



## **New Jersey Economic Development Authority**

### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (“RFI”)**

**2023-RFI-178**

**for**

### **Child Care Employer Innovation Pilot Program**

#### **1. INTENT/SUMMARY OF SCOPE**

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (“NJEDA” or “Authority”), an independent Authority of the State of New Jersey, is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) seeking information and ideas to encourage innovation by employers and the private sector in addressing workers’ child care needs.

NJEDA is seeking responses from qualified entities (“Respondents”) including, but not limited to: employers; employer associations/consortia; child care advocacy organizations; parent/caregiver advocacy organizations; policy and academic researchers; companies that provide child care benefit services; fam-tech companies (e.g. technology companies serving the needs of families or caregivers); child care providers (e.g., licensed child care centers; license-exempt providers; registered family child care providers; home-based providers; and family, friend, neighbor providers); child care technical assistance providers; caregivers; parents; business and entrepreneurship support organizations; Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies; Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) providing loans and/or financial support to child care providers; higher education institutions; and foundations and philanthropic initiatives.

This RFI is issued by the Authority to seek information and ideas on how employers can be part of the solution to child care challenges, including, but not limited to: innovative approaches to employer-provided child care benefits and resources, expanded partnerships between employers and child care providers, and flexible policies for workers with child care needs. For the purposes of this RFI, ‘child care’ may include care for children ages 0 - 5, as well as before- or aftercare for school-aged children.

These perspectives will help the Authority better understand potential solutions to strengthen New Jersey’s child care sector, bolstering a critical piece of the state’s economic infrastructure that enables the labor force participation of working parents and the safe, quality care of their children. This will build on Governor Phil Murphy’s commitment to a ‘whole of government’ approach to bolster the state’s child care sector. Governor Murphy’s Fiscal Year 2023 budget

appropriated \$12.5 million in state funds to EDA to establish the Child Care Employer Innovation Pilot Program.

The information gathered in this RFI may subsequently be used to help the Authority, its partner agencies, and other concerned entities develop strategies, programs, or other initiatives to help accomplish this goal.

**THIS RFI IS NOT A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL** and may not result in a subsequent RFP or further action.

## 2. **BACKGROUND**

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority serves as the State's principal agency for driving economic growth. The Authority is committed to making New Jersey a national model for inclusive and sustainable economic development by focusing on key strategies to build strong and dynamic communities, create quality jobs for New Jersey residents, and provide pathways to a stronger and fairer economy. Through partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders, the Authority creates and implements initiatives to enhance the economic vitality and quality of life in the State and to strengthen New Jersey's long-term economic competitiveness.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of the child care sector as a critical enabler of economic activity and recovery. Working families need reliable, safe, affordable, accessible, and quality child care. However, the child care sector—both in New Jersey and across the nation—faces complex challenges.

As part of Governor Murphy's whole of government approach to supporting the child care sector, NJEDA is dedicating over \$115 million to supporting the child care sector, including:

- **COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program:** More than 1,000 child care providers received approximately \$23.3 million in grants to support working capital needs throughout the pandemic.
- **Child Care Facilities Improvement Program:** Providing more than \$90 million in grants to New Jersey child care providers for facilities improvements that will contribute to high quality early childhood learning environments, including funding to support the expansion of pre-K programs and capacity to serve infants and toddlers.
- **Child Care Technical Assistance:** Dedicating \$4.5 million toward bolstering the child care sector through technical assistance to access grant programs, plan for facility improvements, and improve business practices and sustainability.

In addition, the Fiscal Year 2023 budget included up to \$12.5 million in state funding for a **Child Care Employer Innovation Pilot Program**, which will focus on innovative strategies for businesses to provide child care benefits and resources to their employees (the focus of this RFI).

Access to affordable, reliable, quality child care is a key underpinning of parents' ability to participate in the labor market. Employers across the country have recognized the value of child

care for their employees' attendance and productivity, and for attracting and retaining quality workers. A growing number of employers offer child care benefits, which can include discounts, partial or full reimbursement, child care flexible spending accounts, reserved slots for regular or emergency care, onsite child care centers, extended hour care, support with searching for open child care slots, or other approaches. However, many parents still struggle to find care that is high-quality, affordable, and accessible when and where they need it. Many employers, particularly small and mid-sized businesses, may feel that child care benefits are too expensive or complex for them to offer.

This RFI seeks information to better understand these challenges and potential solutions. The Authority is interested in identifying creative approaches that can empower more employers to offer child care benefits to their employees, supporting New Jersey's parents and children while enabling economic recovery and growth.

**3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (If applicable)**

This is not applicable to this RFI. All responses are welcomed.

**4. RFI RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

Please answer all questions that are relevant to you or your organization, to the best of your ability. The Authority recognizes that respondents may not be able to answer all questions. Answers to these questions are understood to be preliminary and non-binding.

Respondents are free to structure responses as necessary to increase clarity and efficiency of responses.

**A. Your organization and qualifications**

- 1) Please provide information on your organization, company, group, entity, or self and your capacity and qualifications as they relate to employer child care benefits and/or innovative employment practices in the child care industry.
- 2) If your organization is an employer or employer association/consortium, details such as the number of employers your organization represents, number of employees, industry, location, and hours of operation are particularly helpful.
- 3) If your organization is a child care provider, details such as the size and funding structure of your current partnerships with employers (if applicable) are particularly helpful.

