

Strong Beginnings Three-Year-Old Preschool Pilot Program Request for Proposals: Questions and Answers

General Program Questions

Question

I read through the implementation manual quickly to see that the recruitment and enrollment process for children with IEPs is essentially the same as GSRP. At the beginning of the presentation, I also picked up on there being a focus on equity and access. Is there anything in the application process that asks how equity and access will be addressed?

Answer

There is not a specific question in the application that asks about how equity and access will be addressed, but there are open-ended questions in the application that allow you to discuss your approach.

While one of our interests is broadening equity and access for a variety of children including those that live in isolated areas or have no transportation, as well as those who have IEPs; though, we are somewhat constrained during the pilot due to the evaluation.

Question

Can a CBO provide Strong Beginnings if they provide before and after care to those 3-year-olds - or would that be considered "blending" of programs?

Answer

During the portion of the day that children are in the Strong Beginnings funded program, there can be no blending or braiding of funds.

Because before and after care, and Friday care, is generally funded by parent tuition, subsidy, or provided free-of-charge by the program provider, as long as it is not funded by Strong Beginnings, it is allowed and may include children from a variety of programs.

Question

Is there a minimum number of classrooms?

Answer

ISDs are expected to be able to provide 1-3 classrooms for Cohort 1 and 3-4 classrooms for Cohort 2.

Question

The grant requirement to use only Strong Beginnings funds in each pilot 3-year old classroom is something that we just could not do. We were considering

completing the grant and stating that our systems necessitate braided and blended funding streams. Would that completely eliminate us from award consideration?

Answer

Unfortunately, we cannot have blended or braided classrooms in the Strong Beginnings pilot and offering them would eliminate you from award consideration. This is a requirement of the pilot due to the evaluation component and is necessary for the scientifically valid results. After the pilot, if there is state funding, blending and braiding funds will likely be allowed.

Question

Will only those in Cohort 1 be approved for Cohort 2 or will there be an additional RFP for Cohort 2?

Answer

Our preference is that ISDs who participate in Cohort 1 continue participating in Cohort 2; and, as needed and are able we will expand to meet our Strong Beginnings program goals of at least 20 total classrooms over both cohorts. If the performance of any ISD is unsatisfactory in Cohort 1 or if there are not sufficient classrooms for Cohort 2, we will issue an additional RFP.

Question

In the manual, under recruitment, it speaks to GSRP advisory committees. Is that a combination of the Strong Beginnings committee and program parent advisory committees? How will that work, given the quick start-up time for Cohort 1?

Answer

There are some instances, as with recruitment, that the time frame for activities that take place prior to the cohort 1 program start date may require modification. While people should consider the guidance in the Implementation Manual, it is fine in these instances to propose a modified plan that will incorporate the spirit of what is described, as well as the practical realities of a very quick start-up period for cohort 1.

Eligibility Questions

Question

I am assuming 3 years old means 3 on or before Sept 1. Will there be flexibility for the Dec 1 date?

Answer

The cutoff date for turning three is September 1, although early entry for children who turn three between September 2 and December 1 is also allowed as in GSRP.

Question

Does the program follow the same quintile model as GSRP as well?

Answer

Yes. Full eligibility requirements can be found in the [implementation manual](https://eotta.ccrea.org/News.php?id=3853&News=1) at (https://eotta.ccrea.org/News.php?id=3853&News=1).

Question

Does a child eligible for 3-year-old Strong Beginnings receive automatic eligibility for 4-year-old GSRP regardless if their income increases?

Answer

Yes. In the pilot program it is essential for each child to have access to GSRP so that the researchers can compare outcomes of children with one and two years of funded preschool.

Question

Are there other eligibility factors such as low income the children need to have besides their age?

Answer

Yes. Eligibility for Strong Beginnings is determined through the same process as eligibility for GSRP. Children are placed in quintiles based on income and then additional risk factors are considered within quintiles.

Question

With regard to the data/evaluation piece--as children transition to 4-year-old GSRP programming, will 4-year-old teachers be involved in the data/evaluation? If so how much time might be expected of them?

Answer

GSRP teachers with children in their classrooms who were enrolled the prior year in Strong Beginnings will not be expected to complete additional assessments or surveys on these children. Michigan State University student assessors will complete individual child assessments, either virtually or in person, and only information already routinely gathered by GSRP teachers, such as children's COR or TS GOLD scores and attendance records, will be required from them.

Staffing

Question

Can the Family Partnership Program provider be the ISD itself or must it be a separate agency?

