

Guidelines & Applications

Child Care Program Quality Improvement

Community Child Care Connection, Inc.

2801 W. Lawrence Ave.

Springfield, IL 62704



July 1, 2025– June 30, 2026

Illinois is committed to assisting child care providers in providing quality education and care for young children (birth through 12 years). One way to do that is with the Quality Improvement (QI) Funds. In Illinois, the quality recognition program is ExceleRate Illinois. All licensed child care programs are considered a part of ExceleRate Illinois. There are three (3) Circles of Quality above the Licensing level that programs can opt to work towards/advance to /or maintain. The QI Funds have been developed and are offered through the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&R), to assist and support child care programs that are choosing to achieve a Circle of Quality above the Licensing level. Please read the overview and the guidelines to determine which area(s) best meets your needs. Requests may be made in multiple areas.



The QI Funds are based on available funding. The QI Funds program is administered by the Community Child Care Connection. Funds are provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Early Childhood (IDHS-DEC).

QI Funds can assist child care programs with:

- Achieving a Bronze, Silver or Gold Circle of Quality
- Achieving National Accreditation
- Advancing to a Bronze, Silver or Gold Circle of Quality
- Maintaining a Silver or Gold Circle of Quality

Specifics on each component are noted in this Quality Improvement Funds Grant Pack.

Section A Quality Improvement Funds Overview Chart

Section B General Information + Quality Improvement Funds Application (required for all who apply)

Section C ExceleRate™ IL Cohort Specific Information + ExceleRate™ IL Cohort Application

Section D ExceleRate™ IL Training Stipend Specific Information + ExceleRate™ IL Training Stipend Application

Section E Accreditation Specific Information + Accreditation Application

Please read the entire document before completing any application.

Section A: Overview

Basic Eligibility for all Quality Improvement Funds	The child care program must: <div><div>1. be listed on the local Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) provider database and has completed annual Provider Database update requirements (Complete Update, and referral status confirmation) at time of application</div><div>2. currently be providing child care services in one of the following Illinois counties: Christian, Logan, Macoupin, Mason, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, Sangamon, or Scott.</div><div>3. be a current member (Provider/Staff) of the IL Gateways to Opportunity Registry.</div><div>4. have no unpaid financial obligation to the CCR&R agency or IDHS-DEC’s Bureau of Subsidy Management or Bureau of Quality Initiatives</div></div>		
Priority Programs	<div><div>1. Programs currently caring for children whose care is paid for by the IDHS-DEC’s Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), with greater priority given to those with 50% or more of their enrollment consisting of IDHS-DEC CCAP funded children</div><div>2. Programs that are full year (at least 47 weeks)/full day (at least 8 hours)</div><div>3. Programs that are currently caring for infants and toddlers</div><div>4. For ExceleRate IL Cohort – first time applicant programs are a priority for cohort participation</div><div>5. Programs that have not received QI Funds in the last three grant years (FY25, FY24 or FY23).</div></div>		
Basic Expectations	<div><div>1. Program leadership and staff must be committed to and actively participate in the process.</div><div>2. Must agree to meet and actively work with the Quality and/or the Infant Toddler Specialist (see B9).</div><div>3. Program must develop a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP).</div><div>4. Agree to the terms of the QI Funds as described in the Guidelines & Application document.</div><div>5. Programs must attain a Silver or Gold Circle of Quality within three cohort cycles. Programs that do not meet this requirement will not be eligible to participate in future cohorts for a period of three years or until a Silver or Gold Circle is attained.</div></div>		
Abbreviations: <i>O FCC = family child care</i> <i>O LFCC = Licensed family child care</i> <i>O FGH= family group home</i> <i>O CC = child care</i>			
Component	ExceleRate™ IL Cohort	ExceleRate™ IL Training Stipend	Accreditation Assistance
Provider Type	Licensed CC Centers & LFCC	Licensed CC Centers & LFCC	Licensed CC Centers & LFCC
Circle of Quality	ExceleRate™ Illinois Silver, Gold	ExceleRate™ Illinois Bronze, Silver, Gold	ExceleRate™ Illinois Silver, Gold
Specific Requirements and Expectations <i>For the definition of “working towards/ maintaining” see B8</i>	<div><div>1. Centers must be working towards/maintaining an ExceleRate™ IL Silver or Gold Circle of Quality under the child care path. LFCC/FGH must be working towards/ maintaining an ExceleRate™ IL Silver or Gold Circle of Quality under the LFCC path.</div><div>2. Attend and participate in the cohort meetings</div><div>3. Self-assessment: If maintaining an ExceleRate Circle, must have completed within the last 6 months. If working towards ExceleRate application, must be willing to complete as part of cohort participation.</div><div>4. Meetings: If maintaining an ExceleRate Silver or Gold circle, must meet with a Quality and/or Infant Toddler Specialist at least two (2) times, if working towards an ExceleRate Silver or Gold Circle, must meet with a Quality and/or</div></div>	<div><div>1. Centers must be working towards/maintaining ExceleRate™ IL under the child care path. LFCC/FGH must be working towards/ maintaining ExceleRate™ IL under the LFCC path.</div><div>2. Training must be required for an ExceleRate™ IL Circle of Quality and must be ExceleRate™ approved.</div><div>3. A stipend is only available for the minimum staff required to take the training for ExceleRate™ IL</div><div>4. Training participants must be currently employed at the child care program</div><div>5. Must meet with a Quality and/or Infant Toddler Specialist two times if working towards ExceleRate IL; must meet with a Quality and/or Infant Specialist once if maintaining ExceleRate IL</div></div>	<div><div>1. Programs must be applying for or maintaining an ExceleRate™ IL Silver or Gold Circle of Quality.</div><div>2. Must meet with a Quality and/or Infant Toddler Specialist two times if working towards ExceleRate IL; must meet with a Quality and/or Infant Specialist once if maintaining ExceleRate IL</div></div>

