

An Action Plan to **Strengthen Child Care in Grant County**

July 2025



How does Grant County provide safe and reliable child care that meets the needs of families and the workforce to help the community thrive?

The actions proposed in this plan will help to strengthen the Grant County Early Childhood Coalition, increase employer engagement to support child care issues, and enhance high-quality, innovative, and accessible child care options in Grant County. The result of these actions will help to make Grant County a desirable place to live and work, create a safe environment and bright future for young children, and strengthen the local economy.

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Executive Summary

Child care is essential to a thriving community as it provides children with safe and enriching learning environments while supporting parents' and guardians' ability to work, increasing their economic mobility. Lack of adequate, affordable child care can have a ripple effect on communities, the workforce, and the broader economy. Parents and guardians can be late, absent from work, or distracted when their child care needs go unmet. As a result, they miss out on career growth opportunities and earnings.

Grant County leaders work collaboratively and are invested in addressing child care needs and gaps, with many actions to be implemented over the next few years. Indiana Wesleyan University received the Lilly Endowment's College and Community Collaboration grant to transition a campus building to an on-site child care center. The center will allow students to gain experience and build skills related to early care and education. Further, leaders from Ivy Tech discussed the potential of combining early childhood education training with business programs to prepare educators for operating child care centers. There is an active Early Childhood Coalition, supported by Thriving Grant County and previously supported by the United Way. The Community Foundation of Grant County also has a Career to Cradle Fund with a community action network focused specifically on early education.

Even with this collaborative spirit, the challenges and needs of child care remain high in the community.

The Indiana Chamber of Commerce and the Family and Social Services Administration's Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning launched the Employer-Sponsored Child Care Fund at the end of 2023. The program provided communities, businesses, schools, and nonprofit organizations with funding to create or expand employer-subsidized child care benefits for working Hoosier families. To address the needs in Grant County, Greater Grant County (GGC) applied and received an Employer-Sponsored Child Care grant to complete a comprehensive analysis of child care in Grant County and develop best practices and recommendations for the community. GGC engaged Transform Consulting Group (TCG) to complete the comprehensive analysis and develop the strategic action plan.

GGC convened a steering committee to guide this work. TCG collected community data and gathered information from community partners, families, employees, child care providers, and employers. The steering committee met in February 2025 to review the findings and recommendations of a completed child care needs assessment. At that time, the committee identified three primary goals with subsequent strategies to create the Grant County Child Care Action Plan. To implement the Child Care Action Plan, GGC has partnered with the Grant County Early Childhood Coalition, supported by Thriving Grant County, a nonprofit resource center that helps children and families with everything from food insecurity to career readiness.



Executive Summary

The catalytic actions outlined in this plan will help move the needle toward strengthening the child care coalition, increasing employer engagement in child care issues, and enhancing high-quality, innovative, and accessible child care options in Grant County. To put this plan into action, GGC will work with local partners, including the Early Childhood Coalition, local subject matter experts on child care and workforce development, and cross-sector community leaders.

This plan is an invitation to engage with what's possible in Grant County.

Consider the following reflection questions as you read through the strategic actions:

1. Who would be best to partner with to put this plan into action?
2. What progress has already been made in Grant County related to the strategic actions?
3. Where do the strategic actions of the plan overlap and intersect?
4. How do we keep the community engaged in this work?
5. Where do you see yourself in the plan?



Grant County Quick Facts

In Grant County, families need affordable access to care. Nearly three quarters (73%) of Grant County children under the age of 6 need care because both parents work, higher than the state average (68%). Grant County families spend an average of 11% of their annual income on child care.

Families in Grant County Need **Access** to Child Care



4,464 young children (ages 0 to 5) **live in Grant County.**



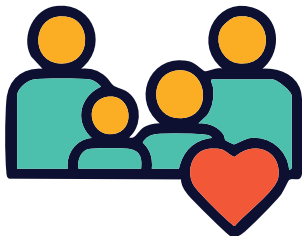
3 in 4 (73%) of **Grant County children under 6 need care** because all parents work.



1,696 **new** child care seats are needed to serve young children in need of care.

Grant County has a higher rate of children in need of care because all parents in the home are working compared to the state of Indiana (68%).

