



RFP 23002160 - AGENCY SOLICITATION SPECIFICATIONS

HEADER

TITLE: Early Childhood Governance and Systems Analysis Services

SECTION A. BACKGROUND

Introduction

The RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services (“EOHHS”), on behalf of the Early Childhood Governance Working Group (“Working Group”) seeks a qualified contractor with expertise in state-level early childhood governance to partner in executing Rhode Island’s Early Childhood System Governance Analysis (“System Analysis”). The System Analysis is a process which will include systematic document review, data collection (i.e. qualitative key informant interviews, focus groups, and surveys), data compilation, data analysis, and the development of policy recommendations and associated financial implications in a final report. The contractor will be responsible for managing all aspects of the process, including but not limited to meeting facilitation, documentation and transparency, project management, analysis, and report production services.

The System Analysis is outlined in [Article 10 of the enacted Fiscal Year 2023 Budget](#). The FY23 Enacted Budget establishes an Early Childhood Working Group to develop a report regarding early childhood governance by October 1, 2023. This report and recommendations must address but are not limited to coordination and administration of early childhood programs and services; governance and organizational structure of early childhood programs to improve equitable access to high-quality programs and services; consideration and circumstances for unification of any components of early childhood programs; fiscal structure of proposed recommendations; and implementation of early childhood data systems.

As outlined in the [Early Childhood Care and Education Strategic Plan 2020-2023](#) (“Strategic Plan”), Rhode Island has ambitious goals for improving early childhood in our state and seeks governance infrastructure to accomplish those goals. The State's vision is for all children to be educationally, social-emotionally, and developmentally ready to succeed, putting them on a path to read proficiently by third grade. To accomplish this, RI state agencies have been collaborating to implement the Strategic Plan that includes five core strategic objectives:

1. Rhode Island’s early childhood programs meet high-quality standards for care and education as defined by our Quality Rating and Improvement System
2. Children and families can equitably access and participate in the early childhood care, services, and supports that will help them reach their potential and enter school healthy and ready to succeed.
3. All four-year-olds in Rhode Island have access to high-quality Pre-K, inclusive of parental choice and student needs. (Note: legislation passed in 2022 requires the state to develop a plan to expand Pre-K to 5,000 seats by 2028)
4. Secure the quality and delivery of Early Childhood Care and Education (“ECCE”) through increased and sustainable funding and operational improvements.

5. Expand the depth and quality of family and child-level data accessible to and used by agencies, programs, and partners to drive decisions.

Building on the Strategic Plan, RI has set goals ambitious longer term early childhood goals in the plan document [Rhode Island 2030: Charting a Course for the Future of the Ocean State \("2030 Plan"\)](#) including:

1. Work towards ensuring all children, starting in infancy, have access to high-quality affordable childcare in which no family in the state must spend more than 7% of income to access high-quality childcare (the federal standard of child care affordability)
2. Implement universal, high-quality Pre-K for children ages 3 and 4 through a mixed delivery system.

Currently, the core programs/funding streams supporting early childhood in Rhode Island within scope of the System Analysis are located across four agencies. **The Working Group on Early Childhood Governance is refining the list of which early childhood programs will be part of the systems analysis and retains the option to expand or narrow the list below, pending final vote of the Working Group.** Specifically, these programs include:

1. Executive Office of Health and Human Services:
 1. [Early Intervention](#) (IDEA Part C)
 2. [KidsConnect](#)
2. Department of Human Services
 1. [Child Care Licensing](#)
 2. [Child Care Assistance Program](#)
 3. [Child Care Quality Initiatives](#)
 4. [Head Start Collaboration Office](#)
3. Department of Education
 1. [RI Pre-K](#)
 2. [Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Approval Standards](#)
 3. [Early Childhood Special Education \(IDEA Part B 619\)](#)
4. Department of Health
 1. [Family Visiting Programs \(long- and short-term family visiting\)](#)

To conduct a comprehensive review, the scope will also include analysis of the gaps and opportunities of existing governance and administrative structures in advancing, coordinating, and supporting systems that enable the delivery of high-quality early childhood programs, including but not limited to:

- Workforce development, career pathways, higher education pathways, and retention (in collaboration with the Governor's Workforce Board)
- Professional development and technical assistance for the workforce and providers
- Quality evaluation, improvement, and support for providers
- Data systems to track child enrollment, waiting lists, staff qualifications and turnover, program quality, progress on strategic goals, etc.

