

Frequently Asked Questions

Please note that grants are not guaranteed, as they are competitive in nature, and awards in each cycle will depend on the total of grant applications received.

How much grant money can I apply for?

The amount for which you can apply varies by type of child care provider:

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| Licensed Family Child Care | \$100 - \$15,000 |
| Licensed Child Care Center (for profit and nonprofit) | \$100 - \$20,000 |
| Certified Child Care Center | \$100 - \$10,000 |
| Legal, Unlicensed Family Child Care Registered with CCAP | \$100 - \$500* |

*Intended for health/safety needs

I am planning to open a new child care program – am I eligible to apply?

Yes – with proof of license submission and background study clearance, a start-up provider may request a grant for eligible facility-related items identified by a regulatory authority (licensor, fire marshal, health department, municipality) during a final pre-licensure visit.. All other items listed on the pre-licensure checklist must be complete before applying for a facility revitalization grant, so these are the last steps to licensing. All providers must remain open for 2 years providing care to children other than their own if awarded a grant.

Maximum grant sizes by provider type are a HUGE amount to repay if the license falls through or if the provider decides not to open a child care program and we want providers to be successful. Therefore, the items that can be covered through a grant need to be the final, final obstacle to licensing. DHS takes the 2-year requirement seriously – if someone uses a grant and does not meet that requirement, they will have to repay the grant or face consequences that go beyond that which is associated with running a child care program. Worst case scenario, if attempts to recover the grant are unsuccessful, it could be turned over to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension for criminal prosecution as fraud.

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What type of budget documentation do I need?

Documentation is required for each item/service requested. Acceptable types of documentation include:

- Bid/estimate uploaded from vendor
- Screen shot of item and price from online store;
- Photo of item and price taken at a store; or
- Exact item, model number, store where purchase will be made and exact price - not rounded.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the application while filling it out?

Technical assistance is available by email at grants@firstchildrensfinance.org and by phone at 612-473-6020.

Voice mail messages may always be left at this number, and calls are returned. This number is answered live when the grant portal is open for applications, during the hours of 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

How do I create a Submittable account? Who do I contact if I am having technical issues with Submittable?

To create a Submittable account to complete a grant application, go to

www.firstchildrensfinance.org/for-businesses/grants

At the bottom of the page, click on “Click Here to Apply”

Enter your e-mail address, create a password, and enter your first and last name and your account will be created so that you can continue with the application. Please note that ALL grant-related communication will go to the email used to create the Submittable account.

Help relating to the information requested in the application is available by email at grants@firstchildrensfinance.org. A help line is also open during the times that the grant application portal is open at 612-473-6020 at the hours noted above in the previous question.

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Technical assistance regarding the Submittable application portal (technology) can be requested by clicking the “?” in the upper corner of the portal.

If I own two or more centers, can I request items for all the locations I own with one application?

No – each grant application may only cover one license/one setting, and the maximum grant size applies to each license.

I lease my property. Am I allowed to make leasehold improvements (changes/improvements to the facility) or am I limited to requesting funds for equipment only?

We strongly recommend that you discuss any non-equipment facility needs with your property owner/manager first to ensure that:

- the property owner will allow changes to be made to the property
- if you make improvements, then the terms of the lease will not change (such as a substantial increase in rent that would force you to move) and
- the property owner has no plans to sell the property within 2 years after grant award.

Each child care provider will be required to remain in business serving children other than their own for at least two years after receiving a facility revitalization grant. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the provider to receive a guarantee in writing from the property owner that making leasehold improvements will not lead to an unfavorable change in lease terms.

I am planning to retire and/or close my business in the next year but I have facility needs that would impact children in my care now. May I apply?

No – Each child care provider who receives a facility revitalization grant MUST remain in business providing care for children other than their own for at least two years following grant implementation. This also means that a provider cannot simply maintain an active license with an “open” business if they are not providing care for children.

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I am planning to move within the next two years and will continue to provide child care in my new home. Is that okay or do I have to remain in the same location providing care for two years after grant implementation?

