would be exclusive to Saint Paul residents
- Program funds would be utilized exclusively with ECE providers functioning from a Saint Paul business address
- Partner providers would be licensed or legal non-licensed
- Temporary waivers may be granted to Saint Paul families needing to select care outside of Saint Paul boundaries due to extenuating circumstances.
- Program funds would cover the cost of tuition in ECE and school-based sites.
- Funding would both follow the child and reserve seats at eligible providers.
- Family, Friend, and Neighbor partnerships would be acknowledged with use of resources, however not eligible for financial reimbursement.

Service Delivery in the Initial Stages

Residents of Saint Paul would have access to free or discounted early care and education experiences. Eligible and awarded families would seek out a licensed or legal non-licensed provider for services. Families would complete periodic verification of their eligibility. Partner Providers would provide services to children and families and submit for reimbursement.

ELIGIBILITY AND SCALE

Eligibility

ELLAC Recommendations: All families residing in Saint Paul are eligible (89% agreed). All families, regardless of immigration status, are eligible (100% agreed).

In alignment with the recommendation from the Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee, participation in the Program is open to all families who reside in Saint Paul who have children birth through kindergarten entry age. Access to the Program's funds is inclusive of all families regardless of immigrant status.

Program Coverage

ELLAC Recommendations: The program should fully cover the cost of care for children under 185% Federal Poverty Level (94% agreed). When fully funded, the program should serve all children in Saint Paul ages 0-5 (96% agreed). If funding is not available for all children, the program should prioritize families with the most need, as determined by a point system (89% agreed). – program prioritization should be based on income, homelessness, children in foster care, and children with parents who were under 21 at the time of birth.

Twenty-seven percent of Saint Paul children live under the federal poverty level. Over half live under 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, a threshold used by the State of Minnesota to indicate the need for Early Learning Scholarships. In response to these statistics, the ELLAC recommended covering the full cost of care for children under 185% of the FPL, as a last-dollar-in effort. Children eligible for other funding streams would be encouraged to apply for those funds. Children who qualify for Head Start or preschool programs would be motivated to first apply for those programs to determine eligibility before accessing use of the Program's funds.

Prioritization

In the application process, priority points would be provided to fast-track children with greater needs. Priority points would be weighted, with income having the greatest weight at three points. All other attributes would be weighted at one point. Not all points would be possible for a family to acquire, as some are contradictory in nature. For example, a child cannot have a point for being unhoused and foster care. A total of 11 points are possible. Priorities include:

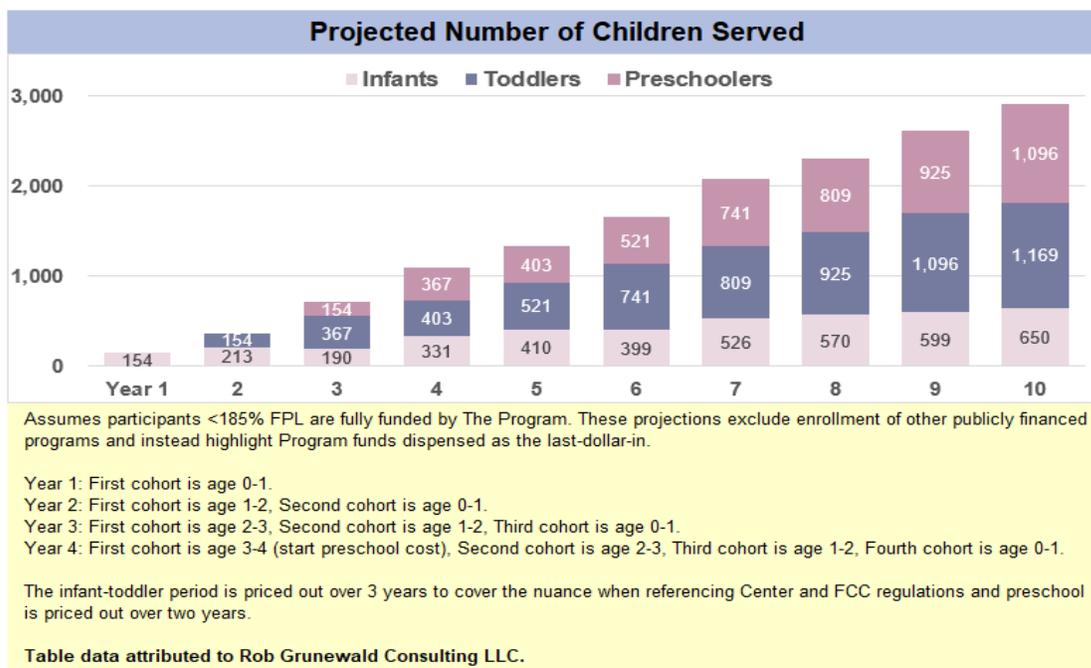
Priority Points Attribute	Points
Income (<185% of the FPL)	3
Child protection/domestic abuse victims (or in transition)	1
Children of incarcerated parents	1
Children with parents under 21 at birth	1
Children with special needs	1
Foster Care	1
Language	1
More than one child in the household under age 5	1
Race	1
Unhoused	1

