



# RURAL CHILD CARE INNOVATION PROGRAM

COMMUNITY SOLUTION ACTION PLAN  
FOR CHILD CARE

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**Manistique/  
Schoolcraft County,  
Michigan**

September 2022



**First Children's Finance**





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This Community Solution Action plan is designed to be a deep dive into the Rural Child Care Innovation Program. You will step through every stage of the community engagement process through solution development and implementation. Please visit [www.ruralchildcare.org](http://www.ruralchildcare.org) for continued updates on community progress.

**Michigan State Director:**  
James Henderson

**Program Leads**  
Melissa Newkirk

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“If employees cannot find quality care for their children, they won’t work for you. They won’t move to your community, or they will be forced to move away, or they might have to consider quitting their job to stay home with their children because **they have no other option.**”

**Kris Bevell**

Editor  
Prairie Business Magazine

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rural Child care Innovation Program (RCCIP) is a community engagement process designed to develop right-sized solutions to address the needs of child care in Michigan's rural communities. The goal of RCCIP is to help communities identify the size and scope of their child care challenges and to empower and support communities to develop solutions to address these challenges.

The Community Solution Action Plan for Manistique/Schoolcraft County intends to outline the child care challenges identified in the community and the proposed solutions to improve the state of child care in the area. A Core Team from Manistique/Schoolcraft County, with the support of First Children's Finance, conducted a thorough investigation and analysis to uncover the factors contributing to the child care shortage in the area through focus groups, individual interviews, and surveys with a multitude of stakeholders in the community.

To understand the potential need for child care in Manistique/Schoolcraft County, First Children's Finance conducted a Supply and Demand Gap Analysis and community surveys, which showed a

child care shortage of approximately 257 child care slots in the Manistique/Schoolcraft County Area. The analysis revealed it is exceedingly difficult to be a child care provider due to numerous rules and regulations, low pay and no benefits, long hours, and high operating costs. Staffing is a significant expense for many child care programs, resulting in 60-80% of overall expenses. This heavily influences the ability of child care providers to sustain their child care operations.

The analysis revealed that the child care shortage has severely impacted parents living in Manistique/Schoolcraft County. 47% of survey respondents declined employment or withdrew from the workforce due to child care issues. Absence from work (when a Provider is closed for the day), inability to work a flexible schedule, inability to work different shifts, and tardiness to work hinders the ability of parents to advance in their careers.

Some of the major factors contributing to the child care shortage in Manistique/Schoolcraft County include affordability for working families and a child care staffing shortage.

## Through the RCCIP, Manistique/Schoolcraft County has identified five goals to address child care challenges. These goals include:

1. Explore ways to market, educate and to provide resources in the community to Providers, Parents and Employers about early childhood education and care.
2. Explore and create a mentorship program that serves as a resource for the Providers in Schoolcraft County.
3. Investigate the Tri-Share program for Schoolcraft County and if it may lower the cost of child care for parents.
4. Research and apply for local and state-wide grants and scholarships that will benefit child care business owners, providers, parents, educators, and tribal communities.
5. Research and conduct an analysis of potential facilities in Manistique for a Co-op program.

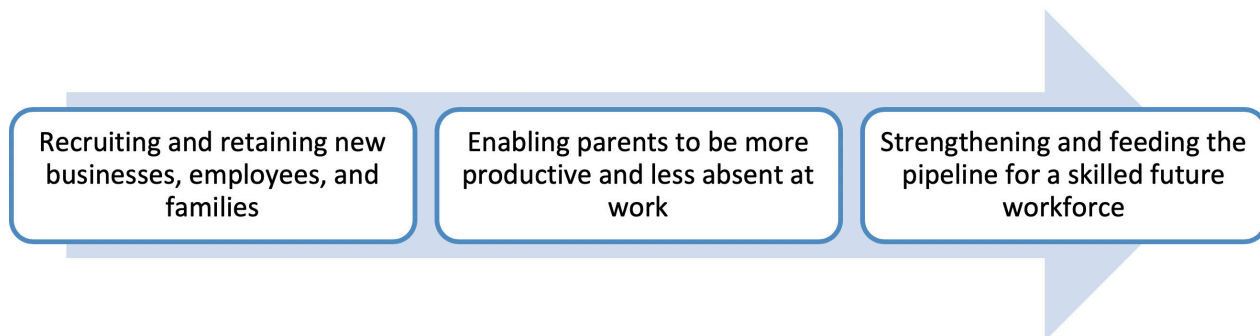
In implementing these goals, Manistique/Schoolcraft County will improve the state of child care, empower local child care providers through continuous community support, provide parents with more care options, and give providers stronger resources to

run and operate their child care business. During the next 4 months, First Children's Finance will support the core team in implementing these goals and measuring outcomes of their efforts.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE IN COMMUNITIES

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In rural communities the ebbs and flows of the local economy influence the sustainability and supply of child care and vice versa. Because of this the Rural Child care Innovation Program addresses child care and early education challenges through a framework of regional economic development. A robust supply of high-quality child care fosters community growth through:



The connection is clear: when our children thrive, so do our communities. Investing in early care and education is not only the right thing to do for our youngest citizens, but the best thing to do for our economic growth and prosperity.

## INTRODUCING THE RURAL CHILD CARE INNOVATIVE PROGRAM

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Child care is an economic driver for rural communities across the United States, but many communities are facing shortages of high-quality child care. The Rural Child Care Innovation Program (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 rural America.

### PROGRAM FOCUS

Children living in rural areas are more likely to come from low-income households than children in urban areas and are more likely to be living in poverty for longer periods of time. Many rural areas struggle to attract and retain a young, educated workforce, while others lack the resources to keep up with their own growth and success. Although rural communities face many challenges, they are also resilient. They have the innovation it takes to develop nimble, creative solutions that will be effective in their communities. The Rural Child Care Innovation Program leverages communities' independent, can-do attitudes to address early care and education in Michigan.

