



# ALTERNATIVE CHILDCARE FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN PROJECT MANUAL

January 2018



**CIWA**  
Calgary Immigrant Women's Association



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## Acknowledgements

Primary research, writing and manual design by Eleah Reimer.

Edits by Beba Svigir, Eva Szasz-Redmond, Joan Chernoff, Jyoti Agnihotri, and Mara Hawkins.

This report should be cited as:

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, et al. January 2018. *Alternative Childcare for Immigrant Women Project*. Calgary, AB: Calgary Immigrant Women's Association.

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### Our Funders



Status of Women  
Canada

Condition féminine  
Canada



### Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee comprised of an experienced childcare service director, three business partners within the food service industry, immigrant mothers who are gainfully employed, and CIWA employees. The Advisory Committee met quarterly over the course of the project, shared knowledge and expertise to guide the project in:

- Conducting research
- Connecting to childcare service providers
- Connecting to employers in the food service industry
- Connecting to gainfully employed immigrant women willing to participate in the project
- Developing, piloting, and evaluating the models
- Developing best practices and sharing findings

The Advisory Committee comprised the following members (*in alphabetical order by first name*):

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## Business Connections

### *Thornhill Childcare Society*

Thornhill Childcare Society provided this project with expertise, evaluation, and support, and facilitated connections to the greater licensed childcare community. Thornhill Childcare Society is a non-profit, registered charity that has been supporting families since 1974 by providing quality childcare and early learning to children ages 0 – 12 years of age, operating several childcare facilities throughout the City of Calgary as well as a Family Day Home Agency. Their focus is to provide developmentally appropriate programs that are accessible to all children.

We would like to acknowledge Neela Ward, Executive Director for Thornhill Childcare Society, as well as Thornhill Dayhome Consultants: Toni Clubb, Holly Smith, Veronica Paul, and Shelley Ottoson for their contributions throughout the project.

### *Childcare Providers*

The following connections provided childcare and evaluated the pilot models:

<b>Amna Rizwan</b>	<i>Thornhill Childcare Society</i>
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The following connections provided initial need assessments in the research phase:

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<b>Wanda Gareau-Hunt</b>	<i>Heart of the Family in Cornwall, Ontario</i>

### *Employer Connections*

The following connections provided employer evaluation of the pilot models:

<b>Andrew Simpson</b>	<i>Walmart</i>
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<b>Katrina Annett</b>	<i>Denny's</i>
<b>Michelle Legaspi</b>	<i>Tim Horton's</i>
<b>Sunil Pratt</b>	<i>Superstore</i>
<b>Tamam Abdullah</b>	<i>Basha International Foods</i>
<b>Tamara Stegari</b>	<i>Residence Inn Marriott Calgary South</i>
<b>Theresa Ayson Alfonso</b>	<i>Popeye's</i>
<b>Tim MacDonald</b>	<i>Calgary Board of Education</i>

The following connections provided initial need assessments in the research phase:

<b>Abhi Prasad</b>	<i>Denny's</i>
<b>Nancy La Salle</b>	<i>Tim Horton's</i>
<b>Pomi Chahal</b>	<i>Subway</i>
<b>Todd Boehm</b>	<i>Subway</i>

### *Community Connections*

The following community members supported the project in various capacities:

<b>Franco Savoia</b>	<i>Vibrant Communities Calgary</i>
<b>Hailey Clark</b>	<i>BowWest Community Resource</i>
<b>Hernando Ortega</b>	<i>Centre for Newcomers</i>
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## Executive Summary

The *Alternative Childcare for Immigrant Women* research project sought to address childcare issues that immigrant mothers face when working shifts outside of the traditional hours that are serviced by day care centres and day homes. We hypothesized that by addressing the barrier of childcare, immigrant mothers would advance in their careers and achieve economic prosperity. The project included research; development of pilots; recruitment of working mothers, employers and providers; and evaluation of pilots based on their sustainability. The project highlighted the nuanced barriers that prevent the economic advancement of immigrant women.

Via a literature review, research on providing alternative childcare showed a lack of demand, and high burnout rates in operating alternative hours which, in turn, contributed to failed models. In addition, providers were unable to easily accommodate the transportation to and from school that school-age children require. Childcare providers were also unable to offer extended evening hours beyond 7:00 p.m. with limited late evening access until 10:00 p.m. and only occasional weekend availability. The greatest successes in this project were the extension of hours for existing childcare providers and the fact that additional funding outside of parental fees would support the scarcity of clients needing alternative hours.

While recruiting participants, we learned that an immigrant family's values influence participation and advancement in the workplace. We were informed by immigrant women that they were apprehensive to join the project due to cultural values, but that those who joined saw the benefits, and changed their beliefs about formal childcare. In the end, project participants believed that their children accessed educational and nurturing environments which supported their own increased focus and dedication at work. Overall, participants stated that access to a local quality provider was foundational to their career successes and increased their quality of life and relationships.

Employers who provided their insights and experience throughout the project were aware of the challenges families faced in accessing childcare, in part due to the difficulty of securing care at flexible hours. Employers reported that employees share that they cannot work certain shifts due to lack of childcare, but the project highlighted additional reasons including: inability to accommodate a tag-team parenting schedule; hours of employment not being conducive to children's needs; women not wanting to work those shifts; or the high cost of childcare being prohibitive altogether. Many participants made the difficult decision to turn down promotions because they were unable to accommodate the schedule of the workplace and the hours provided by their childcare provider. Further barriers included mothers not wanting to work the hours an employer required, or the employers not having leadership or full time opportunities available for further advancement. These factors all contribute to why working immigrant mothers do not achieve economic advancement. Although childcare may appear to be the reason—it is not the only barrier.

The project provided a deeper understanding of the childcare and employment choices of immigrant women. We initially posited that immigrant women were not able to access childcare during alternative hours because it was not available, which is not the case. What keeps immigrant women from employment advancement includes the rigidity of employers to permit flexible schedules for working parents; conflicting family values and personal values that play a role in an immigrant woman advancing in her career; limitations of childcare providers in accommodating every client need based on best practices and childcare regulations; entry level workers finding the cost of childcare, even after subsidies, too high and thus resorting to another family member or friend providing childcare to reduce overall costs.

## Introduction

The need for the *Alternative Childcare for Immigrant Women* project arose from immigrant women expressing a need for childcare hours that extend beyond traditional hours of care. Immigrant women served by CIWA reported that they faced childcare barriers preventing them from prospering and building their careers. These women were only able to work part time hours or were working in multiple jobs that would fit into the traditional work day hours because they were unable to find childcare to accommodate early morning or late evening schedules. As a result, many women kept returning to CIWA to find better or additional employment opportunities, which initiated a conversation between staff, employers from the fast food service industry and childcare professionals.

## Purpose of Project

The *Alternative Childcare for Immigrant Women* project had a three-fold purpose: research current and innovative models in offering childcare; pilot two, seven-month long childcare models during non-traditional hours; and, provide the community with information on findings.

## Purpose of Manual

This manual aims to provide helpful information for the wider community—social serving agencies, employers, and childcare providers—in their queries regarding methods, strategies, challenges, and resources concerning childcare during alternative working hours. Through the project, we hope to contribute to the important conversation of how families, employers and childcare providers are affected by the impacts of alternative childcare.

## References

This manual is designed for various audiences and stakeholder groups. We have listed sections which may be of interest to employers, childcare providers, social serving agencies, and researchers. The sections are listed and linked below.

### References for Employers

Section	Page(s)	Relevance
<a href="#">Individual Experiences of Alternative Hour Work</a>	14-15	Statistics and reports which provide background of target population working alternative hours
<a href="#">Employer Support</a>	24	Models which demonstrate staff retention and employee engagement at work among working parents
<a href="#">Need Assessments: Employers</a>	32	Assessments with local employers and their experience with hiring the target population
Environmental Scan: <a href="#">Employment Climate Affecting Childcare</a>	29	Local employment rate and how it affected childcare demands
Employer's Experience of <a href="#">Pilot 1</a> and <a href="#">Pilot 2</a>	44-45; 48	How each pilot impacted the employer and their business
<a href="#">Recommendations</a> : Employer Contributions	59	Recommendations for employers
<a href="#">Conclusions</a>	61	Conclusive statement about the project and its findings

### References for Childcare Providers

Section	Page(s)	Relevance
<a href="#">Challenges to Provide and Access Alternative Childcare</a>	16-18	Research that engages the target audience, low-income immigrant families, and the factors behind their selection of and challenges found in providing childcare
<a href="#">Learned Risks in Providing Alternative Hour Childcare</a>	18-19	Global research that provides insight and reasons behind failed alternative childcare models
<a href="#">Operational Alternative Childcare Models</a>	19-22	Local and global models providing childcare; their methods; and why they have succeeded
<a href="#">Childcare Agency Support</a>	23-24	Creative ideas on providing financial support for families accessing childcare
<a href="#">Impact of Access to Childcare</a>	24-27	Examples and models that demonstrate the impacts of accessing childcare
<a href="#">Participants Working in the Food Industry</a>	31-32	Local statistics on childcare choices by immigrant mothers
<a href="#">Local Childcare Provider Experiences</a>	32-33	Experiences of local childcare providers offering alternative childcare hours
<a href="#">Introduction to the Models and Proposed Model Structures</a>	37; 38	How project addressed the childcare provider challenges
<a href="#">Longitudinal Study of Pilot's Impact on Immigrant Women</a>	44	How many families continued to access formal childcare after the project ended
Childcare Providers' Experience of <a href="#">Pilot 1</a> and <a href="#">Pilot 2</a>	45; 48-49	Childcare provider experiences in the pilot and their recommendations for offering alternative hours
<a href="#">Discussion: Step by Step Support</a>	54-55	How childcare providers can understand the need and help families access formal childcare
<a href="#">Recommendations: Centralized Navigation and Support</a>	58	Recommendations for supporting immigrant families to access childcare
<a href="#">Conclusions</a>	61	Conclusive statement about the project and its findings

### *References for Social Serving Agencies*

Section	Page(s)	Relevance
<a href="#">Immigrant Women and Entry Level Employment</a>	14	Statistical information on immigrant women working entry level jobs
<a href="#">Demand and Circumstances of Alternative Hour Work</a>	14	Research by social serving agencies on the demand for working alternative hours
<a href="#">Impacts of Working Alternative Hours in Entry Level Work</a>	15	Research by social serving agencies on the impacts of working alternative hours
<a href="#">The Two Piloted Childcare Models</a>	42	Piloted models chosen to address barriers to childcare
Participant Experiences of <a href="#">Pilot 1</a> and <a href="#">Pilot 2</a>	43; 46-47	Impact of pilots on immigrant women in the project
<a href="#">Longitudinal Study of Pilot's Impact on Immigrant Women</a>	44	Access formal childcare after the project completion
<a href="#">Case Studies</a>	50-51	Two participant examples of the project's impact
<a href="#">Discussion and Recommendations</a>	54-59	Project findings and recommendations
<a href="#">Conclusions</a>	61	Summary of project findings and recommendations

### References for Researchers

Section	Page(s)	Relevance
<a href="#">Experiences of Alternative Hour Work</a>	14-15	Research describing the context and effects of alternative hours of work
<a href="#">Challenges to Provide and Access Alternative Childcare</a>	15-17	Research engaging the target audience, low-income immigrant families, and the factors behind their selection of and challenges found in providing childcare
<a href="#">Learned Risks in Providing Alternative Hour Childcare</a>	18-19	Global research on failed models providing alternative childcare
<a href="#">Operational Alternative Childcare Models</a>	19-22	Local and global models providing childcare; their methods and the reason for their success
<a href="#">Impact of Access to Childcare</a>	24-27	Examples and models that demonstrate the intended and latent impacts in accessing childcare
<a href="#">Description of Our Project</a>	29-33	Contextual discussion, needs assessments, and statistics of project stakeholders, immigrant mothers, employers, and childcare providers, prior to entering the project
<a href="#">Methodology</a>	35-38	Needs analysis, goals and objectives of the project, and proposed model structures
<a href="#">Recruitment Results</a>	39-40	Client recruitment
Participant Experiences of <a href="#">Pilot 1</a> and <a href="#">Pilot 2</a>	43; 46-47	Stakeholder experiences of the models
<a href="#">Longitudinal Study of Pilot 1's Impact on Immigrant Women</a>	44	Access formal childcare after the project completion
<a href="#">Discussion and Recommendations</a>	54-59	Project findings and recommendations
<a href="#">Conclusions</a>	61	Conclusive statement summarizing project findings and recommendations

### *References for Government and Policy Makers*

Section	Page(s)	Relevance
<a href="#"><u>Creative Financing and Support: Governmental and Municipal</u></a>	23	Global and local governments which determine contributions to childcare
<a href="#"><u>Impact of Access to Childcare</u></a>	24-27	Research and statistics from models and sources that discuss how addressing the issue of childcare impacts society
<a href="#"><u>Environmental Scan</u></a>	29-30	Current local and provincial childcare access
<a href="#"><u>Discussion and Recommendations</u></a>	54-59	Project findings and recommendations
<a href="#"><u>Conclusions</u></a>	61	Conclusive statement of project's key findings

literature review

section

1

The project sought to address childcare issues that immigrant mothers face when working shifts that require childcare outside of the traditional hours available by childcare providers. We hypothesized that by addressing the barrier of childcare, immigrant mothers would advance in their careers and achieve economic prosperity. We gathered findings from journal articles, review papers, previous research from institutes and universities, pilot findings, and documented government and employer support of childcare to understand the scope of childcare provision. Factors leading the research included:

- Needs of low income earners juggling childcare demands during alternative hours
- Models and the extent that they addressed the needs of the aforementioned populations
- Reviews of the impact of access to formal childcare
- Recommendations from previous models
- Creative responses to the financial difficulties in sustaining the high costs of childcare

## Individual Experiences of Working Alternative Hours

### *Alternative Hour Workers by Employment Types*

Based on a 2005 Canadian study, 28% (4.1/14.6 million) of the population were employed outside of traditional hours. Of these alternative hour workers: 82% worked full time hours and 37% were women compared to 70% of part time employees being women. The study noted that 22% of families have an evening shift working parent while 30% work day shifts (Williams 2015). In 2009, Canadian statistics showed that 20% (1/5) women secured part time employment due to personal or family responsibilities and 25.9% of these women wanted to work full time hours (Ferraio 2010). These numbers indicate high volumes of women working part time alternative hours.

