



# Caring for Our Future: A Regional Action Plan to Expand Child Care Access in Livingston and Washtenaw Counties

## Addressing a Key Barrier to Regional Economic Growth

Spring 2024





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# Executive Summary

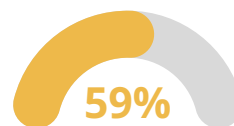
The Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition, composed of prospective and current child care providers, economic development professionals, policymakers, family representatives, and others, has been working to engage the community to better understand child care challenges facing the region and identify solutions.

Some of the key challenges identified through this work include:

## The Care Families Need Is Not Available

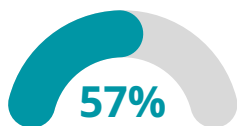
**1 to 8**

There is one licensed child care slot for every eight children under the age of five.



Approximately three out of five families surveyed said they did not have access to child care that meets their needs. This rate was higher for families making less than \$100,000 a year and nonwhite respondents.

## Child Care Is Unaffordable for Families



More than half of families surveyed reported cost as a barrier for finding care.

**1st in the state**

This region has the most expensive child care in the state, on average, with costs for center-based care for infants and toddlers being approximately \$14,000 a year.

## Providers Face Challenges Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Staff

**< \$12.50**

The average child care worker's wage in the region is less than \$12.50 an hour.

**\$39–\$42**

The hourly wage considered livable for a household with one adult and one child in Livingston and Washtenaw Counties—more than three times the average hourly rate for child care workers.

## Child Care Is Negatively Impacting Area Employers

**\$2.8 billion**

The economic impact of the lack of child care in Michigan.



A majority of employers surveyed reported the lack of adequate child care for their employees having a negative impact on their business.

Many of these are driven by root causes, such as **market failure and underinvestment**, a **challenging regulatory and business environment for providers**, and a **lack of community coordination and engagement**. The coalition, informed by their community engagement efforts, identified the following action areas and objectives:

### Promoting Equitable and Adequate Funding for Child Care to Encourage an Increase in Licensed Child Care Slots

- **Advocate for state-level reform related to child care funding**
- **Bring together local funding partners to support child care providers and families**

Market failure and underinvestment have resulted in an overreliance on family contributions to cover provider costs. However, despite the high rates being charged to families, relying on family contributions alone is not sufficient to adequately pay employees and be sustainable as a business or nonprofit. Immediate and long-term funding are needed to expand the number of available child care slots in the region.

### Advocating for Local Policies to Make It Easier for Providers to Open and Expand Programs

- **Advocate for local governments to adopt the coalition's regional action plan and recognize child care as a pressing economic crisis**
- **Advocate for local policy change related to zoning and development**

While working toward long-term structural change, certain short- and medium-term policy changes can promote a friendlier environment for child care providers. These policies will not only improve the current environment, but also better position the region for future investment.

### Providing Resources and Supports to Enable Child Care Providers to Thrive as Businesses

- **Develop a regional resource hub to support child care providers**
- **Connect providers with training institutions to address staff capacity issues**

Resources and partnerships can help providers address business-related challenges. Making these resources more accessible and tailored to child care providers can help current providers maintain or expand operations and help new providers establish new centers.

### Supporting the Child Care Workforce Through Expanded Training and Increased Resources

- **Increase visibility and public funding for area training programs to increase the number of child care workers**
- **Support expanded resources and partnerships to improve the salaries and benefits provided to child care workers**

Staffing shortages prevent potential child care providers from opening programs and current providers from operating at their full capacity. Increasing training resources, salaries, and benefits will increase satisfaction among current child care workers and encourage prospective workers to see the field as a viable career.

### Empowering Area Employers to Be Child Care Champions

- **Develop a certification to recognize area employers that are child care friendly**
- **Foster connections between local employers and child care providers**

Engaging employers is essential to approaching this issue as a critical economic development initiative. Empowering employers to support their employees will position the region as a leader in preventing employees from leaving the workforce due to not having child care that meets their needs.

### Fostering an Informed and Engaged Community That Is Ready to Take Action to Support the Child Care Field

- **Develop visionary shared language for increased and improved messaging and outreach**

Having policymakers, businesses, and community members understand the impact of child care—even if they have not personally had to interact with the child care system—is necessary to ensuring the coalition's advocacy efforts are successful.



## Child Care Needs in the Region

### Background and Context

In 2022, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced Regional Child Care Planning Grants — coordinated by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) — to accelerate community-level efforts to develop new partnerships and implement action plans to address the child care crisis by engaging economic development partners. Ann Arbor SPARK received a grant to lead this work for the Livingston and Washtenaw County region and partnered with Public Sector Consultants (PSC) to convene area businesses, child care providers, municipal partners, education partners, and families to form a regional coalition in spring 2023. Through the remainder of 2023, the group gathered data and had a series of focused conversations resulting in an action plan that, if implemented, can help improve the state of child care in the region.

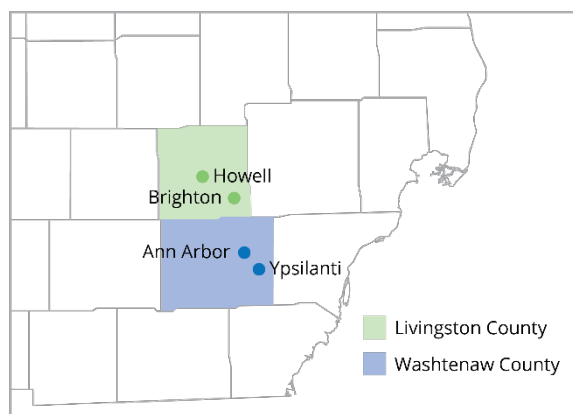


## Region

Livingston and Washtenaw Counties are located in southeast Michigan, to the west and northwest of the Metro Detroit area and are home to 562,537 people—including 74,369 children under the age of 13—according to the U.S. Census Bureau (Exhibit 1) (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.a).

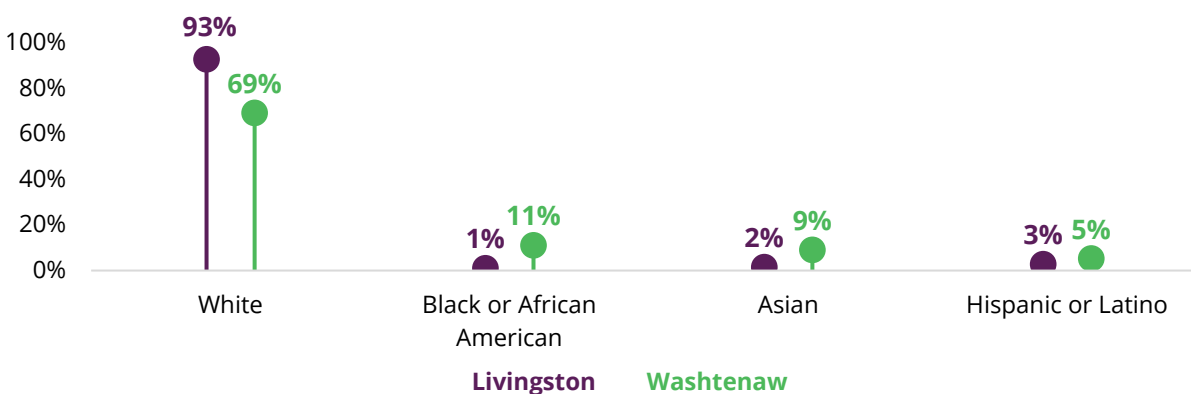
Livingston County has two major cities—Howell and Brighton — and many smaller cities, villages, and townships comprising a total population of 196,161 people. Livingston County is

predominantly white (94 percent) (Exhibit 2). It is estimated that 11,556 children five years old and under reside in Livingston County, as well as 15,598 children between the ages of six and 12 (Exhibit 3).



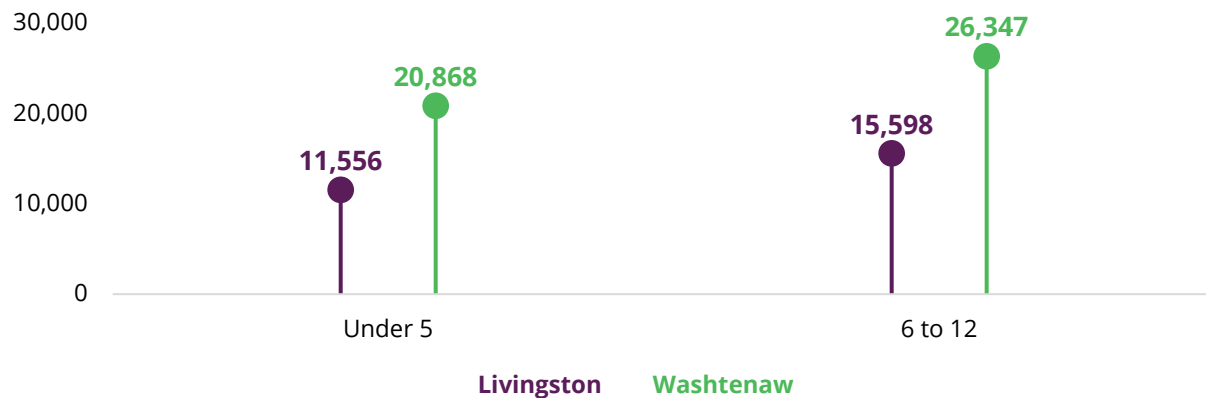
Washtenaw County includes major cities like Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, as well as smaller cities, villages, and townships that all comprise a total population of 366,376. Washtenaw County is also a majority white county (69 percent) but has more racial diversity than Livingston County, with larger populations of Black or African American residents (11 percent), Asian residents (9 percent), and Hispanic or Latino residents (5 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.b). The census estimates 20,868 children five years old and under and 26,347 children between the ages of six and 12 reside in Washtenaw County (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.c). Residents in both Livingston and Washtenaw Counties are more likely to have a bachelor's degree and higher incomes than the state average — Livingston County has the highest median household income in the state — with both counties having substantial healthcare, technology, manufacturing, and higher education sectors.

