

**02CH011434**

**Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. *d/b/a******L.E.A.P.***

**Head Start/ Early Head Start**

**AMENDMENT APPLICATION**

**Change in Scope Request**

**Enrollment Reduction**

**Slot Conversion**

**CCCCCCC**

**Approved by Board of Directors: 02/6/2023**

**Approved by Policy Council: 01/24/2023**

*Submitted by:*

Patricia Salvarezza, Program Director

Emily Fagle, Finance Director

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**Introduction**

This amendment application is being submitted to request a reduction in funded child enrollment slots in the Home-based option and a conversion of Head Start (HS) slots to Early Head Start (EHS). This request is in direct response to the changing needs of families in our county. Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. d/b/a L.E.A.P (herein after referred to as LEAP, the Head Start / Early Head Start grant recipient) is experiencing the effects of many changes in our community; these changes have had a direct impact on the program’s ability to provide the level of services for which we are funded. LEAP is proud of its long-standing reputation for delivering high quality, comprehensive services to the enrolled families of rural Washington County. Over the years, LEAP has demonstrated a strong commitment to delivering high quality services, seamlessly incorporating new initiatives, changing service standards and adapting service deliveries to meet the ever-changing needs of children and families in the county we serve. This has contributed to the excellent quality of services that our program is so proud of. Currently the program is funded to serve 341 HS/EHS children in both the center-based and home-based (HB) option.

LEAP’s service area covers all of rural Washington County, New York with 5 centers strategically located in areas with the greatest population and need. Head Start services are provided in full day and double session classrooms as well as the Home-based option. Early Head Start classrooms are located in 3 of our 5 centers and home-based. A team of home-based visitors provide HS/EHS services to families who live in the more remote areas or who may have difficulty attending a center. A full, comprehensive Community Needs Assessment was completed during the summer of 2022.

**I. Enrollment Reduction Request**

Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, LEAP was part of a Full Enrollment Initiative as maintaining funded enrollment numbers was challenging. During the fall of 2019, the program was making strides toward meeting targeted enrollment numbers in the Center-based classrooms for both Head Start and Early Head Start. Despite making improvements filling slots in the double session classrooms continued to be challenging, as most families indicate a need for full day; many families are choosing Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) options over Head Start. Home-based slots are challenging to fill based on lack of interest in this service option; enrollment numbers reported for Dec. 2022:

* HB Head Start 14 out of 25 slots filled. Waitlist #: O
* HB Early Head Start 37 out of 78 funded slots. Waitlist #: 4 Eligible; 2 Over Income
* Number of Home Visitors on Staff: 4 Full Time; 1 Part-Time Substitute HV; each HV has a caseload of 12 and the long-term substitute has a caseload of 3.

The turnover of enrollment slots and inconsistent participation by families in the HB program is also very high. It has been historically difficult to maintain a consistent team of home visitors and these vacant positions continue to be difficult to fill. Turnover in home visiting staff requires caseloads to be redistributed to existing visitors. This redistribution interrupts the relationship-based practices that build rapport between the family and the visitor. Additionally, Washington County is rural with families living in remote areas, this requires strategic mapping to determine caseloads based on geographic locations. Another documented trend is that families are very transient, often moving from one location to another, and caseloads once defined by location are no longer efficient or manageable for the visitor because of travel time. The recipient has observed that the modifications that needed to be put into place to operate during the pandemic, such as: closures, program modifications (reduced capacity/service delivery) and health and safety protocols, have increased the negative impact on enrollment, hiring, staff wellness and contributed to a change in the county demographics. These impacts compounded pre-pandemic concerns related to:

1. Decreased family participation/ interest in the HB program.
2. Families looking for full day center-based options versus home-based due to work demands.
3. No waitlist for HB HS. Small Waitlist for EHS slots (4 on list).
4. Enrolled HB families requesting to be placed on a waitlist for CB slots.
5. Shuffling caseload assignments to different visitors as a result of visitor resignations or families moving to a different town or county.
6. Visitors leaving their job due to concerns about working in homes where health and safety protocols are challenged.
7. Staff retention (high turnover in teaching and home visiting staff), due to salary, benefits, stress, work conditions, fear, change in profession.
8. Lack of qualified candidates to fill vacant positions, more than half of the home visitor positions have been vacant for more than 3 years. Currently have 4 out of 10 visitors.
9. Strategic recruitment and hiring efforts yielding poor to no results.
10. A strained leadership and supervisory team providing service delivery to fill gaps in staff, leads to new staff not being trained and decreased staff wellness.

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| **Table 1: Program Schedule for HEAD START Home-based Option** | | | | |
| **Funded Child Enrollment** | **Number of Home Visits per child per year** | **Number of hours per home visit** | **Number of hours per home-based socialization**  **Experience** | **Number of home-based socialization experiences per child per year** |
| 25 | 32 | 1.5 | 2 | 16 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 2: Program Schedule for Early Head Start Home-based Option** | | | | | |
| **Funded Child Enrollment** | **Number of Home Visits per child per year** | **Number of hours per home visit** | **Number of hours per home-based socialization**  **Experience** | **Number of home-based socialization experiences per child per year** | **Projected Number of Pregnant Women per year** |
| 75 | 48 | 1.5 | 2 | 22 | 3 |

Current Total Funded Slots for Home-based option=**103**

The program is proposing a reduction in 58 total slots for the HB option; (15 Head Start and 43 Early Head Start), see below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 3: PROPOSED Reduction to HS/EHS Home-based Program** | | | | | | | |
|  | **Currently Funded HB Slots** | **Proposed Reduction to HB Enrollment Slots** | **Proposed Funded HB Child Enrollment**  **Slots** | **Number of Home Visits per child per year** | **Number of hours per home visit** | **Number of hours per home-based socialization**  **Experience** | **Number of home-based socialization experiences per child per year** |
| **Head Start** | **25** | **-15** | **10** | 32 | 1.5 | 2 | 16 |
| **Early Head Start** | **75** | **-43** | **32** | 48 | 1.5 | 2 | 22 |
| **Slots for Pregnant Women** | **3** | **0** | **3** |  | | | |
| **Program Total** | **103** | **-58** | **45** |

**PROPOSED Staff Structure serving Home-based option:**

Currently, the recipient budgets for 10 home visitors (HV), a home-based manager and a home-based coordinator. Significant turnover in visitors has resulted in unfilled positions and long term vacancies. The NYS background clearances are very lengthy, for some employees greater than three months. This has resulted in candidates taking other positions. Once visitors are hired, they receive 4 weeks of onboarding training, curriculum training, job shadowing/mentoring and ongoing professional development and supervision. A great deal of time and expense goes into training each home visitor (not exclusively home visitors, but all LEAP staff). Each HV currently carries a caseload of approximately 11-12 families depending on geographic location. With this amendment, requesting a reduction in HB slots, LEAP will be reducing the number of home visiting staff to 4 visitors and 1 home-based coordinator. Each visitor will continue to carry a caseload of 11-12 families depending on geographic location. This provides each home visitor time to travel to their visits, time for documentation, lesson/activity preparation, case management, professional development and other meetings, as scheduled. Each home visitor will receive scheduled supervision and professional development every 6 weeks, or as needed. Case Management meetings are conducted for each family every 6 weeks. Comprehensive program services will be provided to the families receiving services in the home. The HB Coordinator will provide direct supervision of the visitors; conduct case management meetings, provide professional development and supervisory support and ensure training and curriculum fidelity through regularly scheduled observations of home visits. Each home visitor will be observed three times per year using the HOVRS. The HB Coordinator will work together with the Family Services Coordinator to develop Parent Family Community Engagement (PFCE) activities with family services and home visiting staff. The HB Coordinator position will take the lead along with the Program Director, to support the policy council and provide assistance to policy council members to facilitate meetings, attendance, and other supports to ensure a successful collaboration between policy council, program staff and the Board of Directors. The HB Coordinator and Home Visitors will regularly participate in Education Component meetings with the Education Coordinators to ensure that the program’s school readiness goals are met. Visitors will utilize the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) child assessment data 3-4 times per year to assist in the development of individualized lesson plans and goals for children and families.

