

WORKING WITH CHILD CARE OPERATORS

Building respectful and mutually reinforcing relationships is critical to the success of any local child care plan. Through this guide, local governments will be able to reflect on the key relationships with child care operators.

More specifically, **Guide #5: Working with Child Care Operators** reviews how to:

- Strengthen Local Partnerships
- Support Operators to Open New Child Care Centres or Expand Their Current Operations
- Find a Not-for-profit or Public Partner to Operate Local Government Owned Space

5.1 Introduction

Among the most important relationships a local government can develop is with their community child care providers and those agencies who offer complimentary services. Strong partnerships will promote comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated programs that are responsive to the evolving needs of children and families. Community partners will also be strong allies to support change and improve processes in local policy, regulations and requirements.

Successful, well planned, high quality and effective services require a significant investment of time and resources from many players, the most important of which are the child care operators. See the [Child Care in BC](#) section for details about who operates child care in the Province.

Working closely and in partnership with the community will make certain that child care services are planned and delivered in a way that is responsive, inclusive and timely for children and families.

5.2 Strengthen Local Partnerships

- As noted in [GUIDE #1](#), local partnerships are powerful and impactful for children, families, and professionals working in their community. However, successful partnerships require leadership, time, resources and the willingness of collaborating agencies. Local governments are well positioned to provide this leadership and to guide the way for strong partnerships.

Key practices that support strong partnerships include:

- Establish a shared vision and common set of guiding principles, including expected outcomes
- Establish communication and decision- making processes
- Allow for power-sharing
- Provide adequate, appropriate time for partners to meet, plan and carry out activities
- Involve representatives from all primary stakeholders
- Think ‘blue sky’, embrace innovation, use research and data
- Celebrate, evaluate and renew

TIP

The Ministry of Children and Family Development provides funding to [Child Care Resource and Referral Centres \(CCRR's\)](#) across BC, to work in partnership with government to improve the accessibility, affordability, and quality of child care in all BC communities. “Child Care Resource and Referral Centres provide support services and consultations to parents looking for child care and to all child care providers to foster quality inclusive care through services such as: workshops and training, networking opportunities, supportive program outreach, access to lending libraries, referrals to community resources, drop-in programs, and listing in a registry of licensed and Licence-Not-Required child care providers.”

Across BC there are a number of places where the local government provides leadership to local planning for child care, some examples include:

- City of Burnaby has a [Child Care Resources Group](#)
- City of North Vancouver, the District of North Vancouver and the District of West Vancouver collaborate on the [North Shore Child Care Planning Committee](#)
- City of Vancouver has a [Joint Child Care Council](#)

Providing leadership to community child care partnerships can take several forms:

- a. Facilitate networking and professional development opportunities which will enhance shared learning, capitalize on limited resources, decrease isolation and increase capacity for child care providers.
- b. Formal neighbourhood planning to identify current needs, set targets and develop a child care strategy and plan to fill in gaps.
- c. Working together to educate, promote and advocate for the needs of children
- d. Collaborating on developing new child care spaces (i.e.: supporting capital grant applications or partnering on a new centre).



In a typical child care program, generally all staff are working directly with children for at least part of every day. Child care programs do not often have staff who are available (or compensated) to attend day time meetings therefore consideration needs to be given to when meetings are scheduled to allow for full participation.

There are several groups that are important to consider as partners, especially child care operators who are the most knowledgeable about the delivery of service. It is also critical to include agencies that provide support to the sector, such as the Child Care Resource and Referral Centre, services that provide supports to children with support needs in child care (i.e. the Supported Child Care and Aboriginal Supported Child Care Programs), the local health authority community care facility licensing program, school districts, community service agencies (i.e. Immigrant Services, Family Resource Programs), local businesses and local Indigenous organizations and services.

5.3 Supporting Operators to Open New Child Care Facilities or Expand Their Current Operations

As outlined in [GUIDE #4: LOCAL GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AND PROVINCIAL LICENCING PROCESSES](#) if someone wishes to open a new licensed child care program, or expand their current operations, they must adhere to two sets of requirements, one at the provincial level, which is administered through the regional health authority, and one at the local government level.

Child care operators are typically unfamiliar with the range of regulatory approval processes required by the local jurisdiction, therefore, it is helpful to have policies and practices that are clearly outlined, modernized and make child care a priority.

