

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR | 2025

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



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Dear Friends and Partners,

This past year for The Basics has been one of reflection, learning, and growing momentum. As we approached the ten-year mark of this fascinating journey, we devoted significant time to examining our past, present, and future. The result has been a year defined by insights from new research findings as well as through a process of review that is shaping our path for the decade ahead.

One of the year's most meaningful accomplishments was the release of new research on the impact of Basics Insights, our text messaging program for parents and caregivers. The results affirm what families and providers have been telling us: simple, consistent, science-based guidance anchored in The Basics Principles can enrich early caregiving and bolster child development. These findings deepen the evidence base for The Basics model and strengthen the case that Basics Learning Network backbones around the nation can make as they engage their local partners in the Basics movement.



Alongside this growing evidence base, The Basics continued to expand and deepen its reach in communities across the country. This year saw meaningful growth of The Basics Learning Network, including organizing for statewide expansion in places such as North Carolina and Illinois, as well as deeper integration of The Basics Principles within health, early education, and family-serving systems.

This year also marked an important moment of strategic clarity for our organization. Through a comprehensive strategic planning process, we affirmed the central role of The Basics Learning Network as the engine for scale and systems change. In addition, we committed to a more intentional approach to strengthening backbone organizations, expanding state and regional partnerships, and positioning The Basics for long-term sustainability.

We are deeply grateful to the communities that continue to drive this work forward—local backbone organizations, providers across sectors, parent leaders, funders, and civic partners. Your commitment demonstrates the power of collaboration in strengthening family engagement and improving early childhood outcomes.

What none of us can do alone, all of us can do together.

With appreciation,
Ron Ferguson, PhD
Founder and Executive Director
The Basics, Inc.

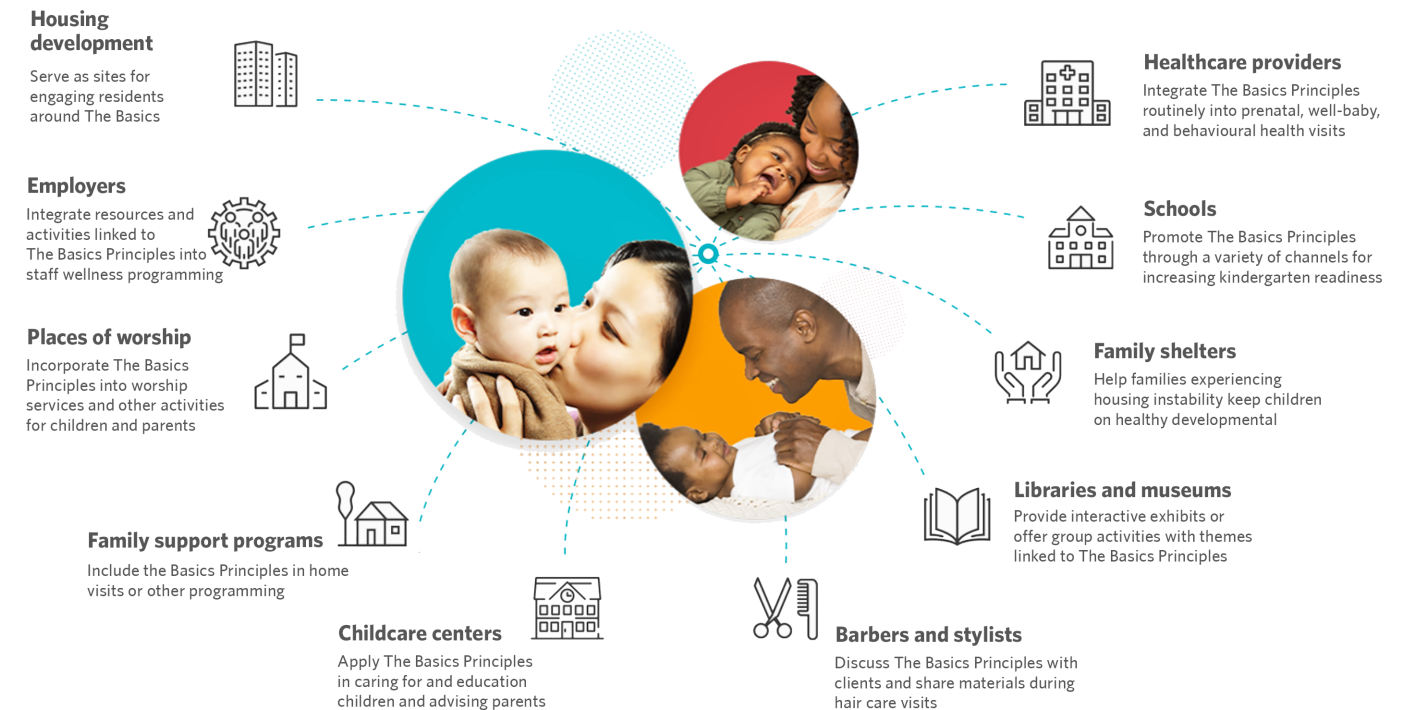
The Basics Principles

All our work is grounded in five science-based tenets for early caregiving.



Our Strategy

The Basics Strategy is to guide institutions in multiple sectors to apply The Basics tools and resources to reach parents and caregivers *where they are* through trusted messengers.



