



Child Care & Early Years Service System Plan

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Kingston acknowledges that we are on the traditional homeland of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat, and thanks these nations for their care and stewardship over this shared land. Today, the City is committed to working with Indigenous Peoples and all residents to pursue a united path of reconciliation.

Table of Contents

- Opening Message from the Director of Housing & Social Services..... 1
- Acknowledgments 2
- Executive Summary..... 3
- Our Strategic Priorities 5
 - Workforce Strategy and Professional Development5
 - Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy.....6
 - System Access and Equity.....6
 - Service Provider Support and Capacity.....6
 - Data Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability.....7
- Background 8
 - Our Role as a Service System Manager8
 - Child Care and Early Years System in Kingston-Frontenac 10
 - Funding and Accountability 11
- Development of the 2026-2030 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan 14
 - Kingston-Frontenac At a Glance 15
- Kingston-Frontenac Child Care and Early Years System Overview 22
 - Licensed Child Care Programs22
 - CWELCC Licensed Child Care Programs – Aged 0 to 525
 - Licensed Home Child Care26
 - CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy.....28

School Age Programs Age 6-12.....	29
EarlyON Child and Family Programs.....	31
Access and Affordability Programs	33
Child Care Registry.....	34
Special Needs Resourcing	37
Licensed Child Care and Early Years Workforce	37
Kingston-Frontenac Workforce Professional Development	40
Community Engagement - What We Heard.....	41
Insights from our Community: System Strengths.....	42
Insights from our Community: System Pressures.....	43
Child Care and Early Years System Framework: 2026-2030	44
Our Vision	45
Our Mandate.....	45
Child Care and Early Years Service System Priority Areas	46
Workforce Strategy and Professional Development	47
Strategic Partnerships & Advocacy	49
System Access and Equity.....	51
Service Provider Support & Capacity	53
Data Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability.....	55
Next Steps.....	57

Opening Message from the Director of Housing & Social Services

I am pleased to share the 2026-2030 Child Care and Early Years System Plan for the City of Kingston and County of Frontenac. Children and families are the heart of our community, and affordable, high-quality child care and early learning remain essential to helping families thrive and building a strong, sustainable and inclusive future.

Affordable, high-quality child care and early learning programs are among the most powerful ways we can support families and shape a brighter future. A strong child care and early years system is more than just infrastructure—it's the foundation of a healthy, vibrant and inclusive community. It enables parents to participate in work and learning, supports child development and contributes to long-term prosperity.

We deeply value the work of early childhood educators whose dedication, skill and care make this system possible. They are truly the backbone of early learning in our region.

We also recognize the challenges facing early childhood education: limited spaces, staffing shortages and barriers to access and affordability. Addressing these will take collaboration, smart investment and a clear focus on community needs.

This plan lays the strategic groundwork for the next five years. It reflects what we heard from families, educators and community partners and aligns with provincial and federal priorities for affordability, accessibility, equity and workforce sustainability. Each section of the plan outlines a key component of a resilient and inclusive system that demonstrates our commitment to every child's development, health and well-being.

This plan is both a blueprint and a call to action. It sets the direction for the next five years to ensure children and families across Kingston-Frontenac benefit from a system ready to support them, today and into the future.

Sincerely,

Jayne Hartley
Director, Housing and Social Services
City of Kingston

Acknowledgments

This plan could not have come to life without the generosity, insights and lived experiences of so many across Kingston-Frontenac. We thank the many agencies and providers who contributed time and expertise throughout this process.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the early years and child care service providers for sharing their realities with honesty and heart, and to the dedicated front-line educators whose compassion, care and skill enrich children's lives every day. Thank you to all who participated in the engagement sessions, including staff supporting licensed child care for children aged 0-5 years, Before- and After-School Programs, EarlyON Child and Family programs, Francophone service providers, Indigenous early years programs and Special Needs Resourcing programs.

We gratefully acknowledge the engagement and collaboration of our local school boards and community partners who play a vital role in aligning supports and shaping early learning environments. Your voices are reflected throughout this plan, and your insights have helped shaped its direction. We are stronger because of your contributions.

We also thank the families and caregivers who shared their experiences, priorities and ideas. Your perspectives ground this plan in real needs and real opportunities for children to thrive.

Disclaimer:

The Child Care and Early Years Service System plan incorporates data and community feedback from various sources. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the data and content within this report. However, we acknowledge that errors and omissions can happen. For more information on alternate formats or to report an error, please reach out to contactus@cityofkingston.ca.

Executive Summary

Kingston-Frontenac is moving forward with a bold, community-driven vision for the next five years—one that puts children and families at the heart of our efforts. At its core is a simple belief: every child deserves the strongest possible start in life, and every family should have access to support that meets their unique needs. We recognize that a strong and responsive child care and early years service system is essential infrastructure for a thriving economy and a more equitable society.

The Kingston-Frontenac Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan is a roadmap and a call to action to focus on investments and supports to improve outcomes for children and families over the next five years. Informed by community voices and aligned with provincial and federal priorities—affordability, accessibility, equity and workforce development—the plan offers a clear, practical framework that will transform our shared vision into action.

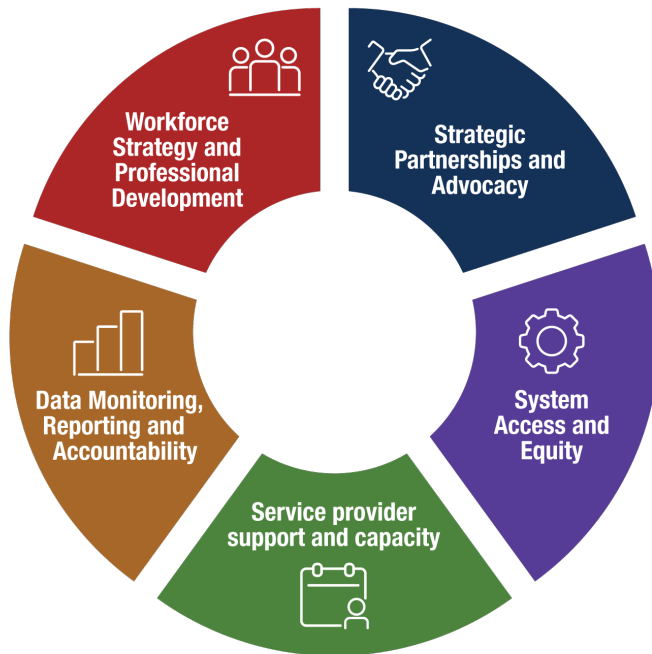
This plan was developed in accordance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*¹, which requires all Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) to lead local planning for the early years system. Local and collaborative planning has been at the forefront of our approach.

The City of Kingston prides itself in being a supportive municipal partner to our child care and early years system. This system plan outlines our vision for continuing to build a more responsive, accessible and inclusive early years and child care system for Kingston-Frontenac.

Our continued focus is on developing sustainable solutions that reflect the strengths of the system and address the needs of families and young children in our communities. Our goal is to ensure every child has access to high-quality early years and child care experiences, while enabling families to thrive and participate fully in the local economy.

¹ [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 11, Sched. 1 | ontario.ca](http://ontario.ca)

Figure 1: Kingston-Frontenac Child Care and Early Years Service System Framework



Our goal: Ensure every child has access to high-quality early years and child care experiences, while enabling families to thrive and participate fully in the local economy.

Our Vision: An affordable, responsive, inclusive and high-quality child care and early years system that connects families, strengthens communities, and supports every child’s early development.

Our Mandate: Lead local early years service system planning, coordination and advocacy to build capacity, support high-quality care and align with provincial priorities.

Our Continued Focus: Developing responsive solutions that reflect the strengths of the system and address the needs of families and young children in our communities.

What the framework emphasizes

- A quality workforce strategy that recognizes registered early childhood educators are the backbone of the system, with expanded access to professional learning and mentorship supports.
- Programs and partnerships that respond to local needs across EarlyON, child care and before- and after-school care.
- Access and inclusion supports reach children and families who need them most, including those from equity deserving groups and children with special needs.

- Service provider and operator support to enable sustainable delivery, reduce administrative burden and advocate for continued funding.
- Data, accountability and continuous improvement to inform decisions that are transparent, with results tracked and shared.

What this means for Kingston-Frontenac

- Reduce barriers to affordability and access and address unmet demand.
- Increase capacity to support children through strengthened consultative supports and inclusion practices.
- Encourage growth of licensed home child care to add flexible, community-based options.
- Support workforce through practical training, leadership development and simplified processes that reduce administrative burden.
- Strengthen collaboration with partners, including school boards and community agencies, to support a connected continuum of services for families.
- Review local data to guide funding, space decisions and community planning.
- Engage, listen and share progress annually to support a responsive and sustainable system.

Our Strategic Priorities

Workforce Strategy and Professional Development

- Support a skilled and knowledgeable workforce by improving access to high-quality early childhood education programs, including promotion of available grants and flexible learning options such as online pathways.
- Continue to collaborate with post-secondary and training institutions to ensure that programs are aligned with real sector needs and that clear, supported pathways into the workforce are available in Kingston-Frontenac.

- Strengthen the workforce through ongoing professional development and learning opportunities, empowering RECEs to grow, lead, and remain engaged in the sector.
- Work alongside child care and early years service providers to support workforce retention and well-being, while maintaining a focus on quality, professionalism, and stability across the system.
- Continue to advocate for fair and sustainable wages for RECEs, recognizing the connection between compensation, retention, and overall sector quality.

Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy

- Deepen integration with school boards to strengthen Before- and After- School Programs (BASP) and align early learning with education systems.
- Enhance partnerships with high-performing programs to share learnings and expand successful models.
- Engage stakeholders to advocate for CWELCC expansion, stable funding and policies that support inclusive, high-quality care.
- Foster ongoing engagement with families, Indigenous and Francophone partners, service providers and community organizations to build trust and support system planning.

System Access and Equity

- Advocate for and work with the Ministry of Education to expand child care spaces and infrastructure, ensuring equitable access to quality care for all families across the region.
- Address barriers through inclusive policies and targeted outreach to underserved populations.
- Monitor Ministry of Education direction and ensure alignment with evolving regulations, sector priorities and community needs.

Service Provider Support and Capacity

- Reduce administrative burden by simplifying processes, centralizing access to Child Care and Early Years Services (CEYS) information and expanding use of digital tools to improve efficiency.
- Offer tailored training and leadership development opportunities to help service providers navigate system changes, retain staff and build long-term sustainability.
- Increase capacity to support children with special needs and encourage the growth of licensed home child care options across Kingston-Frontenac.

Data Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability

- Develop and implement clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to support data quality, reduce administrative burden and monitor processes.
- Build capacity and real-time data systems to support community planning and proactively identify gaps to plan for long-term sustainability.
- Build a robust quality assurance and audit framework that tracks trends, identifies risks early and informs continuous improvement.

Background

This service plan is both a roadmap and a commitment. It outlines how we will continue to build a strong, inclusive and responsive Child Care and Early Years system in Kingston-Frontenac over the next five years. Guided by data, community feedback and government priorities, the plan identifies what matters to families, educators and providers across the region. It helps ensure that resources are directed where they are needed most, services are responsive to changing community needs, and all children have equitable access to quality early learning and child care.

The creation of this plan marks a meaningful step forward. It brings together diverse voices, shared goals and a clear strategy for creating a more connected, sustainable and family-centered system across both urban and rural communities in Kingston-Frontenac.

Our Role as a Service System Manager

The child care and early years system is a thoughtfully designed network that requires collaboration across multiple levels of government, a mix of public and private organizations, and strong coordination among partners to ensure it meets the needs of all. Within this system, the City of Kingston plays a vital role in supporting families and young children 0 to 12 years of age as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for both the City of Kingston and the County of Frontenac. As the CMSM, the City of Kingston plays a central role in the planning, funding, administration and coordination of all Ministry of Education-funded early learning and licensed child care programs and services, as outlined in the *Ontario Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)*².

