

2014 Indiana Early Learning Pilot Grant Program

County Selection

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF COUNTY READINESS

Instructions: Your written statement may not exceed **eight (8)** single spaced pages. Additional pages will not be reviewed or considered. A copy of the language of HEA 1004 may be found on the website of the Indiana General Assembly. An authorized representative for the respondent and any co-respondents must sign this cover page.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION	
County: <i>St. Joseph</i>	
Legal Name: <i>Community Foundation of St. Joseph County</i>	Mailing Address: <i>205 W. Jefferson Blvd. South Bend, IN 46601</i>
Contact Name: <i>Rose Meissner</i> Contact Title: <i>President</i> (Single point of contact for communication)	Contact Phone: <i>574-232-0041</i> Contact Email Address: <i>rose@cfstje.org</i>
COUNTY INFORMATION	
Co-Respondents (please list): <i>Dr. Kathy L. Luogardo Elkhart - St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium</i>	Estimated Number of Children to be Served (county-wide): <i>400 1300</i>
	Estimated Number of Eligible Providers (county-wide): <i>35 current 11 additional by 2015</i>
AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	
I HEREBY CERTIFY that, to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this statement is correct.	
Designated Representative (Printed Name): <i>Rose Meissner</i>	Title: <i>President</i>
Signature of Designated Representative: <i>Rose Meissner</i>	Date: <i>6/25/14</i>
Additional Signatures (of co-respondents, if necessary): <i>Karen L. Hornum, United Way of St. Joe Co. Jill R., St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce Katie Lee, Casey Childhood Coalition Christine G. Westmore, Early Childhood Professionals of Northern Indiana (ECPNI)</i>	

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1,033 Head Start eligible children *not* served: St. Joseph County is ready.

In addition to the unserved Head Start eligible children, there are children in families with incomes between 101% and 127% of the poverty level that are not benefiting from a quality early childhood education. Because we know the long-term cost for children in poverty who lack this opportunity, these numbers engender a tremendous sense of urgency.

That's why our community has long been engaged in the issues surrounding early care and education. For more than four decades, early childhood professionals and community members have been meeting, advocating for, and investing in early childhood programs. As a result, St. Joseph County has numerous assets that make us ready, including:

- a wealth of organizations that support early learning programs and initiatives;
- a multitude of family engagement services that provide support to families;
- providers committed to involving parents in their children's early education;
- 35 early childhood programs on Paths to Quality level 3 or 4;
- an outstanding Head Start program;
- providers eager to increase their capacity to serve more four-year-olds;
- five school corporations excited to participate in this pilot;
- the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County's track record and ongoing commitment to raising and maintaining quality in early childhood programs; and
- organizations and individuals who have committed to a 50% match to help support the pilot program.

Given these assets and the support of the Early Learning Pilot Program, we can significantly increase the number of children in St. Joseph County who will enter school ready to succeed. We anticipate that about 400 additional children would have the chance to attend a quality preschool and walk into kindergarten on the first day with the knowledge, confidence and excitement about learning that early education programs can instill.

One word, however, is key in actualizing that dream: quality. Research shows that it is *quality* early childhood education that makes a difference in a child's future. For this reason, the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County has invested 14 years and \$10 million to improve early childhood classroom and program quality. Annual quality assessments document that huge strides in quality have been made. The Community Foundation will continue to use resources and expertise to ensure that quality is not left out of the equation—not only to make the strong case that quality preschool works, but also to assure a better future for children in St. Joseph County.

Collectively, the co-respondents to this proposal and the organizations that have committed to contribute a 50% financial match represent broad and diverse segments of our community. Their quick and generous responses to this proposal show the depth and breadth of resources and collaboration we will bring to this project should St. Joseph County be selected as a pilot county. Indeed we are ready. We are also energized, passionate and committed to a highly successful implementation of the Indiana Early Learning Pilot Program.

II. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT□

A) Organizations that support early learning programs or initiatives in St. Joseph County

The Early Years Count Education Initiative of the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County works with Head Start, child care centers, ministries, preschools, and homes to improve quality through HighScope curriculum training, other teacher and director trainings, assessments, coaching, educational grants, and the purchase of program materials.

The Early Childhood Coalition of St. Joseph County is a multi-discipline group of 70 entities convened by United Way of St. Joseph County that meets monthly to inform, collaborate, network, advocate, and address issues relevant to early childhood. Participants include business, providers, non-profit organizations, school corporations and others.

St. Joseph County Health Department runs Early Childhood CATCH (Coordinated Approach Program to Children's Health) that provides nutrition information and physical activity to early childhood partners, including Head Start.

Hearing & Speech Center at United Health Services conducts hearing and speech screenings for early identification and treatment and runs pre-literacy supplemental reading programs in childcare centers, ministries, and preschools.

Purdue Cooperative Extension teaches nutrition to child care providers.

WNIT provides early learning programs and activities on-air, on the web, in print and through apps that are focused on STEM, literacy, and/or social and emotional development. They collaborate with multiple organizations, host the Early Childhood Coalition meetings, and offer space for Early Childhood Alliance offices and trainings.

St. Joseph County Public Library offers regular story times that are attended by both parents and providers; makes outreach visits to early childhood providers; schedules an annual staff training session featuring an outside presenter that is open to childcare providers; and has set goal in their new strategic plan to "Create Young Readers" as a service priority, including developing enhanced partnerships with local service organizations and participating in the American Library Association's Every Child Ready to Read initiative.

The Early Childhood Alliance supports providers with training, support and technical assistance.

St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce serves as convener and communicator about the need for community engagement in early learning and family engagement opportunities.

B) Local funding supporting early learning in St. Joseph County:

Community Foundation of St. Joseph County: \$10,000,000 investment in quality since 2001; current budget over \$500,000 annually. The number of children served in 2013-2014 was 3,695, ages birth through 6.

United Way: \$105,000 to fund children's tuition in early childhood programs this year; \$73,000 to support other early childhood learning initiatives. Sixty-two children birth through age 5 were served during 2013-2014.

Junior League: \$1,500 to Purdue Cooperative Extension to purchase blocks for Block Party. Served 50 children in 2014.

PNC Bank: through their Growing Up Great program, supports early learning at El Campito, La Casa de Amistad and Head Start. PNC employees teach 3 to 5 year olds the "For Me, For You,

For Later" curriculum, paint, clean, teach budgeting to parents at the Head Start Summits and more. When the "team" for an approved Grow Up Great reaches 100 hours for the year, the center is then eligible for a grant of up to \$6,000.

The Montessori Academy provides \$32,500 toward the expenses of a preschool class at the Center for the Homeless. An average of 15-16 children are served each year.

No Title I funds are being used as of June 30, 2014, to fund early childhood programs in public schools in St. Joseph County.

III. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT□

A) Family engagement services and how these align with early learning programs

Talk With Your Baby is a multi-organizational, county-wide initiative that works through various agencies to provide parents and child care providers with free classes on the importance of literacy, talking, and engagement with children from newborn to age three. Some early childhood programs also have staff trained as facilitators of this program.

Family and Children's Center—Healthy Families provides home visits and parent training to families screened as at risk for child abuse and neglect (prenatal to age 3) and referrals to childcare and other services to help build resources to under-resourced families; **Brain Train** offers a developmental play center to at-risk families who have children birth to five years old with play sessions for families and trained Family Coordinators. Early childcare programs, including home providers, also have access to Brain Train facilities.

Parents as Teachers is provided in Spanish and English by El Campito for families enrolled at their center as well as for other families in the community.

South Bend Community School Corp Adult Education—Family Literacy is an interactive parent and child development approach serving more than 800 families and more than 1,000 preschool children over past 20 years through HighScope curriculum, positive parent skills, Parent and Child Together, and adult education for parents. Serves 25 – 44 children yearly.

