

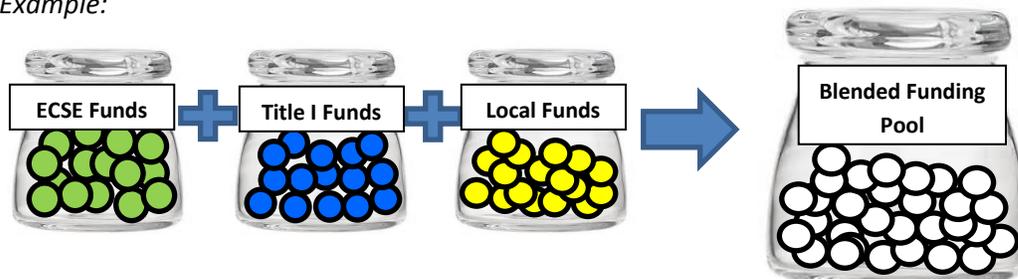
EARLY LEARNING BLENDED PROGRAMS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

This FAQ is a companion piece to the [Early Learning Blended Funding Programs](#) guidance document.

1. What is blended funding?

Blended funding occurs when two or more funding sources are pooled to support educational costs to ensure consistency, eliminate duplication of services, allow for maximum flexibility of funds, and reduce burden. Contributions by funding source are allocated based on the projected number of participating eligible children. Funds blended into the pool lose their individual Federal award-specific identity when they are combined. In addition, there is no distinction between Federal and non-Federal funds. Therefore, there is no means for the fiscal manager to track which funding source paid for the blended program expenditures. Blended funds can be used to support any allowable cost identified in the blended funding program.

Example:



2. What funding sources can be included in blended funding?

A blended funding program can use any two or more existing sources of funds; one must be from DESE {Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) State and/or Federal reimbursement based on prior year ECSE expenditures, Missouri Preschool Program (MPP), Title I}. There is no new Federal or State funding available through DESE for blended funding. Instead, blended funding allows existing resources to be better utilized to support increased access for all children in an inclusive early learning program.

3. Can Foundation Formula funds claimer for preschool services be used in an early learning blended program?

Foundation Formula funds claimed for preschool services can also be used to support costs associated with a blended program. Funds will be reported as local funds on the Early Learning Blended Funding Plan. For specific information regarding eligibility requirements for claiming Foundation Formula for preschool students refer to the [PK Eligibility for State Aid](#) document provided by DESE, School Finance.

4. What costs are allowable for blended funding programs?

All funding sources included in a blended funding program may be used for the allowable expenditures listed in the Early Learning Blended Funding Programs guidance document. The cost for these

expenditures should apply to all children in the blended funding program. If the cost only applies to a specific child in the program (i.e. IEP required therapy), the cost is not a blended funding cost but rather an individual program cost and will need to be charged to that individual program.

5. What costs are not allowable for blended funding programs?

Non-allowable expenditures are listed in the Early Learning Blended Funding Programs guidance document. In general, costs that apply to a specific child (e.g. IEP required therapy, services, supplies, transportation) are not allowable expenditures in the blended pool. These costs, if allowable for a specific program, are paid for by the individual programs and reported on the program specific budget and/or final expenditure report.

6. Is there a budget application to complete for participation in blended funding?

Yes. An Early Learning Blended Plan and Budget Application are available each fiscal year in ePeGS. Both are scheduled to open April 15th and are due no later than July 1st for participation in blended funding.

7. Is there a tool to assist LEAs in determining the type and amount of funds to include in the blended funding program?

Yes. The Blended Plan is part of the application process in ePeGs. It is available to assist LEAs in determining the type and amount of funds to include in the blended funding program. The Blended Plan may be used to determine feasibility without committing the LEA to the blending of funds.

8. Will I be able to revise my blended funding initial budget?

Yes. Budgets may be amended after approval of the initial budget and are due no later than April 30th. However, budgeted amounts may not be reduced below the amount already paid.

