



Child Care Services Regional Grant Application Guide

Regional Grants are intended to support, sustain, and increase quality of child care programs. Grants require completing an online application and approval of eligible expenditures.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Who can apply for Regional Grants?

Any program that is actively providing early learning services to children ranging in age from birth to school-age and is currently licensed with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal Government OR legally license-exempt, which includes certified centers. If licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, a program must have no current negative actions. Programs operating under a conditional license may still apply while under the terms of that license status since grant funds may be used to assist the program in becoming fully compliant. Licensing violations such as a temporary immediate suspension, suspension, or revocation will prevent the issuance of a grant and/or will cause the withdrawal of a grant.

Programs that have received a Start-Up Grant may not apply for a Regional Grant in the same fiscal year (July 1 - June 30).

2. How much money can eligible programs receive?

Family providers may purchase items that total up to \$1,000. Center programs may purchase items that total up to \$2,500.

3. How and when do I apply for a Regional Grant?

Applications for Regional Grants are available on Develop (www.developtoolmn.org) in your Organization Profile beginning September 1 and must be completed by September 25. You must have a registered Organization Profile to access and complete the application in Develop. Your Organizational Profile is separate from an Individual Account/Membership. For programs with no internet access, please contact your local Grant Administrator for a paper application.

4. What items can my program apply for?

Programs may apply for funds to purchase items or training that meet quality improvement goals and strategies and activities to prepare young children for school and life. Please refer to the Grants Spending Categories and Eligible Items list included in this guide. All materials must be new and must be purchased from a retail company, an early childhood supplier such as Lakeshore, and not a private individual.

Any items purchased with this grant must be used in accordance with licensing requirements. Please contact your licensor if you have questions about a particular item meeting licensing requirements.

Child product safety information to guide expenditure eligibility or ineligibility can be found at these government resources:

www.cpsc.gov/Recalls

www.cpsc.gov/SafeSleep

playgroundsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/NPPAS_PlaygroundSurfacing.pdf

www.cdc.gov/injury/features/child-passenger-safety/index.html

Priority Areas

Eligible items fall under five priority areas. Each priority will be scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score. Priorities that are left blank will be given a score of 1.

Health and Well-being

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. **Eligible equipment and activities that promote health and well-being in your program meet this priority.**

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. **Eligible materials that support the mental health of young children and their families meet this priority.**

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 growth and development. 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. **Eligible materials, activities, strategies, assessments, and curriculum development to promote social/emotional, physical, and intellectual development in all children meet this priority.**

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. **Eligible materials that support child development (infant through school-age) in areas such as literacy, social/emotional growth, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and include assessment support meet this priority.**

Professionalism

Children do better when their teachers and providers have professional preparation that includes higher education coursework, combined with ongoing 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. **Eligible learning opportunities and professional resources meet this priority.**

Additional Eligible Expenditure Policies

Learning Support: Materials, activities, strategies, assessment, and curriculum development to promote social/emotional, physical, and intellectual development in all children.

Technology: Programs may use grants for technology equipment, software to create, enhance and maintain business management systems, and related subscription fees. This includes costs associated with accessing the

internet, such as installation or equipment, and website start-up, maintenance, or ongoing subscription fees. This does not include utility expenses for accessing internet.

Education, Training, and Relationship-Based Professional Development: Grants may be used for higher education costs to support T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship recipients, fee-for-service mentoring, coaching, and/or consultation expenses conducted by a Develop-approved Relationship Based Professional Development (RBPD) Specialist during the grant timeframe.

Wages: Grants may be used to pay wages for staff to attend required professional development trainings and/or to cover the costs of substitute teachers or providers to cover for staff who are attending training.

Business Development: Funds can also be used for private businesses that support business development. Contact First Children's Finance for free or low-cost services that support business development, including business coaching, consultation, leadership cohorts, and technical assistance.

Minor Construction Projects: Grants may be used towards the cost of materials for outdoor play area fencing or other minor construction or renovations to the spaces used for child care 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 dli.mn.gov/business/residential-contractors-remodelers-roofers for more information.

Funding Percentage: 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%. The reimbursement rate depends on how the item is used and not the item itself. For example, in one program a refrigerator may be used only for child care food (business use only); and in another program it may be used for child care food and a family's food (shared). Unless specified in application, large items will be assumed to be shared and funded at 50%.

5. What items are not eligible?

Due to a federal rule, Regional 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.

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 healthy and safe.

Travel Expenses: Food, lodging, or mileage associated with training or conferences.

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.

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Restrictions: Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) federal restrictions can be reviewed online in the National Archives Code of Federal Regulations: Title 45 Subtitle A Subchapter A Part 98 Subpart F § 98.56(b)(1) Restrictions of the use of funds at [eCFR :: 45 CFR 98.56 -- Restrictions on the use of funds](#).

