



**Office of Early Childhood**

**Early Childhood Education (ECE) Fund  
Guidance Document 2024-2025**

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### Basic ECE Fund Overview

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](#).

Please note: at least 70 percent of any funding awarded to the applicant will be used to directly fund additional early childhood care and education seats in type III early learning centers with a performance rating of “proficient” or above and at least one classroom with children age 15 months or younger;

- remaining awarded funding will be used to:
- expand seats through improved quality; and
- pay for audit costs required per §909 of this Chapter. ([Chapter 9 of Bulletin 140](#))

### Bulletin 140: Chapter 9: Early Childhood Education Fund

[Bulletin 140, Chapter 9](#): The Early Childhood Education Fund outlines the policy that establishes this fund source. Any Community Network Lead Agency with ECE Fund dollars or interested in ECE Fund dollars should thoroughly review this chapter. The chapter outlines documentation needed for submitting an application for the ECE Fund, allowable uses for the ECE Fund, family eligibility requirements, provider eligibility requirements, and guidance for the LDOE if/when there is not enough money in the fund to cover all requests, or if there is a surplus.

**Eligible Local Entities:** Local entities eligible to receive ECE Fund awards include, but are not limited to, BESE-approved early childhood community networks and Type III early learning centers. To be eligible for monies from the ECE Fund, local entities *must* commit non-state and non-federal funding to the proposed project at a rate of at least one-to-one. Local entities must be able to demonstrate receipt of local funding, which may include, but is not limited to, a grant or allocation award letter or a letter from a donor. The requirements in Bulletin 140 state:

- All applicants whose submission are selected to receive a funding award must submit documentation to the department to substantiate the existence and possession of the match funds including, but not limited to:



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- copy of check(s) received totaling the required match plus receipt for bank deposit into local entity's bank account;
- copy of bank statement which lists the deposit for the required match; or
- copy of bank statement with balance totaling greater than the required match.
- The total of all awards in any given year may not exceed the amount legislatively appropriated to the fund.

To the extent possible, this documentation should be on official letterhead and include date of award, tax ID of awarding entity, funding amount, funding source, and funding period

**In the Case of Surplus Funding:** If there is money in the ECE Fund after BESE has funded every qualifying local project, BESE may award remaining unallocated monies for the exclusive use of Type III early learning centers to provide quality care for children who are ages birth through two who are eligible for CCAP. When determining how and where to allocate remaining funds, BESE shall consider the CCAP waitlist, child poverty rates, child care and economic development needs, and the impact on access to high-quality early learning centers statewide.

**In the Case of Insufficient Funding:** If there is insufficient funding in the ECE Fund to match the local funding raised, the Department will review requests from local entities and make recommendations to BESE on which local projects to award a funding match. BESE shall consider the CCAP waitlist, child poverty rates, child care and economic development needs, and the impact on access to high-quality early learning centers statewide to make allocation determinations.

## Timeline

| ECE Fund Timeline 2024-2025  |   |  |  |  |   |   |
|--|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| 12-18 MONTHS PRIOR: Raise Local Funds!   |   |  |  |  |   |   |
| ECE Fund application is launched:<br><i>July 1, 2024</i>   | ECE Fund application is DUE:<br><i>September 30, 2024</i>   | <b>Final Documentation of Funds Raised is Due:</b><br><i>January 30, 2025</i><br><i>(Note: This deadline varies by year by Legislative Session)</i>  | Legislative Session:<br><i>begins April 14, 2025</i><br><i>(dates vary by year)</i>  | Preliminary Notice of ECE Fund Awards:<br><i>Early June 2025</i>   | BESE Committee Meeting for Approval of ECE Fund Allocations:<br><i>June 10, 2025</i>  | Fiscal Year Begins:<br><i>July 1, 2025</i>  |
| The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) shares the application for the ECE Fund with all Community Network Lead Agencies (CNLAs) and makes application available on the <a href="#">Lead Agency Library</a> | CNLAs share with the LDOE via email at <a href="mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov">earlychildhood@la.gov</a><br>* the already- <b>confirmed</b> amount of funds for the upcoming year and * the remaining anticipated funds to be raised between September 30 and January 30 | CNLAs submit all locally-raised funds, with documentation to verify the local funds, to the LDOE via email to <a href="mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov">earlychildhood@la.gov</a> .<br><br><b>Anything raised or submitted after this date cannot be claimed for the 2024-2025 ECE Fund State Match.</b><br><br>CNLAs must submit to the LDOE:<br>☐ total final amount of 2024-2025 requests from all CNLAs to submit to the legislature<br>☐ Documents verifying local funds raised by the CNLA<br><br><i>For a list of documentation examples, please see page 17 of this document.</i> | The Louisiana Legislature determines the amount of budget authority to give to the LDOE to make allocations from the ECE Fund to communities in 2024-2025. | All potential recipients of the ECE Fund will receive a preliminary notice of award, pending BESE approval, of the amount of State Match dollars expected to be allocated.<br><br>The LDOE will also share the 2024-2025 ECE Fund Planning Document with all potential recipients of the ECE Fund with the preliminary notice of awards. This Planning Document will be due to the LDOE by June 1, 2024. | The LDOE proposes the allocation of ECE Funds to BESE for approval.<br><br>BESE makes decisions on funding allocations for communities, pending availability of funds from the Louisiana Legislature. | ECE Fund State Match dollars will be available in eGMS for budget submission and review by the LDOE mid July, pending the Governor's signature of the state budget in early July.<br><br>ECE Fund State Match dollars will be available for reimbursement request by network by late July, pending budget approval by the LDOE. |



## Administrative Responsibilities

Once allocated monies from the Early Childhood Education Fund, recipients of the funding will be required to accomplish multiple administrative tasks to ensure the responsible administration of this fund.

