



Requests for Proposals Overview

March 18, 2026 from 1:00-2:00 PM

By Zoom

Agenda

- Project Team: Welcome and Introductions
- Strong Beginnings Background and Program Requirements
- RFP: Requirements and Timelines
- Questions

Strong Beginnings Project Team

- **Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP)**
 - Sophia Lafayette-Lause, Director, Division of Early Learning and Family Supports, MiLEAP
 - Dawn Kalkman, GSRP Manager
 - Janice Davis, GSRP Consultant
- **CCRESA Office of Innovative Projects**
 - Christy Callahan, Director
 - Joan Firestone, Strong Beginnings Program and Implementation Consultant
 - Kari Holmberg, Project Manager
 - Glenda Rader, Finance
 - Ella Patrona, Implementation Coordinator
 - Emily Littleton, Project Implementation Assistant
- **Michigan State University**
 - Jamie Wu, Lead Researcher

Project History

- **2017 - 2018: Funded by Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund**
 - Defined conceptual model, established project team, assembled referent group
 - Conducted research, developed funding model, compiled program recommendations, drafted implementation model, refined program elements
- **2020 - 2022: Pilot Initiated Using PDG B-5 Funds**
 - Started with 4 ISDs and 10 classrooms
 - 2 additional classrooms added in second year
- **2022 - 2023: Pilot Continues with First Support from State School Aid Funds**
- **2023 - 2026: Pilot Expanded with Support from State School Aid Funds (sec 32t)**
 - Added 6 new ISDs and 20 new classrooms for a total of 10 ISDs and 30 classrooms

Section 32t of the School Aid Act for FY 26

- Funds Phase 2 of a “three-year-old preschool pilot”
 - Designed for children who are age 3
 - Similar to GSRP
 - Includes program variations and focus on inclusion
- \$25m to CCRESA over four years (FY26-FY29)
 - Planning to have classrooms through 27-28 SY
- Requires CCRESA to provide a report detailing
 - How Phase 2 of the pilot was conducted
 - Details of variations, children served, etc.
 - Lessons learned that can be used in scaling up
- MSU conducts all research associated with the pilot

What we have already accomplished?

- Held an RFP in the Spring of 2025 based on potential award in School Aid Act for FY 26
- Approved 9 ISDs to begin classrooms in the fall of 2025 using a 4 school day schedule—same as pilot phase 1
- Because of late passage of the Act, allowed programs to begin in January or September of 2026
 - 4 opted to start in January and remaining 5 will begin in September
- These 9 classrooms and our 30 existing classrooms from earlier funding will continue through the 27-28 SY

