



Hurricane Impact Disaster Grant Application

Purpose

The purpose of this funding is to implement the Hurricane Impact Disaster Grant (Ian) for the following:

- **Materials, Supplies, Furnishings, and Equipment**
- **Other Child Care Supply Building**
- **Mental Health Consultation or Services**
- **Quality Improvement Activities**

Funding Authority

US Department of Health and Human Services Federal Award 2401FLCCDX, 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Pub. L. No. 117-328) - This initiative is funded from the Child Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund in section 22 of Chapter 2025-198, Laws of Florida.

Budget/Program Performance Period

July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2028.

Eligible Applicants

Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs) can provide services and make subgrants available to child care providers in counties designated in the grant award (Flagler, Volusia, Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee, Manatee, Sarasota, Collier, Lee).

I. Early Learning Coalition Information

Name of ELC: Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Inc.

Executive Director Name: Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz

Email: Melanie.Stefanowicz@elcofswfl.org

Phone: 239-935-6122

Contact Person (if different from Executive Director): Yanely Cruz

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Phone: 239-935-6108

II. Program Initiatives – check all that apply

Please select your organization's program initiatives to be funded. Select all that apply:

☒ **Materials, Supplies, Furnishings, and Equipment**

This category includes all the costs necessary to purchase or replace lost or damaged operating supplies, materials, furnishings, or equipment, such as curriculum resources or generators. Reviews of losses should include indoor and outdoor play areas, kitchens, program and administrative offices, and any other service areas. Costs may support supplies, materials, equipment, and furnishings needed to support the delivery of temporary services or facility activities until program services can be fully restored. See DEL Program Guidance 240.21, Appendix C, Attachment 3 and DEL Program Guidance 240.21 Appendix D.

☒ **Other Child Care Supply Building**

This category could include other activities to increase the supply of child care in impacted areas. For example, Lead Agencies may consider providing start-up grants to incentivize new child care providers, providing technical assistance on child care business practices, supporting family child care networks, supporting unlicensed providers to become licensed, providing bonuses for providers in underserved areas, doing outreach to providers who may have closed, or expanding the use of grants and contracts for child care services. See DEL Program Guidance 240.21, Appendix C, Attachment 3 and DEL Program Guidance 240.21 Appendix D.

☒ **Mental Health Consultation or Services**

This category could include the costs of providing training and materials to child care providers on trauma-informed practices or contracting with qualified practitioners to expand existing mental health support(s) for children, families, and/or child care staff. See DEL Program Guidance 240.21, Appendix C, Attachment 3.

☒ **Quality Improvement Activities**

This category could include providing materials and technical assistance to restore licensing compliance, offering trainings, certifications, and other professional development opportunities for staff, as well as other materials or services that improve the quality of services to children and families in child care programs. See DEL Program Guidance 240.21, Appendix C, Attachment 3 and DEL Program Guidance 240.21 Appendix D.

NOTE: These funds may not be used for activities previously reimbursed by insurance or any other grant funding.

III. Strategy, Goals, and Anticipated Outcomes

Briefly describe your organization's implementation strategy, major goals, and anticipated outcomes for each initiative selected in section II above. *Areas which are not a focus for your organization indicate N/A.*