These tasks include:

- Completing a Planning Document (in the template provided by the LDOE), and submitting that Planning Document to the LDOE via email to [devon.camarota@la.gov](mailto:devon.camarota@la.gov), that outlines the administrative plans of the recipient and their use of both the local and State Matching funds. The information to be provided in the Planning Document includes, but is not limited to:
  - anticipated number of seats by age to be served
  - which partner sites will receive ECE Fund seats
  - seat rates by age
  - preliminary budget by line item
  - additional quality support measures that will occur for sites participating
- Submitting a detailed projected budget to the LDOE through the LDOE’s electronic Grants Management System (eGMS)
  - ***This projected budget must reflect a minimum of 70% of the funding being spent on tuition for seats.***
- Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility of families and children for the ECE Fund seats (both the locally- and state-funded seats)
- Tracking daily child attendance for all seats, both locally-funded and State Match-funded, and submit monthly to the LDOE
- Submitting regular reimbursement requests, with supporting documentation, to the LDOE for the implementation of the seats

## Required Expectations and Administrative Tasks

| Key Administrative Tasks, Responsibilities, and Deliverables | Description  | Deadlines                | New for 2024-2025 Year? |
|--|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| ECE Fund Planning Document                                   | Overview of Type III providers selected to provide the ECE Fund, anticipated budget, estimated enrollment by age, etc. | July 15, 2024            | No                      |
| Attendance   | Daily attendance for each month of the year  | Submitted by 10th day of | No                      |

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|  |  | subsequent month   |    |
|--|--|--|----|
| Eligibility Determination                      | <p>Community Network Lead Agencies (CNLA) receiving the ECE Fund are responsible for determining eligibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If outsourcing the eligibility determination, the Community Network Lead Agency is still ultimately responsible for the quality of that eligibility determination.</li> <li>• Yearly Monitoring by the LDOE Statewide Monitoring Team will occur every year.</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility determination is critical for the continuation of this program. Monitoring events that conclude significant findings (i.e., a CNLA out of compliance with eligibility determination practices) may result in limited or no allocations to that CNLA in the subsequent year.</i></p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Monitoring events typically begin with document requests in November-January of the academic year, with results shared with CNLAs in April-June of that academic year.</p> | No |
| eGMS Budget, Reimbursement, and PER submission | <p>Community Network Lead Agencies receiving the ECE Fund are responsible for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• submitting timely budgets, reimbursement requests, and Periodic Expense Reports (PERs) in the state eGMS software and</li> <li>• demonstrating fiscal responsibility with the funds.</li> </ul>   | Ongoing  | No |



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# ECE Fund Application Requirements

In previous years the ECE Fund application was released in the beginning of September and due September 30. For the 2025-2025 Fund Year, the LDOE will launch the application in July 2024, so that Community Network Lead Agencies have additional time to review, plan, and complete the application. **The application must be returned to the LDOE by or before September 30, 2024** so that the LDOE has sufficient time to review all applications and verify any documentation of funds raised submitted with the application. **Applications submitted after September 30, 2024, will not be accepted.**

The application will be sent out to all Community Network Lead Agencies (CNLAs) via email and will also be available on the [Lead Agency Library](#) on the Louisiana Believes website as a Google Sheet Template. Though application questions may vary from year to year, these questions can and should be used for any Community Network Lead Agency anticipating raising funds in future years.

**The questions for the 2024-2025 application, for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, are provided here as an overview only: CNLAs should use the separate Google Sheet Template provided to answer these questions.**

1. Has your Community Network Lead Agency already secured any non-state or non-federal funding to support B-3 seats in early childhood programs in the 2024-2025 academic year?

If no, you do not need to complete anything further: please submit this form directly to [devon.camarota@la.gov](mailto:devon.camarota@la.gov).

If “yes,” please continue to Question 3 and answer the questions below.

If “maybe,” please continue to Question 2.

2. If “maybe,” please explain in the space provided. Provide all information you have confirmed from your donating entity, the date(s) by which you will have more information, and any contingencies by which you will, or will not, receive the funds. If you are able to answer any of the questions below, please do.
3. As of the submission of this document, what is the amount of local funding that has been raised, secured, and will be available to utilize for birth to three seats in the 2025-2026 academic year? (please enter a dollar amount)
4. Please share the partner(s) from whom your Community Network Lead Agency has received guaranteed local funds.
5. How much additional funding do you intend to raise between September 30, 2024 and January 30, 2025? (please enter a dollar amount)





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6. Please share the partner(s) from whom your Community Network Lead Agency will aim to receive additional local funds between September 30 and January 30.
7. Please initial the cell in column F, to acknowledge that any funds raised after January 30, 2024, cannot be claimed for the 2024-2025 ECE Fund State Match.
8. Please attach any and all documentation in either Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF (as applicable) that demonstrates the donation of funds from the donating entity to the Community Network Lead Agency. Check the box to confirm attachments are included.
9. How many B-3 seats do you anticipate this local funding supporting in the 2024-2025 academic year? **Please note that at least 70% of funding must be spent on tuition for seats** (please enter a digital number, i.e., 12 instead of "twelve")
10. OPTIONAL: On the next page, please submit an estimated number of seats to be provided by age, the providers with whom you anticipate partnering to place these seats, and those provider site code(s) and license number(s). Please check the box to the right to confirm that you have entered information on the next tab.

