



STARS FINANCIAL AWARD GUIDELINES and REQUEST FORM Education & Retention Award (ERA) Centers and Group Homes

Purpose:

Keystone STARS is an initiative of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) to improve, support, and recognize the continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts of Pennsylvania's early learning and school-age programs. Providing financial supports to providers serving children who are vulnerable and at risk is one strategy implemented by OCDEL to promote CQI. All award funds are contingent upon the availability of state funds. **Note: This application may be denied if it is not complete or the instructions have not been followed.** For any questions regarding the completion and submission of the ERA request, please contact your Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC).

Overview:

The ERA Request contains staff-specific awards for highly qualified owner/operators and teaching staff.

General Provider Eligibility:

To be eligible for the ERA, a program must meet the following requirements. Additional requirements are detailed by section.

- 1) The provider must be designated at and meet all Keystone STARS Performance Standards associated with a STAR 2 (or higher) designation.
- 2) The provider must maintain the STAR designation for which the provider received the ERA during the approval and payment phase of the ERA. If a STAR level move-down occurs during this process, the provider is no longer eligible for that award amount. It is expected that the provider is making a commitment to maintain the awarded STAR designation.
- 3) The provider must hold a regular Department of Human Services (DHS) Certificate of Compliance. If a provider has a Provisional Certificate of Compliance, award funds may be available upon return to a full DHS Certificate of Compliance.
- 4) The provider must have an agreement with Child Care Works (CCW). Furthermore, the provider must be willing to enroll a child who qualifies for subsidy, if space is available.
- 5) At least **10%** of enrolled child care children must receive one or more of the following services or funding during the current fiscal year:
 - a) CCW subsidized care administered through the ELRC and/or
 - b) Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Early Intervention (EI) Services program for children with developmental delays and disabilities. To include a child receiving EI services in the provider's percentage, the following criteria must be met:
 - (1) The provider is providing *child care* services to the child; AND
 - (2) The provider is operating inclusive child care, which is defined as a program with no more than 33% of enrollment identified as children receiving EI services; AND
 - (3) The child must have a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP) / Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) on file at the provider.
 - c) Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships Initiative
- 6) The provider must complete and submit a STARS Enrollment Calculation Tool (ECT) and supporting verification documents as specified in the ECT form. Please refer to the requirements for completing the tool or contact your ELRC for further details.
- 7) STARS awards received in previous years must have been expended in compliance with award agreements.
- 8) Providers who owe liens/liabilities to the commonwealth and/or federal government, including tax liabilities, will be suspended from Keystone STARS and will not be able to receive grants and awards until those liens/liabilities are fully satisfied and the program provides the ELRC a clearance certificate issued by the Department of Revenue. Clearance certificates can be obtained at the provider's local tax office. Additionally, if a program receives CCW payments, OCDEL may intercept subsidy payments in order to recoup the delinquent taxes on behalf of the state.

Award Timeline:

Due to the availability of funds being limited, it is recommended providers complete and submit to the ELRC, all completed grant documents (postmarked or emailed) as listed below. It is recommended this submission occur within ten (10) calendar days of the provider's current designation date or as soon as grant paperwork is made available after July 1st annually for those providers designated prior to the release of updated documents.

For Electronic submission:

- Page B below; and
- Attachment #1 Keystone STARS ERA Excel Budget Workbook – see attachment's instructions for details.

For Paper submission:

- Pages A and B below
- Attachment #2 Keystone STARS PDF ERA Budget Worksheet

For timeline/process of closing the grant, see **Award Reconciliation/Closure** below.

Helpful tips:

- Electronic submission of the Award Request is highly recommended and will expedite the processing of the Grant Request.

Award Amounts:

For the award amounts, please see the details in the **ERA Request Instructions/Guidelines**.

Award Guidelines and Compliance

Non-compliance with all the requirements of the STARS Financial Award Request and the Grant Agreement could result in the provider being required to return grant funds to the ELRC.

