



## **Northeastern Minnesota**

### **Child Care Workforce Solutions Pilot Project**

*Flexible funding to help licensed child care programs implement staff recruitment and retention strategies that result in stabilizing and/or growing program capacity and increasing quality to serve more families with young children in northeastern Minnesota communities and Tribal Nations.*

### **Request for Proposals**

#### **About the Funding Opportunity**

The Northland Foundation is partnering with several partner organizations including the City of Duluth 1200 Fund and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation to implement the Northeastern Minnesota Child Care Workforce Solutions Pilot Project.

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to help licensed Child Care Centers and Family Child Care programs with implementing staff recruitment and retention strategies that result in stabilizing and/or growing program capacity and quality to serve more families with young children in northeast Minnesota communities and Tribal nations.

Our hope is to discover effective workforce solution strategies that can be adapted and replicated in child care programs across the region and state to address the growing child care need. Information from this Pilot will also be shared with project funders and policy makers.

#### **Availability of Funding and Implementation Period**

The Northland Foundation anticipates awarding a total of approximately \$475,000 in funding to eligible child care programs across northeastern Minnesota. This funding pool will support licensed child care programs that are able to complete their proposed workforce solutions project within a 6-month implementation period from March 1, 2023, to August 30, 2023. Applicants will be selected on a competitive basis. Funding considerations will be made based on geographic distribution to ensure all parts of the region are served. Other decision criteria include the extent to which the applicant's plan meets the goal of the Pilot and the applicant's capacity to complete the project within the six-month timeframe.

All funded programs will be required to participate in two peer learning sessions to exchange information and learn from one another (held virtually) and provide a final report. The Northland Foundation is also committed to connecting licensed child care providers with resource partners and providing training opportunities.

## Eligibility

Organizations interested in applying for the Child Care Workforce Solutions Pilot Project must:

- Be a for-profit business or non-profit corporation.
- Be a licensed child care program that fits one of the following:
  - Child care center that is committed to increasing capacity to serve additional children; or
  - Family child care program that is committed to increasing licensed capacity by adding 2 to 4 slots to serve additional children by hiring an adult caregiver(s); **or**
  - Center-based Head Start program providing extended child care services; or
  - Faith-based child care program that allows any child to attend regardless of affiliation.
- Provide services in any of the seven counties of northeast Minnesota (Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis Counties) or five Tribal Nations: Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (District I) and Milles Lacs Band of Ojibwe (District II).

## Exclusions

Ineligible organizations:

- License-exempt certified child care programs.

Funding cannot be used for:

1. Capital projects, capital campaigns, or to support fundraising events.

## How much funding can I apply for?

Funding levels are based on the applicant child care program's current licensing capacity as approved by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

### For Licensed Child Care Center Programs:

20 or fewer slots	21-60 slots	61-79 Slots	80+ Slots
\$2,500	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$12,000

If your program operates in more than one site, you may apply for funding for each location. However, funding is limited and competitive.

### For Licensed Family Child Care Providers:

There are two ways Licensed Family Child Care Providers can receive funding:

1. Licensed family child care programs currently licensed for 10 or 12 slots may apply for \$1,500 to help pursue expanded licensing capacity and add additional slots with the support of a Second Adult Caregiver.
2. Licensed family child care programs currently licensed for 14 slots but are not serving at capacity due to lack of staffing may apply for \$1,500.

*\*If awarded funding, we will ask you to connect with your County/Tribal Licensor to ensure you have adequate physical space to expand slots and provide documentation.*

## **Background on the Child Care Workforce Solution Pilot Project**

Northeastern Minnesota has one of the highest shortages of child care in the state. The COVID-19 pandemic has further strained this essential sector. The historically low unemployment rates in our state and the competition for employees has added even greater challenges for the child care industry. In June 2022, the Northland Foundation partnered with Northspan to conduct a regional child care workforce survey. Findings from the study clearly indicated the need to provide flexible funding for individual child care programs to tailor workforce solutions to meet their individual needs.

