**STATE OF MAINE**

**Department of Maine Judicial Branch**

*Administrative Office of the Courts*

**RFA# 202406111**

**Development of Programs and Services for Parents Divorcing, Separating, or Living Apart**

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| **RFA Coordinator** | *All communication regarding the RFA must be made through the RFA Coordinator identified below*.**Name:** Joanna Davis, Esq. **Title:** Family Process Specialist**Contact Information:** joanna.davis@courts.maine.gov |
| **Submitted Questions Due** | *All questions must be received by the RFA Coordinator identified above by:***Date:** July 18, 2024, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time |
| **ApplicationSubmission Deadline** | *Applications must be received by the Division of Procurement Services by:***Submission Deadline:** August 1, 2024, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time.*Applications must be submitted electronically to:* Proposals@maine.gov |

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**PART I OVERVIEW OF THE GRANT OPPORTUNITY**

## Purpose and Background

The Maine Judicial Branch (Department) is seeking applications for Federal Access and Visitation funds for the development of programs and services for parents divorcing, separating, or living apart as defined in this Request for Applications (RFA) document. This document provides instructions for submitting applications, the procedure and criteria by which the awarded Applicant(s) will be selected, and the contractual terms which will govern the relationship between the State of Maine (State) and the awarded Applicant(s).

In [Public Law 113-183(a)(1)&(2)](https://www.congress.gov/113/plaws/publ183/PLAW-113publ183.pdf), the United States Congress found that “[t]he separation of a child from a parent does not end the financial or other responsibilities of the parent toward the child…” and “[i]ncreased parental access and visitation not only improve parent-child relationships, and outcomes for children, but also have been demonstrated to result in improved child support collections, which creates a double win for children – a more engaged parent and improved financial security.” In 1997, the United States Congress budgeted $10 million to be allocated annually across all the states and territories in furtherance of this finding. Since 1997, and each year thereafter, the State of Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in conjunction with the Maine Judicial Branch has applied for, and has been awarded, federal grant funding under the Access and Visitation Grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

The goals of this Request for Application are to fund: (1) co-parent education, (2) high-conflict co-parenting services, and (3) supervised visitation.

## General Provisions

1. From the time this RFA is issued until award notification is made, all contact with the State regarding this RFA must be made through the RFA Coordinator identified on the cover page of this RFA. No other person/State employee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFA. Violation of this provision may lead to disqualification from the application process, at the State’s discretion.
2. Issuance of the RFA does not commit the Department to issue an award or to pay expenses incurred by an Applicant in the preparation of a response to the RFA. This includes attendance at personal interviews or other meetings, where applicable.
3. All applications must adhere to the instructions and format requirements outlined in the RFA and all written supplements and amendments (such as the Summary of Questions and Answers), issued by the Department. Applications are to follow the format and respond to all questions and instructions specified in Part III of the RFA.
4. Applicants will take careful note that in evaluating an application submitted in response to this RFA, the Department will consider materials provided in the application, information obtained through interviews/presentations (if any), and internal Departmental information of previous contract history with the Applicant (if any). The Department also reserves the right to consider other reliable references and publicly available information in evaluating the Applicant’s experience and capabilities.
5. The application must be signed by a person authorized to legally bind the Applicant and must contain a statement that the proposal and the pricing contained therein will remain valid and binding for a period of 180 days from the date and time of the bid opening.
6. The RFA and the awarded Applicant’s proposal, including all appendices or attachments, will be the basis for the final contract, as determined by the Department.
7. Following announcement of an award decision, all submissions in response to this RFA will be public records, available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) ([1 M.R.S. § 401](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/1/title1sec401.html) et seq.).
8. The Department, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in applications received in response to the RFA.
9. All applicable laws, whether or not herein contained, shall be included by this reference. It shall be the Applicant’s responsibility to determine the applicability and requirements of any such laws and to abide by them.

