**FY 21 September 2020 through June 2021 School Readiness Guidance**

**RFP PROCESS**

**The Community RFP must be submitted in Qualtrics when requesting FY21 continuation funding.**

**The application must include accurate data for all School Readiness Program sites funded in FY20 requesting FY 21 September 2020 to June 2021 continuation funding. OEC shall review the community applications and provide communities with approved applications confirmation of the approval via the electronic grant and budget system.**

The documents required for programs to request FY 21 Continuation funding are embedded in the community application. Documents shall be downloaded and provided to programs deemed eligible by the Council to request funding. Completed documents shall be submitted to the Council and maintained at the local level. The information the Council obtains in these documents shall be included in the Community application as applicable. These documents include:

* Program Space and Funding Grid
* Program Data Grid
* Program Site Relocation Details
* Program Site Deletion Grid
* Program Budget Workbook
* Statement of Assurances
* Statement of Assurances Signature Page

Scoring for applicants requesting continuation funding is not required.

**The Community application includes the following documents that shall be completed and uploaded into the Community application:**

* Space and Funding Grid
* Program Data Grid
* Site Relocation Details
* Program Site Deletion Grid
* Community Waiver for Variance in Schedules
* Community Budget Workbook
* Grant Signature page
* Statement of Assurances Signature page

**Additional Program Sites (additional sites for programs approved for funding in FY 20.)**

* Currently funded programs may request approval of additional program sites through the FY 21 School Readiness Continuation Funding Application process.
* Programs requesting additional sites in FY 21 shall allocate spaces and funding within their allocation.
* Councils may elect to increase funding allocations for programs requesting additional sites within the maximum community allocation.
* New program sites recommended by the Council must be represented in all required documents in the Community RFP.
* Councils shall ensure that additional sites demonstrate compliance with School Readiness requirements prior to allocating spaces and funds to those sites.
* OEC approval is required prior to the allocation and utilization of school readiness funded

spaces at any site.

* FY 20 School Readiness program sites that plan to or will relocate in FY21 are not considered “additional program” sites. These are existing sites changing location and a separate approval is required.

Councils may request approval of additional sites for funded programs at any time during FY 21 outside of the Community RFP process. These requests shall be submitted to the School Readiness Program Manager.

* + Programs requesting funding for additional sites shall submit the following documents to the Council:
    - Program Space and Funding Request (within the Program maximum allocation)
    - Program Data Grid
    - Updated Local Program Budget Workbook
      * These documents will be maintained at the local level.
* Upon Council approval of the program’s request for an additional site, the following shall be submitted to the School Readiness Program Manager:
  + - Report of Change Form
    - Community Program Data Grid
    - Community Space and Funding Grid
      * Councils shall ensure sites demonstrate compliance with School Readiness requirements prior to the allocation of spaces and funding to new sites.
      * OEC approval is required prior to the allocation and utilization of school readiness funded spaces at all sites.

**New Program Applications (programs not approved for funding in FY 20)**

In addition to being accepted during the FY 21 Community RFP process for September 2020 to June 2021, Local RFPs to fund new programs will be accepted throughout FY 21 to meet the changing needs of families and communities. The Local RFP process must be implemented for all new programs applying for School Readiness funding. This process includes:

* Issuance of a public notice to identify non-currently funded eligible local programs
* Submission of the full Local RFP to the Council by program applicants
* Council review and scoring of the RFPs
* Councils ensuring only proposals that are complete and specify how the program will address and meet all statutory requirements are given consideration
  + Council submission of the following to OEC for approval:
    - * Copy of the public notice issued by the Council (required each time new applications are solicited)
      * Copy of each Local RFP submitted
      * Local RFP Scoring Summary Sheet and Council recommendations for funding
      * Updated Community Program Data Grid
      * Community Space and Funding Grid
  + Programs shall be allocated spaces and funding within community maximum allocations.

