

## IMPACT REPORT FOR THE 1ST HALF OF 2023

Moab Community Childcare  
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### Our Mission:

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit whose mission is to improve the availability of high-quality, affordable childcare in the Moab area.

### Summary:

In the first half of 2023 our work helped create an additional 11 full-time childcare spots in Moab. This brings the total number of spots we've helped create to 44 in the past 12 months. When we started, there were only 120 spots in town relative to an estimated need of [465](#). A year later, we have 164 spots. Nearly all have been filled, which is both good and bad for those still looking for care. Importantly, we've been able to do this while establishing a reputation for high-quality care.

Besides operating the only infant-focused center in town, we provide subsidized staffing support to the vast majority of childcare providers in Moab through our Helping Hands program. This was a program we created a year ago after hosting several roundtable discussions with childcare providers about how we could best serve them. Thanks to generous financial support from Grand County, the program has grown quickly: in an average week, we provide over 100 hours of staffing support to other daycare businesses in town. Much of this is consistent, regular support but we also provide back-up coverage to prevent providers from having to close when staff call out sick or have a doctor's appointment. On these occasions, we are trusted to literally run their businesses for them. This coverage typically saves 15-25 families from missing work or scrambling for a babysitter.

While we have accomplished a lot, Moab is still a childcare desert. We have a waitlist at our infant care center of 30+ children. We have a ways to go before we achieve our vision of transforming Moab from a childcare desert into a childcare oasis: a future where high-quality childcare is widely available and affordable.

We have made a big impact on childcare in Moab in just our first 12 months. Our focus going forward is to both (1) continue to build on that impact and (2) ensure our own continued operation in the community by expanding and diversifying our funding sources.

### Childcare Center at the Lutheran Church

We have been running our infant-focused, childcare center since late-July 2022. The center is open Mon-Fri 7:30a-5:00p and currently has 21 children enrolled (sharing 15 full-time spots). To ensure quality, we have three staff present at all times.

Infant-care is a particularly pressing need here. We have 10 children on our waitlist that haven't even been born yet. Due to the extra staff required compared with caring for toddlers, it makes more

financial sense for a daycare to exclude infants and focus on toddlers (see our [3Q22 Impact Report](#) for more discussion on this). However, we have chosen to focus on impact rather than profits. We are proud to be the largest provider of infant-care in Grand County.

If you have two minutes and twenty three seconds, please check out our [video](#) geared towards prospective parents, which highlights the great work our staff is doing. Nikki Wilson, our Center Director, has done an amazing job turning our center into a well-oiled machine, fine-tuning lots of details that add up to a great experience for children and their families. We're also excited to announce that Nikki recently obtained the [National Administrator's Credential](#) from the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation.

### Helping Hands

Thanks to the great work of Taylor Rutherford, our Director of Outreach, Helping Hands has quickly become the backbone of the childcare industry in Moab: providing necessary support for childcare providers to thrive and grow. As a reminder, this is a service where our employees go into other providers' businesses (often their homes) and provide an extra-pair of hands. Additionally we assist with various other aspects of running their businesses. The program's goals are to (1) ensure we don't lose any existing providers to burnout, and (2) help them expand capacity where appropriate.

When we rolled out the service in June 2022 providers were understandably a bit slow to adopt it. Over the coming months, we steadily built trust through great service by our caregivers, and demand grew considerably. In the first few months we averaged around 100 hours of support a month. We now provide around 400 hours of direct support each month. Our support ensures 110 children get high-quality, full-time childcare. This represents around two-thirds of children enrolled in full-time childcare in Moab.

The program is achieving its goals quicker than we thought. Beyond stabilizing operations of area daycares and ensuring none have closed, our support has helped several existing daycares expand the amount of children and families they serve. These expansions collectively have resulted in 29 additional full-time childcare spots. As you can imagine, these types of expansions (ones that don't require new construction) are the most cost-effective way for us to increase childcare capacity. Eventually these opportunities will dry up, but thankfully we still see a few more opportunities to support increased capacity at existing providers.

The financial formula for Helping Hands is simple. We focus on attracting, training and retaining the best childcare workers by offering them competitive wages (typically \$22-24/hr), plus generous benefits such as paid-time off, paid sick days, paid maternity leave, and flexibility. Childcare providers then contract with us for additional support when they need it. They pay us a discounted rate (typically \$15/hr); the balance paid from grants (specifically the Rural County Grant Part A).

