



Virginia Early Childhood Integrated Financing Toolkit



Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction and Context: Why?	1
Why Build Systems?	1
Why Address Integrated Financing?	3
Why Local Communities?	4
Why Build Equitable Systems?	5
The Conundrum of Early Childhood Funding	6
Section 2: Funding Streams	7
Federal Early Childhood Funding Streams At-a-Glance	8
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	10
Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)	11
Early Head Start/Head Start	13
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B	14
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C	15
Title I of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	16
State Early Childhood Funding Streams At-a-Glance	17
Virginia Local Funding Sources	18
Local Funding Sources	19
Section 3: Problem-Solving Primer and Tools	23
Key Issues for Communities to Consider	23
Integrated Financing Information Sheet	25
Integrated Financing Self-Assessment Tool	28
Executive Summary	35
Notes	36
Early Childhood Integrated Financing FAQ	37
Who's Who?	41
Section 4: Key Takeaways	43



Section I: Introduction and Context: Why?

Why Build Systems?

Virginia is committed to **advancing school readiness** for all young children, preparing them for success in school, the workforce, and life. To achieve this complex goal, Virginia recognizes the need and urgency to convene its leaders, policymakers, and families to envision and **create an effective and sustainable system**. A stable and successful system will achieve capacity, integration, and scale of key functions at both state and local levels including governance, data/measurement, financing, and accountability. As we work toward this assertive goal in Virginia, community-led efforts like Smart Beginnings are leading the way by demonstrating capacity and innovation in these key component areas.

What is meant by “school readiness?” Virginia’s endorsed definition of school readiness includes:

- ✓ Ready Children (who have been well-supported in their developmental needs)
- ✓ Ready Families (who have been well-supported as the most influence in supporting their children’s needs)
- ✓ Ready Schools (that are ready to accept children where they are and to provide supportive services as needed)
- ✓ Ready Communities (that have a deep understanding of the risk factors for impaired development and are willing to invest in strategies to mitigate those factors)

School readiness is not:

- Just about a child’s academic knowledge at kindergarten entry
- Just about literacy and numeracy
- The results of one single test
- The result of any one single interaction or intervention
- Entirely in the hands of a family, or a PreK teacher, or a physician

Advancing school readiness in the Commonwealth requires that we build and sustain a sensible system working at both state and local levels that is accountable and yet nimble. When we consider “systems change,” we sometimes think about strategies that bring organizations together to achieve a shared goal. But systems change is not just about organizations; it is also about people and changing the ways they have historically thought and acted.¹

To effectively build a cohesive system, communities must start with a shared vision for ensuring that all families have access to the early childhood services that can equip young children to be ready for school and life. A range of relevant players will need to convene to agree on the vision and to collaboratively design and implement a framework for a coherent and seamless system that supports child development and family strength from prenatal to school age. This group of stakeholders should include representatives from diverse sectors and systems of services such as:

- Family engagement and partnership
- Home visitation
- Early childhood education delivered in public and private settings
- Services for children with learning challenges and disabilities and for English language learners
- Health, mental health, and family services based on child and family screening
- Food security
- Higher education
- Business/Employers
- Faith community
- Workforce and economic development

VECF believes that intentional systems-building can help solve some of the most pressing issues surrounding school readiness in the Commonwealth. Factors such as family engagement, health, learning, social services, all play a role and influence a child’s rapidly growing brain. We work to coordinate these often siloed systems into a more coherent whole.

As a convener between public and private sectors, our goal is to increase efficiencies, encourage innovation, and create partnerships to benefit young children, their families, the professionals who work with them, and the Commonwealth.

Smart Beginnings and other community leaders are able to deeply understand and respond to the varied needs of young children and families in neighborhoods and communities across the state. Building systems is complex work and requires a range of skills, knowledge, and relationships. **This toolkit is designed to support local and regional capacity to understand and cohesively integrate the revenue streams and resources available to support school readiness - to most effectively meet the unique early childhood needs in their community.**



Why Address Integrated Financing?

Research on child development shows emphatically that the first five years of life are a critical period of child development.² Moreover, research shows that the interactions children have with adults in that period have a substantial impact on their developmental trajectory.³

All children birth to five have a wide range of needs: they need food and shelter; they need to be cared for all day; their learning and development needs to be supported; and they need to be kept healthy. In addition to general safety, health, and developmental needs, many children have more specific needs, such as developmental delays or disabilities. Many families have home languages other than English; some children may need additional support in English language acquisition. Accordingly, investment in improved outcomes for young children is increasingly a priority for the federal government and states around the country⁵ – including Virginia.⁶ To this end, a range of publicly-funded programs have been established over many years by the federal government and the Commonwealth of Virginia.⁷

These individual federal and state programs support specific services that benefit families, but the broad range of services can feel chaotic to recipients. Each public sector funding stream has its own requirements and accountability, and those requirements are frequently in tension with each other. For over 20 years, federal reports have consistently concluded that more children would be able to be served if states aligned their programs efficiently; states often point back at the federal government as a reason for this lack of efficiency.⁸

² http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Policy_Framework.pdf; <https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2013/10/Evidence20Base20on20Preschool20Education20FINAL.pdf>

³ http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Policy_Framework.pdf; <https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2013/10/Evidence20Base20on20Preschool20Education20FINAL.pdf>; <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2013-42AllianceBirthto81.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ffyf.org/see-just-much-congress-increased-funding-early-childhood-education/>; <https://www.ffyf.org/federal-funding-for-early-childhood-programs-a-decade-of-bipartisan-progress/>

⁵ <http://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks>

⁶ <http://www.vecf.org/reports-and-tools/> (Children's Budget)

⁷ <http://www.vecf.org/reports-and-tools/> (Children's Budget)

⁸ <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Virginia-State-Fact-Sheet.pdf>



Why Local Communities?

But providing early childhood care and education services is not solely a federal and state government responsibility. Communities across the state and around the country are increasingly taking on a leadership role in supporting families' and young children's access to services. In doing so, they have sought to carve out roles that focus on the greatest needs and strengths of families while leveraging the comparative and proximal advantages of local institutions.

One of the most important roles of communities is to provide connective tissue across funding streams in a way that government does not. In a broad sense, community-level work in early childhood addresses two major interrelated issues:

- 1) Turning the complicated system into something more coherent.** By working with a range of program leaders, communities can bring intentional design to a service sector that might otherwise be a random assortment of funded programs. Communities play a valuable role by thinking holistically about available federal, state, local, and private resources, and then working with community providers to organize a system that meets local needs.
- 2) Helping families navigate the system.** Communities are best-positioned to provide them with help in that navigation. Not only can communities make information available to all interested families, they can engage them in shaping a responsive system and reach those families with the greatest needs.

In the absence of streamlined federal and state administration of early childhood funds, community leaders are tasked with understanding and leveraging disparate components to form a cohesive system that has broader, more equitable reach.

Community leaders have the opportunity to collectively and thoughtfully determine needs and goals for their service area, and then *skillfully* maximize access to funding (rather than letting the available funding drive the services provided).

Why Build **Equitable** Systems?

Virginia's School Readiness Report Card⁹ identifies a number of critical equity issues on which the state must focus, and can also serve as a guide for communities about issues worthy of their attention. For example, economically disadvantaged children and families are less likely to access early childhood care and education programs, and therefore may be less likely to enter school ready with every opportunity to succeed.

All children should be supported in reaching their full potential. To this end, VECF has committed to promote and articulate equity strategies in all of our work in early childhood systems-building. We understand that this is deep and important work that involves recognizing and working to eradicate historical and systemic inequities. We know that this requires engaging all key stakeholders in an authentic way that values diverse perspectives.

Approaching systems-building with an equity “lens” means asking deep and sometimes unsettling questions about:

- What are our biases?
- Who benefits from the way systems were designed or currently exist?
- What are the power and privilege dynamics inherent to the system?
- How are communities including the experiences of diverse families in the dialogue?

VECF will promote and articulate equity strategies that:

- authentically engage diverse stakeholders;
- promote culturally inclusive curriculum and learning environments;
- provide skill building and training opportunities centered on identification of conscious and unconscious bias and the impact on school readiness opportunities on children and families who are most disenfranchised;
- are informed by data disaggregated by socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity of children to identify trends and opportunities to take corrective action;
- include in their public relations and media platforms representation of diverse populations and messaging that is culturally informed/sensitive;
- engage with state and local leaders and organizations whose focus is building equitable systems and identifying opportunities to incorporate proven and innovative strategies.



⁹ <http://www.virginiareportcard.com/VECF2018BiennialSchoolReadinessReport.pdf>

The Conundrum of Early Childhood Funding

It is important to know that no one source of funding will likely be enough to cover the actual cost of care. To call early childhood a “challenged” business model is an understatement. Programs themselves are operating on razor-thin margins and struggling to generate enough revenue to attract and retain qualified staff. This is true in programs where every family pays full tuition equal to the true cost of care, and is true in programs dependent upon public funds that are serving children most at risk. This makes a community approach to planning and integrated financing an essential strategy to stabilize existing child care providers and provide services for children and families.

