

## Request for Application

### Promoting Community Engagement in Early Childhood Development: Vroom® Community Engagement Project Mini-Grant

#### I. GENERAL

Brain science tells us that during children’s first five years of life the foundation for all future learning is established. Early development occurs within an environment of relationships that begins with parents and extends to include other adults, such as caregivers, family members, education, health and social service providers, coaches, members of faith communities and neighbors. Children’s early experiences lay the foundation for strong brain development and strong communities by influencing educational achievement, economic productivity, lifelong health, and responsible citizenship.

Vroom®, an inspiring initiative of the Bezos Family Foundation, was created by neuroscientists, child development specialists, parents and caregivers of young children to spark a culture shift in how families and communities understand early learning and the first five years of life ([www.vroom.org](http://www.vroom.org)). Brain science is presented in the form of fun, easy activities that **celebrate and empower all adults to play a proactive role in early brain development** through nurturing and responsive interactions during existing daily routines. Vroom® shares, *“Every time we connect with our children, all the cooing, toe-counting, and eye-gazing—it’s not just their eyes that light up, it’s their brains, too. In these moments, half a million neurons fire at once, taking in all the things we say and do. We can’t see it happening, but it’s all there, all at work.”*

#### II. VROOM® COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Save the Children, through our partnership with the Bezos Family Foundation, is offering interested communities the opportunity to engage parents and caregivers of young children, as well as the community at large, around early brain development through a locally-designed **Vroom® Community Engagement Project**. Communities must be located in a state operating Save the Children’s *Early Steps for School Success* program during the 2019-2020 program year, including Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia. All communities within these states are eligible to apply, including current *Early Steps* sites and new communities.

We are excited to offer selected communities Vroom® Community Engagement Project mini-grants (maximum of \$2,500) to increase local knowledge, resources and/or supports that promote early brain development.

Communities are encouraged to:

- Engage **cross-sector community partners** in project design and implementation. Sectors represented may include, but are not limited to: local government, business, K-12 education, early childhood, social service, health care, faith community, parenting networks/support groups, philanthropy, first responders, media, and/or informal learning institutions, including libraries and recreation centers.
- Integrate project activities into existing community priorities, activities, or initiatives to support **sustained impact**.
- Use Vroom® as a vehicle for **sharing cutting-edge scientific research** on early brain development throughout a community.
- Support community partners to **incorporate Vroom® into existing services and community-wide locations** to “spark joy” in the moments adults share with children and promote everyday actions that advance optimal child development.

Save the Children will provide selected communities with funding, tools and ongoing support to plan and implement proposed projects. See Appendix I for examples of Vroom® Community Engagement Projects.

### III. SCOPE OF WORK

**Project Lead:** Person who can serve as the main contact and lead for the project. This person should be able to answer any questions about the project and take the lead on implementation. In communities with Save the Children programming, the Kindergarten Readiness/Community Ambassador, Community Engagement Coordinator, VISTA or Early Childhood Coordinator may be the lead.

**Planning Team:** It is critical that the project planning team be comprised of cross-sector community partners, including parents/family members. Sectors represented may include, but are not limited to: local government, business, early childhood, K-12 education, social services, health care, faith community, parenting networks/support groups, philanthropy, first responders, media, and/or informal learning institutions, including libraries, and community recreation centers. In communities with Save the Children programming, community collaborative/steering committees sponsored by Save the Children may serve as the planning team. In communities without Save the Children programming, a planning team will need to be convened or an existing group such as an early childhood council may be utilized.

**Fiscal Agent:** Grant payment will be dispersed via an automatic deposit to the agency/entity in the community designated to serve as the fiscal agent. Once the fiscal agent has received the deposit, they are responsible for dispersing payments to various vendors. Possible fiscal partners could include the local school system, public library, health department/government agency, or any 501c3 (non-profit) organization. For communities with Save the Children programming, it may be advantageous for the school system to serve as the fiscal agent.

#### Expectations of Partners

- Convene or utilize an existing cross-sector planning team including parents/family members to collaboratively identify needs and opportunities within the community to increase awareness of early learning and the first five years of life.
- Design and implement a Vroom® Community Engagement Project to utilize grant funds and Vroom® as a catalyst for cross-sector community engagement to advance local knowledge, resources &/or supports that promote early brain development. Project activities begin November 1, 2019 and must be completed by May 1, 2020.
- Participate in training and technical assistance to support project implementation, including a project orientation (Fall 2019) and check-in meeting (Winter 2020).
- Participate in data collection and reporting for the project. A summary report is due at the end of the project period (See Appendix II for report template). Project report must be submitted by May 15, 2020.

