

# Child Care Provider Relief Fund - Investments in Child Care and Early Learning Facilities



LSC

# Quality Early Learning Facilities and the Ongoing Impact of COVID-19

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Quality early care and education programs are essential for healthy kids and families, and for robust local economies – now and in the future.

Across the nation, there is a need for more equitable access to affordable child care and early learning options, offered in facilities that support health, safety, growth and development.

This need has been highlighted and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit our country in early 2020, child care providers faced closures followed by new requirements such as reduced class sizes and enhanced health and safety measures, and lower attendance rates upon reopening. Early care and education providers who already operated on razor thin margins, faced brand new challenges in safely reopening to provide the essential services necessary to keep all others afloat.

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- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law in March 2020 and included emergency funding for states to help stabilize the child care industry.
  - The State of Rhode Island approved \$5,000,000 of its federal CARES Act resources to help sustain the State's essential child care infrastructure through emergency relief grants administered in partnership with LISC.



# The 2020 Child Care Provider Relief Fund Overview



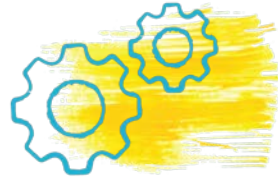
# Launch of the Child Care Provider Relief Fund

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Across our network, LISC mobilized to support the people and communities hit hardest by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In partnership with the RI Department of Human Services (DHS), LISC RI launched the **Child Care Provider Relief Fund** with the \$5,000,000 in approved CARES Act resources to offer emergency grants to help child care providers navigating the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Grant funds were used for small capital improvements and to offset occupancy cost expenses.



## Technical Assistance

Throughout the grant program, intensive technical assistance for early learning programs has been provided to help complete funding applications, identify and prioritize projects, utilize federal funds, and complete renovation projects.



## Occupancy Cost Expense Reimbursement

Tight operating margins have been made even tighter by COVID-related mandated closures and reduced enrollment.

Funds were available to offset ongoing occupancy cost expenses incurred to sustain business operations. This included expenses such as rent/mortgage, utilities, and insurance.

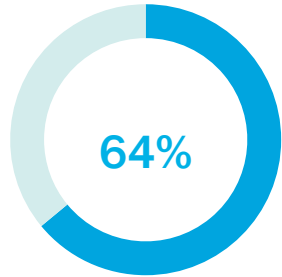


## Capital for Small-scale Renovations and Purchases

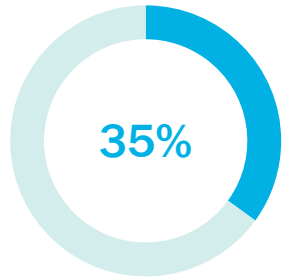
The design of a space can negatively impact health and impede program quality. With COVID-19, that impact was amplified as programs worked to meet enhanced health and safety guidelines.

Space renovations funded included projects like replacing inoperable windows, increasing the number of sinks available in classrooms, and installing shade structures in outdoor spaces to increase the amount of time children could spend outside.

# Applicant Overview



**135 center-based** child care applications



**75 home-based** child care applications



**1 school-based** child care application

Over the course of the summer of 2020, the program was developed, info sessions were held in English and Spanish, and with **over 700 inquiries, hundreds of hours of one-on-one technical assistance** was provided to both center- and home-based early care and education providers seeking to learn more and apply for relief grant funding. This assistance was provided by both LISC and partner agencies such as RIAEYC and the SEIU Education Support Fund.

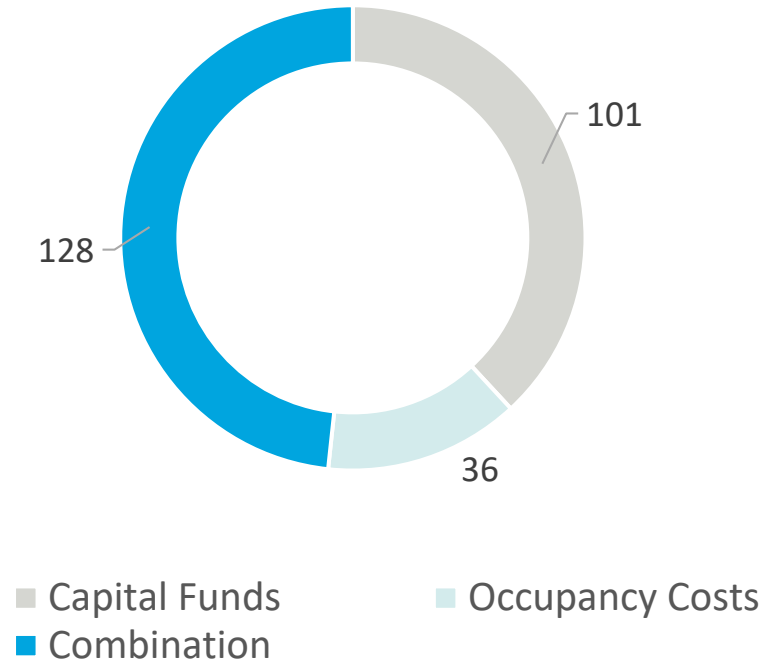
The application period closed in August of 2020 with **211 eligible applications** (out of 265 submissions in total).

