

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Regional Child Care Planning Grant Awarded to Networks Northwest

NORTHWEST LOWER, MI - The Early Childhood Investment Corporation's (ECIC) Child Care Innovation Fund has awarded Networks Northwest with a \$150,000 grant aimed at expanding access to quality, affordable child care for working families in northwest Lower Michigan. Networks Northwest is one of 16 grant recipients throughout the state awarded funds to support a Regional Child Care Planning Coalition in order to understand the capacity and quality of the current child care system, the child care preferences of parents, and the needs of the business community. The Coalition will also determine barriers to increasing access, affordability, and quality along with strategizing for policy, funding and programs meant to overcome these barriers.

"Child care is the backbone of our economy", said Governor Gretchen Whitmer. "Access to quality, affordable child care supports parents as they go back to work, ensures kids have the support they need to grow into their best selves, and helps businesses hire, recruit, and retain talent".

The ECIC received \$12.5 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding in August, awarded by the Michigan Department of Education as part of Caring for MI Future. The state is investing \$100 million to dramatically increase access to child care across the state and open 1,000 new or expanded, child care programs by the end of 2024.

"Access to quality and affordable child care is vital to the economic well-being of a community", said Jessica Willis, Chief Program Officer for Networks Northwest. "We recognize child care as critical infrastructure that enables workforce participation. This grant will support the convening of an inclusive regional network of partners to create the Northwest Regional Child Care Coalition. The Coalition will work to accelerate current initiatives and best practices, while identifying advocacy tools and strategies to support business growth."

(MORE)

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Networks Northwest and Northwest Michigan Works! are supported by the State of Michigan and are proud partners of the American Job Center Network. Projects may be funded with the authorized and appropriate use of federal funds. Contact Networks Northwest for additional information. Equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and service are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Individuals with speech or hearing impairments may call the Michigan Relay Center by dialing 711.

The Regional Child Care Planning grant runs through June 2024. For more information contact Jessica Willis at Jessica.willis@networksnorthwest.org.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by emailing Dan Boss at danboss@networksnorthwest.org and stating preferences for resolution, file format, and file size. Or phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at networksnorthwest.org/media

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10-county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works!, APEX Accelerator (formerly PTAC), various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business, and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our website, networksnorthwest.org. Networks Northwest's member counties are Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.