



Responses to Questions

Questions were submitted to starspreschool@mt.gov from June 5th to June 16th. Please read through the questions and answers completely. Some questions have been combined for efficiency or to alleviate redundancy.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL

Q: Is the 5% Administrative cap negotiable?

A: No. Administrative and indirect costs are capped at 5% of the requested STARS Preschool funds. Any amount in excess of 5% must come from other sources but may count toward the 10% match requirement.

Q: Can the STARS Preschool funds be used to increase the duration of services to Head Start children in part-day classrooms?

A: Yes. Per program criteria, funds may be used to expand but cannot be used to supplant existing federal funding.

Q: Can programs use the funding for repairing items in their program?

A: The funding is not intended to support capital expenses.

Q: Can funding be used to expand and build on a classroom room for Preschool?

A: The funding is not intended to support capital expenses.

Q: Will this funding allow us to accept more children in our program and hire employees to make sure there is enough staff-to-child ratio?

A: Yes, funding may be used towards expansion and staffing costs. Depending on the program type, programs must also adhere to those established standards, e.g. a group home cannot expand its licensed capacity.

Q: Will applications that propose more than 10% match be ranked higher or given additional points?

A: 10% match is a requirement, but more than 10% is not considered in the scoring.

Q: The budget template allocates \$700 for DIAL – where should programs allocate costs for the other required tools, such as ASQ-SE?

A: These expenses should be allocated under Educational Equipment and

Supplies.

Q: Can the “Other” category include salaries/benefits for people other than the classroom teacher and auxiliary teacher?

A: If these expenses are administrative, they should be included under “Operations” in the Administrative field and count toward the 5% cap on administrative costs. Otherwise, grant funds may only support salaries and benefits of staff who are in the STARS Preschool classroom.

Q: Please provide a list of permitted and prohibited uses of grant funds.

A: Capital expenditures are not permitted and budgets should align with generally accepted accounting principles. The budget submitted must follow the budget template supplied. The State reserves the right to negotiate budgets based on approved applications, including, but not limited to, enrollment numbers.

Q: Can grant funds be used to pay for a grant coordinator? We would like to direct the 5% admin/indirect cost allowance to indirects and pay for a grant coordinator out of other grant funds. We anticipate this task to require approximately 10-15 hours per month and it would not supplant salary paid to a current employee.

A: Administrative costs are capped at 5%. The pilot funds are intended to support implementation of a preschool classroom. It is up to applicants to determine budget amounts and to assure criteria are met. A grant coordinator who is not directly supporting implementation of a classroom should fall into administrative costs.

Q: Can salaries of current employees of our Early Childhood Center be used as part of the required match?

A: If staff time is dedicated to the STARS Preschool classroom, this would be allowable.

Q: Can grant funds be used to pay for the ongoing training required under the grant?

A: Yes. Please refer to the Professional Development and Support section of the budget.

Q: Can you please explain and give some examples of in-kind funding? Would STARS incentives be considered in-kind? How does parent volunteer opportunities serve as in-kind?

A: Please refer to the STARS Preschool program criteria for examples of in-kind match requirements. STARS incentives are not considered in-kind as they are state funds. Existing federal/state funds cannot be used to supplant, even as match. Parent volunteer time may be calculated as in-kind contribution toward the match by using the number of hours worked against a pay scale in the facility. Parents cannot take the place of required staff.

Q: What overhead cost can go into the other category?

A: Any items that you want to include that are not already listed in the Operations section of the budget may go into the "Other" section. Please note that any overhead line items added into the "Other" section cannot exceed the 5% administrative cap.

Q: Where do private preschools derive profit from this program?

A: This pilot program is voluntary and intended to support families' access to high quality preschool.

Q: If planning to serve 18 children, can the budget be written for that amount of children even if attendance might vary from time to time?

A: Yes; however, the expectation is that the enrollment is set at 18 and occasional absences are expected but not a lesser enrollment. The selected programs will need to notify the State if enrollment is consistently under 18.

Q: It says that administrative expenses must be capped at 5% of the total funds awarded. What activities are considered 'administrative'?

A: Expenditures that do not directly and exclusively support serving children of the STARS Preschool classroom are considered administrative. The Operations section of the budget lists examples of administrative costs.

Q: If funding is renewable for up to two years, are programs that receive funding for two years then exempt from receiving the funds ever again?

A: Funding has only been allocated for 2 years. Future funding will be determined by the legislature.

