



Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

CLOSING DATE 4/28/17

*Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions:  
Evaluation Design, Planning & Implementation*

**Frequently Asked Questions – Updated April 26, 2017**

## Staff and Partner Roles

### **1. What roles will ECIC and MDE-OGS staff have in the evaluation?**

We anticipate that ECIC, as the lead organization managing the evaluation contract, would have regular contact with the chosen evaluator, likely communicating several times a month as questions or needs arise. We assume that at least monthly status meetings would help ECIC understand progress being made and assist with troubleshooting. ECIC is planning to form an Advisory Committee of local and state-level stakeholders to advise the evaluators on key aspects of the evaluation. We believe stakeholder input throughout the process will ensure the evaluation results will be used both at the state and local levels.

### **2. Are the 2012 evaluators going to still be involved in the project in some way?**

Michigan State University was sent the RFP as part of our overall distribution. If they choose to bid, they will go through the same selection process as all other bidders. There is no formal agreement for their continued involvement at this time.

### **3. To what extent will in-person time be required of stakeholders and how available will they be for this initiative? Can their involvement be through other means (such as teleconferences, surveys) to gather feedback and information if face-to-face is challenging for them?**

While we expect Collaborative and Coalition staff to be involved in some capacity, we are hopeful that evaluators will use their time efficiently. Due to the geographic distance of Michigan, Collaborative and Coalition staff are comfortable using technology for communication and meetings, such as webinars, conference calls, Skype, etc. ECIC and the Office of Great Start often use this technology when providing technical assistance and the previous evaluations used surveys extensively. We would expect an evaluator to consider the outcomes of each meeting or contact and then determine the best method for most effectively meeting the outcomes.

### **4. What is the ECIC's on-site expectation for the vendor for this project?**

As stated, ECIC is very comfortable using webinars or other distance learning methods. We would work with the chosen contractor to develop a reasonable plan for on-site meetings during the evaluation period and the bidder should propose the amount of in-person time they feel is needed based on their previous experience.

## Evaluation Design and Data

- 5. On pages 3 and 4 of the RFP, the five "questions to guide the evaluation" are listed. The RFP notes that these questions are "a minimum." What additional questions is the ECIC interested in for this evaluation?**

The evaluation questions included in the RFP are the questions ECIC and MDE-OGS developed to guide the evaluation design. We do not have additional questions at this time, however acknowledge that an experienced evaluator may consider proposing additional questions for consideration given their experience and other system evaluation research.

- 6. Does each Collaborative conduct an evaluation of their strategic plan? Will the evaluator have access to the evaluation findings?**

The 54 Great Start Collaboratives and 60 Parent Coalitions are not required to "evaluate" their strategic plan. However, they choose to report on at least a portion of the plan twice a year, sharing progress made and challenges. Some Collaboratives/Coalitions may choose to locally evaluate their strategic plan and report progress made, but there is not a consistent process in place across the state.

- 7. Is there an expectation that survey data collected in this study be compared with that collected in previous years, to inform a trend analysis? If so, would ECIC make those legacy data files available to the contractor?**

It is not an expectation for the evaluation design to align with the previous evaluation to inform trend analysis. We recommend each bidder propose their ideas for evaluation design given their experience with evaluation and knowledge of Collaboratives/Coalitions and early childhood system efforts. However, a bidder may propose to align some aspects with the previous evaluation given their review of the previous report and ECIC would work with the chosen bidder to determine what information from the previous evaluation is available to support the next round of evaluation.

- 8. According to the report "Great Start, Great Investment" (2013), metrics have been established for outcomes 1, 2, and 4. What is the current status of metrics for determining early childhood outcome/leading indicator 3- developmental readiness to succeed in school at time of school entry?**

Metrics for Outcome 3 of the Early Childhood Outcomes have not been selected, and continue to be discussed at the state-level Early Childhood Data Governance Council.

- 9. One of the resources listed in Section VII (p. 4 of the RFP)—"Nuts and Bolts..." states that *Each collaborative must choose which outcomes it will work on and then must build its strategic plan around them. Collaboratives next identify which activities they will carry out to help realize the outcomes they have chosen. They also must choose a specific performance measure for each outcome for which they will be held accountable. They report their progress twice a year via an online system through the Michigan Department of Education (p. 27).***

**Is it expected that the contractor evaluates these collaborative-specific outcomes?**

There are not expectations regarding the evaluation design specifics from ECIC or the Michigan Department of Education – Office of Great Start. We hope that bidders will propose their best thinking based on their evaluation experience and knowledge of Collaborative/Coalition efforts. With that said, given the differences in goals, objectives, and strategies between Great Start Collaboratives and Parent Coalitions, a bidder may propose including this type of review and analysis in the evaluation design.

**10. Are you only seeking proposals from Michigan-based organizations?**

The Request for Proposal was distributed widely across Michigan as well as through national system building and evaluation networks. We are seeking proposals from all entities, including those inside and outside of Michigan.

**11. What data do you receive from the coalitions? The RFP says "status of young children" What exactly does this mean? What indicators are you collecting? How often is it collected ( i.e. monthly?)**

Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions report on at least a portion of their strategic plan twice a year, sharing progress made and challenges. The “data on the status of young children” referenced on page four of the RFP refers to an annual quantitative data set created by the Michigan League for Public Policy (MLPP). MLPP pulls available quantitative data together for 48 indicators by county (e.g. infant mortality rate, child abuse and neglect, etc.) and ECIC distributes the data set to Great Start Collaboratives and Parent Coalitions annually, typically in the fall.

**12. What data would be available to the evaluation team?**

The quantitative data set compiled by MLPP will be available to the chosen contractor. Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions also use qualitative data related to system conditions to inform their chosen goals, objectives, and strategies. We anticipate that the chosen contractor will also have access to the strategic plans of the 54 Great Start Collaboratives.

**13. From my understanding you are in the strategic planning process. Could we have a copy of the strategic plan? If not, could we have an outline of potential goals and strategies?**

Are you asking about ECIC’s strategic planning process? ECIC is not conducting strategic planning at this time. ECIC’s most recent strategic plan can be found on our website – [www.ecic4kids.org](http://www.ecic4kids.org). If you are referring to strategic plans for Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions, they each update their strategic plan every three years as part of cohorts. For example, in fiscal year 2017 there are 23 Great Start Collaboratives updating their plan. As stated above, we anticipate the chosen contractor will have access to the strategic plans of the 54 Great Start Collaboratives.

**14. What information you collect on a regular basis from the coalitions and collaboratives. I am assuming that there must be common data you collect from ALL your partners. Thing they have to report back. In other words, what do they have to report to you to justify the money they receive or as outputs of what they do?**

The GSCs/GSPCs are funded by the Michigan Department of Education – Office of Great Start through an annual allocation. As part of their annual application for funding, GSCs/GSPCs identify goals, objectives, strategies, activities and progress and performance measures for each of Michigan’s four early childhood outcomes:

1. Children are born healthy.
2. Children are healthy, thriving, and developmentally on track from birth to third grade.
3. Children are developmentally ready to succeed in school at time of school entry.
4. Children are prepared to succeed in fourth grade and beyond by reading proficiently by the end of third grade.

How GSCs/GSPCs work toward these outcomes is locally determined through a strategic planning process. The planning process includes the collection and examination of quantitative and qualitative data from which GSCs/GSPCs select priority goals, objectives, strategies, etc. for their county(ies). Each year, GSCs/GSPCs are

required to identify at least one goal, objective, and strategy under each outcome area and then report on the status of these twice during the year – mid-year and year-end.

Under Outcome #3, there are two requirements that every GSC/GSPC must work on using consistent language from the Office of Great Start. These two areas are:

- Convene a workgroup focused on making recommendations of community services that support all children's school readiness, also serving as an advisory group to the Great Start Readiness Program.
- Collaborate with Great Start to Quality Resource Centers in the recruitment and engagement of licensed and registered providers to both participate in Great Start to Quality, as well as achieve higher levels of quality.

