



Early Childhood Community Collaborations and Universal Preschool in Chicago Competitive Grant for Collaboration Supports

About the Competitive Grant

In May 2019, Illinois Action for Children, in partnership with the City of Chicago's Mayor's Office, Department of Family and Support Services, and Chicago Public Schools, launched a competitive grant process for community collaborations in Chicago interested in supporting early childhood efforts. In its second year of this initiative, Illinois Action for Children, with its city partners are launching another competitive grant process to award five community collaborations in Chicago.

Community Collaborations can apply for funds between \$30,000-\$50,000 to advance early childhood strategies, with a specific focus on enrolling 3 and 4-year-old young children in Chicago Early Learning programs in their local community-based programs and schools.

With funding from the City of Chicago, Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) will serve as the administrator of this grant. IAFC will also provide cross trainings, webinars and technical assistance for community collaborations that are awarded funds to support their local early childhood recruitment and enrollment efforts.

Anticipated Goals

Community collaborations will commit to the following goals, if awarded:

1. Partner with the City partners and Illinois Action for Children to implement strategies that raise public awareness of universal preschool and the value of early learning.
2. Implement strategies that engage families and enroll young children in Chicago Early Learning programs that they may be eligible for.
3. Maintain monthly collaboration meetings and activities that support local programs in engaging families and young children in early childhood programs and services
4. Track and document the number of weekly outreach events, contacts, family engagement efforts and families program preference
5. Compile and collect relevant data for early childhood strategies. Communicate challenges and successes with Illinois Action for Children and City partners.
6. Participate in peer learning and training supports to enhance early childhood systems change strategies with the goal of increasing collaboration across service partners in the community.

Illinois Action for Children will provide the following:

- Community early learning enrollment data to support collaborations with tracking enrollment and retention
- Data and information that will be used for continuous quality improvement

- Cross Training opportunities that further builds the capacity of collaborations to integrate community systems strategies or enhance early learning enrollment and attendance.

Anticipated Outcomes

Community collaborations will commit to the following outcomes:

- Increased enrollment of young children in early learning programs in their community
 - 10% of increased enrollment in pre-identified programs, with low enrollment, compared to 2019 school year.
- Improved community and family engagement and relationships
 - At least 100 families reached and informed about CEL options
- Strengthen community systems strategies to engage families in a continuum of early childhood services
 - At least 2 community systems strategies implemented to promote early childhood services
- Increased partnerships and coordination with other early learning programs in the community to build a seamless network of referrals based on the needs of families
 - At least 3 new partners developed to improve referrals
- Community partnerships with local elementary schools and Community Early Learning programs to understand family barriers to attendance and develop targeted solutions
 - Increased number of families that receive retention supports

Strategies and Activities for Enrollment and Attendance

Illinois Action for Children has provided a menu of best practices for enrollment and attendance strategies. Community collaborations applying for funds will be expected to work with families to implement the menu of strategies locally, including children in priority populations.¹ Below is the menu of strategies that community collaborations will implement:

Enrollment Strategies

1. **Implement a community wide local outreach strategy** – Identify and target areas for local outreach to include priority populations. Coordinate community stakeholders and collaboration staff/members to find and enroll families in Chicago Early Learning preschool programs (in partnership with other outreach partners).
2. **Engage Parents and Community members in Outreach** – Word of mouth is often the best outreach strategy. Offer stipends or incentives for parents/community members to conduct outreach and raise awareness of early childhood programs and services. Strategies may include leveraging city-wide community partners, such as COFI, who have paid parent leaders available to support targeted outreach.
3. **Support Families with Seamless Access to Resources Needed for Enrollment** – Strategies may include financial support for families that need vital records such as birth certificates; linkages to medical homes to obtain physicals and other needed immunizations.

¹ *IAC uses the definition of 'priority population' adopted by the Early Learning Council. Priority population is defined as homeless children; children of teen parents; children in the state's Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) system, including those children in foster care; children with disabilities; children in poverty and deep poverty; and children whose families are linguistically isolated and experience other effects of isolation based on language.

Attendance Strategies

4. **Engage Families in Attendance** – Develop strategies for follow up with families that are referred to early learning programs through the collaboration to encourage ongoing attendance of children and the long-lasting benefits of being in an early learning program consistently and regularly.

Timeframe

Monday, March 2, 2020 – Application for funds opens

- Community collaborations can begin applying March 2, 2020 for a competitive grant to implement or enhance current strategies to engage families and young children in Chicago Early Learning programs.

March 30, 2020 – Applications are due

- Competitive Grant applications are due **Monday, March 30, 2020 at 5:00 PM. Submit all applications and attached requirements** to Leatha Asbury, Chicago Community Impact Program Manager for Illinois Action for Children at asburyl@actforchildren.org

Fourth week of April 2020 – Award Announcements

- Successful competitive grant award announcements are anticipated to be announced the fourth week of April 2020.

