The Early Childhood Care and Education Capital Fund

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Early Childhood Care and Education Capital Fund

AGENDA:

- Overview & Background

- Capital Fund Grant Uses

- Eligibility Requirements

- Program Priorities

- Application Process

- Decision-Making Process

- Capital Fund Grant Timeline

- Reporting Requirements

- Resources

Through the establishment of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Capital Fund, Rhode Island is taking the necessary steps to expand quality early learning facilities within a mixed delivery system.

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Why does this program exist?

The law establishing this program authorizes the Rhode Island Department of Human Services to administer grants for the improvement of existing early learning facilities, the expansion of existing early learning facilities, and the creation of new early learning facilities.

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Quality, Affordable Care is Out of Reach for Many

High Quality, Affordable Child Care is an Essential Factor for Family Economic Stability
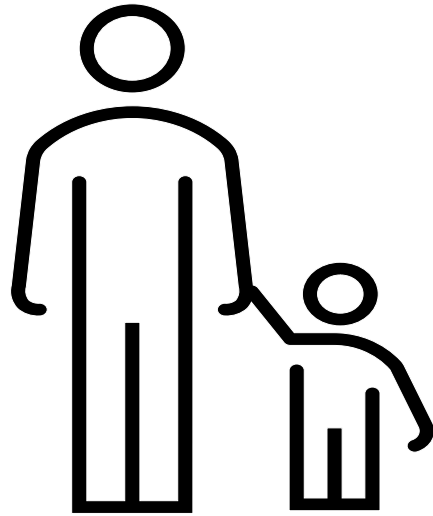
High quality, affordable child care directly influences parents' ability to work and children's healthy development.

Though essential, high costs put this out of reach for many low-income families.

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A facility is not merely where a program takes place, it's part of the formula for success.

Every child deserves equal access to affordable, developmentally-appropriate, high-performing early learning facilities.

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# Facilities Projects Face Unique Financing Challenges

Operator Financials and Large Variation within Industry

- There are at least 600,000 providers in America ranging from small in-home providers to large multi-site businesses and organizations

- Funding sources are often reimbursement based

- Few parents can afford to pay for the true cost of quality care
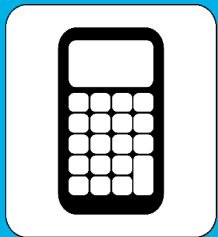
Unique Building Requirements and Appraisal Challenges

- Very particular site and build-out requirements can add time and cost to projects

- Location and specialized nature of facilities can cause appraisal issues
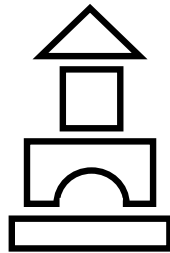
Partnership Opportunities and Hurdles

- Mixed use projects offer some of the highest potential for future child care project development

- Funding sources can be challenging to braid together

- Requirements of child care (such as first floor) may be a disincentive to private developers
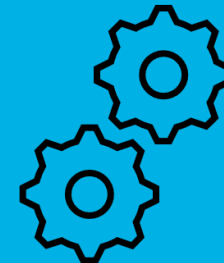
Project Economics

- There is currently no dedicated federal source of funding for child care facilities and very few state sources

- Most projects cannot support traditional debt models and will require an infusion of grant or equity dollars

- New programs may take 2-3 full years to even break even

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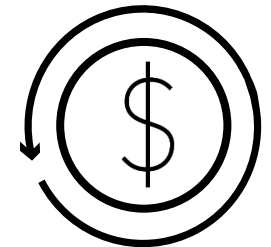
The 2019 Rhode Island Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment

This assessment was commissioned by the State of Rhode Island as part of its strategic planning process to:

1. Describe facility conditions, capacity, and challenges, and
2. Provide actionable recommendations for improving quality and access in the state's early learning system

