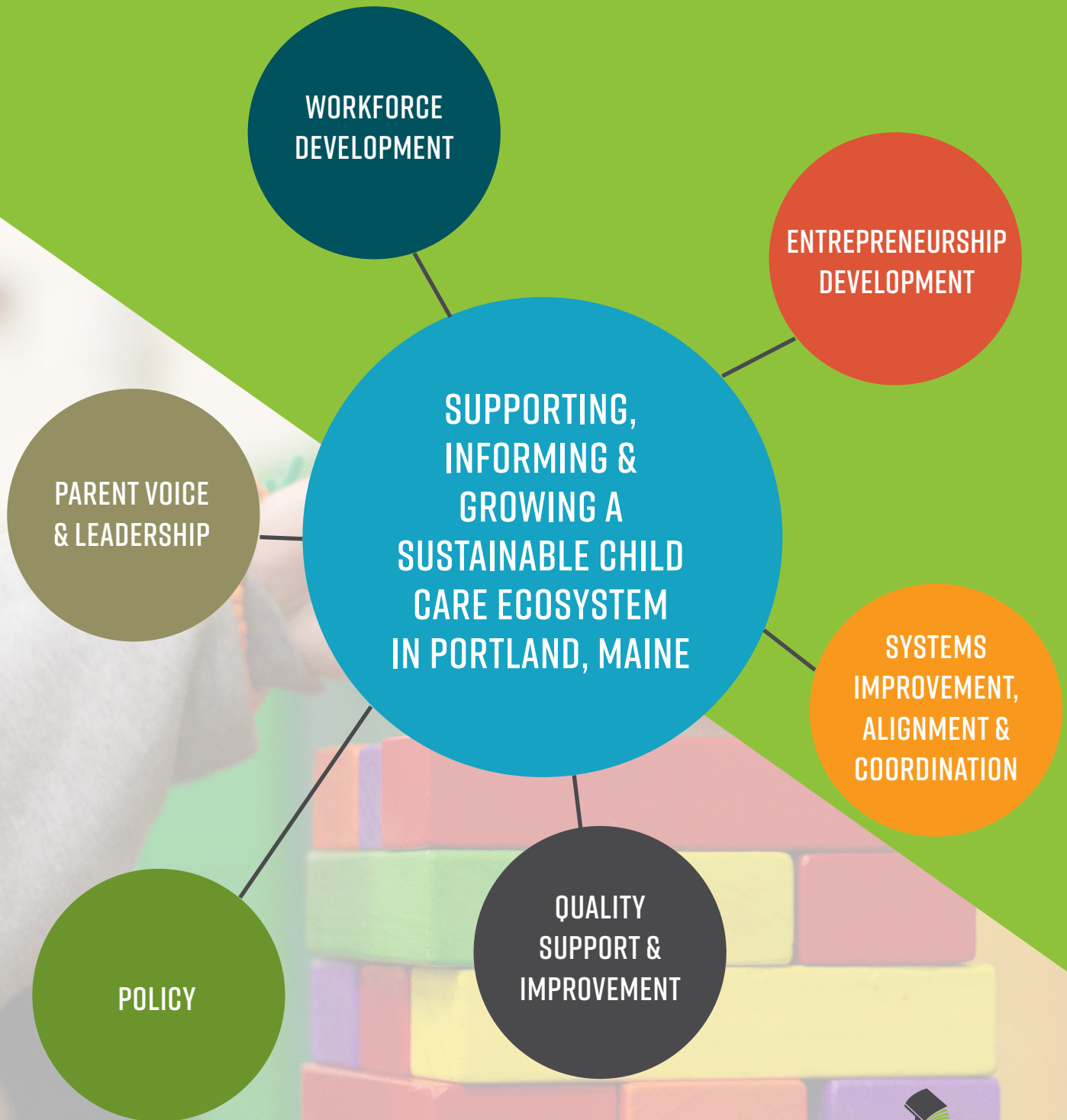


PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS 2022 PRIORITY ACTIVITIES



PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS

When our children thrive, our city thrives

WHO WE ARE

Portland Works for Kids is a community-wide effort led by Starting Strong. We are comprised of dozens of partners working together to make high quality early childhood care and education affordable and accessible to everyone. Concerned community members are aligning efforts across sectors, including businesses and employers, health care professionals, nonprofit organizations, early childhood care and education providers, parents, caregivers, and neighbors.

WHAT WE DO

Portland Works for Kids convenes local leaders and stakeholders, shares resources, combines efforts, and collects local data to help identify specific areas of need and inform strategies. In August 2020, we developed a policy agenda with overall strategies listed below. The following pages outline 2022 priority activities that support these strategies.

- **RESPOND** to the immediate needs of families and child care providers caused by COVID-19 (Timeframe: immediate)
- **REBUILD** crucial policies so we can move the needle on increasing access to high quality child care in Portland (Timeframe: 1-2 years)
- Support **RESILIENCE** in the early education system to ensure that high quality child care and early education is valued and there are regulatory and governmental systems in place – this will ensure that programs and providers thrive and there is equitable access for all families (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

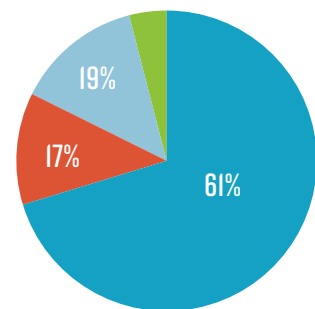
“High quality child care is essential for a vibrant, thriving community. It strengthens the workforce and local economy by allowing parents to work and pay their bills. It also provides young children with experiences that support school readiness and nurture their cognitive, social, and emotional growth.”

