



American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Recommendations for Fox Valley Communities

Thriving Communities: Early Childhood Investment Fund

Outagamie County Fiscal Recovery Fund: \$36,494,459.00

15% = \$5,474,172

The How:

Earmark 10% of all ARPA funds into a Thrive Communities: Early Childhood Investment Fund

We know the Fox Valley prospers when all children are healthy, valued and thriving. In order to provide children with an equal start in life, strengthen our economy in a way that also reduces racial, gender and income inequality in our communities, and meet the needs of working parents, it is time to support a robust vision to make the high-impact investment in children’s readiness for school, work and life. Thriving communities depend on the well-being of all members. By providing families with equitable access to the early child development resources they need, we ensure all enjoy more vibrant years ahead. The need is urgent. The time for action is now!

Growing our local economy- and doing so equitably- requires a dramatically different approach to supporting our youngest children: one that recognizes early childhood development as a public good which requires public investment. Many parents are struggling to meet their basic needs and are also experiencing a growing number of mental and physical health issues. A survey of Wisconsin working parents identified 42% of women cut back on hours or quit a job because of child care issues.¹ The early years present an incredible opportunity to build a strong foundation as the brain experiences the most rapid development during the first five years of life. Failure to address the toll of the Covid-19 pandemic on the next generation means that vulnerable children will miss out on the learning environments, structure and stability that help to set them up for education success, optimal earnings and long-term health and well-being.

The COVID-19 Pandemic took a toll on families. Economic and workforce insecurity, health concerns, education and child care arrangements constantly required parents to adapt quickly when caring for their families’ daily needs. While everyone was dealing with stress and mental health issues, our youngest children experienced an increased level of developmental concerns that understandably could be based on a more sedentary and virtual level of engagement. Without access to play groups, preschool, child care, 4K and other social and educational activities during COVID, young children ages 0-5 in the Fox Valley struggled to achieve positive developmental milestone gains in Fine Motor, Gross Motor, and Communication areas of the ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) developmental screening tool. Hit especially hard were children ages 24-42 months.²

Emerging Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

	Pre-Pandemic Rate	Pandemic Rate	Change in Rate
Fine Motor Delays	8%	11%	^ 46%
Gross Motor Delay	10%	13%	^ 27%
Communication Delay	21%	25%	^ 18%
Overall Concerning Delay	64%	76%	^ 18%

ASQ Screening Data Collected by First Five Fox Valley of a total of 1,280 children in the Fox Valley prior to COVID (6/1/2019 -3/20/2020) and during the COVID pandemic (3/21/2020 -6/30/2022).



Why is this important information? When children do not have regular developmental screening, concerns are not monitored and it takes longer to meet school readiness goals. Children need social interaction, physical activity, safe and healthy living spaces, and opportunities to hear stories and play with friends. Our youngest children can quickly make gains, but it takes a community that empowers and supports every family to build a solid foundation for children in their first five years.

¹ UW-Extension survey of Wisconsin Parents (2020).

² First 5 Fox Valley (2021) Developmental Screening Project Data. The numbers in the above chart are rounded to the nearest whole number. Their actual values were used in calculating the change in rate. For example, Fine Motor Delays actuals are: pre-pandemic rate 7.69% and COVID rate 11.24% equaling a change in rate of 46%.

American Rescue Plan Act allows for communities to:

- Replace lost public sector revenue to strengthen support for vital public services and help retain jobs
- Support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses
- Address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic on certain populations

Creating Transformative change

Use of Funds:

Addressing the negative impacts caused by the public health emergency, including public health surveillance like **Developmental Screenings, Home Visiting programs, Early Intervention services** and services or outreach to promote access to health and social services like **Help Me Grow**. ARPA funds can also be used to employ a broad array of loan, grant, in-kind assistance to support small businesses such as **child care**. Local **Child Care Resource & Referral** agencies support the business savvy work needed to expand child care options to include center and home-based options for parents. Funds are also available to address education disparities through new or expanded early learning services and promoting **healthy childhood environments** including high-quality child care facilities and services that address social, emotional and mental health needs such as **parenting classes** and **Family Resource Centers**.³

Stabilize and Grow Child Care

1. Provide loans and grants for new buildings or remodeling existing child care centers. Encourage natural outdoor play spaces, adding more infant & toddler classrooms, purchasing new equipment, employer supported on-site programs, renovating existing commercial property and expanding much needed child care slots.
2. Develop a substitute provider pool that child care centers can access to support when caregivers take leave from work.
3. Expand home-based programs, seeking culturally relevant options for families.
4. Stipends for programs who expand slots for infants and toddlers.
5. Fund child care slots in local programs earmarked for families who are at 200% of poverty (just above state guidelines).
6. Use ARPA funds to **add an aide or inclusion specialist** at local child care programs to deal with children with challenging behaviors, or to support children with disabilities.