### *Immigrant Women and Entry Level Employment*

Immigrant women enter the labor force slower than immigrant men due to several factors including: "...family responsibilities, ability to converse in a local language and other settlement issues" (Hudon 2015). CIWA recognizes these settlement challenges for immigrant women and provides several services to support families integrate into both Canadian culture and the workforce. One of the programs, the Food Service Industry Program, started as a pilot project in 2014. In 2017, it became a program with the mandate to support immigrant women gain Canadian experience through language and workplace skills training and thereby transitioning from their previous careers. Since its beginning, the program completed 12 intakes and served 195 clients; to date, the program maintains an 85% employment rate following completion. In total, 125 contact partners participated in the program, and 20 of these partners actively support the program by providing jobs to clients. However, the demands of the food industry to work alternative, flexible, and rotating shifts make securing childcare difficult when they may not have the support system of extended family, and childcare providers may not adjust their hours to match the parent's schedule demands (Enchautegui M. E. 2013; Foster and Broad 1998).

### *Demands and Circumstances of Alternative Hour Work*

Many studies argue that alternative hour work has negative effects not only on the person working these hours but it impacts the worker's family as well. Businesses operate and make their profits during non-traditional hours, and demand even more flexibility from their senior and full time staff when it comes to shift work. Due to these vicarious hours, a working mother in this position may turn down hours or promotions (Enchautegui M. E. 2013; Restaurant Opportunities United 2013). Based on a survey conducted in the USA examining why families accept alternative hour shifts, participants identified job requirements, personal choice, childcare arrangements, or lack of other employment opportunities being available (Williams 2015; McMenamin 2007; Restaurant Opportunities United 2013).



### *Impacts of Alternative Hours in Entry Level Work*

Cyclical stresses and challenges with securing childcare, time with family, reliable transportation, employer-controlled schedules, and no paid time off characterize the culture of working alternative hours. Though businesses within the food industry typically schedule alternative and fluctuating shifts, recommendations made for stable scheduling and paid time off could support employees in securing consistent childcare (M. E. Enchautegui 2013). Oftentimes, a mother who requires childcare access and works a low-income job relies on both of these to make her situation functional (Adams and Rohacek 2010).

Another report, entitled *Who Minds the Kids When Mom Works a Nonstandard Schedule?* published through Urban Institute, discusses the nature of non-traditional and entry level workers' experience (Enchautegui, Johnson and Gelatt 2015) which included:

- Nonstandard schedule jobs with lower pay and fewer benefits
- Inflexibility and irregularity in schedules
- Night shifts staffed sparingly with no extra staff "if someone is late or unable to show up"
- No employee-driven flexibility
- Little notice about schedule changes; expectations to be available at any time and requiring last minute family and childcare responsibility changes
- Unpredictable schedule and providers that cannot sustain flexible schedules
- Providers that do not want to accept clients for less than full time hours
- "Unsociable work" during hours that are not compatible with their family and friends' schedules
- Lack of time with their school aged children because they are expected to be at work when children are out of school
- Lack in choice of scheduling due to tag-team parenting, and juggling the expectations of the work place
- Reliance on co-parent or other family member due to the lack of available non-traditional hours in formal childcare
- Dependence on a variety of childcare options rather than one reliable source

This in-depth report describes the complexities of working non-traditional hours and finding a provider to meet varying childcare schedules. Beyond securing childcare, parents experience stress accommodating the type of work they have secured because it creates multi-scheduling for themselves, family members, and children on a weekly basis.

Further challenges of working alternative hours include long wait times on public transit due to low public use at alternative hours, the addition of commute between home, childcare provider, and work, and the lack of available service providers willing to accommodate these hours (Restaurant Opportunities United 2013; Lei 2013; Enchautegui M. E. 2013; Stoll, Alexander, and Nicpon 2015; Forry, et al. 2013). Mothers working nontraditional hours also report not having enough time with their partners, children, or social network (M. E. Enchautegui 2013). Increased isolation and impacts on mental health are factors that worsen among recent immigrant women who have not had time to build a support network (Hudon, 2015).

However, care during alternative hours arrangement creates the opportunity for parents to share childcare responsibilities (Lei 2013). Co-parenting provides parents with the jurisdiction to teach and raise their children with their own personal values, allows for a variation or preference in alternative hours, and promotes both parent's involvement in their children's lives (Enchautegui, Johnson and Gelatt 2015; Wight, Raley and Bianchi 2008). However, a family cared for by a single parent creates further challenges as they are reliant on additional family and friends that may not be available or dependable.

## Challenges to Provide and Access Alternative Childcare

### *Values and Choices of Childcare*

A mother's values and choices in childcare impact her ability to work entry level jobs with a non-traditional schedule. Among immigrant women, cultural values, education, socio-economic background, local support systems, and personal beliefs impact her decisions about what is best for her and her family. Statistics measuring the target audience's decisions in childcare provide this project with helpful information.

In studies observing how low-income mothers and their families access childcare, the following findings were discovered:

#### *Cost Values*

- Those who have less children are more likely to access a centre over parents with more children who are more likely to access at-home informal childcare (Liu 2013)
- Women are more likely to choose childcare where they can apply for subsidies or access a family member for no charge to save on childcare costs (Liu 2013; Adams, Tout, and Zaslow 2006; Cleveland, Krashinsky and Colley 2016)

#### *Alternative Hour Need*

- Alternative hour childcare is less available, so mothers who work non-traditional hours or part-time choose a co-parent or another family member (Liu 2013; Brown-Lyons, Robertson and Layzer 2001; Cleveland, Krashinsky and Colley 2016)
- Mothers also avail multiple childcare sources to meet the needs of alternative childcare (Enchautegui, Johnson and Gelatt 2015)

#### *Type of Formal Childcare*

- Affordability, location of provider or centre, accessibility by transportation, available times, and quality of care are the largest factors governing a parent's decision about childcare (Liu, 2013; Kim and Fram, 2009; Adams, Tout, and Zaslow, 2006)
- Though the preference is for quality care, this is not always seen in actual decision making (Forry, et al. 2013)
- Parents choose day homes based on location, cost and hours of operation (Liu 2013; Adams, Tout and Zaslow 2006)
- Single mothers typically value cost and location over quality of care (Liu 2013)

#### *Child's Needs*

- As children age, type of care may change; typically, older children will access formal care (Adams, Tout, and Zaslow, 2006; Kim and Fram, 2009; Karoly and Gonzalez 2011; Liu 2013)
- Typically, higher educated mothers perceive access to formal childcare as more supportive for developmental opportunities (Kim and Fram 2009)
- Parents who choose centre care perceive it as a higher educational option for their children (Liu 2013)
- The more children under the age of five in a home, the less likely they are to access formal childcare (Cleveland, Krashinsky and Colley 2016)
- As income increases, families are more likely to choose higher costing childcare options (Liu, 2013; Kim and Fram, 2009; Chaudry, et al. 2011)

Studies engaging immigrant families discovered:

- The longer an immigrant family lives in Canada the more likely they are to access formal childcare (Cleveland, Krashinsky and Colley 2016)
- Collectivistic cultures where people identify as a group rather than individual (often seen in Asia, Africa, and South America) typically choose relative care over formal childcare (Liu 2013; Kim and Fram 2009; Matthews and Ewen 2006)
- Low income immigrant families are less likely to access centre-based care (Karoly and Gonzalez 2011; Liu 2013)
- Families who speak a minority language are less likely to access centre-based care (Liu 2013)
- Mothers who adhere to less traditional values about women working, gender roles, and childcare are more likely to access formal childcare over women who value traditional roles and viewpoints on these subjects (Liu 2013)
- Parents from cultures that do not promote women in the workforce tend to not access formal childcare but when they do, it is not typically at a centre (Liu 2013)
- Some cultures put heightened parental emphasis on the importance of nutritious or ethnic foods served (Chaudry, et al. 2011; Adams and Rohacek 2010)
- Parents value providers who speak their mother tongue (Chaudry, et al. 2011; Adams, Tout, and Zaslow 2006)
- Parents value children learning English while continuing their own mother tongue at home (Chaudry, et al. 2011; Adams, Tout, and Zaslow 2006)

### *Knowledge of Demand*

Providers willing to operate alternative hours face challenges forecasting need and experience an unsustainable demand for alternative hour childcare (Washington State Childcare Resource and Referral Network 2015; Liu 2013). However, this low demand may indicate families do not access childcare due to prohibitive costs (Cleveland, Krashinsky and Colley 2016) and/or the nature of their work is unpredictable and unstable, which results in their inability to sustain access (Adams and Rohacek 2010).

### *Cost Barriers*

Earnings at entry level and non-traditional hour employment make paying for childcare a challenge (Cleveland, Krashinsky and Colley 2016; Adams, Tout and Zaslow 2006; Restaurant Opportunities United 2013). Restaurant Opportunities Centers United researched childcare needs of 200 working mothers in five cities, including their workplaces and at childcare access points. The report found that affordability and accessibility of childcare and difficulty achieving career advancement were among the largest indicators affecting women. The report captured: 50% of women spent more than a third of their weekly salary on childcare; less than 7% received subsidies for childcare; worked frequent irregular schedules with last minute changes; and experienced a long commute in public transit (Restaurant Opportunities United 2013).

### *Provider Considerations*

A 1998 study from University of Regina presented data about the difficulty in providing alternative childcare. Their research included 17 childcare centres that offered alternative hour childcare and the challenges they faced, which included:

- Financial losses in overnight and evening care
- Challenges with retaining or finding staff
- Challenges to find day home providers willing to work extended hours
- Increase in administration for agency
- Challenges in maintaining maximum occupancy of children with fluctuating schedules

Though this study hails from 20 years ago, these continuous challenges have been mentioned by other studies and deterred providers from offering alternative hours (see Washington State Childcare Resource and Referral Network 2015; Halfon and Friendly 2015).

### Learned Risks in Providing Alternative Childcare

As with any undertaking, the study and piloting of new opportunities comes with potential risks of unsustainability. In relation to alternative childcare, the risks to sustainability are the difficulties to understand the demand, to meet the financial challenges and to hire willing staff to adequately meet demand (Adams and Rohacek 2010). Though these pilots, as described below, were unsustainable, their findings acknowledged lessons and provided helpful recommendations.

One project in Ontario, in the District of Thunder Bay, piloted extended and evening hours through their *Grace Remus Childcare Centre*. The city currently operates four childcare centers; at *Grace Remus* they offered extended and evening care from 2009 until 2012 during 6:45 a.m. – 2:00 a.m. with subsidized spaces and busing for school aged children. They tested this program's sustainability, but according to the Board's report it was terminated because it was not financially feasible and the public demand for it not high enough (CBC News Thunder Bay, 2014a; CBC News Thunder Bay, 2014b; CBC News Thunder Bay, 2014c; Kleynendors, 2014). This example illustrates a common identified challenge of securing clientele through provider knowledge of supply and demand; understanding the current and local access to childcare; establishing economic support systems to support mutual access; and parent choices and values in childcare that affect demand (Cleveland, Krashinsky and Colley 2016; Halfon and Friendly 2015).

Another pilot, in High River, Alberta located 37 km south from Calgary, *Daydreams and Sunbeams*, ran extended hours from 6:00 p.m. to 11:45 p.m. during 2011. However, the facility managers explained that they cancelled the evening program because they could not find the staff and the demand was not high enough (personal communication, 22 June 2015).

Two examples of public learning around support for childcare come from Australia. The first was a governmental decision in 1991 to financially support free-market childcare to for-profit agencies (Brennan and Oloman 2009); and the second, a pilot during 2013-2014 to explore alternative childcare options and creative financial supports (Cash 2013). The impact of these are explored below.

In 2008, the Australian government intervened to support ABC centres; eventually some were taken over by investors or closed (McMillan 2011). Since then, stabilization of this system relied on government funding to increase national childcare standards and childcare fees, and the overall demand for childcare rising with national economic improvements (McMillan 2011). Some embraced the policies made in 1991 toward funding free market childcare agencies, and the decision in 2008 to finance and bail out for-profit childcare caused a re-evaluation of how the Australian Government should meet childcare needs (Brennan and Oloman 2009).

In 2013, Australia decided to increase funding through the *Childcare Flexibility Fund* and made a call for existing providers to offer alternative childcare through the *Childcare Flexibility Trials*. These increases would support families to access rebates and benefits including: families on income support who were in school or training, providing grants to childcare workers to increase quality, and flexible access for families needing a variety of childcare models (Cash 2013a; Cash 2013b). In 2014, the pilots extended through three disciplines: family day care, extended weekday care, and out of school hours (Cashb; Maiden 2013). Over the year, they analyzed the pilot to test its viability with providers and whether it met the needs of families. In the end, it cost Australia's taxpayers \$5.5 million AUD. Australia terminated the pilot after its testing due to inconsistent need,

families unable to afford the cost, difficulty in location match with the provider and family, and the provider's availability not coinciding with family need (The Sydney Morning Herald 2014).

## Operational Alternative Childcare Models

### Local

In Calgary, there are centres and day homes which advertise alternative hour childcare. Non-profit centres operating alternative hours were unavailable at the writing of this manual; however, various unlicensed day homes advertise their services for alternative hours. A minimal number of non-for profit agencies do have day homes that offer alternative hour services by request.

*FunPlex Play Care* operates a for-profit childcare in the South East as a center for full time, part time, drop in options, and off site day homes. In 2015, they were operating evening hours and during the winter they were open Monday to Thursday from 7 a.m. - 8 p.m., and on Fridays until 11 p.m. In the summer months they extended their weekday hours until 9 p.m. In August 2015, they had no space for children under 5 in full-time care (personal visit, 22 June 2015). Recently, they advertised that the centre is only open extended hours on Fridays until 11 p.m. and open on Saturdays from 9 a.m. – 11 p.m. (Funflex Playcare Services n.d.).

### National

There are multiple alternative hour childcare operations within Canada in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan; the following centres provide examples of offering alternative childcare.

For the past six years, *Heart of the Family* in Cornwall, Ontario, a non-profit organization, has offered 24/7 childcare for families. They serve parents who work nights in various sectors including hospitals, hotels, restaurants, and retail. Ms. Gareau-Hunt, Program Coordinator at *Heart of the Family Childcare Center*, stated that prior to this program, the municipal government recognized and wanted to address the need for extended hours for families. Overall, Gareau-Hunt believes the success of the program is due largely to sponsored spots from the municipality. Providing childcare with high subsidies ensures that children from low-income families have access to high quality education and access to their program wards off potential future challenges these children are often exposed to. To carry out the program, a full-time scheduler receives the parent's weekly schedules and organizes staff accordingly; which also accommodates families' irregular work schedules. The center allows for drop-in and last minute bookings; however, with the risk of being declined due to staff availability. Though staffing is always a concern, they hire people to work days, or evenings and weekends with either infants or toddlers to ensure consistency (personal communication, 12 November 2015).

