Administration for Children and Families

Office of Head Start

Head Start/Early Head Start Recipient -- Communities in Puerto Rico
HHS-2024-ACF-OHS-CH-R2-0090
Application Due Date: 12/14/2023

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Funding Opportunity Title:
Head Start/Early Head Start Recipient -- Communities in Puerto Rico
Announcement Type:
Initial
Funding Opportunity Number:
HHS-2024-ACF-OHS-CH-R2-0090
Assistance Listing Number:
93.600
Due Date for Applications:
12/14/2023

Executive Summary

Notice:

- **Applicants are strongly encouraged to read the entire notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) carefully and observe the application formatting requirements listed in *Section IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission*. For more information on applying for an award, please visit "Applying for an ACF Award" at** https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/how-apply-grant.

The federally funded Head Start program provides high-quality, comprehensive early education programming to low-income children and families so that children start school ready to succeed. The Office of Head Start (OHS) is offering applicants the opportunity to apply for funding to serve pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and children from birth to compulsory school age in one application. This NOFO solicits applications from public or private non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations or for-profit organizations, that seek to provide a high-quality, comprehensive program incorporating both Head Start and Early Head Start (EHS) funding, or to provide services for Head Start only or EHS only, in a manner that ensures continuous services and seamless transitions for children and families residing in two specifically defined service areas in Puerto Rico. Funding is limited to **only** the individually defined service areas listed in the *Appendix* section of this funding opportunity.

The goal of this NOFO is to ensure the distribution of resources to meet the demonstrated community needs of children from birth to compulsory school age, ensuring continuity of services and taking into account the availability of high-quality and comprehensive early childhood education opportunities (which may include public pre-kindergarten programs for 4-year-olds). Applicants proposing to serve pregnant women are expected to serve the newborn through the EHS program. Applicants should thoughtfully consider their reason for deciding to apply to conduct a program to serve the proposed population, including the particular age group of children and, if applicable, pregnant women. This decision should be based on the needs of the community. This NOFO provides applicants the opportunity to propose to reallocate funding between Head Start and EHS based on both the needs in the community and the applicant's capacity and experience serving pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and/or preschool-age children. Applicants may explore combining Head Start and EHS funds with resources from other early childhood programs or funding streams, including state, local, and private sector funding for child care, pre-kindergarten, and special education services. Please note that applicants responding to this NOFO will be expected to begin providing Head Start and/or EHS services quickly after award, with a minimal start-up period, to support limited to no disruption in services to the currently enrolled children and families in this service area.

Any applicant responding to this NOFO must submit only one application per each service area noted in the *Appendix* section, whether the applicant is proposing to provide 1) Head Start services only, 2) EHS services only, or 3) both Head Start and EHS services. Applicant entities may submit only one application per service area regardless of how they choose to apply. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) will review only one application for a service area from any applicant. For more information, please see *Section IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission*.

I. Program Description

Statutory Authority

The Head Start program is authorized by the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.

Description

Program Background and Purpose

The Head Start program is administered by ACF, an operating division (OPDIV) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). ACF intends to fund applications that demonstrate an organization's commitment and capacity to operate a Head Start and/or EHS program that raises the quality of early care and education in the community and helps children start school ready to succeed. School readiness requires that children are cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally prepared to continue to make progress as they enter kindergarten. ACF is seeking applicants that are able to use the best evidence-based early education practices in their programs to support high-caliber classroom instruction, home visiting services, and effective family engagement and health promotion.

The Head Start and EHS programs provide grants to public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies to provide comprehensive child development services to predominately economically disadvantaged children and families. Head Start's primary purpose is to prepare children to be ready for school. In fiscal year (FY) 1995, the EHS program was established to serve pregnant women and children from birth to 3 years of age in recognition of the mounting evidence that the earliest years matter a great deal to children's growth and development. Since its beginning in 1965, Head Start has served more than 37 million children and their families. In FY 2022 Head Start was funded to serve 833,075 children and families and of these, 197,455 were funded in the EHS program. These programs were operated by 1,560 Head Start recipients, including 1,137 recipients providing EHS.

Head Start and EHS programs must provide, directly or through referral, early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services that will enhance the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of participating children in the key domains of physical development and health; social and emotional development; approaches to learning, language, and literacy; cognition; and general knowledge. Programs support parent engagement in their roles as their children’s teachers and advocates, and help parents move toward self-sufficiency. Head Start promotes school readiness by addressing the key domains of language, literacy, mathematics, science, and social and emotional development.

Head Start and EHS programs emphasize family engagement because of the critical role that parents play in supporting their children's healthy development and school success. Effective programs engage parents in their children's development and learning. Programs also emphasize the significant involvement of parents in the administration of local Head Start and EHS programs. These leadership opportunities are designed to strengthen skills that parents can apply to improving their family's economic well-being and to becoming more effective advocates for their children.

Program Approach

Head Start and EHS are designed to increase the number of low-income children receiving high-quality, comprehensive early education services that help facilitate healthy development, including physical and social/emotional development, and prepare them for school success. To meet this goal, it is critical that funds awarded through this NOFO do not supplant existing services. Given the need for continuity of care to support the rapid development in the earliest years, OHS expects that recipients will serve pregnant women, infants, and toddlers for at least 1,380 annual hours, as required in 45 CFR § 1302.21(c), unless approved for a locally-designed option. OHS expects that recipients will implement a full-year model, as described in 45 CFR Part 1302 Subpart B, that will require per-child costs that, in most circumstances, will be higher than the costs needed to provide part-year services. Applicants are encouraged to use this opportunity to design a model of services and program options that best meet the needs of children and families over time, including helping to meet the child care needs of parents.

Applicants are encouraged to bring new and innovative ideas that are evidence-based or evidence-informed to maximize the extent to which EHS and Head Start, in collaboration with other partners and early childhood education providers, can prepare children and their families for school.

Program Model

ACF is interested in new and innovative models that provide continuous and seamless services for pregnant women, children, and their families. These models should be designed to be responsive to community needs; be evidence-based or evidence-informed; and maximize the extent to which the EHS and Head Start resources, in collaboration with other partners and early childhood education providers, can prepare children and their families for school.

These models should include a description of the plan to assess and meet the needs of families pursuing employment, training, education, and other opportunities to support their well-being. The proposed services, and associated family engagement efforts, should have convenient schedules and carefully planned hours designed for families that reflect the schedules and working conditions among low-income parents.

Grants will be awarded based on how effectively the model design fits the needs of the community to be served and the overall quality of the proposed program, dependent upon available funding. Additionally, grants will be awarded based on the applicant’s ability to provide sustainable approaches toward staffing, which includes providing staff with competitive wages, comprehensive benefits and wellness supports. Competitive wages should be comparable to similar roles in local public schools and provide a minimum wage that covers basic necessities. A well-compensated and supported workforce is essential to providing high-quality services to promote children's optimal development and family well-being.

Eligible Participants

Head Start serves children when they are at least 3 years old by the date used to determine eligibility for public school in the community where the Head Start program is located. EHS programs enroll pregnant women and infants and toddlers from birth to age 3. Families must either have incomes below the poverty line or be eligible for public assistance or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in order to be income eligible for Head Start or EHS programs. In addition, homeless children and children in foster care are categorically eligible for services. Children are selected for enrollment based on age, income eligibility, and relative level of need with regard to other criteria that are identified within each community (45 CFR § 1302.12(b) and (c)).

Head Start regulations permit up to 10 percent of enrolled participants to be from families that do not meet these low-income criteria. A provision in the Head Start Act, as discussed in 42 U.S.C. § 9840(a)(1)(B), which is applicable to both Head Start and EHS, allows recipients that can ensure that all eligible children, including homeless children, are served, to enroll up to an additional 35 percent of its participants from families with incomes greater than or equal to 100 percent, but less than 130 percent, of the poverty line. It is not expected, however, given the relatively low EHS participation rates, that the provisions of 42 U.S.C. § 9840(a)(1)(B) regarding serving up to 35 percent of a program's enrollment from families with incomes up to 130 percent of the poverty line would apply for this announcement.

Additionally, programs must ensure that at least 10 percent of the total number of children enrolled by the Head Start or EHS agency and delegates are children with disabilities unless a waiver is granted.

Applicants may elect to propose program models that promote socioeconomic diversity within classrooms. Federal Head Start funds must be used to serve eligible children as described in this section. Additional children who are not income-eligible for Head Start or EHS can be served so long as their participation is supported through other funding sources, including child care subsidies, public school pre-kindergarten allocations, parent-paid tuition, or other sources. Such program designs may be beneficial in promoting socioeconomic diversity within classrooms. All costs must be allocated to appropriate funding sources in compliance with federal requirements.

Head Start Program Performance Standards

In addition to the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq., Head Start is governed by the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) that define the scope of services necessary to support children's development and school readiness. These program performance standards are found in 45 CFR Parts 1301-1305 https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii. The HSPPS are the foundation on which programs design and deliver comprehensive, high-quality individualized services to support the school readiness of children from low-income families. The program performance standards set forth the requirements local recipients must meet to support the cognitive, social, emotional, and healthy development of children from birth to age 5. They encompass requirements to provide education, health, mental health, nutrition, and family and community engagement services, as well as rules for local program governance and aspects of federal administration of the program.

Facilities

Funded recipients proposing facility purchase, construction, or renovation will be required to meet the requirements in 45 CFR Part 1303 Subpart E – Facilities. This subpart prescribes what a recipients must establish to show it is eligible to purchase, construct, and renovate facilities as outlined in section 644(c), (f), and (g) of the Act. It explains how a recipients may apply for funds; details what measures a recipients must take to protect federal interest in facilities purchased, constructed, or renovated with grant funds; and concludes with other administrative provisions. This subpart applies to major renovations. It only applies to minor renovations and repairs, when they are included with a purchase application and are part of purchase costs.

As a component of the facilities request, recipients must also submit the relevant SF-429 Real Property Status Report and Request form(s), along with supporting documentation, in GrantSolutions Online Data Collection (GS/OLDC) system. These are standard forms to be used by recipients of federal financial assistance to report real property status (Attachment A) or to request instructions on real property (Attachment B, C) acquired (i.e., purchased or constructed) in whole or in part under a federal award. This includes real property (owned and/ leased) improved using federal funds. These reports are used for awards that establish a federal interest on real property. Recipients that incur costs to purchase, construct, or improve real property before receiving official ACF approval, typically via the Notice of Award (NoA), do so at their own risk. Federal interest does not expire until disposition has been requested by the recipient using the SF-429 Attachment C in GS/OLDC and approved by ACF. For more information, see Real Property Guidance.

Mortgages and Long-Term Lease Agreements

If so directed by OHS, the newly funded recipient must accept assignment of any existing mortgages, long-term lease agreements, or security agreements (in the case of a modular unit) on properties subject to a federal interest occupied by the current recipient. By accepting this condition, the recipient must comply with real property and reporting requirements, including submission of the SF-429 Attachment A on an annual basis until disposition is approved by ACF. For more information, see Real Property Guidance.

If a recipient intends to finance, refinance, or amendment a financing arrangement on a real property or real property project, the SF-429 Attachment C must be submitted, along with supporting documentation, in GS/OLDC. This is considered an encumbrance that requires Chief Grants Management Officer decision, which may delay recipients. Recipients that proceed on these arrangements before receiving official ACF approval do so at their own risk. For more information, see Real Property Guidance.

Non-Federal Match

Recipients must, unless a waiver is granted, contribute 20 percent of the total cost of the program from non-federal funds. A waiver may be granted for any of the grounds listed in 42 U.S.C.

9835(b) (45 CFR § 1303.4).

For awards that contain real property projects, any portion of the cost of purchase, construction, or renovation contributed by or for the entity, or a related donor organization, to satisfy a matching requirement, per 45 CFR §1303.44(c) and 1305.2, becomes part of the federal share of the facility. Unless recipient equity contributions (sources) are used and meets the following: 1) are non-Head Start related funds (e.g., unrestricted funds such as income unrelated to Head Start, donations, and contributions), 2) not used as match on the facility or related activities (45 CFR §1303.44(c)), 3) not included in the Head Start grant (45 CFR §1303.4), and 4) not used in other federal funding sources (45 CFR §75.306(b)(5)).

Administrative Cost Waiver
No more than 15 percent of total costs may be used for program administration. An HHS official may grant a waiver of the 15 percent limitation on allowable development and administration costs for a Head Start or EHS program approving a higher percentage for a specific period of time not to exceed 12 months (45 CFR § 1303.5).

Oversight and Monitoring Reviews
OHS is responsible for monitoring the quality of Head Start and/or EHS program services and the recipient's compliance with federal and other applicable requirements, and to provide access to T/TA as needed. The federal government uses several mechanisms to conduct its oversight, including ongoing communication with ACF regional offices and periodic site visits. Federal monitoring reviews are required by the Head Start Act. Over the course of the project period, reviews are conducted to ensure compliance with the HSPPS and other applicable regulations. Monitoring reviews may occur onsite or offsite, and include compliance with health and safety requirements, rules related to children's eligibility for the program, and financial management requirements.

Federal Evaluation
As a condition of acceptance of an award under this NOFO, all recipients are required to participate fully in ACF-sponsored evaluations and adhere to all evaluation protocols established by ACF to be carried out by its designee contractors.

ACF-led evaluations are subject to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act. ACF will obtain OMB approval prior to requiring recipients to respond to a collection of information.