Memorial Hospital—BrainWorks offers both parents and early childhood providers educational sessions on topics such as Your Role in the Development of the Young Child's Brain and Helping Children Learn to Focus; sponsors nationally-known speakers on early childhood brain development; developed Little Noggins Nook, a destination play space for newborn to four-year-olds; partners with other early childhood programs to develop brain friendly play spaces; and runs a Baby Brain program for young parents. **WIC** serves about 14,000 women, infants and children yearly; encourages over 78% of WIC mothers to initiate breastfeeding; provides Healthy Families more than 80% of their referrals; partners with Notre Dame Center for Children and Families on research studies. **B.A.B.E.**, a coupon incentive program, rewards women for prenatal care and attending various learning opportunities; provides educational programs for caregivers and pregnant women through many county agencies. Memorial also leads/hosts the Healthy Babies Coalition of St. Joseph County.

St. Margaret's House, a day shelter for women and children, runs a parenting program series (56 hrs.) and a reading program for preschoolers and moms; participates in the Talk With Your Baby initiative; collaborates with Healthy Families, Brain Train, others. Impacts about 250 preschoolers yearly.

Purdue Cooperative Extension teaches healthy eating to Head Start parents; runs *Block Party* through early childhood programs, teaches parents about child development and adult/child interaction through block play.

InSource provides training and information to parents of children with disabilities, including how to participate in their child's education and advocate for their needs.

First Steps helps Hoosier families make sure their infants and toddlers receive services that will help them in the future. Services through First Steps are designed to meet the developmental needs of the child.

La Casa de Amistad offers an 'I Can Read' program for four-year-olds and a 'Strengthening Families' program to support families in communication and school engagement for their children. Parents are involved in educational events on site and in the community through field trips.

Center for the Homeless offers parent/children groups and parenting classes to inform parents about early childhood education and development. Parents also spend time in the Center's Early Childhood classrooms learning about play and education.

St. Joseph County Bridges Out of Poverty offers the 'Getting Ahead' program, encouraging parents to have school involvement and to advocate for their children's education. They investigate with parents the causes and impact of poverty, setting individualized goals for families' development.

B) Community-wide efforts to engage parents in their children's early education and assistance that will be offered

While most early childhood providers are committed to working with parents, it is not easy in today's busy world. As the National Network of Partnership Schools states, "No topic in education generates greater agreement than the need for positive parental involvement. Everyone wants it, but most educators need help in developing productive programs that involve family and community partners in ways that boost student success in school." The same could be said for early education providers.

With the implementation of the Indiana Early Learning Pilot grant, our county's intent is to focus on a more collaborative, intentional effort to engage parents and to build on many of our current strengths. Discussed below are some of the plans in motion.

One of the major community-wide efforts to engage parents in their children's early education is the Head Start Consortium's Family Summit held each year. This successful workshop for families would expand to include the additional families served by the pilot vouchers. Workshop sessions inform families about topics such as health and well-being, dental, smoking, obesity, and school readiness. Providers could suggest, and/or lead, additional workshops.

The Kroc Fest Celebration in August celebrates summer and gets children ready for school. The South Bend Community School Corporation participates and there are opportunities for organizations to provide information for parents about a wealth of topics, including being involved in children's early education. Outreach will be made to include families receiving pilot vouchers.

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The Community Foundation's Early Years Count Education Initiative (EYC) helps providers develop their family engagement practices. Programs that have been involved with EYC for five years or more showed improvement on their Program Quality Assessment scores from an average of 2.83 to a 4.15 on a five-point scale. This support will continue. In addition, EYC will work with community organizations to develop a workshop series for providers on best practices for involving parents in their children's early education based on the research of Joyce Epstein and others. Topics such as home visiting, basics of parent involvement and successful strategies for involving all parents will be explored. Providers will be encouraged to share strategies with each other and individual coaching will also be available.

