

**Community Development Division**  
**Building Human Capital: Early Childhood Funding**

**I. Applicant**

**Organization Name:** Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)

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**Federal EIN Legal Status:** 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

**Will you present for 3-5 minutes at the virtual September 14th Early Childhood Care and Education Committee meeting at 2:30 PM?** Yes, we will present at the virtual meeting.

**II. Proposal Narrative**

**Organizational Capacity**

- 1. Please describe your organization. Include any relevant information about the mission, vision, values and history of the organization as it relates to the services or programming you are proposing to provide.** This is a collaborative proposal between The Hmong Institute (THI) and Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) to create additional early care and education (ECE) capacity in a culturally affirming way that is also financially sustainable for the Hmong community through coaching and training. Guided by a statewide assessment of Hmong ECE needs of parents and those that who provide care, we will work to open a licensed ECE facility (for 50 children) at THI reflective of the needs identified. We will also work with up to 5 family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care providers in the Hmong community who desire support to become regulated, producing up to an additional 40 slots of care for the Hmong community. This collaboration builds on extensive work already completed or in-progress by THI to understand and provide culturally responsive supports to their community combined with WECA's deep knowledge and understanding of the ECE sector and experience working to bring FFNs into regulation through the Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESSN) Provider Assistance for Licensing (PAL) project.

THI is a nonprofit organization serving Hmong, Southeast Asian, Tibetan, Nepalese, and other refugee communities in Madison, Wisconsin with a mission of empowering community through education, health services, and preservation of Hmong heritage. Founded in 2018 in Madison, Wisconsin, THI serves as a central hub for the Hmong community in Dane County, providing a broad range of services that support their health, education, and well-being, and that offer cultural enrichment and language preservation, fostering trust, safety, and belonging.

THI has been a leader in providing culturally and linguistically affirming, holistic wrap-around behavioral health services for senior citizens. This has taken on increased significance in the wake of anti-Asian violence perpetrated on this community as a result of the pandemic, including its elders who typically are the caregivers of young children. THI also has provided culturally competent training on refugee trauma-informed mental health and cross-cultural training for service providers, professionals, and policymakers. THI leads efforts to improve academic achievement of youth through its innovative, award-winning Hmong Language and Cultural Enrichment Program, which is an intensive six-week summer program aimed at improving academic performance by increasing Hmong students' knowledge of their language, culture, and history, which supports their self-esteem, self-pride, and self-confidence. This program was awarded the 2021 Ellison S. Onizuka Memorial Award by the National Education Association for its significant achievement of equal opportunity for Asian and Pacific Islanders.

WECA, the state affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), has been a leader of bold change for the ECE industry. WECA has a deep history of engaging and supporting ECE in Wisconsin. Its vision is a Wisconsin where early care and education is viewed as a public good worthy of long-term, sweeping, and sustained public funding. This guiding vision includes a well-compensated early childhood workforce and ECE that is affordable and accessible for all families with young children. WECA centers diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in its philosophy, programs, and initiatives every day.

The vast majority of WECA's staff have significant lived experience in the ECE field, with first-hand knowledge of the challenges—and joys—of providing family and group care, which brings solid credibility to their relationships with providers. WECA's programs, built by ECE professionals for ECE professionals, embed continual feedback from the provider community. This positions it to carefully observe the challenges and opportunities within the sector. By listening deeply to provider concerns, staff create responsive feedback loops that lead to innovative, responsive solutions. This broad staff knowledge of the ECE sector, workforce, and ECE program needs and challenges is based in a critical foundation of providing services and support through WECA's programs: Food Program, REWARD Wisconsin Stipend Program, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESSN). In particular, WECA developed WEESSN as a direct-to-providers mechanism to support every aspect of the early education system from the perspective of ECE program operations and administration. WECA also leads Raising Wisconsin, a transformational, statewide advocacy initiative centered around affordable, accessible ECE with a well-compensated, professional workforce and optimal child well-being.

- 2. Please describe in detail your organization's experience and abilities in successfully providing early childhood services, technical assistance or programming. Include current work that is the same or similar to the work you are proposing to provide and any outcomes that can be highlighted from this work. Include detailed information about the demographics of individuals currently being served (number of individuals, age, race and ethnicity, income levels, geographic area of the City, and any other relevant demographic information).** Since 2010, THI has implemented the Hmong Language and Culture Enrichment Program, a comprehensive, high-quality, out-of-school time program, serving children ages 6 to 17, that supports positive youth development, educational achievement, and college, career, and community readiness. The program provides a safe and supportive learning environment for students to enhance their academic skills and prepare them for college and career through validation and affirmation of the Hmong culture and language. Increasing the students' knowledge of their language, culture, and history promotes increased positive self-esteem, self-pride, and self-confidence which, in turn, results in improved academic performance and test scores. Research shows that students who are conversant in their home language and culture score higher in academia (Ladson-Billings 1997; Tatum 2003; Gay 2000; Franklin, et al. 2001; Howard 1999). Parents and family members play an active role in the program and learn how to advocate for the needs of their students. This program has served over 390 students, of which 96% identify as Asian and 4% identify as mixed race.