Subawards
Recipients under this grant program may opt to transfer a portion of substantive programmatic work to other organizations through subaward(s). The prime recipient must maintain a substantive role in the project. ACF defines a substantive role as conducting activities and/or providing services funded under the award that are necessary and integral to the completion of the project. Subrecipient monitoring activities alone as specified in 45 CFR § 75.352 do not constitute a substantive role. Furthermore, ACF does not fund awards where the role of the applicant is primarily to serve as a conduit for passing funds to other organizations unless that arrangement is authorized by statute. An award recipient or any subrecipient may not use grant

funds, whether directly or indirectly, to support or oppose union organizing.

Subrecipient(s) must meet the eligibility requirements identified in the NOFO, *Section III.1. Eligible Applicants*. Additionally, all subrecipient(s) must obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number, or after government-wide implementation, a Unique Entity Identifier assigned by the System for Award Management (SAM), if they do not already have one. Prime recipients are required to check the SAM to verify that the subrecipient(s) is/are not debarred, suspended, or ineligible.

Please reference the [Award Term and Condition on Subawards]() on the [ACF Administrative and National Policy Requirements]() website for further requirements involving subawards.

II. Federal Award Information

Funding Instrument Type:
G (Grant)

Estimated Total Funding:
$65,855,821

Expected Number of Awards:
15

Award Ceiling:
$65,855,821
Per Budget Period

Award Floor:
$1,000,000
Per Budget Period

Average Projected Award Amount:
$0
Per Budget Period

Anticipated Project Start Date:
07/01/2024

Length of Project Periods:
60-month project period with five 12-month budget periods

Additional Information on Project Periods and Explanation of 'Other'

Additional Information on Awards:
Awards made under this funding opportunity are subject to the availability of federal funds.

Expected Number of Awards

The expected number of awards represents an estimated total **range** of awards that OHS might make as the result of this funding opportunity, inclusive of all services areas listed later on in the *Appendix* section. If the expected number of awards is 1, applicants are expected to submit proposals for the entire service area. If the expected number of awards is 2 or greater, applicants may submit 1 application to apply to serve either the entire service area, or a portion of the service area.

Award Ceiling Disqualification

Applications requesting an award amount that exceeds the *Award Ceiling* per budget period or per project period, as stated in this section, will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity. Please see *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors.*

Inclusion of start-up/pre-award costs in the application submission is not subject to the "Award Ceiling Disqualification." However, if an applicant does not segregate start-up/pre-award costs from the base funding award request (SF-424, line 18a, Federal), the "Award Ceiling Disqualification" will apply.

Applicants must submit an annual (12-month) budget. The funding amount listed on Line 18a (Federal) of the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, must reflect a full 12 months of funding. The federal funding amounts reflected on the SF-424 and in the applicant's budget submission must match.

The Designation Renewal System, as established in 45 CFR Part 1304 - Federal Administrative Procedures, Subpart B, requires all Head Start and EHS grants be awarded as 5-year grants (60 months with five 12-month budget periods).

Funding provided for the operation of the program is referred to as "base operating funds" or "base funding"; funding provided for training and technical assistance is referred to as "T/TA."

Applicants MUST enter the Competition Identification Number listed in the *Appendix* that corresponds to the individually defined service area for which they are submitting an application, in Line 15 'Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project' of the SF-424.

Start-up/Pre-Award Costs

Pre-award costs, including start-up costs, may be requested by an applicant in addition to the base operating and T/TA grant funds. If requested, applicants must provide a separate budget for start-up/pre-award costs, in addition to a 12-month budget for the base funding awarded, within the page limitations stated for the *Budget and Budget Justification* in *Section IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission*. If awarded, start-up/pre-award costs would apply to costs incurred up to 90 days prior to the award start date. Examples of start-up activities are facility renovations, purchase of classroom supplies, building purchase, licensing, background checks, etc.

Approval of start-up/pre-award costs is **not** guaranteed; they are negotiated at the time of award and are based on reasonableness, necessity, and the availability of funds. The incurrence of start-up/pre-award costs in anticipation of an award is done at the applicant's own risk and imposes no obligation on ACF either to make an award or to increase the amount of the approved budget if an award is made for less than the amount anticipated and is inadequate to cover the start-up/pre-award costs incurred. It is possible that ACF may honor start-up/pre-award costs by reducing the base amount of the award to include these costs.

Estimates for start-up/pre-award costs must be separately identified on the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, and in the Budget and Budget Justification section of the application. The start-up/pre-award funding amount must **not** be included in the funding amount listed on Line 18a (Federal) of the SF-424. The funding amount listed in Line 18a of the SF-424 must represent only the total annual federal funding the applicant is requesting for base and T/TA funding. Start-up/pre-award costs, if requested, should be included only on the Other Estimated Funding line (Line 18e) and clearly labeled as "Start-up/Pre-Award Costs" in a separate line item on the SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs. Additionally, if applicants are requesting start-up/pre-award costs, these costs must be easily identified as a separate budget in the Budget and Budget Justification section of the application.

Inclusion of start-up/pre-award costs in the application submission is not subject to the “Award Ceiling Disqualification” that is explained in this section of the NOFO and in *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors*. However, if an applicant does not segregate start-up/pre-award costs from the base funding award request (SF-424, line 18a, Federal), the “Award Ceiling Disqualification” will apply.

Start-up budgets will be evaluated against the criteria listed in *Section V.1. Criteria*.

Note: Costs incurred for grant application preparation are not considered an approved use of pre-award costs and may not be included in the project budget or budget justification.

Grant Awards

Due to the availability of current year appropriated funds, the successful applicant(s) under this NOFO *may* receive grant awards with a 5-year project period (60 months) that include six budget periods. In cases where a full 12 months of funding is not available at the time of the grant award, the first and sixth budget periods within the 5-year project period will be pro-rated, so that when combined, they equal 12 months of funding. The second, third, fourth, and fifth budget periods would be a full 12 months.

Requests to Supplement Existing Grant Awards

OHS *may* consider applicant requests to supplement an existing Head Start grant with an award made under this NOFO, if the successful applicant is an existing Head Start agency. However, the grant award made under this NOFO (competitive supplement) would assume the length of time remaining in the project period of the existing grant award, which may be less than 60 months. Competitive supplemental awards may result in a reduced amount of funding due to the reduced term of the award. Further guidance will be provided to interested applicants with whom OHS enters into pre-award discussions and/or negotiations.

Please see *Section IV.6. Funding Restrictions* for limitations on the use of federal funds awarded under this announcement.

III. Eligibility Information

III.1. Eligible Applicants

It is important to note that the eligibility requirements are different for Head Start and EHS.

Entities applying for Head Start only - OR - both Head Start and EHS:
Eligible applicants are limited to local public or private non-profit agencies, including community-based and faith-based organizations, or local for-profit agencies, pursuant to section 641(a)(1) of the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9836(a)(1) that can provide Head Start services to children and families residing in the service area(s) listed in the *Appendix* of this NOFO. Applicants must demonstrate they meet the statutory requirement for designation as a Head Start and/or EHS agency as defined in the Head Start Act.

For designation as a Head Start agency, ACF will consider all "qualified applicants in such community" as required by section 641(d) of the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9836(d), where the applicant demonstrates it has an organizational base within the community to be served. This could be established by virtue of the applicant being a current provider of services in the community or having a clear relationship to the community as evidenced, for example, by board representation from the community or by evidence of the support of community leaders, including, but not limited to, elected or appointed city/county officials, school principals, county government officials, social service provider organizations, community organizations representing minority and other relevant sectors of the community to include low-income populations, and community-based child care providers.

Entities applying for Early Head Start only:
Eligible applicants are any public or private non-profit agencies, including community-based and faith-based organizations, or for-profit agencies pursuant to section 645A(d) of the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9840A(d).

Eligibility is limited to public or private non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations or for-profit organizations, that can provide EHS services to children and families residing in the service area(s) listed in the *Appendix* of this NOFO.

Entities operating Head Start programs are eligible to operate EHS programs.

See *Section IV.2. Legal Status of Applicant Entity* for documentation required to support eligibility.

Applications from individuals (including sole proprietorships) and foreign entities are not eligible and will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity. See *Section III.3. Other, Application Disqualification Factors.*

Faith-based and community organizations that meet the eligibility requirements are eligible to receive awards under this funding opportunity. Faith-based organizations may apply for this award on the same basis as any other organization, as set forth at and, subject to the protections and requirements of 45 CFR Part 87 and 42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.*, ACF will not, in the selection of recipients, discriminate against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character, affiliation, or exercise.

III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost Sharing / Matching Requirement:
Yes
Recipients are required to meet a non-federal share of the project cost, in accordance with Section 640(b) of the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9835 (b).

Recipients must provide at least 20 percent of the total approved cost of the project. The total approved cost of the project is the sum of the ACF (federal) share and the non-federal share. The non-federal share may be met by cash or in-kind contributions. For example, if the total approved project cost is $ 82,319,776 , in order to meet the match requirements, a project requesting $65,855,821 in ACF (federal) funds must provide a non-federal share of the approved total project cost of at least $ 16,463,955 , which is 20 percent of total approved project cost.

For all federal awards, any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third-party in-kind contributions, must be accepted as part of the recipient's cost sharing or matching when such contributions meet all criteria listed in 45 CFR § 75.306.

For awards that require matching by statute, recipients will be held accountable for projected commitments of non-federal resources in their application budgets and budget justifications by budget period, or by project period for fully funded awards, even if the projected commitment exceeds the amount required by the statutory match. **A recipient's failure to provide the statutorily required matching amount may result in the disallowance of federal funds. Recipients will be required to report these funds in the Federal Financial Reports.**

For awards that do not require matching or cost sharing by statute, where "cost sharing" refers to any situation in which the recipient voluntarily shares in the costs of a project other than as statutorily required matching, recipients will be held accountable for projected commitments of non-federal resources in their application budgets and budget justifications by budget period, or by project period for fully funded awards. These include situations in which contributions are voluntarily proposed by a recipient or subrecipient and are accepted by ACF. Non-federal cost sharing will be included in the approved project budget so that the recipient will be held accountable for proposed non-federal cost sharing funds as shown in the Notice of Award (NoA). **A recipient's failure to provide voluntary cost sharing of non-federal resources that have been accepted by ACF as part of the approved project costs and that have been shown as part of the approved project budget in the NoA, may result in the disallowance of federal funds. Recipients will be required to report these funds in the Federal Financial Reports.**

See *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification, Commitment of Non-Federal Resources* for more information.

Matching Waiver Pursuant to 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d)
Matching requirements (including in-kind contributions) of less than $200,000 are waived under awards made to the governments of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (other than those consolidated under other provisions of 48 U.S.C. 1469) pursuant to 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d). This waiver applies whether the matching required under the award equals or exceeds $200,000.

Non-federal resources will be evaluated under criteria found in *Section V.1. Criteria* of this funding opportunity.

III.3. Other

Application Disqualification Factors
Applications from individuals (including sole proprietorships) and foreign entities will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Award Ceiling Disqualification

Applications that request an award amount exceeding the *Award Ceiling* per budget period, or per project period, as stated in *Section II. Federal Award Information*, will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity. This disqualification applies only to the *Award Ceiling* listed for the first 12-month budget period for projects with multiple budget periods. If the project and budget period are the same, the disqualification applies to the *Award Ceiling* listed for the project period.

Application Submission Disqualifications

ACF requires electronic submission of applications at Grants.gov. If you do not have an internet connection or sufficient capacity to upload large documents to the internet, you may contact ACF for an exemption that will allow the submission of your application in paper format. Information and the requirements for requesting an exemption from required electronic submission are found in "ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption form Electronic Application Submission."

The deadline for electronic application submission is 11:59 pm ET on the due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. Electronic applications submitted to Grants.gov after 11:59 pm ET on the due date, as indicated by a dated and time-stamped email from Grants.gov, will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Applications submitted to Grants.gov, which fail the Grants.gov validation check, will not be received at or acknowledged by ACF. If you submit an application for the same NOFO more than once, only the last on-time submission will be acknowledged.

Paper applications with an approved exemption from the electronic submission requirement must be received by 4:30 pm ET on the due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*. Paper applications received after 4:30 pm ET on the due date will be disqualified from the merit review and funding under this funding opportunity.

Additional Application Disqualification Factors
• In accordance with 45 CFR § 1304.13, recipients terminated for cause by ACF within 5 years prior to the posting date of this NOFO will be disqualified from competitive review and from funding under this funding opportunity.

• A Head Start or EHS agency that has had a denial of refunding, in the preceding 5 years is also excluded from competing (45 CFR § 1304.13).

Notification of Application Disqualification

Applicants will be notified of a disqualification determination by email or by USPS postal mail within 30 federal business days from the closing date of this NOFO.

IV. Application and Submission Information

IV.1. Address to Request Application Package

HHS-2024-ACF-OHS-CH-R2-0090
Office of Head Start
OHS Grant Review Team c/o Guardians of Honor
1990 K Street NW
Suite 650
Washington
DC
20006
(888) 242-0684
OHSgrants@koniag-gs.com

Application Packages

Electronic Application Submission:

The electronic application submission package is available in the NOFO's listing at Grants.gov.

IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Formatting the Application Submission

Applicants must follow the formatting and upload requirements in this section in order for the full application to be reviewed. Failing to adhere to the three-file requirement, page limitations, and/or formatting restrictions will result in part of the application being excluded from review.

