

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN EFFORTS TO MEET FAMILIES' NEEDS



**Initial Considerations from
Minnesota's Community
Resource Hubs Pilot**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Minnesota's families can be better served by public programs through the expansion of community driven, relationship-based approaches that improve service navigation and delivery. This brief offers initial findings regarding the implementation of community resource hubs, an approach currently being piloted in 12 Minnesota communities with the support of federal Preschool Development Grant B-5 (PDG B-5) funds, along with considerations to promote the expansion of similar family and community resource hub models through a supportive state-local infrastructure.

THE PROBLEM:

Coordination of services for the whole family is challenging

Multiple programs are available to expecting and parenting families in Minnesota, including but not limited to health care assistance, housing supports, food and cash assistance, child care assistance, early learning services, and home visiting. Children belong in families, and the best way to support young children is to support the whole family. However, these programs are supported through various local, state, and federal funding streams, each with its own set of legislatively mandated eligibility criteria, accountability mechanisms, rules, and regulations. Consequently, programs must stretch their limited resources and staff capacity to meet the requirements of these funders—and thus lack both resources and incentive to collaborate and coordinate services across locally implemented programs in order to meet the needs of the whole family. These systemic inefficiencies also lead to confusion for families seeking services at the community level. The lack of streamlined eligibility and enrollment processes places the burden of navigation directly on families, who are often asked to share their stories with multiple programs and complete redundant paperwork to receive services for which they are eligible. In addition, entry points for programs are not welcoming places for all communities, leaving many families wanting a human connection with someone who shares their race, culture, language, and/or geography.



Figure 1. Primary Goals of Minnesota PDG B-5 Community Resource Hubs Pilot



Make it easier for families to get what they need. Develop universal access for families, paired with culturally appropriate, relationship-based navigation of programs and systems.



Increase access to services. Collaborate with state agencies to test and evaluate Help Me Connect paired with culturally appropriate, relationship-based navigation.



Grow community engagement and support community-developed solutions. Encourage a community-based whole family approach so families have what they need to thrive. This will look and feel different in every community.



THE OPPORTUNITY:

Regional and community cross-sector partnerships and relationship-based strategies to help families navigate systems

Family and community resource hubs provide a critical bridge between families who are eligible for services and the various systems in place for children from birth to age eight. These state-local approaches typically provide relationship-based, culturally appropriate assistance by partnering with people and organizations from the communities being served. Hubs also allow for greater flexibility to meet the unique needs of the community and promote more equitable access to services. Families can also benefit from help from a navigator, who recruits families and provides additional referral services, while using a human-centered approach. See Figure 1 for the primary goals of the community resource hubs being piloted in Minnesota as part of the PDG B-5 effort.

THE ASK:

Expand the state's community resource hubs pilot to more communities, build program capacity at the local level, and strengthen the underlying state infrastructure

Minnesota leaders can help families thrive by supporting the expansion of the hubs pilot and other community-driven approaches that promote relationship-based pathways to services and supports through state-local systems. Efforts to improve coordination and capacity across locally implemented programs must start at the state level through streamlined rules, regulations, and flexible funding streams. In addition, by building off the lessons learned from existing efforts and other state models, Minnesota can strengthen its state infrastructure in ways that support the design and implementation of community resource hub models, regardless of approach. Key considerations for refining this infrastructure are found below.

Key Considerations to Create a Supportive Infrastructure for the Expansion of Community Resource Hubs in Minnesota

The findings in this report demonstrate that the community resource hubs are successfully improving service navigation and delivery to families with young children and are well positioned to expand into additional communities. The ongoing success of the hubs will depend on intentional action on the part of the state to help hub partners overcome resource and capacity gaps and strengthen their work. Regardless of the customized approach that is developed by an individual community, state leaders can keep the following considerations in mind as they work to create a supportive infrastructure for further expansion of community resource hubs:

- Create opportunities for state and local leaders to stay abreast of promising practices for hub implementation occurring in Minnesota communities as well as other states.
- Provide guidance and flexible resources for hubs to continue to authentically engage community leaders, families, and providers in their design and implementation of activities.
- Incorporate state-level cross-agency collaboration into the governance, monitoring, and funding design of hubs to help alleviate barriers to coordination due to limited capacity and resources.
- Ensure service providers are available across the state and effectively partnering with the hubs while creating safeguards to ensure families are not pushed from one system to another.
- Encourage additional community resource hubs to advance equitable outcomes through a targeted universalism approach and tailored outreach strategies to help formerly underserved communities identify and access resources.
- Invest in local capacity and leadership to encourage collaboration and partnerships between programs and systems serving families, allowing communities to better respond and generate customized solutions to policy and program barriers seen by families.
- Provide hubs with additional funding and resources to effectively reach and serve everyone, especially rural and multilingual families, while also ensuring that the programs they refer families to are fully funded and available to meet the need.
- Develop intentional state-local infrastructure with strong feedback loops between community partners and the state to improve program design and implementation of hubs.
- Establish a shared vision for outcomes and evaluation metrics early in the planning process to help quantify and ultimately communicate the hubs' value to a range of decision-makers.

