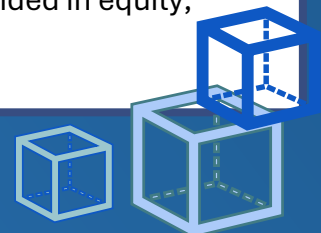


Recommendation & Planning Document

Purpose and Guiding Principles

In early 2025, the Early Learning and Childcare Council of Oceanside (ELCCO) launched a project to assess the state of childcare in the Oceanside region, with a focus on workforce recruitment and retention. The goal was to provide a point-in-time overview of the local childcare ecosystem and identify challenges and opportunities related to attracting and retaining early childhood educators. This research effort produced two reports: A **Workforce Pipeline Analysis** and a **Childcare Ecosystem "State of the Sector"** review, that together offer a comprehensive picture of Oceanside's childcare landscape.

A key insight from these findings is the need for a "paradigm shift" in how we view childcare – moving away from treating it as an individual family burden and instead recognizing it as essential shared social infrastructure. In other words, quality early care and learning should be treated as a public good that is intentionally designed, adequately funded, and equitably managed to meet the needs of children, families, educators, and the community. The research outlines several guiding principles for strengthening the childcare system, including: stable public funding (to ensure sustainable wages, quality facilities, and equitable access); local, community-led governance of childcare (for more responsive and flexible decision-making); integrated support networks linking childcare with other community services (so families are supported holistically); flexibility and inclusivity in services (to meet diverse family needs and cultural contexts); and an ongoing commitment to quality and learning for children (through well-trained staff and evidence-based practices). These principles can set the foundation for ELCCO's planning, ensuring that any actions align with a vision of childcare as a vital part of community infrastructure grounded in equity, stability, and care.



Five Key Areas for Community-Based Action

Based on the two reports' findings, the reports identified five key areas for community-based action. These areas represent strategic priorities to address Oceanside's childcare challenges through collaborative, on-the-ground efforts. Each area is described below with suggested approaches for ELCCO and its partners to consider.

Workforce and Training Hub



Description: Establish a centralized Workforce and Training Hub to cultivate and sustain a strong early childcare workforce in

Oceanside. The hub would serve as a focal point for recruiting new educators, supporting their training and professional development, and connecting them with local job opportunities.

Rationale & Key Findings: Oceanside's childcare sector faces ongoing staffing shortages and retention issues. While there are education programs producing early childhood educators (ECEs) in the region (supported by grants and bursaries), many new graduates either do not enter the local field or leave it shortly after. In fact, the research found that *“the number of trained professionals is not meeting demand... the issue appears to be workforce retention, as trained individuals either leave the sector or do not enter it at all”*. This indicates a need not only to train ECEs, but to actively guide and retain them in the local workforce. Moreover, there is currently minimal coordinated outreach to attract people into ECE careers in Oceanside – recruitment tends to happen ad-hoc via job boards or word of mouth.

Potential Actions: A Workforce and Training Hub could take on several functions to address these gaps:

- **Career Awareness and Outreach:** Promote ECE careers through high school info sessions, career fairs, and community events. The reports suggest that targeted outreach can draw more individuals into the field, for example by highlighting childcare career options to students, career changers, and under-employed adults. A regional employment hub, developed with local career agencies, can provide a one-stop place for people to learn about ECE opportunities in the community. ELCCO could collaborate with partners (like school districts, colleges, WorkBC centers) to host information sessions and raise the profile of early childhood education work in Oceanside.
- **Training and Professional Development Coordination:** Work closely with nearby ECE training institutions (e.g. college ECE programs) to create a smoother pipeline from training to employment. This might include coordinating practicum placements at local childcare centers, offering mentorship for recent graduates,

and ensuring new educators know about local job openings. Given that training opportunities in the region are adequate but not translating into lasting hires, the hub can bridge that gap by actively engaging graduates. ELCCO's hub could also organize workshops or continuing education for existing staff (e.g. leadership or infant/toddler specializations) to support career growth and retention.

