



# TEXAS

## Health and Human Services

*Cecile E. Young, Executive Commissioner*

*Request for Applications (RFA)*

*Grant for*

*Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES)*

*RFA No. HHS0015358*

### **APPLICATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

*February 12, 2025, by 10:30 a.m. Central Time*

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**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 Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES) Program. The purpose of this program is to provide parenting and family support services to expecting families and families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age, promoting the well-being of families, and supporting positive outcomes for children across the State.

Applicants can access information regarding current Family Support Services (FSS) programs at the following website: <https://fss.hhs.texas.gov/>.

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:	Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES)
RFA No.:	HHS0015358
Application Submission Deadline:	February 12, 2025, by 10:30 AM Central Time
Deadline for Submitting Questions or Requests for Clarifications:	January 15, 2025, by 10:30 AM Central Time
Estimated Total Available Funding:	Up to <b>\$197,691,408.00</b> for the Project Period
Estimated Total Number of Awards:	Multiple awards
Estimated Max Award Amount:	State Fiscal Year annual awards will not exceed <b>\$2,500,000.00</b> per Grant Agreement.
Cost Sharing, if any:	Cost Sharing is encouraged but not required.
Anticipated Project Start Date:	September 1, 2025
Length of Project Period:	Four State Fiscal Years

Eligible Applicants:	Applicant must be a nonprofit corporation, as defined by Chapter 22 of the Texas Business Organization Code, or a governmental entity. Applicant must submit a complete Application by the stated deadline. (Refer to <b>Section 3.2, Application Screening Requirements.</b> )
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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 Application Submission Deadline 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.

“Addendum” or “Addenda” 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 and must be signed by the Applicant and returned with its Application.

“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.

“Assistance Listing Number” or “ALN” means the publicly available listing of federal assistance programs managed and administered by the General Services Administration, formerly known as the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA).

“Budget” means the financial plan for carrying out the Grant Project, as formalized in the Grant Agreement, including awarded funds and any Cost Sharing funds. An Applicant’s requested Budget may differ from the System Agency-approved Budget executed in the final Grant Agreement.

“Business Day” means any day other than a Saturday, Sunday, or day on which Texas State offices are authorized or obligated by law, or executive order, to be closed.

“Calendar Day” means every day on the calendar, including weekends and public holidays.

“Caregiver” is an individual who attends to the needs of an Index Child.

“CFR” means the Code of Federal Regulations which is the codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government.

“Community Strengths and Needs Assessment” or “CSNA” is an evaluation developed and used by the Applicant to identify and describe community strengths, needs, assets, characteristics, resources, and challenges.

“Contiguous County” or “Contiguous Counties” means a county whose boundary touches at any point with that of another Primary County.

“Deliverable” means the goods, services, and Work Product, including all reports and Project documentation, required to be provided by Grantee to the System Agency.

“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.

“Effective Date” means the date upon which the parties agree the Grant Agreement will take effect, as indicated in the Grant Agreement.

“Equipment” means, pursuant to 2 CFR § 200.1, 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 the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$10,000.00. See 2 CFR §200.1 for Capital assets, Computing devices, General purpose equipment, Information technology systems, Special purpose equipment, and Supplies.

“Evidence-Based Program” means a Program Model that meets the following criteria:

- A. Is research-based and grounded in relevant, empirically based knowledge and program-determined Outcomes;
- B. Has comprehensive standards that ensure the highest-quality service delivery with continuous quality improvement;

- C. Has demonstrated significant positive short-term and long-term Outcomes;
- D. Has been evaluated by at least one rigorous, randomized, controlled research trial across heterogeneous populations or communities, the results of at least one of which has been published in a peer-reviewed journal.
- E. Substantially complies with a program manual or design that specifies the purpose, Outcomes, duration, and frequency of the program; and
- F. Employs well-trained and competent staff and continually provides staff with relevant professional development opportunities.

“Evidence-Informed Program” means a Program Model that uses the best available research and practice knowledge to guide program design and implementation. Components of Evidence-Informed Programs have been tested using a randomized control trial or rigorous quasi-experimental design.

“Family” or “Families” is a group of two or more people that may be comprised of Caregivers, parents, partners, children, and other related individuals or household members related to an identified Index Child.

“Family Support Services” or “FSS” means the program within HHSC, formerly the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) division of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), which moved to HHSC effective September 1, 2024.

“FSS Program Staff” means employees who work for HHS Family Support Services.

“Grant Agreement” means the agreement entered into by the System Agency and the 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.”

“Grant Term” refers to the base project period plus any renewal or extension of the Grant Agreement.

“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.

“HOPES” is the Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support program as funded through FSS.

“Index Child” means the child for whom a Family’s enrollment in HOPES programming is based. The child that must be identified for a Family enrollment must be 0 through 5 years of age.



“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 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.

“Invoice” is a Grantee’s bill or written request for payment under the Grant Agreement for services performed.

“Non-Responsive” is the designation for when an Application’s noncompliance with a material aspect of the RFA results in the Application’s exclusion from grant award consideration.

“Outcome” means a measure that demonstrates the effect a service has on Participants, typically related to improvements in the lives of Participants regarding safety, permanency, and well-being.

“Output” means an indicator referring to activities, methods, and approaches and the immediate results generated because of program efforts (e.g., number of Families served).

“Participant” means a member of a Family or household served under a Grant Agreement resulting from this RFA.

“Participant Records” refers to any information and documentation related to a Participant and the services provided to a Participant, as recorded and stored by the Grantee and service provider.

“PEIRS Enrollment ID” is the unique identification number for each enrolled Participant and any Family member that is generated after a new enrollment is saved in PEIRS.

“Performance Measure” means a service Output, Outcome, or Deliverable used to assess the performance of the Grantee.

“Prevention and Early Intervention Reporting System” or “PEIRS” means the data reporting system used by FSS Grantees and FSS Program Staff to capture and report program and Grant-related information.

“Primary Caregiver” means the parent or Caregiver of the Index Child and is the person who is the primary Participant enrolled in the HOPES Program.

“Primary County(ies)” means the county, or the Contiguous Counties proposed in this RFA to receive HOPES services, and are the focus of any planned outreach, programming, services, activities, and other grant initiatives in an award resulting from this RFA.

“Priority Characteristics” are the attributes that identify the Caregivers, child(ren), or Families who may receive programming.

“Program Model(s)” means the Evidence-Based Program, Promising Practice Program, Evidence-Informed Program, or program curriculum the Grantee implements.

“Program Staff” means employees working under the auspices of HOPES Grantees, including Sub-awardees who will be providing programming and support to Families.

“Project” or “Grant Project” means the specific work and activities that are supported by the funds provided under the Grant Agreement resulting from this RFA.

“Project Period” is the initial period of time set forth in the Grant Agreement during which grantees may perform approved activities within the Scope of Grant Project 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.

“Project Work Plan” or “PWP” is the documentation of how the Grantee will implement and operate the HOPES grant initiative to achieve the Performance Measures outlined in the Grant Agreement.

“Promising Practice Program” means a Program Model that meets the following criteria:

- A. Has an active impact evaluation program or demonstrates a schedule for implementing an active impact evaluation program;
- B. Has been evaluated by at least one Outcome-based study demonstrating effectiveness or random, controlled trial in a homogeneous sample;
- C. Substantially complies with a program manual or design that specifies the purpose, Outcomes, duration, and frequency of the program services;
- D. Employs well-trained and competent Program Staff and provides continual relevant professional development opportunities; and
- E. Is research-based and grounded in relevant, empirical knowledge, and program-determined Outcomes.

“Protective Factors” means conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, or society that mitigate or eliminate risk in families and communities, thereby increasing the health and well-being of children and families.

“Referral” means the process whereby a Grantee provides Families with recommended external programming or resources that extend beyond the programming the Grantee provides through this RFA.

“Reflective Practice” includes methods and techniques that help individuals and groups reflect on their experiences and actions to engage in a process of continuous learning. Reflective practice can help providers understand intentions, values, and vision as well as support work in a challenging and demanding environment.

“Reflective Supervision” means the regular collaborative reflection between a Program Staff member (clinical or other) and Program Staff supervisor that builds on the supervisee’s use of their thoughts, feelings, and values within a service encounter. It is a necessary, supportive process within the supervisor-staff relationship.

“Responsive” means the designation for when HHSC determines that an Application complies with all material aspects of the RFA, including that the Applicant has submitted all required documents.

“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.”

“Safe” means the state in which an Index Child is secure from maltreatment or the risk of danger or harm.

“Service Authorization” means the process whereby the Primary Caregiver consents to participation in programming by completing an enrollment form and any other documentation required by HHSC or the Grantee.

“Service Area” means the counties within which Applicant proposes to provide HOPES programming.

“Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support” indicates a specific tool for planning, providing, and assessing quality programming. These standards establish how two key frameworks in the Family Strengthening and Support field, the Principles of Family Support Practice developed by Family Support America, and the Strengthening Families Framework and Approach developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, can be applied together programmatically. The standards demonstrate and measure how to work with families with a family-centered, strengths-based, multigenerational approach to support them to build research-based, evidence-informed Protective Factors that increase family stability, enhance child development, and reduce child abuse and neglect.

