



**Solicitation Information
August 20, 2014**

RFP# 7548961

**TITLE: ARRA – RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE: EARLY
LEARNING FACILITIES PROJECT**

Submission Deadline: Wednesday, September 17, 2014 at 2:30 PM (ET)

PRE-BID/ PROPOSAL CONFERENCE: NO

Questions concerning this solicitation must be received by the Division of Purchases at gail.walsh@purchasing.ri.gov no later than **Monday, September 8, 2014 at 5:00 PM (ET)**. Questions should be submitted in a *Microsoft Word attachment*. Please reference the RFP# on all correspondence. Questions received, if any, will be posted on the Internet as an addendum to this solicitation. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download this information.

SURETY REQUIRED: NO

BOND REQUIRED: NO

Gail Walsh
Chief Buyer

Applicants must register on-line at the State Purchasing Website at www.purchasing.ri.gov

Note to Applicants:

Offers received without the entire completed four-page RIVIP Generated Bidder Certification Form attached may result in disqualification.

THIS PAGE IS NOT A BIDDER CERTIFICATION FORM

Request for Proposals (RFP)
(Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge: Early Learning Facilities Project)

The Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Purchases, on behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is requesting Proposals from qualified vendors to develop professional development resources, provide specialized assessment and technical assistance, and issue program improvement grants specific to improving early learning facilities, in accordance with the terms of this solicitation.

This is a Request for Proposals, not an Invitation for Bid. Responses will be evaluated on the basis of the relative merits of the proposal, in addition to price; there will be no public opening and reading of responses received by the Division of Purchases pursuant to this Request, other than to name those offerors who have submitted proposals.

INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS TO BIDDERS:

Potential offerors are advised to review all sections of this solicitation carefully and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein may result in rejection of the proposal.

Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this procurement are solicited. However, proposals which depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of work defined by this Request will be rejected as being non-responsive.

All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this Request, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content, shall be borne by the offeror. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.

Proposals are considered to be irrevocable for a period of not less than sixty (60) days following the opening date, and may not be withdrawn, except with the express written permission of the State Purchasing Agent.

All pricing submitted will be considered to be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated herein.

Proposals misdirected to other State locations or which are otherwise not present in the Division of Purchases at the time of opening for any cause will be determined to be late and will not be considered. Proposals e-mailed or faxed to the Division of Purchases will not be considered. The "Official" time clock is in the reception area of the Division of Purchases.

It is intended that an award pursuant to this Request for Proposals will be made to prime contractor(s) who will assume responsibility for all aspects of the work. Joint ventures shall be considered, as long as the contractor's duties and responsibilities are

clearly articulated in such form as acceptable to the State. Subcontractors are permitted, provided their use is clearly indicated in the offeror's proposal and the subcontractor(s) to be used are identified in the proposal.

All proposals should include the vendor's FEIN or Social Security number as evidenced by a W9, downloadable from the Division of Purchases website at www.purchasing.ri.gov.

In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no foreign corporation shall have the right to transact business in the state until it shall have procured a Certificate of Authority to do so from the Rhode Island Secretary of State (401-222-3040). *This will be a requirement only of the successful bidder (s).*

Offerors are advised that all materials submitted to the State of Rhode Island for consideration in response to this Request for Proposals will be considered to be public records, as defined in Title 38 Chapter 2 of the Rhode Island General Laws, without exception, and will be released for inspection immediately upon request, once an award has been made.

Also, Submitters should be aware of the State's MBE requirements, which addresses the State's goal of ten per cent (10%) participation by MBE's in all State procurements. For further information, contact the State MBE Administrator at (401) 574-8253 or charles.newton@doa.ri.gov. Visit the website <http://www.mbe.ri.gov>.

Interested parties are instructed to peruse the Division of Purchases web site on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this RFP.

Equal Employment Opportunity (RIGL 28-5.1)

§ 28-5.1-1 Declaration of policy. – (a) Equal opportunity and affirmative action toward its achievement is the policy of all units of Rhode Island state government, including all public and quasi-public agencies, commissions, boards and authorities, and in the classified, unclassified, and non-classified services of state employment. This policy applies in all areas where the state dollar is spent, in employment, public service, grants and financial assistance, and in state licensing and regulation. For further information, contact the Rhode Island Equal Employment Opportunity Office, at 222-3090 or via email raymond.lambert@hr.ri.gov.