Q: How should our program budget for a mentor?

A: Mentor support may be categorized as administrative and/or training and professional development support. Please explain in the narrative box.

Q: How will grant funds impact our current tuition based budget? We have not previously enrolled in a government funding programs, so our budget is completely tuition based. With this grant would we still keep the same tuition and this would provide additional funds? My intention with this grant would be a few very important components that we struggle to achieve with our current budget and keeping private school affordable for parents:

- **Competitive and fair salaries for educated teachers and administration to encourage longevity of their career with our school**
- **Offering assistance or completely funding teacher's Montessori training and certification**
- **Offering health, dental, vision, and retirement benefits for teachers**
- **Offering scholarships to lower income families. This is something we have done on a limited basis, but would very much like to offer more of.**
- **Hiring additional staff and/or purchasing specific modification materials for special needs students**
- **Updating and purchasing additional Montessori early childhood materials**
- **Playground improvement with a focus on health and safety**
- **Addition of custodial staff**

A: Grant funds are intended to increase access to high quality preschool for four- and five-year-olds. Per the STARS Preschool Criteria, tuition may not be charged during the required hours for children enrolled in STARS preschool classrooms supported by these grant funds. Funds may only be used to support children in STARS preschool classrooms, any expenses that support other areas of a program would be considered administrative and subject to the 5% cap.

Q: Is salary based on 9 months only, or can it include year-round program wages?

A: The salary should match the term of services provided to children and may include professional development and training time. This may vary by program depending on your defined "school year."

Q: Does planning and professional development time need to be separated out in wages or is that part of the salary?

A: The applicant can determine this; however, it is expected that teachers are with the children most of the time.

Q: Is there a requirement that staff wages match district wages in the area?

A: Applicants should include wage data in their proposals. Please refer to www.starspreschool.mt.gov for optional wage resources.

Q: Can the funds also be used to cover workman's comp insurance?

A: Yes.

ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION

Q: Can programs apply if they just began participation in STARS to Quality and have not yet received STAR 3? Is there allowable documentation for exemption to that criteria?

A: Any Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program at 3 STARS or higher and with dedicated preschool classrooms or services for four- and five-year-olds may apply. The program must maintain compliance with STARS level 3 or higher as well. Child Care Programs who would like to apply for STARS Preschool and who are not currently enrolled in the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program may demonstrate that they meet a minimum of STAR 3 and lower criteria and enroll in Best Beginnings STARS to Quality simultaneously, but must follow rules of both programs.

If a program chooses, they may apply for a STAR 3 just for the STARS Preschool classroom without applying for a STAR 3 as a program. Please note that the program will not be eligible to receive incentives or bonuses until the entire program has reached a STAR 3.

A program at a lower STAR can apply for a STAR 3 just for the STARS Preschool classroom without applying for a STAR 3 as a program. Please note that the program will receive incentives and bonuses at their current program STAR level.

Q: We are a Head Start program and have classrooms that participate in MPDG. We also have classrooms that are not part of MPDG. We are interested in increasing a non-MPDG classroom from half day to full day (28 hours). Would we be eligible to apply for the increase in costs, over and above our current half day?

A: Yes, a non-MPDG classroom is eligible to apply. MPDG programs may apply to have a STARS Preschool classroom that is not part of MPDG. This applies to both Head Start and public school MPDG programs, and the application should demonstrate that funds are used to supplement not supplant other Head Start funding.

Q: Would there be any restriction on taking my current Star 4 program, relocating it, expanding it to serve more children and families, and having all of the Licensing and Star requirements met within the timeline?

A: No.

Q: Does the 25% of total enrolled students who are low-income or at-risk include all children in attendance (including 3 year-olds enrolled in program)? Or is the 25% just calculated based off of the 4/5 year old students enrolled? Additionally, is there a form or paperwork that families must fill out to be qualified as low-income? (Since they won't qualify for the Best Beginnings Scholarship)

A: The 25% should only include the four- and five-year-old students enrolled. There is not a low-income *requirement*, although preference will be given to programs that will serve 25% or more children with high-needs, including those from low-income families.

Q: I have chosen to be a participant in the STARS program, therefore, I am a registered group provider with the State. I have worked hard to achieve and maintain my STAR 4 status, and would like to continue to be loyal to the STARS program while following the licensing rules and regulations. Currently, I am qualified to have 16 children during my overlap hours (3 hours in the morning) with two providers. Is there a way that I can still be licensed and allow 16 children to attend the preschool program for the full 5.5-6 hours per day that school will be offered (other than moving to a commercial building and becoming a center)?

