



April 12, 2024

**Child Care Manual Procedure Letter No. 176**

**TO: All Child Care Manual Holders**

**FROM: Kara Wente, DCY Director**  
**Matt Damschroder, ODJFS Director**

**SUBJECT: 2024 Early Care and Education Access Grants**

**Background**

An analysis completed by the Bipartisan Policy Center found that an estimated 76,660 Ohio children are unable to access potentially needed early care and education due to a gap in availability of early care and education slots throughout the state. The Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) and Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) have allocated \$85 million dollars of discretionary funding from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) for five competitive grant opportunities to improve access to early care and education for Ohio children.

Programs must be compliant with all applicable Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) and Ohio Revised Code (ORC) requirements which include Child Care and Development Block Grant Funds health and safety requirements and the completion of comprehensive background checks.

**What is a competitive grant?**

Competitive grants are an opportunity for application. Competitive grants are not entitlements and not every application will be approved for funding. Each early care and education access grant application will be scored; with the highest scores receiving funding.

Licensed early care and education programs can increase access to services by starting new programs, expanding current capacity or making repairs to their existing programs. Programs may also use access grant funds to focus on building capacity and evidence-based supports for children with special needs and evidence-based training for staff and families to best serve children with special needs.

**What are the five competitive early care and education access grants and which program types are eligible to apply?**

The five early care and education access grant opportunities are: 1) New Center Start-Up Grant; 2) Program Expansion Grant; 3) Program Repairs Grant; 4) Family Child Care Type B to Type A Grant; and 5) Increase Capacity for Children with Special Needs. While programs may apply



for one or all access grant opportunities that applies to their program type, only one grant opportunity may be awarded per license number.

Grant Type	New Center	Program Expansion	Program Repairs	Family Child Care Type B to Type A	Increase Capacity for Children with Special Needs
Center	X	X	X		X
FCC Type A	X	X	X		
FCC Type B	X	X	X	X	
School/Preschool	X	X	X		X
School-Age	X	X	X		

Eligible provider types are listed with each access grant outlined below. Generally, DCY licensed early care and education centers, schools/preschools and family child care (FCC) type A and type B home providers are eligible to apply. Child day camps and in-home aides (IHA) are not eligible for participation in any of these access grants.

**Are there any restrictions on expenses for these access grants?**

Yes, expenses for construction or major renovations (building a program or constructing a new room) are not permitted. 45 CFR 98.2 defines “major renovation” to mean “(1) structural changes to the foundation, roof, floor, exterior or load-bearing walls of a facility, or the extension of a facility to increase its floor area; or (2) extensive alteration of a facility such as to significantly change its function and purpose, even if such renovation does not include any structural change.” In other words, funds may be spent on renovations such as painting, carpeting, and other activities that neither add to the permanent value of the property nor significantly alter the function or purpose of the facility.

**New Center Start-Up Grant**

Estimated Number of Grants: 150

Maximum Amount Program Can Request: \$500,000 per program

Timeframe: The current program must apply to DCY for their new center license by August 31, 2024. Proof of license application is required as part of reconciliation. If new center license application is not made by August 31, 2024, funding must be returned.

Eligible Providers: Centers, Schools/Preschools, School-Age and FCC Providers (if they intend to open a new early care and education center)



Eligible providers who qualify may use these funds related to opening a new center by paying:

- Mortgage or rent expenses- including rent, mortgage, utilities, insurance.
- Salary or benefits expenses- Paying personnel costs; including onboarding new staff, maintaining/increasing wages or benefits such as health, dental, vision, paid sick leave or family leave, retirement contributions.
- Classroom supplies expenses- including consumable materials and equipment for classroom use.

### **Program Expansion Grant**

Estimated Number of Grants: 50 (Centers, Schools/Preschools, School-Age) and 25 (FCC)

Maximum Amount Program Can Request: \$50,000 per Center and \$5,000 per FCC provider

Eligible Providers: Centers, Schools/Preschools, School-Age and FCC Providers

Eligible providers who qualify may use access grant funds for:

- Expanding the number of children served or serving new age groups or serving more children with special needs. Examples of program expansion include but are not limited to: adding more children to the program capacity; adding or expanding care groups like infant/toddler, school-age, or care for children with special needs; or expanding hours of operation to include non-traditional hours (weekdays 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. or between 12:00 a.m. Saturday to 6:00 a.m. Monday).
- Salary or benefits expenses- Paying personnel costs; including adding new staff or work shifts, maintaining/increasing wages or benefits such as health, dental, vision, paid sick leave or family leave, retirement contributions.
- Classroom supplies expenses- including consumable materials and equipment for classroom use.

### **Program Repairs Grant**

Estimated Number of Grants: 50 (Centers, Schools/Preschools, School-Age) and 25 (FCC)

Maximum Amount Program Can Request: \$100,000 per Center and \$5,000 per FCC provider

Eligible Providers: Centers, Schools/Preschools, School-Age and FCC Providers

Eligible providers who qualify may use access grant funds for making repairs to their facilities: Conducting facility maintenance, renovations, including those that make early care and education programs inclusive and accessible for children and families with disabilities. For example: lead abatement, mold remediation, ADA compliance, parking lot, playground, roof or plumbing repairs.