# Applicant Overview – Funding Requests

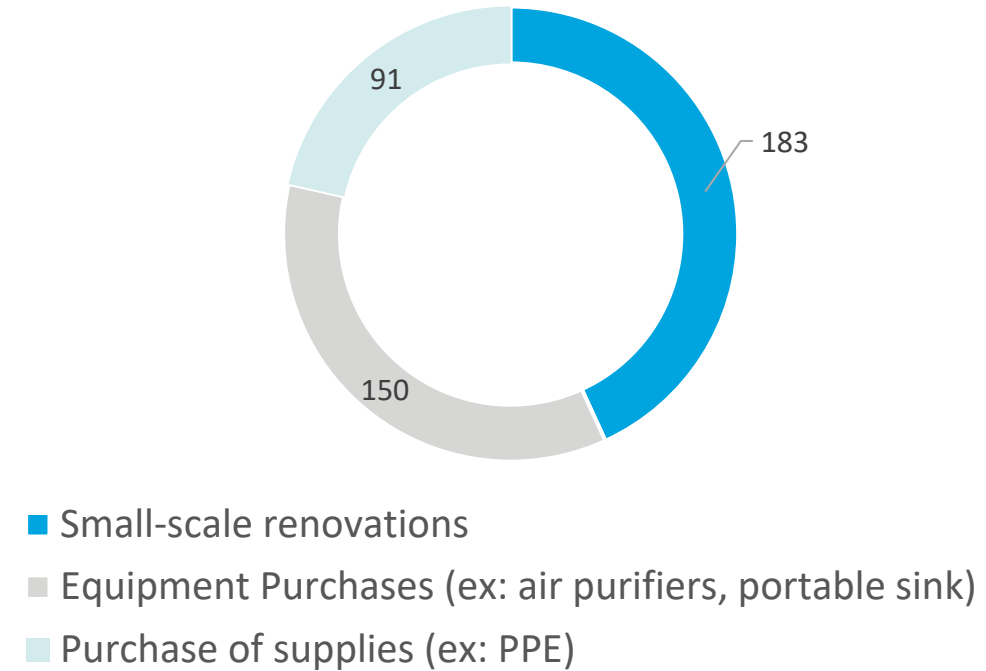
Most applicants proposed at least a portion of funding be used for small capital improvements.

Capital funding requests included proposals for small-scale renovations and purchases of materials and supplies.

### Proposed Use of Funds Overall

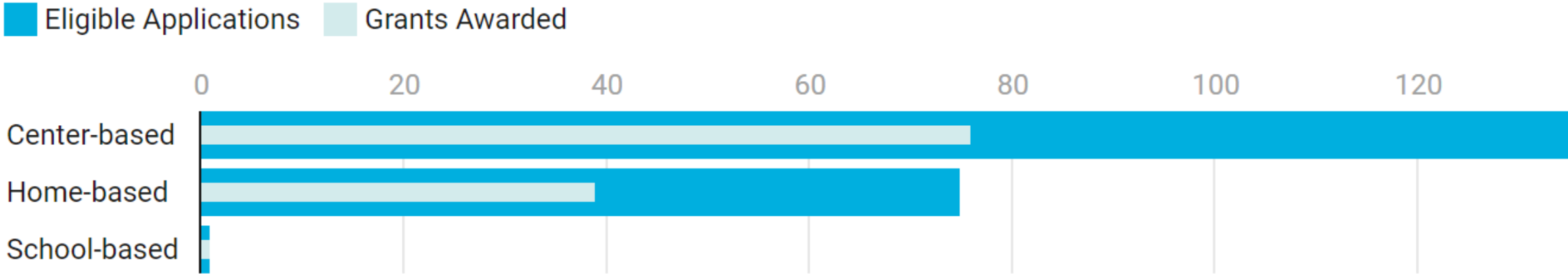


### Proposed Use of Capital Funding



# Grantees Funded

Of the 211 eligible applications, **116 providers (across 170 child care locations)** were funded through the Child Care Provider Relief Fund.

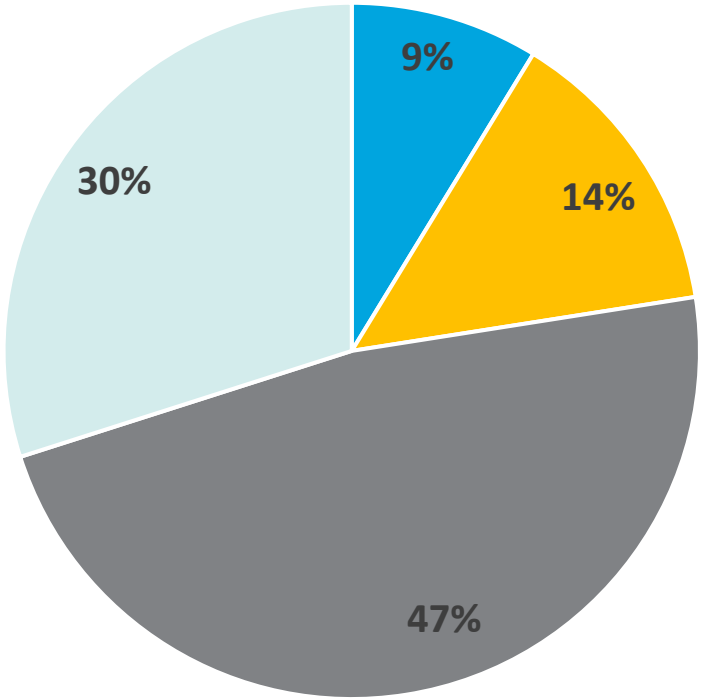




# Grantees Funded

Improvements to space and operating expense support impacted **over 12,000 licensed child care slots.**

