

Marquette County Childcare Provider Enhancement Grants

Program Purpose

The purpose of this mini-grant program is to support local childcare providers in Marquette County in expanding their capacity, improving operational efficiency, and enhancing the educational experience they offer. Grants of up to \$5,000 are available for eligible providers to fund specific projects or purchases that align with these goals. This is a one-time funding opportunity made possible through funding from the County of Marquette.

Program Timeline

- **Application Opens:** April 21, 2025 at 8:00AM
- **Application Deadline:** May 11, 2025 at 11:59PM
- **Grant Awards Announced:** May 19, 2025
- **Projects Completed:** June 25, 2025*
- **Funds Expended By:** June 30, 2025

*Projects beyond this date are allowed but will receive fewer points

Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for funding, applicants must:

- Be a licensed childcare provider operating in Marquette County, MI
- Serve at least four children unrelated to the owner/provider.
- Be in good standing with local and state regulatory agencies.
- Propose a project(s) or purchase(s) that align with one or more of the program's focus areas.
- Not have previously received funding through Marquette County for childcare enhancements
- Former Childcare SPARK participants are not eligible to receive funds for *physical improvements* as that was provided under the SPARK program. Such businesses may apply for other purposes

Focus Areas

Funding may be used for projects that align with one or more of the following categories:

Capacity Expansion

Supports efforts to increase the number of children served or enhance service offerings. This may include:

- **Piloting an expansion of hours or services** to accommodate additional families, such as extending evening or weekend care.
- **Purchasing equipment** (e.g., cribs, tables, seating, playground structures) necessary to safely serve more children.
- **Expanding physical space** through minor renovations or modifications to meet licensing requirements for increased capacity.



Operational Efficiency

Aims to streamline administrative processes and improve daily operations. This may include:

- **Implementing or upgrading childcare management software** to enhance enrollment, billing, attendance tracking, or communication with families.
- **Investing in technology** such as tablets, computers, or security systems to improve record-keeping, scheduling, or safety measures.
- **Automating manual processes** to free up staff time for direct engagement with children.

Educational Enhancements

Focuses on improving the quality of learning and developmental opportunities. This may include:

- **Acquiring curriculum materials, books, or educational toys** to support age-appropriate learning and play.
- **Providing professional development for staff** through workshops, certifications, or training programs to enhance teaching skills.
- **Enhancing indoor and outdoor learning environments** with materials that promote creativity, problem-solving, and social-emotional growth.

Grant Details

- Maximum grant amount: Up to \$5,000. Funds may be used as part of a larger project, but the grant will only cover up to this amount. Smaller grant requests are accepted and encouraged.
- Funding structure: This grant is intended to be a **reimbursement grant**, meaning expenses will be reimbursed after they are incurred and properly documented. However, if time constraints prevent reimbursement, funds may be distributed upfront, with required monitoring and verification after June 25, 2025. Projects with a timeline that can be completed prior to June 25 will receive additional points.
- Eligible expenses: Expenses incurred after submission of the grant application are eligible; however, applicants expend funds prior to signing a formal grant agreement at their own risk. The LSCP is not liable for purchases made prior to a fully executed agreement, even if verbal or written notification of award is made.
- Project alignment: Proposed projects or purchases must align with one or more of the program's focus areas.
- Total program funding available: \$23,000
- Applicants may only submit one application. The application may include multiple projects totaling up to \$5,000.
- Matching funds are not required but those with match can earn up to 5 points.

Application Process

Applicants must submit the following via an online form. A copy of the form is attached as Appendix A to assist applicants in preparing materials prior to submission.



1. **Application Form:** Basic information about the childcare provider and proposed project including address, business plan, time in existence, etc.
2. **Project Description:** A clear explanation of how the funds will be used, including alignment with program goals.
3. **Budget:** Itemized breakdown of how the funds will be spent. If purchasing equipment, installing a fence, or making other improvements, applicants must include cost estimates for materials and labor.
4. **Timeline:** A short timeline demonstrating that the project can be completed by June 30 or, if the applicant is requesting time beyond the date, a date of anticipated completion.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

| Criteria | Max Points | Description |
|---|------------|--|
| Completeness of Project Description | 20 | Clarity, detail, and feasibility of the project plan. Clearly states goals, timeline, and expected outcomes. |
| Matching Funds Contribution | 5 | While not required, applicants providing matching funds demonstrate commitment and financial investment; 1 point per 20% match up to 100%. |
| Expansion of Capacity (Priority Points) | 30 | Projects that increase capacity to serve more individuals or enhance impact receive priority. |
| Feasibility & Sustainability | 15 | Likelihood of project success based on resources, team expertise, and sustainability beyond initial funding. |
| Community Impact & Need | 20 | Addresses a significant community need and has a measurable impact. |
| Innovation & Creativity | 10 | Introduces new ideas, methods, or partnerships that enhance effectiveness. |
| BONUS: Timeliness | 5 | Projects which can be completed by June 25, 2025; awarded as 0 or 5 points. |

Grant Awarding Process

Applications will be reviewed by a committee comprised of LSCP staff and members of the Marquette County childcare coalition responsible for implementing Childcare SPARK. Awards will be determined based on alignment with program goals, evaluation criteria, and available funding.

Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients will be required to submit:

1. A brief final report by June 25 (unless a different deadline is approved), detailing how the funds were used and the outcomes achieved.
2. Receipts or documentation of expenditures.