A: The licensing standards must be maintained. However, there is a provision in the STARS Preschool application for a program to request a waiver to serve less than 18 children.

Q: If you start the application process can it be saved and added to before final submittal?

A: The application is through Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey does allow you to return to the application once you begin, and you will want to look up what your computer settings need to be in order to do so. If you would like to review the questions ahead of time to prepare your answers, there is a document available on the STARS Preschool website, [STARS Preschool Application Worksheet](#). Use this worksheet to review and prepare your responses to the application questions. Once you begin your application, you may not be able to return to the application if your computer settings don't allow you to do so. In that case, you will want to complete the application in one sitting to ensure a complete application. You can copy and paste your responses either from this worksheet or from a Word document into the application. [Please contact Sarah at sadams2@mt.gov if you need assistance with submitting an application.]

Q: How is low-income defined for the purposes of this grant?

A: “Low income” is considered part of the high needs definition This may include, but is not limited to families receiving public assistance, those who qualify for free and reduced lunch, and families with incomes under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (<https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/aspe-files/107166/povertytool2017.xlsx>).

Q: What is the distinction between “supplement” and “supplant”? How will DPHHS determine supplementing if a program wants to blend funding streams?

A: Supplanting means replacing another funding source that is used for similar purposes. Supplemental funding may extend the service day or increase the number of slots available in a program and is allowable. Funding used to supplant existing funds that are then applied elsewhere is not allowable. If federal or state funds are used to operate a program and/or classroom for purposes of early childhood education, then STARS Preschool funds cannot be used for the same purpose. DPHHS will review this in its monitoring and approval of budgets. The program is responsible for assuring correct use of funds. Programs must follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

Q: Does DPHHS expect that the applications will be for a single classroom, or can the funding be for a certain number of slots across multiple classrooms?

A: The STARS Preschool Pilot intends specific classrooms to pilot the STARS Preschool program. If an applicant has a different classroom model, they should address this in the application, providing detailed explanation of how this would assure equal access and compliance with the STARS preschool criteria in each classroom. Justification should include rationale for spreading out across multiple classrooms.

Q: How does this program work with existing Montessori schools and enable us to maintain the Montessori principals that we believe are currently providing a high level of quality education in early childhood?

A: Programs selected for funding agree to meet the STARS Preschool Criteria in addition to whatever program practices are in place based on the program model.

Q: Do public schools need to become a licensed/registered provider if we are chosen for the grant?

A: No; however, public school programs must comply with the STARS Preschool Health and Safety checklist.

Q: is there a specific curriculum that is recommended based on STAR preschools in existence, or is our own research based preschool curriculum sufficient?

A: The curriculum must be demonstrated as research based and that aligns with the [Montana Early Learning Standards](#) and the [Developmentally Appropriate Practices](#).

Q: What is the definition of a private preschool vs a community preschool?

A: Some communities have a community co-op providing services, usually non-profit. A private preschool is generally a privately run and owned model.

Q: Do you intend for Stars Preschool programs to run all 12 months of the year, or can they follow a typical public school calendar?

A: Programs may follow a typical public school calendar, or may choose to propose an innovative model of service delivery, provided that the required number of hours are met.

Q: Who has to participate in the Best Beginning Coalition?

A: Participation is encouraged. The person who attends the meetings is up to the discretion of the program.

Q: Can I apply for a waiver to serve children in less indoor space than the requirement?

A: No. The minimum is 35 square feet per child of indoor classroom space.

Q: We have a Head Start Program on our campus, but we are not in charge of the program. They rent the space from us. How would we answer this question?

A: Please fill out the application based on the specific classroom that is applying to participate in the STARS Preschool pilot program.

Q: What is the goal of this pilot? It states 'seek innovative opportunities to expand and increase access to preschool.' We are an established preschool with full enrollment. Are you hoping for new preschools to be created? Or for the current ones to expand in size of the building or in size of enrollment?

A: It is possible for new programs to apply and it is possible that some programs may increase quality and access for children and families that previously have not been served because of barriers including cost, full enrollment, or other factors.

Q: Our school charges 900/month for 9 months = \$8100. 8100 x 18 children is 145, 500. We would receive 150000 but pay 10% (15000), so receive 135,000 According to my math, we would not make as much with the pilot as with charging tuition. Help me understand the benefit of applying for this program. It seems we would not get money

to expand, nor pay our teachers more. Is this program geared to help high needs children access preschool?

A: Programs are eligible to receive up to \$150,000. There is a match requirement, but it is not withheld from the grant amount. The intent of the pilot grant funding is to increase access to high quality preschool for four- and five-year-olds, but it may not be a fit for every existing program. Note: the program criteria prohibit charging tuition for children in a STARS Preschool classroom during the hours required under the grant.

Q: Why would a school seek to pursue this pilot program? What is the ultimate benefit to them?

A: The opportunity is available to a variety of program types allowing for choice by programs as to whether or not they would like to participate in the pilot program. Eligible programs seeking to offer a high-quality preschool program and/or increase access to preschool for four- and five-year-old children may find this opportunity a good fit.

Q: What are the differences in application process between Head Start, public school, and licensed child care centers at the STAR 3-5 level?

A: Please refer to the STARS Preschool application, which accounts for the various program types.

Q: With regards to the application itself – what are the word limitations for each section? Are there word/space limitations?

A: The application allows applicants to upload documents if they exceed the character limitation.

Q: In program application – Application: Does question #11 want to know most current date a STAR level was determined, or date the level was first achieved?

A: Current

Q: What is the difference between STARS to Quality program, private preschool, and community Based facility? We could mark all three. Is that what I should do? Does it matter?

A: Mark all that apply.

Q: Question 17 clarifications Application

- **What evidence is needed for “how you will design your environment”**

- **What is meant by “child selection” process?**
- **What “proof” is needed for curriculum?**
- **What is a “supervision and staffing model”?**

A: These are all questions that will be evaluated when selecting successful applicants. The response to the questions should provide sufficient enough information so that a selection committee understands the proposed strategy and model for each classroom applying for funds.

Q: If private preschools apply, do they have to be licensed?

A: They don't have to be licensed under Child Care Licensing standards, but private preschool programs do have to meet the STARS Preschool health and safety standards.

Q: Is it the case that if you're in STARS, you have to be at the Level 3 to be eligible, but if you are a private program not in STARS you do not have to meet Level 3 types of criteria other than the checklist?

A: Eligible programs include private preschools, community based programs, tribal programs, Head Start, Public School and STARS providers at level 3 or higher. STARS Preschool criteria is aligned with the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program in addition to Title 10 Chapter 63 requirements, the Montana Preschool Development Grant and with input from other states' funded preschool programs.

Q: Do tribal programs have to meet licensing standards requirements or STARS level three?

A: Regarding the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality program, tribal programs are recognized. Please refer to bestbeginnings.mt.gov for more information. For the STARS Preschool program, programs that are licensed by the tribe should select the community agency box, and provide language that demonstrates the STARS Preschool criteria are met.

Q: If awarded, the STARS Preschool funds are granted on July 21st. Would the goal be to start to school at the start of September or would the start date be more flexible?

A: The goal is to have STARS Preschool programs start at the beginning of the school year.

Q: Can a provider who is just getting started apply?

A: Yes.

Q: How many programs do you anticipate funding?

A: The State anticipates funding approximately 15 classrooms. The actual number of awards will be based on budget and proposal information submitted by successful applicants.

ENROLLMENT

Q: If awarded the Stars Preschool grant, how would children be placed in my program? Would I be able to advertise and enroll children/families that are interested or does the state have a specific placement process?

A: Programs are able to advertise and enroll children to best meet the needs of your community.

Q: I currently have 10 children enrolled for fall 2017 (4 & 5 year olds). Would these children be able to keep their space in my class? If so, I currently charge a registration fee that was due upon enrollment. Would I need to refund the registration fees that have already been collected?

A: Yes, these children can be enrolled in your STARS Preschool classroom and you would not need to refund the registration fees previously collected.

Q: I see that the recommendation is to have a minimum of 25% of the classroom slots for high needs children. I currently enroll children on a first come first serve basis. I do offer services to high needs families as they apply. Would it be acceptable to continue to enroll in a first come/serve manner? Do records of income, tribal membership etc. need to be kept for reporting purposes with this grant?

A: Priority points will be awarded to programs who meet or exceed 25% of their enrollment serving high needs. Please refer to the STARS Preschool program criteria for high needs examples. The State will not require specific documentation from each family to be included as "high-needs" enrollment, however, programs should be able to provide sufficient justification upon request to the state to support the reported percentage. See the next question for examples. All records related to STARS Preschool grants need to be kept within a program for 7 years and shall be available to the State.

