

**PREPARED FOR THE SAINT PAUL CITY COUNCIL**

**FAMILY, FRIEND, AND NEIGHBOR  
WORKGROUP**

**SAINT PAUL  
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM**

**Addendum 2**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Common Acronyms*

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Workgroup Need</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Workgroup Charge</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Workgroup Process and Composition</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Workgroup Outcomes and Recommendations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Family, Friend, and Neighbor in the Initial Stages</b>	<b>12</b>

## **Common Acronyms**

ECE	Early Care and Education
ELLAC	Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee
FFN	Family, Friend, and Neighbor
LNL	Legal Non-Licensed
OFE	Office of Financial Empowerment
SPPL	Saint Paul Public Library

## INTRODUCTION

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By positioning the City to make early care and education accessible to more of its children, and earlier in life, the Saint Paul Early Childhood Program (the “Program”) plan offers a reply to the question, “How do our children, families, and workforce thrive?” The recommended program design both reflects and responds to the growing needs of Saint Paul children and families, in addition to the workforce of Saint Paul Early Care and Education providers.

The primary plan document outlines 8 considerations to program design along with recommendations for initial implementation. Highlights of these considerations include:

Program Consideration	Consideration Overview
Funding and Budget	The proposed use of a special levy to fund early care and education subsidies
Governance, Administration, and Advisory	Recommendations on the City office to oversee the program, the short- and long- term program administrator, as well as the role of a Community Advisory Board*
Service Delivery	Identifies the families, providers, and settings that can participate in the program, as well as funding distribution recommendations
Eligibility and Scale	Highlights the recommendations for eligibility based on priority points in addition to the Program’s rate of scale
Outreach and Enrollment	Explores and recommends multiple ways to inform Saint Paul residents of the program, enrollment approaches, and needed materials
Program Standards and Features	Suggests provider and participant requirements along with unique program features reflective of Saint Paul
Workforce	Proposes Saint Paul curated education and training efforts for ECE providers
Data and Evaluation	Suggests timelines and content for data collection and considerations for evaluation

\*Community Advisory Board per Addendum 1 is titled Early Childhood Commission.

A review of the Program plan would provide a more thorough synopsis of each consideration along with recommendations during start up.

Among the benefits, 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. In addition, the Program design intentionally works to connect Saint Paul families and providers with resources across sectors in an effort to better blend stronger networks of support in the early years, having a direct impact on families and the workforce.

## BACKGROUND

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The evolution of a Saint Paul Early Childhood Program has been on the horizon for nearly a decade. Beginning in 2016, Councilmember Noecker began engaging with Saint Paul stakeholders and interested parties in conversations regarding early care and education in the City and the possibility of a citywide preschool initiative. Since that time exploration, collaborations, and additional joint efforts have continued.

2017 produced the “Blueprint,” recommendations provided through a Saint Paul 3K Workgroup convened and facilitated by the Saint Paul Children’s Collaborative. 2018 and 2019 birthed a 3K Steering Committee which culminated in the Saint Paul 3K Design Team Report. The Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee (ELLAC) 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.

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.

2024 experienced monumental growth in program planning and details with the progression of detail-oriented tasks and data by MetrixIQ and Emmy Liss, prompted by the Saint Paul Children’s Collaborative, as well as the Program plan designed by People of Victory LLC.

For a more in-depth history, access the following documents listed in order of their creation:

- The Blueprint
- Saint Paul 3K Design Report
- City Council resolution 22-1183
- Early Learning Legislative Advisory Committee Report
- City Council resolution 23-1094
- Mayor Carter’s Early Childhood Program Veto
- MetrixIQ and Emmy Liss report
- Saint Paul Early Childhood Program plan

## WORKGROUP NEED

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The convening of community voices through each phase leading to the development of an early childhood program began in 2016 with conversations stimulated by Councilmember Noecker. A range of community voices has since informed each subsequent report and pivotal point of progression. The precedent for some form of collaborative ideation is at the core of the initiative and has continued into program design through the enactment of workgroups to address various details of the program that no one individual or group should inform independently.

The ELLAC structure itself – a composition of Early Care and Education (ECE) providers, Saint Paul residents, various community and education organizations, and council members – emphasized the value and necessity of community perspectives, as well as the power of collaborative ideation. The ELLAC included a range of voices, perspectives, and experiences to offer recommendations for a program designed to benefit the diverse population of Saint Paul. The 2023 report derived from this advisory committee offered recommendations to the Saint Paul City Council on the potential design and implementation of a citywide early childhood program. Their program recommendations gave thought to potential barriers to program access and participation; addressed income, cultural, and language diversity needs; examined access to resources and subsidies; dove into provider types, settings, and hours, among other considerations.

