

MPP Invitation for Grant (IFG) Q&A

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) believes that all early learning programs should provide young children with high quality early learning experiences. Missouri Preschool Programs (MPP) are expected to aspire to the highest standards, such as the ten principles listed below from the DESE's Early Learning Program Guidance: <http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/eel-el-2014-EarlyLearningProgramGuidance.pdf>.

Commonly used acronyms can be found on page 21 of the 2016-2017 MPP Administrative Manual.

1. Community Needs

- **What is meant by the term “expansion of services?”**
An expansion of services increases your preschool capacity, after the award is made, by a minimum of ten additional age-eligible children. The grantee cannot decrease a program's current capacity for any age group in order to increase the capacity of age-eligible children for the purpose of receiving MPP funds. The DESE will look at the number of children a program is currently serving and how many children they will increase by. MPP funds cannot be used to supplant or replace any existing preschool program or staff, and the program must maintain a minimum of ten age-eligible children. (2.1.3, 2.1.4 and 2.1.24)
- **How often should the Community Needs and the Program Plans be updated?**
Expansion and improvement plans for preschool education must be a collaborative effort and must reflect the needs of the community. The plans should be reviewed and updated annually. The plans should show that the program is not operating in isolation, i.e., that the program is partnering with other early childhood professionals regarding opportunities in the community. Meetings, surveys and conference calls can be used to collect input from stakeholders. (2.2.8-F)
- **How often should the Parent Advisory Committee meet?**
A Parent Advisory Committee that includes at least some of the parents with children in the MPP classroom must meet at least twice annually. Documentation must be on file that includes a list of members, sign-in sheets, dates of meetings and meeting minutes. (2.2.8-A)

2. Qualifications for Staff

- **When does the MPP staff need to meet the required teacher qualifications?**
Lead teachers and assistant teachers must meet the required qualifications for MPP staff before the start of the program and must be maintained throughout the grant period. (2.2.5)
- **What curriculum training are MPP teachers required to complete and by when?**
Lead teachers and assistant teachers must be trained in one of the DESE approved curriculum models as outlined in the MPP manual before the start of the program. Review the list of training titles for each curriculum to ensure that your staff has completed all the required modules. (2.1.13 and 2.2.6) Directors/administrators should attend curriculum training in order to support the teachers in the classroom. (2.1.19)

- **Who needs to attend the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) training?**
Both the lead teacher and assistant teacher must attend DRDP training as early in the program year as possible. (2.1.14) The director/administrator should attend the DRDP training if at all possible to offer support for the program. (2.1.19)
- **What qualifications does a substitute need to have?**
A substitute for the lead or assistant teacher needs to meet the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) licensing guidelines. For long-term substitutes, programs need to contact their Early Learning Supervisor to discuss qualifications/requirements.

3. Professional Development

- **How do I learn about professional development opportunities?**
MPP Professional Learning Community (PLC) opportunities are located on the MovingOnTogether.org website, which includes the DESE's annual Conference on the Young Years (CYY). MPP consultants also provide programs with additional information related to professional development opportunities throughout the program year.
- **What type of professional development should I participate in?**
Professional development should be in addition to the DHSS's required 12 clock hours for child care providers. Opportunities can include college-credit courses through T.E.A.C.H., as well as advanced training of the selected curriculum model, professional conferences and DESE required meetings. Professional learning goals should be developed in part as a result of the annual Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3) assessment. (2.2.8-D, and 2.4.2)

4. Staff Evaluation

- **How often should MPP staff be evaluated?**
MPP staff evaluations must be completed and documented annually at a minimum. Refer to your selected curriculum model for guidance on staff evaluations. (2.1.16)

5. Curriculum and Assessment

- **How do programs determine which DESE approved curriculum to select?**
DESE approved preschool curriculum models are research-based, provide continuing professional development and are developmentally appropriate for age-eligible children. Curriculum training must be from the source. Programs must consider accessibility of training and suitability for their program during the selection process. DESE does not reimburse for out-of-state training. Curriculum links are available on the Table of Contents page of the MPP Administrative Manual. The selection of the curriculum model should be given thoughtful consideration. (2.2.6)
- **Is it appropriate to use worksheets in the MPP classroom?**
No. Workbooks and worksheets are NOT appropriate items or activities in an MPP classroom. Best practice expectations are for teachers to provide children with high quality, hands-on learning experiences and to create a constructivist learning environment that is responsive to children's interests, backgrounds and abilities.

- **Is it appropriate to use technology in the MPP classroom?**

Yes. However, technology use should be limited in time and used for developmentally appropriate activities. (2.4.3) Programs should use the ECERS-3 as a guide for appropriate use of technology in the early childhood classroom. Electronic media should be used to support and extend classroom interests, themes and activities.

6. Interaction and Learning Environments

- **Are naps and lunchtime considered part of the educational preschool program?**

Yes. The required minimum of 6.5 hours of educational activities includes all activities that are developmentally appropriate parts of a young child's daily routine and offer opportunities for learning.

- **Why is DESE using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-3) and how will our scores be used?**

Trained ECERS-3 individuals observe MPP programs on an annual basis and share the results with teachers and administrators as a tool for setting goals for professional growth and program improvement. DESE Supervisors will also receive ECERS-3 reports to assist programs with budget planning and professional development opportunities.

