


Step 4: Develop Strategies

Considering your goals and resources, select one or more strategies to implement. The solutions you choose should be dynamic and flexible enough to respond to evolving goals and community trends. Strategies may be used individually or combined to support a single initiative. As your team takes action, reaches benchmarks, and evaluates the results, remember to market your success.

 **Do you need to entice more providers to join the Subsidy Program? Do you want to assist existing providers in increasing capacity or becoming licensed? Or do you need to incentivize new providers to enter the market? Tailor your solutions to meet the specific needs and context of your community.**

	STRATEGY	MAJOR CONCEPTS	MAJOR PLAYERS
1	Know the Child Care Building Basics		
2	Offer Incentives		
3	Provide Technical Assistance on Business Practices		
4	Invest in a Community Hub		
5	Improve Child Care Facilities		
6	Expand High Quality Family Child Care		
7	Expand High Quality Rural Child Care		
8	Expand and Upskill the Early Childhood Workforce		
9	Develop Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships		
10	Create Public-Private Partnerships		
11	Develop Public Agency Partnerships		
12	Launch a Recruitment Campaign		
13	Others		

Know the Child Care Building Basics

1.

IDEA Across **all communities**, these principles comprise the **foundation** of impactful early childhood care and education:

Multi-Sector Partnerships	Shared Responsibility	Creativity	Strong Infrastructure	Focus on Families & Children
Effective Communications	Advocacy	Inclusivity & Equity	Community-Specific Solutions	Flexibility
Ongoing Support	Ongoing Improvement	Measuring Outcomes		

ACT Before you go any further, ensure that **existing quality programs** are full. Identify and fill any existing vacancies before you embark on building supply—this simple fix may solve or diminish the challenge before you!

- **Seek sponsorships** to cover costs and activity fees not covered by the Subsidy Program
- Maintain a list of **child care vacancies** and make available to Subsidy Case Managers at LDSS
- Work with the regional **CCA-VA** office to share existing vacancies when inquiries are received
- Assist child care programs with demographic research and **marketing efforts**
- **Invest in existing programs** to support owners, staff, children and program quality!

LEARN Child Care Aware of America’s amazing **resource guides** walk you through each step of opening and operating a successful child care business. [Child Care Center](#) [Family Child Care](#)

CONSIDER [Afterschool Alliance](#) has tons of resources on starting up an afterschool program.

Coaching Teams = Cool Concept!

Need to enhance quality, upskill educators, and strengthen the early childhood network in your community? Utilize or create a Coaching Team of experts (quality, business operations, marketing, family engagement, inclusion) who will visit child care providers on a rotating basis, facilitate workshops and maintain focus on current educator needs.



Strategies are based on an [Information Memorandum](#) issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (2015), the [2017 VDSS Underserved Areas Workgroup Report](#), and the Building Child Care Supply Work Group (2019-2020).

Offer Incentives

2.

IDEA Provide incentives to help build the number and capacity of providers in underserved areas, or for underserved ages. Include quality supports, training scholarships, recognition bonuses, mini-grants and other start-up resources offered in partnership with local, regional and statewide stakeholders. Align incentives with regulations and requirements to “sweeten the deal” for providers—doing so will help you engage and encourage both new and existing providers.

ACT Review your list of existing and potential resources. Which local businesses or investors recognize the importance of child care supply? Are regional or state grants available to **provide bonuses** or materials for providers who participate in Child Care Subsidy or Virginia Quality?

ASK Which of your stakeholders may be connected to funding sources or volunteer networks? How will you tap into groups which need volunteer hours, and get them connected with child care programs that need support? How might you create **educator subsidies** to help child care programs in low-income areas attract and retain great providers trained in early childhood?

ASK Go corporate! Are there local businesses that will **sponsor a child care program** (they sponsor kids’ sports teams, right?), or who are interested in increasing capacity or enhancing quality? They might start by providing business consultation and become a program sponsor.

CONSIDER How about other potential sponsors for mini-grants and loan programs for providers to become licensed, increase capacity, improve quality, provide transportation? (Think real estate, legal and financial institutions.) Help businesses understand what providers are paid, and how they can invest a couple of dollars an hour to support a **living wage** for providers (via bonus structures or per-hour pay increases).

CONSIDER How can your group use financial and other incentives to strengthen the **child care industry** in your locality? Creating child care programs creates and preserves jobs. Which organizations in your area are invested in employer and employee development?

Incentivize and Sustain Quality Child Care

Quality child care is expensive for parents to pay for, and for programs to deliver! Community stakeholders need to understand the actual costs of providing quality child care. This knowledge enables maximization of limited resources and helps ensure the sustainability of high-quality programs. Look for funding to make up the difference between what working families can afford to pay for child care, and what quality programs must charge to stay afloat while paying skilled educators a living wage.