The role of service manager includes many responsibilities, such as:

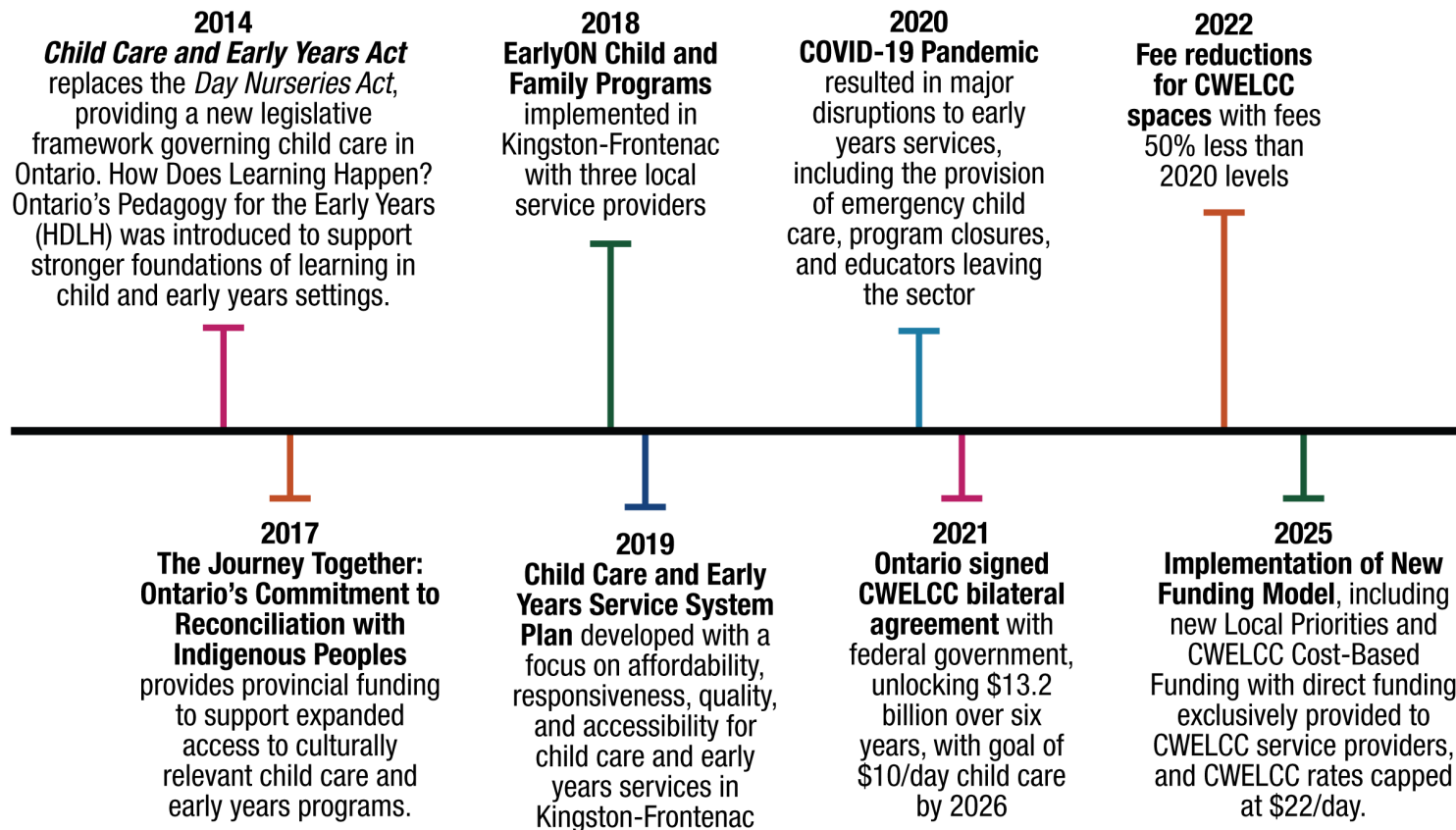
- local system planning and engagement
- policy development and coordination
- system oversight and accountability
- funding and resource allocation
- capacity building and quality improvements

² [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 11, Sched. 1 | ontario.ca](#)

Over the last 25 years, the child care and early years system has undergone significant transformation, resulting in an evolving role for service managers. The diagram below illustrates major milestones in the evolution of the child care and early years system within Ontario and Kingston-Frontenac.

Figure 2: Child care and early years timeline in Kingston-Frontenac

Child care and early years timeline in Kingston-Frontenac



Child Care and Early Years System in Kingston-Frontenac

The City of Kingston works with and funds many licensed service providers and operators across Kingston-Frontenac to offer a diverse landscape of early years and child care services, supporting newborns through to age 12 with programming and supports. The table below outlines the various types of child care and early years services that are available across Kingston-Frontenac:

Table 1: Overview of child care and early years services

Category	Description
EarlyON	EarlyON centres offer free drop-in programs for parents, caregivers and children aged 0 to 6. These centres provide opportunities to play and learn together, connect with other families and get advice from early childhood professionals on parenting, child development and local supports.
Centre-Based Child Care (0-5)	Centre-based care for children 0 to 5 includes licensed child care programs that serve infants, toddlers and preschool-aged children and follow provincial regulations. They offer structured learning environments and play-based curriculum, staffed by Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE). Hours of service vary by centre. Only centre-based programs that have opted into the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system receive direct funding from the City of Kingston. All licensed centres are monitored directly by the Ministry of Education’s Licensing division.
Home-Based Child Care	Licensed home-based child care is delivered in a caregiver’s own home and is regulated through a licensed home child care agency. These agencies monitor programs to ensure they meet provincial standards for safety, learning and child development.
Before and After School Programs (BASP) (6-12)	Before and After or School-age programs provide options for care for children aged 6 to 12 both at the beginning and end of the school day. They are often located in schools or nearby facilities, providing supervised activities, homework help and snacks. These programs offer additional support to working parents, mentoring and tutoring supports, and assist in smooth transitions between school and home.

Category	Description
Special Needs Resourcing (SNR)	SNR supports inclusive child care environments by facilitating programs in accommodating children with special needs. SNR services may include access to resource consultants, customized classroom plans, staff training and support strategies to assist children to fully participate in licensed child care programs. This service is free to families and works in partnership with educators.
Fee Subsidies	Fee subsidies help make child care more affordable for eligible families by covering some or all of the cost of licensed care. Managed by CMSMs, subsidies are based on income and family size using a prescribed formula from the <i>Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014</i> . Families apply through their local service system manager and can use subsidies at participating licensed child care programs.
Professional Learning Resources	The CMSM supports ongoing professional development for the early years and child care sector by offering access to training, workshops and resources. These opportunities help strengthen educator skills, build leadership capacity and support the delivery of high-quality, inclusive programming across Kingston-Frontenac.

Funding and Accountability

All three levels of government—federal, provincial, and municipal—shape child care and early years in Canada, each carrying distinct responsibilities for funding, regulation and service delivery. Together, these levels plan, support and deliver early years and child care services to families across the country. Understanding how these responsibilities are divided clarifies the roles, policies, funding structures and accountability frameworks.

The National Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework³ establishes the policy foundation and the long-term vision for ensuring all children can participate in quality early learning experiences and reach their full potential. The

³ [Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/multilateral-early-learning-and-child-care-framework/)

*Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act*⁴ sets the overarching goal of establishing and maintaining the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system. Through this initiative, the federal government provides funding to provinces and territories through bilateral agreements to support access to affordable, inclusive and high-quality early learning and child care programs.

The Ontario Ministry of Education enforces standards under the *Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)*⁵ including staff-to-child ratios, curriculum expectations, and health and safety rules. In addition, the Ministry allocates funding, develops funding models and creates supporting policies that guide municipalities in implementing early years and child care programs across Ontario.

The City of Kingston, in its role as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), plans, funds, administers, and coordinates local early learning and licensed child care programs and services funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education for children aged 0 to 12 and their families. CMSMs issue direct funding exclusively to CWELCC-enrolled licensees.



Did you know.....

The City of Kingston leads the planning and funding of licensed child care but doesn't operate or supervise children directly.

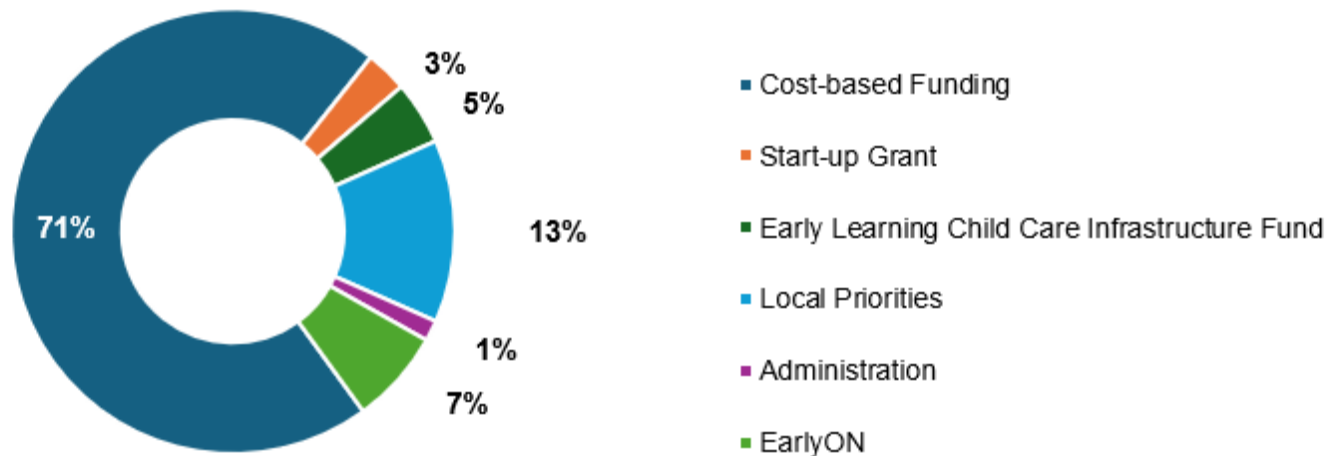
⁴ [Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act](#)

⁵ [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 11, Sched. 1 | ontario.ca](#)

Key responsibilities in the 2025 funding guidelines and budget include⁶:

- Cost-based funding – Disburse, review and monitor funding for CWELCC programs based on benchmark funding that is representative of the cost of delivering high-quality child care in Ontario, and then reconcile allocations to the actual costs of providing early learning and child care services to the community.
- Local priority funding – Allocate based on local needs for CWELCC-participating service providers, child care fee subsidies (low-income or at-risk families), special needs resources and local professional learning supports.
- Accountability and reporting – Review, audit and report financial and service data to the province.

Figure 3: 2025 Kingston-Frontenac child care and early years funding allocations (revised January 2025)⁷



⁶ [Ontario Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines](#)

⁷ [Updates to 2025 Ontario Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines](#)

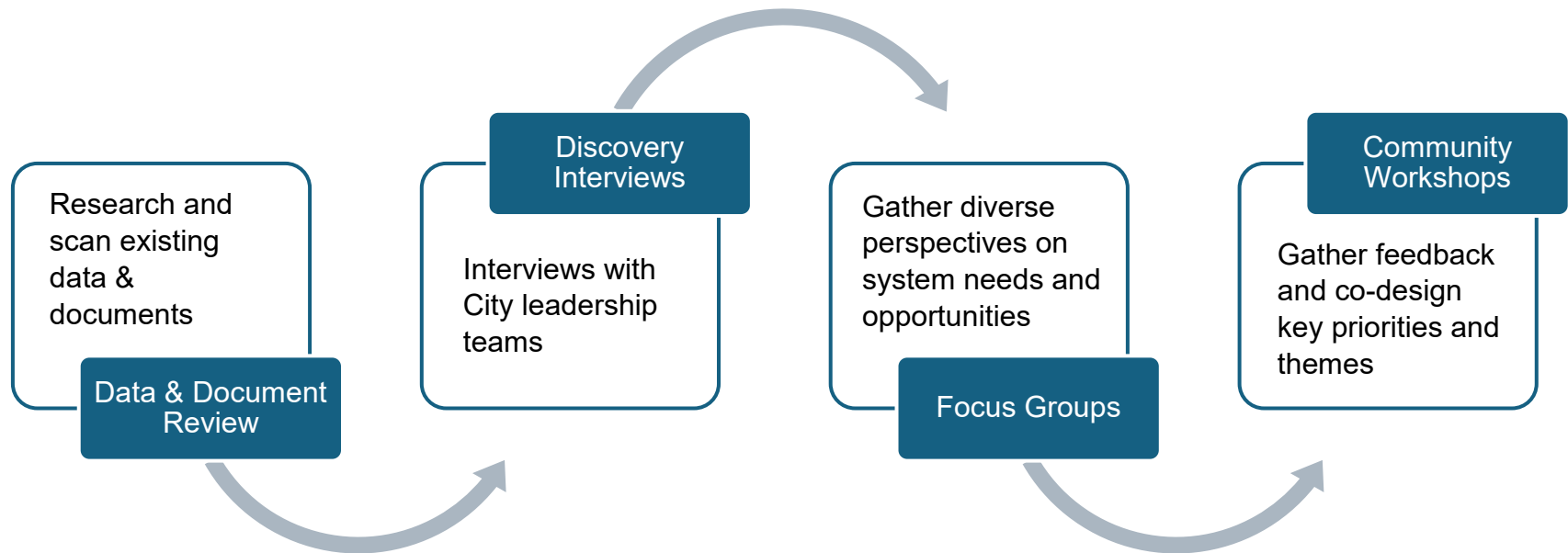
Development of the 2026-2030 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan

Our approach to developing the Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan was informed by a combination of gathering data and insights through community engagement, jurisdictional scans, research and both in-person and virtual discovery conversations. We connected with a broad range of individuals and groups including internal staff, families and community partners.

We engaged purposefully with community partners, including the Francophone community, Indigenous partners and school boards, and we recognize that ongoing involvement with our community will be essential throughout the implementation process to ensure the plan continues to reflect diverse perspectives and evolving community needs.

The insights we gathered through these activities, along with demographic and document analysis and the annual parent/caregiver survey, form the foundation of this plan. These efforts ensure the plan is grounded in local realities, shaped by diverse voices and aligned with our community's vision for child care and early years.

Figure 4: Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan methodology



Kingston-Frontenac At a Glance

The following section offers a snapshot of the current child care and early years system across Kingston-Frontenac, highlighting key facts and trends that shape service delivery and community needs. These insights help ground the Plan in local context, ensuring it responds directly to the realities of families, educators and service providers in Kingston-Frontenac.