**EXHIBIT 2.** Racial Demographics of Livingston and Washtenaw Counties



Source: U.S. Census Bureau n.d.b.

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**EXHIBIT 3. Breakdown of the Ages of Children in Livingston and Washtenaw Counties**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau n.d.c.

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## Coalition

Ann Arbor SPARK invited prospective, new, and established child care providers, economic development professionals, policymakers, community philanthropic entities, workforce development representatives, child care experts, and family representatives to form the Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition. The coalition hoped to learn about region-specific barriers that are impacting parents and child care providers, in addition to barriers that exist across the entire state, and identify steps to reducing those barriers. This report details the coalition's data-collection process, summarizes findings, and presents the coalition's goals, objectives, and strategies to expand access to affordable, quality child care.

Organizations represented included:

- Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation
- Ann Arbor SPARK
- Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Regional Chamber
- Apple Playschools
- Bottles-N-Backpacks
- Child Care Network
- Community Day Care
- Great Start Collaborative of Livingston County
- Little Angels Preschool and Daycare
- Michigan Works! Southeast
- Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development
- Washtenaw County Racial Equity Office
- Washtenaw County Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative
- United Way for Southeastern Michigan

This coalition was led by a project leadership team that included Ann Arbor SPARK and Child Care Network. PSC was engaged to facilitate the coalition, collect and analyze primary and secondary data, and assist in the action-planning process. A roster of active members is included in Appendix A.

## Methodology

Guided by the coalition, PSC's team of consultants and data analysts collected primary and secondary data through a variety of methods to understand how the cost and availability of child care affect families, providers, and employers in the region. Each of these data-collection methods, their outcomes, and implications are detailed in the following sections.

### Data Collection

#### **Secondary Research**

PSC collected and analyzed publicly available data to create a baseline understanding of the region and its specific child care needs. This data included information on the demographics of families with children in the region, the number of child care providers across the two counties, the slots available for children, costs, hours, and quality. Additionally, PSC included data on staffing, such as educational requirements, salaries, and workforce shortage data, in the research analysis. PSC used sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, Great Start to Quality, Lightcast, and licensing data from the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA). A summary of this research is attached in Appendix B.

#### **Family Survey**

The coalition created and distributed an online survey via Qualtrics to gather input from families who need child care, whether they receive it or not. The survey, which is included in Appendix C, was active in June and July 2023. PSC created a social media and promotions toolkit, which the co-leads and members of the coalition used to recruit parents and caregivers in their respective networks to take the survey. The survey was developed to gather information about families' current child care circumstances, ideal child care arrangements, needs and barriers to finding child care that fits their needs, and the impact of unmet child care needs.

Upon the survey's close, PSC completed a data-cleaning process, which verified the authenticity of the responses based on factors such as IP addresses and location data. After the data cleaning, PSC recorded a total of 341 responses. This included 232 families in Washtenaw County and 96 families in Livingston County. A full summary of survey results is in Appendix D. These sample sizes are helpful for understanding needs, but are limited in their ability to represent the 50,000 households with children in the region. Future efforts could attempt to gather more representative data.

## **Provider Survey**

The coalition created and distributed another online survey via Qualtrics to gather input from child care staff and business owners. The survey, which is included in Appendix E, was active in July of 2023. PSC's outreach strategy leveraged the existing networks of coalition members and licensing data from the State of Michigan to reach out to all child care providers in the region. The survey was developed to gather information from child care owners and administrators about their current capacity for providing care, challenges facing their organizations (e.g., staff recruitment, funding), future plans, and needed supports. It also collected information from child care staff about their current circumstances, challenges facing them in their positions, and their future in the child care field.

After the same data-cleaning process as used for the family survey, PSC recorded a total of 232 responses. This included 150 child care staff and 123 child care owners or administrators. While the 123 owners or administrators represent a substantial portion of providers in the region, they do not represent all perspectives. Future work could expand outreach to all types of child care providers. A full summary of survey results is in Appendix F.

## **Employer Survey**

The coalition created and distributed a final online survey via Qualtrics to gather input from area employers. The survey, which is included in Appendix G, was active in September of 2023. PSC's outreach strategy for this survey also leveraged the existing networks of members of the coalition, including Ann Arbor SPARK, Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development, and chambers of commerce in the region. The survey was developed to gather information from employers about the perceived impact child care is having on their workers and their business, along with their willingness to adopt policies and practices to become a more child care-supportive workplace.

PSC again leveraged their process to clean data. This survey recorded a total of 51 responses. Because of this limited number, future work could focus on gathering data from more employers to better understand their needs. A full summary of survey results is in Appendix H.

## **Strategic Planning**

From September through December 2023, the coalition participated in a series of strategic planning activities at hybrid and virtual meetings. These sessions leveraged coalition expertise and the data collected throughout the earlier stages of the process to identify and build consensus around priority action areas. Following a series of meetings to develop the action areas, the coalition reconvened in a series of small group, focused conversations to discuss how to begin implementing the overarching plan.



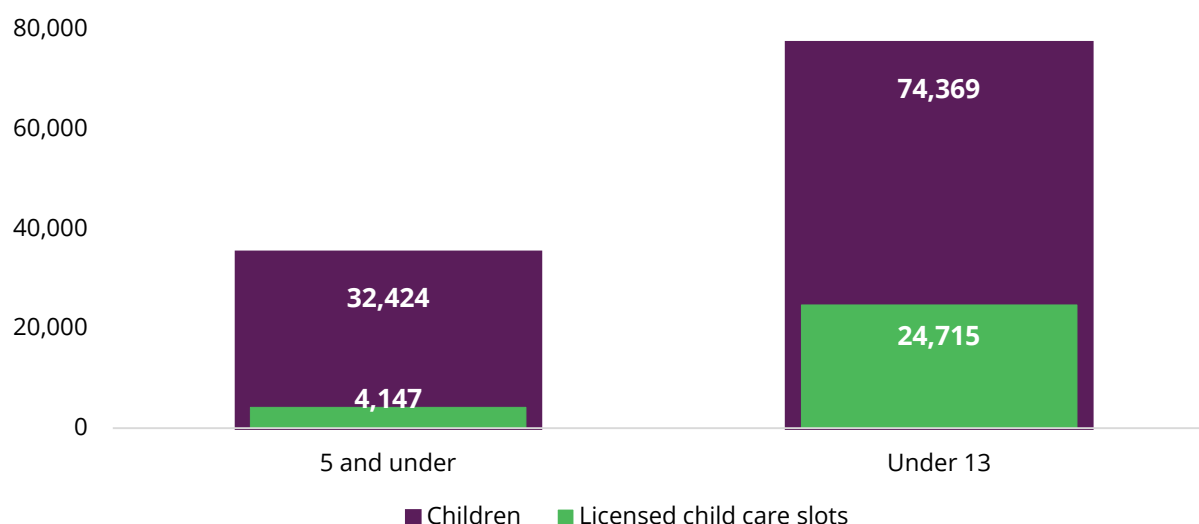
# Defining the Challenges and Impacts of Child Care

Access to child care is a worsening crisis across the state of Michigan and within the Livingston and Washtenaw County region and will continue to have broad impact on local families and the local economy. While full summaries of challenges are in the appendices, the most pressing challenges shown by primary and secondary data — availability, costs, staffing, and impact — are outlined in the following sections.

## The Care Families Need Is Not Available

There are not enough licensed child care slots in the region based on the current population to provide the type of care families need. There are 24,715 licensed child care slots across the two counties. That means there is only one licensed slot for every three children under the age of 13. This gap grows even wider for children five and under, as there are 32,424 children in the region, compared to only 4,147 licensed slots for that age group (Exhibit 4). This represents a ratio of almost eight children per licensed slot. Compared to the rest of the state, the ratios in this region are not as drastic as others, but still are considered to be child care deserts with three or more children for every licensed child care slot. There are some limitations to this data, as not every child in the region needs child care. However, another limitation is that not all licensed slots are currently available. Providers who completed the provider survey reported that they are only able to provide care for 78 percent of their slots. Nearly half of child care providers (45 percent) indicated they did not have enough staff to operate at full capacity.

