

VBREE Regional Initiative

Executive Summary

Background

The Virginia Business Roundtable for Early Education (VBREE) was founded in 2023 as an advisory committee to VECF's Board of Directors with the belief that Virginia's prosperity and quality of life are inextricably dependent upon a strong early childhood care and education system. VBREE's mission is to sustain and grow, through strategic financing and innovation, the supply of high quality, affordable and accessible child care, driving critical and multi-faceted benefits for the Commonwealth.

Launched in 2024 to support VBREE efforts, the Shovel Ready Virginia Task Force sought to more deeply understand the root causes of persistent gaps in child care supply, specifically in (1) the physical spaces (environments, classrooms, and facilities) and (2) the early educator pipeline. After conducting a 12-month exploration of strategies and solutions that specifically address these gaps, the Task Force issued a [report in July 2025](#) outlining recommendations to advance VBREE priorities for child care progress across all regions in Virginia.

VBREE Regional Initiative Overview

The VBREE Regional Initiative harnesses the power of cross-industry regional leaders to identify and implement regional solutions to child care challenges. The VBREE Regional Initiative creates a unified structure for progress toward implementing the Task Force report recommendations across regions. The report recommends a three-phase approach for the Initiative, building toward a certification that clearly demonstrates regions' commitment that **"We mean business with child care."** The Initiative is designed to be a key contributor to the strength of Virginia's economy, workforce competitiveness, and ranking as top in the nation for business.

Priority Goals

The key priority goals for the VBREE Regional Initiative are:

- ◆ **Elevate child care as infrastructure** – Create a paradigm shift in how regions across Virginia view, value, prioritize, and invest in child care through deepened understanding and facilitated connections, expanded access to resources, and improved support of resource navigation.
 - Regional assessment illuminates child care supply and early educator workforce stability
 - Regional planning and policies consider child care impact
 - Resource inventory supports child care businesses, employers, and developers
- ◆ **Expand the supply of quality child care** – Create regions with a robust early educator workforce and ample child care facility supply to meet family demand for child care slots through reduced child care start-up or expansion expenses, increased revenue to grow supply and competitively compensate educators, and reduced barriers for building child care infrastructure.
 - Ordinances, zoning, regulations, and building codes are designed as child care friendly
 - Community funds and local revenue support early educator recruitment and retention
 - Capital access, mentorship, and entrepreneur accelerators facilitate start-ups
 - Repurposed underutilized space, co-location, innovative, and partnerships create new supply
 - Employer support addresses child care needs of current and future workforce in each region

- ◆ **Strengthen the capabilities of the child care industry** – Create business climate and conditions in which the child care industry can thrive through reduced administrative overhead and operating expenses, increased revenue to sustain operations, expanded opportunities for cross-sector partnerships, and enhanced skill-building resources for existing and emerging child care managers.
 - Regional innovations lower operating expenses to grow margin for child care businesses
 - Child care small business resources align with needs for strengthened industry
 - Cross-sector partnerships build early educator workforce pipeline and livable communities

To support the implementation of the VBREE Regional Initiative, the Task Force report also advised the creation of a toolbox of guidance and resources to accelerate coordinated and cohesive progress toward these priority recommendations across all regions. The VBREE Playbook for Regions outlines exemplary strategies as well as provides tools, templates, and data for regions to leverage to advance the vision and mission of the VBREE Regional Initiative.

Vision

The vision for the VBREE Regional Initiative is that all regions across Virginia have the capacity to drive the triple-bottom line return from investment in school-ready children, work-ready families, and business-ready communities.

Mission

The VBREE Regional Initiative fosters broad regional collaboration and aligned commitment to elevate child care as infrastructure, expand the supply of quality child care, and strengthen the capabilities of the child care industry and stature of the early educator profession.

Strategies

The Task Force report charges VBREE with implementing and guiding the new VBREE Regional Initiative work through three strategic phases:

1. Get Ready – Mobilize regional delegations with comprehensive representation

Bring together the power of business, government, economic and workforce development, and philanthropic leaders to leverage existing statewide and regional structures, mobilize commitment to child care as infrastructure, and inform new innovations and partnerships through the full formation of VBREE regional delegations and signed statements of commitment.

