



INVITATION TO NEGOTIATE (ITN)

LEADING GRANT

CHILDCARE ACCREDITATION

ITN Designation Number: PRO 2026 – 08

Release Date: 11/14/2025

Amount Per Proposal: \$200,000

Total Grant Allocation: \$200,000

Contract Term if Awarded: 04/01/2026 – 09/30/2026

Contract Period: 04/01/2026 – 09/30/2030

LEADING GRANT

On September 25, 2025, the Children's Board of Hillsborough County (CBHC) approved the release of this competitive Invitation to Negotiate (ITN). A contract will be awarded to an organization that will primarily serve the ONEhillsborough zip codes with a collaborative approach to support CBHC's focus area: Children are Ready to Learn and Succeed. Leading Grants are expected to meet at least three measurable outcomes annually.

CBHC is seeking proposals from organizations to support licensed school readiness childcare providers in the ONEhillsborough zip codes in obtaining Gold Seal Accreditation. This service priority was identified during the CBHC board strategic planning meeting and is one of the top service priorities on the CBHC strategic plan.

Rebecca Bacon, Executive Director
Robin Wright DeLaVergne, Board Chair

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ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S BOARD

CBHC FOCUS AREAS



In 1988, Hillsborough County residents agreed that improving support and services to our county's children and families was a major priority for our community's future. Thus, the CBHC was established in 1989 as a Special Taxing District allowing a levy not to exceed 50 cents per \$1,000 of the assessed property tax.

CBHC is committed to funding opportunities through strategic grant development principles, leveraging strategies and research with community perspectives in mind to promote wellness, learning, professional development, and enhance service delivery systems. CBHC releases

funding opportunities each year based on revenue projections, contract terms ending, and Board approval.

Our **VISION** is for Hillsborough County to be recognized as one of the top places in the nation to raise children.

We work toward this vision by *investing in partnerships and quality programs to support the success of all children and families in Hillsborough County* – that’s our **MISSION**.

As we partner with community providers, we live by our **CORE VALUES** of Integrity, Excellence, Teamwork and Respect.

FUNDING PLATFORMS: primary funding platforms to support its strategic focus areas:

- Investment Grants (more than \$1,000,000);
- Uniting Grants (between \$300,000 and \$999,999);
- Leading Grants (up to \$299,999); and
- Technical Assistance Grants (under \$10,000).

2024 COMMUNITY IMPACT

CBHC invested more than \$49 million in one hundred and fifty-two programs to address the needs of our community. Contracted programs served 163,068 children and their families with an additional 4,008 professionals who received support services. CBHC works in partnership with funded programs to evaluate the impact of services provided to children and families. We assess the overall effectiveness of the investments within a Results-Based Accountability framework by measuring:

- *How much did we do;*
- *How well did we do it; and*
- *Is anyone better off?*

Additional information may be accessed on the website at www.childrensboard.org.

ABOUT HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Our funded programs support children and families in **Hillsborough County, Florida**.

According to the most current American Community Survey, the total population in Hillsborough County, Florida is 1,581,426, of which almost 5.6% are children under five years of age, and 21.5% are children under eighteen. In addition, 45.8% of the population is white alone (not Hispanic or Latino), 30.4% is Hispanic, and 18.6% is Black or African American alone.

ABOUT ONEHILLSBOROUGH

ONEhillsborough is a community-driven initiative structured around the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH). It is designed to implement tailored, holistic, and meaningful solutions to address long-term issues that communities face within our county.

The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) which include economic stability; education access; health and health care access; neighborhoods and built environment; social and community supports, are the foundation for these solutions. Addressing these elements will help ensure resources to build thriving communities.

The overarching aims are to ensure more economically stable households, engaging learning environments, preventative healthcare and healthy living, safe neighborhoods with health promoting amenities, and easy access to necessary resources.

ONEhillsborough is currently implemented in 33603, 33610, and 33619.

Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability: Empower individuals and families to be financially self-sufficient to meet their obligations and enjoy their lives. This includes enabling people to build equity which leads to wealth.

Education Access: Empower parents to help and advocate for their children and facilitate parent/educator/business collaboration in the long-term best interest of all students.

Health and Health Care Access: Enable people to practice healthy habits that prevent negative health outcomes and provide simplified and consistent access to high-quality health care.

Neighborhoods and Built Environment: Promote government policies that empower and protect residents to make neighborhoods safe and desirable.

Social and Community Supports: Improve civic participation and reduce negative long-term impact of engagement with the criminal justice system.