THI is leading a group of community, philanthropic, and civic organizations, parent leaders, service providers, state officials, business interests, and academic leaders to develop and implement a community-driven, participatory research initiative that engages Hmong communities across Wisconsin. The goals are to determine the state of the Hmong in Wisconsin, including their health, early childhood, educational, economic, and housing needs, and formulate strategies that capitalize on community strengths to develop solutions. This community assessment will include an in-depth analysis of the ECE needs of Hmong families with young children. The assessment will also focus on Hmong ECE providers, many of whom are Hmong grandparents and elders who are able to impart wisdom, knowledge, language, and culture to their grandchildren with appropriate system and community support.

THI is a resource for anyone interested in advancing the community inclusive of the Hmong heritage with a commitment to ensure individuals desiring to learn about Hmong heritage can do so through its trainings and the voices of those impacted by the issues are heard. Lastly, providers and community members have access to culturally competent trainings (Hmong Health Summit, Hmong American Certificate Program, etc.), technical assistance, and consultations as they strive to serve the Hmong community.

WECA is a longstanding, steadfast champion of the early childhood workforce and ECE in Wisconsin, with the organization's daily work impacting the lives of thousands of early childhood educators, ECE programs, young children, and communities both directly and indirectly across the state. WECA is a recognized and respected leader, expert, and key partner in every aspect of early care and education at the local, state, and national levels. WECA manages four programs that support early care and education programs and early childhood educators. Each of these programs provides extensive services in the City of Madison.

WECA Food Program, operated for more than 35 years, is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and contracted to WECA through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). It is the only food program in Wisconsin to serve providers, children, and families in all 72 counties and all Tribal

nations, supporting family ECE providers in their critical daily role in children's lives to promote overall health, wellness, and development. WECA Food Program currently serves six providers in Madison with a total of 43 slots for children.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Wisconsin has offered scholarships to early childhood educators in Wisconsin since 1999 to make credit-based education more affordable and improve early childhood teacher compensation and retention. Over its 23-year history, T.E.A.C.H. has made a resounding impact by awarding more than 18,000 scholarships to more than 10,000 recipients. Scholarships support their efforts to complete credit-based early childhood education coursework through the Wisconsin Technical College System, University of Wisconsin System, private colleges, and two Tribal colleges. Since its inception, there have been 369 T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients in Madison.

REWARD Wisconsin Stipend Program recently marked its 21st anniversary. It has long been supported by federal ECE and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding. Stipends are awarded every six months to eligible professionals to increase income and encourage retention. In FY22, WECA provided 5,203 REWARD stipends valued at \$2,930,750. Currently, there are 679 REWARD Wisconsin Stipend recipients in the Madison area, 3.1% of whom identify as Asian.

WEESN is a nationally recognized leader in shared services and brings together center-based and family ECE providers to share information, resources, and staffing. WEESN supports the administrative and financial aspects of operating an ECE program, including budgeting, reporting, strategic planning, utilization of automation, policy creation, and navigating systems. WEESN currently serves more than 2,200 ECE programs across Wisconsin, including 60% of the regulated ECE programs in the Madison area, 25% of which are Spanish-speaking programs. This collaborative project with THI will be implemented through the WEESN program.

WEESN launched the PAL project in the northern and western regions of Wisconsin, after being awarded a competitive \$2.5 million contract in 2022 to shepherd 100 new licensed ECE programs. WEESN also supports start-up coaching and technical assistance in other regions of the state. General areas of support are centered on:

- A. Connecting providers with resources, tools, and templates relevant to child care start-up needs such as budgeting, space, environments, business planning, marketing, licensing and certification requirements, human resources, enrollment, and ECE management software
- B. Providing guidance with the pre-licensing business start-up worksheet, budget planning, tuition planning, informed rate creation, enrollment of students, marketing, handbook creation, and other needs for successful program start-up
- C. Assisting with job descriptions, job requirements, employee applications, and interviewing

- 3. Please describe the staff with direct responsibilities for this programming or service including required qualifications, experience and training. Include if the staff are demographically representative of the population served.** THI is led by its innovative leader, Peng Her, whose professional career has included leadership positions involving significant community engagement initiatives related to poverty reduction and place-based initiatives providing holistic services for communities marginalized by systemic inequities, poverty, and other factors. He previously served as the community relations coordinator for the University of Wisconsin-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty and as Vice President of Promise Zone and Partnerships for the Urban League of Greater Madison, where he cultivated and maintained partnerships with elected officials, funders, business leaders, and communities to design place-based, cradle-to-career systems of education, health and wellness, and employment services. Peng also sits on the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council, advocating to ensure that Hmong children and families in Wisconsin have access to high-quality early childhood educational programs and services. Peng is part of Pritzker's Wisconsin BIPOC coalition focused on Prenatal to 3 needs in the BIPOC community.

Ninah Thao serves as the lead ECE specialist at THI. She has a Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Studies from UW-Madison. Her focus was on development of young children and adolescents. She formerly worked at the Waisman Early Childhood program and as a 4K teacher mentoring new teachers, student employees, and evaluating individualized educational plans for children. Ninah is a creative leader with experience implementing elements of AnjiPlay in her classroom with students of color to support the freedom of children to play, learn, and experience independence. This supports children's self-determination in play, discovery, learning through play, growth in social-emotional development, and reflecting by sharing. Ninah and Peng will co-lead the implementation of this project.