Examples of possible workforce solution activities may include, but are not limited to:

1. Wage subsidies
2. Hiring bonuses
3. Substitute teacher pay
4. Retention bonuses
5. Staff development plans such as tuition reimbursement, team building, and wellness efforts
6. Other innovative ideas to help you expand program capacity and quality

## **Connecting Child Care Programs to Other Child Care Capacity Building Efforts**

The Northland Foundation is committed to working with an array of partners to ensure that the licensed child care programs selected to receive funding can maximize their resources. In addition to this funding opportunity, the Northland Foundation has partnered with Northspan to create a Child Care Talent Pipeline Workgroup. Launched in August 2022, this workgroup is tasked with pursuing strategies to help child care providers recruit, develop, and retain qualified talent. The group is comprised of child care center directors and representatives from higher education, economic development and business interests, and community organizations. Information and resources from the workgroup will be shared with child care programs across the region on a regular basis.

The Northeastern Minnesota Child Care Workforce Solutions Pilot Project is also designed to build upon the efforts of the Minnesota Department of Human Services to strengthen licensed child care programs through the [Child Care Stabilization Grants](#), the new [Child Care Wayfinder](#) initiative which provides navigation services for start-up, retention, and expansion of child care, Empower to Educate which helps current and aspiring early childhood educators advance and sustain their career goals in child care, and the [Child Care Facility Revitalization Grants](#) being administered by [First Children's Finance](#).

A [Northeastern Minnesota Child Care Resource Guide](#) has been created in partnership with Child Care Aware of Minnesota – Northeast to provide information on sources of support in order to help you stretch your potential funding through programs such as the Empower to Educate Program, First Children's Finance Technical Assistance, and more. We plan to offer some short optional information webinars throughout the funding period to help you better connect with available resources to further support your efforts to bolster staffing, as well as program capacity and quality.

The Northland Foundation will be hosting 1-2 required peer learning opportunities for projects funded through this special initiative to facilitate learning about and the sharing of strategies and learnings among the participating programs.

## **Key Dates**

The application process opens November 16, 2022, and closes December 13, 2022. Applicants will be notified of a decision by January 25, 2023.

## **How to Apply**

**The deadline for submitting an application is December 13, 2022.** Applications will need to be submitted using the Special Initiatives Grant Portal.

**Step 1 – Complete the application documents and save them to your computer.** The application includes two documents:

1. Project Narrative - respond to the application questions (see pages 6 and 7)
2. Project Budget (see page 8)

### **Step 2 – Upload your application to the Special Initiatives Grant Portal.**

When you are ready to submit your application, log into the [Special Initiatives Grantee Portal](#) to complete additional grant information and to upload and submit the two documents listed above. See the attached **Special Initiatives Grant Portal Instructions**.

## **Contacts**

For questions about grant criteria and eligibility:

Jan Amys, Senior Program Officer: [jan@northlandfdn.org](mailto:jan@northlandfdn.org)

For questions about accessing and navigating the grantee portal:

Carol Chipman, Grants Manager: [carolc@northlandfdn.org](mailto:carolc@northlandfdn.org)

## **About the Northland Foundation**

Created in 1986 by The McKnight Foundation, the Northland Foundation is a regional foundation serving the seven counties of northeastern Minnesota: Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis, and the five Tribal Nations that share the same geography: Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (District 2), and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (District 1). The Northland Foundation invests in people and communities to create a thriving region. The Foundation serves as a resource through its: Grant Program, directing support to nonprofit organizations and schools; Business Finance Program, lending to businesses to spur the regional economy; KIDS PLUS Program, improving the wellbeing of children and youth and promoting intergenerational connections; and other special initiatives.



## **Application Narrative Questions**

If you have any questions about your application, please contact:

Jan Amys, Senior Program Officer via email at [jan@northlandfdn.org](mailto:jan@northlandfdn.org)

If you have any questions about the grantee portal, please contact:

Carol Chipman, Grants Manager via email at [carolc@northlandfdn.org](mailto:carolc@northlandfdn.org).