As one of the largest endeavours in 1997, Quebec implemented a childcare policy to support women entering the labor market and children having access to quality childcare (Lefebvre, Merrigan and Verstraete 2008). Some have scrutinized this program, saying that space is limited, the government pays more for this system than other options, and that children have not scored high in cognitive tests since the beginning of the program; (Kelly-Gagnon, 2015; Kozhaya, 2007); it is a, "one-fee system" rather than a sliding scale cost dependant on a parent's income (Anderssen and Mackrael, 2013); and negative child behavior and parental outcomes are due to the system (Baker, Gruber, and Milligan, 2008).

Counter-responses to the quality of childcare gathered information from at-risk communities, however, did not give longevity of these individual cases or incorporate responses from other families who may have accessed this care (Milligan, 2014). Other factors not evaluated include a child's transition into childcare; impact on a child who had one-on-one care with a parent to higher



child to provider ratios, children's inconsistent attendance which affected their transition, and evaluation of providers before they had the opportunity to establish themselves. The lack in thorough evaluation inadequately represents the overall impact of the project (Kottelenberg and Lehrer, 2013; Lefebvre, Merrigan, and Verstraete, 2008).

In Lévis, Quebec *Le Petit Train* offers extended childcare hours to families. News reviews of this centre dating back to 2000 commented that families were relieved, but some apprehensive about the offered overnight care, and has since been discontinued (Peritz 2000). They are now open until 12:45 a.m. and on the weekends from 7 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. for children less than 18 months (Le Petit Train n.d.).

*Discovery Children's Centre* in Winnipeg, Manitoba operates licensed childcare from Monday to Friday 6:30 a.m. until midnight and on Saturdays from 6:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. for children aged 2-12. Parents can also schedule part-time or full-time hours (Discovery Children's Centre 2017).

In Regina, Saskatchewan, *Stepping Stones Childcare Cooperative* originated in 1977 to meet the need of families working alternative hours. The non-profit Cooperative continually provides three locations of licensed childcare with one operating from 5:30 a.m. – midnight 7 days a week (Stepping Stones Child Care 2017).

### *International*

Sustainable programs in Japan, USA and Sweden give credit to high demand, governmental and municipal financial aid, or other creative financial supports from employers. Though government involvement in childcare funding in each country differs, successful alternative childcare often occurs with a reliable financial contribution beyond parental fees (Cleveland, Krashinsky and Colley 2016; McMillan 2011). Whether it is the municipality in Japan and Sweden, or employer contributions in California, USA; parents access these capped childcare programs at larger percentages than non-subsidized and non-capped childcare providers (Krashinsky and Colley 2016; Childcare Resource Center 2010).

Sweden's extensive national childcare program ensures that families have accessible, local, extended, weekend childcare with subsidized and capped costs. No family is charged more than 3% of their salary, and capped fees max at \$197 per month for the country's highest earners (Savage 2013). Parents with children aged 3-5 receive 3 hours a day or 15 hours a week of free childcare. With 94% of children in the country enrolled in childcare, Sweden has one of the highest female and maternal employment rates, and lowest child poverty reported in the European Union. Most facilities are open from 6:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.; however, irregular, evening, and weekend hours are beginning to open up in some municipalities (thelocal.se, 2012; Nordfors, 2013; Olofsson, 2015).

Within Japan, municipalities connect families to access available childcare, subsidies, and match them with their needs. (City of Yokohama, 2015; City of Yokohama, 2015). Within Yokohama and Tokyo, for example, these cities cap childcare costs based on income (City of Yokohama, 2015; Tokyo International Kindercare, 2016). At Tokyo International Kindercare families can access alternative hours until 8:00 p.m (Flexible Programs 2017).

The following table provides six examples of alternative childcare, its relevance to this project, hours of operation, the target population served, benefits of the model, how it supports the high costs of this kind of care by financial stability, and any known challenges.

Location	Birmingham, England <sup>1</sup>	Washington, USA <sup>2</sup>	California, USA <sup>3</sup>	Sweden <sup>4</sup>	India <sup>5</sup>	Ontario, Canada <sup>6</sup>
Name	West Midlands Fire Service	King County Childcare Program: The Twilight Group	PalCare	All governmental childcare	Mobile Crèche	Jubilee Heritage Family Resources-In-Home Childcare
Relevance	Employer childcare	Pilot Project in homes and childcare centres with alternative hours	Alternative hour childcare	Alternative hour childcare	Employer childcare operated by non-for profit	Day homes collectively offering 24 hours / 7 days a week care
Type of Alternate Childcare	Employer run childcare centres	Pilot Project in Washington State among multi-cultural providers	Multi-funded service	Overnight childcare in day-home	Paid for and built by employer and operated by local non-for profit agency	Multi-site day homes run by one organization with flexible extended hours
Operating Times	6:45-21:45	Various hours 24 hours	6:00-23:00 M-F 8:00-23:00 Sat	Various hours 24 hours	9:00-17:00 Monday - Saturday	Various hours 24 hours
Need Assessment	Serves firefighters in the public sector	Serves parents who work in the food industry, hospitals, hotels, airports, and often cannot afford the care	Serves airport and hospital workers	Socialist economy supporting families who need alternative childcare	Serves low-income and single parents who would leave their children unattended otherwise	Serves community members in same area of the city
Benefits of Model	Parents are able to accept shifts	Lower-wage employees can afford care	Parents can change schedule every month as needed	Government financial subsidies and flexibility in care	Multi financial contributions ensures stability and quality of the care	Affordable and accessible childcare
	Staff retention	Parents' schedules accommodated on a monthly basis Strong support between providers	Multiple funders support the center		Social care at the core	
		Onsite visits from supporting agency	Licensed to serve 150 children between 3 months and 5 years		Educational care	

Provider Profile	On-site employer childcare	Provided care in their own home	Local businesses provide clients	Home care providers and childcare centres	On-site childcare at workplace operated by childcare workers	Childcare in parent's home
Financial Stability	Parent contributions through pay-check deductions	Employers and corporations fund center	Foundations, employers, unions, local governments, and community organizations contribute funds and in-kind support	Fees are charged on a sliding scale based on income and are capped for all	Financial Stability brought about by contributions from: Trusts, Corporate Donations, Public, Institutional Donors, Government, and Construction Industry	Less cost to utilize day homes than to use childcare centres
	Rate of childcare based on pay	Tuition rates are 75-80% market rate and subsidised by scholarships and subsidies		94% of their children are enrolled in childcare		
	Government and grants					
	Operational Status	Closed in 2006 Due to lack of financial viability and employee use <sup>7</sup>	Pilot concluded	Still operational		

<sup>1</sup> Formby, Eleanor, Nigh Tang, and Sue Yeandle. *Supporting Work-Life Balance Using Non-Standard Hours Childcare*. 2004. Accessed online 8 May 2015 at <http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/Circle/formby-supporting-wlb.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> ---*Non-Standard Work Hour Childcare Project*. Washington State Childcare Resource and Referral Network. U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau Region X and The Governor's Head Start State Collaboration Project of Washington State. February 2000. Online at [http://www.childcarenet.org/get-involved/advocacy/policy-resources/studies/non\\_standard.pdf](http://www.childcarenet.org/get-involved/advocacy/policy-resources/studies/non_standard.pdf). 22 April 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Pal Care. Online at: <http://palcare.org/about>. 22 April 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Savage, Maddy. "Night Nurseries: Sweden's Round-The-Clock Childcare." *BBC News*. 19 March 2013. Online at: <http://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/05/night-nurseries-swedens-round-clock-childcare>. 22 April 2015.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.mobilecreches.org/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> Les Ressources Familiales Jubilee Heritage. Online at: <http://www.jubileeheritage.ca/Programs/Village%20Home%20Child%20Care.aspx>. 22 April 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Wilkins, personal communication, 8 September 2017.



## Creative Financing and Support

Funding provided by the municipality, employers, or other creative means outside of parental fees increases stability of alternative childcare services (Enchautegui M. E. 2013; Gareau-Hunt, personal communication, 21 November 2015; Restaurant Opportunities United 2013, Washington State Childcare Resource and Referral Network 2015). Operating alternative childcare accrues high costs because of increased wear-and-tear to furniture and toys, additional financial incentives for staff to work early morning and late evening hours and parent's fluctuating schedules not requiring full-time childcare (Enchautegui, Johnson, and Gelatt 2015; Washington State Childcare Resource and Referral Network 2015). Securing alternative hour childcare among low-income wage earners becomes a challenge when the costs of care are higher than traditional hours, and providers may not take clients less than full time with fixed schedules (M. E. Enchautegui 2013).

### *Governmental and Municipal Support*

Within Canada, each province decides childcare licensing, regulations, and subsidies. Multiple provincial governments have developed strategies to meet the growing demand for alternative hour childcare; which greatly affects parents due to the costs of childcare, and especially women, as oftentimes childcare deters their entering the work force. Together, national childcare programs and municipal collectives help families navigate and access childcare through a variety of financial supports. In parts of Canada where government spending on childcare is higher, there are a higher percentage of women working and higher births (MacDonald and Friendly 2014).

Some provincial governments have instituted subsidies based on family income, and some have included capped costs due to multiple children in childcare (MacDonald and Friendly 2014). In Alberta, childcare subsidies are available depending on total family income, licensed center or licensed day home, and additional funding for alternative hours or developmental supports for children. (Alberta Government 2016). In 2017, the Alberta Government opened up 1,296 childcare spaces to provide \$25 a day childcare in a three year pilot project. Families will receive that subsidy through the centre and, if eligible, also the provincial subsidies (Alberta Government n.d.; Alberta Government 2017).

In 2017, Alberta's New Democratic Party propositioned non-profit childcare agencies to apply for additional funding for their three year pilot project to offer \$25 a day childcare. All families would be able to access this care and pay up to \$25 per day per child; families eligible for subsidies due to overall household income levels would allow some to access this childcare for free from participating centres. As a result of these changes, childcare centres that were not providing alternative childcare are expanding their services, including Thornhill Childcare Society, our project partner, who opened up 88 spots in September 2017 (Neela Ward, personal communication, 21 June 2017; Alberta Government, n.d.).

### *Childcare Agency Support*

Aside from government and municipal support, some childcare agencies provide financial support to families. These creative measures come from organizational fundraising and floating the cost of non-traditional hour childcare with profit from highly utilized traditional hours (*Heart of the Family*; PalCare 2015; see Foster and Broad 1998). For example, *PalCare*, a non-profit childcare agency operating alternative hours in California, provides sliding scale childcare costs that take into account the family's number of children in care and total income. The agency also receives support through local businesses, volunteer hours from parents, and an *Escrip Program* which means that any money spent at specific businesses will be donated to the agency. These creative measures help to create a co-operative that both families and community members contribute to beyond parental fees to subsidize childcare costs (PalCare 2015).

### *Employer Support*

Employers in various industries provide programs such as financial assistance to guarantee employee spots for children in care (PalCare 2015), vouchers (Restaurant Opportunities United 2013), referral services (Government of New Brunswick 2009; Formby, Tang, and Yeandle 2004), and onsite childcare (Mobile Crèches 2015). However, among low-income earners this option is not readily available (Enchautegui M. E. 2013; Washington State Childcare Resource and Referral Network, 2015), and families are more likely to access publicly funded programs (Allegretto, et al., 2013).

Outside of financial support, employers can help employees by embracing flexible work hours (Enchautegui and Martha Johnson 2015), providing stable scheduling, and allowing paid sick days (Restaurant Opportunities United 2013). Research shows that employee-focused scheduling increases retention and investment in current employees (Allegretto, et al. 2013). One case study by Restaurant Opportunities United (2013), conducted by nine corporations supporting women in the United States, explains the involvement of employers in providing vouchers for childcare and sick days. Their involvement increased staff retention and created a more harmonious and dedicated team. Another report surveyed 200 mothers, in five major cities, questioned how they handled their childcare needs and noted an improvement in staff retention and productivity: 70% stated that they continued to work for the company because of the childcare benefit; 75% recounted an increased dedication to the company; and 72% reported “less work-family stress” which resulted in greater engagement at work (La Valle, et al. 2002).

### *Impact of Access to Childcare*

A working mother’s continued access to childcare that meets her family’s needs of location, cost, and hours of availability impacts employment stability, financial independence, and her child’s development.

### *Stability in Employment*

Stable employment and childcare often interlink among low-income wage earners and when one changes, the other typically follows (Adams and Rohacek 2010). Research describes that regular and ongoing access to high subsidies in childcare increases employment and overall family stability (Enchautegui, Johnson and Gelatt 2015; Adams and Rohacek 2010; Chaudry, et al. 2011). Access to childcare subsidies decreases work absences and disruptions (Forry and Hofferth 2011), and increasing subsidies for formal childcare also increases its use (Tekin 2005).

Fluctuating schedules and hours as well as unstable employment characterize the nature of food industry work in entry level positions (Keith-Jennings and Palacios 2017). This volatility in employment results in the lack of steady income and increases monthly costs for childcare (M. E. Enchautegui 2013). Unstable employment schedules and income, and efforts to patch together multiple childcare arrangements to satisfy employment demands can impact a child’s development (Liu; Adams and Rohacek). Stable childcare can help support the whole family unit and stabilize other factors such as employment, child development, overall family income, and health (Adams and Rohacek 2010).

### *Financial Independence*

Access to higher subsidies and low costs in childcare promotes parents, especially mothers, entering the work force (Foster and Broad; Fortin; Heckman, 2008). This stimulation of the Gross Domestic Product often accrues a return on investment when governments invest more into quality childcare access to reduce parent portions (García, et al. 2016). One study by Balu and Tekin (2003) evaluated the impact of subsidies that provide the opportunity for mothers’ active involvement in the workforce, particularly among low-income single mothers, in their transition

from welfare status. This study recognized that guidelines in receiving a subsidy for childcare required employment or other related reasons to qualify, which increased the likelihood of workplace participation.

Other evidence from high subsidy availabilities for childcare include Quebec's childcare program. Their economy shows that allowing an increase in public use and available childcare has proactively empowered women to work, stimulating the economy with a return of \$1.04 for every dollar spent on childcare, and has successfully transitioned 60,000 single-mothers on welfare to independent living. The Quebec government has increased parent portions by a small fraction for higher income earners in 2014, but their fees are still low compared to the rest of Canada (Fortin 2015).

