



# **EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION CAPITAL FUND INFORMATION & INSTRUCTIONS**

## **Introduction**

All children deserve high-quality, developmentally appropriate learning environments that are designed to keep them safe, healthy, and support their physical, behavioral and cognitive development. Equitable access to a high-quality early learning experience is essential to providing children with a strong pathway in school and life. That is why, in the March 2021 special election, Rhode Islanders overwhelmingly voted in support of the Early Childhood Care and Education Capital Fund, providing thirteen million dollars (\$13,000,000) in grant funding for physical improvements to and development of licensed early childhood care and education facilities to help close achievement gaps, support our working families, and better prepare our workforce of tomorrow. Funding will be available over a period of three years to begin in Fiscal Year 2022.

Through the establishment of this capital fund, Rhode Island is taking the necessary steps to expand quality early learning facilities within a mixed delivery system by providing funding that capitalizes on existing spaces, facilitates innovative partnerships, and provides technical support in order to build a strong pipeline of new construction projects. These funds will support greater access to safe, high-quality early learning opportunities for Rhode Island's families.

## **Grant Use**

Grants will be available for the following uses:

1. Capital Improvements - small renovations and repairs to existing spaces necessary to address health and safety issues, make quality improvements, and/or reconfigure spaces to enhance capacity.
2. Expansion - 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.

These categories are described in greater detail below.

**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).\*

*\*If you are approved for funding to address an urgent, documented health and safety issue, you may be eligible to receive an advance of grant funds by meeting certain milestones in your grant-funded project. LISC will work with you individually to determine if your project is eligible for a funding advance.*

## Grant Eligibility

### 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 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)
- The entity applying must provide a Unique Entity ID (SAM) – if you do not have one, you can visit SAM.gov to be assigned a number ([click here to view a reference guide for getting your Unique Entity ID](#) or [click here to watch a video demonstration](#))
- The entity applying must be operating in good standing in the State of Rhode Island and with RI DHS Child Care Licensing\*

*\* In good standing with [RI DHS Child Care Licensing](#) refers to early care and education programs currently free of any pending investigations or any pending or past legal actions, or other actions that call into question the Eligible Organization's capacity to care for children in a manner that ensures their safety. This determination will be made at the discretion of RI DHS Child Care Licensing.*

### Eligible Facility

- A building, structure, or site that is, or will be owned, leased or otherwise used by one or more eligible organizations and licensed or will be licensed (post-construction) by the Department of Human Services (DHS) or 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\*
- Municipally-owned buildings are eligible provided that there is a dedicated single purpose space for licensed early childhood care and education, 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\*

*\* Evidence of site control may be requested. All applicants will be required to [provide a document, signed by the property owner](#). For leased spaces, the form will indicate the property owner 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. It also indicates the property owner consents to the proposed project. It also requires the property owner maintain the space as a child care and early learning program for at least 20 years. No application will be considered without such written assurance, and no grant will be awarded without a signed lease as described above.*

## Eligible Project

- The acquisition, design, construction, repair, renovation, rehabilitation or other capital improvement or deferred maintenance of an eligible facility
- Eligible applicants must demonstrate:
  - A need for the eligible project proposed
  - How the project benefits low-income children and the surrounding community
  - A financial need for assistance in the form of **grant** funding (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

## Priority Areas

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 on the proposed project's development team

## Purpose of Grants

- 1) **Small Health, Safety, and Quality Improvements** – grants to address documented urgent health and safety issues, to make quality improvements, and to reconfigure existing licensed spaces to enhance capacity. Health, safety and quality requests 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

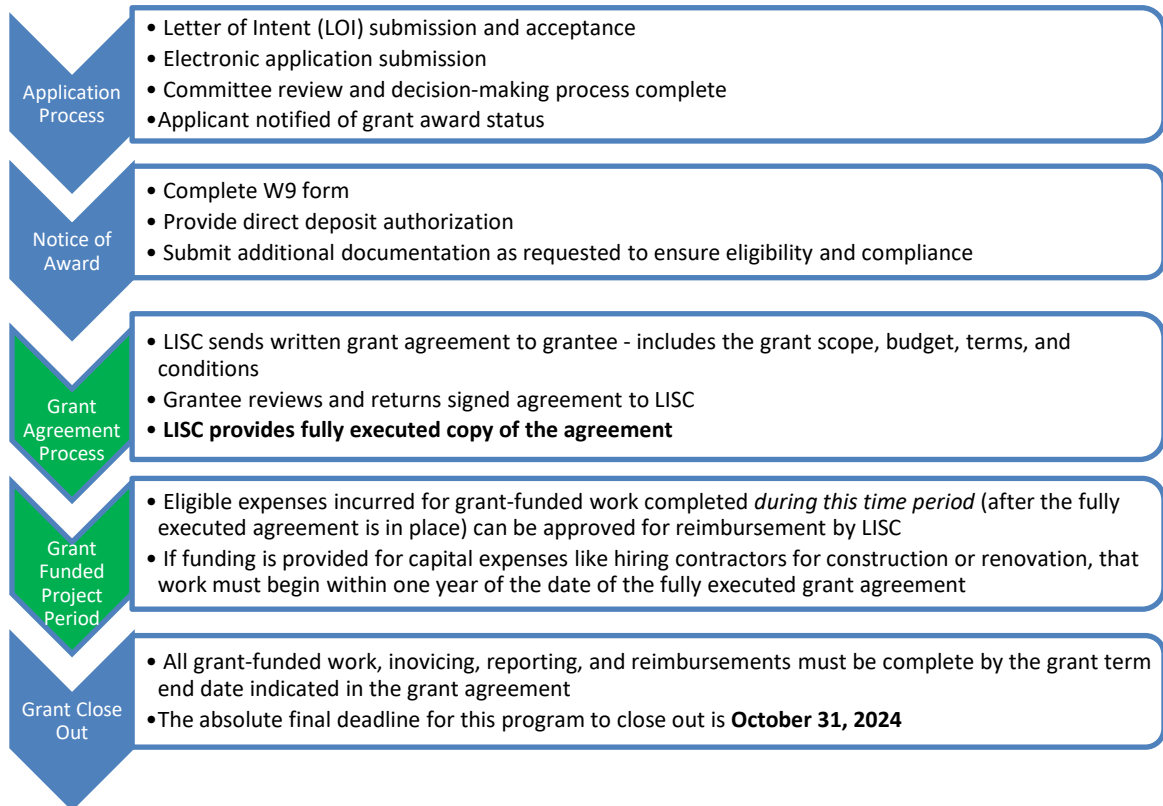
[Further guidance for home-based family child care providers seeking funding for repairs and renovations to residential spaces can be found here.](#)

