

California Jobs First

Orange County Child Care Strategy Activation Plan

June 2025

Table of Contents

OC Activation Plan: Strategy Overview	2
Target Sector Strategy - Brief Overview and Sector Strategies	2
Operating Structure to Organize and Execute	4
Staffing and Operations	4
Engagement with California Jobs First	7
Resourcing Across the Strategy	8
Goals and Metrics Across the Strategy	9
Dependencies and Challenges	11
Activation Plan: Tactical Workplan	12
Appendix A – Child Care Industry Data	39
Appendix B - Industry Overview	40

OC Activation Plan: Strategy Overview

Topic	Sub-topic
Target Sector Strategy - Brief Overview and Sector Strategies	<p>Sector: Child Care</p> <p>The Jobs First Activation Plan for Orange County recognizes the child care sector as a critical component of the regional economy, directly supporting workforce participation and economic mobility. A strong and accessible child care system is essential for maintaining a stable labor market, allowing parents—particularly women—to remain in or re-enter the workforce while ensuring young children receive quality early learning experiences.</p> <p>In 2020, First 5 Orange County conducted a landscape analysis that found a lack of access to child care in the county, specifically for infants and toddlers. Available licensed slots allow for only 1 in 21 infants and toddlers to access care in the county. This prevents parents and caregivers from returning to work, resulting in an economic impact of 67,000 jobs lost annually due to a disruption in child care which accounts for \$4.3 billion annual productivity and wage lost and \$372 million in lost tax revenue.</p> <p>The sector strategy for child care focuses on expanding workforce development pipelines, increasing access to training and certification pathways, and strengthening employer engagement. Key components include:</p> <p>Strategy 1: Workforce Expansion & Training: Investing in apprenticeship models, career pathways, and professional development programs to recruit and retain a skilled child care workforce.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Near-term tactics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify apprentice models and align them with California Child Care licensing requirements ○ Create pathways for entering the child development industry, including transferable skills and professional growth opportunities ○ Partner with agencies that support workforce development not currently leveraged by the Early Childhood industry ○ Analyze current & potential funding opportunities for workforce development and retention. Work with potential funding opportunities for support in backfilling the more entry level positions to provide pathways that can be entered both at the entry level as well as towards the leadership levels ○ Offer targeted recruitment campaigns to attract new providers, especially in underserved areas.

Strategy 2: Business Sustainability: Supporting child care providers in building long-term financial stability through business development training, shared services models, and access to public and private funding opportunities.

- **Near-term tactics:**

- Continue business incubators to recruit and support individuals and organizations interested in opening a child care businesses
- Offer business supports to providers currently in business who are at risk of closing their business
- Establish shared services models to reduce operational costs by pooling resources for administration, HR, and purchasing.
- Provide technical assistance to help providers access subsidies, grants, and low-interest loans for facility improvements and program growth.

Strategy 3: Employer & Community Partnerships: Encouraging employer-supported child care solutions, expanding partnerships with school districts and community-based organizations, and promoting shared services models to increase efficiency and affordability.

- **Near-term tactics:**

- Engage local employers in child care benefit solutions, such as on-site child care, stipends, or backup care partnerships. Engage with businesses already offering these opportunities and learn best practices.
- Expand partnerships with school districts, faith-based organizations, and other community programs, including in-home child care, (including: family, friend, and neighbor providers and contracted nannies) to increase available child care spaces.
- Host child care roundtables with businesses and policymakers to identify collaborative solutions to workforce shortages.

Strategy 4: Infrastructure & Accessibility: Addressing child care deserts by supporting facility expansion, licensing assistance, and streamlined regulatory processes to open and sustain child care programs.

- **Near-term tactics:**

- Work with cities to streamlined licensing and zoning processes to expedite the opening of new child care facilities.
- Invest in facility grants and startup funding to increase the number of licensed providers in high-need areas.
- Create a real-time child care availability dashboard to help families find open slots in local programs.

A Note on Disinvested Communities and Resident Culture, Race and Ethnicity

As Orange County advances a child care system that supports working families and strengthens the local economy, it is imperative that we center the experiences and needs of communities that have been historically disinvested—particularly communities of color, immigrants, and families in low-income neighborhoods. This includes recognizing and addressing the barriers faced by American Indian/Alaska Native residents, Black and Latino families, and others who have long experienced exclusion from equitable access to high-quality, affordable child care and early education.

Disinvestment in these communities has led to a lack of child care options, outdated or insufficient infrastructure, and systemic workforce shortages in the very neighborhoods where care is most needed. The Activation Plan will intentionally focus on creating community-informed, culturally relevant strategies that reflect the unique needs, values, and lived experiences of families across Orange County. This includes prioritizing resources and supports for providers from underrepresented backgrounds and ensuring parent voice and provider voice are integrated throughout planning and implementation.

Through partnerships with trusted community organizations, and by investing in language-accessible, culturally responsive outreach and technical assistance, we aim to increase the participation and leadership of disinvested communities in shaping a more equitable child care system. Metrics will track progress not only in job creation and provider sustainability, but also in how well we serve families who have been most impacted by systemic inequities.

This intentional approach to equity moves us beyond one-size-fits-all solutions—toward a system that reflects the full cultural and racial diversity of Orange County and creates lasting, meaningful opportunity for all.

Operating Structure to Organize and Execute

To effectively implement the Child Care Sector Strategy within the Jobs First Activation Plan for Orange County, a structured operating framework will be established to coordinate efforts across multiple stakeholders, ensure accountability, and drive measurable outcomes.

The Sector Investment Coordinator (SIC) will work closely with stakeholders listed below to ensure strategies are implemented effectively and resources are allocated efficiently, while also leveraging connections to state-level initiatives like California Jobs First.

