LGP Community Plan for the Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington

LGP Information

LGP name: Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington, Inc., a Local Governance Partner
Town(s) included: Southington
Primary LNA contact person: Joanne Kelleher
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LGP Fiduciary approval: Joeline Wruck, Community Foundation of Greater New Britain.
Date submitted to Shine: November 20, 2026

Background

The Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington (ECCS) is the Local Governance Partner (LGP) under the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood's Early Start CT initiative. Our mission is "collaborating to ensure Southington's children are healthy and prepared to learn through advocacy, programs, resources, and support." The ECCS recently celebrated twenty years of serving the community.

The ECCS completed a Strategic Plan in October 2025 with three primary goals: 1) to ensure that ECCS continues to meet the needs of young children and their families; 2) to address how ECCS can incorporate the new roles and responsibilities as a Local Governance Partner of the OEC; and 3) to ensure a sustainable future for the organization through funding, board leadership and sufficient staffing. In undertaking the planning process, five focus areas were adopted, see www.southingtonearlychildhood.org/strategic-plan/. The first two focus areas - Outreach & Family Engagement and Community Engagement - overlap with the ECCS's work as the LGP and the Community Plan. The other three areas - Sustainability, Board/Governance and Staffing/Organizational Capacity - will enable the ECCS to continue to do this work but are outside of the scope of this Community Plan.

Community Plan Development

The LGP Community Plan for the Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington was developed from September to November 2026. It is based on the Community Needs Assessment that was completed in June 2026 which is available at www.southingtonearlychildhood.org/local-needs-assessment/.

The ECCS Community Table met three times during this period to work on the Plan:

- September – The three focus areas identified during the Needs Assessment were confirmed.
- October – Action steps for each focus area were confirmed. Issues were identified and discussed.
- November – The draft plan was reviewed and feedback solicited.

Feedback on an early draft of the plan was solicited by the ECCS liaison from CREC and a later draft was sent to CREC.

Focus Area 1

Focus Area 1: Where is your LGP focusing its efforts and how does it connect to LNA findings?	Support Children's needs Offer and/or promote education opportunities specifically addressing behavioral management, social-emotional needs and emotional regulation, screen time strategies and special needs. Both families and early childhood educators report that these are challenge areas. Also support ongoing health/safety initiatives and kindergarten and preK readiness, registration and transition.
Action Steps: What specific steps will your LGP take to make progress achievable? Action steps should be specific enough to guide implementation while allowing flexibility to adjust as new data and conditions emerge. **(i.e., SMART objective or goal)**	**Parent Education & Support:** • Host at least 6 parent education sessions, including Parent Book Club sessions/discussions (e.g., Tiny Humans Big Emotions, No-Drama Discipline, Raising a Kid Who Can) and a dedicated Parent Night at Margaret Griffin Child Development Center between August 2026 and June 2027 to equip at least 60 parents with behavioral and emotional regulation tools. • Purchase books for parents and children on these topics for donation to the Southington Public Library, Family Resource Center of Southington, Margaret Griffin Child Development Center and Early Childhood Collaborative by January 2027. • Distribute and support Conscious Discipline licenses to interested families and early childhood educators/providers by June 2027 to promote consistent social-emotional strategies across home and care settings. • Plan similar parent education activities for July 2027 to June 2028. Quantity and scope to be based on funding received, which impacts staff capacity, and feedback on 2026-2027 events. **PreK/Kindergarten Readiness & Transition:** Execute the Spring 2027 Kindergarten Readiness plan (with additional funding from Stocker Foundation), including:

	• Speaking at Southington Public Schools (SPS) District's Kindergarten Registration Info Night in March 2027 • Promoting PreK and Kindergarten readiness and registration information through August 2027 via advertising, social media, newsletter and website. Exhibit at Library's annual PreK Showcase in November 2026. Work with District to determine if a Kindergarten Readiness workshop or video will be offered this spring. • Work with SPS Administration to distribute book and math kits to incoming Kindergarten families by May 2027. Historically, 450 of each are purchased. • Start work towards establishing a standardized PreK-to-K student data-sharing process with SPS. **Accessible Resources & Outreach:** • Exhibit at community events (at least 6 per year) such as Touch-a-Truck, Family Fun Day and holiday celebrations and at the Farmers Market (at least 6 each summer). Hold ECCS office hours at the Library and the ECCS office (at least 8 per year) • Translate the ECCS brochure into Spanish for the Registrar and Town Clerk's offices by December 2026 • Publish/distribute a comprehensive printed resource guide on raising young children in Southington by May 2027. • Share digital resources on these topics via the website, social media (25-40 per month), and monthly newsletter • Partner with Southington Police Department on Car Seat Safety initiatives including at least one car seat safety check event per year, distribution of emergency contact stickers at community events and car seat safety outreach. • Cross-promote community events (YMCA, Library, Youth Services, Special Ed parent group, etc.) as notified about them
Current Reality, Challenges, or Barriers: What conditions or constraints could	**Funding:** Support for all of these projects is set through June 2027, but unknown beyond that.

