

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PURPOSE + FIT

What types of providers are eligible for this funding opportunity?

This funding opportunity is open to nonprofit organizations that directly operate early childhood education programs serving children from birth to age five. Eligible providers may include:

- Child care centers
- Family child care organizations or networks
- Head Start or Early Head Start programs or contract holders
- Preschool or pre-kindergarten programs

Organizations must already operate an existing PD system and meet all additional eligibility requirements outlined in the RFP.

What does the Foundation mean by a ‘professional development or learning system’?

A professional development (PD) or learning system is the overall structure an organization uses to support the ongoing growth and development of its early childhood educators over time.

Strong PD systems typically include multiple connected supports, such as:

- Coaching or mentoring
- Training
- Professional learning communities
- Classroom observation and feedback
- Individual growth planning
- Leadership support
- Use of data and feedback to improve practice

We are generally looking for systems that are ongoing, coordinated, and connected to educator practice, credentials, and compensation — rather than isolated or one-time training opportunities.

What does ‘good to great’ mean in this funding opportunity?

This funding opportunity is designed for organizations that already have a solid PD system in place and are ready to strengthen or improve a specific aspect of that system.

For example, an organization may already provide coaching, training, classroom observations, and/or professional learning communities – but want to improve:

- Consistency,
- Alignment,
- Quality,
- Data use, or
- Long-term impact.

We are looking for organizations that are building on an existing foundation rather than starting from scratch.

Can organizations apply if they are building a new PD system?

No. This funding opportunity is intended to strengthen or improve an existing PD system. Organizations should already have foundational PD structures, staffing, and implementation systems in place before applying.

What level of existing infrastructure should already exist?

Organizations should already have an established professional development system in place.

This does not mean the system must be perfect or highly formalized. However, organizations should generally already have:

- Ongoing professional learning supports
- Leadership responsible for educator development,

- Some process for coaching, training, feedback, or continuous improvement
- Sufficient organizational capacity to implement and sustain improvements over time

Can projects focus on a specific curriculum, framework, or content area?

Potentially — but the project should go beyond implementing a single curriculum, training topic, or framework alone.

For example, projects focused on topics like play-based learning, Pyramid Model, Conscious Discipline, family engagement, or trauma-informed practice may be competitive if the project also strengthens broader PD systems, such as:

- Coaching,
- Ongoing implementation support,
- Observation and feedback systems,
- Staff learning structures,
- Or continuous improvement processes.

Projects focused primarily on delivering standalone trainings without broader systems improvements are unlikely to be competitive.

ELIGIBILITY

We are a for-profit entity or membership organization. Can we apply for funding?

No. The Foundation only funds IRS-designated 501(c)(3) charitable organizations, fiscally sponsored organizations, public school districts, and public higher education institutions.

Are religiously affiliated programs or organizations eligible for funding?

Religiously affiliated early childhood providers may be eligible for funding if they meet the following conditions:

1. They do not proselytize or require staff or students to engage in religious activities.
2. They do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age, or disability.

I work for a public agency, school district, college, or university, and can't get my EIN number to work in the portal. Am I ineligible?

Please contact the foundation at grants@stranahanfoundation.org for assistance accessing the application portal and verifying eligibility.

My organization is in the process of opening its first early childhood center. Would we be eligible?

No. To be eligible, organizations must have directly operated an early childhood program for at least two years prior to applying.

My organization currently has an active grant with the Stranahan Foundation. Can we apply?

No. Organizations with an active grant with the Stranahan Foundation are not eligible to apply during this funding cycle.

Organizations may be eligible to apply again after their current grant period has ended and all reporting requirements have been completed.

My organization operates an early childhood program aligned with state-level UPK requirements, which doesn't equate to 180 days and 6 hours per day. Am I still eligible?

Possibly - we intend to support programs offering full-year early care and education, whether based on the academic or calendar year. The breakdown of days and hours does not need to match these exact parameters. If you offer an equivalent schedule, you are welcome to apply and describe your program schedule in the application.

How does the Foundation define "low-income"?

The Foundation defines 'low-income' as families earning at or below:

- 200% of the federal poverty level, or
- 50% of the area median income.

Click [here](#) for the official Department of Health & Human Services 2026 Poverty guidelines.

We do not currently track income data of our families. Would we be eligible?

