Fall 2024

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Frequently Asked Finance Questions

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I. Purpose of Legislation

Q1: What is the purpose of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) law and how can funds be used?

A) The purpose of Lowa Code chapter 256C, Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children, is to create high-quality early learning environments for four-year-old children whose families choose to access such programs. The SWVPP provides an opportunity for all young children in the state to enter school ready to learn by expanding voluntary access to quality preschool curricula for all children who are four years old (256C.2; IAC 281-16.1(256C)). To this purpose, state funds are made available to assist local school districts in the implementation of the SWVPP.

II. Receipt of Funds

Q1: Who is the recipient of funding through the SWVPP?

A) The funding is awarded to public school districts only. The school district is held accountable for financial management. Funds are provided to school districts but they may contract with nonpublic preschools or childcare centers with preschool classrooms to coordinate community partnerships. All district and partnering preschool programs must comply with the requirements of IAC 281 chapter 16.
256C.4(1)

III. Funding Sources

Q1: Can preschoolers served by different funding sources attend the same SWVPP classroom?

A) Yes. A district is encouraged to include Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start, Early Childhood Iowa (ECI), Shared Visions and Title I funded preschool programs as long as there is no supplanting of funds or duplicate charges to funding. The restriction on duplicate charges means the same service to a child cannot be charged to more than one funding source or charged more than once to each funding source (e.g., a child coded as SWVPP Program 1 and 2 in the same school district or different school districts). The restriction on supplanting means that categorical funding cannot be used to provide services required by federal or state law to another source, and that general purpose resources cannot be diverted for other purposes because of the availability of categorical funding.

256C.4(1)(c)-(d); 256C.4(2)(b); 281 IAC 98.1-.2

Q2: May districts use other state or federal funds (ECI, Head Start, Shared Visions, Title I, etc.) and preschool foundation aid funds for the same child during the same time?

A) No. Other state or federal funds may not be used to pay for the same 10 hours of preschool instruction funded through the SWVPP. These funds may be used to extend the preschool day if permitted by the legislation enacting the state or federal funds. However, a child may not be supported by two funding sources during the same portion of the day, as this would represent a situation of duplicate charges (as referenced in Q1 in this section).

256C.4(1)(c)-(d); 256C.4(2)(b); 281 IAC 98.2

Q3: May the district seek other sources of public or private funding to support a SWVPP, such as low income funding or church scholarships?

A) Yes. The collaborative conversations and meetings the school district would conduct with stakeholders would include developing a plan to support implementation and use of various needed funds to support the program. The district may not supplant existing funding.

256C.4(1)(b); 281 IAC 98.1

IV. Administrative Costs (School Districts) and Operational Costs (Private Provider)

Q1: What is the administrative cost percentage?

A) The district is allowed to capture 5% of all funding generated (including funding generated by students attending community partner programs) for administrative costs. The community partner is allowed to capture 10% of the 95% generated per student participating in the community partner setting for administrative and operational costs. The district must document actual administrative and operational costs.

256C.4(1)(g)-(h); 281 IAC 98.13(1)-(2)

Q2: What administrative and operational program costs can community partners cover?

A) Activities related to keeping the physical plant open, comfortable, and safe for use and with keeping the grounds, buildings, and equipment in effective working condition would be permissive operations costs. These operating costs include the activities of maintaining safety in buildings, on the grounds, and in the vicinity of schools. Activities concerned with keeping the physical plant clean and ready for daily use are permissive. These include operating lighting and heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems and doing maintenance or preventative maintenance on those systems. If the facility is used for multiple purposes, the costs permitted as operations costs from SWVPP funding would be limited to the space and time used for SWVPP. Also included in operation costs is the cost of a rental lease for non-district owned buildings (Used with all programs 100–900). Other permissible administrative costs include the costs of non-instructional technology, and school level program administration and clerical support provided directly to the SWVPP.

281 IAC 98.13(1); 281 IAC 98.13(2)

Q3: May a district rent a building in the community using its 5% administrative costs?

A) Yes. Iowa Code 256C.4(1)(e) allows preschool foundation aid funds to be used for this purpose. District expenditures for rent can also be accounted for in the PPEL fund or from SAVE if allowed by the district's revenue purpose statement.