	Infant Toddler Specialist at least four (4) times.		
Funding	Funding is determined based on the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) and provider type; in addition, for child care centers program capacity.	\$10 / contact training hour	80% of the cost of accreditation, as funding allows
Funding Range for the Fiscal Year (July - June). <i>The allowable funding applies for any combination of QI Funds.</i>			
Provider Type		Capacity	Funding Range
Licensed Family Child Care			Up to \$1200
Licensed Family Group Home			Up to \$1500
Child Care Center	50 or less		Up to \$3000
	51-100		Up to \$5000
	101 or more		Up to \$8000

Section B: Frequently Asked Questions

The use of the term “child care program” / “program” in this document includes child care centers and family child care

B1. WHO CAN APPLY?

- Please refer to the chart in Section A: Overview “Basic Eligibility and Provider Type”

B2. ARE THERE ANY PRIORITY PROGRAMS?

- Yes, refer to the chart in Section A: Overview “Priority Programs”

B3. WHAT ARE THE THREE AREAS OF THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FUNDS?

- ExceleRate™ IL Cohort – see Section C for details
- ExceleRate™ IL Training Stipend – see Section D for details
- Accreditation Assistance – see Section E for details

B4. CAN A PROGRAM APPLY FOR MORE THAN ONE AREA?

- Yes

B5. CAN A PROGRAM BE WORKING ON MORE THAN ONE CIRCLE OF QUALITY?

- Not for the purposes of the Quality Improvement Funds. A program must declare one Circle of Quality.

B6. WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

- Child Care programs complete and submit the application, the appropriate supplemental application and all required supporting documentation - Refer to a specific section for required supporting documentation
- As applications are received, a team of CCR&R staff will review for completeness and eligibility. Programs will be notified in writing of their approval/denial.
- Incomplete applications will be returned to the child care program.

B7. CAN AN AGENCY SUBMIT ONE APPLICATION FOR ALL SITES IF THEY HAVE MORE THAN ONE SITE?

- No. Each site (physical location) is considered a different program. Each program must submit an application with requests specific to that program. One license = one site = one program = one application

B8. WHAT IS MEANT BY “WORKING TOWARDS OR MAINTAINING” EXCELERATE™ ILLINOIS

Working Towards	Maintaining
Completed <i>Orientation to ExceleRate IL</i> training or currently hold an ExceleRate Bronze Circle of Quality	Currently hold an ExceleRate IL Circle of Quality (Silver or Gold)
Be willing to complete a self-assessment as part of cohort participation	Completed self-assessment within last six (6) months
Be willing to sign a consultation agreement with CCR&R Quality Specialist and/or Infant Toddler Specialist	Have a signed consultation agreement in place with CCR&R Quality Specialist and/or Infant Toddler Specialist

B9. WHAT IS MEANT BY “MEET AND WORK WITH THE QUALITY/INFANT TODDLER SPECIALIST”?