Minnesota decision-makers are encouraged to elevate the experiences of the community resource hubs pilot to inform the expansion of community-driven and culturally responsive solutions in additional parts of the state. Creating a supportive state-local infrastructure on top of maximizing existing efforts will help minimize inefficiencies and fragmentation within the system. Further, taking these important steps will help improve service navigation and delivery, thus better ensuring that Minnesota families with young children are well positioned to thrive.

SUPPORTING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RESOURCE HUBS

Through a partnership of the Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services and the Children's Cabinet, and funding support from the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), Minnesota aims to support expecting families and families parenting young children by better aligning early childhood education and care systems across the state. As part of this effort, the state was able to invest approximately \$6 million in 12 community-based hubs. These investments are currently helping the regional hubs pilot navigation tools, build capacity, and establish outreach and communication strategies with families seeking services. However, funding for the pilot will expire in December 2022.

The concept of regional hubs was also supported at the state level through a bill introduced in March 2021 ([SF 2170](#)), which sought to establish a Department of Early Childhood in Minnesota. Although the bill did not pass, it underscored the importance of creating a state plan and infrastructure to develop regional hubs that would help carry out the duties and programs of the new department.



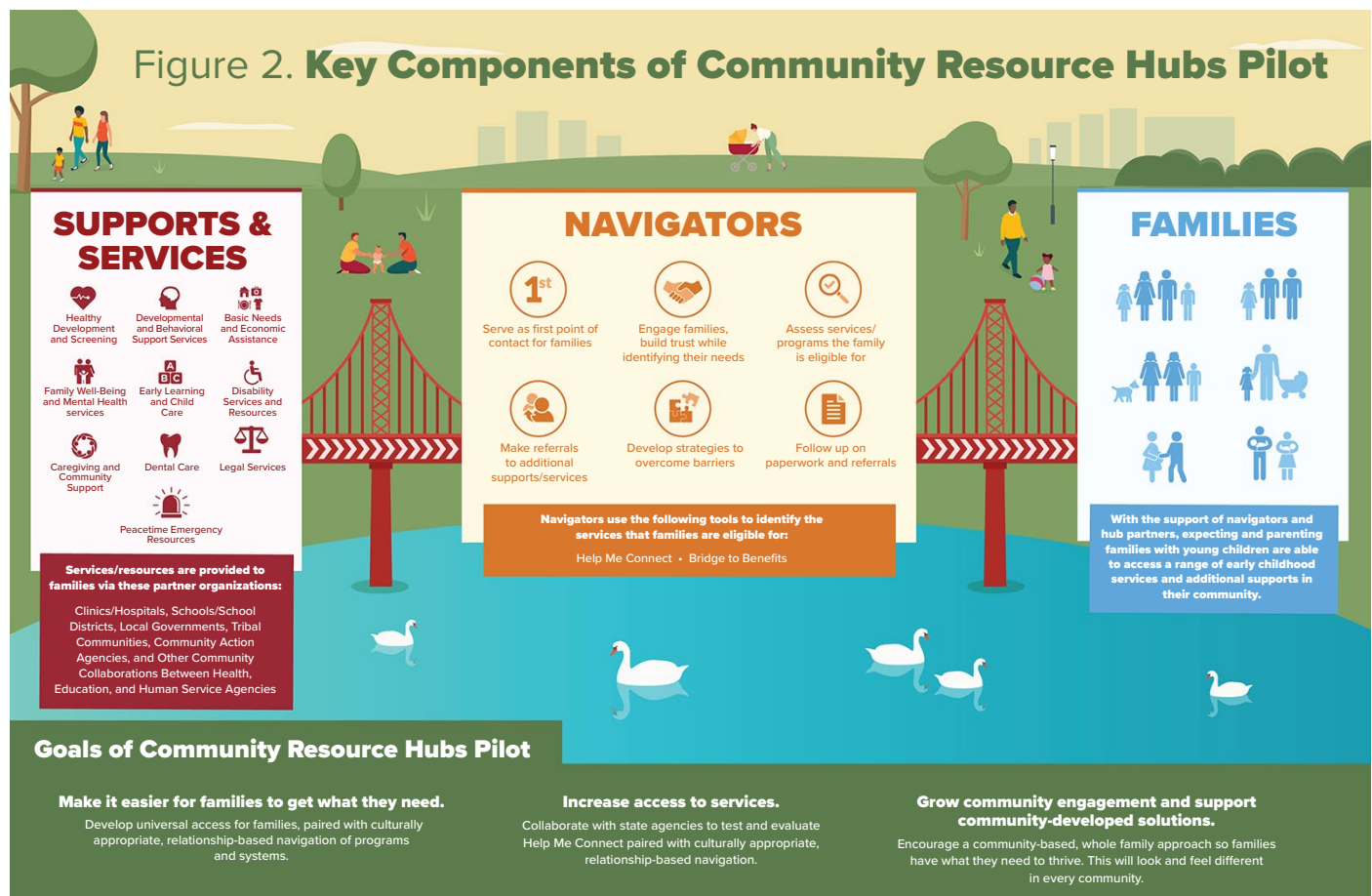
How Do Community Resource Hubs Work?

