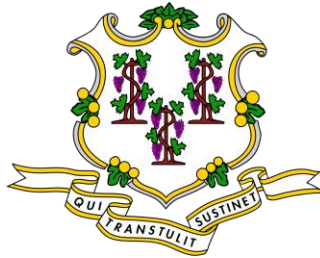


STATE OF CONNECTICUT PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Request for Proposals (RFP) For Staffed Family Child Care Network Hub

RFP Name: OEC-21-SFCCNH

Issued by:
Office of Early Childhood
August 11, 2021

The Request for Proposal is available in electronic format on the State Contracting Portal by filtering by Organization for the "Early Childhood, Office of" <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard> or from the OEC's Official Contacts:

Names: Africka Hinds
Erma Esangbedo
Address: Office of Early Childhood
450 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06103
Phone: (860) 500 - 4549
E-Mail: oec.rfp.eceqi@ct.gov

The RFP is also available on the OEC's website at:
<https://www.ctoec.org/rfps/sfccn-rfp/>.

Respondents may register for the optional pre-bid conference by [clicking on this link](#).

RESPONSES MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN
September 20, 2021
5:00 PM EST

The Office of Early Childhood is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

The OEC reserves the right to reject any and all submissions or cancel this procurement at any time if deemed in the best interest of the State of Connecticut (State).

August 11, 2021

Dear Present and Future Colleagues,

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the early childhood community has courageously faced many new challenges. From the start of the pandemic to present, family child care providers continue to keep their businesses open and make daily decisions on the health and safety of the children in their care. As a way to support providers, the OEC expanded its Staffed Family Child Care Network statewide through quality improvement supports and other resources to support family child care business.

With this support, the tenacity and willingness of the family child care community to respond to new challenges has really shone through. There are now over 1,500 active family child care providers in Connecticut – up from 1,152 in May 2020, one of the most disruptive periods of the pandemic. At one point, in July 2020, FCC businesses provided 13% of all available child care slots in Connecticut, up from 8% prior to the pandemic. Family child care businesses have and will continue to play a crucial role in Connecticut's recovery and in its future. Now, as recognition of the importance of child care continues to grow, we have a historic opportunity to build on this momentum – to not just re-imagine a more equitable future where childcare is valued as a cornerstone of society, but begin to build it.

Alongside CT's \$210 million investment to immediately reinforce the state's overall child care infrastructure, I am proud to announce this RFP for a "Hub" organization to serve as a "superstructure" to the state's Staffed Family Child Care Networks. This RFP is part of the OEC's long-term vision to build a sustainable family child care system that works for both families and for the providers who make so much of everyday life possible – including the ability to work, to further an education, to pursue life with the assurance that our children are in safe and loving hands.

The contractor ultimately selected as the Hub will work closely with the OEC staff to directly manage our regional family child care networks, help elevate the family child care profession, and lead capacity-building initiatives that support the pedagogical and operational aspects of running child care businesses. The Hub will help manage nearly \$5 million in funding over a 3-year period. The opportunities and capacity the Hub help unlock make it integral to the state's strategy of advancing structural change in the state's child care sector – especially when we consider that many family child care providers are sole entrepreneurs and women of color who have been previously excluded from formal systems of support.

The OEC will be hosting a pre-bid conference on Friday, August 20 at 10:30 am EST to further expound on our vision and take any questions from prospective respondents. While this conference is not mandatory, we highly encourage your attendance. Please register for the conference at [this link](#). **Proposals themselves will be due September 20 by 5:00 pm EST.**

With this ambitious vision for the Hub and the state family child care system, we look forward to working with a strategically aligned partner who shares our commitment to equity, dismantling exclusionary structures, and building on the strengths of our care community. We look forward to reading through your proposals, and we hope that many of you will respond to this call to action.

In Partnership,



Commissioner Beth Bye

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I. General Information

A. INTRODUCTION

- 1. RFP Name and Number.** Staffed Family Child Care Network Hub: OEC-21-SFCCNH
- 2. RFP Summary.** The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) seeks a strategic partner to serve as a “superstructure” to the state’s cohort of Staffed Family Child Care Networks. The superstructure, referred to as “the Hub,” will provide facilitative leadership, oversee business support services, and directly manage the OEC’s regional family child care networks in close partnership with the OEC’s staff.
- 3. RFP Purpose.** The OEC is committed to ensuring that Connecticut’s family child care system develops equitably and consistently. Currently, the state’s cohort of Staffed Family Child Care networks operate independently of one another, leading to regional differences in the quality and availability of services between networks. The introduction of the Hub provides a connective tissue between the different regional networks, solidifying the cohesion of the state’s overall family child care system.
- 4. Commodity Codes.** The services that the OEC wishes to procure through this RFP are as follows:
 - 86000000: Education and Training Services
 - 80000000: Management and Business Professionals and Administrative Services

B. INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Official Contacts.** The OEC has designated the individuals below as the Official Contacts for purposes of this RFP. The Official Contacts are the **only authorized contacts** for this procurement and, as such, handle all related communications on behalf of the OEC. Proposers, prospective proposers, and other interested parties are advised that any communication with any other OEC employee(s) (including appointed officials) or personnel under contract to the OEC about this RFP is strictly prohibited. Proposers or prospective proposers who violate this instruction may risk disqualification from further consideration.

Names: Africka Hinds
Erma Esangbedo
Address: Office of Early Childhood, 450 Columbus Street, Hartford, CT 06103
Phone: (860) 500 - 4549
E-Mail: oeclrfp@ct.gov

Please ensure that e-mail screening software (if used) recognizes and accepts e-mails from the Official Contacts.

- 2. Registering with State Contracting Portal.** Respondents must register with the State of CT contracting portal at <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/Registration> if not already registered. Respondents shall submit the following information pertaining to this application to this portal (on their supplier profile), which will be checked by the OEC contact.
 - Secretary of State recognition – Click on appropriate response
 - Non-profit status, if applicable
 - Notification to Bidders, Parts I-V

- Campaign Contribution Certification (OPM Ethics Form 1):
<https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Fin-PSA/Forms/Ethics-Forms>

3. RFP Information. The RFP, amendments to the RFP, and other information associated with this procurement are available in electronic format from the Official Contact or from the Internet at the following locations:

- Agency's RFP Web Page: <https://www.ctoec.org/rfps/sfccn-rfp/>
- State Contracting Portal (go to CTsource bid board, filter by "Early Childhood, Office of"): <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard>

It is strongly recommended that any proposer or prospective proposer interested in this procurement check the Bid Board for any solicitation changes. Interested proposers may receive additional e-mails from CTsource announcing addendums that are posted on the portal. This service is provided as a courtesy to assist in monitoring activities associated with State procurements, including this RFP.

4. Procurement Schedule. See below. Dates after the due date for proposals ("Proposals Due") are non-binding target dates only (*). The OEC may amend the schedule as needed. Any change to non-target dates will be made by means of an amendment to this RFP and will be posted on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, the OEC's RFP Web Page.

RFP Released:	August 11, 2021
Optional RFP Conference:	August 20, 2021
Optional Letter of Intent Due:	August 27, 2021
Q&A Period:	August 11 – August 27, 2021. <i>The OEC will collect and respond to questions weekly. Questions received by the end of the week will receive responses the following Tuesday. (i.e. Questions received by August 13 will receive responses by August 17; questions received by August 20 will receive responses by August 24; and questions received by August 27 will receive responses by August 31.)</i>
Proposals Due:	September 20, 2021
(*) Proposer Selection:	October 15, 2021
(*) Start of Contract:	January 1, 2022

5. Contract Awards. The award of any contract pursuant to this RFP is dependent upon the availability of funding to the OEC. The OEC anticipates the following:

Total Funding Available	Up to \$4,262,500 , with the expectation that up to 62% (\$2,662,500) of total funding will be subcontracted out to regional network operators and specialized nursing consultants. The estimated annual amounts are not to exceed the following: Year 1: \$1,132,500 Year 2: \$1,865,000 Year 3: \$1,265,000
Number of Awards	One (1)
Contract Term	36 months
Funding Source	This contract will be funded through a combination of federal American Rescue Plan Act and Child Care Development funds.

6. Eligibility. Public or private organizations, for-profits or nonprofits legally registered with CT's Secretary of State are eligible to submit proposals in response to this RFP. Respondents claiming nonprofit status must provide proof of nonprofit status, such as a copy of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) determination letter. (Please note that to avoid conflicts of interest, the contractor selected as the Hub will not be permitted to bid for a regional network role in the next network procurement cycle.)

7. Minimum Qualifications of Proposers. To qualify for a contract award, a proposer must have the following minimum qualifications:

- Be able to provide sufficient staff at the time of award, including managerial and administrative support to implement the required operational, research, and evaluation services, including the ability to meet OEC data/technology and report requirements defined in the scope of services description section.
- Be in sound fiscal health, as determined by documentation of clean opinions in audited financial statements for the last 3 years (or whatever number of years are available, for newer organizations); a recent organizational budget; and the respondent's most recent statement of financial activities (profit and loss statement).
- Adhere to generally accepted accounting principles.
- Be registered with [System of Award Management \(SAM\)](#) by the time of contract execution.

8. Letter of Intent. A Letter of Intent (LOI) is not required by this RFP but highly encouraged. The LOI is non-binding and does not obligate the sender to submit a proposal. The LOI must be submitted to the Official Contacts by e-mail by the deadline established in the Procurement Schedule. The LOI must clearly identify the sender, including name, postal address, telephone number, and e-mail address. It is the sender's responsibility to confirm the OEC's receipt of the LOI.

9. Inquiry Procedures. All questions regarding this RFP or the OEC's procurement process must be directed, in writing, to the Official Contacts before the deadline specified in the Procurement Schedule. The early submission of questions is encouraged. Questions will not be accepted or answered verbally – neither in person nor over the telephone. All questions received before the deadline(s) will be answered. However, the OEC will not answer questions when the source is unknown (i.e., nuisance or anonymous questions). Questions deemed unrelated to the RFP or the procurement process will not be answered. At its discretion, the OEC may or may not respond to questions received after the deadline. The OEC may combine similar questions and give only one answer. All questions and answers will be compiled into a written amendment to this RFP. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the amendment and duly noted as such.

The agency will release the answers to questions on the date(s) established in the Procurement Schedule. The OEC will publish any and all amendments to this RFP on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, on the OEC's RFP Web Page. At its discretion, the OEC may distribute any amendments to this RFP to prospective proposers who submitted a Letter of Intent or attended the RFP Conference.

10. RFP Conference. A virtual RFP conference will be held on Friday, August 20 2021 at 10:30 am EST to answer questions from prospective proposers. Attendance at the conference is optional, but highly encouraged. The OEC will publish conference material on its website following the conclusion of the conference. Any oral answers given at the conference by the OEC's representatives are tentative and not binding on the OEC. All questions submitted will be answered in a written amendment to this RFP, which will serve as the OEC's official response to questions asked at the

conference. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the amendment and duly noted as such. The agency will release the amendment on the date established in the Procurement Schedule. The OEC will publish any and all amendments to this RFP on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, on the OEC's RFP Web Page.

11. Proposal Due Date and Time. The Official Contacts are the **only authorized recipients** of proposals submitted in response to this RFP. Proposals must be received by the Official Contacts on or before the due date and time: **September 20, 2021 at 5:00 pm EST.**

Please be aware that delays may occur when emailing submissions with large attachments and plan accordingly. Proposals received after the due date and time will be ineligible for review. The OEC will send an official letter alerting late respondents of ineligibility.

An acceptable submission must include the following:

- One (1) conforming electronic copy of the original proposal. The proposal must be complete, properly formatted and outlined, and ready for evaluation by the Screening Committee.

