



MONTANA EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCOUNT (MECA) GRANTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

SECTION 1: ELIGIBILITY

WHAT GRANTS AM I ELIGIBLE FOR?

Licensed early childhood providers may be eligible for:

FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE SUPPORT GRANT

Eligibility:

- Licensed early childhood providers. Provider types include:
 - Centers: Child care centers provide care in an out-of-home setting for 16 or more children on a regular basis.
 - Groups: Group child care facilities provide care in a private residence or other structure for nine to 15 children on a regular basis.
 - Family providers: Family child care facilities provide care in a private residence or other structure for three to eight children on a regular basis.
 - After School Programs: School-age care facilities provide care on a regular basis only to school-age children and during out-of-school-time hours.
- Unlicensed programs and other individual providers are not eligible for this grant.
- Registered Unique Entity Identifier Number (UEI#) through [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov)

The purpose of this grant program is to support early childhood providers in addressing workforce challenges through flexible, provider-driven solutions.

Intended outcomes include:

- Increased workforce recruitment and retention
- Improved compensation and benefits for early childhood staff
- Expanded access to professional development and career advancement
- Greater flexibility for providers to respond to workforce needs at the local level

License Type	Award Amount
Child Care Center	\$3,835
Group Home Child Care	\$2,710
Family Home Child Care	\$2,445

Providers may request funding for one of the following workforce support strategies:

1. Child Care Cost Assistance for Employees
 - Offset the cost of care for employees' children enrolled in the program



2. Employee Benefits Support
 - Offset the cost of employee benefits, including health insurance or other benefit structures
3. Compensation Enhancements
 - Implement or expand progressive pay scales tied to education, experience, or role
4. Professional Development and Education
 - Support staff participation in continuing education, training, or credential attainment

Funding:

\$6 million allocated total

\$3 million allocated for FY 2027

\$3 million allocated for FY 2028

EARLY LEARNING DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT AND TRAINING GRANT

Eligibility:

- State-licensed or registered child care programs, centers, family, or group programs, serving children ages 0–8
- State licensed school-age-only programs, such as after-school programs
- Unlicensed programs and other individual providers are not eligible for this grant
- Registered UEI # through sam.gov

Grant funds may be used to purchase technology that supports participation in virtual or in-person training. Funds may also be used to offset costs associated with staff participation in approved training, including overtime wages or substitute coverage or staff time completing developmental screenings. Grants are per Provider Identification Number (PV), \$1,500,000 allocated.

Provider Type	Provider Size	Amount
Family, Group, Center	1-29 slots	\$1,500
Center	30-70 slots	\$2,000
Center	71-200 slots	\$2,500
Center	200+ slots	\$3,000

Grant funds may be used to support early childhood programs in supporting staff to participate in professional development opportunities and purchasing technology. Allowable uses include technology and staffing-related expenses that directly support these activities, such as:

- Laptop or tablet computer
- Mobile hotspot device to support reliable internet access



- Webcam, headset, or other basic accessories needed for active virtual engagement
- Staff salaries to actively participate in training (virtual or in-person) or administering screeners
- Substitute pay for staff to actively participate in training (virtual or in-person) or administer screeners
- Course fees
- Subscription fees for developmental screening tools

QUALITY INCENTIVE: INFANT AND TODDLER CAPACITY EXPANSION GRANT

ELIGIBILITY:

Eligible applicants include:

- Currently licensed child care providers seeking to expand infant and toddler capacity.
- Existing licensed providers converting classrooms to infant and toddler care.
- New licensed child care programs establishing infant and toddler services.
- Non-licensed infant and toddler providers who demonstrate willingness and documentation of intent to become licensed by the state with a registered UEI # through sam.gov
- Registered UEI # through sam.gov

This investment is expected to increase Montana's infant and toddler care capacity by reducing start-up costs, supporting new providers through licensing requirements, and expanding access to quality care for families with young children.

Grant funds may be used for start-up, conversion, and expansion costs necessary to establish or increase infant and toddler care capacity. Funds will be used for operational supplies only. No construction projects are allowed with these grant funds.

Allowable uses include:

- **Sleep Area:** Cribs, crib mattresses, and crib sheets
- **Diapering Area:** Changing tables, diaper storage, diaper pails, sanitation supplies, and dispensers
- **Feeding Area:** Highchairs, small feeding tables, bottle warmers, mini fridge, and storage bins
- **Play and Development:** Soft floor mats, activity centers, toys and sensory items, bouncers and swings, wall mirrors
- **Safety and Setup:** Safety gates, childproofing supplies, lockable storage, and air purifiers
- **Storage:** Low shelving, cubbies, and organization supplies



- **Miscellaneous Program Needs:** Cleaning supplies and set-up materials, and staff seating (Rocking chair or glider)

The maximum award amount is \$10,000 per PV#. The grant funds available are \$1 million for FY 2027.

WHAT ARE THE AGE RANGES FOR EACH CATEGORY?

INFANTS: 0-11 MONTHS

TODDLERS: 12 MONTHS-36 MONTHS

PRESCHOOLERS: 3 YEARS-5 YEARS

SCHOOL AGED: 5 YEARS AND OLDER

CAN I APPLY FOR ALL THREE GRANTS?