## Eligibility to Submit Applications

Non-profit agencies or non-profit entities are eligible to apply. All applicants must provide documentation of non-profit status. If an applicant does not provide this documentation, that applicant will be disqualified. Successful applicants will form a Board of Directors if one does not already exist.

## Awards

The Department anticipates making multiple awards as a result of the RFA process. The Department expects to award a total of $95,000 split between successful applicants; the number and size of awards will depend on the number of applications received and available funds. Awards will be made to the highest scoring applicants (with the potential outcome of not making an award in some categories). Receipt of prior funding does not guarantee future awards.

If the applicant is requesting funding for more than one type of the eligible programs outlined in Part II of this RFA, the applicant must submit a separate application for each program.

Applicants awarded through this RFA process will be conditionally awarded a contract for an initial one-year period of performance from October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025, with an option to extend for one more year at the Department’s discretion.

1. **Appeal of Contract Awards**

Any person aggrieved by the award decision that results from this Request for Applications may appeal the decision to the Director of the Bureau of General Services in the manner prescribed in 5 MRSA § 1825-E and 18-554 Code of Maine Rules, Chapter 120 (found here: [Chapter 120](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-120)).  The appeal must be in writing and filed with the Director of the Bureau of General Services, 9 State House Station, Augusta, Maine, 04333-0009 within 15 calendar days of receipt of notification of contract award.

**PART II ACTIVITIES AND REQUIREMENTS**

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* + - 1. **Organizational Requirements**
1. Applicants awarded grant funds must utilize the funds for scholarship assistance for any parent who cannot afford to pay the full program fee. Information about scholarship assistance must be clearly stated in program materials and the assistance must be easily attained. While applicants are allowed to utilize awarded funds for administrative costs at the discretion of the Department, priority will be given to applications that primarily allocate the contract award for program participant scholarship assistance.
2. Awarded applicants are required to maintain [statewide standards](https://www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/sites/maine.gov.pfr.professionallicensing/files/inline-files/DV_Training_0.pdf) and be trained on domestic abuse and violence dynamics and issues. Awarded applicants may be required to attend training or programs recommended by the Access and Visitation Advisory Committee of the Maine Judicial Branch. Awarded applicants are required to have and demonstrate an initial screening process for issues of domestic abuse and violence. When parent education or other services are not appropriate given personal safety concerns, awarded applicants are expected to make referrals to more appropriate services in the community.
3. Awarded applicants must have access to timely and reliable electronic communication.
4. Awarded applicants must be in contact with the Department at least once a month through a mutually agreed upon platform.

1. A site visit by the grant coordinator or any other member of the Access and Visitation Advisory Committee may be required before a contract is issued. Additional site visits after a contract award is granted may be required at the Department’s discretion.
	* + 1. **Program Requirements**
2. **Requirements for Co-parenting Education Programs**
	* 1. The program will be presented by a minimum of two (2) trainers with gender diversity;
		2. Trainers must have prior training and/or experience with parents separated, divorced, or living apart, and must have had training on the dynamics and effects of domestic abuse and violence;
		3. The program must have a screening process for domestic abuse and violence;
		4. The program must be a minimum of four (4) hours in duration and must meet at least monthly, unless otherwise specified in the contract; and
		5. The program will ideally be offered in person and remotely to maximize geographical availability. Applicants should include information on the availability of the program in each format.
3. **Requirements for High-Conflict Co-parenting Education Programs**
	* 1. The program will be presented by a minimum of two (2) trainers with gender diversity. A mental health professional must serve either as a trainer or advisor to the program;
		2. The program must have a screening process for domestic abuse and violence;
		3. The program will be specifically tailored to build co-parenting skills for parents who are in a high-conflict situation and consist of multiple sessions; and
		4. The program will offer sessions at least quarterly, unless otherwise contracted. The Department will prioritize a program with various times of delivery and alternate methods of delivery, including video-conferencing, to ensure access to all families, regardless of work schedule or geographic location.
4. **Requirements for Supervised Visitation Programs**
	* 1. The program must provide trainings to all staff members on the dynamics and issues of domestic abuse and violence;
		2. All employees, volunteers, and interns who work directly with children and families, including intake services, must be required to submit to and pass a criminal background check and DHHS Maine Child Protective Services Central Case Records Research check before any interaction with children and families. The Department reserves the right to request copies of those records;
		3. The program must use a visitation facility or facilities that has/have a physical arrangement that prevents contact between parties before and after parent-child visits, such as separate entrances and exits; and
		4. If appropriate, the program will use secure video conferencing tools to provide monitored video contact between geographically separated non-custodial parents and their children.
			1. **Invoicing and Reporting Requirements**
5. Applicants awarded grant funds must expend their grant funds in the time period specified by the awarding contract. To obtain compensation for services rendered, awarded applicants must submit monthly invoices to the Department that include a detailed description of the funds used, including the amounts billed to scholarship assistance and administrative costs. By the 15th of the month following the service month, the applicant must submit an invoice or send an email to the Department stating that there will be no invoice because no services were provided in that month. Failure to adhere to this requirement may result in a termination of the awarding contract.
6. Awarded applicants are also required to submit monthly reports to the Department that document client information, including “Required Outcome” data regarding increased non-custodial parenting time with children because of the services rendered. By the 15th of the month following the service month, the applicant must submit the report or send an email to the Department stating that there will be no report because no services were provided in that month. Failure to adhere to this requirement may result in a termination of the awarding contract.

