



First Children's Finance

Minnesota Access to Technology Grants

For Child Care Business Management Efficiency

Guidelines

(Includes Eligible and Ineligible Uses List – pages 4-7)

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212 North Third Avenue, Suite 310
Minneapolis, MN 55401
612-473-6020

grants@firstchildrensfinance.org

Accommodation & Interpreter Services

If you need an accommodation or interpreter services during any open grant cycle, please contact the grants team at the Help Line at 612-473-6020 or email grants@firstchildrensfinance.org.

During open application periods, the help line is answered from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Monday – Friday and from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Email is monitored daily, and the help line is answered during open application cycles. During application review, calls may be directed to voice mail, and messages are returned within 2 business days.

For providers who do not have online access, an application may be requested by calling 612-473-6020. Completed paper applications must be received at least 24 hours prior to the grant deadline to ensure processing.

If the paper application is not received in time, applicants will be notified and given the option to have their application held over and considered during the next grant round.

Eligible Entities

The following child care providers with child care programs located within the State of Minnesota and who have children other than their own enrolled in their programs are eligible to apply:

- Licensed family child care
- Licensed child care centers
- Tribally licensed child care

Grant Purpose and Eligibility

The State of Minnesota has allocated funds through 2026 for licensed child care businesses in Minnesota to access technology to improve **business management efficiency**.

Priority will be given to child care businesses that currently have no or limited technology resources, particularly those whose child care locations are in Child Care Access Equity Areas.

Eligible Uses

Eligible uses must be necessary to improve the **business management efficiency** of your child care program. For the purposes of the grant program, business management includes: enrollment, billing/invoicing, recordkeeping, food program, attendance (including parent check in/out), CCAP, grants, staffing/scheduling child care staff, marketing, and training for technology skills.

Grant uses are limited to connectivity, new equipment, business management software and training in technology.

Eligible uses must be necessary to improve the business management efficiency of your child care program. Grant dollars must be used toward new technology – grant dollars may not be used retroactively for items or services purchased prior to the date that FCF receives a signed grant agreement following grant award notification.

Down payments, price-locks or any commitment to purchase, subscribe or register prior to the return of a signed grant agreement are not allowed/not eligible for this program. Eligible/approved uses are identified below under “Yes” and ineligible/denied uses are listed under “No” for each category.

Please note: professional grant writing or administration fees are not eligible for grant funding.

Eligible Uses by Category

Connectivity:

Yes (Eligible)

- New Internet service installation or data plan (one per grant) – this may include a change to a new Internet service or data plan for the purposes of obtaining better service/stronger signal
- New Internet hardware including to improve signal (modem, router, hot spot, Wi-fi extender/booster, ethernet port)
- New or upgraded data plan* is funded at 50%
- New or upgraded internet service* is funded at 50% if shared with personal/family use or with another business/organization
- Assistance with existing Internet service* (future payments – not retroactive) – funded at 50% if shared with family or other business (Add in "Other Technology" category in the application)

*Funding for connectivity service is limited to one type per request – either a data plan or Internet, but not both.

No (Not Eligible)

- Prior purchases/commitment to install or purchase prior to return of signed grant agreement; no retroactive payments for Internet service or data plan

New Equipment:

Yes (Eligible)

- Desktop Computer including All-in-One bundles (tower, monitor, keyboard, mouse)
- Laptop
- Tablet
- Smart Phone
- Printer, All-in-One Printer (print, copy, scan) or Scanner
- Lease of commercial printer/scanner by licensed child care center

- One-time installation (such as set-up of desktop computer, printer, connection to Wi-Fi network)
- Accessories for Tablet, Laptop, Desktop: keyboard, mouse, monitor, headset (for training purposes)
- Accessories for Desktop computer only: Web cam and/or speaker for use with the desktop computer may be considered if the desktop computer is the only equipment available for training purposes

No (Not Eligible)

