SMART START
WORKFORCE GRANTS



Frequently Asked Questions - Updated for Fiscal Year 2027
LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTERS

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Section 1: General Questions

1. What are Smart Start Workforce Grants?

Smart Start Workforce Grants can provide child care programs the stable, ongoing funds they need to cover costs and invest in quality without burdening families by raising tuition or co-pays. These grants will allow programs to cover higher staff wages through consistent funding, helping to offset the unpredictable nature and fluctuation of private pay tuition and Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) subsidy payments, considering the true cost of services, and paying in advance rather than in arrears. Programs receiving Smart Start Workforce Grants through Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) will be required to meet or exceed a wage floor for teachers and assistant teachers, helping them to attract more staff and meet parents' need for child care at a rate they can afford.

Smart Start Workforce Grants are a child care grant program funded by the Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) and administered by the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA).

Smart Start Workforce Grants are subject to state appropriation by the Illinois General Assembly

2. What does "wage floor" mean?

New to Smart Start Workforce Grants is a wage floor. A wage floor is a wage that grantees must meet or exceed for staff. It is different from the legally required minimum wage. For Smart Start Workforce Grants, the wage floor is a requirement that programs agree to when they accept the grant. This requires that teachers and assistant teachers working in grant-funded classrooms must be paid at or above the wage floor described in the grant. See the wage floor section below for frequently asked questions specific to the wage floor.

3. Why do the Smart Start Workforce Grants require programs to care for Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) children?

In addition to raising wages for child care workers, Smart Start Workforce Grants are designed to increase equitable access to child care for families and their children, especially those with limited resources. To meet this goal, the funding stipulates that 15% of a child care center's licensed capacity must be families enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program, DCFS foster care child care payments, or military child care subsidies.

The Smart Start Workforce Grant program will have the greatest impact when it can reach as many child care programs as possible and raise wages for staff by a meaningful amount. This requires a trade off, though: the higher the per-classroom award amount (and the higher the wage increase for staff), the fewer total programs can be funded. The goal is to increase funding for wages by as much as possible and reach as many programs as possible. The grant is also not a competitive grant. All programs that apply and are found eligible will receive funding. This requires the program to include a CCAP requirement for eligibility.

4. How much are the grant amounts?

Programs that participate in the Smart Start Workforce Grant program in State Fiscal Year 2027 will receive the following amounts for each quarter that they opt in and are deemed eligible. Funding will be provided in advance of each quarter. The funding year will begin in July 2026 and end in June 2027. Center-based programs will be eligible for the following grant awards for each classroom:

Classroom type	Quarterly Award
Smart Start Workforce Grants Infant/Toddler	$6,750
Smart Start Workforce Grants Ages 2-5	$6,000

5. Where can I learn more about Smart Start Workforce Grants?

Grant information can be found at https://www.ilgateways.com/smart-start/smart-start-workforce-grants. You can also contact INCCRRA by email at grants@inccrra.org or by phone at 1-855-939-4858. Local technical assistance to help with the application and reporting process and more for Smart Start Workforce Grants is available through the Child Care Resources & Referral agency in your area. Visit https://www.ilgateways.com/smart-start/smart-start-workforce-grants to find contact information for your local expert.

6. What is the timeline for Smart Start Workforce Grants? When does the program start and end?

Each Grant round will be comprised of an Application/Opt-In period, Deadline for Documentation, Funding Release, Funding Use Period, and Quarterly Reporting Deadline.

FY27 schedule

Fiscal Year 2027 July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

Application Round	Application Period	Documentation Deadline/ Funding Request	Funding Released:	Funding Use Period:	Quarterly Reporting Deadline:
Round 1	April 1, 2026 - April 30, 2026	May 14, 2026	Two Payments June 2026 & July 2026	July 2026 - September 2026	October 31, 2026
Round 2	July 1, 2026 – July 31, 2026	August 14, 2026	September 2026	October 2026 - December 2026	January 31, 2027
Round 3	October 1, 2026 – October 30, 2026	November 143 2026	December 2026	January 2027 – March 2027	April 30, 2027
Round 4	January 4 2027 – January 29, 2027	February 12, 2027	March 2027	April 2027 – June 2027	July 31, 2027

Definitions:

Application/Opt-In Period – This is the time that the application will be available in the Programs Director Portal for completion. To be considered for a Smart Start Workforce Grant in an application period you must have the application completed and submitted within this time frame. We encourage programs to apply earlier than the deadline. Once a program has been found eligible the program must only opt-in to receive grant funding in additional rounds each fiscal year.

