



AUGUST 31, 2018

INNOVATIONS IN FAMILY, FRIEND AND NEIGHBOR CARE

Full Evaluation Report



Introduction

Although the field of informal/FFN child care is emergent (compared to research and work that has been accomplished in the field of formal child care), there is a lot of exciting and innovative work being done in this area today, and rapid progress is being made to meet the needs of this important group of caregivers and children. This report summarizes findings from testing and learning experiments completed by community organizations in California.

Background

Children ages five and under spend a substantial amount of time being cared for by parents, extended family, friends, neighbors (FFNs) or a combination. This is also commonly referred to as unlicensed/license-exempt, kith and kin, or informal care. A 2016 U.S. Department of Education survey found that 5.2 million children were in the care of relatives and 2.8 million children were in nonrelative home-based care¹. These providers thus play a critical role in supporting the health and development of the young children in their care. Not much focus, however, has been given to ensuring that informal/FFN care providers have high quality resources, tools, and community networks they need to be successful in their roles. In addition to the high prevalence of FFN care, there are two other factors that make this focus on engaging FFN caregivers with quality resources particularly critical. First, a recent study by New America found that full time in-home care for infants and toddlers costs 53 percent of the U.S. median household income or 188 percent of income for a minimum wage worker². Second, although FFN care is prevalent across all socio-economic backgrounds, families that are most likely to use it are low to moderate income families, Latino, African American, and refugees and immigrants³. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Children, Families, and Communities program aims to address this gap by investing in learning more about programs that support informal care providers.

In 2015, the Packard Foundation launched their Informal Care Strategy that was ultimately aimed at supporting parents, extended family and other informal caregivers to know how to provide the kind of nurturing and enrichment children need early in life to reach their full potential. This strategy has three phases: **1) conduct background research and environmental scan to gain a more nuanced understanding about the current state of settings and strategies; 2) fund testing and learning experiments of projects that are designed to engage informal/FFN caregivers; and 3) scale the most promising practices learned through the research and experiment phases.** In 2016 the Packard Foundation began work on the second phase of their informal/FFN care strategy with four testing and learning community grantees. The purpose of this work was to **test strategies to provide information to FFN caregivers, connect them with resources, as well as each other, and support them in providing quality care.** The nature of this work was exploratory in nature and uncharted territory for some grantees, so it was acceptable to discover that some projects did not work out as planned as long as there were lessons learned along the way. For this reason, evaluation services were provided to the first cohort of informal/FFN care grantees and a summary of their work and findings can be [found here](#).

About This Evaluation

This report summarizes evaluation findings from the **second cohort of five grantees** that started their testing and learning experiments in 2017 (see Exhibit 1). The report is organized as follows:

- [Overview of evaluation goals and methods;](#)

¹ McPhee, C., Jackson, M., Bielick, S., Masterton, M., Battle, D., McQuiggan, M., Payri, M., Cox, C., and Medway, R. (2018). National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016: Data File User's Manual (NCES 201 -100). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

² Schulte, B. and Durana, A. (2016). The New America Care Report. New America *Better Life Lab*.

³ Porter, Toni (2018). Strengthening our efforts to support FFN child care. Packard Foundation Informal Care Meeting.

- Descriptions of the work of each grantee, including logic models, evaluation findings, and future considerations; and
- A cross-cutting summary of findings and recommendations for future informal care projects and the Packard Foundation's grantmaking in this area.

Exhibit 1. Informal/FFN Care Cohort 2 Grantees

Grantee Organization	Project
BANANAS	Develop a toolkit and workshops for FFN caregivers and build the capacity of resource and referral staff to promote informal/FFN care as an option for parents.
Go Kids, Inc.	Expand a neighborhood-based playgroup designed for informal/FFN caregivers in Salinas.
Community Resources for Children	Promote and assist FFN caregivers with the use of an early education app.
Placer County Office of Education	Develop a series of themed toolkits for FFN caregivers to be distributed by trained mentors.
Visión y Compromiso	Provide a series of workshops to develop the capacity of Mixteco- and Spanish-speaking FFN caregivers through community promotoras.

Evaluation Goals

The focus of the evaluation was on supporting learning between grantees, helping to build grantees' evaluation capacity, and lifting up successes and challenges from grantees' projects. Our evaluation questions included:

- What are the **pathways** for reaching FFN informal caregivers?
- What are the most **promising ways** to engage FFN informal caregivers?
- What **messages** do FFN informal caregivers respond to?
- What are **promising practices/mechanisms/tools/resources** to improve the quality of interactions between adult caregivers and the children they care for?
- What practices have the **potential to scale**?

Methods

Given that the evaluation of informal care is relatively new, our evaluation methods focused on understanding the work of each grantee and identifying promising strategies. Grantees varied in their capacity to collect and analyze evaluation data, and we adapted our approach to working with each grantee accordingly. The primary methods for our evaluation included:

- **Initial meetings** to gather information about grantees' work, and begin a working relationship between grantees and the evaluation team;
- **Logic modeling sessions**, to identify grantees' project goals, resources, short- and long-term outcomes, and potential data collection methods;
- **Grantee data collection**, wherein grantees shared data they already collected with the evaluation team,

following the principles of a lean data approach⁴; and

- **Primary data collection**, where Engage R+D worked with grantees to identify and carry out a data collection method or methods that made sense for the stage/type of projects.

In addition to the data collection activities described above, we also facilitated a series of structured learning opportunities between grantees via video conference and in-person. These included:

- A **launch webinar** in June 2017 where each of the five grantees shared information about their projects and what they hoped to learn from each other;
- A **second webinar** in November 2017 where grantees provided updates on their projects and shared insights on how to address common challenges or issues they were experiencing; and
- An **in-person grantee convening** at the Packard Foundation in March 2018, which gave grantees and partners the chance to share more in-depth information about their projects, brainstorm solutions to common challenges, and tie their work to the field of informal care more broadly (see online postings from the [Packard Foundation](#) and [Engage R+D](#) for more information).

⁴ “The Lean Data approach is a new approach to social impact evaluation that is designed for testing and learning. It emphasizes using data to create value for an organization and its beneficiaries (vs. reporting and compliance) and uses methods and technologies for data collection that favor efficiency and speed while maintaining rigor. This approach was designed for and tested in environments that are uncertain, dynamic, complex and resource-constrained.” SSIR, Winter 2016.



BANANAS is a non-profit child care resource and referral agency in Alameda County. They offer workshops, classes and support groups for parents and caregivers, and help connect diverse families with all types of child care options, including preschools, family child care centers and FFN care. BANANAS also links families with financial assistance for child care through the Alternative Payment program

Staff at BANANAS observed that as more of the families that they served were using or providing informal/FFN care, their agency needed more resources that were specific to meeting the needs of FFN caregivers. For their FFN project, BANANAS worked to **create an FFN Caregiver Toolkit for resource and referral agencies**. This toolkit included training curriculum, information on how caregivers can integrate learning activities into their interactions, information for parents about the critical role that FFN caregivers play in a child’s early development and kindergarten readiness; and for agencies, a guide for creating support groups and classes, and promotional, outreach, fundraising and educational materials. Their goal was to create programs and services that can easily be replicated by child care referral agencies.