Federal early childhood programs and funding sources have grown to respond to different goals and from different Congressional and Executive branch leadership. While that has resulted in a collage of multiple programs, each plays an important role in supporting the complexity of early childhood development.

Regarding federal and state funding sources, it is important to understand that there may be allowable maneuvers that have just not been tested or tried in our state or community before. Although it feels tricky to navigate several sets of legal and financial regulations, there can still be room for innovation.

During state fiscal year 2018 (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018), total early childhood investments flowing through the state budget is estimated at \$1.31 billion, or about 2.5% of Virginia’s total budget. Federal funds make up 54% of the total and state funds make up about 46%.¹⁰ These funding opportunities have the potential to ensure Virginia’s young children have access to high-quality early childhood services so they can start school healthy and ready to learn.

Community leaders need a basic understanding of how the funds behind care and education, family, health, social, and nutritional programs can be used so that they can develop and implement strategic financing plans for their system.

This section of the toolkit is designed to help you determine what early childhood funding exists and will work best to move toward your community vision.



¹⁰ <https://www.vecf.org/virginias-childrens-budget-details-state-spending-on-early-childhood/>



Section 2: Funding Streams

In this section, we will review a variety of federal and state funding streams relevant to early childhood education, providing overview information and examples of allowable expenses. The funding streams in the chart below are explored further in depth in the following pages.



FEDERAL FUNDING STREAMS

Child and Adult Care Food Program
Child Care and Development Fund
Early Head Start/Head Start
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Parts B & C)
Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act



STATE FUNDING STREAM

Virginia Preschool Initiative



LOCAL FUNDING SOURCES

Taxes
Bonds



Federal Early Childhood Funding Streams At-a-Glance

FUNDING STREAM	PURPOSE	FEDERAL AGENCY	FLOW OF FUNDS	FUNDING TO VA
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	CACFP supports provision of nutritious foods to promote healthy development in young children (and wellness of older adults and chronically impaired persons with disabilities). CACFP participation includes training, resources and reimbursements for child care providers for meals served.	U.S. Department of Agriculture	CACFP funds flow to the VA Department of Health (VDH). VDH reimburses child care programs and sponsoring organizations that administer CACFP supports and reimbursements to child care providers.	\$29,247,222 in reimbursements (FY19)
Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)	CCDF was designed to help low-income families (in work or education/training) pay for child care. The 2014 bipartisan reauthorization expanded its purpose to improve child care and development of participating children. While CCDF funds are often talked about as subsidy for low-income working families, CCDF funds are also used for quality improvement.	U.S. Department of Health & Human Services	Virginia Department of Social Services	Federal Funds for VA: \$161.7m Required State Match: \$63.7m (FY18)
Early Head Start/ Head Start (EHS/HS)	These programs are designed to promote positive early childhood development and school readiness for children living in poverty in partnership with their families.	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Local grantees for 5-year periods VA is managed by the OHS in the Philadelphia Regional Office.	\$137.3 million ¹¹ (FY18)
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B	IDEA guarantees a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities and ensures special education and related services to qualifying children.	U.S. Department of Education	VA Department of Education	*\$6,733,263 (Part B, Section 619) (FY19)
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C	IDEA Part C has a broader role to assist state agencies in implementing systems and making early intervention services available to children with disabilities (and their families) from birth through age 2.	U.S. Department of Education	VA Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services	**\$11,232,353 (Federal Part C funds) (FY18) \$18,642,543 (State Part C funds) (FY18)

¹¹ <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/head-start-program-facts-fiscal-year-2018>

* Please note that in addition to Part B 619 funds, Part B Section 611 funds for K-12 may also be used to support services for children prior to K-12 entry. In FY19, Virginia received \$263,163,370 in federal funds for Part B Section 619 services.

** Please note that additional state, federal, local, and private funds along with parent fees contributed to a total of \$73,505,965 supporting Part C services in Virginia in FY18.



FUNDING STREAM	PURPOSE	FEDERAL AGENCY	FLOW OF FUNDS	FUNDING TO VA
Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	The purpose of ESSA Title I is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps. State Title I plans submitted to the U.S. Department of Education must address early childhood. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may use Title I funds to pay for services to improve health and development of children under school age.	U.S. Department of Education	ESSA Title I funding flows to Local Education Agencies (LEA) serving low-income children via State Education Agencies (SEAs). If the school population includes 40% or greater low-income children, then it may provide school-wide services with Title I funds.	\$279,184,039 (anticipated for FY19)

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Federal Agency: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service

Federal Funds for VA: \$29,247,222 in reimbursements (FY19)

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS?

Purpose:

The CACFP is a nutrition program that provides reimbursements to child care providers for nutritious foods served to children in care. (CACFP also supports older adults and chronically impaired persons with disabilities in care settings; for the purposes of the report, the focus will be on young children in care.)

Participant Eligibility:

Children through the age of 12 are eligible to participate in this program. All children will receive meals free of charge, regardless of family income level. Providers receive reimbursement funds for meals based on children/families income eligibility.

There is no cost to families for participation in the CACFP.

Provider Eligibility:

Public or private nonprofit child care centers, outside-school-hours care centers, Early Head Start/Head Start programs, licensed or voluntarily registered family day homes, and approved subsidy vendors may participate. For-profit programs may qualify only if at least 25% of children in the program qualify for free or reduced-price meals or receive Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds.

How it works:

Providers receive reimbursement for meals based on the income of the families of the children enrolled in their care.

- Meals served to children whose family participates in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or their family income is at or below 130% of FPL, are reimbursed at the Free rate.
- Meals served to children whose family income is between 130-185% of FPL are reimbursed at the Reduced rate.
- Reimbursement is also provided for meals served to children whose family income is above the FPL.
- Children in families receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), as well as children in Head Start or Early Head Start, are categorically eligible for the Free rate of reimbursement, as are children in foster care.

Quality Standards:

Programs must follow USDA Federal Nutrition Services regulations and standards for nutritious meals and snacks, participate in CACFP training, and maintain required documentation such as current participant eligibility, management plan and budget, monitoring, attendance, meal counts, menus, receipts, etc.

HOW DO FEDERAL FUNDS FLOW?

CACFP funds flow from the USDA, to the Food and Nutrition Services Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, to the VA Department of Health (VDH), to individual child care centers and sponsoring organizations in agreements with VDH, and then to child care centers and family day homes supported by sponsoring organizations.

Child care centers have two paths to participation in this program:

- 1) Child care centers can work with a sponsoring organization. The sponsoring organization assumes financial and administrative responsibility for overseeing CACFP participation for multiple child care providers. Sponsoring organizations provide training, monitoring, and reimbursements to these providers. Sponsoring organizations may provide meals instead of reimbursements to providers.
- 2) Child care centers can work directly with VDH. The child care center is financially and administratively responsible for their own CACFP participation. VDH provides training, monitoring, and reimbursements to these providers.

Family home providers are required by USDA to work with a sponsoring organization.

Child care providers may submit monthly claims for each meal served, by type, per child, up to:

- two meals (breakfast, lunch, or supper) and one snack, or
- two snacks and one meal.

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) (also known to state lead agencies as Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF])

Federal Agency: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families,
Office of Child Care

Federal Funds for VA: \$161.7 M federal

\$63.7 M required state match and maintenance of effort funds in FY18

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS?

Purpose:

When first created, CCDF was intended to help parents in work or education/training to pay for child care. The 2014 bipartisan reauthorization expanded its purpose to improve child care and development of participating children. While the majority of CCDF funds support Virginia's Child Care Subsidy program, CCDF funds are also used for quality improvement.

CCDF Child Care Subsidy (also known in Virginia as DSS Subsidy): operates under regulations approved by the State Board of Social Services and under a CCDF State Plan reviewed by stakeholders and approved by the federal Office of Child Care.

Quality Improvement:

In FFY20, lead agencies must expend no less than 9% of CCDF funds to improve the quality of child care services for all children, and no less than 3% related to quality of care for infants & toddlers.

Subsidy Eligibility:

- Children living in low-income families with parent(s) working or in education or training.
- Children under age 13, or up to 19 with special needs, may be eligible.
- Children in need of protective services.
- Virginia has four different eligibility levels depending on where a family lives in the state, ranging from 38-64% of State Median Income (SMI) for a family of three.
- Once found eligible, the child qualifies for a minimum of 12 months, regardless of a temporary change in parents' status as working or attending job training or education, as long as family income does not exceed 85% of SMI.
- Adult citizenship is not relevant for eligibility, only the citizenship of the child.
- When determining the number of hours of child care a family qualifies for, the state must take child development into consideration and is not limited to covering only hours the parent is working.
- If a family is above the state set initial eligibility level at redetermination, but still under 85% of SMI, then, the state must offer graduated phase-out of child care assistance.
- Eligible families must be referred to and cooperate with the Division of Child Support Enforcement unless one of the specified exceptions is met.