**B. Innovative employer-based child care practices**

Employers may already engage with child care providers and work to support the child care needs of their employees in a number of ways, which can include but are not limited to:

- Offering discounts at particular child care providers
- Offering partial or full reimbursement of child care costs
- Offering tax-advantaged flexible spending accounts (FSA) for dependent care expenses
- Working with child care providers to reserve slots for regular or emergency/backup care for employees
- Building and operating onsite child care centers at the worksite
- Working with child care providers to offer and/or pay for extended hour care
- Working with child care providers to offer and/or pay for overnight or weekend child care
- Offering informational resources or support with searching for available child care slots

- 1) Please describe your experience with any of the strategies listed above, including any advantages, successes, lessons learned, challenges, hurdles, or shortcomings of the strategy. This can include addressing how your organization approached the decision to pursue the strategy, how the strategy was selected, how the program is or was structured and managed, its ability to meet the needs and wants of parents/employees, its feasibility and sustainability for a child care provider, its impact on employee retention and productivity, and/or its return on investment for an employer.
- 2) What factors or approaches could strengthen the feasibility, sustainability, or impact of any of the above strategies? What supports for employers or child care providers could help make it feasible for these strategies to be adopted more widely? (e.g., offering providers additional pay for extended hours, offering employers information on child care benefit options)
- 3) Please describe additional strategies, models, or best practices that employers can use to support employees' child care needs, beyond those listed above. This could include but is not limited to industry-specific models, geographically-based models, or cooperative models. Please feel free to describe models that are used in other states, countries, etc.
- 4) Child care needs may differ by the industry in which parents work (e.g., overnight care for children of health care workers) or by the geography in which they work or live (i.e., a shortage of slots in "child care deserts"), among other factors. What particular approaches (either from the above list of strategies or beyond it) can employers take to help address these challenges?
- 5) How should the effectiveness of these strategies be measured? What metrics, indicators, data sources, economic analyses, etc. are most important for evaluating these strategies?

- 6) Many employers shifted their benefit offerings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and related challenges. If your experience with any of the strategies listed above (or additional strategies described in question B(4)) has recently changed, please describe your experience and the reason for the change.
- 7) What other information would you like NJEDA to know or consider about employer-provided child care benefits and employers' role in supporting child care more broadly?

5. **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS** (From Respondents to the EDA)

All questions concerning this RFI must be submitted in writing no later than 12:00 PM EST, on June 2, 2023 via e-mail to: [childcareRFI2023@njeda.gov](mailto:childcareRFI2023@njeda.gov)

The subject line of the e-mail should state: **Questions – 2023-RFI-178**

Answers to questions submitted will be publicly posted on the Authority's website on or about June 9, 2023 at: <https://www.njeda.com/bidding/#RFI> as Addendum.

**IT IS THE RESPONDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK THIS URL REGULARLY FOR UPDATES.**

6. **RESPONSE DETAILS** (Info Provided to Respondents Regarding Document Submission)

All RFI responses must be submitted in writing no later than **5:00 PM EST on June 20, 2023** via email to: [childcareRFI2023@njeda.gov](mailto:childcareRFI2023@njeda.gov).

The subject line of the e-mail should state: **RFI Response – 2023-RFI-178.**

7. **FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS** (from EDA) / **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Respondents may be asked to provide additional information to allow the Authority to better understand the responses or services available.

8. **PROPRIETARY AND/OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

The Authority reserves the right to copy any information provided by the Respondents. The Authority reserves the right to use ideas that are provided by Respondents, applicants, stakeholders, or vendors. By submitting a Response, the submitter represents that such copying or use of information will not violate any copyrights, licenses, or other agreements with respect to information submitted or product solutions demonstrated, if applicable. Responses must clearly be marked for any information the Respondent deems Proprietary and/or Confidential.

9. **DISCLAIMER / NO OBLIGATION**

This RFI is not a request for qualification/proposal. It may or may not result in further action.

This RFI is issued solely as a means of gathering information and ideas regarding the Authority's desire to understand strategies to encourage innovation by employers and the private sector in addressing workers' child care needs. Interested parties responding to this RFI do so at their own expense. There will be no monetary compensation from the Authority for the time and effort spent in preparing the response to this RFI. All expenses incurred are the sole responsibility of the Respondent.

Should the Authority decide to move forward and issue an RFQ/P or announce a program/product related to this RFI, Respondents need not have submitted a response to this RFI in order to be eligible to respond to the RFP. Should an RFQ/P be issued, responding to this RFI will not affect scoring or consideration for that process.

The Authority is under no obligation to contact Respondents to this RFI.

#### **10. NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT**

Respondents should be aware that responses to this RFI are subject to the "New Jersey Open Public Records Act" (N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.), as amended and including all applicable regulations and policies and applicable case law, including the New Jersey Right-to-Know law. All information submitted in response to the RFI is considered public information, notwithstanding any disclaimers to the contrary, except as may be exempted from public disclosure by OPRA and the common law.

Any proprietary and/or confidential information submitted in response to this RFI will be redacted by the Authority. A person or entity submitting a response to this RFI may designate specific information as not subject to disclosure pursuant to the exceptions to OPRA found at N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1.1, when such person or entity has a good faith legal and/or factual basis for such assertion (i.e., information that may be included in another ongoing public procurement or solicitation). The Authority reserves the right to make the determination as to what is proprietary or confidential and will advise the person or entity accordingly. The Authority will not honor any attempt to designate the entirety of a submission as proprietary, confidential and/or to claim copyright protection for the entire proposal. In the event of any challenge to the Respondent's assertion of confidentiality with which the Authority does not concur, the Respondent shall be solely responsible for defending its designation.