

**Virginia PDG B-5 Strategic Plan
Required Components and Questions**

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I. Why Create a Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Care and Education in Virginia?

In Virginia there is growing awareness and sense of urgency of the importance of investing in young children and their families. Since 2014, more than fifteen statewide reports, commissions, and councils have studied the environment, capacity of state and local agencies, available data on child outcomes, and extent of collaboration and accountability at the state and local levels. Each of these reports has underscored the importance of investing in the early years and improving the life chances and experiences for young children. A 2017 report issued by Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) presented a variety of recommendations for greater coordination and improved conditions for the Commonwealth's children. Yet to date, the Commonwealth has adopted merely incremental changes in the way Virginia leads, manages, and invests its early childhood care and education.

In 2018, the Virginia School Readiness Committee, which serves as the State's Early Childhood Advisory Council, identified the need for a strategic plan to create a unifying vision and set of goals across state agencies. Supported by the federal Preschool Development Grant, Birth through Five (PDG B-5), the strategic plan builds on a history of investment that has elevated the importance of school readiness and early intervention, supported greater coordination among state departments, increased resources for young children, established a chief school readiness officer, and proposed unifying legislation.¹ The strategic plan is informed directly by an accompanying PDG B-5 needs assessment that details gaps in the system and opportunities for improvement.

This strategic plan creates a framework for engaging state and local partners in improving outcomes for young children and identifies measurable goals and strategies to achieve by 2023.

II. Who Has Been Involved in Developing Virginia's Strategic Plan?

Virginia's School Readiness Committee, established in the Code of Virginia by the 2016 state legislature and designated in 2018 by Governor Northam as Virginia's State Early Childhood Advisory Council, is charged with the first-priority goal of strengthening a statewide early childhood care and education (ECCE) workforce that prepares young children for school and healthy development.

To guide the development of the PDG B-5 strategic plan, the Virginia School Readiness Committee established a 23-member Impact Workgroup of educators in public and private ECCE programs; experts in early childhood data, policy, and finance; leaders of community service organizations and social service agencies; family advocates and families, representing the diversity of geographic and cultural communities across Virginia. Impact Workgroup members brought knowledge and expertise in early childhood programming and systems, an understanding of early childhood system assets and needs, and the energy and passion to create and advance an impactful, high quality plan.

Over the course of three in-depth meetings through the first half of 2019, the Impact Work Group members shaped the analysis, engaged diverse constituencies, and developed a draft set of strategies prior to the full School Readiness Committee retreat. They provided expertise and guidance at and in between meetings, opened doors for data, research, or planning purposes as needed, and generated the vision, principles, goals, and strategies for consideration by the School Readiness Committee.

The strategic plan is informed by (1) the findings of recent state and national reports on early childhood care and education, (2) administrative and demographic data from federal and state databases, (3) interviews with families of young children, community leaders, and other early childhood stakeholders, and (4) focus groups with child care center directors, educators, and child care providers, as collected to inform Virginia's PDG B-5 needs assessment process. With this data from the field, members of the School Readiness Committee and Impact Workgroup met for a full day retreat in June 2019 to revise, affirm, and solidify the vision, principles, goals, and strategies contained in this report.

Virginia has engaged additional state, local, and community stakeholders throughout the summer and into the fall of 2019 to further vet, refine, and affirm the goals and strategies. Specifically, the draft goals and strategies have been reviewed through several formats, including

- receipt of online feedback (via info@vecf.org) from a broad base of constituents;
- in-person stakeholder feedback session as part of the Governor's Children's Cabinet in Richmond; and
- four regional "listening sessions," as charged by Governor Ralph Northam to Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane, Commissioner of Social Services Duke Storen, and Chief School Readiness Officer Jenna Conway.

