

Transforming the --- Early Childhood Workforce --- in Colorado

Early Childhood Workforce Innovation Grants

Frequently Asked Questions¹

Updated 1/8/2021

Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative and the Early Childhood Workforce Innovation Grants

1. What is the Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce in Colorado Initiative; who are the partners?

The *Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce in Colorado Initiative* is an innovative, public-private partnership to advance the early childhood (EC) workforce. Buell Foundation and Gary Community Investments serve as funders and advisors, working with the lead agency (Early Milestones Colorado) and resource partners to oversee implementation of the initiative and ensure the promotion of best practices and systemic improvements to advance the early childhood workforce in Colorado.

Responding to the critical need to better recruit, retain, and compensate the EC workforce in Colorado, the *Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce in Colorado Initiative* (Initiative) was launched. The Initiative supported the development of a state plan to advance the EC workforce (Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan) and the completion of [two research studies](#) - a workforce survey including both state and regional findings, and an economic sector analysis - to better understand the experience and impact of the EC workforce in Colorado. From 2018 to 2020, the Initiative selected eleven promising partnerships with good ideas and a commitment to change to receive EC Workforce Innovation Grants. In 2021, the Initiative will award additional EC Workforce Innovation Grants.

2. What is the focus of the Early Childhood (EC) Workforce Innovation Grants?

The EC Workforce Innovation Grants are for state and local partnerships dedicated to advancing the workforce. Those with innovative ideas for **systemic improvement** in recruitment, retention, and compensation of an effective, qualified EC workforce are invited to apply. We are looking for committed partners with a strong vision, a serious commitment to drive change, and a flexible mindset to adapt to the challenges of implementing truly innovative work. This highly competitive grant has an emphasis on data-informed, sustainable, systems-improvement or systems change efforts that address community or state level challenges.

3. What are the application categories?

In 2021, we seek to not only support **new innovations**, but also to **scale promising innovations** and **sustain effective innovations** that have the potential for greater statewide impact. The

¹Please see the full Request for Proposals at www.coloradoecworkforce.org for more information

2021 RFP includes three application categories: **Innovating, Scaling** and **Sustaining**. For more detail, see *Application Categories* on page 6 of the RFP.

Definitions

4. What is the definition of “early childhood workforce”?

For this grant opportunity, the terms early childhood workforce and early educators may be used interchangeably. They refer to the teachers, assistant teachers, directors, and family child care providers working in licensed early learning schools, centers, or homes serving children birth through age five. Proposals should address recruitment, retention, and/or compensation of the licensed workforce or recruitment into the licensed workforce.

5. What is a local champion?

The local champion should be someone who is influential in bringing about change, builds public will, is able to garner resources to support the project, and help ensure sustainability after the end of the grant term. This person should serve as an advocate and ambassador for the project. This individual should be well respected with strong connections. It is expected that the local champion will be willing to advocate for the continuation of the work. Local champions might include public officials, philanthropic leaders, civic leaders, etc. Generally, the local champion is someone outside the lead agency. *State agency partnerships do not require a local champion.*

Eligible Entities

6. Who is eligible to apply?

Eligible applicants for this grant opportunity may include but are not limited to:

- 501(c)3 organizations/non-profits focused on early childhood and/or workforce development
- State Agencies, including departments of labor, education, human services, etc.
- Early Childhood Councils
- Workforce development boards
- Local school districts or boards
- Colleges and universities
- Local government, including departments of health and/or human services, public health, education, community development, town councils, etc.
- Other non-profit entities, such as Family Resource Centers

Ineligible Entities: Though we recognize that workforce issues are a challenge for both non-profit and for-profit entities, for-profit businesses are not eligible to apply as the primary applicant for these grants; however, they may partner with one of the entities listed above.

7. Is this grant opportunity appropriate for areas that have a lack of child care to help increase the number of providers?

The focus of these grants is the early childhood workforce, not availability of child care in general. However, we recognize that the two are often interrelated. Competitive proposals will demonstrate how their strategy will impact recruitment, retention, and compensation of an effective, qualified workforce.

8. Is a licensed child care center eligible to apply?

If a child care center is non-profit and is partnering with other organizations, they are eligible to apply. Strong proposals will demonstrate an innovative approach to addressing systems issues with the potential for broad, sustainable impact.

