Proposal for Child Care Sector
June 5 Deliverable

What is the status of each sector right now?
The already fragile child care system has now been greatly strained by the pandemic and programs are struggling to stay afloat. Many child care programs who were already operating on tight margins and already faced challenges recruiting and maintaining staff may not be able to survive this challenging time.

Data from the Office of Child and Family Services shows that about half of the state’s programs were closed at the beginning of April, while the other half stayed open, often with significantly fewer children in their programs, to care for the children of essential workers.

Many programs are re-opening to align with the state’s phased in re-opening plan in order to meet the needs of working parents. However, as they plan for re-opening, a good number of programs find themselves operating at significant deficits. Because parents are concerned about the health risks of putting their children in group settings, many are operating with fewer children and without the ability to lower all of their operating and overhead costs. All programs will face increased costs for cleaning and protecting the health and well-being of children.

The state cannot afford to lose child care slots for young children. In the rural areas, research by the Bipartisan Policy Center has shown that the state has a significant gap in the number of working families with young children versus the number of child care slots in the state.

In addition to the challenges faced by the child care system for children aged birth through five, the child care/after school system for school aged children will face unique challenges this fall. Schools will likely not be able to return to full day, full week in-school programming in September which will create incredible challenges for working parents. The child care/after school system is not equipped at this time to deal with caring for children who may be attending school part-time. New partnerships between schools and local after-school and child care programs will need to be created at the local level to address this issue.

Lastly the child care subsidy program (CCSP) plays a critical role in helping working parents afford child care for young children. Unfortunately, certain working immigrant families are not eligible for the CCSP under federal law. Many of these immigrants work in the direct care workforce. In addition, this population is overrepresented in the hospitality and restaurant industries, and therefore will likely face increased pressure to return to work more quickly as the economy opens up, and with fewer options to work from home.

What do the sectors within your sub-committees need right now to endure the current crisis (i.e. are there areas you expect to make recommendations on in the coming weeks)?

- Child care programs need financial assistance as they re-open during the pandemic. This funding would help cover the increased costs for meeting the new public health...
guidance and to ensure that programs can stay open to support working families, even if they are not operating at full capacity. We recommend that this initiative be funded with federal Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars made available through the CARES Act. The team will be doing a cost analysis over the next couple weeks.

- To support working parents with school-age children who are not old enough to care for themselves, we recommend that schools and school districts partner with local community organizations starting this summer to determine how care will be provided for out-of-school hours as the pandemic continues. We recommend that grant funding be made available with funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund for districts to help fund these partnerships.

- State funding will be needed to provide child care assistance to working immigrant families who are not eligible for the Child Care Subsidy Program.