

# RECOGNIZEB5 PROGRAM OVERVIEW: 2023-2024 PROGRAM YEAR

## BACKGROUND

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) administers a unified public-private system for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) through the [statewide VQB5 initiative](#). VQB5 focuses on quality across all publicly-funded birth to 5 classrooms and supports families in choosing quality programming. This effort is supported in partnership with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) and the University of Virginia (UVA).

Additionally, **Ready Regions** provide support to ALL Virginia communities. Visit the **Ready Regions** webpage [here](#) for a map of Virginia's nine Ready Regions and a list of lead organizations/contacts.

**RecognizeB5** is an important component of VQB5 that provides direct financial incentives to teachers working at VQB5 sites to support retention of child care teachers, thereby reducing workforce turnover. A stable workforce is a critical element to improving the quality of early care and education programs.

**RecognizeB5** is open to lead and assistant teachers working in publicly-funded child care and family day home sites that are actively [participating in VQB5](#). Participating teachers **MUST** meet and maintain ALL eligibility requirements (see eligibility section below) to qualify. In the 2023-2024 program year (Fall 2023 – Spring 2024), lead and assistant teachers will be eligible for up to \$3,000, an increase from the initial 2019 amount of \$1,500.

## PURPOSE

[RecognizeB5](#) recognizes that strengthening the ECCE system starts at the classroom level.

- Teachers should be supported to improve and be recognized as one of the most important elements of a high-quality experience for young learners.
- Many early childhood teachers - especially in family day homes and child care settings - are women of color who provide an essential service yet often are paid less than teachers in school-based settings.
- Teacher turnover is generally high in early care and education programs (i.e., non-school based settings) which can negatively impact adult-child relationships and interactions.

To make sure children are prepared for kindergarten, Virginia must both increase access to quality ECCE experiences for communities historically impacted by racial and economic inequities and support the continuous improvement of publicly-funded ECCE sites through VQB5. In this context, RecognizeB5 is needed to support, retain, and reward talented - yet undercompensated - early educators in child care and family day home settings.

## STRUCTURE

RecognizeB5 supports both lead and assistant teachers in child care and family day homes who are **teaching in a classroom setting** and working directly with children ages birth to 5 years (children who are NOT in kindergarten) for at least 30 hours per week.

The RecognizeB5 incentive:

- Provides up to \$3,000 to eligible teachers (see eligibility requirements below),
- Is solely intended to recognize teachers for their ongoing efforts to improve Virginia's ECCE system,
- **Does not have to be used for work related expenses**, and
- Will be distributed in two payments, pending continued eligibility: **February 2024** and **June 2024**.

In August 2023, teachers will receive an invitation from their site leaders to register for VQB5 participation through the state's LinkB5 system. Teachers **MUST** register **EACH** year and are encouraged to register prior to the October 3, 2023, registration deadline for the 2023-2024 Program Year.

**Initial eligibility for RecognizeB5 will be based on registration information in the LinkB5 system by participating sites and teachers.**



## ELIGIBILITY

To **participate** in **RecognizeB5**, lead and assistant teachers **MUST**:

1. **REGISTER** in LinkB5 between August 15 and October 3, 2023 as a teacher working at a publicly-funded ECCE site that is actively participating in VQB5. NOTE: Teachers who are employees of public school divisions are NOT eligible.
2. **TEACH** children ages birth to five (children not in kindergarten) in a **CLASSROOM SETTING** for at least **30 hours per week** at the time of registration in LinkB5.
3. **OPT-IN** via a consent form (email sent from RecognizeB5@vecf.org) to participate in RecognizeB5 and submit a current and valid W-9 form.

To **maintain eligibility and receive incentive payments**, teachers must be **continuously employed at least 30 hours per week, TEACHING** in a **CLASSROOM SETTING** at the site where they originally registered in LinkB5. Teachers who DO NOT maintain these requirements will NO LONGER BE ELIGIBLE to receive payments during the VQB5 program year.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Teachers not meeting the base eligibility requirements by October 3, 2023, will not be considered for eligibility in RecognizeB5 during the 2023-2024 VQB5 year. In addition, teachers employed by public school divisions in the Commonwealth ARE NOT eligible – however, teachers working in programs co-located in a public school building, including Head Start, **are** eligible if they ARE NOT employed by a public school division.

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Registering in LinkB5 to participate in VQB5 **DOES NOT** guarantee participation in RecognizeB5. Teachers must first meet the stated eligibility requirements and then actively “Opt-in” to receive the financial incentive.

