

Using the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act to Advance High Quality Professional Development for Early Childhood Educators¹

INTRODUCTION

There are many opportunities to use a wide array of American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to enhance and expand professional development opportunities for early childhood educators. Using ARRA funds for professional development is an excellent investment of these funds over the next two years because professional development creates lasting value for educators and in turn raises the quality of early development and education experiences for young children.

The ARRA has a focus on maintaining and creating jobs and on spurring economic growth. Professional development helps achieve both goals: building skills that lead to better jobs and creating higher quality early learning experiences for children, who are the future workforce.

The early childhood education workforce, working with young children in family and center-based child care, Head Start and Early Head Start, and schools, should be a focus of the use of ARRA funds. Research is clear that children who attend high quality early childhood education programs are more likely to be ready for school and for life. Well-qualified and compensated professionals are essential to ensuring high quality programs. Despite the importance of the knowledge and skills of early childhood educators, there are insufficient resources dedicated to their preparation, ongoing professional development, compensation and retention. These ARRA resources are critical to help meet increasing demands for postsecondary degrees and credentials, as well as the need for individual professional development and better compensation.

The ARRA provides several resources that can be used to provide those opportunities. This document is not an exhaustive list of possibilities. It does provide examples of ways in which these funds can be leveraged with other existing resources to help build high quality programs through the professional development of early childhood educators.

¹ As of the writing of this document, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has not published guidance for the state early learning advisory councils or for the Early Head Start funds under the ARRA. The U.S. Department of Education has not published guidance or the application for the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants and for some of the ARRA funds that will be competed, known as Race to the Top grants and Invest in What Works and Innovation grants. The U.S. Department of Education is expected to publish in April a notice seeking comments on proposed metrics for the state data systems.

ARRA RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

The following are the major funding opportunities under the ARRA that have the potential to enhance professional development for the early childhood education field:

- \$2 billion for the Child Care & Development Block Grant, of which \$255 million is reserved for quality improvements (and within which \$93 million is reserved for infants and toddlers)
- \$1 billion for Head Start, which includes funding for the COLA, quality set aside, state early learning councils, and other set asides in the formula
- \$1.1 billion for Early Head Start which includes up to 10% for training and technical assistance and up to 3% for monitoring
- \$10 billion in Title I grants to local educational agencies using the targeted assistance and education finance incentive formulas for within-state distribution
- \$500 million for Part C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (infants and toddlers)
- \$400 million for Part B Section 619 of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (preschool)
- \$250 million in state longitudinal data systems (Institute for Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education)
- \$4.3 billion Incentive Grants (Race to the Top) to states
- \$650 million for Innovation Grants to local educational agencies or local educational agencies in partnership with nonprofit organizations
- \$100 million for Teacher Quality Partnership Grants (Title II Part A of the Higher Education Opportunity Act)
- \$500 increase in the maximum Pell Grant Award
- Partial refundable tax credit for higher education under the New American Opportunity Tax Credit

PRINCIPLES FOR USING ARRA FUNDS TO LEVERAGE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

The ARRA funds are supplements to the funds available for the underlying programs and higher education financial assistance. The ARRA funds can be used to leverage existing funds and to align better professional development in ways that enhance improvements as well as expand access.

NAEYC's *Workforce Designs: a Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems*² provides principles that should be reflected in the use of the ARRA funds:

- **Integration** – Integration encompasses not only how professional development is accessible across early childhood sectors but also how the provision and expansion of professional development opportunities are coordinated with a state's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), data systems, higher education coordinating bodies or efforts, state and local early learning councils, and other early childhood comprehensive systems planning work.

In using ARRA funds, connect professional development opportunities with the current state professional development systems and develop or expand elements of the system, integrate professional development, establish or enhance data collection and analysis, and link to other systems efforts such as state early learning councils, quality rating and improvement systems, higher education systems, and other professional development efforts to avoid creating competing, disconnected or parallel efforts.