SECTION ONE – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To fund one direct service program that addresses promotion, prevention, and/or early intervention. Services must reflect best practices and improve access for children going to school, families residing or professionals working in Hillsborough County. The ITN is open in one CBHC focus area:

- Children are Ready to Learn and Succeed

Services must also align with the following Social Determinant of Health:

- Education Access

The CBHC Board of Directors approved a total of \$300,000 to support childcare accreditation efforts. Of this amount, the Board approved that \$100,000 be set aside to provide participating centers and family childcare homes with an additional 20% payment for each School Readiness child served during the accreditation process, helping to promote stability and successful completion.

Many childcare centers and family childcare homes in low-income and historically underserved communities lack access to the resources needed to achieve Goal Seal accreditation. Supporting Gold Seal accreditation will strengthen the quality of childcare centers and family childcare homes while increasing the financial resources available to better prepare children for school.

According to 2024–2025 fiscal year data from the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County, only two percent of providers serving children birth to age 5 and eleven percent of providers serving all age groups in the ONEhillsborough zip codes hold Gold Seal Accreditation.

Zip Code	Gold Seal for All Ages of Children	Gold Seal for birth to 5	Not Gold Seal	Grand Total
33603	0	1	7	8
33610	5	0	32	37
33619	5	1	41	47
Grand Total	10	2	80	92

Within the ONEhillsborough zip codes (33603, 33610, and 33619), fourteen licensed childcare providers, with at least 60 percent of their enrollment identified as school readiness children, remain unaccredited. The initial cohort will include a subset of these providers, determined by provider readiness and overall cost considerations. The selected provider will work collaboratively with the ONEhillsborough team to determine which sites will participate in the accreditation process.

Intent: The purpose of this procurement is to fund an organization to support licensed school readiness childcare providers in the ONEhillsborough zip codes to obtain Gold Seal Accreditation within eighteen months. Eligible applicants include accrediting entities, as well as organizations or consultants affiliated with the identified accrediting bodies.

Three accrediting options have been identified as the most appropriate for the ONEhillsborough communities. These options were selected because they emphasize teacher child interactions, family engagement, and overall program quality. They ensure a healthy and safe environment, while limiting the need for capital-intensive facility improvements. This focus makes them more accessible and sustainable for licensed childcare providers serving low-income families.

Accreditation Options:

- Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) – www.faccm.org
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) – www.necpa.net
- National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC) – www.earlylearningleaders.org

The selected grantee will:

1. Be responsible for delivering technical assistance, training, and hands-on support to ensure participating providers achieve successful Gold Seal Accreditation.
2. Conduct orientations to inform licensed childcare providers of the accreditation process and self-assessment.
3. Collaborate with licensed childcare providers to conduct a pre-accreditation assessment.
4. Conduct portfolio review.
5. Conduct on-site technical assistance visits.
6. Deliver individualized coaching to owners and directors until accreditation is achieved.

Applicants should propose the number of providers that can be supported to achieve accreditation within the available budget of \$200,000.

Priority Population: The selected provider will offer childcare accreditation to licensed school readiness childcare providers located within the ONEhillsborough zip codes: 33603, 33610, and 33619.

1.1 NOT SEEKING TO FUND

- Virtual Services required for service delivery;
- Sub-contracted services;
- Any type of Shelter Occupancy and/or Operating costs;

- Expansions of currently funded programs by CBHC.

1.2 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- Refer to Appendix #1: Submissions are only accepted through SurveyMonkey Apply.
- Refer to Appendix #2: Governing Board Policies.
- Refer to Appendix #3: General Terms and Conditions in Appendix.
- CBHC funding or resources shall not be used to supplant funding for activities which other local, state, or federal governmental agencies are obligated by statute, administrative rule, or local ordinance to support.
- CBHC accepts no responsibility for any expense incurred by the Proposer in the preparation and presentation of such Proposal.
- Services and resources funded by the CBHC are available to all families and children who are eligible for services and resources, as determined by the funded agency's program eligibility and admission criteria.
- Any CBHC Grantee (current or former) deemed out of compliance with contractual obligations may be ineligible for CBHC funding.
- Eligible applicants include accrediting entities, as well as organizations or consultants affiliated with the identified accreditation bodies.
- There is the expectation that a Grantee will procure, pay for, and maintain Liability Insurances during the contract term per General Terms and Conditions.
- There is an expectation that all Proposers are informed and comply with:
 - Americans with Disabilities Act. Refer to <https://adata.org/factsheet/ADA-overview>
 - Federal, state, and local requirements for Level Two background screening. Refer to www.myflfamilies.com.