Other key early programs and funding streams that support young children, such as but not limited to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and behavioral health systems are intricately related to early childhood but fall outside the scope of the Systems Analysis. However, all final recommendations within the Systems Analysis must consider and document the potential impact to the broader system.

Systems Analysis Goals and Areas of Investigation

The goal of the System Analysis is to examine systems that govern and administer early childhood and use this information to make recommendations to improve functionality of services and systems that will promote optimal outcomes for children and families. The System Analysis must first conduct a comprehensive review of the current conditions and identify gaps and opportunities for improvement to best achieve the goals set forth in the Strategic Plan and the 2030 Plan.

Specifically, the System Analysis is intended to develop recommendations for the following areas by reviewing what exists related to early childhood internal to state government and how it can be strengthened: optimal organization, capacity, and functioning of state government to meet the needs of children, families, educators and communities; the infrastructure for authority, accountability, integration, and family and community engagement; and the data infrastructure. The contractor will support the Working Group in understanding the current landscape, identifying the core issues that require improvement or are barriers to achieving the stated goals, developing recommendations that build a framework for using our resources most effectively and efficiently, and how restructuring and/or strengthening infrastructure will improve our ability to serve children and families. The contractor will work with stakeholders including but not limited to families, workforce members, providers, advocates, and state agencies in the development of the report and recommendations.

Throughout System Analysis it is critical to document and consider the broader complex early childhood system while making recommendations around governance, infrastructure, and quality improvement. It is important to consider the impact of proposed recommendations on the broader early childhood system at every stage of the System Analysis. The ultimate goal is to ensure that Rhode Island's early childhood system is an integrated, continuous, comprehensive, high-quality system of services that is equitable, accessible and will improve outcomes for each and every child and their family.

SECTION B: SCOPE OF WORK AND REQUIREMENTS

The contractor will be responsible for all aspects of researching, developing, designing, managing, and delivering the full System Analysis in support of the mission of the Early Childhood Governance Working Group.

Components of the System Analysis: The System Analysis must include but is not limited to the areas below.

Consideration of National Best Practices:

- Review of national best practices across a variety of governance configurations and how RI's current early childhood governance systems aligns to best practices. This review may include but is not limited to Massachusetts, Connecticut, North Carolina, Colorado, and New Mexico.
- Lessons learned from other state governance processes and outcomes for children and families by pursuing governance changes
- Identify any considerations based on rules and regulations related to federal funding streams

Review of State Governance, Integration, and Coordination:

- Review of current status of RI's early childhood programs and system alignment
- Identify barriers to effective governance, integration, and coordination across programs.
- Identify barriers that Rhode Island families encounter when attempting to access high-quality early childhood programs and services.
- Identify barriers that organizations that operate early childhood programs encounter when attempting to secure sustainable funding, hire and retain qualified early

childhood staff, meet or exceed quality standards, and engage, enroll, and serve families and children.

