State of Alaska
Department of Health and Social Services
Division of Office of Children's Services

Request for Proposals
Adoption and Guardianship Home Studies for Resource Families
For FY2025 Through FY2028

Grants and Contracts

NOTICE: Proposals will ONLY be accepted through GEMS. Applicants are responsible for reviewing the GEMS homepage at https://gems.dhss.alaska.gov/ for details regarding agency registration and availability of technical assistance. Log into GEMS through myAlaska, https://my.alaska.gov/Welcome.aspx to begin the application process. Once you are logged into GEMS, guidance and instruction are available in the Documents tab and from the film strip icon. Applicants are responsible for monitoring GEMS or the State Online Public Notices site for any changes or amendments that may be issued regarding this solicitation.

Relay Alaska provides assisted communication services at 711 or 1-800-770-8973 from a TTY phone, and at 1-800-770-8255 from a voice phone.

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PROPOSAL DUE DATE: March 27, 2024, 3:59 PM
DEADLINE FOR WRITTEN INQUIRIES: March 18, 2024, 3:59 PM
PROJECT PERIOD BEGINS: July 1, 2024

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Section 1 Grant Program Information

1.01 Introduction and Program Description

The Department of Family and Community Services, Division of Office of Children's Services, is requesting proposals from eligible applicants to provide Adoption and Guardianship Home Studies for Resource Families services for the State of Alaska in FY2025 through FY2027. Program Services are authorized under 7 AAC 78 Grant Programs. Additional governing statutes are Federal Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA, 1997), AS 25.23.100 - AS 25.23.150 and AS 47.10.080 - 10.088. State of Alaska statutes and regulations are accessible at the Department of Law Document Library or through the contact person identified on the cover page of this Request for Proposals (RFP).

Adoption and Guardianship Home Studies contribute to the OCS vision and mission by promoting timely permanency for children in foster care who cannot return to their home of origin. Home Studies can be completed for children in the custody of OCS and in the custody of other states who request adoption home studies through the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC). Children deserve careful consideration in the selection of a permanent family. The home study can help assure child safety, permanency and well-being in the Resource Family home and is a required element of the finalization of all adoptions and guardianships in Alaska. The home study includes a thorough evaluation of the family and background check results. The child's needs and the family's ability to meet the child's needs are assessed.

The Home Study Program follows the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), the Multi-ethnic Placement Act (MEPA), and Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) guidelines, as well as Alaska Statute 25.23.200.

- The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) created case practice timeframes and standards requirements designed to improve the movement of children through the foster care system into permanent adoptive or guardianship homes. OCS is required to meet strict legal, casework and time frame requirements in the process of child placement and adoption.
- The Multi-ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) prohibits the use of a child's or prospective parent's race, color, or national origin to deny or delay a child's placement.
- The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) establishes placement preferences for ICWA-eligible children. In the order of priority, the placement preferences are: 1) with a member of the child's extended family; 2) with other members of the child's Tribe; and 3) with members of another Indian Tribe.
- Alaska Statute 25.23.200

1.02 Program Goals and Anticipated Outcomes

The proposed project must demonstrate a thorough understanding and support of the grant program goals and outcomes anticipated by the Department.

Program Goals: The goal of the Home Study Program is to provide home study services in order to facilitate timely permanency for children who cannot be reunified with their birth families, and to ensure the safety and well-being of children in their permanent placement.

Anticipated Outcomes:

1. Increased rates of adoptions occurring within 24 months of removal and within 18 months of removal for guardianships.

Increase in long term placement stability. Projects must meet or exceed anticipated minimum outcomes described

in this RFP.

1.03 Program Services/Activities

Applicants must include a description of proposed activities that support the goals and outcomes to be employed by the project. The applicant must also upload a timeline for initiating services and project activities.

Applicant proposals must describe the ways in which the project aligns with program intent. The submitted project proposal will identify agency resources available to the project; describe project activities; and clearly state the project's anticipated goals, outputs, and outcomes.

The services delivered through the Adoption and Guardianship Home Studies Grant are anchored around the philosophy that services will be:

1. individualized and strength-based;

2. culturally sensitive/competent; and

3. trauma informed.

Individualized and Strength-Based: Recognition of the strengths of family relationships and building upon those strengths in service planning is critical to achieve optimal outcomes for children and their families.

Culturally Sensitive/Competent: Cultural competence is defined as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). Cultural sensitivity broadens our knowledge and understanding of individuals and communities that we work with. Cultural sensitivity begins with recognition that there are differences between cultures. Cultural sensitivity does not mean, however, that a person need only be aware of the differences to interact effectively with people from other cultures. If providers and their clients are to interact effectively, they must move beyond both cultural sensitivity and cultural biases that create barriers.

Developing this kind of culturally competent attitude is an ongoing process. Applicants must ensure continued education for workers in the area of cultural awareness and history of the people being served. In addition, educational and recreational opportunities for families served should be reflective of the culture and incorporate cultural activities whenever possible.