WECA's team of more than 100 highly qualified, dedicated professionals brings a wealth of direct experience in ECE policy and systems expertise, along with unparalleled integrity and unwavering commitment to innovating the

organization's services. In recognition of this expertise, WECA Executive Director Ruth Schmidt and WEESN Co-Director Kelly Matthews serve on the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council; Kelly was specifically appointed to bring extensive knowledge of Wisconsin's family ECE sector. Ruth also serves on Congressman Mark Pocan's K-12 Early Childhood Advisory Committee. WEESN Co-Director Paula Drew has lived and worked in the City of Madison, contributing to the ECE sector for over two decades. Ruth, Kelly and Paula will all contribute as thought partners to this project and participate on committees as needed. Directly involved in this project are WEESN Start-Up coach Amy Fewel and WEESN Manager of Operations, Chanel Clark.

Amy Fewel has deep experience as both a Center Director and a Certification Specialist and Pre-Licensor serving both roles within the City of Madison. Amy uses strengths from both roles to provide Start-Up coaching to new ECE entrepreneurs to create financially sound, high-quality ECE programs. Amy is a level 15 on the Registry, has completed the TTAP (Training and Technical Assistance Professional) training and WECA's employee DEIB trainings.

Chanel Clark is WEESN Manager of Operations and is extensively engaged in early childhood education and community collaboration. Her participation includes involvement in the Madison ECE long-term planning meetings, School Aged Collaborative Work Group, ECHW workgroup, UW Madison Directors Caucus and Consortium groups, and she was a planning member for the Madison College ECE Conference. Chanel's past experiences include both teaching in and directing an ECE program in the City of Madison. Chanel currently oversees all operations as they relate to the Provider Assistance for Licensing project and additional start-up work that WEESN is currently implementing. Chanel has a registry level 15, also has the trainer endorsement, is a Tier 3 trainer through the Registry and has taken the DEIB employee training at WECA.

This collaboration incorporates both the cultural and linguistic expertise necessary to support the Hmong community of families and ECE providers and the ECE sector knowledge required to expand capacity of care in Madison. WECA and THI have collaborated since 2019, working together on community projects including bringing WEESN's local Tier 3 services to Dane County through a national competition and a recent Dream Up! Initiative to expand access to linguistic and culturally affirming ECE for the Hmong community. This joint proposal builds on the momentum and expansion of these projects in the City of Madison.

- 4. Please describe your organization's relationships to the community you serve and the broader early childhood community in Madison. Include in your answer how you solicit feedback and adapt your work to meet the needs of your community and specific examples of successful partnerships with various service providers. Include any qualitative or quantitative data sources used to inform these decisions.** Relationships play an important part in building community support. THI provides services statewide and has partnered with many Hmong and non-Hmong agencies statewide as well as in Madison. THI Executive Director Peng Her has been involved in the Hmong community in Madison for over 22 years. Mai Zong Vue, COO for THI, has more than 35 years of involvement in the Hmong community. Both are well regarded and respected and are often called upon as spokespersons to represent the Hmong community on community issues. As a trusted community entity, THI will use its vast connections in the Hmong and Southeast Asian community to recruit participants to serve on advisory, parent, and Hmong-speaking provider groups.

As a trained organizer, Peng Her has more than 22 years of community organizing and working with the Hmong community. THI uses a participatory process that centers the voices of the Hmong community in planning and implementing projects. Indeed, this project will be informed by the participatory assessment recently deployed by THI to understand the needs and barriers related to ECE for the Hmong population. This will lay the foundation for scalable and sustainable approaches to leverage the strengths of the Hmong community in Madison to meet the unique ECE needs of this community.

THI and partners have a track record of looking at data and setting goals to pursue equity; a good example of this is the Hmong Language and Cultural Enrichment Program. For many years, data related to the number of Hmong students in Madison at grade level for reading and math was not available because data was aggregated for Asian students as a whole, masking the disparities experienced by the Hmong community. The Hmong Institute worked with the school district to get disaggregated data which demonstrated that 90% of Hmong students were not at grade level in 2013, despite having disproportionately high levels of attendance and low levels of behavioral problems. These findings resulted in THI's creation of the nationally recognized Hmong Language and Cultural Enrichment Program which takes place each summer to provide targeted support for Hmong students.

WECA's office is located in Fitchburg, WI, just south of Madison. As such, a significant portion of its staff are well connected in the Madison community around focused ECE initiatives and groups including the Madison ECE long-term planning meetings, School Aged Collaborative Work Group, ECHW workgroup Madison Out of School Time, REACH Dane, Satellite Family ECE, UW-Madison's Institute on Poverty, School of Education, MMSD 4K Community site meetings, COWS High Road Strategy Center and School of Human Ecology, Downtown Madison Inc., The Hmong Institute, Centro Hispano, Community Coordinated ECE, Madison College, United Way, MadRep, Midwest urban Strategies, One City Early Learning, the ECE 4 All project, and others dedicated to the advancement of ECE in the City of Madison. These relationships led to projects such as: We Care for Dane kids, a multipronged approach to supporting children and families in Dane County; Sleeves Up for the Kids, a collaborative aimed at increasing awareness of COVID-19 vaccines and combatting vaccine hesitancy; and Madison College's expansive Workforce Innovation Grant, among others. WECA continues to work closely with each of these entities on behalf of the ECE community in a variety of ways including local Workforce Innovation Grants (Madison College) and DreamUp (THI).

