



HEAD START

# INNOVATION FUND

**BUILDING REGIONAL  
COLLABORATION**

**2013–2018**

**Community Foundation**

**FOR SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN**



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HEAD START INNOVATION FUND

# BUILDING REGIONAL COLLABORATION

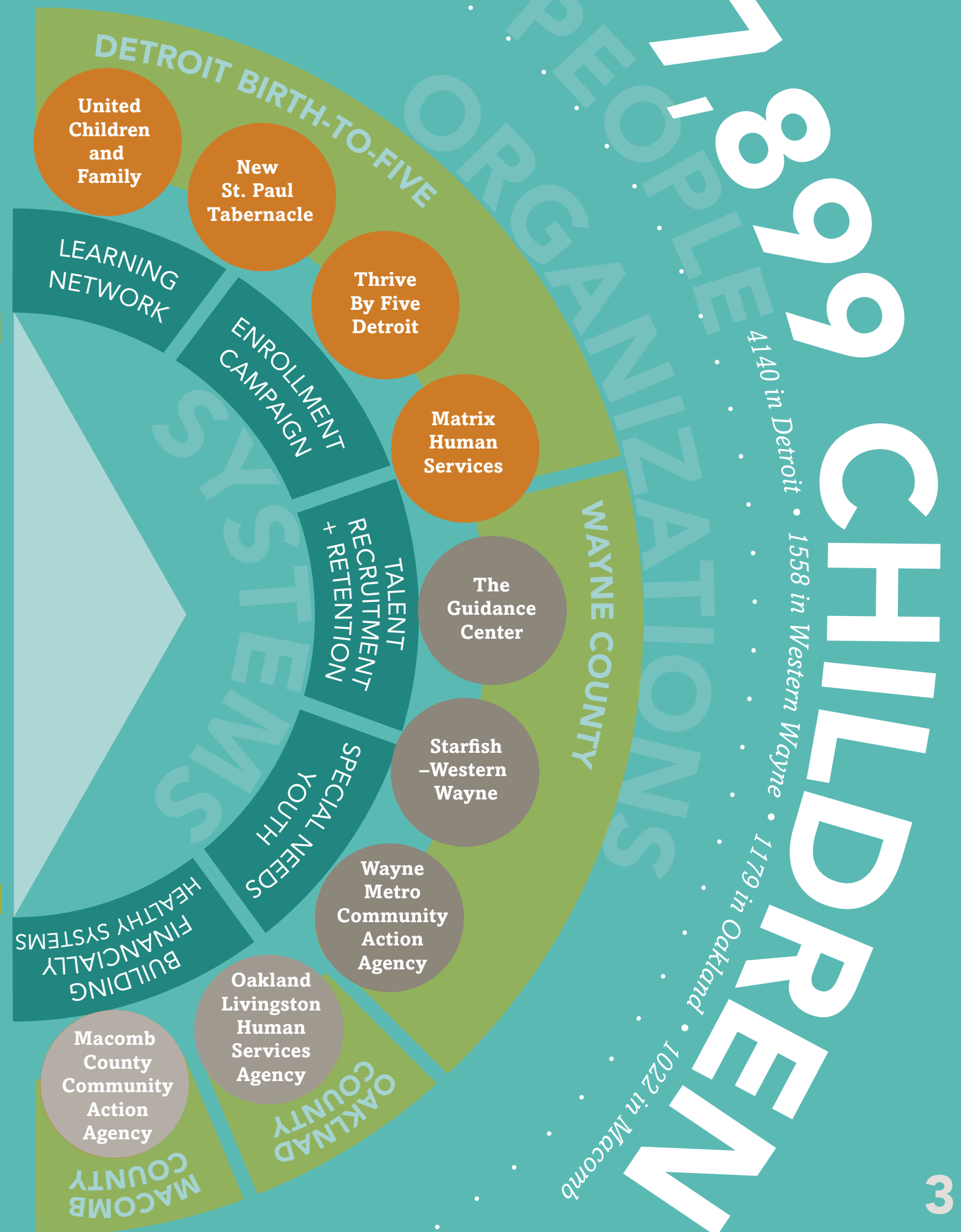
10 FOUNDATIONS  
*raised*  
\$11.05 MILLION

FEDERAL INVESTMENT  
*of*  
\$187.1 MILLION

## HEAD START INNOVATION FUND

Supported by CFSEM  
*Starting 2013*

FAMILY FOCUS MODEL



**The Big Picture** shows the collective value in working together as a region to share a unified voice and purpose in access to—and benefit from—Head Start. The Innovation Fund, supported by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, represents faith in cross-organization collaboration, resulting in identified systems of focus and—most importantly—an efficacy in giving the most help to children and families.

# INTRODUCTION

## PHILANTHROPY'S RESPONSE TO HEAD START REDESIGN IN DETROIT

In 2013, in an unprecedented move, a collaborative of local and national foundations committed nearly \$5 million to create Detroit's Head Start Innovation Fund. The purpose of the "Innovation Fund" is to foster innovation and improvements in Early Head Start and Head Start services for families and children.

The initial impetus for the creation of the Innovation Fund was to leverage and support a \$48 million, 5-year federal investment in Head Start programs in Detroit. The City of Detroit relinquished the Head Start grant, initiating a competition for the Head Start funding. Originally announced in early 2013, the winners of the competition were awarded to new Detroit-based organizations in early 2014. The federal investment supports comprehensive birth-to-age-five Early Head Start and Head Start programming in the city, including programs for expectant families.

The Innovation Fund focuses specifically on the new Head Start providers that were selected by the federal government through the competition. This shift in how the funding was administered in Detroit represented a significant change—and opportunity—to support children and families in new and impactful ways.

The Innovation Fund awards competitive grants for programs and partnerships that improve the quality of Head Start and Early Head Start services and outcomes for children and their families in Detroit. It also provides strategic support for systemwide needs, including the creation and provision of shared resources that are designed to support the system as it continues to reshape in the future.

In 2016, the philanthropic collaborative invested an additional \$6 million, extending the life of the Innovation Fund to 2019, and expanding the geographic reach of the effort to the tri-county area of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties. The federal investment in Head Start is \$139 million for these additional locations.

The impetus for this expansion was primarily the significant need and learnings demonstrated by the Detroit cohort of organizations. The funders had an interest in continuing support through the life of the initial 5-year contract for Detroit agencies. In addition, Western Wayne county and Oakland county participated in a competition for Head Start funding for the birth-to-age-five model of Head Start and Early Head Start at the same time.

At this moment in time, children and families in Southeast Michigan benefit from the hard work of all the agencies involved in the Innovation Fund.

The focus of this publication is to highlight the work of the Innovation Fund to date, including investments in systemwide efforts and support for unique efforts of Head Start agencies. In addition, the case studies aim to show how these investments have changed the lives of people who interact with this system every day.

This review of the Innovation Fund is important because, in 2018, Detroit now stands on the cusp of another competition for funding as the initial five-year federal contract concludes. Many systemwide collaborative structures and intensive community partnerships have been built through the life of this effort. Some of these efforts have been designed to support children and parents across our region in a holistic way, and should be considered as undergirding to future efforts as the early education system in Southeast Michigan continues to evolve and expand.



## IMPACT ON SYSTEMS

Several of the key investments of the Head Start Innovation Fund have been designed to support systemwide efforts, in partnership with all providers. These efforts are aimed at building tools and strategies to cohesively serve families across the city and region.

What follows is a snapshot of some of these collectively designed activities.

