

Start-Up Grant Application

FY27 - San Francisco - Center

Grant Awards

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis through May 1, 2027.

- Grants of up to \$4,000 per **new** child care space created

Purpose

This funding is provided through the Department of Early Childhood (DEC) and is available to eligible early care and education (ECE) centers. The Center Start-Up Grant Program is intended to expand, enhance and improve the quality of licensed ECE centers in San Francisco by offsetting the high operating cost of starting or expanding a center.

Eligible Programs Must

- Be located in the City and County of San Francisco.
- Be Early Learning for All (ELFA) qualified.
- Serve families who reside in the City and County of San Francisco.
- Possess a valid child care center license from the State of California or plan to file an application for a license which will result in the creation of new child care spaces.
- Create new licensed child care spaces to serve infants (birth to less than 24 months) and toddlers (24 to less than 36 months) in the City and County of San Francisco.
- Maintain compliance with the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division.
- Demonstrate financial and organizational viability for the grant term (e.g., business is financially well-managed).
- Demonstrate that the project is feasible and that grant funds are necessary to undertake and complete the project; if grant funds will not meet all costs, other funds must be identified to meet the total costs of the proposed project.
- Provide evidence of control of the designated child care site for the term of the grant (e.g., a lease or deed of trust).

**Age ranges are based upon ELFA operational guidelines.*

Design Standards

LIIF and DEC have an obligation to children, families, and Center staff, to ensure new child care facilities across San Francisco are being built to the highest quality standards. The design of ECE sites should promote functionality while enabling children's creativity and learning. Therefore, LIIF and DEC have higher standards than licensing.

LIIF provides ongoing technical assistance to help grantees align with our design standards and funding requirements. We stay closely involved during planning and implementation to ensure projects meet expectations and reflect shared goals.

- Eligible programs must meet or have plans in place to meet LIIF and DEC's Design standards:
 - Have **50 square feet of usable space per child** (usable space is classroom space that children are in). This does not include administration space, bathrooms, desks, etc. A good rule of thumb to quickly calculate this is 100 square feet per child of the total square footage of the indoor space.
 - Where feasible, all classrooms have direct access to outdoor space for indoor/outdoor education with a specific priority of appropriate and accessible outdoor space for infants.
 - Where feasible, all classrooms have natural light.
 - Classroom design that fosters independence by allowing children to access bathrooms and learning areas independently.

In addition to the Design Standards, LIIF and DEC share a vision for high quality early childhood programs that includes the following:

- Eligible programs must meet or have plans in place to meet high-quality environment standards:
 - Indoor and outdoor environments should be furnished with equipment made of wood and other natural materials that do not contain off-gassing toxic chemicals.
 - Indoor and outdoor environments should be calming and foster learning by reducing visual stimulation by using neutral or natural colors in rugs, paint and furniture choices.
 - Outdoor spaces should use natural surfaces such as dirt, pebbles and grass, avoiding all types of rubber/plastic surfacing and avoiding large areas of cement.
 - Outdoor spaces should have shaded areas for children, ideally created by trees and plants.
 - Classroom consumables and cleaning supplies should be made from non-toxic materials.
 - Appliances located in the child care space should be electric.

With the technical assistance process provided by LIIF, programs will work to meet these standards to create high quality environments. All programs will be required to use LIIF funding exclusively for meeting quality standards, and grant amounts may be amended if programs are not able to meet the standards.

Funding Priorities

Applications will be scored according to the priorities listed below.

Higher priority given to:

- Facilities in alignment with the City's affordable housing plans
- Applicants serving a greater number of low- to moderate-income** and/or CalWORKs, homeless or at-risk families, and/or enrollment of City-subsidized children
- Facilities located in a neighborhood where there is a demonstrated shortage of licensed early care and education serving children birth to three years old from low- to moderate-income families

- Greater number of early care and education spaces created and/or preserved to serve infants
- Programs serving a higher percentage of infants and toddlers
- Early care and education spaces to be created and/or preserved will provide specialized services for children with special physical or mental health needs or families experiencing homelessness
- Facilities located in areas with any additional demonstrated unmet community needs such as multi-lingual capacity and culturally responsive programming

***For the purposes of this program, Area Median Income (AMI) defines low to moderate income, see table [here](#).*

Eligible Uses

Initial (up to three months) operating costs for new licensed centers

- Operating costs (i.e., staff, utilities, professional development, rent/mortgage)
- Any additional uses that may be identified by LIIF in collaboration with DEC

Ineligible Uses

- Construction
- Consumables, furniture, and equipment
- Vehicles or transportation expenses

Application Process

For a list of required documents needed to prepare for the application, click [here](#).

Applicants must complete an application form and submit it along with all the required attachments to be considered for funding. The required attachments, including the organization business plan and project budget, will indicate whether the project is feasible. Low Income Investment Fund/Child Care Facilities Fund (LIIF/CCFF) staff may request additional information as needed. An incomplete application will not be considered and will be returned to the applicant. If assistance is needed in filling out the application, please contact LIIF at ccff@liifund.org.

LIIF will evaluate each complete application promptly and deliver a funding decision in writing approximately four to six weeks from the date of receipt. As part of the selection process, LIIF will also conduct a site visit at a pre-arranged, mutually convenient time.

LIIF/DEC reserves the right, at any point in the process, to deny a facilities grant award based on funding availability and/or changing local, state, or federal policies. Applicants whose requests are not funded by DEC may contact LIIF to discuss the reason(s) for the denial. Applicants may reapply for funding in future rounds.

If a Facilities Grant is Awarded



The grantee must sign a Grant Agreement and must fulfill all the terms of that Agreement, including but not limited to:

- Maintain a license in-compliance with California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing division
- Ensuring grant expenditures are aligned with the approved budget from Grant Application and Grant Agreement
- Submitting a Use of Funds Report detailing how the funds were used

If the grantee defaults on any of the terms of the Grant Agreement during the term of the Grant, grant funds will be due and payable to LIIF in full. If services are provided for a portion of the term, only a prorated portion of the Grant will be repayable.