

Early Learning Models of Excellence

Research shows that when children attend high-quality early learning programs, they start school better prepared to engage in the kindergarten curriculum. Maryland is expanding support for improving the quality of early childhood settings. Private child care and public prekindergarten programs that demonstrate exceptional quality will serve as Early Learning Models of Excellence for other programs throughout the state. MSDE will select 16 sites to provide opportunities for observation, professional learning, and development of resources to enhance the quality of other programs. Models of Excellence sites need not be a model site for all areas of site operations and learning. Sites may focus on and excel at one or more areas of operation and practice, particularly those areas listed below (e.g., business practices; early literacy aligned to the Science of Reading; or reduction of exclusionary discipline practices). Selected sites may use up to June 30, 2023, as a planning period. Applicants must address all focus areas below:

- Meet the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Prekindergarten requirements if serving 3- and 4-year-olds through participation in the publicly funded prekindergarten;
- Meet or exceed Maryland EXCELS Quality Rating Level 3; and
- Demonstrate use of the Maryland Early Learning standards and College and Career Readiness standards.

Additionally, applicants must choose to address one or more of the following:

- Demonstrate adoption of a high-quality, content-rich, research-based, and culturally relevant curriculum (see, for example, the fourteen criteria used to assess curricula in the Curriculum Consumer Report available from the [Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center](#)).
- Show evidence-based instructional practices in early literacy aligned to the Science of Reading and in mathematics;
- Show evidence-based instructional practices in socio-emotional development;
- Demonstrate implementation of an assessment tool and provide examples of how the data is used to support instruction;
- Provide evidence of partnerships with community organizations such as IHEs, nonprofit organizations, and community-based organizations, such as Judy Centers, that support children's learning and health for inclusion of children with complex learning needs;
- Have experience serving, or possess the skills to serve, children with a developmental delay, disability, or special need;
- Have experience serving or possess the skills to serve, children whose primary spoken language at home is a language other than English;
- Have experience serving, or possess the skills to serve, children experiencing homelessness; and/or
- Demonstrate a track record of reducing exclusionary discipline practices.

It will be required that selected private child care providers and public prekindergarten programs be open and enthusiastic about collaborating, sharing ideas and resources, serve as a “learning lab,” for providers and programs across the state, and continue to learn and grow as professionals as they serve as Models of Excellence. For this strategy, the applicant must describe the plan to:

- Participate in the Maryland Models of Excellence network;
- Highlight an area of expertise that your program is doing exceptionally well and could serve as a model or resource to other programs in Maryland (effective practices in minimally-resources environments; implementing a curriculum and reaching assessment targets; providing

- comprehensive wraparound services; supporting multilingual families and children; serving children with complex learning or developmental needs, etc.);
- Train and support other providers/programs to identify potential partners in their area;
 - Host or provide professional learning opportunities that help other child care providers/programs understand the benefits that strategic partnerships can yield;
 - Demonstrate effective implementation of the Maryland early learning standards, a high-quality, content-rich, research-based, and culturally relevant curriculum (see above), an assessment tool, and evidenced-based instructional practices;
 - Share data that demonstrates improvement in learning for student groups; and
 - Be open to serving the provider/program/public prekindergarten community in a collaborative way.

Inspiration from the Field

› [Early Childhood Education and the Science of Reading: Recipes to Last a Lifetime](#)

EdView 360 Blog Series

› [Reducing Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Early Childhood Education](#)

New America

› [Program Of Excellence: Children First](#)

National Head Start Association

Additional Readings

- [Promoting Equity for Young Multilingual Children and Their Families \(WIDA\)](#)
- [Creating Inclusive Environments for Infants and Toddlers \(Child Care Technical Assistance Network\)](#)
- [Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland's Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy, Birth to Age 8 \(MSDE\)](#)
- [Maryland's Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework \(The Maryland Family Engagement Coalition\)](#)

Potential Applicants

- Private child care providers
- Public prekindergarten programs

Funding for this Strategy

- Total amount available: \$6 million
 - Estimated number of grants awarded: 16
 - Average range of award: \$200,000-\$400,000
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Expanding Mental Health Supports and Services

The pandemic has impacted the learning and development of many children. Some child care programs have seen an increase in challenging behaviors and need greater support. Applicants will expand existing mental health programs and/or create new supports to address the mental health needs of infants, toddlers and young children. Selected grantees may use up to June 30, 2023, to develop the curriculum. Applicants will select at least one of the three focus areas below:

- Coordinate with state and local partners (Judy Centers, Early Childhood Advisory Councils, Local Infants and Toddler Programs) to develop a plan to connect families to mental health support services. Key activities must include:
 - A community engagement plan that expands beyond marketing to raise awareness for mental health support services related to early intervention and resilience activities with special attention to underserved populations and regions in Maryland; and
 - Training for families on topics such as trauma informed care, managing stress at any age, teaching parents about school readiness, and providing positive foundations for children.
 - Develop a statewide social-emotional development curriculum that aligns with the Pyramid Model Framework and the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (SEFEL), and the Early Learning Social Emotional Standards. Key elements must include:
 - Curriculum that is inclusive of students who have a development delay, disability, or sensory impairment;
 - A plan to train a cohort of providers, educators and support staff working in underserved regions across Maryland to pilot the curriculum; and
 - A coaching model that supports the pilot and implementation of the curriculum (i.e. training, technical assistance, mentorship).
 - Coordinate with state and local partners to develop a cohort of child care providers, early childhood education teachers, and support staff for the prevention and response to challenging behaviors in young children using evidence-based practices and trauma-informed care (e.g. [National Pyramid Model](#), Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation) across a continuum of home, school, and community environments or underserved geographic locations.
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Inspiration from the Field

› [We know how to help young kids cope with the trauma of the last year – but will we do it?](#)

The Hechinger Report

› [There's a Mental-Health Crisis Among American Children. Why?](#)

The New York Times Magazine

› [A Day in the Life of an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant](#)

Center of Excellence for IECMH Consultation

Additional Readings

- [InBrief: Early Childhood Mental Health \(Harvard University\)](#)
- [A Resource for Developing Integrated Strategies to Support the Social and Emotional Wellness of Children \(Administration for Children and Families\)](#)
- [Pyramid Model Equity Coaching Guide \(NCPMI\)](#)
- [The Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation \(IECMHC\)](#)
- [The Basics of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: A Briefing Paper \(Zero to Three\)](#)

Potential Applicants

- Technical assistance centers
- Non-profit organizations
- LEAs
- IHEs
- Partnerships and collaborative entities are also encouraged to apply

Funding for this Strategy

- Total amount available: \$6 million
- Estimated number of grants awarded: 15
- Average range of award: \$200,000 - \$600,000

Growing a Highly Effective Child Care Workforce

A critical element to ensure success for children in child care and early education is a well-qualified and well-compensated workforce. Applicants will design and launch child care apprenticeship programs and other innovative initiatives to grow the pipeline of family home child care providers, and other support staff. Applicants must select from the following focus areas:

- Develop a paid apprenticeship program aimed at recruiting and training individuals or groups of individuals to enter the child care workforce, with an emphasis on gaining clinical experience that builds representation across diverse communities and working with vulnerable populations;
- Develop and implement coursework that includes best practices when working with children with a developmental delay, disability or special need, as well as children who come from homes where English is not the primary spoken language and children experiencing homelessness;
- Through financial incentives, provide a progression of training and professional development opportunities for caregivers, teachers, and child care providers to increase their effectiveness in supporting children's development and readiness for kindergarten;
- Build programs to support individuals in changing careers and entering the education field; and/or
- Establish an alternative early childhood education teacher preparation program.

Inspiration from the Field

› [Early Childhood Education Apprenticeships: Why, What, and How](#)

National Center on Early Childhood Teaching and Learning

› [The child care worker shortage is reaching crisis proportions nationally. Could Milwaukee provide the answer?](#)

The Hechinger Report

› [Apprenticeships May Help Build the Child Care Workforce](#)

Marketplace

Additional Readings

- [Teacher Turnover in Early Childhood Education \(*Brown University*\)](#)
 - [How the Early Education Career Institute's ECE Apprenticeship Program is Helping Build a Better Future for Children and Childcare Providers \(*Early Education Career Institute*\)](#)
 - [Policies, Initiatives, and Resources to Support the ECE Workforce \(*Child Trends*\)](#)
 - [A Way Forward: Registered Apprenticeships and Advancing the Early Childhood Workforce \(*Bipartisan Policy Center*\)](#)
 - [Supporting the Child Care and Early Education Workforce \(*Urban Institute*\)](#)
 - [To Maintain Teacher Diversity, Listen to Teachers of Color \(*The Hechinger Report*\)](#)
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Potential Applicants

- Non-profit organizations
 - LEAs
 - IHEs
 - Partnerships and collaborative entities are also encouraged to apply
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Funding for this Strategy