Family and community resource hubs are essentially preventative strategies that focus on addressing local needs through cross-sector collaboration. While the pilot hubs supported by Minnesota PDG B-5 are focused on helping expecting and parenting families navigate Minnesota's early childhood system and access additional services, communities can modify their approach to best meet the needs of their local families. Ultimately, hubs are designed to improve access to needed services, with direct impacts on child and family outcomes. When they are driven by community leadership and local partners, hubs can be more sustainable and impactful over time. An additional benefit is that feedback loops are established with state agencies to better document and understand the level of need for services and align policies, programs, and resources accordingly.

While specific services vary based on the needs of individual communities, all community resource hubs¹ offer families direct services and assistance with navigating a range of supports and services. These services may include economic assistance, disability services, healthy development and screening, assistance with developmental and behavioral concerns, family well-being and mental health, early learning and child care, dental care, legal services, or culturally specific services to all families who need them.

¹ There are a total of 13 hubs, 12 of which are supported with federal funds and a 13th hub (Scott) that is a collaborative partner.

Hub partners support communication and serve as a bridge between families and local service providers. A critical role within the relationship-based hub model is the “navigator.” This individual comes from the community being served and is the first point of contact with families in the community. The navigator initiates conversations with families and spends time building trust. After engaging families, navigators assess the types of services and programs they are eligible for and make referrals to additional supportive services, as appropriate. For example, a family may first interact with a navigator when searching for child care options and learn during the process that they are also eligible for child nutrition services. Some families may have concerns about interacting with social service agencies or completing paperwork due to their immigration status or previous challenges with large waitlists when trying to access services. Navigators and hub partners spend time with families to develop a strategy to overcome these types of barriers, often following up with phone calls, text messages, e-mails, home visits, and virtual visits to assist families with paperwork and referrals. See Figure 2 for additional information on the key components of this process.



Who Are the Hubs and Their Partners?

Community resource hubs are community-oriented organizations that lead coordination efforts and are committed to increasing families’ access to a range of services. Out of the 12 community resource hubs funded by PDG B-5, seven are nonprofit organizations that provide direct services (e.g., child care, health care, and housing) to expecting and parenting families and that seek to connect families with additional services. Two hubs (Northland Foundation and Northwest Minnesota Foundation) are part of a consortium of six Minnesota Initiative Foundations that respond to regional needs and opportunities. Each foundation serves its region with unique grants, business loans, leadership programs, and donor services, including for local early childhood needs. One hub is a local government (Ramsey County), one is a Tribal Nation

(Red Lake Nation), and one is a government organization (Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board). See Table 1 and Figure 3 for additional characteristics of the pilot hubs, including partners and service areas.

Regardless of approach, community resource hubs are most effective when connected with partners at the local level to recruit families or assist them in referral processes. Currently, the Minnesota community resource hubs feature partnerships with clinics/hospitals (e.g., Minnesota Community Care), schools/school districts (e.g., Cook County School District), local governments (e.g., Hennepin County), Tribal Nations (e.g., White Earth Nation), community action agencies (e.g., Mahubet-Otwa), and other community collaborations between health, education, and human service agencies.

Similar partnership models are seen in other states as well. In Oregon, for example, various entities—such as school districts, county governments, nonprofits, community colleges, and coordinated care organization—are serving as backbone organizations for the state’s Early Learning Hubs. As in Minnesota’s model, Oregon’s Hubs are collaborating with entities or providers involved in services related to early learning services, education, and health and human services. In Colorado, half of its 34 Early Childhood Councils are independent nonprofit organizations while the other half operate under a fiscal agent such as a local school district or community college. Colorado’s Councils coordinate strategies and action across a wider array of partners: they work with community-based nonprofit organizations, health care providers, child care providers, child care resource and referral agencies, local public health agencies, school districts, libraries, higher education institutions, and the Department of Human Services.

Although the hub models and partnerships vary across counties and states, the key success factor is that the hubs (and their backbone entities) are rooted in **common policy goals, strong local-state partnerships, and the local community’s unique needs and assets**. That is, hubs must center targeted universalism.