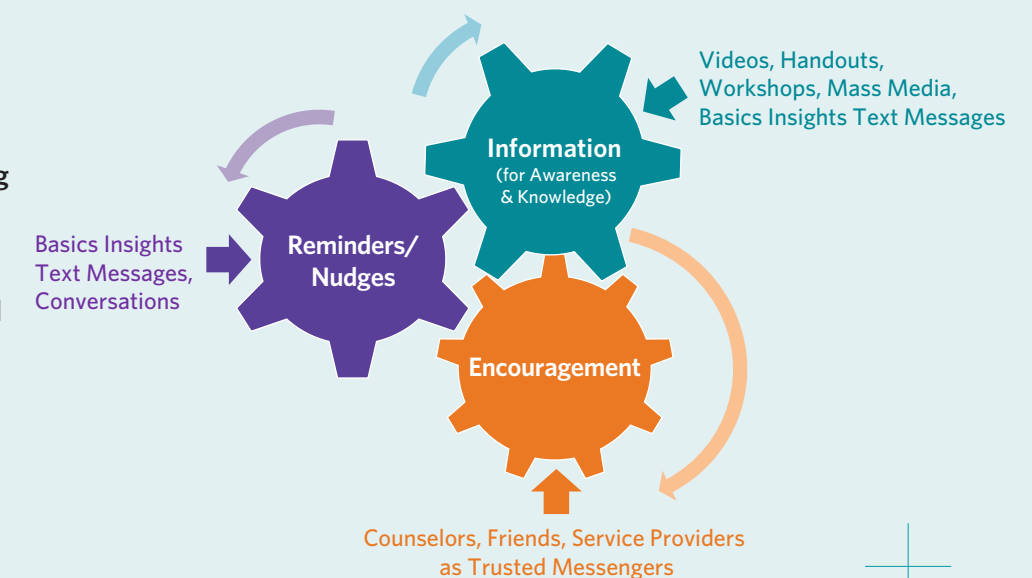
Our Vision

The Basics vision is a world where infants, toddlers, and preschoolers of all racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds are on track to achieve their full potential--having benefited from early experiences that foster healthy brain development, learning, joy, and resilience.

Our Mission

The Basics, Inc. mission is to cultivate collective, cross-sector commitment and capacity in communities to support families in promoting children's wellbeing and development through piloting innovative approaches and scaling effective practices to create sustainable change in the systems and cultures that support families.

The Basics three gears support parents and caregivers in applying The Basics Principles in everyday interactions with their children. The Basics, Inc provides tools and resources that help organizations implement the gears.



The Basics Model is an Integrated System

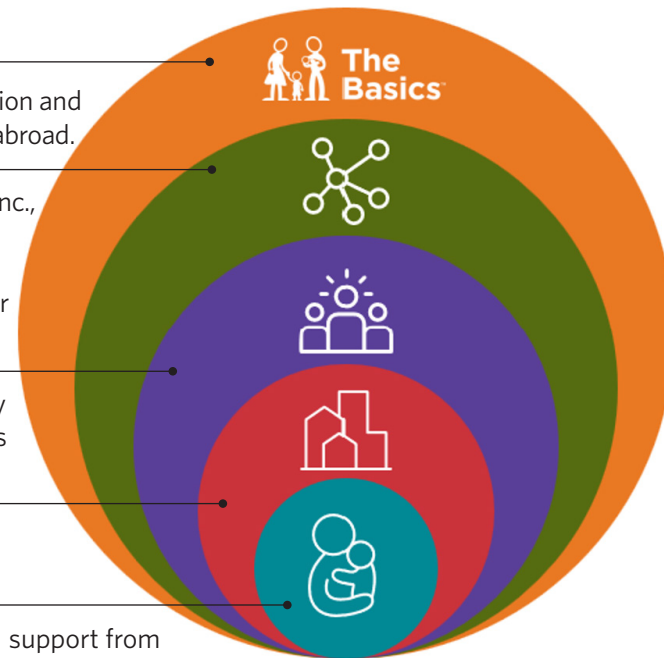
THE BASICS, INC. develops tools and resources for implementation and provides technical assistance to localities and states in the US and abroad.

THE BASICS LEARNING NETWORK, convened by The Basics, Inc., provides regular opportunities for peer learning, innovation, and sharing best practices across member communities. Member communities are licensed to implement The Basics Strategy in their regions and pay a small annual fee to participate.