#### Support provided by Save the Children

- Project timeline: 11/01/2019 - 5/01/2020
- Funding – a maximum of \$2,500, which may include:
  - Funding for materials and supplies for project activities
  - Vroom® materials from the Bezos Family Foundation Vroom® Store
- Training and technical assistance

#### IV. APPLICATION GUIDELINES/TIMELINE

Communities interested in advancing/initiating activities to utilize Vroom® as a catalyst for cross-sector community engagement to increase local knowledge, resources &/or supports that promote early brain development:

- **Notify Save the Children of your intent to apply by September 15, 2019.**
  - *Early Steps Communities:* Contact your Early Steps Program Specialist.
  - *New Communities:* For communities not currently affiliated with *Early Steps for School Success*, contact Lindsey Lockman Dougherty, Vroom Sr. Specialist, [ldougherty@savechildren.org](mailto:ldougherty@savechildren.org)
- **Submit a completed application** via email (subject line “Vroom Community Engagement RFA”) to [ldougherty@savechildren.org](mailto:ldougherty@savechildren.org) by **September 30, 2019**, 5pm PST.
- Applicants will be informed of the award decision by **October 15, 2019**.

Have Questions? Please contact Lindsey Lockman Dougherty, Vroom Sr. Specialist at [ldougherty@savechildren.org](mailto:ldougherty@savechildren.org)

## Appendix I. Examples of Vroom® Community Engagement Projects

### Early Childhood Professional Development Conference - Example from Perry County, KY

During an annual Infant/Toddler Professional Development Conference, Save the Children staff provided a keynote address on Vroom® and a series of Vroom Tip™ Demonstrations to illustrate how Brain Building Moments™ can be incorporated into existing early childhood programming and services. The keynote overviewed early brain development with a focus upon the critical role of early relationships and back-and-forth interactions. Information included Brain Building Basics™, how to access key resources, as well as a provider's testimonial on the impact of Vroom® on their engagement with families and children. Vroom Tip™ Demonstration Tables illustrated Tips across age groups, and provided participants with integration strategies to empower brain-builders within existing programs and communities.

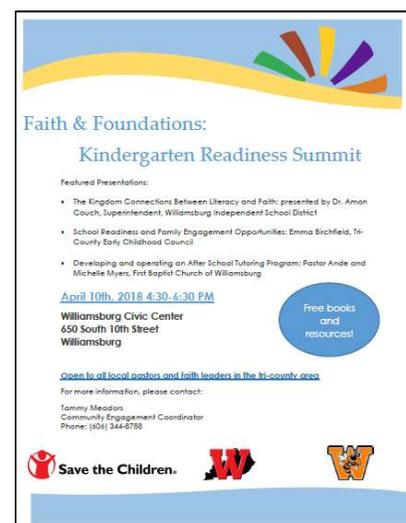


Conference participants included professionals from a variety of settings, including Early Childhood Centers, Preschools, Head Start, and Family Child Care Homes. The conference was held at a local community college providing college instructors an introduction to Vroom®, as well as resources to share with their students. Conference participants received Continuing Educational Unit hours by participating in the Vroom® Keynote and Demonstration Tables. Vroom® Store materials were available for participants to take back and integrate into their programs.

### Faith and Foundations Kindergarten Readiness Summit - Example from Whitley County, KY

The Whitley County Community Collaborative, a cross-sector group focused upon improving early learning outcomes, hosted a Faith and Foundations Kindergarten Readiness Summit to increase awareness and engagement amongst church leaders to address local kindergarten readiness needs. Participants learned that half of children in the county do not currently meet state standards for readiness on kindergarten entry assessments, which increases the risk of poor achievement in school and later in life.

Presentations from a local superintendent, early childhood council member, and pastor each addressed the critical role of the faith community to support early childhood development. "One of the biggest assets we have in our community is our local churches and faith leaders who are dedicated and passionate about improving the lives of children and families," shared a Save the Children staff member. Vroom® was introduced to promote Brain Building Moments™ within children's programming and family outreach efforts, and resources were shared with participants, including Vroom® materials and books for home libraries.



**Parent Engagement Conference - Example from Tulare County, CA**

Save the Children and community partners designed and implemented a Parent Engagement Conference, "Celebrating Parents as the Child's First Teacher," to celebrate and inspire parents/caregivers, enrich family's well-being, promote relationships and connections between families and service providers, and to provide information, strategies and opportunities for reflection to increase parent engagement in children's development and education.