- Total amount available: \$11 million
 - Estimated number of grants awarded: 4-8
 - Average range of award: \$500,000 - \$3 million
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Boosting Family Child Care

Maryland lost hundreds of family child care programs over the last two years. The state has an urgent need to expand the number of family home child care providers in each jurisdiction, particularly in child care deserts, where there are few or no available programs. Sustaining an existing business or starting a new business can be challenging. One powerful strategy to establish and sustain new and existing provider businesses is through an independent, centralized support system, like a Shared Service Alliance. MSDE will consider the regions represented by applicants for this strategy to ensure that all geographic areas across the state are represented and supported. Applicants must select at least one focus area below:

- Develop and implement an incubator that supports individuals who want to start up their own family child care business. Key activities must include:
 - Training and professional learning opportunities surrounding the licensing process, how to open up a business in Maryland, understanding how to file taxes for your new business, how to keep accurate and complete financial and business records, how to start a website, and other business practices;
 - Training and professional learning opportunities on how to maintain your license, as well as opportunities for growth (earning Maryland EXCELS and National Accreditation);
 - Disseminating information on fee support programs such as the Accreditation Support Fund;
 - Creating asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities for family child care providers to share experiences, including through peer to peer networks,; and
 - Offering coaching and mentorship to providers in their first year of business, including assisting individuals with developing a cost of care analysis in order to project all revenue and expenditures for the first 3 - 5 years of service.
 - Design and launch a Shared Services Alliance that benefits from the economies of scale of the State's more than 7,000 providers and will result in:
 - Reduced or shared costs and time through joint purchasing, staff sharing, collaborative contracts, centralized administration, or some combination of this;
 - Shared program or administrative capacity-building using common tools and systems, shared mentoring and supervision, training, and collaborative improvement processes; and
 - Reinvestment of cost and time savings into enhanced program quality.
 - Launch programs that support early childhood educators in obtaining a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credentials, Associate's and/or Bachelor's degrees.
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Inspiration from the Field

› [Case Study: Shared Services Alliances](#)

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

› [Family Child Care Networks](#)

Bipartisan Policy Institute

› [Increasing Qualifications, Centering Equity](#)

NAEYC

Additional Readings

- [Shared Services as a Strategy to Support Child Care Providers \(ELC TA\)](#)
- [Shared Services: A Strategy for Building Stronger Systems Among Early Care and Education Providers \(Build Initiative\)](#)
- [Guide to Starting a Shared Service Alliance \(Opportunities Exchange\)](#)
- [Developing a Staffed Family Child Care Network: A Technical Assistance Manual \(National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance\)](#)
- [Child Development Staff: Resources Available for New Education Requirements \(DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education\)](#)
- [Successful Inclusion of Family Child Care Providers in Higher Education Degree Programs and Courses: A Research-to-Practice Guide \(Early Educator Central\)](#)

Potential Applicants

- Technical assistance centers
- Non-profit organizations
- LEAs
- Partnerships and collaborative entities are also encouraged to apply

Funding for this Strategy

- Amount available: \$11 million
- Estimated number of grants awarded: 4-8
- Average range of award: \$500,000 - \$3 million

Advancing a Coordinated Prekindergarten Enrollment System

Maryland depends on a well-coordinated early childhood system of programs and services to support children, families and early childhood educators and providers. In addition, the state needs to be able to access data to improve the quality and reach of services. Applicants will design a coordinated prekindergarten enrollment system, strengthen the participation of private providers through parent choice, and support alignment of the birth to age 8 early childhood system. Applicants must address all focus areas below:

- Create a countywide or regional approach to a unified and common prekindergarten enrollment mixed-delivery system that includes options for families to enroll their 3-year-old or 4-year-old in private child care, Head Start, or a school-based program;
 - The system must meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ([WCAG 2.1 Level AA](#));
 - The system must be available in other language for families whose primary language spoken at home is a language other than English;
 - Provide a robust community engagement plan that includes plans for direct engagement with families and details how families will be made aware of all the prekindergarten options available;
 - Articulate a plan to address racial and socioeconomic integration in prekindergarten classrooms, as indicated in the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future;
 - Identify what supports will be provided to families through the enrollment process, such as how to select an appropriate setting to meet their child’s needs and to complete applications required documentation; and
 - Provide support for the implementation of a coordinated, unified enrollment system between early childhood and school systems through creating guidance, providing technical assistance, and hosting joint professional learning opportunities.
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Inspiration from the Field

