

September 2024

**Isabella Project
Santa Paula Roadmap**

For access to high-quality early care and education



**Isabella
Project**

Goal: All children in Santa Paula have access to high-quality, full-time early care and education that meets their families' needs.

About Santa Paula

The City of Santa Paula, California, is located 65 miles northwest of Los Angeles and 14 miles east of Ventura and the coastline of the Pacific Ocean. Santa Paula is the geographical center of Ventura County, situated in the rich agricultural Santa Clara River Valley. It is a major distribution point for citrus fruits in the United States. Over 80% of Santa Paula's nearly 31,000 residents are Hispanic/Latino.

Santa Paula families with young children are faced with tough choices. Due to a lack of licensed, high-quality child care, especially for infants and toddlers, parents often do not have the support needed to fully participate in the workforce and feel confident that their child is in a safe and healthy environment that will support optimal development.

About the Isabella Project

Research overwhelmingly shows that children's brains develop more during the first five years than at any other time. This development is nourished through healthy environments, rich interactions, and caring adults. The Isabella Project vision came from a dream of ensuring that all Santa Paula children have access to high-quality early care and education (ECE) programs that meet their families' needs.

About the Isabella Steering Committee

The Steering Committee operates as vision keepers, networkers, intermediaries, decision-makers, and direct providers/consumers of early care and education. The large group of over 90 members includes residents and workforce with direct experience, skills, and knowledge of Santa Paula, as well as countywide representatives that bring complementary connections, funding sources, and insights. Based on a Steering Committee member survey, 50% of the members live or work in Santa Paula, and 50% represent countywide organizations and live outside Santa Paula. Across all members, 42% work directly with families in Santa Paula, and 30% work directly with the Santa Paula ECE workforce. Steering meetings are conducted in English and Spanish.

Participation of Santa Paula workforce and residents in Roadmap Development

Santa Paula families, the local ECE workforce, and qualitative and quantitative data were the key drivers informing all aspects of the Roadmap for Access to High-Quality Early Care and Education. This was done in the development stage and the testing stage prior to finalizing the Roadmap.

Stage One: Development of the Draft Roadmap (September 2023-May 2024)

Santa Paula-specific inputs:

- Population-based data, specific to Santa Paula
- Santa Paula family survey
- Santa Paula ECE workforce survey
- Informal in-person resident interviews and meetings

Stage Two: Testing Stage (June-July 2024)

Once the Draft Roadmap was completed, it was shared with Santa Paula parents and the ECE workforce, including informal caregivers, for their ideas and feedback.

Santa Paula-specific inputs used to test the Draft Roadmap (all conducted in both English and Spanish):

- Family focus groups
- ECE workforce focus groups
- Family interviews
- Informal caregiver interviews

The Roadmap for Access to High-Quality Early Care and Education on the following pages incorporates all community data and feedback.

Santa Paula Roadmap for Access to High-Quality Early Care and Education

Understanding the Roadmap

Key elements to understanding the Roadmap and its intent are:

1. Organizational Framework

Roadmap objectives and strategies are organized into three sections.

- Systems Roadmap Strategies focus on large-scale efforts, primarily infrastructure and finance-related
- Family Roadmap Strategies focus on items where families are the primary target or beneficiary of the strategy
- Workforce Roadmap Strategies focus on items where the ECE workforce is the primary target or beneficiary of the strategy

2. Key

Numbered items = Roadmap Objective

Lettered items = Roadmap Strategy

3. Core Value

Culturally and linguistically appropriate methods will be used when developing and implementing strategies.

4. Quality ECE

Stakeholders saw it as important to define what is meant by quality ECE in simple terms so that it can be communicated and understood consistently.

5. Dosage Needs

Each strategy on the Roadmap has at least two sources indicating the need for its inclusion. In most cases, both quantitative and qualitative data. Please resist the urge to use a checkbox method that a strategy is “already being done or complete.” *Inclusion in the Roadmap means the extent to which needs are met is not currently sufficient to match the demand, and attention from the Isabella Project is needed to supplement existing efforts.*

6. Roadmap Durability

Significant time and attention went into creating this Roadmap. The foundation, concepts, and community inputs represent objectives and strategies that will likely require many years to accomplish. At the same time, new ideas and opportunities will emerge. The Roadmap intends to provide implementation guidance on meeting the family and workforce needs over time but also allow flexibility to add or amend items based on future landscapes.