Child Care Subsidy significantly raised rates in 2018. See the table for examples of rate increases for full day, licensed care. Your locality can build on this investment!

Age	Locality	Program	2017	2020
Infant	Goochland	Center	\$42	\$56
Toddler	Portsmouth	Family CC	\$20	\$30
Preschool	Loudoun	Center	\$46	\$68
School-age	Albemarle	Family CC	\$20	\$27

Provide Technical Assistance on Business Practices

Are there areas in your locality without reliable Internet access? Help early educators overcome this barrier by scheduling group meetings at the library, LDSS or other locations where providers can use computers to access the Internet.

IDEA Child care providers need skills, knowledge, and energy to support **children’s healthy growth and development**, and to run successful, sustainable businesses. Strengthening the business practices of child care providers helps to expand supply and improve child care quality. To maximize community investments and sustain high-quality programs, early childhood professionals need training and experience in business planning, operations, marketing and budgets. This is a critical upskill area for many members of the **Early Learning Workforce**.

CLICK Check out a helpful introduction to **Child Care Finance**: [The Iron Triangle: Financial Policy in ECE Programs](#). Explore **five things** child care business owners need to pay strong attention to at [Financial Health for Child Care Businesses](#) (Occupancy, Tuition Rates, Discounts Offered, Salaries, Rent to Revenue Ratio). Learn more at [Early Education Business Resources](#).

LEARN Rules, regulations, permits and fees are all part of opening and operating a child care business. Contact the **Child Care Licensing Administrator** in your area or the regional **Child Care Aware of VA** office for an overview of the “need to know” basics and government contacts in your community.

CONSIDER Could a local agency host introductory **computer trainings** for providers focusing on needed skills? For example: how to set up email and access emails from Child Care Licensing and Subsidy, complete documents to be returned to the State, create USDA menus on-line, and access online training?

ASK Does the **Local Business Administration** or **Chamber of Commerce** offer business-related training on topics such as marketing, staff timesheets, taxes, financial planning/tracking, collecting fees? Do local banks have **customizable tools** for financial plans and budgets? Do they offer free workshops, or is there a local business leader willing to provide coaching, mentoring or classes?

ACT Strengthening Business Practices Training, developed by the **National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance**, is available in Virginia! The training is customized for both center-based and Family Child Care programs, and offers a foundation in sound fiscal management and business operations. Learn where and when workshops are open via the Training Information for Provider Success (T.I.P.S.) calendar at <http://www.childcareva.com/>.

Poor fiscal and business management is a primary reason that child care businesses fail. Business planning consultation is often available via Child Care Aware of VA, Family Child Care networks, and small business associations to help child care providers develop and sustain their business. Explore the [Shared Services Alliance](#) model of child care financial sustainability.

Visit the Templates section to try the **Child Care Budget Template!** The handy spreadsheet is designed to crunch income, expense and bottom line figures for you.

*Community Hub =
Community Center =
Great Community Value!*

Invest in a Community Hub

4.

IDEA Community or **neighborhood-based hubs** can provide services and support to children, families, and child care providers. A community hub may be a high-quality child care center, a resource and referral agency, a Local Department of Social Services, Community Action Agency, or other community-based organization with technical expertise to provide services and supports.

CONSIDER A hub can serve as a **central location** for coordinating many aspects of early care and learning initiatives, such as building child care supply; enhancing quality via coaching; training and professional development; **family engagement** activities such as financial literacy workshops; and the provision of comprehensive health and mental health services for vulnerable children.

ASK Do you have an **early childhood** community hub? How about a general community hub? Think library, church, arts center...

ACT Find ways the location can be further developed to **welcome, engage and empower** working families. How about to support or offer child care?

ACT Increase the presence and involvement of **child care professionals** within community systems and networks. Could a hub coordinate workshops, peer-to-peer mentoring, shared services and/or other activities to support a range of child care programs?

CONSIDER Another “hub” model is the [Shared Services Alliance](#) piloted by VECF in Richmond, Virginia. In this membership organization early care and learning providers share the costs of services like accounting and procurement.



The **Corporation for National and Community Service**, [CNCS](#), leads national service initiatives that help your organization implement projects or ideas that require special funding or assistance. Through programs and grants, CNCS provides human capital—people power—to help you address emerging needs in your community.

Improve Child Care Facilities

5.

IDEA Physical environment plays a crucial role in the quality, and often in the capacity, of a child care setting. The environment must be appropriate for the ages of children on-site. Funding for facilities improvements may be out of reach of child care providers who frequently operate with a **low profit margin**.

