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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Award Notifications

When will awards be announced? Awards for the Invest in NY Child Care Deserts grant for new providers were announced on July 25, 2022 via email to the grant applicants.

How many providers applied for the grants and how many were awarded? Over 1,700 providers applied for the grant and 344 providers were awarded statewide.

How do I know if I was awarded? On July 25, 2022 notifications were distributed via email to the 344 providers who were awarded funds.

Those who were not awarded should have also received a notification making them aware of their status. Providers will also see an updated status in the Child Care Grants portal.

Why was I not funded? Unfortunately, OCFS was not able to award grants to everyone who applied. Awards were distributed across New York State to providers seeking to open programs, based on the score that applicants received when completing their grant application, until all funds were exhausted.

How was eligibility determined? Grant applications were scored via the electronic application. Awards were made in score order to all eligible provider modalities (program types) out of the funding that was available for each program type and regional economic development council (REDC). Awards were made in score order (from highest to lowest) to licensed programs until funding was exhausted.

For more information on eligibility and scoring, please review the RFA – Section 3.1 - Minimum Qualifications to Apply and Section 6.2 - Evaluation Process - <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/funding/RFA1/RFA1-Childcare-Deserts.pdf>

What were scores based on? Grants were scored separately by program type (modality) based on the scoring matrix below that includes whether the proposed program:

1. Is located within a high, medium, or low-level child care desert census tract



2. Is located within a REDC with a high, medium, or low rate of desert
3. Is located within an area with a high score on the Diversity Index
4. Serves a high poverty neighborhood, as identified by the percentage of families at or below 200% Federal Poverty Level.

Up to 100 points

An additional 5 bonus points were available to programs who proposed:

1. Slots to serve Infant/Toddler populations (SACC n/a)
2. Slots providing non-traditional hours

Up to an additional 10 points for a total from 0-110 points.

For more information on how scores were determined, please review the RFA – Section 6.2 - Evaluation Process -

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/funding/RFA1/RFA1-Childcare-Deserts.pdf>

What happened if two programs who were in the same REDC and had the same modality had a tied score?

In the event of a tie between two or more applications, ties were resolved by awarding in date/time order of application submission.

I was denied for the Deserts grant. Can I still open my child care program?

So long as you obtain the necessary license/registration/permit, you may open a child care program.

Where can I go if I have questions?

Please reach out to your local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) on the licensing or registration process. If you are unsure of your CCR&R you can reach out to the Child Care Deserts hotline at 1-844-863-9320 and they can assist you in finding this information.

I was awarded a Child Care Deserts grant. What can I use the funds for?

Funds can be used for program development costs, short-term operating expenses, personnel costs, rent/mortgage payments, utilities, training, and technical assistance expenses.

For more information review the List of Allowable Expenses - <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/funding/RFA1/RFA1-Att-4-Allowable-Expenses.docx>



I was awarded a Child Care Deserts grant. What are my next steps? When can I expect my first payment?

Awarded programs have 120 days from the pre-award letter to complete the license application process.

Grantees must meet all vendor responsibility requirements, and will receive additional notifications regarding needed documents to complete final approval. Awardees should respond quickly to provide all information requested.

Providers cannot begin to provide child care prior to their licensing date, and awardees cannot use the funds for any eligible expenses incurred prior to the grant application date (if awarded); OCFS has no obligation to pay for expenses incurred prior to that time. Payments cannot be made prior to formal grant award and completion of all pre- and post-award requirements including vendor responsibility.

The first quarterly payment will be made after the license has been issued to the new program and all pre- and post-award requirements are met. The additional payments will be made quarterly after the initial payment as long as the awardee is meeting all deliverables. No payments will be made after June 30, 2024.

For more information on ongoing eligibility for awardees, please see the Ongoing Eligibility Report -

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/funding/RFA1/RFA1-Att-6-Eligibility-Report.docx>

What happens if I don't finish the licensing process?

OCFS will rescind the pre-approval letters or awards of selected awardees who cannot successfully complete the licensing process, do not meet OCFS vendor responsibility requirements or do not comply with the grant requirements included in this RFA.



Child Care Deserts Application Portal

What do I need to do before I apply for the grant?

Prior to applying for the grant you must complete the OCFS or NYC DOHMH Article 47 day care center orientation and request an application apply for a license/registration/permit for a new child care program. For NYC Group Day Care, you must have submitted your application.