Staffing and Operations

1. Leadership & Governance

A Child Care Sector Task Force will oversee the execution of the activation plan, consisting of representatives from:

- Workforce Development Boards (Orange County, local WIBs)
- Early Childhood Education (ECE) Experts (First 5 OC, child care resource & referral agencies)
- Community Colleges & Training Providers (ECE certificate and degree programs)
- Economic & Business Development Organizations (Chambers of Commerce, OC Business Council)
- Employers & Industry Leaders (Representatives from healthcare, education, and corporate sectors)
- Culturally competent/responsive incubators/accelerators/trainers (CIELO, Cooperacion SA)
- Representation of childcare providers (with supporting stipends and services to remove barriers to participation- childcare, interpretations, meals if applicable).

This team will meet quarterly to review progress, assess challenges, and adjust strategies as needed.

2. Implementation Partners

To ensure targeted execution, agencies in four specialized areas will drive each sector strategy area:

- **Workforce Expansion & Training**
 - Lead agencies: Local colleges, apprenticeship program coordinators, workforce boards, department of education
 - Key Actions: Expand apprenticeship programs, align ECE certification pathways, conduct recruitment outreach. Partner with trusted community serving organizations like Latino Health Access, Cambodian Families, Community Hub de Santa Ana.
- **Business Sustainability**
 - Lead agencies: Small business development centers, child care associations, department of education (ie. CIELO, Cooperacion Santa Ana, and the Public Law Center)
 - Key Actions: Develop business training workshops, implement shared services models, provide technical assistance for funding
- **Employer & Community Partnerships**
 - Lead agencies: Employer coalitions, chambers of commerce, child care advocacy groups
 - Key Actions: Engage employers in child care solutions, facilitate community partnerships, host roundtable discussions
- **Infrastructure & Accessibility**
 - Lead agencies: City planning departments, licensing agencies, community development organizations
 - Key Actions: Streamline licensing processes, advocate for facility grants, develop real-time child care availability tools

3. Data Tracking & Performance Metrics

A Data & Evaluation Team will monitor key indicators to measure success, including:

- Workforce Development: Number of new child care apprentices, community colleges & universities, ECE graduates, and licensed providers, and license-exempt providers in business
- Business Sustainability: Number of providers completing business training, financial aid accessed, and administrative support services participation
- Employer Engagement: Number of employer-supported child care initiatives launched
- Infrastructure Growth: Number of new child care slots created, licensing approvals, and facility investments, funding secured.

Quarterly reports will be generated to inform stakeholders and refine strategies as needed.

4. Communication & Stakeholder Engagement

A Communications Strategy will ensure continuous engagement with:

- Providers (via resource fairs, webinars, and direct outreach)
- Employers (through business roundtables and targeted briefings)
- Policy Leaders (via advocacy updates and reports)

Regular updates will be shared through newsletters, press releases, and social media campaigns to maintain transparency and momentum.

Many of these organizations already have a long track record of success helping to drive employment and business growth, workforce development, deep industry knowledge, educational attainment, public engagement, and a number of other programs and strategies aimed at improving the quality of life for all residents in Orange County.

Suggested partners and their roles are below. This list is not comprehensive and is meant as a guide for the types of organizations that will be necessary for successful implementation.

● Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations:

