

Request for Information



State of Alaska
Department of Health
Division of Public Health

Date Issued: 1 FEB 2024

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NUTRITION (PAN) TRAINING AND TA FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE) PROVIDERS

Introduction:

The Alaska Department of Health, Physical Activity and Nutrition Unit (DOH PAN) is seeking letters of interest from qualified parties capable and interested in providing nutrition, physical activity, and breastfeeding training and technical assistance (TA) opportunities and quality improvement supports to early care and education (ECE) programs.

Background Information:

For the past eight years, DOH PAN has worked to help ECE providers implement national nutrition, physical activity, and breastfeeding (NPAB) standards and Farm-to-ECE (FTECE) evidence-based practices.^{1, 2, 3} This has included implementing a quality initiative (QI) utilizing the evidence-based online program, Go Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (Go NAPSACC).⁴ The QI format includes providing training and up to five hours of individualized technical assistance by the Go NAPSACC TA Consultants (i.e. contractor) to assist ECE programs through the Go NAPSACC assessments, goal setting, action planning, and implementation. Additional education opportunities on national NPAB standards and FTECE practices were provided to hundreds of ECE providers through a wide variety of live and virtual events and workshops. In addition, the Breastfeeding Welcomed Here for Child Care (BWH) recognition program was started to help ECE providers better support breastfeeding families.⁵

The DOH PAN program has received federal funding to continue and expand these activities to increase ECE programs meeting national NPAB standards and FTECE evidence-based practices and supporting breastfeeding families as BWH recognized sites. All activities will target statewide licensed ECE providers and those serving families with low incomes, especially in rural priority regions (at this time identified as Northern, Southwest, Interior and Mat-Su regions).

DOH PAN is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) to determine the number of qualified vendors who could complete the deliverables and are interested in applying for funding.

Preferred Minimum Experience

Information provided below lists minimum requirements developed with input of experts in the field and the expectations of professionalism required:

The qualified contractor must have:

1. at least five (5) years of experience out of the last seven (7) years serving as a Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network⁶ or at least five (5) years of experience out of the last seven (7) years in

providing ECE professional development training and TA, approved by Alaska's System for Early Education Development (SEED)⁷, and play a prominent role in Alaska's quality recognition and improvement system (QRIS)⁸ implementation efforts;

2. at least five (5) years of experience out of the last seven (7) years working with ECE providers in Alaska, particularly providers serving families with low incomes, rural providers, and those serving families of many race and ethnic backgrounds; and
3. at least five (5) years of experience out of the last seven (7) years of providing training and TA to ECE providers on national NPAB standards and FTECE evidence-based practices.

The qualified contractor must be a registered business or non-profit with Alaska and maintain a physical presence in Alaska.

Scope of Work

The primary outcome of this project is to increase the number of ECE providers that meet the national NPAB standards and FTECE evidence-based practices that are associated with improved health and weight of children in the ECE setting. The primary objective is to increase the number of ECE providers that participate in the evidence-based Go NAPSACC program and receive training and TA on the national NPAB standards and FTECE practices. These activities should help meet the long-term goal to increase the percentage of young Alaskans who eat healthier foods, meet physical activity guidelines, and are at a healthy weight among families with low incomes or live in rural regions.

The contractor will serve as the ECE professional development specialist(s), providing outreach, recruitment, training, and TA to ECE providers to meet the goals and objectives stated above. The contractor will implement the national Go NAPSACC program in Alaska and help to promote and expand the BWH recognition program. The contractor will serve as the expert and TA consultant on ECE programs and ECE systems in Alaska, such as the CCR&R network, SEED, and Learn and Grow (QRIS), for the DOH PAN Unit and the Alaska Alliance for Healthy Kids-ECE (AAHK-ECE) Work Group.

The DOH PAN program will maintain the Go NAPSACC license with the University of North Carolina (UNC) for the state of Alaska. The DOH PAN program will serve as the overall program coordinator and provide funding, resources, and assistance for implementing contract deliverables.

Deliverables

If DOH conducts a solicitation, it may include the following deliverables in the solicitation:

- (1) Provide expertise and TA on ECE programs and ECE systems, such as the CCR&R Network, SEED, and Learn and Grow (QRIS), in Alaska to DOH PAN as needed. Assist with connecting DOH PAN to ECE programs throughout the state.
- (2) Provide expertise on ECE programs and ECE systems, such as the CCR&R Network, SEED, and Learn and Grow, in Alaska to the Alaska Alliance for Healthy Kids-ECE (AAHK-ECE) Work Group. Participate in quarterly AAHK-ECE meetings and assist with strategic planning.
- (3) Ensure national NPAB standards and FTECE evidence-based practices are embedded into Alaska's statewide technical assistance network (CCR&R), as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Spectrum of Opportunities.⁹
- (4) Ensure at least one Child Care Professional Development Specialist has expertise in national NPAB standards and FTECE evidence-based practices.
- (5) Ensure at least one Child Care Professional Development Specialist is trained as a Go NAPSACC TA Consultant by the University of North Carolina. Go NASACC TA Consultants should participate in the ongoing bi-monthly UNC training webinars.

