



WEST REGIONAL Childcare Action Plan

BARRY, IONIA, KENT, MECOSTA, AND MONTCALM COUNTIES



**VIBRANT
FUTURES**



If you are working on something that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed.

The vision will pull you!

—Steve Jobs

Preface

In a healthy economy, people go to work, build their careers, and secure affordable housing. But in Barry, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, and Montcalm counties of western Michigan, a shortage of acceptable and affordable childcare is suppressing full employment, career growth, and progress toward stable housing and home ownership. Employers and parents confirm that extreme, post-pandemic childcare shortages are keeping parents of young children out of the workforce restricting their ability to earn, get a mortgage, build home equity, and make a better life for their children.

As the affordability and shortage of childcare limits employment for parents of more than 60% of West Michigan's young children, it constrains economic growth throughout the entire region for businesses in need of talent and families in need of income. The demand for childcare is simply outstripping supply, current federal and state solutions are falling short, and young families are caught in a bind they alone cannot solve.

Fortunately, West Michigan is rich with innovation, collaboration, and strategic investment. We will need all three to solve the childcare crisis and unleash the full economic potential of the region.

Funding

*Accelerating community efforts to address the childcare crisis by developing new partnerships and implementing action plans, **ECIC's Child Care Innovation Fund*** collaborates with national, state, regional and community partners to design, pilot, and scale common-sense business, workforce, and financing solutions that expand equitable access to high quality, affordable childcare for working families. More info about ECIC's Innovation Fund can be found in the [FY23 Impact Report](#).

Caring for MI Future is a statewide effort to help childcare entrepreneurs open 1,000 new or expanded childcare programs by the end of 2024. This initiative, led by the **Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP)** focuses on the help entrepreneurs need most to open and expand childcare businesses: finding and renovating space, securing startup funding, recruiting staff, and creating a business plan. This Regional Child Care Action Plan was supported by funding provided by MiLEAP, utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Vibrant Futures is the lead planning, advocacy, and intermediary organization in the region supporting the childcare sector by creating equitable cradle-to-career opportunities, experiences, and solutions that hold sacred the vibrant promise and potential in every child, youth, family, and caregiver to ensure more vibrant futures for all. In 2024, Vibrant Futures celebrates its 50th anniversary of serving West and Central Michigan childcare businesses, professionals, families, and children. www.vibrantfuturesmi.org

The Right Place. Since its founding in 1985, The Right Place, the lead economic development organization in the region has helped thousands of West Michigan companies invest more than \$5.1 billion and create more than 47,000 jobs throughout the region. www.rightplace.org

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Introduction

There is widespread systemic lack of affordable childcare across Michigan, and it's having a dire effect on families wanting to work and make a living for their families. The Coalition to Expand Childcare Supply in the Western Region (CECCS-WR or Coalition) covering Barry, Kent, Ionia, Mecosta and Montcalm counties, led by Vibrant Futures and The Right Place was formed in early 2023. Key stakeholders from each region were enlisted and represent a broad base of thought partners, including: economic development alliances, childcare business owners, parents from each county, government and municipalities, and early childhood intermediaries ([See Coalition Member Roster](#))

The Coalition to Expand Childcare Supply in the West Region, as its name implies, set out to formulate a strategic action plan to address the childcare crisis and the conditions of inadequate childcare supply. The Coalition's expressed purpose is to expand childcare supply in the region. The 18-month planning process was designed to intentionally engage key stakeholders that could bring different perspectives to more fully understand the childcare system from both: 1) needs, and impacts; and 2) systems problems—beyond symptoms, and events—to persistent patterns and behavior over time. The intent was to gain a greater understanding of stakeholder situatedness, system behaviors, interrelatedness, and ultimately structures and mental models that are producing the conditions that result in systemic lack of inadequate supply.

The Coalition set out to learn and document the current capacity of the system, capacity underway in the pipeline, and to establish capacity targets near term to address the persistent root causes of: market failure, limited supply, and early care and education (ECE) workforce shortages. The learning agenda documented here and most fully discussed in the Amplifying Voices series of reports ([See appendix D](#)) represent key questions of the Coalition's inquiry:

1. What are the interests and perspectives of parents, employers, and childcare businesses
2. Where are the low-hanging fruits... low-cost, high-value opportunities?
3. How can we modernize systems to make cost-sharing more efficient and easy?

It is believed that this deeper understanding—both the extent and effects of inadequate supply—will help position this action plan to make significant gains in regional childcare supply.

Ultimately, the Coalition, as documented in this plan has identified a course of concrete action that would: 1) begin to address and mitigate root causes; 2) identify and leverage current systems in new ways at the local and state-levels including departments, policies, procedures, and practices; 3) frame and position the issue of childcare as an issue of “critical infrastructure” needed for continued economic growth in the region; 4) strategically connect childcare as a key component of economic development and shared prosperity to elevate interest and engage new actors, and partnerships; and 5) unearth new or re-direct existing investments and opportunities to shore-up change efforts and the trajectory of childcare in the region and across the state.

The five counties represented in the region include a rich mix of agricultural, commercial, industrial, residential, retail, and conservation zones in varied rural landscapes, urban centers, and small towns. Since the publication of the April 2020 U.S. Census, this unique region in West Michigan has become a magnet for young families, home buyers, and eager entrepreneurs. As millions of workers changed jobs and homes during and after the global COVID-19 pandemic, the abundant business opportunities, family-friendly communities, rich agricultural heritage, and sweeping natural resources of West Michigan attracted many newcomers. Despite the constraints in childcare and workforce opportunity frustrating many Millennial and Gen Z parents of young children, the wholesome Midwest region continues to seed and propagate promising growth in many sectors.

Given current economic conditions, adding critically needed childcare capacity could add \$279 million or more, every year, in new worker productivity, improved attendance, reduced turnover and economic growth.

West Region



Barry County has 16 townships, 4 villages and one city, Hastings, the county seat. Adjacent to Ionia, Eaton, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, Allegan and Kent counties, its population is 62,423, with 5% under 5 years old; 21% under 18 years old; and 96% white.



Kent County has Grand Rapids as its county seat and is Michigan’s fourth most populated county. Sharing borders with Ottawa, Muskegon, Newaygo, Montcalm, Ionia, Barry, and Allegan counties, its population is 657,974, with 6% under 5 years old; 23% under 18 years old; and 82% white, 11% black, 11% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Asian.



Ionia County is nestled in the heart of the Grand River Valley with Ionia as its county seat. Bordered by Montcalm, Gratiot, Clinton, Eaton, Barry and Kent Counties, its population is 66,804, with 5% under 5 years old; 21% under 18 years old; and 91% white, 6% black, 5% Hispanic or Latino.



Mecosta County holds Big Rapids, home of Ferris State University, as the county seat. With contiguous counties including Newaygo, Montcalm, Isabella and Osceola, population is 39,714, with 5% under 5 years old; 19% under 18 years old; and 93% white, 3% black, 3% Hispanic or Latino.*



Montcalm County is home to part of the Manistee National Forest with its county seat in Stanton and its largest city Greenville. Bordered by Isabella County, Mecosta County, Gratiot County, Newaygo County, Ionia County, Kent County and Clinton County, its population is 66,614, with 5% under 5 years old; 21% under 18 years old; and 93% white, 4% black, 4% Hispanic or Latino.*

**April 1, 2020 U.S. Census*

Research

Baseline facility and capacity data was gathered from the Regional Child Care profile provided by ECIC in January 2023 as well the County Child Care Profiles produced by the Michigan League of Public Policy in March 2021.

Prior to the first coalition meeting, the leadership team prepared custom profiles and maps for each county, exploring address level data for each childcare type as well as proximity to key employers in the region. The profiles were presented to coalition members with an opportunity to contextualize and clarify the data. Data sources included:

- Statewide licensed childcare businesses and organizations - LARA, March 2023
- Relative care providers (receiving subsidy) - MEGS+, March 2023
- Capacity variance applications - IFF, May 2022
- Top west Michigan employers - The Right Place, 2020
- Largest employers by county - The Right Place, March 2023
- Child Care Mapping Project - MSU, June 2023

Methodology

Coalition leadership, staff and consultants utilized a variety of methods to research and validate the needs of key stakeholders in the west region. Under the guidance of coalition leadership Vibrant Futures and The Right Place, constituent and key

stakeholder engagement strategies were developed and deployed using the “Institutions and Individuals of Trust” methodology of the Innovation and Impact Collective (I2C). Data collection and analysis was conducted by Groundwork Community Consulting LLC, with support from Metrica LLC. The methodology is outlined below for each stakeholder group.

Parent Survey

Parent perspectives were gathered through the Village Cares: Amplifying Parent Voices on Child Care Survey. The survey utilized the base instrument provided by the Policy Equity Group, with modifications made to address additional questions relevant to work currently being done by coalition leadership.

The survey was designed and refined with feedback provided by Vibrant Future’s Parent Advisory Council. The survey was also developed in Spanish. Once finalized and tested, it was distributed through coalition and partner networks using the Institution of Trust methods, which included Parent Advisory Council’s personal networks. Incentives were offered for access to networks.

Survey responses included a diverse representation of 555 parents in the region. A small percentage of respondents were from counties bordering the west region.

Regional Parent Voices Survey Demographics	
59%	White, Caucasian, or Euro-American
27%	Black, African American, or Afro-Caribbean
24%	Latina/o/x/@/e, Hispanic, or Chicana/o/x/@
3%	Native American, Alaska Native, American Indian, First Nations, or Indigenous
3%	Asian or East Asian
2%	Indian or South Asian
1%	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
1%	Arab or Middle Eastern

Employer Survey

Employer perspectives were gathered through the Village Cares: Amplifying Employer Voices on Child Care Survey. The survey utilized the base instrument provided by the Policy Equity Group, with modifications made to address additional questions relevant to work currently being done by coalition leadership.

The survey was distributed widely through partner networks. There were over 130 respondents representing 40,000 employees in the region. The top three industries represented by respondents included manufacturing, nonprofit, and healthcare.

Regional Employer Survey Demographics

County		Number of Employees		Geography	
59%	Kent	19%	20–49	33%	Small city or town
20%	Barry	16%	500+	33%	Large city
14%	Mecosta	15%	10–19	19%	Rural area
14%	Ionia	15%	1–9	15%	Suburb near city
5%	Montcalm	13%	100–249		
2%	Muskegon	12%	250–500		
1%	Ottawa	9%	50–99		
1%	Mason				
1%	Oakland				

Childcare Business and Organization Survey

Childcare businesses and organizations' perspectives were gathered through the Village Cares: Amplifying Childcare Businesses and Organization's Voices on Child Care Survey. The survey utilized the base instrument provided by the Policy Equity Group, with modifications made to address additional questions relevant to work currently being done by coalition leadership.