Current Program Map

Current ISDs

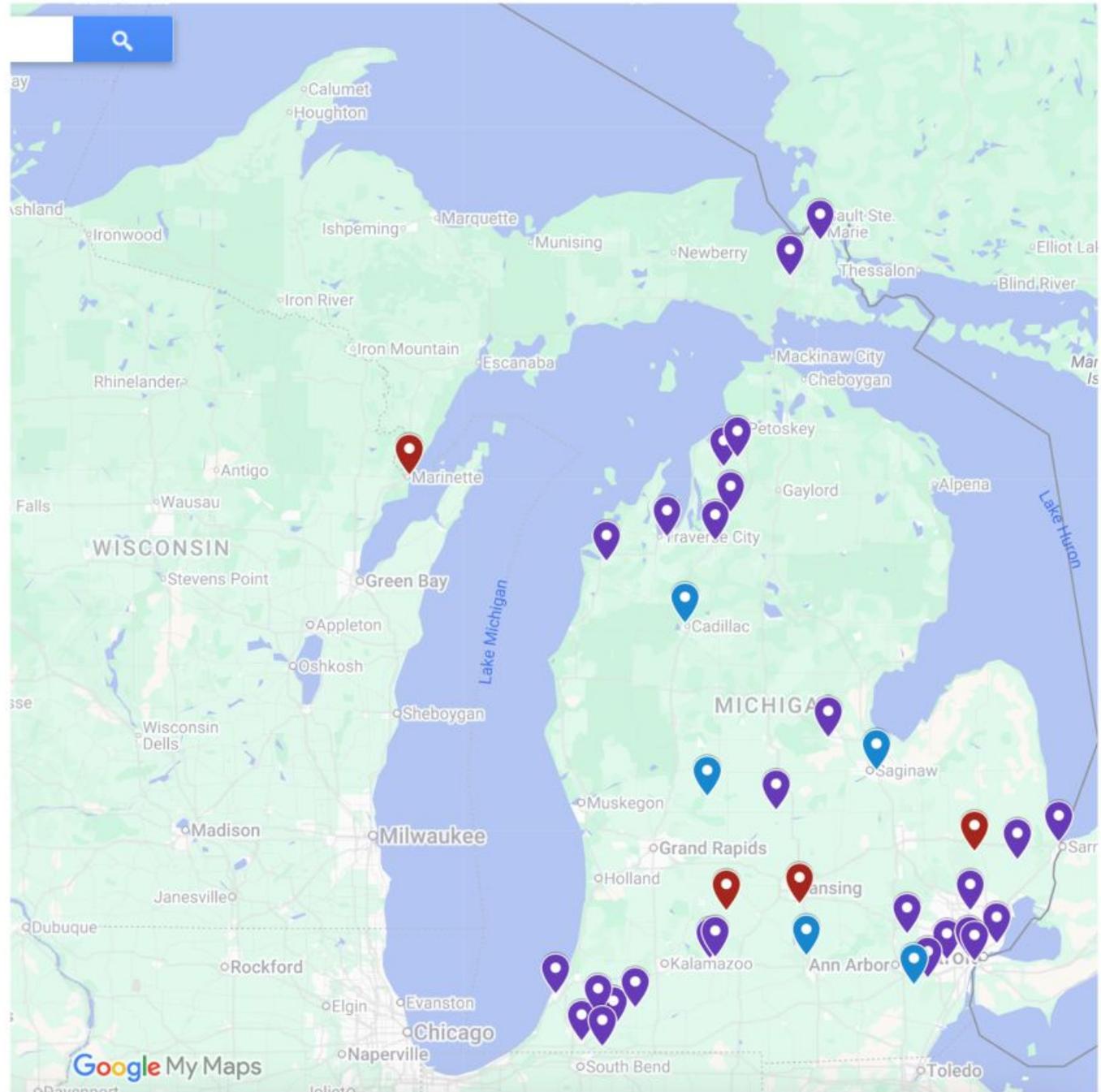
- Berrien RESA
- Calhoun ISD
- Charlevoix-Emmet
- Eastern Upper Peninsula ISD
- Heritage Southwest
- Midland ESA
- Northwest Ed
- Oakland Schools
- St. Clair RESA
- Wayne RESA

New ISDs (Jan 2026)

- Eaton RESA
- Ingham ISD
- Lapeer ISD
- Menominee County I

Future ISDs (Fall 2026)

- Jackson County ISD
- Montcalm Area ISD
- Saginaw ISD
- Washtenaw ISD
- Wexford-Missaukee



Our current RFP reflects Pilot Phase 2

- A range of program variations/options are allowable
- Guidance to increase inclusivity of all programs is included
- Maximum class size has increased to 15 children
- Funding has increased to \$15,000 per child for 4 school day base
- Classrooms will be funded for the 26-27 and 27-28 school years
- During this phase, work will begin with MiLEAP to plan the transition of Strong Beginnings from pilot status to becoming a state administered program beginning in the 28-29 school year

What type of variations will we allow?