Business Expenses: Grants are not allowed to be spent on items considered to be part of the cost of doing business (such as rent, utilities, taxes, bank service fees, and down payments).

In addition, grant funds are not allowed to be spent on child care tuition (scholarships), nor items prohibited by licensing.

Conflict of Interest: Items are ineligible if someone, or a relative of someone, employed by the program will benefit financially from the purchase itself. For example, purchasing toys from an employee who is a Discovery Toys representative.

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

Your program will need to meet the requirements of a Participation Agreement. Please read the agreement carefully before signing. Also see the information on page 9 of this document about how the grant process works.

7. Why is cultural responsiveness important in an early childhood care and education program?

Although purchasing culturally responsive materials is not required for this grant, research has shown that children begin to create ideas about race very early on, typically by ages three and four. For this reason, it is important to teach all children about differences and help them develop individual and group identities based on personal abilities and interests, rather than race and entitlement. This is crucial for children to develop unbiased and successful relationships with others as adults. Additional information in *What If All the Kids Are White: Anti-Bias Multicultural Education with Young Children and Families*, by Louise Olsen Derman-Sparks and Patricia G. Ramsey.

Questions to ask yourselves when purchasing materials:

- What does this item teach the children in my care about less dominant cultures in our country?
- Does this item explore a culture/cultures or a language/languages other than my/their own?
- Does this item help celebrate cultural diversity?
- How does this item encourage and recognize the cultural differences among the children in my care?

APPLYING FOR A REGIONAL GRANT

When Applying

Grant Application Process: Applications for Regional Grants are available on Develop (www.developtoolmn.org) beginning September 1 and must be completed by September 25 in your Organization Profile. You must have a registered Organization Profile to access and complete the application in Develop. For programs with no internet access, please contact your local Grant Administrator for a paper application.

Organization Profile: Ensure that your Develop Organization Profile is up to date before applying. Ensure staff are connected to the Organization, and listed on the Employee tab, and that Classrooms and Lead Teacher assignments are up to date on the Classrooms tab. This applies to all programs. If you are a Family Child Care, you should be listed as an employee of the organization as well as listed as the lead teacher. More information on Develop Organizational Profiles can be found on the Develop Homepage.

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 change in purchase can only occur once in a grant cycle prior to March 31.

Next Steps

Grant Application Review and Scoring: Your application will receive a subjective and objective score. The subjective score is created by a committee of reviewers. Each application is reviewed by three review committee members who determine a score. Scores are assigned according to how strongly the requested item(s) relates to the priority area. The objective score is generated by Develop, and is based on your program's organizational information (enrollment, hours of operation, teacher training, Rating and case details). Funding is awarded to the applications with the highest combined scores.

Award Notification: A denial, waitlist, or award letter will be sent to you on November 1 via Develop notification, email and/or U.S mail.

Training Requirement: All programs must complete 12 hours of training between April 1 of the current year and March 31 of the following year to receive a grant. Training must be completed by staff with position titles in Develop of Primary Care Provider, Director, Assistant Director, or Teacher. **Four of the 12 hours of the required training must be in Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) areas III (Relationships with Families), III.D (Cultural Responsibility and Practice), IX (Trauma Informed Care and Practice), and/or X (Working with Multilingual Children and Families).** These are unduplicated hours and must be listed as approved training on the staff person or persons' Learning Record(s). All required training must be completed and appear on a Develop Learning Record 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.

If Awarded

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

Grant Payment Information: All Child Care Services Grants are paid on a reimbursement basis after all requirements are completed.

Reimbursement Timeline: All documents required for requesting reimbursement must be submitted by April 15 for Grant Administrator review. Grant Administrators have the right to:

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

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.

SUBMITTING A PAPER APPLICATION

If approved for a paper 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
10 Yorkton Court
St. Paul, MN 55117

Checklist

Your application packet must include:

- ☐ The application form, including the participation agreement, with all questions completed.
- ☐ Estimate or bid (*if applicable*). This is required for the installation of fences, windows, or construction, as required by licensing, or equipment assembly projects. If 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.
- ☐ Pictures (*if applicable*). A picture from a catalog or online is recommended if the item(s) may be questioned by the reviewers.

GRANT APPLICATION PLANNING LIST

This list is intended to help you plan your grant request before entering it into Develop. This is not to be submitted.

Priority Area	Goal (what you wish to accomplish)	Strategy (what you need to do to reach the goal)	Description of Purchase (what items you are requesting)	Cost
Example: Health and Well-being	<i>Children are learning concepts from nature and exercising outside</i>	<i>Walk to the park for play and nature experiences</i>	<i>Commercial quality four-child stroller, and stroller awning</i>	<i>\$1,579.90</i>
Health and Well-being				
Relationships with Families				
Teaching and Relationships				
Assessment and Planning				
Professionalism				
TOTAL				