Surveys were distributed through partner networks. 200 childcare businesses and organizations responded to the survey, representing a diverse mix of care types (licensed family home 36%, licensed group home 30%, and licensed centers 27%). Relative care providers are an underrepresented stakeholder group in the data, as the response rate remained low despite varied distribution efforts.

Provider Age		Children in Care	
26%	41–50	64%	From families experience financial challenges
23%	51–60	63%	Experiencing social-emotional and/or behavioral challenges
18%	(blank)	59%	Children of Color
17%	31–40	51%	Children with disabilities
11%	Over 60	41%	Multilingual
4%	21–30	16%	None of the above
Care Setting		Geography	
36%	Licensed family childcare home	26%	Suburb near large city
30%	Licensed group childcare home	26%	Large city
27%	Licensed childcare center	20%	Small city or town
3%	School-based Pre-K	14%	(blank)
3%	Non-Licensed home-based	13%	Rural area
1%	Out-of-School Program		

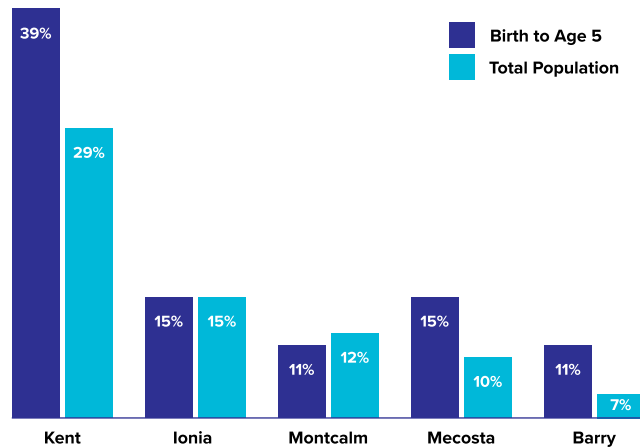
Noteworthy Demographic Shift

One of the coalition’s aims is to ensure these planning and action efforts result in intentional care options for all children and families.

The following chart shows some note worthy demographic shifts in the overall population and the demographics of young children zero to five in some of the counties. Specifically, the chart shows the percentage of young children of color compared to the percentage of people of color in the total population.

These data are drawn from the 2022 Kids Count data and the Census Data for each of the counties in the region. When comparing the demographic composition of young children by race and ethnicity, the data show an increase in the number of children of color for the counties of Kent, Mecosta, and Barry at 10, 5, and 4 percentage points, respectively, over the general population.

Children of Color as Percent of Population, 2022



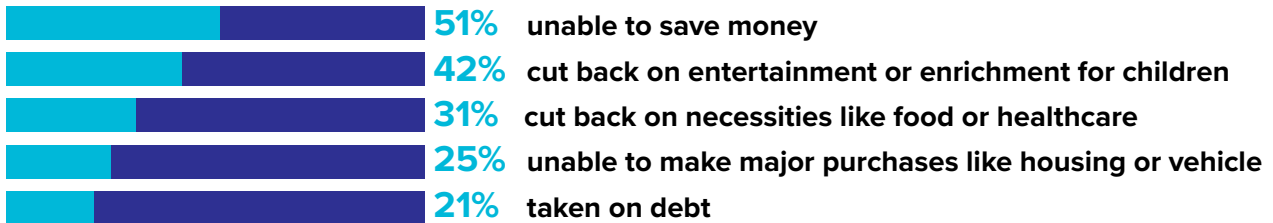
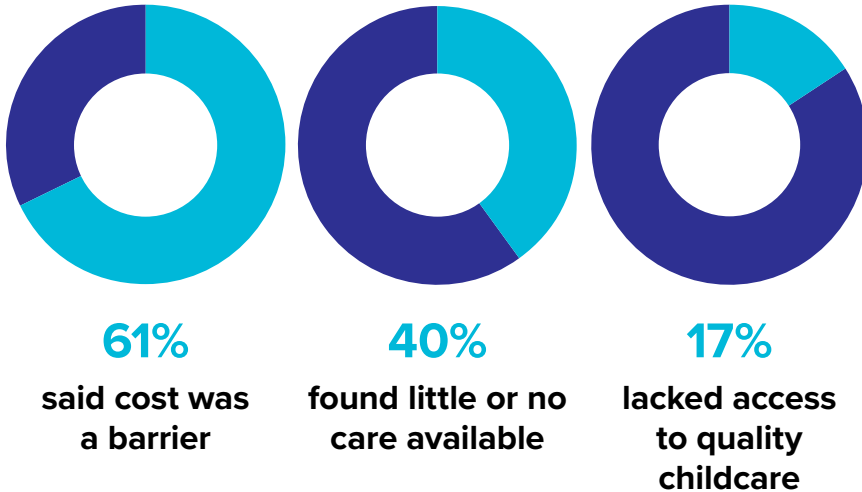
These differences in the composition of the general population compared to the young children in these specific geographies are sizeable enough to have implications for consideration. Applying an equity-lens, these data suggest a deeper dive into patterns of access to quality early care; participation in types of care; availability of culturally and linguistically responsive services; professional development/training needs of in-service teachers and staff; and opportunities for inclusion of families and children in the ecosystem. Considerations related to other issues of situatedness while working toward universal goals and outcomes will be important inquiry.

Certainly, the data and evidence on the impact of demographic shifts on children and families are both compelling and profound. We only need to look at the findings from seminal works on self-esteem and identity like the Doll Study or research on language and linguistics.

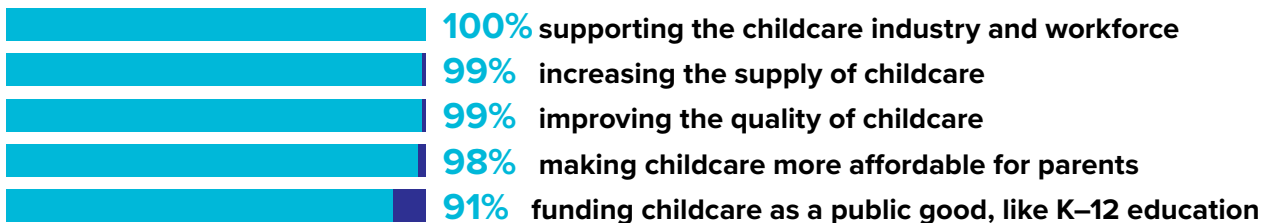
These bodies of work give thoughtful and meaningful perspective toward ensuring all families have access to the care options available of choice and need.

I Defining Childcare Gaps

Childcare costs have risen faster than wages, making it unaffordable. The cost of childcare creates a burden for employers and parents, but childcare sector wages are too low to attract enough workers for growth. 61% of parents identified cost as their major barrier to care. To be able to afford childcare, they are making clear choices about quality, essential needs, and financial stability.



Close to 100% of employer respondents indicated the critical need to support the childcare industry and workforce and make childcare more affordable for parents. 91% felt a paradigm shift to funding childcare as a public good was necessary.



The overwhelming majority of childcare businesses and organizations report they need financial support to be able to stay in business.

What materials would be most helpful?

Financial support to help cover costs	91%
Materials to support play and learning	60%
Health and safety supplies	51%
Ideas for activities that support learning and development	59%
Technology	39%
Grand Total	100%

There is an absence of care relative to need.

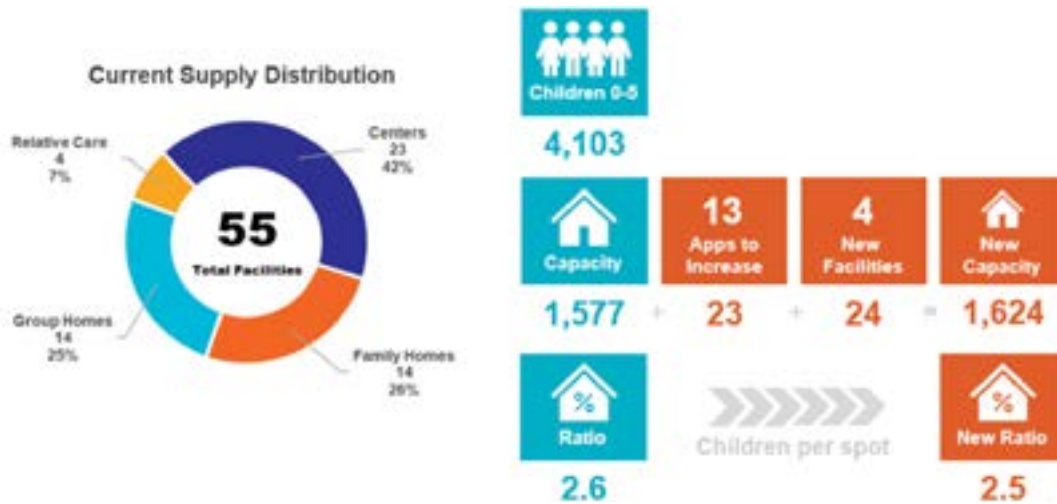
The demand for care exceeds the supply, with enough capacity for just 26% of children under age 13, and 56% of children under age 6.

A look at county childcare facilities, capacity, and projects in the pipeline reveal high child to care ratios as well as disparate gaps between supply available in urban versus rural counties.

In the region:
37,985 seats for 67,752 children 0–5

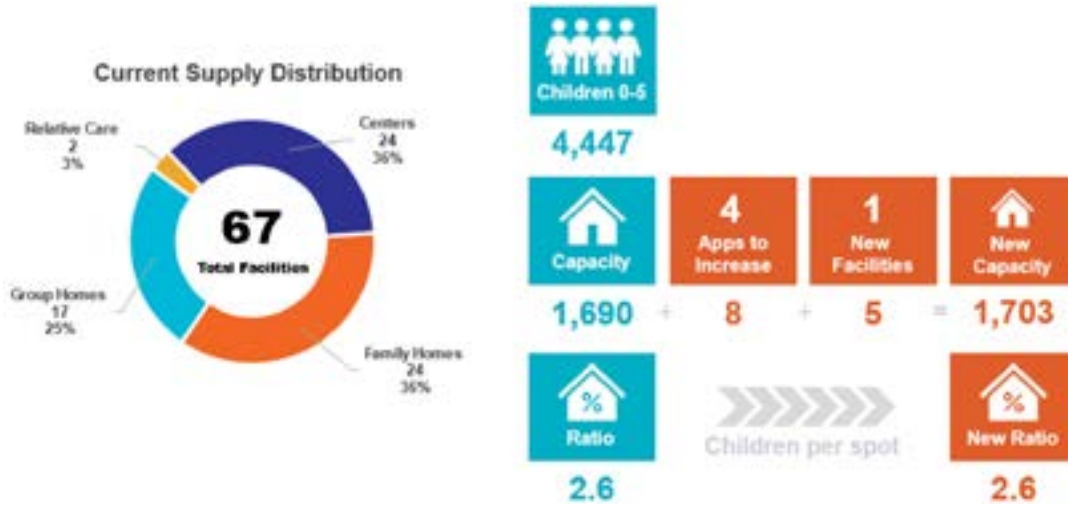
“Every time we create space for another child to play and learn, we create space for another parent to work and earn.”
—Chana Edmond-Verley

Barry County



In Barry County, 55 childcare facilities include 23 centers, 14 group homes, 14 family homes, and 4 homes of relatives. After increasing seats for 4,103 children aged 0-5 from 1,577 to 1,624, Barry County still lacks capacity to care for nearly 2,500 children age 5 and under. Efforts to add more seats are underway.

