

Request to Submit Proposals: Innovate Financial Systems to Build Capacity for Increased and Sustainable Early Childhood Education (ECE) Compensation

Due: June 5, 2023, at 11:59 pm local time

The Early Educator Investment Collaborative (The Collaborative) will fund a limited number of grants to state/local/municipal/territory/tribal governments to innovatively build systemic and structural capacity to support sustainable and equitable early childhood education (ECE) workforce compensation (wages and benefits) increases. The Collaborative is committed to supporting efforts that promote the racial, ethnic, linguistic, and/or socioeconomic diversity of the ECE workforce, including those that center principles of equity to eliminate racial disparities in workforce compensation.

Table of Contents

Part A: Funding Announcement..... 2

 I. Background 2

 II. Problem Statement 4

 III. Overview of the Funding Opportunity 5

 Commitment to Transforming Systems 6

 Fiscal and Program Partnership Approach..... 8

 Allowable Fund Use 10

 Technical Assistance Supports 11

 Community of Practice..... 12

 Funding Amount and Matching Funds Requirement..... 12

 IV. Request for Proposals Requirements 13

 Eligibility Criteria 13

 Characteristics of Strong Proposals 14

 Assessment Criteria for Proposals 15

 Measures of Success 16

 Grant Requirements..... 16

Part B: Funding Application 18

 Overview and Checklist..... 18

 Proposal Questions 19

Submission Requirements and Additional Information.....	23
Submission Requirements	23
Questions and Applicant Webinars	23
Appendices.....	25
Appendix A – Recommended Resources	25
Appendix B – Budget Worksheet & Budget Narrative Template.....	25
Appendix C – Implementation Team Statement of Commitment.....	25
Appendix D –Letter of Commitment for Participation in the Community of Practice	25
Appendix E – Implementation Team Contact Information Worksheet	25

Part A: Funding Announcement

I. Background

The Early Educator Investment Collaborative (The Collaborative) is a group of national funders focused on early childhood education (ECE) who envision a country in which opportunity and achievement gaps no longer exist so that all students, especially children from families with low incomes and children of color, make significant and sustained gains in cognitive, social, and emotional development. One way to manifest this vision is by ensuring that every young child has access to high-quality ECE programs led by well-prepared and appropriately compensated teachers. The Collaborative hopes to drive toward this vision by addressing the inadequacies of current ECE systems, with a focus on breaking down the barriers and addressing gaps in workforce compensation/financing systems and educator preparation. For more information about The Collaborative, please explore our website at <https://earlyedcollaborative.org/>.

The Collaborative’s vision is grounded in two consensus reports issued by the National Academies of Medicine. These reports are: the 2015 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report, “[Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation](#)” and the 2018 report entitled, “[Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education](#).” The reports provide a robust evidence base to support investments in systems-oriented work on competency-based educator preparation and compensation. This funding opportunity *relies heavily* on recommendations in these reports, particularly the 2018 report (see chapters 1-3).

Additionally, The Collaborative strives to center issues of equity, particularly racial equity, in its grantmaking. To support this effort, The Collaborative commissioned [“Mary Pauper: A Historical Exploration of Early Care and Education Compensation, Policy, and Solutions.”](#) In this report, Child Trends provides a policy landscape review of the history of racial inequities in the early education workforce and a white paper that highlights existing policy recommendations for centering racial equity in efforts on early education compensation, preparation, and stability for policymakers, practitioners, and philanthropists. The report illuminates the stark history of inequity that devalues the early education workforce and calls to center equity in current workforce solutions.

The Collaborative engages in short-term and long-term strategies focused on workforce compensation sustainability. The goal of all strategies is to ensure that compensation (salary and benefits) is durably increased for all professional roles within the ECE workforce across all setting types, with a specific focus on lead teaching staff. By “workforce” we mean the professionals who provide early care and education to children ages birth to eight in a myriad of setting types, including family homes, centers, and public schools. We also mean those who provide direct care and instruction and those who administer programs for young children.

We believe that appropriate compensation should be commensurate with professional competencies that reflect the knowledge and skills required for this important work. Dismantling racial inequities in preparation, compensation, and career progression must be intentional activities. It is possible to achieve equity and inclusion in the field while preserving the diversity of the existing workforce. We do not accept the deficit narratives that imply that it is too difficult for the existing ECE workforce to rise to the level of qualifications and compensation that the research shows it will take to eliminate disparities in children’s learning and development and ultimate life outcomes. There is currently much discussion about a living wage. Despite the lack of consensus regarding the definition of a living wage, we do believe that a viable, professional wage, not the minimum wage, is the floor for compensation. We do not support strategies that solely promote the attainment of minimum wages as the floor. Compensation parity with public school district salary scales and benefits is a worthy interim goal, but it is not our ultimate goal. Public school educators are also underpaid. Furthermore, in some settings, early educators work 12 months a year rather than following the public-school calendar. As such, compensation parity with PreK-12 teachers must be adjusted to adequately compensate early educators for the full calendar year. Relatedly, we reject the market-driven approach to financing ECE which falls short of the commitment to increasing public investment in ECE that is sorely needed in the field.