- Programs receiving QI Funds are required to meet and actively work with the Quality and/or Infant Toddler Specialist – for those participating in the cohort component, a minimum of two (2) meetings for programs maintaining an ExceleRate Silver or Gold Circle, and four (4) meetings for programs working towards an ExceleRate Silver or Gold Circle. For the Training Stipend and Accreditation Assistance component, at a minimum two (2) meetings for those working towards an ExceleRate IL Circle of Quality and one meeting for those maintaining an ExceleRate IL Circle of Quality. During the meetings, the following items will be discussed: goals for the program, steps to develop a CQIP, steps to develop a professional development plan, etc., and the Consultant Agreement will be discussed, developed, and signed.

B10. WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION/SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION?

- See each section for application submission deadlines (C12, D15, E4)

B11. WHAT SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION(S) DO I COMPLETE?

- That depends - ALL applicants must complete the QI Funds application (pages 5-7). In addition, they must complete one or more of the corresponding Supplemental Applications (found in this pack). C = ExceleRate™ IL Cohort; D = ExceleRate™ IL Training Stipend; E = Accreditation Assistance
- If Supplemental applications are submitted at different times, a QI Funds application must be completed each time.

B12. WHAT ARE THE GRANT FUNDING AMOUNTS?

- Please refer to the Overview Chart in Section A
- Please note the allowable funding range is for ***any combination of Quality Improvement Funds components***

B13. HOW IS PAYMENT MADE?

- Please see the specific section for payment information

B14. DO THE FUNDS NEED TO BE REPAYED?

- This is a grant program, which means funds do not generally need to be paid back. However, the grant funds come from the State of Illinois, and certain policies and procedures must be followed.
- If a program goes out of business within two years of the grant award, funds received under the ***cohort component*** will need to be repaid at a pro-rated amount. In some cases, **Community Child Care Connection** may be able to recoup materials and equipment purchased with grant funds.
- In the event of over or improper payment or reimbursement, appropriate arrangements will need to be made with **Community Child Care Connection** regarding return of funds.
- If payment is made for an accreditation process and the program withdraws or does not complete the process, the child care program will need to work with **Community Child Care Connection** regarding the return of funds.

B15. DO GRANT FUNDS NEED TO BE REPORTED AS INCOME?

- Grant funds may need to be reported as income. If awarded grant funds, a completed W-9 will be required. Items purchased with grant money may be eligible to claim as business deductions. Please consult an accountant or tax preparer for further information.

B16. WHERE ARE APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED?

- **Community Child Care Connection**
ATTN: Kayla Miller
2801 W. Lawrence Ave. Springfield, IL 62704

Fax: 217-525-2894

Email: KMiller@4childcare.org

B17. WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- Only completed applications will be considered.
- Applicants must use the provided application for July 2025– June 2026.
- Faxed/electronic applications will be accepted.
- Funding is limited and not guaranteed.
- Partial funding may be awarded.
- Payment cannot be made until a complete application and all required documents are received.

B18. IS THERE AN INFORMATION SESSION FOR THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FUNDS?

- Yes, but attendance is not mandatory. We encourage first time applicants to participate. For those who have applied before, it is good to attend as a refresher and to learn about changes to the program. Information Session will be held November 17, 2025 from 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM via Zoom, please register online at:
<https://www.4childcare.org/training-calendar>

B19. FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ASK FURTHER QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

- Kayla Miller 217-525-2805 ext. 8330 KMiller@4childcare.org

The QI Funds application form (pages 7 - 9) must be completed by anyone applying. In addition, a supplemental application(s) must be attached. Supplemental applications follow each section.

Quality Improvement Funds Application Form

All applicants are required to complete this application **and one or more** supplemental application(s).

Community Child Care Connection
2801 W. Lawrence Ave.
Springfield, IL 62704

July 1, 2025– June 30, 2026



- ➔ The current year application form must be used. This application may not be reformatted.
- ➔ Please type or print using black or blue ink.
- ➔ Complete **all fields**; use “NA” if not applicable – **do not leave any field blank**. ***Incomplete applications will be returned.***
- ➔ Please refer to the Quality Improvement Guidelines & Applications.