With this proposed plan, we will be reducing our budget by 6 home visitor positions. No home visitor will lose their job as a result of the reduction; we currently have 4 visitors on staff.

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| **Table 4: Summary of Proposed Staff Structure for HB Option Enrollment Reduction** | | | | |
| HB Option:  **Reduction in Home Visiting Staff by 6 visitors** | Reduce from:  **10 HV to**  **4 Home Visitors** working 52 wks/yr | -Eliminate a HB Manager position. –Maintain 1 HB Coordinator | Maintain current caseload numbers:  11/12 Families | Combined caseloads of HS/EHS |

**Data to Support the Proposed Home-Based Enrollment Reduction:**

Community Assessment: L.E.A.P. utilized the services of Spiridis Consulting LLC to facilitate the Community Assessment between March and August of 2022, including the management of survey processes; research, collection, and analysis of data; and compilation of the final Community Assessment report.

“Key factors in the 2022 Community Assessment include, but are not limited to, the following:

* rapidly increasing inflation on goods and services and families needing to prioritize their greatest needs;
* lasting COVID-19 impacts on housing and the fear of eviction;
* the lack of jobs with pay to sustain families; and
* diminishing childcare— particularly infant/toddler center-based care—for working families.”

Washington County has a variety of resources and supports for children, families, and individuals, including seniors. However, there are several community issues which greatly impact residents, specifically the need for: quality childcare, affordable and safe housing, jobs with livable wages, weatherization and home repairs, and expanded public transportation. These and other issues are interwoven, meaning families must remove a multitude of barriers to move towards self-sufficiency. These findings from the CA are supported by program data which shows a lack of interest in HB and historical low enrollment in the HB program.

County Demographics: While the U.S. population grew by 7.1% and NY’s population grew by 4.3% between 2010 and 2020, Washington County’s population declined by 3% (-1,915 people). Populations declined in every town except Kingsbury (+2.3%). Sizable population declines occurred in Dresden (-17.6%), Fort Ann (-6.1%), Fort Edward (-6%), and Granville (-6.8%). Towns with the largest 2020 populations include Fort Ann (5,812), Fort Edward (5,991), Granville (6,215), and Kingsbury (12,968). A total of 61,302 people live in Washington County’s 831.17 square mile area. Therefore, the population density for Washington County is estimated at 74 persons per square mile, less than the U.S. average population density of 92 persons per square mile. Program enrollment data and turnover in slots demonstrate that many families are moving out of Washington County. As noted in the Community Assessment, barriers in housing, employment, and lack of public transportation have been reasons why families have moved out of ‘rural’ Washington County. Families who work, need center-based services. Many enrolled families move frequently within a program year; out of the county or to a more populated area such as the Town of Kingsbury where we currently have two centers and there is a large availability of both private childcare providers and a large number of Pre-K classrooms offered within the Hudson Falls and Fort Edward School District. Enrollment Data for the past three years demonstrate that HB HS and EHS slots are nearly 50% unfilled.

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| **Table 5: LEAP Head Start and Early Head Start Home-Based Historical Enrollment Data** | | |
|  | HB Head Start Enrollment  (Actual/Funded) | HB Early Head Start Enrollment  (Actual/Funded) |
| 2020 | 19/25- 76% | 66/78- 84% |
| 2021 | 13/25- 52% | 52/78- 66% |
| 2022 | 12/25- 48% | 39/78- 50% |

Population of County: The age group of 65+ constitutes 23.5% (11,905 people) of Washington County’s population, making it the largest age group. The county has an estimated 0-4 age population of 4% (2,705 children), less than New York State (5.9%). Of Washington County’s population, the estimated median age of all persons is 44.2, indicating that the population as a whole generally trends older.

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| **Table 6: Children in Poverty by Age Group in Washington County\*** | | | | | | |
| **Children Under Age 5** | | | **Infants and Toddlers** | | **3 and 4-Year Olds** | |
| **Total Children** | **# in Poverty** | **% in Poverty** | **Count\*** | **In Poverty** | **Count\*** | **In Poverty** |
| 2705 | 452 | 16.7% | 1623 | 271 | 1082 | 181 |

\*Estimated Infants/Toddlers (60%) and 3- & 4-Year-Olds (40%)

Source: American Community, 2020 5-Year Estimate

As indicated in Table 5, the estimated number of Washington County children living in poverty under the age of 5 is 452. Of that group, 271 are infants and toddlers with 181 estimated 3 and 4-year olds.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pre-K Programs and Child Care in Washington County: There are 11 School Districts  in Washington County with each school district now offering Pre-K. This has had a  significant impact to LEAP’s ability to meet funded enrollment numbers in Head Start  Home-based and Center-based.  LEAP contacted each of the 11 school districts to verify their program schedule and  number of UPK seats. The recipient compared the number of UPK seats with  the number of age eligible children in the district. The Pre-K numbers are actually higher  than what was reported in the recent community needs assessment. Districts have  increased their UPK program and converted half day to full day sessions. Currently  there are 314 half day UPK / Pre-K slots and 130 full day slots available to four year-olds  county-wide.  **Table 7: UPK Data for Washington County School Districts** | | | | |  |  |  |  |
| **District** | **Half-Day Seats** |  | **Full-Day Seats** |  |
|  | **314** |  | **130** |  |
| Argyle CSD PreK | 18 |  | 0 |  |
| Cambridge CSD UPK | 0 |  | 40 |  |
| Fort Ann CSD UPK | 36 |  | 0 |  |
| Fort Edward UPK | 17 |  | 0 |  |
| Granville CSD UPK | 0 |  | 54 |  |
| Greenwich CSD UPK | 40 |  | 0 |  |
| Hartford CSD UPK | 20 |  | 0 |  |
| Hudson Falls CSD | 144 |  | 0 |  |
| Salem CSD PreK | 0 |  | 36 |  |
| Whitehall CSDUPK | 21 |  | 0 |  |

Putnam UPK 18 0

Washington County has 2 licensed Child Care Centers: one in Cambridge and one in Fort Edward. Between the two there are 93 slots for infants through age 5. Additionally, there are 17 Group Child Care Homes (serving 204 children; 6 wks-12 yrs) and 21 Family Child Care Homes (serving 126 children; 6 wks.-12 yrs.). Although these numbers reflect a decrease in child care providers since before COVID, there has been in an increase in Pre-K and UPK slots. Children from the more rural towns and hamlets are assigned districts based upon geographic location. These children are also attending the UPK and local family child care homes who can provide a longer day which better meets the needs of working families. Historically, the recipient provided home-based services to families who lived in the more rural areas of the county. The recipient has learned through surveying families that they would rather attend a full day head start or UPK program, if space was available. The population of children eligible for Head Start in each county are largely being served with existing Head Start slots, the local school district or child care providers. The data presented in the chart below provides an overview of what is offered at each school district. The chart also shows the population of children under age 5 for each township/hamlet and the percentage and count of children living in poverty. The data shows that most HS eligible children are already being served through services at the local HS center or through HB services, the local UPK program or community child care providers. The data describes the story of what the program is experiencing; the number of available child care slots along with the increase in Pre-K slots and the decrease in population, results in LEAP receiving fewer enrollment requests particularly for families interested in home-based and center-based double-session services.

