



AITKIN COUNTY CHILDCARE ACCELERATION GRANT PROGRAM

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Aitkin County has been awarded a grant from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners, have approved this grant funding to be used to directly impact the Community of Aitkin County by establishing the AITKIN COUNTY CHILDCARE ACCELERATION GRANT Program.

The purpose of this grant fund is to help support community members who aspire start their career in childcare and become childcare providers in Aitkin County in an effort to drive economic growth. The main purpose of this grant is to increase childcare slot availability and consideration will be given to new Childcare providers increasing the slot availability. The funding will help support fees associated with new licensing and training needed to open a childcare center or at home facility, general remodeling costs to meet licensing standards and/or funding support to add additional employees to new and existing childcare businesses.

Grant Guidelines: Guidelines for application and awarding of AITKIN COUNTY CHILDCARE ACCELERATION GRANTS are as follows:

1. Acceleration Grant funds will be awarded in two categories:
 - Licensing and Training Fees. Childcare professionals can be awarded a maximum of \$500 annually, for up to three (3) years, to be used directly for licensing and training purposes. Proof of expense must be submitted to Aitkin County prior to reimbursement of the funds. ***Currently established/existing childcare professionals must commit to increasing childcare slots to the maximum allotted by standard regulations. No match will be necessary for this award.
 - Remodel costs/supplies to meet licensing standards and regulations. Childcare professionals can be awarded a maximum of \$5000 to be used directly for new facility upgrades to meet licensing standards and regulations. Applicants are required to provide a 1:1 match of all funds awarded. This funding may also be used for supplies needed for child occupancy. Examples are cribs, toys, cots, educational material, etc. The supplies are intended to directly contribute to the capacity of children and increase the child care slot availability. Applicants are required to provide a 1:1 match of all funds awarded.
2. The Economic Development Committee may recommend to the Board of Commissioners to increase or decrease the amount awarded at their discretion. The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners grants the final approval for funding.
3. County-Wide Distribution: The intent of this program is to provide assistance throughout Aitkin County. Consideration shall be given to amounts awarded and number of grants approved for any particular region of the county to ensure that an equitable level of funding is available throughout the county.
4. AITKIN COUNTY CHILDCARE ACCELERATION GRANT funds may not be used to reimburse expenses that occurred prior to grant approval by Aitkin County.
5. The Aitkin County Economic Development Committee will rank applications based on immediate need and actionable project completion. Priority will be given to those applicants who commit to increase childcare slot availability.
6. Eligible Project Examples:



- Annual licensing and training fees
 - General remodeling costs to meet licensing standards
 - Start-up supplies, cribs, educational material, toys, etc.
7. Eligible organizations:
- Community members aspiring to become childcare providers in Aitkin County
 - Existing childcare providers in Aitkin County with a commitment to increase childcare slot availability.

Application Procedure: Guidelines for applications are as follows:

1. Grant requests should be submitted by EMAIL to:
mark.jeffers@co.aitkin.mn.us, subject line: Childcare Acceleration Grant 2023 or by mail to:

Mark Jeffers
Aitkin County Government Center,
307 2nd Street NW, Room 316,
Aitkin, MN 56431.
2. Funding recommendations will be considered at the regularly scheduled monthly meetings of the Aitkin County Economic Development Committee in 2023. Application deadline is **ongoing until all available funds are awarded**.
3. Committee recommendations will be submitted to the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners for final approval.

Reporting Requirements

1. Applicants that are awarded a Childcare Acceleration Grant are required to submit proof of fund use no more than 18 months after the grant is approved and awarded by the Board of Commissioners. Reporting information documents and deadlines will be included in the award letter.
2. Economic Development staff will collaborate with grant award winners to verify qualified grant use.
3. Unused funds at the conclusion of the 18 month grant period must be returned to Aitkin County.
4. In the event that a childcare business accepts funds and the business is not opened or child care slot availability is not increased (existing childcare businesses) within 18 months of funding award, all funding must be paid back to Aitkin County.
5. Applicants agree to use funds only for the designated purposes as described in the grant application and to notify Aitkin County Childcare Acceleration Grant Program Administration and receive consent to any substantial deviation from the grant application.



6. Applicants agree to complete an onsite evaluation no later than 60 days following the event/project completion. This evaluation will be completed by the Economic Development Coordinator of Aitkin County.
7. That the total amount of the grant may be discontinued, modified or withheld at any time, when, in the judgement of the County, such action is necessary to comply with requirements of the law or when, compliance to all of the rules stated on the recipient agreement form are not met.
8. Businesses eligible for the Aitkin County Childcare Acceleration Grant, must have a physical location in Aitkin County.
9. All applicants must be current on their property taxes through 2022 or any other obligations to Aitkin County.
10. All applicants agree that by signing and submitting the Aitkin County Childcare Acceleration Grant application they will be subject to a random audit by Aitkin County for accuracy in expenses, demonstration of business loss or any other statements or information requested. If it is determined that false or misleading information is provided on the Aitkin County Childcare Acceleration Grant Application, the applicant will be required to repay Aitkin County the entire grant amount.
11. All materials and promotion of the program must indicate/acknowledge Aitkin County Economic Development as a supporter of the event/project.
12. All applicants will be required to submit a Form W-9, for payment processing.
13. No interest shall be earned on the grant money provided through the program.
14. No reimbursement grants will be awarded.

Further information and additional forms and materials may be obtained by contacting:

Mark Jeffers
Aitkin County Economic Development Coordinator
218-531-6188
mark.jeffers@co.aitkin.mn.us