## Program Activities & General Timeline

PHASE	TIMING	ACTIVITIES
Project Planning	August – September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project planning</li> <li>Marketing and communications strategies to launch awareness of RCCIP launch</li> </ul>
Project Planning	September – October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing and communication of application; outreach to rural communities as potential applicants</li> <li>Hosting information webinar</li> <li>Answer questions and offer TA for application components</li> <li>Application deadline</li> </ul>
Project Planning	November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and score applications</li> <li>Determine selections</li> <li>Notify selected communities</li> </ul>
Discovery	December 2021– March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch Core Team onboarding sessions</li> <li>Complete Supply/Demand/Gap analyses for RCCIP communities</li> </ul>
Discovery	May 2022 – June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core Teams identify Town Hall dates, begin regular planning meetings and Discovery Phase</li> <li>Provide appreciation events in RCCIP communities</li> <li>ECIC conducts qualitative data collection and analysis</li> <li>FCF preps for Community Solution Action Plans</li> <li>Town Hall planning confirmed by Core Team, promotion/registration</li> </ul>
Discovery	May – June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative data collection analyzed and shared with Core Teams</li> </ul>
Discovery	July 2022–August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town Hall events hosted</li> <li>Smart goal meeting held</li> <li>Community Solution Action Plan (CSAP) drafts created by BDS to include consensus workshop materials</li> <li>Launch community consultation projects</li> </ul>
Planning	September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Solution Action Plan drafts reviewed by Core Team; Smart Goal timeline approved by Core Team</li> <li>Ongoing progress on community implementation projects</li> </ul>
Implementation	September 2022 –October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize project implementation plans for Core Teams</li> <li>Core Team implementation support</li> <li>Ongoing progress on community implementation projects</li> </ul>
Implementation	October 2022– November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core Team implementation support</li> <li>Technical expertise in community projects as needed</li> </ul>
Implementation	December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSAPs finalized, designed, and published on FCF website</li> <li>Track progress of implementation goals and adjacent initiatives</li> <li>Prepare final reports</li> </ul>

## ▶ EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The Rural Child care Innovation Program is designed to support fundamental change in the overall condition of child care in the areas that it is delivered. This is accomplished through various methods that include:

- A thorough analysis of the current child care supply and demand, and evaluation of community factors impacting the local child care supply.
- Events that educate community members about the link between quality child care, rural economic development, and viable communities.
- A Community Solution Action Plan that includes innovative solutions generated through a facilitated process.
- Support and business improvement services to existing family child care providers and child care centers.
- Access to First Children’s Finance’s expertise, resources, and tools, including research and financial modeling.
- Links to other communities working on similar issues.

Measurements of success are determined through a tactical project management grid that provides guidance to the Core Team about the involved participants and their projected steps and progress towards project completion.

## ABOUT MANISTIQUE/SCHOOLCRAFT COUNTY

Schoolcraft County is a rural county in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan with about 8,047 people (2020 US Census). Manistique is a town within Schoolcraft County and is home to 2,828 people (2020 US Census). The top industries in Schoolcraft County are Health Care & Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Manufacturing.





## ▶ LOCAL TEAM REPRESENTATION

The Core Team was identified locally and asked to commit to investigating the child care challenges in Manistique/Schoolcraft County. The Core Team has and will continue to support development of solutions to sustain a high quality and sustainable child care infrastructure in the Manistique/Schoolcraft County Area.

▶ Kim Shiner	Mayor of Manistique
▶ Cathy Rhode	Board Member of Schoolcraft County Economic Development & City Council Member for Manistique
▶ Paul Walker	Schoolcraft County Commissioners Board Chair
▶ Jim Messer	Talent & Business Specialist at Michigan Works
▶ James Gray	Community Resource Coordinator for MDHHS
▶ Jennifer Watson	CEO Limestone Federal Credit Union
▶ Cheryl Demers	Parent Educator, Growing Families Home Visiting
▶ Jill Connin	Program Coordinator & Community Nutrition Instructor of Schoolcraft County 4-H MSU Extension
▶ Deb Gierke	Director of Schoolcraft Fair Association
▶ Joan Ecclesine	MDSCAA Early Childhood Program, Health & Disabilities
▶ Janet Krueger	Student Service, Sault Tribe
▶ Deb Whitcomb	Childcare Provider
▶ Kristin Petrelius	Childcare Provider
▶ Nina Klagstad	Childcare Provider
▶ Yvonne Harris	Community Member

## CHILD CARE DATA AND EARLY EDUCATION TRENDS

As part of the Rural Child Care Innovation Program, the local community was provided with various forms of data to understand the contributing factors to the child care challenges. First Children's Finance leveraged different data sources to pull together an illustrative picture of the impact of child care in the local area. These data sources include the US Census, MI Child Care Licensing Records, Michigan Department of Education, Federal Reserve Economic Data, and other internal research tools including First Children's Finance data.

## POTENTIAL NEED OVERVIEW

First Children’s Finance conducted a child care supply demand gap analysis which provided a snapshot of potential child care needs. When analyzing the data for Manistique/Schoolcraft County, we looked at the data for all zip codes in Schoolcraft County to determine the need. The supply demand gap analysis from September 2022 shows a shortage of 257 slots for children ages birth-five years of age with all available parents in the workforce.

### Manistique/Schoolcraft County Child Care Need Analysis



#### Selected Zip Codes

- 49817–Cook
- 49836–Gulliver
- 49840–Gulliver
- 49854–Manistique
- 49883–Seney



**257**

Birth to 5 spots needed

FCF Calculation

**3**  
Licensed  
Family Child  
Care  
Providers

**4**  
Licensed  
Group  
Home  
Providers



**67%**

Children under 5 with  
all parents in the  
workforce

Estimate based on the 2015–2019 ACS

**66**

Current child care  
capacity

FCF Calculation



**323**

Children under 5 with all  
parents working

Estimate based on the 2015–2019 ACS



**\$640**

per month/preschool

Cost of family child care

Michigan 2020 Market Rate Child Care  
Study Survey 75 percentile –Upper Peninsula Region



**\$853**

per month/preschool

Cost of center child care

Michigan 2020 Market Rate Child Care  
Study Survey 75 percentile–Upper Peninsula Region



First Children’s Finance

September 2022

When asked about how long family providers plan to remain in business, 25% of entrepreneurs reported are planning to remain in business less than 5 years while 25% and reported that they are planning to stay for another 3–5 years. 50% of the family child care providers predicted to be in business for 10 years or more. Manistique/Schoolcraft County must consider ways to retain the current family child care providers and build additional slots within the community.

## ▶ FAMILY CHILD CARE – BY THE NUMBERS

First Children’s Finance evaluated the current supply of family child care to identify trends needing further examination. Providers with less than 5 years of service and those with more than 20 years of service are most at risk for turnover in an industry that already sees tremendous employment turnover rates.

