Opportunities Ahead Announcement for Virginia Communities: Preschool Development Grant – Birth to Five (PDG) and Mixed Delivery Grants (MDG)

February 21, 2020

Participation in high quality early childhood programs can effectively support the school readiness of at-risk children. In order to help communities consisting of one or more localities increase the opportunities for young children and their families to benefit, VECF will offer opportunities for communities to apply to participate in PDG and/or Mixed Delivery Grants.*

Required Letters of Intent (LOIs), described below, are due to VECF no later than March 20, 2020, 5:00 pm.

Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG), with a focus on building local infrastructure: Through PDG, communities have the opportunity to build, expand, and sustain a birth-to-age 5 (B-5) system that supports school readiness for Virginia’s children served in publicly funded early childhood education and care (ECCE) classrooms.** These efforts will help build the foundation for a new uniform measurement and improvement system required for all publicly-funded programs currently proposed in legislation.

VECF anticipates awarding approximately ten PDG grants for FY21. Of the approximately $11 million awarded to Virginia for PDG, up to $3 million will be used to support new communities’ capacity to coordinate activities. Approximately $5 million will be used to fund incentives for community-based teachers who participate. PDG funding will support new communities in convening community stakeholders and engaging them in assessing and improving access to and quality of all publicly funded ECCE for children B-5 by:

- building relationships, including communicating with and coordinating PDG activities with all publicly funded ECCE partners;
- increasing access, including by assessing current program enrollment practices, analyzing needs data, and beginning to implement coordinated enrollment activities;
- improving quality, including through providing CLASS observations and related quality improvement support in all publicly funded classrooms; and
- engaging families in communication and decision making.

PDG Communities will work closely with VECF, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and the University of Virginia to complete activities and strengthen their local systems as indicated above. Note that all Virginia communities will ultimately be expected to build this infrastructure so PDG enables ready communities to start this important work now. It should also be noted that PDG cannot be used to pay for slots.
Mixed Delivery Grants (MDG), with a focus on increasing the number of slots: Communities face structural barriers to providing sufficient access to high-quality ECCE experiences including financial and capacity challenges and limited partnerships between public and private organizations. The Governor’s proposed budget* includes funding that will support communities’ efforts to address these barriers and prepare more children for success in school.

Initial funding will be for a one-year term; with satisfactory performance, the grants will be extended for one additional year. Mixed Delivery Grants will support public/private systems of preschool delivery with a focus on expanding the number of at-risk 3- and/or 4-year-old children served in high-quality ECCE by:

- **building relationships** to ensure coordinated community decision-making and effective use of resources;
- **increasing access** to high quality ECCE in private/community-based (non-school-based) settings for at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds;
- **improving quality**, including through providing CLASS observations and related quality improvement support in publicly funded classrooms; and
- **engaging families** in communication and decision making.

Mixed Delivery Grants are intended to increase the capacity of communities to serve at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds who currently are unserved in a publicly-funded ECCE program (e.g., VPI; Head Start; or subsidized child care in centers, homes, or preschools).

**Potentially eligible applicants:**
Applying entities and fiscal agents must have proven experience and capacity to administer grants of complex nature and represent coalitions of community partners committed to the success of the initiatives. It is anticipated that potential applicants may represent school divisions, local governments, human service agencies, United Way agencies, community action agencies, Smart Beginnings initiatives, chambers of commerce, and/or community-based organizations or associations. Current Mixed Delivery and PDG grantees are eligible to apply for new Mixed Delivery Grants and/or to expand their current service area.

Communities may elect to submit Letters of Intent to apply for either PDG or MDG or for both. However, communities should seriously consider whether they have the capacity to start and implement both initiatives simultaneously. Up to one 2020 MDG and up to one PDG grant will be funded for each community.

**Letters of Intent (LOI)**
The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation invites letters of intent from communities that would like to be considered for Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG) or Mixed Delivery Grant (MDG) funding in 2020-2021. This letter of intent is required for communities interested in the opportunity to submit full applications for PDG or MDG. In developing responses to this LOI request, communities may choose to submit an LOI for PDG only, MDG only, or for both.

A panel of reviewers will use information provided in the LOI to determine which communities will be invited to submit PDG and MDG applications. VECF will also use information provided in LOIs to plan for provision of technical assistance for communities as needed during the application process. Successful applicants for these funding opportunities will represent strong collaborations of organizations at the community level, and only one application per service area will be funded. VECF encourages interested communities to develop a coordinated vision for their community and work collaboratively to apply. Only one Letter of Intent (LOI) per service area will be considered.

*Virginia has been awarded a 3-year federal grant for PDG B-5. The Mixed Delivery opportunity described here is pending current state legislative/budget decisions.
**Publicly-funded ECCE classrooms include those in schools, Head Start programs, and publicly subsidized ECCE in family day homes, child care centers, and private preschools.
To submit an LOI through VECF’s online grants management system, those who have applied for or received funding from VECF before should use their established user name and password; applicants new to the VECF grant process will need to click the “Create new account” button. After you are logged in, click on “Apply” in red letters at the top of screen. If you have any questions about accessing the online LOI, please contact angela@vecf.org.

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**Recommended activities for interested applicants:**

- Review materials related to the two opportunities (as well as for VDOE’s VPI expansion opportunity) on VECF’s website;
- Start or restart conversations with community partners about how this opportunity may help you measure and increase access to and quality of ECCE for at-risk children in your community;
- Gather data that will help describe the need in your community; and
- Submit the required LOI to VECF no later than March 20, 2020 at 5pm.

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To receive information and details about PDG and MDG opportunities, application requirements, and deadlines, please follow VECF on Facebook (www.facebook.com/SmartBeginnings) or Twitter (@SB_VECF). Visit our website for the most up-to-date information. For comments and questions, please send inquiries to info@vecf.org. Questions will not receive individual responses, but they will inform regularly updated FAQs.

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