

INVITATION TO BID
Early Childhood Consultant at
Children's Friend
153 Summer Street
Providence, RI 02903



March 27, 2026

CHILDREN'S FRIEND

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Providence, RI 02903

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Section 1:

Introduction

Children's Friend ("Owner") is pleased to invite qualified consultants to respond to this Request for Proposal (RFP) for an Early Childhood Consultant to serve as Project Coordinator and Community Engagement Lead for the launch and growth of our Market Rate Child Care Program. The intention of this RFP is to solicit responses and formal proposals from experienced professionals with demonstrated expertise in market-rate child care operations, enrollment growth, and community engagement. Children's Friend intends to select a single consultant to support the organization for a six-month engagement.

About Children's Friend

Children's Friend is Rhode Island's first child-serving non-profit agency, providing services for children and families in need for 190 years.

Founded in 1834 in Providence, the agency started as a home for abandoned children and has evolved into one of the state's most innovative human service agencies. Guided by its mission, Children's Friend is an innovative leader in improving the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable young children. By reaching children in their earliest years and working with the entire family, Children's Friend helps children grow up in the best possible environment while assisting their families in becoming self-sufficient.

Challenges

Through its more than 190-year history, Children's Friend has grown alongside the communities it serves and continues to be a leader in providing comprehensive services to Rhode Island's most vulnerable children and families. As the organization evolves, Children's Friend is also expanding its early childhood education offerings to include market-rate child care, positioning the agency to serve a broader range of families while strengthening long-term program sustainability.

As part of this effort, Children's Friend has identified several operational and strategic challenges that must be addressed to successfully grow the market-rate child care program.

First, community awareness and perception may present a barrier to enrollment growth. Families may primarily associate Children's Friend with publicly funded or subsidized services and may not realize that the organization offers high-quality early childhood education options open to all families. Increasing visibility and strengthening the organization's presence in the community will be essential to expanding enrollment and repositioning the program in the marketplace.

Second, a structured enrollment and referral pipeline is still being developed. While tours and family inquiries occur, they are not currently part of a consistent or coordinated intake and follow-up system. The organization is seeking to establish clear ownership of the enrollment pipeline,

implement referral tracking, and build stronger partnerships with community organizations, employers, pediatricians, and other referral sources.

Finally, greater coordination and accountability are needed to move the program from planning to execution. Leadership has identified the need for a single point person to coordinate community outreach, enrollment growth strategies, referral systems, and internal alignment across departments.

Children's Friend is seeking a consultant who can help address these challenges by providing structured project coordination, strengthening community engagement, supporting enrollment growth, and helping the organization establish the systems and partnerships necessary for a successful market-rate child care program.

Ultimately, Children's Friend understands that the strength of its programs is directly connected to the strength of its community relationships and workforce. By investing in thoughtful growth and strong program infrastructure, the organization aims to continue providing high-quality early childhood education while advancing our mission.

Purpose

Children's Friend is seeking proposals from qualified consultants with expertise in market-rate child care operations, early childhood program development, and community engagement to support the launch and growth of our Market Rate Child Care Program.

The selected consultant will serve as a Project Coordinator and Community Engagement Lead to assist the organization in strengthening enrollment systems, increasing community awareness, and developing the operational infrastructure necessary to support sustainable growth of the program.

We are asking respondents to provide information regarding their experience and services in the following areas:

- Market Rate Child Care Strategy and Operations
- Enrollment Pipeline Development and Referral Systems
- Community Outreach and Partnership Development
- Early Childhood Workforce Recruitment and Pipeline Development
- Market Positioning and Family Engagement Strategies
- Program Performance Tracking and Data Reporting

Partnering with a consultant for this engagement is a strategic investment intended to bring specialized expertise, execution capacity, and an external perspective to this important initiative. The consultant will work alongside Children's Friend leadership to translate strategic goals into actionable plans, support cross-departmental coordination, and strengthen the organization's presence in the community.

By leveraging the knowledge and experience of a consultant partner, our objective is to increase enrollment, strengthen community relationships, stabilize program operations, and position Children's Friend as a high-quality early childhood provider open to all families.