RIGL 37-13-3.1 State public works contract apprenticeship requirements. * (a) Notwithstanding any laws to the contrary, all general contractors and subcontractors who perform work on any public works contract awarded by the state after passage of this act and valued at one million dollars (\$1,000,000) or more shall employ apprentices required for the performance of the awarded contract. The number of apprentices shall comply with the apprentice to journeyman ratio for each trade approved by the apprenticeship council of the department of labor and training.

ARRA SUPPLEMENTAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

For contracts and sub-awards funded in whole or in part by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Pub.L.No. 111-5 and any amendments thereto, such contracts and sub-awards shall be subject to the Supplemental Terms and Conditions for Contracts and Sub-awards Funded in Whole or in Part by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Pub.L.No. 111-5 and any amendments thereto located on the Division of Purchases website at www.purchasing.ri.gov.

BACKGROUND/OVERVIEW

In December 2011, Rhode Island was announced as one of nine states awarded grants from the \$500 million Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge fund, a competitive grant program jointly administered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The Departments awarded Rhode Island \$50 million to be used to develop a high-quality early learning system. These grant funds will enable Rhode Island to build the systems that increase access to quality early care and learning programs for the State’s highest need children. This quality early learning system is imperative to increasing school readiness and overall child outcomes for the youngest learners in our state. Rhode Island recognizes that the physical environment plays a key, foundational element in supporting high-quality early learning.

In early 2014, the Rhode Island Early Learning Facility Needs Assessment was commissioned by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). The Needs Assessment conducted by LISC’s Rhode Island Child Care Facilities Fund (RICCFF) from January through May 2014. The resulting report includes detailed information regarding the overall condition of Rhode Island early learning facilities with a particular focus on issues that may present barriers to meeting and maintaining licensing standards, including group size. The final report can be found here: https://exceed.ri.gov/PDFs/RI_Early_Learning_Facility_Needs_Assessment_Final_7.14.14cll.PDF.

This Request for Proposals is seeking a vendor to develop professional development resources, provide specialized assessment and technical assistance, and issue aligned program improvement grants specific to improving early learning facilities, with priority given to supporting compliance with existing regulations and remediating areas which pose significant risks to children’s health and safety. These services must be designed to meet the unique needs of early childhood programs across Rhode Island.

The successful bidder will work jointly with RIDE and the Department of Children, Youth and Families, as well as the other Participating State Agencies (e.g. Department of Health, and Department of Human Services) and other vendors supporting early learning programs (e.g. BrightStars and the Center for Early Learning Professional) to design and provide services which support the goals of the RTT-ELC grant. These services will include, but are not limited to:

- Analyzing and using data from the Needs Assessment to design high quality facilities supports for RI’s early learning programs;
- Creating and disseminating written materials on topics related to identified early learning facility priorities,
- Conducting training (featuring national experts in the field) and group technical assistance on topics related to identified facility improvement priorities.
- Providing expert facility assessment regarding renovation and construction projects in early learning facilities, including both indoor and outdoor

environments, prioritizing licensing compliance and areas of major safety risks to children;

- Providing on-site technical support to centers to develop plans to remediate physical space challenges related to licensing compliance;
- Prioritizing and providing planning or program improvement grants to centers needing to move or substantially renovate facilities;

The vendor will be a central resource for all programs in the early education field and will be responsible for supporting community based programs, Head Start, and public schools requesting services.

SCOPE OF WORK

Tasks

Articulation and Coordination with Existing Efforts

The successful bidder must:

- Attend quarterly meetings of the Early Learning Council (Council) as requested,
- Participate in relevant Council sub-committee meetings as requested to ensure stakeholder input into ongoing growth and evaluation of the system,
- Coordinate with each component of the program quality standards continuum (DCYF Licensing, BrightStars, and RIDE CECE Approval) to ensure that supports are meeting the quality improvement needs of programs and individuals,
- Coordinate with the Center for Early Learning Professionals to ensure aligned improvement and funding plans,
- Align messaging with existing trainings and technical assistance, funded through other sources, in Rhode Island,
- Coordinate with the RI Child Care Facilities Fund to ensure there is no duplication of services/efforts and to ensure access to additional resources which could extend the activities of this project for services which are beyond this project's scope.

Training and Technical Assistance

The vendor will be responsible for developing and providing training and technical assistance that:

- Is research and/or evidence based and aligned with building codes, licensing regulations, quality standards criteria, and with Workforce Knowledge and Competency Frameworks where appropriate,
- Aligns with needs identified in the Needs Assessment,
- Deliver technical assistance that is relationship-based and builds on the strengths of participants, is process-oriented and targeted on outcomes that matter for improving development and learning of young children, individualized to meet

the needs of the array of early childhood personnel and programs in Rhode Island.