- All award funds are allocated for child care services only and are not to be used to supplement or complement the incomes of teachers in any other program or service (i.e. Pre-K Counts, Head Start) other than Keystone STARS.
- Funds attributed to this grant must be expended within the grant year and as specified in the signed Grant Agreement.
- Provider must retain original documentation for all award expenditures and ensure the documented amounts match total expenditures as reported on the respective Attachment #1 Keystone STARS ERA Excel Budget Workbook or Attachment #2 Keystone STARS PDF ERA Budget Worksheet.

Important: Any unexpended funds must be returned to the ELRC.

Award Reconciliation/Closure

The completion of the respective attachments for the electronic and paper submissions will directly tie the request and approval of award funds to the reconciliation and approval of expended funds.

For grant closing and budget approval/expense reconciliation, the following ***must*** be completed and submitted to the ELRC (postmarked or emailed) by the date specified in the Grant Agreement or no later than June 30.

For Electronic Submission:

- Attachment #1 Keystone STARS ERA Excel Budget Workbook with all tabs completed.
The budget revision tab is to be completed only if budget revision becomes necessary.

For Paper Submission:

- Attachment #2 Keystone STARS PDF ERA Budget Worksheet

Providers ***must*** keep documentation of ERA pay-outs to staff for their records, for review by ELRC and for state/federal agents who may need to review documents for auditing/monitoring purposes. **All grant related documents must be maintained for 7 years.**

Examples of Unallowable Receipt/Invoice Documentation

The following is a listing of documents that are unallowable as a receipt or invoice:

- Copies of general ledger posting records.
- Copies of check registers or listing of checks written by providers.
- Computer accounting record screen-shots or other lists of data indicating payment.
- Documents that do not indicate payee, date, amount paid and description of payment and/or is not supported by a check or other form of payment.
- Payroll/employee compensation documents that indicate a payment period that crosses over grant year-end (including checks dated after grant year-end even if payroll period is within the grant year). Do not submit payroll/personnel documents (payroll records, tax forms, etc.). Payroll records must be retained on-site.

Education & Retention Award (ERA) Request Instructions/Guidelines

Education & Retention Award (ERA): Staff awards are tied to the program’s 10% subsidy minimum and tiered by STAR level, hours worked and Career Lattice Level. Hours are calculated on the average number of hours the staff person worked for the past 12 months. Please refer to the table below.

Pro-rated Education & Retention Award Table

STAR Level Attained	# Hours Worked Per Week	Director Level 5 or above	Teaching Staff (Career Lattice Levels)*		
			Level 6 or above	Level 5 or 4	Level 3
STAR 2	15 – 19	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,125	\$ 750	\$ 290
	20 – 24	\$ 1,975	\$ 1,480	\$ 990	\$ 375
	25 – 29	\$ 2,355	\$ 1,770	\$ 1,180	\$ 465
	30 – 34	\$ 2,740	\$ 2,060	\$ 1,375	\$ 550
	35 - 40	\$ 3,090	\$ 2,320	\$ 1,545	\$ 600
STAR 3	15 – 19	\$ 1,750	\$ 1,315	\$ 875	\$ 350
	20 – 24	\$ 2,300	\$ 1,730	\$ 1,150	\$ 460
	25 – 29	\$ 2,750	\$ 2,065	\$ 1,375	\$ 550
	30 – 34	\$ 3,200	\$ 2,400	\$ 1,600	\$ 640
	35 - 40	\$ 3,605	\$ 2,705	\$ 1,805	\$ 700
STAR 4	15 – 19	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,000	\$ 400
	20 – 24	\$ 2,630	\$ 1,975	\$ 1,315	\$ 525
	25 – 29	\$ 3,140	\$ 2,355	\$ 1,570	\$ 630
	30 – 34	\$ 3,660	\$ 2,740	\$ 1,830	\$ 730
	35 - 40	\$ 4,120	\$ 3,090	\$ 2,060	\$ 800

The intent of the Keystone STARS ERA is to provide annual financial awards to highly qualified directors and/or teaching staff who have attained specialized degrees, credentials, and credit-based professional development in content areas that correspond to the age and developmental needs of the children being served. A further intent of the ERA is to assist providers in establishing a stable workforce as they work toward higher levels of quality by reducing turnover and improving the education of teaching staff. To be eligible, a provider must meet site-specific requirements as well as staff-specific requirements.