- **Quality Assurance** Quality assurance includes processes and mechanisms that ensure accountability in investments in high-quality professional development that results in improved classroom practice, better programs for children and families, and positive developmental outcomes for children; processes and mechanisms that address fiscal accountability, as well as accountability to the recipients of professional development, young children and their families, legislative and regulatory systems, and the public; and benchmarks for the quality of initial preparation and ongoing learning experiences provided.

In determining how these funds are used, ensure mechanisms are in place to guide good choices for professional development opportunities and to track the use of resources and the impact those resources make for system implementation and cross-sector systems integration, increased work skills and advancement opportunities for the early childhood workforce and corresponding program quality enhancements, and services for children and their families.

- **Diversity, Inclusion and Access** – Diversity, inclusion and access support the recruitment, development, and retention of a workforce that includes professionals who reflect the diversity of the children and families served and that is also prepared to work with children and families of diverse cultures and abilities. Policies should address diversity, inclusion, and access in all early care and education roles: those individuals working directly with children, those preparing and training practitioners,

² Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems (NAEYC, 2008) available at www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/pdf/Workforce_Designs.pdf

those administering programs, and those advising system and activity implementation.

Focus the use of ARRA funds for professional development on those staff working with populations most in need of high quality early development and learning and on providing staff with the credentials and education that will help move them along a career pathway; fund studies and pilot projects that explore how best to recruit, support and provide advancement opportunities for staff representing and serving high-need, under-represented children and families.

- **Compensation Parity** – The term “compensation parity” means that compensation is equal or equivalent to other similar fields and that the status of the work and individual’s education, experience and responsibilities are recognized and rewarded appropriately.

In using ARRA funds, connect professional development opportunities with attracting, compensating and retaining high quality early childhood educators in all settings.

Every time a funding stream is considered, there should be a reflection on how those resources can be used for professional development in ways that advance and align with those principles, as well as action to realize that alignment.

INTEGRATION PRINCIPLE

Early childhood is a tapestry of administrative, teacher and support staff requirements. Requirements for teacher credentials and ongoing professional development are dictated in large measure by the public funding stream, with the minimal requirements usually set by state child care licensing standards. The Head Start Act as amended in 2007 requires all teachers to have an Associate degree by 2011 and by 2013, fifty percent nationally of Head Start teachers must have a Bachelor’s degree in early childhood.³ Many states require a Baccalaureate or Associate degree for teachers in state-funded prekindergarten programs.

Child Care & Development Block Grant quality funds

Many states are using CCDBG funds to support advisory bodies, task forces, and other structures to design a comprehensive, state professional development system. Given the importance of the quality of the workforce and retention of educated, well-skilled professionals, these funds can and should be used to establish or support state professional development advisory bodies that are directly or statutorily connected to the state early learning council as required by the Head Start Act and/or as created by the governor or legislature to assure implementation of an integrated statewide professional development system that meets the needs of those working in all sectors of early childhood education.

³ Section 648A sets forth requirements for Head Start teachers and section 645A (h) sets forth requirements to teachers in center-based Early Head Start programs.

Head Start funds for the state early learning advisory councils

The Head Start Act requires states to establish (or grandfather) state early learning advisory councils focused on birth-to-five early childhood education programs and services across all settings. The statute explicitly requires these councils to develop recommendations for a unified data collection system for early childhood data systems and for a statewide professional development and career enhancement plan for early childhood educators. The Head Start funds under the ARRA will provide \$100 million to states for the state early learning advisory councils. These councils should coordinate with those entities in the state that will receive the ARRA funds for state longitudinal data systems of preschool through higher education. This provides states the opportunity to strategically assess strengths and weaknesses as the basis of planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of data systems that can track the entire workforce and inform policy development and investments.

