

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Illinois Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) Program

Introduction (page 2)

Section 1: IL ECCG Program FAQs (page 2)

General Questions About the IL ECCG Program (page 2)

Questions About Eligibility (page 4)

Questions About Completing the Application (page 4)

Section 2: Examples of 2011 ECCG Projects (page 7)

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*Please note: All new questions added to the most recent update are indicated with “**New!**” at the beginning. These include questions that were answered by the Illinois Capital Development Board.*

Introduction

The State of Illinois has released the Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) Program, a state-sponsored initiative to invest in quality early childhood education (ECE) facilities where they are most needed. The ECCG Program will provide \$60 million in grants for early childhood education centers who are ready to renovate, expand, or newly construct facilities to serve more children now, and an additional \$40 million to centers who will be ready for facility construction in the fall.

This FAQ sheet provides details on the IL ECCG Program. Section 2 provides examples of ECCG projects from 2011. Sign up to receive updates by visiting www.iff.org/QFA.

Section 1: IL Early Childhood Construction Grant Program FAQs

The state of Illinois released the Early Childhood Construction Grant Program on July 12, 2022. Below is some information on what the ECCG Program is and what you can do to prepare to apply.

General Questions About the IL ECCG Program

What is the Early Childhood Construction Grant Program?

The Illinois Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) Program is a state-sponsored initiative to invest in quality early childhood education (ECE) facilities where they are most needed. It was first established in 2009 and renewed in 2019 as part of [Rebuild Illinois](#), the state's \$45 billion capital plan. The ECCG Program provides \$100 million in grants for school districts and nonprofit ECE centers to renovate, expand, or newly construct facilities to serve more children.

The ECCG Program is administered by the [Capital Development Board](#) (CDB), an independent state agency that oversees construction of state facilities and other public purpose capital projects. The CDB will consider and then award grants on a competitive basis to applicants that demonstrate a combination of community need, project readiness, and ECE program quality. Read on to learn more about what you can do to prepare for the application. Visit the Illinois.Gov website for updates.

What expenses does the ECCG Program cover?

Funded through proceeds from the sale of *Build Illinois Bonds*, grants under the ECCG Program can only pay for [bondable capital improvements](#) as defined by state and federal law. Generally, this means that grant funds must be used for non-recurring durable improvements, such as:

- Constructing an addition onto an existing building.
- New construction of a facility or renovations to an existing facility to create a new early childhood center.
- Acquisition of a facility.
- Purchase or replacement of equipment that meets bondability guidelines.

- Safety improvements.
- Classroom conversions.

Funds can only be used for a property that is owned, or they must be used to purchase a property. ECCG Program funds cannot be used to pay for any operational costs or program expenses, routine building maintenance, existing debt, or space unrelated to the ECE services. Examples of projects that have been funded previously by the ECCG Program can be found in Section 2 of this FAQ sheet.

***New!* Is classroom furniture and office furniture allowable costs? If some furniture expenses are unallowable, should it be included in the project budget? Can a grantee’s match funds be used to pay for any unallowable furniture costs? The grant notes that equipment is unallowable if it is conditional sales contract. Does that mean it’s allowable if it’s not a conditional sales contract?**

A project may include, as part of the overall capital project, equipping the facility. This may include furniture. Other equipment purchases are also allowed provided that the equipment has a significant useful life and complies with the requirements of 71 Ill. Adm. Code 43.100. Match funds may only be used on allowable expenses. Items purchased with conditional sales contracts are never allowable. Unallowable costs should not be included in the project budget.

How much can a school district or nonprofit ECE provider apply for?

CDB regulations do not specify any minimum for the grant amount. The grant ceiling is \$10 million.

Do grant recipients have to provide matching funds?

Yes, all grantees need to contribute a match ranging from 3-10% of their total grant amount, depending on their school district’s designated “tier.” These tiers are determined by the Illinois State Board of Education’s (ISBE) evidence-based funding formula. [Find your local school district’s tier.](#)

| ISBE-Designated “Tier” | Minimum Match (% of grant amount) |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Tier 1 School District | 3% |
| Tier 2 School District | 7.5% |
| Tier 3 School District | 8.75% |
| Tier 4 School District | 10% |

***New!* Are there any limits on the match fund sources or non-cash-in kind sources?**

Matching may be in the form of allowable costs incurred by the recipient or a contractor under the grant. CDB may allow third party in-kind contributions included in the application budget as a source to meet the matching requirement provided they are reasonable, necessary, and otherwise meet the requirements for the grant. Third party in-kind contributions may be in the form of real property, equipment, supplies and other expendable property and the value of goods and services directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to the project. All sources of matching funds and all proposed in-kind contributions must be identified in the application.

What can I do to stay informed?

Sign up for updates by visiting www.iff.org/QFA. Additionally, register for an upcoming information session by visiting www.iff.org/QFA. We also recommend visiting the [Capital Development Board](#) website for updates.

Questions About Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply for the ECCG Program?