The electronic copy of the proposal must be emailed to the official agency contacts for this procurement. The subject line of the email must read: OEC-21-SFCCNH. The main body should be submitted as PDF, while the budget template should be submitted as a spreadsheet. Required forms and appendices may be scanned and submitted as PDFs at the end of the main proposal document. Please consolidate the main proposal body and attachments into a single PDF file or as few files as possible. Please be sure that each file submitted with your proposal is appropriately titled with your organization name and an indicator of the content. For example, if you are submitting the main body and attachments as one file, an appropriate file title would be "ORGNAME_FullProposal." If you are submitting the budget, an appropriate file title would be "ORGNAME_Budget."

Please ensure the entire email submission is less than 25MB as this reflects The OEC's server limitations. Respondents should work to ensure there are not additional IT limitations from the provider side.

12. Multiple Proposals. The submission of multiple proposals is not an option for this procurement.

II. Purpose of RFP and Scope of Services

A. OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD OVERVIEW

Established in 2013, the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is the state agency charged with fostering cross-systems integration, coordination, and collaboration at the state and local level in order to enhance the health and well-being of young children, families, and communities. The OEC brings together leadership, expertise, and a wide range of early childhood and family support services that were formerly housed at five different state agencies. The goal of the Office is to build an integrated early childhood system that includes high quality services for family support and home visiting services, early intervention services, early care and education programming, and regulation.

The OEC provides funding standards, regulations, quality improvement supports, technical assistance, and oversight to ensure that early care and education programs for young children:

- Are safe, healthy, and nurturing;
- Effectively support children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development; and
- Are accessible to all children, particularly those facing barriers, risks or challenges to their health development and success.
- Provide equitable access for all.

The OEC is organized into three programming divisions: Early Care and Education and Quality Improvement, Child Care and Camp Licensing, and Family Support. These programming divisions are supported by the Operations and Legal divisions, all under the leadership of the Commissioner's Office. The OEC is the State's lead agency for child care under the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). This federal program supports improving the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers. The OEC is also the State's lead agency for the prevention of child abuse and neglect under the federal Community Based Child Abuse Prevention program; the Birth to Three program; state-funded home visiting programs; and the federal Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting grant. In addition, the OEC is the state affiliate of the national Help Me Grow program.

The Early Care and Education and Quality Improvement Division

Within the OEC, the Early Care and Education and Quality Improvement Division is responsible for the implementation of quality improvement supports and funding to school-, center-, and home-based child care providers. The Division manages quality improvement contracts to deliver technical assistance and to support providers in the implementation of the OEC's foundational documents, including [the State's Early Learning and Development Standards, Documentation and Observation for Teaching systems](#), and the [Core Knowledge and Competency Frameworks](#). The Division also guides and monitors the delivery of school readiness grants, child day care contracts, and Smart Start awards. The OEC's primary tools to house and manage data related to the child care workforce and provider qualifications are the [Early Childhood Professional Registry](#) and [ECE Reporter](#).

B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW: STAFFED FAMILY CHILD CARE NETWORK HUB

The OEC seeks a strategic partner to serve as a “superstructure” to the state’s cohort of Staffed Family Child Care Networks. The superstructure, referred to as “the Hub,” will provide facilitative leadership, oversee business support services, and directly manage the OEC’s regional family child care networks in close partnership with the OEC’s staff.

Background & Problem Statement

Family child care¹ (FCC) is attractive to parents of young children because, at its best, it delivers an intimately scaled home-like setting with a warm child-centered provider who can support a young child’s cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development. In Connecticut, the diversity found among the State’s 1,500+ active FCC providers² allows parents to choose a child care arrangement that reflects their own cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. In a recent statewide survey of child care businesses with close to 700 FCC respondents who disclosed their race, approximately 28% identified as African American and 15% identified as multiracial, Asian, or another racial group. Ethnically, about 28% identified as Latinx.³

However, the quality of FCC is uneven. There are some FCC providers who offer care that can match the highest quality center-based and school programs. However, as a segment, the family child care field is too frequently seen – even by its practitioners – as babysitting rather than a developmentally-oriented, professional service delivered by an appropriately trained and supported provider.

While there are relatively few barriers to entering or exiting the FCC business – securing a license to operate an FCC home requires neither a large capital investment nor hiring staff, and operating expenses are modest – there are many barriers to financial success in delivering services that address the developmental needs of young children. Working alone at home can be isolating. Caring for children is physically and emotionally demanding. Too often, FCC can be insufficiently remunerative to justify the business’ continued existence and the provider’s long-term commitment to a career in early care and education.

Family Child Care Networks can address these barriers. To increase the supply of infant and toddler care; improve the quality of licensed home-based child care; expand the options available to working parents; and alleviate the social isolation, lack of professional training, and inadequate compensation that many FCC providers face, the OEC has been cultivating a system of geographically defined staffed family child care networks (SFCCN or networks).

Under the OEC’s theory of change, SFCC networks add a needed layer of systemic capacity and help cultivate the conditions for providers’ success. As a result, FCC businesses that join a network will be more likely to survive; produce rewarding careers for providers; and expand the supply of high-quality early education and care for young

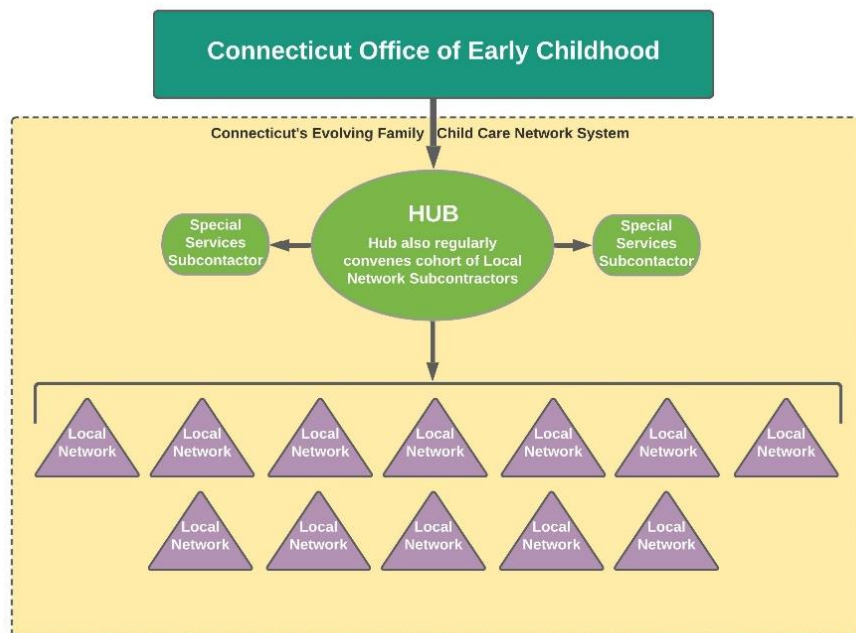
¹ A home child care setting consisting of a private family home caring for not more than six children, including the provider’s own children not in school full time.

² As of December 2020, based on “CT Cares for Family Child Care” internal report, prepared by the University of Connecticut-School of Social Work

³ Parr, E., Pilon, K., Polar, J. and Mukherjee, B. (2020). Review of Early Childhood Education Business Needs Survey. The OEC-UConn Research Partnership. Retrieved at: <https://www.ctoec.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Early-Childhood-Education-Needs-Business-Survey.pdf>

children – especially for infants and toddlers. SFCCNs currently cultivate family child care providers' success by:

- Supporting existing home-based family child care businesses and assisting new ones to establish themselves;
- Enhancing the ability of providers to address the developmental needs of children in their care and support parents using their services;
- Retaining experienced FCC providers through measures designed to make FCC personally, professionally, and financially rewarding for these early childhood educators; and
- Expanding the range of external resources available to these business owners to achieve these goals.



Since 2018, the OEC has contracted with local nonprofit organizations to organize and operate these [regional, community-based family child care networks](#). Network operators recruit state licensed home-based family child care providers and individuals interested in becoming licensed family child care providers as members. Network operators also develop and implement services for their members. Staff from the different networks convene regularly as a cohort to share their experiences, emerging and promising best practices, to exchange information, and to plan and coordinate activities.

From an initial pilot of 6 networks, there are now 12 regional networks spread across the state. As the networks continue to mature, and as network operators scale-up their membership and service offerings, the OEC is committed to ensuring that the overall SFCCN system develops equitably and consistently.

Currently, regional network operators include small-to-medium sized nonprofit organizations and school-based family resource centers, each with its own strengths and specialties. This can lead to some irregularity between the services and opportunities available to FCC members at different networks. For example, some network operators have direct experience providing social services; others are skilled at referral coordination. Some network operators are comfortable coaching FCC providers on the

operational aspects of managing a child care business; others are more steeped in family engagement and pedagogy.

While the variance in individual network operators' expertise was appropriate in earlier stages of the system, going forward, OEC wants to ensure that all FCC providers can receive a broad spectrum of consistent and quality support services and developmental opportunities – regardless of where they are located or who their exact network operator is.

Project Objectives

To continue supporting the OEC's overall child care policy objectives and ensure consistent and equitable growth between networks, the OEC has decided to issue this RFP for a contractor to provide leadership in building out and strengthening this infrastructure of staffed family child care networks. The proposed contract will fund a "Hub," an intermediary organization that serves as the superstructure for this service delivery system. This newly funded Hub will be responsible for augmenting, scaling, and coordinating the services of the regional staffed family child care networks; and for managing the performance of this system and the individual networks.

Operating under a master contract with the OEC, one of the Hub's first tasks will be to partner with the OEC to prepare a competitive Request for Proposals to select regional networks to serve family child care providers statewide. The Hub will contract directly with the regional networks, with contracts expected to be fully executed by July 1, 2022. The Hub will then regularly convene this cohort of regional networks to plan, coordinate, and deliver the system's suite of services. (Please note that to avoid conflicts of interest, the contractor selected as the Hub will not be permitted to bid for a regional network role in the next network procurement cycle.)

While the proposed structure is pyramidal, the Hub's role, and its challenge, is to mobilize the knowledge and experience of the SFCC networks through the exercise of **facilitative leadership**. According to the Interaction Institute, one of the foremost practitioners of this leadership style:

Facilitative leaders are able to tap the power of teamwork and collaboration to achieve mission-critical goals. They seize opportunities for process improvement and hold themselves and others accountable for performance and results. This empowers individuals and teams to take more initiative. People want to perform for and with leaders they trust and respect. Facilitative leaders 'walk the talk' and inspire people to do the same.⁴

Unlike conventional top-down leadership based on positional authority, the Hub's facilitative leadership role requires the ability to skillfully balance three components of productive collaboration: a group process that brings out the best in participating network organizations, builds trusting and respectful relationships among participants, and produces shared and measurable mission-critical performance and results. Respondents to this RFP will need to marshal evidence that demonstrates a history of skillfully leading the type of productive, collaborative initiatives the OEC seeks to initiate by funding the Hub as an intermediary situated between the state government and practitioners operating statewide.

⁴ Interaction Institute for Social Change. Retrieved at: <https://interactioninstitute.org/> on 27 May 2021.

Vision for Success

To date, the SFCCN system has relied on the regional networks to deliver technical assistance to their members, including training, peer support, and coaching. In this framework the networks will continue to provide the “retail” level in-person (or virtual) services to their member family child care providers.

The addition of the Hub will **(1) institutionalize and make more effective the networks as the direct service delivery system** for FCC providers. More ambitiously, with the introduction of this intermediary structure, the OEC seeks to **(2) formalize the emergent communities of practice capacity-building model and introduce [shared services](#) concepts** into its system of FCC support.

