

STEP Mini-Grant Application Support Document

Maximizing Your Use of Mini-Grant Funds

The purpose of this document is to give child care providers examples of fundable activities that can be funded by the Steps to Excellence Project (STEP) Mini-Grant award. Each listed activity is clearly linked to at least one of the six STEP Quality Areas. Refer to the Mini-Grant Application Guide for a complete list of the STEP Quality Areas.

Relates to STEP Quality Areas:	Activity
2: Teacher (Adult)/Child Relationships 3: Learning Environments	<p>Purchase curriculum materials and equipment to improve learning environments as required by the Environment Rating Scale (ERS).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Childhood, Infant/Toddler, and Family Child Care Environment Rating Scales (ECERS, ITERS and FCCERS) provide plenty of examples of appropriate materials in subscales Listening and Talking/Language and Reasoning, Activities, Interaction, and Program Structure under the <i>Notes for Clarification</i>. • When evaluating material needs, consideration should be given to ensure representation of people of different races, cultures, abilities and gender in non-stereotyping roles.¹ • Ideally, materials provide children with opportunities and resources for learning.² • Carefully selected materials extend the social interactions between teachers and children³ and allow children to imagine, explore their world, solve problems, and learn to work well with their peers.⁴ <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A wide selection of age appropriate books on a variety of topics and other language materials (such as flannel boards, posters and pictures, recorded stories and songs);

¹ Examples for this section are taken directly from the ECCERS, FCCERS, and ITERS. For more detailed information on the required materials and how they are to be used to promote children’s growth and development, refer to the Environment Rating Scale appropriate to your program.

² Howes, C. & Ritchie, S. (2002). *A Matter of Trust*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

³ Ibid.

⁴ National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1999). *Tools for Learning*. Washington, D.C: NAEYC.

Relates to STEP Quality Areas:	Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials that encourage expressive language (such as play telephones, puppets, dramatic play props, small animals, and communication boards and devices for children with special needs); - Fine motor materials that are age appropriate, including sorting and grasping toys, small building toys, art materials, manipulatives, and puzzles; - Art materials that include drawing materials (i.e. crayons, markers, chalk, paper), paints, three-dimensional materials (i.e. clay), collage materials, and tools (i.e. scissors, tape, staplers); - An ample supply of musical instruments <i>and</i> music to listen to (such as tape players with tapes to play as well as to record the children); - Plenty of blocks for children to build sizable structures, such as wood or plastic blocks of various shapes and sizes and/or homemade blocks; - Toys for water and sand play; - Puppets to encourage stimulating conversations between providers and children; - Props for dramatic and pretend play may include those used for different kinds of work, leisure, fantasy, and housekeeping; - Nature/science materials include collections of natural objects, living things, nature/science books, games or toys, and nature/science activities (such as cooking and simple experiments); and - Different types of materials for counting, measuring, comparing quantities, recognizing shapes, and written numbers.
<p>2: Teacher (Adult)/Child Relationships</p> <p>3: Learning Environments</p>	<p>Improve on outdoor gardening area to enhance children’s learning in science and nature.</p>
<p>2: Teacher (Adult)/Child Relationships</p> <p>3: Learning Environments</p> <p>6: Family and Community Connections</p>	<p>Purchase start-up materials to develop a resource library for families to check out books, toys, videos, and other resource materials.</p>



Relates to STEP Quality Areas:	Activity
3: Learning Environments	<p>Purchase furnishings to meet the requirements of the environment rating scale for children’s routine care, play and learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ECERS, ITERS, and FCCERS provide examples of furnishings and room arrangements in subscales Space and Furnishings and Personal Care Routines under the <i>Notes for Clarification</i>.⁵ <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Furniture for routine care and storage that is appropriate to the children’s ages, sizes and abilities, such as cots, mats, cribs/beds, infant seats, diapering tables; chairs, and tables (for eating, play and learning activities); and personal storage containers that are accessible to the children regardless of ability; - Shelves and storage containers for toys and books that are easily accessible to children, which may also be used to create distinct areas for learning and play (i.e. block area, dramatic play, and cozy corners); and - Furnishings for comfort, reading, privacy, and quiet play, such as sofa, bean bag chairs, soft toys, and cushions.
4: Identification and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	<p>Purchase start-up materials to implement developmental screenings.</p>
4: Identification and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	<p>Hire trainer to train staff on administration and interpretation of developmental screening tools and making modifications and accommodations in program to ensure inclusion of each child with special needs.</p>
4: Identification and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	<p>Purchase materials, equipment (such as communications boards and adaptive play equipment) to accommodate children of all abilities.</p>
4: Identification and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs 6: Family and Community Connections	<p>Hire a consultant to develop, update and translate the Parent Handbook and program brochures to incorporate program philosophy of high quality that recognizes and embraces diversity and ensures inclusion of all children.</p>

⁵ Examples for this section are taken directly from the ECERS, FCCERS, and ITERS. For more detailed information on the required materials and how they are to be used to promote children’s growth and development, refer to the Environment Rating Scale appropriate to your program.



Relates to STEP Quality Areas:	Activity
5: Qualifications and Working Conditions	Hire a consultant to develop any of the following: job descriptions, employee policies and procedures, in-service education plan, salary scales, and grievance procedures.
5: Qualifications and Working Conditions	Hire a consultant to develop staff evaluation and professional development plans.
5: Qualifications and Working Conditions	<p>Provide specialized training for staff that is consistent with any of the STEP quality areas.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fostering teacher-child relationships to support social-emotional development and early learning; - Integrating a recognition and response system to ensure quality early learning experiences for all children; and - Implementing the use of developmental screening tools into the program.
6: Family and Community Connections	Purchase resource directories, pamphlets on developmental milestones and parenting tips, and display features for community brochures.

