



Early Childhood Learning Erie County Investing in Families

Grant Guidelines | March 2025



Erie County Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Fund

2.11 Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care

Section I. Introduction & Purpose of the Program

Introduction

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 is a federal relief package providing \$1.9 trillion in funding, program changes, and tax policies aimed at mitigating the continuing effects of the COVID-19 public health crisis. As a result of this historic legislation, Erie County is receiving a federal grant of \$52,391,502 from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF).

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) is a subrecipient of Erie County's grant award and was awarded \$2.5 million in funding by Erie County Council in 2024 to stabilize and improve the early childhood learning and daycare industry throughout Erie County. Erie County and its subgrantees must spend all grant funding by December 31, 2026. Grant funds are being deployed to help Erie County recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

About ECGRA

In 2008, ECGRA was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the purpose of creating and administering economic development grants with local share gaming revenue. ECGRA's mission is to elevate Erie County by galvanizing nonprofits and small business toward economic and community development and this is done through impact investing. This type of investing considers the social, cultural, and environmental effects of investments to both communities and municipalities.

Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care

Across Pennsylvania, tens of thousands of parents are struggling to find safe and reliable childcare that allows them to work and support their families. As more childcare centers close, the number of facilities without access to essential services continues to grow. According to the *2024 State of Early Childhood Education* report, the situation is dire. Pennsylvania is facing a historic shortage of early learning educators, exacerbated by unlivable wages that do not meet the cost of living. According to a recent report (<https://www.jeserie.org/uploads/GOULD%20--%20ECIPI%20Final.pdf>), there is a deficit of approximately 2,500 childcare slots in Erie County with shortage of 1,500 in the city of Erie alone.

ECGRA partners with a vast network of nonprofits and small businesses engaged in community development, job creation, wealth building, local business growth, and strategic projects. Many of the projects initiated by these entities have the potential to be transformative for Erie County. Utilizing this network, ECGRA has developed a three-pronged approach to address stabilizing and developing the childcare industry. The three prongs are **1.) Stabilizing the Workforce, 2.) Incentivizing Facility Expansions, and 3.) New Facility Construction**. ECGRA will solicit grant applications for each of the three areas that follow an evidence-based approach to addressing Erie County's childcare industry needs.

Purpose of the Erie County Investing in Families Funding

The purpose of the federal Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) Program is to:

- Fight the pandemic and support families and businesses struggling with its public health and economic impacts;
- Maintain vital public services, even amid declines in revenue resulting from the crisis; and
- Build a strong, resilient, and equitable recovery by making investments that support long-term growth and opportunity.

ECGRA has identified three areas that the SLFRF and Erie County consider eligible and align with ECGRA's existing community revitalization programs.

Phase I

1. Educator Retention Awards

Before ARPA dollars can support the expansion and creation of new childcare slots across Erie County, the community needs to stabilize the industry's workforce. According to recent testimony, Erie County is experiencing historic shortages of early learning educators, exacerbated by low wages. This area of funding will solicit proposals for worker retention incentives.

Project Funding: \$1.5 million

Phase II

2. Startup & Expansion Grant

Erie County has several facilities that are either underutilized or in need of expansion to accommodate additional slots. This area of funding will solicit proposals for renovations and expansions.

Project Funding: To be determined

3. New Facilities Grant

According to testimony, all of Erie County is a childcare desert. This area of funding will solicit proposals for construction of new daycare facilities.

Project Funding: To be determined

Priority Areas

This program requires that grant-funded activities take place within Erie County with priority given to geographic areas and populations that have faced long-term economic challenges, disinvestment, and poverty.

