

The *Building Innovation for Equitable Child Care* program funds, coordinates, and supports a cohort of “co-location models” that seek to push the boundaries of ways that child care space has historically been thought of and developed.

The program has three major goals:

- *Direct predevelopment funds to support innovative mixed-use development projects that incorporate a child care operation*
- *(Re)build a resilient child care system in the wake of COVID*
- *Utilize pilot findings to inform community development strategies and drive broader child care systems change locally and nationally*

Building a Resilient Child Care System

Communities across the country have limited access to quality child care, with historically disinvested communities of color and rural areas disproportionately affected. This need has intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, with experts projecting that up to half of child care providers may close permanently. As millions of people return to the work, equitable access to quality child care and early learning has never been more essential to the health and economic vitality of families, communities and the nation. As we seek to rebuild a more resilient child care infrastructure, we also have an opportunity to address longstanding gender and racial inequities by supporting the women entrepreneurs of color who comprise a majority of child care providers in many communities.

Building a resilient child care system requires exploration of new models and ways of developing space to meet a wide array of family and community needs. Child care should not be an afterthought in community planning endeavors, it should be embedded in the work to create communities of opportunity. Across our nation, there are examples of projects where child care space is part of a broader community revitalization effort. However, there has not been a concerted effort to examine the benefits and challenges of this approach across a variety of programs, partner types, and geographies with a specific focus on increasing equitable access to quality early learning environments. Through this work and future efforts to come, [LISC](#) will leverage its national network of partners to test new models, partnerships and funding streams, and to use the learnings to spur change that creates broader and more equitable access to quality care and opportunity for all.

Partnering to Support Co-Location Innovation

Funding made available from [Pivotal Ventures](#) and [HUD Section IV](#) enables LISC's National Child Care Team to embark on an exciting pilot program to fuel innovation in child care and education learning development.

Funds support a cohort of co-location models across the country – covering the predevelopment expenses of community partners such as mission driven real estate developers, community development corporations and anchor institutions (including but not limited to, medical campuses, retail corridors and other community assets) endeavoring to incorporate child care in a development project. Projects center on locally identified community needs and support wellness and opportunity for kids, families and women entrepreneurs, particularly in communities of color. Priority considerations for program participation were project scalability and replicability, testing the boundaries of funding and regulatory barriers and showing signs feasibility, even if not typical. Technical assistance support is made available to community partners in each of the pilot sites

to afford them the resources to focus on effectively forging partnerships, testing project feasibility and conducting planning and predevelopment activities.

Program Activities

The following program activities will underpin the co-location pilot practices:

Cross-Market Collaboration

Project teams in the program will engage in a robust process for cross-sharing ideas, best practices, challenges and related learning in order to support successful project outcomes.

Focus on Systems Change

The projects that emerge will be critical to improving local access to child care and early learning opportunities. Pilot findings will additionally be utilized to inform broader policy, practice and funding strategies across the child care and community development sectors, and drive broader child care systems change locally and nationally.

Development of Sector Tools

A Building Innovation for Equitable Child Care toolkit will offer a roadmap for communities to operationalize their child care vision to meet the needs of local families. Additionally, program findings will continue to inform the development of local and national strategies to influence and impact ways that build resiliency and innovation within a struggling child care sector and bring a unique set of insights to community development work.

Current Projects

The initial round funds eleven innovative co-location projects from ten [LISC Local Offices](#). Most project sites are closing in on their second year of program participation.



Project Site Outcomes to Date

As we approach the end of year one of the program, all eleven of our project sites have made significant progress in their development activities at individual project sites, and continue to build local relationships through regular meetings with partners and building capacity through close contact with their local LISC office as well as the National Child Care Team. Service populations at each of these project sites seek to address the needs of families with income levels below the area median income, often representing significant Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) populations. Many sites serve populations that receive government subsidy, are dependent on public transit, and/or are located in historically disinvested communities – our partners endeavour to tackle these issues head-on. The **Bay Area** team, which is tackling two affordable housing projects with co-located family and center-based care, had a [grand opening for one site in February](#), and the other site anticipates construction completion in October 2022. The developments serve San Francisco’s Mission District, which is majority Latinx, and will specifically serve families making under 60% AMI, who will be selected through the San Francisco Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development lottery process.

