



Effective Communication Planning: Key Concepts to Get You Started

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 Resource Help You?

For child care stabilization grant funds to succeed, all eligible child care providers need a chance to apply for and access them. Accordingly, communication will be essential to the success of this initiative. The Child Care State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) has created two Communication Toolkits to help states, territories, and Tribes develop effective, coordinated communication strategies and concise messages that will build awareness for and increase the visibility of the child care stabilization grant program with child care providers, stakeholders, and partners.

This tip sheet introduces five key concepts that will help you use the resources in these communication toolkits effectively and efficiently.

Five Tips to Prepare for Effective Communication Planning

Effective communication requires planning and coordinated action. Consider the following key questions to help your agency better think about, plan for, and be ready to perform the tasks that will support the communication efforts needed to successfully promote and build awareness for care stabilization grant program.

TRIBAL CCDF GRANTEES

Tribal CCDF Grantees with medium and large allocation sizes are required to follow the majority of CCDF consumer education requirements. Tribes with small allocation sizes are not required to implement provisions related to consumer education. Moreover, all Tribal CCDF Grantees are exempt from the requirement to develop and maintain a consumer education website.

As such, Tribes should consider the web-based communication tips included in this document. Tribes that do not have a consumer education website must post the child care stabilization grant application on a website associated with the Tribe. Therefore, they should apply the five tips shared in this document as well as best practices presented in the [Child Care Stabilization Grant Communication Toolkits](#) to leverage that website as a communication tool and develop an effective communications plan.

1. Who Is Your Target Audience?

For communication to be effective, you must first identify the audience with whom you need to share information. 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 information about provider eligibility. As such, eligible providers will be your main target audience for child care stabilization grant communications.

- Consider how you can share information with all segments of the eligible provider pool.
- Consider how you can ensure that all segments of the eligible provider population are able to do the following:
 - Receive key communications
 - Understand the child care stabilization grant program
 - Know where and how to apply
- Consider how you can ensure your communication materials reach all eligible providers. Be sure to consider populations that may not be able to access traditional communication channels.
- See SCBC's [Child Care Stabilization Grants Tip Sheet: Reaching All Providers](#) (2021) for more detailed best practices to help ensure your message reaches as many eligible providers as possible and [Building Messages for Key Audiences](#) tool (2021) to learn about tailoring messages to specific segments of your target audience.

2. Which Communication Channels Will Best Help You Reach Your Target Audience?

To ensure your target audience receives your messages, consider which communication channels may be best for reaching each segment of your target audience. Start developing a plan on how you will identify and use these channels. The following are some questions to get you started:

- How will you develop relevant messaging for different segments of your target audience? See SCBC's [Building Messages for Key Audiences](#) tool (2021) to learn about tailoring messages to specific segments of your target audience.
- How can you use social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, to get information out about the grants program? Review SCBC's [Social Media Strategies to Support Consumer Education Websites](#) (2020) and [Consumer Education Website Online Module Series, "Module 2 - Promoting Your Consumer Education Website"](#) (2021) for helpful tips on using social media to share information.
- Can you use additional communication channels, such as brochures, pamphlets, community boards, newsletters, radio spots, television advertisements, instructional videos, webinars, and featured resources on partner websites?
 - Which channels may resonate most with the different segments of your audience?
- How can you layer use of different media types (for example, print, radio, TV, social media) to have the broadest reach?
 - If you are considering multiple communication channels, how can you assign timelines and coordinate efforts so that they complement each other in your plan?
- See SCBC's [Child Care Stabilization Grant Best Practice Brief: Using A Public Awareness Campaign](#) (2021) to learn how to use public awareness campaigns to sharpen your communications efforts to reach your target audience.
- See SCBC's [Using Web Analytics to Strengthen Your Child Care Stabilization Grant Outreach](#) (2021) to learn about how web analytics can help you strengthen your outreach and evaluation capabilities.

3. How Can You Leverage Your Consumer Education Website as a Communication Tool?

You should aim for your child care consumer education website to be the go-to source for child care information in your jurisdiction and use it as one of your core communications tools. As such, consider how your agency can use your consumer education website to promote the child care stabilization grant program and share helpful information and resources with providers. Tribes that do not have a child care consumer education website should consider how to leverage a website associated with the Tribe that is seen as a trusted source as a communications tool.

- Consider sharing information that helps providers understand what child care stabilization grant program is, 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 creating a short video that walks providers through how to apply for the grants.
- Work with your staff (such as your web, policy, and communication teams) to draft a plan that will ensure you regularly review and update posted information so that your audience has access to the most up-to-date child care stabilization information and resources.
 - Ensure timely updates to your website, which 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. This will help ensure that providers can find your website when they use an online search engine to look for information about the child care stabilization grant program.
 - See [“Module 2: Promoting Your Consumer Education Website”](#) from SCBC’s [Consumer Education Website Online Modules Series](#) (2021) for tips on improving your website’s search engine optimization.
- Consider how you can direct providers to the application from your website’s home page. This may include adding a banner, tile, or bolded text on your website’s home page that includes a direct link to the application page.
- See SCBC’s [Child Care Stabilization Grants Best Practice Brief: Leveraging Your Consumer Education Website](#) (2021) for more detailed best practices to help you use your consumer education website as an effective communication tool.

4. How Can You Work with Partners to Extend Your Communications Reach?

Child care stakeholders and partners often have their own connections with different segments of the provider community. As such, they can support this effort by sharing information with these connections, thereby extending your communications reach.

- Stakeholders and partners may include the following:
 - Policymakers, such as state legislators, governors, and Tribal leaders and their staff
 - Child care advocates and community leaders
 - Child care resource and referral agencies or child care professional development associations
 - Other state, territory, or Tribal agencies or community service organizations that work with provider populations

- Here are a few strategies for working with partners:
 - Speak with your stakeholders and partners to determine if they may be willing to help promote this important grant opportunity with the provider community.
 - Consider how you can collaborate effectively and help communicate a consistent message about the grant program that will link providers directly to your consumer education website or Tribal website.
- See SCBC's [Child Care Stabilization Grant Partner Identification Tool and Collaboration Checklist](#) (2021) for more best practices.

5. How Can You Ensure That Your Target Audience Has Equitable Access to Stabilization Grants?

- Because these grants will be available to a wider audience, think about how you plan to communicate information
 - with different provider types;
 - across an equitable geographic distribution (urban, suburban, and rural providers); and
 - in languages spoken by the provider population.
- Consider asking someone in your agency who is familiar with mapping data to help track completed applications so that you may assess if you are reaching a broad audience.
- See SCBC's [Using Web Analytics to Strengthen Your Child Care Stabilization Grant Outreach](#) (2021) to learn about how web analytics can strengthen your evaluation capabilities.