



ALLIANCE

FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

2026 NECAP CONFERENCE

Connected for Impact

Strengthening Family Child Care Incubators Through Shared Practice

A Community of Practice model for relationship-building, peer learning, problem-solving, and continuous improvement.

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What We'll Explore

A practical look at how a Community of Practice strengthens incubator programs.

Understand the Model

Define the purpose and structure of a Community of Practice within a family child care incubator.

Solve Shared Challenges

Use peer-driven problem-solving to address common barriers facing family child care incubators.

Build Trust Across Regions

Identify strategies that create relationships, candor, and shared ownership among programs.

Move Practice Forward

Exchange, adapt, and implement promising practices that improve provider support and program quality.

Why a Family Child Care Incubator?

The incubator combines workforce development, entrepreneurship, licensing support, and early-childhood quality.

Launch & Grow

A structured initiative helps aspiring providers launch and grow licensed family child care businesses through training, resources, and mentorship.

Reduce Barriers

The model addresses entry barriers while building sustainable businesses and strengthening access to child care in the community.

Create a Pathway

Alliance's model includes a rigorous process and a future opportunity for two successful participants to use free classroom space to launch their businesses for 3–5 years.

Alliance's Foundation for the Work

The incubator builds on an established early-childhood workforce development strategy.

Alliance began its ECE workforce development work in 2022 in response to child care staffing shortages.

Nearly 100 community members had been trained and empowered through the workforce initiative at the time of the source presentation.

The incubator extends that work by creating an entrepreneurship pathway into licensed family child care.

Alliance's mission centers on addressing causes of poverty and empowering under-resourced individuals toward self-sufficiency.



The Incubator Is a Partner Ecosystem

Provider success depends on coordinated expertise—not a single training track.

Alliance

ECE training, mentor support, child development, parent engagement, CPR/First Aid, mandated reporting, supportive services.

WBDC

Business-development partnership within the incubator model.

ASPIRING FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER

OEC

Family child care licensing process and regulatory pathway.

M&T

Partner supporting the program's business/financial ecosystem.

What Makes It a Community of Practice?

The value is not simply meeting—it is learning together around shared work.

Shared Domain

A common commitment to strengthening family child care incubators and provider success.

Relationships & Trust

A space where programs can discuss what is working, what is difficult, and what they are learning.

Practice Exchange

Members share tools, approaches, lessons, and promising practices that others can adapt.

Continuous Improvement

Peer reflection turns individual program experience into stronger collective practice.

A Simple Community of Practice Cycle

Structure creates consistency while leaving room for peer-driven learning.



CONNECT

Build relationships and establish trust.



SURFACE

Name shared challenges, barriers, and emerging needs.



SHARE

Exchange tools, lessons, resources, and promising practices.



ADAPT

Decide what can be applied within each local context.



REFLECT

Return with results, questions, and improvements.

Shared Challenges Become Shared Learning

The Community of Practice creates a place to work through recurring incubator questions together.

Licensing Navigation

How do programs prepare participants for the family child care licensing process?

Provider Readiness

What supports help participants move from training to business ownership?

Business Sustainability

How can programs strengthen financial, operational, and entrepreneurial capacity?

Quality & Consistency

How do we maintain strong early-childhood practices while adapting locally?

Space & Start-Up Barriers

How can programs address facilities, start-up costs, and access to appropriate space?

Long-Term Support

What should mentorship, alumni engagement, and after-care look like?

What a Strong Convening Can Look Like

A repeatable agenda keeps the conversation practical and participant-centered.

10 min

Connection

Wins, updates, and relationship-building.

15 min

Shared Challenge

One program frames a current barrier or decision point.

20 min

Peer Exchange

Members share experience, resources, and questions.

15 min

Practice Spotlight

A member demonstrates a tool, process, or approach.

10 min

Commitment

Each program identifies one action to test before the next meeting.

What the Community of Practice Strengthens

The conference proposal emphasizes outcomes at both the provider and system levels.

Provider Success

Better-informed, better-supported pathways for aspiring family child care business owners.

Consistency & Quality

Shared practices help programs strengthen support while maintaining a quality focus.

Peer Problem-Solving

Programs gain colleagues they can turn to when challenges arise.

Statewide Learning

Local lessons become shared knowledge that can improve incubator practice across communities.

How to Start or Strengthen Your Own Community of Practice

A Community of Practice can begin small if the purpose is clear and the participation is meaningful.

Define the shared domain: the specific work or challenge members are gathering around.

Invite the right mix of programs and roles—people who can both contribute experience and apply what they learn.

Establish a predictable rhythm and a psychologically safe expectation for candid discussion.

Rotate practice spotlights so expertise is distributed rather than centered in one organization.

Document shared tools, decisions, and lessons so learning is not lost between meetings.

Close the loop: ask what members tried, what changed, and what should be improved next.

**“Shared practice
turns individual
experience into
collective capacity.”**

Discussion: What Could Shared Practice Unlock for You?

Use these questions to connect the model to your own organization or region.

1

What challenge are you solving repeatedly that peers may already have experience with?

2

What knowledge or tool could your program contribute to a Community of Practice?

3

Who needs to be at the table for the learning to translate into action?

4

What is one practice you would want to test, adapt, and bring back to the group?

Connected for Impact

Strong incubators grow stronger when they learn together.

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