



HB 96 School Readiness Initiative FAQs

Background

1. Who is eligible to apply for these grants?

Existing preschool programs sponsored by public LEAs are eligible to apply through USOE. Private preschools will apply through the Department of Workforce Services.

The High Quality School Readiness Grant Program is created to provide grants to the following, in order to upgrade an existing preschool or home-based technology program to a high quality school readiness program: (a) an eligible private provider; (b) an eligible LEA; or (c) an eligible home-based educational technology provider. (Lines 217-219)

2. What will the grants programs fund?

The High-quality School Readiness Grant Program provides two types of grants: 1) grants to support independent evaluation to demonstrate results and to qualify for potential private investment; 2) grants to upgrade existing preschool programs to high-quality preschool programs and independent evaluation to demonstrate results.

3. Where do the funds come from for this program?

There will be a \$3 million ongoing appropriation from the General Fund, which will be used to pay for a competitive grants program and to repay contracts that have been negotiated where an independent evaluator certifies that agreed upon outcomes have been achieved.

4. Which department oversees this? Who administers the grants program? Who will negotiate contracts with private providers?

The bill creates a School Readiness Board within the Governor's Office of Management and Budget (GOMB) composed of the director of Department of Workforce Services (DWS) or designee, a member appointed by the Utah State Board of Education (USOE), a member appointed by the chair of the State Charter School Board, a member appointed by the Speaker of House of Representatives, and a member appointed by the President of the Senate.

Grants will be awarded by the Board based on recommendations from USOE and DWS, to ensure all sectors are communicating and collaborating. The grants programs will be administered by the respective departments.

Grants awarded to school districts and charter schools will be administered by the USOE and the preschool program will be run by the local school districts and schools. Grants to private childcare providers will be administered by the DWS, but the preschool program will be run by the private providers receiving the grant.

Contracts with private investors will be negotiated by the School Readiness Board.

Definitions

1. Is there a formal definition for “economically disadvantaged”?

Eligible children must qualify for free- or reduced-price school lunch (i.e. have a family income of 185% of the Federal Poverty Level or below).

78 (2) "Economically disadvantaged" means a student who:

79 (a) is eligible to receive free lunch;

80 (b) is eligible to receive reduced price lunch; or

81 (c) (i) is not otherwise accounted for in Subsection (2) (a) or (b); and

82 (ii) (A) is enrolled in a Provision 2 or Provision 3 school, as defined by the United

83 States Department of Agriculture;

84 (B) has a Declaration of Household Income on file;

85 (C) is eligible for a fee waiver; or

86 (D) is enrolled at a school that does not offer a lunch program and is a sibling of a

87 student accounted for in Subsection (2) (a) or (b).

Program requirements/eligibility

1. Is there a formal certification process by which a high quality preschool qualifies for a contract?

The School Readiness Board will determine and communicate the process by which a program will be determined to be high quality as that applies to the contracts.

2. If a program applies for funding through USOE, does that mean the program must be financially supported by an LEA?

Yes. Programs that apply through the USOE must be under the direction of an LEA. Employees of the program will be hired and paid through the LEA.

3. Should Head Start programs apply through USOE or DWS?

Programs that are under the direction of an LEA and have employees who are paid through the LEA must apply through the USOE.

4. Can a program that does not currently serve general education low-income students submit an application with the anticipation of including low income students?

No. A program must be able to demonstrate serving students who are low-income and general education to be eligible to apply for this program. Proposals serving the highest percentage of low income children will be the most competitive.

5. Must a program serve both three and four year old children to qualify for the funding?

No.

6. Can a program serve students who are turning five years old during the school year?

Yes. If a student who is four years old turns five during the school year s/he is enrolled in the program, the student can continue through to the end of the year and s/he enrolls in Kindergarten.

7. Is there a required number of hours per week for a preschool?

Most public preschool programs are half-day, four days a week, for four-year olds. In a daycare center, the preschool portion of the day is usually two and a half to three hours in the morning.

