



# TEXAS

## Health and Human Services

*Cecile E. Young, Executive Commissioner*

*Request for Applications (RFA)*  
*Grant for*

**Thriving Texas Families**  
**RFA No. HHS0015167**

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS**

*February 14, 2025, by 10:30 a.m. Central Time*

## Table of Contents

<b>Section I. Executive Summary, Definitions, And Statutory Authority .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Executive Summary .....	5
1.2 Definitions and Acronyms .....	6
1.3 Statutory Authority .....	10
1.4 Standards.....	10
<b>Section II. Scope Of Grant Project.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Purpose.....	10
2.2 Program Background .....	11
2.3 Eligible Population.....	11
2.4 Eligible Service Areas.....	12
2.5 Eligible Activities .....	12
2.6 Program Requirements.....	13
2.6.1 Assessment Activities.....	14
2.6.2 TTF Services Coverage .....	15
2.6.3 Provide Orientation and Training.....	15
2.6.4 Project Monitoring .....	17
2.6.5 Project Database .....	17
2.6.6 Delivery of Client Services .....	18
2.6.7 Communication and Outreach.....	22
2.6.8 Site Readiness.....	24
2.6.9 Staff Development.....	24
2.6.10 Sub-Contracting Criteria .....	25
2.6.11 Grantee Monitoring by HHSC .....	26
2.7 Required Reports .....	26
2.7.1 Monthly Reports.....	27
2.7.2 Billing Workbook.....	28
2.7.3 Performance Targets.....	29
2.8 Performance Measures and Monitoring.....	29
2.9 Final Billing Submission.....	30
2.10 Data Use Agreement.....	31
<b>Section III. Applicant Eligibility Requirements.....</b>	<b>31</b>

3.1	Legal Authority to Apply.....	31
3.2	Application Screening Requirements .....	31
3.3	Grant Award Eligibility .....	32
3.4	Grants for Political Polling Prohibited.....	33
<b>Section IV. Project Period .....</b>		<b>33</b>
4.1	Project Period.....	33
4.2	Project Closeout .....	33
<b>Section V. Grant Funding and Reimbursement Information.....</b>		<b>34</b>
5.1	Grant Funding Source and Available Funding .....	34
5.2	No Guarantee of Reimbursement Amounts .....	34
5.3	Grant Funding Prohibitions.....	35
5.4	Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements .....	36
5.5	Payment Method .....	37
<b>Section VI. Application Exhibits and Forms For Submission.....</b>		<b>37</b>
6.1	Narrative Proposal .....	37
6.2	Requested Budget .....	37
6.3	Indirect Costs .....	38
6.4	Administrative Applicant Information.....	39
<b>Section VII. RFA Administrative Information and Inquiries.....</b>		<b>40</b>
7.1	Schedule of Events.....	40
7.2	Sole Point of Contact .....	41
7.3	RFA Questions and Requests for Clarification.....	42
7.4	Ambiguity, Conflict, Discrepancy, Clarifications .....	43
7.5	Responses To Questions or Request for Clarifications.....	44
7.6	Changes, Amendment Or Modification To RFA.....	44
7.7	Exceptions.....	44
<b>Section VIII. Application Organization and Submission Requirements.....</b>		<b>45</b>
8.1	Application Receipt .....	45

8.2	Application Submission .....	45
8.3	Required Submission Method.....	46
8.4	Costs Incurred for Application.....	47
8.5	Application Composition .....	47
8.6	Application Organization.....	48
8.7	Application Withdrawals or Modifications .....	48
<b>Section IX. Application Screening and Evaluation.....</b>		<b>49</b>
9.1	Overview .....	49
9.2	Initial Compliance Screening of Applications.....	49
9.3	Questions or Requests for Clarification for Applications.....	50
9.4	Evaluation Criteria .....	50
9.4	Past Performance .....	50
9.5	Compliance for Participation in State Contracts.....	52
<b>Section X. Award of Grant Agreement Process.....</b>		<b>54</b>
10.1	Final Selection .....	54
10.2	Negotiations .....	54
10.3	Disclosure of Interested Parties .....	55
10.4	Execution and Announcement Of Grant Agreement(s).....	56
<b>Section XI. General Terms and Conditions.....</b>		<b>56</b>
11.1	Grant Application Disclosure .....	56
11.2	Texas Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs).....	57
<b>Section XII. Application Confidential or Proprietary Information.....</b>		<b>57</b>
12.1	Texas Public Information Act – Application Disclosure Requirements.....	57
12.2	Applicant Waiver – Intellectual Property .....	59
<b>Section XIII. Submission Checklist .....</b>		<b>60</b>
<b>Section XIV. List of Appendices, Exhibits, and Forms Attached to RFA .....</b>		<b>62</b>

**Section I. Executive Summary, Definitions, And Statutory Authority**

**1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), the System Agency, is accepting applications for the Thriving Texas Families (TTF) program.

The purpose of this program is to operate a support network statewide that provides community outreach, consultation, and care coordination for women with an unexpected pregnancy, in accordance with Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 54.

Applicants should reference **Section II, Scope of Grant Project**, for further detailed information regarding the purpose, background, eligible population, eligible activities, and requirements.

Grant Name:	Thriving Texas Families
RFA No.:	HHS0015167
Deadline for Submission of Applications:	February 14, 2025, by 10:30 a.m. Central Time
Deadline for Submitting Questions or Requests for Clarifications:	January 13, 2025, by 2:00 p.m. Central Time
Estimated Total Available Funding:	\$68,000,000.00
Estimated Total Number of Awards:	Multiple
Estimated Max Award Amount:	\$68,000,000.00
Anticipated Project Start Date:	September 1, 2025
Length of Project Period:	Five (5) years

Eligible Applicants:	See <b>3.2, Application Screening Requirements</b>
----------------------	--

To be considered for screening, evaluation and award, Applicants must provide and submit all required information and documentation as set forth in **Section VIII, Application Organization and Submission Requirements** and **Section XIII, Submission Checklist** by the Deadline for Submission of Applications established in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda. See **Section 9.2, Initial Compliance Screening of Applications**, for further details.

## 1.2 DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Unless a different definition is specified, or the context clearly indicates otherwise, the definitions and acronyms given to a term below apply whenever the term appears in this RFA. All other terms have their ordinary and common meaning.

Refer to all exhibits to this RFA for additional definitions.

[“Abortion”](#) pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 245.002(1) means the act of using or prescribing an instrument, a drug, a medicine, or any other substance, device, or means with the intent to cause the death of an unborn child of a woman known to be pregnant.

[“Addendum”](#) means a written clarification or revision to this RFA, including exhibits, forms, and attachments, as issued, and posted by HHSC to the HHS Grants RFA website. Each Addendum will be posted, must be signed by the Applicant, and returned with its Application.

[“Administrative Costs”](#) means costs necessary for the proper administration of the Project. It excludes direct costs of providing Project services, the salaries and benefits costs for staff providing Project services, and the direct administrative costs associated with providing the services; such as, the costs for supplies, equipment, travel, postage, utilities, rental of office space, and maintenance of office space. It includes costs for general administration and coordination of the Project including contract costs and all indirect (or overhead) costs. For clarification of these costs, see Title 45 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Part 263.

[“Adult Caregiver”](#) means an adult person authorized by a parent to provide temporary care for a child under [Texas Family Code Chapter 34](#).

[“Applicant”](#) means any person or legal entity that submits an Application in response to this RFA. The term includes the individual submitting the Application who is authorized

to sign the Application on behalf of the Applicant and to bind the Applicant under any Grant Agreement that may result from the submission of the Application. May also be referred to in this RFA as [“Respondent.”](#)

[“Application”](#) means all documents the Applicant submits in response to this RFA, including all required forms and exhibits. May also be referred to in this RFA as [“Solicitation Response.”](#)

[“Budget”](#) means the financial plan for carrying out the Grant Project, as formalized in the Grant Agreement, including awarded funds and any required match, submitted as part of the Application in response to this RFA. An Applicant’s requested Budget may differ from the System Agency-approved Budget executed in the final Grant Agreement.

[“Business Day\(s\)”](#) refers to Monday through Friday excluding holidays as appropriately determined by federal or state recognition.

[“Calendar Day\(s\)”](#) refers to the total number of days in a particular month.

[“Client”](#) means a member of the target population to be served under a Grant Agreement as a result of this RFA.

[“Contraception”](#) means the intentional prevention of conception using various devices, sexual practices, chemicals, drugs, or surgical procedures.

[“Direct Cost”](#) means those costs that can be identified specifically with a particular final cost objective under the Grant Project responsive to this RFA or other internally or externally funded activity, or that can be directly assigned to such activities relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy. Costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances must be treated consistently as either direct or indirect costs. Direct costs include, but are not limited to, salaries, travel, equipment, and supplies directly benefiting the grant-supported project or activity.

[“Equipment”](#) pursuant to 2 CFR § 200.1, means tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by a non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$10,000. See 2 CFR §200.1 for definitions of Capital assets, Computing devices, General purpose equipment, Information technology systems, Special purpose equipment, and Supplies.

[“Effectiveness”](#) means the impact of a program under conditions that are likely to occur in real-world implementation.

“Evidence-based” means those interventions and activities that evaluations have shown to be effective at addressing a particular outcome or those interventions and activities that are considered nationally recognized standards of care.

“Grant Agreement” means the agreement entered into by the System Agency and a Grantee as a result of this RFA, including the Signature Document and all attachments and amendments. May also be referred to in this RFA as “Contract.”

“Grantee” means the Party receiving funds under any Grant Agreement awarded under this RFA. May also be referred to as “Subrecipient” or “Contractor.”

“HHS” includes both the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

“HHSC” means the Health and Human Services Commission.

“Healthy Texas Women (HTW) program” means a joint state and federally funded program administered by HHSC to provide eligible uninsured women with women’s health services and family planning services.

“Housing” means provide shelter or accommodations for individuals and families.

“Indirect Cost” means those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the Grant Project responsive to this RFA but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs.

“Indirect Cost Rate” is a device for determining in a reasonable manner the proportion of indirect costs each program should bear. It is the ratio (expressed as a percentage) of the Grantee’s indirect costs to a direct cost base.

“Local Approach” is a program design that reflects the unique strengths, needs, and opportunities of a community. Local Approaches may include collaborations between Service Providers and other community-based social services and healthcare organizations to leverage existing community resources and referral systems and drive local solutions to promote the intended outcomes of the TTF program. Service Providers may adapt national, statewide, or private models and practices for use within the service area, if the adaptation reflects the local community.



"Medicaid" means the federal and state program that helps with medical costs for some individuals with limited income and resources. Medicaid is authorized under Title XIX of the Social Security Act.

"Outreach" means activities conducted to inform and educate the service area about available TTF program services and comprehensive strategies to increase the number of Clients served through the TTF program.

"Project" or "Grant Project" means the specific work and activities that are supported by the funds provided under a Grant Agreement as a result of this RFA.

"Project Period" is the initial period of time set forth in the Grant Agreement during which Grantees may perform approved grant-funded activities to be eligible for reimbursement or payment. Unless otherwise specified, the Project Period begins on the Grant Agreement effective date and ends on the Grant Agreement termination or expiration date, and represents the base Project Period, not including extensions or renewals. When referring to the base project period plus anticipated renewal or extension periods, "Grant Term" is used.

"Proposed Project" means the project work and activities being proposed for funding under this RFA.

"Research-Based" means models or approaches that are able to consistently measure and quantify positive impacts on women, families, and children. These models or approaches should utilize well trained staff that execute a documented program design that includes the purpose, frequency and duration or services, and intended outcome(s).

"RFA" means this Request for Applications, including all parts, exhibits, forms, attachments, and addenda posted on the HHS Grants RFA website May also be referred to herein as "Solicitation."

