



# An Information Session for Employers

September 28, 2026



# Today's Presenters

## Virginia Early Childhood Foundation

*nonpartisan steward of Virginia's promise for early childhood success*



**SUSANNE BELL**

President



**AMY HATHEWAY**

Vice President of Community Networks

## Executives Partnering to Invest in Children

*business advisor on child care challenges facing the workforce*



**SARAH GLOVER**

Engagement Director

# Today's Purpose



1

**Learn about  
Ready Together VA**



2

**Connect child care to  
workforce needs**



3

**Discuss questions and  
next steps**

## **You'll leave with:**

*An understanding of Ready Together VA, key considerations for your organization, and next steps for support.*

# Context

Critical  
workforce issue

Priority of  
business  
community

Bipartisan  
support

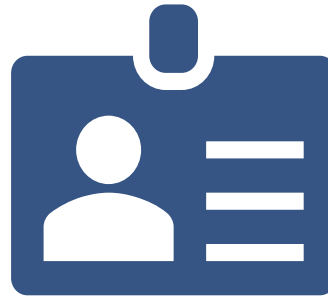
Regional  
leadership and  
innovation

# Child Care is Essential Infrastructure



## **Business-Ready Communities**

Reliable child care is a magnet for new businesses and jobs, which supports a growing and successful economy.



## **Work-Ready Families**

Affordable child care gives employees peace of mind to stay in their jobs and earn a steady income to support their families.



## **School-Ready Children**

Quality child care helps children enter kindergarten with the academic and social skills they need to succeed.

LEARN ABOUT

READY TOGETHER VA

# Child Care Cost Share Legislation

- In 2026, SB3 (Aird) and HB18 (McClure) created the Employee Child Care Assistance Program, administered by VECF
- **Incentivize employers to contribute to child care costs** on behalf of employees (the state contributes as well)
- Funds will flow through Ready Region lead agencies (referred to as third-party administrator or TPA)

