**STATE OF MAINE**

**Department of Health and Human Services**

*Office of Child and Family Services*



**RFA# 202306144**

**First 4 ME Early Care and Education Program**

**Pilot Site**

**Grant Funding Opportunity**

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| **RFA Coordinator** | All communication regarding the RFA must be made through the RFA Coordinator: **Name:** Brittany Hall **Title:** Procurement Administrator  **Contact Information:** [Brittany.hall@maine.gov](mailto:Brittany.hall@maine.gov) |
| **Submitted Questions Due** | *All questions must be received by the RFA Coordinator, identified above, by:*  ***Date:***August 7, 2023, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time and must include **“RFA# 202306144 Question”** in the subject line of the e-mail. |
| **Application Submission Period** | *Applications must be received by the Division of Procurement Services by:*  **Submission Deadline:** August 24, 2023, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time.  *Applications must be submitted electronically to the following address:*  **Electronic (e-mail) Submission Address:** [Proposals@maine.gov](mailto:Proposals@maine.gov)  and must include **“RFA# 202306144 Application Submission”** in the subject line of the e-mail. |

**RFA TERMS/ACRONYMS with DEFINITIONS**

The following terms and acronyms, as referenced in the RFA, shall have the meanings indicated below:

| **Term/Acronym** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- |
| [**Ages & Stages Questionnaires**](https://agesandstages.com/) **(ASQ)** | Provides reliable, accurate developmental and social-emotional screening for children between birth and age six (6). ASQ has been specifically designed to pinpoint developmental progress and catch delays in young children, paving the way for meaningful next steps in learning, intervention, or monitoring. |
| **ASQ-3** | A developmental screening tool that pinpoints developmental progress in children between the ages of one (1) month to five and a half (5½) years. |
| **At Risk** | A Child who is a member of an Economically Disadvantaged family, a recipient or former recipient of services under the child protection or child welfare system of the State, in foster care, homeless, a member of a family exposed to substance use disorder, identified as having special needs, identified as having a physical or mental disability,  or identified as having limited English proficiency. |
| **Child** | A person under six (6) years of age who has not entered kindergarten. |
| **Child Care Providers (CCPs)** | As defined by [22 MRS §8301-A (A) and (C)](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/22/title22sec8301-A.pdf). Within the scope of First 4 ME Pilot Project (Project), CCPs include Home Visiting as a service delivery model. |
| **Community Coach** | Provides information and training to Community Providers. |
| **Community Coalition** | A group of stakeholders, service providers or other members within the community that sponsors and collaborates in the implementation and administration of the Project. |
| **Community Contractor (aka Awarded Applicant)** | A nonprofit organization that is the Applicant and responsible lead member of a Community Coalition for the Project. |
| **Community Provider** | Child Care Provider or other service provider that has entered into a contract with a Community Contractor to provide services as part of the Project. |
| **Department** | Department of Health and Human Services |
| **Economically Disadvantaged** | Having a family income not exceeding one hundred eighty-five percent (185%) of the federal poverty level as defined in [22 M.R.S. §3762 (1)(C)](https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/22/title22sec3762.pdf). |
| **First 4 ME Pilot Project (Project)** | Established under [22 M.R.S. Ch. 1065 §3931](https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3931.pdf) and implemented under this RFA and the resulting contracts. |
| **Home Visitor** | Provides services to a Participant in the Participant’s home. |
| **Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)** | An evidenced-based screening tool that measures an individual child’s development across all domains to inform classroom instruction, curriculum planning, and professional development needs; to identify students in need of specialized supports or interventions and to provide a statewide snapshot of what children know when they enter kindergarten. |
| **Participant** | An eligible Child who has been accepted to participate in the Project. |
| [**Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)**](https://ecquality.acf.hhs.gov/) | A systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. |
| **RFA** | Request for Application |
| **SAU** | School Administrative Unit |
| **State** | State of Maine |

**Details and Instructions**

## Application Purpose and Background

The Department of Health and Human Services (Department) is seeking applications for the implementation of the First 4 ME Early Care and Education Program (First 4 ME Program).

