

# ***Child Care Provider Network***

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## **Abstract**

The Child Care Provider Network is a shared-service cooperative for five home-based child care providers in Osceola County, Florida. In order to meet high market demands, members purpose to increase profits for maintaining or expanding independent services by participating in a joint purchasing enterprise, thereby benefiting from economies of scale. Members merge resources and share skills to fulfill responsibilities as co-owners of the enterprise. The Child Care Provider Network will consequently implement a collaborative marketing campaign to establish a collective brand of locally accessible home-based child care.

In addition to participating in cooperative business education and planning sessions, members of the Child Care Provider Network will work with the Osceola Small Business Development Center, to obtain small business counseling and participate in defined business management workshops, increasing professional capacity. Members of the cooperative also benefit directly from alliance with the Osceola Coalition for School Readiness (OCSR) by participating in available early childhood curriculum training and incentive programs to increase service quality and meet industry requirements.

The success of this program will be evaluated by determining (a) the acceptance and establishment of a cooperative business model; (b) members' complete participation in defined cooperative education and business meetings to build professional capacity; and (c) how many of the members' independent businesses experience asset building as a result of cooperative membership.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Program Profile**

The **Child Care Provider Network** is a cooperative entity developed to address the business needs of local family child care providers in Osceola County Florida. The purpose of the Child Care Provider Network is to form a purchasing and shared services enterprise, democratically controlled by its members, and operating for the equitable benefit of its members. Members of the Child Care Provider Network will jointly obtain needed products and services to recognize economies of scale and lower operating costs. Members will also merge resources and share skills to fulfill their responsibility as owners of the cooperative, particularly in the areas of planning and decision making.

The mission of the Child Care Provider Network will be to empower family care providers to engage in a cooperative business practice that will increase the sustainability of independent services; to provide services in response to the specific needs of its members, becoming a beneficial extension of the individual members' operation; and to develop support and awareness for the advancement of the profession.

## **Target Community**

Located in Central Florida, with Walt Disney World on its western border and Orange County to the north, Osceola County is one of the fastest growing areas in the state and nation. With a current population of 172,493, growth in Osceola County from 1990-2000 has increased 60.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Based on U.S. Census Bureau (2000) data, there are 11,720 children under the age of five residing in Osceola County. Florida Department of Children and Families documents 171 child care programs in Osceola County of which 77% are family care providers. A total program capacity of 5,427 indicates our community's families are substantially underserved.

## **Problem Identification**

Historically, home-based family child care providers are the primary service source for low income working families. In this section of the industry, business capacity and earning potential is extremely limited, resulting in financial instability and high dissolution of vital services. Available resources focus solely on curriculum development. By participating in the Child Care Provider Network, providers will gain business capacity while benefiting from economies of scale, leading to a more stable service environment and securing access to child care in the community.

## **Community Benefit**

The Florida Children's Forum (2003) assembled a group of stakeholders to consider the implications of demands for child care exceeding supply, recommending that new strategic alliances be established to help available programs become more efficient and financially stable.

The goal of this project is to contribute to the community's economic development by stabilizing the providers' ability to maintain services for local working families. By pooling resources, providers can improve their economic well being and gain access to markets, supplies or services otherwise unobtainable to them independently.

## **Program Goals**

The program will begin by offering the service of joint purchasing to recognize economies of scale and lower operating costs. The objective of the program is to build member capacity in cooperative business structure, decision making, and the concept of equal exchange. New and more complex services, including group marketing and shared services will be added as the cooperative matures and membership identifies common needs.

Development of the project has evolved through interviews with local stakeholders and field observation. Acceptance of the cooperative model by an initial group of providers

was achieved. A subsequent telephone survey was conducted to collect exploratory information from a representative sampling of providers in Osceola County. Positive interest led to an initial orientation meeting of 15 family care providers, unanimously deciding to proceed with implementing a joint purchasing program. The formation process is commencing as planned in the implementation timeline. The group is continuously assisted in adopting cooperative skills and behavior, while developing a plan that can deliver the single service of joint purchasing. Next steps for the Child Care Provider Network include determining cooperative feasibility, organizing a legal entity and start-up of operations.

### **Current Status**

Implementing the Child Care Provider Network has met a number of challenges: 1) providers' lack of capacity, since most operate as "baby sitters" rather than as service businesses; 2) lack of trust for new methods stemming from negative experiences with regulatory agencies; and 3) hesitancy to work together because they are accustomed to being independent.

To address the lack of business skills, starting informally has placed everyone on a level playing field, provided a learn-as-you-go environment and a practical, hands-on approach. Trust results from having a stable, long-term organization that adjusts to meet their needs. By owning the organization that provides services, they exercise democratic control over a major component of their business, namely the price and



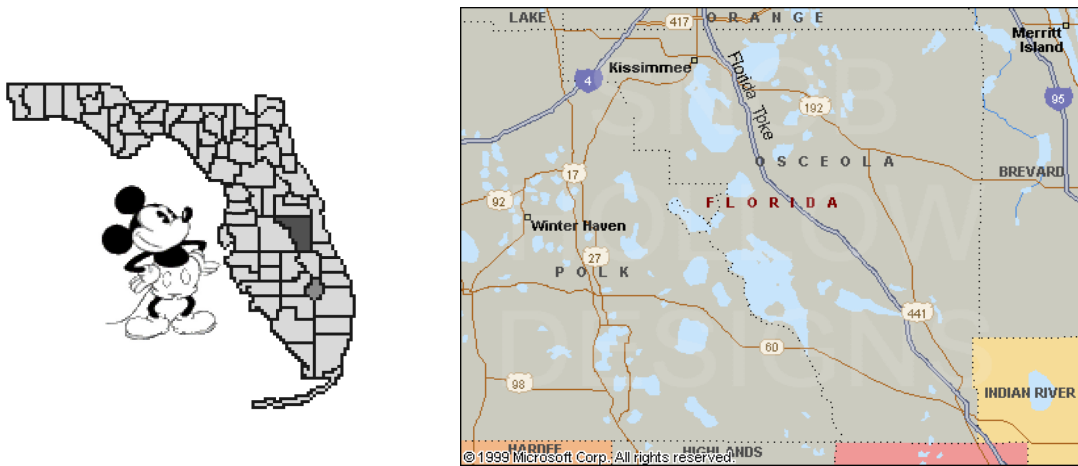
quality of services and products they wish to buy. Finally, teamwork is developing as they share common goals, learn to problem solve together and benefit from the experience.

The project has been implemented as planned. To date, five members meet regularly and have begun cooperative purchasing. A cooperative marketing campaign is in process. Discussions for expanding the cooperative to include food purchases have also begun. In addition, the members have initiated a “placement” program that will secure temporary childcare of clients for members on vacation or during sickness. This cooperative program allows the members to provide scheduled coverage for each other, further enhancing their service offerings.

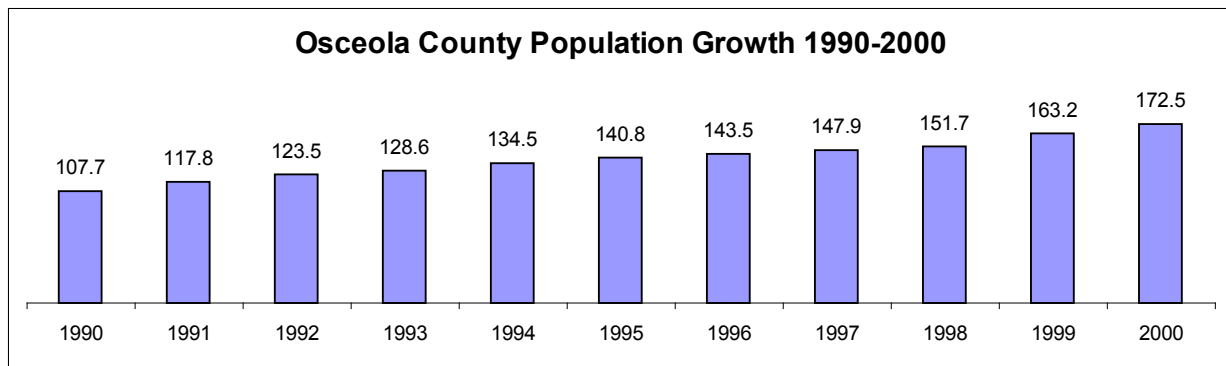
## I. Community Needs Assessment

### Community Profile

Located in Central Florida, with Walt Disney World on its western border and Orange County to the north, Osceola County is one of the fastest growing areas in the state and nation.



With a current population of 172,493, growth in Osceola County from 1990-2000 has increased 60.1% (Florida Quick Facts, 2000).



Predominant ethnicities are 59.6% White, 29.4% Hispanic and 7.4% African American. 14% are foreign born and 33% speak a language other than English in the home. The county is challenged by an extremely migrant population. Only 40% of the population continued to live in the same location during 1995-2000 (U.S. Census, 2000).

Osceola County income levels are at \$38,214 median household and \$17,022 per capita. Approximately 60% of families live under the area's median income, 15% of the families with children under the age of 5 live below the poverty level and 24% of these poor families are headed by single parents (U.S. Census, 2000).

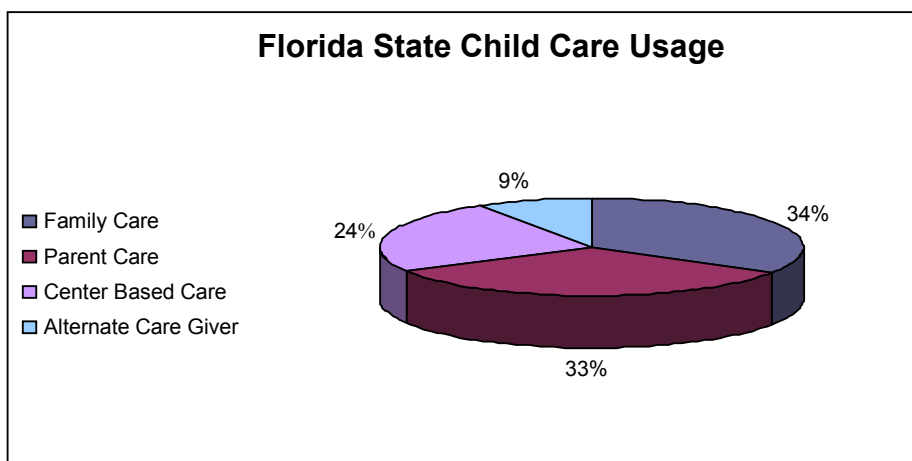
Based on U.S. Census (2000) data, there are 11,720 children under the age of five residing in Osceola County. Available child care programs need to service a working population where 58% of the labor force is women and 62% of the children have both parents in the workforce (Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics, 2002.)

### **Community Needs**

The lack of accessible child care is a well-documented barrier to parents entering the workforce and often inhibits them from remaining steadily employed. The Project on Global Working Families (Heymann, 2000) states, "reliability of child care is vital to parents' work and families' financial status." Access to child care improves the ability to get and keep jobs, cuts down on absenteeism, and improves productivity on the job.

The Florida Department of Children and Families defines child care in Osceola County as comprised of primarily two types of programs: family-based care (care provided in homes) and center-based care (care provided in child care centers, including school sites.)

According to the Florida Children's Forum (2000) in the State of Florida, approximately 63% of "dual-working" parents have children under age six. 34% of infants and toddlers participate in family home care settings and 33% are cared for by their parents. An additional 24% are enrolled in center-based programs, while an alternate caregiver accounts for the remaining 9%.



The largest number of child care programs in Osceola County falls into the family child care category. Family child care providers are categorized as either registered or licensed. Licensing is important because it mandates a specified level of standards in health, safety, and staff training. The total number of family care providers in Osceola

County is 132, representing approximately 77% of the total number of programs available. The State of Florida requires that no more than 10 children, including a provider's own children, be cared for through family child care.

Formal child care centers also fall into two categories: those licensed by the state and those exempt from licensing. Typically, child care centers offer care for children in groups of 12 or more. A total of 39 child care centers are licensed in Osceola County, approximately 23% of all child care programs, with an average capacity of 105.

The Florida Department of Children and Families (2002) currently documents a total of 171 child care programs in Osceola County, including both regulated and unregulated programs. Regulated programs are periodically monitored and can therefore be quantified. Unregulated child care is difficult to quantify and consequently represents an underestimation of the demand and supply of total child care.

| CHILD CARE IN OSCEOLA COUNTY       |        |          |
|------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| PROGRAM TYPE                       | NUMBER | CAPACITY |
| Licensed Family Child Care Homes * | 15     | 150      |
| Registered Family Child Care Homes | 117    | 1,170    |
| Licensed Child Care Centers *      | 39     | 4,107    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                       | 171    | 5,427    |
| *Regulated                         |        |          |

A current total child care program capacity of 5,427 indicates that a large number of our community's families are potentially underserved.