Documentation/Funding Request Deadline – As your application is reviewed if you are missing a piece of required documentation, funding request, or if additional documentation is needed for eligibility, a grant specialist will communicate what is needed by email and that documentation must be submitted by this date to be considered. We encourage programs to submit required documentation when first requested.

Funding Release – This provides the month that the funding is mailed to the program. This is dependent on INCCRRA receiving funding from the state.

Funding Use Period – This provides the months that the grant funding must be used within. This also provides the months that programs must meet the wage floor for teachers and teacher assistants in grant funded classrooms.

Quarterly Reporting Deadline – Programs must complete the required quarterly reporting in the Directors Portal by this date.

7. Where does funding for Smart Start Workforce Grants come from?

Smart Start Workforce Grants are funded by the State of Illinois General Revenue Funds.

8. Who is administering this grant program?

Like the Child Care Restoration Grant Program, Child Care Workforce Bonus Program, Strengthen & Grow Child Care Grants and the Smart Start Transition Grants, IDEC will partner with INCCRRA to administer the Smart Start Workforce Grants program.

9. What will I be required to do as a part of participating in the Smart Start Workforce Grants program?

Programs receiving a Smart Start Workforce Grant will be required to pay teachers and assistant teachers working in grant funded classrooms at or above a wage floor described in the grant and submit quarterly reporting. You can find more information about this in the wage floor section of this FAQ.

10. What is the future sustainability for Smart Start Workforce Grants?

Like all programs administered by the State with federal or State General Revenue funding, Smart Start Workforce Grants will require annual appropriations by the Illinois General Assembly. The Governor is committed to strengthening and expanding the child care workforce, and a part of that commitment is establishing Smart Start Workforce Grants as a sustained, state funded program.

11. Will changes be made to the Smart Start Workforce Grant program in the future?

The Smart Start Workforce Grant Program may continue to evolve as participation and funding availability changes. The Smart Start Workforce Grant Program has received a very strong response from providers across the state. Because of this high level of participation, changes may be made, as needed, to help ensure that available funding can continue supporting the early childhood workforce in programs most recently supporting children funded through CCAP.

12. Is the Smart Start Workforce Grant Program being reduced or eliminated?

IDEC intend to continue implementation of the Smart Start Workforce Grant Program in FY2027. Any updates made are intended to help manage demand and ensure that available funding can support the sustainability of the program. These adjustments help maintain the program so it can continue providing workforce support to child care providers.

13. Will additional funding be available for the Smart Start Workforce Grant Program?

The program continues to experience strong interest from providers across the state. Program administrators will continue to evaluate funding availability when considering future grant rounds or program expansion.

Section 2: Program Eligibility

1. What are the eligibility requirements?

Child care centers are eligible for the Smart Start Workforce Grant if they are:

- licensed as a day care center via the Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC).
- licensed and caring for children by the first of the month prior to the opening of applications. For example, if the application opens on April 1, 2026, programs must be licensed, open, and caring for children by March 1, 2026.
- operating as a full-day, full-year program offering eight consecutive hours of care per day, five days per week, 47 weeks per year.
- For centers - at least 15% of the program's current licensed capacity (at time of application) enrolled and funded by Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in any month in the calendar year prior to submitting an application (e.g., any one month between January 2025 – date of application).
- For more information on eligibility visit https://www.ilgateways.com/smart-start/smart-start-workforce-grants.
- For the FY27 grant cycle, programs must complete a required orientation once per fiscal year. Orientation completion by the grant contact included on your application will be required and confirmed before processing the application. This will help ensure that all applicants are well-informed and ready to make the most of the opportunities available.

2. How can I take the required orientation for FY27?

The orientation will have two versions, one for centers and one for family child care, both available in English and Spanish, and can be taken in two ways:

- In-person or Virtual (Live): Through your CCR&R (Child Care Resource & Referral) local expert, available starting in March 2026. Contact your Local Expert for scheduled dates.
- Virtually (Self-paced Online): Through i-learning (available starting March 2026.)

As part of your grant application, you will list one grant contact for your program. The grant contact that you list is the individual that must take the required orientation. You must also take the orientation for your specific program type in order to meet this requirement.