Title I funds to local educational agencies

The ARRA provides funds to eligible local educational agencies under Title I. Title I is a resource for serving children below compulsory school age as well as a resource for professional development of early childhood educators in Title I schools and jointly between teachers in schools and in community-based early childhood programs. The U.S. Department of Education's non-regulatory guidance on Serving Preschool Children Under Title I states:

E-6. May Title I funds be used to provide professional development for preschool teachers and paraprofessionals not paid with Title I funds?

Title I funds may be used to provide professional development for any teacher or paraprofessional working in a Title I preschool program supported partly by Title I funding even if their salary is not paid for with Title I funds if the training is related to the Title I program and is designed to meet the educational needs of Title I children. For example, Title I funds may be used for professional development for a Head Start teacher working in a preschool program jointly funded by Title I and Head Start if the training is related to the Title I program or is designed to help the Head Start teachers meet the educational needs of Title I children.

Under certain conditions, Title I funds may also be used for joint professional development for non-Title I preschool teachers and paraprofessionals working in programs with no Title I funds, such as Head Start staff, and for Title I elementary school teachers and paraprofessionals. For example, Title I funds may be used for such joint professional development if the children served in the non-Title I preschool are likely to be attending a Title I school when they enter kindergarten, and if the purpose of the professional development is to improve coordination between the non-

Title I preschool and the Title I school or to facilitate children's transition from preschool into the Title I elementary school.⁴

Title I funds should be used in addition to Head Start funds for professional development activities and continuity of educational and developmental continuity under the Memorandum of Understanding required by the Head Start Act that shall include an appropriate plan that includes "(V) staff training, including opportunities for joint staff training on topics such as academic content standards, instructional methods, curricula, and social and emotional development."⁵

IDEA Part C

Serving infants and toddlers with disabilities and helping them make the transition to preschool requires specialized knowledge. The ARRA funds for Part C should be used for professional development proposed under the draft regulations for Part C, section 303.360 that as part of the comprehensive system of personnel development states may include "Training personnel to coordinate transition services for infants and toddlers with disabilities from an early intervention program under this part to a preschool program under part B of the Act or to other preschool or other appropriate services."

QUALITY ASSURANCE PRINCIPLE

Access to professional development is necessary; ensuring that the professional development received meets quality standards is critical. Many of these examples are already being implemented in states, which could use ARRA to take them further to scale.

Child Care & Development Block Grant quality set aside

CCDBG quality funds provide a wide range of professional development activities for providers. In addition, states use these funds to develop, implement and enhance professional development systems. ARRA funds should be used to provide a range of professional development opportunities and to expand and improve integration and quality of professional development. For example, ARRA funds should be used to:

- Create or expand trainer and training approval systems and expand outreach to directors and staff working in child care, Head Start and schools about these quality assurance systems⁶
- Provide counseling and advisement for early childhood educators as they navigate college and university systems and requirements
- Provide professional development and education support to staff to meet requirements of the next level of a state's quality rating and improvement system

⁴ www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.pdf (March 4, 2004)

⁵ Section 642 of P.L. 110-134

⁶ A training approval system includes a set of standards that training must meet, usually linked to core knowledge and principles of adult learning. A trainer approval system includes a set of standards and qualifications for those who offer training.

- Pilot and evaluate training modules, delivery methods, cohort models to identify effective approaches and inform investments in professional development

Head Start quality funds

In the reauthorization of the Head Start Act, there is attention to professional development tailored to the needs of individual staff: “The Head Start program must develop, in consultation with the full-time individual staff member who provides direct services to children, a professional development plan. The plans must be “regularly evaluated for their impact on teacher and staff effectiveness.”⁷ ARRA funds can be used to meet this requirement.

Teacher Quality Partnerships Grants

Title II Part A of the Higher Education Opportunity Act establishes a new grant program, the Teacher Quality Partnership grants.⁸ The Secretary of Education will award competitive grants to local partnerships of Baccalaureate teacher preparation programs and high need school districts. A partnership may include an early childhood education program – defined in the HEAO as a licensed or regulated child care, Head Start or Early Head Start, or state prekindergarten program. If a partnership includes an early childhood program, its plan for improving teacher preparation must include early childhood educators.

