



## Rhode Island Pre-K: Overview & Service-Delivery Models 2021

**Background & Overview:** Rhode Island's Pre-Kindergarten Program (RI Pre-K) serves as a national model for delivering high-quality early learning experiences to children four years of age in Rhode Island. Despite our state's [high ranking](#) for delivering high-quality instruction, Rhode Island still only ranks #35 in the nation for access to Pre-K.

RI Pre-K has expanded each year to serve more communities and its children. As of 2020, RI Pre-K serves 1,848 children in 16 communities across Rhode Island using a mixed-delivery model comprised of Head Start programs, local schools and community based child care providers.

**Goal:** Rhode Island aims to offer universal RI Pre-K to all four-year-olds by 2024. To achieve this goal, the RI Department of Education convened a working group of state agency early childhood leaders and advocates in 2021 to design new and innovative service delivery models to expand RI Pre-K to support RI's vision for strengthening the birth through age five early learning system by offering high-quality learning experiences to four-year-old children across the state. By building new, innovative and sustainable models for service-delivery, RI aims to expand its RI Pre-K reach to more interested families across the state.

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**Why invest in early learning?** Rhode Island is committed to ensuring that all children begin school ready to learn and are on a path to read proficiently in third grade. Research shows that attending high quality early childhood education programs helps children develop important skills and knowledge that prepares them to succeed in school and life.

**What is RI Pre-K?** RI Pre-K is a tuition free, inclusive, high-quality standards-based program, built on the existing early childhood education infrastructure. RI Pre-K programs serve children who are 4 years of age by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current year, prior to entering Kindergarten, who live in the community where the Pre-K is located. RI Pre-K uses a mixed delivery system that includes Local Education Agencies (LEA's), Head Start programs, and community-based childcare programs with coordinated recruitment efforts. RI is recognized as a national Pre-K leader because RIDE requires and supports all RI Pre-K classrooms to achieve the same high-quality standards and achieve Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) regardless of setting.

**Rhode Island currently holds the following requirements for a classroom to be considered part of the RI Pre-K program. As RI works to design and pilot new models for delivering RI Pre-K, our shared definitions and indicators of quality may be adjusted to better reflect the needs and outcomes of our youngest learners.**

- A full 6 hour, 180-days of high-quality early childhood instruction in a general education setting.
- Achieve Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) approval for **each** Pre-K class.
- Receive a minimum overall rating of 5 on an ECERS-3 observation.



- Taught by a Bachelor level or Pre-K-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade certified early childhood teacher and assistant.
- Have a CECE approved Education Coordinator, who supports the program, teachers and classroom practices with ongoing instructional leadership and supervision.
- Pre-K workforce participate in annual and ongoing PD/TA.
- Curriculum aligns with the RIELDS and is endorsed by RIDE.
- Uses a valid and reliable assessment tool, chosen by the state.
- Minimum enrollment of 18 children and does not exceed 20.
- All children receive an annual and timely child outreach screening through the school department.
- Collaborate with the local school district to provide special education services embedded into everyday classroom routines and activities
- Programs support the coordination of comprehensive family services, including before and after school care.
- RI Pre-K quality is monitored regularly by a state agency.
- Eligibility information (residency, income, DOB) is verified prior to the start of the school year.
- There is an attendance requirement as attendance is monitored by RIDE.

***Building on RI's Mixed Delivery System, New & Innovative Service-Delivery Models:*** To date, RI Pre-K has been awarded to programs on a fully-funded classroom basis through grant competition process. This document introduces new ways for Head Start, Community-Based, and LEA early learning providers to open RI Pre-K classrooms by building on existing programming. The goal of the new RI Pre-K service models is to include all partners that are already offering high-quality Pre-K, even when it is funded through another state or federal agency, to ensure a wide variety of options for families, and to be mindful of market saturation. In order to be considered high-quality and part of the universal Pre-K goal, programs must meet the current definition of RI Pre-K and can expand through the models detailed in the following pages. All models will still be awarded through a competitive grant process.

## 1

### Award Full Classrooms (*traditional model*)

#### How it Works:

The current RI Pre-K model provides money and support to selected classrooms, chosen through a competitive grant process, to provide an opportunity for up to twenty 4-year-olds to access high-quality early learning. The RI Pre-K awards cover the entire cost of the classroom including salaries, materials, building expenses and various monitoring activities. All children enrolled in this model are selected through the RI Pre-K lottery.