Since its inception, WEESN has evolved in direct response to the localized needs of ECE programs and the rural, urban, and suburban communities in which they operate. WEESN understands that ECE programs are as diverse as the communities they support, and it is only when the community and providers are actively engaged in a collaborative evaluation process that learning can be fully maximized to iterate and sustain the network. Programming is shaped by those impacted most: ECE providers. Through quarterly and annual program evaluations and "quick check" surveys, providers share information about their experiences as members. This information is used by the WEESN team to assess programming, so it continues to create the most benefit for members. WEESN convenes a Voices of Providers group with participation from both family ECE providers and center directors who give critical feedback about current and future programming for WEESN. In 2021-22 WEESN contracted with Co-Create from UW-Madison to assess usability and benefit of services. Through this qualitative analysis it learned that WEESN-enrolled providers feel more confident, competent, and informed. They noted an increased ability to recruit and retain staff, solve problems, and reduce stress. We also learned that ECE programs accessing virtual services in Tiers 1 & 2 experienced confusion knowing what services were available to them and how to access them. Because of this WEESN transformed the onboarding process to include personal phone calls and mailed paper packets with detailed membership information that supplemented virtual information shared earlier. In 2023-24 WEESN contracted with Luminary Evaluation services to provide quantitative information about the financial benefits of WEESN for ECE programs. This data-driven approach enables WEESN to identify areas for improvement, measure its impacts, and inform decision-makers about the larger implications and needs of the field.

- 5. Please describe how your organization provides programming and services that have an impact on poverty, racial equity and social justice.** The history of the Hmong in the United States is one of enduring persecution and sacrifice. During the Vietnam War, the CIA covertly recruited and trained Hmong soldiers in Laos to fight in support of the United States against the North Vietnamese and communist Pathet Lao in what became known as the "Secret War." An estimated 40,000 Hmong were killed in combat during the war. After the withdrawal of U.S. troops, the Hmong, who were systematically targeted for supporting American troops, began immigrating to the United States to escape political persecution. Many settled in Wisconsin. Today, with more than 58,000 Hmong citizens, Wisconsin is home to the 3rd largest Hmong population in the US.

Hmong children and families face disparities in access to opportunity across a variety of indicators. In the context of ECE, the lack of information and services to support engagement of Hmong families and providers in Wisconsin's ECE system results in inequitable access to resources. THI and partners have an accomplished record of looking at data and setting goals to pursue equity; a good example of this is the Hmong Language and Cultural Enrichment Program. For many years, data related to the number of Hmong students in Madison at grade level for reading and math was not available because data was aggregated for Asian students as a whole, masking the disparities experienced by the Hmong community. The Hmong Institute worked with the school district to get disaggregated data which demonstrated that 90% of Hmong students were not at grade level in 2013, despite having disproportionately high levels of attendance and low levels of behavioral problems. These findings resulted in THI's creation of the nationally recognized Hmong Language and Cultural Enrichment Program which takes place each summer to provide targeted support for Hmong students.

THI has been a leader in providing culturally and linguistically affirming, holistic wrap-around behavioral health services for senior citizens. This has taken on increased significance in the wake of anti-Asian violence perpetrated on this community, including its elders who typically are the caregivers of young children. THI also has provided culturally

competent training on refugee trauma-informed mental health and cross-cultural training for service providers, professionals, and policymakers.

While successfully operating four trusted programs, WECA also has effectively built a multi-sector coalition around the Raising Wisconsin initiative, working to ensure every family with young children has the resources they need to access affordable, high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive ECE and the tools they need to support optimal health and well-being. These efforts place importance on closing the rural, urban, and suburban divides in addition to the racial, ethnic, and linguistic divisions experienced across the state. WECA is working to advance a diverse and representative early childhood workforce in Wisconsin at all levels through a focus on equitable policies and practices.

WECA launched an equity study in 2020 at the organizational level through the Nina Collective, a consulting collective that partners with organizations on systems change initiatives to advance racial equity within their organization and field, and it continues to utilize an equity lens in all operations as an organization. WECA's Board of Directors is 60% persons of color, and 21% of staff are persons of color. The WECA Annual Conference for the past three years has been focused on equity in early care and education, and the organization participates in the Alliance for Early Success' Operationalize Equity Cohort and has a staff team accepted into the Bank Street Center on Culture, Race & Equity's Coaching for Equity Collective. For the past three years, WECA, along with Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF), has been part of the Equity Leaders Action Initiative through the BUILD Initiative, with guidance from Dr. Sherri Killins Stewart, Director of State Systems Alignment and Integration with BUILD. DCF recently launched the Parent/Caregiver Equity Advisory Cabinet (PCEAC). WECA is leading the Advancing Equity in Wisconsin's Early Education Workforce initiative with design, direction, and oversight provided by Dr. Toshiba Adams. Finally, WECA has contracted with U.C. Berkeley Center for the Study of ECE Employment to complete a study on equity in the state's YoungStar education standards with a focus on making recommendations to ensure standards are equitable in design and application.