"Service Provider" means an individual, organization or subcontractor that provides TTF services.

"Site Readiness" means a determination that the Applicant has the specified attributes to support a given service; the ability to meet program and contractual requirements; and the capacity to achieve the service levels proposed to be provided with the funds awarded under a Contract resulting from this procurement.

"State" means the State of Texas and its instrumentalities, including the System Agency and any other state agency, its officers, employees, or authorized agents.

"State Fiscal Year" means the twelve-month period beginning September 1st and ending August 31st.

"Subgrantee" means a non-State entity that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of the TTF program as a Service Provider but does not include an individual that is a beneficiary of such program.

"System Agency" means HHSC.

"TTF Program" means the Thriving Texas Families Program as established in the Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 54. May also be referred to herein as "TTF Program."

"TxGMS" means the Texas Grant Management Standards published by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

"Unduplicated Client" means a client receiving services under the Proposed Project.

### **1.3 STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

The System Agency is requesting applications under Subtitle B, Title 2, Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 54. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated state funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.

### **1.4 STANDARDS**

Awards made as a result of this RFA are subject to all policies, terms, and conditions set forth in or included with this RFA as well as applicable statutes, requirements, and guidelines including, but not limited to applicable provisions of the Texas Grant Management Standards (TxGMS) and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR Part 200).

## **Section II. Scope Of Grant Project**

### **2.1 PURPOSE**

This funding opportunity invites grant applications requesting funding for the TTF Program. The purpose of this program is to operate a support network statewide that

provides community outreach, consultation, and care coordination for women with an unexpected pregnancy, which includes prenatal, perinatal and postnatal services. In accordance with Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 54, the TTF Program:

- A. Promotes healthy pregnancy and childbirth;
- B. Promotes childbirth as an alternative to Abortion;
- C. Increases access to resources that promote family and child development;
- D. Encourages family formation;
- E. Helps parents establish and implement successful parenting techniques;
- F. Increases the number of families who achieve economic self-sufficiency; and
- G. Provides a Local Approach and personalized support to pregnant women to promote childbirth in all instances of pregnancy.

## **2.2 PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

The TTF program, formerly known as the Alternatives to Abortion (A2A) program, was created in 2005. Senate Bill 24, 88th Legislature Regular Session, 2023, amended Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 54 to codify the TTF Program to facilitate the operation of a statewide support network that provides community outreach, consultation, and care coordination for women with an unexpected pregnancy which includes prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal services. Services delivered under TTF must demonstrate the following:

- A. Improving healthy pregnancy and childbirth outcomes;
- B. Improving child health and development;
- C. Assisting families in achieving economic self-sufficiency and stability;
- D. Increasing workforce participation; and
- E. Promoting marriage and family formation for participating parents.

See **Exhibit J, Goals and Outcomes**, for additional detail.

## **2.3 ELIGIBLE POPULATION**

The eligible population to be served under this RFA consists of individuals who are Texas residents and meet one of the following criteria:

- A. A pregnant woman;

- B. The biological father of an unborn child;
- C. The biological parent of a child who is 36 months of age or younger;
- D. An adoptive parent of a child who is 36 months of age or younger;
- E. An approved adoptive parent of an unborn child;
- F. A former Client who has experienced the loss of a child;
- G. A parent or legal guardian of a pregnant minor who is a program, Client;
- H. A parent, legal guardian, or Adult Caregiver of a child who is 36 months of age or younger; or
- I. A parent who experienced a miscarriage or loss of a child not more than 90 Calendar Days before the parent begins participation in the services offered through the program.

## 2.4 ELIGIBLE SERVICE AREAS

The service areas eligible for project funding under this RFA are statewide. Each Applicant must identify each Texas county it intends to serve. Refer to **Section 6.1, Narrative Proposal** for list of required forms.

## 2.5 ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

This grant program may fund activities and costs as allowed by the laws, regulations, rules, and guidance governing fund use identified in the relevant sections of this RFA. Only grant-funded activities authorized under this RFA are eligible for reimbursement and payment under any Grant Agreement awarded as a result of this RFA.

- A. All Proposed Projects must include the provision of at least one of the following services:
  - 1. Counseling and mentoring on pregnancy, education, parenting skills, adoption services, life skills, and employment readiness topics;
  - 2. Care coordination for prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal services, including connecting Clients to health services;
  - 3. Educational materials and information about pregnancy, parenting, and adoption services;

4. Referrals to governmental and social service programs, including childcare, transportation, housing, and state and federal benefit programs;
  5. Classes on life skills, personal finance, parenthood, stress management, job training, job readiness, job placement, and educational attainment;
  6. Provision of supplies for infant care and pregnancy, including car seats, cribs, maternity clothes, infant diapers, and formula; or
  7. Housing services, which includes Housing navigation, Housing advocacy, and Housing through maternity homes.
- B. Grantee or its Service Provider participating in the program is not required to provide all services listed under this section.
- C. Grantees are required to provide referral services as listed in coordination with any other service provided by the Grantee.
- D. Grantee or its Service Provider must provide Client services directly to Clients in their respective county of residence.
- E. Grantee or its Service Provider may provide Client services on an individual basis or in a group setting.

Refer to **Section 2.6.6, Delivery of Client Services**, and **Appendix A, Data Element Guide Thriving Texas Families Program** for complete descriptions of service types.

## **2.6 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

All Grant Projects funded under this RFA must meet the following Program requirements:

- A. Provide at least one of the services identified in **Section 2.5, Eligible Activities**. Services may be provided through a subcontracted service model.
- B. Referrals as a service, is required in addition to any other service selected.
- C. Comply with all Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 54 requirements.
- D. Use a Local Approach and personalized support for clients served under the project.
- E. Foster a caring and supportive environment that focuses on the needs of the client.
- F. Target at least one of the populations identified in **Section 2.3, Eligible Population**.

- G. Align with the TTF services as described in **Section 2.5, Eligible Activities** with TTF outcomes as described in **(Exhibit J, Goals and Outcomes)**.
- H. All services provided under the proposed project must be delivered to each client by a qualified care coordinator. Qualified care coordinators may include, but are not limited to, registered nurses, licensed counselors, individuals with degrees in a related social services field, or certified community-health workers. Grantee must have a policy describing how the Grantee defines a “qualified care coordinator.”

### 2.6.1 Assessment Activities

All Grantees and Service Providers must perform the following assessment activities. Grantees must ensure consent of the client prior to any pre or post assessment:

- A. A standardized Client intake process and tool that assesses the needs of Clients; and includes all required reporting elements as outlined in **Appendix A, Data Element Guide Thriving Texas Families Program.**
  - 1. Intake process and tool must include the collection of the following:
    - a. Client’s age at intake;
    - b. Client’s marital status at intake;
    - c. Client’s income level at intake;
    - d. Client’s highest level of education at intake; and
    - e. Client’s employment status at intake.
- B. The HHSC standardized non-medical drivers of health screening process requires the TTF Grantees or Service Providers to inform pregnant clients about the type of data that will be collected during the screening, the purposes for which the data will be used, and that the collected data will become part of the woman’s medical record or service plan. See **Appendix B, HHSC Approved Non-medical Drivers of Health Assessment Questions.** Additionally, the Grantee must obtain the women’s informed consent before performing the screening and inform the woman that:
  - 1. They have a right to decline the screening or services or choose to discontinue the screening or services at any time; and
  - 2. Declining or discontinuing the screening or services will not result in retaliatory action against the woman in the provision of other services.
- C. Develop a service plan for each Client based on their individual needs. Services must be driven by the Client’s self-identified needs.

D. Post assessment evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the services provide. The post assessment evaluation tool must include the collection of the following:

1. Client’s marital status at the time of post assessment;
2. Client’s income level at the time of post assessment;
3. Client’s highest level of education at the time of post assessment; and
4. Client’s employment status at the time of post assessment.

The assessment evaluation must be made available to Clients and include all reporting elements as outlined in **Appendix A, Data Element Guide Thriving Texas Families Program.**

### **2.6.2 TTF Services Coverage**

An Applicant must identify all counties that it plans to cover Texas Counties and Regions Served List by Project and describe specific benchmarks, including timeframes, for providing direct services to ensure sufficient coverage for the potential need. Coverage can be provided through a direct Service Provider’s main office or satellite office.

### **2.6.3 Provide Orientation and Training**

A. Grantee must ensure that all Service Providers are trained in:

1. Meeting all requirements, procedures, policies, record keeping, and documentation obligations of the Project.
2. Meeting all obligations or restrictions associated with program participation and acceptance of public funds.
3. Maintaining nondiscrimination policies, privacy policies and practices consistent with, as applicable, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”) and any other applicable laws.

B. Grantee must use results of provider monitoring and other available information to analyze the need for ongoing or additional training to individual or groups of providers. Grantee must submit training curriculum to HHSC for review and approval within 30 Calendar Days of the date of Contract execution. Future developed training must be submitted to HHSC for review and approval prior to use.

C. Grantee must ensure that all staff assisting clients in applying for government assistance programs and other social service programs attend all trainings provided or coordinated by HHSC related to providing this service, including:

1. Meeting all requirements, procedures, policies, record keeping, and documentation obligations of the Project.
2. Meeting all obligations or restrictions associated with program participation and acceptance of public funds.
3. Maintaining nondiscrimination policies, privacy policies and practices consistent with, as applicable, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”) and any other applicable laws.
4. Detailed information including eligibility criteria for the following government and social assistance programs:
  - a. Medicaid;
  - b. Children’s Health Insurance Program (“CHIP”);
  - c. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”);
  - d. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (“TANF”);
  - e. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (“WIC”);
  - f. Early Childhood Intervention (“ECI”);
  - g. Nurse-Family Partnership (“NFP”);
  - h. Healthy Texas Women (“HTW”);
  - i. Primary Health Care (“PHC”);
  - j. Title V: Maternal and Child Health Fee-for-Service Program;
  - k. HHSC Behavioral Health Services Programs;
  - l. Family Violence Program (“FVP”);
  - m. Family Planning Program (“FPP”);
  - n. Healthy Marriage Program;
  - o. Office of the Attorney’s General Child Support Division;
  - p. Veteran assistance programs; and
  - q. Other assistance programs available through the System Agency or local community groups to address longer-term food, clothing, health, mental health, legal, transportation, Housing assistance, and other needs.



#### 2.6.4 Project Monitoring

- A. Grantee must be responsible for monitoring the functioning of the Project and the quality of all Client services provided. This must include the development and implementation of a process and schedule for monitoring the performance and cost effectiveness of all Service Providers in the network, as well as internal evaluations of quality.
- B. Grantee must be responsible for ensuring fiscal oversight of the Project, including fiscal oversight of its Service Providers to ensure funds are used in accordance with this RFA and any resulting Contract.
- C. Grantee must take corrective action at any time the Project encounters operational difficulties or the Grantee's staff or Service Providers fail to follow contractual or legal requirements or program policies or procedures.  
Grantee must provide System Agency evidence of any insufficiencies and corrective action(s) by Grantee or Service Providers to correct insufficiencies, including repayment of funds as applicable, upon request. System Agency must be notified of any insufficiencies or corrective action(s) in the subsequent months' monthly narrative report.

#### 2.6.5 Project Database

- A. Grantee must maintain a secure database for all Project Activities, including, but not limited to, the Clients served, services delivered directly to Clients, outcomes related to Clients, needs assessment, non-medical drivers of health screening questions, post assessments, and related costs by Sub-Grantee.
- B. The information included in the Project Database must include at a minimum, the elements required to be reported in **Section 2.7.1, Monthly Reports** and in compliance in a manner required by System Agency.
- C. The Grantee must assign all Clients a unique identifier. The Grantee may collect the Client's social security number, protected health information, or other personally identifiable information; however, it may not be used as the unique identifier.
- D. The Grantee must maintain compliance with the TTF Data Element Guide and any subsequent revisions.

