What Is Child Care Stabilization Grant Funding?

In response to the urgent need to stabilize the child care sector, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act (Pub. Law 117-2), signed on March 11, 2021, included nearly $24 billion in child care stabilization grants for states, territories, and Tribes. The goal of these grants is to address the financial burdens child care providers faced during the COVID-19 public health emergency. By offering much needed, immediate economic relief to child care providers, this funding aims to help stabilize the child care market so that families have better access to child care that meets their needs.

How Can This Brief Help You?

For these funds to be able to stabilize the child care market, all eligible providers need a chance to apply for and access these funds. Accordingly, communication will be essential to the success of this initiative.

Using a public awareness campaign (PAC) can sharpen your efforts to share information about the child care stabilization grants, helping you deliver tailored messages to a broad range of key stakeholders across multiple communications channels. This brief breaks down the key elements of an effective PAC and describes how you may apply them to your child care stabilization grant communications efforts.

For more information about developing a comprehensive digital communications plan to support your Lead agency’s consumer education efforts, see the Child Care State Capacity Building Center’s (SCBC) Digital Communications Planning Guide: Recommendations for Increasing Visibility and Awareness for Your Consumer Education Website (2021).

Tips for Implementing a Public Awareness Campaign to Build Awareness for the Child Care Stabilization Grant Program

This section identifies key strategies for developing and implementing a PAC that will support your child care stabilization grant communications.

Leverage Your Consumer Education Website

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies are required to post child care stabilization grant applications on the Lead Agency’s child care website.

State and territory CCDF Lead Agencies should aim to make their child care consumer education website the go-to source for child care information in their jurisdiction. Therefore, they should take this opportunity to use their consumer education website as a tool to share information about the child care stabilization grant program that providers may find helpful. Since Tribal CCDF Lead Agencies are not required to have a consumer education website, they may apply the strategies shared here to a website associated with the Tribe so that child care providers know the application is legitimate and from a trusted source.

Below, you will find some strategies that can help you leverage your consumer education website more effectively to share information about this important program.
Child Care Stabilization Grants: Using a Public Awareness Campaign

Note: SCBC’s Child Care Stabilization Grants: Leveraging Child Care Consumer Education Websites (2021) provides more detailed tips to help you effectively use your consumer education website as a communication tool.

- Create a banner or button on your website to indicate where child care providers can go on your consumer education website to find information.
- Consider the resources that providers may find helpful for understanding the child care stabilization grant program, who is eligible, and how to apply.
  - Create a plan for how to develop and post that information quickly.
  - Think about drafting a list of frequently asked questions or even creating a short video of the steps that providers may need to take when applying for the grants once they are released.
- Work with your team (such as your web, policy, and communication teams) to draft a plan that will ensure that you regularly review and update posted information. This will help ensure that your audience has access to the most up-to-date child care stabilization grant information and resources. Ensuring timely updates to your website will help providers—and others—recognize your agency and its consumer education website as a trusted source of reliable child care information.
- Work with your web team to improve your website’s search engine optimization to ensure providers can find your site when they use an online search engine to look for information about the ARP Act. See SCBC’s Consumer Education Website Online Module Series, Module 2 - Promoting Your Consumer Education Website (2021) for tips on improving your website’s search engine optimization.

Identify Your Target Audiences

Since the child care stabilization grants aim to stabilize the child care system, a wide range of child care providers are eligible to apply for funds. See the Office of Child Care’s Overview of ARP Act Child Care Stabilization Guidance (2021) for more guidance about provider eligibility.

Think about how you can reach all segments of this eligible provider pool. Consider how you could reach providers who may not be connected to traditional CCDF communication channels. Develop a list of all eligible provider populations and consider how you will share information with them. As you build this list, develop a plan to ensure your communication materials reach all eligible providers. Note: See SCBC’s Child Care Stabilization Grant Tip Sheet: Reaching All Eligible Providers (2021) for tips to help you reach the widest range of your eligible provider population.

