



## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2020.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Category: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Executive Summary**

Chesterfield County Government, in partnership with Chesterfield County Public Schools, developed a model for coordinated local government implementation of The Basics campaign. The Basics are five clusters of parenting and caregiving behaviors, distilled from research by the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, that encompass most of what experts find is important for boosting cognitive and social-emotional development of children from birth to age three. The Basics are fun, simple and free. The Basics movement aims to saturate the social ecology around each family and to engage the whole community, so that everyone knows the Basics and every parent or caregiver receives encouragement and support for using them. In Chesterfield County, twelve local government agencies, including the school system, worked collaboratively to promote The Basics through strategies including print materials, videos, media, social media, care giver education, parent workshops, playgroups, toolkits and 1:1 citizen interaction. Our 2019 implementation showed a 48% increase in awareness of the Basics among those in Chesterfield. The Chesterfield Basics implementation team works closely with a Greater Richmond Regional Basics steering committee which has promoted the Chesterfield implementation blueprint as a model for other local governments.

## **Brief Overview**

In Chesterfield County, twelve local government agencies, including the school system, worked collaboratively to promote The Basics, five clusters of parenting and caregiving behaviors, distilled from research by the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, that encompass most of what experts find is important for boosting cognitive and social-emotional development of children from birth to age three. County agencies promoted The Basics through strategies including print materials, videos, media, social media, care giver education, parent workshops, playgroups, toolkits, 1:1 citizen interaction and partnership with child care and health care providers.

Chesterfield County’s 2019 implementation survey results indicated a 48% increase in awareness of the Basics among those in Chesterfield. The Chesterfield Basics implementation team works closely with a Greater Richmond Regional Basics steering committee which has promoted the Chesterfield implementation blueprint as a model for other local governments.

### **The Problem, Challenge, Or Situation Faced By The Locality**

Eighty percent of brain growth occurs in the first three years of life, building critical foundations for cognitive and social emotional skills. Brain development during this period lays the permanent foundation upon which all later brain function is built. Young children's brains are particularly sensitive to the environment around them. In order for the brain's neural networks to develop normally during the critical period, a child needs specific stimuli from the outside environment. Science is clear about the types of experiences in the first three years that boost brain development and learning. Brain pathways are built and strengthened through interactions that are loving, stimulating, follow a child's interests and go back and forth.

In recent years recent years, Chesterfield Mental Health and Chesterfield County Public Schools staff have seen an increase in the number of children, across demographics and socio-economic status that have deficits in social emotional skills and self-regulation. Many parents and caregivers are unaware of the importance of brain development during the first three years, how interactions during this time period impact lifelong learning and social emotional skills, or of ways to interact with their child that boost brain development.

Chesterfield County learned about The Boston Basics, a parent empowerment campaign that promotes five clusters of parenting and caregiving behaviors, distilled from research by the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, that encompass

most of what experts find is important for boosting cognitive and social-emotional development of children from birth to age three. Boston implemented the Basics through a collaboration amongst their founding partners: the Black Philanthropy Fund, the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, the Department of Pediatrics at Boston Medical Center, the Boston Mayor’s Education Cabinet, WGBH Public Broadcasting, and Boston Children’s Hospital.

Chesterfield County wanted to implement the campaign in our locality, but lacked the non-profit, university and hospital resources available in Boston. Chesterfield County Government, in partnership with Chesterfield County Public Schools, decided to work collaboratively to develop and implement a model for coordinated local government implementation of The Basics.

### **How The Program Fulfilled The Awards Criteria**

Chesterfield County’s coordinated local government implementation of The Basics is an outstanding example of an initiative that is innovative, involves intense collaboration and serves as a model for other localities. Twelve local government agencies, including the school system, worked collaboratively to promote The Basics, clusters of parenting and caregiving behaviors that boost cognitive and social-emotional development of children from birth to age three. We developed and implemented a template for coordinated local government implementation of The Basics that has been and will continued to be shared as a model to other local governments.

This project also resulted in new services offered to county residents, including Basics themed playgroups and parent and caregiver education events, as well as enhancements to many existing services. Dissemination of information and resources through partnerships with local pediatricians and early childhood centers also increased citizen understanding of both the governmental and community services available.

### **Program Implementation**

The Basics movement aims to saturate the social ecology around each family and to engage the whole community, so that everyone knows the Basics and every parent and caregiver receives encouragement and support for using them. The Basics are:

- Maximize Love, Manage Stress
- Talk, Sing and Point
- Count, Group, and Compare
- Explore Through Movement and Play
- Read and Discuss stories

In September of 2018 Chesterfield County formed a Chesterfield County Basics Implementation Steering Team consisting of representatives from the following County entities:

- Mental Health Support Services
- Social Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Citizen Information and Resources

- Police
- Human Resources
- Libraries
- Health Department
- Cooperative Extension
- Communications & Media
- Victim Witness
- Chesterfield County Public Schools

Initial meetings focused on familiarizing ourselves with The Basics, including materials and resources available through the national organization, and brainstorming strategies for implementing The Basics in Chesterfield through universal strategies aimed at all parents and caregivers, targeted strategies aimed at more vulnerable parents and caregivers, and community partnerships with non-governmental entities such as pediatricians and child care providers.