1.3 RESTRICTED COMMUNICATIONS

Communication with CBHC personnel, Community Review Team members, and/or CBHC Governing Board members regarding this Invitation to Negotiate, from date of release through Board review or approval may result in disqualification of the proposal.

1.4 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA COLLECTION

If awarded, Grantees will be required to collect and submit demographic data located in **Appendix (#4)** for all participants and/or professionals served. Outcome data may also be required to be collected and entered based on the tools selected to measure impact. Grantee may need to use the CBHC Analytical Tracking System to enter information.

1.5 PROCESS TIMELINE – DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

DEADLINE / DUE DATE	ACTIVITY
11/19/2025 3:30pm	Information Session <i>In-Person</i> Children’s Board 1002 East Palm Ave. Tampa, FL 33605
12/02/2025 by 11:59pm	Written Proposer Questions Only send to: ONEhillsborough@childrensboard.org Specify ITN designation number in subject line.
12/09/2025	Final Answers to Questions posted on CBHC website
12/19/2025 by 11:59pm	Proposal Submission
Week of 01/12/2026	Community Review Team Session(s)
Week of 1/19/2025	Questions for Recommended Proposer(s) - Optional
02/26/2026	Board Review for Approval of Funding Recommendation(s)
04/01/2026	If awarded: Contract Start Date

SPECIAL NOTES:

- The recorded information session may be available on the CBHC website under Funding/Funding Opportunities.
- All information session attendees must sign in with the organization name, attendee’s name, and contact email.
- Pre-registration or attendance at the information session is not required.

1.6 APPENDIX DOCUMENTS ARE FOR INFORMATION ONLY

1. Survey Monkey Apply Guide
2. Relative Governing Board Policies/Standard Conditions for Procurement
3. General Terms and Conditions
4. Required Demographic Data
5. Matrix/Workplan Instructions
6. New Program Funding Budget Instructions
7. Community Review Team Scoring Criteria/Checklist

END OF SECTION ONE

SECTION TWO – PROPOSAL CONTENT AND SUBMISSION

2. COVER SHEET AND SIGNATURE PAGE – ATTACHMENT (#1) (6 POINTS)

Required Attachment #1 is the Cover Sheet and Signature Page which has two components:

1. Answers to Cover Sheet questions about the Applicant Organization and Program are completed within SurveyMonkey Apply.
2. Download Attachment #1 to print the Signature Page from www.childrensboard.org/budgeting/revenues-and-expenditures/funding-opportunities/.
 - **Two distinct individuals** (Authorized Official and Board Chair) must date and sign the Signature Page.
 - Scan and upload the document to SurveyMonkey Apply.

SPECIAL NOTE:

- Digital signatures are acceptable.

2.1 PROPOSAL NARRATIVE GUIDELINES

The Narrative must include the following information and cannot exceed **3,000 words**.

2.1.1 ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW (10 POINTS)

- a) Organization's Mission Statement;
- b) Eligible applicants must be one of the three identified accrediting agencies or a consultant formally trained and authorized to conduct accreditation through one of these agencies. Applicants should describe their organization's mission and history, experience supporting accreditation for early learning providers, and work in communities similar to the ONEhillsborough zip codes. The overview should also reflect the organization's philosophy on equitable service delivery and authentic community engagement.
- c) Briefly describe qualifications and background of the management and finance staff and include if they are paid employees, volunteers, or contracted;
- d) Provide an example of how the organization ensures equal opportunity to employ staff, recruit volunteers, and recruit Board members based on the needs of the organization and demographic composition of the ONEhillsborough zip codes.
- e) Identify the key personnel who will lead and manage this grant and describe their relevant experience supporting early learning programs, including work in communities similar in demographics or needs to those served by the ONEhillsborough Initiative;

Include a description of each individual's qualifications and approach to building meaningful community relationships.

- f) Disclose any history of contract cancellation, filing of bankruptcy, lawsuits against the organization or its predecessor organization(s); and
- g) Describe the organization's approach to ensuring quality and accountability in managing grant funding, including how community feedback, internal learning, and staff oversight inform efforts to:
 - Monitor and fulfill grant responsibilities;
 - Meet reporting timelines; and
 - Ensure sound fiscal management.

2.1.2 FINANCIAL CAPABILITY (10 POINTS)

- a) Indicate which accounting system is used by the organization;
- b) Indicate if written financial policies and procedures have been established; and
- c) Provide an example of how one is used in daily operations for managing grants.