Allowable Expenditures

9. Can I use grant funds to provide wage supplements or bonuses to teachers?

Yes. However, if providing direct compensation to the workforce, a minimum of a 25% financial match and a plan for sustainability after the grant term is required. Direct compensation of the EC workforce must not be entirely funded by this grant. Other compensation approaches that do not require a match may include, but are not limited to, offering supports related to staff housing, health care and benefits, transportation, or child care.

10. Can I use grant funds to support tuition or scholarships?

This is an allowable expense. Strong proposals will demonstrate systems building work to ensure the scholarships or tuition support is sustained after the grant term.

11. Can I use funds to educate or for advocacy to gain public support for advancing the workforce?

Grant funds may be used for activities such as strategy development, education, communications, marketing, advocacy, or polling about a specific workforce need, but must not be used for direct lobbying. “Direct lobbying” is defined as any attempt to influence specific legislation through communications with any member or staff of a legislative body or any government official who may participate in formulating legislation. Direct lobbying also includes attempts to influence the general public concerning a specific view on a ballot initiative, referendum, or similar process.

Partnerships

12. What constitutes a “partnership”, and what are the roles of the partners?

We are looking for active local and state-level partnerships to address EC workforce challenges. Generally, this will be partnerships that have already been working to address challenges in their community or across the state. Most appropriate partners will vary depending on the project; proposals will be more competitive if they demonstrate appropriate partnership and stakeholder base for successful implementation.

We suggest both traditional (e.g., EC organizations) and nontraditional (e.g., workforce development organizations, businesses) partners to broaden the base of support and ensure sustainability. We believe that part of what makes innovative projects successful is the shared commitment to change and the connections and ideas continuously exchanged among experts, people with varied skills, resources, and experiences. The roles that partners play in your project will vary based upon need, approach, etc.

13. Are partnerships required?

Yes. Though a single entity will be the primary applicant/lead agency for the grant and the recipient of grant funds, additional partners are required.

Proposals

14. Can an organization be the lead agency or partner agency on multiple proposals?

There is no limit to the number of proposals for which an entity can participate or be the lead agency. However, we strongly recommend partnering with and submitting proposals for the innovative idea that will you feel would be most impactful and lead to change on your transformative goal.

Interviews

15. Who will be contacted for phone interviews?

We will contact lead agencies if we need more information about a proposal. This does not represent finalists or “shortlisted” candidates.

Project Selection

16. How will projects be selected for awards?

All proposals will be reviewed, scored, and discussed; Initiative funders will make final decisions on grant awards.

17. What is the criteria for selection?

There are many pieces of the RFP that provide guidance and insight into what the Initiative seeks in proposals. In general, we are looking for “ready” projects and partnerships – those with innovative, systems improvement/building ideas – who are best equipped and prepared to implement and achieve impact with one year of project funding.

Projects will be chosen based upon a clearly identified need, a transformative goal and Theory of Change to impact the goal, the viability of the project design, the approach to systemic improvement and change, the potential for sustainability, the strength and composition of the partnership, identification of a local champion, readiness and willingness to engage in using data in rapid, iterative cycles of learning, and willingness to be part of a learning community. **Special consideration will be given to projects that address compensation and improve the financial well-being of the workforce.**

Grant Awards and Future Funding

18. Is there a total amount of funding allocated to each “lever”?

No. Selection will be based on the “most ready” projects and partners with innovative ideas and the potential for making an impact. *Proposals that address compensation of the workforce will receive special consideration.*

19. How many awards will be made?

The number of awards is dependent upon the type and size of awards funded. The **maximum** amount of funding that will be awarded for all grants is \$630,000. Grants will be selected that meet the criteria in the RFP and show greatest potential for systemic change.

Key Dates

20. What is the due date for proposals?

Intention to Apply: An email noting your intention to apply must be submitted to info@coloradoecworkforce.org by 5:00 pm MST on **February 2, 2021**. In the email, identify the

anticipated lead agency/applicant, partners, and project title or approach. We recognize these may change somewhat prior to proposal submission.

Submission Deadline: Proposals, including all Application Components, must be submitted to Early Milestones Colorado via email by 5:00 pm MST on **February 24, 2021**. Please submit proposals to: info@coloradoecworkforce.org.

For More Information

21. Who should I contact for more information?

More information can be found at www.coloradoecworkforce.org, including the Request for Proposals; required proposal documents; a recorded webinar and research about the early childhood workforce in Colorado.