Minnesota Rural Child Care Innovation Program Application

Child care is an economic driver for rural communities across the United States but many communities are facing shortages of high-quality child care. First Children's Finance's Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) is a community engagement process designed to address the challenges of child care in rural America.

The Rural Child Care Innovation Program 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 rural America.

Applications for the next round of the Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) will open December 1, 2026. Please visit to learn more and apply. Questions? Email us at infomn@firstchildrensfinance.org.

Applications Open: December 01, 2026.

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 that demonstrate commitment to the community engagement process over an 18-24 month period.

Informational Webinar

To learn more about the program and the benefits to participating communities, watch our informational webinar from **August 05,2026 –** here

Award Notifications

Applicants will be notified of their award status by email on **February 08, 2027**

Questions

If you have questions regarding the RCCIP application process or to request a separate application for another community engagement process such as the Child Care Strategic Supply Plan, please contact First Children's Finance MN Team at: infomn@firstchildrensfinance.org.

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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.

This application process is intended to support <u>RURAL</u> communities to increase and sustain the supply of child care. This application process is <u>NOT</u> for individual child care businesses.

1. Describe your community, including a definition of what geographic area(s) will be included.
   - *Applicants can include a single city, a cluster of small towns, a school district, or a single county*
   - *The Twin Cities metro area, Fargo-Moorhead metro area, Duluth, Rochester and St. Cloud metro area are excluded as applicants*
   - *Preference is given to truly rural communities*

2. Why does your community need to address child care? Identify the challenges your community is facing. Include demographic information, survey results or local studies your community has used to identify the local child care issue. Describe the number of child care slots available in your community, and factors that may be impacting the availability of child care.

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

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

5. 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.

6. Are there any community factors impacting the supply of child care in your region? If so, please explain.

7. Describe what your community would like to gain out of this process?

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

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 for approximately 18-24 months 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 suggestions include:

- economic development
- city or county government (administrators or elected officials)
- representatives of local employers
- parents
- public and private school district leaders
- chambers
- child care licensing or the county Child Care Assistance Program
- local philanthropy and non-profits
- community leaders and influencers
- faith based organizations
- social group leaders
- diversity

Core Teams should include 2 primary contacts (Core Team Lead and Co-Leads), 10–20 core team members, and up to 3 alternate members to step in if primary members are unable to fulfill their responsibilities. Please identify the primary contacts (Core Team Lead and Co-Leads) who will be responsible for communicating with First Children's Finance regarding this application.

Core Team Lead
Name:
Title:
Organization:
Business Address:
Business Phone:
Business Email:
Personal Phone:
Personal Email:

Co-Core Team Lead
Name:
Title:
Organization:
Business Address:
Business Phone:
Business Email:
Personal Phone:
Personal Email:

Core Team Members	Organization/ Business Information				Personal Information	
	Title, Organization	Address	Phone	Email	Phone	Email
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						
Alternates						
1						
2						
3						

1. Describe how members of the core team are currently involved in the community.

2. 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?

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

4. Have you reviewed the core team commitments with each proposed member to ensure their full engagement over the next 24 months?

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.

_____

Main Contact (Core Team Lead) Signature Date

Deadline

Applications must be submitted by:

Application Deadline is January 26, 2027, by 5:00 PM CST.

Applications can be submitted online or emailed to First Children's Finance: infomn@firstchildrensfinance.org.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES