**Section 235.20 Application Procedure and Content for New or Expanding Programs**

Each applicant that is proposing a program that has not received funding in the year previous to the current application or is seeking additional funds to expand its currently funded program shall submit to the State Board of Education a proposal that includes the components specified in this Section. For purposes of this Section, an "expanded" program includes one in which the applicant is proposing to serve additional children and their families or to offer initiatives not provided under its currently funded program.

a) Grants for new or expanded programs shall be offered in years in which the level of available funding is such that one or more new or expanded programs can be supported, along with those currently funded programs that seek continuation funding in accordance with Section 235.60.

b) When sufficient funding is available, the State Superintendent of Education shall issue one or more Requests for Proposals (RFP) specifying the information that applicants shall include in their proposals, informing applicants of any bidders' conferences and requiring that proposals be submitted no later than the date specified in the RFP. The RFP shall provide at least 45 calendar days in which to submit proposals.

1) Proposals for preschool education programs shall be submitted electronically through the State Board of Education's grant management system (see http://www.isbe.net/egms/).

2) Proposals for prevention initiative programs shall be submitted in a format specified by the State Board of Education.

c) All proposals submitted in response to an RFP shall include the following components:

1) A cover page signed by the school district superintendent or official authorized to submit the proposal or, in the case of a joint application, by the superintendent from each of the school districts and each authorized official of other eligible entities participating in the joint proposal.

2) For applicants other than public school districts, a description that includes the following:

A) the applicant's mission statement, organizational structure, and goals or policies regarding early childhood programs;

B) the applicant's existing competencies to provide early childhood education programs, to include a list of any early childhood accreditations that have been achieved, which may include, as applicable, the most current designation the applicant has received through the ExceleRate Illinois: Quality Rating and Improvement System (http://www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com/); and

C) in the case of a joint application, the goals and objectives of the collaboration and a brief description of each partner's experience in providing services similar to those to be provided under the Early Childhood Block Grant program.

3) A description of how the comprehensive services to be provided are aligned with:

A) as applicable to the program being proposed, the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, as set forth in Appendix A or, beginning July 1, 2015, the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines, as set forth in Appendix C;

B) the Illinois Birth to Five Program Standards as set forth in Appendix B; and

C) for proposed preschool education programs that will serve English learners, the "Early English Language Development Standards Ages 2.5-5.5 2013 Edition" (2013), published by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System on behalf of the WIDA Consortium, Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER), University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1025 West Johnson Street, MD#23, Madison WI 53706 and posted at http://www.wida.us/standards/eeld.aspx. No later amendments to or editions of these standards are incorporated.

4) A description of the need for the program, which shall include:

A) current demographic or descriptive information regarding the community in which the families and children reside (including information on the prevalence of homelessness); and

B) the process that was used to determine the need for the program in the community in relation to other similar services that may be operating in the same geographic area; this description must list, to the extent known, the other services offered and an estimate of the number of children being served.

5) A description of the population to be served, as defined in Section 235.10(a), for each program to be funded under the Early Childhood Block Grant. This description shall include:

A) how the eligible population will be recruited;

B) the geographic area to be served; and

C) the estimated number of children and/or families to be enrolled.

6) A description of the procedures to be used to screen children and their families to determine their need for services. Results of the screening shall be made available to the program staff and parents of the children screened. All screening procedures shall include:

A) research-based criteria to determine at what point performance on the screening instrument indicates that children are at risk of academic failure as well as to assess other environmental, economic and demographic information that indicates a likelihood that the children would be at risk;

B) screening instruments/activities that are:

i) related to and able to measure the child's development in at least the following areas (as appropriate for the age of the child): vocabulary, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, English proficiency, fine and gross motor skills, social skills, and emotional and cognitive development; and

ii) formally validated with evidence that the instruments/activities reliably and accurately detect children who are at risk for developmental delays and do not incorrectly identify children disproportionately as being at risk of academic failure;

C) written parental permission for the screening;

D) parent interview (to be conducted in the parents' home language, if necessary), including at least the following:

i) a summary of the child's health history and status, including whether the child has an existing disability, and social development; and

ii) information about the parents, such as age, educational achievement and employment history;

E) vision and hearing screening, in accordance with 77 Ill. Adm. Code 685 (Vision Screening) and 675 (Hearing Screening); and

F) where practicable, provision for the inclusion of program teaching staff in the screening process.

7) A description of the parent education and involvement component that will be provided, which shall include activities in each of the following areas:

A) communication between the home and the preschool education program that is regular, two-way and meaningful;

B) parenting skills are promoted and supported;

C) recognition that parents play an integral role in assisting student learning;

D) parents are welcome in the program, and their support and involvement are sought; and

E) parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

8) A description of how the program will coordinate with other programs, as specified in the RFP, that are in operation in the same area and that are concerned with the education, welfare, health and safety needs of young children. A copy of the written agreement between the program and any Head Start program (see http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs) operating in the same area shall be executed by the date and contain the information specified in Section 2-3.71(a)(4.5) of the School Code. If a Head Start program is either unable or unwilling to enter into a written agreement, the program shall notify the State Board of Education of this fact no later than December 31 of each fiscal year.