Table 1. Characteristics of Hubs Currently Supported by Minnesota PDG B-5

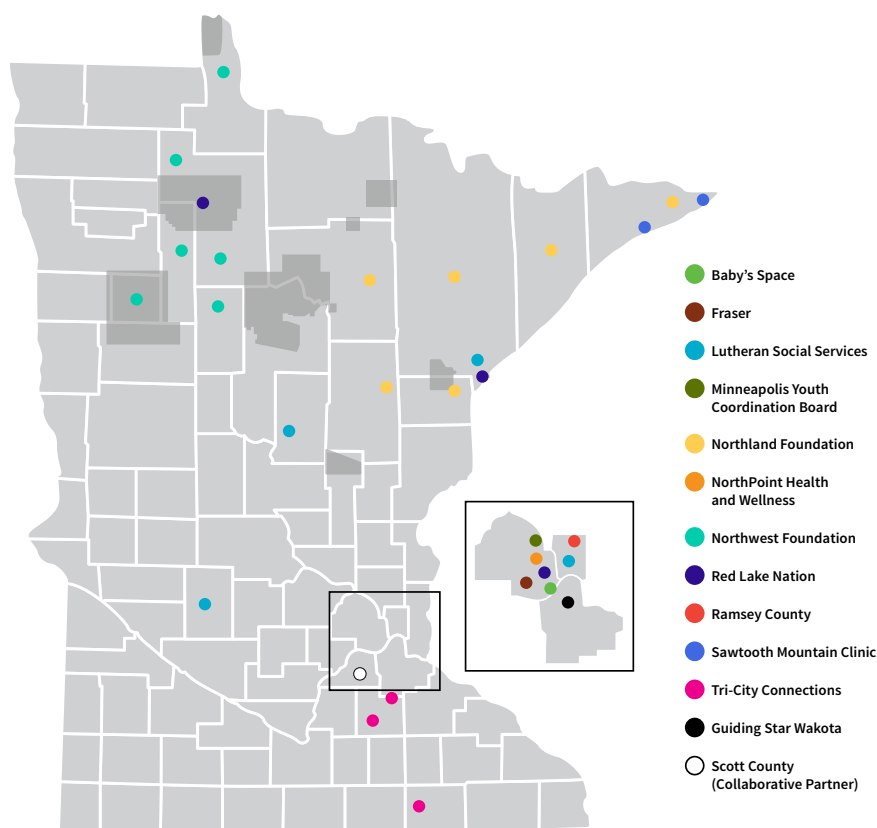
Note: An asterisk () indicates the organizations (n=5) that serve Indigenous communities/Tribal Nations.*

Organization/ Hub Name and Description	Purpose of the Grant Funds	Hub Partners	Service Area (Cities, Counties, or Reservations Served)
Baby’s Space* : Nonprofit organization offering child and family services, including child care and K–3 education	Coordinate support for children and families in the Little Earth housing development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hennepin County Washburn Center for Children Minneapolis Public Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minneapolis (Hennepin County)
Fraser : Nonprofit organization offering health care, housing, and education services to children and families with special needs	Partner with primary care providers to improve service referral processes and help reduce barriers to service access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minnesota Community Care Allina Health South Lake Pediatrics HealthPartners (Park Nicollet) Other local primary care providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anoka County Dakota County Hennepin County Ramsey County Washington County

Organization/ Hub Name and Description	Purpose of the Grant Funds	Hub Partners	Service Area (Cities, Counties, or Reservations Served)
<i>Guiding Star Wakota:</i> Nonprofit organization offering education and health care services for families who are expecting or parenting children	Provide pregnant and parenting families with mental health services, system navigation, and reduced service inequities for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dakota County Service Center • Cradle of Hope Neighborhood House • Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge • Local mental health professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dakota County • Ramsey County
<i>Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota:</i> Statewide nonprofit organization providing social services (e.g., counseling and housing) to children and families	Create a systematic approach to intake, needs assessment, access, and parent and community engagement	<i>Internal partnerships only:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSS Youth and Family Services • LSS Housing Services • LSS Refugee Services • LSS Behavioral Health Services • LSS Financial Services • LSS Adoption Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crow Wing County • Hennepin County • Kandiyohi County • Ramsey County • St. Louis County
<i>Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board:</i> Organization that advocates for children and youth at Minneapolis public jurisdictions	Hire and train community members from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities to work as navigators in their own communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Family, Friend and Neighbor Care providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minneapolis (Hennepin County)
<i>Northland Foundation*:</i> Publicly supported foundation that, through the Early Childhood Initiative, has established and provided training to 12 early childhood grassroots coalitions in northeastern Minnesota	Support navigators to help pregnant and parenting families connect with local resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency • Carlton County • Duluth Public Schools • Invest Early • Itasca Area Schools Collaborative • Fond du Lac Human Services Division • McGregor School District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aitkin County • Carlton County • Cook County • Itasca County • Koochiching County • Lake County • St. Louis County • Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Organization/ Hub Name and Description	Purpose of the Grant Funds	Hub Partners	Service Area (Cities, Counties, or Reservations Served)
NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center: Nonprofit organization that offers holistic health care and education	Reach out to families with infants and toddlers and those who are pregnant in Hennepin County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the Hennepin County Early Childhood Collaborative Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hennepin County
Northwest Minnesota Foundation*: Publicly supported organization that, as part of the Early Childhood Initiative, has formed and funded grassroots early childhood coalitions in northwest Minnesota	Help families navigate systems and access resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tri-Valley Opportunity Council (Marshall County) Mahube-Otwa Inter-County Community Council Northwest Community Action (Kittson County) Bi-CAP (Community Action Program serving Beltrami and Cass Counties) Tribes' child care services (Red Lake Nation and White Earth Nation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 counties with a focus on Hubbard, Beltrami, Clearwater, and Mahnomen Counties. Their service area includes Red Lake and White Earth.
Ramsey County: Local government working to strengthen the well-being of its residents	Implement a community-based navigation model for families of young children with a network of family coaches who have a deep, culturally responsive understanding of local families’ needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently building partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ramsey County
Red Lake Nation*: Tribal government	Purchase two vans to increase outreach and provide services (e.g., counseling, rehabilitation, referral) to Red Lake Nation children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Lake Nation Children and Family Services’ “Ombimindwaa Gidinanwemaaganinaadog” Uplifting Our Relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minneapolis–St. Paul Metropolitan Area

