**STATE OF MAINE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**RFP SUBMITTED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SUMMARY #1**

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| **RFA NUMBER AND TITLE:** | 202211187 First 4 ME Early Care and Education Program Pilot Sites Grant Funding Opportunity |
| **RFA ISSUED BY:** | Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services |
| **SUBMITTED QUESTIONS ROUND #1 DUE DATE:** | March 6, 2023, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time |
| **QUESTION & ANSWER SUMMARY ROUND #1 ISSUED:** | March 8, 2023 and March 16, 2023 |
| **APPLICATION DUE DATE:** | April 10, 2023, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time |
| **APPLICATIONS DUE TO:** | Proposals@maine.gov |

**Provided below are submitted written questions received and the Department’s answer.**

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| **1** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Are there any reference documents for the First 4 ME program? |
| **Answer** |
| Refer to Appendix D in the RFA for an overview of the First 4 ME Program and Goals. |

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| **2** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | I read that the grant may fund up to ten applicants. 1. What is the approximate dollar range for awards?
2. Or if there is not an answer for that, how much money has been appropriate for this grant State-wide?
3. In addition, are funds able to be utilized for infrastructure (brick and mortar) facilities?
 |
| **Answer** |
| Per the Details and Instructions, D. “The Department anticipates making up to five (5) awards as a result of this RFA process.” 1. The Department declines to answer.
2. Refer to [L.D. 1712: An Act to Support Children’s Healthy Development and School Success](https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0533&item=5&snum=130).
3. No.
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| **3** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Is there a “baseline” QRIS rating that providers need before joining First 4 ME? |
| **Answer** |
| There is no minimum QRIS rating required to participate in First 4 ME. Child Care Providers must be licensed and in good standing with the Department.  |

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| **4** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | What if school district doesn’t track how many students qualify for reduced/free school lunch? |
| **Answer** |
| All Maine elementary and junior high schools are required to participate in the tracking of free/reduced lunch through the USDA’s National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Contact your local school department for more information specific to your location.  |

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| **5** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Can we add a narrative to the data submitted about % of free and reduced price lunch? |
| **Answer** |
| Yes. |

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| **6** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Is “Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged should be calculated using the total Children who qualify for reduced/free school lunch, divided by the total Children enrolled in the school programming.” still an accurate data point now that breakfast and lunch are free statewide? |
| **Answer** |
| Yes, all Maine elementary and junior high schools are required to participate in the tracking of free/reduced lunch through the USDA’s National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Contact your local school department for more information specific to your location. |

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| **7** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | What are considered “other entities” in the community |
| **Answer** |
| Refer to Appendix D in the RFA for an overview of the First 4 ME Program and Goals. |

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| **8** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | On the definition of a provider: CCP = Individual provider; and Community Provider = agency However, when we are counting the numbers:1. Do we count the individuals in an organization or just count it as 1 organization?
2. Do you expect each individual to have a professional development plan or just the organization?
 |
| **Answer** |
| 1. When referring to Child Care Provider in descriptions or answers, Child Care Provider should be counted as one (1) when describing catchment area. Within the description, indicate type of provider: Family Child Care, Small Facility, Child Care Center with number of staff.
2. Professional Development Plan support will be provided through community coaches for all child care staff participating in the First 4 ME program during the three (3) year pilot implementation timeframe. Each individual will have support creating and tracking their own PDP. However, it is not required they have one to apply to this RFA.
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| **9** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | 1. Can we partner with unlicensed providers?
2. If we are coming from a lens of inclusion, do, for example, therapists for children count as a provider? Unlicensed School Age programs serving children ages four (4) and five (5), etc.?
 |
| **Answer** |
| 1. No.
2. No. Within the First 4 ME program, Child Care Providers are defined [22 MRS §8301-A (A) and (C)](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/22/title22sec8301-A.pdf). Per L.D. 1712, they must be licensed child care providers and in good standing with the Department. First 4 ME also includes home visiting in Child Care Providers per [22 M.R.S. Ch. 1065 §3931](https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3931.pdf). Other entities that are interested in participating in First 4 ME may consider possible participation on the Community Coalition for inclusive engagement and representation.
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| **10** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Can program delivery prioritize supporting families from diverse backgrounds? |
| **Answer** |
| Yes. |

