

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY NETWORK LEAD AGENCIES

SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE

A. Louisiana’s Early Childhood Community Networks

Louisiana is engaged in an ongoing effort to improve kindergarten readiness for at-risk children by strengthening its early childhood system. To address an early childhood system that was preparing too few children for kindergarten, Louisiana’s legislature passed the Early Childhood Care and Education Act of 2012. This legislation charged the state’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to unify publicly-funded preschool, Head Start and child care programs into a statewide network so that families have easy access to high-quality early learning options that put every at-risk child on track for success in school.

To implement this law, the Louisiana Department of Education (the Department), under the leadership of BESE, created local early childhood networks comprised of child care, Head Start, and publicly-funded pre-K in public and nonpublic schools under a unified system of early learning and development standards, expectations for adult/child interactions, and accessible enrollment. There are currently 66 of these early childhood care and education community networks in Louisiana, and each functions as a consortium of early learning providers. The Department manages this system by designating a lead agency for each community network that coordinates essential administrative activities, observations, and enrollment.

B. Expectations for Lead Agencies

Through this Request for Applications, the Department is seeking to identify and fund community network lead agencies for the two-year period beginning July 1, 2022, continuing through June 30, 2024. Satisfactory execution of responsibilities during year 1 (2022-2023) is a requirement to continue agency designation and funding for year 2 (2023-2024).

Lead agencies must:

- 1. Conduct administrative functions for the community network including serving as the fiscal agent;**
- 2. Coordinate accurate CLASS® observations per the requirements of BESE Bulletin 140 ensuring that feedback is provided to all participating programs; and**
- 3. Coordinate the birth-to-age-five child count, enrollment, and the state funding application for the community network.**

Detailed expectations for the requirements specified above are outlined in [BESE Bulletin 140 - Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network](#) and the Lead Agency Assurances that must be initialed, signed and submitted with the application. The Department will provide ongoing support to guide and assist lead agencies with executing these responsibilities. The Department will monitor lead agencies to determine if adequate implementation is occurring and to provide technical assistance.

C. Funding

Lead agencies will be recommended to BESE for approval in April 2022, and the year one funding cycle will begin July 1, 2022. Funding for 2022-2023 will be provided at a rate of \$525 per infant, toddler, and pre-K classroom, subject to the Department’s budget as established by the Legislature and approved by the Governor. To stabilize allocations, the Department uses a rolling three-year average of the count of classrooms observed at the end of each fall semester. In instances where there has been a natural disaster or unforeseen circumstances like COVID-19 that significantly impacted access in a given year, the

Department will average classroom count to reflect a more typical year of enrollment for each network for the 2022-2024 allocation.

Lead agencies must use this funding to carry out the responsibilities listed in Section B above. Generally, funds may be used to ensure that community network administration, CLASS® observations, coordinated enrollment, and other related lead agency expectations are carried out. Funding may also be used to support the improvement of program quality in the community network if all other lead agency expectations are being met.

The Department recognizes the significant amount of work required for a lead agency to accept the responsibilities of a secondary community network. The administration of a secondary community network requires lead agencies to coordinate network activities, coordinating CLASS observations, network meetings, enrollment, funding, and collaborate with multiple school systems and program partners while incurring travel costs.

In order to support lead agencies who take on the work of a secondary network, a multiplier will be applied to the secondary community networks' per-classroom allocations. This will raise the per-classroom allocation rate from \$525 to \$787.50 for classrooms located in a secondary community network under the purview of the lead agency. Additionally, this higher per-classroom allocation rate of \$787.50 will be applied to classrooms located in school systems in community networks where more than 10% of their total classroom count are located in secondary school systems required to complete Super App.

Lead agency funding cannot be used to increase slots within programs, for construction or facility remodeling, nor for expenses such as furniture, food, or refreshments. Funds unexpended at the end of each fiscal year will revert to the state.

The Department has established recommendations for the use of lead agency funds as outlined in the table below. These recommendations are based on the estimated costs associated with each function. Amounts budgeted for supplies that exceed the recommendation will not be approved without clear and compelling justification.