Q: What evidence is needed to show a high needs population is served?

A: This may include enrollment forms, copies of free and reduced lunch information, IEPs, referrals from counselors or other community members, parent attestation, etc.

Q: When reporting our high needs numbers do you want us to consider only the classroom that is applying for the grant or the entire school?

A: Only the classroom that will be part of the STARS preschool pilot.

Q: Do you want the High Needs numbers to be reported on our current summer enrollment or our estimations for fall attendance?

A: Estimation for fall attendance.

Q: How many days of preschool do we need to provide?

A: Programs need to provide STARS Preschool for 5.5 hours per day, or 28 hours per week, or 900 hours per year.

Q: Does the 20 student class size limit include those students in kindergarten?

A: Class sizes are determined at 18 enrolled. There is an opportunity to apply for a waiver to serve up to 20 or under 18 with rationale. Mixed age groups within a classroom means that the enrollment cap is applicable to the classroom. Maximum staff to child ratios are 1:10 for four- and five-year-olds, and 1:8 for three-year-olds. There may be three-year-olds in a STARS Preschool classroom, in which case the lower ration (1:8) applies, however, STARS Preschool funds may only be used for four- and five-year-olds.

Q: If we only have space for 15 children, does it decrease our chance of getting in when we submit a waiver to serve less than 18?

A: Applications are competitive. The selection committee will take into account a variety of considerations when selection grant proposals including the quality of the proposal, the number of children served (with consideration to the size of the community, as well as community needs/demographics, location, and feasibility).

Q: Can the classroom include a mix of children being served; ie: private pay for families who only want programming 2-3 days / week and public dollars for families who want the full time slots. An example would be that funding is applied for 10 children and the remaining spots would be for private pay.

A: The STARS Preschool Pilot funding is intended to be used for high quality preschool. Parents are not charged tuition for this classroom for four- and five-year-olds. Other children in the program but *not in the STARS preschool classroom* may attend only part-time and/or may be charged parent tuition.

Q: Will the children who are attending a STARS Preschool still be eligible to receive the Best Beginnings Scholarship?

A: Current Best Beginnings scholarship policy states that programs cannot receive scholarship payments during classroom time. Programs may receive the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship for the care provided before and after STARS Preschool time.

Q: In a mixed age classroom, the threes would be paying tuition and the fours and fives would not, correct?

A: Yes.

GENERAL STARS PRESCHOOL QUESTIONS

Q: How was \$150,000 max amount for individual grants determined?

A: Grant amounts were calculated using a maximum of \$8000 per child for an 18-child classroom. The \$8000 per child maximum considers the number of hours served, required credentials of the instructor, program criteria expectations and a survey of per-child funding in similar programs implemented in other states.

Q: Why was 5.5 hours per day chosen as the requirement for a preschool day? (Note that Chapter 63 includes a minimum of 540 hours, which comes out to a 3 hour / day for a 9 month program.)

A: 5.5 hours per day aligns with the Montana Preschool Development Grant.

Q: Who will be providing the “coaching”? Will this be added to R&R responsibility or will there be additional coaches being contracted with?

A: The State continues to develop supports for the STARS Preschool Pilot and will have more details in months to follow.

Q: Is there a vision for how a “public” PK program looks like within a child care center? Are there separate rules for the families in the “public” program vs. rest of enrolled families? Specifically, I am thinking of how current enrollment policies and procedures and tuition policies impact families whose tuition is waived vs. rest of the enrolled families. For our specific program:

- **Can I ask them to contribute to morning snack?**
- **Can I require them to volunteer 15 hours / year?**
- **Will families be required to commit to 5 days / week? Our current fall enrollment is almost full in 4-5 year old class. It includes mostly part-time children. Is part-time enrollment allowable?**

A: The intention of the STARS Preschool Pilot is to provide high quality preschool for 5.5. hours per day, or 28 hours per week, or 900 per year. Programs may be 4

or 5 days per week if the weekly and annual hour requirements are met. Related to meal service such as snack the Child and Adult Care Food Program or the School Lunch Program depending on classroom location may also be a source of support. Related to requiring parent volunteers, applicants are encouraged to describe their business model and rationale for requiring volunteer hours. The rationale should include how a program assures that parents who cannot volunteer are able to still access preschool services.