While the final ELLAC committee recommendation included 89% agreement that participating providers hold a license, under 75% were in agreement that legal non-licensed (LNL) providers could participate in program reimbursements. In greater consensus, 94% strongly agreed the program should continue to explore how to best support family, friend, and neighbor care. The Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Workgroup convened in response to the overwhelming recommendation by the ELLAC to further examine ways to support Saint Paul's FFN providers.

In the City of Saint Paul, FFN providers constitute a large population of caregivers utilized particularly by BIPOC families and include those who speak languages other than English. These providers are often selected by families because they generally address care, teaching and learning, child rearing, and belief systems in alignment with those of the family. These caregiver relationships are not reimbursable because they are without a state license, therefore creating a wider disparity when exclusively supporting licensed or LNL providers.

## WORKGROUP CHARGE

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The Family, Friend, and Neighbor Workgroup was charged with:

- Identifying possible FFN City partnership requirements including, but not limited to:
  - Partnership Agreements
  - Onboarding
  - Data Sharing
- Determining FFN partnership benefits.
- Recommending a mechanism for managing and distributing support specific to FFNs.
- Listing potential FFN organizations to share in the public awareness of FFN support.

The workgroup task was to make recommendations for how the Early Childhood Initiative would include participation from Saint Paul's FFN provider population. The workgroup was mindful that the Program could have the potential to contribute to a growing gap in early preparedness for BIPOC children by excluding trusted community from participating in a City funded program. The workgroup chose to operate with a goal to avoid recommendations that would require significant mitigating responses and therefore consideration was given to the following:

- Family choice
- Flexibility in FFN schedules, approaches to learning, access to and awareness of local resources
- A need to honor cultures, languages, practices, and ways of existing within and outside of cultural spaces
- Awareness of individualism within group preferences and norms
- Allowing provider choice rather than a requirement of a license, while offering licensing support if desired by the provider

Further, the workgroup:

- Identified ways to support FFN providers while not providing reimbursement.
- Recommended a process for managing and dispensing this support.
- Brainstormed a list of current Saint Paul organizations connected with or supporting FFN providers, with whom to share news of a City FFN partnership.

## WORKGROUP PROCESS AND COMPOSITION

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Participation in the Family, Friend, and Neighbor Workgroup was an open invitation to the public. Targeted invitations were sent to the following types of participants:

- Saint Paul residents
  - Saint Paul community elders
  - Saint Paul families of young children (0-5)
  - Unlicensed Saint Paul families who care for age 0-5 at home
- ECE professionals and professional organizations
- FFN providers
- Culturally specific and language diverse organizations and programs

Organizations or individuals who chose to participate in one or more workgroup sessions included:

- ECE professionals and professional organizations
- ECE culturally specific advocacy organizations directly supporting FFN providers
- FFN providers
- Saint Paul resident and stay-at-home parent with two children under 5
- Saint Paul elder

Contributing to conversations about advisory body criteria, membership, and responsibilities outside of workgroup sessions were representatives from African American Babies Coalition and Projects, Child Care Aware of Minnesota, Hmong Early Childhood Coalition, and Voices and Choices Steering Committee members of Children's Defense Fund Minnesota, representing access to a range of ethnically diverse providers.

The workgroup convened on three occasions spanning July through August, 2024. Over the course of these sessions workgroup participants identified the population of Saint Paul's FFN providers, including demographic information such as languages spoken, prominent locations within the City, in addition to provider experiences and common motivations for being an FFN provider rather than a licensed or LNL provider. Participants also identified the families who utilize FFN care, rationales for this voice, and the impact this has on child and family development. Workgroup participants further named benefits of FFN care for providers, families, and children.

In addition, participants considered existing programs and resources available to Saint Paul FFN providers along with the strengths and challenges to these programs or resources. Participants used this information to align FFN programs, supports, and resources, with existing programs, supports, and resources. This action allowed workgroup participants to identify areas of great or under-addressed need for FFN providers and the children they care for.



Through experience and proximity to FFN, workgroup participants identified the following and used these to guide the development of recommendations:

- What children in FFN care need to thrive
- What FFN providers need to care and educate children
- Where these resources or opportunities (the answer to *what*) are currently located within the City
- The format and locations most accessible to FFN providers for the opportunities or resources (the answer to *what*)

## WORKGROUP OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers are unable to receive reimbursement due to having no regulated requirements for quality of care. FFN Workgroup participants were driven to consider opportunities to support these providers with the complexities of early experiences while having a direct impact on children.

### Partnership Requirements

Similar to partnership requirements for licensed or LNL providers, as recommended in the Program plan, workgroup participants recommended partnership requirements for FFN providers, as well. FFN partnerships would have a regular renewal to support ongoing awareness of children in care, as well as to stay abreast of provider, family, and child experiences and needs. Below are the identified recommendations that would be outlined in a partnership agreement between the City of Saint Paul and an FFN provider participating in the Program.

