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Section I – Stabilization Grant

1. What is a Stabilization Grant?

Child care stabilization grants were appropriated to states in the American Rescue Plan Act (Public Law 117-2) to help stabilize the child care sector via subgrants to child care providers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds must be used to support the key operating expenses of child care providers to help ensure access to child care for families. In South Carolina, these stabilizations grants are called “SC Building Blocks”.

2. Is SC Building Blocks a grant or a loan?

SC Building blocks is a grant and not a loan. The possibility of repayment is only applicable if determined necessary through the auditing process.

3. Are SC Building Blocks grants taxable?

Yes, SC Building Blocks funds are considered taxable income.

Section II – Eligibility Requirements

1. Who can apply for SC Building Blocks?

To qualify for the SC Building Blocks, grant a child care facility must meet the following criteria:

REGULATED PROGRAMS

- Must be one of the following program types:
 - Private Licensed Child Care Center
 - Licensed or Registered Faith-based Child Care Center
 - Licensed Group Child Care Home
 - Licensed or Registered Family Child Care Home
- Must have been registered or licensed on or before March 11, 2021 and meet state child care licensing regulations.

- Must be open, have children enrolled, and able to provide care for children or temporarily closed due to a public health emergency, financial hardship, or other reason related to COVID-19.

NOTE: If regulated after March 11, 2021, the child care program must meet CCDF health and safety requirements, which would require the program be enrolled in ABC Quality.

LICENSE-EXEMPT PROGRAMS

- License-exempt child care centers must meet CCDF health and safety requirements, which would require the program be enrolled in ABC Quality.
- Must be open, have children enrolled, and able to provide care for children or temporarily closed due to a public health emergency, financial hardship, or other reason related to COVID-19.

2. If my facility was registered or licensed after March 11, 2021, can I apply for the grant?

Yes, you can apply if you become enrolled in the ABC Quality program and have a regular license. If you become enrolled in ABC Quality and have a provisional license, ABC Quality will issue you a 90-day agreement to give you time to obtain a regular license which will allow you to apply.

3. Are programs that just opened able to apply for a SC Building Blocks grant, even though they were not open prior to the pandemic?

Yes, if a facility received a license or registration from DSS Child Care Licensing on or before March 11, 2021, or if the facility is currently participating in the ABC Quality program they may apply for the grant.

4. Does a program have to be in ABC Quality to be able to apply?

If a facility has a license or registration from DSS Child Care Licensing, dated on or before March 11, 2021, then they do not have to participate in ABC Quality program to apply. If the program was regulated after March 11, 2021, the facility must be enrolled in ABC Quality.

5. Are license-exempt providers able to apply for this grant?

Only license-exempt facilities that participate in ABC Quality meet the criteria to apply for the grant.

6. Are afterschool programs able to apply for a SC Building Blocks grant?

Only if the afterschool program meets the CCDF requirement by being enrolled in the ABC Quality program.

7. If my ABC Quality level is in pending status, can I apply for the grant?

Yes.

8. If my facility is temporarily closed at this time can I still apply?

If the facility is temporarily closed due to a public health emergency, financial hardship, or other reason related to COVID-19, then yes you may still apply. Closure reasons will be verified with DSS Child Care Licensing and/or ABC Quality.

9. What is the definition of temporarily closed due to a public health emergency, financial hardship, or other reason related to COVID-19?

Temporary closures should be brief in nature. A facility may have to close to allow cleaning and sanitation time due to an exposure to COVID-19.

10. If my program is operating at full capacity, do I still qualify for the grant?

Yes, all facilities that meet the criteria can apply for the grant regardless of how many children are enrolled.

11. Who can apply for SC Building Blocks grant Round 2?

To qualify for the SC Building Blocks Grant Round 2, a child care facility must have been approved for Round 1, continue to meet the criteria of Round 1, must be open, have children enrolled, and able to provide care for children.

Section III – How to Apply

SC Building Blocks Grant Round 1

1. How do I apply for a SC Building Blocks Round 1 grant?

To apply, visit our online application [here](#), or visit our website at www.scchildcare.org to navigate to the application.

2. Is there a timeline to apply for Round 1 grant?

Yes, round 1 SC Building Blocks Stabilization Grant is still available for eligible child care programs that have not applied. Remember programs regulated after March 11,

2021 must be enrolled with ABC Quality to be eligible for the grant. Therefore, time needs to be allowed for this enrollment into ABC Quality and the application and approval of the grant.

All grant applications must be **APPROVED** no later than September 30, 2022.

3. Is there a Spanish version of the application?

Yes, at the top right corner of the online application you will see toggle switches. There is an **EN** button for English version and an **ES** button for Spanish.