Ionia County



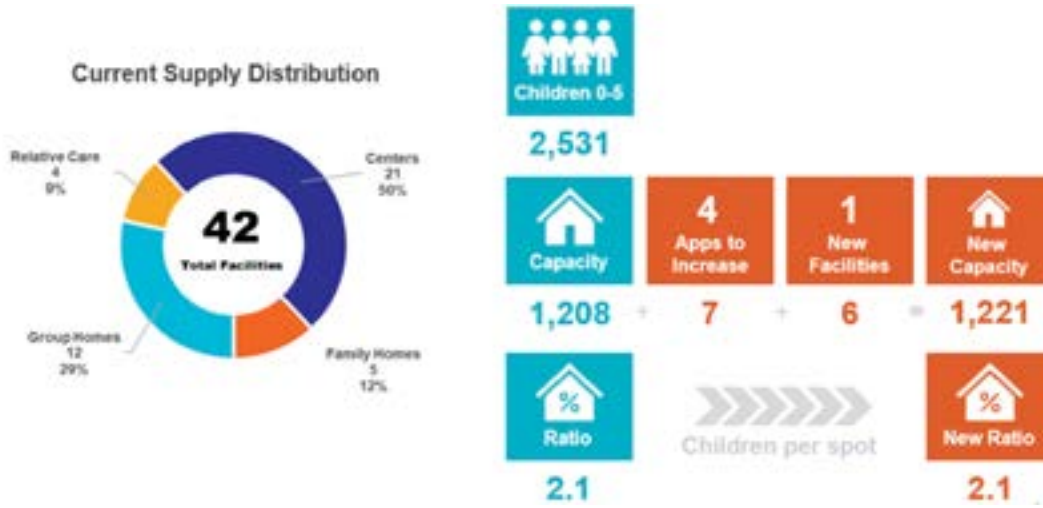
In Ionia County, 67 childcare facilities include 24 centers, 17 group homes, 24 family homes, and 2 homes of relatives. After increasing seats for 4,447 children aged 0-5 from 1,690 to 1,703, Ionia County still lacks capacity to care for 2,744 children age 5 and under. Efforts to add more seats continue.

Kent County



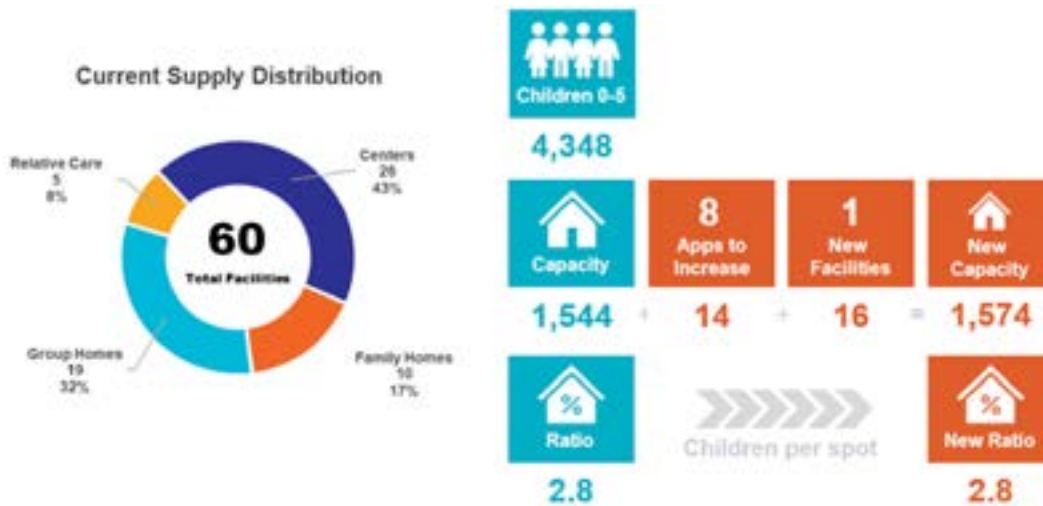
In Kent County, 778 childcare facilities include 320 centers, 87 group homes, 261 family homes, and 110 homes of relatives. After increasing seats for 52,323 children aged 0-5 from 31,114 to 31,863, Kent County still lacks capacity to care for more than 20,000 children age 5 and under. Efforts to add more seats are underway.

Mecosta County



In Mecosta County, 42 childcare facilities include 21 centers, 12 group homes, 5 family homes, and 4 homes of relatives. After increasing seats for 2,531 children aged 0-5 from 1,208 to 1,221, Mecosta County still lacks capacity to care for 1,310 age 5 and under. Efforts to add more seats continue.

Montcalm County



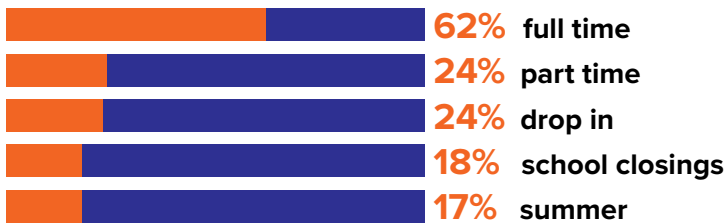
In Montcalm County, 60 childcare facilities include 26 centers, 19 group homes, 10 family homes, and 5 homes of relatives. After increasing seats for 4,348 children aged 0-5 from 1,544 to 1,574, Montcalm County still lacks capacity to care for 2,774 children age 5 and under. Efforts to add more seats are still underway.

II Framing the Problem

Parents need childcare while they work, but very few systems exist to align timetables of childcare and employer operations. 62% of parents report needing full time care. A quarter of parents are looking for flexible part-time care for drop-in and support when schools are closed.

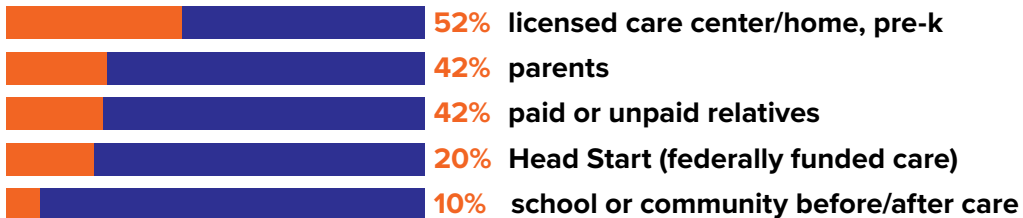
When Care is Needed

Parents need childcare while they work, showing the need to align timetables of childcare and employer operations.



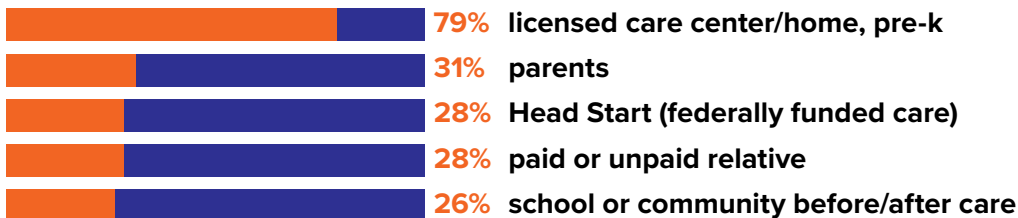
Current Arrangements

In most families today, relatives care for young children.

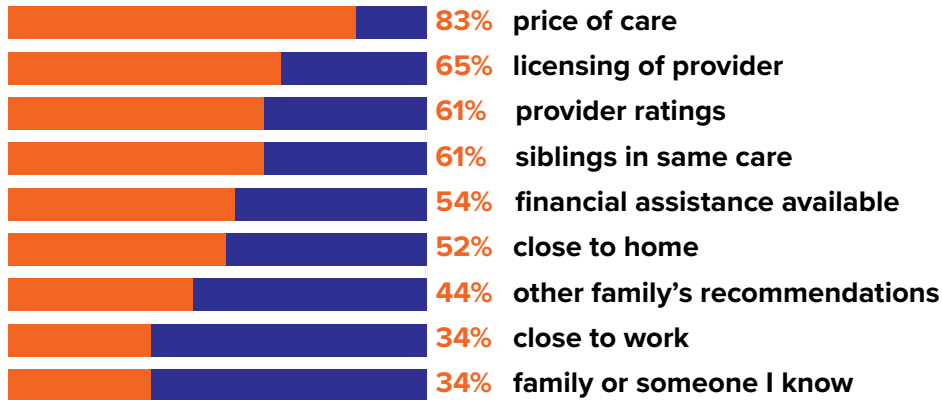


Ideal Arrangements

Most parents would prefer a licensed or professional childcare setting where trained professionals are providing age-appropriate learning experiences.



Selecting Care: Very Important Factors

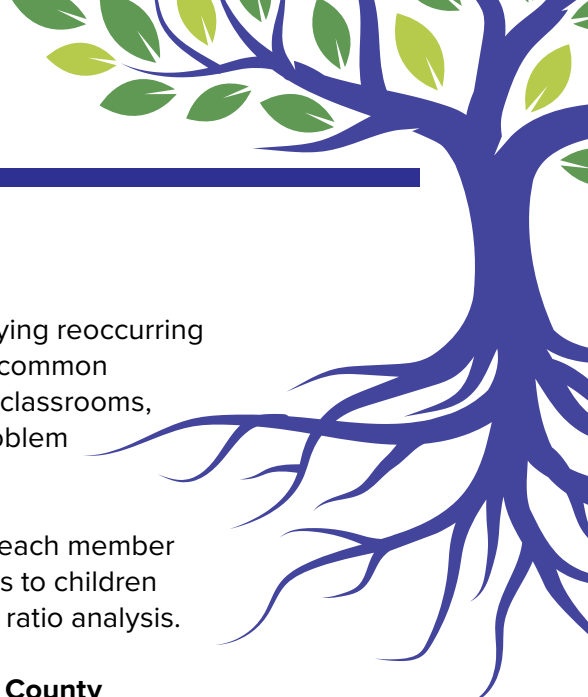


Infant and toddler care are not attainable for the majority of parents.