**FUNDING ALLOCATIONS**

* Community monthly allocations are based on March 2020 space grids.
* OEC does not anticipate additional funding to be available for FY 21.
* Communities recommending funding of new programs and additional program sites must do so within their maximum allowable allocation.
* Space conversions will not reduce community funding allocations. Community allocations shall remain consistent for September 2020 through June 2021 to provide communities with flexibility to respond to the changing needs of families and the community.
* Councils shall maintain consistent allocations to allow programs to meet the changing needs of the families and children enrolled.
* Community space and funding allocations may be adjusted by OEC as follows:
  + Only in cases of significant chronic un-utilized spaces, may the OEC consider shifting spaces and funding from a community should another community demonstrate a significant need and the capacity to provide services using these spaces.
  + Decisions regarding the shifting of funds between communities will be made on a case by case basis taking the current and future needs of each community into consideration.
  + Communities that voluntarily forfeit spaces and funding allocations will result in a reduction in their maximum allowable funding allocation.
    - School Readiness spaces forfeited by communities will be returned to the OEC
    - The OEC will survey communities to determine space needs and additional capacity to provide services.
    - The OEC will reallocate forfeited spaces based on community need and demonstrated compliance with School Readiness requirements

FY 21 School Readiness and Administrative funding allocations for each community can be downloaded from the FY21 School Readiness Continuation Funding Application.

**QUALITY ENHANCEMENT CONTINUATION FUNDING**

Applications for FY 21 Quality Enhancement Continuation funding will be processed in September 2020. Communities may extend the services provided through Quality Enhancement in FY 2020 or may issue a public notice for new proposals. Communities are strongly encouraged to assess the changing conditions due to the current pandemic and utilize Quality Enhancement funds accordingly. Additional information regarding the submission of Quality Enhancement funding requests will be provided in late August.

FY21 Quality Enhancement allocations shall align with funding levels awarded in FY20.

**SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED IN A COMBINATION OF THE FOLLOWING SPACE TYPES:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | FY20 GRANT REQUIREMENTS  (12 MONTHS) | | | **FY 21 GRANT REQUIREMENTS WITH COMMUNITY**  **(10 MONTHS)** | | |
| Space Type | Hours of Access  Per Day | Days/Weeks of Access Per Grant Term | Rates | **Hours of Access**  **Per Day** | **Days/Weeks of Access Per Grant Term** | **Rates** |
| FULL DAY/FULL YEAR | 10 hours per day | 50 weeks | $743.66 per month | **10 hours per day** | **41 weeks\*** | **$743.66 per month** |
| SCHOOL DAY/SCHOOL YEAR | 6 hours per day | 180 days | $600 per month | **6 hours**  **per day** | **177 days\*\*** | **$600 per month** |
| PART DAY/PART YEAR  On-site/  Remote/Hybrid | 2.5 hours per day | 180 days | $450 per month | **2.5 hours per day** | **177 days\*\*** | **$450 per month** |
| EXTENDED DAY/FULL YEAR **Priority Districts only**  (Wrap Around) | Extend the day | 50 weeks | $231 per month | **Extend the day** | **41 weeks\*** | **$231 per month** |

\*Calculations based on FY20 requirement of 50 weeks less 9 weeks funded through COVID-19 Emergency Summer Funding.

\*\*Aligned with Connecticut State Department of Education modification of 2020-2021 School Year

180-day requirement.

**WAIVER APPLICATION FOR VARIATIONS IN DAYS AND WEEKS OF OPERATION**

A town or School Readiness Council may file for a waiver using forms provided by the OEC approval of an operating schedule that varies from the minimum hours and number of days.

The OEC will provide a Waiver Application for each community to complete and upload in the RFP. Communities shall complete the waiver to request a variance in the number of days and weeks programs will operate under the terms of this grant and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specific program requests for variations in operating schedules that do not align with the terms of the waiver provided in the RFP shall be submitted to the Council for approval. The Council shall forward the request to the OEC for final approval. These requests shall be submitted under a separate request form the RFP.

Programs must ensure changes in operating schedules are reported to the OEC licensing division as appropriate and accurately reflected in the Registry.