## Family Eligibility Requirements

It is the responsibility of the Community Network Lead Agency (CNLA) that is awarded State Match funds to accurately determine family eligibility for both the Local and State Match funded seats. Each year, the LDOE Monitoring Team will request documentation from the recipients of the ECE Fund to verify that family eligibility was determined accurately in accordance with the requirements set forth in Bulletin 140.

**Failure to comply with the requests of the LDOE Statewide Monitoring Team, or receiving significant monitoring findings, may result in diminished future allocations or rejection of future applications for the ECE Fund.**

**All families should complete an application for the seat(s), with the date of the application, the parent/guardian(s) signature(s), and all additional documentation required for all families (outlined later in this section).**

The eligibility criteria for each funding source is as follows:

- **Local funding** eligibility can be partially set by the Community Network Lead Agency. However, there must be a minimum requirement of “economically disadvantaged” as defined in [Title 28, Part 1, Chapter 11 of the Louisiana Administrative Code](#).
  - *This means that CNLAs can make the eligibility requirements more rigorous/restrictive, not less.*
- **State Match funding** awarded must be used to fund slots for children who are eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Please review [CCAP eligibility requirements](#).
  - *This requirement is not flexible and must be implemented with fidelity.*



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Documentation required for **all** families, regardless of Local or State Match source of tuition:

- Application for the seat with date and **signature** from parent/guardian
- Birth certificate, immunization form, baptismal record, hospital record, or other form of official identification for child(ren) seeking a seat
  - *This is to verify the birth date of the child*
- Up to date Immunization records, or immunization exemption form, for the child(ren) seeking care

### **Local Eligibility:**

Determining “economically disadvantaged” can be done by requesting any of the following characteristics from the applying family:

- i. is eligible for Louisiana’s food assistance program for low-income families;
- ii. is eligible for Louisiana’s disaster food assistance program;
- iii. is eligible for Louisiana’s program for assistance to needy families with children to assist parents in becoming self-sufficient;
- iv. is eligible for Louisiana’s healthcare program for families and individuals with limited financial resources;
- v. is eligible for reduced price meals based on the latest available data;
- vi. is an English language learner;
- vii. is identified as homeless or migrant pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act and the Migrant Education Program within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act;
- viii. is incarcerated with the Office of Juvenile Justice or in an adult facility;
- ix. has been placed into custody of the state.

Documentation for locally-funded seats includes:

- McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison verification
- Proof of enrollment in any of the preceding publicly funded programs, like their DCFS foster agreement, food program enrollment notice, etc.
- DirectMatch verification
- At-Home Language Survey

### **State Match Eligibility:**

Because the State Match Eligibility must align with the LDOE’s CCAP eligibility requirements, the following must be verified for every child enrolled in a seat funded by State Match dollars:

- Family Income eligibility (no more than 85% State Median Income)
- Confirmation that adults in the household work or attend school/training confirmation for at least 20 hours per week
  - Families of children with disabilities need to only meet 15 hours per week of work or training
- If adults in household are not currently employed or attending school/training for at least 20 hours per week, proof of actively seeking employment through unemployment benefits or proof of their HiRE account registration must be demonstrated for eligibility



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- *Parents verified as actively seeking employment have 90 days to gain employment, and return employment information to the eligibility determination team at the Community Network Lead Agency. If employment is not acquired after 90 days from the acceptance of their initial application, the child is no longer eligible for a seat.*
- Parents who are disabled do not need to meet the work or training requirement with verification of the disability

### Eligibility Determination and Redetermination

An additional update for the 2024-2025 Year of the Early Childhood Education Fund is that all children may be certified for up to 24 months in the Early Childhood Education Fund, as outlined in Bulletin 139 Section §511. Household Certification Period.

A redetermination of eligibility for child care services shall be made prior to the expiration of the certification period, but no sooner than 12 months following the initial determination or most recent redetermination.

- *The LDOE's best practice is to begin the recertification process within 60 days of the family's redetermination date. Networks may begin this process sooner or later than 60 days.*

**Best Practices Recommended by the LDOE** for Documentation to verify eligibility for State Match seats includes:

- **Four** subsequent pay statements, to be inclusive of all pay statements made within 60 days of the application for adult(s) in the household (if working)
  - If parent is paid monthly or bi-monthly, where four pay statements have not been paid out, please submit the number of available pay statements from the 60 day period
  - If a parent has recently begun employment and does not have two subsequent pay statements yet, a parent can submit a letter from the employer listing the hours being worked per week, rate of pay, gross pay per pay statement, and contact information for the employer
- School/training program schedule verifying either credit hours or number of clock hours to be completed weekly by the adult(s) in the household if in a school or training program
- HiRE account verification for adult(s) in household through the Louisiana Workforce Commission (if actively seeking employment)
- Unearned income documentation
  - This includes alimony, child support, social security benefits, retirement benefits, disability benefits, etc.
- Birth certificates, state-IDs, baptismal records, immunization records, or hospital records for **all** dependent children (under the age of 18) in the household for the purpose of verifying household size
- State-Issued ID for adult(s) in the household to verify identity and Louisiana residency

All recipients of the ECE Fund State Match will participate in an eligibility training webinar conducted by the LDOE's EC Strategy Team prior to the start of the fiscal year, held on June 14, 2024, so that all

*This document was last updated on June 14, 2024*



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recipients are able to fully understand the eligibility requirements, practice eligibility scenarios, and establish administrative best practices for ensuring all required documentation is captured.