## LEARNING NETWORK

The implementation of the Head Start Learning Network has been a key activity for the Innovation Fund. It has served as a regular venue for agency leadership to exchange ideas and identify common needs and opportunities. It has also been a place for system leaders to provide social support to one another as the Head Start system builds capacity. Formed in 2014, alongside the Head Start Innovation Fund, the network initially included key leaders and staff from the Birth-to-Five Head Start agencies across Detroit. At the request of the group, it has expanded over time to include representatives from the other Head Start agencies in Detroit outside of the Birth-to-Five pilot, and the new grantees from the federal Early Child Care Partnership. In 2017, we welcomed attendees from five agencies in the larger tri-county area, as they also went through a similar recompetition process.

Staffed by the Head Start Innovation Fund, the Learning Network meets to share knowledge, build collective capacity, and align systemwide efforts. In 2014-2016, the Learning Network hosted monthly meetings focused primarily on topics and activities to build the teacher pipeline, provide supports like complementary programming, and parent engagement. In 2017 and 2018, the Learning Network convened around a common learning objective such as federal recompetition.



The agencies in the Learning Network recently worked together to collaborate on a systemwide community needs assessment. This study and its resulting report are required by the government. Instead of each agency hiring contractors and completing individual reports, the Learning Network members worked together to develop an RFP process and hired consultants to complete the work. The result was a unified report that gave agencies and funders both a high level perspective about the demographics and needs of the system as well as a more detailed, agency by agency set of data.

The Learning Network is also the platform from which the Head Start Innovation Fund can listen to what is most needed for Head Start agencies to be successful. The enrollment marketing campaign and talent attraction campaigns emerged out of conversations in the Learning Network. A monthly e-newsletter from the Innovation Fund to Learning Network participants shares system impact and updates, along with timely announcements.

Members worked together to develop an RFP process, resulting in a unified, high-level perspective about Head Start needs.

## ENROLLMENT CAMPAIGN

Identifying the need for shared marketing and communications to help families.

The overnight evolution in Detroit's Head Start system—from one provider to many providers—caused immediate confusion for parents about where to send their child for Head Start. In addition, with the increased federal funding, Detroit experienced a 200 percent growth in the number of infant and toddler spaces. As a result, entering the 2015-2016 school year, there were hundreds of open spots available at centers across the city.

Because of these changing dynamics, the newly designated Detroit Head Start agencies immediately identified the need for shared marketing and communications to let families know that Head Start and Early Head Start agencies were open across the city, located in their neighborhoods, and eager to serve them.

In response to this call for support, the Head Start Innovation Fund developed a unified brand for Detroit Head Start, one informed by the agencies and the families they serve. This brand then served as the platform from which the agencies could, as a fully collaborative system, boost enrollment and raise awareness of Detroit Head Start. Effective communication is rooted in research and in understanding one's audience. The Innovation Fund approached the challenge of open seats by conducting listening sessions with various staff from the ten provider agencies and current and prospective parents. Insights from these discussions shaped the overall campaign.

With unified branding and messaging in both English and Spanish, *DetroitHeadStart.com* launched in 2015 as a central resource for parents to find a center in their neighborhood, hear about the value of Head Start from teachers and other parents, and take immediate action online to connect with a center. Content is also shared via Facebook, with paid advertising targeting and attracting prospective parents to the page and the website.

In addition to building these information tools, the Innovation Fund has partnered with nearly three dozen neighborhood-based community organizations to disseminate information and get the word out to parents about open seats. This holistic network of partners has played a critical role as a backbone of outreach for Head Start providers.

The collaborative citywide effort has attracted media attention and site visits from local and state government officials with agency representatives. The Head Start Innovation Fund has assisted agencies by providing consistent, cohesive but individualized information to nearly 20 elected officials who came to visit after launch.



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Using our unified voice to speak regionally about the new model for Head Start.

A key tool in the enrollment effort is accurate and up to date information. Agencies share when new centers are opening or if addresses are changing. This enables the *DetroitHeadStart.com* locator tool to provide prospective enrollees with correct options when searching for a center near them.

Equal to distributing “good” information, was the Head Start Innovation Fund’s early efforts to remove inaccurate information. Many months were spent purchasing former websites that were still live but contained bad information, and working with community partners to take down signs of former Head Start sites.

As this centralized system of enrollment has been built for the system, agency enrollment staff from all Head Start agencies regularly connect with Innovation Fund marketing specialists to identify evolving enrollment marketing needs and to share leading practices. Collateral material such as banners, templates for fliers, yard signs and postcards, are available for each agency to use and are able to be customized to include each agency’s specific information.

As a result of the campaign, in its first year, Detroit Head Start locations across the city welcomed new students for the start of the 2015 school year, with 100 percent growth in year-over-year enrollment.

**Detroit Head Start experienced 100% growth in enrollment in the first year of our campaign.**

Progress continues as each month, roughly 70 families use the unified enrollment information to choose Head Start for their children.

And, while the enrollment campaign and contents have been built exclusively for the providers in Detroit, the providers from out-Wayne, Oakland and Macomb have leveraged these collateral materials as we work across the region to speak about the new model of Head Start in a unified voice.

## TALENT RECRUITMENT EFFORT

Teachers are key to high quality early childhood education. Yet, these positions in Early Head Start and Head Start are chronically hard to fill. The new Detroit Head Start agencies, as a unified cohort, identified talent recruitment and attraction as major challenges early on in their pursuit to increase enrollment and quality locally.

The Head Start Innovation Fund has responded to this challenge in a few key ways over the last five years. First, a report was commissioned to examine the barriers to becoming an Early Head Start or Head Start educator in the city, and to identify opportunities for Detroit to utilize proven national methods and locally generated solutions to build the pool of eligible and qualified Head Start educators.

The resulting report provided a comprehensive analysis of relevant local, state and federal trends and efforts concerning Head Start talent recruitment, outlining the Detroit landscape, and offering recommendations for near- and long-term solutions. Each of the Head Start agencies contributed input and authorship to the report, as they would ultimately be engaged in and would benefit from the plan it informed.

Next, a campaign was created to retain great early educators across Detroit’s Head Start system, and to attract new talent to ensure the system could continue to deliver high quality education.

There were many factors to keep in mind for a unified campaign approach. Each of the local agencies providing Head Start or Early Head Start services in Detroit has a different staff composition and faces a myriad of recruitment and retention challenges. And, because of federal Head Start guidelines, job seeker qualifications and the hiring process for Head Start agencies can be complicated and at times, very confusing. In addition, information like salary and benefits can vary by agency.



**Identifying opportunities to utilize proven methods to build a pool of qualified educators.**

So, the Innovation Fund listened to the perspectives of early childhood education students; teachers, administrators and directors at local community and four-year colleges; human resource managers and directors at Detroit Head Start centers; current or former Detroit Head Start educators or site leaders; and national policy experts, advocates and education talent leaders, and designed a campaign from there.

Ultimately, the campaign was ultimately designed to fill open positions and to explore partnership and training opportunities to bring more teachers into the field, with a particular emphasis of attracting qualified candidates who have the credentials for Head Start but have not yet worked in an agency.

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## CHERYL'S STORY

TALENT RECRUITMENT EFFORT

**Cheryl McFall has been a Head Start booster for many years: first as a mother with five children in Head Start classrooms.** Then inspired, she became a Head Start teacher herself. Committed and devoted, she moved into management, and that's when things started to get rough.

In a nutshell, the challenge is the same for every Head Start agency in Detroit and across the country: recruitment and retention of teachers to work with the most vulnerable and needy of children.