› [Coordinated Enrollment Across Early Care and Education Settings](#)

Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center

› [Creating Integrated Early Childhood Education in New York City](#)

The Century Foundation

› [A Guide to Unifying Enrollment: The What, Why, and How for Those Considering It](#)

CRPE

Additional Readings

- [Enroll Indy \(*Enroll Indy*\)](#)
 - [Coordinating Eligibility & Enrollment \(*Child Care Technical Assistance Network*\)](#)
 - [Dozens of Indianapolis Schools, One Application \(*The 74*\)](#)
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Potential Applicants

- Non-profit organizations
 - Partnerships and collaborative entities are also encouraged to apply
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Funding for this Strategy

- Total amount available: \$5 million
 - Estimated number of grants awarded: 2-3
 - Average range of award: \$1 million - \$2 million
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Current Efforts Underway

MSDE investments in the six high-level strategies outside of the grant programs, above. This section describes current efforts already underway at MSDE to level up and increase access to a strong child care infrastructure in Maryland, including more than \$74 million to expand the Child Care Scholarship program through increased reimbursement rates and lowered eligibility cutoffs. Applicants are encouraged to consider how to strategically leverage these resources and, where possible, incorporate and build upon these resources in their grant proposals.

Expanding Access to Quality Child Care

- The Child Care Scholarship (CCS) program provides financial assistance with child care costs to eligible working families in Maryland. Maryland made significant policy changes to the CCS Program in 2022 to increase access to quality child care. Specifically, Maryland has made three historic policy changes to this program:
 - Increased the value of the scholarships used to help cover the cost of child care. The rate rose from the 60th percentile of the tuition charged by child care providers according to the most recent Market Rate Survey (MRS) to the 70th percentile of the MRS.
 - Reduced or eliminated parent copayments. This is an additional amount most parents have been required to pay to use scholarships; Parents who receive certain benefits will have no copay, while other parents will pay a nominal amount.
 - Lowered the threshold of income requirements to qualify for a scholarship. The income threshold rose from the maximum level of income from 65% of State Median Income (SMI) to 75% SMI. The result is a family of four making \$90,033 can still qualify for a scholarship (up from \$71,525).
 - Family and provider portals for the CCS program will be established in FY 2023 to improve customer service for parents/guardians and child care providers.
- Family Resource Specialists can assist parents and guardians in applying for child care scholarships and help navigate the process including gathering all of the correct documentation that is needed, explain eligibility requirements, and help with questions. Families may call Maryland Family Network for support Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. at 877-261-0060. Family Resource Specialists are available to assist in Spanish and other languages. More information can be found on Maryland Family Network's [Family Resource Specialists webpage](#).

Improving Quality in Early Learning Programs

- Judy Center Early Learning Hubs (Judy Centers) are expanding. Judy Centers prepare children for success in school and life. By connecting families with high-quality, comprehensive, full-day, full-year early education services, the Judy Centers promote school readiness for children ages birth through five. Utilizing a multigenerational approach for families and children, and providing professional development for early childhood educators, Judy Centers help to support families during a child's early years. More information can be found by visiting the [Judy Center Early Learning Hubs webpage](#). The Blueprint legislation added nine new Judy Centers in FY 2023, and American Rescue Plan Act funding allowed MSDE to increase the number of hubs by an additional seven. In FY 2023, there are a total of 85 Judy Centers across all jurisdictions.

- Funding for Child Care Quality Incentive Grant Program was increased. This program, funded through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, awards funds to child care providers to enhance the quality of care provided to the children of Maryland. Providers may acquire additional training and education to enhance their knowledge of early childhood development and the role providers play in helping children to enter school ready to succeed. Funds can also be used to purchase supplies, materials and equipment to create stimulating learning environments. Apply for funding on the [Child Care Quality Incentive Grant program webpage](#).
- Providers who participate in the Maryland EXCELS are getting an increased bonus. Maryland EXCELS is the state's quality rating and improvement system for licensed child care and early education programs that meet nationally recognized quality standards. Maryland EXCELS promotes quality by awarding quality ratings to Child Care Centers, School-Age Child Care Programs, Family Child Care Homes, and Public Prekindergarten programs. Child care programs at levels 1-5 are eligible for bonuses funded through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. For more information, visit the [Maryland EXCELS webpage](#).
- Support for state and national accreditation has expanded. Accreditation demonstrates that licensed child care centers and registered family child care homes strive to achieve and maintain a level of quality identified through a rigorous process of self-assessment and program improvement based on quality program standards issued by the accrediting organization. The Accreditation Support Fund covers the cost of pursuing accreditation for licensed child care centers and for registered family child care providers. Child care programs seeking accreditation support may find more information by visiting the [Accreditation Support Fund webpage](#).