The Florida Children's Forum (2003) in their report, The Economic Impact of Child Care in Florida, stated that the child care industry provides the infrastructure that enables parents to work and earn money to support their families. Providing parents with a system of quality child care and early education for their children allows parents to enter the labor force and contribute to the economy.

Researchers of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project (2003), a Michigan study that has continued for more than three decades, found that for every dollar invested in quality care for children, more than \$7 is realized by society in the form of increased personal economic success and reduced future costs for social intervention programs.

As a community, we will pay a high price if we do not urgently invest in child care programs that will influence a future of positive economic growth in Osceola County.

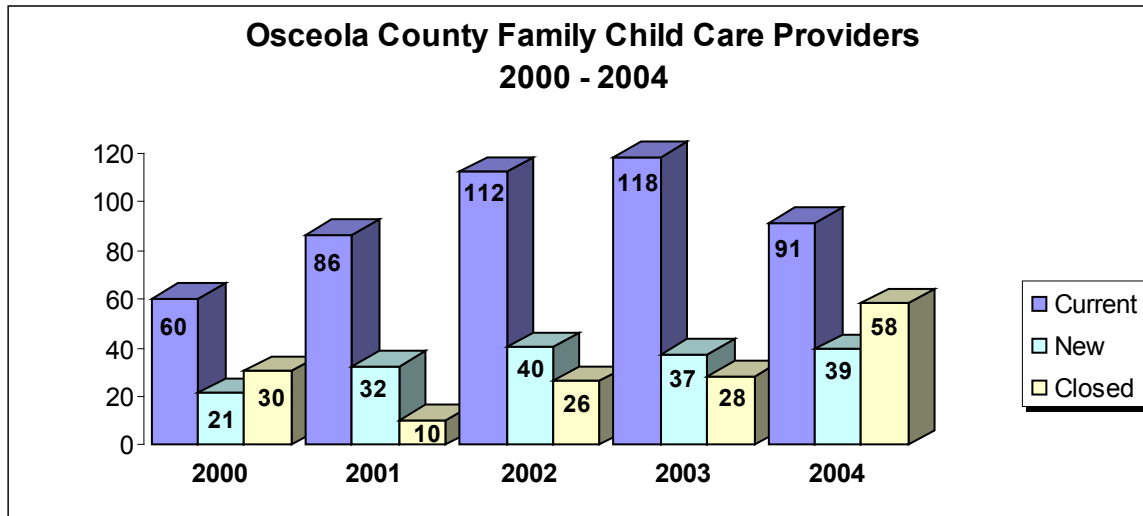
## **II. Problem Statement**

### **Identified Problem**

The inability to access child care has had a negative impact on job acquisition and retention in Osceola County. For residents, a lack of child care is diminishing their opportunity to become or remain employed. For local employers, this same problem creates a challenge in retaining qualified and stable employees.

The Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission (2000) issued The Workforce Development Work Plan analyzing historic, current and projected workforce trends in the Metro-Orlando region, which includes Osceola County. This report confirms that accessible child care is becoming a larger issue as the growth in our region continues. Surveyed employers reported that child care was a key barrier to gaining and keeping employees. Region residents also reported one of their largest barriers to employment as the lack of accessible child care.

Based on data provided by 4C-Community Coordinated Care for Children (Debi Koronka, personal communication, December 31, 2004) an approximate 35% of Osceola County's family child care providers terminated services each year during the period of 2000-2004.



Representatives of 4C disclose that a major reason for high turnover in family child care services is low profitability stemming from the provider's lack of business capacity, further stating that most providers remain in service an estimated 2 years.

One definition of a market failure is a situation where the supply in a particular industry does not match the demand. In reference to the present status of the child care industry in Osceola County, the market failure occurs because the supply of child care is far less than the demand for the service, thereby creating a shortage of services. With the high level of families moving into the area, coupled with the rising numbers of children needing some form of child care, the child care industry in Osceola County is straining to keep up with demand.

If no action is taken to provide readily accessible child care in Osceola County, there will continue to be a negative affect on our local economy due to the resulting limits for



community members to seek and retain employment. Family child care providers in particular, have an advantage in marketing their services to meet these growing demands, yet because most lack the resources to increase or expand their businesses, they will not be able benefit fully from this opportunity.

### **Target Community**

Historically, the family child care provider is the primary service provider for low income earners. Field observation and interviews with local family care providers (May-June 2004) conclude that family child care providers in Osceola County generally operate as “baby sitters” rather than as service businesses. The main reason that many of the providers started their services was to supplement their income as a stay at home parent. In addition, a majority of the providers do not have an education greater than high school, and most have little or no prior business experience. Further, a significant number of providers do not speak English as a primary language. For these reasons, they are challenged to develop as business owners.

Although many of the family care providers interviewed are open to opportunities to grow their services, they are hesitant in committing to try unfamiliar business methods. This attitude appears to be the result of negative experiences with our local state-sponsored resource and referral agency, which provides the initial contact with new providers and also regulates child care provider programs. Dissatisfaction stems from

the agency's reputation of not being a helpful resource, particularly with assisting to fill available slots.

Since service requirements are regulated and therefore limited in this environment, it is difficult for family child care providers to adjust fees to meet expenses. As a result, many of these small businesses are financially unstable and often cannot reach full capacity because of equipment and space constraints. Without a return on investment, they do not have the capital needed to make purchases or renovations to expand services that would generate additional revenue. A continuation of this trend has led to the dissolution of these much needed services.

The Florida Children's Forum (2003) assembled a group of stakeholders to consider the implications of the demand for child care exceeding the supply in Florida. One of the recommendations made by the group is to establish new strategic alliances that can create economies of scale and help early childhood programs become more efficient and more financially stable.

A ready solution is the Child Care Provider Network, a cooperative of family child care providers to address common needs and goals. Members of the cooperative share information and resources, participate in joint education programs, pool expertise, and enter into shared purchasing and marketing endeavors. Cooperative effort will enable independent service providers to recognize savings through the joint purchasing of materials and cost sharing of expensive equipment and services. By benefiting from

economies of scale, they increase income to facilitate business expansion. This in turn will lead to a more stable service environment and secure access to local child care providers in the community.

The Child Care Provider Network seeks to accomplish two things:

1. By pooling resources, enable family care providers to improve their economic well being and gain access to markets, supplies or services otherwise unobtainable to them independently.
2. Preserve services that allow Osceola County residents the ability to access affordable child care through local providers.

Taking into account the incredible growth in population, low income wages and an inadequate supply of child care services, the Child Care Provider Network is in the unique position of becoming a critical support for the community to secure the local child care they require. Further, developing and maintaining our child care services is an investment in human capital that can bring about economic success to our local economy.

## Stakeholders

### Legend:

Att = Attitude of Stakeholder; Inf = Influence of Stakeholder; E = Estimate of Stakeholder

++ Strongly in Favor + Weakly in Favor o Indifferent – Weakly Opposed - - Strongly Opposed

H = High M = Medium L = Low

C = Confidence Level of Analysis: / Fully Confident ? Reasonably Confident ?? Informed Guess ??? Wild Guess

| Stakeholder   | Stakeholder Interest(s) in the Project  | Assessment of Impact |   |     |   | Potential Strategies for Obtaining Support or Reducing Obstacles  |
|---|---|----------------------|---|-----|---|---|
|   |   | Att                  |   | Inf |   |   |
|   |   | E                    | C | E   | C |   |
| Licensed Providers  | Potential caregivers. Offers opportunity to co-own microenterprise. Offers opportunity for collective buying power.   | ++                   | / | H   | ? | Provide structured business organization and management. Develop marketing strategy to locally “brand” professional services.   |
| Osceola Small Business Development Center   | Source of business technical training and funding sources. Provides seminars and free one-on-one counseling for small business owners.  | ++                   | / | M   | / | Collaborating with the SBDC to provide technical assistance, will meet their goals to help local microenterprises start-up and succeed.                               |
| Osceola Coalition for School Readiness/4C Community Coordinated Care for Children | Source of provider resources for delivery of quality programs via training, funding and professional activities. Provides child care subsidies to TANF and low income families. | ++                   | / | M   | / | Partner with Coalition in the recruitment of cooperative members. Assist Coalition in meeting goals of quality child care by building business capacity of providers. |

**Legend:**

Att = Attitude of Stakeholder; Inf = Influence of Stakeholder; E = Estimate of Stakeholder

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|--|---|----------------------|----|-----|----|---|
|  |   | Att                  |    | Inf |    |   |
|  |   | E                    | C  | E   | C  |   |
| Community Vision   | Acts as community liaison between residents, business and government for community planning and assessment. Serves as advocate and provides links to community resources.                             | ++                   | /  | M   | /  | Alliance will support the cooperative's sustainability while serving a specific community need as defined by Community Vision.  |
| Osceola County Board of County Commissioners Economic Development Department | Requires stable workforce to attract new business into "friendly environment." Child care availability will facilitate job training, acquisition and retainment.                                      | ++                   | /  | L   | /  | Encourage support by increasing awareness of financial impact of childcare on business development and growth.  |
| Workforce Central Florida  | Resource for job seekers and employers. Purposed to increase the employment, retention, and earnings of clients, and as a result, improve the quality of the workforce and reduce welfare dependency. | o                    | ?? | L   | ?? | Seek referrals to childcare services, as a component of employment support services. Partnership will enhance the productivity and competitiveness of clients, particularly those requiring non-standard hours of care. |

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Att = Attitude of Stakeholder; Inf = Influence of Stakeholder; E = Estimate of Stakeholder

++ Strongly in Favor + Weakly in Favor o Indifferent – Weakly Opposed -- Strongly Opposed

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| Stakeholder     | Stakeholder Interest(s) in the Project  | Assessment of Impact |    |     |   | Potential Strategies for Obtaining Support or Reducing Obstacles   |
|-----------------|---|----------------------|----|-----|---|--|
|                 |   | Att                  |    | Inf |   |  |
|                 |   | E                    | C  | E   | C |  |
| Local Employers | The lack of child care creates a barrier to employees and often inhibits them from remaining steadily employed, causing an increase in employers' recruitment and training costs. | o                    | ?? | L   | ? | Propose collaboration, via referrals, as employee benefit. Will serve to increase job retention. Potential source for contracted services.       |
| Parents         | Potential clients. Require increased access to quality, affordable childcare.   | ++                   | ?? | H   | ? | Market home-based sites that offer professionally run child care services vs. "babysitting." Sustain local accessibility of child care services. |

## **Project Goals and Objectives**

The goals and objectives of the Child Care Provider Network are to build member capacity in cooperative organization, business structure, leadership, decision making, and the concept of equal exchange. Members of the cooperative have accomplished the following:

| <b>Goal 1:</b> <i>Form a cooperative entity democratically controlled by its members.</i>   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Objective:</b> Members realize practical knowledge in the practice of cooperative business principles.                               |   |
| <b>Prerequisite Task</b>  | <b>Achievement</b>  |
| 1. Hold orientation sessions to develop acceptance of cooperative model and recruit five (5) family child care providers.               | Due: January 2005 - Potential membership recruitment completed November 2004.                             |
| 2. Determine interest in cooperative membership and assess providers' purchasing and related needs.                                     | Due: January 2005 - Shared Services Survey completed November 2004.                                       |
| 3. Hold Education Meeting 1 (Cooperative Models) to introduce cooperative principles and business models.                               | Due: January 2005 – Education Meeting 1 completed December 2004.  |
| <b>Objective:</b> Members achieve leadership capabilities through participation in policy and procedure development for the cooperative |   |
| 1. Hold Education Meeting 2 (Joint Purchasing Model) to establish purchasing policy and procedures.                                     | Due: February 2005 – Education Meeting 2 completed February 2005.   |
| 2. Conduct Cooperative Membership Questionnaire to determine pre-membership capacity.   | Due: February 2005 – Postponed to April 2005 as per member decision and rescheduling Education 3 Meeting. |
| 3. Membership begins informal cooperative purchasing.   | Due: February 2005 – Completed March 2005. Members pilot distribution.                                    |

**Goal 2:** Increase sustainability of family child care providers through collaborative efforts targeting common economic interests involving the joint purchasing of supplies, provision of services and marketing.

**Objective:** Acquire decision making skills through planning the formation and implementation of the cooperative enterprise.

| Prerequisite Task   | Achievement  |
|---|--|
| 1. Hold Education Meeting 3 (Business Planning) to develop strategic growth and value-added services for the cooperative. | Due: March 2005 – Postponed by membership to April 2005. |
| 2. Conduct Cooperative Model Checklist to evaluate organizational cooperative practices.                                  | Due: March 2005 – Completed April 05                     |
| 3. Conduct Cooperative Capacity Checklist to evaluate degree of membership and board practice of cooperative principles.  | Due: March 2005 – Completed April 05                     |

**Goal 3:** Contribute to the community's economic development by stabilizing the family child care providers' ability to maintain services for local working families requiring child care.

