



First Children's Finance

Guidelines for Requests for Proposals: VT Planning Grant Project
May 24, 2024

About the Vermont Planning Grant Project

First Children's Finance (FCF) is a national non-profit, based in Minneapolis Minnesota with a state office in Vermont. FCF Vermont launched in early 2023 to help start, sustain and grow child care businesses in Vermont by providing business resources and access to capital. In Vermont, we work closely with the Vermont Department of Children and Families Child Development Division, Let's Grow Kids and other statewide agencies.

The acquisition of land and buildings suitable for a child care business often requires upfront expenditures before capital can be raised for the purpose of land or building acquisition. In addition, these upfront expenditures may determine that an intended project is not feasible. The **VT Planning Grant Project** will provide in-kind services, child care business assistance and a small financial stipend to prospective child care businesses or community agencies that wish to plan for a capital construction project for a new or expanded child care operation. Through this request for proposals, **First Children's Finance VT will contract with pre-construction professional services vendors that can provide services such as appraisals, architectural drawings/images, feasibility assessment, funding identification and management, environmental review, and land use permitting – all services that may be needed to help a capital construction project to move forward in Vermont.** Throughout this planning grant project, FCF will provide technical assistance and consulting in the areas of child care business operations, budgeting, staffing, and best practices for child care businesses that receive the in-kind support and funds. Prospective child care businesses or community agencies will apply to use these services as well as a financial stipend. We expect to award 15 of these projects from September 2024–September 2025.

To be considered to provide any of these pre-construction professional services to child care capital construction project, please complete the online application here: <https://firstchildrensfinancevermont.submittable.com/submit/296352/vt-planning-grant-project-rfp>. For more information about First Children's Finance Vermont, please visit our website at <https://firstchildrensfinance.org/vermont-grants>.

RFP Contact

No pre-submittal conference for this solicitation will be conducted. Written questions may be sent via e-mail to the project coordinator no later than the close of business, June 14, 2024. Responses will be shared with all Offeror's no later than June 21, 2024.

All communication between potential Offeror's and First Children's Finance VT shall be with the project coordinator via email at: vtgrants@firstchildrensfinance.org

Potential Submitters are to rely on written statements issued by the project coordinator; any other communications will be considered unofficial and non-binding on First Children's Finance VT. First Children's Finance VT reserves the right to appoint an alternate coordinator during the solicitation process, as may be necessary and convenient.

First Children's Finance shall not be responsible for any expenses incurred by an Offeror in responding to this request. All costs incurred by the Offerors in the preparation, transmittal or presentation of any proposal or material submitted in response to this request will be borne solely by the Offerors.

Only those Offerors who meet the following minimum criteria are eligible to submit a proposal pursuant to this request:

1. Offeror must have experience providing the service described in the application in a related industry (for example, educational buildings, recreation centers, community facilities).
2. Offeror must be willing to demonstrate they have no conflicts of interest with program applicants.
3. Offeror must attest to never being debarred and/or excluded from Federal or State contracts.

Grant Amounts

In 2024, we expect to make ~\$150,000 in contracts and select at least five qualified contractors to deliver these services. Contractors will be selected based on their skills and experience, the needs of clients, geographic location of projects, and other factors as appropriate. The total available funds for these projects through 2025 is \$750,000.

We particularly seek the following skills, experience, and approach:

- An understanding of the early education field, community development
- Ability to navigate complex funding sources, online application systems, and keep up to date on relevant opportunities in field of expertise
- Experience and desire to work with volunteer groups, BIPOC Vermonters, and low-income communities
- Ability to manage projects/client communications independently
- Strong communication and collaboration skills
- Evidence of high success rate with federal and state grants and/or private/donor fundraising
- Grant management/reporting and project management expertise
- A focus on education and skill building, in addition to completing high-quality deliverables

Timeline for Grant Process

Request for proposal deadline is July 1, 2024 by 3PM (ET).

May 28, 2024	Request for proposal released and questions answered
July 1, 2024	Proposals Due
July 30, 2024	Vendor Award Notifications

After July 1, 2024, applications will be considered on a rolling basis until all funds have been awarded or the project is completed (December 2025).

To Submit a Proposal

All proposals must be submitted using FCF's online grants management system.

Please use this link to complete a proposal:

<https://firstchildrensfinancevermont.submittable.com/submit/296352/vt-planning-grant-project-rfp>.

The questions below are provided to prepare to enter your responses into the online system.

Summary of Application Questions:

- 1) Contact information, eligibility and demographics.
- 2) General information about your organization including a brief bio/summary of experience, skills and focus area of work.
- 3) Describe what services you can provide to this project and your capacity through 2026. This may include capacity in hours, number of clients and anticipated average cost per client.
- 4) Describe your experience providing these services, including recent successes and any other relevant information.
- 5) What is the typical process you follow when working with clients? Describe how you determine their needs, create a scope of work, facilitate clear communication, deliver services, follow up.
- 6) Due to the highly regulated nature of child care, the unique design considerations that may be needed to care for young children, and the long open hours of a typical child care business, what unique characteristics do you expect you might need to address in the services you provide?
- 7) What is your hourly rate or typical project fee for the project you described in the scope of work?
- 8) Create a sample budget:

For a client that has found a new location for a building suitable to care for 80-100 young children. The location has an existing structure that will likely require extensive renovation as well as some sitework to install an outdoor play area. The client expects to finance the purchase of the location for \$400,000 with debt financing. The client imagines the whole construction project will cost about \$3 million to complete and they will need to raise these funds through state/federal/private sources. They can apply for this planning grant for up to \$50,000. Please provide a sample budget for the services that you could provide to this client (not to exceed \$50,000). It is also helpful if you can note additional services, you expect they will need that are outside your scope of work.

- 9) Please provide three client references including a contact name, business name, and contact information.
- 10) Is there anything else we should know about your availability, skills/qualifications or approach to this work?

Selection and Notification

Vendors will be selected based on the points awarded in the application review – each application can receive up to 50 points and it is expected that selected vendors will score at or above 35 points. Points will be awarded based on the following scoring system:

- Experience and qualifications, up to 10 points
- Clear and relevant scope of work, 20 points
- Complete, reasonable budget and adequate references, 20 points

All applicants will be notified by July 30 (or within 30 days of their application) of whether they are a selected vendor for this Planning Grant Project. Selected vendors will need to agree to the terms and conditions to engage in this project's work.

Disclosures

This project is funded in part by federal funds, specifically the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

First Children's Finance VT is an equal opportunity provider and employer.