- Prior/recent purchase or commitment to purchase prior to return of grant agreement
- Used or previously owned equipment, including professionally certified refurbished, renewed, reconditioned, remanufactured or other terms that may be used to describe equipment that is not 100% new.
- Private-party purchases including online auction/marketplace site(s)
- Service plans including extended warranty or ongoing training (in how to use equipment) or technical assistance
- Store membership fees
- Docking stations/charging accessories
- Digital calendar/smart planner
- Security cameras or systems, monitoring equipment, door security
- Equipment intended for use with children or classroom education
- Desk phones and/or headsets used for answering phones
- Projector
- Ink, paper, and other office supplies
- Protective cases, screen protectors, stylus pens, wall or ceiling mounts including anti-theft kiosks, and pull-down or standing presentation screens
- Time clocks
- Components to build a computer

New Child Care Business Management Software:

Yes (Eligible)

- New Child Care Management Software (CCMS) subscription;
- Assistance with existing Child Care Management Software (CCMS) subscription – future payments only. (Request this use in “Other Technology” category in the application.)
- Accounting or payment software purchase or subscription
- Spreadsheet software purchase or subscription, including as part of a package (for instance, Microsoft Office Suite)
- Tax preparation software
- Marketing software or subscription, including but not limited to website creation/maintenance software or subscription. (Request this use in “Other Technology” category in the application)
- A maximum of two-years (24 months) subscription may be requested.
- When requesting the cost of more than 2 months' subscription for Child Care Management Software, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the software can be prepaid, as some software providers may not allow pre-payment – documentation required. Paid-in-full receipts are due with the 60-day final report and extensions will not be granted for this purpose. If a subscription service cannot be paid in advance, only 2 months of subscription service may be requested/granted.
- Windows 11 upgrade software
- Receipt organizing software

No (Not Eligible)

- Hiring an accountant or accounting service for bookkeeping or hiring a consultant/service to develop a website
- Curriculum, educational software or any software not specifically referenced as eligible
- Anti-virus software
- Calendar/Organizing/Planning software, apps or systems
- Child assessment software
- PDF-maker/reader software including Adobe Acrobat

- Prepared template downloads such as Fundamentals of Home Daycare or Daycare Tax Spreadsheet including bundles (not software programs)

Training in Technology Skills:

Yes (Eligible)

- One-time training to improve technology skills including how to use new equipment, software, or service (certificate of completion required with final report)

No (Not Eligible)

- Training for which provider has already registered/signed up prior to return of signed grant agreement
- Service plans for ongoing training, technical assistance or warranty service
- Store membership fees or annual technical assistance subscription (such as Geek Squad)
- Develop courses
- Travel, meals, lodging expenses related to attending in-person training
- Business management training

Grant Size

Minimum grant size: \$100 Maximum grant size: \$1,000

With just over \$200,000 available to distribute each year, it is anticipated that between 200 – 300 grant awards will be made each fiscal year.

Licensed child care providers may receive only one MN Access to Technology grant per site/license in a two-year period which is measured from the date of their signed grant agreement. This restriction will still apply if the license number changes for any reason for a program/site within two years of grant award. Licensed applicants who have not previously received a MN Access to Technology grant will be prioritized.

Timeline

Please check the First Children's Finance website for up-to-date information. Two grant cycles are planned each year through 2026.

Application cycles will remain open for one week.

- Grants are not first-come, first-served. Pre-determined criteria are used to award grants competitively based on all applications received during a grant period.
- Because we hope to fund as many child care providers in Minnesota as possible, please use exact costs in your budget, and request only what you need.
- Notifications letters are sent to all applicants informing them of an award or declination.
- To benefit the most licensed child care businesses in each grant round, the number of mobile devices (laptop, tablet, smartphone) will be limited. Licensed family child care is limited to one mobile device; licensed child care centers are limited to one mobile device per classroom.

Grant Awards

Grant awards will be paid-in-full* following the deadline for receiving a signed grant agreement.

Final reports* will be due within 60 days of the signed grant agreement deadline. Paid-in-full receipts matching the grant award and photos of purchased items turned on and in use or training completion certificates will be required with the final report.