Families in Grant County Need **Affordable** Child Care



Families in Grant County earn a **median income of \$55,448.**



Families **spend on average \$6,135 annually** on child care in Grant County.



Families earning the median spend **11% of their income** on child care per year.

Lack of Child Care Impacts Grant County **Employees**

Grant County employers are losing an estimated **\$17.4 million annually due to the direct costs of child care-related absences and turnover.**

Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (2024). Untapped Potential in IN: How Childcare Impacts Indiana's Workforce Productivity and the State's Economy.

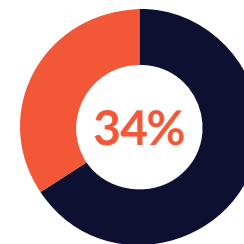
In 2024, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, in partnership with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and Early Learning Indiana, developed a report to understand the impact of child care on working parents, their employers, and the state economy. The report found that child care-related absences and turnover cost Indiana employers \$3.05 billion annually. Indiana experiences a direct financial impact of \$4.22 billion each year due to insufficient child care coverage. More than two thirds of working parents' workdays have been impacted by child care falling through, costing Indiana employers \$13 billion a year in lost productivity, and costing Grant County Employers an estimated \$17.4 million annually.

Contributing to the significant local need for child care, three fourths (75%) of the working-age population is employed. Grant County offers employment opportunities in various industries. Approximately one third (9,128; 31%) of individuals employed in Grant County work in education, health care, or social services. Manufacturing employs the second most workers, and retail trade is the third-largest employment sector. These industry leaders highlight the need for child care to support working parents who are required to work on-site during varying shifts.

Families in Grant County need accessible, affordable child care. Despite the active workforce, 19% of the population falls below the poverty level, which is significantly higher than the state rate of 12% (more than 50% above, in relative terms). The poverty rate of young children under 6 is even more pronounced, with approximately one third (34%) living below the poverty line, nearly double that of the state rate (18%) of children living in poverty. Grant County has the second-highest young child poverty rate in the state.

The median family household income in Grant County is over \$27,000 less than the state median family household income. Single-parent households earn approximately 39% to 47% less than the average family income, and about two thirds that of married-couple households.

Percentage of Grant County Young Children Living in Poverty



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17024.

Median Household Income for Grant County Families with Children

All Households	\$55,448
Married-Couple Households	\$88,491
Single-Parent Households	\$31,687

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1903.

“One of the strongest factors associated with higher quality of life in small towns is spending on public schools, with public school quality and the **availability of early childhood education being two of the most important factors for working parents.”**

- Brookings Institution

Strategic Actions by Goal

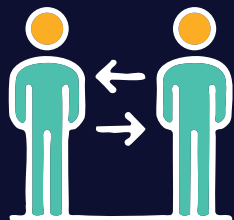
Goal 1



Strengthen the Child Care Coalition

- » Strengthen Coalition Infrastructure
- » Increase the Coalition's Public Presence
- » Support Child Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention
- » Identify Revenue Model for Partnerships or Memberships

Goal 2



Increase Employer Engagement

- » Build Awareness of Business Case for Child Care Support
- » Educate Employers on Existing Child Care Benefits

Goal 3



Enhance High-Quality, Innovative, and Accessible Child Care Options

- » Maintain Available High-Quality Child Care Options
- » Develop Innovative Solutions for Child Care Access

Goal 1:



Strengthen the Child Care Coalition

Early childhood coalitions build social capital, bringing together child care providers, employers, social service organizations, government officials, and other local leaders to create a shared goal. Coalitions work to provoke change locally, leading to the implementation of stronger services, coordinated learning systems, and opportunities for children and parents to thrive.

Strategy: Strengthen Coalition Infrastructure

The Grant County Early Childhood Coalition (Coalition) has been changing to strengthen its infrastructure, including transitioning its lead agency from the United Way to Thriving Grant County. Coalition leaders discussed the need for a strategic plan to guide their efforts, creating shared goals and strategies that ultimately lead to the betterment of children's lives in the county.

Surveyed and interviewed respondents reported that local leaders invest in addressing child care needs. Respondents noted programs and services such as the Coalition, local church initiatives, and grant opportunities that can be leveraged to address child care gaps.

