

Plan for
Hidalgo County Head Start Program
Outdoor Learning Environments and Discovery Park
(Emergency Supplemental Grant/American Rescue Plan Funds)
5/18/2021

The Administration for Children and Families/Office of Head Start under the US Department of Health and Human Services has awarded the Hidalgo County Head Start Program an Emergency Supplemental Grant in the amount of \$1,110,576 under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES Act) “to continue to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19”, (ACF-IM-HS-21-01). We have also received notification of supplemental funding under the American Rescue Plan, 2021 in the amount of \$4, 415,085.

Reflecting on our 2020 educational experiences, we can acknowledge that educators and children did not readily adapt to a restricted learning environment in front of an electronic device, confined to wearing a mask and following stringent cleaning and sanitizing protocols. Add to that minimal socializing and physical activity and you create a learning environment void of creativity! The close proximity and involvement of children using all senses in a holistic learning approach became nonexistent as pandemic fears set in at every nook and corner of a once vibrant and living child development environment. Active learning was replaced with passive routines which have had a traumatic impact on both children and educators alike. Studies have shown that such deprived learning environment will negatively influence our children’s behavior for generations to come and will reflect many educational deficiencies.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) seeks to bring back the very fiber of our program: an integrated, holistic, dynamic and innovative approach for the delivery of services to address school readiness. We believe that we can capture this approach by the development and implementation of the “**Head Start Outdoor Learning Environments and Discovery Park**” to supplement and energize the instructional act with a curriculum introducing the wonders of nature to every Head Start classroom. These classrooms will present the opportunities we have missed for active and meaningful engagement through sensory and manipulative activities integrated in all areas of instruction. We seek to strengthen comprehensive learning experiences with full parental engagement. As a fundamental base we will continue to promote health and safety but at the same time build confidence in children, parents and staff to address any trauma induced needs.

Research shows that being outdoors provides a connection to the natural world that is important for a child’s development, and children can benefit from using all their senses to explore the world around them. A number of studies have documented increased school performance through outdoor education, increased standardized test scores, enhanced attitudes about school, improved in-school behavior, improved attendance and overall enhanced student achievement in all areas when students learn in and about nature. *In*

addition, outdoor education effectively employs a greater range of children's intelligence.)(American Institutes for Research. (2005) "Effects of outdoor education programs for children in California" .Palo Alto,, CA. Blair, D. (2009)." The child in the garden: an evaluative review of the benefits of school gardening". Journal of Environmental Education, 40(2), 15-38.

We propose to use the Supplemental funds to implement the use of **our Head Start Outdoor Learning Environments** and Discovery Park concept. The plan is to divide the project into two phases which will include the construction of outdoor learning spaces at each of our 36 centers and a Head Start Outdoor Learning and Discovery Park in the property we already own located behind our administrative offices.

Phase I will include construction of canopies to provide the additional space for classroom staff to conduct outdoor school readiness activities/lessons using the current curriculum. Learning will be an extension of the daily lesson plans in any and all subjects and will actively engage children and parents. This will allow us to train staff and introduce the expansion of outdoor learning strategies at every facility throughout the county. These funds will also be used to address a long standing need for unmet transportation needs and accommodating the transportation of children to and from the Park described below in Phase II. We propose to purchase shuttle buses which do not require drivers with Commercial Drivers Licenses and can be driven by trained employees at each center. Current employees will be able to serve in a dual role on an as need basis. For several years we have not been able to fully staff the bus driver vacancies and we believe this strategy and the new vehicles will meet our needs.

-Phase II includes the construction and development of our **Head Start Outdoor Learning Environments and Discovery Park** on land located behind our administration building as a permanent addition to the delivery of services offered to our Head Start families. We will secure assistance from our Grantee Board through our Precinct 4 Commissioner, Ellie Torres, where our administration building is situated and our new facility will be located. The preliminary drawings and infrastructure needs will be defined with assistance from the Grantee Board's Planning Department.

Phase I and Phase II preliminary estimates are attached for your information.

Hidalgo County Head Start is in a unique position to immerse our children in outdoor education and make nature a permanent part of our childhood development experience. HCHSP already owns approximately seven acres of undeveloped land attached to the main administration building located at 1901 West Highway 107, McAllen, TX. The area is totally fenced and has a partially completed trail along with some indigenous vegetation. This area makes an excellent location for the Head Start Outdoor Learning and Discovery Park concept where our children will be able to experience the wonders of nature. We propose

to use approximately 3.5 acres to accommodate Head Start open outdoor classrooms, bathrooms, a large canopy for groups of at least 200 children, an amphitheater, trail ways, learning walls and the relocation of a two classroom building, a playground area with equipment for the development of gross motor and fine motor skills. Water fountains, small water fall, wildlife feeders, observation and sitting areas and other accommodations to support wild life habitats will be created.

