

Request for Proposals

Independent Review of the State's Early Childhood Special Education Services

Questions shall be directed to the Office of Executive Director in writing via fax, regular mail, or email. All responses to any questions posed by any entity in receipt of this RFP will be shared with all entities in receipt of the RFP via email (see Section 4 below).

1. OVERVIEW

On behalf of the Maine Legislature, the Legislative Council seeks proposals from qualified research and technical assistance entities (also referred to in this document as bidders) to perform an independent review of the State's early childhood special education services. Qualified research and technical assistance entities are individuals or firms with demonstrated experience conducting independent reviews of state early childhood special education systems and comparisons with other states' systems.

The selected qualified research and technical assistance entity will be responsible for performing all aspects of the review, providing progress reports and related deliverables, and issuing a Preliminary Phase I Report no later than April 1, 2020 and a Final Phase II Report no later than December 1, 2020 to the Maine Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

The Office of the Executive Director is the Legislative Council's designee for administering the contract with the selected qualified research and technical assistance entity including monitoring the contractor's performance in meeting deadlines, providing deliverables pursuant to Section 11 below and ensuring compliance with other terms of the contract.

2. PROPOSAL DURATION

The Bidder shall guarantee the proposal terms and prices through December 31, 2019.

3. PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL

a. **Proposal Due Date**

Interested bidders must submit a sealed proposal. Proposals will be accepted until **5:00 p.m. local time on November 1, 2019**, at which time they will be opened and available for public review. Proposals received after the 5:00 p.m. deadline will not be accepted. The Legislature assumes no responsibility for delays caused by any delivery service. Postmarking by the due date will not substitute for actual receipt of the proposal by the Legislative Council.

b. **Mailing/Delivery Instructions**

1. The Bidder must send its proposal in a sealed package including **one (1) original and twelve (12) copies** of the complete proposal. Clearly label the original. One electronic copy of the proposal must also be provided on CD or flash drive with the complete

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narrative and attachments in MS Word format (2003 or later version). Any attachments that cannot be submitted in MS Word format may be submitted as Adobe (.pdf) files.

2. Address each package as follows (include the Bidder's full business name and address as well as the RFP number and title) and submit to:

Office of the Executive Director
115 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0115

Attn: RFP # **EDU CDS 1**

c. Proposal Organization

The bidder must submit the following as part of its proposal submission and clearly label each section as such (see Section 12 for additional detail).

1. Organization and Project Team Information
2. Approach
3. Implementation Schedule
4. Project Budget and Total Cost

4. PROCEDURE FOR SUBMITTING QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

a. General Instructions

1. It is the responsibility of each bidder to examine the entire RFP and to seek clarification in writing if the bidder does not understand any information or instructions.
2. Bidders must submit questions regarding the RFP in writing to the Office of the Executive Director as soon as possible, but no later than the date and time specified below in Section 5.
3. Bidders may submit questions by e-mail, fax or regular mail. If faxed, include a cover sheet addressed to the Office of the Executive Director and indicate the number of pages sent. The Legislature assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete fax or e-mail transmission and receipt.
4. Include a heading with the RFP Title. Refer to the page number and paragraph within this RFP relevant to the question presented for clarification, if applicable.
5. Send written questions to:

Office of the Executive Director
115 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0115
E-mail: execdirector@legislature.maine.gov
Fax: (207) 287-1621

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b. Written Questions Due

Written questions must be received by the Office of the Executive Directory no later than 5:00 p.m. local time on the date shown in the timeline below. No questions will be responded to after this time.

c. Summary of Questions and Answers

Responses to all substantive and relevant questions will be compiled in writing and distributed to all registered, interested persons by e-mail no later than ten (10) calendar days prior to the proposal due date. Only those answers issued in writing by the Office of the Executive Director will be considered binding. The Office of the Executive Director reserves the right to answer or not answer any question received.