Age Groups Served by Relief Fund Grantees



■ Infant ■ Toddler ■ Preschool ■ School Age

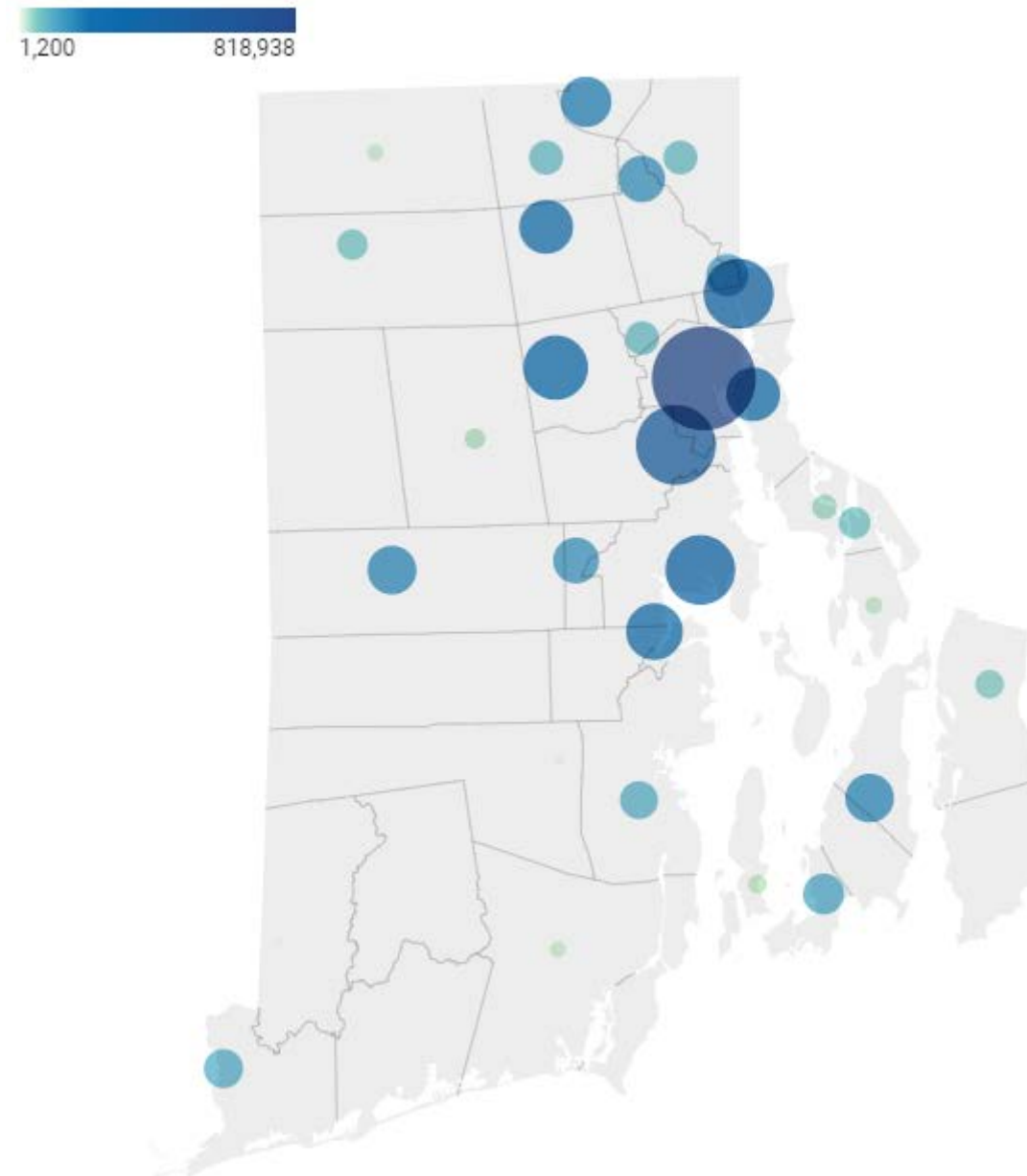
# Grantees Funded

Recipients of grant funding were located throughout 31 of the State's 39 municipalities.

The map to the right is a visualization of total investments made in each of those 31 cities/towns.

You can view an interactive version of this map here:  
<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/fhu5E/2/>

## Child Care Provider Relief Funding by Geography



# Occupancy Expense Grants

Over **\$2 million** in funding was provided to 110 providers to reimburse for occupancy cost expenses incurred during a period of COVID-related closure and reduced enrollment.

*“The LISC grant helped us to pay rent and put us in a better position to go forward with payroll which is our biggest expense. Not a good thing, a great thing!”*

*We truly don’t believe that we could have stayed open without this at that time. We probably would have had to close.”*

