

Informational Webinar
Family Support for Early Learning and Development Program Grant
Thursday, October 8

Ashley Stewart: Welcome everyone to the information session for the Family Support for Early Childhood Learning and Development program. Just to give you an overview of the agenda for this conversation, we're going to do introductions, purpose of the request for proposal, eligibility and requirements, what should a strong letter of intent make clear, funding, submission process, application reminders, questions and discussions.

Let's start with introductions, I'm Ashley Stewart. I'm the Director of Programs for The Rapides Foundation. I have been here for over 18 years. I started in evaluation and have been in programs for about eight years. I oversee the development and implementation of all of our grant making programs, and I'm going to turn it over to Jennifer to introduce herself.

Jennifer Cowley: I'm Jennifer Cowley, a Program Officer. I've been with The Rapides Foundation for one year. Previously, I've worked with the Orchard Foundation for eight years. I work with our education initiatives.

Ashley Stewart: For those who are not familiar with The Rapides Foundation, we have been in existence for over 30 years. We were created through the partial sale of Rapides Regional Medical Center, and the sale created The Rapides Foundation and the endowment that is used to support our grantmaking. Our mission is to improve the health status of central Louisiana, and we want people to live longer, free of disease and disability. Our vision is to positively impact central Louisiana by deploying resources to improve key factors of health status. We focus on 5 areas: healthcare access, healthy behaviors, education, economic development, and the social environment. We work in nine parishes Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon, and Winn.

The Family Support for Early Childhood Learning and Development falls under our education work, and specifically under our School Readiness Initiative. The goal of our School Readiness Initiative is for children to enter kindergarten ready to learn. Research shows that from birth to five, children experience rapid brain development, and it establishes the foundation for all future learning. Currently, our work under school readiness includes quality early childhood programs. We provide a grant to the Orchard

Foundation to provide professional and leadership development within our nine parishes to support the early childcare centers, Head Start, and the public pre-K programs.

The second strategy is access to high-quality programs. We have provided a grant called the Cenla Early Childhood Access Program for over 3 years to provide free childcare tuition for families who are working and are in school with economic needs.

And then the third strategy is early literacy, where we support the Read to Soar and Math to Build On program that the Orchard Foundation implements. We also support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library throughout our service area. So, this funding opportunity adds a fourth strategy to our school readiness work, and we're calling it Family Support. The goal of this strategy is to take our work beyond the classrooms into the homes and into the community. Research shows that only 38% of children at risk are being served by the early childcare centers and by early childcare programs. So, the purpose of this funding is to reach that other 60% of children who are not involved in those centers. I'm going to turn it over to Jennifer to walk us through the purpose of the RFP and to dig into the details.

Jennifer Cowley: Thank you, Ashley. Hello, everyone. Welcome. Thank you for joining us today. Starting off with the purpose of the RFP, as Ashley mentioned, we've been working in the early childhood space, daycare centers, headstarts and pre-K classrooms. And the work for this grant is to move beyond those walls and serve families that are not connected to these spaces.

Purpose of the RFP is to support parents and caregivers with evidence-based knowledge, skills and resources and connections. The support is for expecting families and families with children birth through age 3. The focus is to have a coordinated, ongoing family engagement, and not just one-time events.

To be eligible you have to be 501 (c)(3) organization, governmental entities, universities, or public schools. Applicants cannot be a private foundation and must be within the foundation service area or seek support for a project restricted to the service area. There's only one applicant per organization. However, an organization may serve as a partner on multiple applications. We are encouraging partnerships.

Through this RFP our service area includes Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon, and Winn. The work is to be done within our 9 parishes. The work does not have to cover all of the parishes in The Rapides Foundation service area. The organization does not have to be located in the Foundation service area, but the work has to be isolated within our area.

In the RFP, there are five questions. There's some components here that we really want to point out. So, as you write your letter of intent, we want you to present something that's going to be strong and brings all the pieces together.