**Objective:** Attain shared objectives through the leveraging of combined resources and capabilities of the membership.

| Prerequisite Task   | Achievement                |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Hold Education Meeting 4 (Monitoring and Evaluation) to examine goals and outcomes.  | Due: April 2005 – Upcoming |
| 2. Execute branding/marketing campaign to local community.  | Due: April 2005 – Ongoing  |
| <b>Objective:</b> Generate savings captured through joint purchasing, volume discounts and assured levels of business with vendors and suppliers. |                            |
| 1. Conduct Membership Assessment Survey to capture post-membership capacity.  | Due: April 2005 – Upcoming |



### **III. Project Design**

#### **Review of the Literature**

With a steady increase of working women and two-income families striving to meet the standards of living in our nation, it is hardly surprising that interest in child care has intensified as we seek to balance both family and work. The economic issues of child care impact many facets of our society and consequently, child care is at the top of the nation's agenda. In an article of the United States Department of Commerce News, Record Share of New Mothers in Labor Force, Bachu (2000) states that "the large increase in labor force participation rates by mothers since 1976 is an important reason why child-care issues have been so visible in recent years.

It is hypothesized that difficulties with accessing child care can adversely affect job performance of working parents as evidenced by increased absenteeism, tardiness and turnover rates. These employment issues around child care are especially critical in facilitating families to move from welfare to work, and can lead to increased costs for employers relating to recruiting, training and productivity. Although current research has looked at the effects of child care prices and wages of low-income parents on employment decisions and hours of work, much of this emerging research has not yet examined fully the effects of child care on employment. As such, the following literature reviews attempt to demonstrate and support the hypothesis.

Strawn & Martinson (2000) drew upon available research and reviewed what is known about the work experiences of low-income parents to identify policies and practices that might promote steady employment. Focusing on welfare reform and workforce development, two key points have been identified by states and localities to be important for long-term success: helping parents sustain employment; and advancement in the workforce. One of the main findings from nonexperimental research suggested that child care problems contribute to job loss, especially among low-income workers.

An important factor that plays into securing and retaining employment is accessibility. The lack of quality child care is a well-documented barrier to parents entering or re-entering the workforce and often inhibits them from remaining steadily employed (Supportive Services Resources, 2003). Working poor parents are more likely than non poor parents to work nonstandard hours and have changeable schedules, but most child care centers tend to operate during standard business hours. Hoeffferth (1995) suggests that mismatches between child care and job schedules pose an additional obstacle to juggling parenting and work that may disproportionately affect low-income families.

This review suggests that just as families make the transition from dependence to self-sufficiency, they are likely to experience serious hardships in coordinating child care and work. Yet, while a great deal is known about how to help families prepare for and find jobs, there is little hard evidence about what works to promote employment

retention and advancement. These findings continue to raise questions about equity of access to child care arrangements, particularly by working-poor and low-income families, and the consequences of existing inequities for work effort.

In a research article by Henly (2000), a study was conducted to examine how child care demands were negotiated for an urban sample of low-income mothers. The sample included a racially and ethnically diverse group of 57 respondents with and without welfare experience, parenting children under 13 years of age and working in entry-level jobs. Findings revealed that respondents sought arrangements that were affordable, convenient, and safe. Informal arrangements (family care) were most compatible with convenience and cost considerations and disproportionately used by low-income employed parents. Almost two fifths of the sample respondents reported that problems with regular child care arrangements had interfered with their ability to keep jobs. The data also suggested that when fragile child care arrangements fail, they may be difficult to replace and may ultimately compromise job performance and stability.

A secondary hypothesis is then formulated to suggest that the creation of collaborative programs to expand existing businesses and support the development of new child care businesses could, in turn, enhance workplace stability, job opportunities and the local tax base. In most communities, state and local policy makers have typically relied on three economic development choices: (1) attract outside businesses, (2) expand existing businesses, and (3) develop new businesses. The success of each of these three choices has varied. While attracting outside businesses is a great idea, the "big bang" approach is often a big bust because, at most, only one community in ten is

successful (Scudder & Rettig, 1989). Communities instead have often found the expansion of existing businesses and assistance in the development of new businesses yield greater returns. The focus of this study will be to determine feasibility for supporting family child care businesses for community economic development.

Research was made to investigate national and regional home-based child care programs to review models for quality child care and identify effective and replicable programs. Generic data was available on the start up of a home-based child care business. Although no information or studies were found specific to successful business models for family care provider programs, research was readily available on cooperative child care models and related cooperative models. The remainder of this review focuses on some of those findings.

The University of Wisconsin Cooperative Development Update (1999) reports on successful national cooperative projects. In Shawano, Wisconsin, a unique consortium of three employers used a service cooperative model to establish a high quality child care center to support their employees and the community. The cooperative structure of Kids in the Kountry, established in 1993, provides important advantages. Both parents and employers are represented on the board, and child care staff receives feedback regarding parents' concerns and employer needs. Employers are actively involved and invested in the school's success. Parents have a majority vote on the board which strengthens the school because they are direct users of the cooperative's services. Although the cooperative structure has not been copied locally, Kids in the

Kountry has helped to raise the standard of child care for the Shawano area and raised community expectations for quality care.

Clamp (2001) reports in a case study on the ChildSpace Development Training Institute, that child care in the United States is one of the worst compensated fields, with high employment turnover affecting quality of care. “Wealthier communities fare better because people have the means to pay more for childcare services.” ChildSpace Development Training Institute was created to replicate a successful worker cooperative in the day care field using a multi-pronged strategy for addressing child care problems: enterprise development, job redesign, advocacy and asset building. Incorporated in 1988 to design and manage the first Childspace Day Care Center in Philadelphia, they have developed day care centers in Richmond, California, Denver, Colorado and a second in Philadelphia. By utilizing a cooperative approach to child care, these worker cooperatives provide “better quality and better paid jobs and give workers stable employment and an equal share in their enterprises.”

Thirty-two years ago, the bishops of the United States established the Catholic Campaign for Human Development to partner with poor and low-income people in the search for lasting solutions to poverty in the United States. The Campaign for Human Development Annual Report (2003) summarizes projects selected for funding, having strong local commitment and the best chance of succeeding. One of those projects is Mujeres en Progreso (Women Moving Forward), formed in 1997 by five Mexican-American women with a vision of providing safe child care for farm worker families in

Columbus, N.M. What started as an in-home babysitting cooperative has today evolved into a full-fledged worker-owned child care center. Currently, the women and their parent organization, the Colonias Development Council, have a new vision to create up to three new child care centers in southern New Mexico over the next five years.

The Western Area Cities and Counties Cooperative consists of 25 city and 10 county governments in West Central Minnesota. It was formed in 1993 for the joint purchasing of supplies and services to ensure reduced costs, as well as sharing expensive or seldom used equipment. The cooperative has expanded to offer joint training of employees, saving over 13,000 man-hours and \$500,000 in 1998, according to the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Development Update (1999).

Padgham (2001) describes how purchasing co-ops realize big savings for small operators. In the 1980's the pharmaceutical industry was going through huge changes, with large volume purchasing discounts set by wholesalers and new laws that regulated markups. Larger pharmacy chains gained a strong competitive advantage. The independent owners, in the face of a desperate economic reality, agreed that joint purchasing was worth pursuing and the Independent Pharmacy Co-op (IPC) was formed. The purchasing cooperative is now a very profitable member-owned business, offering joint purchasing, volume discounts, rebates and many other programs to over 2,200 members around the country. The Independent Pharmacy Co-op, is a "wonderful example of how purchasing co-ops have allowed independent businesses to remain competitive."

The social and economic history of the world records innumerable cases of individuals on all continents utilizing collective action to address common social and economic problems by forming cooperatives. Small independent businesses in particular, have found a way to fight economic challenges, through the formation of industry specific purchasing or shared-services' cooperatives. Bringing together several to hundreds of independent business owners to gain the benefits of volume purchasing, joint advertising and marketing, and other services, allows for effective competition in local, regional, national and global markets. Backed by an extensive literature on the economic justification of cooperatives, it would be reasonable to assert that a family child care purchasing cooperative would be economically beneficial to its members and the community it serves.

### **Program**

The pressing need for accessible child care has prompted parents, educators, employers and communities to create new structures and methods for child care services. Professionally operated family child care services are an effective method for meeting expanding child care needs.

The Child Care Provider Network is being developed as a cooperative entity to address the need of local child care providers in Osceola County, Florida, to increase and expand current services for meeting high market demands. The purpose of the Child Care Provider Network is to form a shared services enterprise, democratically

controlled by its members, and operating for the equitable benefit of its members. The Child Care Provider Network will consequently implement a collaborative marketing campaign to establish a local brand of cooperative child care services.

The program will begin by offering the single service of joint purchasing. Members of the Child Care Provider Network will cooperatively obtain needed products and services to recognize economies of scale and lower operating costs. Members will merge resources and share skills to fulfill their responsibility as owners of the cooperative, particularly in the areas of planning and decision making.

The mission of the Child Care Provider Network will be to empower family care providers to engage in a cooperative business practices that will increase the sustainability of independent services; to provide services in response to the specific needs of its members and become a beneficial extension of the individual members' operation; and to develop support and awareness for the advancement of the profession.

### **Participants**

A minimum of five (5) cooperative members will be recruited through the Osceola Family Child Care Provider Advisory Council, an informal trade association for licensed and registered child care professionals. Membership in the purchasing cooperative is open to family child care providers in Osceola County.



## **Community Role**

Local child care providers participating as members in the Child Care Provider Network will be directly affected by the implementation of this project, as they will own and operate the purchasing cooperative. Members benefit economically by securing a wide array of goods and services they would not ordinarily be able to afford as independent business owners. By improving the efficiency of buying activities and increasing savings, members decrease operating costs and can therefore maintain current pricing levels.

Studies show that child care prices impede employment behavior significantly (Kimmel, 1988) and child care cost can be a primary barrier to fulltime work (Thomas, 2002). By sustaining the current services provided by local child care providers, working families in the community will continue to have access to affordable child care. This is especially critical for the working poor who are much more likely to be out of the labor force due to child care problems. The cost of child care is probably a major factor behind this differential (Cattan, 1991). Poor families often find themselves in a “catch-22” since without child care they cannot look for work and without work they cannot pay for child care.

The Osceola County Economic Development Commission is concerned that the county is facing a child care crisis that will negatively affect community businesses and the

potential business ventures they are attempting to attract. By maintaining child care services that help to serve current and future needs of employers, the Child Care Provider Network can have a positive effect on the area's good quality of life.

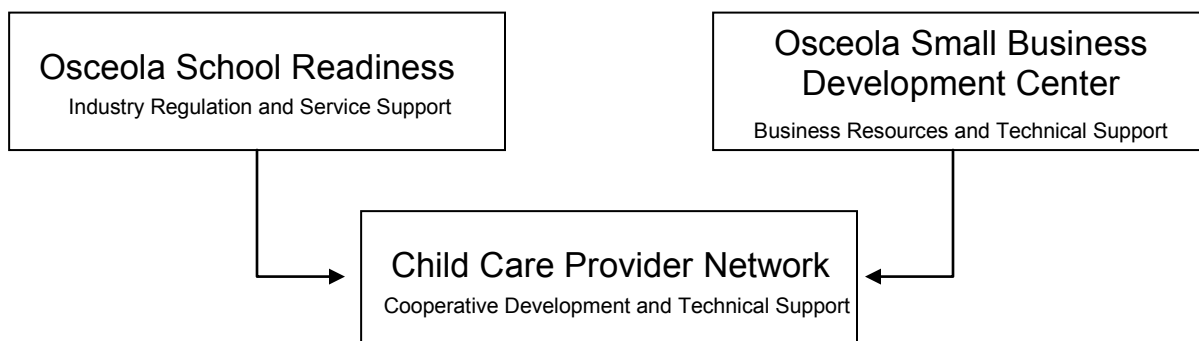
### **Host Organizations**

The Child Care Provider Network will associate with the Osceola Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in providing members with small business counseling to increase professional development. SBDC also serves as a resource to small business financing and related programs.

The Osceola Coalition for School Readiness (OCSR) has an active Provider Support initiative that will work with the Child Care Provider Network in building membership. Members benefit directly from alliance with the OCSR by utilizing available curriculum training and incentive programs to meet industry requirements, secure state licensure and qualify for subsidies that increase the service quality of their independent businesses.

Formation and implementation of the cooperative is facilitated by Margarita Torres, acting as pro-bono Technical Consultant. Upon completion of the project, continued service in the form of professional business consulting and management will be made available.

## **Organizational Chart**



## **Method**

The Child Care Provider Network will implement a shared-services concept in forming the cooperative entity by providing a service to enhance or increase the competitiveness of the members' operations. The service is developed and designed as needed by the members and board of the cooperative. The Child Care Provider Network will begin by offering the single service of joint purchasing. New and more complex services, including private labeling or branding, joint advertising or marketing, common billing services, joint insurance purchases, and joint consulting or management services, may be added as the cooperative matures and membership dictates.

Membership in the Child Care Provider Network will be open to licensed and registered family child care providers in Osceola County, able and willing to accept the responsibilities of cooperative ownership.