- **Centralized Job Matching:** The hub can maintain a local job board or registry of childcare positions in Oceanside, making it easier to match qualified ECEs with centers in need. (This idea overlaps with the “Centralized Supports” area below, but is also a workforce recruitment tool.) A recommendation from the Workforce Pipeline report is the *“creation of a centralized job platform for postings, applications, and recruitment events”* - an initiative the hub could implement. This would streamline hiring by having all ECL (Early Childhood Learning) job opportunities in one place for the region.

Overall, a Workforce and Training Hub led by ELCCO would proactively grow the educator workforce. It would attract new talent, support them through training and into jobs, and provide ongoing professional support. By offering clear career pathways and entry points into the field (for example, from entry-level positions up to leadership roles), the hub can help make ECE a more appealing and viable long-term career in Oceanside.

Centralized Supports

Description: Develop centralized supports to help childcare providers with day-to-day operational challenges that are difficult to manage individually. This could involve creating shared services or resources that all local childcare operators can access – reducing administrative burdens, improving staffing coverage, and generally making it easier to run a quality childcare program in the community.



Rationale & Key Findings: Many Oceanside childcare providers (especially smaller centers or in-home providers) operate on very tight margins and limited staffing, which leaves them little capacity to handle additional tasks or unexpected events. The reports highlighted that centers often have no “safety net” if a staff member is absent – there is rarely spare capacity or funding to bring in a substitute, which in some cases has forced centers to temporarily close and left parents without care options. Administratively, operators are juggling complex responsibilities (licensing paperwork, fee subsidy reporting, payroll, hiring) on top of working directly with children. Many do not have dedicated HR or admin staff; for example, *some managers lack time or training in hiring processes because their background is in early childhood, not business management*. This situation leads to burnout and inefficiencies, and ultimately can impact the consistency and quality of care.

Potential Actions: By centralizing certain supports at a community level, Oceanside providers could collectively benefit from economies of scale and shared expertise. ELCCO can explore establishing a shared services hub or cooperative model to offer such supports. Key initiatives might include:

- **Substitute Staffing Pool:** Implement a regional on-call pool of qualified ECEs or assistants who can step in when a center has a temporary staffing gap (due to sickness, vacations, training leave, etc.). The need for a reliable substitute pool was identified as a priority, since without backfill staff, even a single absence can disrupt operations. Creating a substitute educator registry that all centers can draw from would add flexibility. Indeed, the analysis explicitly recommends *“implementation of a regional ECE substitute staffing pool to address temporary workforce shortages.”* ELCCO could coordinate with the Child Care Resource & Referral program or local hiring agencies to maintain this pool and perhaps secure funding to subsidize the cost of substitutes.
- **Centralized Hiring & HR Support:** Develop a shared recruitment and hiring support system. For example, a centralized job platform (as noted above) can simplify how providers find new staff. Additionally, ELCCO could offer templates for job descriptions, centralized advertising of openings, or even a hiring coordinator role that assists multiple childcare centers. This would be especially helpful for small centers that find the hiring process time-consuming and challenging. Centralized support might also include guidance on HR best practices, assistance with conducting interviews or reference checks, and collaborative orientation programs for new hires.
- **Administrative Assistance and Shared Services:** Many administrative tasks (compliance with government funding requirements, filling out grant applications, bookkeeping, etc.) could be supported centrally. ELCCO might create a resource person or team that helps all local providers navigate government forms, licensing renewals, and funding applications – tasks that *providers currently struggle with while also managing daily duties*. Other shared services could include bulk purchasing of supplies, shared access to specialists (like a roving substitute cook or cleaning service for centers), or pooled professional services (e.g. an accountant or grant writer serving multiple centers). By relieving some of these burdens, educators and directors can focus more on delivering quality care rather than paperwork.