Enhancing the Tiered Service Delivery System

The new statewide intermediary will provide implementation leadership for the OEC’s SFCCN infrastructure. Specifically, the Hub will:

- contract with and oversee the performance of the regional networks,
- survey networks and/or providers and analyze data to better understand system, regional, and provider-level needs;
- engage the networks in continuous improvement processes to achieve OEC’s FCC supply and quality goals;
- track metrics to gauge the impact of this service delivery system and its component activities;
- increase the coordination among the networks;
- develop and implement an automated performance management data collection system;
- expand and coordinate access to specialized technical assistance and support resources to the networks and their members; and,
- oversee implementation of a web-based platform that Connecticut’s FCC providers will be able to use to manage the financial and administrative tasks associated with running their businesses.

Meanwhile, the networks will continue to:

- Recruit FCC providers to join their network;
- Manage member relations to establish trust, engagement, a sense of group identity;
- Organize, promote, and facilitate regular monthly community of practice meetings of their members;
- Determine the pedagogical, business development, parent support and professional development needs of their members, both individually and collectively; and
- Arrange professional development training workshops, technical assistance, and coaching for their members.

More specifically, the tables on the following pages outline the Tiered Service Delivery model the OEC is currently implementing with the SFCCNs. The tiers are defined by both the priority level and the complexity of the services.

Regional network operators are responsible for direct implementation of the services and activities described in the first two columns of the tables, whereas the Hub will be responsible for building the capacity of regional network operators to implement these services and activities. Additionally, the Hub will be responsible for analyzing progress

through the measures articulated in the “Data Collection” column. Please note that the “Data Collection” column represents the OEC’s current thinking on network performance metrics; specific metrics may be added or revised as the Hub works with the OEC, network operators, and providers to further refine the service delivery system.

Tier 1 Service Delivery		
Service Description	Activities	Data Collection
Membership: Engage FCC providers in the Network to help them improve business and pedagogical practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit new members Sustain existing members Sign MOUs⁵ with members Engage members in Network services/activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of signed MOUs Membership retention
Service Navigation: Connect FCC members to relevant services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate members regarding the value of services Promote use of services Connect members to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member participation in Network meetings Member participation in Network training sessions Member uptake of offered services Member completion of intensive service programs
Licensing Support: Grow the number of licensed FCC providers and ensure licensing in good standing for FCC members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify community members interested in becoming licensed Schedule and offer training using the Toolkit guidance Distribute the Toolkit materials Support members with licensing violations to correct areas of concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of community members that attend licensing training Number that complete licensing training Number of Toolkit materials distributed Percentage of training participants that become licensed Licensing status of members
Business Practices Training and Coaching: Improved Business Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide OEC-approved business training sessions to members Collect BAS⁶ data from training participants Use data collected to coach providers to improve practices Use data to refer providers to more intensive services, as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of providers that attend training Percentage of participants that complete sections 2, 4, 5 & 9 of BAS Percentage of members that receive coaching on these topics
Family Engagement & Community Resources Training and Coaching: Improved Pedagogical Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide OEC-approved pedagogical training sessions to members Collect baseline data from members through sections 7 & 8 of BAS Use data collected to coach providers to improve practices Use data to refer providers to more intensive services, as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of providers that attend training sessions Percentage of participants that complete sections 7 & 8 of BAS Percentage of members that receive coaching on these topics

Tier 2- 3 Service Delivery		
Service Description	Activities	Data Collection
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Participation &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support providers in completing CACFP enrollment forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased percentage of providers across all networks that participate in food program

⁵ Memorandum of Understanding

⁶ Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care

Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support providers in selecting a food program sponsor • Support providers in understanding and complying with all nutritional and administrative aspects of the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase to provider revenue
Tax Prep Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide free or reduced cost tax preparation to providers • Assist providers in organizing their income and expense data • Assist providers in calculating their time-space percentage • Explain the completed tax return to the provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in net revenue between the two most recent tax returns • Provider satisfaction with the service
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review provider liability insurance • Support provider in accessing the complete coverage needed at the lowest possible price 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in cost of liability insurance • Changes in liability coverage • Provider satisfaction with the service
Infant Mental Health Endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer endorsement course work • Assess providers to award the endorsement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage that complete training • Percentage that achieve endorsement
NAFCC Accreditation Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to provider requests for information about the NAFCC accreditation process • Assist providers in accessing resources to reduce or minimize the cost of NAFCC accreditation • Assist providers to complete the self-study process and submit materials • Assist providers to prepare for the additional components of the accreditation process • Linking to OEC scholarship fund for provider's accessing credit based course work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of members that use funding available to purchase self-study materials • Percentage of those members that start the self-study process and that complete the self-study • Percentage of those that complete the self-study that become NAFCC accredited

Communities of Practice

Education credentials and professional development workshops furnish an indispensable foundation for prospective early childhood educators. Applying that knowledge, however, requires skills and experiences acquired through less formal channels. Unlike the explicit knowledge acquired in a classroom, being an effective early childhood educator depends on tacit knowhow absorbed through observation, problem-solving and interactions with other practitioners. The *practice* of early childhood education is where the rubber meets the road.

Communities of Practice bring together groups of people who interact on an on-going basis around a shared interest. A book about communities of practice describes them this way:

These people don't necessarily work together every day, but they meet because they find value in their interactions. As they spend time together, they typically share information, insight, and advice. They help each other solve problems. They discuss their situations, their aspirations, and their needs. They ponder common issues,

explore ideas, and act as sounding boards...However they accumulate knowledge, they become informally bound by the value that they find in learning together. This value is not merely instrumental for their work. It also accrues in the personal satisfaction of knowing colleagues who understand each other's perspectives and of belonging to an interesting group of people. Over time, they develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices and approaches. They also develop personal relationships and established ways of interacting. They may even develop a common sense of identity. They become a community of practice.⁷

During the pilot implementation of the SFCC networks model, the OEC observed communities of practice emerging organically and recognized this as a valuable organizing framework for achieving policy objectives. Communities of practice are composed of FCC providers who meet regularly around their shared interest in the business and practice of early childhood education. These networks are nurtured by the SFCC network operators, each of which has significant experience in the early childhood field. The network operators plan regular, mostly monthly, membership meetings. These gatherings are both social and professional development events. They build a sense of community among providers who would otherwise operate in isolation. The coordinating organizations' staffs build relationships with each provider. This establishes a foundation of trust that makes it possible for the staff to visit the FCC home to observe, coach, and provide expert advice. The network's staff conducts needs assessments and, in partnership with members, plans interventions.

That stability and professionalism nurtured through these networks make it possible to integrate FCC into the state's system of early childhood development. These outcomes, in turn, should result in greater professional rewards and lead to longer periods of stable business operation. The OEC's experience indicates that SFCC networks foster a sense of community among their members, a greater sense of professional identity, cooperative strategies for enhancing earnings, and adoption of more developmentally oriented professional practices.

As the SFCCN system begins its next stage of maturation, the Hub will help embed an additional layer of intentionality into the management of these communities of practice by bringing together the network operators themselves. The formalization of a community of practice for the network operators will provide a cross-regional, state-wide structure for identifying common challenges and the dissemination of promising solutions.

Shared Services

Working in close partnership with the OEC, the Hub will be responsible for promoting the adoption of shared services across all regional networks. Shared services harness the economies of scale and technology to access information, to deliver cost savings, and enable providers to focus their most limited resource – their time – to meet the developmental needs of the children in their care.

For example, the [ctSHARES](#) website enables providers to cost-effectively tap into a vast reservoir of resources collected by leading early education leaders from across the country. The site provides access to cost-saving discounts created by the pooled purchasing power of thousands of providers from multiple states that have built their own websites using a shared internet platform. On ctSHARES, providers can get ideas for activities to do with children. It can also save providers many hours of work by

⁷ Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W.M. (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Harvard Business School Press. Boston, MA. pp. 4-5.

tapping the site's database of vetted document templates, like forms and parent manuals, that providers can download and customize.

The shared services movement in the early education and care sector has prompted the more widespread adoption of child care management software (CCMS). These "software as service" platforms have enormous potential to improve the work environment for providers.

First, CCMS reduces time spent on administrative tasks, freeing up hours to focus on children and families, while giving providers a more manageable work-life balance. Second, providers using CCMS generate consistent, timely invoices, often collecting fees electronically. CCMS can also improve enrollment through wait-list management, online tour scheduling, and electronic enrollment processes. Additionally, electronic record keeping of time and expenses facilitates more robust reporting on annual tax returns, resulting in greater deductions and higher earnings. Finally, the data collected through CCMS provides critical intelligence about the strength of the business. Eventually, CCMS may make it possible to seamlessly transfer data with the state's data systems to inform policy and practice decisions and expedite state subsidy payments to participating providers.

C. SCOPE OF SERVICE DESCRIPTION

Organizational Expectations

As a new "superstructure" that did not formally exist prior to this RFP, the contractor ultimately selected for the Hub role will need to be adaptable, responsive, capable of coordinating multiple stakeholders, fiscally responsible, and strategically aligned to the OEC's vision for success. The Hub should be willing to continually adjust its programming and processes as the SFCCN system evolves over the course of this three-year contract. In particular, the OEC is interested in potential respondents with the following qualifications:

- **Early Care and Education Expertise** - The OEC will accept responses to this RFP from organizations for whom the field of early care and education is central to their mission and business activities. The ideal respondent possesses deep knowledge of early childhood development – including pedagogical, infant, and toddler care practices – and familiarity with the ecosystem of organizations, governing entities, and funding streams that support the field of early childhood education. The ideal respondent would also be knowledgeable in Connecticut's child care workforce and regulatory environment.
- **Track Record of Success** – The ideal respondent has an organizational history that illustrates its longevity, capacity to manage innovative and complex programmatic initiatives, and track record in the early care and education field.
- **Innovation and Change Management** – The ideal respondent has the capacity to develop and deliver innovative solutions to sector-wide challenges and to lead a process for facilitating change in the way providers have managed their businesses since their inception.
- **Strategic Alignment** – The ideal respondent's organizational mission and direction aligns with the Hub's proposed function and positionality within Connecticut's family child care infrastructure.

- **Facilitative Leadership** – The ideal respondent would be able to exercise facilitative leadership to build robust supports for family child care providers that successfully integrates home-based programs into the state’s larger early care and education system.
- **Knowledge of State and Regional Nuances** – The ideal respondent has prior knowledge of, or is willing to immerse itself in, Connecticut-wide and region-specific challenges. The ideal respondent would be able to leverage this knowledge to balance regional service adaptations with system-wide goals.
- **Training and Coaching Capabilities** – The ideal respondent has prior experience supporting capacity building initiatives for other organizations. The respondent ultimately selected as the Hub will be expected to organize a system for identifying professional development needs; delivering professional development training; coaching through the SFCC networks; and formulating training and coaching models geared to the needs of family child care providers.
- **Fiscal Management** – The ideal respondent possesses sophisticated financial control systems and would be able to manage complex fiscal arrangements. The Hub will be expected to contract directly with regional network operators – and potentially with other technical assistance providers as the need arises. Additionally, the Hub will need to provide regular financial reporting to the OEC.

Staffing Expectations

- **Governance & Leadership** – The ideal respondent’s governing board, chief executive, and senior staff are actively engaged in the early education and care field and have the ability to provide strategic leadership in this area.
- **Dedicated Personnel** – The creation of a Hub for the SFCCN network is an ambitious endeavor with many dynamic, moving parts. As such, the ideal respondent’s staffing structure and allocation of staff time would reflect a commitment to properly resourcing the Hub’s goals and activities through dedicated personnel.
- **Diverse Workforce** – The ideal respondent has, or is actively working towards, a diverse workforce, with multicultural and multilingual employees.