During the implementation phase, the Child Care Provider Network will provide four (4) Cooperative Education seminars for members to gain proficiency in contributing to the development of the cooperative, covering the following topics:

- Understanding Cooperative Principles
- Employing a Cooperative Joint Purchasing Model
- Business Planning for Cooperative Enterprises
- Monitoring and Evaluation of the Cooperative Business

Members will have active participation in setting policies and making decisions through monthly general membership/board meetings. Members have equal voting rights of one member, one vote. Members will develop professional capacity as they implement the plans established for the cooperative.

Members will contribute equitably to, and democratically control the cooperative. A portion of the capital may be designated as common property of the cooperative. Member-owners can allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

The joint ownership and operation of the Child Care Provider Network offers major benefits to its members:

- Empowerment/Control - by owning the organization that provides service, members exercise more control over a major component of their business, namely the price and quality of services and products they wish to buy.
- Stability/Reliability - members are provided with a stable, long-term organization to meet various service needs. The cooperative requires the commitment of its members, but at the same time offers constant, supportive access to products and services.
- Networking/Equal Exchange - members are afforded an opportunity to meet and discuss problems and topics of mutual concern and to define and recommend solutions for specific issues.
- Flexibility/Adaptability - as members' needs change over time, the cooperative can respond by adjusting the services. The ability to respond to change depends upon the purpose and objective of the cooperative

## **Products and Outputs**

| <b>Goal 1:</b> <i>Form a cooperative entity democratically controlled by its members.</i>  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Objective:</b> Members realize practical knowledge in the practice of cooperative business principles.                                |   |  |
| <b>Task</b>  | <b>Output</b>   | <b>Product</b>                           |
| Hold orientation sessions to develop acceptance of cooperative model by five (5) family child care providers.                            | Analysis of potential membership.                                   | Potential Membership Roster              |
| Complete survey to assess potential members purchasing and related needs.  | Assess potential members' purchasing needs and characteristics.     | Shared Services Survey Results           |
| Hold Education Meeting 1 (Cooperative Models) to introduce cooperative principles and business models.                                   | Assess cooperative feasibility.                                     | Five (5) cooperative members             |
|  | Formally register family child care providers for joint purchasing. | Membership Database                      |
| <b>Objective:</b> Members achieve leadership capabilities through participation in policy and procedure development for the cooperative. |   |  |
| 1. Hold Education Meeting 2 (Joint Purchasing Model) to establish purchasing policy and procedures.                                      | Evaluate products for purchase.                                     | Product/Vendor List                      |
|  | Define purchasing methods.  | Purchasing Guidelines                    |
| 2. Conduct survey to determine pre-membership capacity.  | Assess current business status and capacity of members.             | Cooperative Member Questionnaire Results |
| 3. Begin cooperative purchasing.   | Purchase and distribute products.                                   | Requisition/Delivery Record              |

**Goal 2:** Increase sustainability of family child care providers through collaborative efforts targeting common economic interests involving the joint purchasing of supplies, provision of services and marketing.

**Objective:** Acquire decision making skills through planning the formation and implementation of the cooperative enterprise.

| Task   | Output                                 | Product                                |
|--|--|--|
| Hold Education Meeting 3 (Business Planning) to develop strategic growth of cooperative.                     | Define business type.                  | Article of Incorporation               |
|  | Select board.                          | By-Laws                                |
|  | Define staffing roles.                 | Job Descriptions                       |
|  | Define membership policy.              | Membership Agreement                   |
|  | Instruct in creation of business plan. | Business Plan Executive Summary        |
| Conduct Cooperative Model Checklist to determine organizational cooperative practices.                       | Analysis of compliance.                | Cooperative Model Evaluation Report    |
| Conduct Cooperative Capacity Checklist to determine degree of membership practice of cooperative principles. | Analysis of capacity and compliance.   | Cooperative Capacity Evaluation Report |

**Goal 3:** *Contribute to the community's economic development by stabilizing the family child care providers' ability to maintain services for local working families requiring child care.*

**Objective:** Attain shared objectives through the leveraging of combined resources and capabilities of the membership.

| Task  | Output                         | Product                              |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Hold Education Meeting 4 (Monitoring and Evaluation) to examine purpose and outcomes.   | Assess cooperative activities. | Focus Group Report                   |
| Implement marketing campaign to local providers and community.  | Brand cooperative.             | Media Release<br>Marketing Piece     |
| <b>Objective:</b> Generate savings captured through joint purchasing, volume discounts and assured levels of business with vendors and suppliers. |                                |                                      |
| 1. Conduct Membership Assessment Survey to capture post-membership capacity.  | Analysis of status.            | Membership Assessment Survey Results |



## **IV. Implementation**

### **Implementation Plan and Inputs**

The measurable goals established for the Child Care Provider Network during the period of 2004-2005 are:

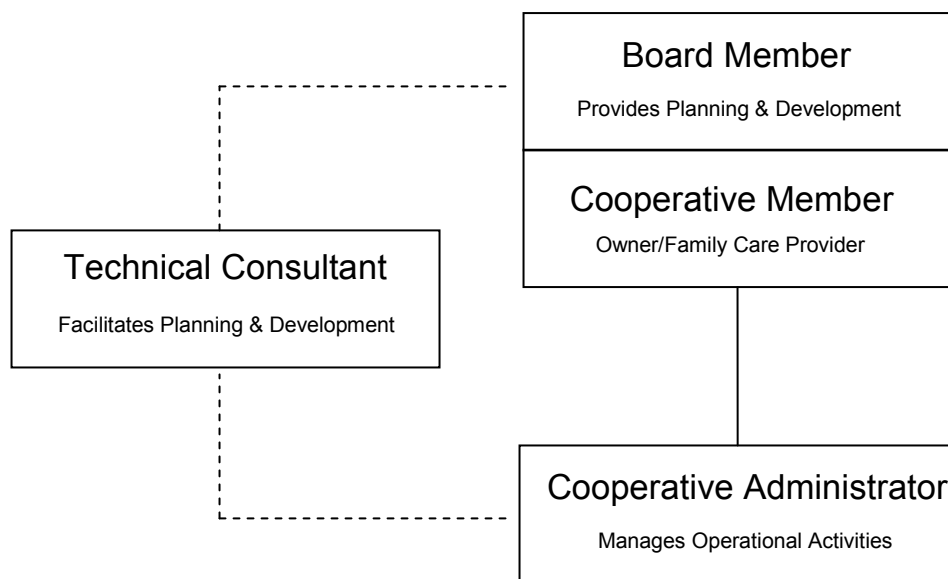
| <b>Time Frame</b>        | <b>Activity</b>                             | <b>Lead Resource</b> | <b>Inputs</b>  |
|--------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| January 04 – February 04 | Assess Community Need                       | Technical Consultant | Field interviews and observation.  |
| March 04 – May 04        | Gain Acceptance of Cooperative Model        | Technical Consultant | Alliance with 4C Coordinated Child Care re: monthly introduction (agenda item) at local provider advisory meetings.  |
| May 04 – Nov 05          | Membership Recruitment                      | Technical Consultant | Method: presentation at Provider Advisory meeting. Follow-up calls to interested participants (potential members).<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Prepare: Proposal presentation, introduction handout and contact sheet.</li><li>2. Generate database of potential members.</li><li>3. Conduct survey of sample providers to determine need and interest in cooperative practice.</li></ol>  |
| October 04 – January 05  | Education Meeting 1: Cooperative Principles | Technical Consultant | Introduction to cooperative principles and business types. Potential members join or decline cooperative.<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Invitation to Potential Members via email, and direct phone contact. Follow-up with Reminder Notice.</li><li>2. Prepare: Agenda, Introduction to Cooperatives presentation and handouts.</li></ol> Needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Meeting space (in-kind).</li><li>- Meeting supplies (in-kind).</li><li>- Photocopying (in-kind) handout materials.</li></ul> |

| Time Frame               | Activity                                | Lead Resource        | Inputs   |
|--------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| May 04 – March 05        | Formative Monitoring and Evaluation     | Technical Consultant | Ongoing observation, data keeping, reporting.  |
| January 05               | Incorporation of the Cooperative Entity | Membership           | Suspended = Decision to pilot an informal purchasing cooperative   |
| February 05              | Board Selection and By-Laws Approval    | Membership           |  |
| January 05 – February 05 | Education Meeting 2: Joint Purchasing   | Technical Consultant | <p>Members purpose to define select products and vendors.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meeting Notice to Potential Members via email, and direct phone contact.</li> <li>2. Prepare: Agenda and sample purchasing methods/materials.</li> <li>3. Show video: Purchasing Cooperatives – The Next Step to Success.</li> <li>4. Participants complete pre-membership survey.</li> </ol> <p>Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting space (in-kind).</li> <li>- Meeting supplies (in-kind).</li> <li>- Photocopying (in-kind) handout materials.</li> </ul> |
| February 05              | Staffing                                | Membership           | Members define and assign roles.   |
| February 05              | Begin Joint Purchasing                  | Membership           | Location (in-kind) for receivables.  |
| March 05                 | Education Meeting 3: Business Planning  | Technical Consultant | <p>Introduction to organizational planning.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invite: Small Business Development Center to present overview of business planning.</li> <li>2. Meeting Notice to Potential Members via email, and direct phone contact.</li> <li>3. Prepare: Agenda and handouts.</li> </ol> <p>Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting space (in-kind).</li> <li>- Meeting supplies (in-kind).</li> <li>- Photocopying (in-kind) handout materials.</li> </ul>   |

| Time Frame          | Activity                                       | Lead Resource        | Inputs   |
|---------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| March 05 - April 05 | Education Meeting 4: Monitoring and Evaluation | Technical Consultant | <p>Membership evaluates program to date.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meeting Notice to Potential Members via email, and direct phone contact.</li> <li>2. Prepare: Agenda and handouts</li> <li>3. Participants complete post-membership survey.</li> <li>4. Conduct cooperative and membership capacity evaluation.</li> </ol> <p>Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting space (in-kind).</li> <li>- Meeting supplies (in-kind).</li> <li>- Photocopying (in-kind) handout materials.</li> </ul> |
| April 05            | Marketing Campaign                             | Membership           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Update (agenda item) at local provider advisory meeting.</li> <li>2. Creative: Marketing piece for branding.</li> <li>3. Media release to local news sources.</li> <li>4. Direct mail to local family child care providers.</li> </ol>   |
| March 05 - April 05 | Project Evaluation                             | Technical Consultant | Final Report and Presentation.   |

## **Staffing Pattern**

Organizational structure, including position descriptions, membership policies, and related criteria will be determined by the pending members/board. Preliminary staffing is voluntary and will include, but not limited to:



In the formation of the Child Care Provider Network, Board Membership is comprised of the initial cooperative membership. Based on member concurrence, an advisory panel of stakeholders may be established.

**Board Member:** Provides leadership and guidance to the management of the cooperative. Ensures that members are participating in decision making. Individual board members must not act independently on matters that should be decided by the entire board nor should they receive special favors from members, staff or affiliates. Serves a volunteer term of one (1) year.

Responsibilities include:

- Establish long-term, broad objectives, purposes and vision for the cooperative.
- Hire and guide the Cooperative Administrator.
- Ensure that operations are consistent with the articles and bylaws, understand the corporate philosophy, act in good faith in handling the affairs of the cooperative, avoid conflicts of interest and represent the best interests of members.
- Able to understand and read financial statements and help in disseminating this and other relevant information to the members.

Cooperative Administrator: As a member elected general manager, oversees the detailed operations of the cooperative, within the policies established by the board, and recommends changes and additions to the board when necessary. Serves a volunteer term of one (1) year. Eligible for re-election.

Responsibilities include:

- Report to the board of directors and maintain good organizational relations.
- Manage day-to-day business activities to achieve maximum productivity and expense control.
- Hire, train and supervise employees, as well as review performance.
- Disseminate information on the cooperative, including financial, operational and strategic, to the board and membership.

Cooperative Member: As the legal owner of the cooperative, must be familiar with the cooperative's purpose, mission and goals. Provide the equity required for running the cooperative through a membership fee. In accordance with the cooperative principles, is allotted one vote and can use that vote with regard to any issues related to the cooperative. Eligible for board election or related governing position.

Responsibilities include:

- Participate in the implementation and development of the cooperative business.
- Patronize the cooperative services.
- Remain actively involved and informed of cooperative business matters.
- Conscientiously select leaders from the membership to devote the time and energy to make the cooperative a reality.

Other general responsibilities:

- To adopt and amend articles of incorporation and bylaws.
- To elect, evaluate and, if necessary, remove directors.
- To decide whether to dissolve, merge or consolidate the cooperative.
- To ensure directors and other agents comply with laws applicable to the cooperative and with its articles of incorporation, bylaws and membership contracts.

Technical Consultant: Provide assistance to cooperative membership to facilitate the formation, planning and development process. Should be familiar with cooperative principles and discuss its legal, economic, and financial aspects. Provide a range of services in helping to organize a cooperative, including:

- Provide information on alternative cooperative choices.
- Define cooperative needs and interests.
- Determine the feasibility of the cooperative.
- Secure professional services as needed to effectively guide the cooperative.

