

North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services, Early Childhood Section

2024-2025 Kindergarten Transition Program Grant

Grant Application Requirements and Instructions for Submission

Invitation to Apply

The *Kindergarten Transition Program Grant* is a competitive, one-time, planning and implementation grant opportunity, established by the *ND HHS Early Childhood Section Preschool Development Grant Activity 3.13 (1): Kindergarten Transition* to support school districts in developing a unique kindergarten transition program to serve North Dakota's children and families in their communities the year before they enter Kindergarten.

The *Kindergarten Transition Program Grant* represents a targeted state investment in delivering high quality and interactive experiences to children and families. Awardees will demonstrate and provide evidence of the return on investment with intentional, research- supported practices in early childhood. The planning and implementation work of districts will be supported, reviewed, and evaluated to help ensure that the investment made has an impact.

Grant Funding and Eligibility

All North Dakota school districts providing kindergarten services are eligible to apply. An approved awardee will receive a one-time payment of up to \$10,000 to support guided design and implementation of a Kindergarten Transition Program responsive to their community needs. The awardee will receive a one-time payment according to the implementation timeline on the Appendix A.

Grant funds will support the plan and provisions for quality early childhood experiences, including expenditures related to staffing, curriculum/resources, training, equipment, and supplies.

Application Requirements and Instructions

The grant application requirements and instructions for submission can be found on SFN 1932 with a more detailed list of allowable expenditures found in Appendix B.

Applicants will include information for the following:

- Demographics of the district/community
- Need and potential of a sustainable kindergarten transition program
- Budget description
- Letter of support

Applications are due January 21, 2025, 3:00 PM CST

Selection Criteria can be found in Appendix C

Program Overview and Guidance

A well-designed and executed kindergarten transition program not only ensures a smooth start for children but also supports families, community partners, and educators in facilitating this stage of early learning. Programs can set the stage for children's future academic success and socio-emotional well-being by fostering collaboration, addressing diverse needs, and prioritizing continuity in learning experiences.

Upon award, NDHHS Early Childhood Section will provide technical assistance to districts through an experienced consultant to support the development and implementation of their unique, comprehensive kindergarten transition program plan to meet the needs of their district and community. Each awardee will develop plans that include the evidence-based key components and *conditions for success* identified by the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA): Kindergarten Sturdy Bridge Learning Community. They include:

- The Kindergarten Transition Team
- Professional Development
- Family Engagement
- Individual Support
- Curriculum alignment
- Social Connections
- Communication
- Evidence-based programming/curriculum and resources
- Data Collection

Reference: 2024 Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center: Kindergarten Sturdy Bridge

School districts can find additional information on the key components and conditions for success in *North Dakota's Comprehensive Kindergarten Transition Plan Guide* (Appendix D)

Awardees will participate in the virtual ND Kindergarten Transition Community of Learners as well as receive three individual virtual consultation meetings to assist in developing the key component areas of a well-designed kindergarten transition plan. The consultant and districts will utilize the *Planning and*

Implementation Worksheet found in *North Dakota's Comprehensive Kindergarten Transition Plan Guide* as a framework (Appendix D).

In response to community needs and unique characteristics, while also incorporating evidence-based components, an awardee's final kindergarten transition program plan must include:

- a research-based framework as their anchor/guide for the Kindergarten Transition Program
- a minimum of four family-child engagement sessions that build upon one another in the implementation of their Kindergarten Transition Program
- family engagement components with opportunities for both the child and the adult(s) to interact and experience developmentally appropriate activities relevant to kindergarten success
- sessions for adults to learn information important to a successful transition to kindergarten

Timeline Indicators

The Implementation Timeline (Appendix A) provides a frame for anticipated timelines and obligations of the districts and State. Programs may choose to move at a quicker pace than indicated but must complete the Data Submission components on or before the deadlines listed.