- **Orange County Business Council (OCBC):** Advocate for business interests, promote workforce alignment, and support regional economic development.
- **Orange Workforce Alliance (OWA):** Lead workforce programs, including pre-employment training, apprenticeships, and job placements.
- **City Economic Development Offices** (e.g., City of Placentia, City of La Habra, City of Westminster): For local business incentives, permit streamlining, and site selection support.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA): Provides resources and advocacy for small businesses statewide. ○ League of Cities: Engage city leadership ○ First 5 OC: Convene partners to identify child care deserts, leverage data, and maintain system infrastructure in the child care industry. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ OC Pathways via Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) and Regional Occupational Programs (ROPs): Provide career technical education (CTE) and pre-employment training for high school students. ○ Quality Start OC via OCDE: Provide training and technical assistance to providers focusing on increasing quality of care and education ○ Colleges & Universities: Develop and deliver certifications, stackable credentials, and child care training programs. (CSUF, Chapman, Concordia, IVC, North OC Community College District, UMASS Global, UCI) ⊘ K-12 School Districts: Support engagement of community based programs and employer partner for workforce efforts. ○ Workforce Centered Non-Profits (e.g Hope Builders): Advance equitable workforce pathways, provide wrap-around support services, and connect disinvested communities to semiconductor career opportunities. ● Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) & Women’s Business Center (WBC): Provide technical assistance, mentorship, and resources for small businesses in the child care sector. ○ Community for Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Leadership, and Opportunity (CIELO): Provide incubator program for family, friend, and neighbor providers and community members interested in opening a child care program. ○ Cooperacion Santa Ana: Incubates Careshare OC, a worker-owned childcare business and platform for childcare providers ○ Local and Ethnic Chambers of Commerce: Support business owner engagement. (OC Hispanic Chamber, OC Black Chamber) ○ Orange County Association for the Education of Young Children (OCAEYC): Promote the region’s plan with child care programs and connect program operators to resources
--	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orange County Child Care Association (OCCCA): Promote the plan amongst in-home family child care providers and connect providers to resources ● Labor Unions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child Care Providers United: Brings together thousands of family child care providers throughout California to improve their profession and ensure every child has access to quality early learning and care. ● Community Based Organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community Based Organizations (e.g. The Cambodian Family, Latino Health Access, Family Assistance Ministries, Kennedy Commission). Trusted messengers with disinvested communities to actively recruit these communities to put them on a pathway to be eligible for careers in this sector.
Resourcing Across the Strategy	<p>Successfully executing the Child Care Sector Strategy within Orange County’s Jobs First Activation Plan requires a multi-faceted investment in workforce development, business sustainability, employer engagement, and infrastructure expansion. To ensure long-term impact, the following key resources are essential across all strategy areas:</p> <p>1. Workforce Expansion & Training</p> <p>To recruit, train, and retain a highly skilled child care workforce, we need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for Apprenticeships & Training Programs: Grants and subsidies to support participants in child care apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and credentialing programs. • Recruitment & Retention Incentives: Stipends, wage supplements, and loan forgiveness programs to attract and retain qualified early educators. • Mentorship & Professional Development: Ongoing technical assistance, coaching, and peer support networks to strengthen the child care workforce. <p>2. Business Sustainability</p> <p>To ensure long-term financial stability for child care providers, we need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Training & Technical Assistance: Programs to equip providers with financial management, budgeting, and operational skills. • Shared Services & Administrative Support: Resources to create shared service models that help providers reduce costs by pooling back-office functions such as payroll, HR, and purchasing.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Capital: Low-interest loans, startup grants, and emergency relief funds to help child care businesses stay open and expand operations. • Financial Incentives & Rate Reimbursements: Increased child care subsidy reimbursement rates to align with the true cost of quality care and ensure provider sustainability. <p>3. Employer & Community Partnerships</p> <p>To expand child care access through employer-supported initiatives, we need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer Engagement & Incentives: Financial incentives, tax credits, and technical assistance to encourage businesses to invest in child care solutions (e.g., on-site child care, stipends, backup care). • Corporate & Philanthropic Funding: Partnerships with private-sector leaders and philanthropic organizations to supplement public funding for workforce initiatives and infrastructure development. • Community-Based Collaboration: Resources to strengthen partnerships between child care providers, school districts, community organizations, and local government agencies to maximize service delivery. <p>4. Infrastructure & Accessibility</p> <p>To increase child care availability and address facility constraints, we need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for Facility Expansion & Renovation: Grants and capital investments to support the construction, renovation, and licensing of new child care centers, especially in underserved areas. • Streamlined Licensing & Zoning Support: Resources to help providers navigate regulatory hurdles and expedite the approval process for opening new child care programs. • Real-Time Child Care Availability Tools: Investment in technology solutions that connect families with open child care slots and streamline enrollment processes. <p>By securing these critical resources, Orange County can build a resilient child care system that supports economic growth, workforce participation, and long-term sustainability. Public-private partnerships, targeted funding, and strategic investments will be essential to driving impactful, lasting change in the child care sector. Bottom of Form</p>
<p>Goals and Metrics Across the Strategy</p>	<p>Goal: Increase the supply of qualified child care professionals to meet demand.</p> <p>Metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new child care workers trained and entering the field. • Percentage of participants completing apprenticeship programs and obtaining ECE credentials. • Percentage of newly trained child care professionals staying in the field after 6 months and 1 year.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of job seekers entering child care training programs, with targeted outreach to underrepresented communities. • Increase in wages (and profits) earned by providers <p>Goal: Strengthen the financial viability of child care providers to ensure long-term stability.</p> <p>Metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of providers attending financial management and business sustainability workshops. • Number of providers utilizing shared administrative support services. • Total funding (grants, loans, subsidies) secured by child care providers. • Growth in revenue or financial stability of participating providers. • Reduction in the number of child care providers closing due to financial hardship. <p>Goal: Expand employer-supported child care solutions and strengthen cross-sector collaborations.</p> <p>Metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses implementing child care solutions (on-site care, stipends, partnerships with providers). • Number of new collaborations between child care providers, businesses, and community organizations. • Amount of private and philanthropic funding secured to support child care expansion. • Number of employers and policymakers engaging in discussions on child care workforce solutions. • Increase in employees receiving child care support from their employer. <p>Goal: Expand access to affordable, high-quality child care by increasing facilities and improving accessibility.</p> <p>Metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of additional child care openings in high-need areas. • Number of new or renovated child care centers. • Reduction in time required to open new child care facilities. • Percentage of families successfully finding care through availability tools. • Increase in the number of child care programs in underserved communities. • Increase in the number of childcare business owners residing in OC and from disinvested communities <p>These goals and metrics will help track progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure Orange County’s child care sector strategy leads to sustainable workforce solutions, business resilience, and</p>
--	---

	increased access for families. Regular reporting and data analysis will guide decision-making and policy adjustments as the strategy evolves.
Dependencies and Challenges	<p>Dependencies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustained Funding & Financial Resources: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ongoing federal, state, and local funding to support workforce training, business sustainability, and facility expansion. b. Employer and philanthropic investment to supplement public funding. c. Subsidy reimbursement rates that align with the actual cost of care to ensure provider viability. 2. Cross-Sector Collaboration <ol style="list-style-type: none"> d. Strong partnerships between workforce boards, educational institutions, child care providers, employers, and policymakers to ensure alignment and resource-sharing. e. Support from local governments in streamlining regulations and providing financial incentives for infrastructure growth. 3. Workforce Development Pipeline <ol style="list-style-type: none"> f. Effective recruitment strategies to attract new professionals to the child care field. g. Training programs that align with licensing requirements, state regulations, and employer needs. h. Retention efforts, including wage support, career pathways, and professional development opportunities. 4. Regulatory & Licensing Support <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Efficient processing of child care licenses and facility approvals to reduce delays. j. Policy advocacy to simplify licensing while maintaining high-quality care standards. k. Local zoning and land-use policies that support child care expansion. 5. Employer Buy-In & Engagement <ol style="list-style-type: none"> l. Incentives for employers to offer child care solutions (e.g., tax credits, grants). m. Education on the economic benefits of supporting working parents through child care investments. 6. Community Awareness & Demand <ol style="list-style-type: none"> n. Outreach efforts to educate families on available child care options and financial assistance programs. o. Accessible platforms to help parents connect with child care providers. <p>Challenges & Potential Barriers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Funding Gaps & Uncertainty