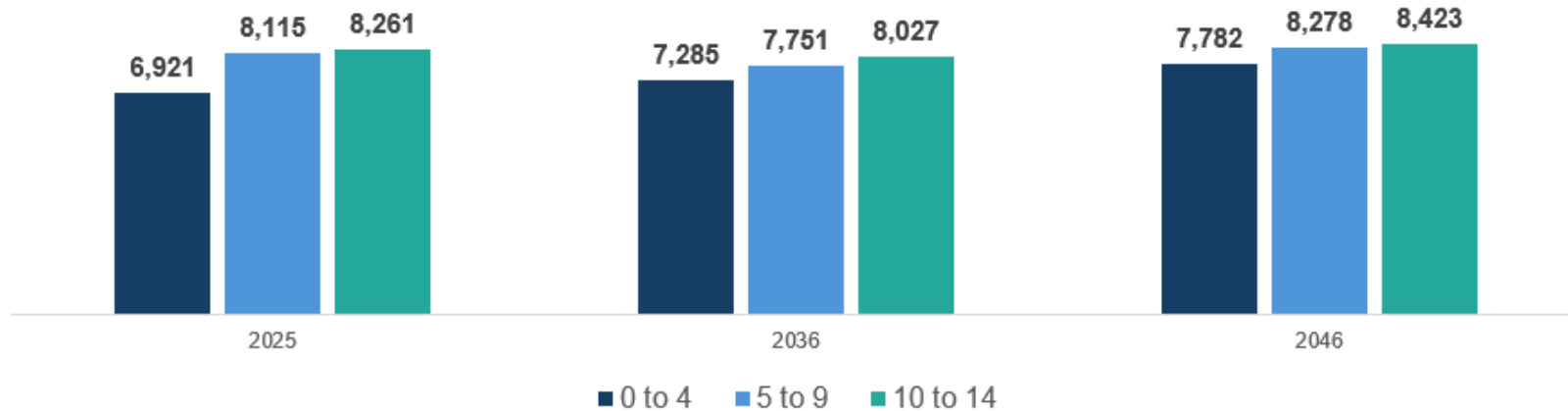
Population Overview

Building a responsive, inclusive and high-quality child care and early years service system in Kingston-Frontenac starts with a clear understanding of the people it serves. Demographic trends, population growth, cultural and linguistic diversity, income levels and workforce patterns all shape the demand for early years services and influence how those services must be delivered.

As Kingston-Frontenac continues to grow and change, so do the needs of families with young children. Effective system planning depends on reliable, current and localized data to ensure child care and early years programs are accessible, equitable and responsive across both urban and rural areas. This section provides a data-informed overview of the Kingston-Frontenac context, forming the foundation for service system design and decision-making over the next five years. It helps identify where new services may be needed, which populations face the greatest barriers, and how to best allocate resources to support all children and families in our community.

Kingston-Frontenac's total population is growing from 161,780 in the 2021 census to an estimated 187,999 by 2030. In that same time frame, the number of children aged 0 – 4 years is expected to grow by nearly 1.3%— from 6,921 to 7,057— and 3.5% for children ages 5 -14. Long-range planning is essential to stay ahead of evolving needs and rising demand across the child care and early years system. This includes expanding licensed child care spaces for children ages 0 to 12, strengthening EarlyON programming and designing flexible, inclusive services that support families at every stage of early development. To achieve this, we must prioritize positive early childhood experiences, invest in workforce development, plan strategically for infrastructure and ensure service design is responsive to the diverse and changing realities of children and families across our communities.

Figure 5: Population projection by number of children 0 to 14 years in Kingston-Frontenac⁸

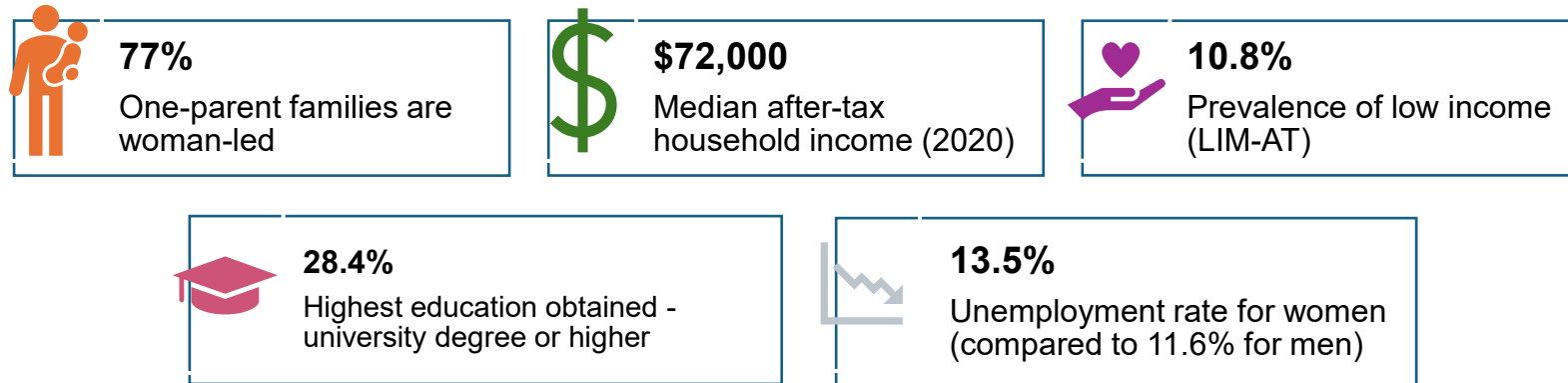


Socio-economic and Diversity Trends

Understanding the socio-economic status and diversity of families in the Kingston-Frontenac region is essential to building responsive and equitable child care and early years programs. Income levels, employment opportunities, stable housing, levels of education and access to resources all influence a family’s ability to participate in and benefit from early learning programs and services. Recognizing the diverse economic realities families face offers insight into community strengths and identifies areas where additional support may be needed. Families with increased barriers often struggle to navigate the system, access support or understand eligibility criteria. Recognizing these dynamics is important when planning equitable, inclusive and accessible programs and services across the system.

⁸ Ministry of Finance, 2025. [Population projections - Dataset - Ontario Data Catalogue](#)

Figure 6: Socio-economic and family indicators in Kingston-Frontenac⁹, 2021



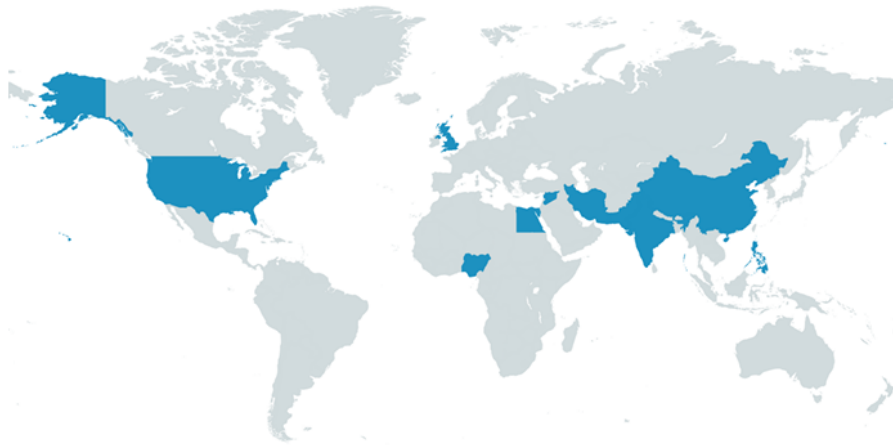
It is important to note the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2021 Census of Population and its influence on employment and income data collected during that time. This period saw widespread job disruptions and the introduction of emergency government supports like the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Pandemic relief benefits played a significant role in family income during this time.

Kingston-Frontenac is home to a growing number of newcomers including immigrants, refugees, international students and temporary residents. Between 2016 and 2021, Kingston's immigrant and non-permanent resident populations increased by 17%, making up approximately 14% (19,375 individuals) of the Kingston-Frontenac total population. While the overall total population grew by 7.5%, or 11,300 individuals, between 2016 and 2021, immigrants arriving during that time period represented 23.4% (2,645 individuals) of this population growth.

⁹ Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). *Census Profile*. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

Figure 7: Top 10 countries of birth for recent immigrants from 2016 to 2021 in Kingston-Frontenac¹⁰

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Syria, 15.2% | 6. Egypt, 3.5% |
| 2. India, 15% | 7. United Kingdom, 2.7% |
| 3. China, 8.2% | 8. Nigeria, 2.6% |
| 4. United States of America, 8.1% | 9. Iran, 2.6% |
| 5. Philippines, 5.5% | 10. Pakistan, 2.6% |

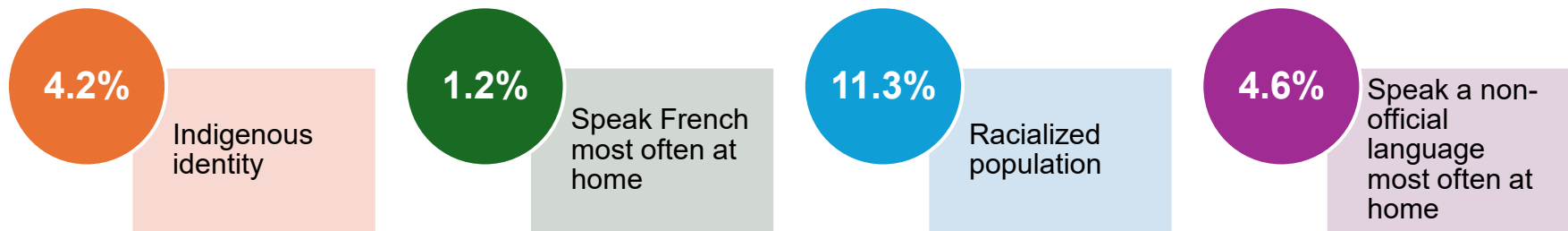


Kingston-Frontenac is also home to several equity-deserving groups whose early years and child care needs must be recognized and supported. This includes Francophone families, Indigenous families and other groups who face unique challenges related to language, culture and access.¹¹

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). *Census Profile*. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

¹¹ Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). *Census Profile*. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

Figure 8: Ethnocultural, language and diversity in Kingston-Frontenac, 2021



The changing socio-economic and demographic landscape of Kingston-Frontenac brings a rich mix of languages, cultural traditions, lived experiences and family structures that shape the expectations and needs of a responsive child care and early years service system. By recognizing and addressing the socio-economic realities families face, and by celebrating the diversity of our community, we can create a child care and early years system that truly supports all children and families both now and into the future.

Early Development Instrument Data

Early childhood experiences build the foundation for lifelong learning, health and well-being. Robust evidence shows the first six years of a child’s life form a critical period when essential skills develop and the brain is most adept at learning¹². This begins at home, in communities and in child care and early years environments that foster curiosity and connection with the world. These early experiences influence children’s development and prepare them for learning through each transition of their lives.

¹² Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child. [Brain Architecture: An ongoing process that begins before birth](#)

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) provides a snapshot of children’s developmental health at age 5 as they begin formal schooling and shift from early years to school age.¹³ Kindergarten teacher teams complete the 103-item EDI questionnaire during the second half of a student’s senior kindergarten year. The results measure children’s ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations across five key domains.

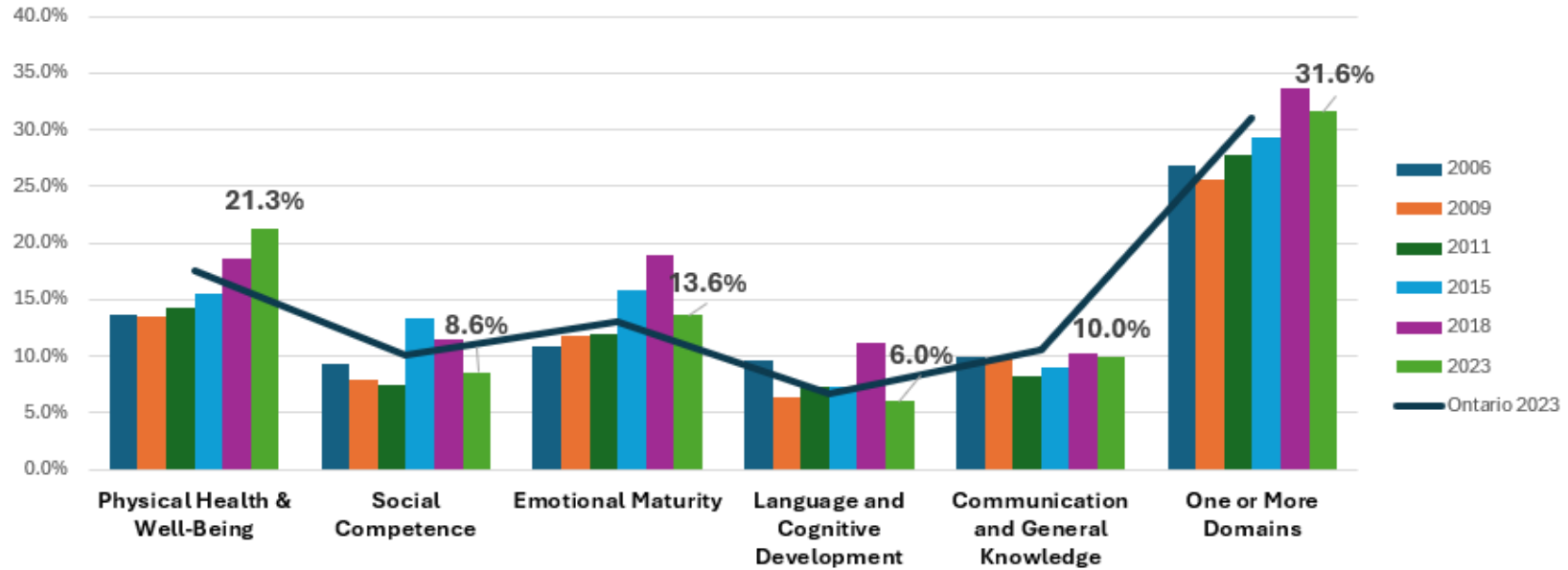
Figure 9: Definitions of the five Early Development Instrument (EDI) domains¹⁴

	Physical Health & Well-being:	physical readiness; independence; gross and fine motor
	Social Competence:	responsibility and respect; solving problems; cooperation and self-confidence
	Emotional Maturity:	prosocial and helping; anxious and fearful; aggression; hyperactivity and inattention
	Language and Cognitive Development:	literacy and numeracy interest and skills; memory
	Communication Skills and General Knowledge:	communicate effectively in native language; imaginative play and storytelling

¹³ The Offord Centre for Child Studies, 2025. [Equity From the Start](#)

¹⁴ The Offord Centre for Child Studies, 2025. [Equity From the Start](#)

Figure 10: Percent of children vulnerable across EDI domains in Kingston-Frontenac¹⁵



Understanding EDI Vulnerability in Kingston-Frontenac

One of the key indicators from the Early Development Instrument (EDI) is the percentage of children identified as vulnerable—those struggling to meet age-appropriate developmental milestones and at greater risk of future challenges in education, health and well-being.