Says Cheryl, who is deputy executive director at the New St. Paul Tabernacle head Start agency: "Our problem is not just finding people, but qualified people, or trainable people. The pool is very, very thin." A candidate who passed an (extensive) background check and got a job offer from New St. Paul might the next day apply at another Head Start agency, never to be seen again.

But in recent years, money and ideas from the Innovation Fund of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan have simplified the hiring process. Various agencies no longer compete but cooperate to win the best candidates and do better for the children and families Head Start helps.

One example: The Foundation marketed and organized two job fairs in 2017 that included several Head Start agencies, selling themselves to candidates on the same day, allowing candidates to make on-the-spot decisions about where to apply.



"Everybody's pay is different, as are our policies and practices, and benefit packages," Cheryl says. Plus, each agency serves families in different areas. "Demand is so high (applicants) can pick their ticket. They're given an opportunity to see what's out there at one time, so you get a faster decision. It's so much easier!"

But, she says, "you still never know if they're going to show up on the first day," a non-uncommon frustration. "From the second fair we hired 15 teachers and all 15 showed. Yeah!"

The first fair, in May, drew about 58 would-be teachers to the Outdoor Adventure Center and the second, in August at Hilton Garden Inn Southfield, attracted some 72 job-hunters. Both fairs were advertised on billboards, busses, fliers and social media, including the new website, DetroitHeadStart.com, spearheaded by the Foundation. New St. Paul's Head Start agency serves 775 children and 30 pregnant mothers at 16 sites on the West side of Detroit, but has no marketing experts. Cheryl is glad the Foundation does, so word of the fairs reached a broader audience.

In addition to the fairs, Innovation Fund dollars made possible monthly gatherings of the leaders of all the Head Start agencies. "Not only are we getting to know each other," says Cheryl, "but we're sharing ideas" – especially on how to retain teachers – "and supporting one another as well."

It's a new collaboration that lifts each agency's aspirations.

## TALENT RECRUITMENT EFFORT CONTINUED

The goals of the talent campaign have been to ensure that the role of and importance of quality early childhood educators will be better understood and amplified in the public conversation about early education in Detroit, to see a change in the demographic (including age, gender) diversity of the teaching staff in Early Head Start and Head Start centers across the city, and to improve the hiring process from the perspective of the job-seeker and the agency.

Working with some specific populations of interest—younger educators, retired teachers, and men in the education field—alongside Detroit Head Start agency human resource staff, the Innovation Fund employed a participatory design process to develop a comprehensive career resource center for *DetroitHeadStart.com* along with collateral and marketing activities to get the word out that Detroit Head Start agencies are hiring. Activities included the first citywide job fair for Detroit Head Start agencies. This soon expanded to be regional in focus, with the addition of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb agencies in the Innovation Fund.

**Group exchanges have created a common forum to work together.**



Each successive job fair has resulted in prospective job seekers who are new to the field but hold the credentials to work in early education. They are from a variety of locations and backgrounds. All agencies in the Innovation Fund have hired staff from the pool of job seekers at one of the citywide or area-wide job fairs.

As part of the ongoing marketing effort, the Innovation Fund convenes human resource managers regularly. This exchange has created a further spirit of collaboration among agencies. Where once it felt more like competition for a limited pool of talent, now the agencies have a common forum for working together to build solutions that work for all. An example of this collaboration in action is that now agencies are pairing up to deliver presentations about Head Start careers at local universities and colleges.

## SPECIAL NEEDS YOUTH

Detroit Head Start programs are required by Head Start Performance Standards to have a systematic approach to developmental screening, assessment, and formal evaluation so that children will get the special services they may need to make developmental progress. Based on screening and assessment results, and/or a parent's request for an evaluation, children will be referred to the authorizing educational body to initiate a formal evaluation. This evaluation, which determines the child's eligibility and need for special education or early intervention and related services, is free to the family in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In Detroit, each Early Head Start and Head Start program has established an interagency agreement with Detroit Public Schools Community District. This means that the district is the service provider responsible for ensuring these requirements are met.

As Detroit Public Schools emerge from a period of uncertainty and transition to one of renewed leadership and progress, the Head Start Innovation Fund identified an opportunity to close the gap to ensure children with special needs are served by the district. With a Head Start Innovation Fund grant, staffing for disabilities has been hired to assist with Head Start special needs assessments. Thanks to the Innovation Fund, more children with specialized learning needs will be able to attend Head Start because their evaluations are in place.

With these new resources from the Head Start Innovation Fund, the district has added capacity to the Resource Coordinating Team (RCT) and the Parent and Community Engagement Team.



The Head Start Innovation Fund also heard from agencies that it was critical to build greater awareness and understanding of parents about developmental support and its importance for lifelong success. Agencies indicated that parents needed support and information when facing a special needs diagnosis for their child. While parent advocates and parent advisory councils existed, they were not coordinated with Detroit Head Start as a system.

In response, the Head Start Innovation Fund is implementing a communication and support plan for parents to understand and address their child's developmental challenges.

**While Head Start mandates that 10% of agency enrollment be special needs children, Detroit Head Start agencies indicate that *in reality the need is for 25% of children across the system.***



Part of the Head Start Innovation Fund's work has been to bridge systems. While Detroit Public Schools is not a direct provider of Head Start, they are a critical partner in their role of providing referrals and supports for special needs children in Head Start. A grant to DPS is working to boost capacity to increase this referral and support system, as 10% of Head Start slots are to be utilized by special needs youth. Here is just one of hundreds of stories of why this is important.

## **TIFFANY'S** STORY DPS PARTNERSHIP

**When her baby was just a few months old, Tiffany McKnight suspected something was wrong.** Samuel languished, disinterested in crawling or pulling himself up. Tiffany knew because, although a first time mother, she had raised a friend's baby. By his first birthday Samuel, born a month premature, had forgotten what "nose" and "mouth" and "eye" meant, words she had taught him with their faces inches apart.

"It was our little game," she recalls somberly. "And he wouldn't play anymore."

He didn't learn to walk until 16 months old. But by that time Tiffany -- a smart, can-do woman -- had taken action, calling a Detroit Public Schools program called Early Intervention. She remembered it because, seven years earlier, she often delivered to it a cousin with cerebral palsy. The program gives a boost to special needs kids from birth to age 3 then, ideally, places them in any of several special Head Start programs.

When evaluators from DPS came to Tiffany's home, Samuel "ran around aimlessly," she remembers. "They couldn't get his attention." He was diagnosed with moderate to severe autism, and his mother was grateful for the words. "They help us to explain how to love and train and relate to our child."

When he graduated from the program last summer, he was quickly enrolled in a Head Start program at Marcus Garvey school. There, his classroom holds just six children, with a teacher and an aide. Today, at 3½, he is making his mama proud with full sentences like "Oh my God, dang

it," copied off his older half-siblings. He sings "Jingle Bells." And the other day he picked up a tool and proclaimed, "This is a screw driver." Amazed, his mother called every aunt, uncle and cousin to brag.

Hers is a good news story. Not every parent recognizes special needs in their children, or knows about the DPS program. Backlogs sometimes fail to quickly find the right Head Start program for these children, so they stay home for too long, losing their momentum, forgetting what they learned. One special needs teacher ruefully called it "back to the old humdrum." A new grant from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan adds people to recruit parents of babies for the DPS program, then to speed them quickly into Head Start at age 3. The law requires that 10 percent of Head Start children have special needs.

