SCALING PROGRAMS FOR FAMILY, FRIEND, AND NEIGHBOR CAREGIVERS

Learnings from the Packard Foundation's Informal Care Strategy
October 2020

engage^{R+D}

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

The first five years of children's lives are fundamental to their growth and development. Many children in this age group spend a substantial amount of time being cared for by extended family, friends, or neighbors. Informal care — or Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care — is both an affordable and a flexible form of care and a way to provide children with a warm, nurturing environment with a trusted caregiver. By some measures, it is the most common type of nonparental childcare for children ages zero to five in the United States[1]. Further, FFN caregivers are often culturally and linguistically aligned with families' preferences and often have decades of experience caring for children. Despite the prevalence of this form of childcare, FFN care providers receive less recognition and support relative to formal childcare providers. This disconnect highlights the importance of elevating high-quality FFN care to support children's development in general and equity in early childhood education outcomes.

The Packard Foundation's Informal Care Strategy

In 2014, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Children, Families, and Communities (CFC) program launched its Informal Care Strategy. This 10-year strategy (2014-2024) aims to support FFN caregivers — both nationally and within California — as they provide the kinds of nurturing and enriching experiences children need early in life to reach full potential. Highlights of the Foundation's strategy to date within California include:

- Taking a **three-phased approach** to supporting FFN programs, beginning with conducting **background research** on the state of FFN programs, continuing with **testing and learning** through a range of investments in FFN programs, and concluding with investments in **scaling the most promising practices** identified through the first two phases.

- Supporting **17 organizations** across **20 California counties** to deliver programming that helps FFN caregivers support the health and development of the young children in their care.

- Investing a total of **$3.6 million dollars** in FFN programs, with a median investment of **$90,000**.

- Supporting a **learning community** for FFN-serving organizations by offering them space for in-person and virtual connection and support.

Engage R+D has been the evaluation partner of the Packard Foundation for its Informal Care strategy since 2016. Individual-level and cross-cutting evaluations of its FFN grants showed promising results in terms of their ability to have positive impacts on caregivers. However, as of 2019, the Foundation had not yet conducted a comprehensive study of the third phase of its investment strategy, which related to scaling the most promising practices. This executive summary and the full learning report synthesize a range of lessons and implications for those interested in supporting and scaling FFN programs, including funders, community organizations, and advocacy groups.

> ***COVID-19 and FFN Caregivers**
> *Most of this evaluation was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the report is not focused on COVID-19's impact per se, the pandemic has had a variety of impacts on FFN caregivers and the organizations serving them. With formal childcare centers closing during the pandemic, many families have increased their reliance on FFNs. At the same time, FFNs face safety issues as they seek to provide crucial care to young children, such as a lack of cleaning supplies and their own membership in high-risk groups. As it relates to scale, COVID-19 required organizations to shift their strategies and approaches to engaging FFN caregivers, which might influence how or what they choose to scale in the future.*

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[1] National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016: Data File User's Manual (NCES 201 -100). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Evaluation Approach and Methods

Through this evaluation, we sought to synthesize what the Foundation has learned about scaling FFN programs. The evaluation had three goals, including: 1) to document the Foundation's approach to supporting promising FFN practices thus far; 2) to surface the hypotheses and assumptions underlying that approach; and 3) to lift up insights and lessons learned from the scaling process. The specific questions we addressed through this evaluation are described in the box to the right. The primary methods for this evaluation included the following:

- **Interviews** with Foundation FFN grantees (n = 10) as well as field and policy leaders (n = 5), conducted between February and March 2020.

- **Document review**, which included grant reports (n = 24) and evaluation reports (n = 16).

- **Reflection sessions** with Foundation CFC staff (n = 3).

Evaluation Questions

How has the Foundation's Informal Care Strategy within California evolved and scaled over time?

What conditions are needed for FFN programs or platforms to scale successfully?

To what extent have the Foundation's hypotheses about scaling conditions for FFN programs been true?

What are the implications of these findings for the early learning field and other audiences?

Key Findings

Conceptualizing Scale

This evaluation embraced the notion that there are multiple, legitimate definitions of scale and that one's view of scale depends on the goals and needs of the community being served and other local contexts[2]. To that end, we did not begin with a pre-existing notion of scale but instead developed one based upon lessons from grantees, what they were hearing from FFNs, and how field and policy leaders viewed scale. Using this approach, we identified five characteristics as being key to a definition of scale within the context of FFN programs. These characteristics are summarized in Exhibit ES1.

Exhibit ES1. Characteristics of Scale for FFN Programs

Characteristic of Scale	Description
Greater reach	Expanding to new sites or increasing the numbers of participants in FFN programs.
Deeper engagement	Providing more intensive and regular services to the populations that need supports the most (i.e., depth rather than breadth).
Diversity of offerings	Engaging in multiple activities in a variety of settings, rather than just implementing one program or model of engagement.
Transfer of capacity	Building the capacity of other organizations and communities to implement and support FFN programs.
Scaling positive outcomes	Focusing on improving outcomes for FFN caregivers and children rather than simply on replication.

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[2] Morel, R. P., Coburn, C., Catterson, A. K., & Higgs, J. (2019). The Multiple Meanings of Scale: Implications for Researchers and Practitioners. Educational Researcher, 48(6), 369-377.

In addition to identifying characteristics of scale, we sought to understand grantees' as well as field and policy leaders' perspectives on why it was important to scale FFN programs. The themes they identified are summarized in Exhibit ES2 and highlight how they saw scaling FFN programming as an essential strategy for supporting children's early learning and education.

Exhibit ES2. How Scaling FFN Programs Can Support Children, Families, and FFN Providers

Reason for Scaling FFN Programs	Rationale
Support quality child care	Implementing and scaling FFN programming supports equitable care and learning for children who are not part of formal systems of care.
Meet demand	There is a clear demand for FFN programs, given that most young children in California are being cared for by FFNs.
Strengthen school readiness	FFN programs can help prepare children for school by providing learning opportunities, supports, and information for FFN providers, children, and families.
Honor parent choice and culture	FFN caregivers are often culturally and linguistically aligned with families' preferences and offer a child care approach that honors parent choice and culture.

Conditions to Support Scale

Grantees also emphasized several key characteristics or conditions that can facilitate an organization's ability to scale FFN programming, as summarized in Exhibit ES3. The full report includes examples of how grantees met each of these conditions as well as grantee exemplars that describe in detail the approaches taken by several FFN grantees.

Exhibit ES3. Conditions for Scaling FFN Programs

Condition	Description
Community connection and trust	Those implementing FFN programs may be most successful with scaling when they build authentic relationships and trust with FFN caregivers and ensure that programs meet the needs voiced by the FFN community.
Staff capacity and support	Staff implementing FFN programs need to have the time, resources, and knowledge to carry out and grow high-quality programs.
Codified program model that can be adapted	Core program models ensure fidelity but should be adaptable to new regions, communities, or spaces in order to meet needs of FFN caregivers.
Access to space, infrastructure, and resources	Having programming in a consistent location supports ongoing engagement and trust with FFNs. Having infrastructure and resources to support FFN programs helps to ensure quality implementation.
Start-up and sustained funding	Programs need capital to launch a scaling approach as well as sustained funding to ensure long-term implementation.
Support from leaders and institutions	Obtaining support and buy-in from leaders at organizations that serve as key partners to FFN programs can help with funding and other supports needed for scale.

Lessons and Implications

Taken together, the findings from this evaluation point to the value of sustaining and scaling FFN programming. The grantees and field leaders we spoke with highlighted the critical role FFN caregivers play in supporting young children's growth and development. Supporting and scaling FFN programming can help to legitimize FFN care as a valued, high-quality and necessary childcare approach for helping communities to thrive.

This evaluation yielded a range of lessons and implications for those interested in supporting FFN programs, including the Packard Foundation, other public and private funders, community organizations, and advocacy groups. A summary of these lessons and implications follows below.

Lessons About Why Scaling FFN Programming Matters

- **FFN caregivers play a critical role in young children's development.** Scaling FFN programming can provide FFN caregivers with early learning information, resources, and connections to other caregivers, all of which can strengthen quality of care. Funders and others within the early childcare field can continue to raise awareness about the integral role FFN caregivers play and make the case for sustaining and scaling programs and resources that support FFN caregivers' work.