We think this arrangement benefits both provider and employee greatly, and helping to subsidize the cost of additional childcare workers is a cost-efficient means to achieve our mission of more affordable, high-quality childcare. Workers get paid fairly, with robust benefits. They get more flexibility in terms of how much, when and where they work. Providers get trained childcare workers when they want them for a price they can actually afford. It also provides peace of mind knowing that if their worker suddenly quits, or needs time off, they won't be suddenly out of compliance with state

caregiver-to-child ratios or have to close for the day or week. It is also much less paperwork and stress for the providers, most of whom do not have employees besides themselves and/or a spouse.

Ultimately, Helping Hands is intervening to fix what economists have called a market failure ([source](#)). Childcare costs more to provide than most parents can afford to pay. This puts the provider in the tough position of deciding whether to raise rates (which would put the cost out of reach for more families) or try to keep their expenses down (primarily wages). Trying to keep wages down makes attracting workers extremely difficult, especially in an area with lots of competition for workers like Moab. This all leads to less supply of childcare.

Before we started Helping Hands, there was only one daycare in town that had any non-spousal employees. It's worth mentioning that that same daycare was probably the one more at risk of closing. A year later, with our help, that same provider is in great shape. They are now at full capacity, state-licensed, receiving a large grant we helped them identify, and are utilizing nearly 100 hours a month of support from our Helping Hands service.

### Childcare Center at The Synergy Company

In May 2022, we partnered with The Synergy Company, one of our area's largest employers, to convert an underutilized manufactured house at their headquarters on Resource Blvd. into a childcare facility to help serve both their employees' children and the community at large. The project has been a success. There are currently 16 children enrolled at the center with a few expected to be added in August.

We provide around 4 hours a day of subsidized staffing support to the center at Synergy. Our staff has also helped the provider with a number of more professional type services: we helped her start an LLC, get set up as an employer with the State of Utah, and set up payroll software. The partnership was written up in the local news. Read about it [here](#).

### Personnel

We are lucky to have been able to quickly build a great staff and board. We employ 14 caregivers, plus 2 part-time grant writers. Five have degrees in Early Childcare Education or a related field. Nearly all are mothers. We have a volunteer board of 5: Rob Walker (Chair), Audrey Graham, Tess Barger, Daniel McNeil, and Kate Niederehe. I, Rob Walker, work closely with our Center Director and our Outreach Director to collectively manage the non-profit. Note that I do not receive any compensation for my work.

Thanks to a few lucky hires early-on (especially Taylor and Nikki), we've been able to establish a great work culture that is attracting high-quality applicants. In the past 12 months we've received well over 50 applications, hired 18 people, and retained all except 2 who moved out of town and 1 who left the workforce to be a full-time parent.

Making the job of childcare worker more attractive seems likely to lead to lots of good outcomes. It directly supports the availability and quality of childcare. Childcare workers have plenty of other options for employment in this town. Several, such as hotel front desk work, are considerably less stressful and offer competitive wages. As a town, we need to ensure we incentivize people to enter and stay in the childcare profession.

We are putting our money where our mouth is on this point. Besides attractive pay we have a robust benefits package for all employees: paid time off, paid sick days, paid maternity leave, \$2,500 a year towards professional development, and a 401(k). These are in addition to perhaps our most generous benefit: we let our employees bring their child to work with them for free, assuming they are within the age range we serve. This benefit in particular has been vital to recruiting employees.

Working in childcare will always be, at least at times, a difficult job. It's an important job and one that many workers get tremendous satisfaction and purpose from. However, on a national level, the pay is quite low: on average just \$12.40/hr ([source](#)). As a result, it's not surprising there is a nationwide shortage of childcare workers. We believe that offering childcare workers competitive wages, benefits and flexibility, will go a long way in terms of increasing the availability of high-quality childcare. More childcare will lead to increased workforce participation, higher incomes for parents, larger families, all while supporting healthy child development. Simply put, we aim to continue to show that small investments in the childcare industry can pay disproportionately large dividends to our community.

### Our Estimated Economic Impact

Increasing the amount of children enrolled in high-quality childcare has considerable economic benefits which accrue to families, employers, children, and society at large. The largest immediate benefits accrue to families. Each filled spot increases a family's income-generating potential by perhaps \$2,200 a month (40 plus hours of care per week frees them up to work during those hours x \$20/hr of potential wages x 4 weeks a month). Note that this is after the costs of childcare (which range in town from \$700-\$1,300 a month).

Our work has clearly made a significant economic impact already. So far, we've used just \$80,000 in grant funds to support the creation of 44 new full-time childcare spots. Based on the math above, these new spots imply an additional \$1,200,000 in additional annual pre-tax earnings for families in Grand County. This may be a conservative estimate as it is based on wage rates for unskilled work. While exact measurement of inputs and outputs are tricky, you don't need a tape measure to know someone is tall. \$1.2 million of impact for \$80,000 spent is an obviously tall person.