Meanwhile, Tiffany and her husband are raising a second special needs child, Samantha. Only four pounds at birth, she underwent emergency surgery at two months to open her airway. At two years she still wasn't calling for her "mama" or "daddy." But she is a darling of teachers at the Early Intervention program, and has recently begun calling out to her parents, saying "uh oh" and naming cars, shoes and Elmo.

Tiffany's days are grueling, tending her family from their temporary home in a motel room, chauffeuring her husband to work, her stepchild to school, her Samuel to Head Start and her daughter to DPS -- then picking them all up. But, she says, "I was told I wouldn't be able to have children, so I want to invest everything I have in them."

## BUILDING A FINANCIALLY HEALTHY SYSTEM



A persistent challenge for the existing Head Start providers has been barriers to raising the matching funds required as part of the federal contract. While Innovation Fund dollars and related in-kind investments have helped to serve as a portion of the match, they only represent a fraction of what is needed. In other communities, agencies typically blend Head Start dollars with other non-federal government financial streams and capital resources that benefit children. While some of that has occurred in the southeast Michigan region, it has not been nearly enough, and there are many more opportunities under exploration.

These challenges are very real for the system, perhaps most clearly displayed in 2017 when one delegate of the Starfish Thrive by Five effort decided to withdraw from the program. While Starfish was able to quickly line up new providers to serve as partners so that children were not affected, the decision of this key agency to withdraw services raised these financial challenges to the surface.

Coupled with this, is the federal government's announcement that the Detroit-based agencies will need to compete for their grant funding again in late 2018. This competition occurs when Head Start programs meet one of seven different conditions related to quality, fiscal stability, or program management that triggers the competition. Detroit providers are still working to stabilize the Head Start program after the city relinquished the grant, and serve a very transient population. So it is not surprising that the federal system that determines whether or not a provider has to compete identified the Detroit programs. The Detroit providers took over a very troubled Head Start program, starting in a place of great instability. They made it more stable in key



ways in a short time, experiencing exponential growth in staffing and enrollment. Navigating a persistent teacher shortage while working to build a quality program has only exacerbated these challenges.

On the positive side, most Head Start programs retain their grants after the competitive process and the competition allows programs to reinvent their model to better support children and families in the city. Preliminary discussions with the Office of Head Start have been positive. They also recognize the difficulties of operating in Detroit. Unfortunately, the legislation does not allow the Office of Head Start management discretion when determining which providers must compete for their grant.

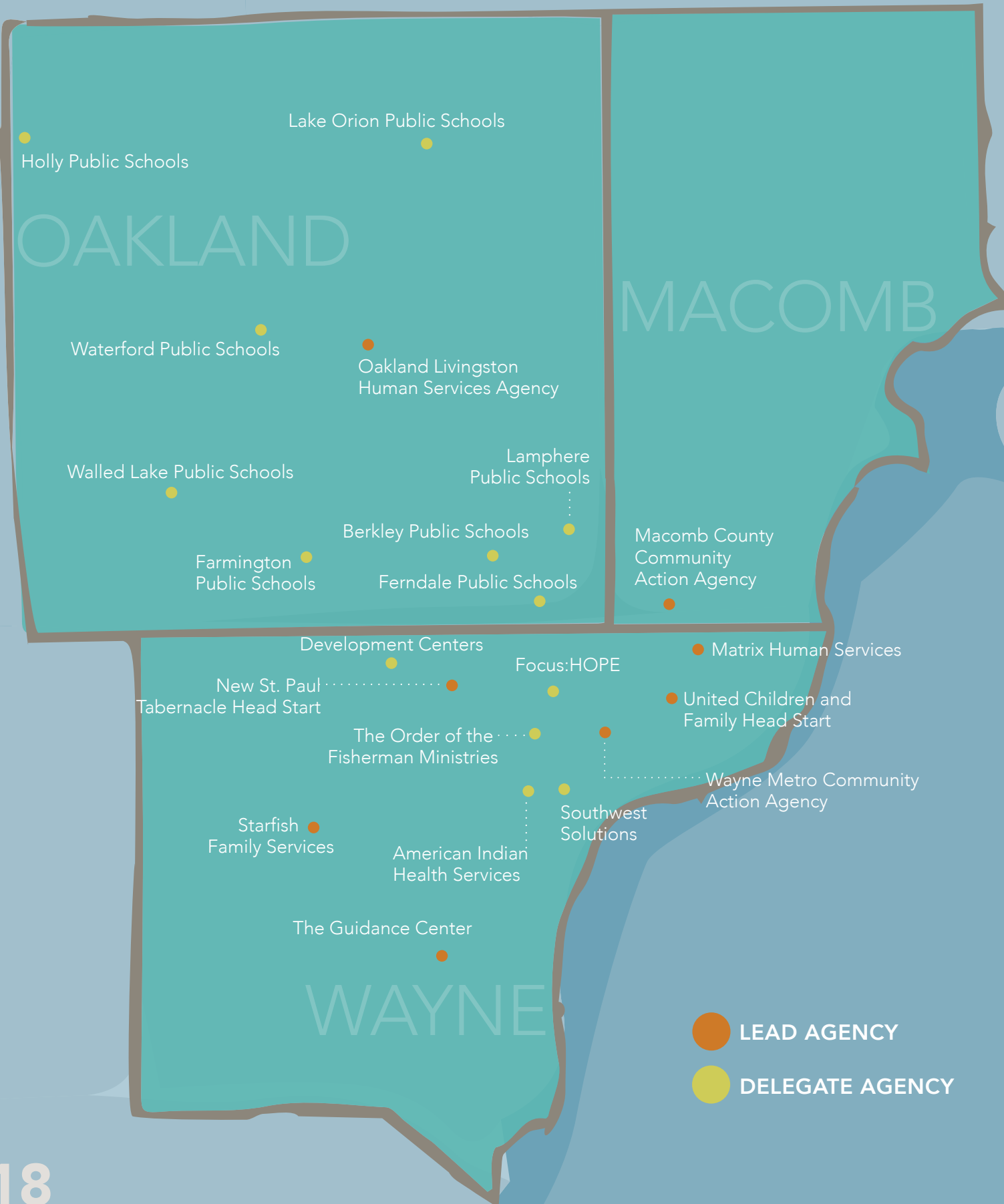
The agency CEOs are working together, across the system, to look for ways to co-design next steps and support one another through resource sharing. The leaders attribute this cohesion to their regular interaction over the last five years of the Innovation Fund.

The Innovation Fund is working to support this continued dialogue and exploration in a couple of ways. Once the new competition was announced for the Detroit providers in early 2018, the Innovation Fund hired Jeff Capizzano, a national consultant, to assist the agencies by:

- Providing Innovation Fund grantees with administrative/ financial consulting to support and coordinate the Head Start reapplication process;
- Conducting Head Start grantee assessments of community resource needs to support high quality Head Start programming; and
- Preparing a Head Start briefing for the Mayor's office, including information on the history of Head Start funding in Detroit, current Head Start context, and opportunities for city involvement.

As a collective, the agencies are determined to find a more sustainable community strategy for Head Start in Detroit. Foundations are also committed to supporting their great work in the next phase of early education. Detroit has millions of dollars in annual Head Start funds that need to be protected for the benefit of the children and families served. Though this work does not touch the tri-county agencies served by the Innovation Fund, their collective thinking and support as key Michigan partners have also been beneficial to the recent effort.

# HEAD START AGENCIES



## IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to the systemwide investments, the Head Start Innovation Fund has also made over \$6.4 million in direct investments to individual Head Start agencies to support innovations in their organizations that contribute to the success of their programs.

What follows is a snapshot of each organization, highlighting one or two areas of unique focus.