Table 10

Scale

The long-term vision of the Program is to support all children in Saint Paul with accessing an ECE experience prior to kindergarten, whether through ECE or school-based programming. When funding is unable to support all children, children with greater need would be prioritized. Should the program become saturated with applications, applicants would be sorted by priority points and date of application.

In a cohort model, the initial stages of the program would service infants, followed by toddlers in year two, and preschool age in year three with the cost of preschool being dispensed beginning in year 4. See Graph 5 to reference the number of projected children served should the Program support last-dollar-in for children during the initial years. For the purpose of this projection, the average weighted cost for an infant and toddler is \$8,710 and \$1,877 for preschool children. The weighted average cost factors in children receiving ELS, CCAP, or a combination of both subsidies and assumes a percentage of children eligible for each, or both, subsidies, while serving children <185% of the poverty rate.



Graph 5

Modeled per-child reimbursement rates for the new early childhood initiative						
	Infant / Toddler			Preschool		
	Low	High	Average	Low	High	Average
Fully funded child	\$18,979	\$21,684	\$20,331	\$15,663	\$17,883	\$16,773
Partially funded child:						
Receives ELS	\$3,979	\$14,966	\$9,472	\$663	\$3,611	\$2,137
Receives CCAP		\$6,393	\$3,197	\$3,620	\$5,840	\$4,730
Receives ELS and CCAP		\$6,393	\$3,197	\$663	\$3,099	\$1,881
<p>Per-child reimbursement rates were calculated based on CCAP reimbursement rates, which are 75th percentile of the market rate, based on a survey conducted in 2021. All numbers factor in the fact that 85% of slots in Saint Paul are at Centers; 15% are at Family Care providers. The high rate is the average reimbursement rate across providers in Saint Paul, factoring in quality rating and quality bonus given to 3- and 4-star rated providers. The low rate is the average reimbursement rate across providers in Saint Paul, removing any quality differential or bonuses. In modeling the reach of the new initiative, we use the average.</p> <p>For partially funded children, the rates are calculated as the cost of care less the average funding received through other public funding programs with low and high estimates. In modeling the reach of the new initiative, we use the average.</p>						
Basic equation to determine the projected reach of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Initiative:	$\frac{\text{Total expenditure on direct services}}{\text{Cost of care per child}}$			=	Total number of children served	
<p>Variables that impact the outcome: Cost of care assumptions: The model assumes a cost-of-care in line with the 75th percentile market rate. Increasing the rate further decreases the number of children who can be served.</p>						
<p>*Taken from <i>Planning for the Saint Paul Early Childhood Initiative</i>, produced by MetrixIQ.</p>						

Table 11¹²

As the program scales, children of all ages and incomes would equally have access to the Program’s funds, with priority points utilized when there are applicants below 185% FPL or experiencing other priorities such as being unhoused. In its mature stage when there is evidence that fewer applicants are below the FPL and more exceed the 185% FPL, a percentage of seats would be reserved for children who do not receive Early Learning Scholarships (ELS) or Child Care Assistance Program funds. These applications would be supported based on date and remaining priority points. Based on saturation and expanse of funds, the Program would determine when to support additional families above 185% FPL. When this occurs, families above 185% of the FPL would participate in a sliding fee scale; with those between 185-300% having the greater discount than those between 300-450% FPL.

Application acceptance for the Program would be ongoing but screened monthly and prioritized based on application date. Children would be admitted to the Program and able to begin at their chosen site at the start of the month following their acceptance.

Program dollars would supplement, rather than supplant, Head Start or Saint Paul Public Schools seats. In those settings dollars would only be used to expand programming, rather than replace funds dedicated to existing programming.

Potential Partnerships

The Eligibility and Scale of the Program would be multilayered. Possible partnerships or collaborations in this work would include but are not limited to Child Care Assistance Program and Ramsey County Vital Records.

As an example, partnerships with Ramsey County Vital Records could assist with verification of birthdates or addresses.