II. Problem Statement

In the United States, low compensation, defined as wages and benefits, continues to plague the ECE workforce. Compensation for early educators remains low and far behind other occupations with similar credentials. The average wage of \$13.31/hour for early educators in birth through age five settings undermines their quality and diminishes the benefits to children, families, and our economy. Additionally, compared with their K-8 colleagues, early educators face poverty rates an average of 7.7 times higher.¹ Similarly, benefits for early educators are severely limited². Low compensation, and limited benefits, in the ECE workforce result in a myriad of problems, including:

- High staff turnover which results in instability in the classroom, less effective child-teacher interactions, and increased program costs to find staff and fill roles.
- Women, and disproportionately women of color, are kept in poverty wages.
- Many new practitioners are deterred from joining the field due to low compensation.

These resulting challenges lead to a lack of continuity of care for children and a reduction in the quality of care that is provided, which affects program quality and child learning outcomes. Ultimately, these challenges significantly affect opportunities for women in the larger workforce, as women are disproportionately induced to leave their jobs when childcare is scarce, unreliable, of lesser quality, and/or unaffordable.

Additionally, issues of racism persist and compound the compensation challenges. The ECE field remains disproportionately women of color (40% compared to the US population of 20%³). Women of color, particularly black, brown, and indigenous women, continue to be paid poverty wages, which depresses their living conditions and exacerbates poor health outcomes. For example, Black early educators are paid on average \$0.78 less per hour than their White peers.⁴ As a society, we will never close the opportunity gaps among children of all backgrounds by perpetuating these inequities in early childhood education.

¹ McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., & Olson, K.L. (2021). Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2020. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <https://csce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/02/Early-Childhood-Workforce-Index-2020.pdf>

² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24984>. Page 88.

³ *Women of color in the United States: Quick Take*. (2022, January 31). Catalyst.

⁴ McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., & Olson, K.L. (2021). Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2020. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <https://csce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/report-pdf/>

The persistent low compensation of the workforce results from a confluence of challenges, most significantly the lack of adequate public investment to support the proper financing of the sector. Relatedly, the existing financial systems and mechanisms continue to be siloed, redundant, and disconnected in ways that do not maximize the existing available revenue and funding streams that could be used to support the sector, including compensation increases for the ECE workforce. As noted in the *Financing* report, “the current structure for ECE financing is fragmented and inconsistent. Current financing mechanisms tend to treat each part of early care and education—service delivery, system supports, and workforce supports—as a separate area, rather than as parts of an integrated system with interdependent components.”⁵ Additionally, the report advises that, “Beyond increasing public investment, state administrators need to maintain and coordinate multiple revenue streams and financing mechanisms to support ECE efforts, including adequate and integrated funding for service delivery with appropriate qualifications and compensation for the workforce, workforce supports, and systems support.”⁶

III. Overview of the Funding Opportunity

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support the capacity of governments to innovate financing systems to increase the compensation of the ECE workforce, defined as salaries and benefits. Benefits are inclusive of the myriad supports for workers including, but not limited to, health care, dental care, vision care, mental health care, and retirement support. Ideally, both efforts to support wage and salary increases and benefits will be proposed. However, we will consider proposals that focus on either wages or benefits. This funding opportunity is primarily concerned with the financial systems, including revenue generation and fiscal spending, that support the ECE system. We acknowledge that early educator compensation is a complex issue with many related components that requires a comprehensive approach that includes educator preparation, credentialing, and business operations, among others. Nevertheless, this funding opportunity is designed to support innovations in the financial systems and structures that undergird the ECE system to increase worker compensation.

⁵ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24984>. Page 201.

⁶ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24984>. Page 210.

This grant will support governments in the implementation of innovative financing approaches centered on the use of multiple funding streams to fund increased compensation in the immediate and long-term future⁷. *Additionally, this opportunity will specifically support governments in the use of typical funds, atypical funds, one-time competitive grant funds, education funds, and new revenue, to promote high-quality ECE and increased compensation*⁸. Some examples of typical funds where ECE is a primary use include the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). Some examples of atypical funds include Medicaid, and Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds. An example of a one-time competitive grant fund is the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5). Education funds that can be used to support ECE include Every Student Succeeds Act, Head Start Act, Higher Education Act, and other state/local/municipal/territorial/tribal funding designated for education. New revenue includes revenue generated by the state/locality/municipality/territory/tribe that may support early education and workforce issues. The funding streams and revenue sources that are identified and acted upon as part of this grant may differ depending on the context of the geography.