Parents report infant and toddler care to be the most difficult to find, as they often have waitlists 12 to 18 months long.

78% of childcare businesses and organizations serving infants and 67% serving toddlers reported waitlists.

Number of infant childcare businesses/organizations listing capacity over 1	86
Number of infant childcare businesses/organizations with waitlist	67
Percent of INFANT childcare businesses/organizations with waitlist	78%
Number of toddler childcare businesses/organizations listing capacity over 1	86
Number of toddler childcare businesses/organizations with waitlist	58
Percent of TODDLER childcare businesses/organizations with waitlist	67%
Number of preschool childcare businesses/organizations listing capacity over 1	93
Number of preschool childcare businesses/organizations with waitlist	42
Percent of PRESCHOOL childcare businesses/organizations with waitlist	45%
Number of school age childcare businesses/organizations listing capacity over 1	58
Number of school age childcare businesses/organizations with waitlist	15
Percent of SCHOOL AGE childcare businesses/organizations with waitlist	26%

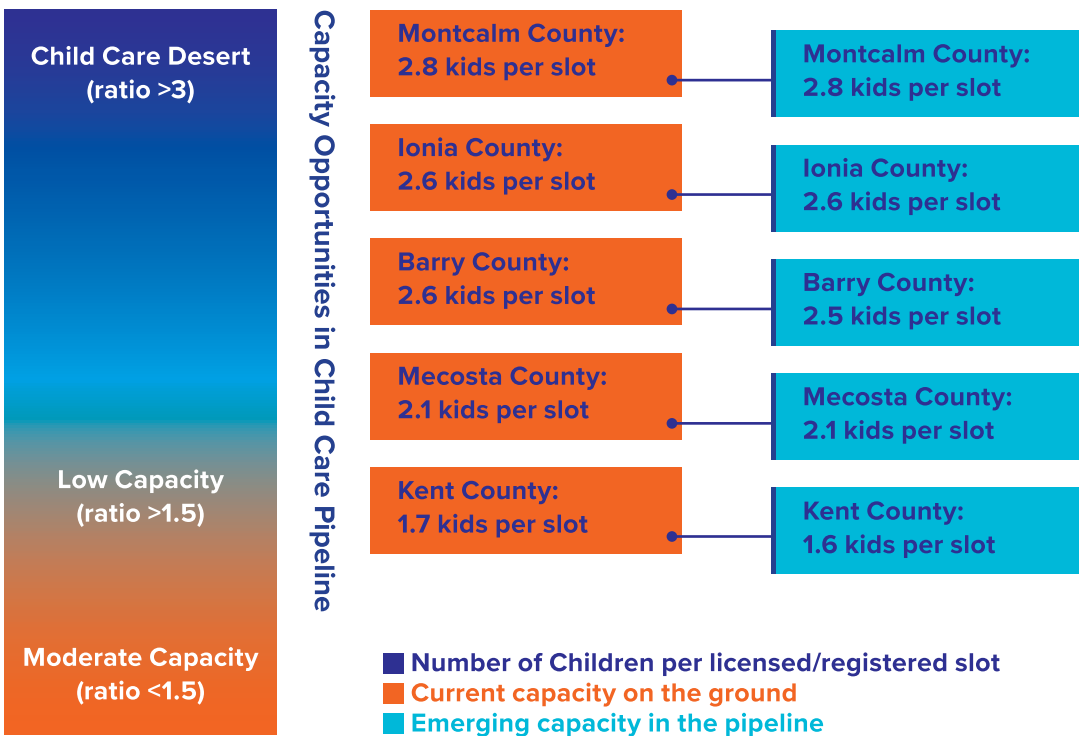


Root Cause Analysis

The CECCS-WR members engaged in a Root Cause Analysis identifying reoccurring events, and symptoms that were prevalent across counties. A list of common symptoms were identified including: waitlist, long wait times, closed classrooms, etc. Initially these events were deemed indicative of one primary problem—a lack of adequate supply across the region.

The coalition investigated the extent to which supply was lacking in each member county of Barry, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta and Montcalm. The ratio of slots to children were calculated. The following chart depicts a summarization of the ratio analysis.

Summary of Ratios and Slots with Projected Pipeline Capacity per County



The coalition was divided by affinity groups of stakeholders (parents, childcare businesses, economic development entities, ECE organizations, and government) to identify specific causes. The process included a second round by geography, as well. Each round culminated in identifying root causes through a deep inquiry process known as the 5 Why's process. From this deep inquiry, clustering, and consensus building process, the following Root Cause Analysis was produced and served as a guide to developing a set of problem statements.



Root Cause Analysis of Childcare in Barry, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, and Montcalm

Based on the two rounds of Root Cause Analysis, five complex and interconnected problems were identified.

PROBLEM #1 Childcare not affordable due to market failure

PROBLEM #2 Inadequate supply of childcare

PROBLEM #3 Workforces Shortages

PROBLEM #4 Professionalization

PROBLEM #5 Infrastructure/Land Use Policies

Summary of Problems

The root causes emanating from the analysis can be best summarized and framed in three buckets of overarching problems that act in concert as a reinforcing loop to produce a widespread lack of affordable childcare in the region, including market failure, limited supply, and workforce shortages.

Market Failure

In a free market, the laws of supply and demand determine pricing—without government intervention. A core tenet of free markets is the voluntary exchange of goods and services, with supply and demand driving healthy growth. In the West Michigan childcare sector, the free-market economic forces of private ownership, profit motive, and supply and demand have not worked: demand outstrips supply, but prevailing wages are too low for (a) parents to afford care, and (b) childcare employers to attract and retain workers.

While the current annual cost of childcare averages \$10,816, this amount does not cover the full cost for childcare businesses/organizations, so most childcare businesses operate at break-even or loss.

Limited Supply

Efforts to expand the childcare supply meet limited success for three key reasons: (1) it is difficult to generate a living wage from operating a childcare business, (2) it is impossible to earn a living wage from working in a childcare job, and (3) structural barriers in licensing and other regulations limit innovation and create high barriers to entry.

Workforce Shortage

When a private university in West Michigan recently established a program to educate childcare workers, they found it was impossible to fill the seats. No students were interested in pursuing a career in a field that provides minimal pay and no benefits. With the entire West Michigan childcare sector perched precariously on the backs of low-wage workers, attrition from the field is more likely than successful attraction of new workers.

III Charting a Course of Action

As a clear course of action began to emerge, the rationale for the coalition’s top goals and strategies were prioritized to bring clarity to the needed work. The prioritization was based on the findings from the following elements: 1) children per slot ratios in respective counties; 2) root cause analyses; 3) key stakeholder voice data; 4) consensus building by coalition members; and 5) alignment with efforts getting traction in the state.

Overarching Goal: Develop and adopt a Childcare In All Policies approach as a container for leveraging change at scale

Childcare in All Policies (CCiAP) emerged as a way to plausibly position the West Region to achieve population-level effects. The plan outlines this overarching goal and four key action goals accompanied by specific sub-strategies to round out efforts for forward movement.

The CCiAP approach is grounded in intersectionality and steeped in collaboration with both likely and unlikely partners, including partners with large-scale potential and interest. Together these partnerships create a powerful synergy and commitment toward mutual reinforcement.

Key Action Goal #1 – Expand and connect cost-share efforts in the region and state for greater childcare affordability for families

Nearly 70% of parents and 91% of employers ranked affordability as the top pressing issue. A robust 81% of coalition members prioritized “affordability” as the top strategic action for the ongoing work of the coalition with a focus on expanding financial assistance and incentives as the primary levers to address the issue. Specifically, to address the affordability issues, maximize the utilization of existing cost-sharing programs including (*CDC Subsidy, Tri-Share*); and support *Pre-K for All* as another important cost-share measure for families. Through intentional partnerships with program operators, scale Vibrant Futures’ “Village Pathways to Childcare” connected strategy to expand awareness and improve navigability across cost-share options.

Sub-strategy 1a: Build out *Pre-K for All* as an affordability measure.

Sub-strategy 1b: Increase participation in *Tri-Share* as an affordability measure.

Sub-strategy 1c: Increase utilization of *CDC Scholarship* among parents and childcare businesses/organizations.

Sub-strategy 1d: Encourage local “village-like” climate among everyone, especially employers, and cultivate robust availability of childcare friendly practices by employers including: bi-shares, FSA, and other participation through CEO Roundtable.

Key Action Goal #2 – Address Early Childhood Education (ECE) Workforce Shortages

A full 70% of coalition members prioritized ECE workforce gaps, with a specific focus on education, training, onboarding and pipeline work to build out pipeline attraction and retention strategies, as the top strategic action for the ongoing work of the coalition.

Sub-strategy 3a: Utilize registered apprenticeships as a workforce development pipeline approach to onboard talent in ECE sector.

Sub-strategy 3b: Extend pipeline opportunities into the high schools.

Sub-strategy 3c: Support *Pre-K for All* for its embedded compensation parity strategy, mixed-delivery, and educational pathways to begin to move workforce issues and compensation levels for ECE workers.

Key Action Goal #3 – Increase childcare supply and access

Nearly 40% of parents and 99% of employers ranked childcare availability or accessibility as a top pressing issue. A strong coalition majority of 57% prioritized supply building, with a specific focus on advocacy for licensing and regulations that create changes and remove barriers to entry and continued participation by childcare business owners, as the top strategic action for the ongoing work of the coalition. Licensing and regulations were among the top three issues cited by childcare businesses when polled over the last four years.

Sub-strategy 2a: Advocacy for licensing and regulation changes.

Sub-strategy 2b: Micro-center creation and expansion through licensing variance in high child-density areas, and to specifically address more infant and toddler opportunities. (See Gretchen’s House, and High Child-Density Geographies By County).

Sub-strategy 2c: Negotiate child-care friendly zoning practices among municipalities through a strategic convening.

Sub-strategy 2d: Create a climate for both “inclusive ECE community. development investments” and “childcare in all policies” approaches, such as redevelopment communities.

Key Action Goal #4 – Pursue and Align Advocacy Efforts and Innovative Approaches

60% of coalition members prioritized education and advocacy efforts as the top strategic action for the on-going work of the coalition with a specific focus on state and federal funding levels and the exploration of innovative approaches to further the work needed in the ECE industry.