STEP 1: Child Care Program Information

1A	Program Name					
	Program (work site) Address:					
	City:		State:		Zip Code:	
	County:					
	Mailing address (if different):					
	Phone #: ()			Fax #: ()		
	Director/Administrator Name:			Email:		
	Is the program listed on the CCR&R referral database? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					
Has the program completed required annual update and/or Market Rate Survey Yes No						
Is the program full year (at least 47 weeks)/full day (at least 8 hours)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						
1B	Program must check a provider type, list DCFS license # and expiration date, enter program capacity and if applicable, accreditation entity					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Child Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Group FCC	<input type="checkbox"/> Head Start	<input type="checkbox"/> School Age Program	
DCFS License #: _____ Expiration date: _____						
If applicable, program is accredited by: <input type="checkbox"/> NAEYC + <input type="checkbox"/> NAC <input type="checkbox"/> NAFCC <input type="checkbox"/> NECPA <input type="checkbox"/> Cognia <input type="checkbox"/> AMS <input type="checkbox"/> COA						
1C	Age Groups:					
	Currently providing care for: (Check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Infants 6 wks–14 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Toddlers 15–23 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Twos 24–35 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Preschool 3–5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> School Age K–12 years
	Capacity					
	Current Enrollment					
CC Centers: enter the # of classrooms for age group:		____ classrooms	____ classrooms	____ classrooms	____ classrooms	____ classrooms
1D	Indicate date attended/completed (mm/dd/yyyy):					
	CHILD CARE CENTERS ExceleRate™ IL Orientation _____ ***An Introduction to Environment Rating Scales _____ or How ERS Works			FAMILY CHILD CARE ExceleRate™ IL Orientation for LFCC: _____ * An Introduction to ERS/Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale _____ Or How ERS Works		

*Does not apply to programs that are currently accredited or working towards accreditation

*** An Introduction to ERS(training offered 2007-June 2005) or How ERS Works (2025).

Quality Improvement Funds Application Form

1E	ExceleRate™ IL circle program is currently at: <input type="checkbox"/> Licensing <input type="checkbox"/> Bronze <input type="checkbox"/> Silver <input type="checkbox"/> Gold <input type="checkbox"/> NA	ExceleRate™ IL circle program is <input type="checkbox"/> working towards <input type="checkbox"/> maintaining: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Silver <input type="checkbox"/> Gold
1F	Does your program currently care for children whose care is paid for by the IDHS Child Care Assistance Program? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Have the <i>Program Administrator/Primary LFCC provider</i> complete the following formula to determine the percentage of children in your program receiving IDHS child care financial assistance. To calculate: Total Number of children with IDHS Financial Assistance DIVIDED by Current total Enrollment MULTIPLIED by 100 EQUALS Percentage of Children Receiving IDHS Assistance. (FCC providers: include your own children, under age 13, in enrollment) <div style="text-align: center;"> $\frac{\text{\# of IDHS children}}{\text{Current Total Enrollment}} \times 100 = \text{Percentage of IDHS Children} \%$ </div>	

STEP 2: Funding Request

Request is being made for:	
2A	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Cohort Participation <i>Complete Supplemental Application C</i> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Training Stipend <i>Complete Supplemental Application D</i> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation Assistance <i>Complete Supplemental Application E</i> </div> </div>
2B	If only partial funds are available, will you complete the activity? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Are you receiving additional funding from another source to assist with requested items/training/accreditation? (e.g. SAM Project, United Way, NAEYC, Smart Start Transition Grants, Smart Start Quality Supports, other, etc.) If yes, list the source(s), the item/activity and amount: <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-right: 50px;">\$</div> <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-right: 50px;">\$</div> <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-right: 50px;">\$</div>

STEP 3: Payment Information

3	Requesting payment be made to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohort – see question C15 for payment method Training Stipend – All payments are made directly to the child care program Accreditation Assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Child care program <input type="checkbox"/> Accrediting body
	Check Payable To: (if payment is being made to a child care program, this must match Box 1 of the W9) <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 20px;"></div>
	Address City: State: Zip Code: <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 20px;"></div>
	(REQUIRED): Applicant <input type="checkbox"/> Social Security Number or <input type="checkbox"/> FEIN Number:

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Quality Improvement Funds Application Form

STEP 4: Application Checklist and Authorization

- ☐ I completed all areas of the current application. If a question was not applicable, I inserted N/A.
Incomplete applications will be returned.
- ☐ I completed the appropriate supplemental application(s). **Incomplete applications will be returned.**
- ☐ I signed and dated the application and the supplemental application(s).
- ☐ I have attached all the required supporting documentation. (Refer to the guidelines and applications #C7, D14, E3)
- ☐ The payment information I have submitted is correct.
- ☐ I have made a copy of this application for my records.

