



Minnesota's Birth-4 Care and Education System

Lynn Hoskins, *Kids Count On Us*

Mary Solheim, *Kids Count On Us*

Kimberly Antonsen, *Education Minnesota*

Debra Messenger, *Kids Count On Us*

Rachel Reinfeld, *Education Minnesota*

Zach Johnson, *Education Minnesota*

Suad Hassan, *Kids Count On Us*

Kiarra Zackery, *Kids Count On Us*

Kirsten Ragatz, *Education Minnesota*

Rachel Johnson, *Education Minnesota*

Karin Swenson, *Kids Count On Us*



Executive Summary: Minnesota's Birth-4 Care and Education System

Minnesota's system of care and education for our youngest citizens is chaotic, inequitable, and in urgent need of dramatic overhaul. We believe that all children have a right to equitable and high-quality care and education. Minnesota's policies and practices have created gaps in outcomes for children that are detrimental to our children, our communities, and our future. We have created an educational system that yields deeply inequitable outcomes. And we have created a child care system that is vastly underfunded and that relies on a workforce that includes many full-time workers who earn poverty-level wages, and that doesn't have nearly enough capacity to meet the needs of Minnesota's families.

This paper reflects the work of a partnership between ISAIH's Kids Count On Us coalition and Education Minnesota's Educator Innovation Policy Center, or EPIC.

Clearly Minnesota needs a dramatic overhaul of the early care and education system. We need to raise revenue to build a new, desperately needed system for our youngest learners and the workforce that cares for and educates them.

Our team has spent 18 months listening to one another. We understand the historical damage done by the artificial distinction between care and education, a distinction that is reflected not only in the ways we talk about young people's needs, but also in the very governance structures charged with oversight. We have collected data via both academic research, family surveys, and interviews with policy makers and practitioners all across the United States. We have looked carefully at programs in other states and municipalities that offer more comprehensive, equitable care and education to their youngest learners, and we have learned some critical lessons along the way.

We have examined programs and interviewed practitioners in West Virginia, New Jersey, Washington, Washington DC, New Mexico, Wisconsin, as well as county and city-wide initiatives such as those in San Antonio, Boston, and Seattle. We have been in conversation with and/or relied heavily on the work already provided by Head Start, Power to the Profession, the National Institute on Early Education Research, Christa Anders of Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce, and the labor economist, Aaron Sojourner, at the University of Minnesota.

Our Key findings

- The argument children ages birth-4 need nothing more than a safe place to be while their parents are in the workforce, commonly thought of as “care,” is false.
- The argument that holds that K-12 is strictly about “education” and not about “care” is false.
- Minnesota has ignored the critical needs of our birth-4 year olds and suffers damage that will last for decades because of it.
- We must find a way to create access to equitable and high-quality care and education for all our state’s birth-4 year olds who need it.
- The birth-4 care and education workforce has been historically maligned, under-compensated, and unsupported, and these conditions are currently at crisis levels.
- We must, both immediately and over time, address the needs of the workforce dedicated to caring for and educating our youngest citizens.
- Doing so will require Minnesota to raise revenue and to commit to a complete overhaul of its birth-4 system

Our Recommendations

- Create a new state agency, the Minnesota Department of Early Care and Education, so that the state’s governance system can use the same vocabulary and align practices.
- Create regional Early Care and Education Hubs which are overseen by boards representative of public schools, special education practitioners, child care centers, home care centers, and community members.
- Create a mixed-delivery pre-K system aligned with the early indicators of progress and built on equitable practices that excludes no family wanting access.
- Create a sustainable funding source so that low-income families pay nothing and all other families pay up to but no more than 7% of family income, regardless of number of children in birth-4 system.
- Create a community needs assessment tool to be used on an ongoing basis by the Early Care and Education Regional Hubs.
- Fund the regional hubs sufficiently so that they can respond to the community needs assessments with the appropriate services needed by the families in their communities.
- Create a funding mechanism to immediately raise the wages of the birth-4 workforce, and to increase compensation, benefits, and professional development via a career-wage ladder on-ramping process.

