



# Child Care Services Start-Up Grant Application Guide

Child Care Services Start-Up Grants assist child care providers and programs who are soon-to-be licensed or have been licensed for less than six months with purchasing items or making improvements that are required by licensing or the Fire Marshall.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. Who can apply for Start-Up Grants?

Any program that is actively providing early learning services to children ranging in age from birth to school-age and was licensed for the first time within the past 6 months OR

- Is soon-to-be licensed with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) or Tribal Government and has been visited by a licensor OR
- Is a new program (less than 6 months in operation) that is licensed or is licensed-exempt OR
- Is an existing program that is expanding to take more children

If licensed by DHS, a program must have no current negative actions. Licensing violation such as a temporary immediate suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment determination where the facility was found responsible will prevent the issuance of a grant and/or will cause withdrawal of a grant.

You may receive only one Start-Up Grant. A program cannot receive both a Start-Up Grant and a Regional Grant in the same fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).

### 2. How much money can my program apply for?

The limit for Start-Up Grants is \$2,000 for Family Child Care programs and \$3,000 for Child Care Centers.

### 3. What items can my program apply for?

Programs may apply for funds to support the start-up of child care and school-age care services through the categories listed in this guide. Please see pages 4-8 of this document for examples of eligible items.

These grants can be used to cover the cost of materials for outdoor play area fencing or other minor construction projects as required by licensing to ensure child safety or meet other program standards. All materials must be new and must be purchased from a retail store, not a private party. In the event that a child care program wishes to have the cost of assembly and/or installation covered by a grant, the labor must be performed by a contractor following applicable state and local laws and regulations regarding registration and licensure. See

<https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/residential-contractors-remodelers-roofers> for more information.

These grants can be used for technology and software to create, enhance, and maintain business management systems. This includes costs associated with accessing the internet, such as installation or equipment, and website costs for start-up, maintenance, or ongoing subscription fees.

Eligible items that are for 100% business use will be funded at 100%. Items that are shared with a household or organization (such as a church) will be funded at 50%.

#### 4. What items are not eligible?

Due to a federal rule, Start-Up Grants may not be used for the following:

**Major Construction or Renovations:** Major renovation means 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 extensive alteration of a facility such as to significantly change its function and purpose, even if such renovation does not include any structural change. Funds may be expended for minor remodeling of the designated child care space and for upgrading the designated child care space to assure that providers meet state and local child care standards, including applicable health and safety requirements.

**Religious-based Curricula, Activities, Materials, or Counseling:** Child care programs are allowed to purchase and/or use religious-based curricula or items in their program if they choose, but they must use their own funds; they cannot use Child Care Services Grants.

**Expendable Supplies:** Expendable supplies (diapers, wipes, soap, paper products), except as it pertains to Personal Protective Equipment (cleaning products, hand sanitizer, masks) used for recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Health to keep children and staff safe during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**Office supplies that are not directly used for early childhood quality improvement activities:** Ink and paper used to print invoices for families would not be an allowed use of grants. Ink and paper used to print curriculum, worksheets, or a newsletter for families in the program would be allowed.

One-time field trips for children

Child care tuition (scholarships)

Items prohibited by licensing

All materials must be new and must be purchased from a retail store, not a private party.

CCDF federal restrictions can be reviewed at <https://ccdf-fundamentals.icfcloud.com/restrictions>

In addition, grants are not allowed to be spent on items considered to be part of the cost of doing business. This includes the following items:

- Accounting and legal fees
- Advertising
- Banking service charges
- Cleaning
- Food
- Insurance
- Licenses
- Taxes
- Rent or mortgage
- Transportation
- Utilities

**5. If my program receives a grant, what requirements do I have to meet?**

Your program will need to sign a Participation Agreement that details the requirements. Please read the agreement carefully before signing.

**6. If my program receives a grant, how will my program receive the money?**

All grants are paid on a reimbursement basis and after all requirements are completed.

**7. When is this grant available?**

It is available on an ongoing basis, subject to available funds.