In 2023, the sixth cycle of the EDI was completed within all kindergarten classrooms across four local school boards in the Kingston-Frontenac region. The latest EDI results show that 1 in 3 children (31.6%) in Kingston-Frontenac enter school vulnerable in at least one developmental domain, while 15.5% are vulnerable in two or more domains. These figures highlight the importance of targeted supports during the transition from early years to school age.

¹⁵ [Early Development Instrument | Open Data Kingston](#)

It is important to remember that the data represents only one piece of a much more complex picture. A broader understanding comes from recognizing the interconnected environments that children live, play and grow in and the lifelong impact these environments have. Decades of research reinforce the value of robust investment in early childhood development and highlights that supporting children and families in their earliest years is a collective responsibility and essential to lifelong health and wellness for communities.¹⁶

For more information about the neighbourhood level EDI and demographics in the Kingston-Frontenac area, please refer to the Children and Youth Community Profiles interactive report.¹⁷

Kingston-Frontenac Child Care and Early Years System Overview

Licensed Child Care Programs

The Kingston-Frontenac licensed child care system for children aged 0 to 12 includes 32 centre-based service providers and three licensed home child care (LHCC) agencies. Programs operate in a range of locations and offer a variety of hours of service, including partial-day nursery programs, full-day care, extended hours care and before and after school programs.

Not-for-profit organizations deliver most of the services in the region, with 75% of all centre-based programs and all LHCC agencies for children ages 0 to 12 operating under this model. Not-for-profit child care programs represent 72% of all licensed centre-based spaces for children aged 0 to 5 years, reflecting a strong commitment to accessible and community-driven care.

As a designated French Language Service Provider under the *French Language Services Act (FSLA)*, the City of Kingston commits to providing French language services across all areas of child care and early years service delivery. Two Francophone service providers operate three centre-based programs that offer Francophone child care options for families. These programs represent 4% of all centre-based programs and 7.9% of all licensed spaces for children aged 0

¹⁶ [Equity From the Start](#)

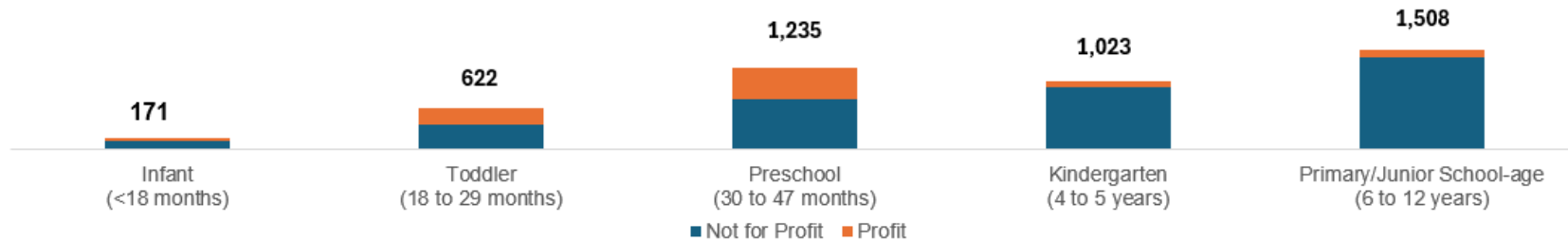
¹⁷ [KFLA Children and Youth Community Profiles](#)

to 12 in Kingston-Frontenac. Through focus group discussions, we identified opportunities to expand the licensed home child care sector for Francophone providers and the need for French-language tools to support French-speaking home providers working with anglophone LHCC agencies.

Kingston-Frontenac has total licensed capacity of 4,594 centre-based spaces for children aged 0-12. Of these, 3,051 spaces serve children aged 0-5 years, with 90% of these spaces considered affordable under the CWELCC program. Within this age group, preschool capacity has the highest number of licensed and operational spaces, while infant care has the fewest. This is largely due to the higher operating costs, specialized care and staffing requirements necessary to operate infant care.

Feedback from the Child Care & Early Years System Plan Survey highlighted concerns about the limited availability of infant and toddler spaces.¹⁸ Addressing this gap requires supporting service providers to increase operational capacity and encouraging growth within these age groups. Respondents also identified challenges in accessing before- and after-school care for both kindergarten and school-age children. Strengthening system capacity, especially by recruiting and retaining qualified staff, will be critical to bridging the gap between licensed and operational capacities.

Figure 11: Total licensed centre-based child care spaces for children 0-12 by Auspice, as of October 2025.¹⁹




¹⁸ <https://getinvolved.cityofkingston.ca/child-care-early-years-service-system-plan>


¹⁹ Child Care Licensing System Full Details Report retrieved on October 7, 2025.

Overview of Licensed Child Care in Kingston-Frontenac

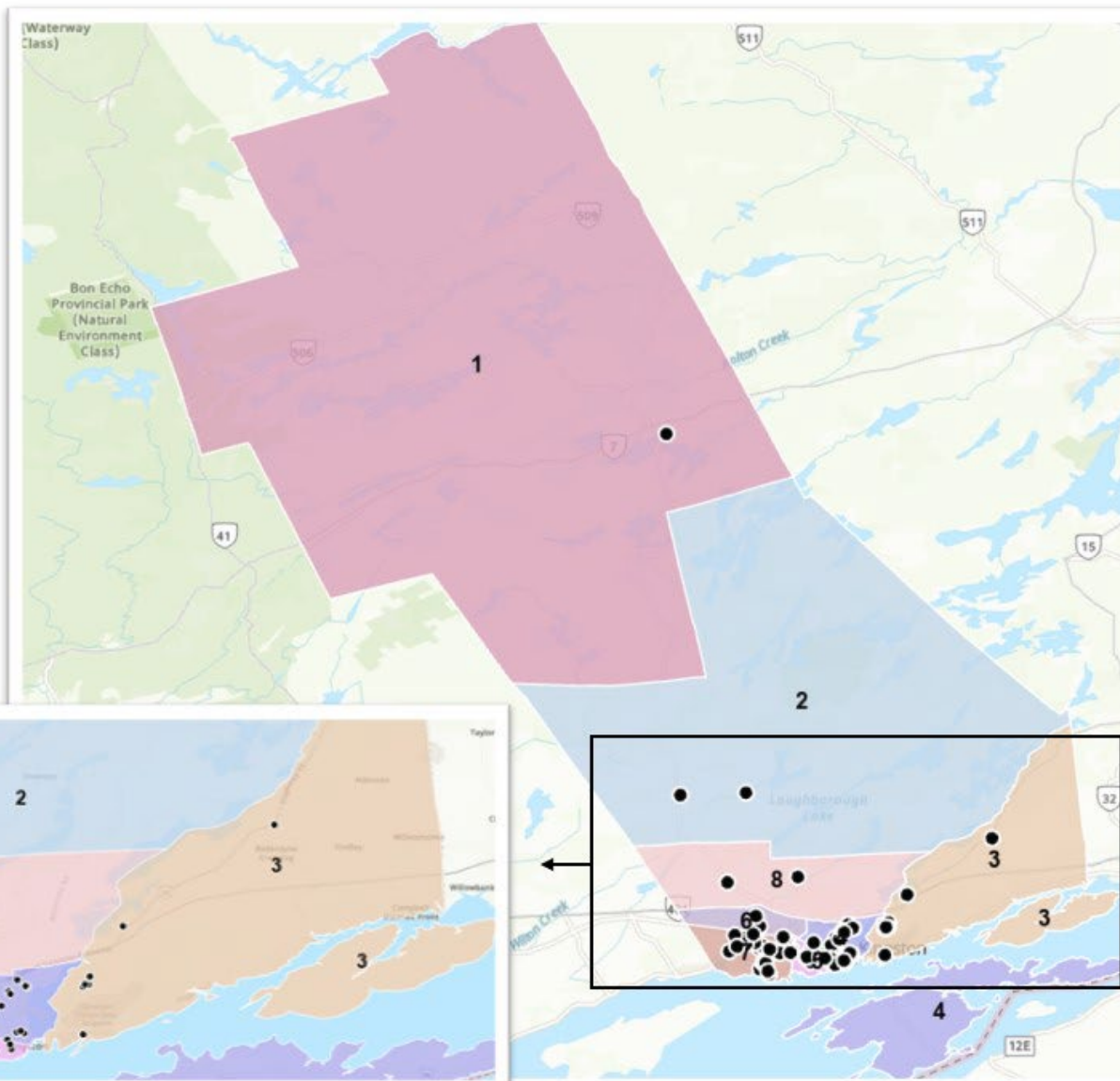
Locations of Child Care Programs in Kingston-Frontenac

- 1 North/Central Frontenac
- 2 South Frontenac
- 3 Kingston – East & Howe Island
- 4 Kingston – Central North & Wolfe Island
- 5 Kingston – Central South
- 6 Kingston – West North
- 7 Kingston – West South
- 8 Kingston – North of 401

 **69**
Centre-based Locations

 **32**
Centre-based Operators

 **2**
Home Child Care Agencies



CWELCC Licensed Child Care Programs – Aged 0 to 5

The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) program provides affordable child care for children aged 0-5 through licensed home child care and centre-based programs. In Kingston-Frontenac, 86% of centre-based programs for children aged 0 to 5 and all licensed home child care agencies are enrolled in the CWELCC program. These CWELCC-funded programs represent approximately 90% (1,762) of the licensed spaces for children aged 0 to 5 across the region. Over 70% of programs serving infant, toddler and preschooler spaces operate in community-based settings, while 59% of operating kindergarten spaces are located within school-based settings.²⁰

CWELCC represents a significant investment in the child care sector, marking a strategic shift toward universal affordability rather than only means-tested subsidies. The increasing demand for child care and ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining registered and qualified early childhood educators underscore the urgent need to prioritize access and equity across the early years system. *Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework* guides growth within the CWELCC system by focusing expansion efforts in under-served communities and among priority populations, including Black, racialized, Indigenous, Francophone, newcomer and low-income families, as well as children with special needs.²¹

CWELCC centre-based programs in Kingston-Frontenac are operating close to their licensed capacity across infant, toddler and preschool-age groups. Toddler and preschool spaces operate at over 90% of their licensed capacity, while infant spaces are operating at slightly below that threshold. In comparison, kindergarten spaces operate at just 61% of their licensed capacity, primarily because school-based settings licence larger physical spaces for this age group, allowing

Did you know.....

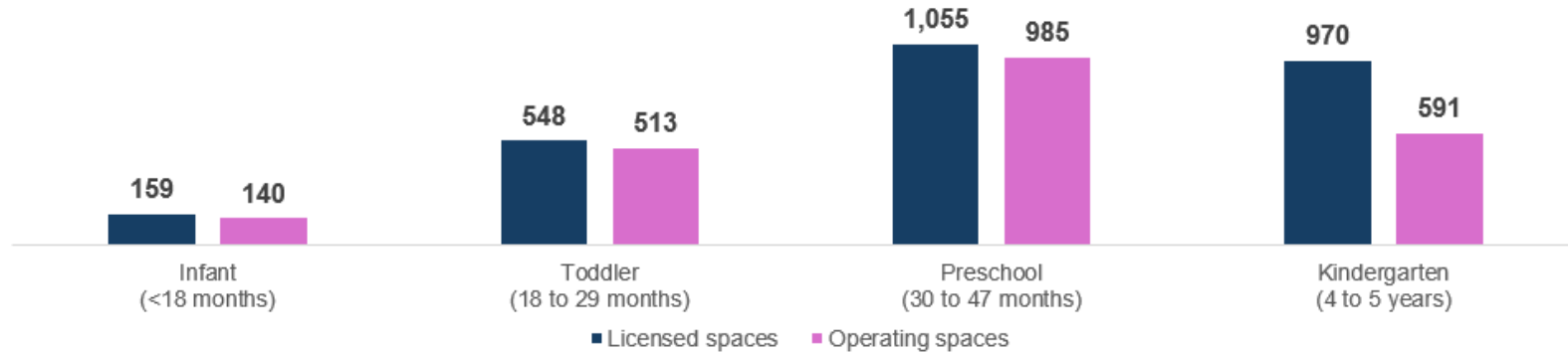
The city's role for 0-5 child care programs is to focus on support and direct funding for CWELCC-participating programs, while overall licensing and operational oversight remain the responsibility of the Ontario Ministry of Education

²⁰ 2025 In-Year Cost-Based Funding Implementation Report. City of Kingston July 2025, Unpublished.

²¹ [Ontario's access and inclusion framework for child care | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/gov/access-and-inclusion-framework-for-child-care)

movement throughout the school. These programs face additional recruitment challenges as they are often part-time roles that operate before and after school.

Figure 12: Total licensed vs. operating CWELCC centre-based spaces for children 0-5 as of May 31, 2025²²



Licensed Home Child Care

Licensed Home Child Care (LHCC) agencies work with independent providers to provide child care for children aged 0 to 12 years within the caregiver’s private home. An LHCC provider can care for a maximum of six children with no more than three of those children younger than 2 years old. As of Fall 2025, there are three LHCC agencies in Kingston-Frontenac, all of which are not-for-profit and enrolled in CWELCC.