Confidentiality Statement

All information presented in this RFP, including information subsequently disclosed by Children's Friend during the proposal process shall be considered confidential and should not be released to outside parties. This document represents a request for proposals only and in no way should it be construed as a contract or letter of intent.

Section 2:

Scope of Solution and Services:

Children's Friend is seeking an Early Childhood Consultant with demonstrated experience in market-rate child care operations, enrollment growth, and community engagement who will take the time to understand the organization's mission, staff culture, and the communities we serve. The goal of this engagement is to establish a collaborative partnership that helps Children's Friend successfully launch and strengthen its market-rate child care program.

The selected consultant will work closely with Children's Friend leadership to provide strategic guidance and hands-on coordination to support the successful implementation of the program. The consultant will partner with key staff across departments, including Early Childhood Programs, Marketing, Philanthropy, Finance, and Talent. It is expected that the consultant will also engage with staff, community partners, and prospective families as part of this work. We are asking respondents to provide information regarding their experience and capabilities in the following areas:

Expertise in Market Rate Child Care Program Development.

Demonstrate experience supporting the development, launch, or expansion of market-rate child care programs. This includes reviewing current program structures, assessing market positioning, and recommending strategies that align with the organization's financial goals, community needs, and operational capacity.

Enrollment Growth and Referral System Development

Assist in designing and implementing a structured enrollment pipeline that includes inquiry management, tours, follow-up processes, and referral tracking. Experience building partnerships with community organizations, pediatric practices, employers, and other referral sources is highly valued. The consultant should help Children's Friend move from passive inquiries to a proactive enrollment strategy.

Community Engagement and Outreach Strategy

Support the development of a strong community presence to increase awareness of Children's Friend's market-rate child care program. This includes identifying key community events, attending

meetings, establishing relationships with potential referral partners, and helping position Children's Friend as a high-quality early childhood provider open to all families.

Consultant Availability and Engagement Expectations

The selected consultant is expected to maintain a strong working presence with Children's Friend staff and leadership throughout the engagement period and must work onsite at Children's Friend at least one (1) day per week to support effective coordination and collaboration. In addition to onsite work, the consultant will also be expected to represent Children's Friend in the community as part of the outreach and enrollment strategy, including attending community meetings, networking events, family engagement activities, and other events that support increased awareness and enrollment in the Market Rate Child Care Program. The consultant should be comfortable serving as a public-facing representative of Children's Friend, building relationships with community partners and potential referral sources while communicating the organization's mission and program offerings.

Early Childhood Workforce Recruitment and Pipeline Development

Provide guidance on strategies to address workforce challenges, particularly in infant and toddler classrooms. This may include exploring recruitment strategies, developing partnerships with higher education institutions, identifying opportunities in the talent pipeline, and recommending approaches to strengthen educator recruitment and retention.

Program Performance Monitoring and Data Tracking

Assist in developing simple and effective tracking systems to monitor key performance indicators such as tour-to-enrollment conversion rates, referral sources, classroom capacity, and enrollment trends. The consultant should provide regular updates and help leadership use data to inform decision-making and continuous improvement.

Operational Coordination and Project Management

Serve as the central point of coordination for the market-rate child care initiative during the engagement period. The consultant will help ensure alignment across internal teams, track progress toward established goals, identify potential barriers, and recommend solutions that keep the project moving forward.

Strategic Growth and Sustainability Planning

Provide strategic guidance to support the long-term sustainability of the market-rate child care program. This includes identifying opportunities to strengthen enrollment, improve operational systems, and position the program for future growth while maintaining alignment with Children's Friend's mission and values.

Risk Mitigation and Sector Awareness

Stay informed of relevant trends, regulatory considerations, and operational challenges within the early childhood sector. The consultant should bring expertise that helps Children's Friend anticipate risks, adapt to changing conditions, and strengthen the program's competitiveness within the child care marketplace.