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> p. Potential reductions in public funding could limit the expansion of training programs, business support, and facility development. q. Private sector contributions may not be sufficient to fill financial gaps.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Workforce Shortages & Low Wages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> r. Difficulty recruiting and retaining child care workers due to low wages and limited benefits. s. Burnout and high turnover in the sector affecting workforce stability. 9. Complex Regulatory Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> t. Varying state, local, and federal regulations make compliance difficult for small providers. 10. Limited Facility Availability & High Costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> u. High real estate costs and limited available space for new child care centers. v. Zoning restrictions and permitting delays hindering expansion efforts. 11. Employer Reluctance to Invest in Child Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> w. Businesses may not see child care as a workforce development priority. x. Need for stronger incentives and case studies demonstrating ROI. 12. Equity & Access Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> y. Low-income families may still struggle to afford child care, even with subsidies. z. Child care deserts persist, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Activation Plan: Tactical Workplan

Strategy 1: Workforce Expansion & Training: Investing in apprenticeship models, career pathways, and professional development programs to recruit and retain a skilled child care workforce.			
Tactic & Overview	Task	Responsible Parties	Timeline
1.1: Tactic 1: Establish Apprenticeship Programs in Partnership with Educational Institutions	Task 1: Develop partnerships with community colleges and vocational schools to design apprenticeship curriculums tailored to child care.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations,	Q1 (Jan.-March) 2025

<p>a. Purpose: To create a sustainable pipeline of qualified early childhood educators by providing hands-on experience and formal education through apprenticeship programs, addressing workforce shortages and promoting long-term careers in child care.</p> <p>b. Program design: Combination of classroom instruction at partner educational institutions (e.g., community colleges) with paid, on-the-job training in licensed child care settings, and competency-based model in partnership with the county office of education. Apprentices will work under the guidance of experienced mentors while earning credits or gaining competencies toward child development credentials or degrees.</p> <p>c. Team: Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support</p>		Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions	
	Task 2: Analyze funding and/or grant opportunities to support stipends or wages for apprentices.	SIC, Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.	Q2 (April-June) 2025- Q3 (July-Sept.) 2026- ongoing
	Task 3: Monitor progress of apprenticeships cohorts already	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development	Q2 (April-June) 2025- Q3 (July-Sept.) 2026- ongoing

<p>Organizations, Labor Unions. Employer Partners: Child care centers and family child care homes</p> <p>d. Costs: \$75,000 (could increase with Potential funding from WFD Board)</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of apprentices, Number of partner employers and educational institutions, Apprentice retention and job placement rates, Credential attainment (e.g., Child Development Permits), Long-term employment outcomes (e.g., retention in child care field after 12–24 months)</p>	<p>functioning in the county and track progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of apprentices, Number of partner employers and educational institutions, Apprentice retention and job placement rates, Credential attainment (e.g., Child Development Permits), Long-term employment outcomes (e.g., retention in child care field after 12–24 months) 	<p>Agencies, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Labor Unions</p>	
	<p>Task 4: Create a pipeline of experienced child care providers who can serve as employers and mentors to place apprentices.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Agencies, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Labor Unions</p>	<p>Q2 (April-June) 2025- Q3 (July-Sept.) 2026- ongoing</p>
<p>1.2: Tactic 2: Develop Clear Career Pathways for Child Care Workers</p> <p>a. Purpose: To strengthen recruitment, retention, and professional growth in the child care workforce by establishing</p>	<p>Task 1: Map existing roles within child care and create advancement tracks (e.g., Assistant → Lead Teacher → Center Director).</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Agencies, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training</p>	<p>Q1 (Jan.-March) 2025</p>

<p>clear, accessible, and well-communicated career pathways that outline advancement opportunities, credentialing options, and supports at every stage.</p> <p>b. Program design: This initiative will map existing and potential roles within the child care sector—from entry-level assistant to center director—and align them with required qualifications, training, and experience. The career pathways will be visualized and distributed through workforce boards, training providers, and employers.</p> <p>c. Team: Lead Agency: Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.</p> <p>d. Costs: \$50,000</p>		Providers, and Labor Unions	
	Task 2: Create visual career pathway guides to distribute to current and prospective workers. Analyze current & potential funding opportunities for workforce development and retention. Work with potential funding opportunities for support in backfilling the more entry level positions to provide pathways that can be entered both at the entry level as well as towards the leadership level.	SIC, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations.	Q2 (April-June) 2025
	Task 3: Promote pathways during recruitment events and onboarding sessions.	SIC, Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support	Q3 (July-Sept.) 2025

e. Potential metrics: Number of individuals accessing and using career pathway tools		Organizations, Labor Unions.	
<p>1.3: Tactic 3: Implement Professional Development Programs and Ongoing Training</p> <p>a. Purpose: To enhance the skills, knowledge, and job satisfaction of the child care workforce through high-quality, ongoing professional development opportunities—ultimately improving outcomes for young children and supporting workforce retention.</p> <p>b. Program design: Provide regular training opportunities aligned with best practices in early childhood education and state licensing requirements. Offerings may include workshops, webinars, coaching, and access to continuing education units. Topics will cover areas such as child development, trauma-informed care, inclusive practices, classroom management, and leadership development.</p>	Task 1: Survey staff to identify training needs and preferred formats (in-person, virtual, hybrid).	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.	Q2 (April-June) 2025
	Task 2: Identify available trainings across the county and create a shared calendar of training events, including topics like trauma-informed care, inclusive practices, and classroom management.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Agencies, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers,	Q1 (Jan.-March) 2026
	Task 3: Track participation and use feedback to refine offerings.	SIC, Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic	Q3 (July-Sept.) 2026