Figure 3. Map of PDG B-5 Community Resource Hubs



Preliminary Findings from the Study of the 12 Community Resource Hubs Pilot

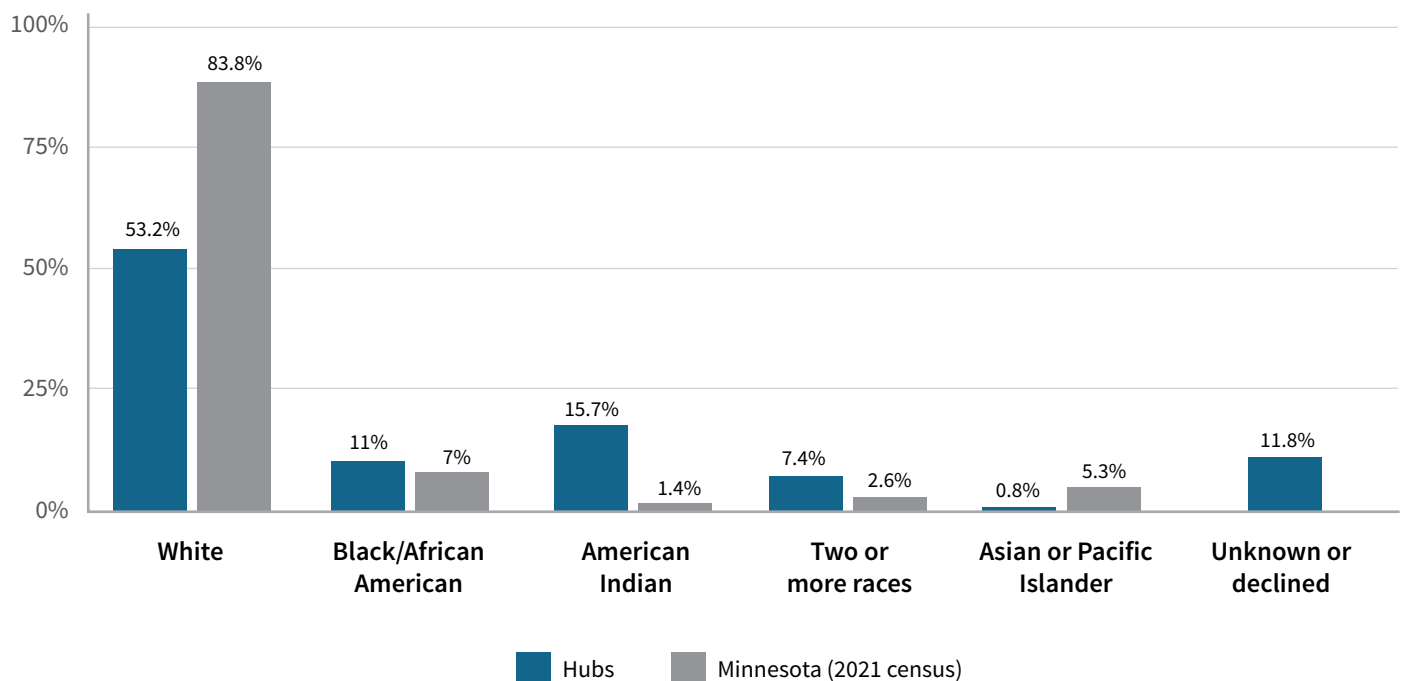
What is working well with the hubs pilot?

