



## Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast

Serving Citrus – Dixie – Gilchrist – Levy – Sumter Counties

### Accreditation Mini-Grant Program Guidelines

#### Program Overview:

The Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast recognizes the importance of high quality early learning environments in ensuring that young children enter school ready to learn. Additionally, the Coalition recognizes that the Gold Seal accreditation options offer a mechanism for providers to demonstrate that they offer high quality early learning programs as well as the opportunity for early learning providers to receive reimbursement at the Gold Seal rate (as funding allows). Accreditation is available to licensed and license-exempt providers.

The Accreditation Mini-Grant Program is intended to offer funding to early learning providers to help facilitate and maintain accreditation. For early learning providers seeking first-time accreditation, the grant award may be used for application fees, verification fees, and membership fees if required for accreditation, and/or to purchase equipment necessary to meet accreditation requirements. For early learning providers seeking re-accreditation, the grant award may be used to purchase equipment or materials necessary to successfully meet re-accreditation requirements. Funding is based on budget allocations determined by the local Advisory Council and further approved by the Board. The amount awarded to each applicant may vary according to provider need and could vary depending on the number of approved applications.

Distribution of grant funds will occur in two parts.

#### Part One:

Early learning providers seeking first-time accreditation may apply for reimbursement for funds expended to purchase the accreditation materials and membership fees to join the accrediting agency (if required). Accredited early learning providers may apply for reimbursement for annual membership/report fees with priority given to first-time accreditation seekers. ***Funds will not be disbursed to currently-accredited early learning providers for Part One expenses until both application periods are complete, and will only be awarded if there is a surplus of funds.***

#### Part Two:

Early learning providers seeking first-time accreditation or re-accreditation may apply for reimbursement of funds expended to purchase equipment or materials needed to successfully meet accreditation requirements and/or verification/validation fees (if the provider is ready for the verification/validation visit).

The applicant must first apply for accreditation or accreditation renewal (including membership in accrediting agency, if required) before being permitted to apply for the second part of the grant. Prior to applying for the second part of the grant, the provider is expected to conduct a self-assessment to determine the needs of the program as they apply to the particular accreditation requirements. The second part of the grant can be utilized for needed equipment/materials and/or verification/validation fees (if the

provider is ready for the verification/validation visit). The Coalition will provide technical assistance to providers as requested during the accrediting process.

Providers may be reimbursed for accreditation fees that they have already paid (if payment was made within the current fiscal year and receipts are provided). Grant funds will not be approved to reimburse a provider for equipment or services previously purchased by the provider.

The mini-grant funds and/or materials will be collected from the provider if the provider does not successfully complete accreditation within two years after receiving reimbursement for verification fee and purchases or services.

**Eligibility:**

The applicant must be an early learning provider contracted to provide School Readiness or Voluntary Pre-kindergarten services. The applicant must be in full compliance with the contract deliverables.

**Procedure:**

There will be two grant periods available. See application forms for allowable requests and documents needed for each period.

Funds requested by first-time accreditation applicants for Part One may be utilized for the initial application fee/packet and the membership fee to the accrediting agency (if applicable). This application must be received by **September 4<sup>th</sup>** of each fiscal year. Currently-accredited applicants must submit applications for allowable Part One expenses by the stated deadline, but will not be eligible for reimbursement until the close of the grant for the fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds. *The Coalition will not award funds more than once for the application fee, if the provider has allowed their application period to expire.*

The second application may be submitted for the verification/validation fee and/or equipment/materials needed to satisfy accreditation requirements. The amount awarded will be determined based on the accreditation mini-grant application and site observation conducted by the Coalition (if deemed necessary). This application must be received by **March 1<sup>st</sup>** of each fiscal year and cannot be submitted until the provider has applied for accreditation/re-accreditation and completed a self-study. The Coalition will notify providers of the approved funding amount following review of all applications and the application of the funding formula, if utilized. When providers submit appropriate proof of payment, reimbursement will be made by the Finance Department.

When accreditation has been awarded and documentation of accreditation is received by the Coalition, the provider will be eligible to be reimbursed at Gold Seal rates, as long as this rate does not exceed the rate charged to private pay customers. The effective date of the Gold Seal reimbursement rate is the first complete month following the date that the Coalition was notified of the award and supplied with a copy of the certificate, *pending the availability of funds.*

Failure to comply with these guidelines in part or as a whole may result in full repayment of grant funds and/or products. Failure to maintain compliance with contract deliverables may result in disqualification from the opportunity to apply for the second part of the grant.

**Funding Formula:**

In the event that sufficient funding is not available to support requests included in all approved grant applications, the following allocation methodology will be utilized.

1. The Program Manager will determine the licensed/approved capacity for each facility with an approved grant application.
2. The Program Manager will divide the total available Accreditation Mini-Grant budget by the total capacity (total capacity is the capacity of all facilities with an approved mini grant application) to determine the per-child funding amount.
3. The Program Manager will determine each mini grant award by multiplying the facility capacity by the per-child funding amount.

The example below illustrates an Accreditation Mini Grant budget of \$15,000.

Approved Applications	Capacity	Requested Award	Actual Award	Calculation
ABC Child Care	100	\$6,000	\$7,692.00	100 x 76.92
DEF Child Care	20	\$5,000	\$1,538.40	20 x 76.92
GHI Child Care	75	\$10,000	\$5,769.00	75 x 76.92
Totals	195	\$21,000	\$14,999.10	

Calculation of per-child funding: \$15,000 divided by 195 = \$76.92 per child