



**Community Engagement
Block Grant Listening Session Summary**
Sept 2024



Welcome & Introductions

Please share your name, organization,
and title in the chat

Ice Breaker

What was the one thing you enjoyed
most about this summer?



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Executive Summary

The City of Chicago recognizes the limitations of a uniform approach in addressing the diverse needs and priorities across its communities, particularly in the context of the Early Childhood Block Grant. In an effort to inform their decision-making process, the months of December 2023 and January 2024, the City set out to engage you as experts spanning various early childhood sectors, community collaborations, and provider backgrounds and experiences. The objective was to facilitate an inclusive conversation that gathered input from all stakeholders to engage the early childhood community perspectives, ideas, and inputs.

Prioritizing community voice, with evidence-based decision-making and equity in mind, the City leveraged insights obtained from these listening sessions to consider stakeholders overall experiences, Early Childhood Block Grant supports and enhancements, and Smart Start Illinois Investment. The aim is to ensure that all children in Chicago, have access to high-quality early childhood education and care and providers are able to deliver these services through an equitable allocation of funding and support services.

Community Engagement

Overview



Community Engagement Summary

Captured and recorded data from the Listening Session participants were categorized based on funding history. The following outlines the details for each category;

Recipient

Is a current funded agency receiving;

- Early/Head Start
- Preschool For All (PFA)
- Prevention Initiative (PI)

Non-recipient

Is not a current recipient of the above named funding;

- Childcare Providers
- Non-Federal/State Recipients





Community Engagement Summary

	Total Participants	<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Non-recipient</i>
Registration Questionnaire	66	47	19
Listening Session Breakout Groups	59	48	11
Post-session Survey	14	10	4
Jamboard	<i>not tracked*</i>		

** During and after the Listening Session, a virtual whiteboard served as an additional platform for gathering feedback. Participants had the option to leave feedback as they saw fit.*

Key Learnings

Insights

ACCESS

- Providers are worried about the lengthy five-year cycle for RFPs
- RFP process is seen as a burden, specifically some cited concerns about the volume and repetitiveness of questions
- There is a strong desire for more transparency surrounding RFP eligibility criteria
- The marketing of grant opportunities is insufficient, which has led to many providers missing out on the chance to apply
- There's a significant delay in the application process from submission to notification

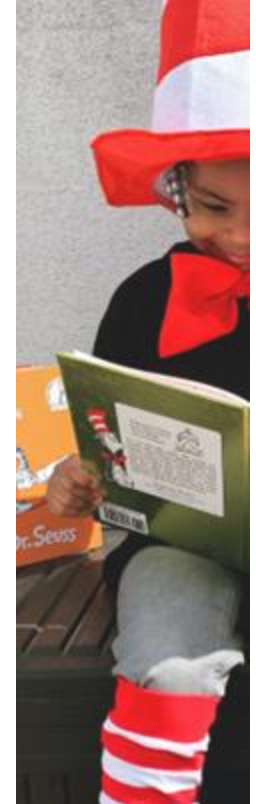
SUPPORT

- Administrative burdens related to paying staff salaries and licensing processes are major obstacles
- Paperwork and the fiscal responsibility related to managing funds create significant burden on providers
- Smaller organizations face difficulties in accessing resources such as grant writers
- A gap exists with ongoing support to navigate grant requirements



EQUITY

- Concerns were raised about CPS prioritizing their enrollment over provider programming if they were chosen to administer the funding
- In response to “how should the administrator invest subsequent Smart Start dollars into the Block Grant to better address disparities in resource allocation...?” the top selected options were:
 - Expansion of existing programs by slot allocation per enrollment needs
 - Consider the true cost of care when determining levels of funding source
- Insufficient due diligence and transparency into why certain recipients were not awarded funding
- Funding eligibility and guidelines are not responsive to needs of families and the changing early childhood landscape