The Department is dedicated to promoting health, safety, resiliency, and opportunity to all Maine residents. The Department’s Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) supports Maine’s children and their families by providing Children’s Development, Behavioral Health, and Child Welfare services.

In July 2021, L.D. 1712: An Act to Support Children’s Healthy Development and School Success was enacted as [22 M.R.S. Ch. 1065 §3931](https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3931.pdf). As a result, the Department established First 4 ME Program, a two- (2) generation framework for a community based, coordinated birth through kindergarten-entry program which provides comprehensive, high-quality early child-care and education to support a Child’s school readiness. The First 4 ME Program seeks to improve Participant’s social, emotional, educational, and health outcomes by providing stabilization support and education to families with young Children under age six (6) not yet in kindergarten. The First 4 ME Program will achieve efficiencies both locally and Statewide through key community roles and intentional supports to Child Care Providers (CCPs) which can include Home Visiting Services and Local School Administrative Units (SAUs) to improve outcomes for Children, families, and early childhood educators. Refer to **Appendix D** for an overview of the First 4 ME Program.

The awarded Applicant, referred to as a Community Contractor, shall be the lead coordinator of a Community Coalition comprised of stakeholders reflective of their unique community. The Community Contractor shall maintain records, logs, and data for the First 4 ME Pilot Project (Project) site to assist the Department-identified evaluator and the Department in monitoring Project sites. The Community Contractors shall achieve the overall First 4 ME Program goals, objectives, and outcomes and the unique Project site-specific goals, objectives, and outcomes through the development of a unique action plan and budget.

Community Coach(es) shall provide intensive supports to CCPs in efforts to increase and sustain comprehensive, high-quality early child-care and education. Community Coaches will receive Department-identified training for direct consultation, and connection to local and State-level services, supports, and programs as needed for a Participant, CCP, and/or SAU level. The Department will provide program oversight, fiscal monitoring, quality assurance and improvement support and training to Community Coaches and Project sites through the OCFS First 4 ME Program Manager and First 4 ME Program Specialist.

## General Provisions

1. From the time this RFA is issued until award notification is made, all contact with the State of Maine (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 the “Submission Instructions” section of the RFA’s application.
4. The Applicant shall take careful note that in evaluating its application submitted in response to this RFA the Department will consider materials provided in the application and internal Departmental information of previous contract history, if any, with the Applicant. The Department also reserves the right to consider other reliable references and publicly available information in evaluating the Applicant’s experience and capabilities.
5. 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 an application.
6. 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.
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. 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

Community Contractors who are registered as a nonprofit organization in Androscoggin, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Sagadahoc, Somerset, Waldo, or Washington county are invited to submit an application in response to this RFA.

## Awards

The Department anticipates making one award of up to $1,300,000.00 as a result of this the RFA process. The amount awarded is to be applied to the entirety of the pilot project. The Department intends to apply priority scoring to a Project that serve communities:

1. With high numbers or high percentages of Children who are Economically Disadvantaged; or
2. That effectively involve a wide variety of providers or other entities in the community, including SAUs.

Any person aggrieved by the award decision that results from the RFA may appeal the decision to the Director of the Bureau of General Services in the manner prescribed in [5 M.R.S.A. § 1825-E](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/5/title5sec1825-E.html) and [18-554 Code of Maine Rules 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 fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of notification of conditional contract award.

1. **Contract Terms**

The Department anticipates issuing an award for a contract period beginning as early as October 2023. Contract periods may vary based on the time the application is received and scored by the Department and the Department’s ability to fully execute a contract.

**Activities and Requirements**

## Application Requirements

## Be sponsored by a Community Coalition who shall assist and support the Community Contractor in sponsoring, developing, and submitting an application, including a community assessment, and supporting comprehensive, high-quality early child-care and education in the community.