CONSIDER Child care providers may need resources to expand or improve their facilities to meet **higher standards**. Funds may be expended for minor maintenance, renovation or repairs necessary to comply with VDSS health and safety standards.

Virginia's Small Business Financing Authority's [Child Care Financing Program](#) offers low or no interest loans to child care programs interested in expansion and program improvement.

ASK Are organizations and entities available to assist in the effort—either on a **one time or ongoing basis**? For example: Eagle Scouts, community service labor, local hardware and building supply companies, AmeriCorps, high school community service groups.

ACT Community groups may be willing to perform repair services such as installing or fixing fences, maintaining playgrounds, painting and other jobs. Looking at your list of resources and stakeholders, what are some **potential matches** between child care provider needs and available supports? What community groups or businesses may be interested in pitching in to keep kids safe, having fun and learning? Look for opportunities to help groups or funders achieve their own mission, vision, and goals.

CONSIDER using a variety of **creative funding sources**, or partnering with other entities or individuals to provide materials or financial assistance. Start-up or equipment grants could be important tools for helping providers increase capacity and meet higher quality standards.

CLICK The [Infant and Toddler Specialist Network](#) operates a **Technical Assistance program** to support infant and toddler care program expansion or creation, including equipment, furnishings, toys and on-site coaching for Family Child Care Homes or Child Care Centers serving infants and toddlers. [Child Care Aware of VA](#) offers technical assistance for all types of programs and all ages!

Expand High Quality Family Child Care

IDEA Family Child Care (FCC) is an important part of the child care system, and an excellent way to increase child care supply. Parents may prefer Family Child Care (a Family Child Care program is also called a Family Day Home) for infants and toddlers, and it is often a valuable child care option for children whose parents work **non-standard schedules**.

CONSIDER Support for FCC providers is particularly important in **rural areas** as providers may be isolated and have limited access to information, training, and resources. Keep in mind that family child care providers have **unique needs**, and for supports to be high-value they need to be tailored to FCC-specific questions and concerns.

ACT Knowing the community is a **great advantage** when recruiting new FCC providers: Is a local teacher retiring? Is there a neighborhood “babysitter” who would like to launch a more structured program? How about a grandparent caring for grandkids who may be interested in caring for a few additional children after school?

LEARN The [Family Child Care Toolkit](#) is an excellent resource, covering everything from getting started, to policies and procedures, health and safety, child development and resources.

CLICK [National Association for Family Child Care](#)
[Virginia Alliance of Family Child Care Associations](#)

ACT Work with FCC providers to ensure they are aware of **technical assistance** and other resources to help them meet licensing and higher quality standards.

CONSIDER Challenges to expanding FCC, such as local or community ordinances or **restrictions, regulations and fees**. Know the contacts (Fire Marshall, Building Inspector) to ask for guidance, and work with providers and local government partners to find solutions.

LEARN

[Developing a Staffed Family Child Care Network: A Technical Assistance Manual](#)
[Staffed Family Child Care Networks: A Research-Informed Strategy for Supporting High-Quality Family Child Care:](#)

6.

Expand High Quality Rural Child Care

IDEA Expanding the supply of child care in rural areas can be especially challenging. Often there are few child care facilities and families may need to travel long distances between home, work, and child care. Building the supply of **Family Child Care (FCC)** is particularly important in many rural areas where there are few child care centers.

ASK If your community is in a rural area, what are the **local and regional resources** you can tap to provide support for child care providers?

ACT Work with existing providers to build **child care networks** and **resource-based initiatives** to help home-based providers meet licensing and quality standards. Research and reach out to small, unregulated family child care programs to ask if they might be interested in coaching and expansion. Building relationships and trust over time are critical to success and sustainability.

ASK Where are schools located, and is there the possibility of collaborating with them to provide child care? Partnerships with **Early Head Start** and **Head Start** may be an important strategy in rural areas.

CONSIDER Have you mapped the locations of **existing child care programs** to see where the deserts are? Where do parents travel to and from for work or education? What are some creative solutions to transportation issues? Think shuttles, re-purposed buses, taxis, Uber, additional bus stops.

LEARN Recognize the groups below from page 19? They are all **excellent resources** for rural child care programs. Ask if a regional representative from one of the groups will act as a liaison to organize a network of home-based providers and connect them with the valuable support, assistance, training and coaching that is already available. Discover the contacts in your area, and get connected!

