Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Program Request for Applications (RFA) Guidance

FY 2019-2020

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BACKGROUND AND GOALS

In 2018-19, $2 million of federal funding was utilized to fund a pilot program serving Child Care Works eligible infants and toddlers via contracted slots. The 2019-20 budget includes $15 million to expand the Infant Toddler Contracted Slots program to serve more eligible children.

Contracted slots are an alternative to the traditional voucher system.   With the voucher system, the funding follows the child. A parent selects a provider and the provider is paid based on the CCW enrollment. With contracted slots, the funding for awarded slots remains with a provider. If a child leaves a provider, the provider continues to be paid for the slot and is responsible to fill the slot with a different CCW eligible child.
The primary goals are to:

- Establish and study a new fiscal model that supports high-quality care within infant and toddler classrooms.
- Provide fiscal stability for high-quality providers serving CCW eligible infants and toddlers.
- Encourage providers to serve infants and toddlers to meet market demand.
- Establish a continuum of care for ages 0-K in high-quality settings.
- Strengthen the link between high-quality child care and high-quality pre-kindergarten programs.

These goals aim to improve overall quality of available child care in Pennsylvania.

The Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Program builds upon the already established infrastructure of the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PA PKC) Program model. PA PKC has been in existence since 2007 and provides high quality pre-kindergarten services to eligible children. Building an infant toddler focused program with established PA PKC programs will allow continued focus on quality programming while building strong transitions from infant-toddler to pre-kindergarten classrooms. In addition, the program assures continuity of care through two main policies:

1) The duration of eligibility for the child(ren) served lasts until the child is eligible to transition into pre-kindergarten program. *Applicants will be asked to coordinate PA PKC prioritization to assure that a child who remains eligible for PA PKC at their third birthday will transition into the PA PKC program.*

2) No co-payments or fees of any kind will be charged to families while the child is enrolled in the pilot.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Contact for this RFA process is:

The Pennsylvania Key

C/O Megan Penson, Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Program Supervisor
200 North Third Street
3rd Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-213-2079

All questions regarding this RFA process should be directed to this contact ONLY, by sending an email to: RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov. The deadline for the submission of questions is August 30, 2019 at 3:00 PM. Responses to the questions will be released on September 2, 2019.

Pre-Application Webinar

A Pre-application Webinar is scheduled for August 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-12:00 PM. Applicants can access the webinar via: http://bit.ly/ITSlotsWebinar

Application Deadline and Submission Information

Applicants must submit two copies of the RFA-one emailed copy AND one mailed copy with an original signature by the due date. Emailed applications must be sent to the email address: RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov. A paper copy of the application with original signature must also be mailed to the RFA contact at the Pennsylvania Key.

All applications must be submitted by September 9, 2019 at 3:00 pm. Emailed applications must be submitted by the due date. Mailed paper copies of the application must be postmarked by the submission deadline.

Applications submitted after this date and time will not be accepted or reviewed.

Calendar of Events

Activity	Date
RFA Released	August 19, 2019
Pre-Application Webinar	August 23, 2019 10:30 AM-12:00 PM
Submission of RFA Questions	August 30, 2019 at 3:00 PM
Responses to RFA Questions Released	September 2, 2019
RFA Due Date	September 9, 2019 at 3:00 PM
Anticipated Applicant Award Notification	October 7, 2019

SCOPE AND USE OF FUNDS

Eligible applicants may apply for the level of funding necessary to support the scope of project activities that are supported by relevant, and credible data, are cost effective, and relate to the goals of this initiative. Applicants are encouraged to consider this

information as guidance in the development of their initiative. Applicants are eligible to apply for only one grant per fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Grant awards are based on the availability of funds to the Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) to support this project. Funds can be used for "startup" materials and activities.

APPLICANT REVIEW, SCORING RUBRIC, AND NOTIFICATION

The application consists of a narrative section only. Budget information will be negotiated after final awarding is made. The narrative section is divided into sections. The sections are:

Narrative
General Information
Contact Information
Grant Structure
Program Description/Work Statement
Program Assurances

Applications that are **complete** and **submitted on time by an eligible applicant** will be reviewed by a team of readers determined by the Pennsylvania Key. Applications will be awarded ratings based on the applicant's ability to provide concise and detailed responses that address the questions, adhere to the Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Program requirements in the responses, and adhere to the application instructions.

Evaluation of the entire application will be based on the following criteria:

General Information: Section Maximum points= 5

Failure to fully complete the General Information section completely and accurately will result in the disqualification of the proposal. *Please take special care in providing information that aligns with the legal name of the applying entity found on the program's Department of Human Services (DHS) Certificate of Compliance.*

Points are awarded for "Summary of Grant Request" information that is consistent with the information provided within the rest of the application.