## Membership of a Community Coalition must include the Community Contractor, who is the lead member of the Community Coalition, and at least one:

## Representative of the local business community;

## Child care center;

## Family Child Care Provider;

## Parent of a Child using early childhood services;

## Home visitor;

## Mental health care provider;

## Public school administrator;

## Health care provider;

## Representative of an organization that supports workforce development;

## Provider of services under the federal [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B or Part C](https://www.maine.gov/doe/cds/idea).

## Provider of professional development to early child-care and education professionals; and

## If available in the community, a faculty member of a career and technical center or higher education institution specializing in early childhood.

## A member of a Community Coalition must be located or operate within the community represented by the Community Coalition. A Community Coalition may include a local government staff member or a representative of an agency that provides services to or a local judicial staff member who has engaged with an at-risk population, a library or local literacy program staff member, an elementary school teacher, a representative of adult education or other similar member of the community.

## Provide a provision for enrollment of Participants who reside within the community of the Community Coalition who/whose:

## Is a Child At Risk; and

## Is receiving care in a facility licensed under [22 M.R.S. § 8301‑A](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/22/title22sec8301-A.pdf); and/or

## Parent requests home visitor services.

## Provide an assessment on the demographics of the identified community, specific to child outcomes related to health care, development across all domains and education, the resources available in the community to address those needs and the ability of the First 4 ME Pilot Site (Project) to address those needs outlined in Table 1 – First 4 ME Pilot Project Components:

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| --- | --- |
| Table 1 – First 4 ME Pilot Project Components | |
| The Project components must include: | |
|  | Service delivery provided by:A child care provider, for at least forty-eight (48) weeks per year, five (5) days per week excluding [State holidays](https://www.maine.gov/bhr/state-employees/holiday-schedule), available ten (10) hours per day and with up to ten (10) days of staff training; orHome visitor services, including group socialization activities that include a Child and the Child's parent, for at least forty-eight (48) weeks per year. Services must focus on the parent-Child relationship and be culturally and linguistically responsive. |
|  | Screening and ongoing Child assessments conducted in a manner that is responsive to a Child's home language and culture :Screening shall include an initial assessment of developmental, behavioral, motor, language, cognitive and social and emotional skills to identify a delay in development in a Child's skills or identify a disability that may require further evaluation.Ongoing assessment must monitor a Child's development and progress toward individual goals with input from the Child's family to determine a Child's strengths and needs and possible adjustment of CCP teaching practices and home visit strategies and to support a referral to the Child Development Services System under [20‑A M.R.S. § 7209 (3)](https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-a/title20-Asec7209.pdf), when necessary. |
|  | Specialized support for Participants, including for cultural and linguistic needs and for Children with diagnosed or who have physical or mental disabilities or developmental delays. Support may include access to and participation in learning and social experiences and activities. |
|  | Family engagement practiced at all levels of the Project, focusing on culturally and linguistically responsive relationship building within the family, including:Communicating effectively with members of a family;Forming positive goal-focused relationships with members of a family;Involving a parent in decision making, teaching practices, including screening, assessment and planning for interactions and learning environments, and implementing the Project services;Ensuring consistency between a Child's home and comprehensive, high-quality early child care and education; andEnsuring Project practices are responsive to a family's needs, including providing connections to employment and education supports. |
|  | Support for a Child's immunization and preventive health and dental care by providing encouragement for a parent to comply with the Department's early periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment program under [22 M.R.S. § 3173](https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3173.pdf); |
|  | Transportation options to assist a family to travel to or from health care, child care or education services. |

## Provide an action plan based upon the assessment that states objectives, goals and intended outcomes and responds to the needs of the community using the available resources and incorporating the Project Components outlined in Table 1.

## Provide a proposed thirty-five-month budget for the implementation of the action plan and operation of the Project including an annual breakdown of expenses as identified on the Cost Proposal form.