Early Childhood Professionals of Northern Indiana (ECPNI), the local affiliate of the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children, is discussing having parent engagement be the focus of their fall 2015 Early Childhood Conference. This conference is attended by about 350 teachers, directors, educators and others each year. The president of ECPNI, Chris Whitmire, is co-chair of the Family Engagement Workgroup of the Early Learning Advisory Committee and she will regularly update the community on their work.

C) Plans to identify and enroll eligible children in the Pilot Program

Early childhood programs and school corporations will use a variety of marketing strategies to inform families about the availability of the Pre-K Pilot Program funding as well as of space in their programs. These strategies could include distribution of flyers to organizations serving eligible families; social media; communications with their current clients through newsletters, email, word of mouth, and so on. Public schools can use email, school meetings, parent groups and parent bulletins to advertise.

In addition, the extensive infrastructure developed by the Head Start Consortium will be utilized. Head Start currently recruits throughout the county, with billboards, bus signs, flyers, television and radio advertisements, and signs in laundromats and other areas where parents gather. Wording will be inclusive of families eligible for the Pre-K Pilot Program as well as those eligible for Head Start. Head Start will be the information hub, providing families with information about the Pilot's application and enrollment process as determined by FSSA. Families on Head Start's waiting list (estimated to be 455 in St. Joseph County in fall 2014) will also be referred to eligible providers. Head Start will maintain a list of eligible providers so that families will understand their options.

IV. PROVIDER CAPACITY

A) Number and type of qualified eligible providers; estimated capacity to serve new children

Thirty-five programs in St. Joseph County are on Level 3 or 4 of Paths to Quality: 16 child care centers, 18 family child care homes and one not licensed registered ministry.

According to a telephone survey conducted by the Community Foundation in June 2014, these providers estimated a capacity of 190 spaces for new four-year olds in the fall of 2014 and they expected that these numbers would be the same in 2015. There are a variety of program options among these providers, including full or part-time and full year or school year only.

B) Current and planned efforts to increase provider capacity

One ministry and one child care center will move from a Level 2 to a Level 3 in the fall of 2014. This represents an increase in about 20 seats for four-year-olds in eligible programs. In addition, four ministries not currently on Paths to Quality have expressed an interest in participating. These include two Catholic schools with preschool programs. Once the ministries have reached a Level 3 there would be an additional 30 seats for four-year-olds.

The possibility for greatest expansion comes from five public school corporations in St. Joseph County. The schools propose having half-day sessions, with 17 children in each. This opens a total of 323 seats among all five corporations, with the most (204) in South Bend, where the highest percentage of eligible families live. To put the need in perspective, the waiting list for Head Start from South Bend families alone is estimated to be at almost 400 by this fall. The Head Start waiting lists in the other corporations in the county are 23 in John Glenn, 12 in Mishawaka and 20 in Penn Harris Madison.

Classrooms in schools in St. Joseph County are not licensed and are therefore not on Paths to Quality. However, we anticipate that schools can ramp up quickly since they plan to contract with the Elkhart and St. Joseph County Head Start Consortium to develop and administer these classrooms. In St. Joseph County, Head Start provides one of the very best preschool programs available, with most teachers routinely scoring above a 4.5 on a 5-point scale (on Program Quality Assessments). CLASS scores are also above the national average. Head Start has been working with the Early Years Count Education Initiative for many years. Under Head Start's leadership, the schools' preschool programs can be quickly brought up to speed. Although the Head Start program has not pursued licensure since classrooms in St. Joseph County are currently in school buildings, the administrator understands that the classrooms participating in the Early Learning Pilot will have to be licensed and reach a level 3 or 4 on Paths to Quality. Given the level of quality in the Head Start program, that is very manageable.