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| **11** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | 1. What is the vision for the individuals who are eligible?
2. Are the services only available for children from families with low income and who are in need?
3. Or is this available for ALL children? (All children in the state of Maine are at risk per the Maine CDC; therefore all children need quality programming to aid in Kindergarten readiness.)
 |
| **Answer** |
| 1. First 4 ME would encourage all families that are enrolled with a First 4 ME Child Care Provider to participate fully in the First 4 ME program. Any family living within the awarded Applicant’s catchment area who are eligible for home visiting may also participate.
2. Every child that is enrolled at the participating Child Care Providers will benefit from increased quality programming. Permission from Parent/Guardian/Caregivers to participant in targeted programming and evaluation will be required, with a focus on families that include at least one “At Risk” factor defined in [22 M.R.S. Ch. 1065 §3931](https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3931.pdf)
3. Yes, any child enrolled with a Child Care Provider that is participating in First 4 ME is able to participate.
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| **12** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Head Start and Maine Families currently have standards/criteria for home visiting services. Can these be expanded to reach more families with an MOU with First 4 ME?  |
| **Answer** |
| Yes. MOUs are encouraged with any program or entities Applicants plan to collaborate with. |

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| **13** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Can program components related to stress and burnout be included to support providers? |
| **Answer** |
| Yes.  |

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| **14** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Is there data for this community assessment already available?  |
| **Answer** |
|  Refer to the Application Form Part V. Community Assessment. |

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| **15** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | What is the max dollar amount available? |
| **Answer** |
| The Department declines to answer. |

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| **16** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Can incentives be included for Child Care Provider participation in the proposal and budget? |
| **Answer** |
| Yes. |

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| **17** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Can clarification be provided regarding the timeline for the grant?   |
| **Answer** |
| The Department anticipates the First 4 ME services to occur over a three (3) year period.  |

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| **18** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | What is the Department's total annual budget for all grant money available to be awarded to all of the program pilot sites? |
| **Answer** |
| The Department declines to answer. |

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| **19** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | 1. Will funds be split evenly between sites?
2. How much can applicants ask for?
 |
| **Answer** |
| * 1. No, the Department anticipates funding awarded projects based on the proposed budgets in alignment with the identified catchment areas with size of community and number of participants taken into account.
	2. It is at the Applicant’s discretion.
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| **20** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | What are the common standards / performance measures to which recipients will be held accountable?  |
| **Answer** |
| Performance Measures and reporting requirements will be determined during contract negotiations |

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| **21** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | 1. Is the coach the only personnel required?
2. Could other positions be funded, such as Project Director?
 |
| **Answer** |
| * 1. Yes, at least one (1) community coach is a required per project award.
	2. Yes, other positions may be included to support program goals and efforts. Refer to **Appendix D** in the RFA for an overview of the First 4 ME Program and Goals.
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| **22** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | 1. What is an appropriate coach: CCP ratio?
2. Is there a specific curriculum expected for coaching?
3. Can you use a peer support model for coaching?
 |
| **Answer** |
| * 1. There is no specific coach: CCP ratio for this pilot. Applicants shall take size and type of CCP into account when creating ratios, budget, and budget narratives.
	2. The Department will provide specific training requirements, a coaches cohort, and Technical Assistance for onboarding of coaches, however additional training would be at the discretion of awarded Applicant in alignment with program goals and community needs.
	3. Yes.
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| **23** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | What is the expectation for home visiting? |
| **Answer** |
| Within statue, home visiting is considered a CCP. Taking dosage into account, goals and expectations would be specific to the home visiting role in the mixed delivery system meeting family’s needs and support program goals.  |

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| **24** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | On page 8, what is meant by transportation options? Would walking or public bus be included? |
| **Answer** |
| Yes. Awarded Applicants shall work with local supports to explore all transportation options for barrier resolution.  |

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| **25** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Can you use grant funds to monitor whether CDS services are being provided? |
| **Answer** |
| Awarded funding under this grant opportunity may be used to meet the deliverables under the contract resulting from this RFA process. |

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| **26** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | What is the role and expectations of Public PreK programs in First 4 ME? |
| **Answer** |
| CCPs that provide services for children of pre-kindergarten age should be considered to be a First 4 ME CCP. Although kindergarten transition is the focused transition point of the First 4 ME program, pre-kindergarten will be a natural transition point for some children in some communities. This transition point should be considered for transition planning teams. Public PreK Program partnerships are encouraged. Expectations related to collaboration for SAU’s and CCP Public PreK partnerships should be considered for their unique settings. |

