

BELIEVE!



**EARLY CHILDHOOD
PLANNING GUIDANCE**

MARCH 29, 2021

BELIEVE! EARLY CHILDHOOD PLANNING GUIDE

To support school systems and community networks with planning for and budgeting new funds under the [Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations \(CRRSA\) Act](#) and the [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\)](#), the LDOE has launched [Achieve! \(pre-K-12\)](#) and Believe! (Early Childhood). This guidance document focuses on Believe! (Early Childhood) and provides community networks with prioritized activities, funding opportunities, and resources to develop community plans in alignment with the priorities and focus areas outlined in [Believe to Achieve: Louisiana's Educational Priorities](#).

OVERVIEW: Early childhood teachers, site leaders, community network leaders, support organizations, and stakeholders have worked tirelessly since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that families with young children continue to receive the high-quality care, education, and supports they need to ensure children are on track to enter kindergarten ready.

The impacts of COVID-19 on the early childhood field, and the child care sector in particular, are significant. A survey conducted by the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (LPIC) found that from March 2020 to January 2021, the child care sector experienced an estimated \$245 million loss (nearly \$200,000 per center). Without immediate stabilization, child care providers are still at risk of closing their doors permanently. This would be devastating to children, families, and our economy; and Louisiana cannot let this happen.

Additionally, due to facility closures or family risk factors, many young children that would have typically been enrolled in high-quality child care, Head Start, or pre-K programs stayed home this year. For example, statewide pre-K enrollment in October 2020 was 17% lower than in October 2019. These drops in enrollment are even greater for Louisiana's Black students (25% reduction in pre-K enrollment) and urban students (18% reduction). While it is difficult to measure the impact of these drops in enrollment, communities and school systems should anticipate needing to provide additional support to children entering school this fall. Community networks and school systems should review [trends in enrollment](#) and [LEA- and subgroup-specific data](#) to best prepare for how to support students entering school in the 2021-2022 school year.

In January of 2021, the Louisiana Department of Education released [Believe to Achieve: Educational Priorities](#), which outlines priorities to achieve the state's critical goals. One of those critical goals is that all children enter kindergarten ready for success in school. Louisiana has made considerable progress in unifying and strengthening its early childhood system and making progress toward this critical goal. To sustain the progress Louisiana has made as a state, it is imperative that early childhood community networks, school systems, and early childhood program partners work in partnership to prepare all children birth through age five to start the 2021-2022 school year ready.

Ensuring All Children Birth through Age Five Start the 2021-2022 School Year Ready

This *Believe!* Early Childhood Planning Guide outlines activities and funding opportunities for early childhood community networks to develop plans and partnerships to ensure:

- **Child care is stabilized immediately**, with a focus on providers and the early childhood workforce.
- **Communities increase access** to opportunities for high-quality early childhood care and education this year.
- **Teachers are prepared to lead classrooms and provide high-quality interactions** for all children every day.
- **Young children who experienced disruptions in learning this year are given opportunities** to prepare for school.



BELIEVE!: EARLY CHILDHOOD PLANNING GUIDE OVERVIEW

The activities outlined below are designed to support early childhood community networks as they develop their plans to ensure child care centers in their community are stabilized, to increase and sustain access to early care and education this year, to provide children with high-quality experiences, and to support families.

CATEGORY: The four early childhood planning categories include the most critical areas for a strong start: child care stabilization; expanding access; classroom quality; and family engagement & support.

ACTIVITY: Each category is further subdivided into prioritized activities for communities. While these activities are not required, they are recommended for communities and may be supported through competitive funding.

FUNDING GUIDANCE: The three federal stimulus packages, CARES, CRRSA, and ARPA, provide states, school systems, communities, and child care providers funding to support activities aligned to each planning category. Funding opportunities are available for different entities:

Entity	Funding Opportunities
Early Childhood Community Networks	<p>In addition to lead agency and Ready Start Network allocations, there are two funding opportunities that community networks should apply for to support the child care needs of their community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2021-2022 COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grant: The Department has released a second Request For Applications (RFA) for which lead agencies are eligible. Lead agencies should develop a planning and funding proposal in coordination with their CCR&R and program partners, and funding must be used to fund activities that support child care. Community Supply Building and Access Expansion Grant: Ready Start Networks will have the opportunity to respond to a Request for Applications (RFA) for grants focused on building the supply of, and expanding access to, high quality early care and education. These grant opportunities will provide both funding and technical assistance to assist with the strategic planning and implementation of this work at the community level. <p>To apply for one or both grants, communities should submit an Intent to Apply (via Google form) by 5:00 p.m. on April 28 and a final application (via Google form) by 5:00 p.m. on May 26.</p>
School Systems	<p>School systems have access to new funds under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The LDOE has launched Achieve! to provide guidance to school systems for creating budgets in alignment with the priorities and focus areas outlined in Believe to Achieve: Louisiana's Educational Priorities. This funding guidance includes initiatives for early childhood through grade 12.</p>
Child Care Providers	<p>The Department is releasing ongoing grant opportunities to support and stabilize child care in the state. More information on all of these grant opportunities will be shared in the Early Childhood Newsletter.</p> <p>These opportunities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Louisiana Child Care Assistance Provider (LaCAP) Relief Grants: Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) providers and non-CCAP providers may be eligible for ongoing rounds of grant funding to support reopening. Teacher Support Grants: Child care assistance providers may be eligible for grant funding to support teachers. Accountability Participation Grants: Child care assistance providers that participate in CLASS observations this year may be eligible for grant funding to offset the costs associated with participating in observations.

RESOURCES: Resources aligned to each prioritized activity are linked to support early childhood communities in planning, and all resources can be found in the [Believe! and Achieve! Library](#). Email earlychildhood@la.gov with any questions.