Potentially. Organizations should be able to demonstrate that at least 60% of children served are from low-income families based on Stranahan’s definition of low-income. We understand organizations may use different methods to estimate or calculate this information. Organizations can use subsidies, enrollment data, tuition assistance, or other reasonable data sources to support this figure. Applicants will be asked to briefly explain how the figure was determined.

Are smaller organizations eligible or competitive?

Yes. The Foundation welcomes applications from organizations of varying sizes.

We are primarily interested in:

- Alignment with the funding opportunity
- Strength of the existing PD system
- Readiness to implement the proposed project
- Potential impact on educators and children

That said, historically, we haven’t directly funded an individual provider who is serving fewer than 50 children.

Do organizations need formal research or evaluation expertise to apply?

No. Organizations are not expected to have formal research departments or external evaluators.

However, applicants should demonstrate a thoughtful approach to:

- Measuring implementation and progress
- Gathering feedback
- Understanding whether the project is improving educator practice or program quality
- Using what they learn to strengthen the work over time

FUNDING

Can organizations submit more than one application?

No. We only allow one application per organization.

Does the Foundation provide general operating support through this opportunity?

No. This funding opportunity is intended to support specific projects that strengthen an existing PD system.

Requests primarily focused on general operating support are unlikely to be competitive.

Can we include funding for existing staff positions?

Yes. Grant funds may support salaries and benefits for staff directly involved in implementing the proposed project.

How focused should projects be?

Organizations should focus primarily on strengthening one area of their professional development system.

The strongest proposals are usually:

- Clear
- Specific
- Manageable
- Realistic within the proposed timeline and budget.

Projects that try to address too many priorities at once are often more challenging to implement successfully, making them less competitive.

Can projects include multiple activities?

Yes — if the activities are clearly connected and support one primary area of improvement within the PD system.

For example, a coaching-focused project might include:

- Coach training
- Observation tools
- Reflective practice meetings
- Coaching documentation systems
- Professional learning communities for coaches

Projects are strongest when activities work together toward a focused goal.

Can grant funds support technology, materials, or assessment tools?

Potentially. Technology, materials, subscriptions, or assessment tools may be included if they directly support implementation of the proposed professional development project.

These expenses should be clearly connected to the project's goals and activities.

What kinds of evaluation or outcome measures are expected in a proposal?

Applicants should include a practical plan to measure implementation, progress, and outcomes over time.

Strong proposals will use a combination of process, formative, and outcomes/impact measures, and may include tools such as educator surveys, classroom observations, workforce retention data, or standardized assessments.

Examples of standardized assessments include CLASS, ECERS, ELLCO, ASQ, TS GOLD, or Brigance.

APPLICATION PROCESS QUESTIONS

Approximately how long does each phase take?

We don't know the exact timing, but we hope that it will not take you more time than:

- Preliminary Screening (LOI): approximately 45–90 minutes
- Full Application: approximately 2–3 hours, plus time to complete templates and gather information
- Supplemental Information Phase: primarily document uploads and follow-up materials
- Virtual Meeting: approximately 90 minutes

We encourage applicants to review all application materials and questions before beginning.

Do we need to attach a project budget to the preliminary screening process?

No, a project budget is not required at the first stage. However, if you have already secured a portion of the project's funding, we'd encourage you to share it in the *Additional Information* section.

How many organizations will advance to the next phase?

The number of organizations advancing between phases may vary depending on the quality and alignment of applications received.

However, we anticipate inviting up to 20 organizations to the full proposal stage and 6 to the site visit stage.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE + SUPPORT

I need help submitting my application; who do I contact?

For applicants needing help accessing or submitting their application, please email grants@stranahanfoundation.org

Are you open to individual meetings to discuss my organization or project?

Due to the volume of interest in this funding opportunity, we are unable to offer individual pre-application meetings.

We are, however, happy to support applicants by:

- Answering questions via email
- Hosting office hours or informational sessions (see the RFP Overview for links to sign up for these sessions)

- Providing guidance through the FAQ and other application materials

We encourage organizations to reach out with clarifying questions as they prepare their application.

The deadline is tomorrow, and I have a question for Foundation staff. What should I do?

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the timeline carefully and to ask questions at least one week before the deadline. Late submissions and applications submitted outside the designated system will not be accepted.