5. DEADLINES & OTHER KEY DATES

Event Name	Event Date and Time
Due Date for Receipt of Written Questions	October 18, 2019 at 5:00pm, local time
Date Responses to Questions Distributed	October 25, 2019 at 5:00pm, local time
Due Date for Receipt of Proposals	November 1, 2019 at 5:00pm, local time
Estimated Contract Start Date	December 16, 2019

6. SCOPE OF REVIEW

a. As provided in Public Law 2019, Chapter 343, Part VVVV, the Review shall include an objective evaluation of Maine’s early childhood special education services. (See Attachment A for the full text of Public Law 2019, Chapter 343, Part VVVV). The evaluation must include, but is not limited to, comparisons between this State and other comparable states and an implementation plan for the transition of services from the Child Development Services System under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 7209 to local school administrative units if appropriate and as provided for in paragraph 5, and must address the following:

1. National trends and relevant models of governing and delivering early childhood special education systems, including but not limited to implementation of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), quality and control measures, and innovating approaches in other states and jurisdictions that hold the potential for enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency or accountability of the early childhood special education system in the State;
2. The short-term and long-term costs and benefits of the proposed plan to restructure the Child Development Services System as presented to the Legislature in An Act To Reorganize the Provision of Services for Children with Disabilities from Birth to 5 Years of Age, L.D. 1715 from the First Regular Session of the 129th Legislature (See Attachment B for the full text of the proposed implementation plan in L.D. 1715) (See Attachment C for the Department of Education’s proposed “friendly amendment” to L.D. 1715 introduced in Committee);
3. The impact that the proposed plan will have on the following:

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- A. Current Child Development Services System staff, including but not limited to the potential impact on staff retirement and how any negative impact on staff retirement can be reduced or eliminated and whether Child Development Services System employees would become employees of the local school administrative unit or the State;
 - B. Current school administrative unit staff;
 - C. Current Child Development Services contracted service providers;
 - D. The provision of services for children birth to 3 years of age and 3 years of age to five years of age;
 - E. Quality of life of the child and family;
 - F. Due process complaints; and
 - G. Local school units and budgets.
4. The development of recommendations for an early childhood special education services program plan for the provision of services of IDEA sections Part C and Part B §619 for implementation by the State, which must include, but is not limited to, for each section:
- A. Models of scientifically-based best practices;
 - B. Fiscally sound budget forecasting, including all possible revenue streams and updated costs;
 - C. Plans to address the impact on local budgets;
 - D. Transportation services;
 - E. Data systems, including a billing system, a system that allows coordination with the MaineCare program and a case management documentation system;
 - F. Use of MaineCare funds and insurance;
 - G. Timely-delivery of services;
 - H. Reconciliation of Individual Education Plans, Individual Family Service Plans and Individual Treatment Plans;
 - I. Models of implementation of Child Find as mandated under the federal IDEA;
 - J. A timeline for the implementation of the plan under this section;
 - K. A procedure for data collection and analysis conducted by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute;
 - L. A method for assessing a school administrative unit's capacity for implementing early childhood special education programs;
 - M. Training requirements for service providers, educators, administrators and leaders;
 - N. A public information communication strategy for implementation of the plan;
 - O. Identification of potential revisions to the Department of Health and Human Services rule Chapter 101: MaineCare Benefits Manual; and

- P. Workforce capacity, including but not limited to the availability of certified teachers knowledgeable in early childhood education; and
 5. A step-by-step implementation plan for the transition of special education services for children from birth to 3 years of age to the Department of Education and a step-by-step implementation plan for the transition of special education services for children 3 years of age to 5 years of age to local school administrative units, including but not limited to the resources required, both human and financial, the transition from Part C to Part B §619 services, and a detailed timeline. The implementation plan under this section will be informed by the review and analysis conducted pursuant to Phase I and may be based on multiple models and provide for different methods or levels of transition and implementation, as appropriate, based on the results of Phase I of the project.
- b. The Evaluation will consist of two parts.

