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# Better Tomorrows Early Childhood Iowa Area Community Plan



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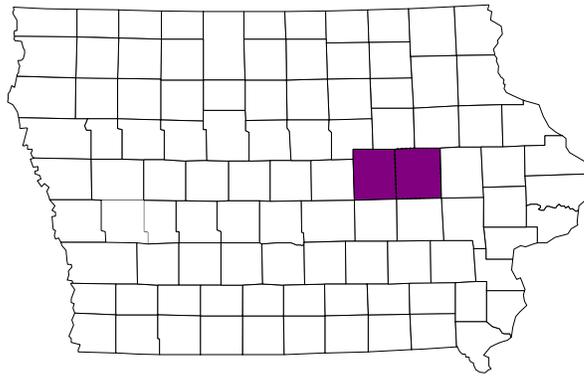
# Section I: General Information

## *Identification of the Better Tomorrows ECI Area*

The State Early Childhood Iowa Board went through a “lean” event in June 2009 to improve efficiencies at the state and local level. The process also looked for ways to find balances between the local and state level, clarify roles and responsibilities, and improve performance and accountability. In the 2010 legislative session, many of the lean event recommendations were approved by the legislators. Merging of Early Childhood Iowa Areas was one of those new requirements.

Prior to July 2012, Benton and Tama ECI boards were separate ECI areas. A committee was formed with representatives from each county who worked on forming the new Early Childhood Iowa Area Board. Merger discussions were not arrived at lightly and there was purposeful and meaningful conversation starting in August 2010. In June, 2012 the state Early Childhood Iowa Board unanimously approved the designation of Benton and Tama boards to merge, which became Better Tomorrows Early Childhood Iowa Area Board. The merger was effective July 1, 2012.

Both counties are contiguous and located in east central Iowa. This successful merger has provided new opportunities along with gained efficiencies. The population eligible for Early Childhood Iowa services is children 0–5 and their families. Both counties serve all children and families in this age bracket residing in Benton and Tama counties. Families must reside in and utilize services in either Benton or Tama County.



## *Use of the Community Plan*

The Better Tomorrows ECI Area Board has drafted this three-year community plan as part of the Levels of Excellence process. It is intended to provide guidance and direction to the board. The community plan is also to be considered a living document for the community.

The Better Tomorrows ECI Area Board supports five result areas:

- Healthy Children
- Secure and Nurturing Families
- Secure and Nurturing Early Learning Environments
- Children Ready to Succeed in School
- Safe and Supportive Communities

It is the desire of the Better Tomorrows Early Childhood Area Board that, during the next three years that, the community plan will serve as a useful tool for the community as a whole. It will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure that it reflects the current assets, needs and priorities of the communities in which it serves. The Better Tomorrows ECI Community Plan is used as a guide to fulfill the needs of the early childhood populations of Benton and Tama counties. Funding recommendations to the Better Tomorrows Board come from the Funding Sub-Committee. The committee used the Community Plan and the priorities therein to make the most informed funding recommendations. This committee is made up of early childhood representatives from each county. The Better Tomorrows Governing Board also represents a diverse collection of area decision-makers with the best interests of young children and their families in mind. The Community Plan is available to the public on the Better Tomorrows website and upon request at each county office.

## ***Better Tomorrows ECI Area's Vision and Mission***

### ***Process***

A sub-committee was formed, with members from both counties. Members of the sub-committee compared current vision, mission and purpose statements from the existing early childhood areas noting significant similarities of content. With collaboration from all sub-committee members a concise message was unanimously formulated.

### ***Vision***

All children (age 0–5) living in Benton and Tama County will be healthy, have a safe, secure, nurturing home and childcare environment, and be ready to succeed in school.

### ***Mission***

To enhance the quality of life in Benton and Tama County by promoting strong, healthy families. Barriers will be overcome and programs and services coordinated through community collaboration.

### ***Purpose***

To ensure the collaboration within our community, the organization will provide families, with children 0–5 years old, the resources and opportunities necessary for their children to be healthy, safe, secure, ready to succeed in school, have available affordable, high quality child care and access to a preschool opportunity.

## ***Geographic/Demographic Profile for the Better Tomorrows ECI Area***

The geographic area for Better Tomorrows Early Childhood Iowa are defined by the boundaries of Benton and Tama County. Children 0–5 and their families living within Better Tomorrows Early Childhood Iowa are eligible for services.

*Benton County* is a rural county located in the east central Iowa. The population was 25,699 in the 2013 census estimates, a decrease from 26,076 in 2010. Its county seat is Vinton which is also the largest city. Towns included in its borders are Atkins, Belle Plaine, Blairstown, Garrison, Keystone, Luzerne, Mount Auburn, Newhall, Norway, Shellsburg, Urbana, Van Horne, Vinton, Walford and Watkins. Total county area is 716.27 square miles. The county continues to be predominately Caucasian with less than 2% of the population representing other races.

The School Districts represented in Benton County include Benton Community, Belle Plaine, Center Point/Urbana and Vinton-Shellsburg. There is one private school which is Central Lutheran School. Benton County is served by Grant Wood AEA 10 and has satellite locations for Kirkwood Community College in both

Vinton and Belle Plaine. These locations serve the county well offering everything from opportunities to obtain a GED to providing classes for child care providers.

Major highways include I-380/Iowa Highway 27, U.S. Highway 30, U.S. Highway 151, Iowa Highway 8, Iowa Highway 150 and U.S. Highway 218. Iowa Highway 21 hinges the two counties together.

*Tama County* is a rural county located in the east central Iowa. The population was 17,576 in the 2013 census estimates, a decline from 17,767 in 2010. Its county seat is Toledo and the largest city is Tama. Towns included in its borders are Buckingham, Chelsea, Clutier, Dysart, Elberon, Garwin, Gladbrook, Lincoln, Montour, Tama, Toledo, Traer, Vining and the Indian Settlement of the Meskwaki's. Total county area is 721.01 square miles. Tama County has no mass transit system, no institutes of higher learning, no health or wellness center and no hospitals. In addition, the recent closing of the Iowa Juvenile Home has resulted in the loss of many well-paying jobs. The Sac & Fox Indian Settlement, home of the Meskwaki Tribe, has approximately 1,300 members of which about 800 live on the settlement; which is located on more than 8,000 acres within the county near the city of Tama and is the only Settlement in the State of Iowa. Tama County anticipates seeing a growth in the Bosnian and Hispanic population with IBP reopening of the Tama Pack Plant. With the influx of new workers there may be a need to provide affordable housing for these families who will have limited support systems.

The School Districts represented in Tama County include GMG (Green Mountain Garwin), Meskwaki Settlement School, Union, Gladbrook-Reinbeck, North Tama and South Tama. Tama County is served by both AEA 267 and Grant Wood AEA 10.

Major highways include U.S. Highway 30, Iowa Highway 8, Iowa Highway 96, Iowa Highway 146 and U.S. Highway 63. Iowa Highway 21 hinges the two counties together.

Both Benton and Tama County are rural. The challenge for both counties, especially as a merged Early Childhood Iowa area, is to represent Native American, Hispanic and now Bosnian population interests and poverty factors fairly. This is also a great asset, as it makes the combined area much stronger with both perspectives being considered in the decision-making process for its Early Childhood system.

A noted strength for both areas is the years of proven leadership from the current directors of their respective areas. They have taken a proactive approach to the challenges of budgets and efficiency to develop a collaborative co-director structure for the newly formed areas.

### ***Better Tomorrows ECI Service Area & Eligibility***

Children 0–5 and their families living within Benton and Tama County are eligible for services provided through the Better Tomorrows ECI Board. Since our funding is based on our county demographics, programs funded through Better Tomorrows ECI can only provide eligible services within the geographic boundaries of the Better Tomorrows ECI area. Special circumstances may be made for preschool tuition on a case by case basis, based on allocations.