## Anticipated Contract Activities and Requirements

## General Requirements

## Ensure an adequate infrastructure and qualified and credentialed staff/subcontractors carry out the duties of the First 4 ME Pilot Project (Project).

## Implement high-quality services with Community Providers.

## Implement and maintain a data system to collect and report aggregate data regarding Children, families and Community Provider information, activities, and outcomes.

## Ensure personally identifiable information derived from the Project services provided to a Participant or family may not be utilized without the consent of a Participant's parent and/or guardian.

## Participate in a collective, internet-based system that captures data from all Project locations in a manner that protects the confidentiality of information of Participants.

## Community Coalition

## Oversee, lead, and coordinate the Community Coalition and its activities, and represent the Community Coalition in the community at large.

## Maintain membership of the Community Coalition with members who are located or operate within the community represented by the Community Coalition and include at least one (1):

## Representative of the local business community;

## Childcare center;

## Family Child Care Provider;

## Parent of a child using early childhood services;

## Home Visitor;

## Mental health care provider;

## Public school administrator;

## Health care provider;

## Representative of an organization that supports workforce development;

## Provider of services under the federal [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B or Part C](https://www.maine.gov/doe/cds/idea);

## Provider of professional development to early child-care and education professionals; and

## A faculty member of a career and technical center or higher education institution specializing in early childhood, if available.

## A community coalition may include a local government staff member or a representative of an agency that provides services to or a local judicial staff member who has engaged with an at-risk population, a library, or local literacy program staff member, an elementary school teacher, a representative of adult education or other similar member of the community

## Community Providers

## Community Providers shall include:

## A CCP who operates at least forty-eight (48) weeks per year, five (5) days per week excluding [State holidays](https://www.maine.gov/bhr/state-employees/holiday-schedule) and is available ten (10) hours per day, and supports up to ten (10) days of staff training; and/or

## Home visitor services, including group socialization activities that include a Child and the Child's parent and/or guardian, for at least forty-eight (48) weeks per year. Services must focus on the parent-Child relationship and be culturally and linguistically responsive.

## Enter into contracts with Community Providers who:

## Are in good standing with the Department’s Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) [CCP Licensing](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/provider-resources/child-care-licensing/becoming-a-childcare-provider).

## Agree to meet the highest level of requirements for the Department's quality rating system established under [22 M.R.S. §3737 (3)](https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3737.pdf).

## Agree to provide the Community Contractor with data on a Participant.

* + - * 1. Ensure Community Providers register for the [Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3)](https://agesandstages.com/)online portal within the first sixty (60) calendar days of the initial period of performance, to ensure families can access the ASQ-3 to complete the Participant screening.

## Community Coaches

## Hire and/or subcontract Community Coaches to provide information and training to Community Providers.

## Ensure Community Coaches receive training from a research-based early childhood program with experience in a comprehensive, high-quality early child-care and education program.

## Ensure an adequate Community Coach-to-CCP ratio.

## Collaborative Partnerships

## Ensure implementation of comprehensive, high-quality early child-care and education services within the proposed community, which support CCPs, Children and families, and local School Administrative Units (SAUs).

## Support a referral process and follow up schedule for local and/or State level services available as needed by participant children, families, and providers.

## Create and implement, within the first nine (9) months of the initial period of performance, a Child transition planning teams to oversee the development and implementation of intentional transitions through a Child’s kindergarten entry from a mixed delivery system.

## Ensure intentional partnership and communication is facilitated between CCPs and early elementary educators through SAU relationships.

