TEXAS
Department of Family and Protective Services

*Audrey O'Neill, DFPS Commissioner*

# *Request for Applications (RFA)*

***Grant for***
***Community & Parent Group Grant***
***RFA No. HHS0017255***

## DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

***December 8, 2026, by 10:30 a.m. Central Time***

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# Section I. Introduction

## 1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Texas, by and through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (**DFPS**) announces the availability of funding for councils, associations, and organizations to develop and expand activities of groups that promote services to abused and neglected children or their caregivers. Qualified Grantees must be voluntary and must have a purpose to promote, coordinate, and facilitate community-based service delivery systems for children and their families, who are at risk of abuse or neglect. These are children who have become a part of the DFPS foster care system. Grantee shall provide education and information about abused and neglected children, develop and expand the activities of groups that identify, recruit, and screen prospective foster and adoptive homes. A secondary purpose will be to serve as the organized body through which foster parents find mutual support and an increase in the knowledge and skills of foster parenting.

The State provides reimbursement through Title IV-E and IV-B funds allocated from the Social Security Act and may use State funds, if necessary. Grantee promotes community awareness, outreach, training and recruitment of potential foster parents. They attend national child welfare conferences for which DFPS reimburses for allowable goods and services.

To be considered for award, Applicant must execute **Exhibit A, Affirmations and Solicitation Acceptance**, of this Solicitation and provide all other required information and documentation as set forth in this Solicitation.

| | |
|---|---|
| Grant Name: | Community and Parent Group Grant – Child Welfare Boards/Councils Program |
| RFA No.: | HHS0017255 |
| Deadline for Applications: | Refer to **Section 7.1 Schedule of Events** |
| Estimated Total Available Funding: | $200,000.00 |
| Estimated Total Number of Awards: | Multiple |

| | |
|---|---|
| Estimated Max Award Amount: | $200,000.00 |
| Anticipated Project Start Date: | September 2027 |
| Length of Project Period: | Refer to **Section 4.1 Project Period** |
| Applicant Eligibility: | Refer to Section **3.1, Eligible Applicants** |

## 1.2 DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

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

Refer to exhibits to this RFA, including **Exhibit B, DFPS Uniform Terms and Conditions – Grant**, for additional definitions.

"Accounting System" means a computerized system that keeps track of expenses, income and other activities.

"Addendum" means a written clarification or revision to this RFA, including exhibits, forms, and attachments, as issued and posted by HHSC to the HHS Grants RFA website . Each Addendum will be posted 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.

"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."

"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.

"Department of Family and Protective Services" or "Department" or "DFPS" means the Department of Family and Protective Services, the agency procuring the services in this RFA on behalf of the State of Texas. The mission of DFPS is to build on strengths of families and communities to keep children and vulnerable adults safe, so they thrive.

"Grant Agreement" means the agreement entered into by the System Agency and the Grantee, including the Signature Document and all attachments and amendments. May also be referred to in this RFA or its exhibits as "Contract" or "Grant Contract."

"Grant Term" means the base Project Period plus anticipated renewal or extension periods.

"Grantee" means the Party receiving funds under any Grant Agreement awarded under this RFA. May also be referred to in this RFA or its exhibits as "Contractor."

"HHS" means Health and Human Services and includes both the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). For the purposes of this document, the Department of Family and Protective Services is considered a Health and Human Services agency.

"HHSC" means the Health and Human Services Commission.

"Project" or "Grant Project" means the specific work and activities that are supported by the funds provided under the Grant Agreement.

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

"RFA" means this Request for Applications, including all parts, exhibits, forms, attachments and Addenda posted on the HHS Grants RFA website.

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

"Subgrantee" means a person who contracts with the Grantee to perform all or a portion of the Project activities. May also be referred to in this RFA or its exhibits as "Subcontractor."

"System Agency" means HHSC or any of the agencies of the State of Texas that are overseen by HHSC under authority granted under state law and the officers, employees, authorized representatives, and designees of those agencies. These agencies include: HHSC and the Department of State Health Services. For the purposes of this document, the Department of Family and Protective Services is also considered a system agency.

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

## 1.3 STATUTORY AUTHORITY

System Agency is requesting applications under DFPS's statutory authority in the Texas Human Resources Code, Chapter 40.

Federal funding for this Grant Project is authorized under Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, as amended and codified in 42 U.S.C. Section 621 et seq. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated federal funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.