- **Supporting FFN programming at scale is an equity issue.** At its core, supporting FFN caregivers and the children in their care can be seen as an equity issue. Although families across all socio-economic, ethnic, and racial groups use FFN care, the families most likely to use FFN care are low-to-moderate income, Latino, African-American, refugee, or immigrant families, and FFN care providers themselves are also predominantly low-income and women of color[3]. Supporting FFN caregivers and scaling FFN programming presents an opportunity to spotlight this work as valued, legitimate, and necessary for communities to thrive.

- **FFN caregivers provide vital support to working families.** In addition to providing nurturing and trusting environments for children ages zero to five, FFN caregivers offer many parents a flexible and affordable child care option so they can go to work. However, despite their prevalence, FFN caregivers are often have less access to information and resources compared to those in formal systems of care. Given the critical role FFN caregivers play in supporting working parents, and the many families that choose FFN care for their children, there is a clear demand to scale supports and resources for FFN caregivers.

Lessons for Those Implementing FFN Programs

- **Build community connection and trust.** The most common piece of advice grantees had for other organizations interested in implementing or scaling programs for FFN caregivers was to devote time to building trusting relationships with FFN caregivers. Authentic relationships grounded in trust support outreach and sustained engagement and ensure programming meets the evolving needs of the FFN community.

- **Prioritize testing and learning.** When implementing new programs or scaling to new regions, funders can pilot and test new approaches to learn what works best for each community. Grantees shared that by learning and pivoting, they were able to design programs that met the needs of FFN caregivers and were adaptable to new regions or communities.

- **Validate FFN caregivers, their role, and the importance of self-care.** Grantees shared that FFN programming can be effective when it seeks to honor and validate the integral role that FFNs play in children's lives. FFN programs can build FFN caregivers' confidence and self-efficacy and teach them the importance of self-care. As one grantee stated, "It's very important because [FFN caregivers] don't think about themselves, they always put their children first…We have to teach them that in order to give something, you have to take care of yourself first."

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[3] Porter, Toni (2018). Strengthening our efforts to support FFN child care. Packard Foundation Informal Care Meeting.

Lessons for the Packard Foundation and Other Funders

- **Consider exploring promising avenues for scale.** Interviews revealed other potential platforms for scaling FFN programs. For example, social service organizations or parks and recreation departments could be promising platforms for scale. This is a testament to the ways the Foundation's investments have already generated interest from other sectors that are not explicitly engaging FFNs and shows potential for new avenues and platforms for scale.

- **Continue to use community-driven approaches to scale.** Through using a community-driven approach, this evaluation revealed definitions of scale that the Packard Foundation had not explored before. For example, some grantees defined scale as "deeper engagement," explaining that scale is more about depth rather than breadth. As the Packard Foundation and other funders continue to explore opportunities to support scaling efforts with their grantees, using more expansive definitions of scale can generate approaches and solutions that are more closely aligned with community needs and local contexts.

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- **Providing support for FFN Learning Communities can help facilitate conversations around scale.** The Packard Foundation's FFN Learning Community brings together grantees from the Informal Care Strategy and other partners via in-person and virtual learning opportunities to share, learn, and network about their work in FFN settings. This type of space can be an effective avenue for stakeholders to address topics related to scale, policy, and field building with each other and to hear from experts on a regular basis.

Introduction

The first five years of children's lives are fundamental to their growth and development. Many children in this age group spend a substantial amount of time being cared for by extended family, friends, or neighbors, who play a critical role in supporting the child's health and early development. Informal care, or Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care, is both an affordable and a flexible form of care and a way to provide children with a warm, nurturing environment with a trusted caregiver. Further, FFN caregivers are often culturally and linguistically aligned with families' preferences and in many instances have decades of experiences caring for children. FFN childcare is, by some measures, the most common type of nonparental childcare in the United States[4]. In California, 80 percent of young children ages birth to 2, and approximately 40 percent of children ages birth to 5, are cared for by unlicensed or license-exempt caregivers[5]. However, FFN care providers often receive less recognition and support relative to formal childcare providers. Further, while FFN care is prevalent across socioeconomic and racial-ethnic groups, the families most likely to use it are low-to-moderate income, Latino, African-American, refugee, or immigrant families, and FFN care providers themselves are also predominantly low-income and women of color.[6] These statistics highlight the importance of elevating high-quality FFN care to supporting both children's development in general and equity in early childhood education outcomes.

In 2014, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Children, Families, and Communities (CFC) program launched their Informal Care Strategy, a 10-year strategy (focused both nationally and within California) which aims to support parents, extended family, and other FFN caregivers as they provide the kind of nurturing and enriching experiences children need early in life to reach their full potential. As one component of this broader strategy, the Foundation invested in California-based organizations that support FFN caregivers. Specifically, the Foundation provided grants to 17 organizations across the state to deliver programming that helped FFN caregivers support the health and development of the young children in their care. In the early years of its California grantmaking strategy, the Foundation focused on casting a wide net with its investments as well as providing opportunities for peer learning and resource-sharing across grantees. In addition, the Foundation supported evaluations of this strategy — by both grantees and external evaluators — which showed promising outcomes for the FFN caregivers involved. In 2019 (5 years into this strategy), the Foundation began shifting its focus to scaling a smaller number of FFN programs that showed promise. At that time, the Foundation wished to synthesize what it had learned about scaling FFN programs for the benefit of multiple audiences, including:

- Community organizations looking to implement and scale FFN programs
- The Packard Foundation as it looks to learn from this strategy to inform its other work
- Other funders (public and private) looking to support FFN work
- Advocacy organizations looking to promote policies that support FFN caregivers

To help synthesize learnings related to scale, the Foundation partnered with Engage R+D in fall 2019 to conduct an evaluation focused on lessons related to scaling FFN programs. This report summarizes our findings related to scaling FFN programs, and is organized as follows:

- The Packard Foundation's Informal Care Strategy
- Conceptualizing Scale
- Findings About Scale
- Funding and Field Building
- Considerations and Implications

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[4] National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016: Data File User's Manual (NCES 201 -100). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
[5] The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 2015. Informal Child Care in California: Current Arrangements and Future Needs.
[6] Porter, Toni (2018). Strengthening our efforts to support FFN child care. Packard Foundation Informal Care Meeting.

Goals and Purpose of the Evaluation

Engage R+D has been the evaluation partner of the Foundation on its Informal Care strategy since 2016. Our previous evaluation activities focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the progress and outcomes of each grantee's work, synthesizing that information, and supporting opportunities for grantee learning and connection. This evaluation sought to synthesize at a high level what we have learned from previous evaluation activities and to more deeply explore lessons related to scaling, with a focus on lessons learned from the Foundation's California-based investments.

The questions guiding this evaluation and specific areas we explored are listed in Exhibit 1. A full list of learning questions can be found in Appendix A.

Exhibit 1. Evaluation Learning Questions

Question	Areas of Exploration
How has the Foundation's Informal Care Strategy within California evolved and scaled over time?	• Key activities and alignment with original vision • What scaling has looked like • Reach of the strategy • Impact of the strategy on grantees and FFNs
What conditions are needed for FFN programs or platforms to scale successfully?	• How demand for FFN programs influences scale • Role of parents in scaling FFN programs • How attitudes towards FFN caregivers impact scale • Other conditions that support scale
To what extent have the Foundation's hypotheses about scaling conditions for FFN programs been true?	• Examples of programs that were successful in scaling and why • Examples of programs that faced challenges in scaling and why
What are the implications of these findings for the early learning field and other audiences?	• Lessons learned about how to scale successfully • Strengths and assets of FFN care providers • External conditions influencing this work

Methods

To answer the above learning questions, the evaluation team used a variety of data collection methods, including a document review, interviews with grantees and field and policy leaders, and quarterly reflection sessions with Foundation staff (see Exhibit 2 on the next page). We gathered information from *all* grantees through a document review, in-depth information from a *subset* of grantees through interviews, and overall reflections on scale and the findings from field and policy leaders and CFC staff.

Exhibit 2. Data Collection Methods

Method	Sample	Timeframe	Description
Document Review	**24** Grantee Final Reports **16** Evaluation Reports	November-December 2019	The evaluation team synthesized final grant reports and evaluation reports from the Foundation's Informal Care Strategy with a focus on findings relevant to scaling. When grantees are called out by name in this report, we are referencing information gathered from this data collection method.
Interviews	**10** Grantee Interviews **5** Field and Policy Leaders	February-March 2020	Interviews explored what scale has looked like for the Informal Care Strategy, including successes, challenges, and promising practices related to scaling. Findings and quotes from interviews are kept confidential and anonymous.
Reflection Sessions	**3** Reflection Sessions with CFC staff	January, May, and August 2020	The evaluation team facilitated quarterly sense-making sessions with the Foundation's CFC team to share learnings in real time and engage in reflection and discussion.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to consider when reviewing the findings from this evaluation. First, data collection methods did not include interviews with FFN caregivers but instead relied upon grantees to lift up caregiver perspectives as they relate to FFN programming and scale. Further, grantees' experience with scale vary greatly — some grantees reflected retrospectively on learnings about scale and others are still at the beginning of their scaling journey. Lastly, we encountered some challenges with data collection related to COVID-19, mainly that we were not able to interview the full sample of grantees and field leaders we initially intended to interview given constraints on capacity. The box below includes more information about COVID-19 and its impacts on FFN caregivers[7].