SYSTEMS - Roadmap Objectives & Strategies

1. Secure funding for ECE infrastructure and expanded service levels

- a. Identify and assess the feasibility of existing and potential ECE financing options. Advance those that are viable. Some that have already been identified include:
 - i. Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFD)
 - ii. Enhanced Infrastructure Tax Credit
 - iii. Education Bond
 - iv. Parcel tax
 - v. Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP)
- b. Legislative advocacy to secure facility and subsidy funds
- c. Strengthen coordinated fundraising infrastructure (e.g., clearinghouse for ECE grants and grant writing support)

2. Eliminate the financial “penalty” for serving infants and toddlers due to ratio size requirements

- a. Determine the current funding gap when choosing to serve infants and toddlers over preschool or school-aged children; provide incentives to offset “penalty”
- b. Legislative advocacy to eliminate the disincentive for serving infants and toddlers in subsidized programs
- c. Utilize the homes owned by SPUSD to run family child care rent-free, prioritizing those who will serve infants and toddlers
- d. Make grants or forgivable loans available for providers who want to increase the capacity of infants serviced or convert preK to infant/toddler spaces. (e.g., facilities, renovation, materials, supplies)

3. Incorporate the prioritization of ECE in Santa Paula City planning and development

- a. Work with city and county planners to build their knowledge of how they can amend policies to encourage ECE development and help them make those policy changes. For example:
 - i. Require city developers to develop more ECE buildings/convert empty buildings into ECE
 - ii. Require or incentivize developers to include FCCs/center-based programs in multi-use properties
 - iii. Require or incentivize developers of large apartment developments to include ECE as part of development or pay a fee in lieu
 - iv. Require city developers to build to ensure more square footage for ECE-related buildings
 - v. Require in city and county code that new development contain ECE facility on-site based on threshold

4. Promote and incentivize the opening of new ECE sites, especially in underserved neighborhoods and those serving infants and toddlers

- a. Create a “Mega center” with a community hub providing wrap-around services and subsidized care
- b. Partner with faith-based organizations to offer community ECE
- c. Partner with corporations to support funding and building infrastructure and build social responsibility into corporation

FAMILIES - Roadmap Objectives & Strategies

- 1. Plan and implement an early care and education outreach and education campaign**
 - a. Extensive mixed media marketing campaign (e.g., paid, earned, trusted messengers)
 - b. Support ECE providers to market their programs directly to families with materials and training

- 2. Simplify the process of finding and enrolling in care**
 - a. Create a central intake/application that would result in an eligibility list of families wanting care, screening those families for all eligible subsidy types, and having a closed-loop referral to ensure families get connected to that care
 - b. In-person presence of CDR staff in Santa Paula
 - c. Have an annual citywide ECE promotion and enrollment fair
 - d. Create a visually organized app that matches families to care options based on information input into the app (phone/web)
 - e. Modify existing digital versions of ECE application processes that currently require a separate complete application for each child in the same family.

- 3. Understand and remove geographic access barriers to ECE participation**
 - a. Model ECE accessibility index using a Geographic Information System (GIS) map, including a layer for population density and marked public transportation stops
 - b. Free bus/transportation program to ECE for families without other means

- 4. Expand and enrich parent and alternative care options (friend, family, neighbor) for those choosing not to enroll in formal ECE settings (center-based, school-based, family child care)**
 - a. Create a listing of fun and free places for parents/care providers to go with children 0-5 throughout the city for enrichment
 - b. Create and distribute activity kits for home that promote child development
 - c. Promote existing home-visiting programs; expand commensurate with demand
 - d. Provide basic training in ECE and CPR for parents/family/alternative care providers; incentivize participation
 - e. Create a mechanism to connect alternative care providers with one or more formal ECE programs willing to offer education and resources and/or CDR.
 - f. Increase the availability of free enrichment and extracurricular programs such as summer camps, low-cost sports, art

- 5. Create a business designation that recognizes employers who offer/promote ECE participation for their workforce**
 - a. Promote co-location of ECE at Workplace; provide technical assistance and linkages to funding
 - b. Promote employer-sponsored/subsidized care (e.g., stipends)
 - c. Promote employer closed-loop referrals to existing referral supports/programs
 - d. Create and promote language that employers would embed in their HR handbook/system related to the importance of ECE and resources for referrals

- 6. Provide wraparound family support to address comprehensive needs**
 - a. Establish a Family Resource Center (FRC) that connects families with young children to services (ECE and others)
 - b. Develop a robust closed-loop referral system that contains information on all Santa Paula and Ventura County service providers. (please note, there is related work underway that can be leveraged, including the Santa Paula Social Services Coalition)

