

**State Early Childhood Education Grant
Frequently Asked Questions**
[Updated 4-22-2019]

The Early Childhood Education Grant Frequently Asked Questions document is for school districts and early learning programs to accompany the guidance put forth by the North Dakota Department of Commerce (Commerce). This is a collaborative process with Commerce, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) and the North Dakota Department of Human Services (NDDHS).

Q: Where is the grant application, guidance, and requirements located?

A: The application, guidance and requirements is available on the [Commerce website](#).

Q: What is the Purpose of the Early Childhood Community Coalition?

A: Each Coalition's task is to plan for the early learning community involvement and partnership together to meet the needs of families with pre-kindergarten aged children. The superintendent is required to call this first meeting of early learning providers. Some topics of this meeting include the development of the governing board, the allocation and utilization of funds, and the level of school board participation.

Q: Who was/is charged with organizing the first coalition meeting?

A: All North Dakota school superintendents are required to call the initial community meeting to create an Early Childhood Community Coalition and document it in STARS before September 1, 2017. If the superintendent has been recently employed to their current school, after September 1, 2017, and no coalition was established, please contact Commerce.

Q. Does the coalition need to continue to meet?

A. Yes, by September first of each grant year the early childhood education coalition shall meet and provide Commerce with a coalition update report.

Q: How to local school superintendents find all providers in their community?

A: Commerce, NDDPI, and NDDHS are working with Child Care Aware of North Dakota to provide you with access to contact information for the early childhood programs (licensed DHS programs) in your area. To acquire the most up-to-date listing, please visit <http://ndchildcare.org/info/early-childhood-education-grants.html> or contact [Verla Jung](#)

Q: Does the school district verify which parents qualify for free and reduced lunches or is that done by each pre-kindergarten program?

A: The parent/guardian letter and the free and reduced application form is located at www.workforce.nd.gov/workforce/EarlyChildhoodEducationGrantProgram/ on the Commerce website. Each family in the program to determine eligibility for the program funding will complete the free and reduced lunch verification. It is up to each program to collect and enroll the eligible children in the State Automated Reporting System (STARS) and mark either the free or reduced lunch box.

Q: Are we obligated to provide meals (breakfast and lunch)?

A: In order to determine funding eligibility, families will need to complete the free and reduced lunch form and submit to the school district or early learning program. This does not mean the program will be required to serve meals. This process is to determine funding eligibility. It is up to each early learning program to decide whether to provide meals.

Q: How will the school district or early learning program receive payments?

A: The program or school district will receive quarterly payments based off monthly enrollment data collected via a PowerSchool report. If the program does not utilize PowerSchool, they will receive STARS login information along with directions to enter the child enrollment information. Commerce will make the payments, to the entity awarded, based off

the number of eligible children enrolled in the program each quarter. Funded programs will request reimbursement to Commerce using the [Quarterly Reimbursement Request Form](#).

Q: Are communities required to apply for this grant?

A: No, it is a local decision whether school districts or community pre-kindergarten programs apply for the funds. Some programs, even though they are coalition members, may choose not to apply for the funds. At no time under this law are programs required to apply for the grant funds.

Q: How does a child care provider become approved through NDDPI to provide Early Childhood Education?

A: Child care providers, along with any other early learning program offering pre-kindergarten will apply to the NDDPI at <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/documents/430/sfn60869.pdf> to start the approval process. Please submit the form to [Tara Fuhrer](#).

- Beginning May 1, 2019, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction is revising the Pre-Kindergarten Approval process. LEAs currently Approved to operate Pre-kindergarten will no longer annually complete SFN 60869; rather, STARS and NDTEACH is now able to collect all required information. The department is required to ensure LEAs operating a Pre-Kindergarten program have completed the North Dakota Century Code 15.1-37-01 requirements. We are now able to complete this review by running an annual report based off of the information LEAs are providing in STARS and NDTEACH. No annual approval is needed as NDDPI will conduct yearly desk audits. New Pre-kindergarten programs are still required to submit SFN 60869 to initiate the process.

