



# Smart Start Child Care

Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Meeting #18

October 11, 2024



## GOALS

- Share an update on Round 1 of Smart Start Workforce Grants applications and funding
- Refresh on the goals, guiding principles and community feedback key takeaways for the Smart Start Quality Support program
- Gather input on tradeoffs and unintended consequences for essential questions

## AGENDA

- Welcome and introductions
- Smart Start Workforce Grants
  - Round 1 funding highlights
  - Administrative Rule update
- Smart Start Quality Support
  - Goals and guiding principles
  - Weighing tradeoffs
  - Small group discussion
- Public comment

## Public Comment Instructions

- We set aside dedicated time for public comment at the end of the meeting.
- If you would like to provide public comment, please send a private chat to Lori Harrison. We will take comments in the order Lori receives the names.

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Build **understanding and alignment** on strategic intent and goals



Provide **input and feedback** throughout the design process



**Review and pressure-test** relevant cost analyses, potential policy options, and administrative options

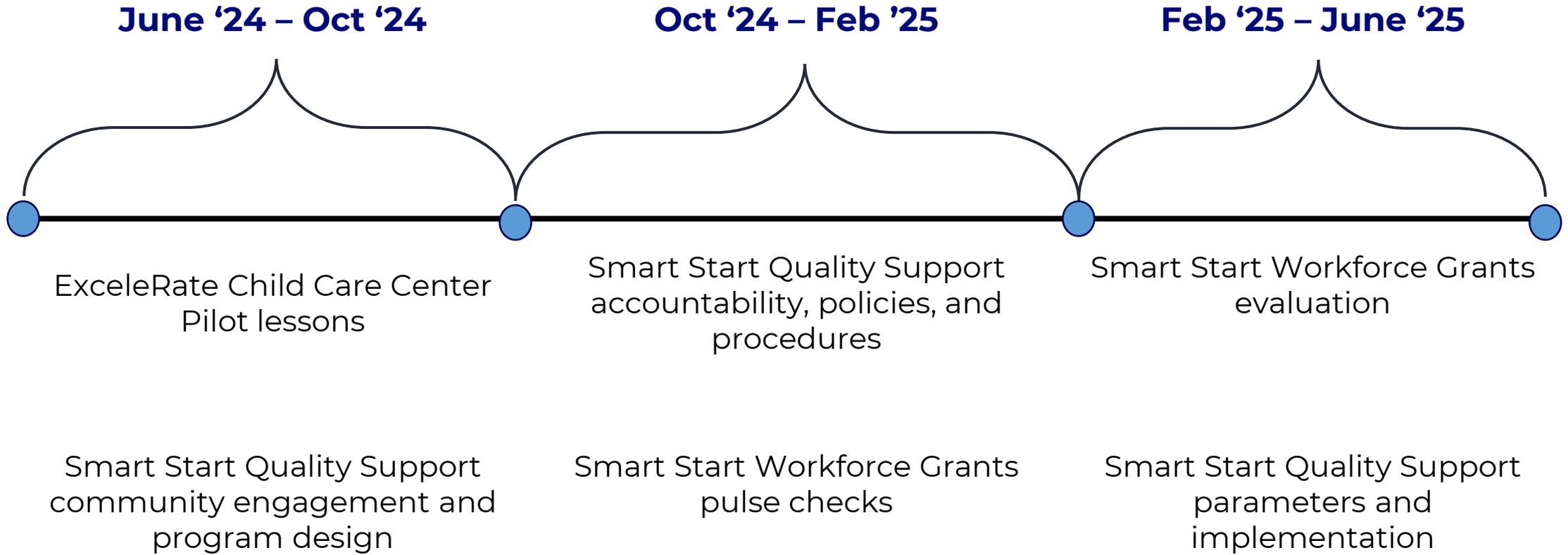


Surface any **potential risks and opportunities**



Support overall plan development and to **champion it among stakeholder groups**

# A year of planning year for Smart Start Quality Support Program expansion



## Common Themes

- Attendees generally aligned with the goals and draft guiding principles for Smart Start Quality Support and shared recommendations for tracking the impact of the program.
- Attendees shared suggestions for Smart Start Quality Support program design, including:
  - accounting for regional context for compensation and benefit,
  - considering the unintended consequences of limiting eligibility, and
  - creating flexibility within the program.
- Attendees were not surprised by focus group findings, and emphasized that family child care homes should be tailored to the specific needs and context of those providers.