* 1. **First 4 ME Pilot Project**
  2. Provide the Project services to Participants, CCPs, and SAUs at no cost.
  3. Implement a Department-approved process for determining Participant eligibility for Participants, CCPs, and SAUs.
     1. Ensure Participant eligibility includes Children at Risk who receive services from a licensed CCP, and/or Home Visitor services.
  4. Ensure family engagement is practiced at all levels of the Project, focusing on culturally and linguistically responsive relationship building within the family, including:
     1. Communicating effectively with members of a family;
     2. Forming positive goal-focused relationships with members of a family;
     3. Involving a parent and/or guardian in decision making, teaching practices, including screening, assessment and planning for interactions and learning environments, and implementing the Project services directly related to the Child;
     4. Engaging families in individual family goal setting and achievement;
     5. Promoting consistency between a Child's home and comprehensive, high-quality early child-care and education;
     6. Ensuring project practices are responsive to a family's needs, including providing connections to employment and education supports;
     7. Informing families of evaluation partner efforts and encourage participation in the evaluation;
     8. Provide support for a Child's immunization and preventive health and dental care by providing encouragement for a parent and/or guardian obtain early periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment as needed;
     9. Facilitate transportation options to assist a family to travel to or from health care, childcare, or early education services.
  5. Ensure the Project:
     1. Increases kindergarten readiness for all Maine Children regardless of risk factors;
        1. Strengthen the alignment from early learning environments and childcare to the K-12 education setting for Children to aid in a successful transition to school.

1. Create a transition plan for each Child through kindergarten entry.
2. Ensure cohesive use of observation tools, assessments, and screenings to improve early learning environments, approaches, and relationship building across delivery models.
3. Increase information sharing and program alignment between CCPs and elementary schools in the community (e.g., cross-walk standards, visiting each other’s early learning environments, participating in joint professional development opportunities on social emotional learning, Child development, and early math and literacy).
4. Complete a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) beginning fall 2023.
   * + 1. Collection for First 4 ME Participants will be conducted at the end of care with providers prior to transition to the school setting.
       2. Assure training participation by key SAU staff for KEA implementation at the SAU for non-Participants.
       3. Ensure an information share agreement with local SAUs for KEA data for non-Participants at each participating elementary school for collection from all SAUs, annually, by November.
5. Obtain end of kindergarten benchmark data from participating SAUs for monitoring of sustained readiness and success beginning spring 2024.
6. Support CCPs in delivering developmentally-appropriate instruction in all major domains of development aligned with [I/T MELDS](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/Infant%20and%20Toddler%20MELDS_2021.pdf), [MELDS](https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Maine-ELDS_0.pdf) and [Maine learning standards](https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/content) to support the trajectory of life-long learning.

Integration of evidence-based, standard aligned curriculum for academic, social, and emotional domains to support whole Child learning birth to kindergarten entry.

1. Support Children and families in completing developmentally appropriate screenings and assessments to meet their individual needs which may include access to and participation in learning, social experiences and/or activities and shall:
   * 1. Be conducted in a manner that is responsive to a Child's home language and culture.
     2. Include an initial assessment of developmental, behavioral, motor, language, cognitive and social and emotional skills to identify a delay in development in a Child's skills or identify a disability that may require further evaluation.
     3. Ensure an ongoing assessment that monitors a Child's development and progress toward individual goals with input from the Child's family to determine a Child's strengths and needs and possible adjustment of CCP teaching practices and strategies to support a referral to the Child development services system, pursuant to [Title 20-A, section 7209, subsection 3](https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/statutes/20-A/title20-Asec7209.html), when necessary.
2. Utilize the Ages & Stages/Ages & Stages Social Emotional Screener to inform early intervention practices through the ASQ online portal registered by the CCPs.
3. Utilize early and ongoing assessment and screenings to inform services, programs, and support for each Child to reach their full potential in the most consistent early learning environments that meet their individual needs.
4. Provide specialized support for Participants, including for cultural and linguistic needs and for children with diagnosed or who have physical or mental disabilities or developmental delays.

Support may include access to and participation in learning and social experiences and activities.