Yes. If you meet eligibility, you can apply for all three. The infant and toddler grant is specific to providing care for infants and toddlers.

DO I NEED TO BE IN GOOD STANDING WITH LICENSING?

Yes.

DO I NEED A CURRENT CHILD CARE LICENSE TO APPLY?

Yes, for all except the Infant Toddler Capacity Expansion Grant. If you are not currently licensed, you must commit to being licensed by Feb. 15, 2027.

DO I NEED A CURRENT CHILD CARE LICENSE TO RECEIVE PAYMENT?

Yes.

DO I NEED A UEI NUMBER?

Yes. To qualify for a MECA grant, you will be required to have a CURRENT and ACTIVE UEI registration at the time of application. This is a federal requirement.

DOES MY UEI NUMBER NEED TO BE CURRENTLY REGISTERED?

Yes. You will need to upload a screenshot showing your UEI is active.

HOW DO I GET HELP WITH MY UEI NUMBER APPLICATION OR REGISTRATION?

How to Get Your UEI:

1. Visit [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) and create a [free account](#) if you don't already have one.
2. Sign in and select "Financial Assistance." It should be the second option. This is the option you will want to complete specifically for the MECA grants.



3. Enter your business information exactly as it appears on your tax and licensing documents. This is very important. Have your documents with you as you fill this out.
4. Submit your request and save your UEI in your business records.

You must renew your UEI annually to ensure it remains active and current. If you are unsure whether your UEI is registered or unsure if you need to renew, you can go to [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) to ensure your UEI has active registration.

Need Help Registering or Renewing Your UEI?

[MONTANA APEX ACCELERATOR](#) provides personal, timely advice on contracting with the government. Check out their webpage for helpful links or sign up for services if you need support.

SECTION 2: APPLICATION PROCESS

HOW DO I APPLY FOR THE GRANTS?

All applications must be submitted through [Submittable](#).

DO I APPLY PER PV NUMBER OR PER PROGRAM?

Applications are submitted per PV number.

WHEN IS THE APPLICATION PERIOD?

The application will be open from Sept. 28, 2026 to Oct. 26, 2026.

HOW LONG IS THE APPLICATION OPEN?

The application will be open for four weeks.

IS HELP AVAILABLE TO COMPLETE THE APPLICATION?

Yes. Technical assistance and office hours will be available during the application period. [Reserve a time](#).

WILL THERE BE A WEBINAR BEFORE APPLICATIONS OPEN?

Yes. An informational webinar explaining how to complete the application and provide details about all grant opportunities was held on Sept. 21. [A recording is available](#). The recording and slides are also available on our website.

WHEN WILL I FIND OUT IF I HAVE BEEN APPROVED TO RECEIVE A GRANT OR GRANTS?

Grants will be approved on a rolling basis throughout the application process. Approval notifications will be sent to all successful applicants by Nov. 15.



SECTION 3: FUNDING AND PAYMENT

HOW MUCH FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

Total available funding across the three grants is \$8.5 million. Each grant has different funding amounts.

IS THE FUNDING COMPETITIVE, OR FIRST-COME, FIRST-APPROVED?

MECA grants are first-come, first-approved. Applications must be complete and correct. If an application is denied due to errors or missing information, MECA staff will help the provider fix the issue – but the application will move back in line until complete.

WILL PAYMENTS BE MADE AS A LUMP SUM OR REIMBURSEMENT?

Payments are made through reimbursement. Providers will submit invoices with receipts and other documentation when funds are spent for each grant.

WHAT DOCUMENTATION DO I NEED TO PROVIDE TO RECEIVE REIMBURSEMENT?

- Invoices
- Proof of training
- Proof of staff payments
- Any other required verification documents

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR REIMBURSEMENT?

Per state statute, all invoices with complete documentation are paid within 30 days of receipt.

I MADE PURCHASES EARLIER IN THE YEAR. CAN I COUNT THOSE PURCHASES TOWARDS REIMBURSEMENT?

No. All purchases eligible for reimbursement must be made during the grant period.

SECTION 4: REQUIREMENTS AND REASONS FOR DENIAL

WHAT COULD CAUSE MY APPLICATION TO BE DENIED?

Applications may be denied for:

- Missing or incomplete information
- A noncurrent UEI number
- Required fields left blank
- Not following instructions
- Including construction or capital costs (not allowed)



DO I NEED A UEI NUMBER SCREENSHOT?

Yes. A screenshot showing your UEI is active is required.

SECTION 5: RESTRICTIONS

CAN MECA GRANT FUNDS BE USED FOR CONSTRUCTION OR CAPITAL COSTS?

No. Construction or capital costs are not allowed. Examples of construction or capital costs may include:

- Structures such as sheds or garages
- Permanent play equipment
- Carpeting/flooring
- Demolition of walls
- Fencing

Applications listing construction will be denied and must be corrected and resubmitted (if funds are still available).

SECTION 6: SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

IS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE?

Yes. MECA staff will provide ongoing support throughout the application period.

WILL SUPPORT CONTINUE AFTER THE GRANT IS AWARDED?

Yes. Onboarding guidance and reimbursement support will be available throughout the implementation period.