You will also need a personal my.NY.gov user account.

Where can I find the application portal?

The application portal can be found at: <https://childcare-grants.ocfs.ny.gov/>

When completing the Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts application why did I receive an error that states that I am ineligible?

There are a few reasons you received this message:

- If the proposed program is in an area that RFA score is below 30
- If the program was licensed/registered/permitted prior to 1/28/22
- If the program address is not in the system of record
- If the program status must also be application received/ application requested/ licensed/ registered/ preliminary/ or permitted.

Please verify with your regulator that your address is on file and is up to date. If you have additional questions on this message, please reach out to your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency. Contact information for those agencies and your local regional office can be found on the child care page of the OCFS website located at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/>

If I don't have all the information needed to complete my application, can I save it and complete it later?

Yes. After you have completed Step 1: General Applicant Information, and clicked the "Save and Next button" an application number will be created. Once your application number is created, you can Exit, by selecting the "Exit" button in the top right corner of the application. All applications must be submitted by 11:59:59 p.m. on 5/19/2022.

If I withdraw my application, is it possible to submit a new application for the same facility?

No. You can only submit one application per facility ID. If you accidentally withdrew your application, you should contact your local CCRR.

What should I do if I need to make edits to my application after it has been submitted?

Please reach out to your CCR&R. Contact information for those agencies and your local regional office can be found on the child care page of the OCFS website located at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/>

Where can I get more information on navigating the grant application portal?

You can find step by step user guides and other training resources at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/deserts/#training-rscs>

How long do I have to apply?

The application portal will close on May 19, 2022 at 11:59PM.



Child Care Deserts Background Information

| | |
|---|---|
| What are child care deserts? | The Invest in NY Child Care RFA defines child care deserts as a census tract where there are 3 or more children under 5 years of age for each available child care slot, or there are no available child care slots in the census tract. |
| What is the purpose of the Invest in NY - Child Care Deserts Grant? | New York State identified \$100M to build and expand licensed, registered, and permitted child care capacity in areas with the least supply. |
| Where do the funds come from? | Funds for the Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts Grant come from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). |
| How will this grant program help New Yorkers? | Child care desert funding represents an unprecedented opportunity and investment to build child care capacity and strengthen the state’s economy, by addressing the issues that impact businesses including chronic absence, productivity reductions and turnover due to inadequate options for quality child care in the most needed parts of the state. |
| What is the age range of children being served by this grant? | All ages that may be served by licensed/registered/permitted child care programs. |



Grant Eligibility & Application Questions

Who is eligible for the Invest in NY - Child Care Deserts grant and how much is available?

NYS will be awarding \$70 million to providers opening new licensed/registered/permitted child care programs in desert areas of New York State.

To find out if you are eligible read section 3.0 of the RFA, Minimum Qualifications to Apply, section 7.0 Mandatory Award Requirements, and section 8.0, Program-Specific Requirements and Forms:

[Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts Request for Application \(RFA\)](#)

When will the grant for existing programs looking to expand under their current license become available?

A separate grant opportunity is anticipated to be released for existing programs looking to expand, later this year. When the grant is available, it will be posted on the OCFS website at:

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/funding/>

What can funds be used for?

Funds can be used for program development costs, short-term operating expenses, personnel costs, training, and technical assistance expenses. For more information on the use of funds read section 2.3, Purpose and Funding Availability, Allowable uses of the Child Care Desert Funding:

[Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts Request for Application \(RFA\)](#)

When does the application period open?

The application portal opened on 04/11/2022 and will close on 05/19/2022 at 11:59 p.m..

The application portal can be found at: <https://childcare-grants.ocfs.ny.gov/>

For more information on the steps to take prior to applying, read the RFA section 5.0, Application Content and Submission:

[Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts Request for Application \(RFA\)](#)

Is the grant first come first serve or competitive?

The grant is competitive. Providers who secure pre-approval will need to successfully secure a license, registration, or permit. Providers will also need to complete an online application to provide details on their proposed program and how it will address child care deserts in their area of the state. Funding will be awarded based on eligible scores. OCFS does not guarantee all approved applicants will receive funding.

For more information read the RFA:

[Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts Request for Application \(RFA\)](#)





What should I do first if I want to apply for the grant?