Cost Benefit Analysis

- Researchers have correlated investments in high-quality, early childhood programming with future revenue generation for local communities. Scholars have argued that, “estimated long-term savings range from three to seven dollars for every dollar spent on such programs” because they help build “a U.S. workforce better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century” (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014, p. 8).
- Local education agencies can predict to see a greater return-on-investment from early childhood programming than other popular policy changes such as a reduction in class sizes (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014, p. 8).
- State and local education agencies that invest in high-quality, early childhood education and care also report a decrease in the reliance on public assistance programs (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014, p. 56).
- A true investment in early childhood education and care “would expand Minnesota’s economy by 1.1% which equates to \$3.7 billion of new economic activity in the state” (Economic Policy Institute, 2019).
- Economic researchers have “demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of investing in preschool, showing states that investments in early childhood education lead to reduced spending in multiple areas, including education, social welfare, and criminal justice” (Huntington, 2020, p. 348).
- Several studies have confirmed that every dollar spent on early childhood education can be associated with a return of \$7 to \$17 a year in the areas of education, health, and social/economic outcomes. Early investment is also linked to a decrease in state spending on social programs (Bartik, 2014; Whitebook, Phillips, and Howes, 2014).

COVID did not create the current crisis in our birth-4 care and education system. But it has certainly lifted the veil that kept many from understanding the severity of the state’s neglect of it. This is our opportunity to usher Minnesota into a better future. We call on Minnesota’s leaders, especially our elected officials, to have the courage to acknowledge the severity of the injustice embedded in the current, fragmented system, and begin the work toward a more just system designed to support Minnesota’s youngest learners so that they might reach their full potential.

References

- Bartik, T. J. (2014). *From preschool to Prosperity: The Economic payoff of early childhood*. Kalamazoo: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.
- Economic Policy Institute. (2019, July). *The cost of child care in Minnesota*. Retrieved from www.epi.org
- Huntington, C. (2020). Lessons from the prekindergarten movement. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, 47(2), 343-351.
- Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). *Worthy work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Berkeley: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce





2020, Vol. 6, No. 1

**Written Testimony to the House Education Finance Committee in Support of
HF 1024**

February 23, 2021

Dear Chair Davnie & Members of the Committee:

We are writing as pediatricians and a professional educator based on our expertise in child development, education, and preventive medicine.

We fully support the intent and the need for a Department of Early Childhood that HF1024 would create. The strong emphasis on coordination of early childhood programs spread out between DHS, MDH, and the MDE has been needed for some time and now is the time to bring it to fruition. The youngest Minnesotans and their families can wait no longer. This is especially true for families with low incomes and other inequities, including those the result of bias and circumstance of location. These are the infants, children, and parents who will benefit most and who will pay the greatest dividends to society.

Support starting with pregnancy and the first 1000 days of life is essential to achieve healthy brain development. Past fragmentation of efforts and various inequities have been barriers to this goal. Both barriers can be resolved by creating this unifying cabinet-level Department.

We the undersigned believe strongly in the necessity for this committee and the legislature to act on behalf of our youngest citizens beginning with the creation of a Department of Early Childhood. We wish you well in this undertaking and we are ready to help in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Dale Dobrin, MD

Mary Meland, MD

Ada Alden, PhD

Roger Sheldon, MD

Sheldon Berkowitz, MD, FAAP
President, Minnesota Chapter of the
American Academy of Pediatrics

Joseph Neglia, MD MPH, Head of Dept of
Pediatrics, U of MN

Pamela (Gigi) Chawla, MD, Chief of
General Pediatrics, Children's MN

Marc H. Gorelick, MD, MSCE, President
and Chief Executive Officer, Children's
Minnesota

Michael Georgieff, MD, Co-Director,
Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain,
University of Minnesota

Angela Kade Goepferd, MD, Chief
Education Officer, Sr. Dr. Interprofessional
Education, Chief of Staff and Medical
Director for Children's Gender Health
Program, Children's Hospitals and Clinics of
Minnesota

Heidi Northrup, MHA, CEO South Lake
Pediatrics for the Clinicians and staff of
South Lake Pediatrics

Arthur Kaemmer, MD
Mark Nupen, MD
Steve Elias, MD
Tom Scott, MD
Mary Conroy, MD
Anne Skemp, MD
Nathalie Lechault, MD
Laura Saliterman, MD
Dianne Pizey, MD
John Paulson, MD
David Estrin, MD
Keenan Richardson, MD
Ted Jewett, MD
Maria McGannon, PNP
Larry Manney, MD
Larry Condon, MD
Sylvia Sekhon, MD
Linda Thompson, MD
Rhoda Liebo, MD
Richard Wicklund, MD
Andrew Thomas, MD
Lisa Batchelor, MD



Written Testimony to House Education Finance Committee re: HF1024

February 23, 2021

Dear Chair Davnie & Members of the Committee:

ISAI AH is a statewide organization comprised of over 200 congregations, 30 mosques, and 400 childcare centers. Altogether, the institutions we help organize represent over half a million Minnesotans. Our mission is to enable people to organize for racial, social and economic justice, and build a democracy that respects every person's dignity and a caring economy where everyone can thrive.

