



QUALITY COUNTS CHILD CARE GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES & REQUIREMENTS 2009-2010

This list of commonly asked questions will assist you with completing your grant proposal and answer many of your questions regarding the grant program's policies. This page lists all the questions that are answered in the following pages. Please read all materials carefully. If you have any further questions please contact:

Jan Fox at janf@four-c.org or (815) 344-5510, Ext. 11 (McHenry County)

Kim Sciacero at kims@four-c.org or (815) 758-8149, Ext. 226 (Carroll, DeKalb, Lee, Ogle and Whiteside Counties)

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QUALITY COUNTS CHILD CARE GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES & REQUIREMENTS 2009-2010

The Quality Counts Grants are intended to improve the quality and/or increase the capacity of child care programs. The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) provides funding for the grant.

SECTION 1: QUALITY COUNTS GRANT FUNDING INFORMATION FOR 2009-2010

Please note: It is **strongly** recommended that you read the Guidelines & Requirements and review the Application in its entirety before beginning the grant application process. Your local CCR&R will provide technical assistance; Bidders' Conferences and related trainings to assist you with grant requirements.

1. How much grant money can a program apply for?

Provider Type	Maximum Category 1 Funds	Maximum Category 2 Funds
	◆ All programs are eligible to apply for Category 1 Funding ◆	◆ Program is accredited, enrolled in accreditation self-study, Head Start Program, QRS Program and/or has completed a program assessment ◆
License Exempt FCC Homes	\$750.00	\$1500.00
Licensed FCC Homes	\$1000.00	\$2000.00
Licensed Group Homes	\$1300.00	\$2600.00
Licensed & License-Exempt Centers: <i>(Capacity)</i>		
50 or less	\$2700.00	\$5400.00
51 – 100	\$5400.00	\$10,800.00
101 +	\$8000.00	\$16,000.00

◆ Each application must request a minimum of \$100. Grant applications may be fully or partially funded.

Do not request more than the maximum amount for your type of program. ◆

Helpful Definitions:

Accredited/Accreditation: The process through which child care programs voluntarily meet specific standards to receive endorsement from a national agency.

Accreditation Self-Study: Applies to programs that are in the process of becoming accredited. See question #4 for specific information.

Head Start: A national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families.

Quality Counts - Quality Rating System (QRS): A voluntary system to provide higher Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) payments to providers who meet specific indicators of quality care. Local CCR&Rs offer the QRS Orientation. Go to www.inccra.org for more information.

Program Assessment: An evaluation tool used to determine a program's strengths and areas in need of improvement. Assessments are based upon observation of the program and its environment.

License-Exempt Family Child Care Checklist: A tool designed for License-Exempt Family Child Care providers to evaluate a program's strengths and areas in need of improvement. Assessments are based upon observation of the program and its environment.

2. How can a program become eligible to receive Category 2 funding?

Only programs that are currently **accredited**, enrolled in **accreditation self-study**, **Head Start** or **QRS programs** or complete an approved **program assessment/License-Exempt Family Child Care Checklist** will be able to apply for Category 2 funding. It is optional for programs that are accredited, enrolled in accreditation self-study, QRS, or a Head Start program to complete an assessment. Programs that are not accredited, or in accreditation self-study, QRS, or a Head Start program and do not complete a program assessment will be able to apply for a grant, but only for Category 1 funding.

3. Where do I get information on an accreditation process and what is the cost?

Cost may vary for each accreditation. Programs interested in obtaining accreditation may apply for Professional Development/Program Improvement funding assistance through their local CCR&R agency. The following agencies and accreditation processes are recognized by IDHS for this grant program. For technical assistance please contact your local CCR&R.

Center - Based Programs:

- NAEYC: National Association for the Education of Young Children
- NACCP: National Association of Child Care Professionals
- NECPA: National Early Childhood Program Accreditation

School – Age Programs:

- COA: Council on Accreditation/SA Accreditation

Family Child Care Programs:

- NAFCC: National Association for Family Child Care

4. At what point in the accreditation process is a program considered “enrolled in accreditation self-study”?

For programs in the process of becoming accredited they must be in a following stage of accreditation:

- **NAFCC:** Submitted the Request for Observation Visit Form
- **NECPA:** Submitted the Request for Verification Visit Form
- **NAEYC:** Submitted the Step 3: Candidacy Materials Form
- **NAC/NACCP:** Submitted the Request for Validation Visit Form
- **COA:** Submitted the Request for Site Visit

5. Which Program Assessment Tools will be accepted?

Depending on the type of program you offer and the request you are making you may choose from the following tools.

