

## United Way Whatcom County Request for Proposals (RFP)

**Project Title:** Analysis of Child Care Demand across Whatcom County

**Proposal Due:** Sunday, December 6, 2020

**Estimated Time Period for contract:** December 15, 2020 – May 1, 2021

**Estimated Funds Available:** \$50,000 - \$60,000

Leaders in Whatcom County are seeking proposals from qualified contractors to conduct a Child Care Demand Assessment to be used in a Child Care “Planning for Expansion” data-informed planning process.

### PROJECT INFORMATION

**Background on the Project:** There is a significant shortage of child care slots in Whatcom County. This shortage has broad impacts on all aspects of our community including access to economic stability for families, school readiness for children, and as we have seen exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, on the local workforce. Stakeholders are eager to create a child care expansion plan to solve this issue; however, with an industry heavily reliant on thin financial margins, state subsidy rates and an underpaid workforce, solutions aren’t easy or obvious. Currently, the most significant barrier to creating an actionable plan with shared metrics is the need for reliable data on the consumer demand for child care. There were many unanswered questions prior to Covid-19 and those questions are compounded as we look towards a post-Covid child care landscape.

We are commissioning a demand assessment that will allow us to set informed targets for specific communities across Whatcom County and drive decision making around where to: open or expand child care centers; increase the number of home-based providers and increase supports for family, friend and neighbor care. For example, current data shows that the Mt. Baker area in eastern Whatcom County only has 1 licensed child care center. Given the geographic isolation, families are relying on friends, family and neighbor care or otherwise are driving their children into Bellingham. What is unknown are the considerations families have in deciding to stay home or opt for family, friend and neighbor care and whether they would enroll their children in care if it was available.

## Project Deliverables:

**Refine Research Questions and Project Plan:** Work with United Way to refine research questions and develop a project plan in order to best meet the data needs for expansion planning.

**Data Collection:** This project should include data gathered from a statistically significant sample of parents and caregivers by varied means to project child care and early learning demand in Whatcom County. Parent and caregiver data collection should be sufficient to demonstrate:

- likelihood of enrollment in child care programs and/or early learning program
- quality indicators that drive decisions about enrollment, for example
  - Early Achievers rating
  - Licensing status
  - Sibling collection
  - Staff representation
  - Curriculum
  - Safety record
  - Cost
- Preference between:
  - Large or small centers, home-based providers and/or family, friend and neighbor care
  - Child care programs close to home or to work
  - Program operating hours

This information should be disaggregated by factors including:

- income and child care subsidy eligibility
- inclusion in historically excluded groups
- geographic distribution across Whatcom County
- child ages

**Data Analysis:** Using the data collected, analyze and present the likely child care demand across Whatcom County based on the factors above. This analysis should include preferences from those parents and caregivers that are likely to enroll children in child care and/or early learning programs.

The Demand Analysis must:

- Use community-led data collection principles to ensure accurate data from a diverse set of stakeholders.
- Be disaggregated by historically excluded groups; income and subsidy eligibility; and geographic distribution.
- Provide reliable and valid data that can refine and answer Part 1 of the Research Questions below.
- Be able to be updated as necessary to better understand the demands in a changing post-Covid workforce (updates do not need to be included in scope of work).

**Expectations for collaboration:** We expect a contractor to plan and implement the data collection and demand analysis. United Way staff will convene a planning group to support the successful

implementation of this work and will support as helpful to create a strong finished product. United Way staff and other members of the planning team can facilitate the introduction to local stakeholder groups, leaders, community groups, etc. The contractor will be expected to research and use child care data and reports to inform project design and analysis. Relevant reports include but are not limited to: Department of Commerce Industry Assessment including the local data provided by the Dashboard; Child Care Aware reports; ALICE reports; and Whatcom County Health Data.

**Timeline:** This data will inform a late spring planning process. The work must be finalized by April 15, 2020 and presented to stakeholders by May 1, 2021.

## CONTRACTOR REQUIREMENTS

**Contractor must agree to terms and criteria set forth for sub-contractors by Department of Commerce including (but may not be limited to):** Provide adequate insurance for the activities arising out of project; identify any/all conflicts of interest upon contracting; and project monitoring. Additional clarification, if needed, will be made available prior to contract agreements.

