

## II. PLAN OVERVIEW

### **Project Background.**

There are two organizations that made this strategic initiative possible. It is altogether appropriate that before we get into the specifics of this report document that we give our professional appreciation to each: The Norfolk Foundation for its financial backing and involvement, and Smart Beginnings South Hampton Roads, for great technical assistance, staff support and encouragement.

The Norfolk Foundation, one of the largest such agencies in the U.S., makes grants “that transform the quality of life and inspire philanthropy in southeastern Virginia.” Its dollars underwrote our strategic planning activities, as well as those in Norfolk, Suffolk, Virginia Beach and Portsmouth.

Smart Beginnings South Hampton Roads engages communities and coordinates resources “so that all children in the region have access to the early care and education they need to arrive at kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed– in school and in life.” Specific activities include:

- Increasing family and community awareness on the importance of early learning experiences, empowering parents to provide quality early education experiences.
- Ensuring that parents have the knowledge and skills to provide their children with quality early education experiences.
- Increasing public and private investment to make high quality early care and education programs and services accessible and affordable to all.
- Improving quality of early care and education for all children.
- Increasing collaboration and engagement, so that all entities work together efficiently through stronger community systems.

The efforts of Smart Beginnings South Hampton Roads are a direct reflection of the priorities of The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, a public-private partnership founded in 2005 that “provides grants, training and technical assistance to local and regional Smart Beginnings initiatives. It also collaborates with state and local government, schools, the business community, parents and early childhood leaders to implement long-term strategies for improving school-readiness for all young children ages birth-5.”

Listed in Appendix C of this report are the individuals and organizations that spent considerable time and energy in putting the Chesapeake plan together. They did so after reviewing and discussing the hard statistical data shown in Appendix A and the conclusions in Appendix B generated from interviews and focus groups that were conducted fairly early-on in the overall process.

The joining of these financial, human and information resources has, we think, resulted in a well-founded document, and a logical framework within which to make decisions on the future allocations of early education and care resources in Chesapeake. We are committed to converting this strategic planning into actual strategic implementation, and invite you to become part of that effort.