- 7. Create an Isabella-Community Partner Program that recognizes and formalizes existing partnerships and develops new partnerships**
 - a. Develop a recognition badge or similar that promotes partners who agree to support the Isabella project (definition of support would need to be defined)
 - b. Integrate the Isabella-Community Partner Program with the existing Community Schools Initiative
 - c. Engage with community partners to promote the Isabella-Community Partner Program (nonprofits, service providers, medical providers)
 - d. Identify and secure funding sources that promote community programs or assets (e.g., parks) that focus on early childhood development

- 8. Build/earn family trust, create strong partnerships between families and ECE providers**
 - a. Create opportunities for ECE providers to go to neighborhood gatherings
 - b. Create a team of local elders to teach young parents about ECE
 - c. Support and promote family activities where parents and their children meet ECE providers who are compensated to run activities or workshops (e.g., a parent-child together activity run by an ECE provider); this could also serve as marketing/outreach for ECE programs

WORKFORCE - Roadmap Objectives & Strategies

- 1. Recruit and retain ECE workforce living in Santa Paula that serves Santa Paula (not salary related; not higher education related)**
 - a. Provide financial incentives to attract new ECE providers and retain those that are already providing care
 - b. Host an annual citywide ECE recognition event; encourage employers and higher education to host/develop recognition events/strategies
 - c. Create a rideshare program for the ECE workforce for those who have transportation barriers
 - d. Provide paid substitutes for those not working in a large program (e.g., school district, Head Start) so that ECE professionals can take sick time when needed.

- 2. Develop and implement a comprehensive ECE wage strategy so that all providers earn above a living wage**
 - a. Pilot a guaranteed income program for family child care providers, with a focus on serving infants and toddlers
 - b. Offer wage enhancements to providers offering quality ECE (definition of quality training/education would need to be determined)
 - c. State-level advocacy for a living wage for ECE providers. For example, the current “regional market rate” (RMR), which is on a 2018 rate basis, should be updated
 - d. Offset the financial “penalty” of serving infants and toddlers due to lower ratio requirements (determining this is found in the systems section)

- 3. Develop/strengthen the ECE workforce pipeline**
 - a. Nurture the SPUSD ECE career pathway with supported articulation into higher education programs (financial and technical assistance/navigation)
 - b. Create and offer a higher education forgivable student loan program for those who work in Santa Paula for a set number of years
 - c. Increase the awareness of the developing ECE workforce that there are existing supports offering technical assistance and financial support in getting licensed, starting an ECE business, and/or finding ECE training and employment
 - d. Increase the number of local sites that are considered learning labs for required higher education observations and practicum hours; ensure students are aware of these site options
 - e. Create a Guide to ECE Higher Education that lists all Ventura County ECE higher education offerings that lead toward an AA, BA, and MA; indicate which are available in Spanish or offer Spanish language support; indicate the physical location of programs as well as transportation support if offered
 - f. Incentivize ECE programs to offer paid internships to provide more exposure to the field for those interested in learning more
 - g. Offer and market free transportation services to higher education classes
 - h. Create a 4-year degree program offered in Santa Paula via a partnership between Ventura College and CSUCI (all classes and practicum to be completed in Santa Paula)

- 4. Develop an affordable housing program for the ECE workforce living and working in Santa Paula**
 - a. Identify all land available for housing; partner with Cabrillo Economic Development Collaborative, Habitat for Humanity, and others
 - b. Support ECE teachers, including licensed home child care providers, in a clear pathway to homeownership, for example, subsidized housing (lease to buy for educators)

5. **Engage all Santa Paula ECE providers in a formal network focused on learning, support, and peer connection**
 - a. Develop and convene a Santa Paula ECE network; incentivize participation through recognition or other method
 - b. Explore the benefits of creating a Santa Paula-specific Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN)
 - c. Create a local community of practice for Santa Paula ECE providers
 - d. Conduct an annual assessment of the professional development needs of providers in Santa Paula, including differentiating needs by provider language and provider type
 - e. Market existing professional development offerings (including details such as language offered, cost, connection to stipend programs, and location)
 - f. Develop new professional development offerings that match needs if not already met by existing options
 - g. Develop a Spanish WhatsApp group for providers to share resources and get support

6. **Increase the number of providers offering care in the early morning, evening/night, and/or weekends**
 - a. Offer stipends for providers offering care during non-traditional hours