HOW DO FEDERAL FUNDS FLOW?

- In Virginia, the Department of Social Services (VDSS) is the designated lead agency.
- State block grants provide parameters for how funds may be used, but provide significant leeway to the state lead agency.
- For child care subsidy, states set eligibility levels, determine intake processes, copayment sliding fee, provider payment practices, and payment levels within federal parameters. For example, states may use a mix of contracts/grants direct to providers and certificates/vouchers to help families pay for child care.

Subsidy funds flow from VDSS to 120 local department of social services offices where families go to apply and receive case management services.

- For quality improvement in Virginia, programs activities include but are not limited to Virginia Quality (quality rating and improvement system); Infant & Toddler Specialist Network (training and technical assistance for providers serving infants and toddlers); child care licensure; IMPACT professional development registry; training through the Community College Workforce Alliance, PSU Better Kid Care and Child Care Aware; Virginia Child Care Provider Scholarship Program; Child Care Provider Low Interest Loan Program; consumer education; and child care resource and referral.

- Federal CCDF regulations:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-final-regulations>

- The VA state CCDF plan:

https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/cc/state_plans/State_Child_Care_Plan.pdf

https://vecf-my.sharepoint.com/personal/alyson_vecf_org/Documents/VECF/VECF.Integrated%20Financing/%E2%80%A2%09https://www.dss.virginia.gov/about/state_plans/cc.cgi

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS?

Cost to Family:

- States must establish a sliding fee scale for family copayment, with flexibility to waive copayments for families under the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), children in protective services, other special populations.
- Federal guidance recommends families pay no more than 7% of income for child care. States may waive copays for families under 100% of the federal poverty level.
- Virginia co-payments range from 5-10% of a family's gross monthly income. Co-payments are waived for TANF recipients, SNAP Education & Training program participants, and Head Start families (when all eligible children are in a Head Start) whose gross monthly income is below Federal Poverty guidelines.

Providers:

- VA DSS must conduct a survey of what child care providers are charging in the state every 3 years. The federal government encourages states to pay providers at the 75th percentile of market rate, meaning a family could access 75% of care. VA reimburses at the 70th percentile as of fall 2018 for licensed providers.
- May pay for care in centers, family child care homes, or Head Start whose gross monthly income is below Federal Poverty guidelines.

High Quality Standards:

- None federally required. Participating programs must meet state licensing rules and exceptions.
- All providers paid by the Child Care Subsidy Program must: complete federally-mandated training on basic health and safety topics prior to, or within 3 months of, being approved to provide care, undergo annual inspections, obtain fingerprint criminal background checks and a search of child protective services records, and have current first aid training and CPR certification appropriate for the age of the children served.

Note: Applicants must complete the required health and safety training prior to approval.



Early Head Start/Head Start

Federal Agency: Administered by the Office of Head Start (OHS), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Federal Early Head Start/Head Start Funding for VA: \$137.3 million in FY18

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS?

Purpose:

These programs are designed to promote positive early childhood development and school readiness for children from low-income families, who are in foster care, have disabilities, are experiencing homelessness, or are receiving public assistance in partnership with their families (using a two-generation model of child and family supports).

Eligibility:

- Early Head Start may begin as early as prenatally (through home visits and other family engagement), and continue to age three; Head Start serves 3- to 5-year-old children.
- Programs must serve the most vulnerable children in their geographic area based on a needs assessment.
- Children are eligible if they live in a family with income under 100% of the FPL, or are in the foster care system, or are homeless. Early Head Start/Head Start grantees who demonstrate all children at 100% of the FPL are being served may receive approval to serve up to 35% of their enrolled children from families with incomes up to 130% of the FPL.
- At least 10% of program enrollment must include children with disabilities.
- Once determined eligible, the child may be served until the age cut-off for EHS and Head Start, regardless of family income or work status.

Cost to Family:

- Families may not be charged for services.

Providers:

- Grantees may apply to offer one or more program options: center-based, home-based (home visit), family child care, or an approved locally-designed variation.
Center-based services may be provided in a private family child care or child care setting, provided that all Head Start/Early Head Start federal performance standards are met.

Quality Standards:

- Specific comprehensive program performance standards including education, health, nutrition, family partnerships, and governance must be met by grantees in order to be in good standing.
- Class size and staff to child ratios are set by the federal regulations.

HOW DO FEDERAL FUNDS FLOW?

Federal Head Start/Early Head Start funding is awarded directly to local grantees for 5 year periods.

Each state has a Head Start State Collaboration Director, but they do not have oversight of grantees. Instead grantees are managed by Head Start Regional Offices. VA grantees receive oversight from the OHS Regional Office in Philadelphia.

Grantees may be any local public or private nonprofit agency, including community-based and faith-based organizations, school districts, or a for-profit agency. (Note: States are eligible to compete for EHS and EHS-child care partnership grants.)

Grantees who are found to be deficient in meeting Head Start Performance Standards, and/or are facing other specific criteria may have to compete for their funding through a competitive process. Competitions may also be run if Congress provides additional funding.

Organizations seeking Head Start funding must respond to a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) issued by the Federal Office of Head Start in order to receive funding. In most cases, the FOA specifies the city or county in which the children and families must be served. Applicants can specify a geographic area within the city or county, based on a community needs assessment. Funding Opportunity Announcements specify the amount of funding available per service area and may be found here:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs/funding>

and here

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants>

Potential grantees must apply to and negotiate directly with the OHS Regional Office to serve children and families in a specific geographic area, based on a community needs assessment.

A grantee may deliver services in multiple sites and contract with “delegate” agencies to serve children.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B (preschool special education)

Federal Agency: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Federal Funding for VA: \$6,733,263 (Part B, Section 619) (FY19)

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS?

Purpose:

Part B guarantees a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible children with disabilities and ensures special education and related services to qualifying children.

“FAPE” means special education and related services that:

- are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge;
- meet the standards of the Virginia Board of Education;
- include an appropriate pre-, elementary, middle, or secondary school education in the state; and
- are provided in keeping with an individualized education program (IEP).

“Special Education” means specially-designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. It includes instruction conducted in a classroom, home, hospital, institution, or other setting at no cost to the parent.

“Related Services” means developmental, corrective, or supportive services required for a child with a disability to benefit from special education (for example, physical therapy, speech language pathology, and transportation are all related services).

Eligibility:

When a child is suspected of having a disability, a written referral or an oral request for evaluation is given to the school. The school evaluates the child to determine whether s/he has a disability as well as the nature and extent of the disability. Based on the results of the evaluation, a team decides if the child is eligible to receive special education and related services. To be found eligible, the team must decide that the child has a disability and as a result needs special education and related services. The child is eligible for special education if s/he meets criteria for one or more of the 13 disability categories recognized in Virginia.

Part B serves children 3 through age 5; in Virginia, children who are 2 years of age by Sept. 30 of the school year are also eligible.

Cost to Families:

No cost to families.

Providers:

Federal law requires that children with disabilities be served, to the maximum extent appropriate, with children who are not disabled. Part B eligible children may be served in a variety of settings, including public or private preschool programs, Head Start programs, child care facilities, and the home.

Quality Standards:

Federal and state regulations provide specific requirements for state implementation of IDEA. Federal regulations can be found here:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/regulations/federal/index.shtml

State regulations can be found here:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/regulations/state/index.shtml

HOW DO FEDERAL FUNDS FLOW?

Federal funds are awarded according to formula grants to state agencies. Part B is administered by the VA Department of Education (DOE).

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to serve children aged 3-5 who are determined to have a disability and require special education and related services. In the state of Virginia, children aged 2 (if 2 by September 30 of current school year) may also be served in Part B.

Virginia is the only state that includes 2-year-olds in Part B. Federal Part B funding does not cover the 2-year-olds; they are served either through early intervention or early childhood special education depending upon parent choice.

The majority of Part B funding must be distributed through Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the state. The flow through funds are used to provide programs to support children with disabilities in preschool programs. An LEA may use both 619 and 611 funds to support preschool-aged children. A portion of the funding stays at DOE for discretionary funds: (eg., personnel, professional development, materials, travel).

In Virginia, the formula for determining funding per division is based upon a child count from 1998.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C (early intervention)

Federal Agency: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Federal Funding for VA: \$26,456,077 (Part C) (FY18)

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS?

Purpose:

Part C has a broader role to assist (state agencies) in implementing statewide systems of coordinated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, interagency programs and making early intervention services available to children with disabilities, and their families, from birth through age 2.

Eligibility:

Part C serves eligible infants birth through age 2 and their families.

Cost to Families: Fees for some services are based on the ability to pay. Some costs are billed to insurance and other sources.

Providers:

Infant and Toddler Connection is the service provider for IDEA Part C. Services are provided in a child's "natural environment" (home, child care).

