Over the past 15 years, Minnesota communities experienced a growing child care shortage. The shortage is especially visible in the family child care sector, which has lost over 35,000 child care spots since 2005. This loss disproportionately impacts rural communities that depend on in-home family care over larger, child care centers. As the shortage continues to grow, it impacts other parts of the community: parents leave the workforce to provide care, increased job absenteeism due to unreliable care options; and businesses struggling to recruit because of lack of child care options.

The County's Role in Child Care

Counties can play an important role in growing new child care capacity and ensuring quality child care through inspections and investigations. Child care providers in Minnesota are required to be licensed by either the state or a county. For family child care providers, counties are responsible for:

- Prospective provider orientation
- Accepting & processing license applications
- Recommending license approval
- Conducting licensing inspections
- Investigating licensing complaints
- Issuing corrective orders

Between 2005 and 2014, Minnesota lost nearly 30% of its family child care providers
Growing Child Care through County Licensing

Counties can boost child care licensing applications by streamlining the licensing application process & assisting individuals as they navigate the application.

Anoka County’s Online Orientation
Anoka County created an online orientation and application guide that streamlines the process for individuals interested in becoming family child care providers. Anoka’s system helps applicants navigate the complicated application and allows them to pursue a license at their own pace. The county reports a high application completion rate of 80% for individuals who go through the online orientation.

Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd & Wadena’s Licensing Collaboration
Counties in Region 5 were experiencing significant child care and county workforce shortages putting a strain on their licensing capacities. In response, the counties partnered with their service cooperative, Sourcewell, merging their individual licensing responsibilities into three regional licensing positions.

The regional licensors focus exclusively on licensing so they are experts at navigating the complicated licensing process, providing individuals interested in child care with meaningful support through their application. The licensors also connect child care providers with training requirements and other professional resources to help with retention of current providers.