Q: Do classrooms need to be self-contained to meet the classroom square footage?

A: Classrooms must have adequate space for the enrolled number of children, equivalent to 35 square feet per child in that classroom.

Q: Additional feedback – Utilizing the STARS name, and the words “mixed-delivery” makes it seem like the program would be conducive to child care programs. However, this project doesn’t feel child care friendly. It’s great that a Level 6 on Practitioner’s Registry is recognized as being competent to teach preschoolers. However, the amount of money for so few programs seems exclusive. Child care program staff work more intimately together than public school and Head Start programs. High wages for one classroom within a center is not a viable option. Creative ways can be developed to “share the wealth”, but may prove to be unsustainable.

A: Thank you for your feedback. Funding was allocated by the 2017 Legislative body. The intent of the funding is to pilot and evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of various models. STARS Preschool Criteria aligned with the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program as well as Title 10 Chapter 63, and the Montana Preschool Development Grant, in addition to resources from other states. The State hopes to receive creative and innovative proposals from all types of delivery models, including child care programs.

Q: Is there going to be leniency for the teachers to create their own curriculum and incorporate that with the research-based, or will they need to solely use the curriculum they choose?

A: Programs will want to honor the structure of a research-based curriculum, and could also supplement or enhance experiences in addition to a research-based curriculum.

HOURS OF CARE

Q: Unlicensed facilities can currently serve children up to 6 hours per day, 4 days a week (24 hours per week). This STARS Preschool opportunity requests that programs

serve children 5.5 hours per day, or 28 hours per week. Won't these programs find that they need to become licensed, in order to be strong candidates?

A: All selected classrooms for STARS Preschool will agree to meet the standards of the STARS Health and Safety checklist. This is a separate checklist than child care licensing regulations and process. If a licensed or registered facility applies to provide a STARS Preschool classroom; however, licensing standards do remain for the entire program.

Q: Can the STARS Preschool funds be used to increase the duration of services to Head Start children in part-day classrooms?

A: Yes. Per program criteria, funds could be used to expand but cannot be used to supplant existing federal funding.

Q: Will part-time 4-year-old students be accepted as participants of this grant or will each student enrolled need to be in attendance 28 hours/week?

A: Children need to be enrolled full-time unless programs are making accommodations for an IEP.

Q: Is rest time included in the 28 hours of 'instruction time'?

A: Yes.

Q: Does it matter how we schedule the 28 hours of instruction? (ex. 4 days a week- M-TH or 5 days a week- M-F)

A: No.

Q: The recommendation for instruction time is 5.5 hours per day or 28 hours per week, unless a waiver has been applied for. My current preschool program for children ages 4 & 5 is a 3 day a week program for 3 hours in the mornings. I have had great success with preparing children for kindergarten using my current schedule. Is this type of schedule/program something the Stars Preschool program would be interested in or is the intent to have more of a full time program?

A: STARS Preschool intends to support preschool for 5.5 hours per day or 28 hours per week, or 900 hours per year.

Q: When I opened my preschool 3 years ago, my understanding was that if children were in my care for more than 3 hours a day I would need to be licensed as a daycare. Has this regulation changed?

A: This regulation has not changed, however, under this pilot, successful STARS Preschool pilot programs may assure compliance with the STARS Health and Safety Checklist in lieu of becoming a licensed childcare facility. However, if a program is already a licensed child care facility, the program must remain in compliance with licensing standards.

PARENT QUESTIONS

Q: My son is going to be 5 In August. He is not ready for Kindergarten per the preschool special education co-op he attends.

A: Once STARS Preschool classrooms have been awarded, we will provide information on the STARS Preschool website on how to enroll children. Five-year-old children who are not ready for kindergarten may be included in enrolled in STARS Preschool classrooms.

Q: Is the application that is open at this time only to be part of contributing? I am trying to find out more about enrolling my daughter in the program.

A: The applications are for programs to apply to be in the pilot program. Once programs are selected for the pilot program, programs will have their own enrollment process. Once STARS Preschool classrooms have been awarded, check the STARS Preschool website for information on how to enroll children.

STAFF

Q: If we are unable to find qualified teachers, how can we still participate in STARS Preschool?

A: In the event staff with qualifications cannot be hired, please provide adequate information around your plans to work toward meeting the qualifications. Programs may apply for a waiver if the Lead teacher has lesser credentials, but has extensive experience and is supervised by a Level 6 practitioner, a certified teacher or higher, especially related to curriculum and content development. In order to receive the waiver, applicants will include a plan and the budget will reflect support for the Lead teacher to work toward meeting this requirement.