7. Health, Safety and Nutrition (Licensing)

- **When should programs contact their child care specialist at the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS)?**

Programs should contact their child care specialist prior to completing and submitting the IFG in order to determine necessary items or repairs to include in the budget. However, the grantee should NOT enter into any contract or purchase any items prior to the MPP grant being awarded.

- **When should MPP programs be licensed and in operation?**

MPP programs should be licensed by June 15, 2016 with children in attendance by July 1, 2016. Programs must be licensed and in operation by August 1, 2016. Governmental entities or public schools may begin services the first official day specified on the school calendar. (2.1.2) The original license application needs to be submitted to the DHSS and a copy needs to be submitted to the DESE as part of the IFG application process.

8. Child/Adult Ratios (Enrollment)

- **How many children must an MPP classroom serve and for how much of the year?**

The MPP classroom must serve a minimum of ten age-eligible children, and must not exceed 20 age-eligible children in a classroom. Age-eligible children are those children who are one or two years away from kindergarten age eligibility. MPP children must attend for five full days for 12 months of the year. Government entities or public school districts only can provide preschool services for no less than the school year. (2.1.4 and 2.1.5) The DESE verifies enrollment numbers in January and programs must have at least ten children. Programs with fewer children than approved in the initial grant application may have their budget adjusted accordingly. Programs should maintain a waiting list and have a recruitment policy to determine how to fill MPP spots if openings become available.

- **Can the MPP classroom serve age-eligible children who are not designated as MPP?**
Yes. However, MPP funds can only be used for expenses related to the MPP children. Itemized costs, such as materials and supplies, will need to be prorated accordingly.
- **Can a child receiving Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services be included in the MPP classroom?**
Yes. The DESE encourages the IEP services to occur in the classroom whenever possible.

9. Program Evaluation (Accreditation and ECERS-3)

- **How do programs determine which accreditation model to select?**
When choosing an accrediting source programs should consider the requirements of each accrediting source and how they each might impact their program and services provided. Public school programs with additional early childhood classrooms that are not required to be licensed are encouraged to discuss their individual program and services with both accrediting sources and select the most suitable option. (2.2.7)
- **In what other ways are MPP programs evaluated?**
MPP programs are observed annually with the ECERS-3 rating scale and the results are used for budget planning, professional development and program improvement goals.

10. Partnerships and Collaborations

- **Do MPP programs need to partner with Parents as Teachers (PAT)?**
Yes. MPP programs must partner with their local PAT program to actively recruit and offer PAT services to MPP families. PAT services must consist of all four PAT components: family personal visits, group connections, developmental screenings and access to the resource network. (2.1.9)
- **Are MPP children required to be screened regularly?**
Yes. All MPP children must be provided with an annual health and nutrition screening and a developmental screening, which can be done by PAT, the County Health Department or Head Start. (2.2.8-C)

Additional Considerations to Support Quality Early Learning

Program Management and Sustainability

- **Who should be the contact person listed on the IFG application?**
The contact person should be the person designated by the grantee to receive all correspondence, questions and important information from their DESE Early Learning Supervisor.
- **What do programs need to consider as they develop a plan for sustainability?**
The community needs assessment should be updated at least every three years and reviewed annually. Programs must be committed to sustaining a high-quality preschool beyond the length of the five years of the grant. Partnerships and collaborations with community stakeholders and families are strongly recommended. The Program Funding Plan must demonstrate a detailed plan for funding the program as the grant money decreases. Recruitment and waiting lists are important. While lease payments are an allowable expenditure, they do require additional consideration in sustainability plans.

Funding and Budgets

- **What are some considerations when requesting funds for purchased services?**
Contracted services associated with becoming licensed, as well as minor remodeling, with justification describing the need, are allowable. Funds used to remodel or to meet license regulations must be on the permanent MPP space. Construction of a building or remodeling of temporary sites is not allowable. (2.4.4) Transportation service costs are not allowable, but funds can be used to purchase required safety harnesses. (2.4.2)
- **What can Administrative Cost funds be used for?**
Administrative costs are NOT to exceed 5% of the award. This category does not have to be itemized for an approved budget but does require expenditures to be reported by category. For example, a director stipend should be recorded in the salary category and purchased services should be recorded in the purchased services category. (2.5.3)
- **What should a program consider if they charge a tuition fee?**
Programs that charge a tuition fee must implement a sliding fee scale to ensure that all families, regardless of income, have an opportunity to participate. (2.1.7) Private providers typically use the sliding fee scale from Social Services while public schools usually create their own sliding fee scale based on free and reduced lunch eligibility.
- **How do programs create an itemized budget?**
The DESE suggests that programs use the MPP Itemized Budget Form and MPP Itemized Budget Sample found on the Early Learning website to create an itemized MPP budget.
- **Can Start-up Funds be amended?**
Start-up Funds are available from the time of the award through June 30, 2016 and can be amended until the end of April. Amendments need to be entered in ePeGs and the program must also send their DESE Supervisor a copy of the corrected itemized budget before the changes can be approved in ePeGs.