Eligibility and Scale Summary

- All families who are residents in Saint Paul, with children ages birth through kindergarten entry would be eligible to participate in the Program funding, regardless of immigration status.
- Long term, the program would attempt to cover the cost of children <185% of the FPL.
- When funding is not available for all children, priority points would be applied during the application process, giving precedence to fast-track applications having greater need.
- At maturity, the Program would serve children in Saint Paul across all ages equally, encouraging families to apply to all eligible funding streams and in partnership with early learning programs in Saint Paul. Maturity of the Program would not occur during the 10 years of projection
- Beginning with infants, followed by toddlers and preschoolers in subsequent years, the initial program projections illustrate the number of children served over the 10-year levy term. The infant-toddler costs are projected over three years to cover the nuance of differing age groupings in centers and family care locations, leaving two years of preschool costs in a 5-year span. These projections also assume no child drops from services over the 5-year period, or should a child drop out of the Program, they are replaced by another child of the same age. Program projections assume 65% of the City's children would participate in care. In the 65%, children <185% FPL would qualify for ELS, CCAP, or both subsidies, leaving the Program to fund the difference using last-dollar-in.

Eligibility and Scale in the Initial Stages

The initial year the Program would target infants, aligning with community feedback and the progression of established practices and partnerships in the OFE where the program would be housed. Provided infants supported by the Program receive another subsidy, the average cost of care dispensed by the Program would be \$8,710 per infant, allowing approximately 154 infants in the initial year at no additional cost to the family. With income as the most weighted priority point, these would be children <185% FPL.

OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT

Outreach

Outreach for the Program would have a three-pronged approach incorporating the lessons learned, design, and partnerships already established in the OFE, which has experience connecting to families with young children. These three approaches would include targeted communities, relationships and partnerships, and paid marketing.

Targeted Communities

Because the Program would enroll infants in the first year, and toddlers and preschool in subsequent years, marketing would begin with efforts targeting families with infants. Programming would begin on a smaller scale in the initial year, allowing marketing efforts to occur on a smaller scale and in alignment with program enrollment. See below for age-based target marketing projections.

Subsequent years would target families with toddlers and preschool-aged children. Year four marketing and beyond would require reevaluation to align with the trends in applications and enrollment, however provided all projections are stable, marketing would target all children birth through kindergarten entry, based on income. A reevaluation would determine if children residing in specific geographic areas or reflecting some cultural groups, for example, are underrepresented and therefore should be targeted. Targeted communities would be informed by Program trends.

Program Year	Marketing Audience
Year 1	Infants
Year 2	Toddlers
Year 3	Preschool
Year 4+	(All) Birth - Kindergarten

Table 12

Relationships and Partnerships

A second layer of outreach is the development of relationships and partnerships. Marketing efforts would be maximized in relationship and collaboration with partners. Partners with existing high touch and high reach efforts are a primary avenue for efficient marketing, particularly to harder-to-reach populations. These partners are often in the ecosystem of a family and therefore trusted networks. Along with ECE providers, the Community Ambassadors in OFE are akin to these trusted networks with greater access to families within their own communities.

Having more indirect than direct contact with families and children, OFE has positioned itself to be a connector of resources and information through its established networks. Over the years OFE has developed a myriad of early childhood relationships both in ECE and early health. This layer of marketing offers a wealth of opportunities for community awareness and engagement as relationships are leveraged to reach Saint Paul's communities.

Partner relationships are critical to spreading the word about the Program, particularly on limited budgets. Formal partnerships would be established with hospitals, clinics, and community organizations that interact directly with families. Brief training and information sessions for organizations or individuals marketing the Program would be necessary to ensure the messengers are knowledgeable and the message is relayed accurately.

Paid Marketing

A final layer of marketing is paid marketing. The Program budget has an allocation for marketing, beginning in the initial year. Small scale marketing efforts such as translated print materials, would be an effective mechanism for sharing information and can be presented in various formats of interest for families. Large scale marketing opportunities such as billboards or radio and newspaper ads, would be more appropriate and aligned as the program scales and matures.

In conjunction with targeted age marketing, the Program would consider social media platforms and pop-ups to reach an array of family demographics.

Enrollment

ELLAC Recommendations: The program should be as easy as possible for providers and parent to access and should explore ideas like a single application, translation, navigators (both centrally located and community-based), etc. (89% agreed). The program should create an online tool (or link to a tool that already exists) and employ staff to help families find the right program and apply for aid. (89% agreed).

In alignment with the recommendations of the ELLAC to create easy access to enrollment in the Program, a single and centralized application process would be developed to support families with identifying priority points, preferred care, and eligibility for funding streams or additional resources.

