

Early Learning Facilities Fund Grant Program

2023-25 Decision Package – Capital Budget



The Early Learning Facilities (ELF) program supports Washington's commitment to developing high-quality early learning opportunities for children from low-income households. Through a strong partnership with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), the Department of Commerce ELF program provides capital dollars to support construction of much-needed Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) classrooms. DCYF and Commerce estimate that an additional 2,500 facilities will need to come online in the next few years to make space for all children eligible for state-funded child care and preschool programs. This budget proposal asks that the state fund a portion of those facilities with ELF program grant dollars.

To learn more about the ELF program visit: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/building-infrastructure/capital-facilities/early-learning-program/>. DCYF is submitting this Capital Budget Decision Package on behalf of the Department of Commerce.



Commerce ELF - Chehalis



Smokey Point - Marysville



Commerce ELF - Kent

Early Learning Facilities Fund:

The ELF program aims to help ECEAP contractors and Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) providers to expand, remodel, purchase, or construct early learning facilities and classrooms necessary to support early learning opportunities for children from low-income households. Projects in child care "deserts," low-income neighborhoods, and/or rural communities are prioritized for funding.

- ✓ Request for funding for another biennial round of Early Learning Facilities Fund new construction, major and minor renovations capacity building grants.
- ✓ In the 2021-22 grant round, Commerce received 143 applications requesting a total of \$72.9 million. They only had funding for a fraction of those projects (\$43.2 million).
- ✓ Request amount - **\$40 MILLION**

Non-Expansion Minor Renovation Grants:

Child care providers, especially the smaller providers like family homes, have long told Commerce and DCYF that they need help paying for critical minor renovations at their facilities to ensure they remain open and can safely serve children. Since the ELF Fund only awards grants to projects that increase ECEAP or WCCC capacity, projects that request funds just for minor renovations (i.e., playground equipment, roof repairs, safety upgrades, etc.) are not eligible.

- ✓ Request for another one-time grant cycle for non-expansion minor renovation grants.
- ✓ In 2021-22 Commerce was funded for \$28.5 million in federal COVID relief dollars to do a one-time grant round. \$169.4 million from 946 grant applications were received in spring 2022.
- ✓ Request amount: **\$10 MILLION**

TESTIMONIALS:

“We would not have been able to expand early learning to additional families, specifically those furthest from early learning opportunities, had it not been for the ELF Grant. Our community is grateful!”

– *Kathy Carman, Owner, Smokey Point Daycare and Early Learning Center, Marysville*

“My dream of having a center has come true, and my community has a safe haven along with providing employment to local residents.”

– *Bertha Acevedo Negrete, Owner, Bertha's Daycare, Yakima*

DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity.
- Create a high-quality integrated B-8 system.
- Improve quality and availability of provider.

TOTAL COST:

23-25 BIENNIUM: \$50 MILLION

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