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| **27** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | What is the role and expectations of home visiting programs? |
| **Answer** |
| Within statue, home visiting is considered a CCP. Taking dosage into account, goals and expectations would be specific to the home visiting role in the mixed delivery system meeting family’s needs and support program goals. |

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| **28** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | A child care center or family CCP, for at least forty-eight (48) weeks per year, five (5) days per week excluding [State holidays](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.maine.gov%2Fbhr%2Fstate-employees%2Fholiday-schedule&data=05%7C01%7Cbrittany.hall%40maine.gov%7C5bcde2f01ff94f98ec6508db1e617892%7C413fa8ab207d4b629bcdea1a8f2f864e%7C0%7C0%7C638137176224923697%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BzwOgHxk6EEadxw3%2B%2BffnUdD%2BpCoVjVBpW2uKXefNa0%3D&reserved=0), available ten (10) hours per day and with up to ten (10) days of staff training;Our local Head Start and a majority of our licensed CCPs programs are not open 10 hours per day at the moment due to staffing issues. Are providers who do not meet the following standards ineligible to participate in a First 4 ME pilot program?  |
| **Answer** |
| All Providers interested in submitting an application are encouraged to do so. CCPs who are not currently available ten (10) hours per day due to staffing shortages must document the current available service hours per day and reason for not meeting the ten (10) hours per day requirement in the Community Provider Letter of Interest. |

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| **29** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Details and InstructionsD. Awards, Page 5 | What is the proposed award amount? |
| **Answer** |
| The Department declines to answer. |

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| **30** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| D. Awards, Page 5 | Is there a requirement for matching funds for this contract/award? |
| **Answer** |
| No. However, the Department expects the Applicants to provide sustainability considerations as part of the year three (3) action plan.  |

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| **31** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| D. Awards, Page 5 | When is the expected start date to create a timeline for the Action Plan goals, objectives and outcomes? |
| **Answer** |
| Action Plan timelines will be determined during contract negotiations.  |

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| **32** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| A. Application RequirementsA.5, Page 8 | This appears to be a three (3) year plan, but it also states it is contract terms are through Dec 2024 with the possibility of one (1) additional year - will the funding be secure for three (3) years? |
| **Answer** |
| The Department anticipates the First 4 ME services to occur over a three (3) year period.  |

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| **33** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| B. Anticipated Contract Activities and RequirementsB.1. d, Page 9 | Who creates and maintains a collective internet-based system, or is this the ASQ-3 portal mentioned in 3.c? |
| **Answer** |
| The Department will work with awarded Applicant(s) on data collection and reporting expectations during contract negotiations.  |

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| **34** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| B. 2., Page 9 | What is the required “catchment area” for these Community Coalitions?  (i.e., School District, Municipality, County, Region, etc.?) |
| **Answer** |
| Catchment area is at the Applicants’ discretion to meet the needs of its community. |

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| **35** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| B. 3, Page 9 | Do Community Providers provide services and data identified within their own cost structure or should it be budgeted within this program? |
| **Answer** |
| Community Providers providing services directly to First 4 ME program participants aligned with the goals of the program shall include their cost in the program budget. Referred services shall be accounted for in their own cost structure.  |

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| **36** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| B. 6. A, Page 10 | Is the proposed budget expected to include all assessments, staffing and activities that may be required for participants? |
| **Answer** |
| All costs associated with Teach Stone, Teach Strategies, and ASQ-Online do not need to be included in proposed budgets. All costs for staffing and activities are to be included in the budget including additional assessments Applicants decide to include.  |

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| **37** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| B.6. D ii, Page 12 | Is the goal of this project proposal to increase the number of CCPs or to work with a set number as part of the coalition team? |
| **Answer** |
| Refer to **Appendix D** in the RFA for an overview of the First 4 ME Program and Goals.  |

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| **38** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| B.8, Page 14 | Can you be more specific on Department Performance measures and reporting requirements? |
| **Answer** |
| The Department anticipates performance measures will be related to participation, financial requirements, staff recruitment and retention, community coalition membership requirements, response rates and attendance, training Kindergarten Entry Assessment requirements. The Department and awarded Applicants will negotiate the specific performance measure requirements.  |