BELIEVE! PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Immediately stabilize child care providers and the early childhood workforce.		
Linkage to LDOE Priority: Cultivate high-impact systems, structures, and partnerships.		
Activities	Funding Opportunities	Resources
Communities understand the challenges their child care providers are facing—including financial challenges, workforce challenges, and challenges related to health and safety—and develop a plan to support child care providers during the 2021-2022 year.	<p><u>2021-2022 COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grant</u></p> <p>LaCAP Grants for <u>CCAP providers</u> and <u>non-CCAP providers</u> (providers apply directly)</p>	<p><u>Office of Public Health Guidelines for Child Care</u></p> <p><u>Health and Safety Resource Guide</u></p> <p><u>CDC’s Guidance for Operating Child Care Programs during COVID-19</u></p>
Communities coordinate to ensure that child care workers and support staff have support to access vaccines.	<p><u>2021-2022 COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grant</u></p>	<p><u>CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Resources</u></p> <p><u>LDH COVID-19 Vaccine Resources</u></p>
Communities support child care providers to access business resources and state/federal grant, loan, tax credit, and other financial assistance programs.	<p><u>2021-2022 COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grant</u></p> <p>LaCAP Grants for <u>CCAP providers</u> and <u>non-CCAP providers</u> (providers apply directly)</p>	<p><u>Child Care Business Supports</u></p> <p><u>Small Business Administration Coronavirus Relief Options</u></p>
Communities support the child care workforce by ensuring teachers are on track to receive their ECAC and by supporting child care providers to apply for and implement child care teacher support grants.	<p><u>2021-2022 COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grant</u></p> <p>Teacher Stipend Grant (providers apply directly - to be released in late spring)</p>	<p><u>BESE approved ECAC program providers</u></p> <p><u>Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate background information</u></p> <p><u>Early Childhood Workforce: Recruiting and Hiring Toolkit</u></p> <p><u>Legislative Report on Early Childhood Workforce</u></p>



Communities increase access to opportunities for high-quality early childhood care and education this year.

Linkage to LDOE Priority: Remove barriers and create equitable, inclusive learning experiences for all children.

Activities	Funding Opportunities	Resources
Communities partner with school systems to identify opportunities to expand access to pre-K through school system funding.	<u>ESSER I/ESSER II</u>	<u>Guidance for Expanding Access to High-Quality Early Childhood Education for School Systems</u>
Communities develop and implement plans to build new child care supply in their community, which may include creating new infant/toddler classrooms at existing centers, partnering with family child care providers, or establishing innovative child care partnerships.	<u>Community Supply Building and Access Expansion Grant</u>	<u>Supply Building and Access Expansion Grant Guidance</u>
Communities develop and implement plans to secure sustainable local funding for B-3 seats offered in high-quality, diverse delivery settings.	Supplemental Ready Start Network allocations* *Communities awarded B-3 seats will be required to develop and implement fundraising plans and may be eligible for additional funding	<u>Funding Plan Guidance for Ready Start Networks</u>

Teachers are prepared to lead classrooms and provide high-quality interactions for all children every day.

Linkage to LDOE Priority: Provide the highest quality teaching and learning environment from birth through graduation.

Activities	Funding Opportunities	Resources
Communities work with school systems and Child Care Resource and Referral agencies to ensure that all early childhood classrooms are utilizing high-quality curriculum and are receiving professional development to support effective implementation of instructional tools and best practices.	<u>ESSER I/ESSER II</u>	<u>Tier 1 Curriculum</u> <u>Louisiana Academic Content PD Vendor Guide</u> <u>Supporting Early Learning and Literacy Vendor Guide</u>
Communities and school systems provide high-quality direct and related service support for young children with IEPs to increase inclusive opportunities within the least restrictive environment.	<u>ESSER I/ESSER II</u>	<u>Compensatory Services Guidance for Students with Disabilities</u> <u>Partnerships for Success Guide</u>
Communities partner with regional Child Care Resource and Referral agencies to understand and support efforts to conduct early learning center needs assessments, enhance child care environments, and ensure the technology needs of child care centers are met.	<u>2021-2022 COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grant</u>	<u>Outdoor Learning Enhancement</u> Communities should reach out to their <u>regional CCR&R</u> to collaborate



Young children who experienced disruptions in learning this year are given opportunities to prepare for school.

Linkage to LDOE Priority: Remove barriers and create equitable, inclusive learning experiences for all children

Activites	Funding Opportunities	Resources
Communities and school systems are prepared to identify children in need of intervention through universal developmental screenings.	<u>ESSER I/ESSER II/ESSER III</u>	<u>Early Childhood Developmental Screening</u> <u>Early Childhood Developmental Screenings Guidebook</u> <u>Supporting Early Learning and Literacy Vendor Guide</u>
Communities develop plans in partnership with families, school systems, and program partners to support transitions into school, through extended learning opportunities.	<u>ESSER I/ESSER II/ESSER III</u>	<u>Guidance for Early Childhood Transitions</u> <u>Designing a Pre-K/K Transition Program</u>
Communities and sites support children’s social and emotional development which may have been interrupted or impacted by breaks in routines and disruptions in relationships with their caregivers.	<u>ESSER I/ESSER II/ESSER III</u> <u>COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grant</u>	<u>Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program</u> <u>Louisiana Student Well-Being Vendor Guide</u>
Communities develop plans to enhance continuous learning through high-quality interactions and developmentally- appropriate learning activities for all children, regardless of their educational setting.	<u>ESSER I/ESSER II/ESSER III</u> <u>COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grant</u>	<u>Opportunities for Early Learning at Home</u> <i>(Updates Coming Soon)</i>