A local superintendent provided a Keynote on the role of self-efficacy in parent engagement. A series of workshops addressed topics such as brain development, social emotional and literacy development, strategies to support kindergarten transition, family health and wellness resources, parent advocacy, and parents' education and career development. Vroom® information and resources were provided to participants to support parent engagement as Brain Builders™ and to spark joy in the moments they share with their children. A vendor marketplace provided an opportunity for participants to connect directly with representatives from health, human service, and education agencies. Additionally, participants were celebrated and provided opportunities to promote health, creativity and fun with a general session on reciprocal kindness and self-care, a canvas painting party, a Zumba class, and shared meals together.



**Vroom Activation in Community Spaces –** Below are additional examples of community-based projects to increase awareness and access to Vroom® resources, and to engage parents/caregivers and children in Brain Building Moments™.



**Reading Corners – Example from Jackson County, KY**

In a law office located in the county courthouse, Vroom posters are displayed and a children's reading corner has been set-up. Children who come into the office with their parents enjoy reading the books together, and the receptionist tells parents about Brain Building Moments™ and connects them with the Vroom® App and information on community early childhood programs. The office receptionist shared, "We put up Vroom posters and that makes parents that come in more aware of the program and how great it is to have something like this in the community."



**Local Restaurants – Example from Perry County, KY**

Mobile book crates have been made available at local restaurants where children can select a free book, and parents/caregivers can learn about Vroom and local resources. Vroom table tents and activity placemats with Vroom Tips™ encourage families to engage in learning experiences while they dine. A Save the Children staff member shared, "[Restaurant owners] were excited to hear about the Vroom Tip activities such as Setting Sizes

and Dinner Bites, because they show how simple it is to turn everyday moments like mealtime, into brain-building moments.”

### **Vroom® Pop-Up Parent-Child Activity Stations**

Designed to engage families with young children in community spaces (e.g., local businesses, health centers, libraries, and recreation areas including pools, playgrounds, etc.) in hands-on activities to experience a Vroom Brain Building Moment™ together, and to hear key messaging related to the Brainy Background™!



Additionally, parents/caregivers are provided with information and resources related to early childhood development, such as Vroom Tips™, Vroom App/Text instructions, local early childhood program information, children’s books and/or Vroom® promotional materials.



### **Where families go to play and have fun**

Example: Opening Day of a Public Lake - “Our table was based off of four Vroom Tips™ - Bathtime Weather, Dry Dance, Splish Splash, Pour and Bath Count. We gave away bubble bath and shampoo with laminated Vroom Tips™ attached. We wanted to share how to incorporate learning fun into bath time. We had a water table, a baby doll with baby tub, and bubble blower. We encouraged children to count bubbles as they came out of blower. Children liked to pop bubbles as they counted. Our goal was to share information about Vroom and to model fun activities for families to see that promoted math and executive function skills, and perhaps download the app for themselves.”

### **Where families go to shop**

Example: Farmers Market - “We discussed with parents/caregivers the opportunity to promote language and early literacy skills while shopping! We provided small notebooks and crayons, along with Vroom Tip™ Shopping List Scribble for families to use while they shop. We encouraged them to make their lists at the activity table, and then return to the table for a small prize (such as a Vroom® tote bag or children’s book) after they’d checked everything off their list.”



## Appendix II. Vroom® Community Engagement Mini-Grants Report Template

Grantee Organization	
Name	
Address	

Contact Information	
Name and Title	
Phone	
Email	

**Project Design:** Provide a description of project goals, activities, timeline and target audience. Include information on community partners engaged in project design and implementation, and the impact of their engagement (Approx. 250-500 words)

**Project Impact:** Provide a description of project outputs (what activities happened?) and outcomes (what impact did those activities make?) (Approx. 500 words)

Narrative must include:

- Description of community partner engagement and impact
- Description of project participant engagement and impact
- Approximate count and description of participants reached
- Approximate count and description of resources distributed
- Description of project sustainability and related future activities

Testimonials and direct quotes from community partners and project participants are encouraged.

**Supporting Documents:** Provide any related media, outreach and promotional materials, agendas, photos, etc.

**Project report must be submitted** via email (subject line “Vroom Community Engagement Project Report”) to [ldougherty@savechildren.org](mailto:ldougherty@savechildren.org) by **May 15, 2020**