### *Early Prevention*

Among test pilots, research findings support that investment in early learning and childcare provides preventative measures that save society and children from later intervention costs (Fortin; Heckman, 2010; Schweinhart; García, et al. 2016). Three studies on the influence of formal childcare on children from low socio-economic families, High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, the Carolina Abecedarian Project, and the Carolina Approach to Responsive Education, all demonstrated positive outcomes on the children that participated, and are summarized below (see Conti, Heckman and Pinto 2016).

One of the most popular studies, the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, conducted in the 1960s demonstrates that quality early childhood education can avert future risky behaviors and attunes children to greater social cooperation and economic prosperity. This study assessed 123 children in poverty, between the ages of three and four, by providing high quality preschool to 58 of the children, while the remaining 65 received no programming. The findings proved that children who were in the program had better dispositions towards education and as adults were less likely to be involved in criminal activity, had higher employment rates and earnings; and also proved that the males were more involved in the lives of and had relationships with their children (Schweinhart n.d.).

The Carolina Abecedarian Project and the Carolina Approach to Responsive Education evaluated the longitudinal outcomes of disadvantaged children who accessed early childhood programs. The studies evaluated the children's development, social skills, recidivism, the type of employment they had as adults, further education attainment, and whether they maintained their health. The studies indicated that early childcare programs had positive influences on the children as they aged, and among males the data indicated higher return on investment. They evaluated a rate of return at 13.7% per year after subtracting the cost of running childcare programs. This rate of return, both financially and socially, indicated that costs for childcare were much less on society, as the children were more likely to succeed, than the costs were for non-program attending children who had lower paying jobs or no employment, committed crimes, or received social assistance (García, et al. 2016; Heckman 2008).

### *Child Development*

Formal childcare can support the family by ensuring that children receive holistic age-appropriate care. Alberta Childcare Accreditation Standards recognizes that healthy children require supportive relationships between caregiver and child, positive interactions and communication with other children, interactive indoor and outdoor play areas, holistic health programs, learning through play and emergent curriculum (provider plans programming around children's indicated needs, interest, and experiences between family and community). Through accredited childcare providers, families can access educational and development support to address the needs of both the child and family (Government of Alberta, December 2013).

Many studies argue for formal childcare as an early childhood intervention among children that are at high risk and are socio-economically disadvantaged (Heckman, 2010; National Research Council Institute of Medicine 2000; Anme, et al. 2010), as it provides opportunities for mothers to join the work force and supports the economy and her family (Fortin 2015; Anme et al. 2010). Some studies stress that the quality of care a child receives and the home environment result in healthy child development; however, the home environment has a much stronger impact in a child's development (Anme, et al. 2010; NICHD 2006).

The type of childcare, whether from parent or formal childcare, correlates to healthy child development. Children thrive in community-based care, unhostile commutes from provider to school (Gehl, 2011), consistent schedules, and curriculum that places equal value on social and cognitive development (Taguma, Litjens, and Makowiecki 2013; Heckman, 2017; Heckman, 2008). Some studies argue that children under the age of two benefit more from in-home childcare than in centres (Lee and Jiyun 2016), and others claim higher language and cognitive capabilities of children under 5 when in centre-based care (Lee K., 2016). Several studies show results of better cognitive function and language development in children who receive consistent higher quality childcare (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2006; Karoly and Gonzalez 2011); that child to provider ratios and provider's education affects the quality of care (NICHD 2006); and high quality of childcare predicts a child's, "...social competence and cooperation and less problem behavior at both 2 and 3 years of age." (Anme, et al. 2010).

Among immigrant children, often participating less in formal childcare compared to non-immigrant children, barriers to access include cultural values, cost and available options (Karoly and Gonzalez, 2011; Liu, 2013). However, access to formal childcare can support an immigrant child's development in learning the local language and culture (National Research Council Institute of Medicine 2000; Adams and Rohacek, 2010; Chaudry, et al. 2011). Evidence indicates that immigrant children reach similar, if not better, levels of development in relation to other children in the classroom when provided with quality care from a parent (Washbrook, et al., 2012). Some studies suggest that if the caregiver acquired less education or comes from a lower-socioeconomic status and the home is at an economic disadvantage, this may have a negative impact on the child's development (García, et al., 2016; Heckman, 2017; Karoly and Gonzalez, 2011). Factors like a low-educated parent, low-socioeconomic status, immigrant background, one-on-one parent care, high or poor quality caregiver, or gender advantages or disadvantages collectively play a role in overall development (Kottelenberg and Lehrer, 2013). Quality licensed childcare can benefit children, provide opportunities for development, and prevent potential negative choices in the future—especially among male or disadvantaged children (NICHD, 2006; Heckman, 2008; Kottelenberg and Lehrer, 2014; Kottelenberg and Lehrer, 2013; Schweinhart, n.d.; Conti, Heckman, and Pinto, 2016; Taguma, Litjens, and Makowiecki, 2013). The most stressed point of the research indicates that quality of care provided by a licensed provider or caregiver will nurture a stable and supportive environment for children to grow and develop (Taguma, Litjens, and Makowiecki, 2013; Liu, 2013; García, Heckman, Leaf, and Prados, 2016; (Adams, Tout, and Zaslow, 2006).

# description of our project

section

# 2

## Environmental Scan

### *Provincial Requirements*

Regulations from the Alberta Government that governed the project pilots include:

- Ratios of children to provider are 6:1
- Ages served per provider should not exceed:
  - Children over the age of 12
  - More than 3 children 36 months or younger
  - More than 2 children 24 months or younger
- Service providers should not provide more than 18 hours of care within a 24 hour period
- Service providers must meet the requirements of each day home agency
- Agencies must follow the criteria outlined in the Family Day Home Standards Manual for Alberta (Alberta Government 2013)

### *Context of Childcare Climate*

Before the pilots began in July 2016, we researched families' access to childcare, statistical information pertaining to care for young children and Calgary's childcare context. Three contextual changes occurred that have affected childcare in both Calgary and Alberta: in 2014, the majority of childcare agencies had a waiting list; in 2014-2015, job loss in the oil and gas field created an economic crisis; and, in 2016, Alberta announced a pilot project that offered \$25 a day access to childcare to begin in May 2017. Each of these changes shifted the environment for families' access in childcare.

Initial project research findings in 2015 were:

- 63% of childcare operations in Alberta have a waiting list (Public Interest Alberta 2014)
- Alberta offers childcare subsidies which include the provision of day care and out of school care, day and group homes, stay-at-home parents, extended hours, and kin care (Alberta Government, November 2015)
- Alberta offers subsidies based on income for families making less than a combined income of \$50,000 (Alberta Government, February 2012)
- In Alberta, families can expect a monthly childcare subsidy to a licensed center and day home of up to: \$628 for a child 0-18 months; \$546 for 19 months to kindergarten; and \$310 for a child 1-6 years old (Alberta Government, November 2016)

### *Employment Climate Affecting Childcare*

Over the three years of the project, childcare in Canada and Alberta experienced influxes in both its use and governmental support. The recession of Alberta's oil industry heavily influenced project participants.<sup>1</sup> Job loss has been rounded to 40,000 to 43,000 individuals in the oil and gas industry, resulting in a 7.3% unemployment rate (Loon, 2016; Johnson, 2016). During the project's recruitment phases (March-May 2016 and January-February 2017), the Advisory Committee meetings with members working in childcare and employers in the food service industry, discussed at length the influence of the oil recession in their respective industries. Childcare providers reported a decrease in enrolled children and the need to fill spots— which contrasts significantly to the prior year's report of 63% of childcare centres having a wait list

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on the oil situation and its importance in the economy of Calgary, where the pilots were implemented, see: Gibson, John. *Alberta recession one of the most severe ever, TD Economics report finds*. 28 June 2016. Retrieved 26 April 2017 from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/td-economics-report-alberta-recession-gdp-forecast-1.3684056>.



(Public Interest Alberta 2014). Hence, providers were willing to extend their hours or work alternative hours to ensure income (Neela Ward, personal communication, 21 December 2015). Further, food service industry employers discussed the layoffs in the industry and an increase of part-time hours, while decreasing full-time employees due to the minimum wage increase in Alberta (Alternative Childcare for Immigrant Women Advisory Committee meeting minutes, 11 January 2017). Cumulatively, these economic changes altered the climate for our target stakeholders and influenced the reception of the project in both supply and demand.

In 2016, the Government of Alberta announced that they would explore funding pilots to cap childcare fees at \$25 a day to address some of the barriers to childcare access. Challenges addressed through this pilot included targeting parents who work non-traditional hours and shift work. At the time of writing this report, the Government of Alberta supported 22 not for profit childcare centers (Alberta Government, n.d.) to provide an “estimated 1000 new child-care spaces and up to 230 new child-care jobs” (Alberta Government, November 2016). The project’s Advisory Committee Member and partner, Thornhill Childcare Society, confirmed they will be participating in this pilot (Alberta Government n.d.).

All of these factors before and throughout the project affected the overall context of childcare in Alberta and Calgary. How they influenced the project will be discussed further in the following sections: *Need Assessments*, *Discussion and Recommendations*, and *Challenges*.

## Needs Assessment

To ensure that the alternative childcare model developed as a result of this project supported the economic prosperity of local gainfully employed immigrant women and addressed the needs of all key stakeholders (immigrant mothers, employers, childcare providers), we conducted an in depth needs assessment over a period of six months. The needs assessment focused on:

- Identifying challenges in providing affordable childcare to low income and diverse families
- Understanding childcare barriers of local immigrant mothers working in the fast food industry
- Understanding barriers to career advancement/economic prosperity for immigrant mothers working in the fast food industry
- Understanding the challenges of providing more employment opportunities to staff from the immigrant population with children who require childcare
- Willingness and ways that employers from local business can support their staff overcome childcare issues
- Identifying local childcare providers that can address the need for alternative childcare support
- Identifying barriers to providing alternative hour childcare
- Identifying regulations for childcare providers related to service offered during alternative hours

## Participants Working in the Food Industry

Evaluation Tool	Individual Assessments
	<p>56 immigrant mothers working in food services provided the following findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% (10/10 women who work part time in this group) would like to work full time but are unable to do so due to unreliable childcare arrangements</li> <li>• 59% (33/56) believe that accommodating other schedules of family members (working opposite shifts of other parent) or picking up children from school has prevented them from moving into full time or accepting a promotion requiring more availability and dependability</li> <li>• 82% (46/56) have a steady schedule (stays the same every week)</li> <li>• 18% (10/56) have an irregular schedule (receive their schedule on Sunday for the following week and work anywhere from open to close with varying days off)</li> <li>• 59% (33/56) share childcare responsibilities with their partners (i.e. working opposite shifts)</li> <li>• 12.5% (7/56) rely on an extended family member (grandmother, mother, or aunt) to help with childcare needs</li> <li>• 25% (14/56) rely on a friend or neighbor for childcare</li> <li>• 0.03% (2/56) has no additional help or support with childcare</li> <li>• 70% (39/56) require pick up or drop off to school for their children</li> <li>• 94% (53/56) rely on public transportation to get to and from work with travel times anywhere between 15 minutes to 1 hour (3/56 take 1 hour and 53/56 is under 30 minutes)</li> <li>• 0.05% (3/56) access subsidies and licensed childcare</li> <li>• 0.05% (3/56) are aware of childcare subsidies</li> </ul>
Evaluation Tool	Focus Groups
	<p>90 immigrant women participated in focus groups provided the following findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 94% (85/90) are unaware of childcare regulations and how to access subsidies</li> <li>• 100% (90/90) believe that childcare costs are too high and preferred to rely on informal care</li> <li>• 100% (90/90) state that they were unable to find a childcare provider (licensed with available spaces) open early morning or late evening (alternative hours)</li> </ul>
<b>Highlights from Assessments</b>	



Common themes found among immigrant mothers interviewed:

- Women did not work full time due to the family's schedule and needs
- Women recognized they did not have quality time with their families
- Mothers believed childcare was not available to them during the hours they need it and/or at a rate they could afford
- Mothers were not aware of available childcare providers who were willing to work alternative hours
- Mothers required help in applying for childcare subsidies
- Mothers were not aware of what kind of childcare exists (licensed, non-profit, for profit, subsidies, parents being on boards of childcare agencies, where to look for information on Alberta Government reviews of childcare agencies)

### Employers

Evaluation Tool	Individual Assessments
Interviews with 4 employers (Todd Boehm and Pomi Chahal from Subway, and Pearl Hystad and Nancy La Salle from Tim Horton's) resulted in the following findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% (4/4) provide a set schedule based on an employee's availability</li> <li>• 100% (4/4) report that a majority of their current staff require childcare</li> <li>• 100% (4/4) report that staff with children under 12, who were possible candidates for promotion, faced high challenges accepting the career advancement opportunities due to childcare issues</li> <li>• 100% (4/4) report that women limit their availability due to childcare challenges which often means part time employment</li> <li>• 75% (3/4) report that mothers who have resigned stated childcare issues were the cause</li> <li>• 100% (4/4) report that immigrant working mothers face stress balancing work and children due to their lack of personal support in a new country</li> <li>• 100% (4/4) report that problems increase when children become ill and mothers need flexibility in their schedule</li> </ul>	
Highlights from Assessments	
Employers were aware of employee challenges to access childcare because of limited spaces, cost, and times of availability. Employers also discussed the nature of their employees' advancement in work; that if they wanted a promotion or more hours, they had to provide open availability during alternative hours. In multiple cases, employers discussed eligible employees turned down promotions because they could not find childcare to have open availability.	

### Childcare Providers

Evaluation Tool	One-on-One Interviews
Individual Assessments	
Four interviews with employees in childcare who either have offered or currently offer alternative childcare hours, included Azza Elfiky ( <i>The Flower Patch</i> in Calgary, Alberta) , Michele Gole ( <i>The Day Home Connection Inc.</i> in Calgary, Alberta), Wanda Gareau-Hunt ( <i>Heart of the Family</i> in Cornwall, Ontario), and Donna Rice ( <i>Stepping Stones</i> in Regina, Saskatchewan).	
Those who stopped or were deterred to offer alternative hours stated it was due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff who did not want to work alternative hours</li> <li>• Not enough clients to make the program cost-efficient</li> <li>• Cost of program too expensive for parents and provider</li> </ul>	

Agencies who continue offering alternative childcare credit the success to:

- Consistent staff willing to work the hours
- Extra funding from the municipality
- Extra funding from employers who require employees to work non-traditional hours
- Commitment of funding regardless of numbers of children
- Location of care in communities where demand for alternative hours childcare exists (i.e. low income communities, neighborhoods by hospitals, airports, hotels)
- Advertising and support throughout the community

### Highlights from Assessments

Local and national childcare providers admitted the challenges of providing childcare during alternative hours and their response to offering these hours to their clients. Securing staff for alternative hours and finding a demand that would make it financial viable for the agencies were highest among challenges discussed by the providers.