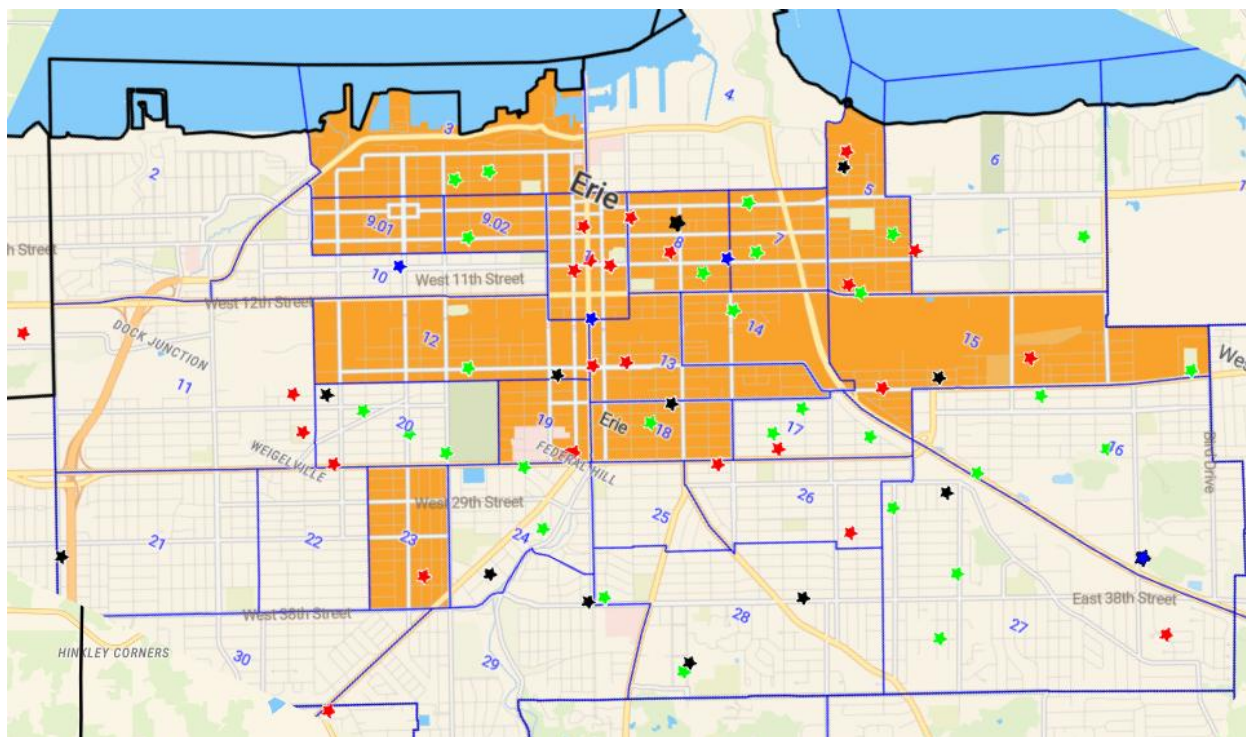
Proposals or work elements with an emphasis on federally protected classes that were disproportionately impacted during the pandemic are acceptable regardless of location.

There are three criteria to determine if projects will be considered targeting economically disadvantaged communities. Projects taking place in these geographic areas do not need justification in terms of reaching disadvantaged populations.

1. In HUD Qualified Census Tracts (QCT);
2. Where primary beneficiaries earn less than 60% of median income for Erie County; or
3. Where 25% of the primary beneficiaries are below the federal poverty level.

The following maps generally illustrate the location of the Census Tracts or Census Block Groups which fall into the county parameters. Projects and programs are not restricted to these locations.

Erie County Census Tracts with Median Family Income less than 60%



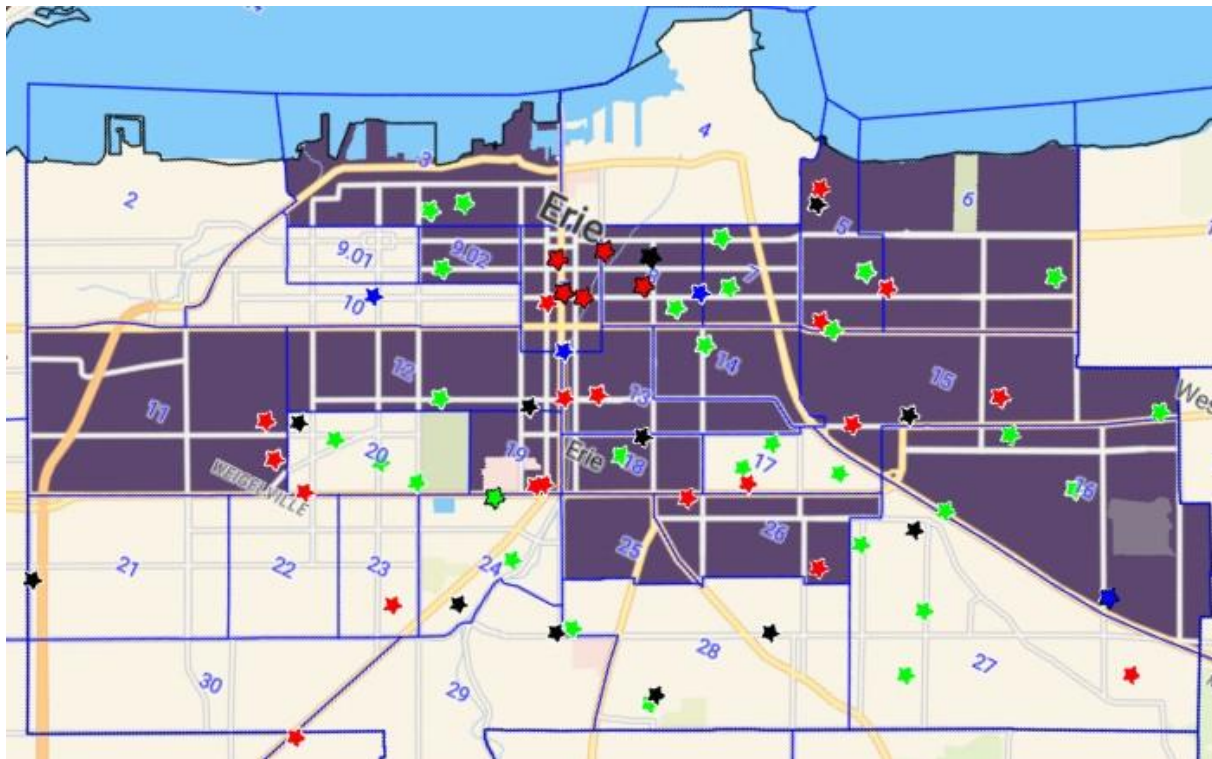
4-star daycare centers represented by red stars.

3-star daycare centers represented by blue stars.

2-star daycare centers represented by green stars.

1-star daycare centers represented by black stars.

HUD Qualified Census Tracts (OCT) in the city of Erie (2024)



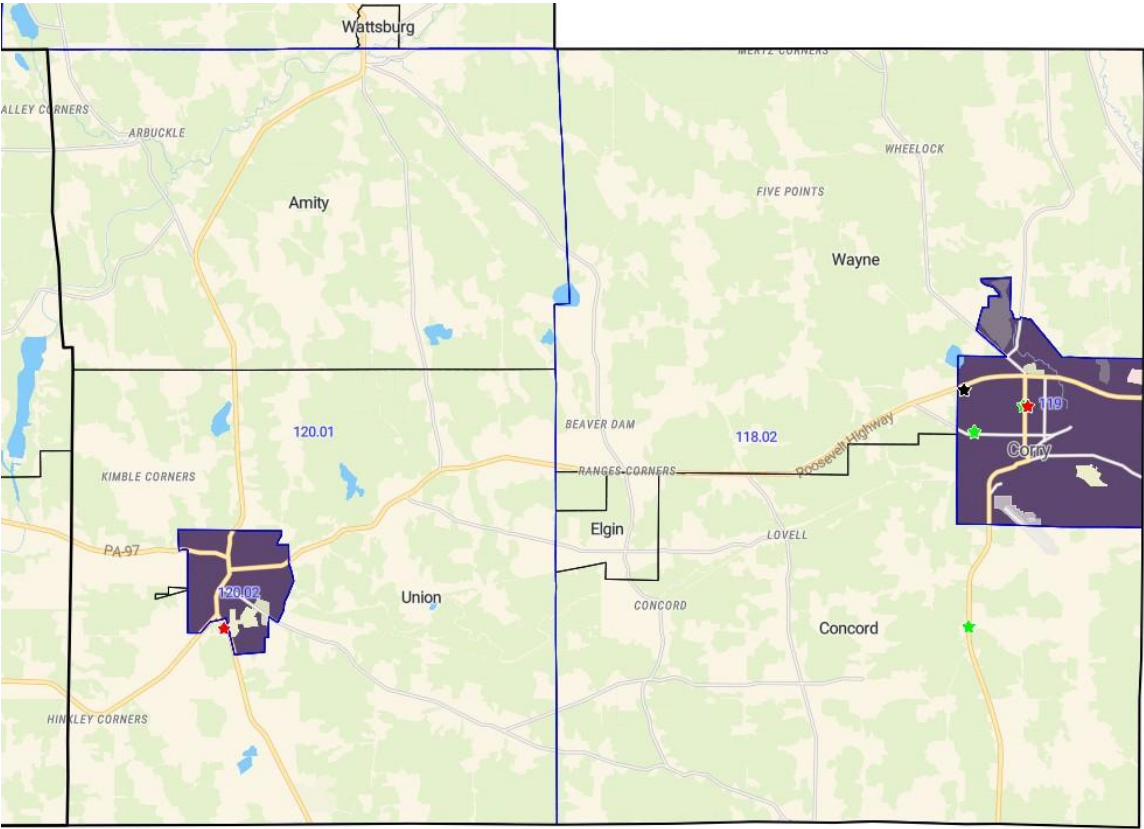
4-star daycare centers represented by red stars.

3-star daycare centers represented by blue stars.

2-star daycare centers represented by green stars.

