ROADMAP 📍

FOR OPTIMIZING CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING USING A SYSTEMS APPROACH

American Rescue Plan Help is on the way

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 provides CCDF Lead Agencies with $14.99 billion in supplemental Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Discretionary Funds to rebuild and strengthen the child care system. Lead Agencies are encouraged by the Office of Child Care (OCC) to use this historic investment in America's child care system to:

» **Expand access to high quality child care**

» **Increase access to financial assistance for families**

» **Provide mental health supports**

» **Expand outreach to educate families on the availability of child care assistance**

» **Support increased vaccination**

This funding provides an unprecedented opportunity for CCDF Lead Agencies to maximize the strengths of their existing systems and address child care's most pervasive challenges. Planning and implementation of systemic change can seem like an unsurmountable task. A systems approach helps CCDF Lead Agencies challenged with optimizing the use of increased funding to address the complexities of scaling long-term systemic change and impact. Through this approach, all of the components of the child care system, including the knowledge and expertise of individuals who support subsystems, can come together to help build it back better.

We encourage CCDF Lead Agencies to contact their State Systems Specialist to request assistance beyond what is offered in this brief roadmap.

PLANNING WITH ENGAGEMENT

Engage stakeholders to help map out funding possibilities by matching needs identified in state or territory needs assessments or strategic plans with OCC's recommended uses for funding.

Use a logic model or The Hexagon (see page 24) to determine the appropriate fit and feasibility of ideas being considered.

IMPLEMENTATION

Develop the infrastructure needed to operationalize the solutions identified in the Planning with Engagement section through three areas that drive implementation (see "Active Implementation Hub" on page 34):
- Staff or contractor competency
- Organizational support systems
- Leadership

DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The ARP Act provides an opportunity for CCDF Lead Agencies to address systemic changes and gaps to positively affect generations to come. This can be shown only if CCDF Lead Agencies document outcomes and evaluate the impact of the work.

PLANNING WITH ENGAGEMENT

FIRST: Determine the CCDF Lead Agency's goal for the funding by examining any existing strategic plans (such as, Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five), needs assessments, or recommendations from early childhood stakeholders that are available, and map where CCDF Lead Agency priorities align with the OCC funding recommendations.

- Pay attention to how elements of equity are addressed within plans, needs assessments and recommendations as older plans may be less likely to prominently include equity.
- Use planning tools and existing data to inform short- and long-term outcomes.

NEXT: Engage families, providers, subgrantees, advocates, and elected officials to provide meaningful input and, if possible, co-create solutions that fit within the recommendations of OCC and the CCDF Lead Agency. Then, adapt the proposed solutions based on feedback, and re-engage with stakeholders to determine if adaptations have met expectations.

- Use Energize Others to engage families and communities to determine their priorities and which solutions would best meet those needs.
- Engage elected and appointed officials to vet options and allow for input. Advocates may have relationships with elected officials that can support communication of CCDF Lead Agency plans.

THEN: Create high-level implementation blueprints to model the cost and present challenges and benefits, including the potential political capital needed to move them forward.

- Map the implementation timeline (incorporating procurement and approval processes) against the funding expenditure period. Full implementation of new initiatives can often take 2 to 4 years.
- Ensure that short- and long-term financing costs are considered.

FINALLY: Release the proposed solutions publicly. Consider messag*ing* and messeng*ers* for specific audiences (legislators, advocates, providers, families, and so on).

- Consider using a message house to frame concise messages to specific stakeholder groups. Engage family members, child care providers, leadership at state and local levels, and so on to help inform and deliver the messages.
- Determine documentation that may be needed for the CCDF Lead Agency's CCDF Plan and required reporting.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What is the CCDF Lead Agency's goal with this funding? How can ARP Act funds bolster the CCDF Lead Agency or partner agencies' capacity to implement timely solutions?
- Who will the CCDF Lead Agencies prioritize for services? How will these stakeholders be engaged in planning?
- How is equity addressed?
- How can innovative solutions such as paying at the cost of quality care or contracting for slots be used with innovative funding strategies (see Resource 22 on page 21) to ensure sustainability after the ARP Act funds?
- Which stakeholders are expressing their needs and recommendations? Which stakeholders are not yet engaged and how will they be engaged?
- What supports and resources (funding for staff time, training, coaching, mentoring, and so on) will your child care workforce need to be successful and adopt the proposed solution?

RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

- *Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity* (Government Alliance on Race and Equity, September 2015)
- *Planning, a Management Function* (Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance System, n.d.)
- *Finance and QRIS* (Build, 2017)
- *Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Stakeholder Communications* (Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance System, May 2019)
- *How Partnerships and Innovations Support the Increased Need for School-Age Child Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance System, February 2021)

IMPLEMENTATION

FIRST: Ensure the right people with the right skill sets are in the right positions to put programs into practice. Hiring, coaching, training, and fidelity assessment help ensure that the people who are implementing have the skill sets they need. Explore how CCDF supplemental funding can provide support.

Next: Create or enhance organizational support systems (see checklist below and outlined in Dimension 4 of the *Capacity Building Self-Assessment Tool*) to implement the solutions.

- Consider use of ARP Act funding to enhance or revamp:
  - ✔ Staff time to work on project planning and the development, implementation, supervision and monitoring of policies, procedures, protocols, rules, and laws
  - ✔ Staff or contractor time to train or be trained on each aspect of the solution being implemented (data system entry, protocols, reporting, and so on)
  - ✔ Staff or contractor time, hardware and software costs associated with project management tools, data systems, payment methods, or other information technology needs
- Develop strong structures for decisionmaking and data management and governance to support service delivery, reporting, and monitoring.
- Define checkpoints that will be used to monitor progress along the way and methods to gather input on the implementation.

THEN: Don't underestimate the need for strong leadership as a key driver of implementation to address both technical challenges (those with defined dimensions and a clear solution) and adaptive challenges (those that are less clear and have many options for addressing them).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Staff or contractor competency:** Does the CCDF Lead Agency or its contracted entities have enough staff to do the work? What do staff need to know to implement the solution? Is there a new skill set to be developed or hired? Do the staff represent the intended populations to be served?
- **Organizational support systems:** What systems within the organization need to be in place to enable change?
  - **Leadership:** Are leaders exercising the right type of leadership or change management to support the solution?

RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

- *Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Program Design and Implementation* (Child Care State Capacity Building Center, May 2019)
- *Leadership Ideas, Principles, and Competencies* (Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance System, n.d.)
- *Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership* (Child Care State Capacity Building Center, May 2019)
- National Implementation Research Network (Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, n.d.)

DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

FIRST: Determine the impact you want to have, and work backwards to determine the best method to document what happens in a way that leads to that outcome.

- Consider the story that your data could tell to enhance the case for sustainability.
- Create a guiding framework (see A Framework for Evaluating Systems Initiatives on page 21) and plan (see Evaluation Toolkit on page 20) to evaluate the solution.

NEXT: Create new, or strengthen existing, internal systems to document and evaluate progress. This includes strong fiscal management, accounting, information, communication, and personnel systems. Build a robust team with the skill sets and authority to maintain the systems. This team should have the capacity to use information that can be pulled from the system to achieve meaningful measures of progress.

THEN: Pull the data and involve stakeholders, both in evaluating the progress made and as part of your continuous quality improvement (CQI) to review, adapt, and improve the solution you've implemented.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What problem is being addressed with the proposed solution? How will the CCDF Lead Agency and its stakeholders know when it's achieved?
- How will the CCDF Lead Agency and its stakeholders define and measure success?
- How will the CCDF Lead Agency gather new, or use existing, qualitative and quantitative data?
- What impact would be needed to make the case for sustainability?
- How will stakeholders (in other words, providers, families, and so on) be engaged in documenting, evaluating, and planning for sustainability?

RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

- *Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Program Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement* (Child Care State Capacity Building Center, May 2019)
- *Early Childhood Program Evaluations: A Decision-Maker's Guide* (Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2007)