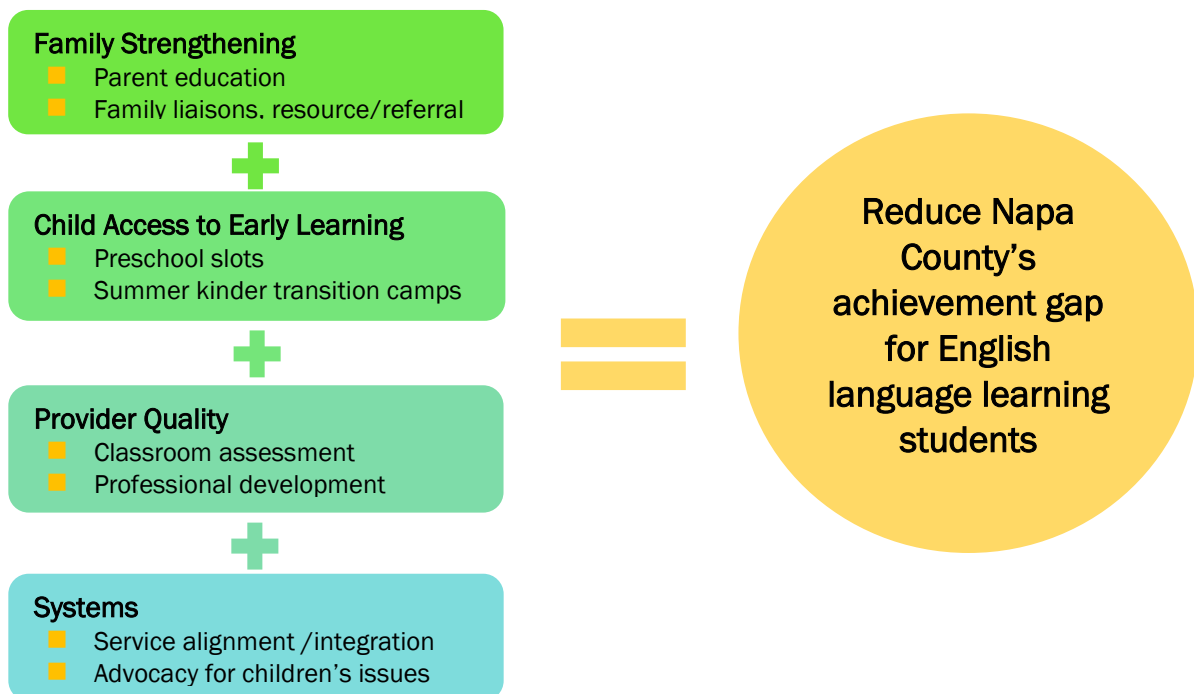


SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AT A GLANCE



BACKGROUND OF NAPA VALLEY EARLY LEARNING INITIATIVE

The Napa Valley Early Learning Initiative (NVELI) began in 2013 as a five year effort of the Napa Valley Vintners (NVV), and is funded by proceeds from the annual Auction Napa Valley. Based on a thorough review of the research and extensive community input, NVELI was designed to close the academic achievement gap between English Language Learners (ELLs) and their English proficient peers. Key strategies or “elements” of the Initiative include: Family Strengthening, Access to Early Learning, Provider Quality, and Systems Change and Integration. Designed as a place-based initiative, the elements are implemented in four target schools in Napa County: Calistoga, Shearer, Napa Junction and Phillips. The key ingredient for the Initiative is the integration between NVELI elements, as well as with other complementary efforts in the target communities; this integration is assured by a coordinator that is funded by NVV and is co-located at First 5 Napa’s office. The Initiative’s theory of change is below.



PURPOSE OF THE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The Napa Valley Early Learning Initiative has had a robust first three years of implementation, supported by an ongoing program evaluation and annual kindergarten readiness assessments to gauge impact. To plan a pathway toward sustainability, NVV staff commissioned this study to answer two broad planning questions:

1. How well is the Initiative performing? Where is it most effective? Where is it less effective?
2. Should NVELI be sustained? If so, which elements? How would the elements be administered? What are options for funding the elements?

