

**Have other states used lottery systems to fund ECE programming? If so, how do their funding mechanisms work, and what kinds of impacts have these new systems had on existing systems?**

Georgia established a new state lottery in 1993; profits from the lottery were dedicated to funding a number of educational programs, including state-subsidized Pre-K for low-income four-year-olds. In 1995, Georgia became the first state in the US to provide universal Pre-K to four-year-olds, relying substantially on lottery profits to fund the expansion. Georgia's experiences provide valuable insight into the challenges and advantages of employing lottery funding to support ECE; and into the pros and cons of universal, versus means-tested, Pre-K models. Below are some brief, informative takeaways taken from a Foundation for Child Development [report](#):

- If included in the general budget for education, lottery funding may supplant, rather than supplement, other sources of funding for ECE. Georgia foresaw this issue and earmarked lottery revenues for specific programs.
- Lotteries are politically contentious, and there was protracted political opposition to instituting a state lottery to fund education initiatives. Georgia's governor created a coalition to advocate in favor of his lottery proposal and to counter much of the media produced by anti-lottery groups. In the end, the proposal was passed with only 52% of the popular vote.
- Lottery revenues are not stable from year-to-year. During the Great Recession, Georgia's lottery revenues decreased significantly, leading to cuts in educational programs. Since the economy has recovered, some—but not all—funding has been reinstated.
- The provision of public funding can be tied to stipulations that help to ensure providers deliver high-quality services. Georgia awarded lottery funding, via a competitive application process, to public schools, nonprofit providers, and for-profit providers. With public subsidies came strings: all curricula had to be approved by the Department of Education; all staff had to have high school diplomas and experience working with children under five; and all providers had to offer a range of health and other supportive services.
- Bringing relevant groups to the table at the beginning can prevent miscommunication and address concerns while building buy-in from a broad-based coalition. Georgia initially neglected to include Head Start administrators in the planning and implementation process for lottery-funded Pre-K, leading to tension between the two programs. Private child-care providers also felt excluded from the Pre-K system in its early years; in 1992, no private providers even applied for funding, and few participated in the program until it evolved into a universal Pre-K system in 1995-1996.
- Universal Pre-K has broad political appeal and can draw together advocates from across political boundaries. Georgia's lottery-funded Pre-K program was initially available only to low-income families; many attribute its continued success to the transition from serving only low-income families to serving all four-year-olds throughout the state.

For more information on Georgia's lottery and Pre-K system:

- Foundation for Child Development: [Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia](#)
- The Atlantic: [How Georgia Got Republicans and Democrats to Embrace Universal Pre-K](#)

For additional information on other lottery-funded Pre-K programs, as well as other funding mechanisms for ECE:

- Pre-K Now: [Funding the Future: States' Approaches to Pre-K Finance](#)