Considerations for Eligible Requests

1. *All requests must be NECESSARY and directly related to **child care business management only**.*
2. Awardees will be given a deadline to sign and return a grant agreement. Grantees may begin their projects/make their purchases on or after the date that this agreement is received by First Children's Finance.
3. Any item or service for which a previous commitment or payment has been made, including down payments – prior to return of the signed grant agreement – is not eligible. Grants may not be used to repay any type of debt service such as loans.
4. All labor requests must be provided by a professional installer or trainer not related to or living with the child care provider who works in the technology field. Estimates and receipts must include their name, business name, address, and phone number, shown on quotes prior to grant awards and on receipts for work performed.
5. If planning to relocate child care program within two (2) years, items or services purchased with grant funding that cannot be moved to the new location must be repaid on a prorated schedule.
6. Quotes should be itemized and prioritized so any portion not eligible can be subtracted from a potential grant award rather than disallowing the entire quote.
7. Any expense found to conflict with these guidelines during final report reconciliation will be disallowed.

Application Process

Applications may be submitted through the online portal at submittable.com using any computer, tablet or smart phone. The portal offers applications in English, Spanish and Somali.

It is possible to submit applications by mail or email, but they must be received in time for a staff member to enter the application into the grant

Minnesota Access to Technology Business Management Efficiency Grants – Guidelines / Eligible Uses

portal prior to the deadline. If not received prior to the deadline, the application must wait for the next open grant period. For applicants new to technology, grant staff may be available to scribe an application by phone by appointment.

Each application may cover one licensed setting only, and applicants may submit only one application per grant period for each license. If an edit or an addition is desired after submitting the application and the portal has not yet closed for the grant round, applicants should request that their application be opened for editing. Edits cannot be made to an application once the portal closes for each quarterly cycle, and additional materials will not be accepted via Messaging or email after the portal closes. Multiple applications submitted for the same license in a round will disqualify all submissions in that round. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one license must submit separate applications for each license. Each application will be evaluated separately.

The application must be signed by the owner of the child care business, even if the application is completed by another individual. Electronic signatures will be accepted.

More than one individual may collaborate on an application, but all communication will be sent through the portal to the email address used to sign into the Submittable grant portal.

Application Grant Portal: Submittable

A free Submittable account must be created **using an email address that is checked regularly**. Facebook or Google may be used to create a Submittable account, but it is not recommended. If the email address associated with Facebook or Google is not used regularly, do NOT sign in with those platforms. ALL communication will be sent to the email address used to register for the Submittable account. Messages may also be viewed in the Submittable grant portal.

Use a memorable password for ease of returning to the platform.

To apply for an Access to Technology Grant, complete an application by going to www.firstchildrensfinance.org/for-businesses/Minnesota-grants and click on the **“Click Here to Apply”** button. This will lead into the Submittable grant portal.

Submittable tips:

- You can **save a draft** of your work if you would like to complete the application later.
- The portal will time out, so save your draft each time you walk away from the application.
- Once you submit your application in Submittable, you will no longer be able to make changes. If you need to provide any additional information or make changes prior to a grant deadline, you may request your application be re-opened to **edit the submission** by calling 612-473-6020 or by sending a MESSAGE through the grant portal.
- Submittable works best on Google Chrome, Firefox, and Safari. Microsoft Edge is not supported. Please make sure you are using a supported Internet browser.
- First Children’s Finance staff will follow-up with applicants by email through the Submittable grant portal. Please be sure to **safelist** notification emails from Submittable and check the email you used to sign up for your Submittable Account regularly.

Additional instructions for using Submittable are available at Submittable.com and an application tutorial is provided at www.firstchildrensfinance.org/for-businesses/Minnesota-grants