- Is prioritized in accordance with State goals, specifically targeting licensing compliance issues, major risks to health and safety, and maximizing impact on children of high needs as defined in the State’s RTT-ELC application.

Facilities Improvement Grants

The vendor will be responsible for reviewing and awarding Quality Improvement Grants (henceforth referred to as grants) to early care and education programs. The grant awarding process will require the vendor to:

- Develop, in collaboration with the State, clear policies for reviewing applications, awarding money, and tracking grants.
- Disseminate information to early learning programs about grant award policies and review processes, including collaborating with each component of the program quality standards continuum (DCYF Licensing, BrightStars, and RIDE CECE Approval) to ensure all eligible programs are knowledgeable about the grant process.
- Award and tracking grants, based on established policies, in a timely manner to ensure programs are able to increase their quality based on goals in the program’s quality improvement plan.
- Ensure services funded by grants meet all applicable federal and state guidelines for renovations or construction.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of grants in improving program quality based on established criteria.

Operational Requirements

- The RTT-ELC Facilities Project may be operated within an existing, larger organization or as a stand-alone agency.
- The vendor must have a communication plan that takes into account the most appropriate and effective strategies and media to communicate with each sector of the early care and education field.
- The vendor will present a staff that is knowledgeable in the field of early childhood education as well as in the area of facilities design.

Project Schedule and Deliverables

| Task | Activity | Deliverable(s) | Timeline |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Create work plan with clear goals, deliverables, and timeline to ensure the effective implementation | Completed Work Plan | Within 30 days of contract start |

| Task | Activity | Deliverable(s) | Timeline |
|-------------|--|--|--|
| 2 | Coordinate with program quality standards continuum (DCYF Licensing, BrightStars, and RIDE CECE Approval) and with other state funded training and technical assistance initiatives | Report on collaboration/coordination efforts | Immediately upon contracting and ongoing |
| 3 | Develop and fulfill communication plan that takes into account the most appropriate and effective strategies and media to communication with each sector of the early care and education field | Communication Plan and visible communication within the early care and education field | within 30 days of contract start |
| 4 | Provide a staffing plan, including at a minimum, professional development plans, qualifications, and performance expectations | Staffing plan | within 60 days of contract start and annually thereafter |
| 5 | Provide professional development/resources to support identified priority areas | Data on PD provided, including data on the characteristics of programs served | within 30 days of contract start and ongoing |
| 6 | Provide expert facility assessment regarding renovation and construction projects | Data on assessments provided, including data on the characteristics of programs served | within 30 days of contract start and ongoing |
| 7 | Provide individualized technical assistance to RI Early Childhood programs | Data on TA provided, including data on the characteristics of programs served | Monthly and upon request |
| 8 | Review, award, administer, and oversee the early care and education Facilities Improvement Grant Program (including data tracking and evaluation). | Facilities Improvement Grants issued and data on grantees collected and analyzed | within 60 days of contract start and ongoing |
| 9 | Conduct annual needs assessment and utilize data to revise workplan | Revised Workplan | Annually |

TERMS OF THE CONTRACT

The contract will begin **upon issuance of State PO (projected October 2014)** and end **December 31, 2015**. The scope of the work may be modified by RIDE prior to beginning work on a given task. RIDE retains the option of granting a time extension of up to one year with additional funding if available and if the level of work is expanded by mutual written consent. If necessary, deficiencies in performance of services and/or failure to supply deliverables in a complete and timely manner will be documented in writing by RIDE. Should a pattern of substantial dissatisfaction become apparent, RIDE reserves the right to terminate the contract.

COST PROPOSAL/TERMS OF PAYMENT

The contractor must prepare a cost proposal reflecting the hourly rate or other fee structure proposed for this scope of services using the Cost Proposal Forms contained in Appendix A. The total cost of the contract is not to exceed **\$1,000,000.00**. It is expected that a significant portion of the funds (at least 70%) will be allocated for grants to eligible sites. The budget should be allocated by state fiscal year:

FY 2015 – services through June 30, 2015

FY 2016 – services occurring between July 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015

Please note that reimbursement for travel within the continental United States will be limited to the per diem rates established by the General Services Administration (GSA). Per diem rates are posted at www.gsa.gov/perdiem.

