

Infant and Toddler Grants
Annual Report for the Department of Family Services
January 15, 2021





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Overview

Wyoming Kids First contracted with the Department of Family Services (DFS) to improve the supply and quality of early care and education for infants and toddlers in Wyoming by providing the following grant options:

- **Startup Grants:** financial support and technical assistance for the planning and development of viable, quality infant and toddler programs that are not yet licensed and that meet a need in their community;
- **Planning Grants:** financial support and technical assistance for the planning and development of an infant and toddler community collaborative that identifies, and addresses needs in the community;
- **Expansion Grants:** financial support and technical assistance for currently licensed child care facilities seeking to expand quality services for infants and toddlers;
- **Quality Grants:** financial support and technical assistance for currently licensed child care facilities to improve or sustain the quality of infant and toddler programs.

Process and Timeline

The grant application was made available in December 2019 with applications due in January 2020. Applicants were required to submit a narrative and budget with their application. Child care facilities were eligible to request up to \$15,000 and Family child care facilities were eligible to request up to \$7,500. The below table shows the number of applications and dollar amounts requested by grant type.

Grant	Num. of App. Received	Dollar Amt. Req.	Num. of App. Approved	Dollar Amt. Approved
Startup	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
Planning	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
Expansion	22	\$269,444.83	7	\$90,000.00
Quality	52	\$570,787.70	11	\$120,000.00
Total	74	\$840,232.53	18	\$210,000.00*

*Other dollars were leveraged to compliment DFS funding to offer additional grants as described in the Leveraged Resources section.

Grant applications were reviewed by a committee consisting of four professionals from the early childhood sector. The committee reviewed the grant applications with the following criteria considerations:

- Programs who identify a documented need for infant/toddler care, education, services and supports in their communities,
- Programs serving families who receive child care subsidy,
- Areas with a shortage of high quality child care, and
- Areas of high poverty and/or very high or low population densities.

Once the individual reviews were complete the committee came together on February 12 to discuss the applications and to award grants. The applications were sorted by region as defined by the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative. The committee prioritized awards to at least one Child Care Facility (CCC) and two Family Child Care Facilities (FCCC and FCCH) per region for successful applicants that met the aforementioned selection criteria. Applications were received from all seven regions, spanning the



entire state. A map is available in the Impact Section of this report outlining the regions and includes the total number of successful grant awards in each region.

Due to COVID-19 the process for grant awards was stalled until April. The week of April 20 individual grantee calls were scheduled to discuss the process going forward. Each grantee was encouraged to work with the Professional Learning Facilitator in their region to ensure the items purchased were developmentally appropriate for children ages 0-36 months and fit within their grant award parameters. Grant agreements were signed by each grantee and funds were distributed in May.

The original timeline for the grants was to have final reporting done in June; however, due to COVID-19 child care facilities across the state were struggling to keep their doors open so spending these grants funds had to be placed on hold for many. Grantees provided initial impact statements and receipts in June and another round of technical assistance calls were completed to check-in with each facility. The final impact statements and receipts were completed in December.

Use of Funds

Wyoming Kids First partnered with Constructive Playthings to provide grantees the opportunity to purchase products that aligned with their grant application at a 15% discount and no sales tax. The expenses of each grantee have been broken out into four categories in the table below. Due to COVID-19 some grantees were not able to utilize funds as they had originally intended. For those grantees we requested they submit an alternate spending request.

Categorical Grant Expenditures

Category	Total Dollars	Expenditure Percentage
Outdoor Space	\$30,694	13%
Facility Improvements	\$124,338	53%
Classroom Materials	\$61,503	26%
Professional Development/Other	\$19,882	8%
Total	\$236,418	100%

*Amounts are rounded to the nearest whole dollar

** Other dollars were leveraged to compliment DFS funding to offer more grants as described in the Leveraged Resources section

Outdoor Space:

Grantees utilized funds to improve their outdoor area which become critical with the impacts of COVID-19 to support social distancing. The funds were spent on playground equipment, tricycles, cement pads to increase outdoor space, outdoor storage, helmets, etc.

Facility Improvements:

Many grantees focused on facility improvements with over half of the funding going towards expenses such as new flooring, furniture to help define spaces, cribs, storage, furniture, technology such as tablets and prints, and software. A couple of grantees are expanding their programs and utilized funds to support expansion efforts.



Classroom Materials:

Nearly a third of the funds were spent on classroom materials. Grantees purchased items such as art supplies, light tables, sensory tables, books, manipulatives, etc.