Looking at the need within the family community that you will be addressing, what's going to solve that issue and the evidence-based strategy that you'll use.

Then there is the connection with the family. There's meaningful contacts and we'll talk about what is meaningful and then partnerships and who needs to be involved. And then, there are the outcomes, what will change? How will you measure growth with short-term and long-term goals?

Looking at needs first, what family community need are you directing? This really goes back to who the program is serving which are expecting families and families with children from birth to 3, and you see we do have it highlighted here, parent and caregivers, because we're looking at them to be those first teachers for their child, and have those positive interactions with them and connecting with them.

And that's for them to learn about brain development and health.

We also want you to reach beyond the families you are already connected with through daycares, but to expand your reach with families that are not a part of those systems already. Applicants should clearly define the families they intend to reach, and why those families need the proposed support.

We have five focus areas that need to be addressed. It needs to be at least two. You can see there's parent and responsive interactions for learning through everyday relationships and interactions, healthy childhood development, and building awareness around milestones. There is also family resource, navigation, family goals and economic stability and maternal mental health.

What is that approach that will be used? We are looking for evidence-based strategies that will be implemented. Think about what is similar to your community. So you know how these strategies work with similar communities to yours. Really want that apples-to-apples comparison when you talk about which evidence-based strategy you're going to use.

Describe the project, the timeline, activities, partners, and other factors. Now, this does not have to go into detail, but it should give us a high-level view of what your work plan is going to be.

Connect your strategy to your desired outcomes. What is the end goal you're looking for to achieve with these families, that should be embedded into the strategy.

When we look at connection, we want it to be meaningful and there are at least 3. What that means is how you engage with these families, how you're going to do it, this could include assessing them, goal planning and creating that rapport with them to determine what it is that you want to achieve together, what they need to learn, what they know, what they don't know. And so on.

Learn and Practice can take on the form of education, instruction for the parent and caregiver such as modeling and what that parent-child interaction should look like, and then at that end goal, following up and checking their progress throughout. So, when it comes to meaningful contact, it's really about how you're connecting with that family as you move towards that goal or outcome that you're looking to achieve.

When it comes to connections, we definitely want to touch on what are not meaningful connections, health fairs and resource fairs are great, but that is not qualified as a meaningful connection here. Just handing out pamphlets and flyers, whether it's at a doctor's office or other places. That is your marketing. That's how you're promoting those programs, and it's not considered something to count as a connection. This includes passing out swag such as pens and cup. You should also consider the frequency of connections. How much engagement with these families are going to be involved with the evidence-based strategy you're using. And also I want to highlight that this is not a finite list. These are just some of the main highlights, especially when it comes to meaningful contacts.

Partnerships, we highly encourage partnerships here. And with that, we want you to identify the partners that have those specialized services and expertise and strengthened referrals.

Engage in the community and get to know these families, there might be services that are already established, and that's what we mean by warm referral. Providing that, helping that family navigate to a resource that might already be established, Don't want to duplicate anything.

Outcomes. What will change and how do you collect and measure it? So when you're thinking of the work plan, you also need to think about how you embed measurements to gauge what you want to achieve in the short term and long term.

Moving on to funding, Up to \$100,000 per year up to a three-year maximum grant period. So the maximum total is \$300,000 for a three-year grant period. Organizations do not have to

ask for the full amount. We will consider grants of all sizes. Matching funds and in-kind support are not necessary, but they are encouraged.

Build a scope of budget around the program you can implement effectively and not simply the maximum award. It's important that if you're asking for what you need. That the resources that are requested support the work plan that you are presenting.

And then explain how that project will be sustained both financially and organizationally after the funding concludes.

The Foundation could partially fund request, recommend revisions to work plans or choose not to fund any of the requests.

When you go into the online submission, there are a couple important dates here. Friday, October 30th, the letter of intent is due. That's going to be submitted online using the online portal. Where you register for this information session, that is the same page where you go to submit your letter of intent. Then we will review that, and then make our decision on who we will be invited for a full proposal, and that will be no later than Friday, December 11. Once you have that invitation the full proposal is due January 18th, and that's on a Monday for invited applicants only.

