

Curriculum Fund

Frequently Asked Questions

About This Funding Opportunity

The Curriculum Fund helps Philadelphia early childhood programs remove the cost barrier to adopting high-quality, OCDEL-approved curriculum. Funding is paired with hands-on support: Community of Practice (COP) meetings, individualized technical assistance, and CLASS classroom observations.

Curriculum Implementation: awards up to \$20,000 per agency (approximately 40 programs across 2 cohorts) to adopt an OCDEL-approved curriculum system.

Application Questions

How do I submit my application?

Applications must be submitted through the online application portal, available from **October 1, 2026** until **November 6, 2026**. The portal is accessible through the PHMC Curriculum Fund [website](#). Once you begin your application, you can save and continue your progress via a unique weblink provided to you. When all application questions (including narrative) are complete and your attachments are added, you will be able to submit. The legal entity contact listed in the application will receive an email confirming that your application has been received.

What are the key dates?

Milestone	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Application Opens	October 1, 2026	October 1, 2027
Application Deadline	November 6, 2026	November 5, 2027
Award Notifications	November 23, 2026	November 22, 2027
Grant Disbursement	January 2027	January 2028

What needs to be submitted for an application to be considered complete?

Applications are considered complete when all sections have been fully answered, all relevant attachments are included, and the application is signed and submitted. All narrative questions, including any sub-questions, must be answered. STAR 1 and STAR 2 applicants must also include a confirmation letter documenting active engagement in a quality move-up initiative (see eligibility questions below).

What communication will I receive to find out if I've been awarded?

The legal entity contact listed on the application will receive an email on **November 23, 2026** indicating whether the agency has been awarded.

What do I do if I need assistance completing the application?

If you need assistance completing the application, please sign up for virtual technical assistance through the PHMC Curriculum Fund website, or email curriculumfund@phmc.org.

We don't currently have curriculum or formal lesson plans. What should we submit instead?

You can submit any type of documentation used for planning classroom activities. It does not have to be a formal lesson plan. We review it to understand your current curriculum and classroom activities.

How are priority areas determined?

Programs located in priority areas will be prioritized. Priority areas are determined using data from the [Childcare Map](#), an interactive tool showing childcare supply and demand for the City of Philadelphia. The Curriculum Fund defines a priority

area as one with limited availability of high-quality centers and high levels of poverty. Use the link above to check whether your center is in a priority area.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

To apply, your program must meet all of the following:

- Be a Keystone STAR 1 or STAR 2 provider operating in Philadelphia.
- Be actively engaged in a quality move-up initiative (ELRC STAR 1 & 2 Move Up Cohort, EQUIP, or comparable) with documented goals to reach STAR 3 within 12 months. A confirmation letter is required.
- Serve families living with low-income - at least 50% of children receiving subsidy (CCW), Head Start, Pre-K Counts, or PHLpreK.
- Be in good standing with DHS Certification and free of city, state, and federal tax liens.

Have the eligibility requirements changed from previous Curriculum Fund rounds?

Yes, in previous funding rounds STAR 3 & 4 providers were targeted. This funding round we are targeting STAR 1 and STAR 2 programs to align with the objective of increasing the percentage of children enrolled in high-quality early education. The investment is intended to help you build the instructional quality that supports STAR advancement, and to remove initial financial barriers. STAR 3 and 4 programs are not eligibility for funding in the current funding cycle.

I am a family child care provider. Am I eligible for this grant opportunity?

Yes. All provider types — center, family child care, and group child care home — are eligible.

I am a STAR 1 or 2 program receiving technical assistance. What do I need to submit as evidence?

Please provide a welcome or confirmation letter from the initiative you are working with. If you are receiving technical assistance through the ELRC, please provide a letter from your Quality Coach with documented goals to move to STAR 3 in 12 months or less.

I am a STAR 1 program. Can I apply, and can I use grant funds?

Yes. STAR 1 programs are eligible to apply and to use grant funds, provided you are actively engaged in a quality move-up initiative with documented goals to reach STAR 3 within 12 months. The Curriculum Fund is specifically designed to support STAR 1 and STAR 2 providers in moving up — the curriculum investment is intended to help you build the instructional quality that supports STAR advancement.

My agency has multiple locations at different STAR levels. Which sites can be included?

Eligible STAR 1 and STAR 2 sites that are actively engaged in a quality move-up initiative may be included in your application. Awards are made at the agency level (see grant amount questions below). If you are a multi-site agency, submit one application encompassing all eligible sites. Read the full announcement [here](#). The OCDEL-approved Curriculum and Developmental Assessment Listing is available [here](#); updates are made annually.