WECA's vision includes a well-compensated early childhood workforce and ECE that is affordable and accessible for all families with young children. Each program of WECA works to improve the financial wellbeing of the ECE workforce, many of whom earn poverty level wages, are over-representative of the BIPOC community, and are primarily women.

### **Proposed Programs/Services**

**1. Which method(s) of programming/services are you proposing (see RFP for a description of each)?** Create additional capacity for children ages birth to five in regulated care through individual coaching, training, and technical assistance.

**2. Please describe the specific programming or services proposed:** This proposal seeks funding for a collaborative project that expands ECE capacity for up to 90 children within the Hmong community through technical support from WECA's nationally recognized shared services network, WEESN, while building on THI's Hmong Language and Cultural Enrichment Program to create a culturally affirming Hmong-centered ECE curriculum. Furthermore, the process will be documented so that others can benefit from its dissemination.

**a. The specific methods for contributing to one or more of the goals stated in the RFP section 1.4**

**PHASE 1:** THI and WECA will begin by reviewing data collected from the statewide community assessment to understand critical gaps in information regarding the ECE needs, preferences, and assets of the Hmong community in Madison. This information will guide our implementation steps moving forward. For example, we may learn that parents prefer home-based environments for infants but would be willing to send their 3-5 yr. old children to a culturally affirming center-based program. We may learn that licensed infant/toddler care is a significant need. Based on these findings, we will create an action plan to achieve a licensed ECE program at the Hmong Institute capped at 50 slots, prioritizing the ages and preferences identified through the community assessment. THI and WECA will:

- Review licensing rules and regulations
- Contact pre-licensing at Community Coordinated ECE (4C) to discuss program goals and assess timeline of pre-licensing requirements
- Schedule a building inspection
- Commence the Start-up coaching protocol that include the following topics: high-quality environment programming and set-up, mission, vision and values, learning philosophy, start-up and ongoing budgets creation and business planning, marketing, structure and authority, job descriptions, hiring, parent and employee handbooks, contracts, family engagement, communications, connection to all available resources (T.E.A.C.H., REWARD, WEESN, City of

Madison Accreditation, YoungStar, Community Coordinated Child Care, CACFP, Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health, DCF, etc.)

- Apply for licensing and schedule pre-licensing visit
- Recruit, interview, and hire and train staff prior to opening
- Start to engage interested entrepreneurs in the community and FFNs who may be interested in becoming regulated
- Contact City of Madison for Accreditation and sign contract with YoungStar

The WEESN coaching model prioritizes being a “guide on the side” where “doing with” is valued over “doing for” because WEESN understands the importance of this skill building and expansion of capacity within an organization or individual. That means the needed skills are practiced in low-stakes situations so that greater success can be achieved when those tasks are needed to be done in real time for program development.

**PHASE 2:** WECA and THI will collaboratively engage with other interested community members to create a committee that will create a culturally affirming curriculum that will be used at the intergenerational ECE program and other potential programs in the future. THI and WECA will adapt the Hmong Language and Cultural Enrichment Program so that it is developmentally appropriate for children ages 0-5 while also cross walking the adaptation with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, the City of Madison Accreditation Standards, YoungStar, and DCF to ensure it meets high-quality standards for early childhood education. The committee created for this work will also review evidence based Culturally Responsive Education curriculum assessment tools that will be used to analyze the curriculum. Once the curriculum has been developed and piloted, THI and WECA will engage with institutions of higher education to introduce the curriculum to child development majors. This phase will also include continuing WEESN coaching support for THI’s ECE program with ongoing FFN outreach.

**PHASE 3:** The steps used for the launch of the intergenerational programming and the completed curriculum will be utilized to provide coaching and mentoring for up to five FFNs in the Hmong community who are interested in becoming regulated. Participants will have access to WEESN’s 18-hour *Build it Strong: Child Care Business Foundations* course and one-on-one coaching to open their business in the model described above. *Build it Strong* is evidence-based and mirrors the Iron Triangle of ECE Finance. In the past eight months, WEESN’s start-up coaching has helped over 100 programs on their path to licensure. This phase will also include ongoing WEESN coaching support for THI’s ECE program.

THI and WECA will document each step of these processes so the greater Hmong community across Wisconsin may replicate or adapt this work.

- b. A clear explanation of the evidence, research or documentation of promising practice that supports the programming or service proposed:** WEESN has a proven coaching and technical assistance record as noted by a recent proof of concept evaluation completed by UW-Madison Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies (Co-Create). Recent focus group and evaluation results show WEESN-enrolled providers feel more confident, competent, and informed. They noted an increased ability to recruit and retain staff, solve problems, and reduce stress. Between February 2020 and December 2021, during the height of the pandemic, ECE programs in WEESN experienced a 2% closure rate compared to programs not enrolled in the network, which experienced a 17% closure rate, showing the strength of this network in the face of unprecedented hardship and instability. The WEESN team has a coaching protocol held up nationally for other shared services networks as a comprehensive model.