Recommendations included taking necessary steps to include an early learning facility bond referendum on a ballot to voters - the most clear-cut way to access the large amount of capital needed to grow the system to scale and enable prioritized providers to make necessary improvements to infrastructure.
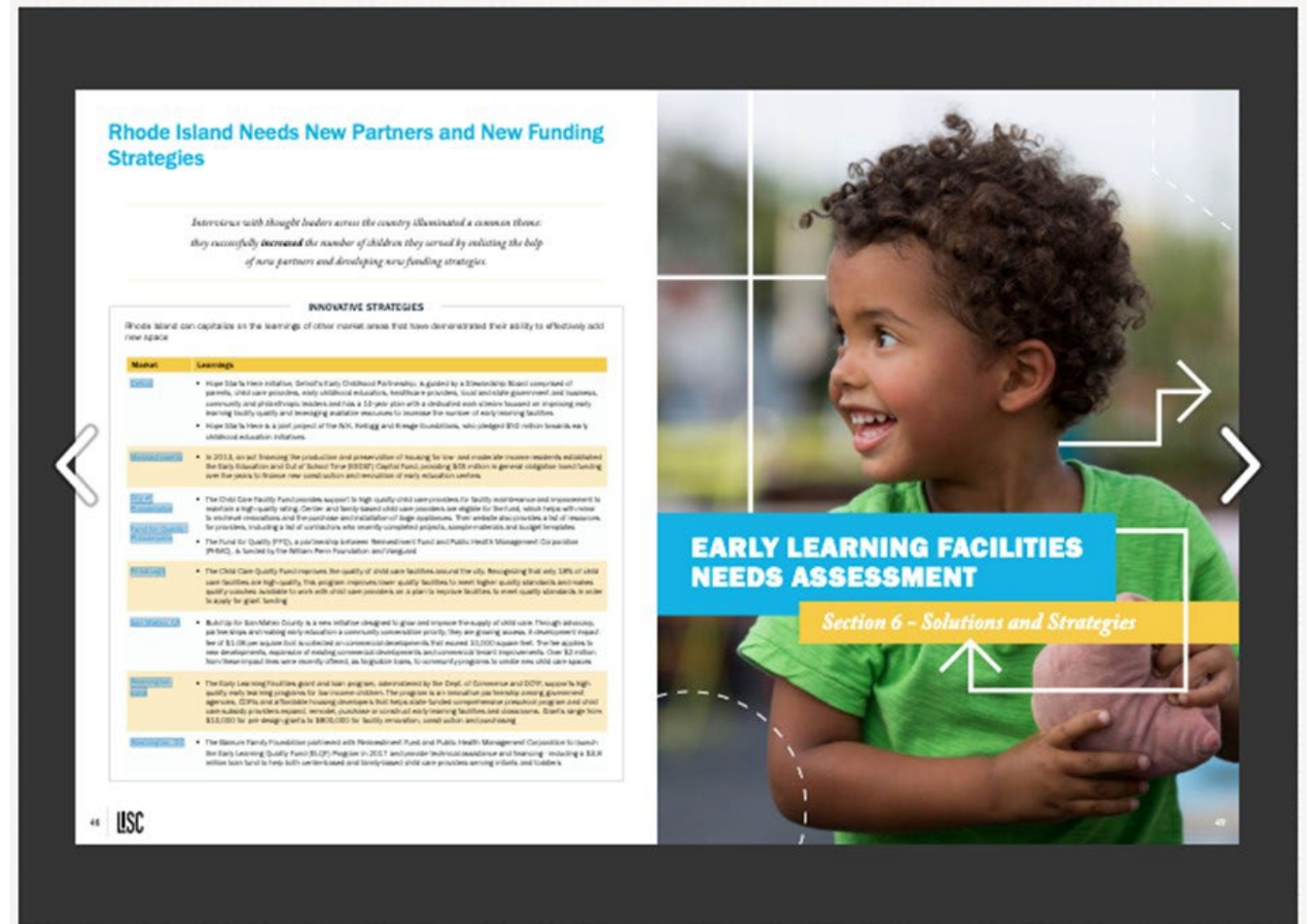
Public Support for the ECCE Capital Fund Was Strong

Approve 66.8%

Reject 33.2%
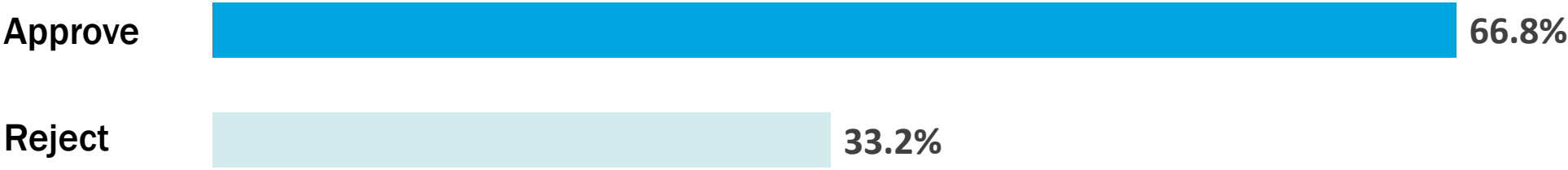
In the March 2021 special election, Rhode Islanders overwhelmingly voted in support of an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Capital Fund, providing over thirteen million dollars ($13,000,000) in grant funding for physical improvements to existing child care spaces and for the development of new licensed early childhood care and education facilities.