- Map Rhode Island’s early childhood system and examine early childhood governance and administration, including collaborative oversight of programs within and between state agencies, departments and divisions including. Identify statutory requirements and authorities of agencies, departments, and divisions, and offices related to early childhood.
- Identify decision-making authority and how it is informed by early childhood stakeholders including the RI Early Learning Council, the State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education required under federal law. (i.e., examining participation, representation of marginalized groups and how stakeholders, including families and educators, are engaged in decision-making)
- Examine capacity and quality of governance and administration for early childhood programs.
- Examine formal and informal collaboration, coordination, and integration across early childhood programs and infrastructure to support this work (i.e., responsibility and authority of Rhode Island’s Children’s Cabinet, Early Childhood Care and Education Governance Steering Committee, and Advisory Councils (including the RI Early Learning Council, Successful Start, the Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council, and the RI Home Visiting Council), and State Agencies)
- Identify mechanisms to strengthen system oversight and administration and accountability for providing equitable access to high-quality early childhood programs and services and improving outcomes for children and families. Mechanisms should define Key Performance Indicators, social return on investment for program budgets, and requirements for ongoing evaluation including cost/benefit analysis and process to consolidating or sunseting those programs that are not meeting performance goals.

Review of Infrastructure and Capacity:

- Review of infrastructure needed to effectively implement high quality programs at scale to meet RI’s early childhood goals. Infrastructure should include the evaluation process and data required to effectively review performance and program impact to inform future decisions.
- Map current capacity – including but not limited to FTEs, data systems, and funding
- Identify barriers/gaps/opportunities in infrastructure and capacity to effectively achieving early childhood goals
- Identify opportunities for improvement in use of data systems and metrics to drive early learning system administration and increase equity

Recommendations:

- Produce comprehensive recommendations to improve governance, coordination, capacity, integration, oversight, and infrastructure to best achieve early childhood goals for the state, with a shortlist of priority recommendations that are most likely to result in improved access to equitable access to high-quality early childhood programs and services. Recommendations should include options for consideration and the opportunities and drawbacks of each option. Recommendations must include but are not limited to:
 - The coordination and administration of early childhood programs and services
 - The governance and organizational structure of early childhood programs and services, including whether, and under what circumstances, the state should consider unifying early childhood programs under one state agency;

- The fiscal structure of proposed recommendations; and
- The implementation of early childhood data systems, for strategic planning, program implementation and program evaluation.
- Tie recommendations to findings and clearly demonstrate how recommendations will help achieve early childhood goals for the state
- Identify the fully loaded cost of each recommendation individually and collectively, such as costs relating to staffing, infrastructure, programming, capacity building, and implementation. In addition, identify administrative changes needed, such as needs for new FTEs.
- Provide projected costs for implementation over the next five fiscal years
- Ensure all recommendations have an equity lens and incorporate an equity impact statement
- Document impacts on the broader early childhood system for programs outside the review of the core System Analysis

System Analysis Process: The proposed System Analysis must include but is not limited to the following process elements. The vendor will propose a methodology within the written proposal. After selection, the vendor will develop the final methodology by reviewing Rhode Island’s needs alongside national best practices and discussions with the Working Group. The final methodology will be approved by the Working Group. The contractor will collaborate with the staff team, the Advisory Committee, and the Working Group to review key questions to be answered by the work, review the developed methodology, determine what data should contribute or be collected to support the systems analysis, manage data, and use national best practices and the systematic document review to guide recommendations that will meet RI’s needs. The contractor will also complete analysis and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data.

Document Review:

- Comprehensive review of existing strategic plans, organizational structures, budgets, and other relevant materials from Rhode Island. An initial set of documents can be found on the [Children’s Cabinet website](#) and on the [Early Learning Council](#) website.
- Review of national best practices.

Qualitative Analysis:

- Key informant/stakeholder interviews and focus groups including but not limited to the following groups: state leadership, state staff, Early Learning Council members, early childhood provider organizations/groups (such as: the RI Head Start Association, RI Pre-K Program Leaders, Business Owners of Childcare Association, RI Child Care Directors Association, Family Child Care Homes of RI, SEIU 1199 Family Child Care Union, RI Early Intervention Providers, Family Home Visiting Providers, Early Childhood Special Education Coordinators), early childhood professionals and educators, families from across the state and of diverse economic security levels and races/ethnicities, advocates, and community partners.
- The consultant must be able to conduct interviews and focus groups with stakeholders who speak Spanish or other languages.
- Execute information gathering from key early childhood stakeholders through a range of mechanisms (key informant interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Work with the RI Early Learning Council (serving as the Working Group’s advisory body) for review of findings and recommendations throughout the process.