Recommendations for Consideration



Recommendations for Consideration

INCREASE ACCESS

- Simplify the application process and offer annual opportunities to apply for slots
- Use various advertising platforms to connect with providers, consider the most effective channels where organizations most regularly receive information
- Evaluate reasons why some providers may not qualify for funding and consider updates based on the changing landscape, ex: review and address discrepancies between awarded and eligible providers
- Offer tiered funding options to open access to those may not meet full qualifications





Recommendations for Consideration

BUILD CAPACITY

- Offer a tiered support approach to recognize the variance in experience with the grant
- Create space for peer-to-peer collaboration and support among grant recipients
- Provide training on outreach and recruitment to address program vacancies
- Better city-wide collaboration among programs to collectively ensure families are directed to the appropriate services
- Invest in licensing and account for administrative responsibilities related to required paperwork and fiscal responsibilities
- Consolidate data management requirements across grants to streamline reporting processes
- Implement strategies to prevent staff losses and center closures, such as advocating for sustainable wages for childcare workers





Pre-session Survey: Practices to Uplift Equity

Core values and practices to ensure the most effective and equitable use of resources

+ Equitable Distribution and Allocation

- Ensure equity for all providers, families, and communities, addressing issues like racial equity and pay parity.
- Ensure that resource distribution and allocation strategies encompass services for family child care programs and small center-based programs.

+ Collaboration and Transparent Policies

- Establish clear guidance, policies, and data systems for appropriate resource use and accountability.
- Emphasize transparency and collaboration for planning, investing, and resource allocation.

+ Financial Equity and Support for Providers

- Invest in the early childhood education workforce, including increased salaries and mentorship programs for capacity building.
- Advocate for livable and sustainable wages for all childcare workers.

Administrative Decision



Administration Question Point Based on Feedback

Should the Early Childhood Block Grant stay with its current Administrator, Department of Family Support Services for oversight?

or

Should the Early Childhood Block Grant return to Chicago Public Schools for administration and oversight?





Administration Decision

In order to promote greater equity for providers and families in Chicago, it is important to make changes to the current process. While no specific agency preference was clearly identified and pro's and con's were shared for both administrative entities, most providers could only identify with the current administrator's processes and guidance to share their experiences and suggested ways to create a more accessible, supportive, and equitable system for all.

Although both administrating entities demonstrated unique and compelling qualities to provide early childhood provider with optimal supports and enhancements our decision did not come easy. Besides for considering all the feedback loops, data collections, and surveys we also recognized the most critically import factor which was the administering agency should be one that is the least disruptive during this time of overall transition and realignment for the new state early childhood Department. Therefore we determined that the Department of Family and Support Services will continue to administer the Early Childhood Block Grant for community based organization.

Chicago Public Schools will continue to fund and collaborate with DFSS to ensure all children and families continue to have access to high-quality early care and education.

Next Steps

Chicago Early Learning RFP 2025

9/5/24

Current funding landscape and timeline

- Current contracts across both funding sources have been extended through the following periods:
 - PFA/PI extend through 6/30/25
 - HS/EHS extend through 12/30/25
- **All current delegates** who receive ECBG or Federal funding from DFSS must re-compete through the upcoming RFPs

NEW RFP Funding /Contract terms

- Initial contract term for ECBG funding in new RFP will be 1 year (7/1/25-6/30/26), with up to two 1-year extensions
- Initial contract term for Federal funding in new RFP will be December 1, 2025 – November 30, 2026, with up to two 1-year extensions

Who will administer the ECBG Grant

- DFSS Children Services Division will continue to administer the ECBG funding it receives from CPS during FY 2025 – 2026
- ECBG funding PFA/PI will be included in the next RFP and ALL current and potential recipients must apply through the RFP.



Who will administer the ECBG Grant – Future State

New Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC)

What to expect!

