



READY Schools Early Learning and Family Support Proposal
Submitted to Ted Terry, DeKalb County Super District 6
Federal ARP Funds

Introduction

The Clarkston Development Foundation (CDF Action) requests ARP funds to implement a READY School early learning and family support program in Clarkston at the Peachtree Creek at Ponce apartments. The program, which will be in the community center, will address the learning loss impacting many 3-and 4- year-old children as a result of COVID-19 and will provide an array of family support and leadership activities to residents. Twenty children will be served in the part-day, free READY School program, and another 40 families will be served through family support services and activities.

Children’s outcomes are often predicted by what a child looks like, where they live, and what languages they speak. It is essential that all young children receive a head start and that our communities ensure equitable early learning policies and programs to ensure positive outcomes for all children.

According to the United Way child well-being index, zip code 30021, which includes the City of Clarkston, has the lowest child well-being score (29.5) in the 13 counties metropolitan area, with 59 percent of children living in poverty.

The READY Schools program, now in 3 communities (two in DeKalb) has created a truly impactful paradigm shift in the approach to creating equitable access to early learning in majority immigrant and refugee communities.

Studies show that investing in early learning pays tremendous dividends to the larger community by improving school performance scores, increasing the socialization of our young people, and fostering career development and advancement for a workforce comprised of mostly women teachers in underserved communities. The current READY School program

specifically addresses learning loss caused by COVID-19 and helps families access other childcare programs, child care subsidies, utility assistance, the vaccine, and other resources that they might need.

Proposal Description

During CDF's recent family dialogues, families reported that their pre-school children did not participate in early learning programs because of the fear of COVID, high costs, the lack of availability of slots and transportation, and difficulties communicating with the program staff because of language barriers. The READY Schools address these barriers and reduce learning loss by offering a small, home-like, part-day, free program, with strict COVID-19 protocols, and engaged bi-lingual, multi-cultural teachers, who speak the languages of the families, with activities conducted in several languages.

The READY School is an innovative, proven approach to mitigate barriers and create positive outcomes for children. The READY Schools provide a trusting, caring environment that helps to prepare the child for Georgia Pre-Kindergarten and beyond.

At the READY School, children learn how to follow a schedule and to get along with peers as well as develop cognitive and other skills. For some children, this is the first time they have been away from their families. The READY School curriculum is based on the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning - Bright from the Start standards.

The free program includes literacy activities, music and movement, snacks, art and science, workshops co-planned with families, and an array of resources and supports, including referrals to rent assistance, food, mental health, employment, and other services requested by families.

An important component of the READY Schools is the Ages and Stages Questionnaire Screening (ASQ), which identifies potential developmental delays and gives guidance on the children's strengths and weaknesses in the following domains: social-emotional, problem-solving, speech, fine motor and large motor. In addition, the staff and families work together to identify and enroll age-eligible children in a lottery-funded Georgia Pre-Kindergarten program, and where available, summer transition camps.

In addition to providing an accessible early learning experience for children and their families, the READY schools create meaningful employment. The READY School hires and trains women from the community to give them workforce experience, professional development, and a living wage. Teachers who do not have a national Child Development Associate (CDA) credential will receive assistance in securing that credential which is the minimum requirement for an early learning teacher.

A READY School logic model guides the evaluation design, which includes focus groups and family surveys. The evaluation looks at outcomes for children, families, teachers, and the

community. Previous evaluation results indicate that parents are more engaged in talking reading, and singing to their children, children are at developmental norms at the end of the program year, and over 90 percent of the age-eligible READY School children enroll in a Georgia Pre-Kindergarten program.

A DeKalb Super District 6 READY School Advisory Council will be formed to help guide and evaluate the program and to assist with replication in other DeKalb communities.

In addition to the READY School, the project will provide family support services to residents, including direct services such as COVID-19 and vaccine information and access to the vaccine, linkages to health, mental health, financial planning, citizenship, and other services. Families will identify workshop topics of interest which may include financial planning, purchasing a home, citizenship, or civic engagement.

CDF Action, Inc.

The Clarkston Development Foundation (CDF Action) is a not-for-profit organization created in 2010, governed by a Board of Directors. CDF Action connects and engages communities by working alongside residents to recognize and develop the individual capacities of each person.

By supporting participation and collaboration among community members, CDF helps to build a community whose residents drive and direct the development of activities and services that benefit the community.

Mission: CDF Action engages residents and partners to craft innovative, culturally sound, community-driven early learning initiatives that build on community assets. We seek to transform early learning to create equitable policies practices, and programs in which all children, including refugees and immigrants, will be nurtured, supported and prepared to learn and achieve school success.

Vision: CDF Action envisions communities that are thriving and diverse, where the voices of all residents are heard and respected, and where residents are engaged in decision making. We envision communities where residents work together and with other stakeholders so that early learning happens everywhere, resulting in equitable, sustained positive outcomes for children, families, and their communities.

Preliminary Budget

Start-up costs: Business licenses, county/city permits, focus groups	\$ 1,500
Start-up equipment: children’s furniture, books, toys, supplies	6,000
Personnel/salaries: teachers, Project Coordinator, payroll taxes	60,000
Consultants: interpreters, evaluators, storytellers	8,000
Operating: insurance, rent, consumable items, printing, professional development	12,000
Indirect Cost: 15 percent	11,484
TOTAL	\$ 98,984

Contact Information

Roberta Malavenda, Executive Director, CDF Action, roberta@cdfaction.org, 404 317-2734 cell

Board Chair: Cynthia Dorsey Edwards

Legal Name: Clarkston Development Foundation, Inc.

EIN: 27-2014061

PO Box 529

Clarkston, Georgia 30076

404 736-6602

Info@cdfaction.org