Financial Analysis:

- Review of current funding streams supporting early childhood programs, infrastructure, and governance. Funding streams for current and recommended programming should be assessed for appropriateness and sustainability. Here, sustainability relates to whether a funding source is growing in step with the costs.

- Develop cost estimates for initial and ongoing cost of recommendations. Cost estimates should detail assumptions in use and project out at least five years of operating costs.

Stakeholder engagement & Public Progress Reports:

- Maintain public website with key documents, public drafts, meeting minutes, and other key documentation to support project transparency and public engagement. This must be accessible in both English and Spanish.
- Conduct a minimum of 5 public progress report presentations (separate from stakeholder feedback as part of Qualitative Analysis), with at least 2 of these presentations being in person in Rhode Island. These progress reports will occur both at Working Group meetings and at dedicated progress report sessions. Spanish interpretation must be available for these sessions.
- Best practices on stakeholder engagement should be incorporated into the project plan proposal.

Project Management:

- Meet at minimum monthly with staff team for project check-ins, updates, and management
- Responsible for all aspects of project management, including but not limited to maintaining complete project plan, implementing project plan, adjusting plan as circumstances arise, and supporting staff team and Working Group in completing the plan.
- Provide all drafts of written materials – documents, reports, presentations, surveys, etc. – to staff team at minimum 2 business days in advance

Documentation:

- Maintain all documents and notes throughout the process of developing the report, including but not limited to a summary of takeaways from document review and qualitative analysis; notes and summaries of takeaways from meetings with stakeholders; presentations; surveys; and any other documentation used to develop the final recommendations.

System Analysis Report Timeline:

- A full draft of the report is due July 30, 2023
- A final draft of the report is due September 15, 2023, to the Working Group in both English and Spanish
- The final report must be in the form of a comprehensive written report and a summary, visual PowerPoint presentation in both English and Spanish.

The contractor will partner closely with the staff team (including the staff of the Children’s Cabinet) throughout the award period. The staff team will support by:

- Providing documentation and publications for systematic document review
- Developing contact lists for key informant interviews and community conversations/focus groups
- Supporting communication to stakeholders about participating in interviews and community conversations as well as convening/hosting the virtual sessions via zoom
- Supporting the contractor with facilitation and analysis as appropriate and necessary

Contractor Qualifications:

- Expertise with state level childcare and early childhood education governance and programming
- National expertise in systems analysis for related to early childhood governance, such as by conducting similar analyses in other states and producing reports specific to the needs of the state

- Expertise in managing complex projects, maintaining positive working relationships with teams and meeting timelines
- Experience with a range of research methodologies, data collection and statistical analysis procedures; policy analysis and program evaluation; project management and reporting
- Understanding of the financing of human service and early childhood systems, especially with expertise in Rhode Island specifically
- Experience collaborating with diverse stakeholders to create respectful, effective systems for soliciting qualitative data
- Experience using a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens in collaboration with stakeholders and collecting and analyzing data
- At least one member of the team must hold a graduate-level degree: Masters or PhD in Public Administration, Child Development, Public Health, Health Policy and Management, Developmental Psychology, Education, or a related field; or equivalent experience in program/project management, data management and analysis and program evaluation
- Work with others cooperatively, communicate clearly, demonstrate a willingness to be a team player, and contribute to a work environment that focuses on shared goals and collective impact
- Clear and accessible writing skills, strong analytical and critical thinking skills

SECTION C: PROPOSAL

1. Technical Proposal

Narrative and format: Vendors must submit a technical proposal which addresses each of the elements listed below and is limited to twelve (12) pages (this excludes any appendices and as appropriate, resumes of key staff that will provide services covered by this request). Note that no budget or cost information should be included in the Technical Proposal.