9) A description of the full-time and part-time professional and nonprofessional staff to be paid by the program, indicating that program administrators, early childhood teachers, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers are appropriately qualified.

A) Teachers of children ages 3 to 5 years must hold a professional educator license endorsed in early childhood education or an educator license with stipulations endorsed in early childhood and one of the following endorsements: provisional educator, alternative provisional educator, resident teacher or visiting international educator. (See Section 2-3.71(a)(3) of the School Code and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.Appendix A.)

B) Paraprofessional staff employed to assist in instruction provided to children ages 3 to 5 years shall meet the requirements set forth in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.510(b) (Endorsement for Paraprofessional Educator) or hold an approval for paraprofessional educator received in accordance with Section 25.15(a)(2)(J) (Types of Licenses; Exchange).

C) Teachers of children ages 3 to 5 years who are assigned to a transitional bilingual program or a transitional program of instruction that is administered by a school district, either in an attendance center or a non-school-based facility, shall meet the requirements set forth in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 228.35 (Transitional Bilingual Education), as applicable.

D) By July 1, 2017, directors of child care centers offering preschool programs funded under Section 2-3.71 of the School Code and this Part shall have either:

i) a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in child development or early childhood education or the equivalent (i.e., baccalaureate in any discipline with a minimum of 24 semester hours of credit in child development, early childhood education, or early childhood special education, including relevant field experience) and a Gateways to Opportunity Level II or III Illinois Director Credential issued pursuant to Section 10-70 of the Department of Human Services Act [20 ILCS 1305/10-70] (see http://www.ilgateways.com/en/credentials); or

ii) meet the requirements of subsection (c)(9)(E).

E) By July 1, 2017, directors of preschool programs funded under Section 2-3.71 of the School Code and this Part and administered by school districts shall hold a professional educator license endorsed for principal or general administrative issued under 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.337 (Principal (2013)) or 25.335 (General Administrative (Through August 31, 2014)), respectively.

F) Beginning September 1, 2015, an applicant must submit an assurance that each staff member who will provide services to children enrolled in an early childhood classroom funded under this Part and who does not hold a professional educator license issued by the State Board of Education pursuant to Article 21B of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/Art. 21B] and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25 (Educator Licensure) has registered in the Illinois Department of Human Services' "Gateways to Opportunity" registry (see http://registry.ilgateways.com).

10) A description of staff development assessment procedures and ongoing professional development activities to be conducted, to include a description of how the results of the assessment will be used to inform the program's staff development and, for proposals for expanded programs, the continuous quality improvement plan required under Section 235.67.

11) A description of how developmental and/or educational progress will be assessed and documented to ensure that the program meets the needs of the child and provides a system whereby that child's parents are routinely advised of their child's progress.

A) The procedures to assess progress shall be formally validated with evidence that the procedures reliably and accurately assess a child's progress relative to his or her individual needs and the standards set forth in Appendix A or Appendix C, as applicable.

B) The procedures shall address each of the domains of development specified in Section 235.20(c)(6).

12) A description of the required program components, as set forth in either Section 235.30 or 235.40.

13) Other information, as specified in the RFP, such as daily schedules (including the number of hours per day and days per week the program will operate, which must provide for at least 12.5 hours a week), an annual calendar of at least 165 days, classroom locations, facility information (e.g., owner's name, terms of lease arrangement, size of classrooms and other areas to be used by the program), if applicable.

14) The plan for ensuring that the program provides either a snack, in the case of a half-day program, or a meal, in the case of a full-day program, for participating children.

A) Food and beverages provided in programs located in a school district attendance center shall meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's competitive food standards set forth at 7 CFR 210.11 (2013).

B) Food and beverages provided in programs located in a licensed child care center or other community setting shall meet DCFS' standards set forth at 89 Ill. Adm. Code 407.330 (Nutrition and Meal Service).

15) A budget summary and payment schedule, as well as a budget breakdown, i.e., a detailed explanation of each line item of expenditure. The budget shall specify that no more than 5 percent of the total grant award shall be used for administrative and general expenses not directly attributed to program activities, except that a higher limit not to exceed 10 percent may be negotiated with an applicant that has provided evidence that the excess administrative expenses are beyond its control and that it has exhausted all available and reasonable remedies to comply with the limitation.

16) A description of how the applicant will ensure that no fees will be charged of parents or guardians and their children who are enrolled and participate in Early Childhood Block Grant programs.

17) A plan for evaluating the proposed programs and activities to be included in the Early Childhood Block Grant, which shall correspond to the applicable specifications set forth in the RFP.

18) Such certifications, assurances and program-specific terms of the grant as the State Superintendent of Education may require, to be signed by each applicant that is a party to the application and submitted with the proposal. (Also see Section 235.70.)

d) Applicants may be requested to clarify various aspects of their proposals. The contents of the approved proposal shall be incorporated into a grant agreement to be signed by the State Superintendent of Education or designee and the school district superintendent or, in the case of an entity that is not the school district, the person legally authorized to submit the proposal and bind the applicant to its contents.

(Source: Amended at 39 Ill. Reg. 6674, effective April 27, 2015)