

Invest Hamilton County – Childcare Action and Investment Plan – Requests for Proposals

Summary

The Hamilton County Economic Development Corporation (HCEDC) (dba Invest Hamilton County) is seeking an experienced consultant and/or contractor to develop a county-wide *Childcare Action and Investment Plan*.

Background and Context

Hamilton County, IN is the fastest growing county in Indiana and one of the fastest growing in the Midwest. Three of our largest communities have collectively attracted approximately five billion dollars in economic investment that will occur over the next three years. By 2026 the population will be nearing 400,000 individuals and 200,000 jobs.

According to Early Learning Indiana only 22% of children in Hamilton County are served by high-quality care. Some parts of the county have multiple providers that are at capacity but also operate at very high cost, while more rural portions do not have access to any high-quality or even acceptable quality options. Employer education is a major barrier to benefits adoption. Throughout multiple consultations with businesses they misunderstand or do not view benefits like DCAPs/FSAs as a necessary benefit, nor do they fully comprehend the cost of care for their own employees. There is also a misconception that male-dominated industries do not need to be as focused on providing these benefits.

Overall, very few employers (0.2% or 27 total) in Hamilton County have more than 500 employees. According to DatabaseUSA, 82.3% of employer establishments in Hamilton County have less than 20 employees, most of whom do not have the capacity to apply for grants, coordinate with childcare providers and/or address some employee benefits gaps without significant turnkey-style education and resources.

Hamilton County is well below the top ranked counties in the state when scoring child-care accessibility. The median advertised salary for open roles in the past year was \$41.6k/year, and it is difficult for any single-earner household and many dual-income households to find and identify quality care. When engaging with experts in early learning it immediately becomes apparent as well that “access to childcare,” and “access to *quality* childcare” are two very different things in Hamilton County, with, according to Early Learning Indiana, only 22.1% of children served by high quality care. This gap is even wider for families on 2nd and/or 3rd shift.

Hamilton County’s growth means that the ability to support and attract workers is of paramount importance to local employers and the community. Local stakeholders have a vested interest in developing and sustaining real solutions to this issue but need a centralized action and investment plan to rally around to ensure gaps are truly addressed in a sustainable manner.

Invest Hamilton County received a grant from the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (IN FSSA) in January 2024. A key outcome of this funding was the development of a county wide *Childcare Action and Investment Plan*.

This RFP is intended to solicit proposals for the responsibilities of building that plan, as outlined below.

Hamilton County Childcare Action and Investment Plan

The *Childcare Community Action and Investment Plan* will be centered around childcare availability/benefits and the lack of accessible inventory within our local market, and identifying key infrastructural opportunities for ecosystem improvement, with attached investment amounts needed to build and sustain those improvements. The development of a comprehensive community action and investment plan will help facilitate future investments in the ecosystem, engage providers and employers with workforce development and K-12 education professionals, and help develop consensus among philanthropic, corporate, and civic leaders regarding funding priorities and coordinated action plans. This will facilitate hundreds of local businesses being able to engage in coordinated and sophisticated childcare solutions.

Outcomes will include:

- a comprehensive curation of gaps existing within the childcare provider ecosystem, and a workforce and wage availability analysis.
- Identified industries and employers within the County economy that see higher rates of childcare barriers.
- Gap analysis and investment planning document, including proposed investments and costs
- Guidelines and best practices for the establishment of a joint fund to address community-wide childcare priorities
- Establishment of a county-wide “Childcare Collaborative” that brings together civic, employer, philanthropic, education, and non-profit stakeholders.
- Process for connecting joint childcare provider priorities and challenges to county-wide audiences and transparently promoting the real state of availability and access within the county ecosystem.

Invest Hamilton County frequently manages labor market and workforce availability analysis and will handle wage and availability analysis internally, while coordinating with RFP vendor. IHC will also assist with managing logistics and expenses related to community meetings and the establishment of necessary infrastructure.

Proposed Project Timeline: (as proposed in grant, flexible to vendor process aside from Dec 2024 funding end-date)

- January-April 2023: Project Kick-Off and Research
 - o February 2024: Core partner meeting with 21st Century Talent Region Leadership Team, Chamber leaders and Invest Hamilton County
 - o March 2024: First community convening
 - o March-April 2024: Research, focus groups, employer and provider engagement.
 - o February 2024: Steering Committee established.
- April-August 2024: Action and Investment Plan Development and Stakeholder engagement
 - o April 2024: 1st Action planning and feedback session with community stakeholders
 - o June 2024: 2nd Action planning and feedback session with community stakeholders
 - o August 2024: 3rd Action planning and feedback session with community partners
- October 2024: Action and Investment Plan Publication and ongoing funding identified.

Proposal Contents and Evaluation

The ideal proposal will showcase a strong track record of working within the childcare ecosystem and developing an informed investment plan with diverse and dynamic stakeholders.

Budget and Timeline

Based on existing funding the initial contract will run through the end of December 2024 with no opportunity for extension. Initial project award is not a guarantee of future projects.

Contract (not to exceed): February 2024-December 2024: \$85,000

Timeline

RFP published: January 23rd, 2024

Proposal submission deadline: February 9, 2024 3pm

Proposal review: February 9-14, 2024

Interviews (if necessary): February 13-23, 2024

Notice of selection (no later than): February 28, 2024

All questions and final submissions should be emailed to the following by or before the submission deadline of February 9, 2024 at 3pm.

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