Answer

The ISD may be the Family Partnership Process program provider. This is particularly appropriate when the ISD also operates Head Start, Home Visiting or similar programs and has experience in this area. Please check the qualifications required for the Family Liaison and Family Liaison Supervisor as they need a social work rather than an early childhood education background. Refer to the implementation manual for more details.

Question

When you speak of Family Liaisons is this program providing that position/role or are we using our current staff to provide that service?

Answer

The awardee is required to have Family Partnership Process personnel who have different educational requirements than typical early childhood teaching or supervisory staff. It is permissible for program providers to use existing staff if they are qualified (.3 FTE for a Family Liaison for each classroom and .07 to .1 FTE for a Family Liaison Supervisor for each Family Liaison) if they have required education and experience. Funding for these additional roles is part of the per-child allocation.

Question

Is there a requirement to have an ECS?

Answer

Yes. The ECS plays a very similar role as in GSRP. It is strongly recommended that Strong Beginnings ECSs have education and experience with toddlers and young preschoolers.

Question

What training will the actual classroom teacher need?

Answer

The requirements for classroom teachers are the same as for GSRP although there is a strong recommendation that they have education and experience related to toddlers and three-year-old children. All teaching staff must be fully credentialed before they are hired and may not be on compliance plans. ISDs are also required to provide training in any area where a teacher needs additional support, such as in curriculum, assessment, or oral language development.

Question

For staff with CDA-is the "preschool" level OK or do they need infant toddler?

Answer

The preschool level CDA is required. It would be very helpful if associate teachers also have the infant-toddler CDA, but it is not required.

Question

How will the classroom teacher's knowledge of the evaluation process be developed?

Answer

Much of the child and family assessment will be done directly by advanced early childhood students hired and trained by MSU. MSU will also provide teachers the necessary training to complete the required assessments (mainly surveys).

Question

We have a program that is under a new administrator. He is now working for a CBO and will be running a program housed in an LEA within our ISD. This CBO has never operated a GSRP classroom, but they are using the same physical classrooms and some of the same staff -- do you think that program could apply or not?

Answer

The program provider does not meet the requirement of having operated GSRP successfully for two years. Even though they have an administrator who had past experience with GSRP, other parts of the organization such as the finance department, have not yet developed a complete understanding of all necessary processes and procedures.

Question

What is considered a related degree to an MSW? Would a master's in Early Childhood be equivalent?

Answer

A degree related to an MSW focuses on "alleviating the conditions of those in need of help or welfare." This is not equivalent to a master's in early childhood education.

Question

Will the program have to have ALL 14 enrolled on the first day of the program - or will there be a little time to get the classroom up to the 14-child count?

Answer

You do not need to have all 14 children enrolled on the first day. You will be able to build enrollment over time.

Question

Is it possible for the ECS and the Family Liaison Supervisor to be the same person if they have the required credentials?

Answer

If an ECS has a MSW and experience in that area as well as a Masters in Early Childhood, and the necessary experience, it is conceivable that they could fill

both positions (we believe this is likely a rare combination). We will be reviewing resumes of both ECSs and Family Liaison Supervisors to determine they meet the proper qualifications.

Question

Could the ECS take the place of the ECC on the required calls/meetings?

Answer

While the ECS could step in on the required phone calls in an emergency situation, much of the content, such as developing budgets and the Family Partnership Process, would not apply to them and should be understood and overseen by the ECC. The ECC should have time and plan to participate in the calls.

Question

Will you consider a combination of early childhood credentials and human service experience other than a MSW for the Family Liaison Supervisor? For example, what if an individual had a Masters in Early with Childhood but who has additional coursework or professional learning as well as experience working with low-income families to improve their individual circumstances?

Answer

Our intent behind the requirement of an MSW was to ensure that the Family Liaison Supervisor has an understanding of and experience working directly with families to address individual and family level challenges. Our thinking was that this is the level of knowledge and experience required to provide effective supervision and support for the Family Liaison. However, we understand that early childhood professionals often come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. We are willing to consider Masters qualified individuals from other disciplines provided that they can document at least 9 credit hours or 135 clock hours of social work-related education and 2,000 hours of experience working directly with families (as opposed to just children and classrooms). Individual resumes and qualifications will not be reviewed until after program award.

Question

We are continuing to run into a barrier with meeting the expectations for the Family Liaison Supervisor and Liaison position credentials for the Strong Beginnings pilot. Everyone with the credentials are "maxed out" with COVID or caseloads. I am wondering if other ISD's that are applying would be willing to partner to use the same person across ISD's just for the pilot. Just trying to think outside of the box as this is the only setback for us right now. If you have any other suggestions, please share.

Answer

It is permissible to partner with an agency or organization in another ISD region, whether or not they are supporting the Family Partnership Process in that region.