Other than these two required areas, there is not consistent language regarding goals, objectives, strategies, etc. across GSCs/GSPCs.

**15. Is there a summary of the Collaborative's and Parent Coalition's outcomes, activities, performance measures, and progress? Could this be shared with vendors? (perhaps some of this information is in the reports based on the progress/challenges of their strategic plan?)**

Each Collaborative and Coalition develop their own goals, objectives, strategies, activities, and progress and performance measures based on a local needs assessment process. Several Great Start Collaboratives and Parent Coalitions have websites that may provide information about their prioritized work. It would be difficult for us to share one report or strategic plan example as it may not provide a full picture of the work across the state, however we understand the complexity of designing an evaluation for a state-wide effort that is so locally driven. To assist in bidders thinking regarding evaluation design, we have provided three recently completed strategic plans that may be used as examples. As you can see, all three are different, however each county(ies) used local needs assessment process when determining priorities.

**16. Should we assume that we will be developing an implementation plan as part of the final evaluation report or will it be a separate deliverable?**

In addition to the evaluation design and implementation, the RFP requests a preliminary communications plan for sharing the evaluation results. A formal implementation plan for utilizing the results is not required, but could be included as part of the proposal.

**17. Do the Coalitions and Collaboratives meet regionally on a regular basis? Would that be a point where our team would be able to connect with them to learn more about how their work is going?**

Collaboratives and Coalitions do not currently have regional meetings organized across the state. ECIC planned for two statewide meetings during the current fiscal year. The first was held in November 2016 and the second is planned for August 8, 2017. We are hoping that during the meeting on August 8<sup>th</sup>, the chosen evaluation contractor will be able to share more information about the evaluation plan so GSCs/GSPCs can plan for fiscal year 2018 (FY18). The meeting plan for FY18 beginning October 1, 2017 has not been decided yet. It is possible that the GSC/GSPC statewide meeting schedule may be influenced by the evaluation design from the selected contractor.

**18. The RFP was clear that understanding the environment/context (staffing, funding, fiduciary organization, etc.) within which the GSCs/GSPCs operate was important. Is that information about the structure of each GSC/GSPC already collected and available somewhere or is that something we would need to collect?**

Some of the information listed is collected, but not all. For example, all Great Start Collaboratives and Parent Coalitions receive a funding allocation from the Michigan Department of Education. Their funding allocations are listed on the MDE website [www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde) under the 32p grant. In addition, many Great Start Collaboratives receive grants/funds from other sources. That information is not collected from Great Start Collaboratives statewide. The MDE also receives staffing information for each Collaborative and Coalition as part of their annual application. Lastly, the local Intermediate School District serves for fiduciary for the Collaborative and Coalition funds from the Michigan Department of Education.

### Indirect Costs, Budget, and Funding Source

**19. The RFP states a limit on indirect costs that can be included in the budget. I am assuming this may be tied to Race to the Top funds, but wanted to confirm before we construct our budget that this is indeed the case. Also, am I reading this RFP correctly that we should construct a single 19-month budget period?**

The funding source is Race to the Top funds and there is a limit on indirect as described in the RFP. It is also correct that we are asking for a 19-month budget based on your best estimates related to proposed activities.

**20. We want to clarify the restrictions around the indirect rate. Our understanding is this is limited to 15% on the first \$25,000. We have a federally approved split rate that allows for 17% on all but subcontracts and our subcontract rate is 4.9%. We are funded primarily with cost reimbursement dollars so our indirect recovery is a critical component of our operations in order to have strong compliance with payroll laws, financial requirements, HR practices and IT data security. We strive to have strong compliance with all aspects of nonprofit and federal regulations. With the limits on indirect is there an option to charge costs on an administrative line in the grant?**

ECIC is a sub-recipient of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, therefore any relationship established between ECIC and an entity awarded these funds for evaluation would be considered a sub-recipient – contractor relationship. Due to the nature of that relationship, as outlined in grant [guidance](#), the entity awarded the grant for evaluation can only charge indirect up to the amount that ECIC was approved for, which is 15%. The guidance also states that an entity is allowed to charge less than the fully approved rate. In addition, the cost rate can only be charged “against the first \$25,000 of any contract or subgrant, and only under circumstances that require meaningful administrative support in distributing and handling the contracted...funds.”