IV Enabling Success

The success of all West Region childcare goals, objectives, strategies and key actions to:

1. Advance childcare in all policies and practices.
2. Expand and connect cost-share.
3. Increase childcare supply and access.
4. Address ECE workforce shortages.
5. Pursue advocacy and innovation.

will find strong support from a matrix of connected community engagements embraced by diverse stakeholders throughout the whole connected regional “village” through important enablers of success. These enablers include:

- a. Achieving broad employer buy-in
- b. Building public understanding
- c. Creating new partners
- d. Documenting measurable successes

Achieving broad employer buy-in

When Vibrant Futures and The Right Place convened West Michigan CEOs and executives to weigh in on the childcare crisis, many in attendance said it was the first event they had attended that addressed childcare shortages and costs as barriers to workforce participation. Many affirmed that childcare was a top workforce constraint for their organization (housing and transportation were noted as well), and all agreed that a top priority for working parents was being able to afford childcare that will keep their children safe.

For decades, families turned to family-serving Institutions of Trust and purpose-driven organizations to find childcare. More recently, Vibrant Futures built on its deep history of workforce support by introducing a professional service to help major employers help their employees connect to childcare and onboard with cost-sharing programs. Vibrant Futures is available to partner with any employer-serving professional organizations to offer their members discovery, presentations, and conversations about leveraging private and community assets to help ensure a ready supply of childcare for all workers. To advance childcare in all policies and practices and foster more employer awareness and agreement around childcare solutions, Vibrant Futures will expand its offerings with employers and employer-serving organizations.

Building positive public understanding

In its reports on stakeholder voices, Vibrant Futures refers to the childcare crisis as a “silent noise.” No one talks about how a lack of affordable childcare is limiting workforce participation, family savings, home ownership, and career growth for

individual families, which are elements in addition to the \$279 million economic loss due to childcare shortages in the region. The childcare crisis is a powerfully negative catalyst, successfully constraining multiple makers and markers of a healthy regional economy.

To advance childcare in all policies and practices, family-serving community organizations such as nonprofits, congregations, schools, neighborhood groups, and clubs have an opportunity to engage more actively and thoughtfully in childcare advocacy and support. With education and encouragement, they may elect to serve as helpful networkers and navigators to childcare by sharing stories, facilitating connections, making referrals, and offering guidance to their constituents and stakeholders.

Creating new partners and innovative connections

In operation for 50 years, Vibrant Futures supports the childcare sector in multiple ways:

- cultivating family success through early childhood enrichment programs connecting professional pathways, credentialing, licensing, and development for childcare businesses/organizations
- leading a Family Childcare Network for licensed childcare businesses/organizations in Barry-Ionia-Kent-Mecosta-Montcalm
- convening alliances to advance mutual reinforcing childcare strategies (such as this plan)
- creating innovative models for early childhood education, enrichment, and care
- administering federal nutrition reimbursement for childcare businesses/organizations
- helping parents find financial assistance for childcare
- helping employers help their employees find childcare and financial assistance
- generating interest and offering apprenticeships in childcare careers and businesses
- facilitating Tri-Share participation for employers and parents

The network of childcare businesses/organizations in Barry-Ionia-Kent-Mecosta-Montcalm counties includes more than 1,000 entities providing childcare, including centers, group homes, family homes, and homes of relatives. They guide, protect, feed, change, supervise, entertain, and educate their preschool students with gentle compassion, great kindness, and pure goodness day in and day out. To advance childcare in all policies and practices, they also have the potential to help attract more childcare businesses/organizations to the sector by sharing their voices of encouragement, tales of adventure, ideas for innovation, and inspirational stories of success.

Documenting measurable successes

As Vibrant Futures and other community stakeholders support the execution of this plan, a regional childcare capacity dashboard could help enable success by making the metrics of growth transparent, clear, and accessible by all. If each county sets a goal for growth, e.g., grow childcare capacity by 20% each year for five years, tracking progress on all goals will be both informative and motivational. Key leaders and advocates in all five counties might share new needs, insider tips, capacity boosters, referrals, and more. By embracing intentional collaboration, sharing information online in real time, and communicating news about key milestones, the region could distinguish itself as an innovative leader in growing childcare affordability, access, opportunity, and capacity.

V Tracking Progress

The sheer magnitude of the childcare crisis and its context steeped in the throes of market failure make progress tracking a critical endeavor. As important tandems, the “key considerations” and “progress tracking” accompanying this plan gives guidance to meaningful metrics for accountability, course correction, and continuous improvement.

Given the complexity and widespread nature of the childcare challenges, having both a plan and clear targets serves as important inputs into further development of both a much-needed logic model and an evaluation plan.

Simply put, what gets measured is likely to get done.

Goal 1: Expand and connect cost-share efforts and coordination in the region and state for greater childcare affordability for families.

Nearly 70% of parents and 91% of employers ranked affordability as the top pressing issue. 81% of coalition members prioritized “affordability” as the top strategic action for the on-going work of the coalition with a focus on expanding financial assistance and incentives as the primary lever to address the issue.

Root Causes Addressed: Affordability of Childcare	Root Statements Addressed: Affordability of Childcare due to Market Failure
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Objective 1.1:
Expand engagement and adoption of Pre-K for All as an affordability measure.

Priority: High			Anticipated Costs: \$\$\$\$	
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Increase classroom availability.</p> <p>Increase teachers and assistants.</p> <p>Pilot to make space for home childcare businesses.</p> <p>Advocate for inclusion of CBO's in delivery model.</p>	<p>Funding</p> <p>Expanded access to curriculum</p> <p>Advocacy to include CBO's</p>	<p>Coalition members</p> <p>Vibrant Futures</p> <p>Great Start to Quality curriculum library</p>	<p>Qualifying home childcare businesses.</p> <p>Many school programs are half-day, difficult for parents to utilize. Need more full time slots.</p> <p>Families often need five days instead of only four.</p> <p>Need for promotion/education on why Pre-K is important - still a mindset that it's not critical for school readiness or parents may have had poor experiences in school</p>	<p>Establish baseline of pre-k classrooms, # teachers, # assistant teachers</p> <p># of connections to advocacy efforts</p> <p># of commitments for classroom expansions</p>

Objective 1.2:
Increase participation in Tri-Share as an affordability measure.

Priority: High			Anticipated Costs: \$\$	
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Increased outreach to employers to expand access to program.</p> <p>Conduct evaluation of what is and is not working about Tri-Share currently (what could 2.0 look like).</p> <p>Advocate for alignment of applications, eligibility verifications, and other refinements.</p> <p>Increase education and engagement among childcare businesses/ organizations about Tri-Share program details.</p> <p>Explore supply building efforts in proximity to employers.</p>	<p>Focused employer recruitment</p> <p>Robust communication strategy, engagement, and onboarding</p>	<p>Further engaging the business community (current costs and reality, increased benefits, etc) to increase buy-in</p> <p>Business network engagement</p> <p>Employer-serving organizations</p>	<p>Employer engagement drives increased need for childcare business/ organization engagement</p>	<p>Alignment between program eligibility</p> <p>Employer increases over baseline</p> <p>Family utilization increases above baseline</p> <p>Track development of pool of businesses/ organizations for subsidy and Tri-Share</p>

Objective 1.3:

Increase utilization of CDC subsidy/scholarship among parents and businesses/organizations

Priority: High			Anticipated Costs: \$\$	
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Improve access to the funds (website is causing confusion).</p> <p>Streamline process for businesses/organizations to become qualified to accept CDC Scholarship.</p> <p>Advocate for changes to CDC reimbursement process.</p> <p>Increase communication with and access to CDC case managers when problems occur.</p> <p>Continued advocacy for increased subsidy/scholarship payments to cover the cost of quality care.</p> <p>Educate employers further on CDC subsidy/scholarship as an option on the continuum.</p>	<p>Outreach/presentation</p> <p>Visualizations of the cost-share continuum for employers</p>	<p>Vibrant Futures Village Pathways program to help troubleshoot issues</p> <p>Employer-serving organizations</p>	<p>Staffing needs at MDHHS to accommodate expansion of eligibility.</p> <p>Having to float the CDC reimbursement is a barrier for many businesses/organizations</p> <p>Using the term scholarship is causing confusion. It has not been formally rebranded.</p> <p>Is it possible to expand Village Pathways connections to other counties in the region? Who are the navigation partners?</p> <p>Is it a free resource for employers to connect to a navigator?</p> <p>Are there opportunities in other counties at resource fairs, business collaborative?</p>	<p>Increase of CDC subsidy utilization over baseline</p> <p>Increase of businesses/organization accepting CDC subsidy</p>

Objective 1.4:

Encourage local “village-like” climate among everyone, especially employers; encourage robust availability of childcare-friendly practices by employers including: cost-shares, FSA, and other participation by employers through CEO Roundtable

Priority: High			Anticipated Costs: \$	
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Host CEO Roundtable events for regional employers and advocates.</p> <p>Share examples for employers to consider.</p> <p>Request employer commitment—follow up to support.</p>	<p>Engagement specialist</p> <p>Analytics</p> <p>Project coordination</p>	<p>Vibrant Futures</p> <p>Employer-serving organizations and alliances</p>	<p>Cue in on employers interested in moving forward on cost share or indicating openness to facility options</p>	<p># of CEO’s and Executive leaders in attendance at CEO Roundtable</p> <p># of commitments and interest</p> <p># of successful follow up conversations /engagements</p> <p>Media coverage of events and related strategies</p>

Goal 2: Address ECE workforce shortages.

70% of coalition members prioritized ECE workforce gaps as the top strategic action for the on-going work of the coalition with a specific focus on education, training, onboarding and pipeline work to build out pipeline attraction and retention strategies.

Root Causes Addressed: Affordability of Childcare Infrastructure/Land Use Policy		Root Statements Addressed: Inadequate supply		
Objective 2.1: Utilize registered apprenticeships as a workforce development pipeline approach to on-board talent in ECE sector.				
Priority: High			Anticipated Costs: \$\$	
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Scholarship programs for CDA's and apprenticeships.</p> <p>Promote apprenticeship opportunities in the career tech space. High Schools pairing students with childcare businesses/organizations.</p> <p>Increase visibility at career fairs.</p> <p>Support FFN providers or staff not yet meeting qualification requirements in seeking apprenticeships.</p> <p>Promote opportunities to ECE professionals with Associates degrees, to allow them to complete Bachelors degree.</p>	<p>Funding</p> <p>Program staff</p> <p>Registered apprenticeship programs</p>	<p>FSU, Michigan Works, Career Tech Centers, Education CTE, program/ Kellogg CC/ Dual Enrollment, Grand River Prep/Davenport</p> <p>Comm. Colleges are starting to adopt this model.</p>	<p>Connection with higher ed is important/track to associates/bachelors, etc.</p>	<p>Enrollment increase</p> <p>Rate of program completion</p> <p>Wage increases</p>

Objective 2.2:

Extend pipeline opportunities into high schools.