On the local scene, amongst childcare providers who had run extended hours, Michele Gole from *The Day Home Connection*, discussed her experience. She had offered childcare during extended hours 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. to hospital workers in the Foothills area, and did not need to actively market these hours. However, her providers became worn out with the overtime, and finding staff to fulfill these shifts proved difficult; even after hiring a full-time substitute for their providers to call on when they needed time off. She suggested extended hours not be available during the regular day shifts as this is unsustainable for a day home, and recommended that alternative hours would work best in a center where more than one staff is able to provide care, and backup to be available in case an employee is sick (personal communication, 19 August 2015).

Another provider, Azza Elfiky from *Flower Pot Childcare*, said that most of her clients seek traditional hours and the need for alternative hours was not common in South West Calgary. However, if the need was known and possible to meet she would offer alternative hours but only in a center due to the difficulty in securing staff (personal communication, 21 August 2015).

*Stepping Stones Childcare* in Regina offers alternative hours from 5:30 a.m. – midnight every day. The director said she hires people for specific shifts that do not rotate through mornings or evenings, and even so it is difficult finding qualified staff to work any hours, and not just the evening shifts (Donna Rice, personal communication, August 27, 2015).

Need assessments and focus groups collectively showed the target population's barriers to accessing childcare; employer's challenges in hiring immigrant mothers and how they have responded; and childcare provider's responses and beliefs of offering alternative hours. Through the gathering of data for the project, it is evident that childcare agencies, employers and community organizations all recognize challenges in access to childcare and are willing to address this significant barrier to help working parents thrive in the workplace.

methodology

section

3

### **How we identified the needs of the participants and evaluated the pilot models**

We discovered the need for alternative childcare hours through ongoing feedback from immigrant women who were employed in the fast food service industry. The women reported back to CIWA that they faced childcare barriers which prevented them from prospering and building their careers. Due to the inability to find childcare for early morning or late evening schedule, these women were only able to work part time or were working in multiple jobs that would fit into the traditional work day hours. As a result, many women kept returning to CIWA to find better or additional employment opportunities. This was the impetus for a conversation between CIWA staff, external employers from the fast food service industry, and childcare professionals.

### **How the need assessments contributed to the models**

To ensure that the models supported the economic prosperity of gainfully employed immigrant women and addressed the needs of key stakeholders (immigrant mothers, employers, childcare providers) we conducted an in-depth need assessment over a period of six months. The need assessment focused on:

- Identifying existing innovative childcare models that could be applied within the project
- Identifying challenges in providing affordable childcare to low income and immigrant families
- Understanding childcare barriers of local immigrant mothers working in the fast food industry
- Understanding barriers to career advancement and economic prosperity for immigrant mothers working in the fast food industry
- Understanding the challenges of providing more employment opportunities to staff from the immigrant population who require childcare
- Exploring methods used by local employers that support employees to overcome childcare issues
- Identifying local childcare providers that have addressed the need for alternative childcare
- Identifying barriers to providing alternative hour childcare
- Reviewing regulations for childcare providers related to services offered during alternative hours

### **How the project engaged stakeholders for need assessments**

To ensure the project understood the barriers from the perspective and experience of all involved stakeholders the following methods were used to conduct the need assessments:

- One on one interviews by phone and in person
- Focus groups and discussions
- Literature review of local, national and international research studies about barriers to economic prosperity for women and innovative childcare models

In addition, the following strategies were implemented to address the gender specific needs of participants:

- Mothers chose the time and place where the interview would take place
- Focus groups provided immigrant women with a safe female only environment where they could voice their challenges; participants were able to direct the conversation in the focus group to gather qualitative data
- Women were invited to participate in the need assessment and only those who identified themselves as wanting to participate were approached; immigrant women were not actively pursued by the Project Coordinator or employers

The participating immigrant mothers were from diverse backgrounds, cultures, educational experiences and family dynamics. All of these variances brought wonderful perspectives to the conversations. The need assessment participants were from Cameroon, Ecuador, Egypt, India,

Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines and many of the interviewed women resided with a partner who worked and co-parented the children; we wanted to ensure that we assessed if this had any impact on the economic advancement of a working mother.

### **Evaluation of Stakeholders**

Evaluation of the pilots included assessing changes and growth with all three groups of stakeholders participating in the pilot: immigrant women, childcare providers with extended hours, and employers of the participants. The following performance measurement tools listed in subsequent section benchmark economic growth throughout the two pilots and evaluated how the two models impact all stakeholders involved that these pilots.

Immigrant mothers completed one pre assessment, two mid assessments, one final assessment, and collectively participated in two focus groups to discuss their experiences in the project, offer feedback, and possible solutions where concerns arose. The feedback included three assessments throughout the project to gauge growth as well as three focus groups with all participants.

Employers provided initial perspective of the project's perceived challenge and barrier of childcare to career advancement, and the project's impact; mid-assessments to discuss project's impact, as well as a final assessment for feedback. Employers also participated in quarterly Advisory Committee meetings. During Pilot 2 however, pre and mid evaluations were combined to adjust for employer time restraints.

Childcare providers were assessed twice: once midway through the pilot and during a final evaluation. Cumulatively, this information provided valuable conclusions about the efficacy in addressing the targeted barrier to alternative childcare.

## Introduction to the Models

Based on the findings of the need assessments and research, we considered several of the challenges the project pilots needed to address. The table below outlines the childcare related challenges faced by stakeholders and strategies recommended to address those challenges.

Considerations	Strategies
<b>Childcare to accommodate school aged children</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>72% (73/73) of immigrant mothers interviewed have children in school and require transportation support from childcare providers for pick up or drop off of children</li> <li>Not all childcare providers have a driver's licence or access to a vehicle to transport children to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternative childcare providers who cannot transport children to and or from school should be located within walking distance from schools</li> </ul>
<b>Cost</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% (72/72) of the immigrant mothers interviewed during need assessments believe that they face a financial barrier paying for licensed childcare</li> <li>Childcare providers face sustainability challenges due to low demand of alternative hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Childcare service agencies provide support with completing subsidies</li> <li>Employers receive information of childcare agencies providing alternative hours</li> <li>Alternative childcare services will be offered in high demand locations</li> <li>Child service agencies will support provider to fill childcare spots</li> </ul>
<b>Employer Scheduling</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers require staff outside of traditional 9 to 5 business hours</li> <li>Employers require employees to be available for a variety of alternative hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Childcare services should be available early morning or evening and late night</li> <li>Childcare services should be available for up to 12 hours to cover alternative hour shifts</li> <li>Childcare service providers should be flexible to meet rotating shifts of clients</li> </ul>
<b>Locations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match participants' work or home locations near pilots</li> <li>Place pilot locations in neighborhoods where the demand is high</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having day homes in close proximity to participants' work or home will allow for better participation in the pilot</li> <li>A single location will limit a parent's ability to access care</li> </ul>
<b>Project Participant Requirements</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet target number of project participant requirements while maintaining childcare provider-child ratios</li> <li>Immigrant mothers may have more than 1 child and a provider can only legally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit parents with 1-2 children</li> <li>Pilot models in more than one location to meet project participant requirements</li> </ul>

provide care for up to 6 children in a day home	
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## Proposed Model Structures

Based on the above challenges, strategies and project requirements, the following models were developed.

Model Proposed	Model Structure
<b>Model 1</b> Early Morning Alternative Childcare in a Licensed Day Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers services that address childcare needs for project participants working late evening shifts</li> <li>• Provides childcare between 5:00 am to 5:00 pm</li> </ul>
<b>Model 2</b> Late Evening Alternative Childcare in a Licensed Day Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers services that address childcare needs for project participants working late evening shifts</li> <li>• Provides childcare between 11:00 am to 11:00 pm</li> </ul>
<b>Model 3</b> Early Morning Alternative Childcare in a Licensed Daycare Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers the option of serving more than 6 children</li> <li>• Several providers present</li> <li>• Provides childcare hours between 5:00 am to 5:00 pm for participants working early morning shifts</li> </ul>
<b>Model 4</b> Flexible Alternative Childcare in a Licensed Day Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides childcare between 5:00 am to 11:00 pm</li> <li>• Hours of care vary weekly depending on the needs of the project participants and their schedules</li> <li>• Does not exceed twelve hours of care on any given day</li> <li>• Provides flexibility to parents who have varying schedules and work both early morning and late evening hours</li> </ul>

### *Childcare in Day Home*

According to Government of Alberta regulations, this model accommodates up to six children in one location between 18 months and 12 years of age. The model can be piloted in multiple locations to ensure that participants are able to access childcare within close proximity to their work or home. Some of the limitations of this model include extending the provider's day as they may also be offering traditional hours to accommodate other families and/or the need to secure multiple children with similar schedule needs.

### *Childcare in Daycare Centre*

Centres that extend their traditional hours into alternative hours show successful results due to the reduction in staff burnout and their dependence on higher numbers of traditional hour families for financial stability (Gareau-Hunt, personal communication, 21 November 2015; PalCare, 2015; Tokyo International Kindercare, 2016; Washington State Childcare Resource and Referral Network, 2015). However, this model's chance of sustainability may be curbed by a lack of continued high demand, irregular need, and reliance on creative financial support through the municipality where families reside as well as community businesses.



## Recruitment Results

The project achieved the targeted quota in participant numbers for each pilot. The reasons behind the families that did not join reveal deeper barriers that prevent the project's target population from receiving available formal childcare and will be explored below.

**Table 1:** Recruitment Statistics

Result	Pilot 1	Pilot 2
Recruitment Phase	February – May 2016	January – February 2017
Pilot Phase	June – December 2016	March – September 2017
Number of eligible women recruited	72	42
Number of women in pilot	6	7

**Table 2:** Recruitment Results

Result	Pilot 1	Pilot 2
Did not meet pilot requirements	17	9
Motivation to participate	7	8
Compatibility with provider	9	10
Values about care	34	6
Personal reasons	0	1
Participated	6	7
Total	73	41

Naturally, a key barrier among families is the cost to access formal childcare. The project assessed immigrant families and found the following additional challenges prevented them from accessing formal childcare:

- Lack of knowledge of available and trustworthy childcare providers and agencies
- Provider not being in their community or easily accessible by public transit
- School age children not easily accommodated due to transportation needs
- Child's additional developmental needs that the family could not find a provider to accommodate
- Parent not working enough hours to feel that they needed childcare
- Parent wanting to continue relying on friend or family member
- Cultural or personal beliefs about formal childcare
- Lack of motivation to complete registration

Barriers to Joining the Project	Conclusions
Did not meet pilot requirements	Unemployed and could not attend interviews because of inability to find a provider
	Worked traditional hours or non-low income employment despite facing childcare barriers
Motivation to participate	Reached out to join the project but did not return any phone calls, or did not follow up with Project Coordinator
Compatibility with provider	Heavily relied on public transportation and length of time for route to available childcare provider (often over 30 minutes during winter months) deemed unsafe by some mothers
	Providers without a vehicle or driver's license could not provide children transportation to school
Values about care	Held different values and beliefs about formal childcare
	Unsure about the project; unable to communicate deeper barriers
	Formal childcare benefits unknown
	Some families did not want a person from another culture or religion watching their children
Personal reasons	Client faced personal concerns whether they could join in the time frame of the project
Participated	Recruited clients that joined the project

Overall, 35% (40/114) of eligible women withdrew from the project because they:

- Did not want to use formal childcare
- Believed this project was a great opportunity but for someone else
- Did not want to change their situation
- Had partners that did not want them to join the project
- Did not understand the benefits of formal childcare
- Had preconceived beliefs about day home care and did not want additional information or support
- Were uncertain of how this would impact their situation after the project ended

Where appropriate, supports were offered to these families to address their concerns and raise their awareness about the benefits of formal childcare.

Through the need assessments, we learned that in most families husbands were the main financial provider of the family and at times worked multiple jobs while mothers worked to provide additional income. Further, families relied on the mother to juggle her schedule around childcare needs and patch together multiple childcare solutions.

# the two piloted childcare models

section

# 4

Evaluation of the models demonstrated that, while the centre model could address multiple clients with alternative childcare needs, it could only provide care in one location. Therefore, the model necessitated a larger number of women with similar childcare needs to be viable and sustainable. During recruitment and matching providers with participants phase, the project found that participants were not located in one community, but rather, were scattered throughout the city. Furthermore, in geographic areas where childcare centres would have been available, there were limited numbers of food service industry businesses employing the project's target population or that were interested in participating in the project.

In matching providers and participants, the project found that current day home providers were willing to accommodate their hours around the needs of parents and increase their hours earlier or later. Some of their reasons were to fill an empty childcare spot or based on their understanding of the difficulties accessing alternative childcare.<sup>2</sup> This increased the number of locations providing alternative care as the providers were also located in multiple neighbourhoods in Calgary. Overall, the project relied on research, need assessments and the reality of pilot participant recruitment to decide on implementing day homes instead of a childcare centre with alternative hours.

Pilot 1	Pilot 2
Piloted between June – December 2016	Piloted between March – September 2017
Childcare provided before 7 a.m. in a licensed day home	Childcare provided beyond 6 p.m. in a licensed day home
<p>Both models were designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run for 7 months while monitored by the Project Coordinator</li> <li>• Recruit car providers from CIWA's Childcare Training Program, bridge to work programs, and alumnae supporting the economic prosperity of other immigrant women</li> <li>• Provide care in approved licensed day homes and be monitored by an Alberta approved childcare agency</li> <li>• Be individually accessible based on transportation choice of participants</li> <li>• Expect participants in pilots to provide feedback through focus groups and individual assessments</li> <li>• Connect with employers of participants to receive feedback about the impact of employees having access to alternative childcare</li> <li>• Connect with childcare providers offering alternative childcare to learn about benefits and challenges of use as well as to elicit recommendations</li> </ul>	

## Pilot 1

*Pilot 1: Early Morning Childcare* was characterized by the following:

- Care started at 6:30 a.m. and some day homes were open until 5:30 p.m.
- Five day home providers in four different communities throughout Calgary North and one in Calgary South participated
- Two day home agencies, including Thornhill Childcare Society and Sonshine Family Day Homes, participated
- Six immigrant working mothers and a total of seven children between the ages of 10 months to 3 years participated
- Employment ranged within entry level positions including the food service industry, deli centres in supermarkets, and retail businesses

<sup>2</sup> Please see *Context: Child Care Climate* in *Environmental Scan* section of this manual

## *Pilot Participants*

### *Focus Group 1 and Mid Assessments – August 2016*

During this first focus group, women shared their delight about having access to free childcare and how this support helps them save money. In addition to this financial relief to the cost of childcare, participants felt that other benefits included access to a licensed facility within a short distance to their homes during early morning hours. The participants collectively noted the following benefits:

- Quality time with family and partner
- Scheduling ease with work and family life
- Working early hours being easier than evening demands
- Developing relationships and a support network because of the regular day schedule
- Children having a good relationship with provider and with the day home environment
- Having a stable, reliable, supportive, licensed day home provider to give them peace of mind

### *Focus Group 2 and Mid Assessments – October 2016*

During the second focus group, participants discussed how their access to childcare increased their work performance, increased their opportunity for economic advancement, increased opportunities for additional employment, connected them to a qualified provider, and resulted in their child's overall development. Participants noted that their ability to focus and engage at work was due to knowing that their child was in quality childcare. This enabled them to learn new skills, take on additional responsibilities, increase hours and flexibility, receive higher wages, and to be recognized by their employers for potential leadership roles. In addition, women who were employed part-time stated that access to alternative childcare provided them with the opportunity to take on additional part-time work, thus increasing their economic security. Participants shared a common belief that their children were in better care than they would with a family or friend, which was based on the provider's education and her ability to create a comfortable and safe environment. The ability to create a comfortable and a safe environment, in turn, created the opportunity for their children to develop healthy relationships with other children and with the provider in the day home.

