BRIGHT BEGINNINGS EVALUATION PLAN

PURPOSE

This evaluation is designed to explore and provide evidence for the process and impact of Bright Beginnings. It will build on the findings from the previous evaluation conducted in 2015-2016. The evaluation will focus on delivering information to 1) measure the overall impact of the initiative, *including* the coordination of critical partners, stakeholders, service providers and decision makers, and 2) inform learning throughout the project to support strategy development.

The primary users of the evaluation results will be the Bright Beginnings evaluation team, MCCC members, Backbone members, and CATs. Additional recipients of evaluation information will include critical partners and stakeholders identified throughout the process, including service providers and decision/policy makers.

CONTEXT AND STRATEGY

Collective impact initiatives often work in phases, with each phase requiring a different approach to evaluation and performance measurement. In the early stages of a collective impact initiative, relationship building and developing trust are key steps to success and often the focus of the work is on building the collective impact processes and structures. As CI initiatives progress over time, the focus of the work often shifts to policy and advocacy wins, mutually reinforcing activities across many different organizations and early signs that the needle is being moved on key indicators. Later stages of CI initiatives are often focused on sustaining the work that has happened, refining policies and practices based on learning coming in and getting closer and closer to achieving the goals of the overall work on the key indicators.

Given the work of Bright Beginnings in 2015-2016, the Year One evaluation focused on learning about and improving the collective impact processes and structures, as well as supporting the early learning on how change is happening across partners and in the community. The current evaluation for 2016-2017 will build on the findings from the 2015-2016 evaluation by continuing to focus on learning about and improving collective impact processes and structures, as well as supporting learning on how change is happening across partners and in the community. Given that the work of Bright Beginnings has continued to move forward, the current evaluation will also focus on shifts to policy and advocacy wins, mutually reinforcing activities across different organizations and early signs that the needle is being moved on key indicators.

For Bright Beginnings, stakeholders articulated the following *end of the road* as their ultimate goal for this work: *All children are healthy, valued, successful in school and realizing their full potential.* In order to move towards that vision, the stakeholders agreed upon the following as *the implementation goals of the initiative* when developing their theory of change:

- Increase in English fluent third grade children who read at 3rd grade reading levels
- Increase in parents engaging children with books and storytelling
- Increase in children who demonstrate social and emotional readiness for Kindergarten
- Increase in availability for early care and education
- Increase in maternal education levels
- Increase in mothers receiving prenatal care
- Communities are implementing systems change
- Deepening collaborative work
- Early childhood systems and policies meet the needs of children and families

The proposed evaluation will be a utilization-focused evaluation, with the focus on ensuring the findings can be used to inform key decisions and improve the collective impact process and outcomes. The evaluation will steadily engage with the primary users, ensuring the evaluation team understands the upcoming decisions that evaluation can inform and the primary users of the evaluation understand and support the work of the evaluation. This partnership increases the likelihood that the evaluation results will be meaningful, relevant and practical.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation will focus on the Bright Beginnings Backbone, the Monterey County Children's Council (MCCC), and Collaborative Action Teams (CAT) activities and outcomes, as well as other organizational-level activities and outcomes, including communications work and integration with other collective impact initiatives in the county, contained within the larger project. This evaluation will integrate a variety of data collection and learning opportunities to inform strategy development and measure outcomes.

Identifying the Evaluation Questions

The implementation goals demonstrate a commitment to supporting significant improvement in the Early Childhood system, generating new opportunities for early childhood and changing the way communities, policy makers and providers view and work with children. These outcomes will be monitored, and eventually be measured, through the individual program and project evaluations of the initiative. The 2016-20217 evaluation conducted by Spark will focus on informing the organizational and contextual changes that result from the initiative as a result of collective impact processes.

The evaluation will seek to understand the extent to which the Bright Beginnings Backbone is functioning along the dimensions of the Collective Impact framework, including building collective impact capacity and establishing a learning culture; the extent to which Bright Beginnings is transitioning through their Theory of Action; and the extent to which Bright Beginnings is aligned with other Collective Impact initiatives in Monterey County.

The evaluation will seek to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent and in what ways is Bright Beginnings making progress across the conditions of collective impact, as guided by the Bright Beginnings Theory of Action?
2. How is Bright Beginnings alignment with other collective impact initiatives influencing early childhood efforts in Monterey County?

Data Collection

To answer these questions and provide actionable, relevant information to the Bright Beginnings partners, the data collection methods will include:

1. Achievement Forms: These online forms will be completed by Bright Beginnings Backbone and CAT members and will focus on successes and notable events happening in the county. The evaluation will include an update to these forms to make the questions and resulting information more accessible and actionable.
2. CAT Facilitator meeting notes: The Bright Beginnings evaluation team will take notes and track achievements discussed during Facilitator Learning Community meetings.
3. CAT Action Plan Worksheets: The data submitted by CAT leaders on the work of their groups will be leveraged as a source of information for the evaluation. Not all data in the reports will be used; rather,

the evaluation will pull out data from key questions associated with the indicators that help to measure movement through the Theory of Action.