FOR ALL APPLICATIONS:

Signature of Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)

Each applicant must designate an authorized organization representative (AOR) with authority to act on the organization's behalf on matters related to the application and awards. The AOR signature must appear on all forms in which a signature is required. By signing, the AOR agrees the organization will abide by all applicable Federal statutes, regulations, or other terms and conditions of the award.

Accepted Font Style and Size

Applications must be in Times New Roman (TNR), 12-point font, except for footnotes, which may be 10-point font.

English Language
Applications must be submitted in the English language and must be in the terms of United States (U.S.) dollars. See 45 CFR §75.111 for more information.

Page Limitations
You must observe the page limitation(s) listed under "Page Limitations and File Content" later in this section. **Page limitation(s) do not include SFs and OMB-approved forms.**

All applications must be double-spaced. An application that exceeds the cited page limitation for double-spaced pages will have extra pages removed, and those pages will not be reviewed.

Application Elements Exempted from Double-Spacing Requirements
The following elements of the application submission are exempt from the double-spacing requirements and may be single-spaced:

- Table of Contents
- One-page Project Summary
- Required Assurances, Certifications, SFs and OMB-approved forms
- Resumes, logic models, proof of legal status/non-profit status, third-party agreements letters of support, footnotes, tables
- Line-item budget and/or the budget justification

Formatting for Appendices (Second File) and Federal Financial Review Attachments (Third File)
If documents submitted in the Appendices (Second File) and Federal Financial Review Attachments (Third File) must be scanned, the font size must be large enough so that it is readable. You may not scan more than one page of a document onto a single page. Pages with blurred text will be removed from the application.

Adherence to NOFO Formatting, Font, and Page Limitation Requirements
Applications that exceed the **150-page limitation** will have page(s) removed from the end of the Second File, which includes the Appendices, before the review. The removed page(s) will not be made available to reviewers.

In instances where formatting and font requirements are not adhered to, ACF uses a formula to recalculate the number of pages the application would include if it conformed to the formatting and font requirements listed in this section. The formula counts the number of characters an applicant uses when following the instructions and using 12-point TNR and compares the resulting number with that of the submitted application. For example, an applicant using TNR, 11-point font, with 1-inch margins all around, and single-spacing, would have an additional 26 lines, or 1,500 characters, per page which is equal to 4/5 of an additional page. Recalculation of pages using this formula may cause applications to exceed the page limitation, which would cause pages to be removed from the end of the Second File, which includes the Appendices, and excluded from review.

***NOTE*: Applicants failing to adhere to the NOFO formatting, font, and page limitation requirements will receive a letter from ACF notifying them that their application was**

amended. The letter will specify the reason(s) for removal of page(s).

Page Limitations and File Content

The page limitation is 150 pages for the Project Summary, Table of Contents, Project Description and Appendices. The Federal Financial Review attachments (financial statements, notes, and audit reports) are not subject to the 150-page limitation when they are included in the Third File as described in the following list.

Application components MUST be submitted in the prescribed order (see file list) regardless of whether the application is submitted in electronic or paper format.

First File

- Project Summary *(single-spaced) – limited to 1 page*
- Table of Contents *(single-spaced) – suggested 1 page*
- Project Description *(double-spaced) – suggested 75 pages*
    - Demonstration of Need for Child Development and Health Services: Location, Population, and Service Delivery Options
    - Achieving Early Learning and Development Outcomes to Promote School Readiness for Children
    - Past Performance
    - Staffing and Supporting a Strong Early Learning Workforce
    - Planning and Implementation
    - Organizational Capacity and Governance
    - Budget and Budget Justification

Second File

- Appendices *(must be readable) – suggested 73 pages*
    - Signed Board of Directors Attestation
    - Certificate of Good Standing
    - Proof of Legal Status of Applicant
    - Proof of Policy Council Approval
    - Organizational Capacity documentation (e.g., resumes, job descriptions, organizational charts)
    - Signed memoranda of understanding
    - Third-party agreements
    - Indirect cost rate agreement (IDR)
    - Letters of support
    - Plan for Oversight of Federal Awards Funds and Activities
    - Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information
    - Other supporting documents

Third File

- Federal Financial Review Attachments (most recent annual independent audit, including financial statements, related notes to the financial statements and the schedule of findings and questioned costs) – *no page limitation*

Competition Identification Number (SF-424)
Applicants MUST enter the Competition Identification Number listed in the Appendix that corresponds to the individually defined service area for which they are submitting an application, in Line 15 'Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project' of the SF-424.

Additional SF-424 Instructions
Line 18a – Federal: Include the combined base and T/TA funding requested by the applicant.

ELECTRONIC APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

You are required to submit applications electronically unless you have received an exemption that will allow submission in paper format. See *Section IV.2 Application Submission Options* for information about requesting an exemption.
Electronic applications will only be accepted via Grants.gov. **ACF will not accept applications submitted via email or via facsimile.**

Application Upload Requirements
ACF strongly recommends that electronic applications be uploaded as Portable Document Files (PDFs). To adhere to the three-file requirement, applicants may need to convert and/or merge documents together using PDF conversion software. Many recent versions of Microsoft Office include the ability to save documents to PDF format without need of additional software.

Applicants using the Adobe Professional software suite will be able to merge these documents together. ACF recommends merging documents electronically rather than scanning multiple documents into one document manually, as scanned documents may have reduced clarity and readability. However, ACF understands that all applicants may not have access to this software.

- ***First File*** must be uploaded to the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" in the electronic Grant Application Package at Grants.gov. It must contain the Project Summary, Table of Contents, and Project Description, including the Budget and Budget Justification.

- ***Second File*** and ***Third File*** must be uploaded to the "Other Attachment Form" in the electronic Grant Application Package at Grants.gov. ***Second File*** must contain the Appendices. ***Third File*** must contain only the Federal Financial Review Attachments (financial statements and notes and audit reports).

Required Standard Forms (SFs) and OMB-Approved Forms
Standard Forms (SFs) and OMB-approved forms, such as the SF-424 application and budget forms and the SF-P/PSL (Project/Performance Site Location), are uploaded separately at Grants.gov. See *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications* for the listing of required Standard Forms, OMB-approved forms, and required assurances and certifications.

Naming Application Submission Files
Applicants should use the following names for their files: FirstFile, SecondFile, and ThirdFile.

Carefully observe the filing name conventions required by Grants.gov. Limit fie names to 50 characters (characters and spaces). Please also see http://www.grants.gov./web /grants /grantors /submitting -utf-8- special- characters.html.

Use only file formats supported by ACF

While ACF supports all of the following file formats, **we strongly recommend that the three application submission files are uploaded as PDF documents in order to comply with the three-file upload limitation.**

ACF supports the following file formats:

- Adobe PDF – Portable Document Format (.pdf)
- Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx)
- Microsoft Excel (.xls or .xlsx)
- Microsoft PowerPoint (.ppt)
- Image Formats (.JPG, .GIF, .TIFF, or .BMP only)

Documents in file formats not listed here will be removed from the application and will not be used in the merit review. This may make the application incomplete, and ACF will not make any awards based on an incomplete application.

Do Not Encrypt or Password-Protect the Electronic Application Files

If ACF cannot access submitted electronic files because they are encrypted or password protected, the affected file will not be reviewed. This may make the application incomplete, and ACF will not make awards based on an incomplete application.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PAPER APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS:

You must receive an exemption in order for a paper application to be accepted for review. For more information on the exemption, see "ACF Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission."

Applicants with an approved exemption for paper application submission should download the forms package associated with the NOFO's Synopsis on Grants.gov under the Package tab.

All copies of mailed paper applications must be submitted in a single package. If an applicant is submitting multiple applications under a single NOFO, or multiple applications under separate NOFOs, each submission must be packaged separately. The package(s) must be clearly labeled with the NOFO title and Funding Opportunity Number.

Applicants must submit one original and two copies of the complete application, including all SFs and OMB-approved forms. The original copy must have original signatures. Copies of the application, not the original, will be reproduced by the federal government for review. **All application materials must be one-sided for duplication purposes. All pages in the application submission must be sequentially numbered.**

Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications

Applicants seeking an award under this funding opportunity must submit the listed SFs, assurances, and certifications with the application. All required SFs, assurances, and certifications are available in the Application Package posted for this NOFO at Grants.gov.

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
Proof of Policy Council Approval	Submission is required of applicants that are **current Head Start and/or Early Head Start recipients**.	Proof of Policy Council Approval of the application is required of applicants that are current Head Start and/or Early Head Start recipients by 42 U.S.C. § 9837(c)(2)(D)(iii) and 45 CFR § 1301.3.
Certificate of Good Standing	Submission is required for all **for-profit organizations**.	Sole proprietorships are not eligible applicants. The submission of the Certificate of Good Standing, along with the current list of board members, and organizational documents that require the establishment and maintenance of a Board of Directors, provide proof of eligibility for for-profit organizations.
SF-424A Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs / SF-424B Assurances - Non-Construction Programs and SF-424C - Budget Information Construction Programs / SF-424D - Assurances Construction Programs	Submission is required for all applicants when applying for both, non-construction **and** construction activities, under the proposed project. SFs must be used and submitted by the application due date. By signing and submitting the SF-424B and/or SF-424D, applicants are making the appropriate	Required for all applications when applying for non-construction and/or construction activities under the proposed project. Please see special instructions in the *Checklist* in *Section VIII. Other Information* in this funding opportunity. Projects that include both, **non-construction and construction** activities must submit the SF-424A, B, C, and D.

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
	certification of their compliance with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination.	
SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications.
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.	Required of all applicants. Applicants must have a UEI and maintain an active SAM registration throughout the application and project award period. Obtain a UEI and SAM registration at: http://www.sam.gov.	See *Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)* for more information.
SF-424 Key Contact Form	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications.
Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)	Submission required of all applicants with the application package. If it is not submitted with the application package, it must be submitted	Submission of the certification is required for all applicants.

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement	Notes/Description
	prior to the award of a grant.	
SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	Submission is required for all applicants by the application due date.	Required for all applications. In the SF-P/PSL, applicants must cite their primary location and up to 29 additional performance sites.
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If it is not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant.	If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the applicant shall complete and submit the SF-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions.

Additional Required Assurances and Certifications

Mandatory Grant Disclosures

All applicants and recipients are required to submit, in writing, to ACF and the HHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG), all information related to violations of federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the federal award. (Mandatory Disclosures, 45 CFR § 75.113)

Disclosures must be sent in writing to:

> The Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Grants Management, ATTN: Grants Management Specialist, 330 C Street, SW., Switzer Building, Corridor 3200, Washington, DC 20201
>
> **And to:**
>
> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, ATTN: Mandatory Grant Disclosures, Intake Coordinator, 330 Independence Avenue, SW., Cohen Building, Room 5527, Washington, DC 20201
>
> **Fax:** (202) 205-0604 (Include “Mandatory Grant Disclosures” in subject line) or

Email: grantdisclosures@oig.hhs.gov

SF-424 Key Contact Form
Applicants must provide contact information on the following in this form:

- Key Management Staff (e.g., Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer)
- Key Program Staff (e.g., Executive Director, Program Director)
- Board Chairperson

The Project Description

The Project Description Overview

General Expectations and Instructions

The Project Description requests the information by which an application is evaluated and ranked in competition with other applications for financial assistance. It must address all activities for which federal funds are being requested and all application requirements as stated in this section. The Project Description must explain how the project will meet the purpose of the NOFO, as described in *Section I. Program Description*. As a reminder, reviewers will be evaluating this section in accordance with *Section V.1. Criteria*.

The Project Description must be clear, concise, and complete. ACF is particularly interested in Project Descriptions that convey strategies for achieving intended performance. Project Descriptions are evaluated on the basis of substance and measurable outcomes, not length.

Cross-referencing should be used rather than repetition. Supporting documents designated as required must be included in the Appendix of the application.

Table of Contents

List the contents of the application including corresponding page numbers. The table of contents may be single spaced.

Geographic Location

Describe the precise physical location of the project and boundaries of the area to be served by the proposed project. If the geographic area(s) are served by both the primary recipient and subrecipient organization(s), describe the locations covered by all organizations anticipated to receive funding from the award.

Legal Status of Applicant Entity

Applicants must provide the following documentation:

Non-Profit Organizations

Proof of Non-Profit Status Options:

Option 1: 501(c)(3) and non-501(c)(3) non-profit organizations are eligible
Non-profit organizations applying for funding are required to submit proof of their non-profit status. Proof of non-profit status is any one of the following:

- A reference to the applicant organization's listing in the IRS's most recent list of tax-exempt organizations described in the IRS Code.
- A copy of a currently valid IRS tax-exemption certificate.

- A statement from a state taxing body, state attorney general, or other appropriate state official certifying that the applicant organization has non-profit status and that none of the net earnings accrue to any private shareholders or individuals.
- A certified copy of the organization's certificate of incorporation or similar document that clearly establishes non-profit status.
- Any of the items in the subparagraphs immediately above for a state or national parent organization and a statement signed by the parent organization that the applicant organization is a local non-profit affiliate.

Unless directed otherwise, applicants must include proof of non-profit status in the *Appendices* file of the application submission.

For-Profits and Small Businesses
For-profit organizations (including small businesses) applying for funding must submit the following to provide proof of their legal status: Documentation establishing the power granted to the entity to enter into contractual relationships and/or accept awards (i.e., articles of incorporation, bylaws).

