

What Economic Developers Can Do to Support Child Care

“An industry can be any community of practitioners that provides a particular type of goods and services to a larger community that wants them. In this large sense, child care is an industry just as health care is an industry, contributing to the economy as employees spend their paychecks, and providers buy or rent property and purchase goods and services in the local community.”

~ Economic Development Strategies to Promote Quality Child Care, Cornell University, 2005

1. Include Child Care in the Definition of Community Infrastructure

Without child care, parents with young children cannot participate in the workforce, earn an income, and contribute to the tax base. When groups talk about housing and transportation, raise the issue of child care as part of the necessary support system of a vibrant community.

Economic Development Role	Child Care Role
Invite child care representatives to meetings where infrastructure issues are discussed	Provide data and information to inform decision makers
Invite child care representatives to be a presenter at conferences and events	Participate in meetings and presentations to help others understand the child care challenges

2. Build Local, Regional and State Support

Use your influence to talk with state and local policymakers about the importance of available, quality child care to support the current workforce and the future workforce. Educate business leaders on the connection between worker productivity and good, stable child care. Spread the word on how good child care supports school readiness, thereby saving costs in K-12 education.

Economic Development Role	Child Care Role
Be an active supporter and participant in community early childhood initiatives	Provide a sincere perspective representing child care businesses, children and families
Include articles on child care in newsletters or other media	Provide data and information
Talk to policymakers about the important link between an adequate supply of stable, quality child care and economic growth	Offer to give tours and provide testimonials
Provide input and suggestions for child care policy and support legislation that strengthens child care	Include economic developers in setting a child care policy agenda

3. Set the Stage when Recruiting New Businesses

Encourage potential new businesses to take into account their impact on the local child care industry. Convince them to form partnerships with child care businesses to meet the additional child care demand.

Economic Development Role	Child Care Role
Provide incentives to businesses that address the child care impact	Coordinate employer child care needs assessments
Direct businesses to local child care services	Provide local child care data and information
Link businesses with other nearby or similar businesses to address common child care needs	Broker relationships between businesses and child care programs
Serve as a clearinghouse for child care models that businesses can incorporate	Provide information on successful child care and business partnerships

4. Be a Convener

Use your leadership to convene a community coalition of business leaders and child care leaders to identify strategies that would increase the ability of child care programs to meet the community's child care needs.

Economic Development Role	Child Care Role
Participate on a planning committee for a statewide conference to provide key information to leaders in North Dakota, including business executives, economic developers, business association leaders, and state and local policy makers	Plan a statewide conference to provide key information to leaders in North Dakota, including business executives, economic developers, business association leaders, and state and local policy makers
Use your influence to persuade local CEO's and policy makers to attend the conference	Provide detailed information on the event
Survey businesses to identify their child care concerns	Provide survey samples
Provide business demographics to child care representatives	Provide child care demographics to economic developers

5. Think Creatively

How can investments be secured to support training for the child care workforce, for facility expansion or improvement, for collective management strategies maximizing economies of scale, for industry information networks, etc.

Economic Development Role	Child Care Role
Help to establish a mechanism for a pool of funds which would support community-wide child care strategies	Identify how funds could best be used to impact the supply and quality of child care in the community
Promote the concept of family friendly work/life policies	Provide information and models of family friendly work/life policies
Help identify funds to support staff time to work on businesses and child care partnerships	Help identify funds to support staff time to work on businesses and child care partnerships
Other	

“Businesses often base their location decisions on the ‘family-friendliness’ of various communities. They want to know that their current workers have the services and supports they need to be productive; and that the next generation of workers is getting off to a good start.”

~Our Children, Our Future by National League of Cities, 2002

Leading the Way for Child Care in North Dakota

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