## 2.6.6 Delivery of Client Services

### A. Counseling, Mentoring and Care Coordination

1. Counseling, mentoring and care coordination must relate to pregnancy, education, parenting skills, adoption services, life skills, employment readiness and connection to perinatal and post-natal services, including health services. Services should meet or exceed the following minimal criteria:
  - a. Provides structured, one-to-one visits that focuses on the needs of the mentored Client (may include home or field visits);
  - b. Fosters caring and supportive relationships that include family group decision-making efforts that promote childbirth;
  - c. Encourages individuals to develop to their fullest potential by improving coping strategies and life skills;
  - d. Provides guidance and assistance to Clients to develop vision for the future; and
  - e. Provides comprehensive, integrated, and timely referral to government assistance programs and/or county support networks that provide assistance to families before and after childbirth and promote the child's safety and well-being.
2. When providing referrals to other support program and services, Grantee must consider organizations and locations that would best meet the needs of the individual clients.
  - a. Referral assistance may include, but is not limited to, referrals and application assistance for health and behavioral health care; child health and development; adoption services; food, educational, employment, financial, Housing, legal, and transportation services; and safety resources.
  - b. Service Providers are permitted to refer individuals to HHSC's Healthy Texas Women (HTW) program or Family Planning Program (FPP) for Contraception services covered by those programs.
  - c. Grantee cannot prohibit Service Providers from making referrals for Contraception services provided by state and federal benefit programs.
  - d. Grantee must provide referrals and report data in accordance with **Appendix A, Data Element Guide Thriving Texas Families Program.**

3. When providing referrals to other support program and services, Grantee must consider organizations and locations that would best meet the needs of the individual Clients.
  4. All Grantees or its Services Providers are required to enroll as an HHSC Community Partner with Level 3 access within 90 Calendar Days of Contract Execution. Information on the HHSC Community Partner Program can be located at <https://www.texascommunitypartnerprogram.com>.
- B. Non-Medical Goods and Services
1. Medical goods and services are unallowable costs.
  2. Grantee or its contracted Service Providers must arrange, at no cost to its Clients, non-medical goods and services that meet the immediate or short-term needs of the Clients and that directly support or promote childbirth. Non-medical goods and services may include, but are not limited to, goods or services that meet the Clients' short-term basic needs related to food and clothing, including:
    - a. cribs and car seats which meet the current safety standards for use;
    - b. maternity clothes and baby clothes;
    - c. diapers; and
    - d. formula, baby food and any non-medical goods or services that support any woman in her decision to breastfeed.
  3. Transportation to and from TTF services, medical appointments, behavioral health appointments and other social service appointments that meet a clients TTF needs are an allowable, non-medical service. Transportation services are only allowable for Clients that are not otherwise eligible for any other transportation assistance programs, including the HHSC Medical Transportation Program.
  4. Grantee or its contracted Service Providers may not be reimbursed for distributing donated non-medical goods.
  5. While services performed with this funding are social services and not medical services, Grantee may offer medical services at the same location as the social services are offered. Medical services may include, but are not limited to, separately-funded Medicaid and CHIP Services.
  6. Grantee must not disqualify a potential TTF Service Provider from participating in the TTF program, or terminate the contract of an TTF Service Provider, because such Service Provider has chosen, or may choose, to become a provider for any other HHSC program.

### C. Client Classes

1. Classes must be provided by Grantee or Grantee's Service Providers to meet Client needs. Classes may include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Adoption education;
  - b. Alcohol/substance use disorder;
  - c. Childbirth;
  - d. Childcare;
  - e. Child development;
  - f. Child health and safety;
  - g. Education and employment readiness;
  - h. Financial management;
  - i. Healthy pregnancies, including prenatal exercise and nutrition;
  - j. Healthy marriages and/or relationships;
  - k. Life skills topics;
  - l. Newborn care and nutrition;
  - m. Parenting;
  - n. Postpartum care and nutrition;
  - o. Postpartum and perinatal depression; and
  - p. Smoking cessation.
2. All class curricula and materials must be approved by HHSC prior to use and include information that assists clients in making informed decisions, supports healthy behaviors, and uses strategies that promote skill building and development.
  - a. The Grantee must submit for approval any requests for website, educational or information materials to [hdisa2contractor@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:hdisa2contractor@hhs.texas.gov).
  - b. HHSC will notify the Grantee in writing that submitted materials have been received.
  - c. HHSC will review submitted materials for approval and notify the Grantee of the determination of the submission in writing.

### D. Employment Assistance and Professional Development

Grantee or its contracted Service Providers must provide, as needed, employment assistance and professional development to eligible Clients. Grantee or its contracted Service Providers must counsel and encourage Clients to follow through with personal life goals and objectives as they relate to enhanced self-sufficiency and improved care for themselves and their children. Employment assistance and professional development may include, but is not limited to:

1. Referrals to the Texas Workforce Commission (“TWC”);
2. Assistance in obtaining high school diploma;
3. Certificate classes and General Education Development (“GED”);
4. Assistance obtaining a driver’s license;
5. Job training;
6. Assistance with job readiness, including application writing, interviewing skills, communication skills, and professionalism;
7. Job placement;
8. Learning budget skills and money management; and
9. Assistance with completing post-secondary education registration.

#### E. Housing

Grantee or its contracted Service Providers may provide, in a maternity home, housing for the duration of a Client’s pregnancy and up to 365 Calendar Days postpartum. Maternity home services may include, but are not limited to:

1. Shelter;
2. Food;
3. Clothing;
4. Safety; and
5. Other Housing services include Housing navigation, Housing advocacy, and other efforts related to identifying Housing options for clients and assisting clients in obtaining Housing. TTF funding may not be used to pay for a client’s Housing costs or to pay for a Client’s costs related to obtaining Housing, such as deposits and arrears.

### **2.6.7 Communication and Outreach**

- A. Grantees must develop and implement comprehensive communication and Outreach strategies to make the public aware of the program, services provided, and how to access services.
- B. Grantees will be required to submit annual Communication and Outreach plans. All Communication and Outreach activities must be conducted in accordance with the approved plan.
- C. All communication and outreach strategies must meet the following requirements:
  - 1. Communication and outreach activities that include, but are not limited to:
    - a. Outreach to other county social service programs to enhance awareness and collaboration.
    - b. Involvement in community capacity building, such as participation on community coalitions that support services for pregnant women and their families.
    - c. Development and maintenance of a Project-specific website.
      - i. Grantee must submit operational links for the Project-specific website for HHSC written approval within 30 Calendar Days of Contract execution and prior to publishing. The approved website must be fully operational (active and accessible to potential Clients) within 90 Calendar Days following Contract execution.
      - ii. Alternatively, Grantee may use Project funds to develop a Project-specific website throughout the duration of the Grant Agreement. Grantee must submit operational links for the Project-specific website to HHSC for review and written approval prior to publishing.
      - iii. Project-specific website must meet federal, state, and local laws for accessibility standards.
      - iv. Grantee may not include any content on the Project-specific website that HHSC has not approved in writing.
      - v. If HHSC declines to approve all or part of the Project-specific website, Grantee must resubmit for approval based on HHSC guidance.
      - vi. Upon termination of the Grant Agreement, Grantee must transfer or dissolve the website domain.
  - 2. All materials developed or used by Grantee as part of this Grant are the property of HHSC.
  - 3. Grantee must submit Project-specific informational or educational materials for HHSC written approval prior to public distribution.

- a. If HHSC declines to approve all or part of any Project-specific informational or educational materials, Grantee must resubmit for approval based on HHSC guidance.
  - b. Educational and informational materials may not be utilized by the Grantee until such time as it has received written approval.
4. Grantee must ensure that all informational or educational materials are available, at a minimum, in both English and Spanish.
  5. Grantee must ensure materials available to Clients with limited English proficiency are available in languages other than English based on the individual need of the Client.
  6. Grantee must ensure that informational or educational materials do not contain any prohibited activities as specified in the RFA, such as information promoting Abortions.
  7. Grantee and its Service Providers may use HHSC approved social media content to promote the TTF program on social media platforms. Grantee and its Service Providers may not promote the TTF program and its services on TikTok, CamScanner, WeChat, WeChat Pay, or any subsequently prohibited platform as determined by HHSC.
- D. Client educational and information materials must meet the following requirements:
1. Educational material must include some evaluation, such as pre-test/post-test or other method to measure impact.
  2. Educational materials provided must support the purpose of the TTF program and contain content, which is based on gaining knowledge, competencies, and skills.
  3. Grantee must provide, at each location where Clients receive services, materials on Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP, TANF, WIC, ECI, NFP, HTW, FPP, FVP, PHC, Title V: Maternal and Child Health Fee for Service Program and the Healthy Marriage Program.
  4. Grantee must ensure that all client informational material and grievance policies include the HHSC Office of the Ombudsman's contact information and complaint language listed below:

*If you have a complaint that is not resolved to your satisfaction, you can contact the HHS Office of the Ombudsman by calling 1-877-787-8999, selecting a language, and then Option 0, or by making an online submission at <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/your-rights/office-ombudsman>.*

### 2.6.8 Site Readiness

- A. Applicant must complete a Program Site Readiness Checklist, for each site that will provide TTF services funded through this RFA. Grantees must submit this form to HHSC within 10 Business Days of a new site being added during the Contract period. These forms will be incorporated by reference into the resulting Contract.
- B. Grantee must comply with all requirements stated in the Program Site Readiness Checklist. Refer to **Section 6.1, Narrative Proposal** for list of required forms.
- C. Grantee must complete and submit to HHSC project site information, including hours of operation, for each site that will provide TTF services funded through this RFA. Grantees must submit this form to HHSC upon contract execution and within 10 Business Days of a new site being added during the Contract period. See **Exhibit K, Thriving Texas Families Project Sites and Hours.**

### 2.6.9 Staff Development

- A. Grantee must conduct staff development activities to ensure Service Provider staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide TTF services and meet the required Project components, including:
  - 1. All Project staff working directly on the grant project must have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to work with the target population, and meet the requirements of this RFA.
  - 2. All staff who hold a license or certificate to perform Project services must maintain the required licensure and certifications throughout the life of the project; and
  - 3. Grantee staff overseeing the Project Grant Agreement are required to attend all Grant Agreement-related trainings and meetings, unless notification detailing the reason(s) for a program manager's absence has been provided to HHSC prior to the event.
- B. Grantee must ensure personnel continuity. The Grantee shall provide a contingency plan, within five (5) Calendar Days of any key personnel vacancy, in the event that the key personnel vacancy exceeds 10 Calendar Days. At a minimum, the plan should include the specific names of the substitute agency personnel who have been assigned to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the absent key personnel member. This information must be submitted to the assigned contract manager.