Providers should choose a program assessment tool that is reflective of the children they serve. Your CCR&R can provide technical assistance and funding.

◆ Centers & Family Child Care Programs ◆

Environment Rating Scales (ERS)

Environment Rating Scales are assessment tools used to measure and assess the level of quality in a program. Each Environment Rating Scale is designed for specific program types and/or age groups.

► Center based programs requesting funding for items to be used by more than one classroom must complete the appropriate assessment tool for each room. Family Child Care Programs will only need to complete the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale- Revised (FCCERS-R).

- Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale Revised (FCCERS-R)
- Infant & Toddler Environment Rating Scale Revised (ITERS-R): Ages birth-30 months
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R): Ages 2½ - 5 years
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS): Ages 5-12 years
 - If you plan to use the SACERS, you must get the profile sheet from this website:
www.fpg.unc.edu/~ECERS/supplements/profiles/SACERS.pdf

Program Administration Scale (PAS)

A tool for center-based programs to measure the overall quality of management and administrative practices

Business Administration Scale (BAS)

A tool for family child care programs to measure the overall quality of management and business practices

License-Exempt Family Child Care Checklist (for License-Exempt Family Child Care providers only)

A program evaluation tool designed for License-Exempt Family Child Care Programs. A copy of this tool is available from your CCR&R agency. If you choose, you may complete the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale Revised (FCCERS-R).

6. What are the supporting documents I may need to submit with my grant proposal?

● **Accredited Programs:** A copy of your certificate of accreditation

● **Accreditation Self-Study Programs:**

NAFCC: Request for Observation Visit Form and receipt of payment. 1-800-359-3817

NAEYC: Step 3 Application Form and receipt of payment. 1-800-424-2460

NECPA: Request for Verification Visit Form and receipt of payment. 1-800-505-9878

NAC/NACCP: Request for Validation Visit Form and receipt of payment. 1-800-537-1118

COA: Request for Site Visit and receipt of payment. 1-866-262-8088

● **Head Start Programs:** A copy of the Grantee certificate or letter of compliance from the Department of Health & Human Services

● **QRS Programs:** A copy of your QRS Certificate

● **Programs That Choose to Complete an Assessment:** A copy of a completed assessment profile sheet for each assessment tool. If you are a center based program you must complete an Environment Rating Scale for each classroom you are requesting funding for and place your results on separate profile sheets. License-Exempt family providers will need to submit their completed checklist. Programs who have applied for a QRS Level and have received an assessment by a National Louis University assessor may submit a copy of their Summary Report (first page only) and/or Facility Report. Assessments completed within the last two years, July 1, 2007 to current date, are acceptable.

SECTION 2: THE QUALITY COUNTS GRANT

7. How is Quality Care defined and how do I need to address it in my program’s grant application?

Quality child care promotes children’s social, cognitive, emotional and physical development. The 4 indicators of quality care applicable to the Quality Counts Grant Program are explained below.

7a. If you are applying for Category 1 Funding - One or more of these quality indicators need to be addressed when you complete the grant narrative. As an applicant you will need to describe how the items you are requesting funds for will meet and/or improve these indicators in your program. These indicators and their relation to the items for which you are applying will need to be addressed in the narrative section of the grant.

How is Quality Care defined and how do I need to address it in my program's grant application? (continued)

1. **Relationships.** Promoting positive relationships among all children and adults to encourage each child's sense of belonging and independence. Fostering children's development respective of each family's composition, language and culture help all children succeed. Respectful relationships are inclusive of all children and families backgrounds, interests, and experiences, learning styles, needs and capabilities. The quality of these relationships influences the learning and development of children.
2. **Curriculum and Assessment.** A well-planned curriculum with identified learning goals and on-going assessment integrates cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. Using multiple teaching approaches that vary from structured to unstructured and adult-directed to child-directed maximizes a child's opportunity for learning.
3. **Environment.** Children reach their learning potential in a healthy, safe, secure and accessible environment. The indoor/outdoor environment includes facilities, equipment, and materials to enhance children's learning experiences.
4. **Program Management.** Effective program management leads to quality experiences for all children, families and staff. A well run program incorporates current technology, professional resources, best business practices, formal education and training, effective supervision, and sound policies and procedures.

7b. For Category 2 Funding — Assessment processes and tools address the level of quality in a program. If you have completed a program assessment, you will need to address your results in your narrative. Look over your program's completed assessment. Those items with lower ratings or scores should be addressed in the grant narrative. Explain how the materials you are applying for will create and/or improve quality of care **and/or** assist your program in maintaining or receiving a QRS rating, accreditation or complying with Head Start standards.