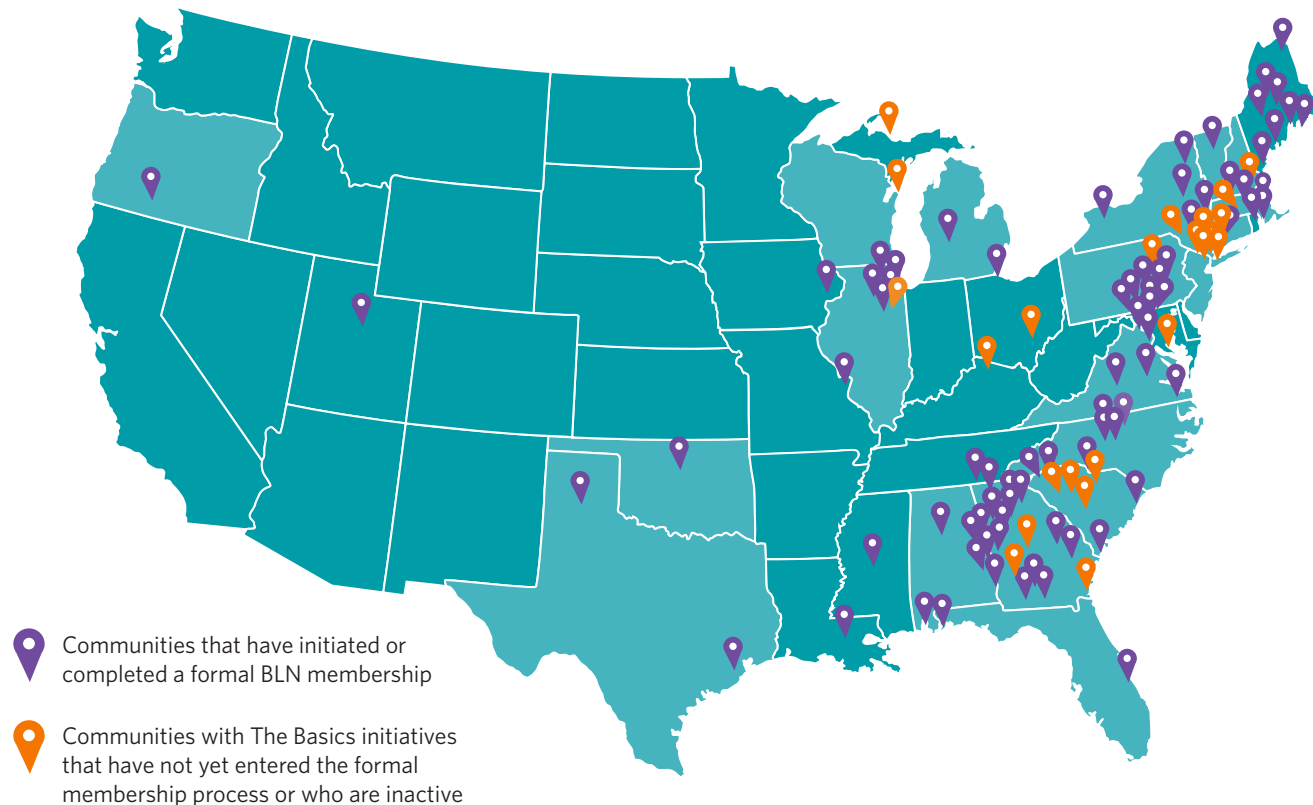
BACKBONE LEADERS recruit and train cross-sector community partners to join the local Basics movement and embed The Basics Principles into their work with families.

FRONTLINE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS make sharing and reinforcing The Basics Principles part of their routines.

FAMILIES receive information, nudges and reminders, and social support from trusted messengers to make The Basics Principles everyday caregiving routines.



In FY25, **The Basics Learning Network** expanded from **117 to 126** cities, towns, and counties.*



* Not shown on the map, are member communities in Australia, Bermuda, Brazil, and Canada

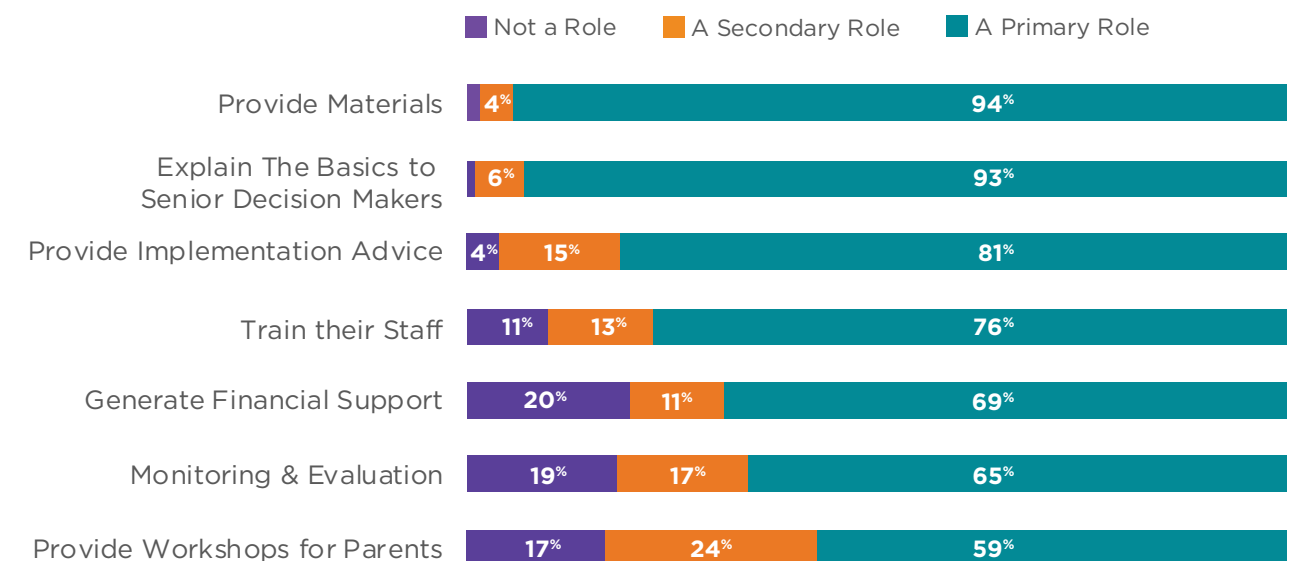
Our Local Backbones Are Building Community Capacity

The Basics local backbones tend to be housed in larger organizations, representing a variety of sectors such as collective impact initiatives, early education and care, school districts, public health, and others. Backbones recruit and train partners from multiple sectors to engage families with The Basics Principles and provide support and overall coordination for their local movements.