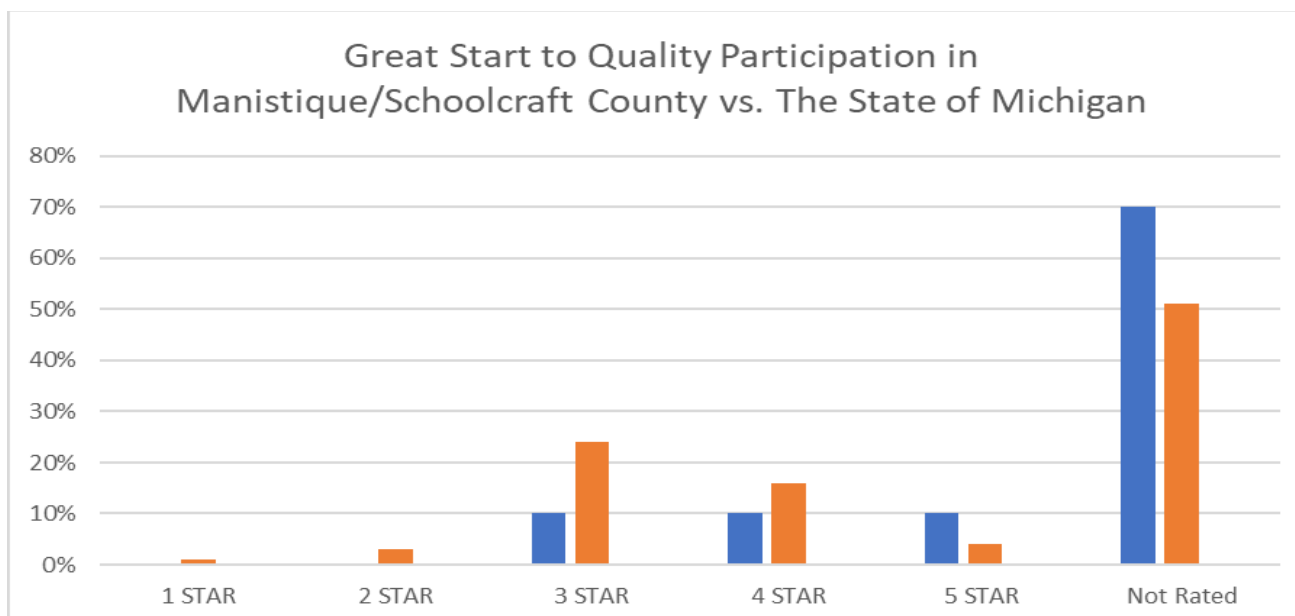
	Schoolcraft
▶ Total Family Child Care Providers	3
▶ Total Group Child Care Providers	4
▶ Average Length of Service	9.5 years
▶ Less than 5 years of service	3
▶ More than 20 years of service	2

August 2022

## ▶ QUALITY CHILD CARE OVERVIEW

First Children’s Finance examined state-wide information about the number of child care programs that are participating in Great Start to Quality.

Great Start to Quality is Michigan’s Quality Rating and Improvement System that identifies programs that go beyond the general licensing requirements to obtain higher quality in their child care programs.



The chart above shows the participation of Manistique/Schoolcraft County child care programs with Great Start to Quality is below the state average. This is a critical component when we evaluate the quality child care program offered in the area.

## AVERAGE COST OF CHILD CARE

Child care is a large investment for families with children. According to Public Policy Associates the 2020 market rate survey included a survey of 6,896 licensed child care providers known to be open across the state. Public Policy Associates conducted in-depth interviews with 24 providers and analyzed the cost to provide care using a variety of extant data and the Provider Cost of Quality Calculator from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Care. These rates are reflected below for the Upper Peninsula region.

### Area Market Rates –Manistique/Schoolcraft County- based on (45 hrs./52 wks.)

Age Group	Weekly Rate	Annual Cost
▶ 75th Percentile- Infant weekly	\$200	\$10,400
▶ 75th Percentile- Toddler Weekly	\$200	\$10,400
▶ 75th Percentile- Preschool Weekly	\$180	\$9,360
▶ 75th Percentile- School Age Weekly (15 hrs / 44 weeks)	\$56	\$2,464

2021 Childcare Market Rate Survey

While rates of investment for child care are high for families, many child care businesses operate on very slim margins due to the excessive cost of quality staffing and care. Staffing is a significant expense for many child care center programs at 60–80% of overall expenses.

## OTHER LOCAL SUPPORTING DATA

As part of the overall collection and review of data, First Children’s Finance shared additional data outcomes such as third grade reading proficiency rates and local graduation rates. There are multiple studies indicating a link between the quality of early education opportunities and school readiness. Third grade reading proficiency rates and high school graduation rates are one way to link the two. Lower achievement levels from birth to age five can be an early indicator of future challenges in school, engagement in higher education, and teen pregnancy rates. The higher the quality of early care and education programs for children birth to age five the higher the achievement later in life. Manistique/Schoolcraft County’s reading proficiency levels were significantly below the state average. The graduation rates for the region are well above the state average.

### Third Grade Reading Levels

District	2020–2021 Proficiency Rate
▶ Manistique Area Schools	22.3%
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>42.8%</b>

Michigan Department of Education

## Local Graduation Rates

District	2020–2021 Graduation Rate
▶ Manistique Area Schools	88.6%
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>80.47%</b>

Michigan Department of Education

## ABILITY TO PAY FOR CHILD CARE

Many families working on the lower end of the wage spectrum have difficulty paying for child care. The following chart provides an overview of the local household income that can further impact access to child care.

### Household Income – Manistique/Schoolcraft County

Household Income	# of Households	Percentage
▶ Less than \$10,000	246	7.1%
▶ \$10,000 to \$14,999	326	9.4%
▶ \$15,000 to \$24,999	406	11.7%
▶ \$25,000 to \$34,999	395	11.4%
▶ \$35,000 to \$49,999	517	14.9%
▶ \$50,000 to \$74,999	694	20%
▶ \$75,000 to \$99,999	482	13.9%
▶ \$100,000 to \$149,999	295	8.5%
▶ \$150,000 to \$199,999	55	1.6%
▶ \$200,000 or more	49	1.4%
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>3,468</b>	
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$45,500</b>	