8. Who will be reading the grant application and how will it be scored?

A knowledgeable and impartial panel of readers will review and score the applications. Steps will be taken to ensure reviewers do not have a conflict of interest with your program.

Your program request will be rated on several criteria including, but not limited to, the following:

- How well your proposal meets the statewide priorities
- Projects that address the needs of children/families receiving child care financial assistance from IDHS
- Clarity of narrative and complete budget
- Meeting and exceeding licensing requirements
- Attendance at the Bidders' Conference (for the current fiscal year)

If applicant does not meet all requirements for the Category of funding they are applying for, the application will be denied and will not be reviewed.

9. Which grant proposals receive higher consideration?

Following are the statewide priorities. Addressing a statewide priority is **not** a requirement; however, grant applications addressing any of the statewide priorities will receive higher consideration for funding.

- Increasing the capacity for infants/toddlers/twos
- Improving the quality of care for infants/toddlers/twos
- Increasing the capacity for school-age children (full-year or school-year only)
- Improving the quality of care for school-age children (full-year or school-year only)
- Creating the ability to accommodate children and families with special needs*
- Maintaining the ability to accommodate children and families with special needs*

* A child with special needs is a child who has been diagnosed by a professional and receives special services from the public school, a community agency or regular care by a physician for a medical condition

10. Which programs receive higher consideration?

Following are the statewide priorities. Grant applications addressing any of these statewide priorities will receive higher consideration for funding.

- Programs that serve children and families receiving IDHS child care financial assistance
- Full-year/full-day programs (at least 8 hours per day & at least 49 weeks per year)
- Accredited programs or those programs in Accreditation Self-Study
- Programs that have received a QRS rating
- Head Start programs
- Programs that completed a program assessment tool
- Programs that attend a Bidders' Conference for the current fiscal year
- Programs that did not receive a Quality Counts Grant last year

11. Do I have to attend the Quality Counts Grant Bidders' Conference in order to apply?

Attendance at a Bidders' Conference is mandatory for first time grant applicants. For those that have applied for a QC Grant before, attendance is not mandatory. All programs attending a Bidders' Conference will receive higher consideration. At the Bidders' Conference, you will be provided with information on completing the application and given a chance to ask additional questions.

If an agency has multiple sites, at least one person must attend from each site to meet requirements or to receive higher consideration. For example, if your agency plans to submit three site applications (one application must be submitted specific to each site), three separate individuals will need to attend a Bidders' Conference.

SECTION 3: MAKING THE DECISION TO APPLY FOR A QUALITY COUNTS GRANT

12. Who can apply for a Quality Counts Grant?

You must currently be providing child care and:

- Your program MUST be listed in the 4-C provider database in order to be eligible for grant funds. You will need to be listed before you submit your application. Please note that the CCR&R provider database is not the same as the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) database.
- All programs must provide care in one of the following counties: Carroll, DeKalb, Lee, McHenry, Ogle, Whiteside

13. What can a program request in a grant?

Programs may apply for the following type of equipment/supplies: (Not limited to examples listed)

- **Facility Improvement – All Ages:**
Child size bathroom, fence, egress windows, fire door, security systems, staircase railing, playground surfacing, etc.
- **Equipment/Materials for Children:**
Cribs, child-sized table/chairs, blocks, books, playground equipment, musical instruments, dress up clothes, dolls, etc.
- **Professional Resources:**
Business computer, software, professional development resources, etc.
- **Family Resources:**
Lending library materials, computer software, parent videos, etc.
- **Special Needs:**
Widening doorways to accommodate wheelchairs, handrails for restrooms, etc.

All items must be directly related to the safety and quality of your child care services. All items must be **new**; used items will not be accepted. In order to assure quality when requesting equipment and materials, all items should be age and developmentally appropriate. Items should also be durable and withstand use in a group setting.

14. What CAN'T a program apply for?

Items you **cannot** apply for include, but are not limited to:

- cosmetic home improvements
- home additions
- decks
- televisions
- video games
- infant walkers
- pools
- trampoline
- vehicles
- used equipment
- non-age appropriate items
- developmentally inappropriate items
- consumable items (items that can be used up like paper, markers, paint, etc.)
- Items from online auctions or third party purchases
- Bunk beds or double decker cribs

Note: Certain items are acceptable for equipment purchases (examples: cell phones, computer, copier, postage machine, etc.); however, grant funds cannot be used for service contracts on that equipment (examples: cell phone minutes, internet access, monthly postage meter charge). Grant funds cannot be used to purchase items from online auctions or for other third-party purchases.