Section 3:

Tentative Acquisition Timeline

Children’s Friend intends to complete the selection process using the following schedule. However, Children’s Friend reserves the right to adjust or reschedule milestones, as necessary. Any changes to the schedule will be issued as an Addendum.

| Task | Completion Date |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Release RFP | March 27, 2026 |
| Intent to Respond Due | April 15, 2026 |
| Vendor Questions Due | April 17, 2026 |
| Children’s Friend Response to Questions | April 24, 2026 |
| Responses Due from Vendor | May 1, 2026 |
| Finalists Notified | No later than May 22, 2026 |
| Vendor Presentations/Demonstrations | June 1-6, 2026 |
| Vendor Reference Checks Complete | June 13, 2026 |
| Final Selection | June 19, 2026 |
| Contract Award | July 1, 2026 |

Bid Questions

Questions pertaining to the scope of work, plans, and specifications should be submitted to Shelli Schofield at bids@cfsri.org no later than **April 17, 2026**. Any questions received after that period will not be addressed. Responses to questions prior to the deadline will be emailed to all Request for Proposal (RFP) holders.

Bid Due Date

Bids for the project are to be **emailed as a PDF attachment with subject heading “Early Childhood Consultant”** to Shelli Schofield at bids@cfsri.org no later than **April 17, 2026**. No bid will be accepted after that time and date. Questions concerning the RFP may be directed to Shelli Schofield at bids@cfsri.org.

Section 4:

Minimum Qualifications

- Relevant Professional Experience:** Demonstrated experience in early childhood education, with specific expertise in market-rate child care programs, enrollment growth strategies, and community engagement initiatives. Familiarity with the Rhode Island early childhood landscape, licensing requirements, and regulatory environment are preferred.

2. **Capacity to Deliver Services:** The consultant or firm must demonstrate the capacity to provide all services necessary to support the scope of work described in this RFP. If submitting as a firm, respondents should identify the project team and clearly describe each member's role and qualifications in supporting project execution.
3. **Proof of Capability:** Prospective consultants must be prepared to provide evidence of experience, past performance, and professional capability that demonstrates their ability to successfully execute the work described in this RFP. Children's Friend reserves the right to request additional documentation, references, or examples of prior work to validate the qualifications and capabilities represented in the proposal.
4. The Owner will reject the proposal of any vendor and void any award resulting from this RFP to any bidder who makes any misrepresentation in their proposal.
5. The bidder must be willing to certify in writing that it has not been suspended or disbarred from doing business with any federal agency.
6. All respondents selected through this Request for Proposal (RFP) must maintain insurance coverage meeting the minimum requirements outlined in this section for the duration of the contract.

Insurance shall be maintained with insurers licensed to conduct business in the state where services will be performed and carrying a minimum **AM Best rating of A- / VII**, unless otherwise approved by the Organization.

The Contractor shall be responsible for maintaining the required insurance and ensuring that any subcontractors, employees, or licensed professionals engaged to perform services under the resulting agreement maintain appropriate insurance coverage.

Contractors must provide Certificates of Insurance prior to the start of services and upon policy renewal throughout the contract period.

7. **Minimum Insurance Requirements**

A. Commercial General Liability Insurance: Contractor shall maintain Commercial General Liability insurance covering bodily injury, property damage, and personal and advertising injury arising out of the Contractor's operations. Minimum limits:

| Coverage | Required Limit |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Each Occurrence | 1,000,000 |
| General Aggregate | 2,000,000 |

Coverage shall include:

- Premises and operations
- Contractual liability
- Personal and advertising injury
- Independent contractors' liability

The Organization, including its directors, officers, employees, and volunteers, shall be included as Additional Insureds with respect to services provided under this agreement.

Coverage shall apply on a primary and non-contributory basis.

B. Professional Liability (Errors & Omissions): Contractors providing professional services including but not limited to clinical services, counseling, behavioral health treatment, case management, social work, educational services, therapeutic services, or program services must maintain Professional Liability insurance. Minimum limits:

| Coverage | Required Limit |
|------------------|----------------|
| Each Claim | 1,000,000 |
| Annual Aggregate | 1,000,000 |

Coverage shall apply to services performed by the Contractor and any employees, subcontractors, or licensed professionals working under the Contractor’s discretion.