4. Will information from the DSS Child Care Licensing system automatically populate some of the fields on the application?

Yes. Information in this application is pulled directly from DSS systems. If any information, such as hours of operations or quality level, is not correct, please contact your Child Care Licensing Specialist or ABC Quality Assessor BEFORE submitting your application.

5. Will programs hear anything back once they submit the grant application?

Yes, programs will receive a system generated email from the SC Voucher System for the following events:

- Application has been received.
- Application has been approved.
- Application has been processed for payment by SCEIS, SC State Government accounting system.

6. How are the grant award amounts determined?

Please visit our website, www.scchildcare.org, to view the fund calculations or utilize our online [calculator](#) to estimate your facility's potential grant award.

7. What is the equity index?

The equity index used to calculate the SC Building Blocks Round 1 grant is a composite index of the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) from the Centers for Disease Control, low licensing capacities to meet child care demand, and high density of children under age five living below poverty in each county.

8. What is the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)?

The SVI was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help local officials identify communities that may need support before, during, or after a disaster. For more information go to:

<https://svi.cdc.gov/Documents/FactSheet/SVIFactSheet.pdf>.

9. If I participate in ABC Quality does that impact how my funding is calculated?

Yes, if your facility is licensed or registered or exempt and participating

in the ABC Quality program this is considered one of the supplemental additions when calculating the award.

10. For Family and Group Child Care Homes, do we count the children living in the home that receive free child care?

Yes, if a child is 12 years of age and younger, he or she is counted towards your capacity therefore you would count them in your enrollment numbers.

11. Do we count the children of staff that receive free or discounted child care?

Yes, they are considered enrolled in your child care program and count towards your capacity.

12. I am temporarily closed according to the temporary closure definition and have no enrolled children? What do I enter on the application?

On the application you will place “0” for the current enrollment and enter your pre-COVID enrollment.

13. Is it a requirement to set up an organizational profile in the SC Endeavors Registry as a requirement to receive the grant?

Yes, the program director must create an organizational profile for their DSS regulated program or license exempt program enrolled in the ABC Quality program. SC Endeavors will approve the profile within 1-3 days.

14. Will the director of the program need to connect staff to the profile?

Yes, after the profile has been approved, the director can connect staff through invitations or staff can connect by creating an employment record on their individual profile.

15. Will the director of the program need to verify staff employment records?

Yes, the director must verify staff employment records on the Employees tab of the organization profile.

16. Is there a “How To” guide to help me set up my organizational profile and connect staff?

Yes, you can access the how-to-guide and a video guide on the SC Endeavors' website (www.scendeavors.org) under resources: [How-To Guides – SC Endeavors](#).

17. If I have questions about creating an organizational profile, who can I call?

Please contact SC Endeavors at scendeavors@dss.sc.gov or (864)250-8581.

18. If a child care owner has more than one location, can we apply for each center?

Yes, each facility can apply for their own SC Building Blocks stabilization grant.

SC Building Blocks Grant Round 2

1. How do I apply for Round 2 of the SC Building Blocks grant?

To apply for Round 2, log into the online application portal [here](#). You will need to enter your CC Number for your facility. This is the same number you use for background checks.

2. How are the grant award amounts determined?

Please visit our website, www.scchildcare.org, to view the award amounts for Round 2

3. Is there a time limit to apply?

Yes, all grant applications must be approved by September 30, 2022.

Section IV – Payment Process

1. How are funds distributed after the application is approved for Round 1?

Funds will be distributed in four payments over 12 months. The first payment, equaling 25% of the total amount awarded, will be sent as soon as the application has been approved. The second payment will be another 25% of the awarded amount and will arrive two months after the first payment. The third payment will arrive three months after the second payment, and the fourth and final 25% will arrive three months after the third.

2. How are funds distributed after the application is approved for Round 2?

Funds will be distributed in 1 lump sum. Providers will have the option to receive the payment immediately or January 2023 (tax purposes).

3. Will SC Building Blocks grants be received separately, or will they be lumped in with SC Voucher payments?

The grant will be separate from any other payments that your facility receives from DSS.

4. If I received the previous rounds of COVID support operation grants, will I receive payments in the same manner? Yes

5. If I am enrolled in the ABC Quality program how will I receive the grant funding?

Providers who are currently in the ABC Quality program and set up for direct deposit will have their funds deposited into the same account.

6. If I have never received a grant from Early Care and Education and my facility is not enrolled in the ABC Quality program, do I need to do anything to ensure that I receive the awarded funds?