Minnesota's hub staff have received training on equity-oriented services, trauma-informed reflective consultation, and statewide systems, which has helped staff improve their services to families. Hub staff members had access to training opportunities and technical support from equity-grounded organizations that specialize in early childhood systems, such as the BUILD Initiative and School Readiness Consulting. The trainings covered such topics as equity-oriented outreach, partnerships, evaluation, sustainability, and funding. BUILD also helped establish Communities of Practice among the hubs, where staff members and navigators from different hubs meet to discuss the challenges that they are facing (e.g., closing feedback loops), identify possible solutions to those challenges, and share promising practices. Hub staff have also participated in infant and early childhood mental health consultation to support the mental health needs of the children and families they serve. As a result of these training and networking opportunities, hub staff have strengthened their outreach strategies for families and providers, identified community-based risk factors, created solutions to mitigate risks and lower access barriers, and enhanced their practices by drawing on trauma-informed and culturally responsive principles. Additionally, hub staff have been trained on how to use two innovative electronic tools—[Help Me Connect \(HMC\)](#) coupled with Children's Defense Fund–Minnesota's [Bridge to Benefits \(B2B\)](#)—that help identify the services that families are eligible for. Hub grantees have not only benefited from the training but also contributed to the improvement of statewide systems and tools. For example, some hub grantees have field tested the Help Me Connect and Bridge to Benefits tools and provided feedback on how to enhance those tools.

Hubs and navigators are developing tailored outreach strategies and effectively connecting families to services. The hub model draws on a highly effective policy framework called targeted universalism, whereby policies and programs are designed so that everyone can achieve a common policy goal through targeted, group-based strategies.² The hubs' common policy goal is to ensure that every child in Minnesota receives an equitable and comprehensive opportunity to reach their full potential. Yet the strategies that the hubs use to achieve that goal vary widely, depending on the needs and circumstances of communities they serve—especially those of parents/caregivers and providers. Thus, their efforts may differ from one community to another. Through this approach, hubs are well positioned to advance equity and address local needs in a culturally responsive and efficient way. Hub grantees and partners employ a range of outreach strategies to connect families with hub resources, including community engagement teams, navigators, and family coaches (see Figure 4 to understand the racial/ethnic background of those served from April through September 2021, as compared to the racial/ethnic demographics in the state). While data is incomplete, the hubs made at least 828 successful referrals connecting families to services in 2021, with 53% using Bridge to Benefits and 47% using Help Me Connect tools. The services most frequently sought by families were financial assistance, child care needs/access, and financial support for child care (see Figure 5). Hubs are contributing to the execution of Minnesota's PDG B-5 strategic plan by cultivating community engagement practices and leveraging community-developed solutions.

Figure 4. Population estimates for Minnesota,³ Compared to Community Resource Hubs' Reports of Families Served, by Race and Ethnicity, for Quarters 2 and 3, 2021

In Q2/3 2021, Minnesota community resource hubs served a greater percentage of Black/African American families and Indigenous families than their respective populations in the state.