The Basics Poughkeepsie, NY team tabling at a community event



Ways That Local Backbone Organizations Support Partner Organizations*

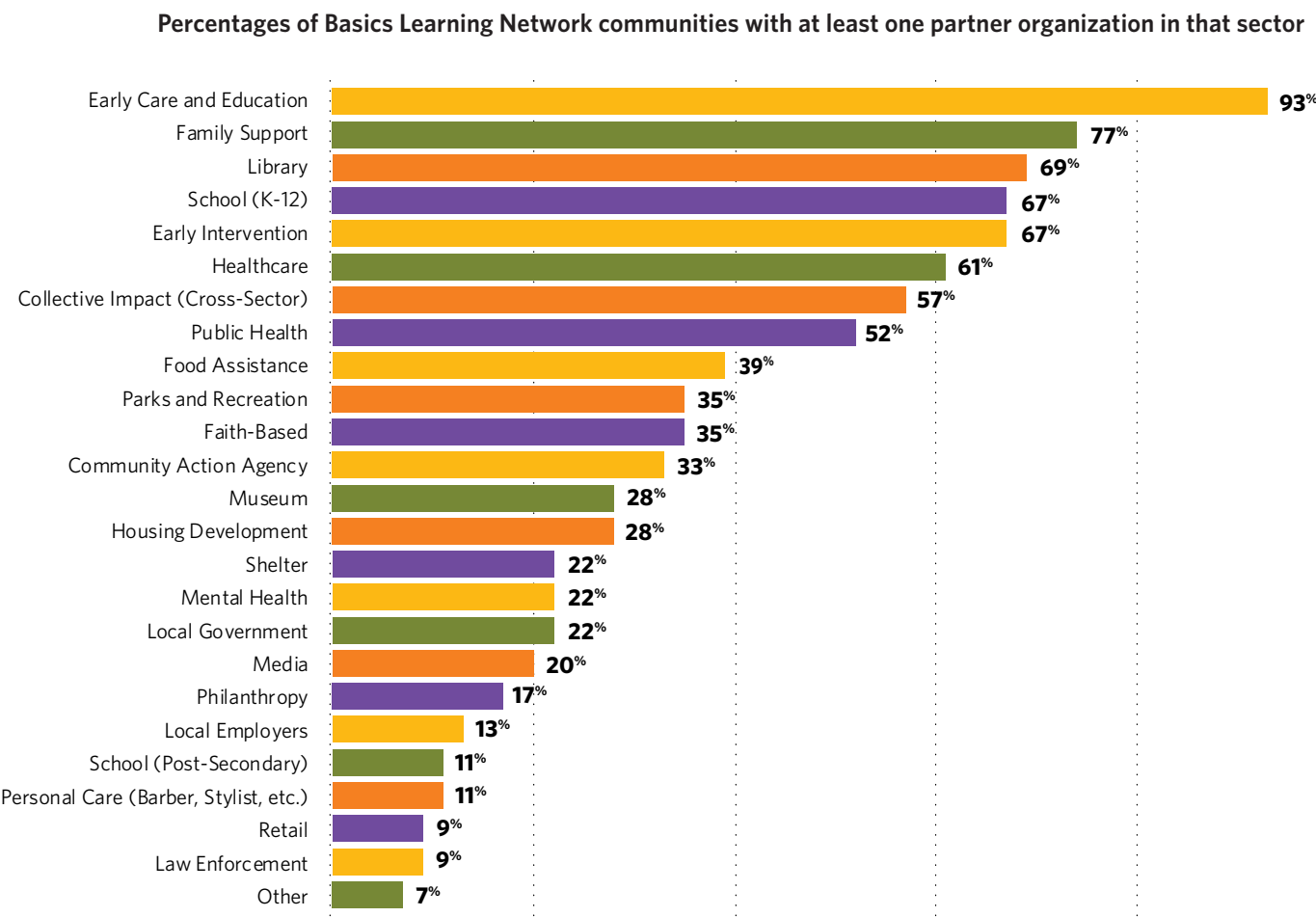


*Data are from 51 communities that responded to the relevant item on the 2025 network-wide Census

Our Impact on Communities is...

Cross-Sector Engagement and Alignment

Across member communities, backbones are recruiting and supporting partner organizations from a wide range of sectors to engage families with The Basics Principles. Together, these partner organizations are working toward socioecological saturation, reaching families where they are.



“The Basics Waccamaw has become an essential part of how we engage families and community partners in Horry County around early childhood development...The Basics principles have truly shifted the culture of how our community views early learning. Through partnerships with hospitals, childcare centers, libraries, and faith-based organizations, The Basics Waccamaw has created a common language for supporting children from birth to age five.”

Richard Williams, Jr., leader of The Basics Waccamaw, United Way of Horry County, SC

The Impact on Providers is...

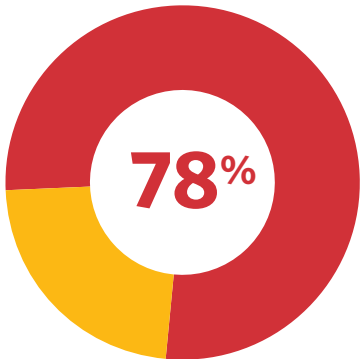
Enhanced Skills and Communication with Families

Providers in participating communities are learning to become more effective in supporting families. Survey results indicate multiple types of enhancement in their capacity to communicate about Basics-related topics and more attention to such topics during routine interactions with parents and caregiver.*

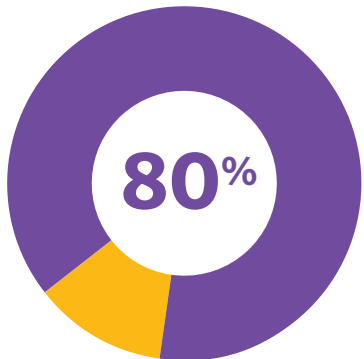


“There is a lot of momentum and energy since the launch...The team I support has grown their understanding and they’re more confident in sharing the messaging. They are also more invested in making sure we connect with as many families as possible.”