# AGENCIES SERVING DETROIT

Supported by the Head Start Innovation Fund since 2014

## Matrix Human Services

**\$1,546,392**

IN TOTAL GRANTS

from the Head Start  
Innovation Fund

Up to

**1,927**  
children

served each year

**Building and Utilizing  
Technological Tools  
to Strengthen  
Programming**

Matrix has played a unique role across the landscape of Head Start providers in its ongoing pursuit to utilize and integrate technology tools across its work. Matrix has improved classroom efficiency and data collection

by utilizing Innovation Fund dollars to invest in easy to use tablets and software, moving away from reliance on paper-based systems. These transitions also save teachers processing time and help to improve teacher morale. When teachers can collect data more easily, the quality and quantity of their data collection improves.

Technology changes aim to support staff, teacher and parent communications and education. For example, the agency is currently implementing tools that will allow parents to access new computers to write resumes and apply for jobs, and launch a network tool of referral partners so parents and families receive help with locating critical resources.

Matrix has used technology to address teacher training needs as well. Early investments from the Innovation Fund addressed Matrix's struggle provide training in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Gathering a large team of staff for trainings can be challenging due to the cost of a venue and the cost of bringing in a subject matter expert. To address these challenges, Matrix developed a more effective system to provide professional development for its staff. The Matrix Online Learning Lab Environment (MOLLE) is a depository for Early Head Start and Head Start training materials, curricula, and resources that support staff development for Matrix staff, parents and child care partners. Matrix professional development staff catalogue existing training material and design new training content for MOLLE. Training materials can include

publications, videos, webinars, podcasts, etc. MOLLE has the capacity to service 1,500 staff, parents and providers and provides mobile, anytime, anywhere learning opportunities.

As the largest of the Head Start providers in the tri-county region, Matrix serves a unique role in its work to build internal systems that may be transferable to other agencies.

### Child Development Associates

- 7 staff received degrees (6 Associates; 1 Bachelor)
- 4 staff received CDA
- 40 staff in degree or CDA program
- 100% of HS teaching staff completed mandatory trainings

### The Matrix Online Learning Lab Environment (MOLLE)

- 551 unique users
- 3,498 training session completions
- 191 courses published on the site

## New St. Paul Tabernacle Head Start

**\$1,184,500**

IN TOTAL GRANTS

from the Head Start Innovation Fund

Up to

**577 children**

served each year

**Retaining High-Quality  
Teachers through  
Robust Wellness  
Activities**

New St. Paul has pursued a variety of recruitment and retention strategies with support from the Innovation Fund. New St. Paul piloted some of these ideas over the last few years, monitored their success, and has determined which strategies worked best for its target population.

New St. Paul tested the idea that qualified staff are more likely to remain in their positions if they feel valued and have opportunities to continue to strengthen their skills. The agency provides incentives such as identifying high performing staff to attend conferences, implementing staff wellness fairs, teacher appreciation events, and milestone recognitions. Additionally, New St. Paul offers stipends to staff who have the highest CLASS scores, to encourage its teachers to aspire toward improvements in their teaching. There are agency-wide recognition for staff who complete key certification programs. For example, teachers complete their Infant & Toddler Certification on site, along with CDA cohort trainings for teachers and parents. Because transportation is often a barrier, onsite trainings are tremendously helpful.



Beyond broad retention strategies, New St. Paul recognizes the strong connection between higher vocabulary and math scores in preschool classrooms, where there are high quality teacher-child interactions. So, with Innovation Fund support, New St. Paul has provided professional development support to its staff to ensure that these quality indicators are in place in their classrooms.

New St. Paul consistently demonstrates success with its programs, and has a strong commitment to excellence. To the extent that it can, given its current financial and human resources, New St. Paul continues to provide programming that mirrors its higher resourced peers. New St. Paul has proposed innovations to many of its project priorities, and has also carefully identified areas where it needs to maintain current practices.



One target population for the Head Start Innovation Fund's talent recruitment efforts has been men. While men have not traditionally been encouraged to pursue careers in early childhood education, they have the potential to make great impacts on the lives of children. Here is just one story that has resulted from a Head Start Innovation Fund investment.

## MR. QUEVIE'S STORY ROLE MODELS

**Quevie Wells never saw himself as a superhero.** Not as a boy when he got in fights and sassed. Not when he earned only Cs. Not when his grandma and his mom told him they expected more of him.

But he turned. His heart and his head turned. The Lord helped, surely. And now, at 25, he wears Superman, Batman and Ghost Busters T-shirts to his Head Start classroom, where he inspires 15 little boys taking what he calls "their first steps in life."

In his cozy classroom at Focus: Hope, they call him Mr. Quevie (pronounced KEE-vee). He's been told it refers to a Nigerian prince.

The men he looked up to most as a boy were the Power Rangers. His mother and grandmother raised him, an only child. In high school he began to know the satisfaction of doing well, making those women smile. But suddenly his grandma died, in his senior year. "I had to stay home for almost two weeks," he remembers, "to get myself back. My grandma was my best friend."

At Henry Ford Community College, he stumbled into the theater program, shyly working far from the flood lights. At six-foot-two and almost 300 pounds, he dared to take a role in "Snow White," playing a dwarf named Tiny. "After that," he says, "I felt I could do anything." He collected two associates degrees, in theater and liberal arts.

But no career called his name, until his mother suggested Head Start. Her own career had led her from cooking for seniors at nursing homes to nourishing kids and staff at Head Start, most recently at Focus:Hope, a Head Start agency in the Thrive by Five Collaborative.

A job offer as a classroom aide surprised Quevie, and he surprised himself by how much he loved working with kids. "I'm a grown-up child myself," he says. At lunchtime, for example, right down the hall from his mom, Mr. Quevie's boys sit on tiny chairs at a low table as he hunches among them, teaching them about their food. Milk, for example, makes your bones strong. And if you pick at your food, how do you expect to grow up like John Cena? (He's a wrestler, rapper and actor one of the boys admires.)

After a promotion to assistant teacher, Quevie aimed for more. He achieved his Child Development Associate credential, studying and passing an exam that costs \$425. "I couldn't have afforded it," he admits, but funds granted by the Head Start Innovation Fund allowed Focus:Hope to cover that expense. In September, he will start at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, studying early childhood development.

He is one of only two male teachers on a staff of 29. Waymond Hayes, who runs the program, thinks young men have too long been teased for wanting to join what's seen as a female profession. Says Hayes: "It's got to be a calling."

Says Quevie: "All children are innocent souls. What we put into them is what they'll put out." And sometimes they surprise you:

One of his boys shouted at him. Another boy spoke up. "Don't talk to my teacher like that! I love Mr. Quevie." The first boy said "I'm sorry," and hugged him.

It was a superhero moment.

## Starfish Family Services & the Thrive by Five Detroit Collaborative

**\$1,819,500**

IN TOTAL GRANTS  
from the Head Start Innovation Fund

Up to  
**1,124 children**  
served each year

**Testing New Models  
of Organizational  
Collaboration**

Starfish Family Services operates as one of the largest multi-service providers in the region, with a strategic and operational design that has positioned it as a field leader in early childhood education. Starfish was the singular agency to propose a large-scale collaborative effort to the Head Start Department of Health and Human Services and the Head Start Innovation Fund. What resulted was “Thrive by Five Detroit,” a five-year partnership between four high capacity human service providers: Development Centers Inc., Focus: HOPE and Southwest Solutions. Starfish operates as the lead agency and fiduciary of Thrive by Five Detroit.