Initiative	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY, GOALS, & ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES
Materials, Supplies, Furnishings, and Equipment	The Coalition will restore or replace critical facility resources damaged during Hurricane Ian to support providers in ensuring safe, functional operations as part of its 'Safe Play, Strong Future' initiative. Funding priorities include initiatives 1.1 – 1.6 outlined in the Hurricane Ian Childcare Impact and Recovery Study (p. 33, 36), including the reimbursement for or replacement of classroom furniture, classroom resources, administrative equipment, technology and payroll/bookkeeping/child care management software, and indoor and outdoor learning materials, including playground equipment, that were lost or damaged due to Hurricane Ian. Funds may also be used to support facility restoration efforts and improvements of kitchens, bathrooms, classrooms, or other areas of child care facilities damaged by Hurricane Ian. Costs will support facility-specific needs and may include supplies, materials, equipment, and furnishings needed to support the delivery of program activities. Investments will be made in infrastructure to enhance future operational readiness. This includes the provision of backup batteries or permanently installed power systems, such as generators or power walls, installed in owner-occupied centers. These systems must be maintained by the provider and incorporate safety equipment such as a carbon monoxide detector at the provider's expense in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and comply with the Florida Building Code and the Florida Fire Prevention Code 69A-60, F.A.C.. Mini grant opportunities for the Safe Play, Strong Future initiative will be provided for emergency and weather-resistant storage solutions and other emergency preparedness materials, supplies, furnishings, payroll/bookkeeping/child care management software, and equipment upon successful completion of a Continuity Plan as provided in the Emergency Preparedness Planning and Hurricane Preparedness Kits and Resources initiative 3.4 under Quality Activities. Hurricane preparedness kits for providers and parents, as well as trauma-informed care kits for children will be distributed to eligible, qualified providers. These kits will include emergency supplies, medical and hygiene items, child-specific comfort and safety materials, communication tools, power and lighting resources, shelter and safety equipment, transportation and evacuation tools, mental health and

	trauma-support manipulatives, and waterproof storage bins.
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Other Child Care Supply Building	Funding priorities include initiatives 2.1 – 2.3 outlined in the Hurricane Ian Childcare Impact and Recovery Study (p. 33, 42), including activities designed to increase the supply of child care in areas impacted by Hurricane Ian. The Coalition will launch the ‘Start Strong SWFL’ initiative to incentivize new child care development and unlicensed child care centers and family child care homes to register and/or license by providing mini-grants to reimburse new providers for start-up activities and business-related software (payroll/bookkeeping/child care management software). The Coalition will provide technical assistance on child care business practices, support the expansion of family child care networks, and assist unlicensed providers to become licensed. New centers will align with housing developments identified in the ResilientLee Recovery Plan, the Collier County Board of County Commissioners' recovery strategies, and areas of high need/deserts in Collier and Lee Counties. To expand the supply of high-quality child care in impacted communities, the Coalition will implement a targeted marketing campaign to recruit potential new providers and engage unlicensed providers interested in becoming licensed. Campaign activities will include the development and distribution of professional marketing materials, outreach through digital and community channels, and information sessions that highlight the benefits, supports, and resources available to new providers. This effort will increase awareness, reduce barriers to entry, and help rebuild and strengthen the child care network in areas affected by Hurricane Ian. A strategic provider compensation initiative will be developed to provide financial relief and promote long-term sustainability for child care providers that retain staff or continue to incur operational expenses during mandatory closures following Hurricane Ian. This initiative aims to stabilize the early childhood workforce and maintain the viability of child care businesses in severely impacted communities. A strategic provider compensation initiative will allow providers to request reimbursement for documented expenses incurred during the closure period caused by Hurricane Ian, including, but not limited to: • Staff wages: Salaries or hourly wages paid to child care staff (full-time or part-time) for scheduled hours during which the program was closed due to storm impact. • Facility costs: Rent or mortgage payments that continued during closures prorated for the number of days closed. Providers will be required to submit documentation verifying closure
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duration and payroll records for all affected staff, provide receipts, billing statements, or lease/mortgage payment history for eligible expenses, and prove the costs were not reimbursed by private insurance, FEMA, CARES, CRRSA, ARPA, Lee BOCC ARPA, or submit a notarized attestation that private insurance, FEMA, or any other federal or private funding source did not reimburse expenses.

As part of the strategic provider compensation initiative, an “**Earn and Learn**” workforce stabilization pipeline will be created to support the recruitment, retention, and professional development of early educators. The Earn and Learn pipeline will ensure that new and continuing educators have access to training and career advancement opportunities while helping fill critical staffing gaps in early childhood education programs. Grant funding will be used to provide tuition reimbursement or scholarships for early childhood education courses and certification exams (e.g., the Florida Child Care Professional Credential or National Child Development Associate Credential).