Elements of the centralized application would include, but may not be limited to:

- Basic family and child information to be found on a typical childcare application (address, emergency information, health information, development questions, etc.)
- Priority point questions
- Care preferences

To effectively reach families, the central application would be provided in two formats with further evaluation for additional formats to occur in year four. The early stages would have a simple online application system, such as a virtual form, manageable by City staff. This small scale would be in alignment with the program’s size and would occur while a larger more robust system is created as an outcome of contract deliverables. Because families would independently seek care in the initial stages, participating providers would be equipped to support enrollment, also. Providers at every stage of the Program would be trained to use the online tool from both family and business perspectives to support a vested interest in the Program and aid with enrollment.

In addition to an online form families would have the option to apply for funding by phone. This opportunity would allow families who do not have internet capabilities, or require other assistance, to apply to the Program with the help of customer service. Beginning in the second year, families would be able to apply over the phone for funding and participation. Translation support would begin in the first year of implementation, through a Language Line set of supports or hired interpreter.

The development and testing of a robust, contractor-created online tool would begin during the initial year of the Program. Located on the OFE website, this tool would serve as a mechanism to assist families in searching for care, have a built-in application, and allow for billing and payment capabilities for providers and families. To ensure greater accessibility for families speaking multiple languages, the tool would feature a translation option to allow families to read and complete the option in one of five languages. Other features would be evaluated and added in response to City and user needs after a period to test the platform efficacy. Prior City Council engagement in a OneStop Shop as an ECE search and billing tool could inform the development of this platform. See below for an enrollment process timeline.

Availability or Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Application via use of simple form	X			
Access to apply online	X	X	X	X
Access to apply over the phone		X	X	X
Access to apply over the phone with translation support	X	X	X	X
Available robust online tool equipped to support search, application, and resource connections		X	X	X
Ability to apply with Provider		X	X	X

Table 13

Potential Partnerships

Outreach and enrollment would be a clear opportunity to partner with individuals, programs, and organizations across the City, while exploring new relationships. Possible partnerships in this work would include, but are not limited to hospitals and clinics, WIC, African American Babies Coalition and Projects, American Indian Family Center, CLUES, Hmong Early Childhood Coalition, College Bound Saint Paul Community Ambassadors, Ramsey County Housing

Services and Support, Saint Paul Public Libraries, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, Think Small, SPNN, PBS/TPT, ECE Providers, Saint Paul Public Schools, district charter schools, local businesses with baby registries.

As an example, a partnership with College Bound Saint Paul Community Ambassadors could assist with connecting families in harder to reach neighborhoods with the benefits of the Program, followed by support with enrollment.

Outreach and Enrollment Summary

- The Program's outreach would use a three-pronged approach over the span of the program, beginning with a targeted age outreach, partnerships, and paid marketing efforts. Targeted outreach would begin with infants.
- A centralized application process would include a search for care function as well as support families with a universal ECE application. Other unique features would include paying for care and applying for other potential funding streams.
- An online and phone application would support families with enrollment. Further platforms could be explored as the program is implemented and scaled. The initial online form would be simple, such as a virtual form, and managed by City staff.
- A larger and more robust online form would be developed and tested in the initial year in preparation for full launch in year two.

Outreach and Enrollment in the Initial Stages

In the initial year of the Program, outreach would be a targeted effort towards families of infants in alignment with enrollment of infants and OFE practices and resources. For efficiency of staff time and effective use of funds, families of infants would be informed through high reach partners, as well as community ambassadors and cultural community organizations. Written materials would be created in various languages to inform families of the Program. Program materials could be universal or designed to reach specific populations.

Enrollment during the first year would be supported by the single City staff person through the use of a simple online form allowing easy data management in small quantities. For families needing language assistance, the use of Language Line Solutions would be a viable option, along with the Translator slated in the budget. Simultaneously, the development of an online search tool, having various functions including a general application and the ability to search and pay for care, would be in development. This tool would become available for use in year two. Partner providers would assist in enrolling families into the Program as the larger platform becomes available in year 2.

PROGRAM STANDARDS AND FEATURES

Standards

ELLAC Recommendation: If the revenue for the program is raised solely by Saint Paul taxpayers, program funding should only go to providers located in Saint Paul. (89% agreed)

In alignment with ELLAC's recommendation, to be a Program provider partner, an ECE provider would have a Saint Paul address where their business functions, except in extenuating circumstances as outlined in Service Delivery. The Program would require participating early care and education (formerly 'childcare') providers to sign a partnership agreement making them eligible for payment reimbursement and allowing them access to partnership resources. Partnership agreements for licensed and legal non licensed (LNL) providers would include confirmation of an active DHS file; agreement to maintain enrollment data and cost of care information on the virtual platform; consent to data sharing of demographics, enrollment, and the cost of care; consent to participate in program evaluation. Due to upcoming shifts in Parent Aware ratings, partnership would not require a rating but could be reevaluated at a later date with the support of the Advisory Body. Partnership would not require providers to participate in additional training beyond DHS requirements to maintain an active relationship.

