

# SoCCER: Support Program of Child Care Expenses for Researchers in Engineering 2024 Implementation Guidelines

July 22, 2024

## 1. Program Objectives

This program provides subsidies to help with the costs of babysitting and childcare facilities, with the objective of helping engineering researchers (regardless of gender) who have children maintain a balance with respect to research and childcare.

Having to give up conducting research or suffering a reduction in research opportunities due to childbirth or childcare is not only a problem for individual researchers, but also represents a significant loss for the researcher's institution, their field, and society in general. This support program is unique to the engineering fields and is based on the 'providing work-life balance support and improving conditions' principle in Tohoku University's 'Action Guidelines for the Promotion of Gender Equality' published in 2013.

## 2. Details

Applications will be accepted during the appropriate period every six months, and individuals for whom subsidies are deemed essential following a screening process will receive said subsidies.

However, the amount allocated may be reduced having taken into account the applicant's situation, the budget situation, and so on.

Scope of support provided:

- The first period over which the program will be implemented in 2024 is from April 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024.
- The second period over which the program will be implemented in 2024 is from October 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.
- Subsidies are provided to cover the costs of using babysitters, daycare facilities, short-term childcare, extended-hours childcare (at a daily rate), etc. The main purpose of providing the subsidies is to help with maintaining a balance between childcare and research activities, such as conducting research, lectures, student guidance, business trips, and conference participation.
- Other matters that are considered part of regular childcare, such as monthly extended-hours childcare, are not eligible for subsidies.
- In principle, the subsidy covers fees related to childcare services provided by babysitters etc. (including transportation costs for picking-up and dropping-off, and any surcharges for working in the early morning or at nights), and does not include fees such as housekeeping services fees, initial admission fees, annual fees, cancellation fees, etc.
- Short-term childcare at the university's on-campus childcare facilities and use of the nursery room for mildly ill and convalescent children are not covered.

Fees

\* The fees vary depending on the age of the child (in months), the time of day, the day of the week, etc. The approximate fees for babysitting and short-term childcare facilities in Sendai are as follows. (The initial admission fees, annual fees, transportation fees, lunch and snack fees, etc. are not included.)

Babysitting: 1,300-2,500 yen/hour; short-term childcare facilities: 500-1,000 yen/hour

## 3. Eligibility

Faculty members, technical staff (excluding facility technical staff), PDs (Research and Education Support Assistants, etc.), or students affiliated with Tohoku University's School of Engineering who meet any of the following criteria are eligible:

1. Researchers (regardless of gender) who are raising children currently in the sixth grade of elementary school or below.
2. Female researchers who plan to return from childbirth or maternity leave to the workplace during the periods covered by the subsidy specified in section 2.

However, applications may not be accepted if the following situation applies:

Those who have someone able to devote themselves to childcare on a daily basis are not eligible for subsidies.

However, in unavoidable circumstances such as the caregiver being hospitalized or giving birth, support may be provided depending on the content of the application.

Applications will only be accepted if it is considered difficult for the applicant to engage in research-related work without the use of short-term childcare services such as babysitters, etc.

Examples:

The applicant has no other caregivers at home with their child due to circumstances such as a job transfer away from the family home or a long-term business trip;

The caregiver will be absent due to unavoidable circumstances, and the child in question is an infant who would thereby be left by themselves while the applicant is engaged in work, and the applicant therefore needs to take the child with them to work that involves staying somewhere overnight.

- If the applicant or their spouse takes childcare leave, they will not be eligible for subsidies during the period of childcare leave.
- In principle, applications for the university-wide babysitter fee subsidy must be made for the relevant fiscal year, but if an applicant has not made an application for an exceptional reason, it will be considered.
- If an applicant has already been selected for the university-wide babysitter fee subsidy for the relevant fiscal year, they may apply for this subsidy if the amount that they spend on babysitters, etc. exceeds the amount provided by the university-wide support and there is a possibility that it will be insufficient.
- If an applicant no longer meets the eligibility requirements due to changes in their family situation, etc., they must promptly submit Attachment 6, 'Notification of change in eligibility for the Support Program of Child Care Expenses for Researchers in Engineering'. Please note that those who no longer meet the eligibility requirements but nonetheless use the subsidy and do not submit this document will be responsible for covering the subsidy.

#### 4. How to apply

Prepare Attachment 1: 'Babysitter Fees Subsidy Application Form', Attachment 2: 'Reference Materials', Attachment 3: 'Notification of Babysitter Fees (as well as how many times you have used the subsidy)', and Attachment 4: 'Invoice for Babysitter Fees (including how many times you have applied)', attach receipts indicating the dates on which you made use of babysitting services and how much they cost, have the documents compiled by the General Affairs Section within your workplace, and submit it to the General Affairs Section within the School of Engineering's General Affairs Division by the appropriate deadline below. Please note that if using babysitting services between March 19 and March 31, you should attach estimates when making your application and submit receipts promptly thereafter.

(Submission deadlines - 1st period: October 31, 2024; 2nd period: March 19, 2025)

#### 5. Selection process

The Gender Equality Committee in Engineering will review applications and decide on which applicants are to be supported and how much they shall receive. The first selection date will be in mid-November 2024, and the second selection date will be in early April 2025.

#### 6. Payment of subsidies

Subsidies will be provided in deferred payments twice in each period based on the report on their use. The subsidy will be transferred to the account designated by the applicant after the details of the application have been confirmed.

#### 7. Annual Report

Recipients of subsidies must prepare an annual report using Attachment 5: 'Report on the Support Program of Child Care Expenses for Researchers in Engineering for 2024'.

#### 8. Notes

In principle, applications are scheduled to be accepted twice a year (in October and March), but the actual number accepted, and the timing thereof, may change depending on the budget implementation status.

Recipients are kindly asked to cooperate as much as possible with requests related to the promotion of gender equality in engineering, such as participating in exchange events and seminars, responding to surveys, and participating in interviews.

## **9. Other matters**

These implementation guidelines will be applied retroactively from April 1, 2024.