



First Children's Finance

Dream Up! Grant Summary

Jackson County Child Care Network

Jackson 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

Jackson County, WI

The Jackson County Child Care Network 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 Marianne Torkelson, from Co-Op Credit Union, 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 the Jackson County Child Care Network in efforts to increase its supply of high-quality child care.

Community Information

Figure 1: Jackson County Defined Zip Codes | Community Application Process

Zip Codes	Cities
54611	Alma Center
54615	Black River Falls
54635	Hixton
54642	Taylor / Melrose
54643	Millston
54754	Merrilan

The Jackson County Child Care Network is based in Jackson County, Wisconsin. Jackson County is beautiful area in the Western 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 Jackson County application included the zip codes and corresponding communities listed in Figure 1 as their geographic region and defined community. This geographic region has approximately 18,000 residents and is the focus of this Strategic Supply Plan.

Core Team

The following people participated in the Core Team meetings to address the child care supply needs in Jackson County. The primary contact for this project is Core Team Lead, Marianne Torkelson, Chief Development Officer at Co-Op Credit Union.

Name	Organization Affiliation
CORE TEAM LEAD: Marianne Torkelson	Chief Development Officer Co-Op Credit Union
CORE TEAM MEMBERS:	
Jill Collins	Director of Business Services Black River Falls School District
Kristin Elvaker	Child Director Blair Taylor School District
Elaina Fatla	Owner Tiny Toes
Rob Stapel	Director of Human Resources Black River Falls Memorial Hospital
Micaela Conion-Bue	Youth Program Consultant & Director of Small Groups and Outreach Black River Falls Early Learning Center
Beau Stafford	Chief of Staff Office of Senator Jeff Smith
Julie Woodbury	Children WI Program Director
Tracy Fleck	Business Child Care Advocate Child Care Partnership
Renee Ernsting	Director Child Care Partnership
Jenn Stubbe	License Specialist Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
Hannah Prince	Business Administrator Black River Childcare
Kathy Rumsey	Public Health Nurse Jackson County Public Health Department
Paula Drew	Co-Director Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WECA)
Samantha McHugh-CCP	Pre-Licensor/ Certifier Jackson County
Lee Ann Mortenson	Program Director Children's Learning Village Montessori
Karla Gearing	Director University of Wisconsin Madison

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.

Jackson County provided demographic data in their initial application that highlighted the community's need for affordable child care solutions.

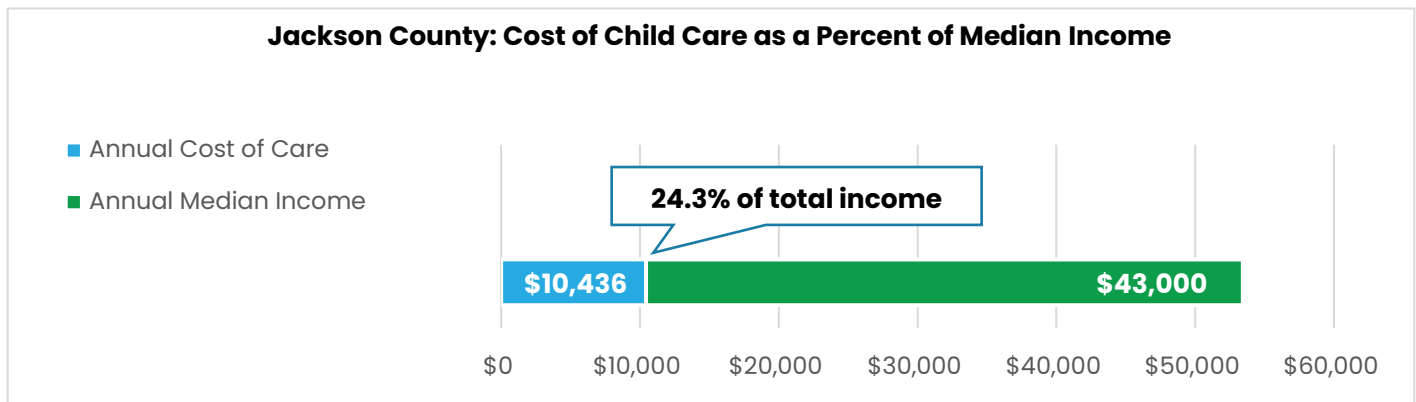
The reported demographics included:

- An estimated 2.5 million is lost annually due to lost work productivity related to lack of child care.
- 50% of people could not work to their full capacity due to lack of available child care.
- The total estimated slots needed in Jackson County are 1,140; currently there are 256 slots available.
- The average cost of child care in Jackson County is \$870.00.