If coverage is written on a claims-made basis, the Contractor must maintain coverage for a minimum of three (3) years following completion or termination of the contract or purchase Extended Reporting Period (Tail) Coverage.

C. Abuse and Molestation Liability: Contractors providing services to children, youth, vulnerable adults, or other protected populations must maintain insurance coverage for allegations of abuse, molestation, or sexual misconduct.

Coverage may be included within the General Liability or Professional Liability policies but must provide minimum limits of:

| Coverage | Required Limit |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Each Occurrence/Claim | 1,000,000 |
| Aggregate | 1,000,000 |

D. Workers’ Compensation and Employers Liability: Contractors with employees shall maintain Workers’ Compensation insurance in accordance with applicable state law.

| Coverage | Required Limit |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Each Accident | 500,000 |
| Disease – Policy Limit | 500,000 |
| Disease – Each Employee | 500,000 |

Independent Contractors without employees may be required to provide a signed statement confirming their independent contractor status and acknowledging responsibility for their own coverage.

E. Automobile Liability Insurance: Contractors using vehicles in performance of services must maintain Automobile Liability insurance covering owned, hired, and non-owned vehicles. Minimum limits:

| Coverage | Required Limit |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Combined Single Limit | 1,000,000 per accident |

Contractors who transport clients must ensure drivers maintain valid licenses and appropriate insurance.

F. Cyber Liability / Data Security Coverage: Cyber Liability insurance shall provide coverage for risks arising from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, or loss of confidential information, including personally identifiable information (PII), protected health information (PHI), or other sensitive data. Coverage should include, where applicable:

- Data breach response and notification costs
- Privacy liability
- Network security liability
- Regulatory defense and penalties where insurable
- Data recovery and system restoration
- Cyber extortion/ransomware response
- Crisis management and public relations expenses

Contractors that store, transmit, or process protected health information must maintain security practices consistent with HIPAA and applicable data privacy regulations.

- 8. Certificates of Insurance:** Prior to the start of services, the Contractor shall provide the Organization with a Certificate of Insurance evidencing the required coverage. Certificate must:
 - Identify the contracting organization as Additional Insured where required
 - Reference the applicable contract or program
 - Provide 30 days' notice of cancellation or material change, where submitted by law
- 9. Waiver of Subrogation:** Where permitted by law, Contractor shall waive all rights of subrogation against the organization and its directors, officers, employees, and volunteers for losses arising out of services performed under this agreement.
- 10. Failure to Maintain Coverage:** Failure to maintain the required insurance coverage may result in:
 - Suspension of services
 - Termination of the contract
 - Disqualification from future contracting opportunities
- 11. Right to Review Coverage:** The organization reserves the right to request copies of insurance policies or endorsements to verify compliance with these requirements.

Submission Requirements

At a minimum, each firm shall submit the following information in order to be considered responsive to this RFP:

Proposals should provide straightforward, concise information that satisfies the requirements noted in the RFP. Emphasis should be placed on brevity, conformity to the Owner's instructions and completeness and clarity of content.

Cover Letter

Provide a cover letter that references this RFP and confirms that all elements of the RFP have been reviewed and understood. The cover letter should express the consultant's interest in the project and summarize why the consultant or firm is well-suited to support Children's Friend in the launch and growth of its market-rate child care program.

The cover letter must:

- Being no more than one page
- Be signed by the consultant or an authorized representative of the firm
- Include the primary contact's name, title, phone number, and email address.

The proposal shall include the following sections:

Consultant Qualifications and Experience

Provide a description of the consultant's background and experience relevant to this project, including:

- Experience working with market-rate child care programs
- Experience supporting enrollment growth and family engagement
- Experience developing community partnerships and outreach strategies
- Experience working with early childhood education providers or nonprofit organizations

Include at least two examples of similar projects completed within the last five years, including a brief description of the project, the role performed, and outcomes achieved.