2. Get Set – Build will and collective action for VBREE Regional Initiative strategies

Secure common understanding of regional child care infrastructure and mobilize cross-sector action to address specific challenges, leverage unique opportunities, and yield returns through development of Regional Action Plans.

3. Get Going – Implement Regional Action Plans and strive toward regional Certification

Incentivize and recognize the accomplishment of certain actions that reflect commitment to and progress toward advancing the task force report recommendations through a regional Business-Forward/Child Care-Friendly Certification.

Anticipated Timeline

- July 1, 2025 Launch of VBREE Regional Initiative
- Jan. 1, 2026 Release of VBREE Playbook for Regions (1.0)
- June 30, 2026 Full formation of regional delegations
- June 30, 2026 Formalization of statements of commitment
- June 30, 2027 Completion of landscape analysis and development of Regional Action Plans
- June 30, 2027 Progress toward regional Business Forward/Child Care Friendly Certification

Guidance for Strategic Phases

1. Get Ready – Mobilize regional delegations with comprehensive representation

With the leadership of VECF's VBREE advisory committee, VBREE regional delegations are designed to bring together the power of senior regional leaders to deliver on the triple bottom line of school-ready children, work-ready parents, and business-ready communities.

Deliverable: VBREE Regional Delegation

Each VBREE regional delegation is convened by the Ready Region lead agency* and comprised of at least one senior representative from each of the following categories, within the designated Ready Region footprint:

- Businesses/Employers (3)
- Economic Development Agency
- Local or Regional Chamber of Commerce
- GO Virginia Regional Council
- Workforce Development Agency (including higher education)
- Planning District Commission
- Philanthropic Organization

Timeline & Expectations

- ✓ **Regional level:** Each VBREE regional delegation is fully formed no later than June 30, 2026. *Ideally, the Ready Region lead agency CEO will facilitate their regional delegation. If the Ready Region opts out or for other reasons is not prepared for the responsibility, another organization from the delegation may serve in this role and the Ready Region lead agency will serve as an active representative of the delegation. The CEO may tap a senior level designee for some responsibilities of facilitation of the regional delegation.
- ✓ **State level:** As outlined in by-laws, VECF/VBREE will approve and may assist with recommendations and connections for senior representatives from relevant categories for the full formation of each regional delegation. VECF/VBREE advisory committee will guide the responsibilities and expectations for representatives and their organizations, and ensure access to government relations and other necessary services. VECF will provide technical assistance for Ready Regions' facilitation of their delegations' engagement once the delegations are fully formed.
- ✓ **VECF Board of Directors:** At least one senior representative from each regional delegation will serve on the VECF Board of Directors to ensure regional representation on the state level VBREE leadership group.

Resources

- Recommendations and connections for delegation members
- Responsibilities and expectations for VBREE regional delegation members and lead/co-lead
- Government relations support

Deliverable: Statement of Commitment

Once fully formed, each VBREE regional delegation is expected to complete a statement of commitment to incorporate the VBREE Playbook mission and vision as priorities in all the region's strategic, economic, and workforce development plans. The statements are signed by a senior leader of each region and submitted to VECF. The Ready Region Lead Agency or other convening organization may be eligible to receive grant funding from VECF to support the facilitation of the group.

Timeline & Expectations

- ✓ **Regional level:** No later than June 30, 2026, each VBREE regional delegation will sign and agree to a statement of commitment toward achieving the VBREE Regional Initiative mission and vision.
- ✓ **State level:** VECF/VBREE will provide a template for the statement of commitment.

Resources

- Template for statement of commitment

2. Get Set – Build will and collective action for VBREE Regional Initiative strategies

Each VBREE regional delegation reflects a unique landscape of child care and early educator workforce challenges and opportunities. Regional syntheses across Virginia will allow for a common understanding of the current state and help mobilize aligned, collective commitment to Regional Action Plans to grow the supply of child care and build the early educator workforce pipeline and to address specific challenges and yield returns in each region.