L.E.A.P.’s current waitlist of eligible families:

Head Start:

* Home-Based- 0
* Center-based Full Day- 27
* Double-Session- 0

Early Head Start:

* Home-Based- 4
* Center-based- 20

**Table 8: Population of Children under Age 5 and Availability of HS and UPK Seats**

| **A** | **B** | **C** | **D** | **E** | **F** | **G** | **H** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **LEAP Centers in District** | **School Districts in Washington**  **County** | **Township/**  **Hamlet** | **Total Count of Children Under Age 5** | **Total Count of Children in Poverty Under Age 5** | **% of Total Children Under Age 5** | **# of Children Enrolled in Pre-K** | **Assumed Count of HS Eligible Children in Pre-K** |
|  | Argyle Central School | \*Argyle  **Total** | 201  **201** | 7  **7** | **3.5%** | **18** | **6** |
| **Cambridge**  **Center**  HS: 18 Full Day Slots  EHS: 8  **No change proposed** | Cambridge  Central School | \*Cambridge  \*Jackson  \*White Creek  **Total** | 151  109  64  **324** | 22  4  0  **26** | **8.0%** | **40** | **3** |
|  | Fort Ann  Central School | \*Fort Ann  \*Dresden  **Total** | 210  28  **238** | 11  2  **13** | **5.5%** | **36** | **2** |
|  | Fort Edward  Central School | \*Fort Edward  **Total** | 247  **247** | 14  **14** | **5.7%** | **17** | **10** |
| **Granville Center**  1 Double Session Room- 34 slots  **Reduction and Conversion Requested to 1 Full Day= 18 slots.** | Granville  Central School | Granville  \*Hampton  **Total** | 274  19  **293** | 5  3  **8** | **2.7%** | **54** | **2** |
|  | Greenwich Central School | Greenwich  \*Easton  **Total** | 299  59  **358** | 71  7  **78** | **21.8%** | **40** | **9** |
|  | Hartford Central School | Hartford  **Total** | 87  **87** | 29  **29** | **33.3%** | **20** | **7** |
| 2Centers  **River St.**:  HS: 36 Full Day Slots  EHS: 24  **No change proposed**  **Dix Ave:**  HS: 2 Double Session Rms 60 Slots  1Full Day 18 Slots  **Conversion Requested** | Hudson Falls Central School | Kingsbury  **Total** | 661  **661** | 179  **179** | **27.1%** | **144** | **39** |
|  | Putnam Central School | \*Putnam  **Total** | 19  **19** | 11  **11** | **57.9%** | **18** | **10** |
|  | Salem Central School | Salem  \*Hebron  **Total** | 67  89  **156** | 0  23  **23** | **14.7%** | **36** | **5** |
| **Whitehall Center**  HS: 2 Full Day rooms= 32 slots  EHS: 8  **Conversion Requested** | Whitehall Central School | Whitehall  **Total** | 121  **121** | 64  **64** | **52.9%** | **21** | **11** |

Rationale:

The Home-based model offers many opportunities for hands-on support and access to services and like other Head Start services it values the important role parents have as their child’s first and most important educator. Building relationships with families and developing individualized plans right in the home provides many positive opportunities for growth and skill development. Over the years however, LEAP has encountered challenges of high turnover in home visiting staff, lack of participation by families and low overall Home-base enrollment.

* Changing Needs of Families: Increasingly the needs of families have changed, and the home-based model no longer works for families as it once did. Many parents work outside the home and must rely on center-based care for their children during the day. Families who have a history with child protective services can be mistrustful of having visitors in their home. This has been observed by center-based staff as well. During recent years, families are concerned about the spread of illness and do not want visitors in their home or some are not compliant with mask protocols. Additionally, since LEAP has limited HS center-based classrooms open due to workforce shortages, we have observed parents enrolling in home-based but adding their child to the waitlist for a Center-based slot. Many of these families are not participating in the weekly home visit. There are frequent cancelations and/or families who are not home when the visitor arrives. Visitors communicate and make efforts to reschedule but are met with similar outcomes. Though every effort is made to communicate with families there are times when, after a month or so of no responses, families are informed that they will lose their slot.
* High Turnover in Home Visitors positions: The HV position is challenging and can be very difficult to fill. A home visitor must be skilled at implementing a home-based early childhood curriculum while also offering resources and support to meet each family’s individual needs based on their goals and plans. Each home situation is unique and at times may present challenges for the HB Visitor. Visitors are presented with situations that can be unsafe (volatile home environment, unsafe house, visitors, animals, remote homes) and leads the visitor to look for other employment. Skills are needed in early education and family services. Increased anxieties have been observed in staff who have encountered more challenging and confrontational type behaviors from families. Though training and professional development is ongoing in LEAP, the program still experiences high turnover. Wages for home visitors are not competitive. With the request for a reduction in HS and EHS Home-Based slots the program will be reducing the HB Visitors from 10 to 4 and eliminating the HB Manager position. The grant recipient will be increasing the hourly rates for the Home Visitors and Lead Teacher positions both of which have been very difficult to fill during this workforce challenge.

**II. Request to Convert Slots:**

Part II of this application is requesting a conversion of Head Start Center-based slots to Early Head Start Center-based slots to better meet the changing and unmet needs of families in Washington County. LEAP has been working hard to fill funded enrollment slots. Over the past four years, the program has found it increasingly difficult to fill classroom positions, particularly the role of the lead teacher. For over a year and a half the program has experienced an ongoing 25% staff vacancy rate. The recipient continues the painstaking, lengthy hiring process of advertising, interviews, and long waits for background clearances before a candidate can start. The pattern of hiring, training and resignations is ongoing. Efforts to recruit qualified candidates is ongoing. Some of the strategies that are in place:

* Hiring bonuses
* Staff Retention bonuses
* Increases to teaching staff salaries
* Wellness training, events, and activities
* Recognition for hard work
* Incentives
* Generous benefit time
* A supportive professional development structure
* Commitment to opening classrooms that are consistently staffed.
* A strategic onboarding and comprehensive training plan for new hires; inclusive of training and technical assistance for Early Head Start staff in compliance with 1302.20(c)(3)(vi) of the Head Start Performance Standards.
* An affordable individual HMO health plan. Agency contributes to deductible.
* Ongoing job postings on social media; and recognition of staff efforts related to program services and activities.
* Building relationships with community partners
* Attending college job fairs; posting opening in career centers

Currently, as a result of staff vacancies, there are four Head Start classrooms that are closed. One classroom opened at the beginning of December 2022. As vacant positions are filled, the program provides training and job shadowing in classrooms that are open. These staff are also used to provide ratio when illness affects staff attendance. COVID, flu and RSV illnesses continue to impact the attendance of staff and children. When a full classroom team is hired, the program establishes an opening date; families on the waitlist are contacted, home visits are scheduled and the process for enrolling children into the CB classroom begin. Throughout this year, maintaining a viable waitlist has been key. Staff keep families informed and contact them when openings occur. The employment crisis has not been the only impact, as described in the Community Assessment data, there is an increase in Pre-K and UPK slots being offered in the local school districts. Working families in need of care for their 4 year olds are being met by school districts, Head Start, and local child care homes. The Community Assessment identified an unmet need and this is reflected by program data, working families need full day, quality care for their toddlers and 3 year-olds. More families need to work outside the home and half day programs no longer meet their needs. As seen in the chart below, LEAP’s current program schedule funds 94 double session slots. These sessions are not attractive to families who work.

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| **Table 9:** **Current Program Schedules: HEAD START Center-based Option** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | Funded Child Enrollment | | Number of Classes | | Number of hours per day | | Number of days per week | | Number of days of classes per child per year | | Number of home visits per year | | Number of hours per home visit |
| Full Day | | 104 | | 6 | | 6 | | 5 | | 173 | | 4 | | 1.5 |
| Double session | | 94 | | 6 | | 3.5 | | 4 | | 139 | | 4 | | 1.5 |
| **Current Program Schedule: EARLY HEAD START Center-based Option** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Funded Child Enrollment | | Number of Classes | | Number of hours per day | | Number of days per week | | Number of days of classes per child per year | | Number of home visits per year | | Number of hours per home visit | |
| Full Day | 40 | | 5 | | 6 | | 5 | | 230 | | 5 | | 1.5 | |

The recipient is requesting a conversion of 2 HS double session classrooms (currently funded to serve 60 children in 4 separate classes) to 2 EHS Full Day classrooms (each serving 8 children 18 month – 3years of age).