4. Interviews with Backbone, MCCC, CAT and Policy Advocacy Network (the Network) members: These interviews will be conducted with active participants of the initiative who are helping to implement different aspects of the shared agenda, as identified in partnership with the evaluation subcommittee. This may include other critical stakeholders as needed, such as Spoke consultants, Strive Together consultants, and/or additional members of other collective impact initiatives not directly involved on the Bright Beginnings Backbone or MCCC executive committee.

5. Survey of Backbone, MCCC, CAT and Network members: This survey will be completed by active participants of the initiative who are helping to implement different aspects of the shared agenda, as identified in partnership with the evaluation subcommittee. This may include other critical stakeholders as needed, such as Spoke consultants, Strive Together consultants, and/or additional members of other collective impact initiatives not directly involved on the Bright Beginnings Backbone or MCCC executive committee.

In addition to new data collected and analyzed for the evaluation, the evaluation will leverage existing data and data being collected by other partners. This will both extend the reach of the evaluation as well as decrease burden on partners by limiting the number of data collection asks.

6. Document review of other evaluative information:
   a. Bright Beginnings communications work through Spoke consulting;
   b. Documents related to aligning with other collective impact initiatives;
   c. Documents related to continuous improvement work (e.g. Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)) with CATs;
   d. Other documents that may help inform the evaluation questions.

Timeline for the Evaluation Implementation in 2016-2017

Timeline of Data Collection/Analysis/Reporting	2016						2017					
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Backbone Meeting and Follow Up	■	■										
Finalize Evaluation Plan		■	■									
Finalize Achievement Form				■								
Design Survey Protocol & Recruit Survey Participants			■	■								
Deploy Stakeholder Survey					■							
Analysis of Survey Data					■	■						
Survey Brief						■	■					
Achievement Forms and Meeting Notes Submitted to Spark						■				■		
Analysis of Secondary Data						■	■			■	■	
In-person Debrief								■				■
Intermediate Eval Summary								■				
Design Interview Protocol							■	■				
Schedule Interviews							■	■				
Conduct Interviews								■	■			
Analysis of Interview Data								■	■			
Final Summary Report										■	■	
Final Stakeholder Debrief											■	

Identifying Outcomes and Indicators

Outcomes and indicators for the 2016-2017 evaluation were identified based on multiple sources, including the Bright Beginnings Theory of Action, FSG's Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact: Part 3, and 2015-2016 Bright Beginnings evaluation findings. Table 1 shows which indicators the 2015-2016 evaluation focused on (in white) and Table 2 shows a detailed evaluation plan for the 2016-2017 evaluation.

TABLE 1: BRIGHT BEGINNINGS THEORY OF ACTION

White text indicates priority focus areas for the 2015-2016 Year One evaluation. Purple text indicates additional priority focus areas for the 2016-2017 Year Two evaluation. (Please note that some Year One focus areas will continue to be a focus in Year Two). These items will be kept in mind when answering the evaluation questions, which explore how progress is being made toward the overarching goals of the initiative.

	Exploring	Developing	Fostering	Integrating	Applying
Common Vision: All participants share a vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon action.	A diverse set of voices and perspectives from multiple sectors develop the common agenda through a common vision statement.	Information is consistently shared on the state of the issue. Dialogues are held to discuss the issue	CATs consistently inform the community of progress	CATs effectively communicate attribution of success and recognition of challenges	Communities are implementing systems change and see indicators improving
	All relevant sectors and constituencies pledge commitment	CAT partners achieve a common understanding of the problem	Larger community is aware of CAT work	Systems have been established that hold each other accountable to both celebrate successes and recognize challenges	
	Members of the target population help shape the common agenda	Partners and the broader community articulate the problem	CATs consistently mobilize the community to prioritize the indicators		
Mutually Reinforcing Activities: A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.	CATs develop a shared values and accountability statement	CATS develop an action plan that clearly specifies the activities that different partners have committed to implementing	Partners coordinate their activities to align with the Action Plan	Partners strategically (re)allocate resources to their highest and best use in support of the Collective Impact Initiative	Communities are implementing systems change and see indicators improving
	CATs identify opportunities and barriers to improving early childhood	Partners collaborate within and across working groups	Partners routinely review programs and systems to ensure consistent feedback and improvement	CATs have financial and community resources aligned to what works to improve community level outcomes	
		CAT members sign agreements to share relevant data	Funders of partner organizations align their resources to support the Action Plan	CATs have sustainable funding for multiple years	