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The rules and regulations for the voter approved ECCE Capital Fund allows DHS to partner with a qualified community partner to establish, administer, and oversee the program. DHS is partnering with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

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Local Initiatives Support Corporation

- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is an "intermediary" or "pass through entity"

  - An intermediary channels funding from public and private sources to organizations that are members of their networks- typically funding is allocated to projects for specific program purposes

- LISC was contracted by the Department of Human Services to administer this facilities grant funding to the early learning community

- Funding for this program comes from the proceeds of a general obligation bond issuance dedicated to this purpose and approved by voters at the March 2, 2021 Special Election

For More than Two Decades LISC has Supported the Early Care and Education Field
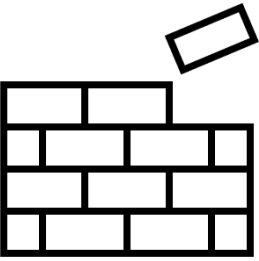
Capacity Building
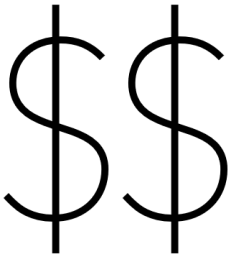
Investment
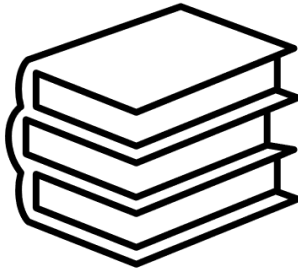
Technical Resources
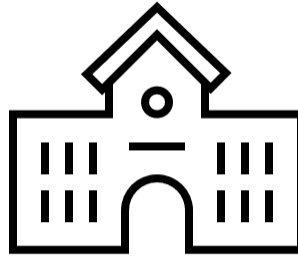
Development of Quality Infrastructure
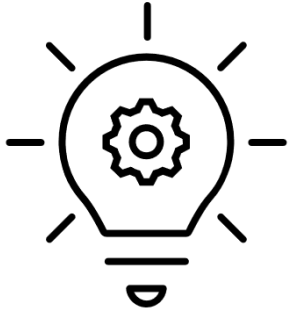
Thought Leadership

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LISC's Rhode Island Child Care & Early Learning Facilities Fund

For over twenty years, LISC has operated a dedicated and staffed early learning facilities fund in Rhode Island.

Through this program, we have paved the way for hundreds of centers to improve their facilities through specialized technical assistance, innovative financing, public policy initiatives, and by sharing expertise, positively impacting thousands of children.

Learn more at www.riccelff.org.

- Over $28,000,000 invested in 250 early learning providers statewide

- 1000+ hours of dedicated, on-site technical support and capacity building to an average of 80 organizations annually

- Cutting Edge Training featuring leading experts, nationally recognized resource materials and a newly launched online training portal

- Influenced and guided statewide policy and funding priorities to support and promote equitable access to quality early education statewide

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ECCE Capital fund Program Overview

Overview of Uses and Funding

Early Childhood Care and Education Capital Fund Grants

$13,201,500

- Over $13 million in matching grants to support early learning facility projects
- Funds are to support greater access to safe, high-quality early learning opportunities supporting technical assistance along with planning and capital funding needs
- Funds are available for a period of three years, starting in 2022 and ending in October of 2024.

Small grants for urgent health and safety, quality improvements, and reconfiguration of space

This would benefit up to 40 organizations and positively impact as many as 4,000 children annually.

~$1,500,000

Larger grants for the development of new, high quality spaces which may include new construction, major rehabilitation of vacant or blighted properties and expansion to existing facilities.

The amount is expected to support approximately 6-10 projects, creating new, high quality spaces and opportunities for as many as 1,500 children annually.

~$11,500,000

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Overview of Uses and Funding

