



## Stakeholder Perspectives on Universal Prekindergarten: Statewide Successes & Barriers

House Human Services Committee  
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## Overview

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- Building Bright Futures' (BBF) roles & responsibilities under Act 104
- Reflections on H. 935
- UPK information gathering results





Building Bright Futures (BBF) is Vermont's foundational early childhood public-private partnership, mandated by state and federal law, to serve as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood

BBF's Mission: To improve the well-being of children and families in Vermont by using evidence to inform policy and bringing voices together to discuss critical challenges and problem-solve.



**Mandates Under Act 104**

**CONVENE** →

**MONITOR** →

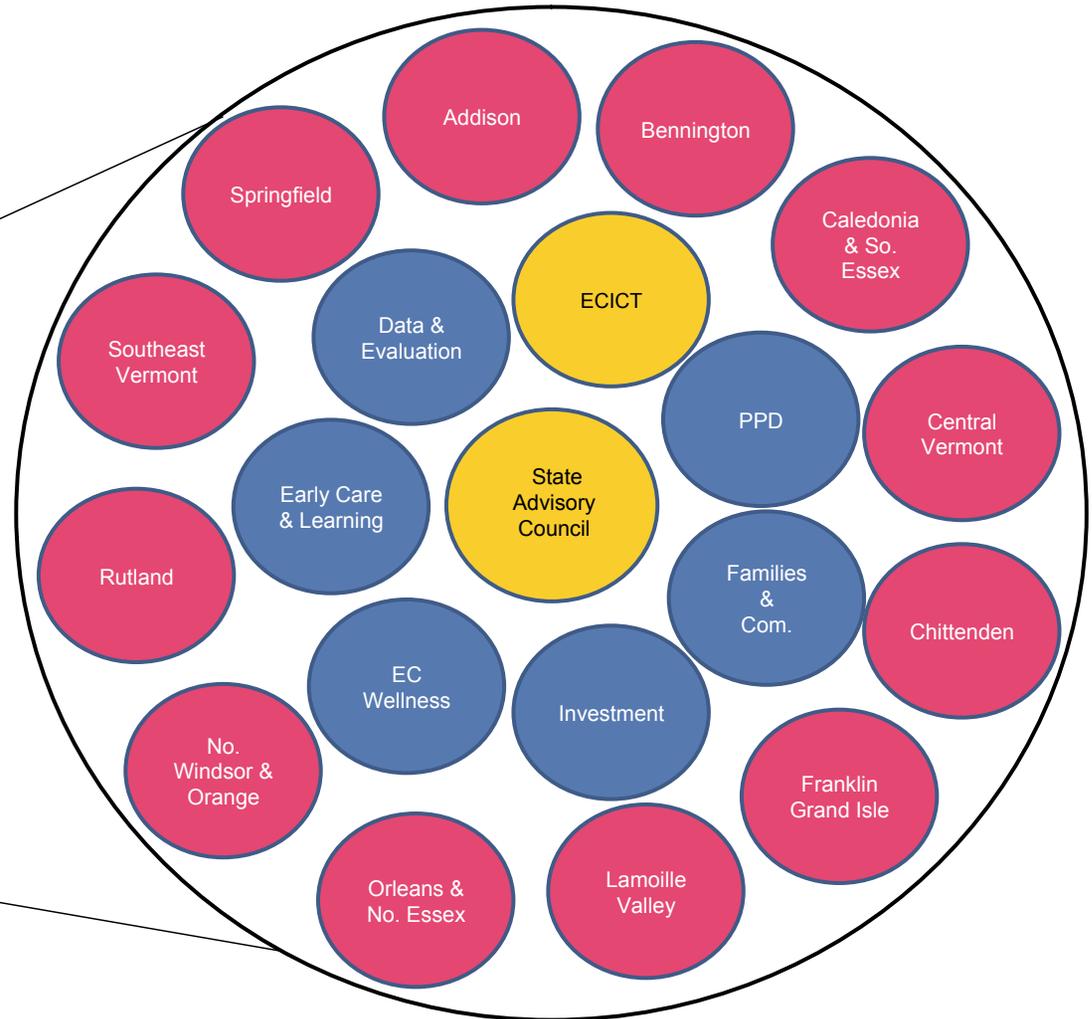
**ADVISE** →

**BBF Structure**

**12 Regional Councils**  
Addressing state-wide communities needs

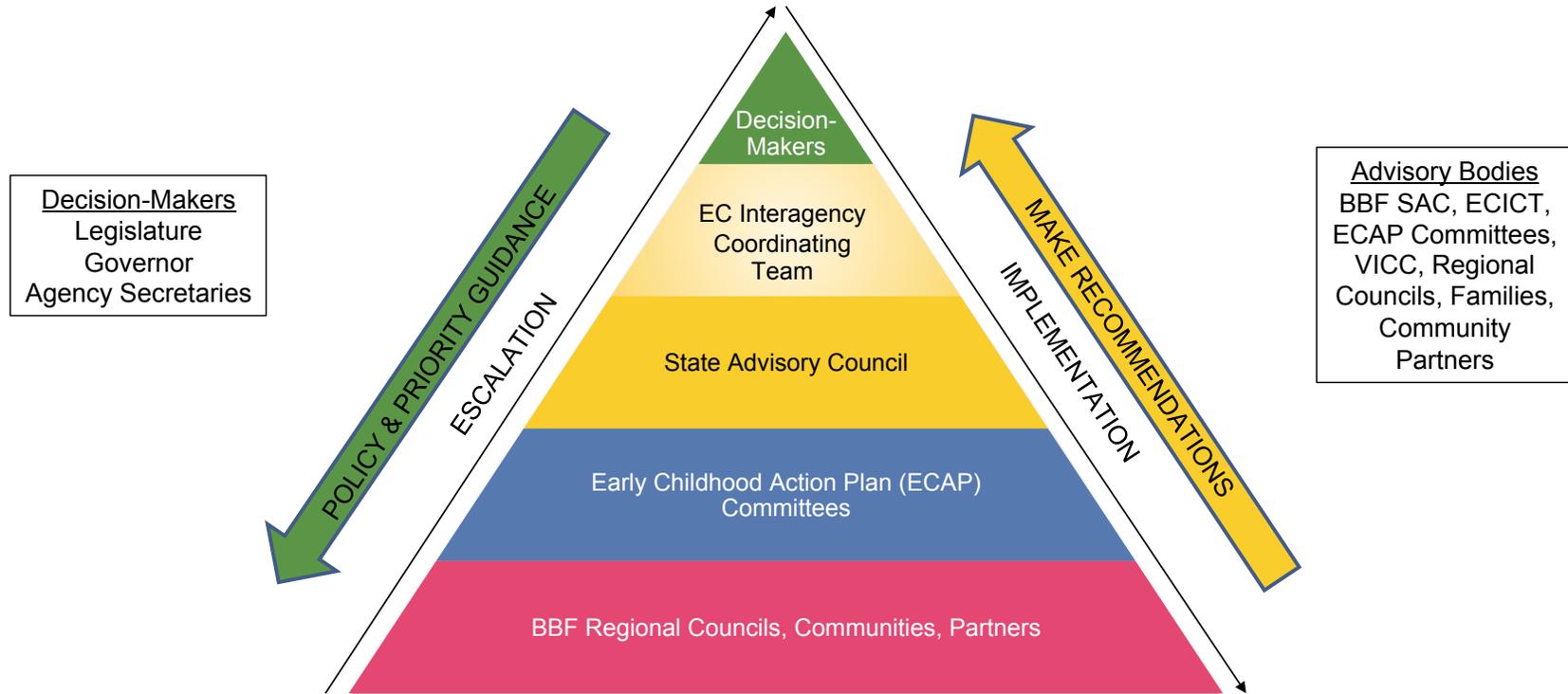
**Early Childhood Action Plan & 7 Aligned Committees**

