



Grow Your Own Early Childhood and Family Educators Grants – State Funds FY 25 – Round 2

Instructions Section

TO: Minnesota-licensed family child care or licensed center-based child care programs, school district or charter school early learning programs, Head Start programs, institutions of higher education, and other community partnership nongovernmental organizations

FROM: Nikki Kovan, Early Learning Services

ACTION: Signed and submitted applications must be received by (not postmarked by): October 18, 2024 at 5 p.m. Central Time.

Purpose and Outcome of the Grant Opportunity

The Minnesota Department of Education makes this funding available to award grants for Grow Your Own Early Childhood and Family Educator programs in order to develop an early childhood education workforce that more closely reflects the state's increasingly diverse student population and ensures all students have equitable access to high-quality early educators. Eligible Minnesota-licensed family child care or licensed center-based child care programs, school district or charter school early learning programs, Head Start programs, institutions of higher education, and other community partnership nongovernmental organizations (referred to collectively in this application as “early childhood programs”) may apply for a grant to host, build, or expand an early childhood educator preparation program that leads to an individual earning the credential or degree needed to enter or advance in the early childhood education workforce.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants include Minnesota-licensed family child care or licensed center-based child care programs, school district or charter school early learning programs, Head Start programs, institutions of higher education, and other community partnership nongovernmental organizations that serve participants/families primarily from Minnesota.

Funding Available

Funding is made available through [Laws of Minnesota 2023, chapter 54, section 6](#).

This grant opportunity estimates that \$2,325,000 is available to fund 15-20 grants during Fiscal Year 2025. To the extent possible the state will award equal grants between greater Minnesota and the metro. To the extent possible the state will make considerations for distributing funds between a variety of eligible programs based on program/organization type (e.g. child care programs, Head Starts, higher ed, schools, community programs.)

The State reserves the right to offer grant amounts that differ than the applicant's request or the maximum identified above.

Grant Period

The term of the initial grant period is **anticipated** to begin on January 1, 2025. Applicants will have the option to choose a grant end date based on the type(s) of credentials or degrees they plan to support. End date options for applicants include: June 30, 2025; June 30, 2026; June 30, 2027; or June 30, 2028

State's Right to Cancel

This grant opportunity does not obligate the State to award a contract and the State reserves the right to cancel the solicitation if it is considered to be in its best interest due to lack of funding, agency priorities or other considerations.

General Information Section

Project Information and Background

In Minnesota, there is a shortage of early childhood and family educators. High quality early childhood programs rely on employing educators who meet the specific knowledge and competencies needed for working with young children. Some regions of the state are experiencing a severe lack of early childhood program access, where parents are unable to find any care/education programs for their children in an area near their homes or work places.

Grow Your Own (GYO) for Early Childhood and Family Educators (ECE) programs are partnerships between early educator preparation/professional development programs, early care and education programs, and community organizations that recruit and prepare local community members (e.g. parents, classroom assistants, and high school students) to enter the early education profession and provide early care and education services in their communities. Some GYO ECE programs assist people who are interested in entering or advancing in the early

education profession by providing stipends, scholarships, and unique student teaching or field placement experiences.

Sample Activities That Align With Purpose of Funding

- Providing scholarships or stipends to participants pursuing early childhood degrees and credentials, such as a Birth to Third Grade teacher license, Early Childhood Special Education teacher license, Parent Education teacher license from a PELSB-approved teacher preparation program, a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, an associate's degree in early childhood education or child development, or a Child Development Associate (CDA) or other early childhood credential.
- Providing programming and support for teacher candidates to help them be successful in the licensure program, degree program, or the credential program.

Specific Program Expectations

Grantees must meet the following expectations:

- Complete an annual report, as designed by MDE staff, on the program participation, activities and effectiveness.
- Participate in a quarterly check-in with MDE staff on program development, progress, and needs.
- Share effective practices among other grantees and with MDE for broader distribution.
- Follow-through on all requirements for fiscal reporting.

General Expectations of Grantees

Submit financial reporting forms and progress reports by the dates indicated in the Official Grant Award Notification.

Maintain a ledger to track the grant budget expenditures and payment reimbursements, plus documentation that supports your budget line item expenses.

If you are a Minnesota public school district or charter school, you must use the Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS) and any other financial reporting forms provided by the department.

If subcontracting is an allowable expenditure in your budget, follow applicable state and federal procurement laws and select responsible vendors who are not debarred or suspended, not engaged in unlawful practices and who are qualified.

Prior to executing the award document and if the grant award is over \$25,000, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will need to conduct a pre-award risk assessment to consider the applicant's financial capacity.