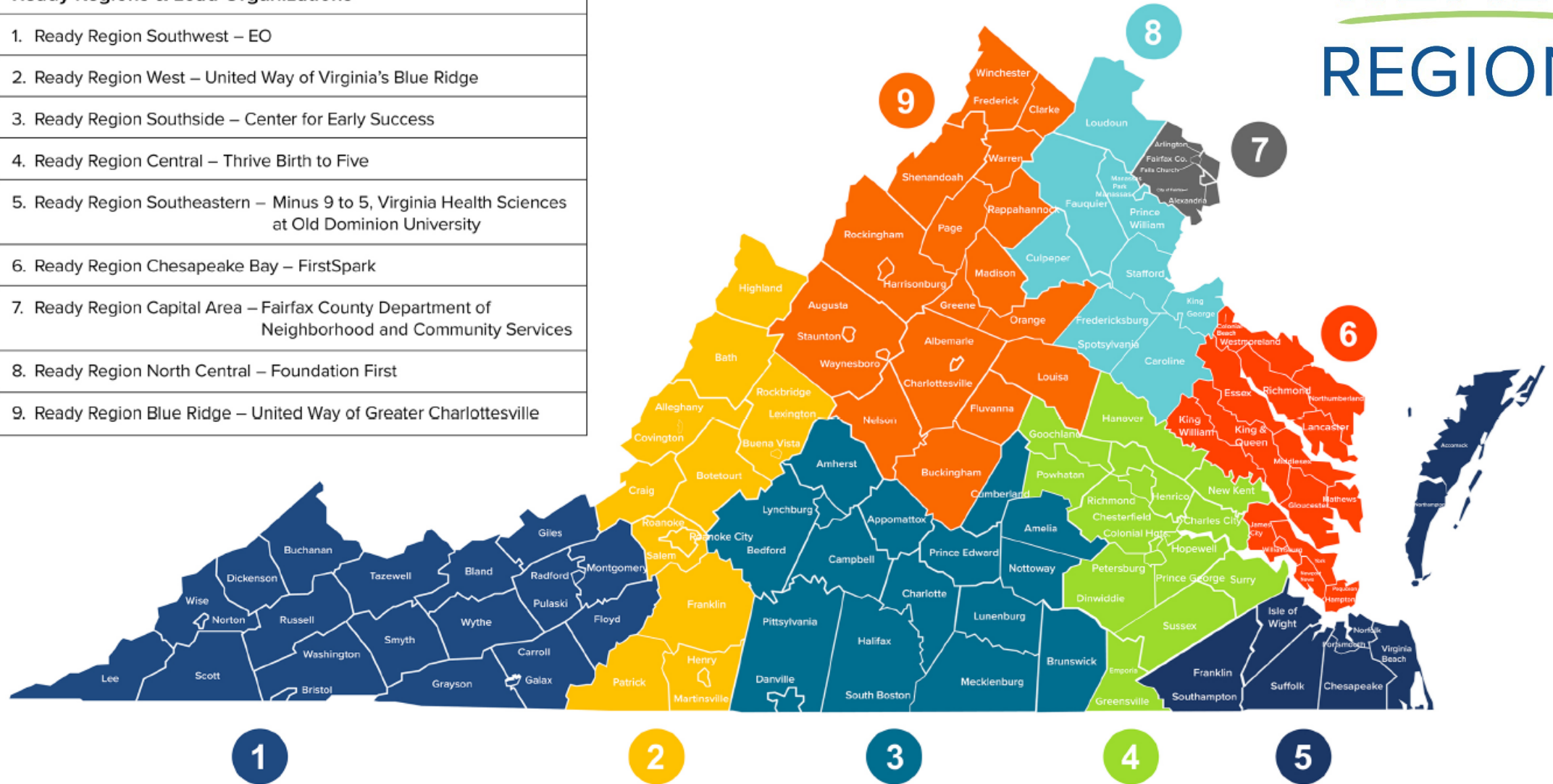


IN LEGISLATION:  
Employee Child  
Care Assistance  
Program

PUBLIC NAME:  
Ready Together VA

# READY REGIONS®

| Ready Regions & Lead Organizations*                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Ready Region Southwest – EO                                                                   |
| 2. Ready Region West – United Way of Virginia's Blue Ridge                                       |
| 3. Ready Region Southside – Center for Early Success                                             |
| 4. Ready Region Central – Thrive Birth to Five                                                   |
| 5. Ready Region Southeastern – Minus 9 to 5, Virginia Health Sciences at Old Dominion University |
| 6. Ready Region Chesapeake Bay – FirstSpark                                                      |
| 7. Ready Region Capital Area – Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services  |
| 8. Ready Region North Central – Foundation First                                                 |
| 9. Ready Region Blue Ridge – United Way of Greater Charlottesville                               |