With the capacity to benefit over 1,100 Detroit children and families annually, Thrive by Five Detroit serves as a model for innovative approaches to pooling funds and resources to provide the best services for children and families. The partnership’s top priority is to ensure that Detroit children start school ready to succeed. Thrive by Five Detroit has focused on its intensive, high-quality Early Head Start and Head Start services. It has also responded to the needs of parents and families to help create stable home environments.

Thrive by Five Detroit partner agencies know that teacher quality has a direct correlation to positive school readiness outcomes. It goes beyond just using the HighScope curriculum in its classrooms. HighScope helps the four partner agencies with ongoing program evaluation, data-driven continuous improvement, and rigorous teacher professional development. More than 85% of teachers participated in intensive HighScope curriculum courses over the last year. And, partner agencies have enrolled teachers in the well-regarded HighScope Training-of-Trainers (TOT) series. It is a two-year commitment, and critical step, in increasing the internal capacity of Starfish to provide in-house curriculum training. The internal expertise for monitoring, training and technical assistance provides a cost saving benefit for the Thrive by Five Detroit partnership.



Thrive by Five Detroit has been successful because all partners are high capacity and well established. While the list of partners has evolved over the list of the contract, the goals have remained the same. Together, partner expertise spans across early childhood, mental health, workforce development and employment services, housing, parenting, and family self-sufficiency programs.

### The partnership sets benchmarks each year to:

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| • Invest in high quality programming     | • Provide exceptional professional development for teachers, staff and community child care providers | • Implement family engagement techniques that are rooted in evidence-based curriculum providers  |
| • Operate with low child to staff ratios | • Implement Practiced-Based Coaching within the HighScope Curriculum                                  | • Partner with the HighScope Educational Research Foundation to provide curriculum and ongoing educational support, evaluation and training. |

The Thrive by Five vision is that its strong collaboration will benefit from an expansion that now includes Order of the Fishermen and American Indian Health and Family Services. To strengthen and stabilize its footprint across the city, Thrive by Five Detroit will continue to identify optimal facilities, pursue strong philanthropic partnerships that can support distributed funding across all five funders, and aim to meet program quality benchmarks that match its good reputation.

The Head Start Innovation Fund has supported a variety of strategies to build the pipeline of teachers into the system, allowing different agencies to test different models. One approach, built by Matrix Human Services, was to partner with Teach for America. Here's one story from that effort.

## VALEDA'S STORY

MATRIX HUMAN SERVICES

***Suddenly, not long ago, Valeda McDowell realized: Nobody in her life ever needed her as much as the children in her Head Start classroom.***

"Some of them, when they come in, they don't know anything," Valeda says of the 3- to 5-year-olds in her colorful basement room in St. Paul Cathedral in Detroit. "Some of their parents, the best thing they've done for their kids is bring 'em through those doors."

To her surprise, she now needs them, too. "If I don't get deep into it and help the parents develop this child, I'm losing this child, and I'm not doing my part in this society."

In her imagination, Valeda was never a teacher. As a 2-year-old child on 12th Street in Detroit during the 1967 riots, she and her five siblings slept in her mother's bed or on the floor nearby. She grew up wanting to leave, to go to California to become a doctor. Instead, she went to work as a young woman for Blue Cross Blue Shield in downtown Detroit. She started a side business as an interior decorator then, when offered a buyout, took it to get a business degree from Wayne State University, in the same year her daughter turned 13.

But in 2012, Detroit still sniffled from the national recession. "Never in my life had I been without a job, without income, for more than two weeks." Encouraged by a brother who teaches, she signed on as a substitute teacher, and was surprised when familiar students got excited to see her again. One girl begged Valeda to date her father.

At a Detroit high school with what she calls "challenging students," she met members of Teach for America, a non-profit that enrolls and trains college students and professionals to teach for two years in any of 52 low-income communities it services across the country. Inspired, she applied. When during her 8-hour interview a man asked her, "Why do you want to do this?," she replied, "Because I'm needed and I care." At age 49, she was accepted, got intensive training and served for one year in a poor South Carolina city, then returned to Detroit to join Matrix Human Services. Matrix had just received a grant from the Head Start Innovation Fund to hire Teach for America teachers in its Head Start classrooms.

As a mother who enrolled her daughter in dance at age 3, and in a pre-engineering program at age 4, Valeda was surprised by some of the children she encountered. No ABCs. No concept of numbers. No ability to focus. One 3-year-old boy cried for hours at a time or, when he was silent, stare straight ahead. Visiting therapist thought he might be autistic. But Valeda, "down in my inner spirit," thought he was crippled by anxiety instead.

Finally, she advised other teachers not to carry him around. She asked his father not to let the boy sleep all the time on his chest, and to let him feed himself. Over the year, she has seen the boy begin to smile, to walk himself from one play station to another, to run down the hall – to finally begin to grow up. She helped his parents understand the difference between supporting their son, and babying him.

"These children need me, and I need them," she says, "because I grow as a teacher from every one."

## United Children and Families

**\$693,500**

IN TOTAL GRANTS

from the Head Start Innovation Fund

Up to

**512 children**

served each year

Engaging the  
Neighborhood  
and Parents in  
New Ways

United Children and Families has focused its Innovation Fund support on improved technology integration, staff recruitment and development, and male engagement. UCF operates its Head Start and Early Head Start in one of the highest need neighborhoods in Detroit. The unique problems that persist in the social fabric of northeast Detroit have an impact on UCF's ability to find qualified staff and engage families – both which

are federal performance standard requirements. The complementary components of use of Innovation Fund dollars have been designed to address these issues.

**Eight parents completed the required CDA coursework in 2017 and are on track to FULL CERTIFICATION.**

UCF has worked to redesign its fledgling marketing efforts. Whereas other agencies have strong brands that are familiar to families, UCF's brand is nearly unrecognizable within its own community. It has worked to make its branding clearer, and to create relevant social media content along with an enhanced website. This includes the development of a wide array of unified marketing materials, including: a new logo, agency brochure, recruitment flier and poster, a parent referral flier, and business-card sized

referral cards. The marketing materials began to be deployed in early 2018 and early reports from the agency about their effectiveness are very positive.

Finally, UCF is implementing a new and innovative father centered cohort program. It is working to engage ten fathers who desire to be more engaged with their children's educational experience. Fathers will receive training and coaching, and participate in forums that address the critical risk factors that negatively affect their lives and community. Innovation Fund support is helping the agency to hire a consultant to run the program.

Many larger agencies in the Innovation Fund have the benefit of full evaluation teams, extensive human resources staff, upgraded technology, and whole family supports, to drive quality services for children. These agencies also have a greater number of staff who can support innovative program improvements. UCF is working to design lower cost, innovative solutions that will still meet the needs of its staff, match the gains of its peer agencies, and attract increased funding resources.

Most recently, UCF has partnered with the Illinois Facilities Fund to develop a strategic facilities plan. Renovations are now underway to open a new Birth to Five center on Detroit's northeast side. UCF will be able to serve 58 more children when the center opens in early August.

In 2017, 19 of 20 UCF staff completed the Infant Toddler Certificate program through Madonna University.





## AGENCIES SERVING WESTERN WAYNE COUNTY

Supported by the Head Start Innovation Fund since 2017

### Starfish Family Services — Western Wayne County

**\$175,000**

IN TOTAL GRANTS

from the Head Start Innovation Fund

Up to

**392 children**

served each year

Providing  
Enhanced  
Professional  
Development  
for Teachers

Two head start staff became Trauma Smart TRAIN THE TRAINERS, who can now provide ongoing professional development services in-house.