Commitment to Transforming Systems

Applicants should propose solutions that are systemic, innovative, and equitable.

- By systemic, we mean solutions that *catalyze transformative structural and policy change* in the ECE workforce system, with a focus on increasing wages and benefits, across the continuum of professional roles, early learning settings, and children's ages.
- By innovative, we mean *strategies that are not typically implemented*, for example the utilization of atypical funding sources to support ECE compensation initiatives. The innovation itself could also be expanding and linking previously existing yet disparate efforts across siloed elements of early educator compensation, coupled with new strategies.
- By equitable, we mean solutions that seek to *eliminate racial disparities in compensation* among the current ECE workforce which is disproportionately composed of women of color who are being paid unjust wages. Prospective applicants are encouraged to explore and embed the principles, conceptual frameworks, and strategies included in the resource list in Appendix A of this document.

⁷ Refer to the ACF guidance documents: “Using CCDF to Improve Compensation for the Child Care Workforce” <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/policy-guidance/ccdf-acf-im-2022-02> and “Strategies to Stabilize the Head Start Workforce” <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/im/acf-im-hs-22-06>

⁸ Schilder, Diane, Julia Isaacs, Soumita Bose, and Laura Wagner. 2022. [Accessing and Strategically Using Federal Funds for Early Care and Education Systems and Programs: Perspectives from National and State Leaders](#). Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

The Collaborative welcomes proposals that benefit a range of ECE professional roles, including teaching staff and administrative staff, in the variety of settings in which early care and education occur. ***All viable proposals must include lead teachers, including infant/toddler teachers and family child care providers, in settings that serve children ages birth to five***, acknowledging the persistent disparities in compensation among those that work in community-based birth to five settings and those who work in public settings serving older children. Additionally, The Collaborative acknowledges that within the birth to five spectrum, infant/toddler teachers remain underpaid and undervalued compared to colleagues who care for and teach older children. A first step may be to ensure compensation parity among public school PreK – 3rd grade teachers with those in community-based early childhood settings. Salary and benefits for roles with equivalent levels of education should be adjusted to reflect differences in hours of work, such as part-year versus full-year, including payment for non-child contact hours (such as paid time for planning).⁹ Additionally, family child care providers may indeed receive compensation closer to a combination of their administrator and teacher roles.

Compensation of the ECE workforce is a complex issue with many interrelated components. Although this RFP is focused on innovations in the financing of ECE to support sustainable compensation increases, we acknowledge that innovations in the other components of the ECE system are also required as part of a comprehensive reform approach. For example, competency-based credentialing systems, and salary/wage scales and schedules can be effective tools in promoting compensation increases. Similarly, the preparation of the workforce, including training and higher education opportunities, is critical to supporting career pathways and associated compensation increases. ***As part of their response to this RFP, applicants should explain how their proposal will align with other existing efforts to transform the comprehensive ECE workforce system, in both the immediate and long-term future. Applicants should also identify the legal, policy and regulatory conditions (e.g., related to funding streams) needed to make the proposed improvements possible and lay out a plan to shift these conditions as needed.*** Applicants should either already have clear policies in place to advance reforms or demonstrate a clear intention to change or make exceptions (e.g., issue waivers) to policies that stand in the way of implementing the proposed reforms.

⁹ Whitebook, M. and McLean, C. (2017). [*In Pursuit of Pre-K Parity: A Proposed Framework for Understanding and Advancing Policy and Practice*](#). Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley and New Brunswick, NJ: the National Institute for Early Education Research. Page 3.

Applicants should focus on either refining or expanding existing, evidence-based practices, and/or on piloting and implementing new programs/policies that transform early educator compensation. ***Applicants' extant and proposed new strategies must form a comprehensive, holistic approach aimed at improving professional compensation.*** The Collaborative will consider proposals for innovations at various stages of development, including proposals to:

- Pilot a new initiative or idea that has not been tested before and that, if successful, could be scaled to a larger system.
- Refine or enhance a current pilot or small initiative that has shown promise and needs additional investment to expand impact and support scalability.
- Scale proven initiatives throughout larger systems and expand partnerships.

All proposed solutions ***should consider multiple settings of care and education work*** across the birth to eight spectrum and ***must include a focus on lead teachers in birth to five settings, including infant/toddler care.*** All proposed solutions ***must also utilize multiple funding streams*** and ***should align with other workforce efforts*** such as educator preparation and career pathways.