Estimated capacity given openings at centers currently at levels 3, 4: 190 (see IV.A)

Estimated new capacity for Early Learning children: 373

TOTAL expected capacity: 563

V. FINANCIAL MATCH

A) Steps St. Joseph County has taken to raise funds to assist with required match and current commitments.

Twelve organizations have collectively committed to match 50% (up to \$1 million) of the funds awarded by the State of Indiana to St. Joseph County families through the Indiana Early Learning Pilot Grant Program. See Commitment Letter submitted by Rose Meissner, President, Community Foundation of St. Joseph County.

B) Plan to sustain support for pre-kindergarten beyond the Pilot Program VI.

The community will continue to brainstorm possible funding sources and explore a blend of public and private support to sustain the early learning initiative. For example, prior to the early learning grant proposal, South Bend's Mayor Pete Buttigieg had already begun to look into ways

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to fund an early childhood initiative and he has appointed a study team to address this question. In addition, school corporations in St. Joseph County are exploring the use of Title I funds for supporting preschool programs.

Further, The Early Childhood Coalition has been working to bring broader awareness to the business community that providing quality early childhood is a driver of economic growth. The involvement of the Chamber of Commerce attests to that outreach to businesses.

The longitudinal study of the Early Learning Pilot Program should contribute to research showing that quality early childhood programs bring positive outcomes for children. Strong and decisive results from this study are critical. The capacity of the pilot counties to ensure that early childhood programs are delivering high quality is therefore essential to the ability to raise funds in the future. St. Joseph County is fortunate to have both an excellent Head Start program, with the knowledge and skills to get excellent classrooms up and running quickly, and the Community Foundation's demonstrated capacity to assist teachers in their growth toward quality and in maintaining that quality over time. As a director of an early childhood program talked about her involvement with the Early Years Count she said, "We would not be anywhere near where we are today, in such as short time, if it hadn't been for the work of the Community Foundation.

VI. COUNTY READINESS AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

St. Joseph County is energized by the prospect of being a pilot county, and individuals and organizations have readily offered their help. If we are granted the opportunity, we will meet program requirements by July 1, 2015.

Recruit sufficient number of eligible children: Given the number of children anticipated to be on the fall 2014 Head Start waiting list for St. Joseph County, we anticipate no difficulty locating enough eligible children for the pilot program. Based on current numbers and previous years, Head Start anticipates a waiting list of approximately 450 children in St. Joseph County for the fall of 2014. Added to that number, are the children *not* eligible for Head Start but eligible for the Early Learning Pilot who are without quality preschool.

Head Start will work with current and new providers, such as the school corporations, in developing and implementing a recruitment plan. As explained earlier, Head Start's extensive infrastructure and experience in recruiting children will be used, along with the marketing strategies of individual providers. With Head Start serving as the information hub, eligible families will have access to information about all eligible providers and about how to apply.

Sufficient provider capacity: Because of their interest in this project, some existing providers are motivated to enroll in Paths to Quality. The first step for teachers is to take the HighScope training at Ivy Tech; for those not qualified for T.E.A.C.H., the Community Foundation will cover the cost of their tuition. Completing HighScope training gives teachers an excellent overview of the elements of a quality classroom as well as the fundamentals of best practice in early childhood education. Further, this depth of training in a particular curriculum will allow the schools to more easily meet the requirements of PTQ Level 3.

A HighScope Certified trainer teaches the HighScope course. It is offered twice a year, in both the fall and semesters. Once teachers have taken the course, the Community Foundation's Early Years Count Education Initiative will provide ongoing coaching. Using the Program Quality Assessment, coaches zero in on areas of strengths and of challenges. Coaches are

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experienced in research-based coaching strategies and have demonstrated success in helping teachers improve by using highly individualized professional development. In addition, coaches work with directors as they improve their program practices, such as staff development and parent involvement. At the same time, programs would be working on getting licensed and moving through the Paths to Quality levels. EYC coaches and PTQ staff have been working collaboratively over the past several years and have learned how to augment, not duplicate, each other's work.