I have completed all documentation that was requested in the instructions and requirements. I certify that the above information is true and accurate, that I have not been indicated of child abuse and neglect and that my name or the names of my employees (if applicable) are not listed on the child abuse tracking system. Further, I grant permission for a representative of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services or their agent to release information about my pending or current Child Care Home, Child Care Group Home or Child Care Center license if applicable to my application.

Program Administrator Signature (required)	Date	Agency Administrator Signature (if applicable)	Date

CCR&R USE ONLY:		
Date Received:	Reviewed by:	Complete? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Request for <input type="checkbox"/> Cohort \$_____ <input type="checkbox"/> Training Stipend \$_____ <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation\$_____ TOTAL \$_____		
Approved for <input type="checkbox"/> Cohort \$_____ <input type="checkbox"/> Training Stipend \$_____ <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation \$_____ TOTAL: \$_____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Pending Date/Reason		
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicated with applicant Date / Message		
<input type="checkbox"/> Denied Date / Reason		

Section C: ExceleRate™ Illinois Cohort

A cohort is a group of individuals working towards a common goal. It not only provides an opportunity to learn and work on achieving the goal, but also provides an opportunity to develop relationships with your peers. The Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agency will offer cohort groups for programs working to improve the quality of care, working towards or maintaining an ExceleRate™ IL Silver or Gold Circle of Quality. Upon completion of the cohort requirements/expectations and the program's self-assessment, as applicable, programs may request funds to help achieve objectives noted on the program's Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP). **Please note: first time applicant programs are given priority for cohort participation.**

C1. WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE COHORT?

- A program administrator is required to attend. For agencies with more than one child care program, an administrator from each site is required to attend.
- Program Administrator is defined as: for centers the person responsible for the on-site day to day operation of the child care program (director, assistant director, director/teacher –when 50% or more time is spent in administration role); for Licensed Family Child Care (LFCC) it is the primary care provider.
- Teaching staff (teacher/assistant teacher, school age worker/assistant) from a child care program or assistants from a LFCC program that is working towards improving the quality of care and working towards/maintaining an ExceleRate™ IL Circle of Quality.
- Based on provider applications, the CCR&R may need to limit the number of staff members attending from one program.

C2. DOES THE SAME PERSON HAVE TO ATTEND ALL THE COHORT MEETINGS?

- Yes, at a minimum the program administrator must attend all meetings. Additional program staff are welcome and encouraged to participate.

C3. WHAT ARE THE COHORT TOPICS?

- CCR&Rs will work to address the needs of the applicants. For example, assessment tools, programs completing a self-assessment, how to develop a CQIP, and/or national accreditation.

C4. WHO WILL BE LEADING THE COHORT?

- Various CCR&R system staff, depending on the cohort topic

C5. HOW WILL COHORTS BE ASSIGNED?

- A team of CCR&R staff will review applications and based on the needs will assign the cohort groups

C6. WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS?

- Please review the Basic & Specific expectations in Section A: Overview.

C7. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

In addition to a completed application and Supplemental Application C, the following documentation is required:

- W-9 form (included in this packet)

C8. WHAT CAN FUNDS BE USED FOR?

- Materials and equipment to meet the ExceleRate™ IL Silver and Gold Circle of Quality standards that are documented as needs through the self-assessment/CQIP

C9. WHAT CAN'T FUNDS BE USED FOR?