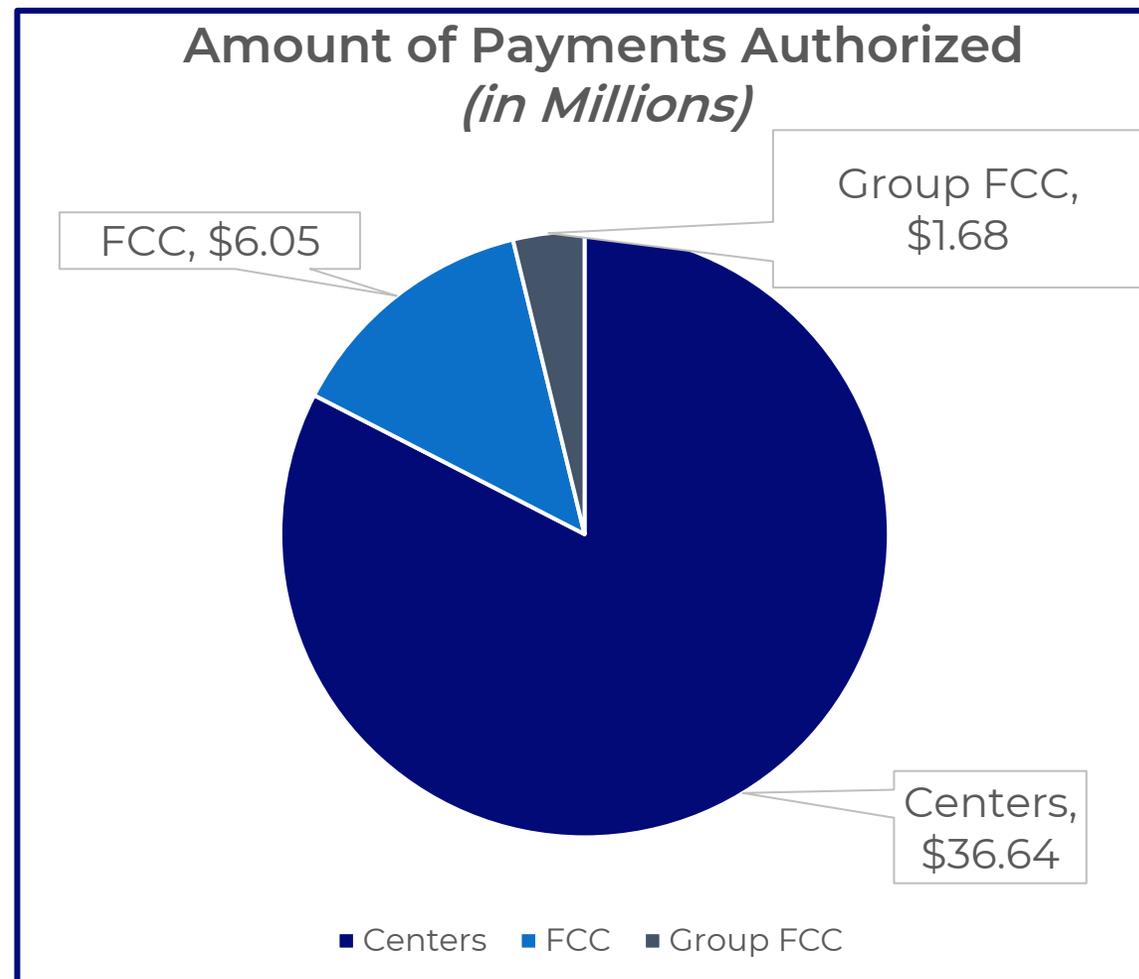