15. Can I submit more than one application? Can I submit one application if my business/agency has more than one site?

Each site/location is considered to be a program. Each program (site) must submit an application requesting what is considered specifically needed by that site. (One license = one site = one program = one application.) Programs with multiple sites cannot submit identical application forms for each site. You can submit only one grant application per site per application period.

SECTION 4: THE QUALITY COUNTS GRANT APPLICATION

16. What is a complete Quality Counts Grant Application?

The Quality Counts Grant Application has the following components. You will need to complete each section and provide **all required documentation** necessary to be considered for funding.

1. **Contact Information**
2. **Proposal Information**
3. **Capacity Enrollment**
4. **Child Care Financial Assistance**
5. **Grant Narrative (See special section below on the Grant Narrative)**

You must include the original and 3 copies of your application and attachments. If you intend to attach or include pictures, they need to be copied and attached to all 4 copies of the proposal.

17. What is the page limit for the Narrative section and what should it include?

You are limited to five (5) double-spaced, typed or hand printed pages for the **narrative** section. **Do not EXCEED five pages.** Use the narrative outline when writing your responses. The outline will help you remain focused when answering the questions. Also, write your name or your business name on each of the attached pages. Your attachments for your budget or documents are not counted as part of the five pages. For a list of documents to include, reference the checklist located on the application.

When completing the narrative, give details and examples of why the items you are requesting show:

- Your need and how it was determined
- How you are addressing quality
 - ▶ **If applying for Category 1 funding, describe in your narrative how your request will:** Create and/or improve quality of care by meeting one or more of the four quality indicators
 - ▶ **If you are applying for Category 2 Funding** – and have completed a program assessment, you will need to address your results in your narrative. Look over your program's completed assessment. Those items with lower ratings or scores should be addressed in the grant narrative. Explain how the materials you are applying for will create and/or improve quality of care **and/or** assist your program in maintaining or receiving a QRS rating, accreditation or complying with Head Start standards.
- If the proposal addresses one or more of the priorities, describe how.
- Which items in your budget are of highest priority and why.
- If you are awarded partial funding, will you be able to complete your project? If yes, please explain.
- Additional information about your program that may be helpful to reviewers

18. How much detail should be provided on the budget?

For details in completing your budget, please see SAMPLE Budget. If you feel the reviewer of the application may not be able to identify the item you listed on your budget, attach a picture or description of the item. For contracted labor work, you must attach at least two itemized bid estimates for work and materials. **All contract labor work must be licensed and bonded.** The preferred bid should be used on your budget form.

Document budget figures carefully, including costs and shipping charges. *You may round to the nearest dollar.* To estimate taxes and shipping charges:

- If you use the Internet to research your items, the "shopping cart" will usually tell you what the estimated taxes and shipping charges will be. Document the source of your estimate.
- If you use a catalog, call the company and ask a customer service representative to provide you with an estimate based on your location. Document the source of your estimate.

Make sure you appropriately indicate the category for the items listed. If the picture description recommends the item be used for children 3-5 years of age, and you indicate the item is for infants or toddlers, that item may not be considered.

19. When should an IDCFS corrective action plan, Fire Marshall documentation, Health Department documentation and/or IDCFS licensing standards be attached?

You need to attach any of these documents to support purchases of equipment that will address deficiencies in a Corrective Action Plan or that will enable you to become licensed.

You need to attach IDCFS licensing standards you are addressing *only if* transitioning from License-Exempt to Licensed, or have a change in license status and have a written timeline/plan in place.

SECTION 5: SUCCESSFUL GRANT WRITING

While it does not guarantee funding, the following section includes helpful information on writing a grant. Please use these suggestions as a tool to assist you in completing the grant in the most successful way possible.

