



Quality Achievement Award User Guide

Instructions:

The Quality Achievement Award will be paid in one payment and allowable expenditures are grouped in two categories, program improvements and merit. Recipients are required to spend a minimum of twenty-five percent (25%) of their award on program improvements. Each award will require programs to complete an initial budget and send to the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA) before the payment is released. Please read all of the instructions before sending your budget to OCCRRA. Contact OCCRRA if you have any questions at (877) 547-6978, Option 4.

Criteria:

Awards are contingent on available funding.

General Quality Achievement Award Requirements:

- The purpose of the Quality Achievement Award is to assist in maintaining and improving the quality of early care and education services at the program site.
- Quality Achievement Awards are program specific. The funding must be spent at the program site where the rating was awarded.
- Awards must be spent between the rating/renewal date and the next renewal date.
- Funds not spent during the award period must be returned to OCCRRA.
- *Effective for dates of rating/renewal of July 1, 2009 and after*, programs have 90 calendar days after the OCCRRA notification letter date to submit the initial budget to OCCRRA. Programs that do not submit their budgets within this timeframe will forfeit their award. If a prior award has not been closed out through the reconciliation process, the reconciliation information must be approved in order to obtain the current award.
- For items that have a unit cost of \$3,000 or more, a minimum of two written price quotes shall be obtained. The price quotes must be maintained as a part of the recordkeeping files. In the event you choose not to select the lowest price quote; written justification must be created and maintained for audit purposes. These items do not need to be sent to OCCRRA but retained by the program. This step can occur after the initial budget is submitted.
- When using contractors they must be licensed, bonded and insured and provide proof of such. These items do not need to be sent to OCCRRA but retained by the program. This step can occur after the initial budget is submitted.
- Any equipment (defined as having a useful life of more than one year and an individual cost of more than \$5,000) that is purchased with this funding is the property of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The program is required to notify OCCRRA if they are closing or desire to dispose of said equipment.
- All purchases made with this funding for use in classrooms or playgrounds must comply with Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Child Care Licensing

Regulations. Compliance questions should be discussed with your ODJFS licensing specialist or Step Up to Quality licensing specialists.

- Compensation budget items must be accompanied by a compensation plan. Compensation must be site specific and related to staff members who are responsible for child interaction, child outcomes and/or supervision. Please refer the compensation section for specific instructions.
- Documentation of each expenditure must be retained by the program for three (3) years.
- Programs may opt for Electronic Fund Transfers instead of a paper check. An EFT Authorization Form must be submitted with the initial budget to complete this option.
- Awards cannot be used for the following purchases:
 - Land, new construction or major renovation
 - Transportation vehicles
 - Televisions, VCRs, video gaming systems, DVD players or related accessories
 - Paid marketing materials, signage or related services
 - One-time events or field trips
 - Fees associated with mandatory ODJFS trainings: First Aid, Child Abuse Recognition, CPR and Communicable Disease

General Award timeline:

- OCCRRA receives award information from ODJFS.
- OCCRRA sends award notification letter with initial budget materials to the program.
- Program completes initial budget and sends with the signed attestation page to OCCRRA.
- OCCRRA approves budget, notifies the program and processes the annual award payment.
- Program completes purchases and retains required documentation. A program may complete the reconciliation when all of the purchases have been made.
- Before the end of the award year, OCCRRA will send reconciliation information to the program.
- Program completes the reconciliation and sends to OCCRRA.
- OCCRRA approves reconciliation, notifies the program and closes the award.
- OCCRRA schedules and conducts site visits as needed pending information from ODJFS for the next award.

Completing the initial budget:

The initial budget is a plan for and estimate of expenditures in the various categories. Reconciliation will be required to close out the award prior to receiving any subsequent annual awards. The reconciliation must detail specific items and amounts. This section will help determine what items are allowable and how to categorize them. A minimum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the award must be spent on Program Improvements. More may be spent in this category. Up to seventy-five percent (75%) of the award may be spent in allowable merit categories.

Program Improvements:

Program Improvements is separated into three categories: Critical Repair, Classroom Supports and Benchmark Supports. Below is information related to each.