| **Table 10: L.E.A.P HS / EHS Center-based Enrollment and Proposed Conversion** | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Centers** | **Program** | **Classroom** | **Funded Enrollment**  **Current** | | **Current Enrollment** | **Comments** | **Proposing** | | | |
| **HS** | **EHS** |
| **Dix Ave.** | Head start | Rainbow AM | 15 | 0 | Closed | No staff  No waitlist | **Convert 30 HS Double Session to EHS-8** | | **HS** | **EHS** |
| **0** | **8** |
| Rainbow PM | 15 | 0 | Closed | No staff  No waitlist |
| Cloud Room AM | 15 | 0 | **15** | Full No waitlist | **Convert 30 HS Double Session to EHS-**  **8 slots** | | **0** | **8** |
| Cloud Room PM | 15 | 0 | **15** | Full  No waitlist |
| Sunshine Room | 18 | X | Closed | No staff  **Waitlist -9 eligible +** 6 Over Inc. | No change  1 Full Day HS  18 slots | | **18** | **X** |
| **River Street** | Early Head Start | Moon Rm | X | 8 | 8 | Full | No change | | **X** | **8** |
| River Rm | X | 8 | 8 | Full | No change | | **X** | **8** |
|  | HS | EHS |  |  |  | | **HS** | **EHS** |
| Star Rm | X | 8 | 8 | Full | No change | | **X** | **8** |
| Head Start | Hilltop Room | 18 | X | Closed | Need Lead Teacher  Need Teacher’s Aide  **Waitlist- 16 eligible**+ 4 O.I. | No Change  1 Full Day HS  18 Slots | | **18** | **X** |
| Sky Room | 18 | X | 17 | Full due to age ratio | No Change  1 Full Day HS  18 Slots | | **18** | **X** |
| **Cambridge** | Early Head  Start | Willow  Room | X | 8 | 8 | Full | No Change | | **HS** | **EHS** |
| **X** | **8** |
| Head Start | Valley Room | 18 | X | 3 | Room opened 12.6.22 after hiring teaching team.  **Waitlist-3**+1 OI | No Change  1 Full Day HS  18 slots | | **18** | **X** |
| **Whitehall** | Early Head Start | Maple Room | X | 8 | 8 | Full | No Change | | **X** | **8** |
| Head Start | Meadow Room | 18 | X | 18 | **Waitlist- 8** +1 OI | No Change  1 Full Day HS  18 Slots | | **18** | **X** |
| Mountain Room | 14 | 0 | Closed | Waitlist- 0 | **Convert 14 HS Full Day Slots to**  **EHS**  **8 Slots** | | **0** | **8** |
| **Granville** | Head Start | Apple AM | 17 | X | 15 | Full Due to age ratio | **Convert**  **34 HS Double Session Slots to Full Day-**  **18 Slots** | | **18** | **X** |
| Apple PM | 17 | X | 2 | Waitlist 5 OI |
| **Total** |  |  | **HS**  **198** | **EHS**  **40** | **85- HS**  **40- EHS** | **36- HS** | **HS**    **-90** | **EHS**  **+24** | **HS**  **108** | **EHS**  **64** |

The above chart is highlighting the current data for the Center-based Head Start classrooms. Each of the 5 center-based EHS classrooms are full and there are 20 families on the wait list. Many of the HS families currently enrolled in the Cloud Room double session classrooms are awaiting openings in a full day classroom. Due to staff shortages and the decision to provide as many eligible families with services, the recipient opened a double session classroom to maximize the number of children who could be served. Some of these children also attend the local Pre-K programs. During the fall of 2022, a survey was distributed to currently enrolled families. Survey responses indicated that a majority of families needed full day, center-based Head Start services five days per week and many required services for children 2-3 years of age. Of the 34 families who responded 76% responded that a full day, center-based program schedule worked best for their family. The double session program option no longer meets the needs of families. Research has shown that children are better prepared for kindergarten when they have more consistent exposure to early childhood learning experiences. Extending the duration of time that children attend program will better prepare them for kindergarten. All Head Start children will receive 5 full days of services, 6 hours per day, and 130 days per year. EHS children will receive services year-round. A full array of HS and EHS services will be received and the program will operate in compliance with all HS Performance Standards and the HS Act.

**IMPORTANT INSIGHT REGARDING Change in Scope Request**

At first glance, the request to reduce/convert currently funded enrollment slots appear high:



* Of the 198 CB HS Slots, 94 are Double Session.
  + The double session options provide 3.5 hrs. per day/ 4 days per week/ 139 days per year. This schedule does not meet the needs of working families or provide the length of time early learners need to be ready for kindergarten.
  + The double session classes in Granville are not full. The morning session has 15 children with only 2 enrolled in the PM session; the waitlist has 4 over income children. The classroom is located in the Granville Elementary School which now offers full day Pre-K. The need for full day services far surpasses the need for double session programming. This is indicated by lack of wait list, vacant slots, and changes to the community as discussed in the overview of the Community Needs Assessment.
    - The proposed conversion to full day will provide children with extended services: 5 full days per week/ 6 hrs. per day, 173 days per year.
    - LEAP will focus on recruiting 3 year olds as this is an unmet need for families with children in Pre-K.
  + The double session classrooms located at Dix Avenue have no waitlist. The Rainbow Room has been closed for over 2 years due to staff vacancy as there is no demand for double session program. If the program had staff to fill the vacancies there would not be children to fill that many slots.
  + Many of the children currently enrolled in the Cloud Room (double session) are on the waitlist for a full day slot.
  + Program enrollment data aligns with data reported in the Community Needs Assessment. Eligible HS children are already being served by LEAP, Local School Districts Pre-K and local child care providers. LEAP is no longer right-sized for eligible families. Full day services will better meet the needs of working families.
  + Based on the CNA and data gathered by the program, there is a need for increasing EHS center-based services. This application is proposing to convert 2 Double Sessions Classrooms to 2 EHS Classrooms… 60 HS Slots to 16 EHS Slots. Two teaching teams would still be required.
  + The conversion of a Head Start classroom in Whitehall to EHS will serve a continued need in that area for children 18 mo-3-years. There will continue to be a full day classroom in Whitehall along with the Pre-K classroom offered by the school district.
  + The reduction in HS and EHS Home-based numbers contribute to the dramatic first impression that the recipient is significantly reducing services. The slots that are being dropped are not filled and there is not a waitlist. The recipient is adding 3 EHS Center-based classrooms which has been demonstrated through waitlists and the CNA to be a need for families in Washington County. This adds 24 CB EHS slots.

**Summary of Proposed Slot Reductions and Conversions**

**HEAD START**

**Table 11**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Current Funded Enrollment by Program Option** | | | | **Proposed Funded Enrollment**  **Change in Scope Request** | | | |
| **Head Start** | **Center-based** | **Home-based** | **Funded Child Enrollment Total** | **Head Start** | **Center-based** | **Home-based** | **Proposed Funded Child Enrollment** |
| **Total Enrollment** | 198 | 25 | 223 | **Total Proposed**  **Enrollment** | 108 | 10 | 118 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Current Head Start Center-based Program Schedule** | | | | | | | |
| **H.S.**  **Center-based** | **Funded Child Enroll-ment** | **Number of Classes** | **Number of hours per day** | **Number of days per week** | **Number of days of classes per child per year** | **Number of home visits per year** | **Number of hours per home visit** |
| **Full Day** | 104 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 173 | 4 | 1.5 |
| **Double session** | 94 | 6 | 3.5 | 4 | 139 | 4 | 1.5 |
| **Proposed Head Start Center-based Program Schedule** | | | | | | | |
| **H.S. Center-based** | **Proposed Child Enroll-ment** | **Number of Classes** | **Number of hours per day** | **Number of days per week** | **Number of days of classes per child per year** | **Number of home visits per year** | **Number of hours per home visit** |
| **Full Day** | 108 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 173 | 4 | 1.5 |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Current Head Start Home-based Program Schedule** | | | | |
| **Funded Child Enrollment** | **Number of Home Visits per child per year** | **Number of hours per home visit** | **Number of hours per home-based socialization**  **Experience** | **Number of home-based socialization experiences per child per year** |
| 25 | 32 | 1.5 | 2 | 16 |
| **Proposed Head Start Home-based Program Schedule** | | | | |
| **Proposed Funded Child Enrollment** | **Number of Home Visits per child per year** | **Number of hours per home visit** | **Number of hours per home-based socialization experience** | **Number of home-based socialization experiences per child per year** |
| 10 | 32 | 1.5 | 2 | 16 |

