



2025 Bright & Early DuPage Grant Guidelines

Vision

Every DuPage child will be ready to succeed in kindergarten.

Mission

To build sustainable, coordinated, local early childhood collaborations that actively work to increase access to quality early childhood education and support for children and families with limited resources.

Why Invest in Early Childhood?

Research shows that children who participate in quality early learning experiences during the first five years of life are better prepared to succeed in kindergarten, which ultimately puts them on the path for lifelong success. This is especially true for children who are considered at risk due to issues such as developmental delays, low income, lack of English skills, or their family's lack of education.

Background

Bright & Early DuPage was launched in 2012 as an initiative of DuPage Foundation. In the past 13 years, the Foundation has provided seed funding and ongoing support for a county-wide early childhood collaboration and nine community-based early childhood collaborations. In a 2021 report conducted in DuPage County, key informants made a direct connection between early childhood system success and the presence of early childhood collaborations, especially related to reaching families in need.

Bright and Early DuPage Goals

It takes a “village” to prepare children for kindergarten and to launch them on the road to lifelong success, which is why the Foundation is investing financial resources to help local communities build a coordinated approach toward this goal by establishing early childhood collaborations.

Although there are many ways to support young children and their families, the Foundation is most interested in supporting the development of new early childhood collaborations or those already in existence which are focusing on building local capacity for early childhood resources in the community, and family outreach and engagement in order to connect families to those resources. This includes identifying needs/resources to develop and implement a plan which expands high-quality early childhood education capacity and provides family support/education.

The ultimate goals of the *Bright & Early DuPage* initiative are that more children are attending educational programs and accessing resources that prepare them to succeed when they enter kindergarten.

Eligibility

Applications for funding will be accepted from newly formed or established early childhood collaborations in DuPage County.

The lead director/coordinator for the collaboration will be responsible for submitting the application and monitoring the grant. A qualifying agency may be a school district or a not-for-profit organization that serves young children and families and is a public charity classified as exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

For the *Bright & Early DuPage* initiative, the Foundation does not award grants to:

- Organizations located outside of DuPage County
- Individuals

- Religious activities (secular activities provided by religious organizations may be eligible for grant funds)
- Endowments
- Disease-specific organizations
- Private foundations and private operating foundations
- Hospitals, including supporting foundations

New Collaboration Development (Maximum Request – \$50,000)

Entities interested in applying for this funding should contact Vice President for Programs Barb Szczepaniak at 630.598.5280 prior to applying. Consultative support is available to assist in the establishment of a new collaboration.

Through this opportunity, communities can apply for seed funding to help establish a new early childhood collaboration and begin with initiatives focused on addressing early childhood needs. A community can be defined as a municipality, school district, or any other collection of one or more of each, which are in proximity and working together.

During the first year, a collaboration will be expected to partner with its local school district(s), at least three or more community organizations, childcare providers, and engage with local families who represent the population it is serving. There are also many agencies providing county-wide early childhood programs and services. It is suggested that these agencies are also included in the planning to foster cross-sector cooperation.

Every community is unique, and each collaboration will have its own set of needs and interests as it relates to early childhood. While newly formed collaborations have much to do to establish ongoing operations and develop relationships, it is expected they will prioritize building local early childhood resources and capacity, and family outreach and engagement.

Established early childhood collaborations may apply for funding in subsequent years.

Local Early Childhood Collaborations (Maximum Request - \$50,000)

The following are *required* activities for existing collaborations that apply for funding:

1. Operate effectively as a collaboration by engaging with community partners, school district(s) and early childhood education providers on a regular basis.
2. Empower families/caregivers with increased child development knowledge, provide educational activities/opportunities to help families navigate the early childhood systems, and provide specific resources and educational events focused on families and children who have risk factors such as economic, language, disability or additional needs.
3. Conduct outreach focused on increasing the number of young children within their region to receive developmental screenings and track the number of children referred for appropriate early intervention services.
4. Promote quality early childhood education and work towards full enrollment of all available program seats, (center-based and home-based) in your community.

Attached is a list detailing the Impact Metrics that collaborations will report on at the conclusion of the grant. A Work Plan is also attached as a guide to help collaborations focus on the activities listed above.

Grant Application Due Date

Applications must be submitted for the *Bright & Early DuPage* grant program by **5:00 p.m. on June 6, 2025**. Applications submitted after the specified deadlines will not be accepted.

Online Grant Application Process

Proposals must be submitted via the [online grant application](#) process.

Application Review Process

The DuPage Foundation's *Bright & Early DuPage* Committee consists of community volunteers, Foundation Trustees and the vice president for programs.

