Questions Submitted for the GEER RFP

Reminders and Tips

- You MUST turn in your full application by the deadline—3:30 PM on Thursday, September 24, 2020. Applications received in the inbox after this date and time WILL NOT be considered. Do not wait until the last minute to submit as we will not be able to make exceptions for you.

- You do not have to complete the expedited review process for licensure PRIOR TO submitting your application. If you are eligible for expedited review and you are funded, GEER will work with you to complete the process before you begin serving children.

- Please READ all the GEER documents carefully as we received several questions that are already answered elsewhere.

About the Questions

Questions in this document are presented as submitted, with no editing unless otherwise noted. We have grouped them according to topic for user ease. Now that the question deadline has lapsed, the Governor’s Office will update this document only as needed. Questions submitted at this point may not be answered.

Questions about Certificate Program Children

We received several questions pertaining to children in the childcare certificate program. We have listed each of these questions and provided one, detailed response.

1. Can the GEER funds be used for parents and students that has a childcare certificate?

2. Will these funds be a conflict with certificate children? I have school age children all day long and I need additional staff to help them with virtual learning (some are certificate children and some are not).

3. I have students in my program who are in foster care, students whose parents have been impacted by the pandemic, and others who cannot afford childcare and have qualified for the certificate program. However, every single child in my daycare does not fall under this category. Would that make me ineligible? Or are you just making sure we provide the service if needed-be?

4. Will children be considered eligible for GEER funds if the family is on an Emergency Childcare Certificate?
5. **Similarly, if foster children's tuition is already partially covered through a 12-month Child Care Certificate will they still be eligible for the GEER funds?**

A child supported by a childcare certificate, including an emergency childcare certificate, may not be served with GEER funding for the same service hours covered by the childcare certificate, as this would violate the GEER prohibition against using GEER funds for services already supported by CARES or other funding source. Therefore, whether an individual child can be served using GEER funds depends on the nature of that particular child's certificate. GEER funds can only be used to support hours not already supported through another source. Please also note that GEER funds cannot be used to pay for the parent portion of a certificate for the service hours covered by the certificate. The reason for this is because the Mississippi Department of Human Services is paying the cost of the parent share through December with its CARES funds.

If you run a program/center in which some but not all children are supported by childcare certificates, you may still apply for GEER funds for those children not on certificates who are eligible even though some children (those on certificates or not eligible for other reasons) do not qualify or for new children you plan to recruit who will be eligible. For example, if you serve 50 children in your center and only 25 qualify for GEER funding, you may receive a grant to support services for the 25 currently served eligible children. (For the purposes of Priority 1.1, serving children affected by the pandemic (eligible children under 1.1) is considered "new.") Furthermore, if you believe you can additionally support 15 new eligible children (current 50 plus 15 more), you could apply for a grant for 40 children (25 currently eligible plus 15 new eligible children). You would need to recruit these new children either before or after you receive GEER funds and make sure they are eligible.

Please remember that once children are being served through GEER funds, you cannot make them pay tuition for the hours covered by the GEER program.

**Questions about Program Hours**

6. **My program for school aged children is from 6:30am-5:30pm (rather than 7am-6pm). Will those hours be acceptable since we are open for the same amount of total hours?** We did offer full-day care for school-aged children from May 4 - the end of August. Students started a hybrid schedule on September 1; therefore, the days that students are not in school, we offer a full-day program, and days they do go to school, we offer an after-school option.

Yes, 6:30 AM-5:30 PM would be an acceptable variation on daytime hours.
The Revenue Table assumes that children will attend the same number of hours per day and the same number of days per week (see the updated version). Since children in your program will attend a different number of hours per day depending on day, you will need to average the hours per day over the correct number of days per week so that the total revenue will be correct. For example, if children will attend 8 hours per day two days a week and 4 hours per day three days a week, you will need to put “5.6” (8+8+4+4=28 divided by 5=5.6) in “Hours Per Day” in the Revenue Table and “5” in “Days Per Week.” Be VERY explicit about the varying hours/days and how you dealt with it in the Revenue Table when answering F. Length of Program Day, Question 1 in Section III, Part 3 of the application so that reviewers can follow your math when they get to your Revenue Table.

Questions about Program Size

7. Is the 40 student maximum per organization or per facility?

The 40-student GEER maximum is per facility. An organization with multiple facilities, including multiple buildings on a shared campus, or an organization that is running part-day programs such that cohorts of children are not in the same facility at the same time may apply for a grant exceeding 40 students, provided that each cohort of students is kept separate for social distancing purposes. This needs to be explicit in the application so that reviewers are not confused as to why the application exceeds 40 students. Remember Priority 2.1 programs may have up to 75 total children in the same facility at the same time but an organization may only receive funding for 40 of them.