- **Child Care Aware of Virginia**
- **Smart Beginnings**
- **The Infant and Toddler Specialist Network**
- **Virginia Quality Program**
- **Child Care Licensing**

If this is your #1 Child Care Challenge, be sure to **cross-reference this strategy** with the others in the Toolkit.

Pick and choose the ideas most suited to the local community and culture, and the strengths of your team.

Expand and Upskill the Early Childhood Workforce

Child Care Providers =
Early Childhood Educators =
Brain Builders =
Community Heroes!

8.

IDEA Highly qualified providers are critical to **child health, safety and development**. Ongoing professional development enhances the qualifications and passion of child care providers, in addition to offering networking opportunities, business/operational supports and retaining providers in the field.

ASK How can your team help create a **strong pipeline** of qualified individuals in the field of early care and education for your community?

LEARN Visit the [ChildCareVA micro-site](#) and click on **Providers**, then **Training and Professional Development** to learn about child care provider trainings, endorsements and career pathways. Check out the **T.I.P.S. Calendar** and the **IMPACT Registry**—free tools for finding and tracking training.

CLICK The [Virginia Child Care Provider Scholarship Program](#) helps current and future child care providers attend undergraduate credit courses at Virginia's accredited colleges to build their knowledge regarding child care and development.

LEARN The [Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (VAAEYC) offers scholarships to assist providers working with young children to obtain their Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential. [Project Pathfinders](#) works to increase the skills of early childhood professionals via community college coursework and credentials.

CONSIDER Community college and CDA programs are a reliable source of educated, motivated child care professionals. Could you partner to employ students to provide **non-traditional hours** of care in existing programs? Or to provide extra staffing for Family Child Care Homes to enable them to serve additional children during the overlap period between **first and second shifts**, or to provide care for military families on reserve weekends?

Join In! Membership in professional groups and attendance at conferences and early childhood meetings enables providers to get and stay connected while learning about new ideas and opportunities.

- [Virginia Child Care Association](#)
- [Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children](#)
- [National Association for Family Child Care](#)
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

Preschool Teacher and Child Care Development Specialist are apprenticeable occupations. Visit the [Virginia Department of Labor and Industry](#).

Develop Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships



IDEA Early Head Start and child care programs can join forces to promote high-quality child care and access to **comprehensive services** in licensed settings.

As of May 2020, Virginia has eight active **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grantees**, for example, Scott County Public Schools, Culpeper Human Services, and Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley. This innovative approach to building the supply of infant and toddler care helps meet the needs of economically-disadvantaged working families and offers high-quality comprehensive early care.

LEARN The **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP)** initiative brings together the best of Early Head Start and child care through layering of funding to provide comprehensive and continuous services to eligible infants, toddlers, and their families. EHS-CCP enhances developmental services and supports for infants and toddlers, and their families, by providing strong relationship-based experiences and preparing them for the transition into Head Start and preschool.

CLICK [Fairfax County's EHS/HS Partnership](#) to explore their current model. Check out the EHS-CCP brochure at [EHS-CCP Brochure](#).

ACT If your community has an EHS/HS program, is there a representative on your core team? Is someone from your group interested in joining the **Head Start Policy Council**? Reach out to the Head Start Director, or the Family Engagement Specialist to learn more. The Program may already be thinking about the possibility of co-locating a **full-time child care program on-site**, or using their classrooms to offer before and after Head Start care.

CONSIDER Working together on issues such as **transportation**, classroom needs and program expansion.

ACT Head Start Wrap-Around Child Care Subsidy is available to eligible families who participate in Head Start. Contact your Local Department of Social Services to learn how these funds may enable your community to provide child care services to additional children.

Early Head Start serves pregnant women and families with children under age 3. Head Start serves children ages 3-5. These programs encourage parent involvement through visits to the child's home, opportunities for parents to volunteer in the program, and special activities.

Create Public-Private Partnerships

IDEA To succeed in growing and improving the child care landscape in your community, a **cross-sector** group of public and private stakeholders working together is helpful. The availability of quality child care and early childhood education is not only everyone's responsibility, it's an excellent investment with great returns, positive child outcomes, and community and business benefits!

ACT Recruit a variety of businesses, industry leaders, investors and donors who can approach other business and industry leaders. When businesses understand the **positive impacts** of adequate child care supply, as well as the risks involved with low child care supply, they are more likely to support child care expansion, improvement, retention and incentive efforts.

CONSIDER Public-private partnerships create opportunities to explore **new funding sources** and offer flexibility in addressing community needs. For example, is there a large local business struggling to retain employees due to lack of reliable child care? Are they interested in starting a program on-site, or at a convenient location nearby, where employees and other families can access child care?