Fiscal and Program Partnership Approach

Via this funding opportunity, ***The Collaborative will support partnerships among fiscal/budget agencies and program agencies to engage in efforts to catalyze transformative change for educator compensation in state/local/municipal/territory/tribal ECE systems.*** This grant emphasizes the need for the fiscal/budget agencies that control the allocation of fiscal resources across the public system, and the agencies that develop and implement the early education programmatic requirements that impact early education, to come together to engage in innovative solutions. Additionally, this grant emphasizes the need for ***fiscal staff and program staff within agencies to also collaborate.*** ECE systemic reform requires ***both intra-agency and inter-agency collaboration among fiscal/budget staff and program staff*** so that those who hold the budget strings and fiscal acumen work with those who understand the intricacies of ECE program development and knowledge of the workforce and its needs. This cross-functional collaboration can work together to: identify challenges with existing funding streams that need to be addressed to provide equitable compensation; document strategies for braiding and blending funds; offer cross-agency technical assistance to under-resourced communities that lack fiscal controls so they can allocate resources to ECE workforce;

and develop ongoing strategies for cultivating relationships and building capacity to support the workforce, among other strategies.¹⁰

Applicants **must** apply as a partnership and **must** include leadership and/or senior staff from the following governmental agencies/entities or their applicable equivalents in the applicant’s geography (state/locality/municipality/territory/tribe), that will constitute the ***Core Implementation Team***. We acknowledge the various governance structures of tribal communities and will entertain proposals that reflect the relevant context:

1. The fiscal entity that controls the administrative budget such as the Office of Management and Budget (or equivalent)
2. The administrative entity with authority over child care funding
3. The administrative entity with authority over public education funding
4. The administrative entity with authority over preschool/pre-kindergarten programs and funding
5. The administrative entity with authority over higher education programming and/or funding
6. The administrative entity with authority over any state/local/municipal/territory/tribal Special Revenue Funds¹¹ (if applicable)

The ***Core Implementation Team*** must be inclusive of leadership and/or senior staff of both the fiscal/budget agencies and program agencies. These leaders and/or their designates must form a structure with identified roles and responsibilities. A lead or co-leads structure must be identified from among the Core Implementation Team members. The lead or co-leads would be the main point of contact for The Collaborative, be responsible for meeting reporting requirements and submitting budgets, and ensure that grant activities are implemented by the other members of the partnership.

Aside from the Core Implementation Team, additional partnership members may include others with authority over programs and funding streams targeted to children prenatal to age eight, for example the Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSCO), State Boards of Education, entities with delegated authority such as Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and entities with aligned interests such as Unions.

¹⁰ Schilder, Diane, Julia Isaacs, Soumita Bose, and Laura Wagner. 2022. [Accessing and Strategically Using Federal Funds for Early Care and Education Systems and Programs: Perspectives from National and State Leaders](#). Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

¹¹ Special Revenue Funds refer to funds that account for and report the proceeds of specific revenue sources that are restricted for a particular purpose within a government entity. See <https://edcgov.us/Government/CAO/Documents/2022-2023%20Budget/Countywide%20Special%20Revenue%20Funds%20FY%202022-23.pdf> Accessed January 18, 2023.

There is no limit on the number of partners that may comprise a proposed partnership, however the partnership must demonstrate a commitment to working together to permanently transform the ECE finance and compensation systems.

The full partnership team must commit to meeting regularly throughout the grant term to design, plan, and implement the solutions. Please note that the partnership team may identify a fiscal agent that is not a government entity to be the conduit to receive the grant funds.

In addition to the team composition outlined above, ***an advisory body must be identified to meaningfully engage in the project design and implementation.*** Preferably, an existing advisory body will be identified and leveraged for this grant, such as a Workforce Council or the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (SAC), or equivalent. If no existing structure can be leveraged, then a new structure may be proposed. This body should meaningfully incorporate the voices and expertise of early educators (e.g., lead teachers, teaching assistants, administrators) and employers (e.g., executive directors and owners of private programs, principals, and superintendents), recognizing the importance of the profession in informing solutions to its challenges. Additional representation, including institutions of higher education and communities (e.g., families, aligned health and mental health professionals, union leadership, community organizers and/or advocates), should also be reflected on this body. If an existing advisory structure does not reflect the aforementioned representatives, then the applicant must propose a plan to incorporate those perspectives for at least the duration of the grant term.

Allowable Fund Use

Grant funds should support implementation activities towards long-term, sustained increases to the salaries and benefits of lead teachers and other ECE professionals. Implementation is focused on putting plans into action and disbursing increased payments through enhanced financing mechanisms. It is expected that most of the funding will support implementation. ***Please note, this funding opportunity will not fund the direct or actual compensation or benefit increases of the workforce.***

Potential implementation support activities include:

- Implementing increased salaries and benefits across the mixed delivery system for lead teachers in all settings.
- Developing new financial mechanisms (e.g., systematic use of contracts rather than child care assistance vouchers).
- Adding human resource capacity with expertise in budgeting/finance.

- Developing or expanding data and evaluation systems to better understand the needs of the workforce and/or track compensation efforts.
- Enhancing information technology to facilitate the operationalizing of compensation increases.