### *Final Focus Group and Assessments – December 2016*

During the final focus group, participants expressed the highlights of participation, challenges they faced as well as their plans after the pilot. They reiterated the key benefits of access to formal childcare and their decision to continue formal childcare with the same provider post pilot. Collectively, they believed that the day home offered the hours they needed, were in an easy to reach location, and provided them peace of mind. Furthermore, participants expressed that quality time with their families, their children's social and educational development, and reliance on a trusted provider contributed to their advancement in the workplace and, for most, their willingness to continue with formal childcare.

Despite the positive feedback, all of the women were concerned about affording the childcare after the pilot ended. At the end of the pilot, 83% ( 5/6) of the women experienced employment change either by choice or due to the economy; 50% (3/6) took on additional employment to afford childcare; one quit her additional employment and reverted back to alternating childcare between her and her partner; and one lost full time hours due to the economy. Unfortunately the fluctuating and unstable job market in entry level positions resulted in uncertainty of whether participants would continue requiring full-time childcare and could afford the associated costs.

### *Longitudinal Study – Participants*

The results of a longitudinal study conducted with all mothers nine months after Pilot 1 ended found the following:

- 66% (4/6) mothers were employed at the same job as during the pilot
- 66% (4/6) mothers were using formal childcare
- 33% (2/6) mothers require and receive alternative hours from their provider
- 33% (2/6) mothers were using the same provider from the pilot
- 33% (2/6) mothers not using formal childcare will return to the same provider from the pilot when their work hours increase or they find employment
- 33% (2/6) mothers using formal childcare from a different provider said it was due to location not to concerns about the provider
- 83% (5/6) mothers were employed
- 33% (2/6) mothers not using formal childcare said it was due to their lack of employment or lack of hours at work
- 100% (6/6) mothers said they overcame the initial barriers of cost and lack of knowledge of the benefits of accessing formal childcare
- 100% (6/6) mothers wanted to work full time and access formal childcare full time

### *Employers*

#### Pre Assessment - June 2016

Employers of immigrant women were contacted when the participants began their involvement in the pilot. They were asked a few questions as to their perception of challenges and benefits in hiring immigrant mothers, childcare needs as it related to their employees and their job performance; and if they believed that early morning childcare would benefit their employees and in turn their own business.

Interviewed employers valued hiring immigrant women due their work ethic, determination to learn and grow, and their longevity with their companies. However, the demands within the family that most mothers faced while working were also difficult to support in the workplace as it prevented flexibility in scheduling. Their employees who are parents would prefer to work around their children's school or their alternative childcare provider which was often a co-parent, and this did not coincide with workplace needs.

Employers were also acutely aware of the childcare challenges their employees faced; 100% of employers believed that their employees with children were prevented from succeeding in the workplace due to their lack of access to a childcare that aligned with their schedules. They expressed that the associated costs were too much for their minimum wage employees, that parents were forced to adjust their work schedules to available childcare or another parent's schedule, and were often inflexible in their availability.

All of the employers believed that early morning childcare would allow their staff to be more available for shifts that were difficult to fill with working parents. Some of the comments of the employers included: it eased their minds to know their staff had reliable and affordable childcare at hours that would support the demands of the workplace and as a result their employees would be more available and reliable for shifts. Overall employers were aware of their employee's need for early morning childcare; the impact this need had on their business; and supported the pilot's aims to address the challenge.

#### Mid Assessments - October 2016

While employers recognized that their employees were now available for morning shifts, those that also required flexibility in scheduling to include evenings and weekends were unable to provide flexible availability to the workplace. Employers believed this continued to hold back their staff from advancing in the workplace when they did not have open availability. However, they also noted that participating employees were more focused, enthusiastic at work and taking on new responsibilities, which positioned them more likely to, as some did, receive a promotion or pay raise.

### Final Assessments - December 2016

Employers were grateful this pilot provided their employees the availability for earlier hours with stable scheduling and supported finances for childcare. However, they believed it did not provide their employees a fluctuating and flexible schedule into the evening—which would be required to advance their careers. They did notice participating women had decreased stress levels and took on additional responsibilities. Finally, employers hoped that the pilot would have continued to offer their employees this support in the future.

### *Childcare Providers*

#### Mid Assessment - September 2016 and Final Assessment - December 2016

Three participating childcare providers operating day homes in various locations in Calgary provided feedback on the early morning pilot. The following information was relayed:

- Early morning access began anywhere from 6:00 to 7:00 a.m., but most frequently was 6:30 a.m.
- Their schedules are consistent Monday – Friday from 6:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
- Children have adapted to the earlier hours but some are more tired than others and have yet to fully adjust
- Children will arrive still asleep and take a nap around 11 a.m.

Benefits of offering early hours included:

- Knowing you are helping and supporting families to increase their work hours and income
- Ability to plan the night before and prepare for work the next day

Challenges in offering early hours included:

- Longer working hours due to also working traditional hours
- Exhaustion while offering extended hours

Solutions offered were as follows:

- Having parents understand the need to put their children to bed earlier to adjust to the new schedule
- Capping available hours to families accessing early morning childcare only so that children are not in care for more than 8 hours
- Preparing food and addressing their own family's needs the night before

In this pilot, our partner childcare agency, Thornhill Childcare Society, intervened on behalf of the parent, child, and service provider to support the child's learning disability and a situation of parental misconduct that could potentially endanger the child. The agency connected the family to a school which specializes in the support their child needed. Additionally, the agency intervened to contact the appropriate sources to ensure the child was safe.



## Pilot 2

Families accessed *Pilot 2 Evening Childcare* as follows:

- Use began between 8:00 a.m. until anywhere from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- One family occasionally accessed late evening childcare until 10:00 p.m.
- Two families occasionally accessed childcare during the weekends
- Seven mothers and their seven children ages 13 months to 4 years were in the pilot
- Four day home agencies participated including Thornhill Childcare Society, Calgary and Region Family Day Homes, Child Development Day Homes, and Davar Family Day Homes
- Employment included entry level positions such as food service industry, janitorial and housekeeping services, grocery stores, and retail businesses

### *Pilot Participants*

#### *Focus Group 1 and Mid Assessments - May 2017*

Participants found that having access to formal childcare impacted their employment, personal life and child and that they were able to focus at work, as well as being more available and dependable to their employer. Employers wanted a greater range of availability from employees to respond to the need of their businesses and requirements of advancing in the workplace. Childcare providers wanted to serve no longer than 10 hours a day (as with traditional use) and avoid burn out. Mothers wanted a flexible childcare provider that would also be available weekends and a variety of shifts.

This pilot had additional licensed and reputable childcare agencies in Calgary join the project. Childcare providers showed greater ability to meet participant's needs in terms of location, services (dietary, cultural, activities, etc.), and hours required. The addition of more childcare providers contributed to their autonomy of choice. The providers also had a greater flexibility in hours and days available, which provided the women with occasional need from as early as 6:30 p.m. and as late as 9:00 p.m. at night. As a result, participants increased their availability for work, attending additional training (college or classes) that would improve their chances or certify them for a promotion, or accepting and receiving a promotion that required early morning and late evening availability.

#### *Focus Group 2 and Mid Assessments - July 2017*

Participants achieved personal goals including promotion, graduating from their programs, and being offered management positions. They believe this achievement is due to their continued focus at work and being more dedicated to their work or school due to fewer interruptions from their duties. They collectively believed they were able to accept additional responsibilities and have more time in the work place to learn and take on new challenges.

Participants also confessed they had initially felt scared to place their children in this project and that they did not know if their children would be okay for long periods of time without them or if their provider would be an adequate caregiver for their child. Furthermore, after five months of being in the project, they noticed improvements in their child's development, eating habits flexibility and openness, manners, motor and fine motor skill development, reading comprehension and spelling abilities. They also noticed that they were watching less TV. Parents also describe that their children had developed an attachment to their provider and to the other children in the day home.

Participants also informed us that with promotions, their employers demand more flexible hours and these hours were unlikely to be met by a provider and were not in the best interest of their children. One had to turn down a management offer because the hours were from 5 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Though the participant would like to accept the position, her provider is unable to accommodate the hours. Another participant has accepted a management position that will occasionally require her availability from 5 p.m. – 1 a.m.

#### Final Focus Group and Assessments - September 2017

Participants discussed their experiences and challenges during the final focus group and assessments. Assessment highlights included their child's educational experience and connection to the day home provider, provider availability and agency support, and how these factors changed their perception of formal childcare, improved their relationships with their partners, and advanced their careers.

As participants accessed their providers, they described improvement in their children's habits, language, reading, writing comprehension and social development; also confirming improvements with the relationship between the provider and child. They believed this development was worth every moment of being in the project and that experiencing trust with their provider supported their focus at work.

Due to the unstable scheduling work demands, participants needed access not only to evening hours but also varied hours during the day. As in Pilot 1, providers and agencies supported the participants' unstable scheduling. However, the childcare providers were even more flexible because they found it easier to regularly extend their evening hours rather than mornings. The providers in this pilot were also available both morning (6:30 a.m.) and evening (10:00 p.m.) and weekends per request. The agencies supported each participant when a provider took holidays or was away, and ensured that each family knew the application process and childcare system. This support from both childcare provider and agency ensured that participants could access services beyond the pilot and CIWA's support, which increased participant's independence and autonomy.

Participants discussed their small and varied experiences with childcare prior to the project and all of them noted that the project connecting them to providers was the only way they would have accessed childcare. Participants were not aware of how to access childcare in Calgary, and did not understand the processes in the system. All participants expressed that their perception of childcare has changed due to the fact that accessing formal childcare is not common in their home cultures. With the support of the project, they realized they could navigate, choose, and access childcare they felt comfortable with. Additionally, referrals through friends and social service agencies as well as the childcare agency supported participants in trusting their provider. The participants discussed they could see their children thriving in relationships and personal development in the day home. Specifically, they could see their children were better prepared for the transition to school, excited to return to the day home, increased manners, choice of play decreased from technological preferences to writing, reading, and learned play.

With access to childcare, participants expressed they had more time for themselves, their partner, friends, and older children. Some discussed they found their own identity outside of their "mother" role, and this rekindled their passions, and excitement to be at work. They believed that their mental health improved, and the quality of their relationship with their spouses and other children (not in the pilot) also benefited from seeing their mother more. Instead of scheduling and alternating schedules with their partners, they were making schedules that suited the members of the whole family—even themselves.

Collectively and conclusively, access to alternative childcare hours provided the necessary support for participants to advance in their careers. Each participant increased their economic security through this pilot and each believes that alternative childcare hours contributed to their

full attention and focus at work. Specifically, 43% (3/7) went from part time to full time; 29% (2/7) received promotions and hourly wage increases; 14% (1/7) was hired at a new job with higher wages; and 14% (1/7) trained for a new position.

### *Employers*

#### *Initial and Mid Assessments - June 2017*

Employers are aware of the challenges that parents face in accessing childcare. Collectively, they acknowledged that immigrant families may not be familiar with systems in Canada, where to access good childcare, or the value of childcare. They recognize that cost is often a barrier for families, especially in entry level jobs; combined with the strains of working alternative hours or the demands of educational upgrading while working, this can become a significant barrier. Collectively, they believed that employers and businesses would benefit from being able to refer their employees who struggle to find childcare or are in need of childcare.

Employers were acutely aware that childcare, especially during alternative hours, was a barrier to career advancement and even maintaining employment. Some of the ways their businesses had been impacted by employees not having childcare include loss of hours, unavailability in scheduling, missing shifts to take care of their children, and lack of focus at work. Overall, they believed that in order for parents to succeed in the workplace they require access to childcare.

Additionally, some employers asserted that childcare needed to be even more heavily subsidized so that parents can be working and their children can be in a safe and educational environment. Employers stated that further government investment in childcare can prevent future concerns and prepare children for school, while giving parents the opportunity to work and make an additional income instead of it being allocated to childcare. Finally, some employers wanted to be able to direct their employees with childcare related barriers to childcare agencies who may be able to support alternative working hours.

#### *Final Assessment - September 2017*

Conclusively, employers acknowledged significant changes in their employees' focus, dedication, and availability to work. All employers recognized a change in their workplace and that the participants were having fewer work interruptions.

Employers in the food service industry were aware that their workplace demands various scheduling which makes securing a provider difficult, and that wages were not high enough to cover childcare. Overall, they saw marked changes in the participants and welcomed the opportunity to promote the agencies which provided these alternative hours.

### *Childcare Providers*

#### *Initial and Mid Assessments - June 2017*

Childcare providers discussed their ability to easily manage these longer hours and that they do not mind extending their days, although initially there was a bit of an adjustment period. Some providers find it comfortable to occupy and interact with the children once all the other day home children have left; some noted that the child in longer care will join their family to dinner and have the opportunity for one-on-one care. One provider felt it was difficult to occupy a child in care once all the other children have left, and would like to charge more for alternative hours. Providers that expressed more satisfaction with the alternative hours had charged an additional fee.

Pilot 2 saw an increase in the number of childcare provider partners. Some of these agencies were unaware of how to support clients with additional needs or support their service providers when communicating boundaries or limitations. For example, some of the participants struggled with the impact of low-socio economics, highly stressful home environments, and or children with

learning disabilities. They benefited from the additional supports offered to them by the childcare provider and agency. In Pilot 2 we found that additional agencies we connected with were not equipped with the knowledge of resources available in the community for families from low-socio economic backgrounds. Information was given to these agencies should they want to be able to support clients requiring additional supports.