Priority: High**Anticipated Costs:** \$\$\$

Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Explore collaboration with local school districts/ISDs to offer dual enrollment programs where students can intern in ECE programs, complete CDA, and transition into employment.</p> <p>Promote ECE career opportunities in the career tech space.</p> <p>Increase visibility at career fairs.</p> <p>Educate school counselors on ECE profession.</p>	<p>Superintendent engagement and buy-in</p> <p>Funding for dual enrollment programs</p>	<p>School districts in region</p> <p>ISD's</p> <p>Childcare businesses/ organizations</p> <p>Hastings High School</p>	<p>Students often enter into K-12 system after graduation because of increased wages and benefits. How can we provide equitable opportunities for students wishing to work in ECE?</p>	<p>Increased enrollment</p> <p>Program/CDA completion</p> <p>Secured ECE employment</p> <p>Wage increases</p>

Objective 2.3:

Support Pre-K for all for its embedded compensation parity strategy, mixed-delivery, and educational pathways to begin to move workforce issues and compensation levels for ECE workers.

Priority: High**Anticipated Costs:** \$\$\$

Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Pilot to make space for home childcare businesses.</p> <p>Advocate for inclusion of CBO's in delivery model.</p> <p>Encourage centers to expand and support collaboration.</p>	<p>Funding</p> <p>Advocacy to include CBO's</p>	<p>Childcare entities from CBO's Head Starts, ISD's in the region</p>	<p>ECE professionals require a livable wage and access to insurance.</p>	<p># of childcare entities expanding and making progress on compensation</p>

Goal 3: Expand childcare access and supply.

Nearly 40% of parents and 99% of employers ranked childcare availability or accessibility as a top pressing issue. 57% of coalition members prioritized supply building as the top strategic action for the ongoing work of the coalition with a specific focus on advocacy for licensing and regulation that create changes and remove barriers to entry and continued participation by childcare business owners. Licensing and regulations were among the top three issues cited by childcare businesses when polled over the last four years.

Root Causes Addressed: Affordability of Childcare Infrastructure/Land Use Policy			Root Statements Addressed: Inadequate supply	
Objective 3.1: Advocacy for licensing and regulation changes.				
Priority: High			Anticipated Costs: \$\$	
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Summarize regulation changes being lifted up by childcare businesses.</p> <p>Submit rule suggestions for changes on michigan.gov/michildcare.</p> <p>Ensure copy of changes updates provided from MiLEAP and weigh in on public comment.</p> <p>Encouraging and advocating for speedy implementation of changes.</p> <p>Consolidate licensing and staffing regulations into easy bite-sized bits of information for new businesses/ organizations.</p> <p>Improvements to licensing websites (and forms).</p>	<p>Increased capacity of licensing staff to meet demand for increased capacity.</p> <p>Streamlined licensing guidelines</p> <p>Assistance with licensing forms as website is very unclear</p> <p>Navigation and communication— need multilingual assistance with refugee businesses apprenticeship holder</p>	<p>Coalition members</p> <p>Together West Michigan</p> <p>Hands Connected</p> <p>Michigan Community of Practice</p> <p>Think Baby</p> <p>MLPP</p> <p>Michigan's Children</p>	<p>Focus is needed to revise ratios, flex available slots, allow for staffing flexibility, space variances</p> <p>Landing page for licensing information that is easy to navigate</p>	<p>Document licensing and regulation changes</p> <p>Track legislators willing to champion changes</p> <p>Track successes</p>

Objective 3.2:

Expand supply of various care types including: new, expansions/variances, micro-centers, conversions in high child-density areas, with emphasis on infant and toddler opportunities. (For example: Gretchen’s House, and High Child-Density Geographies by County).

Priority: High			Anticipated Costs: \$\$\$	
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Funding available to open new facilities and expand current facilities.</p> <p>Exploration of CDFI (IFF, Michigan Womens, First Finance) How are they helping with financial support.</p> <p>Business model support for businesses leveraging FCCNs as sources for expansion conversations; and equipping EDOs and SBA-type organizations.</p> <p>Explore where unique care models would be best utilized (drop-in, on-site, second and third shifts, etc).</p> <p>Looking at business and municipal spaces and partnerships for micro centers. Work with MiLEAP for the waivers.</p>	<p>Simple solution to ratio cap</p> <p>Increase the limit of under 3s to expand capacity</p> <p>Funding</p>	<p>State of MI</p> <p>Civitas</p> <p>EDOs</p>	<p>Limits on capacity inhibit childcare businesses/ organizations’ ability to enroll students</p> <p>Hastings Food Hub - space for a Montessori preschool/ childcare</p>	<p>Explore # of facility options and partners, including housing partners, medical facilities, new development projects, and religious institutions</p>

Objective 3.3:

Negotiate child-care friendly zoning practices among municipalities through a municipality convening.

Priority: High			Anticipated Costs: \$	
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Assess which coalition members have relationships w/ municipalities.</p> <p>Develop the agenda for opportunities with municipalities.</p> <p>Inventory existing and potential spaces in high priority municipalities.</p> <p>Educating planning committees/entities around the issues in childcare and how they can be more supportive.</p> <p>Discuss with municipalities about large developments and the inclusion of childcare and child friendly spaces.</p>	<p>Dual-purpose centers, potential for building</p>	<p>Center in Cedar Springs (part senior center/ childcare center)</p> <p>Intergenerational centers</p> <p>Bethlehem Lutheran Church</p> <p>Village of Sparta</p> <p>Amplify GR</p> <p>Dwelling Place Building on Grandville</p> <p>Rapid/Bus Depot</p>	<p>What are the insurance/tax implications for large business center zones?</p> <p>Microfacilities?</p>	<p># outreach to municipalities</p> <p># of municipalities engaged</p> <p># municipalities willing to shift policies and practices</p>

Objective 3.4:

Create a climate for both “inclusive ECE community development investments” and “childcare in all policies” approaches like redevelopment communities.

Priority: High		Anticipated Costs: \$		
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
Forge deeper relationships with economic development municipalities around partnerships for expanding child care. Explore opportunities for embedded childcare space in new and existing housing developments.	Additional research on case studies/ models for Childcare in all policies	Economic development organizations and advocates Affordable housing organizations Private developers Owners/managers of large scale rental developments	New developments should be zoned for childcare spaces, written into spacing contracts	Creation of profiles of redevelopment projects in region

Goal 4: Pursue and align advocacy efforts and innovative approaches.

60% of coalition members prioritized education and advocacy efforts as the top strategic action for the on-going work of the coalition with a specific focus on state and federal funding levels, and the exploration of innovative approaches to further the work needed in the ECE industry.

Root Causes Addressed: Market failure Limited supply ECE workforce		Root Statements Addressed: Limited voice and advocacy Lack of coordinated response		
Objective 4.1: Develop a regional network response with coordinated efforts toward influencing, educating and advocating on specific policies and practices that move us closer to a robust market with sufficient supply and a growing workforce.				
Priority: High			Anticipated Costs: \$\$	
Actions	Support Needed:	Potential Collaborations:	Key Considerations:	Tracking Progress:
<p>Establish an advocacy task force to take the lead on mobilizing coalition members when needed.</p> <p>Continue to engage parent leaders in advocacy efforts.</p> <p>Continued engagement and education with MLPP and Think Babies Michigan to increase awareness and timing of high leverage issues.</p> <p>Develop strategy to engage and educate local officials and legislators.</p> <p>Offer more advocacy training/workshop with curriculum & trainers—teach the power of amplifying voices.</p> <p>ECIC put out a statement w/1000+ signatures and there have been several press releases.</p>	<p>ex. Huntey’s Clubhouse group for businesses/ organizations to have voice, universal pre-k</p> <p>supply regular updates of policy changes</p> <p>facilitate better understanding budgeting process and when decisions are made</p> <p>Engage more employers</p>	<p>Coalition members</p> <p>Parents/families</p> <p>MLPP</p> <p>Think Babies</p> <p>ECIC</p> <p>Michigan’s Children</p> <p>Local officials</p> <p>State policy makers</p>	<p>Concerned about low turn-out due to not thinking advocacy makes a difference due to past performance falling short</p> <p>Concerned could hurt ECE industry in long run</p> <p>Michigan has lost 40% of childcare availability in last decade whereas US average lost 20%</p> <p>Not giving community-based organizations starter funds causes concern, Michigan cannot afford to do universal pre-k —potentially disastrous to CBO’s and home-based businesses.</p>	<p># of opportunities for policy change</p> <p># of focused efforts related to policy changes needed</p> <p># of successful policy changes through advocacy</p> <p>#of people connected to coalition that are signing on to letters, connecting their constituents, donors and boards to issues & contacting lawmakers</p>

Final Thoughts & Conclusions

Modern American families need income to survive and thrive. Parents and heads of households rely on earnings from direct engagement in work.

This economic reality, the national norm for decades, means that safe, affordable childcare is an essential prerequisite to workforce participation, business success, and economic sustainability in communities throughout Michigan.

Yet the childcare norm for decades in Michigan has been a patchwork of disconnected policies, programs, and businesses/organizations. Despite an impressive record for innovation, creativity, and modernization throughout the state, no connected approach or systemic solution currently exists to:

- make it easy for parents and employers to find an affordable mix of childcare and financial assistance in their locale
- make it attractive for childcare businesses/organizations to expand services to meet needs in their community
- make it sustainable for career-seekers to choose childcare as a profession in Michigan

Five comprehensive and connected design principles will help Michigan transform this current problematic patchwork into a seamless system of services that are connected, visible, and accessible... ultimately making childcare easy, attractive, and sustainable.

Childcare in all policies

Ensuring that quality care for children is available and affordable is in the public interest: not just for family wellbeing, community health, and education, but also for workforce participation, business growth, and economic development. Embedding considerations for childcare in all policies: budgets, economic development, education, employment, energy, environment, equity, healthcare, housing, innovation, labor, management, manufacturing, taxation, and technology. We only need to reflect on the incredible progress in the healthcare industry with healthcare in all policies movement. By taking a wholistic view, it will be possible to create zones of opportunity for childcare that deliver shared benefits throughout the community, and economic system.

Mutual reinforcement

When public policies and private programs complement rather than conflict, and push to intentional consider the other, West Michigan can create true economic synergy that delivers financial benefits exceeding initial costs. By considering the West Region as an economic geography for childcare, and creating connected systems to complement supply and demand, it will be possible to expand economic productivity and increase prosperity for all.

Asset leveraging

By taking a broad view that includes private capital investors, business and industry developers, and government entities at all levels (federal, state, county, municipal, and more), each region in Michigan will be better equipped to integrate incentives that reward, rather than penalize, investments in childcare capacity. This is inclusion and collaboration on steroids.