U.S. Census American Community Survey 2019

Michigan Department of Education

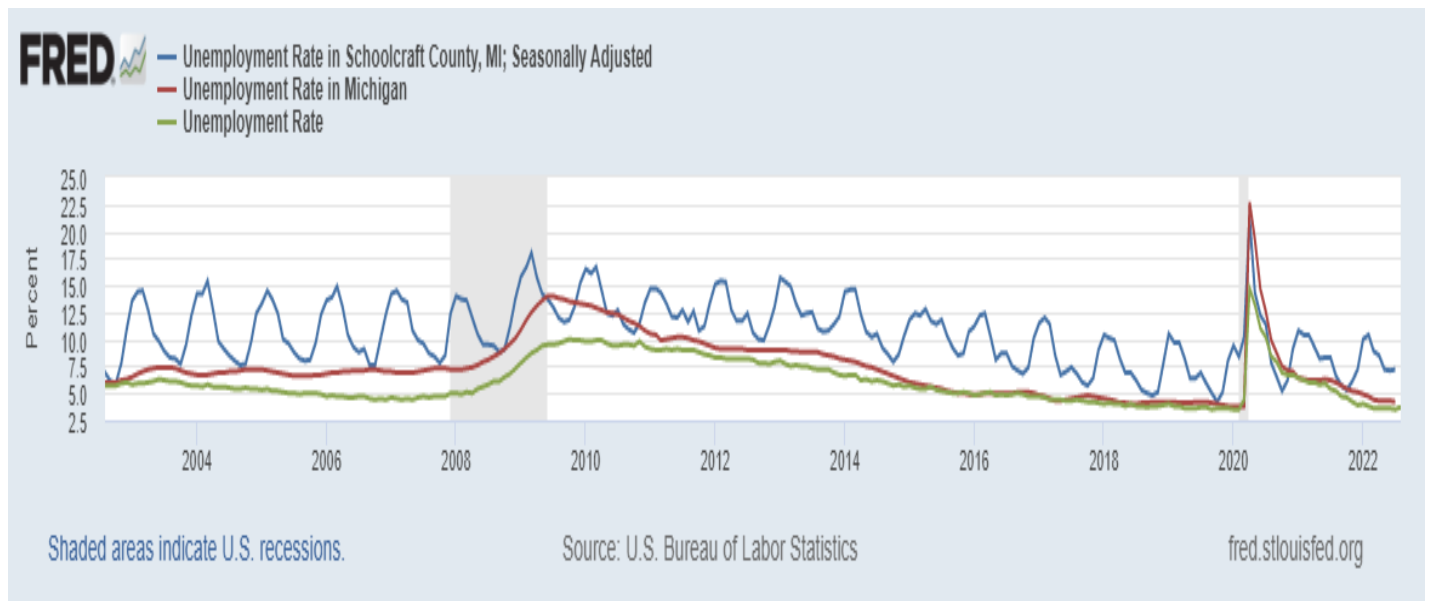


## LOCAL EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Employment data was also considered by First Children’s Finance in the analysis of the child care crisis in Manistique/Schoolcraft County as it can be an indicator that additional child care is needed to support the employment needs of the community since there are families with all available parents in the workforce.

### Unemployment Rates – Manistique/Schoolcraft County

In January 2022, when this initial analysis of data for Manistique/Schoolcraft County began, the unemployment rate for the country was 3.9%; State of Michigan was 5.1%; and Manistique/Schoolcraft County was 10%. The unemployment rates for July 2022 are portrayed in the chart below and have since decreased within the county from December 2021 to 7.2% in July 2022. This could indicate a greater need for child care in the community.



### Community Employers– Manistique/Schoolcraft County

Employers in the Manistique/Schoolcraft County Area were invited to participate in the child care conversation and complete surveys because they are impacted by absenteeism and decreased employee productivity when child care is a challenge. Furthermore, many employers have been able to provide valuable insight and resources into child care discussions.

# COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Extensive outreach was conducted by the Core Team to engage the community about child care. This work included one-on-one stakeholder meetings with various community leaders, electronic surveys of parents, providers, and employers, focus groups, and presentations about child care. Through these inputs, the Core Team better understood the underlying causes of local childcare challenges.

FOCUS GROUPS



ONE ON ONE MEETINGS



SURVEYS



PRESENTATIONS

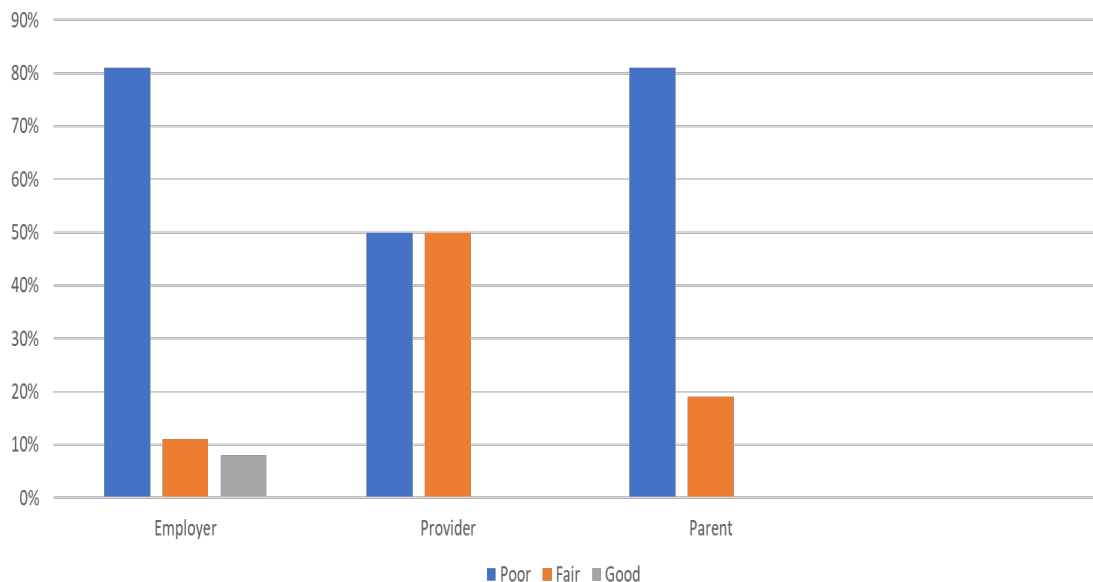


## COMMUNITY SURVEYS – SELECTED PERSPECTIVES

The general community was invited to participate in a comprehensive survey about child care in the local Manistique/Schoolcraft County community. 60 individuals completed the parent survey, and 16 local business representatives completed the employer survey. A separate survey gathered information from 4 child care business survey participants. The following charts represent some highlighted perspectives within the community.

### Perceptions: Availability of Child Care in Manistique/Schoolcraft County

How Would You Rate The Availability of Child Care Options in Your Community?