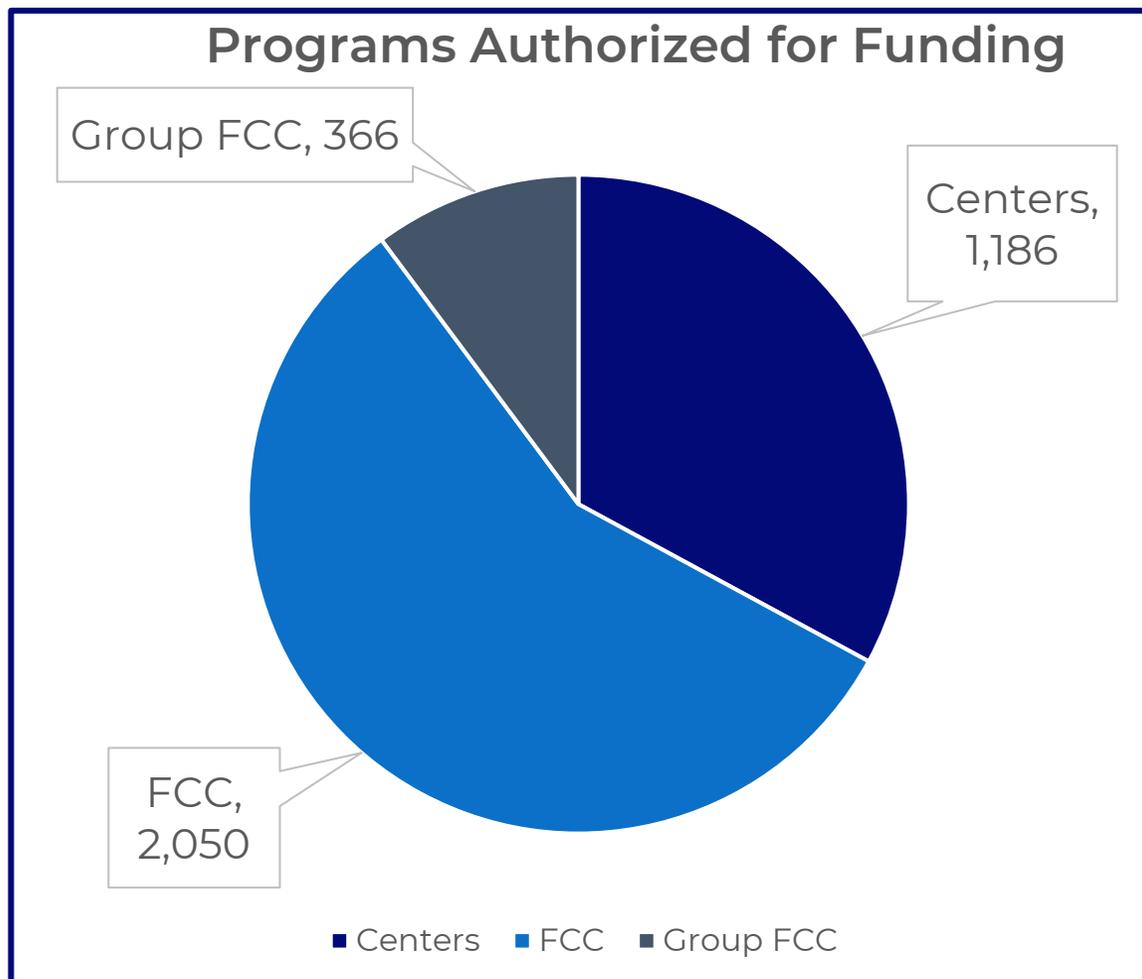
## Questions and Concerns