## **Budget**

Initial membership investments to start a cooperative for a simple buying group like the Child Care Provider Network can exist with little overhead expenses, using volunteer labor and donated services, equipment and supplies. A minimal capital investment of \$250 per member can provide the Child Care Provider Network with working capital for start-up, and is compensated for through low prices, discounts and rebates as services are taken advantage of. Ideally, the cooperative will be set up so the members' initial investment would be equaled in cost savings within a year.

| <b>Child Care Provider Network</b>                          |                  |                                      |                  |
|---|------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Projected Revenues and Expenses for One Project Year</b> |                  |                                      |                  |
|   | <b>2005-2006</b> |                                      | <b>2005-2006</b> |
| <b><u>Revenues</u></b>                                      |                  | <b><u>Expenses</u></b>               |                  |
| <b>Committed In-Kind Support</b>                            |                  | <b>In Kind Services</b>              |                  |
| Professional Services                                       | \$ 2,000         | Professional Services                | \$ 2,000         |
| Equipment   | \$ 200           | Equipment                            | \$ 200           |
| Supplies  | \$ 250           | Supplies                             | \$ 250           |
| Printing/Photocopying                                       | \$ 150           | Printing/Photocopying                | \$ 150           |
| Office/Meeting Space  | \$ 1,300         | Office/Meeting Space                 | \$ 1,300         |
| <b><i>Total In Kind Revenue</i></b>                         | <b>\$ 3,900</b>  | <b><i>Total In-Kind Services</i></b> | <b>\$ 3,900</b>  |
|   |                  |                                      |                  |
| <b>Projected Revenue</b>                                    |                  | <b>Other Expenses</b>                |                  |
| Member Equity   | \$ 2,500         |                                      |                  |
| <b><i>Total Projected Revenue</i></b>                       | <b>\$ 2,500</b>  | <b><i>Total Other Expenses</i></b>   | <b>\$ 0</b>      |
|   |                  |                                      |                  |
| <b><i>Total Revenue</i></b>                                 | <b>\$ 6,400</b>  | <b><i>Total Expenses</i></b>         | <b>\$ 3,900</b>  |



## **Project Implementation Report**

### ***September 2004***

- ▶ Implementation of the project, scheduled for August 2004, was delayed due to the following issues:

1. Providers' lack of business capacity and hesitancy in employing unfamiliar business methods.
2. Providers' lack of trust in "outside" help stemming from dissatisfaction of current regulatory agency inadequately meeting immediate needs, i.e., issues with service regulations, licensure, curriculum requirements, fee schedules and referrals.
3. Timing coincided with mandatory licensing renewals and curriculum trainings which held back the scheduled orientation and moving the project forward.
4. Impact of natural disaster when Osceola County was hit with 4 major hurricanes resulting severe damage to facilities, supplies and equipment.

Although the Child Care Provider Network has not been successful in getting the purchasing cooperative project off the ground, it is anticipated that the program will reach the objective.

Of my original group, 3 of the 5 family care providers have decided to close their service. The other 2 then decided not to proceed. Since July 2004, the project has been presented to three (3) different groups of providers and although there is always interest in the concept, there has been no move forward to actively participate. My next step was to understand why.

After speaking with providers one-on-one, and discussions with the 4C Provider Liaison, it became clear that the obstacles were that providers did not trust someone they didn't know. They were concerned to appear not to be knowledgeable or, did not want to have to "learn something new." But especially because of the hurricanes, did not want to spend time or money they didn't readily have. Now that I have a sense of the problems facing providers and the difficulties keeping them from membership in the Child Care Provider Network, the project is slowly moving forward by working with collaborative groups and building familiarity with local family providers.

The other action taken was to go back to look at the structure of the project to see if it could be amended for another use in the instance that the project cannot be implemented within the target community. Under consideration is offering the

program to local day care center owners since they are already at a professional level and can easily transition into a cooperative model. The other option is to present the project to a child care trade association to offer as another service for members.

The community does not yet own this project. The Osceola Coalition for School Readiness is certainly willing to collaborate on the project and will support the group during implementation to the extent that they are willing to store supplies and even order them for us through the Osceola School District if possible. Instead of working with the family care providers in facilitating the project, I find that I am obligated to lead off on implementation. It was originally intended that this project would be completely authentic, with the members creating the process. I do believe however, that ultimately, the providers will step up to the plate once they feel confident and empowered. Although I am currently on the outside looking in, the more time I spend “living” in their world, the more I am being allowed in.

**October 2004**

- ▶ Held meeting with 4C Provider Liaison (10/01) to discuss immediate provider needs. Liaison explained that providers' seek out licensure to legitimize their service, however they are dissatisfied with the benefits. The 3 main issues shared are:

1. The organization that is supposed to help them with achieve standards (Department of Children and Families) is unorganized and inefficient.
2. The organization that is supposed to provide resources and referral to ensure full capacity (Community Coordinated Care for Children - 4C) is inadequate. The organization maintains a directory of licensed and registered child care providers that is provided to parents seeking services. There is no actual referral. Providers are not knowledgeable in marketing their services and rely significantly on this system to fill slots.
3. Providers feel that they cannot effectively enforce policies and guidelines, for issues with non payment and late fees. The fear is that they cannot afford to lose a client and a bad client is better than no client. This is a direct result of Issue 2 above.

Implementation of the purchasing cooperative will allow members to gain capacity in successful business practices through the cooperative model, especially as a solution

to the issue of relying on outside sources for resources or generating new revenue. The 4C Liaison has agreed to “push” membership so that local providers can benefit from the cooperative business model.

► Strategic research was conducted.

1. Family Child Care Industry - Inquiries were made by personal interview with Susan Sunka, Executive Director for Osceola Coalition for School Readiness, Bexie Perez, 4C Family Care Provider Liaison and Ben Dobson, Director, Osceola Small Business Development Center (personal communications, October 2004) and via internet search to locate resources available to family child care providers for business development. Overall, programs and information emphasized curriculum and early childhood development. Other than information on starting and operating a day care center or small business, a search for information specific to family child care services was unsuccessful. A hypothesis can easily be made that a lack of support for business capacity in family care providers leads to the continuing instability of its practice and perpetuates the high turnover of service providers. This finding suggests that the Child Care Provider Network, through its cooperative principles, can supply a much needed model for affecting and contributing to the capacity of its members to ably participate in entrepreneurial activities.

2. Family Child Care Regulations - The Florida Department of Children and Families (2004) publishes requirements for meeting State child care standards. This document contains 7 Chapters covering 26 code stipulations. It is very likely that due to educational limitations by family care providers, it would prove difficult understanding the documented requirements and would explain their dependence on the local child care licensing agency for direction in achieving compliance.

The state of Florida strives to protect the basic health and safety of children in out-of-home care. These rules also form a baseline of adequate quality of care requiring mandatory credentialing. To become a licensed provider In Osceola County, an applicant must complete 30 hours of early childhood training, certification in first aid/CPR, attend a 5-hour early literacy learning workshop. These classes incur an out-of-pocket expense of over \$100. In addition, applicants must register for background screening for themselves and each member of the family over the age of 18, at a cost of \$32 each, plus a check of juvenile records for children aged 11-17 at a cost of \$8 each. An annual mandatory 10-hour inservice for license renewal costs \$70-100. Annual cost savings resulting from participation in a joint purchasing program would allow members to better afford or recover the costs of licensing.

3. Model Purchasing Cooperatives - A search of purchasing and shared services cooperatives, specifically, was made to find successful models, as well as,

local cooperative enterprises. There is exhaustive information on the strengths and weaknesses of purchasing cooperatives, but overall, this cooperative model often helps lower operating costs by obtaining cost savings for needed services and products to schools, hospitals, libraries, small businesses and farms, churches, utility companies and local governments. Of particular interest was a recent article in Washington Technology (Welsh, 2004) on the federal government's plan to aggressively market cooperative purchasing to state and local governments until it receives widespread adoption. In fact, the report states that it is "clearly the wave of the future...All states eventually will embrace it."

Besides board expertise and membership support and patronage, the success of these cooperatives may be directly attributed to the quality of service it provides. The longest running and most successful cooperatives appear to stress the importance of focusing on specific member needs and finding creative and often flexible ways of satisfying them. Internal challenges tend to stem from weaknesses in structure and operations, but more commonly, challenges come from external issues specific to the industry, for example hospital cooperatives that must adapt to changing medical practices and technologies. Local models include a library cooperative, an electric company, agricultural cooperatives and food buying clubs.

## ***November 2004***

- ▶ Membership Recruitment - The orientation meeting, tentatively scheduled for 11/6 was cancelled due to providers' mandatory First Aid/CPR training scheduled on same date. As a result, a request was made to conduct one-on-one interviews with local providers in partnership with 4C. Liaison was not able to secure appointments due to scheduling conflicts. A request was then made to conduct a telephone interview due to pressing project deadlines. 4C provided contact list of 50 licensed and registered family care providers for Osceola County. A Shared Services Survey was conducted via telephone (11/4-15). Positive results are recorded from the family care providers surveyed.
  
- ▶ Orientation/Cooperative Principles -The orientation was rescheduled for 12/2. A direct invitation was provided to interested participants at the 11/13 Family Provider Advisory Meeting. Direct phone calls and email invitations were made to survey participants 11/18-20.
  
- ▶ Seek out purchasing cooperative start-up advice:
  1. At meeting (10/21) with Ben Dobson, Small Business Development Center, we were not able to locate similar organizations in Osceola County. A search for requisite licensing or permits was also unsuccessful. Referrals were provided for professional services.



2. Email correspondence (10/20, 22, 27) with Jeannine Kenney, VP Public Affairs and Member Services, National Cooperative Business Association. Believes purchasing cooperatives are a growing sector and project has potential of going national. Advised incorporating as either a regular corporation or as a co-op. As long as entity operates as a cooperative for federal tax purposes, it can be incorporated in any state, under any structure and be taxed as a co-op (pass-through treatment). Offered legal referrals. Also provided contact to Rosemary Mahoney, board member and co-op consultant for micro businesses.
3. Email correspondence (10/27, 28) and conference call (11/5) with Rosemary Mahoney, Consultant, Main Street Cooperative Group. Discussed steps to take in setting up the co-op. Recommended starting an informal association to “pilot” as a first step because capacity for this particular group is unknown. Once it is determined that there is a viable group capable of working together, then growth into a formal cooperative can be developed. Also provided two contacts, Margaret Bau, USDA Rural Development, to locate a mini-grant for start-up costs; and Richard Dines, NCBA, to get an “insider’s” point of view from a similar start-up in Pennsylvania.
4. Listserv post (11/1) conference call (11/3) and email correspondence (11/4, 5) with David Leppert, Main Street Cooperative Group. Leppert specializes in

developing purchasing co-ops. Offered perspective with regard to implementation, recommending that group start small and move slowly toward building the program. Suggested buy-in as first step. Provided information for business plan development.

### ***December 2004***

First steps toward implementation of the Child Care Provider Network are in process. Formative activities of the cooperative are being monitored according to plan.

- ▶ Orientation/Cooperative Principles - The orientation on cooperatives and the joint purchasing model (Education Meeting 1) was held on December 2nd. In attendance were 15 family care providers and Bexi Colon of 4C. Participants unanimously decided to proceed with implementing a joint purchasing program. Participants agreed to weekly education/planning meetings.
  
- ▶ Joint Purchasing/Incorporation of the Cooperative - The Joint Purchasing planning meeting is scheduled for December 18<sup>th</sup>. Participation will establish community ownership. Discussion will determine how the cooperative will be formalized, which items will be purchased, and the methods for purchase and distribution. Shared Services Survey results will be shared for use in planning. Membership Assessment Survey will be conducted to document preliminary membership capacity.

With the success of the shared services survey and resulting orientation, the Child Care Provider Network has gained a potential core group of 15 members committed to the cooperative model. The formation process can commence as planned in the implementation timeline for December '04 through February '05. The group will be assisted in adopting cooperative skills and behavior, while developing a plan that can deliver the single service of joint purchasing.

### ***January 2005***

- ▶ Joint Purchasing – The week of December 13<sup>th</sup>, reminder notices were sent via email and phone contact was made to confirm participation at the December 18<sup>th</sup> Education Meeting 2 on joint purchasing planning. Although confirmation was obtain for high participation, actual attendance was low. Only six (6) of the fifteen (15) providers were present. Discussion centered around which items are commonly used and where purchases are currently made. Members will comparison shop and seek out the best deals to create a list of possible vendors. Due to the holiday season and ongoing renovations from hurricane damage, the members decided to re-convene mid January to assign tasks and purchase items. A written policy will be completed at that time. The Cooperative Member Questionnaire will also be conducted to document preliminary membership capacity in order to have majority representative data. The meeting notice will be extended to the absentees.

