

**EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSTRUCTION GRANT (ECCG) PROGRAM
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)
UPDATED 10/26/11**

Purpose of Program

What is the Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) Program?

- Administered by the Capital Development Board (CDB) in consultation with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the ECCG Program was created to provide early childhood centers an opportunity to increase or enhance their facilities space with the primary goal of serving more young children, birth to age five. Priority for these grants will be given to projects located in those communities in the State with the greatest underserved number of young children.
- Chicago-based organizations have three options: (1) they can apply for the grant through CDB (2) apply through the Chicago Public Schools (20% of the grant has been set aside for CPS) or (3) apply to both CDB and CPS - However no program can receive grants from both CDB and CPS.

Where did the grant funds come from and who is administering this money?

- The grant money is coming from the capital bill and is being administered by the Capital Development Board (CDB).

Is this state or federal money?

- The grant is funded by the state capital bill.

Eligible Applicants

Who is eligible to apply?

- Any public school district or private non-profit organization with experience providing educational, health, social, and/or child development services to young children (ages 0-5) and their families.
- Examples of eligible programs include (but are not limited to) both licensed and licensed-exempt childcare centers, Preschool for All programs, and Early Head Start/Head Start programs.

Who is NOT eligible to apply?

- Family childcare homes
- For-profit childcare centers

Can religious-affiliated programs apply at all?

- Yes, if the proposed project's primary focus is to provide early childhood services. However, grant funds cannot be used to fund sectarian/religious instruction or worship.

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What criteria will be used in reviewing grant applications?

- Applications will be reviewed by the CDB Board based upon the following criteria:
 1. Documented need for the project with priority given to projects located in those communities in the State with the greatest underserved population of young children.
 2. Ability to successfully complete project objectives described in the grant application as well as the ability to sustain the early childhood center's new operations upon completion of the project.
 3. Realistic budget and timeline for the completion of the project, including a detailed description of additional funds to be used toward the applicant's financial contribution and the readiness of the project to begin once the grant funds are awarded.

How is "project readiness" defined?

- Form B in the application asks several questions which will be used as scoring criteria for project readiness.

Can a project apply for funding that is currently underway or completed if it otherwise meets all criteria?

- Projects that have already awarded a contract for the construction or moved forward with the construction are not eligible. CDB will not reimburse for a building that has already been built or is partially built.

How is the "greatest underserved population of young children" defined?

- Utilizing existing early childhood data resources from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM), Chapin Hall, and the Census data, a data methodology was developed to identify underserved communities with young children. Please see the following website, developed by IECAM, for a brief overview of this methodology and a list of the state's municipalities and Chicago neighborhoods based on this methodology.

<http://iecam.crc.uiuc.edu/eccg/>

If an applicant does not currently have an early childhood program, but is interested in starting a new center, are they eligible to apply?

- Yes.

Is this a statewide grant?

- Yes, this is a statewide grant. Any licensed or license-exempt childcare provider or public school district in the state is eligible. There will possibly be a different process for providers in CPS and that information will be made available in the future.

Does the district need to have an existing early childhood program to apply for this grant or can the district create a new early childhood program with this grant?

- The district can create a new program.

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How many years of experience are needed for this grant?

- There is no minimum requirement for years of experience.

Are Catholic schools eligible for this funding?

- Yes, as long as the area that is getting the improvement is used for the early childhood development program or facilities and not for religious education during the hours of the early childhood program.

If an applicant is a childcare provider that is applying for nonprofit status but is currently not a nonprofit, can they partner with an existing nonprofit agency that is not a childcare provider?

- No. The entity seeking the grant must be a licensed or a license-exempt childcare center.

If you are looking to move your childcare facility to another city within Illinois where the childcare need is greater, do you need to be licensed within that municipality first?

- Licensing is done on a state-wide basis; it is not done municipality to municipality. If you are moving to a new facility you have to apply for a new license at the facility; it would not transfer from your existing facility to a new facility.

Must applicants be licensed providers at the time of the application?

- Yes. Grants will only be awarded to licensed providers or license-exempt childcare center providers.