### 2.6.10 Sub-Contracting Criteria

- A. Grantees must establish policies and procedures that detail continuous collaboration with subcontractors. Policy and procedures must include specific information regarding the responsibility of the Grantee to provide support and oversight to the subcontractor. Subcontractor roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined prior to the subcontractor providing TTF services. Grantees must develop measurable performance metrics or verifiable processes to track subcontractors' quality performance and identify areas for improvement. Grantees must maintain thorough documentation, including comprehensive records that demonstrate effectiveness and compliance with the TTF program throughout the project.
- B. Policies and procedures must address:
  1. **Fiscal and Programmatic Oversight** – Quality control measures.
  2. **Authority** – Clear and concise information on designations of authority for the System Agency, the Grantee, and the subcontractor.
  3. **Reporting** – Timely and accurate reporting of all required data, demographic and fiscal information.
  4. **Monitoring** – Regular inspections to review performance, identify potential issues and rectify those issues promptly and effectively. Onsite monitoring must occur with each subcontractor each fiscal year.
- C. If Grantee is utilizing a subcontractor model, Grantee must develop and maintain a network of eligible county-based Service Providers. Service Providers, at a minimum, must:
  1. Hold nonprofit status;
  2. Have a minimum of one year of operational experience providing direct client services for pregnant women and families;
  3. Have a demonstrated understanding of the Health and Human Services Commission programs available to pregnant women, families, and their children, and be able to connect Clients to services;
  4. Have as a fundamental part of its mission a commitment to promoting childbirth;
  5. Have adequate accessible space to ensure private and confidential Client assessment and counseling;
  6. Not charge fees for services provided; and
  7. Have a documented process for Client intake, the continuum of care,

Client satisfaction, and complaints that meets the requirements of this RFA.

- D. Grantee must screen and enroll Service Providers necessary to maintain a qualified service delivery network. Grantee must ensure all Service Provider staff are fully oriented and trained prior to their participation in the project.
- E. Grantee must provide ongoing training and oversight of Service Providers to ensure compliance with program requirements. Specific training requirements are outlined in **Section 2.5, Eligible Activities**.
- F. Grantee must ensure Service Provider meets all the requirements of this RFA.

#### **2.6.11 Grantee Monitoring by HHSC**

- A. HHSC will monitor the performance of this Contract. HHSC will conduct monitoring for fiscal, programmatic, and administrative components of the Contract. Grantee must provide all services and deliverables under the Contract at an acceptable quality level and in a manner consistent with the Contract, program requirements, and **Exhibit B, HHSC Uniform Terms and Conditions-Grant v3.5**. Acceptable quality level will be evaluated under the standards provided under **Section II, Scope of Grant Project** of this RFA, of Grantee's accepted offer, or the final negotiated standard, whichever is determined to be most advantageous to the Client or HHSC.
- B. HHSC reserves the right to impose remedies if Grantee fails to meet contractual requirements. Remedies that HHSC may impose include, but are not limited to:
  - 1. Written corrective action plans;
  - 2. Additional reporting;
  - 3. Withholding/offsetting payments; and
  - 4. Termination or suspension of the contract.

#### **2.7 REQUIRED REPORTS**

The System Agency will monitor Grantee's performance, including, but not limited to, through review of financial and programmatic reports and performance measures under any Grant Agreement awarded as a result of this RFA. Each Grantee awarded a Grant Agreement as a result of this RFA must submit the following reports by the noted due dates:

REPORT	FREQUENCY	DUE DATE
Monthly Invoice	Monthly	The 15 <sup>th</sup> of each month following the month being reported.
Monthly Billing Workbook with supporting documentation	Monthly	The 15 <sup>th</sup> of each month following the month being reported.
TTF Database Submission	Monthly	The 15 <sup>th</sup> of each month following the month being reported.
Monthly Narrative Report	Monthly	The 15 <sup>th</sup> of each month following the month being reported.

Grantee shall provide all applicable reports in the format specified by System Agency in an accurate, complete, and timely manner and shall maintain appropriate supporting backup documentation. Failure to comply with submission deadlines for required reports, Financial Status Reports (FSRs) or other requested information may result in System Agency, in its sole discretion, placing the Grantee on financial hold without first requiring a corrective action plan in addition to pursuing any other corrective or remedial actions under the Grant Agreement.

### 2.7.1 Monthly Reports

#### A. TTF Database Submission

1. On a monthly basis, on or before the 15th of each month, the Grantee shall submit to HHSC all required data in the format outlined and required by **Appendix A, Data Element Guide Thriving Texas Families Program**. If the due date of any report falls on a weekend or official State holiday, the report shall be submitted the next Business Day. Data submitted monthly will reflect the services provided by the program for the preceding month. HHSC may review, approve, or require modification to the reporting requirement at its discretion.
2. Additional requirements, clarifications, and report items may be added by HHSC as information needs change.

#### B. Monthly Narrative Report

Grantees must submit the monthly narrative report, in a manner prescribed by HHSC, 15 Calendar Days after the last day of the month being reported. The report will detail the operations of the Project for the month being reported, in addition to the following:

1. Work to be initiated during the next month;
2. List of current subcontractors;
3. Monitoring Activities and Quality Assurance Activities, which may include, but are not limited to:
  - a. The results of the monitoring or quality assurance activities;
  - b. Any findings regarding performance or internal quality assurance of Service Providers;
  - c. Any training needs identified and resulting actions; and
  - d. Any corrective action taken and the resolution of any issues.
4. Project successes and challenges;
5. New partnerships and initiatives; and
6. Other information determined relevant by HHSC.

Additional requirements, clarifications, and reporting items may be added by HHSC as information-needs change.

### **2.7.2 Billing Workbook**

- A. Grantee must request reimbursement for Project costs by submitting monthly invoices using the HHSC-provided monthly invoice and billing workbook for expenses outlined in the Budget approved by HHSC. HHSC will reimburse Grantees for allowable expenses that are incurred during the Contract term. HHSC is not obligated to pay unauthorized costs or to pay more than the Grantee's allowable and actual incurred costs. These costs must comply with the appropriate regulations.
- B. Grantee must submit the monthly billing workbook, in a manner and form prescribed by HHSC, 15 Calendar Days after the last day of the previous month. The billing workbook includes expenses to be reimbursed for the previous month's reporting period. Grantee must include supporting documentation as prescribed by HHSC. This documentation may include but is not limited to general ledgers, invoices, contracts, or any other document that appropriately validates the expense. Grantees using a subcontracting model must include supporting documentation that reflects the subcontractor's actual costs related to service delivery.

C. HHSC may revise or include additional reporting requirements at any time.

Additional requirements, clarifications, and report items may be added by HHSC as information-needs change.

### **2.7.3 Performance Targets**

Based upon the amount of funding Grantees are awarded, the following individual targets will be set:

- A. Number of Unduplicated Clients receiving TTF services.
- B. Number of TTF services to be provided.
- C. TTF outcomes identified in **Section 2.8, Performance Measures and Monitoring**.

Grantee shall provide all applicable reports in the format specified by System Agency in an accurate, complete, and timely manner and shall maintain appropriate supporting backup documentation.

Failure to comply with submission deadlines for required reports, or other requested information, may result in System Agency, in its sole discretion, placing the Grantee on financial hold without first requiring a corrective action plan, in addition to pursuing any other corrective or remedial actions under the Grant Agreement

## **2.8 PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND MONITORING**

The System Agency will look solely to Grantee for the performance of all Grantee obligations and requirements in a Grant Agreement resulting from this RFA. Grantee shall not be relieved of its obligations for any nonperformance by its Subgrantees or subcontractors, if any.

Grant Agreements awarded as a result of this RFA are subject to the System Agency's performance monitoring activities throughout the duration of the Grant Project Period. This evaluation may include a reassessment of project activities and services to determine whether they continue to be effective throughout the grant term.

Grantees must regularly collect and maintain data that measures the performance and effectiveness of activities under a Grant Agreement resulting from this RFA in the manner, and within the timeframes specified in this RFA and resulting Grant Agreement, or as otherwise specified by System Agency and **Section 2.7.3, Performance Targets**. Grantees must submit the necessary information and documentation regarding all requirements, including reports and other deliverables and will be expected to report monthly on the following measures as applicable:

- A. Number of Unduplicated Clients being served as required by Legislative Budget Board (LBB).
- B. Number of Clients that demonstrate improved outcomes as required in the goals and objectives. Refer to **Section 6.1, Narrative Proposal** for list of required forms.
- C. Number of services achieved by client as required by LBB.

Final measures will be dependent on the services provided and will be determined during contract negotiations.

- A. Grantees shall be responsible for monitoring the functioning of the Project and the quality of all Client services provided. This shall include the development and implementation of a process and schedule for monitoring the performance and cost effectiveness of all Service Providers in the network, as well as internal evaluations of quality.
- B. Grantees shall take corrective action when the Project encounters operational difficulties or the Grantee's staff or Service Providers fail to follow contractual or legal requirements or program policies or procedures.
- C. Grantees shall provide HHSC evidence of insufficiencies and corrective action(s) by Grantee and/or Service Providers to correct insufficiencies, including repayment of funds as applicable, upon request. HHSC must be notified of any insufficiencies or corrective action(s) in the subsequent month's monthly narrative report see **Section 2.7.1, Monthly Reports**.

If requested by System Agency, the Grantee shall report on the progress towards completion of the grant project and other relevant information as determined by System Agency during the Grant Project Period. To remain eligible for continuous funding, if any, the Grantee must be able to show the scope of services provided and their impact, quality, and levels of performance against approved goals, and that Grantee's activities and services effectively address and achieve the Project's stated purpose.

## **2.9 FINAL BILLING SUBMISSION**

Unless otherwise directed by the System Agency, Grantee shall submit a reimbursement or payment request as a final close-out invoice not later than 45 Calendar Days following the end of the term of the Grant Agreement. Reimbursement or payment requests received after the deadline may not be paid.

## 2.10 DATA USE AGREEMENT

By submitting an Application in response to this RFA, Applicant agrees to be bound by the terms of Exhibit F, HHS Data Use Agreement v.8.5 including but not limited to the terms and conditions regarding Exhibit F-1, Texas HHS System-Data Use Agreement-Attachment 2, Security and Privacy Inquiry (SPI), attached to this RFA.

## Section III. Applicant Eligibility Requirements

### 3.1 LEGAL AUTHORITY TO APPLY

By submitting an Application in response to this RFA, Applicant certifies that it has legal authority to apply for the Grant Agreement that is the subject of this RFA and is eligible to receive awards. Further, Applicant certifies it will continue to maintain any required legal authority and eligibility throughout the entire duration of the grant term, if awarded. All requirements apply with equal force to Applicant and, if the recipient of an award, Grantee and its Subgrantees or subcontractors, if any.

Each Applicant may only submit one Grant Application.

### 3.2 APPLICATION SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

In order to be considered an Applicant eligible for evaluations, Applicant must meet the following minimum requirements:

- A. Applicant must have a physical business address in Texas.
- B. Applicant must be a public or private nonprofit organization with a current 501(c)(3) status.
- C. Applicant must demonstrate satisfactory results of the most recent two fiscal years of financial history to fund activities/cover project costs prior to receiving reimbursement. Applicant may not be eligible for award if audit reports or financial statements submitted with the Application identify concerns regarding the future viability of the Applicant, material non-compliance, or material weaknesses that were not satisfactorily addressed, as determined by HHSC.
- D. Applicant must have a minimum of one (1) year of operational experience in either providing direct client services for pregnant women and families or managing a

network of Service Providers; such one-year lookback period is calculated from the date the Application is due.

- E. Applicant may not have had any contracts with the System Agency terminated for cause;
- F. Applicant must have a provider site, or a network of service provider sites to offer one or more of the allowable program services (**Section 2.5, Eligible Activities**) located in Texas and have a Texas business address;
- G. Applicant must not charge Clients for any services provided; and
- H. Applicant must submit a complete Application that includes all documents listed in **Article XIII, Submission Checklist**.