COVID-19 and FFN Caregivers
We conducted most of the interviews for this evaluation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had a variety of impacts on FFN caregivers and the organizations serving them. With formal childcare centers closing during the pandemic, many families have increased their reliance on FFNs. At the same time, FFNs face safety issues as they seek to provide crucial care to young children, such as a lack of cleaning supplies and their own membership in high-risk groups. In addition, FFNs face barriers to receiving resources, information, and services due to the halting of in-person activities.

As it relates to scale, COVID-19 required organizations to shift their strategies and approaches to engaging FFN caregivers, which might influence how or what they choose to scale in the future. Additionally, FFN care may become more important to families with limited in-person care options. The elevated importance of FFNs could lead to increased opportunities to support FFN care through federal, state, and local policy and thus more opportunities to scale FFN programming. However, organizations that support FFNs are preparing for reduced funding to implement their work. This context is important to keep in mind when reviewing the findings detailed in this report.

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[7] National Women's Law Center (2020) Impact of COVID-19 on FFN Care Memo.

The Packard Foundation's Informal Care Strategy

This section provides background information and context on the Foundation's Informal Care Strategy in California, how it has evolved over time, the reach of the strategy, and learnings about its impact. These findings draw primarily upon grant reports from all grantees and evaluation reports from a subset of grantees.

Evolution of Strategy

To date, the Foundation's Informal Care Strategy in California has focused on grantmaking to organizations that provide information to FFN caregivers, connect them with resources as well as each other, and support them in providing quality care for young children. (A comprehensive list of key activities funded can be found in Appendix C.) In addition to funding grants, the Foundation has, since 2016, invested in an FFN Learning Community. This initiative brings together grantees from the Informal Care Strategy and other partners via in-person and virtual learning opportunities to share, learn, and network about their work in FFN settings. The infographic below (Exhibit 3) summarizes the three core components of the Foundation's Informal Care Strategy.

Exhibit 3. Core Components of the Foundation's Informal Care Strategy

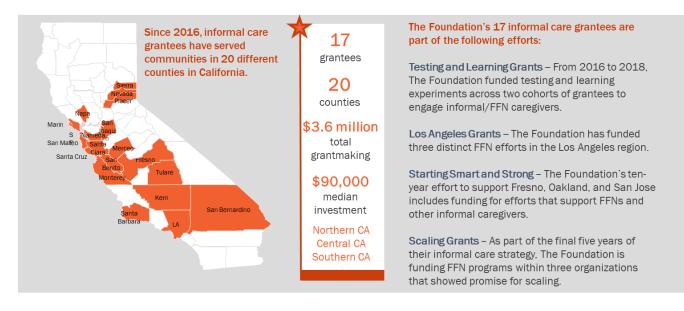| Phase 1 Support Research	Phase 2 Test and Learn	Phase 3 Scale What Works
2014-2015	**2016-2018**	**2019-2024**
The Foundation conducted background research and an environmental scan to gain a more nuanced under-standing about the current state of informal care settings and strategies.	Across two cohorts of grantees, The Foundation funded testing and learning experiments of projects that are designed to engage informal/FFN caregivers.*	The final five years aim at scaling the most promising practices learned through the research and experimental phases.

*In addition to these two cohorts, the Foundation has provided funding to other grantees supporting FFN caregivers. A full list of informal care grantees is included in the appendix.

As the Foundation enters the third phase of this strategy, it has developed its own assumptions regarding how its efforts can support scale. Three key assumptions underlying this strategy include: (1) by investing in a range of testing and learning projects to engage FFN caregivers, grantee organizations and their partners can gain a deeper understanding of the important role FFN providers play in the childcare sector; (2) with this buy-in and support, their organizations can continue to sustain programming for FFN caregivers long after the Foundation invests in their work or despite leadership changes or other transitions; and (3) the Foundation's leadership in this space can encourage increased support from other funders and elevate FFN caregivers as an important part of the larger early childcare ecosystem. This report will explore these assumptions and describe the initiative's progress towards them.

Reach of Strategy

Over the past several years, the Foundation's Informal Care grants have served communities in 20 different counties across Northern, Central, and Southern California. These grants have totaled $3.6 million dollars, with a median investment of $90,000. While this report focuses on the Foundation's investments across California, it should be noted that the Informal Care strategy also includes investments in national organizations not covered in this report. Exhibit 4 shows where Informal Care grantees are located and the four distinct efforts that make up the strategy in California.

Exhibit 4. The Foundation's Informal Care Grantees in California

Since 2016, informal care grantees have served communities in 20 different counties in California.

17 grantees

20 counties

$3.6 million total grantmaking

$90,000 median investment

Northern CA
Central CA
Southern CA

The Foundation's 17 informal care grantees are part of the following efforts:

Testing and Learning Grants – From 2016 to 2018, The Foundation funded testing and learning experiments across two cohorts of grantees to engage informal/FFN caregivers.

Los Angeles Grants – The Foundation has funded three distinct FFN efforts in the Los Angeles region.

Starting Smart and Strong – The Foundation's ten-year effort to support Fresno, Oakland, and San Jose includes funding for efforts that support FFNs and other informal caregivers.

Scaling Grants – As part of the final five years of their informal care strategy, The Foundation is funding FFN programs within three organizations that showed promise for scaling.

Who is reached. In addition to reaching a wide geography of caregivers across the state, the Foundation's grants have also supported engagement with caregivers from diverse communities. Research shows that FFNs are most often women over 40 with low levels of income and education who speak Spanish[8]. While many of the Foundation's FFN grantees provide programming to Spanish-speaking caregivers and low-income caregivers, grantees shared that they also serve:

- **Multi-lingual caregivers.** Grantees engage caregivers who speak Arabic, Farsi, Vietnamese, and Chinese. One grantee provides services to Mixteco-speaking members of their community.

- **Caregivers from rural and agricultural communities.** While many grantees provide services in urban or densely populated areas, a few provide services to caregivers that live in rural and agricultural communities.

- **Parents.** Nearly all grantees said their FFN programming also engages parents as participants. Some grantees said that this is a challenge as they want to prioritize their programming for FFN caregivers. However, others spoke of the benefits of bringing FFNs and parents together so that parents can see the critical role FFNs caregivers play. Parents also serve as trusted messengers who support recruitment of FFNs.

Numbers reached. Some grantees also track the number of caregivers and/or children their programming reaches. We analyzed data from 2017-2018 across 10 grantee organizations and found that FFN programming is reaching a wide range of caregivers and children:

- **4,700 parents/caregivers** (including FFNs) were reached across 10 grantee organizations.

- **184 FFNs** were reached across 5 grantee organizations that specifically tracked FNN participation.

- **4,000 children** were reached across 7 grantee organizations.

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[8] The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 2015. Informal Child Care in California: Current Arrangements and Future Needs.

Conceptualizing Scale

This section lays the groundwork for the evaluation's understanding of scale by exploring definitions of scale, why scaling FFN programming matters, and what success looks like for FFN programming. Information from this section was pulled from interviews with grantees and evaluation reports from a subset of grantees.

Defining Scale

Over the past few decades, research on scale has focused on strategies for effectively spreading what works so social sector organizations can reach those in need. However, along with this work has come a variety of definitions and multiple understandings of what scale means. To date, there is still a lack of conceptual clarity as to what "scale" means and a wide diversity in how the term "scale" is used within the social sector. Further, while there is much research and literature that focuses on scaling in the social sector, there is minimal information about what it takes to scale programming for FFN caregivers.

This evaluation embraces the notion that there are multiple legitimate definitions of scale and that one's view of scale depends on the goals and needs of the community being served and other local contexts[9].The Bridgespan Group's approach to "transformative scale" also influenced this evaluation and grounded our work in the idea that multiple strategies and pathways hold real promise for addressing social problems at scale[10]. To that end, we did not come in with a pre-existing notion of scale but instead developed one based upon lessons from grantees, what they were hearing from FFNs, and how field and policy leaders viewed scale. This community-driven approach to defining scale is especially important in this context as FFN caregivers are a largely non-networked group, engaged primarily by grassroots organizations at the local level.