It is strongly recommended that proposals include funding to enhance staff capacity, either through hired or contracted staff. We recognize that few state/local/municipal/territory/tribal governments have great expertise in early childhood education financing, therefore this funding is an opportunity to develop the roles and expertise, whether within program and/or budget agencies, to better support early childhood education financing issues. Please note that staff capacity may be an in-kind or grant-funded expense.

This is not a planning grant opportunity. This means that, while a discrete planning phase and/or planning activities may be proposed as a component of the overall proposal, The Collaborative will not consider proposals in which most of the time and resources budgeted are for establishing a new partnership or for planning without the implementation of an idea. Some examples of permissible planning activities for this funding opportunity include, but are not limited to:

- Developing an implementation/operational plan.
- Exploring viable, sustainable revenue strategies.
- Researching racial disparities in current compensation systems and solutions to fix them.
- Developing or refining salary scales, benefit packages, career lattices, and credentialing systems.
- Conducting local compensation (salary and benefits) studies including the true cost of high-quality care.
- Conducting ECE fiscal analyses and cost modeling, including cost of quality.

Technical Assistance Supports

The Collaborative will provide grant teams with access to a menu of technical assistance experts to assist with grant activities. With input from the grantees, The Collaborative will directly source and contract with these technical assistance providers. Grantees will not pay to access technical assistance supports through their own budgets. Some examples of technical assistance that may be accessible to grantees include:

- Strategic planning support to guide implementation plans and activities, including collaborative action.
- Policy strategy expertise to inform policy reform crafting and communication.
- Strategic communications expertise, including supporting stakeholder engagement and buy-in.
- ECE governance expertise, including recommendations on reforms to governance functions and structures to make financing mechanisms more efficient and effective.

- ECE finance expertise, including cost modeling that incorporates the true cost of care and equitable compensation levels.
- Expertise on developing systems to track funding allocations and meet funder requirements.
- Support on collecting data on implementation, outcomes, and cost of the initiatives.

Community of Practice

Grantees will participate in a Community of Practice (CoP). A community of practice is a space for people with shared goals or similar interests to engage in shared learning, including defining best practices and cultivating new knowledge together. The CoP will facilitate peer learning, identifying commonalities across projects, collectively problem-solving challenges that arise during implementation, and sharing innovations and lessons learned to wider audiences. An external convener will staff the CoP, however the grantees will set the agenda. Engagement opportunities may include virtual meetings and site visits among grantees. A central feature of the CoP will be rapid cycle learning, analysis, and formative process improvements. Challenges encountered and lessons learned will be quickly sourced from the grantees and shared out to wider audiences. The Collaborative believes in learning from implementation activities and making adjustments in real time based on those learnings. We also believe it is important to widely share lessons learned to inform the work of others. The CoP convener may also incorporate elements of the technical assistance resources into the CoP as an additional way to integrate technical assistance into grantee's efforts. For example, technical assistance providers may be invited to the CoP to support the group in shared learning and implementation. The CoP will commence during the second year of the grant term.

Funding Amount and Matching Funds Requirement

Funding Amount

The total amount of funding to be awarded is \$10 million. These funds will be disbursed among the grantees over a maximum timeframe of three years. ***Applicants may propose grant terms of up to three years.*** The Collaborative anticipates awarding a limited number of grants, though this will be highly dependent on the scope, scale, and number of proposals received. Grants will vary in size according to identified need and the proposed reform's stage of development, with minimum total grant awards ranging from approximately \$400,000 to \$800,000 and maximum awards ranging from approximately \$2 million to \$4 million. Proposals should reflect the true cost of the anticipated work. Grant funds may not fund direct compensation or benefit increases and must not supplant public funds.

Matching Funds Requirement

To be considered for funding, **each team must contribute at least 10 percent of the requested amount in matching funds (real or in-kind)** to the project during the grant period. The Collaborative will fund the remaining 90 percent. Submitters must describe how they plan to meet the matching funds requirement and must submit a letter of commitment from each entity(ies) providing matching funds along with their full proposal materials. Matching funds may include public dollars and/or private revenue, including committed philanthropic dollars. However, all matching funds cannot be private dollars. The required financial match may include in-kind contributions, but in-kind contributions should comprise no more than 50 percent of the match. The rest of the match must be in real dollars. The Collaborative defines in-kind as any non-cash contributions of value, including personnel (dedicated staff members/time), goods, and services. The Collaborative defines real dollars as monetary support for the project (e.g., cash contributions, public funding streams, private philanthropic dollars). The Collaborative encourages applicants to seek additional funding, as needed, for their efforts beyond The Collaborative's support and the applicant's 10 percent match, though this is not a requirement of the grant. The Collaborative requires that applicants have the entirety of the match committed within the first 12 months of the grant period.

Please note that the limitations for overhead/indirect rate charges are either 15 percent or 15 percent of total personnel costs, whichever is lower.

