



2022

# Early Care and Education Needs Assessment



Teton Valley  
Collaborative  
for Early Learning

## OUR MISSION

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The Collaborative for Early Learning seeks to support the development and expansion of early care and learning opportunities for families and children of Teton Valley that prepare children for a successful start in school and life.

## OUR VISION

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Every family in Teton Valley has equitable access to affordable, quality early care and learning opportunities.



# Overview

## **In order to be best prepared to enter school, every child deserves access to high quality early care and learning.**

Children 0-5 years of age are constantly experiencing brain development to prepare them for the formal school environment, and can benefit from early learning on both a cognitive and social emotional level. Because there are no state funded early learning opportunities, families in Idaho must rely on privately owned child care businesses which tend to be limited in number and high in cost. This restricts access for many families. Families in rural communities, those with low-income, and households where English is not the primary language, face additional barriers to accessing high quality early care and learning.

According to the USDA Rural Development Joint Resource Guide, there are several factors that create challenges to families in rural areas seeking child care. These include: fewer choices, limited transportation choices, a lower population density (fewer options), fewer skilled service providers, and lower incomes (to afford care). Additionally, the landscape in Teton Valley presents other challenges plaguing other communities in the Mountain West, namely a dearth in available workforce and limited availability of affordable properties for both families and child care providers, current and potential, to afford to rent or purchase. Teton Valley is described as a child care desert, which means there are far more (at least three times more) children than child care slots. The Teton Valley News reported in March of 2022, on a Teton Region Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) covering Teton County, Idaho and surrounding communities, that the amount of jobs created each year, greatly outnumbers the inventory of housing inventory available. This study found that Teton County, Idaho needs 1580 units with 950 priced below market rate. This further complicates both the ability to find a suitable building to house a center as well as an ability to house employees needed to staff a center.



In December 2019, the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (IDAEYC) was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) to analyze and augment the state's early childhood systems and family resources. In July of 2022, IDAEYC selected Teton Valley as one of 22 collaboratives to carry out the work within each region. The Teton Valley Collaborative for Early Learning collected demographic data and conducted surveys of its families and early care and education programs during October and November of 2022. Findings from this assessment will assist in creating both a local and state level strategic plan during the next phase of the grant to increase and expand high quality learning opportunities and resources for young children and families.



## Background to Teton Valley's Child Care Landscape

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In April, 2022, the owner of the only licensed child care facility in Teton Valley, Idaho to provide care for infants and toddlers under 24 months as well as Idaho Child Care Program for families who need financial assistance to afford child care, learned she would soon be losing its lease (Teton Valley News, July 7, 2022). Without other affordable rental options for this facility, she worried our community would lose the last existing facility to provide care for the youngest residents of our county. Prior to this, Driggs lost three other child care providers in the one year preceding this announcement.

This motivated local leaders from nonprofit organizations, government officials, and representatives from TSD #401 to establish the Collaborative for Early Learning and hire a Project Manager to lead the Advisory Committee in this important work (Teton Valley News, July 7, 2022). Teton County is identified as a childcare desert, meaning more families need care than what is available, and this has become more apparent as the cost of rent and properties for purchase has become increasingly unaffordable, preventing providers from creating centers or expanding services out of a home setting. Further complicating this is the county's struggle to maintain a workforce and contribute to economic development, likely due to the limited affordable housing available both for rent and for purchase. Reportedly, families are leaving the county due to the lack of affordable housing as well as access to early care and education.

# The Advisory Committee

**Adriana Green**

Building Blocks Early Learning Center LLC

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**Anna Wells**

Above and Beyond the Classroom in Teton Valley

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**August Christensen**

City of Driggs

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**Bevin Taylor**

Teton Regional Economic Coalition

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**Bonnie Self**

Community Foundation of Teton Valley

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**Jen Werlin**

University of Idaho Extension, Teton County

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**Kristi Meston**

Collaborative for Early Learning

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**Kristin Livingstone**

Education Foundation of Teton Valley

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**Martin Balben**

Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children

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**Michael Whitfield**

Teton County

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**Monte Woolstenhulme**

Teton School District #401

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**Nan Pugh**

The Spark Foundation

# Data Sources



**The ELAC engaged community members and early childhood providers through online (and paper) surveys.**

- [Collaborative for Early Learning Family Survey](#) // 77 participants
- [Collaborative for Early Learning Family Survey for Food Pantry Clients](#) // 21 participants (20 in Spanish and 1 in English)
- [Collaborative for Early Learning Provider Survey](#) // 12 participants
- [Collaborative for Early Learning Business Survey](#) // 22 participants



