

Voluntary Pre-K Grant Analysis: Contractor Solicitation

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Tennessee Department of Education

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BACKGROUND

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-101, the department awards funding to Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) programs selected through a competitive grant application process. The VPK application addresses the 10 standards of program quality determined by the department's division of early learning (found here: https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/early-learning/pre-k/quality_matters.pdf) and selection is based on applicants' ability to meet rigorous requirements related to quality. Therefore, it is imperative to have a strong review and scoring process for the anticipated 140 applications that will be submitted in January 2020.

PURPOSES OF THE VPK APPLICATION SCORING

Based on VPK application scores and narrative feedback, the division of early learning will be able to:

- Identify high-quality VPK programs that have a demonstrated need for a VPK program in their area;
- Identify VPK programs whose plans show the need for a plan of action or training;
- Provide narrative feedback to districts to increase quality in all programs; and,
- Determine the district allocations for the 2020-21 school year.

SOLICITATION INTRODUCTION

Fifteen (15) to twenty-five (25) individual contracts will be awarded for the purpose of scoring VPK applications and providing detailed feedback to districts. The contract period will begin January 6, 2020 and end on May 31, 2020, not to exceed \$2,425 total per Tennessee resident contract or \$2,925 total per non-Tennessee resident contract.

Contractors must meet the following minimum requirements:

- Knowledgeable and experienced in early childhood education, be familiar with developmentally appropriate practice, and have experience in program evaluation or leadership.
- Available for a one-day face-to-face training on Wednesday, January 29, 2020 (preferred) or a one-day remote training on Thursday, January 30, 2020 (if needed and approved by the State).;
- Demonstrate an ability to score applications accurately and in accordance with the scoring rubric;
- Demonstrate strong writing skills to provide substantive narrative feedback in accordance with departmental guidance; and
- Commit to a schedule that will require them to score an average of 3 applications each week.

Individuals involved in writing a 2020-21 VPK grant or employed by a VPK program in the last three years will not be eligible to apply.

Contractor's compensation shall be contingent upon satisfactory provision of goods and services set forth as minimum requirements and responsibilities.

Contractor shall be compensated on the following payment methodology:

Deliverable	Goods or Services Description	Amount (per compensable increment)
Training	Attend one (1) mandatory one-day application training on either January 29 or 30, 2020	\$200.00 total
Calibration Process	Complete calibration review process of a minimum of two (2) and a maximum of three (3) grant applications, as determined by TDOE grant manager	\$125.00 each (Up to \$375.00 total)
Application Scoring	Complete review, rubric scoring, and written feedback for up to thirteen (13) 2020-21 district grant applications as directed by the State. This includes feedback that districts may use to strengthen their application and/or program practices.	\$125.00 each (Up to \$1,625.00 total)
Non-Tennessee Resident Travel	Travel Compensation/Reimbursement relating to authorized in-person attendance at mandatory January 2020 training, subject to amounts and limitations specified in the current " State Comprehensive Travel Regulations ."	Up to \$850.00 total
Tennessee Resident Travel	Travel Compensation/Reimbursement relating to authorized in-person attendance at mandatory January 2020 training, subject to amounts and limitations specified in the current " State Comprehensive Travel Regulations ."	Up to \$350.00 total

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CONTRACTOR(S)

To ensure timely funding decisions and provide feedback to districts, the contractors must agree to complete all scoring no later than March 13, 2020 and be available to respond within 48-72 hours to scoring-related inquiries from the State through May 31, 2020. Contractors must sign a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement and a Confidentiality Statement for each district they review.

Trainings and Meetings

- Contractors must attend a one-day face-to-face training on January 29, 2020 (preferred) or a one-day remote training on January 30, 2020 (if needed and approved by the State).
- Contractors must score between 2–3 sample applications between the training date and the beginning of the scoring process, to ensure inter-rater reliability. Contractors may not proceed to scoring unless they complete the training and pass the calibration exercise provided by the Department.

Records and Reports

- Contractors must score between 2–3 applications per week during the scoring process (excluding the calibration training window).
- Contractors must return scoring documentation with specific, narrative feedback as trained by the State for each application assigned and scored.
- Contractors must maintain confidentiality of scoring reports and applications at all times, extending beyond the contract term.
- Contractors must be readily available through the contract term of May 31, 2020 to provide timely follow-up information within 48-72 hours requested by the State, including clarifying details that assist in the scoring process and recalibration, if needed.

Contractor shall be an independent contractor and not an employee, partner, agent of, or joint venturer with the department and shall not represent himself/herself or hold himself/herself out to third parties as being the agent or employee of the department.

HOW TO APPLY

Respondents must submit a resume detailing qualifications, letter of interest detailing qualifications and understanding of the required scope/timeline of the work, and a statement identifying the existence or lack of any conflict(s) of interest from working directly with any of the early childhood programs or professionals in any of the Tennessee school districts. Submissions which do not provide all required application materials will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed by the State.

If you have any questions on the responsibilities of this contracted position or clarifications regarding application requirements, please submit them in writing to Jessica.Lord@tn.gov. Phone inquiries will not be accepted.