Part I

Part I must include two separate sections, one addressing children and services covered under federal IDEA Part C plans, and the other addressing children and services covered under federal IDEA Part B §619. Each section must include the following analyses as they relate to the children and services covered by both sections of the law, respectively:

1. A review of previous studies and available data related to early childhood special education, including but not limited to the findings and recommendations of the Subcommittee To Study Early Childhood Special Education in its January 2007 report and the findings and recommendations of the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability in its July 2012 report on child development services;
2. An in-depth analysis of national trends and relevant models of governing and delivering early childhood special education systems in other states and jurisdictions that hold the potential for enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency or accountability of the early childhood special education system in the State; and
3. An in-depth analysis of the short-term and long-term costs and benefits of the proposed plan to restructure the Child Development Services System as presented to the Legislature in An Act To Reorganize the Provision of Services for Children with Disabilities from Birth to 5 Years of Age, L.D. 1715 from the First Regular Session of the 129th Legislature;
4. An in-depth analysis of the impact that the proposed plan will have on the issues listed in subsection a, paragraph 4.

Part II

Part II will include a step-by-step implementation plan for the transition of special education services for children from birth to 3 years of age to the Department of Education and a step-by-step implementation plan for the transition of special education services for children 3 years of age to 5 years of age to local school administrative units, including but not limited to the resources required, both human and financial, the transition from Part C to Part B §619 services and a detailed timeline. The implementation plans under this section will be informed by the review and analysis conducted pursuant to Phase I and may be based on multiple models and provide for different methods or levels of transition and implementation, as appropriate, based on the results of Phase I of the project.

7. ACCESS TO PREVIOUS REPORTS & DATA

The State of Maine’s Department of Education, Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of Revenue Services and the Education Research Institute (established pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 10) will provide the qualified research and technical assistance entity selected with access to previous reports on school funding in the State and access to publicly available database information necessary to carry out the evaluation.

8. STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The contract will require the selected qualified research and technical assistance entity to provide education and other stakeholder groups in the State with opportunities for input at appropriate times, as part of its evaluation. The Contract Administrator, after consultation with the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, will determine the stakeholder groups who shall be invited to provide input to the selected qualified research entity.

9. BACKGROUND

Child Development Services (CDS) is a quasi-governmental agency that was established to serve Maine’s birth to 3-year-old children who need early intervention services and Maine’s 3-5-year-old children with disabilities. Over the past few years, the Legislature has debated whether to continue utilizing CDS to serve birth to-5-year olds or to transition services for Maine’s birth to 3-year olds directly to the Department of Education and services for 3-5-year olds into the local school administrative units. There have been numerous proposals over the years to accomplish this transition. However, there remain many unanswered questions about how this transition would be best accomplished to best serve the children, the local school administrative units, and the State. In order to provide for this transition in the most effective and efficient manner and so as to make informed policy decisions, the Legislature, by enacting Public Law 2019, Chapter 343, Part VVVV has provided for an independent review of the State’s early childhood special education services.

The Office of the Executive Director has developed this Request for Proposals to permit the Legislature through the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, and with the advice of the Independent Review Advisory Committee established by the Legislature, to award a contract to the selected qualified research and technical assistance entity to conduct the review. The Office of the Executive Director is also charged with administering the resultant contract with the advice and assistance of the Independent Review Advisory Committee established by the Legislature.

The Office of the Executive Director is the nonpartisan office that serves as the central administrative and management agency for the Legislature. The office provides staffing services to the Legislative Council and its committees, including agenda preparation, meeting summaries and reporting after deadline bill requests and carrying out Legislative Council policies. The office prepares the legislative budget for the Legislative Council’s review and administers the approved budget. For more information about the Office of the Executive Director, visit <http://legislature.maine.gov/execdir/>.

10. DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

The Legislature is specifically seeking a qualified research and technical assistance entity with the following qualifications:

- Substantial knowledge of:
 - Early childhood special education and different methods that states use to provide services to children from birth to age 5;
 - The advantages and disadvantages of different methods for delivering services;
 - School district organization, staff, teachers, and administrators;
 - State and local budgets, especially in relation to school districts;
 - The delivery of equitable services in rural and urban school districts and populations; and
 - Federal requirements for special education services.
- Experience in:
 - Conducting independent evaluations of state early childhood special education services;
 - Preparing detailed reports with in-depth analyses of other state systems and recommended alternatives; and
 - Working with state legislators, government and municipal entities.
- High functioning project management, critical thinking and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to maintain full objectivity and confidentiality in conducting this review including assuring there are no possible impairments (in fact and/or appearance) to the qualified research entity's independence.

11. DELIVERABLES

Due dates for deliverables, agreed upon between the Legislature through its Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and the selected qualified research and technical assistance entity will be included in the final contract including:

- A written work plan that reflects the design in sufficient detail to allow the Office of the Executive Director and the Independent Review Advisory Committee to understand the specific work steps and tasks the consultant intends to perform as per Public Law 2019, chapter 343, part VVVV, including opportunities for public input from stakeholder groups in the state;
- A written project schedule or other tool for planning and tracking progress of the review;
- Regular updates on progress and results to the Office of the Executive Director, the Independent Review Advisory Committee and the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs;
- Written reports for **Phase I due April 1, 2020** and **Phase II due December 1, 2020**; and
- Participation in public presentations of Phase I and Phase II reports to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs when requested.

12. REQUIRED INFORMATION

In your response to this Request for Proposal, please provide the following information in the order presented below:

Organization and Project Team Information

- The qualified research and technical assistance entity's legal name and list of principal employees.
- Descriptions of projects completed by the qualified research and technical assistance entity or currently in progress, that demonstrate the skills, capacities, knowledge and qualifications needed to undertake evaluations of state early childhood special education systems.
- Describe the scope and objectives of each project, the date of the project and the qualified research and technical assistance entity's role in each. Provide copies of, or links to, any relevant final reports from those projects.
- Description of the qualified research and technical assistance entity's experience and contact names and phone numbers for each of the projects listed above, as well as for any other appropriate references.
- A description of the key personnel who will have actual responsibility for this project including each proposed team member's position with the qualified research and technical assistance entity, experience on relevant projects and their resumes.
- A description of each team member's role on this project. For the individual proposed as project manager, provide brief examples of previous team lead or project management experience. Including an example of a written work plan developed by this individual would be helpful.
- A description of any past work conducted by the qualified research and technical assistance entity or its principals for the State of Maine or other governmental entities within the State of Maine.
- A description of any situations that may impair or be perceived as impairing, the qualified research and technical assistance entity's independence and objectivity in performing this review, and disclosure of any pecuniary or other vested interest in the review, programs, entities or outcomes associated with the review.

Approach

- Description of the general approach the qualified research and technical assistance entity proposes to take to complete the project objectives/deliverables. Please address the objectives for Phase I separately from those objectives in Phase II.
- A summary of the analytic approaches and data sets the qualified research and technical assistance entity expects to use for this evaluation.
- List of any additional areas of focus the entity recommends including as part of this project. Specify whether the time and cost proposed include those additional areas.

Time and Cost

- A proposed timeline for completion of the project. Please note that Public Law 2019, chapter 343, part VVVV authorizing this contract requires the consultant to fulfill all deliverables, other than presentations, by April 1, 2020 for Phase I and by December 1, 2020 for Phase II.
- Provide a budget, including anticipated person-hours and hourly rates for each person from your firm, to complete the project. Please separate out by Phase I and Phase II.

13. SELECTION OF QUALIFIED RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ENTITY

Selection of the successful bidder is anticipated by December 2019. All bidders will be notified of the final results. However, this RFP is not intended to be binding on the Legislature and the Legislature reserves the right to reject any and all bids at its sole discretion. One or more bidders may be asked to publicly present their proposals before a final decision is made. The Legislature also reserves the right to further negotiate price and terms with any bidder.

Responses to this RFP will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Research and Technical Assistance Entity	
Experience & Capacity	25%
Project Team Qualifications & Experience	25%
Proposed Review Methodology & Schedule	30%
Cost	20%