<p>c. Team: Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.</p> <p>d. Costs: Funded by First 5 California IMPACT= \$900,000</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of child care professionals participating in training programs, Number of training hours delivered (total and per participant)</p>		<p>Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.</p>	
<p>1.4: Tactic 4: Launch a county-wide Recruitment & Retention Initiative</p> <p>a. Purpose: Build a stronger, more stable early childhood workforce by attracting new talent to the child care field and retaining experienced providers through targeted incentives, outreach, and support—ultimately ensuring more consistent, high-quality care for young children across the state</p>	<p>Task 1: Develop marketing materials highlighting benefits of working in child care and available supports.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q3 (July-Sept.) 2025</p>

<p>b. Program design: The initiative will combine public awareness campaigns, financial incentives, and support structures to address the workforce crisis in early childhood education. Key components may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County-wide marketing campaign to elevate the visibility and value of child care careers • Recruitment outreach in high schools, colleges, and career centers • Streamlined pathways into the field (e.g., fast-track training, licensing navigation) 			
	<p>Task 2: Host job fairs and information sessions in collaboration with workforce boards and local organizations.</p>	<p>SIC, Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q1 (Jan.-March) 2026</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer mentorship and professional support networks to reduce turnover <p>c. Team: Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.</p> <p>d. Costs: \$50,000</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of new individuals entering the child care workforce, Number of outreach events and recruitment partnerships established, Geographic distribution of new workforce entrants across child care deserts</p>	<p>Task 4: Create a feedback loop with current staff to assess what drives job satisfaction and retention.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q2 (April-June) 2026-Q3 2026</p>
<p>Strategy 2: Business Sustainability:</p> <p>Supporting child care providers in building long-term financial stability through business development training, shared services models, and access to public and private funding opportunities.</p>			
Tactic & Overview	Task	Responsible Party	Timeline

<p>2.1: Tactic 1: Expand and Promote Business Incubators for New Child Care Entrepreneurs</p> <p>a. Purpose: Increase the number of sustainable, high-quality child care businesses—especially in underserved areas—by supporting aspiring entrepreneurs with the tools, training, and resources needed to successfully launch and manage child care programs.</p> <p>b. Program design: The business incubator will offer a structured pathway for individuals interested in opening child care programs, including center-based care and family child care homes. Program components may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on child care licensing, business operations, budgeting, and marketing • One-on-one coaching and mentorship • Peer support • Access to stipend support • Connections to licensing agencies, facility supports, and 	<p>Task 1: Identify and recruit prospective child care entrepreneurs from underserved communities.</p>	<p>SIC, Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations.</p>	<p>Q1 (Jan-March) 2025- ongoing</p>
	<p>Task 2: Partner with local Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), chambers of commerce, and child care resource & referral agencies to host incubator cohorts.</p>	<p>Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations.</p>	<p>Q1 (Jan-March) 2025- ongoing</p>

<p>workforce development resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued technical assistance after program completion <p>c. Team: Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p> <p>d. Costs: \$230,000 per cohort</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of participants enrolled and completing the incubator, Number of new child care businesses licensed and opened, Business sustainability after 6 and 12 months, Number of child care slots created in underserved communities</p>	<p>Task 3: Provide training in licensing, zoning, business planning, and budgeting specific to child care businesses.</p>	<p>Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q1 (Jan-March) 2025- ongoing</p>
	<p>Task 4: Offer mentorship and coaching through the startup phase, including site selection and navigating regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q1 (Jan-March) 2025- ongoing</p>

	Task 5: Track incubator graduates' progress and needs post-launch.	SIC, Education Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	Q3 (July-Sept.) 2025- ongoing
<p>2.2: Tactic 2: Deliver Targeted Business Support to Current Child Care Business Owners, targeting those at risk of closure due to financial instability</p> <p>a. Purpose: To stabilize and sustain child care providers by delivering targeted business supports that strengthen their financial management, operational resilience, and access to resources, ensuring continuity of care for children and families.</p> <p>b. Program design: Identify providers through a combination of</p>	Task 1: Conduct outreach to identify providers at risk of closure due to financial instability, low enrollment, or regulatory challenges or who are interested in building the capacity of their business and sustainable operational practices	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	Q4 (Oct.-Dec.) 2025- ongoing
	Task 2: Offer one-on-one coaching to address urgent operational issues (e.g.,	SIC, Public Sector and Economic	Q4 (Oct.-Dec.) 2025- ongoing

<p>self-referrals, partner referrals, and financial indicators. Conduct needs assessments to determine specific business challenges (e.g., enrollment, budgeting, staffing). Provide individualized technical assistance, business coaching, and financial literacy training. As well as host group workshops on topics like cost modeling, enrollment management, and accessing subsidy programs.</p> <p>c. Team: Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p> <p>d. Costs: \$25,000</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of providers identified and engaged, Number of providers receiving individualized support or attending workshops</p>	cash flow, enrollment management, staff retention).	Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	
	Task 4: Facilitate peer support networks to foster knowledge-sharing and emotional support.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	Q4 (Oct.-Dec.) 2025- ongoing
	<p>Task 5: Explore and Develop a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to Support Child Care Expansion and Stability</p> <p>Design and implement a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) model to assist small child care centers and family child care homes with expenses such as facility upgrades,</p>	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support	Q3 (July-Sept.) 2025 – Q1 2026

	meeting code compliance, and covering initial startup costs.	Organizations, Labor Unions	
<p>2.3: Tactic 3: Implement Shared Services Models to Reduce Administrative Costs</p> <p>a. Purpose: To help child care providers lower operational and administrative costs by sharing resources like billing, human resources, marketing, and purchasing, allowing them to focus more on quality care and program sustainability.</p> <p>b. Program design: Establish a shared services network for providers that offers optional participation in shared back-office support for functions like payroll, enrollment, tuition billing, and purchasing.</p> <p>c. Team: Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p>	Task 1: Conduct a feasibility study to identify shared services opportunities and interest among providers.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	Q2 (April-June) 2025- Q1 (Jan.- March) 2026
	Task 2: Establish pilot networks of providers to share HR, accounting, billing, and purchasing functions.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	Q2 (April-June) 2026- Q3 (July-Sept.) 2026
	Task 3: Develop a centralized administrative hub or platform to coordinate shared services efficiently.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development	Q3 2026

