



PROCUREMENT JUSTIFICATION FORM (PJF)

This form must accompany all contract requests and sole source requisitions (RQS) over \$5,000 submitted to the Office of State Procurement Services.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please provide the requested information in the white spaces below. All responses (except signatures) must be typed; no hand-written forms will be accepted. See the guidance document posted with this form on the Procurement Services intranet site (Forms page) for additional instructions.

PART I: OVERVIEW			
Department Office/Division/Program:		DHHS/OCFS/Early Care and Education	
Department Contract Administrator or Grant Coordinator:		Jennifer Levesque / Nicole Mitchell	
(If applicable) Department Reference #:		ECE-26-5052	
Amount: (Contract/Amendment/Grant)	\$ 198,975.00	Advantage CT / RQS #:	CT 10A 20250502000ECE265052
CONTRACT	Proposed Start Date:	7/1/2025	Proposed End Date: 12/30/2025
AMENDMENT	Original Start Date:		Effective Date:
	Previous End Date:		New End Date:
GRANT	Project Start Date:		Grant Start Date:
	Project End Date:		Grant End Date:
Vendor/Provider/Grantee Name, City, State:		Northern Illinois University (NIU) Dekalb, IL	
Brief Description of Goods/Services/Grant:		Evaluation of Maine's new salary stipend program for child care workers.	

PART II: JUSTIFICATION FOR VENDOR SELECTION			
Check the box below for the justification(s) that applies to this request. (Check all that apply.)			
<input type="checkbox"/>	A. Competitive Process	<input type="checkbox"/>	G. Grant
<input type="checkbox"/>	B. Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/>	H. State Statute/Agency Directed
<input type="checkbox"/>	C. Single Source/Unique Vendor	<input type="checkbox"/>	I. Federal Agency Directed
<input type="checkbox"/>	D. Proprietary/Copyright/Patents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	J. Willing and Qualified
<input type="checkbox"/>	E. Emergency	<input type="checkbox"/>	K. Client Choice
<input type="checkbox"/>	F. University Cooperative Project	<input type="checkbox"/>	L. Other Authorization

Please respond to ALL of the questions in the following sections.

PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

1. Provide a more detailed description and explain the need for the goods, services or grant to supplement the response in Part I.

In response to a series of budget initiatives, the Office of Child and Family Services implemented a new three-tiered monthly stipend program for child care workers in November 2023. The level of each tiered stipend was based upon the amount of available state general funds (currently more than thirty (30) million per year) and tier levels differ based upon the child care worker experience and training. The purpose of the child care stipend program is to support the recruitment and retention of a qualified early care and education workforce.

The Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) was awarded a three (3)-year Preschool Development Grant from the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to strengthen Maine's early childhood system. Supporting the child care workforce is a key component of the Preschool Development Grant. As part of the grant, OCFS is expected to conduct an evaluation of this new three-tiered stipend program for child care workers, in order to inform future policy decisions about the structure and funding for this program.

The purpose of this agreement is to conduct a thorough evaluation of the state's new stipend program for child care workers. The evaluation will combine three (3) components: 1) administrative data analysis, 2) survey of child care program leaders, and 3) survey of child care teachers and staff. The provider will test the impact of the stipends via core indicators pertaining to staffing, turnover, and well-being. With the significant state investment in the child care stipend program, an evaluation is needed to determine if the program is helping the state to reach its goal of recruiting and retaining a qualified child care workforce. The provider will produce a final report that will help to inform OCFS, the Children's Cabinet, and the Governor on future policy decisions.

2. Provide a brief justification for the selected vendor to supplement the response in Part II. Reference the RFP number, if applicable.

With the implementation of the child care stipends going into its second (2nd) year and to satisfy the requirements of the PDG grant, OCFS needs to leverage the extensive experience and expertise of this provider to conduct this evaluation in 2025. NIU has expert program knowledge and experience with Maine's ECE workforce and child care sector from projects over the past two years. The Provider has successfully supported the Department's ECE division in several projects including building a child care cost estimation tool, analysis of Maine's child care market rates, a fiscal map of the state's investments in early care and education, and an evaluation of the Child Care Employment Award, exceeding expectations, and meeting timelines

3. Explain how the negotiated costs or rates are fair and reasonable; or how the funding was allocated to grantee.

The costs are considered fair and reasonable at \$198,975.00. This evaluation will involve in-depth data analysis and a series of communications with the early care and education workforce to develop a thorough and informative evaluation. The proposed cost of this evaluation contract aligns with other OCFS evaluation contracts such as CFS-24-9100 (\$164,838.) and CBH-22-9003 (\$249,955.)

PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

4. Describe the plan for future competition for the goods or services.

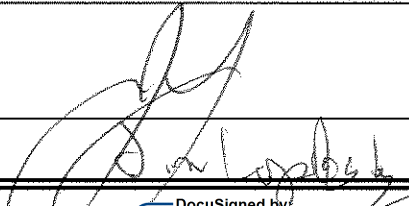
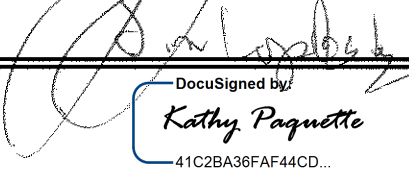
The Department does not intend to RFP these services

PART IV: AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) / MAINE JOBS & RECOVERY PLAN (MJRP)

Does this request utilize ARPA/MJRP funds?

☐ Yes, MJRP funds (023) – If Yes, please attach the approved Business Case(s).☐ Yes, ARPA funds (025) – If Yes, please be aware of the requirements from awarding federal agencies.☒ No – If No, proceed to Part V.**PART V: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (COI); CONTRACT WITH THE STATE***Maine law contains Conflict of Interest statutes directed to State Departments, State Officers, and Employees Generally under MRS Title 5, §18 and §18-A, in harmony with MRS Title 17, §3104.*☒ The requesting department signatory understands and acknowledges Maine's Conflict of Interest statutes.**PART VI: APPROVALS**

The signatures below indicate approval of this procurement request.

Signature of requesting Department's Commissioner (or designee):			
Typed Name:		Date:	18-Jun-25
Signature of DAFS Procurement Official:	 <small>DocuSigned by:</small> Kathy Paquette <small>41C2BA36FAF44CD...</small>		
Typed Name:	Kathy Paquette	Date:	6/24/2025