### **3.3 GRANT AWARD ELIGIBILITY**

By submitting an Application in response to this RFA, Applicant certifies that:

- A. Applicant and all of its identified subsidiaries, including Service Providers intending to participate in the Grant Agreement, are eligible to perform grant-funded activities, if awarded, and are not subject to suspension, debarment, or a similar ineligibility determined by any state or federal entity;
- B. Applicant and any service providers intending to participate in the program are in good standing under the laws of Texas and has provided HHS with any requested or required supporting documentation in connection with this certification;
- C. Applicant and its Service Providers shall remain in good standing and eligible to conduct its business in Texas and shall comply with all applicable requirements of the Texas Secretary of State and the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts;
- D. Applicant and its Service Providers is currently in good standing with all licensing, permitting, or regulatory bodies that regulate any or all aspects of Applicant's operations; and
- E. Applicant and its Service Providers are not delinquent in taxes owed to any taxing authority of the State of Texas as of the effective date of this Grant Agreement.
- F. Applicant is a legal entity that has the authority to do business in Texas and that it is a nonprofit organization Applicants will meet and comply with the criteria listed below at the time the Application is submitted and will continue to meet the eligibility conditions throughout the grant term.
- G. Applicant understands it must demonstrate satisfactory results of the most recent two



fiscal years of financial history to fund activities/cover project costs prior to receiving reimbursement. Applicant understands it may not be eligible for award if audit reports or financial statements submitted with the Application identify concerns regarding the future viability of the Applicant, material non-compliance, or material weaknesses that were not satisfactorily addressed, as determined by HHSC.

- H. Applicant has a minimum of one year of operational experience in either providing or managing a network of Service Providers with experience providing direct client services for pregnant women and families; such one-year lookback period is calculated from the date the Application is due.

### **3.4 GRANTS FOR POLITICAL POLLING PROHIBITED**

Pursuant to the General Appropriations Act, Article IX, Section 4.03, none of the funds appropriated by the General Appropriations Act may be granted to or expended by any entity which performs political polling. This prohibition does not apply to a poll conducted by an academic institution as part of the institution's academic mission that is not conducted for the benefit of a particular candidate or party. By submitting a response to this RFA, Applicant certifies that it is not ineligible for a Grant Agreement pursuant to this prohibition.

## **Section IV. Project Period**

### **4.1 PROJECT PERIOD**

The Project Period is anticipated to be **September 1, 2025**, through **August 31, 2030** with no renewals or extensions unless authorized by additional legislation.

### **4.2 PROJECT CLOSEOUT**

System Agency will programmatically and financially close the grant award and end the Grant Agreement when System Agency determines Grantee has completed all applicable actions and work in accordance with Grant Agreement requirements. The Grantee must submit all required financial, performance, and other reports as required in the Grant Agreement. The project close-out date is 90 Calendar Days after the Grant Agreement end

date, unless otherwise noted in the original or amended Grant Agreement. Funds not obligated by Grantee by the end of the Grant Agreement term and not expended by the project close-out date will revert to System Agency.

## **Section V. Grant Funding and Reimbursement Information**

### **5.1 GRANT FUNDING SOURCE AND AVAILABLE FUNDING**

The total amount of state funding available for the Thriving Texas Families grant program is **\$68,000,000.00 per fiscal year** for the entire Project Period. It is the System Agency's intention to make multiple awards to applicants that successfully demonstrate the ability to provide one or more of the allowable services in **Section 2.5, Eligible Activities** demonstrate the program and comply with the requirements of this RFA.

The State Fiscal Year funding amounts are subject to increase or decrease as funds are appropriated throughout the Grant Agreement term from the federal government, the Texas Legislature, or both. The System Agency will issue annual amounts on a yearly basis to awarded Applicants. The System Agency will make funds available for awarded Applicants to deliver Thriving Texas Families services beginning on or after September 1, 2025.

Applicants are strongly cautioned to only apply for the amount of grant funding they can responsibly expend during the Project Period to avoid lapsed funding at the end of the grant term. Successful Applications may not be funded to the full extent of Applicant's requested budgets in order to ensure grant funds are available for the broadest possible array of communities and programs.

### **5.2 NO GUARANTEE OF REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNTS**

Reimbursement will be made only for actual, allowable, and allocable expenses that occur within the Project Period. No spending or costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award will be eligible for reimbursement. The resultant Contract will require that a total of no more than 15 percent of expenditures be administrative costs. These include indirect costs, salaries and fringe, travel, office supplies, equipment, and other related expenses.

There is no guarantee of total reimbursements to be paid to any Grantee under any Grant Agreement, if any, resulting from this RFA. Grantees should not expect to receive additional or continued funding under future RFA opportunities and should maintain sustainability plans in case of discontinued grant funding. Any additional funding or future funding may require submission of a new Application through a subsequent RFA.

Receipt of an Application in response to this RFA does not constitute an obligation or expectation of any award of a Grant Agreement or funding of a grant award at any level under this RFA.

### **5.3 GRANT FUNDING PROHIBITIONS**

Grant funds may not be used to support the following services, activities, and costs:

- A. Any use of grant funds to replace (supplant) funds that have been budgeted for the same purpose through non-grant sources;
- B. Lobbying or advocacy activities with respect to legislation or to administrative changes to regulations or administrative policy (cf. 18 U.S.C. § 1913), whether conducted directly or indirectly;
- C. Any portion of the salary of, or any other compensation for, an elected or appointed government official;
- D. Vehicles for general agency use; to be allowable, vehicles must have a specific use related to Project objectives or activities;
- E. Weapons, ammunition, tracked armored vehicles, weaponized vehicles, or explosives (exceptions may be granted when explosives are used for bomb squad training);
- F. Entertainment, amusement, or social activities and any associated costs including but not limited to admission fees or tickets to any amusement park, recreational activity, or sporting event unless such costs are incurred for components of a program approved by the grantor agency and are directly related to the program's purpose;
- G. Costs of promotional items, and memorabilia, including models, gifts, and souvenirs;
- H. Food, meals, beverages, or other refreshments, except for eligible per diem associated with grant-related travel, where pre-approved for working events, or where such costs

are incurred for components of a program approved by the grantor agency and are directly related to the program's purpose;

- I. Membership dues for individuals;
- J. Any expense or service that is readily available at no cost to the grant Project;
- K. Reimbursement for any item or expense that has been donated to the Grantee or its Service Providers;
- L. Direct payment to program participant;
- M. Any activities related to fundraising;
- N. Equipment and other capital expenditures such as capital improvements, property losses and expenses, real estate purchases, mortgage payments, remodeling, the acquisition or construction of facilities, or other items that are unallowable pursuant to 2 CFR 200.439;
- O. Any other prohibition imposed by federal, state, or local law; and
- P. Other unallowable costs as listed under TxGMS, Appendix 7, Selected Items of Cost Supplement Chart and/or 2 CFR 200, Subpart E – Cost Principles, General Provisions for Selected Items of Cost, where applicable.
- Q. Applicants are prohibited from the following and must certify the same, see **Exhibit H, Thriving Texas Families Program Affirmations and Solicitation Acceptance Form**:
  - 1. Performing or promoting elective abortions; or
  - 2. Being an Affiliate of any entity or individual that performs or promotes elective abortions.

#### **5.4 COST SHARING OR MATCHING REQUIREMENTS**

There are no cost sharing or match requirements required by this RFA.

## 5.5 PAYMENT METHOD

Any Grant Agreement awarded under this RFA, or any subawards/subcontracts made to Service Providers as a result of any Grant Agreement will be funded on a cost reimbursement basis for reasonable, allowable, and allocable Grant Project direct costs.

Under the cost reimbursement payment method, Grantee and its Service Providers are required to finance operations and will only be reimbursed for actual, allowable, and allocable costs incurred monthly and supported by adequate documentation. No additional payments will be rendered unless an advanced payment is approved. Grantee and its Service Providers are required to maintain, and provide to HHSC upon request, which supports the actual costs for expenditures under the grant.

Awarded Grantees may qualify for a Grant Project implementation period to comply with certain operational requirements under this RFA, including complying with a cost reimbursement business model.

## **Section VI. Application Exhibits and Forms For Submission**

**Note:** Applicants must refer to **Section XIII, Submission Checklist**, for the complete checklist of documents that must be submitted with an application under this RFA.

### 6.1 NARRATIVE PROPOSAL

Applicants shall provide a narrative summary and describe their proposed activities, processes, and methodologies to satisfy all objectives described in **Section II, Scope of Grant Project**, using **Forms F** through **J** attached to this RFA.

### 6.2 REQUESTED BUDGET

Attached **Exhibit G, Requested Budget Summary**, of this RFA is the template for submitting the Requested Budget. Applicants must develop the Requested Budget to support their Proposed Project and in alignment with the requirements described in this RFA.

Applicants must ensure that Project costs outlined in the Requested Budget are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and developed in accordance with applicable state and federal grant requirements. Reasonable costs are those if, in nature and amount, do not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the

decision was made to incur the cost. A cost is allocable to a particular cost objective if the cost is chargeable or assignable to such cost objective in accordance with relative benefits received. See 2 CFR Part 200.403 or TxGMS Cost Principles, Basic Considerations (pgs. 32-33), for additional information related to factors affecting allowability of costs.

Applicants must utilize the budget template provided, **Exhibit G, Requested Budget Summary**, and identify all budget line items and matching costs. Budget categories must be broken out into specific budget line items that allow System Agency to determine if proposed costs are reasonable, allowable, and necessary for the successful performance of the Project. Applicants must enter all costs in the budget tables and explain why the cost is necessary and how the cost was established. Matching funds must also be identified in the Requested Budget.

If selected for a grant award under this RFA, only System Agency-approved budget items in the Requested Budget may be considered eligible for reimbursement.

**Submission of Exhibit G, Requested Budget Summary, is mandatory. Applicants that fail to submit a Requested Budget as set forth in this RFA with their application will be disqualified.**

### **6.3 INDIRECT COSTS**

Applicants must have an approved Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) or request the de minimis rate to recover indirect costs. All Applicants are required to complete and submit **Form K, Texas Health and Human Services System Indirect Costs Rate (ICR) Questionnaire**, with required supporting documentation. The questionnaire initiates the acknowledgment or approval of an ICR for use with the System Agency cost-reimbursable contracts. Entities declining the use of Indirect Cost cannot recover Indirect Costs on any System Agency award or use unrecovered Indirect Costs as match.

The System Agency typically accepts the following approved ICRs:

- A. Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- B. State of Texas Approved Indirect Cost Rate

The System Agency, at its discretion, may request additional information to support any approved ICR agreement.

If the Applicant does not have an approved ICR agreement, the Applicant may be eligible for the 15% de minimis rate or may request to negotiate an ICR with HHS.

For Applicants requesting to negotiate an ICR with the System Agency, the ICR Proposal Package will be provided by the HHS Federal Funds Indirect Cost Rate Group to successful Grantees. The ICR Proposal Package must be completed and returned to the HHS Federal Funds Indirect Cost Rate Group no later than three (3) months post-award.

The HHS Federal Funds Indirect Cost Rate group will contact applicable Grantees after Grant Agreement execution to initiate and complete the ICR process. Grantees should respond within 30 Business Days, or the request will be cancelled, and indirect costs may be disallowed.

Once HHS acknowledges an existing rate or approves an ICR, the Grantee will receive one of the three Indirect Cost approval letters: ICR Acknowledgement Letter, ICR Acknowledgement Letter – 15% Percent De Minimis, or the ICR Agreement Letter.

If an Indirect Cost Rate Letter is required but it is not issued at the time of Grant Agreement execution, the Grant Agreement will be amended to include the Indirect Cost Rate Letter after the ICR Letter is issued.

Approval or acceptance of an ICR will not result in an increase in the amount awarded or affect the agreed-upon service or performance levels throughout the life of the award.

#### **6.4 ADMINISTRATIVE APPLICANT INFORMATION**

Using **Forms A** through **E**, attached to this RFA, Applicant must provide satisfactory evidence of its ability as an organization to manage and coordinate the types of activities described in this RFA.