<b>Demographics</b>				
<b>2013</b>	<b>Benton</b>	<b>Tama</b>	<b>Better Tomorrows</b>	<b>Iowa</b>
County Seat	Vinton	Toledo	–	–
Square miles	716.27	721.01	1,437.28	–
Persons per square mile	36.4	24.6	30.5	–
Hospitals	Does not deliver babies	None	–	–

Local DHS Office	Full Time	None	–	–
Average travel time to work	24.1 minutes	21.5 minutes	22.8 minutes	–
Total Population	25,699	17,576	43,275	3,046,355
Population by Race				
White	97.4%	88.8%	93.5%	91.7%
Black	.2%	.6%	.4%	2.9%
American Indian	0%	7.2%	7.2%	.3%
Asian	.2%	.3%	.25%	1.8%
Two or more races	1.5%	1.8%	1.65%	1.8%
Population by Ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino	1.1%	7.3%	4.2%	5%
Not Hispanic/Latino	98.9%	92.7%	95.8%	95%

U.S. Census Bureau

Demographics – Total Population				
2013	Benton	Tama	Better Tomorrows	Iowa
% of population 65 or older	15.5%	18.4%	16.95%	18.4%
People per household	2.52	2.49	2.51	2.41
% of population below poverty (2012)	7.8%	12%	9.9%	12.2%
Median household income	\$57,488	\$49,244	\$53,366	\$51,129
Median value of housing	\$130,900	\$100,100	\$115,500	\$123,000
Teen unmarried births (2012)	1%	2.4%	1.7%	2.4%
Unemployment rate	4.9%	6.4%	5.65%	5.6%
Family Investment Program (2012)	.7%	1 %	.85%	1.3%
Food assistance (2012)	9.8%	12.3%	11.05%	13.4%
Free and reduced lunch rate (2012)	29.9%	41.5%	35.7%	39.4%
Single parent families	25%	29.2%	27.1%	30.6%

U.S. Census Bureau, Iowa Kids Count

Child Age Demographics				
2013	Benton	Tama	Better Tomorrows	Iowa
0	302	187	489	39,702
1	305	185	490	39,436
2	294	215	509	38,793
3	349	205	554	41,487
4	375	233	608	41,871
5	310	234	544	41,515
<b>TOTAL (0-5)</b>	<b>1,935</b>	<b>1,259</b>	<b>3,194</b>	<b>242,804</b>

U.S. Census Bureau

Child Health – Children 0-5				
2013	Benton	Tama	Better Tomorrows	Iowa
% of total population under 5	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	6.5%
% of children 5 & under living below poverty (2012)	12%	16.5%	14.25%	17.1%
% of low birth rate babies	5.1%	9.1%	7.1%	6.7%
% of children living in poverty (2012)	12%	16.5%	14.25%	17.1%
Infant mortality per 1,000 live births (2012)	0	0	0	5.3
Families with all parents working under the age of 6	82.8%	66.0%	74.4%	74.6%

Full immunizations at age 2 (2012)	74%	72%	73%	71%
% of mothers with no prenatal care in first trimester	12.5%	21.1%	16.8%	17.5%
Infants and children receiving WIC	344	503	423.5	67,792
# of confirmed or founded child abuse cases	48	50	49	8,911
Denial of critical care	72	54	63	14,279
Physical abuse	4	7	5.5	1,646
Sexual abuse	6	14	10	716
Presence of illegal drugs	9	4	6.5	1,172
Ranking	90	63	–	–

U.S. Census Bureau, Iowa Kids Count, [www.pht.idph.state.ia.us](http://www.pht.idph.state.ia.us), [www.preventchildabuseiowa.org/](http://www.preventchildabuseiowa.org/)

### Fourth Grade Reading Scores

District	2011-2012	2012-2013
Belle Plaine	68.09	64.44
Benton Community	76.24	78.99
Center Point/Urbana	74.60	77.59
Vinton/Shellsburg	80.49	92.79
GMG	70.27	96.88
North Tama	76.09	89.47
South Tama	64.21	64.49
Better Tomorrows Average	72.86	80.66
State	73.43	74.63

[www.iowaschoolprofiles.com](http://www.iowaschoolprofiles.com)

### Fourth Grade Math Scores

District	2011-2012	2012-2013
Belle Plaine	70.21	60.00
Benton Community	83.17	89.08
Center Point/Urbana	85.83	83.62
Vinton/Shellsburg	78.05	83.78
GMG	75.68	81.25
North Tama	93.48	84.21
South Tama	70.53	67.29
Better Tomorrows Average	79.56	78.46
State	77.11	77.98

[www.iowaschoolprofiles.com](http://www.iowaschoolprofiles.com)

### Education Levels

2013	Benton	Tama	Better Tomorrows	Iowa
High school graduate	92.7%	89.2%	90.95%	90.7%
Bachelor's degree or higher	18.3%	15.4%	16.85%	25.3%

U.S. Census Bureau

### Major Employers

	Benton	Tama
Manufacturing	Frontier Natural Products Coop, Pierce Lumber	Tama PaperBoard, Pioneer
Health services providers	Virginia Gay Hospital,	Sunrise Hill,

	Lutheran Home for the Aged	Westbrook Acres
Schools	Vinton-Shellsburg School District, Belle Plaine School District	South Tama School District, North Tama School District
Retail trade	Fareway, Clickstop	Meskwaki Casino, Fareway
Utility providers	East-Central Iowa REC, USA Communications	Alliant Energy
Contractor/trucking	GSTCO-Gordon Sevig Trucking Company, Garling Construction	Elliott Brothers, Dysart Trucking

<b>Child Care Rates</b>				
	<b>Benton</b>		<b>Tama</b>	
	<b>Homes</b>	<b>Centers</b>	<b>Homes</b>	<b>Centers</b>
Infant (0-12 months)	\$124	\$157	\$131	\$140
Toddler (13-23 months)	\$119	\$155	\$131	\$140
Two year old	\$114	\$140	\$131	\$130
Three year old	\$114	\$136	\$131	\$128
Four & Five year old	\$112	\$128	\$131	\$128
Before & after school	\$44	\$54	\$50	\$64
Full-time school age	\$98	\$105	\$130	\$128

*Child Care Resource & Referral*

<b>Child Care Providers</b>		
	<b>Benton</b>	<b>Tama</b>
Private Preschool Classrooms	4	4
Voluntary 4-Year-Old Preschool Programs	4	1
Head Starts	1	1
Licensed Child Care Centers	4	2
Registered In-Home Providers	16	19
Known Unregistered Providers	12	9

*Child Care Resource & Referral*

## Section II: Community Needs Assessment

### ***Statistical Data***

Statistical information is gathered and reviewed as it becomes available. Better Tomorrows utilizes data collected from a wide array of sources including: US Census Bureau, Kids Count, Iowa Departments of Human Services, Public Health, Education, Prevent Child Abuse Iowa, State Data Center, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Child Care Resource & Referral and local service providers.

### ***Assessments – Other Agencies***

Area agency needs assessments are solicited and reviewed as part of the annual process of reviewing area information to determine gaps, needs, and barriers to service. Assessments requested via e-mail and reviewed have included: Community Services annual reports for both counties, public health assessments and the Iowa Youth Survey.

Liaison annual report for Community Action Agency, MICA, DCAT, Head Start, Operation Threshold and Public Health Departments were also reviewed.

These assessments provide valuable data provided by community members and help identify challenges families may be facing including but not limited to lack of health insurance, childhood obesity and nutrition challenges, safe and affordable housing, food insecurity, educational attainment, transportation and poverty. Information was pulled from each of these reports in order to develop a clear picture of what the needs may include for the next three years.

In general, these are some of the data points that Better Tomorrows found significant:

- ✓ Higher education attainment in the Better Tomorrows area is close to the state average, although Tama County by itself is substantially less than the state average (10%).
- ✓ Lower graduation rates are of concern.
- ✓ There is a need for early intervention and local access to mental health services
- ✓ Fourth grade reading and math scores in the Better Tomorrows area are higher than the state average.
- ✓ The number of single parent families in the Better Tomorrows area is less than the state average.
- ✓ Children under five living in poverty in the Better Tomorrows service lower than the state average.
- ✓ The median household income in Benton County is higher than the state median and Tama County is slightly lower than the state median.
- ✓ The need to provide more information regarding community services is high.
- ✓ Transportation needs are high in rural counties and accessibility is limited.