Understanding **local business needs** is a critical piece in addressing low child care supply. If parents are unable to work due to lack of child care, local businesses, the economy, and the entire community may suffer. Help businesses recognize the importance of early childhood education:

Quality child care is early childhood education, which is the beginning of the **workforce pipeline**.

Quality child care and strong early childhood education are widely regarded as an **economic imperative** for businesses and communities to thrive.

For business to succeed, the community must retain members and **attract new families**. Without an adequate supply of quality child care, young families are much less likely to move into the area.

ACT Brainstorm with your team, including **parents and child care providers**, to create a list of opportunities for businesses to support child care supply and quality. Will a coalition of local businesses sponsor the expansion of a center, or the start-up of a new Family Child Care program?

LEARN Cross-sector coordination helps you make a **collective impact**—see how Hampton Roads accomplishes this at [Minus 9 to 5](#).

The **Virginia Early Childhood Foundation** funds local pilots to field-test solutions to barriers preventing eligible children from participating in the **Virginia Preschool Initiative** program, with a focus on public-private partnerships and increased collaboration between business, education, and community leaders. Learn more at [Mixed-Delivery Preschool Fund and Grant Program](#).

Develop Public Agency Partnerships



IDEA Whether your community is **rural, suburban, or urban**, relationships with local government officials, departments and programs are imperative for building support and infrastructure, expanding reach, and reducing costs. Develop and share your message reflecting the community's child care priorities.

ASK **Local government organizations** may partner or share services with other state, regional or local public agencies. Have you approached public partners to discuss ways to work together? Look for ways to **build solidarity**, political will, and public will across all aspects of the community.

CONSIDER Public agencies, libraries, schools, art centers and other organizations may be interested in **collaborating to build** child care capacity for certain ages, or all ages. Investing in public programs such as Parks & Rec afterschool care, or a child care program at the **County Government Center** may help stretch funding, while creating sustainable, visible progress.

ACT Housing, transportation, and public safety agencies are invested in the presence of **young working families**. Go to [Step 2: Identify Resources](#), and review the ideas and information you have generated. Which potential partners are you familiar with? Are there projects underway that align with your work to build child care supply and quality?

ACT Which groups seem like the best fit for your project goals, and how might you support them in return? Do you need to create or **re-energize relationships** between and among partners to maximize impact?

LEARN The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) offers [Planning Grants](#) through the Community Development Block Grant program to increase potential for project success and impact.

Who are your local elected officials?

To understand public agency relationships and opportunities, get familiar with the government structure in your locality. Attend meetings, network, and figure out ways to **integrate the work** of building child care supply and quality into **local priorities and plans**. Does this come naturally to someone on your team, or can you recruit team members or stakeholders directly from the local government? Tailor your message to meet the interests of each official or group, such as the City Manager, City Council, or Board of Supervisors.

Launch a Recruitment Campaign

IDEA What is your locality’s greatest child care need? Focusing on a **high-priority gap** in care revealed by data analysis or anecdotal trends enables your team to target specific audiences, age groups, types of providers or potential partner groups.

ASK

- Do you need to identify providers adept at serving children who have special needs?
- Does the community need providers who can offer care over a variety of shifts, including evenings and weekends?
- Is there a continuum of care for children during school breaks such as summer months?
- Do you need to build quality care in economically-disadvantaged areas?
- Or would you like to support existing high-quality programs to expand to serve children participating in Child Care Subsidy?
- Do you want to educate parents or partners about the benefits of quality child care, how to recognize it, and how to pay for it?

ACT Customize the recruitment or awareness campaign to address the **targeted audience** (religious-exempt child care programs, corporate sponsors, parents/grandparents). Put yourself in their shoes and ask, “What’s in it for me?,” then answer that question in your recruitment message. Ask, listen and learn—being open and available promotes relationship-building and recruitment efforts. Include a **Call to Action** so the audience understands what you are asking and next steps. Stay in touch to retain new recruits.

ACT Use the ideas in [Step 3: Generate Awareness](#). Craft your message according to the audience, “the ask,” and your project goals.

CONSIDER The [Choosing Quality Child Care brochure](#) and Virginia Quality printables are available online. Posters for the Child Care Subsidy Program and Child Care Provider recruitment are available to help you promote building child care supply and quality in your community.

LEARN Project templates are available for your modification and use. See the [Templates](#) section for a list of customizable materials.

CONSIDER Successful recruitment and awareness campaigns are **multi-dimensional**. Braid marketing methods such as mailing, social media, presentations, on-site visits (once invited) and word-of-mouth. Prepare for the next steps—when programs or individuals respond to your efforts, you’ll need to be ready to engage, answer questions, and roll out the *Welcome* mat!

12.