As part of our Earn and Learn initiative, the Coalition will offer **Let’s Get Down to Business**, a professional development program designed for both new and experienced child care business owners. This training equips participants with practical skills in budgeting, financial reporting, revenue projection, and internal controls to strengthen fiscal health and sustainability. By enhancing providers’ business acumen, this initiative supports long-term stability, allowing them to focus on delivering high-quality early learning experiences for children and families. Providers who satisfactorily complete this initiative and submit a viable business plan to the Coalition will receive a stipend.

Mentorship and peer support programs will be an integral part of the Earn and Learn Pipeline for providers and VPK and Kindergarten teachers who engage in the **Ready Together Alliance’s** (RTA) Communities of Practice (COP). The RTA is designed to foster kindergarten readiness and improve third grade reading proficiency. Center directors, preschool teachers, and school district VPK and Kindergarten teachers will receive supplements for their participation in these COPs focused on supporting children’s transition from preschool to kindergarten.

The Coalition will partner with school districts to ensure high need areas impacted by Ian have equitable access to kindergarten readiness programs including SR and VPK.

Florida’s new Child Care Tax Credit opens the door for innovative public-private partnerships (PPPs) that leverage employer contributions, tax incentives, and Early Learning Coalition coordination to expand child care access and resilience. Building on proven models

