



SCALING BUSINESS SUPPORTS & ECONOMIC PATHWAYS IN THE UNIFIED EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM

Purpose

Current legislation to approve acceptance of a grant to scale business supports to strengthen child care provider stability launched in Phase 1 of the Unified Early Learning System (UELS), and creating a clear runway for providers to access additional benefits in a future full-scale system—supporting working families, workforce participation, and long-term school readiness.

Background

UELS is the City of Akron's framework for expanding access to high-quality early learning through a mixed-delivery system (meaning it includes center-based, home-based, and school-based providers).

During **Phase 1** of UELS, the City & partners are **designing the full system** while **piloting foundational business and wraparound supports** for child care providers.

Early Phase 1 findings confirm that provider **business stability is essential** to sustained participation, quality improvement, and system growth.

Reliable child care enables parents to work and children to arrive at school ready to learn—making child care a **critical component of both workforce & education systems**.

This grant supports **scaling existing Phase 1 business supports**, advancing work underway. Phases 1 & 2 **activities intentionally overlap** to maintain momentum and readiness for system expansion.

THIS GRANT SUPPORTS

- Expanded business coaching and technical assistance for child care providers
- Groundwork for a structured on-ramp for providers to access additional UELS benefits
- Improved financial sustainability, staffing, and compliance readiness
- Alignment of early learning investments with workforce and economic development priorities

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

- This action reinforces UELS as a systems approach, not a collection of standalone programs
- By scaling business supports and formalizing a pathway into additional UELS benefits, the City ensures that future system investments are built on a stable, prepared provider base
- Child care is treated as essential workforce infrastructure, and providers are supported accordingly

ROLES & PARTNERSHIPS

City of Akron

UELS strategy, alignment with City workforce/economic development priorities, & oversight

Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC)

Provider engagement & implementation support

Elevate Greater Akron

Connecting business development ecosystem & planning for scale

Funding Details

Grant Amount:

\$10,000

Funding Source:

U.S. Conference of Mayors DollarWise Innovation Grant

Matching Funds:

ECRC and Elevate, \$10,000 each

Use of Funds:

Planning & early implementation to scale Phase 1 UELS business supports and positioning economic pathways

Council Action Requested

Approve legislation to accept the grant and authorize the Mayor to execute related agreements supporting scaled implementation of business supports within the UELS.

Bottomline

This grant will help scale the business supports launched in Phase 1 of UELS, creating a runway for providers to access the full system and positioning child care as core economic infrastructure.