Legal status means being established as a public agency under state law or a non-profit under state or federal law. ACF will accept proof of status as a for-profit organization under state or federal law.

For-Profit Organizations
For-profit organizations applying for funding must submit the following to provide proof of their eligibility and legal status:

- A Certificate of Good Standing,
- A current list of board members, and
- Organizational documents that require the establishment and maintenance of a Board of Directors.

Additional Eligibility Documentation
Applicants must provide the additional, required documentation, or required credentials, to support eligibility for an award, as described in *Section III. Eligibility Information* of this funding opportunity.

Proof of Policy Council Approval
Current Head Start and EHS Recipients must submit proof of Policy Council approval of the application as required by section 642(c)(2)(D)(iii) of the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9837(c)(2)(D)(iii), and 45 CFR § 1301.3.

Approach
Outline a plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed project will be accomplished. Applicants must account for all functions or activities identified in the application.

Cite potential obstacles and challenges to accomplishing project goals and explain strategies that will be used to address these challenges.

For Applicants Submitting an Application to Implement a Head Start and/or EHS Program

Applicants seeking funding for both Head Start and EHS programs should describe in their application how the model of joint operation of Head Start and EHS will be conducted in the community, as well as how the entity will manage both sets of services.

1. Demonstration of Need for Child Development and Health Services: Location, Population, and Service Delivery Options

Applicants must describe the precise geographic locations(s) and boundaries of the areas to be served (as described in *Section I. Program Description*). Provide data about why that geographic area is in high need of early childhood education and family support services. Data must include the number of eligible pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers by geographic location; the number of families in extreme poverty; jobless rates; incidence of community health problems; or other similar factors. Provide a description of information regarding the availability and access to early childhood education services for low-income infants, toddlers, or preschoolers in the proposed geographic area.

Clearly justify how the needs of the community are best served by their proposed approach, including a rationale for which ages of children the applicant proposes to serve in its program. Justify the program option(s) proposed for each age group to be served as the most appropriate to meet the needs of the community, as outlined in 45 CFR § 1302.20, including how many pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers will be served; and the number of hours per day, days per week, and weeks per year proposed.

- Applicants proposing to serve in multiple communities must specify the number of program participants to be served in **each** community.
- Applicants proposing the home-based option must include the proposed number of home visits and socializations for each age group(s) to be served.
- Applicants proposing the use of double sessions as a program option for Head Start (45 CFR § 1302.21; § 1305.2, Double Session Variation definition), which is discouraged, must justify why it is the best option to meet the demonstrated need in the community.

Describe how the proposed program will ensure that not less than 10 percent of the total number of children enrolled will be children with disabilities. Describe how the proposed program will partner with other programs or services in the community to best meet the needs of low-income families to be served, with evidence of community engagement and community partnerships in the geographic location(s) to improve service delivery, increase access to services, and prevent duplication.

If proposing delegate agencies, describe how those delegate agencies were chosen, and how the recipient's oversight will ensure the delegate agencies implement high-quality programs that adhere to the requirements outlined in 45 CFR 1303 Subpart D. Applicants must also identify the communities in which the delegate agency will operate, and the number of children to be served including the proposed program option(s).

2. Achieving Early Learning and Development Outcomes to Promote School Readiness for Children

Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to implement and sustain the high-quality, comprehensive, and individualized educational, health, mental health, nutritional, oral health, and other social services to pregnant women, infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families that prepare children to succeed in school. Describe how the program will implement program components and, where applicable, describe separately for infants and toddlers and for preschoolers.

Name the curriculum or set of curricula that will be used, describe why that curriculum/curricula was selected, and present the evidence basis that the curriculum/curricula effectively promotes progress toward school readiness (for preschoolers) or its developmental foundations (for infants and toddlers). Provide evidence supporting how the curriculum is tied to outcomes for children and meets the requirements discussed in 45 CFR § 1302.30.

Applicants must describe a process for establishing and measuring school readiness goals (45 CFR § 1302.102) that reflect the ages of children proposed to be served and demonstrate these goals are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

- **Applicants proposing an EHS program** must explain the extent to which goals were or will be established in alignment with state early learning guidelines, as appropriate.
- **Applicants proposing a Head Start program** must explain the extent to which goals align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and state early learning guidelines, and describe the requirements and expectations of the schools the children will attend after Head Start.

Describe how service effectiveness and quality will be measured, monitored, and improved upon over time. Applicants must specify the name and process for selection of their assessment tool. The assessment must be developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate. Describe the plan to use child assessment data for individualization and referral, and for aggregation and analysis. Describe how that analysis will be used in combination with other program data to determine recipients' progress toward meeting its goals.

Applicants also must include information about how they will meet the health, oral health, mental health, and nutrition needs for pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers. This includes a description of the system for health screening and services that will ensure participants are accurately referred for necessary follow-up evaluation and treatment within time frames specified by 45 CFR § 1302.33.

Provide a plan describing how the applicant will integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to promote children’s learning and development, as discussed in 45 CFR § 1302.34 and 1302.50-52.

Describe how the proposed program will meet the unique needs of special populations, including children with disabilities, dual language learners, children and pregnant women experiencing homelessness, working families, and children in foster care. Applicants must explain their procedures to identify such participants; plans to provide trained personnel; and plans to provide services to assist children in making meaningful progress in attaining age-appropriate knowledge, skills, abilities, and development.

In addition, applicants must propose the coordination of services within a community that support transitions for children and families.

Applicants proposing an EHS program must describe how they will deliver services to enrolled pregnant women post-pregnancy, and how the newborn infant and family will transition into the appropriate program option. They must also describe how the program will support transitions within the Head Start and/or EHS program. Lastly, applicants must describe how they will ensure that infants, toddlers, and their families participating in the program will have the opportunity to receive Head Start or other appropriate preschool services that they are eligible for through the age of mandatory school attendance.

Finally, applicants must describe its plan to coordinate with public and private entities that are willing to commit resources to assist the program in providing high-quality child health and developmental services. Such partnerships must include a plan to coordinate with other child care and preschool programs, state pre-kindergarten programs, programs under Part C and Section 619 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and with the educational programs that children will enter upon leaving EHS or Head Start.

3. Past Performance

Applicants must provide evidence of organizational experience (including the experience of key leaders in the organization such as the Executive Director, Program Director, and Managers) that supports its ability to implement the proposed program. They must also discuss a history of providing effective financial management in operating programs of similar scope and complexity.

They must describe how their past experience in early education (or related fields) and in communities similar to the targeted community will enable them to operate a Head Start and/or EHS program. This may include evidence of the quality of the early education programs or related programs it has operated in the past such as licensing history, accreditation, ratings, independent evaluations of programs, or outcome data for children.

Applicants must also describe the past performance of organizations that it proposes as a delegate for all or part of their services.

Explain the ways (if any) in which past experience – or that of any proposed delegate agencies – differs from operating a Head Start and/or EHS program. Discuss how it will address these differences and succeed in providing high-quality, comprehensive services.

Current or former Head Start or EHS recipients must include a description of any violations, such as deficiencies, areas of non-compliance, and/or audit findings. Applicants may describe the actions they have taken to address any violations. Additionally, applicants that serve or have served as delegate agencies to Head Start and EHS recipients must provide documentation of their past performance.

Current Head Start, EHS, or EHS-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnership recipients must also include a description of any ongoing under-enrollment, including being designated as chronically under-enrolled by the OHS, in accordance with section 641A(h)(5) of the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9836a(h)(5), if applicable. Applicants may describe the actions they have taken to address their under-enrollment.

4. Staffing, Compensation, and Supporting a Strong Early Learning Workforce
Applicants must describe the qualifications of its proposed staff, including their experience in providing child development services in accordance with 45 CFR § 1302.91. This includes a description of key program staff's major functions and responsibilities. Also describe the management staff's knowledge of the requirements of the proposed program, and how it will ensure that all program staff members understand how those standards are applicable to them. If proposing a Head Start and EHS program, describe the plan to include staff with infant/toddler and preschool expertise in decision-making roles.

Applicants must describe how they will attract and retain qualified staff with the necessary competencies to implement a high-quality, comprehensive program, including competitive wages and benefits and supports for a positive work climate. Applicants must also demonstrate that their proposed staff have the ability to implement a research-based curriculum; effective instructional strategies; and a high-quality, comprehensive program.

Applicants must describe the strategies to understand wages for similar positions in high-quality early care and education and elementary school programs and how the program will use this information and account for experience, job responsibilities, and credentials to provide competitive wages. Applicants should include information on benefits that will be provided to staff.

Applicants must provide evidence of a sustainable mechanism for providing competitive compensation to staff, including a clear description of how proposed salary or wage targets are competitive with other employers providing high-quality early care and education and elementary school education in the community.

Applicants must describe the strategies and mechanisms to support staff, and a plan to assess staff performance including under-performing staff. Applicants must also describe how they will provide career development opportunities for professional, paraprofessional, and other staff (45 CFR § 1302.91). Additionally, applications must describe a plan to evaluate job applicants, including existing recipient staff, to determine which applicants are most capable of implementing a high-quality, comprehensive program.

The narrative must also address the following: (1) how the applicant will facilitate strong staff-child relationships that support the development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers; (2) a plan to ensure that staff are prepared for and supported in implementing evidence-based instructional practices that are individualized to support positive child outcomes; and (3) how all staff will successfully partner with families in supporting children's development.

If proposing center-based or family child care services, describe the plan for observing teacher practice, including teacher-child interactions. If proposing home-based services, describe the plan for observing home visitor practice, including interactions with the family and child, and supporting the parents in their role as the child’s primary caregiver/teacher. For all program services, discuss using this information to inform professional development and practice improvements. Include the name of any instruments to be used.

5. Planning and Implementation

Successful applicants will be expected to begin providing services quickly after the anticipated project start date noted in *Section II. Federal Award Information*, with a minimal start-up period, to support limited to no disruption in program services. Therefore, an implementation plan and timeline, including transition period planning, must be included that at a minimum addresses the following:

- State and local licensing requirements for each proposed age group, the length of time required to obtain licensure for early childhood learning environments, and the impact on the proposed implementation plan.
- The availability of appropriate facilities for proposed program model(s), and the anticipated timelines for completing any construction, renovation, or adaptation of space to meet requirements. Plans should include any properties with a federal interest currently occupied by the incumbent recipient, where applicable.
- As applicable, plans for alternative service provision (e.g., temporary home-based services) during start-up, until facilities are fully operational.
- Where facilities are not available, a plan to acquire facilities in accordance with 45 CFR § 1303.42.
- The ability to recruit, hire, and train qualified staff to support the proposed start of Head Start and/or EHS programming.

6. Organizational Capacity and Governance

Applicants must demonstrate their ability to oversee operations that comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. The application must describe the capacity of senior executive managers (for example, Executive Director, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer) and governing body to manage the following:

- exercise effective oversight of program operations and accountability for federal funds;
- set and monitor overall agency priorities and operational systems;
- develop and implement systems for communication, record-keeping, reporting, and ongoing monitoring, and;
- conduct community assessments, annual self-assessments, and outcome-based evaluations.

Applicants must document their plan to constitute and train a governing body that is in compliance with the program governance requirements established in section 642(c) of the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9837(c). Applicants must also demonstrate their capacity to effectively implement a system of governance that includes the Policy Council and parents in decision making. If applicable, applicants should provide information about how its current governance structure would change (if at all) to meet the HSPPS.

Please see 7. Budget and Budget Justification, under The Project Budget and Budget Justification in this section for additional program-specific requirements that will be evaluated in the application review process.

FEDERAL FINANCIAL REVIEW

The financial review is conducted to assess the recipients's financial capability based on information provided in the application package, including the most recent audit conducted under 45 CFR Part 75 – Subpart F. All applicants must include their most recent annual independent audit meeting the requirements of 45 CFR Part 75 – Subpart F, including financial statements, related notes to the financial statements, and the schedule of findings and questioned costs required by 45 CFR §75.507(b)(4)(iv) noting whether or not the applicant qualifies as a low risk auditee.

Organizational Capacity

Provide the following information on the applicant organization and, if applicable, on any cooperating partners:

- Organizational charts.
- Resumes.
- Biographical Sketches (short narrative description).
- List of Board of Directors.
- Audit summary report including auditor's opinion in lieu of the full audit report, if applicable.
- Copy or description of the applicant organization's fiscal control and accountability procedures.
- Evidence that the applicant organization, and any partnering organizations, have relevant experience and expertise with administration, development, implementation, management, and evaluation of programs similar to that offered under this funding opportunity.
- Child care licenses and other documentation of professional accreditation.
- Information on compliance with federal/state/local government standards.

If known at the time of application submission, the applicant must disclose their intent to enter into subaward arrangements in their application. For each proposed subaward, the applicant must include a description of the work to be performed by the subrecipient(s).

Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities

Recipients are required to ensure proper oversight in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart D.

These regulations set forth the following standards for effective oversight:

- Financial and Program Management
- Property Management
- Procurement
- Performance and Financial Monitoring and Reporting
- Subrecipient Monitoring and Management
- Record Retention and Access

- Remedies for Noncompliance
- Prior Written Approval

Describe the framework (e.g., governance, policies and procedures, risk management, systems) in place to ensure proper oversight of federal funds and activities in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart D. The description must include: system(s) for record-keeping and financial management; procedures to identify and mitigate risks and issues (e.g., audit findings, continuous program performance assessment findings, program monitoring); and those key staff that will be responsible for maintaining oversight of program activities staff, and, if applicable, partner(s) and/or subrecipient(s).

Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information

Provide a description of how protected PII and other information that is considered sensitive, consistent with applicable federal, state, local and tribal laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality, will be collected and safeguarded. The applicant must provide the methods and/or systems that will be used to ensure that confidential and/or sensitive information is properly handled and if applicable, address the process for subrecipient(s) and/or contractors. Also, provide a plan for the disposition of such information at the end of the project period. See 45 CFR § 75.303(e) for more information.

Third-Party Agreements

Third-party agreements include Letters of Commitment, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Memoranda of Agreement (MOA). Letters of Commitment, MOUs and MOAs must clearly describe the roles and responsibilities for project activities and the support and/or resources that the third-party (i.e., subrecipient, contractor, or other cooperating entity) is committing. Letters of Commitment, MOUs, and MOAs must be signed by the person in the third-party organization with the authority to make such commitments on behalf of their organization. General letters of support are **not** considered third-party agreements.

Applicants must provide Letters of Commitment, MOUs, or MOAs between recipients and third-parties (i.e., subrecipients, contractors, or other cooperating entities). In addition to clearly describing the roles and responsibilities for project activities and support and/or resources that the third-party is committing, these agreements must detail work schedules and estimated remuneration with an understanding that a finalized agreement will be negotiated once the aware is made to the successful applicant.

Letters of Support

Provide statements from community, public, and/or commercial leaders that support the project proposed for funding. All submissions must be included in the application package. At minimum, each letter of support must identify the individual writing the letter, the organization they represent, the date, and reason(s) for supporting the project.

The Project Budget and Budget Justification

All applicants are required to submit a project budget and budget justification with their application. The project budget is entered on the Budget Information Standard Form SF-424A and, if required, the SF-424C. The budget justification consists of a budget narrative and a line-item budget detail that includes detailed calculations for "object class categories" identified on the Budget Information Standard Form. **Applicants proposing construction costs must submit**

the SF-424C and SF-424D forms listed under the "Optional" section of the NOFO's electronic application package at Grants.gov in addition to the SF-424A and SF-424B.

Project budget calculations must include estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated. If matching or cost sharing is a requirement, applicants must include a detailed listing of any funding sources identified in Block 18 of the SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance). See the table in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances and Certifications* listing the appropriate budget forms to use in this application.

Special Note: Section 653 of the Head Start Act provides that *"[n]notwithstanding any other provision of law, no Federal funds may be used to pay any part of the compensation of an individual employed by a Head Start agency, if such compensation, including non-Federal funds, exceeds an amount equal to the rate payable for level II of the Executive Schedule under section 5313 of title 5, United States Code." Please see "Executive & Senior Level Employee Pay Tables" under https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/.*

The statute also defines the term "compensation" as:

> *"(A) includes salary, bonuses, periodic payments, severance pay, the value of any vacation time, the value of a compensatory or paid leave benefit not excluded by subparagraph (B), and the fair market value of any employee perquisite or benefit not excluded by subparagraph (B); and*
>
> *(B) excludes any Head Start agency expenditure for a health, medical, life insurance, disability, retirement, or any other employee welfare or pension benefit."*

Provide a budget for the initial budget period only (typically the first 12 months of the project) using the SF-424A and/or SF-424C, as applicable.

Provide a budget justification, which includes a budget narrative and a line-item detail, for only the first budget period of the proposed project. The budget narrative should describe how the categorical costs are derived. Discuss the necessity, reasonableness, and allocation of the proposed costs.

7. Budget and Budget Justification

Applicants must demonstrate that funds are budgeted to provide all required comprehensive Head Start and/or EHS services, based on the proposed program option. The applicant must provide evidence of a reasonable per child cost, based on the proposed program type and program option(s). The applicant must submit separate budgets that clearly and accurately distinguish between the proposed Head Start and EHS base operating funds, Head Start and/or EHS T/TA funds, total federal funds, and the applicant's non-federal share, if applicable. The application budget must include evidence of a sustainable, competitive compensation and other necessary supports to staff, including a clear description of how compensation offered is competitive with other jobs in the community providing similar services. Additionally, applications must provide a cost-effective budget that is aligned with the program services, program option(s), management and staffing structure, and other program components proposed in the application narrative.

The application must detail the plan to contribute the required non-federal share/match of the total project cost. Each source of non-federal share match must be clearly identified, including the estimated amount per source and the valuation methodology. Finally, the proposed sources of non-federal share/match must only be derived from allowable sources. Please see *Section III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching* for information on the matching requirement.

Start-up/Pre-Award Costs

The application must demonstrate that start-up/pre-award costs, if proposed, are justified, reasonable, and applicable based on the applicant's proposed Head Start and/or EHS program. Applicants requesting start-up funding must submit a separate budget for start-up/pre-award costs as described in *Section II. Federal Award Information*. If the applicant is not requesting start-up/pre-award costs, this requirement is not applicable.

Start-up/pre-award costs may include the following: 1) ensuring that proposed facilities comply with state and local requirements and are adequately equipped, 2) purchasing classroom equipment and supplies, and/or 3) conducting staff background checks.

Use the following guidelines for preparing the project budget and budget justification. The budget justification includes a budget narrative and a line-item detail. Applications should only include allowable costs in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart E.

General

Use the following guidelines for preparing the project budget and budget justification. The budget justification includes a budget narrative and a line-item detail. Applications should only include allowable costs in accordance with 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart E.

Personnel

Description: Costs of employee salaries and wages. See 45 CFR § 75.430 for more information on allowable personnel costs. Do not include the personnel costs of consultants, contractors and subrecipients under this category.

Justification: For each position, provide: the name of the individual (if known), their title; time commitment to the project in months; time commitment to the project as a percentage or full-time equivalent; annual salary; grant salary; wage rates; etc. Identify the project director or principal investigator, if known at the time of application.

Fringe Benefits

Description: Costs of employee fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees in addition to regular salaries and wages. For more information on Fringe Benefits please refer to 45 CFR § 75.431. **Do not include** the fringe benefits of consultants, contractors, and subrecipients because those costs should be listed under the "Contractual" category as part of the total value of the contract or agreement.

Typically, fringe benefit amounts are determined by applying a calculated rate for a particular class of employee (full-time or part-time) to the salary and wages requested. Fringe rates are often specified in the approved indirect cost rate agreement. Fringe benefits may be treated as a direct cost or indirect cost in accordance with the applicant's accounting practices. Only fringe benefits as a direct cost should be entered under this category.

Justification: Provide a breakdown of the amounts and percentages that comprise fringe benefit costs such as health insurance, Federal Insurance Contributions Act taxes, retirement, taxes, etc.

Travel

Description: Costs of project-related travel (i.e., transportation, lodging, subsistence) by employees of the applicant organization who are in travel status on official business. Travel by non-employees such as consultants, contractors or subrecipients should be included under the Contractual line item. Local travel for employees in non-travel status should be listed on the Other line. Travel costs should be developed in accordance with the applicant's travel policies and 45 CFR § 75.474.

Justification: For each trip show: the total number of travelers; travel destination; duration of trip; per diem; mileage allowances, if privately owned vehicles will be used to travel out of town; and other transportation costs and subsistence allowances. If appropriate for this project, travel costs for key project staff to attend ACF-sponsored workshops/conferences/recipient orientations should be detailed in the budget justification.

Equipment

Description: "Equipment" means tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost that equals or exceeds the lesser of: (a) the capitalization level established by the organization for the financial statement purposes, or (b) $5,000. (Note: Acquisition cost means the net invoice unit price of an item of equipment, including the cost of any modifications, attachments, accessories, or auxiliary apparatus necessary to make it usable for the purpose for which it is acquired. Ancillary charges, such as taxes, duty, protective in-transit insurance, freight, and installation, shall be included in, or excluded from, acquisition cost in accordance with the organization's regular written accounting practices.) See 45 CFR § 75.439 for more information.

Justification: For each type of equipment requested provide: a description of the equipment; the cost per unit; the number of units; the total cost; and a plan for use on the project; as well as use and/or disposition of the equipment after the project ends.

Supplies

Description: Tangible personal property other than those included under the Equipment category. A computing device is a supply if the acquisition cost is less than the lesser of $5,000, or the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, regardless of the length of its useful life. See 45 CFR § 75.2, 75.321, and 75.453 for more information.

Justification: Specify general categories of supplies and their costs. Show computations and provide other information that supports the amount requested.

Contractual

Description: Cost of all contracts and subawards except those that should be placed under other categories such as equipment, supplies, construction, etc. Include third-party evaluation contracts, procurement contracts, and subawards. Recipients are required to use 45 CFR §§ 75.326-.340 procurement procedures, and subawards are subject to the requirements at 45 CFR §§ 75.351-.353. Costs related to professional and consultant services rendered by persons who are members of a particular profession or possess a special skill, and who are not officers or employees, must be listed in the Other category. (Typically, these arrangements will take the form of a consultant agreement directly with an individual as opposed to a contract with a company that employs the consultant. The latter case must still be listed under Contractual line item.)

If applicable and charged as a direct cost, include cost of third-party renting or leasing agreements for equipment; and third-party renting or leasing agreements for real property by address for each building, facility, administrative office, space, structure, land, and other real property.

Justification: Indicate whether the proposed agreement qualifies as a subaward or contract in accordance with 45 CFR § 75.351. Provide the name of the contractor/subrecipient (if known), a description of anticipated services, a justification for why they are necessary, a breakdown of estimated costs, and an explanation of the selection process. In addition, for subawards, the applicant must provide a detailed budget and budget narrative for each subaward, by entity name, along with the same justifications referred to in these budget and budget justification instructions.

For contracts, demonstrate that procurement transactions will be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open, and free competition. Applicants must justify any anticipated procurement action that is expected to be awarded without competition and exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold stated in 48 CFR § 2.101(b). Recipients may be required to make pre-award review and procurement documents, such as requests for proposals or invitations for bids, independent cost estimates, etc., available to ACF.

If applicable and charged as a direct cost, for each real property proposed or claimed for rent or lease include: the rent amount with calculation; terms of lease; maintenance and repair amounts with details on each type of expense proposed and its associated cost; minor A&R with specifics for each type of proposed expense and its associated cost; show the computation and provide other information that supports the amount requested. Only when allowable and with prior approval, describe the financing costs (including interest) including terms for the real property address. For applicable ACF programs with real property authority, see ACF Property Guidance. **Do not include** real property owned by the recipient or arrangements considered “less-than-arms-length,” “sale and lease back,” “finance lease” per Financial Accounting Standards Board, “financed purchase” per Government Accounting Standards Board standards because these costs (e.g., depreciation costs) if charged as 1) a direct cost, should be listed under the “Other” category or 2) an indirect cost as with any indirect costs, as part of their indirect cost pool that is used to calculate an indirect cost rate). These costs must be treated as either direct or indirect costs, not both. For more information, see 45 CFR §75.2, 75.414, 75.430-75.431, 75.434, 75.436, 75.439, and 75.452.

Other

Description: Enter the total of all other costs. Such costs, where applicable and appropriate, may include, but are not limited to: individual consultant costs; local travel; insurance (when not included under the Fringe category); food (when allowable); medical and dental costs (non-personnel); professional service costs (e.g., audit charges); depreciation of real property and equipment (when not treated as an indirect cost), printing and publications, training costs (such as tuition and stipends), staff development costs, and administrative costs (when not treated as an indirect cost). Please note costs must be allowable per 45 CFR Part 75 Subpart E.

Justification: Provide a breakdown of costs, computations, a narrative description, and a justification for each cost under this category.

If applicable and charged as a direct cost, include depreciation by real property address for each building, facility, administrative office, structure, land, and other real property proposed for use and depreciation of equipment proposed for use. For each real property owned by the recipient or less-than-arms-length lease intended to be proposed or claimed for use provide, if applicable, and in accordance with 45 CFR §§75.436 and 75.465: the allocable percentage and total dollar amount; the depreciation amount with type of method and calculation used; tax amount; insurance amount and what it covers; maintenance and repair amounts with details on each type of expense proposed and its associated cost; minor A&R with specifics for each type of proposed expense and its associated cost; the ownership type (e.g., owned, leased, or intent to lease); show the computation and provide other information that supports the amount requested. For more information, please see ACF Property Guidance. **Do not include** costs of third-party renting or leasing real property and equipment because those costs should be under the "Contractual" category.

Indirect Charges

Description: Indirect or Facilities & Administration (F&A) (F&A means those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. F&A costs are generally used by institutions of higher education). Typical examples of indirect or F&A costs include but are not limited to depreciation on buildings and equipment, equipment and capital improvements, operation and maintenance expenses, and general administration and expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of personnel administration and accounting. For more information, see 45 CFR §75.2, 75.414, 75.430-75.431, 75.434, 75.436, and 75.439. Enter the total amount of indirect costs. This category has one of two methods that an applicant can select. An applicant may only select one.

1. The applicant currently has an indirect cost rate approved by HHS or another cognizant federal agency.

   Justification: An applicant must enclose a copy of the current approved rate agreement. If the applicant is requesting a rate that is less than what is allowed under the program, the authorized representative of the applicant organization must submit a signed acknowledgement that the applicant is accepting a lower rate than allowed. Choosing to charge a lower rate will not be considered during the merit review or award selection process.

