

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Privacy Statement

Personal information entered into the application is subject to the Washington Public Records Act and may be subject to disclosure to a third-party requestor. At the City of Seattle, we are committed to protecting your privacy and will ensure that any disclosures are done according to law. To learn more about how this information is managed please see the City of Seattle Privacy Statement.

1. What is the purpose of this grant?

The purpose of this grant is to offer financial support and recognition for early learning educators and childcare staff who have been working in childcare programs located in the City of Seattle.

The City of Seattle has allocated up to **\$2.5 million** from the Families, Education, Preschool, and Promis (FEPP) levy for payments to eligible staff at Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) licensed family childcare (FCCs) and center-based programs. Payments through this grant will only be awarded to programs located within Seattle city limits.

Seattle's Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) and BrightSpark Early Learning Services are partnering to award and dispense these funds.

2. Who is eligible to apply for the Seattle Childcare Workforce Payment?

Application for these funds must be submitted by the employer. In the case of family childcare providers, this is the licensee. Businesses receiving these funds will be responsible for passing it on to their employees.

Description of eligible staff:

All childcare staff who work on-site at a DCYF licensed childcare center or family childcare program located within the boundaries of the city of Seattle, regardless of full-time or parttime employment status, are eligible for this Seattle Childcare Workforce Payment when all the criteria below are also met. Additional criteria:

- The staff person was an employee at the program on or before **September 7th, 2026**, and at the time the application is submitted continues to be employed by the eligible childcare program.
- The person is still an employee of the submitting, eligible childcare program at the time when the program receives their Seattle Childcare Workforce Payment, and when the program issues this payment to their eligible staff.

- The staff person must work on-site, provide direct care for children, and serve or work with children for most of their shift. In addition to classroom teachers, assistant teachers, and teaching staff who cover multiple classrooms, staff members in roles such as food preparation for the childcare program, transportation of children enrolled in the childcare program, or administrative staff who support the program may be considered for eligibility as long as their work is on-site, they are an employee of the childcare program, and they meet the other eligibility requirements. These roles all *serve* the program and enable its operation.
- If the employee works in a childcare facility located within the boundaries of the city of Seattle, they themselves do not need to be a Seattle resident. Each eligible staff member included in the application must have a valid STARS ID.
- Programs outside of Seattle, including unincorporated King County are not eligible for this funding opportunity. License exempt School-age only providers operating within Seattle city limits are not eligible. Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers are not eligible.

3. I'm a family childcare provider who works directly with children at my DCYF licensed facility. Can I apply for this recognition pay for myself?

Yes. You do not need to have hired employees. If you are an FCC provider who works directly with children or *serves* children as defined in question #2 above and whose DCYF licensed business is located within the boundaries of the City of Seattle, you may count yourself as an eligible worker. Please note, your family childcare program must have had an open DCYF license since **September 7th, 2026**, to meet the “hired by” criteria outlined in #2 above.

4. As a licensed family childcare or center-based provider, do I have to be open and serving children to quality for this grant?

You must currently be open and accepting children. Your program must have enrolled and served at least one child in 2026.

5. What are the workforce payments (i.e., grant) amounts?

Each childcare worker determined to be eligible will receive the same amount. Programs **are not** permitted to pay more to some eligible staff over others. This includes no allowable difference for full-time staff over part-time, or by role within the program. The total amount awarded per person will depend on the total number of eligible employees identified by applicants.

6. Is this funding competitive? (Is there a preference if my application is submitted first?)

No. The workforce payments are not competitive. All applicants who meet the eligibility criteria and submit by the close of the application period will be considered equally.

7. Am I required to serve families accessing the Working Connections Child Care state subsidy or be enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to be eligible?

No. Any DCYF licensed childcare provider within the Seattle city limits can apply whether or not they receive Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) or Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) subsidies.

8. Must I be enrolled in Early Achievers to be eligible?

No. This is not a requirement, nor will preference be given to those enrolled in Early Achievers.

9. What can these funds be used for?

Funds must be paid directly to eligible employees. The purpose of the Seattle Childcare Workforce Payments is to provide financial support for childcare staff. This grant is not designed to provide funds for the childcare program. Providers are required to keep records regarding the use of the funds, and to provide the records to the City if requested.

This grant carries no restrictions regarding how eligible awarded employees can use the funds passed on to them. Employees receiving these funds are not required to keep records of how they spend their awarded Seattle Childcare Workforce Payments.

To receive funds, providers must, on the application, agree to use the funds in accordance with the FAQ and any additional stipulations in the application.

10. Do I need to submit receipts or records associated with this grant?

Programs are required to save evidence of distribution of these funds to eligible staff. These records may be requested by the City of Seattle. Unless specifically asked to do so by the City of Seattle, there is no requirement to submit evidence of payment to staff.