Trauma Informed Services: Research of the last 20 years has taught us that previously unrecognized effects of trauma on the developing brain is one, if not the most important, of the prevalent causes of many issues including behavioral health problems, substance abuse, health issues, and a myriad of social ills - including, but not limited to, child abuse, generational poverty, domestic violence, criminal behavior, and incarceration.

Applicants must describe how they will ensure adherence to these service philosophies through provision of the home study services listed below. Any training or professional development provided must also be outlined.

Home Study Services

A home study consists of a narrative which describes an in-depth assessment and evaluation of the identified permanent family for the child. The assessment is conducted through a series of interviews and home visits. The minimum contact requirements for the assessment are:

1. Interviews with each household member;
2. One on-site home visit, preferably with both adoptive/guardianship parents present;
3. Contacts with three references, by letter or phone;
4. Contacts with parties to the child protection case such as the OCS worker, and Guardian ad litem (GAL) and if applicable, contact with the child's Tribe(s).

The Home Study program activities include:

Referral management

The awarded grantee will have 90 days to complete the home study from the time the referral is received by the grantee. OCS will make referrals to the grantee in a consistent manner in an effort to ensure that the work can be distributed among available home study writers and in an effort to stay within the approved quarterly advances. The program requires that the grantee establish procedures for accurately tracking referrals to ensure specified timeframes will be met. Applicant proposals must include a clear description of this process. Awarded projects will be expected to accept all referrals from OCS, and failure to do so may result in termination of award. OCS identifies each family referral as one home study, thus a sibling group residing with the same family is treated as one referral for a home study. Requests for updated studies, or new home studies on previously studied families, also count as a new referral.

OCS is anticipating at least 400 referrals statewide for adoption or guardianship home studies per fiscal year. The numbers are estimates based on historical data, though the actual referral numbers may be lower or higher. The awarded grantee must continue to accept referrals as long as the awarded budget can meet the need. This is an average of 36 referrals per month July through May. The grantee must get approval from the OCS Grant Program Manager to enter into a contract for any referrals received in the final month of the award, prior to entering into a contract.

Home Study Format

The home study will be written in narrative format and include the content as given in the attached OCS Policy and Procedure. Completed home studies will synthesize information gathered by the home study writer from the family assessment process which includes the interviews, home visits, information from the child's OCS worker, collateral agency contacts and documents, and criminal background check information. The family's self-assessment information will also be incorporated into the home study narrative.

Home studies will identify the strengths and needs of the adoption or guardianship family. This will assist the child's caseworker in preparing the child and family for adoption or guardianship finalization.

Limitations

Home studies completed in this program will be utilized for the purpose of finalizing the adoption or guardianship of a child in foster care. The home studies may not be released to private agencies for use for private or international adoptions. Therefore, each completed home study must have the following statement limiting the use of the home study. In the recommendations section of the home study, it must state:

"This home study has been performed by Grantee Name for the specific purpose of special needs adoptions/guardianships through the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Children's Services. This home study may not be used for any other purpose without written permission of the OCS Grant Program Manager."

Notification

Once home studies are completed by the grantee, the grantee is required to notify the pre-adoptive or guardianship family, by providing the adoptive or guardianship family with an unsigned draft copy of the home study. Families wil be given 10 days to respond to the grantee for factual edits.

In the event that the family is not recommended for adoptive or guardianship placement, the home study writer will provide justification in appropriate sections of the home study, as well as in the recommendation section at the end of the study to support the reason for the decision. The writer should also list possible changes in the home which could lead to a positive recommendation in the future.

Home Study Finalization

All completed home studies will be reviewed by the grantee and then forwarded to the appropriate OCS Regional Permanency Specialist for approval. The Regional Permanency Specialist is responsible for the final approval or disapproval of a family home study and its recommendation for adoption or guardianship.

The Regional Permanency Specialists may request revisions to the home study from the grantee before approval. This request should be made within 15 days of receipt of the study. Should a revision to a submitted home study be requested, the grantee will have 30-days to complete the necessary revisions.

Training and Professional Development for Home Study Writers

Home study writers providing services through this program will require initial and on-going training to build their competency level. Applicant proposals must outline the plan for the delivery of training to new and/or existing home study writers, the plan for delivery of services must include how the grantee will deliver training to potential writers in rural areas. Applicants are encouraged to plan for the use of video conferencing to deliver accessible training. These training opportunities will be documented in the home study writer's employee/contractor file and will be reported in quarterly grantee reports.

1.04 Program Evaluation Requirements and Reporting

Results Based Budgeting Framework

Results based budgeting provides a framework in which allocated resources support, and are justified by, a set of outputs and expected results. Within this framework, actual performance and achieved outcomes are measured by objective performance measures.

Projects are required to align with program objectives expressing Department priorities and core services. Projects will use performance measures to evaluate progress toward meaningful outcomes, and to initiate data collection and reporting consistent with Department priorities.