Why Scaling FFN Programming Matters

Given research on the importance of early childhood education, FFN caregivers can play a critical role in contributing to child development, school readiness, and future academic success. During interviews, we sought to understand grantees' perspective on why FFN programming matters:

Supporting quality care. Grantees shared that, in order to ensure all children zero to five have access to quality care, programs, and resources, the early childhood field must look beyond regulated environments and formal systems of care. Because many individuals do not have access to or cannot afford formal childcare systems, implementing FFN programming supports equitable care and learning for children[11]. As one grantee explained, "We work with all the adults who are taking care of children...The FFN segment has been largely ignored...It's about supporting them and giving them the tools so that the children under their care can have access to developmentally appropriate activities and learning."

> "It's critically important that we not limit ourselves to what is a fairly regulated quality of care environment and actually start looking at the environment that most of our children are in."
>
> -Informal Care Grantee

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[9] Morel, R. P., Coburn, C., Catterson, A. K., & Higgs, J. (2019). The Multiple Meanings of Scale: Implications for Researchers and Practitioners. Educational Researcher, 48(6), 369-377.

[10] The Bridgespan Group. *Transformative Scale Resource Center.* https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/transformative-scale/transformative-scale-resource-center

[11] Porter, Toni (2018). Strengthening our efforts to support FFN child care. Packard Foundation Informal Care Meeting.

Meeting demand.

Grantees explained that there is a clear demand for FFN programming, given that most young children in California are being cared for by FFNs[12]. In addition to lack of access related to affordability, one grantee explained there simply is not enough capacity with licensed providers to serve all the children ages zero to five in California who need it. This grantee shared that their work "evolved intentionally on the informal caregiver population because of lots of different external factors, one being the shortage of formal caregivers, especially for infants and toddlers," but also noted that "it's lack of access, because even when there is capacity in the formal caregiving network, people can't afford it."

Strengthening school readiness.

Many grantees noted that FFN programming helps to strengthen school readiness. A couple of grantees reported that their FFN programming was a direct response to significant gaps in school readiness in their community. One grantee shared that it was a "neighborhood priority" because "principals at the local schools were reporting that children were coming in with no early care or socialization experience" and that they "sought to address that by starting the play groups and socialization groups to support early learning" for all children. A different grantee explained that their FFN programming is a "long-term" strategy and that the strong adult-child interactions developed through their program helps them "gain the skills that are necessary for them to succeed when they enter the [formal school] system."

Honoring parent choice and culture.

Grantees noted that supporting FFNs honors parent choice and caregiving across cultures. Grantees spoke about how FFN programming puts the value of "meeting families where they are" into practice. One grantee explained that, for some families, it "may not be their cultural norm to have someone else taking care of their children," and rather than convince a parent to seek care from a childcare center or licensed care provider, they "provide [FFNs] the support and resources" to help ensure that children in their care have access to high-quality learning and development opportunities as well.

> "We know that parents make the best choices that they could make with what they have available. What we're trying to do is support them in those decisions and try to make it the best quality [care] that it can be."
>
> -Informal Care Grantee

What Success Looks Like for FFN Programs

Before understanding strategies for scaling FFN programs, it is helpful to be grounded in what success looks like for this type of programming. Previous evaluations of the Foundation's Informal Care Strategy — including both Engage R+D's cross-cutting evaluation and grantees' own individual evaluations — showed early evidence that caregivers benefit from participation in FFN programming. Further, during interviews, grantees described a clear vision of success for the FFN caregivers that participate in their programming. Some common measures of progress described by grantees and validated by evaluation data include:

Reduced isolation and increased social support for FFN caregivers.

Nearly all grantees said their programming aims to "build a sense of community" among FFN caregivers, who are typically isolated in their role. Several grantees implemented surveys with FFN caregivers, which found that caregivers developed supportive social networks through FFN programs in addition to providing an enriching learning and socialization experiences for children. Further, through their own evaluations, several grantees found that caregivers reported feeling more aware of local

> "[Through our programs, FFNs] have community, they have built friendships, and [they] get to communicate with others about caregiving skills...Having a sense of community is one of the biggest impacts [of our programs]."
>
> -Informal Care Grantee

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[12] Porter, Toni (2018). Strengthening our efforts to support FFN child care. Packard Foundation Informal Care Meeting.

resources and services as a result of FFN activities and strategies. Since FFN caregivers are not part of a network, like early educators in formal systems of care, grantees can provide an important link to resources in the community.

Increased knowledge and skills for FFNs to support early learning and child development.

All grantees we interviewed shared that one aspect of success included increasing FFNs' knowledge, skills, and tools related to early learning and child development. In turn, this could lead to improved adult-child interactions between FFNs and the children in their care. As one grantee stated, "We want to see happy, engaged, productive interactions between the caregiver and the children where the caregiver feels supported and the child feels nurtured." Further, nearly all grantees with evaluation data showed caregivers gained new knowledge and tools to support child development and school readiness after participating in their programming. For example, grantees reported increased engagement between caregivers and children, with caregivers reporting more frequently engaging in early learning and literacy activities.

Caregivers value and perceive their role as important.

Several grantees said a primary goal of their programs is for FFN providers to see themselves as "important members of the community providing a very important service." Grantees want caregivers to feel confident and proud of the role they play as a child's first teacher. Some grantees have observed and documented how FFN providers' perception of their role has shifted over time, with one grantee stating, "One provider went from, 'I'm doing a favor for my daughter-in-law to, 'This is really important work. My community needs me, this child needs me and I'm making a difference.'" Results from a few grantees' evaluations showed that caregivers reported feeling more inspired and confident to support children in their care and in their role.

> *"It's really important for us to make sure that FFNs are feeling valued in their role in children's lives and also recognized."*
>
> *-Informal Care Grantee*

Better outcomes for children.

A longer-term goal grantees spoke to was improved outcomes for children, with grantees noting the successes previously listed as important contributors to child outcomes. Some measures of child success noted include improved school readiness, healthy child development, and increased socio-emotional skills.

Findings About Scale

Although the Foundation is only directly investing in scaling support for 6 Informal Care grantees, all 10 organizations that were interviewed had perspectives on scale and growth. This section details key themes from interviews about grantees' scaling goals and key conditions and characteristics needed to support scale, and also highlights promising platforms and avenues for scale.

Grantees' Scaling Goals

Although exposure and experience with scale varied across grantees, all organizations were able to describe what their goals are for scaling FFN programs. Their goals fell into the following five areas. Note that these categories are not mutually exclusive, meaning that many grantees described scaling goals in more than one of these areas.

- **Greater reach.** Various grantees described taking a more traditional approach to scale where one expands to new sites or grows numbers of participants. For example, one grantee stated that their scaling goal involves "spreading and making our resources available to more individuals and children." However, of those for whom this definition resonated, most emphasized that this was not a "plug-and-play" situation. Instead, one must tailor the program to the needs of new communities. As another grantee put it, the program they are scaling "doesn't need to look the same throughout the city."

- **Deeper engagement.** Some grantees said scale is more about depth rather than breadth, providing more intensive and regular services to the populations that need the supports the most. One grantee explained, "If we have a resource, our first approach isn't, 'Let's give it to everybody.' Our first approach is always, 'Let's focus on those who are most impacted or farthest from that resource.'" A different grantee explained that scaling requires both depth and breadth: "[To me, the] concept of scale really means going deeper [and] going broader…[Deeper in the sense that] those folks that have been participating over the last few years…their quality has greatly increased."

> "There's still a North Star of making sure everyone has access to something, but it's not with the original breadth that I had imagined. Scale to me means going deeper and staying longer."
>
> -Informal Care Grantee

- **Diversity of offerings.** A couple of grantees described having a more holistic view of scale where FFNs were engaged in other settings and through multiple activities (e.g. playgroups, learning apps, toy libraries, etc.) rather than just implementing one program or model of engagement. This approach focuses on diverse and holistic services and various touchpoints with FFNs. One grantee defined this as "scaling horizontally", stating that to "scale vertically means doing a higher quantity of something. If I'm doing a playgroup, for instance, I'm doing lots of playgroups. I would love to scale vertically. Also, I would like to scale horizontally. That means there are other settings in which we can engage FFN caregivers."