For a grant award over \$50,000, we are required to monitor your grant once during the grant period. If your grant amount is over \$250,000, we are required to monitor your grant annually.

Resources for Applicants

UFARS Reporting

Minnesota school districts and charter schools must report their expenditures under the guidelines in the [Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting System](#).

Capital Assets

[Read the Capital Assets Guide](#).

State Travel Plan

[Commissioner's Travel Reimbursement Plan](#).

State Grant Management Policies

[The Minnesota Office of Grant Management Policies](#).

Grant Application Components

Application Coversheet

The coversheet must include:

1. An original signature from the identified official with authority (IOwA) to sign on behalf of the applicant. If a fiscal agent is representing another organization, both the fiscal agent applicant and a representative of the organization represented must sign. The fiscal agent and the organization represented should have a letter of agreement on file.
2. Contact information for the agency, agency head, the program contact and the accounting or business office manager.

You must provide your organizations complete ZIP code. Refer to the [United States Postal Service](#) website for information to look up the ZIP code.

Required Identification Numbers

It is likely your organization already has these numbers; check with your business office.

1. Minnesota Statewide Integrated Financial Tool System (SWIFT) Supplier ID (*required for all applicants*).
 - If you are a fiscal agent applicant, the SWIFT Supplier ID included must be for the fiscal agent who will be receiving and administering the grant funds.
 - Get a [SWIFT Supplier ID](https://mn.gov/mmb/accounting/swift/vendor-resources/) (<https://mn.gov/mmb/accounting/swift/vendor-resources/>).
2. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

- All organizations applying for federal funding must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). A UEI is a unique twelve-character ID number that is used to track how the federal grant is allocated. This number is replacing the Data Universal Numbering System - DUNS Number.
 - Register for or verify a [UEI number](https://sam.gov/content/home) (<https://sam.gov/content/home>).
3. MDE Organization Site Number (required for school districts and charter schools. Not required for private, nonprofit, or nongovernmental).
- Obtain an [MDE organization number](https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/datasub/SiteVerif/) (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/datasub/SiteVerif/>).

Assurances – Standard and Program-Specific

When you sign the application, you certify that you have read the application and that you will comply with the approved application, the assurances here and in the Official Grant Award Notification (OGAN), and all other applicable federal regulations, state statutes, and local policies.

Application Narrative Components and Budget

In the application section, develop your narrative responses to the following components. Label each narrative component with a header in the application. Total points possible is 100.

Organization and Program Summary – 10 Points Possible

This component of the application should briefly describe your organization and the organization’s role in supporting the early childhood workforce. Also describe the organization’s plan for the project as it aligns with the purpose of this funding. The summary should include the following:

- The history and structure of the organization and the role it has for supporting early childhood educators. For example, explain if your organization is a privately-owned child care center that directly employs early childhood educators, if your organization is a two-year Institute of higher education that provides instruction to early childhood educators, if your organization is a regional community action organization that provides job placement services and training to early childhood educators, etc.
- Which Economic Development Region(s) your organization and/or your organization partners are primarily supporting and how that relates to the purpose of this funding.
- An overview of your Grow Your Own Early Childhood and Family Educator Program Plan, explaining how participants will be supported (e.g., stipends, scholarships, other supports, etc.).
- How does your plan support the goal of a “Grow Your Own” program that is supporting participants from within the program or community it serves? Are you partnering with other organizations to meet this goal, and if so, with which organizations?
- An estimate of the number of participants your organization is hoping to support and what the credentials, degrees, or training the participants are anticipated to achieve.
- A timeline for proposed grant-funded activities that reflects the grant period you are requesting. Refer to the instruction document regarding options for the grant period. Grantees will be able to apply for additional funding, if needed, during subsequent grant cycles.

Statement of Need – 25 Points Possible

Describe the need for this project, including information about the targeted group(s) who will benefit from the project. Provide data that supports how the need was determined. What are you currently doing to support the development of early childhood educators and how will this grant help you develop, expand, or enhance your current efforts?

Identify which, if any of the following barriers you or your partner organization currently experience and how the funding will help overcome the barriers.

- Low number of early childhood care and education programs in community (e.g., closest program is 30+ miles away, high number of programs closed or set to close, too few licensed childcare slots compared to children in the community)
- Programs unable to enroll children to capacity due to staff shortage
- Number of teachers on a variance to teach in their position and/or a number of assistant teachers or other staff on a variance for their position
- Teachers and staff have limited breaktime or planning time due to staffing needs with limited staff able to serve as qualified teachers in classrooms to cover for breaks and planning time

Describe any other barriers that present challenges and support the need for this type of grant funding and how the funding will help overcome the barriers.

