

1. Demonstration of Need for Child Development and Health Services: Location, Population, and Service Delivery Options Maximum Points: 20

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant:

1.1. Describes how it will direct Head Start and/or Early Head Start resources to the area(s) of greatest need, which must be within the geographic boundaries described in *Section I. Program Description*. The applicant must clearly: a) describe the precise geographic location and boundaries of the areas to be served by the proposed project; and b) define the area(s) of greatest need, using information from its community assessment.

The applicant must address the needs of special populations, including children with disabilities, dual language learners, homeless children and/or pregnant women, children in foster care, etc.

1.2. Estimates the number of eligible pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers by program type (Head Start or Early Head Start), by geographic location within the proposed service area.

1.3. Describes the rationale for which ages of children the applicant proposes to serve, demonstrating how the applicant will satisfy unmet demand. Provides an analysis of access to other early childhood education programs for each age group of children under 5 in the geographic area.

1.4. Justifies its program option (e.g., center-based, home-based, family child care, or combination option) as the most appropriate to meet the needs of the community. The applicant must specify how it will meet the need for full-day, full-year services in the community, including the planned number of hours per day, days per week, and weeks per year of program operations. The applicant must include the number of children to be served by each option.

- If proposing to serve in multiple communities, the applicant specifies the number of pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers to be served in each community.

- Applicants proposing the home-based option must include the proposed number of home visits and socializations for each age group(s) to be served.
- Applicants proposing the use of double sessions as a program option for Head Start, which is discouraged, must justify why it is the best option to meet the demonstrated need in the community. Applicants may **not** propose double sessions as a program option for Early Head Start.
- **For applicants proposing an Early Head Start program:** Programs must provide a minimum of 48 weeks per year for infants and toddlers to ensure the continuity of services that best supports positive outcomes. Applicants proposing to enroll pregnant women must explain how the services will support the needs of expectant families.
- **For applicants proposing a Head Start program:** Applicants must propose a number of weeks per year for preschoolers that meets the Head Start requirements (45 CFR §§ 1306.32-1306.36).

1.5. If proposing to delegate all or part of its responsibility for operating a program with these funds, the application identifies the proposed delegate agencies, including the communities in which the applicant will operate, the number of children to be served by age of child and their proposed program option(s). If the applicant is not proposing to delegate with other agencies, this criterion is not applicable.

1.6. Describes its recruitment and selection criteria to ensure it enrolls the children most in need in the community. The applicant must describe how the program will ensure that not less than 10 percent of the total number of children enrolled will be children with disabilities.

1.7. Demonstrates community engagement in the geographic locations proposed by the applicant in order to improve the efficiency of service delivery, increase access to needed services, and prevent duplication. Demonstration of community engagement may include memoranda of understanding that provide commitments of exchange of services, resource support, referrals, or other agreements.

1.8. Clearly states how many children the applicant is currently serving as a Head Start and/or Early Head Start grantee, delegate agency or partner to a Head Start and/or Early Head Start grantee, or in other early education or related programs. Clearly states how many Head Start and/or Early Head Start children the applicant would serve if awarded this grant.

2. Achieving Early Learning and Development Outcomes to Promote School Readiness for Children

Maximum Points: 40

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant:

2.1. Provides a plan to implement a high-quality, comprehensive program for the population the applicant proposes to serve, with specific attention to how the plan will be different based on the ages and needs of children and families eligible for services. The plan for a high-quality, comprehensive program includes using a curriculum or set of curricula and teaching practices that promote progress toward school readiness goals and that:

- Are based on scientifically valid research;
- Are developmentally appropriate for all of the ages of children proposed to be served;
- Provide continuity of care to promote attachment and a secure foundation for learning in all program options. For infants and toddlers, explains an approach to staffing continuity across the days, months, and years of service; and
- Are aligned with all relevant state early learning guidelines and the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five*.

2.2. Provides plans to coordinate with other state programs and to participate in state systems of early childhood development, including the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) or the state equivalent. If the applicant participates in QRIS, it must include its rating. If applicable, the applicant explains why it does not participate if there is a QRIS in its geographic area.

2.3. Specifies the name of the curriculum or curricula proposed to be used in different program options and for children of different ages, why the curriculum was chosen, and the evidence supporting how the curriculum is tied to outcomes for children.

