



BlueCross BlueShield  
of North Carolina

Foundation

## Funding Opportunity

### Supporting Home-based Child Care Networks

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is issuing a three-year, \$100,000 / year (\$300,000 total per organization) grant opportunity to support up to four home-based child care networks.\*

**Issue Date:** October 5, 2022

**Submission Deadline:** November 17, 2022, by 5:00 p.m. ET

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This document describes the purpose of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation's Supporting Home-based Child Care Networks Funding Opportunity, eligibility criteria, and the procedures to follow in submitting a proposal. It is requested that proposals are submitted using the Foundation's [online application](#) portal; however, alternative submission arrangements can be requested by contacting: Rob Thompson ([rob.thompson@bcbsncfoundation.org](mailto:rob.thompson@bcbsncfoundation.org))

Note: (\*) denotes a key term defined at the end of the document for shared understanding.

## Supporting Home-based Child Care Networks

### Background

Home-based child care (HBCC)\* is broadly defined as child care provided in the provider's home or in the child's home. It includes licensed family child care (FCC)\* and unregulated family, friend, and neighbor (FFN)\* care. HBCC is the preference of many families due to its myriad strengths and its ability to meet the needs of families. HBCC offers consistent relationships between child and provider; it can provide flexible hours for parents working 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift jobs; and can foster a child care environment that shares the family's cultural norms and values. Many parents' preference for HBCC has been amplified throughout the pandemic due to the smaller number of children in these settings, increased flexibility, and ability to respond to enhanced concerns about safety.

Unfortunately, the supply of licensed family child care (FCC) has been diminished over the past two decades due to the policy, economic, and cultural environment. Over the past 20 years, the number of FCC providers in North Carolina has dropped from nearly 5,000 to just over 1,000. Compared to their center-based peers, the workforce in FCC settings has less access to professional development opportunities, less support from the state's child care infrastructure, and is subject to a licensing process that often alienates, discourages, and disqualifies potential providers. Furthermore, the average hourly wage for FCC providers in North Carolina is substantially lower than that of other educational professionals including center-based staff. At only \$9.09 per hour, there is no county in the state where this average is considered a living wage.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN)\* care providers are also in need of enhanced support. The majority of young children in North Carolina – approximately two-thirds – are in FFN care, which includes everything from stay-at-home parents, grandparents, and other relatives to friends, neighbors, nannies, and other small, informal providers. The widespread use of unregulated FFN care results from a combination of family preference, barriers to licensure for some providers, and lack of access to regulated settings. Even though the data show that more children are in FFN care than any other type of child care, FFN providers receive virtually no support. It's critical that the state's array of FFN providers receive the support they need to provide high-quality and developmentally appropriate care. Resources should also be in place to address barriers to licensure for FFN providers whose quality and ability to care for children would benefit from being part of the regulated system of care.

One promising approach to strengthening all types of HBCC in North Carolina is the development of local HBCC networks that connect independently operated HBCC providers. These HBCC networks link providers in a given community with resources, professional development, business training, advocacy representation, and even shared services. A national organization committed to improving the quality of and access to HBCC, Home Grown, has recently produced [a report](#) documenting best practices for building effective HBCC networks, which this funding opportunity draws from significantly. Home Grown defines an HBCC network as “an interconnected group of providers and families that come together to enhance supports for HBCC, including quality, access to services, and sustainability.”

## Overview of Funding Opportunity

As part of an overall commitment to support an early care and education system that meets the diverse needs of our state's children and families, the Blue Cross NC Foundation is issuing a three-year, \$100,000 / year (\$300,000 total per organization) grant opportunity to support up to four HBCC networks, including licensed Family Child Care and/or unlicensed Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care. Funded networks will provide professional, business, and advocacy support for local HBCC providers and will also participate in a statewide HBCC Network Community of Practice to share learnings and to develop strategies for improving the policy, economic, and regulatory environments for HBCC in North Carolina.

