

# Arkansas Department of Education

## Early Childhood Local Lead Organizations: Request for Application

### SECTION I — OVERVIEW

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Office of Early Childhood, announces the release of the **Local Early Childhood Lead (Local Lead) Application** for the 2026–2031 cycle. Local Leads serve as full implementation partners with ADE to strengthen local early childhood systems and ensure high-quality, developmentally appropriate learning environments for children birth to five.

Selected organizations will receive a **five-year grant beginning July 1, 2026**, with annual performance reviews based on required deliverables, the Phases of Responsibility rubric, and partner feedback.

Local Leads will:

- Submitting an annual **Child Count, Coordinated Funding Request, and Local Plans**
- Conducting regional information campaigns on early childhood options for families
- Coordinating implementation of the state’s Quality Support System implementation efforts.
- Supporting designated catchment area on adult-child interactions and CLASS implementation,
- Collaborating with local community partners to implement a local plan
- Coordinating with local families and providers to access quality child care

### SECTION II — TIMELINE & IMPORTANT DATES

Date	Milestone
February 6, 2026	Local Lead Application Released
February 10, 2026 (12:30-1:30p.m. CT)	Informational Zoom
March 2, 2026 (11:59 p.m. CT)	<b>Applications Due</b> (single PDF submission)
March 3–27, 2026	OEC Review Window
March 28, 2026	<b>Selection &amp; Notifications Issued</b>
July 1, 2026	Grant Period Begins (Year 1 of 5)

## SECTION III — ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants include school districts, education service cooperatives, governmental entities, current/local lead organizations, higher education institutions, nonprofit and for-profit organizations with demonstrated capacity to deliver the required services within the proposed geographic area.

### A. How to Apply

Submit a completed application and supporting documents by March 2, 2026.

[Local Lead Application](#)

[Local Lead Budget Worksheet](#)

### B. Eligible Vendors

Eligible vendors include qualified organizations and individuals, such as, but not limited to:

- Universities
- Education Service Cooperatives
- Government agencies
- Local early childhood lead organizations
- Nonprofit and for-profit organizations
- Other national or local educational vendors or individuals with demonstrated experience delivering early childhood professional services

Vendors must demonstrate:

- Evidence of relevant experience
- Staff qualifications
- Capacity to deliver high-quality services across the selected county or counties

Questions about the Local Lead applications process can be submitted to Jennifer Douglas at [Jennifer.Douglas@ade.arkansas.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Douglas@ade.arkansas.gov).