The following themes ran through these feedback channels that have informed modifications of the Strategic Plan. Stakeholders affirmed that Virginia's early childhood system should:

- preserve enrollment and stability of the diverse programs (market-based child care in homes and centers, federally-funded Head Start, and state-funded preschool) needed to ensure access to quality services for children birth to five in Virginia
- focus on families and support their role as children's first and most influential teachers
- maintain the holistic family approach to early childhood services
- prioritize developmentally-appropriate teaching practice for children's learning
- recognize and reward the significant role and responsibilities of early educators
- support local innovation to build early childhood systems that meet the needs and assets of their families and community vs. one-size-fits-all
- balance carefully the important components of access, quality, and accountability.

This updated goals and strategies will be presented to the Impact Workgroup and the full School Readiness Committee in October 2019. Next steps will include discernment of roles and responsibilities for leading strategies, confirming a timeline and potential financing strategies for implementation. Once these are complete, the PDG B-5 Strategic Plan will be submitted by the Virginia Department of Education to the federal Administration for Children and Families as

required. Lastly, Virginia will create by December 2019 a “dashboard” — an easy-to-understand, succinct overview of indicators that will be used to monitor progress on the proposed goals and strategies.

III. What Are the Vision and Principles for Virginia?

The vision of Virginia’s strategic plan for ECCE is comprehensive and is based on five guiding principles that were developed in an interactive and participatory process engaging the members of the Impact Workgroup committee and the School Readiness Committee. It is envisioned that:

All children in the Commonwealth of Virginia will thrive with the support of accessible, quality, and affordable early care and education delivered in safe and nurturing environments.

It is important to recognize that school readiness is not only about children being ready for school but that there are communities, schools, and families ready to support their readiness. Further, families will have the information and resources to access care and engage in fostering the development of their children and readiness for school. Early childhood care and education providers will continuously improve quality with effective professional development for their diverse work force. State policy makers and ECCE providers will be accountable for coordinated delivery of services, funding, and policies and, with families, improving children’s socio-emotional health, development, and readiness for school.

This vision is guided by principles to inform the development of an accessible, equitable, quality, and effective ECCE system that is created in the context of each community’s needs. These principles are original to Virginia’s stakeholders and draw upon national principles and practices, such as those by the National Academy of Sciences² and the BUILD Initiative.³ Virginia’s ECCE system will be:

1. **Equitable.** All children have access to opportunities in inclusive schools, centers, and homes that provide the care and education they need, regardless of age, income, ethnicity, race, zip code, or ability.
2. **Family Focused.** Families are engaged in guiding the policies and practices of early care and education, and programs and policy makers are accountable to families and welcome their involvement.
3. **High Quality.** Children are supported in their development and learning in safe, high quality environments by a skilled workforce receiving adequate wages and professional supports.
4. **Strategic.** Funding, policies, shared data, and standards are coordinated among programs, agencies, and schools to better invest in and serve children and their families.
5. **Innovative.** Successful local initiatives and policies are incubated, piloted, supported, and scaled through a dynamic state and local partnership, resulting in effective practices.

IV. What Are Virginia's Measurable Goals and Strategies?

The Impact Workgroup and School Readiness Committee developed goals, strategies, indicators, timeline, and potential collaborating partners; these elements are being refined with input from stakeholders. The plan for monitoring the indicators identified through creation and maintenance of a dashboard currently rests with the respective lead agencies, with the School Readiness Committee providing advisory oversight. However, the strategic plan includes a goal (Goal 4) that proposes establishing a unified body to set benchmarks and monitor and report on progress for the Commonwealth. The strategic plan goals and strategies follow.

GOAL 1. EQUITABLE ACCESS – Preserve and expand accessibility of quality public and private early childhood care and education to reach vulnerable children and better prepare Virginia's future workforce.

- 1.1 Increase access to information on available publicly-funded opportunities and seats for children age 0-5 to families and policy makers.
- 1.2 Provide financial and operational support to underserved communities to increase high quality, accessible ECCE options.
- 1.3 Adopt state financing regulations and policies that support coordination of funding and innovative financing mechanisms that cover the real costs of care and maximize use of funds for providers.
- 1.4 Preserve and increase the number and availability of affordable, flexible, quality public and private ECCE opportunities, particularly for children birth to three, that meet the diverse needs of working parents.
- 1.5 Set annual funding goals for increased investments in ECCE.