## Overarching Goals

There are two primary goals associated with this funding opportunity:

1. Build the capacity of HBCC networks to support local HBCC providers through advocacy representation, technical assistance, and connections to additional local and state resources.
2. Improve the policy, economic, and regulatory environments for HBCC in North Carolina.

## Description of Funded Work

Grantees will work to implement a range of internal and external strategies that are characteristic of effective HBCC networks [as described by Homegrown and the Erikson Institute](#). Applicants do not need to propose working on all of the strategies outlined below but should describe at least one from each category they will focus on during the grant period. Additionally, grantees must include at least one strategy that supports the "finances and sustainability" of HBCC providers.

### The "Why" – Network Values and Goals:

- **Providers as Partners:** Enhancing the inclusion of member providers in the network's governance, decision-making, and accountability.
- **Focus on Equity:** Implementing an intentional focus on racial and ethnic equity and culturally grounded service delivery.

### The "What" – Services Provided by Networks:

- **Comprehensive Services:** Offering holistic services for children and families beyond the supports offered for providers.
- **Culturally Relevant Quality Improvement Support:** Offering services that build on and enhance practices that contribute to positive child and family outcomes.
- **Finances and Sustainability (required):** Providing services that promote economic well-being and sustainability of HBCC providers, including, but not limited to, the following: improved revenue, access to benefits, technology supports, assistance navigating state and federal subsidies, and other financial supports.
- **Provider Well-Being:** Offering services to promote provider well-being and professional commitment to HBCC.

### The "How" – Effective Implementation Strategies:

- **Service Delivery and Implementation:** Using research evidence and best practice to inform how services are implemented.
- **Data-Driven Decision-making:** Using an intentional and collaborative approach to data collection and analysis that informs service delivery.
- **Provider Support Staff:** Using intentional staffing strategies to support providers.
- **Recruitment:** Employing recruitment strategies that result in ongoing provider participation.

Grantees will participate in a statewide HBCC Network Community of Practice to share learnings and to develop strategies for improving the policy, economic, and regulatory environment for HBCC in North Carolina. Grantees are also encouraged to advocate locally on behalf of member HBCC providers.

## Eligibility and Selection Criteria

### Organization Size

- There is no minimum requirement in terms of operational budget. Organizations of all sizes are eligible to apply.

### Organization Type

- **Nonprofit organization** that is exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is classified as “not a private foundation” under Section 509(a).

- OR -

- **Fiscally sponsored program** – A group or project with a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization acting as a fiscal sponsor. Please note that the fiscal sponsor is responsible for all legal aspects of the organization or project. The fiscal sponsor is considered the grantee and agrees to be accountable to the Foundation for the programmatic and financial outcomes of the grant.

### Organization/Network Characteristics

- This funding opportunity is for HBCC networks, which we define as an interconnected group of providers and families that come together to enhance supports for HBCC, including quality, access to services, and sustainability. Networks of FFN providers are welcome to apply.
- Applications seeking to create a new HBCC network will be considered, though preference will be given to existing networks.
- HBCC networks composed of and serving Black, Latino, American Indian, and other people of color are strongly encouraged to apply.

## Grantee Experience

In addition to building the capacity of local HBCC networks to serve providers, we will focus on building strong partnerships between HBCC networks and understanding what changes need to occur to improve

the environment for HBCC across the state. Grantees will partake in additional opportunities for the purposes of peer support, learning, and collaboration. Examples to include:

- Participation in shared learning opportunities with other HBCC networks. We anticipate several virtual and/or in-person meetings each year. Accommodations will be made with respect to limitations related to COVID-19, as well as language support for Spanish-speaking participants.
- Ongoing dialog with the Foundation, including potentially participating in the identification of consultants and facilitators to serve grantees.
- Engaging in learning and evaluation activities. Grantees may be asked to provide qualitative or quantitative data as part of reporting processes, complete surveys, and participate in reflection conversations to strengthen learning across projects and inform future grantmaking.

As a partner with our grantees throughout this work, our Foundation commits to:

- Support grantees to achieve their goals and to adapt to new or unexpected circumstances.
- Solicit feedback about our approach to, and implementation of, this project and specific opportunities to adapt.
- Provide timely communication about any changes or updates that might impact grantees.
- Operate in consistency with our organizational values: authenticity, collaboration, curiosity, equity, health, and leadership.