**State Advisory Council (SAC)**  
23 governor-appointed and at-large members



Note: EC = Early childhood, ECICT = Early Childhood Interagency Coordination Team, PPD = Professional Preparation and Development

# VERMONT'S EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Early Childhood Framework : Realizing the promise of every Vermont child.

Continuous, Comprehensive, Integrated, Accessible,  
High Quality EC System



High quality, up-to-date data to inform policy

# Reflections on H. 935

2 new references to BBF

1. BBF hosting list of qualified providers (Section 1, page 8)
2. Special education study section (Section 8, page 26)



# BBF hosting list of qualified providers

(Section 1, page 8)



## Key Considerations

1. The work of BBF is different from Bright Futures Information System (BFIS)

- BFIS – a comprehensive database of all regulated programs in the state, a place for families to access information about all the programs in their area, capacity, philosophy and their regulatory histories
- BFIS is currently being redesigned (DCF)

2. BBF On-going Capacity

- Process: collecting information vs. being provided with all information by state agency partners
- Technology needed to host searchable database

# Special education study section

(Section 8, page 26)



## Key Considerations

1. This work is **CRITICAL**, fits well within the broader mission and BBF scope of work, and BBF is well-poised to serve in neutral convener role
2. BBF Capacity
  - Staffing, resources & timeline
  - **NEED**: financial support for staff and contractor time for the 6-month period
3. Family Representation
  - Family voice critical to include as part of the working group



## History of Act 166

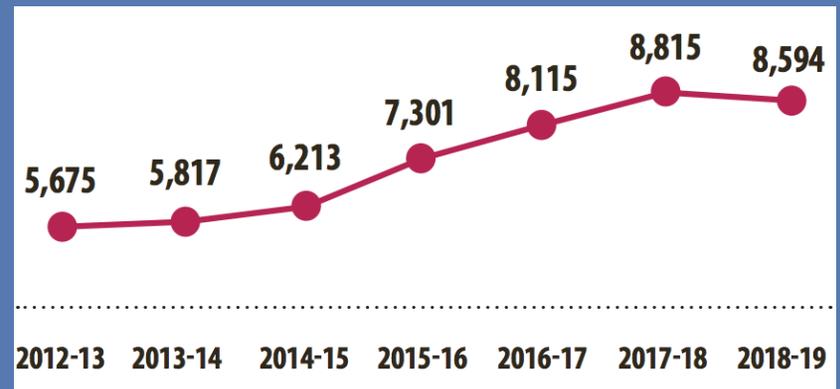
### Vermont's Universal Prekindergarten Education Law

- In 2014, VT legislature passed Act 166: provided access to publicly-funded prekindergarten education for 3, 4, & 5-year-olds not age-eligible for kindergarten
- In 2018, BBF gathered community feedback on 8 recommendations for changes to the law

# Act 166 Universal Pre-kindergarten (UPK)

Since 2014, the number of children enrolled in UPK has increased by more than 2,000.

Trends in UPK utilization over time



<https://vermontinsights.org/19-prek-enrollment/>





## Purpose of BBF Information Gathering

To utilize BBF's statewide and regional networks to ask those directly impacted by Act 166 UPK to identify:

1. Perceptions of successes
2. Mechanisms of Success (where and why it's been successful and to share best practices)
3. Outline persistent barriers



## 2 Methods of Collecting Statewide Perspectives

### In-Person Regional Forums/Focus Groups

Semi-structured focus groups during regional forums to collect qualitative information on UPK statewide during November and December 2019. \_

**13 Total Forums in 11 Regions = 199  
Participants**

### Electronic Feedback Form

Widely disseminated online feedback form targeting participation from those unable to attend in person.

**169 Total Feedback Form Participants**



## Forums & Focus Groups Participation

- 199 Vermonters participated
- 26 unique sectors or organizations were represented