Young Minnesotans between the ages of zero to five of every race, place, and creed deserve access to affordable, safe, and enriching childcare programs and educational opportunities. We write in support of HF1024 because it would create a new cabinet-level department of early childhood to house some of the most important public programs in our state.

For over ten years, policy makers and experts have known that good governance in early childhood requires the alignment of programs currently operating in three separate state agencies under one administrative roof. A [2011 Minnesota task force overwhelmingly recommended](#) the creation of a single state agency. A [2018 OLA report](#) noted the significant challenges posed by housing similar programs in difference agencies, challenges that HF1024 will mitigate. In passing this bill, Minnesota would join the growing number of states who have found success by creating a single state agency to operate early childcare programs.

We applaud the efforts of critical interagency efforts like the Children's cabinet, the pre-school development grant, and the informal partnerships between DHS, MDH, and MDE. None of those efforts, however, are designed to meet the profound structural challenges posed when programs like CCAP, early learning scholarship, voluntary pre-kindergarten, head start, and others seek to meet similar goals but function in separate agencies. The new department will help all members of the early childhood education community including childcare centers, parents and families, regulators, and early childhood educators.

This bill is a non-partisan and common-sense solution to the administrative challenges posed by housing programs in these disparate agencies. We strongly support this important step in making Minnesota a place where the youngest in our communities are given the absolute best chance at a great start.

Sincerely,

Lars Negstad, Policy Director, ISAI AH



Preschool Development Grant Bridging State Agencies for Coordinated Care

Minnesota’s Preschool Development Birth through Five grant works to remove barriers so families with young children can access life-changing early childhood programs.

In partnership with the departments of Education, Health, and Human Services, along with the Children’s Cabinet, **the grant aims to align education and care systems across the state.** By investing in early childhood now means stronger communities in the future.

