



## **GENERAL INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES** **ECHO Innovation Grant Program 2024 – Round 2**

### **Background:**

Every Child Has Opportunities (ECHO) is a new early childhood education initiative in York County, Pennsylvania intended to expand access to affordable, high-quality childcare. Led by Community Connections for Children and York County Economic Alliance, ECHO serves as a catalyst for innovation and collaboration and provides a blueprint for addressing the issues that limit opportunities for children, families, and early childhood educators and business owners.

Major funders include J. William Warehime Foundation, Powder Mill Foundation, United Way of York County, and WellSpan Health. Additional funders include The Kinsley Foundation and York County Community Foundation.

We are proud to announce a second round for the ECHO Innovation Grant Program.

Grants will be awarded in the amount of \$25,000 - \$50,000. This opportunity is a direct response to the crisis in early childhood education we face as a community. In 2020, pre-pandemic, York County had 221 early childhood education providers. In three years, that number dropped to 170. Those that survived the pandemic are operating on average at 85% of typical enrollment due to teacher and workforce shortages. Early childhood education program waitlists average 50-75 children, and many have stopped adding to their lists.

The intent of the ECHO Innovation Grant Program is to fund new, innovative projects that support the initiative's goal of doubling the number of low-income children and families who have access to high-quality early childhood education. This grant is not to fund current operations.

***Note: In this second round, priority shall be given to those who have not yet received an ECHO Innovation Grant. Those who previously received an ECHO Innovation Grant are eligible apply, if they have a new project that directly increases capacity and/or quality.***

### **Grant Cycle Schedule:**

**Application Opens: October 1, 2024 at 8am**  
**Application Closes: October 25, 2024 at 5pm**  
**Notification of Funding: December 2024**  
**Grant Range: \$25,000 - \$50,000**

**This grant recognizes the critical role of early childhood education in York County, Pennsylvania.**

**Areas of interest for ECHO Innovation Grants include:**

- Strengthening the early childhood education ecosystem in York County.
- Increasing capacity for low-income children and families who have access to high-quality early childhood education. [*Low-Income is defined by existing early childhood education programs: Child Care Works (CCW), Head-Start, Early Head-Start, Pre-K Counts, and/or Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE)*]
- Enhancing quality of care and education at existing providers.
- Attracting qualified early childhood educators.

**General Provider Eligibility:**

To be eligible for the ECHO Innovation Grant, the program must meet the following requirements at the time of application and at the time of the payment by Community Connections for Children (CCC).

- Have an early childhood education program located in York County, Pennsylvania.
- Be a full-time childcare program with a regular Department of Human Services (DHS) Certificate of Compliance OR hold an Early Head Start/Head Start, and/or Pre-K Counts OCDEL approved grant. DHS Certified School Age Child Care programs are eligible to apply.
- If DHS Certified, be designated at and meet all Keystone STARS Performance Standards associated with a STAR 2 (or higher) designation and not in a Keystone STAR suspension status. OR be a STAR 1 program that is actively working with a CCC STARS Coach to move up to a STAR 2. If you are a STAR 1, your STARS Coach will reach out directly to you with more information.
- Maintain or move up your STAR level designation during the approval and payment phase of the award. If a STAR level move-down occurs during this process, the program may no longer be eligible for the award amount. It is expected that the program will make a commitment to maintain their STAR designation.
- The provider does not owe funds for any previous OCDEL or CCC grant.
- The provider does not owe liens/liabilities to the County of York, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and/or federal government, including tax liabilities.
- If you are unsure if you are eligible, reach out to [kcaples@cccforpa.org](mailto:kcaples@cccforpa.org) with questions.

**Successful applicants will be able to communicate & consider most of the following:**

- A clear vision of the impact of their project in York County.
- A realistic sense of what it will take to execute their project successfully.
- An intent for increased capacity for low-income children and families in York County.
- A commitment to high-quality early childhood education.
- An innovative and future-focused project.

**Grant Requirements and Compliance:**

- This grant program is not intended to be a sustaining operating funding source for the applicant or the proposed project.
- Project expenses incurred prior to grant notification are not eligible as a grant expense.
- All Grant funds must be spent by July 1, 2025.
- Successful applicants will be required to sign a grant contract to receive their initial payment.
- Non-compliance with all the requirements of the ECHO Innovation Grant Program and the Grant Agreement will result in the provider being required to return funds to CCC.

