



## New Hampshire ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Discretionary Funds Plan Details

April 18, 2022

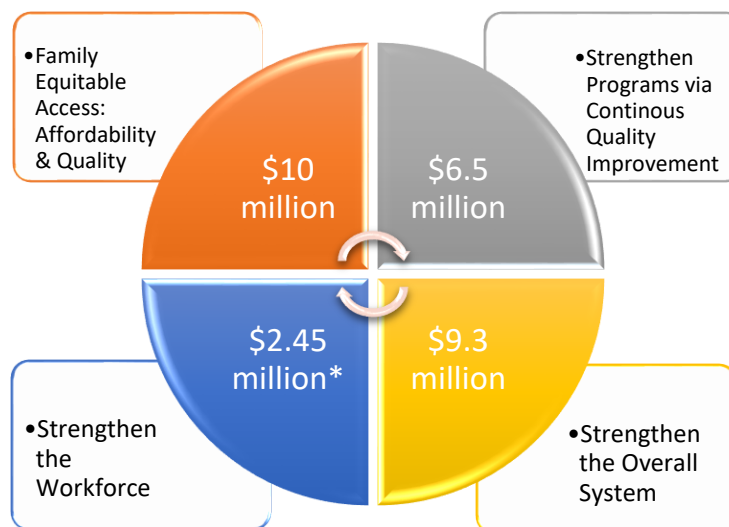
The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) plan to utilize \$29,736,767 in ARPA Discretionary Funds addresses four areas of critical need within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) stated purpose that were identified by a broad array of stakeholders over a six-month period (see: [NH-DHHS ARPA-Discretionary-Funds Summary-Report October-2021.pdf \(nh-connections.org\)](#)):

1. Increase equitable access to affordable, quality child care for families;
2. Strengthen the child care workforce now and for the future by investing in evidence-based and promising practices and strategies designed for these purposes;
3. Strengthen program quality via continuous quality improvement (CQI); and
4. Strengthen the overall child care system (state and local infrastructure building; program strengthening).

### Process to Identify Practices, Approaches and Strategies to Address Priorities

To address each priority area, DHHS explored evidence-based and promising practices, approaches and strategies by reviewing national and state research and reports, participating in ACF Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start webinars and technical assistance opportunities, considering NH stakeholders' recommendations, and identifying opportunities to leverage existing resources and efforts. DHHS also generated preliminary cost estimates (subject to change) for each priority area to create an initial budget. Of the total ARPA Discretionary Funds \$29,736,767 allocation, 95% (\$28,249,929) will support projects and initiatives and 5% (\$1,486,838) will fund allowable administrative costs (not shown in the chart).

Figure 1 presents the estimated costs by priority area for \$28,250,000 (rounded) ARPA discretionary funds including family access (affordability and quality), strengthening the workforce, and strengthening the system (state, regional and programs). As the figure reflects, funding and activities for individual priority areas will also contribute to the remaining areas and overall strength of the system. Following the figure is a list of projects and initiatives for each priority area at this time (subject to change).



**Figure 1. Estimated costs by priority area for ARPA Discretionary Funds projects/initiatives (\$28,250,000, rounded).**

\* Does not include ARPA Stabilization direct-to-program funding for staff recruitment/retention

**1. Family Equitable Access: Affordability & Quality (\$10 million)**

Projects/initiatives in this area will include pilots to document the costs and benefits of various Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) policy changes in support of equitable access to affordable, quality child care, as follows:

- CCDF pilot on increased income eligibility for families during initial determination
- CCDF pilot on child enrollment-based vs. attendance-based payment to providers
- Absent Due to COVID policy extension through September 4, 2022
- Pilot to implement the Early Head Start model in infant/toddler child care to expand access to care and increase program quality
- Community-based, mixed delivery pre-k model development (in collaboration with the Preschool Development Grant and Department of Education)

**2. Strengthen the Early Childhood (Child Care, Head Start/EHS) and Out-of-School Time Workforce (\$2.45 million)**

Projects/initiatives in this area will study and pilot program on the recruitment and retention of the child care/early childhood/out-of-school time workforce in NH, including (but not limited to) the following projects/activities:

- Identify and field test effective strategies that attract, retain and increase the knowledge, skills and competencies of the early childhood and out-of-school time workforce
- Provide a variety of self-help/wellness/mental health supports for staff
- Provide multiple professional development opportunities for career exploration and pathways through scholarships, training programs, internships and apprenticeships
- Fund an effective multi-tiered marketing program

**3. Strengthen Programs via Continuous Quality Improvement (Granite Steps for Quality, QRIS)(\$6.5 million)**

Projects/initiatives in this area will support continuous quality program improvement statewide through the implementation and evaluation of Granite Steps for Quality (GSQ) (NH's Quality Recognition and Improvement System). Funds will provide extensive support for NH's early childhood (child care, Head Start/Early Head Start center-based programs) and out-of-school time programs to enroll and advance in the system via quality bonuses, professional development opportunities and resources/materials—all at little or no cost to programs. QRIS quality incentives for programs. To include:

- QRIS assessment tools and materials
- Professional development activities to support QRIS implementation
- Increased access to mental health supports/services for staff, children and families through self-care/wellness training/technical assistance and support to staff
- Increased access to community mental health services for children in early childhood and out-of-school time programs
- GSQ validation study

#### **4. Strengthen the Overall Child Care and Out-of-School Time System (\$9.3 million)**

Projects/initiatives in this area will support infrastructure development for child care center providers, family child care start-up/expansion, including (but not limited to):

- Assist child care centers in completing a business health assessment that includes the condition of their current facilities, along with operating expenses and finances, rent/mortgage arrangements, human resources, marketing, legal and tax, strategic planning and operational areas
- Provide resources and support for centers to address any identified facility- and/or business-related needs (including expansion or relocation)
- Provide an education series and access to consultation and mentoring from multiple business experts matched to the individual needs of the program
- Link providers with prospective lenders, funders, and resources to meet the child care provider's business and facility goals as identified
- Develop/implement a family child care start-up or expansion initiative to increase access to family child care programs across the state
- Develop an employer and child care partnership program with marketing and pilot the program components to help support employees in accessing equitable, affordable and quality child care during regular and non-traditional work hours

#### **Next Steps**

Over the next six to twelve months, DHHS intends to further develop these projects and generate contracts and grants for the implementation of the ARPA Discretionary Fund plan. It is important to note that intentions in all projects are subject to change as DHHS moves forward in this ever-changing environment in order to maximize the best of use these one-time funds.