

Clinton County RESA Office of Innovative Projects

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Request for Proposals for Strong Beginnings Three-Year-Old Preschool Pilot Program

Statement of Purpose

Michigan is offering a Strong Beginnings pilot preschool program for three-year-old children with factors that may place them at risk for low educational attainment. This program is based on research that shows similar children, who attend a high-quality preschool for the two years prior to kindergarten, have significant positive developmental outcomes when compared to their peers who attended a high-quality program for only one year. This pilot is offered by the Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency, Office of Innovative Projects (CCRESA-OIP), under the direction of the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start (MDE-OGS).

Background

In fiscal year 1986, the Michigan Department of Education received one million dollars to identify appropriate program models for the operation of preschool pilot projects for four-year-old children. Fifty-three projects were funded and served 694 four-year-old children. In fiscal year 1987, Section 36 of the State School Aid Act and the Department of Education Appropriations Act provided funds for targeted early childhood programs, now referred to as the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). Programs began operating in September 1988.

Since then, research on the efficacy of GSRP indicates that children provided with a high-quality preschool experience show significant positive developmental differences when compared with children from the same backgrounds who did not attend a high-quality preschool program. As a result, the program has continuously expanded, serving over 37,000 children in fiscal year 2020. While GSRP improves outcomes for children, one year of preschool is not enough to enable all children to be successful in school. Understanding this to be the case, during the 2017-2018 school year, MDE-OGS used funds from the Race to the Top Early Childhood Challenge to develop a conceptual model for a three-year-old preschool for children with factors that put them at risk of school failure. The model was reexamined to explore equity and access issues during the 2019-2020 school year using funds from the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five grant program (PDG Birth through Five).

Funding from the PDG Birth through Five grant is now available to pilot a small-scale implementation and evaluation of the three-year-old preschool model, currently referred to as Strong Beginnings.

Scope of Work

Strong Beginnings is based on Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program. Some modifications have been made to ensure program appropriateness and suitability for three-year-old children, including the addition of a Family Partnership Process.

A. Applicant Eligibility

Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and Public School Academies (PSAs) are eligible to apply in collaboration with their Intermediate School District (ISD).

B. Classroom Implementation

ISDs **must apply for a two cohort implementation**. Selected ISDs must operate between one and three classrooms for Cohort 1 and scale to three or more classrooms in Cohort 2. Sites selected by ISDs must operate an existing GSRP program that has been operating for at least two consecutive years.

ISDs may start with a limited number of sites and/or classrooms in Cohort 1 and indicate interest in adding additional sites or classrooms in Cohort 2. If the number of additional classrooms to be added in Cohort 2 exceeds available funds, CCRESA will determine how many classrooms each ISD may operate. Conversely, if the number of additional classrooms to be added by ISDs participating in Cohort 1 leaves pilot funds unspent, a second RFP may be issued for participation in Cohort 2 only.

- i. The pilot will be divided into two cohorts:
 - Cohort 1 (Beginning about January 11 and providing 20 weeks/80 days of in-classroom instruction)
 - Cohort 2 (Beginning about September 2021 and providing at least 30 weeks/120 days of in-classroom instruction)
- ii. ISDs included in the pilot may operate classrooms in a rural area, suburban area, urban area, or a combination of all three.
- iii. Sites included in the pilot must offer only **in classroom instruction** rather than a distance learning or a hybrid approach.
- iv. All classrooms for Cohort I must be currently licensed or be able to be added to a current license.
- v. Programs will serve only three-year-old children. Multiage classrooms will not be allowed for the Strong Beginnings pilot.
- vi. Pilot classrooms will use Strong Beginnings funds only. No braided or blended classrooms will be allowed.
- vii. For the pilot program, children with IEPs who are eligible under Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education are eligible for Strong Beginnings. Inclusive classroom limits for children with IEPs is no more than 10 percent.
- viii. Eligibility criteria for Strong Beginnings children closely align with GSRP. Refer to the Strong Beginnings Implementation Manual for a detailed description of eligibility requirements.
- ix. A school day classroom is strongly preferred for evaluation purposes, but part-day classrooms may be considered depending on the circumstance.
- x. Pilot classrooms will consist of no more than 14 children and two staff members. All classrooms, regardless of the number of children, will have two teaching staff with required credentials.