Shared Measurement: All participating organizations agree on the ways success will be measured and reported. A short list of common indicators is identified and used for learning and improvement.	Partners understand the value of the shared measurement system	Develop a data sharing agreement	Partners use a reporting and reflection of data (feedback loop) for decision making	Partners use a reporting and reflection of data (feedback loop) for decision making	Communities are implementing systems change and see indicators improving
	Partners understand the strengths and challenges of their communities	CAT members sign agreements to share relevant data	CATs continually review selected indicators for accuracy and validity	CATs consistently share appropriate data across partners in a timely manner to enable continuous improvement for the prioritized indicators	
	CATs conduct an asset mapping of current early childhood development resources in the community	CATs adopt a shared data system for recording indicator aggregate data	Quality data on a set of meaningful indicators is available to partners in a timely manner	Partners have the capacity to use a compatible data system	
	CATs prioritize core indicator(s)	Partners have a common understanding of data and terms	CATs adapt the shared data system to report on individual data		
Continuous Communication: All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to assure mutual objectives and create common motivation.	Partners discuss and advocate for the goals of the Initiative	The Initiative engages external stakeholders in regular meetings and integrates their feedback into the overall strategy	An external communications plan communicates to the larger community the impact of the Initiative	Partners identify activities/practices that are improving community level outcomes and spread these to increase access and impact	Communities are implementing systems change and see indicators improving
		A series of talking points and presentations exist for a variety of different audiences to connect with the Initiative	Structures and processes are in place to engage the Initiative's external stakeholders, keeping them informed and inspired		
		A variety of different outreach methods, including website, social media, etc. promote the Initiative			

Backbone Support: An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.					Communities are implementing systems change and see indicators improving
	An Initiative Steering Committee is established	The Steering Committee effectively guides the Initiative's vision and strategy	The Steering Committee regularly reviews data from the shared measurement system on progress toward goals and uses it to inform strategic decision making	The Steering Committee and Backbone help align sufficient funding to support the Initiative's goals	
	The Initiative includes a diverse set of voices and perspectives from multiple relevant sectors and constituencies	The Backbone effectively informs the Steering Committee members in issues of strategic importance	The Backbone and Steering Committee visibly and vocally communicates the importance of the shared measurement system for the Initiative	The Steering Committee and Backbone create paths for and recruit new partners to engage	
	An effective Bright Beginnings Backbone is established	The Steering Committee and Backbone reach out to policymakers and build relationships	The Backbone provides project management support connecting partners to discuss opportunities, challenges, gaps and overlaps	The Steering Committee and Backbone build public will, consensus, and commitment to the Initiative's goals	
	The Backbone staff is respected by important partners and external stakeholders		The Backbone and Steering Committee celebrate and disseminate achievements of Collective Impact partners internally and externally	New resources from public and private sources contribute to the Initiative	
	An effective accountability structure exists for the Monterey County Children's Council and the Bright Beginnings Backbone			The Steering Committee and Backbone seek out opportunities for alignment with other efforts	
		CAT representatives help identify local, state and national policies they would like to work on	The Backbone equips partners for effective advocacy	Local communities have the necessary policies in place to sustain improvement	
	Policy Advocacy Network represents a range of communities and partners, including CATs	The Policy Advocacy Network strategizes on policy issues	CAT members actively participate in Bright Beginnings Policy Advocacy Network events and trainings	The Policy Advocacy Network actively work at implementing local policies to support ECD	

Learning Culture*: All participants contribute to an environment dedicated to learning from what has worked and what hasn't through support, trust and respect.	The Initiative establishes structures and processes to support ongoing learning	The Initiative establishes a culture of trust respect and humility among partners	The Initiative utilizes systems and established structures to make data informed decisions	The Initiative shifts the culture to one of more openness, transparency and inclusion	Communities are implementing systems change and see indicators improving
	Partners regularly make time for group reflection and discussion	People of different cultures and backgrounds feel respected and heard within the Initiative	The Initiative actively solicits and acts on feedback from community members and other external partners	Decision-making processes are open and transparent	
				Partners feel included in major decision-making processes	
Collective Impact Capacity*: The Initiative builds the skills, talents and resources necessary to support moving forward with the vision and mission.	The Initiative has influencers and champions that command the respect of a broader set of stakeholders and bring others to the table	CATs identify the resources necessary to move the Initiative forward	The skills and capacities of participating CAT organizations improve	Sufficient funding is available over a multi-year period to support the Initiative's work	Communities are implementing systems change and see indicators improving
	Leadership of the Initiative comes from multiple sectors with the ability to shift both the public and private sector	An Anchor agency helps to facilitate the CAT process	Participating organizations report improved management and administrative capacity	Sufficient operating support is available to enable Backbone staff and the Initiative's leadership to fulfill their responsibilities	
				Funding received by the Initiative is supportive of the top strategies and approaches used by the Initiative	

*Indicates crosscutting elements of collective impact that are separate, but related to, the five core elements of collective impact.