Proposed Approach and Work Plan

Provide a description of how the consultant would approach this engagement, including:

- Key strategies for strengthening community awareness and engagement
- Approach to building or improving an enrollment pipeline
- Strategies for developing referral partnerships
- Methods for coordinating internal stakeholders and tracking progress
- Any recommended tools or systems for tracking performance metrics

Consultants may also include a proposed timeline or phased approach for the six-month engagement.

Project Team (if applicable)

If submitting as a firm, identify the individuals assigned to the project and provide brief descriptions of their roles, qualifications, and relevant experience.

References

Provide at least two professional references from organizations for which similar work has been performed. Include:

- Organization name
- Contact name and title
- Email address and phone number
- Brief description of the engagement

Fee Proposal

Provide a proposed fee structure for the six-month engagement, including:

- Hourly rate or fixed project fee
- Estimated hours per month (if applicable)
- Any anticipated expenses or reimbursable costs

Optional Supporting Materials

Consultants may include additional materials that demonstrate relevant expertise, such as:

- Sample outreach plans
- Enrollment strategy examples
- Program launch or implementation plans
- Relevant reports or dashboards created for similar projects

Section 5:

Evaluation of Proposals

The Children's Friend project team will evaluate the RFPs. The evaluators will consider how well the proposed solution meets the requirements as described in the RFP. It is important that responses be clear and complete to ensure evaluators can fully understand all aspects of the proposal.

Selection of finalists will be primarily evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Early Childhood Expertise and Program Experience

Early Childhood Program Knowledge

Evaluate the consultant's knowledge of early childhood education programs, including experience with market-rate child care operations, enrollment management, and program sustainability.

Relevant Project Experience

Assess the consultant's experience supporting the launch, growth, or improvement of early childhood programs, particularly those serving a mix of publicly funded and market-rate families.

2. Enrollment Growth and Market Strategy

Enrollment Pipeline Development

Evaluate the consultant's experience creating systems that support inquiry management, tours, follow-up, and enrollment conversion.

Market Positioning and Strategy

Assess the consultant's ability to help position Children's Friend as a high-quality early childhood provider open to all families, including strategies to improve community awareness and engagement.

3. Community Engagement and Partnership Development

Community Outreach Strategy

Evaluate the consultant's approach to strengthening Children's Friend's visibility within the community and expanding outreach to families.

Partnership Development

Assess the consultant's ability to build relationships with key referral sources, including employers, pediatricians, community organizations, and local networks that influence child care decisions.

4. Workforce and Staffing Strategy

Early Childhood Workforce Knowledge

Evaluate the consultant's understanding of workforce challenges within the early childhood sector, particularly in recruiting and retaining infant and toddler educators.

Pipeline Development

Assess the consultant's ability to recommend strategies that strengthen recruitment pipelines, including partnerships with higher education institutions and targeted outreach to early childhood educators.

5. Project Management and Operational Coordination

Project Management Approach

Evaluate the consultant's ability to coordinate multiple workstreams, track progress toward project goals, and maintain accountability across teams.

Data Tracking and Performance Monitoring

Assess the consultant's ability to develop practical systems to track key metrics, including referral sources, tour-to-enrollment conversion rates, classroom capacity, and enrollment trends.

6. Fees and Cost

Fee Structure

Review the consultant's proposed fee structure to ensure it is transparent and reasonable for the scope of work.

Cost Effectiveness

Assess the consultant’s ability to provide high-quality services while maintaining cost efficiency for the organization.

7. Organization and Client Service

Consultant Qualifications and Experience

Evaluate the background, qualifications, and expertise of the consultant or project team assigned to the engagement.

Client Service Model

Assess the consultant’s approach to communication, responsiveness, and collaboration with Children’s Friend leadership and staff.

Professional References

Review feedback from references regarding the consultant’s ability to deliver results and maintain strong working relationships.

