Information for Applicants (Grant Guidance)

Overview

As part of our mission to increase the supply of excellent child care, First Children’s Finance (FCF) is working in partnership with Let’s Grow Kids (LGK) and with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, to administer a VT Planning Grant Project. The VT Planning Grant Project will provide in-kind services, child care business assistance and a small financial stipend to prospective child care businesses, employers or community agencies that wish to plan for a capital construction project for a new or expanded child care operation. Often these types of projects require significant investments to scope and fund the construction project. First Children’s Finance will use federal procurement processes to contract with professional services vendors that can provide services to help identify if a project is feasible to move forward with construction. First Children’s Finance VT will contract with pre-construction professional services vendors that can provide services such as appraisals, architectural drawings/images, feasibility assessment, funding identification and management, environmental review, and land use permitting – all services that may be needed to help a capital construction project to move forward in VT. Throughout this planning grant project, FCF will provide technical assistance and consulting in the areas of child care business operations, budgeting, staffing, and best practices for child care businesses that receive this in-kind support and funds. Child care businesses, employers or community agencies can apply to receive these services and a financial stipend. We expect to award at least 15 of these projects from September 2024-September 2025.
Who Is Eligible to Apply?
- Organizations, businesses, schools, municipalities, non-profits or agencies considering a capital construction project to construct a new building or expand on an existing site to operate a licensed child care or early childhood education program serving children ages birth through 5 years.
- These projects intend to increase the supply of child care (birth to 5 years old) in VT.
- Projects must demonstrate readiness, community buy-in, and should expect to leverage applicable resources. This can be a fit for projects that have a leadership team and are prepared to seek and manage funding sources.

Expenses Eligible for Funding
- This in-kind support can be used for professional services typically related to the planning phase of an intended construction project.
- These funds cannot be used to purchase materials or equipment.
- These funds cannot be used for construction or renovation activities.
- All vendors of eligible activities must apply to be an approved vendor for this project; these vendors will be contracted with and paid directly by First Children’s Finance.
- Consulting on child care business operations from an approved vendor for the intended child care project is also an allowable expense or applicants can access consulting from First Children’s Finance at no cost.

Available Funding
FCF expects to award at least 15 of these projects through 2025. A competitive application process will be used, and successful applicants will document their eligibility and participation in the project.

A stipend of $5,000 will be processed upon demonstration that the planning project is complete. In the case of multiple grants to support a single project, only one stipend will be provided.

Before You Apply
To apply for a Planning Grant:
- You must submit an email inquiry via vtgrants@firstchildrensfinance.org.
• First Children’s Finance will discuss with each inquirer the intended project and provide advice on this planning grant program and the application.
• An electronic application must be submitted in order to be considered for an award. New applications will be reviewed each month.
• Successful applicants will be in the planning phase of a potential capital child care facility project (either new build or renovation).

Grant Amounts
First Children’s Finance expects to award planning grants to 15 projects. Additional awards may be made, as funds are available.
  • First Children’s Finance will contract with and pay directly all vendors of planning services engaged with each project.
  • A stipend of $5,000 will be processed at the end of the planning project awarded. These are the only funds that will be paid to the grantee.

Timeline for Grant Process

| The initial grant application deadline is August 30, 2024, by 3PM (ET). |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 30                     | Guidelines and application released                              |
| August 30                   | First round application deadline                                 |
| 4th Friday of each month    | Additional application round deadline, until all available funds are awarded |
| September                   | Grant committee convenes                                         |
| October                     | Award notifications                                             |

Grant Application

**All grant applications must be submitted using FCF’s online grants management system.** FCF will share the link directly when your proposed project is determined to be eligible for these funds. The questions below are provided to allow you to prepare to enter your responses into the online system.

Each application must include **all of** the sections included in the application.

Summary of Application Questions:

1) Contact information, eligibility verification and demographics.
2) Description of who is involved in this project and where it is located. Description of the total construction project as well as the planning project.

3) Description of specific needs for planning assistance and types of services required.

4) How many child care spaces will be added? How many new jobs? Demographics of the families to be served.

5) Description of how your project will contribute to increased equitable access to child care in your community.