Q: How many school board members are required to be on the community coalition?

A: The law does not indicate the composition of the coalition nor state how many school board members are required to participate on the coalition. It does however state that the board of the school district in which the coalition of service providers is located shall provide advice and guidance to the coalition in all matters pertaining to the law. Therefore, this is a local community decision as to how many school board members must participate.

Q: What types of reports are due?

A: There are reporting requirements involved in a program's participation. An explanation of all reporting requirements are in the Early Childhood Grant application guidance document.

- o [Pre-kindergarten Approval](#) by the NDDPI. **(ONLY, if never been Pre-K prior)**
- o [Identification of free or reduced lunch](#) for each child enrolling in the program under the Richard B Russell National School Lunch program.
- o [Parent Notification](#): once each calendar quarter, any provider receiving the funds, must notify the parent the total amount of the grant that awarded to the provider for that quarter.
- o The [Quarterly Reimbursement Request Form](#) submit to Commerce, along with supporting documentation.
- o Enroll each eligible child in PowerSchool. If PowerSchool is not available, [STARS](#) will be available for use.

Q: Do you have to charge tuition to be eligible to apply for the grant?

A: It is a local decision to charge tuition. Some school districts and early learning programs historically have not charged tuition while others have. Each community coalition will need to assess their community needs to determine if charging tuition is in the best interest of the children and families they serve. There are multiple funding factors to take into consideration when making this decision. Whether or not a district uses federal funding may affect this decision.

Q: Can the grant funds be used to add "slots" to a pre-existing program?

A: Yes, it is allowable to use funds to add slots if the early childhood community coalition determines the pre-existing program or classroom has the capacity to increase enrollment. It is up to the local community if purchasing slots or creating a new program is in the best interest of the children and families.

Q: How much money will this bring into my district or program?

A: The Early Childhood Education Grant funding follows the student. Each community will need to take action to estimate the number of potential children to be served during the school year. Encourage families to complete the Free and Reduced Lunch form to ensure that programs can best estimate their budget. Awarded early learning programs and

school districts that enroll four year old children that qualify for free lunch are eligible for \$2,000 and those that qualify for reduced lunch are eligible for \$1,000 during the school year.

Q: Are we obligated to provide transportation if awarded?

A: No, school districts and programs awarded the early childhood funding are not required to provide transportation. It is up to each community coalition to determine the need for transportation and if the grant funds will adequately cover the cost. If a district or program is already providing transportation, it is allowable to offset some of the current cost to provide this service.

Q: Will there be technical assistance for districts who are new to the early childhood planning process?

A: The departments of Commerce, NDDPI, and NDDHS will provide on-going technical assistance to programs as needed. Electronic guidance documents are on the Commerce website with links on the NDDPI early childhood website.

Q: What if a 5-year-old enrolls in my program, are they eligible for funding?

A: Enrolling a 5-year-old child is allowable and they can certainly participate in the program – however, funding is for 4-year-old enrolled children that turn 4 on or before August first of the enrollment school year, that are deemed eligible for free and reduced lunch, may apply and accept funding for them. If the child turns five during that school year, the child is still eligible to generate funding. If the student turns 5 years old after August 1, of the enrollment year, they are still eligible since they were 4 years old prior or on August 1 of the enrollment year.

Q: What teaching qualifications are required?

A: North Dakota teachers must have one of the following to be considered highly qualified to teach pre-kindergarten under the North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB). For further information on highly qualified teaching credentials, please contact ESPB at 701-328-9641.

- B3 license
- Elementary education major and an early childhood endorsement
- Elementary education major and a minor in early childhood education
- Elementary education major and a kindergarten endorsement
- Although no longer issued, those who already have the K-8 or K-6 licenses may teach pre-kindergarten

Q: Who do I call for questions?

A: Please contact [Kerri Kraft](#) (701) 328-7263 at the North Dakota Department of Commerce or [Tara Fuhrer](#) (701) 328-4646 at the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.