	from Michigan, Wisconsin, and North Carolina, these PPPs could include coalition-managed payment clearinghouses, multi-employer slot purchase agreements, tri-share cost-sharing pilots, and employer-sponsored family child care expansions. Such collaborations would align with Florida’s post-Ian recovery priorities, including stabilizing providers, supporting working families, and investing in disaster-resilient early learning infrastructure. Funding for this initiative would support the research and design of potential PPP offerings.
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Mental Health Consultation or Services	Funding priorities include initiatives 4.1 – 4.4 outlined in the Hurricane Ian Childcare Impact and Recovery Study (p. 33, 38), which will focus on mental health and wellness. ‘Thrive: Hurricane Ian Mental Health & Resilience Initiative’ is designed to help children, families, and early learning providers recover, heal, and build resilience in the wake of Hurricane Ian. Through expanded mental health services, trauma-informed training, and access to evidence-based resources, this initiative will strengthen emotional well-being, integrate play-based learning and physical fitness, and support long-term recovery across our early learning community. The Coalition will provide training and materials to child care providers on trauma-informed practices and contracting with qualified practitioners to expand existing mental health supports for children, families, and/or early childhood education teachers and facility staff, including on-site mental health services, mental health training programs, and mental health technology and resources. The ELC of Southwest Florida will implement a multi-pronged mental health and wellness support initiative that includes: • Expand trauma-informed care through community partnerships and Professional Development. Provide on-site and virtual mental health support to children, families, and staff. Screenings are integrated into SR and VPK processes. • The Coalition will expand mental health consultation and services by contracting with qualified professionals, including infant and toddler mental health practitioners, speech-language pathologists, behavioral therapists, and other specialized early intervention providers, to address developmental, emotional, and communication needs of children affected by Hurricane Ian. • Provide high-quality, sustained, and effective professional development to “train the trainers, who are the Coalition Early Childhood Education Resource Teachers, in trauma-informed care and other strategies to: ○ Enable them to provide professional development to Coalition providers; and
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	○ Prepare them to provide immediate support to child care providers, children, and families immediately following a disaster. ● Provide Coalition staff (Program Services, Business Services, and Quality) with a high-level professional development in trauma-informed care to enable them to support providers and families with CCR&R and resources following a disaster. ● Trauma-Informed Training & Resources for child care staff to improve provider response and resilience during post-disaster recovery and future emergencies. ● Mental Health Technology and Resources such as virtual “telehealth” providers, digital screening, referral platforms, and evidence-based applications that support self-regulation, mindfulness, and emotional development in early learners. ● Co-branded outreach campaigns with collective impact partners that destigmatize developmental concerns and promote early intervention access to mental health resources. These services will be coordinated in partnership with regional mental health organizations and will prioritize counties designated as Tier 1 and Tier 2 impact zones. In partnership with the School District of Lee County (SDLC) and Collier County Public Schools (CCPS), the Thrive initiative will support the hiring of a dedicated specialist in each school district to assist with child evaluations for Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This role will help expedite the evaluation process, improve coordination between early learning providers and school district teams, and ensure that children with exceptional needs receive timely access to specialized services. By integrating this support within the broader scope of mental health and resilience activities, the initiative will strengthen both mental health and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services for families, fostering early intervention, reducing service gaps, and promoting equitable access to resources that support each child’s development and well-being. To strengthen these services, the initiative will include the purchase of age-appropriate social-emotional learning curricula, hands-on instructional materials, and interactive resources that teach coping strategies, emotional regulation, and resilience. These will be complemented by educational materials that help preschool children understand the science of weather and natural events, reducing fear and promoting preparedness. Learning will be embedded in play-based activities and movement experiences that encourage physical fitness, gross motor development, and active engagement, reinforcing emotional well-being alongside physical health. Professional development will focus on effectively implementing these curricula and
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	materials in the classroom, integrating them into daily routines, and using them as tools to foster emotional resilience in children before, during, and after emergencies.
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Quality Activities	Funding priorities include initiatives 3.1 – 3.5, which are braided with initiatives 1.1 – 1.6 and 4.1 – 4.4, outlined in the Hurricane Ian Childcare Impact and Recovery Study (p. 33, 36, and 40), to create a coherent recovery and resiliency plan. These initiatives collectively address provider stabilization and long-term resiliency by: • Replacing and restoring damaged materials, equipment, and furnishings essential for safe and high-quality learning environments; • Expanding mental health services and trauma-informed practices to support children, families, and staff; and • Building the child care supply through provider compensation, infrastructure upgrades, and preparedness resources. In addition to the priorities outlined in the previous three sections, the Safe Play, Strong Future initiative includes providing materials and technical assistance to restore licensing compliance and other materials or services that improve the quality of services to children and families in child care programs in Collier and Lee Counties. The Safe Play, Strong Future initiative supports recovery activities that strengthen outdoor safety, emergency preparedness, and infrastructure resilience. Funded activities may include, but are not limited to, fencing repairs, hazard mitigation, playground surface upgrades, Continuity Plans (COOPs), mini-grants to providers to operationalize their COOPs, and the purchase of emergency supplies or equipment. These initiatives are intended to help providers safeguard children and staff and ensure continuity of care during future emergencies. The Safe Play, Strong Future initiative will support professional development opportunities that align with trauma-informed care, CLASS, and resiliency. Providers will participate in COOP training and benefit from SharePoint training to enhance communication, resource sharing, and operational efficiency. Licensing compliance will be strengthened through targeted technical assistance and the provision of necessary materials and training. The initiative will also invest in high-quality, collaborative learning experiences by hosting four one-day conferences. This includes two full-day Coalition-wide Directors' Retreats dedicated to COOP development as well as two professional development days focused on quality improvement initiatives for early childhood teachers and center directors. Together, these activities will ensure providers have the tools, skills, and infrastructure necessary to deliver safe, high-quality, and
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	resilient early learning environments. Through the coordinated implementation of initiatives across all four priority areas, the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida will deliver a comprehensive, evidence-based recovery and resiliency plan. This integrated strategy directly addresses the most urgent needs identified in the Hurricane Ian Childcare Impact and Recovery Study, provider survey data, and stakeholder engagement feedback, including the restoration of safe, high-quality learning environments, stabilization and expansion of the child care supply, strengthened mental health supports, and enhanced provider preparedness for future emergencies. By leveraging targeted investments, technical assistance, and professional development, the Coalition will equip providers with the resources, skills, and infrastructure necessary to serve children and families in Tier 1 and Tier 2 impact zones effectively. Anticipated outcomes include measurable improvements in facility safety and functionality, increased provider capacity in high-need areas, a stabilized early childhood workforce, and greater integration of trauma-informed practices into daily operations. This grant will not only repair the damage left in Hurricane Ian’s wake but will also build long-term resiliency across Collier and Lee Counties, ensuring that child care programs are better prepared to withstand and recover from future disasters. The Coalition’s approach is designed to maximize the impact of every dollar invested, foster sustainable public-private partnerships, and strengthen the early learning ecosystem for years to come, ultimately advancing our mission of preparing every child in Southwest Florida to enter school ready to learn and thrive.
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IV. Budget

Provide a program budget and budget narrative to include all planned initiatives. ELCs must track costs and report expenditures in accordance with DEL Program Guidance 250.01 – Other Cost Accumulators.

