**Michigan Rural Child Care Innovation Program Application**

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) are leading a comprehensive, statewide effort – [Caring for MI Future](https://www.michigan.gov/lara/bureau-list/cclb/caring-for-mi-future)– to increase the number of licensed child care programs across the state. Caring for MI Future is a $100 million investment that will help more Michigan families find quality, affordable child care in their community by opening 1,000 new, or expanded, child care programs by the end of 2024. First Children’s Finance received $600,000 in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding, awarded by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) as part of the Caring for MI Future initiative to expand the Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) to serve six rural communities with a focus on the sustainability and supply of Michigan child care.

Child care is an economic driver for rural communities, but many Michigan communities are facing shortages of high quality child care. First Children’s Finance’s RCCIP is a community engagement process designed to address the challenges of child care in rural America.

The RCCIP is based on the fundamental idea that rural communities are greater than their size in numbers and greater than their current challenges. By mobilizing and empowering rural communities, the landscape of early care and education is changing in Michigan.

* The RCCIP addresses the challenges of rural child care through the lens of economic development
* The RCCIP uses a community engagement process designed to identify right-sized solutions to increase the supply of high-quality affordable child care in rural communities
* By mobilizing community members and empowering the creation of community-based solutions, rural communities can preserve existing child care businesses and add new child care slots

While many communities have child care shortages, only some are ready to roll up their sleeves and embark on the journey to address this critical community issue. Through this competitive process, First Children’s Finance will select communities who demonstrate commitment to the community engagement process for an 18-month period.

Communities that demonstrate readiness will have identified the specific child care challenges impacting economic development in their community and are strongly encouraged to apply to be a part of the RCCIP. Child care shortages have a broad impact beyond the family, and communities need to address these issues with right-sized solutions that meet the unique aspects of the community.

**The work with these communities includes:**

* Development of an engaged community Core Team to drive change by identifying resources to increase the supply of high quality and affordable childcare
* A thorough analysis of the community's current childcare gaps and needs
* Use of First Children’s Finance’s expertise, resources, and tools, including research and financial modeling.
* Events that provide education on the links between quality child care, rural economic development, and viable communities
* Development of a Community Solution Action Plan that includes innovative solutions to increase the supply of high quality and affordable child care
* Support and business improvement services to existing family child care providers and child care centers through business leadership cohorts and one-on-one consulting

**Grant Eligibility**

* Applicants can include a single city, a cluster of small towns, a school district, or a single county
* In addition to scoring the proposals for their merit First Children’s Finance will take into account areas of high need

***Please note that the Metro Detroit area, and the cities of Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Battle Creek, Lansing and individual child care business owners are excluded as applicants. Rural is defined as all population, housing, and territory not included within an urbanized area or urban cluster. A rural area’s population density is very low.***

**Review Process**

Award selection will be based on merit and quality as determined by points awarded for the review criteria and all relevant information. The application rubric will be used as a rating instrument in the review process. The application score total is 110 Points. Applicants with an application below 75 points will not be recommended for funding. The award will be subject to approval by the Michigan Department of Education - Office of Great Start (MDE-OGS). All applicants will be notified of funding decisions.

Historically all RCCIP activities have been held in-person. Due to the pandemic, we have developed systems to adapt the RCCIP process so it can be done in-person, virtually or a combination of both. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis by the local Core Team and First Children’s Finance staff dependent upon local health and safety regulations.

In the event of a virtual session/s, First Children’s Finance will host and facilitate the virtual sessions with Core Team members using Zoom. Sessions will be recorded and shared with participants as needed as well as tools and resources to support planning and implementations sessions throughout the RCCIP process. In-person meetings and events will be coordinated with the Core Team lead to determine the best location, date, time, materials and focus to ensure that the First Children’s Finance team is able to facilitate planning and implementation meetings and events with the best levels of engagement with the Core Team and other community stakeholders as determined.

Rural Michigan communities are invited to submit an application for the 2022-2023 cohort. Applications will be accepted until the deadline of **December 9th at 5:00 PM EST.** *Application link provided upon final approval of application and added to RCCIP Webpage*

**\*Michigan Webpage with Caring for MI Future Language added:** [www.firstchildrensfinance.org/michigan/](http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/michigan/)

**\*RCCIP Webpage Link:** [www.ruralchildcare.org/michigancommunities](http://www.ruralchildcare.org/michigancommunities)

**Informational Webinar**

Consider attending the informational webinar to learn more about the program and the benefits to participating communities:

**Informational Webinar: November 16th at noon EST.** Register in advance at <https://bit.ly/RCCIPinfo>

**Announcement of Selected Communities**

Communities selected to participate will be notified by e-mail by December 23, 2022.

**Questions**

If you have additional questions during the application process, please contact:

James Henderson at 248-270-0257 or [JamesH@firstchildrensfinance.org](mailto:JamesH@firstchildrensfinance.org).

**Michigan Rural Child Care Innovation Program Application**

**Narrative**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** To enter responses, place your cursor over the box and click once to select that field, or use the tab key to move to the next question (Tip: Ctrl + Tab will move you back to the previous question). The boxes will expand as you type.

**Geographic Area of RCCIP Applicant (10 points)**

1. Describe your community, including a definition of what geographic area(s) will be included.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **0-3 points** | **4-7 points** | **8-10 points** |
| The applicant’s: | The applicant’s: | The applicant’s: |
| Geographic area is **not** considered rural or high need | Geographic area is either considered rural **or** high need | Geographic area is rural **and** high need |

**Narrative Proposal – Community Understanding and Readiness (80 points)**

1. Why does your community need to address child care? What are some of the greatest challenges your community is facing and your greatest assets? Include demographic information, survey results or local studies your community has used to identify the local child care issue.