You do not need to remain at the same address if you continue to provide child care services for a full two years. However, you must move whatever the grant pays for with you or return funds on a pro-rated amount for any items or work left behind. If you move you cannot use your old child care license to apply for items to prepare for a new location, therefore you will be treated as a start-up provider until your new location is licensed. You need to continue to provide care for children other than your own for two years within the State of Minnesota.

I am currently a licensed family child care provider but I hope to find a larger location and apply for a center license at a new location in Minnesota. Can I apply both as a family provider and a center provider if I make the transition within 2 years?

You may apply now as a family provider for up to \$15,000, as long as you request items that will move to your new location. If you open a new center location, you could apply for the additional \$5,000 as a center provider, meaning you could receive a total of \$20,000 for the two programs combined over the course of this two-year program. You will need to report the change to First Children's Finance, as it would appear that you are no longer providing care to children through your old license. As long as the grantee is providing continual care to children for two years following each awarded grant, this type of transition is acceptable.

The manual states that sectarian organizations with a child care license are limited to health and safety needs. How is health and safety defined as it relates to a sectarian organization?

It is up to the provider to describe their need and explain why they believe it is a health and safety need. |

I currently have a loan intended to address facility needs. Can I apply for a grant to pay back my loan sooner?

No – grant funds may not be used to repay loans. They also may not be used to reimburse you for child care facility-related needs paid prior to receiving the grant.

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Eligible expenses may only be incurred AFTER grant award notification and the date that First Children's Finance receives your signed grant agreement for items/needs that have no other previously identified funding source. This is also true for down payments – any item or service for which a down payment has been made prior to grant award is not eligible for a grant.

Additionally, individuals who have defaulted on First Children's Finance loans are not eligible to apply, per the loan agreement.

I have a major renovation project and I want to apply for a facility revitalization grant for a small portion of my larger project. There are other grants I can apply for that require matching funds. May I use this grant as a match to leverage additional funds?

From First Children's Finance perspective, yes. However, you will want to check with the source of the other funds to make sure that they will accept this grant as a match, as these are public dollars coming through the State of Minnesota. It may not be ok from the other funders' perspectives.

What if I have a larger project – can these funds be used as part of a bigger project?

Yes – you may apply for funds as a minor purchase, or minor aspect, of a larger project. Examples of major renovation projects for which a facility revitalization grant may pay for a small portion include:

- Minor aspect of converting home garage or other building on private property for child care program;
- Minor aspect of renovating unused space for community child care solutions such as a portion of a church, school, community center, senior center, store front, business, pod, or vacant house.

The entirety of my grant will be paid to a contractor. Can First Children's Finance just send the grant to my contractor?

No – As the child care provider and grantee, you will receive a 1099 as reportable income on your taxes, and the agreement for work provided is between you and your contractor. Any liability or dispute regarding the quality of work would need to be resolved between you and the contractor. Therefore, First Children's Finance will only send grant payment to the child care provider receiving the grant.

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My center is a nonprofit. Do I still need to submit a W9 and receive a 1099?

Yes – you can indicate on your W9 that you are nonprofit, and if/how you report grant income to the IRS would be up to you and your tax preparer.

Does the project need to be done by a licensed contractor, or can it be done by a capable homeowner who works in construction?

A child care program owner may do their own work and the grant can be used to pay for parts/materials. **Grant recipients and/or their family members are not eligible to be paid for labor costs under this grant program.**

If providers hire labor for a project, the labor must be performed by an individual who performs that type of work professionally, and must follow applicable state and local laws and regulations regarding registration and licensure. See <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/residential-contractors-remodelers-roofers> for more information. The individual performing the work will need to meet local permits and inspection regulations. For any labor to be paid by the grant, an estimate or bid by a contractor/professional is required, including but not limited to the installation of fences, windows, roofing, flooring, or other minor renovation projects eligible under this program.

Documentation of labor costs paid for by grant funds must include business name, address, phone performing the work and must be verifiable by the grants accounts payable specialist.

Submit ONLY the estimate/bid/invoice you intend to hire with your budget on your application. We do not need to see multiple bids.

Will an inspection be required when my project is done?

Please check with your local municipality to know if they require permits or inspections for the work that you will be doing. You are required to abide by all state and local municipality regulations, but First Children's Finance will not require a grant-specific inspection. We will ask for before and after pictures in the final grant report.