## 1.4 STANDARDS

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

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# Section II. Scope of Grant Project

## 2.1 PURPOSE

This funding opportunity invites Applications from Texas Councils of Child Welfare Boards to develop and expand activities of groups that promote services to abused and neglected children or their caregivers. Grantees of this type must be voluntary and must have a purpose to:

A. Promote, coordinate, and facilitate community-based service delivery systems for children who are at risk of abuse or neglect and their families, particularly those children who have become a part of the Department's foster care system; and
B. Provide education and information about abused and neglected children.

## 2.2 PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The mission of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services is to protect children, the elderly, and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by working with clients, families, and communities.

The purpose of the Child Protective Services (CPS) program is to protect children and to act in the children's best interest. CPS focuses on children and their families and seeks active involvement of the children's parents and other family members to solve problems that lead to abuse or neglect. The objectives of CPS are to:

1. Prevent further harm to children and keep children with their families when possible;
2. Provide permanence for children in substitute care by resolving family dysfunction and returning children safely to their families; and
3. Provide permanence for children who cannot return to their families.

## 2.3 ELIGIBLE SERVICE AREAS

The service areas eligible for Project funding under this RFA are all DFPS Regions. Refer to **Attachment B, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Regional Map**.

## 2.4 ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

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

The primary purpose of the RFA is to provide a volunteer council whose purpose is to promote and coordinate community service delivery systems for abused and neglected

children in foster care and their families in accordance with Title IV-B of the Social Security Act.

## 2.5 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

To meet the mission and objectives of the Community and Parent Group Services grant, Grantee must comply with **Attachment A, Statement of Work.**

## 2.6 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS

Allowable and non-allowable costs are dependent upon the organization type eligible for this funding opportunity. Refer to **Section 3.1, Eligible Applicants**. Please review **Attachment C, Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards Allowable and Unallowable Costs** for the list of allowable and unallowable costs.

## 2.7 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. Sections 556.004, 556.005, and 556.006, Texas Government Code; and

   3. Sections 2113.012 and 2113.101, Texas 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, Texas Local Government Code;

   2. A local workforce development board; or

   3. A community center as defined by Texas Health and Safety Code Section 534.001(b).

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## Section III. Applicant Eligibility Requirements

### 3.1 Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be identified as a Texas Council of Child Welfare Board volunteer organization that works to promote the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in foster care and adoptive families in accordance with Title IV-B of the Social Security Act.

An Applicant that does not meet eligibility requirements will be disqualified and not considered for a grant. DFPS expressly reserves the right to review and analyze the documentation submitted, request additional documentation, and/or determine the Applicant's eligibility to compete for the Grant Agreement award.

### 3.2 Legal Authority to Apply

By submitting an Application, 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 maintain 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, if any.

### 3.3 Application Screening Requirements

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

A. Applicant must meet the eligibility requirement set out in **Section 3.1, Eligible Applicants**.
B. Applicant must submit all completed Application forms and exhibits as required by **Section VI, Application Forms and Exhibits for Submission**.
C. Applicant must submit a completed Application by the date identified as the "Deadline for Submission of Applications," established in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**.

### 3.4 Grant Award Eligibility

By submitting an Application, 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 System Agency with any requested or required supporting documentation in connection with this certification;

C. Applicant shall remain in good standing and be eligible to conduct its business in Texas

and shall comply with all applicable requirements of the Texas Secretary of State and the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts;

D. Applicant 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 deadline for submitting an Application under this RFA.

## 3.5 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 an Application, Applicant certifies that it is not ineligible for a Grant Agreement pursuant to this prohibition.

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## Section IV. Project Period and Grant Term

### 4.1 PROJECT PERIOD

The initial Project Period is January 1, 2027, through December 31, 2031**.**

The System Agency may, at its sole discretion, extend the Project Period for up to one (1) year to allow for the full expenditure of awarded funding and completion of Grant activities. Approved Projects may not exceed a five (5) year Project Period.

### 4.2 PROJECT CLOSEOUT

Grantee must submit all required financial, performance, and other reports as required in the Grant Agreement by Project close-out. The Project close-out date is ninety (90) calendar days after the Grant Agreement end date, unless otherwise noted in the original or amended Grant Agreement. Funds not obligated by Grantee by the end of the Grant Agreement term and not expended by the Project close-out date will be reverted to the System Agency. System Agency reserves the right to programmatically and financially close the grant award and terminate the Grant Agreement when System Agency determines Grantee has completed all applicable actions and work in accordance with Grant Agreement requirements.

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## Section V. Grant Funding and Reimbursement Information

### 5.1 Grant Funding Source and Available Funding

The total amount of funding available for the Community and Parent Group grant program is **$200,000** per state fiscal year. It is the System Agency's intention to make multiple awards to Applicants that meet eligibility requirements.