**3. Where will services be provided and to whom? Include detailed information about the demographics of individuals that will be served (number of individuals, age, race and ethnicity, income levels, geographic area of the City, and any other relevant demographic information).** THI is located at 4402 Femrite Drive, Madison, Wisconsin, and will be the location for the intergenerational ECE program. Additional family ECE programs that THI and WECA work with will be either representative of the Hmong, Southeast Asian, Tibetan, Nepalese, and other refugee communities or be willing to support a majority of families from these communities in their programming. We estimate impacting up to 90 families through this project directly and many more indirectly through dissemination of materials and lessons learned. We estimate that families within this community live in many parts of the City of Madison.

While data on the Hmong community is scarce, demographic data compiled from the U.S. Census and other sources for the updated edition of the Hmong Chart Book, a partnership between the Hmong Institute and the Applied Population

Lab, demonstrates that this is a young community which is highly engaged in the labor force, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing ECE needs for this population. Key data points include:

- The Hmong population in Dane County is young, with over 9.9% under the age of 5 years old, compared to 6% of the total population according to 2015 data (the most recent available) and Hmong families tend to be larger with a size of 4.8 compared to 2.9 for total population in Wisconsin.
- Hmong are more likely to be in the labor force than the total population at 74% compared to 66%. They are also likely to be employed in industries that necessitate access to ECE for working parents, including after-hours care.
- The median household income for Hmong is \$49,804 compared to \$65,202 for the total population in the County, and 34% of Hmong children under age 5 are experiencing poverty compared to 11.6% of the total population.
- According to school district data, 80% of Madison school age English Language Learners are Hmong. 72% of Hmong students are considered low income. 80.6% of Hmong students are not proficient in reading and 69.0% are not proficient in math.

**4. Please describe how you will maintain a commitment to equity as demonstrated by the promotion of diversity (racial, socio-economic, ability, etc.) at all levels of programming or services.** This project is focused on supporting Hmong, Southeast Asian, Tibetan, Nepalese, and other refugee communities that have families with young children. Our commitment to this population is unwavering. We will prioritize these populations in hiring for positions and in marketing for enrollment. Moreover, with specific training in sustainable business practices, our goal is to impact the economic status of the FFNs that we work with in this project so they can earn a dignified wage for providing regulated child care and strengthen the financial well-being of the ECE center. In meeting each FFN and the ECE center staff where they are and customizing the dosage, modality, and content of support offered, equity is embedded in the coaching practice. Committee members will be prioritized from the target service population of THI.

**5. Please describe your timeline for implementing services. If you are proposing direct provision of care, describe any relevant hours of service as well as a timeline for any assessment within the program.** Hours of service for THI's care program will be determined based on feedback from the community.

Months 1-2: Review assessment data, outreach to the community, and project management planning

Months 3-6: Pre-licensing and program planning for THI ECE; curriculum development committee formation and work, FFN outreach

Months 7-10: THI Program set-up, hiring, and marketing; curriculum development, licensing application

Months 10-12: Launch THI Intergenerational ECE program; Apply for City of Madison Accreditation and YoungStar; curriculum CRE assessment; FFN outreach

Months 13-16: Engage with FFN community and learn about challenges, needs, and goals, THI joins WEESN for ongoing support; curriculum pilot

Months 17-24: Start-up coaching with FFNs interested in becoming licensed or certified

Months 24-36: Start-up coaching with FFNs, disseminate information about successes, lessons learned, and challenges; assist other communities interested in implementing the model; introduce curriculum to institutions of higher education

**6. Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with agencies to ensure that services are not duplicated. If the proposal is a collaboration of multiple agencies, please describe the following:**

- a. Why does collaboration enhance this proposal?** THI and WECA have deep and complementary experiences to ensure we are not only increasing access to ECE in the City of Madison but also that it is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically affirming to the Hmong, Southeast Asian, Tibetan, Nepalese, and other refugee communities. Our organizations and organizational leadership have worked collaboratively for years on different projects, most recently a Dream Up! proposal that directly contributes to this work. Each partner has valued knowledge to share and wisdom to gain.
- b. What formal agreements are/will be in place between the agencies to support this proposal?** An explicit Scope of Work will be created that outlines goals, roles, responsibilities, timelines, and measures of success.
- c. How will decisions about programming and services be made within the collaboration?** Decisions will be made collaboratively as they were when writing the proposal and creating the concept. Both organizations agree on a



shared power approach and direction for planning and implementation will also be largely driven by community input and data from the assessment.

**d. How will this collaboration avoid duplication of services?** Each organization in this partnership brings unique knowledge and capabilities to the project. Additionally, we are aware of other community partners and their strengths and will leverage them as needed rather than attempting to “reinvent the wheel.” Currently there is only one licensed Hmong-speaking home-based provider and no licensed Hmong-speaking ECE centers in Madison. Similarly, there are not any culturally responsive ECE courses for Hmong-speaking individuals to complete to become licensed. Therefore, there will be no duplication of services to create additional capacity for Hmong families with children ages birth to five and in coaching, training, and technical assistance. By aligning proven practices within coaching for start-up, this project will be ahead of the game in that the coaching infrastructure is in place and ready to start immediately.