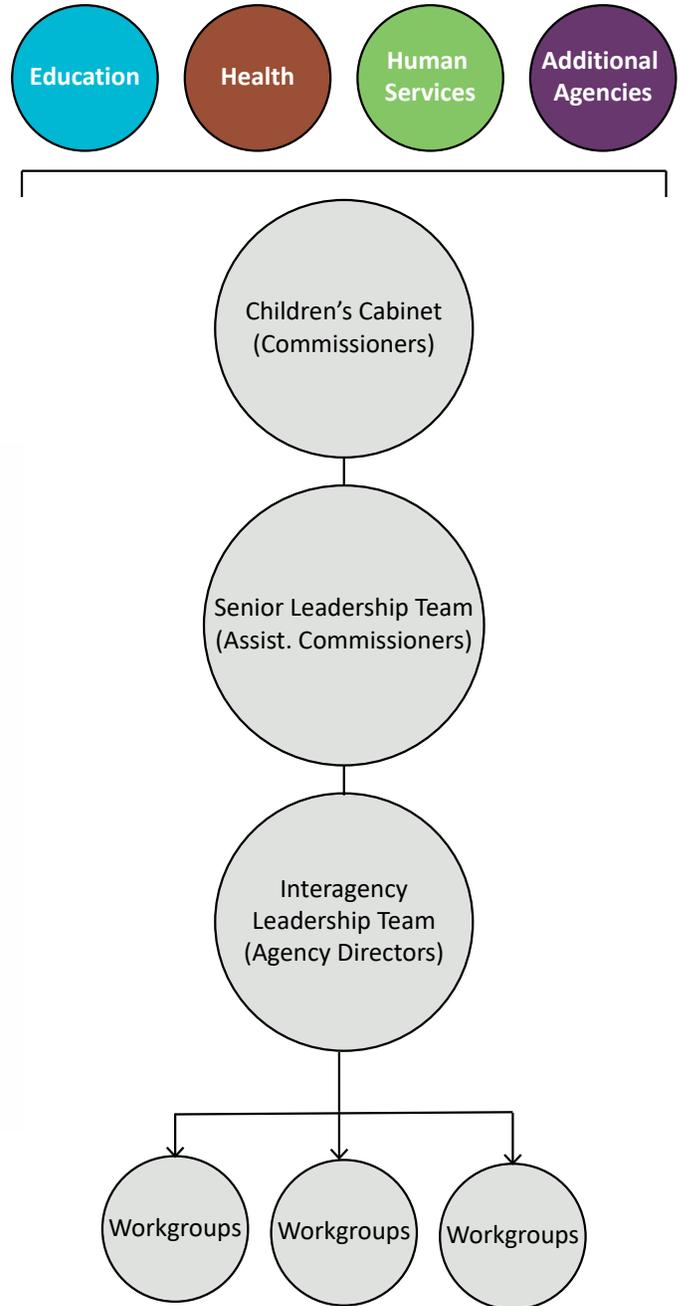


Shared Vision and Priorities

The Preschool Development Grant shares the vision and mission developed within Early Childhood Systems Reform:

By focusing on children experiencing racial, geographic, and economic inequities, in order for all children in Minnesota to be born healthy and able to thrive within their families and communities.

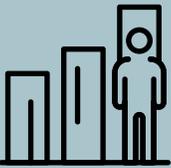
Shared Leadership



Timeline of Recent Cross-Agency Systems Efforts:

- Race to the Top 2012-2015
- Two-Generation Policy Network 2016-Present
- Early Childhood Systems Reform 2017
- Preschool Development Grant 2019-2022

Shared Information

	Coordinated Services and Eligibility Agreement	A legal agreement between state agencies to share information and coordinate programs and services for families.
	Help Me Connect	An online navigator designed to help providers connect families with services in their communities.
	Eligibility and Service Data Portal	A common application for families to apply to multiple programs, regardless of what state agency oversees it.

Shared Learning and Community Investments

	Community Engagement	Community engagement happens together and state agencies share learnings.
	Community Solutions Grants	Provide funding to organizations serving children of color and American Indian children to address challenges to childhood-development outcomes as identified by their communities.
	Local, Cross-Sector Implementation Hubs	Partner with and invest in community agencies to increase family access to services.
	Evaluation	Check the state's success in creating a more coordinated system and supporting children and families.

Shared Support

	Workforce	Focus on building and supporting a workforce to provide stability for working families.
	Trauma-Informed Practices and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	Build adult capacity to support infant and young children's emotional development.
	Transitions	Create tools to support early childhood and kindergarten transitions, including supports related to the pandemic.

Shared Results

	<p>The grant's first year resulted in a comprehensive Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan in collaboration with Minnesota Department of Health's Title V.</p> <p>An updated needs assessment and strategic plan will be complete by the end of 2022.</p>
---	--

Minnesota's Preschool Development Birth through 5 Grant



Minnesota's Preschool Development Birth through 5 Grant aims to support families with young children who are experiencing racial, geographic and economic inequities, so children can be born healthy and thrive within their families and communities. The grant is supported through the Minnesota Departments of Health, Human Services, and Education; and the Minnesota Children's Cabinet.

"Create the system to work for individuals, families, and communities; not making the individuals, families, and communities bend to the system."

Participant from Leech Lake Tribal Nation

Length 3 years **Amount** \$26.7M **Based on feedback from...** 150+ community listening sessions

The funding will be used to improve how state systems serve families with young children.

Grant activities include:



Explore technology supports to coordinate eligibility and services.



Fund Help Me Connect, a system to connect families and those working with families to resources and direct referral to programs and services.



Pilot 4-10 local, cross-agency hubs in the state as a prevention strategy and in testing Help Me Connect.



Invest in community solutions of community identified challenges, prioritizing people of color and American Indians.

Other Activities: Update needs assessment and strategic plan by 2022; Early childhood workforce supports; mental health consultation