1. Why, specifically, do you need to address child care? Describe the number of child care slots available in your community, and factors that may be impacting the availability of child care.

1. How is the local economy impacting child care, and how is child care impacting the local economy?

1. What steps has your community already taken to address the child care challenge you described above?

1. Describe how your community has worked together in the past to solve other community challenges. Examples can be general, and do not need to be directly related to child care.

1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected child care in your community?

1. Describe what your community would like to gain from this process?

1. What resources (financial, in-kind, etc.) does your community have available to implement potential child care solutions?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **0-3 points each** | **4-7 points each** | **8-10 points each** |
| Question # | The applicant: | The applicant: | The applicant: |
| 2 | Somewhat described their community’s challenges and assets (questions were **not** all addressed). | Described their challenges and assets (all questions were addressed but with minimal data/detail). | Clearly and concisely described their challenges and assets including data (all questions were addressed with data and detail). |
| 3 | Somewhat described why they need to address child care (questions were **not** all addressed). | Described why they need to address child care (all questions were addressed but with minimal data/detail). | Clearly and concisely described why they need to address child care (all questions were addressed with data and detail). |
| 4 | Somewhat described how the local economy impacts child care and how child care impacts their local economy (question was **not** fully addressed). | Described how the local economy impacts child care or how child care impacts their local economy (one question was addressed). | Clearly and concisely described how the local economy impacts child care and how child care impacts their local economy (questions were both addressed). |
| 5 | Somewhat described steps their community has taken to address child care challenges (question was **not** fully addressed). | Described steps their community has taken to address child care challenges (questions were addressed). | Clearly and concisely described steps their community has taken to address child care challenges (question was addressed in detail). |
| 6 | Somewhat described how their community has worked together in the past to solve community challenges (question weas **not** fully addressed). | Described how their community has worked together in the past to solve community challenges (all questions were addressed). | Clearly and concisely described how their community has worked together in the past to solve community challenges (all questions were addressed in detail). |
| 7 | Somewhat described how COVID has affected child care in their community (question was **not** fully all addressed). | Described how COVID has affected child care in their community (question was addressed). | Clearly and concisely described how COVID has affected child care in their community (all questions were addressed) in detail. |
| 8 | Somewhat described what they would like to gain from this process (question was **not** fully addressed). | Described what they would like to gain from this process (question was addressed). | Clearly and concisely described what they would like to gain from this process (question was clearly addressed). |
| 9 | Somewhat described resources available to implement the potential child care solutions (question was **not** fully addressed). | Described resources available to implement the potential child care solutions (question was addressed). | Clearly and concisely described resources available to implement the potential child care solutions (question was clearly addressed). |

**Main Contact and Core Team**

The RCCIP is a community engagement process that increases the capacity of local leaders to implement child care solutions. The local Core Team will be highly engaged in the entire RCCIP process, and therefore, should represent diverse perspectives. Core Team members should be leaders committed to **actively** participating in the community engagement process. Applicants are encouraged to create Core Teams with cross representation of the community. Some recommendations include:

* economic development
* city or county government (administrators or elected officials)
* representatives of local employers
* child care licensing or child care subsidy
* local philanthropy and non-profits
* community leaders and influencers
* child care business owners
* parents
* public and private school district leaders
* faith based organizations
* social group leaders
* chambers of commerce or business/employer groups
* representatives of diverse community groups

Core Teams should have 1 primary contact (Core Team Lead with a strong Co-Core Team Lead identified in case of emergency or scheduling conflicts preferred), 10-20 Core Team Members and up to 3 alternate members if initial members are unable to fulfil their duties.

Identify the main contact responsible (Core Team Lead) for communicating with First Children’s Finance regarding this application.

**Core Team Lead**

Name :       Organization:

Title:       Mailing Address:

Phone:       Email:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Core Team Members | Title, Organization | Mailing Address | Phone | Email |
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**Strength of the Core Team (20 Points)**

1. Describe how members of the Core Team are currently involved in the community.

1. How will the Core Team engage a variety of community members to participate in the planning process and community events to develop child care solutions?

1. Describe strategies the Core Team will use to recruit participants in the overall solution implementation.

1. Have you reviewed the Core Team commitments with each proposed member to ensure their full engagement?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **0-6 points** | **7-14 points** | **15-20 points** |
| The proposed members do not include a full Core Team | The proposed members include some of the members from the Core Team list | The proposed members meet the recommendation for a complete Core Team |

**Signature**

By signing this application, I acknowledge I have been authorized to submit my community for consideration as an applicant for the Rural Child Care Innovation Program. I acknowledge the individuals listed on the Core Team roster have agreed to participate in the community engagement process.

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Main Contact (Core Team Lead) Signature Date

**Deadline**

Applications must be submitted by:

**Application Deadline: December 9th at 5:00 PM EST.**

**\*Upon approval of the application the link for the application will be found at** [**https://www.ruralchildcare.org/michiganommunities**](https://www.ruralchildcare.org/michiganommunities) **along with a request form for the application**

Completed applications should be submitted by email to James Henderson, First Children’s Finance: [jamesh@firstchildrensfinance.org](mailto:jamesh@firstchildrensfinance.org)

If you are having difficulties viewing this document please contact First Children’s Finance, James Henderson at [jamesh@firstchildrensfinance.org](mailto:jamesh@firstchildrensfinance.org)