169

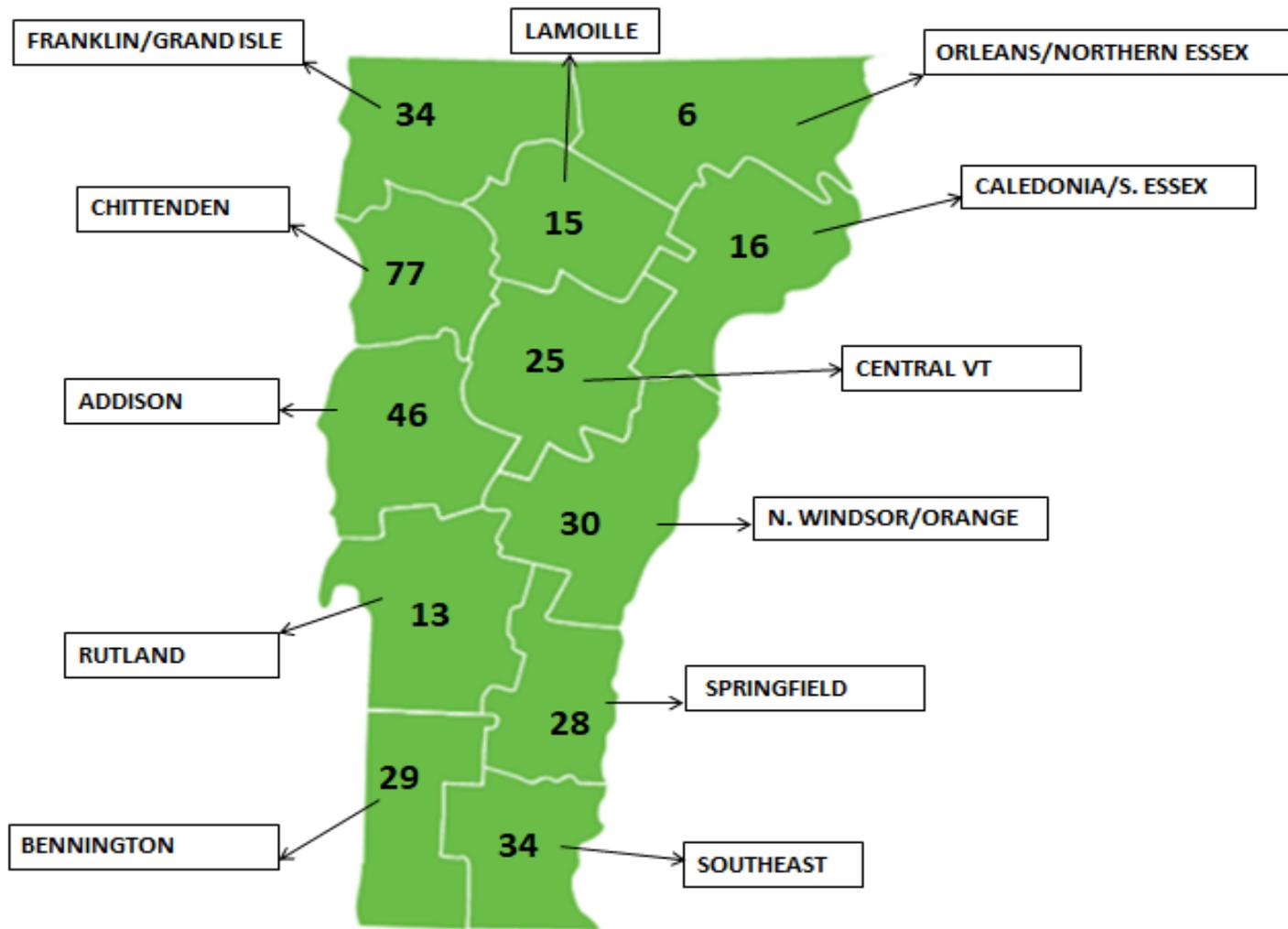
# Electronic Feedback Form Participants

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- 113 parents
- 24 private preK program directors
- 22 child care providers
- 20 private preK teachers
- 16 public preK teachers
- 14 superintendents/principles
- 12 preK coordinators