- **Transfer of capacity.** One grantee shared that their understanding of scale is centered around building the capacity of other organizations and communities to do this work. They stated that "most neighborhoods and communities have the solution they need," and that scale means to "train and build the capacity of other neighborhoods and communities" to bring those solutions to fruition.

- **Scaling positive outcomes.** A couple of grantees suggested that scale isn't necessarily about replication, but rather about improved outcomes for FFN caregivers and children. A longer-term goal one grantee spoke to was improved outcomes for children who receive FFN care, including improved school readiness, healthy child development, and increased socio-emotional skills.

Conditions that Support Scale

Although grantees shared different scaling goals, in interviews they emphasized several key characteristics that can facilitate an organization's ability to scale FFN programming. This section outlines key conditions that support scale, along with suggested strategies that grantees have used to achieve these conditions. A summary of these themes follows in Exhibit 5 below.

Exhibit 5. Conditions and Strategies for Scaling FFN Programs

Condition	Description	Strategy
Community connection and trust	Building authentic relationships and trust with FFN caregivers can support outreach and sustained engagement and ensure that programs meet the needs of the FFN community.	Networks as trusted messengers — Scaling programs through a credible and trusted source in the community
Staff capacity and support	Staff need to have the time, resources, and knowledge to implement and grow high-quality programs.	Leveraging current staffing positions — Identifying existing staff positions to support implementation helps bring on program staff with resources and knowledge
Codified program model that can be adapted	Core program models ensure fidelity but should be adaptable to new regions, communities, or spaces in order to meet needs of FFN caregivers.	Resources and tools for replication — Toolkits, manuals, or other resources codify approaches to engaging FFN caregivers and provide guidance for replication
Access to space, infrastructure and resources	Having programming in a consistent location supports ongoing engagement and trust with FFNs. Having infrastructure and resources to support FFN programs helps to ensure quality implementation.	Scaling through partnerships — Partner organizations might have additional capacity and resources to grow a program in new locations
Start-up and sustained funding	Programs need capital to launch a scaling approach as well as sustained funding to ensure long-term implementation.	Blended funding — Identifying different funding sources to provide flexibility and increased capital
Support from leaders and institutions	Support and buy-in from key leaders can provide partnership, funding, and other supports needed for scale.	Mission alignment and evidence building — Articulating how a program supports the overall mission of an institution, and evidence to promote the effectiveness of the program supports buy-in from key leaders

Community connection and trust. Nearly all grantees emphasized community connection and trust as the most important conditions for scaling FFN programming. Grantees noted that programming must be responsive and meet the needs of the FFN community, that those who are implementing it must gain the trust of or have strategies to build trust with FFNs, and that FFNs need to be authentically engaged on an ongoing basis. One grantee described "conversational groups" that they held every time they considered expanding their FFN program to a new community, which entailed "sitting down and talking to FFNs about the specific needs in their geographic area." This practice helped to build trust, refine programming, and ensure that communities valued and benefitted from what was being scaled. A different organization explained that they were expanding their programming into "high-trauma" neighborhoods that had a "lot of mistrust, for good reasons," and that they had to be patient "when starting a new program in a neighborhood...convincing folks and building a reputation...which takes some time."

> "We still want more participation, but [we need to] build trust in the community and show them that we're there, that we're just not dropping in and out, that we're there for the long haul."
>
> -Informal Care Grantee

Strategy: Networks of Trusted Messengers

Some grantees were developing community connection and trust by scaling programs through a credible and trusted source in the community. Some key networks that grantees cited as effective for conducting both outreach and implementation included: **(1) public agencies or institutions** like libraries, schools, and public housing sites that already engage with families on multiple levels; **(2)** *promotores* **or community health workers** who are trusted by the community, culturally competent, and able to reduce barriers and connect participants to services; **(3) Family Resource Centers** that are community-based, family-focused, and culturally sensitive; and **(4) parent leaders** who support outreach and connection to FFNs, either in person or by phone.

Staff capacity and support. Staff need to have the time, resources, and knowledge to implement high-quality programs. Grantees who have started to scale cited strategies for staff support as critical to growth and implementation. Specifically, a couple of organizations noted that it was important to leverage staff members who had previous experience implementing early childhood programs. A challenge they encountered was that "so many staff didn't necessarily have a child development background...They don't necessarily know what's developmentally appropriate for children at each of the ages...and that's a really important component." Another grantee explained that programs need to have ongoing professional development for staff "related to how to do programming for early learning with families" along with funds for staffing. A different grantee facilitated "monthly meetings with a clinical psychologist" to help staff talk about things that were coming up in programming.

Strategy: Leveraging Current Staffing Positions

A couple of grantees described growing their programming by identifying existing staff positions to support implementation. This was primarily the case with programs being implemented in partnership with school districts. As one grantee working in a school district explained, "We learned that if we wanted to scale, we needed additional resources. As of last year, we included a teacher on special assignment [to implement programming]. We are now moving on to more school sites, more partnerships outside of our school district." A different grantee leveraged community representatives at school parent centers who "were already paid for" to implement and sustain programming.

Codified program model that can be adapted. Grantees reported spending time testing and refining their programs before considering scale, often through pilot programs that helped organizations to learn and refine before replicating. Grantees shared the importance of having a core model that can also be adapted to new regions, communities, or spaces in order to meet community needs. One grantee explained how important it was that they were "testing [the program] in a wide variety of sites" and explained that they would "stop and take a look and see what worked [and] what didn't work, and come together to talk about it and share ideas." Field leaders also spoke to the importance of providing grantees with technical assistance and evaluation supports during the pilot phase to identify what key components should be included in the scaling process. One field leader described a grantee that has seen some success with scale "because they've been bold, they've tried all kinds of different things...different formations of groups and locations...because of that, they were able to identify what works and what doesn't work."

> "If you're going to go to scale you've got to have some way of ensuring that your model is being delivered the way it's supposed to be...I think organizations that have gone from one community to multiple communities, maybe even to statewide, would say that that's an essential component of going to scale."
>
> –FFN Field Leader

Strategy: Resources and Tools for Replication

A handful of organizations are creating resources and materials that codify their program and approach to engaging FFN caregivers, typically in the form of toolkits or manuals. These toolkits are not always a "recipe" to be followed exactly but include key program components, lessons learned, and a "base" to start with, and they help to assess organizational readiness. For example, the Placer County Office of Education is creating a manual and formalizing their materials so they can be distributed and used by others who wish to implement their program. Similarly, LAUSD Parent Centers are creating an implementation guide to support the sustainability and scaling of their playgroups across school districts. One grantee organization estimated distributing their toolkit to 70 organizations across all counties in California but is exploring ways to more robustly support the use and implementation of it moving forward and make it more adaptable, interactive, and engaging.

Access to space, infrastructure, and resources. Grantees noted that having programming in a consistent location supported ongoing engagement and community trust, and that infrastructure and resources (i.e., materials, food, curricula, child-friendly furniture) ensured quality implementation that met the needs of FFNs. As one grantee explained, "[Scale is about] having consistency of location and predictability. That's important because when you know a resource is available to you and available in an easy way...it's a lot easier to engage." One field leader emphasized this as critical to scale, explaining, "Capacity means not only staffing capacity but the infrastructure of the agency...everything from the HR department to the accounting department to the media department...It's going to be hard to get to scale unless you have that capacity."

> "We are co-located with some of our partners, so we're able to provide playgroups on a continual basis every day."
>
> –Informal Care Grantee

Strategy: Scaling Through Partnerships

Many organizations that implement FFN programming are small, grassroots agencies that do work at the local level. Oftentimes this might mean that space, infrastructure, and resources are limited. However, a couple of smaller organizations were exploring scale through the support of partner organizations who have additional capacity and resources to grow their program in new locations. Some organizations leveraged partnerships that provided them a space or location for their work, others identified partnerships that have built-in community supports and referral systems for FFNs, and still other organizations might train partners to implement the curriculum if these partners align with the work or offer existing programs that might be strengthened by the curriculum.

Start-up and sustained funding. Programs need capital in order to launch a scaling approach as well as sustained funding to ensure long-term implementation and support. This was a challenge nearly all grantees spoke to, stating that sustaining, deepening, or growing their FFN programming is hard when funding is limited or when future funding is uncertain. One grantee explained some of their funding comes at the federal level, and thus rolled out on a yearly basis, explaining, "It's on the federal chopping block, and this happens every single year. It really prohibits us from planning more than a year at a time. A different grantee said, "It's been a challenge for us to be able to figure out where are we going to pull from or where the funding is going to come from to be able to truly replicate the resources."