256C.4(1)(e); 423F.3; 281 IAC 98.64(2)

Q4: Can we use the administrative funds to support a portion of salaries for early childhood family support program staff members, as they work with the families in our SWVPP

classroom? They provide social work services, as well as educational parent support to SWVPP families.

A) Yes. The portion of the cost of the staff members that represents the portion of that staff members' total time providing services exclusive to the SWVPP may be allocated to the SWVPP account as long as these are functions under 2100 to 2199 in Uniform Financial Accounting (UFA) and are not community service functions.

256C.4(1)(e)

Q5: May special education funds be used to support a portion of a teacher's salary in a SWVPP classroom that also serves children with IEPs?

A) If the teacher is properly endorsed to teach preschool children with and without IEPs, then the district should determine the approximate amount of time during a normal school day the teacher is working with children with IEPs to address their IEP goals. See also the first row of the Special Education Allowable and Unallowable Expenditures Chart and various resources on the Special Education Education Finance web page.

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V. Transportation

Q1: Can the LEA and its community partners use statewide preschool funds to pay for the transportation of children participating in the SWVPP?

A) Yes, transportation costs for children participating in the SWVPP may be covered by SWVPP funds. SWVPP students may ride with other children to activities associated with the preschool program, such as transportation to or from a childcare center before or after the SWVPP program or on field trips associated with the SWVPP program, as well as regular bus routes. If the community partner is providing transportation or is contracting to have transportation provided, the community partner may use its SWVPP administrative and operation funds for the portion of the cost directly related to the SWVPP enrolled students. The school district may charge the portion of the transportation cost directly related to its SWVPP enrolled students to its SWVPP funding.

256C.3(h); 256C.4(1)(e); 256C.4.(1)(h)

Q2: If the district provides transportation to the community partner site, may the district charge the partner from the partner's portion of the preschool foundation aid funds?

A) Yes, this expenditure can be covered by the partner's funds. To clarify, the district may not simply retain funds for this purpose. Statute requires the district to flow 95% of the funds generated by the students in the partner program to that partner program. The district will bill the partner for the mileage rate for the transportation

of SWVPP children enrolled in the community partner's program, and the partner will timely pay the billing from its SWVPP funding.

Q3: May preschool foundation aid funds be used to cover the cost of transportation, regardless of the route?

A) Generally, yes. The provider may use its preschool foundation aid funds to cover transportation costs for SWVPP students in its center, whether transporting directly or contracting with the school district for this purpose.

However, there are exceptions:

- 1. SWVPP students without IEPs cannot ride a special education specialized bus route provided to eligible students pursuant to an IEP.
- 2. Any student participating in the SWVPP who has an IEP, was eligible to be included on certified enrollment, and is open enrolled out of the resident district is not eligible for transportation.
- 3. Regulations regarding buses crossing other districts' boundaries would apply.

VI. Registration & Other Fees

Q1: Can the LEA (including community partners) charge an enrollment/registration fee?

A) No. Iowa law regarding the SWVPP does not reference or define the term "registration fee." Charging supplemental fees that apply directly to the SWVPP enrolled students are local decisions. Districts may charge a fee similar to the fees charged for K-12 students, excluding tuition fees, if the fee is authorized by Iowa Code and directly applies to items actually used by the SWVPP students, which were not required for the instructional program. Most, if not all, of the fees allowed by Code (for example, textbooks and eye and ear protective devices) would not be appropriate for preschool age children.

See also: Current Year Open Enrollment Handbook; Tuition and Fees FAQ

Q2: Based on the Allowable Fees chart, what fees specific to the SWVPP are allowable? Can the school charge parents of children participating in the SWVPP for other items/services?

A) A school supplies fee (at cost) may be charged to parents if those supplies are not necessary for or part of the instructional program. However, most school supplies in a SWVPP would be a part of teacher-lead instruction and in that case could not be charged to parents.

See also: Tuition and Fees FAQ

Q3: May fees be charged to pay for SWVPP snacks? Can I require families to provide snacks during SWVPP instructional time?