Recommended Use of Funds	
Function	Estimated Percent of Funding
CLASS® Observations	70%
Coordinated Enrollment	10%
Network Administration	15%
Materials, Supplies/Misc.	5%

Note: Child Care Resource and Referral agencies are responsible for providing Type III centers with training and coaching to support their specific needs associated with quality adult-child interactions.

After being notified of selection, lead agencies must sign a set of fiscal assurances to receive the allocation and submit detailed budgets for approval through eGMS. Payments are made to lead agencies

on an expense reimbursement basis and payments are contingent upon the successful completion of milestones. *Note: Lead agencies are subject to having their allocations reduced during any budget period that their annual milestone timelines are not met.*

Annual Milestone Due Dates

October 1	All CLASS® observations for fall have been scheduled in the EC portal or the community network’s plan for “real-time” scheduling has been submitted to the Department along with the local protocol for conducting observations
October 31	Child Count as of 10/1 has been reported to the Department
December 15	100% of fall CLASS® observations have been completed and results are in the online system
February 1	All CLASS® observations for spring have been scheduled in the online system
Early February, exact date TBD each year	Super App has been completed and submitted via eGMS
	If applicable, the Community Network Blueprint has been updated, published, and link uploaded to Super App
	The Coordinated Funding Request has been submitted via Super App
February 28	Child Count as of 2/1 has been reported to the Department
	Coordinated Enrollment Plan has been submitted to the Department
May 15	100% of spring CLASS® observations have been completed and results are in the online system

Note: For October and February counts, if the date falls on a Saturday, the count date is as of the previous Friday, and if the date falls on a Sunday, the count date is as of the following Monday. For all other milestones, if the due date falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the due date is that date – communities may submit earlier, but cannot submit later.

SECTION II – APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. Eligible Applicants

A state agency, a local public school system, a nonprofit or for-profit corporation having an educational or social services mission, 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 is eligible to apply.

The Department anticipates that most current lead agencies will seek to continue their designation. However, this is an opportunity for roles to shift and a different agency to fill this role based on community

interest and need. Existing multi-parish networks may choose to reconfigure, and others may form. In addition, communities may decide to create a new organization such as a nonprofit consortium representing all program partners. **Any current lead agency that does not intend to apply for continued designation should notify amanda.colon@la.gov no later than December 1, 2021.**

B. How to Apply

All current early childhood community network lead agencies will receive an *MS Word* version of the application via email in October 2021.

Intent to apply should be communicated by contacting amanda.colon@la.gov by December 1, 2021. Any entities not currently serving as a lead agency will need to request the *Word* version of the application by this date. The Lead Agency Application has four parts, and all are included in the Application Template. Applicants must complete the template, scan with any attachments, and **submit as one document** by February 4, 2022, to amanda.colon@la.gov.

Part 1 – Community Network Lead Agency Applicant Profile

Complete the Community Network Lead Agency Applicant Profile.

Part 2 – Community Network Lead Agency Applicant Assurances

Complete the Community Network Lead Agency Assurances. These assurances must be signed by the chief administrator of the applying organization.

Part 3 – Rationale and Evidence for Designation as Lead Agency

Use this section to briefly describe why your organization is suited to serve as the lead agency for the local community network.

When completing this part include in the description any relevant accomplishments such as community building among providers, successful efforts to improve Performance Profile ratings, systems implemented to support teachers, and accomplishments toward supporting families with community-wide coordinated enrollment. Limit the response to 500 words or less.

Part 4 – Program Partner Notification and Signatures

Applicants must provide written notice of their intent to apply for lead agency designation to **all** existing program partners. In light of COVID-19, the Department is providing flexibility to networks in how they collect program partner signatures, which is detailed below.

C. Application Deadline and Important Dates

Scan the template with any attachments and **submit as one document**. **An electronic copy of the application file must be sent via email to amanda.colon@la.gov by 4:30 PM on Friday, February 4, 2022.**

Note: Applications with a significant number of pages may present technical difficulties for an applicant's email server. It is the applicant's responsibility to know the technical limits of their system and resolve any issues ahead of 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.