> "Those that have been able to continue some of the work is really because they received additional funding to do it. Some of them have some local First 5 funding, for example, that has supported the impact of that work."
>
> –Informal Care Grantee

Strategy: Blended Funding

Limited federal and state dollars often mean organizations are required to do more with less. A blended funding approach was noted by grantees as one successful strategy for sustaining and scaling FFN programming. Specifically, under the common goals of early childhood development and learning, some grantees have been able to bring different funding sources to the table. For example, one grantee received startup and sustained funding from First 5 and then was subsequently able to integrate their FFN program into the scope of a different funding stream from First 5, which helped with ongoing support for their programming as they expanded their neighborhood-based playgroup to two additional communities. However, some grantees pointed to challenges with this funding model when exploring scale, as funding sources usually come with their own goals, objectives, and indicators to track.

Support from leaders and institutions. Grantees who were looking to scale across public institutions or larger agencies described benefitting from the support and buy-in of key leaders who were able to provide partnership, funding, and other supports needed for scale (e.g. principals and superintendents of school districts, Executive Directors/CEOs, leaders at the state level). One grantee said, "What was really exciting about getting ready to scale this up was the fact that, because of all the positive cross-agency conversations, it was very clear to our administration that this was an area of great interest and need."

> "We were trying to figure out a way to sustain it and hopefully get more people to buy into it, but we know in the era of people focused on quality that we had to have some particular hook, and that hook was that this was an evidence-informed model."
>
> –Informal Care Grantee

Strategy: Identify Mission Alignment and Share Evidence

Grantees and field leaders explained that getting institutional buy-in to sustain and grow programming can be challenging but that it's important that program staff can clearly articulate how their program supports the overall mission of the organization as well as have evidence to promote the effectiveness of the program, which can come in the form of evaluation data or through the spread of an evidence-informed model. For example, a couple of principals made the connection that supporting FFN programming is one way to support their school enrollment, which helped with institutional buy-in. As a field leader put it, "Convincing the school district that having a strong partnership with FFNs would actually further their goals, instead of seeing it as something nice to do," was helpful for getting their support.

Grantee Exemplars

A Packard Foundation grantee since 2017, **Visión y Compromiso's** Family Caregiver Project provides training, a peer support group, a toolkit, and home visits to help FFN caregivers improve the quality of their interactions with children ages zero to five. In 2020, **Visión y Compromiso** received a grant from the Foundation to focus specifically on scale. Its Family Caregiver Project launched in Santa Barbara County, but **Visión y Compromiso** has now expanded to Kern, Ventura, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino Counties and are delivering programs in 13 total communities. Visión y Compromiso's approach to scale leverages a large network of *promotores* that act as trusted messengers to conduct outreach and deliver services across distinct communities. Because *promotores* are trusted by the community and culturally competent, Visión y Compromiso has been able to quickly expand its work to new spaces and engage FFNs. Visión y Compromiso has also been able to increase its engagement with FFNs by creating a toolbox for providers that includes resources such as links to educational pages, emergency services, community resources, and medical forms. The toolbox is hosted on Facebook, where providers can share resources with one another and stay connected.

In 2016, the Foundation funded the Oakland Public Library's Play Café program. The popularity and success of this program led to the Foundation funding a scaling grant to the **California State Library** (CSL) to test the expansion of this codified model across the state, called "Stay and Play." Five diverse local branches in California implemented and adapted this model to their regions and sites. Libraries are trusted community hubs that build collections and programming that reflect the community they serve. Their ability to offer supports and resources in addition to Stay and Play programming is important for FFN caregivers, who are often isolated and are not aware of or lack access to resources. The use of a codified program model helped each site get their programming off the ground, and regular meetings with other libraries implementing the program helped sites learn to tailor and adapt the model to the FFN community they were serving. Nearly all pilot sites funded said they were interested in exploring opportunities to bring the program to other branches in their jurisdiction, with two sites already expanding their Stay and Play programming to new locations. Lastly, given the success of the first scaling pilot, CLS has plans to scale to additional sites in 2020.

Napa Community Resources for Children (CRC) promotes quality early learning environments and experiences for children in various settings. Their Toy Library & Early Learning Center (Library) gives FFN caregivers with the tools they need to support children's learning and development. Although Napa CRC only received a small, one-year grant from the Foundation, the organization has been able to sustain and scale FFN engagement at events and the Library over the past three years. CRC's primary strategy to sustain and grow FFN engagement has been to develop trust and deepen connections with the FFN community with the support of a trusted community partner, Napa Valley Community Housing (NVCH). NVCH site managers support CRC with outreach and engagement, and CRC goes on site to housing centers to conduct trainings and share information. Further, CRC supported a small group of grandparents in developing their own "grandparents group," which created space for caregivers to come together and support one another. CRC hopes that FFNs can play a role in leading additional groups in the future, which would offer another opportunity for scale. This is one example of how a relatively small organization was able to sustain FFN engagement by leveraging the support of trusted messengers.

Funding and Field Building

Field building is an important component of scale and helps generate wide-reaching support for an issue[13]. The Foundation and its grantees and partners alike are working to raise awareness of FFN caregivers and the need for FFN-tailored programming. This section explores the role that funders and the early learning field play in advancing this work as well as policy considerations for scale.

Learning from and Spreading the Foundation's Approach

Grantees and field leaders lauded the Packard Foundation's Informal Care Strategy, explaining that they have been on the leading edge of this work and that the Foundation's credibility and reach has been instrumental in generating awareness and interest regarding FFNs and FFN-tailored programming. As one field leader explained, "It lends some kind of credibility to have a funder like Packard involved…Other funders or government project officers see, 'Oh, the Packard Foundation is funding this work, it might be something that we should look at.'" Grantees and field leaders reported the following aspects of the Foundation's approach should be shared and potentially replicated with other funders interested in supporting programming for FFN caregivers.

> "[The Foundation's] grantmaking helped to legitimize and validate [this work]. It also helped spread the word 'FFN.' That makes a big difference.
>
> –Field Leader

- **Grants that support flexibility, innovation, and learning.** Grantees and field leaders highlighted the Foundation's "testing and learning" approach to grantmaking as a strength when supporting FFN-tailored programming. The Foundation's ability to be flexible, work with grantees as partners, and support piloting of new strategies for FFNs helped grantees meet the unique needs of FFN caregivers and course-correct when needed. As one field leader explained, "The type of grant-making that they did with FFNs was very intentional, it was thoughtful. What made the biggest difference was the grants that went out to the communities…the experimentation grants where they really recognized a lot of community-based organizations, both small and large."

- **Multi-year funding for FFN grants.** Although it wasn't the case for many of the Foundation's grantees, nearly all grantees said multi-year funding is critical for FFN programming. FFN programming requires intentional outreach and engagement to identify FFN caregivers and build trust and authentic relationships with them. One grantee's advice to funders was to make their investment "for the long haul…meaning not a one-year grant and expecting great transformation in one year…knowing what we know about the FFN community and how diverse it is, it's having really an honest conversation at the onset [with funders about this work], even maybe before grants are made."

- **Support grantee learning communities.** Several organizations mentioned the Foundation's FFN Learning Community as a model practice for other funders to consider when supporting this type of work. Grantees said peer-support is especially helpful when implementing FFN programming, with one grantee explaining, "Hearing from each other, we always get ideas. We see what's working and what's not working."

- **Invest in research and advocacy that publicizes this work.** Grantees and field leaders see an opportunity for the Foundation to continue to advance research and advocacy that shares the importance of this work with the public sphere. Grantees shared that it is important that the Foundation generate "awareness of the real state of who's caring for these children and what we can do to better serve that population in order to reach the children." Field leaders highlighted the Foundation's support of evaluation and advocacy grants as critical to adding to the limited

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13 The Bridgespan Group. *Transformative Scale Resource Center.* https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/transformative-scale-resource-center

literature about FFNs that exists. For example, one field leader said a different funder approached them expressing interest in funding a FFN project "because they saw the briefs that came out of the work that was funded by [the Foundation]," which is a testament to some of the field building the Foundation has already done.