2.4. Discusses what tools it will use to support domains that the selected curriculum does not support. The application describes a process for establishing and measuring school readiness goals, including the plans to address the following domains, as appropriate for the age and developmental needs of enrolled children:

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- Cognition
- Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

School readiness goals must reflect the ages of children that the applicant proposes to serve in the program and must be culturally and linguistically appropriate. The application explains the extent to which school readiness goals were or will be established in consultation with the parents of children who will be participating in the program.

Additionally,

- **For applicants proposing an Early Head Start program:** Infant and toddler school readiness goals must reflect the ages of children (birth to 3). The application explains the extent to which goals were or will be established in alignment with state early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers, as appropriate.
- **For applicants proposing a Head Start program:** Preschool school readiness goals must reflect the ages of children 3 to 5, and align with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five*, state early learning guidelines, and describe the requirements and expectations of schools the children will attend after Head Start.

2.5. Describes how the applicant will meet the needs of infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers with disabilities, including procedures to identify such participants, plans to provide trained personnel, and plans to provide services to assist children in making meaningful progress in attaining age-appropriate knowledge, skills, abilities, and development.

2.6. Describes how the applicant will meet the unique needs of its targeted population, including infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers in the child welfare system, dual language

learners, homeless children, and pregnant women. The application describes procedures to identify such children, plans to provide trained personnel, and plans to provide services to assist these infants and toddlers in making meaningful progress in attaining age-appropriate knowledge, skills, abilities, and development.

2.7. Describes how the applicant will meet the health, mental health, nutritional, and oral health needs of pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers. The application describes the system for health screening and services that will ensure participants are accurately referred for necessary follow-up evaluation and treatment within time frames specified by Head Start regulations. Screening and services for identified needs include, at a minimum, health, sensory, developmental, and oral health, and may be provided directly or through community partner providers.

2.8. If proposing center-based or family child care services, the applicant describes a plan for observing teacher practice, including teacher-child interactions. If proposing home-based services, the applicant describes a plan for observing home visitor practice, including interactions with the family and child, and supporting the parents in their role as the child's primary caregiver/teacher. For all program services, the applicant describes using this information to inform professional development and practice improvements. The application includes the name of any instruments to be used.

2.9. Specifies the name and process for selection of their assessment tool. The applicant describes a plan to use child assessment data to individualize the instruction and learning for each child and, as necessary, refer for additional evaluation and intervention; and to aggregate and analyze child-level assessment data at least three times per year (except for programs operating less than 90 days, which will be required to do so at least twice within their operating program period); and to use that analysis in combination with other program data to determine grantees' progress toward meeting its goals, to inform parents

and the community of results, and to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum, instruction, professional development, program design, and other program decisions, in accordance with 45 CFR § 1307.3(b)(2). Applicants are reminded that assessment must be developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate.

2.10. Describes a plan to coordinate with public and private entities that are willing to commit resources to assist the program in providing high-quality child health and developmental services and program management services. Such partnerships must include a plan to coordinate the proposed Head Start and/or Early Head Start program with other child care and preschool programs, state pre-Kindergarten programs, programs under Part C and Section 619 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and with the educational programs that children to be served will enter upon leaving Early Head Start or Head Start.

2.11. **For applicants proposing an Early Head Start program:** Describes the system of how the applicant will deliver services to enrolled pregnant women post-pregnancy, and how the newborn infant and family will transition into the appropriate program option at the appropriate time; how the program will support transition from Early Head Start to Head Start or other community-based programs; and how the program will support transitions from Head Start to public and community-based school settings in accordance with 45 CFR § 1304.41 of the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Additionally, the application describes how the program will support transitions within the Head Start and/or Early Head Start program, which might include a child moving from one center or program option to another, adjusting to staff turnover, moving from one classroom to the next, or moving to new grantees in different communities as families move for economic or other reasons.

2.12. **For applicants proposing an Early Head Start program:** Describes how the

applicant will ensure that infants, toddlers, and their families participating in the program will have the opportunity to receive Head Start or other appropriate preschool services for which they are eligible through the age of mandatory school attendance.

2.13. Provides a plan to facilitate the meaningful engagement of parents (including mothers, fathers, grandparents, foster parents, and kinship caregivers, as appropriate) in activities (at home and, if practicable, at the location of the program) designed to help them become full partners in the education of their children. Such engagement includes participation in the conduct of the program, leadership opportunities, support of their child's development and health, support for the parent-child relationship, opportunities for employment, and other paths to improved financial well-being. The application identifies and addresses barriers to parent participation, such as lack of transportation access or need for child care.