## Perceptions: Quality of Available Child Care in the Local Area

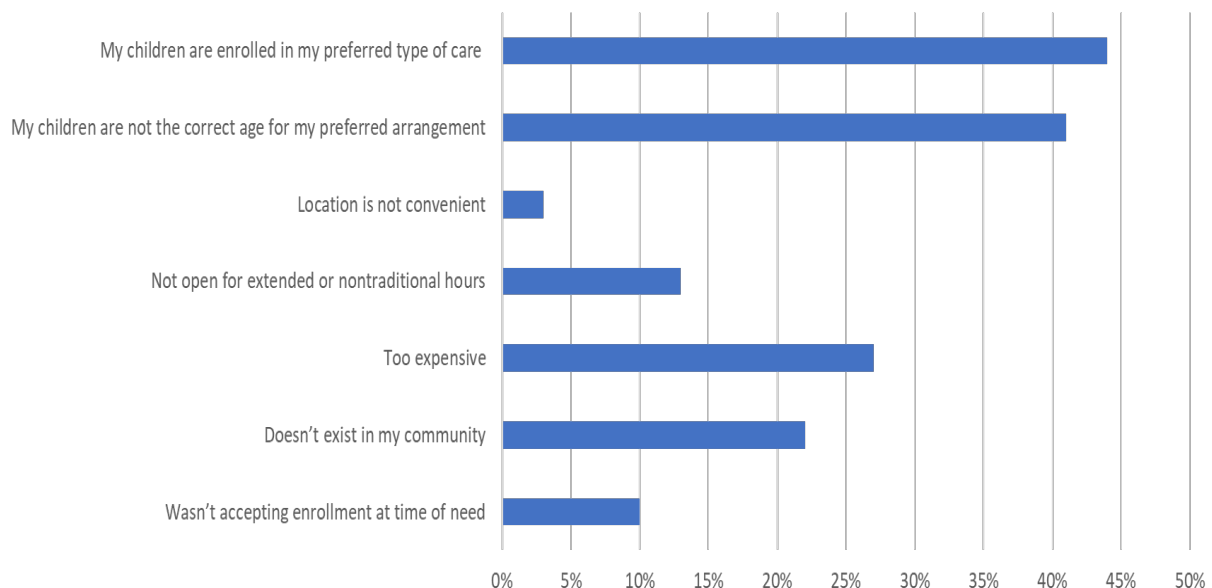
While specific questions about quality were not part of this survey, it was noted that there is a positive perception between child care providers and the local community on the quality of child care programs in the area. When survey participants were asked about what is important for them in a child care program, they ranked their preferences as follows (1 being the most important):

1. Provider demonstrates a safe and healthy environment
2. The provider is licensed by the State of Michigan
3. Provider is conveniently located
4. Provider uses an educational curriculum
5. The provider has achieved an elevated level of education or credential
6. Provider is a friend, family member, neighbor, or someone I have a personal relationship with

## Reasons for Not Enrolling in Paid Child care

The Manistique/Schoolcraft Core Team explored data related to why parents may not be using paid child care. A breakdown of the parent survey showed 41% of the parents did not have children under the age of 5 and may not need full-day, full-year care. The breakdown on why they are not using child care is in the chart below. Most parents who do not use paid child care report the slots available did not match their needs or that they had to utilize an unlicensed option because licensed care was not available.

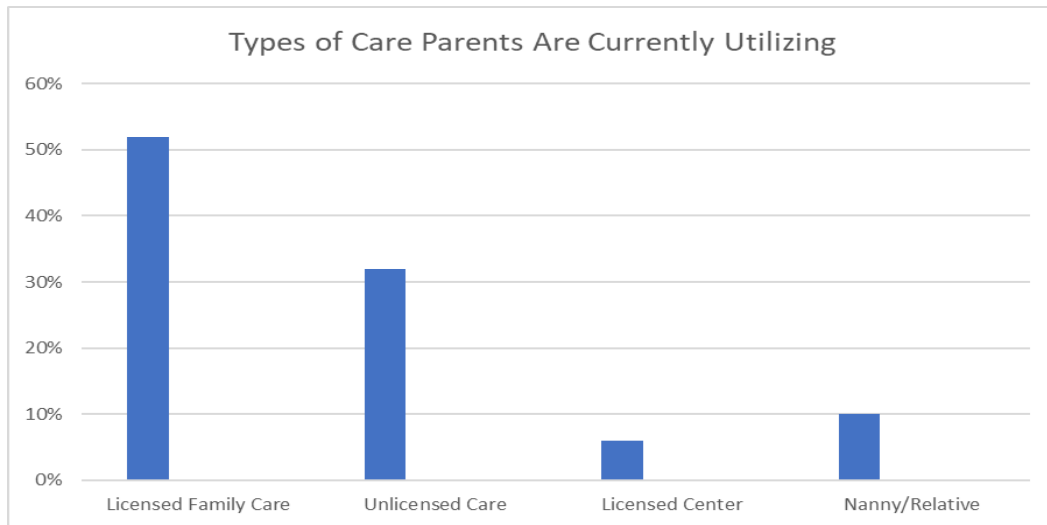
Reasons For Not Enrolling in Paid Child Care





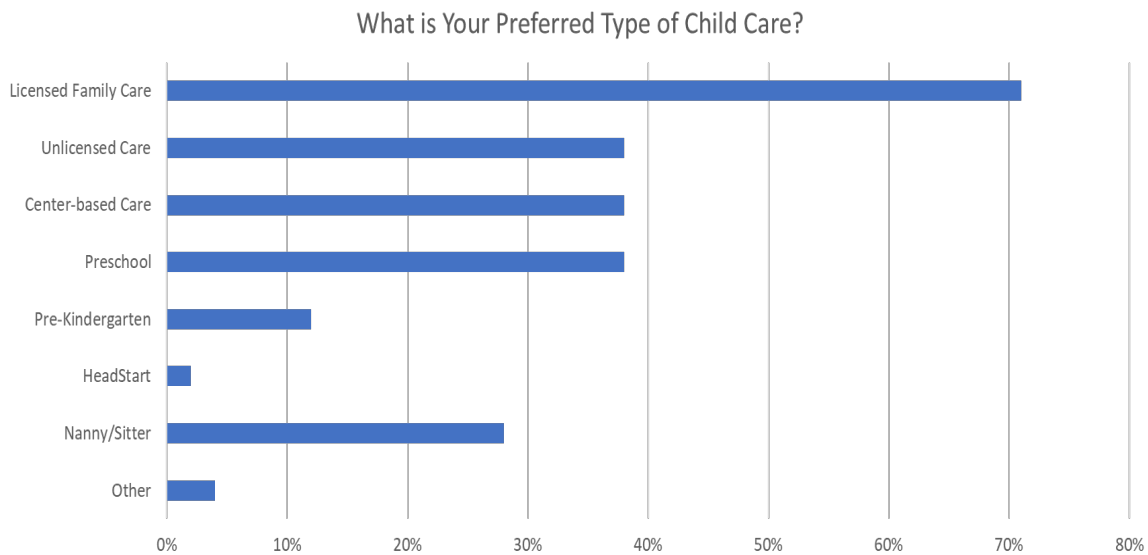
## Types of Care Parents are Currently Using

The chart below shows the types of child care currently being used by families in the Manistique/Schoolcraft County Area.