*Final Assessment - September 2017*

Families accessed care Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 6:45 p.m. with occasional early mornings from 6:30 a.m.; late evenings until 10:00 p.m., and weekends. Providers discussed their enjoyment of being able to accommodate families with reasonable requests, made with appropriate notice, to extend their hours in the mornings and evenings. The provider's family needed to make adjustments to have clients stay later and quickly accommodated. Providers felt the positive outcomes of extended hours included additional one-on-one time with the child after the other children had left for the day, creating more opportunities for the child to learn new activities as the provider carried on their day with their families, and participants being able to rest assured that if they were late it would be okay.

Pilot 1 and 2 noted increased flexibility on the provider's part to offer earlier hours of service on occasion coupled with their extended evenings. Some participants stated that their provider extended care to begin at 6:30 a.m. by request, which helped them to have more flexible and extended hours at work. In summary, the experience of the childcare providers influenced their ability to offer more flexible hours in Pilot 1; the least experienced providers found it more difficult to extend their day than the more experienced providers in Pilot 2.

## Case Studies

### *Pilot 1*

All pilot participants experienced enhanced economic security as a result of the pilot. Marie shared that her access to alternative childcare increased her availability and flexibility at work.<sup>3</sup> The nature of her work at Superstore required open availability from 7 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., and with short notice to schedule changes. Her husband's studies kept him from being able to watch their 1.5 year old daughter while Marie was at work. Through the project, Marie secured early morning childcare to support her flexible work schedule which helped her remain focused and maintain her employment. After the pilot ended, Marie continued to use the provider's services and, as a result of her connection to the childcare agency, accessed another provider when her original provider was on vacation. After the project ended, and at nine months follow up, Marie explained that she has received two raises, company health benefits for her and her family, and continues to utilize the childcare provider.

Prior to the project, participants believed that financial and cultural values as well as lack of knowledge of the system prevented their access to childcare. Financial barriers included their lack of knowledge of subsidies; those who accessed subsidies stated that even after subsidies, most of their paycheck would go to childcare. Cultural barriers included the lack of value in accessing a formal childcare provider over family or friends to watch their children. Lack of knowledge of the childcare system included regulations of childcare, differences between licensed and unlicensed childcare, availability based on location and scheduling, benefits in learning and educational opportunities for children in childcare, provider competency, and agency support. Many of the mothers had never used childcare before, or were unsure of its benefits and how government and agencies regulated day homes. Nine months after accessing this project, all mothers have shifted their value toward accessing childcare and continued to access formal childcare or will continue when their work hours increase.

### *Pilot 2*

Before the pilot, Fatima juggled her studies, evening work schedule, and childcare for her 3 year old daughter. Her husband worked traditional hours, and together they tried to manage their busy schedules. They were unable to find evening childcare late enough so that Fatima's husband could pick up their daughter at 7:00 p.m., and early enough to meet the occasional morning that Fatima needed for her exams. Oftentimes, Fatima would pick up her daughter from home and drive her to childcare in the middle of her workday. Fatima expressed her need to focus on her studies in order to gain a promotion at work, but the demands of the roles collectively impacted her economic prosperity. It was common for Fatima to be late for work or have her day interrupted with childcare needs; her employer mentioned that although he understood her struggles, it still held her back in the workplace.

Having support to access a childcare provider and her provider being flexible in her schedule, sustained Fatima throughout her studies, employment and the roles she held in her family. The provider offered evening childcare until 7:00 p.m. so Fatima's husband could pick up their daughter from childcare, and Fatima could work her regular schedule uninterrupted until 11:00 p.m. Through the support of the pilot, she remained consistent in her work hours, was able to focus on her studies and achieve a promotion when her studies were complete. During the pilot, Fatima needed to book emergency travel to be with her family, and she was able to access the provider during this hectic time. Through childcare, Fatima's daughter was provided an English speaking environment which helped her to begin to communicate. Her provider ensured an environment with no TV or electronics and encouraged her to play and learn more. Fatima

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<sup>3</sup> Names have been changed to protect the identity of participants

believes her daughter has learned more stimulating activities and has had a great opportunity to develop and be school ready. Fatima also shared that she and her partner have developed their relationship further, have had more time with their older sons, and that childcare has allowed her to take more time for herself. Overall, Fatima says she found herself and her identity outside of being a mom—that she feels more like herself and found who she really is. She believes this pilot came at just the right time, during a family emergency, and during her juggling of studies and career. Fatima shared that her access to a provider has helped her and her family to balance all their needs and for her to advance in the workplace receiving a promotion and to continue seeking further promotions as her studies concluded.





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## Factors that Influenced the Project

Before the project's implementation, three factors influenced the participants' experience. These areas highlight the context of the project, and are outlined below.

### *Funding to Pay for Childcare*

Participants in the project applied for available childcare subsidies from the Government of Alberta; Calgary Foundation's contributions to this project covered the remaining portion of up to \$800 per participant. These financial supports greatly influenced the participants' lives and increased recruitment. In Calgary, at the time the participants joining the project, typical costs for full-time childcare ranged from \$850-\$1050. The costs depended on various factors, including total household income, number and age of children in care, and hours of access. After subsidies and project contributions, most participants did not have additional costs, and of those that did, the costs did not exceed more than \$200 per month.

### *Economic Climate*

Stakeholders were affected by Calgary's economy and an increase in the minimum wage as previously discussed in *Context of Childcare Climate*. This resulted in the reduction of hours for entry level positions or positions being eliminated altogether, further increasing the demand for flexible schedules. In addition, employers were paying more for wages but not increasing revenue and childcare providers were losing clients.<sup>4</sup> Immigrant mothers working entry level positions experienced unstable hours and income, thus having funding for childcare through the project meant they had a reliable full time provider, allowing them to be more dependable and increase their chances of being promoted.

During the project, employers shared that it eased their minds knowing their employees had stable access to childcare so they could rely on them to show up for shifts. They also expressed that the pilot provided their entry level employees with much needed financial support. From employees and employers we gathered that employers were forced to reduce employee hours and positions to afford the minimum wage increase and maintain profit margins (Alternative Childcare for Immigrant Women Advisory Committee meeting minutes, 11 January 2017).

### *Transportation*

Barriers to childcare in Calgary are to some extent correlated with results of city planning vis-à-vis urban development necessitating access to vehicles for families as opposed to communities being walkable and easily accessible via transit (Janice Chan, Systems Planner at Calgary Homeless Foundation, Personal Communication, January 31, 2016). The majority of project's target population accessed public transportation and expressed the desire for a provider in their community as they had long commutes to work, and a childcare provider outside of their community would increase the time spent travelling. Undesirable longer commute times requires being away from families for longer periods, complicates the juggling of co-parenting schedules, requires paying more to providers for time spent commuting, and some providers not being able to accommodate the extra hours. The isolation of communities within Calgary commonly prevents working parents from being with their children; compiled with isolated communities within low-socio economic zones also contributes to this cycle.

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<sup>4</sup> Please see in *Context: Child Care Climate* for the full information

## Discussion

The *Alternative Childcare for Immigrant Women Project* hypothesized that by addressing the childcare barriers of immigrant mothers working in the food service industry (entry level positions) we would support their economic advancement in the workplace. Although the project observed an increase in economic security and workplace advancement, the provision of alternative childcare was only one factor of success. The project did not simply offer alternative childcare, but rather, it provided customized support to help participants apply to childcare agencies and facilitated referrals to quality licensed childcare providers that delivered alternative hours, as well as paid for participants' monthly childcare fees. The project enabled participants to increase their economic prosperity and quality of life; however, these outcomes can only be sustainable long term if there are mechanisms and processes in place that create economic climates conducive to the hours required of mothers to secure a promotion and responsive to the demands of young children while being financially viable at the same time.

### *Step by Step Support*

Of the women who participated in the project, 92% (12/13) had never utilized formal childcare in Calgary or Canada and did not know how to access formal childcare including the laws protecting families and benefits of formal care. Women were unaware of Alberta's look up tools or investigation results available for every licensed childcare agency. Through referral, the women accessed agencies that connected them to providers, supported their application for subsidy and guided them through processes to register for childcare, which gave the opportunity for women to make an informed decision about childcare. Not only did the lack of knowledge of the system prevent their access, women were also excluded from knowing the benefits that childcare could provide their family. Prior to the pilot, most women had relied on neighbours and friends or another partner, and although the care was appreciated and valued, formal childcare delivered above and beyond what the participants expected.

Families recruited for the project came through friends who passed on collateral they saw in their community, referrals from friends already involved in the project, internal staff at CIWA, or external social service agencies. Collectively, participants had either never used formal childcare before, had a previous bad experience or were unsure of where to locate a provider whom they could trust. Through the project, women learned the benefits of formal childcare, were given information about subsidies and regulations on childcare; had opportunities to ask questions, and had autonomy in choosing between several providers that could accommodate their needs. The trust in relationship between participants and those referring, and the reputation of agencies involved in the project prepared families to engage by joining the pilots. All participants who joined the project came on board through a personal connection rather than through employers. The faith that families have in their friends, family, and reputable social service agencies demonstrates the authority of relationship to connect people to resources. Therefore, women were more likely to access social support through these trusted relationships.

Collectively, participants were unaware of the childcare system in Alberta, Canada and needed support to apply for subsidies and to examine yearly reviews for childcare agencies of their interest. They appreciated the step-by-step support in navigating the process of application for childcare, visiting providers, and receiving referrals to licensed providers willing to accommodate their schedule needs. Throughout the pilot, mothers sought out additional referrals and developmental support for their children. During the project, clients were continuously referred to additional supports: home visitors, cross-cultural parenting programs, professional counselling, and communal supports. Referrals were made not only within CIWA but to other social service agencies as well to diversify a mother's support system and to build her capacity beyond project completion.

**Table 3: Participant Recruitment by Source**

Source	Pilot 1	Pilot 2
Internally (through CIWA employees)	4	5
Presentation to CIWA classes	0	1
Friend in the pilot	0	1
External social service agencies	1	0
Collateral in the community	1	1
Employers	1	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

**Table 4: Participant Inquiries by Source**

Source	Pilot 1	Pilot 2
Internally (through CIWA employees)	41	27
Presentation to CIWA classes	0	3
Pilot participant referrals	0	2
External social service agencies	5	4
Collateral in the community	15	3
Online collateral (Facebook, CIWA website)	0	2
Employers	0	0
Advisory Committee connection	12	0
Unknown	0	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>42</b>

### *Increased Quality of Life*

Prior to alternative childcare access, many mothers were not available for alternative hour shifts at work because they did not have access to a provider willing to work alternative hours, or struggled to patch together childcare between their partners, friends and family. As seen in the need assessments of project participants and partners, working mothers were responsible for adjusting their work schedule around their children and their partner's needs. Often, this meant that working mothers reduced their work hours, showed up late or left early to attend to childcare needs, and juggled childcare support between family and friends. Furthermore, the struggle to find informal childcare providers that were close enough to home, juggle the varying informal childcare providers schedules, and the impetus to keep the costs low, created a great deal of stress and, as a result, infringed on their work availability, focus and commitment.

Positive outcomes in the mothers' career, children's development, and family relationships were easily recognized once women had access to a stable and qualified childcare provider. After three months of access in both pilots, 100% of participants were reaching their individual goals; some

of these goals included financial stability, more availability for work, improved quality time with family and alone, focus at work, or promotion at work. Employers also tracked their employee's improvements and discussed the changes they saw in the workplace.<sup>5</sup>

Women were given financial contributions for their monthly childcare fees, regardless if they received a subsidy or not, which covered 75% to 100% of their fees (no family paid more than \$200 per month for full time care). These contributions and access to licensed quality childcare at flexible early and late hours resulted in the following changes in the lives of participants:

#### Financial

- Received promotions and raises
- Saved money for emergencies
- Decreased financial stress
- Helped support loss of hours and need to secure additional employment
- Provided stability with reliable childcare
- Reduced stress of finding childcare at unstable hours
- Provided open availability to work without conflicting with her partner's schedule

#### Time

- Increased flexibility at work due to reliable access to childcare with extended hours
- Increased ability to work preferred scheduled time
- Negated need to leave work to transport child between providers
- Arrived at work on time consistently
- Decreased complexity of scheduling
- Increased quality time with children
- Increased quality time with partner
- Increased time to connect with friends and access support network

#### Personal Development

- Increased access to additional training at work during the day time (for Pilot 1)
- Increased access to English classes and improved skills for advancement in the workplace
- Enabled one participant to finish degree while working evening hours which led a promotion (Pilot 2)
- Received more responsibility due to increased commitment
- Increased focus at work
- Provided time to be alone on days off and attend appointments or practice self-care
- Increased sleep quality and energy levels for work and family
- Provided opportunity to consider how to grow and advance instead of survive

#### Family

- Addressed family emergencies more easily without worry of arranging childcare
- Increased time spent together as a family

#### Child in Care

- Developed gross and fine motor skills
- Referred to additional supports to address developmental needs
- Gained language skills and increased English language proficiency

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<sup>5</sup> Please see *Section 4: The Two Piloted Models*; Pilot 1: Pilot Participants and Employers and Pilot 2: Pilot Participants and Employers for specific results

- Developed relationships with children through exposure to other children
- Developed a healthy relationship with the provider
- Accessed play and learning opportunities not available in their home
- Provided alternatives to watching TV and began to value other types of play and learning
- Learned manners
- Increased participation in school readiness activities
- Received one-on-one time with adult during alternative hours

These collective improvements directly correlate to the participants' access to a childcare provider willing to work the hours needed, in a preferred location, with financial support, and the provision of quality childcare and education.

### *Cost of Childcare*

Participants stated that the costs of formal childcare created the largest barrier in their access to care. Knowledge of subsidy only contributed partially to the challenge as the greatest hurdle was to balance the type of work hours with the income received to pay for childcare access. Some women experienced unpredictable scheduling, unstable paychecks, and unreliable hours while working entry level jobs. These realities meant that nearly entire paycheques were going to childcare expenses despite subsidies received which greatly impacted the household income.

Although the project spread knowledge of governmental funding for childcare and covered the costs of almost childcare fees, most participants reverted back to their previous childcare provision upon project completion because they were still not making enough money to justify the cost of childcare after subsidies. The project hoped that mothers would possibly be promoted in their careers through this pilot; and 38% (5/13) did.<sup>6</sup> However, out of the 13 women, only 1 continued full-time childcare. After Pilot 1 ended, 1/6 of the women altered their childcare from full-time to part-time; 16% (1/6) of the women continued full-time childcare; and 67% (4/6) resigned from childcare use altogether. Currently, only 16% (1/6) mothers utilize full-time formal childcare.