While Starfish has utilized Innovation Fund dollars for a range of programming, the unique strength of the agency is their effort to promote particularly high-quality teacher development programs.

New Head Start teachers take a 20-day Preschool Curriculum Course, and new Early Head Start teachers participate in an 18-day Infant & Toddler Curriculum course, both designed by HighScope Educational Research Foundation. Starfish uses HighScope as its base curriculum, and adds supplemental curricula where needed.

All new staff members across the agency are trained to implement the Ages & Stages Questionnaire: SE2 (social-emotional) tool, disaster preparedness, and ways

to identify and support children with special needs. Certain training areas are presented to both parents and staff — such as in Living Literacy, oral health, childhood obesity, child abuse and neglect, and mental health. Starfish uses a supplemental curriculum and staff training, Second Step, which is aimed at supporting the social-emotional development of children in the classroom.

Recently, Starfish implemented Growing Great Kids, a prenatal- to 3 years old, home visiting curriculum that requires an intensive one-week training for home visitors, curriculum managers, supervisors and site leaders. Each month, staff receive coaching and support, to ensure that they are well-prepared to serve expectant mothers and children up until the age of 3 years old.

In 2017, 503 enrolled children (95%) had a Children's Trauma Assessment Center Trauma Screen.



To sustain its training expectations for the years ahead, Starfish is working to recruit and train qualified staff to participate in HighScope's Train-the-Trainer series. A two-year commitment, this training opportunity allows those staff members who show the most potential for becoming successful trainers to develop their skills and become certified HighScope trainers.

#### Further, Starfish supplements this package of training by:

- Providing teachers with ongoing feedback and enhancing coaching opportunities
- Retaining staff through financial incentives
- Placing support staff and materials in classrooms for students with unique challenges
- Retaining staff through reflective supervision practices

In the coming year, Starfish plans to work with the other Western Wayne County agencies – including Wayne Metro Community Action Agency and The Guidance Center - to identify and execute shared training opportunities that extend the impact to more children and families.

In 2017-2018, seven staff completed the Smart Connection and Coaching series, the parent component of Trauma Smart which centers on volunteerism. As a result, there has been a **75% INCREASE IN PARENT VOLUNTEER HOURS.**

With a larger number of Early Head Start seats available in Detroit for newborns, the Innovation Fund made some key, early investments for agencies to better support and connect to new moms. One grant supported embedding doulas within Head Start agencies. Here is one person whose life was touched by that investment.



## AMANDA'S STORY INNOVATIVE IMPACT

***Amanda Lewis knew nothing about mothering when she gave birth to her first child. Nobody even asked if she'd like to breastfeed or taught her that it is good.*** She never witnessed her mother breastfeeding. "When I got home with my baby Kaleah, I went into my bedroom and tried and tried to make it work. Then I gave up. I only tried for 5 minutes."

The next time, she was ready. Pregnant with Sabrina, she enjoyed the advice and comfort of a doula (DOO-lah), a woman trained to support soon-to-be mothers, and new ones. (Doula is an ancient Greek term meaning "servant-woman.") A program offering doulas to low-income women was funded in 2014 by the Head Start Innovation Fund.

Amanda's doula taught her how to ride a big plastic ball while pregnant to comfort her baby, and how to talk to her newborn with enthusiasm and real words, so the baby's spongy brain would learn language quickly. And, Amanda, at 27, finally learned about breastfeeding, and was able to enjoy nursing Sabrina for a few days after her birth in April 2016. Frustrated by an anatomical challenge, she turned to breast pumping – another skill she learned from her doula. She fed Sabrina her own breast milk until the child was 8 months old – then donated the pump to another new mom.

"I love her," Amanda says of her doula. "She's like a mother to me." Amanda was one of 12 children, and her own mother kicked her out when she was 13; she was raised by family friends, but left high school after six months. The doula not only encouraged her, but led her into what she calls her new family: the men, women and children of Head Start.

Her birth family discouraged her from rushing her babies into school, but Amanda enrolled both of them in Head Start classes. Sabrina started the Infant-to-Toddler program at five months. Mom says Sabrina, now 1, learned at Early Head Start "to crawl, to walk, to feed herself, to pick up things and throw things, and because she's around people all the time, she developed a little bit faster than Kaleah. But Kaleah, in school since 2016, can at 4 write her name and her age, and tie her shoes. "She's learned manners, and how to be respectful, and she has calmed her anger down a whole lot."

Amanda walks her girls nine blocks to school every day, then lingers, helping out, learning from watching the pros how to be what she calls "my children's first teacher." Two days a week, she takes courses in the same Focus Hope complex toward earning her GED, and has never felt more excited. "Sometimes I discourage my own self, but they bring me back up. I'm not only giving my kids a good education, but giving myself a better outlook on life, giving me a chance."

Her goal: To teach.

## Wayne-Metropolitan Community Action Agency

**\$215,000**

IN TOTAL GRANTS

from the Head Start Innovation Fund

Up to

**653 children**

served each year

### Building a Pipeline of Early Childhood Educators



Like other Head Start programs, Wayne Metro is experiencing a teacher shortage, and has devised a strategy to create a pipeline of qualified early childhood educators to work in Head Start programs.

Wayne Metro's Head Start Apprenticeship Program, supported with Innovation Fund dollars, is a curriculum-based "work, learn and earn" program, where participants gain academic and practical experience in early childhood education while earning a wage in their community. The target population for this program includes high school juniors/seniors, Head Start parents and caregivers, and young adults/other community members who are interested in teaching.

Students participating in the apprenticeship program receive hands-on training and teacher mentoring/coaching during the school year. During the summer, program participants will have a paid job at one of the Head Start sites. Upon high school graduation, participants who pursue higher education (CDA, associate and/or bachelor's degree) in the area of early childhood education are able to access a scholarship through the apprenticeship program (if they are not eligible for Pell Grants or TIP). Participants who prefer to enter the workforce full time after high school

may pursue paraprofessional opportunities with Wayne Metro or other child care providers.

In addition to attaining teacher experience and credentials, participants in the Head Start Apprenticeship Program will have access to Wayne Metro's other programs (free tax service, budgeting, banking, financial coaching, etc.) to help them achieve further self-sufficiency.

While all agencies are working hard to find new avenues to recruit staff, Wayne Metro has been particularly unique in its vision to work up stream to build more interest in early childhood education as a career. This kind of thinking is crucial to sustaining the Head Start system in the long term in the region.

## The Guidance Center

**\$175,000**

IN TOTAL GRANTS

from the Head Start

Innovation Fund

since 2014

Up to

**513**

children

served each year

### Addressing Mental Health of Children Through Inclusive Learning Environments

Over the last several years, there has been a dramatic increase in young children entering Head Start and Early Head Start with disabilities or challenging behaviors. These children account for 17 percent of the enrolled students at The Guidance Center. A high percentage of children with special needs in a classroom negatively impacts staff morale, due to the significant additional support the children require. Staff routinely express the need for high-quality training to help them work with children with special needs; in equal measure, they say they need additional encouragement, so they can manage their own stress.

**In 2017, two new Infant Mental Health therapists provided weekly classroom and group reflective consultation sessions with 14 Head Start staff.**

The Guidance Center believes that if the teaching staff receives training in the types of strategies they can use to work with this population of children, and if they receive support and understanding regarding their own beliefs, feelings and actions, then the Head Start children will be better nurtured, the classroom climate will improve, staff will experience more success, and turnover will decrease.