- All registered and eligible teachers will receive an email from VECF (RecognizeB5@vecf.org) requesting consent to participate in the recognition program. This email will also indicate the requirement to complete a current IRS W-9 Form. **RecognizeB5 payments WILL NOT be disbursed without receipt of a valid W-9 Form EACH year.**
- If teachers participated in RecognizeB5 previously, they will still be required to “Opt-in” and submit an updated W-9 Form for the **current** program year. All sensitive information included on the W-9 Form will be held securely and only used for disbursing payments and completing required year-end tax forms.

## PERIODIC EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

To ensure participants have maintained eligibility to receive incentive payments, teachers will be periodically verified by their site leaders as continuously teaching in a birth to 5 classroom setting for **at least 30 hours per week** for the entirety of **EACH** employment period. Site leaders will be required to confirm this information **prior** to the disbursement of funds.

The schedule for the disbursement of incentive payments for the 2023-2024 program is below:

| Employment Period                 | Employment Verification Requested from SITE LEADERS | Payment Amount per Employment Period | Payment Schedule |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| October 1, 2023– January 12, 2024 | January 2024  | \$1,500                              | February 2024    |
| January 15, 2024 – April 30, 2024 | May 2024  | \$1,500                              | June 2024        |

## TAX IMPACT AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

It is expected that most participants will receive more than \$600 per calendar year. As such, VECF is required to issue recipients an IRS Form 1099-MISC acknowledging the total funding received through RecognizeB5. VECF and its VQB5 partners CANNOT provide legal, tax, or accounting advice; any information provided is intended to be general in nature and recipients are strongly encouraged to consult their own professional tax, accounting, and legal advisors on tax matters.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** For questions regarding RecognizeB5, please contact the VECF RecognizeB5 Team at: [RecognizeB5@vecf.org](mailto:RecognizeB5@vecf.org) or call us at 804-358-8323, EXT 129.



## RECOGNIZEB5 PROGRAM 2023-2024: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

NOTE: This FAQ is intended to be a supplement to the 2023-2024 RecognizeB5 Program Overview document which contains additional details about the program.

### PROGRAM GUIDELINES, STRUCTURE, AND ELIGIBILITY

**Question:** What are the VQB5 criteria for publicly-funded child care or family day home SITES to participate in RecognizeB5?

**Response:** To be a participating RecognizeB5 site, SITES MUST 1) be publicly-funded, 2) actively serving children ages birth to five (children not in kindergarten), and 3) registered for VQB5 for the 2023-2024 program year. SITES can register in the LinkB5 system between **August 15 and October 3, 2023**. **Sites must meet and maintain the criteria listed above to maintain participation in RecognizeB5.**

**Question:** What are the basic eligibility requirements for **TEACHERS** to participate in RecognizeB5?

**Response:** To participate in RecognizeB5, teachers MUST be working directly with children ages birth to five (children not in kindergarten) in a **CLASSROOM SETTING** for at least **30 hours per week** at a **publicly-funded** child care site or family day home that registered for and is actively participating in VQB5. Teachers MUST ALSO REGISTER in LinkB5 between **August 15 and October 3, 2023** in order to participate in RecognizeB5. Teachers must meet and maintain the criteria listed above in order to maintain participation in RecognizeB5.

**Question:** Information that could impact RecognizeB5 eligibility for my SITE **OR** my TEACHING STATUS was input incorrectly in LinkB5 during the VQB5 registration period (August 15 - October 3, 2023). What should I do?

**Response:** The RecognizeB5 program uses information reported by Site Administrators during each employment verification period to determine ongoing eligibility to receive incentive payments. However, if information input in LinkB5 during registration regarding a SITE's public funding status **OR** a TEACHER's working status was reported incorrectly as part of a completed site or teacher profile, please contact the RecognizeB5 Team at [RecognizeB5@vecf.org](mailto:RecognizeB5@vecf.org) **no later than December 1, 2023** for further instructions.

**Question:** Why is a teacher working with children ages birth to five (children not in kindergarten) and employed by a public school division NOT eligible to participate in RecognizeB5?

**Response:** Teachers employed by public school divisions are not eligible for RecognizeB5. This determination was made due to the limited availability of funds and a commitment to more fully support child care teachers who are less financially compensated and more likely to experience high rates of turnover which can negatively impact teacher-child interactions.