*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 Jackson County compared to the annual cost of care. Figure 2 shows that the annual cost of care in Jackson County is \$10,436. 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.

Figure 2: Jackson County Cost of Care and Median Income | 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 Jackson County dated November 2022 shows a deficit of 462 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 Jackson County at only 145 children. Results showed multiple zip codes within the defined community with only one or two providers.

Figure 3: Jackson County 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
54611	Alma Center	0	1	1	26	51	25
54615	Black River Falls	1	2	0	109	373	264
54635	Hixton	0	0	2	5	41	36
54642	Taylor / Melrose	0	0	2	5	92	87
54643	Millston	0	0	0	0	0	0
54754	Merrillan	0	0	0	0	50	50
Total		1	3	5	145	607	462



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 Jackson County.

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.

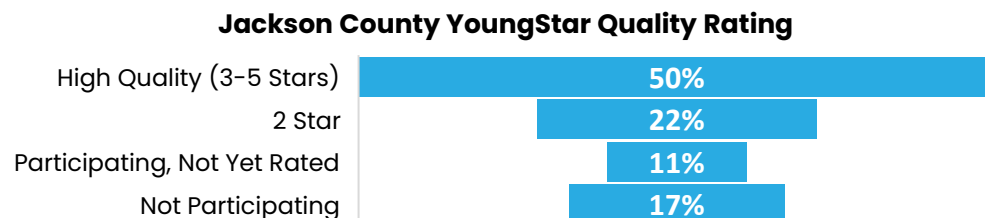
Out of Area Care

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: Jackson 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 Western Region of Wisconsin and shows 19% 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

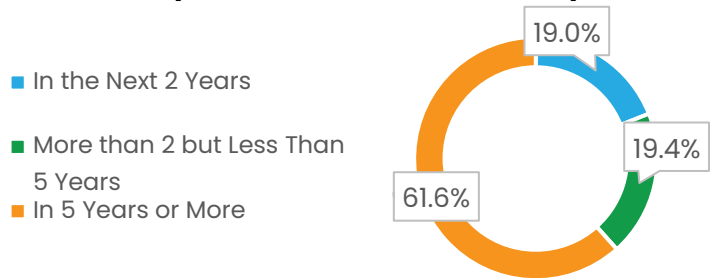


Figure 5: Survey of Center-Based Teachers | Institute for Research and Poverty

Primary Industries

Additionally, First Children’s Finance examined the top industries in Jackson 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 Jackson County, the top industries are educational and health care services, manufacturing and agriculture. Often, these industries call for second and third shift employees, with some seasonal work. Without sustainable child care options during these shifts, hiring new employees and retaining current employees in fields can be 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.

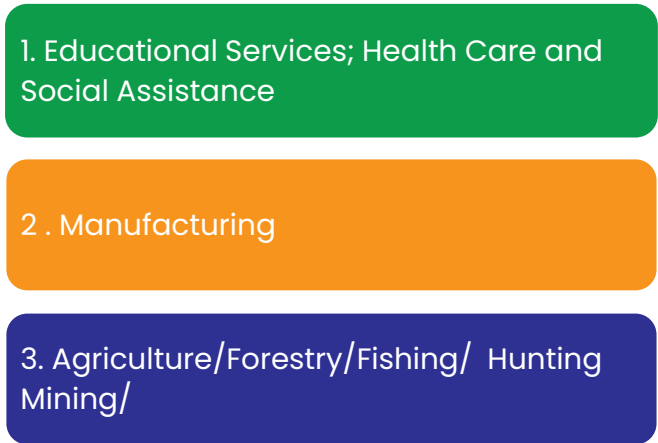


Figure 6: Top Industries in Jackson County | U.S. CENSUS 2021

Data Overview

5 Certified Family Child Care Programs (*DCF Licensing Information)	1 Licensed Family Child Care Programs (*DCF Licensing Information)
3 Licensed Group Child Care Programs (*DCF Licensing Information)	50% of providers have a 3-5 Star Rating (DCF Sandbox Data)
57% of zip codes are considered child care deserts (DCF Sandbox Data)	607 children under 5 with all parents in the workforce (*ACS 5 Year Estimates)
145 *current expected child care capacity (*FCF Calculation May 2022)	462 birth to age 5 slots needed (*FCF Calculation)
\$804 average monthly cost of care (DCF Sandbox Data)	21,145 Jackson County 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 Jackson County, 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.