- Happy Hearts Learning Center



**Rent/mortgage**

**\$1.4 million**



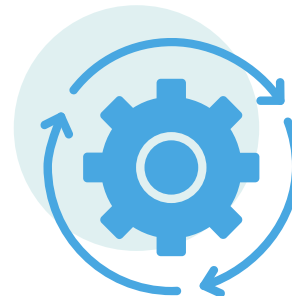
**Utilities**

**\$425 thousand**



**Insurance**

**\$169 thousand**

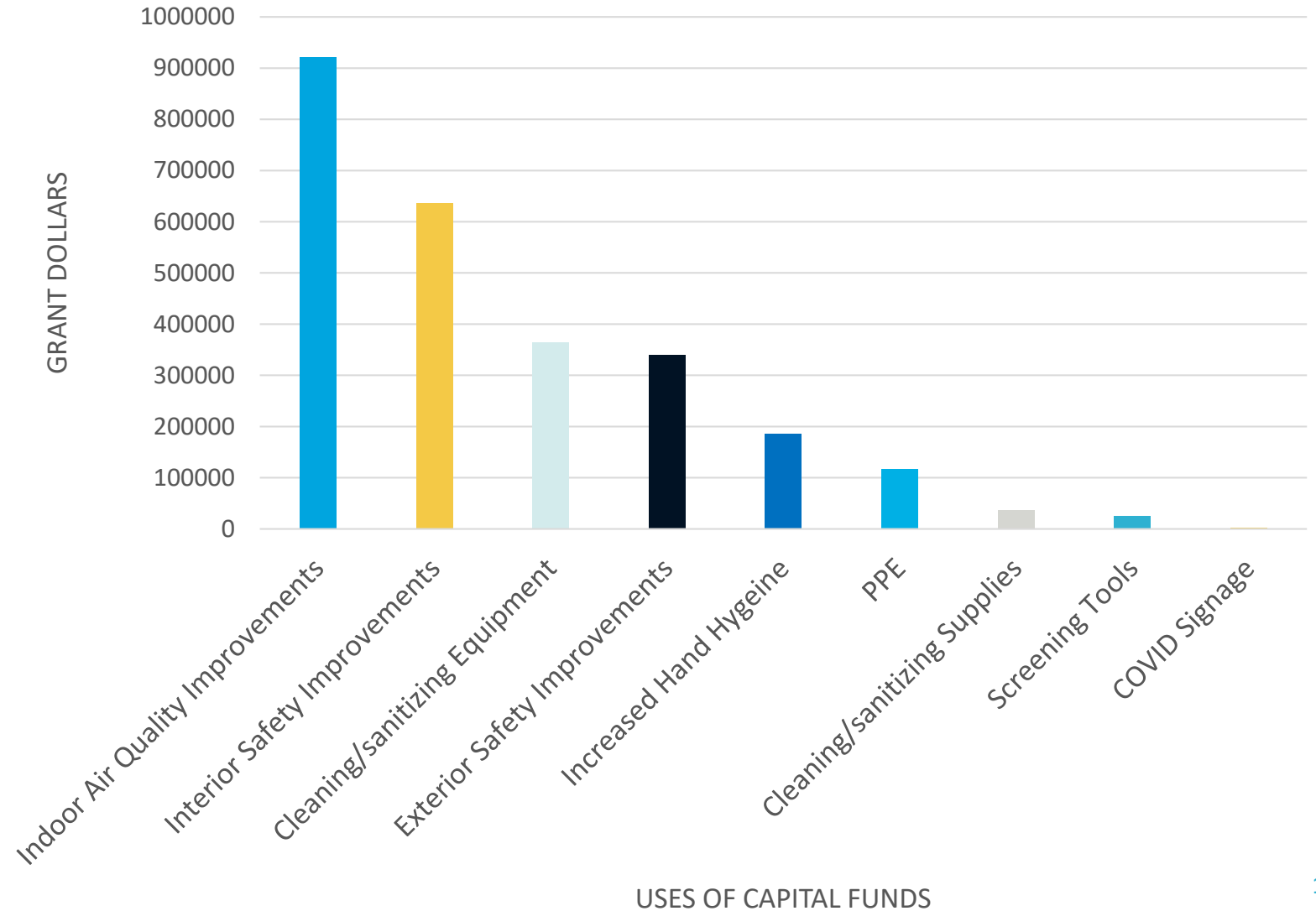


**Other occupancy expenses  
(waste removal, fire/security,  
pest control, etc.)**

**\$82 thousand**


# Capital Grant Overview

Nearly **\$3 million** in grant funds were provided to 83 child care providers for small scale renovations, cleaning and sanitizing services, and purchase of materials and supplies to comply with enhanced COVID health and safety guidelines.



# Capital Grant Overview

Capital Grant Uses	Types of Projects Funded
Indoor air quality improvements	Purchase of air purifiers, UV systems, and fans; HVAC system improvements and maintenance; installation of safely operable windows
Interior safety improvements	Installation/purchase of dividers; upgrades to entrance area; flooring upgrades and replacement; improvements to bathroom facilities
Purchase of cleaning/sanitizing equipment	Hiring cleaning/sanitizing service providers; purchase of washers, dryers, carpet cleaners, and dishwashers
Exterior safety improvements	Landscaping; expansion/division of space; sidewalk/walkway upgrades; canopies/tents/sunshades/awnings; deck/porch improvements
Increased hand hygiene	Hand washing stations; portable sinks; increased number of sinks; touchless faucets and soap and sanitizer dispensers
Personal protective equipment and Cleaning/sanitizing supplies	Gloves; masks; smocks; hand sanitizer; hand soap; disinfectant and sanitizing cleaning products
Screening tools	Thermometers; screening software; tablets for check-in; awnings/tents for check-in/screening area
COVID signage	Display of COVID-related rules/guidelines

A young child with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a white t-shirt with blue, yellow, and green horizontal stripes, is smiling and holding a colorful ball with green and yellow patterns. Another child, wearing a grey t-shirt with a red and black graphic, is visible in the background, also smiling. The scene is outdoors on a grassy area with a building and a car in the distance.

# Small-scale Infrastructure Improvements and their Big Impact

Relief Fund Capital  
Project Examples

LSC

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Very young children are uniquely vulnerable to the deleterious effects of poor, unhealthy and unsafe spaces and have the most to gain from well designed, nurturing environments.

The small-scale renovations funded through the Child Care Provider Relief Fund not only helped providers meet enhanced health and safety guidelines, but many were also **long-term investments in the health and safety of the spaces serving our youngest learners.**