What is the age range that must be served to qualify for the grant?

- For purposes of this grant application, early childhood means birth to age five.

Is it okay to serve older children or adults as well as those in the realm of early childhood?

- You can serve older children in addition to younger children, but this grant is specific to early childhood so you need to be increasing your capacity for children birth to age five.

Can you clarify the process to apply for this funding through Chicago Public Schools? Can organizations apply to both the CDB and through CPS? Will an organization be eligible for funding through both sources?

- You can apply to both CDB and CPS but can only receive one grant.

Will the inclusion of after-school classroom(s) result in a lower score? Can after-school be included if the organization pays for a pro-rated amount of the facility?

- The grant is for early childhood development only.

Are programs that are requesting funds for safety projects or improvements that improve quality of service (e.g., playground improvements) but do not increase the number of available slots eligible to apply?

- Yes, they are eligible to apply but projects that do not increase capacity will receive lower scores.

Do charter schools qualify for this grant?

- Yes.

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Can two districts that are sharing space submit one application for the grant?

- The grant award can be to only one entity. A “partnership” would have to decide which entity applies.

Availability & Use of Funds

How much is the maximum grant award?

- Grant applicants may apply for up to **\$5 million** per application period (also see **Application Review & Grant Award Process** section below). If the total project expenses are more than \$5 million, applicants must demonstrate their ability to obtain the balance of funds for the project.

Can an entity/organization with multiple facility locations apply for funding for multiple locations?

- No. CDB will accept one application per location per grant cycle.

What is the total dollar amount of the Early Childhood Construction Grant?

- A total of \$45 million is allocated for this grant. However, funding maybe distributed in multiple grant cycles.

What can the funds be used for?

- A recipient of a grant from the ECCG program may use grant funds to do one or more of the following:
 1. Construct an addition onto an existing building;
 2. New construction of a facility or renovations to an existing facility in order to create a new early childhood center;
 3. Acquisition of facility;
 4. Purchase or replacement of equipment;
 5. Safety improvements; and
 6. Classroom conversions

What can funds NOT be used for?

- Funds CANNOT be used to:
 1. Offset existing debt;
 2. Supplant existing funds that support a service, program or activity for which grant support is requested;
 3. Fund expenses associated with the operations of the Early Childhood Center;
 4. Lease/rent space for occupancy;
 5. Use for sectarian instruction, religious worship or a school or department of divinity;
 6. Use for the proportional share of joint use facilities that either provide personal residential space for those who are not students, or provide space for business activities unrelated to the educational mission of the early childhood center; and
 7. Fund entities providing services within private residences

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Do the grants require matching funds?

- Yes—all grants require a 10% cash match. Demonstration of your ability to provide the match should be included in your application.

In addition to cash-on hand, can “soft” resources (such as in-kind donations or pro bono work) be included in the 10% match?

- Yes, but it must be included in the budget and value must be verified by the project architect.

Does the 10% match have to be all monetary or can it be equipment, etc.?

- Yes, if it has a purchase price that can be verified and is included as part of the overall budget.

When does the 10% match have to be paid? Do costs that are being occurred now for design plans, etc., count towards an organization’s 10%?

- The 10% needs to be available and committed at the time you submit the grant application. It must be spent within the two year grant period.

How will grant funds be dispersed?

- Funds will be released to programs in 4 payments and must be spent within 2 years of receipt.

What if any will be the CPS portion of the \$45 million pool of the grant money?

- By law, CPS will receive 20% of the \$45 million.

Will grant awards be made according to locations in the state, for example certain percentages to rural or urban?

- No, grant awards will be based on the overall scoring.

Can the district adjust the grant amount, based on bidding, after the initial award is made?

- No.

Application Review & Grant Award Process

Who will be reviewing the applications?

- The State’s construction management authority, the Capital Development Board (CDB), which oversees the design and construction of projects funded by the State, will review applications for this grant.

Are applications considered on a rolling basis, or will they all be evaluated at the same time?

- All applications will be evaluated once per grant cycle.

What is the anticipated timeline for the grant to be awarded?

