

Office of Early Learning
Q & A– Provider Mini-Grants – COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

To assist with costs during the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Office of Early Learning authorized emergency mini-grants for early learning/child care providers throughout the state.

Provider Eligibility

1. Q: Can you clarify what the PIP status refers to? Assume that it’s a provider improvement plan, but does this apply to non-compliance status in regard to monitoring and SR/VPK contractual CAPs? Does this include the following?

- **For SR providers, does it refer to those that are on a QIP due to the CLASS score?**
- **For VPK, does it refer to sites that are considered POPs due to the readiness rates?**

A: OEL modified this portion of the guidance and the application form (PG 240.20, Attachment 1) to clarify the intended scope for this eligibility criteria.

- Criteria **does NOT include** VPK readiness rate improvement plans or Quality Improvement Plans (QIP).
- Criteria applies to pending/open provider contracted-related Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) or probation notices.

2. Q: Can coalitions offer these mini-grants to VPK providers?

A: Yes.

3. Are providers restricted to only applying to their “home” coalition? This could be problematic with coalitions who have out of county providers who attempt to “double-dip” as there is nothing there that says that they cannot do so.

A: Instructions for how to treat potential duplicate payments will vary based on the type of mini-grant offered.

For professional development/training stipends – “home” coalition instructions apply

Early learning/child care providers that contract with multiple coalitions will be paid by the coalition where the provider is physically located (“home” coalition). Duplicate payments will not be offered. Any qualifying teacher/staff member can only be paid once for any completed training session/event by their “home” coalition.

For other emergency mini-grants - “home” coalition instructions do NOT apply

Because of the unique nature of this public health emergency (and the federal/state intent to offer support ASAP), the double-dip issue is not OEL’s focus.

- If a provider serves multiple coalitions, they could potentially be eligible to receive (a) infrastructure and/or (b) health/safety and/or consumable support/welfare supply mini-grants from either or both coalitions. However,
- Each coalition’s budgetary and board-approved spending plans for the program year still apply, and local limitations may impact the amount (if any) of mini-grant activity in these categories that a coalition chooses to fund.

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4. Once the provider is found to be eligible, what are the next steps?

A: See OEL’s COVID-19 detailed spreadsheet. Each coalition must complete and submit to OEL to track these costs, pay providers, and submit expenses on the coalition’s next invoice.

Funding and Allowable Expenditures

5. How much in mini-grant monies can a qualifying provider receive?

A: The following amounts of mini-grants can be earned per provider, per location.

- No cap set on funding for training stipends, since the maximum is \$750 per teacher or qualifying staff member.
- \$2,000 combined maximum for other mini-grants from a single coalition (up to \$1,000 for infrastructure costs; additional \$1,000 for health/safety or consumable support/welfare supply costs).
- The “up to \$1,000” language is meant to provide each coalition local budgeting discretion with flexibility to release funds quickly.
 - Budgetary considerations and board-approved spending plans for program year 2019-20 still apply, and all coalitions/RCMA can choose whether or not to offer these emergency mini-grants for (a) infrastructure costs or (b) health/safety and/or consumable support/welfare supply costs. However,
 - All coalitions/RCMA must offer mini-grant training stipends during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Can a coalition offer larger mini-grant amounts?

A: The emergency provider mini-grants authorized by OEL’s PG 240.20 are limited to the described dollar amounts per provider, per location.

However, if certain additional conditions are met, a coalition may be able to offer other/similar provider mini-grant awards at larger amounts. The following conditions apply.

- There is already language authorizing provider mini-grants in the coalition’s School Readiness (SR) plan, Section III – *Quality Activities and Services*, Item D – *Quality Improvement Strategies*.
- The coalition’s SR plan (with the necessary language) is already on file with and has already been approved/accepted by OEL’s Policy staff.
- The coalition’s budget and board-approved spending plan(s) for FY2019-20 already allow for similar quality-funded activities.
 - If yes, budget amendments may be submitted to FABS to re-align funding to appropriate quality-related OCA codes.
 - If no, governing board action is required.
 - the current year budgets/spending plans

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7. 7. What type of costs can be reimbursed by these mini-grants?

Type of Expense(s) ³ <i>See PG 240.20 Appendices A, B and C for more details</i>	Allowable mini-grant cost(s)?
Costs incurred prior to the activation of the emergency order	No ¹
Teacher stipend for class taken before the emergency declaration occurred	No ²
Crib blankets	No ³
Utility bills (phone, power, water)	Yes ¹
Provider’s monthly mortgage	Yes ¹
Rent	Yes ¹
Insurance	Yes ¹
Staffing (salaries)	Yes ¹
Classes repeated since March 1, 2020 by qualifying teachers/staff	No

¹OEL records indicate **March 1, 2020**, as the effective start date for EO 20-51. Costs incurred after this date are allowable for the health/safety, support welfare supplies, and infrastructure mini-grants.

