



Education Initiative
School Readiness

Cenla Early Childhood Education Access Program

Due Friday, August 23, 2024, 4 p.m. CT.

I. Introduction

The mission of The Rapides Foundation is to improve the health status of Central Louisiana. The Rapides Foundation focuses its work in three strategic areas:

- Healthy People - to improve access to healthcare and promote healthy behaviors;
- Education - to increase the level of educational attainment and achievement as the primary path to improved economic, social and health status; and
- Healthy Communities - to improve economic opportunity and family income, and enhance civic and community opportunities for more effective leaders and organizations.

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to provide Early Childhood Network Lead Agencies with local funds needed to utilize the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund. The Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund offers local entities in Louisiana a dollar-for-dollar match on investments made to expand access to quality early care and education for children who need it most. The match must be local funds. These funds can only be used to support scholarships for families with children birth-to-three that need assistance. An Early Childhood Lead Agency can request funds from the State and must make this request by September of each year. The Foundation recognizes that rural districts have limited capacity to plan and raise local funds in such a short period of time. This funding opportunity provides funds for three years that can be used for the local match. This will allow agencies to show the value of the program and develop a long-term plan for sustainability. It also will allow agencies to participate in the program before all ECE Funds are spoken for by other districts. Once a Lead Agency has received funds, they have priority the next year for funding over new applicants. This helps to make sure no families in the program lose access to early childhood programs. **Early Childhood Lead Agencies in the Foundation's nine parish service area are eligible to participate in the funding opportunity. Funding is for three years starting with the 2025-26 school year. Lead Agencies do not have to commit to fundraising to receive funding.**

II. Background

Research shows that 80% of brain development takes place from birth through age 3, and 90% by age four. This time in brain development is a critical window of opportunity to build the foundation of cognitive and character skills necessary for success in school, health, career and life. A child's experiences during this time have a lasting impact on the architecture of the developing brain. Children who attend high-quality early care and education programs enter kindergarten better prepared, have fewer referrals to special education services, fewer grade retentions, and increased likelihood to graduate high schoolⁱ. Some studies also show long-term health benefits and a reduced likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system. Nobel Prize winning economist James Heckman calculates a 10% return on investment based on increased school and career achievement as well as reduced costs in remedial education, health and criminal justice system expenditures^{ii,iii}.

Unfortunately, in Louisiana less than 16% of low-income children under age four have access to publicly funded programs. Participation ranges from 6% for infants to 32% for three-year-olds^{iv}. The average



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monthly cost of childcare in Louisiana for families that do not receive financial assistance or subsidized care is around \$665 per child per month or \$7,980 per year. According to the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children’s 2023 Parent Survey, almost 50% of surveyed parents were concerned about being unable to afford childcare. Publicly funded seats are funded through Early Head Start, Head Start, IDEA, LA4, NSECD and the state-administered Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). However, only 31% of at-risk children in The Rapides Foundation’s service area can access publicly funded seats and the majority of the children accessing seats are four-year-olds. (See Table 1)

Table 1: 2022 data

| Parish | At-risk Children in need of care birth - 4 | % of at-risk children that can access publicly funded seats | # children unserved | % of 4-year-olds served |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Allen | 1,435 | 24% | 1,087 | 81% |
| Avoyelles | 1,965 | 32% | 1,342 | 83% |
| Catahoula | 460 | 27% | 338 | 77% |
| Grant | 745 | 28% | 533 | 100% |
| LaSalle | 720 | 29% | 512 | 100% |
| Natchitoches | 1,790 | 33% | 1,202 | 74% |
| Rapides | 6,200 | 34% | 4,095 | 93% |
| Vernon | 1,825 | 30% | 1,275 | 92% |
| Winn | 545 | 20% | 436 | 90% |
| Foundation Service Area | 15,685 | 31% | 10,820 | |

<https://policyinstitutela.org/resources/for-policymakers/>

The Louisiana Early Childhood Education (ECE) Fund was established by the Louisiana Legislature during the 2017 Regular Legislative Session, and funding sources were identified and dedicated to the ECE Fund during the 2019 Regular Legislative Session. The ECE Fund is intended to incentivize local investment in and fundraising for early childhood care and education by providing a dollar-for-dollar State Match for locally-generated funds. Louisiana RS 17:407.30 establishes the ECE Fund and gives the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) the authority to administer the ECE Fund. In addition to state law, BESE established rules and regulations to administer the distribution of monies from the ECE Fund in Chapter 9 of Bulletin 140. During the 2023-24 academic year, seven ECE Networks took advantage of the ECE Fund and leveraged it to provide financial assistance to birth-to-three-year-old children in their network. The number of participating networks increased to 13 for the 2024-25 academic year.