How to Apply

Applications must be submitted [online here](https://marquette.org/childcaregrant25/); the link can also be found at <https://marquette.org/childcaregrant25/>. Email or hard copy submissions will **not** be accepted. For questions or assistance, contact Paul Thares at paul@marquette.org or call 906-226-6591.



Be Prepared: Application Checklist

Use the checklist below to ensure you have all your information ready prior to accessing the grant system.

- ___ Business legal name (and dba, if applicable)
- ___ Primary contact name, phone, email
- ___ Business address (physical location); mailing address too (if different)
- ___ Childcare license number (@@#####)
- ___ Type of childcare license (family, group, center)
- ___ Date business opened
- ___ Number of children enrolled
- ___ Brief business history (100 – 300 words)
- ___ Project Name
- ___ Project category(ies)
- ___ Project description such as intended purchases, timeline, etc. (under 1,000 words)
- ___ Anticipated start and completion dates (+ explanation if past June 25, 2025)
- ___ Total cost
- ___ Grant amount requested
- ___ Match amount and source (if applicable)
- ___ Supporting documents as needed, more is better (documentation for costs, project plan, etc.)

Appendix A: Grant Application

This section includes a copy of the application questions as of April 18, 2025. The LSCP believes this to be the final version but reserves the right to modify the application if errors are identified during the process.

Eligibility: Before continuing, please confirm you meet the eligibility requirements below. You must be able to answer yes to the following questions to continue:

- I currently operate a childcare business.
- My business is currently receiving financial compensation for providing regularly scheduled childcare for at least four (4) children unrelated to me.
- My business registered with the State of Michigan.
- My business is in good standing with all local and state regulatory agencies.
- My business is located in Marquette County, MI.
- My business has not previously received a childcare provider grant directly from Marquette County.

SECTION 1: Applicant Information

Legal Business Name (This is the entity name that would go on a contract)

Do you do use a DBA (doing business as)? YES/NO

(If yes) Please provide the dba:

Email Address

Phone Number

Do you prefer communication via phone or email?

Physical Address of the Childcare Business (street, city, state and zip)

Is Your Mailing Address Different? (YES/NO)

(If yes) Business Mailing Address

Child Care License Number (two letters, 8 digits)

License Type (Family, Group, Home)

Date Your Business Opened

Number of Children Currently Enrolled



Do you serve at least four children unrelated to the provider/owner?

Are you in good standing with all local and state regulatory agencies?

Please provide a brief history of your business: How long have you been in business, what major milestones/accomplishments have your business achieved? (100 – 300 words)

SECTION 2: Project Proposal and Budget

Project Title

Select the focus area(s) your project aligns with: (Check all that apply)

(If capacity selected) Was your business part of Childcare SPARK?

Please describe your proposed project or purchase(s). Include how it aligns with the selected focus area(s), how it will benefit the children/families you serve, and your goals for the project. (250 – 1,000 words)

Anticipated Project Start Date

Anticipated Completion Date (If past June 25, 2025 additional information will be requested.)

Please explain why your project cannot be completed by June 25, 2025

Total Project Cost (round to nearest \$100)

Grant Amount Requested (Maximum \$5,000. Round to the nearest \$100)

Amount of Match (will auto populate based on other two questions)

Source of Match (Savings, Loan, Line of Credit, Etc.)

Upload Supporting Documents for your project: (Recommended supporting documentation includes quotes or cost estimates from vendors or contractors that include designs or plans and either photos or screenshots of products, items, or equipment with detailed pricing information.)

SECTION 3: Confirmation Statements

I Understand and Agree to the Following:

- Submission of an application does not guarantee funding. I understand that all funding decisions made by Lake Superior community Partnership (LSCP) are final and not subject to appeal.
- Communication for this grant will be conducted primarily via the email address I have provided on this form. If I have indicated a preference for phone



communication, I understand that some documents and notices will be sent via email.

- If awarded a grant, I agree to sign a formal grant agreement within five (5) business days of receipt to ensure the process continues efficiently.
- I understand this is a reimbursement-based grant. Unless otherwise agreed upon in writing, I must submit all receipts by June 25, 2025, for timely processing. LSCP will issue only one reimbursement payment, so I must hold all receipts and submit them together once all expenses have been incurred.
- I understand that expenses related to this project incurred after submitting this application may be eligible for reimbursement if I am awarded a grant. However, any expenses incurred prior to signing a formal grant agreement are at my own risk. The LSCP is not responsible for reimbursing expenses that are either ineligible or outside the approved project scope and the LSCP's decision on such eligibility is final and not subject to appeal.
- If my grant involves any physical improvements to my business location, I am responsible for obtaining all necessary permits and inspections prior to seeking reimbursement.
- I understand that in most cases, grant funds are considered taxable income. The LSCP will issue a 1099 form in January 2026 for any amount awarded. I acknowledge that the LSCP does not provide tax advice, and I will consult with my accountant or financial professional as needed.
- I understand that grant funds must be used solely for the purposes described in my application and approved by LSCP. Any deviation from the approved project scope must receive prior written approval.
- I agree to retain all documentation related to grant-related expenses for at least one year after reimbursement, and to provide these upon request by LSCP for verification or auditing purposes.
- I agree that if awarded funding, the name of my business or organization may be included in press releases, marketing materials, social media, and other public communications related to this grant. I understand signing a full media release will be a requirement of the formal grant agreement.

My signature certifies all information provided is accurate and truthful to the best of my knowledge. I have read and confirmed all the statements above as well as confirmed all the information provided in this application is accurate. I understand the while the LSCP will seek clarification of errors if time and capacity allows, the responsibility for a complete and accurate application falls on me as the applicant.