Quality Standards:

Federal regulations provide specific requirements for state implementation of IDEA. Part C requirements may be found here:

<http://ectacenter.org/partc/component.asp>

and regulations here:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2011-09-28/pdf/2011-22783.pdf>

HOW DO FEDERAL FUNDS FLOW?

Federal funds are awarded according to formula grants to state agencies.

To receive Part C, a state must serve all eligible children. The governor must appoint an Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), including parents of young children with disabilities, to advise and assist the lead agency.

Part C is managed by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS).

Funds flow through to Infant and Toddler Connection and then to 40 local systems: 29 are Community Service Boards; 11 are other entities (school divisions, universities, local health departments; other local governmental agencies). While the agencies can change, they have been relatively stable.



Title I of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Federal Agency: U.S. Department of Education, Office of State Support

Federal Funds for VA: \$279,184,039 (anticipated for FY19)

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS?

Purpose:

The purpose of ESSA Title I is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps. State Title I plans submitted to the U.S. Department of Education must address early childhood. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may use Title I funds to pay for services to improve health and development of children under school age. This could include the direct provision of services such as offering preschool in a public or private setting or could support existing programming such as providing a coach for early childhood programs where at-risk children are attending.

Eligibility:

Children who attend or are zoned to attend a school that receives Title I funds. Title I schools serve 40% or more low-income children. In a targeted assistance school, children who are at risk of failing to meet state standards are eligible, unless a waiver is granted. In a school-wide model, all students are eligible, but priority must be given to children who are at risk of failing to meet state standards. A school district may choose to use all of its Title I funds for preschool programs if the LEA believes it is the strategy that holds most promise for raising student achievement (no community in Virginia currently does this).¹²

Cost to Families:

Free

Providers:

LEA's may provide services to children birth to school age through a school operated program, a district operated program, or in coordination with community programs such as Head Start.

Quality Standards:

If early childhood services are provided with Title I funds they must meet federal Head Start Program Performance Standards.

HOW DO FEDERAL FUNDS FLOW?

ESSA Title I funding flows to LEA's serving low-income children via State Education Agencies (SEAs).

Title I services may be provided through either a targeted assistance or aschool-wide model.

If a school's population includes 40% or more low-income children, or if a school has received a school-wide eligibility waiver, then it may provide school-wide services with Title I funds.

Federal guidance on using Title I for preschool may be found here:

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance2012.pdf>

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaelguidance10202016.pdf>



¹² <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance2012.pdf>



State Early Childhood Funding Streams At-a-Glance

STATE PROGRAM (AGENCY)

Virginia
Preschool
Initiative
(VDOE)

FY18 FUNDS FOR VA

\$69,097,338
state general funds

\$6,326 per pupil
funding for
FY19 & FY20.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS?

The VPI program was established by the General Assembly in 1995 and began in FY1996 to provide VA communities with funding to enable them to provide 4-year-old children at-risk of school failure, but not served by the federal Head Start program, with a high-quality preschool education.

The local plan must address:

- Providing a quality preschool education;
- Health services;
- Family engagement;
- The facilitation of comprehensive services; and
- A transportation plan.

The preschool education may be full- or part-day, and cover the VA public school year.

There is a local match requirement, based upon the composite index and capped at 50%. The local match must be cash match from local funds directly spent on the program; up to 25% of the local match may be in-kind costs (not including fixed assets) befitting the program. Philanthropic or other private funds may be contributed to the locality to be appropriated in their local budget and then utilized as local match. In-kind contributions may not be included as contributions for any other federally- or state-funded program, and may not be funds received from the federal or state governments under other awards.



Virginia Local Funding Sources

While federal and state support of early childhood is essential, local revenue has also plays an important part in expanding access to high-quality early learning in some communities. Local Smart Beginnings efforts have designed local systems incorporating funds from multiple sources.¹³

As an important contextual note, in Virginia localities are split into counties, towns, and independent cities. Generally speaking, following the Uniform Charter Powers Act, independent cities have much more autonomous taxing authority than other localities. This means that in areas where the General Assembly (GA) has granted taxing authority to localities, cities may impose or lower taxes without limit or prior approval. Counties, on the other hand, must get GA approval for most taxation changes. Towns are sub-units of counties and have the ability to levy a limited number of supplemental taxes on top of county taxes, similarly subject to GA approval. Virginia remains a “Dillon Rule” state, meaning that localities only have legislative powers, such as taxation, that are explicitly given to them by the GA.

This section describes some of the local sources of revenue that communities can explore to fund necessary services for young children.

¹³ <http://www.vecf.org/what-is-smart-beginnings/>

Local Funding Sources

All figures cited below refer to FY16. For specifics visit:

http://hac.virginia.gov/subcommittee/Jt_Local_Fiscal_Stress/6-15-17/061517_No4_Wallmeyer_Taxation.pdf

SOURCE	WHAT IS IT?	HOW DOES IT WORK?	HOW IS IT USED NOW?
Property Taxes	Counties, cities and towns may lower or raise property taxes in Virginia. Property taxes represent by far the largest source of local revenue, accounting for more than two-thirds of local budgets. Property tax revenue goes into a locality's General Fund, where they are used for a variety of municipal functions, including education. Virginia is considered to have below-average property tax rates compared to national averages, with wide variation among localities.	Property taxes can be levied on real property (property that stays in one place, like a house) and personal property (property that moves, like a car). There is no limit on the tax rate. The tax is based of assessments of the property's value, presented as a percent per every \$100 of valuation. For instance, in Albemarle County, the average effective tax rate is \$0.72 per \$100 of valuation. By state law, cities are required to reassess at least every two years and counties every four years. Smaller cities and counties (less than 30,000 and 50,000 people respectively) can vote by referendum to instead reassess every four, five or six years. Some localities require annual reassessments. The reassessment timeframe is important because if home values have gone up or down significantly over the course of the intervening years, that can considerably change the locality's revenue base for better or worse.	Combined, real and property taxes account for about 78% of county tax revenue and 66% of city tax revenue, collected in order to support local services. These services include public education and can include early childhood education services.
Sales Taxes	Localities may impose a 1% local sales & use tax, but are legally restricted from raising it past that rate. All localities in Virginia currently impose this 1% tax.	Most goods and services purchased within the locality's boundaries are subject to the sales tax.	Sales taxes account for an average of 8.5% of city tax revenue and 6.7% of county tax revenue, and go into the General Fund.
Local Business Tax	Cities and counties in Virginia can levy a few different local business taxes. Specifically, in descending order of revenue, they can levy business license taxes, machinery & tool taxes, and merchant's capital taxes (a tax on a businesses' available physical stock). Business license tax rates have statewide statutory maximums that vary by business type.	Business license taxes apply to businesses that are physically located within a locality, machinery & tool taxes are for significant pieces of heavy equipment (such as manufacturing, broadcasting, or dry cleaning equipment), and merchant's capital taxes is applied to available stock (such as unused rental car fleets).	Nearly all cities and about half of counties are at their maximum business license tax levels, making up approximately 6% of city revenue and 3.6% of county revenue. Machinery & tool taxes and merchant's capital taxes tend to be negligible in their revenue generation (combined about 1%), although can be more significant in more manufacturing-heavy localities.

SOURCE	WHAT IS IT?	HOW DOES IT WORK?	HOW IS IT USED NOW?
Meals Taxes	The authority to levy meals taxes varies significantly between cities and counties. Cities may levy a tax with no restriction on the rate and no voter approval required; counties may not levy a tax higher than 4% and require voter referendum approval (there are statutory exceptions for Roanoke, Rockbridge, Frederick, Arlington, and Montgomery Counties, which can bypass the referendum process with a unanimous vote of their Board of Supervisors). Roughly half of Virginia counties have voted to adopt a meals tax, however in the past decade, only one-quarter of referenda have passed.	Meals taxes apply to food or drink purchased at a food establishment. Caterers must also collect meals taxes. The taxes are collected by the establishment and then remitted to the locality. Meals taxes do not apply to factory-sealed items and do not apply to grocery or convenience stores; there are also certain categorical exemptions built into each locality's ordinance.	Meals tax revenue accounts for 7.3% of city revenue and only 1.3% of county revenue. They go into the General Fund and can be set aside for specific purposes. For instance, in early 2018, Richmond City raised their meals tax in order to help fund school facility repair and construction.
Cigarette/Tobacco Taxes	Similar to meals taxes, cities have unlimited cigarette taxing authority. Counties may only levy cigarette taxes with specific GA approval, and then only up to the state tax level of \$0.30 per pack. Currently only Fairfax and Arlington Counties have this authority.	Cigarette and tobacco taxes apply on a per-pack basis.	Cigarette and tobacco tax revenue accounts for 1.2% of city tax revenue and essentially zero percent of county tax revenue outside of Fairfax and Arlington Counties.
Other Licenses and Fee Taxes	Cities and counties can put into place a variety of smaller licenses and fee taxes. The most notable of these are the lodging/occupancy tax and the motor vehicle license tax. There are also available taxes in the form of legal documents recordation taxes; bank franchise taxes (tax on the net capital of banks); admission taxes (for entertainment venues); utility taxes (electricity & gas use); rental taxes; specifically for the Southwestern part of the state, severance taxes on minerals and energy sources like coal (these go into a separate, purpose-limited fund for roadways and economic development); and, specifically for parts of Northern Virginia, personal income tax (capped at 1% and going into a purpose- and time-limited fund for transportation)	Each of these smaller taxes has their own mechanism, but work similarly to the other taxes listed above; of the ones listed here, only the lodging tax is differentiated by cities (unlimited authority) and counties (2% maximum rate unless authorized by GA).	These smaller taxes each make up between 0% and 2% of localities' revenues streams.