1. Increases sustained, comprehensive, high-quality early child-care and education through supports to CCPs;
   * 1. Identify each CCP’s agency, staff, and business goals to support a focused action plan to increase or sustain quality.
        + 1. Increase or sustain the highest level Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) rating for individual CCPs.
          2. Increase the number of accredited CCPs within the State.
          3. Ensure progress on individual professional development plans for each CCP staff for enhancement and retainment of highly qualified staff.
        1. Implement a funding structure that stabilizes CCPs to maintain or raise quality of care.
           1. Obtain data related to how a consistent funding structure supports quality improvement through QRIS rating, professional development plans, satisfaction surveys from families, CCPs, and CCP staff.
           2. Build capacity to advocate with stakeholders for sustainability.
        2. Close the staffing gap for participating CCPs and retain high-quality, trained staff.
           1. Obtain data through CCP and CCP staff self-assessments that indicate positive work climate and staffing needs are being met.
           2. Obtain sustained and consistent employment at individual CCPs.
           3. Support CCPs ability to staff to program capacity in order to meet enrollment thresholds.
2. Develops a coordinated system of support both Statewide and local for CCPs and families by:
   * 1. Identifying community level supports, programs, and targeted solutions for Participants and CCPs to successfully address identified barriers.

Develop individual family goals to mitigate risk, support progress and enhance of quality of life for Participant families.

Assist in goal achievement for CCPs and families through the support of the Community Coach role.

Utilizing a relationship-based approach with CCPs, SAUs, families and Children to connect each to appropriate services, programs, and education necessary for First 4 ME goal attainment.

Develop trust with Participant families in order to create and assist in family goal progression and achievement.

Support communication between CCP and family for early intervention efforts and maintain communication to support school readiness from birth through kindergarten entry.

Connecting families and CCPs with Statewide systems through intensive support by Community Coach role.

Provide support and referrals, on case-by-case basis, to providers and families to support a strong communication pathway to facilitate trust and understanding.

Utilize current and emerging resources in a timely fashion to meet the Child and family’s individual goals and needs.

1. Supports the continuity of Project participation for Children within CCP settings.
   * + 1. Maintain consistent Participant enrollment that meets the needs of each individual Child and family through:

Consultation and guidance from each family, identifying the appropriate setting for each Participant and family through transition to kindergarten; and

Offering solutions from family guided needs for child care and educational experiences that are Child-centered and promote kindergarten readiness.

* + - * 1. Support families on a case-by-case basis to minimize disruption to child care.

Demonstrate systematic and coordinated efforts to maintain enrollment (if appropriate) based on the Child and/or family’s needs and circumstances.

* + - * 1. Support CCPs in interventions, referrals, and family communication to enhance collaborative, Child-centered decisions.

Utilize systems of intervention and supports for the CCP to maintain Child enrollment (if appropriate).

Increase targeted supports, early intervention efforts, and timelines for Participants to support the Child’s individual needs for child care and education.

Create and implement a communication plan for all Participant families that promotes two (2) -way, collaborative communication.

* 1. **Staffing Requirements**
     + 1. Ensure staff and/or subcontractors providing:

Education services have a minimum of a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree in early childhood education or a related field with equivalent course work and experience in early childhood development.

Health-related services have training and experience in public health, nursing, health education, maternal and child health, or health administration and:

Hold a valid, in good standing license/certification to practice in the respective field if providing health care related services (i.e., nurse) or nutrition services (i.e., dietitian, nutritionist);

Hold a valid, in good standing license/certification to practice in the respective field if providing mental health services (i.e., mental health professional) and has experience in serving young children and families.

Family and community partnership services have training and experience in a field related to social, human, or family services.

Disability services have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and training and experience in securing and individualizing services for children with physical and mental disabilities.

Home Visitors have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in human services or a related field and experience in the provision of Home Visitor services and knowledge of infant and child development.

* 1. **First 4 ME Pilot Project Site Community Needs Assessment**

Annually, complete an individualized comprehensive needs assessment evaluating data regarding the demographics of the community and create an action plan on the data collected.

