

Community Transformation Grant Letter of Interest Guidelines

February 3, 2021

Introduction

In January 2020, Governor Brian Kemp announced that Georgia had been awarded a three-year, \$11.2 million Preschool Development Renewal Grant (PDG) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education. This federal grant allows for Georgia to design and implement activities to help ensure that Georgia's children from birth to age five have access to high-quality early childhood programs and services.

As part of Georgia's PDG activities, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is issuing Community Transformation Grants to support projects that increase access to early childhood services and resources. This grant program envisions the creation of early education partnerships composed of community agencies and other stakeholders that will design, tailor, and implement projects that address critical local needs. It is hoped that many of the projects funded through these grants will be expanded or scaled-up over time. DECAL is working with the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) as an evaluation partner. Researchers from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia will also provide support to grantees.

In 2021, DECAL intends to award grants of up to \$75,000 each to six communities in the state for a term of 18 months. In addition to working through local partnerships, grant awardees will be required to contribute money or in-kind services to their projects that have a total value of 30% of the grant award.

Based on the results of Georgia's PDG Needs Assessment, DECAL has identified nine Focus Areas that address specific community needs. They are listed below.

- Increasing access to high-quality early programs for infants and toddlers (six weeks to 36 months)
- Increasing access to high-quality early programs for dual language learners (ages six weeks up to kindergarten entry)
- Increasing access to high-quality early education programs for children living in rural areas of Georgia
- Supporting children with persistent challenging behaviors to reduce suspensions and expulsions from early learning programs
- Reducing food insecurity for children aged birth to five and their families
- Coordinating early learning services for children in foster care or protective services
- Providing mental health services for the birth to five population and their caregivers
- Providing enhanced services to young children related to the early identification and treatment of developmental delays and disabilities
- Developing a system of care to support children birth to five and their families who are experiencing homelessness

Community Transformation Grant applicants must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) that describes a project they propose to design and implement to address one of the Focus Areas listed above. The LOIs should not exceed five pages (double-spaced, 12 pt. font). The LOIs will be scored and the applicants receiving the highest scores will be invited to submit a formal application. DECAL will strive to ensure that the selected group of applicants reflects all regions of the state and a wide range of Focus Areas.

Suggested Content for Letters of Interest

1. **Focus Area for Proposal:** Potential applicants should identify the Focus Area that the project will address. This section should clearly demonstrate the significance of the local need that will be addressed by a Community Transformation Grant. Appropriate community-level data should be used to illustrate the significance of the selected Focus Area.
2. **Local ECE Partnerships:** Potential applicants should list the local community partners that have agreed to participate in this work, if funded, and describe the work of each partner and the population(s) they serve. The discussion of the partnership should make the case persuasively that the collaboration has a high probability of producing the desired outcome. Showing a clear alignment between the local need that has been identified and the current capacities and expertise of the partner agencies is crucial to a successful LOI. Concrete proof of the quality of the relationship that exists between partner organizations—through such evidence as commonality of interests, longevity of the association, past successful collaborations, and quantity of accessible resources—is also critically important.
3. **High-Level Project Plan:** In a maximum of three pages, the LOI should outline a compelling project plan that will address the unique needs of the population that the community team intends to support. A successful LOI will identify specific community conditions that will be transformed through the projects these grant funds will support, as well as the evaluation metrics that will be used to measure the impact of those activities. Additionally, to be competitive, LOIs should explain what insights state officials and leaders from other communities may stand to gain as a result of lessons learned from your community project.

LOIs should be addressed to Laura Wagner, DECAL Director for Community Outreach and Partnerships. LOIs should be submitted in PDF form to the following email address:

communityimpactgrants@decals.ga.gov.

LOIs are due no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 15, 2021. Potential applicants who demonstrate the most compelling needs, functional partnerships, and strong project plans will then be invited on April 15, 2021, to submit a formal application. This application will be due on May 14, 2021, no later than 5:00 p.m. Grantee selection will take place on or before June 7, 2021, and contracts will be finalized by June 30, 2021, for work to begin on July 1, 2021.

For more information

Please join us for an informational webinar about this funding opportunity, as well as two other funding opportunities, on Friday, February 5, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. Register here:

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IdHEumXFQ22TS7fgWJ80Pg

Please direct questions related to this grant opportunity to communityimpactgrants@decals.ga.gov .