

thinksmall

LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING

Strategic Plan

FY24–FY26



Quality

1

Access

2

**Policy and
Advocacy**

3

Strategic Plan

FY24–FY26



Results Based Accountability (RBA)

→ A disciplined way of thinking and taking action used by communities to improve the lives of children, families and the community as a whole. Think Small is using RBA as a framework to accomplish our strategic plan.

Population-Level Result

→ All children will be ready for kindergarten.

Population-Level Indicator

→ All children in the seven-county metro have access to quality early care and education programs.

Proxy-Level Indicator Data Points

- Number and percent of quality early care and education programs in the seven-county metro.
- Number and percent of children in quality early care and education programs in the seven-county metro.

Kindergarten Readiness

→ Think Small defines kindergarten readiness as the successful demonstration of progress across the 9 developmental domains as described in Minnesota’s Early Indicator of Progress at kindergarten entry.

Dosage

→ Think Small is working towards creating quality, full-day, full-year programs that are available to children, birth to 5 years old.

Equity

→ To support the full potential for every child, Think Small commits to championing policies and practices of equity that empower a just, inclusive, and equitable care and education system for children in their crucial early years.

Think Small understands we will not be able to reach our population-level result of all children being prepared for kindergarten by ourselves.

Therefore, we have identified partners to work with us in each of our strategy plans. Our current partners include early childhood providers; school districts; state agencies; policymakers; researchers; promise neighborhoods; other nonprofits working in the field of early childhood, education, health, human services and homelessness. This list will grow as we develop our work and invite others to share our population-level result of all children being ready for kindergarten.

FY24–FY26

Strategies:

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Strategy Areas

Quality Early Care and Education

Result: Increase and retain the number and percentage of licensed family child care and child care center programs participating in Parent Aware in the seven-county metro area to meet the needs of families.

Target:

- Increase percent of programs that are Parent Aware rated or accredited.
- Decrease the number of programs closing that are Parent Aware rated or accredited.
- Decrease the number of programs hesitant to participate in Parent Aware.
- Advance and develop innovative ideas to educate, engage and empower parents and caregivers so they have the information and resources they need to prepare their children for kindergarten.
- Increase outreach and engagement activities in BIPOC and linguistically diverse communities.

Performance Measure:

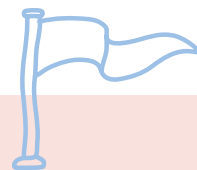
HOW MUCH

- Increase the percent of Parent Aware rated licensed family child care programs in the seven-county metro area from 19% to 25%.
- Increase the number of quality trainings by 18 per year.
- Increase the number of Think Small Institute enrollments from 2,300 to 20,000.
- Increase the percent of Parent Aware rated child care centers in the seven-county metro area from 55% to 60%.
- Achieve 83,000 parent engagement connections specific to quality early care and education.

- Maintain or decrease the Parent Aware rated licensed family child care program closure rate at 3%.
- Maintain or decrease the Parent Aware rated child care center closure rate at 1%.

HOW WELL

- Effectively analyze data to reduce number of early education providers leaving Parent Aware and/or closing.
- Effectively analyze data to increase the number of



- early education providers participating in Parent Aware.
- Authentically meeting needs of BIPOC and linguistically diverse communities.

DIFFERENCE MADE

- More early education providers will earn a Parent Aware rating resulting in more opportunities for young children to receive the skills and knowledge to be ready for school and life.
- Parents and caregivers have the information and resources to prepare their children for kindergarten and life.

Access to Early Care and Education

Result: Increase and retain the number of slots and jobs in licensed family child care and child care center programs in the seven-county metro area to meet the needs of families while fully optimizing all financial assistance funds Think Small administers in Hennepin and Ramsey counties.

Target:

- Controlling/managing/ reallocating administrative costs of Early Learning Scholarships to optimize available funding for children and families.
- Educating eligible families on the most efficient use of funding supports to cover the costs of quality early care and education.
- Identify other funding streams to braid with Minnesota's Early Learning Scholarship funds, with a focus on supporting creation of Great Start Early Learning Scholarships.
- Develop and implement strategies to ensure families have a variety of child care options that meet their needs.
- Develop and implement strategies to support a diverse and qualified workforce.
- Increase outreach and engagement activities in BIPOC and linguistically diverse communities.



Performance Measure:

HOW MUCH

- Ensure 97% of Early Learning Scholarship dollars are spent each biennium in Hennepin and Ramsey counties.
- At least 75% of all children awarded an Early Learning Scholarship in Hennepin and Ramsey counties will come from a priority category.
- No waitlist for children on the Child Care Assistance Program or Early Learning Scholarship waitlist in Hennepin and Ramsey counties.
- Add 230 child care center jobs to the child care workforce in the seven-county metro each year.
- Add 100 licensed family child care to the child care workforce in the seven-county metro each year.
- Add 1,620 child care center slots in the seven-county metro each year.
- Add 1,080 licensed family child care slots in the seven-county metro each year.
- Achieve 28,000 parent engagement connections specific to access to early care and education.
- Ensuring 75% of outreach efforts support BIPOC families in Hennepin and Ramsey counties.

HOW WELL

- Regularly assess opportunities to support families with spending their Early Learning Scholarship dollars and maintaining enrollment at a quality early care and education program.
- Ensure our efforts are focused on children and families

with the largest opportunity gaps, with a particular focus on BIPOC and linguistically diverse communities.

- Regularly monitor and analyze program closures and openings and leverage policy efforts to ensure all children have access to quality child care.

DIFFERENCE MADE

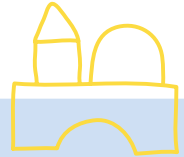
- An increased number and percent of income eligible children (85% of State Median Income (SMI) or below) in seven-county metro area will enter kindergarten with at least one year of quality early care and education programming.
- Parents and caregivers have the information and resources to prepare their children for kindergarten and life.

Early Care and Education Policy and Advocacy

Result: Create and change legislative and administrative policies to support increases in access to quality early learning opportunities that meet the needs of families and increase the number of quality slots and jobs.

Target:

- Fully fund Early Learning Scholarships up to 85% of State Median Income (SMI).
- Monitor legislative changes and timelines passed in 2023.
- Increase child care program participation in Parent Aware.
- Identify opportunities to support the creation and implementation of Great Start Scholarships.
- Provide strategic leadership in early childhood efforts as applicable.
- Prioritize outcomes in BIPOC and linguistically diverse communities when developing legislative and administrative policy change recommendations.



Performance Measure:

HOW MUCH

- Increase the amount of money available statewide for Early Learning Scholarships from \$197M to \$1B.
- Increase the average number of child care programs in the seven-county metro who sign a Parent Aware participation agreements from 220 to 400 every 6 months.

HOW WELL

- Efficient use of all Early Learning Scholarship dollars allocated by the Minnesota legislature.
- More effective transitions for programs to participate in Parent Aware.

DIFFERENCE MADE

- An increase in the number and percentage of children who have access to and attend quality early care and education prior to entering kindergarten.
- All Think Small policy recommendations are guided by the Voices for Racial Justice assessment tool.