Questions about Childcare Licensure

8. As far as expansion, what can be included under the expansion? Much information is not given? Does that mean opening a second location? I’m unsure on that part?

Whether your center is eligible for an expansion of licensure will ultimately be determined by the State Department of Health, and you will need to contact Childcare Licensure for that determination. Expansions of capacity occur when licensed centers have additional qualifying space or are seeking to serve a different age group within their current facility.

Some centers may be eligible to serve more children than their current license allows, if they have a recent addition completed after their capacity was determined or if they have a very close building that has been recently re-purposed for childcare services and was not considered when their capacity was determined. An entirely separate, second location would need to be separately licensed per MSDH and MDHS rules. For second locations, the center would need to undergo expedited review.
Unless you have a currently valid license that will still be valid with the addition of the GEER program, you must complete the Licensure Form. Reviewers will decide whether to refer you for an expansion of capacity or an expedited review process.

9. **Is the square footage required under this grant different from those required by the state childcare licensure?**

In order to satisfy the goal of 6 feet of distance between persons, the square footage requirements for school-age children in Priority 2.1 and 2.2 have been increased from 25 square feet per child to 36 square feet per child. No changes have been made to space requirements for children being served through Priority 1.1 (children 0-5).

10. **If services are provided at a partner site (local elementary school), does the applicant need to be licensed?**

The facility at which the program operates must be covered by a childcare license held by the operator of the program unless the owner of the facility is exempt from licensure. An accredited local elementary school would be exempt from licensure under 43-20-5-(a)(iii) of the Mississippi Code. The operator of the program must still abide by GEER guidelines regarding staff, facilities, nutrition, etc., even if the facility is exempt.

11. **Can services be provided in an elementary school?**

Yes, services for school-age young children may be provided at an elementary school or by an elementary school. However, if in-person school is occurring during services, this may violate the prohibition against having more than 75 school-aged children in the same facility at the same time.

Questions about Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

12. **In Section III-G, question 5, what are considered “fundamental alterations”?**

According to ada.gov, “A ‘fundamental alteration’ is a change that is so significant that it alters the essential nature of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations offered. For example:

If a bookstore places special orders for customers, it should do so for all of its customers. A bookstore that does not place special orders for customers is not required to place special orders for customers with disabilities. This would be a ‘fundamental alteration’ in the nature of the bookstore’s services.
A restaurant is not required to prepare special dishes for customers who have disabilities. This would be a ‘fundamental alteration’ in the nature of the restaurant’s services. However, if it is easy to omit a sauce or ingredient from a dish that is listed on the menu, a customer can request that the item be omitted. This would not be considered a fundamental alteration.”

Questions about Funding, including CARES

13. **How do you determine appropriate grant size?**

Grant sizes for Priority Tasks 1.1, 2.1, and 2.2 are determined via formula based on cost per child for the Priority Task, the number of children served, the number of hours per day, days per week, and total weeks. Grant sizes for Priority Task 1.2 will be determined by the Governor based on the budget rationale provided via the applicant’s budget and budget narrative. All final award amounts are at the discretion of the Governor. The GEER RFP Information document has further information about funding.

14. **If we are able to receive a portion of our university’s CARES Act monies to recover lost revenue while our Child and Parent Development Center was closed due to COVID, can we apply for GEER funding to support the unique and additional services we would like to propose to begin in October in a GEER application?**

Yes, provided that the other CARES funds serve a different purpose and will not support the activities proposed in your GEER application.

Questions about the Budget or Revenue Tables

15. **The Budget Summary is not in EXCEL. Where do you find the Budget Summary Table?**

In the “GEER Excel” document, there are three tabs. The Budget Summary Table is located in the GEER Excel document under the “Budget” tab.

16. **In Section IV-A question 1 and IV-C, question 1, in Excel, is the table for the Budget Summary Table and the Revenue Table the same?**

No. In the “GEER Excel” document, there are three tabs. The tab labeled “Budget” is the Budget Summary Table. The tab labeled “Revenue” is the Revenue Table.

17. **The formula in the budget spreadsheet needs to be corrected. It is calculating incorrectly.**
The GEER Excel has been updated. We apologize for the error.

18. Why when I fill the highlighted yellow cells on revenue table it calculates total for only 1 child when I entered 10?

The Revenue Table has been updated. Please download the new version.

19. In Section IV-C, question 2 (Revenue), what is considered “Other Funds”?

“Other Funds” are any funds that are not GEER funds.

20. In Section IV-A, question 1, How to complete the Budget Summary Table?

The Budget Summary Table is located in the GEER Excel document under the "Budget" tab. Fill in only those cells highlighted in yellow. Formulas will auto-calculate.