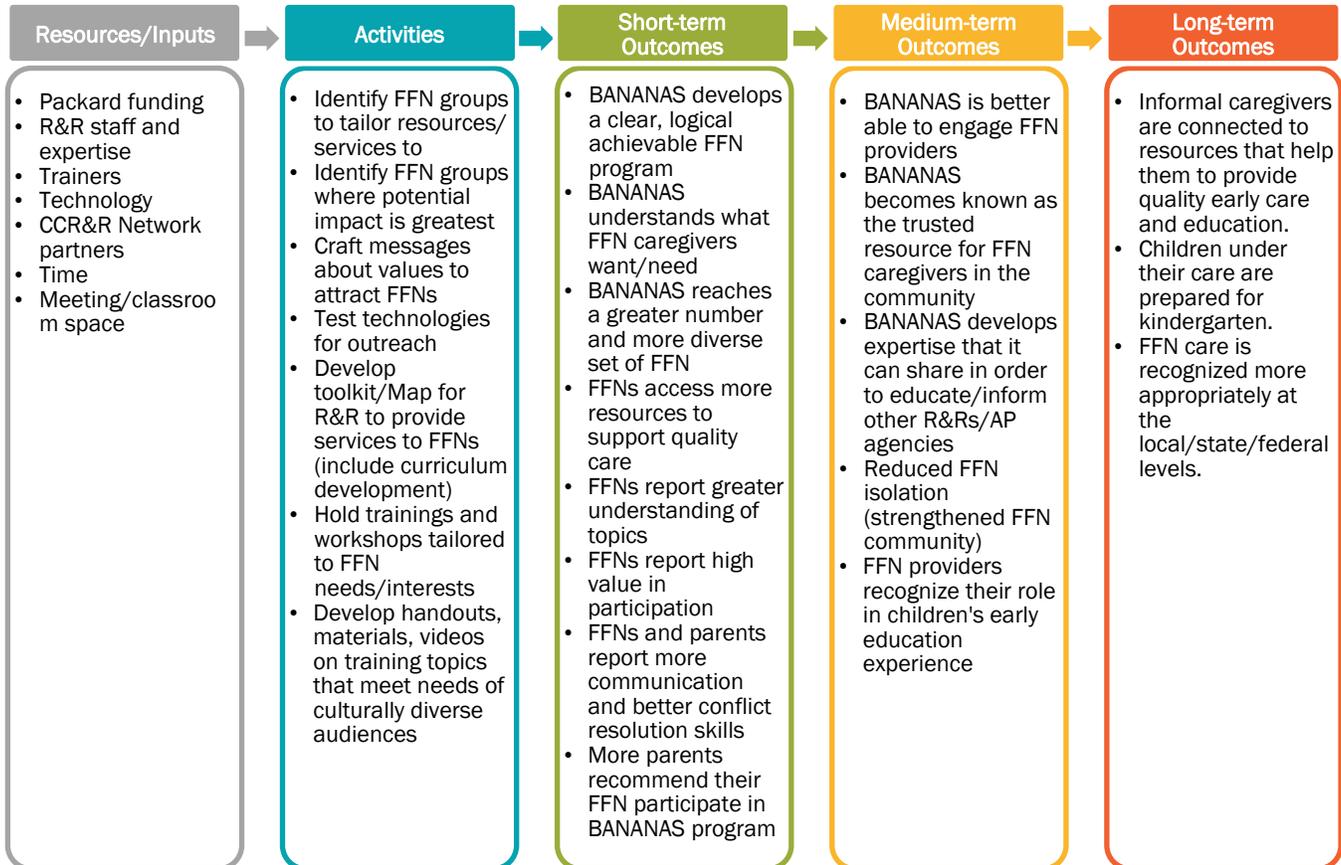


BANANAS Project Logic Model

Engage R+D worked with the BANANAS team to develop a strategy logic model. As displayed in Exhibit 2 below, BANANAS articulated their core goal and identified resources, activities, and desired outcomes in the short-, medium- and long-term. They also articulated their key evaluation questions and developed a data collection plan (not shown).

Exhibit 2. BANANAS FFN Project Logic Model

Goal/Need Statement: FFN caregivers can access resources and support for their work; children are better supported socially and emotionally and come to school ready to learn; and families are strengthened through stronger relationships with FFNs





Findings

At the start of the project BANANAS conducted input sessions with resource & referral (R&R)/Alternative Payment (AP) staff, FFN caregivers, parents and licensed providers to gather more information on the needs of FFN caregivers and how they are connected in the community. This early input session confirmed many of their assumptions. Three key findings included the following:

- Key reasons for choosing FFN care are trust, flexibility and cost;
- FFN Providers want support with activities, discipline, nutrition, safety, child development, and better compensation; and
- Licensed providers have mixed feelings and views about FFN caregivers.

With this and other findings in hand they proceeded with the development of the proposed tool kit. As they began scheduling and holding trainings and support groups for FFN caregivers, they found that it was a challenge to **find the right content, timing and incentives** to reach the FFN providers. They initially learned that FFN providers often see themselves as a family/friend/neighbor **helping** the parent rather than as a **provider** who needs training; therefore, they also did not consider BANANAS as a resource for them to become better caregivers.

More importantly, BANANAS realized that they were not leveraging their own relationships with parents and knowledge of parents' child care needs to actively promote FFN care as an option to families. Although R&R agencies are known to advocate for FFN caregivers, promoting it as an option in their day-to-day work appeared to be lacking. They reviewed R&R resource materials and found that staff are required to talk to families about all the different licensed care options, but they are not contracted to talk about FFN care. Parents who cannot afford child care are often put on a waitlist for subsidized care, but in the meantime, as a BANANAS staff person said, "Who is your village?" This "a-ha" moment spurred them to **take their project in a new direction**. They wanted to **change R&R practices by including FFN care as an informed option to parents on a regular and normal basis**.

Lessons Learned

Key lessons learned for BANANAS through this project included the following:

- Understand how informal/FFN caregivers see themselves and their role with families. Initially, they did not see themselves as a caregiver or provider so they nor the parent did not consider BANANAS as a resource for them.
- Leverage their own relationships with parents and their needs by providing training on informal FFN care with their staff and offer it as an option to parents.



A New Direction

BANANAS staff re-strategized their approach as follows:

- **R&R FFN Toolkit:** BANANAS will continue with the development of their original FFN toolkit that contains resources for FFN care, as described earlier
- **Parent Toolkit:** BANANAS will now add a parent toolkit that provides parents with information and tools they need to have a successful relationship with FFN caregivers. Resources include a child care agreement form, payment agreement form, how to put together a discipline policy, a child routine form, healthcare information, emergency contact form, supply checklist, and meal agreements.
- **Training for R&R/AP staff:** Since R&R/AP staff have regular meetings and trainings, they felt it would be easy

train their staff who work with and counsel parents on a regular basis. This includes going through the Parent Toolkit so that they can help parents feel comfortable engaging in a relationship with FFN caregivers.

- **Workshops for parents on FFN care:** In their series of workshops for parents, they plan to include one on choosing FFN care.
- **Present at the California R&R Network conference and meeting:** Staff from BANANAS plan to present on this work (changing R&R practices to include FFN care) at the upcoming R&R Network conference to encourage other R&R agencies to adopt this practice and share their resources.



Napa Community Resources for Children (CRC) promotes quality early learning environments and experiences for children in various settings (i.e., home, preschool, child care centers, and the community). The Toy Library & Early Learning Center (Library) is at the epicenter of Napa CRC’s programming. Through the library, Napa CRC empowers parents and caregivers with the tools they need to support their children’s learning and development.

Through their grant with the Packard Foundation, Napa CRC **engaged FFNs in using research-based bilingual early learning apps**. These are free apps that are designed to promote early learning with FFNs and the children in their care. Napa CRC reached out to FFNs in their own environments at churches, markets and community housing sites to promote the app. They provided one-on-one coaching to FFNs to help them access the apps and evaluated continued use of them through follow-up phone surveys. They also identified mentors and invite them to bring their friends to the Toy Library & Early Learning Center (Library) to explore other quality early learning opportunities. Napa CRC connected FFNs to these apps with the goal of helping them to understand the value of early learning and improve their ability to provide quality ECE activities to the children under their care.

