



Request for Expression of Interest
Employer Child Care Innovation Fund (ECCIF)

Background:

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), in consultation with the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED), and the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) are piloting a competitive matching grant program, to be administered by Commonwealth Corporation Foundation, to help employers support working families in the Commonwealth.

As described in the administration's Workforce Agenda, there are many critical "work supports" and infrastructure investments needed to attract and retain talent in Massachusetts. Affordable and accessible child care remains a critical support for workers, a driver of employer productivity, and a foundation for economic competitiveness in regions and industries across the Commonwealth.

The \$2.5 million **Employer Child Care Innovation Fund (ECCIF)** calls for a competitive matching grant opportunity for an employer-supported pilot that addresses both affordability for families and capacity building for the early education and child care sector. Grants must be matched \$1-to-\$1 by grantees/employers. Competitive applications include both in-kind matching investment and significant cash match. ECCIF will test and pilot innovative ideas to support the Commonwealth's workforce by incentivizing employer investments to increase access to high-quality and affordable child care.

Goals:

The goals of the program are to:

- Expand access to affordable, high-quality child care for working caregivers
- Expand capacity in the early education and child care sector
- Incentivize employers to advance family-friendly policies for their working caregiver employees

In addition to providing a monetary grant, this program will provide grant awardees with:

- Research support to document findings and learnings
- Participation in a Community of Practice between grantees

Priorities:

The **Employer Child Care Innovation Fund (ECCIF)** will accept applications to support workers in any industry or region of Massachusetts. However, ECCIF seeks to support the Commonwealth's workforce attraction and retention efforts by prioritizing applications in:

- [Priority industries](#) for the Commonwealth, for example:
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Healthcare and Human Services
 - Life Sciences
 - Clean Energy
- Geographic areas short of child care seats

This grant seeks to maximize equity when reviewing and selecting grant applicants, including prioritizing applications that:

- Support higher numbers of children from low-income families
- Present a plan for maintaining affordable tuition prices for families
- Are in rural areas or in areas with a short of early education and care seats
- Support historically underserved populations, infants, toddlers, families with nontraditional work hours, and families with children with high needs
- Promote equity in other ways as deemed appropriate by the department
- Support workers in high-demand industries

Other prioritizations:

- Priority will be given to entities whose pilots serve the largest number of employees.
- Competitive applications will efficiently leverage existing organizational resources to support program goals.
- Priority will be given to applicants who present a plan for sustainability after pilot grant period has ended.

Project Scope:

The **Employer Child Care Innovation Fund (ECCIF)** grants support diverse approaches to achieving the goals above. Examples of applicable funding categories include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Offering tuition benefits
- Standing up community infrastructure investments
 - Further defined: Employers invest in a shared fund (generally operated by a local nonprofit organization) to support child care infrastructure costs such as increasing community-wide child care capacity (i.e. creation of a new child care program), expanding shared services that increase provider sustainability, investing in early child care and education workforce programs, and more.
- Shared cost programs

- Further defined: In a shared cost program pilot, the cost of an employee's child care is shared among the employer, the employee and state funds.
- Shared cost programs can enhance resources for programs, supporting quality improvements, educator compensation, and other key needs.
- Expanding and reserving seats in local child care programs
- Building onsite or near-site child care
- Sponsoring dependent care assistance plans (DCAPs) as defined by Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 129
- Creating flexible work schedules in a previously rigid workplace environment

Grant-Making Process:

The **Employer Child Care Innovation Fund (ECCIF)** is requesting potential applicants to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) by submitting the information below. **Expressions of Interest must be submitted via the [Commonwealth Corporation Foundation's online ECCIF portal](#) no later than 4pm on Monday, November 3, 2025.** Administrators will not accept questions from potential applicants about this solicitation until after EOIs have been received and reviewed.

Program administrators will review EOIs submitted and provide feedback to potential applicants prior to the release of a detailed Request for Proposals (RFP) to be published in the first quarter of calendar year 2026. Only organizations that successfully submit an EOI will be eligible to respond to the upcoming RFP.

The RFP process is expected to result in 2-year grants being awarded to 3-5 grantees ranging in award amounts of \$250,000 to \$1,000,000 depending on the size, scope, and impact of the project.

Applicant Eligibility:

The following organizations are eligible to receive grants:

- A Massachusetts employer or consortium of Massachusetts employers in good standing with state obligations
- Eligible early education and child care providers partnering with one or more Massachusetts employers. Eligible early education and child care providers are limited to non-profit organizations, an organization in which a non-profit organization has a controlling financial or managerial interest or a licensed family home-based early education and care provider
- Intermediary organizations classified as nonprofit including 501c3, 501c4, and 501c6 including but not limited to Chambers of Commerce, Community Based Organizations, Community Foundations, and Community Colleges

Child care activity (i.e. seat) must be provided in Massachusetts.

Worker Eligibility:

The following workers are eligible to participate:

Eligible workers are caregivers who are payroll employees of Massachusetts employers. Eligible workers must work in Massachusetts. Full-time or part-time employees are eligible, but not independent contractors.

Online EOI Form Includes:

- ☐ **Lead Organization:**
 - Lead applicant organization legal name:
 - FEIN:
 - Address:
 - Primary Contact: First, Last, Title, Email
 - Authorized Signatory: First, Last, Title, Email
 - Organization Description: (up to 600 characters) Describe organization's functions, programs, and services.
- ☐ **Project Summary:** (up to 600 characters)
- ☐ **Geographic Area Served:** (up to 600 characters)
- ☐ **Description of Need:** (up to 3500 characters) Describe the need for investment (i.e. the specific problem, gap, or opportunity to be met) and how it was determined. Please clarify what form of needs assessment was undertaken, key findings, and relevant publications.
- ☐ **Partner Organizations:** (up to 1500 characters) List anticipated partner orgs and describe org roles.
- ☐ **Goals & Objectives:** (up to 2500 characters) Explain how the project will increase access to high quality and affordable child care for caregivers. State the specific outcomes you hope to achieve.
- ☐ **Total anticipated request for grant funds:** \$_____
- ☐ **Budget / Use of Funds:** (up to 1500 characters) Please describe the nature of grant-funded expenses. In other words, what expenses will grant funds cover in the proposed project?
- ☐ Grants must be matched \$1-to-\$1 by grantees/employers. Competitive applications include both in-kind matching investment as well as significant cash match. Greater weight will be placed on projects investing a larger share of cash match. Please describe the anticipated matching investment. Please specify both the in-kind and cash investment anticipated.
- ☐ **Project History*:** (up to 1500 characters) Is the proposed project related to ongoing programs or projects? If so, please describe any work done on the project to date including services, surveys, evaluations, needs assessments, etc. What is the current status of related programs or projects?

- ☐ **Readiness*:** (up to 600 characters) If awarded a grant in the second quarter of calendar year 2026, how soon is it anticipated that the grant-funded project work could get underway? How soon would the first child care or early education seats be filled?
- ☐ **Document Upload:** For items above denoted with a *, please provide any optional supporting documentation here (for ex. Needs assessments, employer surveys, etc.).