Contact Information: Section Maximum points= Zero points.
However, must be completed for consideration.

Failure to fully complete the Contact Information section will result in the disqualification of the proposal.

Grant Structure: Section Maximum points= Zero points.

However, must be completed for consideration.

Failure to fully complete the Grant Structure section will result in the disqualification of the proposal.

Program Description/Work Statement

Program History: Section Maximum points= 20

20 points awarded for a detailed response demonstrating a strong program history of service to infants and toddlers with a focus on providing quality services.

Partnership and Collaboration: Section Maximum points= 40

Up to 20 points awarded for described collaborative relationships with Early Intervention, based upon quality of response.

Up to 20 points awarded for described collaborative relationships with Head Start, based upon quality of response.

Program Implementation: Section Maximum points= 120

Up to 20 points for each of the six questions in this section, based upon quality of response and ability to demonstrate that children will receive high-quality services.

Staffing: Section Maximum points= 40

Up to 20 points based upon the quality of the response.

20 additional points based upon the described qualifications of staff.

Program Assurances: Section Maximum points= Zero points

Failure to fully complete the Program Assurances in the affirmative will result in disqualification of the proposal.

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION AND NOTIFICATION

The application score will be used to make funding decisions. In addition, FY 2018-19 Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Pilot participating providers who continue to meet eligibility criteria and have submitted an application will receive funding priority. Successful applicants will be notified by The Pennsylvania Key on the anticipated date of October 7, 2019.

TIME PERIOD, AND REQUIRED REPORTING AND MONITORING
Time Period:

Funding will be available for program expenses upon selection, approval and the effective date of the grant agreement in the first year of funding. Subsequent years, based on the availability of funding, will be available July 1, through June 30th.

Monitoring and Reporting:

Successful applicants will submit reports, including, but not limited to, enrollment and attendance reports, to OCDEL.

Grantees will receive periodic site visits to monitor and learn about program operations, and to identify model programs and practices. These visits may include formal assessments of the learning environment for the purposes of program evaluation, and/or continuous quality improvement.

APPLICATION TEMPLATE AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR A COMPETITIVE APPLICATION

Information in this section will provide direction to the applicant in completion of the application.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Legal name of the applicant agency:

This is the name and address from the program's DHS Certificate of Compliance, which should also match what the program uses on its federal W-9 form. The application also asks for a "Doing Business As" name (if different from the legal name).

Master Provider Index (MPI#)

The supplied Master Provider Index (MPI) number MUST align with the legal name and address provided in the application. All applicants should have an MPI number. MPI numbers are used by the Pennsylvania Department

of Human Services to identify legal entities and service locations that participate in any of its programs. As such, they are used in PELICAN as a common identifier for all OCDEL programs, including child care licensing, Early Intervention, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program, and Keystone STARS. Legal entities are assigned a unique nine-digit MPI number. In addition, service locations are assigned a unique 13-digit MPI number, which is created by adding a four-digit extension to the nine-digit MPI of the legal entity. Legal entities and service providers currently participating in any of these programs should have an MPI number.

Tax ID Number or Federal ID Number

This is the number that an agency uses on its federal W-9 form. Applicants for funds should consult with the person who handles tax, legal, or accounting matters for the agency to determine the federal ID number. Use the number that aligns with the legal name and address provided in this application. The correct number must be provided when requested in order to process an application.

Address of Applicant Agency:

Fully complete with street address, city, state, zip code, and county of the applying program. The address provided should align with that of the program applying for funding.

Applicant Provider Verification:

To meet application eligibility for the Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Programs must:
1) Hold a regular certification of compliance issued by the Department of Human Services,
2) Be in good standing with STARS and hold at minimum a STAR 3 designation,
3) Currently serve Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children at the applying program, and
4) Currently serve or could serve infants and toddlers.

Verifications will occur. ONLY applications in which ALL assurances are verified will be considered for funding.

Summary of Grant Request (5 points):

This section of the application asks for the following information:

Funding requested
This the amount of funding requested to implement the proposed model. Please respond using whole numbers only. To calculate, multiply the requested cost per child by the number of slots requested.

Number slots requested

Include the total number of full day slots being requested. Slots are defined Full Day, Full Week Equivalent. Programs have the option to fill a slot with full day and half day enrollments (as defined by CCW), and with full or part week enrollments, however full day, full week enrollments should be prioritized for Infant Toddler Contracted Slots funding. A slot will be considered fully enrolled when the FTE reaches the equivalent of full day/ full week.