### ***Analysis of the Needs Assessment Data Collected***

Assessments and reports reviewed and analyzed were:

- ✓ Head Start & Early Head Start Community Needs Assessment
- ✓ Benton County Community Health Needs Assessment & Health Improvement Planning
- ✓ Tama County Community Health Needs Assessment & Health Improvement Planning
- ✓ Benton/Iowa DCAT Annual Services Plan
- ✓ Benton County Iowa Youth Survey
- ✓ Tama County Iowa Youth Survey

The Better Tomorrows Early Childhood Board gathered and reviewed the needs assessment data as well as all elements of the community plan. Better Tomorrows Board has only been in existence for only two years and is still learning about each county. The Board has made notable progress in building a new early care and education system since the designation of the new Early Childhood Iowa Area July 1, 2012. The Board carefully reviewed and analyzed all assessment data as well as the current priorities it was decided to continue to utilize most of the current priorities that have been in place since Fiscal Year 2012. These priorities will guide their work, assist with funding decisions, and help evaluate the effectiveness of programs. As a part of continuous improvement these priorities will be reviewed on an annual basis as well as continue to monitor the current capacity to address the results areas.

### ***Identified Priorities***

Better Tomorrows ECI supports the state board initiatives on all priorities and have chosen to enhance and reinforce the importance of all these areas which will allow a child to grow up safe, healthy, socially well-adjusted and ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.

1. Healthy children
2. Secure and nurturing families
3. Secure and nurturing child care environments
4. Children ready to succeed in school
5. Safe and supportive communities

Priority	Rationale for Identification or Deletion of Priority
<p><b>Healthy children</b></p>	<p>The Better Tomorrows ECI Board feels that it is important to assure that there are adequate health care provider/services in their counties so all children have a medical home, have access to a dentist, able to obtain immunizations, and that pregnant women have prenatal care and healthy births to prevent infant mortality or increased health care costs later.</p> <p>Each county saw an increase in the number of children living in poverty. This is an area that we will monitor more closely.</p> <p>Benton County has a higher percentage of women receiving first trimester care, Tama County has a significantly higher percentage than Benton County. Tama County is one of eight counties in the state that does not have a hospital located in its county. The hospital in Benton County discontinued delivering babies in the late 80s. Most residents travel to surrounding counties for hospital services, with the closest being a minimum of 20 miles. There are no pediatrician offices located in either county.</p> <p>Dental care remains a need in both counties, with limited providers accepting clients with Title XIX.</p> <p>Both counties also show a need for child psychologist for mental health services, where residents have to travel a minimum of 20 miles for both services, if needed. As more community members become better informed about adverse childhood experiences and underlying contributing factors for abuse, the need for mental health services is expected to remain strong.</p> <p>Reduced funding has made it impossible for Better Tomorrows to impact the lead levels in children and will no longer be tracking this indicator.</p>
<p><b>Secure and nurturing families</b></p>	<p>Better Tomorrows ECI Board feels that access and the ability to pay for health care and child care assist parents with being able to better provide for their families.</p> <p>Both counties have seen a recent decrease in the number of teen parents. This can be attributed to parent education programs in the Better Tomorrows area that appear to have been effective at supporting teen parents as they complete their high school education. Adolescents whose mothers received quality home visitation programs when those youth were infants are less likely to have been arrested less likely to have been convicted of a crime.</p> <p>Roughly 36% of all minor children in the Better Tomorrows area live with grandparents. It appears that there may be a correlation between the increase in non-relative and multi-generational living arrangements and the increase in the number of families with children living in poverty.</p>

	<p>The percentage of households with minor children living in poverty increased slightly in both counties but continues to be less than the state average. The average household income for both counties is close to the state average with Tama County falling slightly below the state average and Benton County just above the state average.</p> <p>Across all ECI areas, child abuse disproportionately impacts young children. Benton County has seen an increase in cases but remains below the state average. Tama County showed a larger increase in abuse cases in 2013. Depending on which web site you use data from these numbers fluctuate considerably. Overall it does not appear that child abuse is of greater concern in the Better Tomorrows ECI area than other areas.</p> <p>In both counties, the majority of child abuse cases were due to denial of critical care, which is a result of a parent or caretaker failed to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or other care necessary for a child’s well-being. Physical injury, presence of illegal drugs in child, sexual abuse and exposure to meth manufacturing had considerable less incidents. Benton County ranks 90<sup>th</sup> and Tama 63<sup>rd</sup> out of 99 counties in regard to overall rate of child abuse.</p>
<p><b>Secure and nurturing early learning environments</b></p>	<p>Better Tomorrows ECI Board feels that access to quality early learning providers is crucial to assuring children are safe and taken care of while parents have to work to make ends meet. Many parents are not aware of what a quality child care provider is and utilize family members because of financial resources. The Board will work with early care &amp; education partners to information community members and parents of quality preschools and child care providers. This will reinforce the importance for preschool children to receive an optimum educational experience that allows a child to grow up safe, health, socially well-adjusted and ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.</p> <p>On average, 74% of the all parents in the Better Tomorrows ECI area, in households with children under age six, are in the workforce which is in-line with the state average. Tama County’s average is nearly 10% less than the state, while Benton County is nearly 10% more than the state average. With a high percentage of parents in the workforce, access to quality, affordable child care can create stress on a family.</p> <p>Research indicates that as adults, at-risk children who attended a quality preschool and whose families participate in in-home parent education are less likely to receive welfare, more likely to own their own home, more likely to earn \$2,000+ per month and are less likely to be sentenced to jail.</p> <p>After holding steady with the number of child care providers and child care slots, it appears that the Better Tomorrows ECI area has less child care slots available. The number of regulated and licensed child care programs in each county has seen significant decrease since 2012. It is assumed that the economic downturn may have resulted in the decrease of child care providers. As the unemployment and under-employment rates increased, the need for child care decreased. The Better Tomorrows ECI area continues to encourage child care providers to participate in ITERS, ECERS and the Quality Rating System. If additional funding were available, support for quality programs would be a priority. Currently incentives are offered to any program participating in ITERS and ECERS which have been cut with recent budget reductions.</p>
<p><b>Children ready to succeed in school</b></p>	<p>The Better Tomorrows Board is committed to quality early learning environments. With nearly 75% of parents with children under the age of five working it is imperative that resources be provided to build awareness of quality care and support those who provide it.</p>

	<p><b>Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide preschool tuition scholarships for families in need.</li> <li>✓ Enforce standards set for quality preschool programs for the tuition program.</li> <li>✓ Promote the statewide voluntary preschool program.</li> <li>✓ Assist early care environments in meeting standards through support and education.</li> <li>✓ Support high quality professional development services and opportunities for early care and education programs.</li> <li>✓ Support incentives for quality improvement efforts for early learning environments.</li> </ul> <p>Two preschools in Benton County were closed in recent years due to the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program initiative. Only one school district in Tama County participates in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program initiative. The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program has provided opportunity for many area four-year-old children to attend preschool, but the area continues to see a high need for tuition assistance for three-year-old students and those four-year-old students in Tama County who don't have access to the Statewide program. Many preschools charge tuition for more than the basic ten hours per week provided free of charge through the state program. Better Tomorrows has placed a high priority on the need to provide more scholarships to low income children.</p> <p>Research indicates that kids who attend a quality preschool program are less likely to receive special education, more likely to graduate high school, less likely to repeat a grade and more likely to attend a four year college.</p>
<p><b>Safe and supportive communities</b></p>	<p>Better Tomorrows ECI Board feels that child abuse data reflects high incidents of child abuse. A review of the assessment and surveys indicate that poverty and educational levels impact this. The Board will work with community partners, economic development, health care and child care providers to inform them regarding quality child care, access to health care, and available services. This will reinforce the importance for children to be able to have an optimum educational experience and be able to succeed in school and later in life. Progress may be difficult to measure but the Better Tomorrows ECI area will continue to review indicators such as juvenile arrest rates and high school graduation rates which may suggest that progress is being made.</p>

***Strategies of the Early Childhood Iowa Area Board***

Better Tomorrows ECI is working on moving forward in planning to improve the lives of children and families in Benton and Tama County. As funds allow, Better Tomorrows plans to continue with currently funded programs that each have supported in the past for continuity. The ECI area will strengthen relationships with organizations in both counties and work collaboratively with them to better utilize limited funds. The plan will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to ensure that the needs of each county are being met. The ability to sustain the programs can only happen if there is continued growth in the funds we receive.

