

Start Early Funders Coalition

Grant Type: **Dollar and nondollar support**

Dollar Amount: **\$20,000**

Foundation Name: **The Sheltering Arms Foundation**

What was your objective with the grant or initiative?

The Sheltering Arms Foundation wanted to continue the progress made by the Start Early Funders coalition, which helped create an early childhood system in Minnesota that ensures that children are socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively ready to succeed in kindergarten and in life.

What were the results of this grant or initiative?

The Sheltering Arms Foundation's support of the Start Early Funders Coalition is part of a collective effort to support the MinneMinds Coalition, a consortium of more than 100 nonprofits, advocates, funders, businesses, and others interested in ensuring Minnesota's future success by investing now in its young children. This effort has resulted in more than \$100 million in early learning scholarships going to the lowest-income children, in growing investments in home visiting, and in growing public awareness of the importance of children's getting a strong start in life. The coalition is gearing up for the next legislative session because, even though the effort in previous year has brought much success, only 12% of eligible children currently are being served. In 2015, some of the dollars supported a research trip to Sweden by legislators, other funders, and child care providers to look at that country's highly advanced early childhood system.

Why would you say this grant or initiative had outsized impact?

The Sheltering Arms Foundation is one of the smaller funders in the group, yet it has played a major leadership role in making the collaborative happen. The executive director of Sheltering Arms has cochaired the Start Early Funders for the past 5 years; because Sheltering Arms is a public foundation, its dollars are able to support lobbying and other critical elements of a legislative campaign, such as communications and the building of public will. Twelve years ago, the foundation convened a session on children's legislative issues; it now is a Start Early Funders signature event that draws nearly 1,000 attendees each year.

Small funders are able to make a bigger impact when they join in coalitions with other funders and community members. Having an opportunity to view similar efforts in other cities and countries can inspire them in forming a vision for success.



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