8. What constitutes a full-year preschool program?

A program that runs at least through the academic school year (nine months).

9. Can a program that runs during the academic school year, but not the summer, apply for this funding?

Yes.

10. Can a preschool program that is a summer or bridge program (3 months per year or less) apply for this funding?

No.

11. Can this funding be used by summer programs to develop a full-year program?

No, although the program may apply in subsequent years after the full-year program is developed.

12. If children are receiving home-based technology assistance (UPSTART), can they still participate in a preschool program funded by HB96?

Yes. However, students who are enrolled in both will need to be tracked and that information disclosed to the external evaluator.

13. Would a private school with a preschool program apply to USOE or DWS?

Private providers apply through the Department of Workforce Services. A private provider on the campus of a public LEA would also apply to the Department of Workforce Services.

14. Can a program that includes a sliding tuition rate for some children, and also serves low-income students, apply for this funding?

Yes. School Districts and Charter Schools are not permitted to charge a parent copay in Title I funded programs. If Title I funding is not being used to fund a preschool program, schools can and often do charge a sliding fee scale copay. Children receiving childcare subsidies to attend preschool/daycare are typically charged a copay on a sliding fee scale, according to income level and eligibility.

313 (4) If permitted under Title 1 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 314 6301-6578, an LEA may charge a sliding scale fee to a student participating in a high quality 315 preschool program under this section, based on household income.

15. Do programs that serve a majority of special education students qualify for the funding?

This program is focused on serving general education, low-income students.

Data requirements

1. What kind of indicators are required to be in the longitudinal data?

The board will select an independent, nationally-recognized early childhood education evaluator, selected through a request for proposals process to annually evaluate performance outcome measures. The board will select a uniform assessment that:

- is a nationally norm-based measure of age-appropriate cognitive or language skills

- has established reliability and validity with other similar measures and with later school outcomes

Early childhood entities participating in the program must conduct ongoing program evaluation and data collection to monitor program goal achievement and implementation of required program components.

381 (6) The State Board of Education shall annually share with the board aggregated
382 longitudinal data on eligible students currently receiving funding under this section
and any
383 eligible students who previously received funding under this section, including:
384 (a) academic achievement outcomes;
385 (b) special education use; and
386 (c) English language learner services.

2. Will students' academic performance be compared between programs to determine success, or will students be evaluated individually?

Programs will not be evaluated in a comparative model.

3. How will private providers create and assign SSIDs to students?

Instructions for this procedure will be posted on the USOE/DWS information sites.

Allowable expenses

1. Can a program pay for student enrollment with this program?

No.

2. Can students who are not designated low-income attend a preschool funded by this grant?

Yes.

3. Can the funding be used for advertising to recruit students?

No.

4. Can this program be used to fund education for teachers or paraprofessionals to earn their certification or degrees?

While funding education is not specifically restricted, programs who choose to expend funds on education for staff should carefully consider the sustainability of that model.

5. Can the assessment determined by the School Readiness Board be purchased with grant funding?

Yes.

6. Can the grant funds be used for the gap analysis required in the grant application?

No. The gap analysis must be completed as a part of the grant application. Grant funds cannot be used to pay for a grant writer or any other work before the grant period begins.

7. Can a program hire a consultant to provide professional development with the grant funding?
Yes.

8. Can the funding be used pay for expansion?
No. Grant funds cannot be used to pay for student tuition, capital projects, or ongoing expenses such as rent.

Highly-qualified staff

1. Can a program have a highly-qualified teacher and a paraprofessional in a classroom to create the 20:1/10:1 ratio for students?

Yes. Each class must have one teacher who has obtained at least the minimum standard of qualification and one paraprofessional.

189 (e) for a preschool program run by an eligible LEA, a class size that does not exceed 20
190 students, with one adult for every 10 students in the class;

195 (h) for a preschool program run by an eligible LEA, each teacher having at least
196 obtained:

197 (i) the minimum standard of a child development associate certification; or

198 (ii) an associate or bachelor's degree in an early childhood education related field;