**PART III KEY PROCESS EVENTS**

## Submission of Questions

* 1. **General Instructions:** It is the responsibility of all Applicants and other interested parties to examine the entire RFA and to seek clarification, in writing, if they do not understand any information or instructions.
		1. Applicants and other interested parties should use **Appendix A** (Submitted Questions Form) for submission of questions. The form is to be submitted as a WORD document.
		2. Questions must be submitted, by e-mail, and received by the RFA Coordinator identified on the cover page of the RFA as soon as possible but no later than the date and time specified on the RFA cover page.
		3. Submitted Questions must include the RFA Number and Title in the subject line of the e-mail. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete/on time e-mail transmission and receipt.
	2. **Question & Answer Summary:** Responses to all questions will be compiled in writing and posted on the State’s Division of Procurement Services [Grant RFPs and RFAs](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants) website. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain a copy of the Question & Answer Summary. Only those answers issued in writing on this website will be considered binding.

## Amendments

All amendments released in regard to this RFA will be posted on the Division of Procurement Services [Grant RFPs and RFAs](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants) website. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain amendments. Only those amendments posted on this website are considered binding.

## Application Submission

* 1. **Applications Due:** Applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. local time, on the date listed on the cover page of the RFA.
		1. Any e-mails containing original application submissions or any additional or revised application files, received after the 11:59 p.m. deadline, will be rejected without exception.
1. **Delivery Instructions:** Applications must be submitted electronically to the State of Maine Division of Procurement Services at proposals@maine.gov.
	1. Only applications received by e-mail will be considered. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete e-mail transmission and receipt.

Application submission e-mails that are successfully received by the proposals@maine.gov inbox will receive an automatic reply stating as such.