**Question:** If a TEACHER registered for participation in VQB5 through LinkB5 does this mean that they will definitely be eligible for the RecognizeB5 Program?

**Response:** Registering for VQB5 in LinkB5 DOES NOT guarantee participation in RecognizeB5. Teachers must first MEET the stated eligibility requirements and then actively "OPT-IN" to receive the financial incentive. All eligible SITES and TEACHERS will be contacted by the RecognizeB5 Team within 30 days after the close of VQB5 registration (October 3, 2023).

**Question:** How do teachers "OPT-IN" to receive the financial incentive from RecognizeB5?

**Response:** All eligible teachers will receive an **email** from RecognizeB5 ([RecognizeB5@vecf.org](mailto:RecognizeB5@vecf.org)) that requests **consent to participate** AND also requests that teachers submit an **IRS W-9 Form** (the W-9 Form must be completed and reviewed for accuracy before being accepted as valid). All sensitive information included on the W-9 Form will be held securely and **ONLY** used to disburse payments and complete required tax forms for the RecognizeB5 program. See more information below about "**Tax Related Matters.**"

## MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY

**Question:** After registering for VQB5, a teacher **voluntarily** moved from the SITE where they first registered to another SITE participating in VQB5. Will they still be able to receive the RecognizeB5 incentive?

**Response:** Retaining and rewarding talented teachers and providing consistency for young children is key to improving early learning experiences in child care settings. As such, **movement of teachers among different sites DISQUALIFIES them from eligibility for the RecognizeB5 incentive for the rest of the VQB5 program year** whether or not the new site is actively participating in VQB5. If teachers move to a new site, they will receive incentive payments for each employment period\* in which their continued working status was verified **BEFORE** they moved to a different site. Beyond that, they will **NOT** be eligible for additional incentive payments during that specific VQB5 program year.

\*Please see employment periods below.

**Question:** What are the 2023-2024 RecognizeB5 employment periods?

**Response:** **EMPLOYMENT PERIODS** for the **2023-2024 RecognizeB5 Program** are displayed below.

| Employment Period Required         | Employment Verification Requested from SITE LEADERS | Payment Amount per Employment Period | Payment Schedule |
|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| October 1, 2023 – January 12, 2024 | January 2024  | \$1,500                              | February 2024    |
| January 15, 2024 – April 30, 2024  | May 2024  | \$1,500                              | June 2024        |

**Question:** During part of the program year, a teacher was away from their site (physically unable to teach at least 30 hours in a birth to five classroom) due to maternity leave, family medical leave, sick leave, or other site-approved leave like vacation. Will they still be eligible to receive the financial incentive?

**Response:** In cases where teachers are temporarily away from their site on approved leave during an employment period, teachers may maintain eligibility to receive the incentive, partially or in full, if their site considers them to remain continually employed during the approved time away from the classroom. For teachers to qualify for this exception, they **MUST** have at least worked a **combined 30 hours** directly with children ages birth to five (children not in kindergarten) in a CLASSROOM SETTING within the employment period. **Of note, an agreement between the site and teacher to reduce a teacher's hours to accommodate work or schooling outside of the site (unrelated to site operations) does NOT constitute site-approved leave.**

**Question:** At the time a teacher registered for VQB5 they were working directly with children ages birth to five at least 30 hours per week. The teacher **voluntarily** asked their site to reduce their hours below 30 hours per week. Will they still be eligible to receive the financial incentive?

**Response:** Teachers will be eligible to receive the incentive for each employment period (see above) in which their continued working status was verified **BEFORE** they voluntarily reduced their working hours below 30 hours per week. Beyond that, they will **NOT** be eligible for incentive payments.

**Question:** At the time a teacher registered for VQB5 they were working directly with children ages birth to five in a classroom setting. They are now **NO LONGER** working with children in this age range. Will teachers still be eligible to receive the financial incentive?

**Response:** RecognizeB5 is designed to support teachers working directly with children ages birth to five years (children not in kindergarten). Teachers will be eligible to receive incentive payments for each employment period (see above) in which their continued working status was verified **BEFORE** they stopped working directly with children ages birth to five years. Beyond that, they will **NOT** be eligible for incentive payments.

**Question:** At the time a site registered for VQB5 they were open and in operation, actively serving at least three (3) unrelated children ages birth to 5 (children not in kindergarten). After registration, the site is no longer operating **OR** no longer serving at least three (3) unrelated children ages birth to five. Will teachers at the site still be eligible to receive the financial incentive?