GOAL 2. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT – Increase the capacity of communities to engage and support families to foster children's healthy development, learning, and well-being.

- 2.1 Better coordinate local recruitment, enrollment, and eligibility processes to make it easier and more affordable for families in need to enroll in public ECCE programs, receive subsidies, and access support services.
- 2.2 Target resources to support parents as children's first teachers in advancing their learning, social-emotional development, and readiness for school, and understanding the value of developmentally-appropriate quality ECCE.
- 2.3 Increase the engagement of families in guiding ECCE policies and developing welcoming, culturally responsive, language sensitive, and relevant practices at the program, community, and state levels at all stages of development and implementation.
- 2.4 Support the capacity of programs that serve families and their children to connect families to comprehensive community resources.
- 2.5 Increase timely identification, enrollment, and retention of children with disabilities who would benefit from early assistance in publicly-supported programs.

GOAL 3. WORKFORCE QUALITY – Finance and develop unified, accessible career pathways and working conditions that retain and reward a talented ECCE workforce that is continuously improving.

- 3.1 Adopt and articulate statewide developmentally-appropriate indicators that measure multiple dimensions of children’s development from 0-5 in ECCE settings.
- 3.2 Implement and bring to scale a uniform, statewide classroom quality measurement and improvement system for all programs receiving public funding.
- 3.3 Maximize pathways of support that align and strengthen recruitment, competency-based educator preparation, classroom tools, and professional development opportunities to support quality improvement toward statewide quality measures.
- 3.4 Employ performance-based contracts and incentives to centers and homes that support sustainable operations, reward quality care, and ensure adequate compensation, benefits and working conditions.

GOAL 4. ACCOUNTABILITY – Align and unify responsibility for establishing standards, coordinating services, maximizing resources, and improving outcomes for children age 0-5, in partnership with local communities.

- 4.1 Unify and align oversight, eligibility, and funding for agencies administering public ECCE programs.
- 4.2 Align and streamline health, safety, and quality expectations for providers to reduce barriers and increase effectiveness of public ECCE funds.
- 4.3 Drive transparency of government programs and fully expend available dedicated funds for ECCE.
- 4.4 Assess and track longitudinal progress of Virginia’s children receiving services across agencies to better understand impact of early childhood programs and services through an integrated data system.

GOAL 5. LOCAL CAPACITY AND INNOVATION – Engage local and regional public and private stakeholders in designing, piloting, informing, and scaling a more accessible and high quality system that meets community needs.

- 5.1 Provide resources for communities to build infrastructure needed to ensure ECCE programs meet statewide quality standards and improve family access to quality ECCE.
- 5.2 Design, pilot, and scale innovative public and private partnerships at the local level to maximize state, federal, and local resources and improve impact.
- 5.3 Increase the number of families making a successful transition from home to ECCE to elementary school.
- 5.4 Support interagency governance and shared services at the local and regional levels to align with the state strategic plan to improve kindergarten readiness.

V. How Does the Strategic Plan Address the Gaps Identified in the PDG B-5 Needs Assessment?

The PDG B-5 needs assessment identified significant gaps for parents, communities, practitioners, and policy makers in Virginia’s ECCE system and Virginia’s opportunities to address

them. Each of these gaps is addressed by a goal and strategy in the strategic plan, as indicated in the table below.

