

Request for Proposals



Introduction

An important but poorly supported component of the child care system in Connecticut is the hundreds of family child care providers who operate small home-based child care businesses. They are a particularly important source of care for infants and toddlers: the age groups for which demand far exceeds supply. Family child care providers often come from the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds as the children enrolled in the homes ensuring that they have the ability to interact effectively with the children in their care and with their parents, especially those from minority groups. Many family child care providers are able to accommodate parents with odd-hour jobs that are not available in other child care settings.

Family child care providers also face challenges. They spend long hours with young children, often without interacting with other adults. The work is demanding and isolating, preventing providers from benefiting from the material resources, supports and professional development available to those working in center-based programs. And too many family child care providers still operate outside of the state licensing system.

Given the public policy interest in expanding the supply of infant and toddler care and in improving the quality of care in all settings around the state, Connecticut's Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Plan for 2016-18 calls for the creation and expansion of locally-based family child care networks staffed by professionals who are able to provide business and child development training and technical support.

Family child care (FCC) networks have existed for decades. These **networks are comprised of** a group of FCC providers who have voluntarily affiliated with an existing (or have formed an) organization with which they maintain an ongoing supportive relationship. Providers join a network for a more rewarding career, to improve the FCC homes' performance as a source of income, and/or to enhance the quality and market appeal of their services to parents. Recent research provides evidence that professionally staffed networks can help improve outcomes for children enrolled in the affiliated homes.¹

Moreover, an emerging best practice in the child care field is shared service business alliances. These alliances take many forms and some resemble the best family child care networks. A **shared services business alliance** is a FCC network that pursues an intentional strategy for improving the sustainability and financial performance of each member's individual business. The "shared services" strategy capitalizes on the efficiency—the economies of scale—that arise when multiple providers pool business

¹ A 2008 study by Herr Research Center for Children and Social Policy at the Erikson Institute explored this concept. With the technical assistance of the Office of Child Care's State Capacity Building Center, key stakeholders who support family child care providers in Connecticut reviewed this research during a February 17, 2017 meeting. The participants agreed with the study's key findings, which have informed the Office of Early Childhood's Framework for Staffed Family Child Care Networks.

functions such as purchasing, marketing, billing and bookkeeping for the purpose of reducing each member's operating costs. **The goal of a shared services alliance is to have the resulting cost-savings and enhanced market appeal translate into a more viable and better performing home-based business enterprise for all of the alliance's members.** Some alliance services enable programs to maintain higher enrollments and collect fees in full and on-time. Some administer the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program, making it possible to offer subsidized meals and snacks to low-income children. Other alliances also focus on improving program quality by organizing professional development workshops to a group of child care providers that work in affiliated programs or homes as well as one-on-one coaching to alliance-affiliated early childhood educators. Again, providing these services for multiple providers brings down the cost of delivering them.

In the family child care sector both networks and business alliances help providers of "informal" care to secure and maintain state licensure as well as supporting their participation in the state's quality improvement rating system. Connecticut's interest in promoting the growth and development of both FCC networks and shared service business alliances is to build the supply and quality of infant and toddler care.

This request for proposals offers financial support to organizations that currently support family child care providers who are interested in expanding technical assistance and shared service business alliance functions; or interested in launching a new shared service business alliance for family child care providers.

The funding for this project is for FY 2018 and may be renewed for a second year within the limits of available appropriations.

The funding is in part from the state's federal award of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). These federal funds are subject to the requirements of the CCDF Block Grant Act of 1990, as amended (CFDA 93.575)

Available Funds

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood may award up to \$300,000 through this request for proposals: \$300,000 to be awarded and expended during the balance of the current fiscal year, ending June 30, 2018.

The United Way of Connecticut serves as the fiduciary for these awards.

Number of Awards

The Office of Early Childhood will fund up to four proposals.

Purpose of Funds

Through this RFP, the Office of Early Childhood seeks to award funds for organizations that currently support family child care providers who are interested in expanding technical assistance and shared service business alliance functions; or interested in launching a new shared service business alliance for family child care providers. Alliance activities must focus on and prioritize family child care providers, and may be extended to other sectors of the early childhood field.

Eligible Organizations

To be eligible to compete for the funding to be awarded pursuant to this request for proposals, the applicant must:

- (1) be located in the state of Connecticut;
- (2) operate in good standing with the secretary of state's office, the Internal Revenue Service and with all applicable laws and regulations; and
- (3) have experience delivering or supporting activities that strengthen families and/or early childhood development.

Use of Funds

Funds awarded pursuant to this request for proposals can be used for any legal purpose that contributes, directly or indirectly to increasing:

- the number of family child care providers who are affiliated with shared service business alliances;
- the viability of these home-based businesses, and/or
- the quality of care that are reasonably expected to lead to improved child outcomes and child wellbeing.

The OEC will manage the awarded proposals. The OEC will establish and monitor reporting requirements including outcome measures for all awarded proposals.