The Department Priorities, Core Services, Objectives, and Performance Measures of Effectiveness and Efficiency for this program are:

Department Priorities

- 1 Health & Wellness Across the Life Span
- 3 Safe & Responsible Individuals, Families & Communities

Department Core Services

- 1.2 Provide Quality of Life in a Safe Living Environment for Alaskans
- 3.2 Protect Vulnerable Alaskans

Department Objectives

- 1.2.1 Improve the Safety of Children Receiving Department Services
- 3.2.3 Improve Client Safety within Department and Provider Operated Facilities

Performance Measures

- Effectiveness: Number of studies completed within 90 days of referral, on referrals where extensions were not granted.
- Efficiency: Cost per study (Total amount of grant award divided by the number of referrals which were assigned to writers within the fiscal year)

The applicant's proposed evaluation plan will incorporate the performance measures of effectiveness and efficiency identified above. Applicants can propose additional performance measures for evaluating the project's progress in achieving results supportive of program goals and outcomes.

Home studies are part of OCS's efforts to comply with the Federal mandate to achieve timely permanency for children in foster care who cannot return to their home of origin.

Grant Reporting

Required reporting will include:

1. Cumulative Fiscal Reports recording overall grant and match expenditures by budget line; and
2. Program Reports in the format prescribed by the program.

1.05 Target Population and Service Area

Applicants must clearly describe the population targeted by the project, including the area or communities that will be served. Proposals will be evaluated for compatibility with the program's intended target population identified in this solicitation.

Target Population: The target population for the program services requested in this RFP consists of children in a state's out-of-home care system that have a permanency goal of adoption or guardianship. Children may or may not be legally free at the time of the home study referral. The only cases in which OCS will refer a family for a home study without an identified child for adoption or guardianship would be those families enrolled in the OCS Preparing Families for Special Needs Adoption program.

Service Areas and Communities: A single grantee is sought to provide services statewide. To the greatest extent possible, a home study writer should be assigned who lives in the same community where the family resides or to a home study writer who is familiar with the cultural standards of the child's Tribe, culture and community. Home study writing services may be provided through subcontractors.

1.06 Program Funding

Funds available for this program are anticipated to total Funding is estimated to be $749,884 per year, comprised of approximately 26% Federal IVE and 74% GF Match. Total funding for the three-year procurement is estimated at $2,249,652.

Proposed Budget: The applicant must submit a budget proposal for the first fiscal year of the project. The proposed budget detail and narrative will support the program's results-based service delivery and staffing requirements stated in this RFP.

Grantees should confer with their CPA to confirm they are following acceptable accounting principles when charging expenditures to the grant. The grantee must get approval from the OCS Grant Program Manager in order to enter into a contract for any referrals received in the final month of award, prior to entering into a contract.

The proposed budget will be fully compliant with the limitations described in this RFP, and those detailed in 7 AAC 78.160 (Costs). Regulations are provided under the GEMS Documents tab.

Resources specific to budgeting are also available under the GEMS Documents tab. The Department's Grant Budget Preparation Guidelines provide information and guidance about budget lines, cost detail groupings, and narrative requirements. Grantee User Manual Part I provides detailed instructions for entering a budget proposal in the chapter "Responding to a Solicitation."

Other Agency Funding: Prior to submitting a proposal, applicants are required to list all other agency funding received and applied for. This task must be completed by an Agency Power User in the Other Funding section of the Agency Administration tab. This is part of the pre-award risk assessment required under Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200.

Indirect Costs: If the proposed budget includes indirect costs, 7 AAC 78.160(p) requires a copy of the agency's current federally approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement. The agreement is to be uploaded in the Agency Administration tab. Lapsed agreements can be used if uploaded with the negotiating federal agency's written approval to continue using the rate until a new agreement is negotiated. If an agency has never entered into a federally approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement or no longer has a federally approved agreement in place, the recently updated Federal Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200 now allows that agency to budget the 10% De Minimis.

Payment for Services/Grant Income: If applicable to the services proposed in response to this solicitation, awarded grantees will have a Medicaid Provider Number or apply to obtain one, and will make reasonable effort to bill all eligible services to Medicaid and any other available sources of payment before seeking grant support for delivery of the proposed services. Department funds are the payer of last resort.

In the applicant’s proposed budget, anticipated receipts and expenditures for all grant income must be evident in the detail and narrative. Fiscal reports for awarded income generating projects will include the receipts and expenditure of all grant income.

Section 2 Applicant Qualifications

2.01 Agency Experience

Proposal evaluation will include consideration of the applicant’s history of compliance with service and grant requirements, and previous experience in providing the same or similar services. Evaluation may include Department site reviews, program audits, and confirmation of the successful resolution of any findings. This is part

of the pre-award risk assessment required under Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200.

The applicant must describe previous experience providing services the same or similar to those proposed. The description must clearly identify the time period over which services were provided and the target population served.

Applicant must have a Child Placement Agency license.

2.02 Project Staffing

Project staffing must be sufficient to implement the proposed activities in order to meet program goals and the anticipated outcomes.

Resumes and professional credentials for key project personnel must be uploaded as part of the response. This is part of the pre-award risk assessment required under Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200. Program staffing levels must be commensurate with meeting the program goals, anticipated outcomes, and activities/strategies for service delivery appropriate to the proposed project.