LHCC often provides flexible and non-standard hours, making it a desirable option for families whose work schedules fall outside centre-based child care hours. LHCC accommodates smaller groups in a home-based, family-like setting and can offer a more culturally responsive environment that aligns with the languages and traditions of the families served. The

²² Total licensed CWELCC spaces as listed in Child Care Licensing System Full Details Report retrieved on October 7, 2025. Total operating CWELCC spaces reflect operational spaces as reported through CWELCC Service Provider In-Year Reconciliation Tool – Data to May 31, 2025 - Internal City of Kingston Report, Unpublished

smaller group setting also allows providers to offer more individualized support, which can benefit children with special needs. Expanding LHCC in underserved communities is a vital part of supporting equitable access to quality child care.

In Fall 2025, a new LHCC agency was licensed with capacity for 15 licensed homes, increasing the number of licensed capacity of home child care providers in the community from 30 to 45. This will create up to 90 new affordable CWELCC child care spaces in the community as the new LHCC provider begins offering care.

Figure 13: Active licensed home child care agencies and homes, August 2025²³



²³ [Child Care Licensing System | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/child-care-licensing)

CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy

The City of Kingston’s directed growth approach aligns with Ontario’s *Access and Inclusion Framework 2023*²⁴, which emphasizes expanding licensed spaces and promoting inclusion for underserved communities. To support this, the province revised CWELCC space allocation targets to achieve 86,000 net new spaces by 2026. The updated approach allows CMSMs to shift spaces between settings and age groups while maintaining overall targets and advancing the goal of ensuring 70% or more of spaces for children aged 0–5 are located in not-for-profit settings.

Under these revised space targets, Kingston-Frontenac’s 2024–2026 allocations include a total of 456 new spaces, comprised of 122 school-based spaces and 334 community-based spaces. A breakdown of allocations by setting is included in the table below and is also reflected in Schedule 1 of the Ministry of Education’s CWELCC memo 2025.

Provincial funding tools, including start-up grants and the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Infrastructure Fund, will support the implementation of these expanded spaces. The ELCC Infrastructure Fund prioritizes not-for-profit CWELCC licensed centres and is designed to increase inclusion in child care for underserved communities. In 2025, the ELCC Infrastructure Fund allocated approximately \$135.1 million province-wide, including a \$1.5 million base per CMSM/DSSAB plus a proportional share linked to revised 2025–2026 community-based targets.

The City of Kingston’s directed growth strategy and provincial supports work together to expand access, promote inclusion and sustain high-quality licensed child care across school and community-based settings while meeting provincial objectives.

Figure 14: CWELCC space targets for directed growth strategy for Kingston-Frontenac, March 2025²⁵

Role	2024	2025	2026	Total
School-based spaces	122	0	0	122

²⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education, Memo 2025: EYCC01—Updates to 2025 Ontario Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines (including Appendix A: Schedules 1–2; Appendix B: ELCC Infrastructure Fund; Appendix C: 2025 Allocations)

²⁵ [Updates to 2025 Ontario Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines](#)

Role	2024	2025	2026	Total
Community-based spaces	114	55	165	334
Total spaces	236	55	165	456

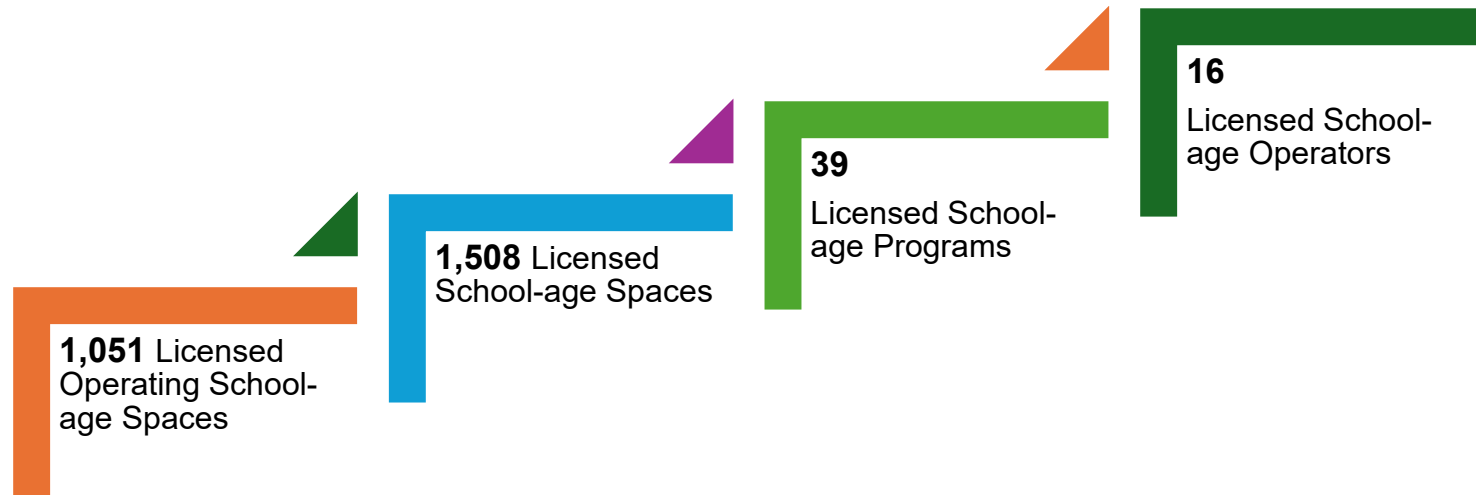
School Age Programs Age 6-12

The capacity of programs licensed in school-based settings is not always reflective of the actual or expected operational capacity of those programs. Several factors contribute to the gap between operational and licensed capacity thresholds within licensed school-age child care programs. These factors include requests for licenses covering larger physical spaces to accommodate movement between locations within a school due to changing needs within the school setting, as well as difficulties in recruiting staff for part-time roles. As a result, a comparison of operational vs licensed capacity is less meaningful for programs serving children aged 6-12.

The City of Kingston collects operational capacity data for school-age programs from licensees participating in the CWELCC program, even though school-age programs themselves are not eligible for CWELCC funding. This means that available data excludes service providers who operate licensed school-age programs but are not enrolled in CWELCC. Consequently, data on the operating capacity of programs for school-age children (aged 6 to 12) is limited and incomplete.

A comprehensive assessment of school-aged programs is needed to fully understand and address the service gaps in school-age programs identified during community engagement. This includes a commitment to standardizing data collection to better capture and understand provider capacity and utilization across programs for children aged 6-12.

Figure 15: Total licensed school-age spaces for children 6-12 as of May 31, 2025²⁶



²⁶ Total licensed School-age (6-12) spaces as listed in Child Care Licensing System Full Details Report retrieved on October 7, 2025. Total operating School-age spaces reflect operational spaces as reported through CWELCC Service Provider In-Year Reconciliation Tool – Data to May 31, 2025 - Internal City of Kingston Report, Unpublished

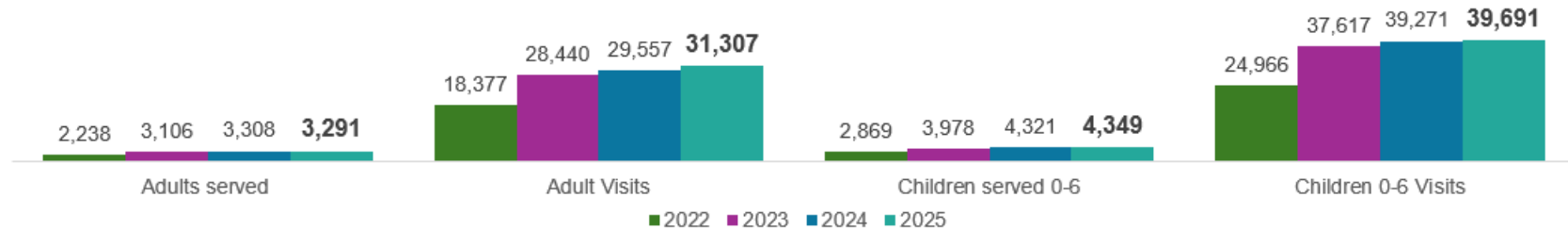
EarlyON Child and Family Programs

Three agencies in the Kingston-Frontenac region deliver EarlyOn programming across approximately 30 sites. While most locations are within the City of Kingston, programs for families and young children are also offered in the surrounding rural townships. This footprint is designed to ensure strong access in neighbourhoods where families live, work and study. However, rural families may still face transportation barriers as they must travel further to reach these programs.

EarlyON centres offer free play-based learning, parenting support and connections to community services. They function as welcoming hubs for newcomers, Indigenous and Francophone families, and families with children who may need extra support. To close the urban–rural gap, the system will continue to use satellite and mobile programming, partnerships with libraries and schools, and rotating outreach in hamlets and villages so families in North, South, Central, and Frontenac Islands have predictable opportunities to participate close to home. Exploring opportunities to expand evening and weekend hours in select communities may also improve access for shift-working and commuting parents.

Participation in EarlyON programs and services across Kingston-Frontenac has increased significantly since 2022. There has been growth in unique visits among adults and children aged 0 to 6, as well as the total number of visits to the programs through the area. The growing participation reflects the increased variety of unique programs offered across various locations, increasing access for different populations throughout the city and the county. As programs evolved during the post-pandemic period to meet community needs, virtual programs were primarily replaced with indoor programs, but outdoor programs have remained an important program delivery method.

Figure 16: Total visits and numbers served at EarlyON child and family programs in Kingston-Frontenac

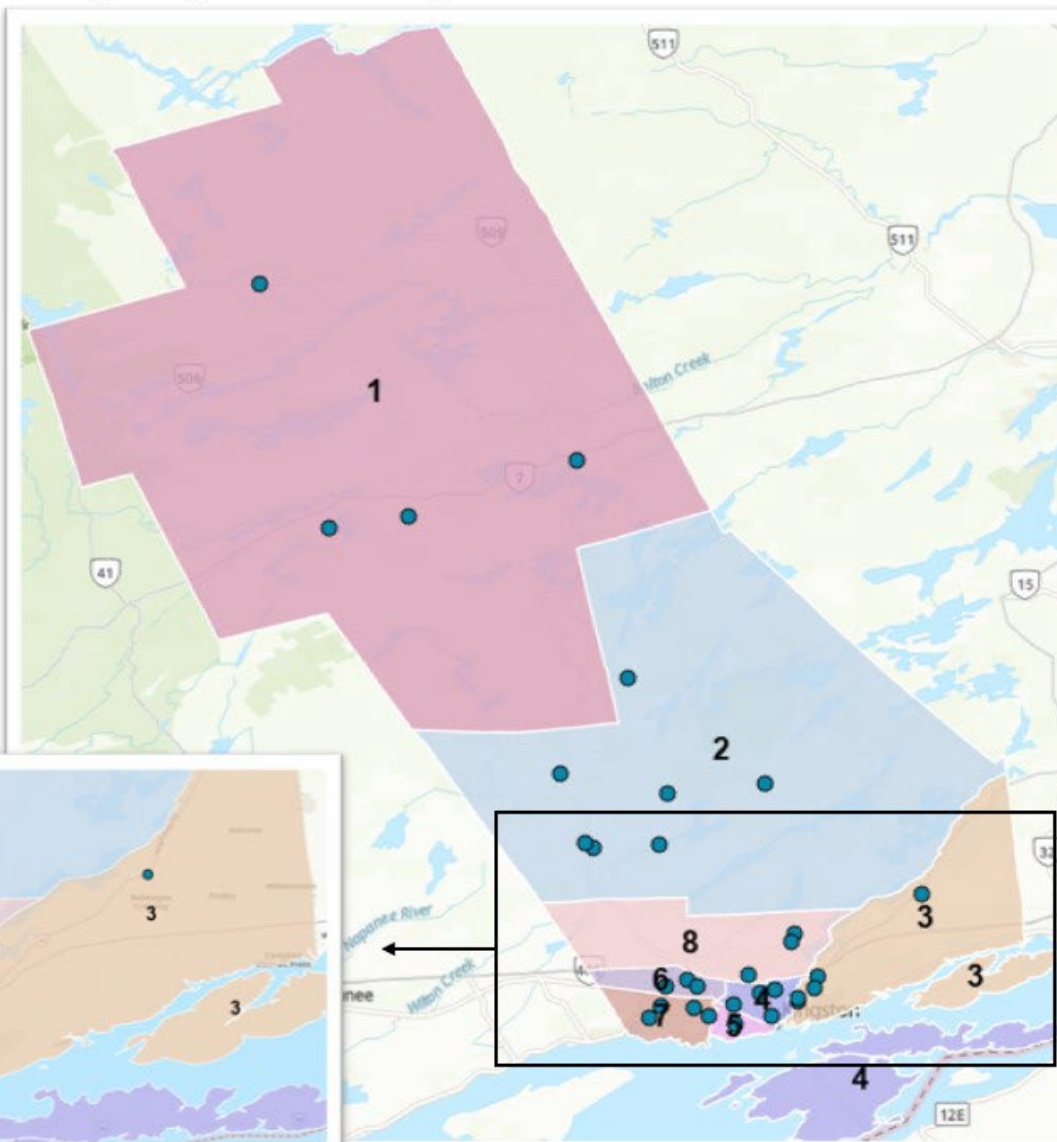


Overview of EarlyON Child & Family Programs in Kingston-Frontenac

Locations of EarlyON Programs in Kingston-Frontenac

- 1 North/Central Frontenac
- 2 South Frontenac
- 3 Kingston – East & Howe Island
- 4 Kingston – Central North & Wolfe Island
- 5 Kingston – Central South
- 6 Kingston – West North
- 7 Kingston – West South
- 8 Kingston – North of 401

