



**Isabella Project
Steering Committee Meeting
August 22, 2023**

Notes

Facilitated by Christina Bath Collosi, Iris Elent, and Rebecca Strull of VIVA Social Impact Partners

Meeting Highlights:

Welcome & Introductions

Gabino welcomed the Steering Committee members to the meeting and reminded participants of the process that had been initiated for procuring a consultant to facilitate the Isabella Project into its next phase. Next, Elvia introduced VIVA Social Impact Partners, a woman-owned social impact consulting firm, as the group who had been selected through the RFP process.

Looking Ahead with VIVA Social Impact Partners

Christina Bath Collosi introduced herself and the firm, sharing more about VIVA's values that are core to the team and the work they do. Next, Christina introduced the VIVA team and welcomed Rebecca and Iris to share more about their anticipated role in the Isabella project.

Christina grounded the Steering Committee in the goal of the Isabella Project: "All children in Santa Paula have access to high-quality, full-time early care and education that meets their families needs," noting that for the first year of work with VIVA, the focus will be on 3-4 year old children in Santa Paula.

Then, Christina walked through the four phase timeline and process planned for the Isabella Project (See Appendix A attached to these notes): Phase 1: Define, Phase 2: Learn, Phase 3: Anchor, Phase 4: Implement. She shared a more in-depth overview of the current "Define" phase and what to expect through November.

Christina opened up the floor for questions and answers. The following highlights the questions, comments, and discussions that followed:

1. Does VIVA have GIS for data mapping? Does VIVA need other data sources?
2. Santa Paula is one of the top 3 communities of need in Ventura County; Which social determinants of health have the most impact on 3-4 year olds?
3. Who will partners be? Are realtors involved? How about faith based community?
4. Interest in having youth representation and more faith based representation in Steering meetings.
5. Recognition that beyond TK classes, there are Family Child Care Homes (FCCHs) and Private Centers that need to be included as vital partners in our mixed delivery system
6. Need for additional linguistic access beyond Spanish. There are Indigenous languages spoken in the area, and in particular two dominant Indigenous languages to consider for interpretation when including other parents/community members

7. Awareness of trauma in early childhood and impact on development
8. Consider role that youth can have as leaders and thought partners and how to bring them to the table
9. On the Portal there are the “hopes for ECE” that came from the “Rights of the Child” conference in Santa Paula

Following the Q&A, Iris explained that participants would have an opportunity to individually reflect on and respond to a few questions to help advance the Define phase of the work. Each participant was able to answer two of the following questions:

1. Imagine that all of your time spent on the Isabella Project Steering Committee is the very best use of your knowledge and experience. How and what would you contribute?
2. Option A: Imagine that you could have the answer to one question that would substantially advance the progress towards Isabella Project’s goal. What question would you want answered?
3. Option B: Imagine that you could remove a significant barrier to families in Santa Paula accessing high quality preschool. What barrier would you remove?

The responses to questions Option A and Option B can be consolidated and found in Appendix B, attached to these notes.

Partner Updates

Vanessa Bechtel, President & CEO, Ventura County Community Foundation

Vanessa Bechtel shared that the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF) Board had approved \$845,000 in commitments to the Isabella Project.

Funding available for projects and possibility of connecting with existing projects:

- If you want to apply for funding, reach out to Eileen Monahan (eileen@eileenmonahanconsulting.com)
- If you are interested in existing projects, connect with Rebecca Strull from VIVA (rebecca@vivasocialimpact.com)
- Reminder that if you can add value, we do not want to stand in the way of progress!

Then, Vanessa invited Petra to share about the Ventura County Early Education Taskforce. Petra introduced the partners that are part of this countywide taskforce, and invited each to share updates related to the Isabella Project. The following captures highlights from these updates:

Jack Hinojosa, CEO of Child Development Resources of Ventura County

Jack shared about how the Taskforce worked in concert to respond to changes in licensing requirements and other changes as a result of the COVID pandemic. They were able to coordinate reaching out to Community Care Licensing (CCL), Public Health, and an attorney in order to host a webinar (held in both English and Spanish) about the legal, health, and licensing implications of these licensing changes. They were also able to conduct surveys for Family Child Care Homes to understand the implications and needs as a result of the pandemic.