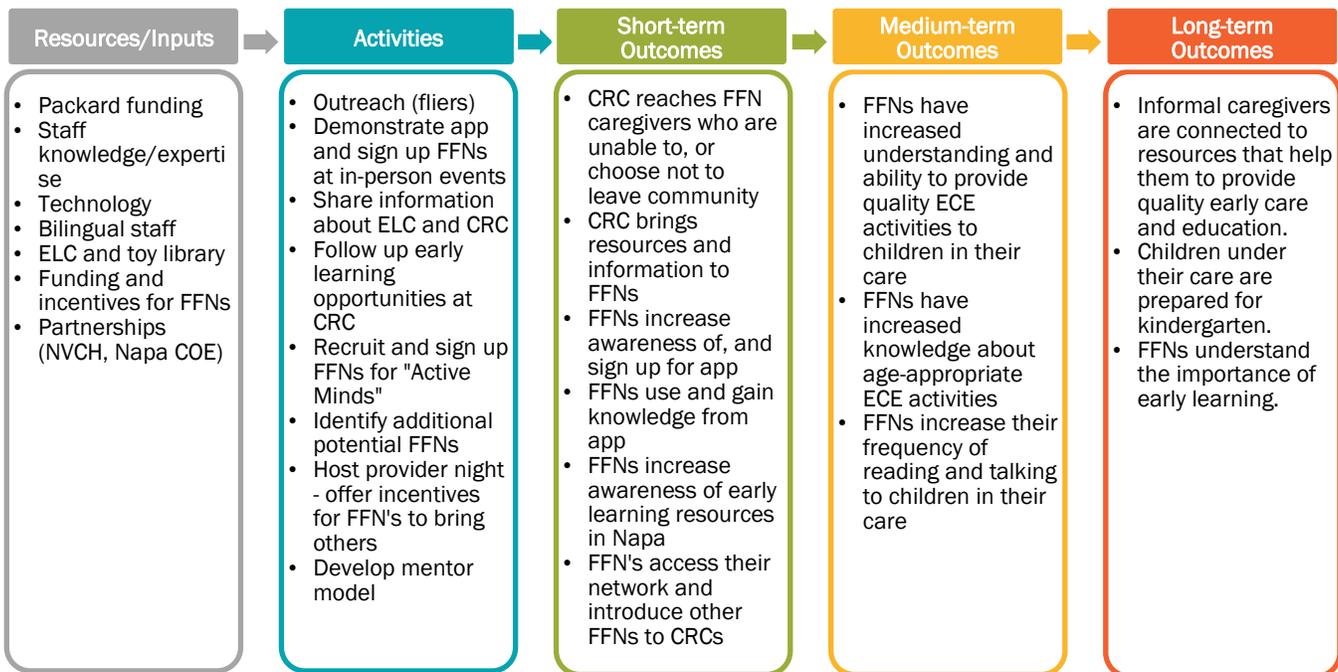


Napa CRC Logic Model

Engage R+D worked with Napa CRC to develop a strategy logic model. As displayed in Exhibit 3 below, Napa CRC articulated their core goal and identified resources, activities, and desired outcomes in the short-, medium- and long-term. They also outlined their key evaluation questions and data collection plan (not shown).

Exhibit 3. Napa CRC FFN Project Logic Model

Goal/Need Statement: FFN's understand the importance of early learning; there is improved quality of FFN care; and there is reduction in the kindergarten achievement gap.



Findings

Outreach and Recruitment

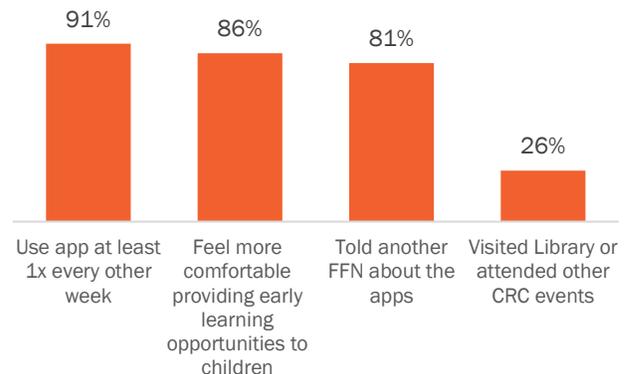
Napa CRC faced initial challenges with outreach and recruitment. They attended community events and conducted outreach to FFNs inviting them to the library, but they found that not many FFNs were coming to events or to the Library. They realized they needed to develop a more proactive recruitment approach. As one staff member at the grantee organization put it: “we knew that in order to reach providers, we had to go out and find them.” Napa CRC successfully created a formal partnership with Napa Valley Community Housing (NVCH) to assist with outreach and recruitment. Napa CRC shared information about their events with site managers at the three NVCH sites, and they also conducted trainings on the app onsite at the housing centers. Napa CRC noted that forming this partnership was critical to recruiting FFNs. Napa CRC also invited FFNs to events and the Library through text messages, phone calls, emails, and social media. In addition, the organization found that it was best to schedule events in the late afternoon or early evening to increase attendance amongst FFNs.

Use of the App by FFNs

Napa CRC provided one-on-one coaching on the apps (Footsteps to Brilliance and Vroom) to a total of **43 caregivers** (including 30 FFNs and 13 parents). These caregivers had a total of 67 children under their care. Of the caregivers reached by the program, Napa CRC had success in getting them to use the app, as detailed in the survey results shown in Exhibit 4. **Almost all FFNs surveyed (91 percent) reported using the app at least once every other week.** The vast majority (86 percent) also reported feeling more comfortable providing early learning opportunities to the children under their care as a result of using the app and 81 percent reported they told at least one other FFN caregiver about the app. However, a smaller percentage of FFNs reported engaging in other activities the app use was meant to promote – visiting the Library or attending other Napa CRC events (26 percent).

In follow-up interviews conducted by Napa CRC with two FFNs who used the app, FFNs reiterated the value of the app to their role in supporting children’s early learning. One FFN commented: *“I can keep the children entertained for a while with the learning activities on the app. I’ve also read more to them because the app offers books and songs.”* They also elaborated on the barriers they face to visiting the Library or attending other events. Both of these caregivers noted that finding the time to visit the Library, and the fact that they would have to bring the children under their care with them, were major barriers preventing them from doing so. As one FFN put it: *“I watch babies, and it’s hard for me to leave the house with the two babies and the other kids [I watch] under my care.”*

Exhibit 4. Impact of App Use on FFNs



Source: Survey of FFNs using app conducted by Napa CRC. A total of 23 out of 27 FFNs responded for a response rate of 85 percent.

Lessons Learned

A few important key lessons that Napa CRC staff learned from the grant were as follows:

- **Establishing trust with FFNs is an essential foundation from which to conduct outreach and promote use of the app. The initial challenges the organization faced around recruiting FFNs vastly improved once Napa CRC identified individuals with established relationships with FFNs who could help with outreach. With the**

partnership that Napa CRC formed with NVCH, they were able to leverage the trusting relationships that FFNs already had with NVCH staff to help promote use of the app.

- Napa CRC learned the importance of “hand holding,” and providing direct guidance to FFNs on how to use the app in order to promote its use.
- Participation in this project also helped to **build Napa CRC’s organizational capacity**. Napa CRC is now partnering with NVCH on other projects, including to provide bilingual preschool-type readiness programs for parents at the housing sites. Napa CRC as an organization is now providing more resources and information to the community in Spanish.



Next Steps for the Project

Beyond this grant, Napa CRC would like to continue reaching FFNs through community housing sites and encouraging them to attend events and visit the Library. The organization plans to continue reaching out to FFNs through text messages, emails, direct invitations, and event flyers distributed at housing sites.

In addition, to scale this program more broadly, Napa CRC has considered technology training programs for FFNs to increase their comfort level with the apps; pre-loading the apps onto tablets at the Library for FFNs to use when they visit; holding a support group for grandparents at the Library; and identifying community partners (such as pediatricians or dentists) who could also pre-load the apps onto tablets that could be used in their waiting rooms.



