

Prekindergarten Partnership Funding Award Eligibility Discussion Paper

Background

The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Child Care & Early Learning (CC&EL) Division continues to support the development of Prekindergarten Partnerships (PKP). Originally initiated in 2021 using stimulus funds, the program was made permanent through the enactment of [HB 1615](#) (88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023), which added Texas Labor Code [§302.0051](#), directing TWC to continue its PKP efforts. The permanent TWC PKP Department launched on October 1, 2024.

The TWC PKP Department's efforts are intended to support a mixed delivery system for Prekindergarten (pre-k) services, which build upon the existing pre-k offered by Local Education Agencies (LEAs) such as school districts and charter schools, by expanding pre-k into high-quality community-based child care programs.

PKP Funding Awards

New PKP classroomsⁱ are eligible to receive a \$25,000 funding award. The PKP funding award helps child care programs with the costs associated with the new PKP classroomⁱⁱ, including but not limited to teacher compensation (ex. one-time bonuses), furniture and equipment, instructional materials, and minor repairs and building modifications. TWC's PKP Department accepts applications from September 1st through January 15th.

To be eligible for the funding award, a child care program must meet the following criteria:

- Be actively working with TWC's PKP Department;
- Be Texas Rising Star Three- or Four-Star certifiedⁱⁱⁱ;
- Have a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for a formal partnership with an LEA;
- Have a new PKP classroom in operation with students dually enrolled; and
- Attend a virtual funding information session.

At the end of Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25), **165 child care centers** have received the \$25,000 funding award, representing **228 new PKP classrooms** and **\$5,700,000** in awards.

Fiscal Year	# of PKP Classrooms	Funding Awards Issued
FY23	17	\$425,000
FY24	73	\$1,825,000
FY25	138	\$3,450,000
Total	228	\$5,700,000

Issue 1 – Child Care Programs Affiliated with an LEA

TWC’s PKP Department has recently engaged with several child care programs which are affiliated with an LEA. These child care programs meet the currently approved PKP funding award criteria, as the current criteria does not make a distinction between a community-based child care program, and a child care program that is affiliated with an LEA.

The goal of TWC’s PKP Department is to support the development of a mixed delivery system by helping *community-based* providers partner with LEAs to provide pre-k instruction within community-based child care settings (i.e., not on LEA property, and not affiliated with the LEA). As such, CC&EL recommends that the Commission approve the following additional criteria for the PKP funding awards:

- Child care programs that are affiliated with an LEA are not eligible to receive TWC’s PKP funding award unless there are no available community-based 3- or 4-Star Texas Rising Star child care programs within the LEA’s attendance zone.
- If there are 3- or 4-Star Texas Rising Star child care programs within the LEA’s attendance zone, the TWC PKP Department must have documentation that:
 - none of these programs have chosen to enter a PKP within 30 days of initial outreach; or,
 - the LEA has partnered with at least one willing child care program and has made a good faith effort to establish partnerships with as many other willing community-based child care programs as possible.

Documentation should include any reasonable barriers preventing partnerships with other programs within the LEA’s attendance zone, and what steps, if any, were taken to overcome those barriers.

Staff recommends that the eight existing LEA-affiliated child care programs^{iv} that TWC’s PKP Department is currently working with to broker a PKP still be eligible to apply and receive the funding award; however, no new LEA-affiliated child care programs will be funded unless they meet the criteria outlined above.

Issue 2 - Licensed Child Care Homes

To date, the TWC PKP Department has not assisted with the development of PKPs with licensed child care homes. As a result, all PKP funding awards have been limited to licensed child care centers.

TWC’s PKP Department was notified by an LEA that they are considering partnering with a licensed child care home. As child care homes have lower operating costs than child care centers, staff recommends that PKP funding awards for child care homes be set at \$13,250.

In addition, staff recommends that the following parameters for funding awards will apply to licensed child care homes:

- Providers are eligible to apply for only one award of up to \$13,250 per site.
- Minor repairs and building modifications will be excluded as an allowable expense to prevent the potential misuse of funds for personal home improvements.

1 **Issue 3 – District Accountability Ratings**

2 To support high-quality partnerships, TWC’s PKP funding awards are only available for 3- and 4-Star
3 Texas Rising Star certified child care programs that are in PKPs. TWC does not currently have a
4 comparable quality requirement for partnering LEAs.

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6 TWC provides funding to the Texas Education Agency, who in turn contracts with Texas A&M
7 University System (TAMUS). TAMUS recently released a Request for Applications (RFA) to assist in
8 developing additional PKPs ([TEA PKP Collaborative Districts RFA](#)). This RFA establishes eligibility
9 criteria for LEAs based on their district accountability rating. To be eligible for funding through this
10 RFA, the LEA must have a rating of C or better for the last three years.

11
12 Staff recommends that TWC also require that the PKP funding awards be expended to support child
13 care programs in partnerships with high-quality LEAs, which aligns with the TAMUS RFA
14 framework. Staff recommends that the Commission limit PKP funding awards to child care programs
15 in partnerships with LEAs that have a district accountability rating of C or better for the most recent
16 year that ratings are available.

17
18 To date, TWC has funded child care programs partnering with 5 LEAs^v that received district
19 accountability ratings below a C and is actively working with child care programs who are partnering
20 with 5 additional LEAs^{vi} with similar ratings. Staff recommends that the child care programs that are
21 currently working with TWC’s PKP Department and are in the process of brokering a PKP with these
22 LEAs^{vi} still be eligible to apply for the PKP funding award. However, in order to support high-quality
23 partnerships, any child care program that begins the process of establishing or expanding a PKP after
24 November 12, 2025 will not be eligible to apply for the PKP funding award, unless they have a signed
25 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for a formal partnership with an LEA *that has an*
26 *accountability rating of C or better for the most recent year for which ratings are available.*

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28 **Decision Point**

29 Staff recommends that the Commission approve the PKP funding award eligibility criteria, as outlined
30 above.

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ⁱ A pre-k partnership classroom that came into operation less than 12 months ago. A classroom is in operation when children who are dually enrolled in public school pre-k and the child care center are currently receiving pre-k instruction and wraparound care in the classroom.

ⁱⁱ A dedicated classroom where children who are dually enrolled in public school pre-k and the child care center receive pre-k instruction and wraparound care.

ⁱⁱⁱ CCS providers that have established a new PKP classroom have a 12-month grace period to obtain the required Texas Rising Star certification and apply for the TWC PKP funding award.

^{iv} 1) Lyford CISD CDC (Lyford CISD); 2) GCISD Early Childhood Development Center (Grapevine-Colleyville ISD); 3) Playing for Keeps (Longview ISD); 4) Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD Discovery School (Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD); 5) Uvalde CISD; 6) LEISD Childcare Programs @ Herschel Zellars Center (Little Elm ISD); 7) Palestine Employee Daycare (Palestine ISD); and 8) Eagles Nest Early Learning Center (Rogers ISD)

^v 1) Baird ISD; 2) Beaumont ISD; 3) Fort Stockton ISD; 4) Lawson Academy; and 5) Lyford CISD.

^{vi} 1) Brookesmith ISD; 2) Fort Davis ISD; 3) Marfa ISD; 4) Pecos-Barstow Toyah ISD; and 5) Uvalde CISD.