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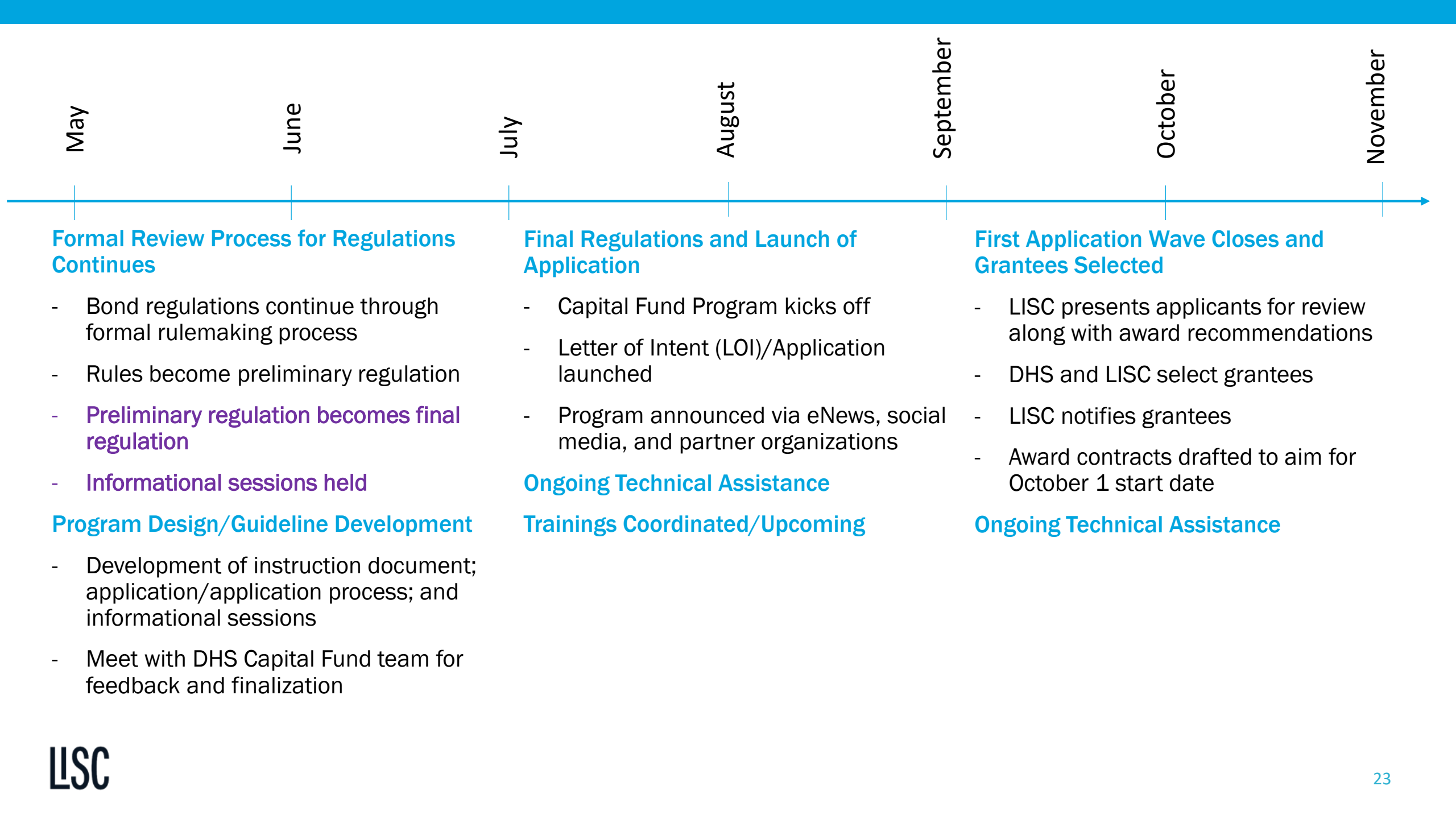
~$11,500,000

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May | June | July | August | September | October | November

Formal Review Process for Regulations Continues

- Bond regulations continue through formal rulemaking process

- Rules become preliminary regulation

- Preliminary regulation becomes final regulation

- Informational sessions held

Program Design/Guideline Development

- Development of instruction document; application/application process; and informational sessions

- Meet with DHS Capital Fund team for feedback and finalization

Final Regulations and Launch of Application

- Capital Fund Program kicks off

- Letter of Intent (LOI)/Application launched

- Program announced via eNews, social media, and partner organizations

Ongoing Technical Assistance

Trainings Coordinated/Upcoming

First Application Wave Closes and Grantees Selected

- LISC presents applicants for review along with award recommendations

- DHS and LISC select grantees

- LISC notifies grantees

- Award contracts drafted to aim for October 1 start date

Ongoing Technical Assistance

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Early Childhood Care and Education Capital Fund

Access to public dollars for facilities will enable our communities to leverage resources and address the needs of most vulnerable children and families, and provide local community economic stimulus and construction trade business growth.

You can read news and updates on the status of the Capital Fund here: https://riccelff.org/early-childhood-care-and-education-capital-fund/

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Grant Uses

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Grant Uses

Grants will be available for the following uses:

- **Facility Improvements** – Small-scale renovations and repairs to existing spaces necessary to address health and safety issues, make quality improvements, and/or reconfigure spaces to enhance capacity.

- **Facility Development & Expansion** – Costs associated with the development of new, high-quality spaces, which may include planning and feasibility activities, new construction, major rehabilitation of vacant or blighted properties and expansion to existing facilities.

This is a reimbursement-based grant program. *If approved for grant funding, grant-funded expenses must be approved, incurred and paid for during the grant term prior to receiving reimbursement (evidence of expense and payment such as invoices and cancelled checks will be required).*

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Grant Uses

Grant funds will be used to cover eligible costs associated with the design, construction, repair, renovation, rehabilitation or other capital improvement or deferred maintenance of an eligible facility such as:

- Preparation of reports, plans, engineering, specifications, and/or inspections,

- Construction, rehabilitation, expansion, demolition, site work,

- Upgrading or conversion of building systems, and

- Costs of furniture, fixtures, and/or equipment.