**EARLY HEAD START**

**Table 12**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Current Funded Enrollment by Program Option** | | | | **Proposed Funded Enrollment by Program Option** | | | |
| **Early Head Start** | **Center-based** | **Home-based** | **Funded Child Enroll-ment Total** | **Early Head Start** | **Center-based** | **Home-based** | **Proposed Child Enroll-ment Total** |
| **Total Enroll-ment** | 40 | 78 | 118 | **Proposed Total Enroll-ment** | 64 | 35 | 99 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Current Early Head Start Center-based Program Schedule** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **EHS Center-based** | **Funded Child Enroll-ment** | | **Number of Classes** | | **Number of hours per day** | **Number of days per week** | **Number of days of classes per child per year** | | **Number of home visits per year** | | **Number of hours per home visit** |
| **Full Day** | 40 | | 5 | | 6 | 5 | 230 | | 5 | | 1.5 |
| **Proposed Early Head Start Center-based Program Schedule** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **EHS Center-based** | **Funded Child Enroll-ment** | | **Number of Classes** | | **Number of hours per day** | **Number of days per week** | **Number of days of classes per child per year** | | **Number of home visits per year** | | **Number of hours per home visit** |
| **Full Day** | 64 | | 8 | | 6 | 5 | 230 | | 5 | | 1.5 |
| **Current Early Head Start Home-based Program Schedule** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Funded Child Enrollment** | | **Number of Home Visits per child per year** | | **Number of hours per home visit** | | **Number of hours per home-based socialization**  **Experience** | | **Number of home-based socialization experiences per child per year** | | **Projected Number of Pregnant Women per year** | |
| **75** | | 48 | | 1.5 | | 2 | | 22 | | **3** | |
| **Proposed Early Head Start Home-based Program Schedule** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Funded Child Enrollment** | | **Number of Home Visits per child per year** | | **Number of hours per home visit** | | **Number of hours per home-based socialization**  **Experience** | | **Number of home-based socialization experiences per child per year** | | **Projected Number of Pregnant Women per year** | |
| **32** | | 48 | | 1.5 | | 2 | | 22 | | **3** | |

**Time Frame to Implement Change in Scope:**

With this application, no currently enrolled child will lose program services. All classrooms that are proposed for conversion or reduction are currently not enrolled (see Table 10). The children in the double session classroom identified as the Cloud Room PM will be going to kindergarten in the September of 2023. Additionally, no staff will lose their job as a result of the Change in Scope. LEAP is requesting approval of this Change in Scope without a decrease in funding. The recipient is proposing to begin operating under its proposed scope of services effective July 1, 2023.

**Program Design and Management**

LEAP Head Start / Early Head Start is committed to implementing a high quality Head Start program in compliance with the 2007 Head Start Act, the Head Start Program Performance Standards and all NYS Department of Children and Family Services Child Care Licensing regulations. For years, the Head Start program has risen to the challenges of running high quality early childhood programs using guidance from cutting edge research and best practices. Program leaders and staff are often challenged to “do more, with less.” The standards that guide the excellent practices of operating a Head Start program rise to the top of other early childhood programs. Head Start has historically been the leader in developmentally appropriate practices, building connections with partners, teaching parenting skills and recognizing parents as the primary teachers of their children. From active learning to positive solutions for addressing challenging behaviors, Head Start staff does it all. It is indeed, a program to be proud of. This has all come at a price, however. The low salaries and challenging work have contributed to high turnover and staff leaving for better paying jobs with a lighter workload. LEAP has been challenged to implement a well-staffed program operating centers that are spread out in a rural county. Compensating teachers, home visitors and other staff with wages that are comparable to those in similar positions in the community or local Pre-K programs has been difficult. With workforce challenges increasing over the past 5 years, LEAP has experienced a high rate of turnover, vacancies for the past two years have been steady at 22 -25%. Many positions have remained vacant for long periods of time. This leads to existing staff taking on additional responsibilities which then leads to more turnover. LEAP’s goal is to break this cycle of over-working and under paying our valued staff. The goal is to repurpose savings, as a result of the reduction request, to increase salaries. By right-sizing the program and compensating difficult to fill positions, such as teachers and home visitors, we are working toward creating a workplace where staff are supported and fairly compensated. The program’s goal is to build a consistent, qualified workforce that continues to benefit from ongoing professional development and training. The success of a program’s service implementation is tied directly to staff. Key positions need to be filled; recruiting and retaining qualified staff is essential to implementing a multi-disciplinary set of services. Compensation is key. Funding must be available for supervisory and management staff. LEAP has a supportive management structure to provide the supervision, professional development and training needed to assist staff. LEAP has an active Policy Council and Board of Directors. Both governing bodies are committed to the Head Start program and the services it provides to eligible children and families in Washington County. The program implements a strong model of ongoing monitoring to ensure compliance but also to guide professional development.

**III. Budget Narrative**

This change in scope request proposes an annual budget amount that is **equal to** the amount awarded to the agency through the Office of Head Start Notice of Award dated 7/16/2022; award number 02CH01143403 for $4,752,457 for the Year 3 funding cycle ending on 3/31/2023 (not inclusive of sub-award number 02CH01143403C3 of $63,903.38). On 10/13/2022, the Office of Head Start issued a Funding Guidance Letter for this same amount ($4,752,457) for the grant year ending 03/31/2024, which the agency applied for on 12/22/2022; currently under review with the Region II Office. While there is no change in the total amount of annual funds requested within this application, this budget describes in detail how several cost reductions (“freed up funds”) are to be repurposed to improve the wages of key staff roles within the program. Note, the agency has not had unobligated funds at the end of any each grant year within the current or the previous 5-year grant cycle (2015 – 2020; 2020-2025, respectively).

A net-zero-cost-change budget is supported in part by the fact that all 14 classrooms across all 5 centers will remain open. The conversion of 3 classrooms from Head Start to Early Head Start does not eliminate costs associated with expenses that include but are not limited to class supplies, center/classroom maintenance, center overhead such as rent and utilities, in addition to teaching teams (currently 14 teaching teams covering 14 classrooms across 5 centers, with no proposed change to these staffing numbers). While the overall net change from the approved to the proposed budget is $0, the amount of funds between cost categories and the allocation of funds between Head Start and Early Head Start differs from the budget submitted for approval on 12/21/2022. The following narrative explains the rationale for the changes in budget by line item, including a chart outlining the impact on the cost per child.



**Chart Explained**

The Enrollment Reduction chart, shown above, provides a high level visual that walks you through the change to our programs’ total Head Start and Early Head Start funding allocation as well as the impact to the cost-per-child (CPC) for each; 1) From what was *authorized* (funding and enrollment), to 2) *current figures* (authorized funding and *current* enrollment as of December 2022) to 3) *proposed budget and proposed enrollment figures* based on the change in scope (authorized funding reallocated between Head Start and Early Head Start, as well as new projected enrollment numbers). As you can see the proposed budget remains flat as compared to the Authorized budget. This is primarily driven by reallocating any savings from reducing staff numbers (in tandem with enrollment numbers) and reinvesting those cost savings into the wages of the positions most critical to the program, and in an effort to greatly improve recruitment and retention. The ‘Personnel/Wages’ section below outlines these staff changes in more detail.