- 2) **Development of New Spaces** – includes grants for:
- 3) **Planning and Feasibility** - grants are available for predevelopment and feasibility activities such as professional architectural design services for project feasibility and concept design; site analysis; engineering studies; legal services
- 4) **Acquisition**
- 5) **Construction/rehabilitation/renovation**

Applicants should be aware that any design professionals/contractors hired must be licensed and insured. Proof of licensure and insurance will be required. All construction must follow proper building and fire codes.

## Grant-Funded Project Period

The beginning date of a project period will be the date a successful applicant enters into a signed grant agreement with LISC following approval by LISC, RI DHS, and the decision making committee. Funds spent on the grant-funded project after the date of the execution of the LISC grant agreement shall be eligible for reimbursement. If repair, renovation, or construction funding is awarded, project construction must begin within one year of the date of the signed grant agreement and must be completed by the term end date in the signed grant agreement. Any extensions to this time period will be made at the discretion of LISC. *All grants funded under this program must be closed out (grant-funded work complete, expenses paid and reimbursed, and reporting complete) by October 31, 2024.*



## Application and Selection Process

### Step 1 – Determine Eligibility

Carefully review eligibility criteria to ensure you are meeting baseline requirements. If you are unsure of whether you meet the criteria, please reach out to the LISC RI Child Care Facilities Fund team for guidance at [RIECCE-CapitalFund@lisc.org](mailto:RIECCE-CapitalFund@lisc.org) or 401-331-0131.

### Step 2 – Submit Letter of Intent – This is required regardless of the type of project proposed

Submit a **Letter of Intent (LOI)** to the LISC RI Child Care Facilities Fund Team at [RIECCE-CapitalFund@lisc.org](mailto:RIECCE-CapitalFund@lisc.org). 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.

- The LOI should be a *maximum* of 3 pages
- Please include the following elements within your LOI
  - ✓ 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

*\*For guidance on assessing your organization’s capacity to carry out your project along with other helpful information including testing project feasibility and resources for selecting professionals, visit the [Child Care Facilities Development & Financing](#) resource guide.*

### **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:

- 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

Please note that all applications must be submitted electronically. If you are unable to complete an online application, please contact the LISC team at [RIECCE-CapitalFund@lisc.org](mailto:RIECCE-CapitalFund@lisc.org) or 401-331-0131 for assistance. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

### **Step 4 – Selection Process and Funding Decisions Made**

Online applications will first be reviewed by LISC staff to ensure basic eligibility and completeness. Eligible, complete applications will then be reviewed by RI DHS and released to a review committee, which will evaluate each application based on the scoring rubric. Applications will be assigned a score which will determine the funding recommendation. RI DHS will then give final award approval based on the results of the committee meeting. These funding recommendations will be made and provided to applicants based on the following schedule:

- Wave 2 letters of intent must be submitted no later than **3/24/23**
- Complete applications are due by end of day on **4/21/23**; applications will be reviewed and applicants notified of decisions in early **May 2023**
- Future reviews may be scheduled and posted based on funding availability

In addition to meeting eligibility requirements and scoring based on the identified criteria using the rubric in Appendix A, selection will also be based on:

- The clarity and completeness of the application;
- 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

- 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 Department of Human Services.

### **Step 5 – LISC Grant Agreement**

Successful applicants who have been approved for funding will provide necessary information to LISC to enter into a formal grant agreement. This may include, but is not limited to, a W9 form, direct deposit authorization, and additional business financial information. A written agreement will be sent via email for review and signature by the grantee and LISC will then provide a fully executed copy of the agreement.

### **Reporting**

All funded organizations are required to participate in regular impact surveys and reports. Information to be gathered will include any changes in the provider's capacity to offer safe, high quality early learning services as a result of the capital project, and other information that can be used to assess the impact of this program. Financial reporting regarding all approved expenditures related to grant funding must be maintained and provided upon request.

## APPENDIX A

### Evaluation Criteria

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

CRITERIA	Maximum Points Available	SCORE*
<b>Project and Organizational Readiness (Maximum 50 Points)</b>		
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	
<b>Technical Proposal (Maximum 35 Points)</b>		
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	
<b>Other Priorities (Maximum 15 Points)</b>		
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	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>/100</b>	
<i>*Points can be partially awarded in each category</i>		