

2024-2026 Early Childhood Ready Start Network Lead Agency Request for Application

Guidance Document

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Request for Application For Early Childhood Ready Start Network Lead Agencies

Section I - Overview And Opportunity To Participate

1A. Louisiana's Ready Start Network Summary

In 2018, legislation passed that allowed the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to create and fund pilot programs called Ready Start Networks (RSNs) to expand local responsibilities to include access to quality.

Through this pilot, select Early Childhood Community Network Lead Agencies' local responsibilities were expanded to include:

- assessing local demand for early care and education
- determining strategies to increase access
- creating a blueprint to address gaps
- setting a vision for the network's future
 - inclusive of community-level goals
 - recruiting stakeholders as partners to develop and expand an early childhood coalition
- establishing local advisory councils to make collaborative decisions
- developing strategies in a local funding plan to secure funding locally to meet local demand.

In 2022, the Ready Start Network Lead Agencies were codified through [Bulletin 140](#) into policy that formalized the roles and responsibilities of networks. As a scaled initiative, Ready Start Networks are recognized as an ongoing part of Louisiana's early care and education system, with unique duties and responsibilities that layer on top of the duties and requirements of a Community Network Lead Agency (CNLA). To maintain this recognition, Ready Start Network Lead Agencies have a clear application, selection, and renewal process that establishes expectations for success.

1B. Expectations for Ready Start Networks

Through this Request for Application, the Department seeks to identify and fund Ready Start Network Lead Agencies for the two-year period beginning July 1, 2024, continuing through June 30, 2026. Satisfactory execution of responsibilities by the Ready Start Network Lead Agency during year 1 (2024-2025) is a requirement to continue agency designation and funding for year 2 (2025-2026).

The Ready Start Network Lead Agency must:

1. Conduct administrative functions for the Ready Start Network, including serving as or coordinating with the fiscal agent;
2. Develop and maintain a blueprint, a strategic document outlining the Ready Start Network's current state, mission, vision, and goals. The blueprint should also include long-range plans for early childhood care and education in the community and focus on

- creating opportunities for access to quality early childhood care and education for children and families. A revised blueprint shall be submitted to the Department annually.
3. Establish a Ready Start Network Coalition comprised of local early childhood care and education stakeholders, including representation from the Early Childhood Community Network and partners such as child care providers, teachers, parents, and leaders from education, local government, non-profit, businesses, research, faith-based, and/or philanthropic entities or organizations. A list of coalition members shall be submitted to the Department annually.
 4. Establish a Ready Start Network Advisory Council that advises the Ready Start Network Lead Agency, assists in establishing by-laws and meeting protocols, and collaborates to develop and maintain the Ready Start Networks's blueprint via shared strategic planning and decision-making. A list of Ready Start Network Advisory Council members shall be submitted to the Department annually.
 5. Develop, maintain, and update a strategic Ready Start Network Funding Plan, which is a document that identifies the Ready Start Networks current funding sources and outlines the Ready Start Network Lead Agency's plans for seeking additional funding to support early care and education initiatives implemented at the local level. The Ready Start Network Funding Plan shall be submitted to the Department annually.

1C. Funding

The Department will recommend selected Ready Start Network Lead Agencies to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) for approval during the June 2024 meeting.

Each Ready Start Network Lead Agency has historically received a \$100,000 annual allocation*.

- The Department plans to notify Ready Start Network Lead Agencies of their 2024-2025 Academic Year (State Fiscal Year 2025) allocation by June 30.
- The year one funding cycle is anticipated to begin July 1, 2024, and end June 30, 2025.

Ready Start Network Lead Agencies must use all allocated funding to fulfill all duties and responsibilities specific to the Ready Start Network as outlined in Bulletin.

**As stated in Bulletin 140, all Ready Start Network Lead Agency funding is subject to available funding.*

Section II - Application And Selection Process

2A. Eligible Applicants

A Ready Start Network Lead Agency is either a state agency, a local public school system, or a non-profit having an educational or social services mission, including but not limited to a nonprofit corporation of a philanthropic or policy nature, a Louisiana public postsecondary institution, or a nonprofit corporation established by the governing authority of a parish or municipality.