Key Strategy Elements

- Evidence-based bilingual early learning apps
- Training and technical assistance on use of app
- Toy Library and Early Learning Center





Go Kids, Inc. (Go Kids) enhances the lives of children and families through the delivery of comprehensive child development services and community involvement. Go Kids Community Engagement services allows them to provide families in Monterey County a broad range of direct services, including quality child care programs, community information and referral services, parenting education, early screening, assessment and intervention, and early childhood professional development support. Additionally, their FFN program provides playgroups for license-exempt child care providers. These playgroups are designed to give FFN caregivers the opportunity to build relationships with other caregivers in their community, to gather ideas from trained facilitators/mentors and from each other, to have access to child development information, and to reflect on their work with children.

Through the informal/FFN care grant from the Packard Foundation, they **expanded their FFN playgroup work to two additional communities (zip codes) in Salinas**. This project allowed Go Kids to provide more caregiver-child playgroups based on best practices in infant-family and early childhood mental health, as well as comprehensive training for playgroup facilitators.

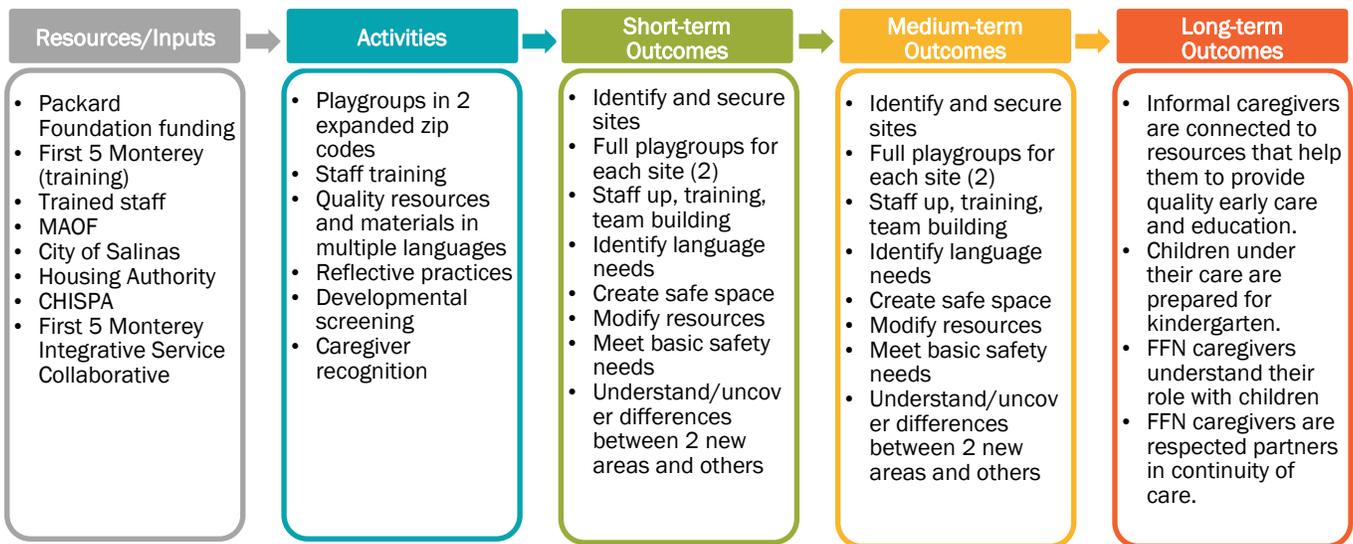


Go Kids Logic Model

Engage R+D worked with Go Kids Salinas to develop a strategy logic model. As displayed in Exhibit 5 below, Go Kids articulated their core goal and identified resources, activities, and desired outcomes in the short-, medium- and long-term. They also outlined their key evaluation questions and data collection plan (not shown).

Exhibit 5. Go Kids FFN Project Logic Model

Goal/Need Statement: Provide high quality care for children in the community that focuses on the relationship between the caregiver and child; and to address the (gap) majority of the care in the community by providing support to FFN caregivers



Findings

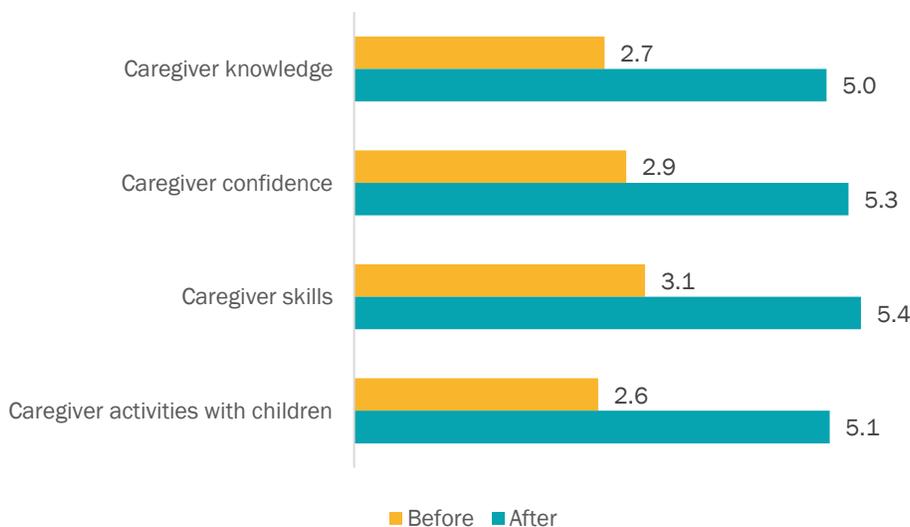
Expanding into two new communities in Salinas allowed Go Kids staff to establish new relationships with FFN caregivers beginning with community open houses in a new facility, outreach to neighborhood schools, and invitations with lawn signs for caregivers and children to come play before and after school. Two playgroups were soon established with six caregivers each. These caregivers participated in playgroups for an average of six months and attended an average of 10 sessions (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6. Average participation in Go Kids FFN playgroups, n=12

Average number of months participated	Average number of sessions attended	Average number of total hours participated
6	10	11.5

Go Kids staff used the Caregiver Ladder⁵ tool for evaluation, and caregivers reported improvements across all items/item areas as shown below in Exhibit 7.

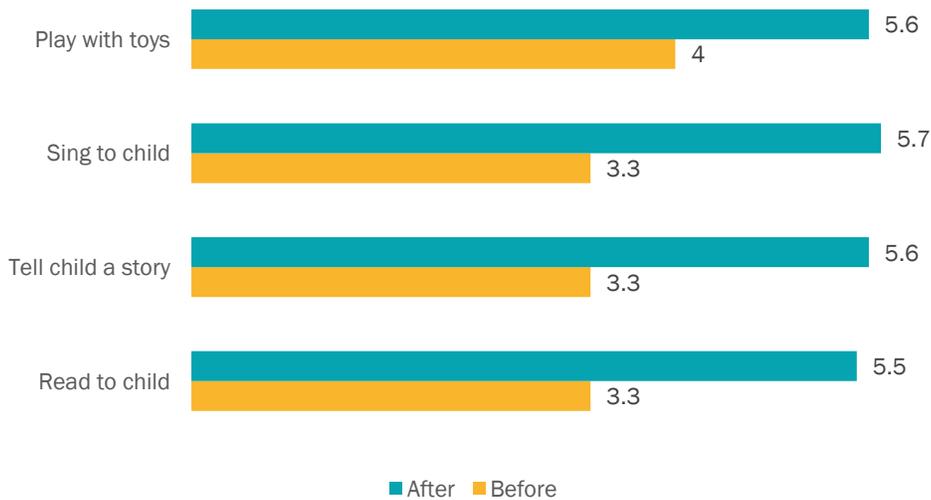
Exhibit 7. Caregiver Ladder: Before and after results by survey areas (out of a possible score of 6), n=9



FFN caregivers of these playgroups also reported an increase in the number of days per week they conducted, talk, read, sing and play activities with the children in their care (see Exhibit 8).

