

# Bridging the Gap Between Child Care and Community & Economic Development

## Case Studies



## The Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development

**The Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD)**, an organization and network of community action agencies dedicated to improving the quality of life for families in Appalachian Ohio, provides many direct service programs in 30 Ohio counties. One of these programs is COAD4kids,

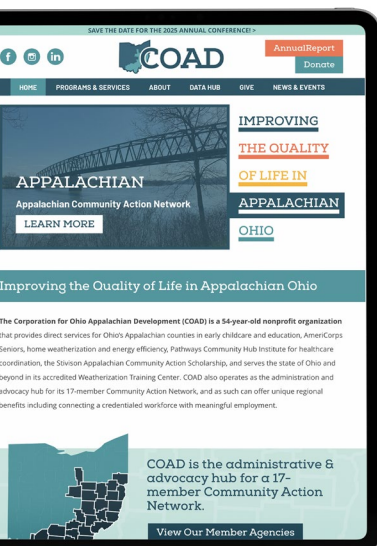
a child care resource and referral (CCR&R) organization. COAD4kids helps families find child care, increases the supply of child care providers, and offers professional development and technical assistance to early childhood professionals.

COAD4kids was selected by Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) as one of five organizations to participate in the Bridging the Gap Between Child Care and Community & Economic Development Community of Practice (CoP). This Community of Practice supported organizations in developing and implementing

locally driven projects that address the intersection of child care and broader community and economic development.

COAD4kids developed their project plan as the result of a child care needs assessment conducted for Vinton County, OH where local employers had been expressing concern about barriers to the workforce, specifically in child care and transportation. Findings from this assessment prompted collaboration with the county's Economic Development Council, which shared an opportunity to expand the work. Building on that momentum, the COAD4kids team decided to replicate the needs assessment in three other counties across Appalachian Ohio, an area that, while often lumped together, has significant cultural and community diversity. By first understanding employer needs, they are laying the groundwork for stronger engagement and future investment.

This wider regional reach provided data to contribute to their overarching goal to complete a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis, a tool designed to quantify the community benefits of investing in child care. Tools like the SROI can support the longer-term goal of buy-in from employers. In the meantime, regional agencies like Economic Development Councils and Chambers of Commerce act as vital connectors.



In addition to conducting surveys and developing the SROI analysis, the COAD4kids team focused on building strategic partnerships to sustain and expand their work. Early support from a Department of Labor (DOL) grant helped establish credibility and open doors for collaboration. Over time, referrals from county Jobs and Family Services (JFS) agencies to COAD4kids served as a strong indicator of growing trust and recognition of the organization's value within the community.

Key stakeholders played a critical role in the project, with local leaders offering valuable insights that informed both the literature review and the economic modeling for the SROI tool. Collaborative efforts also contributed to the success of a comprehensive needs assessment conducted in partnership with Kent State Tuscarawas, a branch of Kent State University, which utilized a secure survey platform and yielded 400 valid responses. Building on this momentum, the team is now moving forward with plans for a new child care center to grow local supply and is actively exploring funding opportunities through Ohio's public-private partnership grant programs.

COAD4kids shared that the project's success stemmed from building trust and partnerships thoughtfully, celebrating milestones, and maintaining effective communication despite challenges. Strong partner engagement and a positive outlook were key successes of the project. While the work faced some limitations, these challenges did not overshadow COAD4kids success in achieving their core objective to create a tool that effectively highlights the value of investing in child care.



## County-wide Employer Supported Childcare Center

Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development entered into an agreement with Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service to create a report identifying the **Social Return of Investment** in child care.



For more information, please visit the [Bridging the Gap](#) digital hub.