affect implementation?	**Staffing Constraints:** The ECCS's Executive Director, who also serves as the LGP liaison, is paid for 24 hours a week and is supported by a part-time marketing admin and three Parent Ambassadors. Volunteers assist with community outreach and special projects. **Data Sharing Constraints:** • PreK providers currently cannot share transition "report cards", trauma/behavior issues or developmental evaluations directly with SPS without signed release forms from parents. There is no process for the district to accept this information and share with the appropriate school or teacher. • There is no state-wide way to assign student IDs prior to a child enrolling in their school district. **Unidentified/Hidden Needs:** Children are entering PreK and Kindergarten with unaddressed behavioral or developmental needs that catch schools off guard. An example of this that has changed over time is toileting readiness. Parents may be hesitant to share concerns due to fear of labeling, lack of recognition of atypical behavior, or stigma. **Parent/Family Barriers:** • Families are both overwhelmed with the amount of information being shared with them and also don't know where to look for resources. With so many activities it is hard to know what is important. • Some families report that they struggle with paying for extracurricular activities. • The ECCS has limited availability of fully translated materials or bilingual staff for non-English speaking families navigating registration and early childhood resources.
Resources Needed: What resources (people, funding, partnerships, data, support) will your	**Funding:** • Continued LGP funding beyond June 2027 at a level that supports required work, including staffing, operational expenses and quality enhancement activities.

LGP need and use to advance the work?	• Replacement funding for the Stocker Foundation grant (which covers the kindergarten readiness and literacy initiatives in the 2026–2027 school year and ECCS is ineligible for renewal in 2027–2028). • Current grant from the Bradley Henry Barnes & Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust at the Main Street Community Foundation to support health/safety initiatives, including car seat safety, expires in December 2026. The renewal application was submitted in October 2026 and notification will be received in December. **People & Partnerships:** • Funders – OEC/Shine, Community Foundation of Greater New Britain, Stocker Foundation • Professional translation services or native-language volunteer editors to verify machine translations • SPS administration for Kindergarten Readiness & Transition activities. • SPS and childcare providers to streamline student information sharing and support state-wide advocacy efforts on this issue. • Town Clerk's office to distribute brochures/letters and new resource guide to parents picking up birth certificates • Social Service organizations - Southington Youth Services, Southington Police Department, South-Central Health District, Calendar House, YMCA, Southington Public Library, and other community organizations for exhibiting, sharing event info and resources. **Data & Materials:** • Information to be included in resource guide. • Way to identify/track students from preK to K. Note this is on the 2027 advocacy agenda of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance and CT369.
Plan for Progress Monitoring: How will	**Review and Reporting:** • Review plan at ECCS LGP Community Table meetings held 6 times a year

your LGP know you've met its goal? How will progress be reviewed and discussed over time, and how will adjustments be made as needed?	• Quarterly LGP Programmatic Reports. **Metrics Tracked:** • Number of book club/workshop registrations vs. attendees and post-event survey ratings • Number of Conscious Discipline licenses activated and used. • Number of books and mini math kits provided to SPS for Kindergarten families. • Number of cars and seats checked at car seat safety events. • Statistics about social media outreach and newsletter distribution/open rates. • Other metrics as required in LGP reports. **Adjustments:** • If staff time is limited, recruit other volunteers to help with community outreach. • If parent attendance at evening events is low, shift remaining sessions to virtual or weekend formats and adjust topics based on feedback.

Focus Area 2

Focus Area 2: Where is your LGP focusing its efforts and how does it connect to LNA findings?	Support Mental Health needs of children, families and childcare providers • Share resources and educational information. • Work to decrease mental health stigma. • Encourage and share opportunities for community connection and socialization. Addressing mental health, including anxiety, depression and trauma, is an ongoing need for people of all ages. This was seen in the 2 ECCS surveys, the 2020 and 2025 ECCS Strategic Plans and Hartford Healthcare's Community Health Needs Assessment. Families are reporting they are not connected to others in the community which increases isolation.

