

SMART START WORKFORCE GRANTS



Cash Payments Are NOT ALLOWED for Smart Start Workforce Grants!

Family and Family Group Child Care programs **cannot pay assistants in cash**. Cash does not provide the proof needed for the grant. To stay eligible, programs must use **approved payment methods** that show clear records that employees were paid at or above the required wage floor during the full funding use period. Payments made in cash, gift cards, or extra benefits are not allowed.

What are the approved payment methods?

Accepted Payment Methods	Proof of Payment for Reporting
Direct Deposit	Payroll reports of copies of employee paystubs
Payments made through an Accounting Service or Firm	Reports issued by an accountant
Check issued from a Business Account	Copies of cleared checks or bank statements confirming checks were cashed
Check issued from a Personal Account	Copies of cleared checks or bank statements confirming checks were cashed
Digital Payment Platforms such as Venmo, PayPal, Cash App or similar services.	Screenshots or downloaded images of payment transactions to the employee(s)

All documentation must also clearly include the following information for each employee:

- Name(s)
- Total Hours Worked
- Dates Worked
- Gross Pay
- Net Pay
- Deductions (if applicable)

For checks or digital payment platforms, be sure to include these details in the **memo or subject line** of the transaction.

Tips for using funds and getting ready to report:

1. **Write down the start date** of each funding use period so you can meet the wage floor requirements from the first day.
2. **Make a payment plan** for your assistants that follow the guidelines. Do not use cash or other payment types that are not allowed.
3. **Learn what payroll records and pay stubs are needed** so you're ready when it's time to report.
4. **Save all payroll records**, either digitally or in a paper file, so they are easy to find later.

Fiscal Year 2026 July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Application Round	Application Period	Documentation Deadline/ Funding Request	Funding Released:	Funding Use Period:	Quarterly Reporting Deadline:
Round 1	April 1, 2025 - April 29, 2025	May 14, 2025	Two Payments June 2025 & July 2025	July 2025 - September 2025	October 31, 2025
Round 2	July 1, 2025 – July 31, 2025	August 14, 2025	September 2025	October 2025 - December 2025	January 30, 2026
Round 3	October 1, 2025 – October 31, 2025	November 14, 2025	December 2025	January 2026 – March 2026	April 30, 2026
Round 4	January 2, 2026 – January 30, 2026	February 13, 2026	March 2026	April 2026 – June 2026	July 31, 2026

Have questions? Reach out to your local expert for guidance on requirements and acceptable payment and documentation methods. [Find your local expert here.](#)