2025 Partner Survey respondent



Agree or strongly agree that sharing The Basics Principles helps them do their **job more effectively**.



Communicate **more frequently** with parents about The Basics Principles and related ideas now, compared to before they learned about The Basics Principles.

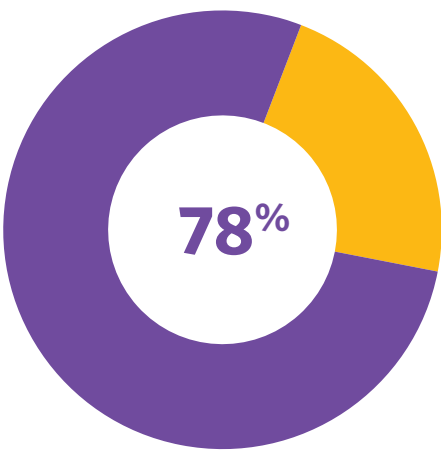


Communicate **more effectively** now about the types of ideas that The Basics Principles cover, compared to before they learned about The Basics.

The Impact on Families is...

Increased Awareness of The Basics Principles and Ways to Apply them in Caring for Children

Backbones in communities that responded to the 2025 Annual Network Census collectively aspire to impact over half a million families over the next three years.*



Of frontline partner survey respondents agree or strongly agree that **parents do The Basics Principles more frequently** after they talk about them.



Basics community event
TROUP COUNTY, GA



Pediatric clinic
ELGIN, IL



Baby dedication
integrating The Basics
HORRY COUNTY, SC



Basics event for families
HOWARD COUNTY, MD

“The Basics helps me get parents excited about ways they can support their child’s development without stressing themselves out.”

2025 Partner Survey Respondent

SPOTLIGHT

Basics Research

New Evidence that Basics Insights Text Messages Boost Social-Emotional and Cognitive Development

In November 2024, The Basics released new evidence showing that **Basics Insights (BI) text messaging meaningfully enhances children’s development**. Using data from more than 1,400 parents across multiple states, the study measured growth in social-emotional and cognitive skills among children ages 18 to 60 months. By comparing children of the same age whose parents had been enrolled for different lengths of time, researchers were able to separate normal maturation from the added benefits of Basics Insights.

Results show that children whose parents received Basics Insights experienced **28% more developmental growth** between 18 and 48 months of age compared to normal age-related progress. This impact is equivalent to **8.4 months of additional maturation**—a significant boost for kindergarten readiness.

Parents also praised the program, calling the messages “invaluable” and “so helpful” in supporting daily interactions with their children.

These findings align with evidence from interventions, which shows that **simple, consistent digital supports for parents** can make a measurable difference in young children’s development. Find the report under ‘**View Our Reports**’ on the website at www.TheBasics.org.

Basics Insights text messages stop when the child turns 5, but impacts on caregiving behaviors are lasting

Parents of kindergarten-aged children shared that their earlier participation in Basics Insights continues to shape their day-to-day caregiving behaviors. Asked about lasting impacts, many described stronger communication—“more talking with my children,” “helping her talk through her problems,” and “more conversational times with my child.”

Others emphasized calmer, more confident caregiving: “I am more calm and concise with my reactions,” and “the messages helped me use daily life as teaching moments.”

Respondents also highlighted learning routines: “We read every day,” “I keep up with what I learned,” and “those messages help my kids grow and do things well.” Expressions of gratitude were common —“This is awesome,” “Fue súper,” “Gracias... fueron de mucha ayuda.”

Source: 70 Boston parents of 5-year-olds surveyed Dec. 2024



KEY FINDINGS

Data for this brief come from The Basics Parental Assessment of Child Development Status, which includes a battery of items pertaining to children’s skills. Respondents were parents who enrolled to receive Basics Insights text messages beginning at least 6 months before the survey and whose children were between 18 and 60 months of age at the time of the survey. Dosage is measured by the length of time the parent had been enrolled at the time of the survey, controlling for the child’s age at that time and other background variables.

- The estimated impact on child development of a parent’s Basics Insights enrollment over the 30-month period from the age of 18 months to 48 months is 28% more growth on a measure of social-emotional and cognitive skills compared to normal age-related maturation.
- This 28% impact equates to 8.4 months of additional maturation during this 30-month, over and above normal age-related development and any impacts before the child is 18 months old.

This impact is a policy-relevant magnitude for stakeholders concerned about kindergarten readiness and developmental equity. The results are for children who have not been diagnosed with developmental delays or disabilities.