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Grant Uses

Facility Improvement grant proposals to address health and safety issues and enhance program quality in existing child care spaces should be based on documentation and consultation from a regulating entity such as DHS Child Care Licensing or as part of a BrightStars Quality Improvement Plan (as a result of an onsite visit).

Examples of improvements may include, but are not limited to:

- Repair/replacement of unsafe fencing or installation of additional fencing to meet licensing regulations

- Installation of safety egress where required by health and safety rules and regulations

- Installation of safety surfacing under structures that are otherwise deemed in compliance with ASTM and CPSC guidelines

- Costs to remove unsafe equipment

- Remediation/improvement of a direct facility-related item as a result of a compliance or regulatory visit

- Purchase/installation of shade structures in an outdoor space

- Purchase/installation of handwashing sinks

- Purchase/installation of storage/shelving

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Grant Uses

Examples of grant uses to expand or develop new sites may include, but are not limited to:

- Planning and feasibility such as professional architectural design services for project feasibility and concept design; site analysis; engineering studies; legal services

- Site acquisition (the cost to purchase and prepare property for its intended purpose)

- Construction of a new site (ground up construction)

- Renovation of a newly purchased/leased site

- Expansion/Addition of existing site

- Large-scale renovation or retrofit of existing site

- Mixed Use Development (a land development containing two or more major types of uses including child care space-*Program grant resources would fund child care portion only*)

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ECCE Capital Fund Eligibility

What is an Eligible Early Learning Facilities Project?

For a project to be eligible, applicants must clearly demonstrate:

- A need for the project proposed

- How the project benefits low-income children and the surrounding community

- A financial need for assistance in the form of grant funding for the project to be feasible (please note, if an award is made, the amount of the award will be based on the demonstrated minimum amount required to fill the financial need with grant funds, not necessarily on the requested amount)

- Local support for the project

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A CONCISE AND COMPELLING CASE for your project. Why are you considering undertaking a facility project? What problem are you solving for?

Health & Safety

For example, programs are often in older buildings that may suffer from things such as lead paint contamination, splintering flooring and handrails, poor ventilation or unsafe play equipment.

Quality

The way that a facility is designed and configured can have a big impact on the quality of your program. Some examples include bathrooms adjacent to classrooms, toilets, sinks and counters at child-height, physically divided spaces, good natural light, adequate storage, and space for adults to plan and meet.

Expansion

Programs that maintain long waiting lists may consider expanding to a larger facility. For example, facilities currently serving only certain age groups such as preschoolers may want to expand to incorporate children of other ages such as infants and toddlers, or adapt their space to better serve children with special needs.

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- Local support for the project

Have you conducted a market study? Applicants should describe:

1. **Target Market** – The geographic area you expect to draw most of your children and the population you plan on serving.
2. **Existing Supply** – How many other providers are in your market area and who do they serve?
3. **Demand** – The number of children you can reasonably expect to enroll in your facility.
4. **Competitive Advantage** – What can distinguish your program from others

Sources of information:
- American Factfinder – United States Census Bureau
- Rhode Island Kids Count
- Exceed – exceed.ri.gov
- 2019 RI Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment
- Call other providers – Ask if they are fully enrolled; do they have a waiting list and if so, how many kids are on it and in what age groups
- Survey parents – What are their current child care arrangements, what do they like or dislike

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- Local support for the project

Market Study

How many children will be served, and from what age groups

What will distinguish your program from others in the area; what community needs are you fulfilling

- o Will you offer space for priority populations such as infants and toddlers?
- o Will you have special features like a parent resource room or gardening/green space?
- o Are you collaborating with any local organizations to offer additional family services or supports?

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- Local support for the project

"Eligible Projects involving the Improvement of existing early learning facilities should leverage funds in addition to Program funds. Program funding shall be the minimum amount necessary for the feasibility of the Eligible Project proposed.

Eligible Projects involving the expansion of existing early learning facilities and/or the creation of new early learning facilities must leverage funds in addition to Program funds. Priority will be given to proposals that leverage a diverse source of funds for project completion. Program funding shall be the minimum amount necessary for the feasibility of the Eligible Project proposed."

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- Local support for the project

SHOW YOU HAVE A PLAN TO RAISE SUFFICIENT FUNDING– Applicants must demonstrate a reasonable plan for how they will get the money to complete their project. Ideally this will include resources in hand to apply toward the project, such as agency or personal assets or external funds that have already been raised.

