

## Request for Proposals

# Fund Development and Sustainability Planning for Early Education Wage Initiative and Child Care Solutions Fund

Networks Northwest is seeking proposals from qualified bidders to create and initiate a fund development and sustainability plan for the Early Education Wage Initiative and establish a framework for a general Child Care Solutions Fund.

**About Networks Northwest:** Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10 counties of Northwest Michigan.

Our mission is to build stronger communities and enhance the quality of life in Northwest Michigan. Our hallmarks are public-private partnership, visionary leadership, responsiveness and adaptability, entrepreneurship, and economy of scale.

Our primary service categories are: workforce development; business & economic development; and community development. Our programs include Northwest Michigan Works!, various business services, and many different initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business and community services Networks Northwest offers as you look through our [web site](#).

## 1. Introduction and Project Background

Networks Northwest is the lead organization for the Northwest Regional Child Care Coalition (NW RCCC) and the Grantee Organization for the Northwest Michigan Region 2 Early Education Wage Initiative. The NW RCCC aims to strengthen our region's child care system by developing and implementing sustainable solutions tailored to address region-specific child care challenges. The Early Education Wage Initiative aims to address one of those challenges – low wages for early care and education providers – and a core outcome of this project is to establish a public-private fund to supplement wages for participating early educators, with a focus on maximizing matching funds.

This RFP seeks proposals from consultants or firms to design and implement a robust, multi-year sustainability and fund development strategy to support regional child care initiatives, including a plan designed to ensure the continuation of the wage funding approach beyond the grant period.

- *Grantee Organization:* Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, dba Networks Northwest
- *Project Lead Contact:* Norika Kida Betti, [norika.kidabetti@networksnorthwest.org](mailto:norika.kidabetti@networksnorthwest.org)
- *Project Timeline:* Contracts will commence upon award and conclude by February 1,

2027. The resulting sustainability plan is to be submitted to grant funders (MiLEAP/GOISD) for approval by December 1, 2026.

## **2. Scope of Work and Deliverables**

The selected Fund Developer will be responsible for the following activities and deliverables.

### **2.1 Early Education Wage Initiative Sustainability Plan Development**

- Conduct a thorough analysis of current funding sources, operational costs, and future financial needs for the Early Education Wage Initiative.
- Develop a financial model and fund development plan that outlines a diverse and achievable funding mix (e.g., grants, corporate sponsorships, individual giving, public funding), and utilizes the resources of the NW RCCC and various partners.

### **2.2 Child Care Solutions Fund Framework**

- Design the operational framework for a new, general Child Care Solutions Fund, including governance recommendations and fund disbursement criteria.
- Develop the case for support, including messaging and materials, for the Solutions Fund targeting various donor segments (e.g., businesses, foundations, private donors).

### **2.3 Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Strategy**

- Seek input from NW RCCC members and incorporate feedback into the plans for the Child Care Solutions Fund and the sustainability plan for the Early Education Wage Initiative.
- Recommend a strategy for engaging and soliciting major gifts from regional business leaders and foundations.
- Assist the NW RCCC in initial outreach to at least three high-potential funding partners.
- Present the final Sustainability Plan and Child Care Solutions Fund Framework to the NW RCCC members.

### **2.4 Support the creation and establishment of a Funders' Circle.**

- Establish a Funders' Circle of regional funding partners to help identify opportunities and strategies for funding regional child care initiatives and ongoing child care needs throughout the region.
- In coordination with the Child Care Initiatives Coordinator, convene meetings of the Funders' Circle as needed to guide the development of the Early Education Wage Initiative sustainability plan and the general Child Care Solutions Fund.

### 3. Funding

This project is part of the Early Education Wage Initiative, which is grant funded by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP), and administered by Gogebic-Ontonogan Intermediate School District (GOISD). The maximum amount available for this RFP is \$32,885.00. Proposals must include the requested contract amount and commit to completing the services and deliverables for said fee, all-inclusive.