Grow the Early Childhood Workforce

7. Create a HR benefits pool for low-cost health care, retirement funds and family leave.
8. Introduce wage parity for early childhood caregivers and teachers for equivalent pay of local business salaries.
9. Provide supplemental funding for child care programs seeking to pay staff higher wages without charging parents more.
10. Create a mentoring or apprentice program for those entering into the early care field- including wages, CDA credential work and mentors to support learning on the job.
11. Community Health Workers that support the child care field.

Thriving Families

12. Expand Help Me Grow with additional navigators including bi-lingual, expanded developmental screening, and data collection.
13. Expand the Welcome Baby projects to include all parents having babies- not just first-time parents.
14. Expand evidence-based programs and fully fund early childhood providers doing intensive support for special health care needs, Home Visiting, parent education, Early Intervention, family support, special education, county health programs, etc.
15. Support non-profit community cultural and learning opportunities for children ages 0-5. Include hands-on learning, libraries, and inclusive parks as examples.

Collaboration among Community Partners

16. Create a commission to examine ways to create transformational change for the benefit of early child well-being. Developing recommendations and strategies to scale efforts across the Fox Valley Region.
17. Create the **Thriving Communities Early Childhood Investment Fund** where innovative ideas can be vetted and funded through a mechanism that can braid both public and private dollars for maximum social benefits.

³ SLFRP-FACT SHEET: The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Will Deliver \$350 Billion for State, Local, Territorial, and Tribal Governments to Respond to the COVID-19 Emergency and Bring Back Jobs, May 10, 2021.



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Community-based innovation:

New Orleans – ECHO Fund The ECHO Fund is the Early Childhood Opportunity Fund, an innovative grant program that seeks to increase access to high-quality early care and education for New Orleans children, birth through age four, through directly funding early child care center needs. The ECHO Fund is made possible through the generous support of several local educational partners and leaders in the Greater New Orleans area. The Quality & Recovery Grant program provides \$2500-\$5000 to ECE programs aimed to improve program quality.

Kent County, MI (Grand Rapids) passed a millage (property tax) to support early childhood 0-5 years. First Steps Kent is the fiscal fiduciary and works very closely with the city of Grand Rapids. They are very outcomes focused. Fund are used to support a host of items within the span.

The City of Oakland and Alameda County's ballot measures were B-5 and not PreK specific. Oakland uses a Results based leadership approach. Oakland Starting Smart & Strong is their public/private partnership.

The City of Pittsburgh has a \$2million Childcare Quality Fund, which provides grants to providers to improve facilities, programming and increasing the number of high-quality slots.

The City of Seattle has \$106 million out of the total funds from an education levy are dedicated for education and early learning (FY 2020).

Tarrant County, TX is implementing the Help Me Grow system model within the community. A region-wide approach across 18 counties in the major metropolitan area, with a population of over 8 million people fits perfectly with the prenatal-to-three goals.

Helpful Resources:

Counties for Kids-Counties play a major role in shaping early childhood systems and investing in core services for infants and toddlers that help to support a thriving community and positively impacting outcomes into adulthood. Every county in the United States administers and funds part of the cost of strengthening communities and families with young children. Counties routinely provide an array of programs and services to an estimated 16 million children ages zero to three in the United States and are responsible for addressing the needs of young children, and their families, by administering and coordinating PN-3 services including child care, health and prenatal care, early intervention, home visiting, maternal health screenings, parent classes and early literacy programs.

Start Early has released Leveraging ARPA Child Care Funds for Equitable Systems Change by Mina Hong that discusses how to utilize multiple funding systems to create more equitable child care systems blending funding sources that include better support for the child care workforce.

Build Initiative in Collaboration with EducationCounsel, Center for Law and Social Policy, Georgetown Center for Children and Families, and Linchpin Strategies (2021). Supporting Prenatal-to-Three with Federal Relief Funds. The Build Initiative.

National Association of Counties Overview on the U.S. Treasury Interim Final Rule & Guidance for State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds identifies how cities and counties can support the child care infrastructure in your local communities.

First 5 Fox Valley has gathered information on the local city, town, village and county ARPA fund allotments and what a 15% or 10% Early Childhood Investment would calculate to be.