20. I've never written a grant before, what are some tips?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend the Bidders' Conference. Mandatory for first time applicants.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the entire grant guidelines & requirements and application thoroughly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the format and instructions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use only the 2009-2010 grant application and budget sheets provided. They cannot be recreated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer ALL questions and complete ALL sections.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a question is not applicable, please indicate N/A in space provided.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use proper grammar with no typographical errors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate your message without excessive wordiness. Remember, reviewers will be scoring many proposals. Being brief and concise, and including relevant information will be an advantage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When completing the narrative, give details and examples of why the items you are requesting show: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your need and how it was determined • How you are addressing quality • How your proposal will address one or more of the priorities • Which items in your budget are of highest priority and why • If and how you will be able to complete your project if partially funded • Additional information about your program that may be helpful to reviewers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not state assumptions. Back up statements with factual information and data where appropriate. For example: Do not propose to expand an infant program without some documentation of need, waiting lists and/or other information to support your request.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit the required number of copies of completed proposals, including the original. If you intend to attach or include pictures, they need to be copied and attached to <u>all</u> copies of the proposal. Also, write your name or your business name on each of the attached pages.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are requesting funds for contracted labor work, remember to attach at least two itemized bid estimates from a licensed and bonded contractor for work and materials. The preferred bid should be used on your budget form.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal should be neat and easy to read. Keep the proposal simple (do not use elaborate packaging, expensive folders or spirals). Due to the large quantity of proposals that reviewers will receive, elaborate packaging will be dismantled and is therefore unnecessary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete & submit ALL requested forms and supporting documents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have another person who does not understand your business read your proposal before submitting it. If they understand it, chances are, the reviewers will too.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the checklist provided on the last page of the application.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you complete and SIGN your application.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you do not understand the instructions call: Jan Fox at (815) 344-5510, Ext. 11 (McHenry Office) or Kim Sciacero at (815) 758-8149, Ext. 226 (DeKalb Office)

SECTION 6: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

21. If the program received a grant last fiscal year (July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009) can we apply again?

Yes, you may apply for a grant during this grant period.

22. If my program's grant is approved will the full amount of money requested be received?

Possibly. Your program's grant request may be fully or partially funded. The amount of funds available is limited, and the amount of funds requested always exceeds the available dollars. The application includes an opportunity for you to explain how you would address your full request if we were able to only fund a part of your request.

23. How many grants will be awarded?

Based on available funding, \$128,289 will be distributed through the Quality Counts Child Care Grant Program. The number of grants funded depends on the number of proposals received and amounts awarded to successful proposals. We reserve the right to award full or partial funding.

24. If awarded funding, how does my program receive the funds?

If your request is approved you will receive 75% of your award with your award letter. The remaining funds will be sent to you when we receive receipts for 100% of your expenses and the required documentation.

- Any item purchased prior to the award letter date will not be considered for reimbursement.
- Any costs exceeding the award amount are considered out-of-pocket expenses and will not be reimbursed.

25. Is this a grant or loan?

This is a grant program, not a loan, which means funds do not generally need to be paid back. However, the grant funds come from the State of Illinois, and certain policies and procedures must be followed. The following policies apply:

- You will have to return any advanced funds (or you will not be reimbursed, depending on the situation) if you fail to provide proof of purchase for the agreed upon expenses within the timeline that will be specified in your award letter.
- You will have to return items/equipment purchased with grant funds if you go out of business within two (2) years of the date of your award. You will need to repay for items that are not easily retrievable (e.g. fence). The amount due will be prorated based on the number of months you remained in business following the purchase of items/equipment.
- If awarded funds, programs cannot substitute items that are not listed in the budget or award letter. You must seek prior approval.
- You will not be reimbursed for items purchased before the date of the award letter, even if the items were requested in your proposal.

26. Do I need to report the grant as income?

Grant funds may need to be reported as income. If awarded grant funds a completed W-9 form will be required. Items purchased with grant money may be eligible to claim as business deductions. Please consult an accountant for further information.

27. When are applications due?

Applications are due to 4-C by February 19, 2010 no later than 4:30 PM. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. Be sure to keep a copy of everything that is submitted. Our agency cannot be responsible for applications lost in the mailing process. Any incomplete application will not be considered for funding. *Applications must be received in office by day/time stated above.*

28. Can I mail the proposal or bring it to the office?

If you return the application in person, we will provide you with written verification of the date and time you turned it in. If you mail in the application, it is recommended that certified mail/return receipt request be used. You must include the original and 3 copies of your application and attachments. Be sure to keep a copy of everything that is submitted.

Each application packet must be in the following order:

- (1) Application
- (2) Budget Form
- (3) Grant narrative
- (4) Supporting documents

NO FAXES or EMAILS will be accepted.

29. When will I know if my program has been awarded funding?

All applicants will be notified by letter as to whether or not their grant proposal was funded no later than March 31, 2010.

If you are awarded funding, **the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) or CCR&R staff may conduct an on-site visit to verify appropriate use of grant funds.**

FOR QUESTIONS ON THE QUALITY COUNTS GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS PLEASE CONTACT:

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