21. In Section IV-B, question 1-10, How to complete the Budget Narrative?

Please read the instructions provided in the appropriate application document for each question. The purpose of the Budget Narrative is to explain how you derived the amount for each cost category of the Budget Summary Table.

22. In Section IV-C, question 1, How to complete the Revenue Table?

The Revenue Table is located in the GEER Excel document under the “Revenue” tab. Fill in only those cells highlighted in yellow. Formulas will auto-calculate.

Questions about Priority 1.2

23. Can a single applicant apply for both Priority 1.1 and Priority 1.2?

Most childcare centers should apply only for Priority 1.1, which is to allow centers to directly serve very young children (0-5), or for Priority 2.1 (to serve school-age children). Priority 1.2 is intended for organizations with a record of success in improving the quality of care and education services provided by parents or care providers. The typical applicant for Priority 1.2 would be an organization providing technical assistance, training, or other support services to parents or care providers rather than direct childcare services, although a few large or "model" centers might do both. Priority 1.2 is not intended for a single childcare center to improve its own services.

Nonetheless, there is no prohibition against an organization applying for all Priority Tasks for which it feels it is eligible.

24. Do all direct services and training need to take place in-person?
If this question is in response to Priority 1.2, the answer is no, provided that the applicant can implement high-quality services and/or training with fidelity remotely. Services under Priority Tasks 1.1, 2.1, and 2.2, by definition, must be in-person.

25. **We are a statewide nonprofit offering technical assistance, training, supplies, and support for child care providers in MS that participate in the DHS Child Care Payment Program (CCPP). We want to apply to the GEER fund program for funding to distribute to CCPP centers that need financial support for training, supplies, and services for pre-school and school-aged children. Is this an allowable use under Priority 1.2?**

No. Due to the nature of the GEER program and the reporting requirements involved, an application that intends to “pass-through” GEER money as cash grants to other entities who are not direct sub-grantees will not be successful. Furthermore, we understand that CCPP providers are already receiving a number of similar supports through MDHS’s CARES program, including an emergency cash grant and higher reimbursements. Your hypothetical pass-through grants would therefore also violate the prohibition on using GEER funds for purposes already supported through CARES or other source.

The nonprofit may directly provide technical assistance, training, or supplies to childcare providers under a Priority Task 1.2 application, provided that the proposed services are not duplicative of other services these centers are eligible to receive or expect to receive through another CARES-supported program, such as the CARES program from MDHS. Alternatively, each of the childcare centers may apply for GEER funding through Priority 1.1 or 2.1 to serve children in their centers not already served through the childcare certificate program.

26. **I could not find an answer in the proposal, but I do know that we need to establish a need to provide training for childcare staff. Can these funds be used to train current or potential childcare employees?** [Questioned shortened for brevity]

One of the allowable uses of Priority 1.2 is to “provide access to programs, training, or technical assistance that improves the quality of care and education services.” A program that trains current childcare employees or parents with the goal of improving the quality of care and education would qualify, provided that the applicant also meets eligibility requirements as an entity as well as further eligibility requirements for Priority 1.2 found in the GEER RFP Information document. A program that trains “potential” employees may have difficulty in satisfying scoring criteria pertaining to how the applicant will measure success relative to the program’s goals by the end of the project and the estimated number of children that would benefit.
27. Is the funded organization allowed to utilize equipment inventory on hand that was purchased previous to the Award Date (October 1)? Or, do we have to purchase all materials/equipment after the October 1 award date?

This is a complicated question to answer, and we have made some assumptions in order to answer it. We assume that this question was asked in relation to Priority Task 1.2 about equipment to be provided to childcare partners for technical assistance or other support programs. We also assume that you intend not only to “utilize” the equipment but also reimburse the organization/pay the invoice for it with GEER funds. (Otherwise, there is no issue with using inventory.)

The answer is that it depends. If the organization’s general practice is to pre-purchase equipment as on-hand inventory with general revenue or operating support that is expected to then be reimbursed/paid for once grant partners are lined up, then, yes, the organization may utilize this equipment as this is the typical practice. However, if the equipment was purchased as part of some pre-existing grant, contract, or other restricted source, it cannot then be utilized/reimbursed out of GEER as this would violate the rule that GEER funds not be used for expenses already supported through another source.

For example, a hardware store that sells 20 hammers every month may have a standing order from a supplier for 20 hammers because it knows someone will come in to purchase them and it needs to have them on hand. The hardware store expects to pay the supplier or cover the pre-paid expense out of that walk-in revenue. However, imagine the hardware store purchased and paid for 50 hammers with funds from a specific handyman who then did not need all of them and let the hardware store keep the extra 20. The hammers remained at the store, which wanted to re-sell them for extra profit since they were already paid for. In other words, the hardware store was paid twice for the same hammers. Such a situation would violate the GEER rules.

