

Request for Proposal

Early Childhood Iowa – Instructions



APPLICATION DEADLINE

Application due date is November 1, 2026 by 12:00 pm. Late applications will not be accepted

Purpose and Overview

The Linking Families and Communities is seeking request for proposals to select qualified applicants to coordinate and implement services and activities for families with children prenatal through age 5 in Calhoun, Pocahontas and Webster County.

[Early Childhood Iowa \(ECI\)](#) is a statewide initiative that distributes funds to designated area boards to support the vision that *Every child beginning at birth will be healthy and successful*. The local Linking Families and Communities consists of members representing citizens, elected officials, education, health, human services, faith, business, and consumer. Linking Families and Communities determines community needs for young children, establishes priorities, and provides funding to programs that improve outcomes for children pre-birth through age 5 and their families. The ECI State Board determines what service types are eligible to be funded by a local area board (see Tool O). This RFP is open to all service types listed in Tool O, however a preference is given to programs that address literacy.

Attachments

- A. [Tool O: ECI Statewide Performance Measures](#)
- B. Scoring Rubric
- C. RFP Application FY27
- D. RFP Budget form FY27

Eligibility

To be considered eligible for funding an application must:

- Serve children and families in one or more of the counties in the Linking Families and Communities service Area.

- Demonstrate the commitment and ability to comply with all reporting requirements relevant to Linking Families and Communities' policies and performance measures listed in Tool O
- Demonstrate the capacity to implement the project and/or service within 30 days of contract execution.
- Work collaboratively with the Linking Families and Communities, early childhood committees, and other regional organizations/agencies providing services to achieve program objectives and successful outcomes.

Ineligible Applicants

- Individuals or entities without an EIN able to receive state funding
- Applicants seeking funding for a one-time purchase or a single activity should not complete an RFP. One-time purchase/activity inquiries should contact Elizabeth Stanek at estanek@linking-families.com
- Family Support Home Visitation Services
- ECI funding cannot be used to cover brick and mortar expenses.

Funding

The Linking Families and Communities receives state funds from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. Linking Families and Communities receives funding in the following categories:

- Administration
- Family Support Home Visitation
- Discretionary

This RFP will be funded from Discretionary. The intent of this RFP is to award one or more contracts.

Legislative stipulations and statewide performance measures apply to all ECI funding. More information about funding regulations and required performance measures can be found on the ECI website under [tool kit resources](#). Allowable uses of ECI funding are outlined in [Tool G](#).

Application Process

1. The Linking Families and Communities Director will complete a technical review of RFP's submitted on time for completeness and eligibility.
2. A comprehensive review of proposals is completed by a committee of the Linking Families and Communities Board. Additional information from the applicant may be requested after the comprehensive review.
3. The committee will provide recommendations to the Linking Families and Communities Board for consideration of approval.

The Linking Families and Communities reserves the right to negotiate proposal details and may grant less than the amount requested. Applicants awarded less than the amount requested will have an opportunity to resubmit budgets and proposed outputs based on the awarded amount.

The Linking Families and Communities reserves the right to reject, in whole or in part, any or all applications, and to cancel this RFP if it is the best interest of Linking Families and Communities.

The Linking Families and Communities is subject to Iowa *Open Meetings* and *Open Records* laws. An RFP submitted and reviewed by the Linking Families and Communities and/or committees of the board are considered public documents and can be reproduced.

General Instructions

The narrative portion of the application and cover page are found in a fillable PDF titled RFP Application FY27. The Budget form is a separate Excel document. Detailed budget instructions are below. All questions for the RFP should be directed to Elizabeth Stanek, (515) 955-5437, estanek@linking-families.com

- All proposals are due by November 1, 2026 by 12:00 pm
- Cover page and Budget form should be signed and dated. Electronic signatures are accepted.
- All questions in the application must be answered.
- **Submit: 1(one)** electronic version of the completed RFP Application and Budget form to Elizabeth Stanek at estanek@linking-families.com. Documents may be combined into one PDF for submission.

Funding Guiding Principles

Proposals will be evaluated using a scoring system that includes the 4 sections (15 questions) on the RFP Application Narrative and the Budget from (separate excel document). Section 1: Program Description - 5 points, Section 2: Operation and Need - 25 points, Section 3: Implementation – Quality and Efficiency - 25 points, Section 4: Outcomes - 25 points, and Budget - 20 points.

