



First Children's Finance

Dream Up! Grant Summary

Ithaca School District

Richland County, WI

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Strategic Supply Planning

The Strategic Child Care Supply Planning Process is a facilitated community planning process designed to engage a Core Team of community leaders to support and expand the child care capacity in their community. First Children’s Finance works with the Core Team to understand the current child care landscape and create goals to address child care needs.

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Background

Ithaca School District – Richland County, WI

The Ithaca School District was selected to engage in community consultation regarding the supply of child care, through the Dream Up! Child Care Strategic Supply Planning Process. Funding for this work is provided by a *Preschool Development Grant (PDG)* received by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. In this process, a Core Team lead by Julie Prouty, Superintendent, Pupil Services Director in the Ithaca School District, participated in a process that included:



- 8 hours of facilitated meetings by First Children’s Finance National Team Staff
- Identification of goals to increase high-quality child-care slots
- Planning support, facilitation, and technical assistance from First Children’s Finance
- A Strategic Child Care Supply Plan that guides Ithaca School District’s Core Team in efforts to increase its supply of high-quality child care.

Community Information

The Ithaca School District is based in Richland County, Wisconsin. The school district is located in rural Wisconsin in the Southern Region of Wisconsin. They applied for the Dream Up! Strategic Supply Planning Process and were awarded participation with the Fall Dream Up! Strategic Supply Plan Cohort. Each application included a geographic region the Core Team planned to focus on, referred to as ‘the community’. The Core Team’s application included the zip codes and corresponding communities listed in Figure 1 as their geographic region and defined community. This geographic region has an approximate population of 10,000 residents and is the focus of this Strategic Supply Plan.

Cities	Zip Codes	Population
Richland Center, Ithaca	53581	10,024

Figure 1: Defined Zip Codes | Community Application Process

Core Team

The following people participated in the Core Team meetings to address the child care supply needs in Ithaca School District's defined community. The primary contact for this project is Core Team Lead, Julie Prouty.

Name	Organization Affiliation
CORE TEAM LEAD: Julie Prouty	Superintendent Pupil Services Director Ithaca School District
CORE TEAM MEMBERS:	
Chelsea Wunnicke	Extension Richland County
Dan Lewig	Pastor Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Shane Stibbe	Director Richland Center Parks and Recreation
Shari Johnson	Curriculum Director Richland School District
Bill Bartlett	Development Director Schmitt Woodland Hills
Jenni Schrock	Owner Sunshine & Giggles Childcare Center
Paul Skoraczewski	VP of Human Resources The Richland Hospital
Liz Perkins	Pupil Services Principal Richland Schools
Ellie Czys	Manager Rockwell Automation
Tanya Vorndran	Quality Assurance Manager Rockwell Automation
Kathleen Schoen	Elementary Principal Ithaca School District
Stacia Kohlstedt	Principal St. Mary School
Mari Beth Valley	Lead Program Coach Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESN)
Kelly Matthews	Co-Director Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESN)
Steve Louis	Owner Oakwood Fruit Farm
Lori Pulvermacher	Owner BEAR VALE FARM Certified Organic Farm
Tom Rislow	Director Pine Valley Community Village
Juli Thompson	Ithaca Parent
Briana Turk	Economic Support Manager Richland County