- Attendees are concerned about the unintended consequences of limited eligibility and how eligibility and the guiding principles' commitment to equity will intersect.
- Attendees are still unsure about how the updated SSQS program will be implemented and how CQI will be defined.
- Attendees wonder where a CDA is considered on the credential ladder and whether it is a recognized pathway into the ECEC workforce.

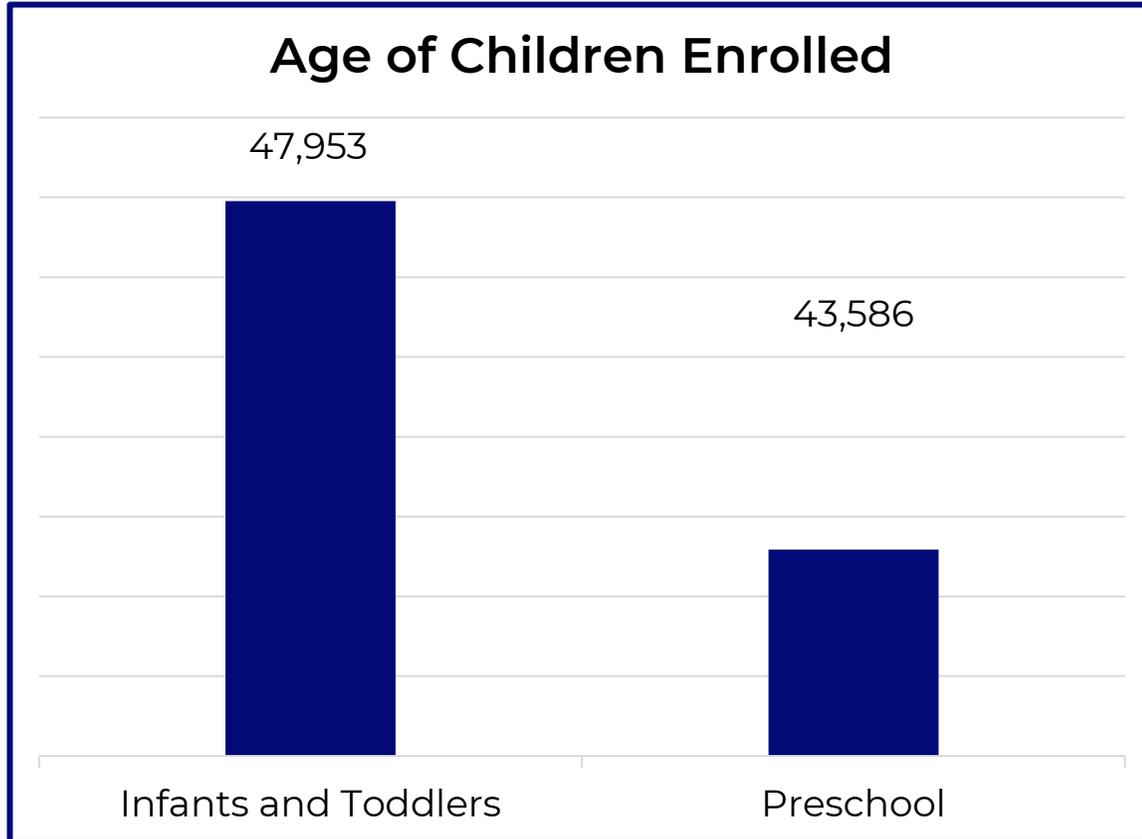


# Smart Start Workforce Grants

**\$44.37 million** has been distributed to **3,602** eligible programs for Smart Start Workforce Grants Round 1.



Smart Start Workforce Grants will reach 13,990 teachers/providers, stabilizing child care for over 91,500 children ages 5 and under and their families.



Facility type	Educators funded by grants
Child care center	9,942
Family child care home	3,094
Family group child care home	954
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,990</b>

## 417 programs that applied were found to be ineligible while 569 waivers were granted.

### Ineligible programs summary

- Of the 4,020 programs that applied, 417 programs were determined to be ineligible including:
  - 167 centers (12% of applying centers),
  - 204 FCC homes (9% of applying FCC), and
  - 46 FGCC homes (11% of applying FGCC)
- Most common reason: required information not submitted on time (74%)
- 10% did not meet the CCAP minimum enrollment eligibility criteria
- 10% withdrew their application

### Waiver summary

Waiver reason	Total
DCFS Licensed Below Min	74
Low enrollment	453
Lack of staff	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>569</b>



## Regulations Adopted as of Oct 1

- Final Rules will be under Title 89, Part 50, Subpart M:  
<https://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/089/08900050sections.html>
- Ex Parte Communications requirements are no longer applicable to Smart Start Workforce Grants rulemaking
- The content within the rules are consistent with the information that has been shared with the Ad Hoc Committee during the planning of Smart Start Workforce Grants, and that was developed through [community engagement](#).



# Smart Start Quality Support

**The Smart Start Quality Support Program goal will guide our discussions about program design.**

## **Draft Smart Start Quality Support Program Goal and Strategies**

The Smart Start Quality Support Program will improve access to high quality child care for families and children throughout the state by:

- Strategy 1: Providing funds to incentivize staff attainment of additional degrees or credentials,
- Strategy 2: Providing funds to enhance staffing patterns, and
- Strategy 3: Supporting participating child care programs to implement continuous quality improvement practices.