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Initial Underwriting		
Development Cost	$	100,000
Sources		*Amount*
Owners' Equity	$	10,000
Capital Grant	$	-
Debt	$	90,000
Total:	$	100,000
Operating Financials		
Tuition Revenue	$	30,000
Operating Costs	$	25,000
Net Operating Income:	$	5,000
Interest Rate		6%
Amort (Yrs)		20
Annual Payment		$7,846.61
Debt Service Coverage Ratio		0.64

Underwriting Grant Size		
Development Cost	$	100,000
Sources		*Amount*
Owners' Equity	$	10,000
Capital Grant	$	45,000
Debt	$	45,000
Total:	$	100,000
Operating Financials		
Tuition Revenue	$	30,000
Operating Costs	$	25,000
Net Operating Income:	$	5,000
Interest Rate		6%
Amort (Yrs)		20
Annual Payment		$3,923.31
Debt Service Coverage Ratio		1.27

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- Local support for the project

A network of supporters can be a huge resource and ability to demonstrate support.

Internal Stakeholders

- Staff

- Board members (or if for-profit, consider forming a group of advisors)

- Parents

External Network:

- Funders

- Professionals who will volunteer as advisors

- Elected officials

- Contractors

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What is an Eligible Facility

"Eligible facility" means a building, structure, or site that is, or will be, owned, leased, or otherwise occupied by one (1) or more "Eligible Organizations" and licensed by DHS or a Local Education Agency (LEA); provided that:

- The facility serves or is committed to serving low-income families

- Leased facilities have a lease term no less than 20 years including options*

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What is an Eligible Facility

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*Evidence of site control may be requested.

Applicants who <u>lease space </u>will be required to provide a document, signed by lessor and lessee, indicating they will enter into a lease or written agreement of at least 20 years from the date of the award or a lease with options that comprise a full 20-year period in the event a grant is awarded.

No application will be considered without such written assurance, and no grant will be awarded without a signed lease or written agreement as described above.
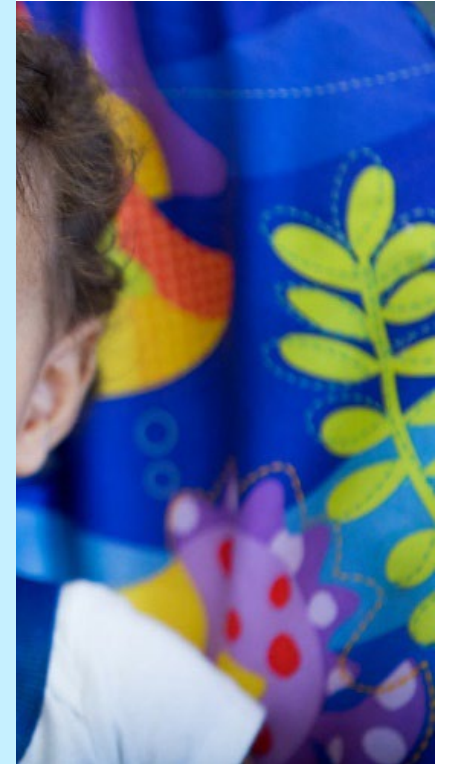
Who is an Eligible Organization

A child care provider that is, at the time of application, providing, or has demonstrated a commitment to provide early childhood care and education for low-income families with a public subsidy, OR

A developer or community-based organization that is partnered with or is committed to partnering with a child care provider that has demonstrated a commitment to provide early childhood care and education for low-income families with a public subsidy *(evidence such as a memorandum of understanding between the developer and child care provider may be requested)*

All eligible organizations:

- Must provide a Unique Entity ID (SAM) - if you do not currently have a Unique Entity ID, please visit SAM.gov to get one assigned to your business entity – Watch a "how to" video and read the step-by-step quick guide for getting a Unique Entity ID

- Must be operating in good standing in the State of Rhode Island and with RI DHS Child Care Licensing

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Questions so far?

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Program Priorities

Program Priorities

The Program represents a limited resource with a large mandate.

To ensure that resources are expended efficiently and in a manner that most positively impacts the intended beneficiaries, the DHS has established the following list of Program funding priorities.

Preference may be given based on the following criteria:

- Level to which project improves access to early childhood care and education in underserved communities

- Level to which applicant has demonstrated commitment to serving families with public subsidy

- Includes development of space for infants/toddlers

- Proposes matching funding for project (evidence such as bank statements to verify the availability of proposed matching funds may be requested)

- Solicits and/or includes participation of businesses certified by state Office of Diversity, Equity & Opportunity (ODEO), including construction companies and/or businesses

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What is Not Likely to be Funded

- Landlord responsibilities in leased spaces
- No long-term site control
- No detailed and/or approved plan
- Plan not aligned to best practice
- Low or no high-needs children served
- Low capacity to manage project and / or grant
- Fiscal issues
- Home expansions

*Please note, if you plan on applying for playground construction or renovation, **large climbing structures** are not required by regulation, are not necessary for best practice in outdoor play, and are not likely to be funded in this Program.*

Application and Decision-Making Process

Application Process

Step 1

Determine Your Eligibility.

