



Employer Child Care Innovation Fund (ECCIF)

Request for Expressions of Interest FAQs

- Q: Our organization is a private non-profit school, a 501c3, exempt from filing Form 990 and does not have audited statements. Can you please clarify if our organization is eligible to apply?
- *A: Lead applicants will be required to provide their most recent audited financial statements. If the organization is exempt and files a 990-N, the applicant will be required to provide financial statements including a balance sheet and income statement, as well as the most recent 990-N e-postcard.*
- Q: Does this include both early ed and school aged childcare?
- *A: This program will include early education, 0-5 (pre-kindergarten).*
- Q: Our organization currently offers existing Tuition and Dependent Care Reimbursement programs. Would these existing initiatives qualify under the “pilot program” category, or does the program specifically seek to fund new initiatives only?
- *A: The funding could not be used to subsidize existing investments. The ECCIF program will consider leveraging existing programs only in cases where the funding adds capacity to significantly scale up an existing program.*

- Q: The guidelines note that this is a competitive process, with awards typically ranging between \$250,000 and \$1,000,000. Would funding levels (below \$250,000) be considered too low for eligibility under this program?
- *A: The ECCIF program is expecting to award grants between \$250,000- \$1,000,000 and will prioritize those that will have the most impact. Any changes to this amount will be communicated in the RFP that will follow.*
- Q: Is the match requirement per year, or an overall total of the award?
- *A: The match must be met as an overall total of the award; The grantee has the entire contract period to fulfill the match requirement.*
- Q: Is this a cost reimbursement grant?
- *A: Once a grant is awarded and the contract is executed, the grantee will be advanced the first 25% of the grant. The first three payments will be advances and the final payment will be a reimbursement when the program is complete.*
- Q: Can we engage in partnership with an FCC system?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Can you share more about the research support offered post-award?
- *A: The research support will be at a macro level to help the ECCIF team evaluate the efficacy of the grant program and various pilots as a whole. This helps us to understand the effectiveness and the results, and how we may scale this if given the opportunity. There is an expectation that the grantee will be able to pilot their own goals and be able to measure them themselves.*
- Q: Do you have a sense of the number of applicants?

- *A: No more than 37 will be received.*

- Q: Will you accept letters of support?

- *A: The RFP does not ask for letters of support, only letters of commitment from key partners during this RFP process. Therefore, letters of support will not factor into any decisions regarding funding. (The letters of commitments, however, will be very important to see the partners' overall contributions to the project.)*

- Q: If using a shared cost model, we understand that the employer's share of the cost counts toward the match. Does the employee share also count to the match? We understand that "cash" is prioritized over in-kind. We would also have some in-kind.

- *A: The employee's own contribution towards childcare does not count towards the match because 1) they are not considered a project partner and 2) those payments would occur regardless of this program.*

- Q: We have employers and partners who are very interested in this process and standing alongside us in this process that are in the core industries that are priority. Does the letter of commitment have to have a dollar amount of the matching amount?

- *A: Letters of commitment should indicate the level of commitment the partner will be making, whether it's cash, in kind or a combination of both. Applicants may not have full visibility into these numbers until the design phase is nearly complete. At the time of application, the letters should reflect those in the application budget.*

- Q: Can you please describe the elements of a strong sustainability plan?

- *A: Reviewers are looking for evidence that the proposed program will be sustainable after the program ends. The ECCIF team is interested in looking at models where*

future state funding is not guaranteed. The other element is looking at whether something can be scaled up if given the resources, i.e. is it replicable?

- Q: Is there a minimum number of partners that are required to be considered for funding?
- A: *There must be at least one employer in the proposed project. There is no minimum number of additional partners specified, though it would be advisable to include at least one additional partner.*
- Q: If there were a potential funder interested in committing to the cost of sustainability after a successful pilot, would you accept letters of support from them?
- A: *Applicant relationships, including those with potential future funders, would be best explained in the Project Narrative. Because it is speculative and outside the scope of this project, it will not affect your score.*
- Q: Is there a minimum/max for the number of employees impacted you are looking to see from strong applicants?
- A: *The ECCIF team has not defined a minimum or a maximum number of employees impacted by this program; that is largely due to the variety of approaches an applicant might take. The minimum funding amount is \$250K per pilot. The intention is that this is something that appeals to both smaller and larger businesses.*
- Q: Is there a preference for impact with regard to a high number of employees versus a high number of children? (i.e. if a single employee has one child versus 5 children, would the preference be for serving 5 children?)
- A: *No. Applications will be evaluated on both the number of employees supported, as well as the number of early education and child care seats supported.*

- Q: I understand that the RFP requires at least one employer partner. As a large nonprofit community action agency with multiple departments, we have the opportunity to collaborate internally across our organization.