**EXHIBIT 4.** Gap Between Number of Children and Number of Licensed Child Care Slots in the Livingston and Washtenaw County Region

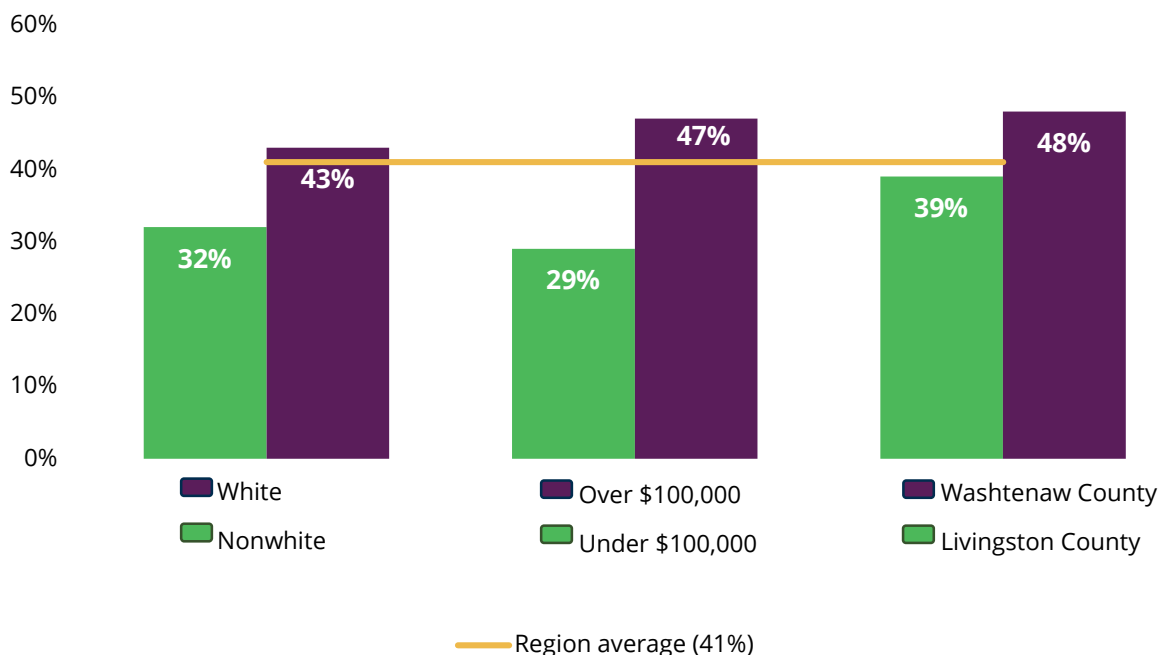


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau n.d.c.; Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs.

This regional ratio also does not reflect differences within the two counties. Cities in the region, such as Ann Arbor and Brighton, might have more open slots, but they also have a higher population density of children. Additionally, the families of those children must compete with people who live elsewhere but work in the cities and might want child care close to their place of employment. Another way to consider gaps within the region is looking at areas with high ratios of children to slots within a specific census tract. This shows that areas in and around Ypsilanti, Pinckney, and the townships north of Howell have particularly high ratios for toddlers. Pittsfield Township and southwest Livingston County join this list when looking at ratios for preschool students. Outside of Ann Arbor, Brighton, Pinckney, and Whitmore Lake, most areas across the two counties have a ratio of more than three school-age children per licensed slot (ages six to 11).

According to the parent and caregiver survey, 59 percent of families seeking care did not have child care that meets their needs. This number was slightly higher in Washtenaw County (61 percent) than in Livingston County (52 percent). There were also disparities by income and race. Families with a household income of less than \$100,000 a year were less likely to have care that meets their needs (29 percent) than families with a household income of more than \$100,000 a year (47 percent). Likewise, nonwhite respondents were less likely to have care that meets their needs (32 percent) than white respondents (43 percent) (Exhibit 5).

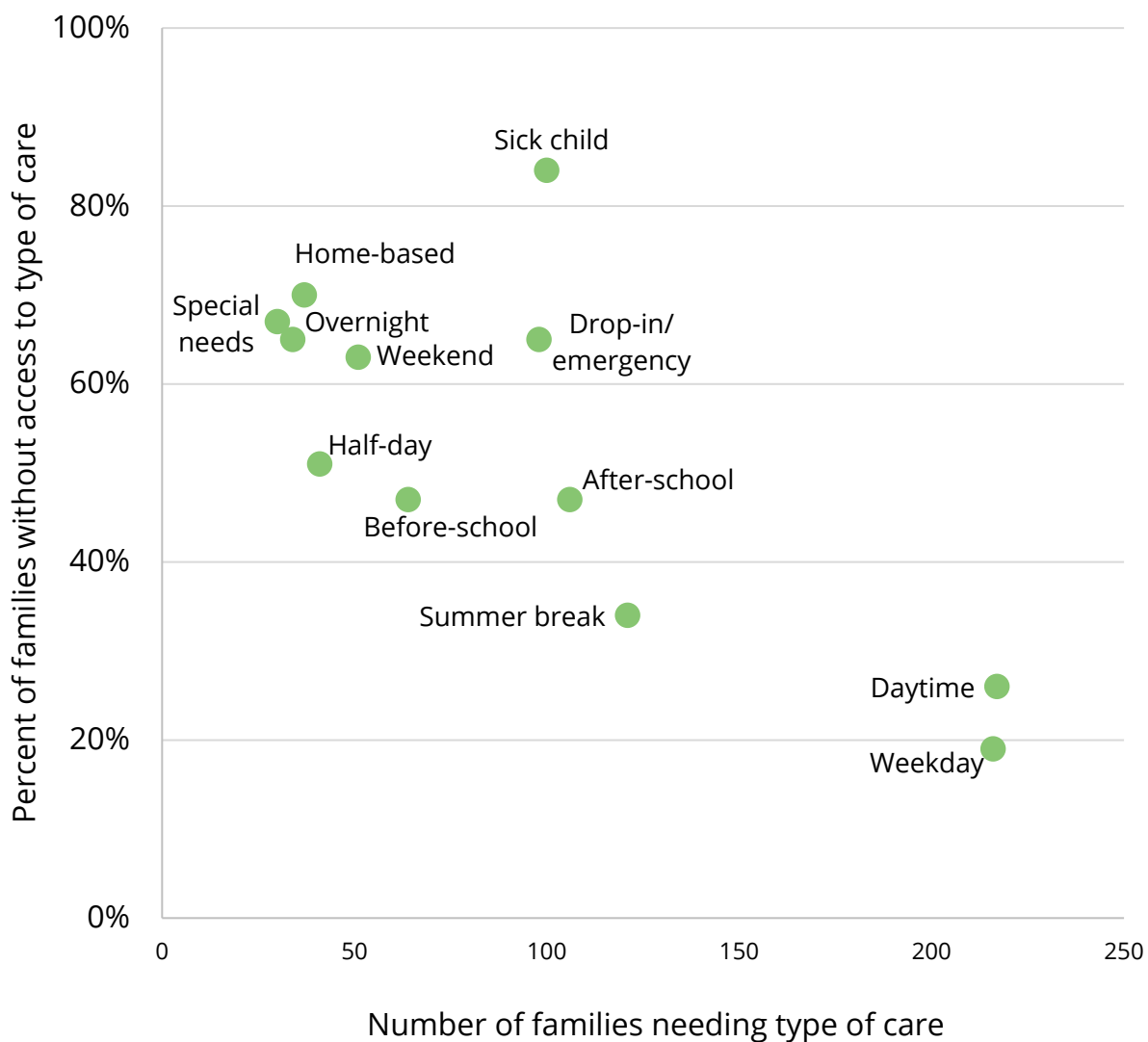
**EXHIBIT 5.** Disparities in Families Having Care That Meets Their Needs by Race, Income, and County



Sources: Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition Family Survey. N= 319.

Another factor that contributes to the lack of availability of child care in the region is that not all licensed slots are providing the types of care that families require. For example, over a third of families reported needing child care when their child is sick, 84 percent of whom reported not having access to this type of care. Other notable gaps in the types of care families reported needing but not having access to include drop-in or emergency care, care during overnight hours, weekend care, and after-school care (Exhibit 6).

**EXHIBIT 6.** Comparing Access to Care with Care Needs



Source: Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition Family Survey. N = 341.



Another type of care need that emerged through conversations with the coalition is care for children with special needs. Of the 341 families who completed the survey, only 30 reported needing special needs care. However, of those 30 families, 67 percent reported not having access to care. Discussions at the coalition highlighted that challenges related to child care providers having funds to adequately pay their staff are exacerbated for providing care to children with special needs, often making it financially unfeasible to provide care to them.