Information Requested in the Application

1. Provider information (name/address, license, provider type, capacity, etc.)

2. Demographics of Provider and Children in the Program (required for aggregate reporting)
3. Technology Self-Assessment (types and ages of current technology used for business management and technology skills)
4. Narrative Questions
 - a. Please describe your current child care record keeping practices.
 - b. Please describe your current child care business management practices. How would a technology grant improve the efficiency of managing your child care business?
 - c. When NOT caring for children, how many hours are you currently spending on managing the business aspects of your child care business (billing/invoicing, reporting, food program, CCAP, attendance, grants, business management training)?
 - d. What is your top priority (most needed) technology request?
 - e. What additional items are you requesting for grant funding?
Please add a priority list that clearly states what you need most in order. More than one item is recommended – if your priority item is found on sale, remaining grant funds may be used toward the next item(s) in the priority list, if also approved in the award letter.
 - f. Will the grant pay for the entire cost? What additional resources will be used to complete your technology purchase(s)?
 - g. Please describe in detail how you will use the grant funds, if awarded.
 - h. Available resources – asked to ensure purchases can be complete as awarded, including sales tax and shipping.
5. Grant Request and Budget Information:
 - a. Total grant request amount
 - b. Amount by category
 - c. Installation, Subscription Service or Training quote – must include:
 - i. Vendor name, address/contact information, service description and pricing; and/or
 - ii. Training description provided from trainer and Registration/pricing information;

- d. Screen shot or detailed list of equipment requested – must include:
 - i. Store name/vendor;
 - ii. Contact information (address/phone or web address);
 - iii. Product name
 - iv. Item/model number;
 - v. Description of equipment requested; and
 - vi. Exact price
 - vii. Sales tax rate if not shown, if sales tax is requested
- 6. Remaining technology needs – this application question is an opportunity to list remaining needs not already included in the request for two reasons:
 - a. It helps us understand the scope of need; and
 - b. If approved items are found on sale and funds remain, a modification request may be submitted but is not guaranteed. Only items referenced in the application will be considered in a modification request.
- 7. Attestation (same information as found in the Grant Agreement and Attestation to be signed and returned to FCF following an award letter)

Award Process

Complete application review will begin after each application round closes. Depending upon the number of applications in any given grant cycle, it is anticipated that award decisions and notifications will be made within four weeks of the application deadline. All grant process stages, including notification of award, are subject to change and can vary with each grant cycle. Applicants are advised to watch for status updates delivered via email.

Grant Notification: Award notification will be made by email to the email address used to register for a Submittable account. The award letter will specify terms of the grant, including which specific items from proposed

budget are approved. Grant funds may **only** be used for items or services as outlined in the grant award letter.

Partial Awards: Partial grant awards may be made based on eligibility of items requested in the proposal budget and availability of funds. If a partial award is made, grant funding must be spent only on item(s) approved as identified in the grant award letter.

Underspent Awards: If your project comes in under budget, remaining funds must be returned to First Children's Finance, unless additional spending is approved following a modification request. Remaining funds may not be spent on items not approved in the award letter without prior written approval following a modification request. If additional technology items were referenced in the application and funds remain from the grant award, a modification request may be submitted in writing. A form may be found in Submittable for modification requests. The item description, reason for modification request and associated budget documentation are required. Approval of modification requests must be received in writing prior to incurring the expense. If the modification request is not approved, remaining funds must be returned to First Children's Finance.

Award Agreement: An acceptance of the grant terms will be required, including required attestations, an ACH deposit form W9 and a report form.

The signed grant agreement and attestations must be returned within seven (7) days of award notification. Grant funding will be released following the grant agreement deadline.

Post Award – Final Report: Any unused funds for the awarded projects remaining after any modification request approval and purchase(s) must be returned. You may not use remaining funds on items not approved in the award letter. During final report reconciliation, if any use is found to be inconsistent with eligible uses, that portion of the grant funding may be disallowed, requiring return of funds to First Children's Finance.

Denied Applications: Applicants will be notified if their application is denied. Examples for why an application may not be approved for funding include but are not limited to:

- Limited resources available within the grant program;
- Application request does not meet the grant guidelines for funding or is incomplete;
- Applicant scored lower than other applications submitted;
- Applicant was funded in the last two years and is not yet eligible to reapply; and/or
- Applicant is not in good standing with Licensing or First Children's Finance.

Re-applying: Funds will be distributed in a balanced manner each cycle. Providers who submitted an eligible application that did not receive a grant in any cycle due to insufficient funds may apply again in a future round. Applicants will be notified if information is incomplete or if further detail is needed. A new application is required in each grant round.