Examples of these programs and approaches are listed below.

***Healthy Children – Horizons Family Support Program, Tama Healthy Families, Home Health Consultant and The Nest***

This results area has been most impacted by budget cuts in recent years, as a result the Child Care Nurse Consultant and Home Provider Consultant services are no longer provided in either county. If additional funds

were available, Better Tomorrows ECI would like to provide more support for services such as in-home consultations, prenatal education and mental health services.

Strategies are to reach prenatal families early in their pregnancy and immediately following the birth of their baby to engage them in parent education and child abuse prevention. The Home Health Consultant focuses on prenatal and newborns, referring them on to other resources in the county. Tama Healthy Families and Horizons Family Support Program are local programs that assist in early prevention and detection for low income families with children age 0–5. Supports are based in family needs. The Nest works with families prenatally to age one and offer parenting classes and well as the opportunity to earn points to use to purchase needed items.

### ***Secure and Nurturing Families – Horizons Family Support Program, Tama Healthy Families, Home Health Consultant and The Nest***

Family development strategies have been a significant focus for Better Tomorrows ECI even before the two counties merged. Nearly 70% of the School Ready Fiscal Year 2015 budget will be utilized to support family development programs which range from home visitation programming to group parent education. Better Tomorrows strives to make services available that are family driven and meet the individual needs of the families in our communities. Educators share child development information and work with the parents to initiate developmentally appropriate interactive activities. Families whose needs are greater than the program’s capabilities are referred to other agencies that are able to meet the family’s needs. Waiting list for families in need of home visitation services are not unusual due to programs not being fully funded. With continued budget cuts we anticipate that programs will continue to have families on a waiting list.

Better Tomorrows ECI funded parent education programs are an essential part of the family development plan for families. The Nest program is a group parent education program and parents attending these education classes are able to earn incentive points through a variety of healthy, positive activities. As of 2013, 100% of our family support programs are evidence based or promising practice; one hundred percent (100%) are working toward or have achieved state credentialing.

These opportunities provide quality parent education, help prepare children to be successful, and ready to succeed in school. It also provides opportunities to develop supportive relationships with other parents, connects families to additional community supports, provides screenings for developmental delays and for maternal depression.

### ***Secure and Nurturing Child Care Environments – ECERS, ITERS and Provider Classes***

Availability and accessibility of quality child care is a very high priority. Better Tomorrows ECI’s provides a great deal of support to child care providers through professional development classes and environmental rating scale evaluations. Quality child care in the Better Tomorrows ECI area is child care that, at a minimum, meets all requirements for registration and licensing by the Iowa Department of Human Services. Kirkwood provides training opportunities in both counties that are designed to be accessible to all registered and licensed providers, and to those seeking registration or licensure.

Improving the quality of child care is a costly undertaking for all but especially for small centers and home child care providers. Offering local training and financial assistance through Kirkwood is the current tactic being funded. With an average of 74% of families with children under age 6 have all parents working at least

part time. These children spend a large part of their day with their child care provider, many of which are small home-based providers. A quality child care environment is a learning environment for its children. The professional development opportunities assist in improving the quality of these providers.

If additional funds were available, Better Tomorrows ECI would like to see an increase in curricula materials and incentives for child care providers participating in quality initiatives.

### ***Children Ready to Succeed in School – Provider Classes and Preschool Scholarships***

The Better Tomorrows ECI board places high priority on services provided directly to families and children and have focused on making preschool more accessible to all children. While the dollar amount of scholarship funding has decreased along with overall funding, Better Tomorrows ECI has continued to allocate roughly 11% of its available School Ready funding to preschool scholarships. Demand for scholarships has decreased slightly since the introduction of the statewide voluntary preschool program; we continue to see a high demand for three-year-old children, five-year-old children and four-year-old children residing in school districts that do not offer the statewide voluntary preschool program. If additional funding were available, it would be a priority to provide assistance for extended preschool hours.

Better Tomorrows collaborates with community preschools to offer tuition assistance for three and four year old children in low income families. In order to insure that the children for whom tuition assistance is provided are receiving a quality preschool education, Better Tomorrows ECI expectations are that all participating preschool programs:

- Participate in ECERS;
- Track attendance ensuring that each child attends at least 80% of the time each month; and
- Utilize a curriculum that aligns with Iowa’s Early Learning Standards.

In addition, professional development opportunities are also available to area preschools and child care providers through Kirkwood.

### ***Safe and Supportive Communities***

This results area employs more strategies than any other result area. Better Tomorrows ECI often relies on community collaborations rather than contracted services in this area. Needs are identified through review of other organizations needs assessments. These documents provide data, input on trends as well as current and future needs.

In recent years, many agencies have experienced funding reductions. Often when budgets are reduced, many valuable services are lost or become limited. Better Tomorrows has developed a brochure that provides information on resources we fund. Each county also has worked collaboratively with other agencies to create a brochure listing all available resources available to families. If additional funds were available, Better Tomorrows ECI would like to increase the number of quality programs that we fund to provide additional services to families in need.

### ***Supporting Quality Programs***

The Better Tomorrows ECI Area Board supports quality improvement and quality programs:

- The Board has a strong preschool tuition policy and requires the following:
  - ✓ The policy requires preschool programs to agree to be evaluated annual with the ECERS Quality Rating Scale.
  - ✓ Preschool programs providing 4 year old programming are required to offer a minimum of 10 hours of instruction per week.
  - ✓ Preschool programs are encouraged to utilize the GOLD assessment.
  - ✓ Preschool programs are encouraged to utilize an evidenced based curriculum.
- Preschool programs are required to track attendance and each child must maintain 80% attendance each month.
- Child care provider trainings offered are required to be on the DHS registry.
- Family support programs are required to participate in the Iowa Family Support Credential or National Accreditation.

### ***Capacity to Address Results***

The Better Tomorrows ECI Area Board feels confident it has the organizational capacity and collaborative partnerships necessary to address the strategies as described in this community plan. All contractors demonstrated successfully in grant applications the capacity to meet the identified priorities through quality programs/services. The Board consists of eleven volunteer members, who represent a broad spectrum of views, is dedicated to families, takes responsibility for fiscal management and oversight, are good communicators and adapt to change. The service providers in the Better Tomorrows ECI area take responsibility for programs, are fiscally accountable and are interested in making a difference with families.

### ***What's Missing in the Decision Making Process***

Funding allocations for the Better Tomorrows ECI area does not keep up with the demand for services. Historically over the last several years the area experienced budget cuts of up to \$25,000 and has had to pass those deficiencies on to the program, which means less families can receive services.

### ***Moving the System Forward***

The Better Tomorrows ECI Area Board is committed to moving the early care, health and education system forward. During the next several years the Board will:

- ✓ Review current programming/services on a regular basis
- ✓ Review quarterly reports and information from annual site visits
- ✓ Continue to review the process to award funding
- ✓ Continue to communicate to the community, providers and policy makers about gaps and needs
- ✓ Continue to enhance Board policies and procedures

### ***Indicators of the Early Childhood Iowa Area Board and Analysis***

<b>New Indicator</b>	<b>Rationale for Selection of NEW Indicator</b>
<b>Number of early learning environments participating in a quality initiative</b>	Data indicates that Quality Child Care for 0-5 is a priority for the Better Tomorrows ECI area because quality care is necessary for children to reap from the benefits by graduating, acquiring a higher education and economically being able to financial support themselves or their families. As of June 2014, 5 of 35 Homes and 6 of 12 Centers in the Better Tomorrows ECI area participate in QRS.