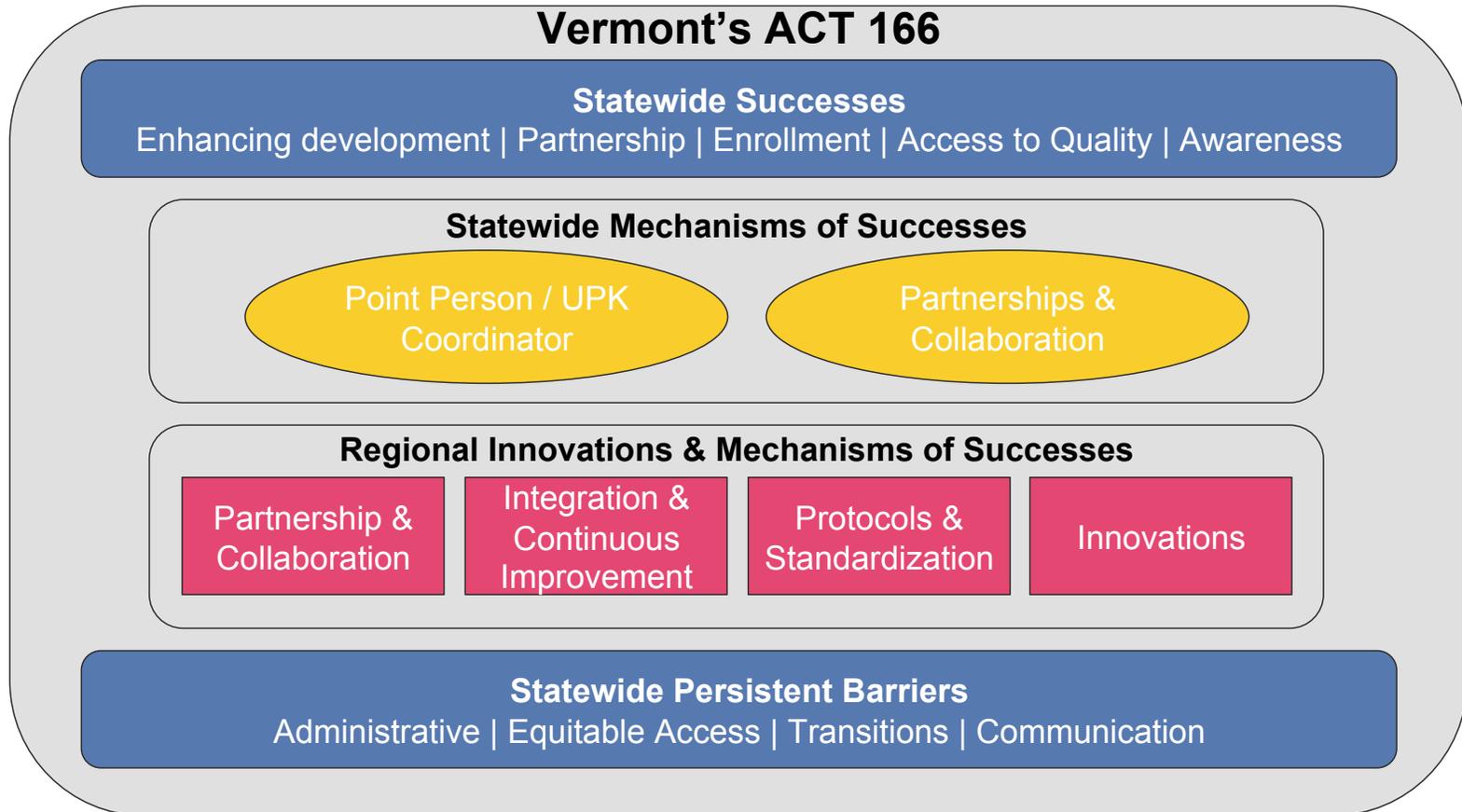
**368**  
**Total**  
**Vermonters**



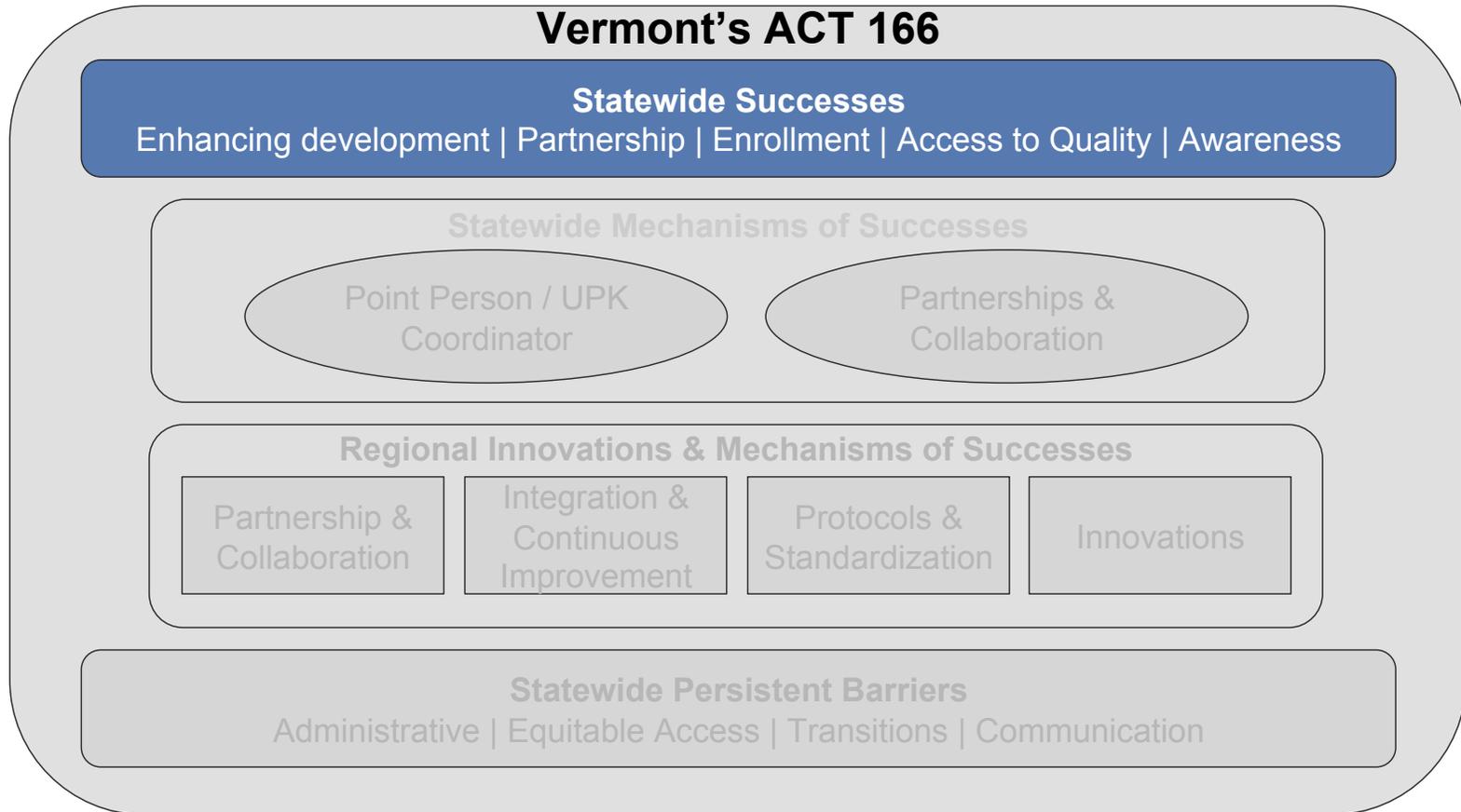
## Qualitative Analysis

- Team of 4 reviewed all data from each forum and the electronic feedback form
- Each region was reviewed by at least 2 members of the analysis team
- We then developed themes that reflected the data and identified quotes

