

# Child Care Market Analysis and Strategic Planning for Child Care Underway in Iowa Communities

The child care sector serves two equally critical community functions. It is an economic driver allowing parents to work and earn income while at the same time creating jobs. And, since children in child care typically spend between 35 and 50 hours per week with a caregiver, child care has an important role in preparing children for school and life at a critical stage in their development.

In short, the child care industry is an essential component of the community infrastructure that keeps businesses growing and keeps parents working. In addition, quality child care contributes to a higher

quality of life for residents as it assures that children are experiencing the kind of care that not only is safe and nurturing but prepares them for success and for growing into healthy and contributing future citizens.

First Children's Finance (FCF) helps communities address the child care supply. In 2023, FCF worked with twelve communities across Iowa and will be working with nine more in 2024. Most of these projects consisted of two phases, a *Child Care Market Analysis* followed by a *Strategic Plan for Child Care*. "Many communities know they have a child

care shortage when they contact us, but they want help digging deeper to understand and quantify the need," states Angie Rae Duncan, senior business development specialist. "Using data from our direct research along with input from surveys with local employers, child care providers, and parents, FCF provides a list of key findings to help the community understand the full picture. This along with our 'child care gap analysis' lays the groundwork for the community to move on to developing solutions, which is exactly what we do through strategic planning."

For most communities the two-phase process looks like this. A child care market analysis is launched by FCF working with the community's representatives to distribute three surveys. Parent surveys help us understand the exact challenges experienced by families today and their preferences for future child care use. Employer surveys provide insight into how employers are currently being impacted, including how child care impacts employee performance and attendance.

And child care provider surveys are used to gain perspective and knowledge of current waiting lists, openings and future plans of the providers.

After the child care market analysis is complete, FCF works with the community to host a series of strategic planning sessions. At those sessions, FCF facilitates the conversation and provides guidance so the community can identify their child care priorities and develop goals with detailed strategies and specific activities to address the child care needs identified in the market analysis.

For more information on how First Children's Finance can provide your community with customized consultation services to increase child care supply in your community, contact us at [InfoIA@firstchildrensfinance.org](mailto:InfoIA@firstchildrensfinance.org).