Deliverable: Regional Action Plan

Each VBREE regional delegation is expected to conduct a landscape analysis to determine the major child care challenges and opportunities in the region and develop a Regional Action Plan based on the landscape analysis. The Regional Action Plans focus on achieving the vision and mission of the VBREE Regional Initiative and, at a minimum, include:

- Results of the landscape analysis, including the potential root causes of the region's child care challenges and the existing regional innovations and solutions on which to build to address the challenges
- Comprehensive analysis of regional ordinances, regulations, and land-use rules that may create barriers to the availability of child care services in the region
- Inventory of available local and regional opportunities to elevate child care as infrastructure, such as upcoming planning cycles, zoning opportunities, Enterprise or Opportunity Zone incentives, waivers, building incentives, development grant funding, and aligned public-private partnerships, as well as existing capacity to support within the child care industry, such as Business Academy tools
- Development of objectives, strategies, and initiatives to address findings from the landscape analysis that move the region toward the VBREE Regional Initiative vision
- Timeline for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Regional Action Plan, as well as resources needed for success of the objectives and strategies
- Indicators to track progress toward goals

Timeline & Expectations

- ✓ **Regional level:** By June 30, 2027, each VBREE regional delegation is expected to have developed a current state landscape analysis and a Regional Action Plan incorporating child care challenges, opportunities, and the vision of the VBREE Regional Initiative.
- ✓ **State level:** VECF/VBREE will provide a template for the landscape analysis and Regional Action Plan and tools, technical assistance, and links to expertise for component requirements. VECF/VBREE will work with regional delegations to identify indicators and to track and monitor progress toward goals, including timeline milestones.

Resources

- Facilitated Community of Practice (CoP) to support regional delegation leads with guidance, problem-solving, brainstorming, and peer learning
- Playbook for Regions with briefs, case studies, tools, and data resources
- Regional Action Plan guidance and template, including framework and process for the strategic plan with sections focused on defining child care gaps, identifying root causes, proposing actionable strategies, outlining conditions for success, and specifying metrics to track progress
- Tools, technical assistance, sample surveys, and links to expertise for landscape analysis and Regional Action Plan development
- Suggested data sources for understanding current state
- Sample agendas and meeting facilitation tools
- FAQ document with information on commonly asked questions and suggested talking point responses
- Support with indicators and to track and monitor progress toward goals, including timeline milestones

3. Get Going – Implement Regional Action Plans and strive toward regional Certification

VBREE regional delegations are incentivized to strive to achieve Business-Forward/Child Care-Friendly Certification. This Certification recognizes the accomplishment of certain actions reflecting the region's commitment to and progress toward addressing child care challenges that present a risk to Virginia's economy, workforce competitiveness, and ranking as top in the nation for businesses. A Certified region has achieved the VBREE Regional Initiative's goals of elevating child care as infrastructure, expanding the supply of quality child care, and strengthening the capabilities of the child care industry.

As a result of being awarded as Certified, VBREE regional delegations can expect to receive several key benefits for being designated a Business-Forward/Child Care Friendly region.

- Marketing materials and press release
- Certification recognition and appeal to attract businesses and families
- Preferential access to resources and funding, as available
- Regional outcomes for school-ready children, work-ready families, and business-ready communities

Deliverable: Regional Certification

The Certification is awarded based on the accomplishment of specific, statewide Certification criteria that are associated with the achievement of outcomes that advance the overall goals of the VBREE Regional Initiative. To become Certified, VBREE regional delegations must demonstrate actions that achieve the three Certification criteria within each priority area of the VBREE Regional Initiative: elevate child care as infrastructure, expand the supply of quality child care, and strengthen the capabilities of the child care industry.

Timeline & Expectations

- ✓ **Regional level:** VBREE regional delegations will continue to work toward the accomplishment of achieving the Certification over a five-year period, as part of the implementation of their Regional Action Plans. VBREE regional delegations will complete an initial application for consideration of Certification award. Regional delegations maintain certification status through progress updates and review by VECF/VBREE.
- ✓ **State level:** VECF/VBREE, in partnership with the regional delegations, will establish the criteria for Certification as well as the monitoring process for achievement, progress, and recertification. VECF/VBREE will review the initial application and subsequent updates from regional delegations to maintain their Certification standing.

Resources

- Exemplar models for Certification activities, including from Virginia and other states
- Certification criteria and application process
- Toolkits, talking points, and marketing materials
- FAQ document with information on commonly asked questions and suggested talking point responses