



Early Learning Shared Services Alliance

100 Women Strong Proposal

Childcare Workforce Development Initiative

1. Background and Introduction

100 Women Strong is in its second year of a three-year focus on women's economic empowerment - an effort to build assets in our community to achieve economic independence and resiliency for vulnerable women and their families. One critical need for women hoping to earn a living wage and raise their families out of poverty is access to high quality affordable childcare. As childcare programs struggle to build back their enrollments from historic lows during the height of the pandemic, the greatest challenge they face is finding staff. In a recent survey of childcare providers in Orange County, 60% of programs report teacher openings; and 78% say that it is difficult or extremely difficult to hire and retain teachers.

The Early Learning Shared Services Alliance (ELSSA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2021 to support local independent childcare programs through centralized business administration services and business coaching. Services offered include staff recruitment, enrollment marketing, bookkeeping and financial reporting, as well as free access to childcare management software. Since September 2021, ELSSA has recruited and placed close to 100 staff members for local childcare programs. ELSSA's childcare business coaches encourage providers to utilize the additional resources that become available through increased enrollments, modest tuition increases and ARPA grant funding to increase teacher wages in the effort to attract and retain quality teachers.

2. Childcare Workforce Development Vision

To provide a long-term solution to the childcare staffing shortage in Central Florida, ELSSA's vision is to develop a pipeline of qualified staff through a Childcare Workforce Initiative that would include the following elements:

- Partner with Central Florida high schools and colleges that have childcare curricula to recruit students for internships with ELSSA childcare programs
 - Valencia, Seminole, UCF, Rollins, Orange County Public Schools, Orange Technical College
 - Present students with career advancement opportunities that can be achieved in the childcare industry through continuing education
- Provide paid 6-month internships in ELSSA childcare programs
 - Receive mentoring and coaching from ELSSA Childcare Program Directors

- Explore opportunities for internship funding through CareerSource, Orange County, City Municipalities, private foundations and charities, etc.
- Ensure that interns achieve DCF (Department of Children & Families)-required 45-hour credentials to be able to work independently in a classroom
- Substitute Pool
 - Internship graduates enter substitute pool to work across ELSSA schools
 - Provides new teachers opportunity to work in a variety of childcare settings
 - Provides temporary solution for staffing shortages in childcare programs
 - While serving in substitute pool, participants take coursework to attain CDA (Child Development Associate) certification
 - When CDA credential is attained, participants placed in an ELSSA childcare program as a lead teacher.
- Continuing Education and Career Advancement
 - Program members continue to work with ELSSA career counselor to attain additional credentials (AA, BA, Directors Credential, VPK Endorsements)
 - Utilize Teach Scholarships and explore additional funding sources through Children's Forum to support continuing education.
- Infrastructure Development
 - Establish a pipeline of new talent entering the industry with the support of constituents to expand the capacity of early childcare education in Central Florida
 - Explore and support childcare business entrepreneurship (Family Childcare Homes & Centers) to address the childcare desert areas through partnership with National Entrepreneur Center, BizLink Orange, SCORE, Chambers of Commerce, NAWBO, SBDC, Prospera, etc.

3. 100 Women Strong Grant Initiative

A 24-month grant from 100 Women Strong can help jump-start ELSSA's Workforce Development Initiative in 2023. We anticipate the initiative to include the following phases of activity:

- Phase I: Design and Plan – 90 Days to 6 months
 - Recruit and hire Workforce Development Program Manager
 - Meet with constituents to build partnerships for Workforce Development Initiative (local schools, Career Source, Goodwill Career Center, Universal, I-Drive initiative, Dress for Success Greater Orlando, etc.)
 - Investigate other models (e.g., Career Edge in Sarasota)
 - Design Pilot Program and Preliminary Funding Strategy (Career Source, ARPA funds, other local and state resources)
 - Recruit participants in first cohort (10-20 students)

Phase I Outcomes:

- Pilot Program Plan
 - Committed Partners
 - Decision Regarding Feasibility of Substitute Pool Program
 - Funding Plan for Paid Internships
 - 10-20 Committed Interns (to begin internships in Fall 2023)
- Phase II: Pilot Program (Internship) – 6 months
 - Provide career coaching and workforce readiness training
 - Place students in paid internships
 - Regular check-ins, feedback, problem-solve, provide support to interns, ensure education milestones are being met
 - Design and plan Substitute Program
 - Fee structure/budget
 - Technology platform for requesting and assigning substitutes
 - Funding plan for 1st Year of Substitute Program

Phase II Outcomes:

- 80% of Interns complete program (Fulfill hours requirement, gain 45-Hour DCF credential)
 - Substitute Program designed, funded and ready to launch
 - Plan to scale Intern program to 100 participants per year
- Phase III: Launch & Manage Substitute Program – 6 months
 - Recruit and train 5-10 substitutes
 - Day-to-day management of substitute program
 - Job placement plan for substitutes at end of 6 months

Phase III Outcomes:

- Evaluation of Substitute Program
 - Go/No Go decision to continue and scale Substitute Program
 - Plan to scale Substitute Program (budget, funding sources)
- Phase IV: Ongoing Career Coaching/Advancement
 - Funding strategy for continuing education (Teach Scholarships, other)
 - Regular check-ins with program participants to ensure meeting educational and career milestones.
 - Exploration and advocacy for higher wages & benefits for childcare workers in Central Florida

Risk Factors/Uncertainties

- **Language** – A relatively high percentage of the childcare community (both teachers and owners/directors) are non-English speaking. In hiring the ELSSA Workforce Development Program Manager, preference will be given to applicants who are bilingual to make it easier to recruit non-English speaking interns and childcare programs to participate in the internship program.
- **Supply of Interns** – It is unknown at this time whether there are enough participants in childcare education programs in Central Florida to create a sustainable pipeline of new entrants into the field. We may need to recruit outside of the local schools (college & high school) to support an Intern Program and viable pipeline at scale. To supplement the supply of interns, we will engage in discussions with Career Source Central Florida to connect with candidates looking for career change opportunities, reemployment services, veteran services, and youth programs. In addition, the Early Learning Coalition of Orange County is planning a marketing campaign to attract new teachers to the childcare industry. In preliminary conversations with the ELCOC, they have agreed to funnel candidates who respond to the marketing campaign to the ELSSA internship/workforce development program.
- **Viability of a Substitute Program** – 4C has had a Substitute Program in the past but ended the program. As part of the feasibility study for the Substitute Program in Phase I, we will explore the economic viability of a Substitute Program (what programs can afford to pay for substitutes relative to the cost of the program, the ability to retain substitutes when they most likely will be in high demand for full-time hire, etc).
- **Liability** – As part of the Substitute Program feasibility study, ELSSA will evaluate the risks/costs of maintaining a substitute pool – background screening, workers compensation insurance, liability insurance, etc. These factors will be considered as part of the Substitute Pool Go/No Go decision.

Budget: Per Year for Two Years

Workforce Development Program Manager One Year Salary:	\$60,000
Payroll Taxes & Workers Comp:	\$4,692
Benefits (Health, 401(k), Vehicle & Cell Phone Allowance	<u>\$10,080</u>
All-In Cost	\$74,772
Administrative/Incidental Expenses:	<u>\$5,000</u>
Total Budget	<u>\$79,772</u>

Note: The Early Learning Coalition of Orange County has expressed preliminary interest in providing matching funds for the 100 Women Strong 2023 grant to extend the Grant Period to two years.