## ECE Fund Administration Responsibilities

In addition to the eligibility determination requirements, the Community Network Lead Agency receiving the ECE Fund State Match dollars is responsible for several additional administrative duties. These responsibilities include:

- Submitting the ECE Fund application for the first and subsequent years
  - *The ECE Fund application must be submitted by Community Network Lead Agencies every year, regardless of whether or not funds were claimed in the previous year and regardless of whether the network is requesting funds.*
- Submitting the yearly Planning Document to the LDOE (at [earlychildhood@la.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov))
  - *The ECE Fund Planning Document must be submitted by the recipients of the ECE Fund every year for which they are applying for funding, even if the network submitted a planning document in the previous year.*
  - ***This projected budget must reflect a minimum of 70% of the funding being spent on tuition for seats.***
- Conducting financial management of the ECE Fund State Match Dollars including:
  - Submission of the ECE Fund budget in the electronic Grants Management System (eGMS) utilized by the LDOE for all allocations
  - Submission of reimbursement requests in the electronic Grants Management System (eGMS) utilized by the LDOE for all allocations
  - Submission of Periodic Expense Reports (PERs) in the electronic Grants Management System (eGMS) utilized by the LDOE for all allocations
- Ensuring that all Local Funds are spent equivalently, or sooner than, the ECE State Match funds
  - *This will be verified through reimbursement request documentation.*

More detailed information about each of the additional ECE Fund Administration Responsibilities listed above is found below:

### Submission of the ECE Fund Application

The Community Network Lead Agency receiving the ECE Fund State Match dollars is responsible for submitting the ECE Fund Application each year, regardless of whether the network is requesting ECE Funds. More information about the “ECE Fund Application Requirements” is outlined in section on page 6 of this document.

### Submission of the ECE Fund Planning Document

The Community Network Lead Agency receiving the ECE Fund State Match dollars is responsible for submitting the ECE Fund Application each year for which the network is applying for funding, even if the network submitted a planning document in the previous year. The ECE Fund Planning Document demonstrates the strategic planning conducted by the recipient Community Network Lead Agency for the use of monies from the ECE Fund. The general outline and questions of the ECE Fund Planning Document

*This document was last updated on June 14, 2024*

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are found in Appendix A. Questions are subject to change year after year; however, the provided questions should give any interested Community Network Lead Agency a solid foundation of the administrative responsibilities for which they should be prepared to share and implement their plan. Please see Appendix A for the “ECE Fund Planning Document” template example.

**Conducting Financial Management in electronic Grants Management System (eGMS)**

The Community Network Lead Agency receiving the ECE Fund State Match dollars is responsible for ensuring that the following activities in eGMS are completed timely:

- Contact Information and signed Assurances
  - *This is currently embedded in the EC Consolidated application in 2023-2024 (this is subject to change in future years)*
  - *Follow the click path below to ensure Contact Information and Assurances are completed:*

Created

**Central Data** NOTE: Before a new year application will be available, you MUST complete the contact information (LEA Central and related program), and agree to ass

| Application Name | Revision             | Status  | Date |
|------------------|----------------------|---------|------|
| LEA Central Data | Original Application | Created |      |

Open

Formula Grant

**Contact Information**

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|                     |                    |                          |                              |                        |  |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Contact Information |                    | Assurances               |                              |                        |  |
| Central Contacts    | Super App Contacts | Formula Program Contacts | Competitive Program Contacts | Discretionary Contacts |  |

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|                                 |                             |                            |                              |                            |                              |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Contact Information             |                             | Assurances                 |                              |                            |                              |
| Central Contacts                | Super App Contacts          | Formula Program Contacts   | Competitive Program Contacts | Discretionary Contacts     |                              |
| Early Childhood Program Contact | Early_Childhood CCR Contact | Early_Childhood SI Contact | 21st_CCLC Program Contact    | High_Cost Services Contact | Stronger Connections Contact |

Contact Information - Early Childhood | Click for Instruction



Assurances

|                                    |                      |                               |                                |                               |                                 |  |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact Information                |                      |                               | Assurances                     |                               |                                 |  |
| Common Assurances                  | Super App Assurances | Formula Program Assurances    | Competitive Program Assurances | Discretionary Assurances      | MOE Assurances                  |  |
| Early Childhood Program Assurances | Believe! Assurances  | Early Childhood SI Assurances | 21st CCLC Program Assurances   | High Cost Services Assurances | Stronger Connections Assurances |  |