Provider Eligibility Requirements

The **provider** must meet the following site-specific requirements:

- Be able to provide the following upon request by the ELRC:
 - Two years of site-specific operating budgets documenting income, expenditures and revenues
 - Copies of employee salary scale and personnel handbook
 - Proof of payment of payroll taxes
 - Verification of staff eligibility through diplomas, transcripts, or other appropriate documentation
 - Documentation of participation in a Keystone STARS child care program (as opposed to PA Pre-K Counts or Head Start)
 - An optional tool, Keystone STARS Staff in Classrooms with Blended Funding, is available to assist programs in determining a pro-rated ERA amount.
- ERA funds must be processed through payroll and are subject to applicable taxes (processing through IRS 1099 is prohibited). Adhere to IRS guidelines for employers, and be responsible for any employer portion of taxes as awards are distributed.
 - To prevent financial penalties to the provider from the US Department of Labor, providers are required to use all salary given to a staff person including ERA funds to calculate hourly rate of pay for over-time.
- Foreign degrees must be translated and reviewed by an approved source to determine U.S. equivalencies. Please refer to the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (www.naces.org) and the “Early Childhood Education Teacher Quality: Recognizing High Quality Core Content in Pennsylvania” on the PA Key website for further assistance.

* Please refer to the Career Lattice and the Optional Tool-- “Early Childhood Education Teacher Quality: Recognizing High Quality Core Content in Pennsylvania” documents on the PA Key website for clarifications regarding degree types, related degrees, credit hours, etc.

- Contact the ELRC to determine eligibility for staff who:
 - Work at multiple sites of the same legal entity
 - Work in both early learning and school-age portions of the program day
 - Work with children funded through Head Start, Pre-K Counts, or EI

Practitioner Eligibility Requirements

- Staff must be employed at the site for at least 12 consecutive months prior to the date of ERA request.
- Teaching staff awards may be used only for child care practitioners who work directly with children during operating hours (at least fifteen 15 hours) a week.
- Staff member must be a Keystone STARS child care or school-age practitioner.
- Eligible directors must be earning less than \$50,000 per year including salary and bonuses (whether received through the Merit Award or the legal entity) as indicated by the exact amount reported on the director's individual *most recent* W-2 statement.
- Teaching staff must be earning less than \$40,000 per year including salary and bonuses (whether received through the Merit Award or the legal entity) as indicated by the exact amount reported on the teaching staff's individual most recent W-2 statement.
- Award amounts are based on the number of hours worked.
 - Staff members working a minimum of 35 hours per week for the past 12 months are eligible for a full award. Staff working an average of 15 to 34.99 hours per week for the past 12 months will receive a pro-rated award (as outlined in the Pro-Rated Education & Retention Award Table).
 - Staff working with children funded through Head Start, Pre-K Counts, or EI may be eligible for a pro-rated award for time worked with Keystone STARS child care or school-age children. An optional tool, Keystone STARS Staff in Classrooms with Blended Funding, is available to assist programs in determining a pro-rated ERA amount.
 - Staff members working less than 15 hours per week are not eligible for awards.

Academic Eligibility Requirements for Early Learning and School-Age Practitioners

Please refer to the Career Lattice and the Optional Tool “Early Childhood Education Teacher Quality: Recognizing High Quality Core Content in Pennsylvania” documents on the PA Key website for clarifications regarding degree types, related degrees, credit hours, etc.