Variable	Option	Option	Option
Days Per Week	Four	Five	
Length of Day	Part Day AM only	Part Day AM and PM sessions	School Day
Age of Children	3-year olds	Both 3- and 4 year-olds	
Funding Source	Strong Beginnings only	Blended Funding	Braided Funding

Guidance on Variations

- Aligned as much as possible with GSRP
 - Funding levels same on percentage basis—\$15,000 per child 4 school day base
 - Program guidance generally the same
 - Multiage is new so different
- Three versions of will be available
 - Integrated into Implementation Manual
 - New guidance by IM section stand alone
 - Quick Start Guide comparing each variation to GSRP

Braided Classroom Guidance

- Strong Beginnings/GSRP multiage classrooms will receive the same funding as Strong Beginnings only classroom
 - Children in GSRP receive an extra allocation from Strong Beginnings that is the difference between the allocation from GSRP and that from Strong Beginnings
- Strong Beginnings/Tuition Based classrooms whether multiage or single age will be funded for only the Strong Beginnings children enrolled
 - Since Strong Beginnings funding is generally much greater than tuition funding, the classroom will need to fund all Strong Beginnings requirements with a much lower overall funding level

Inclusion Support Assurances For Strong Beginnings

- Another new component of our FY 26-29 grant from MiLEAP
- “The pilot will explore ways to promote inclusion from a child’s first experience with state funded preschool through working with teachers and early childhood educators to understand key components of inclusive classrooms”
- Assurances stress that there is an expectation that leadership will promote inclusive practices through collaboration, systems development, family partnerships and continuous improvement
- General expectations in each area are spelled out
- Signed by ISD Superintendent, Special Education Director, and ECC

Current and Expected Strong Beginnings Classrooms

Year	FY 24 Funding \$18m	FY26 Funding \$25m	Total Classrooms/ISDs
2025-2026	30	4 new	34 (14 ISDs)
2026-2027		34 continuing; about 17 (5 + 12) new	51 (31 ISDs)
2027-2028		About 51 continuing	51 (31 ISDs)

Priorities for Expansion

- Communities/areas in a child care desert
- Programs operated by Community Based Organizations
- ISDs in areas of the state without Strong Beginnings

Strong Beginnings: Overview

- Modeled after GSRP with modifications to ensure program appropriateness for three-year-old children and additional family support
 - Children must be under 250% FPL
 - Connect 4 Learning is not an allowable curriculum in Strong Beginnings
- New ISDs are expected to operate **one new classroom in 26-27 and 27-28**
- Current **pilot ISDs will continue to operate their existing classrooms** and will not receive additional classrooms. They will be allowed to recommend up to half their existing classrooms for a new variation.
 - These recommended classrooms will move immediately into the final pool

Child and Family Supports

- **A tiered, individualized model of support** for Strong Beginnings families
 - Approximately 10-15% of funding for this purpose
- All classrooms are required to have a **Family Liaison to serve all families**
 - Provides families with support, information, and resources to improve family well-being
 - An integral part of the classroom team
 - From a similar cultural and geographic background as SB families
- Family Liaisons should be hired for at least .2 FTE and should have a background that includes early childhood and/or social work
- ISD oversees onboarding and support of all Family Liaisons, even if hired by site
- Other child supports like behavioral consultation and additional teacher are allowable expenses, but **cannot take the place** of a Family Liaison

Pilot Evaluation Elements

- Programs will participate in both a **process and child/family-level evaluation**
- **Process Data**
 - Collected by CCRESA at the summary-level
 - Family support contacts, child and program quality assessments, etc.
 - Used to inform the scalability and replicability of the program
- **Child, Family and Teacher-Level Data**
 - Collected by the MSU Evaluation Team at the individual and item level
 - Parent Survey, Family Liaison Rubric, MSDS data, etc.
 - Used to assess the efficacy of the three-year-old program

Ongoing Strong Beginnings Evaluation Process

- **Data sharing agreements** will be made between sites, ISDs, and CCRESA for program level data
- **Data sharing agreements** will be made between CEPI and MSU for MSDS and comparison group data
- Families **will complete one year-end survey and may be compensated** for their participation
- **Family Liaisons** will complete a self-assessment rubric at the beginning and end of the year
- **Process summary-level data** will be collected bi-monthly by Implementation Team using SurveyMonkey and Family Contact Logs