- Initial budget
  - Budget should reflect what was submitted in the Budget section of the Planning Document and should be submitted after receiving feedback from the LDOE’s program manager of the ECE Fund.
  - **This projected budget must reflect a minimum of 70% of the funding being spent on tuition for seats.**
- Reimbursement requests for the ECE Fund
  - Can happen as frequently as the recipient needs
  - **Requires** documentation to verify the equivalent local funds spent
  - Should be submitted timely and have approximately 25% of the funds requested for reimbursement each quarter
- Periodic Expense Reports (PERs)
  - Require detailed documentation submitted for all reimbursement requests in that quarter
  - Always due on the same dates for **every** allocation in eGMS
    - July-September, due October 15
    - October-December, due January 15
      - Must be completed before subsequent reimbursement requests can be submitted
    - January-March, due April 15
    - April-June, due July 15
      - Must be completed before subsequent reimbursement requests can be submitted
      - Must be completed before next fiscal year budget can be submitted
- Budget Amendments (as needed by the Community Network Lead Agency)
  - If providers, rates, or number of children served change, a budget amendment is recommended
  - If quality improvement efforts change, a budget amendment should be submitted after consulting the allowable uses of the grant and the LDOE program manager.

**Tracking and Communicating of Local Spending**

One final administrative responsibility of the Community Network Lead Agency receiving the ECE Fund State Match dollars is to ensure that the local dollars raised are spent at least at the same rate as, or sooner than, the State Match dollars. **This means that recipients must demonstrate to the LDOE in eGMS Reimbursement Requests that the local funds are being spent in equal measure as the state match funds.** Because the ECE Fund statute requires that localities match state incentive funds 1:1, the State cannot match unspent local funds.



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Documentation to verify this spending may include:

- Budget sheets from internal business office indicating spend-down of local funds equivalent to the amount requested in eGMS reimbursement for State Match dollars
- Invoices between Community Network Lead Agencies and providers for locally-funded seats, signed by internal finance team leadership
- Schedule of payments agreed to between provider(s) and Community Network Lead Agencies, with signatures of Community Network Lead Agency lead, internal finance office lead, and provider
- Partnership Agreement between local entity and Community Network Lead Agency, with schedule of payments and signatures of local community partner lead, Community Network Lead Agency lead, internal finance office lead, and provider

Unlike some other allocations in eGMS, ECE Fund Reimbursement Requests **will require** documentation. Reimbursement requests submitted without the above documentation will be immediately rejected by the LDOE grants management staff.



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## Local Fundraising: Who, How, and Documentation

### With Whom Can Community Network Lead Agencies Partner?

Community Network Lead Agencies (CNLA) can receive funds from any of the following sources, as non-federal and non-state funders, as long as the source of those local funds is not federal:

- local municipalities
- city governments
- philanthropic organizations
- businesses
- individual donors

If a donor is interested in supporting a Community Network Lead Agency with funding, those funds have the potential to be matched dollar for dollar by the State of Louisiana. If a Community Network Lead Agency has reported locally-raised funds in its Early Childhood Education (ECE) Fund Application due September 30, those Community Network Lead Agencies must include preliminary supporting documentation with the application, such as email correspondence between the CNLA and the donating entity, a dated and signed letter of estimated funds, or other documentation that has been reviewed and approved by the LDOE ECE Fund program manager.

Official documentation for donated funds is due no later than January 30 every calendar year.

- All project funding is intended to supplement existing funding sources and not supplant other state or federal funds.
- Official documentation must include the

Donors who are interested in donating funds are asked to submit a statement of the obligation of funds to the local Community Network Lead Agency. The local Community Network Lead Agency will provide additional information on what is required in this statement.

| Application Due Date  | Community Network Lead Agency Receives Final Dedicated Local Funding and Provides Documentation to the LDOE* | Fiscal Year for State Match |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| By September 30, 2023 | January 30, 2024   | 2024-2025                   |
| By September 30, 2024 | January 30, 2025   | 2025-2026                   |
| By September 30, 2025 | January 30, 2026   | 2026-2027                   |
| By September 30, 2026 | January 30, 2027   | 2027-2028                   |

\*This date is subject to change depending on the start of Legislative Session, however it is best practice to expect January 30 as the latest possible date.





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### How Can a Local Entity Donate Money?

A local entity can prove that local funds have been contributed to the Community Network Lead Agency by submitting documentation verifying the amount of funding and the date by which the funding will be received by, or available to, the Community Network Lead Agency. The form of the verification may depend on the donating entity.

### Documentation Requirements

The funding must meet the following requirements to qualify for the ECE Fund match:

- Used for the expansion of birth to three-year-old seats in the community (70% of the total award at minimum)
- Given with a statement of obligation by **September 30** when the ECE Fund Application is due, that must include:
  - letter from the entity providing funds, preferably on letterhead, especially if from an organization
  - exact amount of funding guaranteed
  - Contact Information for the entity donating
  - date by which the entity will give funding to the lead agency
- Donated officially to the Community Network Lead Agency by **January 30**, which means one or more of the following:
  - Follow-up documentation for any funds claimed in the September 30 application and not yet verified, and/or documentation for any additional funds raised between September 30 and January 30, must be submitted by or before January 30.
  - The donor has physically contributed the funds to the Community Network Lead Agency or committed those funds to being exclusively available to the Community Network Lead Agency.

## Partnership with Local Entities

Partnering with local entities, from businesses to individual philanthropists, requires strong communication between the Community Network Lead Agency and the potential partner. First, Community Network Lead Agencies should provide data and information about what the ECE Fund is, why Early Childhood Care and Education matters, and where their dollars might go, if they choose to donate. Community Network Lead Agencies can use the information in the pages below to support their informational campaigns to seek potential partners.