In summary, Centralized Supports aim to reduce the isolation and load on individual childcare operators by offering collective solutions. ELCCO could act as the backbone organization coordinating these supports – effectively becoming a local support hub for all childcare programs. This approach not only improves efficiency but can also improve educator well-being (knowing they have backup and help when needed) and ultimately

stabilize services for families. It aligns with the principle of building integrated support networks around childcare, so that providers and families are not operating in isolation.

Wage and Wellness Working Group

Description: Form a Wage and Wellness Working Group dedicated to improving compensation and working conditions for early childhood educators in Oceanside. This community-based working group (facilitated by ELCCO) could bring together stakeholders – childcare providers (employers), ECEs (employees), and possibly local policymakers or funders – to develop strategies that support fair wages, benefits, and the overall well-being of the childcare workforce.



Rationale & Key Findings: It is widely recognized that low wages and stressful working conditions are at the heart of the recruitment and retention crisis in childcare. Oceanside is no exception: many local childcare centers report that they struggle to pay their staff a living wage under current funding models. Government fee reduction policies cap parent fees but don't fully cover operating costs, squeezing provider budgets and thereby suppressing wages. The result is a cycle of high turnover, as educators understandably leave for better-paying, more stable jobs in other fields. Those who remain often face challenging conditions – working paid hours with minimal breaks and then doing additional duties (cleaning, paperwork) on their own time. Front-line feedback described these conditions as *“physically and emotionally demanding and chaotic,”* even *“brutal,”* which clearly is not conducive to long-term staff wellness.

On the provincial level, there are calls to implement a standardized ECE wage grid to raise and stabilize educator pay. Currently, ECE wages in B.C. vary widely and are generally low, and advocates argue the promised wage grid needs to be competitive (in the range of \$30–\$40/hour for qualified staff) to make childcare careers sustainable. While B.C. has introduced wage enhancement grants, those have limitations (e.g. not all centers are eligible, and they don't cover things like paid sick replacements or pensions). All this suggests that without deliberate effort, wages and working conditions will remain a major weak point in the ecosystem.

Potential Actions: The Wage and Wellness Working Group could serve as a platform to tackle these issues collaboratively and advocate for improvements. Some actions and objectives for this group could include:

- **Advocating for Better Compensation:** Develop a local advocacy strategy pushing for the implementation of a fair wage grid and other compensation improvements. The group can gather data and personal stories from Oceanside to strengthen the case that higher wages are urgently needed (e.g., showing how current low pay contributes to losing qualified educators). They might work with provincial advocacy

organizations (like ECEBC or the Coalition of Child Care Advocates BC) to amplify the message. The research underscores the importance of this by noting that a standardized, competitive wage scale is essential to address the wage disparity. ELCCO's working group can ensure Oceanside's voice is heard in these broader advocacy efforts for wage equity.

- **Exploring Local Incentives:** While many funding levers are provincial, the working group can investigate local solutions to improve financial incentives for ECEs. For example, could municipalities or donors support a local wage top-up fund? Are there opportunities to offer housing support or other benefits to make it easier for ECEs to live and work in Oceanside (given high housing costs can drive staff away?) The group can brainstorm creative ideas like partnership with local businesses for staff discounts, or pursuing grants that could fund bonuses, etc. Any achievable boost or recognition for educators' vital work could help retention.
- **Improving Workplace Wellness:** Equally important, the group could address non-wage aspects of educator well-being. This includes managing workload, providing emotional support, and preventing burnout. The working group could initiate things like a peer support network or regular educator meet-ups for sharing challenges and self-care strategies. They could work with the Oceanside Wellness Network (NOW Network) to coordinate or advocate for mental health resources or wellness programs. Additionally, the group can recommend and support center-level practices that improve wellness – for instance encouraging a culture of appreciation and promoting professional development (since feeling valued and growing in one's career contributes to job satisfaction). By treating educators as the backbone of the system and prioritizing their health and morale, the community will ultimately see better retention and better quality of care for children.

In summary, the Wage and Wellness Working Group is about taking care of those who take care of our children. By convening this group, ELCCO sends a message that educator compensation and well-being are top priorities. Through collective action, the group can push for structural changes (like funding and policy shifts) and implement supportive measures at the community level, making Oceanside a more attractive and sustainable place for childcare professionals to work.