Provider Private Pay Cost per Child

Applicants are asked to include current private pay cost per child infant rate information. This is the annual cost per child private pay rate families would be charged for infant care.

Requested Cost per Child

Applicants are also asked to calculate the requested cost per child. To determine this amount, applicants should divide the total funding request by the requested number of slots. If this cost is significantly different than the private pay rate for infant care, applicants must provide narrative justification of the difference. Once applications are scored, negotiations of cost per child may occur.

Description of Differences between Provider Private Pay Cost per child and the Requested Cost per Child

Applicants should include a narrative response justifying/explaining any difference between the provider's annual pay cost per child and the requested cost per child. Applicants should be specific in their provided description regarding the reason why any difference exists. If no difference exists, applicants should simply state, "no difference exists." The requested cost per child for Infant Toddler Contracted Slots may be negotiated.

Providers should consider all current income sources (i.e. child care subsidy rates, STARS add on, etc.) when calculating the requested cost per child. Cost per child for Infant Toddler Contracted Slots will be negotiated if awarded to provide a consistent cost per child across ELRC regions.

Number of Classrooms requested

Include the total number of classrooms requested. Classrooms must be staffed at a ratio of 1:4 regardless of children's ages. Maximum group size shall be 2 teachers to 8 children.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Fully complete all requested information. If an individual functions in more than one role, repeat information when necessary.

If an applicant is successful in their proposal, grant documents must be physically signed and dated by an individual authorized to sign contracts.

GRANT STRUCTURE

Fully complete all requested information.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION/WORK STATEMENT

Each question must be answered completely with enough detail to understand exactly what is being proposed.

Program History:

The section has one question.

Question 1: Infant Toddler Program History/ text response character limit 5000 (20 points):

Discuss the program's history of serving infant-toddler children and any other past or current participation in infant/toddler quality initiatives.

OCDEL is interested in funding programs with a strong history of offering quality infant-toddler services. As such, applicants should respond with details about currently operating infant-toddler programs that show commitment to quality.

Partnership and Collaboration:

This section has two questions which ask applicants to describe collaborative relationships

Collaborations play a key role in supporting a successful infant-toddler programming and significantly impact multiple aspects of a program's operation.

Question 1: Early Intervention/ text response character limit 5000 (20 points)

Describe collaborations with Early Intervention (both infant/toddler and preschool). Detail the programs' inclusion policies and practices. How will EI, and other behavioral and/or mental health agencies, be utilized to support inclusion, and to reduce or eliminate suspension and expulsion?

Applicants should review the following in developing a response to this question: OCDEL policy statement on Inclusion, and OCDEL policy statement on Suspension and Expulsion.

Question 2: Head Start/ text response character limit 5000 (20 points)

Describe collaborations with Early Head Start, including the strategy for promoting Early Head Start enrollment for children meeting 100% of FPL. If there is a formal MOU in place with Early Head Start, please attach to this application. Describe the planning

process with Early Head Start as preparations were made for this application process. If a planning meeting was held, provide the date and the contact.

In order to maximize funding resources and assure a systematic approach to the early learning services provided within communities, pilot providers must commit to avoid enrolling children into programming who are already being served in an Early Head Start program or who are eligible to participate in Early Head Start. The purpose of this requirement is to avoid impact on enrollments in Early Head Start such that federal resources would be supplanted.

Program Implementation:

This section has six questions.

Question 1: Classroom Capacity Building/ yes/no response and text response character limit 5000 (20 points)

Will the program open new infant, toddler, or mixed aged classrooms/space to implement this initiative?

Applicants will select either "yes" or "no."

Describe the number and configuration of all requested classrooms and indicate which classrooms/spaces will be new ones.

OCDEL is interested in building statewide capacity to serve infants and toddlers in quality settings. Applicants committing to opening new infant, toddler, and/or mixed aged spaces will receive 20 priority points. Applicants may respond in narrative form or may include a chart.

Question 2: Continuity of Care/ text response character limit 5000 (20 points)

Describe the program's approach to assure continuity of care. How will classrooms be structured to assure children build positive and long-term relationships with their caregivers and with other children?

Relationships are at the heart of high-quality infant-toddler care. It is the trusting relationship infants and toddlers establish that build the foundation for all later development. Applicants should describe the model(s) that will be used to structure classrooms to assure children can build strong relationships. Although not required, applicants should consider innovative classroom structure such as mixed age grouping, where children of different ages are grouped together for longer periods of time (i.e. multiple years) or looping, where the same teacher(s) remain with a group of children for multiple years.