III. Purpose for Request for Proposals

The Cenla Early Childhood Education Access Program will provide Early Childhood Networks Lead Agencies with a local match needed to leverage the Louisiana Early Childhood Education (ECE) Fund. The Foundation’s match, locally-generated funds and Louisiana ECE Funds will be used to support families in accessing high-quality child-care education by providing financial assistance to low-income families while they are working or attending school. The grant award is intended to 1) provide a portion of locally generated match funds needed to increase the number of available subsidized birth-to-three seats through the Louisiana ECE Fund; and 2) incentivize local investment in and fundraising for early



childhood care and education by providing a dollar-for-dollar match for funds generated by the local communities to leverage the Louisiana ECE Fund.

IV. Eligibility Requirements

The primary applicant (grant fiscal agent) must meet the following requirements:

- Must be eligible to apply for funds from the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund.
- Classified as a Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization under the Internal Revenue Code or a governmental entity.
- Cannot be a private foundation under Section 509(a).
- Must be an organization within The Rapides Foundation Service Area or seeking funding support for projects restricted to the Foundation’s nine parishes.

V. Funding Guidelines and Grant Terms

The Rapides Foundation will award a set amount of funds to each Early Childhood Network Lead Agency to help low-income families afford early childhood education. Grant awards will be based on the number of seats each network can provide. It is a tiered funding structure that includes a base funding rate that will decrease each year and 1:1 incentive rate that will increase each year. The 1:1 incentive funds are contingent on local fundraising and will provide a dollar-for-dollar match to local funds raised.

The base funding is not contingent upon fundraising.

Funds are available for three academic years starting with the 2025-26 school year. Funds will provide a base rate of 75% of the needed match in Year 1, 50% in Year 2 and 25% in Year 3. The remaining incentive funds are available for a dollar-for-dollar match to local funds raised and are capped at the amount shown below. The estimated number of seats supported by the project should remain the same for all three years and CCAP participation should not decrease. The Network should determine if the community can support 37.5% of the required match by year three. If the amount does not seem attainable, the recommendation is to reduce the number of seats to a sustainable level. (See Table 2)

Table 2: Tiered Funding Structure

| | Source of Funds to Use to Leverage ECE Funds | | | | | |
|---------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Foundation Base Award | Lead Agency Responsibility | Foundation 1:1 Incentive Award | Total Match | Foundation Funded Portion of Match | Lead Agency Portion of Match |
| Year 1 | 75% of match | Up to 12.5% | Up to 12.5% | 100% | 75%+12.5%=87.5% | 12.5% |
| Year 2 | 50% of match | Up to 25% | Up to 25% | 100% | 50%+25%=75% | 25% |
| Year 3 | 25% of match | Up to 37.5% | Up to 37.5% | 100% | 25%+37.5%=62.5% | 37.5% |

Foundation funds can only be used to cover the cost of birth-to three-year-old seats of low-income families while parents/guardians work or attend school. Funds must be used to leverage the Louisiana ECE Fund.

The following contingencies apply:

- Funding is to be used solely as a 1:1 match for the Louisiana ECE Fund or for a 1:1 match to incentivize local investment for the ECE Fund.
- Funding is contingent upon availability of ECE Funds.
- 100% of Foundation funds must go directly to funding seats for the three years starting with the 2025-26 academic school year.



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- Foundation funds cannot be used for administration or professional development.
- Amount of Year 2 and 3 funding is contingent upon number of seats filled in prior year.
- Amounts funded by the Foundation in excess of the Louisiana ECE Fund allocation approved at the BESE June meetings must be returned to the Foundation at the end of the grant term.
- Lead Agencies will receive the base rates without a fundraising contingency. However, the additional incentive funds are contingent upon fundraising. (See Table 2 above)

Grant funds may not be used for:

- Administrative costs.
- Professional development.
- Lobbying or political programs or events.
- Activities, projects, or programs exclusively benefitting members of sectarian or religious organizations.
- Biomedical, clinical or educational research.
- Direct support to individuals or endowments.
- Funding that supplants existing sources of support.
- Individuals, including patient assistance funds.
- Social events or similar fundraising efforts or telethons.
- Projects outside of the Foundation’s service area.
- Operating expenses.
- Vans or other vehicles.
- Building purchase or renovation.

Funding is limited. The Foundation may award less funds than requested.