### **Measurement of Success**

**1. Which System Level Indicator (see RFP section 1.4) will your proposal address and how?** This proposal will develop new programs to support the growing need for regulated ECE through the opening of THI’s Intergenerational ECE program and creation of newly regulated family ECE homes. If we are successful with our curriculum pilot, it will also expand the capacity of all early childhood professionals to serve children with high barriers to success by ensuring ECE professionals can implement curriculum that is culturally affirming.

**2. Which Population Level Indicator (see RFP section 1.4) will your proposal address and how?** Increased number of children served by high-quality ECE programs including, but not limited to:

- Infants and toddlers
- Children and families participating in ECE assistance programs
- Providers who speak home languages of children and families

Possibly also these two additional categories over time:

- Is in a geographically underserved area of Madison
- Weekend, flexible, and evening care options

While statistics show that the ECE crisis is grave for the general population of Wisconsin, with 54% of people residing in a ECE desert, anecdotal evidence gained through THI’s role as an institution of trust suggests that the ECE challenges faced by the Hmong community are especially acute. One factor is the cost of care, which is prohibitive for many Hmong families. The average cost of center-based care for an infant, according to data from 2019, was \$16,240 for Dane County. Recognizing that Hmong families are larger, on average, than in the general population, costs for ECE for multiple children add up quickly. Barriers to accessing care are compounded by the lack of linguistically and culturally responsive services available through Wisconsin’s regulated ECE system.

Data from YoungStar indicates there are no Hmong-speaking providers participating in the program in Dane County. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a substantial portion of Hmong families rely on informal care, also known as family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care. The current lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate training and other support for ECE providers are barriers to Hmong-speaking informal care providers becoming licensed or certified and is one of the issues to be addressed in this project.

**3. How will success be assessed and evaluated? Include a description of the tools, screeners or assessments that will be used.** This project will be successful when we have created increased capacity for care in the City of Madison through THI and collaborations with FFNs that come into regulation that are both financially sound and culturally affirming to the Hmong community of families they will serve. Specifically, over the course of this project we will provide coaching and technical assistance that leads to the creation 50 new care slots through an intergenerational ECE program housed at THI and up to an additional 40 new care slots through newly regulated family child care homes. WECA will utilize a customized digital CRM system to track outcomes and activities with each ECE program including training completion, coaching content, licensure achievement, slots created, and demographic data on those served. Additionally, WEESN has an annual survey that tracks the Iron Triangle of Child Care Finance to track financial security for each newly licensed program. The CRM reporting mechanism can pull aggregate data on each of these outcomes within any desired timeframe, thus providing metrics needed for reporting requirements of this project.

THI and WECA will form a committee with other interested community members to review Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) curriculum assessment tools such as *Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard* and *Culture in the Classroom: Standards, Indicators, and Evidences for Evaluating Culturally Responsive Teaching*. This committee will also crosswalk the curriculum with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, YoungStar standards, and City of Madison Accreditation for congruency.

Additionally, THI and WECA will produce qualitative information as it relates to the replication of our project in other locations including:

- Coaching and technical assistance protocols
- Lessons learned through the community survey on ECE needs with the Hmong community
- Curriculum development and pilot project results

### **III. Disclosures**

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest: The City of Madison Community Development Division has generously supported WECA's Annual Conference for many years. In 2023, the City of Madison provided funding in the amount of \$5,340, which allowed us to award 24 scholarships for early childhood educators in Madison to attend one and/or two days of the conference in-person at the Madison Marriott West in Middleton, WI. Priority of scholarships were awarded to early educators working directly with children in group centers or family-based ECE programs located in the City of Madison who serve a low-income population, serve a Spanish-speaking population, and/or work in the Northside or Leopold Early Childhood Zone. This opportunity includes a complimentary one-year WECA membership and virtual access to all pre-recorded sessions. WECA's Annual Conference allows early childhood professionals the opportunity to earn more than 50 hours of free continuing education credit, connect with other early childhood educators across the state, and learn from well-respected experts in the field.

Disclosure of Contract Failures, Litigations: Not applicable.

### **IV. Budget**

Please find our proposed budget attached.

## Early Childhood Funding RFP Total Budget

Name of Agency:

Name of Proposal:

### Instructions

Complete the table below by filling in the yellow cells. Formulas within this spreadsheet will autofill into the white Total Revenue cells.

Proposals for a Single Program/Service: If you are proposing one program, for example, direct child care programming at a single location, you will only need to fill in columns B and C.

Proposals for Multiple Programs/Services: If you are proposing to include multiple methods of services or programs, for example, on-site child care programming and separately provide consultation services for other programs, two proposals (each with a separate budget) should be submitted separately. If you are proposing to do the same service at multiple locations, for example, child care at two different locations, one proposal and budget may be submitted. In this case, use columns C, D and E below to delineate the budget for each program within your proposal. You may insert more columns, if needed.