## How to Apply

### Part 1:

All applicants will complete a 2-3 page [application](#) to provide information about the HBCC network, its membership and governance, and its goals. Prospective applicants will have the opportunity to schedule a conversation with Foundation staff before submitting an application. This will help us get to know you and will help you determine if your organization is a potential fit for this funding opportunity. Applicants will be able to apply in Spanish and all materials will be translated. Interpretation will also be available for all conversations with Foundation staff.

***To sign up for a 20-minute conversation, [follow this link](#).***

Applications from eligible organizations will be reviewed by Foundation staff and external reviewers with particular attention to:

- Description of experience related to HBCC and supporting HBCC providers, including the current number of members in an applying network and the length of time that network has been in operation.
- The proposed or existing governance structure of the HBCC network, specifically the degree to which providers are included in decision-making.

- The HBCC network's focus on racial equity.
- The clarity and feasibility of network's plan to implement specific strategies named from the "description of funded work" section.
- The proposed staffing of the HBCC network. Specifically, the Foundation will look to see if the staffing plan for the network will provide the capacity to accomplish the goals described in the proposal.
- The Foundation will seek to support a geographically diverse group of applicants that includes rural and urban areas.

**Application decision notifications will be communicated by December 16, 2022, and a smaller group of participants will be invited to participate in Part 2 of the proposal process.**

#### **Part 2:**

Following receipt of the applications, a review committee will invite a group of applicants (by December 16, 2022) to move forward to Part 2 of the process. Invited applicants will submit additional organizational and financial details and participate in a conversation with Foundation staff and external partners to further explore the organization's programming and capacity, community context, and the proposed work. Specific questions will be shared in advance of these conversations and will be provided with at least two weeks to prepare. Applicants will be notified in early February 2023 whether their proposal has been approved for funding.

#### **Timeline**

<b>Deadline or Activity</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>
Funding Opportunity release and application web form is open	October 5, 2022
Q&A webinar for prospective applicants	October 18, 2022
Foundation staff available for consultation	October 21 – Nov. 3, 2022
Application web portal submissions due	November 17, 2022
Finalist decision notifications	December 16, 2022
Invited applicant interviews	January 11-20, 2023
Grantees selected and notified	February 2023

#### **Learn More: Informational Webinar**

On Tuesday, October 18 at 3:00 p.m., the Blue Cross NC Foundation will host a webinar to discuss the funding opportunity and answer prospective applicants' questions.

***You can register for the webinar [at this link](#).***

A recording of the webinar will be posted on the Blue Cross NC Foundation [website](#) along with written

Frequently Asked Questions.

**Questions**

For questions about this funding opportunity, please contact Rob Thompson at [rob.thompson@bcbsncfoundation.org](mailto:rob.thompson@bcbsncfoundation.org).

## Definitions

- Home-based Child Care (HBCC): Home-based child care refers to any nonparental child care in the provider's own home or the child's home.
- Home-based Child Care (HBCC) Network: An interconnected group of providers and families that come together to enhance supports for HBCC, including quality, access to services, and sustainability.
- Family Child Care (FCC): Family child care refers to home-based child care that is regulated, formal, and paid.
- Family, friend, and neighbor care (FFN): Family, friend, and neighbor care refers to unregulated, informal, paid or unpaid, or license-exempt home-based child care. It may also include care by relatives, most often grandparents.

## About the Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is a private, charitable foundation established as an independent entity by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina in 2000. Over the past two decades, the organization has worked with - and supported - nonprofit organizations, government entities, and community partnerships across the state, investing more than \$190 million into North Carolina through nearly 1,300 grants, collaborations, and special initiatives. Within its focus areas of early childhood, healthy communities, healthy food, and oral health, the Foundation strives to address the key drivers of health, taking a flexible approach designed to meet identified needs in partnership with the community. Learn more at [bcbsncfoundation.org](https://bcbsncfoundation.org).