Q: Our organization (Head Start) would like to submit our proposal as a collaborative program with our local School District. Within this arrangement, do the teacher certification requirements for public schools, or non-public schools, apply? Are there implementation requirements that differ (not listed on the application) for programs at public schools versus other settings? When submitting the application, should we answer questions 10, 13, and 20 as a non-public school, or as a public school?

A: Collaborations are encouraged. When submitting a proposal as a collaborative, programs should follow the guidelines based on the location of services.

Q: Can my STARS consultant and/or coach be my supervisor for me to be the lead teacher in the STARS Preschool Pilot Program? And if they can, do I need to work paying them for that supervision into the budget plan? I have 31 college credits in the Early Childhood Field but have not completed a degree.

A: Supervision can be included in your budget plan. Having the STARS consultant or coach would cause a potential conflict of interest, but if you need help with finding a Level 6 practitioner or certified teacher, the state, through the Early Childhood Project, will assist in matching a qualified supervising individual. The supervisor may be remote (please provide justification in your application).

Q: This grant allows for a licensed teacher to be a lead teacher. Would this include the new rule through OPI permitting certain Montessori credentials?

A: The new rule adopted by the Board of Public Education that permits certain Montessori credentialed teachers to teach in public schools applies only to kindergarten through eighth grade. The requirements in Chapter 63 and the requirements listed in the STARS preschool criteria address teacher qualifications for preschool. The State understands that the Early Childhood Project and its advisory board are currently reviewing Montessori credential and similar proposals. The state does not intend to adjust their criteria in advance of a recommendation from the Early Childhood Project.

Q: We currently have a staff member targeted to serve as the lead teacher in this exciting endeavor. If for any reason this would change between now and the potential start of the program, is it permissible to have "back up teacher" just to be safe?

A: Yes.

Q: You are asking that we use Teachers with either a level 6 or extensive experience. I noticed that you allow for exemptions as long as someone is working toward that certification. However, if it is not possible to get a current employee to this level, can you provide recruiting help to acquire a teacher with these qualification?

A: The state, through the Early Childhood Project, will assist in matching a qualified supervising individual. The supervisor may be remote (please provide justification in your application).

Q: What qualifications do substitutes need?

A: Applicants should consider that ratios and the curriculum are met with substitute teachers. A long term absence by the primary teacher would need to be communicated to the state with assurances that the substitute can meet the standards set forth for preschool delivery.

Q: Would a CDA be accepted for the Assistant Teacher?

A: Please review the Early Care and Education Career path for guidance. In some cases, CDA's are not credit bearing. A proposal would need to detail the auxiliary teacher's qualifications.

Q: Do the teachers participating get any monetary compensation or just training?

A: Staff compensation may be included in the budget submitted to accompany the application.

Q: How much extra time would the classroom teacher spend (outside of teaching) per year to make this a successful pilot?

A: Each proposal will differ based on the applicant's model, staff qualifications and requirements to meet the criteria of the program.

Q: Do teacher qualifications include the P3 endorsement?

A: Yes

Q: Will there be a requirement for staff to be on the Registry in order to collect workforce data?

A: STARS Preschool classroom staff are required to be on the Registry within 90 days.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

Q: For children in the program, can you tell us whether the CACFP or School Lunch program will apply?

A: Yes, programs may be able to receive Child and Adult Care Food Program funds and may be able to participate in the school lunch program if at a school facility.

Q: If the state supplied us with a mentor, what are the details involved in that?

A: The State is not supplying a mentor, but will assist with referrals of individuals who may be interested in serving as a mentor. The relationship between the mentor and the program is not dictated by the State, rather the state is

concerned with high quality preschool instruction and adherence to the STARS Preschool Standards.

Q: How often do the assessments and quality improvement plans occur during the year?

A: Assessments will occur at a *minimum* twice per year.

Q: If STARS program teaching staff have already completed Pyramid Model trainings, will they be required to do again? How will that be tracked?

A: No, the Early Childhood Project database should show that these trainings were completed already.

Q: Who is going to be providing the coaching, and what does the Pyramid Model training look like?

A: The Pyramid Model training is online and comes from the national entities who have implemented and developed the Pyramid Model. In terms of coaching, The State continues to develop supports for the STARS Preschool Pilot and will have more details in months to follow.