The Project Director position is required to have a resume and position description which outlines the following:

The Project Director position is required to have a resume and position description which outlines the following:

1. Educational credentials:

i. A master's degree in social work or related field; OR

ii. A bachelor's degree in social work or related field, plus one year of job experience in social work or related field;

AND

2. Documentation of prior experience with home study writing to include:

i. At least one year of experience in home study writing or other professional casework writing skills.

Resumes and professional credentials must be uploaded for key project personnel. The applicant's description of program staffing must also include the agency's employee orientation process and the staff training plan, including training for special populations served and the ways in which both are accomplished for staff in outlying service areas. The training plan must include training to enhance staff and (if applicable) subcontractor knowledge in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, the Adoption & Safe Families Act of 1997 and the Multi-ethnic Placement Act of 1994.

Subcontracting for home study writers is allowable under the Home Study program and grant regulation 7 AAC 78.180. If an applicant intends to use subcontractors, the applicant's description of staffing will include the process for selecting and monitoring subcontractors. Subcontractors who will write home studies must meet these minimum qualifications:

Any combination of education and/or experience that provides the home study writer with competencies in:

- Analytical Thinking/Problem Solving: Uses a logical, systematic, and sequential approach to address problems or opportunities or manage a situation by drawing on one's knowledge and experience base and calling on

other references and resources as necessary.
- Integrity/Honesty: Behaves in an honest, fair, and ethical manner. Shows consistency in words and actions. Models high standards of ethics.
- Interpersonal Skills: Shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations; is sensitive to cultural diversity, race, gender, disabilities, and other individual differences.
- Oral Communication: Makes clear and convincing oral presentations. Listens effectively; clarifies information as needed.
- Writing: Recognizes or uses correct English grammar, punctuation, and spelling; communicates information (for example, facts, ideas, or messages) in a succinct and organized manner; produces written information, which may include technical material, that is appropriate for the intended audience.

AND

Evidence of training in a social science, behavioral science, health science, guidance and counseling, or a closely related field and/or progressively responsible professional experience providing assistance, information or referrals to the general public related to social services, health care, or legal services; OR evidence of professional experience in child, adult, family, or group case management, licensing, or probation services; OR evidence of providing care or services to delinquent juveniles.

“Typically gained by” means the prevalent, usual method of gaining the competencies expected for entry into the job.

“Training” and “education” in this guidance are synonyms for the process of acquiring knowledge and skills through instruction. It includes instruction through formal and informal methods (such as classroom, on-line, self-study, and on-the-job), from accredited and unaccredited sources, and long-duration (such as a post-secondary degree) and short-duration (such as a seminar) programs.

“Progressively responsible” means indicating growth and/or advancement in complexity, difficulty, or level of responsibility.

“Professional experience” means work that is creative, analytical, evaluative, and interpretive; requires a range and depth of specialized knowledge of the profession's principles, concepts, theories, and practices; and is performed with the power or right to decide or act according to one's own judgment.

Names of all subcontractors and agency staff will be provided to the OCS Grant Program Manager prior to being allowed to write for the Grant.

2.03 Administrative, Management, and Facility Requirements

The applicant must demonstrate the agency's sustainable fiscal and administrative capacity. Executive, administrative, and financial staff must be qualified, as indicated by the resumes of position holders uploaded as an element of the proposal. This is part of the pre-award risk assessment required under Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200.

1. The applicant must ensure procedures are in place to protect client confidentiality compliant with State and federal standards.
2. The applicant must ensure its most recent financial audit was submitted to the appropriate state office (see

Audit Requirements below), and any findings identified have been resolved.

Awarded proposers will be required to submit additional agency information if the agency GEMS record is not current.

Audit Requirements:

Federal Requirements: Agencies spending $750,000 or more total Federal Financial Assistance in the agency fiscal year may be required to comply with conditions of the Single Audit Act of 1984, P.L. 98-502, as amended by the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996, P.L. 104-156, and as defined in 2 CFR 200.

State Requirements: Agencies spending $750,000 or more total State Financial Assistance in the agency fiscal year are required to comply with the conditions of 2 AAC 45.010-090. The current regulations may be viewed at the State of Alaska, Department of Law website, Department of Law Document Library, or copies may be obtained from the contact identified on the cover page of the RFP.

Information on State and Federal Single Audit Acts compliance may be obtained from:

State Single Audit Coordinator
Department of Administration
Division of Finance
PO Box 110204
Juneau, AK 99811-0204
Telephone: (907) 465-4666
Fax: (907) 465-2169

Department of Family and Community Services Program Audit Requirements: All DHSS grantees are subject to the requirements of 7 AAC 78.230. If awarded, agencies which are not required to file State Single Audits under 2 AAC 45.010 must ensure a fiscal audit of the agency operations under the grant program is performed by an independent, licensed, certified public accountant at least once every two years and submitted to:

State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
Finance and Management Services
Audit Section
PO Box 110602
Juneau, AK 99811-0602
Telephone: (907) 465-3120

Facility, Service Access, and Safety:

1. The applicant must address potential safety concerns for clients and staff in the management of services proposed in response to this RFP.
2. The applicant should describe client accessibility to services and the way in which that will enhance project success.
3. All applicants for Department grants should have a written plan for emergency response and recovery that provides for potential safety concerns and the safe evacuation of clients and staff. This plan is mandatory for agencies providing residential and/or critical care services as noted in the State Grant Assurances.