	The Board will work with the area Child Care and Nurse Consultants (as available) as well as continue to provide incentives to those providers participating in ECERS and ITERS Ratings Scales to ensure that programs are meeting the definition of quality.
<b>Continue Prior Indicator</b>	<b>Rationale to Continue Tracking PRIOR Indicator</b>
<b>Number of regulated and licensed child care programs and slots</b>	<p>Remains of importance to the Board as an Indicator.</p> <p>Number of available child care slots was identified as a need because the majority of households in the service area have all parents in the workforce and accessibility of child care from a quality care provider, especially during untraditional hours was a concern. The number of child care providers has dropped in recent years, although the quality of child care has increased. Quality initiatives can increase the number of available child care slots. This has helped offset the downward trend in child care providers. Additionally, there is strong evidence to support lifelong benefits of quality early care.</p>
<b>Number of confirmed child abuse reports</b>	<p>Remains of importance to the Board as an Indicator.</p> <p>There are many underlying factors that contribute to child abuse and neglect. Examples include poverty, lack of parenting skills, mental health issues and substance abuse. Research indicates that adverse childhood experiences may result in behavioral problems later in life.</p>
<b>Percent of fourth grade students reading at fourth grade level</b>	<p>Remains of importance to the Board as an Indicator.</p> <p>Fourth grade reading scores are a key predictor of future academic success, a reliable indicator of a child's school readiness and a measure of whether or not children's needs have been met between birth and fourth grade. Students who cannot read proficiently by fourth grade are more likely to be absent from school, exhibit behavior problems, have low self-confidence and perform poorly in school. The board will continue to track this indicator to help in determining the effectiveness of early childhood education, e.g. preschool attendance.</p>
<b>Percent of Teen Births (females ages 15-19)</b>	<p>Remains of importance to the Board as an Indicator.</p> <p>Babies born to teen mothers are often less healthy at birth, more likely to suffer from low birth weight and premature birth. Tracking teen birth data can help measure the need for services such as parent education and prenatal service.</p>
<b>Child poverty rate</b>	<p>Remains of importance to the Board as an Indicator.</p> <p>Current poverty rate was identified as a need because social and economic situations have changed with the recession. Businesses are closing at an alarming rate and many families have at least one adult under or unemployed. The board will track this number to be aware of the economic impact this will have on the programs provided and the families served.</p>
<b>Number of children enrolled in preschools</b>	<p>Remains of importance to the Board as an Indicator.</p> <p>Data indicates that Availability of Child Care for 0-5 is a priority for the Better Tomorrows ECI area. Number enrolled in preschool was identified as a need because the ECI area wants to ensure that every child has an opportunity to attend</p>

	preschool to get a jump start on education and to hopefully help them to succeed to graduation, further their education and support their family. Currently 5 of 7 Better Tomorrows School Districts are a part of State-Wide Voluntary Four-Year-Old Preschool.
<b>Delete Prior Indicator</b>	<b>Rationale for DELETING an Indicator</b>
<b>Percent of fourth grade students performing math at fourth grade level</b>	Tracking 4th grader reading proficiency deemed more relevant particularly in light of legislative interest in 3rd grade reading proficiency. In addition, math scores are at or above the state level.
<b>Percent of children tested for elevated lead levels</b>	Reduced funding has made it impossible for Better Tomorrows to impact the lead levels in children and will no longer be tracking this indicator.

## Early Childhood Iowa Area Indicators

Community ECI Area Indicators	Identify the State Results Linked to the Indicator by A, B, C, D, E	Identify Source of data for each Indicator	Baseline Data	Subsequent Year's Data (Trend Line) Identify Year			Goal (numerical value & projected timeline)	Progress Update (Brief Analysis of data)
			<b>2012</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>		
<b>Number of early learning environments participating in a quality initiative</b>	E. Secure & Nurturing Child Care Environments	QECE Coordinator, Child Care Resource & Referral, DHS	<b>ITERS Participants</b> 7  <b>ECERS Participants</b> 24  <b>Homes</b> 0 ★ 2 ★★ 1 ★★★ 0 ★★★★ 0 ★★★★★  <b>Centers</b> 0 ★ 0 ★★ 0 ★★★ 0 ★★★★ 0 ★★★★★	<b>ITERS Participants</b> 7  <b>ECERS Participants</b> 24  <b>Homes</b> 0 ★ 2 ★★ 1 ★★★ 0 ★★★★ 0 ★★★★★  <b>Centers</b> 0 ★ 0 ★★ 0 ★★★ 0 ★★★★ 0 ★★★★★	<b>ITERS Participants</b> 14  <b>ECERS Participants</b> 24  <b>Homes</b> 0 ★ 4 ★★ 0 ★★★ 0 ★★★★ 0 ★★★★★  <b>Centers</b> 0 ★ 0 ★★ 3 ★★★ 0 ★★★★ 0 ★★★★★	<b>ITERS Participants</b> 15  <b>ECERS Participants</b> 24  <b>Homes</b> 0 ★ 5 ★★ 0 ★★★ 0 ★★★★ 0 ★★★★★  <b>Centers</b> 0 ★ 3 ★★ 2 ★★★ 0 ★★★★ 0 ★★★★★	10% of registered or licensed child care providers will participate in QRS and 85% of centers and preschools will participate in ITERS and ECERS by July 2017.	New Community Indicator. Historically, participation in QRS has been low in both counties. Equal participation from home and center providers. The low number of participants in our area may be low due to the lack of trained Child Care Nurse Consultants. As a results providers are not able to increase their QRS ratings.

								Several providers have decided to become nonregistered or have quit child care services all together.
<b>Number of regulated and licensed child care programs and slots</b>	D. Safe & Supportive Communities E. Secure & Nurturing Child Care Environments	Child Care Resource & Referral	<b>2012</b> <b>Benton</b> Sites: 35 Slots: 751 <b>Tama</b> Sites: 28 Slots: 704 <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> Sites: 31.5 Slots: 727.5 <b>State</b> Sites: 6,147 Slots: 159,806	<b>2012</b> <b>Benton</b> Sites: 35 Slots: 751 <b>Tama</b> Sites: 28 Slots: 704 <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> Sites: 31.5 Slots: 727.5 <b>State</b> Sites: 6,147 Slots: 159,806	<b>2013</b> <b>Benton</b> Sites: 29 Slots: 712 <b>Tama</b> Sites: 26 Slots: 569 <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> Sites: 27.5 Slots: 640.5 <b>State</b> Sites: 5,939 Slots: 160,106	<b>2014</b> <b>Benton</b> Sites: 27 Slots: 677 <b>Tama</b> Sites: 25 Slots: 581 <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> Sites: 26 Slots: 629 <b>State</b> Unavailable	Increase number of slots back to the 2012 level by July 2017.	Number of sites and slots has decreased but the quality of programs have increased.
<b>Number of confirmed child abuse reports</b>	B. Healthy Children C. Secure & Nurturing	Prevent Child Abuse Iowa	<b>2012</b> <b>Benton</b> 11	<b>2012</b> <b>Benton</b> 11	<b>2013</b> <b>Benton</b> 12	<b>2014</b> <b>Benton</b> Unavailable	Decrease number of confirmed child abuse cases 10% July	In most recent reporting period, Benton County abuse

	Families  D. Safe & Supportive Communities		<b>Tama</b> 11  <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 11  <b>State</b> 2,484	<b>Tama</b> 11  <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 11  <b>State</b> 2,484	<b>Tama</b> 8  <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 10  <b>State</b> 2,233	<b>Tama</b> Unavailable  <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> Unavailable  <b>State</b> Unavailable	2017	rates increased slightly from 2012 while Tama County decreased its rate. Trend indicates decline in confirmed abuse.
<b>Percent of fourth grade students reading at fourth grade level</b>	A. Children Ready to Succeed in School  B. Healthy Children  E. Secure & Nurturing Child Care Environments	Kids Count	<b>2009</b>  <b>Benton</b> 84.1%  <b>Tama</b> 75.1%  <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 78.6%  <b>State</b> 81.2%	<b>2010</b>  <b>Benton</b> 77.1%  <b>Tama</b> 72.5%  <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 74.8%  <b>State</b> 78.5%	<b>2011</b>  <b>Benton</b> 89.9%  <b>Tama</b> 82.9%  <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 86.4%  <b>State</b> 82.4%	<b>2012</b>  <b>Benton</b> 77%  <b>Tama</b> 68.2%  <b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 72.6%  <b>State</b> 73.5%	The average reading proficiency rate will increase 3% by July 2017.	Scores for our area are typically lower than the state average, we anticipate that scores will increase with emphasis by school districts on reading scores. We will monitor changes to scores and respond accordingly.
<b>Percent of Teen Births (females ages 15-19)</b>	C. Secure & Nurturing Families	Kids Count	<b>2009</b>  <b>Benton</b> 1.8%	<b>2010</b>  <b>Benton</b> 1.5%	<b>2011</b>  <b>Benton</b> 2.2%	<b>2012</b>  <b>Benton</b> 1%	Annual downward trend to stay below the state	Rates for our area are typically lower than the