# Many Physical Space Elements of Enhanced COVID Health & Safety Guidelines Are Also Design Best Practice



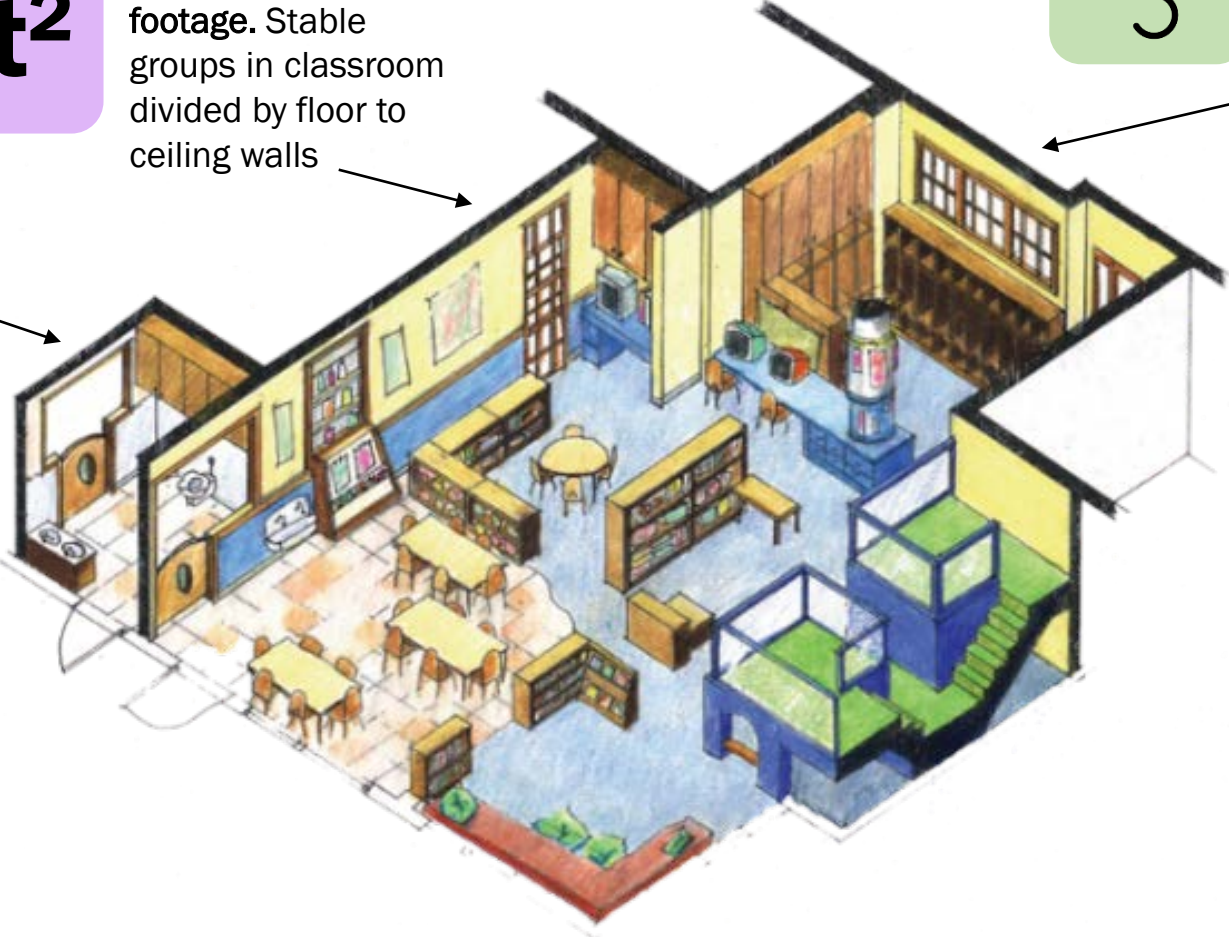
Access to handwashing and improved hygiene. Bathroom and sinks directly within classroom, easily cleanable surfaces



Ample square footage. Stable groups in classroom divided by floor to ceiling walls



Plenty of fresh air. Operable windows allow for fresh air and a separate mechanical air exchange system minimizes spread between spaces





# Distinct Classroom Spaces for Each Stable Group

ft<sup>2</sup>

Small, stable group sizes are a key research-based predictor of quality.

Classrooms with stable groups in distinct spaces with all the things young kids need – sinks, bathrooms, natural light, fresh air, direct outdoor access can help reduce viral transmission and improve quality.

## COVID Safety

Groups in classrooms with floor to ceiling walls contain spread

Bathrooms directly in classrooms minimize cross-contamination

Direct outdoor access allows children to go outside without passing through common spaces

Windows directly in room allow for fresh air exchange

## Good for Kids!

Small stable groups are a research-backed key to quality

Floor to ceiling walls minimize noise and distractions

Bathrooms in classrooms promote autonomy, improve supervision and interactions

Sinks in classrooms encourage creative, messy learning

Direct access outdoors encourages more time spent outside, key to child well-being; and brings in natural light, good for mental health

# Woonsocket Head Start – Benoit-Brown Center

Woonsocket, Rhode Island

ft<sup>2</sup>



**Project Overview:** Installation of sidewalks connecting the toddler classroom doors.

**Impact:** By reducing the number of classrooms entering through the main entrance, check-in time was reduced from an hour and a half to a half hour and reduced the number of people passing through a common area. It also made it possible to have social distance face-to-face parent/teacher/child contact during drop off and pick up, an emotional element which is so important in an early childhood program towards building strong relationships with families.

Access to safe walking areas also made it easier for children and staff to go on walks around the center, increasing outside activities and exposure to fresh air.

# Ample Space for Every Body

ft<sup>2</sup>

Child care regulations and quality standards require less square feet per child indoors and out than all research shows is truly needed for quality and well-being.

Designing for miracles, not minimums, can not only improve quality, but also help meet enhanced health and safety requirements.

## COVID Safety

In minimum square footage scenarios, it can be impossible to maintain good social distancing

Merely reducing group sizes does not work financially and negatively impacts access

## Good for Kids!

While most states require 35 sq. ft. per child all research shows a need for at least 60 sq. ft. to promote quality practices

Crowded spaces are bad for mental health – children need to be able to spend time alone if needed

Crowded spaces are bad for physical health

It can be very challenging to fit an array of materials into a crowded space safely

# Children's Friend– McAuley

Providence, Rhode Island

ft<sup>2</sup>



**Project Overview:** A gap between two classrooms was closed to provide full floor-to-ceiling dividers between the two spaces. Previously, the space was separated by a partial wall.

**Impact:** With a full wall rather than partial height wall, the risk of viral spread is reduced between the two spaces. Creating small stable groups is a research-backed key to quality.