Community-Led Innovation

Description: Foster community-led innovation in childcare by encouraging local ideas, pilots, and partnerships that can address unmet needs in Oceanside's childcare ecosystem. This area focuses on empowering the community – parents, educators, organizations – to try new approaches in delivering childcare and early learning, especially where traditional models aren't meeting all the needs.



Rationale & Key Findings: The reports paint a picture of a childcare system under strain, but also highlight that overcoming these challenges will require new perspectives and transformative solutions. In other words, doing “business as usual” won’t fix the fundamental issues. Oceanside has unique community characteristics and needs (ranging from rural geography to a mix of private and nonprofit operators), so solutions need to be tailored and community-driven. A one-size-fits-all policy from the top may not address specific local gaps. For example, families may struggle with needs like infant care availability, non-standard hours for working parents, culturally specific programming, or inclusion of children with special needs. The principle of flexibility and accessibility means childcare services should adapt to such diverse needs, offering varied hours, culturally appropriate care, and inclusive programming for different ages and circumstances. Meeting these needs often calls for innovation at the community level – trying out new formats and collaborations.

Potential Actions: ELCCO can act as an enabler of innovation by identifying areas where needs are not met and inviting the community to develop creative solutions. Some approaches might include:

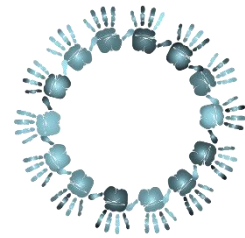
- **Pilot Programs:** Encourage and support pilot projects for childcare. For instance, if there’s a shortage of infant-toddler spaces (perhaps due to the extra qualifications required for infant care), ELCCO could help a childcare provider, pilot a new infant program or services by connecting them with needed resources or funding. Other pilot ideas could be an evening/weekend care program for parents who work non-traditional hours, or a multi-age community childcare model that might operate in a neighborhood hub or school. Pilots allow the community to test innovative ideas on a small scale and evaluate what works.
- **Community Partnerships:** Innovation can spring from partnerships that haven’t been tried before. ELCCO might facilitate partnerships such as: collaborations between childcare centers and local employers (e.g., a business sponsoring some childcare slots for its employees’ children), or between seniors’ organizations and childcare providers to create intergenerational programs. The key is to leverage Oceanside’s community assets. For example, working with Qualicum First Nation to incorporate Indigenous early learning approaches, or strengthening partnerships with the school district to use underutilized space for preschool programs or summer programs, could bring new resources and perspectives into the sector. Such community-led initiatives align with the idea of local governance and integration of childcare with other community systems.
- **Flexible and Inclusive Models:** As guided by the research, any innovative solutions should aim for flexibility and inclusion. This could involve creating caregiver networks or co-ops where families and providers organize mini-programs that are more flexible than center-based care. It could also mean introducing more inclusive

supports for children with special needs (for example, a mobile team of special needs educators that can assist multiple childcare sites, since currently there's no requirement for centers to have specialized staff even when caring for high-needs children). By thinking outside the box, Oceanside can develop home-grown solutions that larger systems might overlook.

ELCCO's role in Community-Led Innovation could encourage experimentation and share knowledge. This could involve accessing small grants or fundraising for community ideas, setting up a platform to share success stories and lessons learned, and connecting innovators with experts or mentors. Importantly, innovation here is ground-up: it listens to the ideas of those directly involved (parents, educators, local leaders) and supports them to implement those ideas. As noted in the analysis, taking a systems view "opens the door to new perspectives... inviting more innovative and transformative solutions to emerge". By embracing that mindset, Oceanside can pioneer approaches that not only improve local childcare, but perhaps serve as models for other communities.

