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ACTION  
RESULTS

# The Role of Community Foundations in Supporting Child Care:

LOCAL SOLUTIONS FOR CHILD CARE

Early Childhood Initiative

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## DISCLAIMER

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Access to high-quality child care helps working parents maintain employment, supports the healthy development of young children, and strengthens the economy. Although federal and state governments play a large role in supporting high-quality child care, solutions to child care issues also require local interventions. In BPC's Future of Working Families plan, addressing the needs of localities and communities is a priority for child care groups.

Community foundations are grantmaking public charities that focus their philanthropic efforts in a defined local geographic region. They play an important role in responding to the unique needs of an area and can mobilize local partnerships, funders, and resources to drive sustainable change. Community foundations enjoy a high level of trust because they have the best interest of the community at heart and know the most efficient ways to invest their money.

Engaging community foundations in the need for child care can have substantial impacts as they are more attuned to local concerns and can provide targeted solutions reflecting community preferences. Community foundations are well positioned to convene critical local partners, like leaders from businesses, philanthropy, public education and faith groups. These types of community-based groups can leverage different sources of funding, support capital campaigns, and help build the supply of child care providers.

Research shows that 31% of young children across 35 states lack access to formal child care settings.<sup>1</sup> The philanthropic sector can help address the clear need with local interventions to scale, stabilize, and expand child care options for families. In analyzing community foundations, we found several trends, summarized in the chart below, that make their work unique:



<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Needs assessments</b>	Evaluate the number of local child care slots to identify the supply gap of child care in a community. Often, community foundations use these findings to advocate for expanding care if there are not enough slots to meet the child care demand.
<b>Supply building</b>	Concentrate efforts on increasing the amount of child care slots in a community, often through certifying new providers.
<b>Parent surveys</b>	Survey parents to determine need and choice. Community foundations use these findings to inform solutions that parents are likely to use.
<b>Raise awareness</b>	Meet with business and community leaders to inform them on the child care crisis, often motivating them to help develop and implement solutions.
<b>Goal setting</b>	Understanding the local need and feasibility, develop realistic milestones for communities to hit in improving access to and the quality of child care. Craft strategies to help hit those goals.
<b>Create shared services models</b>	Mobilize their network of leaders and child care experts to implement a shared services model that encourages information and resource sharing and distribution among families and providers.
<b>Public-private partnerships</b>	Partner with public social service agencies to serve as the private arm of public funds. This increases the efficiency and expediency of fund distribution.
<b>Direct services</b>	Implement direct services, including programming for families and providers.
<b>Targeted support</b>	Identify smaller areas within a community that have the greatest need for financial and technical support. In this way, they can bring a lens of equity by focusing on historically marginalized groups.
<b>Coalition building</b>	Use their credibility to create broad-based coalitions of leaders across a variety of sectors.
<b>Advocacy</b>	Align advocacy efforts across different child care organizations and meet with local leaders to push for more child care support.
<b>Business engagement</b>	Meet with local business leaders to get their buy-in on supporting child care, often using a lens of economic development.

In this brief, BPC highlights the role of community foundations in improving the quality of and access to child care across the country. As these community foundations demonstrate, they are more closely connected to the families they serve and are uniquely positioned to help identify child care needs and develop workable solutions.

Below are examples of how community foundations have engaged in supporting child care.



## MARIN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION — NOVATO, CALIFORNIA

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Marin Community Foundation provides tailored grantmaking assistance to donors.<sup>2</sup> Marin Community Foundation's mission is to improve the human condition, embrace diversity, promote a humane and democratic society, and enhance communities through sustainable change. Marin Community Foundation partners with over 500 donors and distributes an average of \$150 million per year in grants – amounting to \$2 billion over the past 30 years.

In 2018, the foundation conducted a child care needs assessment of Marin City. The household median income in Marin City is \$38,984; yet for a family of four, child care costs an average of \$29,724 per year. In the needs assessment, 70% of parents reported that even though they wanted formal child care, their child was not enrolled in a child care program, likely due to the high cost. Eighty-two percent of parents indicated that having their child in a formal child care program would make it easier for them to work or go back to school.<sup>3</sup>

In Marin County, there are about 800 children on the waitlist for California's child care subsidy program. Marin Community Foundation invests in increasing the number of subsidized child care slots for low-income families – especially for employed single parents. The foundation connects child care programs with health and social services to create comprehensive supports for families. Marin Community Foundation funds the Marin Child Care Council – a nonprofit and Child Care Resource and Referral Program that partners with providers and parents to find funding opportunities and open child care slots.

Contact: <https://www.marincf.org/about/mcf-staff>





## **OREGON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION— PORTLAND, OREGON**

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Oregon Community Foundation focuses on increasing public and private investments in early childhood and programs that support families.<sup>4</sup> The Oregon Community Foundation prioritizes ensuring that every child, regardless of their circumstances, has access to the same life opportunities. To do so, Oregon Community Foundation has created a network of donors, community partners, nonprofits, and volunteers across the state.