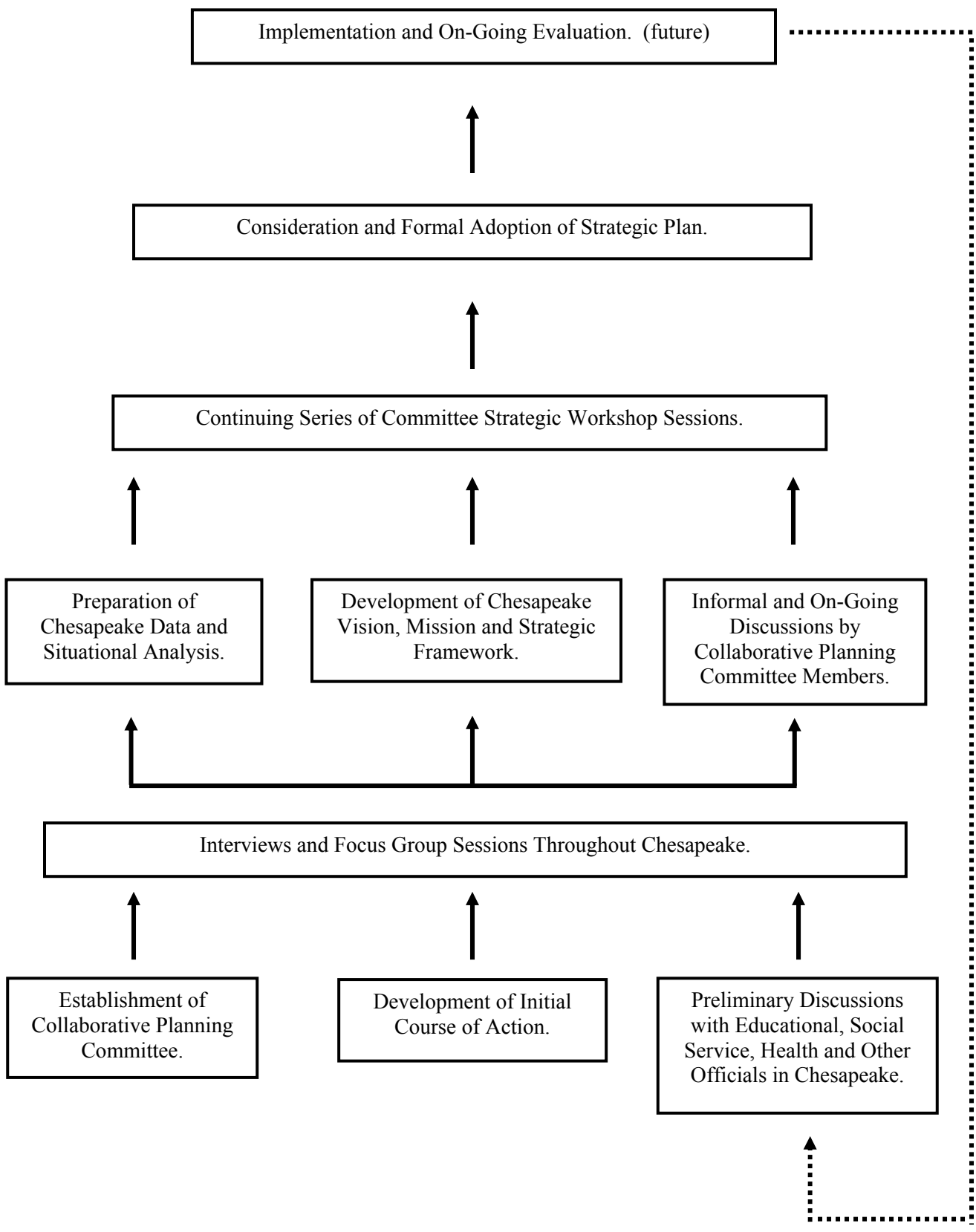
## **PROJECT SCOPE.**

Eight separate but closely related components were the driving principles of the work in putting the plan together:

1. The plan should be for all children and families, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, or special needs.
2. The plan should recognize parents and families as their children's first and primary educators and care providers. Any subsequent planning and implementation processes should include them as significant players and persons of influence.
3. Particular emphasis should be placed on the issue of transition from early education to kindergarten. K-12 systems locally and early educators must develop a better understanding of what each needs from the other so that the concepts of "ready children" and "ready schools" come together in a natural collaboration.
4. The strategic process must be realistic, ambitious in scope but reflecting the realities of economic conditions at the local, state and national levels. It should not raise the level of expectations to a level that cannot be achieved. The initiative must focus initially on several high priority items where it can actually move numerical indicators; i.e. make short-term measureable improvements in the lives of children and families.
5. A children's strategic initiative for Chesapeake is especially relevant in an era of accelerated change that characterizes virtually every aspect of society today. Programs supported by taxpayer, foundation and other dollars have a particular obligation to review their effectiveness and strategies on an on-going basis, and, where appropriate adjust.
6. The plan must be specific to the assets, needs and challenges of Chesapeake-- not some boilerplate process that is general in nature and equally applicable to any part of Virginia.
7. The plan should be structured so that strategic planning logically leads to strategic implementation. Otherwise, both the time and money expended to create the plan will have been wasted. It should include an evaluation approach that will enable the organization's leadership to realistically track the level of implementation.
8. The plan should focus on fundamental decisions and actions that will shape and guide early education and care systems in the future, including: how the systems see themselves; the systems from the community's perspective; and appropriate roles, services and resources for the systems in the future of Chesapeake.

The Chesapeake Collaborative Planning Committee recognized that this strategic effort must be flexible-- setting a general direction, but recognizing that it will need to be reevaluated and as appropriate modified in the years immediately ahead as local needs and conditions change. What will not change is the commitment to program excellence and an insistence on accountability.

**STRATEGIC PROCESS COMPONENTS AND FLOW.**



## **STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN.**

The Chesapeake strategic initiative is based on an organizational framework that provides both clarity of purpose and accountability for results. As outlined below, the Committee first determined its long-term vision for Chesapeake (what success will look like), and then identified the Collaborative Planning Committee's mission in helping attain that vision.

The mission for the institution was then factored down to a series of broad functional goals-- each having a series of specific measurable Objectives. Achieving measurable Objectives leads logically to realizing the broader Goals. By accomplishing the Goals, the Committee fulfills its Mission, and thereby helps attain the overall Vision for Chesapeake.

The Committee thereby directly addresses its key responsibility to provide full accountability for any monies entrusted to it. It also provides the management tool to guide the Committee to a future of relevant and professional service to its diverse constituents. At the same time, the Committee provides its funding sources with a definition of what it seeks to achieve and the means degree to quantify its success in doing so.

## **ESTABLISHING THE FOUNDATION: THE COMMITTEE'S VISION AND MISSION.**

Absolutely essential to the successful development of a relevant and focused strategic document is getting the Vision and Mission right. Those two statements should directly affect everything that the plan and the Committee seek to achieve.

The Vision should paint a picture of a desired future for the people and communities of Chesapeake in areas where the Committee can make a difference through its programs, policies and strategies. The Mission, on the other hand should define the Committee's role(s) in making that future possible by capturing in an enthusiastic manner why the institution exists.

After several rounds of discussion, the members of the Collaborative Planning Committee adopted the following statements. Appropriately, they both put early education and care matters in a broader community context with multiple impacts extending beyond the children and their futures.

### **Vision for Chesapeake:**

Chesapeake's long-term economic vitality is assured through its youngest citizens being given all the educational, health and social support needed to become engaged, knowledgeable and productive citizens.

### **Mission of the Chesapeake Collaborative Planning Council:**

To provide leadership and advocacy to make certain that the educational health and social systems for young children are recognized as essential components of our community infrastructure and that they are funded and supported accordingly.

**THE OVERALL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK.**

**Vision for Chesapeake:**

Chesapeake’s long-term economic vitality is assured through its youngest citizens being given all the educational, health and social support needed to become engaged, knowledgeable and productive citizens.

**Mission of the Chesapeake Collaborative Planning Council:**

To provide leadership and advocacy to make certain that the educational health and social systems for young children are recognized as essential components of our community infrastructure and that they are funded and supported accordingly.

