



SMALL, SMART INVESTMENTS PAY OFF IN BIG RETURNS!

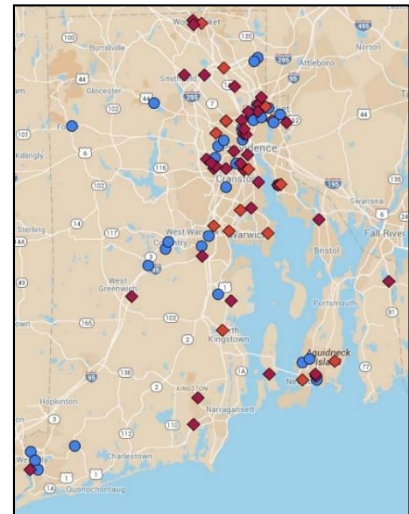
As a result of stakeholder feedback on the 2013 revisions to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) regulations for licensed child care centers, the State of Rhode Island commissioned an Early Learning Facility Needs Assessment. Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) - Rhode Island Child Care Facilities Fund (RICCFF) conducted the study from January through May 2014. The resulting report, which can be read [here](#), included detailed information regarding the overall condition of Rhode Island early learning facilities, with a particular focus on issues that presented barriers to meeting and maintaining licensing standards, including group size. The facilities study led to additional Race to the Top resources and supports to RI programs in the area of facilities.

Race to the Top resources were partnered with Rhode Island Department of Human Services Child Care Development Fund dollars along with private corporate and foundation supports. Utilizing these pooled resources, in addition to the \$2.3 million in Race to the Top Early Learning facilities grants being awarded to 83 organizations, LISC also offered professional development opportunities, created and shared technical resources, provided specialized onsite technical assistance and awarded another \$369,998 in capital and planning grants to 7 programs for a total of nearly **\$2.7 million to 90 programs** throughout Rhode Island. All funding assisted with addressing facility-related licensing variance issues, correcting health and safety concerns and implementing modest indoor and outdoor physical space alterations with a focus on supporting increased program quality. Grants were awarded through a competitive process in five different funding “waves” over an 18 month time frame. **A total of \$7.1 million in requests were received from 136 organizations throughout the application process.** Virtually all of these projects would have been funded in some capacity if additional resources had been

available. Proposals were ranked and selected utilizing objective criteria which included readiness of project to proceed, alignment of project to funding goals, fiscal and organizational health of the center, demonstrated commitment to serving a high needs population, demonstrated commitment to quality and quality improvement.

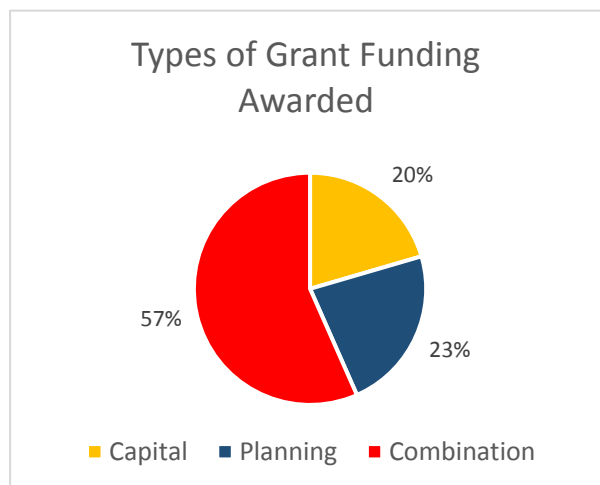
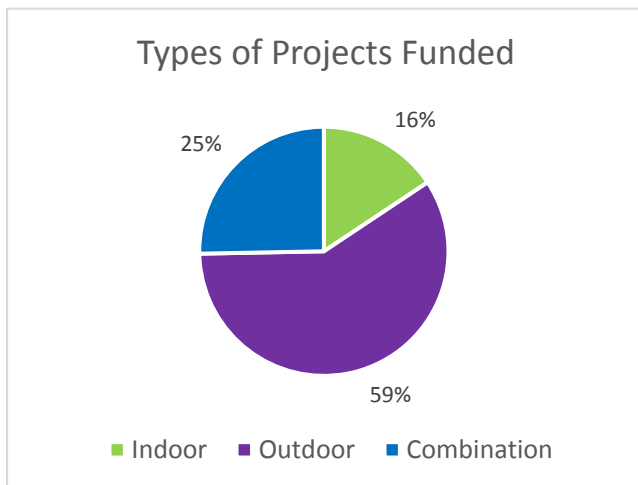
Race to the Top-Funded Early Learning Facility Projects

A total of \$2,325,324 in Race to the Top Funding was awarded to 83 child care and early learning centers which were operated by 57 distinct organizations and school systems. The grants were awarded to organizations throughout RI (see map for geographic break-down): ● Planning Grants; ◆ Capital Grants; ◆ Capital/Planning Combination)



