PreK Expansion Grant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Is there a requirement to include 3’s?

No, applicants are not required to include 3-year-olds; however, the option now exists to include both 3-year-olds and/or 4-year-olds in the PreK Expansion Grant.

2. Can we use funds to include paras to support 3’s classroom?

PreK Expansion funds can be used to support all instructional staff that will support the grant-funded classrooms.

3. If we open 3-year-old slots, are they are considered new slots?

Yes, 3-year-old slots are considered new slots, for funding purposes ($10,000 per slot), with the exception of Head Start Programs who already receive federal dollars for 3-year-olds and would, therefore, receive the improved slot rate of $5,000 per slot.

4. Is there a required ratio for the 3’s classroom?

The ratio for 3-year-olds is the same as for 4-year-olds or a minimum of 1:10.

5. Can we use Children Study Their World (CSW) with 3’s and 4’s in a mixed group classroom?

Yes, CSW can be used in a mixed-age classroom, but the teachers will need to understand how to differentiate the units and look at the Early Learning Assessment (ELA) Skills, Knowledge, and Behaviors (SKBs) for 3-year-olds, which is covered in the Professional Development. The units and the ELA SKBs that the lessons are aligned to were written for 4-year-olds.

6. Can we have any number of 3’s or 4’s in a mixed-age classroom?

Yes, programs may determine the composition of mixed-aged classrooms to meet the needs of your program. Additionally, programs must ensure that teachers have adequate PD and support to differentiate instruction so that 3’s and 4’s are being instructed appropriately.

7. Can we open a class with less than 20 students?

In order to apply for grant funds, an applicant must request a minimum of 5 slots. A classroom with less than 20 students can be opened, but the required ratio must be maintained (minimum 1:10).
8. If you are changing a half-day slot to a full-day slot, is it improving a slot or creating a new slot?

In the case of local school systems and Head Start, changing a half-day slot to a full-day slot is considered improving a slot to meet the definition of high-quality prekindergarten. In the case of other community-based programs, all slots are new slots.

9. New seats are only for families with incomes at 186%-300% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)? Can Local School Systems (LLS) accept children from families earning up to 300% or just 186%-300% moving forward?

For 3-year-olds, all children are eligible regardless of family income up to 300%.

For 4-year-olds in local school systems, funding for children in families up to 185% must be for improved slots and children in families between 186-300% are considered new slots. In Head Start, since they receive federal funds for the children they serve, all slots are improved slots; however, if Head Start programs enroll children in PreK beyond their funded enrollment for Head Start, then those slots above the funded enrollment number will be considered as new slots. For other community-based programs, all children served from families with incomes up to 300% are considered new slots.

For 3 and 4-year-old children with disabilities, follow the above guidance for income levels up to 300%. Those children with disabilities in families with income above 300% are also eligible as new slots.

10. Can we request additional slots now for 2020-2021?

All slots for the FY21 grant must be included on the FY21 Grant Application.

11. What is the maximum amount of slots you can request?

An applicant should request the number of slots determined to meet their community needs. Additionally, awarded slots will be determined based on the total number of slots requested by all applicants and the total amount of funds available for awards. We do not guarantee that all requested slots will be funded.

12. What is the latest day to begin the school year to enable full grant funding?

The grant year is July 1 - June 30; however, the program year is the school year. The start date for the school year is determined by the program or school system. The PreK regulations require a 180-day school year.

13. Do teachers have to be certified on day 1 of instruction?

Yes, teachers must be certified or enrolled in an alternative certification program by the first day of school. Please see the Definition of High-Quality Prekindergarten (Appendix A) for more
detailed information regarding the teacher certification requirement. **It is important to note a State-approved alternative pathway that has been approved by the Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval does not yet exist.**

We recommend that you verify the teacher’s certification status with the Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval for any new hire to be sure they will have their certification by the first day of school. Do not rely on the teacher’s assurance that they will have it on time.

14. **What is the link to check teacher candidate certification?**

All questions regarding teacher certification/teacher certification status should be directed to the Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval [http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DEE/index.aspx](http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DEE/index.aspx)

15. **Where can we find certified teachers?**

You can work with local school systems to see if they have any names of teachers they are not hiring that they could share with you. You could also build partnerships with your local colleges and universities to see if they can provide a cadre of new teacher graduates.

16. **How will teachers be paid - through 2020-2021 funds or LSS funds?**

LSS and community-based programs that collaborate to administer the PreK Expansion Grant will determine how funds will be allocated, including teacher salary.

17. **Who observes the LSS teacher working in a community partner setting?**

LSS teachers working in community-based settings will be governed by the policies of the LSS regarding teacher observations. Additionally, all PreK Expansion Grant teachers will be observed by MSDE PreK Monitors.

18. **Can Head Start collaborate with LSS to serve priority children?**

Yes, collaboration is encouraged.

19. **If additional slots are held at schools that are not accredited, do they need to go through the accreditation process?**

Yes, each school location with PreK grant slots must be accredited. When adding new schools, documentation of progress through the accreditation milestones must be provided (orientation, scheduled program improvement visit confirmation email, scheduled validation visit confirmation email, etc.) **in order for those schools to be considered.**
20. **What is the process to obtain approval from MSDE on our plan to achieve Level 5 in Maryland EXCELS?**

Your written plan to achieve Level 5 in Maryland EXCELS, with specific details and dates, must be submitted with your application. Approval of your application will mean approval of your plan. Progress, per your plan, will be verified throughout the grant year.

21. **Can we use funds to pay for an accreditation manager to oversee the process?**

Grant funds can be used to pay for personnel that you deem necessary to meet and maintain the grant requirements.

22. **Can we use Supplemental Prekindergarten Grant funds to improve classrooms?**

The LSS receive Supplemental Prekindergarten Grant funds each fiscal year. The funds are still unrestricted and can be used as the Superintendent decides. Community providers do not receive the Supplemental Prekindergarten funds.

23. **Who completes line 214 on C-125? School system or community-based?**

Community-based programs complete line 214 on the C-125 Budget Form.

24. **Can you apply for funds if you are still in the planning stages?**

Grants will not be awarded to programs that do not yet exist.

25. **Do we have to advertise for our slots?**

Programs must have a recruitment plan to ensure that all slots will be filled. Advertising can be a part of the recruitment plan; however, it is up to each grantee to determine their own recruitment strategies.

26. **What is the link for application submission?**

Applications must be submitted to prekexpansiongrant.msde@maryland.gov

27. **Do we need to submit 1 or 2 copies of our application?**

Applications must be submitted electronically. Only one copy is necessary. Multiple staff will score applications; however, they will be forwarded an electronic copy.

28. **What if my application file is too large to send electronically?**

The application can be compressed using the following directions: Open that file/folder, then select File, New, Compressed (zipped) folder. Type a name for the compressed folder and press enter. Your new compressed folder will have a zipper on its icon to indicate that any files
contained in it are compressed. To compress other documents or files (or make them smaller) simply drag them into this folder.

29. What is a typical award amount?

The amount of grant awards varies as it is determined by the number and types of slots requested by each applicant.

30. Moving forward, are we using the terms PreK 3 and PreK 4?

Our regulations refer to Prekindergarten for both three and four year olds, so Prekindergarten has always referred to both ages. We will be using the terms Prekindergarten3 (PreK3) and Prekindergarten4 (PreK4) moving forward.