Diversity and Equity – 20 Points Possible

Describe your organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Include the following:

- Identification of underserved populations.
- Describe how this program will be used to bring equity to the families and community you serve.
- Describe how you plan to recruit and prepare local community members (e.g., parents, para-educators, non-certified staff, high school students) from diverse backgrounds.

Capacity of the Applicant Agency – 10 Points Possible

Describe your organization's capacity for and commitment to administering the project successfully. Identify the following:

- The primary project staff (employees) funded with the grant and their role in this project.
- All non-grant-funded staff (staff who may contribute to the project but who will not be paid by the grant funds) and what their contributing role is in the project.
- Your intent to subcontract with outside professionals using the grant funds, the services to be performed, and the qualifications expected of the subcontractors. How will you document the selection process used and follow applicable procurement practices?
- What methods will you use to ensure your approaches are inclusive and consider the needs of the diverse populations targeted?

- External partners (not paid subcontractors) that may contribute to the project; identify their contribution. You may include memoranda of understanding or other documentation from project partners with your application materials in order to demonstrate partnership commitments.

Community and/or Family Engagement and Outreach – 5 Points Possible

If community organization members and/or families are directly involved in the initiative or activities, describe the following:

- Why their involvement is important to this initiative.
- Your communication and outreach strategies and methods to families or community members and how you will ensure your communications methods are inclusive and culturally appropriate.

Project Goals, Activities, Strategies, Outcomes, and Estimated Timelines – 20 Points Possible

Outline your goals and the activities and strategies that you will use to achieve the expected outcomes of the grant. Describe how these goals, activities and strategies are aligned with the purpose of this grant opportunity for the population(s) expected to benefit from the project.

Refer to the sample activities identified in the Grow Your Own Early Childhood and Family Educator Grants Instruction Document. Include information on recruitment, ongoing supports, evaluation, and other project goals and activities that will help ensure the success of the program.

Copy and paste the prompts below as needed for multiple goals and/or activities. Make sure your goals and activities are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound (SMART). Provide estimated timelines for the completion of each goal.

Goal 1:

Activity 1:

Expected Outcome and Benefiting Party:

Person Responsible for Activity:

Estimated Timeline:

Evaluation Plan – 5 Points Possible

The State is committed to funding services that produce a measurable result, outcome and/or product for the population identified in your application and the people of Minnesota. Evaluations help demonstrate a project's effectiveness and inform future decision making. Evaluations use quantitative data, qualitative data, and sometimes, interviews.

Your evaluation plan should:

- Pose questions for the evaluation to answer.
- Describe a process and method(s) for data collection.
- Describe who will conduct the evaluation(s) (staff or subcontractors).

Excel Budget with Descriptions – 5 Points Possible

In the budget form, complete each tab corresponding to the fiscal years for which you request funding. Total points possible is 5 for the budget.

Leave tabs blank for any fiscal years that extend beyond your requested end date on the cover sheet. Detail all necessary and reasonable expenditures anticipated during the project period that align with the project goals and activities, using the budget codes available.

As indicated in [Laws of Minnesota 2023, chapter 54, section 6](#), **grant recipients must use at least 80 percent of grant money for student stipends, tuition scholarships, or unique student teaching or field placement experiences.**

Provide the budget narrative in the Excel budget form, ensuring the following:

- There is sufficient narrative description for each budget line item entry.
- Reviewers are able to determine if the budget aligns with the project activities and primary purpose of the funding.
- The budget estimates for employee and proposed contractor services appear to correspond with reasonable approximations of the activities to be performed.
- The budget planned expenses appear necessary and reasonable for the success and purpose of the project.

Necessary means it is important to the success of the project. Reasonable means you are paying fair market price for the item or services.

Informational Webinar

A webinar will be available for interested applicants to join on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, from 4-5 p.m. The purpose of this webinar will be for new or returning applicants to hear an overview of the funding. [Join the Zoom call at 4 p.m. on September 18.](#)

Applicant Questions

The following program representative is available to provide additional information or answer questions.

Kelly Kazeck, Early Childhood Workforce Collaboration Specialist
kelly.kazeck@state.mn.us

Questions must be emailed to the program contact by September 27, 2024. A question and answer document will be published on the grant opportunity site after October 2, 2024. The document will be published on the grant announcement page.

Questions related to the grant opportunity may be answered **only** by MDE's program representative identified above or their successor. Information received from an unauthorized source is not binding and could result in misinformation.

Application Signature and Submission Instructions

Electronic Signature

We prefer that you sign the application with the Adobe Digital signature. Once the application is complete and ready to be signed by the IOwA, follow these instructions.