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

“Statement of Work” means the description of activities Grantee must perform to complete the Project, as specified in the Grant Agreement, and as may be amended. See **Exhibit C, Statement of Work Template**.

“Subaward” means a written agreement that assigns portions of a Grantee’s obligations to a third party that the Grantee selects. The third party assumes some of the Grantee’s obligations while the Grantee remains completely responsible for all actions that the Subawardee performs. Subaward may be used interchangeably with the term “Subcontract” or “Subgrant” for this RFA.

“Sub-awardee” means any entity that has entered into a Subaward with the Grantee to assume some of the Grantee’s obligations. Used interchangeably with the term “Subcontractor” or “Subgrantee.”

“System Agency” means HHSC, DSHS, or both, that will be a party to any Grant Agreement resulting from the RFA.

“Trauma” means the results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning or the individual’s mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

“Trauma-Informed” means an individual, program, organization, or system that fully integrates knowledge about Trauma into policies, procedures, and practices by:

- A. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of Trauma in parents, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
- B. Maximizing physical and psychological safety and responding to the impacts of structural inequities on individuals and communities;
- C. Building healthy, trusting relationships that create mutuality among children, families, caregivers, and professionals at an individual and organizational level; and
- D. Striving to avoid re-traumatization.

“Texas Grant Management Standards” or “TxGMS” means uniform grant and contract administration procedures, developed under the authority of Chapter 783 of the Texas Government Code, to promote the efficient use of public funds in local government and in programs requiring cooperation among local, State, and federal agencies. Under this Grant Agreement, TxGMS applies to Grantee except as otherwise provided by applicable law or directed by System Agency. Additionally, except as otherwise provided by applicable law, in the event of a conflict between TxGMS and applicable federal or State law, federal law prevails over State law and State law prevails over TxGMS.

### 1.3 STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The System Agency is requesting applications under Chapter 137 of the Texas Human Resources Code. State funds for this Grant Project are authorized under the Texas General Appropriations Act, Article II. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated State funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.

Federal funding for this Grant Project is authorized under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Act, as amended and codified in 42 U.S.C. § 5116. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated federal funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law. Federal funding awarded to the System Agency is through the program(s) listed below:

Federal Grant Program:	Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Grants
Federal Awarding Agency:	Administration for Children and Families
Funding Opportunity No.:	2403TXBCAP
Assistance Listing Number and Program Title:	93.590 Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grants

### 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 Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES) Program.

The purpose of this program is to provide effective parenting and family support services to expecting families and families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age, promoting the well-being of families with young children and supporting long-term positive outcomes for children and families throughout the State of Texas.

### **2.2 PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

- A. FSS partners with and provides funding for organizations across the State to deliver free, voluntary programs for families, offering a variety of services that help promote positive outcomes for children and support the well-being of families in Texas. FSS provides the HOPES Program as part of its overall service array to support young children and their families across Texas.
- B. The HOPES Program is a community-based program providing a range of services to expecting families and families with young children. HOPES Programs have provided parent education and support through home visiting, parenting workshops, caregiver support groups, and service coordination. In addition, HOPES Grantees implement community-level approaches and leverage early childhood coalitions to raise awareness about early childhood development, promote child and family well-being, and advance positive outcomes for families with young children.
- C. The HOPES Program addresses community needs through its programming, services, and initiatives and promotes collaboration among community providers and stakeholders to increase Protective Factors of families with young children across the State.

### **2.3 ELIGIBLE POPULATION**

- A. The eligible service population for the HOPES Program consists of families expecting a child or who have at least one child, 0 through 5 years of age.
- B. HOPES Grantees must identify a Primary Caregiver and an Index Child for each family enrolling in HOPES services, however the entire family should benefit from services provided through the program.
- C. Grantees must identify two or more of the following Priority Characteristics for any program enrollment, as applicable:
  - 1. Behavioral concern;

2. Childcare or childcare access concerns;
  3. Current or former military connection;
  4. Current or past alcohol abuse – Caregiver;
  5. Current or past child maltreatment or child welfare involvement;
  6. Current or past domestic or interpersonal violence;
  7. Developmental delay or disability – Caregiver;
  8. Developmental delay or disability – Index Child;
  9. Family dynamics or structure concern;
  10. Family or household conflict;
  11. High stress level;
  12. Homeless, runaway, or housing instability;
  13. Household has a child with developmental delays or disabilities;
  14. Household has a history of alcohol abuse or a need for alcohol abuse treatment;
  15. Household has a history of substance use or needs substance use treatment;
  16. Low school attainment – Caregiver;
  17. Low-income household;
  18. Mental health concern – Caregiver;
  19. Mental health concern – Index Child;
  20. Parenting skills concern;
  21. Social support concern;
  22. Someone in the household has attained low school achievement or has a child with low student achievement; and
  23. Someone in the household uses tobacco products in the home; or
  24. Household includes an individual who is pregnant and under 21.
- D. All Participants must enter and participate in the program voluntarily. Voluntarily means that the Family must not be court-ordered, mandated, or coerced to participate in HOPES programming.
- E. Any programming, services, and initiatives implemented under a Grant Agreement resulting from this RFA must focus on and be designed to support expecting families and families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age.

## **2.4 ELIGIBLE SERVICE AREAS**

- A. Applicants may propose HOPES programming and services for any Texas county under this RFA.
- B. Applicants may propose to serve a single county or multiple Contiguous Counties as Primary Counties.

1. Primary Counties are counties that will be identified in the Grant Agreement Statement of Work that must be served under this award. They are the focus of any outreach and recruitment efforts, grant programming and services, and grant initiatives.
  2. Contiguous Counties include any county whose boundary touches at any point with that of another county.
  3. Identified services must be available to the entire Primary County or Counties. Services may not be denied to any Family that meets the eligibility requirements if capacity and funding allow for service provision.
  4. If an Applicant would like to serve multiple counties that are not Contiguous Counties, the Applicant must submit a separate Application for each county that the Applicant proposes to serve.
- C. HHSC reserves the right to negotiate with Applicants regarding specific geographic coverage. The Grantee's approved service area will be included in the Grant Agreement Statement of Work.
- D. Applicants may use the Community Maltreatment Risk Maps to aid in planning. See <https://www.maltreatment-risk.txsafebabies.org/>. The Community Maltreatment Risk Maps use geographically based risk indicators to illustrate the distribution of maltreatment risk in the State by county and ZIP Code.

## **2.5 ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES**

This Grant Project may fund activities and costs within the Scope of Grant Project 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.

The primary purpose of the Grant Project is to provide effective programming and services that promote healthy child development, positive parenting, and family well-being for families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age.

HOPES objectives include promoting healthy outcomes for young children and their families; strengthening systems in which families with young children interact; increasing Protective Factors for families with young children; assisting families with young children in achieving self-sufficiency and stability; promoting workforce participation; promoting school readiness; supporting healthy, nurturing, and safe families for young children; and reducing the risk of child abuse, neglect, and other negative outcomes.

Applications must include plans for effective, quality programming, activities, and services to promote well-being for young children and their families that are designed to achieve



the intended outcomes. HOPES Grantees will be required to provide the approved programming and services and demonstrate impact related to the intended outcomes.

### **2.5.1 Eligible Programming**

- A. Grantees must implement quality programming and services to meet program goals and objectives, ensuring competent and effective delivery of programming and services for families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age.
- B. Applicants must identify one or more services or approaches to support families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age in the identified service area.
- C. Applicant's proposed programming should be based on the needs and gaps in the proposed service area as identified in the CSNA (see **Section 2.6.1 Community Strengths and Needs Assessment**).
- D. Applicants should also address how proposed programming will lead to the intended effects and impact identified in the logic model (see **Section 2.6.2 Logic Model**).
- E. The following are examples of potential HOPES programming, services, and initiatives:

#### **1. Early childhood systems building activities and initiatives**

Approaches for communities to coordinate and align early childhood systems, services, and resources to support optimal health, development, and well-being of young children. This could include early childhood community resource alignment efforts, community outreach and screening, enhancing early childhood service connections in the community, and other systems initiatives.

#### **2. Caregiver education and support**

Programming using curriculum-based approaches that are designed to promote healthy parent-child interaction, build parenting skills, enhance Protective Factors through in-home, individual, or group programming.

#### **3. Parent navigation**

Services connecting Parents and Caregivers to early childhood information, community-based resources, supports, and services through centralized community navigation, assisting with service navigation and connections, resolving access issues, and following up on connections. Child development staff might also provide education and support to families regarding developmental or parenting topics, conducting relevant screenings and assessments, assessing Caregiver needs, and completing intakes for programming and services. Centralized navigation may be supported through virtual platforms, providing tailored information, support, and referrals for families with young children in the community.

#### **4. Service planning and coordination**

Services in which Family needs and goals are identified and documented, and corresponding services and supports are arranged and linked to address. Includes collaboration with other providers to ensure successful coordination and

connections. Service planning and coordination could be conducted as part of parent navigation services or Family Resource Center implementation or could be provided as a supplemental service for other proposed primary services.