Ground-Up Advocacy

Description: Engage in ground-up advocacy to influence policy and investment in childcare from the local level upward. This area involves organizing the community's voice – parents, educators, providers, and allies – to advocate for changes that Oceanside cannot achieve alone, such as increased funding, supportive policies, and broader system reforms. It's about ensuring that the realities on the ground in Oceanside are heard by decision-makers at municipal, regional, and provincial levels.



Rationale & Key Findings: Many of the challenges Oceanside faces (funding shortfalls, wage issues, regulatory constraints) are driven by higher-level policies and systems. While local action is crucial, it must be paired with advocacy to address those systemic issues. The reports note a tension: government initiatives to make childcare affordable (like fee caps) have unintentionally put financial strain on providers and workers. Resolving this requires policy change (for example, adjusting funding models) which communities need to push for. The idea of community-led governance emphasizes that decisions should be made at the community level where possible, but in practice many big decisions still happen at the provincial level. Ground-up advocacy means Oceanside's community can actively participate in shaping those decisions, rather than passively being subject to them.

The project work already took initial steps in this direction: the ELCCO members joined local **Childcare Community Action Group** meetings with key service providers. One recommendation in the Workforce report is to establish a formal **Child Care Action Group and a Regional Child Care Policy** to address systemic barriers. This suggests that organizing for advocacy is itself a strategic action item.

Potential Actions: Ground-up advocacy can happen on multiple fronts. Here are a few strategies ELCCO could facilitate:

- **Strengthening a Unified Coalition:** ELCCO can continue to formalize the coalition of childcare stakeholders in Oceanside – expanding towards a Community Action Group. This coalition would meet regularly to set advocacy priorities and coordinate efforts. It should include providers, educators, and parents (who can be powerful voices for change), and improve engagement with allies like school district representatives, health professionals, and business/community leaders who care about childcare. By uniting these voices, Oceanside can present a strong, cohesive message when advocating. The coalition can also develop a Regional Child Care Strategy or Policy Platform – a document that lays out the community’s needs and proposed solutions, which can be presented to local councils or the province.
- **Municipal Engagement:** Work with local governments (Parksville, Qualicum Beach, and the Regional District) to champion childcare at the municipal level. Municipalities have levers such as zoning, property, and community grants that affect childcare. ELCCO can continue to advocate for things like including childcare space in community plans, expediting permits for new childcare centers, or allocating city resources (land or funding) to support childcare projects. If local councils pass resolutions supporting childcare improvements or calling on the province for action, it adds political weight. Ground-up advocacy in this context means starting with our city halls and school boards to officially recognize childcare as critical infrastructure (much like parks or schools) – a principle echoed by the idea that early care is an essential public good.
- **Provincial and Broader Advocacy:** Using the evidence and stories from Oceanside, advocate to provincial authorities for changes such as increased operational funding, better wage subsidy structures, or policy tweaks that allow more flexibility (for example, funding that allows overlap staffing for training or leave coverage, which currently isn’t funded). ELCCO and partners can write letters, submit briefs, or join consultations held by the Ministry of Education and Childcare to push these points. They can also collaborate with provincial advocacy groups – essentially adding Oceanside’s experience to the broader movement for childcare reform. The strength of ground-up advocacy is in personalizing the issue: sharing real examples from local centers and families about waitlists, staffing woes, etc., to illustrate why policy change is needed.
- **Public Awareness and Parent Voice:** Advocacy isn’t just behind the scenes – it also involves raising public awareness so that the broader community and voters support childcare initiatives. ELCCO could help organize parent forums, story campaigns (where parents and ECEs share what reliable childcare or the lack thereof means to them), and use local media to highlight the sector’s importance.

When more community members recognize that childcare is a foundation for a thriving community (allowing parents to work, fostering early learning and development, preparing children for school, creating jobs, etc.), there is more momentum for change. This bottom-up support can pressure elected officials to act. It truly embodies a ground-up approach when the call for action comes from the very people impacted daily in Oceanside.