Not sure if you are eligible? Seeking assistance in meeting eligibility criteria?

Contact LISC!
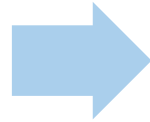
Step 2

Submit a Letter of Intent (LOI).

Full proposals are not accepted before submitting an LOI. The LOI is intended to be an abbreviated description of your project, which will be used by LISC and RI DHS as an initial assessment of fit with resources available.

A template is available and LOIs will be accepted on a rolling basis.
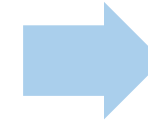
Step 3

Complete Electronic Application or Access Additional Technical Assistance.

Within 30 days of the LOI submission, LISC may request further information and/or clarification, and will notify you of authorization to proceed with one of the following next steps:

1. Set up a meeting for further technical assistance from LISC staff and/or consultants or

2. Proceed to full electronic grant application

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Letter of Intent

A Letter of Intent (LOI) must be submitted to the LISC RI Child Care Facilities Fund Team at RIECCE-CapitalFund@lisc.org *prior to any application submission*. It should be a maximum of 2-3 pages in length.

LOIs will be accepted on a rolling basis (please note decision-making schedule and dates below).

Full proposals are not accepted at this point in the process. The LOI is intended to be an abbreviated description of your project, which will be used by LISC and RI DHS as an initial assessment of fit with resources available.

- ✓ A brief summary statement
  - Who is applying, organization name, and what are you proposing to do with grant funds?
  - How much funding is being requested?
  - Is this a portion of a larger project cost (for example, are you requesting funding for the development of child care space that is part of a larger mixed-use development)?
  - What is your project timeline (planning to completion)?
- ✓ A statement of need
  - What issue are you addressing?
  - Who benefits?
- ✓ A description of project activity
  - What activities will be involved?
  - What is your approach?
  - Are you collaborating with others?
- ✓ The outcome of the project (what is the measurable impact)
  - What do you hope to achieve?
  - How will you know you have achieved these outcomes?
- ✓ Your capacity to complete the project*
  - How are you, your staff, and your organization equipped to carry out the proposed activities?
  - Do you have a history with similar projects?
  - Can you carry out the proposed project within a 12 – 24 month time period?
- ✓ A budget – a general description of the project funding needs
  - What is the total development cost of the project?
  - What is the amount of your grant request?
  - How did you estimate these costs (did you receive estimates from licensed professionals)?
- ✓ Contact name and contact information
- ✓ A signature

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Decision-Making Process

1. Online applications will first be reviewed by LISC staff to ensure **basic eligibility and completeness**.

2. Eligible, complete applications will then be released to a **review committee**, which will evaluate each application based on a scoring rubric. They will then assign a score which will determine the funding recommendation.

3. RI **DHS will then give final award approval** based on the results of the committee meeting.

In addition to meeting eligibility requirements and scoring based on the scoring rubric, selection will also be based on:

-   o   The clarity and completeness of the application;
-   o   A site assessment by LISC staff or consultant prior to the final decision to award funding, either done by phone, virtual meeting or on site; and
-   o   The availability of funding.

The decision for acceptance of LOIs and grant applications will be made at the discretion of LISC's Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund in partnership with RI DHS.

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Decision-Making Criteria

Each eligible application will be evaluated on the following competitive criteria (100 Points):

Project and Organizational Readiness (Maximum 50 Points)	
Proposal demonstrates the need for the project and presents a feasible and complete plan for success (includes identification of team with ability to complete eligible project)	**20**
The organization has shown the ability to sustain this project and its overall operations	**20**
Applicant has sought out and can demonstrate local support for the project	**10**

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Decision-Making Criteria

Each eligible application will be evaluated on the following competitive criteria (100 Points):

Technical Proposal (Maximum 35 Points)

Proposal clearly demonstrates how the project will have a specific and measurable impact on the affected community's access to safe, high-quality, affordable slots for low-income families	15
Application demonstrates accurate costs (budgets reflect sound business practices, costs are based on professional estimates, project incorporates any findings from assessments of space such as licensing consultation)	10
Application clearly demonstrates a financial need for assistance in the form of grant funding	10

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Decision-Making Criteria

Each eligible application will be evaluated on the following competitive criteria (100 Points):

Other Priorities (Maximum 15 Points)	
Includes development or improvement of space for infants/toddlers	5
Proposes matching funding for project (evidence such as bank statements to verify the availability of proposed matching funds may be requested)	5
Solicits and/or includes participation of businesses certified by state Office of Diversity, Equity & Opportunity (ODEO), including construction companies or development team members, as part of the project team	5

Questions?