New digital signature

1. Right click on the signature box
2. Select Configure Digital ID
3. Choose a new Digital ID and Save to File
4. Enter the appropriate information, including your name, agency, and email information, click continue
5. Enter a password and click save
6. Save completed document to prepare it to be sent to MDE.

Existing digital signature

1. Right click on the area of the signature
2. Choose Sign Document
3. In the new window, choose the correct Digital ID file and press continue
4. Review the information to insure it is correct, enter your password and click continue
5. Save completed document to prepare it to be sent to MDE.

Note: If you change any information in the application after the signature is applied, you will have to have the application signed again.

Submission Instructions

Applications must be received by October 18, 2024, at 5 p.m. Central Time to be considered. Late applications will not be accepted.

Include one copy of the signed application coversheet, assurances, and application narrative in one document (in PDF format) and one copy of the completed budget (in Excel format) to mde.compgrants@state.mn.us with the subject line **GYO Early Childhood Educators Grant, then the name of your organization**. You should title all documents with the name of your organization, then the name of the document. Example: if ABC Public Schools were to submit an application, then the names of the submitted documents should be **ABC Public Schools Application** and **ABC Public Schools Budget**.

We will not accept applications via fax, through the SERVS system, or saved as Google docs.

Costs associated with preparing the application must be borne by the applicant. The burden of proof of timely submission is on the applicant.

Application Screening and Review

Phase 1: Screening

Applications that meet the following criteria will be forwarded for further consideration and review.

1. Received by (not postmarked by) the due date and time.
2. Application includes a narrative and budget.

Phase 2: Application Components Scored

Applications will be reviewed by an equal number of reviewers. Reviewers will apply a score to each component below. Total points possible for this initiative are 100.

- Organization and Program Summary – 10 points
- Statement of Need – 25 points
- Diversity and Equity – 20 points
- Capacity of Applicant – 10 points
- Community Member and/or Family Engagement and Outreach – 5 points
- Goals, Activities, Outcomes and Estimated Timelines – 20 points
- Evaluation – 5 points
- Excel Budget with Descriptions – 5 points

Grant Services may contact reviewers to obtain clarification of their feedback, during this phase, after the grant review is complete. This final score will be determined by a combination of the average score of all reviewers involved, with the addition of any priority points as assigned by MDE.

Phase 3: Review of Outcomes and Notifications to Applicants

Grant Services will present agency program staff and management the results from the first two phases of this review. As a standard practice, those applications with the largest score are offered grant awards. Programs may offer grant award amounts that differ than the applicant's grant request or the maximum grant amount identified by the department. During this phase or the next, agency program staff or grant services staff may contact you to obtain clarification for one or more sections of your application. All funding decisions made by MDE are final.

Phase 4: Pre-Award Risk Assessment and Review of Prior Performance

After notifying the applicants of our decisions, but before executing of the OGAN, and if awards exceed \$25,000, MDE will conduct a pre-award risk assessment on the financial capacity of our selected grantees as well as review prior performance in prior grants administered by MDE and/or any other state agency. Further information, such as financial audits, may be requested at this time.

Phase 5: Execution of OGAN or Other Grant Documentation

After the funds are awarded, along with the pre-award risk assessment, additional clarifications and negotiations, your grants specialist will draft an OGAN or other grant documentation to be encumbered and signed by MDE. It is the policy of MDE to reimburse you for any grant-related expenses only after the OGAN or other grant documentation is complete. If selected for a grant and you begin work on the grant prior to the OGAN or other grant documentation's full execution, those expenses will be your sole responsibility to pay. MDE will not reimburse you for those expenses.

Appeals

If we disapprove your application under applicable state statute or federal programs, you may submit an appeal to the State with regard to the disapproval by filing a notice and stating the state or federal statutes violated. Refer to Title 34 CFR 76.401, for more information. Please remember that this is an appeal of the process; funding decision are not subject to appeal.

You should contact the Grant Coordinator at mde.compgrants@state.mn.us if you have questions about the process or wish to file an appeal.

Delays

The following may result in a delay of preparation of any grant awards.

- Clarifications to the budget or work plan
- Missing or invalid UEI number
- Missing ZIP code
- Invalid state Vendor ID Number
- Pre-Award Risk Assessment Review

The agency anticipates the review to be completed by December 2024. Applicants are expected to be notified within two weeks after the review has been completed. Review feedback is considered public, but not until the competitive grant process is complete, which is upon execution of the OGAN.

Minnesota Department of Education

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This document can be made available in alternative formats by calling (651) 582-8651. Persons with a hearing or speech disability may contact the Minnesota Relay Service by dialing 711 or (800) 627-3529.

The State of Minnesota is an Equal Opportunity Employer