Action Steps: What specific steps will your LGP take to make progress achievable? Action steps should be specific enough to guide implementation while allowing flexibility to adjust as new data and conditions emerge. **(i.e., SMART objective or goal)**	**Education and Support:** • Incorporate community connection opportunities and mental health topics into activities planned under Focus Area 1 to increase social support networks among families. • Promote mental health resources to childcare providers for both staff and the families they care for via email and the closed Southington Early Childhood Educators Facebook group. **Stigma Reduction & Awareness Campaign:** • Through June 2027, utilize digital channels (website, newsletter, social media) to share monthly mental health education, reducing stigma and promoting local wellness programs. • Incorporate mental health resources in the printed resource guide being developed as part of Focus Area 1 by May 2027. • Share mental health resources when exhibiting at other community events and office hours as part of Focus Area 1 throughout year. **State & Local System Collaboration:** • Maintain active participation at quarterly Southington Behavioral Health and Social Service Stakeholders meetings and in Southington Interfaith Clergy Association meetings (held 6-8 times a year). • Exhibit at the annual W.I.S.E. Mental Health Block Party scheduled for May 2027. • Integrate materials from CT's "Big Work Happens Here" infant mental health initiative into digital channels (website, newsletter, social media) through 2027.
Current Reality, Challenges, or Barriers: What conditions or constraints could affect implementation?	**Funding:** Support for all of these projects is set through June 2027, but unknown beyond that. **Staffing Constraints:** The ECCS's Executive Director, who also serves as the LGP liaison, is paid for 24 hours a week and is supported by a part-time marketing admin and three Parent Ambassadors. Volunteers assist with community outreach and special projects.

	Cost Barriers: Southington offers strong community enrichment opportunities, but program fees often create a financial barrier for lower- and moderate-income families, increasing feelings of isolation. **Stigma & Awareness:** Ongoing societal stigma around mental health prevents families and providers from seeking early interventions or attending dedicated support sessions. **Provider Burnout:** Early childhood providers face high stress and low wages, with minimal time or access to mental health supports tailored for educators.
Resources Needed: What resources (people, funding, partnerships, data, support) will your LGP need and use to advance the work?	**Funding:** • Continued LGP funding beyond June 2027 at a level that supports required work, including staffing, operational expenses and quality enhancement activities. • Current grant from the Bradley Henry Barnes & Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust at the Main Street Community Foundation to support health/safety initiatives expires in December 2026. The renewal application was submitted in October 2026 and notification will be received in December. • Ability to request Main Street Community Foundation's Immediate Response Funds for families in need to remove fee barriers for community enrichment. **Partnerships:** • Funders – OEC/Shine, Community Foundation of Greater New Britain, Main Street Community Foundation • Local childcare providers and SPS District • Mental health educational organizations – CT-AIMH and Team Baby CT, First Congregational Church's W.I.S.E. mental health team, CT Clearinghouse, Southington Behavioral Health and Social Service Stakeholders • Healthcare providers - Hartford HealthCare, Cornerstone Counseling, and others focused on postpartum and mental health. • Social Service organizations - Southington Youth Services, Southington Public Library, and others.

	Materials: • Printed copies of Southington Behavioral Health Resource Guide (produced by So. Behavioral Health Outreach Coordinator at Wheeler Clinic). • Printed mental health materials from CT Clearinghouse.
Plan for Progress Monitoring: How will your LGP know you've met its goal? How will progress be reviewed and discussed over time, and how will adjustments be made as needed?	**Review and Reporting:** • Review plan at ECCS LGP Community Table meetings held 6 times a year • Quarterly LGP Programmatic Reports. **Metrics Tracked:** • Attendance and feedback at community connection and parent mental health events. • Web traffic/click-through rates on mental health resource guides and "Big Work Happens Here" links. • Documentation of meeting participation, resource exchanges, and joint initiatives. **Adjustments:** Adjust information shared as new research or materials become available.

Focus Area 3

Focus Area 3: Where is your LGP focusing its efforts and how does it connect to LNA findings?	Improve quality and affordable childcare • Provide advice, resources and/or training to the providers who want to apply for Early Start, become accredited, increase their Elevate level and/or improve the quality of their program. • Promote Care4Kids to families. • Educate families about how to identify quality care and how that ties to accreditation and the Elevate program. • Advocate for quality and affordable care.

	Finding affordable care is difficult as Care4Kids is underutilized and there are only 45 Early Start spots in town compared to over 2600 children age 5 and under and a ALICE rate of 26%. Of the 24 providers surveyed in spring 2026, 1 is currently accredited by NAEYC, two are working on it and one other is interested. One Family childcare is interested in NAFCC accreditation. Four are interested in moving to the Elevate Member+ level. Despite 10 childcare providers and 1 pediatrician having their own unique SPARKLER code the parent utilization of SPARKER was lower than expected.
Action Steps: What specific steps will your LGP take to make progress achievable? Action steps should be specific enough to guide implementation while allowing flexibility to adjust as new data and conditions emerge. **(i.e., SMART objective or goal)**	**Provider Technical Assistance & Training:** • Host at least 8 ECCS Provider Support Calls or Provider office hours annually with email follow up • Share information about Early Start CT application and process when it becomes available from OEC. • Conduct required monitoring visits at Early Start providers twice a year with follow-up reporting. • Offer individual site visits/calls with all providers in town • Remind providers about their SPARKLER code or invite other providers to participate, offer custom flyers and have them encourage utilization by families. • Deliver a full-day quality training at Margaret Griffin Child Development Center (open to all providers) on February 16, 2027. • By February 2027, facilitate updating Southington Police Department's list of provider emergency contact information and annual test of Everbridge emergency notification system. • Once a standardized PreK-to-K student data-sharing process is developed with SPS (Focus area 1), create a sample waiver for providers to use and share details about the process. **Quality Enhancement Coaching:** • By June 2027 provide resources to educate about benefits of and assist family and center providers in advancing to Elevate Member+ level and NAEYC/NAFCC accreditation.