### 4. Timeline and Key Milestones

The engagement is expected to align with the following project timelines:

Activity	Timeline	Performance Measure/Deliverable
Wage Initiative Sustainability Plan Development	Ongoing, March 2026 - Dec. 2026	Sustainability plan submitted to MiLEAP/GOISD for approval by December 1, 2026.
Child Care Solutions Fund Framework Creation	March 2026 - June 2026	Fund developer creates the framework and case for support for the Child Care Solutions Fund.
Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership	Ongoing, March 2026 - Jan. 2027	Present the final Sustainability Plan and Child Care Solutions Fund Framework to the NW RCCC members.
Funders' Circle Establishment	July 2026 - Dec. 2026	Funders' Circle is established.
Plan Implementation & Fund Building	July 2026 - Aug. 2027	Regional Child Care Coalition and Funders' Circle build the fund. Outreach to at least three funding partners.

### 5. Proposal Submission Requirements

Proposals must address the following components:

1. *Organizational Profile and Qualifications*: Description of the consultant/firm, including relevant experience in public-private partnerships and sustainability planning.
2. *Team Expertise*: Resumes/CVs of key personnel who will be working on the project, highlighting successful completion of similar scopes of work.
3. *Proposed Approach and Methodology*: A narrative describing the approach to meeting the Scope of Work, including a project timeline that aligns with the required milestones.

Complete proposals must be submitted via email to [norika.kidabetti@networksnorthwest.org](mailto:norika.kidabetti@networksnorthwest.org) by **March 9, 2026, at 5:00 PM EST.**

**RFP Schedule**

Activity	Date
RFP Release Date	February 12, 2026
Deadline for Questions	February 27, 2026
Proposal Submission Deadline	March 9, 2026
Selection Announcement	March 16, 2026

**6. Rubric and Scoring Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated and scored based on the following criteria:

Scoring Criteria	Description	Points Available (100 Max)
<b>Relevant Experience &amp; Qualifications</b>	Demonstrated experience with successful creation and implementation of sustainability plans for non-profit or public-private initiatives. Specific experience with coalition building or collective impact models is a plus.	40 ▾
<b>Proposed Approach &amp; Methodology</b>	Clarity, feasibility, and quality of the proposed plan to achieve the Scope of Work. Alignment of the proposed timeline with the required milestones (December 18, 2026, deadline for plan submission).	40 ▾
<b>Team Expertise</b>	Strength of key personnel's qualifications.	20 ▾

**Total Points:** 100

## **7: Insurance Coverage**

The Consultant notes and agrees ECIC and Networks Northwest assumes no responsibility or liability for the Consultant's operations. Thus, the Consultant shall provide and maintain public liability insurance in such amounts as necessary to cover all claims which may arise out of the Consultant's operations under the terms of any Agreement as a result of a successful bid, and provide proof of such insurance coverage upon request to Networks Northwest prior to the effective date of such Agreement. Unemployment compensation coverage and workers compensation insurance shall be maintained by the Consultant in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. The Consultant shall provide and maintain general, professional, medical and/or automobile liability including nonowned auto insurance in such amounts as necessary to cover all claims which may arise out of the Consultant's operations under the terms of any Agreement as a result of a successful bid, and provide proof of such insurance coverage to Networks Northwest upon request. The Consultant shall maintain all required insurance coverage during the term of any Agreement as a result of a successful bid, and extensions thereto.

## **8: Supplemental Information and Requirements**

Networks Northwest reserves the right to waive any informality or defect in any proposal, to accept any proposal or parts thereof or to reject any or all proposals, should it deem it to be in the best interest of the project to do so. Networks Northwest reserves the right to revise the contents of the proposal and to negotiate all aspects of this proposal and any future agreement with the successful firm of their choice. Networks Northwest further accepts no responsibility for expenses which may be incurred in the preparation of such proposals. The selected firm shall be expected to comply with all applicable state and federal laws in the performance of services. Submittals to Networks Northwest are considered public information. Networks Northwest has the right to disclose information contained in the submittals. Networks Northwest further reserves the right to photocopy, circulate or otherwise distribute any material submitted in response to the Request for Proposal. Original materials which the Consultant may wish returned shall be clearly marked to be returned to them. The selection of the successful Consultant shall be made without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion, sexual preferences, handicap, political affiliation, veteran status, or national origin. Networks Northwest is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The selected Consultant will be required to enter into a Consultant Agreement for this project.