



**COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

Item No. 11 b

BRIEFING ITEM

Date of Meeting July 9, 2024

DATE: June 21, 2024

TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

FROM: Julie Collins, Director, Aviation Customer Experience & Brand Strategy

SUBJECT: SEA Childcare Services Evaluation Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Port recognizes the vital role Seattle-Tacoma International Airport plays in the region's economy and the critical importance of maintaining robust airport services and delivering excellent customer service. Attracting and retaining a skilled workforce lies at the heart of ensuring the airport is fully staffed and well-operated. This is a growing challenge for SEA and at more and more large hub airports across the country. Given the difficulty in filling airport jobs, and the compelling results of the August 2023 SEA Employee Childcare Survey, the Port Commission allocated \$100,000 in the 2024 budget to explore a potential role for the Port around childcare services. The Port contracted with The Imagine Institute (Imagine) in January 2024 to conduct a six-month SEA Childcare Services Evaluation.

Over the past six months, Imagine has gathered information to deeply understand the unique airport workforce. Imagine has assessed the geographic dispersion of where airport employees reside, developed a strong understanding of the 24/7 employee base and worked with the Port's Business Intelligence Department to survey airport employers. Imagine has also participated in discussions around childcare challenges with airport stakeholders including airline representatives, dining and retail vendors, union representatives, etc. Imagine and port staff have also participated in conversations with large hub airports and with local childcare providers. Additionally, Imagine has created a comprehensive workbook detailing potential grant funding opportunities. Imagine has also utilized its deep understanding of the childcare delivery system in Washington State in developing five recommended solutions for consideration.

The results of the SEA Childcare Services Evaluation will be presented as a briefing at the July 9th Commission meeting. The briefing will feature Imagine's assessments of the unique airport workforce, the childcare "desert" conditions in the Puget Sound region, and the survey results from employers and employees around childcare challenges. Imagine will present a multi-faceted set of recommended solutions that, together, offer a comprehensive approach for addressing employee childcare needs that is accessible, affordable, and flexible.

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The Imagine Institute presentation will provide a high-level overview of the five recommended solutions. These solutions include the following:

- **Technical Assistance:** Provide in-language support to help employees navigate subsidy applications, find available child care slots that support continued employment, or access any new childcare investment.
- **Child Care Business Incubator:** Open new licensed family home child care businesses to build child care supply in targeted areas close to where airport workers live.
- **Networks and Hubs:** Incentivize child care businesses to prioritize enrolling airport worker families and offering non-standard hours and drop-in child care.
- **Subsidies and Stipends:** Provide employer-sponsored stipends to subsidize the cost of care and attract and retain employees, especially those not eligible for public child care subsidies.
- **Port Child Care Center:** Open a new child care center, or set of centers, prioritizing the needs of airport workers related to accessibility, affordability, and flexibility.

Given the complexity of this work, initial efforts have started to examine potential funding capabilities, facility development, legal risks, and partnerships. The findings around these key considerations will be shared as more is learned. Commission guidance at this point is timely in shaping the desired priorities and timeline for this work and ensuring alignment with port staff.

NEXT STEPS

The Port Commission will have the opportunity to consider initial expenses for childcare investments during the Port's 2025 public budget process. Such expenses would include a 3-year consulting contract, pre-development costs and possible advancement of short-term solutions. There will also be considerable port staff work necessary to explore the feasibility of various options and to advance this work.

Port staff will continue to work with Imagine during the remainder of 2024 to develop a strategic implementation plan that provides a timeframe with initial cost estimates over a 3-year period. Ongoing engagement will continue with the Commission's Ad Hoc Workforce Conditions Committee, external airport stakeholders, an internal staff Airport Childcare Working Group and with Port leadership staff to shape future funding and policy requests for consideration by the full Port of Seattle Commission.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

(1) Presentation

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

None