Phone calls were made through December 22nd to check status of absent members from the December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. Most responded by confirming that issues with the holidays and renovations conflicted with their participation at the meeting. All confirmed interest in re-scheduling the meeting mid January.

- ▶ January 10 – Contacted 4C to verify upcoming training calendar in order to avoid scheduling conflicts or limited availability of providers to participate in Education Meeting 2. Based on a tentative schedule, 4C has scheduled training sessions throughout the next few months, leaving the only available time during the week of February 20th.

In lieu of meeting mid January, the members will remain in contact to discuss purchasing plans and develop a list of available equipment and supplies to be used in-kind by the cooperative.

- ▶ January 18 – Meeting with Ben Dobson, Osceola Small Business Development Center to discuss preparation of content for Education Meeting 3, Business Planning. Dobson will advise in developing a template business plan and learning session specific to the providers' educational capacity and special needs.
- ▶ January 25 – Telephone contact and email correspondence to Neil McDonald, Purchasing Manager, Osceola School District. Request to “piggy-back” on supply

orders by the purchasing cooperative. Pending response from the Osceola School District legal office.

- ▶ January 31 – Meeting with Debi Koronka, 4C Information & Referral Coordinator, Regional Office. Received quarterly reports representing the status of child care providers in Osceola County, for the period 2000 – to date. Data was compiled to show actual supply against the current demand for child care and is recorded in the project proposal.

### ***February 2005***

- ▶ February 8 – Follow up via telephone contact with members to coordinate next steps in joint purchasing. Members will set date and meet. Decision will be made on which item(s) will be purchased and the method, including delegation of tasks, buying guidelines and distribution.
- ▶ February 17 – Follow up via telephone contact with members. Decision made to begin purchasing of disposable items and cleaning supplies. Vendor and supply list will be finalized. Currently, members choose to postpone Education Meeting 3 – Business Planning. Members propose a “trial” purchase instead.

## March 2005

- ▶ March 5 - Five (5) Members will begin pilot purchasing with member investment of \$20 each, total of \$100. Purchasing will be done informally.
- ▶ March 21 – Purchasing cooperative acquires 2000 each of disposable cups, bowls and bowl covers, through local restaurant wholesale order. Items will be stored for distribution at next meeting.

| Item   | Quantity | Pack of 100 | Price/Pk | Wholesale Cost     |
|--------|----------|-------------|----------|--------------------|
| Cups   | 2000     | 20          | \$0.50   | \$10.00            |
| Bowls  | 2000     | 20          | \$1.65   | \$27.00            |
| Covers | 2000     | 20          | \$1.40   | \$24.00            |
|        |          |             |          | <b>\$61.00</b>     |
|        |          |             |          |                    |
|        |          |             |          | <b>Retail Cost</b> |
|        |          | 20          | \$1.50   | \$30.00            |
|        |          | 20          | \$2.50   | \$50.00            |
|        |          | 20          | \$2.00   | \$40.00            |
|        |          |             |          | <b>\$120.00</b>    |
|        |          |             |          |                    |
|        |          |             |          | <b>Savings</b>     |
|        |          |             |          | \$20.00            |
|        |          |             |          | \$23.00            |
|        |          |             |          | \$16.00            |
|        |          |             |          | <b>\$59.00</b>     |

## ***April 2005***

- ▶ April 9 – Members begin distribution process. Members will coordinate next Education Meeting 3 - Business Planning, to formulate a plan for purchasing on a monthly basis. Based on cost savings as documented, members are fully interested in adding food buying to cooperative services.

Members will meet with Technical Consultant in mid April to prepare marketing creative and begin cooperative marketing campaign. Focus of campaign will be to fill openings with new Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program clients. This campaign will benefit the members' independent businesses by generating fully subsidized clients for a period of one year.

Education Meeting 4 (Monitoring/Evaluation) is delayed to follow program design sequence. Membership Assessment Survey will be conducted at that time.

- ▶ April 9 – Technical Consultant conducts evaluation of the cooperative project, including Cooperative Model Checklist and the Cooperative Capacity Checklist, in compliance with monitoring and evaluation plan. In attendance are five (5) members. Members present and interviewed attend all cooperative meetings. Members are participatory in discussions and activities. There is a clear understanding of cooperative benefits.

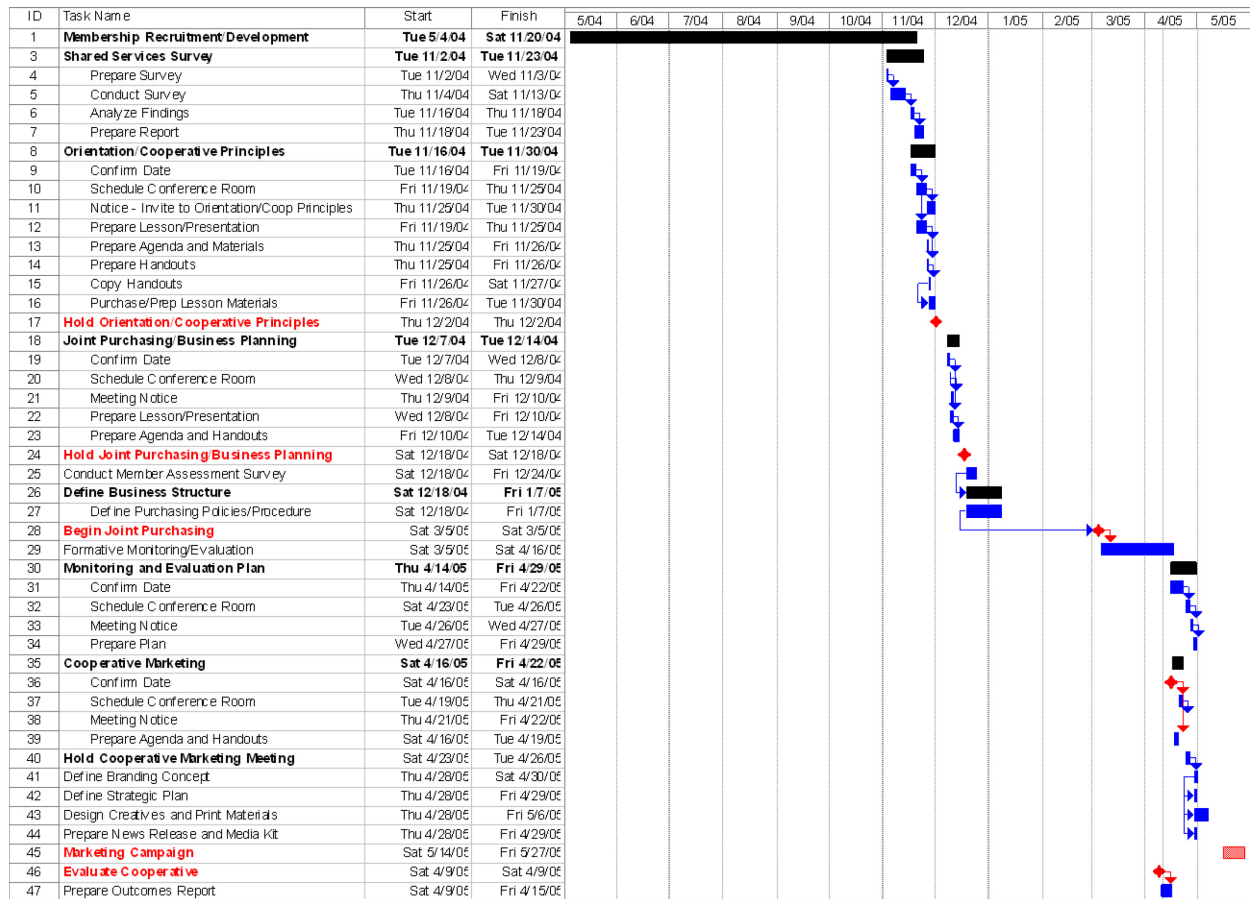
| <b>Cooperative Member Capacity Checklist</b>  |            |           |
|---|------------|-----------|
| <b>Description</b>  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| Are members giving direction to the cooperative?                                      | ✓          |           |
| Are members attending meetings and other cooperative activities?                      | ✓          |           |
| Is voting on significant actions affecting changes?                                   | ✓          |           |
| Are members formulating and approving overall objectives and policies?                | ✓          |           |
| Is membership evaluating the performance of the cooperative through general meetings? | ✓          |           |
| Are members approving and amending the cooperative's rules?                           | ✓          |           |
| Are members providing capital to the cooperative?                                     | ✓          |           |
| Are members communicating complaints, suggestions and needs?                          | ✓          |           |
| Are members encouraging the support and involvement of other members?                 | ✓          |           |
| Are members encouraging and supporting the development of other cooperatives?         | ✓          |           |
| Are the members evaluating the performance of the cooperative?                        | ✓          |           |



| <b>Cooperative Model Checklist</b>  |            |           |
|---|------------|-----------|
| <b>1. Acceptance and Establishment</b>  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| Is there an understanding and acceptance of the cooperative difference and advantage?         | ✓          |           |
| Is that understanding reflected in practices that reinforces cooperation?                     | ✓          |           |
| Do members see the connection between their individual interest and the cooperative interest? | ✓          |           |
| Is there an ongoing member participation program?   | ✓          |           |
| Are the members adequately notified in advance of time, date, place and purpose of meetings?  | ✓          |           |
| Are members at meetings encouraged to raise questions and make comments?                      | ✓          |           |
| Do members speak freely on issues?  | ✓          |           |
| Is the cooperative effectively responding to the needs and wants of the members?              | ✓          |           |

| <b>2. Member Participation</b>                                 | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Are members attending meetings?                                | ✓          |           |
| Is the scope and nature of membership control clear?           | ✓          |           |
| Are the members involved in determining their needs and wants? | ✓          |           |
| Do members feel that their participation is meaningful?        | ✓          |           |

## Gantt Chart



## **V. Monitoring and Evaluation**

As the members develop the cooperative enterprise, adoption of appropriate performance measures are key to their ability to evaluate services and benefits of cooperation. Such measures provide useful information in the formation of the cooperative, improvement of services, the development of support for further collaboration and to make changes, as needed, in effectively meeting established goals and objectives.

### **Management Information System**

Monitoring and evaluation of formative activities of the cooperative, as well as, ongoing performance according to the scope of work set by the members of the cooperative, is conducted upon implementation. Members participate in the evaluation of the project with the assurance that confidentiality is maintained. The Technical Consultant prepares updates and analysis reports, using qualitative and quantitative data, to monitor the implementation of the cooperative and its membership. All data is documented, printed to hardcopy and stored and includes:

#### **1. Formative Activity Monitoring**

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Introduction to Cooperative Concept/Request for Information

- Orientation Registration and Sign-Up Sheet
- Membership Roster (database)
- Shared Services Survey
- Cooperative Membership Questionnaire

## 2. Capacity Building Monitoring

- Education Meeting Registration and Sign-Up Sheet
- Education Meeting Agenda/Notes
- Member Assessment Survey
- Cooperative Model Checklist
- Cooperative Capacity Checklist

The goal of the Child Care Provider Network is to build member capacity in cooperative organization, business structure, leadership, decision making, and the concept of equal exchange.

A formative evaluation of the cooperative is incorporated into the development of the Child Care Provider Network in order to successfully implement the entity and operate under its distinctive principles. Evaluation is particularly vital in the early stages of the cooperative since the membership/board is ultimately accountable for policies, practices and procedures that will determine whether or not the enterprise can be sustained. The success of the cooperative depends upon the capacity of its membership to provide the

vision and direction needed not only to survive, but to develop and prosper. It is important to assess the capacity of the membership in order to determine personal and collective contributions to the overall development of the cooperative business. It should be noted that evaluation will not be a personal performance review but rather an assessment of the performance of the cooperative as a whole.

## **Objectives**

|  |
|--|
| <b>Objective 1:</b> Provide the membership with a chance to reflect on and assess areas of strength and weakness.  |
| Accomplished: Membership provided with results of the Shared Services Survey.  |
| Goal Met: Build capacity in concept of equal exchange.   |
| <b>Objective 2:</b> Provide the membership with an invaluable yardstick by which it can prioritize activities for the future.  |
| Accomplished: Benchmark Timetable was provided to the membership.  |
| Goal Met: Build capacity in business structure   |
| <b>Objective 3:</b> Serve as an educational and consensus-building function by clarifying and defining the overall standards of performance.   |
| Accomplished: Shared observation and results of the Cooperative Capacity Checklist.  |
| Goal Met: Build capacity in cooperative organization.  |
| <b>Objective 4:</b> Provide a formal appraisal reflecting membership accomplishments, as well as, what it should be doing and how it works. Such a review can optimally result in all members contributing to setting goals. |
| Accomplished: Shared observation and results of the Cooperative Model Checklist.   |
| Goal Met: Build capacity in cooperative organization.  |

**Objective 5:** Pointing out strengths and weaknesses can give membership a sense of its own competence and accomplishment as a group. This is a good foundation on which to build positive change.