"As a child care provider, we are committed to offering inclusive care to as many children as possible, including those with special needs who have the same right to access care as any other child. However, the significant financial challenges we face in adequately compensating our classroom teachers—let alone staff able to offer individualized care—makes it extremely difficult to provide the level of support some children need to be safe, happy, and successful in our program." – Etta Heisler, Executive Director, Apple Playschools

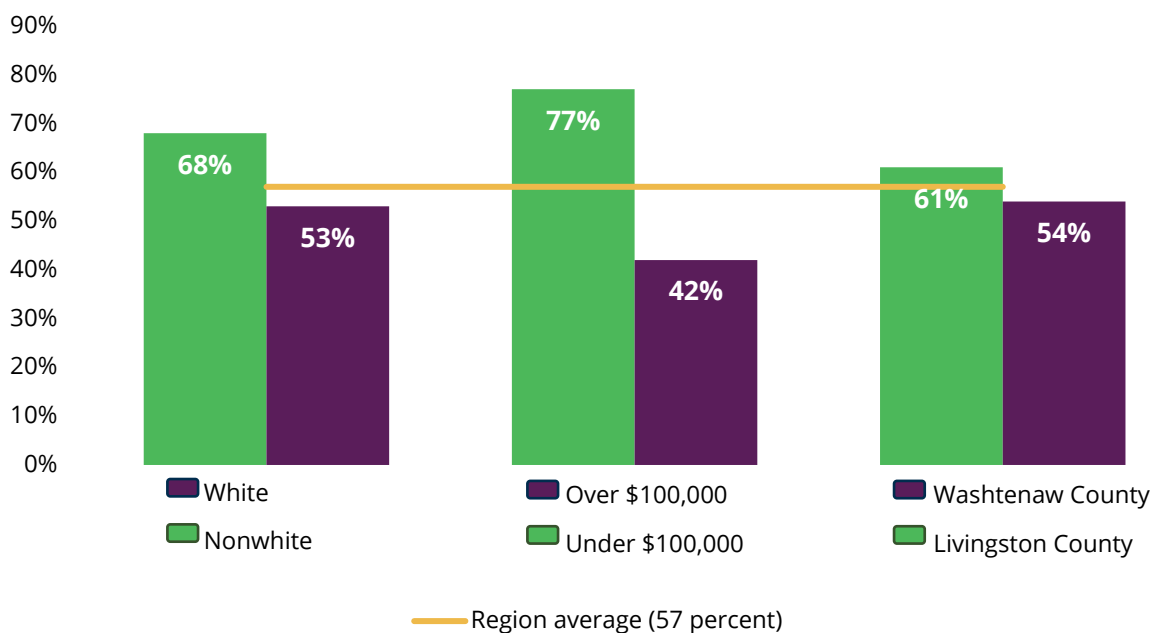


## Child Care Is Unaffordable for Families

Family survey respondents reported that the number one barrier to accessing care was cost (57 percent). This number was even higher among families in Livingston County (61 percent), families making less than \$100,000 as a household (77 percent), and nonwhite families (68 percent) (Exhibit 7). Factoring in the high cost of living in Livingston and Washtenaw Counties and that families often need to pay for child care for more than one child, the cost of care is extremely prohibitive for families. The result is that families, particularly families who make near or below the median area household income, must consider sacrificing their current or prospective employment to take care of their children because they cannot afford the cost of care.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the average cost of home-based child care is over \$9,000 per year for children of all ages in the region (U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau n.d.). For center-based child care, the cost for infants and toddlers is almost \$14,000 a year, and only slightly lower for preschool-age (\$12,000) and school-age children (\$11,000). These regional costs equate to the most expensive child care in the state.

**Exhibit 7.** Percent of Families Identifying Cost as a Barrier for Finding Care



Source: Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition Family Survey. N = 338.

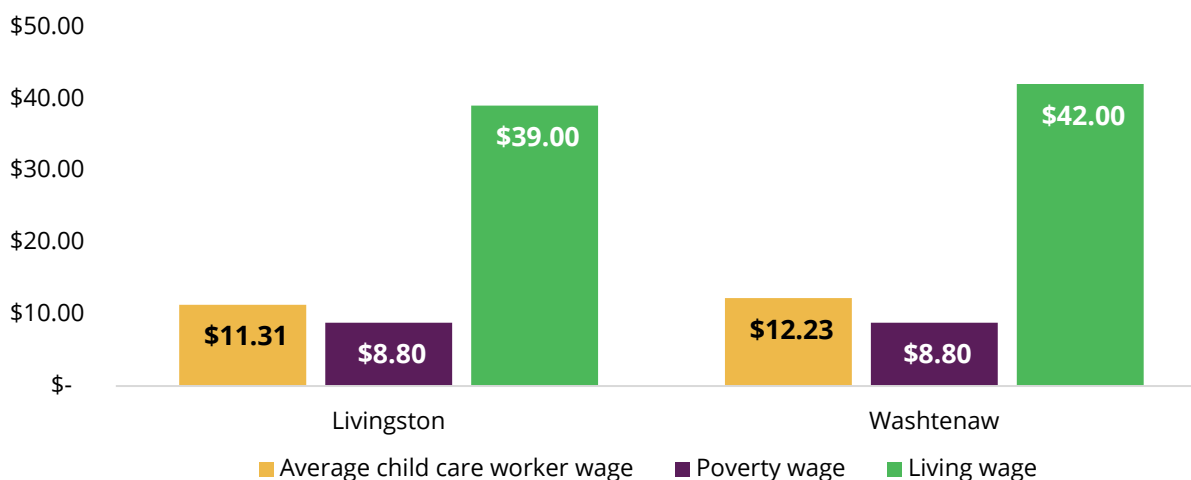
## Providers Face Challenges Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Staff

As previously mentioned, child care owners and administrators identified staffing shortages as the number one challenge related to enrollment and capacity. They also reported that support for staff recruitment, retention, and training were all needed to help providers succeed as businesses.

Owners and administrators also identified the need for additional staff as the top barrier that prevents them from expanding the number of slots for which they provide care. Staffing is likely a top concern due to the estimated 17 percent shortage in the number of child care workers in the region to staff the number of licensed slots, let alone the number of slots needed to adequately provide care for all families in the region. According to the provider survey, this situation could worsen soon, with over a quarter of child care workers surveyed reporting that they are considering leaving the field in the next year.

The top two factors that could lead to workers leaving the field were wages and burnout. About 71 percent of child care workers reported often or sometimes struggling to make ends meet, which may not be surprising considering that the median hourly wage for child care workers in the region is less than \$12 an hour. This wage barely keeps workers above the federal poverty line as an individual, let alone if they have multiple members in their household, and is less than a third of what is estimated as a living wage in the two counties based on cost-of-living estimates for a household with one adult and one child (Exhibit 8). Over 30 percent of workers surveyed indicated often or always working more hours than they are scheduled to work, which would be exacerbated by a staffing shortage increase.

**EXHIBIT 8.** Child Care Worker Hourly Wages



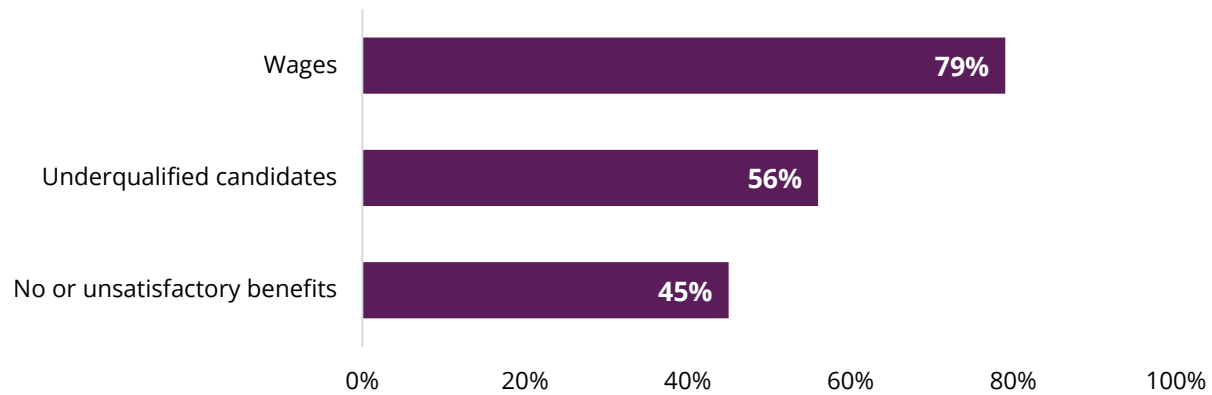
Sources: Lightcast 2022. Glasmeier 2024a. Glasmeier 2024b.

Note: Living wage is calculated based on a household with one adult and one child.

Owners and administrators surveyed overwhelmingly agreed with the statements “I am worried about staffing recruitment” and “I am concerned about retaining the employees I do have.” They cited low wages, underqualified candidates, and unsatisfactory benefits as a key challenge for recruitment (Exhibit 9). Wages and benefits were also listed as retention challenges, as was burnout (Exhibit 10).

