



First Children's Finance

Rural Child Care Innovation Program Overview

About the program

The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is a facilitated community engagement process designed to develop right-sized solutions to address the challenges of early care and education in the communities selected to participate. Over a two-year period, selected communities will partner with First Children's Finance to increase the supply of high-quality affordable child care in their local community.

How will the current pandemic change the RCCIP process?

Historically all RCCIP activities have been held in-person. With 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 core team lead and First Children's Finance staff depending upon regulations and the current situation with the pandemic.

What can a community expect as a result of participating in the RCCIP process?

The Core Team and the greater community are provided background information on the child care industry along with other resources that help inform the conversation around the importance of brain development in children, as well as child care's link to strong rural communities. Detailed demographic information is prepared along with a Supply and Demand Gap analysis report that highlights specific child care needs within the community. The community identifies innovative solutions to address challenges, and these strategies, combined with local research, are included in a customized Community Solution Action Plan. Communities that are invited to participate in the program can expect the following:

- Educate community members about the link between quality child care, rural economic development, and viable communities.
- The community's Core Team (see below) will increase their capacity to drive change by identifying resources and focusing their efforts on solutions that make a difference in the supply of child care.
- A thorough analysis of the current child care supply and evaluation of community factors impacting the local child care supply.



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- Access to First Children's Finance's expertise, resources and tools, including research and financial modeling.
- A Community Solution Action Plan that includes solutions generated through a facilitated Town Hall process.
- Support and business improvement services to existing family child care providers and child care centers.

Why should a community consider participating?

Communities with identified child care challenges impacting economic development in their community should consider applying. Child care shortages have broad implications beyond the family, and communities need to address these issues with right-sized solutions that meet the unique needs of the community.

What should Core Team participants expect in the process?

The Core Team, identified in the community's application, is a primary group of local leaders who become local champions of child care as an economic development strategy. These community leaders will receive specific training and business support throughout the process from First Children's Finance staff. The Core Team, in partnership with First Children's Finance will provide leadership to identify solutions to the child care challenges. The project timeline highlights the main areas of need for participation and each step of the community engagement process. Sessions will take place in-person, virtually, or a combination of both as deemed appropriate by the Core Team Leader and FCF staff using regulations and public health guidance.

How does the program include existing child care providers?

While the broader conversation around child care needs continues, First Children's Finance works directly with local child care centers and family child care providers on their business needs. This includes a four-month business cohort experience, and one-on-one individualized consultation to identify needs to help support long-term sustainability efforts and profitability of their programs.

How does the greater community participate?

Through demonstration and guided support, First Children's Finance prepares the Core Team to communicate child care needs through crafted presentations tailored for different audiences. The Core Team leads the engagement with the community to inform potential solutions.



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Are communities required to pay for any services provided in the program?

No, due to generous funding from MN Department of Human Services and other philanthropic partners, First Children's Finance does not require payment to participate in the Rural Child Care Innovation Program.

For more information please contact:

Jessica Beyer

Business Development Manager

jessica@firstchildrensfinance.org

320-808-7066

Teri Steckelberg

Business Development Manager

teris@firstchildrensfinance.org

507-475-8460