	D. Safe & Supportive Communities		<b>Tama</b> 4.2%	<b>Tama</b> 3.2%	<b>Tama</b> 3.2%	<b>Tama</b> 2.4%	average by July 2017	state average and we anticipate a downward trend during the next three reporting years.
			<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 3%	<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 2.35%	<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 2.7%	<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 1.7%		
			<b>State</b> 3.2%	<b>State</b> 2.9%	<b>State</b> 2.5%	<b>State</b> 2.4%		
<b>Child poverty rate</b>	A. Children Ready to Succeed in School  B. Healthy Children  C. Secure & Nurturing Families  D. Safe & Supportive Communities	Kids Count	<b>2008</b>  <b>Benton</b> 9.8%	<b>2009</b>  <b>Benton</b> 1.7%	<b>2010</b>  <b>Benton</b> 11.4%	<b>2011</b>  <b>Benton</b> 12%	Continue to maintain poverty rates that are lower than the state average.	Rates for our area are lower than the state average and we anticipate a downward trend during the next three reporting years.
			<b>Tama</b> 14.2%	<b>Tama</b> 15.8%	<b>Tama</b> 18.2%	<b>Tama</b> 16.5%		
			<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 12%	<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 13.25%	<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 14.8%	<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 14.25%		
			<b>State</b> 14.2%	<b>State</b> 15.6%	<b>State</b> 16.2%	<b>State</b> 17.1%		
<b>Percent of children enrolled in preschools</b>	A. Children Ready to Succeed in School	KidsCount	<b>2000</b>  <b>Benton</b> 54%	<b>2005–2009</b>  <b>Benton</b> 57.9%	<b>2006–2010</b>  <b>Benton</b> 52.5%	<b>2007–2011</b>  <b>Benton</b> 47.7%	Increase preschool enrollment by 1% annually.	Rates for our area are typically higher than the state average and we anticipate
			<b>Tama</b> 37.9%	<b>Tama</b> 47.9%	<b>Tama</b> 47.9%	<b>Tama</b> 44.7%		

			<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 45.95%  <b>State</b> 44.5%	<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 52.9%  <b>State</b> 46.8%	<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 50.2%  <b>State</b> 47.1%	<b>Better Tomorrows Average</b> 46.2%  <b>State</b> 48%		there will be an upward trend in enrollments during the next three years.
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***Better Tomorrows ECI Area Annual Report***

The Annual Report is available to the public and has up-to-date information on required program performance measures data.

## ***Better Tomorrows ECI Area Board's Process for Awarding Funds***

Better Tomorrows ECI grant process takes place annually. A RFP application and scoring tool will be utilized to determine FY 2016 funding priorities. Programs must indicate what priority (priorities) and outcome(s) they are addressing. The written applications will be reviewed by the Funding Committee, consisting of board members from each county. Providers will not be allowed to serve on the Funding Committee. The Funding Committee will make recommendations to the Better Tomorrows Board. The Better Tomorrows Board will make the final decision on all funding. Funded providers/agencies will be required to sign a contract and provide a Certificate of Liability Insurance listing Better Tomorrows Board as additionally insured. Future funding will determine what programs will continue based on their outcomes and current progress.

## ***Better Tomorrows ECI Area Board's Appeal Process***

Applicants have the right to appeal the funding decisions based upon a showing that the policies and procedures governing the grant selection process have not been properly applied. The appeal process begins on the date the written notification was sent to the applicant of the Board's decision. Appeals should be in writing and e-mailed to Better Tomorrows within ten (10) working days of the date of the e-mail notification of funding decisions to the applicant. It is the responsibility of the applicant to assure appeals are e-mailed on or before the tenth working day of the appeal process. Appeals e-mailed after the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) day will not be reviewed.

- All appeals shall clearly state how Better Tomorrows failed in following the rules of the grant process as governed by the policies and procedures outlined in the application material provided to all applicants. The request must also describe the remedy sought;
- An independent committee will review the appeal and gather information regarding any infractions of the process;
- The committee will make a report and a recommendation to the Better Tomorrows Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting;
- The Better Tomorrow Board will determine if there has been a violation of the process and rule on the appeal.

## ***Better Tomorrows ECI Area Board's Capacity***

As long as funding stays level we have the capacity to continue funding programs at their current level.

# **Section III: Fiscal Assessment**

## ***Early Childhood Iowa Area Board's Fiscal Assessment***

The information in the fiscal assessment matrix was gathered by directly contacting the entities providing the services via a letter and questionnaire. There were 129 contacts made with 41 responses returned. The following information was requested from community partners: organization/program, location, service provided, families served, ages served, estimated funding, type/source of funding and gaps in funding. The majority of the required fiscal information is public record, however, obtaining complete information was challenging. This information is difficult to obtain for various reasons. Many of the programs available in the Better Tomorrows ECI service area serve a wider age range than the 0–5 population. This presents a challenge when attempting to assess the financial investment in early childhood initiatives. Although the request stated the purpose and how the information would be used as part of merger process, it appears that some of the organizations did not understand the intent or the value of providing the information. The option was given for those contacted to not disclose the source or the amount of funding. Most of the responses received opted to not disclose so the data collected is not as useful as we had hoped. The costs involved with gathering this information includes staff time, postage, envelopes, copies, return address postage and envelopes outweighed the usefulness of data that was received.

Any application for ECI funding must identify other sources of income secured. The Board is also more likely to fund programs that can secure other funding and do not just rely on Early Childhood Iowa funding (though some programs do). The Board is mindful of avoiding duplication and supplanting of funds.

Better Tomorrows is always looking for ways to braid funding and create collaboration for successful projects. Our home visitation programs are either already credentialed or in the process of becoming credentialed and are seeking other funding to combine with ECI funding to sustain their programs. Several of the current programs funded with ECI funding would not sustain themselves if one of their funding sources collapsed. Preschool scholarships may require that the family pay a portion of their tuition, have a monthly cap and yearly dollar limit allowed. These are just a few of the many ways in which we locally use ECI funds to help make children and low income families successful.

**Better Tomorrows ECI Area Fiscal Assessment (Conducted Fiscal Year 2014)**  
**(Codes for identifying sources of funding: Federal Funding =F, State Funding=S,**  
**County Funding=C, Local Funding=L, Private Funding=P, ECI Local Funding=E)**

<b>AGENCY AND ORGANIZATION SERVICES</b>								
20 surveys sent out with 10 responding								
<b>Program/Agency/ Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Service Provided</b>	<b>Ages of Children Served</b>	<b>Number of Families Served</b>	<b>Yearly Estimated Funding</b>	<b>Identified Sources of Funding</b>	<b>Identified Gaps in Funding</b>	<b>Level of Collaboration</b>
Abbe Center for Community Mental Health	Benton	Other – Outpatient Mental Health Services	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
The Arc of East Central Iowa	Both	Other – respite care, supported community living, intermittent medical monitoring and treatment	All	0-50	Did not wish to disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Benton County Social Services	Benton	Other – screen for food pantry; general assistance for utility and rent, mental health funding	6-21, 22+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Benton County Transportation	Benton	Other - Transportation	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation,