Alicia McFarland, Director, Ventura County Office of Education

Alicia shared about the deep relationships and connections that enabled the Taskforce to leverage F5CA dollars for the Shared Services Alliance to bring in the Economic Development Collaborative to support Family Child Care Home providers with their small businesses.

Bruce Stenslie, Chief Operating Officer, Economic Development Collaborative

Bruce shared that the Economic Development Collaborative (EDC) is a member of the Ventura County Early Childhood Education Task Force. EDC believes that economic mobility is tied to the success of children in early childhood. They offered resources to providers who are business owners to help them with managing disruptions due to the pandemic. EDC also accessed funding from VCCF to support providers with technical assistance during the TK transition, which included helping providers shift towards more infant and toddler care.

Stacy Miller, President & CEO, Stacy Miller Public Affairs

Vanessa shared about another grant approved by the Board in July focused on branding and communications of the Isabella Project. Vanessa then invited Stacy Miller of SMPA (Stacey Miller Public Affairs) to speak about their work, which included the Legacy Journal for VCCF and a Parent Ambassador Program for Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP).

Daniel Sandoval, School Board Vice President, Santa Paula Unified School District

Daniel shared that they have hired 6 outreach workers to be out in the community sharing about TK and offerings. Daniel noted that they opened 3 new TK classrooms and have also started community school planning, which has a “whole child” focus. Daniel shared that last year they had funding to provide 160 slots and still have a lot of space left. Daniel also noted that a setback that they have experienced recently was that they were hoping to have a fully inclusive special education class, but the teacher for that unfortunately resigned two weeks ago.

Dr. Gabino Aguirre, Special Projects Coordinator, Ventura County Community Foundation

Dr. Gabino invited Steering Members to participate in upcoming events in Santa Paula, in order to be more involved in the Santa Paula community. These included:

- The Labor Day parade
- A soccer tournament in November
- Quinceañeras por La Causa through El Centro Del Pueblo. On the third Friday in November going to have a quince for all the women who didn't have one when they were younger due to lack of affordability
- Santa Paula Latino Town Hall hosting a scholarship fundraiser on September 9th. Tickets available on EventBrite. Can't make it? Please consider making a donation!
- Ventura County 150th Anniversary Celebration in October

Group Photo & Lunch

The Steering Committee was asked to take a group photo and then had a chance to eat lunch that was provided. All photos can be found in [this folder](#).

Updates for the Good of the Group

Notecards that were submitted were welcomed to share updates when called.

VCOE Migrant Education Program

- Offering informational sessions - email mep@vcoe.org for more information

Women's Economic Ventures (Ashley Goldstein)

- Emprendimiento Awards Ceremony was on August 23rd at VCCF. There were 45 awardees, including 7 child care businesses and Poder Popular!

Ventura County 150 Years Celebration (James Mason)

- Celebration in Santa Paula on October 21st. All day event with music and activities.

Santa Paula Latino Town Hall (Laura Espinosa)

- Santa Paula Latino Town Hall hosting a scholarship fundraiser on September 9th. Tickets available on EventBrite. Can't make it? Please consider making a donation!

Adjourn

Gabino shared closing remarks. The Steering Meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm.



VIVA
social impact
partners

APPENDIX A

Steering Committee Meeting

Isabella Project

August 22, 2023

Meet VIVA

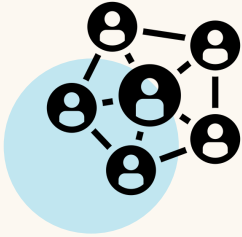


**VIVA is a
woman-owned
social impact
consulting firm.**

For more than a decade, we've been helping clients solve the complex challenges that lead to transformational changes for families and communities.



Our Values



SERVICE & COMMUNITY



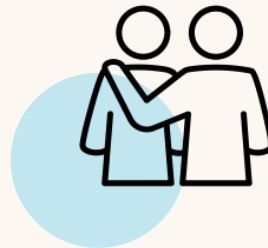
INTEGRITY



JUSTICE



PERSISTENCE



EMPATHY



RESPECT



Our Team





Christina Bath Collosi, M.Ed.