**Response:** If a SITE closes during an employment period (see above), teachers will be eligible to receive incentive payments for each employment period in which their continued working status was verified **BEFORE** the site closed or stopped serving at least three (3) unrelated children ages birth-five. Beyond that, teachers at the site **will NOT be eligible** for incentive payments. This does not apply to temporary site closures, such as for facility repairs, holidays, or staff training days.

**Permanently closed sites or classrooms** are those sites that are no longer operating full-time and/or no longer serving at least three (3) unrelated children and are not expected to reopen full-time or serve three or more unrelated children at any point during the fall or spring observation window. (Section 3.3.1 of [VQB5 2023-2024 Guidelines](#))

## **PROGRAM PAYMENTS**

**Question:** WHY does the continued employment of teachers need to be verified by a Site Administrator **BEFORE** they are issued an incentive payment?

**Response:** Program eligibility guidelines require that teachers periodically be verified as 1) continuously employed at the SITE where they initially registered for participation in VQB5, and 2) working directly in a classroom of children ages birth to five years (children not in kindergarten) for at least 30 hours per week.

**Question:** WHEN will teachers receive incentive payments from RecognizeB5?

**Response:** Please see the **EMPLOYMENT PERIODS** table above which contains the 2023-2024 payment schedule for RecognizeB5.

**Question:** WHAT can teachers do with the incentive payment(s) they receive from RecognizeB5?

**Response:** Teachers can determine how to use the funds received based on their own personal situation and needs. There is **no expectation** and there is **no rule** that teachers use this financial incentive for work-related expenses.

**Question:** HOW will teachers receive incentive payments?

**Response:** Paper checks will be mailed to the address listed on participant IRS W-9 Forms. Teachers are notified by email when a payment has been mailed and is on its way. Direct deposit is **NOT** an option to receive payments. To ensure payments are mailed to the **CORRECT ADDRESS**, please contact us at [RecognizeB5@vecf.org](mailto:RecognizeB5@vecf.org) if the address provided on your W-9 Form **changes AFTER** it is submitted. A new W-9 Form will need to be submitted with the updated address. Changes to the address listed in a teacher's LinkB5 profile **WILL NOT** be used as a source for updating the payment mailing address for RecognizeB5.

**Question:** Do teachers have to cash/deposit the incentive check immediately after receiving it?

**Response:** Teachers are **strongly encouraged** to cash/deposit their incentive check as early as it is convenient. The **expiration date** of each check is **90 days from the date of issuance listed on the payment**. If checks are NOT cashed/deposited prior to expiration, they will NOT automatically be reissued without additional confirmation required from participants.

**Question:** What if teachers encounter a problem cashing or depositing the incentive payment check?

**Response:** Please email [RecognizeB5@vecf.org](mailto:RecognizeB5@vecf.org) for direct assistance.

**Question:** How will teachers recognize the check when it arrives by mail?

**Response:** The RecognizeB5 payment will arrive in an envelope that is similar to the one below. All payments are processed by a vendor in California with an estimated delivery of 15-18 days from the mailing date.



## **TAX RELATED MATTERS**

**Question:** Why are teachers required to submit an IRS W-9 Form to participate in RecognizeB5?

**Response:** It is the expectation that most eligible teachers in RecognizeB5 will receive most or all incentive payments during the program year. By law, any participants receiving more than \$600 in a calendar year **MUST** receive an IRS 1099 Form from the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) the following January. Information obtained from participant W-9 Forms will enable VECF to comply with IRS reporting requirements. **Payments will NOT be issued to participants until a completed, signed, and validated W-9 Form is received.**

**Question:** Why are teachers asked to submit a W-9 Form even if they participated in RecognizeB5 in a **PRIOR** year and submitted one at that time?

**Response:** The law requires that RecognizeB5 Program participants submit a W-9 Form for EACH program year of participation to ensure that records are maintained and up-to-date for payments as well as for tax reporting purposes.

**Question:** What should teachers do if they have questions about the impact of receiving this incentive on their tax status?

**Response:** VECF and its VQB5 partners **CANNOT** provide legal, tax, or accounting advice. Any information provided for the RecognizeB5 program is intended to be general in nature. RecognizeB5 participants are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to consult their own professional tax, accounting, and/or legal advisors on tax matters. Please remember that VECF cannot provide guidance related to anything that concerns individual tax status, accounting, or legal advice.