

# **2026-2028 Early Childhood Ready Start Network Lead Agency Request for Application**

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## **Guidance Document**

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## **Ready Start Network Lead Agency Application**

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# Request for Application for Early Childhood Ready Start Network Lead Agencies

## Section I - Overview and Opportunity to Participate

### A. 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 increasing access to quality.

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

- 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 the 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.

### B. Expectations for Ready Start Networks

Through this Request for Application, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) seeks to identify and fund Ready Start Network Lead Agencies for the two-year period beginning July 1, 2026, continuing through June 30, 2028. Satisfactory execution of responsibilities by the Ready Start Network Lead Agency during year 1 (2026-2027) is a requirement to continue agency designation and funding for year 2 (2027-2028).

The Ready Start Network Lead Agency must do the following:

1. Conduct administrative functions for the Ready Start Network, including serving as or coordinating with the fiscal agent;
2. Develop and maintain a blueprint, which is 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 LDOE 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 LDOE annually.
4. Establish a Ready Start Network Advisory Council that advises the Ready Start Network Lead Agency, establishes bylaws and meeting protocols, and collaborates to develop and maintain the Ready Start Network's blueprint via shared strategic planning and decision-making.
  - A list of Ready Start Network Advisory Council members shall be submitted to the LDOE annually.
5. Develop, maintain, and update a strategic Ready Start Network Funding Plan, which is a document that identifies the Ready Start Network's 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 LDOE annually.

### **C. Funding**

The LDOE will recommend selected Ready Start Network Lead Agencies to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) for approval during the April 2026 meeting.

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

- The LDOE plans to notify Ready Start Network Lead Agencies of their 2026-2027 Academic Year (State Fiscal Year 2027) allocation by June 30.
- The year one funding cycle is anticipated to begin July 1, 2026, and end June 30, 2027.

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

### A. 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.

### B. 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 e-mail to [earlychildhood@la.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov) by 5:00 p.m. on January 30, however the Department encourages Intent to Apply notices be sent as early as possible, preferably by January 23rd.

The Intent to Apply should include the following information:

- The name of the agency intending to apply
- Agency point of contact information, inclusive of name, title, e-mail address, 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 Summer 2026-Spring 2028 period is also asked to e-mail [earlychildhood@la.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov) by 5:00 p.m. on January 23.

#### 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

### C. Application Deadlines and Important Dates

All applications must be submitted via e-mail to [earlychildhood@la.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov) by **5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 13, 2026**. 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 document and must use the following naming convention:

**Agency Name\_RSN Application 26\_28**

*Note: Applications with a significant number of pages may present technical difficulties for an applicant's e-mail 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 LDOE reserves the right to review and/or fund an application submitted after the deadline when late submission is due to an emergency. Additionally, the LDOE reserves the right to request additional information or revisions from any applicant.

Ready Start Network Lead Agency RFA Timeline	
January 13, 2026	Ready Start Network Lead Agency RFA Process announced during CNLA Office Hours, a press release, and the EC Newsletter
January 30, 2026	Intent to Apply due via e-mail to <a href="mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov">earlychildhood@la.gov</a> by 5:00 p.m.; the Department encourages early submission of the Intent to Apply by January 23, 2026.
February 13, 2026	Ready Start Network Lead Agency Applications due via e-mail to <a href="mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov">earlychildhood@la.gov</a> by 5:00 p.m.
February 27, 2026*	Notice of Recommendation sent to LDOE selected agencies
April 14, 2026	April 2026 BESE Meeting
April 16, 2026*	BESE-approved Ready Start Network Lead Agencies notified by the LDOE via e-mail
July 1, 2026*	Ready Start Network Lead Agencies 2026-2028 2-Year-Term begins (State Fiscal Year 2027 begins)

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

## D. 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 the 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 e-mail once recommendations have been submitted to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE).

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**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:
E-mail address (Superintendent or CEO):
Phone:
Name of Superintendent or CEO:
<b>1a. Applying Agency Primary Contact</b>
<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 award period.</i>
Name:
Title:
E-mail address:
Phone:
<b>1b. Agency Participation as a Ready Start Network Lead Agency</b>
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 Network(s) does the agency serve currently?
Is the applicant adding or removing Early Childhood Community Network(s) served as part of this application?
Early Childhood Community Network(s) added:
Early Childhood Community Network(s) removed:



Provide an updated list of Early Childhood Community Network(s) the agency wishes to serve in the 2026-2028 term.

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

Which Early Childhood Community Network(s) 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's 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 most recent Early Childhood Community Network or Ready Start Network Blueprint with this application.

**Part 4: List of 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 LDOE 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	E-mail 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 (LDOE), Office of Early Childhood Care and Education. 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 LDOE; 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 LDOE annually.
- C. Establish a Ready Start Network Lead Agency advisory council that advises the network, establishes bylaws 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 LDOE 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 LDOE annually.

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

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

*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

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent, CEO, or Primary Agency  
Lead Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number

### Submission Instructions

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

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

**Agency Name\_RSN Application 26\_28**

All applications must be submitted via e-mail to [earlychildhood@la.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov) by **5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 13, 2026**. Late submissions will not be accepted.