Managing Partner



Iris Elent, MSW

Director of Strategic Planning &
Community Engagement



Rebecca Strull

Senior Associate Consultant



Laura Bowen, MA

Director of Communications
& Marketing



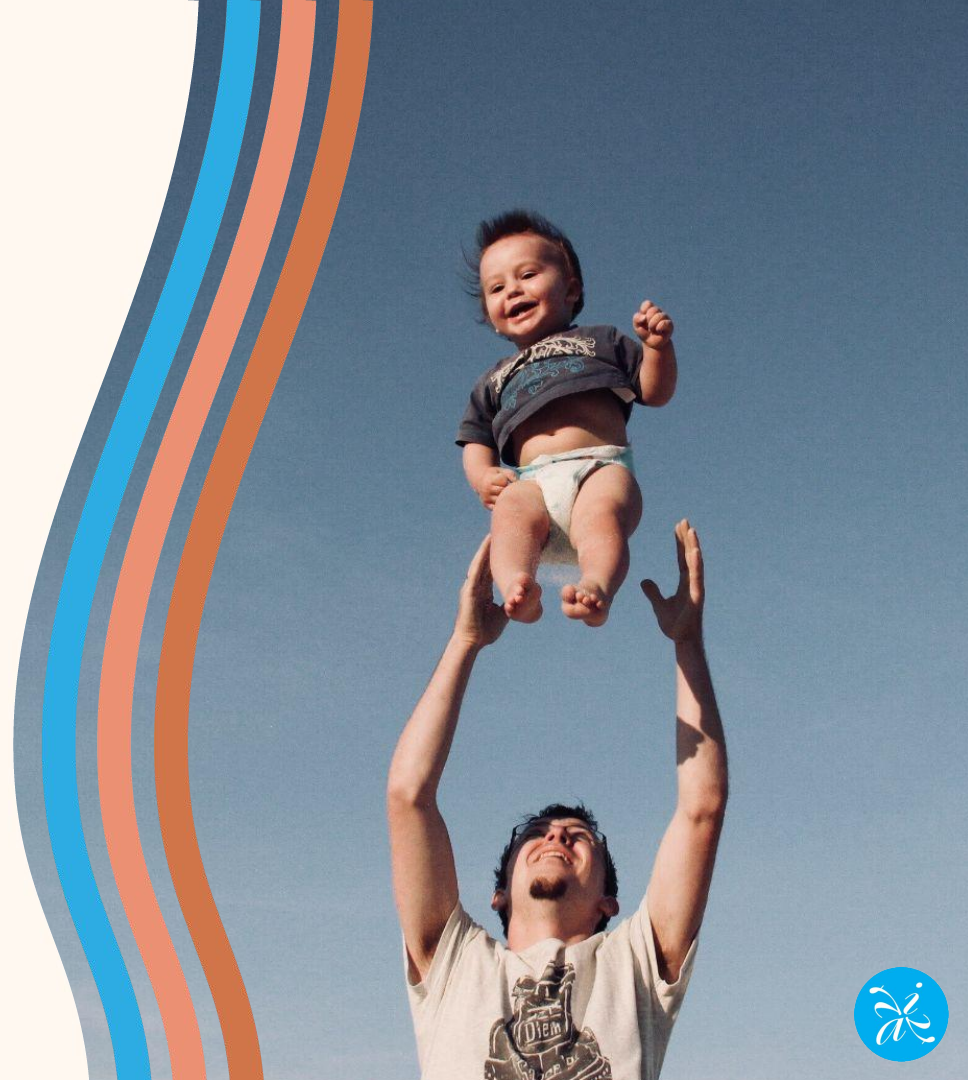
Joseline Delgadillo

Associate Consultant



Up Next ...

- Looking Ahead
- Partner Updates
- Group Photo
- Lunch



Looking Ahead



Goal of the Isabella Project

All children in Santa Paula have access to high-quality, full-time early care and education that meets their families' needs.

For the first year of work with VIVA, efforts will focus on 3-4 year old children in Santa Paula.