As the Director of the Early Education Department, I'm interested in partnering with our other departments to provide greater access to child care for their staff, many of whom are also individuals who may qualify for or benefit from child care financial assistance.

Would an internal cross-department partnership within our agency meet the employer partner requirement outlined in the RFP?

- *A: No, it is not recommended that any one organization serves as both the employer partner and the child care provider (and intermediary), as relevant legislation calls for partnerships across organizations. In addition, this pilot project encourages collaboration between partners for greater impact and to support models that may be scalable and/or replicable.*
- Q: FCC Systems are acceptable providers. Can those FCC Systems be for profit, or must they be nonprofit?
- *A: FCCs can be either for profit or nonprofit.*
- Q: The guidelines state that the employer must be in Massachusetts. If one of its employees lives in NH but selects a MA child care provider for care, is that acceptable?
- *A: Yes, as long as the employee is a W2 payroll employee of a Massachusetts employer, and that the child care activity (i.e. seat) is provided in Massachusetts.*
- Q: What if they select a care provider in NH?
- *A: The child care activity (i.e. seat) must be provided in Massachusetts.*

- Q: Would the match by the state be considered a taxable benefit for employees who receive discounted child care?
- A: *Employees should consult with their accountant or tax professional regarding any potential tax implications.*
- Q: The guidelines state that beneficiaries must be employees, not contractors. Are “per diem” employees in the health care sector eligible?
- A: *As long as the “per diem” employee is a W2 worker, they are eligible. If the “per diem” employee is a W9 worker, they are considered independent contractors and therefore not able to participate in this program.*
- Q: In Section B: *Project Summary and Expected Outcomes*: Questions 1 & 2 look nearly identical. Would it be OK if we only addressed the measurement plan under question two?
- A: *Yes. The questions regarding Expected Outcomes are closely related, with the distinction being that the first question asks for the outcome (i.e. how the project or policy would improve some measurable aspect related to recruitment, retention etc.) and the second question asks about the **impact** i.e. broader or longer-term changes.*

For example, if a proposed project offered “back up” or emergency child care for employees:

- *the **outcome** may be reduced absenteeism (question #1).*
- *the **impact** might be improved retention rates and an enhanced recruitment strategy that appeals to working caregivers (question #2).*

*Yes, it **is** acceptable to combine both questions into one answer that explains how the project will improve any workforce outcomes that lead to a positive impact on the employees or organization.*

- Q: In writing our application, we found that some of our answers included identical information.

For example, Under Section B when we speak about workforce outcomes and how they are measured, we address again in section G where we are again asked about measuring the impact of access and workforce outcomes.

Because we are working hard to keep our application on target with the character count for each section, could we under section B at the appropriate spot write “see section G?”

- *A: Yes. It is acceptable to refer to another section.*
- Q: Budget question. Do we need to include a corresponding “match” item for every line in the “grant request” worksheet?
- *A: No. The budget categories for grant funds and matching funds do not need to be identical, and the budget should be based on the full two-year project duration.*
- Q: Would participation in a steering or advisory committee count as an in-kind match?
- *A: Only the committed project partners’ activity, directly related to implementation of the grant, could be considered in the match, not general committee work. Further clarification from Office Hours: If a partner is doing committee work as an integral part of the grant project itself, only that specific partners’ time can be counted towards the matching funds.*
- Q: In our model, there is a technology organization serving as the “hub” for many child care providers under their umbrella. That organization will be the source of matching funds. Do we need a letter from every child care provider under their umbrella?
- *A: No, if the organization serving as the hub is the source of matching funds and provides a Letter of Commitment clearly outlining its roles and responsibilities, letters are not required from the individual care providers.*

- Q: If an employer commits to a specific amount of matching funds, but that changes due to certain factors during implementation, how much flexibility is there post-award for adjustments that might be needed?
- *A: Grantee performance management will be assessed in recurring reporting and meetings with ECCIF staff. Failure to meet contractual obligations, including match, could result in grants being reduced or withdrawn. However, circumstances will be taken into consideration and opportunities for correction will be considered.*