### The Impact of Donating to a Community Network Lead Agency (CNLA)

High-quality early childhood education is critical for Louisiana:

- 80% of brain development occurs from birth through age 3, and 90% by age 4, establishing a critical foundation for future success.
- Early experiences affect the development of the brain's architecture, which provides the foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health.

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- Public investment in early childhood provides a greater return than at any other time of life; Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman's recent research shows a return on investment (ROI) of up to 13%.
- 66% of Louisiana children age five and under have both parents, or their single parent, in the workforce and must spend significant time in child care.
- Child care costs almost as much as public college tuition in Louisiana, with infant care in a child care center costing over \$8,700 per year on average.<sup>1</sup>
- Intervention is likely to be more effective when it is provided earlier in life rather than later.
- Early intervention services can change a child's developmental path and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities.
- Families benefit from early intervention by being able to better meet their children's needs from an early age and throughout their lives.<sup>2</sup>

### Once a Partnership is Established

Some donating entities may want to be more involved than others after pledging funds. Navigating these partnerships should be done with both parties agreeing on the ultimate goal, of ensuring high-quality care and education to economically disadvantaged children aged birth to three years old in previously underserved or unserved populations. Some additional recommendations for a strong partnership include a consideration of the following questions:

#### General

- What is the purpose of the partnership?
- Who will be the main liaisons/contacts within this partnership?
- Who will be the main point of contact for the ECE Fund for this community?
- What are the partners' communication norms and meeting/touchpoint cadences?
- Who will attend LDOE technical assistance, office hours, eligibility training, and other meetings as requested by the LDOE for ECE Fund recipients?
- What data sharing agreements will partners' individual legal teams require?
- What confidentiality agreements will partners' individual legal teams require?
- Who will ensure that all programmatic elements align with LDOE requirements of the statewide early childhood network?

#### Financial

- How will funding flow between partners to meet the LDOE ECE Fund requirements?
- What financial documentation is needed by which partners and on what timelines in order to meet the LDOE's requirements for reimbursement requests, periodic expense reports, and quarterly reports?
- Who will complete the ECE Fund Quarterly Report for the ECE Fund, requested by the LDOE?
- Who will submit next year's application for the ECE Fund and collect and share documentation for the LDOE to review?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://policyinstitute.org/early-childhood/why-early-childhood-matters/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/early-childhood-developmental-screenings-guidebook.pdf>



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### Administrative

- How will providers participating in the ECE Fund be selected, and who will lead this charge?
- Who will conduct outreach to potential provider participants in the ECE Fund?
- Who will conduct eligibility determination and keep records required by the LDOE?
- Who will complete and submit attendance records to the LDOE?
- Who will house the application documentation for all children determined eligible for the ECE Fund seats?
- Who will be responsible for quality support and technical assistance given to participating providers?

### Public-Facing

- Who will be responsible for communicating the availability of seats to the community, reaching out to potentially eligible families, and hosting enrollment meetings?
- Who will conduct outreach to potential eligible families for enrollment in ECE Fund seats?
- Who will be responsible for communicating to external stakeholders, not including the LDOE?



## Appendix A: ECE Fund Planning Document 2024-2025

### Early Childhood Education (ECE) Fund

#### Local & State Match Funds Planning Document 2024-2025

#### Overview:

Community Network Lead Agencies receiving Early Childhood Education Fund State Match for locally-generated community dollars, which are designated to expand the number of early childhood care and education quality seats, must complete and return this “Local & State Match Funds Planning Document” to [earlychildhood@la.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov) prior to budget approval for state matching dollars in eGMS. **This document is due back to the LDOE by no later than Monday July 15, 2024, by close of business.** Lead agencies can expect feedback on the planning document within two weeks of submission to the LDOE.

Please note that lead agencies should allow two weeks for Department feedback after submitting the planning document to the LDOE and that they should receive that feedback from the Department prior to entering their ECE Fund budgets into eGMS. Networks should plan their submission of the completed planning document accordingly. The eGMS application opens in June 2024, though funds will not be available until the 2024-2025 state fiscal year.

#### I. Administration Preparation

The following questions will help assist the Community Network Lead Agency in planning for the distribution of funds. These questions will also provide insight to program managers at the Department, so they can provide ongoing technical assistance and support throughout the year. These questions should prepare the Network for the ongoing administrative needs of this work. Please answer to the best of the Network’s ability at this time, and whenever applicable provide an estimated date by which the Network will have an answer, if one is not clear at this time.

Please answer the following questions to support the Network’s budgeting process:

1. At what rate(s) will the Network pay centers for seats? Please note that the Network can differentiate rates between age groups, which is recommended by the LDOE to be in alignment with the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

Please type in the yearly or monthly rate the Local Network intends to pay centers by age group for one child. **Please note that these rates must be at no cost to families for full-time care (at least 6 continuous hours per day, 5 days per week).**

| Age        | Total Estimated Allocation (Bper Child by Age | Yearly/Monthly/or Daily (Please Specify) Rate Per Child |
|------------|---|---|
| Infant     |   |   |
| Toddler    |   |   |
| 3-year-old |   |   |



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2. How did the Network decide the rate(s)? For example, please include any communication with participating providers, comparative rates, or other logic that resulted in the selected rate(s).