-  **30+**
Locations (seasonal)
-  **3**
EarlyON Operators
-  **39,271**
Visits by children 0 to 6 years of age in 2024

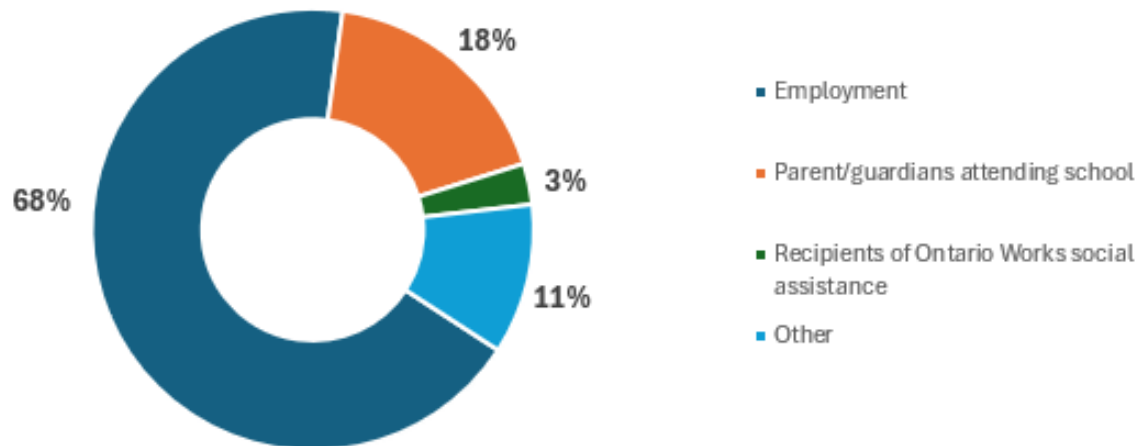


Access and Affordability Programs

Child Care Fee Subsidy Program

The Child Care Fee Subsidy program helps eligible families with the cost of licensed child care for children aged 0-12. The Ontario Ministry of Education sets the eligibility criteria for fee subsidy and local service managers handle fee subsidy applications. Eligibility is based on the family’s adjusted net income as calculated from their tax return. Additional requirements include parent/guardian participation in employment and/or education programs. Families can apply for fee subsidy after they have secured and confirmed a child care space with a service provider through the Centralized Childcare Registry and Information Service (CCRIS).²⁷ There is currently no waitlist for fee subsidy in Kingston-Frontenac. An average of 428 families and 467 children accessed fee subsidies monthly in 2025.

Figure 17: Reason for households in Kingston-Frontenac accessing fee subsidy in 2025²⁸



²⁷ [City of Kingston | Child Care Waitlist](#)

²⁸ Ontario Child Care Management System (OCCMS) Reports R017 & R040. 2025 Internal City of Kingston Reports, Unpublished.

As the overall affordability of child care spaces for children aged 0 – 5 has increased since the implementation of the CWELCC program, the total number of families and children accessing the child care fee subsidy program has decreased by 20% since January 2022. Although the reduction in the fee subsidy caseload is primarily attributed to the increased affordability of child care under the CWELCC program, it should also be noted that the financial eligibility requirements, or income testing thresholds for fee subsidy set by the Ontario Ministry of Education, have not been updated since 2007.

While child care costs have become more affordable for families with children aged 0 to 5 through the CWELCC program, more children now receive fee subsidies for school-age care. In January 2025, 37% of all children receiving fee subsidy in Kingston-Frontenac were attending school-age programs, up from an average of 27% in 2022, before CWELCC launched. Because CWELCC funding only applies to children aged 0-5, families are experiencing affordability pressures if they require care after their children turn 6. Demand for subsidies for school-age programs continues to grow, but outdated financial eligibility requirements limit access for many families. Currently, 64% of fee subsidy households have an adjusted annual income of less than \$40,001 per year, demonstrating the need for broader awareness and advocacy to extend access and support affordability. These efforts are essential to ensure equitable access for our most economically vulnerable residents.

Child Care Registry

The Centralized Child Care Registry and Information Service (CCRIS)²⁹ is a user-friendly online platform for Kingston and Frontenac County residents seeking child care. By filling out a single application, families can apply to multiple child care providers that match their preferences and identify those who accept child care fee subsidy. The registry system is used as an administrative tool for child care service providers to manage their waitlists and fill spaces. Access to affordable child care in Kingston-Frontenac begins with an application through the registry.

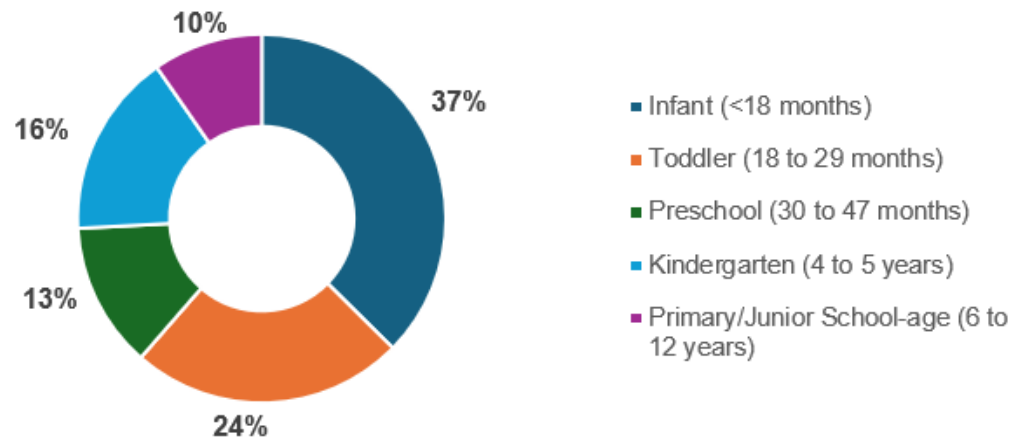
Approximately 3,200 children are currently active on the registry with preferred start dates ranging from January 2025 to September 2030. It is important to note that although families indicate a preferred start date, they unfortunately may not secure a licensed child care space by this date, leaving them in the registry for the next available space. Families consider multiple factors when applying for licensed child care, including type of care, location and start date, all of which may change with family circumstances and as children grow older. Approximately 60% of current applicants are seeking full-

²⁹ [City of Kingston | Child Care Waitlist](#)

day child care, while 30% are looking to access Kindergarten and Before- and After-School Programs (BASP). Additionally, more than half of all applications are requesting placement in infant or toddler programs.

The registry numbers fluctuate daily as many families face significant wait times for licensed child care in Kingston-Frontenac. Between January to June 2025, 697 children had active applications requesting a child care space with a preferred start date in that period. By the end of September 2025, that number rose to 1,080 unique active applications, including new registrations and those still waiting for placement after their preferred start date. As of the end of September 2025, 308 of these active applications secured a child care space. Figure 18 below shows the breakdown of all active registrations within the registry by age group between January 2025 and September 2030.

Figure 18: Percentage of all active registrations in the Centralized Child Care Registry by age group, Jan 2025 to Sept 2030³⁰



³⁰ https://kingston.onehsn.com/ux_2_0

Community engagement through the Child Care & Early Years System Plan Survey highlighted the need for clearer information on the registry, including waitlist statuses and timelines, and more oversight of its use by providers.³¹ This call for improved transparency and accountability within the registry creates an opportunity to use the data more effectively for system planning and emphasizes the importance of prioritizing data monitoring.

³¹ <https://getinvolved.cityofkingston.ca/child-care-early-years-service-system-plan>

Special Needs Resourcing

Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) in Ontario's Child Care and Early Years settings is a foundational support system that ensures children with developmental, physical, emotional, or communicative needs can meaningfully participate in licensed child care programs.³² The Ontario Ministry of Education funds the program and aligns outcomes with Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework. Municipal service system managers oversee the system locally.

Community Living Kingston and District (CLKD) serves as the contracted service provider for SNR in Kingston-Frontenac. Through its Child Care Resource Consultant service, CLKD supports all licensed child care programs in building inclusive environments for children. Resource consultants use a class-wide approach grounded in the principles of inclusion and belonging, helping educators ensure every child in licensed child care can actively and meaningfully participate. They work collaboratively with educators to strengthen capacity to meet diverse needs and connect families to additional services and supports. CLKD also administers direct funding for enhanced supports to all licensed child care programs participating in the CWELCC program in accordance with the Ministry of Education guidelines. Enhanced support funding may cover specialized or adaptive equipment, supplies or supplemental staffing to support the inclusion of children with special needs.

In 2024, the SNR program served more than 300 children each month on average. While the Ministry of Education mandates minimum expenditures for Special Needs Resourcing, the City of Kingston Child Care and Early Years Services (CEYS) routinely invests additional funds as part of an ongoing commitment to supporting equitable access for children with special needs. With a minimum funding requirement of \$536,127 for 2025, the City invests more than \$1.2 million annually in Special Needs Resourcing to ensure children with special needs can participate in licensed child care programs.

Licensed Child Care and Early Years Workforce

Ontario's licensed child care and early years workforce is facing both significant challenges and promising opportunities. Municipalities, traditionally limited in their role within child care delivery, are now being called upon to play a more active part in shaping and supporting the sector, particularly with the implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) initiative. Workforce shortages, especially among Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs), strain local systems and limit access and quality in communities. However, this moment also gives municipal governments

³² OMSSA Special Needs Resourcing Funding and Support, 2024. [Special_Needs_Resourcing_2024.pdf](#)

a unique opportunity to lead by developing innovative, community-specific strategies that support and address recruitment, retention, and professional development.

RECEs are trained professionals who play a vital role in supporting the development and well-being of young children in Ontario. As regulated members of the College of Early Childhood Educators, RECEs are held to standards of practice and a Code of Ethics that guide their professional conduct, knowledge, and skills. Their work is grounded in principles of child development, inclusive education, and responsive care, ensuring that children receive high-quality early learning experiences. In addition to meeting educational and certification requirements, RECEs are committed to ongoing professional learning, recognizing it as both an ethical obligation and a cornerstone of excellence in their field. This dedication to continuous improvement helps RECEs stay current with best practices and evolving needs within the early years sector.

There is a shortage of RECEs in licensed child care and early years programs across Ontario, in communities of all sizes³³. While local service managers actively support local recruitment and retention efforts through partnerships, workforce development initiatives and community engagement, many of the root causes lie beyond our jurisdiction. Key factors such as fair wages, a competitive salary scale, post-secondary training capacity, and immigration pathways for qualified early childhood educators are shaped by provincial and federal policies³⁴. Addressing these systemic issues requires coordinated action across all levels of government to ensure a stable and sustainable workforce that meets the needs of families in our communities.

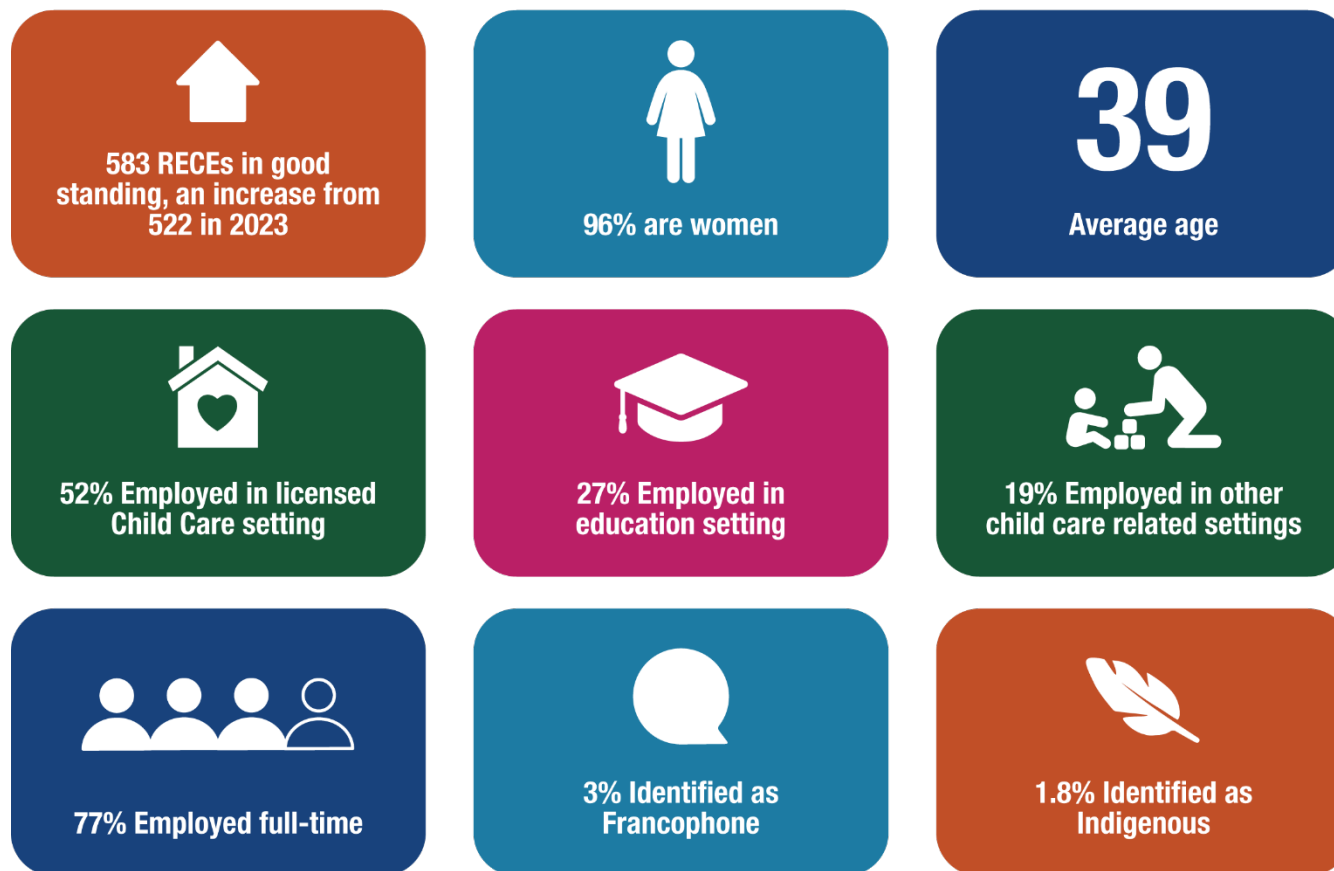
Did you know.....