Resources and Partners	Actions	Outcomes
<i>What is needed to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What steps need to be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What will change as a result of the strategy?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant County Early Childhood Coalition Thriving Grant County Grant County United Way Community Foundation of Grant County Greater Grant County Other community partners Funding support from employers and community partners 	<p>Year 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Coalition strategic plan with key milestones and performance indicators. Hire a full-time Coalition coordinator to support Coalition efforts. Update Coalition membership roles and expectations to foster consistent participation. Recruit knowledgeable and experienced individuals to join the Coalition. Establish Coalition subcommittees to distribute efforts and provide the full Coalition with updates on progress made. <p>Year 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversify Coalition membership to include center and home providers, education, government, and employer partners. <p>Year 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish skills assessment of Coalition members. Identify skills they bring to the membership, and how they work together to be more intentional about recruitment. <p>Year 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish yearly membership reviews. Offer continuing education units and credentialing to Coalition members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strengthened coalition will have a full-time director to lead early education efforts in Grant County. The coalition will represent the community and early care and education in Grant County, with established roles and responsibilities for coalition members.
Models and Resources		

- [LaunchPad](#)
- [Monroe SmartStart](#)

Goal 1:




Strengthen the Child Care Coalition

Strategy: Increase the Coalition's Public Presence

Although many respondents were aware of the Coalition, they felt unaware of the initiatives implemented by the Coalition. Some respondents expressed a desire for more involvement from the Coalition to address child care needs in the county. Coalition members also discussed the need to strengthen the Coalition's public presence.

Increasing the Coalition's public presence also spotlights the child care needs and the opportunities to meet those needs in the community. A strong coalition will support accessibility, affordability, high-quality, and a more reliable workforce. The Coalition will seek support from community partners, businesses, and educational partners, and work as a collaborative partner with other community initiatives aimed at addressing child care needs in Grant County.

Resources and Partners	Actions	Outcomes	
What is needed to implement the strategy?	What steps need to be taken to implement the strategy?	What will change as a result of the strategy?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grant County employers• Grant County school corporations• County and City government• Grant County Early Childhood Coalition• Thriving Grant County	<p>Year 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase outreach to employers, schools, government, and other community partner agencies.• Create communication strategies to disseminate to local employers. <p>Year 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a child care benefits navigator to support the adoption and implementation of child care benefits by employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The coalition will establish a significant public presence and engage the community to grow awareness of early care initiatives.	
Models and Resources			

Goal 1:



Strengthen the Child Care Coalition

Strategy: Support Child Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention

In Grant County, child care providers noted that their facilities were not at full enrollment but at full capacity based on the number of staff employed. Strengthening the recruitment and retention of the child care workforce in Grant County can help leverage the existing capacity of child care seats.

In addition, child care providers noted that wages are a barrier to recruiting and retaining staff members. On average, part-time and full-time employees earn around \$15 per hour. The hourly living wage for one adult with no children in Grant County is \$18.01 and \$41.31 for one adult with two children. As such, child care workers typically do not make enough to meet the living wage.

There are several opportunities to support child care workforce recruitment and retention practices and increase the capacity of existing child care providers.

“We are the industry that allows every other industry to exist. Many of us have specialized training, advanced degrees, and decades of experience. We need to be recognized, respected, and paid as the professionals we are.”

- Grant County child care provider

Resources and Partners	Actions	Outcomes
What is needed to implement the strategy?	What steps need to be taken to implement the strategy?	What will change as a result of the strategy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant County employers Grant County school corporations County and City government Grant County Early Childhood Coalition Thriving Grant County Grant County Regional Career Center Community Foundation of Grant County 	<p>Year 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a wage supplement program <p>Year 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen career and technical education (CTE) partnerships, allowing for increased internship opportunities, or create internship opportunities through TEACH. <p>Year 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide scholarship programs and loan forgiveness programs for child care professionals or education majors while they engage in internship opportunities. Provide scholarships and continuing education for child care workers. Provide entrepreneurship support to child care providers and potential providers. <p>Year 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide driver's education classes at the Grant Regional Career Center to assist with child care transportation needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care professionals will have increased access to education and training options. Child care professionals will earn more money

Models and Resources

- First Five of Wabash County
- Elkhart Area Career Center's Early Childhood Education Program
- Child Care Works Wage Supplement Program
- Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH) Early Childhood Scholarship Program

Goal 1:



Strengthen the Child Care Coalition

Strategy: Identify Revenue Model for Partnership or Membership

Although tuition and fees are unaffordable for many families, these costs are market prices and may not be the actual costs incurred by child care programs. Market prices are based on what families in the community can afford, and they often do not cover the actual operating costs of child care programs. Many factors go into programs' operating costs and how program administrators make ends meet.

