

# Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot: A New Opportunity for Child Care Workers

## What is the Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot?

The Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot invests \$25 million in additional compensation to an enrolled cohort of child care workers through 2027. The Pilot anticipates reaching 1,400 workers who receive additional compensation as a wage boost every three months that they remain in the Pilot. The Pilot is inspired by community input and supported by King County voters and is providing vital support to current child care workers while studying the impact of government investment. Through our learnings Best Starts for Kids hopes to inform a path forward for a sustainable child care sector that supports worker well-being and affordable consistent care for families.

## Why is the Pilot Important?

Child care workers are the backbone of our community, offering essential care and education to children. Despite their critical role, child care workers are among the lowest paid professionals, often earning less than half of a living wage. The Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot is an opportunity to:

- Provide consistent financial support to workers.
- Address workforce turnover and improve economic stability for child care professionals.
- Build a sustainable child care sector through government investment.

Workers participating in the Pilot will receive the following quarterly payment amounts: Full-time workers (25+ hours per week) receive \$2,080 per quarter, and part-time workers (10 – 24 hours per week) receive \$1,040 per quarter.

## How to participate:

Licensed child care facilities in King County that meet minimum eligibility requirements are invited to apply to participate. Once a facility is selected via a lottery process, eligible workers at those facilities can enroll. Enrolled workers will continue to receive the wage boost as long as they remain employed at the participating facility or until the Pilot ends in 2027.

If you work at a licensed child care facility in King County, encourage your facility to apply for the Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot. If your facility is selected, you'll have the opportunity to enroll and start receiving the wage boost.



1

**Facility Application**

Licensed child care facilities may apply during the Pilot's application window of February 10 – March 7, 2025. Facilities are selected through a lottery process.

2

**Worker Enrollment**

Workers at selected facilities enroll in the Pilot to begin receiving additional compensation. Once facilities are selected, workers will receive an email with an enrollment invitation. This link will also ask workers to verify employment details. To support a quick enrollment, please have your MERIT profile up to date.

3

**Quarterly Payments**

Enrolled workers receive their wage boost payments every three months starting in Spring 2025.

Eligible participants include all child care workers employed at selected facilities that hold an eligible role, such as a teacher's aide, assistant teacher, lead teacher, group leader, director, or 'other' defined as anyone who provides direct care of children or essential operations within the facility and is marked as "other" as classified in MERIT.

## Important Reminders for Workers

- **Update Contact Information:**

Ensure your contact information is up to date in MERIT to avoid missing any communication.

- **Check Your Email:**

Invitations to enroll in the Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot will be sent via email. Be sure to check your inbox regularly and complete the enrollment process promptly.

- The Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot is considered taxable income and participants will receive a 1099 for each tax year that they are receiving income from the Pilot. We encourage all workers considering participating to talk to a tax professional prior to enrollment to understand the potential tax implications for their individual circumstances.
- The Imagine Institute will assist participants by offering basic benefits counseling and providing resources and materials to help answer common questions, including those related to taxes. While The Imagine Institute aims to support workers with accessible information, it is strongly recommended that participants consult with their tax preparer or financial advisor for personalized advice tailored to their unique financial situation.

## Pilot Evaluation

Best Starts is partnering with research partners, Urban Institute and Cardea Services, to conduct a rigorous evaluation of the Pilot. This evaluation will help us determine whether and how public investment in the King County child care workforce improves stress, financial wellbeing, the health of workers, workplace conditions, and the continuity of care for families and kids. By studying the impact of government investment in the child care workforce, Best Starts for Kids hopes to inform a path forward for a sustainable child care sector that supports worker well-being and affordable consistent care for families. The resulting learnings will be shared with the broader community to inform public policy and action in King County and beyond. Child Care workers in King County are invited to participate in evaluation activities such as surveys, interviews and focus groups. If you are enrolled in the Pilot, you may receive opportunities to participate in surveys and/or focus groups by email.

If you are not enrolled in the Pilot, but you would still like to be contacted for evaluation opportunities, please contact [BSKwageboosteval@urban.org](mailto:BSKwageboosteval@urban.org)

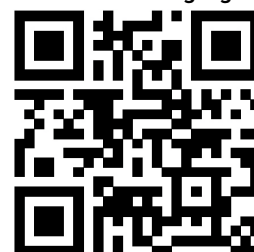
### Technical Assistance

Imagine's Technical Assistance team is available live between 8:00am and 6:00pm PT. Wage Boost participants can receive help over the phone, or by email, live chat, virtual 1:1 sessions, and in-person meetings. Our team is available to help you! Call [206-492-5249](tel:206-492-5249) or email us at [BSKwageboost@imaginewa.org](mailto:BSKwageboost@imaginewa.org).

### Stay Informed

For updates, resources, and answers to common questions, visit <https://bskwageboost.imaginewa.org> or contact us at [BSKwageboost@imaginewa.org](mailto:BSKwageboost@imaginewa.org) [206-492-5249](tel:206-492-5249)

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Thank you for your dedication to supporting children and families in King County!