

Memorandum

REPORT TO: City Commission

FROM: Jesse DiTommaso, Economic Development Coordinator

SUBJECT: Child Connect Presentation

MEETING DATE: January 27, 2026

AGENDA ITEM TYPE: Plan/Report/Study

RECOMMENDATION: No Commission action required.

STRATEGIC PLAN: 1.2 Community Engagement: Broaden and deepen engagement of the community in city government, innovating methods for inviting input from the community and stakeholders.

BACKGROUND: A shortage of accessible child care can negatively impact the economy by creating workforce instability, as parents are forced to reduce hours or leave jobs due to lack of care options. Businesses across the country are directly impacted by instability in the child care sector. The US Chamber of Commerce estimates businesses lose \$57 billion annually nationwide due to child care related absenteeism. According to a recent report from the Montana Department of Labor and Industry (attached), an estimated 23,200 Montana parents did not participate in the labor force because they were caring for family in 2024. In Gallatin County, 44% of parents report missing work due to child care challenges. In addition to strengthening early learning, accessible child care can reduce stress on families, businesses, and the local economy.

The City of Bozeman's adopted [Economic Vitality Strategy](#) highlights the importance of child care as critical infrastructure for a healthy local economy. The City's Economic Development Department has participated in the CHILD Task Force since 2021 in an effort to address child care challenges in our community. In 2023, the CHILD Task Force began a strategic planning process to address child care throughout Gallatin County. Since then, the CHILD Task force has worked to implement the strategy.

With support from the City of Bozeman and Family Forward Montana, Greater Gallatin United Way has launched [Child Connect](#). The platform directly connects families with child care providers in Gallatin County and Park County. It allows parents to see what providers are offering and allows child care providers to use one platform to communicate with families and fill open child care spots. The platform is the first step in growing a community-powered initiative that brings families, providers, employers,

and policymakers together to create lasting, local solutions.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES: None.

ALTERNATIVES: None.

FISCAL EFFECTS: None.

Attachments:

[25_NonWorkingPopulationReport_Final \(1\).pdf](#)

[Employer CC Sponsor Sub sm 4.pdf](#)

[Kinside Child Connect sm 2.pdf](#)

[Child Task Force Strategic Plan 2024.pdf](#)

Report compiled on: October 1, 2025