- Funds attributed to this award must be expended within the award timeline and as specified in the signed Award Agreement.
- Programs must keep documentation of award pay-outs for their records for review by CCC and for funders who may need to review documents for auditing/monitoring purposes.
- All Grant-related documents must be maintained for seven years.
- All funds must be used solely for the specific purpose outlined in the grant application and if at the specific location receiving the grant.
- **Important: Any unexpended funds must be returned to CCC.**

**Examples of Innovation Include, but are Not Limited to:**

- Building, renovating, and/or furnishing new classrooms to serve more children.
- Increased quality of care, including purchasing and implementing new curriculum and/or technology program-wide, expanding or refurbishing outdoor learning environments, or creating a dedicated indoor sensory space with social emotional support training.
- Innovation collaborations or partnerships with business, industry, K-12 schools, or workforce development organizations. Partnerships could include contracted slots, onsite ECE programs, scholarships, or solutions to transportation or other challenges
- Innovative recruitment, hiring, and/or onboarding activities for qualified teacher positions. Increasing the number of *new* early childhood educators into the system.
- Private/Public partnerships with local municipalities or government bodies.

**Ineligible Use of Funds:**

Ineligible use of funds includes but is not limited to:

- Existing operations.
- Gift cards, bonuses, stipends, alcohol.
- Owner or Director compensation.
- Current payroll or payroll taxes.
- Mortgage or lease of existing Early Childhood Education space.
- Property tax payments or any other tax payments.
- Credit card or other debt payment.
- Day to day operating supplies, equipment, utilities, or administrative expenses.
- Previously incurred expenses.
- Endowments, seed money, initial funds raised for capital campaign.
- Maintenance, repairs, or major renovations to existing ECE space.
- Indirect costs not to exceed 10%.

**Funding Terms:**

Funding provided by the ECHO Innovation Grant Program shall not exceed \$50,000. Grant disbursement will be as follows:

- With a signed Award Agreement, funding in the amount of 50% of the total grant award will be provided to facilitate the initiation of the project. With the successful completion of an interim grant report, the remaining amount will be paid out.
- Initial full payout will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

A grant follow-up report must be completed and submitted to ECHO within 90 days of the stated project completion date. Failure to submit required interim reports or follow-up reports may disqualify you from receiving future grants and/or require you to pay back the funds in full.

**Marketing:**

Submission and acceptance of a grant assumes a willingness to make the project available for ECHO's use and inclusion for informational, marketing, and/or public relations purposes. This may entail social media posts, press releases to local papers and other media outlets, a feature on the ECHO website, photos, and information at event presentations by ECHO, or any of ECHO's partners.

**Grant Announcements, Public Reports and Use of the Grantor's Name and Logo.** If you wish to issue a press release or announcement regarding the award of this grant, you must obtain advance approval from ECHO of the press release and the date of release. You also agree to obtain advance approval from ECHO for any other use of ECHO's name or logo. Please contact the ECHO Director prior to any press release, announcement or other publication, or proposed use of its name or logo. This grant is being funded by ECHO and should be noted in any presentations or publications resulting from this grant.

**Scoring Criteria:****Program Impact – 50%**

- The project is innovative and future focused.
- Will increase capacity for low-income children and families in York County.
- Demonstrates a commitment to high-quality early childhood education.
- Is consistent with ECHO funding priorities.
- Project will have an impact that is positive and measurable.

**Program Plan & Outcomes – 25%**

- Program design and action plan are feasible and understandable.
- Clear, understandable statement of need that aligns with program's outcomes and indicators.
- Is a new or innovative approach; does not replicate existing services.
- Budget is logical - proposed expenses and revenues are clear and feasible; appropriate to total project cost; not subsidizing existing/operational expenses.
- Collaborative effort.
- Project has measurable outcomes, indicators, and evaluation criteria in place.

**Agency/Project Capacity – 25%**

- Agency is capable of carrying out project and is prepared to take on proposed program.
- Project is consistent with agency mission.
- Implementation timeline is reasonable.

**To successfully submit your grant proposal, submit a complete application by 5pm on October 25, 2024 via the Grant Portal: <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=cccforpa>.**

**ECHO Innovation Grant Program 2024 – Round 2 Application includes Project Snapshot, Project Description, Applicant History, Estimated Impact, Short Answer Section, Funding & Support, Additional Information, Access & Inclusion, Sign & Submit Form, and signed Attestation. Along with inclusion statement or policy, if you have one.**

For more information, visit [www.echoyork.org](http://www.echoyork.org) or contact Katie Caples, ECHO Director, at [kcaples@cccforpa.org](mailto:kcaples@cccforpa.org) or 717-714-8561.