Question 3: Curriculum/ text response character limit 5000 (20 points)

Describe the programs' curriculum model. Describe the ways in which the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards will be used. Describe the program's approach to engaging infants and toddlers in learning experiences that will focus on the unique developmental needs of this age group.

Infants and Toddlers have unique development needs. Applicants should describe the program's curriculum model, and the ways in which this model meets these unique needs. Applicants should the *Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood* in crafting a response to this question.

Question 4: Family Engagement/ text response character limit 5000 (20 points)

Describe the program's family engagement approach. In your response, explicit connections to each area of The Pennsylvania Partnership for Learning Standards should be made.

Family engagement is an important element that contributes to the overall success of a program and the children receiving services. Family engagement extends beyond point-in-time events, and requires vigilant planning, and an understanding of the diverse situations of each family. Applicants should use the *Pennsylvania Partnership for Learning Standards* found within the *Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood* in crafting a response to this question.

Question 5: Comprehensive Services/ text response character limit 5000 (20 points)

Describe the program's approach to assuring the needs of the whole child are addressed in the program model. How will the program assess the needs of the children, and follow up on identified needs? What types of comprehensive services does the program offer? What types of comprehensive services are available through coordination with other agencies?

Meeting the needs of the whole child is an important component of high-quality infant and toddler care. Applicants should describe how infants and toddlers are assessed to identify potential needs, and the ways in which the program follow up on the results of assessment. Applicants should also describe any comprehensive services that are either provided by the program or coordinated with outside agencies that directly benefit the children and/or the families being served. Comprehensive services discussed might include mental or behavioral health services, vision screenings, hearing screenings, and /or any other relevant services.

Question 6: Transition/ text response character limit 5000(20 points)

Explain your program's transition efforts. How will transitions be coordinated for children as they transition between classrooms? How will transitions be coordinated for the children/families who enter and exit your program to and from other early learning

programs? Detail the approach/coordination with Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts that will assure children enrolled in the infant-toddler pilot will be prioritized for transition into the PA PKC program.

Applicants should provide a detailed response which includes information on how families, children, and other agencies are involved in all levels of the transition process. A goal of this program is to assure children have a smooth transition into the PA PKC program (in instances where they remain eligible for that program). Applicants should assure coordination with the PA PKC lead and describe in detail the ways in which toddlers enrolled in the pilot will be prioritized for PA PKC.

Staffing:
This section asks one question related to staffing.

Question 1: Staffing/ text response character limit 5000 (40 points)

Classrooms should be staffed with teachers and assistant teachers who are trained to provide high-quality learning experiences for infants and toddlers. Staff in the Infant/Toddler pilot classrooms must hold a minimum of a CDA, however applicants with staff holding an infant-toddler CDA and/or infant-toddler related qualifications higher than a CDA will receive priority points for this application.

Classrooms must be staffed at a ratio of 1:4 regardless of children's ages. Maximum group size shall be 2 teachers to 8 children.

Do you currently have staff to fill these positions and/or a plan to recruit staff? If you responded, YES, list the staff along with their current level of qualifications of both lead and assistant teachers.

For both YES and NO responses, describe how qualified lead and assistant teachers will be recruited and retained.

Staffing recruitment and retention are critical to ensuring the quality of programming. While recruitment allows for the acquisition of distinctive teachers, retention helps maintain classroom and program consistency. The applicant's response should detail both recruitment and retention strategies and should include information regarding the provision for salaries and benefits to entice applicants and retain qualified staff.

Staff with specified training in the development of infants and toddlers are best suited to provide high quality environments. Although not currently required for this program, staff qualifications including infant-toddler specialization will be prioritized as part of this application process. Therefore, in addition to the 20 points for providing a detailed response regarding recruitment and retention of teachers, up to an additional 20 points will be awarded based upon the qualifications of already hired staff. Applicants are asked to list staff along with their current qualifications. OCDEL will reserve the right to verify any staff qualifications listed within the application before awarding funding.

PROGRAM ASSURANCES

Applicants must provide assurance that they understand and have the capacity to meet the requirements for the program as outlined within the application assurances. Applicants will be asked to check each assurance box to indicate whether they can comply with the assurances.

Failure to respond in the affirmative by checking each assurance box will result disqualification from funding consideration.

FISCAL DOCUMENTATION /BUDGET

Fiscal documentation will be required after awarding occurs. Budgets will be negotiated during the contracting process.