

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

INFANT/TODDLER CHILDCARE CENTER

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BELLINGHAM

LEASOR

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1. RFP Summary

First Congregational Church of Bellingham (FCCB), in partnership with the Opportunity Council's Center for Retention and Expansion of Child Care (C-RECC), announces a Request for Proposals (RFP) from experienced providers (Provider) interested in running an infant/toddler child care business in the church space.

1.1 Childcare Center Opportunity

The C-RECC in partnership with FCCB is seeking proposals from providers interested in owning/operating a high-quality, inclusive infant/toddler childcare center (CCC) housed at the First Congregational Church located in downtown Bellingham.

The congregation at FCCB is aware of the critical need for infant/toddler care in the community and as part of their local social justice outreach has prioritized using part of their building space for a childcare facility. FCCB will lease the space to the Provider but will not be involved in programming or daily operations. The Provider and FCCB will be co-applicants for grant funding for necessary renovations with the goal of having the space operational by summer 2026.

1.2 Description of the Child Care Center

The Center will be located in the basement of the church with a dedicated entrance on the south side of building off D Street. The configuration provides approximate license capacity of 15. The space includes 2 classrooms, warming kitchen, two-stall bathroom, and outdoor play space.

1.3 Childcare Center Location and Neighborhood

FCCB is on a main street leading into downtown Bellingham between the Broadway Park and Lettered Street residential areas. It is on a main bus route and has a large parking lot on the west side of the building. A city-maintained toddler playground and park area is across the street on the south side of the building.

1.4 Project Schedule

This Request for Proposal was released to the public in July 2025 and will remain open until the right partner provider is selected. The intention is to find a partner and prepare renovation plans prior to the release of the 2026 Whatcom County Healthy Children's Fund Capital Projects Grant – projected for Summer of 2026. Alternative project scheduling will be considered based off of accessibility to other renovation funding opportunities.

2. Scope of Services, Costs, Enrollment and Operating Policies

2.1 Description of Services

The Center will provide a high-quality, well-regarded childcare program serving families in Whatcom County in accordance with the following scope of services and operating policies. The Provider will be solely responsible for the ongoing operation of the Center and for funding the day-to-day operations of the Center.

a. Program Capacity - The Infant Toddler Center may be licensed for up to 15 children—birth to 30 months.

b. Pedagogy - To ensure the quality of children’s daily experiences at the Center and promote positive child outcomes, the Provider should refer to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)’s Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria related to educational requirements for teaching staff, ongoing professional development, curriculum, family involvement, and other criteria for this RFP. FCCB seeks a Provider that can articulate a pedagogy that reflects the NAEYC philosophy and program policies for Infant/Toddler Care and offers a comprehensive curriculum plan based on the Washington State Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines.

c. Program Participation - The Provider will participate in the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) Early Achievers Program and professional development opportunities provided by Child Care Aware and local colleges.

d. Licensing - The Provider will maintain good standing with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, & Families (DCYF).

e. Hours of Operation/Holiday Closures - The Center’s hours of operation should be Monday – Friday, with hours of operation being convenient to working families. Specifics to be determined by the tenant in conjunction with FCCB.

f. Ongoing Operations - The Provider will be responsible to:

- i. provide the highest quality early childhood education based on established criteria related to educational requirements for teaching staff, ongoing professional development, curriculum, family involvement, etc.
- ii. oversee day-to-day operations of the Center
- iii. operate the Center in compliance with WA State DCYF licensing regulations and respond to requests and/or concerns of any regulatory agency
- iv. hire and maintain qualified staff

- v. train and evaluate staff
- vi. provide daily structured learning activities
- vii. provide nutritional meals
- viii. maintain a clean and hygienic Center to ensure safe and sanitary conditions and to meet the health and safety requirements of state licensing regulations
- ix. provide supervision of Center staff by the Director or Assistant Director during all hours the Center is operating
- x. maintain the DCYF standards for teacher-child ratios for the proper supervision of children at all times
- xi. ensure that all persons providing services to the Center successfully undergo a criminal background check
- xii. implement fiscal cost controls to ensure cost-effectiveness while maintaining high-quality Center operations
- xiii. administer the enrollment process: applications for enrollment, waitlist, orientation, and collection of all fees and tuition payments from families
- xiv. oversee the assessment of children's development and the development of the program in each room and the Center as a whole