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

Reimbursement will only be made for actual, allowable, and allocable expenses that occur within the Project Period. No spending or costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award will be eligible for reimbursement.

### 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. Grantee 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, social activities, and any associated costs including but not limited to admission fees or tickets to any amusement park, recreational activity or sporting event unless such costs are incurred for components of a program approved by the grantor agency and are directly related to the program's purpose;
G. Costs of promotional items, and memorabilia, including models, gifts, and souvenirs;
H. Food, meals, beverages, or other refreshments, except for eligible per diem associated with grant-related travel, where pre-approved for working events, or where such costs are incurred for components of a program approved by the grantor agency and are directly related to the program's purpose;
I. Membership dues for individuals;
J. Any expense or service that is readily available at no cost to the Grant Project;
K. Any activities related to fundraising;
L. 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;
M. Any other prohibition imposed by federal, State, or local law; and
N. 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 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 monthly and supported by adequate documentation.

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## Section VI. Application Forms and Exhibits for Submission

Applicant 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 APPLICATION FORM

Applicant shall complete Form A in its entirety.

### 6.2 SOLICITATION AFFIRMATIONS

**Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations, v. 2.10** is mandatory and must be completed, signed, and submitted for the Application to be considered responsive. Applications received without **Exhibit A** or with an unsigned **Exhibit A** may be disqualified.

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## Section VII. RFA Administrative Information and Inquiries

### 7.1 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

| EVENT | DATE/TIME |
|---|---|
| Funding Announcement Posting Date<br><br>Posted to HHS Grants RFA website | November 4, 2026 |
| Deadline for Submitting Questions or Requests for Clarification | November 12, 2026 at 2:00 PM Central Time |
| Date Answers to Questions or Requests for Clarification Posted | On or after November 19, 2026 at 2:00 PM Central Time |
| **Deadline for Submission of Applications**<br><br>**NOTE: Applications must be RECEIVED by HHSC by this deadline unless the deadline is changed by subsequent Addenda. Applications must be complete and received by HHSC by this deadline to be considered eligible.** | **December 8, 2026 by 10:30 a.m. Central Time** |
| Anticipated Notice of Award | June 2027 |
| Anticipated Project Start Date | September 2027 |

**Applicant must ensure its Application is received by HHSC in accordance with the Application deadline (date and time) indicated in this Schedule of Events.**

**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 deadline will be published by posting an Addendum to the HHS Grants RFA website.. After the Application 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 website. Applicant is responsible for checking the HHS Grants RFA website and Procurement Forecast for updates.**

## 7.2 SOLE POINT OF CONTACT

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

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | Julia Solis |
| **Title** | Grant Specialist, HHSC Procurement and Contracting Services |
| **Address** | Procurement and Contracting Services Building<br>1100 W 49th St. MC: 2020<br>Austin, TX 78756 |
| **Email** | julia.solis@hhs.texas.gov |

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

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

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

This restriction (on only communicating in writing by email with the sole point of contact identified above) does not preclude discussions between Applicant and agency personnel for the purpose 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 specified in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**. Applicant's name will be removed from questions in any responses released.

A. All questions and requests for clarification must include the following information. Submissions that do not include this information may not be accepted:

   1. RFA number;
   2. RFA package reference (page number, section, exhibit, form or other attachment, if applicable);
   3. Question topic (e.g., "Schedule of Events," or "Form A"); and
   4. Question.

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

1. Name of individual submitting question or request for clarification;
2. Organization name;
3. Phone number; and
4. E-mail address.

C. Questions or other written requests for clarification must be received by the Sole Point of Contact by the deadline specified in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**.

D. HHSC may review and, at its sole discretion, may respond to questions or other written requests received after the deadline specified in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**.

## 7.4 AMBIGUITY, CONFLICT, DISCREPANCY, CLARIFICATIONS

Applicant 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 described in **Section 7.3, RFA Questions and Requests for Clarification**. 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. Must not contest the interpretation by the HHSC of such provision(s); and
C. Is not 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.

## 7.6 CHANGES, AMENDMENT, OR MODIFICATION OF 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 the 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 Applicant 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 Applicant to stay informed of all postings to these websites. If Applicant fails to monitor these websites for any changes or modifications to this RFA, such failure will not relieve Applicant of its obligation to fulfill the requirements as posted.