December 1, 2021	<p>Applicants indicate intent to apply by emailing amanda.colon@la.gov</p> <p>Any entities not currently lead agencies will need to request a version of the Word document by this date.</p> <p>Any current lead agency that does not intend to apply for continued designation should notify amanda.colon@la.gov</p>
December 6, 2021	<p>Informational webinar on the Lead Agency RFA will be held on Monday, December 6, 2021 at 12 p.m.</p> <p>Link to join webinar: https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/93629969120</p>
February 4, 2022	<p>Applications emailed <i>as one document</i> by 4:30 pm to amanda.colon@la.gov</p>
April 2022	<p>Lead agency allocations are submitted to BESE for approval</p>

D. Selection Process

The Department will review all applications for completeness and will determine whether the applicant has the capacity to fulfill lead agency responsibilities. Past performance with carrying out lead agency responsibilities will also be considered. Telephone or in-person interviews may be conducted as part of the selection process. Successful applicants will be notified via email once the recommended designations have been submitted to BESE for approval.

APPENDIX A: 2021-2022 Lead Agency Allocations (subject to change for the 2022-2023 academic year)

Network Code	Network Name	Allocation
001	Acadia	\$34,650
002	Allen	\$12,950
003	Ascension	\$63,000
004	Assumption	\$9,800
005	Avoyelles	\$32,900*
006	Beauregard	\$17,325
007	Bienville	\$11,025
008	Bossier	\$74,025
009	Caddo	\$203,875
010	Calcasieu	\$161,000
011	Caldwell	\$5,600
012	Cameron	\$4,900
013 & 054	Catahoula & Tensas	\$6,212
014	Claiborne	\$5,425
015	Concordia	\$11,200
016	DeSoto	\$14,175
017	East Baton Rouge & City of Baker	\$347,813
018	East Carroll	\$11,025*
019	East Feliciana	\$8,400
020	Evangeline	\$19,600
021	Franklin	\$18,725
022	Grant	\$8,225
023	Iberia	\$56,963
024	Iberville	\$22,925
025	Jackson	\$6,650
026	Jefferson	\$264,250
027	Jefferson Davis	\$16,975
028	Lafayette	\$165,375
029	Lafourche	\$46,550
030	LaSalle	\$7,350
031	Lincoln	\$40,950
032	Livingston	\$51,975
033	Madison	\$11,200
034	Morehouse	\$29,400
035	Natchitoches	\$32,725

036	Orleans	\$360,062
037	Ouachita & City of Monroe	\$130,463*
038	Plaquemines	\$15,750
039	Pointe Coupee	\$22,750
040	Rapides	\$141,225
041	Red River	\$5,425
042	Richland	\$23,887*
043	Sabine	\$14,175
044	St. Bernard	\$32,900
045	St. Charles	\$40,950
046	St. Helena	\$6,125
047	St. James	\$15,750
048	St. John the Baptist	\$27,125
049	St. Landry	\$80,150
050	St. Martin	\$35,963
051	St. Mary	\$31,675
052	St. Tammany	\$169,925
053	Tangipahoa	\$113,050
055	Terrebonne	\$59,850
056	Union	\$7,525
057	Vermilion	\$37,800
058	Vernon	\$19,250
059	Washington	\$22,225
060	Webster	\$27,300
061	West Baton Rouge	\$25,025
062	West Carroll	\$4,025
063	West Feliciana	\$8,925
064	Winn	\$6,300
066	City of Bogalusa	\$10,500
067	Zachary	\$24,150

*calculated as a secondary network

APPLICATION TEMPLATE

APPLICATION PART 1: COMMUNITY NETWORK LEAD AGENCY APPLICANT PROFILE

Lead Agency Applicant Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
Physical Address: _____
Primary Contact Name: _____
Primary Contact Title: _____
Telephone: () _____ - _____
Email: _____

Network Name: _____
Geographic parish(s): _____

APPLICATION PART 2: COMMUNITY NETWORK LEAD AGENCY APPLICANT ASSURANCES

My organization will comply with all provisions of BESE 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 that my organization will:

CONDUCT ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY NETWORK

- Ensure that all of the following required program partners are engaged:
 - Any school district in the community network’s geographic boundaries and all early childhood programs within the district(s), and the Recovery School District if more than 10% of public schools are governed by the RSD; and
 - Programs that feed into any participating school district’s pre-K and kindergarten programs (e.g., Head Start and Early Head Start, all school-based early childhood programs including charter schools, Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development (NSECD) Program sites, Early Steps, and Type III child care providers).