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**EXHIBIT 9.** Recruitment Challenges Reported by Child Care Providers

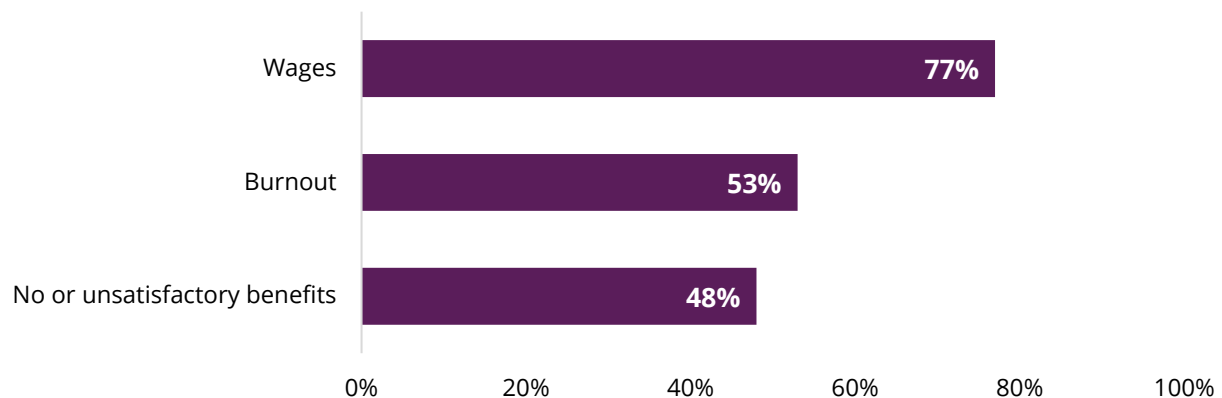


Source: Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition Child Care Provider Survey. N = 121.

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**EXHIBIT 10.** Retention Challenges Reported by Child Care Providers



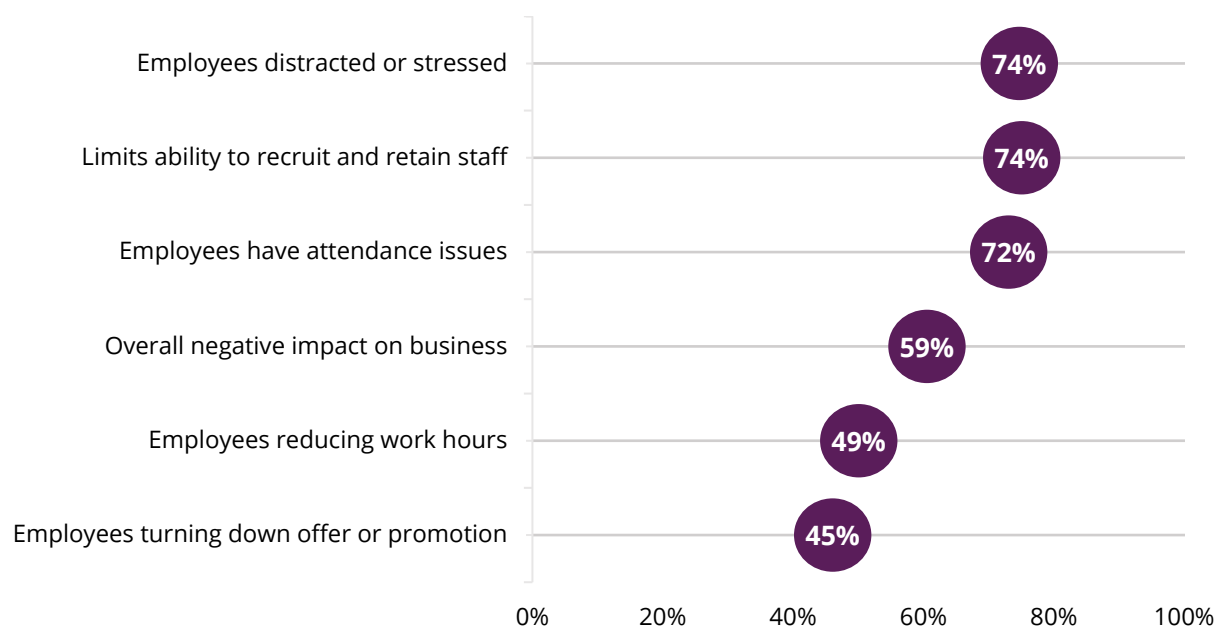
Source: Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition Child Care Provider Survey. N = 118.

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## Child Care Is Negatively Impacting Area Employers

Fifty-nine percent of employers surveyed reported that child care issues negatively impact their business. Nearly three-quarters of employers indicated that lack of child care limited their ability to recruit and retain staff to varying degrees. Nearly three-quarters of employers also said their employees either frequently or occasionally were distracted, stressed, or worried at work as a result of having a child care issue, and 72 percent said employees frequently or occasionally missed work, arrived late, or left early due to problems with child care. Nearly half said their employees frequently or occasionally reduced regular work hours or changed from full- to part-time, and 45 percent said employees frequently or occasionally turned down a job offer, promotion, reassignment, or further education or training as the result of a child care issue (Exhibit 11).

**EXHIBIT 11.** Percentage of Area Employers Reporting Business Challenges Due to Child Care



Source: Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition Child Care Employer Survey. N = 51.





This data was also reflected in family survey responses. Eighty-five percent of respondents reported employment-related troubles due to not having child care that meets their needs. The most frequently reported challenges were job attendance (65 percent) and productivity (54 percent). A contingent of families (9 percent) reported needing to resign due to child care needs.

### Two recent reports...

...estimate that Michigan loses \$3 billion annually because parents are struggling to find care. (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation 2023)

...found that for every \$1 employers spend on child care benefits, they saw a net gain of between \$0.90 and \$4.50 through reduced absenteeism, less lateness, and lower rates of attrition (Boston Consulting Group and Moms F1rst 2024).

# Framing the Root Causes of the Problem

The previous section details challenges and impacts identified through the coalition's primary and secondary data collection. These findings stem from a series of root causes, including market failure and underinvestment, regulatory burden and lack of business support resources, and a lack of community coordination and engagement.

## Market Failure and Underinvestment

Families spend so much on child care, yet child care centers are struggling to stay open, and child care workers make a near poverty wage with little to no employment benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement savings plans). Child care provision is labor intensive, requiring a low teacher-to-child ratio to ensure quality and safety. Child care also has high operational costs to keep facilities in good condition and allow for time to support staff and families. As providers are faced with increasing costs of labor, they increase the costs of care that are passed to families, thus making child care unaffordable for many families that need care the most. Further, slim profit margins make the capital costs of expansion or opening a new center financially unfeasible for most providers.

Public investment by the state or federal government, potentially supported by investment of other funding organizations, is desperately needed to address the market failures driving this untenable situation. Recent investments in scholarships for families and to provide additional operating funding to providers have shown success at limiting some of the challenges and impacts related to accessing child care. However, those short-term solutions do not address the root causes of this issue. Long-term, equitable, and adequate child care funding that accounts for the true cost of child care is necessary to address market failures. Failing to do so will continue to put providers trying to pay their staff what they deserve, and the cost families are being asked to pay, at odds.

## Challenging Regulatory and Business Environment

Several coalition members expressed that limited understanding of how to navigate state licensing regulations, local zoning ordinances, and the challenges of running a business on a tight margin is a key barrier to establishing new and expanding existing child care centers. At least 20 child care owners or administrators who responded to the survey reported needing assistance with beginning or advancing Great Start to Quality recognition levels (which is tied to how much funding a provider receives), business management, licensing, cash-flow challenges related to accessing state and federal dollars, and understanding municipal policies. While many business support services are available through various entities locally and at the state level, most are not tailored to child care services. Further, awareness of these services is low and many providers do not have the time or funding needed to access them.

Examples of this root cause were present throughout the coalition meetings. Members highlighted several concerns related to local zoning ordinances, commonly citing the complicated requirements and the intimidation that accompanies approaching municipal leaders without a clear understanding of the ordinance. A child care provider spoke of challenges supporting families who received a subsidy from the state, saying they had not received that funding from the state for several months. This resulted in them effectively providing care for free because they did not want to turn the family away.

Together, this makes child care a type of enterprise with low margins and high risk. With these low margins, to be profitable child care businesses must operate on a large scale. However, most providers are small businesses and due to the high level of risk, they do not have the investors or shared capital backing necessary to expand and grow to that larger scale.

For child care providers to be able to thrive as businesses, regulatory burdens must be reduced or made easier to navigate through the provision of tailored business development support. Further, the organization and communication of existing resources and support would address the number one barrier that providers reported keeping them from doing so: lack of awareness.

## Lack of Community Coordination and Engagement

At the first coalition meeting, members were asked to identify what success would look like for the coalition over the next 12 months. After collecting answers, members conducted a vote to prioritize the envisioned outcomes; the item that received more votes than any other was the phrase “people who don’t care about child care, caring about child care.” Many community members, businesses, and organizations do not understand the downstream impacts of families not having their child care needs met, such as reduced worker productivity for local employers or having employees leave the workforce altogether. The lack of community coordination around this issue and the isolation of those impacted by it have made it hard to address the aforementioned challenges. Child care access often ends up being a secondary or tertiary priority of local and state policymakers, economic development officials, and the private sector despite its interconnection with so many other facets of community well-being. The result of this under prioritization is the continued exacerbation of these issues.

**Those who need child care typically only need that service for a certain period in their lives, there are large swaths of the community that do not realize how pressing the need is for quality and affordable child care.**

# Developing Key Action Areas

As described in the methodology section, from September through December 2023, the coalition participated in a series of strategic planning activities at hybrid and virtual meetings. These sessions leveraged coalition expertise and the data collected throughout the earlier stages of the process to identify and build consensus around priority action areas. Following a series of meetings to develop the action areas, the coalition reconvened in a series of small group, focused conversations to discuss how to begin implementing the overarching plan.