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What is the period for me to use the funds, and will I have to provide a report?

With quarterly grant cycles over two years, we ask that you wait to apply until your project is ready to be implemented, and if you are hiring labor, you know that the work will be completed within six months of the application. A final report will be due **six months** after the grant award notification. If a grant is unavoidably delayed due to supply chain or contractor availability issues, a grantee may request an extension in writing through the grant portal. Please do not apply without checking on contractor availability and scheduling first. Approval of any variance or extension must be granted in writing. Final reports must outline the impact the grant has had on your child care business and must include receipts for all grant spending.

What do I need to include in the final report?

A grant report form will be provided, and final reports must include narrative on the impact the grant has had on your child care business. Receipts are required for all grant spending. We will ask about the number of child care slots and jobs that benefited (preserved and/or added) and if you experienced any barriers in implementation. We will ask for before/after pictures to document completion of your project. We will also ask for your permission to share portions of your grant story in our reports, which is optional.

You are asking for Before/After pictures in the report to help tell the story. May I submit a picture with my application to help underscore the need?

Yes – there will be a place in the budget section where you can upload supporting documentation. Photos are highly recommended to help demonstrate your need in your application.

What if I do not use the full amount of the funds awarded?

Grant funds not spent within 6 months of the award date must be returned to FCF immediately unless an extension has been granted in writing due to a contractor or supply chain issue. Any amount not documented with receipts will need to be returned.

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Do I need to have a quote available during the application process to apply? Or do I just apply and then figure out how much we need after we have been approved?

Your grant application budget must include an actual quote/estimate for your project and/or specific purchase documentation such as screen shots or photos from a store, inclusive of store name, item number, description and price. Any item for which documentation is not provided will be disallowed. With 10 grant rounds over the next two years, we really want providers to wait to apply until they are 100% ready to implement their proposed project. A final report will be due within 6 months of award notification, so it must be ready to go once funding is received and the grant agreement is signed and returned.

Can each grant be used for one item/project only (such as a fence or a piece of equipment) or can more than one item/project be requested?

You may request more than one item/project on your application. Grant awards will not exceed the maximum allowed grant. Keep in mind that your final report will be due 6 months after the award notification, so apply only for the work that you can accomplish during that 6-month period. If you did not receive the maximum allowed grant, you may submit another application after you submit your final report for the first grant in an amount that does not exceed the maximum grant award with combined grant totals. Each provider is limited to one application per cycle, so if you want to add an item to your request after you submit your application, please request that your application be opened for editing. **Submitting more than one application per cycle for the same license will disqualify both requests.**

How long will it take for me to find out if I am awarded a grant, and after that, how long will it take to receive funds?

We anticipate having award notices out within **6-8 weeks** of each application closing date, but that will depend greatly on the number of applications received each quarter.

The timing of when you receive your funds will depend on how long it takes you to return the signed grant agreement, W9 and ACH Electronic Transfer Authorization form. Reminder: all receipts must be dated on or after the date we receive your

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signed grant agreement, so it is in your best interest to return those items as soon as possible once you receive notification.

What if my application is denied – can I apply again in a later round or make changes and apply again?

If your application is denied because there was insufficient funding in that particular round, or we recommend changes, you may reapply. If your request is denied because it does not meet eligibility requirements, you will not be able to reapply for that same purpose.

What does it mean to preserve a child care slot or job?

We understand that many child care providers have been at risk of closing during the pandemic. If you are able to continue providing care for children as a result of this grant, you have preserved the number of child care slots for which you are licensed or for whom you are providing care.

Similarly, you are preserving your own job and that of any employees that you are able to continue to employ.

I have questions about whether or not my specific project is eligible under this grant program. Where can I learn more?

A list of eligible and ineligible uses is included on the website, and a comprehensive grants manual is also available on the website. Go to these documents to look up information related to your specific situation.

If you cannot find the answer in those documents, you may email grants@firstchildrensfinance.org or call the help line at 612-473-6020 during open grant application periods. The help line is answered only when the application portal is open, but voice mail messages are responded to when the portal is closed.