Note: Operations/Administration cannot exceed five (5) percent of the total expenditures.

Category	Budget Narrative	Budget Amount
Operations/Admin	Administrative costs to operate the grant, including administrative salaries and overhead costs up to 5% of total grant dollars	\$364,464.95
Materials, Supplies, Furnishings and Equipment	Reimbursement or replacement of classroom furniture, curriculum resources, administrative equipment, technology, and playground equipment damaged by Hurricane Ian; facility	\$3,207,901.35

	restoration (classrooms, kitchens, bathrooms); infrastructure upgrades (generators, backup batteries); emergency storage solutions; hurricane preparedness kits with safety, medical, communication, and comfort items.	
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Other Child Care Supply Building	“Start Strong SWFL” mini-grants for new provider start-up costs and business software; technical assistance for licensing and business practices; expansion of family child care networks; provider compensation for documented closure expenses (staff wages, facility costs); “Earn and Learn” tuition reimbursement, scholarships, credential exam fees, and mentor stipends.	\$629,786.81
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Mental Health Consultation or Services	Contracts with licensed mental health practitioners for on-site/virtual services; trauma-informed care professional development; purchase of social-emotional curricula, instructional materials, and mental health technology platforms; outreach campaigns with partners.	\$1,742,934.35
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Quality Improvement Activities	"Safe Play, Strong Future" initiative: hazard mitigation (fencing repairs, playground surface upgrades); COOP plan development/operationalization; licensing compliance support; SharePoint training; four one-day conferences (2 Directors' Retreats, 2 teacher PD days) with venue, materials, meals, and facilitator costs.	\$1,344,211.54
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Budget Total	\$7,289,299.00
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V. Outcome Data

ELCs and child care providers will be required to track and submit to the Coalition Zone>Coalition Document Exchange>Hurricane Ian Impact Disaster Grant folder, a brief narrative within six (6) months of issuing the grant funding to childcare providers on the effectiveness of the project to include the following data points (at a minimum):

1. Increase in equipment, supplies, materials, curriculum software and curriculum available for classroom instruction, including observed and/or measurable outcomes.
2. Total provider (new and/or existing) capacity.
3. Total professionals, families and children participating in mental health support(s) & narrative of services delivered.
4. Total repairs to restore enrichment materials and equipment – indoor and outdoor – for continued high-quality early education for children in their care.

NOTE: Expenditure of these funds will be subject to review as part of scheduled fiscal monitoring procedures per FS 1002.82(2)(c) and (2)(s), 2 CFR 200.332(e) and 45 CFR 75.352(d). ELCs are required to apply the criteria established in DEL Program Guidance 240.23, to document expenditure of funds to providers.

NOTE: After your initial budget is approved, if you choose to move funds between categories, you will need to provide an amended application via SharePoint and notify your grant manager for approval.

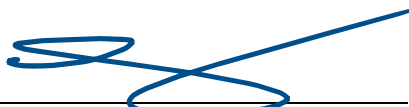
VI. ELC Attestations

I have read this application and attest to its completeness and correctness and have made a copy of this application for my own records. Funds awarded through this application are subject to the terms and conditions in the early learning grant agreement and any amendments, modifications and/or extensions, as executed between the named subrecipient and the Division of Early Learning. Acceptance of the award terms and conditions is acknowledged when funds are drawn or otherwise obtained from the Division of Early Learning.

Signature of Authorized ELC/ Representative  _____

Exec. Director Name: Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz

Email: Melanie.Stefanowicz@elcofswfl.org

Signature:  _____ Date: August 12, 2025

☒ I confirm that this electronic signature is to be the legally binding equivalent of my handwritten signature and that the data on this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

This application must be submitted electronically to the SharePoint Coalition Zone > Coalition Document Exchange > Hurricane Ian Impact Disaster Grant no later than August 15, 2025.