Notable indicators:

- Award announcements: Awards will be announced to individual districts and listed on the NDHHS website.
- Award Distribution: Districts will be awarded funds upon completion and review of their district's unique Kindergarten Transition Program Plan to be completed no later than August 2025.
- Community of Learners Virtual Meetings: Specific dates will be determined upon agreement with awardees. A representative from the district must be in attendance for all three meetings.
- Data Submission-Completed District Kindergarten Transition Program Plan: Districts will complete and submit for review on or before August 30, 2025.
- Data Submission- Proof of Execution: Districts will complete and submit data regarding elements such as participation numbers, demographic breakouts, stakeholder feedback, etc. no later than June 1, 2026.

Appendix A: Implementation Timeline

Kindergarten Transitions Program Grant Announcement	December 2024
Virtual Question and Answer Sessions	Session January 7, 2025 10:00 a.m. CST
Grant Applications Due SFN 1932	January 21, 2025, 3:00 p.m. CST
Awards Announced Selection Criteria Appendix C	January 31, 2025
Awards Distributed	Upon completion and review of the district's Kindergarten Transition Program Plan (No later than August 2025)
Community of Learners Virtual Meeting #1 (Topic: Initial stages of planning)	February 2025
Initial PROGRAM Consultation- virtual	Planned with PROGRAM
Community of Learners Virtual Meeting #2 (Topic: Planning documents)	March 2025
PROGRAM Consultation- virtual	Planned with PROGRAM
Community of Learners Virtual Meeting #3 (Topic: Implementation plans)	April 2025
PROGRAM Consultation- virtual	Planned with PROGRAM
Community of Learners Virtual Meeting #4 (Topic: Review and Next Steps)	May 2025
Data submission: Completed District Kindergarten Transition Program Plan	August 30, 2025
Data Submission: Proof of Execution	June 1, 2026

Appendix B

Allowable use of funds

Personnel Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salary, benefits or stipends for classroom staff• Administrative costs (not to exceed 10%)• Qualified substitute staff• Provisions for childcare• Cost of background checks for new staff/volunteers
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-state travel for professional development/site visit/face to face consultation to include food, lodging and transportation
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Registration and fees for training directly related to the program (curriculum, age group, strategies, etc.)
Materials, Supplies, and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curriculum• Instructional materials and supplies related to the curriculum
Other Operating Expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facility costs<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Classroom maintenance and cleaning fees○ Renting or leasing agreements○ Insurance• Administrative supplies<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Printing and mailings○ Advertising and outreach

Unallowable use of funds

Grant funds may NOT be used for:

- Food items
- Equipment such as furnishings (tables, chairs, shelving, etc.)
- Technology (screens, computers, Chromebooks, I-Pads, etc.)

Appendix C

Selection Criteria and Scoring Rubric

The STATE's intent in this section is to identify the selection criteria and help applicants understand how the point value will be applied during the review process. The reviewers will use these criteria to guide their reviews, so it is in the applicant's best interest to be familiar with them.

- Reviewers will use criteria in the scoring rubric to evaluate the applications for funding with a point value for each section.
- Reviewers will consider each area of the application and evidence presented by the LEA when scoring the section criterion on the rubric.

Total Points Available = 20

Scoring Rubric

Criterion- Project Need Description of the need for the program to support children and families with kindergarten transitions. Priority points will be given to districts with underserved early childhood populations.	Points Awarded
There is clear and convincing evidence to support the needs of children and families including underserved children and under-resourced backgrounds.	5
There is moderate evidence to support.....	3
There is some evidence to support.....	1

Criterion- Potential and Sustainability Description of avenues for a successful start-up as well as continued support for an ongoing kindergarten transition program.	Points Awarded
There is clear and convincing evidence that the district has a current system including partnerships, community resources, and supports to start and maintain a kindergarten transition program.	10
There is moderate evidence to support.....	7
There is some evidence to support.....	3

Criterion- Budget Extent the budget breakout aligns with the applicant's proposal	Points Awarded
There is clear and convincing evidence to support the applicant's plan to utilize funds within the parameters of the grant and responsive to program proposal as outlined.	5
There is moderate evidence to support.....	3
There is some evidence to support.....	1

Appendix D

North Dakota Comprehensive Kindergarten Transition Program Plan Guide

The journey into formal education is a pivotal moment in a child's life. A Kindergarten Transition Program Plan not only sets the stage for children's future academic success and socio-emotional well-being but assists in a smoother start for children while empowering families, community partners, and educators in facilitating this phase. A well-executed kindergarten transition program fosters collaboration and prioritizes continuity in learning experiences to support every child in the kindergarten entry process.