##### **A. Litigation and Contract History**

Applicant must include in its application a complete disclosure of any alleged or significant contractual or grant failures by submitting **Form D, Entity Information Conflicts and Contract Litigation History.**

In addition, Applicant must disclose any civil or criminal litigation or investigation pending over the last five years that involves Applicant or in which Applicant has been judged guilty or liable. Failure to comply with the terms of this provision may

disqualify Applicant. See, HHS Solicitation Affirmations. Applicant certifies it does not have any existing claims against or unresolved audit exceptions with the State of Texas or any agency of the State of Texas.

Application may be rejected based upon Applicant's prior history with the State of Texas or with any other party that demonstrates, without limitation, unsatisfactory performance, adversarial or contentious demeanor, or significant failure(s) to meet contractual or grant obligations.

**B. Internal Controls Questionnaire**

Applicant must complete **Form E, Organizational Financial Information, and Internal Controls Questionnaire**, and submit with its Application.

**Section VII. RFA Administrative Information and Inquiries**

**7.1 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

EVENT	DATE/TIME
Funding Announcement Posting Date Posted to HHS Grants RFA website	December 20, 2024
Deadline for Submitting Questions or Requests for Clarification	January 13, 2025, by 2:00 p.m. Central Time
Tentative Date Answers to Questions or Requests for Clarification Posted	January 27, 2025
<b>Deadline for Submission of Applications</b>  <b>NOTE: Applications must be <u>RECEIVED</u> by HHSC by this deadline if not changed</b>	<b>February 14, 2025, by 10:30 a.m. Central Time</b>



<b>by subsequent Addenda to be considered eligible.</b>	
Anticipated Notice of Award	August 1, 2025
Anticipated Project Start Date	September 1, 2025

**Applicants must ensure their applications are received by HHSC in accordance with the Deadline for Submission of Applications (date and time) indicated in this Schedule of Events or as changed by subsequent Addenda posted to the [HHS Grants RFA](#) website.**

**All dates are tentative and HHSC reserves the right to change these dates at any time. At the sole discretion of HHSC, events listed in the Schedule of Events are subject to scheduling changes and cancellation. Scheduling changes or cancellation determinations made prior to the Deadline for Submission of Applications will be published by posting an addendum to the [HHS Grants RFA](#) website. After the Deadline for Submission of Applications, if there are delays that significantly impact the anticipated award date, HHSC, at its sole discretion, may post updates regarding the anticipated award date to the [Procurement Forecast](#) on the HHS Procurement Opportunities [web page](#). Each Applicant is responsible for checking the HHS Grants RFA website and Procurement Forecast for updates.**

## **7.2 SOLE POINT OF CONTACT**

All requests, questions, or other communication about this RFA shall be made by email **only** to the Grant Specialist designated as HHSC's Sole Point of Contact listed below:

<b>Name</b>	Amy Pearson
<b>Title</b>	Grant Specialist, HHSC Procurement and Contracting Services]
<b>Address</b>	Procurement and Contracting Services Building 1100 W 49th St. MC: 2020 Austin, TX 78756
<b>Phone</b>	(512) 406-2638

<b>Email</b>	amy.pearson@hhs.texas.gov
--------------	---------------------------

**Applicants shall not use this e-mail address for submission of an Application. Follow the instructions for submission as outlined in Section VIII, Application Organization and Submission Requirements.**

However, if expressly directed in writing by the Sole Point of Contact, Applicant may communicate with another designated HHS representative, e.g., during grant negotiations as part of the normal grant review process, if any.

**Prohibited Communications:** Applicants and their representatives shall not contact other HHS personnel regarding this RFA.

This restriction (on only communicating in writing by email with the sole point of contact identified above) does not preclude discussions between Applicant and agency personnel for the purposes of conducting business unrelated to this RFA.

Failure of an Applicant or its representatives to comply with these requirements may result in disqualification of the Application.

### **7.3 RFA QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION**

Written questions and requests for clarification of this RFA are permitted if submitted by email to the Sole Point of Contact by the Deadline for Submitting Questions or Requests for Clarification established in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or as may be amended in Addenda, if any, posted to the HHS Grants RFA websites.

Applicants' names will be removed from questions in any responses released. All questions and requests for clarification must include the following information. Submissions that do not include this information may not be accepted:

- A. RFA Number;
- B. Section or Paragraph number from this Solicitation;
- C. Page Number of this Solicitation;
- D. Exhibit or other Attachment and Section or Paragraph number from the Exhibit or other Attachment;
- E. Page Number of the Exhibit;

- F. Language, Topic, Section Heading being questioned; and
- G. Question

The following contact information must be included in the e-mail submitted with questions or requests for clarification:

- A. Name of individual submitting question or request for clarification
- B. Organization name
- C. Phone number
- D. E-mail address

**Questions or other written requests for clarification must be received by the Sole Point of Contact by the Deadline for Submitting Questions or Requests for Clarification set forth in this Section 7.1, Schedule of Events, or as may be amended in Addenda, if any, posted to the HHS Grants RFA website.**

**HHSC may review and, at its sole discretion, may respond to questions or other written requests received after the Deadline for Submitting Questions or Requests for Clarification.**

#### **7.4 AMBIGUITY, CONFLICT, DISCREPANCY, CLARIFICATIONS**

Applicants must notify the Sole Point of Contact of any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, exclusionary specification, omission, or other error in the RFA in the manner and by the Deadline for Submitting Questions or Requests for Clarification. Each Applicant submits its Application at its own risk.

If Applicant fails to properly and timely notify the Sole Point of Contact of any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, exclusionary specification, omission, or other error in the RFA, Applicant, whether awarded a Grant Agreement or not:

- A. Shall have waived any claim of error or ambiguity in the RFA and any resulting Grant Agreement;
- B. Shall not contest the interpretation by the HHSC of such provision(s); and
- C. Shall not be entitled to additional reimbursement, relief, or time by reason of any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, exclusionary specification, omission, or other error or its later correction.

## 7.5 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS OR REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATIONS

Responses to questions or other written requests for clarification will be consolidated and HHSC will post responses in one or more Addenda on the [HHS Grants RFA](#) website. Responses will not be provided individually to requestors.

HHSC reserves the right to amend answers previously posted at any time prior to the Deadline for Submission of Applications. Amended answers will be posted on the [HHS Grants RFA](#) website in a separate, new Addendum or Addenda. It is Applicant's responsibility to check the [HHS Grants RFA](#) website or contact the Sole Point of Contact for a copy of the Addendum with the amended answers.

## 7.6 CHANGES, AMENDMENT OR MODIFICATION TO RFA

HHSC reserves the right to change, amend, modify, or cancel this RFA. All changes, amendments and modifications or cancellation will be posted by Addendum on the HHS Grants RFA website.

It is the responsibility of each Applicant to periodically check the HHS Grants RFA website for any additional information regarding this RFA. Failure to check the posting website will in no way release any Applicant or awarded Grantee from the requirements of posted Addenda or additional information. No HHS agency will be responsible or liable in any regard for the failure of any individual or entity to receive notification of any posting to the websites or for the failure of any Applicant or awarded Grantee to stay informed of all postings to these websites. If the Applicant fails to monitor these websites for any changes or modifications to this RFA, such failure will not relieve the Applicant of its obligation to fulfill the requirements as posted.

## 7.7 EXCEPTIONS

Applicants are highly encouraged, in lieu of including exceptions in their Applications, to address all issues that might be advanced by way of exception by submitting an **Exhibit E, Exceptions** or questions and/or requests for clarification pursuant to **Section 7.3, RFA Questions and Requests for Clarification**.

No exception, nor any other term, condition, or provision in an Application that differs, varies from, or contradicts this RFA, will be considered to be part of any Grant Agreement

resulting from this RFA unless expressly made a part of the Grant Agreement in writing by the System Agency.

## **Section VIII. Application Organization and Submission Requirements**

### **8.1 APPLICATION RECEIPT**

Applications must be received by HHSC by the Deadline for Submission of Applications specified in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda. HHSC will date and time stamp all Applications upon receipt. Applications received after the Deadline for Submission of Applications may be ruled ineligible. Applicants should allow for adequate time for submission before the posted Deadline for Submission of Applications.

No HHS agency will be held responsible for any Application that is mishandled prior to receipt by HHSC. It is the Applicant's responsibility to ensure its Application is received by HHSC before the Deadline for Submission of Applications. No HHS agency will be responsible for any technical issues that result in late delivery, non-receipt of an Application, inappropriately identified documents, or other submission issue that may lead to disqualification.

**Note: All Applications become the property of HHSC after submission and receipt and will not be returned to Applicant.**

Applicants understand and acknowledge that issuance of this RFA or retention of Applications received in response to this RFA in no way constitutes a commitment to award Grant Agreement(s) as a result of this RFA.

### **8.2 APPLICATION SUBMISSION**

By submitting an Application in response to this Solicitation, Applicant represents and warrants that the individual submitting the Application and any related documents on behalf of the Applicant is authorized to do so and to binds the Applicant under any Grant Agreement that may result from the submission of an Application.

### 8.3 REQUIRED SUBMISSION METHOD

Applicants must submit their completed Applications by the Deadline for Submission of Applications provided in the **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda, using one of the approved methods identified below. Applications submitted by any other method (e.g., facsimile) will not be considered and will be disqualified.

**Submission Option #1 HHS Online Bid Room:** Applicants shall upload the following documents to the Online Bid Room utilizing the procedures in **Exhibit I, HHS Online Bid Room**. **File Size Limitation:** Restriction to 250MB per file attachment.

- A. One (1) copy marked as “Original Application” that contains the Applicant’s entire application in a Portable Document Format (“.pdf”) file.
- B. One (1) copy of the completed **Exhibit G, Requested Budget Summary**, in its original Excel format.
- C. One (1) copy of the complete Application marked as “Public Information Act Copy,” if applicable, in accordance with **Section 12.1, Texas Public Information Act-Application Disclosure Requirements**, in a Portable Document Format (“.pdf”) file.

**Submission Option #2 Sealed Package with USB Drives:** Applicants shall submit each of the following on separate USB drives:

- A. One (1) USB drive with the complete Application file marked as “Original Application” in a Portable Document Format (“.pdf”) file. Include the USB in a separate envelope within the sealed Application package and mark the USB and envelope with “Original Application.” USB drive must include the completed **Exhibit G, Requested Budget Summary**, in its original Excel format.
- B. One (1) USB drive with a copy of the complete Application file marked as “Public Information Act Copy,” if applicable and in accordance with **Section 12.1, Texas Public Information Act-Application Disclosure Requirements**. The copy must be in a Portable Document Format (“.pdf”) file. Include the USB in a separate envelope within the sealed package and mark the USB and envelope with “Public Information Act Copy” or “PIA Copy.”

Sealed packaged must be clearly labeled with the following:

- A. RFA Number;
- B. RFA Title;

C. Deadline for Submission of Applications;

D. Sole Point of Contact's name; and

E. Applicant's legal name

Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring the USB drives are submitted in sealed packaging that is sufficient to prevent damage to contents and delivered by U.S. Postal Service, overnight or express mail, or hand delivery to the addresses below. No HHS agency will be responsible or liable for any damage.

<b>Overnight/Express/Priority Mail</b>	<b>Hand Delivery</b>
Health and Human Services Commission ATTN: Amy Pearson, Grants Specialist Tower Building Room 108 1100 W. 49th St., MC 2020 Austin, Texas 78756	Health and Human Services Commission ATTN: Amy Pearson, Grants Specialist Procurement & Contracting Services Building 1100 W. 49th St., MC 2020 Austin, Texas 78756

#### **8.4 COSTS INCURRED FOR APPLICATION**

All costs and expenses incurred in preparing and submitting an Application in response to this RFA and participating in the RFA selection process are entirely the responsibility of the Applicant.