Key criteria for sifting through the sustainability options for each NVELI element included **gap** (*does the element fill a critical gap?*), **effectiveness** (*is the element effective?*), **community support** (*does the community support the element?*) and **leverage** (*are there opportunities to leverage other funding?*).

PLANNING PROCESS

In June 2016, Applied Survey Research (ASR) and a team from NVV met to identify the guiding planning questions, methods and timeline for this sustainability study. In July and August, local leaders with knowledge about NVELI and the early learning environment in Napa County were identified and interviewed. In September and October, program evaluation reports were reviewed, and landscape research was conducted to identify other initiatives similar to NVELI, and understand how they were administered and funded. ASR also scanned and identified relevant funding options, including federal grants, state grants, foundation funding, and city and county taxation strategies. In December, preliminary findings were shared with the NVV Grants Review Committee, which led to a follow up survey with committee members to gather their individual opinions about NVELI sustainability. In January and February 2017, kindergarten readiness data from Fall 2016 were analyzed to understand whether there were any associations between participation in NVELI services and kindergarten readiness.

FINDINGS

Effectiveness of the Initiative

Based on a review of research, key informant interviews with local leaders, NVELI program outcome data and kindergarten readiness data, NVELI appears to be effectively addressing the key components needed to reduce the academic disparities between ELLs and non-ELLs in the four target schools:

- **Kindergarten readiness data** consistently points to a benefit for ELLs who have been served by the Initiative. While kindergarten readiness gaps still remain, the readiness data and the readiness gap is narrowed between the ELLs who were served and their comparison group. In terms of kindergarten readiness scores, having a greater number of NVELI services appears to be more beneficial than fewer services. NVELI-supported preschool was the strongest independent predictor of kindergarten readiness, but NVELI-supported family strengthening programs, in combination with NVELI preschool, yielded the highest overall kindergarten readiness scores. These services were also linked to the predictors of readiness, such as parents asking important questions of their preschool

providers. NVELI parents were also significantly more likely to read and tell stories with their child, and do important activities to help prepare for the transition to kindergarten.

- **Program outcome data** gathered by the Initiative’s evaluator showed that parents made statistically significant improvements in home literacy practices (book sharing, regular reading routine), and providers made improvements on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) tools. Children made statistically significant gains in their pre-kindergarten skills such as counting and recognition of numbers, shapes, colors and letters.
- **NVV Grants Review Committee members** who were surveyed said they were the “most proud” of the following NVELI accomplishments:
 - *“Bringing focus to preschool as (being) so important for education, especially for English Language learners.”*
 - *“Stimulating cross-organizational integration of several programs.”*
 - *“The leadership impacts and incremental change toward equalizing the potential of kids in this community.”*
 - *“That children who received help from NVELI will have a better chance at succeeding in school.”*
 - *“Data showing the increase in kindergarten readiness for ELL students.”*
- **Local leaders** who were interviewed had highly favorable views of the Initiative’s role in filling gaps that would otherwise be unaddressed. They were also complimentary of NVELI’s high quality programs, and of the Initiative’s role in coordinating and integrating services. They offered no significant criticisms of the Initiative’s design or implementation, but did offer a few suggestions for consideration, such as expanding to other schools, offering services to children ages 0-3, and better communicating NVELI’s effectiveness to the broader community.

How well does NVELI meet the Sustainability Criteria?

