



First Children's Finance

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Dream Up! Grant Summary

Medford Area Public School District

Taylor 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

Medford Area Public Schools – Taylor County, WI

Medford Area Public Schools was selected to engage in community consultation around 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 Joseph Greget, Chairperson of Taylor County Early Childhood Council and Director of Student Services at Medford Area Public Schools, 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 Medford Area School’s Core Team in efforts to increase its supply of high-quality child care.

Community Information

Medford Area Public Schools, based in Taylor County, Wisconsin, is a quaint and close-knit community in the Northern 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 Medford Area Public Schools community 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 14,980 residents and is the focus of the Strategic Supply Plan.

Cities	Zip Codes	Population
Gilman	54433	1,870
Medford	54451	10,988
Rib Lake	54470	2,122

Figure 1: Medford Area Public Schools 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 Medford Area Public School's defined community. The primary contact for this project is Core Team Lead, Joseph Greget, Chairperson of Taylor County Early Childhood Council and Director of Student Services at Medford Area Public Schools.

Name	Organization Affiliation
CORE TEAM LEAD: Joseph Greget	Chairperson, Taylor County Early Childhood Council Director of Student Services Medford Area Public Schools
CORE TEAM MEMBERS:	
Amanda Lange	Director of Community Health & Foundation Aspirus Medford Hospital
Ashley McCarron	Parent & Third Grade Teacher Medford Area Elementary School
Walter Leipart	Superintendent Gilman Schools
Micki Krueger	Assistant Director Childcaring, Inc. Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)
Natasha Mallak	Parent & School Psychologist Medford Area Public Schools
Monica Halopka	Director Huey's Hideaway Children's Museum
Tammy Schreiber	Foster Care Coordinator Taylor County Human Services
Sara Bartelt	Associate Dean North Central Technical College
Courtney Scholl	Co-Director Stepping Stones
Scott Schultz	Director of Administrative Industry & Innovation Northwest Wisconsin
Jessica Mudgett	Director, Taylor County Housing Authority & Representative Rib Lake Community
Jina Lange	Vice President Sandbox Child Care & Retired Medford School teacher
Lydia Ekenstedt	Owner Peace Tree Child Care Management Services
Rochelle Crank-Woller	Assistant Principal Medford Area Elementary School & Stetsonville Elementary
Samantha Hines	Administrator Wausau Child Care
Sarah Agena	Business Child Care Advocate Childcaring, Inc.
Dan Miller	Principal Stetson Elementary
Kirsten Budimlija	Principal and Curriculum Coordinator Rib Lake School District
Michelle Hoffman	Owner June's Sweet Bees Child Care
Amanda Miskanis	Program Director Sandbox Child Care
Carrie Krauak	Executive Director Abiding Care Pregnancy Resource Center
Frank Vanbrocklin	Staff Minister Immanuel Lutheran
Samantha Gehrke	Community Coordinator Stepping Stones Inc.
Frank Quill	Victim Support Advocate Stepping Stones Inc.
Brad Gast	Dean of Workforce Training and Apprenticeship North Central Technical College

Community Insights

Research by the Core Team was conducted and provided as part of the application process. First Children's Finance provided additional 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.

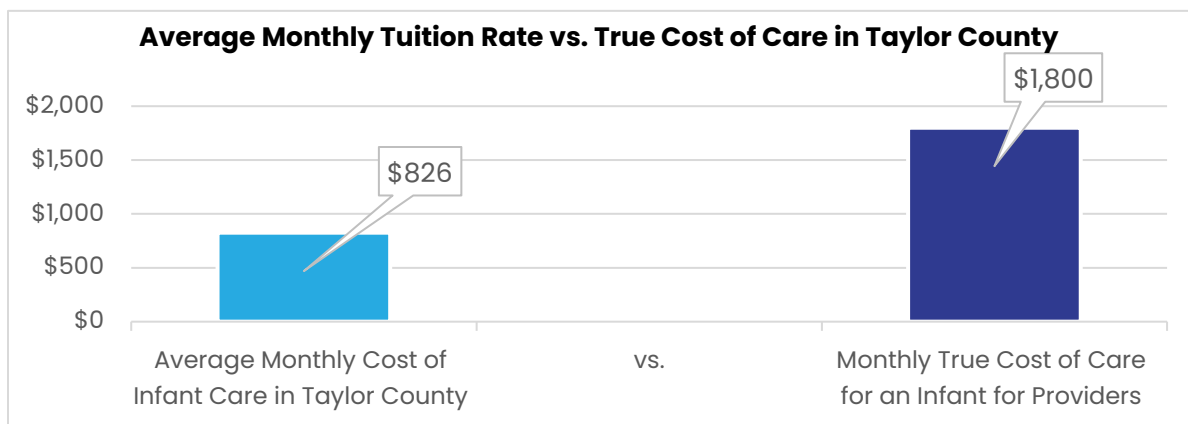
Medford Area Public Schools provided demographic data in their initial application that highlighted the community's need for affordable child care solutions.

