



## Request for Proposals: Project Consultant for Early Matters Northeast Ohio

EM NEO's charge is to change public and private policies to ensure working families have access to affordable, quality child care to support workforce and business growth in Northeast Ohio.

We are seeking consulting support to facilitate and activate a coalition of regional leaders to champion state and local policy solutions that will increase access to child care for Northeast Ohio families; identify private, business-driven solutions to increase child care access; and create a framework for ongoing engagement of business and economic development leaders in Northeast Ohio.

The consultant will work directly with the Leadership Committee of EM NEO and will partner with the Leadership Committee to engage a broad set of business and economic development partners to support the goals of this work. Starting Point will act as the main day-to-day point of contact.

### Background

Early Matters NEO is a coalition focused elevating public and private solutions for a stronger child care system to support workforce and business growth in Northeast Ohio.

In Cleveland and across Cuyahoga County, parents struggle to balance the need to work with the available child care options. Parents overwhelmingly describe their child care options as unaffordable, low quality, or simply inaccessible. Parents directly relate these issues to their jobs and the adverse impacts on their productivity, work effort, and careers. Some parents are unable to work at all. From a range of perspectives, the current child care system imposes large economic losses.

Early Matters Northeast Ohio is pursuing its goals through the following core strategies:

- **Develop and raise awareness** of the local need and cost and economic impact of quality child care.
- **Activate a robust coalition** of regional leaders, with a strong focus on business and economic development leaders, to champion state and local public policy changes that **support sustainable child care business models, including child care workers' wages.**
- **Identify community-level strategies to strengthen child care workforce**, to ensure there are enough professionals prepared to provide quality child care.

- **Elevate local innovation** and implementation of best practices around employer-driven supports for workers' child care needs.

The Leadership Committee for Early Matters NEO consist of: Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board, Cuyahoga Community College, Cuyahoga County Workforce Funders Group, Cuyahoga County Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children, PRE4CLE, and Starting Point.

### **The Ideal Candidate**

Our ideal candidate has experience building relationships with business leaders, while being very mission-driven. They care about Northeast Ohio, children, equity, our economy and our community's future.

They are a highly effective communicator (both oral and written), a strong listener and collaborator. They are an experienced bridge-builder across organizations with differing interests and have experience supporting organizations (with differing points of view) find shared ground. They have experience inspiring or supporting organizations to take new or different actions. They aren't afraid to make considered "asks."

Our candidate is a self-starter and very organized. They have experience defining and driving forward a course of action, including through leveraging other organizations' strengths and assets. They can communicate with key stakeholders about progress (and challenges), assimilate their input and adjust course over time as needed.

They are comfortable working in environments that include change, ambiguity, various stakeholders and interests, and multiple goals.

Example backgrounds of candidates: sales, community relations, economic development, sector partnerships, employer-facing in workforce development, career services, policy advocacy (with a history of coalition building, including businesses), government affairs, communications (with private sector experience), project management (in a business context, or involving businesses).

What the candidate is not:

- This candidate is not necessarily an expert on child care, or child care policy. EM NEO organizations have tremendous subject matter expertise.
- Wanting to be an executive director right now. This effort, at this stage, is highly focused on connecting and amplifying efforts of multiple organizations, and building a broader coalition, especially including businesses. This role is not intended to build up an EM NEO as a standalone organization.

## **Project Scope/Deliverables**

The expected engagement for this role is at least 6 months; the project has a budget of \$80,000, with the potential for additional funding to extend the length of the engagement. The consultant will work with the Early Matters NEO Leadership Committee to:

- **Develop and raise awareness of the local need and cost and economic impact of quality child care.**
  - Develop messaging and materials about the connection between a thriving economy and child care
  - Support media engagement as needed to advance the EMNEO communication goals
  
- **Activate a robust coalition of regional leaders to champion state and local public policy changes that support sustainable child care business models, including child care workers' wages.**
  - Support Early Matters NEO in the development of a policy agenda that supports accessible, affordable, quality child care for working parents
  - Develop an outreach strategy to engage business leaders and develop buy-in for the goals of EMNEO, and support the execution of the strategy with the EMNEO Leadership Committee
  - Facilitate Early Matters NEO meetings and engage regularly with Early Matters NEO Leadership Committee
  - Support business leaders in engaging in education and advocacy related to child care
  
- **Identify community-level strategies to strengthen child care workforce, to ensure there are enough professionals prepared to provide quality child care.**
  - Inventory best practices in supporting the development of a strong child care workforce and potential untapped resources in Ohio
  - Develop recommendations for strengthening the local workforce
  
- **Elevate local innovation and implementation of best practices around employer-driven supports for workers' child care needs.**
  - Inventory best-practices in business-led child care solutions, and use that inventory to develop mechanisms for businesses to engage in developing solutions
  - Develop recommendations and implement a path to regular communication with Early Matters NEO stakeholders
  - Develop a framework for ongoing engagement and communication between early care and education sector, workforce/economic development sector, and business leaders
  
- **Staff Early Matters NEO Leadership Committee**
  - Facilitate bi-monthly Leadership Committee meetings
  - Provide regular communication and status updates
  - Provide regular engagement with participating organizations

**Who could fill this role**

- An independent consultant or partnership of consultants, available to dedicate substantial capacity
- A consulting firm, with differentiated staff support

**Proposal Submission**

A complete proposal should address the following:

- A statement of consultant experience and qualifications
- Who will be involved in providing consulting services and their scope of involvement and experience if not specified above
- A project budget for a 6-month engagement
- Contact information for 2-3 clients

Complete proposals should be submitted on or before Wednesday, September 11th at 5:00pm, by email to:

Kara Porter  
Executive Vice President  
Starting Point  
[Kara.porter@starting-point.org](mailto:Kara.porter@starting-point.org)

Candidates to be interviewed will be notified in the weeks following the submission deadline.