Alignment of Goals and Strategies with Gaps Identified

Needs Assessment Gaps	Goals and Strategies
<p>Gaps in ECCE Resources <i>Addressed by Goal 1: Preserve and expand accessibility of quality public and private early childhood care and education to reach vulnerable children and better prepare Virginia’s future workforce.</i></p>	
<p>Infant and Toddler Care The vast majority of ECCE capacity in Virginia is for four-year old children. Only one public ECCE program (Early Head Start, which has 2,395 seats) is focused solely on infants and toddlers, and child care subsidies support infant and toddler care. Title I and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) programs allow for limited participation of two-year-olds. Similarly, private programs offer greater capacity and options to families of preschool-age children (age 3-4) than to infants and toddlers. Among private programs, just under half of those serving young children accept infants (45% of programs and up to 49% of seats), while 80% of these programs (and up to 95% of seats) accept four-year-olds.⁴</p>	<p>1.2 Provide financial and operational support to underserved communities to increase high quality, accessible ECCE options. 1.4 Preserve and increase the number and availability of affordable, flexible, quality public and private ECCE opportunities, particularly for children birth to three, that meet the diverse needs of working parents. 1.5 Set annual funding goals for increased investments in ECCE.</p>
<p>Child Care Deserts and Rural Areas “Child care deserts” are areas with inadequate child care opportunities, defined as less than one seat for every three children. A census tract-level analysis of child care in 2018 found that 47% of Virginians live in a child care desert, including 50% of Hispanic/Latino families, 61% of people in low-income neighborhoods, and 63% of rural families.⁵</p>	<p>1.2 Provide financial and operational support to underserved communities to increase high quality, accessible ECCE options. 1.3 Adopt state financing regulations and policies that support coordination of funding and innovative financing mechanisms that cover the real costs of care and maximize use of funds for providers. 1.4 Preserve and increase the number and availability of affordable, flexible, quality public and private ECCE opportunities, particularly for children birth to three, that meet the diverse needs of working parents. 2.2 Target resources to support parents as children’s first teachers in advancing their learning, social-emotional development, and readiness for school, and understanding the value of developmentally-appropriate quality ECCE. 5.1 Provide resources for communities to build infrastructure needed to ensure ECCE programs meet statewide quality standards and improve family access to quality ECCE.</p>
<p>Children with Disabilities Educators and families interviewed for Virginia’s PDG B-5 needs assessment noted that it can be difficult to find programs that are inclusive of children with disabilities, developmental delays, or behavioral issues, or that have teachers who are</p>	<p>2.5 Increase timely identification, enrollment, and retention of children with disabilities who would benefit from early assistance in publicly-supported programs.</p>

Alignment of Goals and Strategies with Gaps Identified

Needs Assessment Gaps	Goals and Strategies
<p>knowledgeable about working with young children with disabilities. Virginia’s public classrooms currently include children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) at a much lower rate than the national average—34% of children with IEPs, compared to 46% nationally.⁶</p>	<p>1.3 Adopt state financing regulations and policies that support coordination of funding and innovative financing mechanisms that cover the real costs of care and maximize use of funds for providers.</p>
<p>English Language Learners Virginia has an estimated 81,608 limited English-speaking households. Due to the relatively small number of households, estimates for the number of young children in limited English speaking households are unreliable. An estimated 17% of children age 5-17 in Virginia speak a language other than English in the home, and about 13% of all students enrolled in Virginia public schools are classified as English learners.⁷</p>	<p>2.3 Increase the engagement of families in guiding ECCE policies and developing welcoming, culturally responsive, language sensitive, and relevant practices at the program, community, and state levels at all stages of development and implementation.</p>
<p>Family Support and Engagement Of the 29 families researchers interviewed for the needs assessment, 25 reported that they make below \$50,000 a year and 26 reported using at least one form of public assistance (e.g., Medicaid, WIC, SNAP) in the past and/or currently. Families reported accessing ECCE and other public programs largely via word of mouth. They utilize both informal family and peer networks as well as formal channels, such as the Department of Social Services and community-serving nonprofit organizations, to access the services they need. All but one family heard about care or education opportunities they use or other public programs from a peer (e.g., friend or family member).</p>	<p>1.1 Increase access to information on available publicly-funded opportunities and seats for children age 0-5 to families and policy makers.</p> <p>1.4 Preserve and increase the number and availability of affordable, flexible, quality public and private ECCE opportunities, particularly for children birth to three, that meet the diverse needs of working parents.</p> <p>2.1 Better coordinate local recruitment, enrollment, and eligibility processes to make it easier and more affordable for families in need to enroll in public ECCE programs, receive subsidies, and access support services.</p> <p>2.2 Target resources to support parents as children’s first teachers in advancing their learning, social-emotional development, and readiness for school, and understanding the value of developmentally-appropriate quality ECCE.</p> <p>2.3 Increase the engagement of families in guiding ECCE policies and developing welcoming, culturally responsive, language sensitive, and relevant practices at the program, community, and state levels at all stages of development and implementation.</p> <p>2.4 Support the capacity of programs that serve families and their children to connect families to comprehensive community resources.</p> <p>2.5 Increase timely identification, enrollment, and retention of children with disabilities who would benefit from early assistance in publicly-supported programs.</p>