For an OCFS license or registration, complete the OCFS Orientation before applying for the Invest in NY Child Care grant opportunity:

[How to Get Started/ Day Care Orientation](#)

For programs applying to become an NYC DOHMH Article 47 day care center, you must attend a pre-permit orientation - <https://a816-healthpsi.nyc.gov/OnlineRegistration/dohmh/DOHMHService.action>. Check the box next to “Group Child Care and Summer Camp Orientation Sessions”, then click “Continue” at the bottom of the page before applying for a new permit.

After you have attended the applicable orientation, you can apply for a license/registration/permit for a new child care program.

For all steps of the grant application process, read the RFA, section 5.0, Application Content and Submission:

[Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts Request for Application \(RFA\)](#)

What are the steps to apply?

There are five steps to the grant application process

- Step 1: Review Licensing and Grant Requirements
- Step 2: Determine the Taxpayer Identification Number, Type, Legal Business Name and Business Entity Type
- Step 3: Attend Technical Assistance Sessions
- Step 4: Complete Grant Application Submission
- Step 5: Complete Licensing and Contracting

For a detailed explanation of the grant application process, read the RFA, section 5.0, Application Content and Submission:

[Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts Request for Application \(RFA\)](#)

What are the available languages for the application?

The application is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Yiddish, Bengali, Korean, Haitian Creole, French, Italian, Arabic, and Polish.

Where can I go for more information on the grant application?

For more information on the Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts Grant visit: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/deserts/>

Or read the RFA at:

[Invest in NY – Child Care Deserts Request for Application \(RFA\)](#)

You can also submit questions to:

investnychildcare@ocfs.ny.gov



I am an existing child care provider. Do I qualify for this grant?

Programs adding capacity by either creating an additional modality or changing their current modality are considered a “new program” and are eligible to apply. For example, a Family Day Care (FDC) that is going to become a Group Family Daycare (GFDC) is eligible to apply. Programs or providers that held a license within the year preceding the issue date of this RFA or are current license holders and are changing locations or their legal entities but not, in fact, expanding their licensed capacity are **not** eligible to apply.

I run an after-school program and we are planning to add a preschool component. Will the preschool program qualify for this grant?

If you are required to apply for a new license/permit/registration to care for preschool children, you could be eligible based on the criteria of RFA 1 - Invest in NY Child Care Emergency Request for Applications (RFA) for New Programs.

I am a current provider and I have questions about expanding my facility under my current license or changing modalities. Who is the best person to speak to about this?

Current providers who have questions about their current license should contact their regulator/licensor.

Is help available for selecting a child care site?

Applicants who require assistance with licensing requirements and selecting a site can reach out to their local Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R) for support. A directory of CCR&R Agencies and contact information is available at: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/referral-agencies.php>

When the grant portal opens, how long will I have to apply and when will I find out if I’m awarded the grant?

The application period opened on April 11, 2022 and closes May 19, 2022 at 11:59 p.m.. The anticipated date of notification of pre-approval is no earlier than June 15, 2022.

Are funds paid as reimbursement?

This is not a reimbursement-based grant but awarded providers are required to keep a record of how funds are used to support their child care program. Written or electronic record of all receipts must be available in case of an audit for at least 6 years following the end of the grant period. More information on how grant funds can be used is available within RFA 1 Invest in NY Child Care Emergency Request for Applications (RFA) for New Programs Attachment 4 - List of Allowable Expenses.

What happens if I offer non-traditional hours and I don’t have families who take advantage of these services?

In order to receive the bonus, the non-traditional hours slots must be available, and the program must be open, regardless of attendance, as reflected in grant requirements.

The program must also be open and operating with required staff ratio to provide the non-traditional hours to the number of slots stated in the application.



I started the process of becoming OCFS licensed last month. Would I still be considered a new provider?

Providers who are in the process of applying for a license are eligible as long as they have not secured a license as of January 28, 2022. If awarded, funds from the child care desert grant can only be spent on eligible expenses dating back to the date of application submission.

I'm currently a legally-exempt provider. Do I qualify for this grant?

Legally-exempt programs that will become licensed or registered are eligible to apply.

I missed the informational session. Is there a recording I can watch?

You can find the recordings, slide deck and transcripts for the public information sessions about the Invest in NY Child Care Emergency Request for Applications (RFA) for New Programs here:

English Versions

- [February 14, 2022 Session Video](#)
- [February 14, 2022 Slide Deck](#)
- [February 14, 2022 Transcript](#)

Spanish versions

- [February 14, 2022 Session Video](#)
- [February 14, 2022 Slide Deck](#)
- [February 14, 2022 Transcript](#)

Additional information is available here:

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/funding/#RFA1>

Are there plans for another grant opportunity for new providers like this? I won't be ready to begin the process of opening a child care program until 2023.