⁵ The Parent/Caregiver Ladder tool is retrospective pre-test developed by the University of Idaho for caregivers to report the change in their caregiving behavior during their participation in the program. The survey includes twelve items that focus on practices in the areas of knowledge, confidence, skills, and behavior. <http://first5association.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Parenting-Ladder-Eng-6.9.11.pdf>

Exhibit 8. Caregiver Ladder: Before and after results of days per week of adult-child activities, n=9



Lessons Learned

Go Kids, Inc. has become a trusted organization in the Salinas community for several years now and their lessons learned, listed below, reflect that:

- The training and ongoing reflective practice with their playgroup facilitators are just as important as the work that they do with the informal/FFN caregivers. Facilitators are carefully selected and participate in extensive trainings. Additionally, facilitators have regular reflective practice sessions.
- They are not quick to expand their playgroups. They are thoughtful about the needs of the communities/neighborhoods that they expand into and having the resources to maintain the integrity of their model.



Key Strategy Elements

- Community open house events
- 2-hour weekly playgroups
- Trained facilitators/mentors
- High quality materials and resources
- Developmental screenings

 **Next Steps for Project**



Go Kids considered this a good start to their expansion and plans to **continue their presence in this neighborhood**. Their intention is to maximize the resources they have and look for opportunities to secure new resources in order to maintain their commitment to the providers they have engaged. They have been approached by the United Way of Monterey County and the community of Greenfield (South Monterey County) about **expanding the playgroup model** to their area. They are thoughtfully considering how this might be accomplished while maintaining the integrity of their community-responsive and trust-building program model.



The Placer County Office of Education’s (PCOE) Early Childhood Education Department houses many high-quality early learning programs for children, their families, child care providers, early educators, school districts and others who provide early education and child care services. In addition to preschool classrooms, services include resource and referral, the local planning council, family child care networks, the alternative payment program, quality improvement efforts, and professional development.

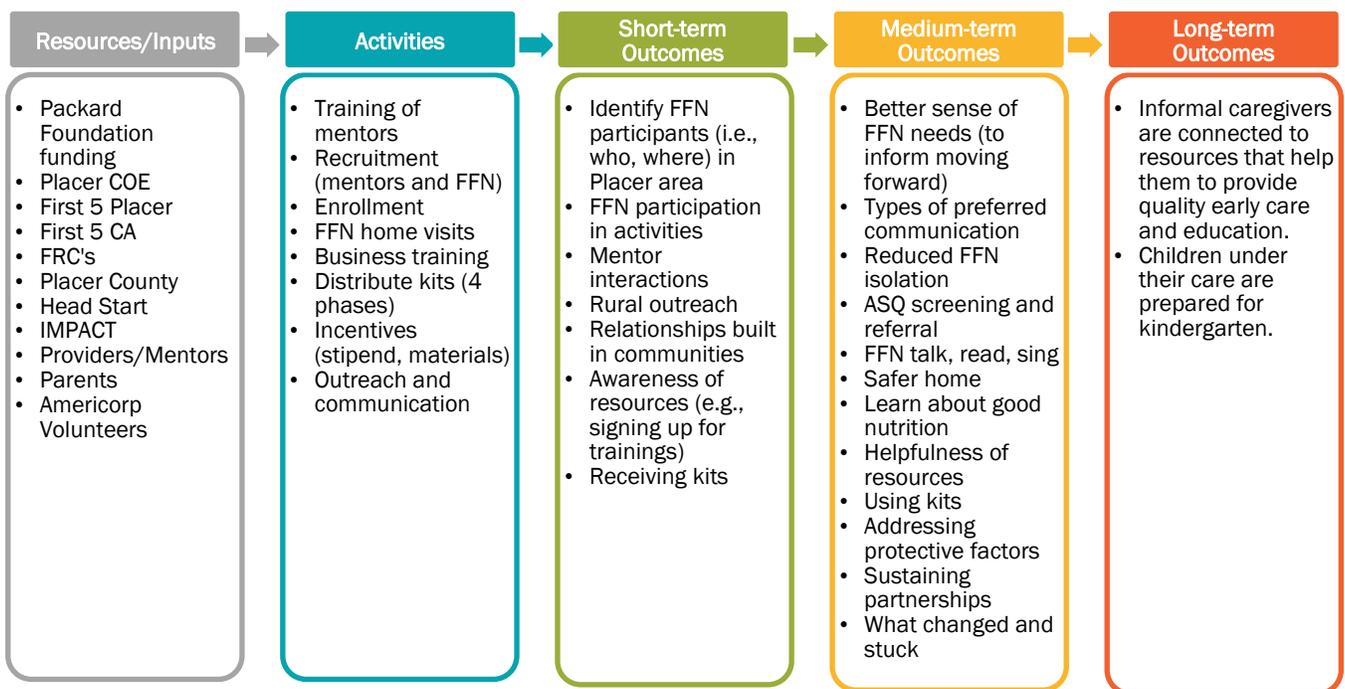
Through the Packard Foundation grant, PCOE developed a project to target low-income and Spanish speaking FFN caregivers in primarily rural areas of Placer County (and surrounding areas) to increase the quality of early learning experiences. Through this **project FFN caregivers receive four kits during home visits by trained community mentors and PCOE staff**. The kits included health/safety, literacy and school readiness activities, community resources, social/emotional behavior resources, and online resources. The long term goal is that every person providing FFN care has the information, materials and resources they need to make sure children in their care are safe, healthy, learning and ready for school.

 **PCOE Logic Model**

Engage R+D worked with PCOE to develop a strategy logic model. As displayed in Exhibit 9 below, PCOE articulated their core goal and identified resources, activities, and desired outcomes in the short-, medium- and long-term. They also outlined their key evaluation questions and data collection plan (not shown).

Exhibit 9. PCOE FFN Project Logic Model

Goal/Need Statement: We reach FFN caregivers in Placer County; change how FFNs interact with children in their care; and FFNs recognize their importance and value.



Findings

PCOE enrolled 52 FFN caregivers in their project. These FFN caregivers were friends, foster parents, grandparents and other relatives as displayed in Exhibit 10 below.

Exhibit 10. Types of FFN caregivers

Type of FFN	Number*
Friend	21
Grandmother	20
Aunt	9
Grandfather	2
Foster parent	1
Nanny	1
Great Grandmother	1

*Some caregivers cared for both friend and relative so numbers will not add up to 52

Additionally, **ten mentors** were trained to participate in this project. Through these mentors, VISTA volunteers and PCOE staff, **202 FFN themed kits were distributed, 224 books were distributed and 232 ASQs were administered.** More importantly, **227 interactions between FFN caregivers and mentors were logged.** Examples of these interactions included demonstrating talk, read, sing activities and phone apps; demonstrating shared book reading; and discussions regarding challenging behaviors. A full list of interactions recorded in the mentor logs are shown in Exhibit 11.

Exhibit 11. Types of interactions between mentor and FFN caregiver

Mentor-FFN interactions

Initial telephone contact
Getting to know each other
Reviewing kit contents
Demonstrating activities
Demonstrating talk, read, sing activities and phone apps
Demonstrating shared book reading
Discussion regarding any concerns, questions or needs
Discussion regarding challenging behaviors
Discussion about community resources and family needs
Email flyers for workshops and playgroups
CPR reminders
“How are you doing?” check-ins

When FFN caregivers were asked how their caregiving practices changed, their responses reflected the ways in which they increased or improved how they interacted with the children in their care. They responded as follows:

“I am more in tune with how they are feeling and helping them understand the emotions.”

“I read more books to my grandchild. He loves the interactions.”