DIVERSITY, ACCESS AND INCLUSION

The early childhood workforce is comprised of individuals with a range of qualifications and experiences. For many in the early childhood workforce, the costs of higher education are prohibitive. In addition, many early childhood educators spend large sums of their own money or programs spend on their behalf significant resources toward professional development that does not articulate to any degree program. Unlike K-12, there are few and varied qualifications or credentials required of early childhood practitioners. Many educators in early childhood community programs have entered the field with little professional preparation and must go back to school, typically while working full-time, even after years of experience working with young children. It can take years for an early childhood educator to complete an associates or bachelor’s degree. Distance learning, cohort and degree-completion models, both onsite and campus- based, plus systems of supports for first-time or first-generation college students are all methods to provide access to professional development and assure success in academic and professional achievement.

⁷ Section of P.L. 110-134

⁸ See P.L. 110-315. A summary of the Act’s provisions that relate to early childhood educators is available at www.naeyc.org/policy

Child Care & Development Block Grant quality dollars

The ARRA sets aside CCDBG funds for quality improvements which states can use on a wide range of training and education. Some possible uses of ARRA funds include:

- Providing grants for professional development opportunities that support attainment of staff standards and ongoing PD for programs to meet the next level of the state quality rating and improvement system
- Expanding the number, use and coordination of early childhood program coaches, mentors, and technical assistants to work with programs to improve practices and services
- Reviewing and revising state child care licensing standards with respect to preparation and ongoing professional development for working in family child care and centers – aligning requirements with professional development systems (core knowledge areas, credentials, and career lattices)
- Developing distance learning, degree-completion, and cohort models to support attainment of credentials, movement on a career lattice, and/or degrees and certification
- Supporting faculty development in early childhood higher education programs and articulation of training and courses from one level to the next.
- Developing credentials for directors of early childhood education programs that include management and leadership skills
- Including cultural and linguistic competence and family engagement knowledge as part of the core competencies
- Creating quality inclusive classrooms in which children with and without disabilities are served together
- Selecting and using curricula assessments, and other resources that are appropriate for English language learners and children with disabilities
- Hiring substitutes to allow staff to participate in professional development

Head Start quality funds

Head Start funds include a set aside of funds for quality improvements. The April 2, 2009 Program Instruction from the Office of Head Start regarding use of the ARRA Head Start funds states:

Any remaining funds from the reserved amount described in subparagraph (A) shall be used to carry out any of the following activities:

- Supporting staff training, child counseling, and other services, necessary to address the challenges of children from immigrant, refugee, and asylee families, homeless children, children in foster care, limited English proficient children, children of migrant or seasonal farmworker families, children from families in crisis, children referred to Head Start programs

(including Early Head Start programs) by child welfare agencies, and children who are exposed to chronic violence or substance abuse. (...)

- Employing additional qualified classroom staff to reduce the child-to-teacher ratio in the classroom and additional qualified family service workers to reduce the family-to-staff ratio for those workers.
- Ensuring that Head Start programs have qualified staff that promote the language skills and literacy growth of children and that provide children with a variety of skills that have been identified, through scientifically based reading research, as predictive of later reading achievement.⁹

Additionally, the Head Start Act requires that full-time Head Start staff who provides direct services to children receive a professional development plan created in consultation with that employee. The 2007 amendments also require Head Start teachers receive at least 15 clock hours of professional development per year. ARRA Head Start funds could be used to meet this requirement.

Title I funds to local educational agencies

Title I funds as described in the section on Integration can be used for professional development purposes in Title I-funded early childhood programs and with other early childhood education programs that serve children likely to attend Title I schools. In addition, Title I can be used for professional development for teachers in the early grades. These ARRA funds should be used for professional development for teachers, assistant teachers and other school personnel on developmentally appropriate practices, instruction and support for children who are English language learners, transitions between preschool, kindergarten, and first grades, and on meaningful family engagement.