IV. Request for Proposals Requirements

What follows are the requirements for responding to the request for proposals.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to apply for this opportunity, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Applicants may apply from any state, locality, municipality, territory, or tribal community. We acknowledge the varied governance structures in tribal communities and will entertain proposals that reflect the relevant context needed to accomplish the grant goals.
- Applicants must apply as a partnership that includes a ***Core Implementation Team*** that must include leadership and/or senior staff from the following governmental agencies/entities or their applicable equivalents in the applicant's context:
 - The fiscal entity that controls the administrative budget such as the Office of Management and Budget (or equivalent)
 - The administrative entity with authority over child care funding

- The administrative entity with authority over public education funding
- The administrative entity with authority over preschool/pre-kindergarten programs and funding
- The administrative entity with authority over higher education programs and/or funding
- The administrative entity with authority over any Special Revenue Funds (if applicable)
- Applicants must identify an advisory body, such as a Workforce Council or State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (SAC), or equivalent, constituting representatives of early educators, employers, higher education institutions, and other community members that will inform the project design and implementation.
- Applicants must meet the matching funds requirements described above.
- Applicants must not use funding for lobbying. Per the policies of The Collaborative’s fiscal sponsor, Third Sector New England (TSNE), grantees cannot use funds pursuant to this procurement for lobbying or to influence legislation, as defined by the IRS.

Characteristics of Strong Proposals

A successful proposal is oriented towards a systems approach focused on achieving meaningful, equitable compensation for the ECE workforce that is scaled over time.

Strong proposals:

- Are **oriented toward innovating financial systems and structures** that impose barriers to equitable compensation for the ECE workforce.
- **Develop, pilot, or expand an innovative model** aimed at transforming ECE professional compensation. For example, the model must go beyond a sole focus of utilizing typical CCDF funds to include additional atypical funds.
- Include a plan to support appropriate, durable **compensation¹² that is commensurate with professional competencies**. Early educator preparation and compensation is based on clearly articulated competencies that address the full range of professional roles in the ECE field.
- **Advance a comprehensive solution** by connecting the financing systems innovations to other aligned efforts to support the ECE workforce in achieving increased compensation.

¹² Appropriate compensation is defined as a living wage that reflects the professional competencies required to perform a job function.

- Demonstrate an understanding of **why aligning with and reforming policies and regulations is important, how this will be sustained**, and how partners intend to change any existing policies and regulations that are standing in the way of implementing reforms.
- Prioritize maintaining the *racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity* of the ECE workforce by ensuring early educator compensation reforms support those who already work in the field. Furthermore, proposals should **leverage aspects of community and workforce diversity as assets and not replicate issues of racial disparities in compensation**.
- Have a plan to replicate, sustain, and scale the proposed model beyond the grant period. **Applicants should lay out their vision for the entire transformation** and specify what will be achieved within the grant period with funding from The Collaborative.
- Include a process to **achieve compensation parity with public school district salary scales and benefits, as an interim goal**. Public school educators are also underpaid, and in some settings, early educators work 12 months a year rather than following the public-school calendar. As such, compensation parity with PreK-12 teachers must be adjusted to adequately compensate these educators for the full-calendar year.

Assessment Criteria for Proposals

Applications will be assessed on **five** principal criteria, derived from the characteristics described above.

The five criteria are as follows:

1. **Oriented Toward Systems Transformation:** The proposal is highly innovative. The proposed work represents a fundamentally different way of conceptualizing and implementing aspects of the ECE financing and compensation system across the continuum of professional roles and settings. It leverages complex system-design work that prioritizes equity.
2. **Context:** The partnership team presents a contextually relevant plan to transform early educator compensation. It is compatible with the needs of the ECE workforce and was designed with input from and in collaboration with the ECE workforce and local community.
3. **Equity, Diversity and Belonging:** The proposal ensures that racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity and equity are reflected in the design and reach of the implementation activities and in the partnership's staffing of the proposed project team. The team demonstrates a strong commitment to the concept of belonging as the next iteration of community-building, beyond inclusivity.

4. **Readiness and Capacity:** All members of the applicant partnership demonstrate a readiness within their own institutions to accomplish this work. Readiness indicators might include:
- Political will and authorization/support to carry out the proposed forms.
 - A functional approach to governance in the state, including the ability to braid, blend, and efficiently/equitably manage funds.
 - A cross-program and cross-funding stream perspective on systems change and compensation for the workforce at-large.
 - A broad base of leaders and community-members engaged in the proposal development process and plan for implementation of the proposed reform.
5. **Risk Management and Mitigation:** The partnership presents a realistic timeline and staff capacity for driving change in its ECE system. The partnership presents a thoughtful assessment of the potential risks to its ability to complete its plan in the specified timeline and identifies options for addressing these risks.