* 1. E-mails containing links to file sharing sites or online file repositories will not be accepted as submissions. Only e-mail application submissions that have the requested files attached will be accepted.
	2. Encrypted e-mails received which require opening attachments and logging into a proprietary system will not be accepted as submissions. It is the Applicant’s responsibility to check with its organization’s information technology team to ensure that security settings will not encrypt its application submission.
	3. File size limits are 25MB per e-mail. Applicants may submit files across multiple e-mails, as necessary, due to file size concerns. All e-mails and files must be received by the due date and time as described above.
	4. Applicants are to insert the following into the subject line of their e-mail submission: “**RFA# 202406111 Application Submission – [Applicant’s Name]**”.
1. **Submission Contents**
2. Applicants are not to provide additional attachments beyond those specified in the RFA or Application Form described below for the purpose of extending their response. Materials not requested will not be considered part of the application and will not be evaluated.
3. **Application Form.** Application submissions must include the Applicant’s completed Application Form (found in Part V of the RFA) and all required information and attachments as stated in the form. The Application Form must be submitted as a single, typed, PDF file.
4. **Eligibility to Apply (Proof of Non-Profit Status).** The applicant must provide a copy of documentation showing proof of non-profit status as of the time of the application submission.
5. **Litigation.**
	* 1. The applicant must list all current litigation in which the applicant is a named party or otherwise involved;
		2. The applicant must include a list of all closed cases within the past five years in which the applicant was a named party or otherwise involved, and the outcome of those cases; or
		3. The applicant must indicate that there is no relevant litigation to report, if applicable.
6. **Qualifications and Experience.** The applicant must submit a brief statement of qualifications, including the history of the applicant’s organization and three (3) examples of projects which demonstrate their experience and expertise in performing these services as well as highlighting the applicant’s stated qualifications and skills.
7. **Program Requirements.** Applications must include the following information to show compliance with the Program Requirements in Part II(B) of this RFA, as it relates to the program being proposed:
	* + 1. **Co-parenting Education Programs**
				1. The applicant must provide a description of its co-parenting education program;
				2. The applicant must provide a roster of its trainers to the Department and document their prior training and/or experience with parents separated, divorced, or living apart, and must also document training on the dynamics and effects of domestic abuse and violence;
				3. The applicant must certify that it provides program scholarship assistance and must describe its screening process for doing so;
				4. The applicant must describe its screening process for domestic abuse and violence;
				5. The applicant must include information on the program’s Board of Directors; and
				6. To the extent the applicant has provided co-parent education programming in prior years and received Access and Visitation grant funds for that programming, the applicant must provide the following information for federal fiscal years 2019-2023:

The total number of parents, grandparents, legal guardians, and children served and the number of courses offered broken down by each federal fiscal year; and

The total amount of Access and Visitation award for each federal fiscal year and total amount actually expended for each federal fiscal year.

* + - 1. **High Conflict Co-Parent Education Programs**
1. The applicant must provide a description of its high-conflict program, including the curriculum;
2. The applicant must provide a roster of its trainers to the Department and document their prior training and/or experience with parents separated, divorced, or living apart, and must also document training on the dynamics and effects of domestic abuse and violence;
3. The applicant must certify that it provides program scholarship assistance and must describe its screening process for doing so;
4. The applicant must describe its screening process for domestic abuse and violence;
5. The applicant must include information on the program’s Board of Directors; and
6. To the extent the applicant has provided high-conflict co-parent education programming in prior years and received Access and Visitation grant funds for that programming, the applicant must provide the following information for federal fiscal years 2019-2023:

The total number of parents, grandparents, legal guardians, and children served and the number of courses offered broken down by each federal fiscal year; and

The total amount of Access and Visitation award for each federal fiscal year and total amount actually expended for each federal fiscal year.

* + - 1. **Supervised Visitation Programs**
1. The applicant must provide a roster of its supervisors to the Department and provide documentation on training provided to the supervisors;
2. The applicant must certify that it provides program scholarship assistance and must describe its screening process for doing so;
3. The applicant must provide documentation of trainings to all staff members on the dynamics and issues of domestic abuse and violence;
4. The applicant must demonstrate that its visitation facility or facilities has/have a physical arrangement that prevents contact between parties before and after parent-child visits, such as separate entrances and exits;
5. The applicant must include information on the program’s Board of Directors; and
6. To the extent the applicant has provided supervised visitation in prior years and received Access and Visitation grant funds for that programming, the applicant must provide the following information for federal fiscal years 2019-2023:

The total number of parents, grandparents, legal guardians, and children served and the number of courses offered broken down by each federal fiscal year; and

The total amount of Access and Visitation award for each federal fiscal year and total amount actually expended for each federal fiscal year.

1. **Cost Proposal and Budget Information.** The applicant must provide cost proposal and budget information for the federal fiscal year 2025 (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025) in the space provided on the Application Form.

