

FUNDING

Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) are the subcontractors for Strong Beginnings. ISDs receive funding for the program from Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency (CCRESA). An upfront payment will be made the first year each classroom is awarded funds for durable equipment and supplies, including child safety restraint systems for transportation, or minor renovations. Funds for program operation and transportation will be made on a reimbursement basis monthly, every other month or quarterly at the ISDs request. The first invoice for payment for Cohort 1 will cover November and December expenses and may be submitted in January 2021. Program and transportation funding will not be available until the ISD budgets for these funds have been approved. Local agreements detail the process and timeline of how funding is flowed to program providers.

Strong Beginnings funds are appropriated annually based on a July 1st to June 30th fiscal year. If funds are awarded during, rather than at the beginning of the year, they will still have an ending date of June 30th. ISDs are to ensure that revenues and expenses related to services and materials purchased for their respective fiscal year are recorded in their accounting system for that same year. Revenue is not allowed to be earned on any Strong Beginnings funds. ISDs receive an allocation to implement the program and a transportation allocation as well as funds for classroom equipment, materials, or small renovations. No Strong Beginnings funds are available for carryover.

Eligible Applicants

Strong Beginnings subcontracts are funded from the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0055 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services received by the Michigan Department of Education and allocated through a contract to CCRESA. CCRESA awards subcontracts from these funds to ISDs for piloting the Strong Beginnings program.

Awarding of the Allocation

The Strong Beginnings Pilot project is a demonstration project to assess both the scalability and efficacy of a three-year-old preschool program. A competitive RFP process will be used to rank based on scores obtained on a rubric. Because it is necessary to study implementation across different settings, however, final site selection will be based on a combination of factors such as geographical distribution and the site's contribution to a diverse, balanced sample as well as the score obtained on their proposal.

Funding

Initial Funding

Each Strong Beginnings classroom will be awarded \$15,000 for durable classroom equipment and supplies, including child safety restraint systems for transportation, or minor classroom renovations. Only one \$15,000 payment will be made to two part- day programs operating in the same physical location. The budget for these funds is due to CCRESA 30 days after the contract between CCRESA and the ISD has been signed. Funds may be spent before or during much of the school year and the final expenditure report (FER) for these funds is due June 1, 2021 for Cohort I. They may be distributed to program providers on an upfront or reimbursable basis. Any funds of the initial allocation of \$15,000 that are not spent on supplies, equipment or renovation will be subtracted from the final reimbursement for program expenses and should be applied to those. Any individual item or project, such as a bathroom renovation, that costs in excess of \$5,000 is considered capital outlay and must obtain prior approval from the CCRESA Implementation Consultants. For more information, see the subsection on Capital Outlay in the Budget and Financial Guidelines section of this Implementation Manual.

Program Funding

An ISD will receive \$168,000 for each school day and \$84,000 for each part day Strong Beginnings classroom serving 14 children. This funding, which covers both the classroom and the Family Partnership Process components of Strong Beginnings, is based on a \$12,000 per school day and \$6,000 per part day child allocation. Classrooms operating for 20 weeks during cohort 1 will receive two-thirds of the yearly allocation or \$112,000 for a school day and \$56,000 for a part day program. For cohort 1, the program budget will be due to CCRESA January 8, 2021 and the first invoice may be submitted for expenses generated in November and December 2020. The invoice will be paid after the budget is approved, which is expected to occur by February 5. The FER for program expenses will be due August 30, 2021.

In the event that class sizes are limited to fewer than 14 children for reasons related to COVID-19, full funding for each classroom will still be available. The subcontractor operating the classroom must be able to document that all preschool programs they operate and not just Strong Beginnings classrooms have lower than typical enrollment caps. Funding will continue if the program must be closed due to executive orders or child care, health department or LEA/CBO rules relating to program or classroom closures relating to COVID-19. While no virtual learning is expected during that time, the Family Partnership Process component of the program should operate virtually or in-person.

Requesting and Awarding of the Transportation Allocation

Transportation funding is available for Strong Beginnings. A minimum of \$200 per child for cohort 1 and \$300 per child for cohort 2, whether they are enrolled in a school or part day program, is available. Each year the ISDs will be asked to collect

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projected transportation budgets for Strong Beginnings from subcontractors offering transportation to their programs including community-based organizations (CBOs) seeking reimbursement for costs related to parent or guardian accompanied public transportation. A total transportation request for Strong Beginnings will be forwarded to CCRESA from each ISD by January 8, 2021. If the total request from all ISDs is equal to or less than the total pool determined by multiplying the number of children funded for Strong Beginnings by \$200 for cohort 1 or \$300 for cohort 2, each ISD will receive the requested amount. If the total of the projected transportation budgets exceeds this amount, CCRESA will prorate the total amount available. Each ISD will receive at least the minimum child allocation for each child transported for each cohort. CCRESA will notify ISDs of their final transportation allocation for cohort 1 on January 22, 2021 and the ISD budget for this allocation will be due to CCRESA on February 5, 2021. Transportation funds may be distributed on a per FTE amount or more equitable method to ISD program providers. The transportation FER for cohort 1 will be due August 30, 2021.

The ISD may accept all or only a portion of the transportation allocation. If an ISD receives less than the total projected transportation budget submitted, the ISD may distribute funds they do receive either equally based on child FTE or equitably based on actual costs or other such factors to all programs providing transportation. The ISD must document the process used to distribute funds and share it with the school readiness advisory committee.