



Head Start Budget Request: \$50M in FY 22-23

Head Start California is seeking \$50 million for Head Start programs in the FY 22-23 state budget to support the state's goal of expanding access to early childhood care and learning to more families, ensuring children reach Kindergarten healthy and ready to learn, and prepare children to become proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade.

California's plan to provide universal Pre-kindergarten opportunities for families is both hopeful and ambitious. As districts expand access to Transitional Kindergarten, Head Start programs can serve as a critical resource and collaborative partner, providing support to districts regarding the unique learning and care needs of younger children. To stabilize and strengthen the capacity of non-LEA providers to support this change, all providers, including Head Start programs, need state investments to address four major challenges.

Four Challenges:

- 1. Inequitable wages:** *Salaries for early childhood teachers are deeply inequitable* compared to their K12 counterparts. ECE positions can go unfilled for months, forcing providers, including Head Start programs, to close classrooms—leaving families with no childcare.
- 2. Insufficient workforce:** *The teacher shortage crisis is real and urgent.* Caring for toddlers is challenging and many teachers of 4-year-olds may not be interested in serving younger children. Head Start programs need support to recruit, train, and retain teachers to serve more children aged 1-3.
- 3. Facility design:** *Head Start is expected to pivot to serve younger children* as TK programs serve more 4-year-olds. That will require funding to build or renovate facilities that meet requirements for younger children and provide children with safe and engaging environments.
- 4. Informed choice:** *Kindergarten readiness begins at birth*, but many families with young children *lack awareness of and access* to program options that will support healthy child development and learning. Awareness is a pre-requisite of choice.

Alignment

This funding request advances one of the four key objectives of *California's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care*: "Ensure that all families can easily identify and access a variety of quality early learning and care choices that fit the diverse needs of their children, their financial resources, and workday and nonstandard schedules."

California Precedent

Investing state funds to expand federal programs is not new. The Home Visiting (HV) Initiative [Assembly Bill 1811 (Chapter 35, Statutes of 2018)] appropriated funds to increase Home Visiting services through CalWorks using evidence-based HV models including Early Head Start.

Precedents in Other States

Oregon has built their well-regarded Oregon Pre-kindergarten (OPK) program on Head Start. Three-fourths of grantees are federal Head Start programs and they follow Head Start's performance standards. In the coming two years, they have budgeted to invest just over \$200 million in OPK. Other examples:

- Alaska and Massachusetts provide state investments to help fund the 20% local match requirement of Head Start grants.
- Nine other states invest in Head Start or Early Head Start to expand access and serve more children.

Budget Request: \$50M in FY 2022-23 increasing to \$200M annually by FY 2025-26.



Fiscal Year	Appropriation	% of total Head Start grant per agency
FY 22-23	\$50M	5%
FY 23-24	\$100M	10%
FY 24-25	\$150M	15%
FY 25-26 and after	\$200M	20%

Use of Funds

Head Start programs will be authorized to use funds based on local need and in coordination with local planning for TK expansion for four purposes:

1. Attract and retain qualified staff, including higher compensation.

This is a core equity issue. Given the amount of education required, the disparity in salaries between ECE teachers and K-3 teachers is deeply inequitable and a major barrier to staff recruitment and retention. Further, most early educators are women, many of whom are women of color. The entire ECE system must achieve salaries that achieve systemic equity and local parity.

2. Train and educate the workforce to care for younger children. Caring for 18-month-old toddlers is very different than caring for four-year-olds. It requires more teachers (due to mandated lower teacher-child ratios) with different skills.

3. Acquire or renovate facilities to serve more children ages 0-3. Facilities for younger children have different design requirements and are desperately needed. In addition to renovation or new construction, funds may be used to cover the costs of facility assessments and address immediate health and safety needs. Support for facilities is necessary for Head Start to shift towards serving younger children and state funds can be matched with federal funds to leverage California’s investments.

4. Local marketing and outreach to identify families who need comprehensive services. Head Start programs can serve school districts as a critical resource by identifying and serving children who qualify for and will benefit from Head Start’s comprehensive services. Head Start programs have over 55 years of experience *specializing* in serving the complex needs of:

- children in poverty
- children with disabilities
- children in foster care
- children experiencing homelessness
- children suffering from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- children who are at-risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation

Funding eligibility: Agencies with one or more Office of Head Start (OHS) grants for Head Start or Early Head Start, including American Indian / Alaskan Native and Migrant and Seasonal programs.

Funding oversight and management: California Department of Education (CDE) and California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in consultation with the California Head Start State Collaboration Office (CHSSCO), shall jointly manage funding oversight.