**5. Family Resource Center (FRC) implementation**

A responsive and family-centered approach using a community-based location through which families can access support, programming, and other opportunities. An FRC must reflect and be responsive to families' needs and interests as well as increase Protective Factors and support children's well-being. FRC implementation under HOPES must be tailored to serve expecting families and families with infants and young children. Other eligible HOPES services and activities may also be conducted through or in conjunction with an FRC.

**6. Parenting groups and workshops**

Facilitated groups and activities for parents to share and connect around parenting experiences, build social connections, and engage in a community of other parents with infants and young children. Groups and workshops can facilitate discussion, learning, and peer connections regarding parenting experiences, parent-child connections, enhancing well-being, navigating challenges, coping with stress, co-parenting, supporting healthy development, parent advocacy, and other topics. This could include parenting strengths exploration, building social connections, building parenting awareness, and shared learning. Café-style, seminar, and workshop formats may be used.

**7. Caregiver mental health services and support**

Services that could include counseling, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, perinatal depression and anxiety interventions, or other mental health services for expecting parents and parents of infants and young children. Mental health supports could also include depression screening, depression prevention intervention, stress management workshops and curriculum, mindfulness training, Trauma-sensitive parenting support, or other aids for expecting parents and parents of infants and young children.

**8. Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)**

Services using a prevention-based approach in which a mental health consultant develops relationships with the adults in young children's lives to build their capacity to support children's healthy social and emotional development. Mental health consultants are able to partner with parents of infants and young children, as well as other adults who work with infants and young children in different settings such as childcare, preschool, home visiting, early intervention, etc. IECMHC can be implemented with parents, Caregivers, care providers, and teachers, equipping them to support and promote children's healthy social and emotional development.

**9. Perinatal and early support services**

Examples of these types of services could include community doula services, universal perinatal supports, early parenting and perinatal groups, tailored parenting education for the perinatal period, or other supports.

#### 10. **Family workshops and activities to support parent learning and awareness**

Programming for families with infants and young children that includes parenting education, awareness, and experiential components, parent-child interaction workshops and activities. May also include parenting workshops, seminars, and other events supporting learning and awareness around healthy child development, positive parenting, and parent-child interactions. This type of programming could also include supported learning and activities related to developmental milestones, parent mental health, early literacy, and other areas.

#### 11. **Population-focused programming**

Programming and services providing support for adolescent parents, fathers, or other specific Caregiver populations caring for infants and young children. Services and implementation may be designed to engage and support specific parents and Caregivers, with enhanced support addressing particular needs. This could include parent and Caregiver education, workshops, facilitated groups, mental health supports, service coordination, or other types of services tailored for and addressing unique needs and priorities of the specific population. Population-focused enhancements may also be integrated into other selected programming and initiatives.

#### 12. **Financial wellness and literacy programming**

Programming and services that include financial wellness and literacy workshops, individual planning and coaching, access to financial wellness applications or platforms, support materials, and resources. Any financial wellness and literacy programming should have demonstrated efficacy and be relevant and suitable for families with young children, meeting two or more Priority Characteristics.

#### 13. **Short term childcare or respite care**

Childcare providing parents and other Caregivers short term childcare for infants and young children to prevent loss of employment, loss of housing, or in case of other emergent or unexpected circumstances; or respite care offering temporary relief to improve family stability and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect. Short term childcare or respite care may be offered during emergencies or crises, or to prevent emergencies and crises.

#### 14. **Basic needs support** (supplemental service)

Assistance to meet basic needs essential for family well-being, stability, and optimal care for young children. Assistance could include but is not limited to food, housing, utilities, clothing, household items, and diapers. Basic needs support would not be considered a primary service but may be provided in conjunction with other primary supports and services.

- F. The above list of potential programming and initiatives in **Section 2.5.1, Eligible Programming**, is not an exhaustive list; Applicants may propose other programming, services, supports, and initiatives that may not be listed above.

- G. Applicants will also note that the above list is extensive in scope. Applicants should propose programming and services based on community needs, intended outcomes, and the Applicant’s capacity to successfully implement the proposed programming and service(s). Applicants may wish to focus programming and initiatives by using one or two approaches, or if proposing multiple approaches, ensure that they are integrated and achievable.
- H. Applicants must identify and describe programming, services, and initiatives for the selected service area that address program objectives and meet community needs and priorities in **Form G, Project Work Plan**. Plans detailed in **Form G, Project Work Plan** should be specific and concise, and describe how the Applicant will implement programming and initiatives.
- I. The following resources include information regarding Program Models and selection:
  1. [California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](https://www.cebc4cw.org/) ([\(https://www.cebc4cw.org/\)](https://www.cebc4cw.org/))
  2. [Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness](https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/model-search) (<https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/model-search>)
  3. [Results First Clearinghouse Database](https://evidence2impact.psu.edu/results-first-resources/clearing-house-database/) (<https://evidence2impact.psu.edu/results-first-resources/clearing-house-database/>)
  4. [SAMHSA Practices Resource Center](https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp) (<https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp>)
  5. [Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](https://preventionservices.acf.hhs.gov/) (<https://preventionservices.acf.hhs.gov/>)
- J. If including Program Model(s), Grantees must implement any selected Program Model(s) with fidelity.

### 2.5.2 Eligible Programming Delivery Methods

HHSC prefers in-person programming, which should comprise most programming and service delivery. However, HHSC recognizes that some initiatives and services are conducted primarily via phone, videoconference, or web-based platforms (e.g., parent navigation, centralized screening and intake, communitywide information and referral, etc.). HHSC also recognizes the need for flexible access for Families and that some programming may be provided in multiple ways to best serve Families with young children. For these reasons, Applicants may propose virtual methods of service delivery as well. Please note that FSS requires in-person intake and assessment for all multi-encounter or multi-session programming.

Applicants should address the following items in **Form G, Project Work Plan**:

- A. Description of the programming that will be provided through a virtual platform, and the platform(s) to be used.
- B. Description of any modifications required for delivering applicable programming via telephone or virtual platform.

- C. Description of how family preference informs the service delivery methods.
- D. Description of screening and assessment, consent and authorization, and intake procedures when programming or services are delivered via telephone or virtual platforms.

## **2.6 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

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

- A. Grantees must provide programming and services as required by the Grant Agreement to the eligible population in the specified service area.
  - 1. The number of unduplicated Participants served must meet the minimum monthly and annual Outputs established in the Grant Agreement. An unduplicated Participant is a Primary Caregiver with a unique PEIRS Enrollment ID number who is only counted one time per month for monthly Output, and one time during the State Fiscal Year for the annual Output.
  - 2. Grantees may only recruit and serve families that are not already receiving the same services.
  - 3. Grantees may not charge Participants any fees to participate in programming and cannot charge Participants for any participation-related costs.
  - 4. Any community-level services, activities, and events the Grantee conducts under the Grant Award must be focused on and tailored for families with young children and expecting families.
- B. To support effective programming and services, Grantees must:
  - 1. Incorporate intentional, ongoing efforts to support and make resources available to Caregivers and families.
  - 2. Meet requirements and qualifications of any selected Program Models.
  - 3. Provide Reflective Supervision for Program Staff, especially direct service staff.
  - 4. Provide supervision that includes case discussion and review, ongoing education, and professional development.
  - 5. Assess for and ensure program quality through supervision, service documentation review, quality assurance practices, Program Model fidelity review (as applicable), and monitoring.
- C. Grantees may use the National Family Support Network's Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support (<https://www.nationalfamilysupportnetwork.org/standards-of-quality>), or another quality framework to assess the Applicant's organization and services for responsiveness to the needs of families and to enhance their approach and services during the Project Period.
- D. Grantees must comply with all policy updates and clarifications that HHSC issues during the Project Period.

E. Grantees must participate in all HHSC required webinars, trainings, and meetings.

F. Use of Subawards

1. Grantees may choose to enter into a Subaward for the provision of any direct programming described within this RFA. Sub-awardees providing programming under this RFA must meet the same requirements and levels of experience as required of the Grantee.
2. No Subaward under this RFA will relieve the Grantee of the responsibility for ensuring that programming is provided in accordance with the requirements described in any Grant Agreement resulting from this RFA.
3. Applicants must identify any work to be performed by Sub-awardees in **Form G, Project Work Plan** and will include proposed Sub-awardee Budget(s).
4. Grantees will award Subawards based on its own internal policies and processes. Grantee will notify HHSC in writing before executing a new agreement if the Sub-awardee changes.
5. After award, Grantee and Sub-awardee must negotiate any needed changes to the Sub-awardee and report requested changes to HHSC. Any proposed change from the Grantee or Sub-awardee to the direct programming provided, or any proposed change that would require a new Sub-awardee, must have prior approval from HHSC.
6. If Grantee terminates any Subaward and the Grantee has not fully expended the funds obligated to the Sub-awardee during the State Fiscal Year, the Grantee must find a replacement Sub-awardee within 60 Calendar Days or obligate those funds in a manner consistent with the purposes of HOPES. Any changes resulting from such termination must be reported to and approved by HHSC prior to implementation.