2.04 Support/Coordination of Services

Applicants must demonstrate the proposed project has the necessary support and coordination for the successful delivery of services. The proposal must address the following:

1. Community support where services are proposed;
2. Involvement of the public and potential service recipients in the planning process;
3. Partnerships and collaborations specific to the proposed project; and
4. Coordination with necessary referring agencies and the role of each described.

Section 3 General Instructions for Proposal Submission

3.01 Eligibility

Applicants must be eligible to apply under 7 AAC 78.030 (Eligible Applicants). Eligible applicants are state agencies; political subdivisions of the state such as cities, organized boroughs, and Regional Educational Attendance Areas; nonprofit organizations and consortia of nonprofits; and Alaska Native entities. As follows, eligibility will be verified by Grants and Contracts.

1. Political subdivisions of the state and Regional Educational Attendance Areas will be verified by State records.
2. Eligible nonprofits are listed in the State's database of registered nonprofit entities or the US Internal Revenue Service's register of tax-exempt organizations. Nonprofit subsidiaries of nonprofit corporations must also provide a letter from the parent organization confirming nonprofit status.
3. Alaska Native entities as defined in 7 AAC 78.950(1) must submit, with the application, a legally binding resolution waiving the entity's sovereign immunity to suit through the duration of the program, identified in RFP Subsection 3.05. The resolution must be authorized in compliance with the tribe's constitution, either by the tribal council or by majority vote of the tribal membership. The required template is provided at Subsection 4.02, Other Technical Requirements.

(*Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA): In accordance with 2 CFR Chapter 1, Part 170 Reporting Sub- Award And Executive Compensation Information, reporting is required of any grant award with federal funding equal to or greater than $30,000. FFATA is intended to hold the federal government accountable for spending decisions. Accountability data is available to the public at U.S. Government spending. Reporting requirements extend to recipients of State-issued awards with federal funds. An Agency Power User must complete the FFATA form under Federal Reporting in the GEMS Agency Administration tab. The report data will reflect the audited figures of the agency's most recently completed fiscal year. The report captures expenses and executive compensation for your agency. More information regarding FFATA requirements can be found atFederal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System.*

Effective April 4th, 2022, the US Federal Government transitioned from the Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to a System for Award Management (SAM) generated Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) alpha-numeric value for federal awards management. All grantees receiving awards with federal funds are required to have a UEI. More information regarding this transition can be found on the U.S. General Services Administration.

The Grants Electronic Management System (GEMS) has been updated to include fields for both the DUNS nine-digit number and the UEI twelve-digit alpha-numeric value under the General section of the Agency Administration tab. An Agency Power User must confirm the current UEI number is listed in GEMS. The DUNS number will continue to be displayed in GEMS until further notice.

Applicant agency GEMS records must contain the agency's current State of Alaska Business License number, and a current governing board roster which includes titles, contact information, and terms of office for each seat. The

roster must include emergency contact information outside the applicant agency for one or more officers.

Grants and Contracts will verify neither the applicant agency nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from receiving grant assistance from any State or federal department or agency. If an agency or its principals are excluded from receiving grant assistance, the proposal may not be considered.

If this grant program includes Federal funding, effective November 12, 2020 Federal Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200 requires that agencies be registered on the System for Award Management (SAM) website at System for Award Management (SAM). If an applicant is recommended for award and is not registered on this site, the offered award will not be executed, and funds will not be issued until agency registration is confirmed.

Applicants who have had a contract or grant to help produce this RFP are not eligible to apply and any submitted proposal will not be considered.

3.02 Acceptance of Terms

By submitting a proposal, an applicant accepts all terms and conditions of this RFP including all identified attachments and guidelines, 7 AAC 78, and any other applicable statutes and regulations. Copies of these may be accessed through the contact person identified on the cover page or through the web address(es) identified in this RFP.

If a grant is awarded, this RFP and the applicant's proposal become part of the grant agreement. The applicant will be bound by the provisions contained in the awarded proposal unless the Department agrees that specific parts of the proposal are not part of the agreement.

Proposals and other materials submitted in response to this RFP become the property of the State and may be returned only if the State allows. Proposals are public documents and may be inspected or copied by anyone after grants have been awarded.

3.03 Inquiries

Applicants should immediately review this RFP for defects and questionable or confusing content. Questions that can be answered by directing the applicant to a specific section in the RFP may be answered verbally by the contact person identified on the RFP cover page. Questions that cannot be answered by directing an applicant to a specific section of the RFP may be declared substantive. The applicant will be directed to submit the question in writing to the contact person at the email address on the cover page no later than the Deadline for Written Inquiries, also identified on the cover page. This will allow issuance of any necessary amendments and/or clarifications to all prospective applicants.