Please contact Monty Marsh (mmarsh@cityofmadison.com) for any questions about clarifications regarding joint or singular proposals.

| Revenue Source                | Agency 2024 Total | Program A    | Program B | Program C |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Dane County                   | \$ -              | \$ -         | \$ -      | \$ -      |
| United Way of Dane County     | \$ -              | \$ -         | \$ -      | \$ -      |
| City of Madison-This program  | \$ -              | \$ 75,000.00 | \$ -      | \$ -      |
| City of Madison-Other Funding | \$ 5,000.00       | \$ -         | \$ -      | \$ -      |
| Other Government*             | \$ 21,316,398.00  | \$ -         | \$ -      | \$ -      |
| Fundraising/Donations**       | \$ 9,650,602.00   | \$ -         | \$ -      | \$ -      |
| User Fee                      | \$ 144,950.00     | \$ -         | \$ -      | \$ -      |
| Total Revenue                 | 31116950          | 75000        | 0         | 0         |

\*Other Government: includes all federal and state funds, as well as funds from other counties (outside Dane County), other cities, villages or townships

\*\*Fundraising: includes funds received from foundations, corporations, churches and individuals, as well as those raised from fundraising events

## Early Childhood Funding RFP Program Budget Breakout

Name of Agency:

### Instructions

Complete the table below by filling in the yellow cells. Formulas within this spreadsheet will autofill into the white Total Revenue cells.

Proposals for a Single Program/Service: If you are proposing one program, for example, direct child care programming at a single location, you will only need to fill in columns B and C.

Proposals for Multiple Programs/Services: If you are proposing to include multiple methods of services or programs, for example, on-site child care programming and separately provide consultation services for other programs, two proposals (each with a separate budget) should be submitted separately. If you are proposing to do the same service at multiple locations, for example, child care at two different locations, one proposal and budget may be submitted. In this case, use columns C, D and E below to delineate the budget for each program within your proposal. You may insert more columns, if needed.

Please contact Monty Marsh (mmarsh@cityofmadison.com) for any questions about clarifications regarding joint or singular proposals.

| Account Category            | Agency 2024             | Program A Budget    | Program B Budget | Program C Budget | Total City Request  |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>A. Personnel</b>         |                         |                     |                  |                  |                     |
| Salary                      | \$5,238,170             | \$ 28,220.00        | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 28,220.00        |
| Taxes/Benefits              | \$ 1,979,913.00         | \$ 6,084.00         | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 6,084.00         |
| <b>Subtotal</b>             | <b>\$ 7,218,083.00</b>  | <b>\$ 34,304.00</b> | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ 34,304.00</b> |
| <b>B. Other Operating</b>   |                         |                     |                  |                  |                     |
| Insurance                   | \$ 52,169.00            | \$ 200.00           | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 200.00           |
| Professional Fees/Audit     | \$ 1,060,785.00         | \$ 200.00           | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 200.00           |
| Postage/Office & Program    | \$ 25,461.00            | \$ 100.00           | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 100.00           |
| Supplies/Printing/Photocopy | \$ 113,885.00           | \$ 250.00           | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 250.00           |
| Equipment/Furnishings/Depr. | \$ 99,929.00            | \$ 350.00           | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 350.00           |
| Telecommunications          | \$ 19,488.00            | \$ 90.00            | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 90.00            |
| Training/Conferences        | \$ 131,423.00           | \$ 250.00           | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 250.00           |
| Food/Household Supplies     | \$ -                    | \$ -                | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ -                |
| Travel                      | \$ 394,653.00           | \$ 1,135.00         | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 1,135.00         |
| Vehicle Costs/Depreciation  | \$ -                    | \$ -                | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ -                |
| Other*                      | \$ 202,828.00           | \$ -                | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ -                |
| <b>Subtotal</b>             | <b>\$ 2,100,621.00</b>  | <b>\$ 2,575.00</b>  | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ 2,575.00</b>  |
| <b>B. Space</b>             |                         |                     |                  |                  |                     |
| Rent/Utilities/Maintenance  | \$ 166,984.00           | \$ 600.00           | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 600.00           |
| Mortgage Principal/Interest | \$ -                    | \$ -                | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ -                |
| Depreciation/Taxes          | \$ 3,578.00             | \$ 20.00            | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 20.00            |
| <b>Subtotal</b>             | <b>\$ 170,562.00</b>    | <b>\$ 620.00</b>    | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ 620.00</b>    |
| <b>D. Special Costs</b>     |                         |                     |                  |                  |                     |
| Assistance to Individuals   | \$ 20,083,953.00        | \$ -                | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ -                |
| Payment to Affiliate Orgs.  | \$ -                    | \$ -                | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ -                |
| Sercie/Program Subcontrs.   | \$ 1,210,970.00         | \$ 37,500.00        | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ 37,500.00        |
| Other*                      | \$ -                    | \$ -                | \$ -             | \$ -             | \$ -                |
| <b>Subtotal</b>             | <b>\$ 21,294,923.00</b> | <b>\$ 37,500.00</b> | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ 37,500.00</b> |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>\$ 30,784,189.00</b> | <b>\$ 74,999.00</b> | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ -</b>      | <b>\$ 74,999.00</b> |

\*If costs are included in Other rows, please provide an explanation of those costs below:

**Other Operating:** Miscellaneous Expenses

**Other Special Costs:**

