Program Overview

1. **What is the Guided Growth Program?**
   The Guided Growth Program is your opportunity to grow with confidence! Child care centers selected to participate in this program will receive professional business consulting including business practices that can improve each program’s sustainability and viability. In addition, participants will have exclusive access to child care specific business tools, DHS-approved trainings, and opportunities to network and exchange ideas with other centers.

2. **Why should we apply?**
   You should apply if you are seeking any type of growth for your center; including growth in size, quality or sustainability. Guided Growth and other First Children’s Finance programs have been proven to help participants achieve their goals. Participants have reported improvements such as higher enrollment, sustainable finances, increases in parent satisfaction, and decreases in staff turnover.

Eligibility Questions

1. **What are the eligibility requirements?**
   See the [www.firstchildrensfinance.org/guidedgrowth](http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/guidedgrowth) for the eligibility requirements.

2. **We are very small/large, full-day/part-day, full-year/part-year, are we still eligible?**
   Yes, all of these are eligible as long as you meet the other requirements.

3. **Are we required to be nonprofit to be eligible?**
   No. For-profit centers and preschools, are eligible as well.

4. **What is meant by “serve low-income families”?**
   You are approved to accept reimbursements through either the Child Care Assistance or the federal food program (CACFP). If you do not provide those programs, you show evidence of service to low-income families in another way, such as a scholarship program.

Expectations of Participating Providers

1. **If selected, how long does the program last and when will we officially start?**
   The full program will last 18 months, from February 2016 to September 2017. The center leadership team will attend an orientation on February 11, 2016. The exact time and location will be determined later to best accommodate those selected.

2. **What representatives from our center will participate in the cohort?**
   Center participation requires a two-person “center leadership team”. Each center leadership team will consist of the center director and the owner or one member of the board of directors.
3. **How many trainings or meetings are center directors expected to attend?**
   All events are carefully designed to provide maximum benefits. Total expected gatherings for center directors will average only once every month or two.

4. **What events are the board members/owners expected to attend?**
   A board member or owner is expected to attend approximately 4 meetings between February 2016 and September 2017—including orientation and joint meetings with the other centers and advisory group.

5. **How much travel will be necessary to attend meetings or trainings?**
   Efforts will be made to hold the meetings and trainings in a central location. We encourage participants to car pool if possible.

**Process and Technical Questions**

1. **How do I apply for the Guided Growth Program?**
   Review the full program information at [www.firstchildrensfinance.org/guidedgrowth](http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/guidedgrowth).

2. **Are the application questions weighted?**
   No. Applications are evaluated as a whole.

3. **Is it ok to contact First Children’s Finance with questions while filling out the application?**
   Yes! We are happy to answer questions about the application, eligibility requirements, or program.

4. **Who makes up the Local Advisory Group?**
   The advisors are a carefully selected group of business and early care and education professionals. Through group meetings with the center leadership teams, the advisors share their knowledge and experiences with the centers. In turn, you will be able to share your knowledge about the child care industry and the importance of early care and education with the advisors, which helps them to become greater advocates for quality child care in the community.

**Narrative Content Questions**

1. **How do we describe “current programs”?**
   When describing current programs, you may include center level programming as well as programs that occur at the classroom level.

2. **Who are our “key leadership and management staff”?**
   **Key classroom staff** includes lead teachers or others who serve in a classroom leadership role. **Key non-classroom and management staff** includes your director, assistant director, financial managers or other key managers of your business operations.

3. **Are all of the attachments required?**
   Yes, all attachments are required unless they are clearly marked “optional”. If you have questions about any of them, please contact First Children’s Finance.