# RESULTS OVERVIEW



# RESULTS OVERVIEW



# RESULT THEME 1: Statewide Success-Positive Initial Investment

ENHANCING  
DEVELOPMENT  
LEARNING AND  
KINDERGARTEN  
READINESS

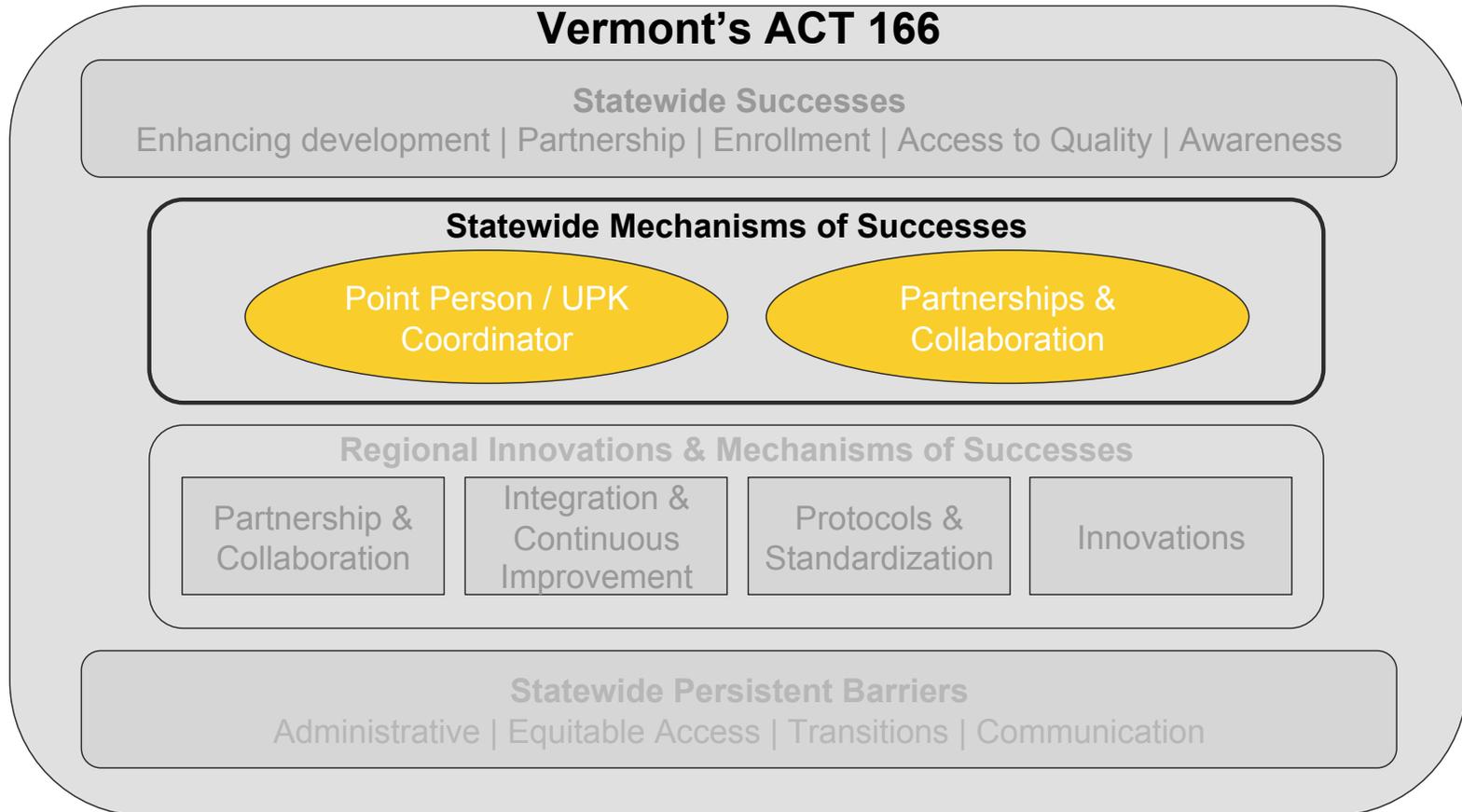
PUBLIC AND  
PRIVATE  
PARTNERSHIPS

INCREASED  
UPK  
ENROLLMENT  
ACROSS THE  
STATE

INCREASED  
ACCESS TO HIGH  
QUALITY  
LEARNING  
EXPERIENCES

INCREASED  
AWARENESS OF  
THE IMPORTANCE  
OF EARLY  
LEARNING BEFORE  
AGE 5

# RESULTS OVERVIEW



## **RESULT THEME 2:**

### **Statewide Innovations and Mechanisms of success**

#### **TWO MAJOR SUB-THEMES:**

1. Having a UPK liason or point person
2. Partnerships among public and private community entities.



## RESULT THEME 2:

### Statewide Innovations and Mechanisms of SUCCESS

UPK POINT PERSON

**“When school districts have an Act 166 Coordinator who understand and know the law”**

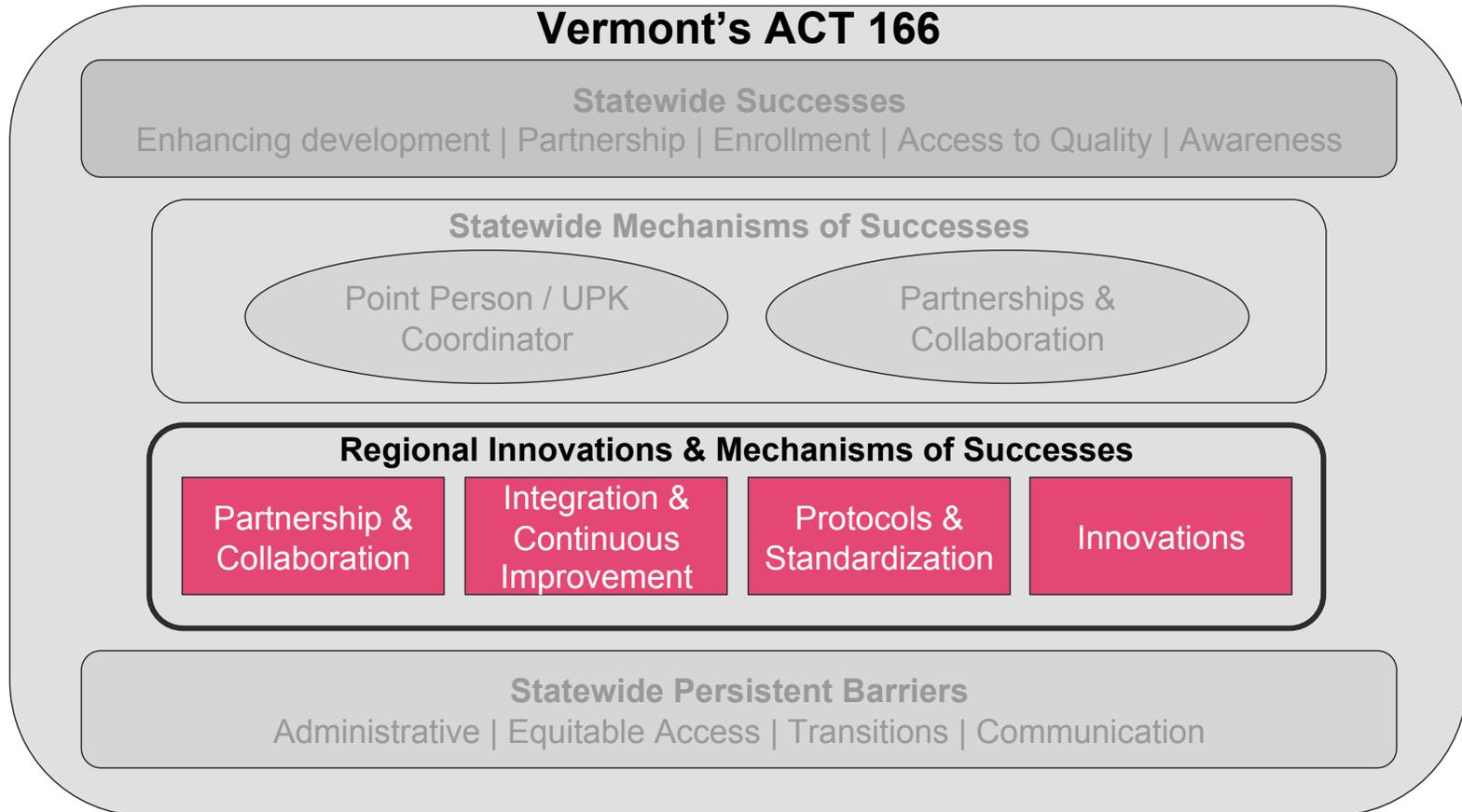
**“Having a Regional Coordinator is helpful for both the district and partner program. A consistent system using common contracts, forms, and other information has been very successful. It has also been positive for partner programs that may have more than one of the 11 districts to contract with”**

