



## Agency ARPA Proposal - 2022 Session

**Document Name:** 121721\_SDE\_ARPAProposal\_LEAP\_Expansion.docx

(If submitting electronically, please label with date, agency, and title of proposal – 121721\_SDE\_ARPAProposal)

State Agency: State Department of Education

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Lead agency division requesting this proposal: Commissioner's Office

Agency Analyst/Drafter of Proposal: Kari Sullivan

**Title of Proposal:** Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) Expansion

**Statutory Reference (if applicable):** [Click here to enter text.](#)

### Proposal Summary

*Similar to those in the [Governor's plan](#) that connects the project to one of the Administrations main themes of equity and the key pillars from p. 2 of the allocation plan*

This proposal seeks \$26 million over two school years to continue and expand Governor Lamont's Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP).

LEAP was initiated and funded through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funding in the spring of 2021. The program is currently operating in 15 districts in partnership with the state's Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs). This proposal requests to continue funding through 2024 for the 15 participating districts and to expand to five additional high-need districts.

The hallmark of LEAP is the implementation of home-visiting programs that combine the efforts of school districts and community organizations to strengthen and expand trusting relationships between schools and families. The one-to-one relationships developed between home visitors and the families strengthens connections to their child's education and helps to remove barriers to school attendance including, safety misperceptions, connecting students to afterschool and tutoring programs and assisting families with economic, social, and health barriers.

LEAP resources are targeted toward districts and communities hardest hit by the pandemic in the areas of academics, access to mental and physical health services, and economic losses. LEAP supports the administration's main themes of equity and specifically key pillar #3. School and community staff work with families to building trusting relationships that enables families to connect to vital resources including child care, housing college and career readiness, mental health issues, internet and broadband access and many others. Families struggling with day-to-



day necessities and resources have a harder time making ends meet and ensuring regular school attendance for students. Today's students are tomorrow's citizens – their future is dependent on their family having access to these vital services and supports.

## **PROPOSAL BACKGROUND**

### **◇ Reason for Proposal**

*Please consider the following, if applicable:*

- (1) Projects from the Governor's plan for American Rescue Plan Act funds that were not included in the implementer bill (sections 306 and 307 of Public Act 21-2, June Special Session)?*
- (2) Is this an extension or expansion of existing ARPA projects included in the implementer?*
- (3) Is this a new project that aligns with the Governor's priorities and addresses needs created by or exacerbated by the pandemic?*
- (4) Is this another area that has come up in discussions with legislators or various hearings?*

We are requesting \$13 million for the 2022-23 school year and \$13 million for the 23-24 school year to continue and expand, the Governor's GEER investment in districts with high levels of student absences in the 2020-21 school year. It continues funding for the existing 15 LEAP districts and adds 5 additional high-need districts (based on data analysis). Demand for this program is driven by the dramatic decline in student attendance and engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These downward trends have continued and worsen in the first few months of the 2021-22 school year. In addition, the return to a fully in-person school year has arrived with additional difficulties for students, staff and families including, behavioral health issues, staffing and transportation shortages, and continued anxiety and hardships at home. Overall, 2020-21 chronic absence rates (19%) are nearly 2 times the rate they were in 2019-20 (12.2%) and pre-pandemic in 2018-19 (10.4%). As of October 2021, the state chronic absence rate is 22.3%. Students who are chronically absent, regardless of age or grade, risk falling further behind academically and ultimately dropping out of school. This risk has negative economic and health impacts for students, families, and our communities. To address this issue, CSDE proposes a continuation LEAP in 15-targeted districts through 2024 and an additional five high-need districts for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

## **PROPOSAL ELIGIBILITY**

### **◇ Eligibility Justification**

*Please give a brief justification of eligibility explaining how it aligns with Treasury Guidance which can be found [here](#) for ARPA State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds or [here](#) for ARPA Capital Project Funds.*

LEAP supports Treasury objectives to 1) support economic stabilization for households and 2) address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the impact by targeting resources to the highest need communities and families struggling from the pandemic. LEAPs design to provide home-visits strengthens the efforts of school districts and community organizations to fortify and expand trusting relationships between schools and families. These one-on-one relationships with home visitors builds



families trust with the school and strengthens connections to their child's education. The establishment of trust allows for personal relationships and sharing that leads to understanding and removing barriers to school attendance and engagement including, understanding safety misperceptions, connecting students to after school, tutoring programs, and assisting families with economic, social, and health barriers.