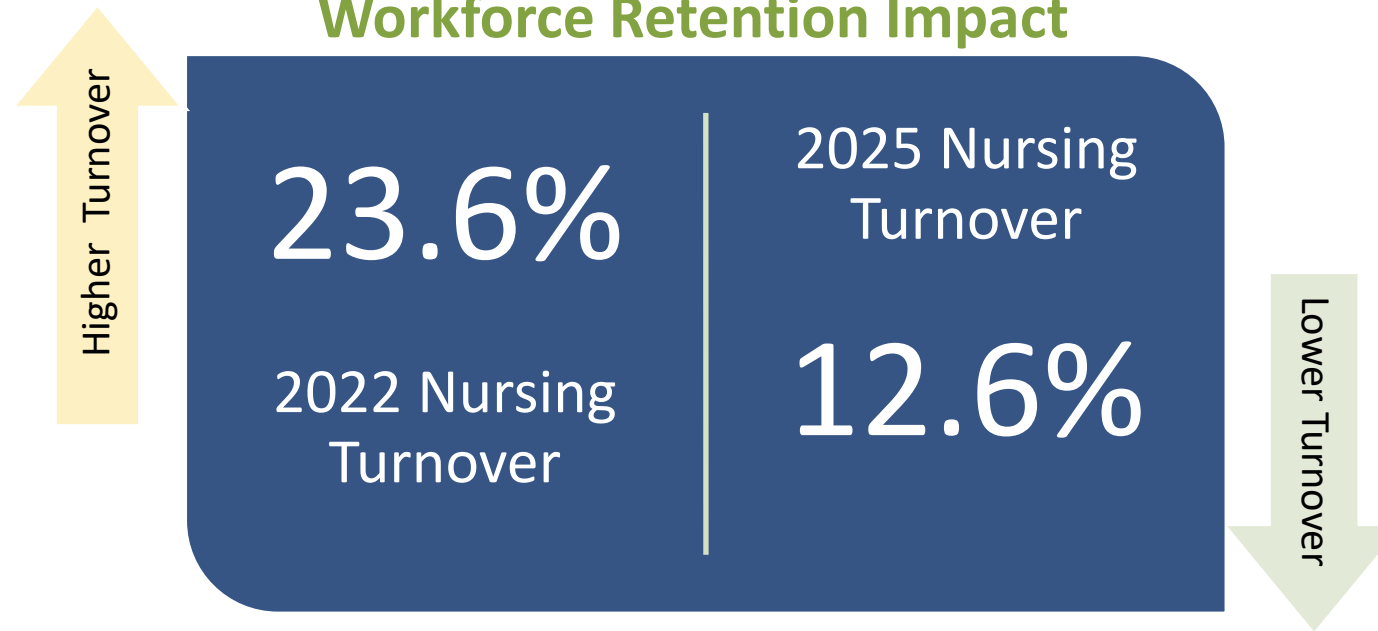


\* Although one organization is identified as the Ready Region lead, they must partner with school divisions, social and human services, quality improvement networks, early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs, and other organizations involved in Virginia's public-private network focused on the coordination and integration of critical services and resources for families with young children.

# Ready Together Pilot

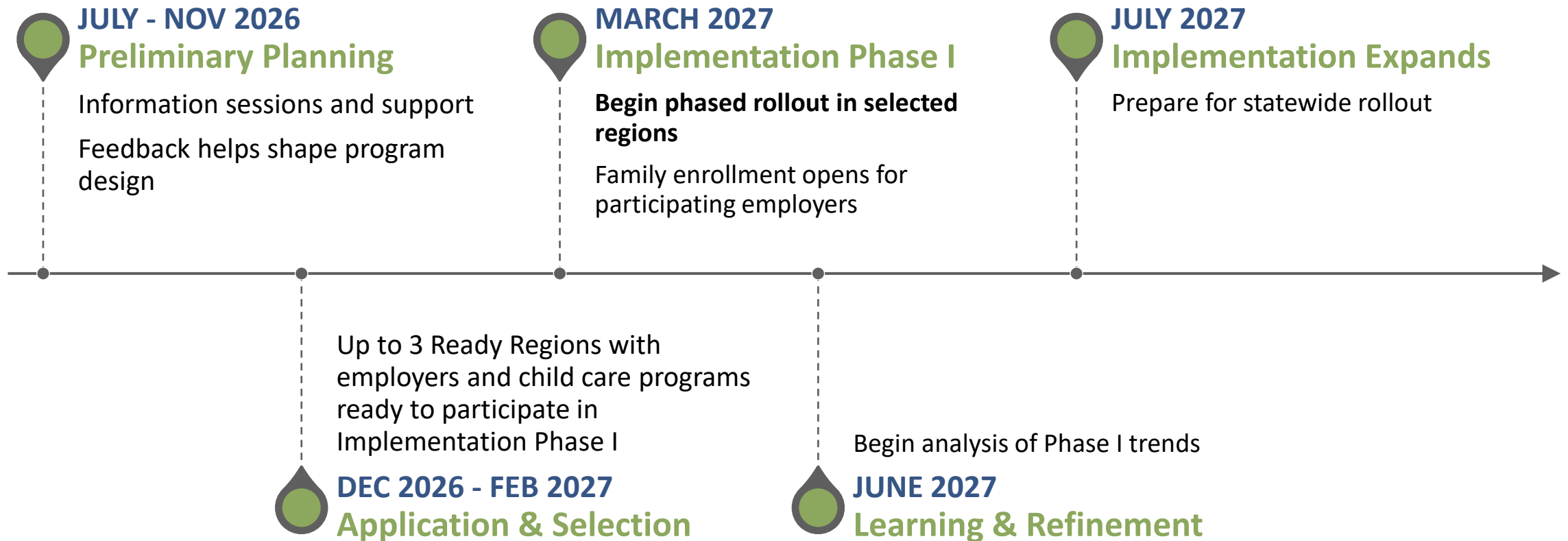


## Workforce Retention Impact



"Ballad's internal child care programs – and this pilot – have been key contributors to this dramatic improvement."