Proposal

The proposals must be complete and shall include the following:

Content	Maximum Length	Maximum Scoring Points	Scoring
(1) A cover sheet with the legal name of the applicant organization; mailing address; name, position title, phone number and email address for the organization's chief executive officer and, if different, the equivalent information for the contact person. The applicant's chief executive officer must sign and date the cover sheet attached to this RFP.			No points but must be completed correctly for the proposal to be scored.
(2) A statement explaining whether the applicant organization seeks funds for expanding technical assistance and shared service business alliance functions; or interested in launching a new shared service business alliance for family child care providers.			
(3) A description of applicant organization that includes how many years it has existed in its present form; its corporate purpose; the number of FTE employees; a breakdown of the number and types of employees by function (e.g. managers and administrators, social workers, teacher, etc.); current year operating budget; sites if located at more than one location; geographic area served, and corporate relationships such as having or being legally affiliated with another incorporated entity (e.g. a subsidiary, joint venture, etc.).	600 words	25	Description of applicant organization - For maximum points the organization should have demonstrated that it is well-established (operating stably with an adequate fund balance, operating deficits, if any, less than 3% of revenue and sufficient liquidity according to its financial statements and at least 5 years of consistent operations). The program should demonstrate a solid reputation in its local community for worthwhile programmatic activity that primarily relates to promoting the wellbeing of infants/ toddler children or families of infant/ toddler -aged children. Rationale: Effective programs depend on

			stable, resilient and high-functioning organizations.	
(4)	A detailed description of the programs operated by the applicant organization with special attention to providing evidence of significant experience delivering services to center-based, home-based child care providers, to infant/ toddler - aged children and/or to their families.	400 words	10	A detailed description of the programs operated by the applicant organization providing evidence of significant experience delivering services to center-based, home-based child care providers, to infant/ toddler children and/or to their families.
(5)	Detail the alliance activities and benefits – financial savings, time saved, knowledge and skills acquired, additional revenue generated, etc. – providers might realistically expect to realize from the services you propose to provide.	400 words	15	Detail the alliance activities and benefits – financial savings, time saved, knowledge and skills acquired, additional revenue generated, etc. – providers might realistically expect to realize from the services you propose to provide. Answer should make it clear whether the services focus on business support, program quality improvement or both. There should be an evident logic – reasonable plausibility – that the activities will result in the projected outcomes and a description of the methodology that will be used to measure success. Information on the metrics or benchmarks used to document progress is encouraged. A description of the automated system that will be used by the applicant organization to manage finances on behalf of participating family child care homes, as well as detailed information on the ability to enroll children on-line, pay bills electronically (or by cell phone), and so forth.

<p>(6) Describe your organization's existing relationships with family child care providers in your area and what if any steps the applicant organizations may have taken to explore with providers their service needs and their level of interest in affiliating with a shared service business alliance.</p>	200 words	15	The organization should have authentic existing relationships with family child care providers or explain steps it has taken to explore with providers their service needs and their level of interest in affiliating with a shared service business alliance.
<p>(7) Based on your response to the preceding question estimate the number of providers likely to join your alliance after six and 18 months following the project's start date. If available attach signed letters of interest or letters of intent from family child care providers. If you are an existing alliance, also state the number of providers currently affiliated with your alliance.</p>	200 words	10	Applicant provides a plausible estimate the number of providers likely to join its alliance after six and 18 months. Applicants provides description and signed letters of interest or intent from family child care providers. Existing alliance must state the number of providers currently affiliated with its alliance.
<p>(8) Describe your plan to outreach to and recruit family child care providers to join your alliance.</p>	200 words	10	Applicant must provide a plan to outreach and recruit family child care providers that is reasonably likely to reach potential alliance members with a message about the benefits of affiliation.
<p>(9) Provide the names and qualifications of key personnel, including the applicant's executive director and members of current staff who will be involved in delivering services to members of the shared service business alliance. Attach resumes and the job description for the alliance manager.</p>	250 words	10	Applicant provides a staffing plan. If existing staff will be used for this project, provide evidence that they have the qualifications and experience to deliver the planned services.
<p>(10) Provide a list of relevant organizational collaborations and describe what contributions you expect these organizations to provide in support of the Alliance. Attach support letters.</p>	150 words	5	Based on 3-5 letters of support and the application narrative, the applicant should have demonstrated that it has established working relationships with other organizations capable of making relevant contributions to the proposed project.

(11)	Provide a budget for the Alliance project for the balance of this state fiscal year and for the following 12 months, identifying other sources of revenue, if any.	1 page	5	The budget should be sufficient and the identified sources, including the amount being requested, sufficiently plausible to support the proposed scope of work over the coming 18 months.
(12)	Describe how you envision sustaining funding for the alliance after the Office of Early Childhood discontinues funding commitments to support shared service business alliances after June 30, 2019.	200 words	5	The proposal should outline a reasonably plausible business model capable of sustaining funding for the alliance after June 30, 2019.
(13)	Feel free to describe policy changes or waivers you believe are important to the success of your plans to create or expand a shared service business alliance.	100 words		Assess the reasonableness and potential of any suggested policy-related changes or waivers.
TOTAL POINTS			110	

Application Attachments – please attach in the order listed below

1. List of the board of directors with organization affiliation and position.
2. Audited financial statements for the two most recent years (or, if unavailable, financial statements for the same period with a written explanation for why an audited financial statement cannot be submitted at this time).
3. Most recent budget report for the current fiscal year.
4. If available, signed letters of interest or letters of intent from family child care providers stating their level of interest in joining your alliance.
5. Resumes for key personnel including the applicant's executive director and for any existing staff who will be assigned to the project.
6. Job description for the individual responsible for the Shared Service Business Alliance Letters of support from organizations expected to collaborate with the applicant in support of the Alliance.
7. Other relevant letters of support.

Proposal Format

The proposal shall be submitted in an easily readable typeface no smaller than 11 point. Each section should be clearly marked with the section number associated with the proposal content description, above. Please submit the proposal electronically in Microsoft Word format. If Board approval is not possible to obtain prior to March 8, 2018, Send official board approval no later than April 9, 2018.

Submission Deadline

The proposal must be received electronically via email no later than 5:00 pm March 8, 2018 to the following email address:

Thrive@ctunitedway.org

The hard copy with the original signature on the cover sheet must be mailed and postmarked no later than March 8, 2018 to the attention of Child Care Services at the following address:

United Way of Connecticut
1344 Silas Deane Hwy
Rocky Hill CT 06067