**PART IV APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

1. **Evaluation Process – General Information**
	1. An evaluation team, composed of qualified reviewers, will judge the merits of the proposals received in accordance with the criteria defined in the RFA.
	2. Officials responsible for making decisions on the award selection will ensure that the selection process accords equal opportunity and appropriate consideration to all who are capable of meeting the specifications. The goals of the evaluation process are to ensure fairness and objectivity in review of the applications and to ensure that all contracts are awarded to the Applicants that provide the best value to the State of Maine.
	3. The Department reserves the right to communicate and/or schedule interviews/presentations with Applicants, if needed, to obtain clarification of information contained in the applications received. The Department may revise the scores assigned in the initial evaluation to reflect those communications and/or interviews/presentations. Changes to applications, including updating or adding information, will not be permitted during any interview/presentation process and, therefore, Applicants must submit proposals that present their rates and other requested information as clearly and completely as possible.
	4. Failure to respond to all questions and instructions throughout the RFA may result in the application being disqualified as non-responsive or receiving a reduced score. The Department, and its evaluation team, has sole discretion to determine whether a variance from the RFA specifications will result either in disqualification or reduction in scoring of a proposal.
2. **Scoring Process:** The evaluation team will use a consensus approach to evaluate and score all sections listed below. Members of the review team will not score those sections individually but, instead, will arrive at a consensus as to assignment of points for each of those sections.
3. **Scoring Weights:** The score will be based on a 100-point scale and will measure the degree to which each application meets the following criteria.

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| **Scoring Criteria** | **Points Available** |
| Eligibility to Apply (*Proof of Non-Profit Status*) | Pass/Fail |
| Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA | 5 points |
| Litigation (*Part III(C)(3)(d) of the RFA*) | 5 points |
| Part II: Activities and Requirements*Organizational Requirements**Program Requirements**Invoicing and Reporting Requirements*  | 60 points |
| Cost Proposal and Budget Information (*Part III(C)(3)(g) of the RFA*) | 30 points |
| **Total Points**  | **100 points** |

1. **Selection and Award**
	1. Notification of conditional award selection or non-selection will be made in writing by the Department.
	2. Issuance of this RFA in no way constitutes a commitment by the State to award a contract, to pay costs incurred in the preparation of a response to the RFA, or to pay costs incurred in procuring or contracting for services, supplies, physical space, personnel, or any other costs incurred by the Applicant.
	3. The Department reserves the right to reject any and all applications or to make multiple awards.
2. **Contract Administration and Conditions**
	1. The awarded Applicants will be required to execute a State of Maine Service Contract with the appropriate riders as determined by the issuing Department.
	2. Allocation of funds is final upon successful negotiation and execution of the contract, subject to the review and approval of the State Procurement Review Committee. Contracts are not considered fully executed and valid until approved by the State Procurement Review Committee and funds are encumbered. No contract will be approved based on an RFP which has an effective date less than fourteen (14) calendar days after award notification to Applicants. (Referenced in the regulations of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, [Chapter 110, § 3(B)(i)](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-110)). This provision means that a contract cannot be effective until at least 14 calendar days after award notification.
	3. Following the award, a Contract Administrator from the Department will be appointed to assist with the development and administration of the contract and to act as administrator during the entire contract period. Department staff will be available after the award to consult with the awarded Applicants in the finalization of the contract.
	4. In providing services and performing under the contract, the awarded Applicant must act as an independent contractor and not as an agent of the State of Maine.

**PART V APPLICATION FORM**

## Applicants must use the Application Form embedded below to submit their application in response to this RFA.

## The Application Form may be obtained in a Word (.docx) format by double clicking on the document icon below.



**APPENDIX A SUBMITTED QUESTIONS FORM**

This form should be used by Applicants when submitting written questions to the RFA Coordinator.

If a question is not related to any section of the RFA, enter “N/A” under the RFA Section & Page Number. Add additional rows as necessary. Submit this document in WORD format, not PDF.

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| **Organization Name:** |  |

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| **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
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