



# **MONTANA EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCOUNT (MECA) EARLY LEARNING DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT AND TRAINING GRANT GUIDANCE**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the grant is to support early childhood providers in building a foundational understanding of how to serve children with developmental differences through participating in professional development opportunities, increasing access to necessary technology, and related staffing costs.

Grant funds may be used to purchase technology that supports participation in virtual or in-person training. Funds may also be used to offset costs associated with staff participation in approved training, including overtime wages or substitute coverage.

## **TIMELINE AND SUBMISSION**

All applications must be fully completed and submitted by a date yet to be determined and must include the current licensed slot capacity. This deadline will be updated once it is finalized. Applications will be reviewed and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Incomplete applications or applications with inaccurate information will be returned for correction, which may delay review and funding decisions.

Final funding approval will be made by the MECA Board. Prior to final approval, recipients must have a registered Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. The process to obtain a UEI is free through [SAM.GOV](https://SAM.GOV) and [Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\) | EXIM.GOV](https://UniqueEntityIdentifier.com) or [Montana Apex Accelerator](https://MontanaApexAccelerator.com). Award notifications will be issued after board approval is complete. Failure to submit a complete and accurate application may result in a loss of funding if grant funds have already been fully obligated.

Anticipated Application Deadline: August 3, 2026

Anticipated Award Notification: September 30, 2026

Final Expenditure Report Due: on or before May 14, 2027

## **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Eligible applicants are state-licensed child care programs, centers, family, or group programs, serving children ages 0–5. School-age-only programs, such as afterschool programs, Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) or Relative Care Exempt (RCE) providers, unlicensed programs and other individual providers are not eligible for this grant.

Applicants must provide an active PV number as part of the application. Grants will be awarded on a per-program basis, with one award available per individual PV number.



## **ALLOWABLE USES OF FUNDS**

Grant funds may be used to support early childhood programs in supporting staff to participate in professional development opportunities and purchasing technology. Allowable uses include technology and staffing-related expenses that directly support these activities, such as:

- Laptop or tablet computer
- Mobile hotspot device to support reliable internet access
- Webcam, headset, or other basic accessories needed for active virtual engagement
- Staff salaries to actively participate in training (virtual or in-person) or administering screeners
- Substitute pay for staff to actively participate in training (virtual or in-person) or administering screeners
- Course fees
- Subscription fees for developmental screening tools

## **PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS**

Programs receiving a grant are expected to participate in approved professional development opportunities focused on building staff understanding of developmental differences. A list of approved training courses has been provided to support programs in selecting high-quality, aligned professional development opportunities. The list includes both paid and free training options. Programs should select the trainings that best meet the needs of their staff. If funds are used for the purchase of technology, the technology must support staff participation in virtual or in-person training opportunities.

Programs are required to submit a final expenditure report no later than May 14, 2027. The report must include documentation for all grant-funded expenses, including training costs, technology purchases, staffing costs, overtime wages, and substitute coverage, to ensure funds were used to directly support professional development and building program capacity.

If a program closes during the grant period, any technology purchased with grant funds must be transferred to another licensed child care provider to ensure continued benefit to the early childhood system.

## **TRAINING PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS**

### **CHILD DEVELOPMENTAL KNOWLEDGE**

Options focused on child development or developmental differences include:

Teaching Strategies



- Amazing Development: Infants (4 hours, \$350)
- Amazing Development: Toddlers (4 hours, \$350)
- Amazing Development: Preschoolers (4 hours, \$350)
- Developmental Milestones: Look At Me Know! (Teaching Strategies, 5 hours, \$350)
- Recognizing Developmental Differences Learning Path (Teaching Strategies, 5 hours, \$350)

#### AIR Training Solutions

- A Child First! Understanding Special Needs (3hours, \$30.95)
- Exploring the Spectrum: A Guide to Autism (2hours, \$20.95)
- Decoding ADHD (2hours, \$20.95)
- Understanding Oppositional Defiant Disorder (2hours, \$20.95)
- Dyslexia: A Different Ability (2hours, \$20.95)

#### SPARK

- Autism 101 (2hours, Free)

#### Child Care Training (CCT)

- Look Who's Talking: Language and Literacy Development in Infants and Toddlers (2 hours, \$24)
- Look Who's Talking: Language and Literacy Development in Preschoolers (2 hours, \$24)

### **DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING**

Options focused on developmental screening include:

#### Teaching Strategies

- The Nuts and Bolts of Developmental Screening (Teaching Strategies, 3 hours, \$350)

#### Child Care Training (CCT)

- Developmental Screening: Develop a process to identify and support individual child development, promote family engagement, and enhance program quality (CCT, 4 hours, FREE for MT providers)

### **SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION**

Options that support developmental screening, inclusion, behavior, or family communication practices include:

#### SPARK

- Supporting Families of Children with Disabilities (2 hours, Free)
- Helping Children with Emotional Regulation (2 hours, Free)