To reach these goals, the agency utilized Innovation Fund support to implement a robust Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation program. Two part-time infant and early childhood mental health therapists conduct classroom consultation, identify and support individual staff needs, provide training and group reflective consultation for teaching staff, and assist in determining the

appropriate referrals for children. The consultant works closely with the Head Start mental health specialist in identifying those classrooms with the highest needs. The criteria for consultation is based on the number of children with existing behavioral referrals, initial classroom observation data, staff notes and CLASS scores.

The Guidance Center has observed throughout its mental health work that a child's negative behaviors can be minimized when the teacher is able to identify the underlying need for connection, nurturance, and repair. Children then learn to trust that the teacher will support them, and in turn, they learn to feel safe to express fear, need, and desire for connection. TGC believes that the program design is centered on these ideas, and will help meet the critical needs of staff and children.



## AGENCIES SERVING OAKLAND AND MACOMB COUNTIES

Supported by the Head Start Innovation Fund since 2017

### Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency & Macomb Community Action Agency

**\$235,000**

IN TOTAL GRANTS

from the Head Start Innovation Fund

Up to

**1,179 children**

served each year

**\$225,000**

IN TOTAL GRANTS

from the Head Start Innovation Fund

Up to

**1,022 children**

served each year

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency and Macomb Community Action Head Start are unique in that each of the agencies serves an entire county within the region. In addition, they are unique in that they came together to strategize and apply for funding for a common interest—addressing the impact of trauma on children and families. Both agencies have worked over the last two years to implement the *Trauma Smart* model as the core component of their behavioral intervention plan, with support from the Innovation Fund.

*Trauma Smart* is a systematic practice model to address the aftermath of violence and trauma within the context of a natural environment—Head Start classrooms. *Trauma Smart* serves as a “pause” and “reset” button so that children can enter kindergarten prepared to succeed socially and academically. *Trauma Smart* actively includes parents in their child’s school experience, improves the work environment for teachers and creates practical and enduring change for children, families and communities.



## Collaborating to Address the Impact of Trauma on Children and Families

The agencies view the implementation of this model not only as a critical service to children and families, but also as a staff retention tool, by providing all staff with the tools of trauma-informed care in the classroom. The entire staff of both agencies—well over 350 employees—have received training.

Children in Head Start have a higher exposure rate to trauma than other children. One study of 155 Head Start families found that 78% of children self-reported exposure to trauma and 66% of parents expressed that their children had experienced an episode of community trauma. The same trend is happening with Oakland and Macomb families.

Through its partnership with *Trauma Smart*, MCA and OLHSA have provided onsite training and coaching support regularly throughout the year. All Head Start staff will receive a minimum of 20 hours of trauma-based training with separate ongoing coaching. A total of 366 staff between the two organizations are projected to be trained on *Trauma Smart*.

In addition to staff training, *Trauma Smart* also offers a Smart Connection parent workshop component. Smart Connection provides parents with information regarding trauma-informed care and bridges the gap between home and school. Parents will also be able to continue their trauma-informed trainings by participating in family engagement activities. These family engagement opportunities will improve parental resilience and skill building and will allow for a consistent message that supports a trauma-informed focus at home.

**OVER  
350 STAFF  
have received  
Trauma Smart  
training.**



Social-emotional support for kids, families and agency staff has been a key focus on Head Start Innovation Fund investments. Several key agencies, including the two that serve all of Macomb and Oakland counties, chose to apply for funds to implement TraumaSmart, a program to train and support all of their staff in methods to better support social-emotional needs of kids.

## MISS CHRISSY'S STORY ORGANIZATIONAL SPOTLIGHT



***On many school busses and over many years, Miss Chrissy has seen a lot,*** including an all-out assault by one boy on another.

But until she started on bus #219, a mini-bus in Macomb County, Chrissy Rogers had not seen what she recognizes now as the trauma of poverty on the face of a child.

"It's hard for me to grasp," says Chrissy, who grew up in one house, with dinner at the table each night, church every Sunday and parents still together after 50 years. Now, she drives 13 young children to and from Head Start, five days a week, and knows many of them don't have much to count on. She's seen the symptoms, up close and in her rear view mirror – tears, fears, acting up.

Now, she and every other person in Macomb Community Action's Head Start program are being trained in Trauma Smart, a nationwide mental health program, funded by the Head Start Innovation Fund. A grant funds the same program for Head Start workers at the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency.

Behind the wheel, rolling through her kids' neighborhood of small lots and 800-square foot bungalows, Chrissy is a small, energetic woman who talks fast, describing what she has learned from Trauma Smart: While some children are traumatized by violence, even murder, around them, far more are traumatized by the realities of poverty. Even babies' emotional landscapes are marred by chaos and fury around them.

And this: Some people get to drive the car. Others are content to ride along. But many are consigned to the trunk, cowering anxious and afraid. They are the victims of trauma, yesterday or long ago. They are unnoticed unless they make noise.

"We had one little girl who really tested our patience," Chrissy remembers, speaking of herself and the teacher's aide who rides along every day. "The girl would cry and scream, one day the whole way home," and thrusting toys at her to distract her did no good. "Come to find out she was in foster care, taken from her dad. I'm don't know if Mom was even in the picture. But she was living with Granny, who had four or five other kids to watch over."

The next time the child stumbled to the bus screaming, Chrissy used her Trauma Smart intelligence. She got out of her seat and embraced her. "Come here, honey, and I held her head to my chest. It's OK, there's nothing to be afraid of. It's OK, honey. You're safe with me. I love you."

She stepped up and sat in the back and she hasn't had a meltdown since.

"It's hard for me to realize, but oh my gosh, all she needed was somebody to love her. She had so much upheaval in her life, she didn't feel safe anywhere."

Miss Chrissy's small yellow bus is a haven of peace.

## LOOKING *FORWARD*

The cohort of ten foundations that have supported the Innovation Fund remain committed to building a collaborative system that supports the needs of children and families in our community. This fact will remain true regardless of the outcome of the new federal competition for Head Start funding.

### WHAT IS CRITICAL NOW:

- **Learn from the current Head Start and Early Head Start providers about their experience over the last five years.**

Allow agencies to lead the discussion and decision making in areas where they are showing unique progress that can serve as best practice for their peers.

- **Maintain the collaborative structures and community partnerships built through the life of this effort as a framework to be built upon by the next cohort of providers.**

Some of the current efforts have been designed to support children and parents across the southeast Michigan region in a holistic way and should be considered as undergirding to future efforts.

- **Leverage other funding streams and government resources with Head Start funding.**

We can learn from other communities who have been successful in aligning the efforts of local governments with Head Start goals and priorities. There are ways to share resources that are mutually beneficial to all partners.

- **Continue to build a culture of trust and learning.**

The collaborative relationships and efforts built across the Head Start system, both in Detroit and the tri-county region, should not be discounted. Head Start leaders have been meeting regularly for the life of this effort and continue to grow in their collective thinking and solutions. Likewise, philanthropy has demonstrated its ability to speak with one collaborative voice. This alignment and collective thinking of leadership will help to continue to build a quality system.

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As Detroit continues to renew itself post-bankruptcy, it is paramount to consider how the city and region prioritizes its children. Head Start, a proven model of quality early childhood development and education, serves and uplifts the whole family. Building strong foundations that can last a lifetime, even when using a proven model, can take time. The past five years proved that there's collective will to make the Detroit region's early childhood systems strong. Now is the time to continue to advance the work.



HEAD START  
**INNOVATION  
FUND**

**BUILDING REGIONAL  
COLLABORATION**  
**2013–2018**

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