Currently, this is the only grant opportunity scheduled for new providers. Interested new providers must apply for the Invest in New York Child Care grant opportunity under RFA #1 by the deadline of May 19, 2022, 11:59 PM.

How long does it take to find out if you are preapproved?

After an application is submitted, the anticipated date of notification of pre-approval is no earlier than June 15, 2022.

Do you qualify for this grant if you run a child care program in a public school building?

Programs that receive 100% of their funding from public sources such as Head Start/Early Head Start or publicly funded Pre-K programs are not eligible. If programs are not 100% funded with public sources, they would be eligible to apply. Please note that any expenses claimed under this grant must be substantiated separately from other funding sources. You may not attribute the same expenses to multiple fund sources.

What happens if I become approved for this grant and I have to move?

If the proposed program site location must change after the site visit, applicants must provide a new site location meeting site requirements by the Section 1.2 Application Submission Deadline, to be eligible for funding.



Failure to update the new program location and information (# to be served may change, etc.) in the application by Application Submission Deadline will eliminate the program from being funded. For program requirements, please review section 3 of the RFA, Minimum Qualification to Apply and Prequalification Process - <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/deserts/#steps>

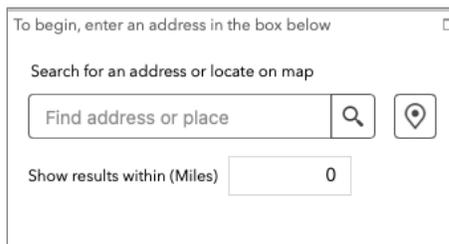
Understanding the REDC Child Care Deserts Map

How do I know if my area is in a child care desert?

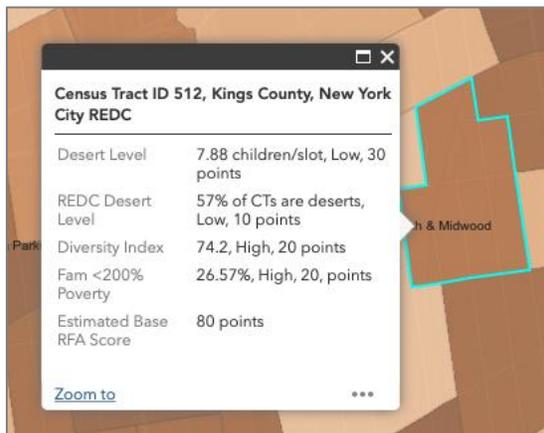
To view child care deserts in New York State, visit the REDC Child Care Deserts map: https://bit.ly/cc_deserts

How do I search the map?

You can type your site address into the “Find address or place” box in the upper left-hand corner of the page.



You can also click on the image of New York and zoom in on a particular area for more information.





Where can I go for more information on how to read the REDC Child Care Deserts Map?

For more information on the REDC Child Care Desert Map you can view the user guide and video here:

- [REDC Child Care Desert Map User Guide](#)
- [How to Use the REDC Child Care Desert Map Video](#)

I can't find my desert level by typing in my zip code. Why is that?

In some cases, you may need to be more specific and include the full address of the site. Census tract boundaries do not correspond to zip code boundaries. A census tract might have one zip code or many, and a zip code might cross census tract boundaries. Click on the links below for further instructions

- [REDC Child Care Desert Map User Guide](#)
- [How to Use the REDC Child Care Desert Map Video](#)

Do I have to use the map in order to apply for the grant?

Use of the map by an applicant is optional but will be used by OCFS to determine if the program location is eligible to apply. A minimum base score of 30 (without bonus points) is required to be eligible for funding. See [REDC Child Care Desert Map User Guide](#) for instructions.

What do you consider downstate?

Downstate is considered the New York City, Long Island (Nassau and Suffolk counties), and the Westchester region (Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester counties). Downstate includes the following Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) regions: Long Island, Mid-Hudson and New York City.

The map doesn't show the Fam<200% estimate for my proposed location. Why is that?

The map reflects data on the number of families with income under 200% of the poverty level from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2015-19. If there were no Census data on number of families or income in a census tract, a percentage could not be calculated. For the RFA, such census tracts received a "low" poverty score category for 6 points toward the Estimated Base RFA score.