### 2.6.1 Community Strengths and Needs Assessment (CSNA)

- A. The Community Strengths and Needs Assessment (CSNA) is an assessment the Applicant develops and utilizes to identify community strengths, needs, assets, characteristics, challenges, and available resources in the proposed service area. A comprehensive CSNA will aid in planning and decision making, helping to identify gaps in the community, identify priorities, set goals, plan programming and initiatives to meet those goals, and allocate resources accordingly.
- B. Applicants must conduct a CSNA for their proposed Service Area.
- C. Applicants must use information and insights from the CSNA to identify the needs and priorities of families with young children in their proposed service area.
- D. Applicants should include both quantitative and qualitative data and information in their CSNA. Applicants should also include parent and Caregiver input, insights, and feedback in their CSNA. The CSNA is an early opportunity to include parents of young children, those most affected by the program, in the planning and design of programming and initiatives.

- E. The CSNA data, information, and insights should inform the Applicant’s logic model (see **Section 2.6.2, Logic Model**). The Applicant’s proposed services and activities should be clearly related to identified needs and priorities and supported by CSNA findings.
- F. Applicants must provide a summary of the CSNA as part of **Form F, Program Narrative**.

## 2.6.2 Logic Model

- A. A logic model is a graphic depiction that shows the relationship between a program’s activities and impact – demonstrating the connection between the resources, efforts and activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact of a program. A logic model also shows the impact the program’s efforts will have in a measurable way.
- B. A logic model illustrates how activities are designed to bring about change, as well as how other external factors influence program effectiveness; shows how activities will achieve meaningful and measurable results; and draws on relevant research and theory, including the validity of the program design and how the activities align with local needs, contexts, and circumstances.
- C. Applicants must submit a logic model supporting use of the proposed programming and activities. The Applicant’s logic model should be informed by the CSNA. The logic model should, in turn, inform the Applicant’s **Form F, Program Narrative** and **Form G, Project Work Plan**.
- D. Applicants may use any logic model format. There are many logic model formats but for the purposes of this RFA, logic models should include the following components – resources, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact.
- E. Sources for more information in developing a logic model include, but are not limited to:
  - 1. W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide [https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Kellogg\\_Foundation\\_Logic\\_Model\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Kellogg_Foundation_Logic_Model_Guide.pdf).
  - 2. Family Resource Information, Education, and Network Development Service, <https://friendsnrc.org/evaluation/logic-models/>.
  - 3. The University of Kansas, <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/main>.
- F. Applicants must submit the logic model as an attachment to **Form F, Program Narrative**, labeled as **F-1 Logic Model**.

## 2.6.3 Organizational Qualifications and Experience

Applicants must describe their experience implementing and administering similar programs, including how they meet organizational qualifications in **Form F, Program Narrative**.

- A. Applicants should describe experience working with and providing services to expecting families and families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age.
- B. Applicants should describe previous experience providing services in the proposed Service Area and community partnerships.
- C. Applicants should describe the organization's experience and capacity in managing budgets, grants, or contracts and capacity to meet administrative and fiscal requirements. This could include Texas State agency or federal funding monitoring or audit reports for reviews conducted in the past three years.
- D. Applicants should describe how any proposed Sub-awardees meet these organizational qualifications as well.

#### **2.6.4 Organizational Competence**

Applicants must describe organizational competencies and demonstrate preparedness to implement HOPES programming in **Form F, Program Narrative**.

- A. Applicants should address the ability to:
  - 1. Strategically hire and retain direct service staff and supervisor(s) to ensure successful program implementation, family engagement, and quality service provision;
  - 2. Ensure staff are competent in connecting with and serving Participants who have acute Trauma exposure, history or other adverse experiences;
  - 3. Promote programming and services, utilizing outreach methods and materials in a manner that is relevant and compelling to expecting families and families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age; and
  - 4. Reach and engage families from priority populations across proposed communities.
- B. Applicants should describe how any proposed Sub-awardees meet these organizational competencies as well.

#### **2.6.5 Program Staffing Requirements**

- A. Staffing Plan
  - 1. Applicants must develop and provide a staffing plan to ensure successful delivery of programming and ability to meet program and Grant requirements. Applicants must describe the program staffing plan in **Form G, Project Work Plan**.
  - 2. The staffing plan, at a minimum, should include the following requirements for all Program Staff:
    - a. Minimum education or licensing requirements;
    - b. Required experience and skills;
    - c. Position responsibilities;
    - d. Comprehensive employee training plan; and
    - e. Coverage plan for all program positions.



3. Applicants should develop a staffing structure for their HOPES Program that addresses the roles and responsibilities outlined in **Section B. Program Staff Responsibilities and Requirements**, and **Section C, Program Director Staffing Requirements**.
4. FSS reserves the right to approve each position funded under this Grant.
5. If Grantee elects to enter into a Subaward for any programming, the same minimum staffing qualifications apply to Sub-awardee staff.

#### B. Program Staff Responsibilities and Requirements

1. Applicants must outline proposed staff roles, responsibilities, and qualifications in **Form G, Project Work Plan**.
2. Staff experience, education, and qualifications are at the discretion of the Grantee but should be sufficient to ensure quality programming and service delivery. They should also ensure the ability to meet required service Outputs and achieve intended Outcomes and program impact.
3. HHSC recommends that direct service Program Staff who are responsible for delivering any primary services have an associate degree or higher in a health and human services field, along with two or more years of direct service experience in a health and human services field. A bachelor's degree is preferred, along with two or more years of direct service experience in a health and human services field. If any proposed Program Models have more stringent requirements or qualifications, the Grantee must meet those requirements rather than the minimum requirements cited in this section.
4. Program Staff must:
  - a. Complete all FSS-required training and that required by any relevant Program Models;
  - b. Adhere to standards of social work or other human services practice as well as any relevant agency or Program Model requirements, policies, procedures, and guidelines;
  - c. Employ strengths-based methods; and
  - d. Employ Reflective Practice and Reflective Supervision in program operations and service delivery.

#### C. Program Director Staffing Requirements

1. The program director role (or equivalent position, such as program coordinator, program manager, program supervisor) is the primary program contact and is responsible for program oversight, services, and supervision.
2. HHSC recommends that any person holding the program director position or performing program director responsibilities should have at least a bachelor's degree in a relevant field, with relevant work experience, and a minimum of five years of relevant program management and supervisory experience or a master's

degree in a relevant field, along with a minimum of three years program management and supervisory experience.

3. The program director must have experience with performance evaluation, data analysis, reporting, budget oversight, and social service programming.
4. The following responsibilities and activities are required of the program director role or must be integrated into other appropriate manager roles where qualifications are met. Clear organizational structure is required, with program director responsibilities clearly accounted for and assigned to the qualified FTE(s).
5. The program director will:
  - a. Serve as the primary program contact and liaison;
  - a. Provide program oversight, to include managing operations, supporting, and monitoring performance related to the project, and planning for improvements where needed;
  - b. Ensure program operations and activities adhere to all applicable policies, procedures, and guidelines pertaining to the Grant Agreement, organization, selected Program Model(s), and services;
  - c. Ensure program goals are met, especially related to Deliverables, Performance Measures, and processes;
  - d. Coordinate budget planning, ensuring budget is aligned with program goals and operations;
  - e. Hire, train, and supervise project employees; and
  - f. Provide for regular administrative, clinical, and Reflective Supervision of direct service staff.

#### D. Background Checks

1. Grantees must complete staff background checks, as directed by FSS, before:
  - a. Having direct contact with a Participant;
  - b. Accessing Participant information and records; and
  - c. Accessing PEIRS.
2. Grantees must complete background checks every two years for all Program Staff members who complete any of the activities above.

#### E. Organizational Training

1. The Applicant must submit a training plan as part of **Form G, Project Work Plan**, for all HOPES Program Staff, including direct service staff and anyone else working on the grant that includes both initial and ongoing training.
2. Grantee must develop and follow a process to track all required training in personnel files.
3. All training must be noted in the regular program quarterly reports.

4. The same minimum training requirements must be met by any Sub-awardee performing services under this award.
5. Program Staff training must include the following:
  - a. New employee orientation;
  - b. Mental Health First Aid Training; and
  - c. Program Model trainings (as applicable).
6. Additional training topics could include but are not limited to:
  - a. Adolescent development (especially as relevant to adolescent parents);
  - b. Adverse childhood experiences;
  - c. Breastfeeding and lactation consultation;
  - d. Child development and developmental milestones;
  - e. Community collaboration and community impact;
  - f. Developmental screening;
  - g. Early brain development;
  - h. Family engagement;
  - i. Motivational interviewing;
  - j. National Family Support Network Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support;
  - k. Parent advisory groups;
  - l. Parent-child interaction assessment;
  - m. Professional ethics;
  - n. Referrals and service connections;
  - o. Reflective Practice and Reflective Supervision;
  - p. Relational health;
  - q. Safe sleep;
  - r. Service documentation; and
  - s. Trauma-Informed approaches.
7. Grantees must implement any required and proposed training.