#### Program Types:

Community-based programs, Head Start programs, and Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

#### Program Eligibility:

In addition to the requirements listed for all Pre-K sites, it is required that all programs applying for a full classroom have an identified space for the RI Pre-K classrooms to open without displacing children currently enrolled in the program. This typically means identifying a classroom that is licensed, but unused, or a new space that can be utilized.

#### Award Amount:

Awards for a fully funded classroom range between \$170,000 and \$190,000 annually.

Applications:

Programs can apply to open a fully-funded RI Pre-K classroom by responding to the grant competition and submitting appropriate documentation.

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Expand/Extend Current Head Start Classrooms (*pilot service model for 2021*)

How it Works:

Head Start classrooms that meet the RI Pre-K definition -- with the exception of length of day and/or length of year -- are eligible to apply for RI Pre-K grant awards to support their program in moving to a 6 hour a day, 180 days a year model. This would allow Head Start programs to extend the length of day and the number of days in operation. Children will be enrolled through Head Start's current enrollment process.

Program Types:

Head Start programs

Program Eligibility:

To be eligible for this grant the classroom needs to employ a Bachelor-degreed lead teacher, have an Education Coordinator that will provide staff support and supervision, be willing to attend RI Pre-K trainings and Communities of Practice, and achieve CECE approval for each class applied for in the application.

These classrooms would not be part of the current RI Pre-K lottery system and Head Start would continue to enroll children per their usual protocol.

Award Amount:

The maximum award for these grants are \$50,000 per classroom and is based on the amount of lengthening (hours per day or days per year) each classroom needs.

For example, a classroom operating at 4 hours a day and 170 days could apply for \$165/hour to lengthen the day and an additional \$1,000/day to lengthen the school year. In contrast, a classroom that is already operating at 6 hours a day but only 170 days a year could apply for \$1,000/day to offset the cost of lengthening the school year by 10 days.

These awards will also be supported with the quality support contracts involved in RI Pre-K such as SUCCESS, LISC and PD/TA. TSG can be negotiated, if needed.

Applications

To apply, programs would need to fill out the upcoming grant competition from RIDE, submitting the appropriate documentation, along with verification of the current operation of the classroom.

How it Works:

In the Head Start for Free/Reduced Price Lunch Students service model, Federal Head Start funds are used to pay for all children under the federal poverty line of 135% who qualify for Head Start. These children can be directly enrolled and do not need to enter through the lottery. The state RI Pre-K funds are used to provide Head Start Comprehensive Services and a seat in a Head Start classroom to those children who qualify for free and reduced lunch poverty guidelines (between 135% and 185%) as "below-income" families and over 185% as "above income" families based on the socio-economic population of their city or town. Braiding funding allows for children of varying social-economic backgrounds to participate in the same classroom.

Program Types:

Head Start programs

Program Eligibility:

To be eligible for this grant the classroom needs have a minimum of nine (9) children enrolled in Head Start seats, employ a Bachelor degreed lead teacher, have an Education Coordinator that will provide staff support and supervision, be willing to attend RI Pre-K trainings and Communities of Practice and achieve CECE approval for each class applied for in the application. These classrooms will share TSG data with RIDE.

Award Amount

The maximum award amount for this grant is \$130,000 per classroom. "Below and above-income" children that are chosen through the RI Pre-K lottery process at a rate of \$13,000 per child. The RI Pre-K funds are also used to extend the Head Start academic calendar from 170 days to 180 days in compliance with RI Pre-K guidelines. All of these classrooms must become CECE approved and all children count towards the total seat count of RI Pre-K and are reported to NIEER.

Applications

To apply, programs would need to fill out the upcoming grant competition, submitting the appropriate documentation, along with the number of projected Head Start children enrolled in the classroom and a request for the number of children needed to be seated through the lottery.

RI Pre-K recognizes the need to leverage federal funding to more thoughtfully integrate our state's most vulnerable families in a high-quality learning experience. Families who participate in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) often struggle with identifying high-quality care options for their children due to low reimbursement rates and limited care options. This model would enable families who participate in CCAP to preserve their current slot without fear of displacement, or disruption—creating a unique opportunity for their inclusion into a high-quality RI Pre-K classroom. This model would not require families who participate in CCAP to enter the RI Pre-K lottery in order to preserve their slot. Additionally, child care providers serving children who participate in CCAP would not need to displace or reassign their current students who participate in CCAP to accommodate RI Pre-K funding.