The Program reimbursements would be exclusively for licensed or legal non licensed providers. Program partnerships with FFN providers would be resource and access driven, rather than financially reimbursable. FFN providers would also sign a partnership agreement. FFN partnership agreements would include an agreement to a virtual onboarding of partnership expectations; virtual sessions on health and safety in early childhood; data sharing of demographics, enrollment, the frequency of care, and the use of partnership resources; participate in ongoing feedback.

In addition to providers, all Program families would be residents at a Saint Paul address at the time of participating in the Program and receiving reimbursable funds.

The City of Saint Paul attempts to offer equity in resources and access. As such, aspects of the Program would be standard to meet the needs of the growing demographic. These standards would include:

- The use of language translation on the website and application
- The use of phone-based translation supports for customer service
- The design of Program Quality Indicators for Data and Evaluation, developed by Saint Paul residents and organizations

Features

Provider features of the Program would support building community among those providing care for Saint Paul's earliest learners. All provider partners, independent of license status, would have access to Saint Paul specific:

- Professional groups and networking experiences
- Videos for information and learning on topics including but not limited to
 - Community Involvement
 - Culturally specific learning practices
 - Early Childhood Development
 - Early Childhood Special Education
 - Family Involvement
 - Kindergarten Transitions
 - Play
- Resources
 - Early Childhood Resource Library
 - Cultivated library experiences
 - Cultivated parks programs
 - Museums

The development of information and resource videos would be supported in the marketing and workforce budgets and informed by partners in the field. Early Childhood Resource Library materials would be housed and managed at the Saint Paul Public Libraries.

Scheduling Options

ELLAC Recommendation: Program funding should be available for any scheduling option that meets families' needs, from part-time up to and including year-round, full- and extended day care. (100% agreed).

Congruent with the needs of working families, funding for the Program would be applied at a range of early care and education settings, from family and center ECE providers, to Head Start and preschool programs. In response to family needs, program funds would also support a variety of schedules including full or part time, year-round, or extended day programming. Program funds would be unable to support Early Childhood Family Education experiences.

Licensing Support

ELLAC Recommendation: The program should develop ways to support providers in obtaining licensure and meeting program standards. (83% agreed).

The Program would aid in connecting providers with resources to help obtain licensure. Through connections with Ramsey County Early Childhood Academy, Think Small, and DHS, FFN and

LNL providers could participate in an array of supports to meet licensing requirements, obtain a childcare license, or begin a ECE business. FFN providers would also receive support in registering as a LNL provider through DHS. The Program would inform providers of these options while also encouraging them to choose the type of care deemed most appropriate for them.

Potential Partnerships

Program Standards and Features of the Program offer opportunities to partner. Possible partnerships in this work would include but are not limited to Ramsey County Early Childhood Academy, Think Small, Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Advisory Body.

As an example, a partnership with Think Small could include conversations with their Coaches about regarding standards as they are implemented with the licensed providers they work with.

Program Standards and Features Summary

- Program providers would have a business within the Saint Paul boundaries for which they provide ECE.
- Program families would reside at a Saint Paul address at the time of participation.
- Program partnership with licensed, LNL and FFN providers would require an agreement. Licensed and LNL providers would maintain an updated active file with DHS.
- In response to Saint Paul's demographic, language translation would be available on the search and application platform, as well as during phone customer service.
- Program features would include various resources for partner providers, including access to professional networking, learning and information videos, as well as access to resources.
- To meet family needs, families could apply funds at programs having varied schedules.
- If desired, FFN or LNL providers could receive assistance in meeting childcare license requirements, obtaining a childcare license, or beginning an ECE business.

Program Standards and Features in the Initial Stages

Providers wanting to participate as a Program partner would sign an annual partnership agreement. During the first year of the Program, and ongoing, partners desiring to receive reimbursement would need to be identified as a licensed or LNL provider.

A process would need to be determined to verify the address for both provider and family participation. Possible existing resources for verification could include a utility bill for families and DHS for partner providers. As families apply and spend their allocation, data would be kept on the type and hours of programming that families choose. During the first year, efforts towards identifying more broad translation services would need to be mobilized for subsequent years.