The planning group identified core strategies for an initial launch including displaying and disseminating print materials, showing videos or graphics on screens in waiting areas, sharing information in one on one citizen interactions, social media, print media, earned media and play groups. Whenever possible, materials were developed in both English and Spanish in order to maximize our reach. The County’s Communications and Media department developed a comprehensive Communications Plan, including a social media plan, media releases, outreach to media, and electronic and print communications to county employees and retirees. They also customized The Basics

materials available from the national organization to our locality. The Steering Committee developed an initial implementation plan detailing the strategies each agency planned to implement and set a coordinated launch date of January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The implementation plan has evolved over time as new strategies and partners have been added.

Chesterfield County Public Libraries (CCPL) took the lead on gathering baseline data related to awareness of The Basics in Chesterfield prior to the January 15<sup>th</sup> launch date. A subgroup of the Chesterfield County Basics Steering committee developed a survey which CCPL sent by email to 149,183 cardholders between January 10 and January 15, 2019. They received 9,593 responses, with 7,679 from local zip codes.

After our initial launch our team continued to work within our own agencies and in partnership to expand our efforts towards socio ecological saturation. Additional strategies were implemented including:

- Mini-grants to early childhood education and child care providers to provide education about The Basics to staff and parents and/or infuse The Basics into their work with children
- Integrating Basics messaging into library programs and products, including a searchable catalogue of Basics related items
- Providing information and materials about The Basics to leaders from multicultural communities
- Developing “Welcome Back Packets” for County employees returning from parenting leave that includes information about The Basics



Chesterfield County Coordinated Local Government Implementation of “The Basics”

- RVA Basics themed playgroups at libraries and a state park
- Incorporating The Basics into Chesterfield County Public Schools’ preschool program registration days, orientations and parent education events
- Dissemination of materials to all local pediatric practices
- Conducted a Basics “Learn and Share” for professionals who work with children and families in a variety of capacities to learn about the Basics and develop strategies to incorporate them into their work.
- Development and dissemination of additional print materials, including bookmarks related to each Basic in English and Spanish

Throughout the process, the Chesterfield County Basics Steering Committee worked with Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond which was spearheading Basics implementation throughout the region. Smart Beginnings invited us to present to a neighboring county government about our work and shared our template with other local governments.

The Cost of the Program:

Staff Time	Staff time from all agencies was provided a no charge to this coordinated project
Print Products	\$865
Mini-Grants to Early Childhood Education Centers	\$5380

Chesterfield County Coordinated Local Government Implementation of "The Basics"

Total	\$6245
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### **The Results of the Program:**

Chesterfield County achieved our goal of developing and implementing a model for coordinated local government implementation of The Basics campaign. We developed an implementation template and shared resources that resulted in a successful, coordinated, community wide launch from County Government and Schools. This template has been shared as a model for other local governments. Our team continues to meet regularly to sustain and enhance our work and our implementation template is continuously updated to reflect our current and planned strategies.

Chesterfield County coordinated government implementation of The Basics had tremendous reach and resulted in increased awareness of The Basics among those in Chesterfield. As described earlier, an email survey was sent to Chesterfield County Public Libraries pre- county wide launch to determine a baseline for awareness. A follow-up email survey was launched from August 15-September 5<sup>th</sup>. This group included the same emails from the first launch minus email bounces and those that unsubscribed. The follow up survey showed a 48% increase in awareness amongst those in Chesterfield County. Respondents reported that their knowledge of the Basics changed how they interacted with a child in their life.

Highlights of the reach of our awareness efforts include:

- Approximately 5500 parents of children prenatal to age 5 were exposed to messaging and materials in WIC waiting rooms.
- At least 148,000 people were reached through social media channels

## Chesterfield County Coordinated Local Government Implementation of “The Basics”

- Information about The Basics was incorporated in newsletters that were sent to 193,000 County citizens, employees and retirees Chesterfield County Over 20 families participated in Basics playgroups.
- Approximately 30 professionals were trained to incorporate the Basics into their work at a professional Learn and Share.
- 24 early childhood centers were provided mini-grants to promote their Basics to their staff and parents
- 18 pediatric practices received information to share with their patients’ families
- Over 300 parents learned about The Basics at Chesterfield County Public Schools’ preschool registration, orientation and parent education events.

Our reach through traditional media included:

- Village News Article– Circulation is 12,000
- Chesterfield Observer News Brief – Circulation is 70,789 per week (news brief published 1/23/19)
- Richmond Magazine Story – Circulation is 43,000 per month
- RTD Ad in Sunday paper– Circulation is 97,022 on Sunday
- NBC 12 RVA Parenting Blog feature – Reaches more than 100,000 people
- CBS 6 News Story – Approximately 40,000 viewers

## Facebook Post Examples

**RVA Basics**  
**WHY?**  
Because 80% of brain growth happens in the first three years!

Please get involved. Help spread the word! Visit: [rva.thebasics.org](http://rva.thebasics.org)

**Maximize Love, Manage Stress**

Please get involved. Help spread the word! Visit: [rva.thebasics.org](http://rva.thebasics.org)

**Talk, Sing, and Point**

Please get involved. Help spread the word! Visit: [rva.thebasics.org](http://rva.thebasics.org)

**Count, Group, and Compare**

Please get involved. Help spread the word! Visit: [rva.thebasics.org](http://rva.thebasics.org)

**Explore Through Movement and Play**

Please get involved. Help spread the word! Visit: [rva.thebasics.org](http://rva.thebasics.org)

**Read and Discuss Stories**

Please get involved. Help spread the word! Visit: [rva.thebasics.org](http://rva.thebasics.org)