The grant guidance does not directly address the ability of any entity receiving these funds to be able to charge direct expenses in the categories that would typically be within the pool of charges for indirect cost, and to combine those direct expenses with charges to indirect.

The option for which it appears you are seeking information, that of charging no indirect whatsoever and budgeting direct expenses to categories of expense that would typically be submitted to your cognizant agency to set your indirect cost rate is allowable, noting that a cost allocation plan would be required.

**21. On page 6, under Itemized Budget, the Corporation has set an indirect cost limit at 15%. Under the Omni-Circular, Section 200.331, requirements for pass-through entities, requires pass-through entities to honor sub-recipients' federally recognized indirect (IDC or F&A) cost rates. Since the funding for this work is from the federal government, and we have a current fully-negotiated, federal indirect rate agreement, we plan to use our rate under this RFP. Do you see any problem for us if we use our federal rate?**

The interpretation of this section of the circular is accurate if the Early Childhood Investment Corporation was the pass-through entity for the Race to The Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. However, ECIC is a sub-recipient of the grant, therefore any relationship established between ECIC and an entity awarded these funds for evaluation would be considered a sub-recipient – contractor relationship. Due to the nature of that relationship, as outlined in [grant guidance](#), the entity awarded the grant for evaluation can only charge indirect up to the amount that ECIC was approved for, which is 15%. The guidance also states that an entity is allowed to charge less than the fully approved rate.

**22. We are a non-profit organization. Can you elaborate on what you would expect to see in a cost allocation plan?**

As a non-profit entity, the OMB Circular A-122 should be consulted for guidance to create a cost allocation plan.

**23. We don't follow A-122 anymore as we are now required to follow the Uniform Guidance. We do have a cost allocation plan that is in compliance with the Uniform Guidance and it looks as if this grant will not allow any adjustments to that plan.**

The funding for this grant was awarded prior to the Uniform Guidance being enacted, and the federal Grant Award Notification indicates that the Circulars in place at that time are to be followed. An updated Cost Allocation Plan that is in alignment with the Uniform Guidance would contain all the elements that were expected within A-122.

**24. As a full-service consulting firm, we use and provide competitive, market based, commercial rates and do not include a breakdown of indirect costs. Rather, we provide competitive, fully inclusive hourly rates and deliverable based pricing for our clients. Our fully inclusive rates include all our costs including overhead. Our accounting system was set up to meet the needs of a for profit consulting organization and as such we do not accumulate overhead and other indirect costs in the pool format as might be seen in the accounting systems of not for profit organizations or Federal Government cost reimbursement based organizations. Based on this understanding, we want to confirm that our bidding with these fully loaded rates is allowable on this scope?**

Yes, this is allowable.

**25. In what format would you like the budget summary and budget detail to be presented?**

There is not a formal requirement related to format. We would hope whatever format is chosen, that it would include all the line items and is easy to interpret.

## Application Process

**26. Is there a deadline to submit questions about the RFP? Also, will there be a public posting of the Q and A's at some point?**

Our plan is to respond to questions directly and compile a listing to be placed on our website at the end of March. We are tracking all inquiries and will plan to send periodic emails when new Q&A have been posted. We have not set a deadline for submitting questions.

**27. What is the process for confirming receipt of proposals?**

Whether delivered in-person or via mail, each proposal will be date and time stamped and checked for the required submission requirements (listed on page 7 of the RFP). An email confirmation will be sent to the contact person listed on the cover page. No proposals will be accepted if received after 5:00pm (EST) on April 28<sup>th</sup>. If a proposal is received after the deadline, but the bidder can provide documentation of paid mail delivery before 5:00pm on the 28<sup>th</sup>, the proposal will be accepted and reviewed.