### **Type B to Type A Grant**

Estimated Number of Grants: 10

Maximum Amount Program Can Request: \$25,000 per FCC provider

Timeframe: The type B provider must apply to DCY for their new type A license by August 31, 2024. Proof of licensing application is required as part of reconciliation. If new type A license application is not made by August 31, 2024, funding must be returned.

Eligible Provider: Type B Family Child Care Home Providers

Eligible providers who qualify may use access grant funds to convert to a type A program by paying for items listed below. *(Note: FCC providers applying for this grant will not be awarded FCC Expansion or FCC Repairs Access Grants.)*

- Mortgage or rent expenses- Paying ongoing costs including rent, mortgage, utilities, insurance.
- Salary or benefits expenses - Paying personnel costs; including adding new staff or work shifts, maintaining/increasing wages or benefits such as health, dental, vision, paid sick leave or family leave, retirement contributions.
- Classroom supplies expenses- including consumable materials and equipment for classroom use.

### **Increase Capacity for Children with Special Needs Grant**

Estimated Number of Grants: 20

Maximum Amount Program Can Request: \$100,000 per program

Eligible Providers: Centers and Schools/Preschools

Eligible providers who qualify may use access grant funds to focus on:

- Capacity building and providing evidence-based support for children with special needs.
- Evidence-based training for staff and families to best serve children with special needs.

### **Who is eligible to apply for competitive early care and education access grants?**

Below are the applicant qualifications and access grant award criteria. Applicants from all Ohio counties may apply. There is no county requirement associated with this access grant opportunity. Applicants may use the checklist below to determine whether they qualify and to prepare for the online application process:



Check Box	Applicant Qualifications and Access Grant Criteria
	Licensed by DCY and in "Continuous" license status as verified in in the Ohio Child Licensing and Quality System (OCLQS).
	In "Open" program status as verified in OCLQS and serving children. A temporarily closed program can apply for these access grants to reopen the temporarily closed program.
	License is in good standing as of the date of application. Programs not in good standing include: 1) Programs in enforcement during the qualification period. 2) Programs who have had their Provider Agreement for Publicly Funded Child Care terminated, within the five years prior to this application, due to misuse of funds. If a program is in good standing at the time of application but is later determined not in good standing prior to the funds being awarded, the funds may not be awarded.
	In agreement with access grant terms by certifying that the early care and education program will, for the duration of the grant, use funds only for the purposes indicated for each of the access grant types.

**Who is not eligible to apply for competitive early care and education access grants?**

The following are not eligible for early care and education access grants at this time:

- Child day camps and IHA.
- In "Provisional" license status as verified in OCLQS.
- Out-of-state providers.
- Programs that have not properly reconciled previous ARPA stabilization grant funds.
- 2023 Infant and Toddler Start-Up Grant recipients are not eligible to receive the Program Expansion Grant.

**How do programs apply for the competitive early care and education access grants?**

The early care and education access grant application will be found in the Ohio Professional Registry (OPR). Guidance and requirements are available on the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association’s (OCCRRA) website at [www.occrra.org](http://www.occrra.org). Eligible providers must submit an application through the OPR, via a program’s organization dashboard at <https://registry.occrra.org/>.

All applications submitted during the application period are eligible for review in this competitive grant process. Points will be assigned to each application based on established criteria including, but not limited to, children per slot with both parents in the workforce, evening care, weekend care, infant care, toddler care, highly rated, anticipated children served, and Inclusive Child Care Program (ICCP) designations obtained as of April 5, 2024. There are no



additional points awarded for submitting earlier in the process. **The goal is to have a complete and well-thought-out application.**

Programs that apply must select at least one, some, or all of the access grants; however, funds cannot be used toward an expense previously paid for with any ARPA stabilization grant funding. When considering the amount to apply for, programs should determine the amount of expenses they will have in the grant expense period.

The table below is a summary of the early care and education access grant timeline.

Application Period	Award Notification	Expense Period	Reconciliation Due
April 12, 2024 at 2 p.m. through April 26, 2024 at 5 p.m.	May 3, 2024	July 1, 2023 through August 31, 2024	August 31, 2024

**What is the process for awarding these competitive grants?**

Early care and education access grant awards will be based on allocations determined by the budget in each grant category starting with the applicant with the highest points, until funding is exhausted. If the remaining funding is not enough for the next request, OCCRRA may reach out and offer a partial award or combine the remaining funds to complete a full award.

**How will awarded programs receive payment?**

Grant notification can be viewed by a status change in the organization dashboard of the OPR. These statuses will be available on May 3, 2024. Payments will be processed approximately four weeks after the award notification date.

**What are the grant expense reconciliation requirements?**

Programs are required to complete a reconciliation for each early care and education access grant. Reconciliations must be submitted no later than August 31, 2024.

Reconciliations will be located in the program’s organization dashboard in the OPR. Programs should retain receipts, invoices and documentation for expenses used toward these grants. Reconciliation guidance will be located at [www.occrra.org](http://www.occrra.org). Should a program receive but not be able to spend all of the funds provided, funds should be returned to OCCRRA.

**Questions**

Please contact OCCRRA with questions regarding the application and process at [support@occrra.org](mailto:support@occrra.org) or 614-396-5959.