Readying multiple classrooms in the public schools will follow a similar trajectory. The schools will contract with Head Start to develop and operate these preschool classrooms. Head Start has experience with this type of arrangement; a similar classroom was operated successfully at Roosevelt School in Elkhart County. Since there will be large numbers of teachers, a HighScope training outside of Ivy Tech will be arranged for the summer of 2015. This provides more flexibility, both in structure and in timing. Instead of spreading the training over a semester, it could be accomplished in a four-week period.

The schools and Head Start will work closely with the Bureau of Child Development to license these classrooms and to attain Level 3 as quickly as possible. Once that is attained, staff from the Early Years Count will continue to provide individualized professional development, coaching and assessments. This provides assurance that the teachers are following the curriculum with fidelity and helps teachers over any rough spots they may encounter. Along with specific coaching in HighScope, EYC provides professional development in a variety of domains, including early literacy, math, science and social studies. Coaches work intensively with teachers to create a positive environment and meet children's social and emotional needs.

Plans for family and community engagement: Upon award of this grant, the Community Foundation and co-respondents will meet to make implementation plans for family and community engagement. Each organization represents different constituencies, thus assuring the involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders and bringing diverse perspectives to the process. At this meeting, we will determine who else needs to be at the table. While community organizations and providers will be present, families are typically not involved at this level of community planning. Placing individual family members on committees dominated by professionals does not assure that parents' perspectives are heard. There are effective strategies for involving families and we will use lessons learned from *Consumer Involvement in Step Ahead and First Steps*, a research project conducted by the Family Connection of St. Joseph County in 1994 for the Bureau of Child Development, Division of Family and Children. Additional plans are discussed in III. B.

June 30, 2014

Melanie Brizzi
Family and Social Services Administration
402 W. Washington
W361, MS-02
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Melanie,

On behalf of St. Joseph County, the organizations listed below collectively commit to match 50% (up to \$1 million) of the funds awarded by the State of Indiana to St. Joseph County families through the Indiana Early Learning Pilot Grant Program. We came together quickly and without hesitation because our community understands the importance of giving children from low-income families the opportunity to attend a high quality preschool.

As individuals and organizations, we all work to improve the quality of life for the citizens of St. Joseph County. Our efforts are aimed at improving health outcomes, reducing teen pregnancy, closing the achievement gap, eliminating poverty, promoting job creation, reducing crime and incarceration, just to name a few. *Every one* of these goals is positively affected by improving the educational attainment of children from poverty. We would welcome the opportunity to prove the value of broad access to preschool as a pilot site for the Indiana Early Learning Grant Program.

Community Foundation of St. Joseph County Rose Meissner, President	St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce Jeff Rea, President
University of Notre Dame John Affleck-Graves, Executive Vice President	United Way of St. Joseph County Alfred Guillaume, President
Memorial Hospital of South Bend Margo DeMont, Executive Director, Community Health Enhancement	Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center Albert Gutierrez, President & CEO
Jon and Sonja Laidig Foundation Jon and Sonja Laidig, President and Vice President	The Garatoni Family Foundation Larry and Judy Garatoni, Trustees
Marjorie H. Wilson Charitable Trust James Wilson, Trustee	Judd Leighton Foundation Jim Keenan, President
Asante Foundation, Inc. Nancy Iekler, Executive Director	African American Community Fund Virginia Calvin, Chair



June 30, 2014

To whom it may concern,

PNC of Northern Indiana is committed to matching funding for early childhood education within St. Joseph County, Indiana. Regionally, we will match a minimum of \$25k, up to several hundred thousand dollars depending on how much funding is made available to us from PNC's Grow Up Great program, a corporate-wide initiative focusing financial resources on early childhood education. Our young children need your support and ours. Thank you for affording us the opportunity to impact young lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kari Huston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Kari Huston
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