Child care labor costs are higher than other educational programming due to the need for lower adult-to-child ratios. Nationally, teacher and staff compensation accounts for 60% to 80% of program budgets. But most staff are still not paid anything close to the local median wage. This income gap results in high turnover and poorly staffed classrooms, lowering overall capacity and availability.

A shared services model to support administrative costs collectively for collaborating child care providers would offset the overall operating costs, thus reserving funds to support a strong workforce at a living wage and bolster overall programming and other essential business operations.

Resources and Partners	Actions	Outcomes
<i>What is needed to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What steps need to be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What will change as a result of the strategy?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant County employers Grant County school corporations County and City government Grant County Early Childhood Coalition Thriving Grant County Grant County Regional Career Center Community Foundation of Grant County 	Year 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a shared services model supporting back office operations, providing workshops, mentorships, and a substitute teacher pool. Establish a sick care cooperative - specifically, a partnership between colleges, providers, schools, and Marion Health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A shared services model will support child care providers with operations, training, and available substitute teachers. A sick care cooperative will ensure that options are available to families needing care when providers cannot accommodate children due to illness.



Models and Resources

- [Monroe Smart Start](#)
- [Pathfinder Services Kids Clinic](#)

Goal 2:



Increase Employer Engagement

A lack of viable child care options can undermine a parent's ability to work, so employers have a strong incentive to help make child care more accessible and affordable. Nearly three fourths (73%) of surveyed Grant County employers agreed that employees are either unable to focus at work, are late, or miss work altogether due to child-care related issues. Nearly half of the surveyed parents and guardians said that child care impacts their ability to be on time, and 41% said it affects their ability not to miss work.

“Without adequate, affordable, and safe child care, I am **unable to perform my job to the highest level. I am constantly interrupted and sometimes have to attempt to work one-handed. This has led to higher anxiety and stress related to my job.”**

- parent or guardian



Strategy: Build Awareness of Business Case for Child Care Issues

These child care-related absences and turnover cost Grant County an estimated \$17.4 million annually. Educating employers on the significant impact can help gain buy-in on the benefits and services employers offer to parents and guardians.

Resources and Partners	Actions	Outcomes
<i>What is needed to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What steps need to be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What will change as a result of the strategy?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant County employers Grant County school corporations County and City government Grant County Early Childhood Coalition Thriving Grant County 	<p>Year 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share Child Care Action Plan with employers. Create and share Grant County Child Care campaign information and data (i.e., ROI, tax incentives for supporting child care initiatives, etc.) <p>Year 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host employer roundtables and the “No Small Matter” child care documentary. Host public events to reach decision-makers. Establish communication strategies to maintain employer engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The coalition will establish a significant public presence and engage the community to grow awareness of early care initiatives.
Models and Resources		

- **“No Small Matter”**

Goal 2:



Increase Employer Engagement

Strategy: Educate Employers on Existing Child Care Benefits

There are many opportunities to address child care needs from a workforce standpoint, and many Grant County employers are already offering some benefits, including flexible schedules, remote work, and dependent care accounts. Some Grant County employers expressed an interest in expanding benefits, especially related to tuition assistance and backup care options. Further, parents and guardians expressed a desire for employers to offer child care benefits to them as employees. Nearly two thirds (63%) expressed interest in employers providing scholarships to assist with child care costs, and nearly half (49%) expressed interest in having employers reserve spots at local child care programs that give employees priority.

Many employers expressed a need for more education and awareness of potential supportive services that can be leveraged in the community to support their employees. There is also an opportunity for employers to be educated on potential benefits that can increase their employees' productivity and retention.

