

EARLY EDUCATION INITIATIVE GRANTS

Application Process for 2012-2013

What is the Early Education Initiative Grant Program?

The Early Education Initiative (EEI) grant program was established by the Vermont Legislature in 1987 to provide early education opportunities for *three- and four-year-olds who are at-risk*. The provisions of the law¹ that created this state funded grant program include: (1) prioritizing areas in the state with few opportunities for early education, (2) providing developmentally appropriate, experiential learning opportunities in home and/or group settings, (3) valuing parent involvement and input, and (4) developing programs that result from collaborations between school districts and community organizations.

The range for EEI grant requests is \$10,000 to \$30,000. *Funding is contingent upon legislative approval*. EEI grant funds may only be used for direct services. Funds may be used to pay tuition for eligible children to attend community early care and education programs, or for salaries and benefits for direct service personnel (e.g., teachers, para-educators), food, supplies and materials, facilities (not to exceed 10% of grant), transportation, staff travel, parent support program, and professional development.

What is the definition of “at-risk” children?

Children who are considered to be “at-risk” include children who:

- Are developmentally delayed by at least 25% of their chronological age in one or more of the five developmental domains (such as language, socio-emotional development), but who are not eligible for Essential Early Education (EEE) services²,
- Are from non-English speaking families or are English Language Learners,
- Are economically disadvantaged (at 185% of federal poverty guidelines),
- Have a history of abuse, neglect, or family violence,
- Are homeless or in a family that has unstable housing, or
- Are socially isolated.

Who can apply for an EEI grant?

¹ The law governing EEI is Ch. 133, T.16 § 4014

² Since school districts have a federal and state mandate to serve children who qualify for early special education services and receive federal and state funding to do so, the Early Education Initiative funds should target at-risk children and not those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Community child care centers, registered family providers, school districts, supervisory unions, tax exempt organizations serving children and families, and public agencies such as Head Start and parent-child centers may be the lead agency for EEI grants. However, all proposals **must be collaborative** and developed by representatives from at least one school district (or supervisory union) and one community program.

How do I apply for an EEI grant?

First, it is important for all prospective applicants to engage in discussions with individuals, schools, organizations and agencies within the community that provide and/or support early care and education. These discussions will help identify how the community could best utilize EEI funds to ensure children who are at-risk have access to quality early education opportunities.

Step 1: Submit a Letter of Intent no later than March 12, 2012

If your partnership plans on submitting an EEI grant proposal, please complete the attached *Letter of Intent form*. Email the completed form as either a **Word or PDF** file to Shirley Rawson at shirley.rawson@state.vt.us *no later than March 12, 2012*. You will receive an email acknowledging receipt of your Letter of Intent.

Step 2: Submit the EEI Grant Proposal no later than April 23, 2012

EEI grant applications consist of an **abstract, a narrative that addresses all required sections, and a proposed budget**. The abstract should be single-spaced and not exceed one page. The narrative should be double-spaced and not exceed 15 typed pages. The budget (on an Excel file) requires explanations of how the EEI grant funds would be used as well as disclosure of other funding sources that would support your proposed program.

Supporting documentation may be included; however, all documentation must be in an electronic format (i.e., PDF files) and should be kept to a minimum.

EEI applications must be submitted electronically as PDF files.

CAREFULLY READ AND FOLLOW THE APPLICATION GUIDELINES.

Applications that do not follow the attached guidelines will be returned and not considered.

- a. Start by reading the attached rubrics which the reviewers will use to score grant applications. The rubrics will indicate what you need to focus on in your responses.
- b. Label each section of your narrative so that each section is clearly identified. (e.g., Introduction, Need for the Program). Be certain to address all sections and follow the sequence presented in the application guidelines. Remember to proofread and ensure that your narrative is clear and comprehensible.
- c. It is advisable to write the Abstract *after* you've completed your narrative.

EEI grants are awarded on a competitive basis; grantees are selected based upon the average number of points two independent reviewers assign to an application. The higher the number of points, the more likely the application will be funded.

Is any technical assistance available?

Yes, technical assistance on the EEI application is available. You may contact Manuela Fonseca (phone: 828-3850 or email: manuela.fonseca@state.vt.us) with program related questions or Shirley Rawson (phone: 828-5128 or email: shirley.rawson@state.vt.us) if you have any logistical questions.

Technical assistance and funding for creating and/or strengthening partnerships between community based programs and public schools are available through the Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative (VCPC). Please contact Mark Sustic (mrksustc@together.net) or Sherry Carlson (scarlson380@comcast.net) from VCPC. For information on VCPC, go to www.permanentfund.org/collaborations/vcpc.php and www.vermontparentsforprek.org.