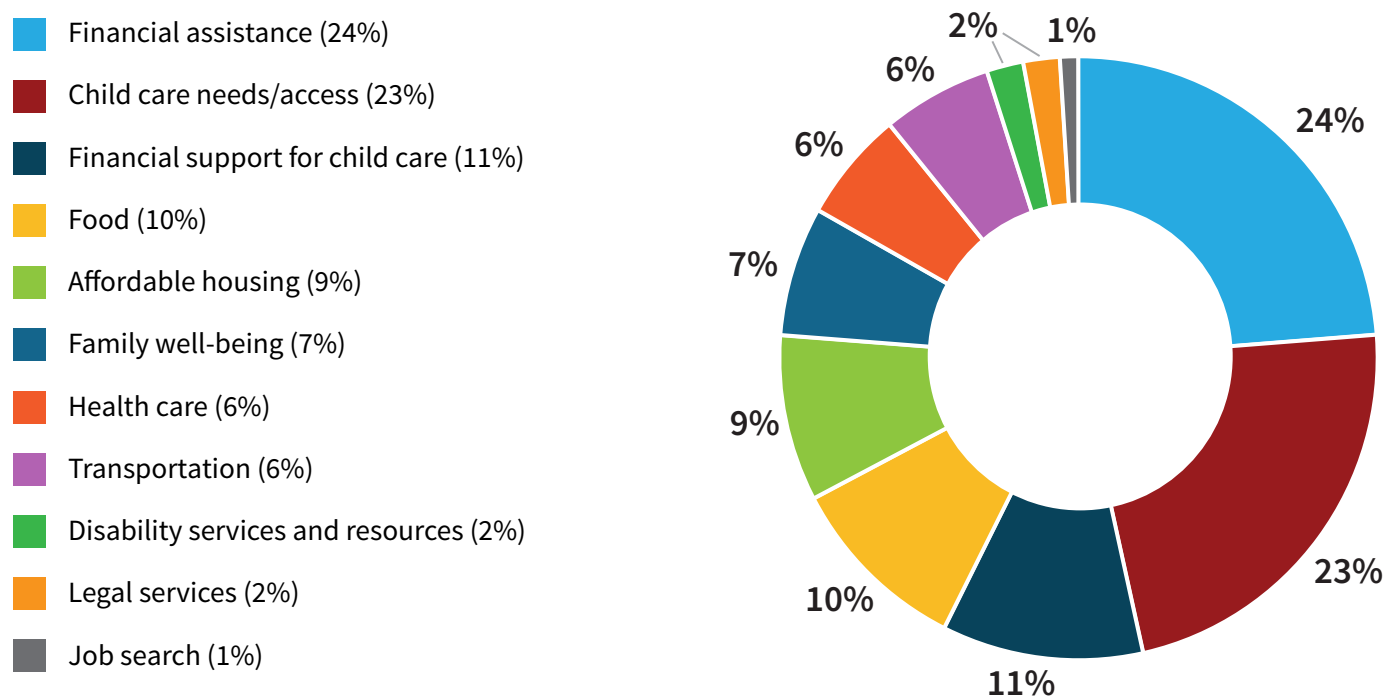


² Powell, J. A., Menendian, S., Ake, A. (2019). Targeted universalism: Policy & practice. Haas Institute. Retrieved from https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/targeted_universalism_primer.pdf?file=1&force=1

³ U.S. Census Bureau (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/faq/MN/PST045221#1>

Figure 5. Minnesota Community Resource Hubs' Reports of Services Families Were Referred to, Quarters 2 and 3, 2021

In Q2/3 2021, the services most frequently sought by families through Minnesota community resource hubs were financial assistance, child care access, and financial support for child care.⁴



The effectiveness of regional hubs in expanding services for children, leveraging funding, and improving child outcomes has been proven in other states. In **Oregon**, regional hubs have been successful in promoting a sense of collaboration across entities, supporting the development of cross-sector partnerships, and leveraging funding to provide services. The Oregon system was developed through the work of the Affordable Care Act/Accountable Care Organizations model and offers a great example of attaching early childhood/family needs to a shifting policy. Since 1993, **North Carolina's** Smart Start initiative has successfully established cross-sector partnerships and blended public-private funding to increase both families' access to affordable services and child care quality.⁵ Research consistently shows that Smart Start children have better health and learning outcomes than non-participating children.⁶ And the positive effects of Smart Start on children's learning hold steady or even grow across years.⁷ The benefits of Smart Start hubs have been experienced among families of all incomes and across diverse geographic areas.⁸ **Michigan's** network of Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions has helped strong community voice impact their birth-to-age-eight systems work by connecting local philanthropic organizations, educators, leaders of public agencies, and parents to address the needs of children in the state.

4 "Child care needs/access" is about families looking for a child care slot for their child, and "financial support for child care" is related to families getting connected to the state Child Care Assistance Program funding for child care

5 Bryant, D., & Ponder, K. (2004). North Carolina's Smart Start initiative: A decade of evaluation lessons. *The evaluation exchange: A periodical on emerging strategies in evaluation*, 10(2), 7-8.

6 Ponder, K. W. (2010). Early childhood education and North Carolina's Smart Start initiative. Institute for Emerging Issues, NC State University.

7 Dodge, K. A., Bai, Y., Ladd, H. F., & Muschkin, C. G. (2017). Impact of North Carolina's early childhood programs and policies on educational outcomes in elementary school. *Child Development*, 88(3), 996-1014.

8 Ibid.

What else is needed to strategically support a family and community resource model?

Maintain the focus on coordination and collaboration at the state level to support and expand local hubs. Because families with young children must interact with a range of programs and services, cross-sector collaboration and coordination must start at the state and federal level (e.g., agency partners and the Children’s Cabinet) before being refined and customized through local and Tribal consultation. Ongoing collaboration at the state level can lead to common definitions for success, priority areas for intervention, dedicated and sustainable funding, and collective data tracking and evaluation efforts across program areas. For example, state agency partners may develop governance structures (e.g., an interagency Memorandum of Understanding or strategic plan), or integrated data systems, or allow for blending and braiding of funds so programs at the community level are able to combine funding streams to better serve children and families.



