The Come Back Stronger Fund is designed to reinforce Indiana’s supply of high-quality early learning opportunities and support providers across the state who are committed to serving vulnerable family populations. Grant funds are intended to offset new expenses incurred by providers to safely operate and continue delivering early learning experiences due to the pandemic.

Awarded providers submitted a plan for how they would use grant funds. Even so, we understand plans may shift and change. To be adaptable to providers’ evolving needs, the Come Back Stronger Fund has provided a list of allowable expenses on which grant funds can be spent. If expenses are listed below, providers may use grant funds for them; if they are not on the allowable expenses list below, they are not approved for funding by this grant. Questions can always be sent to: stronger@earlylearningindiana.org.

Allowable Expenses

In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Indiana’s Family and Social Services Administration has set forth a number of new health and safety recommendations for early care and education providers as they re-open or continue serving families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please review them all here. Use this guide to understand what is recommended versus mandatory. You’ll also find helpful resources and tools as part of Indiana’s “Let’s Get Back to Work” campaign. These resources, which may be customized for your program, are intended to complement federal, state and local guidelines and are not a substitute for them. Please continue to monitor relevant government agencies for the latest guidance and requirements.

Your Work Has Never Been More Important

As an early care and learning provider, you play a critical role for families and your communities. By offering quality care and education, you create a two-generational economic ripple effect, allowing parents to work with the peace of mind that their children are in a safe and engaging environment, and nurturing the next generation of leaders and thinkers. Now more than ever, the children, families and leaders in your community need you to provide a healthy and safe environment for children. In addition, many children have now spent considerable time outside of educational environments as a result of the pandemic. Your program’s services and care are vital to helping children and families combatting learning loss.

Safety Recommendations for Delivering Care in a COVID-19 Environment

In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Indiana’s Family and Social Services Administration has set forth a number of new health and safety recommendations for early care and education providers as they re-open or continue serving families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please review them all here. Use this guide to understand what is recommended versus mandatory. You’ll also find helpful resources and tools as part of Indiana’s “Let’s Get Back to Work” campaign. These resources, which may be customized for your program, are intended to complement federal, state and local guidelines and are not a substitute for them. Please continue to monitor relevant government agencies for the latest guidance and requirements.
**Equipment Supplies**

**Purpose:** Replenish previously existing supplies or offset new supply needs that are required to adhere to social distancing guidelines and safely serve children and families.

**Examples of allowable expenses:**
- Personal protective equipment including masks, gloves and scrub jackets
- Individual learning supplies for children
- Signage, labels and other onsite visual reminders to maintain a healthy operation
- Meal preparation and packaging supplies
- Cleaning and disinfecting supplies and appliances
- Tools or supplies – such as an email or text service – that help providers engage with or communicate to families

---

**Physical Environments**

**Purpose:** Make temporary environmental improvements that enable social distancing or accommodations that allow providers to safely care for children amid regulatory capacity limits.

**Examples of allowable expenses:**
- Ventilation and airflow equipment or modifications
- Temporary space rentals
- Physical barriers to separate spaces
- Necessary modifications to entryways

If you need to make permanent structural changes to increase spacing for social distancing, please seek approval from the Come Back Stronger Fund at stronger@earlylearningindiana.org.
**STAFFING**

**Purpose:** Pay substitute teachers or transitional staff costs related to accommodating limited group sizes and supporting COVID-related recruitment and retention expenses.

**Examples of allowable expenses:**
- Substitute teachers or temp services to cover additional classroom staffing to meet smaller group size requirements
- Costs for a service or additional staff to provide daily health screenings
- Additional staff needed at opening, closing or mealtimes
- Additional cleaning or janitorial services
- Costs for a service or additional staff to create and implement recruitment and retention efforts

Funds can only be used to support permanent or temporary staff who are working in your program to help with social distancing and health requirements. For example, if you have to employ more staff to keep groups of children separated, particularly in the early or later part of the day when you might have combined classes before COVID-19, you can pay for costs related to this new staffing model. Programs should continue to set salaries for their staff. Funds may not be used for staff bonuses, salary increases or stipends.

If you have any questions about specific expenses, please contact stronger@earlylearningindiana.org.
Purpose: Invest in reopening planning efforts, support for family communications, mental health supports or other related professional services.

Examples of allowable expenses:
- Consultants to create reopening or communication plans
- Program marketing fees to help recover lost enrollment
- Contracted mental health services for staff, children and/or families

Purpose: Expand programs to serve more children within existing and new locations in response to a depletion in community supply. This could include expanding operating hours, opening new seats, expanding to new sites or building networks that support other providers.

Examples of allowable expenses:
- Staffing for expanded hours
- Capital improvements for new classroom space related to licensing or registration
- Program merger or acquisition services/supports for providers who are expanding to account for a closing program’s former capacity
- Start-up materials for new locations

If you are unsure whether you’re creating a replacement supply, please reach out to stronger@earlylearningindiana.org before planning any capital improvements or using funds to this purpose.

If you have any questions about specific expenses, please contact stronger@earlylearningindiana.org.
**LEARNING LOSS**

**Purpose:** Design and implement developmentally appropriate activities to compensate for children’s time spent outside of stimulating, educational environments as a result of the pandemic.

**Examples of allowable expenses:**
- New or expanded curriculum
- Individual learning supplies for children and families
- Training for staff to implement family engagement programming
- Family engagement opportunities targeting learning loss

**Important Notes**
Funds may only be used to serve children ages 0-5. You are responsible for understanding and adhering to any requirements for licensing and/or registration standards. If you have any questions about specific expenses, please contact stronger@earlylearningindiana.org.