Community Insights

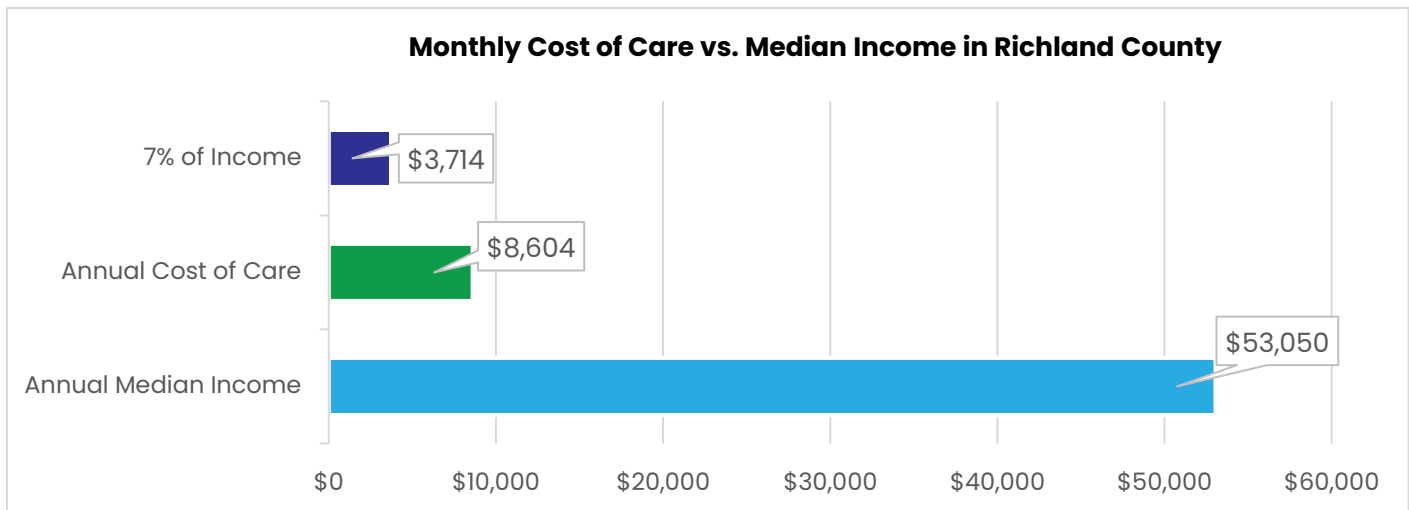
Research by the Core Team was conducted and provided as part of the application process. First Children's Finance provided research and statistics regarding child care needs and sustainable child care solutions. During Strategic Supply Plan meetings, this data was reviewed with the Core Team to better understand their community's child care challenges.

Richland County provided demographic data in their initial application that highlighted the community's need for non-traditional, affordable child care solutions.

- *We have several industries with multiple shifts...this is an area of need, to expand child care hours to include non-traditional hours.*
- *Our entire county is an extreme child care desert with over 10 children for every child care slot.*
- *There are no licensed group centers providing full time care; Only 2 licensed family child care programs, each serving 8 children.*
- *45% of families report that the lack of child care greatly affects their ability to work.*

*Excerpt from Dream Up! Application

During the Strategic Supply Planning process, First Children's Finance shared with the Core Team the data regarding the annual median household income in Richland County compared to the annual cost of care. Figure 2 shows that the annual cost of care in Richland County is \$8,604. This is over double what is affordable according to the Federal Government but is still under what the true cost of providing high-quality care would be for a program. True cost of care is defined as the dollar value of all resources used to provide high-quality early childhood care and education. In Wisconsin, research conducted has the true cost of care at \$1,800 a month for an infant. Families simply cannot afford the true cost of care, leaving providers required to charge less than what it truly costs to provide high-quality care.



Figures 2 Richland County Child Care Cost | PDG Sandbox

Supply Demand Gap Analysis

As part of the Strategic Supply Planning Process, the Core Team was provided with information to help them understand factors that contribute to child care challenges. First Children’s Finance leveraged different data sources to create an illustrative picture of the demand for child care in the community (see Figure 3). These data sources include U.S. Census Bureau, Wisconsin’s Department of Children and Families Data, and First Children’s Finance research and data.

The Supply Demand Gap Analysis completed by First Children’s Finance for Ithaca School District dated November 2022, shows a deficit of 290 slots for children birth to 5 living in households where all available parents are in the workforce. As a result, First Children’s Finance found capacity of licensed and regulated full day year-round care in Ithaca School District at only 39 children.

Figure 3: Ithaca School District Supply Demand Gap Analysis | First Children’s Finance Analysis

Zip Code	City	Licensed Family Child Care	Licensed Group Child Care Center	Certified Child Care	Expected Child Care Capacity	Expected Number of Children Under Age 5	Expected Child Care Need
53581	Richland Center & Ithaca	2	2	1	39	329	290
TOTAL		2	2	1	39	329	290



How Is the Need Supported Today?

When there is a gap in the licensed and regulated child care slots available in a community compared to the children potentially needing care in the community, families find unique ways to meet their needs outside of licensed or regulated child care. The following are common ways that parents may fill their need for child care and may be present in Ithaca School District.