Applicants are responsible for monitoring GEMS or the State's Online Public Notices website (Online Public Notices) for any clarifications or amendments that may be issued regarding this solicitation.

Proposals will not be accepted after 3:59 PM prevailing local time on the due date identified on the cover page.

3.04 Proposal Costs and Content

The Department will not be responsible for any expenses incurred by the applicant prior to the authorized grant performance period. All costs of responding to this RFP are the responsibility of the applicant.

The applicant is responsible for the content of the proposal.

3.05 Duration

This RFP is for a 3-year period, beginning 7/1/2024 through 6/30/2027. At the discretion of the Department, a project funded under this RFP may be considered for continued funding in subsequent program year(s). The annual decision to continue funding for the subsequent year(s) of the 3-year grant cycle is based on the following general conditions:

1. the Department's judgment that there is a continued need for the grant project service;
2. the grantee's satisfactory performance during the previous grant year;
3. the availability of sufficient grant program funds, and whether continuation of the financing is consistent with public health and welfare; and
4. the ability of the grantee and the Department to agree on any adjustments in payments or service.

Applicants will submit a budget proposal for year one of the grant only. Funding in each subsequent year will require submission and approval of documents needed to update service plans, evaluation measures, and budgets. Grants and Contracts will notify grantees of specific submission requirements necessary to qualify for consideration of continued funding.

This RFP is for fiscal year FY2025, 7/1/2024 through 6/30/2027.

3.06 Proposal Review

Following the deadline for receipt of proposals, no revisions will be accepted unless provided in response to a request from the contact person named in this RFP. Proposals will be reviewed as follows:

1. Proposals will be evaluated in a manner that will avoid disclosure of contents before notices of grant award have been issued.
2. Department of Family and Community Services staff will evaluate each proposal for minimum responsiveness and other technical requirements and eliminate nonresponsive proposals from consideration.
3. Using the criteria set out in this RFP and 7 AAC 78.100 (Criteria for Review of Proposals), Department staff will evaluate each responsive proposal. **Scores for each criterion will be based solely on the response to the associated question. Points will not be earned if the information was provided in response to another question in Section 4**. Department staff will also review relevant departmental documentation regarding the applicant. Staff recommendations regarding awards and levels of funding will include consideration of the following:
    i. a history of the applicant's compliance with grant requirements, to include records of program performance, on-site program reviews, and prior year audits;
    ii. priorities in applicable State health and social services plans;
    iii. requirements of applicable State and federal statutes; and
    iv. municipal ordinances or regulations applicable to the grant program.

If there are multiple responsive proposals for which there is insufficient money to fully fund, or supplementary expertise is deemed necessary to the review of proposed services, the Department may appoint a Proposal

Evaluation Committee (PEC) as an additional advisory body. PEC members will initially evaluate proposals, independently of other committee members. As a committee the PEC will meet in a **closed session** (7 AAC 78.090 Review of Proposals) to further review proposals and develop recommendations. Scores will be assigned based on the applicant's response to each individual question and the associated criteria. **Applicants will not earn points for a given question based on a response to another question in the RFP**. The PEC review will include discussion of each proposal's merits. PEC recommendations will rank proposals in priority order and include approval or disapproval for award, modifications to the proposed project, and special compliance conditions.

All staff advisory recommendations and, if applicable, those of the PEC, and all review materials will be submitted for consideration by the Division Director, who will make recommendations to the Commissioner of the Department of Family and Community Services or the Commissioner's designee.

3.07 Final Decision Authority

Recommendations are advisory only, including those from any PEC that may be held. The final decision to approve or disapprove award, the amount of each award, and whether to impose special conditions or modifications rests with the Commissioner or Commissioner's designee.

NOTE: The final decision may include additional considerations, such as a lack or duplication of services in certain locations, or alternative services that may be available; a critical need for services by vulnerable populations; and matters of health, life and safety. The Department has the responsibility to ensure public monies are utilized in a manner that protects the interests of the people of the State and retains the right to make final awards that ensure responsible distribution of grant funds.

3.08 Notification of Grant Award and Appeals

Within fifteen (15) days after the decision regarding grant awards, applicants will be notified of the final funding decisions, and, if awarded, any conditions of award or modifications. Following any necessary negotiations for revisions to the proposed budget and scope of services, successful applicants will be issued a grant agreement. This formal agreement will contain specific performance and reporting requirements consistent with Department policy and procedure and 7 AAC 78.

Per 7 AAC 78.305 (Request for Appeal), an applicant may appeal a final grant award decision. Requests for hearing must be addressed to the Commissioner and received in writing at the address below within 15 days after the applicant receives notification of the decision. The request must contain the reasons for the appeal and must cite the law, regulation, or terms of the grant upon which the appeal is based.

