

Project Description

Southwest Child Care Resources proposes to use the Shared Prosperity grant to leverage funds to support the Early Childhood Education CDA/Apprenticeship program, a career laddering opportunity for individuals desiring to advance in the early childhood education industry.

In Southwest Michigan there are 910 licensed childcare programs (380 licensed childcare centers, 232 group homes and 298 registered family homes). The staff of Southwest Child Care Resources (SWCCR) work with approximately 447 childcare providers, consulting, coaching, advocating and supporting them in the Great Start to Quality rating system. SWCCR is the primary source of required, basic and advance trainings such as Health and Safety requirements for licensing, understanding curriculum, CPR training, administrative advancement for directors, and Child Development Associate (CDA) training. Southwest Child Care Resources supports childcare providers in the following counties: Barry, Berrien, Branch, Allegan, Cass, St. Joseph, Calhoun, Kalamazoo and Van Buren.

Research states that multiple studies have indicated that teacher pay and working conditions boost the quality of services for young children. This is largely connected to the ability to attract and retain a talented workforce. According to The Century Foundation report “Quality Jobs, Quality Child Care” one major focus of efforts to improve the quality of early care and education programs has been the education of the workforce, including the goal that Early Childhood Education (ECE) educators possess some kind of post-secondary credential. Focusing on education alone will not guarantee quality care. Without a baseline of a living wage and appropriate compensation for the additional years of education, such requirements may act as a deterrent to entering and staying in the field.

Southwest Child Care Resources along with several early childhood educational and community organizations (KC Ready 4s, KRESA, YWCA, Kellogg Community College, Mi Works-Southwest, New Genesis Childcare, Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), Upjohn Institute) realized the effect of not having a pool of talented childcare employees due to low wages and limited educational experience. Due to this realization, an effective strategy was to build a talent pipeline into early childhood education related fields. Thus, the development of the Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship program. This program would allow childcare providers to sponsor a paid apprentice to receive on-the-job training along with education through on-line and/or classroom format which would result in trainees earning their Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate along with a Child Development Associate (Apprenticeship) certificate. In January 2018, SW Child Care Resources applied for an early childhood education apprenticeship through the US Department of Labor and Pre-Apprenticeships/Apprenticeship. The award of the Early Childhood Education apprenticeship program is the first in the state of Michigan to offer a multi-employer/multi-county approach and is a comprehensive design offering a pre-apprenticeship pipeline into the apprenticeship, as well as, career laddering opportunities for individuals desiring to advance in the early childhood education industry.

Southwest Child Care Resources has been leading the work on the Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship program in Kalamazoo County since 2017, in Calhoun County since 2018 and recently in Van Buren County in 2019. Since the beginning of the program, SWCCR has successfully implemented five cohorts of 12 – 15 participants, totaling fifty-six (56) individuals. Beginning in October 2019, the program will be expanding into Branch and St. Joseph counties. This work was recognized at this year’s Michigan Works! Association Impact Awards in February 2019. Southwest Child Care Resources has been requested to share the Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship program and the standards with the Ingram County ISD, Upper Peninsula Resource Center, Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Resource Center and the Early Childhood office of the Mayor of Detroit.

Falling outside the scope of traditional apprenticeship models, which are often developed and implemented within the Healthcare, IT, and Manufacturing sectors, the Early Childhood Education Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs serve non-traditional employers in the Early Childcare and Early Education fields and offers an innovative solution to the need of quality and reliable childcare across all industries.

The Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship offers multiple points of entry including participation in the Pre-Apprenticeship program, entry through a local CTE program, previous early childhood education experience, or direct placement. All entry points require work experience, employability skills and classroom hours involving “Introduction to Education” coursework components with specific hourly requirements associated with each requirement.

Once an entry point has been determined, individuals will begin to earn their Child Development Associate Credential, a nationally recognized certification that requires 480 hours of experience working with children and 120 hours of educational training. Per the Council for Professional Recognition, “the CDA National Credentialing Program is a nationally recognized credential for early childhood education professionals working with children age birth to 5. It assesses their knowledge, skills, and abilities against the Competency Standards established by the Council for Professional Recognition through an exam, observation, and professional portfolio with resources and competency statements prepared by the candidate.” While the trainee is working on their CDA, after 90 days in the program the trainee will begin working as an apprentice in a childhood setting. The apprentice will have to complete 2144 hours of work experience and professional hours.

During the Apprenticeship, the apprentice will be introduced to the Kellogg Community College (KCC), Early Childhood Education (ECE) program. KCC’s Early Childhood Education courses are offered in the evening or online to meet the needs of nontraditional students, providing greater flexibility in student schedules. In collaboration with KCC, up to 9 experiential credits will be offered to the Apprentice who completes the Apprenticeship program. This portion of the career pathway would allow an apprentice to reach their Associate degree. Career laddering has been embedded into the process creating a pathway that spans from entry level from the CDA to Associate degree to a Bachelor’s degree/Teaching Certification.