The grant period for the activities is from date of award through December 31, 2020. If awarded, community collaborations must implement grant activities and spend funding for activities completed by **December 31, 2020**. Community collaborations will need to submit a W-9 to be reimbursed for activities associated with the initiative including relevant invoice and documentation. Illinois Action for Children reserves the right to adjust or modify your workplan and budgets based on scoring results or funds available.

Webinar

To learn more about the grant opportunity, please join us for an informational webinar. Details of the webinar are below:

Date: March 11, 2020 (Wednesday)

Time: 1:00-2:00 PM

Please register for Competitive Grant for Collaboration Supports (Chicago Early Learning):

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6127539123891933453>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. If you missed the webinar, you may access the recording using the link above.

Applicant Criteria and Eligibility Requirements

This application is for community collaborations that focus on early learning recruitment and enrollment strategies. Communities eligible to apply (or their chosen fiscal agent) must be:

- A 501c3 nonprofit or have a fiscal agent that can receive funds on behalf of the collaboration
- Not currently administering an Chicago Early Learning program funded by DFSS or CPS

- Have at least 2-3 year demonstrated history of working on community collaboration strategies in its mission, vision, or strategic plan
- Priority will be given to applicants that are located in UPK (Universal Pre- Kindergarten) communities that are within year 2 and 3 communities listed in [“Chicago’s Roadmap for Implementing Universal Pre-K: A Plan for Investment in Chicago’s Early Learning System.”](#)

Scoring Rubric

Illinois Action for Children, in partnership with City agency and staff, will review the applications to determine eligibility. Applications will be scored by the quality of their work plan and responses to the following questions:

Category	Points
Overview of Collaboration (Question 1)	10
Collaboration Issue and Focus (Question 2-4)	10
Collaboration Enrollment and Retention Strategies and Staffing Structure (Question 5)	15
Engaging Diverse Perspectives and Stakeholders (Question 6)	10
Collaboration is located or serving a priority community	5
Budget Proposal	25
Work plan	25
Total Points	100

Competitive Grant Application

COLLABORATION NAME:	
COLLABORATION GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF SERVICE(S):	
Collaboration Leader Name:	Organizational Affiliation:
# of years with collaboration:	Title:
Email address:	Organizational Mailing Address:
Phone:	

Please share brief responses to the following questions below. Complete a work plan and budget for your proposed activities.

1. Please provide a general overview of your collaboration.

How long has the collaboration existed? What is the current mission, vision, and/or purpose statement? What is the collaboration's staffing and funding status? Does the collaboration host regularly community meetings to engage stakeholders in efforts to establish partnership building and supporting families? How often does the collaboration meet? What is your collaboration's governance and decision-making structure? How do you distribute leadership and tasks?

2. What is your collaboration's main early childhood issue or focus area?

What are some of your collaboration's activities that demonstrate a commitment to serving families with young children? Include any outreach and public awareness efforts. What are some known issues related to enrollment to early learning programs or attendance issues that impact young children in your community? Share any relevant data that describes these issues.

3. What strategies have you used to make improvements to enrolling children in early learning programs (birth-three services, preschool, etc.)?

List any accomplishments or current community systems strategies. Include efforts to maintain and develop new partnerships with local Chicago Public Schools and Community Early Learning Programs.

4. If you haven't directly focused on early childhood strategies, state how your collaboration will work together to include early childhood issues in your work.

Include how your mission, vision and the goals from your strategic plan relate to the goals and outcomes of this initiative.

5. Please provide information on how your collaboration will support the enrollment of young children in Chicago Early Learning programs. Please use the workplan provided to provide details of your workplan and timeframe. Use this section to provide more explanation of your strategies, goals, and approach. How will you follow up engagement strategies with families that will lead to enrollment in

an early learning program. Include the staffing structure of who is doing this work and follow up strategies that you will implement to better serve families that you initially engaged.

6. How will you engage diverse perspectives (including parents and community members)? Who are your stakeholders and participants? How are you identifying and eliminating or minimizing barriers to participation and engagement? How will you work with partners to align efforts and work toward a shared vision?

Budget Template (attached). Collaborations must spend their funding by **December 31, 2020**. Please attach a detailed budget that describes your proposed budget, which should not exceed \$50,000. Collaborations will be reimbursed for services and expenses rendered. Illinois Action for Children will provide an invoice template for reimbursements.

Funds could be used to offset the cost of:

1. Salaries/benefits for staff member(s) and/or stipends for consultants
2. Direct expenses like meeting expenses, office supplies, food, and travel

Proposed Work Plan Template

Collaboration Name:

Goal/Strategy <i>[Please explain how you will implement the enrollment and attendance strategies listed above.]</i>	Activities <i>[Please include weekly activities you will do to meet the goals.]</i>	Timeframe <i>[When do you propose implementing your activities?]</i>	Measures of Success <i>[How do you know you will be successful? Please provide key quantifiable measures.]</i>