SOURCE	WHAT IS IT?	HOW DOES IT WORK?	HOW IS IT USED NOW?
Bonds	In Virginia, localities may issue general obligation bonds, subject to certain restrictions. Bonds are debt obligations that investors buy, providing immediate cash to the locality, and then the bonds 'mature' (are paid back with interest) on a given date. Cities can issue bonds without a referendum, but may not take on a debt load exceeding 10% of their total real property value. Counties can issue bonds with no limit, but must get voter approval, unless they are issuing bonds for the Virginia Public School Authority (a state financing institution that provides financial support to public school divisions). Either way, many localities still choose to put bond questions before voters. Unlike some states, School Boards in Virginia have no authority to issue bonds, so must rely on their corresponding city/county government to do so.	Each locality follows a bond issuance process that goes through local legal departments and a bond rating agency.	Bonds are most often used to finance school construction, arenas, or other major capital projects that a locality cannot absorb into its annual budget. For instance, in 2017, voters in Fairfax County, Loudon County, and the city of Falls Church approved a total of over \$515 million in bonds to be used for school facilities.







Section 3: Problem-Solving Primer and Tools

Key Issues for Communities to Consider

When developing a community-wide plan for school readiness, you will need to consider where you are, where you want to be, and the people who will be involved. Community engagement activities exist on a continuum from transactional to transitional to translational.¹⁴ Through collective impact, organizations work together strategically to solve a complex problem. In order to shepherd deep translational community engagement, there are key issues to consider regarding: relationships, data, and the early childhood landscape of your community.

Relationships

Relationships are at the heart of this work—and that means not just organizational relationships but also individual ones. As people move into and out of positions and organizations, their knowledge and commitment can move with them. To prevent this, you should consider formalizing partnerships through a *memorandum of understanding* (MOU) or similar mechanism.



Memorandum of Understanding

You can find sample MOUs in VECF's Data Use Toolkit:

<https://data.vecf.org/data-sharing/data-sharing-agreements-and-memoranda-of-understanding/data-sharing-agreements-and-memoranda-of-understanding-sample-mous/>

Strong partnerships include shared goals, consistent engagement, and steadfast leadership. While many successful collaborations can and do happen at the staff-to-staff level, high-level support for this work is essential to ensure a long-range community vision.

You may need to coordinate disparate entities for whom collaboration is new. Drawing on existing relationships and establishing trust is essential for successful partnerships.

Relationships with Families

Remember to include provider and family stakeholders as well, so that they are involved in this work from the beginning. It's not just about sharing information—it's also about listening to and understanding what families and services providers really need. By authentically engaging with families, collaborators can understand how systems are working and what additional resources would be most valuable.

Your stakeholders may include:

- Business leaders
- Community action agencies
- Community leaders
- Community services boards
- Early childhood care and education providers
- Head Start
- Health departments
- Libraries
- Local government
- Military services
- Organizations that serve English language learners, and/or low-income, homeless, or immigrant/refugee families
- Parents and families
- Private funders
- Professional associations
- Social and human services agencies
- Early childhood special education

Consider all of the stakeholders who are interested in child development, family health and well-being, school readiness, and economic success.

¹⁴ <https://www.strivetogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Community-Engagement-Continuum.pdf>

Data

Understanding what your community needs means a careful consideration of the available data. Knowing where your community stands on various indicators of school readiness and human well-being will help you set goals and create strategies.

It is important to use data that are disaggregated by socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity of children to help identify trends and provide opportunities to correct inequities.



Some available sources of data include:

- School Readiness Report Card and Interactive Mapping Tool
- Early Childhood Workforce Survey
- Data Sharing and Use Toolkit
- Virginia Longitudinal Data System

You may likely have, or be able to gain, access to other sources of local data about child outcomes (such as PALS PreK and PALS K data). In working to connect data from the early childhood setting to the public schools, you may need to expend considerable effort shepherding data-sharing agreements.

In addition, you may need to develop strategies to gather data that are not readily accessible. You may want to partner with a data or research consultant to design strategies to obtain data you would like to have, such as fiscal mapping.

Deeply analyzing available data and gathering information about the lived experiences of your community members will allow you to bring your data to life and use it to tell meaningful stories.

Program Landscape

As a leader in your community it is important to understand the landscape of early childhood programs and services in order to help coordinate programs and funding.

Obtaining a census or conducting a scan of the way your landscape of programs, agencies, services, etc. looks in terms of geography, auspice, quality level, capacity, ages served, hours available, and more will be essential in this work.

Fiscal Mapping

Having a granular sense of how and where (and for which children) funding for early childhood education services are distributed in your community will help you better discern where gaps are, for which children, and where additional investment may be warranted.

Some available resources regarding fiscal mapping include:

- Examples of Community Fiscal Maps
- Tutorial on Implementing a Fiscal Map
- Virginia's Children's Budget Inventory

To explore these resources, visit:

<http://smartbeginnings.org/virginia-early-childhood-integrated-financing/>

Integrated Financing Information Sheet

Virginia is committed to advancing school readiness for young children to help them be prepared for success in school, the workforce, and life. To achieve this complex goal, Virginia recognizes the need and urgency to convene its leaders, policymakers, and families to envision and create an effective and sustainable system of early childhood care and education (ECCE).

Virginia's current ECCE landscape is characterized by a diverse group of providers, (including Head Start, VPI, child care centers, family day homes, religious-exempt programs, early childhood special education (ECSE), and early intervention services) as well as a myriad of federal and state programs to support specific needs of children and families.

This diversity is a strength in that it allows for a wide array of services, but it can also feel chaotic to recipients and lead to gaps in services. Each public sector funding stream has its own requirements and accountability, and those requirements are frequently in tension with each other.

While challenging, it is possible to build a more cohesive system. However, this process will require communities to develop a shared vision for ensuring that all families have access to the early childhood services that can equip young children to be ready for school and life. A range of relevant players will need to convene to agree on the vision and to design and implement a framework for a coherent, equitable, and seamless system that supports child development and family strength from prenatal to school age. Additionally, many implementation details will need to be discussed and clarified, including: how and where eligibility is determined at the local level, which neighborhoods need expanded services or targeted dollars, which children and families should be highest priority, which service providers are best positioned to address unmet needs in the short and long-term, and more.

VECF believes that systems-building can help solve some of the most pressing issues surrounding school readiness in the Commonwealth. To that end, we have developed the **Integrated Financing (IF) Toolkit**, a comprehensive document that provides an overview of both federally and state funded programs designed to serve children birth to age 5. Included in this resource are explanations of:

- How funds are allocated and disbursed from the source to service delivery
- Entities responsible for managing funds at the state and local levels
- Amount of funding available statewide
- Program descriptions, including purpose and cost to family
- Eligibility criteria
- Program and funding standards.

In addition to the toolkit, we have developed a Self-Assessment tool which builds on the Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment Tool and process developed and required for PDG B-5 pilots. Non-PDG B-5 communities may access information about the Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment Tool and process at <http://smartbeginnings.org/virginia-early-childhood-integrated-financing/>. Enrollment and financing are deeply interconnected and Virginia communities are encouraged to think comprehensively about how these processes are governed, planned for and implemented at the local level.



In addition to the Integrated Financing Toolkit and IF Self-Assessment Tool, the state, through PBG B-5, is working with relevant partners to gather reliable community-level data about: the need for services to young children, the current availability of services, and the gap to be addressed. Some of these critically important resources are:

- **Fiscal Map.** A community level assessment of the financial resources available to serve children birth-5 with early childhood care and education services, by program type and source; and a summary of demographic characteristics of young children in those geographic boundaries. Some communities have completed fiscal maps; others may access resources and a tutorial to explore fiscal mapping on the VECF website.
- **VECF Integrated Financing Toolkit.** A comprehensive review of funding streams, programs, eligibility criteria and guidelines, and key community stakeholders responsible for ensuring early childhood care and education services for children birth-5 in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- **VA Child Care Mapping Project.** Child Care Aware of Virginia's child care mapping project is designed to enable viewers to see the various types of child care programs throughout Virginia and overlaid with child poverty data.