Access to Care / Subsidies

Community Awareness

Compensation

Workforce

Child Care Funding

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:

Secure \$25,000 in community funding through the creation of Family Friendly Workplace certification by October 31, 2023.

Project Team Members: Chris Hardie, Marianne Torkelson, Jill Collins, Paula Drew, Ann Smetana, Lee Ann Mortenson, Karla Gearing, Sherri Torkelson, Jeff Eide, Jeff Arzt, Amanda Gunn

Objective of the Goal: This certification will shine a positive light on employers that support families and children. By employers providing family friendly policies and practices, as well as contributing funds to the Jackson County Child Care Network, the support for the child care industry will strengthen and increase in the Jackson County business community.



SMART Goal:

Host a fundraiser gala event for Jackson County community leaders, business owners and all child care providers to raise funds and community awareness around local child care needs by October 31, 2023.

Project Team Members: Jill Woodbury, Kathy Ramsey, Beth Bue, Micaela Conlon-Bue, Karla Gearing, Ann Smetana, Jordan Nortman, Carla Summer

Objective of the Goal: To increase awareness, support and funding available for the child care industry of Jackson County.



Goals (continued)



SMART Goal:

By October 31, 2023, a 'Community Campaign Program' will be created; an entire system of direct marketing, connecting with local foundations, donation tracking and fundraising will be constructed. Maintaining a strong, consistent base of support for the Jackson County Child Care Network will reinforce the importance of the local child care industry and professionals in the child care field.

Project Team Members: Marianne Torkelson, Julie Murray, Micaela Conlon-Bue, Jill Collins, Kristin Elvaker, Elaine Fatla

Objective of the Goal: To effectively enhance the opportunities for high-quality care in the Jackson County area, the 'Community Campaign Program' will ensure consistent financial support to the Jackson County Child Care Network.



SMART Goal:

Beginning May 2023, and to be continued on a quarterly basis, a 'Mobile Learning Lab' will be created and implemented throughout Jackson County. This goal will involve high school students interested in the child care industry connecting with existing providers and supplementing their daily curriculum.

Project Team Members: Marianne Torkelson, Sarah Halverson, Elaine Fatla, Kristin Elvaker, Brad Markhardt

Objective of the Goal: To enhance the interest of students interested in child care by allowing them to create curriculum, connect with local providers and provide for them firsthand insight into how effective curriculum can influence and potentially increase high-quality learning in all types of child care centers.



Project Recommendations

Jackson County Child Care Alliance has a committed Core Team of individuals that are heavily invested in the child care landscape of their community. First Children's Finance recommends that the Core Team engage in the following activities:

1

Run financials before committing to a project – look for a broad base of support.

As new and expansion child care projects are discussed, run financials and feasibility reports specific to child care programming. Having an accurate understanding of current enrollment numbers, staffing needs and tuition rates will help to create sustainability in the current child care climate.

2

Continue to engage the community and current child care programs in this project – many hands make light work.

The Jackson County Child Care Alliance has established some excellent partnerships with local resources. Continue to develop these relationships by providing outreach and education so that local resources can better understand how they can support the child care industry in Jackson County. Ongoing outreach to child care businesses and those people hoping to start a child care business will help the Core Team to better understand what the current needs are and will allow for the best use of the community's resources.

3

Inspire and support the existing providers in the community. While continuously engaging and attracting new members of the community to begin the process of opening a child care is critical, ongoing support to all types of existing child care in the area should be prioritized to retain the existing providers. Efforts should be made to ensure current child care providers continue to feel supported and have access to resources to stay in the field. Continue to involve providers not only in their recruitment but in their staff retention efforts to ensure they are able to keep those additional child care slots long term.

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