**8. How does my program apply for this grant?**

Please contact your local Child Care Aware of Minnesota Grants Administrator for additional guidance about this grant funding. You must fill out the application form and mail it to the address listed at the end of this document.

## GRANT SPENDING CATEGORIES

The following charts give suggestions for items that you may want to purchase with your grant. This is not an all-inclusive list, but it will help you identify which spending category to use when describing your proposed purchases on the budget pages of the application.

<b>Health and Well-Being</b>			
<b>Children do better when early care and education programs are safe and healthy, provide nutritious meals and snacks, and offer many opportunities for active play. This foundation allows children to take full advantage of learning opportunities.</b>			
<b>Household alarms and detectors</b>		<b>Transportation safety</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smoke alarms</li> <li>Carbon monoxide alarms</li> <li>Radon detectors</li> <li>Lead content detectors (for toys and other child items which could be put in the mouth)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate child restraint systems for the ages of the children in care</li> <li>Safety helmets for children riding bicycles or tricycles</li> <li>Strollers that meet safety specifications</li> </ul>	
<b>Household emergencies</b>		<b>Household safety</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First aid kits</li> <li>Fire extinguishers</li> <li>Choke tubes (for gauging choking potential of small objects)</li> <li>Disaster kits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hand-washing kits and posters</li> <li>Healthy habits posters</li> <li>Food group activities</li> <li>Safety kits and posters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety gates</li> <li>Appliance locks</li> <li>Electrical outlet covers</li> <li>Refrigerator thermometer</li> <li>Hot liquids thermometer</li> <li>Window blind and curtain cord tension or tie-down devices</li> <li>Air purifiers, humidifiers, dehumidifiers</li> <li>Light fixtures containing shielded or shatterproof bulbs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fireplace, heater and wood-burning stove screen covers</li> <li>Closet door latches to prevent a child from being trapped inside a closet</li> <li>Locks for cabinets or locked storage units for medicines and cleaning agents</li> <li>Panic hardware for exterior doors</li> </ul>
<b>Child safety</b>		<b>Facilities and operations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child toothbrushes and individual toothpaste containers</li> <li>Cribs, mattresses that meet safety standards</li> <li>Cots, mats and linens for sleeping</li> <li>Highchairs that meet safety standards</li> <li>Changing tables</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Egress windows</li> <li>Lead-free environment</li> <li>Facility improvements such as repairing steps, installing railing if flagged by licensing.</li> <li>Gates</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Playground safety surfacing</li> <li>Large outdoor umbrella</li> <li>Sandbox covers</li> <li>Infant bucket swings for outdoor playground swing sets</li> <li>Swings with soft or flexible seats</li> <li>Fencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shock-absorbent or loose material such as sand under outdoor climbing equipment</li> <li>Outdoor play equipment that meets safety standards</li> <li>Replacement of wooden barriers that contain creosote or arsenic</li> <li>Guardrails on stairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Antibacterial wall dispensers</li> <li>Secured garbage cans and wastebaskets, hands-free covered waste disposal cans</li> <li>Purchase of safe plastics that do not contain polycarbonates for serving food</li> <li>Consultation with a Child Care Health Consultant in Family Child Care Homes for health, safety, nutrition, infectious disease control and/or advice on the care of a child with special needs</li> <li>Bibs and Eating utensils</li> <li>Special needs items such as positioning equipment, eating utensils, cups and plates, adapted toys</li> </ul>	

## Teaching and Relationships with Children

Children do better when early care and education teachers and providers are caring and engaging, have quality learning environments, use a research-based curriculum, and support children’s transitions to kindergarten. Teachers and providers make a big difference in children’s lives. These practices help build relationships and give children what they need to learn and grow.