**Additional demographic statistics were gathered from the following sources:**

- U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts
- 2020 Kid Counts Data Book
- Teton Valley News
- Teton Region Housing Needs Assessment (March, 2022)
- USDA Rural Development Joint Resource Guide



# A SNAPSHOT OF Teton County, Idaho



## POPULATION

11,630 (Census, 2020)

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## POPULATION

81.5% White

0.5% Black

0.8% Asian

0.1% Native American/Alaskan Native

16% Hispanic

1.5% Two or More Races



## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2016-20)

\$73,274



## PER CAPITA INCOME IN PAST 12 MONTHS

\$34,205



## PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY

7.4%



## Current Child Care Landscape

Description of current child care programs



### Business model

- All day (M-F) licensed center based care (includes care for 0-2): 1
- Licensed preschool (M-F): 2 (one is for 3-5, and one is for 2-5)
- Licensed developmental preschool: 1 (two half day programs)
- Outdoor based preschool: 2 (one is MWF 9-12, one is MTWTh 9-4)
- Home based group care: 5+



### Level of education:

Varies from no HS degree to HS degree to Masters degree



### Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP)

2 programs certified to serve families participating in ICCP



### Current children in child care slots:

144 (estimated, and including part time and in home care)



### IdahoSTARS Steps to Quality

3 participating

# Key Findings from the Family Survey

The Teton Valley Family Survey respondents across all groups (both online and paper surveys targeted to low income families through the Food Pantry) indicated that families need greater access to affordable high quality early care and education opportunities. Regardless of the average annual income of respondents, finding child care presents a large challenge due to the extremely limited options, especially for the 0-2 age range. Many respondents also indicated that some current options do not support the hours needed for working families, especially for the families that commute to Jackson.

60% of children aged 2 and under are being taken care of in their family's home with only 24% of parents making that choice intentionally. 32% of parents do not have another option and 30% of parents keep children home because it is the option that is affordable for their family.

The majority of parents with children aged 3-5 are happy with their arrangements, with 41% of children in a preschool program. Parents are happy with their current arrangements because it is affordable and the curriculum aligns with their goals/values.

When choosing a care provider, all parents prioritize a safe and caring environment first, that staff passes a background check second, and that programs pass a yearly inspection third.

After that, parents of children two and under care about qualified teachers, and parents of children 3-5 care that the curriculum aligns with their goals and values.

For families targeted through the Food Pantry survey, 67% have their children in their own home during the day. 52% of those indicated that cost/affordability is one of the most important factors in selecting child care, with meals are provided as the second most important (28.5%) and location is close to my work/home is also a high priority (24%)

Qualitative data suggests families desire subsidized costs for parents and providers, providing support for parents through education and easier connection to resources, and increasing flexibility in hours of operation.

This survey suggests that the Collaborative should prioritize increasing access (additional spaces) and affordability (\$20-\$50 a day) for children ages 2 and under as the first priority. The findings also suggest the Collaborative should support all providers of children 0-5 in providing safe and caring environments, providing background check information, and decreasing barriers/challenges around licensure.



## Key Findings from the Business Survey

This survey is representative of both small and "large" businesses, including non-profits, in Teton Valley.

Employers believe child care is vital to our community's economy, and that the lack of access and affordability of child care in the valley is increasing employee stress and decreasing productivity. 30% of employees are frequently missing work because of child care issues and it is difficult to attract new employees because of the lack of child care. 5% of employers are already offering financial assistance to employees for child care and 35% would be interested in learning about more ways to do so.

Employers will be key allies in this work moving forward. The findings suggest that a large portion of employers in the valley would be interested in support from the Collaborative regarding solutions that decrease employee stress around child care issues and increase the reliability and availability of employees.



## Key Findings from the Provider Survey

Current providers reported significant challenges to providing care for children. Multiple of the in-home providers (55%) reported they would like to expand their services, but have been unable to find a building that is affordable to rent or purchase, which limits their capacity, as well as their ability to expand services to more families. They also expressed that if they were able to expand, they are concerned they would not be able to find and retain reliable and high quality employees or be able to pay a livable wage. For licensed providers, charging enough per child to provide reasonable wages for employees makes it unaffordable for many families. A consistent theme is that in order to keep their services affordable for care, their profits are low, which contributes to our ability to maintain and recruit new providers in the valley.



## Next Steps

The needs identified in the Needs Assessment will guide the development of a Strategic Plan for Teton Valley, Idaho. The plan will document the steps needed to create and enhance a well-coordinated and supported system of high quality early care and learning opportunities for the children and families of Teton Valley. The priority of the Strategic Plan will be to help reduce the stressors placed on families and local businesses due to the lack of affordable high quality care, as well as to support those providing this critical service in our valley. In turn, the plan have positive effects on the children, families, workforce, and economy of Teton Valley.

