



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Early Language and Literacy Classroom Grant
Operating Guidelines
2017-2018

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the requirements and regulations for operating an Early Language and Literacy (ELL) grant. To ensure program compliance and quality service, all ELL grant providers must be familiar with and implement these guidelines. This document is intended to provide clarity and to offer guidance to ELL grant providers. Bright from the Start makes all funding decisions for the Early Language and Literacy grants. Infant Toddler Specialists make site visits throughout the grant period to review compliance and provide support. Providers who do not comply with the ELL Guidelines may have the existing grant agreement terminated and will not be eligible for the grants in the future.

1.0 General Program Information

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Early Language and Literacy Classroom (ELLC) grants is to support the language and literacy skills of infants and toddlers through increasing teacher confidence and competence in using responsive caregiving practices as a tool to build literacy skills, developing a teacher leader to support and coach infant and toddler teachers, and strengthening program leadership skills in supporting positive, responsive and high quality infant and toddler classrooms.

1.2 Program Responsibilities

Early learning programs receiving an Early Language and Literacy Classroom Grant will:

- ensure that teachers, teacher leaders and directors participate in on-going professional development and coaching by a highly trained DECAL Infant Toddler Language and Literacy Specialist;
- identify a Teacher Leader, from their current Infant Toddler workforce, who will receive intensive training and support in peer coaching to support infant and toddler teachers in their program;
- hire qualified infant and toddler teachers and support attainment of higher credentials;
- participate in all evaluation measures, including but not limited to, the use of LENA and CLASS instruments;
- budget and expend grant funds according to ELLC guidelines; and
- maintain or increase their current Quality Rated star rating.

1.3 Program Administration

All programs must designate one center director as the ELLC Grant Administrator who will be responsible for all aspects of the project. The Grant Administrator will serve as the primary point of contact for the grant and should be located onsite at the child care program. The Grant Administrator may have other duties but should be able to focus ample time on the operation of the grant program during the work day. Persons with other responsibilities such as teaching in another classroom or preparing meals may not serve as the grant administrator.

1.4 Grant Roles and Responsibilities

Contact Signatory: The legal signatory (CEO, COO, CFO, President, Sole Proprietor) who has apparent authority or legal authority for the program/ company applying for the grant must sign the grant agreement.

ELLC Grant Administrator: Identified director who attends all professional learning sessions, participates in technical assistance with Infant Toddler Specialist, and oversees the day to day work of the grant.

Teacher Leader: Identified Infant Toddler teacher whose salary is paid by the grant, receives intensive coaching and supports in coaching and mentoring, and acts as a support and coach to infant toddler teaching staff. In addition, the Teacher Leader will handle various administrative duties related to LENA and other data collection activities.

Teachers: Infant and Toddler teachers who are teachers in the grant classrooms identified to participate in the grant activities including professional development sessions, coaching sessions, observations and assessments. Programs should determine the appropriate number of teachers to include in grant activities based on their budget.

2.0 Personnel

2.1 Teachers

Programs must identify specific infant and toddler teachers who will participate in the professional development and other grant activities. The teachers identified should work primarily in the infant and toddler classrooms receiving the grants. Grant classrooms must be staffed with teaching personnel to meet the minimum required ratios and credentials under Georgia's Child Care Learning Center licensing rules. Program administrators should review credentials and certifications of teaching staff and provide encouragement and resources for teachers to increase their credentials.

2.2 Teacher Leaders

Programs must select one teacher leader to serve as a support in grant classrooms. The Teacher Leader should be chosen from the program's current infant and toddler classroom teachers and must hold a current minimum credential as required under Georgia's Child Care Learning Center licensing rules. The Teacher Leader may not be a member of the administrative staff; however, programs that currently have staff functioning in a technical assistance or coaching role may request a waiver to appoint that staff person as Teacher Leader. Written approval must be obtained prior to making the appointment. The Teacher Leader must be employed 40 hours per week and cannot fulfill job duties in any other capacity, (i.e. classroom teacher, bus driver, floater). Teacher Leaders must be paid at the rate specified in the grant.

The ideal Teacher Leader will be a demonstrated leader in the program with extensive experience as an infant and toddler teacher. Teacher Leaders will provide mentoring, coaching and support to teachers and will provide administrative support for the LENA project and other data collection activities.