The agency has put much effort in evaluating its program structure and ability to capture efficiencies through negotiated contract terms and/or reduced pricing (supplies, equipment, etc.). LEAP has been successful in capturing savings and efficiencies through the following contract/pricing negotiations over the last four years:

1. Enterprise Fleet Management: Between July and November 2022, the vehicle fleet acquired in 2016 (14 minivans, primarily Dodge Caravans) were replaced with new 2022 Chrysler Voyagers, rolling any equity into the new vehicles resulting in a lower cost per vehicle (monthly and annually). These new vehicles are also more fuel-efficient, resulting in savings in that piece of the local travel / transportation budget.
2. Prior year Base and One-time funding was utilized to replace two older buses with new buses that resulted in significantly less vehicle maintenance on an annual basis. These older vehicles required regular repair and maintenance; anywhere from $10k-$15k per year per bus.
3. Center-Maintenance: in 2019, and through a Request for Proposal and a competitive bidding process, the agency transitioned from a contract for maintenance with North Country Janitorial (at all 5 centers and the administrative building) to a contract with All Pro Restoration; approximately $10k in annual savings captured.
4. Waste Management: in 2021, after soliciting quotes from other providers, we renewed our contract with Casella Waste Services (for all 5 center locations), capturing an annual savings of $9k or 61% from previous rates. This was during a period of high competition between providers in our region.
5. Under-funded pension plan IRS payments: driven by fiscally responsible management of the under-funded, frozen Head Start Defined Benefit Pension Plan, we have seen a decrease in (a) required quarterly and annual payments the agency makes due to the under-funded status of the plan and (b) the amount paid annually to the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation to insure the plan. This has been driven by active management and strategic decisions, including working with partner NBT bank to remove participants from the plan (rolling small balances, under $5k, into IRAs) which both reduces the liability and the need for a separate annual audit ($4k in annual audit expense). Additionally, a $200,000 one-time contribution into the plan was made in 2022 (with ‘freed up funds’ as a result of significant turn over in the grant year ending March 31, 2022). These strategic decisions, coupled with increasing interest rates in 2022, has significantly improved the plans under-funded status. Plan termination may be possible in 2024.

The cost savings that have been realized from these strategic decisions have been reinvested in wages to every extent possible (without jeopardizing our annual budget). In October of 2021, the leap Finance Director presented an analysis of the continued efforts to improve the wages of positions across all five non-exempt tiers of the Wage & Grade Scale (over a three-year period). Despite these efforts, and as discussed in more detail in the ‘Personnel’ section of this proposal, we continue to lack a competitive advantage when comparing our wages to that of the market. This was confirmed with a Wage Benchmarking study conducted by an independent contractor in 2021 (and revised in 2022).

While the cost per child increases for both Head Start and Early Head Start in this proposal**,** without an investment in our highly valued but under-paid staff (primarily those in roles directly serving children and families), we will continue to struggle with attracting and retaining qualified talent. **A reduction in our grant funding would have an enormously negatively impact on the future outlook of the L.E.A.P. Head Start and Early Head Start programs.** Without the ability to reinvest cost reductions into improved wages, the ongoing hiring crisis, seen in our community and around the country, will persist. And as such, would have a direct impact on our ability to offer services to the children and families in our community. Without the qualified staff needed to run the program, classrooms will close (or continue to remain closed) and home-based options may become unavailable to those families who depend on the services.

**Line by Line Changes to Budget**

***Overall net Change of $0; Head Start ($517,349); Early Head Start +$517,349***



1. **Personnel (Wages) net change of +$3,171;** *Head Start ($409,137); Early Head Start +$412,308*

L.E.A.P. has always utilized regional salary comparison data to determine compensation for new employees. As noted in the information memorandum, ACF-IM-HS-22-09 issued on 11/17/2022, “*If requesting a change in scope for the purpose of freeing up funds to increase staff compensation, the program’s request should be supported by findings from the wage comparability study or by current data on comparable wages in the community*”. A wage benchmarking study was completed by a hired consultant, Delark HR Solutions, in 2021 and revised in 2022. The findings have helped to inform the raised salaries and rates that are proposed within this application and reflected in a revised version of our Wage & Grade Scale Policy, included in the supporting documents tab of HSES. Per our Employee Handbook, the Wage & Grade Scale Policy is used to determine rates of pay for all agency employees (with the exception of the Executive Director, whose salary is determined by the Board of Directors). A copy of the policy is also included in the documents tab of HSES.

The rates within this policy are limited by our authorized funding, and have historically, by position, lagged behind comparable roles within comparable agencies (primarily public school districts in our region). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency struggled with retention and recruitment efforts due in part to this lack of competitive wage. Since the onset of the pandemic, this issue has only been exasperated by a shrunken labor pool with which to recruit from (driven by the ‘Great Resignation’, an ongoing economic trend). In November 2022, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 1.9 available jobs for every one individual seeking work. Since the onset of the pandemic, LEAP’s Head Start / Early Head Start program saw turnover as high as 25%, with many existing staff suffering from burnout as a result (covering multiple positions in order to ensure continued programming). Stressful and uncertain conditions over the last three years has led to burnout, resignation and low morale. Employee Wellness and Recognition has never been more important. We must rise to the higher expectations demanded from both prospective and current staff; primarily in the form of wage increases that align with the market and more accurately compensates for what is a challenging job. This budget proposal does not result in any layoffs; rather eliminating already open roles and reinvesting those funds into current staff wages.

**(a) Reductions in Personnel (Wages) Expense ($269,816)**

* A reduction of **($165,256)** driven by the elimination of six Home Based Visitor positions to align with a reduced home-based program. These are currently vacant positions which have been challenging to recruit for. The position requires both social work as well as early education experience, in addition to experience working with vulnerable populations. The reduced Home-Based team is also a reflection of both demand for this type of service and our 2022 Community Needs Assessment as discussed previously in this application.
* **A reduction of ($31,264**) driven by combining positions. The Parent Engagement / Center Manager position at our Granville Center (open at the time of this application) will be replaced by a staff person who will serve dual roles of ‘Family Advocate’ as well as ‘Granville Center Manager’. In right-sizing our program, the Granville Center Manager has the capacity to serve in both roles.
* **A reduction of ($51,524)** driven by eliminating the (vacant) Health Manager / RN position. This role has been challenging to recruit for since becoming vacant, as we are unable to compete with local health services rates (including that of a school nurse position within the local school districts). While an RN is required to sign off on specific documents/assessments, it could be filled by a consultant who, under contract, would only be needed on a part-time basis (a cost savings).
* **A reduction of ($21,771)** driven by the elimination of one Assistant Cook position at our Dix Avenue Center. While we will continue to provide breakfast, snack and lunch to all enrolled children, due to the drop in enrollment, particularly at our Dix Avenue Center where 60 Head Start slots are converting to 16 Early Head Start slots, meal preparation at this Center will be completed by the Lead Cook (not requiring an Assistant).

**(b) Increases to Personnel (Wages) Expense +$272,987**

* **Teaching teams (licensed/qualified) and Home Based Visitors +$189,455:** increased wages for (14) Lead Teacher, (14) Assistant Teacher positions, (4) Home Visitors and the positions that manage these roles – Home Based Coordinator and Education Coordinator. This amount also includes the impact of converting 3 Lead, 3 Assistant and 3 Teacher Aide positions from 44 week (Head Start) employees to 52 week (Early Head Start) employees. The rationale for differentiating a Head Start Lead from an Early Head Start Lead Teacher is the difference in qualifications and experience that is required. A Bachelor’s degree is required for a HS Lead Teacher and as Associate’s degree is required for an EHS Lead Teacher (no such differentiation for an Assistant Teacher for EHS and HS). A Home Visitor is slightly ahead of an Assistant Teacher due to the responsibilities of the job and needing a background in both early childhood development/education as well as social work. An annual salary of $40,000 for Lead Teachers (HS and EHS) is far more competitive with local school districts in our region. For example, the Hudson Falls School District (the largest in the County) starting salary (lowest 5% percentile) for a Lead Teacher is $43,170[[1]](#endnote-1). Additionally, the median wage for a Lead Teacher, as per the 2022 Wage Comparability data provided by Delark HR Solutions, is $43,007. We see the highest turnover within our teaching teams and home visiting positions and are confident that these proposed wage increases will greatly improve recruitment, retention and morale. Finally, it is important that the positions that oversee these roles, Education Coordinator and Home Based Coordinator, be recognized for the increased need for staff professional development and support, as well as support to our enrolled families. The hourly rate of these Coordinator-level positions must also remain above that of their direct reports, for whom they provide supervision. The 2022 Wage Comparability Study valued these positions as between $53,814 and $55,151. The proposed rate brings these positions much closer to like-positions in the labor market. The chart below summarizes these changes and are reflective of the base (starting) rate of each position.