Barrier watch

As changes are implemented, it will be important to watch for unintended consequences. Like weeds in a garden, old and new barriers should be considered, planned for, mitigated, and even neutralized as soon as they appear to prevent outcomes that threaten new childcare solutions.

Pipeline monitoring

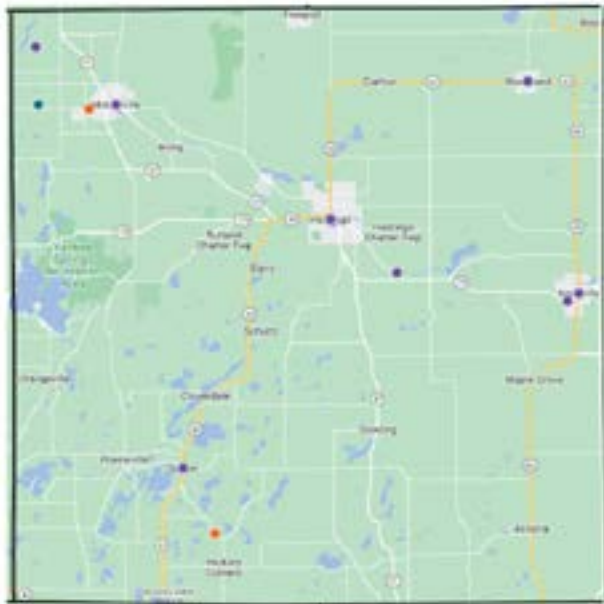
As learned during the global COVID pandemic, a robust pipeline of nursing talent is essential to healthcare. The same is true for childcare: maintaining a healthy pipeline of talent and care capacity must be a shared priority of public policymakers and private investors.

Appendix A

Capacities by County

Barry County

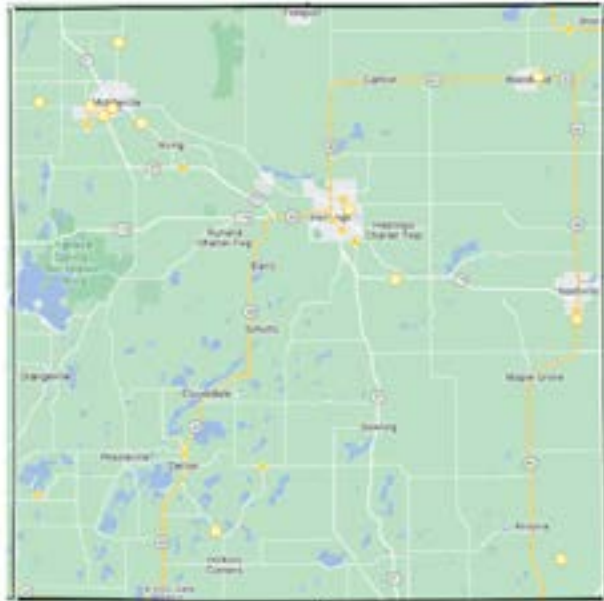
Licensed Facilities



Relative Care Homes



Increases in Capacity and New Facilities



Top Employers



Ionia County

Licensed Facilities



Relative Care Homes



Increases in Capacity and New Facilities



Top Employers



Kent County

Licensed Facilities



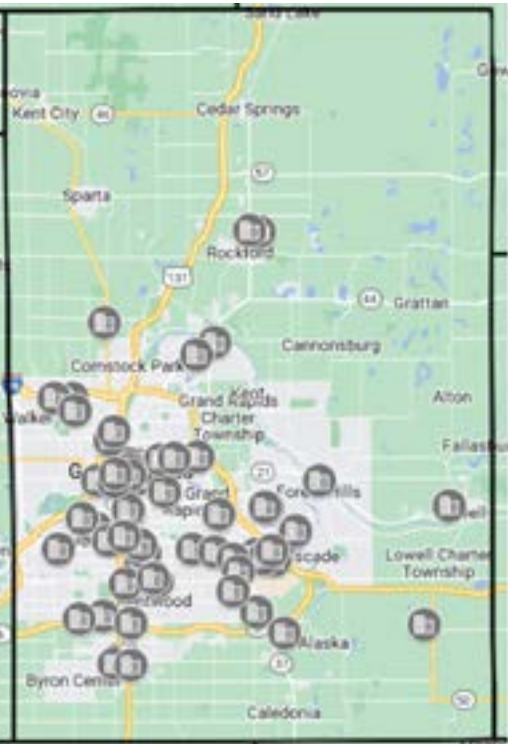
Increases in Capacity and New Facilities



Relative Care Homes

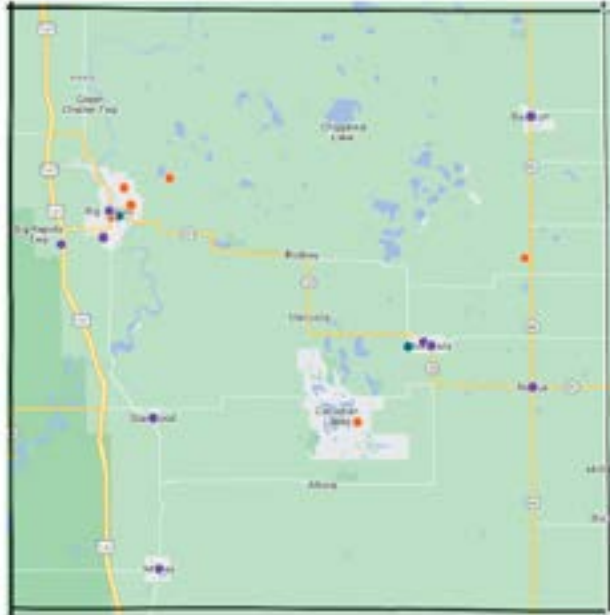


Top Employers



Mecosta County

Licensed Facilities



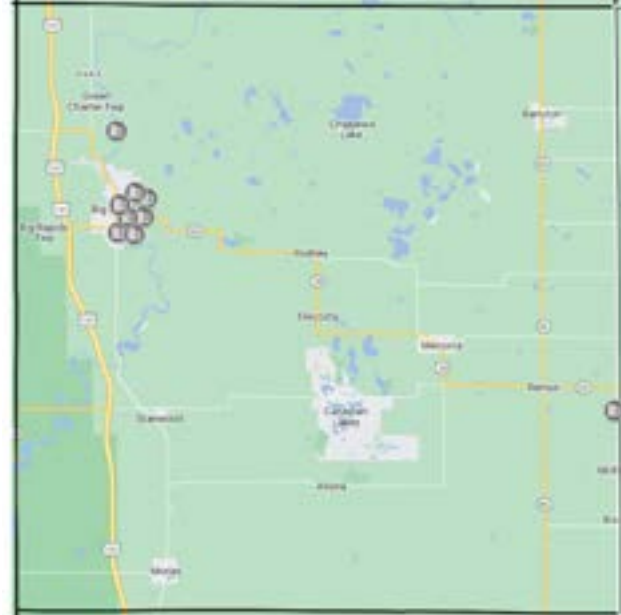
Relative Care Homes



Increases in Capacity and New Facilities



Top Employers



Montcalm County

Licensed Facilities



Relative Care Homes



Increases in Capacity and New Facilities



Top Employers



Appendix B

Top Employers Western Region

Employer	City	County	Industry Category
Spectrum Health	Grand Rapids	Kent	Healthcare
Meijer, inc.	Walker	Kent	Retail
Mercy Health Saint Mary's	Grand Rapids	Kent	Healthcare
Gordon Food Service	Wyoming	Kent	Wholesale/Distribution
Amway	Ada	Kent	Manufacturing
Steelcase, Inc.	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Farmers Insurance Group	Caledonia	Kent	Insurance
Lacks Enterprises Inc.	Cascade Township	Kent	Manufacturing
Grand Rapids Public Schools	Grand Rapids	Kent	Education
Hope Network	Grand Rapids	Kent	Non Profit
Metro Health Hospital	Grand Rapids	Kent	Healthcare
Roskam Baking Co.	Cascade Twp.	Kent	Manufacturing
Fifth Third Bank, West Michigan	Grand Rapids	Kent	Finance
SparanNash	Byron Center	Kent	Wholesale/Distribution
Challenge Manufacturing Co.	Walker	Kent	Manufacturing
Wolverine Worldwide Inc.	Rockford	Kent	Manufacturing
City of Grand Rapids	Grand Rapids	Kent	Government
Dematic	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
ADAC Automotive	Cascade Township	Kent	Manufacturing
Ventra/Meridian	Kentwood	Kent	Manufacturing
GE Aviation	Cascade Township	Kent	Manufacturing
Pridgeon and Clay, inc.	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Hutchinson Antivibration Systems, Inc.	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Forest Hills Public Schools	Cascade Township	Kent	Education
Heathside Foods	Kentwood	Kent	Manufacturing
General Motors Components Holding, LLC	Wyoming	Kent	Manufacturing
Independent Bank	Grand Rapids	Kent	Finance
Calvin University	Grand Rapids	Kent	Education
Michigan Turkey Producers	Wyoming	Kent	Manufacturing
Knappe & Vogt Manufacturing Company	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing

Top Employers in the Western Region *Continued*

Employer	City	County	Industry Category
Gill Industries	Grand Rapids Charter Township	Kent	Manufacturing
Goodwill Industries of Greater Grand Rapids, inc.	Grandville	Kent	Manufacturing
Cascade Engineering	Cascade Township	Kent	Manufacturing
Benteler Automotive	Wyoming	Kent	Manufacturing
Metron Integrated Health Systems	Grand Rapids	Kent	Healthcare
Magna Mirrors North America, LLC	Alto	Kent	Manufacturing
Founders Brewing Company	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Tooling Systems Group	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Byrne Electrical Specialists, Inc.	Rockford	Kent	Manufacturing
BISSELL inc.	Walker	Kent	Manufacturing
Notions Marketing Corporation	Grand Rapids	Kent	Wholesale/Distribution
Booking.com LLC	Woming	Kent	Call Center
Arnies Inc.	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Kellogg's Snacks	Wyoming	Kent	Manufacturing
Praxis Packaging Solutions	Byron Township	Kent	Packaging/Repackaging
TCF Bank	Grand Rapids	Kent	Finance
Trace3	Cascade Township	Kent	IT/Software/Web Development
Coca-Cola Distribution, LLC	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Kellogg Company, Grand Rapids Plant	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Litehouse, Inc. - Lowell Plant	Lowell	Kent	Manufacturing
Fishbeck	Cascade Township	Kent	Engineering
Advantage Solutions	Wyoming	Kent	Consulting Firm
Work Furniture Group	Kentwood	Kent	Manufacturing
Lumbermen's, Inc.	Wyoming	Kent	Construction
Autocam Corporation	Kentwood	Kent	Manufacturing
Spectrum industries, inc.	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Kent Companies, Inc.	Grand Rapids	Kent	Construction
Undercar Products Group, Inc.	Wyoming	Kent	Manufacturin