In essence, Ground-Up Advocacy is about making Oceanside's voice heard in the larger conversation on childcare. By organizing locally through ELCCO, the community could influence policies that are currently barriers. This approach complements the on-the-ground changes with the necessary "asks" of government. It aligns with the guiding notion that solutions should be driven by those who know the community best, rather than imposed top-down. Through persistent and unified advocacy, ELCCO can help secure the support and systemic change needed to realize the other four action areas and ensure long-term success.

Exploring Next Steps for ELCCO

Moving forward, ELCCO can take concrete steps to turn the above focus areas into action. Below are suggested next steps to initiate a community plan:



- **1. Prioritize and Plan:** Convene an ELCCO planning meeting (or series of meetings) with key stakeholders to review action areas, discuss, and prioritize them. Determine which initiatives are feasible in the short term, mid, or long-term. For each focus area, ELCCO could form a small task force or working committee responsible for developing it further (e.g. a Workforce Hub committee, a Wage & Wellness committee, etc). Increasing the active participation in ELCCO would be a necessary next step to accomplish this.
- **2. Engage Partners and Formalize Teams:** Reach out to potential partners for each action area. For instance, connect with local colleges and employment agencies for the Workforce and Training Hub, and with the CCRR (Child Care Resource & Referral) agency and major providers for Centralized Supports. Similarly, identify champions for the Wage and Wellness Working Group (such as experienced center directors or ECEs who are passionate about workforce issues). Formally establish these working groups under ELCCO's umbrella so they can start meeting and planning specific initiatives.
- **3. Quick Wins and Resource Identification:** Aim for some "quick wins" to build momentum. This might include setting up a centralized job posting board (a relatively low-cost tech solution) or beginning a roster of substitute ECEs that centers can start sharing. Simultaneously, outline what resources (funding, staffing,

training) are needed for larger projects like the physical Workforce Hub or shared services center. ELCCO can begin approaching potential funders, (SPARC BC, municipal governments, UBCM, local foundations, or provincial grants) with the findings and these proposed solutions to seek financial or in-kind support.

- **4. Communication and Community Buy-In:** Develop a communication plan to inform the broader community about this initiative. This could involve a plain-language summary of the planning document to share with parents and the public, a presentation of findings and plans to local government councils or the school board, and updates via social media or community newsletters. Using data and quotes from the reports can help make the case (for example, sharing that centers have had to close due to lack of staff or that the sector loses more childcare workers than it gains each year). Building community buy-in will make it easier to recruit volunteers for working groups and to demonstrate public support in advocacy efforts.
- **5. Integrate Past Recommendations:** As a next step, ELCCO should also revisit previous childcare plans (such as the 2020 Mid-Island Child Care Action Plan, etc.) and compile any relevant recommendations that were made for Oceanside. Comparing those with the current plan will be important. Some recommendations may align and reinforce these action areas, while others might conflict or be no longer relevant. ELCCO can prepare a brief report or table that maps past recommendations vs. current initiatives. (See section two).
- **6. Monitor and Adjust:** As ELCCO moves into action, set up a simple tracking method to monitor progress on each key area. Each working group can set 6-month and 12-month goals (e.g. "by 6 months, have a substitute pool operational," or "by 12 months, pilot one new childcare program"). Regular ELCCO meetings can include updates on these goals, so the entire council stays informed. If certain strategies aren't working or new challenges arise, the plan can be adjusted. The idea is to keep this as a living, informal plan that evolves with input from the community.

Through prioritizing, scheduling, and community engagement, ELCCO can maintain momentum from the research phase and transition into action. A collaborative approach will help ensure that the solutions remain community-driven and effective.

Section Two

Past Recommendations for Discussion

The following recommendations were taken directly from the **Mid-Island Region Child Care Action Plan (2021)**. They have been grouped in two broad categories; **Advocacy and Policy-Related Work**, and **Infrastructure and Capacity at a Local Level**. Reviewing these recommendations will allow ELCCO to determine which items have been addressed, which are no longer relevant, and which are still left to do. Of the unresolved recommendations, it would be helpful to understand the reasons the action items were not addressed and how to improve the process for the future. Initial observations are that without a group taking ‘ownership’ or responsibility for the recommendations, it is unclear who is to do the work. Furthermore, already overburdened action groups may not have the capacity to take on significant new initiatives. Identifying who is accountable for doing the work, and how it will be done, is vital to successful outcomes.

