

# Early Learning Division

## GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS



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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to describe the Early Learning Division grant review process and provide instruction to those involved in the review process.

## REVIEW PROCESS TIMELINE

Applications are due according to the schedule posted in the Request for Application (RFA). The review process will take place approximately four weeks from the date of the application deadline until the date funding decisions are announced. The review process includes the following steps:

1. Independent Review, weeks 1-2
2. Review Committee, week 3
3. Early Learning System Director review and final decision, week 4

## REVIEW DOCUMENTS

The documents listed below will be used to inform the review process and create a record of the Independent Review and the Review Committee's recommendations to the Early Learning System Director.

1. Application
2. Scoring Form (see "Scoring Table" in RFA)
3. Independent Review Score Summary Form (Appendix A)
4. Review Committee Report Form (Appendix B)
5. Review Committee Matrix (Appendix C)

The application and scoring form will be made available through an electronic application platform. Reviewers will be trained on use of the platform as well as the overall review process prior to the commencement of the review process.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

### Potential Conflict of Interest

A public official—including participants in this review process—is met with a potential conflict of interest when the public official participates in actions that **could** affect the financial interests of the official, the official's relatives or a business with which the official or a relative of the official is associated. Individuals with a potential conflict of interest may participate in the review process after declaring the potential conflict. The disclosure must be stated publicly at the meeting and recorded in the committee's minutes. Independent Reviewers must attest by written declaration that no potential (or actual) conflict exists regarding the application for which they are reviewing.

### Actual Conflict of Interest

An actual conflict of interest exists when a public official participates in actions that **would** affect the financial interests of the official, the official's relative or a business with which the

official or a relative of the official is associated. Those with an actual conflict of interest regarding matters before this review process may not participate.

## STEP 1: INDEPENDENT REVIEW

ELD will invite internal staff and external individuals with expertise in early care and education to serve as independent reviewers. ELD will assign a subset of complete and eligible applications to each independent reviewer for review. Each application will be reviewed by at least two reviewers using the scoring criteria described in the RFA. A third review may be used when scores significantly diverge between two reviewers by more than 30 percent. Applications will be reviewed in the language it was submitted. Independent Reviewers will complete an online review form for each application assigned for review. All completed forms will be shared with the Review Committee.

### **Communication with Applicants**

ELD staff may request additional written information from applicants at the request of Independent Reviewers. Applicants will be given three business days to provide the requested additional information. All requests for additional information must be sent in writing to applicants.

### **Incomplete and Ineligible Applications**

Applications determined incomplete or ineligible will be excluded from the Independent Review. Applicants will be notified in writing of this determination by ELD staff. Questions of eligibility by an Independent Reviewer may be brought to the attention of ELD staff for verification.

## STEP 2: COMMITTEE REVIEW

### **Membership and Staffing**

Review Committee members and a Chair will be appointed by the Early Learning System Director according to criteria specified by Oregon Administrative Rules. The Early Learning Council may recommend representatives to be named to the committee. External individuals who participate in the Independent Review may also be appointed to the Review Committee. In order to ensure a neutral appeal process, should an appeal occur, Early Learning Council members shall not serve on the Review Committee.

The Review Committee Chair shall preside over all meetings, including calling the meeting to order, assuring the conflict of interest process is followed, minutes are taken and approved, and the committee completes its work as outlined in this document. The Review Committee will be facilitated by ELD staff.

Spanish applications will be translated to English for the Review Committee.

### **Scheduling and Public Notice of Review Committee Meetings**

All meetings of the Review Committee are public meetings and public notices will be posted on the ELD website in addition to other posting sites used by public agencies. Meetings will take place three weeks after the application due date.

## **Applicant Presentations**

The Review Committee may invite presentations from applicants on an equal basis, specifically inviting every applicant. All presentations from applicants are to be conducted during the public meetings. If applicants are invited to make presentations, the applicants must be informed at the same time as the public meeting notices are posted. New information learned by the Review Committee from applicant presentations should be documented in the Review Committee Report.

## **Input into the Decision Process**

The Review Committee will consider the following information when developing its recommendations:

- Regional distribution of services
- Distribution across federally recognized tribes
- Diversity of services and programs (example, delivery options and settings)
- The application and related documents
- Applicant follow up information (if applicable)
- Independent Review Score Summary forms
- Review Committee members' knowledge and expertise
- Applicant testimony (if all applicants are provided the opportunity to testify)
- Public comment

The Review Committee may also use early care and education planning documents identified by the ELD, such as the **2019 ECE Sector Plans** and any other analyses brought to the committee by the ELD.

When considering individual application scores, the Review Committee must use the required scoring criteria outlined in the RFA.

The Review Committee shall **not consider** information provided through lobbying by the applicant or any other person outside of the public meetings.

## **Additional Information**

The Review Committee may request additional written information as needed concerning any application. This request must be made through the ELD staff. Staff will collect information from applicants. Staff should give applicants no more than three business days from time of request to reply. All requests to and responses received from applicants will become part of the official record as attachment to the Review Committee Report (Appendix B).