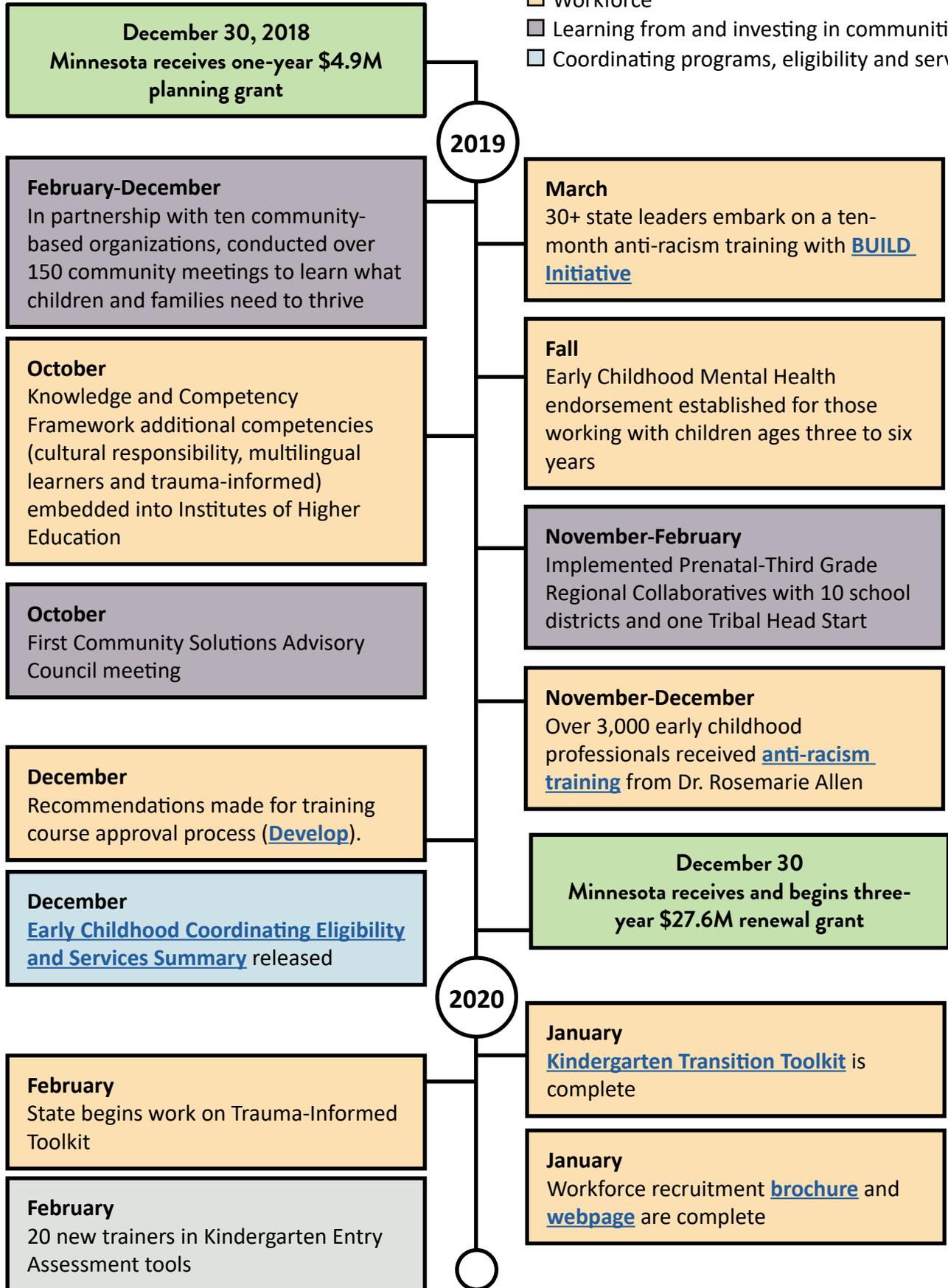


Inclusive and Responsive Practices, Programs and Policies

Guiding Principles: Racial Equity • Trauma-informed • Geographic Responsiveness • Everything is Connected • Whole Family • Agencies Working Together • Belonging

Preschool Development Grant **Timeline**

- Milestones
- General grant activities
- Workforce
- Learning from and investing in communities
- Coordinating programs, eligibility and services



February
Young Multilingual Children in Minnesota report released

October
Grant evaluator, School Readiness Consulting, begins work

November
Minnesota Association of Children's Mental Health awarded contract to create Trauma Informed Toolkit

November
Begin work with the Build Initiative to develop community engagement plan

January
Execution of legal agreement between departments of Human Services, Education and Health to share information to coordinate eligibility and services for families

January
Launch of School District-Head Start learning communities on transitions through the pandemic and beyond

Spring
Launch of Communities of Practice for Hubs, including early childhood mental health consultation

Spring
Begin integrating Bridge to Benefits into Hubs

April
Trauma-informed curricula is complete and implementation begins

2021

Spring
State released the Needs Assessment, Community Needs Assessment, and Strategic Plan

May
Community Solutions Grantees awarded

November
Launch of Family, Friend and Neighbor Learning Community

December
Eligibility and Service Coordination Data Portal Leadership Committee begin meeting