### **PROPOSAL IMPACT**

#### **◇ AGENCIES AFFECTED** *(please list for each affected agency)*

**Agency Name:** N/A

**Agency Contact (name, title, phone):** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Date Contacted:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

Approve of Proposal    ☐ YES    ☐ NO    ☐ Talks Ongoing

#### **Summary of Affected Agency's Comments**

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Will there need to be further negotiation?    ☐ YES    ☐ NO

#### **◇ Implementation Details**

##### **Desired Outputs & Outcomes**

Outputs: 1) The continuation of LEAP infrastructure to support, monitor, and evaluate the home visiting model, including a Home Visits Training Hub; a Performance Management System and Evaluation; and a Resource and Information Hub. All of these are facilitated and maintained by the RESC Alliance. 2) Support, coordination, and personnel for home visiting programs in 15 existing and 5 new LEAP districts. Outcomes: 1) Increase student attendance and engagement. 2) Increase engagement by students and parents/caregivers in school, as measured by needs assessments. 3) Increase usage/adoption of district and state resources available to K-12 families, including critical economic and social services (e.g., food security, housing, employment) and supports for emotional well-being.

**Estimated resource requirements (funding and staffing) of the project and sustainability/wind down plan after the expiration of federal funds.<sup>1</sup> Be detailed, indicating resource needs by fiscal year.**

<sup>1</sup> For SLFRF, funds may be used to cover eligible costs incurred during the period that begins on March 3, 2021 and ends on December 31, 2024. In all cases, funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024, and expended by December 31,



2022-23: \$13 million and 2023-24: \$13 million. The majority of the funding will be awarded to districts based on the LEAP funding algorithm to support coordination, training, transportation, and personnel (district/community organization) to conduct home visits. Funding per district is based on an algorithm that includes student enrollment; %FRL eligible/meals; attendance rate and % English Learners. Funding will also support the Home Visits Training Hub; Performance Management System; and Attendance Awareness Campaign. SDE is partnering with the Connecticut COVID-19 Education Research Collaborative (CCERC) to conduct an evaluation study of the impact of the LEAP home visiting model. This information will allow SDE to continue to monitor implementation and to make improvements and adjustments as needed. As 2024 approaches, lessons learned from the implementation, monitoring, and outcome analysis of LEAP, will provide best practices and protocols for the implementation of district-supported and -funded home visiting models.

**Other funding sources that could be braided with ARPA funds to support the initiative**

\$10.6 million in GEER Funds were allocated through September 20, 2022 for the current 15 districts. SDE is investing \$4 million of its Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds for a total new investment of \$30 million over two school years.

**Timeline for project implementation, including key milestones**

**Winter 2022:** Contract negotiation and execution with partners (e.g., RESC Alliance, Parent Teacher Home Visits, Attendance Works)

**Spring 2022:** Coordinate with identified districts to conduct asset mapping of programs, resources, and initiatives that districts are already involved with to expand or enhance capacity and reach. Identify and engage community partners including youth serving organizations, faith-based organizations and community social service and health care providers to support the initiative. Develop student engagement plans to support identified districts through 2024. (Student engagement plans will include region-wide goals and metrics for each RESC to measure its progress against.) Deploy financial resources to urgently begin or expand student engagement plans and services to engage families and bridge students back to school, to summer programs, and to the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years.

LEAP will be evaluated as it is continued into the 2023-24 school year.

**Staffing Plan (if applicable)**

During the 2021 implementation of LEAP, CSDE contracted with the RESC Alliance and Attendance Works to coordinate and support an infrastructure of supports for the LEAP districts and home visitors. An expansion of the LEAP program through 2024 would include the



continuation of these agreements:

Duties and responsibilities of CREC:

**Implementation of New LEAP districts (5)**

- Coordinate, by appropriate RESC, and engage the 5 newly identified districts to conduct needs assessments and asset mapping of programs, resources, and initiatives that districts are already involved with to expand or enhance capacity and reach.
- Identify and engage community partners including youth serving organizations, faith-based organizations and community social service and health care providers to support the initiative.
- Develop student engagement plans to support identified districts for school year 2021, bridging summer 2021, and reopening and sustaining student engagement for school year 2022. Student engagement plans will include region-wide goals and metrics for each RESC to measure progress.
- Design or expand existing home visiting programs to identify needs of families and to plan and ensure consistent training and appropriate protocols for conducting relational home visits across identified districts.
- Connect families to existing support services to address student needs identified during home visits, including, but not limited to, challenges and barriers related to technology; academics; social, and emotional and mental health.