- Director Awards
 - At least a Level V on the Career Lattice
- Teaching Staff Awards
 - At least a Level III on the Career Lattice
- Teaching staff who are below Level III, administrative, custodial, transportation, food service staff, and volunteers are **not** eligible for the STARS ERA.

STARS FINANCIAL AWARD REQUEST: Education and Retention (ERA) Award

To be completed by provider and submitted to the Early Learning Resource Center

Name of Provider _____

STAR Level _____ Designation Expiration _____

MPI# on Certificate of Compliance _____ County _____

ERA Award

Instructions: On this worksheet, document the staff eligible for the Keystone STARS ERA Award. To complete this, please refer to the individual staff eligibility requirements in the **Education & Retention Award (ERA) Request Instructions/Guidelines. Reference the Pro-Rated Education and Retention Award Table as well the PA Key website at www.pakeys.org for information on the Career Lattice and other teacher quality documents** to determine the amount entered in the "Award Amount Requested" column for each staff member and the appropriate career lattice level (according to the major course of study as it appears on the staff member's college diploma). Indicate if the staff works with school-age children and how many hours per week. Also, indicate if the staff member works in a classroom funded through Head Start, Pre-K Counts, or Early Intervention. List the care level of the classroom the staff member spends 50% or more of their time during the day. Only list those staff members who are eligible for a Keystone STARS ERA. Make copies of this form for additional staff.

Employee Name	Position Title [†]	Date of Hire	Care Level of Classroom (INF, YOT, OLT, PRE, YSA, OSA or MXD)	Earnings (Child Care Annual Salary & Bonuses)	# Hours Worked Per Week	Career Lattice Level	Current Level of Education & Major Attained (as it appears on diploma) [‡]	Does this staff work with school aged children? Yes/No and, if yes, list number of hour per week	Does this staff work in a classroom that receives funding through Head Start, Pre-K Counts or Early Intervention? (please specify)	Award Amount Requested
<i>Example: Jane Doe</i>	<i>GS</i>	<i>3/2/2000</i>	<i>PRE</i>	<i>\$15,000</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>CL5</i>	<i>BA in Human Development</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>\$1,805</i>
										\$
										\$
										\$
										\$
										\$
										\$
										\$

[†] Position Titles: D = Director; GS = Group Supervisor; AGS = Assistant Group Supervisor; A = Aide; PSP = Primary Staff Person as the Operator

[‡]Please refer to the Career Lattice and the Optional Tool-- "Early Childhood Education Teacher Quality: Recognizing High Quality Core Content in Pennsylvania" documents on the PA Key website for clarifications.

Name of Provider _____ MPI# _____ County _____

STARS EDUCATION AND RETENTION AWARD REQUEST AND ATTESTATION

Instructions in the table below, please list the total amounts requested for the Education & Retention (ERA) Award.

At Closure/Reconciliation: If a budget revision is required, call your ELRC to discuss options.

TOTAL EDUCATION & RETENTION AWARD REQUESTED	\$
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Instructions: Please complete this page and submit with the Keystone STARS (ERA) package. To be eligible to receive the ERA, make sure the individual who signs this request has legal authority to represent the provider.

Education & Retention Award

This provider meets the requirements for receiving the ERA.

What is the Provider Type? (*Check one*) Center Group

Attestation

By signing this document, the grantee certifies that all instructions were read prior to completion of this form. The grantee also certifies that, as of the date of this grant request, this legal entity/program has no liens/liabilities or other commonwealth or federal obligations. Discovery of state or federal liens/liabilities or other obligations by the Early Learning Resource Center and/or OCDEL staff will result in the grantee's/legal entity's program(s) STAR level being suspended in Keystone STARS, and may result in the garnishment of Child Care Works, until such time as those liens/liabilities are fully satisfied. Lastly, the grantee certifies that, as of the date of this grant request, this program location has a full Certificate of Compliance.

Signature Section:

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Signature of the Individual Who is Legally Authorized to Represent the Provider	Date
<hr/>	<hr/>
Print Name	Provider Phone
Number	
<hr/>	
Title	