# Creative Early Learning Center

Johnston, Rhode Island

ft<sup>2</sup>



**Project Overview:** Purchase and installation of stable dividers to separate classroom space.

**Impact:** Previously, dividers did not effectively differentiate the two classroom spaces. A taller, stable divider allows for a safe, stable and separate environment for children in the two classrooms.

# Thoughtful Entry and Common Spaces

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Even as you approach a space you are beginning to form an opinion about what you will find inside. Entryways set the tone but also foster safety, security and wellbeing of the building's inhabitants.

## COVID Safety

Large entry spaces can enable child drop off and health checks in a safe environment

Covered outdoor areas allow families to wait and drop off outside if necessary

Direct, but secure access to classrooms can facilitate direct drop off to classrooms if disease spread needs to be controlled

## Good for Kids!

Well-designed entries welcome families and children and ease transitions

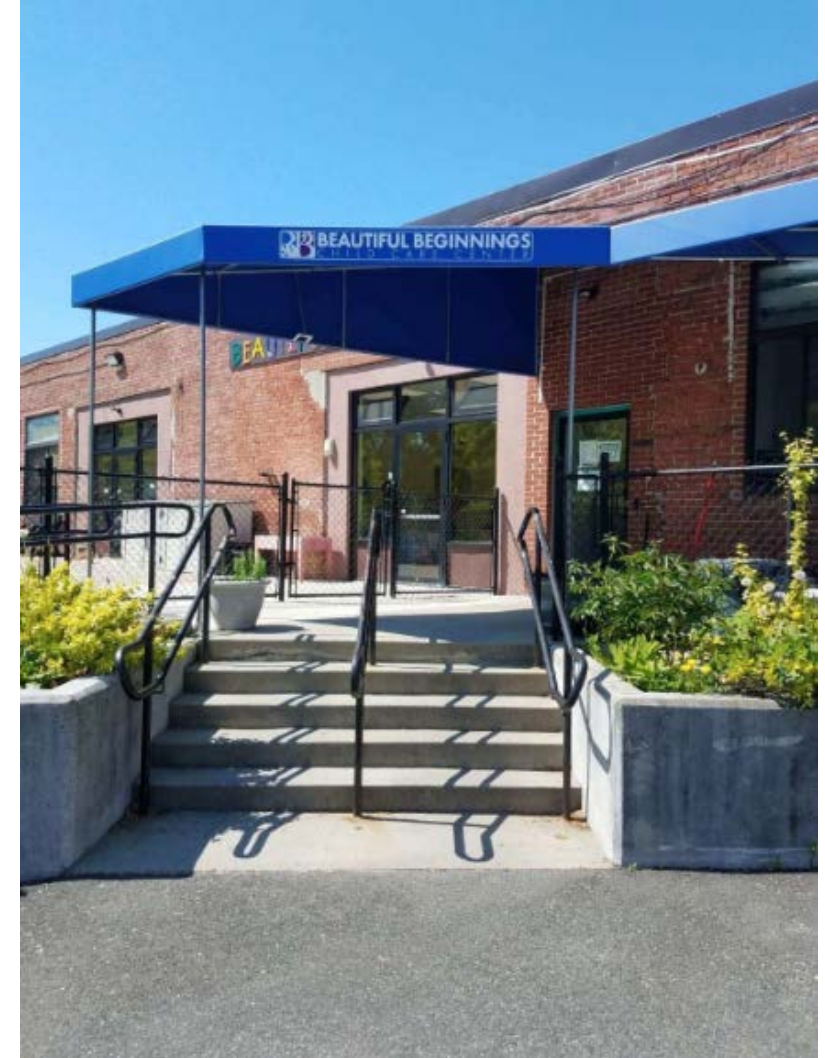
Generously sized, well planned entries allow for informal family gathering areas

Well planned entries can promote child safety while not forcing an institutional feel

# Beautiful Beginnings

Providence, Rhode Island

ft<sup>2</sup>



**Project Overview:** Installation of an awning over front entryway.

**Impact:** Parents, teachers, and children are shielded and protected from adverse weather and sun when waiting to enter buildings. The awnings provide a warm and welcoming space for families to enter the building.

# East Bay Community Action Program

Multiple Sites, Rhode Island



**Project Overview:** Custom sized framework and awnings for buildings were installed.

**Impact:** Parents, teachers, and children are shielded and protected from adverse weather and sun when waiting to enter buildings.

*“Doorway awnings are great! The day after awnings were installed it rained. Parents, children, and employees were able to participate in the COVID screening under the protection of the awning before children were escorted to classrooms.” - Lead Teacher, Warren*



# Improved Hand Hygiene and Easily Cleaned Surfaces



Too many programs must accept whatever space is available and oftentimes, it is not space that has been designed to support health and quality for kids.

Spaces with accessible sinks and flooring, fixtures, windows and even walls built from easily cleaned materials encourage children to be children and fully engage in meaningful, messy, interactive exploration, learning and play!

## COVID Safety

Necessary deep cleaning is easiest when surfaces are readily cleaned and in good repair

Incorporating safe storage for cleaning supplies is essential to regular, safe cleaning

Sinks and bathrooms directly in classrooms minimize cross-contamination and helps to meet enhanced hand hygiene requirements

