

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Louisiana Early Educator Investment Collaborative Demonstration Projects

Due Date: April 1, 2024

Overview

The Louisiana Early Educator Investment Collaborative seeks project proposals from Louisiana-based organizations that have experience with or currently implement programs to boost early educator compensation in the state.

The Louisiana Early Educator Investment Collaborative is managed by the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children and supported by a three-year grant from the [Early Educator Investment Collaborative](#). It is designed to advance sustainable improvements in ensuring competitive compensation for Louisiana's early educators, particularly those working in community and home-based child care settings. It was developed as a key strategy to advance the Child Care for Everyone, Everywhere goal of the [Geaux Far Louisiana](#) strategic plan.

Inadequate compensation and benefits continue to plague the early care and education workforce, with compensation for early educators remaining low and far behind other occupations with similar credentials. Compared with their K-8 colleagues, [early educators face poverty rates an average of 7.7 times higher](#), and turnover rates among child care teachers exceed 75% every three years. On average, [Louisiana's child care teachers make \\$9.77 per hour](#) and lack benefits. These low wages and lack of benefits is especially troubling when the early care and education workforce is made up disproportionately of women of color. [Low wages result in high staff turnover](#), increased program costs, and an unstable learning environment.

Values and Guiding Principles

The Louisiana Early Educator Investment Collaborative operates from a shared set of values and guiding principles. All partners and projects are expected to adhere to these.

Values

- **Value the profession:** Increase the respect and public value for early educators, particularly those who work in home- and community-based child care settings.
- **Understand history:** Ground our efforts in a deep understanding of the ways in which poor compensation of early educators is grounded in a long history of structural racism that has devalued the labor of Black and Brown women.
- **Center equity:** Embed equity in our targeted outcomes and our approach to center the voices of those who have been traditionally marginalized, including family home providers, undocumented residents, rural providers, and those who have been marginalized because of their race, language, or immigration status.

Guiding Principles

- **Target early educator compensation, including wages & benefits:** Don't rely on "trickle down" approaches that don't require increased compensation with increased

rates, facilities funding, or other strategies.

- **Seek sustainable funding:** Pursue strategies that have a path to sustainability, even if they are launched with one-time or variable revenues.
- **Address regular base compensation levels across programs wherever possible:** Focus on early educators' regular compensation across roles, programs, and funding streams to ensure a stable livable wage, not simply one-time or annual distributions or bonuses for experience and educational advancement.
- **Maximize spending power and minimize adverse impacts** on early educators from benefit cliffs, regressive taxes, or increased tuition paid by low-income families.
- **Center the voices of those most impacted in design and implementation:** Ensure that early educators themselves, alongside center directors and program leaders, are involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of strategies focused on increasing their compensation.

Demonstration Project Goals

Through the funded demonstration projects, the Louisiana Early Educator Investment Collaborative seeks to:

- **Demonstrate and evaluate promising approaches** for sustainably increasing early educator compensation that can be scaled to other Louisiana communities and/or statewide.
- **Leverage recurring public and/or philanthropic funding** sources to cover and sustain increases in compensation.
- **Support a *diverse portfolio* of demonstration projects** that advance the compensation of early educators and ensure:
 - **Geographic diversity:** Projects occur in a variety of regions and types of communities (urban/rural) across Louisiana.
 - **Alignment with three core areas of focus within compensation:** The portfolio of projects touches each of the three focus areas identified by the collaborative: compensation, employer benefits, and public benefits. Note that individual projects can address any one of these three areas.
 - **Appropriate use of funds:** Grant funds are not used directly to pay for the compensation or benefits of early educators (unless it is to participate in grant-specific activities). Funds must be used to demonstrate/implement effective strategies to improve compensation and benefits for early education professionals working in child care.
- **Leverage other funding** to support the proposed project, wherever possible.
- **Promote collaboration** among entities across the public, private and non-profit sectors that are involved in early care and education, workforce development, social services, higher education, and other related sectors.

Proposal Scope

Applicants are expected to propose projects that address at least one of the following areas related to early educator compensation:

1. Sustainable increases in **salary and wages** for early educators

2. Increased access to and utilization of **benefits** for early educators (health insurance, paid family leave, paid time off, individual development account (IDA) savings programs, paid professional development, etc.)
3. Public benefits or other strategies that **decrease the cost of living** and/or prevent the loss of benefits as compensation increases for early educators (e.g., subsidies for child care, housing, transportation, tax credits, shifting, etc.)

Examples of potential projects may include:

- A project that earmarks the **use of School Readiness Tax Credits** to increase early educator teacher compensation.
- A project to establish and/or evaluate the impacts of a \$15 per hour **wage requirement** for all providers that participate in a locally contracted seats program (see [The Professional Wages for Professional Educators](#) report for strategies implemented across the state).
- A project to develop and/or implement a **new dedicated local funding source** that provides steady funding for sustained increases in early educator compensation.
- A project that connects early educators across programs to **affordable health insurance** options to increase enrollment.
- A project that offers **child care subsidies for early educators** with young children to reduce their cost of living and allow them to remain in the profession.

Applicants are encouraged to propose other innovative ideas not described above.

Applicant Eligibility

The following types of organizations are eligible to submit a proposal:

- Ready Start Networks
- Early childhood community networks
- Membership-based early care and education organizations
- Coalitions of the above types of organizations that may also include other types of organizations

Applicant organizations must have an office address located in Louisiana.

Allowable Project Expenses

Project funds may not be used directly to increase wages or salaries for early educators, or to pay for benefits, bonuses, or other compensation increases. These funds should come from other sources. The goal is for these grant funds to be used to help develop, implement, evaluate, and/or expand approaches to improving early educator compensation at the community level (as opposed to just within an individual early learning center or program). Funds may be used to pay for costs associated with planning, research, coordination, communications, consultants, evaluation, stipends for early educators to participate in helping inform, lead, or evaluate award project activities, and indirect costs.

Project Awards & Length

Average grant awards are expected to range from \$100,000 to \$225,000. Awards may be one or two years in length. For multi-year awards, the release of funds will occur in yearly increments, dependent on the satisfactory progress of the project. Projects will be funded on a July-to-June fiscal year.

Award Recipient Requirements

All awarded projects are expected to:

- **Engage with a third-party evaluator**, funded and contracted directly by the Louisiana Early Educator Investment Collaborative (with funding separate from your project proposal budget).
- **Provide regular updates to the Louisiana Early Education Investment Collaborative leadership** throughout project implementation; funding in future years will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and reports each year.
- **Meaningfully engage early educators** in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the project.
- **Share lessons learned** from implementation regularly with peers, advocates, and policy makers across the state.

Key Terms

- **Compensation:** For purposes of this initiative, compensation includes the salary, wages, bonuses, incentives, employer benefits, and public benefits specifically offered to early education professionals.
- **Early Educator:** For purposes of this initiative, early educator is synonymous with early care and education professional and defined as any professional who contributes to high-quality early care and education (including non-instructional staff) for children from birth to age 5 in a child care center, family child care home, or similar setting.
- **Sustainability:** For the purpose of this initiative, sustainability is defined as the ability to continue the proposed project past the grant period.

To Apply

Complete the application [here](#) and [email](#) all required attachments by **April 1, 2024**. For your convenience, a copy of all application questions, a sample budget template, and the scoring rubric are available [here](#).

Questions about the application may be emailed to application@policyinstitutela.org. Please include "EEIC RFP question" in the subject line. You may also sign up for office hours [here](#).

Selected projects will be notified before June 2024 to begin implementation by July 2024. Applicants may be requested to participate in an interview (virtual).