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Needs Assessment Gaps	Goals and Strategies
	5.1 Provide resources for communities to build infrastructure needed to ensure ECCE programs meet statewide quality standards and improve family access to quality ECCE. 5.3 Increase the number of families making a successful transition from home to elementary school.
<p>Gaps in Quality and Access Addressed by: <i>Goal 2. Increase the capacity of communities to engage and support families to foster children’s healthy development, learning, and well-being.</i> <i>Goal 3. Finance and develop unified, accessible career pathways and working conditions that retain and reward a talented ECCE workforce that is continuously improving.</i></p>	
<p>Level of Quality Virginia does not have a unified system in place to understand the quality of pre-K and early care offerings, and the various instruments used by multiple state departments are insufficient to capture all of the important dimensions of a child’s readiness for school. While there are many recommendations that seek to improve quality overall, several call for a unified standard and/or approach among the multiple entities allocating and receiving public ECCE funding.</p>	3.1 Adopt and articulate statewide developmentally-appropriate indicators that measure multiple dimensions of children’s development from 0-5 in early care and education settings. 3.2 Implement and bring to scale a uniform, statewide classroom quality measurement and improvement system for all programs receiving public funding. 3.4 Employ performance-based contracts and incentives to centers and homes that support sustainable operations, reward quality care, and ensure adequate compensation and working conditions. 5.2 Design, pilot, and scale innovative public and private partnerships at the local level to maximize state, federal, and local resources and improve impact.
<p>Teachers, Staff, and Administrators Key challenges within Virginia’s early education workforce include substandard wages, wage and training disparities between program types, barriers to accessing professional development, and limited state policies to address these challenges. Low compensation also contributes to teacher turnover in Virginia; 25% of programs (particularly private centers, programs with lower wages, and programs serving at-risk children) reported high staff turnover in 2017.⁸ According to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Virginia is stalled in three areas of early childhood workforce policies, having (1) no minimum required educational attainment or educational supports for teachers in private programs, (2) inadequate paid professional development, planning and preparation, and salaries with benefits; and (3) no</p>	1.3 Adopt state financing regulations and policies that support coordination of funding and innovative financing mechanisms that cover the real costs of care and maximize use of funds for providers. 3.3 Maximize pathways of support that align and strengthen recruitment, competency-based educator preparation, classroom tools, and professional development opportunities to support quality improvement toward statewide quality measures. 3.4 Employ performance-based contracts and incentives to centers and homes that support sustainable operations, reward