How it Works:

For children who are turning 4-years old by September 1, 2021, with an active CCAP certificate, & attending a RI Pre-K provider, they will now be able to remain in their program and matriculate directly into the RI Pre-K classroom rather than entering the Pre-K lottery. Programs can offer their matriculating 4-year-olds, with CCAP subsidy, the chance to stay enrolled in their current program and the remaining seats will be filled through the RI Pre-K lottery process.

Programs will submit for CCAP reimbursement as they typically do through the CCAP portal, and then charge the differential of the per student cost to RIDE. RIDE will also cover all parent CCAP co-pays to ensure the program is entirely free to all families

Program Types:

Community-based programs serving CCAP children

Program Eligibility:

To be eligible for this grant, the applying classroom needs have a minimum of five (5) and maximum of twenty (20) children who participate in CCAP enrolled in the upcoming year's RI Pre-K classroom, employ a Bachelor degreed lead teacher, have an Education Coordinator that will provide staff support and supervision, be willing to attend RI Pre-K trainings and Communities of Practice, and achieve CECE approval for each class applied for in the grant competition. These classrooms will share TSG data with RIDE.

Award Amount:

The maximum award amount is not to exceed \$143,000. The base award factors in full reimbursement from CCAP with \$0 co-pay. The award can increase for families that have a co-pay as RI Pre-K funds will cover that cost to ensure the program is free to families. For example, if the program has nine (9) children who are funded by CCAP that are eligible for RI Pre-K and it is assumed that the program will bill CCAP for \$26,840 over the 44-week RI Pre-K school year, they may apply for and additional \$28,160 in RI Pre-K funds to cover each child up to \$11,000. Programs may then apply for 9 children to be enrolled through the lottery and receive an additional \$11,000/child for those seats. In this example, the program would apply for \$127,160 in RI Pre-K funds.

Classrooms will be required to participate in all quality supports such as PDTA from The Center for Early Learning Professionals, SUCCESS, LISC and quality monitoring such as ECERS and CLASS.

Application:

To apply, programs would need to apply to the upcoming grant competition and submit the appropriate documentation, along with the number of projected children participating in CCAP enrolled in the classroom and a request for the number of children needed to be seated through the lottery.

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Transform Special Education Preschools to Gen-Ed RI PreK (*pilot service model for 2021*)

Providing students who are differently abled access to RI Pre-K is an equity issue. This new service model will allow more 4-year-old students who are differently abled to have the same opportunities as their peers and reduce the readiness gap at kindergarten entry. Currently, many preschools in school districts are special education classrooms and not meeting all of the RI Pre-K criteria.

How it Works:



Additional funding would provide districts with the funds necessary to provide high quality RI Pre-K classrooms by supplementing the existing investment they receive through the funding formula, Title I, or other funding streams. In exchange for the funding, districts would sign an MOU to meet all RIDE CECE standards, share needed data with RIDE, and participate in all PDTA and monitoring activities

Program Types:

All LEAs

Program Eligibility:

To be eligible for this grant the classroom needs to operate 6 hours a day for 180 days, employ a Pre-K -2 certified teacher, have an Education Coordinator that will provide staff support and supervision, provide special education and related services embedded into the RI PreK classroom, be willing to attend RI Pre-K trainings and Communities of Practice, and achieve CECE approval for each class applied for in the application.

Award Amounts

This model is based on the per child cost awarded to LEA's through the funding formula. The maximum award will vary due to student success and poverty level factors. For example, if the state's funding formula provides \$6,600 per child, LEA's will be eligible to apply for \$4,400 per child to equal a per RI Pre-K child cost of \$11,000. LEA's who already exceed the per child cost who have limited local funds may apply for up to \$3,000 per child. LEA's can work with RIDE to determine their per child state allocation. The maximum RI Pre-K award for this service model is \$150,000.

Classrooms will be required to participate in all quality supports such as PDTA from The Center for Early Learning Professionals, SUCCESS, LISC and quality monitoring such as ECERS and CLASS. TSG can be provided at no cost to the district, if needed.

Application

To apply, programs would need to apply to the upcoming grant competition, submitting the appropriate documentation, along with the amount of state funding formula per child that is received. Children will be enrolled to these classrooms through the RI Pre-K lottery process.

*\* Districts are also welcome to apply through the current model.*