3.0 Professional Development

3.1 Required Professional Development Opportunities

All personnel participating in grant activities must attend required professional development opportunities as listed below. Infant and toddler teachers and other staff not directly involved in the grant activities may be included in professional development activities as the program's budget allows.

- Literacy Leader Forums
 - Participants: Teacher Leaders and Directors
 - Frequency: Monthly
 - Location: Central location
 - Conducted by: DECAL staff

- Professional Learning Community sessions
 - Participants: Infant and Toddler Teachers
 - Frequency: Monthly

- Location: Onsite at program
- Conducted by Infant Toddler Specialist and Teacher Leader
- Quarterly Early Language and Literacy Institutes
 - Participants: Teachers, Teacher Leaders and Directors
 - Frequency: Quarterly
 - Location: Central location
 - Conducted by DECAL staff and invited presenters
- Weekly coaching sessions
 - Participants: Teachers, Teacher Leaders
 - Frequency: Weekly
 - Location: Onsite in classroom
 - Conducted by DECAL Infant Toddler Specialists and Teacher Leaders

3.2 Professional Development System

Teachers, Teacher Leaders and directors must be enrolled in the Georgia Professional Development System (PDS). PDS combines education, experience and training and assigns all registrants a Career Level. Supporting documentation must be submitted to confirm educational attainment and training. Supporting documents include official transcripts, training certificates, copies of CDAs and technical college credentials. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) reviews transcripts and credentials for the PDS to verify an individual teacher’s credentials and degrees. Grant Administrators should confirm that teachers have registered in the PDS, submitted required documentation to the PDS, and that the PDS has verified the credential. Failure to have credentials current and verified in the PDS may affect grant payments.

3.3 Registration for Professional Development Opportunities

Registration for quarterly Early Language and Literacy Institutes, monthly Literacy Leader Forums and monthly Professional Learning Community sessions will be done through the PDS. The Grant Administrator is responsible for distributing professional development and training information to all grant personnel and can register staff for grant-related training in the PDS. For help with professional development needs, ELLC grant administrator should contact their assigned Infant Toddler Specialist or GAPITC@decals.ga.gov.

3.4 Stipends for Attending Professional Development Sessions

Stipends should be paid for all staff participating in professional development falling outside their regular work schedule. Stipends must be paid to all eligible participants, including any teachers not participating in the grant. Stipends should be paid as follows:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Eligible for Stipends</u>	<u>Stipend</u>
Quarterly Early Language and Literacy Institutes	Teachers, Teacher Leaders, Directors	\$125 per Institute
Monthly Professional Learning Community Sessions	Teachers, Teacher Leaders	\$25 per session (when held outside regular work hours)

4.0 Materials and Supplies

Infant Toddler Specialists will assist programs in conducting a Language and Literacy inventory in each grant classroom. Programs should plan to spend a minimum of \$1200 per classroom for language and literacy materials and supplies. Funds may also be used to purchase a laptop or desktop computer for the Teacher Leader's use, a Wi-Fi hotspot or other materials necessary for data collection activities.

5.0 Funding

Programs will receive \$20,000 for each funded classroom. Funds must be utilized for approved grant activities. No funds may be budgeted for program administration. Failure to follow guidelines or to obtain approval for expenditures outside the guidelines will result in owing ELLC funds back to DECAL, termination of grant agreement and ineligibility of participation in future ELLC grant opportunities.

Each grantee will be required to develop a written budget for ELLC funds. Programs may use the budget worksheet provided by Bright from the Start or may use any other standard budgeting worksheet.

5.1 Teacher Leader Salary

Funding must be utilized to employ a Teacher Leader. A minimum salary of \$15.00 per hour for a 40 hour work week must be met. The Teacher Leader will also be eligible for stipends for participating in professional learning outside of the 40 hour work schedule and compensation for any travel expenses incurred due to training or job responsibilities.

5.2 Classroom materials, equipment and supplies

A minimum of \$1,200 must be spent in each classroom for language and literacy materials, equipment and supplies. Infant Toddler Specialists will work with programs to inventory current materials, equipment and supplies and identify appropriate items for purchase. Programs may order from any vendor. Copies of paid invoices and receipts must be retained for record keeping.

