DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

Preschool Expansion Grant Overview

Louisiana's Effort to Unify Early Childhood

Louisiana is in a multi-year effort to unify its early childhood system and improve kindergarten readiness. To address a fragmented early childhood system that prepares only 54% of children for kindergarten, Louisiana passed a law (Act 3, 2012) to unify preschool, Head Start and child care programs into a statewide early childhood network. By empowering families with choice and ensuring easy access to high quality options, the state seeks to start every child on track for success.

Early Childhood Community Network Pilots Lead the Way

To implement Act 3, the Department called on innovative communities to create community network pilots comprised of child care, Head Start, publicly funded private preschools, and public school pre-kindergartens under a unified system of academic and development standards, enrollment, and teacher preparation expectations. Beginning in 2013, Cohort 1 launched with 13 pilots, followed by Cohort 2 in 2014 with 16 pilots. All remaining communities opted into Cohort 3 which will launch in January 2015.

For the first time, leaders from child care, Head Start and schools have come together to:

- Count all of their at-risk kids and coordinating planning to serve more at-risk children;
- Train and provide professional development for all teachers, regardless of where they work; and
- Create better ways to share information with families and to help them enroll in the best option for their children. Soon families will no longer have to travel all over town, fill out multiple forms, often only to be left with limited or confusing options.

Louisiana Receives Preschool Developments Grants as Validation of Pilot Model

Using the community network pilot model as the centerpiece, Louisiana applied for $32 million over 4 years to expand high-quality preschool programs in high-need communities through a unique parent choice model. Among a competitive field, Louisiana was selected to receive funding which not only validates the pilot model but will provide Louisiana children with:

- **New Quality PreK Seats through Choice:** Families of 4,600 at-risk children over 4 years will be able to choose a new, high-quality option in diverse settings including child care, Head Start, nonpublic and public schools; and
- **Improved Seats:** Families of 6,000 at-risk children over 4 years will benefit from quality improvements for existing seats. This means children will have 1) a credentialed teacher who is receiving coaching and professional development and 2) access to comprehensive services.

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More Louisiana Children and Families Will Benefit Each Year

More than 10,500 Louisiana children are expected to benefit. Louisiana will use $23.7 million to add new high-quality PreK seats as listed below. Equally important, these seats will be funded at a rate designed achieve quality under Act 3, approximately $5185 per child. These seats are in addition to existing PreK seats such as LA 4 or NSECD.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
New Seats Created	340	660	440	360
Continued from Prior Year	---	340	1000	1440
Total Seats Funded	340	1000	1440	1800

Number of Children Served in New Seats Over 4 Years: 4580

Louisiana will use $7.4 million to improve teaching and services for existing seats as listed below. This funding will demonstrate how achieving a certain funding level helps ensure high quality teaching.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Improved Seats Funded	442	1300	1872	2340

Number of Children Served in Improved Seats Over 4 Years: 5954

Starting Point: Plan for 2015-2016:

Louisiana will gradually scale up the number of seats provided or improved by the grant. In 2015-16, funding will go to 6 high-need communities (Caddo, City of Monroe (Ouachita), Iberville, Lincoln, Orleans, Rapides) for 340 new seats and 442 improved seats. Communities were chosen on 3 factors:

1. *Community Network Pilot*: Capacity to coordinate enrollment and implement a parent choice model
2. *Unmet Parent Demand:* More parents requesting preschool seats than are available
3. *Children in Poverty*: Designation as a high need community by LSU/Tulane *Risk and Reach* Report

These 6 Cohort 1 Community Network Pilots will offer new seats through a coordinated, parent choice enrollment model for the 2015-2016 school. They are committed to sharing lessons learned to support the state on how to best implement these types of enrollment models.

Moving Forward: All Early Childhood Community Networks Have Funding Opportunity

Starting with the 2016-17 school year, all communities in Louisiana that are successfully implementing Act 3 will be able to apply for funding to offer new and/or improve existing seats. From 2016-2019, every Community Network in Louisiana that has a collaborative leadership structure in place, supports teachers and empowers parent choice through coordinated enrollment will be able to compete for an average of $10 million dollars annually to increase access, improve quality and help ensure more children enter kindergarten ready.