This facility will become a special site for integrated instruction whereby approximately 300 children at a time can extend their indoor classroom activities in the outdoors as they explore and experience nature. The facility will accommodate scheduled instruction year round for all children based on the Frog Street Early Childhood Education Curriculum units, the Growing Up Wild Curriculum by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and totally aligned with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework*. Indoor air conditioned spaces will accommodate use of electronic equipment to support outdoor instruction. The plan includes the provision for the landscaping/propagating of the area with local vegetation, domestic and wild plant/trees to attract and support birds and butterflies and other wildlife habitats. Playground and other equipment for gross and fine motor development and educational engagement will be procured and installed to support the outdoor learning activities. Indoor learning activities will include connectivity to the internet with individual and large group electronic devices readily available for children.

COVID-19 & Beyond

Immediate and longer term program needs

Additional Space

Extended program year

Meal and Nutrition Services

Family Economic Mobility

Vaccine support

HVAC and ventilation

Staff Wellness / Mental Health Support

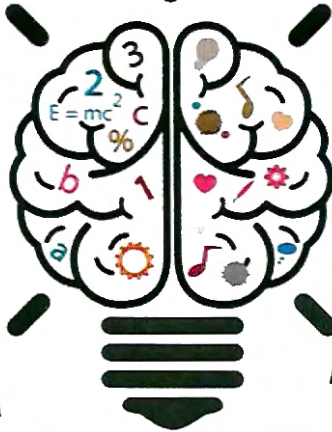
Family Support

Outdoor Spaces

Supplies

Transportation

Staff and consultants



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



OFFICE OF HEAD START



Skip Navigation

 **Office of Head Start / Head Start Enterprise System**

06HE000736 Hidalgo County Head Start Program

Project Period: 04/01/2021-03/31/2023 (24 months) Current Budget Period: 01: 04/01/2021-03/31/2023 Annual Funding Month: April

Financials Grant Applications

Fiscal Year: 2021  Budget Period: 06HE000736-01: 04/01/2021-03/31/2023  Project Period: 04/01/2021-03/31/2023 Annual Funding Month: April

Applications

 [Application Guide](#) |  [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Type	Dates	Application Status	Proposed Funding	Actions
Amendment 1: Supplement - American Rescue Plan One-Time		Returned to Grantee	\$4,415,085 Federal Total: • \$0 Non-Federal Total: 0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • view • submit • delete
Non-Competing New	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04/08/2021 Submitted: 	Submitted to Regional Office	\$1,110,576 Federal Total: • \$0 Non-Federal Total: 0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • view

[Add Amendment](#)

For assistance, please contact the HSES Help Desk at help@hsesinfo.org or call 1-866-771-4737 (toll-free) or 1-571-429-4858 (local), Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 7 p.m. EST (not available on weekends or federal holidays)

OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND DISCOVERY PARK



Hidalgo County Outdoor Learning Environments and Discovery Park

Description	DRAFT	
	CRRSA	ARP
	Phase I	Phase 2
	1,110,576	\$4,415,085
Equipment (Object Category 6.d)		
MIS Equipment/Supplies	300,000	
Shuttle Buses 10 X60,000		\$600,000
Van for MIS (small)		\$30,000
Maintenance vans (2 X 30,000)		\$30,000
Delivery truck with lift for warehouse		\$60,000
Bobcat (For playground maintenance)		\$40,000
2 Small Utility Vehicle(Golf Cart, Mule)		\$30,000
Total Equipment	300,000	\$940,816
Supplies (Object Class Category 6.e)		
Rubber mulch for all pending centers	100,000	
Classroom supplies(microscopes, computers, cameras, screens, etc.)	500,000	
Growing UP Wild Curriculum (outdoor) 225 staff X \$35		\$6,440
Storage Building		\$100,000
Fencing		\$150,000
riding lawn mowers, trimming equipment		\$110,816
Playground equipment/supplies/structures		\$300,000
Palmview Kitchen A/C (replacement)		\$40,000
Local Trees & Plants		\$250,000
Outdoor Water Cooling fans 10 X 2000.00		\$20,000
Total Supplies	600,000	\$977,256
Construction(Object Category 6.g)		
Parking & Driveway for Loading/Unloading		\$200,000
Pavilion (small kitchen and bathrooms) 100' x100'=10,000 sq.ft. X \$55		\$600,000
Outdoor classrooms at centers 36 X 14,000	210,576	\$293,524
Outdoor Classrooms at Park 7 X \$16,000		\$112,000
Walking trails & utility road		\$300,000
Restroom, Facilities around outdoor classrooms, (8 toilets, 6 urinals, 8 sinks- to serve 300 children) 4X\$50,000		\$200,000
Infrastructure: Electrical, Water, drainage		\$400,000
Water tank(\$5,000)for recycling rain water; irrigation system \$7,435 x 3acres		\$27,305
Water pond/fountain/fall; drip water stations for birds/wildlife.		\$75,000
Amphi-Theater		\$50,000
Relocation of 2 classroom portable		\$30,000
7 brick/block/stucco learning walls with smooth surfaces		\$60,000
Total Construction	210,576	\$2,347,829
Other (Object Class Category 6.h)		
Total Other	0	0
Contractual (Object Category 6.i)		
Engineering/ Architecture/Park Designer Fees (10% to 15 % of project		\$300,000
Total Contractual		\$300,000
Total Expenditure	1,110,576	\$4,415,085