Accomplished: Evaluation results shared with the membership.

Goal Met: Build capacity in leadership and decision-making.

### **Performance Indicators**

The Child Care Provider Network program recognizes success of the services delivered by determining:

1. The acceptance and establishment of the cooperative model;
2. Participation of members in defined cooperative education and business meetings to build professional capacity; and
3. How many of the members' service businesses experience asset building as a result of cooperative membership.

## **Method**

The evaluation process is modeled as a feedback system, designed to measure the following outcomes:

- Acceptance of Cooperative
- Establishment of Cooperative
- Participation in Cooperative
- Capacity Building from Cooperation
- Asset Building from Cooperation
- Development of the Cooperative

| <b>Summary Monitoring Table</b>    |   |  |  |                         |                    |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Outcome</b>                     | <b>Objective</b>                            | <b>Indicators</b>                        | <b>Monthly Data Collection</b>   | <b>Time Plan</b>        | <b>Time Actual</b> |
| Acceptance of Cooperative Model    | Implementation of the Cooperative           | • Registrants                            | • Orientation Signup<br>• Shared Services Survey   | Monthly<br>Mar – May 04 | Mar – Nov 04       |
| Establishment of Cooperative Model | Planning and Development of the Cooperative | • Membership                             | • Membership Roster<br>• Purchasing Policy and Procedure<br>• Cooperative Member Questionnaire | Annual<br>Jan 05        | Dec 05             |
| Participation in Cooperative Model | Application of Cooperative Principles       | • Capital Investment<br>• Service Patron | • Supply Requisition Form<br>• Vendor List   | Monthly<br>Jan – Feb 05 | Mar 05             |
|                                    |   |  | • Cooperative Member Questionnaire   | Annual<br>Feb 05        | Open               |
|                                    |   |  | • Cooperative Model Checklist  | Annual<br>Apr 05        | Apr 05             |

| Summary Monitoring Table                    |  |  |  |                       |               |
|---|--|--|--|-----------------------|---------------|
| Outcome                                     | Objective  | Indicators   | Monthly Data Collection  | Time Plan             | Time Actual   |
| Capacity Building through Cooperative Model | Effectiveness of Cooperative Model (Concept)             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gained Education</li> <li>• Leadership Skills</li> <li>• Decision Making</li> <li>• Collaboration (equal exchange)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting Sign In</li> <li>• Meeting Agenda/Notes</li> </ul>  | Monthly Oct 04–Apr 05 | Oct 04–Apr 05 |
|   |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperative Capacity Checklist</li> </ul>   | Annual Apr 05         | Apr 05        |
| Asset Building through Cooperative Model    | Success of Cooperative Method (Organizational Technique) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased Revenue</li> <li>• Enhanced Services</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase Orders</li> <li>• Membership Assessment Survey</li> </ul>  | Annual Apr 05         | Open          |
| Development of the Cooperative Model        | Expansion of Cooperative Model                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing Cooperative Education</li> <li>• Membership Growth</li> <li>• Implement Value-Added Services</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperative Model Checklist</li> <li>• Cooperative Capacity Checklist</li> <li>• Evaluation Report</li> </ul> | Annual Apr 05         | Apr 05        |

### **Summary Evaluation**

This reporting sets out the findings of the formative and summative evaluation of the Child Care Provider Network concerning the implementation of a purchasing cooperative for family child care providers during the period of January 2004-2005. The evaluation is addressed through an examination of project documentation and reports.

Evaluated outcomes for measuring the success of this program are:

- (a) the acceptance and establishment of a cooperative business model;



- (b) members' complete participation in defined cooperative education and business meetings to build professional capacity; and
- (c) how many of the members' independent businesses experience asset building as a result of cooperative membership.

#### KEY FINDINGS:

##### **Measure A - acceptance and establishment of a cooperative business model**

Acceptance of the cooperative model is key to implementing the joint purchasing initiative, and was achieved through membership of a minimum five (5) family child care providers in a cooperative purchasing program.

Monitoring the recruitment activities was vital to achieving this goal, as this determined which methods were most effective in gaining participation. Documented methods used in membership recruitment have proven effective in introducing the benefits of cooperation, as well as, building interest in cooperative membership. This is evidenced by sign-up sheets and a growing database of potential members.

When the initiative was delayed due to natural disaster, potential membership was quickly re-established by referring to these records and subsequently conducting a telephone survey to generate new interest and involvement.

Results of the Shared Services Survey documents potential members' purchasing characteristics and provides evidence of continued interest in the cooperative model, recording the following related responses:

Are you familiar with the benefits of cooperative businesses?

Yes 8%

No 92%

How important is it to you to learn new business skills?

Very Important 40%

Important 60%

Not Important 0%

Which shared services do you believe would benefit your business?

Buying or selling products 82%

Marketing and advertising 64%

Professional services – legal, financial, insurance, etc. 27%

Facility Co-Ownership 27%

None 18%

Other: 36%

Would you like to join a shared services cooperative?

Yes 80%

No 2%

Analysis of the survey results revealed that family child care providers who responded to the survey were those who were in business more than 2 years. The question to be considered is whether special efforts should be made to target providers who meet this criteria in future membership recruitment activities.

**Measure B - members' complete participation in defined cooperative education and business meetings to build professional capacity**

During the period of formative evaluation, sequential cooperative education sessions had begun and met the scheduled timeline as set in the project implementation plan.

Documentation for Education Meeting 1 – Orientation to Cooperative Principles and Methods, records that both the nature and level of participation were appropriate.

Evidence is captured in the attendance record, meeting agenda, curriculum outline and materials.

Recorded observation of the session shows success in creating participant motivation to join the cooperative. At this time, it is clear that the motivational effect of the orientation is lasting in that participants unanimously agreed to begin informal purchasing as documented in the session notes, and are pre-registered for the next program as documented in the sign-up sheet.

The next cooperative session, Education Meeting 2 - Joint Purchasing Model, was held as scheduled and prepared to train membership in establishing purchasing policy and procedures as evidenced by the agenda, curriculum outline and materials, and meeting notice. Sign-up sheet records low participation. Session notes record members'

decision to schedule a follow-up session in the attempt to increase participation in establishing purchasing decisions.

Although this action has pushed back sequential sessions, it remains as evidence of practice in cooperative principles and an increase in capacity with regard to strategic business planning by the membership.

Summative evaluation of the cooperative project finds that although membership remains at the minimum required level, it is committed to developing the cooperative. This is noticeably indicated by the membership themselves initiating the scheduling of upcoming meetings and coordinating activities. Observation of group discussion during the pilot distribution process also verifies that members are building capacity in cooperative planning, organization and the concept of equal exchange.

**Measure C - how many of the members' independent businesses experience asset building as a result of cooperative membership.**

The Cooperative Member Questionnaires are pending completion by the membership. This document provides the preliminary information needed for comparison with the Membership Assessment Survey, a post implementation record. In lieu of this formal documentation, an evaluation of the effect of cooperative participation by the members on the assets of the member's business can be measured based on the initial product distributed. The pilot distribution resulted in the membership receiving 400 of each

product item, valued at \$12.20 wholesale vs. \$24.00 retail, an estimated cost savings of 51% for each member. In addition, the initial product will be on inventory for the member's business for up to 6 months, 2-3 times longer in stock, which potentially saves the member shopping and travel time, making the effort efficient for business.

Observation further reveals that cooperative marketing plans, currently in the planning stage, can potentially benefit the members' independent businesses by generating a fully subsidized client for a period of one year.

Summative evaluation has determined that the cooperative is meeting project goals and objectives as prescribed, with exceptions dictated only in direct compliance of membership decision. It is this result that exemplifies the practical application of cooperative principles in the implementation and development of this cooperative endeavor.

### **Sustainability Plan**

The cooperative approach is well suited to the successful long-term community development process and there are significant case studies highlighting the experiences of communities that have successfully achieved that. This emphasizes the fact that successful local development must be locally driven and requires local community ownership and control to thrive.

Key factors to sustainability of the Child Care Provider Network are:

- Investment/Stability - the cooperative serves a goal to identify and meet the common needs of child care providers in the community. The foundation of the cooperative is that it belongs to the people who use it. This makes the cooperative firmly grounded and not prone to relocation or buy-out. This economic stability helps to build the community's needed infrastructure to increase community vitality.
- Market Demand - there exists a viable business opportunity to retain and expand child care resources within the community. Demand for child care is local and the work of the cooperative will meet an urgent need.
- Value-Added Services - the Child Care Provider Network will actively pursue innovative strategies to develop new and efficient cost cutting practices, utilizing the concept of shared services, including:
  - Joint Marketing and Advertising - branding cooperative members as a local, affordable resource for child care services.
  - Consolidated Services – share administrative and operation costs, such as billing and fee collection, staffing and transportation.

- Contractual Services - allow members to negotiate to provide services for the public sector, an employer, or a group of employers.
- Use of Advisors - members will seek the best advice available to build the cooperative into a viable enterprise. This resource will serve as guidance, rather than in the role of defining opportunities and outcomes.
- Continuing Education - The cooperative will keep members informed and involved through on-going cooperative business updates. This will enable child care providers to become aware of current issues and industry trends as they develop future plans and strategies.

### **Institutional Plan**

The Technical Consultant received an invitation to present the Child Care Provider Network project results to the board of Community Vision, a major stakeholder in Osceola County with strong social and political relationships, as it serves as the liaison between community, business and government in the planning processes of our community. This opportunity will validate the cooperative as an effective Community Economic Development strategy.

The Technical Consultant currently represents the Child Care Provider Network on the planning committee for the Whole Child Project. Osceola County is one of only three communities invited to participate in the project, which is part of the Lawton Chiles Foundation. The mission of the Whole Child Project is to assist communities in building comprehensive, integrated, community-based systems to enable children ages 0-5 to lead productive, rewarding lives. This will afford members of the Child Care Provider Network to play an important role in the future of the families in our community, by having a decision making voice.

Osceola County Economic Development has shown interest in supporting the Child Care Provider Network by providing linkages to workforce related opportunities. Continuing membership capacity and cooperative growth can ensure a greater role in developing the provision of child care services in Osceola County.

Osceola School Readiness Coalition is seeking additional opportunities to partner with the Child Care Provider Network. Preliminary discussion is in effect to incorporate business skills learning, with cooperative members offering training to local family child care providers new to the industry. This value-added service can potentially provide additional revenue to the cooperative, as well as, contribute to the cooperative's name recognition as an authority in the business of child care.



## **VI. Conclusions**

### **Results**

The first benchmark, acceptance of the cooperative model and recruitment of five members, was achieved in April 2004 as scheduled.

Membership recruitment which should have been completed by August 2004, was delayed 3 months. This was due primarily to natural disasters which caused major hurricane damage to the providers' homes, their place of business. This resulted in losing 3 of the 5 initial members and threatening the implementation of the project. Ultimately, it was necessary to prolong membership recruitment.

In an effort to quickly recapture interest and gain new membership, the implementation plan was revised to include a preliminary survey of the providers' purchasing needs and interest in cooperative purchasing. In so doing, acceptance was achieved by November 2004.

The second benchmark, orientation to cooperative principles (Education Meeting 1) was originally planned as a one time workshop achieved in May 2004. After the group dispersed in August 2004, it became important to repeat the orientation session in December 2004 for the new group of potential members. Participation resulted in gaining 15 providers committed to joint purchasing. This activity was also a first step toward community ownership.

Another change in implementation plans occurred after Education Meeting 1, where the new membership made a unanimous decision to begin as an informal purchasing cooperative. It is likely that incorporation and establishing a board will occur on a date succeeding the project timeline. Since the providers are accustomed to working independently, piloting an informal cooperative would determine whether or not the group can feasibly work together. This decision will either be revoked or confirmed during the business planning session covered in Education Meeting 3.

Education Meeting 2 - Joint Purchasing was held December 2004, with low participation due to the approaching holiday season and ongoing renovations from hurricane damage. The present members decided to re-convene mid January in order to have a majority of the membership represented prior to assigning tasks and purchasing items.

Beginning in January 2005, the providers' regulatory agency began scheduling ongoing curriculum trainings. Every effort is being made to avoid low participation at the cooperative meetings due to conflicts with training schedules. Since the education sessions are sequential, any challenges in timing can effectively postpone the project from meeting established deadlines. In lieu of meeting mid January, the members will remain in contact to discuss purchasing plans and develop a list of available equipment and supplies to be used in-kind by the cooperative. The next meeting incorporates an update from the last meeting and will begin the purchasing process. This action has kept project implementation on schedule.

