



Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language-rich
Environments (LITTLE) Grant
Family Child Care Learning Homes
Application and Operating Guidelines
2026-2027

ABOUT THE GRANT GUIDELINES

This document outlines the requirements and regulations for applying for and operating a Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language-rich Environments (LITTLE) Grant. To ensure program compliance and quality service, all LITTLE grant providers must be familiar with and implement these guidelines. The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) - Bright from the Start makes all funding decisions for the LITTLE Grant. If you have questions about this grant opportunity, please contact PSSInfo@decalfga.gov.

1.0 GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of the Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language-rich Environments (LITTLE) grants is to support the language and literacy skills of infants and toddlers by increasing provider confidence and competence in using responsive caregiving practices as a tool to build literacy skills and to increase skills in providing positive, responsive, and high-quality environments for infants and toddlers.

1.2. Eligibility

To be eligible for participation in the LITTLE Grant, applicants must:

- Be a licensed Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH) provider in good standing with DECAL;
- Have and maintain a 2- or 3-star Quality Rating;
- Have at least three infants and/or toddlers enrolled in program throughout grant period; and
- Have not already participated in LITTLE.

1.3. How to Apply

Eligible FCCLHs must apply in Survey Monkey Apply no later than August 14, 2026. DECAL will not accept incomplete applications or applications submitted outside of the online portal (via email, mail, etc.). DECAL will announce the grant award winners in mid to late September 2026.

2.0. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GRANT COMPONENTS

2.1. Grant Component Overview

As part of the grant, funded Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH) will receive training, coaching from an Infant Toddler Specialist, and materials and technology to support their grant participation. The grant activities will occur between **September 2026 – June 2027**. Each grant component is detailed in the chart below, and the material and technology packages are detailed in the funding section of this document.

Please note, FCCLHs are expected to attend and fully engage in all grant components. DECAL Infant Toddler Specialists will document and report provider completion of grant requirements, including attendance at required training institutes and coaching visits. Providers who do not comply with the LITTLE Grant Guidelines may have the existing grant agreement terminated and may not be eligible for future grants.

Component	When/Where* <i>Please note: dates and locations are subject to change.</i>	Additional Details
Welcome Meeting	- October 2026 - Scheduled with assigned Infant Toddler Specialist	Welcome meeting will: - Detail grant expectations; - Provide an overview of each component of LITTLE Grant; and - Describe the goals and format of coaching.
LITTLE Training Institutes	- In-Person, Metro Atlanta 9:00am –1:00pm on the following dates: <u>Institute #1</u>: November 2026 <u>Institute #2</u>: January 2027 <u>Institute #3</u>: March 2027 <u>Institute #4</u>: May 2027 <i>*Dates and locations subject to change</i>	Institutes will cover the following concepts: - Building early language skills through responsive interactions; - Strategies to use when reading books interactively; - Strategies to build a strong foundation for literacy; and - How to help families develop and adopt practices of early language skills
Coaching Visits	- Hybrid Format: virtual and onsite coaching - Bi-weekly - Coaching visits typically last an hour (with one initial visit lasting up to three hours)	- Grantees must participate in coaching visits with their assigned Infant Toddler Specialist throughout the grant period. - Some coaching visits will occur during FCCLH operating hours, and others will entail goal setting/action planning meetings outside of FCCLH operating hours. - DECAL’s Infant Toddler Specialists will arrange the schedule based on the needs of the provider.
LENA Grow	- Hybrid Format: virtual and onsite coaching - Weekly (when LENA recording is in progress)	- LENA Grow is an early language program powered by “talk pedometer” technology to help increase interactive talk between adults and young children. - Children wear vests with inserted LENA devices on LENA recording days. Parental consent is required. - With coaching support from Infant Toddler Specialist, providers will use LENA data to increase interactions and enhance children’s language development.
Evaluation and Feedback Measures	Throughout grant period and upon completion of grant activities	Grantees will participate in activities to evaluate program effectiveness, such as surveys, interviews, and the use of the LENA device.

2.2 Georgia Professional Development System

Georgia PDS combines provider education, experience, and training and assigns all registrants a Career Level. Educators must submit supporting documentation to confirm educational attainment and training. Supporting documents include official transcripts, training certificates, copies of CDA (Child Development Associate) and technical college credentials. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) reviews transcripts and credentials for the PDS to verify an individual provider's credentials and degrees.

To attend the LITTLE Institutes and receive a stipend, providers must ensure:

- They are registered in the [Georgia Professional Development System \(GaPDS\)](#);
- They have submitted required documentation to GaPDS; and
- GaPDS has verified the credential.

Failure to have credentials current and verified in the GaPDS may affect grant payment.

2.3 Registering for LITTLE Training Institutes

DECAL will register grant participants for LITTLE institutes in GaPDS. Providers must provide DECAL with his/her GaPDS number. For help with additional professional development needs, LITTLE grantees should contact their assigned Infant Toddler Specialist or email infanttoddler@dec.al.ga.gov.

3.0 FUNDING

3.1 Materials

To support participation in the LITTLE grant, providers will be given materials and technology that support the implementation of grant activities. Providers will receive technology (including but not limited to a laptop and headset) valued at up to \$600, and classroom learning materials valued at \$1,000. Infant Toddler Specialists will work with programs to conduct a materials inventory and identify appropriate packages to order. Materials include, but are not limited to, books to promote emotional literacy, play items that promote culture and diversity, and book storage items (book bins, bookstands, etc). To receive incentives, providers must submit additional documentation including a signed and sworn affidavit verifying the applicant's lawful presence in the United States.

3.2 Stipends

Stipends to support participation at training will be paid as follows: \$125 per provider participating in the LITTLE Institutes. Stipends payments are processed and distributed directly to providers by DECAL Scholars. Providers must complete an application and meet eligibility criteria determined by DECAL Scholars to receive a stipend. **Stipends may take up to three months to process.** Please note, stipend payments are considered taxable income.

Stipend	# of Institutes	Total
\$125 per Institute	4	\$500