Top Employers in the Western Region *Continued*

Employer	City	County	Industry Category
Country Fresh, LLC	Wyoming	Kent	Manufacturing
Applied Imaging	Cascade Township	Kent	Wholesale/Distribution
MedPlast GR	Grand Rapids	Kent	Manufacturing
Ranir LLC - Perrigo	Kentwood	Kent	Manufacturing
Williams Distributing Company	Grand Rapids	Kent	Wholesale/Distribution
NBHX Trim Corporation	Alpine Township	Kent	Manufacturing
Spectrum/Kelsey Hospital	Lakeview	Montcalm	Healthcare
Sparrow Carson Hospital	Carson City	Montcalm	Healthcare
Dicastal North America, inc.	Greenville	Montcalm	Manufacturing
Federal Mogul Coporation	Greenville	Montcalm	Manufacturing
Quad Graphics	Greenville	Montcalm	Manufacturing
Parker Hannifin Corp., Lakeview	Lakeview	Montcalm	Manufacturing
Wolverine Worldwide Distribution Center	Howard City	Montcalm	Wholesale/Distribution
Clarion Technologies - Greenville	Greenville	Montcalm	Manufacturing
Sheridan Community Hospital	Sheridan	Montcalm	Healthcare
Marvel Refrigeration	Greenville	Montcalm	Manufacturing
Ferris State University	Big Rapids	Mecosta	Education
NOCTI	Big Rapids	Mecosta	Consulting Firm
Big Rapids Components	Big Rapids	Mecosta	Manufacturing
Mecosta-Osceola ISD	Big Rapids	Mecosta	Education
Big Rapids Public Schools	Big Rapids	Mecosta	Education
Mecosta County Medical Center	Big Rapids	Mecosta	Healthcare
Big Rapids Products	Big Rapids	Mecosta	Manufacturing
City of Big Rapids	Big Rapids	Mecosta	Government
Hanchett Manufacturing	Big Rapids	Mecosta	Manufacturing
Telan Manufacturing	Remus	Mecosta	Manufacturing
Ventra Ionia Main, LLC	Ionia	Ionia	Manufacturing
Herbrucks Poultry Ranch, Inc.	Saranac	Ionia	Agriculture
Mercantile Bank of Michigan	Ionia	Ionia	Finance

Top Employers in the Western Region *Continued*

Employer	City	County	Industry Category
THK RHYTHM Co.	Portland	Ionia	Automotive
Cargill Kitchen Solutions	Lake Odessa	Ionia	Manufacturing
Sparro Ionia Hospital	Ionia	Ionia	Healthcare
Matcor Automotive, Inc.	Ionia	Ionia	Automotive
Portland Products, Inc.	Portland	Ionia	Manufacturing
Twin City Foods, Inc.	Lake Odessa	Ionia	Manufacturing
Extruded Aluminum, Corp.	Belding	Ionia	Manufacturing
Bradford White Corp.	Middleville	Barry	Manufacturing
Pennock Hospital	Hastings	Barry	Healthcare
Hastings Mutual Insurance, Co.	Hastings	Barry	Finance
Flexfab, LLC	Hastings	Barry	Manufacturing
Viking Corp	Hastings	Barry	Manufacturing
Thornapple Kellogg Schools	Middleville	Barry	Education
Hasting Area School System	Hastings	Barry	Education
Hastings Manufacturing Co., LLC	Hastings	Barry	Manufacturing
Thornapple Manor	Hastings	Barry	Healthcare
County of Barry	Hastings	Barry	Government
Delton-Kellogg Schools	Delton	Barry	Education
Wal-Mart Stores Inc.	Hastings	Barry	Retail
Family Fare Supermarket	Hastings	Barry	Retail
Tendercare, Inc.	Hastings	Barry	Healthcare
J-Ad Graphics, inc.	Hastings	Barry	Manufacturing
Highpoint Community Bank	Hastings	Barry	Finance
Middleville Tool & Die Co.	Middleville	Barry	Manufacturing
Applebee's International Inc.	Hastings	Barry	Hospitality
Hastings Fiber Glass Products	Hastings	Barry	Manufacturing
Bliss Clearing Niagara, Inc.	Hastings	Barry	Manufacturing
City of Hastings	Hastings	Barry	Government

Appendix C

Members of the Coalition to Expand Childcare Supply in the Western Region

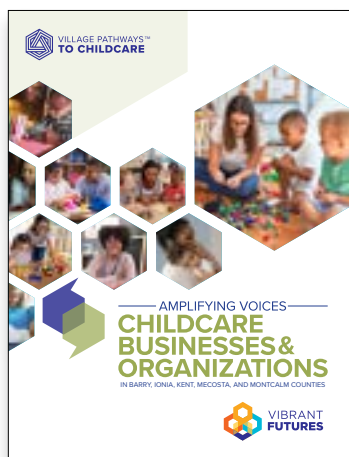
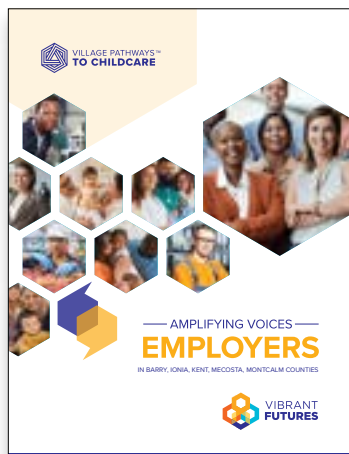
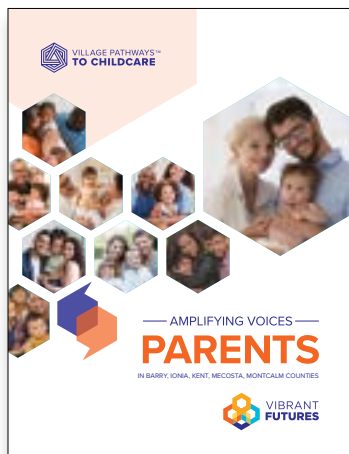
Name	Organization	County(ies)	Member Type
Alison Freas	The Source	Kent	Employers/Employees
Amy Bost	Kidz Korner	Ionia	Childcare Business Owner
Ann Kluting	Vibrant Futures	Kent	Regional Non Profit
Ariel Sherwood	Small Business Owner	Kent	Childcare Business Owner
April Goodwin	GSQ Southwest Resource Center	Ionia	GSQ-RC-Child Care Network
Ashanti Bryant	WKKF	West Michigan	Foundation
Barbara Berens	Vibrant Futures	Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm	Regional Non Profit
Bryana Hopkins	Frey Foundation	Kent	Foundation
Cari O'Connor	GSQ/GSC	Montcalm	GSQ/ Parent Lead / School District
Chana Edmond-Verley	Vibrant Futures	Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm	Regional Non Profit
Cindy Deyoung	MAISD EC	Montcalm	School District
Crystal Park	GSQ Western Resource Center	Mecosta/Ionia	GSQ-RC-Child Care Network
Dave Hamelund	Mecosta County Dev Corporation	Mecosta	Economic Development Organization
Dick Bulkowski	Steepletown	Kent	Childcare Center Director
Drew Train	GSCP	Montcalm	Parent - GSCP Parent liaison
Emily Dowd	Corewell	Kent	Business/Community
Heather Boswell	First Steps Kent	Kent	Early Childhood Organization
Heather Walczewski	GR YMCA	Kent	Childcare Center Director
Isabel Blair	Mi Casa Es Su Casa	Kent	Childcare Business Owner
Jakob Bigard	Montcalm Economic Alliance	Montcalm	Economic Development Organization
Jaime Mueller	GSQ Kent Resource Center	Kent	GSQ-RC-Child Care Network
Jennifer Headley-Nordman	First Steps Kent	Kent	Early Childhood Organization
Jennifer Heinzman	Barry County Chamber & Economic Development Alliance	Barry	Economic Development Organization
Joanne Sweedyk	Joanne's Tot Stop	Kent	Childcare Business Owner
Katherine Atkinson	Ms. Kat's Family Daycare	Kent	Parent & Childcare Business Owner
Kathleen Neumann	Grand Rapids Community College	Kent	Community Leader
Katrice Sweet	LARA	Kent, (past Mecosta, Montcalm)	Government
Kelly Wawsczyk	Mecosta Economic Development Corp/The Right Place	Mecosta	Economic Development Organization
Kerry Winkle	GSC Parent Liaison	Mecosta	Parent
Kristina Robinson	Kristi's Day Care	Kent	Parent & Childcare Business Owner
Lynn Kehoe	Small Business Owner	Ionia	Childcare Business Owner
Libby Chappell	Small Business Owner	Mecosta	Childcare Business Owner

Members of the Coalition to Expand Childcare Supply in the Western Region *Continued*

Name	Organization	County(ies)	Member Type
LeeAnn Miller-Busson	Calhoun ISD	Barry	GSPC
Lisa Hungerford	Talent First	Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm	Economic Development Organization
Maddie Elliott	Michigan's Children	Michigan	Advocacy Organization
Madonna Princer	Head Start of Kent County	Kent	GSRP - Head Start
Mindy Train	MAISD	Montcalm	Parent
Marcus Kreech	Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce	Kent	Economic Development Corporation
Nichole Lyke	Barry County Chamber & Economic Development Alliance	Barry	Economic Development Corporation
Nicole Notario Risk	Groundwork Community Consulting	Kent	Parent
Nicole Pratt	Milestones Child Care	West Michigan	Childcare Business Owner
Paula Brown	Great Start Collaborative	Kent	GSC / Parent Network
Ryan Wilson	Ionia County Economic Alliance	Ionia	Economic Development Corporation
Sally Kapteyn	Ionia GSC	Ionia	GSC / Parent Network
Shanequa Mosely	GSC	Kent	Parent - GSC Parent Liaison
Stacy Manor	Small Business Owner	Mecosta	Parent & Childcare Business Owner
Stacey Laverty	Parent/Lactation Specialist	Barry	Parent
Teresa Neal	616 Lead	Kent	Community Lead / Former Superintendent
Terri Legg	United Way	Montcalm	Economic Development Organization
James Geitzen	DHHS	Kent	Government
Tricia Smith Bennet	GSC	Mecosta	GSC / Parent Network
Trisha Dart	Little Ones Learning Early Education	Kent	Childcare Business Owner
Tyler Huntley	Huntley's Clubhouse	Mecosta	Childcare Business Owner

Appendix D

Partners



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Vibrant Futures creates cradle-to-career opportunities and experiences that hold sacred the vibrant promise and potential in every child, family, and caregiver, to ensure more vibrant futures for all.



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