Measures of Success

If successful, applicants' proposed work would advance states/localities/municipalities/territories/tribal communities in achieving the following ultimate outcomes:

- Early educators receive increased compensation that reflects their professional value.
- Early educators have access to a wide range of benefits, such as health, dental, and retirement.
- States/localities/municipalities/territories/tribal communities implement effective governance structures to support the mechanisms for efficient and effective financing of the forms of compensation.
- Compensation aligns to a competency-based credential system and a widely available salary schedule.
- The pipeline of racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse educators expands.
- States/localities/municipalities/territories/tribal communities eliminate policies that stand in the way of enhanced compensation.
- ECE lead teachers achieve pay parity with PreK-12 teachers.
- States/localities/municipalities/territories/tribal communities eliminate racial disparities in ECE workforce compensation.

Grant Requirements

Organizations that are awarded grants must be willing and able to:

- Provide regular updates to The Collaborative’s Director, The Collaborative’s fiscal sponsor (TSNE) and The Collaborative’s Steering Committee.
- Participate in the Community of Practice and available technical assistance supports.
- As required by TSNE, submit interim and final narrative and financial reports as described in the grant agreement and payment schedule. Selected grantees will receive reporting instructions and templates to assist them in preparing these reports.

Part B: Funding Application

Proposals to Innovate Financial Systems to Build Capacity for Increased and Sustainable Early Childhood Education (ECE) Compensation

RFP responses are due by 11:59 pm local time on Monday, June 5, 2023.

As described in the funding announcement, The Early Educator Investment Collaborative (The Collaborative) will fund a limited number of grants to state/local/municipal/territory/tribal governments to innovatively build systemic and structural capacity to support sustainable and equitable early childhood education (ECE) workforce compensation (wages and benefits) increases.

This document provides details on how prospective applicants should respond to the RFP.

Overview and Checklist

Table 1. Proposal Requirements

Required Proposal Materials	
Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to the RFP Questions as a Microsoft Word document.
Budget, Matching Requirement, & Budget Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A completed budget worksheet and budget narrative (Appendix B) as a Microsoft Excel file. • Within the budget narrative, a description of how you will meet The Collaborative’s 10% matching funds requirement. • Letters of commitment from entities providing the matching funds.
Implementation Team Statement of Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team members must sign on to a letter stating their commitment to this project and working in partnership to advance the project’s goals (Appendix C).
Community of Practice Letter of Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A signed letter of commitment to participate in the Community of Practice (Appendix D)
Implementation Team Contact Information Worksheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A completed spreadsheet with contact information on the proposal team (Appendix E) as a Microsoft Excel file.

Table 2. Anticipated timeline for proposals and grant awards.



Proposal Questions

The RFP questions below reflect the criteria listed in the funding announcement. Applicants must submit answers to the application questions in a Microsoft Word document. We recommend that applicants restate the Section number and title, followed by all the Questions in that Section, before stating the response. Responses to the questions should not exceed the word counts specified below; words included in charts or visuals do count toward the word limit. The maximum word count does not include the Section or Questions text. Proposals will be scored on a 100-point scale. Point totals for each section are indicated below.

SECTION	MAX WORD COUNT	QUESTIONS	ELEMENTS OF A STRONG RESPONSE	MAX POINTS
1. CONTEXT	1000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the assets in your context that you will leverage for this project? - What progression of wins are you drawing from? - What barriers have prevented you from moving forward on financing solutions to improve compensation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description of the geography’s context as it relates to ECE workforce systems issues, including compensation. - Articulation of current compensation challenges. - Details of the governance and financing structures that impact the ECE workforce, including compensation, in the geography. 	10

SECTION	MAX WORD COUNT	QUESTIONS	ELEMENTS OF A STRONG RESPONSE	MAX POINTS
2. PARTNERSHIP	2000	<p><u>Partnership Team</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What agencies/organizations constitute your Core Implementation Team? - Beyond the Core Implementation Team, what other partners are involved in this work? - Which entity is the lead or co-lead applicant and why? - Which entity will be the fiscal agent and why? - What experience do you have working together as partners? - What is the level of commitment of the team members for this initiative? <p><u>Advisory Body</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What organizational structure will advise this project? - How will representatives of early educators and employers be engaged in the advisory body? 	<p><u>Partnership Team</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnership includes a mixture of budget/fiscal and program staff. - Clear roles, responsibilities, and level of authority are included for the team members. - Team members include organizational leaders and/or senior staff. - Some or all team members have a history of demonstrated successful collaborations. - A description of how all partners will communicate and coordinate amongst themselves (e.g., structures, venues, roles, common goals). <p><u>Advisory Body</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viable organizational structure exists to convene early educators, employers, and other community voices to inform the design and implementation of the initiative. - Representation of advisory body includes early educators, employers, institutions of higher education, families, aligned health and mental health professionals, community organizers and advocates. 	20