# Ready Together VA: Employer Timeline



# Roles and Responsibilities

| Virginia Early Childhood Foundation                                                                                                                                     | Ready Regions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Participating Employers                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oversee program design</li><li>• Provide guidance and support to Ready Regions</li><li>• Report progress to the state</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support interested employers*</li><li>• Gather input from families</li><li>• Identify child care providers interested in participating</li><li>• Determine readiness to participate in Implementation Phase I and administer the program</li></ul> <p>*EPIC will serve as the initial contact for employers for some Ready Regions during preliminary planning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with their Ready Region to identify eligible employees</li><li>• Provide data to support employee participation and program evaluation</li></ul> |

# Budget and Eligibility

## FUNDING

**\$25M**

Funding can carry over through fiscal year 2030

## HOUSEHOLD ELIGIBILITY

***at or below 100% SMI***

Income-based only, no additional criteria

## EMPLOYER ELIGIBILITY\*

***at least one employee***

Must work in Virginia in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year

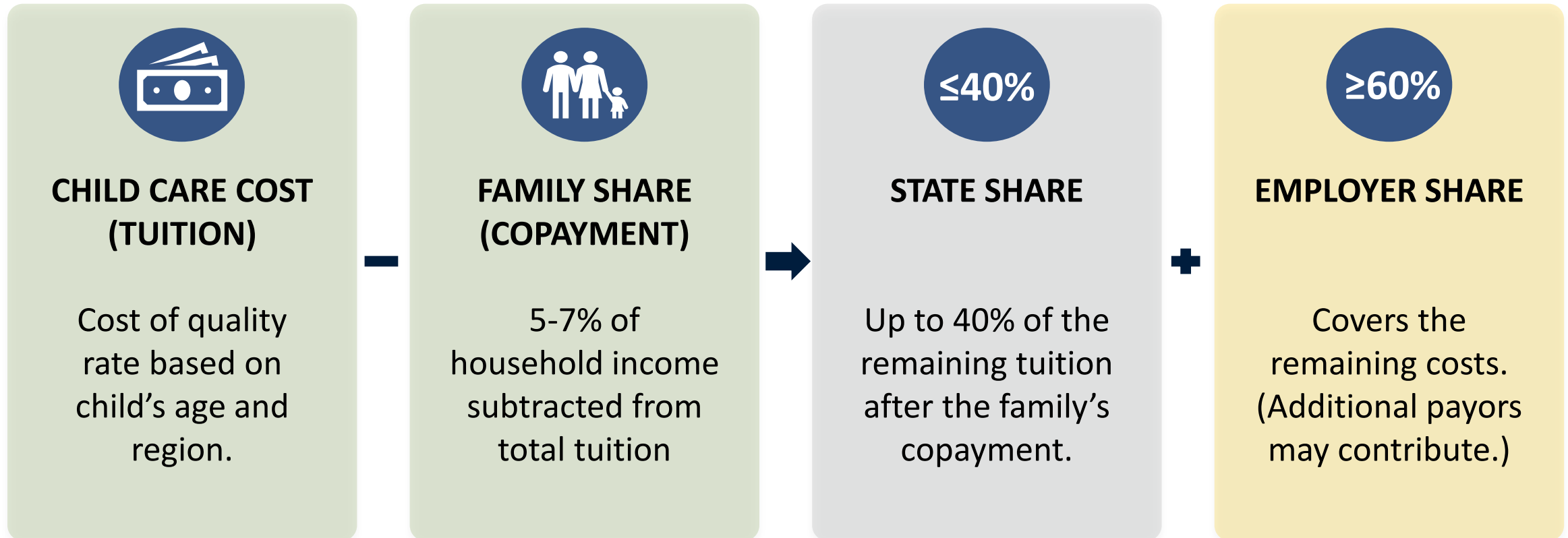
## Can payors other than employers help fund the program?