2.2 Childcare Center Costs primarily paid by FCCB

a. Building and Building Systems - FCCB will provide and pay for the operation, maintenance, and repair of the building and the building systems (which shall be defined as the heating, cooling, plumbing, electrical, and structural systems).

b. Utilities - FCCB will provide all basic utility services to the Center such as water/sewer services, gas, and electricity, but will not provide telephone and data services.

c. Janitorial - The Provider will provide their own janitorial service.

d. Maintenance - The Provider will have certain maintenance obligations regarding the Center as specified in the lease.

e. Building Security - Entry to the Center will be controlled by keycard access. Issuance of keycards for access to the Center will be limited to the Provider and Center

staff. FCCB will provide initial keycards for Center staff, and the Provider will be required to pay a reasonable fee for lost keycards or the issuance of additional replacement keycards. Off-hour entry to the building and Center should be communicated to FCCB administration.

2.3 Childcare Center Costs paid by the Provider

a. Base Rent - The selected Provider will pay rent monthly at the amount agreed upon in the lease. There will be an initial five (5) year lease term with an additional four (4)-year option term. FCCB will conduct an annual review of the contract by FCCB.

b. Security Deposit - \$4,000.

c. Telephone and Data Services - The Provider will procure and pay for telephone and data services.

d. Insurance - The Provider will procure and pay for the insurance required by the Trustee Board of FCCB and by the state of Washington.

e. Janitorial - The Provider will have janitorial obligations regarding the Center as specified in the lease.

f. Maintenance - The Provider will have certain maintenance obligations regarding the interior of the Center as specified in the lease.

g. Furniture and Appliances - The Provider will procure and pay for all furnishings of the Center including children's furniture (indoor and outdoor), storage furniture, office furniture, area rugs, all appliances (including refrigerators, freezers, microwaves, dishwasher, and washer and dryer for laundry), audio-visual equipment, and security devices within the Center. All appliances must be pre-approved by FCCB before installation.

h. Office Equipment and Operating Supplies - The Provider will procure and pay for all equipment in the Center including office equipment such as copy machines, computers, telephones, and office supplies. The Provider will procure and pay for all operating supplies, including additional keycards, toys, and books.

i. Signage - The Provider will provide and pay for any signage external to the premises and within the building. Signage within the building will be limited and must be approved in advance by FCCB. All signage must be consistent with signage concepts for the building.

2.4 Enrollment Policies

a. Subsidized Enrollment Spaces - The Provider will solicit and accept families using the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy.

b. Enrollment Priorities - The Provider will create an inclusive and diverse environment for children and staff. Written enrollment policy will include a non-discrimination notice based on race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, marriage status, or national origin.

c. Additional Services - While not a mandatory requirement for the award of the lease, additional review points will be given to Proposers who offer bilingual programming and/or family support services either individually or through partnerships.

3. Minimum Qualifications

Each Proposer must demonstrate that they have met the following minimum requirements and can successfully perform all the required operating services as described above. FCCB may reject proposals from Proposers that do not clearly demonstrate possession of the minimum qualifications or request clarification from Proposers who fail to meet any minimum qualification requirement(s).

a. The Proposer must demonstrate satisfaction of the following qualifications or employ a Center Director that meets qualifications:

- i. An Initial Certificate in Early Childhood Education or DCYF approved equivalent related credits;
- ii. Completion of DCYF mandated pre-service training and certifications;
- iii. A minimum of three (3) years of experience owning or managing a DCYF licensed child care program;
- iv. Experience providing care for infants/toddlers (ages 3 -30 months).

b. The Proposer must be a registered business with the Washington Secretary of State or become registered prior to lease execution. The Proposer must also obtain and keep current the necessary licenses and permits from the Department of Revenue and City of Bellingham.

c. If the Proposer is a nonprofit organization, the Proposer must provide proof of its tax-exempt status.

d. The Proposer must remain current and compliant with all applicable federal and state tax obligations, including, but not limited to, business taxes, payroll taxes, sales taxes, and must have filed all required tax returns with the United States Internal Revenue Service and the Washington State Department of Revenue.

e. The Proposer must not have filed for bankruptcy protection within the last five (5) years.