**Specific thus far to PDG B-5 pilot communities:*

- **Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment Tool.** An activity that PDG B-5 pilot communities have undertaken to convene ECCE stakeholders with the goal of coordinating outreach and enrollment practices to maximize services for children 0-5. Non-PDG B-5 communities may access this resource at <http://smartbeginnings.org/virginia-early-childhood-integrated-financing/>.
- **LinkB5 Data Portal.** A data portal designed for the PDG B-5 pilot communities, sites, and teachers to capture information on access and quality from (at a minimum) all early education programs receiving public funds to serve young children with early childhood care and education services. At this time, only PDG B-5 communities have access to this resource.

Convening Local Stakeholders

Information and data are only valuable when they are used by stakeholders to craft and implement a vision for comprehensive services for all children and families in that community. The **Integrated Financing Self-Assessment Tool** has been developed to assist communities in identifying, collecting, and utilizing data and information. This document will guide community stakeholders through a process designed to improve the coordination of multiple programs and funding streams with the goal of “utilizing every available dollar to serve every child who needs these resources.”

In a process similar to the recent *PDG B-5 Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment*, communities are being asked to convene a group of stakeholders that represent the full spectrum of the ECCE community.* This group should include representatives from diverse sectors and systems of services including, but not limited to: early childhood education delivered in the home as well as public and private settings; services for children with learning challenges, disabilities, and English language learners; and, health, mental health, and family screening.

Using the relevant documents, the collaborative group will respond to a set of questions that will expand their understanding of the needs of young children, the current delivery of services to meet these needs, and the gaps in services within their local community.

The Integrated Financing Self-Assessment Tool also invites stakeholders to identify action steps that will begin to address the need for improved coordination and more comprehensive services in the community. Because of this, communities will want to identify a process for continued engagement and monitoring of progress toward this shared vision.

As a part of an initial convening, the group should address logistical considerations including:

- Who will lead/facilitate the collaborative’s work?
- How often will the group need to meet?
- How will communication flow between group members in between meetings?
- Who else needs to be at the table, and how will outreach take place?

Additional guidance on convening the session and completing the self-assessment can be found in the tool itself as well as in the FAQ.

**** Please note the utilization of the IF Toolkit and Self-Assessment Tool are not required for Smart Beginnings, Mixed Delivery, or PDG B-5 pilot communities. If communities choose to pursue goals and activities related to integrated financing, VECF will provide technical assistance and resources in support of community efforts.***



Integrated Financing Self-Assessment Tool

This Integrated Financing Self-Assessment Tool is designed to help evaluate how your community is utilizing all relevant, available early childhood care and education (ECCE) resources to meet the needs of children and families in your community by reviewing information and data collected from a variety of recent initiatives, including:

- **Fiscal Map.** A community level assessment of the financial resources available to serve children birth-5 with early childhood care and education services, by program type and source; and a summary of demographic characteristics of young children in those geographic boundaries. Some communities have completed fiscal maps; others may access resources and a tutorial to explore fiscal mapping on the VECF website.
- **VECF Integrated Financing Toolkit.** A comprehensive review of funding streams, programs, eligibility criteria and guidelines, and key community stakeholders responsible for ensuring early childhood care and education services for children birth-5 in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- **VA Child Care Mapping Project.** Child Care Aware of Virginia's child care mapping project is designed to enable viewers to see the various types of child care programs throughout Virginia and overlaid with child poverty data.

**Specific thus far to PDG B-5 pilot communities:*

- **Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment Tool.** An activity that PDG B-5 pilot communities have undertaken to convene ECCE stakeholders with the goal of coordinating outreach and enrollment practices to maximize services for children 0-5. Non-PDG B-5 communities may access this resource at <http://smartbeginnings.org/virginia-early-childhood-integrated-financing/>.
- **LinkB5 Data Portal.** A data portal designed for the PDG B-5 pilot communities, sites, and teachers to capture information on access and quality from (at a minimum) all early education programs receiving public funds to serve young children with early childhood care and education services. At this time, only PDG B-5 communities have access to this resource.

Why Engage in this Process?

Research on child development shows emphatically that the first five years of life are a critical period of child development. To this end, a range of publicly-funded programs have been established over many years by the federal government and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Each public sector funding stream has its own requirements, standards, and accountability, and those requirements are frequently in tension with each other. While the PDG B-5 Needs Assessment documents that Virginia has physical capacity across its various ECCE programs to serve 75% of children birth to age five, there is significant disconnect (in available financing, age/socioeconomic status eligibility, location/geography) between seats and children in need.

In the absence of streamlined federal and state administration of early childhood funds, community and site leaders are tasked with understanding and “knitting” available revenue streams/programs into a coherent system that maximizes reach. Local community leaders have the opportunity to collectively and thoughtfully determine needs and goals for their service area, and then *skillfully* maximize access to funding (rather than let the available funding drive the services provided).

Overview of the Process

Virginia has significant opportunity at present to build an effective and durable system to advance school readiness for young children. In some communities, the PDG B-5 grant helps accelerate these efforts with resources to collect timely information about services to young children at the community level. For all communities, this self-assessment process will facilitate a conversation about available data, information, and resources to assist your community to:

- Identify assets and gaps (successes and challenges) in the delivery of services to young children
- Develop action steps to address challenges
- Envision a process and commitment to expand and sustain coordination of ECCE funding in your community.

The table below provides a set of questions that draws on the available documents/resources to guide your conversation of critical issues. Data sources available to PDG B-5 communities are marked with an asterisk. While the Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment Tool is available to interested communities by visiting <http://smartbeginnings.org/virginia-early-childhood-integrated-financing/>, the LinkB5 Data Portal is limited to only those PDG B-5 pilot communities at this time but may be more broadly available in the future.

CRITICAL ISSUES <i>Potential Data Source</i>	KEY QUESTIONS	RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS	POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS
Stakeholder Engagement <i>LinkB5 Data Portal*</i>	What are the total number/percentage of sites in your community that you can identify and/or secure data for? Is the level of participation sufficient to provide a comprehensive view of the current level of services? What efforts/activities might increase engagement from programs in a whole-community effort?		
Stakeholder Engagement <i>Coordinated Enrollment* Self-Assessment Tool</i>	What do you know about the level of engagement and coordination among ECE stakeholders in your community?		
Stakeholder Engagement <i>VECF Integrated Financing Toolkit</i>	Using the list of potential stakeholders in the IF Toolkit, can you identify critical partners who may be missing from your community's table of partnership and collaboration? What efforts are needed to include all stakeholders?		

CRITICAL ISSUES <i>Potential Data Source</i>	KEY QUESTIONS	RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS	POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS
<p>Services Needed (# of Children needing ECCE services)</p> <p><i>Fiscal Map and VA Child Care Maps (for demographic information)</i></p> <p><i>VECF Integrated Financing Toolkit (for eligibility rules)</i></p>	<p>What do the data tell you about the estimated number of infants and toddlers likely to need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care (private pay) • Child Care (subsidized) • Early Head Start <p>What do the data tell you about the estimated number of 3 and 4-year-old children likely to need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care (private pay) • Child Care (subsidized) • Head Start <p>Since Pre-K may be delivered as a <i>stand-alone</i> program or in the context of a child care setting, and may be selected by non-working parents, what are some ways you might estimate the number of children in need of VPI resources?</p> <p>What do the data tell you about the number of children likely to need supplemental supports provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title I Preschool • Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) 		
<p>Funding: Met Need</p> <p><i>Fiscal Map</i></p> <p><i>CCA Child Care Mapping Project</i></p>	<p>What do you know about the number/percentage of children who currently receive funding, by source?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care subsidy • Head Start • Early Head Start • VPI • Title I Preschool • ECSE • Private scholarships/ philanthropy 		
<p>Funding: Unmet Need</p> <p><i>Fiscal Map</i></p> <p><i>LinkB5 Data Portal*</i></p>	<p>Compare the data from “Services Needed” to the data in “Funding: Met Need”</p> <p>Where are the largest gaps between Need and Served?</p> <p>What are the most pressing needs to be addressed?</p>		

CRITICAL ISSUES <i>Potential Data Source</i>	KEY QUESTIONS	RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS	POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS
Available Supply <i>LinkB5 Data Portal*</i>	<p>The data portal will provide a snapshot of enrollment, by classroom, for sites in the communities that have entered data.</p> <p>What do the data tell us about how fully enrolled programs are currently, by age of children?</p>		
Supply/Demand <i>LinkB5 Data Portal*</i>	<p>What do the data on vacancy tell us about where slots are most needed, and for what ages of children?</p> <p>Assuming that child care programs should maintain at least 90% enrollment to be fiscally sound, are programs enrolled at a high enough rate to ensure financial sustainability at the site?</p> <p>If some programs are significantly under-enrolled, how would you explore a mis-match between supply and demand?</p> <p>If care is lacking in specific neighborhoods, how could you make funding available to support supply in that area?</p>		
Blending/Braiding Funding Streams <i>VECF Integrated Financing Toolkit</i> <i>LinkB5 Data Portal*</i>	<p>Using Funding Streams Table, identify sites that received funding from multiple sources, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCDF (Child Care Subsidy) • Head Start • Early Head Start • VPI • Title I Preschool • ECSE • CACFP <p>What would be helpful to know from programs that are accessing multiple funding streams?</p> <p>Are there models for braiding/ blending funding that could be replicated in other sites?</p>		