– Quincy Hentzel, CEO
Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce



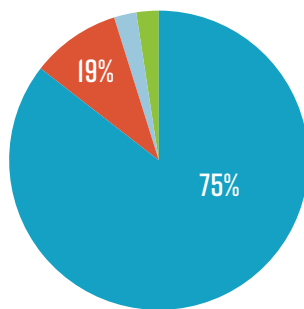
WHAT BUSINESS OWNERS IN GREATER PORTLAND SAY *

61% SAID AN EMPLOYEE HAD EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES FINDING AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILD CARE IN THE PAST YEAR



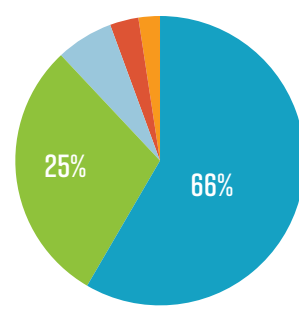
■ YES ■ NO ■ DON'T KNOW ■ N/A

75% SAID AN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCED UNPLANNED WORK ABSENCES DUE TO CHILD CARE ISSUES IN THE PAST YEAR



■ YES ■ NO ■ DON'T KNOW ■ N/A

91% AGREE (STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) THAT INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE SHOULD BE A PRIORITY FOR OUR COMMUNITY



■ STRONGLY AGREE ■ SOMEWHAT AGREE ■ DON'T KNOW ■ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ■ STRONGLY DISAGREE

*From a survey emailed to Portland Regional Chamber members, March 2021

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PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS

2022 PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

PARENT VOICE & LEADERSHIP

In order to ensure all children have equitable outcomes in education and life, parents and caregivers must be engaged and leading the way. Research shows that when families are engaged as leaders in the programs, services, and policies that support them, then children thrive, systems change, and outcomes are more equitable. Through this work, we grow our capacity to deepen the equity focus of our partnership's work, build public will, and create skilled parent advocates in the community.

Activities

Starting Strong's parent/caregiver organizing and advocacy efforts bring families from diverse backgrounds together to share their experiences, as well as learn about and inform policies. Additionally, parents/caregivers who want to take on an expanded role in improving early childhood systems in Portland are invited to participate in leadership positions. Starting Strong convenes a virtual parent group bi-weekly. To date, approximately four parents participate in this group. Expanded outreach, guest speakers, and other activities are planned in 2022 to increase participation.

Starting Strong is working with the Right from the Start Coalition to develop and administer a parent survey in March 2022. Results will be shared and will be used to help inform strategies.



PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS

2022 PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Attracting and retaining a qualified workforce has been one of the biggest barriers to expanding access to quality early childhood education in Portland and throughout the state.

Activities

Starting Strong, in collaboration with the Greater Portland Workforce Initiative, helps to facilitate a partnership between Portland Adult Education and The Opportunity Alliance's Childhood Development Associate (CDA) Development Center to offer a CDA credential program with wrap-around English language support for non-English speaking students who are interested in becoming early childhood educators. This year, the program will partner with local quality child care providers for the students' practicum placement in order to meet multiple workforce needs in one streamlined approach.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In order to truly expand access to quality early childhood care and education, we must increase the number of providers offering services in our communities.

Activities

Once funding is secured, Starting Strong – in partnership with the United Way of Southern Maine, Greater Portland Workforce Initiative, and Coastal Enterprises Inc. – will launch a Child Care Incubator in Cumberland County, supporting and guiding entrepreneurs on their pathway to opening sustainable, quality child care businesses. Each cohort is designed to launch 12 new financially sustainable, quality child care programs. Starting Strong's unique role will be to conduct stakeholder engagement and participant recruitment.

QUALITY SUPPORT & IMPROVEMENT

Programs and providers demonstrate quality through their practices, interactions, and staff qualification. High quality child care helps children be more successful in school and has been shown to improve health and earning outcomes over their lifetimes.

Activities

Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network will support a Portland cohort of providers with professional development opportunities designed to improve student and family engagement practices among diverse populations.

“Affordable quality child care must be addressed if we are going to grow our economy and invite families to Maine and keep working families in Maine.

– Participant

Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce
Member Survey, March 2021



PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS

2022 PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

POLICY

Ensuring the most crucial policies are in place to increase access to high quality child care in Portland drives our work because it has the potential to impact the greatest number of people. Portland Works for Kids strongly believes that early childhood education is critical to our community from multiple perspectives and, as such, should be valued as a public good on par with K-12 education.

Activities

We regularly convene the coalition to review and update the strategies developed in our 2020 policy platform (outlined on page 2), in order to respond to the most pressing needs and opportunities.

Tactics

- Policy subcommittee/parent voice and leadership
- Communications and messaging
- Alignment with Right from the Start on state policy priorities and advocacy efforts
- Local advocacy and revenue development
- Grassroots organizing/coalition building



SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT, ALIGNMENT & COORDINATION

A strong, sustainable early childhood care and education ecosystem is vital to children's growth and development, a successful economy, and vibrant communities. In 2022, we are conducting education and outreach so that these programs are valued by families, employers, and legislators. We are also working to ensure that the regulatory and governmental systems and structures are in place to provide for financial stability of programs and providers, as well as the professional development of their teams and their ability to access needed resources and supports.

Activities

We are convenient partners, facilitating conversations, and helping to make the case for mixed-delivery public Pre-K in Portland.

Tactics:

- Portland Public School pre-school data analysis and research (conducted by the Muskie School of Public Service's Data Innovation Project), recommendations, and coordination
- Fiscal analysis recommendations
- Preparation for First4ME proposal

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