A) No. Fees may not be charged for costs that are necessary to meet program standards. Programs cannot require families to provide snacks during SWVPP instructional time; however, families may volunteer to donate items for snacks. Preschool foundation aid funds may be used by approved local programs and community providers for food and beverages used by children in the approved local program.

256C.4(1)(e)

Q4: Can a textbook fee be charged to SWVPP preschool participants?

A) No, this is a permissive fee only for grades K-12.

See also: Tuition and Fees FAQ

VII. Tuition

Q1: Can the LEA charge tuition for participation in the SWVPP?

A) Districts participating in the SWVPP may not charge tuition for eligible 4-year-old children participating in hours referred to as SWVPP instructional hours. Districts must charge a fee or use other means available (e.g., scholarships) to support participation in childcare or non-SWVPP preschool instructional hours if extending the day by providing these types of services to wrap around the SWVPP program. In these cases, reasonable fees may be charged to cover only the remaining portion of the day and allowable supplemental costs that are not a part of the SWVPP program. The district cannot use preschool foundation aid funds in lieu of charging the actual cost of the childcare services. However, the district may use any excess funds it has in the SWVPP for expanding the instructional hours of the SWVPP program or to serve additional eligible children.

Example: An arrangement with two classrooms (1) a SWVPP classroom that serves two different groups of children between the morning and afternoon; and (2) a district enterprise preschool classroom that offers non SWVPP preschool hours for families, before or after SWVPP instructional hours. No tuition could be charged for 4-year-old children during SWVPP hours, but tuition may be charged for any who choose to participate in the enterprise preschool classroom that offers non-SWVPP hours.

256C.4(1)(e); 279.49; 281 IAC 98.75-.76

Q2: If a district's SWVPP is designed and communicated as more than 10 hours weekly, can a tuition fee be charged for the additional SWVPP hours?

A) No. The instructional time referred to as the SWVPP program must be free for eligible 4-year-old students. Enrollment is voluntary and the local district determines the number of hours per week the SWVPP is offered. The district cannot use any other district funds for the hours the district refers to as SWVPP instructional hours. Any available SWVPP funds may be used to support expanded SWVPP instructional hours.

Example: A district offers 12 hours weekly, advertised and communicated as SWVPP classroom hours. No tuition may be charged for the additional two hours beyond the required minimum. The hours as a whole are being communicated as SWVPP hours and the additional two hours are not distinguished as non-SWVPP or enterprise programming.

256C.4(1)(e)

Q3: If a district elects to offer programming separate from SWVPP in order to make available additional hours of service, such as enterprise preschool or child care, can a tuition fee be charged for these hours?

A) Yes. Fees may not supplant other sources of funding to support children's participation in other programming. Families may opt to enroll in only SWVPP instructional hours and cannot be required to attend and pay for non-SWVPP instructional hours. If additional, non-SWVPP instructional hours will be offered as an enterprise, it is recommended that programs are clear at the time of enrollment if programming will be offered in addition to SWVPP instructional hours, and any associated fees.

279.49; 281 IAC 98.75-.76

Q4: Can a district charge tuition fees for children under and over 4 years of age?

A) Yes. If space is available, children younger and older than 4 years of age may participate in a SWVPP session. Participation of children younger and older than 4 years of age in the preschool program should not be at the exclusion of an eligible 4-year-old. These children shall not be counted for state funding purposes. Tuition may be charged to support participation of children younger and older than 4 years of age, but cannot supplant other funding.

Additionally, preschool foundation aid funds, if available, may be used to pay the cost of attendance of a younger or older child than age 4; this is a local school district's board decision.

256C.2(1); 256C.3(1)(b); 256C.3(3)(d)

Q5: What is the relationship between the school fee waiver rule and various preschool programs?

A) Iowa Administrative Code chapter 281-18 provides for full or partial school fee waivers for children with low income or children in foster care.

For permissible fees associated with a four-year-old preschool program or a three-year-old preschool program supported by state aid or property tax (e.g., special education), those fees must be waived for children and families of low income or in foster care.