Yes. The legislation also allows other payors, such as local governments or philanthropic partners, to contribute. Employers must be engaged as a condition of participation.

\*VECF is encouraged to prioritize small businesses (fewer than 50 employees).

Source: 2026 Special Session I Budget Bill, Item 126 G

# Sharing the Cost of Quality Child Care



The family's 5-7% share is a percentage of household income. The state, employer, and other payors are shares of the tuition amount remaining after the family's contribution. Source: 2026 Special Session I Budget Bill, Item 126 G

# Cost Sharing By the Numbers

| CHILD CARE COST<br>(TUITION)                                        | FAMILY SHARE<br>(COPAYMENT)                            | REMAINDER<br>AFTER<br>COPAYMENT | STATE SHARE                          | EMPLOYER SHARE                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Age: Preschooler<br>Region: Southwest<br><br><b>\$13,260/year -</b> | HH Income:<br>1-100% FPL<br><br><b>\$60/year =</b>     | <b>\$13,200/year</b>            | Up to 40%<br><br><b>\$5,280/year</b> | Remaining Costs (other<br>payors may contribute)<br><br><b>\$7,920/year</b>  |
| Age: Infant<br>Region: Capital Area<br><br><b>\$32,500/year -</b>   | HH Income:<br>96-100% SMI<br><br><b>\$8,400/year =</b> | <b>\$24,100/year</b>            | Up to 40%<br><br><b>\$9,640/year</b> | Remaining Costs (other<br>payors may contribute)<br><br><b>\$14,460/year</b> |

The family's 5-7% share is a percentage of household income. The state, employer, and other payors are shares of the tuition amount remaining after the family's contribution. Source: 2026 Special Session I Budget Bill, Item 126 G

# Partnership with EPIC

## Executives Partnering to Invest in Children

Ready Together VA Partner | August – December 2026

A national nonprofit that helps employers understand how child care impacts their workforce and identify strategies that support working families and business goals.

### WHAT EPIC WILL BE DOING

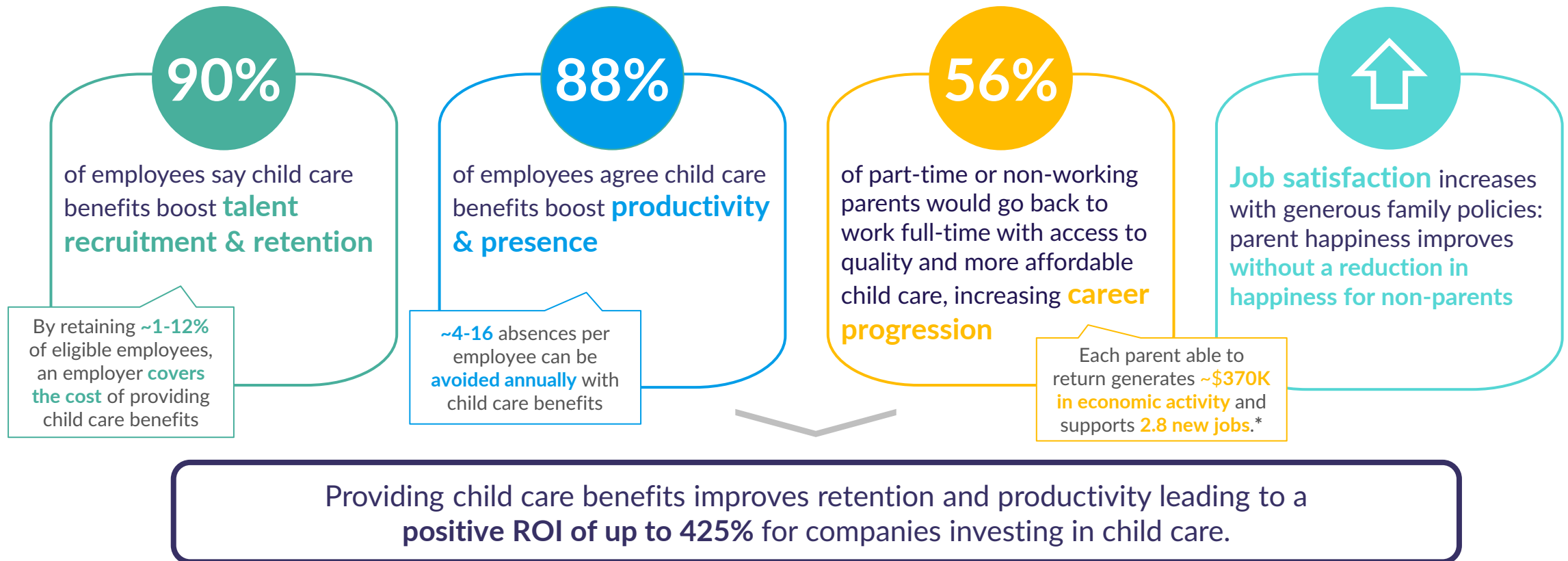
- Help employers explore readiness and workforce needs
- Provide individualized employer advisory support
- Gather employer insights to help inform program implementation