6) What is the timeline for your proposed project?

7) What is the project budget?

Note: Grant dollars may not be used retroactively for items or services purchased prior to grant approval.

This grant program is funded by Let’s Grow Kids through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. First Children’s Finance is required to comply with federal requirements, as it applies to data created, collected, received, stored, used, maintained or disseminated. When a grant application is submitted, the following, at minimum, is public information: name, address, and funds awarded.

The steps in the application process

1. Inquiry – Anyone interested in applying for a planning grant should email vtgrants@firstchildrensfinance.org

2. Initial consultation – Within 5 business days of receiving an inquiry, FCF staff will consult with prospective applicants regarding their proposed project. FCF staff will provide guidance as to project eligibility and how to apply for the grant.

3. Application – The online application will be available beginning July 30, 2024, to any eligible applicant that has completed an email inquiry and initial consultation. The link to the application will be provided by FCF staff. FCF will provide technical assistance to potential applicants throughout the application period.
4. Application review – An external grant review committee will review and score all complete applications and make funding recommendations to FCF.
5. Final award decisions will be made by FCF.

**Selection Process**
The selection process will be the responsibility of a grant committee that will make recommendations to FCF. The final selection decision will be made by FCF. The grant review committee will consider the following in making their recommendations:

- Community impact of intended construction project
- Clarity of proposed plans
- Likelihood to succeed based on project leadership, community input and project plan
- Reasonable budget and timeline
- Geographic diversity of projects

Incomplete proposals may not be considered for funding.

Applications that do not meet the grant eligibility requirements will not be considered for funding.

Applicants must be in good standing with Vermont child care licensing regulations (if applicable) and the VT Department of Taxes. Existing child care business applicants must participate in the VT Child Care Financial Assistance Program.

**Notification**
Applicants will be notified by email in October if their application is awarded funding. Applicants will also be notified if their application is denied. Examples for why an application may not be approved for funding include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Application does not meet the grant guidelines for funding;
- Applicant/request is not eligible for the grant program;
- Limited resources available within the grant program;
- Incomplete/inaccurate application; and/or
- Applicant scored lower than other applications submitted.

**Acceptance**
Upon notification of grant awards, applicants must sign a Terms of Agreement document and meet other grant conditions (see Standard Grant Conditions below) prior to receiving funds.

Grant dollars are considered taxable income. First Children’s Finance will issue a 1099 for the grant award. Grantees should work with their tax advisors on how to calculate eligible business expense deductions when reporting the grant to the IRS for tax purposes.

**Standard Grant Conditions**

The standard grant conditions are listed below. Applicants must agree to these conditions in order to receive grant funds from the Planning Grant Project.

- Grant project leadership will engage with FCF staff for technical assistance and grant guidance through the grant award period.
- Grantee will provide project and funding information to FCF as requested.
- Grant funds are intended to be used as described in the approved application. Any requests to make significant changes to the activities described in the application must be emailed to erinr@firstchildrensfinance.org for consideration.
- The source of funds for this grant includes federal funds. These funds cannot be used by your organization as matching dollars for federal grant purposes.
- All planning grants must be completed no later than September 30, 2025.

**Ongoing Grant Consultation and Technical Assistance**

Grant applicants agree to participate in ongoing consultation with FCF before submitting a grant application and throughout the grant cycle.

**Reporting Procedures**

*Required Reporting:* At the end of the planning project, the recipient must submit a brief report, as described below. If the planning project indicates the project should not move forward, the brief report will document why the project will not move forward.

The brief report will be required no later than 30 days from project completion. This report should include:
o A summary of the professional services obtained through this grant.
  o A summary of the results of these professional services.
  o Next steps to be taken as a result of this project, and a brief timeline for these next steps.

For its grant reporting, FCF will aggregate this information and provide cumulative results. FCF will report on grant impact including the number of awards by region, the types of professional services provided, the amount of funds awarded, demographics as provided in the grant applications and expected next steps for grantees.

Applications and individual grantee reports will not be discussed outside of First Children’s Finance employees and the grant review committee. Information will be compiled for reporting to Let’s Grow Kids and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.