"It would be helpful to have **more resources available to employers related to licensed child care options in the county."**

- employer

Resources and Partners	Actions	Outcomes
<i>What is needed to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What steps need to be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What will change as a result of the strategy?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant County employers Grant County Early Childhood Coalition Thriving Grant County Community Foundation of Grant County Greater Grant County 	<p>Year 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate employers about employer-sponsored programs and incentives. Create employer rankings, "Best of Family-Friendly Workplaces," to share with employers. <p>Year 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a local liaison (i.e., child care broker). <p>Year 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work one-on-one with employers to bolster family-first policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers will be educated on and supported by family-first policies that can increase employee recruitment and retention.



Models and Resources

- KinderCare at Reid Health
- Business Support Examples

Goal 3:



Enhance High Quality, Innovative, and Accessible Child Care Options

Since 2020, Grant County has seen an increase in child care capacity, including five new programs resulting in 57 additional seats. In addition to increasing the number of spots available, it is critical that child care meets quality standards.

Strategy: Maintain Available High-Quality Child Care Options

Four local programs have started to participate in Paths to QUALITY™, Indiana's quality rating and improvement system for child care programs. Community partners noted that investing in current child care programs can help to maintain high-quality, accessible child care. Fourteen child care providers stated they would be interested in expanding their capacity if barriers did not exist. In order to expand, 71% said they would need financial support, 64% need expanded space, and 43% need staff recruitment and retention support.

Resources and Partners	Actions	Outcomes
<p><i>What is needed to implement the strategy?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant County child care providers Grant County school corporations County and City government Grant County Early Childhood Coalition Thriving Grant County Foundation of Grant County Greater Grant County 	<p><i>What steps need to be taken to implement the strategy?</i></p> <p>Year 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support existing programs to leverage available spaces for expansion in rural areas. <p>Year 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Right-size current providers and build partnerships to expand hours and locations of care. <p>Year 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host an innovative child care solutions incubator. <p>Year 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize employer-sponsored programs to incentivize the use of high-quality care (e.g., DCAP-funded plans) 	<p><i>What will change as a result of the strategy?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain available child care seats in the community in the face of state funding changes, and create opportunities for additional seats and increased quality of care in Grant County.

Models and Resources

- Sponsoring Dependent Care Assistance Plans (DCAP)

Goal 3:



Enhance High Quality, Innovative, and Accessible Child Care Options

Strategy: Develop Innovative Solutions for Child Care Access

Community members reported the need to enhance innovative child care options to increase access to high-quality care. Additionally, many child care providers, parents, and guardians noted that leveraging existing services and partnerships could help fill care gaps. Specifically, parents and guardians emphasized the need for more backup and emergency child care services, as parents and guardians often face disruptions when their regular arrangements fall through. Respondents also included sick child care options for when parents and guardians cannot use their regular provider and may have to miss work when their child is ill.

Resources and Partners	Actions	Outcomes
<i>What is needed to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What steps need to be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>What will change as a result of the strategy?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant County child care providers Grant County School Corporations County and City government Grant County Community Partners Marion Health Grant County Early Childhood Coalition Thriving Grant County Community Foundation of Grant County Greater Grant County 	<p>Year 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer backup and sick child care options through the established sick care cooperative. <p>Year 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to combine services to leverage existing facilities, operations and services like those offered at the YMCA and Boys & Girls Club. Leverage adjacent partnerships with similar organizations, such as prenatal care, mental health, chamber, and HR directors. <p>Year 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community partners to offer alternative bus routes and transportation models to coincide with child care hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain available child care seats in the community in the face of state funding changes, and create opportunities for additional seats and increased quality of care in Grant County.

Models and Resources

- [Pathfinder Services Kids Clinic](#)
- [Home Depot](#)
- [The Bethlehem Intergeneration Center](#)
- [YMCA of Richmond](#)

Implementation Roadmap

The goals and strategies laid out in this plan will guide the work of the Grant County Child Care Action Plan. The plan is supported through collaboration with Greater Grant County and the Grant County Early Childhood Coalition.