Current delays are the direct result of member decisions to move forward at a careful pace. However, with the success of the distribution of product in April, the membership is urgently pursuing cooperative purchasing on a regular and more time sensitive basis.

| <b>Timeline/Implementation Goals as of April 2005</b> |                |               |
|---|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Benchmark</b>                                      | <b>Planned</b> | <b>Actual</b> |
| Assess Community Need                                 | Feb 04         | Jan 04        |
| Acceptance of Cooperative Method                      | May 04         | May 04        |
| Membership Recruitment                                | Nov 04         | Nov 04        |
| Education Meeting 1 - Cooperative Models              | Jan 05         | Dec 04        |
| Education Meeting 2 – Joint Purchasing Model          | Feb 05         | Feb 05        |
| Implement Cooperative Purchasing                      | Feb 05         | Mar 05        |
| Education Meeting 3 – Business Planning               | Mar 05         | Apr 05        |
| Education Meeting 4 – Monitoring/Evaluation           | Apr 05         | May 05        |
| Marketing Campaign                                    | Apr 05         | May 05        |
| Evaluation  | Apr 05         | Apr 05        |

## **Recommendations**

1. Go to where the people are: The Provider Advisory Council meetings and mandated trainings hosted by 4C were the only opportunities available where large numbers of providers would be present. Use opportunities like these to build recognition and gain the acceptance of your constituents.
2. Spend the time: Develop strong relationships with the constituents you are seeking to reach. It takes consistency to build trusting relationships. This is especially true if you are working with a constituency with which there is no previous working history.
3. Learn to listen: Don't take for granted that you know what someone else needs, why they need it or how they need it. If you learn to listen and understand the issues in context, then you will hear, from the constituent, the solution. They are your best partner in creating a program that will be effective and will become your best ally to ensure success.
4. Talk, talk, talk: Let everyone know what you are doing. In addition to contact with constituents, one of the most important tasks was sharing the proposal with members of the business community, leaders and other representatives of local community groups. From these relationships come local resources, advice and future support.

5. Know what others are doing: Find out who else is serving your population, who the key players are, what they're doing, what works, what doesn't, what you can do better, and what can you do together (leverage.) This will give you a clearer picture of how your approach is different and can achieve greater results than others working in your field – or not.
6. Don't give up: It is worth the effort to be persistent. No matter how challenging the effort, there is always someone as ready as you are to make this happen. Find those individuals and build on that. Surround yourself with supporters.
7. Keep up the momentum: Timing is everything. It's important to follow-up and follow through. There will certainly be times to hand hold, but it should be empowering for the constituent, not enabling. You can't and shouldn't do everything for anyone, but you will have to keep the flame going until the fire is lit.
8. Think outside the box: Try different approaches. Good planning does not guarantee a good fit. It may take several attempts to overcome a barrier or find a solution.
9. Be flexible: Most things are out of your control. Allow for worse case scenarios and as much as possible, be prepared with alternatives.
10. Let others work with you. Share the responsibility. As often as possible, allow stakeholders to take an active role in achieving program success. This is especially important to achieving community ownership.

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## **VIII. Appendices**

- 1 - Shared Services Survey
- 2 - Cooperative Member Questionnaire
- 3 - Membership Assessment Survey
- 4 - Cooperative Model Checklist
- 5 - Cooperative Capacity Checklist

**CHILD CARE PROVIDER NETWORK  
Shared Purchasing Survey**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

|                            |
|----------------------------|
| <b>Owner/Contact Name:</b> |
| <b>Company Name:</b>       |
| <b>Address:</b>            |
|                            |
| <b>Phone Number:</b>       |
| <b>Fax Number:</b>         |
| <b>Email Address:</b>      |

**1. Child Care Status (check if applicable):**

- ☐ Licensed Family Care Provider  
☐ Registered Family Care Provider

Number of Years in Business \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Are you familiar with the benefits of cooperative businesses?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**3. How important is it to you to learn new business skills?**

- ☐ Very Important  
☐ Important  
☐ Not Important

**4. Which shared services do you believe would benefit your business?**

- ☐ Buying or selling products  
☐ Marketing and advertising  
☐ Professional services – legal, financial, insurance, etc.  
☐ Facility Co-Ownership  
☐ None  
☐ Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

**5. How often on average, do you purchase the following products or services for your business?**

|                     | Every Week | Every Month | Every 3-6 mo | Once a Year | Never | How much do you spend |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Art Supplies        |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Office Supplies     |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Cleaning Supplies   |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Food                |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Movie Videos/DVD    |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Toys                |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Books or Magazines  |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Play Equipment      |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Office Equipment    |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Accounting/Tax      |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Business Consulting |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |
| Legal Services      |            |             |              |             |       | \$                    |

**6. How important is the following when you make a purchase for your business?**

|                                | Very Important | Important | Not Important |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| Quality                        |                |           |               |
| Price                          |                |           |               |
| Quantity                       |                |           |               |
| Name Brand                     |                |           |               |
| Packaging (Individual or bulk) |                |           |               |

**7. How important is the following in deciding to join the Shared Purchase Cooperative:**

|                                   | Very Important | Important | Not Important |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| lower price for same quality      |                |           |               |
| better quality at same price      |                |           |               |
| able to purchase in quantity      |                |           |               |
| able to buy new types of products |                |           |               |
|                                   |                |           |               |

Other. Please Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. Would you like to participate in a shared services cooperative?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

***Thank you for participating in this survey.***

## Child Care Provider Cooperative Cooperative Member Questionnaire

This survey is developed to further assist you in benefiting from participation in the Child Care Provider Network by assessing the general service environment of your home-based child care business. ***This survey is completely confidential.*** Your answers to these questions will help in the collaborative planning and development of the Child Care Provider Cooperative to meet the needs of all members. If you have any questions or need assistance in completing the questionnaire, please feel free to contact Margie Torres, Technical Consultant, 407/460-8979.

Thank you for your participation in the survey.

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Part 1: Cooperative Principles

1. How familiar are you with cooperative businesses?
  - ☐ Very familiar
  - ☐ Somewhat familiar
  - ☐ Not familiar
2. How familiar are you with the principles of cooperatives?
  - ☐ Very familiar
  - ☐ Somewhat familiar
  - ☐ Not familiar
3. How familiar are you with the benefits of cooperatives?
  - ☐ Very familiar
  - ☐ Somewhat familiar
  - ☐ Not familiar

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## Part 2: Business Characteristics

4. What is your provider **status**?
  - ☐ Licensed
  - ☐ Registered
  - ☐ Exempt
  - ☐ No license or registration
5. How many **years** have you been running your child care business?
  - ☐ 0 - 1
  - ☐ 2 - 4
  - ☐ 5 - 7
  - ☐ 8 - 10
  - ☐ more than 10
6. Do you **own or rent** the residence where you conduct your child care business?
  - ☐ Own
  - ☐ Rent

7. Does your child care **business** currently have: (check all that apply)
- ☐ A Business Plan
  - ☐ Operational Policy & Procedures
  - ☐ Business Bank Account
  - ☐ Liability Insurance
8. Are you a member of a child care **trade association** or support group?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
9. Are you a member of a **business association** or support group?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
10. Have you participated in **business skills** training or related workshops?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
11. How do you **promote** your child care business? (check all that apply)
- ☐ 4C Resource and Referral Service
  - ☐ Brochure
  - ☐ Flyers
  - ☐ Word of Mouth
  - ☐ Sign in Front of Home
  - ☐ Local Newspapers
  - ☐ Community Newsletters
  - ☐ Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is your **gross annual income from child care** only?
- ☐ under \$12,999
  - ☐ \$13,000 – \$16,999
  - ☐ \$17,000 – \$20,999
  - ☐ \$21,000 – \$24,999
  - ☐ \$25,000 – \$28,999
  - ☐ \$29,000 – \$39,999
  - ☐ \$40,000 – \$59,999
  - ☐ over \$60,000



13. What would you like to do in the coming year to **improve** your child care business?

- ☐ Serve more children
- ☐ Charge more for services
- ☐ Receive child development training
- ☐ Receive business skills training
- ☐ Have better communication/involvement with parents
- ☐ Improve or expand my child care space
- ☐ Improve or add to equipment, toys and educational materials
- ☐ Add to or change my program curriculum
- ☐ Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

### Part 3 Personal Information

14. Please check the box that most appropriately describes your **age**:

- ☐ 18 – 24
- ☐ 25 – 34
- ☐ 35 – 44
- ☐ 45 – 54
- ☐ 55 – 64
- ☐ 65+

15. What is your **gender**?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

16. What is the **highest level of school** you have attended (check only ONE)

- ☐ Grade School
- ☐ Junior High School
- ☐ High School/GED
- ☐ Trade/Technical School
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ Associate Degree/Two-Year College
- ☐ Bachelor Degree/Four-Year College
- ☐ Post-Graduate Degree

17. How do you **identify yourself** ethnically?

- ☐ Caucasian/Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian-American/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

18. What is your **primary** language?

- ☐ English
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

19. Do you speak a second language?

- ☐ English
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

## Child Care Provider Cooperative Membership Assessment Survey

This survey is developed to further assist you in benefiting from participation in the Child Care Provider Cooperative by re-assessing the general service environment of your membership in the cooperative. ***This survey is completely confidential.*** Your answers to these questions will help in the continued collaborative planning and development of the Child Care Provider Cooperative to meet the needs of all members. If you have any questions or need assistance in completing the survey, please feel free to contact Margie Torres, Technical Consultant, 407/460-8979.

Thank you for your participation in the survey.

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How familiar are you with the following cooperative concepts?

|                                  | Very Familiar | Somewhat Familiar | Not Familiar |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Types of Cooperatives            |               |                   |              |
| Cooperative Principles           |               |                   |              |
| Cooperative Benefits             |               |                   |              |
| Membership Rules and Regulations |               |                   |              |
| Cooperative Business Plan        |               |                   |              |

2. Since joining the cooperative, how have you purchased the following products or services for your business? (Please check all that apply)

|                       | Used Cooperative | Did Not Use Cooperative | Did Not Purchase |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Toys                  |                  |                         |                  |
| Books                 |                  |                         |                  |
| Magazines             |                  |                         |                  |
| Classroom Supplies    |                  |                         |                  |
| Office Supplies       |                  |                         |                  |
| Art Supplies          |                  |                         |                  |
| Cleaning Supplies     |                  |                         |                  |
| Paper Products        |                  |                         |                  |
| Groceries             |                  |                         |                  |
| Movie Videos/DVD      |                  |                         |                  |
| Music                 |                  |                         |                  |
| Playground Equipment  |                  |                         |                  |
| Office Equipment      |                  |                         |                  |
| Insurance             |                  |                         |                  |
| Professional Services |                  |                         |                  |

3. Which of the following purchasing factors have improved since joining the cooperative:

|                                   | Improved | Did Not Improve |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| lower price for same quality      |          |                 |
| better quality at same price      |          |                 |
| ability to one-stop shop          |          |                 |
| reliability                       |          |                 |
| able to purchase in quantity      |          |                 |
| able to buy new types of products |          |                 |
| Other. Please Explain:            |          |                 |

4. How often do you participate in the following cooperative activities?

|   | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|---|-------|-----------|-------|
| Attend education sessions   |       |           |       |
| Attend general meetings   |       |           |       |
| Voting on significant actions affecting the cooperative business? |       |           |       |
| Communicating suggestions and needs                               |       |           |       |
| Encouraging the support and involvement of other members          |       |           |       |
| Encouraging and supporting the development of new members         |       |           |       |

5. How satisfied are you with cooperative membership?

|                      | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
|----------------------|-----------|------|------|------|
| Overall Satisfaction |           |      |      |      |

## Child Care Provider Network **Cooperative Model Checklist**

| <b>1. Acceptance and Establishment</b>  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Is there an understanding and acceptance of the cooperative difference and advantage?         |            |           |
| Is that understanding reflected in practices that reinforces cooperation?                     |            |           |
| Do members see the connection between their individual interest and the cooperative interest? |            |           |
| Is there an ongoing member participation program?   |            |           |
| Are the members adequately notified in advance of time, date, place and purpose of meetings?  |            |           |
| Are members at meetings encouraged to raise questions and make comments?                      |            |           |
| Do members speak freely on issues?  |            |           |
| Is the cooperative effectively responding to the needs and wants of the members?              |            |           |

| <b>2. Member Participation</b>                                 | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Are members attending meetings?                                |            |           |
| Is the scope and nature of membership control clear?           |            |           |
| Are the members involved in determining their needs and wants? |            |           |
| Do members feel that their participation is meaningful?        |            |           |

### **Comments**

Child Care Provider Network  
**Cooperative Member Capacity Checklist**

| <b>Description</b>  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Are members giving direction to the cooperative?                                      |            |           |
| Are members attending meetings and other cooperative activities?                      |            |           |
| Is voting on significant actions affecting changes?                                   |            |           |
| Are members formulating and approving overall objectives and policies?                |            |           |
| Is membership evaluating the performance of the cooperative through general meetings? |            |           |
| Are members approving and amending the cooperative's rules?                           |            |           |
| Are members providing capital to the cooperative?                                     |            |           |
| Are members communicating complaints, suggestions and needs?                          |            |           |
| Are members encouraging the support and involvement of other members?                 |            |           |
| Are members encouraging and supporting the development of other cooperatives?         |            |           |
| Are the members evaluating the performance of the cooperative?                        |            |           |

**Comments**