- xi. Programs will use only GSRP approved curriculum and assessments. Programs may not use Connect 4 Learning in three-year-old classrooms. No specials, supplemental curricula, or assessments will be allowed.
- xii. All classrooms involved in the Strong Beginnings pilot will utilize the same program quality assessment. The preferred assessment of the majority of classrooms involved, either PQA-R or CLASS, will be utilized.
- xiii. Each classroom will be assigned and work in cooperation with a Family Liaison, as outlined in the Strong Beginnings Implementation Manual.
- xiv. Exceptions and modifications to Strong Beginnings programs may be made due to COVID-19. For example, Strong Beginnings will align with GSRP policies and procedures related to COVID exposure and quarantine. (In the event of a shutdown, online instruction is not permitted for Strong Beginnings classrooms, but the Family Partnership Process is expected to continue according to the organization's submitted Family Partnership Process plan). Programs will be allowed to modify program requirements such as serving family-style meals and encouraging parent volunteers in the classroom if LEA, CBO, PSA, or other regulatory agency policies or regulations prohibit them for health or safety reasons. Programs may modify the number of children served based on local restrictions on the number of children per classroom.

C. Family Partnership Process

Each ISD must develop and implement a written, ISD-wide plan for a tiered model of support for Strong Beginnings families. Under this model, Family Liaisons will facilitate a connection to community resources and help families advance self-identified goals, such as improving family health, stabilizing housing situations, strengthening parenting skills, and improving parents' education, employment, and financial stability. The Family Liaison will use this process to empower families to acquire the resources, skills, and sustained behavior changes necessary to attain their goals.

In addition to developing and implementing a written ISD-wide plan for a Family Partnership Process, ISDs will be responsible for the development of a Family Partnership Process agreement and contracting with a new or existing oversight organization/agency. The Family Partnership Program service provider will be responsible for hiring and supervision of a Family Liaison Supervisor, and hiring and mentoring of at least one (1) Family Liaison for every 42 families served.

D. Data Collection and Reporting

To scientifically examine the benefits of this new program for vulnerable children and families, data collection and reporting is required of each site for program monitoring, continuous quality improvement, and program evaluation. Examples of data collection and reports include:

- i. Information such as COR or TSG child and summary records
- ii. Child Screening Data
- iii. Program Quality Assessments
- iv. Parent Contact Logs
- v. ECS Coaching Logs

Refer to Appendix A for a full description of data collection items and their associated reporting schedule.

E. Evaluation

Pilot sites must agree to participate in a multi-year evaluation conducted by researchers at Michigan State University (MSU). The evaluation will include individual child-level assessments, classroom assessments, and teacher and parent surveys for the Strong Beginnings program year. The progress of children who participated in Strong Beginnings will be assessed during the four-year-old GSRP year and kindergarten.

Due to Covid-19, Cohort 1 assessments and surveys may be conducted electronically. During Cohort 2, the Research Team hopes to conduct assessments and surveys on-site and in-person. The capacity to do so will be evaluated to align with health and safety standards and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), MSU, and partner programs.

Children, teachers, and parents will be compensated for their time completing assessments and surveys by MSU. Participation of the children and parents in the MSU activities is voluntary and will not impact children's admittance to the program.

See Appendix A for a list of assessments and schedules.

Outcomes and Performance Standards

Desired Program Outcomes

- Implementation of Strong Beginnings classrooms
- Implementation of a Family Partnership Process
- Implementation of a program meeting performance standards

Please refer to the Strong Beginnings Implementation Manual for a full description of performance standards.