For preschool programs that are not supported by state aid or property tax, such as a voluntary enterprise preschool program for three-year-old children, there is no funding source other than parent tuition payments or private funding; for that reason, those fees cannot be waived under Chapter 18.

281 IAC 18

VIII. Partners

Q1: Are there examples of 28E agreements with a partner that could be shared?

A) The Department does not collect copies of 28E agreements. Agreements are locally developed. Consult the school district's attorney for further guidance on the development of a local 28E agreement.

Q2: If a SWVPP community partner uses district facilities, can the preschool funds provided to the community partner be used by the community partner to pay the district rent for the use of the district facilities?

A) No. Although rent is an allowed expenditure from preschool foundation aid funds, in this case it would be supplanting. Preschool foundation aid funds are district funds, thus the district in essence would be renting its own space. Other costs, such as expenditures for custodial services, can be paid to the school from the community partner's administrative funds. 256C.1; 256C.4(1)(e); 281 IAC 98.13(3)

Q3: May a community partner use administrative funds to pay itself if it is purchasing its own building?

A) No. Purchase of a building is a capital expenditure, which is not a permissive use of preschool foundation aid funds.

281 IAC 98.2(5); 256C.4(1)(e)

Q4: What if the community partner has funds that are not expended?

A) If a community partner does not expend the full amount allocated, the remaining unexpended funds for a given fiscal year must be returned to the district annually at the close of the given fiscal year. The preschool foundation aid funds returned to the district remain categorical to the preschool program. 281 IAC 98.13(2)(b)-(c)

Q5: How could one ensure the costs for special education services needed are addressed in agreements with community partners offering SWVPP?

A) A community partner and district establish a contractual agreement regarding the shared responsibility of ensuring the implementation of a child's IEP, and the district is responsible for the costs incurred by the community partner, if any, for the provision of such services. The district is responsible for compensating the community partner for the actual costs necessary to provide special education services, supports, and supplemental aids in accordance with a preschool student's IEP. Allowable costs are the actual costs for special education and are individualized based on each student's IEP.

281.41.907(8)

Q6: May the district contract with a community partner to provide a teacher for the community partner site?

A) The district could provide the teacher directly for the SWVPP without contracting with the partner site. Remember, this is the district's program regardless of location, so the community partner's site would become that teacher's assigned classroom for that portion of his/her day.

IX. Annual Calculations

Q1: What is the per student amount that the Department will be retaining this year?

A) See the School Business Alert on the Department's website each July for the information related to the ensuing year.

Q2: What is the per child cost allocated to districts for the SWVPP?

A) Districts receive fifty percent of the state foundation aid based on the certified enrollment count from the previous year.

256C.5(1)(c)

Q3: What is the formula for how preschool state aid is calculated?

A) The formula for calculation of state aid is 0.5 x certified enrollment count of SWVPP students x the state cost per pupil. The state cost per pupil changes based on the supplemental state aid percentage for the given fiscal year.

256C.5(1)(d)

X. Improvements

Q1: A preschool wants to update an existing playground (e.g., by constructing a concrete pathway for tricycles). Are these allowable expenditures from SWVPP funding?

A) Yes. Approved local programs and community providers may use preschool foundation aid for "any purpose determined by the board of directors of the school district to meet standards for high-quality preschool instruction and for purposes that directly or indirectly benefit students enrolled in the approved program..." Determinations based on meeting standards for high-quality preschool instruction might be straightforward since the district had to determine which program standards it would follow when its program was approved (IQPPS, for example). However, making a determination of whether an expenditure provides "a direct or indirect benefit to students enrolled in the program" may be less so. It would be worthwhile for the local school district's board to establish the criteria it will use in making such decisions. The Department does recommend decisions made pertaining to this provision be consistent for all entities providing the district's SWVPP, including its community partners. If the district's board determines the proposed use aligns with 256C.4(1)(e), and approves the use for this purpose, it is appropriate for the full cost to be paid from this source. Since the funds in question are categorical, consideration must be given to 281 IAC 98.2(5), which states in part, that "expenditures from categorical funding shall be limited to direct costs of providing the program or service for which the funding was intended. A district could also use PPEL or SAVE funds for purposes such as a concrete pathway for tricycles (located on district property). When the district's board determines such expenditures are an appropriate use of funds, including for community partners, it is recommended the agreement between the district and community partners be reviewed for the procedures related to such expenditures, in the event that a partnership dissolves.