And I do want to show you what you'll see on our website. As I mentioned, when you registered for this session, you were at these pages. But just to go back, because I know that maybe you've gotten a direct link to where you need to go. You go to The Rapides Foundation website. We do have the tabs at the top here, and grants. When you click on this page, it'll show all our funding opportunities that are available. And the one that we have open currently right now...The family support for early Childhood Learning and Development Program Grant is listed at the very top, and you'll see the picture with the family, and when you click on read more, it does take you to this next page that goes over all the details.

Along with starting your letter of intent, when you go to log into the portal, if you don't have an account already, you will need to set up one. And if you need to — if you're not finished with it and you need to close out of it, you can come back here and return to it as well. Also on this right panel are the key materials. These are the documents that you will need to upload into the portal. When you go into the portal itself, there will be tabs for the overview. Excuse me the cover page. the narrative. and the questions from the narrative that is listed in Section VII for the letter of intent requirements on the RFP. Those questions are in the portal, so you'll be answering those questions directly in there. I think I may have mentioned back there, you have to upload the document. There's not a document to upload for the questions. I just want to make that clarification that these questions are

directly into the portal where you will answer those questions. Please answer all parts of the question. You will have to upload other documents. Refer to section VII.

So when you go to submit your letter of intent, just a few reminders. Definitely want to make sure that you're identifying the family and the community needs and what evidence based strategy you'll be using. The two focus areas that you will be addressing. How you will connect with those families when it comes to meaningful engagement with them. How that work occurs in the community or family homes. Once again, we're looking to go outside of daycare centers and Head Start. Children do spend time at home, and these are the families we want to try and get engaged with to give them the information they need to have those positive interactions with their children.

Relevant partners and how they contribute and also the measurable outcomes and how they will be assessed. Of course, the budget is appropriate and then also that you meet the eligibility and requirements, and there's one application.

Before we dive into any questions you might have, I do want to highlight here that on the RFP, which you can find on the grant page under Key Materials, Section VII tells you everything that is required to submit. These are just what needs to go into your portal. The key materials, as I showed, are on the right panel of the grants page. Those are downloadable to fill them out, and they need to be uploaded, and there are fields available in the portal for you to upload each document.

This is just a direct link here as far as going to our grants page. If you want to write that down, it's very easy to navigate. Our website's very user-friendly.

If you have any questions and you'd like to meet with me one-on-one, just request that, at least two weeks prior to the letter of intent deadline. So, no later than October 15th. You can email me or you can call my direct line as well.

So as a reminder, the letter of intent deadline is October 30 by 4 Pm. And this has to be submitted through the portal by that time. So please allow yourself enough time to upload this document, and if you have issues, we definitely want you to reach out to us if you're having problems with the portal. The best rule of thumb here is to start this process at least three hours before the deadline.

So this is my contact information. You can see my direct line is listed. And then Courtney Keys, she works with our portal. So she is really the person who can help you troubleshoot what issues you might be having.

Ashley Stewart: Hey, Jennifer, can you go back one more slide to the reminders before you submit an LOI? I think that's a great summary of the conversation to have a background of

what needs to be submitted and what you covered. But definitely open to questions if y'all want to take yourself off of mute. I will say a couple of things I did want to bring up. Funding will not fund clinical services or treatment, and also that universities can apply. That was a question that we did have, since it didn't specifically say that in eligibility on the RFP.

One other thing that we did have a group ask about is what if multiple organizations wanted to come together and ask — could they ask for more than the \$300,000? And the answer to that is no. Each organization can only ask for up to \$300,000. But you can link those applications together through partnerships as you can apply for an application and be a partner on another application. And so, if you want to show that partnership and that connection of how they're all working together link them.

In your supporting documents include letters of support or MOUs of partnerships including what you're doing and this is what they're doing. Organization can be a partner in multiple applications as well as submit their own.