* **Adding an additional Education Coordinator for an annualized salary of $48,521**. The slight variance from the proposed base rate in the chart above is driven by the longevity of the individual who is planned to transition into this role. The rationale for an additional Coordinator supervising the teaching staff is premised on Employee Wellness. The current model does not allow for sufficient oversight, support and professional development as the position oversees 14 positions located across 5 centers. With an additional Coordinator, aligning each by location (Hudson Falls Centers (2) vs. Outlying Centers (3)), staff will be more effectively supervised and supported. We anticipate a great impact on employee morale and overall wellness with this additional role. And a healthier, more supported team leads to an even higher quality of service to our children and families.
* **An increase of $10,564 driven by an increased rate for the Child Health Nurse/LPN position** and extending the role from a 44 week to a 52 week position to reflect the proposed higher Early Head Start enrollment. We plan to change the current base rate of $19.14 ($34,835 annually) to $22.00 per hour ($40,040 annually). This position is currently filled and an increased wage would help to address issues of retention. The 2022 Wage Comparability study valued this role at $48,712.
* **With the remaining savings, a 2% increase in the base rate of all other positions, equal to $24,446 in total**, within the HS/EHS program. When Delark completed the wage study in 2021, and then again updated the study in 2022, **not one of the 56 positions on our Grade & Wage Scale had an associated wage that was at or above the median market wage.** While the difference between LEAP rates and market rates varies by position according to this study, all positions could benefit from an increased wage. For morale purposes, and if and when the agency would be able to implement these proposed changes, at least some benefit provided to all staff in the program will go a long way in improving retention for the program as a whole.

1. **Fringe Benefits – net change of +$23,052;** *Head Start ($46,787); Early Head Start +$69,389*
2. **In the proposed budget, FICA/FUTA/SUI/Workers Compensation increases by +$81,961**driven by more current projections of the NYS Unemployment Insurance rate (SUI). Our authorized budget assumes an SUI rate of 2%, which was the assumption used based on actual payroll in 2021 and the first half 2022. The 2023 rate is set to 4.3%, driven by the status of the New York State Unemployment Trust Fund (a struggling, under-funded trust, with funding status exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic), and the sunsetting of FUTA credits provided to employers following the pandemic. As a result, an SUI tax increase to NYS employers is expected. Note that due to the conversion of slots, and the subsequent allocation of staff time between programs, the impact to Head Start SUI budget is +$19,212, while the impact to Early Head Start fringe is +$62,749 (note: enrollment goes from 65%/35% HS/EHS to 54%/46% HS/EHS)
3. **Decrease of ($6,911) in employer-sponsored health benefits**. The net change in FTE (full time equivalents) is a decrease of 6.5 (driven by Home Visitors). The annual contribution that the agency makes towards our HMO health plan is $7,958 per employee. To be conservative, and because the HMO plan is not fully utilized, we have assumed (just under) 1 less FTE to fund annually (at minimum).
4. **Decrease of ($50,367) in employer-sponsored retirement benefits***.* By the end of the Year 3 grant period (3/31/2023), we anticipate making another sizable contribution ($200,000 minimum) towards the agency’s under-funded, frozen defined benefit pension plan. Due to high turnover at year-ending 3/31/2022, LEAP senior leadership, the Policy Council and the Board of Directors approved a $200k contribution as a fiscally responsible decision that helped to ensure the spend down of Year 2 funds in full by the grant end-date. This resulted in a temporary pause on the IRS required quarterly contributions into the plan (estimated to be $50k - $60k in 2022-2023). We anticipate another large contribution will both improve the under-funded status of the plan, and again eliminate these quarterly payments.
5. **Decrease of ($1,631) in employer sponsored HRA benefits***.* Concurrent with the decision to reduce the agency’s HMO budget based on reduced headcount, the agency’s HRA, a contribution of $500 per employee towards the plan’s deductible, is expected to decrease in tandem.
6. **Travel – no anticipated changes to this portion of the agency’s Training & Technical Assistance budget**
7. **Equipment – net change of ($16,112):** *Head Start ($4,010); Early Head Start ($12,102)*While the agency’s fleet of 2022 Chrysler Voyagers is available for all programming/travel needs, they are utilized primarily for home-based programming visits with Head Start and Early Head families. Because of the change in enrollment and the subsequent reduction in 6 Home Visitors, our Transportation Coordinator has determined that 4 of the minivans may be sold back to Enterprise Fleet Management should this application be approved. Each van carries an annual cost of between $3500-$4500 in leased fees. The drop in expense impacts the Early Head Start budget more than the Head Start equipment budget due to the proposed Home-Based enrollment slot changes for each (drop of 15 within Head Start and a drop of 43 within Early Head Start).
8. **Supplies – net change of ($27,911):** *Head Start ($29,162); Early Head Start +$1,251*
9. **Office Supplies – net zero change overall; only the allocation between programs (65%/35% HS/EHS -> 54%/46% HS/EHS)** (paper, pens, ink, masks, etc. are primarily in use by our administrative / supervisory team.
10. **Decrease of (22,996) in Child and Family Services Supplies**. Of this, (20,918) in Head Start and ($2,078) in Early Head Start supplies. This is directly related to the reduced enrollment and was calculated based on the supplies cost per child (total authorized supplies divided by authorized enrollment), adding 10% for inflation per economic trends, and multiplying that new supplies CPC rate by the proposed enrollment for each program. We believe that these changes are reasonable without sacrificing program quality and/or outcomes.
11. **Decrease of (9,915) in Food Services Supplies**. Of this, (9,019) in Head Start and ($896) in Early Head Start food services (kitchen) supplies; paper products, gloves, utensils, etc. This is directly related to the reduced enrollment and was calculated based on the food supplies cost per child (total authorized food supplies divided by authorized enrollment), adding 10% for inflation per economic trends, and multiplying that new food supplies CPC rate by the proposed enrollment for each program. We believe that these changes are reasonable without sacrificing program quality and/or outcomes.
12. **Other Supplies +$5,000: Head Start +$2,700; Early Head Start $2,300.** This budget is for supplies specific to employee recognition. Small rewards (certificates, badges, pins) that are offered to employees at Appreciation Events throughout the year. This is in recognition of Information Memorandum ACF-IM-HS-21-05, “Supporting the Wellness of All Staff in the Head Start Workforce”, released on 09/27/2022, in response to working conditions following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (staff shortages, burnout, etc.)
13. **Contractual Expense – net change of +$16,900:** *Head Start $739; Early Head Start $16,161.*We anticipate that the reduced enrollment, converted slots, and small changes to staffing structure will not have an impact on Administrative Contracts (Accounting, Payroll, IT, etc.) or on ‘Other Contracts’ (for program software ChildPlus, as-needed website support or annual member dues). However, the allocation between the two programs will shift based on the conversion of slots from EHS to HS. The net increase is related to a Health Services contract with an RN, to provide as-needed evaluation/sign-off, in place of what was a full-time staff position.
14. **Other Expense – net change of +$900:** *Head Start ($28,992); Early Head Start $29,892.*

We anticipate that the reduced enrollment, converted slots, and small changes to staffing structure will not have an impact on Utilities, Liability Insurance or Publications, as compared to the authorized budget. However, the allocation between the two programs will shift based on the conversion of slots from HS to EHS. The following ‘Other Expense’ sub-categories reflect a net change from the authorized amounts.