### **2.6.6 Recruitment, Outreach, and Retention**

- A. Applicants should describe outreach and recruitment plans and strategies to connect to eligible families **Form G, Project Work Plan**. In developing plans and strategies, Applicants should be aware of the following:
  1. In addition to standard means of program outreach such as dissemination of brochures and attending community events, outreach to eligible families should

involve innovative and targeted approaches that could include, but are not limited to, enlisting previous participants to participate in outreach, partnering with other providers for shared early childhood information and referral, connecting with parent groups to promote programming, establishing relationships with pediatric and family care providers, engaging community stakeholders and their respective organizations, etc.

2. Applicants should describe how they will alleviate barriers to engagement and participation. Outreach and retention plans should include consideration of community context, geographic location, and other relevant factors. Outreach and retention plans should address means of reaching families with the potential to be underserved in programming as well.
  3. Applicants may also plan to serve and conduct outreach and recruitment efforts for expecting and parenting current and former foster youth who meet HOPES eligibility criteria. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or HHSC may at times refer expecting and parenting foster youth directly to HOPES Grantees.
  4. While Grantees are not permitted to conduct outreach and recruitment, regular grant programming and activities, or other grant initiatives outside the Grantee's approved Primary County(ies), Grantees may serve families residing in a county that is contiguous to an approved Primary County on a limited, individual, and as-needed basis, such as when a family relocates to a county that is contiguous to the Primary County. Grantees may not allocate resources to serve these counties and must obtain approval to serve Participants outside the approved service area.
  5. Grantees must add programming, including all programming provided by Sub-awardees, to the Texas 2-1-1 site as well as its 2-1-1 Area Information Center and must update its information within 30 Calendar Days of any changes to program information.
- B. Applicants should describe plans to promote participant retention in **Form G, Project Work Plan**.
1. Retention plans should include plans to promote and support family engagement and participation, including increased frequency of communication with families, use of parent support groups to enhance parent connections, involving families in program planning, developing relational health competency for direct service staff, etc.
  2. Applicants may propose the use of incentives to support program retention and engagement as well. Applicants should elaborate on proposed incentives, how they were chosen, how they will be provided, and the intended impact for Participants.
    - a. Incentives may be used in the cases of milestone achievement or after successful program completion.
    - b. For information on effective incentive types and strategies, please consult the field guide and webinar slides available at the following URL:

<http://www.buildingbetterprograms.org/2016/12/14/using-incentives-in-human-services-field-guide-literature-review-and-webinar/>.

- c. Incentives should not be used as payment for participation. Therefore, incentives cannot be excessive and cannot be provided at every interaction or encounter with a Participant Family.
  - d. HHSC must approve program incentives plans, which must, at a minimum, be reasonable and allocable.
- C. Efforts must be made by the Grantee to ensure that eligible families are not denied or delayed services due to a wait list. The Grantee must have referral policies and procedures in place that provide alternative service options either through the Grantee or through other community resources when the Grantee is at capacity.

### **2.6.7 Service Authorization and Enrollment**

- A. Grantees must have a documented process for conducting intakes and completing enrollments, including how the Family's individual eligibility is determined.
- B. Grantees must have an enrollment process that captures all required data, which includes a Primary Caregiver's signed consent to participate, eligibility criteria, and any additional surveys or assessments as required by HHSC.
- C. Grantees should complete enrollments as applicable and ensure that all required data is entered in PEIRS.
- D. Grantees must complete a new data authorization form for each participating Primary Caregiver either at the beginning of each State Fiscal Year, at the beginning of the program year after services begin, or on each anniversary of Participant enrollment in services, for as long the Participant receives programming.

### **2.6.8 Program Surveys**

Grantees must administer surveys as required by HHSC.

#### **A. Protective Factors Surveys**

- 1. Where required by HHSC, Grantees must administer a pre-service Protective Factors Survey (PFS) to Primary Caregivers enrolling in relevant programming. Protective Factors Surveys may be provided to any secondary Caregivers who are participating in services as well.
- 2. Grantees must also administer a post-service Protective Factors Survey to Primary Caregivers at the end of any relevant program participation. Surveys may also be provided to any secondary Caregivers who are participating in programming.
- 3. Grantees must enter the PFS data into PEIRS within the required data entry timeframe.
- 4. Grantees must maintain any pre-service PFS and post-service PFS in Participant Records.

B. Program Experience Survey

1. Where required by HHSC, Grantees must complete the Program Experience Survey (PES) with the Primary Caregiver at the end of any relevant programming. The PES must be completed for those Participants who have completed relevant services as well as for those who may be exiting early.

**2.6.9 Service Completion**

- A. Grantees must document service completion as required by HHSC and in PEIRS when services are completed.
- B. Grantees must have a documented process for service completion and forms completion that includes collecting any required surveys from Participants and documenting any additional referrals.
- C. Grantees must enter any referrals made for additional services to other local social service providers in PEIRS.
- D. Applicants must describe the process for service completion and discharge in **Form G, Project Work Plan**.

**2.6.10 Community and Systems Support Requirements**

Applicants must describe plans for community and systems-level engagement in **Form G, Project Work Plan**. The following should be considered:

- A. Young children and their families benefit from an organized system of community resources to support healthy development and well-being. An organized system can help families of infants and young children readily connect to and access information, resources, and supports. This connection and access can have a pronounced positive impact on children's early development, health, and well-being.
- B. Early childhood coalitions can support community coordination of parent and Caregiver support, quality early learning experiences, healthy nutrition, access to health care, and improved child safety practices. Through assessment, planning, and coordination, early childhood coalitions can promote improved community conditions, services, and outcomes for families with young children and advance early childhood health and well-being across the community.
- C. Grantees must lead or actively engage with a local coalition comprised of community partners and organizations, including parents and other stakeholders, sharing common goals of supporting healthy early childhood development, promoting maternal health, preventing child abuse and neglect, promoting early literacy, or other related areas in early childhood. Coalitions may be population- or issue-focused or have a subcommittee or task force to promote awareness and address goals.
- D. Where possible, Grantees should engage with an existing coalition to leverage infrastructure and partnerships in order to promote and meet local coalition goals.
- E. Examples of coalition activities include but are not limited to:

1. Improving coordination of existing services and resources for families with infants and young children.
  2. Advocating for additional services or resources to improve systems and outcomes for expecting families and families with young children.
  3. Engaging parents and Caregivers in early childhood service planning or community development efforts.
  4. Developing a subcommittee to assess and improve service availability and coordination for expecting parents and families with young children in the community.
  5. Increasing connections between providers in the community that serve families with young children, e.g., health care providers, childcare, mental health, ECI, etc.
- F. A community coalition that is an appropriate fit for a Grantee under this RFA should:
1. Encourage collaboration among area agencies and stakeholders to address a range of needs for families with young children; and
  2. Identify and work to address barriers to service delivery and promote access to resources and supports.
- G. Grantees will document coalition meetings in the “events” section of PEIRS and report on efforts and impact in the quarterly reports.
- H. Grantees must partner and collaborate with other FSS Grantees in the service area, where applicable, to ensure optimal coordination of services for families and to achieve greater impact of grant investments in the community.
1. Applicants should outline any plans for connecting to and collaborating with other FSS Grantees within the proposed service area in **Form G, Project Work Plan**.
  2. To learn more about current FSS Grantees, visit the following URL: <https://fss.hhs.texas.gov/default.asp>
- I. Grantees will document coalition efforts and impact and community partnerships through quarterly reporting and PEIRS data entry.

### 2.6.11 Required Record Keeping

Grantee service documentation and Participant Records must be maintained by Grantees to reflect details of required programming and services and to support programmatic efforts and improvements. Grantees must have Participant Records and service activity documentation system(s), processes, and procedures. Grantees must have policies and procedures regarding how records and service activity documentation are maintained and utilized to support Participant services. These must identify the information required in Participant Records and service activity notes. Grantees must have a quality assurance process and procedures regarding Participant Records and service activity documentation.

- A. Grantees must track all HOPES activities and initiatives provided in accordance with the Grantee’s approved **Form G, Project Work Plan**.

- B. Grantees must ensure that all program documentation is complete, accurate, and maintained in an organized fashion.
- C. Grantees must maintain Participant Records in a manner that protects the Confidential Information of all members of the Participant's Family.
- D. Grantees must maintain individual Participant Records that include the following:
  - 1. Enrollment form;
  - 2. Annual data authorization form;
  - 3. Required screenings, assessments, and surveys;
  - 4. Service activity documentation, such as sign-in sheets and service activity notes;
  - 5. Basic Needs support documentation;
  - 6. Outgoing service referrals;
  - 7. Discharge form and information; and
  - 8. Other agency documentation or documentation required by Program Model (if applicable).
- E. Grantees must maintain service activity notes. Service activity notes are the narrative section of the Participant Record in which the Grantee documents programming and service details. Service activity notes support the program activities performed and billed to HHSC. They also aid in service planning, supervision, and quality assurance. Service activity notes must include, at a minimum:
  - 1. Programming type;
  - 2. Date and duration of programming;
  - 3. Participants;
  - 4. Brief description of topic or items discussed;
  - 5. Program Model used, if applicable;
  - 6. Response or communication from the Participant(s); and
  - 7. Plans for next steps and follow-up.
- F. Grantees must develop and maintain a system tracking Participants referred to the Grantee for services. Documentation must include:
  - 1. Date of referral;
  - 2. Origin of the referral;
  - 3. Participant eligibility; and
  - 4. Date Participant began program.
- G. Grantee must ensure compliance with all recordkeeping requirements in this RFA.
- H. Grantee must maintain electronic and/or physical records related to Grant programming, activities, and operations.