Year 1

- Develop a Coalition Strategic Plan with key milestones and performance indicators.
- Hire a full-time Coalition Coordinator to support Coalition efforts
- Update Coalition membership roles and expectations to foster consistent participation.
- Recruit knowledgeable and experienced individuals to join the Coalition
- Establish Coalition subcommittees to distribute efforts and provide the full Coalition with updates on progress.
- Increased outreach to employers, schools, government, and other community partner agencies.
- Create communication strategies to disseminate to local employers.
- Share Child Care Action Plan with employers.
- Create and share Grant County Child Care campaign information and data such as ROI and tax incentives for supporting child care initiatives.



Year 2

- Diversify Coalition membership to include center and home providers, education, government, and employer partners.
- Establish a wage supplement program.
- Establish a shared service model supporting back office operations, providing workshops, mentorships, and a substitute teacher pool.
- Establish a sick care cooperative – a partnership between colleges, providers, schools, and Marion Health.
- Host employer roundtables and the “No Small Matter” child care documentary.
- Host public events to reach decision-makers.
- Establish communication strategies to maintain employer engagement.
- Educate employers about employer-sponsored programs and incentives.
- Create employer rankings, “Best of Family-Friendly Workplaces,” to share with employers
- Support existing programs to leverage available spaces for expansion in rural areas.
- Offer backup and sick child care options through the established sick care cooperative.

Implementation Roadmap

The goals and strategies laid out in this plan will guide the work of the Grant County Child Care Action Plan. The plan is supported through collaboration with Greater Grant County and the Grant County Early Childhood Coalition.



Year 3

- Strengthen career and technical education (CTE) partnerships, allowing for increased internship opportunities, or create internship opportunities through TEACH.
- Establish a local liaison (i.e., child care broker).
- Right-size current providers and build partnerships to expand hours and locations of care.
- Leverage adjacent partnerships with similar organizations (e.g., prenatal care, mental health, chamber, HR directors).
- Seek to combine services to leverage existing facilities, operations, and services like those offered at the YMCA and Boys & Girls Club.



Year 4

- Establish skills assessment of Coalition participants. Identify skills they bring to the membership, and how they work together to be more intentional about recruitment.
- Provide scholarship programs and loan forgiveness programs for child care professionals or education majors while they engage in internship opportunities.
- Provide scholarships and continuing education for child care workers.
- Host a child care solutions incubator.
- Work one-on-one with employers to bolster family-first policies.
- Work with community partners to offer alternative bus routes and a transportation model to coincide with child care hours.
- Offer backup and sick child care options through the established sick care cooperative.



Year 5

- Establish yearly membership reviews.
- Offer continuing education units (CEUs) and credentialing to Coalition members.
- Establish a child care benefits navigator to support the adoption and implementation of child care benefits by employers.
- Provide driver's education classes at the Regional Career Center to assist with transportation needs.
- Utilize employer-sponsored programs to incentivize the use of high-quality care (i.e., DCAP-funded plans).

Appendix



Models and Resources

Goal 1: Strengthen the Child Care Coalition

Strategy: Strengthen Coalition Infrastructure

- **LaunchPad:** Kosciusko County's (Indiana) child care and early learning coalition, founded in 2018 with a paid, full-time director.
- **Monroe SmartStart:** One of Indiana's longest existing early childhood coalitions, with two full-time staff, the leadership initiative is supported by the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County, local government, and businesses.

Strategy: Increase the Coalition's Public Presence

- **LaunchPad:** LaunchPad in Warsaw, Indiana, is a vibrant early-learning coalition deeply embedded in the community. Via their active social media and grassroots presence, they regularly share updates on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, spotlighting successes like grant awards, new childcare seats added, and behind-the-scenes glimpses into educator training programs.

LaunchPad highlights partner businesses at every tier, offering platinum partners dedicated "shout-outs" and video testimonials to amplify community support. These posts build local awareness about early learning gaps.

Through community involvement, such as board events, employer-partner spotlights, state-level advocacy updates, and invitations for local parents to weigh in, especially those working second and third shifts, they can be responsive to the community's child care needs. LaunchPad is a social-savvy, community-driven force. Their channels actively engage local families, educators, businesses, and policymakers to raise awareness and prompt real action in Kosciusko County.