2.1.3 STATEMENT OF NEED AND POPULATION TO BE SERVED (10 POINTS)

- a) Provide a summary of the need for accreditation support among early learning providers, including a description of the target population to be served (e.g., licensed childcare centers or family childcare homes, age groups served, and communities represented).
- b) Specify the eligibility criteria for providers to participate in the proposed accreditation support program.

2.1.4 PROPOSED PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND DESIGN (15 POINTS)

- a) What are the main services to be provided for which funding is needed?
- b) Specify location, duration, and frequency of main services;
- c) Indicate average length of time in program;
- d) How will model fidelity be sustained?
- e) Describe how input from childcare providers and families has informed the organization's approach to accreditation support, and how ongoing feedback will be used to guide implementation and continuous quality improvement. Explain how the organization ensures its services remain responsive to the needs and priorities of the communities and providers it serves.
- f) Describe staff and/or volunteer training requirements for the model;
- g) Describe strategies to enroll and retain participants;
- h) Describe how you ensure staff and practices are respectful and responsive to the needs of the people you serve; and

- i) Describe software or tools utilized to collect, track, and report both demographic information and measurable performance outcomes.

2.1.5 PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION (15 POINTS)

- a) Specify **Informal** Partnerships, in-kind resources or Other Vendor Services necessary for agencies to deliver quality services and describe their role in the proposed program.

SPECIAL NOTE:

- Informal Partnerships do not require Sub-contracts for the purposes of this ITN.
- See **Appendix (#6)** for definition of Sub-contract and Other Vendor Services.

END OF PROPOSER NARRATIVE

2.2 ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS

2.2.1 MATRIX/WORK PLAN – ATTACHMENT #2 – (10 POINTS)

Required Attachment #2 is the Matrix/Work Plan which outlines how the Proposer will meet outcomes and deliverables, refer to **Appendix (#5)** Matrix/Work Plan Instructions. Complete and keep to one page for each outcome and deliverable below.

Objective: One sentence with the total number of participants that will be enrolled with a description of priority population, main service and location of service.

Proposed Program Activities: Brief and specific titles of service provided to priority population with frequency and duration.

Outcomes: Participating childcare providers (centers and family childcare homes) will be expected to achieve Gold Seal Accreditation within eighteen (18) months of entering the cohort. Complete the Matrix/Work Plan with the following outcomes and deliverables:

1. At least # childcare providers have increased awareness of accreditation support opportunities.
 - Number of childcare provider orientation sessions conducted.
 - Number of attendees/childcare providers participating in each session.
2. At least # childcare providers sign agreements to become accredited within 18 months.
3. At least # participating childcare providers achieve Gold Seal Accreditation status within 18 months of signed agreements. (Applicable in year one or two)

4. At least # children accessing quality childcare services in newly accredited sites.
(Applicable in year one or two)
5. Summary report on Technical Assistance provided including:
 - Number of TA visits conducted with each provider to support completion of childcare provider self-assessment.
 - Number of participating childcare providers passing pre-accreditation assessments.
 - Number of childcare provider portfolios reviewed.
 - Number of on-site visits conducted and follow-up action steps:
 - reports submitted to the provider identifying outstanding issues to be resolved
 - accreditation documentation submitted to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), as appropriate.
 - Number/type of post-accreditation support provided, as applicable.(applicable in year one or two)

The contracted organization shall ensure ongoing communication with the CBHC contract manager regarding progress, challenges, and any barriers that may impact timely and successful achievement of Gold Seal Accreditation.

Data Source: Name a proposed measurement tool for each outcome if available and where the data will be stored.

SPECIAL NOTE:

- The Matrix/Work Plan activity column is not for staff administrative tasks or duties.
- The Matrix/Work Plan will be finalized in partnership with CBHC during contract development if an award is granted.

2.2.2 BUDGET – ATTACHMENT (#3) (10 POINTS)

Required Attachment #3 is the Budget in which Proposers should include necessary funds to operate the program effectively according to the service delivery model to meet outcomes.

Refer to the New Program Funding Budget Instructions, **Appendix (#6)** to develop the budget summary, salary detail, and budget narrative for First Year and Second Year Operating Budget.

First Year Operating Budget is the amount deemed necessary for startup and services or to fully operate a year-round program between **April 1, 2026, and September 30, 2026.**

- First Year Operating Budget amount may not exceed **\$200,000**.

Second Year Operating Budget is the amount deemed necessary to fully operate the program between **October 1, 2026 and September 30, 2027**.