Partnerships among public and private community entities

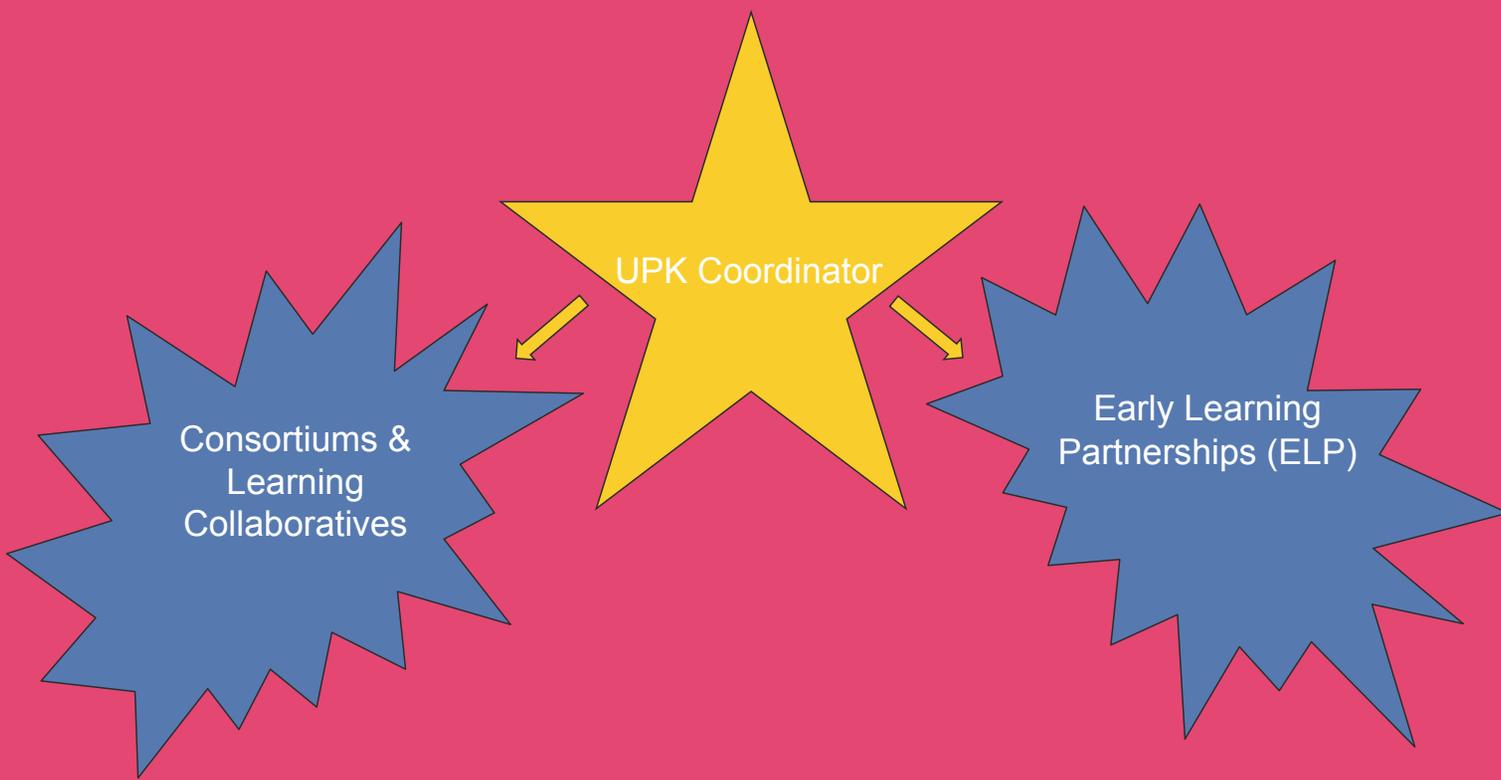
**“Meetings with preK and K teachers [facilitate] better transitions to K and more professional respect”**

**Building strong relationships between partner providers, public pre-k teachers, and the local school district administration is a huge change maker. When the supervisory union reaches out to share resources, training opportunities, and partner staff, the benefits for children increase and trust among adults builds to create better outcomes.**

# RESULTS OVERVIEW



# RESULT THEME 3: 3 Ways Regions have Formalized Partnership and Collaborations



## RESULT THEME 3: Integration & Continuous Improvement



Photo of original team implementing the Same Page Initiative in Springfield:  
From left to right are Ellen Taetzsch, Molly Oglesby, Rachel Hunter, and Stacey Sanderson. Photo provided

### Examples of Integration & Continuous Improvement

- The Same Page Initiative (Springfield)
  - Building bridges
  - Connection among teachers, families and community resources
  - Support understanding of assessment tools
- Resource Sharing (e.g. professional development)

## RESULT THEME 3: Protocols and Standardization

Regions have developed individual protocols and ways to standardize administrative practices

Examples:

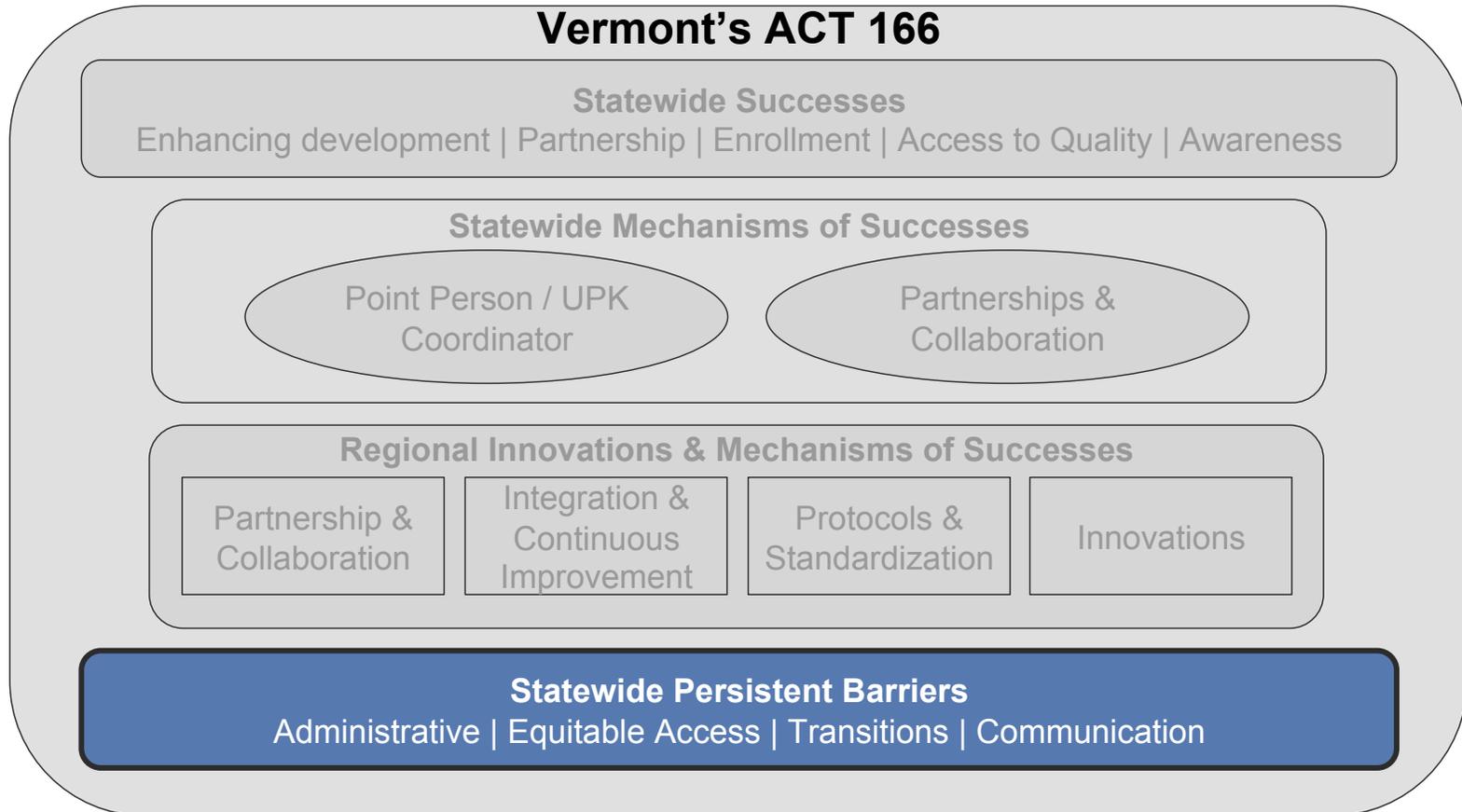
- Universal common enrollment forms
- Standardized invoices



## RESULT THEME 3: Innovations & Existing Programs/Models

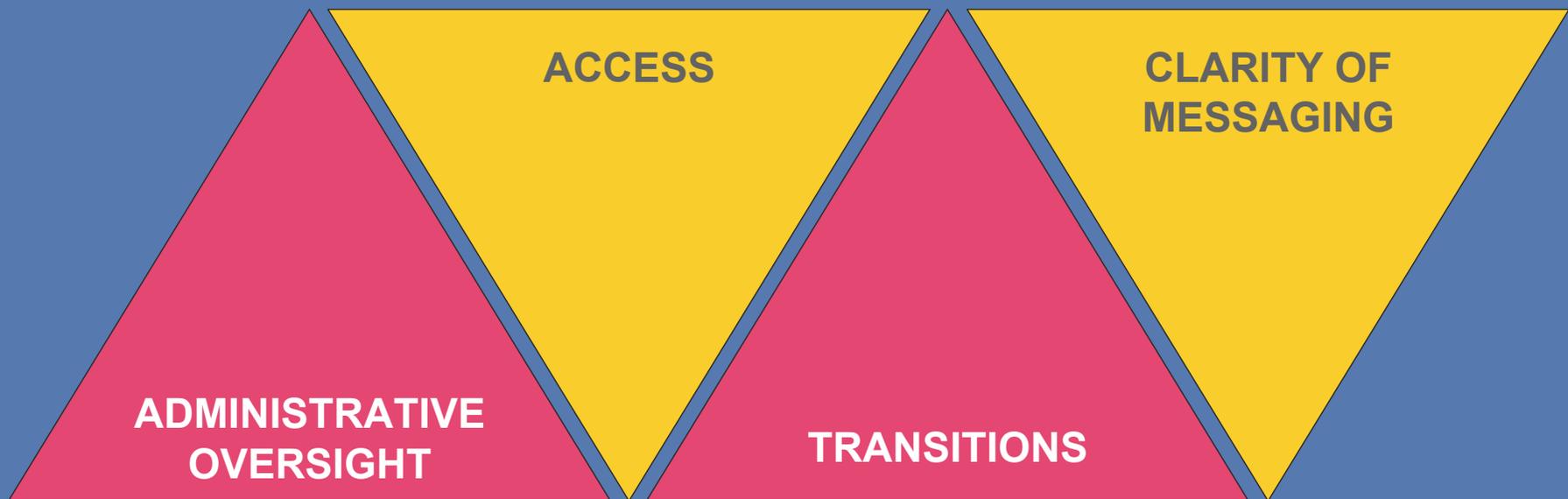
Transportation & flexible models of care	“We’ve had children take the bus in order to attend a program outside of their town which better meets their needs. For part day programs, a bus to local child care was successful. Providing before and after care also removes barriers for parents.”
Wrap-around Care	“Having private child care and public preK in the same building.”