With a copy to the contact identified on the solicitation cover page, send appeal to:

Kim Kovol, Commissioner
Department of Family and Community Services
3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5923

3.09 Cancellation of the RFP/Termination of Award

Contingent upon funding appropriations and the Governor's approval, the Department may fund proposals from

eligible applicants. The Department may withdraw this RFP at any time and reserves the right to refrain from making an award when such action is deemed to be in the best interest of the State. Funds awarded for a grant as a result of this RFP may be withheld and the grant terminated by written notice from the State to the grantee at any time for violation by the grantee of any terms or conditions of the grant award, or when such action is deemed to be in the best interest of the State.

Section 4 Submission Requirements/Evaluation Criteria

4.01 Minimum Responsiveness Criterion per 78.100(2)(A)

Proposals that fail to meet the minimum responsiveness requirements below will be eliminated from consideration per 7 AAC 78.090(b)(2).

1 Applicant is eligible per 7 AAC 78.030.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	Applicant is eligible per Alaska Administrative Code 7 AAC 78.030.	☑	

4.02 Other Technical Requirements per 7 AAC 78.060, 78.090(b) and 78.100

Response & Organizational Documentation

1 If applying as a non-profit organization, confirm non-profit status is documented.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The agency is listed as a non-profit in good standing on the State's corporation database, confirmed at State Corporation Database and/or	☑	
b	The agency's current 501(c)(3) status is confirmed on the Exempt Organizations page, accessible at IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search.	☑	
c	If a non-profit subsidiary of a non-profit corporation, a verifying letter from the parent non-profit agency is uploaded to the applicant's agency GEMS record (under General in the Agency Administration tab). The parent corporation must meet criteria a and/or b.	☑	

2 If applying as a Federally recognized tribal entity, upload the signed Resolution for Tribal Entities using the template provided below. Confirm the following criteria are met.

Evaluation/Review Criteria	Review	Points

a	The applicant is a recognized Alaska Native entity as verified by the Federal Register at Federal Register. If a tribal consortium, all members are recognized Alaska Native entities.	☑	
b	A Resolution, completed on the provided form, is uploaded in the space provided. If a tribal consortium, a Resolution from each member tribe is uploaded as a single file.	☑	

3 If applying as a government entity, confirm the following criterion is met.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The applicant is another State Agency, such as the University; a political subdivision such as a city or municipality, verified at Local Boundary Commission ; or an REAA under AS 14.08.031 verified at Department of Education Alaska School Map.	☑	

4 Confirm neither the applicant agency nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from receiving grant assistance from any State or federal department or agency. If an agency or its principals are excluded from receiving grant assistance, the proposal may not be considered.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The applicant agency nor its principals are barred from receiving federal assistance as verified in the federal System for Awards Management at System for Award Management (SAM).	☑	

5 Electronically sign the State Grant Assurances form.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	State Grant Assurances form is signed by an individual authorized to enter into legal agreements on behalf of the applicant agency.	☑	

6 This program receives federal funds. Confirm the following criteria are met.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The Federal Assurance and Certification form is electronically signed by an individual authorized to enter into legal agreements on behalf of the applicant.	☑	

b	The applicant agency GEMS record, under General in the Agency Administration tab, contains the agency's DUNS number.	☑	
c	The required Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) information, located under the Federal Reporting section of the Agency Administration tab, has been provided for the agency's most recently completed fiscal year. This task can only be completed by an Agency Power User.	☑	

7 Confirm the applicant has uploaded a copy of their Child Placement Agency license in the upload field

Evaluation/Review Criteria		**Review**	**Points**
a	The Child Placement Agency license has been uploaded as a single scan document	☑	

8 Confirm the following information is provided at the Agency Administration tab. These tasks must be completed by a Power User. If the information is found to be incomplete or not current, there may be delay in execution of any offered award.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		**Review**	**Points**
a	The General section contains a current governing board roster. The roster includes terms of each seat and contact information outside the applicant agency for one or more officers.	☑	
b	The Other Funding section contains a record for each source of agency operating funds. The record includes funds applied for under this solicitation. This is part of the pre-award risk assessment required under Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200.	☑	
c	The General section contains a State of Alaska business license number, verified at Alaska Business Licenses Search.	☑	
d	All agency contact records are up to date, including Head of Agency, Primary Contact, and Head of Financial Operations.	☑	
e	The applicant's agency record contains the Agency Fiscal Year Start Date.	☑	

f	The applicant's agency GEMS record contains a current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement. If lapsed, the agreement is uploaded with written confirmation from the negotiating agency that the rate is valid until a new agreement is approved.	☑	

4.03 History of Compliance with Grant Requirements per 7 AAC 78.100(2)(B)

1 Previous recipients of grant awards will confirm the following criteria pertaining to past performance and compliance are met. This is part of the pre-award risk assessment required under Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200. All other applicants will mark Complete without confirming.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	Fiscal, narrative, and data reporting in prior years has been complete and timely.	☑	
b	Required State and Federal Single Audits have been submitted, verified at Division of Finance, State Single Audit. Any prior year audit exceptions have been resolved, verified by the Finance and Management Services Audit Section contact identified at Finance and Management Services Audit Contact.	☑	
c	Activities in prior year(s) demonstrate effective delivery of services. The departmental review may include documentation such as performance reports, audit reports, grant records, site visits, etc.	☑	
d	Agency historically maintains required standards. Verification may include, though is not limited to, quality assurance reviews, licensing, and certifications.	☑	

4.04 Questions and Criteria Related to Program Policy, Goals, Outcomes, and Activities

1 Describe the proposed project in the text box below, identifying the ways in which it will achieve the program goals and anticipated outcomes stated in this RFP.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The description demonstrates a thorough understanding of program goals and outcomes, and clearly identifies the ways in which they will be achieved.	☐	80

2 Provide the timeline for the initiation of services and implementation of project activities in the upload field below.