Legal Unlicensed (unregistered) Care / Family, Friends, & Neighbors

Friends, family, and neighbors may provide care for up to three (3) children without a license; however, under Wisconsin law, no person may provide care and supervision for four (4) or more children under the age of seven (7) for less than 24 hours a day. Care for four (4) or more children under the age of seven (7) would require a provider to obtain a license to operate a child care center from Wisconsin's Department of Children and Families.

Illegal Unlicensed/Unregistered Care

Child care is provided in a setting that requires licensing or regulation, but the provider has chosen to provide care without the proper license or following regulatory guidelines.

Under-Employment / Shift Alignment

Parents may work split shifts, work part-time, or limit their work hours to stay home with their children. There may be children in the community whose parents have left the workforce and are not looking for employment because of child care challenges. These families are not included in the data in this report, but parents may enter the workforce if viable child care options were available.

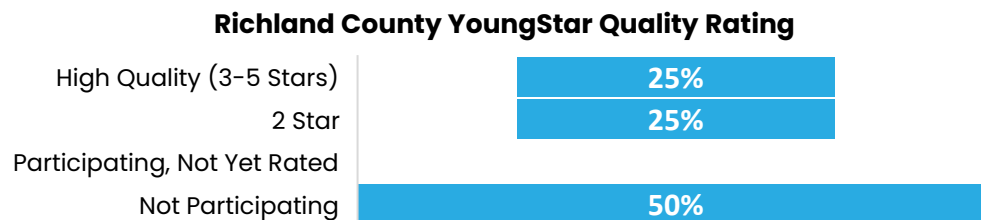
Out of Area Care

Parents with children in the region studied may take their child to care outside of this report's area. This may be due to parents' work location, access to care, or other reasons.

Quality Rating and Improvement System Overview

First Children's Finance examined state-wide information about the number of child care programs that are participating in the YoungStar Program (see Figure 4). YoungStar is Wisconsin's child care Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) that identifies programs that go above and beyond the general licensing requirements to obtain higher quality in their child care program.

Figure 4: Richland County YoungStar Rating | PDG Sandbox



Workforce

Child Care Workforce

First Children’s Finance examined the child care workforce in Wisconsin. Many individuals in the workforce have formal educational backgrounds and more than a decade of experience. However, more than half of early childhood educators rely on some form of public assistance and do not receive benefits. The Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin–Madison reported a 40% turnover rate in the Early Childhood Education field. Figure 5 shows data collected for the Southern Region of Wisconsin and shows 24.1% of the workforce anticipates leaving the field within the next two years. The cost of care is high for families, and the cost of delivery is high for providers. Often, the impact is reflected in child care worker wages. The First Five Years Fund researched the average compensation rate for child care workers and found in Wisconsin; the average hourly rate is \$10.66. The annual salary of \$22,170.00 is below the poverty line for a working family.



Early Education Workforce Survey

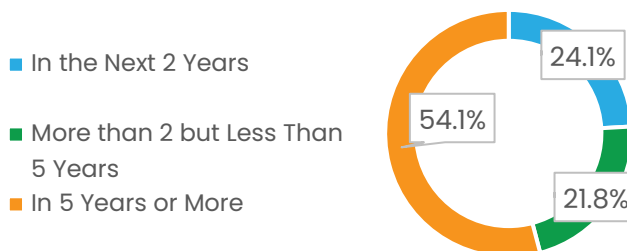


Figure 5: Survey of Center-Based Teachers | Institute for Research and Poverty

Primary Industries

Additionally, First Children’s Finance examined the top industries in Richland County using available census data. The top industries (see Figure 6) can impact child care needs based on when shift workers are needed, as well as beginning and end time of employee shifts. In the Ithaca School District, two of the top industries are Educational / Health Services and Manufacturing. Often, these industries call for second and third shift employees. Without sustainable child care options during these shifts, hiring new employees and retaining current employees in fields such as manufacturing can quickly become a challenge.

During Strategic Supply Plan meetings with First Children’s Finance, the Core Team was asked to brainstorm ways to address the need of child care for all types of working families within their community.

1. Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance

2. Manufacturing

3. Retail Trade

Figure 6: Top Industries in Richland County | U.S. CENSUS 2021

Data Overview

1 Certified Family Child Care programs (*DCF Licensing Information)	2 Licensed Family Child Care programs (*DCF Licensing Information)
2 Licensed Group Child Care programs (*DCF Licensing Information)	25% of providers have a 3–5 Star Rating (DCF Sandbox Data)
100% of zip codes are considered child care deserts (DCF Sandbox Data)	329 children under 5 with all parents in the workforce (*ACS 5 Year Estimates)
39 *current expected child care capacity (*FCF Calculation May 2022)	290 birth to age 5 slots needed (*FCF Calculation)
\$717 average monthly cost of care (DCF Sandbox Data)	10,024 Ithaca School District’s defined zip code population

Core Team Planning Meeting

Throughout the winter of 2023, the Core Team, a group of community stakeholders interested in the supply and sustainability of child care met to discuss the child care shortage in Ithaca School District, and to develop strategies to increase the number of high-quality child care slots. Below are the primary topics addressed in the conversations and the goals developed to address the child care shortage.

Community Awareness

Workforce

Partnerships

After discussing these core topics, the focus was placed on primary areas of need, where current resources should be directed, and where additional resources are needed. The Core Team created the following goals to support the child care needs in the community.



Goals



SMART Goal:

Goal 1: Contact at least five area businesses to increase awareness of the child care need and request any donations, assets or services be provided to local daycares. Our goal is to receive an 80% response rate from businesses by June 1st, 2023.

Project Team Members: Audra Wisner, Kaylin Kalk, Bill Bartlett, Dan Lewsilig, Jenni Schrock

Objective of the Goal: This goal will increase awareness throughout the community, as well as promote partnerships for the growth of the child care industry in Richland County. The final objective will be to establish local business partnerships and gain resource support throughout the community.



SMART Goal:

Goal 2: To increase engagement in the early child care profession by reaching stated benchmarks by October 2023. Benchmarks include hiring a child care coordinator, offer providers professional development training, explore potential internship for students interested in the child care field.

Project Team Members: Shari Johnson, Jeni, Jason, Sheri, Tara, Steve, Julie Prouty, Brianna

Objective of the Goal: To increase child care workforce during and after the grant period to improve the quality of care and add educated providers interested in the child care profession. This will result in a more sustainable child care community that will offer diverse options for families.



SMART Goal:

Goal 3: By October 1st, 2023, a campaign to increase awareness of the benefits of early childhood education for positive child development will begin. An informative brochure/pamphlet will be distributed throughout the community to educate Richland County parents, business and community leaders on the importance of early intervention and education.

Project Team Members: Chelsea Wunnicke, Lyn, Steve, Deb

Objective of the Goal: By the end of April 2023, create a media and outreach plan that includes at least one community awareness event or media advertisement per month to reach both parents and community leaders. Connect community resources such as the school district, county offices, head start and all existing child care businesses.

Project Recommendations

Richland County, Wisconsin is a beautiful rural area with a history of community partnership to bring needed services to the area. The Core Team is a group of individuals that are invested in the child care landscape of their community. First Children's Finance recommends that the Core Team engage in the following activities:

1

Use the marketing strategy and activities from goals 2 and 3 to identify and educate community members interested in starting a child care business. Continuously promoting and raising awareness of the benefits of opening a child care business can increase the interest of unregulated providers and others interested in the field to pursue certification or regulation. In addition, efforts should be made to continue marketing efforts beyond the grant period, data shows a low number of providers and high demand for child care which will take time to address.

2

Continue to engage the community in this project – many hands make light work.

As noted in the application and throughout the Strategic Supply Plan Process, the Ithaca School District and surrounding area has amazing community members invested in helping children and families grow and succeed. As with so many community projects, this project has seen changes in team members. The success of the goals and addressing the on-going child care supply needs will depend on the Core Team continuing to meet and adapting to team changes.

3

Involve existing providers – they are part of the solution.

Ongoing support for all existing child care businesses in the area is important to keep them operating. Efforts should be made to ensure current child care providers have access to resources they need. Gather; this may be training, funding, in-kind donations, or supplies. Gather the information from providers and use the knowledge and resources of the Core Team to meet the child care needs in the community. Ongoing support can help maintain and grow current regulated programs along with encouraging others to enter the field.

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