Build off existing hub implementation efforts in Minnesota and other states. It will be important to ensure the findings and lessons learned from the Minnesota Preschool Development Grant B-5 hubs pilot, Community Action Agencies, Family Service Collaboratives, Full Service Community Schools, and other efforts are well documented and used to inform the planning and design of Minnesota’s statewide community resource hub structure. The reports and stories captured from partners working to implement these models, including the hub partners’ Community of Practice, will be instrumental in identifying what is working well and how similar approaches might be designed for additional communities. For example, one lesson learned from other state efforts is the importance of creating a common infrastructure that ensures the funding for hubs is not from a single program area (e.g., child welfare, education), but draws from a variety of resources to allow space for true cross-agency collaboration and promote greater sustainability.

Provide hubs with additional funding and resources to effectively reach and serve everyone, especially rural and multilingual families. Regardless of the hub approach, providing human-centered, comprehensive referrals requires significant staff capacity and resources in order to be effective. While many hubs want to expand their reach to serve more families, there is an inherent tension between the complexity of building trust and engaging families in a culturally responsive way and the staff, time, and resources available to support human-centered navigation. For example, some hub partners may rely on models of payment that do not fully cover the cost of larger caseloads involving lengthy interviews, completing referral loops, or relationship-building time with families. Some hubs and navigators also struggle to connect with and properly serve certain populations (e.g., those who live in highly rural areas). These challenges stem from a range of factors. Services are not evenly distributed across the state, and some families face transportation or financial constraints when trying to reach services that are available in their region. Hubs can benefit from additional resources to produce outreach materials in the languages primarily spoken in their local communities, and additional staff and technology capacity to serve families with the greatest level of need.



Expand the common application and referral tracking system to help more hubs close the loop and ensure families receive what they need. Given the time-intensive nature of relationship-based navigation, all existing and new hub partners would benefit from access to a common application and a formalized system to track referrals to other services and follow up with families as needed. The recently launched [MNBenefits](#) online application interface allows users to apply for benefits in nine different programs in a shorter, streamlined process. It is currently available in Spanish, with plans to expand to additional languages, and should be expanded to include even more programs based on what families currently need.

Invest in local capacity and leadership to encourage collaboration and partnerships between programs and systems serving families. Strong partnerships and formal connections between state and local systems are essential to creating effective and responsive systems. For example, the state can invest in local capacity by providing resources for dedicated leadership positions for people who come from the community being served and focus on creating connections and providing strategic technical assistance/support for partnerships. This infrastructure would allow communities to build greater capacity to quickly respond and generate customized solutions to policy and program barriers seen by families. In addition, state leaders can benefit from observing trends at the local and regional levels that will ultimately inform decision-making and resource allocation at the state level.

Continue to offer training and technical assistance supports to hub staff and their partners. The training and support received so far by the hub staff has been crucial to their success and should be continued. These opportunities can help hub partners to connect with one another and share lessons learned on various aspects of implementation, including family entry points, outreach and engagement efforts, culturally relevant and trauma-informed programs and services, sustainability models and funding, and evaluation. These trainings are particularly important over time, given the potential for staff turnover. As the hubs expand, leaders can consider offering additional opportunities for hub staff to communicate directly with their peers and offer workshops where they can discuss problems of practice and strategize around an issue together

(e.g., strengthening feedback loops or creating warm hand-offs). Local partners may also benefit from additional training and demonstrations on the use of statewide system tools (HMC and B2B) to increase their familiarity and comfort level with those resources during the initial stages of hub development. In some cases, navigators may choose to rely on their existing, direct connections with community partners for referrals until more local programs are added to the tools and they become more comprehensive resources.

Ensure service providers are available across the state and are effectively partnering with the hubs. For many families, the hub may be their first time interacting with state and local systems. Therefore, it is particularly important to ensure that they leave with a concrete solution and are not simply referred to yet another entry point in the system, whether it is the county, the school district, or another organization. The development of hub approaches should be accompanied by a corresponding expansion of local program capacity to ensure an adequate supply of programs and services are available to meet the demand from families in the community.

Establish a shared vision for outcomes and evaluation metrics early in the planning process. Creating a shared framework for measuring the impacts of hubs across different communities will be key to quantifying and ultimately communicating their value to a range of decision-makers. Given the time-intensive nature of a human-centered approach to service navigation, local hub partners can benefit from establishing clear metrics and desired outcomes for successful implementation early in the planning process. Once hubs are underway and demand for navigation support increases, partners may face the need to shift resources in order to provide comprehensive supports to families. Therefore, having a clear understanding of scale and successful implementation already in place will be critical for the long-term sustainability of these initiatives.

Looking Ahead

Minnesota decision-makers at all levels—funders, policymakers, government agency staff, service providers, families, and community partners—are encouraged to elevate the stories and lessons learned from the community resource hubs pilot, as well as learnings from other state family and community resource models, to inform the expansion of community-driven and culturally responsive solutions in more parts of the state. Building off these existing efforts while creating a supportive state-local infrastructure will help reduce barriers and fragmentation while improving service navigation and delivery for more families with young children.