Applicant Eligibility for SB

- Intermediate School Districts not currently participating in Strong Beginnings are the **eligible applicants**
 - Local Education Agencies, Community-Based Organizations, and Public Schools Academies who are interested should contact their ISD for more information on how they may be able to participate
- All classroom space planned for the **cohort beginning SY26-27 must be currently licensed**
- ISDs will most likely only receive funding for one classroom for the 26-27 school year

Funding

Per child allocations:

- SY 26-27
 - \$15,000 per child base for at least 30 weeks (more preferred) for a 4 school-day program
- Funding is not dependent upon full enrollment
- Funds must cover classroom and Child/Family Support expenses
- There **may be** modest increases up to \$250 per child per year **if funding allows**
- Start-up funds of \$20,000 per classroom for minor repairs and durable equipment only
- Transportation is encouraged and funded in addition to per-child allocation at a minimum of \$500 per child for each year of the grant
- Administrative costs for the ISD align with GSRP guidance and are capped at 4%

Payments

- **\$20,000 start-up funds** for equipment/repairs for each classroom can be invoiced at contract signing (purchases made before the budget is signed may not be reimbursed)
- Program **invoices and payments made at least quarterly** on a **reimbursement basis** beginning in December
- Strong Beginnings fiscal year is **July 1 - June 30**
- Budgets and FERs will be done similarly to those for GSRP—**initial program budgets are due in September**
- **No carryover** of funds allowed

Other Program Expectations and Requirements

- At least one ISD-level representative must participate in all Strong Beginnings trainings and technical assistance calls. Strong Beginnings staff must participate in specified trainings.
- All due dates for evaluation and budget related information must be met.
- Completion of a Child and Family Supports Plan.
- Submission of staff resumes and credentials may be required. Permission must be granted by CCRESA for employing staff who are not fully qualified.
- All ISDs/classrooms may receive site visits during the implementation period.
- Program-level implementation requirements not covered in this PPT can be found in the Strong Beginnings Implementation Manual and Appendix A of the application materials.

Application Process

How? A complete application using submit.com consists of all of the following:

- Intent to Apply
- Application
- Rubrics and variations and experience form for selected potential partners
- Letters of agreement to participate and to follow rules and guidance from ISD Superintendent and Site CEO
- Inclusion Support Assurances signed by ISD Superintendent, Special Ed Director and ECC
- Letters of support from Great Start to Quality Resource Center, Regional Head Start Agency and Regional Child Care Coalition Leads

Decisions for all ISDs will be made using rubrics which are available with the application

Program Rubric Details

- A rubric will be provided that **must be used by each ISD** applying for the grant to evaluate all sites that apply to become Strong Beginnings partners
- Only sites scoring 27 points or 75% on the rubric will be allowed to be proposed as potential sites
- From those sites scoring 27 or more points, ISDs may select up to 2 potential site partners—preferable 1 that is a CBO/Head Start and 1 that is a LEA/PSA/ISD
- Have interested partners complete the Program Request for and Experience with Variations form. That information will be included in the application for selected partners.

