



Maximize American Rescue Plan Dollars to Benefit Youngest Louisianans, Economic Recovery

Overview

The [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\)](#) will provide Louisiana with over \$772 million specifically for early care and education. This includes \$296.8 million for expanded child care assistance, which has to be spent by September 30, 2024, and \$475.7 million for child care stabilization grants, which has to be spent by September 30, 2023. More information about ARPA and other COVID-related relief funding is available [here](#).

The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children recommends the Louisiana Department of Education allocate ARPA funds through non-formulary grants available to local communities, early care and education networks, resource and referral agencies, lead agencies, and child care providers. To maximize these one-time funds, the grants should focus on initiatives that quickly expand access for young children and their working parents, improve quality, and strengthen the early care and education system.

Recommended Grant Activities:

Access to quality early care and education

- **Increase the income threshold for working families eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** to 85% of state median income to support more working parents as they return to work.

Compensation incentives for child care staff

- **Offer wage stipends to child care staff** – at providers of all types, not just those eligible for CCAP – who are helping to keep the economy running, while putting their own health at risk, by caring for children who cannot easily practice social distancing, masking, or other prevention measures.
- **Provide healthcare benefits to child care staff**, either through an employer-sponsored plan, creation of an insurance pool with multiple providers, and/or stipends to cover insurance premiums.
- **Offer paid leave to child care staff**, including sick and family leave, to support staff members caring for themselves and family members rather than coming to work when ill and contributing to community spread of infectious diseases.

Facility and capacity expansion

- **Support quality providers with increasing enrollment capacity** either at their existing facilities through facility improvements and expansion or by acquiring additional facilities.
- **Enable quality providers to recruit, hire, and retain any additional staff** necessary to support increased enrollment by funding workforce strategies, including hiring incentives, training costs, and retention bonuses.



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Recommended Grant Activities:

Quality improvement

- **Support Type I and Type II providers to become Type III providers** through purchasing quality curriculum and classroom materials; providing staff training on curriculum, assessments, and instructional methods; offering regular coaching to teachers; and covering licensure related costs including background check fees.
- **Expand family child care pilots** to increase the number of providers becoming a registered family child care through purchasing quality curriculum and classroom materials; providing staff training on curriculum, assessments, and instructional methods; offering regular coaching, and providing participation stipends.
- **Offer incentive grants to family child care providers to become residential licensed care providers** that fund startup costs including facility improvements, high-quality curriculum and assessments, and training and coaching for providers.
- **Provide startup support and funding for informal care providers to become a family child care provider** by helping providers navigate and meet regulation requirements; purchase needed curriculum, materials, and supplies; and manage business responsibilities.
- **Continue to support implementation of quality curriculum, assessments, and instruction** by funding providers to purchase high-quality curriculum; train teachers on curriculum, Teaching Strategies Gold, CLASS, and other quality improvement initiatives; and provide regular coaching to staff to support implementation.

Facility and capacity expansion

- **Develop a responsive data system** that can be used to support coordinated enrollment for ages birth through four, daily attendance, and reporting requirements; takes into account needs of providers, state, and families; and includes a provider-facing dashboard that is easy to use.
- **Create opportunities for increased provider and family engagement and involvement** in system decision making, goal setting, policy development, and resource allocation.