- | | |
|---|---|
| • General operating expenses etc.) | ○ Consumable items (e.g., paint, food, cleaning supplies, |
| • Staff salaries/wages, benefits, bonuses | ○ Used equipment |
| • Televisions, VCR, DVR, Video gaming systems | ○ Screen devices for children under 2 |
| • Vehicles, vehicle repair | ○ Motorized riding toys |
| • Pools and pool equipment | ○ Items from a 3 rd party purchase |
| • Trampolines | ○ Items that restrict child mobility |
| • Service agreements (e.g., cell phone, internet) | ○ Developmentally inappropriate items |

- On-going per child costs associated w/assessment tools
 - Cosmetic improvements to the facility, decks
 - Staff training
 - Fire doors
 - Please note: e-learning materials should be discussed with your local school district
- Consultants, Mentors, Coaches
 - Appliances
 - Sprinkler systems

C10. WHAT ARE THE DATES FOR THE COHORT MEETINGS?

- There will be a minimum of three (3) cohort meetings.
- The first meeting for ALL cohort participants will be held on Tuesday, January 6th at 6:00 PM. In-person attendance is mandatory for this meeting.
- The remaining cohort meetings for all participants will fall on Thursday, January 22nd at 6:00 PM, and Thursday, February 5th at 6:00 PM

C11. ARE THE COHORT MEETINGS AND SESSIONS WITH THE SPECIALIST THE SAME THING?

- No.

C12. WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING MY APPLICATION?

- Complete Applications (including supporting documentation) for cohort **MUST BE RECEIVED BY December 4, 2025**

C13. MAY I PARTICIPATE IN MORE THAN ONE QI COHORT GROUP PER FISCAL YEAR?

- No.

C14. WHAT ARE THE GRANT AMOUNTS?

- Please see the Overview Chart in Section A for funding ranges
- Please note that the funding range is a combination of all three Quality Improvement Fund areas

C15. HOW ARE FUNDS PAID?

- Forward up to 75% of grant award to provider and reimburse remaining percentage after receipt of expenditure documentation for total grant amount

Supplemental Application C: ExceleRate™ Illinois Cohort Application

Program Name

Program (work site) Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

County:

Program Administrator:

Have you participated in an ExceleRate IL QI Cohort before? ☐ YES ☐ NO If yes, What year(s)?

What ExceleRate™ IL Circle of Quality are you ☐ working towards or ☐ maintaining?

☐ Silver ☐ Gold

If **maintaining** ExceleRate Circle, have you completed a recent self-assessment of your program?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If **working towards** an ExceleRate Silver/Gold Circle, have you completed a recent self-assessment of your program OR are you willing to complete as part of cohort?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Is your program: ☐ working towards ☐ maintaining accreditation?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, which accreditation: ☐ NAEYC ☐ NAC ☐ NAFCC ☐ NECPA ☐ Cognia ☐ AMS ☐ COA

To assist CCR&R staff in planning the cohort, please answer the following questions:

List up to five (5) areas where you would like to see quality improvements in your program:

Supporting Documentation: See # C7

As the program administrator, I agree to complete all the requirements of this program as stated in the Quality Improvement Funds guidelines.

_____ Program Administrator's Signature _____ Date

Section D: ExceleRate™ Illinois Training Stipends

Licensed child care programs working towards/maintaining an ExceleRate™ IL Circle of Quality may apply for an ExceleRate™ IL training stipend. The stipend applies only to the required training within the ExceleRate™ IL Circle of Quality that the program is working towards/maintaining and is available only to the minimum staff required to attend the training.

D1. WHO MAY APPLY FOR A TRAINING STIPEND?

- The minimum staff required to take training per the ExceleRate™ IL Circle of Quality
- Staff of licensed programs pursuing an ExceleRate™ IL Bronze, Silver, or Gold Circle of Quality
- Staff is defined as
 - for Centers: program administrator and teaching staff. Program Administrator is defined as the person responsible for the on-site day to day operation of the child care program. Includes Director, Assistant Director, Director/Teacher (when spending 50% or more time in administration role). Teaching staff is defined as Lead Teacher, Teacher, Director/Teacher (when spending 50% or more time in teaching role), teaching assistant
 - for Family Child Care (LFCC): the primary care provider and LFCC assistant

D2. ARE THERE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS?

- Training must occur during the current fiscal year (7/1/25-6/30/26)
- Training must be required for the Circle of Quality which the program is working towards/maintaining
- Training must be ExceleRate™ approved (face to face and on-line)
- Training participants must be a current member of the Gateways to Opportunity Registry
- Training participants must be currently employed at the program

D3. WHAT TRAINING IS APPROVED TO RECEIVE AN EXCELERATE™ IL STIPEND?