Responses to this solicitation must be submitted electronically, preferably as one PDF file, to Jessica.Lord@tn.gov no later than 4 p.m. Central Time, November 22, 2019. Based on need, the State may consider applications received after November 22 on a rolling basis until all positions are full.

The department reserves the right to determine, at its sole discretion, the appropriateness and adequacy of responses related to this solicitation. Contracts are subject to funds availability and final approval by the state procurement offices.

RESPONDENT EVALUATION

For consideration, respondents must submit a resume and a letter of interest detailing qualifications and understanding of the scope/timeline of the work. Respondents must also state if they do or do not have any conflict(s) of interest from working directly with any of the early childhood programs or professionals in any of the Tennessee school districts.

Respondents must address all items and provide the information as required. Responses which do not include all items in the below table will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed by the State.

REQUIRED SUBMISSION ITEMS		PASS/FAIL
1)	Resume detailing qualifications	
2)	Letter of interest detailing qualifications and understanding of the required scope/timeline of the work	
3)	Statement identifying the existence <u>or</u> lack of any conflict(s) of interest from working directly with any of the early childhood programs or professionals in any of the Tennessee school districts	

A proposal evaluation team, made up of three or more state employees, will independently evaluate all complete applications using the detailed scoring rubric on the following page. The three evaluation scores will be averaged. The department will select the highest scoring applicants meeting the criteria.

RESPONDENT LEGAL ENTITY NAME:							
Technical qualifications, experience, & approach items	Weight	5 - Excellent	4 - Good	3 - Satisfactory	2 - Fair	1 - Poor	0 - No value
Early childhood expertise	30	<p>Respondent has eight or more years of experience working in early childhood environments.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent has an advanced degree in early childhood and five or more years of experience working with or in early childhood programs.</p>	<p>Respondent has five to seven years of experience working in early childhood environments.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent has a bachelors or advanced degree in early childhood and three to four years of experience working with quality early childhood programs.</p>	<p>Respondent has four years of experience working in early childhood environments.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent has a degree in early childhood or a Tennessee early childhood endorsement (467, 468, and/or 459), and two years of experience working with quality early childhood programs.</p>	<p>Respondent has three years of experience working in early childhood environments.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent has an education degree or a Tennessee education endorsement in a field other than early childhood, and less than two years of experience working with quality early childhood programs.</p>	<p>Respondent less than three years of experience working in early childhood environments.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent has a degree, but not in early childhood.</p>	<p>Respondent does not have any relevant educational or work background in early childhood.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent does not address this item.</p>
Grant application review and scoring expertise	30	<p>Respondent has prior experience in application review and scoring for two or more TN voluntary pre-K grant application cycles since 2016.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent thoroughly details experience in application review and scoring of three or more robust grant applications aligned to a rubric.</p>	<p>Respondent has prior experience in application review and scoring for one TN voluntary pre-K grant application cycles since 2016.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent thoroughly details experience in application review and scoring of two robust grant applications aligned to a rubric.</p>	<p>Respondent details experience in application review and scoring of two or more grant applications aligned to a rubric; there is no evidence that the grant applications were of a robust nature.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent details experience in application review and scoring of one robust grant application aligned to a rubric.</p>	<p>Respondent describes limited experience in application review and scoring at least one grant application aligned to a rubric; there is no evidence that the grant applications were of a robust nature.</p>	<p>Respondent details experience in utilizing robust scoring rubrics; however, no experience with grant rubrics.</p>	<p>Respondent does not have any relevant educational background in grant application review and scoring.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent does not address this item.</p>
Written communication skills	30	<p>Respondent provides application materials with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no noticeable errors; no instances of unclear information; and, 	<p>Respondent provides application materials with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> up to two noticeable minor errors (such as a slight typo or minor punctuation errors); 	<p>Respondent provides application materials with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more than two noticeable minor errors; no instances of unclear information; and, 	<p>Respondent provides application materials with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> up to two major errors (such as run-on sentences, sentence fragments, excessive 	<p>Respondent provides application materials with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> three to four major errors; 	<p>Respondent provides application materials with five or more errors, such that the clarity of information severely impacted.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tone appropriate for professional and public materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no instances of unclear information; and, • tone appropriate for professional and public materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tone appropriate for professional and public materials. 	<p>wordiness, major punctuation errors, inappropriate jargon, or unidentified acronyms);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • up to two instances of unclear information; and, • tone appropriate for professional and public materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more than two instances of unclear information; and, • tone appropriate for professional and public materials. 	<p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent provides application materials with a tone inappropriate for professional and public materials (i.e., informal or casual).</p>
Understanding of and commitment to project expectations and schedule	10	Respondent provides a clear and detailed understanding of the project schedule, including identification of all relevant dates identified in the solicitation document.	Respondent provides a clear and detailed understanding of the project schedule, including identification of at least 80 percent of relevant dates.	Respondent provides an understanding of the project schedule, including identification of at least 60 percent relevant dates.	Respondent provides an understanding of the project schedule, including identification of at least 40 percent relevant dates.	Respondent broadly references the project schedule, but does not include identification of any relevant dates.	<p>Respondent does not reflect an understanding of the project needs.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent does not reflect an ability to commit to the project schedule and/or expectations.</p> <p>-OR-</p> <p>Respondent does not address this item.</p>