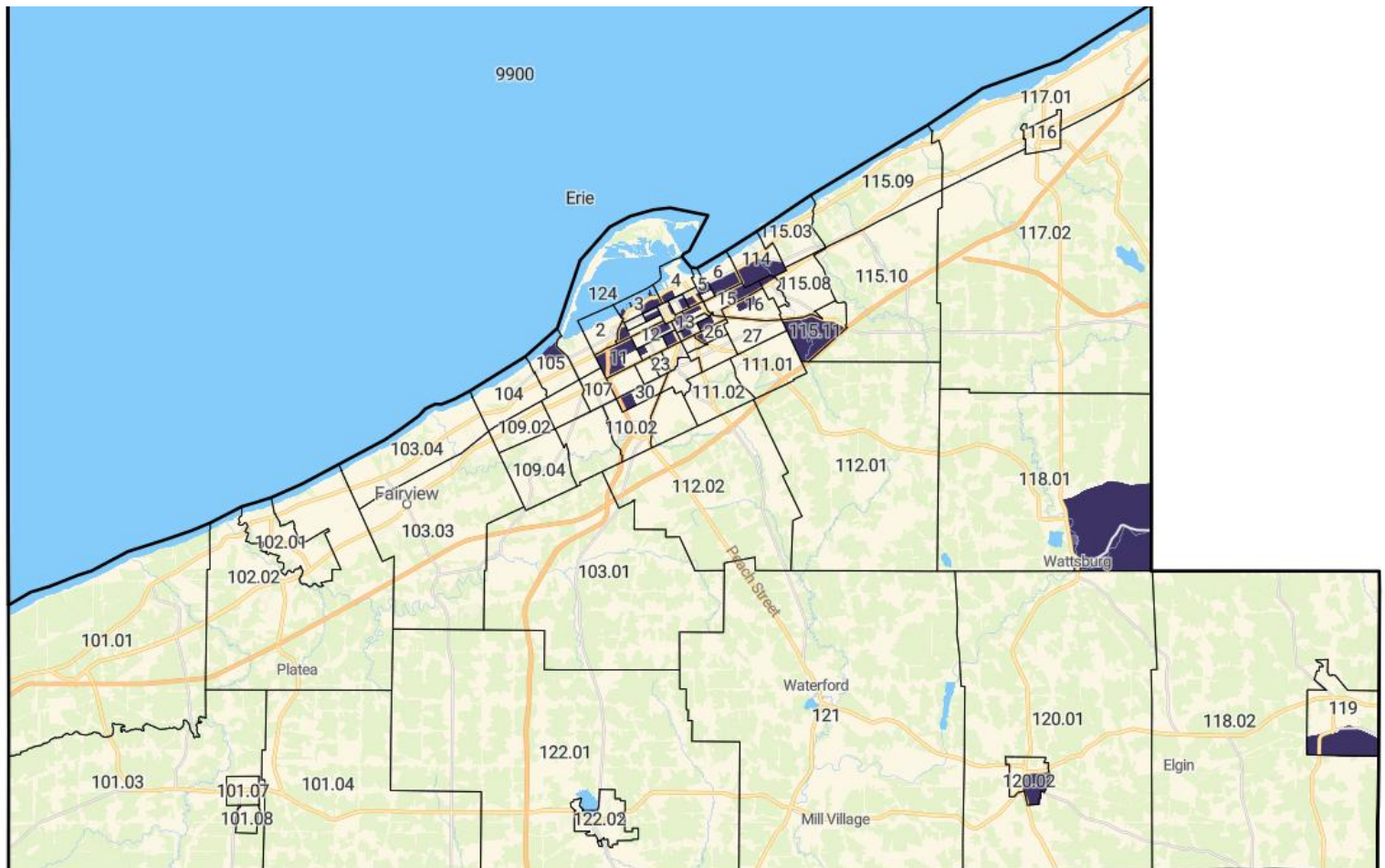
1-star daycare centers represented by black stars.

Other HUD Qualified Census Tracts (QCT) in Erie County (2024)