2. Per 45 CFR § 75.414(f) Indirect (F&A) costs, "any non-Federal entity [i.e., applicant] that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, ... may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 10% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely. As described in Section 75.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as the non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time."

   Justification: This method only applies to applicants that have never received an approved negotiated indirect cost rate from HHS or another cognizant federal agency. Applicants awaiting approval of their indirect cost proposal may request the 10 percent *de minimis* rate. When the applicant chooses this method, costs included in the indirect cost pool must not be charged as direct costs to the award.

Commitment of Non-Federal Resources

Description: Amounts of non-federal resources that will be used to support the project as identified in Block 18 of the SF-424. This line should be used to indicate required and/or voluntary committed cost sharing or matching, if applicable.

For all federal awards, any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third-party in-kind contributions, must be accepted as part of the recipient's cost sharing or matching when such contributions meet all of the criteria listed in 45 CFR § 75.306. For awards that require matching by statute, recipients must meet the required level of cost sharing. Recipients that have voluntarily decided to contribute cost sharing when it is not required, or at a higher level than required, will be held accountable for the proposed cost-sharing, if accepted by ACF and included in the Notice of Award (NoA). **A recipient's failure to provide cost sharing that has been accepted by ACF may result in the disallowance of federal funds.**

Justification: If an applicant is relying on cost share or match from a third-party, then a firm commitment of these resources (letter(s) or other documentation) is required to be submitted with the application. Detailed budget information must be provided for every funding source identified in Item 18. "Estimated Funding ($)" on the SF-424.

Applicants are required to fully identify and document in their applications the specific costs or contributions they propose in order to meet a matching requirement. Applicants are also required to provide documentation in their applications on the sources of funding or contribution(s). In-kind contributions must be accompanied by a justification of how the stated valuation was determined. Matching or cost sharing must be documented by budget period (or by project period for fully funded awards).

Applications that lack the required supporting documentation will not be disqualified from the merit review; however, it may impact an application's scoring under the evaluation criteria in *Section V.1. Criteria* of this funding opportunity.

Construction
Description: Provide a separate detailed budget and narrative in accordance with the instructions

outlined on the SF-424C. Identify which construction activities and costs will be contractual and those that the applicant will assume.

Justification: Provide a separate detailed budget and narrative in accordance with the instructions for other object class categories. Identify which construction activities/costs will be contractual and those that the applicant will assume.

Program Income

Description: The estimated amount of gross income, if any, expected to be directly generated by or earned from this project. Program income includes but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed, the use or rental of real or personal property acquired under federally-funded projects, the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award, license fees and royalties on patents and copyrights, and interest on loans made with award funds. See 45 CFR §75.307 for more information.

Justification: Describe the nature, source and anticipated use of program income in the budget or refer to the pages in the application that contain this information.

Paperwork Reduction Disclaimer

As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3521, the public reporting burden for the Project Description is estimated to average 60 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. The Project Description information collection is approved under OMB control number 0970-0139, which expires 03/31/2026. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Application Submission Options

Please read the following instructions carefully and completely.

Electronic Delivery

ACF applicants are required to submit their applications online through Grants.gov.

How to Register through Grants.gov

Applicants should read the registration instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process.

Organizations must have an active System for Award (SAM) registration which provides a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), and Grants.gov account to apply for awards under funding opportunities.

Creating a Grants.gov account can be completed online in minutes, but SAM registration may take several weeks. Therefore, an organization’s registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact the entities ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:
https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

Register with SAM**:** All organizations (entities) applying online through Grants.gov must register with SAM. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. SAM registration must be renewed annually. For detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

Create a Grants.gov Account**:** The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Follow the on-screen instructions provided on the registration page.

Add a Profile to a Grants.gov Account**:** For detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/add-profile.html

EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles: After you register with Grants.gov and create an Organization Applicant Profile, the applicant's request for Grants.gov roles and access is sent to the EBiz POC. The EBiz POC is then expected to log into Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles. For detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html

Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov.

For questions related to this funding opportunity, please contact the number listed in the application package.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your submission, it is best to call the Grants.gov Support Center and get a ticket number. The Support Center ticket number will assist ACF with tracking and understanding background information on the issue.

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

All applications must be received by 11:59 pm ET on the due date established for each program. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will receive an acknowledgment of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When ACF successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submission, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role.

Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by ACF.

Issues with Federal Systems

For any systems issues experienced with Grants.gov or SAM.gov, please refer to ACF's "Policy for Applicants Experiencing Federal Systems Issues" for complete guidance.

Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission

To request an exemption from required electronic submission, please refer to ACF's "[Policy for Requesting an Exemption from Required Electronic Application Submission]" for complete guidance.

Paper Application Submission

See *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements* of this funding opportunity for address information for paper application submissions.

IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

All applicants must have a UEI and an active registration with SAM (https://www.sam.gov) prior to applying to a funding opportunity.

HHS requires all entities that plan to apply for, and ultimately receive, federal funds from any HHS Agency to:

- Be registered in SAM prior to submitting an application or plan;
- Maintain an active SAM registration with current information until the process is complete. If you receive an award, your SAM registration must be active throughout the life of the award. It must be renewed every 365 days to keep it active;
- Provide its UEI in each application or plan it submits; and
- Ensure any proposed subrecipient(s) have obtained and provided to the recipient their UEI(s) prior to making any subawards (**Note:** Subrecipients are not required to complete full SAM registration.).

ACF is prohibited from making an award until an applicant has complied with these requirements. At the time an award is ready to be made, if the intended recipient has not complied with these requirements, ACF:

- May determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award; and
- May use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

IV.4. Submission Dates and Times

12/14/2023

Explanation of Due Dates

The due date for receipt of applications is listed in the *Overview* and in this section.

Electronic Applications
The deadline for submission of electronic applications via Grants.gov is 11:59 pm ET on the due date.

Applications submitted to Grants.gov at any time during the open application period prior to the due date and time that fail the Grants.gov validation check will not be received at ACF. These applications will not be acknowledged.

Mailed Paper Applications
The deadline for receipt of mailed paper applications is 4:30 pm ET on the due date listed in the Overview and in this section. Applications should be mailed to the address provided in *Section IV.7. Other Submission Requirements*.

No appeals will be considered for applications classified as late under the following circumstances:

- Applications submitted electronically via Grants.gov are considered late when they are dated and time-stamped after the deadline of 11:59 pm ET on the due date.
- Paper applications received by mail after 4:30 pm ET on the due date will be classified as late and will be disqualified.
- Paper applications received from applicant organizations that were not approved for an exemption from required electronic application submission under the process described in *Section IV.2. Request an Exemption from Required Electronic Submission* will be disqualified.

Emergency Extensions

ACF may extend an application due date when circumstances make it impossible for an applicant to submit their applications on time. Only events such as documented natural disasters (floods, hurricanes, tornados, etc.), or a verifiable widespread disruption of electrical service, or mail service, will be considered. The determination to extend or waive the due date, and/or receipt time, requirements in an emergency situation rests with the Grants Management Officer listed as the Office of Grants Management Contact in *Section VII. HHS Awarding Agency Contact(s)*.

Acknowledgement of Received Application

Acknowledgement from Grants.gov

Applicants will receive an initial email upon submission of their application to Grants.gov. This email will provide a **Grants.gov Tracking Number**. Refer to this tracking number in all communication with Grants.gov. The email will also provide a **date and time stamp**, which serves as the official record of the application's submission**.** Receipt of this email does not indicate that the application is accepted or that it has passed the validation check.

Applicants will also receive an email acknowledging that the received application is in the **Grants.gov validation process.**

Acknowledgement from ACF of an electronic application's submission:

Applicants will be sent additional email(s) from ACF acknowledging that the application has been retrieved from Grants.gov by ACF. Receipt of these emails is not an indication that the application is accepted for competition.

Acknowledgement from ACF of receipt of a paper application:

ACF will provide acknowledgement of receipt of hard copy application packages submitted via mail.

IV.5. Intergovernmental Review

This program is covered under Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," and 45 CFR Part 100, "Intergovernmental Review of Department of Health and Human Services Programs and Activities." Under the Executive Order, States may design their own processes for reviewing and commenting on proposed Federal assistance under covered programs.

Applicants should go to the following URL for the official list of the jurisdictions that have elected to participate in E.O. 12372 https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf.

Applicants from participating jurisdictions should contact their SPOC, as soon as possible, to alert them of their prospective applications and to receive instructions on their jurisdiction's procedures. Applicants must submit all required application materials to the SPOC and indicate the date of submission on the SF-424 at item 19.

Under 45 CFR § 100.8(a)(2), a SPOC has 60 days from the application due date to comment on proposed new awards.

SPOC comments may be submitted directly to ACF at: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Grants Management, 330 C St. SW, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20201.

Entities that meet the eligibility requirements of this funding opportunity are still eligible to apply for an award even if a State, Territory or Commonwealth, etc., does not have a SPOC or has chosen not to participate in the process. Applicants from non-participating jurisdictions need take no action with regard to E.O. 12372. Applications from Federally-recognized Indian Tribal governments are not subject to E.O. 12372.

IV.6. Funding Restrictions

Costs of organized fund raising, including financial campaigns, endowment drives, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions are unallowable. Fund raising costs for the purposes of meeting the Federal program objectives are allowable with prior written approval from the Federal awarding agency. (45 CFR § 75.442)

Proposal costs are the costs of preparing bids, proposals, or applications on potential Federal and non-Federal awards or projects, including the development of data necessary to support the non-Federal entity's bids or proposals. Proposal costs of the current accounting period of both successful and unsuccessful bids and proposals normally should be treated as indirect (F&A) costs and allocated currently to all activities of the non-Federal entity. No proposal costs of past accounting periods will be allocable to the current period. (45 CFR § 75.460)

IV.7. Other Submission Requirements

Submit paper applications to the following address.

Submission by Mail
HHS-2024-ACF-OHS-CH-R2-0090
Office of Head Start
OHS Grant Review Team c/o Guardians of Honor
1990 K Street NW
Suite 650
Washington
DC
20006

V. Application Review Information

V.1. Criteria

Please note: With the exception of the notice of funding opportunity and relevant statutes and regulations, reviewers must not access, or review, any materials that are not part of the application documents. This includes information accessible on websites via hyperlinks that are referenced, or embedded, in the application. Reviewers must evaluate and score an application based on the documents that are presented in the application and must not refer to, or access, external links during the merit review.

Applications competing for financial assistance will be reviewed and evaluated using the criteria described in this section. Points will be allocated based on the extent to which the application proposal addresses each of the criteria listed. Applicants should address these criteria in their application materials, particularly in the project description and budget justification, as they are the basis upon which competing applications will be judged during the merit review. The required elements of the project description and budget justification may be found in *Section IV.2. The Project Description* of this funding opportunity.

In addition to the required elements of the project description found in *Section IV.2.*, the objective review panel will evaluate proposals in accordance with the relevant sections of the HSPPS (45 CFR Parts 1301-1305). The review of applications under this NOFO will result in a numerical score as evaluated by a panel of non-federal reviewers. The review panel will assign numerical scores for each evaluation criterion based on a range of points (0 points - total point value), taking into consideration the extent to which the application narrative includes substantial and compelling evidence.

1. Demonstration of Need: Location, Population, and Service Delivery Options	**Maximum Points:** 20

To evaluate the Demonstration of Need, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant presents evidence of the need for Head Start and/or EHS services in the proposed community. In reaching their conclusion, reviewers will deliberate the following narrative elements:

- How Head Start and/or EHS resources will be directed to the geographic area(s) of greatest need.
- The rationale for which ages of children are proposed to be served, including the estimated number of eligible pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers by program type and geographic location(s).
- If the proposed program option(s) is the most appropriate to meet the needs of the community.
- The analysis of access to other early childhood education programs in the geographic area.
- The plan to enroll children with disabilities.
- How the need for full-day, full-year services in the community will be met, including the planned number of hours per day, days per week, and weeks per year of program operations.
- If applicable, how the proposed delegate agency is identified, including the communities in which the applicant will operate, the number of children to be served by age of child and their proposed program option(s).

- Evidence of community engagement in the proposed geographic location(s) that is designed to improve service delivery, increase access to services, and prevent duplication.

2. Achieving Early Learning and Development Outcomes to Promote School Readiness for Children **Maximum Points:** 30

To evaluate Achieving Early Learning and Development Outcomes, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant presents evidence of its ability to implement a high-quality, comprehensive program for the population the applicant proposes to serve in the *Demonstration of Need* section. In reaching their conclusion, reviewers will deliberate the following narrative elements:

- The curriculum or set of curricula and teaching practices proposed that promote progress toward school readiness goals.
- The process for establishing and measuring school readiness goals. Do those school readiness goals reflect the ages of children that the applicant proposes to serve in the program, and are they culturally and linguistically appropriate?
- If the school readiness goals were or will be established in consultation with the parents of children who will be participating in the program.
- How the applicant will meet the needs of infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers with disabilities.
- The plan to meet the needs of the applicant's targeted population, including infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers in the child welfare system, dual language learners, homeless children, and pregnant women.
- How the applicant will meet the health, mental health, nutritional, and oral health needs of program participants.
- **For applicants proposing center-based or family child care services:** How the applicant describes a plan for observing teacher practice, including teacher-child interactions. **For applicants proposing home-based services:** How the applicant describes a plan for observing home visitor practice. Does the applicant describe using this information to inform professional development and practice improvements?
- The process for selecting the specified assessment tool. The plan to use child assessment data to individualize the instruction and learning for each child and, as necessary, refer for additional evaluation and intervention; and to aggregate and analyze child-level assessment data.
- The plan to coordinate with public and private entities to assist the program in providing child health and developmental services and program management services.
- **For applicants proposing an EHS program:**
    - The system proposed to deliver services to enrolled pregnant women post-pregnancy, and how the newborn infant and family will transition into the appropriate program option at the appropriate time; and how the program will support transitions from Head Start to public and community-based school settings.