Entry level positions in the food service industry expect employees to provide open-availability with additional flexibility to manage fluctuating hours. Throughout Pilot 1 and 2, the project saw this as an alarming impact on participants. After the pilots ended and financial coverage for childcare expenses ceased, some participants left their second jobs because they found it difficult to keep working when their entire paycheck was going to childcare. Even with subsidies supporting them, these working mothers could not guarantee that they would need or be able to afford a childcare provider full-time. Each participant had varying circumstances that contributed to them struggling with continuing access; however, in summary, their unstable employment was partially to blame. Even with the overwhelming appreciation and impact that the childcare provider had on their child's life, and increase in their family's quality of time together and positive impacts at work, the cost of childcare was prohibitive to continued use. Without financial supports in place, these models are not sustainable due to the high costs of childcare to be borne by families coupled with the instability and income their jobs provide.

### *Recommendations*

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<sup>6</sup> Project: 5/13 women were able to pursue a management position or receive a financial raise in their income during the project



To continue the success of this project we recommend the following:

### *Centralized Navigation and Support*

Families need support with accessing and navigating social programs. Immigrant women were daunted by the task of finding a reliable childcare provider and trusted the one-on-one support, inter-agency referrals, and integrity of social service agencies to help them access a childcare provider. Navigating social programs can be intimidating English speakers and long-time residents; however, immigrants face additional barriers such as cultural norms that make securing childcare a challenge. As noted elsewhere in this report, not many families involved in this project were aware of the benefits of formal childcare.

For the project to successfully support each participant's engagement to access childcare, our partnering agencies created wrap-around supports to help mothers to:

- Fill out childcare subsidy forms (some had never done this before and this prevented their access; some did not know this was available; some did not know about an appeal if their partners had lost their jobs which affected their overall income)
- Locate a provider in their community that they could travel to by their own means (partner or they could drop off their child, or they could take transit to the provider's home)
- Find a provider willing to work the hours they needed (none of the mothers knew of providers offering alternative hours)
- Find a provider they trusted (the daunting task of finding an agency, interviewing a provider, feeling the support of someone ensuring their safety and satisfaction was foreign to them)
- Find a provider that was capable of meeting their family and child's needs (some families had dietary restrictions and didn't know if they would find a provider who would respect those needs)
- Access referrals, as needed, to employment counsellors, family counselling, developmental support, basic need support, in-home parent support and or settlement counselling

### *Economical Solutions through Community Mobilization*

As outlined above, the cost of childcare is the largest barrier for families. Due to the nature of employment, many participants had fluctuating wages and hours. Furthermore, multiple family emergencies came up during the pilots and parents either had to miss work, search for new employment, or return briefly to their home country.

Throughout the project, community, business, and municipal support built effective and economically sustainable models to support childcare access. The models were designed to creatively offset childcare costs. Some of these models included financial support from municipal government (*Thornhill Childcare Society* and *Heart of the Family*); businesses supporting childcare (*New Brunswick, PalCare*, and *Mobile Crèches*); and community contribution by co-opting dollars spent at local businesses going to support childcare (*Palcare*).<sup>7</sup>

### *Further Research Engaging Non-Immigrant Families*

Due to the nature of this project, some of the limitations of the research was the recruitment of immigrant mothers working in entry level positions in the food service industry who could avail the benefits of alternative childcare at no cost or at a reduced cost after subsidies. Some exceptions were made to include retail employment with a food industry component that also presented similar financial and scheduling challenges that the food industry faced. The variables of this project included alternative hours, heavily subsidized costs, working immigrant mothers, minimum

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<sup>7</sup> See *Literature Review* for reference of these models



wage employment, and serving non-school aged children. Further research could manipulate these variables to gauge targeting non-immigrant families in a range of employment fields and with school aged children. Findings of this research may provide those interested in offering childcare at alternative hours with information on how to replicate this study in a different geographic context or expand on it further to explore additional variables as mentioned above.

### *Employer Contribution*

During the project we found that employers responded in a variety of ways with regards to encouraging employee advancement in the workplace. Two of our participants were offered promotions that they turned down because of the hours the employer required them to work; for example, some were required to work at 5:00 am each day, despite these not being peak business hours. Workplace expectations for employees requiring adherence to inflexible schedules prevents working parents with young children from advancement. We recommend that employers consider the unique needs of their staff and strive towards a supportive workplace that encourages qualified staff the opportunity to advance. This would require modifications in work schedule expectations and employers to mirror the type of flexibility they want from staff.

During the project, we saw two workplaces mirror the flexibility required to support employees. A Subway manager discussed how one of her supervisors had a young child which prevented her from working some of the hours required as a supervisor. Other staff members wanted to see their colleague continue in her position and modified their schedules to support the supervisor's childcare needs. This allowed the supervisor to continue in her role, and promoted workplace collaboration. A Human Resources Manager at Tim Horton's recognized that her employee, a new mother, had applied for a promotion and was qualified to take the position. The employee consistently demonstrated dedication and commitment to her work, so the Human Resources Manager modified the supervisory role's schedule to a flexible schedule that allowed the employee to meet her family's needs. The employee continued to meet the expectations in the workplace and was able to balance her childcare needs, which resulted in a harder working employee who was committed to the workplace.

When workplaces consider the unique needs of employees, the demands of family, and the need to balance these roles, this promotes equality in the workplace. A lack of flexibility in the workplace contributes to employee attrition, increases stress in families, and perpetuates the risk and outcomes of poverty. As demonstrated in the literature review, research indicates the positive outcomes that securing employment and access to quality childcare provide working low-socio economic parents and the community at large.

To address the barriers of workplace advancement and economic prosperity, we have to consider the overall picture. While we initially believed that it was the lack of alternative childcare, which definitely plays a role in supporting immigrant mothers, we have come to conclude the importance of the following factors: employer flexibility and considerations of working parents with unique needs; and, high costs of childcare that, even after having the appropriate information, parents from low-socioeconomic backgrounds have difficulty accessing due to their income. All stakeholders in this collective problem need to consider how they can contribute to the solution.

conclusions

section

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## SECTION 6. CONCLUSIONS

The *Alternative Childcare for Immigrant Women Project* sought to address childcare issues that immigrant mothers face when working shifts that require childcare outside of the traditional hours available at day care centres and day homes. We hypothesized that by addressing the barrier of childcare, immigrant mothers would advance in their careers and achieve economic prosperity. The project was designed around the assumption that immigrant women were not able to access alternative hour childcare because it was not available. However, we learned that even when this type of care is made available, the barriers to advancement in the workplace are more nuanced. Barriers to advancement include the lack of flexibility from employers to permit flexible schedules for working parents; immigrant family values and personal factors that play a role in a woman advancing in her career; limitations of childcare providers that cannot accommodate every need of their clients; and entry level workers finding the costs of childcare, even after subsidies, too high. In summary, immigrant women's sustained economic prosperity is fully dependent on entire communities coming together.

appendices

section

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## Evaluation Documents

The following are evaluation tools developed to understand the impact of the pilot:

Project Participants			
Evaluation Tool: Participant Pre-Assessment Form			
Objective: To establish relationship and commitment, identify goals, and discuss benchmarks of the participant.			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
Face to Face Interview	Establish benchmarks and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of immigrant women working in the food industry involved in piloting alternative childcare models who discuss their goals for economic advancement in the pilot</li> </ul>	Pilot 1: June – July 2016  Pilot 2: February 2017
Evaluation Tool: Participant Mid 1 and 2 Assessment Form			
Objective: Evaluate the pilot's impact on immigrant women's career and personal life.			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
Handout at Focus Group	Effective strategies to maximize opportunities for participants and establish best practices with key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% of immigrant women report that the piloted models address childcare needs</li> <li>% clients report facing less childcare issues when working early morning or late night shifts</li> </ul>	First Pilot: August and October 2016  Second Pilot: May and July 2017
Evaluation Tool: Participant Final Assessment Form			
Objective: Stakeholders will evaluate the pilots; the impact of their career and personal life while participating in the pilot; and discuss the results of their initial goals.			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
Phone Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective strategies to maximize opportunities for immigrant working mothers are developed</li> <li>CIWA and Advisory Committee identify effective strategies to support the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% of immigrant women report that the piloted models address childcare needs</li> <li># of immigrant women that complete the pilot</li> <li>% clients report facing less childcare issues when working early morning or late night shifts</li> </ul>	First Pilot: December 2016  Second Pilot: September 2017

	economic prosperity of immigrant women	• % of women who reached their initial goals	
<b>Evaluation Tool:</b> Participant Mid 1 and 2 Focus Group Questions			
<b>Objective:</b> Evaluate impact of pilot on economic prosperity and pilot meeting the needs of participants			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
Facilitated Group Discussion	• Effective strategies to maximize opportunities for participants and establish best with a key stakeholder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80% of immigrant women report that the piloted models address childcare needs</li> <li>• # of meetings with immigrant women engaged in the pilot</li> <li>• % clients report facing less childcare issues when working early or late shifts</li> </ul>	First Pilot: August and October 2016  Second Pilot: May and July 2017
<b>Evaluation Tool:</b> Participant Final Focus Group Questions			
<b>Objective:</b> Evaluate the overall impact of pilot on economic prosperity and pilot meeting the needs of participants			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
Facilitated Group Discussion	• Effective strategies to maximize opportunities for participants and establish best practices with a key stakeholder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80% of immigrant women report that the piloted models address childcare needs</li> <li>• # of meetings with immigrant women engaged in the pilot</li> <li>• % clients report facing less childcare issues when working early or late shifts</li> </ul>	First Pilot: December 2016  Second Pilot: September 2017

Employer Supervising Participating Immigrant Mother Working in the Food Industry			
Evaluation Tool: Employer Pre-Assessment Form			
<b>Objective:</b> An initial meeting to discuss potential of pilot to address challenges in employing immigrant women who face barriers of childcare			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
Phone Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers discuss their challenges in hiring working parents because of the lack of childcare access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of employers involved in piloting alternative childcare models</li> </ul>	First Pilot: August 2016  Second Pilot: January - February 2017
Evaluation Tool: Employer Mid Assessment Form			
<b>Objective:</b> The employer will discuss pilot impact in the workplace and if modifications need to ensure end goals are met			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
Phone Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers complete an interim <i>Staff Performance Assessment</i> to benchmark growth throughout pilot</li> <li>Effective strategies to maximize opportunities for immigrant mother working are developed</li> <li>CIWA and Advisory Committee identify effective strategies to support the economic prosperity of immigrant women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers support the economic prosperity of immigrant women</li> <li># of job performance reports</li> <li>80% of employers or supervisors report immigrant women show increased job commitment</li> </ul>	First Pilot: October 2016  Second Pilot: June 2017
Evaluation Tool: Employer Final Assessment Form			
<b>Objective:</b> The employer will discuss pilot impact in the workplace and if pilot increased the economic prosperity of pilot participants			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
Phone Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders collaborate to support the economic prosperity of women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% of employers report that the piloted models support the economic prosperity/career advancement of immigrant women</li> <li>% of employers report that client performance increased</li> <li>% of employers report that the models piloted addresses</li> </ul>	First Pilot: December 2016  Second Pilot: September 2017



		their needs and challenges in working with immigrant women during the shifts	
<b>Childcare Providers</b>			
<b>Evaluation Tool:</b> Childcare Provider Mid Assessment Form			
<b>Objective:</b> Childcare provider will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the sustainability and successfulness of the model			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
One-on-One Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CIWA and Advisory Committee identify effective strategies to support the economic prosperity of immigrant women by addressing barriers to childcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of service providers communicate effective strategies, best practice, and feedback on models during implementation</li> </ul>	First Pilot: October 2016  Second Pilot: June 2017
<b>Evaluation Tool:</b> Childcare Provider Mid Assessment Form			
<b>Objective:</b> A final assessment to gauge if childcare providers report that the model tested sustainable			
Evaluation Method	Outcome	Indicator	Frequency of Evaluation
One-on-One Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CIWA, Advisory Committee and stakeholders learn about the benefits of each model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% of childcare service providers report the childcare models can be implemented</li> </ul>	First Pilot: December 2016  Second Pilot: September 2017

## Challenges

Throughout the project, we identified three challenges:

### *Accommodation of School-Aged Children*

During recruitment, several families with school-aged children wanted to access the project; however, childcare providers in close proximity to these potential participants were unable to accommodate transportation (walking or driving) to the schools. Some of the reasons included:

- Provider did not have a driver's license or access to a vehicle
- Provider was not insured by the agency to offer transportation
- Provider did not live near or in the community of the family (for ease in their drop off of the child to their school and provider)
- Parent's further costs to the school to provide lunch time supervision
- Interruption for provider and other children in day home (altering routines of up to 5 other children)
- Not recommended by childcare providers to have school aged children's sleep interrupted for early morning childcare at 6:00 a.m. or earlier

Some transportation was provided with one child being dropped off by bus to the provider's home during the first pilot, and with the provider being able to occasionally provide transportation from the provider's home to the parent's in the second pilot during evening hours, although this was not a requirement for the family.

### *Employer Response to Increase of Minimum Wage*

Due to the nature of the food industry employing minimum wage workers, participants were affected when businesses were mandated to increase wages to \$15 per hour. Businesses were not increasing menu item costs so employers were forced to make up costs by reducing staff and staff hours while expecting increased schedule flexibility from employees. This instability in scheduling forced entry level workers to either patch together multiple part-time or casual employment, or not work altogether—which also forced them to take work where they could, work odd hours, receive unstable paychecks, juggle fluctuating schedules based on employer demand, as well as manipulate transit times and family needs. This increased the potential vulnerability for project participants to financial insecurity after the project ended.

### *Cultural Values towards Formal Childcare*

Early on in the project during the first assessments in May 2015, staff interacted with new immigrant mothers from a variety of collectivistic countries. Cultural norms in these countries driving the mother's choices to opt out of formal childcare included the value around a mother working while accessing a stranger for childcare. Some families did not previously have a mother working outside of the home; some cultures admitted that they shamed women for working; some husbands had the final say on whether a wife could access childcare or work even if she wanted to; some fathers worked multiple jobs so the mother would not have to work outside the home; some did not want to access a provider outside of their culture and religion and did not realize that this choice could be made available; some did not want a non-family member watching their child. These multiple or singular values collectively represented the barriers to families joining this project and created a challenge for the project to provide support to these families. Supports were offered both from CIWA and the childcare agencies; however, the families declined to join.

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