



Northland Foundation to launch Regional Child Care Workforce Solutions Pilot Project

Duluth 1200 Fund provides major funding boost to support licensed child care programs with implementing staff attraction and retention strategies to help address child care shortage - November 16 press conference will outline funding opportunity

(November 15, 2022)

The [Northland Foundation](#) will offer a special funding opportunity 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 northeast Minnesota communities and Tribal nations. **The Foundation will award funding ranging from \$1,500 to \$12,000**, through a competitive process, to eligible child care programs based on existing licensing capacity. Applications will be accepted November 16 – December 13 on the Foundation’s website <https://northlandfdn.org/grants/apply-report.php> with awards finalized the week of January 24, 2023.

Funding for the awards is supported by a \$300,000 grant from the [City of Duluth 1200 Fund](#) and additional funding from partners including the [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation](#). The opportunity will launch with a press conference:

Press Conference

Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 12:00 p.m.

City Hall - 4th floor Mayor’s Reception Room

411 W 1st Street, Duluth

Deb Otto, President, Duluth 1200 Fund

Tony Sertich, President, Northland Foundation

Elena Foshay, Director, Duluth Workforce Development

The child care crisis was well known even before COVID-19, but the pandemic created a massive strain on providers who battled with inconsistent attendance, closures due to COVID exposure, supply shortages and high costs, and staff burnout. Now the competition for workforce is putting added stress on this sector.

Data compiled by [First Children’s Finance \(June 2022\)](#) shows northeast Minnesota needs 3,739 more child care openings to accommodate families with children under five—55% more spaces than currently exist.

In June, the Northland Foundation partnered with [Northspan](#) to conduct a survey of licensed child care center owners and directors in the region to learn more about how the workforce shortage is affecting child care programs. Key findings included:

- Pay rates and retention rose to the top of the list of current difficulties. Just over one-third reported serving fewer children due to staffing shortages.

- A number of owners/directors are filling in for teachers and assistants to meet adult-to-child ratios, leaving little time for administrative tasks.
- A major challenge within the child care industry revolves around providing teachers and other staff a competitive wage, while keeping the program operable and affordable for parents. Nearly 80% reported losing staff to other jobs with higher wages.

As a result of survey findings and conversations with partners, two new efforts were initiated to support child care. In August, the Northland Foundation formed a **Child Care Talent Pipeline Workgroup** tasked with pursuing strategies to help child care providers find and keep talent. The group is facilitated by Northspan in partnership with the Northland Foundation and counts center directors, higher education, economic development and business interests, and community organizations among its members.

Now, the Foundation is launching a **Child Care Center Workforce Solution Pilot Project to make available flexible funding** through a competitive process to licensed child care center and family programs to help with staff recruitment and retention. Eligible programs must provide services in northeast Minnesota counties of Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis and/or the Tribal nations of 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 Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (District II). Selected pilot projects will also receive peer learning opportunities and specialized trainings.

“Northland and our partners are doing what we can to support workforce attraction and retention to help address our region’s significant child care shortage,” states Tony Sertich, Northland Foundation President. “The [City of Duluth 1200 Fund](#)’s \$300,000 grant to our organization provides a major boost to extend the reach of this pilot within the City of Duluth and help stretch additional funding from partners including the [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation](#) across the region.”

“We know the child care shortage is negatively impacting the workforce, families, businesses, and our communities. We are pleased to partner with the Northland Foundation to launch this new opportunity to help stabilize and grow child care program capacity to serve more families with young children,” stated Elena Foshay, Director of Duluth Workforce Development.

Jan Amys, Northland Foundation Senior Program Officer stated, “This funding opportunity will help child care programs implement strategies that make the most sense for their organization, as well as help connect them with resources and supports from our partners including [Child Care Aware of Minnesota – Northeast District](#) and [First Children’s Finance](#).”

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