3. Can newly opened child care centers apply for Smart Start Workforce Grants?

Yes. Programs must be open and caring for children by the first of the month prior to application and continue to care for children today. For example, if the application opens April 1, 2026, the program must be licensed, open and caring for children by March 1, 2026 and still care for children when they apply.

4. Am I still eligible if some of my classrooms operate full day and some operate part day?

Yes. Smart Start Workforce Grants funding will be distributed by classroom, and programs will receive funding based on the number of full-day, full-year classrooms in operation.

5. If a program closes over the summer for June and July, can I still apply for quarters I am open?

No. Programs must operate full-day and full-year, defined as a program that is open and offering at least eight consecutive hours of care per day, five days per week, 47 weeks of the year. Based on this, a program can only be closed five weeks of the year.

6. What if a program is not eligible for Smart Start Workforce Grants in the first application round? Can the program become eligible in the future?

Programs that are not currently eligible for Smart Start Workforce Grants will have the opportunity to apply in a future round when the program meets eligibility requirements. For example, if you are not currently caring for Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) children, you can begin enrolling and caring for CCAP children. Once your program meets the enrollment percentages, you may apply in a later round. While new applicants will be accepted, eligibility for funding will not be guaranteed. New programs applying after Round 1 will be placed on a waitlist, pending funding availability.

7. Am I required to participate in the Smart Start Workforce Grants?

No. Programs can determine whether they would like to apply for a Smart Start Workforce Grant.

Section 3: Classroom Criteria

1. What criteria must a classroom meet to be able to be funded as a Smart Start Workforce Grants classroom?

Smart Start Workforce Grants are designed to support classroom staffing. Award amounts support staffing assumptions that meet or exceed licensing regulations. Classrooms may be eligible if they are funded only by Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and/or private tuition and meet minimum enrollment criteria. Classrooms must be full day, full year defined as a classroom that is open with children in attendance at least eight consecutive hours of care per day, five days per week, 47 weeks a year.

2. For the purposes of Smart Start Workforce Grants, how are classrooms defined?

Classrooms must be full day, full year defined as a classroom that is open with children in attendance at least eight consecutive hours of care per day, five days per week, 47 weeks a year. Based on this classroom eligibility requirement, school-age classrooms offering care before and after school, and on holidays and breaks would not be eligible. School-age classrooms with children over the age of 5 are not eligible. For the purposes of Smart Start Workforce Grants, a classroom must contain a minimum number of children, determined by the age of children. These minimums are not a ratio like those in child care licensing regulations, nor are they required to maintain Illinois Child Care Licensing. Rather, these are conditions of the Smart Start Workforce Grant program.

	Age Group	Classroom Enrollment Minimum
Center-Based Programs	Infants/toddler classrooms	4 children
	Two-year-old classrooms (and transitional 2-3 year old classrooms)	8 children
	3-5 year-old classrooms	12 children

3. What will be required at time of application for programs to show classroom enrollment?

Within the Gateways Registry Director Portal, programs will be required to create a classroom card for each classroom for which they are seeking grant funding and report the teacher and assistant teacher in each of those classrooms. They will then include the number of children enrolled in each classroom. Programs must also upload an enrollment list at time of Smart Start Workforce Grant application and future quarters' opt-in that includes the first Initial, last Initial, and age of each child in each classroom. These will be required to show proof of classroom enrollment.

4. Why does the Smart Start Workforce Grant program have classroom enrollment minimums and why are those minimums different from licensing requirements?

These minimums define the minimum number of children in a classroom necessary to support a full Smart Start Workforce Grant in that classroom. They are not ratios like those in child care licensing regulations. Award amounts assume 2.5 - 3 educators in each classroom (depending on ages of the children). This is based on actual staffing patterns reported in survey data and validated through focus groups and the Gateways Registry workforce data. These minimums are below group size limits for licensed programs.

5. If a program has multiple ages in one classroom, which minimum applies?

Just like Illinois Child Care licensing requirements, the classroom enrollment minimum will be based on the youngest child in the classroom.

6. **If I include a classroom in round 1 and their enrollment drops below the minimum, will that affect the classrooms eligibility in a later round?**

   Once a program is found eligible during each opt-in period you can add and remove classrooms. During each opt-in period you want to make sure all classrooms meet the enrollment minimums, since this is the definition of a classroom for the purposes of the Smart Start Workforce Grant.