Some strategies that would assist include:

1. Identify or assign one staff person who will be the primary contact for all child care applications. This will be an efficient way of providing both internal and external support.
2. Clearly communicate the child care needs and priorities of the Local Government through the Official Community Plan or in by-laws so that child care applications can be prioritized.
3. Ensure that child care strategies/plans are publicly available

4. Have simple, plain language, joint information documents that that outlines both the Regional Health Authority and the local government requirements.
5. Provide as much detail as possible early on to applicants about rezoning, development permit and change of use implications so that time is not wasted. (i.e. a change from a Family Child Care operation to a Group Care operation means the operator must consult with both their regional health authority community care facility licensing program and municipality before taking action).
6. Consider fast-tracking and streamlining applications for child care development, especially those from non-profit and public entities, ahead of other types of development. These means a review of how staff workload and projects are assigned.
7. Share needs assessment data with child care operators, for example, noting areas of unmet need, or areas where need may be fully met and new programs difficult to fill. This information may help child care operators plan expansion, and/or apply for funding.

Examples of local government requirements and practices.

- [Creating Child Care Spaces in Richmond](#)
- [Developing A Child Care Centre in Vancouver](#)
- [Opening A Child Care Facility in New Westminster](#)
- [Child Care Facility Requirements - Coquitlam](#)

5.4 Finding a Not-for-Profit or Public Partner to Operate Local Government Owned Space

While local governments may be actively looking for ways to secure new child care spaces through partnerships, land use, or applying for capital funds from the Province, they might not have the ability or interest to directly operate the new child care programs. In this case, it is crucial to have clear processes and procedures for selecting and working with an operating partner.

Why work with public or non-profit operators?

The [Child Care BC New Spaces Fund](#) requires local governments receiving capital funds to either operate the child care spaces themselves, or partner with another public or not-for-profit entity who will deliver those spaces. In addition, Section 25 of the [BC Community Charter](#) also prohibits local governments from providing a grant, benefit, advantage or other assistance to a business.

Selecting an operator

The chosen operator should have the capacity, the experience and the commitment to offer services that are in the public interest for the long-term and should be thought of as more than a typical tenant. Given the nature of child care operating budgets (see the [INTRODUCTION](#)), consideration must also be given to ensure that the occupancy costs are kept to a minimum.

In order to select a Child Care Operating Partner, local governments should have a transparent, public process, such as a Request for Proposals or a Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI) that is broadly advertised. If there are plans to develop more than one location, then attention should be given to a multi- project process. In other words, develop a process to select one or more proponents who will be the partner for more than one location; this limits the resources required for all parties in the selection process and establishes a deeper commitment.

REOI Examples:

- [City of Vancouver RFEOI Document](#)
- [City of Burnaby - RFP Sample - Operator for Burnaby Lake Child Care Centre](#)
- [City of Richmond – Request for Expression of Interest Sample](#)

a. Criteria that should be considered when selecting a Child Care Operator include:

- Strong governance and operating policies and procedures
- Sustainable and viable finances
- Organizational capacity, including roles and responsibilities of key employees and organizational structure
- Experience operating the type, size and scope of child care programs that are proposed
- History of Community Care Facility Licensing site Inspections, if currently operating a facility
- Vision and commitment to quality child care, including staff professional development and child care program staffing model
- Child Care Program Philosophy and Service Delivery Model, including priorities for enrolment
- Commitment to engaging parents/guardians and the broader community
- Policies and practices to promote inclusion, diversity and culturally competent programming
- Awareness of local child care needs

b. Consider all legal and liability issues when selecting an operator and when negotiating the final arrangement. Consideration could be given to developing a draft lease and operating service level agreement that is attached to the REOI documents to provide proponents with a clear overview of the responsibilities that each party will have.

This will also enable appropriate budgeting by both parties. In particular, it is necessary to clearly articulate:

- Maintenance, repairs and occupational costs
- Recapitalization costs, including life cycle of the capital assets
- Insurance requirements both liability and property

City of [Vancouver Child Care Service Level Agreement](#) and [Vancouver Sample Lease](#)



Including child care operating expertise on the child care operator selection team can ensure that a reputable and appropriate operator is found.