



## Spring 2024 Frequently Asked Questions Updated 2.9.2024

***Please check back frequently as this document will be updated regularly***

### **What is the objective of the Vermont Early Childhood Fund?**

The Vermont Early Childhood Fund (VECF) aims to support creative solutions that will improve the well-being of children (prenatal–age 8), their families, and the Vermont communities in which they live.

### **Where can I find information about the grant programs?**

General information about VECF, including links to the application portals, a downloadable PDF of the applications, budget, and scoring rubrics, the history of VECF, a recording of the Grant Information Session, and a list of past recipients can be found on the [VECF page](#) of the Building Bright Futures website.

Detailed information about the Opportunity Grant and Innovation Grant, including focus of the grants and examples of what they will fund, can be found in the [VECF Announcement blog post](#).

### **What kind of projects should apply?**

- This grant is open to all sorts of projects and activities as long as they are helping children (prenatal–age 8) and their families
- Eligible projects support the vision stated in [Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan \(VECAP\)](#)
- While not required, preference will be given to projects that:
  - Increase access/provide equitable access to early childhood services and programs
  - Improve the quality of existing services and programs
  - Develop the early childhood workforce
  - Engage families and connect them to services
  - Address [BBF Regional Council Priorities](#)

### **Who is eligible to apply?**

Grants are open to nonprofits, businesses, municipalities, and schools.

### **If I applied for a grant in 2023 and was *not* awarded, can I apply again?**

Yes! If you applied in the fall, you will use the same login name and password, but be sure to apply using the new webpage links from the [VECF page of the website](#). Please

note that the application and budget have been updated for this round, so you may want to preview the questions before accessing the online application.

**If I was awarded a grant in the fall 2023 round, can I apply again?**

We are asking current grantees to wait until the fall 2024 application period to apply again.

**If awarded a grant, will we need to undergo a credentialing process?**

The application asks for your Federal EIN (Employee Identification Number). This is also known as your Federal Tax ID# (in the case of sole proprietors or individuals, this would be your social security number). **If awarded a grant, you will be required to have a federal SAM (System for Award Management) Number.** This can take more than a month, so it's best to look into the process now at <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

**What can the grant money be used for?**

The money can be used for the following (*not a complete list*):

- Paying people (salaries and benefits for staff, presenter fees, consultant fees, interns)
- Travel related to the project (mileage, training, events)
- Cost of training, education, or professional development
- Renting space for special events or programs
- Advertising directly tied to the grant goals
- Supplies and materials; equipment under \$5,000 that is not capitalized and will not add to the appreciable value of a property
- Up to 10% of the direct costs of your project may be used toward overhead/operating expenses to cover things such as rent, utilities, administration, equipment maintenance, etc.

**What can the grant money *NOT* be used for?**

The money cannot be used for the following (*not a complete list*):

- Construction of any kind. This includes any capital improvements, such as renovations to indoor and outdoor spaces, infrastructure such as water and sewer, and the purchase of any labor or materials directly related to a construction project.
- Capital purchases (generally, items which your business will add to your balance sheet and depreciate over time)
- Fundraising of any kind, including contributions to fundraisers or capital campaigns and any fundraising expenses
- Advertising (general advertising for the organization or programs not directly related to the grant)
- Alcohol
- Bad debt, debt, or things that have already been purchased

- Entertainment
- Food
- Goods or services for personal use
- Providing support for an individual
- Interest
- Lobbying
- Memberships and subscriptions
- Organization cost (for example, costs associated with becoming a nonprofit or an LLC)
- Patents
- Real property (land and anything attached to it)
- Royalties
- Sales taxes for exempt entities
- Pay for anything that happens outside of the grant agreement dates (before July 1, 2024, or after June 30, 2025)

**If you are including staff salaries in the application, are you able to include benefits?**

Yes.

**Can funds be used to purchase gift cards or stipends?**

No.

**How much funding is available?**

A total of \$1,500,000 is available to both programs. We expect to award approximately 15 Opportunity Grants and 4 Innovation Grants in the current round.

**What if we are piloting an innovative idea that does not meet the \$100,000 threshold for an Innovation Grant?**

Please apply for an Opportunity Grant at this time.

**Opportunity Grants range from \$10,000–\$80,000. What if my project costs less than \$10,000?**

We encourage you to think big with these grants! Consider expanding your program to reach more people, or partnering with another organization with similar needs to build a more comprehensive program. Collaborative applications are welcome!

**Is this grant available for organizations that are not focused on child care or education?**

Yes, as long as the project benefits children from the prenatal period to age 8.

**Are current and past VECF grantees eligible to apply?**

Yes.

**Can an organization apply for both an Opportunity and Innovation grant?**

No, we're asking each applicant to submit only one application. If an organization applies for a grant that will benefit multiple organizations, or includes collaboration with several other organizations, the other organizations can apply for a separate grant.

**Will you accept collaborative applications?**

Yes.

**Can an organization submit more than one application?**

No. We're asking each applicant to submit only one application per round. There will be additional rounds of funding in 2024 and 2025.

**If *ABC Organization* acts as a fiscal agent/sponsor for *XYZ Organization*, and *ABC Organization* applies for a grant, can *XYZ Organization* apply for a grant of its own?**

Yes.

**Can a VECF grant be combined with a grant from another funding source?**

Yes! In the application budget, there is a section to indicate funding from other grant sources.