Through the proposed Early Childhood Education Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs, Southwest proposes to focus on the implementation of career pathways, in the early childhood, childcare, and education sectors, through a combination of education, training, and other services that: The Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship aligns with the Education goals/opportunities by “Promoting talent development and retention to encourage growth and sustainability in all facets of the local economy” by:

- align with the skill needs of industries in Southwest counties, Prosperity Region 8 and the state;
- prepare individuals to be successful in either secondary or postsecondary education options, including this proposed apprenticeship;
- includes career counseling, planning, and goal setting for individuals to assist them in achieving their education and career goals related to Early Childhood and Education;
- includes coursework at Kellogg Community College offered concurrently with related workforce preparation activities and training specific to Early Childhood Education;
- enables an individual to earn a stackable credential, the CDA, while also completing coursework at Kellogg Community College, as noted; and
- guide individuals to enter and/or advance within the pathways of childcare, early childhood development, and education.

Organizational Description

Child Care Resource & Referral of Kalamazoo was established as a Not for Profit business in 1973. CCR&R mission was to provide support and education to the early childhood community, assist parents in their search for local childcare options and to support local businesses who were supporting their employees with work life balance. In 1998 CCR&R shortened their name to Child Care Resources and has been doing business as CCR since that time. In 2018 CCR added Southwest to their name to better describe the area that the agency serves and updated the mission.

Child Care Resources modified the name to be Southwest Child Care Resources and updated the mission of SWCCR to be: Southwest Child Care Resources will promote quality care and education for all children by connecting providers and families with community and resources.

Southwest Child Care Resources has the privilege of serving 9 counties which are: Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Van Buren.

In 2009 SWCCR was awarded the funding to run and manage the Great Start to Quality Resource Center. The Resource Center contract provides training and technical assistance to childcare providers across all settings: Centers, Home based programs and licensed exempt programs. The contract also provides funding to assist parents in finding quality childcare programming.

SWCCR is the primary source of required, basic and advanced training for childcare providers. SWCCR coordinates and offers a wide variety of training from an Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship program to monthly 2-hour workshops on child development, literacy and movement, and many more childcare topics. SWCCR has a staff of 8 Quality Improvement Specialists and Consultants who work one on one with providers in their journey to improve the quality of care they are providing for children. SWCCR is the hub for information, resources, and strategies to create quality and affordable childcare options for families throughout Southwest Michigan.

SWCCR currently has 2 staff members who are providing training for the Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship program and one contracted employee.

Partners

Numerous community partners stepped forward and dedicated time and resources to plan and implement the Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship program. The critical need for skilled and properly trained individuals to care for and educate the very vulnerable infant, toddler and pre-school aged children was a growing concern amongst many in the industry. It was also recognized that the lack of reliable, affordable and highly rated childcare providers, needed to support working families, was also part of a larger economic/workforce development focus. To support the attraction, expansion and retention of businesses, high quality childcare is required. The partners around the table realized that increasing and enhancing the talent pipeline for early childhood education will result in individuals gaining meaningful employment and businesses thriving, a win-win for the community.

Local employers, business/community partners, workforce development and post-secondary education have banded together to create and support the Apprenticeship program. The following is the list of the current partners involved in the project, knowing the list will expand as more employers and counties embrace the program:

- Kellogg's Community College, Early Childhood Education Program
- Battle Creek Shared Services
- Kalamazoo County Ready 4s
- Kalamazoo RESA
 - Head Start
 - GSRP
 - Special Education Services
 - Education for Employment (CTE)
- Mi Works – Southwest
- Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU)
- U.S. Department of Labor and Apprenticeships
- New Genesis, Inc.
- YWCA of Kalamazoo
- W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

Projected Timeline

County Cohorts	Cohort expected start date	Cohort expected end date
Kalamazoo	September 2019	May 2020
Branch	October 2019	June 2020
Calhoun	January 2020	October 2020
St. Joe	November 2019	July 2020
Kalamazoo	February 2020	September 2020
Van Buren	January 2020	October 2020

*Cohort starting and ending dates could change depending on the number of participants.

Budget

	Grant Funds
Salaries and Benefits	\$6250
Travel	\$1750
Marketing/Supplies	\$2000
Total	\$10,000

- **Salaries and Benefits:** Southwest Child Care Resources is planning to hire a .5 FTE Apprentice Support Specialist to support apprentice in obtaining work experience and professional development hours, support employers and recruitment.
- **Travel:** Allow the Apprentice Support Specialist to travel and meet with apprentice and their employer to support apprentice during the apprenticeship phase.
- **Marketing/Supplies:** General office supplies to ensure the success of the staff and to support the continued growth of the program.