



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### Rising STARS Support Grant Application

**KEYSTONE STARS RISING STARS IS AN INITIATIVE OF PENNSYLVANIA'S OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING (OCDEL) TO TARGET FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO EARLY EDUCATION PROVIDERS WHO ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE TO HIGH NEED POPULATIONS IN HARD-TO-SERVE COMMUNITIES.**

#### WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- All active Keystone STAR 1 Department of Human Services (DHS) certified child care providers who are actively working on a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan that includes moving up to a STAR 2 in a reasonable amount of time.
- Active STAR 2 providers who received the Rising STARS Support Grant and successfully moved from STAR 1 to STAR 2.
- STAR 2 providers who have received the maximum amount of Merit Awards (three) but who now are positioned to move to a STAR 3 or 4.
- SACC only certified providers.

To be eligible, providers may not receive more than two previous support grants (including the previous Rising STARS Support Grants) unless they successfully moved from STAR 1 to STAR 2 using the Rising STARS Support Grant. Eligibility exclusions include STARS Head Start, PA Pre-K Counts, Private Academic Schools (PDE licensed preschool) and School District Pre-K.

**HOW MUCH GRANT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?** In order to maximize financial support of as many providers as possible, Rising STARS Grant Funds are available in the following amounts based on Provider Type:

**CENTERS & GROUPS: UP TO \$5,000**

**FAMILY: \$2,000**

**HOW DO I APPLY?** Complete the "Rising STARS Support Grant Application" located on the PA Key website, [www.pakeys.org](http://www.pakeys.org), or your Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) website. Carefully read all instructions and complete the application in full. There will be no consideration of partial or illegible applications.

**WHAT IF I AM UNSURE OF HOW BEST TO USE THESE GRANTS FUNDS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CARE AND SERVICES IN MY FACILITY?** Please contact your Keystone STARS Quality Coach who can help you identify how to maximize usage of this support grant. Examples of best practice include using grant funds to purchase classroom materials, curriculum, ERS training and materials, authentic assessment training and materials as well as other ideas that will target grants funds to help your program move to higher STARS. Rising STARS Support Grant funds are not to be used for staff salary.

## **WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED TO SUBMIT FOR CONSIDERATION?**

- 1.) A completed Enrollment Calculation Tool (ECT) form, also sometimes referred to as the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) form, for the current Fiscal Year;
- 2.) The application completed in full.

**Please note that both documents must be submitted together, or application will be invalid.**

**WHEN IS MY APPLICATION DUE?** All Rising STARS Support Grant Applications must be postmarked no later than Tuesday, **March 10, 2020** for eligibility and consideration. **HOW WILL MY APPLICATION BE EVALUATED?** ELRCs will evaluate provider's eligibility for the Rising STARS Support Grant by based on the following criteria: **1)** At least **40%** of enrolled children receiving one or more of the following services or funding during the current fiscal year: Child Care Works (CCW) subsidized child care, Early Intervention (EI) Services program for children with developmental delays and disabilities (criteria must be met), and/or Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships Initiative. Additionally, family providers may include children enrolled in the TIER 1 Child/Adult Care Food Program (CACFP); and **2)** have their STARS Quality Coach sign off on the application, affirming the provider is prepared to move up in STARS level.

**WHO WILL BE EVALUATING MY RISING STARS SUPPORT GRANT APPLICATION?** The ELRC associated with the location of the applying child care provider will be responsible for issuing, collecting, scoring, awarding, managing and monitoring the Rising STARS Support Grant initiative. OCDEL retains ultimate approval and authority and maintains the right to target funds to high need, hard-to-serve areas of the commonwealth.

**WHEN WILL I FIND OUT IF I WILL RECEIVE A RISING STARS SUPPORT GRANT?** All notifications will be made by the ELRC in which the facility/home is located on or around **March 23, 2020**. Successful applicants will be contacted directly and provided with Rising STARS support grant paperwork. Please do not contact the ELRC as this will misdirect resources and potentially delay the notification process.

**WHAT IF I FAIL TO COMPLETE THE RISING STARS SUPPORT GRANT PAPERWORK BY THE DEADLINE MY ELRC GAVE ME?** Failure to complete required paperwork by the **deadline of March 26, 2020** will result in forfeiture of eligibility. The ELRC will rescind the award and offer it to another applicant.

**WHEN DO I HAVE TO SPEND THE RISING STARS SUPPORT GRANT IF I RECEIVE ONE?** All purchases must be made within a reasonable timeframe and the grant must be closed (which includes completion of all grant paperwork along with Final Expense Report) no later than **May 29, 2020**.

**WHAT IF I FAIL TO SPEND MY GRANT FUNDS OR FAIL TO SUBMIT THE PAPERWORK TO CLOSE MY GRANT BY MAY 29, 2020?** Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the Rising STARS support grant as identified in the Rising STARS support grant paperwork will result in future ineligibility of all Keystone STARS grants and awards until such time as correction, submission, or restitution has been made.

**WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MY RISING STARS SUPPORT GRANT APPLICATION?** You may contact your associated ELRC after all Rising STARS support grant notifications have been made and request a copy of your application evaluation. The ELRC will scan/email or mail a hard copy of your application evaluation. [Please note; reviewers will not be writing comments on applications. Due to time constraints and resource limitations, no feedback for program improvement or enhancement will be provided.]

**WHAT IF I WANT TO APPEAL THE DECISION?** All appeals must be made in writing to the associated ELRC no later than **March 24, 2020**. The ELRC will forward the appeal along with the application/evaluation to OCDEL who will act as mediator.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, COMPLETION OF THE RISING STARS SUPPORT GRANT APPLICATION, OR THE RISING STARS INITIATIVE, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL ELRC.**