## Good for Kids!

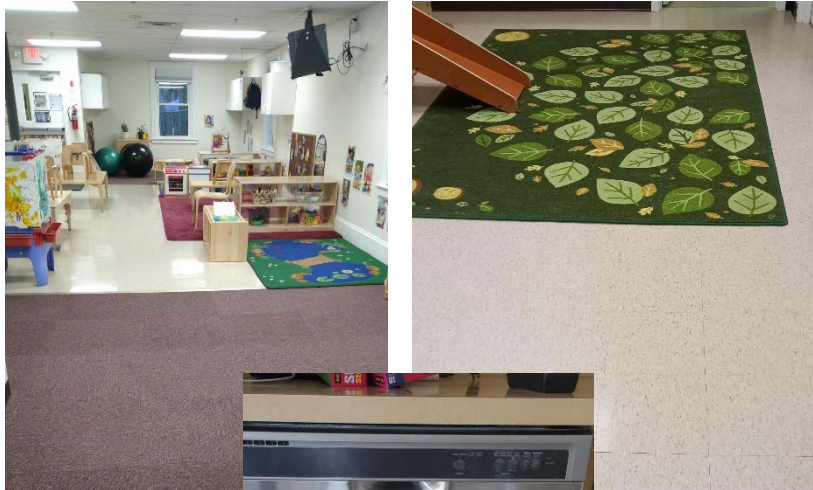
When clean up is easy – great messy play can be encouraged

When cleaning is easier, the use of harsh chemicals can be minimized – better for air quality – better for kids

Sinks in classrooms reduce wait time and encourages autonomy and creative, messy learning

# Tri-County Community Action Agency

Burrillville and North Providence, Rhode Island



**Project Overview:** The program updated classroom flooring, replacing carpeting with easier to clean tile. Dishwashers were also purchased and installed to clean and sanitize classroom materials.

**Impact:** Improvements to flooring not only provided an immediate improvement to the hygiene of the space, but it also saved the program money due to the reduction in costly carpet cleaning services. The dishwasher installation offered a way to meet enhanced cleaning protocols in an efficient way.

# Boys & Girls Clubs of East Providence

East Providence, Rhode Island



**Project Overview:** Installation of handwashing sinks for children where the building previously did not have enough to support regular handwashing for the number of children served.

**Impact:** The conversion of space into handwashing areas allow children to wash their hands with soap and water at least hourly and also eliminates hallway backups caused by insufficient sinks.

# Touchless Faucets and Soap/Sanitizer Dispensers

Multiple Sites Across Rhode Island



*Munchkin Land Learning Academy  
Coventry, RI*



*Schoolhouse Preschool  
Johnston, RI*



*Children's Friend and Service  
Providence, RI*

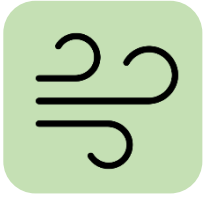


**Project Overview:** Installation of touchless faucets, sanitizer dispensers, and soap dispensers into classrooms, bathrooms, and common spaces.

**Impact:** Not only do touchless fixtures reduce the amount of bacteria build up resulting in reduction of the risk of illness, but touchless faucets can reduce the amount of water used and be a more eco-friendly option.

*"The automatic faucets are fabulous! Handwashing is so much easier for children with the touchless soap dispensers and faucets."* – EBCAP Early Head Start Teacher, Newport

# Access to Fresh Air



Safe, operable windows provide ideal solutions for fresh air. Good planning for mechanical systems is essential as well.

Newer air handing systems allow for individual classroom controls, fresh air exchange and more.

Direct access outdoors allows children to move in and out more throughout the day.

## COVID Safety

Air exchanges are essential to disease control

Closed mechanical systems that exchange indoor air between classrooms can negate other efforts

Covered outdoor areas may extend the number of months that children can spend long periods of time outdoors in less temperate climates

## Good for Kids!

Fresh air is always good for kids

Focusing on connecting the indoors with the outdoors is good for mental health

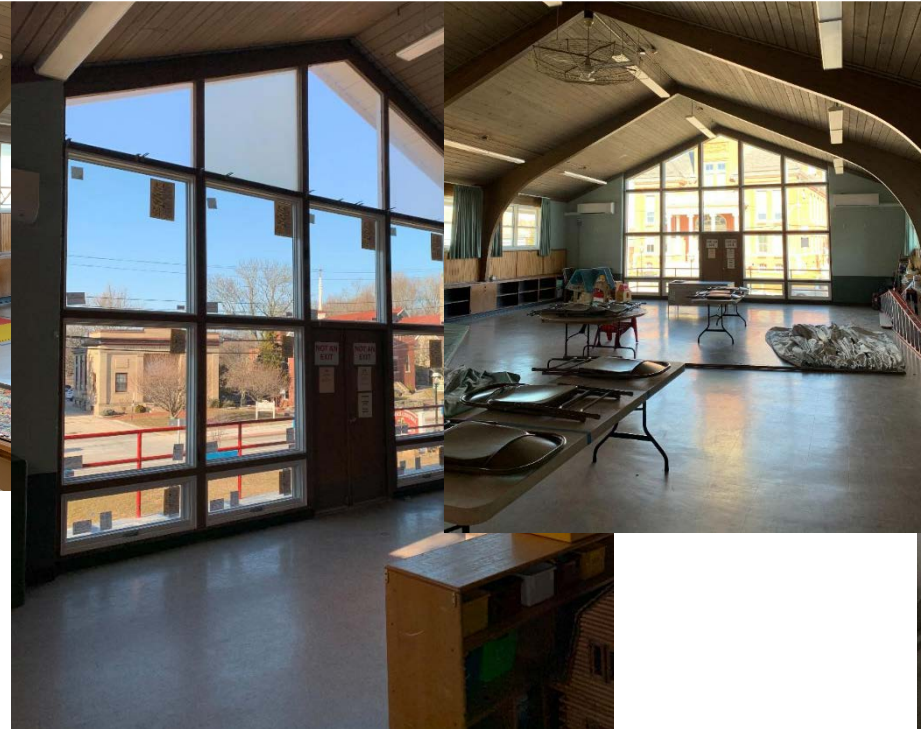
Fresh air exchanges help improve indoor air quality – connected to asthma issues

# Building Blocks

Warwick, Rhode Island



*"Parents were clear in their statements that completion of the window installation would determine whether or not their children would return to the center." - Building Blocks/Warwick Central Baptist Church*



*Children visiting City Hall to view their improved school building from Mayor Picozzi's perspective!*

**Project Overview:** Windows in the classroom space dated back to the 1950s and while some could open, the vast majority could not or could not do so safely. An upgrade to an outdated HVAC system was also needed to improve filtration, air flow, and air quality.