Empty rectangular box for response to question 2.

3. How many Local and State Match seats does the Network propose to add with this funding? Please identify the age groups for each number of new seats the Network proposes to add.

| Local Funding Seats |                             | State Match Funding Seats |                             | Seats Funded by Both Local and State Funds |                             |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Age                 | Approximate Number of Seats | Age                       | Approximate Number of Seats | Age  | Approximate Number of Seats |
| Infant              |                             |                           |                             |  |                             |
| Toddler             |                             |                           |                             |  |                             |
| 3 year old          |                             |                           |                             |  |                             |

4. What additional quality initiatives or measures, if any, will the Network support with this funding? (e.g., professional development, teacher stipends, etc.) Please note that no more than 30% of the State Match Funds can be used on administrative responsibilities, quality efforts, and indirect costs.

Empty rectangular box for response to question 4.

5. Networks will be asked to take attendance for Local and State Match seats and submit that information monthly, on the 10th of the subsequent month, in alignment with LA 4 and NSECD. Please describe below how the Network will collect attendance at the provider-level from participating centers to verify and submit official attendance to the LDOE. Please note that the LDOE is not implementing an attendance requirement for families, and tracking attendance is purely for data collection purposes at this time.

If the Network lead agency chooses to implement an attendance requirement for families, please indicate that in this section.

Empty rectangular box for response to question 5.



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6. What concerns does the Network have regarding filling seats in a timely manner? Does the Network anticipate being able to enroll at least **90% of the local and state match fund seats by September 30, 2024?**

**II. Eligibility Preparations**

Please note the following eligibility requirements for Local and State Match funding:

- *Local funding eligibility can be partially set by the Community Network Lead Agency. However, there must be a minimum requirement of “economically disadvantaged” as defined in Title 28, Part 1, Chapter 11 of the [Louisiana Administrative Code](#).<sup>3</sup>*
- *State match funding awarded must be used to fund slots for children who are eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Please review [CCAP eligibility requirements](#).*

1. What will be the Network's particular eligibility requirements for the Locally-funded seats? The Network should consider whether the Network might want to establish any of the following eligibility requirements:

- *Income threshold [please note that only those children whose family income makes them economically disadvantaged<sup>2</sup>, as defined in Title 28, Part 1, Chapter 11 of the Louisiana Administrative Code, shall be eligible for the early childhood care and education quality seats outlined in the applicant’s proposal]*
- *Categorical eligibility (e.g., children in foster care)*
- *Work or school requirements*
- *Child-age requirements, if more restrictive than B-3*
- *Participation or membership in a particular community (e.g., parents who are also students at a local university, front-line workers for COVID-19 response or disaster response, children of military personnel)*
- *Others (please explicitly state, if any)*

2. What, if any, additional eligibility parameters will the Network will set, and how do these parameters support the Network’s goal to serve any particular high-need group(s) in the community identified in Question 1 above? If the Network has no additional parameters for eligibility for Local Funds, please write “N/A.”

3. How will the Network structure the internal eligibility determination process based upon the eligibility requirements outlined in Question 3 above? The Network should consider the following questions, as they are helpful to the Network:

- *Who on the team will review applications?*
- *Who on the team will communicate with families to inform them about enrollment decisions?*
- *How long will the staff have to make a determination?*

<sup>3</sup> Children with the following characteristics are considered *economically disadvantaged*: eligible for food assistance program, disaster food assistance program, TANF, Medicaid, or reduced price meals or children who are English learners, homeless, or in foster care.



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- *What documents does the staff need to create or want LDOE support in creating, to ensure a smooth eligibility determination process?*
- *How long will the Network give families to turn in eligibility documents?*
- *How will the Network maintain eligibility documents?*
- *How will the Network redetermine eligibility for families who were previously deemed eligible after the 24 month period of eligibility?*
- *What documentation will the Network provide to families to share their enrollment decision? (Please see this [sample letter template for B-3 seats](#) that the Network can download as a Word document and use or edit as needed.)*

**4. For Past Participants Only:** What was the result of Statewide Monitoring for the 2023-2024 year?

- No Findings
- Eligibility Findings

If the Network received eligibility findings by Statewide Monitoring and was asked to implement a Corrective Action Plan, what additional support does the Network need from the LDOE to implement the Corrective Action Plan and improve in 2024-2025?

**III. Participating Providers and Proposed Requirements**

**Participating providers must have:**

- 2022-2023 Performance Profile score of Proficient or above
- Type III licensure and CCAP certification, or be an FCC in Academic Approval
- Open infant classrooms (site may use ECE Fund monies to open infant classrooms)

1. What additional criteria will the Network set for centers to be recipients of these seats?  
*(Please note, participating centers must have a Performance Profile rating of at least Proficient and at least one classroom with children aged 15 months or younger. This question is asking whether the Network will have additional criteria beyond that minimum requirement.)*



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2. What process will the Network utilize to select participating centers, and how will the Network communicate that process to program partners?  
*(For example, Networks may choose to create a detailed application for all licensed providers in the Network to complete within an established time frame and communicate to those providers through Ready Start Network meetings, school board meetings, or other established communication methods.)*