<b>Program/Agency/ Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Service Provided</b>	<b>Ages of Children Served</b>	<b>Number of Families Served</b>	<b>Yearly Estimated Funding</b>	<b>Identified Sources of Funding</b>	<b>Identified Gaps in Funding</b>	<b>Level of Collaboration</b>
								Collaboration
Center Associates	Tama	Other – Mental Health Services	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Child Care Resource & Referral Region 5	Both	Parenting, Support to Early Childhood Iowa Programs, Other - Parent referrals, training technical assistance to providers	0-5	151+	\$976,436 \$180,889 \$10,000 \$240,000	F, S, L, E, P	These are combined funds for all 19 counties in the region	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
HACAP Child Care Programs	Benton	Other – home-based crisis child care and meal reimbursement to child care providers and nutritious meals for children	All	0-50	Did not wish to disclose	P	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

<b>Program/Agency/ Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Service Provided</b>	<b>Ages of Children Served</b>	<b>Number of Families Served</b>	<b>Yearly Estimated Funding</b>	<b>Identified Sources of Funding</b>	<b>Identified Gaps in Funding</b>	<b>Level of Collaboration</b>
HACAP Paces to Quality	Benton	Other – Home based child care technical assistance and home visits with developmentally appropriate materials, training and QRS support.	Did not disclose	0-50	Did not wish to disclose	P	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc. (MICA)	Both	Health Care, Family Support, Parenting, Support to Early Childhood Iowa Programs, Other – education, housing (LIHEAP, weatherization)	All	151+	\$4,936,425 \$878,111 \$82,372 \$289,875 \$74,767	F, S, L, E, P	There is insufficient funding for family support for birth to age three to reach all families in need of services, and there is no funding for CCNC work to assist child care providers in pursuing higher quality ratings.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

<b>Program/Agency/ Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Service Provided</b>	<b>Ages of Children Served</b>	<b>Number of Families Served</b>	<b>Yearly Estimated Funding</b>	<b>Identified Sources of Funding</b>	<b>Identified Gaps in Funding</b>	<b>Level of Collaboration</b>
Vinton Counseling Services	Benton	Other – Therapy and Counseling	All	0-50	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

### EARLY CARE ENVIRONMENTS

16 surveys sent out with 6 responding

<b>Program/Agency/ Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Service Provided</b>	<b>Ages of Children Served</b>	<b>Number of Families Served</b>	<b>Yearly Estimated Funding</b>	<b>Identified Sources of Funding</b>	<b>Identified Gaps in Funding</b>	<b>Level of Collaboration</b>
Benton Community Schools	Benton	Other - Preschool	0-5	101-150	\$600	S, E	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Central Lutheran School	Benton	Other – Preschool	0-5	0-50	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Early Beginnings Child Care Center	Benton	Other - Childcare	0-5, 6-21	51-100	Did not disclose	S, E, P	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Pied Piper Preschool	Tama	Other – Preschool and Childcare	0-5, 6-21	50-100	\$38,598 \$9,750	S, E	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution,

<b>Program/Agency/ Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Service Provided</b>	<b>Ages of Children Served</b>	<b>Number of Families Served</b>	<b>Yearly Estimated Funding</b>	<b>Identified Sources of Funding</b>	<b>Identified Gaps in Funding</b>	<b>Level of Collaboration</b>
								Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Pointer Pups Preschool	Benton	Support to Early Childhood Iowa Programs, Other – preschool services	0-5	0-50	Did not disclose	S	Each year there are families who want to send their children to 3- year-old preschool but they can't afford the tuition. This funding source allows that to happen, so it is a much appreciated service.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
TLC Preschool	Benton	Health Care, Family Support, Parenting, Support to Early Childhood Iowa Programs, Other- faith based program	0-5	51-100	\$590 per month	E	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

## RELIGIOUS ENTITIES

3 surveys sent out with 0 responding

## CITY MANAGED SERVICES

1 surveys sent out with 1 responding

Program/Agency/ Organization	Location	Type of Service Provided	Ages of Children Served	Number of Families Served	Yearly Estimated Funding	Identified Sources of Funding	Identified Gaps in Funding	Level of Collaboration
Vinton Park & Rec Center	Benton	Other – parks and recreation facilities and program	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

## LIBRARIES

16 surveys sent out with 7 responding

Program/Agency/ Organization	Location	Type of Service Provided	Ages of Children Served	Number of Families Served	Yearly Estimated Funding	Identified Sources of Funding	Identified Gaps in Funding	Level of Collaboration
Belle Plaine Community Library	Benton	Other - Preschool Story time	All	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Blairstown Public Library	Benton	Other	All	51-100	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Schroeder Public	Benton	Family Support,	All	151+	Did not	Did not	No gaps noted.	Communication,

<b>Program/Agency/ Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Service Provided</b>	<b>Ages of Children Served</b>	<b>Number of Families Served</b>	<b>Yearly Estimated Funding</b>	<b>Identified Sources of Funding</b>	<b>Identified Gaps in Funding</b>	<b>Level of Collaboration</b>
Library		Parenting			disclose	wish to disclose		Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Shellsburg Public Library	Benton	Other – preschool story hour, summer reading	All	51-100	\$58.45 \$32,332	L, C	Our budget gets tighter every year. This limits the amount of books and materials I can buy. We depend on donations to help close the gap.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Tama Public Library	Tama	Other - Public Library, children's programs	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Traer Public Library	Tama	Other – early reading skills	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not wish to disclose	We receive funding from the state for library services that include 0-5. We also have a budget from the city of Traer.	Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration, Communication,
Van Horne Public	Benton	Other – Story	All	151+	Did not	Did not	No gaps noted.	Communication,

Program/Agency/ Organization	Location	Type of Service Provided	Ages of Children Served	Number of Families Served	Yearly Estimated Funding	Identified Sources of Funding	Identified Gaps in Funding	Level of Collaboration
Library		time, etc.			disclose	disclose		Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

## FAMILY SUPPORT AND PARENT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

1 surveys sent out with 1 responding

Program/Agency/ Organization	Location	Type of Service Provided	Ages of Children Served	Number of Families Served	Yearly Estimated Funding	Identified Sources of Funding	Identified Gaps in Funding	Level of Collaboration
Horizons-A Family Service Alliance	Benton	Family Support, Parenting	0-5	0-50	\$4,000 \$119,762 \$2,000- \$4,500	L, E , P	Need funding for family assistance and emergency needs. Currently need to secure outside funds for this. Also would like some funds for staff development and trainings.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

## HEALTH SERVICES

34 surveys sent out with 10 responding

<b>Program/Agency/ Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Service Provided</b>	<b>Ages of Children Served</b>	<b>Number of Families Served</b>	<b>Yearly Estimated Funding</b>	<b>Identified Sources of Funding</b>	<b>Identified Gaps in Funding</b>	<b>Level of Collaboration</b>
Belle Plaine Dental	Benton	Health Care	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Country Chiropractic	Tama	Health Care	All	151+	Did not disclose	P	Exams are not covered by insurance especially Medicaid	Communication, Collaboration
Covenant Clinic - Traer	Tama	Health Care	All	151+	Did not disclose		No gaps noted.	Communication, Collaboration
Gladbrook Family Practice	Tama	Health Care	All	151+	Did not disclose	F, S	No gaps noted.	Communication, Collaboration
Mercycare Tama	Tama	Health Care	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Collaboration
Sara E. Stuefan DDS, PC	Benton	Health Care	All	0-50	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Collaboration
Twin City Chiropractic	Tama	Health Care	All	51-100	Did not disclose	F, S	No gaps noted.	Communication, Collaboration
Virginia Gay Home Health/Benton County Public Health	Benton	Health Care	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Virginia Gay Hospital	Benton	Health Care	All	151+	Did not wish to disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Wolfe Clinic Eye Centers, L.C.	Tama	Health Care	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Collaboration

## OTHER SERVICES/PROGRAMS

37 surveys sent out with 5 responding

Program/Agency/ Organization	Location	Type of Service Provided	Ages of Children Served	Number of Families Served	Yearly Estimated Funding	Identified Sources of Funding	Identified Gaps in Funding	Level of Collaboration
Benton County Sheriff's Office	Benton	Other – Law Enforcement	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Cooperation
Community Clothes Closet	Tama	Other – clothing	All	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Lough Law Office, Ray Lough	Benton	Family Support, Parenting	0-5, 6-21	0-50	Did not wish to disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
STC United Fund	Tama	Other – all area non-profits	All	151+	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Contribution, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration
Union Middle School	Tama	Other – education	6-21	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	Did not disclose	No gaps noted.	Communication, Collaboration

# Section IV: Community Collaboration

## *Collaborative and Networking Opportunities*

By definition, Better Tomorrows itself is collaboration, with Board members from every facet of the community (health, education, human services, faith). Board and staff are heavily involved with community partners by attending meetings. Below is a list of some, but not all, meetings that individuals have participated in.