**SPACE CONVERSIONS AND SPACE SHIFTS**

* Programs with multiple sites may submit requests to convert/shift spaces between sites.
* These requests shall include justification for the change and the month requested for the change to become effective.
* Liaisons shall verify changes are allowable within existing allocations and obtain Council recommendation for approval if required in accordance with Council by-laws.
* Liaisons shall submit space conversion and space requests to the OEC Program Manager no later than the third Friday of the reporting month in order for changes to considered for approval for that reporting period.
* All requests must be submitted on the Report of Change Form and include a written justification for the change and updated space and funding grid.
* Programs submitting requests to convert spaces to Part-Day/Part-Year for the purpose of implementing alternative learning models must also submit plans for remote or hybrid learning which shall require a separate approval by the OEC.
* Liaisons will be notified of the approval status of requests space conversions and space shifts.
* Program and Community Monthly Report templates shall be modified to reflect the approved changes and provided to Liaisons for the month changes are effective.
* Councils wanting to shift spaces between programs in the community shall submit recommendations to the OEC for approval prior to implementing the change and shall include a justification for the shift in spaces between programs.

**PART-DAY/PART-YEAR SPACE ALTERNATIVE MODELS FOR LEARNING**

On-site services should be provided whenever possible. If at any time during the grant period on-site services are not possible for reasons including, but not limited to, local health guidance or facility closures due to COVID-19, programs may request to implement alternative models for Remote or Hybrid Learning utilizing part-day/part year spaces.

Requests to implement Remote and Hybrid Learning models shall include a justification explaining why on-site services are not possible, a plan detailing how the model(s) will be implemented; staff training and/or qualifications to ensure effective delivery of remote learning family engagement activities, and the anticipated date of implementation. This information shall be submitted to the Liaison for Council review. Councils shall develop a review process that may include review by the full Council or a cohort of Council members holding the knowledge and skills to effectively evaluate of Distance and Hybrid Learning requests. Councils shall submit recommendations to the OEC for final review and approval. A request and planning form shall be available for submitting these plans. Plans shall include the following details for each of the following models:

* **Hybrid Model:** Hybrid models include a combination of both on-site and remote learning. This models may be implemented when there is a need to reduce group size to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The plan for Hybrid Learning must include:
  + A rationale for implementing this model over five-day per week in-person learning
  + Details describing the remote learning component of the Hybrid model, including communication/activities with children, remote conferencing with families, planning time and professional learning related to distance learning.
  + How participation in remote learning portion of this model will be tracked.
  + Qualifications/training of the staff delivering the remote learning component.
* **Remote Learning:** Remote learning is defined as situations where students and teachers are not physically present in a classroom environment. Remote learning should be implemented when there is a need for a school/program to remain closed for any period of time to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Plans must include:
  + A rationale for implementing this model over in-person learning Details describing the remote learning opportunities including: communication/activities with children, remote conferencing with families, planning time and professional learning related to distance learning.
  + Qualifications/training of the staff delivering the remote learning component

Programs implementing these models will be required to meet additional monthly reporting requirements.

**MONITORING**

Councils shall ensure Liaisons implement a robust system for regular fiscal and program monitoring of sub-grantees that includes general data about the 11 quality components, NAEYC Accreditation/Head Start approval, and general program requirements including review of licensing and health and safety inspections, alignment of curriculum and assessment to the CT-ELDS and implementation of the sliding fee scale required by the OEC and includes at least quarterly checks of the Registry to check staffing and to ensure reporting requirements are met.

**Off-site monitoring**

Off-site monitoring also known as “desk” monitoring can serve as an effective way of monitoring program compliance. Areas that can be monitored include but are not limited to:

* Staff qualifications, DQSM compliance, licensing and accreditation status, Registry updates and reporting requirements;
* Classroom quality check-in via virtual observations;
* Virtual review of learning plans for evidence of intentional planning using CT ELDS;
* Review of distance learning activities; and
* Providing support to program staff via virtual meetings.