In their strategic plan, Oregon Community Foundation reported focusing on the youngest and least advantaged Oregonians and their families. Oregon Community Foundation broadly promotes universal access to parenting education, reducing barriers to access early childhood programs, and raising awareness about Oregon's opportunity gap. A 2017 Tracking Oregon's Progress (TOP) Report written by Oregon Community Foundation highlights the state-specific opportunity gap data and challenges for Oregon's children.

In addition, Oregon Community Foundation invested \$500,000 to help increase access to child care across Oregon's South Coast.<sup>5</sup> This investment is part of a multi-year plan to establish an Early Learning Shared Services program which pools resources and reduces operating costs for small child care providers. This shared services model also helps child care businesses with their payroll, administrative tasks, and quality improvement efforts. The foundation also supported Social Ventures Partners Portland in developing the Oregon Child Care Provider Relief Guide advising child care providers on safety guidelines, improving mental health, and financial sustainability.

Contact: <https://oregoncf.org/about/our-people/staff/>



## **THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE—NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

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The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee facilitates donations to charitable organizations and nonprofits across 43 counties in Middle Tennessee and Kentucky.<sup>6</sup> The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee encourages innovative responses to the specific needs of communities.

The foundation leads Childcare Tennessee with the Tennessee Department of Human Services, or TDHS, to provide administrative and operational services to TDHS-licensed child care programs.<sup>7</sup> It is a child care provider network that consolidates information on early childhood education policies, forms, regulations, guidance, funding opportunities, and professional development workshops. Childcare Tennessee partners with vendors so providers can



get supply discounts on a variety of equipment for their programs. In 2019, Childcare Tennessee served 161,000 children in 2,300 programs and began administering support and enhancement grants to providers. During the pandemic, Childcare Tennessee distributed \$10 million in new assistance to licensed child care agencies impacted by COVID.

In addition, The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee created The Early Childhood Education Scholarship Initiative.<sup>8</sup> This program provides scholarships to children ages birth-4 years who come from low-income families and are at risk of entering kindergarten with educational or behavioral challenges. With these scholarships, children can attend high-quality early learning programs to develop a strong foundation and allow their parents to stay in the workforce.

Contact: <https://www.cfmt.org/about/team/>



## **FOREST COUNTY POTAWATOMI FOUNDATION—CRANDON, WISCONSIN**

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Forest County Potawatomi Foundation, a tribal community foundation, seeks to fight poverty, promote economic opportunity, strengthen communities, and grow responsible citizens.<sup>9</sup> The foundation is built upon the traditions and values of the Potawatomi tribe, including self-reliance and self-determination. As such, the foundation concentrates its efforts on helping people overcome economic challenges in areas with a high percentage of low-income families. Since its founding in 1999, the foundation has granted over \$30 million to charitable organizations in the Forest County and Greater Milwaukee areas.

Forest County Potawatomi Foundation administers the Forest County Potawatomi Child Care Program, which helps parents find, access, and enroll in child care so they can pursue educational or employment opportunities. The foundation also builds the supply of child care by certifying new home-based child care providers.

Forest County Potawatomi Foundation partners with other tribal departments to increase and improve child care programming for families and providers. This programming includes events on topics such as children's health and safety and grant opportunities. With the Wisconsin Inter-Tribal Early Education Child Care Council, Forest County Potawatomi Foundation plans a child care conference for all 11 tribes in Wisconsin to discuss how to address tribal child care gaps.<sup>10</sup>

Contact: <https://www.fcpotawatomi.com/government/foundation/contact-foundation/>





## THE DALLAS FOUNDATION – DALLAS, TEXAS

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Established in 1929, The Dallas Foundation is the oldest community foundation in Texas.<sup>11</sup> This foundation connects donors to their extensive network of nonprofits serving communities throughout North Texas. In 2006, The Dallas Foundation's Board of Governors designated quality early care and education as a core priority, and it has since focused on supporting nonprofits that foster educational and social-emotional development in early childhood.

One of these organizations is Early Matters Dallas, a broad-based coalition of business, civic, educational, philanthropic, and nonprofit organizations. This coalition raises awareness on the importance of quality early care and advocates for increased investments in early childhood due to the high return on investments and economic benefits. The long-term goal of Early Matters Dallas is to get 60% of Dallas County students reading on a college-ready pace in 3rd grade by the year 2025. In the short-term, Early Matters Dallas hopes to increase Pre-K enrollment overall, full-day 4-year old slots in Pre-K, and access to child care.



The Dallas Foundation is also one of the founders of the Zero-to-Five Funders Collaborative. The Zero-to-Five Funders Collaborative, established in 2006, now has over 34 member individuals and organizations. This collaborative promotes school readiness by age five in children from low-income neighborhoods.

Contact: <https://www.dallasfoundation.org/stafflisting.aspx>



## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER DUBUQUE – DUBUQUE, IOWA

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Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque supports initiatives focused on economic opportunity, academic achievement, equity, and inclusion.<sup>12</sup> Since 2002, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque has granted about \$54.6 million to over 270 endowed community-focused nonprofits.

