



**Children's Services Council of Leon County  
Early Learning Project Proposal**

**The Children's Services Council of Leon County (CSC Leon) is proposing a collaborative partnership with the Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend (ELCBB) to create a local funding category that will allow ALICE families in Leon County to enter the School Readiness program. In essence, this project will create a new "on ramp" for families to access an existing support program, thereby better leveraging existing federal dollars.**

**Amount of Investment Requested: \$250,000**

**Amount of federal/state funding drawn down: \$2,888,726.98**

*Background:*

To enter the School Readiness (SR) program through the working families (BG8) category, family income must be at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Once a family has been determined eligible for SR, families can remain in the program even if their income increases, up to 85% State Median Income (SMI).

However, the Division of Early Learning at the Florida Department of Health (DEL) guidance allows for a modified income limit (85% SMI) for families *transferring* to BG8 from other assistance categories, whether funded by DEL or local resources. There is no minimum amount of time that ELC must serve family under a locally funded category before being eligible to transfer to BG8.

By creating a locally funded category that aligns with all BG8 requirements except the income limit and setting the initial eligibility income limit at 85% SMI, ELC and CSC create a pathway for families into SR who would otherwise not have qualified. It will also allow ELC to draw down more state funding (whether normal SR direct or match) to support children in our community.

*Estimated Fiscal Impact:*

The average cost to subsidize childcare for one month is \$435. If the ELC determined a child eligible for and served the child for one month under a CSC funded local eligibility category for \$435, the ELC could then transfer the child to the BG8 category and draw down \$4,455 in state funding to serve the child for the remainder of the year.

For a three-year-old child in a center-based preschool, the average childcare cost would go from \$626 a month to \$86 a month. This equates to an annual savings of \$6,480. For families who are utilizing informal childcare arrangements, the assistance can make regulated quality care accessible for the first time.

Budget for CSC Local Funding Category

- Total request for CSC: \$250,000
  - Admin: \$30,000
  - Direct assistance: \$220,000 (approximately \$435 per child x 505 children x 1 month)
- Amount of federal/state funding drawn down: \$2,888,726.98
  - \$2,253,207.04 (approximately \$405 per child x 505 children x 11 months)
  - \$635,519.94 (state funding allocated for admin costs and quality improvement services, such as child screening and assessments, childcare program monitoring, and childcare teacher training)
- Return on investment: 1,313%

Proposed Eligibility Requirements:

- Parent must apply for funding through the State of Florida’s Early Learning Family Portal
- Child must be 0-12 years old at time of eligibility determination
- Child must be a legal citizen or qualified alien
- Child must reside with a parent in Leon County
- Parent(s) must meet the requirements for “working family” as defined in law, 1002.81 (14) F.S.
- Family income must be above 150%FPL and below 85% SMI

Household Size	150% Federal Poverty Level	85% State Median Income
2	\$27,465	\$46,863
3	\$34,545	\$57,889
4	\$41,625	\$68,915
5	\$48,705	\$79,942

- Child must enroll at a provider contracted with the ELC to offer SR
- Parent must agree to comply with all SR regulations before transferring to BG8

Minimum Eligibility Requirements for SR Providers

There are currently 182 SR providers in Leon County. These providers must meet the following requirements to be contracted with the ELC:

- Be licensed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), or be determined by DCF to be exempt from licensure
- Pass DCF’s Health and Safety Inspection
- Have a composite score of at least 4.00 on the CLASS assessment, which measures the quality of interactions between teachers and children
- Use developmentally appropriate curriculum that addresses Florida’s Early Learning Standards
- Employ instructors who have passed a Level II background screening
- Employ instructors who have required training in early care, education, and literacy