Proposal Submission

Questions concerning this solicitation may be e-mailed to the Division of Purchases at the address on the cover sheet of this solicitation and no later than the date & time listed. **Send your questions in Microsoft Word format.** Please reference the RFP # on all correspondence. Questions received, if any, will be posted and answered on the Internet as an addendum to this solicitation. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download this information. For computer technical assistance, call the helpdesk at 401-222-3766 or lynda.moore@doit.ri.gov.

Proposals (an original plus 4 copies) should include the following:

1. A completed and signed four-page RIVIP Bidder Certification Cover Form, available at www.purchasing.ri.gov.
2. A **separate sealed** Cost Proposal as described above.
3. A *separate* Technical Proposal (see below) describing the qualifications and background of the applicant and experience with similar programs, as well as the work plan or approach proposed for this requirement.

4. A completed and signed W-9 (taxpayer identification number and certification). Form is downloadable at www.purchasing.ri.gov. **Please include with original proposal only.**

Deliver to: Department of Administration
Office of Purchases
One Capitol Hill
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

5. In addition to the multiple hard copies of proposals required, Respondents are requested to provide their proposals in electronic format (CDRom, diskette, or flash drive). Microsoft Word / Excel or .pdf format is preferable. Only 1 electronic copy is requested and it should be placed in the proposal marked "original".

Contractor assumes all responsibilities for proposals submitted by mail or commercial delivery service. Proposals misdirected to other state locations or which are otherwise not present in the Office of Purchases at the time of opening, for any cause, will be determined to be late and will not be considered. Faxed responses will not be considered.

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL/REQUIRED ELEMENTS

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Contractor understanding of the Issues | (10 points) |
| 2. Work Plan | (20 points) |
| 3. Proposed Workplan and Capacity to Effectively Administer the Project | (20 points) |
| 4. Quality of Key Personnel (including Curriculum vitae) | (20 points) |
| 5. Cost Proposal | (30 points) |

The technical proposal should be 10-20 pages in length, respond to each area of the required elements detailed below, and contain a cost proposal using the forms in Appendix A. Supplemental information may be appended to the technical proposal.

Required elements are referenced below. The technical proposal may no longer than 20 pages, including attachments. Margins must be at least 1 inch on all sides.

Understanding of the Issues

Describe your understanding of the importance of high quality early childhood programs and their impact on child outcomes, including the role of physical facilities. Describe your understanding of the challenges facing programs as they attempt to improve facilities. Describe the role of professional development and technical assistance in improving quality. Describe the relationship of program regulations/standards and workforce competencies to the services to be provided under this contract. Summarize the Facilities

Needs Assessment and propose areas for prioritization along with a rationale for your proposal.

Experience

Please summarize your relevant experience in meeting the objectives outlined in this solicitation. Describe your expertise in the development and provision of professional development opportunities. How do you ensure that the content and delivery method of these opportunities is grounded in recent pedagogy and research? Describe your expertise in the development and provision of program level technical assistance. How do you ensure that technical assistance is individualized and effective? Include any examples of organizational experience in managing projects of a similar size/scope. Address both your expertise in early childhood education systems and in facilities construction and renovation specific to early childhood environments.

Proposed Work Plan and Capacity to Implement

Describe your plan to implement the services outlined in the solicitation. Include information on your organization's purpose, leadership, staffing structure, and proposed policy development. Include a full description of the objectives, anticipated outcomes, and technical plan for accomplishing the work outlined. Describe your plan to provide Professional Development and Technical Assistance Services. Include information on the evaluation of these services to ensure that the needs of the workforce are met, how your organization will collect and maintain relevant data, and methods that will be used to assess the impacts on program quality improvement. Describe your plan to provide Facilities grants and propose a method and rationale for prioritization.

Staff Qualifications

Summarize the background and qualifications of key personnel. Provide evidence that staff have requisite experience in early learning systems, are knowledgeable about indicators of program regulations and quality standards related to facilities. Attach resumes and other relevant certificates for individuals already on staff. Include detailed job descriptions for positions that will need to be filled.

Collaboration

Provide evidence of effective and existing collaborative partnerships and/or a plan to develop such partnerships. Describe how potential conflicts of interest will be avoided and/or addressed. Describe how services and activities will be coordinated with other components of the early learning system that provide education, training and technical assistance services. Describe how you will coordinate with the RI Child Care Facilities Fund to access additional available resources which could extend and sustain activities which are beyond the scope of this project.

