

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Child Care Provider Grants Expanding Services in Infant/Toddler Care, Special Needs, and Expanding Hours of Operation

Q: What is the purpose of the Child Care Provider Grants?

A: The grants aim to enhance and expand services for licensed and/or registered family child care homes, group child care homes, centers and Early Head Starts, Head Starts, AIAN Early Head Starts and AIAN Head Starts, and Tribally licensed programs serving children ages 0-8 by increasing and improving the availability of;

1. infant/toddler care
2. increasing/enhancing services for children with special needs
3. expanding hours of operation slots and services.

Funds will be utilized to enhance and expand services for vulnerable children in high need areas which are counties designated as rural or frontier, providers serving tribal populations or on reservations, and child care deserts. Vulnerable populations include infants/toddlers, children with special needs, families with nontraditional care needs, low-income families, triable areas, children in foster care, and families who are homeless.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for the grants?

A: Licensed and/or registered family child care homes, group child care homes, centers and Early Head Starts, Head Starts, AIAN Early Head Starts and AIAN Head Starts, and Tribally licensed programs that serve children ages 0-8 and have not received ARPA Innovation Grant funds are eligible.

Q: What can the grant funding be used for?

A: Funding can be used for equipment, supplies, professional development, services, and compensation which contribute to health, safety, and development of children. Specific category examples are listed in the guidance of the grant application.

Equipment refers to large, durable items.

Supplies are consumable items necessary for daily operations in a child care facility.

Resources encompass educational materials and tools that enhance curriculum delivery and support effective teaching practices.

Professional development refers to targeted training and educational opportunities designed to improve the skills and knowledge of child care staff, ultimately enhancing service quality.

Services refer to specialized consulting and support resources contracted to improve operational effectiveness and address specific needs within child care programs.

Compensation refers to the financial remuneration provided to staff members for their work, encompassing salaries, wages, and benefits.

Q: What are the requirements to apply for the grant?

A: Applicants must complete an application through “Submittable” that includes:

- Implementation Plan
- Budget and narrative

- Participation in data gathering for evaluation
- Commitment to required reporting (quarterly and annually)

Q: What are the requirements of the implementation plan?

A: A child care program will create a detailed implementation plan outlining how your program will use grant funding to effectively and sustainably expand child care services in infant/toddler, special needs and/or expanded hours of operation. The plan should demonstrate your program's ability to meet community needs and achieve lasting positive outcomes.

The following areas should be addressed in the implementation plan:

- Specific strategies for expanding services (i.e. increasing capacity, flexible and extended hours, resource sharing, partnerships with local community programs)
- Number of additional children and families to be served and the impact on families, program and community (i.e. increased enrollment and access)
- Methods for implementation and sustainability (i.e. collaborative partnerships, needs assessment, professional development, diversified funding sources, community support and involvement)
- Approaches for monitoring and evaluating the program's effectiveness (i.e. surveys, assessments, key performance indicators, outcome measurements, quality and data analysis)
- Information on sustainability. (i.e. funding diversification, community partnerships, staff development, resource management)

Q: What are the Deliverables of the grant?

A: Funding awarded to participants must be utilized within the grant period (2/1/25- 12/30/25).

Grantees will provide data and evaluation by completing required reporting to show how funds are utilized through quarterly and annual reports with data collection on the following:

- increase in program capacity
- increase in serving the number of children with special needs
- increase in serving the number of infants and toddlers
- expanding the program's hours of operation
- report on staff hiring, training and professional development, and/or obtained certification(s)
- description of funding utilization related to budget categories (equipment, supplies, professional development, services, and compensation)

Q: When is the application open to apply for funds?

A: January 6th, 2025 through January 24th, 2025

Q: What is the grant period?

A: February 1st, 2025 through December 30th, 2025.

Q: Can our program apply for more than one expansion area?

A: Yes. Funding must be utilized in 1-2 of the expansion areas of infant/toddler, special needs, or expanded hours of operation.

Q: How much funding can I receive through the grant for increasing/enhancing slots in *Infant/Toddler Care* children ages 0-3?

A: Eligible child care providers can receive:

- \$8,000 for Family Child Care Homes
- \$12,000 for Group Child Care Homes
- \$15,000 for Centers

Q: How much funding can I receive through the grant for increasing/enhancing slots in *Special Needs Care* children ages 0-8?

A: Eligible child care providers can receive:

- \$5,000 for Family Child Care Homes
- \$8,000 for Group Child Care Homes
- \$10,000 for Centers

Q: How much funding can I receive through the grant for *Expanding Hours of Operation* for children ages 0-8?

A: Eligible child care providers can receive:

- \$5,000 for Family Child Care Homes
- \$8,000 for Group Child Care Homes
- \$10,000 for Centers

Q: What are the vulnerable populations of the grant?

A: Vulnerable populations providers serve include:

- Infants and toddlers (0-35 months)
- Counties designated as rural or frontier.
- Tribal populations or on reservations.
- Children with diagnosed developmental disability or delay.
- Families that are low-income.
- Children in Foster Care.
- Families who are homeless.
- Families with non-traditional work hours.
- Child care deserts.

Q: How can I determine if my area qualifies as a child care desert?