The following section details the results of these planning conversations. All action areas are informed by the following principles.

**Equity:** Disparities exist in child care access. Families with lower incomes, people living in areas of the Livingston and Washtenaw County region that are considered child care deserts, and nonwhite families are all more likely to face challenges finding affordable care. While everyone is affected by child care, and all actions included in this plan attempt to improve child care access for everyone in the community, understanding that some segments are particularly impacted currently can inform how limited resources can be leveraged most effectively in the short term.

**Accessibility:** Not every family has the same child care needs. Whether it's families with parents or guardians who work irregular schedules or those who have children with special needs, families with diverse needs must not be forgotten when making investments and policy change. Funding that results in an increase in child care slots only offered during the traditional work day does not help a parent who needs child care while they work the night shift. Policy changes that do not consider the extra care and coordination with partners who specialize in working with children with special needs will further isolate and alienate some of the members of this community most in need of support. Weaving accessibility into these actions is critical for the outcomes from these action areas to be felt by all area families.





## Promoting Equitable and Adequate Funding to Encourage an Increase in Licensed Child Care Slots

### Root Cause Addressed

Market failure and underinvestment

### Challenges Addressed

- Unaffordable child care
- Challenges recruiting and retaining staff

### Rationale

From day one, the coalition discussed market failure and underinvestment as a leading cause to the community challenges of unaffordable child care and providers' difficulties recruiting and retaining staff, resulting in a dearth of child care slots. When analyzing strategies to address these challenges, the coalition determined that promoting equitable and adequate funding for child care providers would lead to an increase in licensed slots. The group aligned in identifying this as a high-priority action area, one that all members are ready to launch and support and the effects of which will reverberate to address many of the challenges highlighted in this report. Given Child Care Network's experience working with statewide advocacy groups and the existing network of local funders who have shown willingness to support early childhood education programming, the coalition felt the region is ready to launch these efforts soon.

### Community Objectives

1. Advocate for state-level reform related to child care funding
2. Bring together local funding partners to support child care providers and families

# Advocate for State-level Reform Related to Child Care Funding

*Priority: High | Time frame: Ongoing*

## Description

Market failure and underinvestment has directly caused most of the challenges and impacts outlined in this report. A key step to addressing this root cause is advocating for more public investment in child care.

## Key Parties

- Child Care Network (lead)
- Region's state-level elected representatives
- Child care providers
- Great Start Readiness Program
- Family coalitions
- General public

## Potential Activities

- Continue to develop and refine the list of advocacy priorities listed below
- Identify opportunities to engage policymakers, such as Child Care Network's existing public policy program, and work to bolster the impact of those opportunities through promotion, outreach, and engagement of interested parties
- Support ECIC's and other statewide policy efforts related to increasing public funding for child care

## Supports Needed

While local efforts exist to communicate with area policymakers, a coordinated statewide effort is needed to ensure all state-level policymakers are educated and engaged on this issue. To that end, this coalition requests that ECIC develop consistent advocacy materials that support the following priorities and provide cohesive messaging across all of the state's regions to increase impact of advocacy efforts.

## Advocacy Priorities

- Increasing overall investment to support child care
- Expanding the eligible uses of public dollars, including who can use that money and how funding can be used to support the providers as a business, workers seeking more livable wages, and families in need of financial assistance
- Reforming the current definition of the cost of care to capture the operational and organizational expenses of providing care more accurately
- Prioritizing funding that addresses current geographic gaps or gaps in types of care provided (e.g., overnight care, weekend care)
- Reforming the funding distribution through Great Start to Quality to ensure equitable disbursement of dollars to providers of different sizes and ratings
- Expanding successful programming that reduces costs for families, such as Tri-Share or the Child Development and Care program
- Streamlining reporting requirements tied to state funding sources

## Key Considerations

The governor and legislature are actively working to develop a state budget for fiscal year 2025. As the current governor, who is midway through her final term, has expressed support for previous public investment in child care, opportunities for advocating for state funding opportunities could be time sensitive.



## Tracking Progress

### *Outputs*

- The number of policymakers educated and informed on the need for increased public investment in child care
- The number of advocacy events or efforts supported
- The total allocation of the State of Michigan budget going to support child care

### *Outcomes*

- Increase in the number of licensed slots in the region
- Increase in the sustainability of child care providers by reducing the number of owners concerned with keeping their organization operational
- Reduction in the economic burden on families by decreasing the cost of child care charged to families
- Reduction in the disparities in having child care that meets the needs of families between different income levels, racial and ethnic groups, and location within the region



# Bring Together Local Funding Partners to Support Child Care Providers and Families

*Priority: Medium-high | Time frame: Ongoing*

## Description

While achieving adequate and equitable funding requires state reform, there are a variety of funders in the Livingston and Washtenaw County region that can help support child care providers and families seeking child care immediately. By coordinating efforts, local funders can make a substantial impact.

## Key Parties

- Child Care Network (lead)
- Community and private foundations
- United Way for Southeastern Michigan
- Michigan Works! Southeast
- County governments
- Municipal governments

## Potential Activities

- Develop a list of private and public funders currently supporting child care providers, scholarships, and training programs in the region
- Support local funders in partnering with area experts to understand current funding gaps and learn how future funding rounds can most effectively support child care in the region

## Supports Needed

Given the local focus of this work, the only statewide support needed at this time is the sharing of best practices for other regions that successfully foster effective coordination among different funders that build upon the examples below.

## Examples of What Local Funders Can Do

Local funders can connect with Child Care Network to learn about what types of funding are needed in their communities, including:

- Contributing to child care scholarship programs that make care more affordable for families
- Supporting the creation of new child care centers or expansion of existing centers through capital investments
- Supporting local child care development and training programs
- Prioritizing investments that address geographic gaps or gaps in types of care provided (e.g., overnight care, weekend care, special needs care)
- Participating in statewide discussions related to coordinated funding efforts on a larger scale

## Key Considerations

Coordination is key. Investing only in scholarships, while great at making care affordable for families, does not address the significant gaps in the number of slots available; that can only be increased through capital investments. Understanding what funders are currently supporting is critical to informing how funders new to the space or looking to expand their investment can best leverage their resources.

## Tracking Progress

### *Outputs*

- The number of local funders educated and informed on the need for increased investment in child care
- The total number and amount of funding opportunities that are available to child care providers by local governments, area foundations, and other potential funders

### *Outcomes*

- Increase in the number of licensed slots in the region
- Increase in the sustainability of child care providers by reducing the number of owners concerned with keeping their organization operational
- Reduction in the economic burden on families by decreasing the cost of child care charged to families
- Reduction in the disparities in having child care that meets the needs of families between different income levels, racial and ethnic groups, and location within the region





## Advocating for Local Policies to Make It Easier for Providers to Open and Expand Programs

### Root Cause Addressed

- Challenging regulatory and business environment
- Lack of community coordination and engagement

### Challenges Addressed

Care families need is not available

### Rationale

While many long-term structural changes are needed to how child care is funded, there are short- and medium-term steps that the region can take to begin addressing the root causes and resulting impacts of the challenging regulatory and business environment and the lack of community coordination and engagement. The strategies in this section, which leverage already engaged and motivated individuals and organizations, can begin moving forward in the first half of 2024. While longer-term funding questions identified in the previous action area are still needed to open centers and ensure they are financially viable, the strategies of this section can facilitate quicker, more efficient use of future dollars earmarked for child care.

### Community Objectives

1. Advocate for local governments to adopt the regional action plan and recognize child care as a pressing economic crisis
2. Advocate for local policy change related to zoning and development

# Advocate for Local Governments to Adopt the Regional Action Plan and Recognize Child Care as a Pressing Economic Crisis

*Priority: High | Time frame: June 2024*

## Description

Many strategies in this plan will require interest and action by local entities in the region moving forward. As local governments serve a significant role as a funder and convener of much of this work, getting the counties, cities, and townships in the region to adopt this plan is an important first step when laying the groundwork for future activities.

## Key Parties

- Ann Arbor SPARK
- Coalition members
- Local governments

## Potential Activities

- Create a contact list of local governments to reach out to and share the plan with upon its publication
- Develop a brief advocacy tool kit that members of the coalition or other interested parties can use to encourage local governments to adopt the plan and take initial action in line with the plan
- Track local governments who have adopted the plan to keep them engaged and informed about other steps they can be taking in line with this plan

## Supports Needed

Given the local focus of this work, there is no statewide support needed at this time.

## Why Is This Important?

Elsewhere in the plan, local governments are identified as key partners to make important policy and funding decisions to support child care in the region. To increase buy-in for those efforts, ensuring local policymakers are educated and engaged on current state of child care and impacts of child care on several aspects of our community is critical. Sharing this plan directly with local governments and then encouraging coalition members and concerned community members to use their voices to amplify importance will greatly increase the likelihood of immediate and long-term action.

## Key Considerations

There is a wide variety of local governments in the region. The two counties, while sharing many characteristics, also have their own unique challenges related to child care. Further, within counties, cities and townships vary greatly in how much their municipality is impacted by child care and the capacity they have as an entity make significant impact on any of these issues. Ensuring that outreach and engagement is tailored to engage local governments in a meaningful and relevant way will be critical to creating a broad base of support.



