

## Micro-Grant FAQs for Programs

### **Who makes purchases?**

Micro-grant staff will make purchases on behalf of the program, if possible. There are some instances where micro-grant staff cannot make a purchase on behalf of a program. These are explained in a matrix on pages 71-75 of The Micro-Grant Handbook (40-41 of program copy). Example: if a program wishes to use their micro-grant toward training, the program must purchase the training and be reimbursed. Any purchase by the program that does not follow the guidelines of this handbook is not guaranteed reimbursement.

### **Why do we have designated vendors?**

The Micro-Grant Program has developed relationships with certain vendors over time. These are vendors who have offered discounts, shipping specials, and a variety of age-appropriate materials designed to meet the needs of programs in early care and education. These vendors have also demonstrated that they will work with programs on returns, exchanges, and credits for damaged items, items with issues of quality, or shipments that do not arrive. If purchases are made from vendors not on the designated vendors list, and something goes wrong with the order, the Micro-Grant Program is not able to guarantee that the vendor will allow returns, exchanges, or credits. Additionally, the set-up associated with new vendors can be time-consuming and may cause a delay in processing orders.

### **How long will it take to get my materials?**

Micro-grant staff cannot guarantee an arrival time for any order or reimbursement. Programs should plan accordingly if materials are needed for implementation during technical assistance. In certain instances, programs may seek approval from their Technical Consultant to purchase materials needed for a rating on their own behalf and submit documentation for reimbursement. Technical Consultants and programs should not delay the completion of technical assistance or delay moving forward on a rating until micro-grant materials arrive. The volume of micro-grants submitted statewide in a particular period of time directly affects wait times. Programs may encounter shorter waiting times when YoungStar volume is low, or they may encounter longer waiting times during periods of higher volume. Current average processing timelines may be found at: <https://supportingfamilies.together.org/youngstar-micro-grant-program/>. This information is updated weekly.

### **What does a program do when materials arrive?**

Programs should arrange to have someone available to receive items at the delivery address. The Micro-Grant Program cannot be responsible for loss of items left by delivery companies at the door. Program staff should check packages upon delivery and sign where available, noting any possible damages that occurred during shipping. If a package is significantly damaged, the program may refuse delivery. If this happens, the program should contact micro-grant staff immediately.

Once materials are received, open them **immediately** to determine if anything has been damaged or if there are any errors on the order. Vendors usually have a short time frame in which items can be returned or exchanged. If there are any issues, micro-grant staff should be contacted right away. Review and keep all packing slips for your records. The program should then incorporate the materials as planned during their technical assistance process.

### **What should a program do if order is incorrect or damaged, material is missing, or items never arrive?**

If the material is incorrect or damaged, contact the Micro-Grant Program first. Programs should not initiate exchanges or returns without notifying the Micro-Grant Program. A micro-grant staff person will instruct the program on the next steps to take.

If materials are missing, contact micro-grant staff, who will work with the vendor to ensure the correct material is delivered. If items never arrive, contact micro-grant staff directly. Micro-grant staff will contact the vendor for tracking and delivery information. **Note: Programs should arrange to have someone available to receive items at the delivery address. The Micro-Grant Program cannot be responsible for loss of items left by delivery companies at the door, and vendors will not always issue replacements at no cost.**

### **What if a program wants to return an item?**

Programs must contact micro-grant staff to discuss return options. No returns should be initiated without contacting micro-grant staff. Micro-grant staff must abide by the return policy set by the vendor. It is in the program's best interest to review a vendor's return policy before ordering, as some vendors do not allow returns. If an item arrives damaged, not as described, or in an incorrect size or color, micro-grant staff will work to assist you with a return. We are not able to return items when a program has simply changed their mind. Therefore, please research items carefully before making selections.

The Micro-Grant Program is not able to guarantee that shipping costs will be refunded by the vendor in the event of a return. If return shipping is charged, or shipping is charged for a replacement item, the cost will be deducted from the program's grant funds. All monetary credits will be returned to the Micro-Grant Program, to be re-spent on micro-grant purchases on behalf of the program. The provider will never receive cash for returned items. Programs should be aware that they may experience delays with returns, as the Micro-Grant Program may have to wait for a credit from the vendor before placing a replacement order. All returns must be initiated within 60 days (2 months) from the time the program receives their initial order.