“I’ve learned to interact several different ways not only with items received by PCOE, but several of my own. I use this to give the child several perspectives in a fun atmosphere”

“My grandkids love for me to read books and have games after each book I read to them. We also sing with the singing book we got from the program”

Lessons Learned

PCOE described how this informal/FFN care project, in particular, was successful because it was more inclusive of the community with more offerings. Lessons learned included the following:

- While a previous project had a narrow focus on the Alternative Payment license-exempt list, this project was inclusive of a diverse array of informal care/FFN caregivers – rural families, grandparents, other relatives – which contributed to its success.
- One successful outreach strategy was to access the wait list of parents waiting or a subsidized child care/preschool slot. They realized that those parents still needed child care and were most likely using informal/FFN care.
- The FFN caregivers “loved the mentors.” FFNs felt supported, by mentors that had empathy, knowledge, and experience from where they were coming from. FFNs reported that mentors provided a feeling of community and they had someone to call. Mentors were recruited from Head Start, State preschool staff, and licensed family child care.



Key Strategy Elements

- 4 themed kits with children’s books: Health/Safety; School Activities; Community Resources; Social-Emotional Behavior resources
- Trained mentors
- Home visits
- ASQ
- Stipend upon completion



Next Steps for the Project

Next steps for PCOE include **formalizing their materials such as training tools, protocols and documents** and create a manual that can be used by others who wish to implement the program. They also want to follow up on ASQ/ASQ-SE results. Finally, they would like to begin a **“2nd tier” or go deeper with the initial group of FFN providers** who are interested in continuing this program for another year. Ideas include a numeracy topic, a grandparent café, and a behaviors workshop.



Visión y Compromiso is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of under-resourced and under-represented communities by providing support, training and leadership development. At the center of their programming is the promotora model: culturally-competent community liaisons engaged with county agencies and community-based programs who can help reduce barriers and connect participants to services.

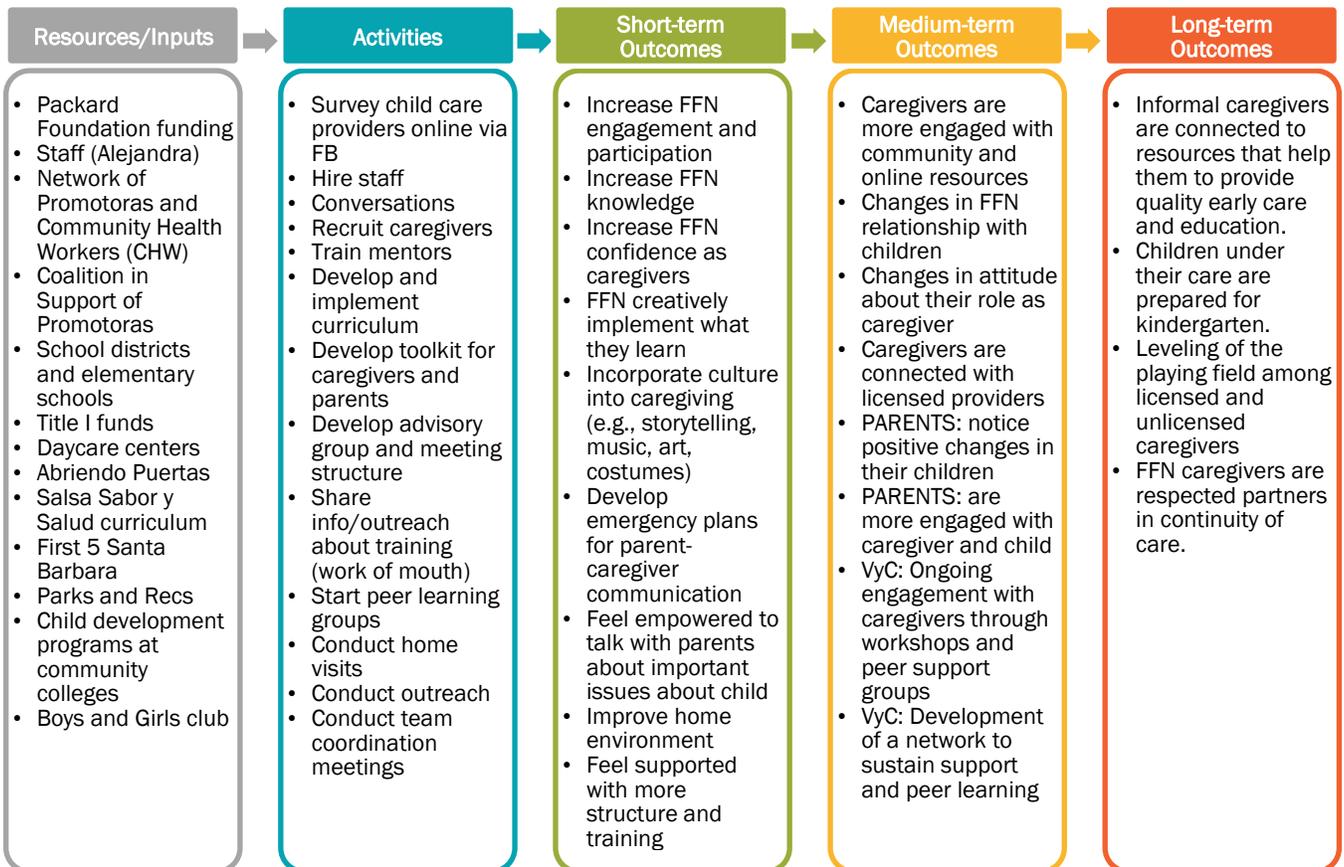
Through their community involvement, Visión y Compromiso found that many of their promotoras were informal caregivers and, as trained community leaders, had the capacity to identify others who were caring for young children. With the Packard Foundation grant, Visión y Compromiso **designed the Family Caregiver Project providing training, a peer support group, toolkit, and home visits to help caregivers in Santa Barbara County improve the quality of their interactions with children ages 0-5.** The project aimed to increase informal caregivers’ skills and understanding while connecting them to social support and local resources.

Visión y Compromiso Logic Model

Engage R+D worked with Visión y Compromiso to develop a strategy logic model. As displayed in Exhibit 12 below, Visión y Compromiso articulated their core goal and identified resources, activities, and desired outcomes in the short-, medium- and long-term. They also outlined their key evaluation questions and data collection plan (not shown).

Exhibit 12. Visión y Compromiso FFN Project Logic Model

Goal/Need Statement: Informal/FFN caregivers are supported to care for others and their self; every caregiver is the best they can be through quality materials and messages; and caregivers have the skills and understand their value to improve their caregiving capacity.



Findings

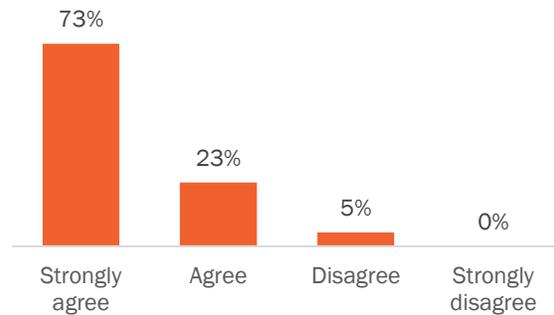
Family Caregiver Project Trainings

To support informal caregivers, Visión y Compromiso designed a series of skill-strengthening trainings. The comprehensive curriculum was tailored to the needs of the providers by involving participants at each stage of the process, from fielding a needs assessment survey on social media to facilitating a series of conversations to identify training topics. This feedback led to 48 hours of training that included such topics as caregiver roles, child development, self-care, emergency preparedness, coordinating with parents, identifying community resources, and more. By combining licensed and unlicensed child care providers in the same training, providers were able to learn from each other.

Visión y Compromiso evaluated the trainings by asking participants to complete a survey about their experiences. As a result of the training series, 95% of participants reported that they felt better prepared to work as a caregiver (Exhibit 13). “I was given many tools to put into practice with the children,” reported one caregiver. Many participants found the trainings

on **emergency preparedness** (44%) and **discipline without punishment** (40%) to be the most relevant to their work. As a result of the training, **more than half of participants said they planned to do more activities that expand children’s intelligence** and about a **third said they plan to use the tools and agreements from the training to foster effective communication with parents**.