Expanding Mental Health Supports and Services

- The Infant Early Childhood Mental Health ([IECMH](#)) Support Services program has expanded. IECMH Support Services is an evidence-informed intervention designed to build the capacity of early childhood professionals' ability to nurture social and emotional development in infants and young children through the [Pyramid Model for Social Emotional Competence](#). MSDE has also expanded support for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Certification.

Growing a Highly Effective Child Care Workforce

- Retention and hiring bonuses are offered to participants in the Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program. This new program, established by House Bill 1100, recognizes individual child care providers who increase their qualifications beyond the requirements of state licensing and registration regulations. Six staff credential levels and four administrator levels offer recognition of achievement based on professional development/education, years of experience, and professional activities. Information about the program may be found on the [Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program website](#).
- A child care teacher retention study will be conducted in 2023. Retention of a quality early childhood workforce supports continuity of care for children and families and helps to stabilize the child care system.
- MSDE is partnering with Institutions of Higher Education to launch alternative certification/degree pathways, including programs with flexible delivery options. These programs will help create the high-quality, credentialed staff required for private child care providers to participate in Maryland's mixed-delivery prekindergarten program.

Boosting Family Child Care

- Three Planning Grants for Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care (GOFCC) grants were awarded to support the growth and sustainability of the family child care field. The Maryland State Department of Education will provide \$150,000 each to a minimum of three jurisdictions to implement this program in FY 2023. Grant funds must be used to establish and support local pilot programs in increasing the supply of family child care providers and ensuring their sustainability in areas with above average rates of poverty, unemployment, or areas with a lack of available child care providers. Subgrantees must raise local matching funds, including in-kind matching resources at a 1:1 match. They must also collaborate with existing family child care providers during the implementation of the program, provide multilingual outreach to recruit individuals to become registered family child care providers, and provide technical assistance, financial incentives, and start-up assistance to become registered family child care providers. In addition, entities awarded grants must assist newly registered and established family child care providers through technical assistance to achieve quality benchmarks, peer-to-peer mentoring, and financial incentives. They must also establish partnerships with local chambers of commerce, or other local or State organizations for family child care providers that support small businesses and women and minority-owned businesses to provide assistance to recruited individuals or registered family child care providers in implementing best business practices and assistance in achieving financial sustainability.

Advancing a Coordinated Enrollment System

- The new Early Childhood Data System data system is modernizing and expanding. This system provides critical data collection and use for licensing, workforce supports, Child Care Scholarships, and Maryland EXCELS. Other program data, such as data from the Judy Center Early Learning Hubs, Patty Centers, and mixed-delivery prekindergarten, will be accessible through this system. The system will also support the implementation of a unique identifier system for young children to better understand the impact of support and services on child outcomes. These unique identifiers can help ensure data integrity for data in a unified enrollment system.

Customer Service Support Sessions

The Maryland State Department of Education seeks to support any potential applicant in submitting the strongest application possible. Strong program designs are essential to ensuring Maryland Rebuilds delivers upon the goals of the initiative. Customer service and support for Maryland Rebuilds consists of general information and strategy information sessions as well as for appointments, upon request. These sessions and the scheduled dates are listed below.

General Information Sessions

Prior to completing and submitting the application, it is required that applicants attend at least one General Information Session. These sessions provide an overview of the Maryland Rebuilds grant program, requirements, and how to apply. To register for a session, click on a session below. See the dates and times below:

- [September 2, 2022, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.](#)
- [September 8, 2022 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.](#)

MSDE staff are available to support applicants throughout the submission process. In addition to the information sessions and office hours listed below, applicants may make individual appointments with MSDE staff as needed.

Strategy Sessions

After attending a general information session, applicants must attend a strategy specific session to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements and expectations for the strategy you're interested in. To register for a session, click on a session below. See the dates and times below – click a given time to register:

Strategy	Dates/times
Expanding Access to Quality Child Care	September 6 and September 19 from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Early Learning Models of Excellence	September 6 and September 19 from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Expanding Mental Health Supports and Services	September 7 and September 20 from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Growing a Highly-Effective Child Care Workforce	September 7 and September 20 from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Boosting Family Child Care	September 9 and September 21 from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Advancing a Coordinated Prekindergarten Enrollment System	September 9 and September 21 from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