	• Provide resources about OEC 360 Provider portal and COMPASS portal as it becomes available from OEC. **Family Education & Care4Kids Promotion:** • Starting in December 2026, publish a quarterly informational series (via articles on website that is shared via social posts and newsletter) on topics such as how accreditation/Elevate links to quality care, navigating the COMPASS portal, accessing financial supports such as Early Start and Care4Kids subsidies, and locating local open childcare slots. • By June 2027, offer education about Care4Kids and Early Start to other social service agencies in town so they can help with referrals. **Legislative & Community Advocacy:** Advocate for increased state funding for Early Start Endowment and Care4Kids rate adjustments, equitable funding formula for LGPs and other early childhood issues. • Deliver public testimony at the Early Childhood Endowment Annual Hearing in October 2026 and at future hearings. • Conduct direct outreach to state legislators to explain the ECCS Local Needs Assessment (fall 2026) and advocacy issues during legislative session. • Submit public testimony at hearings during the 2027 legislative session. (Note that this advocacy work is funded via a grant from the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain and not the contract from Shine.)
Current Reality, Challenges, or Barriers: What conditions or constraints could affect implementation?	**Funding:** • Support for all of these projects is set through June 2027, but unknown beyond that. **Capacity & Supply Shortages:** • Limited local Early Start slots, currently only 1 center in Southington receives Early Start funding for 45 slots and they are full with a waiting list. Given the number of

	children in town and the ALICE rate, there are likely hundreds of children who would qualify for free childcare. • Systemic underutilization of Care4Kids subsidies due to application complexity and long wait times. **Staffing Constraints:** • ECCS lacks staff capacity to conduct frequent, high-touch site visits and individualized coaching calls across 24+ local providers. • If more providers in town receive Early Start funding, then will need to look at staffing levels to complete monitoring and support. **Economic Constraints:** • High tuition rates ($200–$425/week) put financial strain on working families, while providers struggle with operational costs to achieve accreditation without tuition hikes.
Resources Needed: What resources (people, funding, partnerships, data, support) will your LGP need and use to advance the work?	**Funding:** • Continued LGP funding beyond June 2027 at a level that supports required work, including staffing, operational expenses and quality enhancement activities. • Current grant from the Bradley Henry Barnes & Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust at the Main Street Community Foundation to support health/safety initiatives, including provider support calls and Everbridge test coordination, expires in December 2026. The renewal application was submitted in October 2026 and notification will be received in December. • Increased State funding to Early Start Endowment resulting in increase in Early Start slot awards to Southington providers. **Staffing & Technical Support:** • Additional staff time for extensive provider coaching, new Early Start provider monitoring and individual COMPASS/Care4Kids family navigation support.

	• Technical support and training from Shine and/or CT Office of Early Childhood (OEC) about Elevate and accreditation so ECCS staff is better prepared to provide supports. **Data & Policy Support:** • Accurate collection of local childcare vacancy data via United Way. Openings in Southington have historically been overcounted. Their current formula assumes if provider did not respond to survey, they have openings based on state-wide averages when really they did not respond because they have zero openings. **Partnerships:** • Funders – OEC/Shine, Community Foundation of Greater New Britain, Main Street Community Foundation • Local childcare providers and SPS District • Educational organizations - Tunxis Community College, CT Clearinghouse • Social Service organizations - Southington Youth Services, Southington Public Library, and others.
Plan for Progress Monitoring: How will your LGP know you've met its goal? How will progress be reviewed and discussed over time, and how will adjustments be made as needed?	**Review and Reporting:** • Review plan at ECCS LGP Community Table meetings held 6 times a year • Quarterly LGP Programmatic Reports. **Metrics Tracked:** • Provider attendance at monthly calls (target: 8 per year) and the Feb 16, 2027 full-day training. • Number of providers advancing their Elevate tier status or completing accreditation milestones. • Number of Family Education & Care4Kids promotional outreach pieces created and social media statistics and website traffic around these articles. • Legislative advocacy contact and testimony submissions logged. **Adjustments:**

	• If providers cannot attend live support calls, offer one-on-one calls after hours, asynchronous training modules or micro-consultation visits. • If Care4Kids uptake remains low, coordinate application assistance clinics in partnership with local community organizations.