- Committee will evaluate all applications received.
- Committee will recommend selected community projects to the full Board of Trustees for approval.
- Applicants will be notified about the status of their application in August.
- Grants will be distributed in early August 2025.

Application Questions

If you have questions about the application process, please contact Barb Szczepaniak, vice president for programs, at 630.598.5280.

For further details about *Bright & Early DuPage*, visit our website at dupagefoundation.org/BrightAndEarly

Bright and Early DuPage Impact Metrics

- 1. Operate effectively as a collaboration by engaging with community partners, school district(s) and early childhood education providers on a regular basis.**
 - # of full collaborative meetings and # of attendees
 - \$ secured from other sources of funding to support financial sustainability and collaboration activities (excluding *Bright & Early DuPage* grant funds)

- 2. Empower families/caregivers with increased child development knowledge, provide educational activities/opportunities to help families navigate the early childhood systems, and provide specific resources and educational events focused on families and children who have risk factors such as economic, language, disability or additional needs.**
 - # of events held to help families/caregivers navigate early childhood systems
 - # of attendees
 - # of educational resources given away
 - # of new family contacts collected for your family database
 - # of follow-ups after events (families contacting collaboration or collaboration contacting families)

 - # of events held to help families increase their child development knowledge and enhance family relationships, including programs that address special needs, disabilities, and social/emotional competencies.
 - # of attendees
 - # of educational resources given away
 - # of new family contacts collected for your family database
 - # of follow-ups after events (families contacting collaboration or collaboration contacting families)

- 3. Conduct outreach focused on increasing the number of young children within your region to receive developmental screenings and track the number of children referred for appropriate early intervention services.**
 - # of children who received developmental screenings
 - # of children referred for appropriate early intervention services

- 4. Promote quality early childhood education and work toward full enrollment of all available program seats (center-based and home-based) in your community.**

Reported as of May 1

 - # of children enrolled in Early HeadStart
 - # of children enrolled in HeadStart
 - # of children enrolled in Preschool for All
 - # of children enrolled in Preschool for All Expansion
 - # of children enrolled in Prevention Initiative
 - # of families enrolled in Home Visiting

Work Plan to Support Bright & Early DuPage Activity Goals

Collaborations are not expected to address every item. This is a tool to help guide collaborations to address the key activities outlined in the guidelines and to help gather metrics.

- 1. Operate effectively as a collaboration by engaging with community partners, school district(s) and early childhood education providers on a regular basis.**
 - Meet a minimum of four times a year.
 - Develop collaborative goals driven by local community needs as well as those required by Bright & Early DuPage.
 - Identify and list the public and private childcare programs within your region, and note those that you have connected with.
 - Develop multiple funding sources to support collaborative goals and financial sustainability.
 - Track total funding sources including the source, the amount, and the funding purpose.
 - Collect and use data to guide decision-making.

- 2. Empower families/caregivers with increased child development knowledge, provide educational activities/opportunities to help families navigate the early childhood systems, and provide specific resources and educational events focused on families and children who have risk factors such as economic, language, disability or additional needs.**
 - Plan and offer programs/events that help families/caregivers navigate the early childhood systems.
 - Plan and offer programs/events that help families/caregivers to increase their child development knowledge and enhance the family relationship.
 - Plan and offer programs/events that help families/caregivers and children who have risk factors.
 - Track attendance and information from program/events such as:
 - Educational resources distributed
 - Contact information collected
 - Post-event contacts made (families contacting collaboration and/or collaboration partners contacting families)
 - Pre/post-event impact/knowledge retention surveys, if appropriate.

- 3. Conduct outreach focused on increasing the number of young children within your region to receive developmental screenings and track the number of children referred for appropriate early intervention services.**
 - Develop a spreadsheet that lists all of the providers of early screening in your area and tracks the events where screenings are held. Examples include:
 - School District Early Learning Center and other child care providers
 - Easter Seals screenings done in your community
 - Screening conducted at Back to School, Pre-K Registration, and Library Events
 - ASQ Screenings conducted by team members of your collaboration
 - Track # of children, aged zero to five, who received developmental screenings
 - Track # of children who were referred for appropriate early intervention services

- 4. Promote quality early childhood education and work towards full enrollment of all available program seats (center-based and home-based) in your community.**
 - Identify the publicly funded early childcare programs (Early Head Start, Prevention Initiative, Head Start, Preschool for All, Preschool for All Expansion, School District, Home Visiting) in your community that serve children with risk factors
 - Track # of slots that are available in each program
 - Track # of children on average who have been enrolled throughout the year