

# 2025 Childcare Startup & Expansion Grant Program

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*Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority*

## *I. Project Information*

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### **Purpose:**

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, worsened by wages that do not meet the cost of living. According to a recent report (<https://www.jeserie.org/uploads/GOULD%20-%20ECIP%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 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.

This program is designed to support Early Care and Education (ECE) programs in Erie County. The program focus is on 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. Provider must be STAR 2, 3, or 4, or equivalent at time of application. Pre-K counts is considered STAR 4 equivalent.

Program guidelines for **Childcare Startup & Expansion Grant Program** can be accessed [here](#).

### **Project Name\***

*Character Limit: 200*

### Project Summary\*

Please provide a brief executive summary of the project or program. Example: Urban Achievers Childcare will

*Character Limit: 500*

### Amount Requested from ECGRA\*

**The maximum grant is \$50,000.**

*Character Limit: 20*

### Total Project Match\*

ECGRA grants must be matched 1:1 with cash. Do not include in-kind donations in the project total.

*Character Limit: 20*

### Total project cost\*

*Character Limit: 20*

## II. Eligibility Criteria

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### **Basic Applicant Eligibility and Requirements**

- The provider must be designated at and meet all Keystone STARS Performance Standards associated with a **STAR 2 (or higher) designation or equivalent as of July 1, 2025.**
- It is expected that the provider is making a commitment to maintain the awarded STAR designation. If a provider moves down to a STAR 1 prior to payment, the provider will no longer be eligible to receive a grant.
- 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.
- 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.
- Providers who have liens/liabilities to the commonwealth and/or federal government, including tax liabilities, filed against them (not UCC-1 filings) 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.

- Applicant must be located in Erie County
- 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.)

### **Ineligible Projects**

- Purchase of land
- Purchase of gift cards, gift certificates, travel checks, and/or any other comparable legal tender.
- Purchase of alcohol.
- Purchase of vehicles or vehicle maintenance.
- Payment toward staff entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and/or social activities or any costs directly associated with such activities (such as tickets to shows or sports events, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities) that are not professional development-related events.
- Purchase of any second-hand (used) items, including but not limited to, those from individuals, yard sales, and auctions.
- Federally approved and/or corporate indirect cost rates assessed to affiliated programs.
- Salary increases and bonuses for current staff and/or those who work solely in programs such as PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program, and Infant Toddler Contracted Slots.

### **Eligible Project Examples**

- Indoor Health and Safety Equipment
  - First aid items.
  - Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
  - Hand washing stations.
  - Diaper changing stations.
  - Child safety equipment including gates, cabinet locks, door knob covers.

- Cameras to monitor new classroom(s).
  - Mobility aides.
- Outdoor Health and Safety Equipment
  - Age-appropriate playground equipment.
  - Evacuation cribs.
  - Strollers or buggies.
  - Playground surface improvements.
  - Fencing.
  - Shade sails and prefabricated shade solutions.
  - Adaptive playground equipment.
- Minor Renovations\*  
**(\*Major building construction or structural changes are not eligible expenses under this grant.)**
  - Flooring and ceiling upgrades.
  - Interior partition construction or removal (non-load-bearing walls only).
  - Drywall repair and painting.
  - Door or window replacement.
  - Adding insulation to an unfinished space.
  - Adding a sink or lavatory to an area where plumbing is already available.
  - Addition of wheelchair ramp.
  - ADA compliant restrooms.
  - Facility kitchen upgrades.
- Materials and Equipment
  - Curriculum and classroom materials.
  - Toys, consumables, and craft supplies.
  - Sleeping equipment for children.
  - Classroom furniture (chairs, desks).
  - Communication and/or translation devices.
  - Overnight supplies and equipment for non-traditional care.
- Business Practice Purchases
  - Upgrades to client management software.
  - Permits, zoning variance fees, etc.

## Organization Eligibility

### All must apply in order to be eligible

Please contact program administrator if you are unsure of your eligibility.

#### Choices

Applicant must be a STAR 2, 3, or 4 facility,  
Applicant is current in payment of real estate taxes or is tax exempt.  
Applicant is in good standing with ECGRA's reporting requirements to date.  
Applicant is in good standing with the IRS and state and local taxing bodies.  
Applicant must own or lease property to be improved.  
Applicant will be the recipient of the grant. (Pass through grants are not permissible.)  
Applicant's headquarters is located in Erie County.

### Ineligible Primary Organizations

If an applicant is one of the following, they are ineligible to apply

#### Choices

A state or federal park  
An airport or transportation facility  
A state or federally owned facility or agency  
A public safety organization or facility, including volunteer fire departments  
An institution that predominantly provides primary, secondary, or higher education/training  
A part of the settlement agreement with ECGRA entered into 12/13/10

### Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Law\*

Applicant has reviewed information in the program guidelines regarding the Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act for construction projects and will abide by the Act, if applicable.

#### Choices

I have read and understand the Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act requirements.

## III. Primary Organization Information

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### Name of Applicant's Organization\*

*Character Limit: 250*

### Name and Title of person submitting application\*

*Character Limit: 250*

### Municipality in which applicant's headquarters is located\*

*Character Limit: 250*

### County Council District in which applicant's headquarters is located\*

Click here to see a County Council District map

## Choices

County Council District #1  
County Council District #2  
County Council District #3  
County Council District #4  
County Council District #5  
County Council District #6  
County Council District #7

## Staff/Volunteer Leadership\*

List or upload a list of the names and titles of key staff or volunteer leadership

*Character Limit: 1000 / File Size Limit: 1 MB*

## Board of Directors

If the applicant is a 501(c)(3) list or upload a list of current board of directors, including email addresses and occupations.

*Character Limit: 1000 / File Size Limit: 1 MB*

## IV. Project Narrative

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### Project Description.\*

Tell us about your organization's mission. Whom do you serve now? What are your major areas of focus? What are you trying to accomplish with your proposal? Will you serve anyone new? Please provide adequate details.

*Character Limit: 2000*

### Describe the need for the proposed project.\*

Please explain the demand or need for your project and how your project will create more slots, if any.

*Character Limit: 3000*

### In which census tract(s) will your project take place?\*

Please visit this website to obtain census tract information:

<https://geomap.ffiec.gov/FFIECGeocMap/GeocodeMap1.aspx>

*Character Limit: 250*

### Describe past project management experience and the ability of your team to complete the project.\*

Who will be managing the project? Describe their relevant experience.

*Character Limit: 2000*

## Project Budget\*

Please click [here](#) to download Project Budget form.

**Applicants must submit a budget in Excel format.**

Applicants may leave additional comments about the budget in text block below.

*Character Limit: 2000 / File Size Limit: 3 MB*

## Describe the amount and source of matching funds.\*

The match for ECGRA grants must be cash. No in-kind donations can be accepted. Please indicate if matching funds have been secured, committed, and/or requested.

- Eligible grant or match costs can include expenses incurred beginning 1/1/2025

*Character Limit: 1000*

## How will you measure the success or effectiveness of your proposed project?\*

Do you have goals or benchmarks in mind?

*Character Limit: 2000*

## V. Additional Documents

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### Current General Liability Insurance Certificate

*File Size Limit: 3 MB*

### Photographs

**For capital improvements, please include photographs that document current conditions.**

*File Size Limit: 3 MB*

### Additional Supporting Documents

Upload any other information reviewers might find helpful.

*File Size Limit: 2 MB*