1. Critical Repair

a. Definition – purchases to improve the health and safety of the physical environment.

b. Types of allowable items:

* Inclusion of children with disabilities	* Ventilation
* Lighting	* Plumbing
* Refrigeration	* Remodeling
* Storage	* Addressing toileting and/or diapering
* Playground fall zones	* Ground cover
* Shade structure	* Fencing
* Water and proximity	* Window Coverings
* Flooring	* Other

- i. Please note that playground fall zones, ground cover, shade structure and fencing are the only playground related items under this category. Other playground items should be captured under program supports.
- ii. Environment Rating Scale data can assist in determining your needs in this area. You may have completed a self study or your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R) may have completed one for you.

2. Classroom Supports

a. Definition – purchases to provide developmentally appropriate materials and furnishings to support child development across all domains.

b. Types of allowable items

* Appropriate/ample furniture	* Comfort areas
* Relaxing nap/rest time	* Activity centers
* Literacy and language	* Art/Music/Movement
* Blocks	* Sand/Water
* Dramatic Play	* Nature/Science
* Ample and varied toys and games for free play	* Inclusion of children with disabilities
* Promoting cultural diversity	* Ample gross motor equipment
* Equipment that stimulates a variety of skills (balancing, climbing, ball play, steering and pedaling wheel toys)	

3. Benchmark Supports

a. Definition – purchases to maintain and/or improve the program’s quality through the Step Up to Quality benchmarks.

b. Types of allowable items

Benchmark:	Description:
Ratio, Group Size	Personnel costs associated with ratio reduction. A compensation plan is required with your initial budget.

	Please see the compensation section for instructions.
Staff Education and Qualifications	TEACH expenses
Administrative Practices	Professional memberships & PAS book – all other benefits and practices should be captured under merit
Early Learning	Curriculum aligned with one of the following: Ohio’s Infant and Toddler Program Guidelines, Ohio’s Early Learning Content Standards, Ohio’s K-12 Standards. Assessment tools that are valid and reliable which include but are not limited to the Environment Rating Scale and Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation.

- i. For the early learning benchmark, a rationale must be provided with your reconciliation to explain how these standards are met with the tools selected.
- ii. For this section, computers, digital cameras, video cameras and voice recorders can only be purchased with the intent of ongoing child assessment. Purchases of these items for other intent must be captured under program supports.

Merit:

The remainder of the award is identified as Merit. Merit is grouped into five categories: Accreditation, Compensation, Staff Training/Professional Development, Administrative Supports and Program Supports. Below is related to each

- 1. Accreditation
 - a. Definition – To assist with national accreditation costs.
- 2. Compensation
 - a. Definition – To assist with costs related to salaries, merit awards and benefits.
 - b. Additional instructions
 - i. With the initial budget, a compensation plan must be submitted. This plan should include the following for each employee:
 - 1. Employee name or identifier
 - 2. Position title
 - 3. Current salary schedules
 - 4. Amount of compensation
 - 5. Plan for wages, increase and/or benefits with a rationale
 - 6. A copy of your program’s personnel policy on distribution of merit awards, salaries and benefits must be included with the budget.
 - a. Programs should carefully consider the method used for paying staff increases. For example, programs might consider making quarterly payments rather than committing to an on-going salary increase. Regardless of the method, documentation will be required.
 - ii. Compensation should be site specific and related to staff members who are responsible for child interaction, child outcomes and/or supervision.

- iii. With the reconciliation, a Compensation Detailed Budget Summary must be completed for this section.

3. Staff Training/Professional Development

- a. Definition – To assist with professional development costs related to maintaining or improving the program’s star rating.

b. Types of allowable items

* Administrator - Cost of earning a Director's Credential.	* Administrator - Specialized training/professional development assistance that relates to achieving Step Up to Quality star rating.
* Staff - Personnel costs of substitutes for training/professional development attended during program hours of operation, not to exceed \$10.00 per hour.	* Staff - Cost of enrolling in approved Step Up to Quality training/professional development, coursework, or conference registration fees.
* Staff - Travel costs for staff persons attending appropriate training/professional development (supports time allotted for travel and training only).	* Other items as deemed appropriate

c. Additional Instructions

- i. With the reconciliation, a Training/Professional Development Detail Budget Summary must be completed for this section.