Since this is complicated, you should have very clear documentation as to what your typical practice is and what source was used to purchase the existing inventory in order to justify the expense. However, if at all possible, we recommend you purchase new inventory just for GEER, as this will provide cleaner documentation for GEER auditors and administrators to understand and allow.

Questions about Application Documents or Attachments other than the Budget and Revenue Tables

28. Please reply with Part 3 Priority Task Application documents, or provide page numbers for the application documents. The location of these fillable forms within the 30-page RFP is unclear.
On the Governor's website where the GEER materials are located, the Part 3 Priority Task Application documents are posted as "Priority [NUMBER] Application." Select the document corresponding to the Priority Task for which you intend to apply. For example, if you are applying for Priority 1.1, please download "Priority 1.1 Application." This document contains Part 3 of the proposal for the corresponding Priority Task. Parts 1 and 2 are found in the document labeled "GEER RFP Information." Please remember that the document labeled "GEER Excel" contains important attachments for Part 4.

29. Which application I should use for a licensed child care center?

It depends on which group of children you intend to serve. If you intend to serve children you are not yet old enough for school, you should use the application documents for Priority 1.1. If you intend to serve school-age young children, you should use the application documents for Priority 2.1. If you intend to serve school-age persons with diagnosed developmental delays, intellectual disabilities, or mental or behavioral health disabilities, you should use the application documents for Priority 2.2. Please see the GEER RFP Information document to read about and understand the requirements for each of these Priority Tasks.

30. For Appendix G, what is the District and Program Calendar?

The District Calendar is the student attendance calendar (dates children are expected to be in school) for the school district which serves the community that the applicant intends to serve. This is typically the school district in which the applicant is located but the applicant may serve children from multiple, nearby school districts. If this is the case, the applicant should include the district calendar(s) relevant to the children the applicant intends to primarily serve.

The Program Calendar is the applicant’s calendar showing the dates that the applicant’s program will be open.

31. For Appendix H, who does the “Letter(s) of Support” need to come from?

The letter of support should be signed by an appropriate representative of the school district(s) attending by the children to be served. This may be the superintendent or other authorized representative.

32. Please provide more clarity on what the letter of support from the school district should include.

An ideal letter of support would specify the nature of the partnership between the school district and the applicant, including how closely the two organizations would work together, the roles of each organization, and who will be responsible for each organizations’ responsibilities.
Questions about Application Questions

33. In Section II, question 3, what documentations are sufficient/relevant to attest to strength of our cash financial accounting system?

This question asks for a narrative response in addition to a Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs from the organization's most recent audit. The narrative response should provide sufficient detail to answer the question as written, allowing the reviewer to assess the organization's financial procedures and controls.

If the organization has no audit, you must provide other relevant documentation, such as a financial review by a qualified accountant attesting to the adequacy of the organization's financial procedures and controls and the accuracy of the organization's financial statements. Please refer to the GEER Rubric for further information about how this response will be scored.

34. In Section III-B, question 1 (Capacity to Fulfill the Duties of the Applicant), what type of documentation is sufficient to use as evidence for caring for the very young children?

This question asks for a narrative response; no attachments are allowed. You should provide sufficient detail in your narrative to answer each part of the question as written, including verifiable facts, dates, places, names, organizations, etc. Please refer to the GEER Rubric for further information about how this response will be scored.

35. In Section III-C, question 1 (Children Served & Ages, Number of Groups, etc.), are these number our current numbers or is it for anticipated numbers?

You should respond with information that includes children you expect to serve if awarded GEER funding.

36. In Section III-D, question 1 (Caregiver Staff), how do we calculate these numbers?

You must have enough staff to satisfy applicable student:staff ratios, either from Childcare Licensure Regulations or GEER requirements. For Priority 1.1, please refer to the Mississippi Childcare Licensure Regulations as promulgated by the Mississippi Department of Human Services. For the Priority Task 2.1 and 2.2, refer to the ratios described in the GEER RFP Information document.

Questions about Application Signatures
37. As the director, can I place my name on all paperwork? Or does it require the owner’s name? I manage the entire Center including preparing grants, paperwork, purchases, finances and more.

If you are authorized by the center owner to represent the center for the purposes of signing paperwork, you may sign the grant documents.

38. Are electronic signatures allowable?

You should print the documents requiring a signature, sign them by hand, and scan them into a PDF as part of your application. Do not turn in typed signatures.

Questions about Reporting Requirements

39. Can you provide more information around financial and programmatic reporting requirements?

Monthly reports will be required. More information will be forthcoming if you are awarded.