It would also be helpful to consider how you will communicate with other stakeholders, such as the following:

- Policymakers and child care advocates
- Child care partners, such as child care resource and referral agencies or child care professional development associations

Develop Effective Messaging

PACs are most effective when their messaging is creative, succinct, and informative. Once you develop your target audience list, build messaging that will connect with your specific audience. Consider why this new funding opportunity might be important to each audience and consider how you can communicate about these funds in a way that resonates with each audience.
For example, a message aimed at policymakers and child care advocates might include links to ARP Act guidance from the Office of Child Care and could use more technical child care terms. Meanwhile, targeted messaging for family, friend, and neighbor care providers may be more effective if you avoid technical jargon and focus on potential uses of the funds. Please see SCBC’s *Child Care Stabilization Grants: Building Messages for Key Audiences* (2021) for templates that can help you develop effective messaging.

**Develop a PAC Plan**

Develop a PAC plan to guide your efforts and keep you on track. This plan should help you do the following:

- Develop tailored messaging for each segment of your target audience (see SCBC’s *Child Care Stabilization Grants: Building Messages for Key Audiences* (2021)).
- Identify the communication channels that may resonate most with your target audience.
  - Determine how to layer media types (for example, print, radio, television, social media, and so on) for lasting, far-reaching impact.
  - Consider using a mix of at least three primary channels for digital and social media promotion to reach target audiences.
  - Work to identify demographics, characteristics, and media consumption habits of your target audiences to help hone strategies. Audiences often fall into multiple intersecting subgroups. Identifying where these audiences overlap and intersect will allow you to further refine your strategies.
  - When using multiple channels of communication, be sure to assign timelines and coordinate efforts so that they complement each other.
- Apply appropriate branding to PAC communications to build recognition. If you have a brand for your agency or consumer education website, be sure to include that on communication materials. Then, use them in your PAC materials and communications strategies to build visual recognition for the program with your audience.
- Identify which languages would be best for translation of materials. See SCBC’s *Consumer Education Website Online Module Series, Module 1 - Building a Family-Friendly Website* (2021) for best practices for identifying the languages for translation.

**Note:** If you translate the online application into other languages, be sure to plan for someone to be able to translate them back into the language spoken by your staff so that you may process them efficiently.

In addition to the PAC itself, consider developing a suite of print and digital materials to extend the reach of your campaign. All materials should be 508 compliant in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Table 1 provides an example of a planning matrix that you could use to help develop a PAC. It helps you consider how to reach your target audience through tailored messaging, identify appropriate communication channels, and leverage key partners to extend your communications reach. See SCBC’s *Child Care Stabilization Grants: Building Messages for Key Audiences* (2021) for message building templates.
Table 1. PAC Planning Tool Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>Key Messaging Points</th>
<th>PAC Platform and Supporting Materials</th>
<th>Key Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family child care</td>
<td>The goal of this funding is to help child care providers, like yourself, cover some of the costs you have faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds can be used for personnel costs, rent, personal protective equipment, professional development, goods and services, and more. The application process is simple. You can apply using this link to the application [include link or URL]. See SCBC’s <em>Child Care Stabilization Grants: Building Messages for Key Audiences</em> (2021) for complete messaging templates.</td>
<td>Radio—poll child care provider groups to identify preferred stations for advertising or programs for guest spots, and remember to include radio spots in languages other than English. Brochures—distribute them in local churches, through child care licensing and quality staff, or through other community partners. Social media—consider using targeted Facebook advertisements or asking partners to share in Facebook groups.</td>
<td>State or local child care resource and referral agencies. Social media managers for the Lead Agency and partners. Lead Agency staff and partners who directly interact with providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care stakeholders</td>
<td>The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has adversely impacted the child care sector. As an essential service for working families, child care plays a vital role in our economy’s recovery. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 includes nearly $24 billion dollars for child care stabilization grants to stabilize the child care system. [Insert State, Territory, or Tribe Name] received [Insert Dollar Amount] to provide rapid financial relief to child care providers to help them recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and stay in business. You can support this effort by sharing information about this opportunity with eligible providers. See SCBC’s <em>Child Care Stabilization Grants: Building Messages for Key Audiences</em> (2021) for complete messaging templates.</td>
<td>Direct email. Add to agendas for all meetings with outside partners. Early childhood advisory councils. Informational resources on the consumer education website.</td>
<td>Advisory group and child care committee leadership. Consumer education website content manager. Child care listserv managers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 provides descriptions of some communication channels that you could use to promote the Child Care Stabilization Grants.