Source: City of Nanaimo. Mid-Island Region Child Care Action Plan. March 2021.

<https://www.nanaimo.ca/docs/property-development/community-planning-and-zoning/mid-island-region-child-care-action-plan.pdf>

Advocacy and Policy -Related Work

Develop a Mid-Island (or Oceanside?) Region Child Care Policy for local governments, providing a consolidated statement of the Region’s vision, goals, strategies and commitments to child care.

Who: Short Province, school districts, not-for profit operators, community agencies.

Consider the opportunities for developing local government/Regional District-owned child care facilities, including accessing Provincial Capital funding to build child care spaces.

Who: Province, not-for profit operators

Develop and maintain an inventory of existing publicly owned spaces and properties that could be developed for child care that includes:

- **Assets in the various jurisdictions (buildings and land) that are potential sites for capital redevelopment.**
- **Underutilized or vacant spaces or land, including parks, that could be used for child care; and**

- **Working with other public and not-for profit partners to identify additional potential spaces and land.**

Who: Island Health, School districts, not-for-profit child care providers, post secondary institutions

Endorse the space targets identified in this report recognizing that partnerships and solutions outside of the mandate and resources of local governments are needed to deliver on these needs.

Who: Not-for-profit providers, school districts, Island Health

Where possible, prioritize spaces for age groups which are most underserved, like infant/toddler and school-age. Direct these new spaces to areas of the Region with lower access rates, growing population, and priority locations such as public facilities and parks, new residential and commercial developments, along transit corridors and on school properties. (See Appendix E)

Who: Child Care providers, school districts, Island Health, Regional District Transit System

Consider childcare as a desired amenity in return for bonus density, where applicable.

Who: None

Identify and consider changes to municipal processes and regulations to better facilitate creation of new childcare spaces. Include a review of fees charged. Where appropriate, changes should align with Island Health.

Who: Island Health, applicants, not for-profit child care providers

How:

Put not-for-profit child care applications at the front of the permitting queue, when/if the size of the queue is causing delays in approval. ??

Who: None

Create a grant program for not-for-profit childcare centres to assist with facility upgrades and maintenance or to offer extended hours.

Who: Not-for-profit providers

Lease or rent local government-owned facilities or land to not-for-profit childcare providers at no cost or below-market rates.

Who: Not-for-profit providers

Reduce application fees for permits.

Who:

Advocate to senior governments to reduce the cost of child care and increase compensation for child care facility staff.

Who: Senior governments, School district

When and if considering the development of local government-owned childcare spaces (as in Recommendation #4 under Accessibility), ensure that:

- **Partners are not-for-profit and/or public childcare providers**
- **Local government policy expectations are met**
- **Local/regional governments consider the efficacy of developing facility design guidelines (see note below) that are based on what the research states is best practice for childcare (i.e. square footage for indoor and outdoor space that exceed the minimum Provincial Licensing Requirements.)**

Who: Not-for-profit providers, School districts

Support the province in its “Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy” initiative through joint advocacy.

Who: School districts, Not-for-profit providers

Increase the number of licensed, not-for-profit, publicly funded child care operations, including consideration of strategies to recruit not-for-profit operators to move into the Mid-Island Region.

Who: Long Province, not-for profit providers, School districts, Parks, Island Health

Build supportive and learning relationships with Métis and First Nations. Support Indigenous perspectives and history in childcare.