IDEA Part C

The April 1, 2009 Fact Sheet from the U.S. Department of Education on the use of Part C funds under the ARRA provides this example for the use of those funds:

Provide in-service training on evidence-based practices to EIS program staff and EIS providers to ensure that infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families receive high quality early intervention services in a timely manner.

Obtain state-of-the art assistive technology devices and provide training to qualified personnel on the use of such devices to support the functional development of infants and toddlers with disabilities.¹⁰

⁹ Head Start Funding Increase ACF-PI-HS-09-06 Program Information at http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/PIs/2009/resour_pri_006_040209.html

¹⁰ www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/factsheet/idea-c.html

IDEA Part B

Part B funds may be used for professional development for educators working with children with disabilities in preschool, elementary and secondary grades. The ARRA funds should be used to provide professional development for preschool and early elementary grade teachers and other school personnel in

- Appropriate assessment of children with disabilities and teaching practices
- Effective inclusive classrooms, including coaching and mentoring
- Transition practices with a focus on those programs and schools serving children whose kindergarten program is provided in a setting different from their preschool program

Statewide longitudinal data systems

Under the Head Start Act, state early learning advisory councils must help develop unified data collection systems for early childhood education. The ARRA funds used to create or enhance data systems should include information on the early childhood workforce, disaggregated by role, program setting, credential, demographic characteristics (including multiple languages), experience in the field, population and age of children served, specific areas of knowledge and credentials (e.g., infants, toddlers, preschoolers, children with disabilities, English language learners) and compensation. Data collected include a focus on barriers to access and supports, including data related to program sustainability and stability.

Stabilization funds

Local school districts may use the stabilization funds for any purpose authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA); or the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. Some examples include:

- Providing professional development for early childhood educators on developmentally appropriate curricula, assessment and instructional practices aligned with the state early learning guidelines;
- Creating channels of communication and joint professional development between community based early childhood programs and schools on alignment of curricula and transition for kindergarten entry;
- Providing professional development for elementary school principals and other school personnel on early childhood development and developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate practices with children in preschool and early elementary grades;
- Tech-Prep – a program which receives Perkins funding, links high school technical preparation to community college and four-year institutions. Often CDA or another State entry-level credential is used as the foundation for these agreements that grant community college credit for CDA and identify a defined course of study that will transfer to the 4-year institution. Teacher

prep programs have been difficult because they have so few hours of early childhood content.

Pell Grants

Pell grants are a needs-based grant for low-income individuals enrolled in a postsecondary institution. The eligibility and amount of an individual's grant award is determined by student's expected family contribution (a formula calculation); the cost of attendance (as determined by the institution); part time versus full time status; and whether the student attends for a full academic year or less. A student must be pursuing his or her first Baccalaureate degree or be enrolled in certain post-baccalaureate programs that lead to teacher certification or licensure. For academic year 2009-2010, the maximum Pell Grant award will be \$5,350.

New American Opportunity Tax Credit

The ARRA replaces the HOPE tax credit with a new "American Opportunity" tax credit for tax years 2009 and 2010. A student must be enrolled at least half-time in an undergraduate degree program. If a student has "qualifying expenses" (tuition, books, fees) of \$4,000 or more a year, the credit can be as much as \$2,500 per student, per year. The amount of the new credit equals 100% of the first \$2,000 of qualified tuition and expenses paid and 25% of the next \$2,000 of expenses. So a student must have incurred \$4,000 in eligible expenses for a family to receive the maximum \$2,500. The new credit is 40% refundable. Thus, if a tax filer spends \$4,000 in eligible expenses and does not owe federal income taxes, the credit is \$1,000 (40% of \$2,500). If tax filer owes \$1,000 in federal taxes, and is eligible for and claims this tax credit, the tax liability is eliminated and creates a rebate of \$1,500. Under the ARRA, the maximum eligible income range has been raised. For tax years 2009 and 2010, the maximum eligible income is \$80,000 for an individual or \$160,000 for married joint filers. Because the tax credit is partially refundable, eligibility is extended to approximately four million low-income students.