* 1. **Performance Measurement**

*The Awarded Applicant will be required to adhere to all Department Performance Measures and reporting requirements outlined in the contract resulting from this RFA process. Performance Measures and reporting requirements will be determined during contract negotiations.*

* 1. **Collaboration with the Department’s Evaluation Provider**

The Department will identify and contract with a third-party evaluator to provide data informed results regarding programmatic and cost benefits, cost analysis and measurement of outcomes for the Project. Community Contractors shall collaborate, communicate, and participate in the evaluation efforts for the Project. The evaluation shall specifically measure:

* Program fidelity to the Project;
* Attainment of Project goals;
* Accessibility and provision of Project programming for the intended recipients;
* Participant satisfaction with Project programming services and support;
* Project effectiveness in supporting the community, Children, family and CCPs;
* Overall wellness indicators of Participants;
* Impact to Participant’s measured kindergarten readiness in comparison to their grade-level peers;
* Recommendations for expansion and ongoing sustainability of Project sites; and
* Project site’s funding structure, to include a cost-benefit analysis including individual Project site comparisons and overall program.

**Key Process Events**

## Submitting Questions about the Request for Application

Any questions must be submitted by e-mail and received by the RFA Coordinator identified on the cover page of this RFA, as soon as possible but no later than the date and time specified on the RFA cover page. Submitted Questions emails must include the subject line: “RFA# 202306144 Questions.” The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete/on time e-mail transmission and receipt.

**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 to the Request for Application

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.

## Submitting an Application

* 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. 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. **Submission Instructions:** Applications are to be submitted electronically to the State’s Division of Procurement services at [proposals@maine.gov](mailto: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.
   2. E-mails containing links to file sharing sites or online file repositories will not be accepted as submissions. Only e-mail applications that have the requested files attached will be accepted.
   3. 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.
   4. 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 listed above.
   5. Applicants are to insert the following into the subject line of their e-mail submission: “**RFA# 202306144 Application Submission – [Applicant’s Name]**”.
   6. Applications are to be submitted as a single, typed, WORD or PDF file, as applicable and must include all related documents identified on **Appendix C** (Application Form). Applicants are not to provide additional attachments beyond those specified in the RFA Materials not requested will not be considered part of the application and will not be evaluated.

**Application Evaluation and Selection**

1. **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.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Scoring Criteria** | **Points Available** |
| 1. Eligibility Requirements | Pass/Fail |
| 1. Priority Population | **10 points** |
| 1. Community Coalition Engagement | **10 points** |
| 1. Participant Enrollment Provision | **10 points** |
| 1. Community Assessment | **10 points** |
| 1. Community Action Plan | **30 points** |
| 1. Proposal Budget | **30 points** |
| **Total Points** | **100 points** |

1. **Scoring Process:** The Grant Review Team will use a consensus approach to evaluate and score all sections listed above. 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. In order to be considered for award, an Applicant must receive a minimum total score of sixty (60) points.

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.

The Department intends to apply priority scoring, as determined by the scoring matrix below, to a Project that demonstrates serving a community:

1. With high numbers or a high percentage of Children who are Economically Disadvantaged; or
2. That effectively involves a wide variety of providers or other entities in the community, including SAUs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Priority Point Scoring Matrix** | | |
|  | Up to seven (7) points for Projects serving a community with high numbers or high percentage of Children who are Economically Disadvantaged. The Department intends to provide priority points based on the percentages below.  Priority points will be determined based on the Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Children as calculated by the Maine Department of Education’s Free and Reduced School Lunch Report | |
| 10-20% of Children | One (1) point |
| 21-40% of Children | Two (2) points |
| 41-60% of Children | Three (3) points |
| 61-80% of Children | Five (5) points |
| 81-100% of Children | Seven (7) points |
|  | Up to three (3) points for Projects serving a community that effectively involves a wide variety of providers or other entities in the community, including CCPs, community service providers and School Administrative Units (SAUs). List all providers individually. | |
| 5 to10 providers | One (1) point |
| 11 to 15 providers | Two (2) points |
| 16 or more providers | Three (3) points |

Regarding the Cost Proposal, the Grant Review Team will consider whether the proposed Project work and cost estimates (tasks & budget) are reasonable for the expected outcomes. Applicants are expected to complete each form within the cost proposal in order to be fully evaluated.