## Section VIII. Application Organization and Submission Requirements

### 8.1 Application Receipt

Applications must be received by HHSC by the deadline for submission of applications specified in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda. HHSC will date and time stamp all Applications upon receipt. Applications received after the deadline specified in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events** will be ruled ineligible. Applicants should allow for adequate time for submission before the specified 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 by the date and time specified in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**. 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 issues that may lead to disqualification.

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

Applicant understands and acknowledges 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 binds the Applicant under any Grant Agreement that may result from the submission of an Application.

### 8.3 Required Submission Method

A. An Applicant must submit its completed Application by the deadline for submission of Applications provided in Section **7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda, using one of the approved methods identified below. An Application submitted by any other method (e.g., facsimile or email) will not be considered and will be disqualified.

B. **Submission Option #1**
**Sealed Package with USB Drives:** Applicant shall submit each of the following on separate USB drives:

1. One (1) USB drive with the complete Application file marked as "Original Application" in a searchable 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."
2. One (1) USB drive with a copy of the complete Application file marked as "Public Information Act Copy," if applicable and in accordance with **Section 12.1, Texas Public Information Act – Application Disclosure Requirements**. The copy must be in a searchable 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."

Applicant is 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.

| Overnight/Express/Priority Mail | Hand Delivery |
|---|---|
| Health and Human Services Commission<br>ATTN: Julia Solis<br>Tower Building, Room 108<br>1100 W. 49th St., MC 2020<br>Austin, Texas 78756 | Health and Human Services Commission<br>ATTN: Julia Solis<br>Procurement & Contracting Services Building<br>1100 W. 49th St., MC 2020<br>Austin, Texas 78756 |

Sealed packages must be clearly labeled with the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| **RFA NO:** | Applicant to include Solicitation Number from Page 1 of this RFA. |
| **RFA TITLE:** | Applicant to include title of RFA from Page 1 of this RFA. |
| **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS:** | Applicant to include the deadline for applications from Section 7.1, Schedule of Events. |
| **SOLE POINT OF CONTACT'S NAME:** | Applicant to include the name of the Grant Specialist from Section 7.2 (Sole Point of Contact). |
| **APPLICANT'S NAME:** | Applicant to include its name. |

## 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 should:

A. Be responsive to all RFA requirements;

B. Be clearly legible;

C. Include page numbering for each section of the Application; and

D. 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.

Applications that do not meet the requirements above may be deemed ineligible.

## 8.6 APPLICATION ORGANIZATION

The complete Application file must include all required documentation, exhibits, and forms completed and signed, as applicable. Copies of forms are acceptable, but all copies must be identical to the original. All exhibits must be submitted and obtained directly from the posted RFA package; previous versions and copies are not allowed or acceptable.

## 8.7 APPLICATION WITHDRAWALS OR MODIFICATIONS

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

A. Withdraw its Application by submitting a written request to the Sole Point of Contact; or

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

No withdrawal or modification request received after the Deadline for Submission of Applications, set forth in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda, will be considered. Additionally, in the event of multiple Applications received, the latest received 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.

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# Section IX. Application Screening and Eligibility Review

## 9.1 Overview

A two-step selection process will be used:

A. Review of qualifications; and

B. Final selection based upon State priorities and other relevant factors, as outlined in **Section 10.1, Final Selection**.

## 9.2 Initial Compliance Screening of Applications

All Applications received by the Deadline for Submission of Applications as outlined in **Section 7.1, Schedule of Events**, or subsequent Addenda, will be screened by HHSC to determine which Applications are complete, meet all the minimum requirements of this RFA, and are deemed responsive and qualified for further consideration. See **Section 3.3, Application Screening Requirements**.

At the sole discretion of the System Agency, Applications with errors, omissions, or compliance issues may be considered non-responsive and may not be considered for award. The remaining Applications will continue to the eligibility review stage and will be considered in the manner and form in 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 sole 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. Any disqualifying factor set forth in this RFA does not constitute informality (e.g., submission of signed **Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations**).

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

## 9.3 Questions or Requests for Clarification for Applications

The 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. The System Agency reserves the right to select qualified Applications received in response to this RFA without discussion of the Applications with Applicants.

## 9.4 ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

To move to the final selection review set out in **Section 10.1, Final Selection**, an Applicant must meet eligibility requirements. Please refer to **Section III, Applicant Eligibility Requirements**.

## 9.5 PAST PERFORMANCE

The System Agency reserves the right to request additional information and conduct investigations as necessary to assess any Applicant. 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 the System Agency.

The 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.

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 Grant Agreements based on Applicant's unsatisfactory performance.