### **How does participation in the Micro-Grant Program affect a program's business taxes? Does the micro-grant have to be reported to the IRS?**

Micro-grant staff are not tax professionals and do not have the expertise to advise an individual or business on how to report anything on their taxes. The best advice is to contact your program's tax professional or the IRS.

### **Why do purchases have to go through the Micro-Grant Program? Why doesn't a program just get a check for the amount of their grant?**

Several reasons:

- The micro-grant staff has the ability to work with vendors to negotiate the best possible price on materials, and possibly even negotiate group discounts or free shipping.
- As a tax-exempt organization, SFTA, on behalf of the Micro-Grant Program, can in many cases reduce cost further by being exempt from paying sales taxes.
- The Department of Children and Families (DCF) requests that all purchases be made through one entity to guarantee proper use of dollars and to ensure funds are being expended to directly support quality improvement.
- By housing all micro-grant information in one place, the YoungStar Program is able to identify the purchases tied most to quality improvement and learn how to better inform providers on best use of their grant dollars.

### **What if individual items end up being more than expected?**

If individual items on a Purchase Plan end up being *significantly* more than expected (like an item expected to be \$79 is now \$130), micro-grant staff will contact the program representative to confirm the purchase before it is made. The Purchase Plan may have to be adjusted in this circumstance. Small fluctuations in prices (like an item expected to be \$7.95 is now \$8.75) may be managed without contacting the program.

### **What if total purchases exceed the micro-grant amount?**

If the overall Purchase Plan exceeds the micro-grant amount itself – micro-grant staff will make purchases in the order that they are prioritized on the Purchase Plan, to the extent possible. Items at the end of a Purchase Plan, or other items based on price, may need to be dropped. While micro-grant staff work to honor program requests where possible, the final decision on which items are dropped from an order rests with the individual Purchasing Specialist.

Micro-grant staff cannot purchase all the items requested and bill the program for the overage. Micro-grant staff will only make purchases up to, but not exceeding, the full grant amount. If programs wish to make these remaining or additional purchases on their own, it is recommended that the program contact the vendors, as they will sometimes extend to providers the same discounts provided to the Micro-Grant Program.

### **What if total purchases end up being less than expected?**

If micro-grant staff completes an order, and there is **less than \$50 remaining**, micro-grant staff will make purchases to complete the order. This may include adding duplicates of materials already ordered, or items that may complement or supplement the materials already ordered. Specialists may also send materials that have been identified as excellent resources to support quality improvement. Our staff will make decisions based on the Purchase Plan itself, a program's Quality Improvement Plan, and our experience and knowledge of materials.

This means that sometimes programs will get small bonus items that were not on the original Purchase Plan. This strategy is being used because micro-grant staff can order the additional items immediately and complete the grant, rather than place a second order at a later time. Programs may ensure that grant funds are maximized by adding extra items at the end of their list on the Purchase Plan.

**If micro-grant staff completes an order, and there is more than \$50 of the grant remaining**, the program will be contacted so they can plan how to use the remaining dollars. The program may receive a phone call or email or be mailed a *Completing Purchase Plan* form from micro-grant staff. Instructions will be included.

### **What may cause my micro-grant request to be declined?**

The Micro-Grant Program allows for many possibilities. Staff are flexible and eager to partner with programs to help meet quality improvement goals. However, there are a few instances in which micro-grant requests may be declined:

- Request is for a purchase that does not follow micro-grant policy, including items that do not meet regulatory standards.
- Approval was not received from TC and/or micro-grant staff before purchase was made (for reimbursements).
- Reimbursement request is for a purchase made in a previous YoungStar Service Year.
- Programs with multiple locations attempt to pool their funds to make a large purchase.
- Request is for items that do not align with the program's Quality Improvement Plan.
- Request is for items or costs that exceed grant budget. (For materials, items will be removed from order. For reimbursement, overage will not be reimbursed.)
- Request is submitted on incorrect or incomplete form.
- A program receives a non-compliance status from their licensing or certification body before micro-grant staff begin processing the request.
- Request exceeds the number of allowable vendors.
- Portal order is submitted with more than one vendor for a single program or split with a reimbursement.