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<p>compensation standards or guidelines or public financial relief for the early childhood workforce.⁹</p>	<p>quality care, and ensure adequate compensation and working conditions. 5.1 Provide resources for communities to build infrastructure needed to ensure ECCE programs meet statewide quality standards and improve family access to quality ECCE.</p>
<p>Gaps in an Integrated ECCE System <i>Addressed by:</i> <i>Goal 4: Align and unify responsibility for establishing standards, coordinating services, maximizing resources, and improving outcomes for children age 0-5, in partnership with local communities.</i> <i>Goal 5: Engage local and regional public and private stakeholders in designing, piloting, informing, and scaling a more accessible and high quality system that meets community needs.</i></p>	
<p>Accountability and Measurement Virginia remains relatively segmented in its approach to funding and managing early childhood care and education resources. There has been no unified approach to aligning services, targeting investments, streamlining policies and requirements, or planning for the well-being of young children under five. Virginia does not have a coordinated data system or source of information for policy makers, planners, or parents to consult to understand the number of opportunities open to children, the number of children enrolled in and across systems, or the impact of these interventions over time. Without a clear portrait of how children are faring or clear accountability for children’s progress over time, agencies are most likely to be accountable only for what they are funded to do. The result is a complex system of programs that lack accountability for the intended outputs and outcomes.</p>	<p>2.3 Increase the engagement of families in guiding early childhood care and education policies and developing welcoming, culturally responsive, language sensitive, and relevant practices at the program, community, and state levels at all stages of development and implementation. 3.2 Implement and bring to scale a uniform, statewide classroom quality measurement and improvement system for all programs receiving public funding. 4.1 Unify and align oversight, eligibility, and funding for agencies administering public early care and education programs. 5.4 Support interagency governance and shared services at the local and regional levels to align with the state strategic plan to improve kindergarten readiness.</p>
<p>Coordination and Communication The Commonwealth has designated public and private entities to facilitate and support joint planning and coordination of early childhood care and education services, yet none have statutory responsibility, sufficient resources, or accountability to coordinate the system. Insufficient coordination between agencies leaves gaps for serving vulnerable children. The lack of a unified state approach has resulted in fragmentation and gaps in service that hinder support for families. Publicly-funded early childhood resources are housed within eight separate agencies, each with respective regulations and requirements. Services are designed, funded, and implemented by distinct federal, state, and local bodies. Public resources are invested in early childhood with the ultimate goal of achieving demonstrable improvements in child development. In an uncoordinated system, individual programs</p>	<p>1.1 Increase access to information on available publicly-funded opportunities and seats for children age 0-5 to families and policy makers. 1.3 Adopt state financing regulations and policies that support coordination of funding and innovative financing mechanisms that cover the real costs of care and maximize use of funds for providers. 2.1 Better coordinate local recruitment, enrollment, and eligibility processes to make it easier and more affordable for families in need to enroll in public early care and education programs, receive subsidies, and access support services.</p>

Alignment of Goals and Strategies with Gaps Identified

Needs Assessment Gaps	Goals and Strategies
<p>operate and are funded independently, without the benefits of collaborative planning, accountability for efficient and targeted services to young children and their families, or a shared understanding of the collective results.</p>	<p>4.1 Unify and align oversight, eligibility, and funding for agencies administering public ECCE programs.</p> <p>4.3 Drive transparency of government programs and fully expend available dedicated funds for ECCE.</p> <p>5.1 Provide resources for communities to build infrastructure needed to ensure ECCE programs meet statewide quality standards and improve family access to quality ECCE, leading.</p> <p>5.4 Support interagency governance and shared services at the local and regional levels to align with the state strategic plan to improve kindergarten readiness.</p>
<p>Finance Delivery of ECCE programs and supports is shaped by funding streams and their requirements. At present, ECCE funding in Virginia is (1) underfunded, (2) driven by federal priorities, (3) fragmented across programs and agencies, (4) inequitable, (5) too narrowly tailored for family needs, (6) incentivizes underutilization, and (7) does not incentivize quality. Virginia has a complex set of programs and regulations that do not work together to support child development or a strong ECCE market, and current ECCE funding is inadequate to support high-quality ECCE for all vulnerable children, particularly infants and toddlers, and lacks a cohesive early childhood system or funding structure. Funding structures present a challenge to the schools and communities working to optimize services to children while complying with varied eligibility and reporting requirements of funding streams, who must combine state, federal, and local funds to support various programs.</p>	<p>1.3 Adopt state financing regulations and policies that support coordination of funding and innovative financing mechanisms that cover the real costs of care and maximize use of funds for providers.</p> <p>1.5 Set annual funding goals for increased investments in early childhood care and education.</p> <p>3.4 Employ performance-based contracts and incentives to centers and homes that support sustainable operations, reward quality care, and ensure adequate compensation, benefits and working conditions.</p> <p>4.2 Align and streamline health, safety, and quality expectations for providers to reduce barriers and increase efficiency of public early care and education funds.</p> <p>4.3 Drive transparency of government programs and fully expend available dedicated funds for ECCE.</p> <p>5.1 Provide resources for communities to build infrastructure needed to ensure ECCE programs meet statewide quality standards and improve family access to quality ECCE.</p>
<p>Data and Outcomes In Virginia, there are data gaps that limit collaboration across programs and services, particularly for early childhood and education programs. According to stakeholders interviewed for the needs assessment, it is not presently possible to accurately and efficiently measure program outcomes over time. The Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS) is Virginia’s closest effort to tracking outcomes, but the system does not currently</p>	<p>3.1 Adopt and articulate statewide developmentally-appropriate indicators that measure multiple dimensions of children’s development from 0-5 in ECCE settings.</p> <p>3.2 Implement and bring to scale a uniform, statewide classroom quality measurement and improvement system for all programs receiving public funding.</p>