**On-site monitoring**

Councils are encouraged to work with the Local Public Health Departments in their communities to develop a protocol for safe monitoring visits for Liaisons or others who visit multiple sites as appropriate. Visits that do not include classroom monitoring, should be scheduled for times when children are not present. When it is necessary for Liaisons to be in the same space with children, they should take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In addition to the items listed above, on-site visits shall include observations of the health and safety practices implemented in the program and classrooms

**REPORTING**

**Monthly Space and Funding Reports**

Liaisons shall complete a community summary for Program Monthly Reports and shall submit the Community Summary and Program Monthly Reports to the [schoolreadines@ct.gov](mailto:schoolreadines@ct.gov) email box by due dates for each reporting period. Updated Monthly Report Templates reflecting these changes will be distributed to communities upon approval.

**Space Conversions and Shifts**

Liaisons shall submit space conversion and space shift requests to the OEC School Readiness Program Manager no later than the third Friday of each reporting period. Requests must include a written justification for the change and updated space and funding grids reflecting the change. The School Readiness Report of Change Form shall be completed and submitted for all space conversion and space shift requests.

**Program Site Relocation**

Liaisons shall submit in advance written notification of program site relocation to the OEC School Readiness Program Manager. Prior to submission, Liaisons will verify that requirements are met at the new location including but not limited to: Staffing qualifications, accreditation status, licensing status and Registry requirements. The School Readiness Report of Change Form, Program Data Grid and updated Contact Information Form shall be submitted to OEC prior to any program site relocation.

**Community, Council and Program Contact Information**

Liaisons shall submit updated Contact Information Forms to the [schoolreadiness@ct.gov](mailto:schoolreadiness@ct.gov) mailbox to notify the OEC of changes in contact information at the program and community level. Prompt notification of such changes is expected. Liaisons must verify information and submit a fully completed Contact Information Form for FY21 no later than August 20, 2020. This form must include contact information for: Council, Liaison, Fiscal Agent and Program contacts regardless if there has been a change from FY20. Moving forward, only the portion of the forms identifying a change requires updating.

**Liaison Status**

Liaisons and/or Councils shall submit changes in Liaison status to the OEC School Readiness Program Manager using the School Readiness Report of Change Form. The Council’s plans for ensuring the responsibilities of the liaison will continue to be met during the recruitment process shall be submitted with the notification of change.

**BUDGETS/eGMS SYSTEM**

* E-Grants, a new electronic grants and budget system will be put into operation for Competitive and Priority School Readiness communities beginning in September 2020.
* Fiscal contacts will receive additional information about the system in upcoming weeks and will be provided with opportunities for training regarding use of the system.
* OEC staff will enter the budgets in the E-Grants system for all communities. Funding will be spread across 2 lines: 100 (Administrative Funding) and 500 (Funding for spaces.)
* Upon final approval for funds being granted, Fiscal Agents will be required to submit revisions and spread funds out across all applicable budget lines.

**PAYMENTS**

* Funding is earned based on utilization of spaces within appropriated allocations.
* Children must be in attendance at least one day during the reporting period for programs to earn the funds for the space in which they are enrolled.
* Programs providing Distance Learning services during any reporting period, shall document the participation of children and families during that month in order to receive payment for each space and shall include this information with the submission of their monthly report.
* CHEFA Intercepts for FY 21 will be withheld from payments August 2020 – June 2021 for applicable programs and communities.
* Fiscal Agents for CSR and PSR districts shall request FY21 payments through the electronic eGMS grant and budget system.
* Grant award letters will be available via the eGMS system.
* Payments for the utilization of spaces during September 2020 will be available for request in the eGMS system in September 2020. Fiscal agents will be notified when the system when budgets have been approved and funds can be accessed.
* Payments for the utilization of spaces during October 2020 through June 2021 shall be available for request in the eGMS system on a quarterly basis during the months of October 2020, December 2020 and April 2021.
* Payments for Administrative funds shall be requested in the eGMS system on the same schedule as payments for services will be available.
* Districts must ensure that payment requests for services provided do not exceed monthly utilization of spaces.
* It is the responsibility of the Fiscal Agent to reconcile payment requests with the funds earned based on utilization on a monthly basis to ensure excess funds are not requested over the course of FY21.
* Funds received that are in excess of funds earned based on utilization shall be returned to the OEC.