### Aligned Curricula

These tools align with the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs) and meet Parent Aware curriculum requirements: [ParentAware.org/programs/full-rating-resources/](https://parentaware.org/programs/full-rating-resources/)

<b>Room equipment and furniture</b>		<b>Active Play</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tables</li> <li>• Chairs</li> <li>• Coat, cubby units</li> <li>• Storage units</li> <li>• Centers (book, listening, writing)</li> <li>• Computer table</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cots or mats</li> <li>• Classroom activity carpets</li> <li>• Activity mats and gyms</li> <li>• Classroom displays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bicycles, Tricycles,</li> <li>• Wagons</li> <li>• Scooters, scooter boards</li> <li>• Balance beams</li> <li>• Tumbling mats</li> <li>• Play tunnels or hoops</li> <li>• Basketball hoops, balls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground equipment (climbers, swing sets, slides)</li> <li>• Large unit blocks</li> <li>• Rocking boats</li> <li>• Parachutes</li> <li>• Large motor games (such as bean bag, ring toss)</li> </ul>
<b>Manipulatives</b>		<b>Science and technology</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials that link, construction sets</li> <li>• Puzzles</li> <li>• Beads, lacing sets</li> <li>• Pegs and pegboards</li> <li>• Pre-writing stencils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pounding benches</li> <li>• Tools and tool benches</li> <li>• Block play materials</li> <li>• Small design blocks</li> <li>• Sensory materials</li> <li>• Manual dexterity vests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration kits</li> <li>• Nature activities and materials</li> <li>• Magnifying glasses, microscopes</li> <li>• Weather charts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magnets</li> <li>• Prisms</li> <li>• Science kits</li> <li>• Computers, tablets</li> <li>• Educational software</li> <li>• Minerals/rocks</li> </ul>
<b>Social Concepts</b>		<b>Cognitive Development and Perception</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costumes</li> <li>• Play masks</li> <li>• Dramatic play equipment</li> <li>• Dolls, doll houses and furniture</li> <li>• Other play buildings (e.g., barn, firehouse, school, etc.)</li> <li>• Animal collections</li> <li>• Puppets</li> <li>• Plush animals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miscellaneous such as purses, cameras, phones</li> <li>• Multicultural games, activity kits, craft kits and books</li> <li>• Bilingual language materials</li> <li>• Youth cookbooks</li> <li>• Cooking utensils, pots, pans, and food items</li> <li>• Woodworking materials</li> <li>• Posters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age-appropriate books</li> <li>• Storytelling kits and materials</li> <li>• Materials that promote phonological awareness.</li> <li>• Materials that promote print awareness</li> <li>• Materials that promote alphabet awareness.</li> <li>• Early language concept activities such as object matching, sorting</li> <li>• Infant and toddler toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geometric forms and boards</li> <li>• Patterning activities and materials</li> <li>• Math awareness materials</li> <li>• Tactile numbers and tracing activities</li> <li>• Measurement kits</li> <li>• Clocks and time activities and materials</li> <li>• Calculators, money</li> <li>• Discovery boxes</li> </ul>
<b>Sensory</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music, Headphones, rhythm instruments</li> <li>• Art supplies including stencils and sponges</li> <li>• Sand and water tables and toys</li> <li>• Feely boxes</li> <li>• Sensory balls</li> <li>• Sight and sound tubes</li> </ul>			

### Assessment and Planning for Each Individual Child

**Children do better when their teachers and providers know them well, understand their levels of development, and use the information to plan instruction. Assessment information is accurate and fair when it is gathered in a way that includes observation in natural settings, and a child assessment tool that is valid and reliable.**

Purchase of an assessment tool for use in your program. See list of approved assessment tools on the Parent Aware website: [ParentAware.org/programs/full-rating-resources/](https://parentaware.org/programs/full-rating-resources/)

- Camera or video camera for recording classroom activities (Does not include special lenses, etc.)
- Journaling materials
- Laptop, tablet, or desktop computer for on-line assessment

### Professionalism

**Children do better when their teachers and providers have professional preparation that includes higher education coursework, combined with on-going training and support. These qualifications have been found to be consistent predictors of program quality, strong child-adult interactions, quality learning environments, and positive child outcomes.**

#### Learning Opportunities

- Face-to-face training approved on Develop
- Credit-based classes
- Online learning approved on Develop
- Professional organization conferences approved on Develop
- CDA
- Early childhood conferences
- Fee-for-service mentoring, coaching, and/or consultation
- Costs of supporting a T.E.A.C.H. recipient