The reported demographics included:

- 67% of zip codes in Taylor County are considered child care deserts
- Residents travel a daily average of 22.8 minutes to work
- Taylor County is ranked 70 out of 72 in child cares per capita and child care centers per square mile
- 1 child care per 6,781 people and 1 child care per 324 square miles.

**Excerpt from Dream Up! Application*

Figure 2: Average Monthly Tuition Rate vs. True Cost of Care in Taylor County | Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Sandbox



During the Strategic Supply Planning process, First Children's Finance shared with the Core Team the data regarding the average cost of child care in Taylor County compared to the 'true cost of care'. True cost of care is defined as the dollar value of all resources used to provide high-quality early childhood care and education. True cost is not just what a provider charges a family or receives in the state child care subsidy; rather, it is what it costs to provide high-quality early learning experiences and the value of personnel and non-personnel resources used to manage a program. Figure 2 shows that the average monthly cost of infant care in Taylor County is \$826; this is less than half of what has been designated as the 'true cost of care' at \$1,800 per month. Families simply cannot afford the true cost of care, leaving providers having to charge less than what it truly costs to provide high-quality care.

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 child care capacity in the community (see Figure 3). These data sources include the 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 Medford Area Public Schools dated August 2022, shows a deficit of 237 slots for children birth to 5 living in households where all available parents are in the workforce. First Children’s Finance found capacity of licensed and regulated full day year-round care in Medford Area Public School District at only 155 children. Results showed two out of the three zip codes within the defined community having zero child care slots available.

Figure 3: Medford Area Public Schools 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
54433	Gilman	0	0	0	0	47	47
54451	Medford	4	2	0	155	285	130
54470	Rib Lake	0	0	0	0	60	60
TOTAL		4	2	0	155	392	237



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 Medford Area Public Schools.

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.

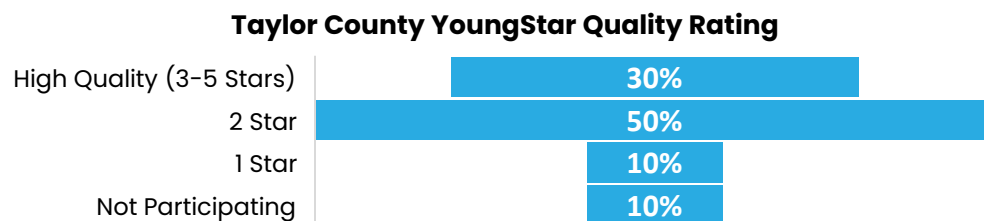
Out of Area Care

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: Taylor 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 Northern Region of Wisconsin and shows 34.5% 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

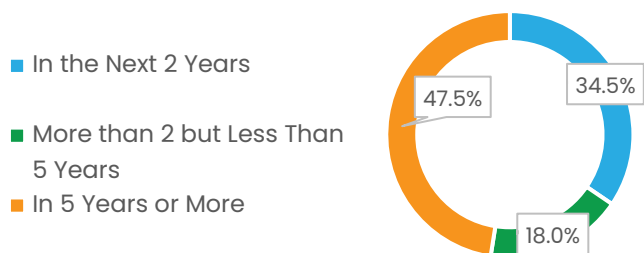


Figure 5: Survey of Center-Based Teachers | Institute for Research and Poverty

Primary Industries

Additionally, First Children’s Finance examined the top industries in the Taylor County using available census data. The top industries within a community can greatly impact child care needs based on when shift workers are needed, as well as beginning and end time of employee shifts. In Taylor County, all three top industries often call for second and third shift work hours. Without providers offering this service hiring new employees and retaining current employees in any of these three industries shown in Figure 6, 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. Manufacturing
2. Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance
3. Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting and Mining

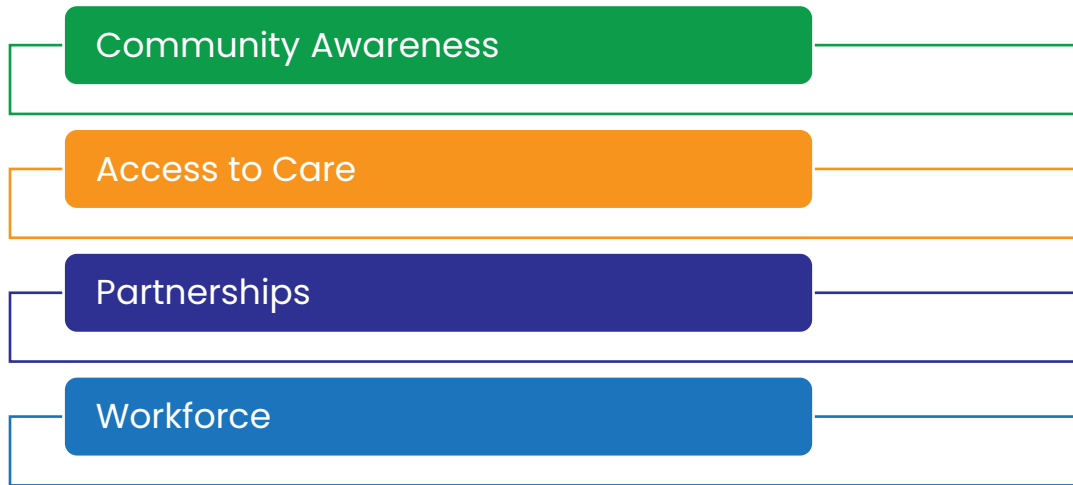
Figure 6: Top Industries in Taylor County | U.S. CENSUS 2021