7. **Do children enrolled in our program part-time count toward classroom enrollment minimums?**

   Yes. Children that are enrolled in a classroom part-time will count as one child. For example, if you have 7 full time children and 2 part time children enrolled in a two-year-olds classroom that counts as 9 children and would meet the classroom enrollment minimum.

8. **Are classrooms that receive Early Childhood Block Grant funding (e.g., Preschool for All, Prevention Initiative) or Head Start funding eligible for Smart Start Workforce Grants?**

   No. Only classrooms funded with private pay and/or Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funding are eligible. Programs that receive Early Childhood Block Grant or Head Start funding can be eligible for any classrooms they have that only receive private pay and/or CCAP funding.

9. **If a program offers extended day care in a Preschool for All classroom, can that classroom be eligible for Smart Start Workforce Grants?**

   No. Classrooms receiving Early Childhood Block Grant funding would not be an eligible classroom to receive a Smart Start Workforce Grant.

10. **Are school-age only classrooms eligible for Smart Start Workforce Grants?**

    If you are providing care in a school-age classroom full-day, full-year defined as a program that is open and offering at least eight consecutive hours of care per day, five days per week, 47 weeks per year for the entire grant quarter for which you are applying, then the classroom may be eligible. School-age classrooms with children over the age of 5 are not eligible. Most school-age only classrooms will not meet this eligibility requirement.

11. **If we receive the Smart Start Workforce Grant for several classrooms in our building but not for our school-age classrooms, can grant funds be spent on teaching staff or items for the school age classrooms that are not eligible?**

    Smart Start Workforce Grant funds must first be spent on wages or salaries to meet the wage floor for teachers and teacher assistants working in grant funded classrooms. Once the wage floor is met in grant funded classrooms, the funding may be used to increase any other wages or salaries within the program. All Smart Start Workforce Grant funds must be invested in wages or salaries of staff at the program.

12. **Why are Infant-Toddler classrooms eligible for more funds than Preschool classrooms?**

    Since infant-toddler classrooms have lower teacher child ratios which requires more staff in the classroom, infant-toddler classrooms will receive a higher per-classroom award to support wage increases for those staff. Smart Start Workforce Grants will reflect the value and importance of infant-toddler child care, providing them with the investments they need to succeed alongside preschool classrooms.

13. **My program is planning to open an additional classroom during the upcoming grant period. Can I add this classroom to my classroom card and include it for the next round of funding?**

    Classrooms that are marked "Active" on your program's classroom card should be current open classrooms with children enrolled and in attendance. When submitting an application or opt-in for an upcoming round of funding for the Smart Start Workforce Grant, programs should not include classrooms that are not open yet. Once the classroom opens, programs can add the classroom to their classroom card and include it for the next application or opt-in period for upcoming grant funding.

Section 4: Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Eligibility

1. **In the eligibility requirements for Smart Start Workforce Grants, how will the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) percentage of licensed capacity requirement be measured?**

   IDEC and INCCRRA will determine the percentage of CCAP enrollment based on a program's licensed capacity, at the time of application, and the number of children enrolled receiving CCAP each month. Programs will meet this eligibility requirement if, at any time between January 2025 and the date a program applies for Smart Start Workforce Grants, at least 15% of licensed capacity (at time of application) is enrolled in CCAP. For example, if a program has a licensed capacity of 100 children, and in at least one month at least 15 children enrolled received CCAP, the program will meet this eligibility requirement for the year.

2. **My program has multiple site locations. Does each site need to meet the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) percentage of enrollment threshold to be eligible for Smart Start Workforce Grants?**

   Yes. Eligibility is determined on a site-by-site basis. Each site location must meet all eligibility requirements to be deemed eligible for a Smart Start Workforce Grant.

3. **Does each classroom within the center have to meet the 15% Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) requirement?**

   No. The CCAP requirement is a program/site requirement, it applies to the overall site not the classroom.

4. **Can other forms of subsidy be included for a program to meet the 15% requirement?**

   Yes. To meet the 15% Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) requirement, programs can include children that receive the following subsidies: CCAP, DCFS Foster Care Child Care Payments, and Military Child Care Subsidy payments. Additional documentation may be requested if children receive non-CCAP subsidies.