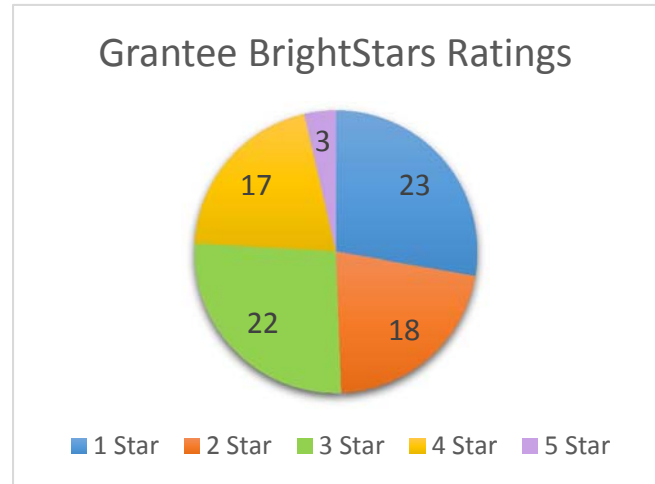
The Projects:

- ◆ A total of 114 facility projects funded (note that some centers were funded in more than one wave for separate projects)
- ◆ Types of projects funded: 16% Indoor space issues; 59% Playground space issues; 25% addressed both Indoor and Outdoor space
- ◆ Types of grant awarded: 20% Capital (construction) grants; 23% Planning grants; 57% Combination of Planning and Capital grants



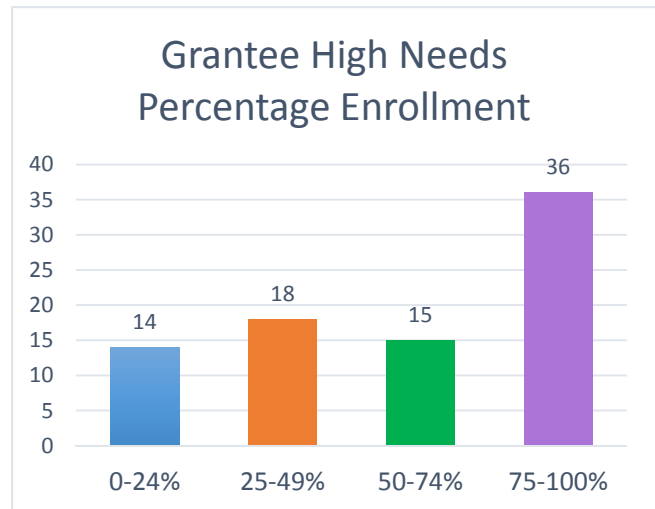
The Grantees:

- Centers funded are at all levels of the state's quality rating system (BrightStars): 23 One Star; 18 Two Stars; 22 Three Stars; 17 Four Stars; 3 Five Stars
- 17 centers operate State Pre-K classrooms
- 39 Centers are non profit and 44 are for profit small businesses
- There are 6 public schools that received grant funding (representing 5 school districts) and 77 community-based centers



The Kids:

- More than 7,100 RI children, ages six weeks – five years benefitted from improvements made through this project
- Children enrolled in child care and early learning programs across 28 Rhode Island cities and towns can experience the benefit of improved physical facilities as a result of this work



More than just Grants:

From November 2014 – December 2016, Owners and administrators from **178 centers** received over **1,100 hours** of on-site technical assistance from LISC staff and specialized consultants. This on-site technical assistance was designed to help center leaders better understand their physical space challenges and to effectively navigate the complex process of making improvements to spaces and successfully carrying out complex, federally funded facility projects in a very short

amount of time. In many cases cost savings were strategized and solutions to seemingly insurmountable challenges were reached. The technical assistance in many cases was the magic that helped make the projects possible in the short amount of time.

An extensive array of training and resource materials were also developed and disseminated. These live on the website www.riccelff.org that was developed with funding made available through the Race to the Top award.

Why It Matters:

- ✿ 28 centers received the financial and/or technical support needed to resolve licensing compliance issues related to their physical space. Issues that were resolved included: reconfiguring spaces to meet group size requirements, giving children access to natural light, securing building entries and addressing plumbing issues.
- ✿ 20 centers increased their BrightStars rating by at least one level during the period of the grants.
- ✿ A total of 60 playground safety audits were conducted by Certified Playground Safety Inspectors. 100% of these identified hazards present in the space. More than 60% of the audits reflected **priority 1 hazards**, indicating safety concerns that could result in permanent disability, loss of life or body part in a high risk area. These hazards require immediate action including closure, repair, or removal of the hazard. Identifying these hazards, and working with centers to formulate corrective action plans was an essential first step to keeping Rhode Island's children safer while in licensed care.
- ✿ 100% of the centers receiving audits went on to apply for and receive funding to develop comprehensive plans to address the issues and create a more appropriate and engaging outdoor space. Of those 60 centers who received funding for safety audits and comprehensive playground plans, 49 have completed some or all of the work on their plans. Other centers continue to work to raise funds to begin work on their outdoor spaces.

CAPITAL FUNDING SPURS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY IN RHODE ISLAND:

Funds investing in capital improvements funnel back into the economy, creating job opportunities and providing revenue to small businesses. Early Learning Facility Grants, funded through this project supported 58 different licensed contractors and 22 professional design firms.

The State investment in this project also motivated small business and non-profit organizations to invest more in their spaces themselves. Over \$760,000 was spent on the projects from the centers themselves!