Award Rubric

Grants will be evaluated using an award rubric with a numeric rating including the following categories:

- Current technology, recordkeeping methods and identified need
- Access Equity Area score
- Whether or not high need children/families are served
- Whether or not an applicant accepts CCAP
- Number of sites owned/operated by applicant
- Active enrollment/capacity
- Overall impact and reason for request

Every effort will be made to balance grant allocations by geography and demographics of the community served. Requests from applicants who

currently have no technology or limited technology, have not previously received a MN Access to Technology – Business Management grant, and/or demonstrate that the request will increase their business management efficiency will be prioritized.

Items purchased with funding from a previous grant round will not be awarded in a subsequent grant round without documentation of need.

Because the purpose of the grant program is to improve business management efficiency, smart phones and existing service/subscriptions score lower in the rubric than equipment with larger screens or new service/subscriptions.

Grant Agreement and Attestation

To accept a grant, child care business owners must sign an attestation that indicates understanding and agreement of the following:

1. They are **currently licensed in good standing** with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal Government.
2. Read and understand the requirements, including the reporting requirements and deadlines.
3. **Spend dollars exactly as described in the award letter** or as amended with permission in writing from Grant Administrators. Grant Administrators reserve the right to disallow items not matching the approved budget.
4. Not utilize funds to supplant expenditures for which there is another federal, state, tribal and/or local public funding source.
5. Submit a final report within 60 days, answering all questions in the report and submit:
 - a. Receipt/expense/training and/or certification documentation for entire grant
 - b. Photo of equipment purchased – must be out of the box, set-up, and turned on for use
6. Return unused, misspent or underspent funds to First Children's Finance for reallocation, as grant funds are paid up front.

7. Provide licensed child care in Minnesota caring for children other than the provider's own ranging in age from birth – school age for a minimum of two (2) years from the date of the grant fund notification. If the program closes before the minimum period is complete, the grantee understands that they will be required to return a prorated amount of this grant. The prorated portion is calculated from the date that the signed grant agreement is received.
8. Return a prorated share of grant dollars spent on services not moving with a program that relocates within the two-year period, even if continual care is provided for children other than the provider's own.
9. Remain licensed in good standing, verifiable by grant administrators following grant implementation.
10. Make services available to families regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, public assistance, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or familial status.

Grantees also attest that they understand that by signing the agreement:

- The information provided and other information related to the awarding of grants may be classified as public data pursuant to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. By signing the grant agreement, First Children's Finance is authorized to share all such information with the Minnesota Departments of Human Services/Children, Youth and Families and such other government agencies as may have a right to access such information for public purposes, including analyzing the use and effectiveness of grant funds. All information may be shared in full and/or aggregated format for reporting purposes.
- If they knowingly submit false or fraudulent information during any part of the grant process, their program will no longer be eligible for funds. Any funds awarded during this grant process would be required to be repaid and appropriate authorities would be notified.
- If unable to meet grant requirements, they must agree to return up to the full amount of the grant to First Children's Finance for

reallocation. Failure to do so will result in requirement to return funds and/or reporting to licensing authorities and DCYF fraud department.

Additional Forms

Included with the grant agreement/attestation, are an IRS Form W9 and an authorization for direct deposit of grant funds to the grantee's bank account (also referenced as an ACH Form).

W9: Grant dollars are considered taxable income. First Children's Finance will issue a 1099 for any payments of \$600 or more to businesses as required by the IRS. S-Corps, C-Corps, churches and tax-exempt, nonprofit centers are exempt from 1099s. FCF is still required to collect a W9, but a 1099 may not be issued.

Please Note: The Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) MUST match the TIN used to file taxes. If taxes are filed using a social security number, the W9 must include the social security number. If taxes are filed using an Employer Identification Number (EIN), Line 1 on the W9 must indicate the name associated with the EIN that is used to file taxes.

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.

ACH: Grantees will be asked to complete an electronic, direct deposit bank transfer (ACH) form, including bank routing and account information for direct deposit. If a grantee does not have a bank account, a check may be requested, though this will cause a delay in payment.

Final Report

A final report* will be due within 60 days of the deadline for returning signed grant agreements.