4. Administrative Supports

- a. Definition – To assist with the costs of managing the program.

b. Types of allowable items

* Security Equipment	* Communication
* Computers	* Software
* Other items as deemed appropriate	

- i. Program marketing is limited to the statewide tools and publications provided and/or developed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

5. Program Supports

- a. Definition – To assist with the costs of programming not related to individual classrooms.

b. Types of allowable items

* Laminator	* Ellison machine
* Copier	* Playground Equipment
* Other items as deemed appropriate	

- i. Please note that in January 2007 new playground regulations took effect. Contact your licensing specialist or Step Up to Quality licensing specialists with questions.
- ii. Early Childhood Mental Health consultations and vision, hearing and speech screening costs are allowable under program supports.
- iii. Membership to use community based equipment like laminators, Ellison machines, etc. and applicable usage costs are allowable.

Sample Budget:

Award Information:			
Enter the Total Award	\$10,000.00		
Program Improvements (min of 25%)		Merit	
Estimated amount in this area	\$ 2,500.00	Estimated amount in this area	\$ 7,500.00

Budget Information:			
Please describe the types of items requested and their estimated costs for this funding.			
Refer to the Quality Achievement Award User Guide for detailed instructions.			
Program Improvement	Est. Cost	Merit	Est. Cost
<i>Critical Repair</i>		<i>Accreditation</i>	
Storage - Shed	750	NAEYC costs	500
		<i>Compensation (attach plan)</i>	
<i>Classroom Supports</i>			
Chairs/Tables	2000		
		<i>Professional Development</i>	
		Early Care Conf Reg/travel/time	1450
		<i>Administrative Supports</i>	
		Copier	800
<i>Benchmark Supports</i>			
		<i>Program Supports</i>	
		Playground Equipment	3500
		Computer for teacher use	1000
Program Improvement Subtotal	2750	Merit Subtotal	7250
Prog Improvement % of Budget	28%		

Attestation:

Once the initial budget is completed, complete and sign the attestation page and return to OCCRRA. Should you complete the budget form available online at www.occrra.org, the attestation page should be faxed to (614) 396-5960 or scanned and emailed to qaasubmissions@occrra.org. Your budget will not be considered complete and ready to approve until this form is received.

Budget/Payment Process:

Once the budget is received, it will be thoroughly reviewed by OCCRRA staff members. They will contact you if there are any questions. It will then be approved and the signed Attestation page will be returned via fax or email. A check request will be internally generated and payment released.

Reconciliation:

Toward the end of the award period, OCCRRA will send a reconciliation packet to the program. The program will complete in detail how the funds were spent. A reconciliation will be required to close out the award prior to receiving any subsequent annual awards.

Documentation:

Quality Achievement Awards are provided using federal funds available to ODJFS. As such, purchase and payment documentation must be collected and maintained for each expenditure for three (3) years. This documentation must be retained by the program.

Below are forms of acceptable documentation.

* Copy of order form and copy of cancelled check	* Copy of invoice and check
* Copy of online order confirmation with payment information	* Copy of itemized shipping form with amounts and copy of cancelled check
* Copy of itemized order form/shipping form with amounts and copy of credit card receipt/statement	* Third party payroll reports or copies of paychecks

Should you need to retain a credit card statement, please black out the account number and keep only the page in which the purchase is listed.

If you are using a lease or financing agreement, please provide a copy of the agreement with copies of payments made during the award period.

What to send to OCCRRA:

This section outlines what to send to OCCRRA and when.

1. Budget completion – once budget packet is received from OCCRRA
 - a. Initial Budget Form with signed Attestation page
 - b. Compensation Plan– if applicable
 - i. Employee name or identifier

- ii. Position title
 - iii. Current salary schedules
 - iv. Amount of compensation
 - v. Plan for wages, increase and/or benefits with a rationale
 - vi. A copy of your program's personnel policy on distribution of merit awards, salaries and benefits must be included with the budget.
2. Reconciliation completion – when purchasing is complete or end of award period

What to keep for the program's records:

OCCRRA strongly encourages that you keep a file with the following information:

1. Award notification letters
2. Initial Budget Form with Attestation page
3. Compensation Plan – if applicable
 - a. Employee name or identifier
 - b. Position title
 - c. Current salary schedules
 - d. Amount of compensation
 - e. Plan for wages, increase and/or benefits with a rationale
 - f. A copy of your program's personnel policy on distribution of merit awards, salaries and benefits must be included with the budget.
4. Training/Professional Development Budget Summary – if applicable
5. Copies of two price quotes for items with a unit cost of over \$3,000 – if applicable
6. Proof of contractors' license, bond and insurance information – if applicable
7. Reconciliation with Attestation page
8. Originals of documentation for each purchase