Yes, the following information will be required to receive a grant payment:

- If you operate under an Federal Tax Identification Number (FEIN), you must provide a signed, completed W-9 and a copy of your IRS letter (147-C or SS4). The name on these two documents must match.
- If you operate under a Social Security Number (SSN), you must provide a signed, completed W-9 and a copy of your Drivers' License and a copy of your SSN card. The name on these documents must match.

Please forward this information to: scstabilizationgrant@dss.sc.gov.

7. My banking information has changed since the last time I received any funds from Early Care and Education, do I need to provide updated information?

Yes, you will need to provide the following information to receive a grant payment:

- If you operate under an Federal Tax Identification Number (FEIN), you must provide a signed, completed W-9 and a copy of your IRS letter (147-C or SS4). The name on these two documents must match.
- If you operate under a Social Security Number (SSN), you must provide a signed, completed W-9 and a copy of your Drivers' License and a copy of your SSN card. The name on these documents must match.

Please forward this information to scstabilizationgrant@dss.sc.gov.

8. When will payments begin?

After your application is approved, the request for payment will go to the DSS Finance department for processing. Please allow a minimum of two weeks before a payment will be released. This process will take longer if you are a newly opened provider or have not received any of the previous COVID-19 operating grants through the DSS system.

9. If I am temporarily closed according to the temporary closure definition how will this affect grant payment?

If temporarily closed at the time of grant application, the first payment will be initiated upon approval of your application, however you will receive only one month of your 12-month grant amount. The facility will have 30 days to open from the date of notification of payment from the state accounting system (SCEIS). If your facility does not open the remaining grant funding will be cancelled.

10. How long do I have to spend the grant funding?

This funding is critical in assisting with stabilizing child care and assisting families. Therefore, you will need to spend the Round 1 funding by September 30, 2023 and Round 2 funding by September 30, 2024.

Section V – SC Building Funding Categories

1. How may I use the SC Building Blocks grant funds?

- *Personnel costs:* Wages and benefits for child care program personnel, including increases in compensation for any staff in a child care center or family child care providers and their employees; health, dental, and vision insurance; scholarships; paid sick or family leave; and retirement contributions. Other examples of allowable personnel costs include ongoing professional development or training, premium or hazard pay, staff bonuses, and employee transportation costs to or from work. Funds may also be used to support staff in accessing COVID-19 vaccines, including paid time off for vaccine appointments and to manage side effects, as well as transportation costs to vaccine appointments.
- *Rent, utilities, and insurance:* Rent (including rent under a lease agreement) or payment on any mortgage obligation, utilities, facility maintenance or improvements, or insurance. It also may include *late fees or charges related to late payment*.
- *Facility maintenance and improvements:* Subgrant funds may not be used for construction or major renovations. Acceptable expenses may include, but are not limited to, building or upgrading playgrounds, renovating bathrooms, installing railing, ramps, or automatic doors to make the facility more accessible, and removing no-load bearing walls to create additional space for social distancing. In addition, maintenance and minor renovations to address COVID19 concerns are appropriate, as are any facilities improvements that make programs inclusive and accessible to children with disabilities and family members with disabilities. **Please inform your Child Care Licensing Specialist about any planned renovations.**
- *Personal protective equipment, cleaning, and other health and safety practices:* Personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning and sanitization supplies and services, or training and professional development related to health and safety practices. Uses of funds under this category are not limited to those designed specifically in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency and may include equipment, supplies, services, and training that support meeting state and local health and safety guidelines, including those related to the prevention and control of infection diseases, prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleep practices, administration of medication (consistent with standards for parental consent), prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions, building and physical premises safety, prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma and child maltreatment, response planning for emergencies from a natural disaster or a man caused event, handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of bio contaminants, appropriate precautions in transporting children, pediatric first-aid and CPR, and recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

- *Equipment and supplies:* This category includes purchases of or updates to equipment and supplies to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. So long as the equipment and supplies are in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, they may include indoor and outdoor equipment and supplies that facilitate business practices consistent with safety protocols and developmentally appropriate practice, as well as business items needed to respond to new challenges, such as business software and upgrades.
- *Goods and services:* Any material good or service necessary for the operation of a child care program. Examples of goods that might be necessary to maintain or resume child care services include food and equipment and materials to facilitate play, learning, eating, diapering and toileting, or safe sleep. Examples of services that are allowable include business automation training and support services, shared services, child care management services, food services, and transportation. This category also covers fees associated with licensing and costs associated with meeting licensing requirements.
- *Mental health supports:* Providers may use these funds to support the mental health of children and employees. Infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC), an evidence based, prevention-based strategy that teams mental health professionals with people who work with young children and their families to improve their social, emotional, and behavioral health and development in the settings where children learn and grow, is one example of an allowable mental health support. The wellbeing of caregivers is also important to stabilizing the child care sector because the mental health and wellbeing of staff impacts training, recruitment, and retention as well as the level of care provided to children. Mental health consultations for staff and other types of mental health supports to staff are also allowable.