I. Grantee must make all HOPES records available and accessible to HHSC upon request.

## 2.7 REQUIRED REPORTS

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

### 2.7.1 Quarterly Reports

Grantees must submit Quarterly Reports to FSS regarding implementation efforts, achievements, challenges, and other issues relevant to performance. FSS will provide Quarterly Report templates to Grantees. **Table 1. Quarterly Reports** provides due dates for all Quarterly Reports. If the due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the Quarterly Report is due the next Business Day.

Table 1. Quarterly Reports and Due Dates	
Quarter 1 Report – September, October, November	December 15
Quarter 2 Report – December, January, February	March 15
Quarter 3 Report – March, April, May	June 15
Quarter 4 Report – June, July, August	September 15

### 2.7.2 PEIRS Data Entry

- A. Grantees are required to enter data pertaining to Participant enrollments, service activities, and program events activities in PEIRS. Required PEIRS data entry includes the following:
1. Participant enrollment information;
  2. Index Child enrollment information;
  3. Service data;
  4. Survey data;
  5. Participant discharge information; and
  6. Program events and activities data.
- B. Grantees must complete accurate and comprehensive data entry for a specific month into PEIRS no later than 30 Calendar Days following the close of the month in which an enrollment occurred, programming was provided, an event was held, or a Participant and/or Family was discharged.
- C. Grantees must use a secure internet connection to complete PEIRS data entry and ensure that the computer equipment used for data entry meets minimum requirements

established by FSS for connection to PEIRS. At the time of this RFA, the minimum requirements are Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome 99 or higher.

- D. Grantees must have documented procedures to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of data entry for all services provided, including training and quality assurance.
- E. To access PEIRS, Program Staff must:
  - 1. Have cleared a background check;
  - 2. Complete PEIRS training (see <https://learningportal.hhs.texas.gov/>); and
  - 3. Annually complete HHSC's cybersecurity training, a version of which is located at the following URL:  
<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/contracting/hhs-information-security-cybersecurity-training-for-contractors.pdf>.

### **2.7.3 Invoices/Requests for Reimbursement**

Grantees must submit an Invoice and purchase voucher each month through PEIRS, following the instructions and using the forms provided by FSS.

- A. Grantees will submit the Invoice and purchase voucher through PEIRS no later than the last day of the month following the month in which the expenditures occurred. If the last day of the month falls on a weekend or holiday, the Invoice and purchase voucher are due the next Business Day.
- B. Upon receipt of a proper and verified Invoice, and after deduction of any known previous overpayment made by HHSC, HHSC will pay the Grantee from available funds for programming rendered in accordance with the terms of the Grant Agreement.
- C. Grantees must create and maintain reliable and accurate records to support all actions related to invoicing, payments, and adjustments for programming provided. Records must include the following:
  - 1. Signed purchase vouchers;
  - 2. Expenditure reports, monthly mileage tracking, basic needs support tracking if applicable, incentives tracking if applicable; and
  - 3. Any other supporting documentation required by HHSC.

### **2.7.4 Compliance with Reporting Requirements**

Grantee will provide all applicable reports in the format specified by System Agency in an accurate, complete, and timely manner, and will 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 will not be relieved of its obligations for any nonperformance by its Subgrantees or Subcontractors, if any.

Grant Agreement(s) awarded as a result of this RFA are subject to the System Agency’s performance monitoring activities throughout the duration of the Grant Term. 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. Grantees must submit the necessary information and documentation regarding all requirements, including reports and other Deliverables and will be expected to report on the following measures:

- A. FSS requires Outputs and Outcomes for each Grant Agreement awarded as a result of this RFA.
- B. Performance Measures incorporated into HOPES grants include but are not limited to those included in **Table 2: Required Grant Outputs and Outcomes below:**

Table 2. Required Grant Outputs and Outcomes	
Outputs and Outcomes Defined	Required Output / Outcome
<b>Output 1:</b> Expected number of Families served monthly.	The Applicant will propose the number of Families served monthly.*
<b>Output 2:</b> Expected number of Families served annually.	The Applicant will propose the number of Families served annually.*
<b>Output 3:</b> Pre-service and post-service Protective Factors Surveys are completed by Primary Caregivers enrolled in identified services.	60%
<b>Output 4:</b> Program Experience Surveys are completed by Primary Caregivers.	60%
<b>Output 5:</b> Grantee will lead or actively engage in a local early childhood coalition.	Engagement and impact demonstrated through quarterly reporting.

<b>Outcome 1:</b> Index Children will remain safe while receiving programming.	100%
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Primary Caregivers who complete the pre-service and post-service Protective Factors Surveys will show an increase in score for at least one Protective Factor.	75%
<b>Outcome 3:</b> Primary Caregivers will report satisfaction with services (agree/strongly agree responses) in at least one domain of completed Program Experience Surveys.	80%

\* Outputs are subject to negotiation and final determination based on available funds and FSS requirements.

C. Applicants will propose the following, in **Form G, Project Work Plan:**

1. Total number of Families to be served monthly; and
2. Total number of Families to be served annually.

Proposed number of Families to be served must be based on the type(s) of proposed programming, duration of each, and proposed staffing.

D. Outputs and Outcomes will be determined through the negotiations process, prior to award of a Grant Agreement, and based on available funds and FSS requirements. HHSC reserves the right to make final determination on Outputs and Outcomes for any Grant Agreement awarded as a result of this RFA. Additional Outputs or Outcomes may be added during the Performance Period.

E. Grantees are required to enter data related to required Outputs and Outcomes in PEIRS.

If requested by System Agency, the Grantee will 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 renewal 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 Scope of Grant Project, goals and requirements, and that Grantee’s activities and services effectively address and achieve the Project's stated purpose.

## 2.9 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Grantee must have a financial management system in place to maintain internal controls, ensure proper management of federal and State funds, maximize non-federal resources, and maintain solvency. Grantee’s accounting and internal control systems must meet the following requirements:

- A. The systems must be appropriate to the size of the organization.

- B. The accounting system must consist of source documents, a chart of accounts, journals, ledgers, and routine financial reports.
- C. The accounting system must be capable of producing expenditure reports, cost center analyses, budget formats, and automated reports as required by, and without additional support from, HHSC.
- D. The systems must include records that adequately identify the source and application of funds for federally funded activities. These records must contain information on federal awards, authorizations, financial obligations, unobligated balances, assets, expenditures, income, and interest, and be supported by source documentation.
- E. The systems must demonstrate Grantee's effective control over and accountability for all funds, property, and other assets. The systems must ensure all funds and assets are adequately safeguarded and are solely used for authorized purposes.
- F. The internal controls system must safeguard the Grantee's assets, produce accurate accounting data, promote efficient operations, and ensure adherence to prescribed accounting policies and procedures.
- G. Effective internal controls must involve a division of responsibility among different employees for a sequence of related functions, clear establishment of each employee's responsibilities and duties, and use of standards such as procurement policies, proofs, checks, and other security measures.
- H. The system must meet the minimum standards for financial management systems under 7 CFR § 277.6, Standards for Financial Management Systems, and under 2 CFR § 200.302, Financial Management.
- I. Grantees must use the accrual basis accounting method for all financial Deliverables. This includes, but is not limited to, Invoices or any other financial documents or reports as requested by HHSC. This requirement does not constitute a change to the agency's financial management system. Refer to 45 CFR § 75.302, Financial Management and Standards for Financial Management Systems.

## **2.10 FINAL BILLING SUBMISSION**

Unless otherwise directed by the System Agency, Grantee will 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.

## **2.11 DATA USE AGREEMENT**

By submitting an Application in response to this RFA, Applicant agrees to be bound by the terms of **Exhibit D, HHS Data Use Agreement v.8.5, October 23, 2019**, or **Exhibit D-1, HHS Data Use Agreement v.8.5, Governmental Entity Version, October 23, 2019**, including but not limited to the terms and conditions regarding **Exhibit D-2, DUA Attachment 2, Security and Privacy Inquiry (SPI)**, attached to this RFA.

## **2.12 LIMITATIONS ON GRANTS TO UNITS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Pursuant to the General Appropriations Act, Article IX, Section 4.04,

(a) In each Grant Agreement with a unit of local government, grant funds appropriated under the General Appropriations Act will be expended subject to limitations and reporting requirements similar to those provided by:

- (1) Parts 2, 3, and 5 of Article IX of the General Appropriations Act (except there is no requirement for increased salaries for local government employees);
- (2) §§556.004, 556.005, and 556.006, Government Code; and
- (3) §§2113.012 and 2113.101, Government Code.

(b) In this section, "unit of local government" means:

- (1) a council of governments, a regional planning commission, or a similar regional planning agency created under Chapter 391, Local Government Code;
- (2) a local workforce development board; or
- (3) a community center as defined by Health and Safety Code, §534.001(b).

