**Whatcom/Bellingham ARPA Grant**

**Innovative Approaches to Child Care Sustainability**

FAQ

***When does the application open?***

The Whatcom Bellingham ARPA grant opens Monday, December 19, 2022.

***When does the application close?***
The Whatcom Bellingham ARPA grant cycle runs through November 30, 2024 or when funding runs out. A first round of awards will be made in early to mid-February based on all proposals received prior to January 23, 2023. Thereafter, batches of proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis until funds are exhausted.

***What can I use the funding for?***

Funding should be aimed at recovery and resilience of your operations post-pandemic. Allowed uses include, but are not limited to:

* Staff retention and hiring/recruitment innovation strategies
* Increased pay for employees
* Minor home/facility repair for licensing health and safety compliance
* Rent/Mortgage (past due), utilities (past due), maintenance food costs, etc
* Education Supplies including supports/assistance needed to care for children with special care needs and disabilities
* Personal Protective Equipment to protect staff and young children’s exposure to illness

***What can I NOT use the funding for?***

* Large home/facility repairs and improvements
* Capital projects
* Start-up costs
* Credit Card debt, capital debt, business/personal loans
* Future/advanced mortgage/rent payments
* Future/advanced utility usage payments

***Can you explain how you came up with March 31,2022 as your cut off for being licensed?***

The date chosen is equivalent to 6 months prior to the Governors proclamation declaring the pandemic to be over, which establishes at least 6 months of impact in order to be eligible.

***If I did not have any pandemic impact am I still eligible to apply?***

The public health crisis of COVID-19 had a devastating impact on the child care industry. Loss of enrollment/revenue, increased expenses and challenges with retaining and/or recruiting staff are a few examples. If you are unsure how your business was affected, please reach out to your CCA NW Early Learning coach or C-RECC.

***Do I need to supply tax documents?***

The application process does not include submission of tax documents. Do not send tax documents with the application.

***Will receiving this money effect other money I have received like the DCYF Stabilization?***

You can apply for and receive this funding even if you have been granted funding from other sources. You cannot use this funding for the same use as other funding, for example if you have received assistance for December rent payment you cannot also use this funding for December rent payment. Applying for these dollars also does not prohibit you from seeking other new funding, including other ARPA dollars, currently being made available by local, state or federal governments.

***Can I use it to put on a covered porch?***

No. Large capital improvements are not an eligible use of these funds. Repairing an existing structure depends on the scope of the project and whether it meets the standard for “minor” repairs. Consult with your Early Learning coach and/or C-RECC.

***I feel recovered from the impact, what are ways I can use these funds?***

Employee retention, increased pay for employees and/or bonuses, educational supplies, minor improvements for health, safety and licensing compliance could be some of the ways you can achieve resilience for your operations post-pandemic.

***With this being a competitive grant, how is it decided whether applications are accepted or not? Do they prioritize different uses of the funds?***

The grant review committee uses a scoring rubric. This includes points for provider eligibility, families/children served, pandemic impact, provider need and success probability with use of funds. Innovative solutions that could be taken to scale in the child care sector will also be an advantage in the committee’s review.

***If a provider asks for the maximum amount of funds, are they restricted to that amount? Or, can they get a reduced amount based on number of applicants?***

Each provider license type has an award range (see power point). (can you link to PP from here?)

Since we don’t know how popular this funding is going to be, it is hard to guess amounts providers will ask for and how fast the funding will be spent. We encourage you to apply early. If the review committee has questions about the amount asked, you will be contacted for more information. If insufficient funds remain at the time of award to fully fund a proposal, the applicant will be contacted to see if a negotiated smaller amount can still meet some portion of an expressed critical need. In that case, the award might be smaller than the maximum asked for.

***How long do we have to spend the funding?***

November 30, 2024

***Can funds be used to directly support affordability for families? E.g. to fund sliding scales for low income?***

No.

***If my application is not approved will I receive feedback?***

Yes. The OC/C-RECC/CCANW team is dedicated to helping providers learn through this grant process, which could be helpful for concurrent or future funding opportunities.

***If we want to expand can we use this funding?***

This funding cannot be used for capital projects such as building renovation or purchasing a building. It can be used to recruit/hire staff and purchase equipment/supplies for expansion.

***START HERE***

**How will this affect my taxes?**

All grants are taxable income but may be offset by allowable expenses under the tax code.

Grants deposited in 2023 are considered 2023 income. You will receive a 1099 form from the Opportunity Council. Please consult with your accountant if you have questions about filing your taxes and/or tax documents.

**How is this different than the stabilization grant I received from DCYF?**

The Stabilization funding is offered by DCYF. The Innovative Approaches to Child Care Sustainability Grant is offered through a collaboration of City of Bellingham and Whatcom County ARPA funding.

**A big part of COVID loss has been trained staff who have left the field. We are experiencing a challenge with the path for new staff to get proper training and professional development to comply with licensing. Can we use this funding for PD?**

I would just say - A second wave of funding is aimed at employee credential scholarships but that contract has not yet been released. We are researching this question per the usage of these grant dollars toward teacher required education and will post the answer from our funders when we have their response.

**Given the small community in which providers live and work, how will the review committee ensure applications are managed in a fair and equitable way? Will identifying markers be removed during the review process? (David – what say you? Discuss the scoring committee’s diversity – or do we not identify the provider to the scoring team??? I would say: the review panel is defined by the funders’ contract with C-RECC. In addition, a unique identifier will be substituted for provider ID details to enhance objectivity during the review phase.**

**Preparing for the application recommends consulting with our coach because by accepting this funding there is 12-months of business stabilization and technical assistance support collaborating with your existing Early Learning Coach and C-RECC, NW.**

**Can you tell me what this means?**

As part of the contract, the funders required 12 months of support/coaching for providers regarding the grant usage. This required support will be integrated with work you already do with your Early Learning coach and will include the requested needs/use of funding stated on your application. For example, if you request funding support to retain staff, your coach will ask about your strategy to do things differently, present best practices from elsewhere, if desired, etc. Another example might be you request materials, equipment or staffing to help you in your work with children who have special needs. Your coach can observe the child or children using those materials, suggest adaptations or alternatives. Providers who do not participate in Early Achievers will have an assigned coach. If you do not wish to work with an Early Learning coach you can consult with the C-RECC team.

**~~Any ideas for creativity in finding trained lead staff? This isn’t really a question about the application process. I would delete.~~**

~~Be innovative. Meet with other providers to discuss strategies.~~

~~Survey your staff, ask what they appreciate, need, want as an employee.~~

~~Use some dollars for marketing and recruiting. In some surveys, staff express they want more paid time off. An extra hands/float teacher strategy might work in situation.~~

**Does innovative need to be a new strategy or can we take something that we have used and implement it again.**

It does not need to be new idea. You can revisit a previous strategy that worked for you or expand on a previous strategy, especially if you have data demonstrating effectiveness.

**How can money for raises go beyond the grant used up?**

**I can't tell staff they have to give up their raise/benefits because money ran out.**

Consideration for sustainability of your proposed strategies is worthwhile ahead of filing your application. If those changes help you consistently serve more children, you should generate more revenue to help sustain your compensation plan. In addition, enhanced subsidy rates that are planned or other funding sources might be an eventual resource for continuation, such as Whatcom County’s recently passed Prop 5 – Healthy Childrens Fund.

**I just submitted my application for the ARPA grant and did not see a place to submit the financial worksheet. How should I do that?**

This application does not require a financial spreadsheet.