## Tracking Progress

### *Outputs*

- The number of local municipalities sent the regional action plan
- The number of local municipalities that adopt the regional action plan and recognize child care as a priority issue





# Advocate for Local Policy Change Related to Zoning and Development

Priority: Medium | Time frame: December 2024

## Description

Multiple conversations at coalition meetings highlighted stories from providers struggling to establish or expand their business due to zoning laws that were not made with child care providers in mind. The result is a taxing and slow process that stifles the increase in the number of slots available while also making it hard for providers to stay up to date. Additionally, with municipalities lacking consistency in their planning processes, even individuals who are well informed can struggle to navigate the system themselves or support others to do the same.

## Key Parties

- Ann Arbor SPARK (lead)
- Coalition members
- Local government planning entities
- Public Sector Consultants

## Potential Activities

- Host a preliminary meeting with local providers, policymakers, and planning entities in spring 2024 to start a process and identify individuals or organizations to lead this work moving forward
- Identify a list of best practices to develop draft zoning language that can be adopted by local governments in the region
- Reach out to local governments and planning entities to educate them on child care-specific topics and encourage the adoption of draft zoning language
- Keep group of local providers, policymakers, and planning entities engaged to identify other local zoning or municipal policies that could be enacted, such as incentivizing the development of child care facilities as part of new developments or redevelopments, as is sometimes done in affordable housing policies

## Supports Needed

Given the local focus of this work, the only statewide support needed at this time is the sharing of local policies identified elsewhere that could be applicable in the Livingston and Washtenaw County region.

## Key Considerations

While the above steps detail how action can happen locally, reform is also needed at the state level to reduce regulatory burden. To that end, in addition to these actions, people living and working in the area who care about improving the state of child care must also be ready to advocate and support policy solutions identified by other coalitions and statewide efforts to ensure a broad base of support to increase the speed and priority of those policies moving forward.

In addition to local efforts to develop and adopt draft best practice policies, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation recently funded the creation of early care and education guidelines for use by Redevelopment Ready Communities. Any municipality could also use these guidelines, which are expected by Fall of 2024, to inform local policy decisions.

## Tracking Progress

### *Outputs*

- The number of local municipalities with whom example policies and ordinances are shared
- The number of local municipalities that adopt the example policies and ordinances

### *Outcomes*

- Increase in the number of licensed slots in the region
- Increase in the sustainability of child care providers by reducing the number of owners who identify regulatory burden as a business challenge





## Providing Resources and Supports to Enable Child Care Providers to Thrive as Businesses

### Root Cause Addressed

- Challenging regulatory and business environment
- Lack of community coordination and engagement

### Challenges Addressed

- The care families need is not available
- Providers face challenges recruiting and retaining qualified staff

### Rationale

Even with high demand for child care services and a high cost of care, child care providers are still struggling to succeed as businesses due to several factors. With the staff, tools, and resources to succeed, new and existing providers will not only be able to fully operate and offer care for the total number of slots they are licensed for, but they will also be able to scale their programming to serve more families. While many of the resources connect to funding, there are other partnerships and resources that can be developed and leveraged to support providers in the current funding environment and set them up for success should funding increase.

### Community Objectives

1. Develop a regional resource hub to support child care providers
2. Connect providers with training institutions to address staff capacity issues

# Develop a Regional Resource Hub to Support Child Care Providers

Priority: Medium | Time frame: June 2024

## Description

A resource hub is essential for regional child care providers, as it centralizes access to crucial information, tools, and support services, enabling providers to efficiently navigate business challenges and regulatory environments. This facilitates improved service quality, sustainability, and growth in the region's child care sector.

## Key Parties

- Ann Arbor SPARK (co-lead)
- Child Care Network (co-lead)
- Entrepreneurship Center at Washtenaw Community College
- Michigan Works! Southeast

## Potential Activities

- Host a meeting with area organizations that offer small business supports, along with child care providers and Child Care Network, to identify how best to organize, share, and manage a resource hub
- Review existing resources to understand what is currently available and what can be included in the local regional resource hub
- Develop and maintain the resource hub to ensure entities that offer small business support are aware of the resources and how to help child care providers access support and navigate operating a child care center or home
- Communicate directly to child care providers to ensure they are aware of available resources to help them operate
- Identify gaps in the resource hub to locate additional resources, or request the development of new resources, that can be added to the hub in future years

## Supports Needed

Many of the technical assistance resources needed will be consistent with those needed throughout the state. While work is done on the regional level to organize, share, and identify gaps in the available resources, ECIC can continue to develop, organize, and share state-level resources to make the regional resource hub more effective and easier to maintain and keep relevant to the changing needs of child care providers.

## Examples of Resources

- Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) technical assistance and navigators
- Child Care Network technical assistance supports
- Wonderschool
- TOOTRiS
- List of child care-friendly developers to assist with construction projects
- A list of other child care providers willing to share lessons learned or partner to create shared service networks

## Key Considerations

For a resource hub to be successful, it must be maintained, which will require some level of ongoing resources beyond the initial work to develop the resource list. Identifying local funding that can help support the maintenance of the resource list can ensure the sustainability of this activity as an effective mechanism for helping child care providers.

## Tracking Progress

### *Outputs*

- The development of a resource hub that is easily available to current and prospective child care providers
- The number of technical assistance or navigation services rendered by child care providers

### *Outcomes*

- Increase in the number of available licensed slots in region by reducing the number of providers not able to fully staff or expand their program
- Reduction in the number of owners who identify business management practices as a challenge





# Connect Providers with Training Institutions to Address Staff Capacity Issues

*Priority: Medium-high | Time frame: Ongoing*

## Description

Strengthening the connection between providers and training institutions is crucial, as it can help address immediate capacity concerns of child care providers through fully funded apprenticeship and work study programs or volunteering. Collaboration will also promote a well-trained workforce, directly impacting the success and sustainability of child care businesses.

## Key Parties

- Michigan Works! Southeast
- Area school districts
- Local community colleges
- Eastern Michigan University
- University of Michigan
- Child Care Network

## Potential Activities

- Host a meeting with area organizations that are involved in the training of child care workers to identify how those organizations can best connect with child care providers
- Develop a process or identify a key organizational partner that can serve as a connection between child care providers and training organizations
- Create a centralized list of training and financial assistance programs that child care providers can access to connect with training institutions effectively

## Supports Needed

No need for external support at this time.

## Existing Resources

There are a variety of child care training programs locally, as well as programs that can assist employers with onboarding new hires and associated training costs. These include:

Michigan Works! Southeast programs:

- [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult Program](#)
- [Going PRO Talent Fund program](#)

Child Care Network's [Early Care and Education \(ECE\) Registered Apprenticeships](#)

## Key Considerations

Several organizations are already doing work in this area, which sets this objective up for immediate success if they are able to coordinate and communicate effectively. Entities that can bridge training institutions and providers, such as Child Care Network and Ann Arbor SPARK, can play a key role in ensuring that these efforts to connect the two groups are sustained over time.



## Tracking Progress

### *Outputs*

- The number of new child care provider and educational institution partnerships
- The number of child care workers able to pursue training opportunities as a result of partnerships

### *Outcomes*

- Increase in the number of available licensed slots in the region by reducing the number of providers not able to fully staff their program, or who identify staffing as a barrier to expansion
- Increase the number of child care workers in the region by getting individuals who attend local training programs to stay by fostering connection with child care providers as prospective employers





# Support the Child Care Workforce Through Expanded Training and Increased Resources

## Root Cause Addressed

Market failure and underinvestment

## Challenges Addressed

- The care families need is not available
- Providers face challenges recruiting and retaining qualified staff

## Rationale

Staffing shortages are a central driver of many of the region's child care challenges. The current licensed slots are not all available due to lack of staff. Providers are not able to increase their available slots because of challenges recruiting staff. They are also not able to offer care at different times of day and different days of the week because they do not have the staff to do so. Even if public investment drastically increases in the form of scholarships for families or capital funds to build new or expand existing centers, the lack of available child care slots will persist if the challenges facing child care workers, who cannot afford to live in the region, continue.

## Community Objectives

1. Increase visibility and public funding for area training programs to increase the number of child care workers
2. Support expanded resources and partnership to improve salary and benefits for child care workers

# Increase Visibility and Public Funding for Area Training Programs to Increase the Number of Child Care Workers

*Priority: Medium-high | Time frame: Ongoing*

## Description

As listed in the previous action area, there are many training programs in the region, as well as financial assistance programs to support them. However, to adequately train the number of staff required to fill the immediate staffing shortage and be able to staff an increase in the number of licensed slots in the region, there will need to be a significant increase in the number of people completing training programs.

## Key Parties

- Michigan Works! Southeast
- Eastern Michigan University
- University of Michigan
- Child Care Network

## Potential Activities

- Host a meeting with area organizations that are involved in the training of child care workers to identify how best to communicate availability of training programs to prospective students
- Identify how local funders could help supplement existing programs to increase capacity
- Conduct outreach to local funders to generate buy-in and support for these local programs
- Support ECIC's and other statewide policy efforts related to continuing and expanding existing training programs and resources

## Supports Needed

This coalition requests that ECIC supports training programs in their advocacy efforts and identifies ways that local entities can support these statewide advocacy efforts.

