

2023-2025 Early Learning Facilities Debrief Webinar Transcript

Good Afternoon and welcome to the Eligible Organizations Grant Funding Round Debriefing webinar. This webinar is being recorded, and the recording will be posted on our website within two weeks, along with the slides.

In today's webinar, we will summarize the program eligibility requirements, the application process, the scoring process, and the primary reasons projects were not able to be funded.

Due to the large volume of projects that were not able to be funded, we will not be able to respond to questions about individual projects at this time, but we may be able to update the FAQ document on our website at a later date.

The Department of Commerce strengthens communities through programs by helping reduce homelessness, supporting infrastructure and broadband, providing small business assistance, supporting clean energy, planning & technical assistance, supporting community services, being advocates for crime victims and public safety, and promoting economic development in the State of Washington.

To be eligible for this funding round, projects must demonstrate increased capacity for ECEAP and/or Working Connections Child Care. The proposed completed project increases cannot exceed licensing capacity for the facility. There must be evidence of Early Achievers participation, or the intent to enroll in Early Achievers. Project costs and scope of work items must be eligible per the Program Guidelines. The legislative language for this program requires that a minimum 25% of the project cost is provided by the successful applicants. If submitting multiple applications, documentation for the matching funds must be from different funding sources. To increase the possibility of being awarded, projects should be complete by the end of the current biennium, or June 30, 2025, as re-appropriation, or extension by the legislature is not guaranteed.

Many of the applicants were not awarded simply because there was not enough funding to go around. There was a little over \$31.5m available in this competitive process, but the total of the requested funds from all of the applicants exceeded \$196m. That means only 16% of the projects were able to be funded.

The application, as well as the review process, were in two sections. The total of pre-applications received were reviewed internally for program eligibility, project readiness, accuracy, and completion. The remaining 154 applications were assigned to an external review team, representing the early learning, community support, and finance fields. The reviewers were divided into three teams. Each team reviewed and scored a third of the applications. Each of these reviewers awarded points to 20 of the questions that had point values. Each external reviewer also provided a vote to either recommend the project for funding, or not recommend the project for funding.

All of the scores and votes were exported from ZoomGrants to an Excel spreadsheet. The projects were divided into five categories for equitable distribution of funds:

Pre-Design

Pre-Development

Minor Renovations

Major Renovations / Acquisition (\$200,000 - \$999,999)

Major Renovations / Acquisition (\$1,000,000 - \$2,500,000)

The projects were sorted in each category by score, and also by votes, with the highest on top and the lowest at the bottom.

Using votes in addition to the scores helps to justify the decision making process.

The exported scoring data and votes were anonymous to ensure objectivity in the decision making process

There were a variety of reasons that projects were not selected for funding.

First of all, some simply did not score high enough in areas such as site control, ability to fully fund the project outside of the grant funds being requested, insufficient detail in the scope of work, the project would not be completed until after the end of the biennium, the proposed ECEAP or WCCC slot increase is greater than what may be licensable for the site (even after project completion), missing contractor bids and/or equipment estimates, half or more of readiness tasks incomplete or required tasks marked as NA, timeline not feasible or

incomplete, and in some cases, the project was not appropriate for the funding category selected. Some projects requested the highest category of funding without pre-design or pre-development tasks completed or identified. To assist applicants in the future, the ELF team is working on creating a training that will be posted on our website to help potential applicants with basic project development and how to determine at what stage their project is in. This resource will assist applicants increase their success rate in future funding rounds.

All award decisions are final and as this was a competitive funding round, we are unable to offer an appeal process

168 applications were declined, and due to that quantity, Commerce cannot offer individual debrief meetings to anyone

To increase chances for success in the future, carefully read the Program Guidelines and Notice of Funding Opportunity carefully. The Notice of Funding Opportunity has sections on how to complete a Scope of Work, how to complete the budget, and had all of the application questions that would appear in ZoomGrants.

Here is a preview of the pending resource that will assist in determining what phase a proposed project is in.

Do you have an idea for a facility? Then you would be in the Idea Phase.

Have you completed a feasibility study? DCYF can assist with early learning facility feasibility studies.

Are you in the Planning Phase? Are you working on architectural plans, permits, zoning, and bids?

Are you in the construction or renovation phase where the previous pieces are in place and you are ready to start?

Here is a review of the funding categories, with the phases identified.

Simply planning a project around the appropriate funding category and phase can greatly increase the chances of being funded, as only the top scoring projects are selected. There are fewer awards in the highest category to go around, so applicants seeking to complete large projects need to ensure they are “shovel

ready”, which means all of the previously mentioned steps have been completed and the project is ready to start upon award.

We realize that not being selected for a grant can be disappointing.

We have assembled some other funding opportunities for early learning, and these slides will be posted on our website shortly. The blue text means that if you click on it, you will be taken to the online website for that organization.

If additional funding is provided by the legislature, then the next projects, in order, on the sorted score sheet may be selected for funding.

Potential awardees will receive an award letter in August if selected for funding.

Other funding opportunities include Enterprise Community Partners for grants and loans, the United States Department of Agriculture for rural non-profit grants, Small Business Administration Loans, and there are also a few opportunities for grants through DCYF.

Please check our website periodically for future funding opportunities. The Health and Safety Minor Renovations Round opens 2/1/2024, and the public schools round opens 4/30/2024.

The Program Guidelines and Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Health and Safety Round, along with the recorded webinar and slide are already on our website.

Please make sure to sign up for updates on our website, and you can enter your email address at the bottom of the webpage to receive those updates by email.

We have reached the time limit allotted for the debrief webinar for the Early Learning Facilities Eligible Organizations grant. This recorded webinar and slides will be available on our website within two weeks. Thank you for attending. We hope you enjoy the rest of your day.