Exhibit 13. “As a result of the training, I feel better prepared to work as a care provider”



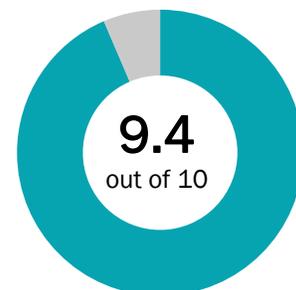
Family Caregiver Project Support Group

To further support caregivers, Visión y Compromiso led three 8-week support groups, two in Spanish and one for the Mixteco-speaking community. Engage R+D helped Visión y Compromiso evaluate the support groups using pre and post surveys of participants.

Overall, participants rated the group highly and reported feeling more confident after taking part. When asked how much they had benefited from the support group on a scale from 1 to 10 participants rated it, on average, a 9.4 out of 10 (Exhibit 14). Many participants reported that the support group **helped them to work with parents and gave them an opportunity to learn from their peers**.

While their confidence was relatively high before the group, on average participants reported feeling even more confident after participating. The areas of highest growth were ensuring that activities are bi-culturally appropriate, implementing activities that support the “Nine Intelligences⁶,” and providing an

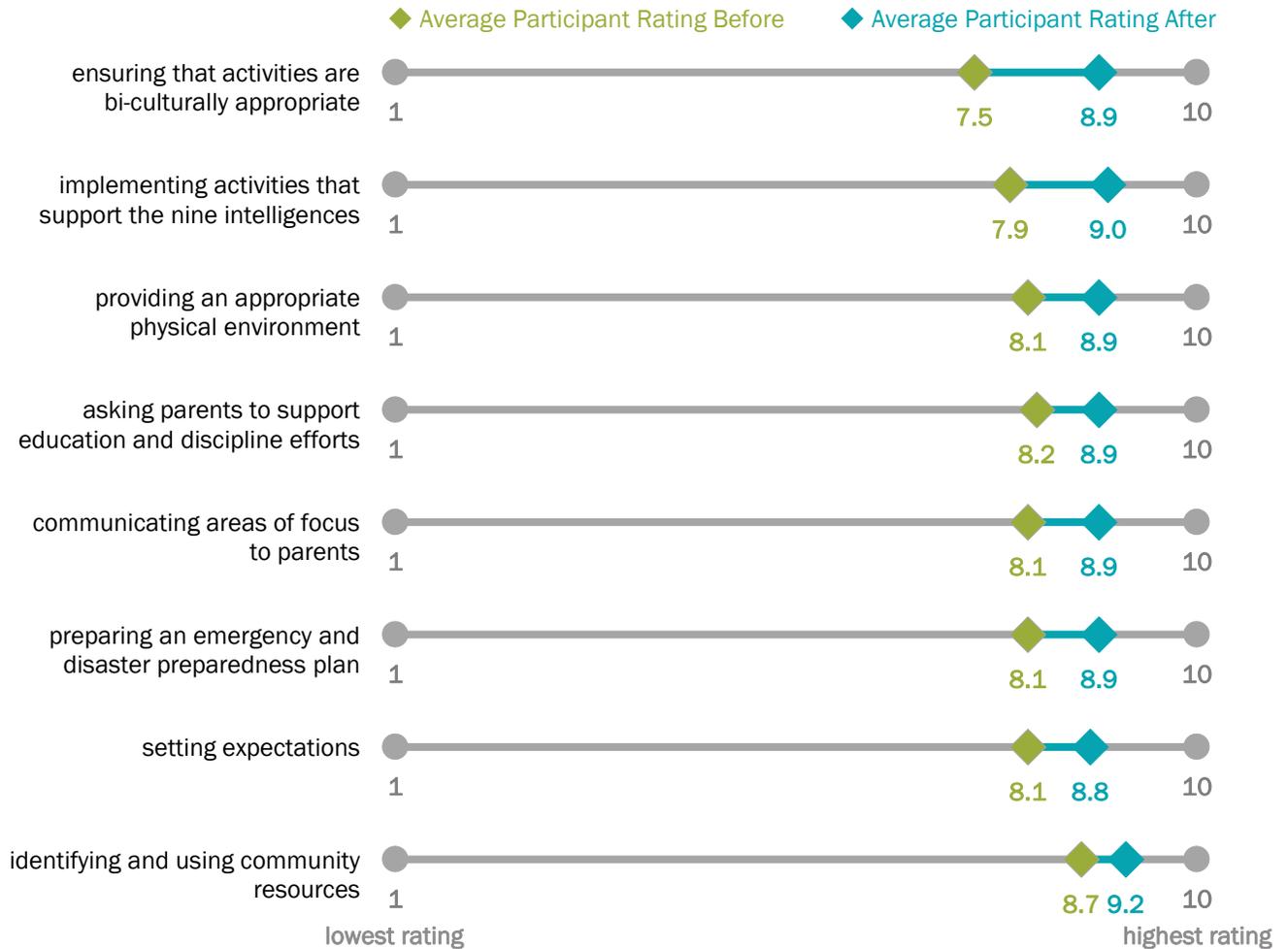
Exhibit 14. Average participant rating of support group



⁶ <http://multipleintelligencesoasis.org/about/>

appropriate physical environment for the children for whom they provide care. Exhibit 15 shows the average difference in participants' ratings before and after the group, listed in order from the areas of largest to smallest change.

Exhibit 15. Key Focus Areas*



*Averages were rounded to the nearest tenth of a point.

Lessons Learned

Key lessons learned through the implementation of this FFN project for Visión y Compromiso included the following:

- Through the family caregiver trainings it was important for the caregivers to see themselves as teachers and to value that role. Visión y Compromiso staff saw that by caregivers participating in 48 hours of training they felt more prepared and empowered to **teach** the children in their care.
- The family caregiver support groups led in Spanish and Mixteco were not only important in boosting the caregivers' confidence, but also uncovered their **own self-care needs**. They realized that to provide good care they needed to also take good care of themselves.
- An area that concerned caregivers and that was addressed in the trainings and support groups was **communicating with the parents** of children in their care – both communicating about the child's development,

and their own needs as caregivers such as pay, a schedule, and emergency contact information. This led to the development of tools such as talking points and templates for contracts.



Next Steps for the Family Caregiver Project

To continue with this project, Visión y Compromiso is creating a toolbox for providers that includes resources such as links to educational pages, emergency services, community resources, and medical forms. The toolbox is hosted on Facebook, where providers can share resources with one another and stay connected. Furthermore, at least one of the three support groups plan to continue meeting in-person on a regular basis.



Key FFN Strategy Elements

- Promotora caregiver training (48 hours)
- Peer support group (8 weeks)
- Home visits
- Toolkit

Key Learnings

All the Informal/FFN Care grantees and their projects demonstrated that, without a doubt, they were meeting a critical need in their early childhood community landscapes. The first year/cohort of the FFN testing and learning evaluation lifted **six key characteristics of promising and/or successful projects**. Those characteristics included the following:

- They are based in and **use evidence-based practices**.
- They are delivered or organized by a **credible and trusted source in the community**.
- They allocate a significant amount of resources towards **outreach and it is active and ongoing**.
- They help **reduce isolation** and connect or **anchor FFN caregivers to a “community.”**
- They have knowledgeable **mentors or facilitators** that guide FFN caregivers.
- They recognize and emphasize their **value as caregivers** to children.

The work of this second cohort of grantees further confirmed the above findings such as the use of **evidence based practices** by Go Kids in their playgroups and Community Resources for Children with their apps; the delivery of services by a **credible and trusted organization** like the Placer County Office of Education and BANANAS; the creative and **ongoing outreach** by all grantees; creating a **supportive caregiver community** like the promotora-led support groups of Visión y Compromiso; and the use of knowledgeable, trained **mentors and facilitators** like PCOE, Go Kids and Visión y Compromiso. New insights were also gained, as outlined below. *(For a full summary of grantee strategy characteristics, see the table at the end of this section.)*



What More Did We Learn?