- (6) Conduct Go NAPSACC Quality Improvement Initiatives (QI) with 20-25 ECE programs annually to make improvements in NPAB standards and FTECE practices at their sites. The QI format includes specific training and up to five hours of individualized technical assistance by the Go NAPSACC TA Consultants to assist ECE programs through the Go NAPSACC assessments, goal setting, action planning, and implementation. Provide resources or financial incentives worth \$500-\$700 to participants who complete a Go NAPSACC QI. At least one Go NAPSACC QI will focus on breastfeeding and will help ECE providers become a recognized BWH site.
- (7) Provide education opportunities on NPAB standards and FTECE practices to at least 100 ECE providers each year through virtual and in-person trainings, webinars, and events throughout the state, such as the Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC) conferences, Head Start/Early Head Start conferences, and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) trainings.
- (8) Recruit ECE sites serving families with low incomes, especially in rural priority regions (at this time identified as Northern, Southwest, Interior and Mat-Su regions) to participate in the Go NAPSACC program and other NPAB and FTECE trainings. Trainers and trainings must be approved by SEED for continuing education.
- (9) Work toward incorporating Go NAPSACC into the Learn & Grow (Alaska's QRIS) Quality Activity Points Menu for Level 3 - 5.
- (10) Promote Go NAPSACC, the BWH recognition program, and other NPAB and FTECE professional development opportunities to ECE providers statewide. Share DOH "Play Every Day" blogs and resources to increase provider knowledge and skills related to improving NPAB and FTECE in the ECE setting.¹⁰
- (11) Participate in evaluation surveys conducted by DOH PAN staff and evaluators.
- (12) Provide quarterly reports on contract activities and invoices to DOH PAN for grant evaluation reporting purposes.

Success will be measured by the number of participants completing the Go NAPSACC QI program; the number of ECE providers participating in other NPAB and FTECE trainings; number of ECEs with improved NPAB standards and FTECE best practices; and the number of state systems that made improvements in NPAB standards and FTECE.

Budget

The term of the contract will be from the date of award through September 30, 2024 (including up to nine (9) optional annual renewals). Funding is subject to available funds and appropriations. Current funding comes from federal funding and grants. The state reserves the right to add additional funding from other sources and to modify the budget amounts during the life of this project. The annual amount budgeted for this contract is \$99,825.

References:

1. National Resource Center for Health and Safety In Child Care and Early Education, Caring for Our Children – Healthy Weight: <https://nrckids.org/HealthyWeight>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, High-Impact Obesity Prevention Standards for Early Care and Education: <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/strategies/early-care-education/obesity-prevention-standards.html>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Advancing Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE): <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/strategies/farm-to-ece.html>
4. University of North Carolina, Go Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (Go NAPSACC): <https://gonapsacc.org/>
5. Alaska Department of Health Physical Activity and Nutrition Unit, Breastfeeding Welcomed Here for Child Care: <https://health.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/Obesity/bwh.aspx>
6. Child Care Resource and Referral Network: <https://www.childcareaware.org/about/child-care-resource-referral/>
7. Alaska System for Early Education Development (SEED): <https://www.threadalaska.org/seed/>

8. Alaska Learn & Grow, quality recognition and improvement system (QRIS):
<https://www.threadalaska.org/learn-and-grow/>
9. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, State Obesity Prevention Efforts Targeting the Early Care and Education Setting: https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/strategies/early-care-education/pdf/ECE_2018_QuickStartActionGuide_April2018_508.pdf
10. Alaska Department of Health, Play Every Day:
<https://health.alaska.gov/dph/PlayEveryDay/Pages/default.aspx>

Response Information:

To participate with a response to the RFI, firms must indicate their interest by submitting an electronic response (.pdf format is preferable) with the following information:

1. Company Name;
2. Contact information (email) for the individual(s) who should be notified if DHSS releases a solicitation
3. A summary that clearly describes your company's capabilities and experience relate to providing the services described in this RFI (Scope of Work and Deliverables)
4. A summary that clearly describes how the applicant/firm meets or exceeds the preferred minimum experience.
5. A statement confirming that the company anticipates the project deliverables, as shown in Deliverables section, and that they are reasonably within the estimated budget provided which is listed in the budget section. Or, if they are not, why not?
6. A summary of any concerns regarding the project as described, and what potential obstacles should be anticipated.

Submission Instructions:

Applicants/firms must submit their response as a PDF file, sent via email, on or before **4:00PM, February 16, 2024**. The response should be attached to the email with "RFI 1623-033" included as the subject line of the email to the following:

R. Todd Webster
Procurement Specialist
Alaska Department of Health
Russell.Webster@alaska.gov
Phone: (907) 268-4847

It is the responsibility of the interested party to follow up with the procurement specialist shown above to ensure that response was received prior to the time and date specified at the top of this RFI.

OFFERORS WITH DISABILITIES: The State of Alaska complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disabilities who may need auxiliary aids, services, and/or special modifications to submit a Letter of Interest should contact the Procurement Officer named above, no later than September 2, 2022.

Important Notice:

This RFI does not extend any rights to prospective vendors or obligate the state to conduct a solicitation or purchase any goods or services. Nor will the State be financially responsible for any costs associated with the preparation of any response for the requested information. This RFI is issued for the sole purpose of obtaining information as described in this notice. However, the information obtained from this request may be used to prepare a purchase, contract, or solicitation in the future.

This Request for Information does not constitute a formal solicitation. The purpose of the RFI is to determine if there are qualified offerors who would be interested in bidding on these services. The State will use this information to potentially develop a future solicitation.

The State of Alaska is not responsible for any costs associated with the preparation of responses. The issuance of this Request for Information does not obligate the state to purchase any goods or services, extend any rights to prospective vendors nor guarantee that the State of Alaska will proceed with a formal solicitation.