Timeline



Build relationships and hone how we work together, including updates to governance

Understand quality early care and education progress to date and potential opportunities

Understand the baseline data of early care and education capacity and utilization

Identify strategic learning questions to guide next phase and methods for answering

Answer strategic learning questions through qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis

Learn how various stakeholders define quality with the goal of coming to some consensus on key features

Create actionable Implementation Roadmap to achieve the Isabella Project Goal that is data-driven and inclusive of community feedback

Advance measurable progress and monitor according to Implementation Roadmap

Continue high levels of engagement with Steering Committee and community partners





Phase 1 – DEFINE

(Aug – Nov 2023)

GOALS

1. Build relationships and hone how we work together, including updates to governance
2. Understand quality early care and education progress to date and potential opportunities*
3. Understand the baseline data of early care and education capacity and utilization*
4. Identify strategic learning questions to guide next phase and methods for answering

ACTIVITIES

- VIVA review project materials and learn more about the community of Santa Paula as well as get to know some of its residents
- Key informant interviews
- Steering Committee survey
- Two Steering Committee meetings (Aug & Nov)
- Community engagement (e.g., focus groups, surveys, etc)
- Data review



Q&A



Group Activities



Activity #1

Option A - *Developing Strategic Learning Questions*

Imagine that you could have the answer to one question that would substantially advance progress towards the Isabella Project's goal. What question would you want answered?

OR

Option B - *Determining Highest Priority Barriers*

Imagine that you could remove a significant barrier to families in Santa Paula accessing high quality preschool. What barrier would you remove?

Activity #2

Steering Committee Engagement

Imagine that all of the time you spend as an Isabella Project Steering Committee Member is the very best use of your knowledge and experience.

- a) How and what would you contribute?
- b) Is there anything else you would like to share?



Activity #1

- 1) **Find** ivory-colored half sheet of paper on your table. It is double sided.
- 2) **Write** a response to one of the two question options. **Note: there is a different question on each side.**



Please write with a black sharpie!

- 3) **Post** your response on the blue wall.

Activity #2

- 1) **Find** the Activity #2 sheet in your meeting packet.
- 2) **Write** a response to the questions.
- 3) **Place** your completed sheet in the large VIVA envelope on your table.





APPENDIX B

Isabella Project Steering Committee Meeting Activity Notes

“Strategic Learning Questions & Barriers”

The following captures the written responses to group activity #1 at the August 22, 2023 Steering Committee meeting. These responses are organized by the prompt questions and have been clustered into similar themes.

Prompt 1: Imagine that you could have the answer to one question that would substantially advance progress towards the Isabella Project’s goal. **What question would you want answered?**

Community Partnerships

- *How are we working with current providers of ECE? School district T.K program? Other public programs? Head Start, State P/S, etc...*
- *How do we most efficiently and effectively coordinate all stakeholders (Head start, private and non-profit child care, TK Education, Universities, etc) to work together and collaboratively in reaching our individual and collective goals?*
- *There are many competing interests between providers. How will VIVA manage public, non-profit, private, and home-based providers?*
- *How to engage youth in being part of the solutions*

Quality

- *What guarantee can be made that true, actual, evidence-based, whole-child, culturally and linguistically sensitive, high quality care will be provided by all participating programs?*
- *I want to know about the conditions of CCE in Santa Paula: # licensed spaces in CCE, # of publicly funded spaces for 0-3, 3-5. Utilization of all these spaces. Status of workforce?*
- *How can we provide quality EC child care with play-based curricula that helps children and their social-emotional needs? And help train EC providers?*
- *How can we ensure sufficient capacity, both in terms of people that want to work in the industry and appropriate locations. Earning a living wage.*

Family Needs

- *What schedule (days/hours) do parents need for Early Education Services for their children?*
- *Parents' ability to be there for kids while balancing jobs, childcare.*
- *What do families need? What would prevent them from utilizing services?*
- *How can we support families in educating children for those who don't want to institutionalize their children?*

- *To achieve goal: All children in SP have access to high-quality, full-time early care and education that meets their families needs. What are the families' basic needs?*
- *More income for community members*
- *Language, etc.*
- *Early childhood mental and emotional health resources.*