This study reviews the ways in which the elements of the Napa Valley Early Learning Initiative meet the sustainability criteria of *gap, effectiveness, community support and leverage*:

- **Gap:** The premise is that NVELI funds a particular response to fill a gap. There was consensus amongst local leaders that the gaps are greatest in the areas of preschool and family strengthening, in that if NVV pulled away funding entirely, those gaps would re-emerge because there is no entity with sufficient resources to assume funding of the work. For the 2016-17 contract year, NVELI programs have a combined match of \$125,000 from other sources to support their NVELI program services, but these funds would only cover about 15% of the annual NVELI budget. NVELI programs are filling a significant service gap that will require creative funding solutions going forward.
- **Effectiveness:** The premise is that sustainability efforts should be focused on those elements that have demonstrated effectiveness. Based on ASR’s review of the annual evaluation reports, the program outcome data for each of the NVELI elements are of high quality and are compelling. Additionally, the kindergarten readiness data reveals a strong relationship between NVELI preschool and parent education with kindergarten readiness, and that NVELI services are helping to narrow the readiness gap between ELLs and non-ELLs.
- **Community Support:** The premise is that stakeholders will rally and support efforts in which they believe. There was unanimous support amongst local leaders that the elements seed-funded by

NVELI needed to be continued, and 6 of the 7 Grants Review Committee members surveyed listed NVELI elements they felt should be sustained.

- **Leverage:** The premise is that NVV funding for NVELI, or elements funded under NVELI, will be decreasing or eliminated, and therefore sustainability efforts should focus on those elements for which other resources could be harnessed. *ASR found no major sources of funding that could fully replace NVV's investment.* As an example of NVV's success in leveraging, NVELI has already transitioned the work around provider quality (Pathways to Quality) to First 5 Napa. Other leveraging opportunities were identified, including creating more preschool capacity by one-time funding capital investments for facilities, and/or encouraging districts and community agencies to draw down California State Preschool Program funding. As for family strengthening, there could be opportunities to partner with districts' Local Control Accountability Plan, which includes a focus on family engagement (State Priority #3) and student engagement, particularly on dual language learners (State Priority #4).¹ NVV can also explore ways to pool resources with health or human service agency programs who also share an interest in helping families strengthen parent-child interactions, social connectivity and leadership abilities. Lastly, ASR identified foundations who support initiatives very much like NVELI in other parts of the state.



¹ See all eight State Priorities to be addressed in districts' Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP): <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/statepriorityresources.asp>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The following presents recommendations for sustaining the work of the elements of the Napa Valley Early Learning Initiative in Napa County.

► All of the elements should be continued.

In ASR's view, the Napa Valley Early Learning Initiative contains the programmatic elements that are supported by research, local community leaders, and quantitative outcome data. However, what makes NVELI more than a collection of strategies is the intentional integration of services, in terms of programs being co-located or aligned, and clients being consistently cross-referred across services. In other words, it is the carefully planned connectivity between the services that ensures that families receive the benefits of the elements working in unison: their child has a preschool space, the child's classroom is an enriching environment led by a highly trained provider, their parent is informed and engaged with the role of parenting and the opportunities around them, and their family is linked to other critical services such as developmental screenings, ESL classes and resources at their nearby elementary school. In addition to conceptually making good sense, the NVELI elements are effective, based on the systematic collection of participant, service and outcome data.

Based on the research about evidence-based approaches to impact school readiness, the evidence about NVELI effectiveness, the links between NVELI participation and kindergarten readiness, and the opinions of Grants Review Committee members and other local leaders, ASR's recommendation is that all elements of NVELI be continued in some manner: preschool, family strengthening, systems coordination and integration, and provider quality (leveraged with First 5 Napa). Six of the 7 NVV Grants Review Committee members surveyed concur, in that they listed elements of NVELI that they would like to see sustained. The majority of Grants Review Committee members responding to the survey (n=4) suggested that the "whole model" be sustained, followed by preschool (n=1) and family strengthening (n=1).

► NVV should continue funding, coordinating and evaluating the elements while more systemic partnerships are built.

To assure the continued level of coordination and accountability of these critical elements, ASR recommends that the Napa Valley Vintners continue to directly fund the programmatic elements of NVELI (as did 5 of 7 NVV Grants Review Committee members surveyed), and that the coordination of such grants is overseen by NVV, rather than shifting grant funds and coordination responsibilities to an outside agency.