Other project teams are in an earlier stage, but anticipate imminent development start: for example, the **Connecticut** team anticipates construction groundbreaking in the first quarter of 2023, and plans to serve seventy children per year with two-thirds of families receiving public assistance, as well as potentially providing subsidized housing for teachers. The Far Eastside neighborhood, the area served by the **Indianapolis** project, was recently designated an intensive CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) investment area in the city of Indianapolis, providing new investment opportunity at that site.

The **Battle Creek** team seeks to develop 96-132 units of affordable/workforce housing along with a 10,000 square foot child care center that offers 24-hour dropoff, modeled on an existing development, [The Creamery and Dreamery](#), which shows proof of concept. The **San Antonio** team has closed on a nine-acre property to serve as the project site and successfully achieved a rezoning for the site, which will provide workforce training, child care, and other services for women who have experienced abuse.

The first full cohort convening was held in June 2021, and allowed cohort members to meet one another, introduce their projects, network and participate in a lively, dynamic meeting. This was followed by a set of topic-specific convening sessions in the winter of 2021-2022 that dove into partnerships between developers and child care, nontraditional care models and community engagement, and financing tools for development. In July 2022, the entire cohort convened again and three teams presented their work so far: **Bay Area, Battle Creek, and Twin Cities**. In the meantime, the National Child Care Team is in regular communication with project sites, providing tools and resources to aid in project development, and keeping teams abreast of potential funding opportunities (particularly at the federal level) such that sites are well positioned to access resources.

Program Expansion Concepts

With the aforementioned seed funding from Pivotal Ventures and HUD Section IV, the National Child Care Team has methodically built out much of the program infrastructure, positioning us with an eye towards program expansion. We are actively seeking funding partners to participate in this program and give us the opportunity to expand our reach and drive resources to spur further innovation in the child care space.

Over this last year, our continued engagement with project teams, community development experts, elected officials and other stakeholders, has informed our proposed expansion pathways. We look forward to discussing the following areas with potential funders to identify interest and overlap in program concepts and/or geographic targets:

- Expand existing program to add a second cohort of project sites in new geographies. Utilizing the existing program platform, we can smoothly administer new dollars and seamlessly integrate new grantees. Further, we already have in place a regular schedule of sub-grantee supports and convenings that these new participants can join and reap immediate benefits from.
- More intentionally study the benefits related to the co-location of child care with other community amenities (including housing, health systems, food retail, etc.). Research and evaluation work would look to explore and document the utilization of services that are physically and programmatically connected and consider how these points of connection may impact health and quality-of life outcomes.
- Consider supporting projects at different points of development –both earlier stage feasibility and exploration and/or additional resources and tools to move projects to execution and successful child care program opening (could be in the form of grants, guarantees or other flexible financing products that remain as funding gaps in the current system).
- Explore alternate supports to build a more resilient and resourced child care sector. Namely, working with project teams to create new housing models targeting child care educators. Considering technology, financing and affordability of home production, sites could look to address workforce compensation and housing stability through innovative approaches.

The Building Innovation for Equitable Child Care program has done more, singlehandedly, to garner widespread interest in child care from an array of geographically diverse LISC offices than any LISC child care initiative before. By tasking our local offices, and partners with doubling down on work they are already doing; considering community needs, exploring mixed use real estate development, looking at ways that real estate projects can serve to be transformative in communities we are building upon the existing strengths of our partners to take on new challenges and solve timely issues in their communities.

The National Child Care Team is energized by the enthusiastic response we have received from local LISC offices and project sites to date, and delighted at the thought of being able to help effectively deploy additional dollars to further expand LISC’s reach in this important program area.

For More Information, Reach Out to the LISC National Child Care and Early Learning Team:

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Media on *Building Innovation for Equitable Child Care*:

[LISC Launches Pilot Program for “Co-located” Child Care Centers](#)