Continuing to Build Awareness of FFN Caregivers

While field leaders said that there appears to be much more awareness of FFN care in California, they noted that there is still much work to be done at both the state and federal levels. In addition to funding, grantees and field leaders had suggestions for other ways to continue to build awareness of the important role that FFN caregivers play in supporting young children's learning and development as well as to increase respect for the role that FFNs play with children and families:

- **Changing the perception of FFN care as low-quality.** One field leader explained that when they first became involved in supporting FFN work, they were "well aware of perceptions that FFN care was low-quality, unsafe," and that the "impetus behind the work was to dispel some of those myths that quality was necessarily lacking in these settings." While field leaders noted an increased awareness over the past several years, they explained that there continues to be a need for both the wider early learning field and FFN caregivers themselves to have a deeper understanding of the value of FFN care in order to help change the narrative and perception of FFN care as low-quality and support scale. Field leaders also noted that changing the perception of FFN care as low-quality requires the field to think differently about how quality is defined and measured as well as who is defining and measuring quality. The Foundation contributed to this need by supporting a study conducted by Mathematica which explored appropriate ways to measure quality in FFN care settings. This study, although small, showed promise, and its findings emphasized the nurturing environment FFN caregivers provide young children.

- **Educating professionals outside of the FFN community.** There are opportunities to educate and engage a wider group of professionals about FFN caregivers and the role they play in early learning. One field leader said that within a school district, one could provide in-depth training to teachers, administrators, and mental health professionals about "what FFN caregivers do and what roles [they themselves] could assume to support the FFN community...for example, school teachers helping FFNs with lesson planning, having mental health staff become involved in playgroups, and taking referrals of families that could use supports." This engagement could also help create a more formal pipeline of children from FFN care to kindergarten. One grantee has already put this approach into practice by inviting FFN caregivers to participate in professional development alongside formal teachers and staff. This strategy helped other professionals engage and learn about the role FFN caregivers play, validated FFN's work, and strengthened the understanding that FFN caregivers are an important part of the early-learning ecosystem. In addition to schools, grantees suggested that educating staff from other state and public agencies can help spread learning — for example, departments of social services or Women, Infants, and Children's (WIC) programs through local public health departments.

> "Teachers and mental health professionals need to involve families in their work. They cannot just do their own work as professionals and then send the kids home."
>
> –Field Leader

- **Engaging other states in this work.** Grantees and funders said there seems to be more attention to FFN care at the federal level but explained that there is still the need to spread this work to other states in order to strengthen this movement at the national level. Field leaders saw an opportunity for the Foundation to take a lead role and help foundations in other states engage in this work. As one field leader put it: "The lessons [the Foundation] has learned and the effects [its strategy] has had might be convincing lessons for other states to engage in similar activities…You might end up with a cohort of states that are doing it, and that could expand to other states." Field leaders shared that public dollars alone were unlikely to be sufficient to launch or sustain FFN work in other states. Thus, they suggested that the Foundation could explore identifying other funders who could help provide initial resources to test programming in their states and then share their learnings with the field.

"We don't seem to have figured out how to actually put money in this, even though we have an adequate research base to tell us perhaps what's needed and what might work."

–Field Leader

Connecting Practice to Policy

While there are a range of organizations supporting FFN caregivers, as one field/policy leader put it, the "connection between policy and practice is not there yet." One way to sustain and support the work of FFN caregivers is through public funding that comes in the form of subsidies for caregivers or grants to organizations to implement programming. As one field leader put it, "This cannot be a foundation-supported effort forever…It's going to be really important to ensure that there's some strategy for what I would call 'institutionalization.' By institutionalization, I mean public support to go to scale." This section lifts up key considerations for connecting practice to policy, informed by field and policy leader interviews.

- **Articulate the needs of FFN caregivers.** Getting clear about the primary needs of FFN caregivers is an important first step in advancing policies that support their work. While this research has been done by a small subset of early learning researchers, there are still opportunities for knowledge building. "Right now we don't have a lot of information about FFNs. If we can have a little bit of a better sense of who they are and what they need, that will make a better case or to develop policy," one field leader explained.

"This is not a homogeneous group…There's a difference between someone who's a grandparent and someone who's a neighbor down the street who's caring for kids [without any relation to the family]."

–Field Leader

- **Engage more advocacy organizations in this work.** While there are many organizations implementing programming for FFN caregivers, field leaders noted that not many of these organizations are engaged in advocacy work, and there are not many advocacy organizations focusing on FFN caregivers. One field leader explained there is a "small group of researchers with whom I work [on FFN care in particular] and try to get presentations at national conferences, and it is a really hard slog…Folks are much more interested in center care, and if they're looking at home-based childcare, they want to look at family childcare centers." The same field leader suggested that "there are unions that we have not yet tapped that represent FFN caregivers that could contribute to the conversation about this."

- **Develop a plan that outlines policy suggestions.** Once the needs of FFN caregivers are clearly articulated and more advocacy organizations are engaged in this work, a "united ask" can be developed that outlines key policies to support FFN caregivers. Field leaders recommended prioritizing more sustained funding for childcare subsidies. As one leader explained, "The generosity of those wax and wane depending on the government administration. And so I don't know that we've achieved sustained funding there yet." Access to fiscal resources is very competitive with other initiatives and has been focused on home-based licensed care, so "showing that informal care is valuable to parents and it could provide employment opportunities for the caregivers themselves" supports the growth of subsidies for FFN caregivers. Further, field leaders mentioned there is still "tension between the low subsidy rates for informal caregivers and the thinking that licensed care automatically confers higher quality," and that states should recognize that FFN caregivers could be integrated into the subsidy system and not become licensed caregivers. In addition to subsidies, FFN caregivers should have supports that strengthen their quality, with one field leader explaining, "If you're getting a subsidy from the state, you should also have access to the right supports." These suggestions are a starting point for how FFN practice can be more closely linked to policy changes.

> "To get an informal caregiver to jump through the hoops to be eligible for the subsidies, it's only a little bit more to get for them to get licensed. And so the state administrators think, 'Why not just incentivize them to take that last step and get licensed?' But that's not what every informal caregiver wants. So there's a little bit of tension there."
>
> –Field Leader

Lessons and Implications

Taken together, the findings from this evaluation point to the value of sustaining and scaling FFN programming. The grantees and field leaders we spoke with highlighted the critical role FFN caregivers play in supporting young children's growth and development. Supporting and scaling FFN programming can help to legitimize FFN care as a valued, high-quality, and necessary childcare approach for helping communities to thrive.

This evaluation yielded a range of lessons and implications for those interested in supporting FFN programs, including the Packard Foundation, other public and private funders, community organizations, and advocacy groups. A summary of these lessons and implications follows below.

Lessons About Why Scaling FFN Programming Matters

- **FFN caregivers play a critical role in supporting young children's development.** The first five years of a child's life are fundamental to their growth and development, and FFN caregivers provide children warm, nurturing, environments with a trusted caregiver. However, FFN caregivers are often isolated and lack access to resources and supports. Scaling FFN programming can provide FFN caregivers with early learning information, resources, and connections to other caregivers, all of which can strengthen quality of care. Funders and others within the early childcare field can continue to raise awareness about the integral role FFN caregivers play and make the case for sustaining and scaling programs and resources that support FFN caregivers' work.

- **Supporting FFN programming at scale is an equity issue.** At its core, supporting FFN caregivers and the children in their care can be seen as an equity issue. Although families across all socio-economic, ethnic, and racial groups use FFN care, the families most likely to use FFN care are low-to-moderate income, Latino, African-American, refugee, or immigrant families, and FFN care providers themselves are also predominantly low-income and women of color[14]. Supporting FFNs also honors parent choice and caregiving across cultures and puts the value of "meeting families where they are" into practice. Supporting FFN caregivers and scaling FFN programming presents the field with an opportunity to lift up the wider equity issues central to FFN care and spotlight this work as valued, legitimate, and necessary for communities to thrive.

- **FFN caregivers provide vital support to working families.** In addition to providing nurturing and trusting environments for children ages zero to five and offering parents the option to choose a care provider that shares their culture or language, FFN care offers many parents a flexible and affordable child care option so they can go to work and provide financial stability to their families. Further, by some measures, FFN care is the most common type of nonparental child care for children ages zero to five in the United States. Despite the prevalence of the care they provide, FFN caregivers often have less access to information and important community resources than early educators in formal systems of care. Given the critical role FFN caregivers play in supporting working parents, and the many families that choose FFN care for their children, there is a clear demand to scale supports and resources for FFN caregivers.

Lessons for Those Implementing FFN Programs

- **Build community connection and trust.** The most common piece of advice grantees had for other organizations interested in implementing or scaling programs for FFN caregivers was to devote time to building trusting relationships with FFN caregivers. Grantees emphasized that building trust requires patience and commitment and suggested working closely with partners who can serve as trusted messengers in the community. Developing

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[14] Porter, Toni (2018). Strengthening our efforts to support FFN child care. Packard Foundation Informal Care Meeting.

authentic relationships grounded in trust supports outreach, sustained engagement, and ensures programming meets the evolving needs of the FFN community.