### Table 2. PAC Channel Identification Matrix Example

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social media posts</strong>&lt;br&gt;(such as Facebook&lt;br&gt;and Twitter)</td>
<td>Provide information to existing followers&lt;br&gt;Can be easily shared by partners and individual users to expand your reach&lt;br&gt;Are easy to share and repost as needed</td>
<td>Leverage partners to share your posts on their own pages and in child care or related groups&lt;br&gt;Post in multiple languages&lt;br&gt;Include a link to the application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio advertisements or guest spots</strong></td>
<td>Can reach audiences who might not engage on social media, do not have access to reliable Internet, or have low or no vision&lt;br&gt;Are affordable and accessible—many radio stations reserve advertising and program space for public service messaging</td>
<td>Poll your target audience for preferred radio stations, radio programs, and advertising times&lt;br&gt;Secure multiple spots on the same channel&lt;br&gt;Consider advertising in multiple languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Television advertisements</strong></td>
<td>Can reach audiences who might not engage on social media or do not have access to reliable Internet&lt;br&gt;Allow you to use visuals to connect with your audience</td>
<td>Consider advertisements on channels with children and family programming&lt;br&gt;Vary advertisement times on the same channel to reach the broadest audience&lt;br&gt;Ensure your target audience can see themselves reflected in the people and messages in your advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recorded webinars</strong></td>
<td>Can be quickly planned, posted, and shared at low cost and with minimal effort&lt;br&gt;Can be posted online and be accessible to users on-demand&lt;br&gt;Present the opportunity to put a face to your agency and show how you are supporting providers in accessing these funds</td>
<td>Consider using this opportunity to walk providers through the application process&lt;br&gt;Address frequently asked questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional videos</strong></td>
<td>Walk providers through the process of applying for child care stabilization grants&lt;br&gt;Help ensure you provide the highlights of the process and can be viewed on demand</td>
<td>Keep instructional videos brief and to the point, and link to additional resources in the video description&lt;br&gt;When posting longer videos on YouTube, use chapters to break the webinar into digestible sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Print resources</strong></td>
<td>Can reach audiences with limited or no access to digital communication platforms</td>
<td>Create PDF versions of materials to attach to emails or post on digital platforms&lt;br&gt;Consider printing and delivering these resources to trusted information sources for the provider</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collaborate with Partners

Child care stakeholders and partners often have their own connections with different segments of the provider community. Thus, while developing a PAC strategy for child care stabilization grants, consider collaborating with these key partners to tap into their communication channels.

It might be helpful to develop a list of potential partners who can help you reach specific audiences to help guide your outreach efforts. For instance, do you have access to trusted leaders in local communities who could help you get the word out about these grants? Use SCBC’s Child Care Stabilization Grant Partner Identification Tool and Collaboration Checklist (2021) to help you with this effort.

Do Not Recreate the Wheel

Your agency or partners may have communications templates and plans already in place for similar campaigns. Consider the following:

- Do you have emergency response and recovery messaging and resources that you developed in response to COVID-19? Could these materials be easily repurposed to deliver communications on the child care stabilization grants?
- Do you have existing frequently asked questions documents, social media frames, or advertising strategies that you could use instead of creating something from scratch?
- Did your Lead Agency or partner agency already develop communication materials around Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act or Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act funding?
If so, review those materials and see if they can be revamped to address child care stabilization grants. This will allow you to quickly disseminate messages without a large investment of time.

**Remember to Evaluate**

Having an evaluation plan is critical to your ability to assess how well your PAC reached your target audience. Consider the following:

- Think about how you can collect information in your grant application and PAC to assess your success. Include questions in your grant application that will help you determine who is applying for grants and how representative applicants are of your provider population. Estimate the number of eligible providers in your jurisdiction by using your database of licensed providers together with data from others who may certify or register license-exempt providers (such as the Department of Education or Department of Public Health). How does the number of applicants compare to the estimated total of eligible providers?

- Use campaign tracking URLs and digital analytics to understand how users are responding to your digital outreach efforts. See SCBC’s *Using Web Analytics to Strengthen Your Child Care Stabilization Grant Outreach* resource (2021) and *Consumer Education Website Online Module Series, Module 3 - Using Data to Support Continuous Website Improvement* (2021) for tips on how to develop and use campaign URLs and Google Analytics to assess and inform your communication efforts.

- Be sure to engage members of your target audience to test your messaging before, during, and after your campaign. Testing can be done formally, through workgroups or user testing workshops, or informally, through hallway testing or by polling providers at organized events.