### Child Care Training (CCT)

- Inclusion 1 (15 hours, Free)
- Inclusion 2 (30 hours, Free)
- Introduction to the Pyramid Model (2 hours, Free)
- E-Pyramid Model Birth to Five – Module 1 (6 hours, Free)
- E-Pyramid Model Birth to Five – Module 2 (6 hours, Free)
- E-Pyramid Model Birth to Five – Module 3 (6 hours, Free)
- The Sandbox Project (2 hours, Free)
- Full Spectrum Support (4 hours, \$48)

## GRANT AMOUNT

Grant funds are intended to support early childhood programs in both purchasing reliable technology and offsetting costs associated with staff participation in training. This ensures programs have the resources needed to both engage in professional development and implement developmental screening practices effectively.

Award amounts will be based on state-licensed child care slot capacity. Applicants must request the full award amount for which the program is eligible based on its licensed slot capacity. Applicants must clearly outline how all requested funds will be used to support approved training, technology, and any related staffing costs. Partial funding requests will not be considered and will be returned for corrections.

Funds may be used for:

- Technology purchases, including laptops, mobile hotspot devices, and basic accessories necessary for virtual training participation.
- Financial support to cover training fees, staff participation costs, including overtime wages or substitute coverage for staff to attend training.

**TABLE 1: GRANT AWARD AMOUNTS**

License Type	License Slot Capacity	Award Amount
Family, Group, Center	1-29 slots	\$1,500
Center	30-70 slots	\$2,000
Center	71-200 slots	\$2,500
Center	+200 slots	\$3,000



## **USE AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS**

Funds awarded through the grant may be used for technology purchases and financial support for staff participation in approved training.

Technology purchased with grant funds remains the property of the participating program. Equipment is intended to support participation in training, ongoing program activities, and effective communication with families.

Programs must maintain documentation of grant fund expenditures, including receipts for technology purchases and records of staff participation in trainings and associated costs. This ensures accountability and supports the continued use of resources to strengthen professional development.

Failure to meet program requirements, including incomplete participation in training, misuse of funds, or failure to provide required documentation, may result in a request for partial or full repayment of grant funds.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Interested programs will complete and submit an application through the Submittable platform describing their program needs, including technology and/or financial support for staff participation in trainings.

Following approval, recipients will be required to submit expenditure documentation to verify appropriate use of funds. This includes receipts or proof of purchase for technology and documentation of staff participation in trainings, along with associated costs such as overtime wages or substitute coverage. Funding will not exceed the approved grant amount. More details regarding the application and approval process will be provided in Submittable.



# DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING GRANT APPLICATION

## SECTION 1: PROGRAM INFORMATION

1. Program Name:
2. Driver's License Picture:
3. Federal Tax ID:
4. License Slot Capacity:
5. Registered UEI Number:
6. PV Number:
7. Program Type:
8. Program Address:
9. Program Contact Name:
10. Contact Email:
11. Contact Phone Number:

## SECTION 2: CURRENT NEED

1. Please indicate the primary area(s) of need for your program (select all that apply):
  - Technology to support participation in virtual or hybrid training
  - Financial support for staff participation in training (staff wages or substitute coverage)
  - Financial support to cover training fees
2. Please briefly (1-2 paragraphs) describe the primary challenges your program faces related to the areas selected above. Consider limitations related to technological access, staffing capacity, or the ability to support staff participation in training.

## SECTION 3: BUDGET NARRATIVE

### BUDGET NARRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

The budget narrative provides a detailed explanation of how grant funds will be used and how each expense supports your program's participation in training. This narrative should clearly connect your funding request to the needs identified in your application.

Applicants may allocate funding across one or more categories. Applicants may also request the full award amount in a single category if it aligns with the identified needs of the program.



1. Select your eligible funding amount
  - \$1,500
  - \$2,000
  - \$2,500
  - \$3,000
2. Explain Budget Categories  
Provide a brief (3-4 sentences) description for each category included in your budget:
  - **Technology:** Equipment such as laptops, tablets, or internet access needed to support training activities.
  - **Staffing Support:** Costs related to staff participation, including overtime wages or substitute coverage.
  - **Training Fees:** Costs associated with approved professional development opportunities.
  - **Other (if applicable):** Any additional allowable expenses that support training participation.

## **SECTION 5: IMPLEMENTATION**

Please briefly (1-2 paragraphs) answer the following questions:

1. How will your program support staff in using knowledge and skills learned through this grant to better serve children with developmental differences?
2. How will the requested technology, training, and/or staffing support strengthen your program's ability to support children with developmental differences and sustain these practices over time?

## **SECTION 6: ACKNOWLEDGMENT/AGREEMENT SECTION**

By submitting this application, the program agrees to:

- Participate in approved training and follow-up activities
- Use funds only for approved purposes
- Submit required documentation
- Comply with all grant requirements

Name:

Signature:

Date: