



Request for Qualifications

Early learning providers needed to provide Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start services in Clay, Platte and Jackson counties.

Need

MARC Head Start is seeking early learning providers to deliver Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start services in Clay, Platte and Jackson counties. Through partners, MARC Head Start serves a total of 2300 children and families; and needs support for around 340 children in total, around 200 in Clay and Platte counties and 140 in central Jackson County. More than one provider will be selected.

Background

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) is a nonprofit association of city and county governments and the metropolitan planning organization for the Kansas City region. MARC promotes regional cooperation and develops innovative solutions through leadership, planning, and action. MARC is funded by federal, state, and private grants; local contributions; and earned income. A major portion of MARC's budget is passed through to local governments and other agencies for programs and services.

MARC's organization includes a variety of departments, each with specific focus areas. The Department of Early Learning is focused on improving access to quality early learning programs in the region through advocacy, shared services and strategic planning. Under the umbrella of the Department of Early Learning, MARC operates the **MARC Head Start program**, which has been the recipient of federal and state grants for Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start programming in Clay, Platte and Jackson Counties since 2005. These grants provide services for approximately 2,300 HS and EHS children ages 0-5, pregnant women, and their families through multiple partnerships with community childcare providers.

This RFQ seeks **qualified community agencies, educational institutions, or other entities with experience in providing comprehensive center and home-based child development services**. These organizations will be part of a network of providers and

community stakeholders working to deliver and achieve the goals and objectives of the MARC Head Start program:

Goals

- Advance our play-based, project-based approach to joyful, engaged learning and inform others who are invested in children’s early education.
- Support families through a healthy, connected community that is safe emotionally, physically, and mentally.
- Foster environments of belonging and deliver holistic (physical, mental and developmental) services that support the well-being of staff, children, and families.
- Create strong systems to recruit, develop, retain, and invest in a highly skilled workforce.

Objectives

- Effectively administer Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start funds and ensure the highest level of accountability in the delivery of services.
- Promote school readiness through comprehensive education, mental health, disabilities, health, and nutrition services to young children.
- Engage families in support of their children’s ongoing learning and development, promote strong relationships between parents and their children, and improve family well-being.
- Collaborate with community partners to enhance and expand these core services.

Structure

Providers. MARC Head Start includes a network of providers, with MARC staff providing oversight and support for the delivery of services. Current non-profit community-based agency partners include: Ability KC, Emmanuel Child and Family Development Center, Front Porch Alliance, Guadalupe Centers, Learn a Lot Academy, Operation Breakthrough, The Family Conservancy and EarlystART. Current school district partners include: Blue Springs, Center, Excelsior Springs, Grandview, Independence, Kansas City, Lee’s Summit, and Raytown.

Facility. MARC currently owns the Thomas Roque Early Education Center, located at 3800 E. 51st Street, Kansas City, Missouri and would like to find a provider to manage Head Start operations in that facility. Other current facilities are held through leases outside of MARC; however, MARC can facilitate conversations between landlords and potential tenants, if needed. MARC is also open to other location options.

Service types. MARC Head Start partners provide three types of services: Center-based Head Start Preschool (3-5); Center-based Early Head Start (0-3) and/or Early Head Start Home-based (home visiting). Providers may deliver only one service option of Head Start Preschool, Early Head Start, Early Head Start Home-based or a combination, depending on their capacity.

Operations. Providers are classified in three different tiers of operations. Each tier receives different levels of support from the MARC staff, and each tier has different requirements related to the grant. MARC enters into contracts with each provider that specifically set out the roles and responsibilities and other terms of the relationship.

- **Tier 1 organizations** - provide high quality early childhood classroom and/or home - visiting experiences and family engagement services. MARC staff work with the provider to offer a comprehensive system of support, which includes an on-site Education Coordinator / Coach, and all other services needed to meet the full complement of Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start requirements.
- **Tier 2 organizations** provide high quality early childhood classroom and/or home - visiting experiences and family engagement services along with support for education services and individualized coaching for teachers, and on-site logistical coordination of all other services provided through the grantee. MARC staff provide targeted / focused support, which includes all other services needed to meet the full complement of Head Start requirements.
- **Tier 3 organizations** provide comprehensive Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start services, program planning, and leadership to ensure all components necessary to meet the full complement of Head Start requirements are in place along with on-site coordination of any services provided by the grantee. MARC staff provide modest support, which includes a regional approach to planning and coordination of agency wide objectives, program evaluation, and monitoring for continuous program improvement and technical assistance. Tier 3 organizations are considered subrecipients and need to comply with all federal rules and regulations associated with the Head Start program and must have a clear annual single audit if they expend \$1,000,000 or more of federal funds per year.

Funding. MARC is the grantee for HS/EHS Core Operating 2024-2025 grant (07CH012381-01). Through that grant, funding is provided to childcare providers based on the number of children, and whether they serve Head Start Preschool (3-5) or Early Head Start (0-3) or Early Head Start Home-based (pregnant woman). The method of funding is based on federal award amount, and the number and age of child slots that are allocated to each provider. Each provider submits an annual training plan and budget. Additional funding is provided to support training and professional development. Other funding from the grant is used to support MARC Head Start support staff.

Organizations submit monthly invoices. Tier 1 and 2 agencies are reimbursed monthly based on funded enrollment. Tier 3 organizations are reimbursed for actual costs each month and are required to provide an in-kind/match. For Tier 3, the maximum annual reimbursement is based on a fixed amount per slot.