<p>d. Costs: \$300,000 for launch and first pilot year. (CIELO received funding to start this work)</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of providers enrolled in shared services, Provider satisfaction with services, Increase in provider financial stability or sustainability</p>		Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	
	Task 4: Provide training and onboarding for providers to participate in the shared services model. Include access to resources for providers serving low-income families to access concrete supports, ie. diapers	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	Q3 2026
	Task 5: Measure cost savings, operational improvements, and participant satisfaction to inform scaling efforts.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support	Q3 2026

		Organizations, and Labor Unions.	
<p>2.4: Tactic 4: Provide Technical Assistance for Accessing Funding and Facility Improvements</p> <p>a. Purpose: To help child care providers secure public and private funding for facility improvements, expansions, and quality enhancements, ensuring safe, high-quality environments for young children.</p> <p>b. Program design: Develop user-friendly guides and toolkits on funding opportunities. Host workshops and webinars on accessing facilities funding and navigating licensing improvements. Partner with local banks, credit unions, and community development organizations to connect providers with low-interest loans.</p> <p>c. Team: Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support</p>	Task 1: Host regular grant-writing and loan-readiness workshops tailored to child care businesses.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, and Labor Unions	Q1 (Jan-March) 2026
	Task 2: Create a resource hub with up-to-date information on available subsidies, grant programs, and low-interest loan opportunities.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Labor Unions	Q2 (April-June) 2026
	Task 3: Offer hands-on application support for state and federal funding programs, including documentation and compliance requirements.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	Q3 (July-Sept) 2026

<p>Organizations, and Labor Unions, Technical assistance specialists, grant writing coaches or consultants, outreach coordinator, financial institutions and real estate experts</p> <p>d. Costs: \$100,000</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of providers receiving technical assistance, Number of grant or loan applications submitted, Amount of funding awarded to participating providers, Number of facilities improved or expanded</p>			
	Task 4: Partner with community development financial institutions (CDFIs) and local government to connect providers with capital for facility upgrades and expansion.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.	Q3 (July-Sept) 2026- ongoing
	Task 5: Track outcomes of technical assistance in terms of funds secured and projects implemented.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations	Q3 (July-Sept) 2026- ongoing

Strategy 3:

Employer & Community Partnerships: Encouraging employer-supported child care solutions, expanding partnerships with school districts and community-based organizations, and promoting shared services models to increase efficiency and affordability.

Tactic & Overview	Task	Responsible Party	Timeline
-------------------	------	-------------------	----------

<p>3.1: Tactic 1: Engage Employers to Implement Child Care Benefit Solutions</p> <p>a. Purpose: To partner with local employers to expand access to child care benefits—such as on-site child care, stipends, or backup care—helping working families and improving employee recruitment and retention.</p> <p>b. Program design: Identify and reach out to local employers interested in offering child care supports. Share best practices and examples of successful employer-supported child care models. Provide technical assistance to design customized child care benefit solutions. Host informational sessions and roundtables to build employer interest and collaboration.</p> <p>c. Team: Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, and Small Business</p>	<p>Task 1: Identify and convene a cohort of local employers across sectors to explore child care support models (e.g., stipends, backup care, on-site care, concrete resources for families).</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations</p>	<p>Q1 2025</p>
	<p>Task 2: Conduct employer surveys or focus groups to assess needs, barriers, and readiness for offering child care benefits.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations</p>	<p>Q2 2025</p>
	<p>Task 3: Develop a toolkit highlighting best practices, case studies, and ROI of employer-sponsored child care programs. Include access to concrete resources for families that can be underwritten by companies, ie. diapers.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations</p>	<p>Q4 2025</p>

<p>and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations</p> <p>d. Costs: \$100,000</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of employers engaged and participating, Number of employers implementing new child care benefits, Employer satisfaction and reported impacts on employee retention, Increase in awareness of child care solutions among local businesses</p>	<p>Task 4: Facilitate learning exchanges with businesses ready to launch supports for their employees.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations</p>	<p>Q3 2025- ongoing</p>
	<p>Task 5: Collaborate with chambers of commerce and economic development agencies to integrate child care into broader workforce support strategies.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations</p>	<p>Q1 2026</p>
<p>3.2: Tactic 2: Strengthen Partnerships with School Districts, Faith-Based Groups, and Community Programs</p> <p>a. Purpose: To expand access to child care by partnering with school districts, faith-based organizations, and community programs to create and support more child care spaces, especially in underserved areas (ie. Affordable Housing developments,</p>	<p>Task 1: Map existing and potential facilities (e.g., schools, churches, community centers) that could host or expand child care services.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q1 2025</p>

<p>programs needing to transition their business models from PK to Infant & Toddler).</p> <p>b. Program design: Identify and build relationships with school districts, churches, and community organizations interested in offering or expanding child care programs. Provide technical assistance on licensing, facility use, and program development. Develop partnership models (e.g., leasing unused classrooms, shared facilities) that make it easier to open or expand programs. Host partnership forums to connect child care providers with potential facility hosts.</p> <p>c. Team: Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p> <p>d. Costs: \$100,000</p>	<p>Task 2: Meet with district and organizational leaders to identify underused spaces or programs that could support child care.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers</p>	<p>Q4 2025</p>
	<p>Task 3: Develop partnership agreements that define roles, expectations, and shared outcomes.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q1 2025</p>
	<p>Task 4: Provide technical assistance to potential program operators or those strengthening or revising current delivery models (including age groups that they're serving, or from in-home to center-based) on licensing, facility use, and staffing.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p>	