#### **8.5 APPLICATION COMPOSITION**

All Applications must:

- A. Be responsive to all RFA requirements;
- B. Be clearly legible;

- C. Be presented using font type Verdana, Arial, or Times New Roman, font size 12 pt., with one (1) inch margins and 1.5 line spacing; the sole 12-point font size exception is no less than size 10 pt. for tables, graphs, and appendices;
- D. Include page numbering for each section of the proposal; and
- E. Include signature of Applicant's authorized representative on all exhibits and forms requiring a signature. Copies of the Application documents should be made after signature.

## 8.6 APPLICATION ORGANIZATION

The complete application file .pdf must:

- A. Be organized in the order outlined in the **Section XIII, Submission Checklist**, and include all required sections (e.g., "Administrative Applicant Information," "Narrative Proposal," "Requested Budget," "Indirect Costs," "Exhibits to be Submitted with Application," and "Addenda")
  - 1. **Exhibit G, Requested Budget Summary**, is to be submitted in its original Excel format.
  - 2. Each Application section must have a cover page with the Applicant's legal name, RFA number, and Name of Grant identified.
- B. Include all required documentation, exhibits, and forms completed and signed, as applicable. Copies of forms are acceptable, but all copies must be identical to the original. All exhibits must be submitted and obtained directly from the posted RFA package; previous versions and copies are not allowed or acceptable.

## 8.7 APPLICATION WITHDRAWALS OR MODIFICATIONS

Prior to the Deadline for Submission of Applications set forth in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda, an Applicant may:

- A. Withdraw its Application by submitting a written request to the Sole Point of Contact; or
- B. Modify its Application by submitting an entirely new submission, complete in all respects, using one of the approved methods of submission set forth in this RFA. The modification must be received by HHSC by the Deadline for Submission of Applications set forth in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda.



No withdrawal or modification request received after the Deadline for Submission of Applications, set forth in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda, will be considered. Additionally, in the event of multiple Applications received, the most timely received and/or modified Application will replace the Applicant’s original and all prior submission(s) in its entirety and the original submission(s) will not be considered.

## **Section IX. Application Screening and Evaluation**

### **9.1 OVERVIEW**

A three-step selection process will be used:

- A. Application screening to determine whether the Applicant meets the minimum requirements of this RFA;
- B. Evaluation based upon specific criteria; and
- C. Final selection based upon State priorities and other relevant factors, as outlined in **Section 10.1, Final Selection**.

### **9.2 INITIAL COMPLIANCE SCREENING OF APPLICATIONS**

All Applications received by the Deadline for Submission of Applications as outlined in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda, will be screened by HHSC to determine which Applications meet all the minimum requirements of this RFA and are deemed responsive and qualified for further consideration. See **Section 3.2, Application Screening Requirements**.

At the sole discretion of HHSC, Applications with errors, omissions, or compliance issues may be considered non-responsive and may not be considered. The remaining Applications will continue to the evaluation stage and will be considered in the manner and form as which they are received. HHSC reserves the right to waive minor informalities in an Application. A “minor informality” is an omission or error that, in the determination of HHSC if waived or modified, would not give an Applicant an unfair advantage over other Applicants or result in a material change in the Application or RFA requirements. **Note:** Any disqualifying factor set forth in this RFA does not constitute an informality (e.g.,

**Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations v2.6, or Exhibit G, Requested Budget Summary**).

HHSC, at its sole discretion, may give an Applicant the opportunity to submit missing information or make corrections at any point after receipt of Application. The missing information or corrections must be submitted to the Sole Point of Contact e-mail address in **Section 7.2, Sole Point of Contact**, by the deadline set by HHSC. Failure to respond by the deadline may result in the rejection of the Application and the Applicant's not being considered for award.

### **9.3 QUESTIONS OR REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION FOR APPLICATIONS**

System Agency reserves the right to ask questions or request clarification or revised documents for a submitted Application from any Applicant at any time prior to award. System Agency reserves the right to select qualified Applications received in response to this RFA without discussion of the Applications with Applicants.

### **9.4 EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Applications will be evaluated and scored in accordance with the following scoring criteria using **Exhibit D, Evaluation Tool**.

Scoring Criteria: Qualified Applications shall be evaluated based upon:

- A. Program Design – 45%
- B. Applicant Background – 35%
- C. Project Details – 20%

### **9.4 PAST PERFORMANCE**

System Agency reserves the right to request additional information and conduct investigations as necessary to review any Application. By submitting an Application, the Applicant generally releases from liability and waives all claims against any party providing information about the Applicant at the request of System Agency.

System Agency may examine Applicant's past performance which may include, but is not limited to, information about Applicant provided by any governmental entity, whether an agency or political subdivision of the State of Texas, another state, or the Federal government.

System Agency, at its sole discretion, may also initiate investigations or examinations of Applicant performance based upon media reports. Any negative findings, as determined by System Agency in its sole discretion, may result in System Agency removing the Applicant from further consideration for award.

Past performance information regarding Applicants may include, but is not limited to:

- A. Notices of termination;
- B. Cure notices;
- C. Assessments of liquidated damages;
- D. Litigation;
- E. Audit reports; and
- F. Non-renewals of grants or contracts based on Applicant's unsatisfactory performance.

Applicants also may be rejected as a result of unsatisfactory past performance under any grant(s) or contract(s) as reflected in vendor performance reports, reference checks, or other sources. An Applicant's past performance may be considered in the initial screening process and prior to making an award determination.

Reasons for which an Applicant may be denied a Grant Agreement at any point after application submission include, but are not limited to:

- A. If applicable, Applicant has an unfavorable report or grade on the CPA Vendor Performance Tracking System (VPTS). VPTS may be accessed at: <https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/programs/vendor-performance-tracking/>, OR,
- B. Applicant is currently under a corrective action plan through HHSC or DSHS, OR,
- C. Applicant has had repeated, negative vendor performance reports for the same reason, OR,
- D. Applicant has a record of repeated non-responsiveness to vendor performance issues, OR,

- E. Applicant has contracts or purchase orders that have been cancelled in the previous 12 months for non-performance or substandard performance, OR
- F. Any other performance issue that demonstrates that awarding a Grant Agreement to Applicant would not be in the best interest of the State.

## **9.5 COMPLIANCE FOR PARTICIPATION IN STATE CONTRACTS**

Prior to award of a Grant Agreement as a result of this RFA and in addition to the initial screening of Applications, all required verification checks will be conducted.

The information (e.g., legal name and, if applicable, assumed name (d/b/a), tax identification number, DUNS number) provided by Applicant will be used to conduct these checks. At System Agency's sole discretion, applicants found to be barred, prohibited, or otherwise excluded from award of a Grant Agreement may be disqualified from further consideration under this solicitation, pending satisfactory resolution of all compliance issues.

Checks include:

### **A. State of Texas Debarment and Warrant Hold**

Applicant must not be debarred from doing business with the State of Texas (<https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/programs/vendor-performance-tracking/debarred-vendors.php>) or have an active warrant or payee hold placed by the Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA).

### **B. U.S. System of Award Management (SAM) Exclusions List**

Applicant must not be excluded from contract participation at the federal level. This verification is conducted through SAM, the official website of the U.S. Government which may be accessed at:

<https://www.sam.gov/SAM/pages/public/searchRecords/search.jsf>

### **C. Divestment Statute Lists**

Applicant must not be listed on the Divestment Statute Lists provided by CPA, which may be accessed at:

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/publications/divestment.php><https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/publications/divestment.php>

1. Companies that boycott Israel;
2. Companies with Ties to Sudan;
3. Companies with Ties to Iran;
4. Foreign Terrorist Organizations; and
5. Companies with Ties to Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

**D. HHS Office of Inspector General**

Applicant must not be listed on the HHS Office of Inspector General Texas Exclusions List for people or businesses excluded from participating as a provider: <https://oig.hhsc.texas.gov/exclusions>

**E. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Applicant must not be listed on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General's List of Excluded Individuals/Entities (LEIE), excluded from participation as a provider, unless a valid waiver is currently in effect: <https://exclusions.oig.hhs.gov/>.

Additionally, if a subrecipient under a federal award, the Grantee shall comply with requirements regarding registration with the U.S. Government's System for Award Management (SAM). This requirement includes maintaining an active SAM registration and the accuracy of the information in SAM. The Grantee shall review and update information at least annually after initial SAM registration and more frequently as required by 2 CFR Part 25.

For Grantees that may make procurements using grant funds awarded under the Grant Agreement, Grantee must check SAM Exclusions that contain the names of ineligible, debarred, and/or suspended parties. Grantee certifies through acceptance of a Grant Agreement it will not conduct business with any entity that is an excluded entity under SAM.

HHSC reserves the right to conduct additional checks to determine eligibility to receive a Grant Agreement.

## **Section X. Award of Grant Agreement Process**

### **10.1 FINAL SELECTION**

After initial screening for eligibility and Application completeness, and initial evaluation against the criteria listed in **Section 9.4, Evaluation Criteria**, the System Agency may apply other considerations such as program policy or other selection factors that are essential to the process of selecting Applications that individually or collectively achieve program objectives. In applying these factors, the System Agency may consult with internal and external subject matter experts. The funding methodology for issuing final Grant Agreements will include the following identified factors:

- A. Program design aligns with TTF Services and Outcomes;
- B. Applicant background and experience; and
- C. Project details meet requirements of Senate Bill 24, 88<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

The System Agency will make final funding decisions based on Applicant eligibility, evaluation rankings, the funding methodology above, geographic distribution across the state, state priorities, reasonableness, availability of funding, cost-effectiveness, and other relevant factors. In accordance with Texas Health and Safety Code, Section 54.002(d), the System Agency shall, to the extent practicable, contract with previous Grantees and subcontractors, who have a history of working with the System Agency in programs similar to the former Alternatives to Abortion Program. Priority may also be given to organizations that operate as a pregnancy support center, adoption assistance provider, or a maternity home.

All funding recommendations will be considered for approval by the HHSC Program Deputy Executive Commissioner, or their designee.

### **10.2 NEGOTIATIONS**

After selecting Applicants for award, the System Agency may engage in negotiations with selected Applicants. As determined by System Agency, the negotiation phase may involve direct contact between the selected Applicant and HHS representatives by virtual meeting, by phone and/or by email. Negotiations should not be interpreted as a preliminary intent to award funding unless explicitly stated in writing by the System Agency and is considered

a step to finalize the application to a state of approval and discuss proposed grant activities. During negotiations, selected Applicants may expect:

- A. An in-depth discussion of the submitted Application and Requested Budget; and
- B. Requests from the System Agency for revised documents, clarification, or additional detail regarding the Applicant's submitted Application. These clarifications and additional details, as required, must be submitted in writing by Applicant as finalized during the negotiation.

### **10.3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTED PARTIES**

Subject to certain specified exceptions, Section 2252.908 of the Texas Government Code, Disclosure of Interested Parties, applies to a contract of a state agency that has a value of \$1 million or more; requires an action or vote by the governing body of the entity or agency before the contract may be signed; or is for services that would require a person to register as a lobbyist under Chapter 305 of the Texas Government Code.

One of the requirements of Section 2252.908 is that a business entity (defined as “any entity recognized by law through which business is conducted, including a sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation”) must submit a Form 1295, Certificate of Interested Parties, to the System Agency at the time the business entity submits the signed contract.

Applicant represents and warrants that, if selected for award of a Grant Agreement as a result of this RFA, Applicant will submit to the System Agency a completed, certified, and signed Form 1295, Certificate of Interested Parties, at the time the potential Grantee submits the signed Grant Agreement.

The Form 1295 involves an electronic process through the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC). The on-line process for completing the Form 1295 may be found on the TEC public website at: [https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/whatsnew/elf\\_info\\_form1295.htm](https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/whatsnew/elf_info_form1295.htm).