Support for All LEAP Districts:

- Monitor and update student engagement plans, document barriers to student attendance and engagement, and actively support districts and stakeholders with execution and implementation.
- Work collaboratively with CSDE and its partners to enhance and improve a performance management system to track data, measure progress towards goals, and monitor improvements in attendance and engagement at the student level to ensure effectiveness of the model.
- Work collaboratively with the SDE and state and national partners identified by the SDE to improve and enhance the home visiting training hub to ensure implementation of best practices and continuity across LEAP program implementation and other non-LEAP districts as possible.
- Ongoing technical assistance and monitoring of RESC and district LEAP budgets to ensure alignment with intent of LEAP funding and efficiency of payments and reporting.
- Collaborate with identified districts on the development and implementation of an annual statewide Attendance Awareness Campaigns in collaboration with SDE and state and national partners.

Duties and Responsibilities of Attendance Works:

- In collaboration with the RESC Alliance, support and enhance the home visiting training hub to ensure implementation of best practices and continuity across LEAP and, when possible, other district home visiting programs. implementation that builds on the strengths and principles of evidence-based models such as the Parent Teacher Home Visits that have shown to improve attendance, including the creation of guidance for recruitment of home visitors, training for home visitors, designing a multi-visit approach with data collection, and evaluation.



- In collaboration with the RESC Alliance, build capacity to support LEAP districts in addressing attendance, including equipping them with Attendance Works and other national resources.
- Design, support and conduct three (5) Attendance and Engagement Communities of Practice session (90 minutes) each year.
- Participate in monthly meetings as directed by the SDE regarding the alignment of Attendance Work duties and responsibilities with CSDE's school attendance goals.

**Delivery mechanisms and potential partners (if applicable) – Identify method for selecting project vendors (competitive bidding, sole source arrangement, etc.)**

Modeled after the original implementation of LEAP in 2021, CSDE will award grant money to the six RESCs that, in turn, will coordinate directly with their respective districts and local organizations (i.e., Youth Service Bureaus, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.). Together, these organizations will expand their capacity to address specific student needs, including using devices to log in for remote learning; troubleshooting problems with new broadband services; providing additional academic supports, like tutoring; and connecting students with critical social service needs (e.g., food security, behavioral and mental health care, etc.). In addition, CSDE has a sole source contract with national experts, Attendance Works, to support and ensure quality of LEAP services and district attendance and engagement efforts.

◇ **EVIDENCE BASE**

*What data will be used to track the impact of this proposal over time, and what measurable outcome do you anticipate? Is that data currently available or must it be developed? Please provide information on the measurement and evaluation plan. Where possible, those plans should include process and outcome components. Pew MacArthur Results First [evidence definitions](#) can help you to establish the evidence-base for your program and their [Clearinghouse](#) allows for easy access to information about the evidence base for a variety of programs.*

Home visiting is supported by research-based evidence. The Parent Teacher Home Visits model, specifically, has shown to impact student attendance and engagement. SDE consulted with PTHV leadership in the development of LEAP. PTHV was also a partner and presenter in training for LEAP home visitors. It is said that PTHV is baked into the design of LEAP, however, there are two differences. LEAP is targeted to particular students and families with needs whereas PTHV is a universal model, where all families could receive visits. The other difference is that LEAP engages a range of staff to conduct home visits whereas PTHV relies on the student's teacher to conduct the home visit. LEAP districts use teachers to conduct home visits when available – it is not a requirement. To evaluate the impact of LEAP, a data collection tool, Home Visiting Log, has been implemented for the collection of information gathered at home visits, including reasons for absences, family requests for assistance, and any follow-up required from the visits. Home visits are conducted by certified teachers, family-school liaisons, para- professionals and



community-based staff. All visits focus on building relationships with families. Families often receive multiple visits in order to strengthen the relationship and continue to provide supports. Soon information from the visits will be matched with student identification data in order to monitor impact of the program. As mentioned above, SDE will partner with the Connecticut COVID-19 Education Research Collaborative (CCERC) to conduct an evaluation study of the impact of the LEAP home visiting model. This information will allow SDE to monitor implementation and to make improvements and adjustments as needed. As 2024 approaches, lessons learned from the implementation, monitoring, and outcome analysis of LEAP, will provide research-based analysis, best practices and protocols for the implementation of district-supported home visiting models.