VI. Timeline for Submission

Proposals are only accepted using the Foundation’s online application portal. The application is located on the Foundation’s website at www.rapidesfoundation.org under the “Grants” tab. Online deadline submission is no later than 4:00 p.m. Central Time, on the date listed. In fairness to all applicants, late or incomplete submissions will not be considered. *Please note, the grant proposal must be fully submitted by the deadline, therefore, you must begin uploading documents prior to 4:00 p.m. on the day of the deadline. We suggest you allow a minimum of three hours for the upload process.*

Proposals are due August 23,2024. Award notifications will be released September 27, 2024.

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|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Proposals due | August 23, 2024 |
| Notification of Award | September 27, 2024 |
| Grant Start Date | January 1, 2025 |

Pre-submission Consultation

Prospective applicants are encouraged to schedule a call or a meeting with the Director of Programs to discuss the feasibility of their proposal before submitting a proposal. Contact Ashley Stewart, at ashley@rapidesfoundation.org or 318-443-3394 to request a meeting. Please schedule the meeting at least two weeks before the proposal is due.

VII. Full Proposal Requirements

All applicants are required to answer the following questions in the online portal as well as upload the required documents, utilizing provided templates where noted. The application is located on the Foundation's website at www.rapidesfoundation.org under the "Grants" tab. Deadline for submission is **no later than Monday, August 23, 2024 by 4 p.m. CST.**

- a. **Cover page** (completed in the online portal)
 - 1) Organization information (including organization name, address, phone, email, etc.)
 - 2) Primary contact information
 - 3) Project Title
 - 4) Total Project amount.
 - 5) Requested amount from the Foundation. (Foundation award + fundraising match)
 - 6) Brief narrative overview of the proposal including estimated number of seats funding will support.
- b. **Proposal narrative** (See questions below. Upload document with answers to the online portal.)
- c. **Project Budget Worksheet** (Template provided. Upload to the online portal.)
- d. **Signature Page** (Template provided)
- e. **IRS 990, Financials or Audit** (Upload to the online portal.)

Proposal Narrative Requirements (10-page limit): You are required to address each of the components below in a narrative format. Follow the guidelines and address each area in the order listed.

- **Statement of Need**
 - How many birth-to-three-year-old children are in your service area?
 - Provide the number of birth-to-three-year-old children the network has served by year for the past three years.
 - How many birth-to-three-year-old children are currently being served by your network? Please separate by provider type; Childcare Centers, Early Head Start, Head Start, Other.
 - How many birth-to-three-year-old children are on wait lists for subsidized seats? Please separate numbers on wait lists for each program - CCAP, Early Head Start, Head Start, and if applicable, other tuition waiver programs.
 - Explain why there are not enough seats. (lack of funding, lack of available seats...)
 - Are there other birth-to-three-year-old children who are not on wait lists that would be eligible for CCAP? Provide an estimate of children not enrolled in a center and children who are enrolled but may qualify for financial assistance.
 - If applicable, describe the funding sources that support existing subsidized seats and any expected changes to funding that would impact the sustainability of existing seats.
 - Will this funding provide new seats or sustain existing subsidized seats? Please explain.
- **Applicant capacity and experience**
 - Describe your network's capacity to provide additional seats. (e.g. opening new classrooms or new centers)
 - Describe applicant's capability and resources to ensure timely start-up and implementation of administering birth-to-three-year-old subsidized seats.

- If applicable, describe the applicant's experience obtaining funds to support early childhood education. (grants, local funding, other)
- Discuss how the efforts and/or anticipated outcomes will be sustained beyond the funding period.
- **Proposed Project Plan**
 - How many seats will this funding support?
 - How many centers will participate in the program?
 - Describe the process you used to decide where the new seats will be located and what data did you use.
 - Describe how you plan to recruit families to participate in the program.
- **Budget Narrative**
 - What is the amount of the annual match needed?
 - Describe how the budget was determined for this project.
 - How many seats will this funding support by age?
 - How much will a seat cost by age?
 - Additional expenses allowable from the State match.
 - Other budget considerations, if applicable.
 - Funding amount requested from the Foundation.
 - Provide a description of each line item in your budget.

ⁱ The Lasting Payoff of Early Ed | Harvard Graduate School of Education
Heckman JJ, "Invest in early childhood development: Reduce deficits, strengthen the economy."

ⁱⁱ Heckman JJ, Moon SH, Pinto R, Savelyev PA, and Yavitz A. "The Rate of Return to the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program." *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1-2): 114-128, February 1, 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ García JL, Heckman JJ, Duncan EL, and Prados MJ. "Quantifying the Life-cycle Benefits of a Prototypical Early Childhood Program." May 26, 2017.

^{iv} <https://policyinstitutela.org/early-childhood/state-of-early-care-and-education/>