5.3 Professional Learning stipends and support

Funds must be utilized for stipends to support participation at trainings, professional learning community meetings and other activities falling outside the 40 hour work schedule. Stipends may be paid for all staff participating in professional development falling outside their regular work schedule. Stipends will be paid as follows: \$125 per director, teacher leader and teacher participating in the Quarterly Early Language and Literacy Institutes; and \$25 per teacher participating in the monthly Professional Learning Community sessions that occur outside regular work hours. Teachers who work with infants and toddlers but are not specifically identified as participants in the grant may attend professional development activities and receive stipends as grant budgets allow. Documentation of stipends paid must be retained for record keeping.

5.4 Professional Development or Credential Attainment

Grant funds may be utilized to support the professional development of staff working with the grant (directors, teacher leader, and classroom teachers). Allowable expenses would include approved trainings; fees associated with credential attainment including tuition, certification fees or books; and other approved costs associated with professional learning.

5.5 Travel Costs

Grant funds should be utilized to cover the costs of travel including mileage, meals, and overnight stays incurred due to professional development activities. Documentation of travel costs paid must be retained for record keeping.

5.6 Substitutes

Grant funds may be utilized to pay for additional staff such as a substitute teacher or “floater” teacher to support a lead or assistant teacher’s participating in professional learning including workshops, coaching sessions, or other identified professional learning activities. Grant funds can only be utilized when teachers are participating in professional learning activities approved for the grant. Documentation of substitute salary paid must be retained for record keeping.

5.7 Other pre-approved items

Funds may be utilized for other items such as a computer for the teacher leader’s use, or support for credential attainment. Programs must submit a written request to DECAL requesting permission to use grant funds for items under this category.

6.0 Fiscal Procedures

6.1 Payment Process

All payments will be made through PANDA. Funds will be deposited in the provider’s bank account via an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) process. Appropriate forms and instructions to allow for EFT were included in the ELLC grant application package. Providers are responsible for the correct routing of their payments by promptly notifying DECAL of changes in bank account information or ownership. Providers are responsible for reviewing their monthly payments and payment documentation each month.

6.2 Schedule of Payments

Equal payments of \$5000 per classroom will be processed quarterly by:

- September 20th (Payment will be made after grant agreement is executed)
- October 20th
- January 20th
- April 20th

6.3 Record Keeping

ELLC grant recipients are required to keep all receipts and other records necessary to support figures reported on the annual reconciliation statement. If an ELLC grant recipient provider is audited and receipts and other records are not available to support these amounts, funds must be returned to DECAL. Examples of such records include, but are not limited to:

- ELLC signed grant agreement
- Canceled check copies (front and back)
- Bank statements

- Paid invoices
- Federal and state payroll records
- EFTPS or other evidence of taxes remitted to regulatory agencies
- Timesheets
- Original receipts for equipment, materials, and supplies for Early Language and Literacy grant classrooms
- Approved waivers

7.0 Audit and Accounting Requirements

7.1 Reconciliation Report

Early Language and Literacy grantees must provide Bright from the Start with a reconciliation report spanning the dates of the grant agreement. The purpose of the reconciliation report is to provide an actual accounting of all of the providers expenditures related to the Early Language and Literacy Classroom grants. This report shall demonstrate that funds were spent in appropriate categories for their intended uses. Supporting documentation must be maintained and provided upon request from DECAL.

The Early Language and Literacy Grant Reconciliation Report is due by July 31, 2018. Failure to submit the Early Language and Literacy Grant Reconciliation Report by the due date may impact a program's eligibility to apply for future grant opportunities.

7.2 Right to Audit/ Agreed Upon Procedures Review

Bright from the Start reserves the right to require an independent, certified financial audit of the Pre-K program at the Pre-K provider's expense. Bright from the Start reserves the right to conduct Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) reviews.

Bright from the Start may conduct audits and AUP reviews as specified in the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Grant Agreement, Section III, Part H:

Grantee agrees to cooperate fully with Grantor auditors and/or agents providing Audit or Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) review services. Grantee will coordinate with auditors/reviewers to have appropriate staff available during the scheduled audit/review period. Grantee will make advanced preparations for scheduled audits/reviews to make available for auditors or reviewers all identified documents, records, and entity related materials requested by the auditors/reviewers for the current school year, as well as for prior school years in which Grantee participated in Georgia's Pre-K Program as requested by the Grantor. Grantee's failure to substantially prepare for a scheduled audit engagement or provide requested documentation or information to an auditor/reviewer during the scheduled audit period may result in the withholding of grant payments. The failure of Grantor to review and/or inspect the services provided or to discover a breach of this Grant or any amendment thereto shall not subsequently operate as a waiver of any remedies available to the Grantor.