According to the College of ECEs, “research has demonstrated that qualified and accountable professionals are key to the delivery of high-quality early years programs, which include both learning and care.”

³³ [Knowing Our Numbers - Home](#)

³⁴ [AECEO.OCBCC_Salary_Scale_Position_Paper.pdf](#)

Figure 19: Snapshot of RECEs in Kingston-Frontenac, 2024.³⁵



³⁵ https://www.college-ece.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2024_Annual_Data_Membership_Overview.pdf

Kingston-Frontenac Workforce Professional Development

The City of Kingston provides the early years and child care sector in Kingston-Frontenac with responsive professional learning that supports *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* by offering access to training, workshops, resources and direct support from a Professional Learning Facilitator.³⁶



In 2024, approximately 30 individual EarlyON staff participated in seven Professional Learning Communities of Practice sessions. A further 40 individuals attended an additional nine Professional Learning Communities of Practice sessions focused on educators working in licensed child care. The range of topics covered discussions on inclusion, cultural awareness, building relationships with families, teaching empathy and nurturing communication skills. In addition to Community of Practice sessions, focused workshops delivered tailored professional learning to over 100 participants on topics such as resiliency skills, Reggio pedagogy and trauma-informed practices. These opportunities strengthen educator skills, build individual and organizational capacity and support the delivery of high-quality, inclusive programming across Kingston-Frontenac.

In June 2025, the Child Care and Early Years Services (CEYS) team hosted the fourth annual "Nothing Without Early Learning" conference for Early Childhood Educators from licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres across Kingston-Frontenac. Attendance continues to grow each year, expanding from 320 participants in 2022 to over 475 participants in 2025. In addition to the valuable professional

learning offered, the conference also celebrates the critical role that educators play in the development and resilience of our community's children.

³⁶ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-does-learning-happen-ontarios-pedagogy-early-years>

Community Engagement - What We Heard

To ensure this child care and early years system plan accurately reflects the needs and realities of Kingston-Frontenac residents, we engaged directly with those that know it best through meaningful conversations, collaborative focus groups and community surveys to connect with a broad range of individuals, including families, child care and early years service providers, educators, community partners and City staff. They shared valuable insights that helped us understand what works, where gaps persist, and what the future could look like with the right strategies. Their feedback was instrumental in shaping the direction of the plan. The following section summarizes the key themes that emerged.

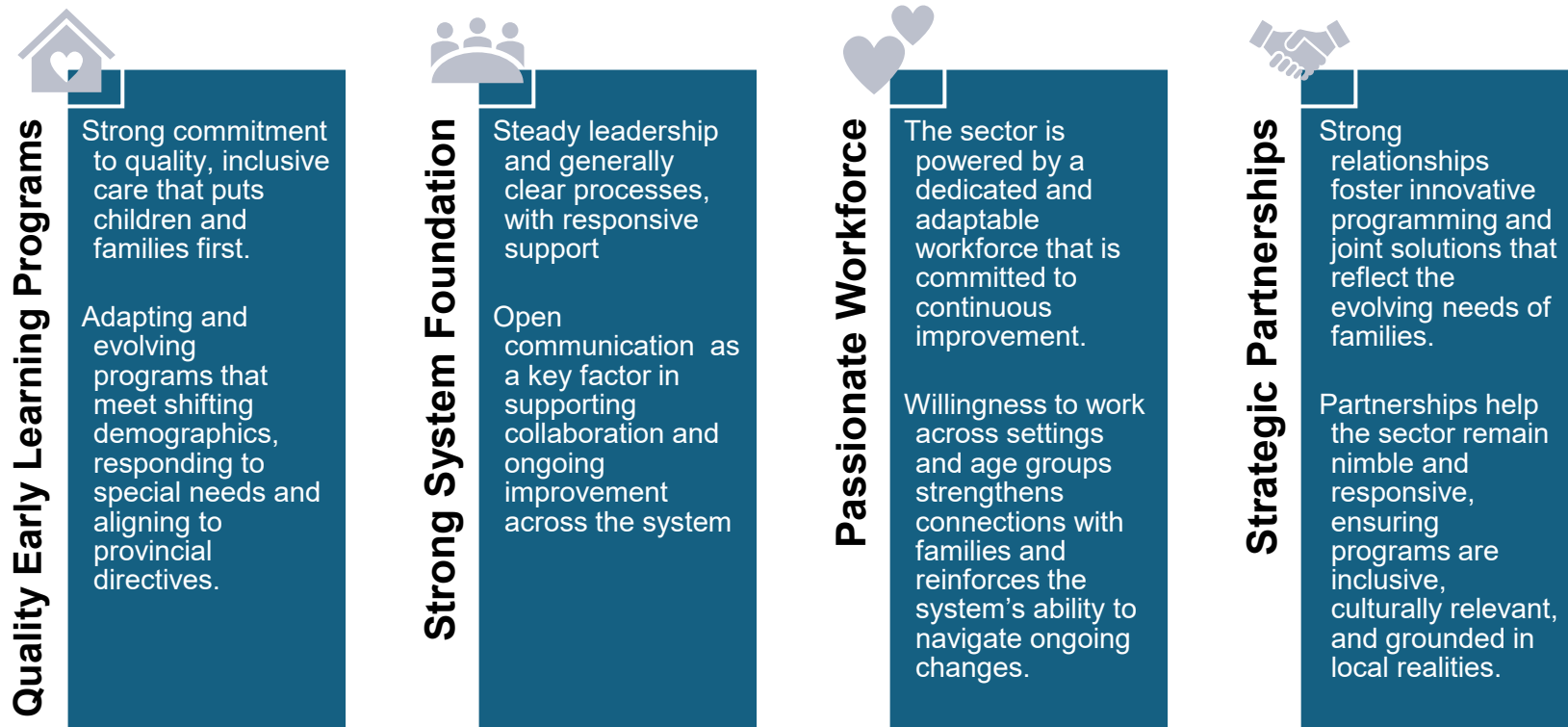
Figure 20: Overview of system and community engagement; 2024-2025



Insights from our Community: System Strengths

Through meaningful engagement with families, educators, service providers and community partners, several core strengths of the Kingston-Frontenac child care and early years system emerged. These strengths highlight the dedication, collaboration and adaptability of the sector in supporting children and families across the region.

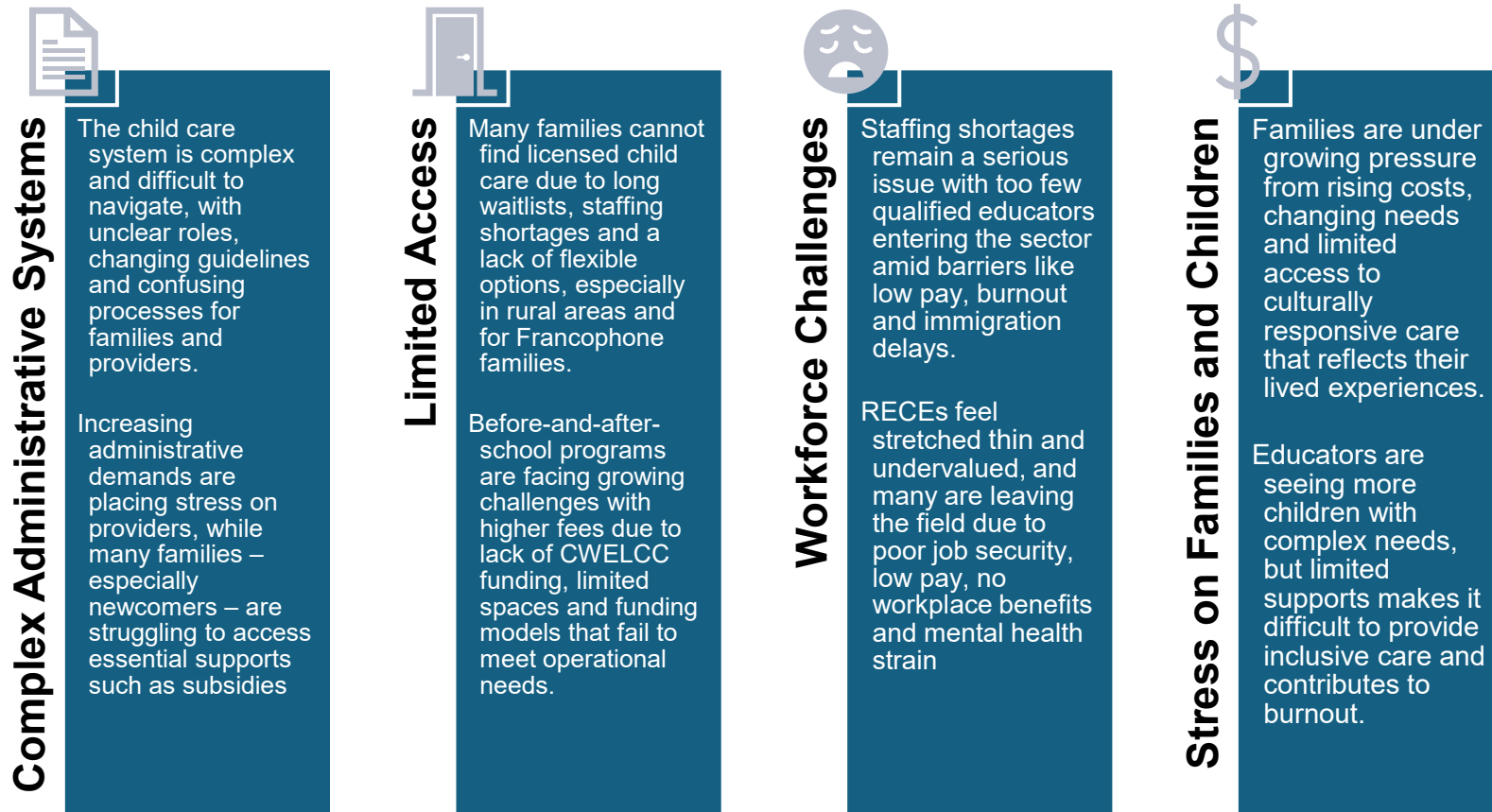
Figure 21: Overview of System Strengths



Insights from our Community: System Pressures

Engagement with families, educators, service providers and partners revealed several system pressures that impact access, quality and sustainability across the region.

Figure 22: Overview of system challenges

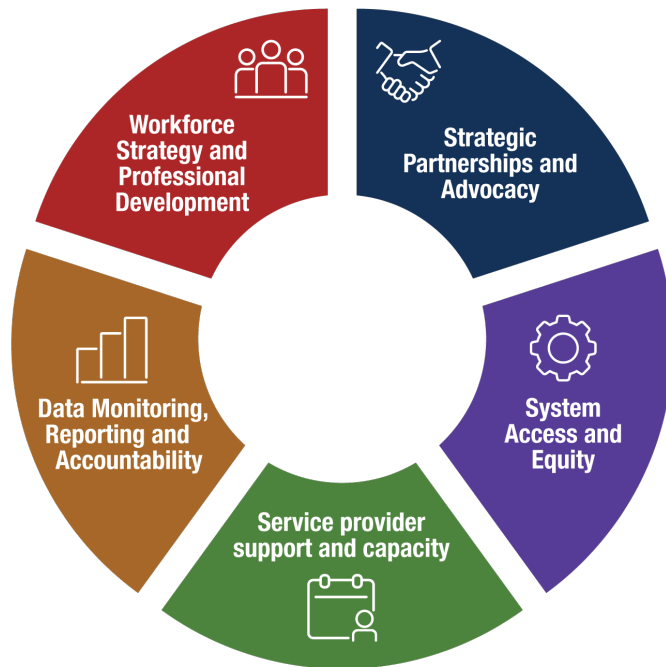


Child Care and Early Years System Framework: 2026-2030

The Child Care and Early Years System Framework sets the strategic foundation for the next five years transformation in Kingston-Frontenac. It reflects what we heard directly from families, educators and community partners throughout our engagement process and aligns with provincial and federal government priorities including affordability, accessibility, equity and workforce sustainability.

Each component of the framework represents a critical function needed to deliver a child care and early years system that is inclusive, resilient and responsive to local needs. As we move forward, this framework will guide our decisions, investments and partnerships to ensure children and families across Kingston-Frontenac experience the benefits of a system that is future-ready.

Figure 23: Child Care and Early Years System Framework



Our Vision

An affordable, responsive, inclusive, and high-quality child care and early years system that connects families, strengthens communities and supports every child's early development.

Kingston-Frontenac's vision for child care and early years goes beyond a statement—it commits to giving every child the opportunity for the best possible start in life. By celebrating and embracing the diversity of children, families and communities, this vision recognizes that all children, no matter their identity, background or circumstances, deserve equitable access to nurturing environments and supportive experiences. It reflects a deep understanding of the pivotal role early years experiences play in shaping lifelong health, learning and wellbeing.