2. Can SC Building Block grant funds be used for major renovations?

No, the SC Building Blocks grant cannot be used for major renovations or construction.

Major renovation means:

(1) structural changes to the foundation, roof, floor, exterior or load-bearing walls of a facility, or the extension of a facility to increase its floor area; or

(2) extensive alteration of a facility such as to significantly change its function and purpose, even if such renovation does not include any structural change;

Construction means the erection of a facility that does not currently exist;

3. Do I need to budget out funds to all the categories?

No, the total percentages in the section should equal 100%, but can be applied to any category you choose. The only exception is if you opt in for staff compensation than a minimum of 25% must be applied to the personnel cost category.

4. Do I need to verify how funds are used in each category?

Yes, funds will need to be verified quarterly either through receipts or other certified documents.

5. How do Personnel Costs apply to Group and Family Child Care Homes? As sole proprietors, are we able to pay ourselves to satisfy this category?

Yes. As owner and sole employee, Group and Family child care home providers may pay themselves a salary.

6. Can SC Building Block grant funds be used for playground repairs?

Yes, a facility can update or repair any playgrounds under the facility maintenance category.

7. Can SC Building Block grant funds be used for new equipment?

Yes, under the facility maintenance category a facility can add or replace any equipment necessary for the operation of the business.

8. Can 100% of SC Building Block grant funds be used for Personnel Costs?

Yes

9. What does it mean for programs to “opt in” to grant funding for staff compensation options?

By opting in to receive additional funds to provide staff compensation, your child care program is agreeing to use at least 25% of the total grant funds for staff compensation.

The funds must be used to increase staff's regular compensation. Consideration should be given to how to support all staff in the program. The use of these funds will be subject to audit and any improper use of funds will require repayment.

Funds for staff may be used for:

- Bonuses or increases in wages
- Contributions towards health insurance cost that reduce such costs for staff
- Contributions to staff retirement plans

10. Why do I not get the full amount if I don't opt to spend 25% of the funds on staff compensation options?

States are strongly encouraged to use stabilization funds to support child care providers in recruiting and retaining existing and former child care workers and strengthening the diversity of the workforce to meet children and families' needs.

11. Do I have to spend 25% on staff compensation options?

No. If you choose not to opt in to staff compensation you can receive a smaller grant award. If you opt in for staff compensation, 25% is the minimum amount that must be allocated. You can choose to use more funding on these activities.

Section VI – Reporting Changes

1. I am in the process of acquiring a new facility. Would I be able to apply for the grant?

No, you would not be able to apply until you are licensed or registered by DSS Child Care Licensing and are enrolled in the ABC Quality program.

2. If the director changes after I apply, do I have to change my application?

No. Please report any changes to DSS Child Care Licensing or ABC Quality to have their systems updated. This update will be translated to your SC Building Blocks application.

3. If I purchase a child care program, will their SC Building Blocks payments transfer to me?

No, a change in ownership would require a new application. As a reminder, since the license would be received after March 11, 2021, your program would need to be enrolled in the ABC Quality program.

4. If I sell my program, what happens to my SC Building Blocks grant?

If a child care program is sold to a new owner, all grant payments will cease upon the change of ownership notification. The previous owner will still need to provide verification of use of grant funds up to the point the business is sold and may be subject to repayment of funds.

5. Will I be required to report how I have used SC Building Blocks grant funding?

Yes, there are quarterly reporting requirements. The report will be made available to providers after approval of the grant. Providers will need to indicate on reporting form how much of the funds were used in each budget category for the time period associated with each report.

Section VII – Additional Questions

1. If I made a mistake on my application, can I edit it or make a change?

Once an application is submitted no changes can be made by the applicant. If there is a mistake, please email scstabilizationgrant@dss.sc.gov with the information or call Tameka Pauling at (800) 476-0199 to have the application edited.

2. If I have questions about the SC Building Blocks grant, who can I call?

Please email scstabilizationgrant@dss.sc.gov or call Tameka Pauling at (800) 476-0199.

3. If I need help completing the SC Building Blocks Grant application or need assistance on planning how to use the grant funding who can I call?

Please call the SC Child Care Resource and Referral Network at (888)335-1002 or complete a web referral at www.sc-ccrr.org.