* 1. **Building Maintenance +$10,000 Early Head Start:** the conversion of 3 Head Start Classrooms to Early Head Start classrooms will result in the increased use of those rooms (two at the Dix Avenue Center and one at the Whitehall Center) driven by the 44 week Head Start duration as compared to the 52 week, year-round Early Head Start duration. We are currently contracted for janitorial services with All Pro (2019); a $106k contract that is based on the specific cleaning needs at each location and a specific schedule. Eight additional weeks at 2 locations (3 classrooms) could have an impact of an estimated $10,000 to total maintenance cost.
  2. **Local Travel ($11,600): Head Start ($6,264); Early Head Start ($5,336).** As noted within the equipment section of this application, we anticipate reducing our vehicle fleet by 4 minivans. This not only impacts the leased fees with Enterprise Fleet Management, but the Enterprise Maintenance Fees ($75/month per vehicle; a decrease of $3,600), Fuel savings of an estimated ($4,000) based on an average of $1,000 in fuel costs per year per vehicle. And finally, vehicle insurance, an additional savings of ($4,000) based on an average annual premium of $1,000 per vehicle.
  3. **Nutrition Services ($5,000): Head Start ($4,350); Early Head Start ($650).** The agency receives USDA funding through the CACFP program that covers the majority of meal expenses (breakfast, snack and lunch). However, the formula-based reimbursement utilized by the CACFP program typically results in a portion of meal expenses being allocated to our Head Start / Early Head Start Funding. Driven by the reduced enrollment (a drop overall of approximately one-third of authorized enrollment), we assumed a revised nutrition services budget of $10,000 (as compared to the authorized amount of $15,000).
  4. **Training & Staff Development +$7,500: Head Start +$2,213; Early Head Start $5,287**. While we do not anticipate a change to the Training & Technical Assistance portion of this line item ($57,530), we anticipate the need for additional Employee Wellness programs to support staff mental and physical wellness – mindfulness trainings, retreats and other events coordinated by the agency’s Onboarding Coordinator. This is in recognition of Information Memorandum ACF-IM-HS-21-05, “Supporting the Wellness of All Staff in the Head Start Workforce”, released on 09/27/2022, in response to working conditions following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (staff shortages, burnout, etc.). Note that within the $57,530 Training & Technical assistance piece of the budget, we will ensure that all Early Head Start staff are certified with the appropriate licensure and certifications (including but not limited to a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential).

**One-time Funding Needs**: the agency is not requesting one-time funding related to the conversion of Head Start to Early Head Start slots. This primarily relates to classroom supplies and fixed assets/equipment (tables, chairs, etc.) where Head Start supplies and equipment will be replaced by Early Head Start equipment. We are anticipating raising funds from our community or soliciting in-kind donations from both current and new partners, to fulfill this one-time need.

**Non-Federal Matching Requirement:** The agency will secure non-federal match in the form of both in-kind services (majority of share raised) plus cash contributions, together representing 20% of the total budget. Because this is net $0 change in total requested HS/EHS funding, our assumption for raising non-federal share remains consistent with the authorized non-federal share budget ($1,188,114). Non-federal resources are a challenge in Washington County, as outlined in our requests for non-fed share waivers over the past few years. Raising match only became more challenging following the onset of the pandemic, as in-house volunteer numbers were greatly reduced. However, LEAP has made progress in forming new partnerships, and raising funds that support the program from private grants and foundations. We continue to work on meeting the 20% matching goal year after year.

**INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT***:* This does not apply to our agency. LEAP treats all costs as direct costs and utilizes a Cost Allocation Plan to allocate overhead and administrative expenses to the agency’s programs; and administrative costs reflect approximately 11.5% of total budget; an administrative percentage that is lower than the 15% threshold set by many public and private donors.

**CAP ON EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION**

Per Section 653 of the Head Start Act, our program does not have an employee receiving compensation which exceeds Level II of the Executive Schedule, currently $203,700, nor do we contribute toward any salary directly or indirectly, or at a pro-ration that exceeds this amount.

**Addendum to Program Narrative**

**Under enrollment program information**

Washington County L.E.A.P Head Start/Early Head Start has a well-developed strategic plan for recruiting children and families most at risk throughout Washington County.

**Efforts to reach full enrollment:**

* Flyers displayed at locations most frequently visited by community members such as local health departments, doctors’ offices, libraries, post offices, hospitals, and business that draw families such as laundromats, and grocery stores.
* Door to door recruitment efforts – Utilize the Community Needs Assessment data to ensure staff are targeting the population most in need.
* The Outreach Coordinator consistently creates informational posts on several different social media platforms.
* Recruitment tables at local schools’ open houses, fairs, and festivals throughout the community.
* Implementation of an ERSEA manager to ensure the enrollment process is efficient and accurate.
* Policy Council members participating in community events, providing information to community members.
* Strategic recruitment calendar, all staff are assigned times and days to perform recruitment efforts.
* Hold Open House events, inviting community members into our centers.
* Place road signs and center signs strategically throughout the community.
* Word of mouth incentives.
* Collaborate with community partners such as Glens Falls Hospital Snuggery, local pediatricians, Social Services, and the WIC program.
* Regular contact with Washington County DSS
* Community Engagement Days / Resource Days
* Provide Spanish forms, flyers, and brochures to reach the Migrant population.
* Frequently call families that are on the waitlist to ensure the waitlist remains viable.
* Reaching out to over income families to reverify income to see if they are receiving or eligible for SNAP benefits. Help facilitate SNAP application.
* Provide recruitment training and support for the Governing Board, Policy Council, parents, community partners, staff and other stakeholders.

**Under enrollment by program option and location:**

**Center based program option:**

| **Centers** | **Program** | **Classroom** | **Funded Enrollment**  **Current** | | **Current Enrollment** | **Waitlist** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **HS** | **EHS** |
| **Dix Ave.** | Head start | Rainbow AM | 15 | 0 | Closed | No staff  No waitlist |
|
| Rainbow PM | 15 | 0 | Closed | No staff  No waitlist |
| Cloud Room AM | 15 | 0 | **15** | Full No waitlist |
| Cloud Room PM | 15 | 0 | **15** | Full  No waitlist |
| Sunshine Room | 18 | X | Closed | No staff  **Waitlist -9 eligible +** 6 Over Inc. |
| **River Street** | Early Head Start | Moon Rm | X | 8 | 8 | Full |
| River Rm | X | 8 | 8 | Full |
|  | HS | EHS |  |  |
| Star Rm | X | 8 | 8 | Full |
| Head Start | Hilltop Room | 18 | X | Closed | Need Lead Teacher  Need Teacher’s Aide  **Waitlist- 16 eligible**+ 4 O.I. |
| Sky Room | 18 | X | 17 | Full due to age ratio |
| **Cambridge** | Early Head  Start | Willow  Room | X | 8 | 8 | Full |
|
| Head Start | Valley Room | 18 | X | 3 | Room opened 12.6.22 after hiring teaching team.  **Waitlist-3**+1 OI |
| **Whitehall** | Early Head Start | Maple Room | X | 8 | 8 | Full |
| Head Start | Meadow Room | 18 | X | 18 | **Waitlist- 8** +1 OI |
| Mountain Room | 14 | 0 | Closed | Waitlist- 0 |
| **Granville** | Head Start | Apple AM | 17 | X | 15 | Full Due to age ratio |
| Apple PM | 17 | X | 2 | Waitlist 5 OI |
| **Total** |  |  | **HS**  **198** | **EHS**  **40** | **85- HS**  **40- EHS** | **36- HS** |

**Home based program option:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Program** | **Funded Enrollment** | **Current Enrollment** | **Waitlist** |
| Head Start | 25 | 14 | 0 |
| Early Head Start | 78 | 37 | 4, 2 over income |

The under enrollment is concentrated in the home-based program option and the double session option offered throughout the county. Additional under enrollment numbers are based on the workforce crisis we are currently experiencing. Our inability to hire qualified classroom staff has resulted in classrooms remaining closed. Additionally, we have a wait list for full day HS but do not have a waitlist for double session HS. Our current change in scope application identifies the change in population and need in the different communities throughout Washington County. The data we collected shows that working parents need full day center based services. With the influx of pre-k options being offered in the 11 school districts throughout Washington County, the needs for preschool aged childcare are being met. The Community Needs Assessment identified a greater need for center based care for children aged 18 months to 36 months.

1. Source: https://seethroughny.net/teacher\_pay [↑](#endnote-ref-1)