The evaluation factors identified above reflect a wide range of considerations. All proposals will be evaluated using the same criteria.

| Criteria | Weight Given |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. Early Childhood Expertise and Program Experience | 20% |
| 2. Enrollment Growth and Market Strategy | 20% |
| 3. Community Engagement and Partnership Development | 15% |
| 4. Workforce and Staffing Strategy | 5% |
| 5. Project Management and Operational Coordination | 20% |
| 6. Fees and Cost | 10% |
| 7. Organization & Client Service | 10% |

Notification

The Children's Friend Project Team will review all proposals submitted in response to this RFP and identify a short list of consultants or firms whose qualifications and proposed approaches best align with the organization's needs.

Short-listed respondents may be invited to participate in interviews and/or presentations to further discuss their experience, proposed approach, and ability to successfully support the launch and growth of Children's Friend's Market Rate Child Care Program.

Selected respondents will be notified by email and provided with additional details regarding the interview or presentation process, including scheduling, format, and any materials requested in advance.

Children's Friend reserves the right to make a final selection based solely on the written proposals submitted, or to request additional information from respondents as needed during the evaluation process.

Contract Award and Execution

Children's Friend reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposal submitted. Children's Friend shall not be bound or in any way obligated until both parties have executed a contract. Children's Friend also reserves the right to delay contract award and/or not to make a contract award.

Section 6:

Terms and Conditions

The following terms and conditions apply to this RFP and are not inclusive of all terms and conditions in the final contract.

Proposals – Public Information

Children's Friend will attempt to protect legitimate trade secrets of the Vendor. Any proprietary information contained in the Vendor's proposal must be clearly designated and shall be labeled with the words "Proprietary Information." Marking the entire proposal or any one or more of the major sections as proprietary will neither be accepted nor honored.

The Vendor should be aware that the Children's Friend is required by law to make certain records available for public inspection with certain exceptions. The Vendor, by submission of materials marked proprietary, acknowledges, and agrees that Children's Friend will have no obligation or liability to the Vendor if Children's Friend must disclose these materials.

General Provisions

All proposal packages shall be submitted at no cost to Children's Friend and shall become the property of Children's Friend.

Selected vendor shall maintain strict privacy of all Children's Friend records, data, and files (regardless of media), including any copyrighted material received from Children's Friend.

The issuance of a proposal by prospective Vendors does not constitute in any way the issuance of a contract or intent to enter into a contract.

Children's Friend is committed to a policy of providing equal job opportunities and prohibiting discrimination against any employee, applicant or subcontractor because of age, color, creed, handicap condition, marital or parental status, national original, race, sex, veteran status, or political opinion or affiliation. The Respondent shall take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment without regard to their age, color, creed, handicap condition, marital or parental status, national origin, race, sex, veteran status, or political opinion or affiliation. Such actions shall include, although not limited to, the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship.

Thank You

Children's Friend looks forward to reviewing your proposal and would like to thank you in advance for your interest in and participation in this process. The successful launch and growth of our Market Rate Child Care Program is an important initiative for the organization and represents a key opportunity to strengthen access to high-quality early childhood education while supporting the long-term sustainability of our programs.

We value the expertise, insight, and partnership that experienced consultants can bring to this work and appreciate the time and effort required to prepare a thoughtful response. Children's Friend welcomes your ideas, experience, and perspective as we continue to advance our mission

ATTACHMENTS

- I. Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Form

END OF DOCUMENT

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

This contractor and subcontractor shall abide by the requirements of 41 CFR 60-1.4(a), 41 CFR 60-300.5(a) and 41 CFR 60-741.5(a). These regulations prohibit discrimination against qualified individuals based on their status as protected veterans or individuals with disabilities and prohibit discrimination against all individuals based on their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or national origin. Moreover, these regulations require that covered prime contractors and subcontractors take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment individuals without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or veteran status.

_____ is committed to promoting equal employment opportunity through progressive program designed to provide equal opportunity without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, or political affiliation or belief. (Name) takes positive steps to eliminate any systematic discrimination from personnel practices.

_____ recruits, hires, trains, and promotes into all job levels the most qualified persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability status. Staff at all levels are responsible for active program support and personal leadership in establishing, maintaining, and carrying out an effective equal employment opportunity program.

Name of Organization

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

Print Name and Title of Authorized Representative