Service Expectations

- **Target Population** – While the Hub’s primary clients are the staff of different SFCC networks, the contractor selected as the Hub should possess a comprehensive understanding of the different layers of clientele that the SFCCN system serves.
 - **Families** are the ultimate end-users of the SFCCN system. Families who choose home-based child care in Connecticut are often diverse in their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.
 - **FCC Providers** run and operate home-based child care businesses. FCC providers typically identify as self-employed or sole entrepreneurs. The majority are women. In a recent survey of child care businesses with close to 700 FCC respondents who disclosed their race, approximately 28% identified as African American and 15% identified as multiracial, Asian, or another racial

group. Ethnically, about 28% identified as Latinx.⁸ This diversity adds to the cultural, racial, and linguistic abundance in FCC options.

At the same time, however, most FCC providers are not formally trained in infant and toddler development or in business administration. Moreover, like other segments of the child care industry, FCC providers continue to experience significant instability because of the pandemic.

Despite the challenges, FCC providers have displayed admirable resilience in the face of adversity. In May 2020, there were approximately 1,100 open FCC businesses in Connecticut. As of December 2020, that number has grown to over 1,500.

- **SFCC networks** address FCC providers' capacity gaps, supporting FCC providers in both pedagogical and business supports. As noted in earlier parts of this RFP, SFCC networks are typically operated by small and medium sized nonprofits with a regional focus. While the staff at network operators are experts in their regions and in particular services, they may not have state-wide or systems expertise. The introduction of the Hub provides a connective tissue between the different regional networks, solidifying the cohesion of the overall SFCC system's structure.
- **Core Services** - As the SFCCN system continues to evolve, the OEC anticipates that the Hub will continually adapt its supportive activities to the various networks' needs. Listed below are the eight core services that the Hub is expected to provide during the three-year contract period – either directly or through subcontractors – as well as aspirational services that the OEC envisions the Hub working towards.

The Hub will not be expected to provide all eight core services immediately upon contract execution; the OEC recognizes that additional planning and ramp-up phases will be necessary. Respondents should articulate how they plan to sequence the introduction of different service offerings in a work plan submitted with their proposals (see "Main Proposal Submission Questions & Prompts" beginning on page 31 of this RFP for additional explanation of work plans). Detailed descriptions of each of the expected and aspirational service areas are also provided in tables below:

Expected Core Services

1. Oversee Infrastructure of SFCC Networks
2. Strategic Planning and Program Development
3. Marketing and Enrollment
4. Business Readiness Assessments
5. Capacity Building and Technical Assistance
6. Network Capacity Building
7. Resource Commons
8. Data Collection and Evaluation

Aspirational Services

9. Business Management
10. Enhanced Marketing and Enrollment
11. Workforce Development

⁸Parr, E., Pilon, K., Polar, J. and Mukherjee, B. (2020). Review of Early Childhood Education Business Needs Survey. The OEC-UConn Research Partnership. Retrieved at: <https://www.ctoec.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Early-Childhood-Education-Needs-Business-Survey.pdf>

Description of Expected Core Services <i>Services that should be provided during the 3-year contract period</i>	
Oversee Infrastructure of SFCC Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with OEC, prepare and execute on a multi-year strategic implementation plan to ensure that the SFCC Network follows a phased timeline for introducing and advancing the three-tier FCC shared services framework of pedagogical and business practices, with immediate focus on tier one service navigation activities. • Contract with and oversee the performance of the regional SFCC Networks. • Monitor service offerings across regional networks to ensure that services address needs of local providers and reflect system goals. • Create and track metrics to gauge each networks' outcomes, the effectiveness of this system's programmatic initiatives, and the system's overall impact on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the number of providers affiliated with a SFCC Network ▪ supply and quality of child care services delivered by Network members ▪ network member engagement ▪ longevity and stability of FCC businesses ▪ evidence of career attachment and provider well-being ▪ enrollment ▪ net after-tax income • Convene and facilitate the Networks as a community of practice to share information, improve programmatic activities, identify needs, and plan and coordinate service delivery for the network through statewide contracts with the hub for mental health consultations, training programs, etc. • Provide leadership-level presence in the Connecticut's early childhood system to ensure that FCC and the emerging FCC system are represented and well-integrated into the state's larger early childhood system including with OEC and its initiatives and contractors.
Strategic Planning and Program Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene network cohort, representatives from the provider community, and OEC liaison on a quarterly basis to chart the buildout of Connecticut's SFCC Network system, identifying high yield innovations in terms of provider well-being, business performance or programmatic quality and resourcing. • In collaboration with OEC and network partners, schedule, resource, plan and implement strategic initiatives prioritized through the strategic planning process.
Marketing and Enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the networks to ensure their marketing aligns with the OEC's campaigns. • Ensure third-party child care search engines and organizations list network-affiliated FCC providers and receive updated data on availability. • In collaboration with the network cohort, design promotional campaign to recruit FCC providers to join a network and to retain network members.
Business Readiness Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support networks in assessing the readiness of their provider members to use digital technology and assess the capacity of the networks to support FCC providers as they adopt technology.
Capacity Building and Technical Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In coordination with OEC, continue to ensure the availability and use of specialized services and programs of need to FCC providers. • Building on existing supports (such as the Professional Registry, nursing consultation, Early Childhood Consultation Partnership, and Business PD & Coaching via Women's Business Development Council), offer or procure NAFCC accreditation consultation, infant mental health endorsement training, and Child and Adult Care Food Program participation coaching programming. Networks will refer member providers to these services as needed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In consultation with the cohort of SFCC networks, develop and maintain an inventory of professional development and technical assistance resources FCC providers might need to access to improve the quality of their services and measures to sustain and improve the performance of their FCC as a business enterprise. Support networks in navigating the Quality Recognition and Improvement system.
Network Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train staff at each network to become certified Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale and Business Administration Scale validators. Develop a coaching model to insure consistency and quality in the one-on-one services networks will be delivering. Because of the relationship-based connection networks are expected to cultivate with their members, one of the most valuable support services for providers is individualized coaching.
Resource Commons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure FCC providers can access ctSHARES and are aware of the editable templates for forms, agreements and manuals available on that platform. If needed, work with the contractor for ctSHARES to supplement ctSHARES' "document bank" with FCC and or Connecticut-specific templates.
Data Collection and Evaluation of Network Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboratively with networks and providers, develop a set of outcomes the networks and the hub are seeking to achieve and define measurable indicators for each outcome. Develop reporting system for networks to report provider-level data on outcomes. Collect outcome measurement data or support networks to collect and report these outcome measures including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network member engagement (e.g. percentage of members who attend more than 60% of their network meetings). Network member NAFCC accreditation. Network member BAS scores. Trust and transparency as demonstrated by the member's openness to in home visits by coaches, consultants and observers using various rating tools. Network member business performance including enrollment rates, bad debt rates, gross and net income, and number of hours worked per week. Career attachment based on years in operation, professional development points from the registry and certifications. Number of new FCC providers licensed within each network region. Absolute number and changes in infant/toddler enrollment. Analyze the performance of the hub and the network in achieving outcomes. Analyze the performance of the hub and the networks in achieving outcomes and delivering services that meet provider needs Adhere to data privacy, data confidentiality, and data security protocols pursuant to all state and federal data statues, policies, and regulations

Description of Aspirational Services

These services reflect goals the OEC would like to work towards over the long-term. While these services may not reach a fully operational point during the 3-year contract, the Hub should be actively preparing the SFCCN infrastructure for future implementation.

Business Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee implementation of a CCMS, preferably an on-the-shelf product customizable for CT, for FCC providers to use to manage the financial and administrative tasks associated with running their businesses. Train the SFCCN in the implementation of the Business Administrative Scale (BAS) to measure the overall quality of business practices in the family child care setting.
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Enhanced Marketing and Enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in partnership with OEC and its communications firm, plan and implement an ongoing public relations campaign to raise awareness of network-affiliated FCC homes as a child care option
Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In consultation with the cohort of networks, determine the feasibility of organizing a group of early educators interested in temporary placement at FCC homes as paid substitute caregivers, including procedures for screening applicants for the substitute pool, a mechanism for scheduling substitutes and a compensation schedule. Explore software systems in use to operationalize substitute pools and, as feasible, serve as the coordinating entity that recruits, employs, trains, schedules, and pays substitutes. Support networks in developing a system that enhances their ability to recruit and hire OEC-approved substitute early educators and caregivers, in addition to recruiting, training, and building upon a registry system for those who are already OEC-approved early educators and caregivers

Data and Technology Expectations

- Technology Assessments:** A key dimension of the infrastructure OEC seeks to introduce to family child care practitioners is digital technology to cost-effectively manage administrative and financial functions in a manner that will maximize the earnings potential of these home-based businesses and minimize the time providers spend managing their businesses. Through business partnerships, or through its own internal staffing, the ideal respondent would have the capacity to conduct technology needs assessments; develop affordable system specifications; and understand the challenges associated with procuring and installing hardware and software and with getting FCC providers to adopt and use these technology tools.
- Technology Utilization:** In later stages of the contract, after assessments are completed and technology systems are put in place, the Hub may support networks in managing more back-office functions, such as billing processes. The ideal respondent would have the capacity and know-how to efficiently manage digitized administrative services.
- Data Security, Privacy, and Confidentiality:** The ideal respondent is able to secure all data pursuant to all state and federal data statutes, regulations, and policies.

Financial Expectations

- Fiscal Health** –The ideal respondent is in a fiscally sound position, as determined through clean opinions documented in the last 3 years of audited financial statements (or whatever number of years are available, for newer organizations); a recent organizational budget; and the respondent's most recent statement of financial activities (profit and loss statement).
- Financial Management** – The ideal respondent has strong financial systems and reporting capabilities; would be able to manage contracts with the cohort of SFCC Networks and with third parties contracted to deliver training and technical assistance services to the networks and their members; and would be able to provide business finance expertise to the cohort of networks and their members. Respondents should be using Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

Budget Expectations

- **Program Funding Sources:** This contract will be funded through a combination of federal American Rescue Plan Act relief funds and Child Care Development funds.
- **Total Available Funding & Award Period:** The contractor selected as the Hub will manage up to \$4,262,500 in funding over a three-year period. The estimated annual breakdown is not to exceed the following:
 - Year 1: \$1,132,500
 - Year 2: \$1,865,000
 - Year 3: \$1,265,000

In the first project year (January 2022 – December 2022), up to 47% of funding (\$532,500) is expected to be subcontracted out to regional network operators and specialized nursing consultants.

In the second project year (January 2023 – December 2023), up to 57% of funding (\$1,065,000) is expected to be subcontracted out to regional network operators and other specialized nursing consultants.

In the third project year (January 2024 – December 2024), up to 84% of funding (\$1,065,000) is expected to be subcontracted out to regional network operators and specialized nursing consultants.

Budgets submitted in response to this RFP should reflect these spending priorities. The OEC will work closely with the selected contractor on a regular basis to analyze funding and ensure that both the Hub and the regional network operators are sufficiently resourced and functioning efficiently, given the available funding.

To better support respondents in developing their budgets, the table below represents the OEC's best estimates at this time on how funds might be allocated between network operators and specialized nursing consultants.

Please note that the figures below are estimates; the OEC is interested and open to respondents (and ultimately, the Hub) proposing different frameworks for allocating funds.

Year	Network Operators Estimate	Nurse Consultants Estimate
Year 1	\$500,000	\$32,500
Year 2	\$1,000,000	\$65,000
Year 3	\$1,000,000	\$65,000

- **Cost Standards:** Respondents' budget and planned expenditures for this RFP must comply with the cost standards published by the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. The cost standards are available online at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/POSCostStandards101816pdf.pdf?la=en>

As this contracted is primarily funded through federal grants, respondents are also expected to adhere to standards prescribed by the Federal Office of Management and Budget Cost Principles, which can be found online at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/management-and-budget-office>

In order to comply with State & Federal requirements, awarded providers must maintain separate accounting/cost centers for State and Federal funding using generally accepted accounting practices. The OEC will reach out to the selected contractor about allowable expenditures.