11. What about taxes and costs associated with receiving these funds?

Grant funds are considered income. For the purposes of taxes, grants (including this Seattle Childcare Workforce Payments) should be treated similarly to other income received by your business.

Providers can hold back up to 15% of the funds allotted to cover business expenses associated with passing on these funds to their employees, for any related taxes and/or administrative fees. The remaining balance must be passed on directly to your employees via your program's usual payroll system. Payment should not be made in gift cards or other substitutions for a direct payroll pass-through. Please know that any payroll withholdings may further reduce final compensation amounts to individual employees.

For example, let's say that your agency claimed 20 people on the application, and you received \$5,000. Your agency is allowed to hold back up to 15% (in this example, that would be \$750) to cover any taxes or administrative costs of passing this on to your employees' paychecks. This means that the program in this example would be obligated to pass on at least \$4,250 to your 20 employees, each receiving an equal amount before their own taxes and withholdings are applied.

Please seek advice from a professional tax consultant regarding your specific business implications.

12. Will the grants be given in full?

Yes. The full grant amount will be awarded up front, after the application is approved. Providers will be paid by electronic funds transfer (EFT) or check. Providers who have not previously received an electronic payment from BrightSpark Early Learning Services will be

given the option to authorize payment by this method. Applicants can expect to receive notification of the award status approximately one month after submitting their application.

13. When do I have to pass these funds on to my staff?

Payment of the Seattle Childcare Workforce Payments, via your program's regular payroll system, should be completed within the next two regular payroll periods following the receipt of funds by the provider.

14. What if I am an agency that has multiple licensed childcare sites in Seattle, do I need to submit separate applications for each site?

Yes. Programs will list their business name and DCYF issued provider ID# as part of the application. Each application must have a unique DCYF issued provider ID.

15. What documentation will I need to submit?

After notification of the award, you will need to submit a completed and signed W-9 and a copy of your program's DCYF childcare license. BrightSpark will notify applicants if these documents are already on file, or if they must be sent specifically for this grant.

A binding agreement will be included in the grant application. Applicants must select "yes, I agree" or whatever affirmative language appears on the application form.

16. What do I need to do if I want my Seattle Childcare Workforce Payments sent to my bank electronically?

It is not a requirement, nor is there any preference given to programs who choose to receive payment electronically.

Programs that wish to receive electronic payments but do not yet have an electronic payment agreement with BrightSpark must submit a completed direct deposit authorization form along with either a voided blank check or a letter from their bank confirming their account and routing numbers. Programs that do not have the required direct deposit authorization and banking documentation on file with BrightSpark will receive their payments by paper check instead.

17. How do I apply?

The application is scheduled to be available **September 7th, 2026**. A link to the application will be posted by the City of Seattle and will be published via email sent by BrightSpark. Providers may also request the application in a pdf format and can send to this email address: grants@brightspark.org. The application will be available in the following languages: Amharic, Arabic, English, Simplified Chinese, Oromo, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

STARS ID Requirement: Applicants must have a valid STARS ID to complete the application. Please verify that each eligible staff member has a valid STARS ID before submitting your application. Applications cannot be processed without valid STARS IDs for eligible staff.

18. Is there a deadline to apply for this grant?

Yes. The deadline to apply is **September 30th, 2026, at 11:59pm Pacific Daylight Time.**

19. What if I need help to fill out the application?

If you are enrolled in Early Achievers, you may contact your Early Learning Coach for assistance. If you are not enrolled in Early Achievers or do not know who your coach is, please contact **BrightSpark's Provider Line at 1-800-446-1114**, select option 2.

Questions may also be directed to BrightSpark staff at grants@brightspark.org.

20. How and when will I receive notice if I've been awarded funds from the Seattle Childcare Workforce Payments?

All providers who applied will be notified of their award status via email. Award announcements will include the payment amount and number of eligible staff.

Applicants can expect to receive notification of the award status approximately one month after submitting their application. The deadline to apply is **September 30, 2026, at 11:59pm Pacific Daylight Time.**

21. What if an employee leaves my program after the application is submitted?

If staff who were counted as eligible on the application are no longer employed at your childcare site, and this represents 25% or less of the number of staff you identified as eligible, the program must disperse, equally, the full Seattle Childcare Workforce Payments award amount amongst the eligible employees currently employed. Please note, to be eligible, a staff member must meet all of the eligibility requirements in question #2 above, including having been employed on or before **September 7th, 2026.**

If more than 25% of the staff members reported as eligible on the application no longer work at your program, your award amount will need to be recalculated and you must contact grants@brightspark.org.