WORKFORCE

Compensation

ELLAC Recommendation: The program should ensure that there is competitive pay and benefit on par or aligned with K-12 education.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services regulates staffing requirements for Early Care and Education, while the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) regulates staffing requirements for school-based programs. Staffing requirements for family, center, and school-based programming vary greatly due to the age of the children and the setting. As a result, a range of hours of operation, training, and pay scales would be the basis for addressing workforce initiatives in the Program.

To date, ECE providers are far from parity in pay as K-12 staff. Many of the current programs designed to support ECE providers do not provide increased wages. Instead, these programs offer to offset costs of programming with the expectation that paying for supplies (etc.) with a grant liberates other funds to be used for employee wages. In reality this is not a practical solution for long-term compensation challenges. ECE providers remain underpaid.

The Program budget does not address workforce compensation, instead workforce initiatives would focus primarily on education and training. To this end, the Program's reference to workforce specifically targets education and training, allowing space for further conversations about compensation for Saint Paul's early childhood workforce.

Education and Training

ELLAC Recommendation: The program should consider developing a professional development fund or pay for certain training opportunities.

To support education and training efforts that equip providers for their profession, the Program would assist providers to apply for financial supports through available and applicable funding opportunities designed to aid ECE professionals in advancing their skills, upward mobility, and maintaining competitive pay.

At the time of this report, the following funding opportunities to support or offset ECE provider training include, but are not limited to, Great Start Compensation; T.E.A.C.H. scholarship; R.E.E.T.A.I.N. grant; Ramsey County Early Childhood Academy.

LNL providers are unable to benefit from funding opportunities listed above, however could receive support to become licensed through the Ramsey County Early Childhood Academy. FFN providers are unable to benefit from any financial or professional support unless they are becoming, or become, a licensed provider. The Program would stay abreast of opportunities to support grow-your-own pipelines for the ECE workforce in Saint Paul.

The Program budget would allocate funds beginning in year 8 to support professional learning or specific training opportunities relevant to Saint Paul providers. Aligned with responses from the ELLAC report, Saint Paul providers would be encouraged to inform professional learning opportunities and topics in response to their own needs.

Potential Partnerships

Workforce initiatives of the Program would offer opportunities to partner. When interested in partnering or collaborating regarding compensation, further conversation would occur with Child Care Aware of Minnesota and First Children's Finance. Additional partnerships for education and training would include Think Small, DHS, Saint Paul Public Schools, independent consultants, and any grow-your-own programs at local colleges.

As an example, a partnership with Child Care Aware and First Children's Finance can support ongoing efforts to address compensation.

Workforce Summary

- Workforce initiatives would center education and training. Investments for the workforce are allotted in year 8 of the initiative budget.
- The Program would support providers in applying for available and applicable funds to support their ongoing professional learning or opening an ECE business.
- The Program would continue to advocate for and seek opportunities to influence compensation for Saint Paul providers.
- The Program would create connections with local schools and training programs to build a pipeline of ECE workforce.
- The Program would not have additional requirements for the workforce, other than those identified by DHS or MDE.

Workforce in the Initial Stages

During the initial stages of the Program, there would be no financial investments in workforce training. In lieu of this, partnership onboarding videos, along with brief information videos covering other pertinent topics, would begin development during the first year for later availability in year two.

DATA AND EVALUATION

Data

Data collection for the Program would be ongoing beginning at the initiative's start. Both quantitative and qualitative data would be collected with short-, middle-, and long- term outcome measures. Due to the participant quantity, data collection at the onset would be manual using tools such as spreadsheets. In the initial stages data would be collected by the consultant and at a regular frequency until a research company has been selected to develop a more robust tool having an aligned collection method and timeline, in addition to a full-bodied system as the program scales.

As a contracted task, data collection would be both quantitative and qualitative. There would be a range of data points collected. Sample data collection categories and an aligned timeline for short-, middle-, and long- term measurements are below. Data categories would evolve over time, adding as needed, as the program scales and matures. Short-, middle-, and long- term timelines would be directly impacted by the kind of data collected and appropriate duration of measurement.

	Short term	Middle term	Long term
Quantitative Data			
Program Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demographics ● Child demographics ● Enrollment trends ● Waivers for extenuating circumstances 	X	X	X
Family Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family demographics ● Impact of Program funds on family financial stability 	X		
Child Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development ● Social adjustment ● Kindergarten entry ● Supports for children with special needs 		X	X
Workforce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participation in education and training ● Business development and sustainability 		X	X
Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Initiative participation ● Direct family contact 	X	X	X
Qualitative Data Collection			
Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews ● Surveys ● Narratives 	X	X	X

Table 14

Data collection would require consent from providers, families, and potential partners. Providers would consent to sharing:

- enrollment data, cost of care,
- services provided,
- business and enrollment demographics, and
- program evaluation.