In addition to required compliance with the published cost standards, respondents are advised that a responsive budget must limit annual administrative costs to 10% of the total budget. State or federal funding, by activity, will be determined at point of contracting for final determination of administrative cap.

Per OPM Cost Allocation guidelines, unused/unexpended State funding at the end of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) has to be returned to the State and cannot be carried forward to the following SFY. Federal funds can be carried forward to the next Federal Budget year with OEC review and approval.

D. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT/DATA REPORTING

As part of the State's commitment to becoming more outcomes-oriented, OEC seeks to actively and regularly collaborate with contractors to enhance contract management, improve results, and adjust service delivery and policy based on learning what works. Just as the Hub will work in close collaboration with the individual networks to manage their performance, the awarded contractor should expect to partner extensively with the OEC staff in its own continuous learning and improvement processes.

OEC will work with the awarded contractor to set expectations for what contract management will look like. At minimum, this will include:

- Frequent, regular meetings focused on project planning; assessing strategy and progress towards system goals; assessing network satisfaction rates; understanding disparities and disproportionalities between networks; and advancing greater adoption of shared services among networks and their members;
- Timely submission of progress updates and fiscal reports; and
- Open lines of communication to proactively address challenges and course correct.

As the data needed to monitor hub and network activities expand, the awarded contractor may be required to enter and adhere to data sharing and reporting agreements with the OEC. Should they occur, the awarded contractor will be required to notify the OEC of any data breaches within 24 hours.

E. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are two levels of performance measures that will be regularly analyzed throughout the lifetime of this contract. The first, as noted in earlier parts of the RFP, is the performance of regional networks in direct service delivery. The second is the performance of the Hub in managing the overall SFCCN system. While the contractor selected as the Hub will be responsible for managing the performance of the regional networks, the OEC staff will direct evaluations of the Hub's performance.

Examples of the metrics that the Hub may utilize to analyze regional networks' performance were listed on pages 13 - 14 of this RFP. The table below highlights outcomes of interest that the OEC may examine during the course of this contract to understand the Hub's performance. The table below does not represent an exhaustive list; rather, it is an indicator of how the OEC may approach analyzing its desired outcomes. The OEC looks forward to working with the Hub to collaboratively refine and define additional important performance metrics.

Desired Outcome	Potential Metric	Potential Data Source
Network operators feel supported in their ability to work directly with FCC providers and are actively working towards a unified vision for the SFCCN system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service satisfaction rates• Network perception rates	Network surveys
Service offerings and developmental opportunities are consistent across networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• # and type of services offered by network• Service utilization rates	Service inventory
Network membership grows equitably across regions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Membership demographics by network	Membership database

III. Proposal Submission Overview

A. SUBMISSION FORMAT

- 1. Required Outline.** All proposals must follow the required outline presented in Section IV – Proposal Outline. Proposals that fail to follow the required outline will be deemed non-responsive and not evaluated.
- 2. Cover Sheet.** The Cover Sheet is Page 1 of the proposal. The Cover Sheet should include the following:
 - RFP Name or Number
 - Legal Name
 - FEIN
 - Street Address
 - Town/City/State/Zip
 - Contact Person
 - Title
 - Phone Number
 - E-Mail Address
 - Authorized Official
 - Title
 - Signature
- 3. Table of Contents.** All proposals must include a Table of Contents that conforms with the required proposal outline.
- 4. Executive Summary.** Proposals must include a high-level summary, not exceeding 2 pages, of the main proposal and proposed budget.
- 5. Attachments.** Attachments other than the required Appendices or Forms identified in the RFP are not permitted and will not be evaluated. Further, the required Appendices or Forms must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFP. Failure to abide by these instructions will result in disqualification.
- 5. Style Requirements.** Submitted proposals must conform to the following specifications:
 - Paper Size: 8 ½ x 11 (Letter)
 - Page Limit: Maximum 35 pages for the main body of the proposal (the cover letter, executive summary, budget, and required attachments do not count towards this 35-page limit)
 - Font Size: 12
 - Font Type: Times New Roman
 - Margins: Normal (1 inch)
 - Line Spacing: 1 ½
- 6. Pagination.** The proposer's name must be displayed in the header of each page. All pages, including the required Appendices and Forms, must be numbered in the footer.
- 7. Declaration of Confidential Information.** Proposers are advised that all materials associated with this procurement are subject to the terms of the Freedom of

Information Act (FOIA), the Privacy Act, and all rules, regulations and interpretations resulting from them. If a proposer deems that certain information required by this RFP is confidential, the proposer must label such information as CONFIDENTIAL prior to submission. In subsection F of the proposal submission, the proposer must reference where the information labeled CONFIDENTIAL is located in the proposal.

EXAMPLE: Section G.1.a. For each subsection so referenced, the proposer must provide a convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify an exemption of the information from release under the FOIA. The explanation and rationale must be stated in terms of (a) the prospective harm to the competitive position of the proposer that would result if the identified information were to be released and (b) the reasons why the information is legally exempt from release pursuant to C.G.S. § 1-210(b).

8. **Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Statement.** Proposers must include a disclosure statement concerning any current business relationships (within the last three (3) years) that pose a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85. A conflict of interest exists when a relationship exists between the proposer and a public official (including an elected official) or State employee that may interfere with fair competition or may be adverse to the interests of the State. The existence of a conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, evidence of wrongdoing. A conflict of interest may, however, become a legal matter if a proposer tries to influence, or succeeds in influencing, the outcome of an official decision for their personal or corporate benefit. The OEC will determine whether any disclosed conflict of interest poses a substantial advantage to the proposer over the competition, decreases the overall competitiveness of this procurement, or is not in the best interests of the State. In the absence of any conflict of interest, a proposer must affirm such in the disclosure statement. *Example: "[name of proposer] has no current business relationship (within the last three (3) years) that poses a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85."*

B. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

1. **Evaluation Process.** It is the intent of the OEC to conduct a comprehensive, fair, and impartial evaluation of proposals received in response to this RFP. When evaluating proposals, negotiating with successful proposers, and awarding contracts, the OEC will conform with its written procedures for POS and PSA procurements (pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-217) and the State's Code of Ethics (pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 1-84 and 1-85). Final funding allocation decisions will be determined during contract negotiation.
2. **Evaluation Committee.** The OEC will designate an Evaluation Committee to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this RFP. The Evaluation Committee will be composed of individuals, the OEC staff or other designees as deemed appropriate. The contents of all submitted proposals, including any confidential information, will be shared with the Evaluation Committee. Only proposals found to be responsive (that is, complying with all instructions and requirements described herein) will be reviewed, rated, and scored. Proposals that fail to comply with all instructions may be rejected after review by the Evaluation Committee Chairs. The Evaluation Committee shall evaluate all proposals that meet the Minimum Submission Requirements by score and rank ordered and make recommendations for awards. The OEC Commissioner will make the final selection. Attempts by any proposer (or representative of any proposer) to contact or influence any member of the Evaluation Committee may result in disqualification of the proposer.
3. **Minimum Submission Requirements.** To be eligible for evaluation, proposals must (1) meet the Proposal Format requirements; (2) follow the required Proposal

Outline; and (3) be complete. Proposals that fail to follow instructions or satisfy these minimum submission requirements may be disqualified upon review of the Evaluation Committee Chairs. The OEC will reject any proposal that deviates significantly from the requirements of this RFP.

3. **Evaluation Criteria and Weights.** Proposals meeting the Minimum Submission Requirements will be evaluated according to the established criteria. The criteria are the objective standards that the Evaluation Committee will use to evaluate the technical merits of the proposals. Only the criteria listed below will be used to evaluate proposals. The weights are disclosed below.

Evaluation Criterion Title	% of Total	What would a top score look like?
Organizational Strengths	25%	<p>The ideal respondent...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates sustained commitment to and credibility in the early childhood field, with a history of thought leadership and innovation, as well as an experienced staff and a governing board that has subject-matter expertise. • Has the ability to leverage its own capacity/infrastructure to provide training, coaching, and other support services to the SFCCN system, as demonstrated through a strong staffing plan with personnel who individually or cumulatively possess the range of skills related to both the operational side of running FCC businesses and the pedagogical side of child development. • Clearly articulates a cultural humility and equity framework, with an explanation of how that framework will shape both internal processes and external-facing activities. • Provides past examples and/or future-oriented decision-making frameworks illustrating how they will be responsive and adaptable to a dynamic programming environment. • Articulates a process for identifying both state-wide and regional needs to simultaneously build a more cohesive state SFCCN system and tend to the unique needs of individual networks. • Has prior experience managing state contracts and working collaboratively with public sector partners.
Facilitative Leadership	20%	<p>The ideal respondent...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an ability to engage, interact with, and manage multiple stakeholders • Demonstrates an ability to breakthrough institutional inertia, build a collective sense, and move partners forward along a shared

		<p>strategic vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an ability to balance three components of productive collaboration: a group process that brings out the best in participating network organizations; builds trusting and respectful relationships among participants; and produces shared and measurable mission-critical performance and results • Values openness, transparency, and a willingness to collaborate
IT, Data, Evaluation, and Performance Management	20%	<p>The ideal respondent...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has prior experience developing and measuring key metrics, and utilizing data to generate performance insights • Demonstrates an ability to effectively communicate data-derived insights and build data literacy among stakeholders • Articulates a clear, logical vision for developing and implementing a performance management framework • Has the IT infrastructure and enhanced data reporting capacity in place to manage performance and program evaluation data • Has internal capacity on staff to support evaluation and to manage contractor/subcontractors in this area, as needed • Has the ability to adhere to all state and federal data share statutes, regulations, and policies and can secure all confidential information
Work Plan	15%	<p>The ideal work plan...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers multiple years of project activities, with an emphasis on the early years of implementation • Contains a logical sequencing and phasing of planned activities, with clear milestones articulated • Provides a clear description of relationship-building processes (addressing the Hub-to-networks relationship, network-to-network relationships, and Hub-to-external stakeholder relationships) • Provides a clear description of the project management framework, including when and

		<p>how different staff members will be involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies early project management risks and the strategies used to mitigate risks
Financial Profile	10%	<p>The ideal respondent...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates strong fiscal health as determined through clean opinions in the last 3 years of audited financial statements (or whatever number of years are available, for newer organizations); a recent organizational budget; and the respondent's most recent statement of financial activities (profit and loss statement) Responsibly and proactively manages its financial systems, with clearly defined internal controls Has prior experience managing complex financial reporting requirements Uses Generally Accepted Accounting Principles with financial systems
Budget and Staffing Plan	10%	<p>The ideal budget and staffing plans...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe a reasonable, cost-effective use of funds, with the total monetary "ask" within or under budget, and the majority of funds going to network subcontracts and core network activities Reflect a strategic commitment to the overall goals of developing the SFCCN network in the way that monetary, in-kind, and staffing resources are allocated Include resumes of key staff and/or draft job descriptions of staff that need to be hired

Note:

As part of its evaluation of the Staffing Plan, the Evaluation Committee will consider the proposer's demonstrated commitment to affirmative action, as required by the Regulations of CT State Agencies § 46A-68j-30(10).

- 5. Proposer Selection.** Upon completing its evaluation of proposals, the Evaluation Committee will submit the rankings of all proposals to the OEC Commissioner. The final selection of a successful proposer is at the discretion of the OEC Commissioner. Any proposer selected will be so notified and awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the OEC. Such negotiations may, but will not automatically, result in a contract. Pursuant to Governor M. Jodi Rell's Executive Order No. 3, any resulting contract will be posted on the State Contracting Portal. All unsuccessful proposers will be notified by e-mail or U.S. mail, at the OEC's discretion, about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process. The OEC reserves the right to decline to award contracts for activities in which the OEC Commissioner considers there are not adequate respondents.