**Please refer to the RFP (Request for Proposals) for additional information about this request.**

**Implementation Timeline: March 1, 2023 to August 30, 2023**

The completed narrative and project budget should be uploaded separately as attachments on the grantee portal. All materials need to be submitted via the [Special Initiatives Grantee Portal](#) using the Special Initiatives Application.

### **Narrative Questions:**

Please construct your narrative responses using the questions provided below.

#### **Part I: Program Information**

**1. Are you a licensed family or center-based program (check one):**

Licensed family

Licensed center

Licensed center/Head Start Program with extended child care services

**2. Is your child care business/program:**

For profit

Not for Profit

Other (please describe)

**3. Child Care Program License Number:**

**4. Primary Contact Information:**

First and Last Name:

Primary Contact Email:

**5. From the list below, please select the physical location of your licensed child care program (check one):**

- Aitkin County
- Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- Carlton County
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Cook County
- Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Itasca County
- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (District 1)
- Koochiching County
- Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (District 1)
- Lake County
- Northern St. Louis County (all areas outside Duluth, Proctor or Hermantown)
- Duluth
- Hermantown
- Proctor

**6. What is your current licensed capacity?**

**7. Are you currently operating at your full licensed capacity?**

- Yes
- No - If no, please describe?

**8. Is your program Parent Aware rated or in process of earning a rating?**

- Yes, my program is rated or in process
- No

**9. How many staff members are currently employed in your program including all staff e.g., directors, teachers, assistants, and other support staff:**

\_\_\_ Full-time  
\_\_\_ Part-time

**10. Do you currently provide infant and toddler care?**

- No
- Yes - If yes, please describe numbers of infant and toddlers served:

**Part II: Child Care Workforce Solutions Plan (limit 2-3 pages)**

**1. Based on your Minnesota Department of Human Services licensing capacity, what funding level are you requesting to implement your proposed project:**

**Licensed Center Programs**

- \$2,500 (20 and fewer slots)
- \$5,000 (21-60 slots)
- \$7,500 (61-79 slots)
- \$12,000 (80+ slots)

**Licensed Family Programs**

- \$1,500 (currently licensed for 14 slots but not serving at capacity due to lack of a second adult caregiver/employee)
- \$1,500 (currently licensed at 12 but interested in expanding to
- \$1,500 (currently licensed for 10 slots but interested in expanding to 14 slots) \*

\*If awarded funding, we will ask you to connect with your County/Tribal Licensor to make sure you have adequate physical space to expand slots and provide documentation prior to grant award.

- 2. What workforce challenge(s) do you plan to address with your request to support?**
- 3. In what ways will you use this funding to meet the goal of this project: Implement staff recruitment and retention strategies that result in stabilizing and/or growing program capacity and increasing quality to serve more families with young children?**
- 4. Please describe the key activities:**
- 5. List the key staff members who will work on this project and briefly describe their roles with the project:**
- 6. What steps will you take to track progress and demonstrate that the project has been successful?**
- 7. What resources or support do you need to help you be successful with your plan?**
- 8. If awarded funding, I will participate in the two peer learning sessions:**
  - Yes, I will participate
- 9. If awarded funding, I give my permission to the Northland Foundation to share information with resource partners (Child Care Aware, First Children's Finance, etc.) regarding my program that will assist with support and project evaluation.**
  - Yes, I give permission to share information with resources partners.

### **Part III: Budget**

- Please complete the project budget template or use a similar format.**



## Child Care Workforce Solutions Pilot Project Budget

**ORGANIZATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FUNDING REQUEST:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TIMELINE:** FROM \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_

Budget Line Item (List each item separately)	NORTHLAND FOUNDATION FUNDS	OTHER SUPPORT		TOTAL (Line Item)
		Cash	*In-Kind	
1.	\$	\$		\$
2.	\$	\$		\$
3.	\$	\$		\$
4.	\$	\$		\$
5.	\$	\$		\$
6.	\$	\$		\$
7.	\$	\$		\$
8.	\$	\$		\$
9.	\$	\$		\$
10.	\$	\$		\$
<b>Column Totals</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$

\*In-kind refers to any supplies, staff time, use of space, or other non-cash contributions that are provided by your organization or others.