Timing. The grant year runs November 1, 2024 – October 31, 2025. New providers from this RFQ process will begin services no later than September 1, 2025. It is anticipated that the terms of this contract will extend from September 2025 through October 2026. MARC Head Start may extend the term of the contract to two additional periods. This extension is contingent upon successful performance of the program and services provided, and upon availability of funds. Availability of funds is dependent upon pending approval of the MARC Head Start federal grant application by The Administration for Children and Families.

Qualifications

In order to be part of the MARC Head Start network, providers must:

Administrative

- *Licensing.* Have a childcare license or license-exempt approval letter from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, or ability to attain licensure.
- *Insurance.* Maintain adequate levels of commercial general liability, automobile liability, worker's compensation and employer's liability insurance and name MARC as an additional insured.
- *Reporting.* Provide regular reporting on services and financial matters.
- *Meals and snacks.* Be eligible for funding from USDA school lunch or Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- *Federal requirements.* Comply with federal requirements based on the size of organization and Tier.

Operations

- *Center-Based Early Head Start* programs must provide 1,380 annual hours of planned class operations for all enrolled children, conduct two home visits and two parent teacher conferences per family each year.
- *Center-Based Head Start Preschool* Programs must provide a minimum of 1,020 annual hours of planned class operations over the course of at least eight months per year, conduct two home visits and two parent teacher conferences per family each year.
- *Early Head Start Home-Based* programs must provide one 90 minute home visit per week per family with a minimum of 46 visits per year; and provide a minimum of 22 group socialization activities over the course of the program year.

Staffing

- Have adequate administrative, teaching and professional staff to provide all of the services described in their Tier.
- Have adequate staff to meet adult/child ratios:
 - 1/10 for Head Start Preschool center-based rooms
 - 1/4 for Early Head Start center-based rooms

- Ensure all staff consultants and contractors have sufficient knowledge, training and experience, and competencies to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of their positions, and meet Head Start education requirements:
 - Head Start Preschool: AA for Lead Teachers, CDA for assistant teachers and floaters.
 - Early Head Start: CDA for lead teachers, assistant teachers and floaters.
 - HS and EHS: Family Service Workers should have credentials or certification in relevant field.
 - Early Head Start Home-based: Home visitors require a Home Based CDA and family development credential.

Program

Requirements for programming elements vary based on the Tier selected and include these categories:

- Program design and management
- Staffing and professional development
- Child health and development
- Working with families

Process

The intent of this RFQ process is to identify interested organizations, then provide additional information to them through a pre-submittal session so they can determine their interest and assess their ability to meet the requirements. If interested, they should submit a Statement of Qualifications. The qualifications will be evaluated, and interviews/information sharing will be conducted with the most qualified organizations. If it is mutually determined that the partnership will be successful, a contract will be drafted and submitted to the MARC Board and the organization’s leadership for approval.

Anticipated Schedule

RFQ posted	March 28
Hybrid Information Session*	April 7, 2:00 p.m.
Statement of Qualifications Due	April 25
Review of SOQ’s	May 2
Interviews/information sharing/facility tours	May 5 - May 16
Selection and MARC Board approval	May 27
Contract execution	June 30
Anticipated start date of services	September 1

*If you are interested in attending the Information Session, email klawson@marc.org for location or virtual access information.

Statement of Qualifications

The Statement of Qualifications should be organized in the following format and include:

(1) Cover Letter

The cover letter is to be signed by an officer of the organization authorized to execute a contract with MARC and should include the following information:

- Organization's legal name, address, and telephone number
- Number of years operating
- Number of employees
- Number of children currently serving
- Reasons for interest in providing Head Start services
- Indicate the Tier you would be interested in and/or the estimated number of children you could serve
- Description of any facility(ies) where services would be provided

(2) General Qualifications

Provide a background of your organization and a summary of qualifications demonstrating your expertise, understanding and ability to provide high quality early learning services. Include brief descriptions around your practices related to:

- Program design and management
- Staffing and professional development
- Child health and development
- Working with families

(3) Key Staff

Identify and provide qualifications of key staff members that would be leading the program, and the structure that you would use to serve children and families.

(4) Requirements

Describe your ability to meet the requirements of the Tier that you are interested in and your capacity to take on Head Start services.

(5) References

Provide a list of three references for your organization.

Criteria for review

- Knowledge, expertise and experience of key staff in the management of an early learning center and delivery of Head Start/early learning services
- Demonstrated delivery of strong early learning programming and support for families
- Commitment to professional development for staff
- Capacity of the organization to take on the services

Other contributing factors in selection:

- Location of services
- NAEYC and/or Missouri Accreditation

Other key information

Open Records Act and Proprietary Information

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) is a public organization and is subject to the Missouri Open Records Act (Chapter 610, RSMo). All records obtained or retained by MARC are considered public records and are open to the public or media upon request unless those records are specifically protected from disclosure by law or exempted under the Missouri Sunshine Law. All contents of a response to a Request for Proposals, Qualifications, Proposals or information issued by MARC are considered public records and subject to public release following decisions by MARC regarding the request for proposal. If a proposer has information that it considers proprietary, a proposer shall identify documents or portions of documents it considers to contain descriptions of scientific and technological innovations in which it has a proprietary interest, or other information that is protected from public disclosure by law, which is contained in a Proposal. After either a contract is executed pursuant to the Request for Proposal, or all submittals are rejected, if a request is made to inspect information submitted and if documents are identified as “Proprietary Information” as provided above under Missouri Sunshine Law, MARC will notify the proposer of the request for access, and it shall be the burden of the proposer to establish that those documents are exempt from disclosure under the law.”