## Key Considerations

Both this and the "Providing Resources and Supports to Enable Child Care Providers to Thrive as Businesses" action area related to connecting providers and training institutions. Partners could explore how they could pursue both of these simultaneously given the overlap between involved parties.

## Tracking Progress

### Outputs

- The number of child care workers able to pursue training opportunities as a result of increased supports

### Outcomes

- Increase in the number of child care workers in the region
- Increase in the number of available licensed child care slots in the region
- Reduction in the number of families that do not have care that meets their needs

# Support Expanded Resources and Partnership to Improve Salary and Benefits for Child Care Workers

*Priority: Medium-low | Time frame: 2025 and beyond*

## Description

As long as average child care wages are so low relative to the regional cost of living, the ability to increase the number of child care workers in the region is going to be an exceptional challenge. To that end, any advocacy efforts toward increased funding for child care centers must ensure that those funding increases result in higher wages. Beyond wages, improved benefits are needed to communicate to future generations that becoming a child care worker can not only be a fulfilling career, but one that is financially feasible.

## Key Parties

- Ann Arbor SPARK
- Child Care Network
- Child care providers

## Potential Activities

- Engage a local convener, e.g., Ann Arbor SPARK, Child Care Network, or another organization, to assist interested providers in developing a shared-service network
- Incorporate language that prioritizes child care worker salaries when advocating for increased funding locally and statewide
- Support ECIC's and other statewide policy efforts related to increasing funding and protections for child care workers

## Supports Needed

This coalition requests that ECIC includes protections and resources for child care workers in their advocacy efforts and identifies ways local entities can support these statewide advocacy efforts.

## Key Considerations

This objective should coexist with other action areas, as child care worker compensation needs to be part of the conversation related to increased funding or supporting child care providers to succeed as businesses.

## Tracking Progress

### Outputs

- Inclusion of child care worker wage increases on local and state advocacy priority lists
- Inclusion of fostering collaborations to improve child care worker benefits in the regional resource hub

### Outcomes

- Increase in the number of child care workers in the region
- Decreased turnover of child care workers
- Increase in the number of available licensed child care slots in the region





# Empowering Area Employers to Be Child Care Champions

## Root Cause Addressed

Lack of community coordination and engagement

## Challenges Addressed

- Child care is negatively impacting area employers
- The care families need is not available

## Rationale

Not having access to child care that meets a family's needs results in caretakers facing challenges in their employment, ranging from struggling to be productive at work to needing to leave the workforce to focus on caregiving. In short, child care is greatly impacting local businesses' ability to thrive. While there are a number of actions that the state and local government, providers, and other partners can take to help improve child care in the region, employers have a unique opportunity to add significant value through partnership and collaboration.

## Community Objectives

1. Develop a certification to recognize area employers that are child care friendly
2. Foster connections between local employers and child care providers

# Develop a Certification to Recognize Area Employers That Are Child Care Friendly

Priority: Medium-low | Time frame: June 2024

## Description

Employers indicated they were overwhelmingly open to sharing resources and better supporting their workers who have child care needs when responding to the coalition's employer survey. Developing a list of best practices that lead to an employer being child care friendly and offering a local certification that incentivizes employers to adopt these best practices can help area families continue their careers while bolstering employers' ability to recruit and retain high-quality employees.

## Key Parties

- Ann Arbor SPARK
- Local business groups (e.g., business associations, chambers of commerce)
- Area employers
- Child care providers
- Public Sector Consultants

## Potential Activities

- Host a series of meetings with key parties to identify how best to develop and maintain a certification
- Develop branding and communication materials related to the certification to increase visibility and understanding of what the certification entails
- Promote certification through local business groups to generate interest and buy-in

## Supports Needed

While this could start as a locally recognized certification, a statewide certification could increase the likelihood of adoption by employers throughout the region. To that end, the coalition requests that ECIC explore the feasibility and potential impact of a statewide certification to identify child care-friendly employers.

## Examples of Potential Best Practices

- Help working families find child care by offering a list of nearby child care providers and potential resources to help afford child care
- Offer flexible scheduling to allow caretakers to work hours that make sense with their child care situation
- Offer financial support as a benefit for employees with child care needs (e.g., [Tri-Share program](#), onsite care, [dependent care spending accounts](#), sponsoring slots at a nearby provider to get discounted rates for employees)
- Join advocacy list to learn how employers can support policies and investments that improve regional child care
- Pulse at the [W.E. Upjohn Institute](#) has developed [a website](#) with many curated resources for employers that speak to other potential best practices and strategies.

## Key Considerations

Achieving buy-in from well-known and respected groups will be paramount to creating a certification that employers will be likely to pursue. However, the maintenance and quality assurance of this certification will be needed, so this process will require a conversation around who will manage this objective moving forward.



## Tracking Progress

### *Outputs*

- The number of employers who are engaged and educated on child care–friendly policies and practices
- The number of employers who adopt child care–friendly policies and practices

### *Outcomes*

- Decrease in the number of individuals leaving the workforce due to not having child care that meets their needs
- Reduction in the number of employers identifying child care–related issues negatively impacting their ability to recruit and retain employees



# Foster Connections Between Local Employers and Child Care Providers

*Priority: Medium-high | Time frame: Ongoing*

## Description

By fostering connections between local employers and child care providers, these parties can share resources and pursue activities that will improve the workforce access to child care.

## Key Parties

- Ann Arbor SPARK (co-lead)
- Child Care Network (co-lead)
- Local business groups (e.g., business associations, chambers of commerce)
- Area employers
- Child care providers
- Public Sector Consultants

## Potential Activities

- Host meeting(s) with key parties to identify strategies for fostering connections between providers and area employers
- Share information via local employer groups so these groups and their members know how to connect with providers through reaching out to a central, engaged entity, such as Ann Arbor SPARK or Child Care Network

## Potential Partnership Model

An emerging model, where employers sponsor a handful of slots, or even a full center, is showing promise in addressing challenges faced by child care providers and employers. The employers pay a fee per slot to reserve them for current or prospective employees. The employee then gets access to that slot at a discounted rate. The combination of the sponsorship and employee fee provides adequate funding for providers and the reservation of the seat ensures employees have access to affordable, easy-to-find care should they need it.

## Key Considerations

Fostering connections can happen as part of the development of the certification or outside of the certification. Much of this work can happen organically between providers and employers to identify how best to partner, and the work of Ann Arbor SPARK, Child Care Network, and local business groups will be more focused on facilitating those initial connections.

## Tracking Progress

### *Outputs*

- The number of partnerships between child care providers and area employers

### *Outcomes*

- Decrease in the number of individuals leaving the workforce due to not having child care that meets their needs
- Reduction in the number of employers identifying child care-related issues as negatively impacting their ability to recruit and retain employees



# Fostering an Informed and Engaged Community That Is Ready to Take Action to Support the Child Care Field

## Root Cause Addressed

Market failure and underinvestment

## Challenges Addressed

- Unaffordable child care
- Challenges recruiting and retaining staff

## Rationale

At the first meeting of the Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition, the question was asked, “What is the most important thing for this group to accomplish?” The most common answer was getting members of the community who are not impacted by child care to care about child care. Through the promotion of the findings in this report, and a coordinated effort to build public support for the advocacy and actions detailed through different action areas, this coalition can have a much greater and more sustained impact on child care in the region.

## Community Objectives

1. Develop visionary shared language for increased and improved messaging and outreach

# Develop Visionary Shared Language for Increased and Improved Messaging and Outreach

*Priority: High | Time frame: June 2024*

## Description

The sharing of this report and associated short reports will help increase the understanding of the wide-ranging impact of child care on the community. The next step is capitalizing on that increased understanding to generate the broad community support that will encourage the key parties identified throughout this report to take action.

## Key Parties

- Coalition members (lead)
- Public Sector Consultants
- Child care providers
- Ann Arbor SPARK
- Child Care Network

## Potential Activities

- Publish the report on the coalition's website
- Promote the publishing of this report via local media
- Directly share this report with policymakers, local employer groups, and community groups through attending community meetings and other outreach efforts

## Supports Needed

No need for external support at this time.

## Tracking Progress

### *Outputs*

- The number of media stories about the state of child care in the region
- The number of community meetings at which this report, or findings related to it, are presented

### *Outcomes*

- There are no direct outcomes of an engaged community, but it can lead to success in other areas





## Maintaining Momentum

The above action areas and objectives detail many things that can be done, how to begin to implement those ideas, and how to measure success. This action plan, which includes advocacy efforts; change by state and local governments; investments by a variety of funding partners; the facilitation of partnerships between employers, providers, and other partners; and the organization and creation of resources, will only be successful if the momentum built by these conversations is maintained. While key parties have been identified and potential next steps are identified, other individuals and groups have the opportunity to support this work by beginning conversations about how they can best support each objective and action area.

The members of this coalition will begin working on these issues in 2024, while also continuing to support and collaborate with coalitions from other regions and ECIC to maximize impact for the region and the state of Michigan as a whole.

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