

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Virtual Learning Support Center Grant Application

1. We have an established, licensed child care center. Is the school district the applicant for the grant or would we be the applicant?

Only school districts or their designee are eligible to apply for the funding. Child care centers have to work with the school district as a selected partner and could serve as the district's designee if chosen to do so by the district.
2. If funding for this grant is to run out in December, would the expectation be to hire temporary staff members for the VLSC role(s)?

We encourage districts to utilize teacher's aides, substitute teachers, teacher assistants, and other school related professionals to help staff virtual learning support center (VLSC). Please note that if the virtual learning centers are a success and schools are expecting to continue operating in a virtual model in the new year, Erie County will look for additional sources of funding (from the Federal government, local foundations, and other parties) to help fund the VLSC in 2021. However, all applicants need to know that because of current coronavirus relief funding regulations, FUNDING IS NOT GUARANTEED after 12/30/2020.
3. Does the school district assign student placement in the VLSC or can parents choose where to go?

Parents are able to choose the VLSC for their child(ren).
4. What is the financial range for grant applications? How much is the County providing?

The County has not established either a floor or a ceiling on the amount of funding any given district can request. Districts should prepare budgets based on their anticipated costs for space, equipment, supplies, etc., as well as the number of children they believe they need to serve and the anticipated number of those children whose parents/guardians earn less than 85% of SMI and are unable to privately pay for the VLSC. Funding will then be distributed based on submitted budgets and ratios of children within each district in need. Up to \$11 million of coronavirus relief funds are available for virtual learning support centers.
5. I'm working with a Center that provides services, educational and vocational supports, social emotional programming, and other opportunities for children with disabilities. They would like to offer Virtual Learning Supports for their families as they are desperately needed. They are currently providing services with strict social distancing requirements and are following all recommendations outlined by the CDC and NYS DOH. While they have been offering social emotional, educational, vocational, and respite services for years, they are not a registered childcare center. Does the prevent them from applying?

Providers must be familiar with any relevant OCFS regulations related to subsidy, school-aged childcare and staff to child ratios. Registration as a childcare center is not required. Care may be provided through expanding spaces within licensed and registered child care providers for school-aged children in accordance with current OCFS regulations. For your purposes, you should note that care may also be provided by creating self-contained learning spaces for groups of less than seven children, or by creating single purpose programs solely operating for remote learning instruction, not requiring SACC registration through OCFS (OCFS Policy Statement 20-02). Also, keep in mind, the center cannot apply directly unless they are the school district's designee.

6. Is there a minimum number of students one has to accept to be eligible?

There is no minimum number of students required.

7. I am requesting clarification on the grant application and upload processing. Do we fill out the agency information or school district?

The School district or their designee shall submit the application (RFP # 2020-032VF) as separate documents (Appendix A and Appendix B) to http://bit.ly/ECDSS_RFP_Submission.

8. Agency information: Is this our schools districts information or my business information?

The agency information would be that of the school district and/or their designee(s), whoever would be entering into contract with the county.

9. Income: Is this what we would normally charge our private pay families? What exactly is the other funding sources?

It is expected that parents are screened for eligibility through the DSS subsidy program. Those eligible are expected to apply. Eligible families can be emailed an application by completing the online prescreen at <https://forms.gle/FSgMcpfbTZmDrhRF8>. Families above the threshold (presently set at 85% of state median income) shall support the cost of staffing virtual learning centers at a rate of \$50/day/child. Other funding sources may also include 21st century funding (or any other funding made available by the school district), or the in-kind donation of space or other supplies.

10. I am a minority business and woman business enterprise however, I have not been certified yet as one. We do have a contract with the county for our childcare center. Will this affect my business being chosen as a location?

Applications must be submitted by the school district or designee(s). The school district or designee shall complete the questionnaire regarding business enterprises owned and controlled by women or persons of color. Certification as a Minority Business Enterprise/ Women's Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) will not affect being chosen as a recipient.

11. As a provider for After School services at both of our locations, and currently have expanded to offer full-day options for parents, I am interested in applying as a partner. As a partner can we apply for the funding or must a school district request us? I have started to complete the

application but then it requests school district information. I am not sure if this is for partners to apply for funding or districts.

Applications must be submitted by the school district or designee(s). If you are interested in applying, it is recommended that you contact your school district, share with them the potential number of spaces you could make available, and offer to be one of their partners.

12. I have been doing private tutoring full time since the end of March due to Covid-19. Before it was just after school help for the past several years. I plan on increasing my students as I am closing in on a location so it can be a complete center where parents can drop their children off to learn instead of me going house to house for now. I was hoping I would qualify for the grant. I already have a certified teacher and a few other adults who have bachelors and masters degrees in various fields to assist me. Because I am a private tutor do I qualify for the grant?
Only school districts or their designee are eligible to apply for the funding. Private tutors have to work with the school district/designee as a selected partner.
13. If a provider has already expanded for this school year, are they eligible to be a partner under this grant application? Do they need to expand further to meet the requirements?
It is OK to partner with a provider that has already expanded as long as they include whatever funds they were already going to use to cover the expansion costs in the revenue portion of the budget. In other words, coronavirus relief funding should not cover costs for which the provider has already found funding. Grant dollars provided by this process should be used to cover any additional expenses for which the revenue has not yet been identified (supplies, technology, etc.) and/or to further expand beyond what the provider has been able to do in order to properly meet the parent/family needs identified by the school district.
14. Can a community-based organization apply for the grant themselves, as a designee of the school district?
A school district can designate a community-based organization to apply on behalf of the school district.
15. Can a school district have more than one designee? Can each designee make their own application?
A school district may have more than one designee. An application must be submitted for each designee on behalf of the school district(s).
16. Are there precise or specific time restrictions or requirements as to when the program must take place? Or is it just the general time when school should be operating (which may vary by school)?
Hours of operation may depend on many factors, including the needs of the school district and the licensure of the provider. For example, those providers that are already licensed by OCFS to provide before and after-school care may be able to provide all day programming. However, VLSC that are established via the "single purpose site" model and do not require an OCFS license, must operate solely for the purpose of virtual learning and are not authorized to offer extended daycare.