Affordability, responsiveness and inclusion are central to Kingston-Frontenac's vision for early childhood. We believe no family should have to choose between high-quality care and financial stability. A responsive system listens to families and providers and adapts to their changing needs. Inclusion guides every decision we make, ensuring children from equity-deserving groups, including Indigenous, racialized, low-income, newcomer, children with special needs, and 2SLGBTQ+ families, are not only reflected in the system but actively supported and welcomed.

This vision positions child care and early years programs and services as vital to Kingston-Frontenac's social and economic fabric. These programs provide positive early experiences that support healthy child development, enable parents to participate in the workforce and strengthens local communities—all contributing to a healthier, more equitable region. It is a vision rooted in care, driven by evidence and shaped by the voices of families, educators, service providers and communities across the region.

By aligning with provincial and federal priorities such as affordability and access, high-quality and inclusive care, investments in the workforce and infrastructure, and long-term sustainability, this vision moves Kingston-Frontenac forward with purpose and clarity. Over the next five years, child care and early years services will ensure programs and support for families are seen as vital public services that should be available and accessible to everyone.

Our Mandate

Lead local early years service system planning, coordination and advocacy to build capacity, support high-quality and align with provincial priorities.

Kingston-Frontenac's child care and early years system carries a mandate that reflects strategic leadership and deep collaboration. As the designated service system manager, the City of Kingston is responsible for building a cohesive and responsive system that delivers affordable, high-quality care for all families. This mandate drives us to set the direction for growth, invest in proven strategies, identify and address service gaps and align all actions with provincial frameworks and policy priorities.

At its core, this mandate creates the conditions for success: supporting providers, empowering the workforce and removing barriers so every child can access high-quality care that is safe, culturally affirming and developmentally appropriate. System coordination involves much more than managing spaces—it fosters partnerships, advocates for underserved communities, and builds long-term sustainability into every aspect of the sector.

Over the next five years, the City of Kingston's role will evolve to meet new challenges, and this mandate will guide how we lead change rather than react to it. Through data-informed planning, community-rooted engagement and a focus on outcomes, we will strengthen the system to make it more equitable and effective for all.

Child Care and Early Years Service System Priority Areas

The priority areas in this plan represent Kingston-Frontenac's key focus for the next five years and outline the critical building blocks needed to strengthen and sustain our child care and early years system. Each priority begins with a clear objective that expresses our core aspiration and describes what we aim to accomplish to improve outcomes for children, families and providers. High-level commitments follow these objectives to guide our actions and decision-making, reinforcing our role as system leaders and partners.

We support each priority with strategic initiatives and concrete actions designed to drive progress and deliver measurable, community-informed outcomes. These priorities are interconnected, with the success of one being intertwined with the next. Together, they reflect insights from current population-level and service data, community engagement feedback and alignment with provincial and federal direction. They provide a roadmap for coordinated action, operational focus and long-term impact across the system.

Workforce Strategy and Professional Development

Build a stable, skilled and growing early years workforce through targeted education and development strategies.

Actions:

- Improve access to high-quality early childhood education programs, including promotion of available grants and flexible learning options such as online pathways.
- Continue to collaborate with post-secondary and training institutions to align programs with real sector needs and create clear, supported pathways into the workforce.
- Strengthen the workforce through ongoing professional development and learning opportunities that empower RECEs to grow, lead and stay engaged in the sector.
- Work alongside child care and early years service providers to support workforce retention and well-being while maintaining a focus on quality, professionalism and stability across the system.
- Continue to advocate for fair and sustainable wages for RECEs, recognizing the link between compensation, retention and overall sector quality.



Without qualified early learning staff, the other priorities cannot be met.”

September 2025 Child Care & Early Years System Plan
Survey Participant

Outcomes:

- Recruitment and retention of qualified Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) is strengthened, ensuring a stable and skilled workforce.
- RECEs experience greater job satisfaction and a stronger sense of professional identity
- Professional learning programs are aligned with sector needs, equipping new and existing educators with relevant skills and knowledge to meet evolving demands.
- Access to continuous professional development and leadership opportunities is expanded, supporting growth, innovation and career advancement for RECEs throughout the region.

Strategic Initiatives for Priority Area:

Initiative	Objective
Promoting ECE Career Pathways	Strengthen workforce retention, satisfaction and leadership capacity by expanding access to high-quality professional development and mentorship support at key career stages.
Promotional Campaign	Elevate visibility and value of the early childhood educator profession through targeted communications that inspire new talent and strengthen sector pride.
Academic Partnership	Support alignment of post-secondary training with local sector needs by fostering collaborative partnerships with academic institutions, ensuring graduates are workforce-ready and placements are mutually beneficial.
RECE Recognition & Retention strategy	Enhance recruitment and retention by implementing locally tailored incentives that recognize the contributions of RECEs and promote the sector as a viable long-term career.

Strategic Partnerships & Advocacy

Strengthen cross-sector collaboration and coordinated advocacy to align services, expand access and advance policy goals across the early years system.

Actions:

- Deepen integration with school boards to strengthen Before- and After-School Programs (BASP) and align child care and early years programs with education systems.
- Enhance partnerships with high-performing programs to expand shared learnings and successful models.
- Engage interested parties to advocate for CWELCC expansion, stable funding and policies that support inclusive, high-quality care.
- Foster ongoing community engagement with families, Indigenous and Francophone partners, service providers and community organizations to build trust and support system planning.



There must be room to explore and work through these challenges among the various stakeholders responsible for this important public service.”

September 2025 Child Care & Early Years System Plan
Survey Participant

Outcomes:

- Before- and After-School Programs (BASP) are fully integrated into the early learning system and aligned with school operations to ensure seamless support for children and families.
- High-performing child care and early years programs are supported to grow or be replicated, using shared learning and best practices to expand quality across the region.
- Sector-wide growth is actively supported, including advocacy for CWELCC implementation, sustainable funding models and policies that strengthen the early years system.
- Communication and collaboration are enhanced with families, Indigenous and Francophone partners, service providers and community groups to inform planning through evidence and lived experience.

Strategic Initiatives for Priority Area:

Initiative	Objective
Integrated School-Based Child Care and Early Years Planning	Strengthen partnerships with school boards by conducting a financial and operational feasibility analysis of delivering early years programs including BASP, licensed child care for children aged 0-5 and EarlyON in school settings, and collaboratively identify sustainable, accessible service models that maximize space and efficiency.
Promote Quality Through Targeted Engagement	Ensure high standards and service consistency by identifying and supporting high-performing service providers, strengthening continuous feedback loops and identifying risks or concerns early through ongoing engagement.
System-Level Advocacy and Communication Strategy	Amplify Kingston-Frontenac’s voice in provincial child care and early years policy discussions by developing a coordinated advocacy and communication strategy. Engage families, service providers and stakeholders to ensure transparency, shared messaging and broad awareness of system challenges and opportunities.
Engagement Framework	Establish a responsive and inclusive approach to engaging RECEs, service providers, and sector stakeholders, including Indigenous Partners, to ensure their voices inform local planning, policy, workforce initiatives and day-to-day operations. This approach demonstrates our commitment to strengthening engagement practices and building on lessons learned.

System Access and Equity

Increase equitable system access and capacity to support all children through strengthened consultative supports and inclusion practices.

Actions:

- Advocate for expanding child care spaces and infrastructure by working with the Ministry of Education to ensure equitable access to quality care for all families across the region.
- Address barriers through inclusive policies and targeted outreach to underserved populations.
- Monitor Ministry of Education direction and ensure alignment with evolving regulations, sector priorities and community needs.

Outcomes:

- Licensed child care spaces are increased, expanding access for families across all income levels.
- Barriers to access are identified and reduced, with a focus on underserved and equity-deserving families.
- Utilization of available child care spaces is improved, ensuring families access services when and where they need them.
- Programs remain responsive and aligned with Ministry direction, sector developments and the evolving needs of the community.



“Access needs to be improved; the priority needs to be making sure all families have access to high quality licensed childcare that is affordable.”

September 2025 Child Care & Early Years System Plan
Survey Participant

Strategic Initiatives for Priority Area:

Initiative	Objective
<p>Access and Inclusion Framework</p>	<p>Ensure equitable access and high-quality service delivery, by actively monitoring and regularly updating strategies in alignment with the Access and Inclusion Framework to support funding decisions, space allocation and community planning across BASP, licensed child care (0–5) and EarlyON.</p>
<p>Licensed Home Child Care Expansion</p>	<p>Support the growth of licensed home child care options by removing barriers to entry, enhancing support for home-based providers, and enabling access for families in underserved or rural areas.</p>
<p>Responsive Program Design for Diverse Needs</p>	<p>Build sector capacity and provide targeted education that equips programs to welcome and meaningfully support and engage with children and families with diverse cultural, social and developmental needs.</p>
<p>Enhance EarlyON Access for Vulnerable Families</p>	<p>Increase access to EarlyON programming for vulnerable families by engaging diverse populations to reduce isolation and promote equity in early learning experiences.</p>

Service Provider Support & Capacity

Enable sustainable service delivery by reducing administrative burden, strengthening leadership capacity and supporting the diverse needs of service providers, ensuring they are equipped to grow, adapt and deliver high-quality care.

Actions:

- Simplify processes, centralize access to information and expand the use of digital tools to reduce administrative burden and improve efficiency.
- Offer tailored training and leadership development opportunities to help service providers navigate system changes, retain staff and build long-term sustainability.
- Increase capacity to support children with special needs and encourage the growth of licensed home child care options across Kingston-Frontenac.



“The staff are the foundation of every childcare system. Supporting operators ensures the childcare centres are viable, operators are invested in the system, and they are able to manage childcare programs amid the complex licensing system and regulations.”

September 2025 Child Care & Early Years System Plan

Outcomes:

- Service providers spend less time on administrative tasks, allowing more focus on delivering high-quality, responsive care.
- Access to training and leadership development is improved, resulting in stronger retention, resilience and professional growth among staff.
- Capacity across educators, service providers, and the system is strengthened, enabling inclusive, equitable and well-supported learning environments to meet the diverse needs of children.
- Growth in home-based child care increases system capacity, offering flexible community-based options for families.

Strategic Initiatives for Priority Area:

Initiative	Objective
<p>Special Needs Resourcing and Inclusion Model</p>	<p>Develop and implement a scalable special needs resourcing model that builds service provider and educator capacity, reduces reliance on 1:1 supports and creates inclusive environments for children with diverse needs. Update funding models, invest in internal consultant roles across multi-site agencies, embed inclusion coaching in home- and centre-based settings and revisit existing SNR policies and practices.</p>
<p>Administrative Efficiency and Technology Optimization</p>	<p>Conduct a comprehensive review and modernization of tools, forms and processes to reduce administrative burden on service providers. Assess alignment with MEDU expectations, maximize the use of database systems like OCCMS and OneHSN, and support the transition to digital platforms that improve sector efficiency and service quality.</p>
<p>Licensed Home Child Care Expansion and Quality Support</p>	<p>Increase capacity of licensed home child care across Kingston-Frontenac by recruiting home providers and offering start-up support. Use the Access & Inclusion Framework to guide expansion and incentives.</p>

Data Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability

Drive quality and responsiveness through clear standards, aligned practices and data-informed decision-making.

Actions:

- Develop and implement clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to support data quality, reduce administrative burden and monitor processes.
- Build capacity and real-time data systems to support community planning and proactively identify gaps to plan for long-term sustainability.
- Build a robust quality assurance and audit framework that tracks trends, identifies risks and informs continuous improvement.

Outcomes:

- Service delivery is streamlined through clear, consistent set of SOPs.
- Capacity across the child care and early years system is strengthened in the collection, use and understanding of data and digital tools.
- Real-time data informs planning and improves system responsiveness.
- Risks and quality concerns are identified early through increased monitoring and used to drive continuous improvement.



Data monitoring, reporting and accountability is of the utmost importance to ensuring that the providers are upholding their standards, and providing the quality of early years support that our children deserve.”

September 2025 Child Care & Early Years System Plan
Survey Participant

Strategic Initiatives for Priority Area:

Initiative	Objective
<p>Improve System-Wide Data Practices</p>	<p>Strengthen planning and decision-making by developing clear and consistent data collection processes (e.g. demographics, demand trends, service gaps) into core system practices, including community engagement, service data and reporting mechanisms.</p>
<p>Enhance Real-Time Data and Technology Tools</p>	<p>Build sector capacity to collect and use real-time data through platforms such as OneHSN, KeyON and OCCMS. Improve accuracy, responsiveness, and long-term system planning through integrated, timely information.</p>
<p>Quality Assurance and Audit Framework</p>	<p>Develop and implement a quality assurance and audit framework that reviews, tracks and uses relevant indicators to monitor trends, identify service gaps and drive continuous improvements across child care and early years programs and services.</p>

Next Steps

The future of child care and early years in Kingston-Frontenac is full of possibility. This plan is a commitment to a system that reflects the community's needs, opportunities and strengths. We envision a future where families feel supported, educators are valued and every child has the opportunity to grow and explore in safe, inclusive and inspiring environments. Grounded in data and community feedback, this plan outlines actions that create a more connected, equitable, and resilient system.

Collaboration, dedication and ongoing effort will drive this work. By working together and staying focused on what matters most, we will build a child care and early years system that meets community needs and encourages investment into a brighter future for our youngest residents.

This plan shows what is possible when we listen, lead with purpose and work together toward something greater than any one organization or system. It calls on families, educators, service providers, school boards, partners and governments to keep showing up, keep innovating, and keep believing in what our early years system can become. Early years matter—they are where belonging begins, where resilience is nurtured, and where lifelong potential is set in motion. With this plan, we don't just imagine a better future for children in Kingston-Frontenac, we build it—together.