²Training stipends are allowable for classes taken/completed after **March 1, 2020**.

³ Cost principles for allowable activities (i.e., related laws, program rules or regulations from OMB, FDOE/OEL, DCF or other governing awarding agencies) remain in effect during any declared disaster or emergency. Costs for any prohibited items are still considered unallowed costs.

8. What documentation is required or allowable to support making payments for these mini-grants?

Type of Documentation	Required or allowable for mini-grant cost(s)?
Separate/additional coalition-prepared reimbursement form	Not required ^A
Single copy of completed Attachment 1 per provider, per location	Required
Evidence for OEL about which mini-grants are offered by Coalition/RCMA	Required ^B
New Attachment 2 per teacher, per training session/event	Not Required
Electronic copy of training certificate with each Attachment 2 (per training session or event, per qualifying teacher/staff member)	Required
Provider receipts (for cleaning supplies, rent, etc.)	Not required
Provider “proof of payment” documentation (paid bills, bank stmts)	Not required
Documentation to pro-rate costs from providers ¹	Not required ^A

^AIf a coalition intends to develop their own forms for these mini-grant activities they have the ability to do so. However, supplemental forms cannot substitute for the documentation requirements noted in guidance issued by OEL.

^B OEL has determined training stipends are essential and required activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. All coalitions and RCMA are instructed to offer these mini-grants during this public health emergency.

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Tracking Expenditures

9. How are these mini-grant expenditures reported?

A: The following OCAs should be used to record expenses for these emergency mini-grants.

- **Emergency mini-grant infrastructure costs:** 97QOO.*
- **Emergency mini-grant health/safety supply costs:** 97QHS.*
- **Emergency mini-grant consumable support/welfare supply costs:** 97QOO.*
- **Emergency mini-grant training stipends:** 97QPD.*

**Note: use of these OCA codes for mini-grants to VPK-only providers is authorized by OEL for COVID-19 pandemic mini-grant activities only.*

OEL must track expenditures and planned purchases related to each emergency/disaster event. A COVID-19 cost-reporting spreadsheet is posted to each coalition’s Invoice folder on SharePoint, which must be submitted with a coalition/RCMA’s monthly invoice. Please contact your grant manager with questions or requests for assistance.

Mini-Grants – Cleaning Supplies

10. What is the time frame for spending the \$1,000 on cleaning supplies?

A: These mini-grants are only available while the disaster or emergency declaration remains in effect. Mini-grant monies awarded to any provider should be used for the listed/allowed costs as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days after the emergency declaration expires.

Mini-Grants – Teacher Stipends

11. Q: If a provider is a VPK only facility, can all provider staff get stipends or only VPK staff?

A: For a VPK-only facility, only VPK staff are eligible for training stipends. For SR only facilities, only SR staff are eligible for the training stipends.

12. Can coalitions issue the stipend checks directly to teachers if W-9 forms are collected?

A: Yes. If OEL’s attachments are completed and other documentation requirements are met, the coalition can issue stipend checks directly to qualifying provider teachers/staff. Amounts paid directly to teachers/staff for stipends should be reported as Other Income (box 3) on Form 1099 for tax purposes.

13. Are there plans to create a “Reimbursement Request Form” or to issue other OEL tracking instructions?

A: No.

14. Do the coalitions have the flexibility to not accept some of the trainings on the list(s)?

A: No. Coalitions should accept all of the trainings on the approved list to award stipends to qualifying provider teachers or staff members. If you have difficulty with tracking these costs, please submit a request to the OEL Questions email box for assistance.

15. How should a Coalition/RCMA handle creating a return to work bonus for qualifying teachers/staff?

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A: These types of awards or bonuses are beyond the intended scope of emergency provider mini-grants authorized by OEL in PG 240.20 and any related appendices and attachments. For more details on this query, please contact OEL questions at OEL.Questions@oel.myflorida.com.

16. Could the PD stipends impact unemployment filing status for qualifying teachers/staff?

A: Yes. Individuals receiving unemployment are required on a weekly basis to report work performed and/or related earnings. Although the stipends are not classified as wages, they are classified as work-related earnings.

- Part-time earnings more than \$58 will be deducted from your weekly benefit amount.
- If your gross earnings in a week are more than your weekly benefit amount, no benefits will be paid to you for that week.
- **If you attend training or job orientation, your earnings must be reported for the week attended.**
- Any work and earnings not reported may result in a fraudulent overpayment determination. Reemployment Assistance fraud is a third-degree felony and is subject to prosecution by the State Attorney’s Office.

Source: DEO State of Florida *Reemployment Assistance Handbook*, (Rev 1/20), page 9 – *Reporting Work and Earning*. Individuals should consult a Reemployment Assistance Specialist for additional information or possible waivers due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Additional Questions

17. Who should an early learning/child care provider contact if it has additional questions?

A: Providers should contact their local coalition. Click [here](#) to locate your Early Learning Coalition.