Public schools or private not-for-profit entities with experience providing educational, health, social and/or child development services to young children and their families. The facility must operate in the future as an ECE center for 10 years if awarded the grant. Family Child Care Homes (FCCH) are not eligible. If eligible for licensing, appropriate DCFS license must be current.

***New!* Can licensed exempt programs that are not school districts apply for the ECCG funding?**

Yes, any nonprofit entity with experience in providing early childhood services is eligible.

***New!* Can for-profit entities apply for the IL ECCG Program?**

No, for-profit entities are not eligible. Only public schools or private nonprofit entities are eligible.

***New!* What if you're a center operating inside the church? The church owns the building, but the center and the church are under the same nonprofit, so would these types of centers still be eligible to apply?**

Any nonprofit entity with experience in providing early childhood services is eligible to apply. The applicant must provide proof of its nonprofit status at the time of application and must be properly licensed or licensed exempt in the operation of the center. Additionally, the grantee must own the property to be renovated or constructed. Please note that grant funds may not be used for sectarian instruction, religious worship or a school or department of divinity or for the proportional share of joint use facilities that provide space for business activities unrelated to the educational mission of the early childhood center.

Questions About the Application

When will the ECCG Program start accepting applications?

Applications will be accepted now through October 10th at 5pm CT through the [IL Capital Development Board webpage](#). Once applications are submitted and grant awards made, the grant period will begin no sooner than Dec. 1, 2022, and extend for a maximum of five years from the execution date of the grant agreement. All construction work and close-out requirements must be completed within that term.

What can I do to get ready to apply?

CDB will be looking at the following in an application:

- **Community Need.** CDB must prioritize applications from communities with the most children in need of ECE services. Priority will be given to areas with the most children from marginalized communities and populations of children 0-5, with an emphasis on children 0-36 months, who

exceed the number of enrolled slots designated for their age groups at ECE centers in the area served by those centers. **How can I demonstrate the need in my community?** A good starting point is [IFF's statewide needs assessment from 2019](#) and the [Illinois Early Children Asset Map \(IECAM\)](#).

- **Project Readiness.** CDB needs to know that applicants, if selected, are ready to move forward with their projects. That means applicants should have a clear renovation/expansion plan, budget, and team. There is \$60 million allocated for centers that are project ready now, and a separate Notice of Funding Opportunity will be released at a later date allocating additional funds for centers that need more time to plan or find a new facility.
- **ECE Program Quality.** CDB asks applicants about the quality of their ECE program and their track record as an ECE provider.

What documents should I have ready to submit with my application?

In addition to thinking through the questions above, providers will also need to submit various documents with their application, including:

- Current DCSF child care center license
- Deed/proof of ownership
- Documentation of non-profit status
- Good standing with IL SOS
- UEI number, GATA ID, SAM CAGE code
- Register/authenticate on the Illinois.gov authentication portal
- Certify ability to generate 3-10% match
- Ability to sustain operations outside of ECCG funding
- Demonstrates need in your community, organizational history, ability to recruit/sustain child care slots, quality factors
- Collaborative relationship with EI/CFC

New! What resources are there to help with the application process?

Please check the IL Capital Development Board website and utilize the Application Guide presentation to support your application, found here: [State of Illinois Capital Development Board](#).

New! Will the application response be on a full go, no-go approval basis? Or will the application response indicate what parts of the project are awarded as eligible expenses and what are not?

Grant amounts will be awarded based on the amounts requested in the application. Applications should only include eligible expenditures. Please note that the amounts paid under the grant agreement may be reduced to reflect only eligible expenses. Please review the Notice of Funding Opportunity for additional information on allowable expenditures.

New! Can you request funding for multiple sites owned/operated by the same non-profit organization? If so, should a non-profit submit separate applications for each site or combine into one application for all sites? If a non-profit can submit applications for more than one site, does the total grant funding requested for all sites need to be limited to \$10 million?

As stated in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, "Each entity may only submit one application per

funding round and each application must be for a single location.”

New! Can an applicant submit an application with a property that will be purchased upon grant award? Does the applicant need a letter of intent or contingent sales contract?

Yes, property purchases are allowed as part of the overall grant project. No paperwork regarding the property is required at the time of application; however, documentation related the property purchase will be required after grant award to support the payment milestone related to the purchase.

New! There is no section in the application to write about the community need, so how will this be scored? If no need section is added, where should we indicate our community need in the narrative sections?

Need shall be evaluated using the school district tier under Section 18-8.15 of the School Code for the area where the proposed project is located and using data from Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM (illinois.edu) related to the number of children living at 185% poverty or below and the number of children in the area versus the number of available early childcare slots for ages 0-5 (Head Start, licensed and licensed-exempt child care centers, licensed family child care centers, etc.), with an emphasis on children 0-36 months.

New! What is the timing of the Programmatic Risk Assessment that will be administered by the CDB? Is there any information you can share about the content of this risk assessment?

The Programmatic Risk Assessment is part of the Internal Controls Questionnaire and must be completed prior to submission of the application.

New! Can you clarify the terminology “total project cost”? It is used on Page 3 of the application. Will the total project cost exceed the grant amount requested plus required match?

At a minimum, the Total Project Cost will equal the grant amount requested plus the required statutory match. However, an applicant may contribute more than the minimum amount required by statute. In that case, the Total Project Cost will include the grant amount requested, the statutorily required match, and any additional contributions from the applicant.

New! Is LEED/environmental sustainability design required? If not required, is it recommended and scored?

LEED is not required, but it encouraged. Please see the Notice of Funding Opportunity for items that will be scored.

New! Does the equipment purchased list and reason that this equipment is needed to be included if the project scope of work involves renovation or construction, or is this list only required if the scope of work is for equipment purchases only?

Any equipment that will be purchased using grant funds or match funds, regardless of the overall project type, must be listed on the budget.

New! Does the grant recipient need to obtain multiple bids to select an architect?

Please see 2 CFR 200. 320 Methods of procurement to be followed, which says “(5) The non-Federal entity may use competitive proposal procedures for qualifications-based procurement of

architectural/engineering (A/E) professional services whereby competitors' qualifications are evaluated and the most qualified competitor is selected, subject to negotiation of fair and reasonable compensation. The method, where price is not used as a selection factor, can only be used in procurement of A/E professional services. It cannot be used to purchase other types of services though A/E firms are a potential source to perform the proposed effort.”

Section 2: Examples of 2011 ECG Projects

The State of Illinois funded a similar grant program for early childhood education educators in 2011. Here are some of the projects that resulted from that effort.

Brown Bear Daycare and Learning Center (Harvard) – \$3.2 million

Expansion of the current facility of approximately 18,750 square feet to provide additional infant rooms and infant and toddler play areas.

Chicago Urban Day School (Chicago-Englewood) – \$183,690

Renovation of the interior and exterior of the current facility, including a new roof and windows. The renovations allowed for the re-opening of classrooms.

Christopher House (Chicago-Belmont) – \$5 million

Demolition of the current structure and construction of a new 28,500-square-foot building, consisting of classroom and office spaces.

Dolton Park (Dolton) – \$3.5 million

Demolition of the current facility and construction on the current site of a new 15,300-square-foot facility consisting of classroom space, play areas, nursery, and computer lab.

Harlem Community Center Hand-n-Hand Child Care Center (Loves Park) – \$4 million

Construction of a new 20,540-square-foot facility that will include infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms.

Keeneyville School District 20 (Hanover Park) – \$1.6 million

Construction of a 6,000-square-foot separate preschool facility on the Greenbrook Elementary Site.

Korean American Community Services (Chicago-Irving Park) – \$847,625

Renovation to expand the current facility, consisting of classroom space and child activity center. The grant allowed for an increase in 2-5-year-old slots, and the ability to offer services in Korean, Spanish, and English.

Lighthouse Early Learning (Cahokia) – \$1.3 million

Construction of a new 8,000-square-foot facility to provide full-day, full-year services to children from birth to age 5.

One Hope United (Joliet) – \$3.1 million

Purchase of an existing building and renovation to convert the building into an early childhood facility.

Roseland Community Good News Daycare Center (Chicago-Roseland) – \$461,820

Demolition and construction of a new building. The program focuses on serving high school and low-income working moms.

Through A Child's Eyes (Cicero) – \$5 million

Purchase of an existing building and renovation to convert the building into an early childhood facility.

Tiny Tots Villa (Chicago-Chatham) – \$100,000

Renovation and repair of the current 2,115-square-foot facility, where 97% of the children served were from single-female households.

Tom Thumb Community Childcare Center (Carpentersville) – \$5.0 million

Construction of a new 27,000-square-foot facility, which became the only infant and toddler center in Carpentersville.

YWCA Kankakee (Kankakee) – \$2.4 million

Demolition of a portion of the existing facility and construction of classroom, kitchen, and staff workroom space.

Chicago Public School Grants

In 2011, 20% of the Illinois ECCG funds (\$20 million of the \$100 million) went directly to the Chicago Public Schools, which then developed its own criteria and process for awarding its funds to grantees. Listed below are the 2011 grantees.

Chicago Commons (Chicago-Bronzeville) – \$999,994

El Hogar del Niño (Chicago-Pilsen) – \$855,000

Metropolitan Family Services (Chicago-Multiple Locations) – \$731,712

Asian Human Services Award (Chicago-Multiple Locations) – \$603,900

Chicago Child Care Society (Chicago-Hyde Park) – \$563,089

Mary Crane Center (Chicago-Multiple Locations) – \$464,105

Concordia Place (Chicago-Multiple Locations) – \$127,100

Northwestern University Settlement Association (Chicago-Noble Square) – \$116,649



Sharing a mission of change

Southeast Asia Center (Chicago-Uptown) – \$78,097

Children’s Place Association (Chicago-Humboldt Park) – \$64,231

If you have any additional questions regarding the Illinois ECG Program or IFF’s Quality Facilities for All program, please reach out to us at QFA@IFF.org.