COMPENSATION PARITY

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, early childhood educators are among the lowest paid workers in the nation. Inadequate compensation – low wages and lack of health and retirement benefits – creates difficulty in recruiting staff with training and education and difficulty in retaining staff in programs. Even when early childhood educators obtain higher education degrees, they are not assured a significant change in compensation.

Many states use CCDBG funds for compensation initiatives, projects that combine scholarships for higher education with compensation rewards or bonuses. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project is one example that operates in 21 states. Funding is not sufficient to provide scholarships and compensation bonuses to every eligible individual. ARRA funds should be used to expand the number of individuals who participate in T.E.A.C.H. and similar initiatives, including the hiring of more counselors and substitutes that make it

possible for individuals to be successful in their higher education and for programs to afford to have staff enroll in higher education part time.

Child Care & Development Block Grant quality set aside

Many states use CCDBG funds for compensation initiatives that help individuals with scholarships for postsecondary education and then provide a bonus upon completion, and for retention initiatives to keep educators with degrees in early childhood programs.

- Start up or expand a T.E.A.C.H. or WAGES or similar compensation initiative that links education with compensation
- Establish salary schedules or scales as part of the state quality rating and improvement systems and provide enhancement grants to help programs provide staff with scholarships, release time and substitutes as well as grants for compensation rewards as programs reach the next level of the quality rating and improvement system.

Head Start

The Head Start funds include funding for a cost of living adjustment and quality activities. The April 2 guidance from the Office of Head Start¹¹ states that the quality funds must be used for Section 640(a) (5) of the Head Start Act:

- (5)(A) Not less than 50 percent of the [quality improvement funding] shall be used to improve the compensation (including benefits) of educational personnel, family service workers, and child counselors, as described in Sections 644(a) and 653, in the manner determined by the Head Start agencies (including Early Head Start agencies) involved, to—
- i. ensure that compensation is adequate to attract and retain qualified staff for the programs involved in order to enhance program quality;
 - ii. improve staff qualifications and assist with the implementation of career development programs for staff that support ongoing improvement of their skills and expertise; and
 - iii. provide education and professional development to enable teachers to be fully competent to meet the professional standards established under section 648A(a)(1), including—
 - I. providing assistance to complete postsecondary course work;
 - II. improving the qualifications and skills of educational personnel to become certified and licensed as bilingual education teachers, or as teachers of English as a second language; and

¹¹ To read the guidance, go to http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/PIs/2009/resour_pri_006_040209.html

- III. improving the qualifications and skills of educational personnel to teach and provide services to children with disabilities.

Teacher Quality Partnership Grants

A partnership that receives a grant under this program and that includes an early childhood education program among its partners must use some of the grant funds for compensation initiatives that reward educators who achieve an Associates or Baccalaureate degree in early childhood education.

Statewide longitudinal data systems

Statewide longitudinal data systems should include information on compensation by setting, age of children served, credentials and degrees, and years in the role and field. By collecting this data and comparing to other professions for which parity is sought, policies to promote compensation parity can be expanded or enhanced. These data systems should build on, expand or connect to existing workforce data systems including training registries, Head Start and Early Head Start information collection, state prekindergarten data, child care market rate surveys and other sources of workforce compensation information.

- Create capacity across state and local agencies and entities that collect such data to share information.
- Conduct surveys of the state's current workforce in family and center-based child care, Early Head Start and Head Start, state prekindergarten programs, early childhood special education programs, and schools on compensation and evaluate alignment with the state career lattice, equity of access to professional development and higher education, and the state quality rating and improvement system incentives, and other elements of the statewide professional development system.