#### Agreement

Just as the Program plan outlines a required agreement for licensed and LNL providers, a partnership agreement would also be a requirement for FFN providers. The partnership agreement would consent to a mutual collaboration with the City of Saint Paul to support children in FFN care and include participation in:

- Onboarding
- Data sharing
- State rules and regulations on health and safety when caring for children

#### Onboarding

FFN providers interested in partnership would experience a series of informational sessions welcoming them to participate. While some sessions would be required, others would be optional as additional resources. Session topics would include, but are not limited to:

FFN City Partnership Overview	A session to focus on the specifics of a partnership, benefits of partnership, etc.
Early Health and Safety	A session to focus on
Early Childhood Development	A session to focus broadly on developmental stages of infants through preschool age children
Early Teaching and Learning	A session to focus broadly on how young children learn and possible approaches for facilitating their learning
Early Childhood Special Education and Referrals	A session to share Early Childhood Special Education resources, increase awareness, and share information on the referral process
Early Childhood Screening	A session to inform about Early Childhood Screening

Choosing a school	A session to focus on choosing other environments for learning as children grow
Kindergarten Transitions	A session to focus on preparing and supporting children and families before, during, and after the kindergarten transition

Additional topics would be added over time, during renewal, some required and others optional. New topics would be determined based on the developmental progression of the children served, as well as provider experiences.

Workgroup participants recommended session experiences to be available virtually as short, prerecorded videos, with some sessions available as in-person group opportunities. The virtual prerecorded format would allow FFN providers flexibility in completion, mirroring the flexible schedules FFN providers are known to have.

### **Data Sharing**

As part of the partnership agreement, during renewal FFN providers would share data about the care they have provided. Data to be shared would include:

- Number of children served
- Frequency and duration of children served
- Ages of children served
- Ward where the care is provided
- Feedback on the use of partnership benefits

The suggested data collected would be used to better quantify the number of children participating in FFN care, gather greater detail on provider and child demographics, and note the areas of the City needing additional resources including possible locations for licensed or LNL care.

### **Partnership Benefits**

The FFN Workgroup worked to align known programs, supports, and resources, with existing programs, supports, and resources available to FFN providers in the City of Saint Paul. This process made visible the areas of great or under-addressed need for FFN providers and the children they care for, noting the lack of organized resources and experiences to support early development for children in FFN care and their providers. It was determined that resources and experiences are needed to encourage a supportive experience for FFN providers and an equitable experience for children in their care. As a result, workgroup participants recommended FFN partnership benefits for both providers and the children they serve; neither mutually exclusive of each other.

### **Child Benefits**

In response to what children need for quality early development while in FFN care specifically, broad topics included access to books and early literacy experiences, tangible materials, and experiences. Below are recommendations that collectively address these broad topics.

### **Resource Library**

Participants highlighted early literacy skills as a priority, noting it is one predictor of long-term success. The Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) system has 13 locations across the City and offers a range of literacy materials for children, teens, and adults. The FFN Workgroup recommendation is to develop a curated set of books specific to the Saint Paul FFN population and their experiences. Books would span languages and be available in both tangible and virtual formats.

In addition to books, materials are necessary for early development. Toys—puppets, baby climbers, magnetic or doodle boards, etc.--provide children with experiences for exploration. These experiences allow children to develop new understanding, add words to their listening and speaking vocabulary, grow social skills, make sense of the world around them, and more.

As children grow it is necessary for the adults, and the materials, to grow with them. FFN providers often do not own items that span a developmental range, as these can be costly for temporary use during each stage of development. As a result, many children in FFN care, ultimately many BIPOC or economically disadvantaged children, are limited in their ability to explore through materials due to constraints in access.

The FFN Workgroup determined that access to books and materials for temporary and rotating use would be housed at SPPL in a Resource Library for FFN provider partners. The workgroup further recommended using the allotted \$10k in the Program plan to purchase curated books and materials for check out. For ease of access and concentration of funds, all curated books and materials would be housed at the George Latimer Central Library in the initial stages. Items would be available individually or combined in learning kits for FFN partner provider check out. To receive materials, providers would do one of the following:

- Access the Central Library location
- Select materials virtually and have them transferred to the branch in their area
- Select materials virtually and have them placed on the mobile library (Bookmobile) to access when in their area

In a second phase, materials would be housed at one branch in each ward for closer provider access.

When discussing provider and child needs, conversations arose addressing regular use of materials, access, and trusted community relationships. It was noted that many FFN providers are familiar and comfortable with City resources such as SPPL, while others prefer to engage with trusted community organizations for their early care information,

community updates, and resources. Therefore, the FFN Workgroup also recommended collaborating with cultural and language specific organizations to:

- House a smaller assortment of curated materials onsite for check out.
- Help FFN provider partners request materials from SPPL branches.