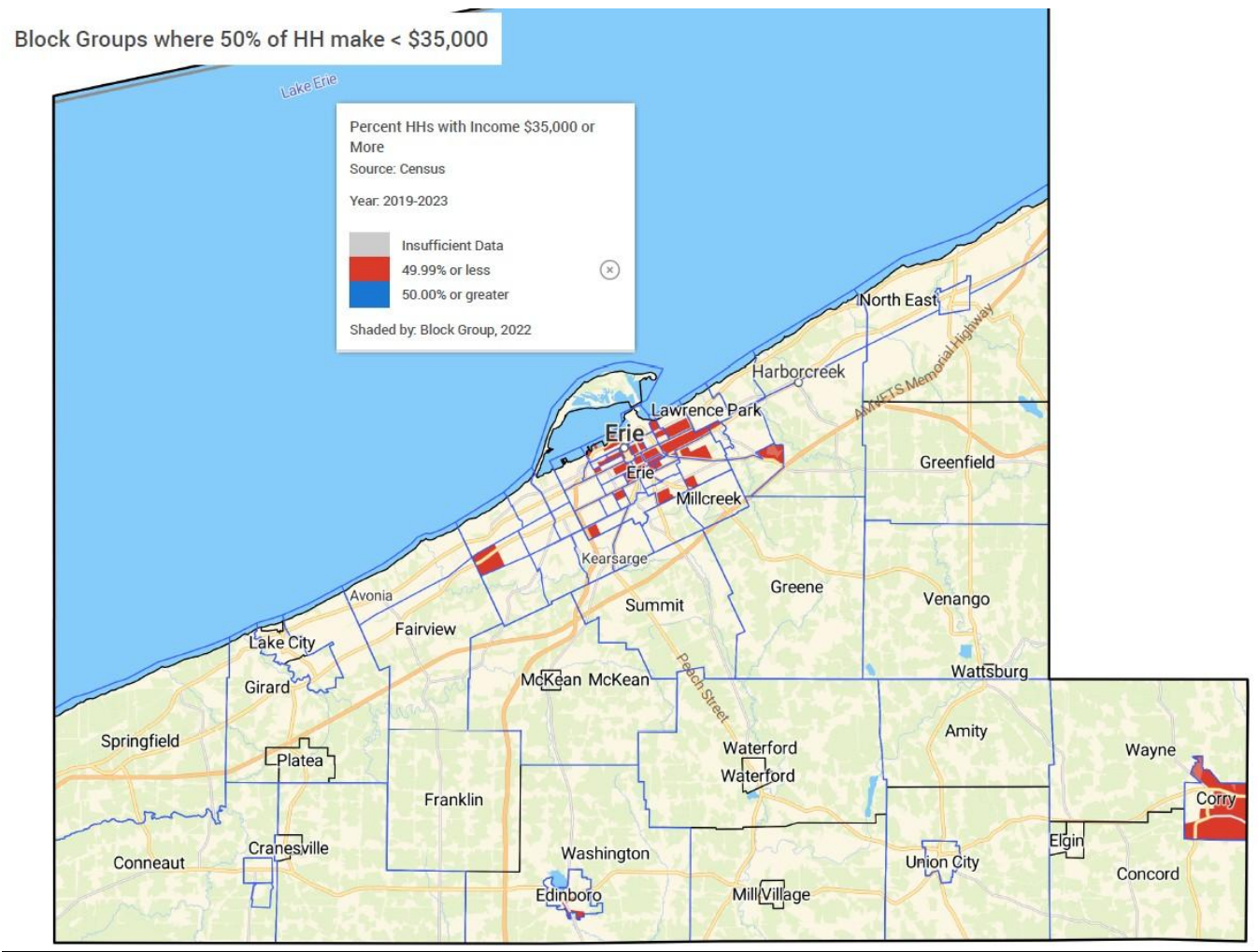


- 4-star daycare centers represented by red stars.
- 3-star daycare centers represented by blue stars.
- 2-star daycare centers represented by green stars.
- 1-star daycare centers represented by black stars.

Erie County Census Block Groups with over 25% of Families Living in Poverty



Erie County Census Block Groups where 50% of Households make less than \$35,000.



Section II. Program Specific Eligibility Criteria, Guidelines, & Application

ECGRA Early Care and Education Educator Retention Award (ERA)

Erie County Investing in Families

FINANCIAL AWARD GUIDELINES

REQUEST and ATTESTATION FORMS

Child Care Centers, Group & Family Child Care Homes

Purpose:

This award is designed to support Early Care and Education (ECE) programs for those who are serving families in Erie County. Priority for these awards will be targeted to Department of Human Services (DHS) Early Care and Education (ECE) programs serving vulnerable or at-risk populations. If there are available funds, they may be awarded to programs who have Pre-K Counts (PKC), Head Start and Head Start State Supplemental (HS & HSSP), Early Head Start (EHS), and/or Private Academic Pre-School (PDE) certification. The provider must be STAR 2, 3, or 4, or equivalent at time of application. Pre-K counts is considered STAR 4 equivalent.

Overview:

The ERA Request Forms (PAGE A & Attachment 1) will collect staff-specific information in order for eligible ECE programs to pay awards to qualified owner/operators and teaching staff.

Important Notes:

All award funds are contingent upon the availability of ECGRA funds.

This application may be denied if it is not complete, or the instructions have not been followed.

For any questions regarding the completion and submission of the ERA request, please contact the JAM Team Foundation at grants@jamteam.org

General Provider Eligibility:

To be eligible for the ERA, an ECE program must meet the following requirements. Additional requirements are detailed by section.

- 1) The provider must be designated at and meet all Keystone STARS Performance Standards associated with a STAR 2 (or higher) designation or equivalent.
- 2) The provider must maintain the STAR designation, or equivalent, for which the provider received the ERA during the approval and payment phase of the ERA. If a STAR level move-down occurs during this process, the provider is no longer eligible for that award amount. It is expected that the provider is making a commitment to maintain the awarded STAR designation.
 - i) If a provider moves down to a STAR 1 prior to payment, the provider will no longer be eligible to receive payment.

- 3) The provider must hold a regular Department of Human Services (DHS) Certificate of Compliance. If a provider has a Provisional Certificate of Compliance, award funds may be available upon return to a full DHS Certificate of Compliance. PKC, HS, HSSP, EHS, or PDE certification may apply and will be awarded based on available funding.
- 4) The provider must have an agreement with Child Care Works (CCW) through the Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC). Furthermore, the provider must be willing to enroll a child who qualifies for subsidy, if space is available.
- 5) Providers who have liens/liabilities to the commonwealth and/or federal government, including tax liabilities, filed against them (not UCC-1 filings) will be suspended from Keystone STARS and will not be able to receive grants and awards until those liens/liabilities are fully satisfied and the program provides the ELRC a clearance certificate issued by the Department of Revenue. Clearance certificates can be obtained at the provider's local tax office.