2B. How to Apply

Agencies interested in applying to be a Ready Start Network Lead Agency must complete an Intent to Apply and the Ready Start Network Lead Agency Application.

Intent to Apply:

If interested in applying, eligible entities should first submit an Intent to Apply via email to earlychildhood@la.gov by March 12 EOD.

The Intent to Apply should include the following:

- The name of the agency intending to apply
- Agency point of contact information, inclusive of name, title, email, and phone number
- Indication of intent for RFA type: Ready Start Network Lead Agency
- The community or communities the agency wishes to represent.

Any current Ready Start Network Lead Agency that does not intend to apply for the Fall 2024-Spring 2026 period is also asked to email earlychildhood@la.gov by March 12 EOD.

Ready Start Network Lead Agency Application:

The Ready Start Network Lead Agency Application consists of five parts that applicants must complete fully and accurately.

Part 1: Ready Start Network Lead Agency Applicant Profile

Part 2: Rationale and Evidence for Designation as a Ready Start Network Lead Agency

Part 3: Current Agency Blueprint

Part 4: Coalition and Advisory Council Members

Part 5: Ready Start Network Lead Agency Applicant Assurances

2C. Application Deadlines and Important Dates

All applications must be submitted via email to earlychildhood@la.gov by **EOD on Tuesday, March 26**. Applicants must complete the application, scan and attach supporting documents (i.e. program partner signatures and agency blueprint), and submit all pages as one complete file.

Submissions can be submitted as a PDF or Word documents and must use the following naming convention:

Agency Name_RSN Application 24_26

All applications must be submitted via email to earlychildhood@la.gov by EOD on Tuesday March 26.

Note: Applications with a significant number of pages may present technical difficulties for an applicant's email server. The applicant is responsible for knowing the system's technical limits and resolving issues before the deadline.

In general, applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed. However, the Department reserves the right to review and/or fund an application submitted after the deadline when late submission is due to an emergency. Additionally, the Department reserves the right to request additional information or revisions from any applicant.

Ready Start Network Lead Agency RFA Timeline	
March 5, 2024	Informational Webinar on the Ready Start Network Lead Agency RFA Process
March 12, 2024	Intent to Apply due via email to earlychildhood@la.gov by EOD
March 26, 2024	Ready Start Network Lead Agency Applications due via email to earlychildhood@la.gov by EOD
May 15, 2024*	Notice of Recommendation sent to LDOE selected agencies
June 11, 2024	June 2024 BESE Meeting
June 14, 2024*	BESE Approved Ready Start Network Lead Agencies notified via email
July 1, 2024*	Ready Start Network Lead Agencies 2024-2026 2-Year-Term begins (State Fiscal Year 2025 begins)

**These dates are tentative and subject to change.*

2D. Selection Process

The Department will only review complete and accurate applications.

- Applicants will be evaluated based on their capacity to fulfill lead agency responsibilities and prior performance in carrying out Ready Start Network Lead Agency.
- During the review process, in-person or telephone interviews may be conducted. If this occurs, questions will be sent in advance. All applicants should be prepared to participate if requested by the LDOE.
- Selected applicants will be notified via email once recommendations have been submitted to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE).

The Ready Start Network Lead Agency Application begins on the following page. Please complete all sections.

Ready Start Network Lead Agency Application

Part 1: Ready Start Network Lead Agency Applicant Profile Information
Name of Agency:
Address:
Email:
Phone:
Name of Superintendent or CEO:
1a. Applying Agency Primary Contact
<i>The primary contact is the individual who will serve as the main point of contact with the Louisiana Department of Education. This individual represents the agency responsible and accountable for the deliverables within this role. This individual is also responsible for engaging in any and all communication to and from the LDOE related to the role before, during, and after the grant period.</i>
Name:
Title:
Organization:
Email:
Phone:
1b. Agency Participation as a Ready Start Network Lead Agency
Does this agency currently serve as a Ready Start Network Lead Agency? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Complete this section if you answered “yes” to the question above.
What is the name of the applying network?
Which Early Childhood Community Networks does the agency serve?
Is the applicant adding or removing Early Childhood Community Networks served as part of this application?
Early Childhood Community Networks added:
Early Childhood Community Networks removed:

Provide an updated list of Early Childhood Community Networks the agency wishes to serve in the 2024-2026 term.

