The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Child Care Stabilization Grants funding was enacted to provide resources for states, territories, and Tribes to issue stabilization grants to child care providers, including Tribally operated centers. This document includes tips and considerations for Tribal Lead Agencies to consider when developing a plan for ARP Act stabilization funds. For more information, reach out to your Office of Child Care Regional Program Specialist and refer to the following Information Memorandum CCDF-ACF-IM-2021-02

### Tips and Considerations

#### Assessing the Child Care Needs

Many Tribal Lead Agencies have been engaged in planning how to implement their ARP child care stabilization grants and are beginning to think about how to use the funds to increase quality within their child care programs. Needs assessments can be a useful tool for planning and can include family and staff surveys, community needs assessments and program evaluation, or self-assessments. Some considerations include:

- Survey your past and existing Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) staff including your office staff, Tribally operated center teachers, cooks, support staff, etc. for job satisfaction. Include questions around wages, benefits, and support to determine if an increase in wages, benefits or support programs would increase staff retention.
- Reach out to your local Head Start program for a copy of their most current Wage Comparability study to identify how your current wages compare to other child care programs within your service area.
- Inspect your health and safety monitoring reports from your Tribally operated center to determine if there are any safety issues within your building, on your playground, or parking areas that should be addressed.
- Evaluate child screening results to determine children’s needs around curriculum, social emotional supports, and motor skills. If you do not screen children, consider purchasing or developing a screening tool.
- Review child ongoing assessment data to determine if children are on track with their learning. If you do not currently use a child assessment system, consider purchasing or developing one.
- Examine staff professional development records and plans to determine if additional training or educational opportunities are needed to increase the quality of care.
- Inspect your current technology equipment and software to see if it meets the needs of your program staff, provides you with adequate record keeping, and can generate reports needed.
- Conduct a talking circle with Tribal elders, parents, and community members to hear their thoughts and ideas for improving child care within your Tribally operated center.

#### Collaboration with Tribal Leaders and Departments

Communication is key and critical throughout the internal collaboration efforts to use the ARP Act child care stabilization grant funds. It helps departments develop strategies, implement them, and then review them to determine what is and is not working.

- Summarize the information gathered as you assessed the child care needs and share with Tribal leadership. Listen to their thoughts and incorporate their vision into your spending plan.
- Provide the COVID-19 Relief Funding At-A-Glance for Tribal Lead Agencies document with Tribal leadership, human resources department, and fiscal department to review the allowable uses of the relief funds.
- Share the Tribal Frequently Asked Questions on ARP Act Child Care Stabilization Grants: Tribally Operated Centers document with Tribal leadership, human resources department, and fiscal department.
Schedule time to discuss the funding or request a copy of the Fiscal At-A-Glance fillable PDF to record all your COVID-19 funds awarded and share with your Tribal leadership and fiscal department from your Regional Program Specialist or Tribal Child Care Capacity Building Center (TCBC) Technical Assistance (TA) Specialist.

Collect all notices of grant awards (NOAs) or refer to the ARPA Supplemental Stabilization and CCDF Discretionary Funding Allocation Tables for Tribes if you are unsure of your total award to begin planning.

Explore ways to infuse cultural elements into the programming of the Tribally operated center to meet the Tribe’s priorities. Examples include language immersion, culturally-grounded curriculum and family engagement.

Meet with your Human Resources (HR) department.

Ask about the current wage scale and whether it can fit increases in staff salaries or would need to be revised and approved prior to increasing staff wages. This can include wages for CCDF administrative staff, teachers, cooks, support staff, etc.

Inquire about adding paid mental health days for all CCDF staff.

Explore the option of providing health insurance for all CCDF staff.

Discuss the possibility of providing staff bonuses.

Meet with your Fiscal department.
- Share the obligation and liquidation dates for the ARP Act child care stabilization grants with your fiscal department representative.
- Provide a copy of the Obligation of CCDF Funds: Options for Tribal Lead Agencies document with your fiscal department to compare with the Tribe’s internal obligation methods. *Please note: the first two examples on the document do not apply to the ARP Act child care stabilization grants funding as Tribal Lead Agencies cannot use the funds to support direct services.
- Review the process for purchasing materials with fiscal staff, determine the dollar amount of purchases that will need a bidding process, and gather the information to implement that process.
- Request time with your Tribe’s auditor to ask any questions around insuring program integrity and accountability.