## Types of Care Parents Prefer to Utilize

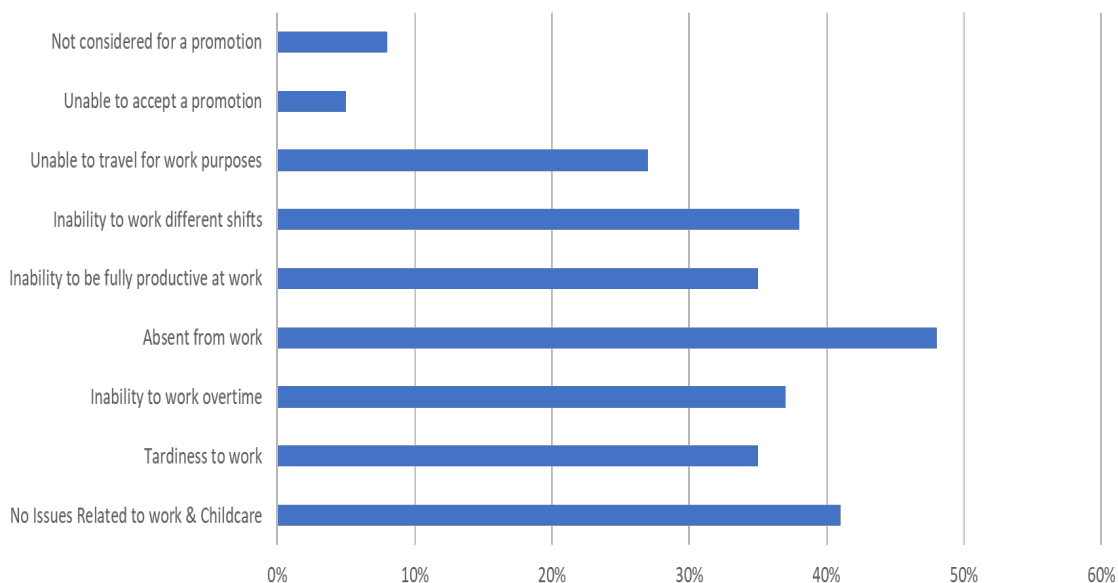
The types of care parents in the Manistique/Schoolcraft County Area prefer are shown on the chart below. When a community can better meet the preferred child care options of families the community will be more successful in attracting new families and individuals to the community to live and work.



## How Child Care Shortages Impact the Community and Employers

Beyond families and children, the greater community and local businesses can also be impacted by child care challenges and issues. Child care is often framed as an economic development issue by communities facing declining populations or challenges with the workforce. These issues can compound and further extend into the business community by causing the loss of workers due to the lack of child care or by businesses relocating to communities with better availability of care. The chart below shows various work-related issues from a parent employee and an employer perspective.

### Work Issues That Occurred Due to Child Care Arrangements in the Last 12 Months



Normal work environments can be adversely impacted when child care is a challenge for employers and workers. As illustrated, the biggest impact of child care limitations include absence from work, inability to work a flexible schedule or work different shifts, and tardiness to work.

From the employer survey, 56.25% of employers said the child care shortage has affected their ability to **attract** employees while 50% of employers indicated the lack of child care has impacted their ability **retain** employees.

Additional child care related challenges for parents included 8% not able to travel for work, and 8% were not able to accept a promotion. While employers responded that 12.5% of their employees were not able to travel for work, they did also mention that 3% were unable to accept a promotion due to child care challenges.

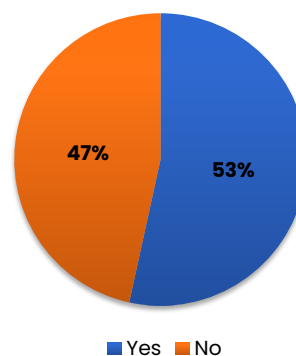
### Impact on Family Planning – Manistique/Schoolcraft County

Parents in the survey were asked if childcare availability has impacted their family planning. This chart shows the results.

Manistique/Schoolcraft County must consider this data point carefully. If families report the size of their family is impacted by the availability of child care, it is quite possible that parents of young children may relocate to a community that has child care access.

In addition to impacting family planning, child care shortages can also impact the local employment environment. In the survey, 47% of parents have declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce due to child care issues at some point in their career. Rural communities should consider child care as a strategy to retain young professionals and their families.

Has the availability of your preferred child care option impacted your decision to have another child or limit the size of your family?