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

In addition to the reasons stated in **Sections 9.2** and **9.4**, an Applicant may be denied a Grant Agreement at any point after Application submission include, due to the following:

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 System Agency; or

C. Applicant has had repeated, negative vendor performance reports for the same reason; or

D. Applicant has a record of repeated non-responsiveness to vendor performance issues; or

E. Applicant has Grant Agreements or purchase orders that have been cancelled in the previous twelve (12) months for non-performance or substandard performance; or

F. Any other performance issue that demonstrates that awarding a Grant Agreement to Applicant would not be in the best interest of the State.

## 9.6 COMPLIANCE FOR PARTICIPATION IN STATE CONTRACTS

Prior to award of a Grant Agreement 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 Identifier ("UEI", a unique identifier created via SAM.gov, which replaces the previously used DUNS)) provided by Applicant will be used to conduct these checks. At HHSC sole discretion, Applicant 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/home

**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

1. Companies that boycott Israel;

2. Companies with Ties to Sudan;

3. Companies with Ties to Iran;

4. Foreign Terrorist Organizations; and

5. Companies with Ties to Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

**D. HHS Office of Inspector General**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# Section X. Award of Grant Agreement Process

## 10.1 Final Selection

After completion of compliance checks as set out in **Section IX, Application Screening and Eligibility Review**, System Agency will make final funding decisions in accordance with **Section 9.4, Eligibility Review**.

## 10.2 Negotiations

After determining eligibility for award, the System Agency may engage in negotiations with selected Applicants. As determined by the System Agency, the negotiation phase may involve direct contact between the selected Applicant and DFPS representatives by virtual meeting, by phone and/or by email. Negotiations should not be interpreted as an award unless explicitly stated in writing by the System Agency. Negotiations are considered a step to finalize the terms for approval and discuss proposed grant activities. During negotiations, selected Applicants may expect:

A. An in-depth discussion of the submitted Application; 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 Grant Agreement 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 Grant Agreement 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 Grant Agreement.

Applicant represents and warrants that, if selected for award of a Grant Agreement, 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.

Form 1295 involves an electronic process through the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC). The online 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 Grant Agreement, 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 make multiple awards to Applicants that meet eligibility requirements. 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, the 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 the System Agency.

HHSC may announce tentative funding awards through an "Intent to Award Letter" once approval is given 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), HHSC will post a notification of all grants awarded to the HHS Grants RFA website.

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## 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 similar services.

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## 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 the 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 Affirmations**: Certify, in the designated section of the **Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations v. 2.10**, Applicant's confidential information assertion and the filing of its Public Information Act Copy; and

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

1. The copy must be clearly marked as "Public Information Act Copy" on the front page in large, bold, capitalized letters (the size of, or equivalent to, 12-point Times New Roman font);

2. Each portion Applicant claims is exempt from public disclosure must be redacted (blacked out); and

3. Applicant must identify, adjacent to each redaction, the claimed exemption from disclosure. Each identification provided as required in Subsection (C) of this section must be identical to those set forth in the Original Application as required in Subsection (A)(2), above. The only difference in required markings and information between the Original Application and the "Public Information Act Copy" of the Application will be redactions – which can only be included in the

"Public Information Act Copy." There must be no redactions in the Original Application.

**By submitting an Application under this RFA, Applicant agrees that, if Applicant does not mark the Original Application, provide the required certification in Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations v. 2.10, 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 THE SYSTEM AGENCY FROM ANY CLAIM OF INFRINGEMENT REGARDING THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS OF THE SUBMITTING PARTY OR ANY THIRD PARTY FOR ANY MATERIALS SUBMITTED TO SYSTEM AGENCY BY THE SUBMITTING PARTY.**

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## 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 documents, will be disqualified or whether additional time will be permitted for submission of the incomplete or missing information. 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) may be disqualified. See also, Section 9.2, Initial Compliance Screening of Applications.**

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. Forms to be Completed and Submitted with Application**

Form A, Grant Application ____

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

1. Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations ____

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

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## Section XIV. List of Attachments, Exhibits, and Forms

### Attachments

Attachment A, Statement of Work for Child Welfare Boards

Attachment B, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Regional Map

Attachment C, Child Welfare Boards Allowable and Unallowable Costs

### Exhibits

Exhibit A, HHS Solicitation Affirmations

Exhibit B, DFPS Grant Uniform Terms and Conditions

Exhibit C, DFPS Supplemental Conditions

Exhibit D, DFPS Grant Certifications and Affirmations

### Forms

Form A, Grant Application