#### Professional Resources

- Textbooks, subscriptions to education and professional journals
- Child care association fees
- Professional texts
- Laptop or tablet for taking online courses

### Relationships with Families

**Children do better when families are engaged in their children's education and development. Building two-way relationships with families helps strengthen a sense of belonging among all children in the program as they experience respect and support for their home cultures and languages.**

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face-to-face training approved on Develop about communicating with families</li> <li>• Technology related to communicating with families (text programs, etc.)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulletin boards</li> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Family events</li> <li>• Parent conferences</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## Requirements (Program Materials Required by Licensing)

These items may be required by licensing. You should consider purchasing these items if you don't already have them in your program or if they are in poor repair.

<b>Room Equipment and Furniture</b>		<b>Active Play</b>	
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## APPLYING FOR A START-UP GRANT

**Training Requirement:** Participate in 12 hours of training, approved by Achieve, which can be found on Develop ([www.developtoolmn.org](http://www.developtoolmn.org)). All required training must be completed before receiving reimbursement. The cost of participating in this required training is your responsibility. However, you may choose to include the cost of the required training as part of the grant application by applying for dollars within the Professional Development category.

**Participation Agreement:** Your program will need to sign a Participation Agreement that details all requirements. The agreement lays out the responsibilities of programs receiving grants. Please read the agreement carefully before signing.

**Two-Year Requirement:** If you are awarded a grant, your program will be required to provide active licensed or license-exempt child care services in Minnesota for a minimum of two years from the date of your award letter. If for any reason your program ceases to provide active child care services within the required timeframe, you will be required to repay grant dollars on a prorated basis.

**Reimbursement Timeline:** All documents required for requesting reimbursement must be submitted by the date indicated on your award letter for Grant Administrator review. Grant Administrators have the right to:

- Ask for clarification (or pictures) of any grant item before approving AND
- Refuse reimbursement for any purchase that doesn't match the original request or intended purpose

**Expenditures:** Be specific on your expenditure pages. Only items that were approved on your application will be reimbursed. If any substitution needs to occur, this **must** be approved by your local Grant Administrator, prior to making the purchase. A budget change can only occur once in a grant cycle.

**Grant Payment Information:** All Start-Up Grants are paid on a reimbursement basis after all requirements are completed.

**Grant Application Review Process:** Once you submit application, it will be reviewed by a review committee. Each application is reviewed by three review committee members and a scorecard is used to rate the applications. Funding is awarded to the highest scoring applications. A denial or award letter will be sent to you via email or U.S mail.

**Before Applying:** below is a list of steps to complete prior to completing your application.

- Create a Develop Membership ID (Directions can be found at [www.developtoolmn.org](http://www.developtoolmn.org)).
- Link your Develop Membership ID with your program's Organization ID and list yourself as an employee.
- Please contact your local Grant Administer with questions or concerns.



## SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

Fill out your application form completely in ink. Your application should be neat and easy to read and stapled together in order. Do not submit grant applications in folders or binders, professionally bound or store-bought.

1. Send in one complete packet, including the application with all required attachments stapled to it.
2. Keep one copy of the completed application form and all required attachments for your records. You will need to refer back to your application if you are awarded a grant.
3. Mail or email the original completed application packet to:

Think Small  
Attn: Christine Devitt  
10 Yorkton Ct  
Little Canada, MN 55117

### Checklist

Your application packet must include:

- The application form, including the participation agreement, with all questions completed.
- Copy of your current child care license, if applicable, and documentation from your licensor that the items in your grant application are needed to meet licensing requirements.
- Estimate or bid (*if applicable*). This is required for the installation of fences, windows, or construction, as required by licensing, or equipment assembly projects. This bid must be from a licensed and bonded contractor. See <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/residential-contractors-remodelers-roofers> for more information.
- Pictures (*if applicable*). A picture from a catalog or online is recommended if the item(s) may be questioned by the reviewers.