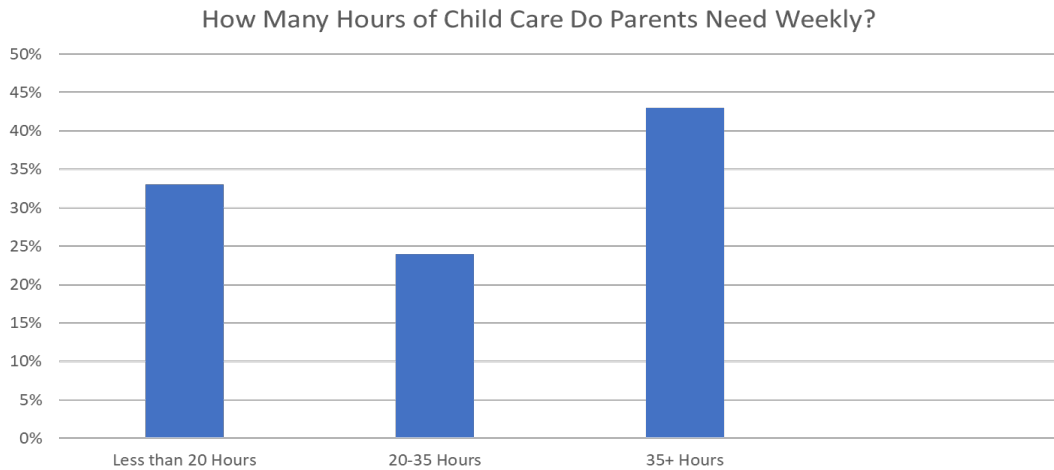




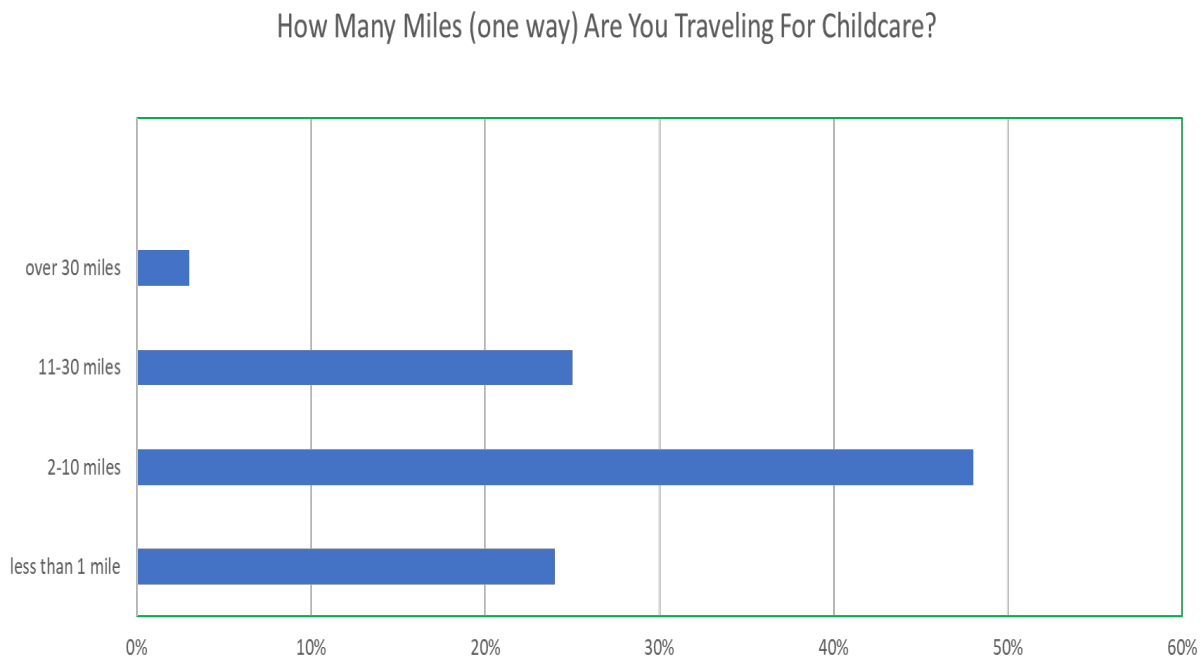
## TYPES OF CHILD CARE NEEDED

It is important for a community to understand the types of child care parents need to identify the right sized solutions for the community. The survey indicated that 43% of parents need more than 35 hours of care per week and are seeking full-time child care options.

It is also important to determine when parents need care so the community can invest in options that will be utilized. The chart below shows the hours of care needed from both a parent perspective and an employer perspective. As we see in many communities, the survey showed employers believe families need care options on evenings, overnights, rotating shifts, and weekends at a much higher rate than families want. Manistique/Schoolcraft County must ascertain the preferences of parents and that they are reflected in community options, or risk investing in an option that will be underutilized by families

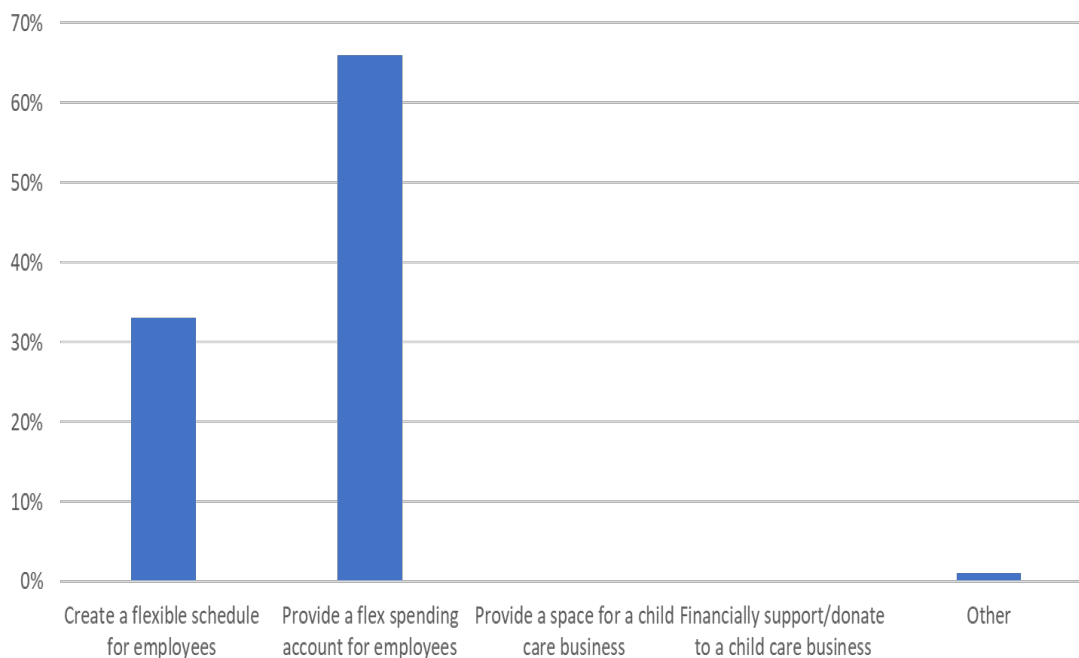


Manistique/Schoolcraft County Area survey respondents indicated that they were traveling significant distances to find appropriate child care. 25% indicated that they were traveling more than 11 miles for child care.



Employers can help address the child care shortage in multiple ways. From the employer survey, the top two ways employers in the Manistique/Schoolcraft County area are willing to help are to create flexible schedules or provide flexible spending accounts. Sixty-seven percent reported that they would be willing to create a flexible schedule while 32% said that they would be willing to provide a flexible spending account for employees.

Employers Are Willing To Address The Child Care Shortage





## UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERLYING CHALLENGES

The Core Team in Manistique/Schoolcraft County spent several months investigating the underlying reasons for the local child care challenges by conducting one-on-one interviews, engaging with members of the community and surveying community members. Digging deeper into the child care challenge led to discovery about the situations many families, providers and employers are experiencing around child care and the factors contributing to those challenges.

### **FACTOR: It is Challenging to be a Child Care Provider**

- Providers do not feel treated as business owners and parents do not understand the value of the services they offer.
- Centers cannot find and keep quality workers and cannot afford to pay them more.
- Providers receive low wages, long hours, and NO benefits (such as health insurance, retirement, or PTO).
- Lack of space and resources to expand or operate outside of the home
- Complicated business model – constantly changing
- A child care business is expensive to start and the first year may not/may never have a positive cash flow

The challenges of being a family child care provider or running a child care center is well-documented. Licensing rules and regulations have changed over the years along with increasing expectations around outcomes for children entering kindergarten. Many family child care providers operate their businesses with minimal community support which can lead to issues with sustainability. Child care providers have a tough job – one that comes with very few benefits or recognition. Local providers and other community organizations have a chance to recognize the ongoing contributions and continuous innovation of family childcare providers in the industry. This could be achieved through recognition programs and other material support such as professional development.

## FACTOR: Quality & Regulations: Two Sides of One Coin

- Need for low-cost, local professional development to increase quality care, and support to enhance programs.
- Overall parents agree there is not enough high quality child care, and most times settle for what is available – even if they do not like or trust the program
- Highly regulated industry – growing number of requirements and regulations for centers and home providers

Manistique/Schoolcraft County Area residents indicated the desire to have a variety of licensed child care choices and quality offerings available to select from. While some of this desire is for new child care offerings, many also want enhanced offerings within existing child care. Leveraging interaction and engagement with existing child care programs and families can provide additional insights to support and understand child care programs within the area. As child care quality increases, the community should expect increased family and community investments in child care.