5. **How do I know if my center meets the 15% Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) requirement at my site?**

   Programs can meet the eligibility criteria of 15% of licensed capacity at time of application enrolled in CCAP using monthly CCAP enrollment from any month from January 2025 until the date a program applies. You can determine your program's eligibility using the following tool for each site that you are applying for:

How many of my enrolled children participated in CCAP in one month?		A._____	Note: If your CCAP enrollment fluctuates, choose the month between Jan 2025 and now when you had the highest CCAP enrollment.
How many of my enrolled children participated in DCFS foster care child care payments or military child care subsidies		B._____	Note: This may require additional documentation at the time of application.
How many children am I licensed to serve at the time of application?		C._____	
	(A+B) ÷ C=	_____	X 100 = _____ % If this is 15% or greater you may be eligible.

6. **Are you required to have children enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to apply for the grant?**

   Yes. Smart Start Workforce Grants are available to programs that enrolled 15% or more of the program's licensed capacity at the time of application with children in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) during any month between January 2025 to the date of application. Programs must currently participate in CCAP at the time of application.

7. **Would you be able to confirm if the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) percentage of enrollment requirement is in relationship to the number of children enrolled or licensed capacity?**

   It is 15% of the current licensed capacity at the time of application. This is because licensed capacity is available to IDEC for all licensed centers and is verified by Illinois Child Care Licensing at least once a year. Enrollment or operational capacity, on the other hand, are more difficult to access and assess and have a greater likelihood of fluctuation compared to licensed capacity.

8. **If we qualify in application round 1 and then fall below the 15% Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) enrollment during the grant year, what happens?**

   Once you qualify, you will remain in the program for the full state fiscal year. In the first year of Smart Start Workforce Grants (State Fiscal Year 2027), this includes the time between July 2026 - June 2027. If programs fall below their required CCAP threshold, they are encouraged to work with their local CCR&R to recruit new CCAP participants; however, as long as they continue to meet the wage floor, they will remain in the program for the remainder of the Smart Start Workforce Grant period enacted in State Fiscal Year 2027 without a need to reapply.

Section 5: Wage Floor

1. **What is the wage floor requirement for licensed child care centers?**

	Region		
Role	**Group 1A**	**Group 1B**	**Group 2**
Wage floor for teachers	$19.25 per hour	$18.50 per hour	$18.25 per hour
Wage floor for assistant teacher	$18.00 per hour	$17.25 per hour	$17.00 per hour

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

2. **Why are the wage floors different for Group 1A, Group 1B, and Group 2?**

   The wage floors use the same county groupings as those of the Child Care Assistance Program reimbursement rates. These groupings account for the cost of living and other factors that differentiate pay and resources across the state of Illinois.

3. **How was the wage floor determined?**

   IDEC gathered data from the Gateways Registry, the Provider Cost of Quality Calculator (from the federal Administration of Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) as well as directly from Illinois providers to understand current wages and set the wage floor amounts at least $2-$3 above current median wages based on specific roles and geographic regions.

4. **What is the specific definition of Teacher and Assistant Teacher?**

   Workforce Grants will use the Illinois Child Care Licensing definitions for Teacher, and Assistant Teacher. These can be found in the 89 Ill. Adm. Code 407.45 https://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/089/089004070A00450R.html).

   "Early childhood assistant" means a staff member who works under the direct supervision of an early childhood teacher and does not assume responsibility for a group of children.

   "Early childhood teacher" means a staff member responsible for a group of infants, toddlers or preschool children.

5. **What positions are required to receive the wage floor?**

   Early childhood teachers and early childhood assistants in Smart Start Workforce Grant funded classrooms are required to be paid the wage floor.

6. What should I do if I still have grant funding available after meeting the required wage floor for the teachers and assistant teachers in my grant-funded classrooms?

All Smart Start Workforce Grant funding must be used toward staff salaries. This can include all staff, including directors, assistant directors, floaters, substitutes, food service, custodial, and more. Programs must first meet the wage floor for teachers and assistant teachers assigned to grant-funded classrooms. Any remaining funds may be used to 1) further increase wages for classroom staff or 2) increase or otherwise support wages for other program staff including (but not limited to) floaters, substitutes, directors and assistant directors. There is no specific wage requirement for these roles.