- Second Year Operating Budget amount may not exceed **\$200,000**.

Complete and upload the required budget for both First- and Second-Year funding using the Excel file posted with the release which includes **four** tabs:

- Tab (1) – New Program Funding Budget Summary,
- Tab (2) – Salary Detail,
- Tab (3) – First Year Budget Narrative, and
- Tab (4) – Second Year Budget Narrative.

SPECIAL NOTES:

- CBHC disperses funds on a cost reimbursement basis, which means that expenses must be paid prior to requesting reimbursement.
- Do not change or alter the Excel form.
- First Year budget may include one-time expenses that may not be necessary in Second Year.
- Unallowable expenses included in the budget are subject to removal and the overall budget may be reduced if Proposer is recommended for funding.
- If the program charges fees for services, they must be included in the “other funding sources” line of the budget under the revenue section.
- Applicants should propose the number of providers that can be supported to achieve accreditation within the available budget of \$200,000.

2.2.3 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN – ATTACHMENT (#4) (6 POINTS)

- Complete template provided to upload a **one-page** Implementation Plan based on the **First Year Activities** which includes anticipated **start date** for services.

2.2.4 BOARD OF DIRECTORS – ATTACHMENT (#5) (3 POINTS)

Complete and upload template provided.

SPECIAL NOTE: This list will not be shared or used to solicit donations.

2.2.5 LETTERS OF SUPPORT – ATTACHMENT (#6) (5 POINTS)

Required when Proposer intends to:

- Use space in locations not owned or rented by proposer.
- Receive in kind goods or services for the proposed program.
- Serve populations that require referrals from specific sources.
- Demonstrate authentic connections with the early learning community by providing letters of support or testimonials from childcare providers who have previously benefited from the proposer's accreditation services.

SPECIAL NOTES:

- Up to 3 current letters may be uploaded in SurveyMonkey Apply.
- Letters include what will be provided to the proposed program.
- Letters should be on the agency's letterhead and signed by an agency representative.

2.2.6 AUDIT, REVIEW, OR UNAUDITED ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS – ATTACHMENT #7 (NOT SCORED)

Upload the agency's most recent Audit, Review or Unaudited Annual Financial Statements defined as:

- **Audit** is required if the agency's total expenses are greater than or equal to \$300,000.
- **Review** is allowed if the agency's total expenses are less than \$300,000.
- **Unaudited Annual Financial Statements** allowed if the agency's total expenses are less than \$300,000, there is no current Audit or Review and the agency is not currently funded by CBHC. Unaudited Annual Financial Statements are:
 - Income Statement
 - Statement of Cash Flow
 - Statement of Changes in Equity

Audit or Review submission based on Agency Fiscal Year please refer to the table below:

Agency's Fiscal Year:	Audit / Review to be uploaded:
4/1/2024 - 3/31/2025	Year End for 2025
7/1/2024 – 6/30/2025	Year End for 2024
10/1/2024 - 9/30/2025	Year End for 2024
1/1/2025 – 12/31/2025	Year End for 2024

2.3 SURVEY MONKEY APPLY SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Required submissions via SurveyMonkey Apply (SMA), available at

<https://cbhcgrants.smapply.org/>

- a) **Cover Sheet** (Form in SMA)
- b) **Signature Page** (Attachment #1 template provided, upload PDF file to SMA)
- c) **Narrative** (Form in SMA)
- d) **Matrix** (Attachment #2 template provided, upload PDF or Word file to SMA)
- e) **Budget** (Attachment #3 template provided, upload Excel file to SMA)
- f) **Implementation Plan** (Attachment #4 template provided, upload PDF or Word file to SMA)
- g) **Board of Directors** (Attachment #5 template provided, upload PDF or Word file to SMA)
- h) **Letters of Support** (Attachment #6) (No template provided; upload PDF file to SMA)
- i) **Audit, Review, Financial Statements** (Attachment #7) (No Template, upload PDF file to SMA)

SPECIAL NOTES:

- Proposers must hit **"Submit"** in SurveyMonkey Apply for proposal to be considered.
- Use **Appendix (#1)** for directions on how to use the online grant application system, contact information for SurveyMonkey Apply support staff, and links to frequently asked questions.
- Templates provided can be found on the CBHC website located at:
www.childrensboard.org/budgeting/revenues-and-expenditures/funding-opportunities/
- Proposals **will not** be accepted by e-mail, mail, courier, or hand delivery.
- Do not include active web links in any responses.

Incomplete submissions may be disqualified.