## FACTOR: High Cost and Low Availability of Child Care

- Families have a tough time finding and affording childcare
- Employers see the need to provide flexibility to schedules, when possible, to accommodate lack of child care
- Infant care is extremely hard to find – Parents are trying to be proactive and research the availability of care prior to becoming pregnant.
- Child care has small profit margins, expensive to start, and may have little to no cash flow – lack of resources
- Parents want high quality care, but they cannot pay enough to compensate providers
- Employers struggle to cover when employees have challenges with child care
- Programs have a challenging time charging enough to maintain staff or be financially stable

There is no clear answer to the ongoing challenge of cost of care versus family investment to get quality child care. Additional support in helping families with low-to-moderate incomes become acquainted with existing support systems such as CCAP can help bridge the gap.

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPED SOLUTIONS

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First Children's Finance and the Manistique/Schoolcraft County Area RCCIP Core Team facilitated a Consensus Workshop with the community to produce a variety of viable solutions to address the child care shortage. Below are the main points of conversation from the session.

## **THEME: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

- Finding the talent for child care businesses
- Evaluate wages so parents can afford care but still allows to pay a child care worker a livable wage.
- There are more open jobs in our community and less people available

## **THEME: COMMUNITY EDUCATION/PARTNERSHIPS**

- Community wide education on the fundamentals needed to prepare children for Kindergarten.
- Developing a stronger partnership with Delta Schoolcraft Great Start Connections
- Community Necessity-Early On Programming in Schoolcraft County
- Parent Education-Local family night where families can learn about early childhood education
- Partner with local businesses and schools for necessary training
- Employer/Employee Partnerships for child care such as utilization of the Tri-Share Program.

## **THEME: FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

- Discussion on who to involve within the community such as schools, banks, healthcare systems.
- Form a Core Team to Lead and network with businesses to develop partnerships.
- Implement child care programming for educators through colleges and universities.

## **THEME: RECOGNITION**

- Recognize the child care crisis as a community-partner with businesses and educate at local festivals and gatherings.
- Recognize Providers/Business Owners through supply drives and fundraising.

## **THEME: FACILITIES**

- Evaluate local churches in the community to see if space may be available.
- Research local buildings to see what may be available or zoned for child care licensing
- Investigate local schools that may be available for opening or expansion.



## IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

After the brainstorming session, the Core Team met to develop SMART Goals to address the child care needs of the community. Those SMART Goals, Project Team Leaders, Team Members and expected outcomes are listed below.

### SMART GOAL ONE

Explore ways to market, educate and to provide resources in the community to providers, parents and employers about early childhood education and care.

**Project Team Lead** – Jill Connin

**Additional Team Members** – Joan Ecclesine, Yvonne Harris

#### **Expected Outcomes and Impact:**

- The Project Team Members will reach out to parents/families in the community to provide resources about quality child care. They will connect with families through the local library, Delta Schoolcraft ISD, parenting evenings through the school district and provide early childhood education materials.
- Resources will be readily available in strategic places within the County for parents/families to read or research at their leisure.

Impact to the community will be knowledge and additional resources for families about early childhood education the importance of quality education and care.



## SMART GOAL TWO

Explore and create a mentorship program that serves as a resource for providers in Schoolcraft County.

**Project Team Lead** – Cathy Rhode  
**Additional Team Members** – Nina Klagstad

### **Expected Outcomes and Impact:**

- Project Team will develop a support program for current providers
- The Project Team will collaborate with current providers to assist potential new providers through the licensing rules and regulations. The current providers will then remain a mentor to the new providers to assist as needed with support and guidance.

The importance of a mentorship program within Schoolcraft County will impact the community. providers, especially home providers, will not feel isolated. They will have a support system within the provider community which will boost morale and encourage them to remain in business.

## SMART GOAL THREE

Investigate the Tri-Share program for Schoolcraft County and if it may lower the cost of child care for parents.

**Project Team Lead** – Jim Messer  
**Additional Team Members** – James Gray

### **Expected Outcomes and Impact:**

- After research is completed by the Project Team, they will determine if the Tri-Share Program is a good fit for the Schoolcraft County Community.
- If the determination is to push forward with a relationship with Tri-Share, the Project Team will seek to collaborate with local businesses to develop a partnership.
- The Project Team will then continue to monitor the progress of the Program between the Tri-Share representative and the employers.

The impact of the Tri-Share program on the Schoolcraft community will be crucial to the success of Schoolcraft County. Parents will return to work, employers will have employees with quality care, and children will be safe, cared for and can succeed in their early childhood program.

## SMART GOAL FOUR

Research and apply for local and state-wide grants and scholarships that will benefit child care business owners, providers, parents' educators, and tribal communities.

**Project Team Lead** – Cheryl Demers

### **Expected Outcomes and Impact:**

- Upon the initial research the Project Team will then determine which grants/scholarships are a good fit for the community
- Project Team may then apply or ask for assistance from community members in which the grant/scholarship may benefit.

The impact to the community may be potentially reduced pricing in child care for parents depending on how the grant is written or what the initial intention is for.

## SMART GOAL FIVE

Explore the potential facilities in Manistique to open a Co-Op program.

**Project Team Lead** – Jennifer Watson

**Additional Team Members** – Alyssa Swanson

### **Expected Outcomes and Impact:**

- Research available facilities in Manistique. Once a space is identified, the Project Team will gain community support for an alternative-style childcare facility.
- Develop a relationship with the region's Licensing Consultant for guidance on how to open and maintain a successful program.
- The Project Team will identify parents that are interested in participating.

The impact of this project will give children a sense of belonging and help them develop socially, emotionally, and physically. Parents will be provided with the opportunity to work onsite remotely knowing that their child is being well cared for in a quality environment. Two parent working household allow families quality food, education and savings which means more jobs and inclusive economic growth within the community.

Founded in 1991, First Children's Finance is a national nonprofit organization based in Minneapolis, Minnesota with regional offices in Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Vermont. First Children's Finance works to stabilize, improve, and expand high-quality child care businesses serving low and moderate-income families. First Children's Finance provides financing, child care business training and consulting, and builds partnerships that connect child care businesses with the resources and expertise of the public and private sectors.

First Children's Finance understands the issues and challenges child care businesses face in today's world. We have industry specific expertise and a shared commitment to the success of child care.

In addition, First Children's Finance aligns its work with childcare leaders, businesses and regional initiatives committed to quality. We define quality as the creation of environments that support healthy brain development for young children to enhance early learning. First Children's Finance brings a unique perspective, approach, and experience to providing business planning and financial assistance to our child care and economic development partners.

For more information about Rural Child Care Innovation Program visit [www.ruralchildcare.org](http://www.ruralchildcare.org)



**First Children's Finance**