Award Timeline:

Providers shall complete and submit their application by 5:00 p.m. Friday, April 25, 2025. All completed grant documents as listed below shall be emailed to: **grants@jamteam.org**

Electronic submission:

- **Page A & B Request Forms and Page C Attestation Form** below; and
- **Attachment #1 ERA Excel Budget Workbook** – see Attachment's instructions for details

Guidelines and Compliance for the ERA Award

Non-compliance with any requirement of the Grant Agreement could result in the provider being required to return grant funds to ECGRA and not be eligible for future ECGRA funding.

- All award funds are a one-time payment for those working directly with children and are not to be used to supplement the incomes of teachers.
- Funds attributed to this grant must be expended within six months of the Board approval date as specified in the signed Grant Agreement. Grants not expended must be returned.
- The provider must retain original documentation for all award expenditures for seven years and ensure the documented amounts match total expenditures as reported on the respective Attachment #1 ERA Excel Budget Workbook. Non-compliance will result in grantee being ineligible for future grants.
- **Important: Any unexpended funds must be returned to ECGRA.**

Payroll Tax Assistance

This grant will include the 7.65% employer portion of payroll taxes associated with the payments made to eligible staff included on Attachment #1. This amount will be calculated for you on Attachment 1 and should be included on the Attestation Page. Please ensure all Totals on all documents are the same.

Award Reconciliation/Closure

The completion of the respective attachments will directly tie the request and approval of the award funds to the reconciliation and approval of expended funds.

For grant closing and budget approval/expense reconciliation, the following **must** be completed and submitted to **grants@jamteam.org** no later than **November 30, 2025**.

Right to Know Law

Federal funding and local share gaming revenue (State funding) is being used as a source for the program funding. As such, Erie County, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, or their authorized representatives shall have right of access to records of the grantee to conduct audits or other investigations. Grantee records including the grant application, may be subject to disclosure under Pennsylvania's Right to Know Law.

Electronic Submission:

- Attachment #1 ERA Excel Budget Workbook with all tabs completed.
(The budget revision tab is to be completed only if budget revision becomes necessary).

Providers **must** keep documentation of ERA pay-outs to staff for their records, for review by the Jam Team Foundation or ECGRA and for state/federal agents who may need to review documents for auditing/monitoring purposes. **All grant related documents must be maintained for 7 years.**

- Allowable documentation: Payroll/employee compensation documents indicate payee, date, amount paid and description of payment and/or is supported by a check or other proof of employee payment.
- Payroll documents should remain onsite and should not be submitted with Attachment #1.

Examples of Unallowable Documentation

The following is a listing of documents that are unallowable as confirmation of a receipt or invoice:

- Copies of general ledger posting records.
- Copies of check registers or listing of checks written by providers.
- Computer accounting record screen-shots or other lists of data indicating payment.
- Documents that do not indicate payee, date, amount paid and description of payment
- and/or is not supported by a check or other form of payment.
- Documents that appear to have been altered or changed in any way.

Eligible Staff Persons

To be eligible, staff must be listed and verified on the providers staff report in the PD Registry. The following staff positions are eligible for this award:

Position Titles:

- OO = Owner/Operator as Primary Caregiver;
- PSP = Primary Staff Person as the Operator
- D/AD = Director and one Assistant Director
- GS = Group Supervisor
- AGS = Assistant Group Supervisor
- A = Aide

*Please refer to the Career Pathway on the PA Key website for clarifications.

- Administrative, custodial, transportation, and food service staff, are not eligible for the ERA unless they have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) and work at least 15 hours per week directly with children. If this is the case, they should be classified as an Aide or AGS.

ECE Educator Retention Award (ERA)

Award Amounts

Educator Retention Award (ERA): Staff awards are tiered to the program's STAR level, hours worked and Career Pathway Level. Hours are calculated on the average number of hours the staff person worked for the past 12 months. Please refer to the table below.

Pro-rated ERA Table

STAR Level Attained	# Hours Worked Per Week	Director/AD Owner/Operator Level B or above	All Qualified Staff (Career Pathway Levels)*		
			Level C or above	Level B or B+	Level A or A+
STAR 2	15 – 20	\$ 2,750	\$ 1,750	\$ 1,000	\$ 500
	21 - 40	\$ 4,500	\$ 3,500	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,000
STAR 3	15 – 20	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,500	\$ 750
	21 - 40	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,500
STAR 4	15 – 20	\$ 3,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,000
	21 - 40	\$ 6,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 2,000

The intent of the ERA is to assist providers in establishing a stable workforce as they work toward higher levels of quality by reducing turnover and improving the education of teaching staff. To be eligible, a provider must meet site-specific requirements as well as staff-specific requirements.

ECE Provider Eligibility Requirements

The **provider** must meet the following site-specific requirements:

- Be able to provide the following upon request:
 - Copies of employee salary scale, bonus policy and personnel handbook
 - Proof of payment of payroll taxes
 - Verification of staff eligibility through Career Pathway Placement in the PD Registry.
- ERA funds must be processed through payroll and are subject to applicable taxes (processing through IRS 1099 is prohibited). Adhere to IRS guidelines for employers and be responsible for any employer's portion of taxes as awards are distributed.