EARLY EDUCATION INITIATIVE GRANTS

Application Guidelines

Required Sections of the Application:

Abstract (5 points)

Write a succinct one-page summary of who is involved in developing the proposal, what your program will look like, how many at-risk children you plan on serving, and why this program is needed. (Note: The abstract may be single-spaced.)

Program Narrative

Introduction – 3 points

Briefly describe your partnership and other collaborators, the geographic areas to be served, and which priority area your proposal addresses (refer to the five priority areas specified at the end of these guidelines). Summarize how this proposal addresses the priority area(s) here and provide a more fully presented rationale for the target priority area(s) at the end of the narrative.

Need for the Program– 10 points

Why is an EEI grant needed? What information indicates that children who are at-risk do not have adequate access or opportunity for quality early educational experiences? Are there any publicly funded prekindergarten education programs? Do children who are at-risk in your community appear to be “slipping through the cracks” due to a lack of resources? Do you have estimates of the number of three to five year old children in your community who would be considered “at-risk” according to the EEI eligibility categories? What do NECAP or other type of assessment data indicate about the children in your community? What are the rates of poverty and Medicaid eligibility for the families you are targeting? Does your community have any unique needs?

Program Description – 20 points

What are the goals your proposal seeks to accomplish? How will your partnership go about doing that? How will children who are at-risk be identified and served through your proposed program? How many at-risk children, and in which at-risk categories, do you plan to serve on an annual basis?

Describe the delivery model(s) you propose using (e.g., center-based, outreach). How does your model address the needs you’ve identified? How will you ensure that the early education opportunities are quality experiences? What will the opportunities you’re providing for at-risk children look like? Who will be involved? How will you ensure that children who are at-risk are in inclusive environments and have opportunities to play with typically developing peers?

What efforts will be used to ensure curricula are aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards? How will the progress of children served by your proposed

program be measured? How will program quality be assured? Will program staff participate in evidence-based professional development activities?

☐ Family Involvement – 15 points

How have families of young children who are at-risk been involved in the development of your proposal? How will they be included in the process for making decisions about the issues that affect the proposed program, and in evaluating the quality of the services? What specific opportunities or services will be provided to families whose children participate in your program?

☐ Collaborative Development of the Proposal – 5 points

Describe the collaborative process that was used to generate this proposal. Which organizations, school districts, and/or community-based agencies have been actively involved in developing this proposal? How were they involved?

☐ Collaboration and Coordination in Implementing the Proposal – 10 points

Who are the co-leaders from the community program(s) and the school district or supervisory union? Describe the partners' roles and responsibilities. How will communication about the program and decisions impacting the program be shared with collaborating partners? How will other providers (e.g., child care providers, Head Start) be involved? If publicly funded prekindergarten education is currently available in your target community, how will your efforts be coordinated in order to ensure services complement rather than compete with each other?

Who will be the fiscal agent for the program?

EEI PRIORITIES:

Additional points may be earned for addressing one or more of the following EEI priorities. In order to request these additional points, you **must submit an explanation of how your proposed program addresses the priority** or priorities you've selected. The reviewers will determine whether or not to assign extra points based on the clarity and persuasiveness of your explanation.

1. Support the development of publicly funded prekindergarten in towns where prekindergarten education has not yet been established so that this opportunity may be afforded to resident at-risk three- and four-years-olds. **(25 points)**
2. Provide a safety net for at-risk children who are not selected through the random selection process required of districts that have received more requests for publicly funded prekindergarten education than resources allow. **(15 points)**
3. Provide early education opportunities to at-risk three-year-olds in districts that opt to offer universal prekindergarten education only to four-year-olds. **(15 points)**
4. Support the provision of specific services to at-risk children and their families so that they may successfully participate in existing publicly funded prekindergarten programs. **(8 points)**

Budget

Budget Form – 7 points

Complete the attached budget form (Excel file) and budget narrative; be certain to explain each line item. You **MUST INCLUDE** amounts and a brief description of any **other funding sources** that will be used to support your proposed program.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION:

Your application **must be saved as a PDF file and emailed** to Shirley Rawson at shirley.rawson@state.vt.us. If you'd like to send any attachments, please limit these and send them as PDF files.

Important Dates to Remember:

- March 16, 2012 – Letter of Intent Due
- April 23, 2012 –EEI Grants Applications Due
- May 16, 2012 - Teams of reviewers meet to jointly score applications
- June 13, 2012 - Applicants notified of Grants Reviewers' Decisions
- July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013 - Grant Period