

Early Childhood Education Grant Procedures Guide

Section I Grant Information

A. Background

The Early Childhood Education Grant program was established by the 2015 64th Legislative Assembly and codified in NDCC Chapter 15.1-37-01 to assist North Dakota's communities with public, private, nonprofit or partnership entities offering early childhood education.

B. Grants Administration

The Early Childhood Education Grant (ECEG) program will be administered by the Workforce Development Division of the Department of Commerce in collaboration with the Department of Public Instruction and Department of Human Services, Early Childhood Services. References to 'the Division' throughout the guide mean the Department of Commerce, Workforce Development Division. References to 'DPI' mean the Department of Public Instruction. References to 'DHS' mean the Department of Human Services, Early Childhood Services.

C. Grant Application and Award Schedule

The Division will award ECEG grants in accordance with criteria aligned with the expectations set forth in statute. Grants will be awarded beginning July 1, 2016, the second year of the biennium. If the amount appropriated to the ECEG program is insufficient to provide grants to all eligible providers who submit a completed application, grants will be awarded on a chronological basis in accordance with the date on which a completed application is received. The grant application is Attachment I of this program guidance.

Grant applications will be directed to Wayde Sick via email at wsick@nd.gov. Inquiries can be made by email or phone (701-328-5345). Inquiries can also be made to Tara Bitz with the Department of Public Instruction by email tbitz@nd.gov or phone (701-328-4646).

Grant applications will only be accepted via email. The date stamp on the email will serve as the date of submittal.

The Division will have 60 days to review grant applications, request and receipt of clarification, or accept additional information and make award determinations.

The biennial timeline shown below will be revised for each biennium, pending legislative funding approval.

2015-17 Biennium Timeline

By November 30, 2015: Early Childhood Education Coalition initial meeting

The superintendent of a school district shall invite all public and private early childhood education providers within the school district to meet to discuss the following:

- a. Identify all available options for cost-effectively providing early childhood education services within the district;
- b. Coordinate utilization of facilities, personnel and transportation;
- c. Form a coalition of early childhood education service providers; and

- d. Select a coalition governing board

For a list of early childhood education partners in your community, visit North Dakota Child Care Aware at <http://www.ndchildcare.org/info/earlyedgrants.html>

March 1, 2016: Report on coalition status and the Division will begin accepting applications

See Section VI, A on coalition reporting requirements.

April 1, 2016: Application deadline

June 1, 2016: Awards announced

October 15, 2016: First quarter disbursement

January 15, 2017: Second quarter disbursement

April 15, 2017: Third quarter disbursement

June 15, 2017: Fourth (final) quarter disbursement

Award Determination

The Division will make award determinations with assistance from DPI and DHS.

Appeals

Award determinations may be appealed to the Commissioner of the Department of Commerce.

D: Eligibility

Eligible public and private early childhood education providers in the state who:

- a. Are a participating member in the local coalition or on the governing board;
- b. Operates an early childhood education program that:
 - Is approved in accordance with NDCC Chapter 15.1-37-01; and
 - Incorporates within its curriculum at least ten hours of research-based parental involvement.
 - Has documented willingness to admit children of all learning abilities into the early childhood education program.

E: Allowable Use of Funds

NDCC Chapter 15.1-37-01 states:

The department of commerce shall receive applications for and distribute grants under this section to eligible members, including governing board members, of a consortium formed in accordance with section 2 of this Act, in the amount of two thousand dollars for each child enrolled in a program of early childhood education, if the child is eligible for free lunches under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act [42 U.S.C. 1751, et seq.] and one thousand dollars for each child enrolled in a program of early childhood education, if the child is eligible for reduced lunches under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act [42 U.S.C. 1751, et seq.], provided:

- a. The child is a resident of this state; and
- b. The program has a duration of at least four hundred hours over a period of thirty – two consecutive weeks.

Once each calendar quarter, at the time and in the manner required by the department of commerce, any provider receiving a grant under this section shall forward to the parent of each child receiving services a notice indicating the total amount of the grant that was awarded to the provider for the quarter, the pro rata amount attributable to the parent's child, and the source of the grant. The department of commerce shall standardize the notification required by this subdivision.

If a provider fails to meet the notification requirements of this subsection, the department of commerce shall reduce the amount of the provider's next grant payment by fifty percent. If a provider fails to meet the notification requirements of this section a second time, the department of commerce shall determine that the provider is ineligible to participate in the grant program for a period of one year.

Section II Grant Applications

Early Childhood Education Grant application can be found in Attachment III of this guidance. Incomplete applications will not be accepted, but are eligible for resubmittal.

When applying for ECEG grants, along with basic provider information, the provider must include the following:

1. DPI approval to offer Early Childhood Education services;
2. Verification of membership to the local coalition;
3. Verification of local school board participation in coalition governing board;
4. Projected number of four year olds to be served in upcoming school year that qualify for free and reduced lunches;
5. Projected number of all other four-year-olds to be served in the upcoming school year;
6. Program schedule to verify the program provides at least 400 hours of service over the duration of 32 weeks (as required by statute);
7. Verification the provider incorporates at least ten hours of research-based parental involvement (as required by statute);
8. Details on how the provider will use the funds;
9. Verification that the provider is aware they must notify the Division if enrollment numbers of four-year-olds the provider serves that qualify for free and reduced changes.