Additional Contractor Qualifications

- Bidders must submit a letter of transmittal signed by an owner, officer, or other authorized agent.
- Bidders must submit relevant organizational information, a list of similar projects undertaken and/or clients served, agency expertise relative to the services requested, and a statement of existing workload as it impacts the performance of the project.
- Bidders must disclose any work to be sub-contracted including the specific work to be performed and staffing, organizational structure, and business background of the sub-contractor, if known.
- Bidders must submit a proposed mission statement for the PD/TA Center that emphasizes advancing the professionalism of the early learning field.

Related Proposal Requirements:

- The contract is scheduled to begin **at issuance of purchase order** and will end **December 31, 2015**. The scope of the work and budget may be modified by the state prior to beginning work on a given task.
- All costs included in the bidder's proposal should be necessary, reasonable, and required to carry out program functions. **The total cost of the contract is not to exceed \$1,000,000.00**
- Contractor will be responsible for supervision, performance and adherence to contractual language of all of its subcontractors or else seek other partners for continued work.
- Program(s) must comply with all applicable provisions of the general laws and with all applicable rules and regulations of the state and its contractual procedures.
- To ensure compliance, RIDE or its designee, shall regularly monitor the program(s) under this contract. The contractor must provide access to any and all materials and data relevant to the evaluation and monitoring of the activities and requirements described herein.
- The cost or the advance deposit for meals or refreshments will not be considered a necessary expense and such requests for payment will not be processed.
- Administrative/Indirect costs are limited to a maximum of 10% of the grant award.

APPENDIX A

BUDGET MULTI-YEAR PROJECTS

The Contractor estimates that its budget for work to be performed under this Agreement is as follows:

| <u>Expense Category</u> | <u>Estimated Expenditures</u> | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| | Year 1 | Year 2 |
| 1. Employee Salary and Benefits | 0 | 0 |
| 6. Purchased Services | 0 | 0 |
| 3. Supplies and Materials | 0 | 0 |
| 4. Travel | 0 | 0 |
| 5. Printing | 0 | 0 |
| 6. Office Expense | 0 | 0 |
| 7. Other: <i>(describe)</i> | 0 | 0 |
| 8. | 0 | 0 |
| Subtotal | 0 | 0 |
| Indirect Cost * | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 0 | 0 |

It is understood and agreed that the amounts indicated above for the several line items are estimates of expenditures to be incurred by the Contractor on behalf of this Agreement and to be claimed by the Contractor for reimbursement under this Agreement. It is further understood and agreed that actual expenditures may vary from the estimates set forth above and that such variations shall not in themselves be cause for disallowance of reimbursement by RIDE; provided, however, that the Contractor shall notify the contract officer of the variance and obtain pre-approval, in writing; and provided further that unless permission of the contract officer shall have been obtained in advance, no expenditure shall be claimed by the Contractor for reimbursement by RIDE under this Agreement if such expenditure shall have been incurred in a line item category not listed above. Transfer of funds between categories requires prior written approval by RIDE. In no event shall the total amount of reimbursement claimed by the vendor under this agreement exceed the total approved contract amount.

**** Attach a copy of the approved indirect cost documentation***

BUDGET DETAIL SHEET *
 FISCAL YEAR _____

EMPLOYEE SALARY AND BENEFIT DETAIL (TOTAL COMPENSATION)**

| NAME | POSITION TITLE | NUMBER OF HOURS | HOURLY RATE (including benefits) | SALARY and BENEFIT TOTAL \$ |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| TOTAL REQUEST | | | | |

PURCHASED SERVICES DETAIL

| NAME | POSITION TITLE | HOURS | HOURLY RATE \$ | TOTAL \$ |
|----------------------|----------------|-------|-------------------|-------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| TOTAL REQUEST | | | | \$ |

OTHER EXPENDITURES DETAIL

| EXPENSE CATEGORY | DESCRIPTION | TOTAL |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------|
| Supplies and Materials | | |
| Travel *** | | |
| Printing | | |
| Office Expense | | |
| Other: <i>(describe)</i> | | |
| Indirect Cost | | |

Total \$

* Please include a detail budget sheet for each state fiscal year (July 1st – June 30th)

** Please round hourly rates to the nearest whole dollar and ensure there are no rounding differences with the extended totals.

*** Reimbursement for travel within the continental United States is limited to the per diem rates established by the General Services Administration (GSA). Per diem rates are posted at www.gsa.gov/perdiem.