In addition, nearly 40% of these newly filled spots receive federal childcare subsidies. These subsidies dramatically reduce the cost of childcare paid by the parents and bring in new federal money to our economy. So far, we have helped 16 children qualify for these subsidies; this brings in over \$100,000 a year to Grand County.

On top of this, the children are statistically likely to benefit. [Research](#) has shown that high-quality childcare results in better performance in school, both academically and emotionally, and higher-incomes later in life (this is true even after adjusting for parental income).

### How We Think About Fundraising

Our non-profit is somewhat different in that around two-thirds of our funding comes from those who are directly benefiting the most from our services: families and other childcare providers. However, as we've explained before, the economics of childcare don't quite work unless you focus on only serving the richest families. In fact, the second largest national provider of childcare, Bright Horizons,

said average tuition for infants was [\\$2,350](#) per month across its over 1,000 locations in 2022. This compares to our rate of \$1,100 per month. Put in other words, our service saves each family at our center \$15,000 a year compared to if Bright Horizons came to town.

Thankfully, the economics of childcare almost work. We are proud that we are able to cover nearly all of our costs at our infant center while charging less than half of the national average rate. With that said, our operations, especially our Helping Hands service, require ongoing grant funding. Based on current operations, we estimate we will need to fundraise around one-third of our total projected expenses. The lion's share (the other two-thirds) will be funded by families and providers, both of which are receiving our services for a hefty discount. Put in another way, every dollar donated is effectively tripled based on the financial value of the work it enables us to do (as measured by the cost of our programs). As illustrated in the prior section, the ultimate economic impact on families income generating potential is far greater: a multiple of 15x.

Point is, we think we've accomplished a lot in a year with relatively modest funding. We do need more funding to continue our work but we think we've stumbled on a highly efficient model in terms of financial impact per dollar donated/granted. Our work not only helps families and children, but helps local businesses find workers, all while providing great jobs for caregivers.

As I conclude this letter, I'd like to thank you for your interest in our work. If you'd like to get more involved, and join the movement to make high-quality childcare widely available and affordable in Moab, there are several ways you could help. First, if you have a passion for early childhood education, we accept volunteers at our center. Second, we are accepting applications to join our board of directors. Third, we would love it if you would consider including us in your charitable giving this year. Please reach out to me directly if you're interested in any of the above.

Thank you for your interest in Moab Community Childcare.

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## **APPENDIX**

### Testimonials from Providers:

*"The Helping Hands program has helped the Moab Montessori Center so much this year! At the beginning of the school year we lost our cleaning person just a few days before school started. Helping hands stepped in and sent a person daily to clean our building for several weeks until I was able to fill that position. They've also sent people to help with laminating and preparing student materials to help me get my classroom ready for the school year. They have also helped us with hiring by making suggestions and preparing ads for us to post. In addition to these 'as needed' situations, they send a caregiver for a day or two every week to help us with a very busy time on our playground each afternoon. It is so wonderful to have an organization that helps support our child care center!" - **Jessica Driskell, Owner of Moab Montessori Center***

*"Helping Hands has been an invaluable resource for the BEACON Afterschool Program. Through the aid of Helping Hands and its staff, we have been able to serve an additional 24 elementary aged students so far this year. The spots provided by this coverage mean additional child care coverage for our families, and that these students have a safe, structured space in the hours between the end of the school day and the end of the work day. We are grateful for the addition of Helping Hands to*

*our community and urge you to continue funding this vital resource.” - Xandra Odland, Executive Director of BEACON Afterschool*

*“Helping Hands has been wonderful assisting in so many areas. We appreciate the extra pair of hands at meal times and outdoor play which can get a little hectic. Looking forward to having the extra help during arts and crafts projects! I truly believe this program benefits and enriches the daycare community.” -Jodi Goff, Owner of Happy Dayz Kidz Daycare*

*“I would like to say that I very much appreciate the Helping Hands program. They have come to my home daycare and helped me with my duties and helping with the children in my care. They are a great asset to the community and I hope they can stick around for me and other providers.” -Heather Brooks, Owner of Red Rock Tots*

*“It feels great to have support and not feel alone. To be able to clean and disinfect parts of the daycare I normally would not have the time to has been awesome. The children have been able to participate in fun arts and crafts that would be too messy without the help. I have also appreciated the schedule and organization help.” -Amy Allen, Owner of Wiggle Worms Daycare*