NVV set out to fund NVELI as a 5-year demonstration initiative. NVV's grantmaking model incorporates initiatives in each of its focus areas (children's education and health) at about \$1 million a year for 3-5 years. At the end of the initiative term, NVV should consider funding the programs delivering the elements under its community support grants (CSG). Indeed, some of the current NVELI grantees receive community support grants from NVV, so this would be a seamless transition. (The community support grant category has restrictions around funding ratios, which would have to be considered under this scenario.)

Transitioning the programs currently funded by NVELI to the category of community support grants ensures efficiency and centralization of grant administration, oversight and accountability. However, the








other key ingredient to the Initiative’s success has been having a coordinator to assure programmatic integration across the NVELI elements and catchment schools. Without a coordinator, the integration simply won’t happen. (In ASR’s partnerships with similar collaboratives in Solano and Santa Clara Counties, each collaborative has an individual designated to assure integration between various agencies). ASR recommends that NVV hire a coordinator on a contract basis for the final phases and transition of the Initiative. This would save money currently paid to another agency for overhead and the coordinator’s time could be leveraged to integrate other education-focused CSG grants while the current NVV grants manager could dedicate her focus on the health-based grants. This greater attention to each portion of NVV’s portfolio will ensure more strategic use and accountability of the investments. Additionally, the coordinator could help seek other foundation investments for the NVELI portfolio. Similarly, ASR recommends that NVV continue contracting evaluation services for the grant investments. The level of quality of NVELI’s current evaluation is commendable, and far exceeds what a grant-funded agency could do on its own.

Summary of ASR’s Recommendations for Sustainability

- **All NVELI elements should be continued:** *preschool, summer pre-K, family strengthening and systems integration.* Provider quality is already being coordinated with First 5 Napa.
- **NVV should continue to fund the elements,** as they are in line with NVV’s strategic plan. Other streams of ongoing funding must also be identified and leveraged (e.g., education, health, social service sectors).
- **NVV should administer the grants from its community support fund** category to assure ongoing focus, quality and accountability for the investments.
- **NVV should consider contracting a coordinator** to ensure systems integration between service elements and to identify fund development and leveraging opportunities.
- **Create a Leadership Team** to help the community “hold” the work of NVELI. Local decision-makers should meet periodically to ensure sustained focus on the needs of English language learners, the four elements, cross-systems integration, program impacts, communication and messaging, and strategic fund development.
- **Allow for two years of time for NVELI** to facilitate smooth transition to its next iteration.

NEXT STEPS

In the 5th year of the Initiative (FY 17-18), ASR recommends that NVV staff begin the necessary conversations with potential partners around cost leveraging, so that sustainability plans can be cemented before the close of the 5th year. Specific steps can include the following:

-  Concretize the Leadership Team goals, membership, and meeting frequency; meet regularly with clear agendas, engaging topics and meeting notes to keep the team's ideas moving. Consider creating a parent advisory component or other means of ongoing feedback to ensure that the voices of parents are incorporated in the NVELI system of supports.
-  Contract a coordinator to oversee administration of NVELI grants as well as to ensure integration of these grants with other NVV grants.
-  Create a specific cost-leveraging strategy per NVELI element and grantee, including an estimate of how much NVV investment can be saved per element and grantee.
-  Create an updated estimate of NVV investment for FY 18-19.
-  With cost leveraging strategies identified, NVV can approach foundations for support. Some foundations are interested in funding direct services, while others will only fund systems-strengthening work, but the updated portfolio has both aspects of the work built in and thus should be of interest to funders.
-  Begin implementing cost-leveraging strategies.
-  Continue telling the story of NVELI-related impacts for children, families, providers, systems and schools, using both quantitative as well as narrative data. Critical audiences include NVV, Leadership Team, local city leaders, Board of Supervisors, local legislators, and business communities.