**The Smart Start Quality Support Program goal should support our theory of change.**

**Smart Start Quality Support Program theory of change**

Programs have the resources to invest in additional staff and increased wages to further support quality services



- Turnover will decrease within programs
- ECEC professionals will achieve higher credentials
- ECEC professionals will engage in continuous quality improvement



Children and families will equitably access higher quality care

## Smart Start Quality Support guiding principles will guide decision-making through all aspects of the design process.

### Proposed guiding principles for Smart Start Quality Support Program

1. Decisions must be grounded in equity, prioritizing programs with limited access to funding and that are serving high concentrations of children from priority populations.
2. Decisions must be informed by those that stand to be most impacted by them, including programs that currently participate in the Smart Start Quality Support Program.
3. The program must stay within the allocated budget and meet the Governor's stated goals.
4. The program must provide participants with enough funding to cover the costs associated with requirements and implement meaningful changes in their program.
5. The program should build on and complement other statewide quality support programs and funding streams.
6. The program will build on lessons learned from the pilot program and scale up effective elements.
7. We recognize that we need to make decisions on a timeline with the best information we have.

## The Smart Start Quality Support Program can build on Smart Start Workforce Grants to progress toward quality



**Other early childhood funding streams that support quality**

### **Smart Start Quality Support Program**

Support child care programs committed to enhancing their quality

### **Smart Start Workforce Grants**

Raise wages to promote program stability and staff recruitment and retention

## Community engagement findings align to goals and guiding principles for the Smart Start Quality Support Program.

### What we heard:

- **Staffing shortages, time, and financial constraints are barriers** to engaging in continuous quality improvement

### Smart Start Quality Support Program design:

- The Smart Start Quality Support Program aims to **help child care programs access CQI supports**
- Guiding principles include: “Decisions must be grounded in equity, prioritizing programs with limited access to funding and that are serving high concentrations of children from priority populations.”
- The proposed Smart Start Quality Support Program **provides funds to incentivize staff to attain additional degrees or credentials, supports programs to enhance staffing patterns, and offers tailored support for programs to engage in CQI.**

## The key findings elevated what should carry forward from the existing Smart Start Quality Support Program.

### What we heard:

- The **strengths of the current Smart Start Quality Support program** are the **comprehensive approach** and opportunity to hire additional staff.
- Current Smart Start Quality Support program participants felt the **program helped them meet and maintain quality standards defined by ExceleRate.**
- Providers are **eager for professional development that is accessible and applicable** to their context.

### Smart Start Quality Support Program design:

- **No major changes will be made to the current components for center-based programs.** The program design for family child care and family group child care homes will apply the same concepts to the unique context of homes.
- The current program design provides individual coaching and support to programs that is based on the needs the program identifies through baseline assessments and growth plans.

**The key findings elevated what can be improved for the near term and what should be considered in systemic and transition conversations.**

**What we heard:**

- The current program would **need to be modified for family child care homes and family group child care homes.**
- **Concerns** about the current Smart Start Quality Support Program **focused on funding to increase staff wages based on credentials.**
- Providers have **mixed experiences and perceptions of ExceleRate** and other funding sources.

**Smart Start Quality Support Program design:**

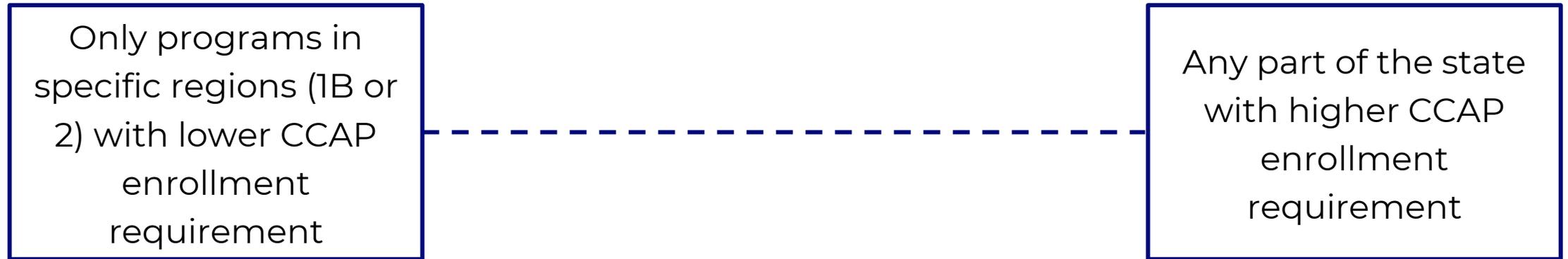
- IDHS is **exploring options for family child care homes and family group child care homes that are responsive to community engagement.**
- IDHS is **revisiting the wage scale** to consider ways to account for experience and address challenges with the credential system.
- Feedback on ExceleRate and will be shared with system alignment workgroup as **part of the transition to the new Illinois Department of Early Childhood.**

We will need set eligibility criteria to determine which programs can participate in the redesigned and expanded program.