A: A child care desert is defined as any geographic area where child care supply meets less than a third of the potential demand. Nearly 60% of Montana's counties are classified as child care deserts, including four counties without a single licensed provider. Approximately 30% of children under age six live in a county designated as a child care desert.

Refer to this document for further information:

https://lmi.mt.gov/_docs/Publications/LMI-Pubs/Special-Reports-and-Studies/ChildCareDesertsWhitePaper-FINAL.pdf

Q: Is our program required to complete an implementation plan and budget?

A: Yes, both are required and are fillable documents in the application.

Q: Does our program have to enter dollar amounts in each budget category?

A: No. However, the dollar amounts need to total the amount per funding category.

Q: If I apply for Crisis Child Care can I apply for Infant/Toddler, Special Needs, and Expanding Hours of Operation funds?

A: No, you cannot apply for both. However, if you apply for the Crisis Child Care funds and receive a decline letter, you can then apply for Infant Toddler, Special Needs and Expanding Hours of Operation funds as funds are available.

Q: If I am not currently licensed, can I apply to become licensed and receive the funding?

A: If you are not fully licensed at this time, you may be eligible if there is a second round of funding.

Q: What are the reporting requirements for grantees?

A: Grantees must complete required quarterly and annual reporting to demonstrate how funds are utilized and participate in data sharing and evaluation activities as outlined in the award letter.

Q: How will the funds be disbursed?

A: Funds will be disbursed as a first-come, first served basis as funds are available.

Funds will be disbursed to approved applicants based on the implementation plan and budget upon successful completion of the application process. Payment will be dispersed in two installments. The first payment will go out after grantee agreement and documentation is signed and returned. The second payment will be dispersed after the second quarterly report. Quarterly reports will be utilized for monitoring and tracking of funding use and expansion and enhancement efforts within each grant category.

Q: What is the total funding allocated for slot expansion activities (Infant/Toddler, Special Needs, Expanded Hours of Operation, Crisis Child Care)?

A: Yes, the total funding allocated for slot expansion activity is \$2,000,000 over the two-year period if funding is available.

Q: What happens if funding runs out?

A: Funds will be disbursed as a first-come, first served basis.

Grants will be provided only as long as funding is available, so applying early is encouraged.

Updated Questions 1/7/2025

Q: How can I get more information or assistance with the application?

A: For more information or assistance, you may contact the grant administration team at Bright Futures B-5 via email at pdgb5@mt.gov or check the website at [Montana Early Childhood System \(mt.gov\)](http://Montana Early Childhood System (mt.gov)) for resources and guidance. Zero to Five is also available for assistance with the grant application. Contact Jason Nitschke @ jasonn@zerotofive.org

Q: What if my program does not have a UEI#?

A: Please apply for a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, list in that section that you have applied for it and submit the expansion application. A UEI# will need to be provided within 30 days of the closing of this application period. For assistance with UEI# applications please go to [SAM.GOV](https://sam.gov) and [Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\) | EXIM.GOV](https://exim.gov) or a Montana resource <https://montanaapex.org/>.

Q: If I have more than one licensed child care programs, can I apply for each program?

A: Yes, however, it has been determined for eligibility purposes that you cannot apply for those program/PV#s that received the ARPA Innovation grants in the past. If you have other programs/PV#s that have not received Innovation grants, then you are able to apply for the Slot Expansion grants through them.

Q: If I have more than one licensed child care program that is eligible for slot expansion funding, can I apply for 1 to 2 expansion areas (infant/toddler, special needs, or expanded hours of operation) for each of the eligible programs?

A: Yes you can apply for each eligible program that has not received ARPA Innovation grant funding. This is determined by the program/PV number.

Updated Questions 1/16/2025

Q: Can funding be used for construction or renovations?

A: No funding cannot be used for construction/ remodeling or renovations. We cannot allow any items that increase the value or useful life of the property. That includes fences, ramps, windows, sidewalks, kitchen/bathroom renovations, carpeting, etc.

Q: Can funding be used for vehicles?

A: No, the grant does not allow funds to be used towards the purchase of a vehicle.

Q: Will this grant impact my License/Registration?

A: Because these grants are about expanding slots, expanding hours of operation, and/or serving Children in Crisis, YES, contact your Licensor to discuss your grant application. Licensing regulations will need to be adhered to, and adjustments may need to be made to your license/certificate if you are awarded a grant.

Updated Questions 1/24/2025

Q: If I applied for Crisis Child Care can I now apply for Infant/Toddler, Special Needs, and Expanding Hours of Operation funds?

A: Yes, you now can apply for both. If you have submitted an application for Crisis Child Care you can also apply for the Slot Expansion Grant. Awardees will only be eligible for one grant.

Q: What is the deadline to apply for Crisis Child Care?

A: The deadline to apply for Crisis Child Care is deadline has not changed and will close today 1/24/25 at 11:59 pm.

Q: What is the deadline to apply for Slot Expansion?

A: The deadline is being extended to February 7, 2025, and the applicant pool is being expanded to include all licensed and registered providers that are not one of the 30 ARPA innovation grantees. Grants will be awarded to successful applicants in the order they are received and as funding allows.