### WHAT EPIC WILL NOT BE DOING

- Provide legal, tax, accounting, or benefits compliance advice
- Determine eligibility or prioritization

CONNECT  
CHILD CARE TO  
WORKFORCE NEEDS

# Investing in Child Care Helps Employees and the Business



(\*) Per-mother estimates derived from CSI's Colorado model around projected GDP and employment increase with 10,200 mothers returning to work; figures reflect modeled averages, not individual-level impacts..

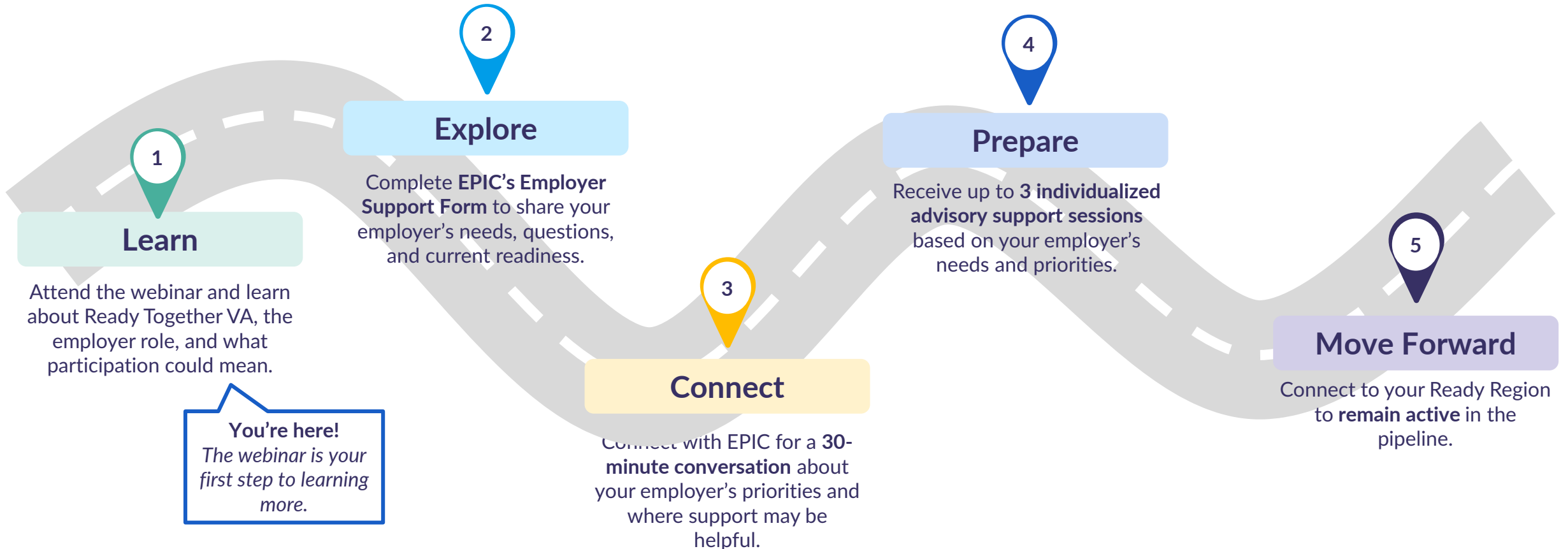
Note: All data based on a study done by Mom's First and BCG, which included working with five companies to lead the charge on child care benefits

Source: [Mom's First](#); [BCG](#), Childcare Benefits More Than Pay for Themselves at US Companies; [Unlocking Work: Impacts of Improving Access to Affordable Child Care \(CSI, 2024\)](#)

# Employer Journey



A path to explore Ready Together VA and get the support you need.