Who: External Partners, Métis and First Nations

Build a partnership and joint planning protocol with the school districts around child care to:

- **Ensure child care is part of all new school facilities and renovated school spaces where possible;**
- **Facilitate the use of school spaces and grounds for school age care operations, where possible;**
- **Structure regular and ongoing communication between the local governments and School districts;**
- **Support the provincial direction of universal school age care and the commitment to move child care to the Ministry of Education;**

- **Explore the use of empty, surplus school spaces for child care; and**
- **Work with the school districts to ensure that child care providers have access to school facilities during holidays and professional development days.**

Who: School districts, not-for-profit providers

Pursue partnership opportunities with employers in the corporate sector to provide spaces for child care facilities that serve their employees' families and community. These could be joint projects with the involvement of several employers and not-for profit child care providers.

Who: Local employers, Chamber of Commerce

With Parks departments, community service providers and others, explore the possibilities of providing more after-school activities for 10-12 year olds as the needs of this population are generally not met in licensed child care programs.

Who: Parks (Community Centres), other community facilities such as a Boys and Girls Club.

Advocate to senior governments to provide support to the child care sector and families in the following areas and other priorities that may arise:

- **Ensuring the needs of Mid-Island children are a priority for new spaces in provincial planning and funding**
- **Recruitment, remuneration and retention of ECE's;**
- **Increased resources to support children with additional needs through Supported Child Development**
- **Lower fees for families; and**
- **Funding to support non-traditional hours of care.**

Who: School districts

Include consideration and provision of child care within strategies and projects for affordable housing, seniors' residents and transit expansion/improvement.

Who: BC Housing, Regional Transit System, Island Health

Infrastructure and Capacity at a Local Level

Establish an on-going Child Care Action group that would be comprised of representatives from childcare providers and other service providers, the school districts and key staff from each of the Project Partner jurisdictions (Nanaimo,

Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Lantzville and the Regional District) to ensure a consistent regional approach. This group would develop strategies to maximize the group's effectiveness for a systemic approach to child care in the Mid-Island Region. (Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting)

Who: Not-for-profit providers, school districts, service providers and Island Health Licensing

Develop an inter-jurisdictional staff position dedicated to childcare. The position would focus on:

- **Monitoring the progress of implementing the recommendations and meeting targets**
- **Reporting annually to Councils and the School districts**
- **Facilitating partnerships, and engaging with Provincial and community partners**
- **Identifying locations for new, not-for-profit and public quality childcare**
- **Bringing child care providers and staff together for information sharing, joint training and education; and providing more information for parents about child care, how to access it and how the system works, especially targeting more vulnerable populations.**

Who: Not-for-profit providers, Island Health, all Mid Island jurisdictions, school districts.

Bring community partners together to explore the feasibility of a centralized waitlist and centralized list of providers in the Region to remove barriers for families to access current child care spaces.

Who: Child care providers, school districts, Island Health, Child Care Action Group

Develop building models/prototypes and high-level cost estimates to facilitate planning for new child care facilities on municipal sites.

Who:

Engage in ongoing dialogue with First Nations and Métis, focusing on meeting the needs of Indigenous families/children and supporting high quality and culturally rooted programming.

Who: Indigenous Communities

Bring partners together to explore and pilot, with providers, child care that offers longer, non traditional and/or flexible hours.

Child Care Action Group, Province, Island Health, not-for-profit providers, school district

Join or co-host Island Health child care information meetings for potential child care providers who are interested in opening child care centres to describe the various ‘licensing’ roles and processes for each jurisdiction.

Who: Island Health (and...?)

Add comprehensive information on all municipal (Non profit?) websites regarding child care. This should include information for families seeking child care (e.g. links to the Pacific Care Child Care Resource and Referral and the BC Child Care Map) and particularly, should include zoning, processing, financial and related information for operators wanting to develop a child care facility. Information should align with Island Health where appropriate.

Who: Not-for-profit child care providers, Island Health.

Explore the role of providing leadership for more and better-qualified ECE staff and additional training opportunities such as workshops, online seminars, professional education, etc.

Who: VIU, not-for-profit operators

Work with not-for-profit child care providers on collaborations that support their existing service and potential expansion.

Who: Not-for-profit child care providers

Continue to support and collaborate with the Early Learning and Child Care Council (“ELCCO”).

Compiled and authored by Sharon Tomczyk for ELCCO . 2025