* Please refer to the Career Pathway on the PA Key website for clarifications regarding degree types, related degrees, credit hours, etc.

ECE Educator Eligibility Requirements

- **Staff** must be employed at the same legal entity for at least 12 consecutive months prior to the date of ERA request.
- Teaching staff awards may be used only for staff who work directly with children during operating hours (at least 15 hours) a week, who hold a CDA or 9 credits in Early childhood Education.
- Award amounts are based on the number of hours worked. Staff members working less than 15 hours per week are not eligible for awards. This may be an average of 15 hours over a 12-month period.

Academic Eligibility Requirements

Please refer to the Career Pathway on the PA Key website for clarifications regarding degree types, related degrees, credit hours, etc.

- Owner/Operator Awards
 - At least a Level B on the Career Pathway
 - Can receive the director ERA at Career Pathway A+ with an approved educational plan to achieve Career Pathway Level B
- Teaching Staff Awards
 - At least a Level A on the Career Pathway
- Teaching staff who are below Level A are not eligible.
- Administrative, custodial, transportation, food service staff, and volunteers are **not** eligible for the ERA.

Reporting Requirements

A closeout report will be required at the completion of the program. Details will be furnished at a grantee award meeting.

ECGRA must submit quarterly reports to Erie County. Grantees will need to furnish the following information:

1. Number of households served
2. Number of children served
3. Race, ethnicity, gender, and income level of families supported.

Educator Retention Award (ERA) Request Form

To be completed by provider and submitted to grants@jamteam.org

Name of
Provider _____

Address of Provider _____ STAR Level _____

Phone Number _____ MPI# on Certificate of Compliance _____

Number of children being served at time of application: _____

Instructions:

- On this worksheet, document all information for each staff person who is eligible. **Do not leave any columns blank.**
- Please refer to the eligibility requirements in **Section II and III** if you have any questions.
- **Reference Educator Retention Award Table on page 14** to determine the amount entered in the "Award Amount Requested" column for each staff member
- **Please make sure the PA Key website at www.pakeys.org is updated with the correct Career Pathway information for each staff member.**
- Indicate if the staff works with school-age children and how many hours per week.
- Indicate if the staff member works in a classroom funded through Head Start, Pre-K Counts, or Early Intervention.
- List the care level of the classroom the staff member spends 50% or more of their time during the day.
- Only those staff members who are eligible: Administrative, custodial, transportation, food service staff, and volunteers are **not** eligible for the ERA.
- Make copies of this form for additional staff.

ECE Educator Retention Award (ERA)

ATTESTATION Form

To be signed by Legally Authorized representative and submitted to **grants@jamteam.org**

Instructions: In the table below, please list the total amount requested for the ECE Educator Retention Awards, Payroll Tax Assistance from Attachment #1 and the Grand Total.

At Closure/Reconciliation: If a budget revision is required, email **grants@jamteam.org** to discuss options.

TOTAL ECE Educator RETENTION AWARD REQUESTED	\$
Payroll Tax Assistance (multiply total by .0765 or 7.65%)	\$
Grant Total	\$

Instructions: Please complete this page and email with all copies of Page A and Attachment #1. Please make sure the Grant Total on this page matches the Total Amount Requested on Attachment #1. To be eligible to receive the ERA, make sure the individual who signs this request has legal authority to represent the provider.

Attestation:

By signing this document, the grantee certifies that the provider is in compliance with all ERA grant requirements. The grantee also certifies that, as of the date of this grant request, this legal entity/program has no outstanding liens/liabilities or other commonwealth or federal obligations. The grantee certifies that, as of the date of this grant request, this program location has a full DHS Certificate of Compliance. The grantee hereby declares under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 18 Pa.C.S §4904, that the statements made within this application are true and correct.






Signature Section: _____

Print Name and Position: _____



Legal entity: _____ **Date:** _____

Section III. Eligibility

Eligibility Criteria

-  Applicant must align proposed projects and programs with priorities and recommendations identified by Positioning Erie To Prosper and Compete (2024), Child Care Crisis in Erie testimony (2024), as well as any other relevant existing community plans.
-  Other American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding may not serve as match.
-  Applicant must adhere to contemporary practices/policies with regards to diversity, equity, and inclusion and reflect the spirit and intent of Erie County's Diversity Commitment Statement (Appendix B.)
-  All applicants must be in good standing with the IRS and state and local taxing bodies.
-  All applicants must be in good standing with ECGRA's reporting requirements to date.