## **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 Application per Service Area.

### **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 be a nonprofit entity as described by Chapter 22 of the Texas Business Organization Code or be a governmental entity.
- B. Submit a complete Application by the date identified as the “Application Submission Deadline,” established at **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**.

### **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 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 is 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 must remain in good standing and eligible to conduct its business in Texas and must comply with all applicable requirements of the Texas Secretary of State and the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts;
- D. Applicant 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 is not delinquent in taxes owed to any taxing authority of the State of Texas as of the Effective Date of the Grant Agreement.

### **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, 2029**.

**Extension of Project Period:** The System Agency may, at its sole discretion, extend the Project Period for up to one year to allow for the full expenditure of awarded funding and completion of Grant activities. The Grant Term may not exceed five years.

### **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 Term and not expended by the Project close-out date will revert to System Agency.

At the end of the Grant Term, or upon termination or cancellation of a Grant Agreement, the Grantee will work in coordination with HHSC to transition programming, data, and Participant Records as applicable.

## Section V. Grant Funding and Reimbursement Information

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

The total amount of federal and State funding available for the HOPES grant program is estimated up to **\$197,691,408.00** for the entire Project Period. HHSC estimates the total amount of funding for the HOPES Program is **\$32,948,568.00** per State Fiscal Year. HHSC estimates the value of the RFA based on the stated annual amount multiplied by four years, plus an additional 50% to allow for increases in funding during the Project Period.

It is the System Agency's intention to make multiple awards to Applicants that successfully demonstrate the ability to provide services and support to expecting families and families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age in the State of Texas. Annual awards per individual Grant Agreement typically range between **\$300,000.00** and **\$2,500,000.00**.

Applicants are strongly cautioned to apply only for grant funding they can responsibly expend during the Grant Term 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 Budget to ensure grant funds are available for the broadest possible array of communities and programs.

Reimbursement will only be made for actual, allowable, and allocable expenses that occur within the Project Period. Spending or costs incurred prior to the Effective Date of the Grant Agreement will be allowed to the extent that the costs would have been allowable if incurred after the date of award and only with the written approval of the System Agency through a Pre-Agreement Cost Letter.

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

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. Inherently religious activities such as prayer, worship, religious instruction, or proselytization;

- C. 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;
- D. Any portion of the salary of, or any other compensation for, an elected or appointed government official;
- E. Vehicles for general agency use; to be allowable, vehicles must have a specific use related to Project objectives or activities;
- 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 in any civic or community organization, except when preapproved by HHSC, required for program implementation, and in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.454;
- J. Any expense or service that is readily available at no cost to the grant Project;
- K. Any activities related to fundraising;
- L. Any allocation of grant funds (e.g., stipends, basic needs support, incentives, etc.) to individuals that do not meet the requirements outlined in Section 2.3, Eligible Populations;
- M. 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;
- N. Any other prohibition imposed by federal, State, or local law; and
- O. 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.

## 5.4 COST SHARING

Cost Sharing is defined as the non-federal and non-State share of costs the Grantee contributes to accomplish the purpose of the Grant Project. Cost Sharing must be treated consistently with grant funds and used only for allowable and allocable purposes.

HHSC does not require Cost Sharing for this grant; however, to ensure that funds are available to support the broadest array of communities and programs, and to maximize overall impact of the Program, requests for funding may not be fully met and grant awards

may not cover the entire cost of a Grantee's Grant Project. Awarded funding may also be fixed and may not cover increasing or unexpected costs during the Project Period.

All Cost Sharing contributions must meet all the following criteria:

- A. Are verifiable from the Grantee's records;
- B. Are not included as contributions for any other State or federal award;
- C. Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of Grant Project objectives;
- D. Are allowable under the Grant Agreement;
- E. Are not paid by the State or federal government; and
- F. Are provided for in the approved Grant Project Budget.

Applicant may provide Cost Sharing funds through philanthropic, private, city, or county funds, or through pooled funds from partner organizations committed specifically to the HOPES Program. Applicant may not use State or federal funds as Cost Sharing funds.

**Donations:** The value of donated services may be used for Cost Sharing. If a third party donates supplies, the contribution will be valued at the market value of the supplies at the time of donation. If a third party donates the use of equipment or space in a building, but retains title, the contribution will be valued at the fair rental rate of the equipment or space. If a third party donates equipment, building, or land, and title passes to Grantee, the treatment of the donated property will be determined based on TxGMS, Cost Sharing Section. Applicant should calculate the value of donated materials and professional services in accordance with TxGMS (see <https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/grant-management/>).

Applicants should reflect any Cost Sharing, including in-kind or cash investments, in **Exhibit E, Requested Budget Template**.

## 5.5 PAYMENT METHOD

Grant Agreement(s) awarded under this RFA will be funded on a cost reimbursement basis for reasonable, allowable and allocable Grant Project Direct Costs. Under the cost reimbursement payment method, Grantee is required to finance operations and will only be reimbursed for actual, allowable, and allocable costs incurred on a monthly basis and supported by adequate documentation. No additional payments will be rendered unless an advanced payment is approved.

Upon execution of a Grant Agreement, if any, resulting from this RFA, the System Agency may disperse to a Grantee a one-time initial advance payment of no more than 10% of the funding awarded for eligible start-up costs.

## **5.6 NOTICE TO PROCEED**

The State Fiscal Year funding amounts are subject to increase or decrease as funds are appropriated throughout the Grant Term from the federal government, Texas Legislature, or both. HHSC Contract Representative will issue a written Notice to Proceed (NTP) annually to Grantee on or around July 1 containing the award amount for the upcoming State Fiscal Year (September 1–August 31). HHSC reserves the right to modify the annual award amount at any time during the Grant Term by issuing a written revised NTP to the Grantee. No expenses may be incurred, and no work may begin until HHSC issues an NTP to the Grantee. HHSC may send the NTP to the Grantee by regular mail, electronic mail, or facsimile transmission. Grantee will be notified of a change to the availability of funds through the NTP.

Although the NTP may issue a budget amount less than the total not-to-exceed amount of the Grant Agreement, the NTP must not effectuate a total budget of the Grant Agreement that results in a total not-to-exceed Grant Agreement amount that exceeds the amount specified in the budget section of the Grant Agreement. Such changes to the total not-to-exceed amount specified in the Grant Agreement must be effectuated by amendment. Any expenditures made beyond the dollar amounts specified in the NTP(s) will be at Grantee's sole risk.

## Section VI. Application Forms and Exhibits 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**

Using the specific Forms and Attachments listed below, Applicants must provide an Executive Summary, a Program Narrative, and a Project Work Plan that describe their capacity, proposed activities, and approaches to satisfy all objectives described in **Section II, Scope of Grant Project**, including:

- A. **Form E, Executive Summary**
- B. **Form F, Program Narrative**
  - 1. **Attachment F-1, Logic Model** (Applicant provides)
  - 2. **Attachment F-2, Letters of Support** (optional)
- C. **Form G, Project Work Plan**

For the attachments listed above that state “Applicant provides,” a template is not attached to this RFA nor being provided by HHSC. Applicants are responsible for labeling the requested information with the attachment title.

#### **6.1.1 Executive Summary**

Applicants must use **Form E, Executive Summary** to provide a broad overview summarizing the Applicant’s approach to meeting the RFA’s requirements. The summary must demonstrate an understanding of the goals and objectives for this grant opportunity. The Executive Summary limit is one page.

#### **6.1.2 Program Narrative**

Applicants must use **Form F, Program Narrative** to describe its background, experience, and capacity. The Program Narrative must not exceed 10 pages (excluding attachments). Applicants must attach the logic model and label as **Attachment F-1, Logic Model**. Applicants may attach letter(s) of support to **Form F, Program Narrative**, and label as **Attachment F-2, Letters of Support**.

#### **6.1.3 Project Work Plan**

Applicants must use **Form G, Project Work Plan** to identify proposed Project activities and initiatives to be performed during the grant Project Period. Project Work Plan content should be substantive, providing a good idea of the activities to be performed and the manner in which they will be conducted. Responses should be both informative and concise.

## 6.2 REQUESTED BUDGET

Attached **Exhibit E, Requested Budget Template**, 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 that, 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. 31-32), for additional information related to factors affecting allowability of costs.

Applicants must utilize the budget template provided, **Exhibit E, Requested Budget Template**, and identify all budget line items and Cost Sharing funds. 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. Cost Sharing funds must also be identified in the Requested Budget, if applicable.

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 E, Requested Budget Template, is mandatory. Applicants that fail to submit Exhibit E, Requested Budget Template, 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 D, HHS System Indirect Cost Rate 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 Cost Sharing.

HHS 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 HHS, 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 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 – Fifteen 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 D** attached to this RFA, Applicant must provide satisfactory evidence of its ability as an organization to manage and coordinate the types of activities within the Scope of the Grant Project.

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

Applicant must include in its Application a complete disclosure of any alleged or significant contractual or grant failures.

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. Financial Management and Administrative Questionnaire**

Applicant must complete **Form C, Financial Management and Administrative Questionnaire** and submit with its Application.