- **Focus on diverse populations/communities through targeted outreach.** Grantee organizations recognized very specific needs in their communities and tailored their outreach to these groups. Visión y Compromiso, for example, saw that many of their promotoras who work with the Spanish- and Mixteco-speaking communities were also FFN caregivers. These promotoras, therefore were the key to their outreach. Go Kids focused on specific zip codes/neighborhoods in Salinas and held open house events through the neighborhood schools and strategically placed lawn signs. PCOE used their R&R/AP waitlist to identify FFN caregivers or families who may use FFN caregivers that live in rural areas of their county.
- **Use trained mentors that reflect the community to enhance how the program is received.** The mentors and facilitators that were part of the grantee programs were often experienced FFN caregivers, current and former licensed caregivers, and early learning program staff that additionally came from the same cultural background and/or community as the FFN caregivers themselves. FFN service providers and caregivers remarked about the valuable relationships that were formed between caregivers and mentors that helped with learning and continued participation. Additionally, as a part of many of these projects (Go Kids, PCOE, VyC and BANANAS) was a training component for mentors and facilitators to work with FFN caregivers. This may be a good component to any early learning professional development program. As BANANAS discovered, they needed to increase the awareness and knowledge among their staff of FFN as a care option and thus enhanced their trainings and workshops.
- **Consistent participation in FFN programs helps to improve FFN caregiver learning.** Through their evaluations, grantees reported increased learning following FFNs' consistent participation in their programs such as regular use of apps (Napa CRC); participation in playgroups over several months, sessions and hours (Go Kids); completion of a series of home visits and receipt of kits (PCOE); and attending weekly FFN support groups

(VyC). Participants reported increased confidence in their skills as caregivers, increased knowledge of developmentally appropriate activities, and ability to advocate for their needs with parents. Many of these funded projects offered programs that were a series of sessions versus one-time events.



What is Quality in the FFN Setting?

A definition and standards for quality in the FFN setting have not yet been established. All grantees have continued to use a combination of best practices and experience from other early learning work to develop and test FFN projects. When these service provider grantees were asked to describe what quality in the FFN setting looks like, three themes emerged from their responses.

1. **Nurturing adult-child interactions.** Grantees stated that the most important indicator of quality, and what they look for in the implementation of their programs, is the quality of the interactions between the caregiver and child. They described that a caregiver should be concerned with the “emotional wellbeing” of the child, provide “love in the home,” and demonstrate “nurturing interactions.” As service providers described,

“Quality care in the FFN setting can be described as positive, warm, and responsive child and adult interactions and relationships while providing engaging and stimulating age-appropriate learning opportunities to the child. Quality care is about giving FFNs the tools and knowledge, so they can encourage the learning within their own environment, of the children under their care.”

“It comes down to the relationship with the kiddo - [the] quality of that interaction. [Programs have] been able to put high quality materials in the hands of kids and adults, but at the end of the day it’s about that attachment and shared joy.”

2. **Access to quality resources.** The resources described by grantees included both necessary resources (i.e., food, car seats) and, as these programs demonstrated well, high quality, age-appropriate learning resources. These resources also need to be packaged and delivered in ways that work for the FFN setting including materials always/predictably being available at playgroups; portable and organized kits; materials brought to home visits; uncomplicated apps; multiple languages. One grantee stated the following:

“The project presented information, created dialogue and reflection with the FFN caregivers to improve the dynamics in each of these [FFN settings] and improve the caregiver’s ability to understand and respond to the needs generated within each one.”

3. **Safety.** Often safety is something that many of these programs address first as an entry point of FFNs to their programs or as an incentive with free safety materials as part of their outreach. Interestingly, safety was framed by service providers as a quality element that meets the immediate needs of parents and FFN caregivers so that they do not worry. Once they address this, they can move on to the other areas of quality as described above and throughout this report. In many cases health and safety is also a requirement to receive child care vouchers. The cost of implementing safety measures can often be a barrier to caregivers and families so programs that can offer these resources, such as the health and safety kit of the PCOE project, can bring relief to FFN caregivers.



Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The evaluation of this work strives to continue learning and building the evidence base for informal/FFN setting child care. Our lessons and recommendations include the following:

- **Continue the FFN Service Provider Learning Community.** It is a rare opportunity for these community grantees

to come together to exclusively focus on Informal/FFN care; further many do not have the time and resources to learn about what others in their field are doing, or even to pause and reflect on their own work. The webinar and grantee convening this past year generated momentum for learning from each other and reflection. We recommend continuing this learning community with themed webinars and another convening. The hope is that this can also accelerate the spread of good ideas.

- **Testing Measurement of Quality in the FFN Setting.** As demonstrated by two cohorts of testing and learning grantees, the innovative work happening in these communities are beginning to set a standard for quality in FFN quality care. We recommend the exploration of a project to address the need for a greater understanding of the quality of care children receive in the FFN setting and for measures that are appropriate to assess quality in these settings. Settings may include playgroups and library story time groups designed specifically for FFN caregivers and children. The hope is that this kind of study will provide a more robust picture of caregiver-child interaction quality in out-of-home FFN settings through assessments.
- **Support experiments with evaluation.** We have learned that in an emergent field not only is it important to support exploratory experiments, but to also provide evaluation support so that there is continuous learning for grantees, funders and evaluators. With a quick grant cycle of 1 year, there is also a quick turnaround of data to learn from what did not work and to lift up promising strategies whether they be outreach, partnerships, learning strategies, and learning communities. The lean data approach has allowed us to capitalize on data that they already collect or add on to existing data systems; develop logic models; and conduct quick interviews at strategic points of the project.



Summary of Grantees and Their Strategies

Strategy and program	Evidence base	Credible trusted pathway	Outreach	Connection	Mentors, facilitators	Expansion or Scaling
FFN Toolkit for Resource and Referral agencies - BANANAS	California Child Care Resource and Referral resources	Resource and Referral (R&R) agencies	Leverage R&R staff relationships with parents and caregivers.	Counseling sessions with R&R staff, parent workshops, caregiver workshops	Trained R&R staff	<i>Present at the CA R&R Network conference and share/distribute kit through thumb drives; promotion through webinars</i>
FFN use of early education apps – Community Resources for Children, Napa	Footsteps to Brilliance and Vroom apps	Napa’s early learning center and lending library	Establish partnership with Napa Valley Community Housing to reach families that use FFN care.	Coaching and training on the apps at the CRC Lending Library.	CRC and Community Housing staff.	<i>Formalize app/technology training at the CRC Library and pre-load apps on Library tablets</i>
Neighborhood-based FFN playgroups - Go Kids, Inc.	Strengthening Families Initiative; Infant-Family Early Childhood Mental Health; First 5 Quality Enhancement Framework	Go Kids in Salinas and neighborhood elementary school	Neighborhood-centered open house events and lawn signs	Consistent, weekly, 2-hour playgroups; reflective practice sessions; materials available in multiple languages	Knowledgeable, trained, bi-lingual-bi-cultural playgroup facilitators.	<i>Continue expansion in current neighborhoods, expand to other communities based on need and sufficient resources.</i>
Themed tool kits and mentors – Placer County Office of Education	Early literacy principles (e.g., dialogic reading), CLASS, PITC, Talk Read Sing Initiative	Placer County Office of Education, First 5 Placer County	R&R waitlist for subsidized child care, flyers, social media, schools, libraries	Consistent series of 4-5 home visits to receive kits from mentors who are similar to them	Knowledgeable, trained mentors recruited from Head Start, State preschool and family child care	<i>Formalize materials into a manual for others who want to implement, addition of new tool kit on numeracy</i>
Promotora caregiver training and support – Family Caregiver Project, Visión y Compromiso	9 Intelligences	Visión y Compromiso	Network of Promotores and Community Health Workers	8-week peer support groups following 48-hr. caregiver training – in Spanish and Mixteco	Promotora leaders and culturally competent staff of Visión y Compromiso	<i>Develop community leadership and identify more caregivers</i>