- Decisions on future administration of the ECBG funding will come in the near future as IDEC is stood up in Illinois
- City of Chicago is working to align with the State
- This is a unique time for Early Learning in Illinois

Previous Chicago Early Learning RFP - DFSS released one RFP in April 2019

- Included both funding sources Federal (HS/EHS/EHS CCP) and State (PFA and PI)
- Organizations who applied were required to submit one response for 4–5-year-olds and one response for 0–3-year-olds
- The RFP was complex and cumbersome therefore made it difficult for respondents to apply
- DFSS was required to complete three addenda to clarify for the respondents what different statements and sections of the RFP meant and how to respond

RFP structure - one RFP required a response to

Part A: 4-5 year olds

PFA

HS

Part B: 0-3 year olds

PI

EHS

★ NEW - DFSS will release two separate RFPs in early 2025

- DFSS will launch an updated RFP in 2025. We will purposely separate the RFP by age to ensure we clearly articulate the requirements for specific age groups and funding streams
- DFSS anticipates launching the RFPs in early January 2025 with contract start dates as follows:
 - ECBG: July 1, 2025
 - Federal: December 1, 2025
- DFSS traditionally will keep RFPs open for 4 to 6 weeks
- The duration for how long the RFP will be open will be determined closer to the launch date
- There will be a virtual webinar to take questions and answers from potential respondents

RFP structure

RFP A: 4-5 year olds

PFA

HS

RFP B: 0-3 year olds

PI

EHS

★ NEW - DFSS will release two separate RFPs in early 2025

- Organizations who are interested in providing programs for both 4–5-year-olds and 0–3-year-olds will need to submit a response to both RFPs
- This structure will allow DFSS to make award decisions that best balance system needs across these two age groups and funding sources

RFP structure

RFP A: 4-5 year olds

PFA

HS

RFP B: 0-3 year olds

PI

EHS



What trainings will be available to organizations who wish to apply?

- DFSS will engage a support services provider to assist potential respondents in navigating the RFP process.
- Core Support Offerings will be focused on lowering / removing knowledge barriers in the following areas
 - Chicago Early Learning Standards (CELS) - a review of key requirements that will shape RFQ responses and which includes planned service delivery structures
 - Partnership considerations
 - Budget Building and Considerations
 - Allowable costs
 - Non-Federal Match
 - Collaborative Governance core requirements
 - Programmatic Requirements and Considerations
 - I-Supplier Navigation, Insights and Tips



How do we plan to improve communication regarding the RFP launch and access?

- DFSS intends to utilize multiple sources, including additional sources not used in 2019 to share information about the RFPs, including the information in all state and local committees and meetings and the following channels to ensure widespread notification of the RFPs:
 - CSD internal channels, CSD Update and CSD Alerts
 - Department of Family and Support Services website
 - **Illinois Head Start Association**
 - **Illinois Action for Children – Providers and Educators – Funding Opportunities**
 - **Every Child Ready Chicago**
 - Local news sources
 - Social Media
 - **Birth-to Five Illinois**
 - **Listening to constituents like yourself we ask that you participate in the following poll**

*Share in the poll: What communication pathways are the most effective?
Are we missing any?*



Important links

- Department of Family and Support Services Website – You will find department updates including RFP’s that have been launched. Keep an eye on “Most recent News”
 - <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/fss.html>
- City of Chicago eProcurement system– **You must register for access to this system to review and apply to RFPs**
<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dps/isupplier/login-register.html>
- **Questions on Registration, eProcurement, and additional technical assistance:**
 - CustomerSupport@cityofchicago.org or 312-744-4357 (HELP)
- **Online Training Materials (technical assistance materials and handouts):**
<https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dps/isupplier/online-training-materials.html>



Important links

- Illinois Early Learning Project
 - <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/>
- Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC)
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>
- Illinois State Board of Education
 - <https://www.isbe.net>
 - <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Early-Learning-Standards.aspx>
 - <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/el-guidelines-0-3.pdf>



Questions and Answers

Contact Information

Programmatic questions

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Closing Questions & Information

Participant Feedback Padlet

This present and Recording will be available
[Chicago Early Learning/Every-child-ready-chicago](https://www.chicago.gov/3-1-1/department/0301-0000/early-childhood/early-childhood-early-learning)

For Questions Contact
ECRC@cityofchicago.org

THANK YOU!