EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GRANT FY23
FREQUENTLYASKEDQUESTIONS

ELIGIBILITY

How can a family receive funding for the ECE Grant?
The purpose of the Early Childhood Education Grant is to maximize a child's early educational experiences
before kindergarten and provide high-quality early learning services to eligible children. The funds must be
used to provide preschool services to economically disadvantaged children whose family income falls at or
below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, with the exception of children with disabilities; or children with a
case plan or family service plan; or a child placed in Kinship Care as documented through Kinship Permanency
Incentive Program payments; or a family experiencing homelessness.

The Office of Early Learning and School Readiness does not handle the grants directly with families and you
will need to apply at the site level. ECE site locations can be found at Early Childhood Education Grant for
Families.

What are the age eligibility requirements?
Children must be four years of age as of October 1, 2022. Children who are age-eligible to attend
kindergarten in their district of residence are not eligible to fill a grant slot. A child with an
Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is eligible for the Early Childhood Education Grant as of his or her
fourth birthday. Please note, a student who is age-eligible for kindergarten is not eligible for the grant,
even if the IEP calls for another year of preschool programming.

How do I determine family size?
Family size is defined as one of the following:

- All parents/legal guardians of the child residing in the home and all minor children of the
  parent/legal guardian who are residing in the home
- Unmarried parents of a common child who reside in the same home and all the minor children
  who live with them
- A foster parent and all the minor children who reside in the home

Grantees should refer to Ohio Revised Administrative Code 5101:2-12-02, Application and qualification
process for receipt of publicly funded child care benefits, for additional information around determining family
member's income.

How do I determine a family's income?
Grantees should use the Federal Poverty Guidelines to determine if the family is eligible. Grantees must have
a written sliding fee scale outlining tuition rates and fees based on poverty level and private-pay rates. The
sliding fee scale should be shared with families at the time of enrollment.

ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION

Do I need to update previously collected paperwork to reflect the updated ODJFS 01121 Early
Childhood Education Eligibility Screening Tool?
Grantees should begin to use the March 2022 JFS 01121 form but do not have to ask families to complete a
new form if they previously collected their information on the old form.
Do I need to collect pay stubs, tax forms, or other proof of income for a family that is receiving benefits such as Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC), Ohio Works First (OWF), or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)?
No. Families that are receiving government assistance benefits that are 200% or below the Federal Poverty Guidelines must provide an award letter or verification. Additional income documentation is not required.

Can I use a copy of the SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card as verification of benefits?
No. Grantees must verify the dates of enrollment to ensure the family meets the relative time period (last 12 months). This can be done through the award letter, information collected from the Ohio Benefits portal, or the family’s caseworker.

Do I need to collect verification of Unearned Income if family has no earned income?
If a family has no earned income, they must provide documentation to explain how they are meeting basic living expenses, including but not limited to food, housing, utilities, and transportation. This requirement can be met by using a Zero Income Statement. The Zero Income Statement must include a written description of how the parent is meeting basic living expenses, including food, housing, utilities, and transportation. The parent should list sources of unearned income, such as housing benefits, SNAP benefits, other public assistance, or letters verifying cash gifts on the form. Grantees would only need to collect one source of unearned income to document they meet the 200% or below Federal Poverty Guidelines. Grantees can use the sample form Zero Income and McKinney-Vento Statement to meet the requirement.

Do I need to collect income information for a child with an IEP, placed in foster care or Kindship care, or experiencing homelessness?
Some children attend the program at no cost to the family (regardless of family income level). It is not necessary for the families of this group of children to provide income information on page 3 of the JFS 01121. They should complete the other pages of the JFS 01121 form and collect the following:

- Children with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) (retain copy of front page)
- Children placed in a foster home and have a case plan or family service plan as defined in ORC 2151.412 (retain court order)
- Children placed in Kinship Care as documented through Kinship Permanency Incentive Program payments (retain payment documentation)

Can a child begin preschool services before their SSID is assigned?
Yes. A child can begin services once the Grantee verifies the child’s age and determines the family meets the income guidelines, when applicable. Please note it can take a few weeks for the child to be eligible in the EAS or EMIS system. Grantees should not wait on the eligible status as long as they have required documentation on file.

ENROLLMENT

When is the last day I can enroll a student in the ECE Grant?
The deadline to enroll children in the ECE grant is April 1, 2023. Grantees cannot enroll additional children after April 1. Exceptions to this include:
- Eligible child with an IEP.
- Eligible child with a case plan or family service plan as defined in ORC 2151.412; or a child placed in Kinship Care as documented through Kinship Permanency Incentive Program payments.
- Eligible child whose family is experiencing homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act: Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residence and includes: 1) children who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals, 2) children who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, 3) children who are living in parks, cars, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and 4) migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described in 1-3 above.