Priority may be given to proposals serving families in communities of higher risk within the service area. Indicators and reports used by ECI to determine areas of need can be found in the *Data Drive* dashboard on [Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision Making \(I2D2\)](#) website.

Notification of Awards

Applicants will receive email notification of the Linking Families and Communities' decision within 5 business days from the date of the meeting at which the application was considered. It is the intent of Linking Families and Communities to issue contracts effective January 1, 2027.

TIMELINE	
**Timeline is subject to change by the Linking Families and Communities as needed	
September 24, 2026	RFP released • Notice sent via email to current contractors and local ECI partners & posted on the Linking Families and Communities website.
November 1, 2026	Proposals Due • Electronic submission only
TBD	Proposals reviewed by a committee of the Linking Families and Communities
December 10, 2026	Linking Families and Communities Board meeting • Committee will submit funding recommendations for discussion and approval
January 1 – June 30, 2027	Anticipated contract duration

Budget Instructions

The Budget form is in excel and includes some embedded basic addition formulas. The Budget form is not locked to allow programs to add narrative space as needed. Headings, required categories, and general layout of the excel sheet should not be altered. For technical assistance help with the budget please contact Elizabeth Stanek at estanek@linking-families.com.

Budget should be calculated based on the estimated expenses of the project for the proposed contract period. Provide detailed narrative for each line item in the space identified on the excel form. Show the math that justifies the total line item requested.

Other Funding

Other funding is not required to be eligible for funding, but applicants are strongly encouraged to identify other funds being used to support the direct service/activity in the application. Other funds include grants, donations, and/or additional revenue, from an outside source, specific to the service/activity. In-kind funding is not to be noted in the application.

Direct salaries: Include all staff and supervisors to be paid by the grant and doing work directly related to the funded program. Include a detailed breakdown of the total salary per staff person. For example – 1 consultant (.5FTE) 20hr/wk. @ \$20/hr. X 50wks = \$20,000. Salaries of an agency wide administrator should not be included in this section. See Indirect Administrative below.

Benefits: Includes all benefits associated with the salary of the direct staff identified for the program such as social security, IPERS, health insurance, 401K, etc.

Contracted Services: Includes any subcontracted staff that will be used to directly support the program requesting funding. Provide hourly and/or daily rates and the total cost.

Travel: Includes mileage, lodging and meals that are directly related to program activities of direct staff. Mileage rate shall not exceed the current state of Iowa rate. Hotel rates and meals shall not exceed the current state of Iowa rate. Rates can be found on the Iowa Department of Administrative Services website – [Travel and Relocation](#). Itemized receipts will be required. Travel does not include fuel expenses. Fuel receipts are only accepted if a contractor has fuel identified as a supply directly related to the service such as a transportation specific program.

Equipment: Includes equipment purchased with an expected useful life of 1(one) year or longer. Expenditures for single items over \$1,000.00 must be itemized and inventoried.

Office Supplies: Includes miscellaneous supplies and materials such as pens, paper, ink, copies, etc. The amount may be shown in one lump sum.

Operational: Includes costs associated with operating the program such as rent, utilities, phone, and internet. Operational may also include insurance directly related to the program and annual fees associated with the use of a particular model or curriculum.

Staff Professional Development: Includes registration fees to attend trainings and/or conferences for the purpose of increasing direct staff knowledge.

Incentives: includes items and or earned monetary rewards that are provided to program participants/families/children actively enrolled in the services/activities. Scholarships and salary stipends provided to program participants would be considered an incentive expense.

Indirect Administration: Indirect costs are those that are incurred for common or joint objectives benefiting all programs and cannot be readily identified or assignable to a final cost. Indirect costs relate to central management and administrative functions that are necessary and beneficial to all programs administered by the organization. Photocopies for the purpose of submitting claims are considered indirect administrative costs and should not be billed monthly as a direct program expense. All programs are encouraged to utilize indirect administration even if your agency does not have a formally established indirect rate. See ECI [Tool H \(A\)](#) for further information.

Applicants with a federally approved indirect administration MUST include documentation of the rate identified in the budget. Applicants that do not have a federally approved rate may request up to 5% for indirect administration. The 5% indirect rate is calculated based on the subtotal request to the Linking Families and Communities not the total operating costs of the program in other funding is received.