If the project cannot be completed in 60 days due to supply chain issues or delayed availability of an installer, up to a 30-day extension may be requested in writing by completing the Extension Request form in Submittable or by submitting a request through the MESSAGES feature in the grant portal. Approval must also be granted in writing. Failure to submit the final report will result in the grantee receiving an invoice for return of grant funds. If not paid, the grant will be reported to the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families or Tribal licensor. See Caution, below.

Report elements will include:

- a. Narrative description of impact of grant on child care business management
- b. Anticipated impact on time spent on business management aspects of the child care business
- c. Survey questions
- d. Barriers encountered in implementing grant if any
- e. Demographic changes
- f. Documentation of expenditures matching the budget submitted in application. If actual costs were less than the grant award, an invoice will be issued for return of the underspent funds.
- g. Receipts must be itemized and demonstrate that the project has been paid in full. (For example, an Amazon screen shot showing the total cost of an order is not acceptable. Grantees must download the receipt from their Amazon account once the order is complete.) Receipts from an installer must include the name of the vendor/business, address, phone number and scope of work completed. The entire receipt and/or document must be submitted – photos of partial receipts will not be accepted. Receipts should only include items that were approved in the award.
- h. Photos of grant-funded items, turned on and in use, including screenshot of funded software, installed and in use.
- i. Optional media release (quotes for reporting purposes)

- j. If applying for another First Children's Finance grant, final reports need to be returned, fully processed and final award funding reconciled before grantee is eligible to apply for an additional grant up to the maximum grant value through the current funding period. Grant status will change to COMPLETE when fully closed.

CAUTION

If grantees do not follow the terms outlined in the grant agreement, a referral will be made to the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families and may result in recoupment of payments already made, discontinuation of future payments from state-funded programs, and/or additional action related to the funds and the provider license under Minnesota Statutes, chapters 119B, 245A, 245E, and Minnesota Statutes, section 245.095.

This means you may be ineligible for other Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families public programs per [Minnesota Statutes, section 245.095 LIMITS ON RECEIVING PUBLIC FUNDS](#).

These programs include Licensing (your license may be suspended or revoked), Parent Aware Ratings (your rating may be revoked and you will be excluded from seeking a future rating); and funds, including but not limited to Great Start Compensation payments, Parent Aware grants, TEACH scholarships, REETAIN bonuses, Child Care Aware Regional Grants, reimbursement through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and any additional funding from First Children's Finance – both grants and loans.

Referral to another agency may be made by the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) if necessary, such as the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and/or the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

Confidentiality and Data Privacy

Applications will not be discussed outside of First Children's Finance employees, Board of Directors or External Advisory group comprised of key

stakeholders or partners. Information will be compiled for reporting to the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).

As this grant program is funded through the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), First Children's Finance is required to comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13.599, as it applies to data created collected, received, stored, used, maintained or disseminated. First Children's Finance is authorized to share all such information with the Minnesota Departments of Human Services/Children, Youth and Families and such other government agencies as may have a right to access such information for public purposes, including analyzing the use and effectiveness of grant funds. All information may be shared in full and/or aggregated format for reporting purposes.

Individual provider information will be reported to the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) licensing authority and/or fraud department if grant agreements are not honored, and when required by the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families for law enforcement investigation.

Access to Technology Training

Along with grant funding, the State of Minnesota allocated funds for training on leveraging technology for child care businesses. This training is offered to child care providers at no cost by First Children's Finance. Training opportunities and announcements may be viewed on the website at www.firstchildrensfinance.org and <https://www.facebook.com/FCFMinnesota>. This training is designed to help child care business owners assess their business management technology needs and learn about various options.

Grant Application/Report Assistance

For grant assistance (applications and reports) and for questions not covered in these guidelines, email grants@firstchildrensfinance.org or call the help line at 612-473-6020. Translation, interpreter services and assistance with the grant application are available upon request.

If voice mail is received, please leave a message so the call may be returned.

During open grant application periods, the help line will be answered Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. and on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

*FCF reserves the right to pay grant awards on a reimbursement basis, depending upon the rate of timely final report submissions in early round(s).