Plan with Your Internal CCDF and Tribally Operated Center Team

Give employees a chance to come up with approaches that they think will work in a way that makes sense for the Tribally operated center. Leaders who actively involve employees in planning increase ownership of the spending plan and the initiatives it generates.

Meet internally with your CCDF administrative staff and Tribally operated center staff to discuss the summary of the information gathered as you assessed the child care needs. Develop goals for the Tribally operated center to meet those needs. Ask for their insight as to spending ideas to meet those goals.

Share the COVID-19 Relief Funding At-A-Glance for Tribal Lead Agencies document with CCDF staff to review the allowable uses of the ARP Act stabilization grants funds.

Share the Uses of ARP Act Child Care Stabilization Subgrant Funds: Tip Sheet for Child Care Providers document as a handout during the planning meeting to help with the discussion.

Request participation from staff to assist with research, bidding processes, and purchasing of materials to lessen the burden on the CCDF Administrator.

Create a list of priorities based on conversation with the CCDF staff to be used in the development of your spending plan and budget.

Schedule a meeting with your Regional Program Specialist and TCBC TA Specialist to review allowable spending categories.
Develop a Spending Plan
Creating a spending plan ahead of time will allow you to effectively manage your ARP Act stabilization grants funds and determine where to best spend your money. It will help you to make choices in the way you will spend money and to prioritize needs and wants. It will relieve the burden and stress of the CCDF Administrator as others can begin to carry out the plan.

- Create a list of priorities based on the ideas generated during your internal planning meetings
- Request a copy and demonstration of the budgeting template to document your spending plan from your Regional Program Specialist or TCBC TA Specialist.
- Estimate the additional costs of increasing staff wages, providing benefits, or bonuses to determine the sustainability of those increases. Check to see if the additional annual costs will be affordable using your regular CCDF funding, including the increased Mandatory funding.
- Meet with your fiscal department to inform them of the ARP Act stabilization grants allowable spending categories used within the spending plan or budget so they can ensure there is a tracking system in place as you begin to spend the funds.
- Follow your Tribe’s internal processes for any steps for approval of your spending plan or budget.

Begin Spending According to your Approved Spending Plan

- Begin spending according to your approved spending plan or budget to assist you in meeting the obligation and liquidation deadlines of the ARP Act child care stabilization grants funds.
- Follow your Tribe’s procurement or purchasing policies and procedures as you spend the ARP Act stabilization funds.
- Contact your Regional Program Specialist if you do not feel you will meet the obligation deadlines of the ARP Act stabilization funds. They can assist you in submitting a waiver if necessary and approved by your Tribal leadership.

Prepare for Tracking and Reporting Expenditures

- Tribal Lead Agencies will need to have a system in place to track the uses of the ARP Act child care stabilization grants funds by allowable spending categories to accurately complete their required reporting; specifically, the ACF-700, ACF-696T, and the Public Law (P.L.) 102-477 required annual reports.
- Evaluate your management equipment and software including, accounting, payroll, child care systems and upgrade as needed to ensure accurate tracking and reporting.
- Meet with your fiscal department regularly to ensure you are on track with your spending plan or budget and that all expenses are coded to the proper line item that corresponds with the ACF 696T report or P. L. 102-477 annual report to assist in reporting.
- Schedule a meeting with the National Center on Data and Reporting to discuss reporting requirements and to gain access to the Child Care Automated Reporting System (CARS).

Spotlight on Spending

- A Tribally operated center budgeted for outdoor white board panels to attach to their fence to keep children from climbing over and to support artwork and Indigenous forms of learning.
- To support the mental health of children and staff, one Tribally operated center hired a Yoga Instructor.
- A Tribal Lead Agency reached out to their TCBC TA Specialist for a demonstration of the budgeting template to use as they developed a spending plan for their ARP Act stabilization funds.

Spotlight on Tracking

One Tribe’s fiscal department utilized the ARP Act stabilization funds to upgrade their accounting software - the new software allows the CCDF Administrator to see expenditures in real time and in each allowable spending category.