CRITICAL ISSUES <i>Potential Data Source</i>	KEY QUESTIONS	RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS	POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS
<p>Resource Utilization: Child and Adult Care Food Program</p> <p><i>LinkB5 Data Portal*</i></p> <p><i>CCA Child Care Mapping Project</i></p>	<p>What is the percentage/number of child care centers and family child care homes utilizing the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?</p> <p>Do the data indicate that this resource is being fully utilized? If not, what strategies might expand utilization of this resource?</p>		
<p>Resource Utilization: Subsidized Child Care</p> <p><i>Fiscal Map</i></p> <p><i>VECF Integrated Financing Toolkit</i></p>	<p>What do the data tell you about the need for more child care subsidy dollars?</p> <p>What additional information is needed and how could this be attained, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there a waiting list for families in your community who are eligible for or have applied for subsidy? - How long does it take for eligible families to receive a subsidy voucher? - Are there families who have received a voucher but are unable to find an appropriate, available placement (slot) for their child/children? - Are there available funds that have not been utilized to serve eligible children? 		

CRITICAL ISSUES <i>Potential Data Source</i>	KEY QUESTIONS	RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS	POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS
Resource Utilization: Virginia Preschool Initiative and Title I <i>Fiscal Map</i> <i>VECF Integrated Financing Toolkit</i>	<p>What do the data tell you about the need for additional resources for preschool options for 4-year olds through the public schools?</p> <p>Using data from the local VPI plan, identify the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local partners who deliver PreK services • Funding sources to meet the required fiscal match • Level of VPI funding accepted from the state/compared to level of funding allocated • Level of Title I funding used for early childhood services or slots <p>Based on this review, is there a need for additional efforts to maximize use of VPI or Title I funding in the community?</p>		



CRITICAL ISSUES <i>Potential Data Source</i>	KEY QUESTIONS	RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS	POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS
<p>Resource Utilization: Head Start/Early Start</p> <p><i>Fiscal Map</i></p> <p><i>LinkB5 Data Portal*</i></p>	<p>What do the data tell you about the need for additional services for children with high needs (from families at or below poverty or with a disability)?</p> <p>What agencies deliver HS/EHS services in our community? (Remember these agencies also do eligibility determination, so they are a primary point of contact for families.)</p> <p>What information/data would be useful to know about from these HS/EHS service providers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are they fully enrolled? Are spaces available in any locations? - Are there wait lists for HS services? - Are there wait lists for EHS services? - When HS/EHS agencies cannot serve a family, where else do they refer them for services? - Are there wait lists in some neighborhoods or localities served by the HS/EHS grantee(s) and hard-to-fill or open slots in others? 		
<p>Resource Utilization: Early Childhood Special Education Services</p> <p><i>Fiscal Map</i></p> <p><i>VECF Integrated Financing Toolkit</i></p>	<p>What do the data tell us about the need for services for children with special needs aged 2-5 in our community?</p> <p>What agencies deliver services for ECSE in our community?</p> <p>Using the background information from VECF IF Toolkit, what information for agency leaders would be useful to know about challenges/obstacles to reaching children and families in need of services?</p>		

Executive Summary:

Reflecting on the information you have assembled through this process, what are the most important takeaways that your collaborative team would like to address?

If you were to re-cap for an outsider, the story of early childhood in your community, what are the most important things to say (in 2-3 sentences)?

Notes:



Early Childhood Integrated Financing FAQ

All children birth to five have a wide range of needs: they need food and shelter; they need care while parents are working; their learning and development needs to be supported; and they need to be kept healthy. Additionally, many children have more specific needs, such as developmental delays or disabilities, home languages other than English; or need additional support in English language acquisition. To this end, a range of publicly-funded early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs have been established over many years by the federal government and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Virginia has the opportunity to engage in a thoughtful review and planning for the utilization of public resources for children birth-5. An especially relevant resource for this review is Virginia's experiences with the community pilots and activities funded through the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG B-5). While PDG B-5 communities are required to engage in this process, every community in Virginia can benefit from consideration of the strategies and activities.

Communities have the opportunity and motivation to convene early childhood stakeholders to:

- Review the information in the Integrated Financing (IF) Toolkit to gain an understanding about the myriad of ECCE programs and funding streams available to serve children ages birth to five and their families
- Identify and review relevant data about the local community gathered from a variety of sources
- Identify community strengths and opportunities to more effectively utilize all available resources
- Develop and implement action steps to improve the coordination and utilization of ECCE resources.

The *Integrated Financing Self-Assessment tool* will lead your group through a series of questions designed to increase your understanding of **the need for early childhood services and the current supply of those services in your community**. Using relevant data and the IF Toolkit, you will be able to begin identifying opportunities to address the gap between need and available resources.

Please note that this self-assessment builds on and is modeled after the Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment tool and process that PDG B-5 pilots have been required to conduct. Non-PDG B-5 communities may access the Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment tool for their own use at <http://smartbeginnings.org/virginia-early-childhood-integrated-financing/>. Enrollment and financing are deeply interconnected and communities are encouraged to think comprehensively about how these processes are governed, planned for and implemented at the local level.

General Questions

1) What is the purpose of the Integrated Financing Self-Assessment Tool?

The IF Self-Assessment tool and process are meant to increase ECCE stakeholders' understanding of programs and funding available to serve young children, birth to 5; and to promote community collaboration around the optimal use of these resources. This work begins by developing a shared vision for comprehensive services to meet the needs of children and families in your community.

2) Why is my community being asked to participate?

Children and families in communities across Virginia will benefit when decision makers in their communities gather and use data about the ECCE resources available to them in order to provide the greatest possible access to high quality ECCE. Communities that currently operate a Mixed Delivery Preschool Grant program initiative may find these strategies especially helpful as they work to combine private and public funding to support high quality preschool.

PDG B-5 communities have been charged with helping Virginia identify the current needs and opportunities for improving services to children and families across the state. While the PDG B-5 Needs Assessment documents that Virginia has physical capacity across its various ECCE programs to serve 75% of children birth to age five, there is significant disconnect (in available financing, age/socioeconomic status eligibility, location/geography) between those seats and children needing to be served. Integrated financing strategies can significantly and positively impact the delivery of services to young children. Your community is invited to participate in order for your providers, families, and young children to benefit from insights learned through this process.

3) What is my community being asked to do?

Communities are invited to convene early childhood and community stakeholders to collaborate on reviewing and discussing the information and data made available through this initiative. Using the questions in the IF Self-Assessment Tool, along with the relevant sources of data and information, groups will be asked to identify significant gaps in needed services and strategize first steps to address these gaps. **No community is required to pursue this effort, but will be supported with technical assistance and relevant resources if you choose to do so.**

4) What if we are not able to answer all the questions in the Self-Assessment tool?

We recognize that this process is new to most communities and that data may not be readily available especially at the outset. Communities may find missing data elements or may need to build deeper, trusting relationships with ECCE colleagues in order to facilitate unfettered sharing of information about funding and services. We anticipate that the IF Self-Assessment Tool will be the first important step in a process that will engage ECCE stakeholders in building a vision of what is possible when communities work together to make data-informed decisions about the delivery of ECCE services.

5) Where can I find more information about Integrated Financing?

- a. More information about Integrated Financing can be found at <http://smartbeginnings.org/virginia-early-childhood-integrated-financing/>
- b. For more information about Virginia's PDG B-5 grant, visit the PDG B-5 website.

Logistical Considerations

6) Who would be responsible for organizing this collaboration?

- a. Your PDG B-5, Mixed Delivery, and/or Smart Beginnings Lead – or someone they designate – would be well-positioned to convene and facilitate the collaboration.
- b. Meetings of the collaborative should be scheduled at times convenient for the multiple provider types in the community. At the convening, attendees should decide on a facilitator who will run the discussions and compile attendees' responses on the self-assessment tool.
- c. Collaborative members should decide how they will determine the best answers for the questions presented. A consensus approach is recommended.
- d. Collaborative members should also discuss the timing and frequency of future meetings to monitor progress of the action steps identified in the assessment tool.



7) Who should be included in this collaborative?

a. Communities should include as many early childhood providers and relevant stakeholders as possible in these sessions. At minimum, communities should ensure that at least one representative from each of the following groups are present:

- i. Family day home director/owner
 - ii. Private child care director (including faith-based program leader)
 - iii. Head Start director/regional coordinator (if applicable)
 - iv. School-based (e.g. VPI) principal or coordinator
 - v. Early childhood special education program representative (from the schools)
 - vi. Local Community Service Board representative familiar with Early Intervention services for children 0-3
 - vii. Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) representative – familiar with the intake and eligibility determination process for child care subsidy
 - viii. Local philanthropy (especially if local entities – such as the United Way – fund early childhood programs or services)
- b. Additionally, communities may wish to include community partners such as family advocates or pediatricians, among others.