- Please refer to the training grids at <http://www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com> (select “How it Works” and then the overview for provider type) to confirm the requirements for a Circle of Quality and the minimum required staff.

D4. DOES THE EXCELERATE™ ILLINOIS TRAINING STIPEND COVER THE TRAINING NEEDED TO OBTAIN/MAINTAIN A CREDENTIAL AND/OR ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HOURS?

- No, these training sessions may be eligible for the Individual Professional Development funds.

D5. WHICH STAFF ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND TRAINING?

- This varies per training; however, it is either the Program Administrator or the Program Administrator and a percentage of teaching staff. For LFCC it is the primary care provider and LFCC assistant(s) (when specified on the Circle of Quality Chart). Please refer to the Circle of Quality charts - <https://www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com/resources/standard-and-evidence-requirements>
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D6. DOES THE SAME PERSON HAVE TO ATTEND ALL THE TRAINING?

- Program Administrator – No, but the person(s) must be in a role as described in D1.
- Teaching staff– not necessarily, but the person(s) must be in a role as described in D1.
- For LFCC it is the primary care provider and LFCC assistants (when specified on the Circle of Quality chart).

D7. IS THERE A STAFF LIMIT?

- Programs may apply for the stipend based on the **minimum** training requirements listed on the Circle of Quality chart which they are working towards/maintaining.

D8. WHAT ABOUT ON-LINE TRAINING?

- If a required ExceleRate™ IL training is offered on-line, the training is eligible for the stipend. Please note the stipend is based on the number of training contact hours.

D9. HOW DO I KNOW WHEN AND WHERE THE TRAINING SESSIONS ARE?

- Training sessions will be noted on your local CCR&R training calendar www.4childcare.org
- Training information may be found at the statewide training calendar www.ilgateways.com

D10. WHAT IF A PROVIDER WANTS TO ATTEND AN EXCELERATE™ APPROVED TRAINING THAT ISN'T REQUIRED FOR THE CIRCLE OF QUALITY THEY ARE WORKING TOWARDS/MAINTAINING?

- The stipend only applies to training that is required for the Circle of Quality the program is working towards/maintaining

D11. WHAT IF A PROVIDER WANTS TO ATTEND A TRAINING THAT ISN'T REQUIRED FOR EXCELERATE™ ILLINOIS?

- The training may be eligible for Individual Professional Development Funds. Check with Community Child Care Connection for information.

D12. WHAT IS THE AMOUNT OF THE STIPEND?

- \$10.00 per contact training hour (applies to face to face and on-line courses)
- Travel time is not covered under the stipend.
- For the allowable funding ranges per program per fiscal year please see Section A: Overview Chart. Please note that the allowable funding range is a combination of all three Quality Improvement Fund areas.

D13. WHAT DOES THE STIPEND COVER?

The stipend is designed to assist with staff costs while staff are taking the required ExceleRate™ IL training including:

- staff wages while attending training outside of normal working hours
- substitute wages while staff attend training during working hours

D14. WHAT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION IS NEEDED?

In addition to a completed application and Supplemental Application D, the following documentation is required

- Documentation of training attendance/completion
- Proof of Gateways to Opportunity Registry Membership for each training participant
- W-9 form (included in this packet)

D15. WHAT ARE THE DEADLINES FOR ME TO SUBMIT MY APPLICATION FOR A TRAINING STIPEND?

- Complete Training Stipend Applications (including supporting documentation) may be submitted at any time during the funding cycle. However, for this funding period the final due date for applications to be received at the CCR&R is May 29, 2026.

D16. HOW IS PAYMENT MADE?

- Payment is made directly to the child care program *after* training is completed and required documentation is submitted.

**Supplemental Application D: EXCELERATE™ ILLINOIS Training Stipend
For Licensed Child Care Center Staff and Licensed Family Child Care Primary Caregiver**

Program Name

Program (work site) Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

County:

What ExceleRate™ IL Circle of Quality are you working towards? ☐ Bronze ☐ Silver ☐ Gold

✓ **Training stipend is available for the minimum staff required to take the training for ExceleRate™ IL based on the Circle of Quality the program is working towards/maintaining.**