Program Element	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Licensing	No licensing special investigation found in the last three years.	One licensing special investigation in the last three years found one established violation that did not result in a change to the license.	In the last three years, one licensing special investigation found two violations OR two licensing special investigations each found one violation that did not result in a change to the license	One licensing investigation in the last three years resulted in a change to a provisional license. Currently have a regular license.
Great Start to Quality	Enhancing Quality-Validated or higher	Enhancing Quality	Reflecting on Quality	Maintaining Health and Safety
Fiscal Management	Program has more than one year of proven positive experience supporting GSRP fiscal requirements and understands their fiscal codes and procedures.	Program has one year of proven positive experience supporting GSRP fiscal requirements and is learning to understand their fiscal codes and procedures.	Program has proven positive experience with grant-funded programs other than GSRP, such as Head Start. It has a 75-day cash flow.	Program uses an accounting system like QuickBooks and has utilized functions such as splitting payment types. It has a 60-day cash flow.
Teacher Compensation (salary + benefits)	Lowest-paid teacher with credentials required for Strong Beginnings would be compensated at least \$65,000.	Lowest-paid teacher with credentials required for Strong Beginnings would be compensated at least \$55,000.	Lowest-paid teacher with credentials required for Strong Beginnings would be compensated at least \$45,000.	Lowest-paid teacher with credentials required for Strong Beginnings would be compensated at least \$35,000.
Availability of a free preschool program for four-year-olds at the same site as Strong Beginnings	Site offers free preschool program for 4-year-olds open to children up to at least 250% FPL.	Site offers free preschool program for 4-year-olds only open to children at lower levels of poverty, such as 150% FPL	Site doesn't offer free preschool but accepts child care scholarships that cover the cost of tuition for all eligible 4-year-olds.	Site doesn't offer free preschool and charges a co-pay for children who receive child care scholarships.

Program Element	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Experience with Three-Year-Old Children	Program currently enrolls three-year-old children as well as toddlers.	Program currently enrolls three-year-olds who are not required to have learned to use the toilet.	Program currently enrolls three-year-olds who are required to have learned to use the toilet.	Program does not currently enroll three-year-olds but does enroll four-year-olds.
Parent Engagement Opportunities	Program offers two home visits, two parent-teacher conferences, and at least five group parent engagement activities during the year.	Program offers two of the three following activities: 1) two home visits; 2) two parent-teacher conferences; 3) five group parent engagement activities.	Program offers at least one parent-teacher conference AND three group parent engagement activities.	Program offers at least one parent-teacher conference OR three group parent engagement activities.
Bathrooms	There is a bathroom in the classroom as well as a multi-stall bathroom nearby.	There is a bathroom in the classroom OR a multi-stall bathroom immediately adjacent to the classroom.	There is a multi-stall bathroom near the classroom (within three rooms) OR an individual bathroom immediately adjacent to the classroom.	There is a multi-stall bathroom further than three rooms away from the classroom OR an individual bathroom more than one room away from the classroom.
Additional Supports	Program provides transportation, before and after care, and Friday care.	Program provides 3 of the following: transportation, before care, after care, or Friday care.	Program provides 2 of the following: transportation, before care, after care, or Friday care.	Program provides one or none of the following: transportation, before care, after care, or Friday care.

Decision Making Process

- Only proposals that are complete and submitted by the deadline will be reviewed
- Questions concerning ISD process to invite site participation, verify site information, and letters of support will be scored by outside reviewers with a rubric
- Applicants scoring at least 75% on the rubric will move on in the process
- A grid of finalist classrooms, including those from both current and potentially new ISDs will be compiled.
 - Factors such as type of variation requested, geography, child care desert status etc. will be considered in selecting funded programs.
 - Random selection may occur between programs
 - Exact number of new sites will be determined by the costs of variations/options selected

Strong Beginnings RFP Timeline

Issue RFP	March 16, 2026
Strong Beginnings RFP Information Webinar	March 18, 2026
Questions from ISDs due	March 20, 2026, 5:00 PM
FAQ Response posted	March 24, 2026, 5:00 PM
Intent to Apply due to CCRESA (submit.com)	April 14, 2026, 5:00 PM
Applications due to CCRESA (submit.com)	April 24, 2026, 5:00 PM
RFP Review/Possible Site Visits	May 2026
Applicants Notified of Pending Acceptance	Late May 2026

Contacts and Resources

- Questions about the RFP Requirements?
 - Email Joan Firestone at jfirestone@ccresa.org
- Need a copy of helpful documents?
 - Implementation Manual
 - Variation Guidance
 - Rubrics for Program Partners
 - RFP PPT
 - Q/A for 2026 RFP process
 - Tutorial for submit.com
- All documents available on eotta.ccresa.org under Strong Beginnings Resources



Questions?