Early Childhood Equity Grant: Round 2 Refinements

DCYF engaged with providers, stakeholder groups, ally organizations, and government-to-government to gather feedback on the first round of the Early Childhood Equity Grant. As a result of this feedback, the following refinements will be implemented in Round 2.

Reconfigure Prioritization Criteria

Providers will receive a priority point for each of the following six factors that they meet:

1. Provider serves any children who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). This includes any children who are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern or North African, Pacific Islander, or multiracial.
2. Provider serves any children who are enrolled or eligible for membership in one of the 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington.
3. Provider serves any children receiving state, tribal, or military subsidies.
4. Provider serves any unhoused or homeless children.
5. Provider serves any children in out-of-home care due to child welfare involvement.
6. Provider serves any children who speak languages other than English at home.

Changes:
- Eliminates previous criteria that are not about children
- Includes "Middle Eastern or North African" as a distinct group
- Expands subsidy qualifier to include tribal and military subsidies
- Adds a point for serving tribal children
- Changes factors that previously calculated a percentage to a simpler yes/no.

Why: *We heard from providers and allies that the previous prioritization criteria made it unlikely or impossible for some of Washington's most vulnerable children – such as tribal children living on tribal land and children of color in rural communities – to benefit from this funding. Broadening the criteria allows us to reach these children.*

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Add a Grant Readiness Checklist

A grant readiness checklist will allow us to make more clear the specialized nature of the grant, and will allow providers to evaluate whether they are able to fill out a proposal specifically addressing "a need that the funding opportunity is intended to fill – not the organization's need for funding"[1]

Why: *The competitive nature of this grant is a departure from previous DCYF grants. Ally organizations suggested that DCYF focus more on this to help providers understand that meeting the funding requirements is not sufficient to receive an award.*

Add Categories for Primary Outcomes

A provider may request funding for a project with one of the following primary outcomes. All activities should be related to the primary outcome:

- o Preventing suspension and expulsion
- o Increasing the use of research-informed social-emotional teaching practices
- o Increasing the use of culturally and linguistically responsive practices and decreasing bias in the classroom
- o Offering ongoing child assessment and developmental screening
- o Connecting families to services and supports that meet health, mental health, financial, or other needs
- o Other: another project to incorporate inclusive practices, culturally and linguistically supportive and relevant practices, or both into early learning program design, delivery, education, training, and/or evaluation. Providers must describe the intended outcome of the project.

Why: *These categories give providers more guidance and more focused examples for acceptable uses of funding, which was commonly requested. The outcomes were generated using a combination of provider ideas, Early Achievers Quality Standards, Strengthening Families Self-Assessment categories, the position statement from the National Association for the Education of Young Children on "Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education", reports from the National Center for Children in Poverty, and guidance from the Office of Early Childhood Development at HHS.*

Change Budget Categories

Original Budget Categories:

- o   Program Design
- o   Program Delivery

- o   Staff Education/Training
- o   Program Evaluation

New Budget Categories:

- o   Specialized Staff
- o   Child Care Materials and Experiences
- o   Office and Business Supplies
- o   Staff Training

- o   Program Evaluation and Assessment Tools
- o   Other Services
- o   Other Materials

Why: Providers told us the original budget categories were confusing and unintuitive. The original budget categories also made it hard for us to know what funds are being used for. For example, both funds for staffing and funds for dress up materials would fall under "program delivery". The new categories will allow us to better survey areas of need while being less confusing for providers.

Lower Minimum Amount

Allow grant requests from licensed and certified providers between $5,000 and $100,000. The minimum in Round 1 was $15,000. Lowering the minimum will allow funding for smaller project proposals.

Why: In Round 1, we were only able to fund 34 of 2,370 submitted applications. When surveyed, many providers wrote that "spreading the funds amongst providers" would be "more beneficial" and have a "greater impact" even if this leads to smaller awards. Lowering the funding floor will allow providers to submit smaller projects.

Additional Terms and Conditions

- • Add questions about accessing technical assistance
- • Add an attestation: "I have reviewed my application and am ready to submit. I understand that once my application is submitted I cannot make any changes to my answers"
- • Add an attestation: "I understand that my application will be denied if I have requested funding for any of the disallowed costs described above"

Why: This makes necessary information more prominent. Though TA information was featured in the instructions in Round 1, more than 1 in 4 providers who applied reported that they did not know or were not sure if they knew that TA was available.

We received frequent requests to edit submitted applications, which is not possible in WA Compass. We also received many requests for disallowed items in Round 1 and want to make sure providers know DCYF is not able to fund partial applications.

Community Review Panel Makeup

- Add parents to the Community Review Panel
- Continue to work with Ally Organizations to receive nominations for other panel members
- Work with Office of Tribal Relations to invite tribes to participate on the panel

Why: This diversifies voices on the review panel, and is a response to direct feedback requesting parent and tribal participation.

Notify Providers Earlier

- Notify providers whose applications were not identified as finalists, so they know earlier in the process that they were not selected.
- Notify finalist applicants at the same time, so there is more communication throughout the process.

Why: Providers frequently expressed frustration with the length of time between application and notification. This change would help keep providers informed about the process.

Reporting Requirements

- Grantees will complete a short survey twice per year.
- The survey will be simple and include an opportunity for the grantee to share successes and challenges as they implement their project.
- This will allow DCYF to learn more about project outcomes and may shape future refinement periods.

Why: Information on the successes and challenges of implementing different types of projects will allow DCYF to refine the selection process going forward by allowing us to apply any lessons learned to future projects and evaluation.

ECEAP Eligibility

- Licensed ECEAP may apply through WA Compass.
- ECEAP and Early ECEAP Contractors may submit an application through SmartSheet.
    - Individual ECEAP-only sites and subcontractors cannot submit individual applications.
    - ECEAP Contractors should not request funding for any licensed site that is also applying on their own.

Why: *We heard from ECEAP contractors that it was more equitable and effective for Contractors to be able to approach equity and inclusion issues as a program, rather than filling out separate applications for individual sites. We heard from ECEAP Contractors that smaller sites and subcontractors were not likely to apply on their own but would like to be included in the grant if their Contractor received funding.*