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Grant-Funded Project Timeline

Grant Timeline

Application Process
- Letter of Intent (LOI) submission and acceptance starting **July 1, 2022**
- Electronic application submission, including all necessary attachments such as project estimates and schedule
- Committee review and decision-making process complete
- Applicant notified of grant award status

Notice of Award
- Complete W9 form
- Provide direct deposit authorization
- Submit additional documentation as requested to ensure eligibility and compliance

Grant Agreement Process
- LISC sends written grant agreement to grantee - includes the grant scope, budget, terms, and conditions
- Grantee reviews and returns signed agreement to LISC
- **LISC provides fully executed copy of the agreement**

Grant Funded Project Period
- Eligible expenses incurred for grant-funded work completed *during this time period* (after the fully executed agreement is in place) can be approved for reimbursement by LISC
- If funding is provided for capital expenses like hiring contractors for construction or renovation, that work must begin within one year of the date of the fully executed grant agreement

Grant Close Out
- All grant-funded work, inovicing, reporting, and reimbursements must be complete by the grant term end date indicated in the grant agreement
- The absolute final deadline for this program to close out is **October 31, 2024****

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Key Dates

- **Letter of Intent (LOI)** accepted starting July 1, 2022 on a rolling basis (template available on the website) –Within 30 days of the LOI submission, LISC may request further information and/or clarification, and will notify you of authorization to proceed with one of the following next steps:
  - Set up meeting for further technical assistance from LISC staff and/or consultants; or
  - Proceed to electronic application for one of the following specific grant types
    - Planning and/or capital repair and renovation grant for immediate health and safety, quality improvement, or space reconfiguration; or
    - Planning and/or Capital grant for large scale development of space

- **Complete applications** received by 8/18/22 will be reviewed in early September with applicants notified by 10/1/22

- **Future reviews** may be scheduled and posted based on funding availability

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Questions?

LISC

Grant-Funded Project Reporting

LISC

Grant Reporting Requirements

Financial Reporting

- Maintain records to demonstrate use of grant funds (including copies of signed agreements for grant-funded work, invoices, receipts, cancelled checks, bank statements)
- Provide and maintain financial reports of revenue and expenditures of grant funds
- Provide and maintain records of signed financial reports for each disbursement request certifying the use of the funds are true and accurate and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant award.

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Grant Reporting Requirements

Project Reporting

- Provide monthly written project updates and comply with requests for information regarding project activities
- Maintain and provide records that anyone hired (such as contractors, designers, engineers, etc.) with grant funding went through a competitive application process, including the rationale used to make all hiring decisions
- Maintain and provide signed agreements with any contractors, architects, designers, etc. hired for grant-funded work
- Allow LISC and DHS to visit project site when requested

LISC

Questions?

LISC

Resources

Tools and Resources to Support Early Planning and Predevelopment

- **LISC Technical Assistance** – If you are in any stage of this process or even just considering starting this process, please contact us! There is a brief electronic form to be completed.
- **Facility Project Readiness Worksheet**
- **Site Evaluation Checklist**
- **Space Planning Worksheet**
- **Planning Grant Resources**
  - LISC planning grants
- **Loans and Recoverable Grants**

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Planning Grant Opportunities

EARLY FEASIBILITY AND PLANNING GRANTS allow qualified organizations to secure professional services to plan for and asses the feasibility of both indoor and outdoor facility projects. Qualified services might include things such as architectural services, landscape/playground design services, engineering studies, and environmental surveys.

LISC Planning Grants
- Small, competitive pool of private funds
- Funds can be used to secure professionals to plan for and assess the feasibility of indoor and outdoor facility projects
- Funds through the RICCFF are available to both non-profit and for-profit corporations in Rhode Island

Please contact us for LISC's funding guidelines.

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LISC Loans and Recoverable Grants

Recoverable Grants

A very competitive pool of recoverable grant funds are available to qualified organizations that are looking to expand quality child care or early education programming for low-income families. Recoverable grants, which typically range in size from $10,000 – $100,000 can be used to support pre-development costs, such as an option on a site, architectural drawings, environmental and engineering review, legal and project management fees.

Loans

- Eligible Borrowers: Nonprofit and for-profit early childhood program operators; community development corporations and other mission-driven development organizations providing space for early childhood centers. Priority to projects in LISC sites.
- Interest Rate: 5-8%
- Product Term:
  Bridge Loan: n/a
  Predevelopment: 2 years
  Acquisition: 3 years
  Construction: 3 years
  Permanent: 20 years
- Loan Fees: Up to 1.5% of loan amount plus legal fees

Questions? Comments?

LISC

RICCELFF website: www.riccelff.org