The North Dakota Comprehensive Kindergarten Transition Program Plan Guidance pulls from evidence-based strategies utilized in the *Kindergarten Sturdy Bridge Learning Community's* work through the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center “to support the U.S. Department of Education's efforts to focus attention and resources on when [children] enter school for the first time (a critical point in a child's education), and ensure that all children, including historically underserved children such as those from under-resourced backgrounds, those with developmental delays or disabilities, and young English learners, experience success in kindergarten” (ECTA Center, 2024).

Key components and “*conditions for success*”:

- The Kindergarten Transition Team
- Professional Development
- Family Engagement
- Individual Support
- Curriculum alignment
- Social Connections
- Communication
- Evidence-based programming/curriculum and resources
- Data Collection

Key Component 1: Kindergarten Transition Team

Establishing partnerships between early childhood education providers, elementary schools, community organizations, and families lays the foundation for a cohesive transition plan. Regular communication, joint planning sessions, and shared resources foster a sense of collective responsibility for children's successful transition to kindergarten.

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans must show evidence of partnership building during planning and implementation phases and have a plan for ongoing joint review, planning, and implementation.

Key Component 2: Professional Development

Providing partners and educators with training and resources to understand the developmental needs of incoming kindergarteners, implement effective transition practices, and support children's diverse learning styles and backgrounds.

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans show evidence of a plan for providing training and resources to stakeholders as well as ongoing support for implementation.

Key Component 3: Family Engagement

Empowering families as partners in their children's education by offering workshops, learning sessions, and resources on preparing for kindergarten, navigating the school system, and fostering learning at home.

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans include an ongoing family engagement component incorporating direct contact with families including opportunities for them to learn with their children and separately with other adults through a variety of experiences.

Key Component 4: Individualized Support

Recognizing that each child's transition experience is unique, offering personalized support and accommodations for children with special needs, English language learners, and those experiencing socio-economic challenges.

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans include strategies for individualization, resources, and outreach to children and families with unique needs.

Key Component 5: Curriculum Alignment

Facilitating alignment between early learning and kindergarten curricula to ensure continuity in learning experiences and minimize disruptions during the transition period.

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans include strategies for strategic review and alignment of curricula with early learning partners.

Key Component 6: Social Connections

Creating opportunities for incoming kindergarteners to build relationships with peers and familiarize themselves with the school environment through playgroups, school visits, and transition events.

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans include time for incoming kindergarteners to engage in learning together, build social connections, and visit the elementary school environment and classroom.

Key Component 7: Communication

Ongoing, clear communication and support is critical for effective implementation of the transition plan as well as being responsive and flexible when adapting to families, individual LEA, and community needs.

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans include a plan for communicating with families. A point of contact must be named to assist families with registration, ongoing questions, and sharing important information and resources.

Key Component 8: Evidence-based kindergarten readiness programming/curriculum and resources

Utilizing an evidence-based kindergarten transition program/curriculum that combines both school readiness and family education and engagement as a framework for the kindergarten transition plan's activities.

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans provide a summary of how they will utilize evidence-based programming as the framework / anchor for their programming choices.

Key Component 9: Data Collection

Monitoring progress and reviewing success and challenges of a transition plan is an important step in the process. Incorporating mechanisms for collecting feedback from stakeholders and evaluating the plan's impact on kindergarten entry allows for continuous improvement and refinement.

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans provide a summary of what data will be collected and how.

Resources:

2024 Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center: Kindergarten Sturdy Bridge:
<https://ectacenter.org/topics/kindergarten/kindergarten.asp>

2024 ECTA Research and Reference Portal: <https://ectacenter.org/portal/portal.asp>

Kindergarten Transition Program

Planning and Implementation Worksheet

*To be utilized as a framework. Although comprehensive, this is a working document and should be expanded as needed.