## **Distribution of Application Materials**

Prior to the first meeting of the Review Committee, the following information will be posted on the ELD website:

1. Staff presentation materials
2. An application packet for each applicant, including:
  - a. Application and attachments, including translations if applicable
  - b. Completed Independent Review Form (pdf of online scoring form)

- c. Completed Independent Review Score Summary (Appendix A)
  - d. Draft Review Committee Report (Appendix B)
3. Review Committee Matrix (Appendix C)

The Review Committee will also receive a briefing from the ELD on the program goals, funding available, and geographic distribution expectations, prior to commencing with its deliberations. Prior to the Review Committee meetings, the committee members are **strongly encouraged** to review in detail the application packets.

### **Review, Discuss and Prioritize**

The Review Committee is expected to provide the Early Learning System Director with a Review Committee Report for each applicant (Appendix B) and a prioritized list of recommendations for grant funding (Appendix C). These documents will constitute the written record of the Committee's decision-making process. Factors that the Review Committee may consider when developing recommendations are listed on page five (5) of this document, under "Input Into the Decision Process."

### **Review Committee Matrix**

The Review Committee will assign a priority number to each application, with priority number one (1) indicating the committee's first choice, priority number (two) 2 indicating the second choice, and so on, until all applications are assigned a number. If a committee reviews 20 applications, the prioritization should be from 1 to 20. The Review Committee may be asked to rank applications on a regional or statewide basis or both. The Review Committee may also be asked to rank applications by program type. ELD staff will complete the Review Committee Matrix (Appendix C) by recording the actions of the Review Committee throughout the Committee's meetings. The Review Committee Matrix is designed to capture and summarize the Committee's recommended priorities.

### **Review Committee Report**

For each application, the ELD staff will finalize the Review Committee Report (Appendix B) at the direction of the Review Committee. The report will summarize the application and will be used to present the details of the Committee's decision-making process to the Early Learning System Director. The Review Committee Report should include any specific details that the Committee thinks the public or the Director should be aware.

The Review Committee will use the Independent Review Score Summary (Appendix A) as a basis for the scoring process; however, the Review Committee is not constrained by the Independent Reviewer's recommendation(s) and may choose to reduce or increase an applicant's score. Score changes **must be discussed** by the Committee and the reasoning justified within the scoring criteria on the Review Committee Report (Appendix B). If the Committee agrees with the Independent Reviewer's recommendation(s), the decision shall be noted on the Review Committee Report (Appendix B). Additional factors that the Review Committee may consider when developing recommendations are listed on page five (5) under "Input Into the Decision Process."

The Review Committee may not change the scope of a proposal as submitted in an original application.

## **Meeting Minutes**

For each Review Committee meeting, ELD staff will record and prepare Committee meeting minutes, and secure the Committee's approval of the minutes. Within 10 days of each meeting, draft meeting minutes will be posted on the ELD website. Upon approval of the Committee, final meeting minutes will replace draft minutes posted on the ELD website.

## **Preparation and Transmittal of Reviews**

ELD staff will complete and prepare for publication the following:

- Review Committee Report (Appendix B)
- Review Matrix (Appendix C)
- Meeting Minutes

ELD staff shall secure the authorization of the Review Committee Chair prior to transmittal of these documents to the Early Learning System Director.

## **STEP 3: EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM DIRECTOR REVIEW**

The Early Learning System Director will review recommendations from the Review Committee and make final decisions as scheduled in the RFA. Final funding decisions will be announced on the ELD website.

## **Appeal**

An applicant not receiving funding may appeal for review to the Early Learning Council. An appeal must be received by the Council in writing within 15 calendar days of the notice of non-funding. Appeals must be sent to 700 Summer Street NE, Salem OR 97301 or [early.learning@state.or.us](mailto:early.learning@state.or.us).

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Early Learning Division

700 Summer Street NE

Salem, Oregon 97301-4178

Email: [early.learning@state.or.us](mailto:early.learning@state.or.us)

Phone: 503.947.0639

## APPENDIX A

### Sample Independent Review Score Summary Form

APPLICANT:

	<b>AVAILABLE POINTS</b>	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>
Section 1	Maximum Available Points XX	
Section 2	Maximum Available Points XX	
Section 3	Maximum Available Points XX	
Section 4	Maximum Available Points XX	
<b>Maximum Available Points XXX</b>		



## APPENDIX B

### Sample Review Committee Report

<b>Applicant:</b>	<b>Assigned Priority:</b>
<b>County:</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Requested Funds:</b>	
<b>Families/Children Served:</b>	
<b>Provider/Program Type:</b>	
<b>Report Date:</b>	
<b>Summary of Request:</b>	
<b>Independent Review Recommended Score:</b>	<b>Review Committee Score:</b>
Use this space to document Committee discussion related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rationale for modifying score</li><li>• Specific details which the Committee wants the public or the Early Learning System Director to be aware</li><li>• Any additional information requested and/or received from the applicant</li></ul>	

## APPENDIX C

### Sample Review Committee Matrix

The table below is a sample of the fields that will be used for the review matrix provided to the Review Committee. The final version will be a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

The applicant name, funds requested, families/children served and provider/program type columns will be completed by ELD staff. The priority column will record the recommendation from the committee.

Applicant Name	Total Funds Requested	Families/Children Served	Provider/Program Type	Priority Rank