*“Moab Community Childcare has been an excellent resource for my daycare. I started with only 8 full time children and couldn’t find an employee to help me expand or lower my provider to child ratio. Moab Community Childcare was able to help find me an employee, as well as take on the added responsibility of providing insurance, benefits, etc. It just didn’t seem to be in the cards for a daycare as small as mine to be able to have an employee or to expand. MCC helped me solve that and I can now take on more full time children and still have one of the lowest provider to child ratios in Utah. Thank you, MCC!” - Nicole Simon, Owner of Moab’s Little Sprouts Daycare*

*“Moab Community Childcare is a remarkable asset to our community. The Synergy Company is exceedingly proud to soon be offering on-site daycare to our staff and others in our community. This simply would not have been feasible without the reliable, consistent, and insightful guidance Moab Community Childcare.” - Thatcher Vagts, CEO of The Synergy Company*

#### Testimonials from Parents:

*“Finding childcare in Moab for my infant was challenging, due to lack of open spots in daycares in the community. I was having to bring my baby to work, and eventually was told I couldn’t. Bouncing around from person to person was frustrating, and my baby was never on a schedule, not to mention it took half of my paycheck! When Moab Community Childcare opened their center, I felt extreme relief. Having that stability for my daughter, and to have more than one provider in the center, alleviated having to miss work all the time. When we arrive at the center, my baby has the biggest smile on her face! She is on a perfect schedule, and loves being there everyday. Not to mention the fact they take Federal subsidies, and I have saved \$600 a month in childcare costs. They have saved me from losing my job, and made my daughters day to day easier.” - Rebecca Monceaux*

*“I had my daughter the same time I moved to Moab and after a year I needed to return to work, but the hardest part of returning to work was finding childcare that could take a 12 month old and that worked within my budget. When I found out about the Moab Community Childcare I was beyond*



*ecstatic because they were well within my budget and the staff are caring mothers, and they take amazing care of my daughter.” - Lilian De Roch*

*“These ladies are absolutely amazing! I'm so grateful I've been able to find such high quality childcare so I feel good about leaving Malina at daycare when I need to go to work.” - Sonja Nichols*

*“Wonderful, caring staff and lots of support for the individual needs of each kiddo. My daughter looks forward to seeing the teachers and other kids at the center. Initially I had a hard time sending my baby to childcare, but I absolutely trust the staff and am so pleased and grateful to have MCC.”  
- Susannah Lemke*

*“I feel so confident leaving my child with the team here. Nikki and the whole staff are running a great program. Everything is clean, well managed, well documented, and most importantly, communication is seamless. They've worked hard to make the environment best for my child: working to acclimate him to napping at daycare, not giving him certain foods, etc.” - Hanna Matyiku-Nuñez*

*“The caregivers at Moab Community Childcare have been so easy to work with. They listen to the needs we need for our child. The app they use has made leaving my child at daycare easier, because I get daily updates and pictures. I would highly recommend this daycare to anyone looking for a quality daycare.” - Laci Leavitt*

#### Data on The Need for Childcare in Moab:

Lack of childcare is a national issue but the situation is particularly stark here. Moab is an expensive place to live relative to resident incomes. As a result, both parents usually need to work. According to the Department of Workforce Services (DWS), 91% of women in Grand County with children under 6 are part of the labor force ([source](#)). This is the highest rate of any county in Utah and compares with just 62% for Utah as a whole and 72% for the US. 74% of Grand County families with young children need childcare ([source](#)). This is also the highest rate of any county in Utah.

There simply isn't enough childcare in Moab. There are only 165 spots available relative to an estimated need for 465 ([source](#)). What are these hundreds of families doing in the meantime? It's a good question. Anecdotally, we have found that many resign themselves to less than ideal situations either because high-quality, licensed childcare isn't available and/or they cannot afford it. These situations include working less-skilled jobs than they are qualified for in order to obtain more flexibility (such as call-center work), working fewer hours than they'd like to, trying to alternate work hours with their partners, setting up childcare exchanges with other families, getting help from family members, and often exiting the workforce altogether to care for their child.

While the lack of childcare seems bleak, there are generous federal subsidies available to many families that should allow us to close this gap. For example, a family of 4 can earn up to \$80,000 and still qualify for highly subsidized childcare for each of their children ([source](#)). This compares to a median income in Grand County of \$57,000 ([source](#)). We see two hurdles: (1) there aren't enough licensed locations in Moab and (2) people aren't aware they qualify for the subsidies. National data supports this second point: out of 12.5 million people who would qualify for federal childcare subsidies, only 2 million receive them ([source](#)).