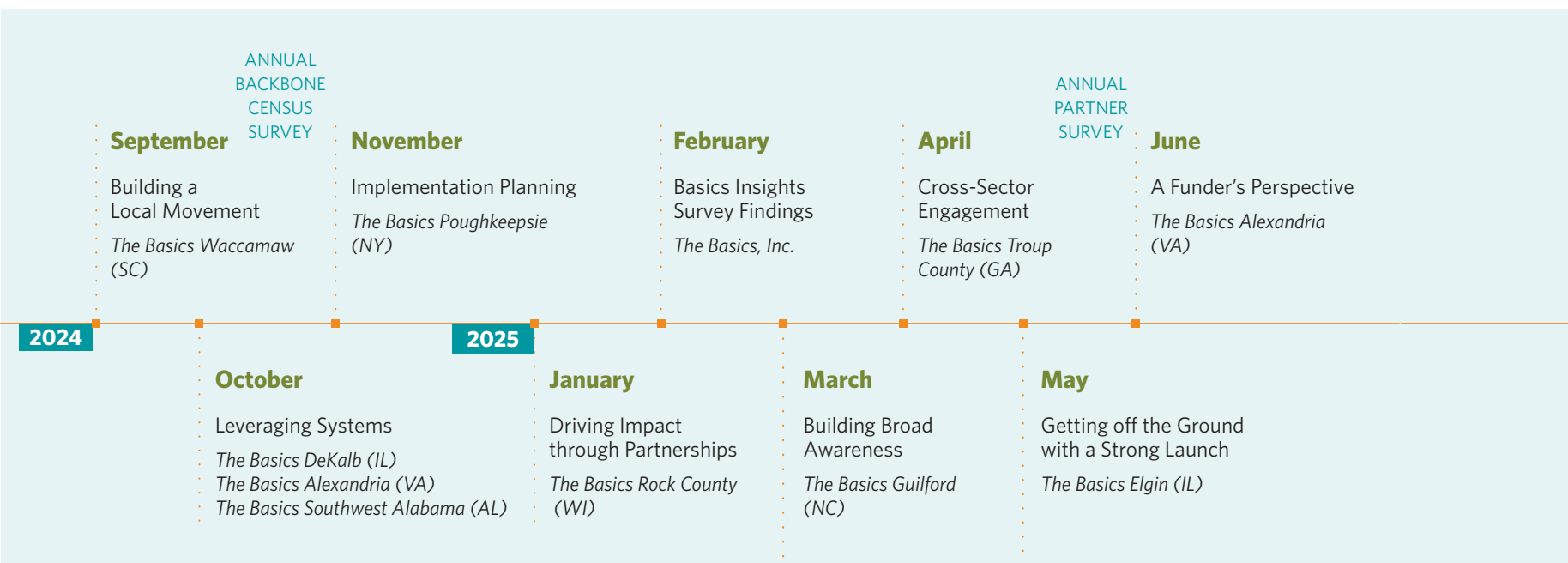
* One BLN Census survey is completed each year per community.

THE BASICS LEARNING NETWORK

A Year of Shared Learning

Each month, between 40 and 60 local backbone leaders from across the network convened on Zoom to learn and support one another. They also participated in evaluation by completing the annual Census of Backbone Organizations and enlisting local allies to complete the Partner Survey of collaborating organizations that work with their backbone to integrate The Basics Principles and tools into support for families. See below for some highlights!

BLN Learning Cycle and Survey Milestones September 2024 to June 2025



How the Network is a Learning Community

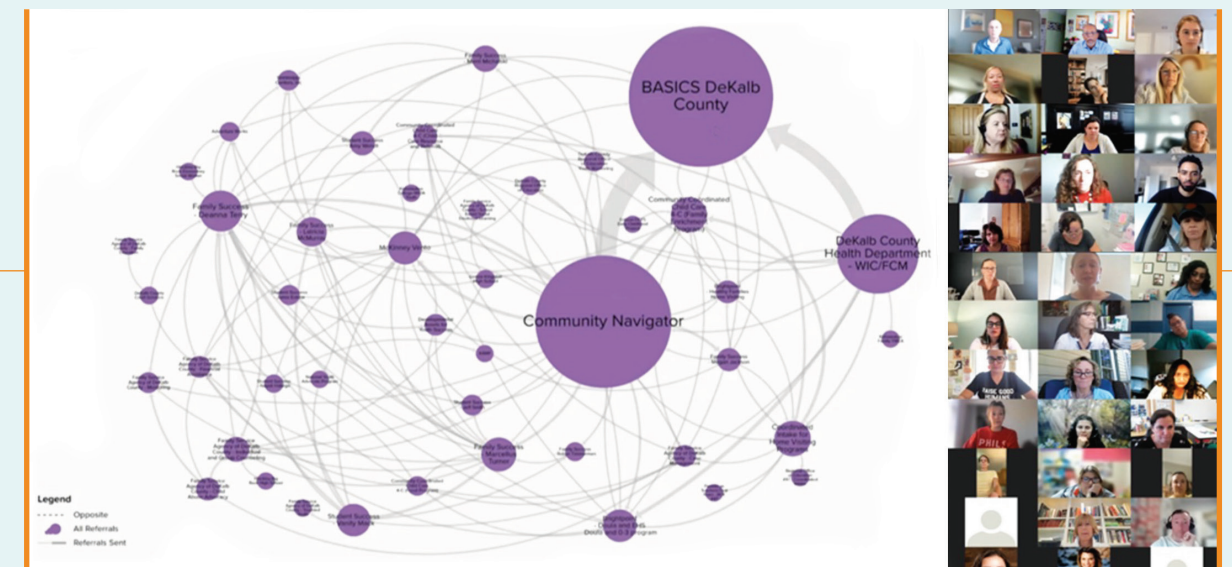
Monthly meetings are opportunities to share, receive practical guidance, and build solidarity



Implementation is refined as communities learn from the research and from one another



Participatory research builds understanding and a shared narrative of the network's impact



A monthly BLN meeting presentation by DeKalb, IL, on networking with partner organizations.

“The Basics, Inc. and the Basics Learning Network have been incredibly valuable in providing not only guidance and resources, but also a sense of shared purpose and connection with others.”

2025 Backbone Census Respondent

State Spotlight

THE BASICS IN NORTH CAROLINA



The expansion of The Basics in North Carolina reflects a powerful combination of organic community leadership and strategic statewide partnership. Over several years, individual communities—including Guilford, Mecklenburg, and Randolph counties—began implementing The Basics and naturally formed a peer learning community, sharing insights and strengthening local practice. Their early success drew the attention of Invest Early NC, an early childhood funders collaborative where philanthropic leaders recognized the potential for a coordinated, statewide approach.