Section 6: Applying for Smart Start Workforce Grants

1. Can I submit my application for Smart Start Workforce Grants via the USPS mail?

No. Applications must be submitted online through the Gateways Director Portal. Mailed applications will not be accepted. If you need assistance accessing the online portal, contact grants@inccrra.org.

2. My program has multiple locations. Do I need to complete an application for each site?

Yes. Programs must apply for each site to receive a grant.

3. What can I do to prepare to apply for Smart Start Workforce Grants?

You want to make sure you are ready to apply for Smart Start Workforce Grants. Start this check list below today!

- As part of your grant application, you will list one grant contact for your program. The grant contact that you list is the individual that must take the required orientation. You must also take the orientation for your specific program type in order to meet this requirement.
- Keep your Registry membership and Registry Director Portal current. Your Registry membership and Director Portal access renew annually and often at different times. You can check your Director Portal Expiration using these steps.
- Make sure all reporting for all previous grants administered by INCCRRA is complete and accepted. This includes Child Care Restoration Grants, Child Care Workforce Bonus, Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grants, Smart Stat Transition Grants, and Smart Start Workforce Grants.
- You must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). This process can take time and should be started now! Entities doing business with the federal government will now require the Unique Entity ID created in SAM.gov. If you are unsure how to obtain a UEI, refer to the UEI tip sheet (Spanish).
- Update your classroom listing often in your Gateways Registry Director Portal. Use this help article for detailed instructions on how to update your classroom listing.
- For centers, corporations, partnerships, and Limited Liability Companies (LLCs), an Illinois Secretary of State Certificate of Good Standing will be required. This must have a date of 2026 to apply for Smart Start Workforce Grants.
- Consider how your program manages payroll and set up a plan for how the program will report payroll documentation to prove the wage floor requirements are met. This will be required quarterly.
- Review wages in your program and determine the amount needed to increase wages to at least the wage floor.
- Review your classroom enrollment, making sure that each classroom will meet the enrollment minimums set for Smart Start Workforce Grant Classrooms.
- Consider your Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) enrollment. Are you currently caring for enough children with subsidies to meet the 15% requirement? Might you need to recruit additional CCAP families? Do you have families that are currently private pay that may be eligible for CCAP?

4. How can I get help with applying for Smart Start Workforce Grants?

You have multiple options to get help!

Locally - Local child care resource and referral agencies have a local expert that you can work with to answer questions and prepare to apply for the Smart Start Workforce Grants. Find your local expert here.

By Email - Email grants@inccrra.org and a helpline specialist can offer answers to simple questions, offer technical assistance on accessing the Gateways portal, or help with the online application. You can also email your grant specialist that you worked with for Transition Grants, they will be able to answer eligibility and application questions.

By Phone - You can call your Grants Specialist to check on eligibility details, and past grant reporting.

Section 7: Reporting

1. How often will reporting be collected?

Smart Start Workforce Grants FY27 Round 1 quarterly reporting will be due October 31, 2026. Reporting will be due quarterly, on the last day of the month following the grant period. For example, Smart Start Workforce Grant Stat Fiscal Year 2027 Round 2 funding covers October 2026 - December 2026. Round 2 reporting will be due by January 31, 2027. Incomplete or incorrect reporting could delay acceptance and impact future grant payments.

2. What will be required for reporting?

Programs must confirm that they pay teachers and teacher assistants in grant funded classrooms at or above the wage floor required by the grant. Payroll reporting must include the following; full name of employee, dates worked, total hours worked, gross pay, net pay, and deductions.

Programs will also complete a short narrative report about the impact on their program, including enrollment and staffing questions. This narrative report will be similar to the narrative required under Smart Start Transition Grants.

Lastly, programs will be required to celectronically acknowledge receipt of funding through the reporting system. This confirms that they are accepting the grant funding.

Section 8: Audits

1. How many times will I be audited?

All eligible grant programs will be audited at least once per grant year.

2. What will I be audited on?

Programs will be audited to verify wage floor, number of grant funded classrooms, and classroom enrollment.

3. What will happen if there is a finding for my program?

Audits could result in findings and a path to mitigate the finding may be offered. If mitigation is not complete, programs could lose grant funding and/or be asked to repay grant funding that was received.

4. Who will be conducting the audits?

The audit will be conducted by INCCRRA audit staff and shared with IDEC.

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