e. Potential metrics: Number of partnerships established with districts, faith groups, or community organizations, Number of new or expanded child care spaces created, Number of technical assistance sessions provided			
<p>3.3: Tactic 3: Host Roundtables to Align Business, Policy, and Community Stakeholders</p> <p>a. Purpose: To bring together business leaders, policymakers, and community organizations to discuss child care challenges and identify collaborative solutions that support the local workforce and economy.</p> <p>b. Program design: Host roundtables focused on child care needs, challenges, and opportunities that facilitate discussions that highlight data, best practices, and success stories. Create action plan based on stakeholder input to drive systems-level solutions and share</p>	Task 1: Plan and host quarterly child care cross sector meetings that include employers, policymakers, child care providers, and workforce agencies.	Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations	Q1 2025- ongoing
	Task 2: Facilitate discussions on local workforce needs, child care gaps, and cross-sector solutions.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Small	Q1 2025- ongoing

<p>outcome with broader community to build momentum.</p> <p>c. Team: Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations</p> <p>d. Costs: \$50,000</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Diversity of sectors represented (business, education, policy, nonprofits); Action steps identified and initiated through roundtables</p>		Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations	
	Task 3: Document and share insights and actionable recommendations.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations	Q3 2025
	Task 4: Invite speakers from regions with successful models to present innovative strategies.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Small Business and Entrepreneurship	Q2 2025

		Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations	
	Task 5: Use roundtable feedback to inform local policy recommendations and funding priorities.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations	Q3 2025
Strategy 4: Infrastructure & Accessibility: Addressing child care deserts by supporting facility expansion, licensing assistance, and streamlined regulatory processes to open and sustain child care programs.			
Tactic & Overview	Task	Responsible Party	Timeline
<p>4.1: Tactic 1: Partner with Local Governments to Streamline Licensing and Zoning</p> <p>a. Purpose: To accelerate the opening and expansion of child care programs by collaborating with cities and counties to simplify</p>	Task 1: Identify cities within Orange County with significant child care gaps and complex regulatory barriers.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions	Q1 2025

<p>licensing, zoning, and permitting processes.</p> <p>b. Program design: Build relationships with local planning, zoning, and licensing departments and educate them on the importance of child care infrastructure. Work together to identify and address regulatory barriers that delay or prevent child care facilities from opening. Advocate for policy changes such as expedited permitting, reduced fees, and flexible zoning rules for child care sites.</p> <p>c. Team: Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions</p> <p>d. Costs: \$50,000</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of jurisdictions engaged in streamlining efforts, Number of policy or regulatory changes adopted, Reduction in time needed to open a new child care facility, Number of new or expanded child</p>	<p>Task 2: Convene workgroups with city planners, licensing officials, and providers to map out pain points in current processes.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions</p>	<p>Q3 2025- Q4 2025</p>
	<p>Task 3: Develop policy recommendations for expedited permitting, zoning flexibility, and use-by-right designations for child care facilities.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions</p>	<p>Q4 2025</p>
	<p>Task 4: Create a licensing & zoning guide for providers with step-by-step instructions and contact points.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions</p>	<p>Q1 2026</p>

care facilities as a result of streamlined processes	Task 5: Pilot a “child care concierge” (similar to city of Irvine office of child care) service in select cities to provide direct support navigating city requirements.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions	Q2 2026
<p>4.2: Tactic 3: Explore and pilot a Real-Time Child Care Availability Dashboard</p> <p>a. Purpose: To make it easier for families to find available child care by providing an up-to-date, user-friendly dashboard showing open slots across programs in Orange County.</p> <p>b. Program design: Design a digital dashboard that displays real-time child care availability by location, age group, and program type. Partner with child care providers to update their availability data regularly. Integrate the dashboard with existing family resource websites and promote it widely to the community. Offer technical</p>	Task 1: Explore dashboards in other communities.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations	Q3 2025-Q4 2025
	Task 2: Collect baseline data on existing child care providers, including licensed capacity, current openings, and contact details.	SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers	Q2 2025

<p>support to providers to ensure consistent data reporting.</p> <p>c. Team: Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers, Web Developer, Providers, Systems Collaborative, Resource & Referral</p> <p>d. Costs: \$250,000 initial year development and operations</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of providers participating in the dashboard, Frequency of provider updates (e.g., weekly, monthly), Number of families accessing the dashboard</p>	<p>Task 3: Develop a provider-friendly interface for real-time updates, ensuring ease of use and data accuracy.</p>	<p>SIC, Tech Vendor</p>	<p>Q3 2025</p>
	<p>Task 4: Pilot the dashboard to families through schools, community hubs, employers, and digital channels.</p>	<p>SIC, Community Based Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers</p>	<p>Q2 2026</p>
	<p>Task 6: Regularly review and refine the platform based on user feedback and evolving needs.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations, Educational Institutions and Workforce Training Providers</p>	<p>Q3 2026- ongoing</p>
<p>4.4: Tactic 4: Develop Toolkit that Assists Operators through Licensing and Facility Readiness.</p> <p>a. Purpose: To simplify and support the licensing and facility</p>	<p>Task 1: Develop a virtual toolkit that supports new child care operators and those intending to transition program model (age groups, setting type) through</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and</p>	<p>Q1 2025- Q4 2025</p>

<p>preparation process for new and expanding child care providers, helping them open programs more efficiently and successfully.</p> <p>b. Program design: Create a user-friendly, step-by-step toolkit that explains licensing requirements, zoning considerations, health and safety regulations, and facility setup best practices. Include checklists, sample forms, timelines, and contact information for local regulatory agencies.</p> <p>c. Team: Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p> <p>d. Costs: \$75,000</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of toolkit downloads, Number of providers who successfully complete licensing and facility set up after using the toolkit</p>	<p>licensing steps, facility standards, and business planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include: templates, checklists, and readiness tools to simplify the licensing process. 	<p>Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p>	
	<p>Task 2: Partner with child care licensing specialists and facility experts to host workshops and one-on-one consultations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide multilingual support and culturally relevant assistance to better reach diverse communities. 	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Community Based Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q1 2026</p>
	<p>Task 3: Track use of Toolkit</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Community Based Organizations, and Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q1 2026- ongoing</p>