256C.4(1)(e); 281 IAC 98.13(3)

Q2: Can preschool foundation aid funds be used to build a fence?

A) Yes. Fencing is required by program standards and would be an acceptable use of preschool foundation aid funding, based on approval by the local board of directors of the school district. The school district could also use PPEL or SAVE funds for this purpose, assuming the fence is located on district property.

IQPPS Criterion 9.6; 256C.4(1)(e)

Q3: Can you claim paint for walls (we painted our room) and addition of bookshelves?

A) Yes. The 5% administrative funds (district) or 10% private provider administrative and operational funds may be used for this purpose.

256C.4(1)(g)-(h)

Q4: May preschool foundation aid funds be used to remodel a local facility?

A) No. Funds shall not be used for the costs of constructing or remodeling a facility in connection with the preschool program. This expenditure would not be an allowable cost from SWVPP for either a public school or a community partner. A district could use PPEL or SAVE funds for this purpose if the facility is owned by the district.

256C.4(1)(e); 281 IAC 98.13(3)

XI. Expanding Capacity

Q1: If a district's SWVPP session(s) is/are at max capacity (i.e., 20 students in a session) and that district has a few extra 4-year-old students, can the district include those students in its established 3-year-old room?

A) Yes. The district would report the 4-year-olds during certified enrollment in October and receive .5 funding for each 4-year-old in the next fiscal year. The district would not count and would not receive .5 funding for children who are 3 years old. The mixed age room would need to operate under one of the acceptable program standards (IQPPS, HSPPS, or NAEYC) and meet all SWVPP assurances. At no time may a classroom exceed the maximum group size based on SWVPP assurances and program standards.

256C.2; 256C.3(3)

Q2: If a district enrolls 20 students within a session but only has funding for 9 students, and the session is 12 hours weekly, what guidance is there for the district or what would be some funding options for how to handle this scenario and how to grow the program to serve more students?

A) The district could use carry-forward money or excess current funding to grow the program and to pay for additional hours beyond the minimum required. If funding is available to serve 20 students in the SWVPP, the district will report the 20 students served in the October count, which will generate 11 more 0.5 SWVPP funded slots for the following year. Other options to expand funding available to offer the SWVPP would include seeking other grants that are available for this purpose, soliciting donations, or fundraising.

Districts could elect to use available funds transferred to their new flexibility account (which could be from several original funding sources) for expansion of the SWVPP. See more information about the Flexibility Account on the <u>General Fund</u> web page.

298A.2(2)

XII. Other Uses of Funding

Q1: What should the district's focus be when allocating funds for the SWVPP?

A) The focus should be on supporting the implementation of the SWVPP: allocating funds to ensure that the district meets the assurances and program requirements, such as an appropriately licensed teacher, staff to child ratio, and meeting program standards to increase access and opportunity for four-year-olds to attend quality preschool programs. Funds allocated to support the implementation of quality preschool programs are intended to address the purpose of the legislation.

281—98.13(1)

Q2: May a district use preschool foundation aid funds to pay a paraeducator to get a paraeducator certificate or CDA?

A) No. Although program standards include criteria for properly qualified assistant teachers, holding appropriate teacher assistant qualifications is a requirement for being employed in the position. Thus, fees associated with obtaining a paraeducator certificate or a CDA would be the personal cost of the employee.

Q3: We would like to use statewide funding to train our preschool teachers and to provide materials for them to supplement their current curriculum and program. May we use preschool foundation aid funds to provide this professional development and materials for teachers?

A) Yes, funds may be used to provide training and materials to SWVPP teachers. When community partners participate in this professional development, payment may be made by the community partner from its SWVPP funding. SWVPP funding could not be used for professional development of teachers who are not providing SWVPP instruction to eligible 4-year-olds.

256C.4(1)(e)

Q4: Teachers are requesting additional materials to support the curriculum. May the district use carryover funds to purchase these materials?