Evaluation/Review Criteria	Review	Points

a	The timeline proposed for initiation of services and project activities is compatible with program intent.	☐	120

3 In the text box below, describe the ways in which the project aligns with program intent. The response will identify project resources, activities, and clearly state the project's anticipated goals, outputs, and outcomes.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The described activities are well developed, reasonable and supportive of program intent.	☐	80

4 In the text box below, describe the project evaluation plan, including indicators and data gathering strategies that will be implemented to address the program's performance measures identified in Subsection 1.04.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The proposed evaluation plan includes indicators and data gathering strategies aligned with the program performance measures identified in Subsection 1.04.	☐	80

5 In the text box below, describe the target population and service area(s) of the proposed project.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The description clearly identifies the proposed target population and service area and meets the intent of the services solicited.	☐	80

6 Provide the proposed budget for the first year of the project. Include detail and supporting narrative as shown in the provided Grant Budget Preparation Guidelines (Documents tab). Confirm the following criteria are met.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The budget narrative is complete and mutually consistent with the budget detail.	☑	
b	Cost line items are allowable under 7 AAC 78.160 and are compliant with stated program requirements.	☑	
c	Travel costs are consistent with 7 AAC 78.160(h) and (i), and with any program requirements or limitations identified in the solicitation.	☑	

d	Equipment costs and subcontract costs are allowed by the program and consistent with 7 AAC 78.280.	☑	
e	Indirect costs are fully compliant with rates and exemptions of the agency's current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, uploaded in the General section of the Agency Administration tab.	☑	
f	The budget supports the proposed project and program intent, and the project appears achievable with demonstrated resources.	☐	40
g	Costs are reasonable and substantiated in the narrative.	☐	20
h	The proposed budget narrative clearly describes any necessary allocation of resources among target populations or service areas.	☐	20

4.05 Applicant Qualifications - Criteria Relating to Personnel, Management, and Facilities

1 ***In the text box below, describe the agency's previous experience in providing services the same as, or similar to, those proposed. Clearly identify the time period over which services were provided and the population served. This is part of the pre-award risk assessment required under Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200.***

Evaluation/Review Criteria		**Review**	**Points**
a	The applicant's previous experience providing the same or similar services demonstrates the resources and capacity needed to provide the solicited program services. Note: the review by department staff will also include documentation such as prior year performance reports, audit reports, site visits, etc. as noted in Subsection 4.03.	☐	60

2 ***In the text box below, describe the proposed project's program and administrative staffing needs. Scan the following documents as a single file and upload in the space provided below: 1) Position descriptions for key project positions 2) Resumes and professional credentials for position holders 3) Resumes of administrative staff providing supervision, fiscal, reporting, and management needs. This is part of the pre-award risk assessment required under Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200.***

Evaluation/Review Criteria		**Review**	**Points**
a	Staff providing services are qualified and competent as demonstrated by the uploaded position descriptions, resumes, and professional credentials.	☐	120

b	Staffing levels are sufficient to support the requirements of the proposed project and compliant with all identified program mandates.	☐	80
c	Administrative staff is qualified as demonstrated by the resumes provided.	☐	80
d	Administrative capacity demonstrates capability to meet management and reporting needs.	☐	80

3 In the text box below, describe the procedures that will be used to protect client confidentiality.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The applicant's description identifies the procedures necessary to protect client confidentiality compliant with State and Federal standards.	☐	100

4 In the text box below, describe the service delivery facilities and locations and the ways in which access to services will enhance project success.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	The facilities described are safe and appropriate to the purpose of the program.	☐	60
b	Access to the locations will enhance delivery of services to the targeted populations.	☐	60

4.06 Demonstration of Support/Coordination of Service

1 In the text box below, describe partnerships or collaborations necessary to the proposed project. In the upload field below, provide a single-file scan documenting existing partnerships and collaborations specific to the proposed project.

Evaluation/Review Criteria		Review	Points
a	Partnerships and collaborations necessary for the effective delivery of services are well described. Evidence specific to the proposed project is provided.	☐	60

2 In the text box below, describe the in-place or planned coordination with the State or other providers for referrals necessary to project success. Identify the project staff involved as well as the responsible positions at the referring agencies.

Evaluation/Review Criteria	Review	Points

a	The applicant's description demonstrates a clear understanding of the roles that must be performed by the applicant and by referring agencies for the effective delivery of services to the targeted population.	☐	60