### **Experiential Learning Opportunities**

While most can agree there is an achievement gap, many also note the existence of an opportunity gap that feeds this achievement gap. Opportunities—experiences—expedite deep understanding through facilitation of exploration, connection, and interaction that can be limited or delayed in the absence of the experience. The natural curiosities of children motivate them to investigate the world around them, particularly during the early years. Opportunities—swimming, guided park exploration, music, art, play, etc.—help to develop cognitive, literacy, motor, and creative development as children approach learning from social, cultural, and varied language perspectives. The City of Saint Paul department of Parks and Recreation has 26 locations serving individuals and families in Saint Paul.

The recommendation is to provide free or reduced-price access to developmentally appropriate experiences curated specifically for children while in FFN care. Classes, lessons, museum and zoo visits, and more, would be customized for this population and therefore offered at a schedule, frequency, location, and cost accessible to FFN providers.

While access to curated books and materials would be held at SPPL, curated experiences would be facilitated by Saint Paul Parks and Recreation. Akin to trusted cultural and language specific organizations aiding in supporting FFN providers to request books and materials through SPPL, these partners would also have the ability to support FFN providers with registering for curated experiential learning through Parks and Recreation.

### **Meal Access**

In conjunction with free or reduced-price experiences and programming, workgroup participants recommended further offering free or reduced-price meals for children in FFN care while participating in an extended curated FFN provider experience – swimming lessons, museum tours, etc. – supported by Parks and Recreation. This access would be available at select experiences and could encourage partner and child engagement.

### **Provider Benefits**

Workgroup participants recognized FFN providers often offer their service in isolation. This fact identifies a need for networking, group learning, and adult interaction groups, similar to those of licensed or LNL providers who have the opportunity to participate with like-minded and similarly skilled individuals to advance the quality of their service. These groups would encourage exchange of shared knowledge and resources, offer group opportunities to learn new

information, develop a skill, and participate in a supportive community as they care for a family, friend, or neighbor's child.

These support opportunities would occur flexibly as an option. In conjunction with experiential learning for the children in FFN care, one noted opportunity for networking, group learning, and adult interaction would occur simultaneously during FFN curated experiences for children. Partners would be notified of these opportunities when completing their partnership agreement, as well as during renewal.

## **Potential Partnerships**

At the close of the Family, Friend, and Neighbor Workgroup, the following culturally specific agencies were identified as possible organizations who may have interest in aiding in:

- Development of an FFN partnership agreement.
- Selection of books, materials, and experiences for curation.
- Determining which SPPL branches to support in phase 2.
- Supporting FFNs to check out materials or register for experiential learning.
- Public awareness of FFN partnerships and benefits.
  - African American Babies Coalition and Projects(AABC)
  - American Indian Family Center
  - Change
  - Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES)
  - Hmong American Partnership
  - Hmong Early Childhood Coalition
  - Karen Organization of Minnesota
  - Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD)

In addition to these culturally specific organizations, other collaborative partners to support these recommendations would include Como Planetarium; Como Zoo; Frogtown Farm and Garden; Minnesota Children's Museum; Minnesota Toy Library; Planting People, Growing Justice; Saint Paul Public Schools; and Science Museum of Minnesota.

## FAMILY, FRIEND, AND NEIGHBOR IN THE INITIAL STAGES

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Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) partnerships are a critical component to serving all children in Saint Paul as they honor the family's choice in their early care and education setting and support a significant number of children in Saint Paul. FFN providers offer flexibility often unlike that of LNL or licensed programs, while also aligning with the values, beliefs, and child rearing practices of the child's family. Difficult to quantify, FFN providers are many and serve a great number of children in Saint Paul. An estimated number of children who would not participate in licensed or LNL care were included in the Program plan projections.

FFN providers, just as all other caregivers, are in need of resources and support to serve effectively, regardless of an agency to report to regarding quality.

The need to service and support FFN providers is to ensure the City contributes to no additional gaps in early preparedness for its children. In the initial stages, the following will need to occur:

- A review and solidification of partnership benefits
  - Collaboration with existing City resources such as SPPL and Parks and Recreation
  - Collaboration with local museums, farms, and other Saint Paul, non-City run, programs
- Development of a partnership agreement
- Selection and purchase of curated materials and experiences

Below is a timeline suggested by the FFN Workgroup for these actions.

Action	Timeline
Purchase curated materials	Months 1-2
Define and develop a check out system for access to curated materials	Months 1-4
Determine free or reduced-price experiences through Parks and Recreation	Months 1-4
Session video creation	Months 4-9 and ongoing
Staff orientation	Months 5-9 and ongoing
Marketing and Outreach to Saint Paul FFN partners	Month 9 and ongoing
Enrollment of FFN partners	Month 9 and ongoing