1. **Selection and Award:** Notification of selection or non-selection will be made in writing by the Department. 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.

The Applicant awarded through this RFA process will be required to submit, prior to the contract execution, a valid certificate of insurance on a standard ACORD form (or the equivalent) evidencing the awarded Applicant’s general liability, professional liability and any other relevant liability insurance policies that might be associated with the services provided as a result of this RFA.

**APPENDIX A**

**RFA# 202306144**

**First 4 ME Early Care and Education Program**

**Pilot Site**

**Grant Funding Opportunity**

**GRANT FUNDING APPLICATION – COVER PAGE**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Applicant’s Organization Name:** | |  | | |
| **Chief Executive - Name/Title:** | |  | | |
| **Tel:** |  | | **E-mail:** |  |
| **Headquarters Street Address:** | |  | | |
| **Headquarters City/State/Zip:** | |  | | |
| ***(Provide information requested below if different from above)*** | | | | |
| **Lead Point of Contact for Application - Name/Title:** | | |  | |
| **Tel:** |  | | **E-mail:** |  |
| **Street Address:** | |  | | |
| **City/State/Zip:** | |  | | |

* This Application and the agency budget contained herein will remain firm for a period of one hundred eighty (180) days from the date and time of the bid opening.
* No personnel currently employed by the Department or any other State agency participated, either directly or indirectly, in any activities relating to the preparation of the Applicant’s Application.
* No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the Applicant to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an Application.
* The above-named organization is the legal entity entering into the resulting contract with the Department should they be awarded the contract.
* The undersigned is authorized to enter contractual obligations on behalf of the above-named organization.

*To the best of my knowledge, all information provided in the enclosed application, both programmatic and financial, is complete and accurate at the time of submission.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (Print):** | **Title:** |
| **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** |

**APPENDIX B**

**RFA# 202306144**

**First 4 ME Early Care and Education Program**

**Pilot Site**

**Grant Funding Opportunity**

**DEBARMENT, PERFORMANCE, and NON-COLLUSION CERTIFICATION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vendor’s Organization Name:** |  |

*By signing this document, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the aforementioned organization, its principals and any subcontractors named in this application:*

1. *Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, and declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from bidding or working on contracts issued by any governmental agency.*
2. *Have not within three (3) years of submitting the application for this contract been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for:*
   1. *Fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a federal, state, or local government transaction or contract.*
   2. *Violating Federal or State antitrust statutes or committing embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property.*
3. *Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State, or Local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (b) of this certification.*
4. *Have not within a three (3) year period preceding this application had one or more Federal, State, or Local government transactions terminated for cause or default*.
5. *Have not entered into a prior understanding, agreement, or connection with any corporation, firm, or person submitting a response for the same materials, supplies, equipment, or services and this application is in all respects fair and without collusion or fraud. The above-mentioned entities understand and agree that collusive bidding is a violation of state and federal law and can result in fines, prison sentences, and civil damage awards.*

**Failure to provide this certification will result in the disqualification of the Applicant’s Application.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (Print):** | **Title:** |
| **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** |

**APPENDIX C**

## APPLICATION FORM

**RFA# 202306144**

**First 4 ME Early Care and Education Program**

**Pilot Site**

**Grant Funding Opportunity**

## APPLICATION FORM

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



**APPENDIX D**

## FIRST 4 ME PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**RFA# 202306144**

**First 4 ME Early Care and Education Program**

**Pilot Site**

**Grant Funding Opportunity**

## FIRST 4 ME PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND GOALS

## The First 4 ME program overview and goals may be obtained in a PDF (.pdf) format by double clicking on the document icon below.