- 6. 6. Debriefing.** Within ten (10) days of receiving notification from the OEC, unsuccessful proposers may contact the Official Contact and request information about the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date or the postmark date on the notification envelope will be considered "day one" of the ten (10) days. If unsuccessful proposers still have questions after receiving this information, they may contact the Official Contacts and request a meeting with the OEC to discuss the evaluation process and their proposals. If held, the debriefing meeting will not include any comparisons of unsuccessful proposals with other proposals. The OEC will schedule and hold the debriefing meeting within fifteen (15) days of the request. The OEC will not change, alter, or modify the outcome of the evaluation or selection process as a result of any debriefing meeting.
- 7. Appeal Process.** Pursuant to General Statutes § 4e-36 (a), any bidder or proposer on a state contract may contest the solicitation or award of a contract to a subcommittee of the State Contracting Standards Board. Such contest shall be submitted, in writing, not later than fourteen days after such bidder or proposer knew or should have known of the facts giving rise to such contest and shall be limited to the procedural elements of the solicitation or award process, or claims of an unauthorized or unwarranted, noncompetitive selection process.
- 8. Contract Execution.** Any contract developed and executed as a result of this RFP is subject to the OEC's contracting procedures, which may include approval by the Office of the Attorney General. Fully executed and approved contracts will be posted on State Contracting Portal and the OEC website.

IV. Required Proposal Submission Outline

- A. Cover Sheet**
 - B. Table of Contents**
 - C. Executive Summary**
 - D. Main Proposal**
 - E. Attachments** (clearly referenced to summary and main proposal where applicable)
 - F. Declaration of Confidential Information**
 - G. Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Statement**
 - H. Statement of Assurances**
-

A. Cover Sheet

The respondent must include a Cover Sheet capturing the following information:

- RFP Name or Number
- Legal Name
- FEIN
- Street Address
- Town/City/State/Zip
- Contact Person
- Title
- Phone Number
- E-Mail Address
- Authorized Official
- Title
- Signature

Legal Name is defined as the name of private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality submitting the proposal. *Contact Person* is defined as the individual who can provide additional information about the proposal or who has immediate responsibility for the proposal. *Authorized Official* is defined as the individual empowered to submit a binding offer on behalf of the proposer to provide services in accordance with the terms and provisions described in this RFP and any amendments or attachments hereto.

B. Table of Contents

Respondents must include a Table of Contents that lists sections and subsections with page numbers that follow the organization outline and sequence for this proposal.

C. Executive Summary

The page limitation for this section is two (2) pages briefly describing how the respondent meets the eligibility criteria outlined in the Proposal Overview and a brief overview of why the respondent should be selected for the activities highlighted in the scope of services.

D. Main Proposal Submission Questions & Prompts

*****Please note the maximum total page length for the main proposal submission is 35 pages. Please limit narrative responses to no more than five paragraphs per prompt.** All appendices and other attachments should be referred to in section D and then placed in section E. The OEC Evaluation Committee will not read answers longer than 35 pages in the main proposal section.

Organizational Strengths

- 1. Mission & History:** Provide your organization's mission statement, a brief organizational history, and a description of core programs.
- 2. Organizational Expertise in Early Childhood Education:** Describe your organization's experience and expertise in early childhood education, highlighting knowledge of infant/toddler development in particular.
- 3. Familiarity with Early Childhood Education Delivery System:** Describe your organization's involvement with the early childhood education system, including public policy and workforce issues, program quality, licensing and various performance standards, funding streams (including Care4Kids vouchers, Head Start, School Readiness, USDA Child and Adult Food Program, etc.), early intervention and family engagement.
- 4. Organizational Governance:** Provide a list of your organization's board of directors (and advisory councils, if appropriate) and include a brief summary of their qualifications. Indicate which members have experience in the early childhood space. Also provide a brief explanation of how major strategic and programming decisions are made at your organization, and submit the minutes of your last two board meetings as a required attachment.
- 5. Cultural Humility and Equity:** Describe your organization's framework to advancing equity and applying cultural humility to your work. How is this framework applied *within* your organization, and how does it guide your *programming and project decisions*?
- 6. Strategic Rationale:** Describe the strategic rationale for your organization to step into the Hub role at this point in your history and explain the relevance of your organization's programmatic and operational activities to the proposed Hub role in the SFCC network system.
- 7. Statewide and Regional Support:** Describe any past or current projects your organization has worked on related to statewide and/or regional early care and education issues in Connecticut. How would you go about deepening your knowledge of statewide and regional issues? What approaches would you take to providing equitable resources to all providers statewide, while allowing individual networks the flexibility to support specific providers' regional needs?
- 8. Capacity Building:** Share an example of a current or prior project where your organization supported capacity building for another organization (or cohort of organizations). What was the goal of the project? How did you identify the coaching and technical assistance needs of the recipient organization? How did you incorporate knowledge transfer and sustainability into your coaching or technical

assistance provisions? What internal resources did you leverage to support the other organization(s), and what external resources did you draw on?

- 9. Contract Management:** Describe your experience managing state contracts. How was success defined? What competencies does your organization possess that made the contract management successful? If applicable, what adjustments did you make in between when the contract first started and when it ended to effectively meet the goals of the contract?
- 10. Adaptability Case Study:** Tell us about how your organization responded to the Covid-19 public health crisis, organizationally and programmatically. How did you support your staff members? How did you work with external partners or clients to address their needs? How did you put your equity and cultural humility framework into practice? What did you learn from this experience, what will you carry forward, and what will you let go?

Facilitative Leadership

- 11. Organizational Networks:** List and describe existing organizational partnerships with entities whose expertise complements your capacity in the early education arena. Include any Memoranda of Agreement/Understanding you have with relevant partners and current subcontractors in the required attachments section. (If you do not have any memoranda to include, simply indicate "No relevant memoranda" in your attachment section.)
- 12. Organizational Values:** In establishing a productive collaboration, the Hub will need to demonstrate openness, transparency and collaboration. Describe how your organization puts these values into action in the programs that you operate.
- 13. Productive Collaboration:** The Hub will be required to build productive collaboration and partnerships with the regional SFCC Networks and other early care and education stakeholders. Describe the process that your organization will use that balances the three components of productive collaboration (a group process that brings out the best in participants; builds trusting and respectful relationships; and moves participants towards measurable performance and results). In your response, be specific on how each of the three components are established.
- 14. Stakeholder Management:** Share an example of a time when there was disagreement or dissent between different stakeholders you were working with. How did you address the disagreement? What was the result of your efforts, and/or what would you have done differently based on what you learned from that experience?
- 15. Facilitative Leadership Case Study:** As a Hub, you've identified two regions that serve a similar geographic area and membership demographic. One region seems to be enrolling new members at a much higher rate than the other. What would you do to identify the factors why and help better balance membership growth between the networks? What support would you provide? How would you move the networks toward collaboration rather than competition to further the overall system goals of statewide reach and a unified system?

IT, Data, Evaluation, and Performance Management

- 16. Performance Management:** Describe the process your organization would take to develop a performance management framework that moves SFCC networks and the overall system towards OEC's desired outcomes.

- 17. Technology Partners:** A key strategy for improving the business performance of FCC providers is to introduce technology tools, especially to manage finances, communications, and marketing. Describe how you would analyze provider readiness to adopt and implement digital tools. What internal capacity could you then leverage to support adoption and implementation efforts, and/or how would you identify additional subcontractors to support these processes?
- 18. Data Protocols:** Describe your data security procedures to ensure data collected are kept secure, confidential and complies with all state, federal data share laws, regulations and policies. As a required attachment, share your organization's data privacy policy if one is available. If one is not yet available, describe the process you will take to formalizing data security and privacy into organizational policy.
- 19. Data Case Study:** Suppose that in Year 2 of the project, the networks collectively identify supporting FCC providers in implementing high quality infant/toddler care as their top priority. How would you operationalize this goal? What are metrics you'd propose collecting, and how would you analyze them? How would you communicate your insights back to the networks and use these insights to drive action?

Work Plan

- 20. Work Plan:** As a required attachment, include a multi-year work plan for staging the hub's activities with measurable milestones and outcomes. In your work plan:
- Provide a clear description of the project management framework that will be used;
 - A detailed description of the relationship-building strategies (e.g. activities, processes, facilitation techniques, meeting and feedback structures, etc.) that you plan to implement with various stakeholders, particularly in Year 1; and
 - Mitigation strategies that you may draw on to address risks related to launching the Hub.

Note: The OEC understands that work plans are dynamic documents, and that often, the granular aspects of project implementation will not become clear until the project itself is in motion. As such, high-level descriptions of planned activities in later years of this contract are acceptable. The OEC is particularly interested in understanding how a respondent would:

- Set up the Hub's launch for success;
- Identify the gaps in regions served as you prepare for a competitive RFP for the selection of the next cohort of regional networks;
- Build out Tier 1 Service activities in the first project year; and
- Prepare both the Hub and the SFCC system for the introduction of additional functions in later projects years.

Financial Profile

- 21. Financial Management:** Describe the financial management and internal accounting procedures that will be used to ensure proper financial management, including the fiscal controls designed for accountability. Any respondent to this RFP must agree to maintain its financial records in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (as defined by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants).

22. Financial Reporting: Describe the processes your organization has taken to manage and analyze financial reports – as both a producer/generator of financial reports, and as a consumer/recipient of financial reports.

23. Fiscal Health: As part of the required attachments, include 3 years of audited financial statements, your most recent organizational budget, and your most recent statement of financial activities (profit and loss statement). For respondents who have been incorporated for less than 3 years, include audited financial statements for whatever years you have available.

Budget and Staffing Plans

24. Proposed Budget & Budget Narrative: Submit a detailed budget using the OEC's standard budget template. The budget should reflect how your funding request will be utilized and include a narrative description of the spending plan. Respondents are advised that a responsive budget must limit annual administrative costs to 10% of the total budget.

In the first project year (January 2022 – December 2022), up to 47% of funding (\$532,500) is expected to be subcontracted out to regional network operators and specialized nursing consultants.

In the second project year (January 2023 – December 2023), up to 57% of funding (\$1,065,000) is expected to be subcontracted out to regional network operators and specialized nursing consultants.

In the third project year (January 2024 – December 2024), up to 84% of funding (\$1,065,000) is expected to be subcontracted out to regional network operators and specialized nursing consultants.

Budgets submitted in response to this RFP should reflect these spending priorities. The OEC will work closely with the selected contractor on a regular basis to analyze funding and ensure that both the Hub and the regional network operators are sufficiently resourced and functioning efficiently, given the available funding.

To better support respondents in developing their budgets, the table below represents the OEC's best estimates at this time on how funds might be allocated between network operators and specialized nursing consultants.

Please note that the figures below are estimates; the OEC is interested and open to respondents (and ultimately, the Hub) proposing different frameworks for allocating funds.