Better Tomorrows Board Meetings  
Southeast ECI Director Meetings  
Northeast ECI Director Meetings  
State ECI Director Meetings  
Benton County DCAT Meetings  
Benton County CPPC Meetings  
Benton County Coalition Meetings  
Tama County CPPC Meetings – SKIP (Supporting Kids in Prevention)  
Funding Committees  
Ad Hoc Committees  
Benton County Above the Influence Executive Committee Meetings  
Benton County Above the Influence Meetings

**Governing Board:** is the decision making board. Comprised of members from Tama/Benton County.

**Funding Sub-Committees (as needed):** shall consist of five (5) Advisory Committee members that are not receiving funding and the ECI Co-Directors. Tasks may include but not be limited to: reviewing, approving/disapproving Requests for Proposals (RFP's) and making recommendations to the Board regarding funding decisions. The Board will make the final decision.

**Other Committees and Task Forces:** The Board may establish such standing or ad hoc committees and task forces as it believes will help carry out the responsibilities of the Board. The composition, duties, and terms shall be recorded in the Board minutes. All committees shall report to the Board who shall retain final and complete authority.

## *Community Partners*

Benton and Tama County are fortunate to have many collaborative partners, which include providers and other concerned citizens, interested in and serving families with children 0–5 years of age. This collaboration did not happen before their Empowerment/Early Childhood Iowa Areas were designated. There are private preschools, public preschools and Heads Starts in each county. Early Childhood Iowa has brought these entities together to work toward all children in Benton and Tama County having a preschool opportunity are ready to succeed in school and ensuring they have safe, secure and nurturing family and childcare.

Community partners include, but are not limited to: local businesses, school districts, community action agencies, faith organizations, community organizations and health and human service organizations. Better Tomorrows partners are:

ABBE/Oaks  
Area Education Agency 267  
Board of Supervisors

Above the Influence Coalition  
ASAC  
Child Abuse Prevention

Child Care Providers  
Citizens  
DECAT  
Grant Wood AEA 10  
ISU Extension of Tama County  
Legislators  
Local physicians  
Mid-Iowa Community Action & Head Start  
Virginia Gay Home Health  
Preschool Programs  
ShopKo  
Tama County Public Health & Home Care  
Tama-Toledo AAUW  
United Way  
WIC

Child Care Resource & Referral  
CPPC  
Department of Human Services  
Horizons Family Support Program  
Kirkwood Community College  
Libraries  
Mental Health Clinic of Tama County  
Ministerial Association  
Virginia Gay Hospital  
School Districts  
SKIP (Supporting Kids in Prevention)  
Tama-Toledo Kiwanis  
Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition  
Vinton Unlimited  
Women's Health & Education Center

These community partners have been linked together through the Early Childhood process to compliment their assets and to increase both the capacity and effectiveness of each organization.

Appropriate and positive early childhood development is crucial in the first 3 years of life for the health & well being of children and to promote their success now and in the future. The early years of life, from birth to age 5, are a critical period during which a child's brain develops rapidly and their cognitive, emotional, and social competencies, as well as their sense of well-being are enhanced. Parenting education is an important component to our services. Parents have a significant impact on how children will function from preschool and beyond. Unfortunately, children are exposed to risk factors such as: inadequate prenatal care, sub-standardized child care, poverty, lack of parental support, single parent households, child abuse, poor nutrition, lack of adequate dental care, cultural norms, poor housing, and alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse.

While the outcomes of children with only one risk factor are the same as those with no identified risks, children with two or more risk factors are more likely to develop social and academic problems, and possibly face other socio-economic issues. Barriers to achieving self-sufficiency include lack of available and affordable childcare, low education levels, illiteracy, poor employment skills and lack of transportation.

#### *Spread of Infectious Disease (Collaboration exists and will enhance)*

Currently, both counties support services to prevent the spread of infectious disease, prevent childhood injuries, develop emergency protocols, help with medication, and care for children with special health needs are being provided to child care facilities registered or licensed under IA Code Chapter 237A.

## ***Community Coordination & Collaboration***

#### *Family Support Collaborative (Collaboration exists and will expand)*

A family support collaborative currently exists in Benton and Tama County. It will be comprised of home visitation and parent education programs that provide services to children and families ages 0–5. Maternal Child Health, Parent Partner, Parents as Teachers, Head Start, Healthy Families Inc., Family Nutrition, Incentive Based Parent Education, and Early Access have been identified in which to gather together to address duplication, quality, as well as offer support and networking opportunities for providers that meet the state definition of family support.

*Private Public Partnership (Collaboration exists and will enhance)*

The Better Tomorrows Early Childhood Area will pursue private/public partnerships to inform the private sector of the importance of the early years. There have been small gains made in this area with Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce, and public libraries but more needs to be done. This will be an evolving collaboration with partners yet to be identified.

Below is a list of agencies/organizations that may be involved with one or more collaborative meetings mentioned and/or receive information in the form of an email distribution list. The distribution list serves as a central point of information for early childhood in the Better Tomorrows ECI Area, as well as a gateway for other information.

- Mental Health
- Area Education Agencies
- Business Leaders
- Central Point of Contact for Mental Health
- Chamber of Commerce
- Child Abuse Prevention Councils
- Child Care Centers
- Child Care Resource and Referral
- Community Action Agencies
- County Board of Supervisors
- County City Councils
- County Public Health Services
- Decategorization Projects
- Department of Human Services
- Economic Development
- Head Start
- Iowa State Extension
- Juvenile Court Services
- Kirkwood Community College
- Libraries
- Human Service Agencies
- Parents, caregivers, consumers, citizens
- Preschools
- Private and Public Schools
- WIC Program

## **Section V: Review and Evaluation**

### ***Review and Evaluation Methods***

The Early Childhood Area Co-Directors maintain ongoing communication with the programs, monitors monthly billing, and ensure contract compliance. Programs are also invited to present at Better Tomorrows board meetings.

Funded programs will be required to submit a monthly report to track state required performance measures data and include additional information as identified by the Board. Cumulative information for each program is reported in the ECI areas annual report and will be posted on local and state websites.

Site visits to programs will be conducted annually or as deemed appropriate to show progress, efficiency, and fiscal accountability.

In-depth board policies, infrastructure, and operations are in the process of being developed.

### **Currently**

The Better Tomorrows Board is sensitive to the current contractors/programs that exist in each single county; however a Request for Proposal Process will be utilized annually, requiring programs to establish clear budgets and explanations of services with an emphasis on efficiencies and collaboration.

### **Monthly**

The Co-Director (Treasurer) and Fiscal Agent will review all expenditures and financial statements on a monthly basis and provide feedback and/or recommendations to the Early Childhood Iowa Board. Funded projects will be required to submit written monthly reports to the board. A quarterly financial report will be submitted to the office of Early Childhood Iowa.

### **Annually**

- Contractors may be asked to provide an oral report on an annual basis.
- A year-end report will be required to be completed by each funded project with outputs, inputs, outcomes and finances.
- All programs, at a minimum, must address the state required performance measures as outlined in the Toolkit on the state Early Childhood Iowa website.
- The community plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to address any changes within the community and legislation.
- An annual report will be submitted to the State of Iowa on or before September 15.
- Annual report will be used to evaluate program responsibilities and effectiveness.
- The Board will provide input regarding their roles as members.

### **Continuous and Ongoing**

Funded service providers will be provided with tools that will assist them with expenditures and performance measures reporting. Clear guidelines and expectations will be provided to each provider as well as drafted documents to assist them with their specific project for expenditure reporting and outcome measurements.