2.14. Explains the plan to implement the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework and to offer family literacy and parenting skills training using evidence-based curricula and approaches, either directly or through referral to local entities, public and school libraries, and entities carrying out family support programs. The application includes a plan to offer (either directly or through referrals) other support for families struggling with mental health challenges, domestic violence, homelessness, or substance abuse.

3. Past Performance

Maximum Points: 20

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant:

3.1. Demonstrates how the applicant's history and experience, based on past performance providing high-quality early education or other related programs, support its ability to effectively and efficiently administer a project for pregnant women, infants, toddlers,

and/or preschoolers of the size, complexity, and scope of their proposed program.

Reviewers will evaluate evidence of experience, such as, but not limited to:

- QRIS rating,
- Record of high performance in the early primary grades by children formerly enrolled in the program,
- Evidence from use of teacher-child interaction rating system,
- Evidence of successful staff development system leading to highly qualified staff,
- Evidence of high level of success improving family self-sufficiency.

Applicants that serve or have served as delegate agencies to Head Start and Early Head Start grantees must provide documentation of their past performance.

3.2. Documents how the professional experience of the applicant's proposed management team (executive director, program director, managers), based on past performance providing comprehensive, high-quality early care and education, demonstrates an ability to effectively and efficiently administer a project of this size, complexity, and scope within the service area.

3.3. Explains how the applicant's past performance and experience will inform its administration of the Head Start and/or Early Head Start program being proposed and will help ensure a high-quality program. To the degree that the applicant is currently operating a program that differs from the Head Start and/or Early Head Start program being proposed – such as differences in the target population, the set of services provided, the structure of the program (the hours, days, or weeks of operation), the ages of children served, the mechanisms for quality assurance and improvement, the early learning standards to be used, and the performance measurement system – the applicant acknowledges these differences and explains how it will successfully adapt to the differences between its current program and the proposed program.

3.4. Applicants that are current or former Head Start or Early Head Start grantees must include a description of any violations, such as deficiencies, areas of non-compliance,

and/or audit findings. These violations should represent findings from the last two OHS triennial monitoring reports plus any other OHS monitoring reports and any audit reports issued in the 5 years preceding the posting of this FOA. Applicants must describe the actions they have taken to address any violations. If the applicant does not have violations, this criterion is not applicable.

4. Staffing and Supporting a Strong Early Learning Workforce

Maximum Points: 20

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant:

4.1. Documents that the proposed program director and proposed key program staff are qualified and knowledgeable about administering complex social service programs or early education services. The applicant describes its key program staff's major functions and responsibilities in the narrative and includes their resumes in the appendix.

4.2. Provides a clear plan to attract and retain qualified staff with the ability to implement a research-based curriculum aligned with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* and state early learning guidelines (as appropriate); effective instructional strategies; and a high-quality, comprehensive program.

4.3. **For applicants proposing an Early Head Start program:** Demonstrates that employees of the agency will meet the requirements of the Head Start Act for staff qualifications set in Section 645A(h) for Early Head Start. The applicant provides documentation showing that all center-based Early Head Start teachers have an Infant Toddler Child Development Associate credential and have been trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development as required by Section 645A(h) of the Head Start Act. If applicable, the applicant describes how it will hire Early Head Start home visiting staff qualified or trained to conduct home visits that include the full range of comprehensive Early Head

Start services.

4.4. **For applicants proposing a Head Start program:** Describes how all employees in the Head Start center-based programs meet the requirements of the Head Start Act for staff qualifications set in Section 648A and what share of preschool classroom teachers are expected to have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field.

- For classroom teachers - have: (a) an associate degree in early childhood education; (b) an associate degree in a related field and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool-age children; (c) a baccalaureate degree; or (d) been admitted into the Teach For America program; passed a rigorous early childhood content exam such as the Praxis II; participated in a Teach For America summer training institute that includes teaching preschool children; and are receiving ongoing professional development and support from Teach For America's professional staff.
- For assistant teachers - have at least a CDA credential; be enrolled in a program leading to an associate or baccalaureate degree; or be enrolled in a CDA credential program to be completed within 2 years.