Year	Network Operators Estimate	Nurse Consultants Estimate
Year 1	\$500,000	\$32,500
Year 2	\$1,000,000	\$65,000
Year 3	\$1,000,000	\$65,000

25. Staffing Plan: As a required attachment, supply a staffing plan that includes the following:

- A count of your organization's total employees

- A chart indicating where (within which business or program unit) the Hub's staff will be located organizationally
- A detailed explanation of the supervisory structure to be used to oversee the Hub's activities, including the FTE staffing to be devoted to the Hub
- A detailed explanation of how your organization continually works towards diversity and equity at all levels of your workforce. (This could include: plans to diversify your workforce so that it is representative of the communities you serve; increasing the number of multicultural and multilingual employees; leadership pipelines for staff from historically marginalized communities; incorporating antiracist and/or equity lens into staff development; developing decision-making and management structures that incorporate frontline staff and client voice, etc. *This should be specific to your organization and reflective of your unique goals.*)

26. Staff Qualifications: Provide a brief summary of the qualifications and tenure of each key staff member who will be assigned to resourcing the Hub's activities. In the required attachments, also include resumes of key staff. If you plan to staff up, include draft job descriptions for anticipated hires and hiring timelines. (Please compile all resumes and job descriptions into one document, as opposed to sending separate files for each resume or description.)

E. Attachments

Attachments other than the ones identified below are not permitted and will not be evaluated. Further, the required attachments must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFP. Failure to abide by these instructions may result in disqualification.

- Work Plan
- Staffing Plan
- Résumés of Key Personnel
- Memoranda of Agreement/Understanding for Subcontractors (Indicate "No relevant memoranda" if this is not applicable to you)
- Last Three Years of Audited Financial Statements (respondents with less than three years' organizational history should include audited financial statements for whatever years you have available)
- Most Recent Organizational Budget
- Most Recent Statement of Financial Activities (Profit and Loss Statement)
- Minutes from Last Two Board Meetings
- Copy of your data security and privacy policies, if available (Indicate "in progress" or "see main proposal" if your organization does not currently have one in place)
- Proof of nonprofit status (i.e. IRS Determination Letter), if applicable. Indicate "Nonprofit status not applicable" in your attachments section if this does not apply to you.

F. Declaration of Confidential Information

If a proposer deems that certain information required by this RFP is confidential, the proposer must label such information as CONFIDENTIAL prior to submission. The proposer must reference where the information labeled CONFIDENTIAL is located in the proposal. *EXAMPLE: Section G.1.a.* For each subsection so referenced, the proposer must provide a convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify an exemption of the information from release under the FOIA. The explanation and rationale must be stated in terms of (a)

the prospective harm to the competitive position of the proposer that would result if the identified information were to be released and (b) the reasons why the information is legally exempt from release pursuant to C.G.S. § 1-210(b).

G. Conflict of Interest – Disclosure Statement

Proposers must include a disclosure statement concerning any current business relationships (within the last three (3) years) that pose a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85. A conflict of interest exists when a relationship exists between the proposer and a public official (including an elected official) or State employee that may interfere with fair competition or may be adverse to the interests of the State. The existence of a conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, evidence of wrongdoing. A conflict of interest may, however, become a legal matter if a proposer tries to influence, or succeeds in influencing, the outcome of an official decision for their personal or corporate benefit. In the absence of any conflict of interest, a proposer must affirm such in the disclosure statement. *Example: "[name of proposer] has no current business relationship (within the last three (3) years) that poses a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85."*

H. Statement of Assurances

Place after Conflict of Interest-Disclosure Statement. Sign and return Appendix B.

V. Mandatory Provisions

A. POS STANDARD CONTRACT, PARTS I AND II

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the proposer implicitly agrees to comply with the provisions of Parts I and II of the State's "standard contract" for POS:

Part I of the standard contract is maintained by the OEC and will include the scope of services, contract performance, quality assurance, reports, terms of payment, budget, and other program-specific provisions of any resulting POS contract. A sample of Part I is available from the OEC's Official Contact upon request.

Part II of the standard contract is maintained by OPM and includes the mandatory terms and conditions of the POS contract. Part II is available on OPM's website at: http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/standard_contract

Note:

Included in Part II of the standard contract is the State Elections Enforcement Commission's notice (pursuant to C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(2)) advising executive branch State contractors and prospective State contractors of the ban on campaign contributions and solicitations. If a proposer is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the OEC and the resulting contract has an anticipated value in a calendar year of \$50,000 or more, or a combination or series of such agreements or contracts has an anticipated value of \$100,000 or more, the proposer must inform the proposer's principals of the contents of the SEEC notice.

Part I of the standard contract may be amended by means of a written instrument signed by the OEC, the selected proposer (contractor), and, if required, the Attorney General's Office. Part II of the standard contract may be amended only in consultation with, and with the approval of, the Office of Policy and Management and the Attorney General's Office.

B. ASSURANCES

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly gives the following assurances:

- 1. Collusion.** The proposer represents and warrants that the proposer did not participate in any part of the RFP development process and had no knowledge of the specific contents of the RFP prior to its issuance. The proposer further represents and warrants that no agent, representative, or employee of the State participated directly in the preparation of the proposer's proposal. The proposer also represents and warrants that the submitted proposal is in all respects fair and is made without collusion or fraud.
- 2. State Officials and Employees.** The proposer certifies that no elected or appointed official or employee of the State has or will benefit financially or materially from any contract resulting from this RFP. The OEC may terminate a resulting contract if it is determined that gratuities of any kind were either offered or received by any of the aforementioned officials or employees from the proposer, contractor, or its agents or employees.

- 3. Competitors.** The proposer assures that the submitted proposal is not made in connection with any competing organization or competitor submitting a separate proposal in response to this RFP. No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the proposer to induce any other organization or competitor to submit, or not submit, a proposal for the purpose of restricting competition. The proposer further assures that the proposed costs have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, or agreement with any other organization or competitor for the purpose of restricting competition. Nor has the proposer knowingly disclosed the proposed costs on a prior basis, either directly or indirectly, to any other organization or competitor.
- 4. Validity of Proposal.** The proposer certifies that the proposal represents a valid and binding offer to provide services in accordance with the terms and provisions described in this RFP and any amendments or attachments hereto. The proposal shall remain valid for a period of 180 days after the submission due date and may be extended beyond that time by mutual agreement. At its sole discretion, the OEC may include the proposal, by reference or otherwise, into any contract with the successful proposer.
- 5. Press Releases.** The proposer agrees to obtain prior written consent and approval of the OEC for press releases that relate in any manner to this RFP or any resultant contract.

C. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly agrees to comply with the following terms and conditions:

- 1. Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.** The State is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate in its hiring, employment, or business practices. The State is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to, or operation of its programs, services, or activities.
- 2. Preparation Expenses.** Neither the State nor the OEC shall assume any liability for expenses incurred by a proposer in preparing, submitting, or clarifying any proposal submitted in response to this RFP.
- 3. Exclusion of Taxes.** The OEC is exempt from the payment of excise and sales taxes imposed by the federal government and the State. Proposers are liable for any other applicable taxes.
- 4. Proposed Costs.** No cost submissions that are contingent upon a State action will be accepted. All proposed costs must be fixed through the entire term of the contract.
- 5. Changes to Proposal.** No additions or changes to the original proposal will be allowed after submission. While changes are not permitted, the OEC may request and authorize proposers to submit written clarification of their proposals, in a manner or format prescribed by the OEC, and at the proposer's expense.
- 6. Supplemental Information.** Supplemental information will not be considered after the deadline submission of proposals, unless specifically requested by the OEC. The OEC may ask a proposer to give demonstrations, interviews, oral presentations or further explanations to clarify information contained in a proposal. Any such

demonstration, interview, or oral presentation will be at a time selected and in a place provided by the OEC. At its sole discretion, the OEC may limit the number of proposers invited to make such a demonstration, interview, or oral presentation and may limit the number of attendees per proposer.

- 7. Presentation of Supporting Evidence.** If requested by the OEC, a proposer must be prepared to present evidence of experience, ability, data reporting capabilities, financial standing, or other information necessary to satisfactorily meet the requirements set forth or implied in this RFP. The OEC may make onsite visits to an operational facility or facilities of a proposer to evaluate further the proposer's capability to perform the duties required by this RFP. At its discretion, the OEC may also check or contact any reference provided by the proposer.
- 8. RFP Is Not An Offer.** Neither this RFP nor any subsequent discussions shall give rise to any commitment on the part of the State or the OEC or confer any rights on any proposer unless and until a contract is fully executed by the necessary parties. The contract document will represent the entire agreement between the proposer and the OEC and will supersede all prior negotiations, representations or agreements, alleged or made, between the parties. The State shall assume no liability for costs incurred by the proposer or for payment of services under the terms of the contract until the successful proposer is notified that the contract has been accepted and approved by the OEC and, if required, by the Attorney General's Office.

D. RIGHTS RESERVED TO THE STATE

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly accepts that the following rights are reserved to the State:

- 1. Timing Sequence.** The timing and sequence of events associated with this RFP shall ultimately be determined by the OEC.
- 2. Amending or Canceling RFP.** The OEC reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP on any date and at any time, if the OEC deems it to be necessary, appropriate, or otherwise in the best interests of the State.
- 3. No Acceptable Proposals.** In the event that no acceptable proposals are submitted in response to this RFP, the OEC may reopen the procurement process, if it is determined to be in the best interests of the State.
- 4. Award and Rejection of Proposals.** The OEC reserves the right to award in part, to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, for misrepresentation or if the proposal limits or modifies any of the terms, conditions, or specifications of this RFP. The OEC may waive minor technical defects, irregularities, or omissions, if in its judgment the best interests of the State will be served. The OEC reserves the right to reject the proposal of any proposer who submits a proposal after the submission date and time.
- 5. Sole Property of the State.** All proposals submitted in response to this RFP are to be the sole property of the State. Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under a contract awarded as a result of this RFP shall be the sole property of the State, unless stated otherwise in this RFP or subsequent contract. The right to publish, distribute, or disseminate any and all information or reports, or part thereof, shall accrue to the State without recourse.

- 6. Contract Negotiation.** The OEC reserves the right to negotiate or contract for all or any portion of the services contained in this RFP. The OEC further reserves the right to contract with one or more proposer for such services. After reviewing the scored criteria, the OEC may seek Best and Final Offers (BFO) on cost from proposers. The OEC may set parameters on any BFOs received.
- 7. Clerical Errors in Award.** The OEC reserves the right to correct inaccurate awards resulting from its clerical errors. This may include, in extreme circumstances, revoking the awarding of a contract already made to a proposer and subsequently awarding the contract to another proposer. Such action on the part of the State shall not constitute a breach of contract on the part of the State since the contract with the initial proposer is deemed to be void *ab initio* and of no effect as if no contract ever existed between the State and the proposer.
- 8. Key Personnel.** When the OEC is the sole funder of a purchased service, the OEC reserves the right to approve any additions, deletions, or changes in key personnel, with the exception of key personnel who have terminated employment. The OEC also reserves the right to approve replacements for key personnel who have terminated employment. The OEC further reserves the right to require the removal and replacement of any of the proposer's key personnel who do not perform adequately, regardless of whether they were previously approved by the OEC.

E. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the proposer implicitly agrees to comply with all applicable State and federal laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1. Freedom of Information, C.G.S. § 1-210(b).** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) generally requires the disclosure of documents in the possession of the State upon request of any citizen, unless the content of the document falls within certain categories of exemption, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-210(b). Proposers are generally advised not to include in their proposals any confidential information. If the proposer indicates that certain documentation, as required by this RFP, is submitted in confidence, the State will endeavor to keep said information confidential to the extent permitted by law. The State has no obligation to initiate, prosecute, or defend any legal proceeding or to seek a protective order or other similar relief to prevent disclosure of any information pursuant to a FOIA request. The proposer has the burden of establishing the availability of any FOIA exemption in any proceeding where it is an issue. While a proposer may claim an exemption to the State's FOIA, the final administrative authority to release or exempt any or all material so identified rests with the State. In no event shall the State or any of its employees have any liability for disclosure of documents or information in the possession of the State and which the State or its employees believe(s) to be required pursuant to the FOIA or other requirements of law.
- 2. Contract Compliance, C.G.S. § 4a-60 and Regulations of CT State Agencies § 46a-68j-21 thru 43, inclusive.** CT statute and regulations impose certain obligations on State agencies (as well as contractors and subcontractors doing business with the State) to ensure that State agencies do not enter into contracts with organizations or businesses that discriminate against protected class persons.
- 3. Consulting Agreements, C.G.S. § 4a-81. Consulting Agreements Representation, C.G.S. § 4a-81.** Pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 4a-81 the successful contracting party shall certify that it has not entered into any consulting agreements

in connection with this Contract, except for the agreements listed below. "Consulting agreement" means any written or oral agreement to retain the services, for a fee, of a consultant for the purposes of (A) providing counsel to a contractor, vendor, consultant or other entity seeking to conduct, or conducting, business with the State, (B) contacting, whether in writing or orally, any executive, judicial, or administrative office of the State, including any department, institution, bureau, board, commission, authority, official or employee for the purpose of solicitation, dispute resolution, introduction, requests for information, or (C) any other similar activity related to such contracts. "Consulting agreement" does not include any agreements entered into with a consultant who is registered under the provisions of chapter 10 of the Connecticut General Statutes as of the date such contract is executed in accordance with the provisions of section 4a-81 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Such representation shall be sworn as true to the best knowledge and belief of the person signing the resulting contract and shall be subject to the penalties of false statement.

- 4. Campaign Contribution Restriction, C.G.S. § 9-612.** For all State contracts, defined in section 9-612 of the Connecticut General Statutes as having a value in a calendar year of \$50,000 or more, or a combination or series of such agreements or contracts having a value of \$100,000 or more, the authorized signatory to the resulting contract must represent that they have received the State Elections Enforcement Commission's notice advising state contractors of state campaign contribution and solicitation prohibitions, and will inform its principals of the contents of the notice, as set forth in "Notice to Executive Branch State Contractors and Prospective State Contractors of Campaign Contribution and Solicitation Limitations." Such notice is available at https://seec.ct.gov/Portal/data/forms/ContrForms/seec_form_11_notice_only.pdf

- 5. Gifts, C.G.S. § 4-252.** Pursuant to section 4-252 of the Connecticut General Statutes and Acting Governor Susan Bysiewicz's Executive Order No. 21-2, the Contractor, for itself and on behalf of all of its principals or key personnel who submitted a bid or proposal, represents:

(1) That no gifts were made by (A) the Contractor, (B) any principals and key personnel of the Contractor, who participate substantially in preparing bids, proposals or negotiating State contracts, or (C) any agent of the Contractor or principals and key personnel, who participates substantially in preparing bids, proposals or negotiating State contracts, to (i) any public official or State employee of the State agency or quasi- public agency soliciting bids or proposals for State contracts, who participates substantially in the preparation of bid solicitations or requests for proposals for State contracts or the negotiation or award of State contracts, or (ii) any public official or State employee of any other State agency, who has supervisory or appointing authority over such State agency or quasi-public agency;

(2) That no such principals and key personnel of the Contractor, or agent of the Contractor or of such principals and key personnel, knows of any action by the Contractor to circumvent such prohibition on gifts by providing for any other principals and key personnel, official, employee or agent of the Contractor to provide a gift to any such public official or State employee; and

(3) That the Contractor is submitting bids or proposals without fraud or collusion with any person.

Any bidder or proposer that does not agree to the representations required under this section shall be rejected and the State agency or quasi-public agency shall award the contract to the next highest ranked proposer or the next lowest responsible qualified bidder or seek new bids or proposals.

6. Iran Energy Investment Certification C.G.S. § 4-252(a). Pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-252(a), the successful contracting party shall certify the following: (a) that it has not made a direct investment of twenty million dollars or more in the energy sector of Iran on or after October 1, 2013, as described in Section 202 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010, and has not increased or renewed such investment on or after said date. (b) If the Contractor makes a good faith effort to determine whether it has made an investment described in subsection (a) of this section it shall not be subject to the penalties of false statement pursuant to section 4-252a of the Connecticut General Statutes. A "good faith effort" for purposes of this subsection includes a determination that the Contractor is not on the list of persons who engage in certain investment activities in Iran created by the Department of General Services of the State of California pursuant to Division 2, Chapter 2.7 of the California Public Contract Code. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to impair the ability of the State agency or quasi-public agency to pursue a breach of contract action for any violation of the provisions of the resulting contract.

7. Nondiscrimination Certification, C.G.S. § 4a-60 and 4a-60a. If a bidder is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract, the proposer must provide the State agency with *written representation* in the resulting contract that certifies the bidder complies with the State's nondiscrimination agreements and warranties. This nondiscrimination certification is required for all State contracts – regardless of type, term, cost, or value. Municipalities and CT State agencies are exempt from this requirement. The authorized signatory of the contract shall demonstrate his or her understanding of this obligation by either (A) initialing the nondiscrimination affirmation provision in the body of the resulting contract, or (B) providing an affirmative response in the required online bid or response to a proposal question, if applicable, which asks if the contractor understands its obligations. If a bidder or vendor refuses to agree to this representation, such bidder or vendor shall be rejected and the State agency or quasi-public agency shall award the contract to the next highest ranked vendor or the next lowest responsible qualified bidder or seek new bids or proposals.

8. Access to Data for State Auditors. The Contractor shall provide to OPM access to any data, as defined in C.G.S. § 4e-1, concerning the resulting contract that are in the possession or control of the Contractor upon demand and shall provide the data to OPM in a format prescribed by OPM [or the Client Agency] and the State Auditors of Public Accounts at no additional cost.

VI. Appendix

A. ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS / DEFINITIONS

BAS	Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care
BFO	Best and Final Offer
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CCDF	Child Care Development Fund
CCMS	Child Care Management Software
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CHRO	Commission on Human Rights and Opportunity (CT)
CT	Connecticut
DAS	Department of Administrative Services (CT)
FCC	Family Child Care Provider
FCCN	Family Child Care Network(s)
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act (CT)
IRS	Internal Revenue Service (US)
LOI	Letter of Intent
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OAG	Office of the Attorney General
OEC	Office of Early Childhood
OPM	Office of Policy and Management (CT)
OSC	Office of the State Comptroller (CT)
POS	Purchase of Service
P.A.	Public Act (CT)
NAFCC	National Association for Family Child Care
RFP	Request for Proposal
SEEC	State Elections Enforcement Commission (CT)
SFFCN	Staffed Family Child Care Network(s)
U.S.	United States

- *Community of Practice*: groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly⁹
- *contractor*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that enters into a POS contract with the OEC as a result of this RFP
- *facilitative leadership*: a style of leadership that emphasizes teamwork and collaboration to achieve mission-critical goals¹⁰
- *network operator*: the entity, often a nonprofit organization or school-based organization, that operates, organizes, and coordinates services for family child care providers in a specified region
- *proposer*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that has submitted a proposal to the Department in response to this RFP
- *prospective proposer*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that may submit a proposal to the Department in response to this RFP, but has not yet done so

⁹ Wenger-Trayner, E & B. (2015). [Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction](#).

¹⁰ Interaction Institute for Social Change. Retrieved at: <https://interactioninstitute.org/> on 27 May 2021.

- *respondent*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that has submitted a proposal to the Department in response to this RFP
- *shared services*: a framework (organizational structure) that enables center- and home-based ECE providers to establish systems that can sustain high-quality teaching and learning (pedagogical leadership) while at the same time making sure all necessary fiscal and administrative tasks are performed (business leadership)¹¹
- *subcontractor*: an individual (other than an employee of the contractor) or business entity hired by a contractor to provide a specific health or human service as part of a POS contract with the OEC as a result of this RFP

¹¹ Easterling, S. & Stoney, L. [Shared Services: A Strategy for Building Stronger Systems Among Early Care and Education Providers.](#)

B. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES

Office of Early Childhood

The undersigned Respondent affirms and declares that:

1) General

- a. This proposal is executed and signed with full knowledge and acceptance of the RFP CONDITIONS stated in the RFP.
- b. The Respondent will deliver services to the OEC per the cost proposed in the RFP and within the timeframes therein.
- c. The Respondent will seek prior approval from the OEC before making any changes to the location of services.
- d. Neither the Respondent or any official of the organization nor any subcontractor or the Respondent or any official of the subcontractor organization has received any notices of debarment or suspension from contracting with the State of CT or the Federal Government.
- e. Neither the Respondent or any official of the organization nor any subcontractor or the Respondent or any official of the subcontractor's organization has received any notices of debarment or suspension from contracting with other states within the United States.

Legal Name of Organization:

Authorized Signatory

Date

C. PROPOSAL CHECKLIST

To assist respondents in managing proposal planning and document collation processes, this document summarizes key dates and proposal requirements for this RFP. Please note that this document does not supersede what is stated in the RFP. Please refer to the Proposal Submission Overview, Required Proposal Submission Outline, and Mandatory Provisions (Sections II, III, and IV of this RFP) for more comprehensive details. It is the responsibility of each respondent to ensure that all required documents, forms, and attachments, are submitted in a timely manner.

Key Dates

<u>Procurement Timetable</u>		
The OEC reserves the right to modify these dates at its sole discretion.		
Item	Action	Date
1	Optional Pre-bid conference	August 20, 2021; 10:30 am EST
2	Optional Letter of Intent Due	August 27, 2021; 5 pm EST
3	Deadline for Questions	August 27, 2021; 5 pm EST
4	Proposals Due	September 20, 2021; 5 pm EST

Registration Link for Pre-bid Conference:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4809561144957877772>

Registration with State Contracting Portal (if not already registered):

- Register at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/Registration>
- Submit Campaign Contribution: Certification (OPM Ethics Form 1): <https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Fin-PSA/Forms/Ethics-Forms>

Proposal Content Checklist

- ☐ **Cover Sheet** including required information:
 - RFP Name or Number
 - Legal Name
 - FEIN
 - Street Address
 - Town/City/State/Zip
 - Contact Person
 - Title
 - Phone Number
 - E-Mail Address
 - Authorized Official
 - Title
 - Signature
- ☐ **Table of Contents**
- ☐ **Executive Summary:** high-level summary of proposal and cost, two-page maximum
- ☐ **Main Proposal Body** (not to exceed 35 pages)
- ☐ **Required Attachments**
 - Work Plan
 - Staffing Plan
 - Résumés of Key Personnel
 - Memoranda of Agreement/Understanding for Subcontractors (Indicate "No relevant memoranda" if this is not applicable to you)

- Last Three Years of Audited Financial Statements (respondents with less than three years' organizational history should include audited financial statements for whatever years you have available)
 - Most Recent Organizational Budget
 - Most Recent Statement of Financial Activities (Profit and Loss Statement)
 - Minutes from Last Two Board Meetings
 - Copy of your data security and privacy policies, if available (Indicate "in progress" or "see main proposal" if your organization does not currently have one in place)
 - Proof of nonprofit status (i.e. IRS Determination Letter), if applicable. Indicate "Nonprofit status not applicable" in your attachments section if this does not apply to you.
- ☐ **Proposed budget** in standard OEC budget template, including budget narrative and cost schedules for planned subcontractors if applicable.
- ☐ **Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement**
- ☐ **Statement of Assurances**

Formatting Checklist

- ☐ Is the proposal formatted to fit 8 ½ x 11 (letter-sized) paper?
- ☐ Is the main body of the proposal within the page limit?
- ☐ Is the proposal in 12-point, Times New Roman font?
- ☐ Does the proposal format follow normal (1 inch) margins and 1 ½ line spacing?
- ☐ Does the proposer's name appear in the header of each page?
- ☐ Does the proposal include page numbers in the footer?
- ☐ Are confidential labels applied to sensitive information (if applicable)?