- **Kids Hope Alliance** (Jacksonville, FL): The Kids Hope Alliance (KHA) weaves strategic alliances, workforce empowerment, and literacy-driven advocacy together. Their model shows how aligning cross-sector partnerships with visible public messaging can build sustainable, community-wide impact in early childhood. KHA's work exemplifies Jacksonville's long-standing commitment to early childhood development. This public-private partnership drives millions in annual investment, aligning government, nonprofits, employers, and media to uplift the city's youngest residents collectively. Since 2004, Jacksonville has launched and grown major literacy initiatives, from the Rally Jax Book Club to the River City Readers challenge, mailing books to families, hosting author events, and running citywide reading apps like Beanstack alongside local media partners. These efforts have turned literacy into a community celebration and a visible priority, boosted through consistent mayoral messaging across administrations.

Additionally, KHA treats early childhood educators as essential small business leaders. Programs like the Business Leadership Institute and Accreditation Academy empower providers with business planning, finance, and accreditation training. Over 130 participants have completed such programs, supported by partnerships with the Jacksonville Small and Emerging Business Program and the Florida Association for Child Care Management.

Strategy: Support Child Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention

- **First Five of Wabash County:** The Goal of First Five was to raise funds to supplement early childhood education teachers for local providers. They raised funds from local banks and businesses to offset increased child care costs for families through scholarships for care.
- **Child Care Works Wage Supplement Program** (Iowa): The Wage Supplement Program, launched in January 2024, raises employee pay at qualifying centers by \$2/hour, making the average wage more competitive and the industry more attractive for workers. Funding for the program is possible because of the investment of local businesses and a matching grant from the State of Iowa.
- **Elkhart Area Career Center's Early Childhood Education Program** (Elkhart, IN): The Elkhart Area Career Center participates in Indiana's Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Registered Teacher Apprenticeship program, offering high school students the chance to receive early childhood career field experience and college credit. Students may earn up to 24 college credits towards an associate's degree through dual enrollment at Ivy Tech at no charge.
- **Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH) Early Childhood Scholarship Program:** Provides scholarships to teachers, assistant teachers, Early Head Start staff, center directors, and child care home owners. It works to link education, compensation, and commitment to improve the quality of early care and education.

Appendix



Models and Resources

Goal 1: Strengthen the Child Care Coalition (Continued)

Strategy: Identify Revenue Model for Partnership or Membership

- **Monroe Smart Start:** Monroe Smart Start (Bloomington, IN) launched a shared services hub to help support the sustainability of their early care and education programs. One of the key elements in their hub is a substitute pool. They estimate that staff turnover costs a child care program approximately 30-50% of the annual salary for the position, and they completed a study to determine the actual costs of their participating child care providers.
- **Pathfinder Services Kids Clinic** is inside Pathfinder Early Learning Center (Huntington, IN). Pathfinder saw the need to provide a quality environment where parents felt comfortable bringing their children when they had an illness or needed extra medical attention. It is free (via donations and other funding sources) and open to the community to support working parents. It operates with an open-door policy, offering a quality sick care alternative for working families for any child in the community with a minor illness (ages 6 weeks to 12 years), regardless of enrollment status at Pathfinder Early Learning Center. The clinic is staffed by a certified or licensed nurse or medical assistant.

Goal 2: Increase Employer Engagement

Strategy: Build Awareness of Business Case for Child Care Issues

- **“No Small Matter”:** “No Small Matter” is a feature-length documentary film and national engagement campaign that brings public attention to this vital question by sharing powerful stories and stunning truths about the human capacity for early intelligence and the potential for quality early care and education to benefit America’s social and economic future. This multifaceted project reveals how our country is raising its youngest citizens, why making the most of this time in their lives is so crucial, and most importantly, what we can do to change the perception of when learning begins. The first major theatrical documentary to tackle this topic, “No Small Matter,” is designed to kick-start the public conversation about early care and education. The ultimate goal: produce an entertaining, accessible, and inspiring film that redefines the audience’s understanding of the issue and helps drive it to the top of the political agenda.