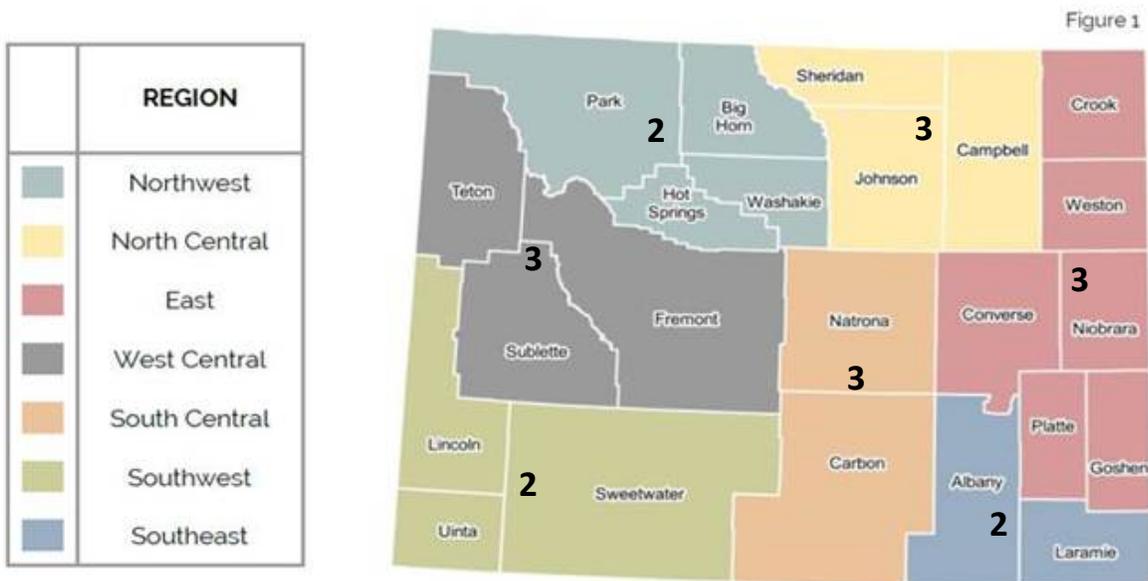
Professional Development/Other:

Four grantees utilized grant funds for professional development including book studies with the WYECPLC, Zero to Three Critical Competencies coaching program, and internal training days. Two grantees utilized the funding to expand quality efforts in their program and community by providing a low-income scholarship fund and housing stipends for staff. The low-income scholarship fund was utilized by a program that was seeing high turnover with families who received DFS child care assistance. The scholarships allowed the program to help currently enrolled families that could not afford the days the DFS child care assistance did not cover. The housing stipend was provided to existing employees or new hires as an incentive to maintain highly quality and trained staff until the board was able to provide a new wage structure in the fall of 2020.

Impact

As mentioned above one of the goals of the review committee was to be able to reach facilities across the state. The map below shows the number of grants awarded in each of the WYECPLC regions across the state. Additionally, grantees have reported that over 300 infants and toddlers were impacted by these grants.

Community Impact



Impacts from the Field

Part of the process required grantees to provide an Impact Statement at the conclusion of the award to reflect on how the funds were utilized. The following are sample statements from across the state from grantees.



“The intended impact for this grant was to create more availability for this age bracket that is in high demand in Douglas. By opening these sports, we are serving the community. More mothers and fathers are able to go to work knowing they have a safe and loving environment for their infant or toddler. Over, this opportunity has been a true blessing to this facility as well the community and we couldn’t be more grateful.”

–Douglas, WY

“Accepting infants as part of our enrollment has always been an intimidating prospect but not having to worry about how to pay for the basics eases some of the intimidation. Word spread quickly around town that we are now accepting infants for child care services and I now have a waitlist! Providing our community with infant care is a huge relief for many families and we will be able to quadruple the number of licensed infant care spots!” – Wheatland, WY

“The impact of receiving this quality improvement grant has been so positive in so many ways. For myself, as a provider, I am feeling prouder and more confident in my childcare facility with the updates of new flooring, new furniture and open-ended Loose Parts based toys. My facility has transformed into a much more professional and more inviting setting.” – Buffalo, WY

“The impact that this grant opportunity provides for my program is immeasurable. The monies provided allows my program to update materials and bring new ones into the program that we would have otherwise never have been able to afford.” – Wright, WY

“With the new building we were able to grow our day care from a very small number of just a few students to a larger amount with enough room for them to run around and play all the while having enough social distancing and still being able to interact with each other.” – Worland, WY

“This has been a powerful uplift to the educators in these classrooms. They have appreciated the fact they received new materials, we have made it important to recognize them in this way and recognize, what they are trying to provide this age group is just as important as Preschool age group. The infant toddler and 2 educators have been able to use these materials to provide greater opportunities for the children to explore, gain milestones and promote more purposeful quality learning. These materials lead to a greater discussion on environment, child development and routines.” – Cheyenne, WY

“Receiving this grant has supported our early childhood facility and our community to improve the supply and quality of early care and education for infants and toddlers.” – Lyman, WY



Leveraged Resources

Due to the high volume of applications and funding requests, WY Kids First and the John P. Ellbogen Foundation contributed additional funding to complement the Infant and Toddler Grant dollars provided through DFS. WY Kids First leveraged the additional private foundation dollars to support applicants and were able to increase infant and toddler care supply and quality projects in meaningful ways statewide. The John P. Ellbogen Foundation provided an additional \$10,000 to support this infant and toddler grant opportunity. Additionally, many of the grantees invested supplemental funding to further increase supply and/or quality for infants and toddlers in their communities.

Recommendation

Wyoming Kids First recommends continuing to provide this infant and toddler grant opportunity to early childhood education facilities across the state. As indicated by the number of applications received, there is a great need statewide to increase the availability and quality of early childhood education settings. Wyoming Kids First is positioned to administer additional early childhood grant opportunities and has the capacity and relationships with local communities to sustain these efforts well into the future.