**Do I need to fill the slot of a child that withdraws from the program?**
Grantees must make efforts to fill vacated slots when a child withdraws. Grantees will be reimbursed for slots that have been vacated; however, cannot draw down funding for students served in excess of the allocated number of slots. If an eligible enrolled child leaves the program and another child takes their place, this counts as one filled spot, not two, as they were not enrolled at the same time.

**Are children allowed to fill a slot for more than one year?**
Yes. Children that are not age-eligible for kindergarten may be on the ECE grant a second year. If a Grantee serves a three-year-old child through the grant one year, the child is automatically age-eligible to fill a slot the following year, even if they are not yet four by the age eligibility date.

**When can I begin to create Student Applications in the EAS system?**
Grantees may begin to create Student Applications for the children enrolled in the ECE grant for the current year after the annual Provider Application is approved. The Provider Application is open starting July 1.

**FISCAL**

**How are funds allocated?**
Funds are based on a per child allocation of $4,000 and calculated based on the maximum number of ECE-funded children enrolled in the program at any one time. Grantees may use highest enrollment numbers from any day in the period the PCR covers. Please note the department releases funds incrementally throughout the year and the total allocation will not be available until all slots are filled. Grantees are entitled to the full amount of their allocation as long as all slots are filled at any one point in time for one full month.

**Do I need to pro-rate the Project Cash Request to reflect the number of ECE children enrolled in the class?**
No. Expenses do not need to be pro-rated to reflect the number of ECE-funded students versus the total number of students benefitting from the expense.

**Will I receive the full allocation of a child that withdraws before April 1?**
Yes. Every effort should be made to fill a vacancy; however, Grantees are not penalized for a child withdrawing before the end of the school year as long as the child was enrolled for one full month.

**PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

**Do all site locations receiving ECE funding need to be Step Up to Quality rated?**
Meeting required licensing standards with ODE or ODJFS is the foundation and first step to providing high-quality care. In addition to maintaining a good standing with licensing, all ECE grantees are required to be Step
Up to Quality-rated and maintain a 3-, 4-, or 5-star rating. Any Grantee that does not meet the legislative requirements of being highly rated will be placed on a corrective action plan. The corrective action plan will include a scheduled plan for monitoring by the Department of Education, any required documentation, and the name and signature of the person responsible for implementing the corrective action plan. Grantees will be given a timeframe to become rated based on the Step Up to Quality standard not met. Failure to obtain a high-quality rating within 6 months may result in a loss of funding.

What happens if a Grantee falls below a 3-star rating?
Grantees that fall below a 3-star rating will be placed on corrective action plan and be given six months to become highly rated. Grantees that are not highly rated with a 3-, 4-, or 5-star rating are required to do all of the following:

a) Meet teacher qualification requirements prescribed by section Am. Sub. H. B. No. 110 134th G.A. 21173301.311 of the Revised Code, which states fifty per cent of the staff members employed by the program as teachers have attained a bachelor's degree of a type approved by the department;
b) Align curriculum to the early learning content standards developed by the Department;
c) Meet any child or program assessment requirements prescribed by the Department;
d) Require teachers, except teachers enrolled and working to obtain a degree pursuant to section 3301.311 of the Revised Code, to attend a minimum of twenty hours every two years of professional development as prescribed by the Department;
e) Document and report child progress as prescribed by the Department;
f) Meet and report compliance with the early learning program standards as prescribed by the Department;
g) Participate in the Step Up to Quality program established pursuant to section 5104.29 of the Revised Code.

What are the ECE Teacher Requirements?
The goal of the Early Childhood Education grant is to provide education services and to promote school readiness for young children ages 3-5 in a center-based setting. To accomplish this goal, programs must employ highly qualified teachers with training and experiences in early childhood education. Grantees must ensure that the ECE classrooms meet Ohio Revised Code 3301.311 rule of 50% of staff members employed by the program as teachers have attained a bachelor's degree of a type approved by the department.

RESOURCES
Who do I contact for ECE Grant Questions?
The Early Childhood Education Grant team is available to support grantees with implementing the ECE grant through on-site visits, webinars, email, phone, and professional development. The ECE team wants to ensure grantees have the tools and resources needed to carry out grant requirements. The Early Childhood Education Grant for Administrator Webpage has provider resources and frequently used forms.

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