Alignment of Goals and Strategies with Gaps Identified

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<p>have information on, for example, whether child enrolled in VPI is also benefiting from the child care subsidy program. At present VLDS is not ready to support an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) that captures children served or awaiting service or tells the complete story of the impact of services on children, families, and Virginia’s workforce pipeline. To build a successful ECIDS, Virginia requires a more robust technical infrastructure and enhanced user supports with greater resources than it currently has.¹⁰</p>	<p>4.4 Assess and track longitudinal progress of Virginia’s children receiving services across agencies to better understand impact of early childhood programs and services through an integrated data system.</p>

VI. What Are the Resources to Implement the Strategic Plan?

With the formation of the strategic plan, leaders from Office of the Governor, the Commonwealth’s state agencies supporting ECCE, and the School Readiness Committee will work together and in partnership with state legislators and local community partners during the remainder of 2019 to:

- 1) Estimate the resources needed to support priority recommendations within the plan;
- 2) Assess the potential to maximize existing federal and state resources; and
- 3) Seek funding for additional support as needed to advance the strategic plan.

VII. Who Will Guide the Implementation of the Strategic Plan?

The strength of Virginia’s approach to ECCE is that it engages both the public and private sectors. For example, in advising, staffing, and supporting the School Readiness Committee, leaders at the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) have worked closely with the Virginia Departments of Health, Education, and Social Services, and the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Resources. Each entity has contributed to advancing a coordinated and improved system along with state and local partners that contribute to an innovative and effective set of services.

One of the key findings of the needs assessment is that unified state leadership is needed to advance this collection of programs, coalitions, and partnerships into an integrated ECCE system. This shift will likely require changes in governance structures, regulations, and legislation to be discussed at local, state, and legislative forums throughout the remainder of 2019. In fact, in response to the increasing urgency around early childhood, Governor Northam issued Executive Directive 4 in July 2019, creating an inter-agency leadership team to conduct listening sessions and produce recommendations on how the state can improve school readiness, including the oversight and administration of ECCE, in time for the 2020 legislative session.

In this interim period, representatives of the School Readiness Committee, including the office of the Secretary of Education, the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, and the Virginia Departments of Education and Social Services will engage stakeholders in assigning

responsibilities for collecting and monitoring strategic plan indicators which will be tracked publicly via a dashboard.

The School Readiness Committee has been engaged in the creation of the strategic plan through regular updates during the four months of research and planning, as well as a full day retreat where members identified a vision, principles, goals, and strategies. The School Readiness Committee has designed its Impact Workgroup to not only prepare for the retreat but also continue to be involved as emissaries, advisors, and supporters of the vision. The Impact Workgroup will re-convene in October 2019, and it is anticipated that School Readiness Committee members will drive the implementation of the strategic plan and monitor the dashboard of indicators to guide plan implementation.