Strategy: Educate Employers on Existing Child Care Benefits

- **KinderCare at Reid Health** (Richmond, IN): Reid Health, one of Richmond’s largest employers, partnered with KinderCare to build a new child care facility exclusive to Reid Health employees. As an additional benefit, Reid Health offered its employees a 10% discount on tuition at all other KinderCare locations.
- **Businesses can provide various benefits to help support their employees with child care.** The following are some examples.
 - » **Tuition benefits:** Employers may offer child care tuition benefits to employees, sharing the cost of care with employees (often using a sliding scale model). In this model, employers set the parameters for how and where employees can use tuition benefits (e.g., child care tuition discounts offered for families enrolling in licensed, high-quality care programs) while still providing families with a broad range of choices to decide the best programs for them.
 - » **Priority waiting list partnerships:** Employers may partner with local child care programs to establish priority access for employees at specified programs as an alternative to on-site child care. In this model, child care programs offer employers waiting lists and placement services.
 - » **Near- or on-site child care:** Custom on-site or near-site child care programs for individuals or groups of employers. Companies provide space and agreements with a child care provider to operate the program. Employers often subsidize tuition costs for priority employee groups and may make a portion of seats available to the broader community.
 - » **Backup care:** Sick days, holidays, and school breaks create one-off challenges for parents balancing home and work demands. Some employers provide backup care services for employees through partnerships with local child care and out-of-school time partners. Typically, employees receive a certain number of days (or credits) for use in approved partner programs in the case of emergency or short-term coverage needs.

Appendix



Models and Resources

Goal 2: Increase Employer Engagement

Strategy: Educate Employers on Existing Child Care Benefits (Continued)

- » **Reserved seats in local child care programs:** Employers may partner with local programs to reserve seats for exclusive access by priority employee groups. In this model, the company pays enrollment costs for vacant seats to ensure their availability when needed. This benefit is common in companies facing high turnover in specific roles.
- » **Dependent care assistance programs (DCAPs):** DCAPs are flexible spending accounts, similar to accounts used for health care costs. Employers and employees can contribute to these accounts, setting aside up to \$5,000 annually in pre-tax household income for child care expenses.
- » **Tri-Share:** The cost of an employee's child care is shared equally by the employer, employee, and local community, with coordination provided regionally by a Tri-Share facilitator hub, generally a nonprofit intermediary organization. Participating employers set investment parameters and determine how many child care slots employees can be offered. Employees of participating employers sign up for the program and make contributions through a payroll deduction.

Goal 3: Enhance High Quality, Innovative, and Accessible Child Care Options

Strategy: Maintain Available High-Quality Child Care Options

- **Sponsoring Dependent Care Assistance Plans (DCAPs)** - DCAPs are flexible spending accounts, like accounts used for health care costs. Employers and employees can contribute to these accounts, setting aside up to \$5,000 annually in pre-tax household income for child care and adult daycare expenses.

Strategy: Develop Innovative Solutions for Child Care Access

- **Pathfinder Services Kids Clinic Pathfinder Services Kids Clinic:** Offers a quality, sick child care option for any child in the community with a minor illness (ages 6 weeks to 12 years) so parents and families can still work or attend school
- **Home Depot:** Offers eligible associates backup care when regular child or adult care is unavailable. All associates who have been with the company for at least 1 year have access to backup care. The care is available 24/7, up to 10 days per calendar year.
- **The Bethlehem Intergeneration Center,** based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, has created an opportunity for multiple generations to live, work, and play together. By providing both a place and the staff to facilitate such interaction, children and elders can share their “unique gifts while building meaningful relationships.” The Center describes itself as: “...consisting of a wing dedicated to the care and education of young children and another wing dedicated to the care and enrichment of the elderly.” It is intergenerational because programming is intentionally designed to encourage the children and elders to be together at various times during the day for activities. Early childhood staff includes highly trained and skilled teachers with degrees in early childhood learning. They are required to receive at least 24 hours of professional development each year and are kind and caring individuals who desire to work with young children.
- **YMCA of Richmond** opened a child care facility with a certain number of reserved spots for SugarCreek factory employees and Western Wayne Schools employees before availability opens to the community. This facility was created in response to SugarCreek employees contacting the YMCA for child care assistance. They established a small child care facility in Western Wayne Elementary School, where SugarCreek factory employees have specific seats reserved for their children. Western Wayne School Corporation employees get their children's next priority in admission. The remaining spots are open to the community. The YMCA employees are licensed and operate the early care program. In addition to Sugar Creek employees benefiting, Western Wayne School Corporation employees are provided with a convenient option for their child care.

Endnotes

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