Outreach and Data

- *24/7 Where do you go to get help or information?*
- *Access to information*
- *Lack of knowledge about the opportunity to access pre-school.*
- *How can we reach and fulfill the needs of every community in Santa Paula?*
- *Where do the families with children 0-5 live?*
- *Can we use census data to reach every family in Santa Paula with children ages 3 and 4 as well as child bearing age families to advance info sharing, enrollment, and needs assessment work for the whole family process?*
- *What data do various Steering Committee members have or may be aware of?*
- *What geographic witnesses can we identify to increase the impact of the Isabella Project? (too big to list as a barrier)*
- *The lack of information about early care options to take a child to where they can begin their education. The promotora can serve as a bridge between the information acquired and the parents that are looking for the information.*
- *That language, race, or lack of awareness isn't what limits the opportunity for each child in the city of Santa Paula*

Prompt 2: Imagine that you could remove a significant barrier to families in Santa Paula accessing high quality preschool. **What barrier would you remove?**

Income, Poverty, Cost

- *Funding*
- *Income Inequality*
- *Economic barrier*
- *Poverty is the greatest barrier. Fighting to survive is an overwhelming struggle.*
- *One barrier is that we do not all have the same opportunities in our community; to have the same rights and ability to make change for our children that are the future of our community and that they all have the same opportunities.*
- *The barrier of having to be a specific age to access the program or of a certain income level. Mid-class families sometimes earn just above the qualifying threshold but don't earn enough to be able to afford quality child education programs. This is a big barrier in our community.*
- *Having to pay for equitable and accessible HQ care (that pays their workforce a living wage) (inclusive of food, transportation, before/after care where applicable)*

Transportation

- *Transportation of little ones to high quality centers*
- *Access to transportation*

- *Transportation for many families, access to these services is hindered by their own access transport services.*
- *Cost, Transportation*
- *Transportation*
- *Access to Early Childhood Education by ensuring zero cost and transportation (or accessible location near families)*

More Options to Allow Family Choice

- *Empowering families to make informed choices instead of being told what they should do.*
- *That there be more centers for our children and there be more help and supports for our community*
- *Any barrier that would exclude the possibility for a mixed delivery system. Considering all options and opportunities for all families.*
- *I'd love for every family to know that Santa Paula is all about Early Childhood Education and where they can go/ options available*

High Quality

- *Identifying what high quality is!*
- *Lack of cultural responsive programs*
- *Opportunities for parents to convene, form healthy relationships and learn about benefits of high quality ECE programming.*

Options that Meet Families' Needs

- *Access because of time of services available - Banking hours*
- *Lack of nutrition access*
- *Access to full time child care to meet families needs due to lack of affordable, high quality child care for all children 0-5*
- *Logistics - especially those around facilities and transportation of students.*
- *Nutrition, health, family support*
- *Trauma, emotional support*

Workforce (Qualifications/Training, Recruitment, & Retention)

- *How are you going to incentivize students to go into the field of ECE?*
- *People who are not qualified to support our farmworking community*
- *Assurance that we have enough trained professional ECE teachers, with expertise in Quality Standards*
- *The big barrier I would like to see removed is the education research based practices for ECE - education families do well as education for schools not just staying with current practices*

Trust/Confidence

- *Mistrust of public institutions*
- *Trust and confidence in a new program service*
- *Fear, lack of information, economic status, culture/religion*

Awareness/Outreach for Families

- *Lack of information. Have a community that is always informed and know where to obtain information.*
- *Isolation, lack of knowledge*
- *Lack of parental knowledge of available resources or indifference to the need for those resources*
- *Communication, outreach, language,*
- *Education for families focusing on child development as well as evidence based practices utilized in all programs with education staff allowing evidence based practices*
- *How are you going to inform parents of the importance of rendering their children to an early ed program?*

Other

- *How are you planning to remove barriers to equal education for all*
- *What are the barriers preventing families from enrolling kids into ECE?*
- *No 'familismo' ¹*

¹ Familismo is a cultural value of family commitment and dedication, loyalty, cohesion, collectivism as opposed to individualism