Eligibility  
options

- Geography
- Priority populations served
- CCAP enrollment
- Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)
- Age group served
- Current funding streams

## With limited resources, what do we want to prioritize for expansion? Where do you fall along this spectrum?



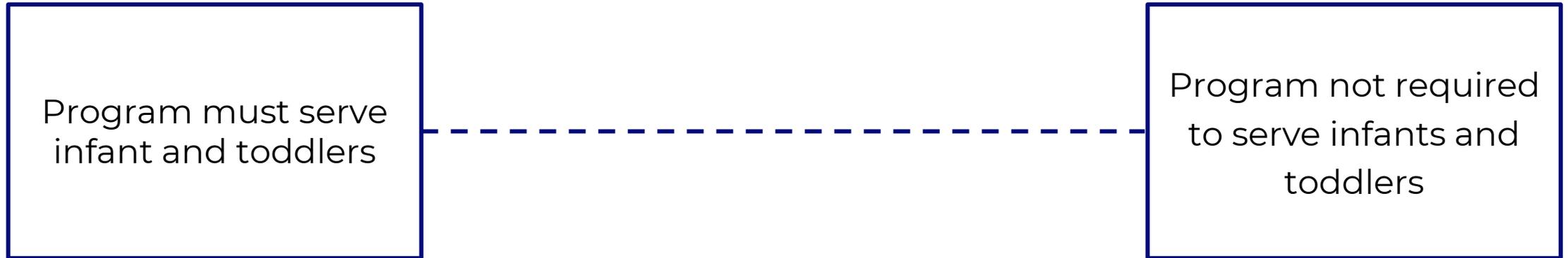
### **Region descriptions:**

Group 1A: *Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, and McHenry counties.*

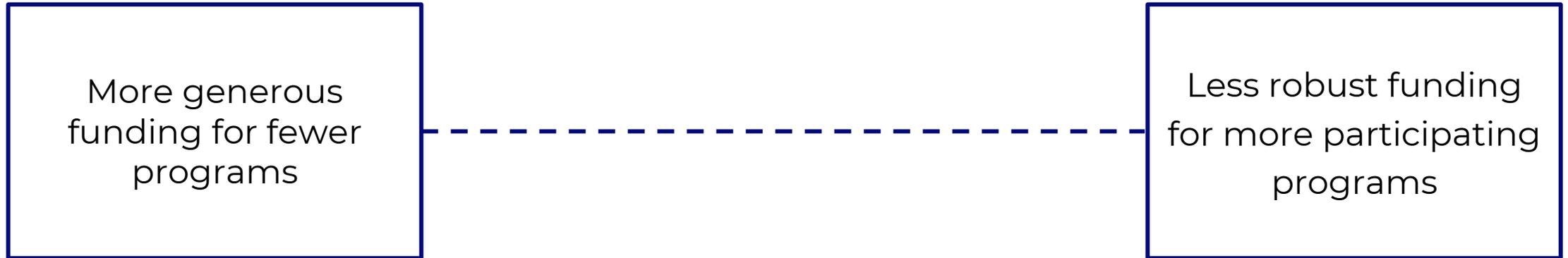
Group 1B: *Boone, Champaign, Kankakee, Madison, McLean, Monroe, Ogle, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon, St. Clair, Tazewell, Whiteside, Will, Winnebago, and Woodford counties.*

Group 2: *all counties not listed in Group 1A or 1B.*

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# Small Group Discussion



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## Small Group Discussion

We will split into groups to hear from you and respond to these questions:

1. What is most important to prioritize with eligibility considerations?
2. What are the unintended consequences or what concerns do you have about any of the tradeoff decisions?
3. What would be unique or different in the way that these tradeoffs impact family child care/family group child care home providers?

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# Public Comment

## Next Smart Start Child Care Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Meeting

**Tuesday, December 3, 2024 6 PM – 8 PM**

- **Meeting topic:** Quality Support program design and trade off decisions; eligibility

**Open Survey for Feedback:**

<https://forms.gle/3DPPyPUcPQiTgbwX9>



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Thank you!