Complete this section if you answered “no” to the question above.

Which Early Childhood Community Networks is the applicant applying to represent?

Part 2: Rationale and Evidence for Ready Start Network Lead Agency

Use this section to briefly describe why your organization is suited to serve as the Ready Start Network Lead Agency for the networks listed in Part 1. Include relevant accomplishments related to the Ready Start Network Four Pillars: Blueprint, Coalition, Advisory Council, and Local-Funding. If applying as a Ready Start Network Lead Agency for the first time, please discuss how the agency plans to execute these activities.

Please use the space below to enter your response:

Part 3: Attach the current organization's blueprint

Applicants must provide a copy of the agency's most recent Early Childhood Community Network or Ready Start Network Blueprint with this application.

Part 4: List of Coalition and Advisory Council Members

Coalition and Advisory Council Members

Ready Start Network Coalition

- Applicants must provide a list of coalition members. Ready Start Network Coalitions are made up of local stakeholders that include representation from the community network and shall seek to include representation from partners such as parents, local government, non-profits, businesses, research and education entities, faith-based organizations, and/or philanthropic entities.

Ready Start Network Advisory Council

- Applicants must establish an RSN advisory council that advises the RSN lead agency, which must be submitted to the department annually.

(For new applicants, please provide the names, titles, and agencies of any potential early care and education stakeholders who may support the endeavors of the newly formed Ready Start Lead Agency if selected.)

List of Advisory Council Members

Name of Advisory Council Member/ Title/Agency Represented	Email Address

Part 5: Ready Start Network Lead Agency Applicant Assurances

I agree that the Ready Start Network Lead Agency, hereafter known as the network, will comply with all provisions of [Bulletin 140](#) – *Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network* and all guidelines and requirements for lead agencies prescribed by the Louisiana Department of Education (Department), Early Childhood Office, and the organization will:

- Carry out the duties and responsibilities of the Ready Start Network;
- Act as the liaison between the Ready Start Network and the Department; and
- Be responsible for coordinating with the fiscal agent.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Ready Start Network Lead Agency shall be responsible for the following:

- A. Work with designated Community Network Lead Agencies in meeting the requirements of [Bulletin 140](#) §310. Any such agreements will be memorialized in an MOU.
- B. Develop a coalition of local stakeholders that shall include representation from the community network and seek representation from partners such as parents, local government, non-profits, businesses, research and education entities, faith-based organizations, and/or philanthropic entities. A list of coalition members shall be submitted to the Department annually.
- C. Establish a Ready Start Network Lead Agency advisory council that advises the network, establishes by-laws and meeting protocols, and collaborates to develop and maintain a blueprint. The blueprint outlines the community network's current state, mission, vision, and goals. A list of the advisory council members and the blueprint shall be submitted to the department annually.
- D. Create, maintain, and update a funding plan, which is a document that identifies the Ready Start Network's current funding sources and outlines the Ready Start Network's plans for seeking additional funding to support early care and education initiatives implemented at the local level. The funding plan shall be submitted to the department annually.

In addition, the Ready Start Network Lead Agency shall conduct administrative functions that include

- Maintaining records and documentation for the community network and making them accessible to department representatives when requested.
- Designating an individual to serve as the primary point of contact between the community network and the Department.
- Sending a required representative to all Department-sponsored network meetings.
- Disseminate communication to all of the network's program partners when requested by the Department.

By my signature below, I am indicating agreement with the above-listed requirements. (Digital signatures will be accepted)

Lead Administrator Signature

Title

Printed Name

Date

Email

Telephone Number

Superintendent, CEO, or Primary Agency
Lead Signature

Title

Printed Name

Date

Email

Telephone Number

Submission Instructions

Applicants must complete the application above, scan and attach supporting documents (i.e. program partner signatures and blueprints), and submit the application and supporting documents as one file.

Submissions should be submitted as PDF or Word documents and must use the following naming convention:

Agency Name_RSN Application 24_26

All applications must be submitted via email to earlychildhood@la.gov by **EOD on Tuesday, March 26**. Late submissions will not be accepted.