Section III Grant Award Determinations

A. Grant Application Award Determinations

Applications will be reviewed by the Division, DPI and DHS to ensure they meet the requirements stated in NDCC Chapter 15.1-37-01.

If the amount appropriated is insufficient to provide grants to all eligible providers, the Division will award grants on a chronological basis in the order on which completed applications are received.

B. Grant Award Process

The Division will notify facilities of intent to award.

C. Post Award Requirement

Upon completion of the Letter of Agreement, a State Automated Reporting System (STARS) account is required to be established and utilized for reporting during the duration of the award. Refer to

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/66/LoginID.pdf> for guidance on how to create the account. **Facility must contact DPI to finalize account setup. Contact Tara Bitz at 701-328-4646.**

D. Payment Method

Funds will be made available upon completion of the grant agreement or letter of agreement as follows:
Upon submitting each quarterly report, the provider will receive \$500 per enrolled four-year-old eligible for free lunch and \$250 per enrolled four-year-old eligible for reduced lunch.

Section IV Grant Agreement and Reporting

Upon approval of the grant application, the Division will develop a letter of agreement. The Division will work with the authorized agent to finalize agreement details.

A. Reporting Requirements

Local Coalition Report:

Prior to grant applications being accepted, the governing board of each local coalition must submit a coalition update report to the Division. The report is to include the following:

1. Name, contact information, and respective organization of all members of the governing board.
2. A list of all provider members of the local coalition.
3. Details on how the local coalition is working together to provide early childhood education services within the district. Examples include:
 - a. Identifying all available options for cost-effectively maximizing the availability of early childhood education services within the district.
 - b. Address coordinated utilization of facilities, personnel, and transportation for early childhood education within the district.

Quarterly Reimbursement Requests

On the last Friday of each calendar quarter, the providers must submit a quarterly reimbursement request to the Division, except the final quarter of the 2015-17 biennium. The final quarterly reimbursement request must be submitted by June 1, 2017 to allow the Division to process payments prior to the close of the 2015-17 biennium. The Quarterly Reimbursement Request Form can be found in Attachment III of this guidance. Due dates are as follows:

September 30, 2016
December 30, 2016
March 31, 2017
June 1, 2017

Quarterly Reimbursement Requests must include the following:

- a. The number of four year olds served at the facility that qualify for free lunch;
- b. The number of four year olds served at the facility that qualify for reduced lunch;
- c. The number of all other four year olds served.
- d. Verification the provider notified all parents of each child receiving services a notice indicating the total amount of the grant that was award to the provider for the quarter, the pro-rated amount to that child and the source of the grant. NOTE: The Division will provide the standard notification. This can be

found in Attachment IV of this guidance. Failure to provide verification of this notice will reduce the providers next grant payment by 50%. Continued noncompliance will deem the provider ineligible to participate in the grant program for a period of one year.

- e. A brief narrative explaining how funds are being used.

NOTE: Five-year-olds served at the facility who were age four as of August 1, 2016 will be included. Students served at the facility whose birthday falls after August 1, 2016 are excluded from this program.

NOTE: All grantees may be subject to a random site selection for a program effectiveness assessment. Selected grantees will be required to agree to complete a series of teacher and parent evaluations during 2016 according to provided deadlines. Evaluations and deadlines will become available during the 2016-17 school year.

Annual Report – In July 2017, grantees will be required to report program and child outcome data to DPI.

All reports will be sent via email to:

Kerri Kraft

Program Specialist

North Dakota Department of Commerce

kkraft@nd.gov

B. Grant Agreement Modification

The provider must contact the division in writing in the event of any enrollment changes which may change the agreed upon funding amount. If funds are available, a Letter of Agreement modification will be developed.

C. Grant Closeout

By June 15, 2017, the Division will notify the grantee that the grant agreement has been closed. This notification signifies the end of the grant agreement and releases the administrator and the grantee from any further obligations under the grant agreement.

Section V Monitoring, Audits, and Records

Monitoring

The Division will monitor all grant recipients within the biennium. Monitoring includes review of all report submittals. A monitoring report will be prepared and presented to the Division Director within 60 days of a monitoring event. Grantees will receive a notification of monitoring results within 90 days of the monitoring event.

Audit

Grantees are subject to audit. Grantees must keep financial records necessary to fully disclose the complete financial status of the grant.

Open Records

Per NDCC Chapter 44-04 ([NDCC 44-04](#)), grant records are subject to North Dakota open records laws. The Department of Commerce must disclose to the public upon request any records it receives from the Grantee. Any records obtained or generated by the Grantee under this grant may, under certain circumstances, be open to the public upon request under the North Dakota open records law. Grantees must contact the Department of Commerce immediately upon receiving a request for information under the open records law and comply with the Grantor's instructions on how to respond to the request.

Information on open records laws and Attorney General's guidance is available at www.ag.nd.gov/OpenRecords/ORM.htm.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment I – Application for Free and Reduced Lunch Template
- Attachment II – Free and Reduced Lunch Parental Letter Template
- Attachment III – SFN 60888, Early Childhood Education Grant Application
- Attachment IV – Standardized Letter of Agreement
- Attachment V – SFN 60889, Quarterly Reimbursement Request Form
- Attachment VI – Quarterly Parental Grant Notification Template
- Attachment VII – Frequently Asked Questions

REFERENCES

List of early childhood education partners in your community:

<http://www.ndchildcare.org/info/earlyedgrants.html>

STARS account information and creating account guidance:

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/66/LoginID.pdf>