8) Is my community allowed to spend PDG B-5, Smart Beginnings, Mixed Delivery funds to support this effort?

a. The general PDG B-5 guidance on allowable food and travel expenditures applies to Coordinated Enrollment and Integrated Financing sessions. In short, communities should not use funds to purchase food unless doing so is necessary to accomplish meeting business. Any food and travel costs must comply with GSA rates. Questions about the use of funds should be sent to Lucy Mitzner (lucy@vecf.org).

b. Mixed Delivery grantees may use Mixed Delivery funds to support this effort. Questions about the use of funds should be sent to Amy Hatheway (amy@vecf.org).

c. Smart Beginnings initiatives who receive funding from VECF will need to follow guidance related to TANF funding, as described in relevant Scopes of Work and attachments, before undertaking expenditures related to integrated financing. Questions about the use of funds should be sent to Amy Hatheway (amy@vecf.org) or Emily Keenum (emily@vecf.org).

9) My community is geographically large – should I convene separate groups or a regional collaborative?

a. The purpose for the collaborative is to promote discussion and integration within a relatively distinct community where families might seek care. Large-footprint communities may wish to hold collaboratives for geographically-distinct sub-communities, though the community should seek to include cross representation of provider types within meetings. Other communities, where there is great fluidity between contiguous localities due to commuting patterns or the relative locations of neighborhoods and ECCE programs, might choose to convene groups representing more than one locality.

b. For example, PDG B-5 communities composed of multiple counties may consider holding separate sessions for each county. Each of these communities would then submit its own self-assessment.

10) Can my Mixed Delivery Leadership Team or my Smart Beginnings Leadership Council serve as the collaborative that considers integrated financing strategies?

a. Some Leadership Teams and Leadership Councils will be well positioned to be part of a collaborative. However, leaders should ensure that they convene representatives from all relevant stakeholder groups.

11) Can I hold this session as part of my PDG B-5 community quarterly meeting?

a. Yes. However, you should ensure that at least one of each of the provider types listed previously are present at that meeting.

12) Who will see my community's responses to this self-assessment?

a. Only members of the collaborative team will see community responses to this self-assessment unless your members choose to share beyond the group.

13) What if there are no providers of a certain type (e.g. Head Start) in my community?

a. If there are no providers of a certain type in the community, please note this in the self-assessment form.

14) How should my community decide on responses to the self-assessment?

a. Attendees should determine how best to arrive at decisions. We recommend that decisions represent consensus; however, other options (e.g. majority vote) may also be appropriate.

15) What should I do if a particular question on the self-assessment tool is not relevant to my community?

a. If a specific question is not relevant to your community or if none of the response options truly reflect your community's response, please indicate this in the "Comments, Examples, or Evidence" box associated with each section. For instance, if no dual language learners live in your community, you may indicate this.

16) What should I do if providers attending the self-assessment session in my community cannot agree on responses to the self-assessment?

a. Before starting the self-assessment, be sure that all attendees agree on how the group will arrive at making decisions (e.g. consensus, majority vote) and that the facilitator honors this process.

b. If your community cannot agree on a response to a specific question on the self-assessment tool, please note this in the "comments" section of the appropriate section.





Who's Who?

Every region of the state is unique. Different challenges, different populations, different organizations. No one solution will work in every community, which is why a community-driven approach to school readiness is so important.

Many partners need to be involved to create a cohesive system that maximizes all the available resources. A good plan for addressing the community's needs will be informed by and involve the participation of many stakeholders. The chart below is a starting point for you; however, in your community you may need to do a little additional digging.

Community leaders across the state stress that this work is not easy. You'll need to be strategic about building trust and gaining access. Consider in your approach an appeal to a higher intention. Approach this work with a problem-solving orientation, and, if possible, examples of how it can be done.

IF YOU WANT TO WORK WITH THESE PARTNERS...	YOU SHOULD CONTACT...	YOU'LL NEED TO THINK ABOUT...
Head Start / Early Head Start	Head Start Collaboration Office Virginia Head Start Association Local Head Start Director Community Action Partnership (CAP) Agencies	In Virginia, Head Start grantee organizations are diverse and include community action agencies, non-profits, municipal government, and school systems. Head Start programs are held accountable to performance standards which ensure high levels of program quality, teacher qualifications, and family support. Head Start has provided considerable leeway as to where services are delivered (public schools, private centers, family day homes).
Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)	Local VPI Coordinator	VPI funding flows through school divisions or in a few cases, local government and are therefore subject to local budgeting processes and timelines. VPI also has considerable leeway as to where services are delivered (public schools, private centers).
School Divisions	Superintendent Director of Early Childhood Director of Special Education Federal program representatives	Working with a bureaucratic entity: there is often (sometimes unwritten) protocol about who makes what types of decisions, how these requests are funneled, or who has the agency or authority to respond. The decisions at the division level are often made months (or years) in advance. Attempting fast-paced innovation is unlikely to be a successful strategy. Working with a school system also comes with community-wide benefits, such as: data sharing, connections with kindergarten and early elementary, increased compensation for teachers, and administrative resources, job-embedded professional development, and opportunities for career growth. In some divisions with larger fiscal staffing, the accountability systems are sophisticated. Behind the scenes, funding from different streams is kept siloed for accountability purposes; in a classroom, it's impossible to tell what dollar what spent for what service/child. School divisions utilize a variety of state and federal funding sources to deliver early childhood programs; regulations and accountability requirements vary considerably.

IF YOU WANT TO WORK WITH THESE PARTNERS...	YOU SHOULD CONTACT...	YOU'LL NEED TO THINK ABOUT...
Private Child Care Providers (centers, family day homes, religious exempt programs)	Providers directly. Local departments of social services.	<p>Local trainings, workshops, directors' groups and association meetings are all good places to share information.</p> <p>Private child care providers may have the most flexibility to innovate, try new things, adapt new models, and work with new partners. However, that flexibility is often overshadowed by a fear of financial risk. Understand that and help think through solutions that meet both the community's needs and the provider's needs as well.</p> <p>Early childhood directors and administrators may be difficult to access. This is not because they lack interest or motivation. It helps to understand that their days are often unpredictable and the best laid plans can go awry when responding to the needs of small (and large!) humans.</p> <p>Understand that building a relationship--and trust--may take many calls, meetings, and visits. Think about who in your community already has established relationships with the provider community.</p> <p>Think about communicating regularly, in multiple ways. Oftentimes, successes are about catching someone at the right time.</p> <p>Think about convenience for the providers: a 6 a.m., 7 p.m. or Saturday meetings may be the only times they are consistently available.</p> <p>Sometimes a provider is not the "decision-maker," and you will need to figure out who is--the Board of Directors? A corporate office? An owner? The families?</p>





Section 4: Key Takeaways

As community leaders consider their potential actions to support young children and their families, they should keep in mind the following:

The early years really matter.

From a child development standpoint, there's no better opportunity to influence long-term outcomes.

It's not just about early education and care.

All children have learning and developmental needs in their first five years – and they also need somewhere to be while their parents are working. Early education and care programs like Head Start, VPI, and child care are helping to meet those needs for many children. But all children also have a range of other needs that those programs don't meet. That makes coordination across providers and sectors a critical priority.

Communities have a unique and essential role to play.

The U.S. and Virginia governments are funding early childhood services, which Virginia providers are delivering to Virginia families. But the organization and quality of that service delivery is stronger when communities step up and play a leadership role. Communities can make the system more coherent, and make it easier for families to be matched with the services they need. And where federal and state funding does not meet community needs, communities can step up and fill those gaps.

Communities succeed when they work collaboratively.

Because the work is multi-sector and requires building coherence, it's important to work together. Communities can convene leaders from multiple sectors, and can facilitate the relationships needed to make the work successful. This requires strong leadership – but that leadership can come from a variety of sources within the community.

Be clear on the goals.

Community collaboratives won't have the capacity to do everything that matters, so they should focus on some critical problems where they can really make a difference. In doing so they should use data to both define their scope of activity and track progress toward their desired outcomes.

Put families and children at the center.

The community's priorities should be based on the needs of parents, and parents must be engaged and included in the design of the strategies to address those needs. Families should be able to access information in formats that they can easily understand, and processes should be in place to facilitate families' knowledge about, access to, and navigation of services and programs. Parent leadership and engagement as problem-solvers is key to successfully designing an equitable and effective system. Providers should be supported to deliver high-quality services, with a focus on the interactions between adults and children.

Community voice matters at the state level.

State policy is constantly evolving, and for Virginia to get it right requires communities sharing their insights to inform policy development.