**Impact:** Funding allowed the provider to install new, operable windows throughout the building in compliance with the City's historical guidelines. Fresh air now flows freely to circulate throughout the center.

# Replacement of Fixed Windows with Operable Windows

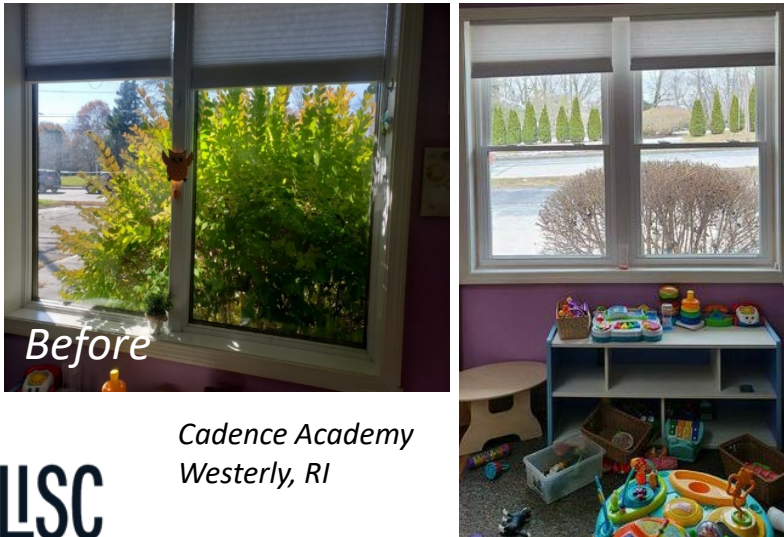
Multiple Sites Across Rhode Island



*Boys & Girls Clubs of Northern Rhode Island  
Woonsocket, RI*



*Beautiful Beginnings  
Providence, RI*



*Cadence Academy  
Westerly, RI*



**Project Overview:** Operable windows were installed to replace fixed, inoperable windows.

**Impact:** The replacement of stationary windows in child care areas with safely operable windows has improved indoor air quality by allowing for increased natural ventilation and air flow, reducing the potential concentration of virus particles in the air.

# Children's Friend

Multiple Sites, Rhode Island



**Project Overview:** Air purifiers purchased and installed across all sites. Also pictured is a grant-funded awning installed to provide a stable structure to shelter families from the weather and ease in completing the pre-screening process each day.

**Impact:** Staff leaders could not reiterate enough the importance of the air purifiers that were installed at all locations. The significant improvement of air quality was noted in an email from staff nurses stating,

*“We clearly have noticed the improvement of the air throughout the building as a result of the installation of air purifiers. The nursing staff feels this improvement has created a safer and healthier environment for children and themselves.”*

Without the funding to make these improvements staff leadership believes child enrollment would have remained stagnant due to parents' fears around the safe environment for their children.



# Little Darlings Child Care

North Smithfield, Rhode Island



**Project Overview:** Installation of an improved HVAC system to better circulate air.

**Impact:** The system has significantly improved indoor air quality, not only reducing the chances of viral transmission, but also providing the peace of mind to parents and teaching staff that the program is able to provide a high standard of indoor air quality. With the installation of the HVAC system, the program owner noted that she has seen a significant drop in allergy-related, cold and flu-like symptoms as well.



# Great Space to Get Outside



Outdoor space is historically thought of – too often – as just a small place to get outside and run around for a few minutes. It can and should be so much more.

## COVID Safety

Spread is lessened outdoors

Well designed spaces can allow for better social distancing

Fresh air is good for health

## Good for Kids!

Different and essential experiential activities can occur outdoors

Great outdoor space is essential to mental health

Young children's time and space outside is shrinking with each generation – early learning centers have a key role to play in this

# Over the Rainbow

Johnston, Rhode Island



**Project Overview:** Installation of shade structures in outdoor play areas.

**Impact:** The addition of shade structures in the outdoor spaces provides a safe environment for outdoor activities. Outside shade allows for increased number of classroom outdoor activities and extended time outdoors thus greater exposure to fresh air.

*“Mil gracias to LISC and the childcare team. Parents are spreading the word to other parents with confidence on the health and safety of Over the Rainbow and now enrolling siblings to attend our learning center.” – Over the Rainbow*

# East Bay Community Action Program



**Project Overview:** Installation of shade structures in outdoor play areas.

**Impact:** The addition of shade structures in the outdoor spaces provides a safe environment for outdoor activities. Outside shade allows for increased number of classroom outdoor activities and extended time outdoors thus greater exposure to fresh air.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work, play and do business. As a result, the child care community quickly shifted to ensure CDC precautions were implemented while also adapting to the needs of the children and families who entrust in their care each day- they were the essential workforce behind our essential workers. The quick shifts in programming resulted in a greater need for supplemental funding to purchase or enhance air purification equipment, sanitization products and even to complete capital improvement projects in both family child care and center-based programs.

Through the Child Care Provider Relief Fund, family child care and center-based programs alike were granted access to funding that would allow them to implement creative changes and precautionary measures to ensure children, staff and families remained safe. This opportunity proved to be one that child care providers across the state truly needed in order to keep their doors open at that time, keep enrollment stable and most importantly provide an invaluable service to families within the communities they serve.

With an impact footprint spanning across the state, no stone was left unturned as LISC worked diligently to pass through the federal grant funding while also providing high level technical assistance to funded partners in order to assist in identifying new programmatic needs due to COVID-19 and ensuring that the funding provided would make the biggest impact in the smallest state.

