

Carryover of Unobligated Balance Application **DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED**

02CH011434C3 CARES Act Funding

**Request to Carryover an Unobligated Balance – Reprogram Application**

Total amount awarded under 02CH011434C3: \$299,673.00

Amount Spent by 03/31/2021: \$235,769.62

Carryover balance at 04/01/2022 to be spent by 03/31/2022: \$63,903.38

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. (herein known as LEAP), under the Head Start Act section 640(b) and administrative requirements detailed in 45 C.F.R. §75.308 (d)(3), is requesting to carryover the full amount of unobligated dollars (at 03/31/2021) awarded under 02CH011434C3; CARES Act' funding as outlined in program instruction ACF-PI-HS-20-03. The agency was unable to spend the full amount awarded by the 03/31/2021 date due to secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. LEAP program and administrative staff, with approval from the Policy Council and the LEAP Board of Directors, have identified a use for the remaining balance of funds that aligns with both the needs of the agency and the guidance within the program instruction.

**Transportation as a need within our community and program:**

As identified in the agency's Community Needs Assessment (2019), reliable, affordable transportation continues to be a great need for residents in Washington County, specifically within the low-income population. L.E.A.P. meets this need by providing bus transportation to children living in the Hudson Falls, Fort Edward and Whitehall areas. This was outlined in greater detail in our Continuation Application (Year Three of Five) submitted on 12/21/2021.

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Meeting the transportation needs of all the families is an ongoing challenge. Transportation is very expensive. The NYS Department of Transportation has rigid standards regarding bus inspections and safety. While these inspections are important for the safety of the children, repairs can be both costly and time-consuming. In 2021, two aging buses were removed from our fleet due to the repair costs exceeding the value of the assets.

**Challenge due to the pandemic:**

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, LEAP has continued to provide both center-based and home-based services to our Head Start and Early Head Start children and families. In order to do so safely and effectively, and in response to the pandemic, many aspects of our day-to-day operations have been revised in order to ensure the health and safety of our staff as well as our clients. This includes but is not limited to social distancing measures while transporting children to and from our Centers. LEAP is currently transporting only 14 children on each bus to ensure that all (non-sibling) children are socially distanced while being transported.

The children in our program are some of the most vulnerable in our community at present due to the following conditions. Children under age five are not yet eligible to become vaccinated (as of the date of this application), have a harder time wearing a tight-fitting mask, and struggle to keep themselves safely distanced from their peers, teachers and others LEAP support staff due to the curious nature of this age-group. This vulnerability, coupled with the high rate of transmission of the omicron variant that is currently spreading within our community, in addition to the lack of backup vehicles that the program has available to meet the need, has led

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to the decision to pursue the purchase of a new school bus using the remaining balance of our CARES grant dollars.

**Use (and location) of the unobligated funds:**

LEAP was unable to spend the total amount of award 02CH011434C3 by the end-date of 03/31/2021. This was driven by staff resources needing to be routed elsewhere during the ‘first wave’ of the pandemic (spring 2020 – spring 2021), which did not allow for the planning necessary to request permission and follow through on the steps needed to acquire an asset of this size and scope. LEAP has experienced a level of turnover and vacancy within the program, as a result of COVID, that is historically unprecedented.

While staff capacity continues to be strained, LEAP is ready to respond to what is an urgent need within our program, and formally requests permission to purchase a Type A2 school bus, with customized specifications that meet our need. Based on a quote dated 12/10/2021, the current estimated base price is \$56,311, with options to address capacity and safety needs equal to an additional \$13,382. The total quote, inclusive of discounts and fees is \$69,815.

Because the total cost exceeds the remaining balance of CARES Act funds (\$63,903.38), LEAP intends to use any costs in excess of \$63,903.38 to be covered by ARP funds awarded under 02HE000073-01-01 on 06/10/2021. This new bus will be located at our Whitehall Head Start Center, where we are currently operating with one (aging) bus. We anticipate having funds spent-in full by 04/30/2022. The new vehicle will ensure that we are able to safely transport children living within the Whitehall community; one of many ways in which

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our agency has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic to-date. *Please note that due to market conditions out of our control, the total cost may fluctuate if and when we are approved to move forward with this acquisition. Due to both staffing and inventory issues within the automotive market, it is difficult to provide an amount that is 'fixed' without a contract in place.*

**Ongoing costs associated with a one-time purchase:**

While a new vehicle translates to additional permanent costs over-time, LEAP has identified efficiencies and cost savings in other parts of the program that will enable us to maintain a new vehicle year-after-year, beyond the term of this one-time funding.

**Non-Federal Share (NFS) Requirement:**

When the agency was awarded funding under this grant, the NFS requirement was waived, and our application was approved with a \$0 matching requirement. While LEAP is aware that this waiver and other temporary flexibilities issued during the initial award will not automatically carryover to subsequent budget periods, we are requesting a \$0 matching requirement. The COVID-19 pandemic has only created added obstacles in obtaining both in-kind and cash assistance from our community due to the inability to bring volunteers on-site. Additionally, and as mentioned, the high turnover within the agency (secondary impact of COVID) has left us with our Outreach & Development Coordinator role vacant; making it all the more challenging to raise necessary match at this time.

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LEAP will however continue to work on identifying other sources of allowable non-federal share on an ongoing basis.

**Governing Body Approval:**

The LEAP Board of Directors approved this application at a meeting with Key Staff on February 7, 2022, contingent on Policy Council approval. The Policy Council approved this application via email communication on **April 1, 2022**. We believe that we have and continue to make significant progress in safely providing Head Start and Early Head Start services in Washington County and we hope that you will consider our request to carryforward this unobligated balance of funds.