SECTION	MAX WORD COUNT	QUESTIONS	ELEMENTS OF A STRONG RESPONSE	MAX POINTS
3. PROPOSED REFORMS	4000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the elements of your proposed reforms? - What is the specific problem you are trying to solve? - What is innovative and potentially effective about your approach in your specific context? - How do your proposed reforms align with other aspects of the ECE workforce and finance system? - What are the challenges or barriers you will have to overcome to create real change? - How will your strategies lead to durable compensation increases for the ECE workforce? - What policies do you already have in place to advance the proposed reforms and/or how will you change or make exceptions to any policies that may present barriers to implementing the proposed work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed solutions impact the multiple settings of care and education work with a focus on birth to five settings. - Proposed solutions impact the multiple professional roles in the workforce, including lead teachers (e.g. infant/toddler teachers and family child care providers). - Proposed solutions identify and incorporate multiple funding streams into project plan. - Proposed solutions pilot or expand new and extant approaches to support early educator compensation increases that center equity and sustainable financing. - Proposed solutions include both wages and benefits. 	35

SECTION	MAX WORD COUNT	QUESTIONS	ELEMENTS OF A STRONG RESPONSE	MAX POINTS
4. SUSTAINABILITY	1000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will you scale and sustain the innovations beyond the grant term? - What is your approach to sustainability in this project? - How will you align and leverage this grant-funded project to long-term efforts to increase ECE workforce compensation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Articulate a clear long-term plan that builds on the grant-funded activities to sustain compensation increases. 	10
5. EQUITY	2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your definition of equity? - What are the ways in which you will incorporate equity into the design of your financing and compensation strategies? - How will your proposed strategies help to reduce or eliminate racial and gender disparities in compensation of the workforce? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear definition of equity that encompasses the diversity of the workforce. - Incorporate frameworks such as targeted universalism, liberatory design, critical race theory, or other applicable framework in proposed reform approach. 	20
6. TIMELINE & KEY MILESTONES	500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the timeline for this project? - What are the key milestones in this work? - What potential risks may impact the timeline and key milestones and how will you address them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A graphic depiction of the timeline. - Explanation of key milestones and why they are important to advancing the work. - Thoughtful assessment of the potential risks to the team's ability to complete proposed work in the specified timeline that identifies options for addressing these risks. 	5
TOTAL	10,500			100

Submission Requirements and Additional Information

To ensure you receive all future information and updates related to this opportunity, including FAQs and webinar recordings, please sign up for the opportunity's email distribution list [here](#).

Submission Requirements

The following proposal materials should be submitted to info@earlyedcollaborative.org by Monday, June 5, 2023, 11:59 pm local time:

- Responses to the RFP application questions in a Microsoft Word document.
- A completed budget worksheet and budget narrative (noted as Appendix B and available for download from our [website](#)) as a Microsoft Excel file. The budget narrative must include a description of how you will meet the 10% matching funds requirement.
- Signed letters of commitment from entities providing the matching funds
- A Statement of Commitment signed by all team members (noted as Appendix C and available for download from our [website](#)).
- A signed letter of commitment to participate in the Community of Practice (noted as Appendix D and available for download from our [website](#)).
- A completed Implementation Team contact information worksheet (noted as Appendix E and available for download from our [website](#)).

Proposals that do not include all the aforementioned items or are not received by 11:59 pm local time on Monday, June 5, 2023, will not be considered.

Submitters will receive a confirmation email within three business days of submitting their application.

Questions and Applicant Webinars

The Collaborative will host two webinars to address questions. Please submit questions to The Collaborative at info@earlyedcollaborative.org by the deadlines listed below. The Collaborative will do its best to address your questions during a webinar or in the FAQs document, which is available for download on our [website](#). We will update the FAQs document periodically throughout the submission window.

You must register for the webinars to receive dial-in information. Please use the following links to register:

Applicant Webinar 1: Tuesday, February 14, 2023 [12pm EST/ 9am PST]

- Register here: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Rp5-OwnmQpOTU07EY_2tSA
- Deadline to submit questions: Friday, February 10, 2023, 11:59 pm local time; questions submitted after this deadline will be considered for the second webinar

Applicant Webinar 2: Thursday, March 2, 2023 [12pm EST/ 9am PST]

- Register here: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JvqZT1ZyRPWD_XdGmf-mqQ
- Deadline to submit questions: Thursday, February 23, 2023, 11:59 pm local time

Following each webinar, all individuals who signed up for the grant opportunity's [email distribution list](#) will receive an updated FAQs document and webinar recording.

Appendices

All appendices are available for download from our [website](#).

Appendix A – Recommended Resources

Appendix B – Budget Worksheet & Budget Narrative Template

Appendix C – Implementation Team Statement of Commitment

Appendix D – Letter of Commitment for Participation in the Community of Practice

Appendix E – Implementation Team Contact Information Worksheet