Families would consent to:

- sharing child data for middle- and long-term trends.

Partners would consent to:

- sharing data regarding contact with families and
- the sharing of Program information

Evaluation

At the onset of the Program, the contractor would evaluate the data collected and report trends to the Program Manager and OFE Executive Director. Information would be evaluated on the expected short-, middle-, and long- term program outcomes. The collected data and its subsequent evaluation would inform any adjustment to Program implementation.

Evaluation outcomes are key to ongoing efforts and potential future funding. Community input should be sought to determine quality indicators that should be measured across the program.

In addition to Program evaluation, there would be an opportunity to revisit quality as it pertains to requiring Parent Aware for partner providers. Saint Paul would benefit from considering a set of homegrown indicators to determine ECE quality for the Program, separate from the state QRIS system of Parent Aware. While this homegrown set of indicators could use Parent Aware as a foundation, the indicators would reflect the demographics of Saint Paul along with community expectations, becoming a Program Standard. This work could be facilitated, or informed, by the Advisory Body.

Potential Partnerships

Data and Evaluation of the Program would offer opportunities to partner and elevate existing relationships in the field. Potential partnerships would include but are not limited to the Data Management & Customer Service Coordinator in the OFE, and other appropriate City offices.

Data and Evaluation Summary

- Data collection and evaluation would begin at the initiative's onset, beginning with simple spreadsheets to manage participant information while a full-bodied tool is designed.
- Data collection would have short-, middle-, and long-term outcomes to be measured.
- Data collection would be both quantitative and qualitative.
- Evaluation of the data would inform further implementation of the Program.

Data and Evaluation in the Initial Stages

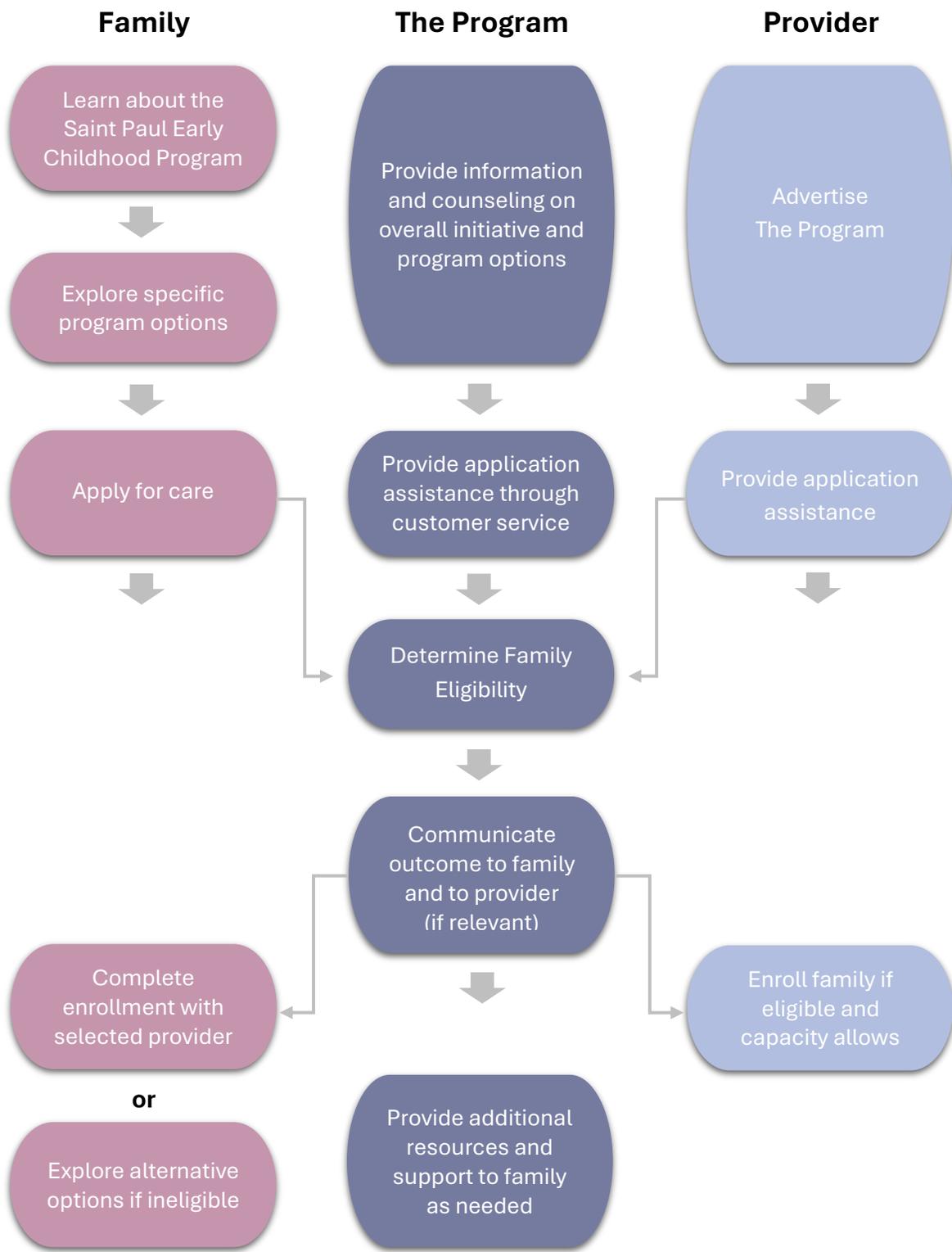
Beginning in the initial stages, data would be collected and evaluated by the contractor using simple tools such as spreadsheets. During the first year the Program would identify a research company or organization for ongoing data collection, management, and evaluation. Participating Program providers, parents and potential partners, would sign consent forms to allow for data collection over time.