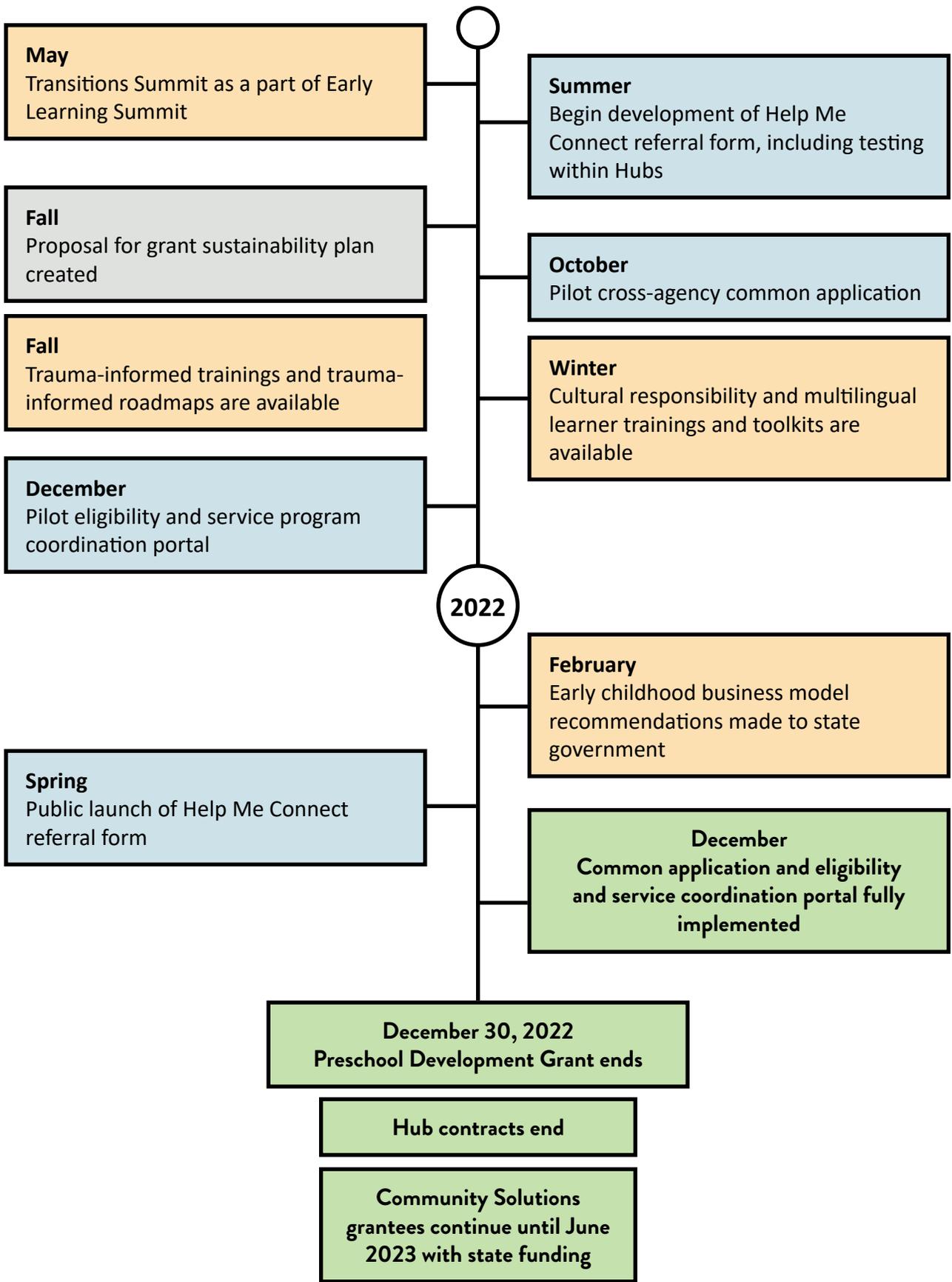
January
Local, cross-sector implementation Hubs awarded

January
Launch of Knowledge and Competency Framework additional competencies: cultural responsibility, multilingual learners and trauma-informed

February
Launch of Help Me Connect website

February
Hiring of Indigenous Evaluation contractor

March
Launch of statewide early childhood mental health consultation cross-sector reflective practice teams



This product is made possible using federal funding, 93.434-ESSA Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Learn more on the [Preschool Development Grant web page](https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/early/preschgr/). <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/early/preschgr/>