

Deschutes County Child Care Coalition

Executive Summary:

Growing child care so we can get back to work

COVID-19 devastated our regional economy, closing businesses and forcing families to adapt to learning and working from home, even as parents lost jobs and wages and as children missed months of important learning and development. To get back to work and see a thriving economy, our region needs more childcare.

With nearly 12,000 children under age 5, and only 4,562 childcare spots, Deschutes County is a childcare desert: there are three times as many children as there are licensed childcare slots. This lack of options limits children’s access to high-quality learning and care, just as it forces working families to stay out of our workforce because they can’t find adequate care. With hundreds of unfilled positions across essential roles, childcare is a critical resource, limiting our recovery.

To address this urgent need, **we seek county-wide funding to expand and sustain childcare across Deschutes County.** The funds requested will increase childcare slots immediately, and also expand long-term capacity: by investing in a well-educated, sustainably-paid workforce; by recommending investments in new childcare facilities and models; by engaging businesses as partners; and by creating a system of well-supported, well-resourced childcare businesses.

Regional leaders, collaborative goals:

We are a coalition of partners in workforce, education, business, and early learning, including the region’s leaders in this work, and welcoming new partners whose initiative makes us stronger. Together, we seek to accomplish three key goals:

1. **Build a workforce pipeline** to train and retain 330+ high-quality, trained childcare leaders and teachers for existing and new centers across our region.
2. **Invest in facilities and program** needs to grow the 3300+ full-day childcare slots needed across Deschutes County, with a focus on rural expansion in Sisters and South County.
3. **Sustain childcare as a viable business model** across our region by leveraging these above supports to provider businesses with new partnerships with employers, civic and church partners that can make childcare affordable to families, sustainable for teachers, and a thriving business sector for our region.

Bridging the Gap:

Experts estimate needing two child care slots to serve every three children (<https://health.oregonstate.edu/sites/health.oregonstate.edu/files/early-learners/pdf/research/oregons-child-care-deserts-2020.pdf>). In Deschutes County, that means adding 3327 slots, nearly doubling the full-time capacity in addition to an existing 1000 part-time slots. Childcare staffing ratios vary based on the type of care and age of child. Here, we estimate needing one care provider per 10 children. (See attached full gap analysis for more information, using 2019 US Census and Head Start data.)

Deschutes County	Total	
	Seats	Educators
City		
Bend	2473	247
Redmond	687	69
Sisters	98	10
La Pine	69	7
Total	3327	333

Solution:

There are three key components to growing the system:

1. Create a **pipeline** of new teachers
2. **Build capacity** for early learning and childcare centers (including new facilities and new use of existing ones)
3. Establish **on-going support** to sustain providers and educators

This coordinated strategy invests in high-quality programs, new and existing, with capacity to create sustainable, high-impact outcomes. The jobs pipeline, center infrastructure, and ongoing support programs outlined here are rooted in these smart business strategies and values, designed to match high-quality childcare with well-planned, sustainable businesses. Specifically, the programs we highlight demonstrate three criteria:

- Sustainable long-term plan
- Ensure quality
- Leverage funding or match

Workforce Pipeline

We know that we need 333 early childhood educators to meet current and grow future classroom capacity to meet regional childcare demand. This strategy is a multi-pathway approach to building our network of early childhood educators in Deschutes County. The approach meets future Deschutes County educators where they are. It aligns existing with new pathways to meeting Early Learning Division's (ELD's) requirements for teachers for centers or home providers to achieve licensing. And this proposal leverages Deschutes County, City of Bend, Early Learning Division, OSU-Cascades and COCC resources through three programs:

1. Childcare Sustainability Pathway Program
2. Fasttrack
3. Little Kits Internship

Build capacity for early learning and childcare centers

Childcare resources cannot grow without expanded infrastructure: more centers in new locations, expansion of existing locations, and new programs which leverage resources in our churches, community centers, and office spaces, alongside new construction across our growing residential communities.

The following proposals and programs (submitted to the County with independent funding requests, and/or included here) meet key sustainability criteria above, add new facilities in underserved locations and for key populations, and introduce new models with promise for expansion and duplication. These investments will both expand and multiply capacity, as they create centers for training high-quality childcare educators across Deschutes County, build and strengthen partnerships in rural communities, and introduce needed models of employer-based childcare centers.

1. **Little Kits Bend Westside** (already funded)- a new model which invests in on-site learning for early education students, while supporting students returning to college after becoming parents.
2. **Boys and Girls Clubs, St. Charles, Little Kits Bend Eastside**- a new model which leverages St. Charles resources and investment to demonstrate the value of employer-based childcare to employees and business alike.

3. **Re-Village Coop** (Sisters)- a new model which partners with church and community spaces while also training parents as high-quality caregivers, investing in long-term wellbeing for families and expanding first into Sisters, then into other areas of need and partnership.
4. **Morning Star Relief Nursery** (La Pine) – a trusted and needed provider seeking to expand service in La Pine and provide needed, high-quality care for families in South County.

Because many existing providers can expand capacity with investments into their facilities, we propose creating a **\$500K Small Center Facilities Fund**, which will be held by NeighborImpact, CCR and administered using guidelines and criteria created by this joint childcare coalition, following sustainability guidelines above.

Establish on-going support for providers and educators

As part of our workforce pipeline, we must invest to **Sustain** early childhood educators and centers by ensuring living wages and a strong business climate.

The Sustain program builds on existing capacity investments, with a focus on key long-term business capabilities:

1. Business and professional development for Center Directors to ensure they understand the business model,
2. Partnership with business sector leaders and workforce leads to leverage more employer contributions to underwrite the cost of childcare tuition, and
3. Sector-wide, regional resource development efforts to expand funding across the sector through new and existing, traditional and non-traditional funding sources, including private foundations, public-private partnerships, and longer term policy changes to attain and sustain on-going living wages for educators to retain them in our workforce.

Sustain work is led by key partners including East Cascades Works, NeighborImpact, BDAB, Bend Chamber, OSU-C, COCC, and community investments in our municipalities and led by regional employers such as St. Charles.

Funding Model and Matching Resources:

The estimated total cost for this countywide initiative is \$15M-\$20M, funded from a combination of public and private donors, emergency and ongoing program funds, fees for service, and state, county, and city ARPA funds. Community partners including K-12 and higher education institutions, government organizations, and non-profit partners, will provide valuable space and in-kind staff and planning to move this effort to reality.

Program Focus	Requested County Investment	Matching Funds (operating and capital)	Childcare Impact
	\$	\$	<i>Highly-qualified educators</i>
Workforce	\$3,325,000	\$1,872,496	<i>needed: 333</i>
Business Accelerator	\$235,000	\$125,000	<i>total: 339</i>
Childcare Sustainability Pathway Program	\$400,000		
FastTrack	\$1,600,000	\$405,000	
Little Kits Internship	\$1,000,000	\$1,342,496	
Center Infrastructure (capital, capacity)	\$4,550,000	\$10,806,000	<i>Childcare Seats</i>
Little Kits (Bend West)	\$1,000,000	\$1,500,000	100
Little Kits, Boys and Girls Clubs, St. Charles (Bend East)	\$2,100,000	\$7,606,00*	200
MorningStar (La Pine)	\$600,000*	\$400,000	50
Re-Village (Sisters, Bend, Redmond)	\$350,000	\$300,000	80
Small Center Capacity Fund	\$500,000	\$1,000,000	100
(could invest in Manzanita, School of Enrichment, others via criteria)			TOTAL: 535
<i>*includes cost to purchase land</i>			

Key Partners