✓ **Please note: Only one staff member per form, copy as needed.**

STAFF MEMBER:		REGISTRY ID #	<input type="checkbox"/> Program Administrator <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant <input type="checkbox"/> LFCC provider <input type="checkbox"/> LFCC Assistant	
Current Credential: check all that apply – indicate level <input type="checkbox"/> IDC ____; <input type="checkbox"/> ECE ____; <input type="checkbox"/> ITC ____; <input type="checkbox"/> FCC ____; <input type="checkbox"/> Other ____; <input type="checkbox"/> NA				
TRAINING DATE	TRAINING TITLE / LOCATION	TYPE		CONTACT HOURS
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
		<input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> on-line		
TOTAL # OF CONTACT HOURS THIS PAGE				
Requests this page: _____ total of contact hours x \$10				\$

Supporting Documentation: See #D14

As the Program Administrator, I confirm that the above staff member attended the training listed.

_____ Program Administrator's Signature _____ Date

Section E: Accreditation Assistance

Accreditation is a voluntary process that provides child care programs the opportunity to examine their services based on recognized standards of high quality. The Accreditation Assistance option is for child care programs that are applying for or maintaining an ExceleRate™ IL Silver or Gold Circle of Quality.

E1. WHAT ACCREDITATIONS ARE APPROVED FOR FUNDING?

- | | |
|---|--|
| • National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) | www.naeyc.org |
| • National Accreditation Commission for Early Care & Education Programs (NAC) | www.earlylearningleaders.org |
| • National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) | www.nafcc.org |
| • National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) | www.necpa.net |
| • Cognia | www.cognia.org |
| • American Montessori Society (AMS) | www.amshq.org |
| • Council on Accreditation (COA) – Early Childhood | www.coanet.org |

E2. WHAT CAN FUNDS BE REQUESTED FOR?

- Fees associated with the accreditation process as outlined in the Supplemental Application E

E3. WHAT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION IS NEEDED?

In addition to a completed application and Supplemental Application E, the following documentation is required

- Proof of payment to the Accrediting Body (if paid by the child care program)
- Copy of page 1 of the application for accreditation
- W-9 form (included in this packet)

E4. WHAT IS THE DEADLINE TO SUBMIT MY APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION ASSISTANCE?

- Complete Accreditation Applications (including supporting documentation) may be submitted at any time during the funding cycle however, for this funding period the CCR&R must receive Accreditation Assistance applications by May 29, 2026.

E5. WHAT ARE THE GRANT AMOUNTS?

- Please see the Overview Chart in Section A for funding ranges
- Please note that the funding range is a combination of all three Quality Improvement Fund areas

E6. HOW IS PAYMENT MADE?

- Programs will be notified in writing if the application has been approved or denied, and if approved, the amount at which the request was funded
- Payment is done as a reimbursement to the child care program

Supplemental Application E: Accreditation Assistance Request			
Program Name:		Program Capacity:	
Program (work site) Address:			
City:	IL	Zip code:	County:
What ExceleRate™ IL Circle of Quality are you working towards/maintaining?		<input type="checkbox"/> Silver	<input type="checkbox"/> Gold
Please indicate: <input type="checkbox"/> Initial Accreditation <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Accreditation			
Accreditation Process		Actual Cost	CCR&R Max
National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)			80% of the actual cost
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 1: Enrolling in self-study	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 2: Becoming an applicant	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 3: Becoming a candidate	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report Fee	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Intent to Renew	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal Material Form Fee	\$		
National Accreditation Commission (NAC) for Early Care & Education Programs			
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Study Enrollment	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Verification Fee	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report Fee	\$		
National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study Step	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Application Step	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Renewal Fee	\$		
National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Enrollment Fee	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Verification Fee	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report Fee	\$		
American Montessori Society (AMS)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Information Packet	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Application Form	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Study Report/Review Fee	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report Fee			
Cognia (fee only, no travel expenses)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation and Self-Assessment	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Engagement Review	\$		
Council on Accreditation (COA) Early Childhood			
<input type="checkbox"/> Application Fee	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation Fee	\$		
<input type="checkbox"/> Site Visit Costs	\$		
TOTAL ACTUAL COST			

TOTAL REQUEST - 80% of actual cost	To calculate 80 %: actual cost _____ x 0.80		
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Supporting Documentation: See #E3

As program administrator, I confirm we are actively working towards/maintaining accreditation.

_____*Program Administrator's Signature*

_____*Date*

(insert W-9 form)