**We're here to support you along the way.**

From information to individualized support, Ready Together VA offers a pathway for employers at every stage

# How EPIC Can Support You



Tailored support to help your employer explore, prepare, and take the next steps.

A white speech bubble icon with three dots inside, set against a green circular background.

### You may be wondering...

How is child care affecting our workforce?

What do our employees need?

Who needs to be involved?

What internal processes do we need to navigate?



A white icon showing three stylized human figures, set against a dark blue circular background.

### EPIC can help you...

**Connect the dots**  
Between child care and workforce challenges

**Better understand employee needs**  
And who may benefit

**Identify the right people**  
To move the conversation forward

**Think through key considerations**  
Like approvals, budget, HR, and benefits



A white lightbulb icon, set against a blue circular background.

### You may leave with...

Clearer understanding of the workforce impact

Better insight into employee needs

Stronger internal alignment

Clearer path forward

A white icon of a calendar grid, set against a dark blue square background.

Up to 3 individualized free of charge sessions tailored to your employer's needs.

# Poll: Which workforce priorities stand out most to you?



Respond using the poll on your screen

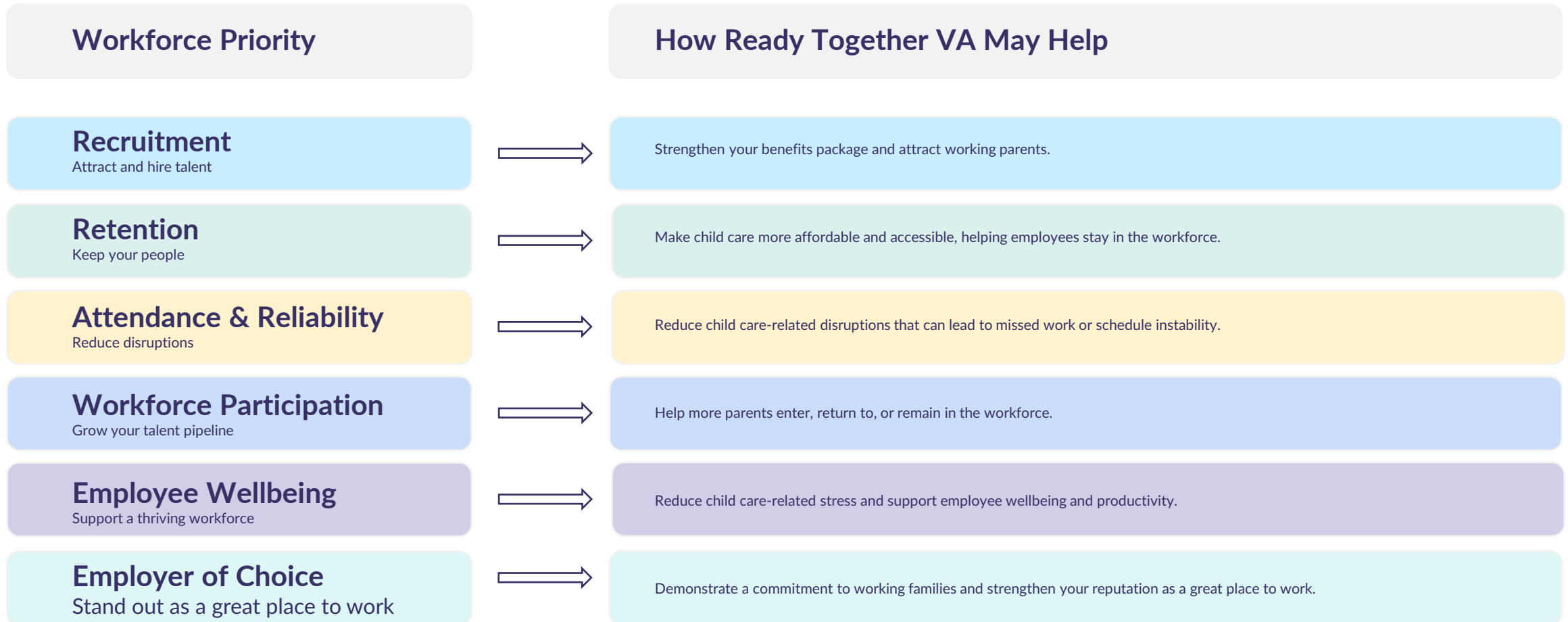
# Poll Results

| Options                                              | Responses ⬆ |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Recruitment and retention                            | 11/30 (37%) |
| Attendance and reliability                           | 14/30 (47%) |
| Employee well-being                                  | 8/30 (27%)  |
| Supporting employees with child care needs           | 12/30 (40%) |
| Strengthening benefits / being an employer of choice | 10/30 (33%) |
| Not sure yet                                         | 2/30 (7%)   |

# How Ready Together VA Can Help



A flexible way to support workforce and business goals.



# QUESTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Are certain types of employers encouraged to participate?**

Small businesses are highlighted as a priority in the legislation, but the program is not limited to them. The legislation defines eligible employers as having at least one employee who works in the Commonwealth in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year.

## **Are all Virginia families eligible to participate?**

Ready Together VA was created for working families whose employer participates in the program. Eligibility is income-based and dependent on employer participation. Households at or below 100% of state median income (SMI) at participating employers may qualify. For Implementation Phase I, participation will be focused on specific communities in Virginia to inform future rollout statewide.