Note: All licensed Type III early learning centers are required to participate in the state’s accountability system and the local coordinated enrollment system.

- Engage additional partners in the community who want to support early care and education.
- Serve as fiscal agent for this community network.
- Maintain records and documentation for this community network and make the records available to representatives of the Department when requested.
- Designate an individual to serve as the primary point of contact between the community network and the Department.
- Send a representative to all Department-sponsored meetings for lead agencies.
- Disseminate communication to all community network program partners when requested by the Department.
- Ensure that all sites in this community network have a site code assigned by the Department.

- Facilitate and reconcile on an ongoing basis an accurate accounting in the *GOLD*® online system of all classrooms at publicly funded sites in the community network that contain children from age birth to age five.
- Ensure that all infant, toddler, and pre-K classrooms at publicly funded sites are entered in the Department's CLASS® online system.
- Using the Department's verification process, verify community network-level data that has been collected and reported to the Department for the community network Performance Profile.
- Conduct meetings for all community network program partners a minimum of once each quarter.
Note: Best practice is to conduct meetings once each month.

COORDINATE CLASS® OBSERVATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY NETWORK

- Identify all sites and all classrooms to be observed with the CLASS® Toddler, CLASS® PreK tools and the CLASS® Infant tool.
- Develop a written process to verify that all sites and all birth to age five classrooms at each site are correctly recorded in the Department's CLASS® online system.
- Maintain an adequate number of local reliable observers and maintain a copy of their certificate of reliability.
- Ensure that all local observers have the required Child Care Criminal Background Check and that they are prepared to present it when entering a center.
- Develop a schedule and a written local protocol, in accordance with Department guidelines, to ensure that all Infant, Toddler, and PreK classrooms in publicly funded programs and child care centers with Type III licenses are accurately observed twice each year by CLASS® reliable observers.
- Collaborate with all program partners to establish and implement written procedures that minimize potential conflict of interest between local observers and the personnel in the classrooms they are assigned to observe and incorporate these procedures into the local observation protocol.
- Conduct shadow score observation checks for 10 percent of all classrooms observed during the fall observation period and for 10 percent of all classrooms observed during the spring observation period.
- Ensure that every local observer is shadow scored at least once during each school year.
- Ensure that at least one observation for each classroom age configuration in the community network is shadow scored during each school year.
- Develop and implement a written process to monitor and compare the results of all local observers for the purpose of ensuring accurate observations.

Note:

- *Local observers with fall observation results that differ from third party results by more than one point across the majority of domains compared may not be allowed to observe in the spring for the accountability system. Lead agencies should monitor observer accuracy to maintain adequate local observer capacity.*
- *High scores, low scores, and concerning patterns will trigger additional third-party observations to ensure accuracy for local observation scores.*
- Conduct a minimum of one observation calibration activity each semester and ensure that all observers participate in a minimum of one observation calibration activity each semester.
- Ensure that all local observations entered in the Department's CLASS® online system are conducted in accordance with the publisher's standardized procedures.

- Ensure that observation information and results are entered into the Department's CLASS® online system accurately and in accordance with [BESE Bulletin 140](#) timelines.
- Request corrections for the observation data in the Department's CLASS® online system in accordance with the Department's established procedures and timelines.
- Establish and implement a written process and timeline to ensure that written results and feedback from each local observation is reported to sites within 10 business days.
- Collect the scoring booklets for all community network observations that occur in a school year and maintain them for three school years. The three school year retention period begins on June 30th of the school year during which the observations were conducted. If programs conduct their own observations, assure that copies of the original scoring booklets are obtained from the program and maintained in lead agency files for three school years.