9. How do I request funds budgeted in the blended funding program?

Payment requests for reimbursement of blended funding costs may be submitted in ePeGs on a monthly basis once the Blended Plan and Budget have been submitted and approved. The payment request will open July 1st. If ECSE funds have been budgeted in the Blended Budget, these funds will not be paid out until the following fiscal year once the ECSE FER has been approved. A final payment request will be due no later than May 15th for all LEAs blending MPP funds. LEAs that do not blend MPP funds may submit payment requests through September 1st.

10. Will I be required to submit a Final Expenditure Report (FER) for blended funding?

Yes. All LEAs with an approved Blended Budget will be required to submit a FER in ePeGs to report final blended funding program costs. The FER will be utilized as the final payment request for any federal funds, other than ECSE federal funds, being pooled. The blended funding FER will be due no later than September 30th.

11. Is separate tracking of expenditures necessary for a blended funding program?

As the funds blended into the pool lose their individual identity, it is not necessary to track which pooled funding source paid for blended program expenditures. However, it is necessary to identify all blended program expenditures separately from other early childhood non-blended expenditures in the general ledger.

The Missouri Accounting Code structure to identify expenditures in the general ledger consists of the fund, function, object, building, and project/source code. In order to track blended program expenditures separately, there must be a unique project/source code attached to the end of all blended program expenditure codes.

The project/source code used may be selected at the discretion of the LEA. It is essential for program staff and finance staff to work closely together in setting up the appropriate codes before the school year begins.

12. How do I seek reimbursement for IEP required costs (e.g. therapy, equipment, transportation) for children in blended funding classrooms?

LEAs should request reimbursement for child specific costs through the ECSE Final Expenditure Report in ePeGs, as these costs are not considered part of the blended funding classroom expenditures.

13. What is the age requirement for eligible children in a blended funding program?

Children 3-5 years of age are eligible to participate in the blended funding program. If MPP funds are used, all non-special education children must be 1-2 years away from kindergarten entry.

For Title I eligibility requirements, refer to the [Federal Programs Administrative Manual](#).

For ECSE eligibility requirements, refer to the [Missouri State Plan for Special Education Part B](#).

14. If the LEA receives a child with an IEP during the year can this child be included in a blended funding classroom?

a. If the IEP team determines preschool instructional services are needed, and the blended classroom is the appropriate setting for the child, then the child can be placed in the blended funding classroom as an ECSE child in the Early Learning Blended Plan. ECSE funds must be included in the blended pool to cover 100% of the per child costs.

b. If the IEP team determines related services only are needed, those services are funded through ECSE and are not included in the blended funding budget. This child would not be reported in the Early Learning Blended Plan as an ECSE child.

15. What if the LEA receives a child during the year with an IEP that requires preschool services but the blended funding classroom is full?

While the LEA must serve the child with an IEP, that child would not be placed in the blended funding classroom. The LEA may give priority to this child if an existing child drops from the classroom. A policy must be in place to outline enrollment criteria, including providing services to children with IEPs.

16. In a blended funding classroom can tuition fees be charged to those children who are identified as Title I, Foundation Formula or ECSE?

No. However, if the IEP team determines that a child only needs related services and not preschool instructional services, tuition fees can be charged.

17. If children with IEPs are included in the blended funding classroom, does the classroom teacher need to have ECSE certification?

No. Teachers in the blended funding programs must have either ECSE certification or EC certification.

18. What is the difference between an integrated ECSE classroom and a blended funding classroom?

An integrated ECSE classroom must have at least 50% children with IEPs in order to receive ECSE reimbursement for a 1.0 FTE teacher. The classroom teacher must have ECSE certification.

A blended funding classroom may have less than 50% children with IEPs. ECSE reimbursement is based on the number of children with IEPs receiving preschool instructional services. The classroom teacher must have either ECSE certification or EC certification.