In 2016, Project HOPE, an initiative of Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, conducted a child care needs assessment.<sup>13</sup> In this assessment, nearly half of parents reported that child care responsibilities led them to turn down a job or work fewer hours.<sup>14</sup> This needs assessment led Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque to become one of nine participant foundations in the Rural Economic Development Philanthropy Innovators Network, or REDPIN, to improve the quality of life in rural areas.<sup>15</sup>





In support of REDPIN's goals, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque will host child care councils composed of employers, child care providers, parents, and community organizations in six rural communities. These councils will assess the child care need, unify advocacy efforts to build a more effective child care system, and brainstorm solutions that best meet the unique needs of their community. To aid this work, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque will provide each council with needs assessment data and best practice models.

Contact: <https://www.dbqfoundation.org/about-us/staff>



## **SOUTHWEST INITIATIVE FOUNDATION – HUTCHINSON, MINNESOTA**

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Southwest Initiative Foundation strengthens southwest Minnesota by educating business and community leaders on local issues, connecting donors with community-based organizations, and investing in local businesses.<sup>16</sup> Since their establishment in 1986, this foundation has granted \$52.7 million in loans to 821 businesses; awarded \$36 million in grants to nonprofits, schools, and other community groups; and now manages 30 local community foundations.

Southwest Initiative Foundation cites access to child care as the fastest growing economic development and community issue in southwest Minnesota. To support access to affordable, high-quality child care, Southwest Initiative Foundation focuses on five areas: project investment and technical assistance, community planning, professional development, public policy, and public relations. Southwest Initiative Foundation invests directly in local programs, provides professional development and technical assistance to child care providers, and circulates information to community leaders on current child care issues. Their advocacy work centers on identifying funding gaps, aligning the legislative strategies of child care advocacy groups, and meeting with local policymakers who prioritize child care. These efforts have created or retained nearly 1,000 child care spots in the region.

Contact: <https://swifoundation.org/who-we-are/our-people/staff/>



## **YAKIMA VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION – YAKIMA, WASHINGTON**

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Yakima Valley Community Foundation is a philanthropic organization committed to creating an economically, physically, mentally, and educationally stronger community.<sup>17</sup> The Yakima Valley Community Foundation focuses on three main areas: quality education, health and well-being, and civic vitality. This foundation focuses on creating equitable access to opportunities for historically marginalized groups.

Yakima Valley Community Foundation financially sponsors the Investing in Children Coalition of South Central Washington, a collective of over 35 agencies working towards better access to high-quality early learning programs for all families. The Investing in Children Coalition advocates for stronger support for families with young children by speaking with and creating a network of community, business, service agency, and government leaders. The Coalition also analyzes needs assessment data to better understand the child care supply gap. The work of the Coalition in early learning has contributed to lifelong benefits, such as increased employment, school readiness, graduation rates, and college enrollment.

Contact: <http://www.yakimavalleycf.org/bAboutbtheFoundation/BoardandStaff.aspx#54654-staff>

## CONCLUSION

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Community foundations are uniquely positioned to understand the needs of the local communities they serve. Child care issues are nuanced, and there is no one solution that fits every community. In places with insufficient access to child care, community foundations are a valuable part of the child care puzzle. They can effectively collect and divert resources to increase the supply and quality of child care.

BPC mapped child care supply gap data in 35 states. Community foundations can use BPC's data to help drive local changes by connecting local donors with local investment opportunities and using their ties in the community to better understand the needs of local parents and child care businesses.

# Endnotes

- 1 <https://childcaregap.org/report.html>
- 2 <https://www.marincf.org/>
- 3 [https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/mcf-redesign-assets/pdfs/Needs-Assessment\\_final.pdf](https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/mcf-redesign-assets/pdfs/Needs-Assessment_final.pdf)
- 4 <https://oregoncf.org/>
- 5 <https://oregoncf.org/news/oregon-community-foundation-announces-500000-investment-to-improve-access-to-child-care-in-oregon-south-coast/>
- 6 <https://www.cfmt.org/>
- 7 <https://www.childcaretennessee.com/utility-pages/log-in/?redirectUrl=/>
- 8 <https://www.cfmt.org/community-leadership/community-initiative/early-childhood-education-scholarship-initiative/>
- 9 <https://www.fcpotawatomi.com/government/foundation/>
- 10 <https://www.fcpotawatomi.com/family-services/child-care/>
- 11 <https://www.dallasfoundation.org/>
- 12 <https://www.dbqfoundation.org/>
- 13 <https://www.dbqfoundation.org/initiatives/ProjectHOPE>
- 14 <https://www.dbqfoundation.org/story/community-foundation-explores-child-care-barrier-employment>
- 15 <http://www.aspencsg.org/rdp/>
- 16 <https://swifoundation.org/>
- 17 <https://www.yakimavalleycf.org/>



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