- How the applicant will ensure that infants, toddlers, and their families participating in the program will have the opportunity to receive Head Start or other appropriate preschool services.

- The plan to facilitate the meaningful engagement of parents in activities designed to help them become full partners in the education of their children. Barriers to parent participation should be discussed.

3. Past Performance **Maximum Points:** 20

To evaluate Past Performance, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant provides evidence of its organizational history and experience in successfully providing high-quality early education or other related programs. In reaching their conclusion, reviewers will assess whether the applicant's past performance:

- Supports its ability to effectively administer a project of the size, complexity, and scope of their proposed program.
- Describes the professional experience of its proposed management team, and whether that supports its ability to effectively administer a project of this size, complexity, and scope.
- Supports its ability to provide effective financial management in operating a Head Start and/or EHS program.
- As applicable, includes any violations, such as deficiencies, areas of non-compliance, and/or audit findings, if the applicant is a current or former Head Start or EHS recipient. The narrative may describe actions taken to address the violations, and the extent to which these actions have addressed the violations. (**Note:** If the applicant does not have violations or is not a current or former Head Start or EHS recipient, this criterion is not applicable to the review of the application.)
- As applicable, includes a description of any ongoing under-enrollment, including being designated as chronically under-enrolled, if the applicant is a current Head Start, EHS, or EHS-CC Partnership recipient. The narrative may describe actions taken to address their under-enrollment.

4. Staffing, Compensation, and Supporting a Strong Early Learning Workforce **Maximum Points:** 20

To evaluate Staffing, Compensation, and Supporting a Strong Early Learning Workforce, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant demonstrates its ability to recruit, retain, and manage staff with the ability to implement a comprehensive Head Start and/or EHS program. In reaching their conclusion, reviewers will deliberate the following narrative elements:

- Evidence of the proposed program director and proposed key program staff's ability to meet the required qualifications to administer a Head Start and/or EHS program, complex social service program, or early education services.
- The plan to attract and retain qualified staff, including through competitive salaries and benefits, with the ability to implement a high-quality program. Evidence that demonstrates how proposed salary or wage targets are competitive with other employers providing similar services in the community.

- Describe the strategies to understand wages for similar positions in high-quality early care and education and elementary school programs and how the program will use this information and account for experience, job responsibilities, and credentials to provide competitive wages. Applicants should include information on benefits that will be provided to staff.
- Provide evidence of a sustainable mechanism for providing competitive compensation to staff, including a clear description of how proposed salary or wage targets are competitive with other employers providing high-quality early care and education and elementary school education in the community.
- How the applicant proposes to provide career development opportunities for professional, paraprofessional, and other staff.
- If the plan to evaluate job applicants, including existing recipient staff, to determine which applicants are most capable of implementing a high-quality, comprehensive program is realistic.

5. Planning and Implementation **Maximum Points:** 15

To evaluate Planning and Implementation, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant details its plan to provide effective and efficient implementation of Head Start and/or EHS programming, including transition period planning to minimize the disruption of services. Applicants must include an implementation plan and timeline that addresses, at a minimum, the following:

- State and local licensing requirements for each proposed age group, the length of time required to obtain licensure for early childhood learning environments, and the impact on the proposed implementation plan for the timely provision of services.
- The availability of appropriate facilities for proposed program models, and the anticipated timelines for completing any construction, renovation, or adaptation of space to meet requirements.
- As applicable, plans for alternative service provision (e.g., temporary home-based services) during start-up, until facilities are fully operational.
- Where facilities are not available, a plan to acquire facilities in accordance with federal Head Start regulations.
- The ability to recruit, hire, and train qualified staff to support the proposed start of Head Start and/or EHS programming.

6. Organizational Capacity and Governance **Maximum Points:** 25

To evaluate Organizational Capacity and Governance, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant demonstrates its understanding of the crucial role of the Board and Policy Council. Reviewers will also consider the extent to which the applicant demonstrates a capacity to provide effective program administration and oversight. In reaching their conclusion, reviewers will deliberate the following narrative elements:

- The capacity of the senior executive managers and governing board to manage the following:
    - exercise effective oversight of program operations and accountability for federal funds;
    - include the Policy Council and parents in the decision-making process;

- ensure representation of the diverse community served;
  - set and monitor overall agency priorities and operational systems; and
  - conduct community assessments, annual self-assessments, and ongoing monitoring.

- The ability to plan, constitute, and train a governing body in compliance with Head Start regulations. If applicable, an applicant can describe how its current governance structure would change to meet the requirement of the Head Start Act.
- The existence of management systems for program planning, internal and external communication, recordkeeping, issuance of internal and external reports, and program self-assessment and monitoring.

7. Budget and Budget Justification **Maximum Points:** 20

To evaluate Budget and Budget Justification, reviewers will consider the extent to which the applicant demonstrates that funds are budgeted to provide all required Head Start and/or EHS services based on the proposed program option(s), and if the applicant:

- Clearly and accurately distinguishes the proposed Head Start and EHS base operating funds, Head Start and/or EHS T/TA funds, total federal funds, and the applicant's non-federal share, if applicable.
- Provides a budget that allocates costs that align with the proposed management and staffing structure.
- Provides evidence of competitive wages, comprehensive benefits and wellness supports for staff.
- Provides a cost-effective budget that is aligned with all components of the application narrative as described in *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification*.
- Includes evidence of a reasonable per child cost, based on the proposed program type and program option(s).
- Demonstrates that start-up/pre-award costs, if proposed, are justified, reasonable, and applicable based on the applicant's proposed Head Start and/or EHS program. **NOTE:** If the applicant is not requesting start-up/pre-award costs, this criterion is not applicable.
- Details its plan to contribute the required non-federal share/match of the total project cost.

V.2. Review and Selection Process

No award will be made under this funding opportunity on the basis of an incomplete application.

Initial ACF Screening

Disqualified applications are considered “non-responsive” and are excluded from the merit review process. Applicants will be notified of a disqualification determination by email or by USPS postal mail within 30 federal business days from the closing date of this NOFO.

Merit Review and Results

Applications competing for financial assistance will be reviewed and evaluated by review panels using only the criteria described in *Section V.1. Criteria* of this funding opportunity. Each panel is composed of experts with knowledge and experience in the area under review. Generally, review panels include three reviewers and one chairperson.

Results of the merit review are taken into consideration by ACF in the selection of projects for funding; however, merit review scores and rankings are not binding. Scores and rankings are only one element used in the award decision-making process. ACF reserves the right to consider preferences to fund organizations serving emerging, unserved, or under-served populations, including those populations located in pockets of poverty. In addition, ACF reserves the right to evaluate applications in the larger context of the overall portfolio by considering geographic distribution of federal funds (e.g., ensuring coverage of states, counties, or service areas) in its pre-award decisions.

ACF may elect not to fund applicants with management or financial problems that would indicate an inability to successfully complete the proposed project. In addition, ACF may elect to not allow a prime recipient to subaward if there is any indication that they are unable to properly monitor and manage subrecipients.

Applications may be funded in whole or in part. Successful applicants may be funded at an amount lower than that requested.

ACF may refuse to fund projects with what it regards as unreasonably high start-up costs for facilities or equipment, or for projects with unreasonably high operating costs.

Federal Financial Review

The financial review assesses the recipient's financial capability based on information provided in the application package, including the most recent audit conducted under 45 CFR Part 75 – Subpart F. Applicants will be ranked as either a **low-to-no risk** (qualifies as a low-risk auditee) or **high-risk** (does not qualify as a low-risk auditee). Please note that applicant entities that have never been audited or have not submitted an audit for the most recently completed fiscal year as required under 45 CFR § 75.512(b)(1) no later than 9 months following the end of the fiscal year will be classified as **high-risk**.

This review will not change the numerical scores determined in *Section V.1. Criteria*, by the objective review panel, but the financial review will assist ACF in determining whether an otherwise qualified applicant has sufficient financial capacity to manage the potential award.

Pre-Award Discussions and Negotiations

ACF may enter into pre-award discussions and/or negotiations with one or more applicants regarding each applicant's proposed project, budget, and other information related to its organizational capacity to provide high-quality, comprehensive early education services before making final award(s). Based on these discussions, ACF may consider the following:

- Whether the proposal meets the stated purpose of the funding opportunity as described in *Section I. Program Description.*
- Whether the proposed program is cost effective based on the application submitted for evaluation in response to *Section IV.2. The Project Description and The Project Budget and Budget Justification*.
- Whether the proposal contains contingent activities that may impede, or indefinitely delay, the implementation of the proposed program such as, but not limited to, the ability

to timely renovate and/or secure facilities that are required to deliver Head Start and/or EHS services.

- Whether the Head Start and/or EHS programming proposed by an applicant who will be newly operating in the state, can begin quickly after award with a minimal start-up period as described in the *Executive Summary*.
- Any other factors necessary for ACF to determine if the applicant is capable of providing high-quality, comprehensive early education services.

Not all pre-award discussions and/or negotiations will result in grant awards. ACF reserves the right to cease discussions and negotiations with applicants prior to award and may enter into discussions or negotiations with other applicants. A breach of confidentiality by the negotiating applicant during pre-award discussions may jeopardize the final award decision.

Additional Review and Funding Considerations

The Head Start Act gives priority to organizations based on their ability to serve target populations. In keeping with section 641(d)(3) of the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9836(d)(3), HHS shall give priority to applicants for Head Start funding that have demonstrated capacity in providing effective, comprehensive, and well-coordinated early childhood education and development services and programs to children and their families. Section 645A(e) of the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 9840A(e), gives priority in EHS funding to entities with a record of providing early, continuous, and comprehensive childhood development and family services.

Please note that if the applicant is a current or former Head Start or EHS recipient, ACF will retrieve, review, and consider the recipient's last two OHS monitoring reports. In addition, ACF will retrieve, review, and consider any monitoring reports issued in the 5 years preceding the posting of this NOFO. ACF will retrieve, review, and consider any documentation that relates to the fiscal health and financial viability of the applicant. ACF will also retrieve, review, and consider state licensing documentation on the applicant. These reports and documents may be considered in making final funding determinations.

Also, if the applicant is a current Head Start, EHS, or EHS-CC Partnership recipient, ACF will retrieve, review, and consider the recipient's enrollment data for the 3 years preceding the posting of this NOFO. Ongoing under-enrollment may be considered in making final funding determinations.

ACF reserves the right to deny funding to any applicant that is presently designated as "high-risk," probationary or not in good standing, or has been debarred or defunded by any federal agency. ACF reserves the right not to fund applicants with unacceptably high federal Head Start per-child costs. Additionally, ACF may decide not to fund projects that would require unreasonably high start-up costs for facilities or equipment. Further, ACF may deny funding to applicants that propose such a low number of children that the project may require unreasonably high operating costs relative to the number of children and families proposed to be served, or may not be deemed viable.

A well-compensated and supported workforce is essential to providing high-quality services to promote children's optimal development and family well-being. ACF reserves the right to prioritize applicants based on their ability to provide sustainable approaches toward staffing, which includes providing staff with competitive wages, comprehensive benefits and wellness supports.

ACF reserves the right to deny funding to any applicant that is not "in the community" to be served, in accordance with the requirements for designation as a Head Start agency at 42 U.S.C. 9836. ACF will consider all "qualified applicants in such community" as required by 42 U.S.C. 9836(d) where the application demonstrates that they have an organizational base within the community to be served. This could be established by virtue of the applicant being a provider of services in the community or having a clear relationship to the community as evidenced, for example, by board representation from the community or by evidence of the support of community leaders, including elected or appointed city/county officials, school principals, county government officials, social service provider organizations, community organizations representing minority and other relevant sectors of the community to include low-income populations, and community-based child care providers.

Applicant entities may submit only one application per service area. In such cases where two or more applications are submitted by the same organization, and those applications are deemed to be identical in content except minor differences in proposed enrollment and budget, ACF may consider those submissions non-responsive to the requirements of the funding opportunity. Applications that are derived from a template are over-generalized and may not meet the needs of the individual service area.

ACF is interested in ensuring a robust competition for high-quality, comprehensive early care and education service providers. Accordingly, ACF reserves the right to deny funding to any applicant for whom there is evidence of statements, written agreements, correspondence, etc. that prohibit other entities from applying for a Head Start or EHS grant on their own behalf or that impose a penalty on any entity for making such application.

The ACF Office of Grants Management will also perform an internal review of all property requests and documentation submitted to assess that costs comply with federal regulations and NOFO requirements. ACF reserves the right to request any additional information (e.g., lease agreements, encumbrance documents, etc.) to ascertain allowability and may reduce the budget due to unallowable costs.

Each prime recipient's primary role must be to ensure the delivery of the statutorily authorized services, whether provided directly or through collaborative involvement with their subrecipient(s). Prime recipients of an award under this NOFO will be legally accountable to ACF for performance of the project or program. Prime recipients will be held solely responsible in the event of non-compliance by a subrecipient.

Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants

ACF is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS), https://sam.gov/reports/ei/static, before making any award in excess of the simplified acquisition threshold over the period of performance. An applicant may review and comment on any information about itself that a federal awarding agency has previously entered into FAPIIS. ACF will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to other information in FAPIIS, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 45 CFR § 75.205(a)(2) Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants.

Approved but Unfunded Applications

Applications recommended for approval in the merit review process, but not selected for award, may receive funding if additional funds become available in the current Fiscal Year. For those applications determined as "approved but unfunded," notice will be given of the determination by email.

V.3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

Announcement of awards and the disposition of applications will be provided to applicants at a later date. ACF staff cannot respond to requests for information regarding funding decisions prior to the official applicant notification.

VI. Federal Award Administration Information

VI.1. Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified through the issuance of a NoA that sets forth the amount of funds awarded, the terms and conditions, the effective date, the budget period for which initial support will be given, the non-federal share to be provided (if applicable), and the total project period for which support is contemplated. The NoA will be signed by the Grants Officer and transmitted via email or by GrantSolutions, or the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES), whichever is relevant.

Following the finalization of funding decisions, organizations whose applications will not be funded will be notified by letter signed by the cognizant Program Office head. Any other correspondence that announces to a Principal Investigator, or a Project Director, that an application was selected is not an authorization to begin performance.

Recipients may translate the Federal award and other documents into another language. In the event of inconsistency between any terms and conditions of the Federal award and any translation into another language, the English language meaning will control. Where a significant portion of the recipient’s employees who are working on the Federal award are not fluent in English, the recipient must provide the Federal award in English and in the language(s) with which employees are more familiar.

VI.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Awards issued under this funding opportunity are subject to 45 CFR Part 75 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards currently in effect or implemented during the period of award, other Department regulations and policies in effect at the time of award, and applicable statutory provisions. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is available at www.ecfr.gov. Unless otherwise noted in this section, administrative and national policy requirements that are applicable to discretionary awards are available at: www.acf.hhs.gov/administrative-and-national-policy-requirements.

An application funded with the release of federal funds through an award does not constitute or imply compliance with federal regulations. Funded organizations are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable federal regulations.

HHS Grants Policy Statement

ACF grant awards are subject to the requirements of the HHS Grants Policy Statement (HHS GPS), which covers basic grants processes, standard terms and conditions, and points of contact, as well as important agency-specific requirements. The HHS GPS is available at https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/grants/grants/policies-regulations/hhsgps107.pdf.

Equal Treatment of Faith-Based Organizations

A faith-based organization that participates in this program will retain its independence from the federal government and may continue to carry out its mission consistent with religious freedom, nondiscrimination, and conscience protections in federal law, including the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.*), the Coats-Snowe Amendment (42 U.S.C. 238n), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e–1(a) and 2000e–2(e)), Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12113(d)(2), section 1553 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18113), the Weldon Amendment (e.g., Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Public Law 116–94, 133 Stat. 2534, 2607, div. A, sec. 507(d) (Dec. 20, 2019)), or any related or similar federal laws or regulations. Religious accommodations may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

Consistent with 45 CFR § 87.3(b), a faith-based organization that receives direct financial assistance from HHS may not engage in any explicitly religious activities (including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization) as part of the programs or services funded with direct financial assistance from the HHS awarding agency. Such an organization, whether faith-based or not, also shall not, in providing services funded by HHS, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice, as provided in 45 CFR § 87.3(d).

The Head Start specific regulations (known as the Program Performance Standards or HSPPS) are as follows:

- 45 CFR Part 1301, Program Governance
- 45 CFR Part 1302, Program Operations
- 45 CFR Part 1303, Financial and Administrative Requirements
- 45 CFR Part 1304, Federal Administrative Procedures
- 45 CFR Part 1305, Definitions
- And all applicable grant regulations

Copies of the current applicable Head Start regulations are available at the websites identified in *Section VIII. Other Information, Reference Websites*. Regulations used to determine whether expenditures by Head Start and Early Head Start recipients are allowable can be found at https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy under Fiscal Regulations.

VI.3. Reporting

Performance Progress Reports:
Annually
Unless otherwise noted in this section, recipients under this NOFO will be required to submit performance progress and financial reports periodically throughout the project period. Information on reporting requirements is available on the ACF website at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/manage-grant/reporting.

Head Start Program Reporting

All Head Start recipients under this NOFO will be required to submit program information periodically, including for example, monthly enrollment reports, an annual Program Information Report (PIR), and service location and staff contact information. Recipients will be notified in advance of required reporting through various means, such as Notice of Award (NoA) documents, email correspondence, and letters. Additional information on Head Start Program Reporting can be found at https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/pir. The PIR serves as the annual performance progress report for the Office of Head Start.

For planning purposes, the frequency of required reporting for awards made under this funding opportunity are as follows:

Financial Reports:
Semi-Annually

VII. HHS Award Agency Contact(s)

Program Office Contact
Shawna
Pinckney
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Head Start
330 C ST SW
Washington
DC
20201
(888) 242-0684
OHSgrants@koniag-gs.com

Office of Grants Management Contact
Jeff
Newton
Administration for Children and Families
1961 Stout Street
Office 08-148
Denver
CO
80294
(888) 242-0684

OHSgrants@koniag-gs.com

VIII. Other Information

Reference Websites

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) www.hhs.gov/.

Administration for Children and Families (ACF) www.acf.hhs.gov/.

ACF Funding Opportunities Forecasts and NOFOs www.grants.gov/.

ACF "Applying for an ACF Award" https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/how-apply-grant.

ACF Property Guidance https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/real-property-and-tangible-personal-property

Grants.gov Accessibility Information www.grants.gov/ web/grants/accessibility-compliance.html.

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) http://www.ecfr.gov/.

United States Code (U.S.C.) http://uscode.house.gov/.

The Head Start Act as amended by The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, (Public Law 110-134) http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/law.
Head Start Program Performance Standards (45 CFR Parts 1301-1305) https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii.

Applicant Support Resources
OHS strongly encourages applicants interested in applying for this Head Start and EHS opportunity to visit https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/how-apply-grant. This webpage provides information on applying for grants, registering and applying through www.Grants.gov, submitting an application, and understanding the grant review process. Additionally, interested entities can find important information on service area-specific Head Start and/or EHS funding, deciding whether to apply, and frequently asked questions at https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/grant-application/article/decide-whether-apply.

Lastly, OHS encourages entities interested applicants to visit https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/grant-application/article/funding-opportunity-announcement-foa-locator-map. This website offers resources, such as a **profile of the current recipient services, equipment, and inventory**, that are intended to support organizations in preparing their funding applications. All interested applicants are reminded to frequently refer back to this NOFO when preparing their application.

Prospective applicants will also have the opportunity to send questions to OHS by e-mail at OHSgrants@koniag-gs.com. A summary of the questions and OHS responses will be posted for public view on the applicant support website as soon as they become available.

Interested applicants may also contact the OHS Operations Center at (888) 242-0684 or TTY: 711 if they have additional questions.

Application Checklist

Applicants may use this checklist as a guide when preparing an application package.

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
Proof of Policy Council Approval	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances and Certifications* and *The Project Description, Additional Eligibility Documentation*.	Submission is due by the application due date listed in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Application Due Dates and Times.*
Certificate of Good Standing	See *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances and Certifications* and *The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity*.	Submission is required with the application by the Application Due Date in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
SF-424A Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs / SF-424B Assurances - Non-Construction Programs and SF-424C - Budget Information Construction Programs / SF-424D - Assurances Construction Programs	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications*. These forms are available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory section. All forms are ***required*** for applications under this NOFO for projects that include both non-construction **and** construction activities.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance	Referenced in *Section IV.2.Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*

What to Submit	**Where Found**	**When to Submit**
	www.Grants.gov in the Mandatory section.	
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration.	Referenced in *Section IV.3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)* in the funding opportunity. To obtain a UEI and SAM registration, go to http://www.sam.gov.	A UEI and registration at SAM.gov are required for all applicants. Active registration at SAM must be maintained throughout the application and project award period.
SF-424 Key Contact Form	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	Submission is due with the application by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*
Certification Regarding Lobbying (Grants.gov Lobbying Form)	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	Submission is due with the application package or prior to the award of a grant.
SF-Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL)	Referenced in *Section IV.2.Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times.*

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
	package at www.Grants.gov.	
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	"Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying" is referenced in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances, and Certifications.* This form is available in the NOFO's forms package at www.Grants.gov.	If submission of this form is applicable, it is due at the time of application. If not available at the time of application, it may also be submitted prior to the award of a grant.
Table of Contents	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description*.	Submit with the application by the due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
Project Summary	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description.* The Project Summary is limited to one single-spaced page.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
Proof of Non-Profit Status	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Legal Status of Applicant Entity*.	Proof of non-profit status should be submitted with the application package by the application due date and time listed in the *Overview* and *Section IV.4.* of the NOFO. If it is not available at the time of application submission, it must be submitted prior to the award of a grant.
Mandatory Grant Disclosure	Requirement, submission instructions, and mailing addresses are found in the	If applicable, concurrent submission to the Administration for Children and Families and to the Office of the Inspector General is required.

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
	"Mandatory Grant Disclosure" in *Section IV.2. Required Forms, Assurances and Certifications*.	
The Project Budget and Budget Justification	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification*.	Submission is required in addition to submission of SF-424A and / or SF-424C. Submission is required with the application package by the due date in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (IDR)	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Budget and Budget Justification*. The IDR must be submitted with the application package.	If the IDR is available by the application due date, it must be submitted with the application package. If it is not available by the application due date, listed in the *Overview* and *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*, it may be submitted prior to the award of a grant.
The Project Description	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description*.	Submission is due by the application due date found in the *Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.
Federal Financial Review Attachments	Referenced in *Section IV.2. The Project Description*.	Submission due by the application due date found in *Overview* and *Section IV.4*.
Assurance: Board Attestation	Referenced in *Section IV.2. Forms, Assurances, and Certifications and Section V.1. Criteria*, with a template	Applicants for whom this applies the assurance must be **signed** by the Board chair, who is authorized to sign the application on behalf of the applicant. Submission is due by the application due date found in the

What to Submit	Where Found	When to Submit
	provided in the *Appendix.*	*Overview* and in *Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times*.

Appendix

1. Available Service Areas

Funding for this opportunity is limited to each of the individually defined service areas listed below. The total amounts identified serve as the maximum amount of funding available for each service area. Applications that exceed the Award Ceiling listed in *Section II. Federal Award Information* will be disqualified from competitive review and from funding under this NOFO.

Applicant entities may submit only one application per service area regardless of how they choose to apply. Further, applicants must not combine proposals for more than one service area into a single submission. ACF will review only one application for a service area from any applicant. For more information, please see *Section IV.2. Content and Form of Application Submission*.

Applications may be funded in whole or in part. Successful applicants may be funded at an amount lower than that requested.

Applicants must list the total funding amount, inclusive of base and T/TA, on Line 18a of its SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, and break out its requested base and T/TA funding on the SF-424A and in the budget and budget justification.

Competition Identification Number (SF-424)

Applicants MUST enter the Competition Identification Number listed below that corresponds to the individually defined service area for which they are submitting an application, in Line 15 'Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project' of the SF-424. For example, an application for funding in the Municipalities of Arroyo, Guayama, Maunabo, Patillas, and Salinas, Puerto Rico would enter R02-PR-2001 in Line 15 of the SF-424. This important requirement will ensure all submissions are evaluated in the same competitive group with other submissions responding to the noted Competition Identification Number. Failure to include the correct Competition Identification Number may result in an application being paneled with the wrong service area.

- The Municipalities of Arroyo, Guayama, Maunabo, Patillas, and Salinas, Puerto Rico (Competition Identification Number: R02-PR-2001)
  - Total $14,568,903 (Base $14,398,559 T/TA $170,344)
  - Expected Number of Awards - Up to 3

- The Municipalities of Aguadilla, Aguada, Rincón, Cayey, Aibonito, Cidra, Dorado, Toa Alta, Fajardo, Ceiba, Naguabo, San Lorenzo, Trujillo Alto, Juncos, Juana Diaz, Peñuelas, Guayanilla, Yauco, Sabana Grande, Cabo Rojo, Guánica, Lajas, San Sebastián, Vega Baja, Morovis, Yabucoa, and Las Piedras, Puerto Rico (Competition Identification Number: R02-PR-2002)

- Total $51,286,918 (Base $50,703,595 T/TA $583,323)
- Expected Number of Awards - Up to 12

2. Assurance Template: Board of Directors Attestation
For applicants to whom this applies, this assurance must be completed, **signed** and dated, and submitted as part of this application in the appendices.

Date

To Whom It May Concern:

I, (name), attest that (organization) collaborated with an external grant-writer(s), consultant(s), and/or contractor(s) on the development of the application submitted in response to the funding opportunity announcement. Further I, (name), attest that the governing Board of (organization) actively participated in the content development and commitments included in the applicant's proposal. On behalf of (Organization), I also confirm that its governing Board, and proposed Head Start and/or Early Head Start management staff are fully knowledgeable of the Head Start regulatory requirements.

(Signature)
(First and Last Name)
(Title/Board Chair)

The assurance must be signed by the Board Chair, who is the designated representative of the applicant with authority to act on the organization's behalf in matters related to the award and administration of grants.