Additional instructions and information to be used to process the Form 1295 will be provided by the System Agency to the potential Grantee(s). Grantee may contact Sole Point of Contact or designated Contract Manager for information needed to complete Form 1295.

If the potential Grantee does not submit a completed, certified, and signed TEC Form 1295 to the System Agency with the signed Grant Agreement, the System Agency is prohibited by law from executing a contract, even if the potential Grantee is otherwise eligible for

award. The System Agency, as determined in its sole discretion, may award the Grant Agreement to the next qualified Applicant, who will then be subject to this procedure.

#### **10.4 EXECUTION AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF GRANT AGREEMENT(S)**

The System Agency intends to award one or more Grant Agreements as a result of this RFA. However, not all Applicants who are deemed eligible to receive funds are assured of receiving a Grant Agreement.

At any time and at its sole discretion, System Agency reserves the right to cancel this RFA, make partial award, or decline to award any Grant Agreement(s) as a result of this RFA.

The final funding amount and the provisions of the grant will be determined at the sole discretion of System Agency.

HHSC may announce tentative funding awards through an “Intent to Award Letter” once the HHSC Program Deputy Executive Commissioner and relevant HHSC approval authorities have given approval to initiate and/or execute grants. Receipt of an “Intent to Award Letter” does not authorize the recipient to incur expenditures or begin project activities, nor does it guarantee current or future funding.

Upon execution of a Grant Agreement(s) as a result of this RFA, HHSC will post a notification of all grants awarded to the [HHS Grants RFA](#) website.

### **Section XI. General Terms and Conditions**

#### **11.1 GRANT APPLICATION DISCLOSURE**

In an effort to maximize state resources and reduce duplication of effort, the System Agency, at its discretion, may require the Applicant to disclose information regarding the application for or award of state, federal, and/or local grant funding to the Applicant or SubGrantee or subcontractor (i.e. organization who will participate, in part, in the operation of the Project) within the past two years to provide support services for pregnancy women and families.



## 11.2 TEXAS HISTORICALLY UNDERUTILIZED BUSINESSES (HUBS)

In procuring goods and services using funding awarded under this RFA, Grantee must use HUBs or other designated businesses as required by law or the terms of the state or federal grant under which this RFA has been issued. See, e.g., 2 CFR 200.321. If there are no such requirements, System Agency encourages Applicant to use HUBs to provide goods and services.

For information regarding the Texas HUB program, refer to CPA's website: <https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/vendor/hub/>.

## **Section XII. Application Confidential or Proprietary Information**

### 12.1 TEXAS PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT – APPLICATION DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

Applications and resulting Grant Agreements are subject to the Texas Public Information Act (PIA), Texas Government Code Chapter 552, and may be disclosed to the public upon request. Other legal authority also requires System Agency to post grants and applications on its public website and to provide such information to the Legislative Budget Board for posting on its public website.

Under the PIA, certain information is protected from public release. If Applicant asserts that information provided in its Application is exempt from disclosure under the PIA, Applicant must:

#### **A. Mark Original Application:**

1. Mark the Original Application, at the top of the front page, with the words "CONTAINS CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION" in large, bold, capitalized letters (the size of, or equivalent to, 12-point Times New Roman font); and
2. Identify, adjacent to each portion of the Application that Applicant claims is exempt from public disclosure, the claimed exemption from disclosure (NOTE: no redactions are to be made in the Original Application);

**B. Certify in Original Application – HHS Solicitation:** Certify, in the designated section of the **Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations v2.6**, Applicant's confidential information assertion and the filing of its Public Information Act Copy; and

**C. Submit Public Information Act Copy of Application:** Submit a separate “Public Information Act Copy” of the Original Application (in addition to the original and all copies otherwise required under the provisions of this RFA). The Public Information Act Copy must meet the following requirements:

1. The copy must be clearly marked as “Public Information Act Copy” on the front page in large, bold, capitalized letters (the size of, or equivalent to, 12-point Times New Roman font);
2. Each portion Applicant claims is exempt from public disclosure must be redacted (blacked out); and
3. Applicant must identify, adjacent to each redaction, the claimed exemption from disclosure. Each identification provided as required in **Subsection (C) of this section** must be identical to those set forth in the Original Application as required in **Subsection A(2)**, above. The only difference in required markings and information between the Original Application and the “Public Information Act Copy” of the Application will be redactions – which can only be included in the “Public Information Act Copy.” There must be no redactions in the Original Application.

**By submitting an Application under this RFA, Applicant agrees that, if Applicant does not mark the Original Application, provide the required certification in Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations v2.6, and submit the Public Information Act Copy, the Application will be considered to be public information that may be released to the public in any manner including, but not limited to, in accordance with the Public Information Act, posted on the System Agency’s public website, and posted on the Legislative Budget Board’s public website.**

**If any or all Applicants submit partial, but not complete, information suggesting inclusion of confidential information and failure to comply with the requirements set forth in this section, the System Agency, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to (1) disqualify all Applicants that fail to fully comply with the requirements set forth in this section, or (2) to offer all Applicants that fail to fully comply with the requirements set forth in this section additional time to comply.**

No Applicant should submit a Public Information Act Copy indicating that the entire Application is exempt from disclosure. Merely making a blanket claim that the entire Application is protected from disclosure because it contains any amount of confidential, proprietary, trade secret, or privileged information is not acceptable, and may make the entire Application subject to release under the PIA.

Applications should not be marked or asserted as copyrighted material. If Applicant asserts a copyright to any portion of its Application, by submitting an Application, Applicant agrees to reproduction and posting on public websites by the State of Texas, including the System Agency and all other state agencies, without cost or liability.

The System Agency will strictly adhere to the requirements of the PIA regarding the disclosure of public information. As a result, by participating in this RFA, Applicant acknowledges that all information, documentation, and other materials submitted in its Application may be subject to public disclosure under the PIA. The System Agency does not have authority to agree that any information submitted will not be subject to disclosure. Disclosure is governed by the PIA and by rulings of the Office of the Texas Attorney General. Applicants are advised to consult with their legal counsel concerning disclosure issues resulting from this process and to take precautions to safeguard trade secrets and proprietary or otherwise confidential information. The System Agency assumes no obligation or responsibility relating to the disclosure or nondisclosure of information submitted by Applicants.

For more information concerning the types of information that may be withheld under the PIA or questions about the PIA, please refer to the Public Information Act Handbook published by the Office of the Texas Attorney General or contact the attorney general's Open Government Hotline at (512) 478-OPEN (6736) or toll-free at (877) 673-6839 (877-OPEN TEX). To access the Public Information Act Handbook, please visit the attorney general's website at <http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov>.

## **12.2 APPLICANT WAIVER – INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

**SUBMISSION OF ANY DOCUMENT TO ANY HHS AGENCY IN RESPONSE TO THIS SOLICITATION CONSTITUTES AN IRREVOCABLE WAIVER, AND AGREEMENT BY THE SUBMITTING PARTY TO FULLY INDEMNIFY THE STATE OF TEXAS AND HHS FROM ANY CLAIM OF INFRINGEMENT REGARDING THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS OF THE SUBMITTING PARTY OR ANY THIRD PARTY FOR ANY MATERIALS SUBMITTED TO HHS BY THE SUBMITTING PARTY.**

**Section XIII. Submission Checklist**

HHSC, in its sole discretion, will review all Applications received and will determine if any or all Applications which do not include complete, signed copies of these exhibits and/or addenda, will be disqualified or whether additional time will be permitted for submission of the incomplete or missing exhibits. If additional time is permitted, Applicants will be notified in writing of the opportunity to provide the missing documentation by a specified deadline. Failure by an Applicant to submit the requested documentation by the deadline WILL result in disqualification. Applications that do not include Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations v2.6 (completed and signed), and Exhibit G, Budget Request Summary (completed), will be disqualified. See Section 9.2, Initial Compliance Screening of Applications for further detail.

This Submission Checklist identifies the documentation, forms, and exhibits that are required to be submitted as part of the Application.

The Application must be organized in the order below and include each required section and the forms and exhibits identified within a section:

**A. Administrative Applicant Information**

- 1. Form A: Face Page \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Form B: Contact Person Information \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Form C: Nonprofit Entity, Board of Director, and Principal Officers, if applicable \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Form D: Entity Information Conflicts and Contract Litigation History \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Form E: Organizational Financial Information and Internal Control Questionnaire \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Narrative Proposal**

**The Narrative Proposal must be titled “Narrative Proposal” and include the Applicant’s Legal Name, the RFA No., and the name of the Grant Program. Use the titles below for each required section.**

- 1. Form F: Program Design \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Form G: Applicant Background Guidelines \_\_\_\_\_

- 3. Form G-1: Applicant Guidelines for Monitoring Subcontractors \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Form H: Texas Counties and Regions Served by Project \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Form I: Communication and Outreach Plan \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Form J: Program Site Readiness Checklist \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Requested Budget**

Exhibit G: Requested Budget Summary (Excel) \_\_\_\_\_

**This Requested Budget Summary is mandatory and must be submitted with the Application, in the original format (Excel), for the Application to be considered responsive. Applications received without the completed Requested Budget Template will be disqualified.**

**D. Indirect Costs**

Form K: Texas Health and Human Services System Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) Questionnaire \_\_\_\_\_

**E. Exhibits to be Completed, Signed, and Submitted with Application**

1. Exhibit A: HHS Solicitation Affirmations \_\_\_\_\_  
**Exhibit A is mandatory and must be completed, signed, and submitted for the Application to be considered responsive. Applications received without Exhibit A or with an unsigned Exhibit A may be disqualified.**

- 2. Exhibit E: Exceptions Form \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Exhibit F: HHS System Data Use Agreement v8.5 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Exhibit F-1: Texas HHS System-Data Use Agreement- Attachment 2 Security and Privacy Inquiry (SPI) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Exhibit H: Thriving Texas Families Affirmation and Solicitation Acceptance \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Exhibit K: Thriving Texas Families Project Sites and Hours \_\_\_\_\_

**F. Addenda:** Each Addendum, if any, must be signed and submitted with the Application. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Section XIV. List of Appendices, Exhibits, and Forms Attached to RFA**

### **Appendices**

Appendix A, Thriving Texas Families Program Data Element Guide

Appendix B, HHSC Approved Nonmedical Drivers of Health Assessment Questions

### **Exhibits**

Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations version 2.6, November 2024

Exhibit B, HHS Uniform Terms and Conditions – Grant, version 3.5, September 2024

Exhibit C, HHS Additional Provisions – Grant Funding, version 1.0, February 2021

Exhibit D, Evaluation Tool

Exhibit E, Exceptions Form

Exhibit F, HHS System Data Use Agreement v8.5, October 2019

Exhibit F-1, Texas HHS System-Data Use Agreement- Attachment 2 Security and Privacy Inquiry (SPI)

Exhibit G, Requested Budget Summary (Excel)

Exhibit H, Texas Thriving Families Affirmation and Solicitation Acceptance Form

Exhibit I, HHS Online Bid Room

Exhibit J, Goals and Outcomes

Exhibit K, Thriving Texas Families Project Sites and Hours

### **Forms**

Form A, Face Page

Form B, Contact Person Information

Form C, Nonprofit Entity, Board of Director, and Principal Officers

Form D, Entity Information Conflicts – Contract Litigation History

Form E, Organizational Financial Information, and Internal Controls Questionnaire

Form F, Program Design

Form G, Applicant Background Guidelines

Form G-1, Applicant Guidelines for Monitoring Subcontractors

Form H, Texas Counties and Regions Served by Project

Form I, Communication and Outreach Plan

Form J, Program Site Readiness Checklist

Form K, Texas Health and Human Services System Indirect Costs Rate (ICR) Questionnaire