COORDINATE BIRTH-TO-AGE-FIVE ENROLLMENT AND THE STATE FUNDING APPLICATION FOR THE COMMUNITY NETWORK

- Count all at-risk publicly funded birth-to-age-five children being served in the community network on October 1 and February 1 of each school year and report to the Department as required.
- Coordinate and submit to the Department a community-wide application for early childhood public funding and:
 - Provide an opportunity for each program partner in the community network and the general public to comment on the proposed funding request prior to submission to the Department.
 - Document the public comment process and include the documentation in the funding request that is submitted to the Department.
- Engage all program partners to submit a coordinated enrollment plan to the Department that is signed by all program partners.
- Provide all program partners the opportunity to participate in the design of an enrollment information campaign that identifies the community network and/or all program partners.
- Provide all program partners in the community network the opportunity to plan and participate in information and enrollment events that are conducted on behalf of all program partners.
- Collaborate with all program partners to develop and implement a single preliminary eligibility determination process that informs families of the programs for which they are eligible to apply.
- Inform all program partners of eligibility requirements for all programs so that appropriate referrals can be made.
- Collaborate with all program partners to design and use a coordinated application that allows families to indicate/rank their preference for programs and is used year-round by all programs in the community network.
- Provide all program partners with the opportunity to be represented in the design, review, and revision of the application on an annual basis.
- Collaborate with the Regional Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R) to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that delineates the relationship between the CCR&R's referral system and the community network's coordinated enrollment system.
- Collaborate with all program partners and the Regional CCR&R to ensure that the community network's enrollment application is easily accessible and available year-round, particularly for families interested in child care.

- Collaborate with all program partners to ensure that at-risk children are enrolled in programs based on family preference, as long as space is available.
- Collaborate with all program partners to develop and maintain a community-wide waitlist of unserved infant-to-age-five children so families that want publicly funded child care and education services are identified and their preferences noted.
- Manage the Tracking of Time Services (**TOTS**) system as part of coordinating enrollment for child care and ensure that:
 - Families can scan their finger image during business hours *five days a week* unless explicit written permission is obtained from the Department to do otherwise.
 - Trained staff are available to enroll families in the TOTS system.
 - The staff keeps all information related to client records and case files for child care assistance confidential as required by La. R.S. 17:407.29.
 - Lead agencies report any TOTS machine malfunctions to the Department immediately.

By my signature below, I am indicating agreement with all of the above listed requirements.

Signature of Leader/Chief Administrator:

Agency:

Title:

Email Address:

Printed Name:

Telephone Number:

**APPLICATION PART 3:
RATIONALE AND EVIDENCE FOR LEAD AGENCY DESIGNATION**

Use this section to briefly describe why your organization is suited to serve as the lead agency for the local community network. When completing this section, include in the description any relative accomplishments such as community building among providers, using CLASS® to support teachers and improve programs for children, and supporting families with community-wide coordinated enrollment. Limit the response to 500 words or less.

**APPLICATION PART 4:
PROGRAM PARTNER NOTIFICATION AND SIGNATURE PAGE**

Applicants must provide written notice of their intent to apply for lead agency designation to **all** existing program partners. Though not required, letters from program partners may be submitted as evidence that the applicant has support from local early childhood providers.

Due to circumstances surrounding COVID-19, the Department is providing multiple options for gathering program partner signatures for the 2022 Lead Agency Request for Application. In accordance with BESE Bulletin 140, Lead Agency Request for Application will be considered incomplete without Part 4 Program Partner Signatures.

In addition to accepting in-person signatures, options for obtaining program partner signatures include:

1. Providing a Google form survey that asks the program partner to input their name and responds to a question providing their support for the lead agency application. Survey responses can be submitted as an excel spreadsheet or PDF.
2. Sending an email to program partners requesting a response email of support. Email responses can be compiled to submit with RFA.
3. Obtaining digital or e-signatures on the traditionally used signature page (found below).

If you anticipate difficulty obtaining signatures through one of these methods, please contact Amanda.Colon@LA.gov.

PROGRAM PARTNER SIGNATURE PAGE FOR THE 2022 LEAD AGENCY APPLICATION

My signature below on behalf of my organization indicates that I have been notified that (insert the organization name) is applying to be lead agency for insert the geographic area, parish or community Early Childhood Community Network.

Program Name (printed or typed)	Program Administrator Signature