## **Will families who have already enrolled their children in child care be excluded?**

No. There are no plans to require that children be new to child care to participate. Many families who are already paying for child care still cannot afford it. VECF is aiming to minimize additional restrictions.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Can a participating employer work with more than one child care site?**

The number of child care sites an employer works with will remain flexible and largely determined in discussion with the Ready Region that applies to participate. Ready Regions will consider factors such as existing site contracts; site capacity and location, and which sites are likely to meet family needs and preferences, including where families are already enrolled.

## **Will families be required to use only pre-approved child care sites, or can any provider become eligible based on family choice?**

Family choice is a key aspect of Virginia's early childhood care and education system. For this program, [§ 22.1-289.05:2](#) defines “eligible mixed delivery provider” as a “child day center or family day home that has been selected or identified to deliver mixed delivery services through a local agreement with the relevant regional entity...” It may be valuable to use current Mixed Delivery providers in many cases, but the program will not be restricted to them.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What happens if an employee stops working for a participating employer during the program?**

All policies and procedures will be documented in a signed agreement between the Ready Region and the employer. No policies or procedures have been finalized yet. VECF may require the employer to log in to a database monthly to verify that participating employees remain employed.

## **How many children will be served through Ready Together VA?**

Helping employers design and adopt new child care benefits takes time. VECF is intentionally starting small to build a strong foundation for this new and innovative program. The number of participating employers, Ready Regions, and children served will grow as the approach is refined and more employers choose to participate. For context, Missouri began a similar cost sharing initiative in September 2025, and, as of June 2026, they were actively serving 50 children (source: [Early Progress Found with Cost-Sharing in Missouri, First Five Years Fund](#)).

# POLL: How would you describe your organization's readiness to participate after hearing initial details?



Respond using the poll on your screen

# Next Steps



## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Tell us a little about your employer, your workforce needs, and your interest in learning more.

### EPIC'S EMPLOYER SUPPORT FORM\*



[EPIC's Employer Support Form – Fill out form](#)

*\*Your Ready Region will be alerted of your interest.*



## LEARN MORE

Visit the Ready Together VA website for program information, resources, FAQ, and updates.

<https://vecf.org/ready-together-va/>



## QUESTIONS / FEEDBACK

We're here to help. Contact the VECF team for questions or to provide feedback on the program.

[ta@vecf.org](mailto:ta@vecf.org)