We are aware that there are a number of grant opportunities available from other organizations, including the [Make Way for Kids](#) grant from First Children's Finance, grants through the [Vermont Children's Trust Foundation](#), a variety of [scholarships, grants, and bonuses through VTAEYC](#), and more. The Vermont Afterschool [Room for Me Grant](#) has been extended, and their webpage includes a helpful listing of other grant opportunities.

**Can a project propose to do work in more than one region?**

Yes, a project can serve more than one region; however, you must indicate a primary location in the application.

**Can statewide organizations submit multiple applications for different regions in the same grant round?**

No, BBF will accept one grant application per organization per round.

**If our project serves a wide variety of age ranges, can we apply?**

You can apply for the portion of the project that benefits children from the prenatal period to age 8.

**If an organization representing a network of organizations applies, can individual network members also apply?**

Yes.

**Can a sole proprietorship apply?**

Yes, as long as the project benefits children from the prenatal period to age 8. The project can benefit participants in your program and does not need to be region- or county-wide.

**Are family child care homes eligible?**

Yes, as long as the project benefits children from the prenatal period to age 8.

**Can I apply for a grant for National Accreditation fees?**

A VECF grant can be used to cover costs related to gaining accreditation not covered by other funding sources. [VTAEYC offers NAEYC and NAFCC Accreditation Fee Grants](#) as well as a Program Accreditation Bonus Grant.

**Can I apply for education/training/professional development for one person?**

BBF's goal is to provide grants that are not covered by other funding sources. VTAEYC and VSAC offer [a variety of scholarships and grants for education costs](#). VECF will provide grants for training and professional development that is not covered by these sources.

**Do requests need to be for one project or can it be for a range of needs?**

The request can be for a range of needs.

**When writing our application, should we only focus on the primary need we're addressing, or also the additional benefits of the work?**

You will be asked what area is the primary focus of your work. Please give a full description of your primary goal AND include the other benefits of the work. Be aware that awardees will be asked to work with BBF staff to develop metrics and measurable outcomes based on their application.

**When choosing a Regional Priority, do we have to select a priority for the region where our project is taking place?**

Yes.

**What if our organization serves the entire state?**

Please choose the region that the project you are applying for will serve. If the project will serve several regions, please choose the region where your project will have the greatest impact.

**Will grant recipients receive funding for the full amount of their request?**

Depending on the number of awards made and the amount of funds requested, BBF may choose to partially fund projects.

**Are matching funds required?**

No.

**Do I need to have experience with grants to apply?**

No.

**The grant application asks if my project will create new preschool slots. Will it hurt my application if that doesn't apply?**

No, many of the multiple choice questions on the applications are to meet federal reporting requirements. We recognize that the early childhood system is complex and welcome applications that address a variety of needs.

**What if I don't have reliable internet access to apply through the online grant portal?**

Contact Michelle Kersey, VECF Grants Manager, for assistance at [mkersey@buildingbrightfutures.org](mailto:mkersey@buildingbrightfutures.org)

**How will decisions be made about what projects are selected?**

There will be approximately 10 review teams consisting of BBF staff members, state agency representatives, early childhood partners, and parents of young children from throughout Vermont. Each team will score applications using a scoring rubric to prioritize projects from each region of the state for funding.

**How do I receive the funds if awarded?**

**Due to federal funding restrictions, grantees will be reimbursed monthly for expenses.**

Grantees will submit a reimbursement request (using a template provided by BBF) along with supporting documentation (such as receipts and payroll) through the grant portal. We are asking grantees to submit their requests by the 5th of the month following the month they paid for items, and BBF will reimburse you by the end of that month. For example, you would submit a reimbursement request by the 5th of August for things you paid for in July, and BBF would reimburse you by the end of August.

**Can funds be provided up front to make purchases or pay for staff?**

Due to federal funding restrictions, funds can only be provided on a reimbursement basis. If reimbursement is a challenge for your organization, please reach out to Michelle Kersey, VECF Grants Manager, at [mkersey@buildingbrightfutures.org](mailto:mkersey@buildingbrightfutures.org)

**If the grant period starts in July, would we be required to pay for costs using a month's worth of our own funds and then get reimbursed for that?**

Yes, due to federal government requirements, these grants are being made on a reimbursement basis.

**Is the reimbursement expected to be Net30?**

Yes, that is our goal.

**What if the federal government shuts down? Will that affect payments?**

Not for this round of funding.

**What happens if I receive a grant award?**

- You will be asked to sign a formal grant agreement within 2 weeks of notification.
- If you don't already have a SAM.gov Unique Entity ID (UEI), you will need to [apply for one right away](#), as it can take several months to receive your ID and you must have one to receive reimbursement.
- Grantees will:
  - Develop a budget timeline for spending needs by mid-May , as well as a plan to measure impact by June 30, 2024
  - Attend a training session that reviews federal grant information and the reimbursement process
  - Attend the BBF Early Childhood Regional Council meeting in your area (as you're able) and maintain contact with the BBF Regional Manager regularly throughout the project
  - Report on their project and the impact of funding twice: in January 2025 and July 2025. Grantees can choose between submitting a written report through the VECF grant portal or attending a virtual meeting with a BBF staff member.

**Is outside evaluation required?**

Outside evaluation is not required, but BBF staff will be providing technical assistance to grantees to help develop outcome measures.

**Who should I contact if I have another question?**

Please contact Michelle Kersey, VECF Grants Manager, at [mkersey@buildingbrightfutures.org](mailto:mkersey@buildingbrightfutures.org)