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

**7.1 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

<b>EVENT</b>	<b>DATE/TIME</b>
Funding Announcement Posting Date Posted to HHS Grants RFA website	December 17, 2024
Applicant Conference Attendance is Optional	January 8, 2025 at 10:30 AM Central Time
Deadline for Submitting Questions or Requests for Clarification	January 15, 2025 at 5:00 PM Central Time
Tentative Date Answers to Questions or Requests for Clarification Posted	January 23, 2025
<b>Application Submission Deadline</b> <b>NOTE: Applications must be <u>RECEIVED</u> by HHSC by this deadline if not changed by subsequent Addenda to be considered eligible.</b>	<b>February 12, 2025 by 10:30 a.m. Central Time</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 Application Submission Deadline (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 Application Submission Deadline will be published by posting an Addendum to the [HHS Grants RFA](#) website. After the Application Submission Deadline, 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 must be made by email **only** to the Grant Specialist designated as HHSC's Sole Point of Contact listed below:

<b>Name</b>	John Norton, CTCD, CTCM
<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>	512-776-6140
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:john.norton2@hhs.texas.gov">john.norton2@hhs.texas.gov</a>

**Applicants must not use this email address for submission of an Application. Applicants must 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 must 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 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, and Section Heading being questioned; and
- G. Question.

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

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

**Questions or other written requests for clarification must be received by the Sole Point of Contact by the deadline 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.**

#### **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. 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. Waives any claim of error or ambiguity in the RFA and any resulting Grant Agreement;
- B. Will not contest the interpretation by the HHSC of such provision(s); and
- C. Will 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 questions 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.

## 7.8 APPLICANT CONFERENCE

HHSC will conduct an Applicant conference on the date and time set out in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, to review the key elements of this RFA. Attendance is optional and not required, however, it is strongly encouraged.

People with disabilities who wish to attend the meeting and require auxiliary aids or services should contact the Sole Point of Contact identified in **Section 7.2, Sole Point of Contact**, at least 72 hours before the meeting in order to have reasonable accommodations made by HHSC.

The conference may be held by webinar, conference call, or both. Attendees are required to sign a conference attendance log and those joining via conference call are required to send an email to the Sole Point of Contact (see **Section 7.2, Sole Point of Contact**) advising of participation in the conference. Whether signing the conference attendance log in person or sending email notification, each attendee must provide their name, attendee's company name, and attendee email address.

All questions and requests for clarification must be presented in writing at the conference. Reference **Section 7.3, RFA Questions and Requests for Clarification**, for the required format and information to be included.

During the conference, HHSC may provide responses; however, HHSC will consolidate the official responses to all questions and requests for clarifications received during the conference and include in an Addendum posted on the HHS Grants RFA website.

HHSC reserves the right to amend responses to questions and requests for clarifications after posting at any time prior to the Application Submission Deadline. Amended answers will be posted on the HHS Grants RFA website in a separate, new Addendum or Addenda.

### **WEBINAR INFORMATION:**

The conference will be held through GoToWebinar, which may be accessed at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7141420823857195358>.

### **Webinar Instructions:**

- A. Enter Webinar ID: 715-697-515.
- B. Enter Attendee's business email.
- C. To register, the participants must have the following information ready:
  1. First and last name of each attendee/registrant
  2. Email address for the attendee/registrant
  3. Applicant's legal name
  4. Job title of attendee/registrant

## Section VIII. Application Organization and Submission Requirements

### 8.1 APPLICATION RECEIPT

Applications must be received by HHSC by the Application Submission Deadline 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 Application Submission Deadline may be ruled ineligible. Applicants should allow for adequate time for submission before the posted Application Submission Deadline.

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 Application Submission Deadline. 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 bind 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 Application Submission Deadline 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 must upload the following documents to the Online Bid Room utilizing the procedures in **Exhibit F, HHS Online Bid Room. File Size Limitation:** Restriction to 250MB per file attachment.

- A. One copy of marked as "Original Application" that contains the Applicant's entire Application, with the exception of **Exhibit E, Requested Budget Template**, to be submitted separately (see B.below).
- B. One copy of the completed **Exhibit E, Requested Budget Template**, in its original Excel format.

C. One copy of the complete Application marked as “Public Information Act Copy,” if applicable, in accordance with **Section 12.1, Texas Public Information Act**, 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 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 F, Requested Budget Template**, in its original Excel format.

B. One 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**. 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.”

C. Sealed packaged must be clearly labeled with the following:

1. RFA Number
2. RFA Title
3. Application Submission Deadline
4. Sole Point of Contact’s name
5. 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>
<p style="text-align: center;">Health and Human Services Commission            ATTN: John Norton            Tower Building Room 108            1100 W. 49th St., MC 2020            Austin, Texas 78756</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Health and Human Services Commission            ATTN: John Norton            Procurement &amp; Contracting Services Building            1100 W. 49th St., MC 2020            Austin, Texas 78756</p>



#### 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-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 Information," "Narrative Proposal," "Exhibits to be Submitted with Application," and "Addenda").
  - 1. **Exhibit E, Requested Budget Template**, 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 Application Submission Deadline 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 Application Submission Deadline set forth in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda.

No withdrawal or modification request received after the Application Submission Deadline, 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 Application Submission Deadline 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**, or **Exhibit E, Requested Budget**).

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 email 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 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 G, Evaluation Tool**.

**Scoring Criteria:** Qualified Applications will be evaluated based upon:

- A. Applicant's Experience (30%);
- B. Community Engagement (30%); and
- C. Project Design (40%).

## 9.5 PAST PERFORMANCE

System Agency reserves the right to request additional information and conduct investigations as necessary to evaluate 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's 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 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 performance reports for the same reason, OR,
- D. Applicant has a record of non-responsiveness to 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 the Applicant would not be in the best interest of the State.

## **9.6 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, Unique Entity Identification 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://sam.gov/content/exclusions/federal>.

### **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.state.tx.us/oigportal2/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 must 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 must 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 System Agency will make final awards based on evaluation scores, geographic distribution across the State, Applicant past performance (if applicable), Cost Sharing, existing infrastructure, State priorities, and availability of funding. HHSC may not fully fund request to ensure that funds are available for the broadest array of communities and programs. HHSC may not fully fund budget requests to ensure that funds are available for the broadest array of communities and programs.

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/filinginfo/1295/>.

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 effective family support services to expecting families and families with young children, 0 through 5 years of age in the State of Texas.

### **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**, 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 (3) of this section** must be identical to those set forth in the Original Application as required in **Subsection 1(b)**, 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, 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 (completed and signed), and Exhibit G, Budget Request (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 Information**

- 1. Form A, Face Page – Applicant Information (Template provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Form B, Administrative Information (Template provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Form B-1, Governmental Entity– Authorized Officials (If applicable)  
(Template provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Form B-2, Non-Governmental Entity– Board of Directors and Principal  
Officers (If applicable) (Template provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Form C, Financial Management and Administrative Questionnaire  
(Template provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Form D, HHS System Indirect Cost Rate Questionnaire (Template provided) \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Narrative Proposal**

- 1. Form E, Executive Summary (Template provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Form F, Program Narrative (Template provided) \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Attachment F-1 Logic Model (Applicant provides) \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Attachment F-2 Letters of Support (Optional) (Applicant provides) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Form G, Project Work Plan (Template provided) \_\_\_\_\_

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

- 1. Exhibit A – HHS Solicitation Affirmations \_\_\_\_\_

**Per Section 3.2, Application Screening Requirements, Exhibit A HHS Solicitation Affirmations 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 will be disqualified.**

2. Exhibit D-2, Texas HHS System – Data Use Agreement – Attachment 2,  
Security and Privacy Inquiry (SPI) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Exhibit E, Requested Budget Template (Excel) \_\_\_\_\_

**This Requested Budget Template 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.**

4. Exhibit H, Exceptions (If applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Exhibit I, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs \_\_\_\_\_

6. Exhibit J, Certification Regarding Lobbying \_\_\_\_\_

7. Exhibit K, Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act  
(FFATA) Certification Form \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

### **Forms**

Form A, Face Page – Applicant Information (Template provided)

Form B, Administrative Information (Template provided)

Form B-1, Governmental Entity – Authorized Officials (Template provided)

Form B-2, Non-Governmental Entity – Board of Director and Principal Officers (Template provided)

Form C, Financial Management and Administrative Questionnaire (Template provided)

Form D, HHS System Indirect Cost Rate Questionnaire (Template provided)

Form E, Executive Summary (Template provided)

Form F, Program Narrative (Template provided)

Form G, Project Work Plan (Template provided)

### **Exhibits**

Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations, Version 2.6, Effective November 2024

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

Exhibit C, Statement of Work Template

Exhibit D, HHS Data Use Agreement v.8.5, October 23, 2019

Exhibit D-1, HHS Data Use Agreement v.8.5, Governmental Entity Version, October 23, 2019

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

Exhibit E, Requested Budget Template

Exhibit F, HHS Online Bid Room

Exhibit G, Evaluation Tool

Exhibit H, Exceptions Form (If applicable)

Exhibit I, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs

Exhibit J, Certification Regarding Lobbying

Exhibit K, Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Certification Form