- 2012

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If my program is not awarded a grant is the first funding cycle, may I apply for funding when additional funding becomes available?

- Yes, as long as your application meets the guidelines noted in the **Eligible Applicants** section of this FAQ. Programs that are deemed “eligible” but ultimately not awarded the grant, may re-apply for the next round of funding.

Am I required to obtain a Quality Counts quality rating?

- The Quality Counts – Quality Rating System is a rating system for child care providers to be recognized for indicators of excellence. While a rating *is not* an application requirement and participation in the program *will not* impact your application score, in an effort to help the State better understand participation in the program and also build awareness about the program, we invite you to share whether or not you participate in the Quality Counts – Quality Rating System. Additional information about the program including subsidy bonuses for rated providers can be found at: <http://www.ilqualitycounts.com/quality-rating-system/overview>

Special Note:

- All grants awarded to (applicant) non-profit organizations for the purpose of acquisition or construction of new facilities are subject to a special rule: the Capital Development Board (or designated State agency), will either hold the title to the new (or newly-acquired) facility, or a lien will be placed on the facility for 10 years after the date of the grant award. If the organization complies with the terms of the grant agreement, after this 10 year period is complete, the title to the facility will be transferred to the non-profit (applicant) organization or the lien will be removed.

Where should expenditures for an acquisition be included on Form A1?

- This should be indicated in the “Other” box. Note in the box that funds are for an acquisition.

Should Form A2 of the application be filled out for the current revenue or for anticipated revenue for your new/remodeled center?

- Form A2 needs to show how you are going to be able to fund the program you are adding. You can do both if you so choose.

Form A2 is a revenue proposal. Where are operating expenses to be reported on the grant application?

- Only revenue is required for Form A2. Expenses are not required, but it is recommended that organizations think about revenue and expenses as part of the planning process.

Does zoning have to be secured in writing from the city before the grant is submitted? If so, what documentation or demonstration needs to be included?

- The grant award will have the cash distributed at particular milestones. One of the milestones is related to bidding of the construction contracts, and it is assumed that this bidding will not go forward until all permits are in place. You should have all your permits in place before the bidding milestone.

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What kind of supporting documentation are you seeking to demonstrate that the space will be used for early childhood programs for at least 10 years?

- Providers will need to provide proof of licensure and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) inspection report on an annual basis.

If your program's Early Head Start slots are in family childcare homes, do you count them in your overall count or is the capacity just center-based?

- It is only center-based.

If the building is leased, should a lease agreement be attached to the application?

- Yes, this would be helpful.

Will CDB accept a reasonable estimate of project costs based on published square foot cost projections validated by an A&E (architect and engineer) or will they require a detailed A&E cost estimate?

- Yes, either is sufficient. The grant award will be based on the amount of funds requested in the application and cannot be adjusted later.

Can only CDB-approved architects and engineers be used?

- No, there is no requirement to select a pre-qualified design firm. The only requirement is they must be licensed in the State of Illinois.

How long will it take to review the applications and give the district an answer?

- CDB is hoping to review applications in 30-60 days, but this timeframe will be based on the number of applications received.

Will partial awards be made? In other words, if an applicant requests a dollar amount, would an amount less be awarded?

- No, projects will be either funded in full or not funded.

For the space requirement, will preference be given to applicants who meet the IFF workable or recommended space requirements; i.e., the square foot per infant or toddler rather than the state minimum requirement?

- No, there will be no preference. The square footages are meant to help applicants think about space and plan accordingly so that they can hit their target capacity mark. Licensing requirements are through DCFS.

How important is the pursuit of LEED accreditation in the selection process?

- There is no number of points or percentages given for LEED accreditation. CDB is encouraging everybody to consider LEED and other sustainable and green aspects in their design and construction.

Will there be a preference for grant recipients who have twelve month programs as opposed to nine month programs and/or offer childcare services at their facility?

- No, there is no preference.

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For the square footage figures that were noted during the IFF webinar, are these for the classroom or primary areas only, or are they for common areas such as hallways, restrooms, gymnasiums, or cafeterias?