- Staff Qualifications** – Provide staff resumes/CV and describe qualifications and experience of key staff who will be involved in this project, including their experience in conducting similar System Analyses related to early childhood, human services, or education governance structures within states. Demonstrate the team’s ability to thoughtfully and thoroughly complete all components and processes of developing the report and recommendations.
- Capability, Capacity, and Qualifications of the Vendor** - Provide a detailed description of the Vendor’s experience and expertise as a strategic consultant in advising and reviewing government systems, inclusive of governance structures, administrative structures, statutory requirements, state and federal funding streams, and data systems. Demonstrate that the Vendor meets all components of the “Contractor Qualifications” listed in the Scope of Work. List a minimum of three (3) relevant client references, to include client names, addresses, contact names with emails and phone numbers, dates of service and type(s) of service(s) provided. In addition, demonstrate that the Vendor produces recommendations specific to the needs of the client,
- Approach/Methodology** – Describe in detail how the vendor will accomplish all aspects of the Scope of Work to deliver a comprehensive Systems Analysis, including but not limited to:

- a. Detailing how each aspect of the **System Analysis Process** will be completed
 - b. Detailing how each aspect of the **System Analysis Components** will be addressed and completed to develop a comprehensive report
- D. **Work Plan** - Please describe in detail the framework within which the requested Systems Analysis will be performed. The work plan must detail:
- a. Timeline and anticipated key dates for each aspect of the **System Analysis Process**
 - b. Timeline and anticipated key dates for each aspect of the **System Analysis Component**
 - c. Which team members listed in Staff Qualifications will be responsible for which aspects of the Work Plan, as well as overall project management approach
 - d. A full list of anticipated interim and final deliverables, as well as the anticipated dates by which deliverables will be sent the State for review
 - e. Any anticipated barriers to completing the work plan as envisioned and possible approaches to addressing barriers |

2. Cost Proposal

Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative:

This contract will operate as a deliverable-based budget.

Provide a cost proposal for the required services which includes the following information:

- Cost of interim and final deliverables, with detailed description of how cost was derived (i.e. number of hours at what cost)
- Specific costs associated with project management, with detailed description of how cost was derived (i.e. number of hours at what cost)
- Specific costs associated with meeting facilitation and stakeholder engagement, with detailed description of how cost was derived (i.e. number of hours at what cost, cost of translation services, travel, etc)
- Any other costs associated with delivering the scope of work as defined in this solicitation. |

3. ISBE Proposal

See Appendix A on the “Overview” tab in Ocean State Procures™ for information and the MBE, WBE and/or Disability Business Enterprise Participation Plan form(s). Vendors are required to complete, sign and submit these forms with their overall proposal. Please complete separate forms for each MBE, WBE, and/or Disability Business Enterprise subcontractor to be utilized on the solicitation.

SECTION D: EVALUATION AND SELECTION - SOLICITATION SPECIFIC

Technical proposals must receive a minimum of 60 (85.7%) out of a maximum of 70 points to advance to the cost evaluation phase. Technical proposals scoring less than

60 points shall not have the accompanying cost or ISBE participation proposals opened or evaluated; such proposals shall not receive further consideration.

Technical proposals scoring 60 points or higher shall have the cost proposals evaluated and assigned up to a maximum of 30 points bringing the total potential evaluation score to 100 points. As total possible evaluation points are determined, vendor ISBE proposals shall be evaluated and assigned up to 6 bonus points for ISBE participation.

Proposals shall be reviewed and scored based upon the following criteria:

Criteria	Possible Points
Staff Qualifications	10 Points
Capability, Capacity, and Qualifications of the Vendor	15 Points
Approach/Methodology	25 Points
Work Plan	20 Points
Total Possible Technical Points	70 Points
Cost proposal	30 Points
Total Possible Evaluation Points	100 Points
ISBE Participation	6 Bonus Points
Total Possible Points	106 Points

See the “Requirements” tab of this solicitation for additional information on the evaluation and selection process in the “RFP Standard Specification” section.