**Priority goes to candidates that can provide the following:**

In order to create an expansion plan that ensures mixed-income classrooms that provide early learning in the context of child care, it is essential that we have data that represents the vast diversity of needs and preferences in all areas of our community. Therefore, priority will be given to contractors that can ensure the data will be representative.

1. Ability to collect data from a diverse and accurate representation of families and caregivers and analyze the data based on various characteristics. This includes but may not be limited to those experiencing racial disparities, those working in agricultural/food production, families without documentation, ALICE families, non-English speaking children, local tribal communities, and children with special needs.
2. Demonstrated ability to work within a tight timeframe and with a variety of stakeholder groups.
3. A data collection system that could be updated over time to capture change in attitudes post-Covid.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**Part I: (Essential for Demand Assessment and Analysis)**

1. Of those parents/caregivers with children not currently in care, how many would choose to put them in licensed care if it were available? Of those that would opt to put their kids in care:
  - a. Have they previously been in care?
  - b. What are the factors that have and continue to drive their decisions?
  - c. Where are the geographic densities?

- d. How many of those slots should be subsidized at what level?
2. How many families in the county prefer child care to be near work vs. near home and how does that impact the need for child care in Bellingham vs. dispersed in the county?
3. What is the demand for child care by preferred setting (center based, home-based, family/friend/neighbor/school based) by geographic area within the county, taking into consideration preference to be near home, school or work?
4. How many parents/caregivers intend to continue working from home, and what type of care do they anticipate utilizing (full vs. part-time, in-home nanny vs. center vs. family/friend/neighbor care)?
5. What are the most important indicators of quality that will drive mixed-income classrooms across the county?

## Part II: *(Option to include in proposed scope of work)*

In addition to the demand assessment, there are other pieces of that need to be gathered to inform an actionable plan:

1. What is the need for respite care for foster families and families with children with special needs?
2. What are the services that must be integrated into child care programs to allow children to thrive and become school ready?

## PROPOSAL INFORMATION

**Proposal Contents:** Electronic Proposals must be submitted to Meredith Hayes on or before Sunday, December 6 at [z.mhayes@unitedwaywhatcom.org](mailto:z.mhayes@unitedwaywhatcom.org) with the following information:

### **General Information:**

1. Name of business contact name, phone, email
2. Address from which the consultant would operate
3. Legal status of the consultant (sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, etc.) with EIN

**Project Approach and Strategies:** Include a description of your proposed approach and methodology for refining and answering research questions. Please outline the specific strategies you will undertake to answer the research questions and include relevant outputs such as the number of focus groups, interviews, surveys, etc.

**Work Plan:** Include a timeline and steps to complete the required tasks within the timeframe. Include:

1. How you intend to collect and analyze the demand for child care across Whatcom County based on a broad representation of community members analyzed by various child care contexts.
2. Means to access a diverse set of respondents including those experiencing racial disparities, those working in agricultural/food production, families without documentation, ALICE families, non-English speaking children, local tribal communities, and children with special needs.
3. What support you anticipate needing from United Way staff or local planning group.

# United Way of Whatcom County



**Project Management:** How will you manage the project in collaboration with United Way staff and other stakeholders? Describe communication strategies, timelines, etc. that will ensure the completion of a successful project within the timeframe.

**Deliverables:** Describe how you will present information in a way that enables others to use data for expansion planning purposes.

**Expertise:**

1. What experience do you have in conducting this type of work? Please give specific examples of track record and accomplishments.
2. If possible, please provide a previous client or reference who could attest to your qualifications.

**Proposed Budget:** Identify all costs to be charged for performing the services necessary to accomplish the objectives of the contract. Include sub-contractors if applicable, as well as costs required to compensate research participants, child care families/consumers and/or providers.

**How could the information in the demand analysis be updated to reflect a changing workforce post-Covid?**

Questions about this RFP as well as completed proposals should be directed to Meredith Hayes at (cell) 303-520-5824 [z.mhayes@unitedwaywhatcom.org](mailto:z.mhayes@unitedwaywhatcom.org).