7.3 Record Keeping Findings and Adverse Findings

Findings noted during the course of the AUP review that do not result in a balance of funds due back to Bright from the Start are considered Record Keeping Findings. Examples include:

- Understatements of reported expenses compared to the Early Language and Literacy Grant Reconciliation Report.
- Overstatements of reported expenses compared to the Early Language and Literacy Reconciliation Report.
- Variances between the expenditures reported on the Early Language and Literacy Reconciliation Report and the allowable ELLC expenditures supported during field work.

Findings noted during the course of the AUP review that result in a balance of funds due back to Bright from the Start are considered Adverse Findings. Examples include:

- Failing to meet teacher leader salary requirements.
- Failing to support that payroll taxes were forwarded to the relevant taxing authorities.
- Failing to support that the use of all monies received from Bright from the Start were used in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

7.4 Balances Due to Bright from the Start

If an ELLC grant recipient is unable to support its expenditures with receipts and other records as a result of having its financial records reviewed (AUP, audit, investigation), funds may be required to be returned to Bright from the Start. There are three options regarding these outstanding funds:

- Remit the balance in full by the deadline date
- Submit a payment plan proposal with a 10 percent good faith payment by the deadline date
- Submit all source documentation by the deadline, disputing the results of the AUP review findings.

7.5 Reconsideration- Audit, Agreed Upon Procedures Review (AUP), or Investigation

In order for an Audit, AUP review or investigation to be reconsidered, providers must submit a formal request. The request:

- Submitted along with the Repayment Agreement document, provided by Bright from the Start
- Submitted in writing
- Must be made within 15 days of the notice of balance due letter from Bright from the Start
- Must include a detailed audit trail including all source documents necessary for Bright from the Start to make a final decision in a timely manner.

7.6 Random Reviews

The ELLC grant recipient is subject to random, unannounced expenditure reviews by Bright from the Start or Bright from the Start contract auditors during the program year. All records (programmatic and financial) must be retained for a minimum of three years as stated in the grant agreement.

7.7 Tracking of Early Language and Literacy Grant Funds

The provider must maintain financial records to track Early Language and Literacy grant expenditures in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). All records must be retained for a minimum of three years as stated in the grant agreement.

The provider is required to keep all receipts and other records necessary to support figures reported on the Early Language and Literacy Grant reconciliation statement. If a program is audited and receipts and other records are not available to support these amounts, funds must be returned to Bright from the Start. Examples of such records include federal and state payroll records to verify payment of teacher leader salaries, original receipts for equipment, supplies, and materials for grant classrooms, original receipts for expenses for travel to professional development activities and records indicating payment of stipends to eligible participants.

7.7 Lost, Stolen, or Destroyed Records

In the event of natural or man-made disasters, i.e. flooding, fire, hurricane, tornado, theft, etc., the ELLC provider is responsible for providing third-party verification to substantiate the disaster. Verification includes police reports, insurance company claims, photos, or other proof that support the disaster and must also include detail of the property impacted. Claims related to man-made disasters must be made and files within 30 calendar days of the incident. Claims related to natural disasters must be filed as soon as possible in accordance with insurance company regulations.

Lost, stolen or destroyed records will not exclude an organization selected for an audit, AUP review, or investigation from undergoing the scheduled review. DECAL reserves the right to request other supplementary documentation in lieu of supporting records that have been lost, stolen or destroyed.

7.7 Fraudulent/ Inappropriate Use of Funds

The provider shall ensure that expenses charged to the Early Language and Literacy grant funding source are not concurrently charged to another program funding source.

The provider must ensure that no ELLC grant funds are used to pay penalties associated with adverse actions imposed by licensing or governmental agencies. ELLC grant expenditures should be identifiable as separate from federal expenditures (e.g. CACFP).

Misuse of funds may result in repayment of funds and denial of current and future participation in other Bright from the Start programs and/or in prosecution.

Providers that participate in any federal programs operated by DECAL and who are terminated from a federal program because of fraudulent or misrepresentative submission of records and/or inappropriate use of funds as determined by the federal program, shall also have their ELLC grant terminated.

8.0 Data Collection and Evaluation Activities

All grantees must participate in activities designed to evaluate program effectiveness. Participation in these activities includes completion of surveys and interviews, participation in classroom observations, use of the LENA device, structured assessments and teacher practice observations.