TABLE 2: DETAILED EVALUATION PLAN

In addition to measuring progress along indicators listed in the Theory of Action, the evaluation will focus on additional indicators identified in FSG's Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact: Part 3 and 2015-2016 Bright Beginnings evaluation findings. Some of these additional indicators overlap with those listed in the Theory of Action and are called out separately in the evaluation plan because they are considered priority indicators that will require a deeper dive in the 2016-2017 Year Two evaluation.

Evaluation Questions	Outcomes	Indicators	Data Collection
Evaluation Question 1: To what extent and in what ways is Bright Beginnings making progress across the conditions of collective impact, as guided by the Theory of Action?	• Bright Beginnings is progressing along the Theory of Action	• BB stakeholders identify and give examples of specific indicators within the Developing and Fostering phases listed in the Theory of Action.	• Achievement Forms • Interviews w/BB members and partners • Surveys w/BB members and partners • CAT Action Plans and meeting notes • Document Review
	• **Common vision:** Participants share a vision for change, a common understanding of the problem, and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon action.	• BB stakeholders accurately describe the common vision. • A diverse set of stakeholders from multiple relevant sectors and constituencies attend meetings and events	
	• **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** A diverse set of stakeholders, across sectors, coordinate activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action	• Number and type of actions Bright Beginnings stakeholders have reported in alignment with the shared vision and Theory of Action • BB members and partners identify specific examples of financial and resource alignment	
	• **Continuous Communication:** Participants engage in frequent and structured open communication to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.	• BB stakeholders value internal and external communications structures and processes • BB internal groups (MCCC, Backbone, the Network, and CATs) are well-informed of the activities of other internal BB groups • Feedback loops have been established and are utilized by BB stakeholders	
	• **Shared Measurement:** Participating organizations agree on how success will be measured and reported, with a list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.	• A shared measurement system, including structures and processes, has been designed and adopted by BB stakeholders • BB stakeholders understand the value of and how they will participate in a shared measurement system • BB stakeholders can identify specific examples of using data to inform decision-making	
	• **Learning Culture:** Participants contribute to an environment dedicated to learning from what has worked and what hasn't, through support, trust and	• BB stakeholders express trust in each other and the process • The initiative actively solicits and acts on feedback from	

Evaluation Questions	Outcomes	Indicators	Data Collection
	respect	- community members and other external partners - BB stakeholders feel included in decision-making processes - BB stakeholders have one or more examples of adapting actions in response to data	
	• **Collective Impact Capacity:** The Initiative has the skills, talents and resources necessary to support moving forward with the vision and mission.	- BB stakeholders view Backbone staff and leadership as having adequate skills and resources to support the initiative - BB has influencers and champions that are respected by and can bring a broader group of stakeholders to the table - BB stakeholders report having improved skills and capacities as a result of participating in BB efforts	
	• **Backbone/Infrastructure Support:** An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources	- BB stakeholders give specific examples of how the Backbone and the MCCC have supported their work - The Backbone infrastructure supports the collection and use of data to promote accountability, learning, and improvement - The Backbone supports the development of policy goals and ways to achieve them, (including providing talking points, identifying windows of opportunity, and/or building relationships with policymakers, etc.) - New resources from public and private sources are contributed to or aligned with the initiative's goals	
Evaluation Question 2: How is Bright Beginnings aligned with other collective impact initiatives influencing early childhood efforts in Monterey County?	• Partners are coordinating their activities to align on common goals	- Partners understand each other's work and how it supports a common agenda - Partners collaborate within and across initiatives - Partners hold each other accountable for implementing activities as planned - Partners' individual activities are changing to better align with the plan of action **OR** Number and type of actions partners have taken in alignment with the shared vision and plan of action	- Achievement Forms - Interviews w/BB members and partners - Surveys w/BB members and partners - Document Review
	• Partners have filled gaps and reduced duplication of efforts	Partners identify and implement new strategies or activities to address gaps or duplication	

Evaluation Questions	Outcomes	Indicators	Data Collection
	• Partners have (re)allocated resources to their highest and best use in support of the overall CI initiative	• Partners identify specific examples of financial and resource alignment to support the plan of action **OR** Funders of partner organizations align their resources to support the plan of action	
	• Partners value collaboration with Bright Beginnings	• Partners report seeing value in collaborating with Bright Beginnings • Partners provide examples of how collaboration with Bright Beginnings has increased the efficiency and impact of their work	