17. If a family makes more than 85% of the state median, can the program charge them less than \$50/day? (For example, our current fees for virtual learning time are about \$15/day)
\$50/day is the minimum expected fee for families earning above the threshold to support staffing costs. If charging less, the difference would need to be accounted for on the budget, ex: in-kind funds.
18. If a family is currently signed up to receive DSS Day Care subsidies, would they continue to pay their existing rate to the program?
The 35% Family Share is waived for those families in receipt of DSS daycare subsidies, impacted by COVID-19. The family share will be paid by Erie County to child care providers who are open during the pandemic emergency for children that are in attendance. Child care providers should not be requiring parent/caretaker to pay the weekly family share. Erie County will continue to pay providers at the current market rate.
19. Would non-BPS students be eligible to attend our sites (e.g. Ken-Ton or Cheektowaga students)?
Parents may choose to send their child(ren) to any location that meets their needs.
20. Families who are at or below 85% SMI don't have to apply for a child care subsidy, correct? The program is simply free for them?
The school district or designee must provide an initial screening of income eligibility for parents for the possible use of childcare subsidy dollars. Those eligible are expected to apply. Eligible families can be emailed an application by completing the online prescreen at <https://forms.gle/FSgMcpfbTZmDrhRF8>.
21. Would all sites need to be operational, at least in part, by 10/5? Or would it be acceptable to have some sites open by 10/5, but not all sites?
At least some programs must operational by Monday, Oct. 5, 2020.
22. Do we need to submit a final list of contractors and subcontractors with our grant application? Or can we submit a tentative list that may change?
A tentative list of contractors and subcontractors may be submitted with the grant application, understanding that it may change.
23. Will awardees be paid based on enrollment, attendance or some combination of the two?
Awards will be paid based on program expenses, anticipated revenue, enrollment and district needs.
24. Can a community-based organization make an application to serve 2 different school districts in 1 application? Or should each have their own application?
A community-based organization named as a designee for two different school districts may submit one application. Both School District Names and information must be submitted in the application.
25. Can a community-based organization make an application as the designee of 1 district and subcontract with another applicant to serve a different district?
Yes

26. Is there a limit to how many applications a CBO can be attached to as a subcontractor?
No
27. We are wondering around provider payment and parents who are currently approved for day care subsidies specifically, what is the preference of payment the provider should address first? Day Care Subsidies or Grant Funds? For example; if the provider is a single purpose model or maybe not, and is not typically accepting daycare payments, would that provider lead a parent to use day care subsidies or the grant monies? We know that most providers going the single purpose model won't have a license with either OCFS or SACC in order to day care subsidies. Any thoughts to assist our providers considering this grant would be greatly appreciated.
Families eligible for a daycare subsidy are expected to apply. Until such time that the application is approved, grant monies may be used for participation in the program.
28. If a family is above 85% SMI, does the site have to charge the family the \$50/child/day, or can they supplement with other funding to keep the program free for the family?
They can supplement with other funding to keep the program free for the family. The revenue should be reflected as other funding sources on Appendix B.
29. Do enrollees in the support centers have to attend 5 days/week? Or, for example, would there be an allowance for families to have their children attend only 3 days/week? If the latter, how would that affect the payment we would receive for that child?
Enrollment is not limited to 5 days/week. The fees structure should be per day.
30. Would it be allowable to enroll high school students in these centers, as long as the emphasis remains on 5-12 year olds?
The grant is to support VLSCs for 5-12 year olds.
31. If we end up bringing partners into the initiative that are already serving families receiving child care subsidies, would the subsidies be suspended for the duration of the Virtual Learning Support Centers grant and the program would simply be free of charge for the family?
Families receiving child care subsidies will continue to receive a subsidy. Families that choose a single purpose program ineligible for Child Care Block Grant funds will be funded through this grant with coronavirus relief funding.
32. In reading the grant application issued to Districts by the County, the application references that families who are eligible to receive ECDSS subsidy would be required to apply for the subsidy. We understand that in order to receive ECDSS subsidy, a family must attend an OCFS-licensed facility. However, per OCFS guidelines, one of the rapid ways we can move this effort forward is to set up a model that operates as a "single purpose site" as defined by OCFS, which does not require an OCFS-license. If a District opts to partner with a provider who uses this model/strategy, am I correct in assuming that families who sign-up would not be DSS subsidy eligible? Also, do you know, given grant application requirements, if families cannot apply for subsidy because it is single purpose, does it make District ineligible for grant?

If the district opts to partner with a provider who uses the “single purpose site” model, parents making less than 85% SMI would still be eligible for DSS subsidy, but the subsidy will be funded with DSS coronavirus relief funding. If districts choose to partner with “single purpose sites” they are still ELIGIBLE for the grant.