Grant Awards & Scoring

I used the map, and my base score is 65. Is this high enough to qualify for the grant to open a program in my home?

Higher scores in child care deserts may be more likely to qualify for funding. However, funding is based on an application’s total score compared to the total scores of other applications received in the same REDC and modality (day care centers, school age child care, and home-based). Providers with a minimum base score of 30 (without bonus points) are eligible to apply. See RFA Section 5.2 Application Content and 6.2, Evaluation Process for more information.

Does my child care center have to be located within a child care desert to qualify?

Yes. Your program location and/or your regional desert level must be sufficient to achieve a minimum base score of 30 (without bonus points) to be eligible for funding.

If my base score is 50 points does that mean I have a 50% chance of getting the grant?

No. The Estimated Base score points on the map does not indicate percent chance of receiving an award. Completed applications will be scored via the answers provided on electronic application. Award recommendations will be made in score order to all eligible providers out of the funding available for each program type and REDC region. After the application submission deadline, applications will be ranked in final average score order (from highest to lowest) within each REDC and modality. Awards will be made in score order (from highest to lowest) to programs until funding is exhausted. A minimum base score of 30 (without bonus points) is required to be eligible to apply.

I’m trying to understand the process. If I have a medium point score of like 57 points, does that mean I would get a potentially smaller grant?

No. The grant amounts are set amounts or amounts per slot for each modality (program type) as explained in RFA Section 2.3 Purpose and Funding Availability, in the chart labeled, “2022 Child Care Desert Grant Awards”.

How will awards be decided if several applications with the same point value, from the same community are submitted?

Funding will be awarded to eligible programs based on scores, modality and location (REDC) as explained in Section 2.3, Purpose and Funding Availability and Section 6.0, Minimum Criteria/Evaluation Process. If there are tie scores among applicants, ties will be resolved by awarding in date/time order of application submission.



Starting a Child Care Program

How do I become a licensed or registered child care provider in New York State?

For more information on becoming a provider go to: [How to Get Started/Day Care Orientation](#)

For programs applying to become an NYC DOHMH Article 47 day care center, you must attend a pre-permit orientation - <https://a816-healthpsi.nyc.gov/OnlineRegistration/dohmh/DOHMHService.action>. Check the box next to “Group Child Care and Summer Camp Orientation Sessions”, then click “Continue” at the bottom of the page before applying for a new permit.

Where can I go for assistance in opening a child care program?

Applicants needing assistance with starting child care programs can contact the OCFS Regional Office for their county (<https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/regional-offices.php>) or their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R).

Applicants can find their local CCR&R here: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/referral-agencies.php>

Providers in New York City should visit NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/business/permits-and-licenses/children-and-adolescents-childcare.page> or call 311 and ask for: day care license

What date are we expected to open after awards are announced?

All programs must be open within 120 days of their pre-award letter. To achieve this timeline, applicants must submit all required documentation to their licensing entity within 60 days of pre-award.

All programs must meet and continue to meet all licensing requirements throughout the grant, including deliverable 1: program is open and operating.

Please Note: Programs that are licensed after 9/30/2022 will not receive all eight quarterly payments. That is because the grant period ends on 6/30/2024 and no payments will be made beyond that date.

Can I use this grant to buy a new building or do major renovations at my current location?

This grant cannot be used for major renovations or capital expenses such as purchase of a new building. Applicants seeking assistance with these costs should contact their local [Regional Economic Development Councils \(REDCs\)](#) for assistance. Note that child care programs funded under this RFA must be licensed and operating within 120 days of their notice of pre-award.



Can I use the grant to recruit staff?

Recruitment expenses are allowed. One example is to offer a sign-on bonus paid after the completion of training. Pay increases and retention bonuses are also permitted. Additional information on how grant funds can be used is available within [RFA1 Attachment 4 - List of Allowable Expenses](#).

How long will my program need to be enrolled in the Quality Stars Program?

A program must join the Aspire Registry and apply to Start with Stars within 30 days of being issued a license/registration/permit. Once selected for participation, programs must participate for the duration of their grant term. Note that SACCs are not currently eligible to participate in Quality Stars but will be required to apply once available.

Do we need to have the required staff working according to our capacity even if we do not have children enrolled, in order to meet the deliverable?

Yes, program/room must have the required staffing ratio of dedicated staff working to meet the grant deliverable even if the total number of children aren't enrolled for that room.