“We saw local momentum building—and a real opportunity to amplify it for families across the entire state.”

Susan Schwartz, Executive Director of The Cemala Foundation and member of Invest Early NC

Recognizing the importance of a strong statewide partner, Invest Early NC engaged the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), the organization that oversees the Smart Start network across all of North Carolina’s 100 counties. Smart Start is a statewide initiative focused on preparing children for kindergarten and school success. With its county-level infrastructure, trusted reputation, and deep cross-sector connections, NCPC emerged as the ideal anchor for statewide implementation of The Basics.

“The Basics gives us a common language—simple, strong, and universal—that aligns beautifully with Smart Start’s mission and NCPC’s statewide vision. We both believe little moments create big futures.”

Safiyah Jackson, Chief Strategy Officer, North Carolina Partnership for Children

A three-year investment from Invest Early NC established the foundation for growth, including hiring Carey Ann Watkins as Director of The Basics North Carolina and launching a close technical-assistance partnership between NCPC and The Basics, Inc.

Together, NCPC and The Basics organized work across three initial pillars

1 Strengthening & Expanding Local Learning Communities

Supporting existing Basics communities while engaging new communities that are exploring adoption.

2 Statewide Public Awareness Campaign

Partnering with a communications firm to develop, test, and refine messaging and core assets for a statewide campaign.

3 Customization of Basics Insights

Beginning work to embed information about North Carolina-specific resources in the text-messaging platform and exploring future opportunities for integration with other NCPC-supported systems.

“Communities have been incredibly enthusiastic. The Basics resonates because it is simple, research-based, and easy for families to put into practice.”

Carey Ann Watkins, Director, The Basics North Carolina

NCPC, through the Smart Start network, continues to work closely with The Basics to ensure alignment and integration with statewide early childhood priorities—embedding The Basics within existing structures rather than layering on a separate initiative. Together with Invest Early NC, they share a vision of The Basics becoming part of the long-term institutional architecture supporting families and young children across the state.

“It has been an honor to partner with such thoughtful, mission-driven leaders. North Carolina’s approach is becoming a model for other states.”

Jocelyn Friedlander, Director of Learning and Innovation, The Basics, Inc.



State Spotlight

THE BASICS IN ILLINOIS



Basics DeKalb County and collaborators have built four toddler gardens.

The Basics Illinois is a growing consortium of local backbone organizations generously supported by a grant to The DeKalb County Regional Office of Education (ROE) from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. Consortium members so far include The Basics DeKalb County, The Basics of Greater Elgin, The Basics Rockford, The Basics DuPage County, The Basics Aurora, The Basics Oak Park, and The Basics Bureau Henry Stark.

Basics DeKalb County

Since joining the Basics Learning Network in 2018, Basics DeKalb County has become a powerful example of how The Basics can take root in a rural community.

What began as interest among leaders in the local Collaborative for Young Children— and spearheaded by the ROE—is today a local movement uniting health, education, social services, early learning, and faith communities, to ensure that every family with young children benefits from The Basics.

Early adoption by the DeKalb County Health Department helped establish The Basics in the county. Staff incorporated the Principles into everyday interactions with clients, displayed materials in public-facing spaces—including renovating an entire wall in the reception area—and consistently enrolled families in Basics Insights text messaging, contributing greatly to enrollment of 3,300 subscribers across the county.

Today, The Basics DeKalb is a model of rural community building.



Elgin community members signed next to the sectors they represented.

Basics “engagement stations” are installed at sites across the community in Elgin to promote awareness and positive caregiver-child interactions.

The Basics of Greater Elgin County

In 2022, Amber Peters was the leader of a new initiative in Elgin, IL, dubbed “Enriching Partnerships for Early Learning (EPEL),” when she began engaging with partners to bring The Basics to Elgin. She knew the second-largest school district in Illinois needed to be involved. Their “Give Me Five” messaging overlapped with The Basics but lacked the structure and scalability Elgin needed. The Basics offered both simplicity and a framework for long-term adoption.

Momentum accelerated in 2023 when a small team attended The Basics National Conference. They returned energized and unified—“We absolutely have to do this”—and began intentionally assembling a cross-sector coalition: early childhood leaders, city officials, library staff, health providers, food systems partners, pediatricians, and faith leaders. The assistant city manager, already a champion for early childhood, helped knit together a strong civic foundation.

In 2025, Elgin convened a vibrant celebration featuring city and school leadership. The Basics’ founder Ron Ferguson spoke at the event and community members, including parents, gave powerful testimonies. Colleagues from other Illinois communities also attended.

A Statewide Approach

Together, DeKalb, Elgin, and other The Basics Illinois communities are demonstrating that The Basics is more than a program—it is a shared language, a cross-sector strategy, and a collective commitment to giving every young child a strong start. Their statewide approach is coherent, collaborative, and grounded in local leadership.

Advancing The Basics:

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE NEXT DECADE

In FY2025, The Basics, Inc. undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process informed by three key sources: research findings, stakeholder perspectives (funders, board members, advisors), and leaders across the Basics Learning Network (BLN). Together, these inputs shaped a plan designed to deepen evidence, strengthen capacity, and expand impact nationwide, on families and children of color and from traditionally marginalized backgrounds, through a targeted universalism approach to outreach and family engagement.

1 Strengthening Evidence and Practice

New analyses continue to show strong benefits for parents and young children engaged with The Basics—particularly through Basics Insights, frontline supports, and BLN backbone activities. Hence expansion is warranted. Yet the next stage of learning requires complementing parent-reported data with external assessments from medical professionals, preschool educators, and kindergarten teachers.