- Those numbers are only for licensable spaces, meaning classrooms.

What is the weighting scale for community need?

- The community need measure utilizes data from the 2008 U.S. Census on children living in families whose income is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (200% FPL). The methodology consists of two measures: (1) an “absolute measure” of slot gap, which is the number of children below 200% FPL minus the number of children served by Early Childhood Education (ECE) services; (2) a “relative measure,” which is the percent of children below 200% FPL served by ECE services. From these two measures, a final measure, which CDB will use in guiding their review of applications, was prepared that used the ranking of the municipalities or Chicago Community Areas from the absolute measure (weighted at 75%) and the rankings from the relative measure (weighted at 25%) to produce a combined ranking. Please see the IECAM website for more information, <http://iecam.crc.uiuc.edu/>.

Is there any sort of weighting or ranking of community need versus proposed program and project-readiness?

- The scoring will have three components: community need; proposed program; and project readiness. All three of those will be included in the scoring with highest priority being given to community need.

Is it possible that if two agencies submit high quality proposals for one target area that both are funded if the need there is great enough?

- Yes.

The grant is based on the need for adding slots for childcare, does the need also mean in a low income area?

- In addressing the issue of need when referring to early care and education slots, CDB is predominantly considering low income. For this grant, in the specific methodology for determining community need by slots, 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) was used as the income variable. Of course, other FPLs (100%, 185%, etc.) or other risk factors could also be included. Please see the IECAM website for more information, <http://iecam.crc.uiuc.edu/>.

Submission of Application

When is the application due?

- Application must be received by November 30, 2011 at 4:30pm.

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How should the application be submitted?

- The grant application, signed by an authorized individual of the organization, can be hand delivered, sent via U. S. mail, fax or e-mail to the following address:

**Elizabeth Smith
Illinois Capital Development Board
Stratton Office Building
401 South Spring Street – 3rd. Floor
Springfield, IL 62706
Fax: 217-782-4938
elizabeth.smith@illinois.gov**

Does the Capital Development Board have a preference for how the application is submitted (e.g. via mail, fax, or email?)

- While all formats listed above are accepted, the CDB welcomes applications submitted via email and would recommend the document be sent in PDF format.

What assistance or resources will be offered to help my program apply for these funds?

- An informational webinar, prepared and presented by IFF, was held **Thursday, September 29th at 10: 00 am**. For those who were not available to participate in the webinar, the webinar will be archived and materials will be available on the following website:

Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development website:

<http://www2.illinois.gov/earlychildhood/Pages/EarlyChildhoodFacilitiesConstructionGrant.aspx>

Is there a page-limit to the application?

- Yes—applications must not exceed 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages

Is there a way to receive copies of the forms to fill out and print?

- The application is available on CDB's website at <http://www.cdb.state.il.us/> and at the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development's website at www.earlychildhood.illinois.gov.

Reporting

Are there specific reporting requirements?

- For grants larger than \$25,000, recipients must submit quarterly reports on the project's progress and expenditures.
- For grants smaller than \$25,000, the recipient must submit an annual report on progress and expenditures.

When are reports due?

- First quarterly report is due 3 months (90 days) after execution of the agreement.

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Is there a specified format for reports?

- Once a program has been selected to receive a grant, the program will receive specific contract and reporting information from CDB.

Troubleshooting

If I have additional questions, who do I contact?

- Elizabeth Smith at the Illinois Capital Development Board at 217-524-7656 or Elizabeth.Smith@illinois.gov

Miscellaneous

Are there a minimum number of bids that applicants are required to get for safety/facility improvement projects?

- A standard business practice is three to five.

Can a district hire a construction manager to oversee the competitive bidding process?

- Yes.

What is meant by current curriculum philosophy on slide 12 of the September 29th IFF Webinar presentation?

- What IFF was referring to by current curriculum philosophy is whether there is a specific education philosophy that your organization follows, for example Reggio or Montessori. It is not required for the application and it will not be considered as part of the scoring portion; it is just a point that you may want to highlight in describing your programs and services and substantiating your organization's credibility or history as a provider.