Key Component 1: Kindergarten Transition Team <i>Establishing partnerships between early childhood education providers, elementary schools, community organizations, and families lays the foundation for a cohesive transition plan. Regular communication, joint planning sessions, and shared resources foster a sense of collective responsibility for children's successful transition to kindergarten.</i>		
	Notes	Timeline as needed
Initial Planning Meeting (Stakeholders, Facilitator)		
Plan for ongoing discussion and communication		
Identify shared resources and/or opportunities		
Shared vision and understanding of kindergarten readiness		
Key Component 2: Professional Development <i>Providing partners and educators with training and resources to understand the developmental needs of incoming kindergarteners, implement effective transition practices, and support children's diverse learning styles and backgrounds.</i>		
<i>Identify training needs for staff and partners</i>	Notes	Timeline as needed
What is a kindergarten transition program?		
Partners- their role		
Staff- Curriculum/Framework		
Key Component 3: Family Engagement <i>Empowering families as partners in their children's education by offering workshops, learning sessions, and resources on preparing for kindergarten, navigating the school system, and fostering learning at home.</i>		
	Notes	Timeline as needed
Family Engagement plan/format		
Topics for discussion		
Learning at home ideas and supports		

Key Component 4: Individualized Support

Recognizing that each child's transition experience is unique, offering personalized support and accommodations for children with special needs, English language learners, and those experiencing socio-economic challenges.

	Notes	Timeline as needed
Outreach to diverse learners and socio-economic status		
Support and accommodation considerations		

Key Component 5: Curriculum Alignment

Facilitating alignment between early learning and kindergarten curricula to ensure continuity in learning experiences and minimize disruptions during the transition period.

	Notes	Timeline as needed
Identify partners and resources		
Crosswalk resources and alignment		
Identify challenges and solutions		

Key Component 6: Social Connections

Creating opportunities for incoming kindergarteners to build relationships with peers and familiarize themselves with the school environment through playgroups, school visits, and transition events.

	Notes	Timeline as needed
Programming format for socialization opportunities		
Where will the program be implemented?		
Opportunities for additional events or connections?		

Key Component 7: Communication

Ongoing, clear communication and support is critical for effective implementation of the transition plan as well as being responsive and flexible when adapting to families, individual LEA, and community needs.

	Notes	Timeline as needed
Communication plan for promoting program and recruiting families		
Ongoing plan for communicating with enrolled families		
Communication plan to PROGRAM administration		
Communication plan with STATE teams		

Key Component 8: Evidence-based kindergarten programming/curriculum and resources

Kindergarten Transition Program Plans must provide a summary of how they will utilize evidence-based programming as the framework / anchor for their programming choices.

	Notes	Timeline as needed
Which program/curriculum framework was chosen?		
How will you utilize the resources?		
What is the framework/outline of the program overall?		
What is the framework/outline of the sessions?		

Key Component 9: Data Collection

Monitoring progress and reviewing success and challenges of a transition plan is an important step in the process. Incorporating mechanisms for collecting feedback from stakeholders and evaluating the plan's impact on kindergarten entry allows for continuous improvement and refinement.

	Notes	Timeline as needed
How will evidence of student learning be collected?		
How will evidence of family learning be collected?		
How will feedback of program experiences be collected		
Who will track and drive efforts for continuous improvement? What will that look like?		

Operations Considerations		
	Notes	Timeline as needed
Classrooms		
Teachers		
Aides/Translators		
Additional speakers/guests		
Kindergarten Transition Coordinator?		
Printing needs (<i>recruitment, handouts, classroom materials, family resources, etc.</i>)		
Classroom supplies and materials lists		
Facilities Agreements		
Custodial needs		
Organization of Session Timeline		
How many sessions?		
When will they be (dates)?		
How long will each session be?		
Format for each session?		
Communication Plan		
How will the program be advertised?		
Registration form and platform for enrolling		
Welcome letter and information		
Ongoing communication		
Opportunity for feedback		
Support resources and materials		
Registration flyer		
Registration form		
Tracking sheet for distribution of information, photo release forms if needed, attendance, etc.		
Information handouts for families		
Translation of information if needed		
Activities for classrooms		