Milestones, Deliverables, and Timeline

Program Milestones

- All contracts and subcontracts are signed by 11/16/2020
- ISD Early Childhood Contact and Finance Representative attend 12/05/2020 online training
- Child recruitment and enrollment begins no later than 11/20/2020
- Programs start by February 1, 2021
- At least one Strong Beginnings ISD-level Project Team Member attends all Training and Technical Assistance meetings

Program Deliverables:

- Submission of all budgets, reports, and data in accordance with project timelines

Application Questionnaire

[Strong Beginning Application Form \(https://forms.gle/GfGjyexXRqUhHhys5\)](https://forms.gle/GfGjyexXRqUhHhys5)

Payments and Incentives

*Contingent on funding from the PDG Birth-5 Grant by US Health and Human Services and Michigan Department of Education.

Program Payments

Each child in a school-day Strong Beginnings Cohort 1 classroom will receive an allocation of \$8,000 or two-thirds the Cohort 2 full-year allocation of \$12,000. A full classroom of children, aligned with LEA return-to-learn plans is equivalent to \$112,000 in Cohort 1 and \$168,000 in Cohort 2.

Children in part-day classrooms will receive a half allocation of \$4,000 in Cohort 1 and \$6,000 in Cohort 2.

These funds must cover both the classroom program and Family Partnership Process components of the program.

Additional Payments

Transportation is encouraged and will be funded in addition to program payments at a minimum of \$200 per child for full and- part-day students for Cohort 1 and \$300 per child for Cohort 2.

One-time start-up funds of \$15,000 for each physical classroom are available in addition to program funds for the purchase of non-consumable equipment, materials, and supplies, including child restraint systems for vehicles, or minor classroom renovations.

An ISD or consortium of ISDs may retain an amount not to exceed 4% of the total grant amount for administrative services provided by the ISD. This amount comes out of the ISDs per child expenses and is not in addition to it.

Periods(s) of Closure

In the event of a COVID-19 related shutdown, classrooms will continue to receive their full per-child allocation. The Family Partnership Process is expected to continue virtually throughout the period(s) of closure in order to receive continued funding.

Fund Balances

Due to the requirements of this program and the parameters of the evaluation, a fund-balance carryover is not allowed.

Contractual Terms and Conditions

Assurance Regarding Compliance With Grant Program Requirements

ISDs awarded contract funds under this RFP agree to comply with all applicable requirements of all state statutes, federal laws, executive orders, regulations, policies, and award conditions governing this program. Awardees understand and agree that if they materially fail to comply with the terms and conditions of the award, CCRESA may withhold funds otherwise due to this program until the recipient comes into compliance, or the matter has been adjudicated and the amount disallowed has been recaptured (forfeited). CCRESA may withhold up to 100 percent of any payment based on a monitoring finding, audit finding, or pending final report.

Certification Regarding Nondiscrimination Under Federally And State Assisted Programs

The applicant hereby agrees that it will comply with all federal and Michigan laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination and, in accordance therewith, no person, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, age, sex, marital status, or handicap, shall be discriminated against, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity for which it is responsible or for which it receives financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education or the Michigan Department of Education.

Specific Program Assurances

Contractors assure that they will comply with the following Federal Health and Human Services regulatory requirements:

- Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirement for HHS Awards (45 CFR Part 75) - [Part 75—Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=1&SID=df3c54728d090168d3b2e780a6f6ca7c&ty=HTML&h=L&mc=true&n=pt45.1.75&r=PART) (<https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=1&SID=df3c54728d090168d3b2e780a6f6ca7c&ty=HTML&h=L&mc=true&n=pt45.1.75&r=PART>)
- Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR Part 200) – [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=1&SID=02748a1e7fab41711ba2b063bc8eb05&ty=HTML&h=L&mc=true&n=pt2.1.200&r=PART) (<https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=1&SID=02748a1e7fab41711ba2b063bc8eb05&ty=HTML&h=L&mc=true&n=pt2.1.200&r=PART>)

Should an award be made, the following provisions are understood to be true:

1. This project is supported by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0055 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
2. The award will be made as a contract between CCRESA and the applicant.
3. The award is approved for the applicant and is not assignable to a third party without specific approval.
4. CCRESA is not liable for any costs incurred by the awardee prior to the issuance of the award.
5. Payments, records, and financial statements made to sites under the provisions of this program will be made accessible and are subject to audit by CCRESA.
6. Each ISD, in collaboration with its sites, shall comply with all reporting requirements and due dates.
7. Each ISD acknowledges the program is part of a data collection and evaluation effort. Acceptance of these funds requires that the project fully cooperate with CCRESA, MDE, and MSU and that cooperation includes but is not limited to:
 - making classrooms available for observation;
 - providing non-classroom space for on-site or virtual child assessments;
 - allowing administrators and staff to take time to complete surveys and questionnaires (by phone, online, on paper, or in-person);

- returning completed surveys and questionnaires promptly and regularly to the contractor or to any of the state’s other research partners;
 - providing program information to CCRESA and MSU. This information may include but is not limited to: program type, session types, session hours, program calendar of school breaks, field trips, and staff development, site locations, numbers of classrooms per site, number of children served, and staffing assignments within classrooms;
 - providing children’s Unique Identification Number (UIC) for each child enrolled in Strong Beginnings and each child on the waitlist;
 - participating in project informational webinars, conference calls, and in-person meetings;
 - distributing parent information letters/consent forms; and
 - collecting and forwarding parent consent forms promptly and regularly.
8. ISDs are aware and understand that program requirements may be subject to change due to circumstances around COVID-19.

Award Availability, Force Majeure And Contract Or Award Cancellation

Awards made under this agreement are subject to funding allocation and availability under Grant Number 90TP0055 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Michigan Department of Education fiscal year 2020, 2021, and 2022 appropriations.

The performance of an award or agreement by either party shall be subject to force majeure, including but not limited to acts of God, fire, flood, natural disaster, war or threat of war, acts or threats of terrorism, civil disorder, unauthorized strikes, governmental regulation or advisory, recognized health threats as determined by the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control, or local government authority or health agencies (including but not limited to the health threats of COVID-19, H1N1, or similar infectious diseases), curtailment of facilities, or other similar occurrence beyond the control of the parties, where any of those factors, circumstances, situations, or conditions or similar ones prevent, dissuade, or unreasonably delay the terms of the award or ensuring agreement. The award or contractual agreement may be canceled by either party, without liability, damages, fees, or penalty, for any one or more of the above reasons, by written notice to the other party.

Format of Response

A webinar relating to this RFP will be held at 10:00 AM EST on Wednesday, September 16, 2020 by Zoom: RFP [RFP Zoom Webinar](https://ccresa.zoom.us/j/97925854959?pwd=RXcwRUVwbVQ3eG85SXN2L0NTL29nUT09) (https://ccresa.zoom.us/j/97925854959?pwd=RXcwRUVwbVQ3eG85SXN2L0NTL29nUT09)

Meeting ID: 979 2585 4959

Passcode: 669958

[Preregistration](https://eotta.ccrea.org/Event.php?id=3845) (https://eotta.ccrea.org/Event.php?id=3845) is encouraged but not required. A recording will be made available for those who are unable to attend.

ISDs must submit an intent to apply by 12:00 PM EST on September 25, 2020 indicating their interest in applying for pilot classrooms and including the name of the ISD and the name and contact information

of the person who will be completing the ISD response. (LEAs, CBOs, and PSAs who are interested in applying should contact their ISD). Only those ISDs submitting an intent to apply will be allowed to respond to the RFP. The intent to reply should be sent to holmberg_k@ccresa.org.

Full RFP responses must be received by CCRESA no later than 4:00 PM on October 20, 2020. Responses should be emailed in a single PDF document to holmberg_k@ccresa.org.

Required RFP response elements include:

1. Cover letter
2. Completed Application with Signature Pages
3. ISD and Site Letters of Support

Evaluation and Awards

The Strong Beginnings Pilot Project is a demonstration project to assess both the scalability and efficacy of a three-year-old preschool program. Because it is necessary to study implementation across different settings, final site selection will be based on a combination of factors such as geographical distribution and the site's contribution to a diverse, balanced sample.

Award announcements will be made on November 3, 2020.