What is Announcement ELRC 25-02: OCDEL – Approved Curricula and Development Assessment Tools in Keystone STARS?

This announcement replaces and makes obsolete ELRC Announcement 22 #7 which outlined that **only** currently OCDEL-approved curricula and development assessment would be valid for meeting the requirements of STARS EC 3.4.1 and EC 3.4.2 for STAR 3 and 4 designations. Historically, OCDEL released and maintained an annual listing of approved curricula and developmental assessment tools. The annual listing provided details of newly approved tools and those that were set to be discontinued at the end of the fiscal year and thus would no longer count towards STARS standards.

OCDEL no longer issues an annual listing of approved curricula and developmental assessment tools. Moving forward, OCDEL will only discontinue approved curricula and developmental assessment tools under the following conditions:

- The vendor fails to respond to OCDEL's annual request to confirm the tool's information on file;
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- The PA ELS are updated, causing the curricula and developmental assessment tools to no longer align with the standards; or
 - The curriculum or developmental assessment tool is updated, and the tool no longer aligns with the PA ELS.

Keystone STARS providers can refer to the listing on the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) Early Learning Standards [website](#). The PDE Early Learning Standards website provides the most up-to-date information on approved curricula and developmental assessment tools will also be announced in the [PA Early Ed News \(EEN\)](#).

Read the full announcement [here](#).

Grant Amounts

How are award amounts determined?

Award amounts depend on program size and demonstrated need, and are based on the agency (not per site). **Cohort 1 awards are up to \$20,000 per agency** for comprehensive curriculum implementation. The Classroom Practices Facilitator works with each program to determine the total grant amount and submit the program budget for approval. Programs are **not required** to obtain and submit quotes for curriculum materials or training with their applications.

Can I use the funds for non-OCDEL-approved curriculum?

If your site currently uses an OCDEL-approved curriculum, you may be able to purchase non-approved supplemental materials or a social-emotional curriculum. You must justify in the narrative how it aligns with your program vision/mission and identify whether the materials are research-based.

What are the OCDEL-approved curricula that I may purchase?

A complete list of OCDEL-approved curricula is available [here](#).

What are the OCDEL-approved assessment tools that I may purchase?

A complete list of OCDEL-approved assessment tools is available [here](#).

We use Creative Curriculum but use Work Sampling for our assessments. Do I have to use the Creative Curriculum (GOLD) assessment?

No, you do not have to switch assessments, but we encourage applicants to use the assessment designed for the curriculum. Be sure to justify your decision to use a different assessment tool in the narrative.

What age groups / care levels can be purchased with the funds?

Grant funds may be used to purchase curriculum for infants, toddlers, and pre-K children. The funding does not cover school-age curriculum.

Program Supports

What are Community of Practice (COP) meetings and how often will they occur?

COP meetings provide a shared learning environment where practitioners connect to share knowledge, discuss challenges, and build community. Director/administrator COPs focus on the programmatic supports needed for successful curriculum implementation, while teacher COPs focus on pedagogical learning. Teachers identified to participate in technical assistance are required to participate in bi-monthly teacher COP meetings; directors are required to participate in quarterly COP meetings.

What role will the Classroom Practices Facilitator have in supporting my program?

The Classroom Practices Facilitator works with providers to determine overall curricular needs, provides guidance on curricula and supplemental materials, conducts CLASS assessments, and delivers individualized technical assistance (TA) to classroom teachers around curriculum implementation. Each provider receives up to 20 hours of TA for the lead teacher and up to 10 hours for the director/administrative lead. The Facilitator also helps coordinate and lead the COP meetings.

Are there any supports for applicants that are not selected?

Yes. If your program is not selected for a cohort, you will be invited to attend a Community of Practice meeting or informational session to further explore curriculum implementation. These sessions offer insight into the programmatic supports needed to select and implement curriculum. Additional support with the grant-writing process is available through virtual office hours.

What does "research-based" mean for an early childhood curriculum?

Defined by the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning:

A research-based early childhood curriculum is consistent with research on how children develop and learn. It provides rich content and teaching practices shown to support children's learning and development, focuses on domain-specific, developmentally appropriate content and skills, and offers a sequence of learning experiences based on children's developmental progressions. A rich curriculum invites children to think deeply about content that interests them and builds on their prior knowledge and experiences.

Note: certain contracted Pre-K slots (e.g., PHLpreK, Head Start, Pre-K Counts) may require programs to use a research-based curriculum to be eligible for funding. If you participate in, or plan to apply for, these funding streams, consult the program contract and curriculum requirements before purchasing curriculum.