# RESULTS OVERVIEW



## RESULT THEME 4:

### Locally perceived barriers in UPK implementation



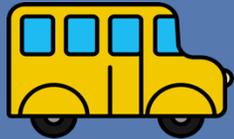
## **RESULT THEME 4:**

### **Barrier: Administrative Oversight**

1. No consensus (in the field/statewide) around agency oversight
2. Perceived lack of communication between AHS and AOE
3. Lack of standardization and systems in place
4. Variation in financial management and pay equity
5. Perceived lack of monitoring and evaluation

## RESULT THEME 4:

### Barrier: Access & Capacity



- a. Transportation - not specific to UPK. Given our rural state, transportation is a challenge we need to address.
- b. Financial barriers for families and providers
- c. Capacity
  - i. Concern from providers about maintaining their ability/ capacity to serve children
  - ii. Concern about the # of spots for kids
  - iii. Concern about the availability and quality of the EC workforce

## RESULT THEME 4:

### Barrier: Equitable Access for Children



- **Specific sub-groups of the larger population are struggling to access UPK**
  - Children with special health care needs, religious affiliations, and residing in families in poverty
- **Overall # of hours**
  - 10 hrs not enough, but no consensus on how many would meet the needs of children
- **Awareness & Messaging**

# RESULT THEME 4:

## Barrier: Transitions

Transition-related barriers include 2 types of transitions

1. Daily transitions for children across programs/ sectors
2. Transitions as the child ages
  - From child care to preK
  - From early intervention (EI) to preschool special education services
  - From preK in to Kindergarten



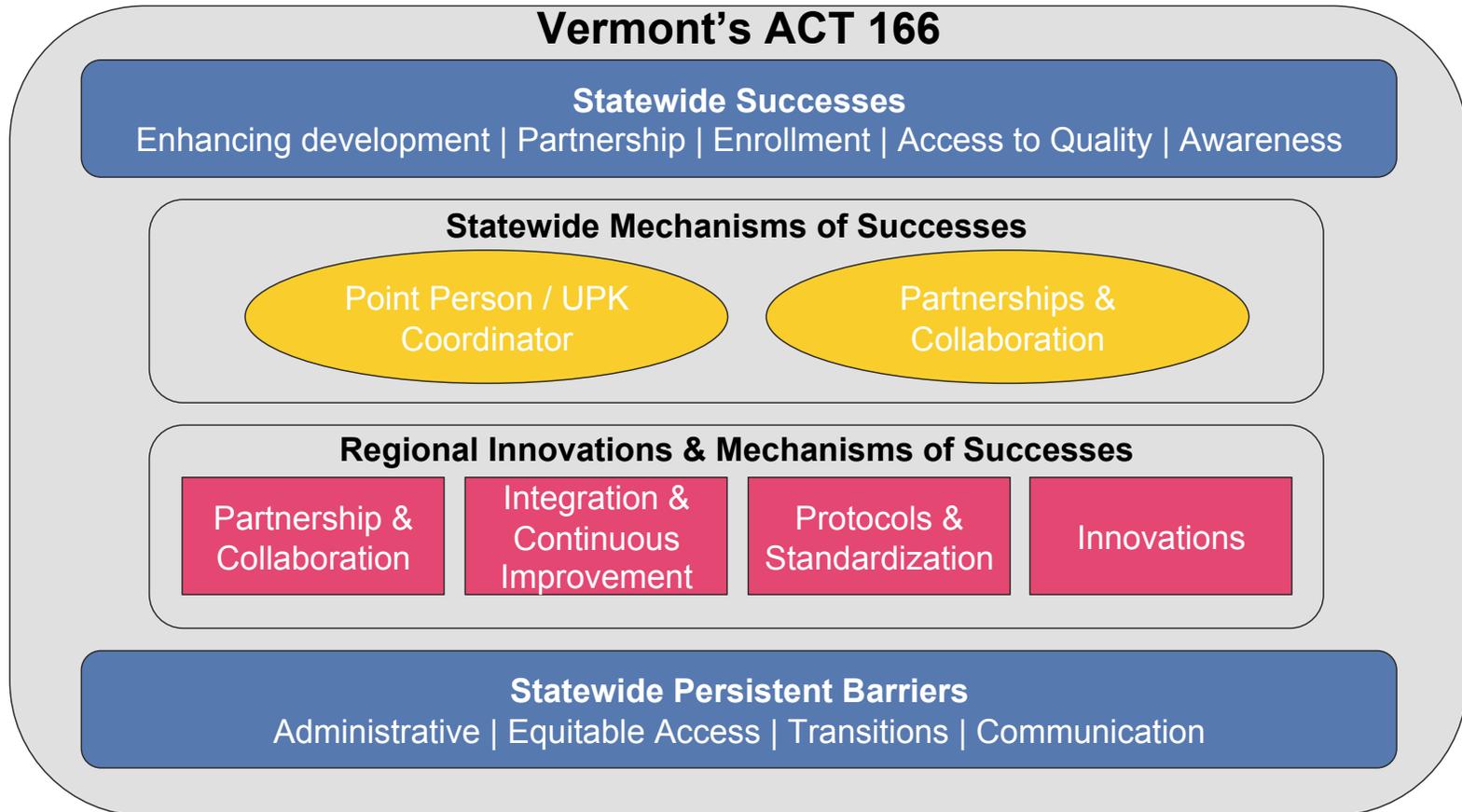
## RESULT THEME 4:

### Barrier: Clarity of Messaging



- **Lack of clear information disseminated to families and the field**
  - “More outreach to parents and information about this act. It is hard to find information when you are a new parent and unaware of Act 166!”
  - “Lack of information about the pre-K enrollment process and timeline”
  - “Challenges for families to understand how it works if your child goes to daycare outside of your town”

# RESULTS OVERVIEW



## SOME LIMITATIONS TO CONSIDER...

- There was no way to determine whether or not the individuals participated in the electronic feedback form also participated in an in-person forum.
- Rutland did not have an in-person forum.
- Identified quotes may have been from notes vs. a verbatim transcription, however, quotes from survey respondents were pulled verbatim.
- Voluntary/self-selection bias: only those who opted to participate provided feedback
- Although BBF distributed information as widely as possible to elicit feedback, the data is not representative of all individuals statewide.

# Conclusions

1. Continued investment in improving the quality of UPK (Administration & implementation)
2. Need for shared vision
3. Monitoring & Evaluation
4. Investment in collaboration
5. Clarity and consistent messaging



## Conclusions continued...



6. Standardization
7. Access for sub-populations
8. Transportation
9. Workforce development



# Current Status of UPK & BBF Next Steps



- BBF's Executive Director provided testimony on preliminary findings to a joint hearing of the House Education and House Human Services Committee
- BBF will be publishing a report with the full results of the UPK information gathering effort

# BBF's Final Message



KEEP THE CHILD AT THE  
CENTER OF ALL  
DECISION-MAKING!





DISCUSSION