Ineligible Grant Recipients

-  Suspended or inactive daycares
-  501 c 3 not in good standing with IRS


Section IV. 2025 Grant Schedule


 **April 1, 2025** – ECGRA releases the **Early Childhood Learning - Erie County Investing in Families Grant Application for Stabilizing the Workforce**


 Application and Guidelines and posts to ecgra.org

 **April 2025** – Grant workshop held via Zoom


 **April 25, 2025** – Applications must be submitted by midnight

 **May 15, 2025** – ECGRA's board of directors will make the final review and approve funding recommendations

 **May 30, 2025** – last day to submit signed agreement letter

 **October 31, 2025** – last day to submit a closeout report online

 **November 30, 2025** –

 **grant closing and budget approval/expense reconciliation, must be completed and submitted to grants@jamteam.org**

Appendix A. Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act Summary

Summary of Applicable Provisions of the

PREVAILING WAGE ACT

43 P.S. §§ 165-1 et seq

34 Pa. Code §§ 9.101 et seq

The Prevailing Wage Act (the “Act”), 43 P.S. §§ 165-1 et seq., and the various laws and regulations governing the Act apply to Public Works projects funded by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (“ECGRA”). A Public Work is defined as including construction, reconstruction, demolition, alteration and/or repair work other than maintenance work, done under contract and paid for in whole or in part out of the funds of a public body where the estimated costs of the entire project exceed **\$25,000**.

ECGRA fund recipients shall require their contractor, if any, and contractors shall agree to require their subcontractors, to comply with the Act and the associated laws and regulations issued pursuant thereto.

Wage rates paid workmen employed in the Work shall not be less than the rates determined in the applicable wage rate determination by the Secretary of Labor and Industry for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and no workmen may be employed in the Work except in accordance with the classifications in Secretary’s determination.

The recipient of ECGRA funds shall be required to obtain the aforementioned public wage minimum rate determination prior to drafting project specifications or engaging in a contract with a contractor on a Public Work project.

Workmen employed or working in the Work shall be paid unconditionally, regardless of whether a contractual relationship exists or the nature of the contractual relationship. Payments shall be at least once a week and be the full amounts due at the time of payment, computed at the rates applicable to the time worked in the appropriate classification, without deduction or rebate, on any account, either directly or indirectly, except authorized deductions.

The contractor and each subcontractor shall post, for the entire period of construction, the wage determination decisions of the Secretary, including the effective date of changes thereof, in a prominent and easily accessible place or places at the site of the Work and at the places used by them to pay workmen their wages. The posted notice of wage rates shall comply with the requirements of the Pennsylvania Code, Title 34.

The contractor and subcontractor shall keep an accurate record showing the name, craft or classification, number of hours worked per day and the actual hourly rate of wage paid, including employee benefits, to each workman employed by him in connection with the Public Work. The record shall include deductions from each workman. The record shall be preserved for two (2) years from the

date of payment and shall be open at reasonable hours to the inspection of ECGRA and to the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Industry or his authorized representatives.

Apprentices shall be limited to the numbers in accordance with a bona fide apprenticeship program registered with and approved by The Pennsylvania Apprenticeship and Training Council and only apprentices whose training and employment are in full compliance with the Apprenticeship and Training Act (43 P.S. §§ 90.1 – 90.10), as approved July 14, 1961, and the regulations issued thereto, shall be employed on the Public Work project. A workman using the tools of a craft who does not qualify as an apprentice shall be paid the rate predetermined for journeymen in that particular craft or classification.

Payment of compensation to workmen for work performed on a Public Work in a lump sum basis, or a piece work system, or a price certain for the completion of a certain amount of work, or the production of a certain result shall be deemed a violation of the Act and associated regulations, regardless of the resulting average hourly wage.

Each contractor and subcontractor shall file a statement each week and a final statement at the conclusion of the work with the recipient of ECGRA funds, under oath and in a form satisfactory to the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Industry, certifying that workmen have been paid wages pursuant to the contract and the Act, or if wages remain unpaid, to set forth the amount of wages due and owing to each workman respectively.

The provisions of the Act, and its associated regulations shall be incorporated by reference in each contract.

This document is provided solely for informational purposes only and is not for the purpose of providing legal advice. You should contact your attorney to obtain advice with respect to compliance with the Prevailing Wage Act. Use of this document does not create an attorney-client relationship between the user and legal counsel to ECGRA.

Appendix B. Erie County Statement Regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Erie County Diversity Commitment Statement

Erie County government values the power of diversity. Our goal is to develop an inclusive workforce that will uphold racial equity, support the diversity of employee experiences, and include unique perspectives. Through our commitment to inclusion and diversity, Erie County will provide repeated opportunities for training and professional development that will support on-going positive change. We affirm a zero-tolerance attitude toward any form of discrimination. We pledge to maintain our mission to promote justice and equity in the community we serve.

Defined Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Erie County

Diversity is simply the presence of differences. Diversity is achieved when we ensure that the county employs and engages individuals at a level that reflects the population it serves.

Equity is promoting fairness (not a one size fits all approach) providing as much as possible to support individual needs. Equity exists when current and future employees have access to opportunities necessary to satisfy essential needs and advance their well-being and achieve their full potential as a county employee.

Inclusion is creating a space where all diversities are empowered to contribute to decision making. Inclusion occurs when the structures and practices that support employees make them feel welcomed, affirmed, and respected across the county system.