Strategic Priority: Expand evaluation research to include impacts on external assessments of child development and school readiness, aligned with continued growth of the BLN, Basics Insights enrollment, and frontline provider engagement.

2 Building Organizational Capacity

Board members, funders, and national advisors affirmed that The Basics has entered a new phase marked by rapid growth, national visibility, and expanding partnerships. As the organization scales, these stakeholders emphasized the importance of a clearly articulating The Basics’ mission, approach, and evidence of impact to sustain momentum, support revenue diversification, and attract the specialized talent and national partners required for the next phase.

Strategic Priority: Sustain effective implementation while annually producing and disseminating a small, curated portfolio of written and video cases documenting implementation fidelity and demonstrated impact. Such case-making underpins the funding, talent, and partnerships required for sustainable growth and quality.

3 Centering the Basics Learning Network

BLN leaders expressed strong appreciation for the resources and peer learning opportunities The Basics provides. They also emphasized the need for stronger evidence linking the model—particularly Basics Insights—to **kindergarten readiness**, more help training their local partners (for example, virtual trainings that serve the whole multi-community network), and resources for families in additional languages.

Strategic Priority: Invest in research that follows children from birth into the early grades. Expand training opportunities and resources for frontline professionals. Add languages and customization to Basics Insights. Continue serving as an effective community of practice for backbone organizations in the Basics Learning Network.

Together, these priorities are achievable and position The Basics to advance a powerful next chapter rooted in evidence, responsiveness, collaboration, and relentless commitment.

Team and Board

Staff



Ronald F. Ferguson, PhD
Founder & Executive Director



James Quane, PhD
Director of Operations



Jocelyn Friedlander, EdM
Director of Learning & Innovation



Keyla Kelley, MS, CCLS
Program Director



Zoë Hansen-DiBello, PhD
Senior Liaison to the Basics Network



Katherine Vogt, MPH
Program Manager



Nimrah Bakhsh
Program Manager



Ji Hye (Esther) Park, PhD
Research Associate

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Retired Boston Philanthropic Leader; 32 years as Trustee of Northeastern University



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Founding Partner Global Infrastructure Partners; Alumnus, Advanced Leadership Initiative at Harvard University



Jeri Robinson
Chair, Boston School Committee; Retired VP, Boston Children’s Museum



Michael Yogman, MD
Pediatrician (Retired); Co-Chair, Board of Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network; Retired faculty, Harvard Medical School

Technology Partner

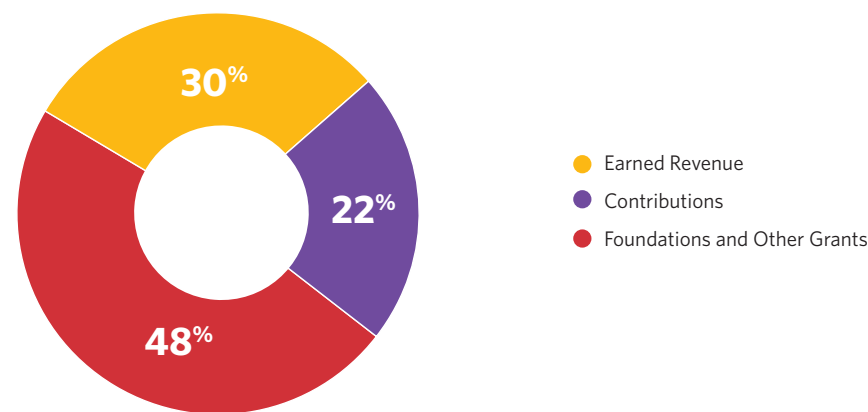


Jitendra Vyas
MyBliss Technology

Financial Report FY 2025

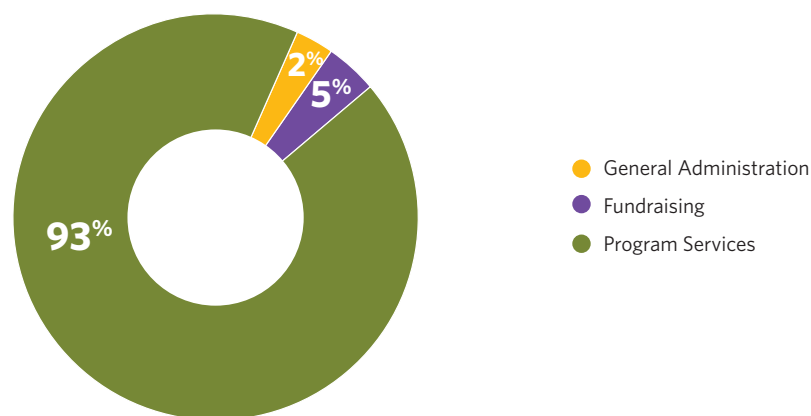
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Total Revenue \$1,434,715*



*This does not include funds carried over from FY24

Total Expenses \$1,367,201



Thank You to Our Contributors

Our impact would not be possible without the generous contributions of the individuals and foundations acknowledged here, along with the millions of additional dollars invested in local backbone organizations across the Basics Learning Network. Also not reflected here are investments by our technology partner, MyBliss, that enable and sustain delivery of Basics Insights text messaging.

Individual Donors

Supporter (\$1-\$1,249)

Mari Barrera
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Maximize Love, Manage Stress



Talk, Sing, and Point



Count, Group, and Compare



Explore through Movement and Play



Read and Discuss Stories



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To donate, go to thebasics.org/donate/ or scan here



Local backbone organization leaders from several Georgia communities at a recent national conference of the Basics Learning Network.

