

Sample Creative Community Solution Application

This document is meant to serve as a sample application; a potential format that applicants could follow. It is not meant to serve as a rule.

Women in the Workforce: Childcare Expansion for Stark County

There were 597 job openings within Stark County as of August 2023, with the average age in Stark County 34.4 years. More than 92% of our residents have a high school or higher education; yet 10.9% of the Stark County population lives in poverty.

We are a women's nonprofit organization in Dickinson that is working to address a critical problem within the county - the lack of childcare. As of August, 2023, only 17% of potential childcare needs are met within the county, with 47% of the population female.

The difficulty finding childcare workers is the primary reason for limited childcare access. This gap is due to the fact that childcare workers in Stark County are paid an average of \$11.19/hour. McDonalds pays more, as do the vast majority of other jobs. Wages have risen significantly, while childcare salaries have not; due to the limitations of childcare businesses to expand wages and yet still provide affordable childcare for families.

This is a critical statewide and national issue, with a strong need for employee wage subsidy to provide adequate, quality childcare; allowing women to work. The State offers training and startup grant opportunities available for childcare; however, there is no support for increasing salaries for childcare employees. This is the crux of the problem.

Our solution is to raise the funds to contribute the difference to childcare facilities specifically to increase pay from \$11.19 to \$17.00 Obviously, a subsidy would need to be more than a short term solution. We liken it to farm subsidies that support farmers who provide food; however, we cannot depend upon the government to allocate it.

Stark County, with Dickinson the largest and central community, has a strong manufacturing base, as well as continued oilfield service industries and business. It has a young growing population, with an unprecedented birth rate. We have the hobs, we have the young residents; however, lack of childcare is a tremendous barrier to women who need or want to work.

We believe city, county, and business should subsidize childcare salaries - which will solve much of the workforce issues within the county. We need to prove to those entities the direct benefits of this subsidy to ensure that it will become a part of their annual budgets. We also believe that the subsidies will increase the economy and reduce the poverty rate within the county. This is a unique, yet common sense approach

that has not been undertaken.. To prove this approach is effective, we seek a two year award from Creative Community Solutions to provide exclusively salary subsidies for two years. Our request is for \$40,000 the initial year and \$75,000 the second in anticipation of more employees/childcare operations. We will closely track our outcomes from increased childcare workers, increased childcare centers, to increased workforce within the county. Additionally we will track the poverty rate and increase in the number of women working and women start up businesses.

This is a proposal to test our assertions and begin to prove its potential success for Stark County business and its economy. Ongoing discussion will be held during the second year with Stark County, City of Dickinson and other communities, utilizing data to indicate the cost effectiveness of this approach. Additionally, we will partner with the Chamber of Commerce to share information and make the case for business contributions as well. We will request funds during the second year to cover the cost of the salary subsidies from each of the three entities.

It is our premise that this innovative, yet common sense approach will be found to be cost effective, affordable, and successful and will garner budgeted, annual budget support from the County, Cities, and Business. Once documented and proven this could be a model for other cities - breaking the stigma of childcare as a " women's issue." It will also recognize the significance of women within the workforce; an additional benefit to the County and the State.

We would be happy to provide full budget figures and answer any questions you might have regarding our request. Below is a brief bulleted overview of our project request.

Problem: Low childcare wages inhibit growth in the childcare industry, thus inhibiting a woman's ability to enter the workforce.

Phase of Innovation: Test

Solution: Test the impact of childcare wage subsidies.

Process:

1. Identify potential participating childcare providers;
2. Complete a landscape analysis of hyperlocal childcare wages;
3. Develop tiered or step-down process for short-term wage subsidies;
4. Identify benchmarks to evaluate childcare facility operations increases and after-effects, including recruitment and retention of staff, availability of slots, quality of care.
5. Identify and track both qualitative and quantitative measures to prove success of women entering the workforce.
6. Create a future plan for subsidy next steps after the grant period.