YEAR ONE AT A GLANCE

<p>Finance and Budget</p>	<p>In the initial year the Program would gather an estimated \$2 million dollars from the approved special levy. Funds allocated towards indirect costs would be spent to hire staff, both City and contractors, support technology development, and establish evaluation mechanisms and protocols.</p> <p>As the program rolls out to families, funds would be allocated to providers for reimbursement for services.</p>
<p>Governance and Administration</p>	<p>The Office of Financial Empowerment would house the Program as the governing body. An RFP for contracted administration of the Program would be made available following the election. Following responses and selection, tasks would begin in 2025.</p>
<p>Service Delivery</p>	<p>Residents of Saint Paul would have access to free or discounted early care and education experiences. Eligible and awarded families would seek out a licensed or legal non-licensed provider for services. Families would complete periodic verification of their eligibility. Partner Providers would provide service to children and families and submit for reimbursement.</p>
<p>Eligibility and Scale</p>	<p>The initial year the Program would target infants, aligning with community feedback and the progression of established practices and partnerships in the OFE where the program would be housed. Provided infants supported by the Program receive another subsidy, the average cost of care dispensed by the Program would be \$8,710 per infant, allowing approximately 154 infants in the initial year at no additional cost to the family. With income as the most weighted priority point, these would be children <185% FPL.</p>
<p>Outreach and Enrollment</p>	<p>In the initial year of the Program, outreach would be a targeted effort towards families of infants in alignment with enrollment of infants and OFE practices and resources. For efficiency of staff time and effective use of funds, families of infants would be informed through high reach partners, as well as community ambassadors and cultural community organizations. Written materials would be created in various languages to inform families of the Program. Program materials could be universal or designed to reach specific populations.</p>

<p>Outreach and Enrollment (continued)</p>	<p>Enrollment during the first year would be supported by the single City staff person through the use of a simple online form allowing easy data management in small quantities. For families needing language assistance, the use of Language Line Solutions would be a viable option, along with the Translator slated in the budget. Simultaneously, the development of an online search tool, having various functions including a general application and the ability to search and pay for care, would be in development. This tool would become available for use in year two. Partner providers would assist in enrolling families into the Program as the larger platform becomes available in year 2.</p>
<p>Program Features and Standards</p>	<p>Providers wanting to participate as a Program partner would sign an annual partnership agreement. During the first year of the Program, and ongoing, partners desiring to receive reimbursement would need to be identified as a licensed or LNL provider.</p> <p>A process would need to be determined to verify the address for both provider and family participation. Possible existing resources for verification could include a utility bill for families and DHS for partner providers. As families apply and spend their allocation, data would be kept on the type and hours of programming that families choose. During the first year, efforts towards identifying more broad translation services would need to be mobilized for subsequent years.</p>
<p>Workforce</p>	<p>During the initial stages of the Program, there would be no financial investments in workforce training. In lieu of this, partnership onboarding videos, along with brief information videos covering other pertinent topics, would begin development during the first year for later availability in year two.</p>
<p>Data and Evaluation</p>	<p>Beginning in the initial stages, data would be collected and evaluated by the contractor using simple tools such as spreadsheets. During the first year the Program would identify a research company or organization for ongoing data collection, management, and evaluation. Participating Program providers, parents and potential partners, would sign consent forms to allow for data collection over time.</p>

Visual Map of Family Enrollment Process



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*Citations 1-7 are from the Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee Report, March 22, 2023.