A) Yes, if these materials support instruction and enhance the curriculum of the SWVPP, this would be an appropriate use of instructional funds.

256C.4(1)(e)

Q5: May I use preschool foundation aid funds to pay for snacks?

A) Yes. Preschool foundation aid funds may be used by approved local programs and community providers for food and beverages used by children in the approved local program. Whether preschool foundation aid funds would be used for this purpose would be a decision of the local school district's board.

256C.4(1)(e)

Q6: May I use preschool foundation aid funds to pay for meals?

A) Preschool foundation aid funds may be used by approved local programs and community providers for food and beverages used by children in the approved local program but should not supplant other sources of funding for meals. Whether preschool foundation aid funds would be used for this purpose would be a decision of the local school district's board.

256C.4(1)(e)

Q7: How may I use preschool foundation aid funds that are unexpended and unobligated at the end of the year?

A) Preschool foundation aid that remains unexpended and unobligated at the end of a fiscal year shall be used to build the approved local program's preschool program capacity in the next succeeding fiscal year. This would exclude the portion of such unexpended and unobligated funding that the school district authorizes for transfer and deposit in the school district's flexibility account established under section 298A.2(2) if the statutory requirements for the use of such funding are met. See more information about the Flexibility Account.

256C.4(1)(e)

Q8: May a district or community partner use preschool foundation aid for non-SWVPP purposes within the school/center?

A) No. Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds are considered categorical and must be used for SWVPP program expenditures. However, amounts can be moved to the district's flexibility fund at the end of a fiscal year as mentioned in Q7 of this section. See more information about the Flexibility Account.

256C.4(1)(e)

Q9: For what other purposes may I use preschool foundation aid funds?

A) Preschool foundation aid may be used for purposes determined by the local board of directors of a school district that directly or indirectly benefit students enrolled in the approved local SWVPP program. Community partners should refer to the local school district's board regarding questions relating to the use of preschool foundation aid funds.

256C.4(1)(e)

XIII. Enrollment

Q1: Can a student without an IEP enroll in the SWVPP in two districts? If a student attends two SWVPP sessions, each in different districts (one resident and one non-resident), who receives the SWVPP funding?

A) A student without an IEP may enroll in the instructional program of more than one school district (when compulsory attendance requirements can be met). Only the district in which the student attends first during the day/week may count the student as a SWVPP student to receive funding. A second district or its community partner could allow the student to attend its preschool program the same as it allows other students not eligible for SWVPP if space allows, but the funding for participation in this program must come from a source other than SWVPP and must not exclude other eligible students' participation in a single session. Once the child is enrolled in a program, compulsory attendance applies. Both programs are required to take and report attendance. Based on local attendance policies, either (or both) programs may not allow the child to continue participation.

256C.4(2)(b)

Q2: Can a student enroll in the SWVPP in two sessions within the same district program?

A) No, unless a different funding source is identified to support the student's participation in the second session and only as long as space allows. A child's participation in a second session should not exclude other eligible students' participation in a single session.

256C.4(2)(b)

Q3: A district borders another state and preschool students are attending the preschool program who are residents of the other state. How does this work for funding?

A) Students from out-of-state, with the exception of students who live on base on the Rock Island Arsenal, cannot be supported with preschool foundation aid funds. Those students by law must pay tuition. Only a four-year-old child who is a resident of lowa may be counted for SWVPP funding. In addition, the out-of-state student cannot take a space in the lowa program if there are eligible 4-year-old lowa students for that available space in the SWVPP.

256C.3(1)(a), 256C.4(1)(a), 256C.4(2)(a)

Q4: If a school district does not serve a child in the SWVPP this year, is the district able to count the child 1.0 when s/he attends kindergarten?

A) Yes. Children who are attending kindergarten are counted as 1.0 even if they did not participate in the SWVPP.

Q5: Can a program enroll and claim on certified enrollment more than 20 students per session?

A) No. Based on SWVPP assurances, no more than 20 children may participate in a session. If the program will serve more than 20 children, additional sessions would need to be created in order to address the group size maximum assurance.

256C.3(3)(a); 281 IAC 16.3(3)

For additional questions about the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program contact:

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