<p>4.5 Create a centralized, user-friendly digital platform that connects families, child care providers, and employers. The platform will serve as a hub for resource sharing, program enrollment, employer partnerships, and provider visibility.</p> <p>a. Purpose: To connect families, providers, and employers through a centralized, user-friendly digital platform that increases transparency, access, and coordination in the child care system.</p> <p>b. Program design: Develop a mobile-friendly, multilingual platform where: Families can search for child care options based on real-time availability, location, and program type. The platform will also allow for secure referrals and support local planning by collecting various data.</p> <p>c. Team: Tech developer, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship</p>	<p>Task 1: Conduct a user needs assessment to define key platform features and functionality and gain buy-in from systems partners</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations</p>	<p>Q1 2025</p>
	<p>Task 2: Identify and procure a lead industry partner to lead the effort as well as a technology vendor to develop or adapt a platform that meets identified user needs.</p>	<p>SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions.</p>	<p>Q2 2025</p>
	<p>Task 3: Build and pilot platform infrastructure, including user interface design, language access, and data privacy protections, with a cohort of families, providers, and employers; collect feedback and refine functionality.</p>	<p>Tech Vendor, SIC, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support</p>	<p>Q3–Q4 2025- build platform Q1 2026- pilot platform</p>

<p>Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations</p> <p>d. Costs: \$350,000 for development, maintenance, and outreach in Year 1</p> <p>e. Potential metrics: Number of families and providers registered, Monthly platform users, Increase in access to child care in underserved zip codes</p>		Organizations, and Labor Unions.	
	Task 5: Launch full platform countywide and initiate promotional campaign through trusted channels (e.g., schools, employers, clinics) and onboard providers.	SIC, Lead industry partner, Public Sector and Economic Development Organizations, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations, Labor Unions, Community Based Organizations Tech Vendor	Q2 2026- launch platform countywide Q2-3- onboard providers
	Task 6: Monitor engagement and user satisfaction; refine and scale platform functionality as needed.	SIC, Tech Vendor, Data & Evaluation Team	Q3 2026–ongoing

Appendix A – Child Care Industry Data

First 5 OC Child Care Landscape

Orange County's child care landscape faces significant challenges, particularly in the availability and affordability of care for infants and toddlers. According to a 2020 analysis by First 5 Orange County, licensed child care slots are available for only 5% of the county's infant and toddler population, compared to 70% for preschool-aged children. This shortage means that even if only one-third of infants and toddlers required care, there would still be only enough licensed capacity for one in seven children.

The high cost of infant and toddler care further exacerbates the issue. The average annual price for full-time, center-based care for one infant or toddler in Orange County is \$15,650, consuming up to 26% of a median family's income, well above the 10% considered affordable. For families just above the eligibility threshold for subsidies, this financial burden is particularly significant.

Child care providers also face economic challenges. Serving infants and toddlers is more costly due to higher provider-to-child ratios (1:4 for infants aged 0-2 years compared to 1:12 for children aged 2-6). However, providers often cannot charge the true cost of care, as it would be unaffordable for most families. Consequently, many providers rely on enrolling preschool-aged children to subsidize the cost of infant and toddler care. The introduction of no-cost public transitional kindergarten for 4-year-olds has further strained providers' financial viability.

These challenges have broader economic implications. A 2021 economic analysis highlighted that inadequate affordable child care is removing working parents, particularly women, from the workforce talent pool, leading to significant productivity losses for Orange County businesses.

To address these issues, First 5 Orange County has implemented initiatives such as the Child Care Business Incubator program, which trains and assists future providers in operating quality child care in their homes. As of the 2023-2024 fiscal year, 85 participants have completed the program, with 39 successfully applying for a child care license and 26 receiving their license and enrolling in QualityStart OC, collectively serving over 200 children aged 0-5.

First 5 Orange County continues to work with partners to expand access to affordable, quality infant and toddler care, increase funding and subsidies, and provide business assistance to child care providers, aiming to create a more sustainable and accessible child care system for families in the county.

Appendix B - Industry Overview

The child care industry is a critical component of Orange County's economic infrastructure, enabling parents to participate in the workforce while supporting the early development of young children. However, the industry faces major challenges, including severe shortages of available child care slots, especially for infants and toddlers. Currently, there are licensed spaces for only about 5% of Orange County's infant and toddler population, leaving many families without reliable options.

At the same time, the high cost of care—averaging over \$15,000 annually for an infant—places a significant financial strain on families and limits access, particularly for those who fall just outside subsidy eligibility. Child care providers also face economic pressures, as the

true cost of providing care for young children often exceeds what families can afford to pay, leading to instability and closures, particularly among smaller community-based providers.

At the center of this system is a workforce that is highly skilled yet chronically underpaid and undervalued. Early educators often earn low wages with limited benefits, leading to high turnover and a shortage of qualified providers. Many child care workers leave the field for higher-paying jobs in other sectors, compounding the gap in available care and affecting program quality. Building a stable, well-compensated child care workforce is essential not only for ensuring children's healthy development but also for sustaining broader economic growth.

This fragile system has broader workforce and economic impacts. A lack of affordable child care reduces workforce participation, especially among women, and contributes to lost productivity for businesses across the region. Strengthening the child care industry through expanded supports, sustainable funding, and workforce development strategies will not only benefit young children and families but also directly contribute to a stronger, more resilient Orange County economy.