4.5. Describes the plan to maintain child-to-teacher, home visitor, or family child care provider ratios and family service worker caseloads that comply with appropriate regulations given the varying ages of children served, reflect best practices, and are tied to high-quality service delivery in the event of staff absences or vacancies.

4.6. Describes the plan to provide opportunities for qualified parents and other community residents to seek employment and how these opportunities will be designed to improve the quality of the proposed program. The applicant explains how it will provide career development opportunities for professional, paraprofessional, and other staff.

4.7. Describes a clear plan to evaluate job applicants, including existing grantee staff, to determine which applicants are most capable of contributing to the implementation of a high-quality, comprehensive program, including the implementation of a research-based curriculum aligned with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* and state early learning guidelines, as appropriate.

4.8. Describes an ongoing strategy for professional development, evidence-based coaching and mentoring, supervision, and evaluation of staff and program managers, oriented to improving the skills, knowledge, effectiveness, and career opportunities of all employees.

5. Organizational Capacity and Governance

Maximum Points: 25

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant:

5.1. Provides a plan identifying the capacity of the applicant's senior executive managers (for example, Executive Director, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer) and governing board to: (1) exercise effective oversight of program operations and accountability for federal funds; (2) include the Policy Council in the planning and decision-making process; (3) ensure representation of the diverse community served; (4) set and monitor overall agency priorities and operational systems; and (5) conduct community assessment, annual self-assessments, ongoing monitoring, and outcome-based evaluations.

5.2. Explains how its organizational oversight meets the program governance requirements established in Section 642(c) of the Head Start Act. The applicant provides information about how its current governance structure would change (if at all) to meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

5.3. Demonstrates the existence of management systems for program planning, internal and external communication, recordkeeping, issuance of internal and external reports, and program self-assessment and monitoring.

5.4. Demonstrates an ability to provide effective financial management in operating a Head Start and/or Early Head Start program based on experience.

5.5. Describes plans to meet or exceed state and local requirements concerning licensing

for facilities and to be accessible by state and local authorities for purposes of monitoring and ensuring compliance unless state or local laws prohibit such access. Where facilities are not available, the application provides a plan to acquire facilities in accordance with the requirements provided for the purchase, construction, and major renovation of facilities described in 45 CFR Part 1309.

5.6. Demonstrates the ability to provide timely and efficient implementation of all program components and services immediately upon award, including planning during the transition period; the availability of classroom space and facilities that meet applicable state and local licensing standards for each age group; the ability to provide necessary transportation; and the ability to recruit eligible pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and their families.

6. Budget and Budget Justification

Maximum Points: 15

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant:

6.1. Demonstrates that funds are budgeted to provide all required comprehensive Head Start and/or Early Head Start services to eligible pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers, and their families in a cost-effective manner as indicated in the application narrative. If proposing both Head Start and Early Head Start services, funds must be budgeted separately for Head Start and Early Head Start. The applicant's budget must also clearly distinguish the proposed base operating funds, training/technical assistance funds, total federal funds, and the applicant's non-federal share.

6.2. Demonstrates that teaching staff salaries are commensurate with the degree qualifications and experience required in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Proposed staff salaries should reflect the data identified in the Wage and Fringe Benefits Comparability Survey.

6.3. Demonstrates that start-up/pre-award costs, if proposed, are justified, reasonable, and applicable based on the applicant's proposed Head Start and/or Early Head Start program.

Start-up/pre-award costs may include: 1) ensuring that proposed facilities comply with state and local requirements and are adequately equipped, 2) purchasing classroom equipment and supplies, and/or 3) conducting staff background checks. If the applicant is not requesting start-up/pre-award costs, this criterion is not applicable.

6.4. Demonstrates that the applicant will contribute the required non-federal share/match of the total project cost using allowable sources. Identifies each source of non-federal share match, including the estimated amount per source and the valuation methodology.

Bonus Points

Maximum Points: 10

7.1. In the interest of ensuring a robust competition for high-quality, comprehensive early care and education service providers, ACF is awarding bonus points to any applicants that do not have agreements that prohibit other entities from applying for a Head Start or Early Head Start grant on their own behalf or that impose a penalty on any entity for making such application. Applicants that wish to receive the bonus points must include in the appendices of their applications the **signed** statement included in the *Appendix* of this announcement. The statement must be **signed** by the person who is authorized to sign the application on behalf of the applicant.