4. Proposal Response Format

4.1 Proposal Preparation Assistance

a. C-RECC will offer technical assistance with both the process of filling out the online form and preparing responses when requested. Proposers who wish to receive this assistance should contact C-RECC directly at: info@creccnw.org

b. Tours of FCCB Center space are available upon request. Requests should be submitted via C-RECC.

4.2 Proposal Submission

To ensure uniformity and ease of comparison, all proposals must be submitted via the online Proposal Form posted on the C-RECC website.

4.3 Proposal Format

The online Proposal Form will consist of three parts: Programming & Services; Qualifications, Education & Experience; and Business Management & Financial Planning. Each section will be worth 25 points.

a. Programming & Services

i. Statement of Philosophy and Mission Statement – Provide a brief statement about your program philosophy, mission of your work, including the most important goals of your intended early learning program.

ii. Program Curriculum - Describe your overall curriculum philosophy and approach. If a particular curriculum is subscribed to, name it. Describe how your curriculum will meet the individual needs of each student to maximize growth and development. Explain the tools and processes you will use to evaluate curriculum success and facilitate continuing program improvement.

iii. Scope of Services – Describe, if any, additional or unique programming or services that will be offered. Include any special needs accommodations, ancillary activities,

dual languages, or parent resources you will provide, or partner to provide for families. Name any organization that you will partner with.

iv. Family Partnerships - Describe how you will promote family support and involvement in your program. Explain how you will facilitate communication and partnership between families and staff.

v. Cultural & Linguistic Responsiveness - Describe how you will be responsive and supportive of student and family cultural and linguistic needs (beyond translation of materials). This includes the capacity to tailor services to diverse types of families.

vi. Program Operation and Staffing - Explain in detail the hours of operation, how many staff you intend to hire, and the student/staff ratio maintained throughout the day. Describe your plans for staff recruitment, retention, and continuing professional development for yourself and staff.

b. Qualifications, Education & Experience

i. Education & Training – Provide details regarding all Early Childhood Education credits earned and satisfaction of all pre-service training mandated by DCYF.

ii. Work History - Provide a work history demonstrating a minimum of 3 years owning or managing a licensed child care program in Washington State. Specify ages served and highlight experience caring for children ages 0 to 30 months.

c. Business Management & Financial Planning

i. Cost Analysis/Break Even Worksheet – Complete a tentative operating budget including proposals for tuition rates, staff wages, and other expenses. Use \$2,500 as monthly rent for this exercise, actual rate may be higher depending on tax-exempt or for-profit status. Worksheet attached. *FCCB will not request access to your actual operating budget or financial information and recognizes that all projected numbers shared at this point are subject to change.*

ii. Facility Startup – Describe any prior experience in the startup process of a child care program. Briefly explain what startup costs you expect for this program and how you intend to fund those costs. Elaborate on your willingness to be co-applicant for grant funding or other plans to fund the renovation costs necessary to meet DCYF health & safety standards.

iii. Enrollment Administration – Describe your methodology for calculating tuition fees and how you will ensure tuition fees are in keeping with local economy and your families’

ability to pay. Explain your plans for marketing to a diverse community and how you will ensure maximum enrollment and steady income.

5. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

5.1 Initial Review

Following Proposal submission, Proposals will be reviewed for completeness and satisfaction of minimum qualifications. All Proposers will be notified of initial acceptance or rejection of proposal within a week of submission.

5.2 Selection Panel

Proposals that meet initial acceptance requirements will be shared with a Selection Panel. The Selection Panel will be comprised of three or more FCCB members who have experience working with young children and their families. The panel in, consultation with C-RECC, will invite high-scoring Proposers for an in-person interview.

5.3 In-Person Interviews

The Selection Panel will hold in-person interviews with each of the short-listed Proposers. Interview dates will be based off the RFP Timeline. The same set of interview questions will be used for all Proposers and may include follow-up questions. Proposers will have the option of inviting a member of the selection panel to tour their current facility.

5.4 Scoring Rubric

Programming & Services	25 points available
Qualifications, Education, & Experience	25 points available
Business Management & Financial Planning	25 points available
Interview	25 points available
100 points Total	

6. Award of Lease

The successful Proposer will be offered a Memorandum of Understanding to partner for the development of the Childcare Center. The Lease will be offered at the time renovation funding is secured.