- **Prioritize testing and learning.** When implementing new programs or scaling to additional regions, piloting and testing these approaches can help grantees learn what strategies and activities work best for each community. For example, one grantee noted it is important to "not be afraid to go back to the drawing board and start fresh" and to be flexible, acknowledging that every FFN caregiver has a different background and story. By learning, pivoting, and "failing forward," grantees shared that they were able to design programs that met the needs of FFN caregivers and were also adaptable to new regions, communities, and spaces.

- **Validate FFN caregivers, their role, and the importance of self-care.** Grantees shared that FFN programming must also strengthen FFN caregivers' own self-awareness by honoring and validating the integral role they play in children's lives. In addition to building caregivers' confidence and self-efficacy, grantees also reflected upon the value of programming that teaches FFN caregivers the importance of self-care. As one grantee stated, "It's very important because [FFN caregivers] don't think about themselves, they always put their children first...We even have to teach them that in order to give something, you have to take care of yourself first."

Lessons for the Packard Foundation and Other Funders

- **Consider exploring other promising avenues for scale.** Interviews revealed other potential platforms for scaling FFN programs. For example, one field leader suggested continuing to explore schools as a platform for scale, citing local adult education departments as potential partners that would be interested in supporting FFN programming. A different grantee mentioned that their local department of social services reached out to them to learn more about the playgroups they were hosting for FFN caregivers and children, wondering, "What would happen if we did some type of model like that at a Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) center." Another stakeholder mentioned local parks and recreation departments as agencies that might be interested in supporting FFN programming. This is a testament to the ways the Foundation's investments have already generated interest from other sectors that are not explicitly engaging FFNs and shows potential for new avenues and platforms for scale. Other funders interested in supporting FFN programs could also benefit from exploring the range of venues that can be used to support and scale FFN programs.

- **Continue to use community-driven approaches to scale.** This evaluation embraced the notion that there are multiple, legitimate definitions of scale and that one's view of scale depends on the goals and needs of the community being served and other local contexts. By using a community-driven approach to defining scale, this evaluation was able to reveal new and unique definitions of scale that the Foundation had not explored before. For example, some grantees defined scale as "deeper engagement," explaining that scale is more about depth rather than breadth, providing more intensive and regular services to the populations that need the supports the most. Another grantee understood scale as "transfer of capacity," noting that organizations can scale by building the capacity of other organizations and communities to do this work. Both definitions represent non-traditional ways to explore scale that funders could apply to their investment strategies. As the Packard Foundation and other funders continue to explore opportunities to support scaling efforts with their grantees, using a more expansive definitions of scale can generate approaches and solutions that are more closely aligned with community needs and local contexts.

- **Providing support for FFN Learning Communities can help facilitate conversations around scale.** Participants have noted that the Packard Foundation's FFN Learning Community has been an inspirational space for FFN service providers and leaders. This type of space can be an effective avenue for stakeholders to address topics related to scale, policy, and field building with each other and to hear from experts on a regular basis. As grantees continue to sustain and scale their programming, the existing FFN Learning Community can continue to provide peer support and space for organizations to explore new ideas together and share what is working well and what challenges they are facing. Other funders looking to support FFN programs could benefit from creating similar spaces for FFN service providers and leaders to connect and learn from each other.

Appendices

Appendix A: Evaluation Learning Questions

1. **How has the Foundation's Informal Care strategy within California evolved and scaled over time?**
   a. What key activities have taken place within this strategy? How does this fit into the Foundation's Theory of Change and what the Foundation set out to do at the launch of this initiative?
   b. What has scaling looked like within the context of this strategy? What are the different ways in which scale is being defined (and by whom)?
   c. What has been the reach of this strategy (e.g., where, who, and how many people/caregivers and organizations have been touched by it)?
   d. What have we learned through this strategy about the impact of this initiative? What has the impact been on caregivers? What has the impact been on grantees?

2. **What conditions are needed for FFN programs or platforms to scale successfully?**
   a. How does demand for FFN programs influence scaling? How does systems capacity influence scaling?
   b. What are we learning about the role parents play in these programs, and how does that relate to scale (e.g. parents as gatekeepers, engaging parent participants in addition to FFNs, etc.)?
   c. What are we learning about what people know and think about FFN caregivers, and how does that relate to scale (e.g., FFN caregivers valued as essential, dispelling myths about FFN caregivers, FFN's seeing themselves as caregivers/educators)?
   d. What capacities, conditions, or elements need to be in place within a channel or platform for scale to be possible?

3. **To what extent have the Foundation's hypotheses about scaling conditions for FFN programs been true?**
   a. What are some examples of FFN programs or platforms that have successfully scaled? What characteristics and conditions made these programs or platforms successful?
   b. What challenges have FFN programs or platforms faced in scaling successfully? What factors contributed to these challenges?

4. **What are the implications of these findings for the early learning field and other audiences?**
   a. What are some key lessons learned about how to successfully scale FFN strategies?
   b. What are the distinct strengths and assets of FFN care providers as a form of childcare?
   c. What are the external conditions (e.g. state and federal policy context) that are influencing this work and where do FFN strategies fit into the larger political environment?

Appendix B: Informal Care Grantees

Testing and Learning Grantees

- Oakland Public Library
- Stanford University (Ready4K)
- Fresno Housing Education Corps (Helm Home)
- Lotus Bloom
- BANANAS
- Go Kids
- Placer County Office of Education
- Community Resources for Children
- Visión y Compromiso

Starting Smart and Strong

- Oakland Public Education Fund
- Franklin McKinley School District
- Fresno Unified School District

Los Angeles Grants

- YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles
- Child Care Resource Center (CCRC)

Scaling Grants

- CA Child Care Resources and Referral Network
- California State Library
- Visión y Compromiso

Appendix C: Key Activities Funded

Grantees packaged and delivered programming to FFNs in various ways, including: 1) strategies to increase knowledge and awareness of child development, 2) development of tools and resources, and 3) activities that build support systems. It is common for grantees to implement strategies that span across all three of these categories.

Strategies to Increase Knowledge and Awareness of Child Development

- Playgroups and Play Cafés: 10 grantees have used a "playgroup" or "play café" model to engage FFN caregivers and children. While each program is uniquely tailored to the community it serves, this strategy generally uses a guided facilitator to support intentional play and learning experiences for children and their caregivers, with a focus on increasing caregivers' knowledge of child development and modeling how to support school readiness.

- Learning Apps/Text-Messaging Programs: Five grantees use learning apps or text messaging programs to engage with FFN caregivers. For example, Stanford's Ready4K program sends caregivers texts three times a week over the course of six months, and each text provides different information on child development and early learning.

- Caregiver Workshops and Trainings: Eight grantees have offered workshops to increase knowledge and build the capacity of FFN caregivers. As part of their Family Caregiver Project, Visión y Compromiso led three 8-week training programs, two in Spanish and one for the Mixteco-speaking community, which aimed to increase informal caregivers' skills and understanding while connecting them to social support and local resources.

- Home Visits: Three grantees use home visits to establish positive contact and communication with FFNs.

The Development of Tools and Resources

- Toy and Book Lending Libraries: Four grantees have implemented toy or book lending libraries for caregivers and children. *Community Resources for Children* is one example of a grantee that provides resources to FFNs via a Toy Lending Library, which they also use to recruit and conduct outreach to new community members.

- Toolkits: Three grantees have developed toolkits for FFN caregivers or for organizations serving FFN caregivers as a way of spreading learning and information. The Placer County Office of Education (PCOE) provides "FFN caregiver toolkits" during home visits by trained community mentors and PCOE staff. The kits included health/safety resources, literacy and school readiness activities, community resources, social/emotional behavior resources, and online resources. The California State Library is also developing a toolkit, which will be hosted online, that aims to serve as a guide for other libraries that are interested in implementing Stay and Play at their site. The toolkit helps libraries assess their readiness to launch programming, outlines key steps for implementation, and includes case studies that share examples of activities and agendas used by other libraries as well as guidance for evaluation and continuous learning.

Activities that Build Support Systems

- Training and Leadership Programs: Four grantees offer regular training or leadership programs to caregivers as a way of supporting them in learning and becoming advocates for children. *Oakland's Starting Smart and Strong* initiative supported the piloting of weekly leadership trainings for parents and caregivers, including a Literacy Champion program that trained individuals in early literacy and book-sharing topics through a six-module curriculum.