VIII. What Are the Next Steps?

The Commonwealth of Virginia has a unique opportunity to create a system where all children and their families have access to quality, affordable early care and education delivered in safe and nurturing environments. By expanding accessibility of ECCE to vulnerable children, supporting the teachers and administrators who care for children, engaging families and providers in children's healthy development, and working in the partnership with local communities, the Commonwealth can improve children's readiness for school and better prepare Virginia's future workforce.

Members of Virginia's School Readiness Committee

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Members of Virginia's Impact Workgroup:

Rosa Atkins, *Superintendent, Charlottesville City Schools*
 Maria Isabel Ballivian, *Executive Director, ACCA Child Development Center*
 Chanel Bea, *Community Liaison, Peter Paul Development Center*
 Derek Chapman, *Interim Director, Center on Society and Health, Virginia Commonwealth University*
 KJ Cook, *Site Coordinator, Petersburg Communities in Schools*
 Andrew Daire, *Dean of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University*
 Francisco Duran, *Chief Equity Officer, Fairfax County Public Schools*
 Dale Epstein, *Senior Research Scientist, Child Trends*
 Shikee Franklin, *Director, Head Start at Hampton Roads Community Action Program and President, Virginia Head Start Association*
 Emily Griffey, *Policy Director, Voices for Virginia's Children*
 Phillip Hawkins, *Teacher, Norfolk Public Schools*
 Gail Johnson, *Vice-Chair, School Readiness Committee*
 Amy Martin, *Director, Culpeper Baptist Church Child Development Center*
 Colleen Rathgeb, *Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Early Childhood Development, U.S. Administration for Children and Families*

Shannon Rudisill, *Executive Director, Early Childhood Funders Collaborative*
Jim Schuyler, *Executive Director, Virginia Community Action Partnership*
Travis Staton, *President and CEO, United Way of Southwest Virginia*
Louise Stoney, *Consultant, Opportunities Exchange*
Cecelia Suarez, *Director, Creative Learning School, Inc.*
Gary Thomson, *Chair, School Readiness Committee*
Anne-Marie Twohie, *Director, Fairfax County Office for Children*
Rebecca Vinroot, *Director, James City County Department of Social Services*
Janelle Wilson, *Member, Virginia Board of Education and Dean, School of Professional and Continuing Studies at the University of Richmond*

¹ An earlier Virginia statewide council established by Governor McAuliffe—the 2015 Commonwealth Council for Childhood Success—called for a cost benefit analysis and full review for a potential “realignment of children’s programs and services within and across secretariats in Virginia.”

² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24984>.

³ Early Childhood System Governance: Lessons from State Experiences.” BUILD Initiative. Elliot Regenstein and Katherine Lipper. 2013. “A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood Governance System.”

⁴ Many programs registered with the Virginia Department of Social Services—particularly home based programs—do not provide a maximum or minimum age they serve. In cases where no minimum age is specified but it is clear that the provider may serve young children, the authors presume that children are accepted from birth for the purposes of estimating capacity.

⁵ Center for American Progress “Mapping America’s Child Care Deserts,” 2017. <https://childcaredeserts.org/index.html?state=VA&urbanicity=All>.

⁶ Email correspondence with Dawn Hendricks, Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator, Virginia Department of Education, April 25, 2019.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau 2017 American Community Survey estimates, Table C16007; Virginia Department of Education 2018 fall enrollment report.

⁸ Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, *The Commonwealth’s Brain Builders: Virginia Early Childhood Workforce Survey 2017*. Richmond, Virginia, 2018, 31. <https://www.vecf.org/reports-and-tools/>.

⁹ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018: Virginia*, <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2018/06/2018-Index-Virginia.pdf>.

¹⁰ Email from Aaron Schroeder, Research Associate Professor at the University of Virginia, June 13, 2019.