Data Overview

0 Certified Family Child Care (*DCF Licensing Information)	4 Licensed Family Child Care (*DCF Licensing Information)
2 Licensed Group Child Care (*DCF Licensing Information)	30% of providers have a 3–5 star rating (DCF Sandbox Data)
67% of zip codes are considered child care deserts (DCF Sandbox Data)	392 children under 5 with all parents in the workforce (*ACS 5 Year Estimates)
155 *current expected child care capacity (*FCF Calculation August 2022)	237 birth to age 5 slots needed (*FCF Calculation)
\$826 average monthly cost of care (DCF Sandbox Data)	14,980 Medford Area Public School District 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 Medford Area Public Schools community, 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.



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 child care needs in the community.



Goals



SMART Goal:

Goal: Within the next six months, the Core Team will host multiple family/parental outreach events at schools and child care centers. This will include hosting a child development birth to 5 years expo and create a child care awareness campaign.

Project Team Members: Joseph Greget, Taylor County Early Childhood Education Council, Taylor County Drug Opposition Partners, Taylor County Literacy Council, Child care Agencies, Medford Area Public Schools.

Objective of the Goal: Create community awareness on the importance of child care, child development in the first 5 years, as well as provide support to families within the community to bring to light the challenges providers and families are currently facing within the child care sector.



SMART Goal:

Goal: By October 30, 2023, families and providers will be surveyed to identify child care workforce challenges within Taylor County. Advocacy and awareness campaigns will be created within the business community to explore partnerships.

Project Team Members: Taylor County Early Childhood Education Council, Taylor County Drug Opposition Partners, Taylor County Literacy Council, Child care Agencies, Medford Area Public Schools, Rib Lake Schools, Gilman School District.

Objective of the Goal: To further understand child care capacity and challenges for current providers. Advocate and educate the community on the impact of child care. Increase child care slots in Taylor County by expanding 2 current programs and expanding pre-k programs for Medford and Rib Lake Schools.



SMART Goal:

Goal: Develop and distribute provider survey to support current child care providers based on their identified needs by October 30th, 2023.

Project Team Members: Taylor County Early Childhood Education Council, Taylor County Drug Opposition Partners, Taylor County Literacy Council, Child care Agencies, Medford Area Public Schools, Rib Lake Schools, Gilman School District.

Objective of the Goal: To increase the support for and feeling of value for child care providers within the community.

Project Recommendations

Medford Area Public Schools located in Taylor County, Wisconsin. This community is a quaint area with a long history of community partnerships that bring needed services to the area. Medford Area Public Schools 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

Continue investments for the retention of the current child care workforce; consider investing time and resources into the workforce pipeline.

As shared continuously by Core Team members throughout Strategic Supply Plan meetings, the early childhood workforce is a concern. Both retaining and attracting new providers and staff is a challenge that many, if not all, programs in the community are facing. Utilization of the information learned and shared by providers from the survey will help to develop ways to invest and focus on a new workforce pipeline for the future. Starting at the high school level, and with 47.5% of the current workforce in the Northern Region planning on leaving the workforce within the next 5 years, investments in recruitment of new workforce should be addressed.

2

Continue to promote and encourage regulation within the community.

There are many benefits to regulated child care. Licensing rules and regulations for providers are developed for the health, safety and welfare of children receiving care. A few benefits of regulated care stem from providing providers opportunities to receive additional income through grants or quality initiative investments. Regulated providers can also provide a benefit for families by participating in the states tuition assistance program and accept subsidy payments through Wisconsin SHARES. This information can be utilized during planned outreach events, to encourage those in the community who may be providing unregulated care or who are interested in starting a child care to begin the process of obtaining licensure or certification.

3

Continue to involve existing providers – they are part of the solution.

Ongoing support to all types of existing child care in the area should be considered to retain the current providers. Efforts should be made to ensure current child care providers continue to feel supported and have access to resources they need to stay in the field. Expansion of 4-year-old kindergarten programs could impact surrounding providers, and potentially decrease enrollment from their programs in the areas where they are able to make the most income. Use this information and partner with community resources so all child care programs can be sustainable.

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