3. Please list the centers, their license numbers, site code, and most recent Performance Profile Rating, where Local and State Match seats will be placed, so that the Department can create and distribute attendance trackers to the Network. If the Network is not yet prepared to submit these providers and their license numbers, please provide the date by which the Network will know that information and email [earlychildhood@la.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov) when those decisions are made. **Please include any sites that *might* have seats enrolled throughout the year. Though adjustments may be made, it is preferred to have all possible sites included in the initial build of the Attendance Trackers.**

Please add rows as needed for additional sites.

| Provider Name | License Number | Site Code | 2022-2023 Performance Profile Rating (Excellent, High Proficient, Proficient) | Estimated Number of Total Seats to be Placed at Site |
|---------------|----------------|-----------|---|--|
|               |                |           |   |  |
|               |                |           |   |  |
|               |                |           |   |  |
|               |                |           |   |  |
|               |                |           |   |  |
|               |                |           |   |  |

**IV. Budget**

Include the Network’s budget for both the Local funding and the State Match funding. The table below is provided to facilitate the entry of the Network’s budget into eGMS. Please write the budget descriptions as if entering them into eGMS. This way the LDOE can provide clear feedback so that when the Network is ready to enter the actual budget in eGMS, the approval process can move forward more swiftly.





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The following are requirements and questions to consider when creating the ECE Fund budget; not all questions will be applicable to every Network:

- **At least 70% of funds must be used for directly funding seats, ensuring that these seats are provided at no cost to families.**
- **Remaining funding (up to 30% of funds) may be used for costs associated with funding the project (such as improving quality and paying for audit costs required per §909 of Chapter 9 of Bulletin 140)**

| <b>Budget Category</b><br><i>(Linked Document for Budget Code Reference)</i> | <b>Description of Activity</b> | <b>Estimated Local Funds Amount</b> | <b>Estimated State Match Funds Amount</b> |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 100  |                                |                                     |   |
| 200  |                                |                                     |   |
| 300  |                                |                                     |   |
| 400  |                                |                                     |   |
| 500  |                                |                                     |   |
| 600  |                                |                                     |   |
| 700  |                                |                                     |   |
| 800  |                                |                                     |   |
| Indirect Costs<br><i>(rate is already established with the State)</i>        |                                |                                     |   |



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V. Partnership Agreement

Attach and submit a draft of the partnership agreement the Network plans to enter into with all participating centers. The agreement below is an example; the Network shall modify this agreement or create/use its own partnership agreement, detailing the responsibilities of the Community Network Lead Agency, and the Community Network Lead Agency should confer with their internal business office, legal team, and other stakeholders prior to sharing with program partners.

SAMPLE

Child care center \_\_\_\_\_ (name of site) agrees to partner with \_\_\_\_\_ (Ready Start Network) for the allocation of locally-funded and match-funded seats starting on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) through \_\_\_\_\_ (date). We agree to work together towards providing high-quality child care and education to the children of Louisiana, and to do this we will:

- Meet all of the Local and Match Seats program requirements, including:
- offering infant care in my center,
- ensuring the lead teacher in classrooms with Local and Match-funded slots has an early childhood ancillary certificate; and
- ensuring that Local and Match-funded seats are offered free of cost to families who meet the eligibility requirements.
Offer care to Local and Match enrolled children, aiming for the approximate number of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ children. I understand that due to family needs, my allocation number and age groups may fluctuate throughout the year, and I am willing to do what is necessary to meet the community needs.
Attend recurring meetings on a \_\_\_\_\_ (weekly/biweekly/monthly) basis (via Zoom or in person at \_\_\_\_\_ location) to discuss operational/logistical matters in effectively implementing the B-3 seats
Participate in \_\_\_\_\_ (hours) of early child care professional development OR Participate in \_\_\_\_\_ (specific Early Childcare professional development sessions, maybe through Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies )
Take daily attendance for Local and Match-funded seats and submit by \_\_\_\_\_ (daily time deadline)
Conduct \_\_\_\_\_ (number) weekly informal observations of all teachers/classrooms with B-3 seats and take action with aim of increasing quality of all classrooms serving B-3 children
Participate in \_\_\_\_\_ (number) of informal or formal observations per month of all teachers/classrooms with Local and Match-funded seats by Ready Start Network
Receive and act upon feedback based on unified quality rating system rubric and guidance
All purchases for curriculum, tools, supplies, or other classroom supports that impact classrooms with Local Match seats will be discussed with and approved by the Ready Start Network \_\_\_\_\_ prior to purchase.
Receive \_\_\_\_\_ (dollar amount) to be used exclusively for the creation and improvement of Local and Match-funded seats within the center. <The Network can be more prescriptive on how specific dollar amounts will be used to what purpose here as appropriate for the agency/center relationship.>
Determine, in coordination with Ready Start Network staffing, employment responsibilities. <The Network can be more prescriptive on how specific dollar amounts will be used to what purpose here as appropriate for the agency/center relationship.>
Agree that the Ready Start Network RSN has the right to remove children and funding from \_\_\_\_\_ (center) at any point during the year if the RSN Ready Start Network finds that \_\_\_\_\_ (center) is out of compliance with any of the listed agreement requirements, or in violation of any requirements listed within Bulletin 137.
<Add other requirements for partnership as needed or desired between agency and child care center.>

Both parties agree to uphold the qualifications listed herein. Signed by:

Community Network Lead Agency

Date

Child Care Center Director

Date

This document was last updated on June 14, 2024