STATE OF CONNECTICUT
## Department of Social Services

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)
for Services to Assist Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons

The Department of Social Services is requesting applications for services to assist Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons with activities and services to remove Barriers to Self-Sufficiency (BSS). Services shall be provided in five (5) Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEHMS) Regions (Region 1, Region 2, Region 3, Region 4, and Region 5). The below map identifies the 5 Regions:
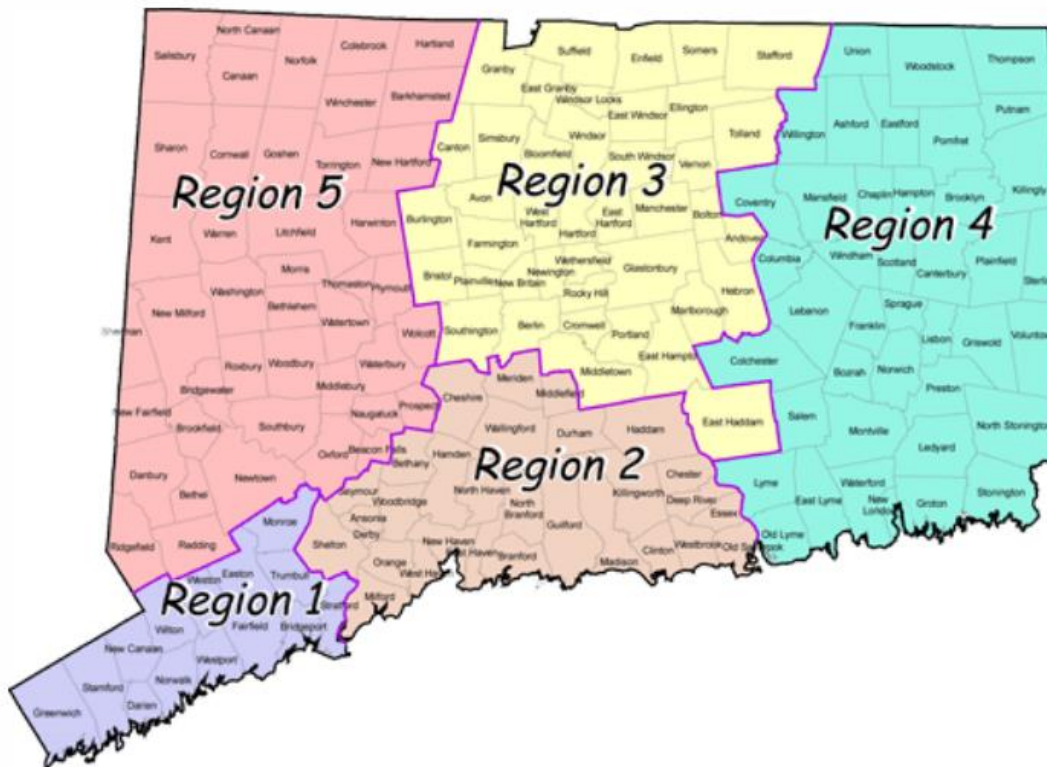
It is the Department's intention to award one award per region; however, multiple awards are possible depending upon successful responses to the RFA.

Application Deadline: The Official Contact is the only authorized recipient of applications submitted in response to the RFA. Applications **must** be received by the Official Contact **on or before** the due date and time:

- **Due Date:** August 10, 2021
- **Time:** 2:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time.

The submission of the electronic copy of the application **must** be emailed to the Official Agency Contact for this RFA to DSS.Procurement@ct.gov.

The subject line of the email **must** read: LEP BSS RFA 2021

THIS IS AN ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION. Please be aware of the amount of time it may take for an electronic submission to be sent from one server and accepted by another server. Each file sent to the official contact, shall not be larger than 35 MB per e-mail.

NOTE: Applications received after the due date and time may be accepted as a clerical function but will not be reviewed. The deadline will be strictly adhered to.

The electronic copies of the applications shall be compatible with Microsoft Office Word except for the Budget and Budget Justification, documents which may be compatible with Microsoft Office Excel. Only the required Forms and attachments identified in this RFA may be submitted in Portable Document Format (PDF) or similar file format.

The applications **must** carry original signatures. Unsigned applications will not be evaluated. The application **must** be complete, properly formatted and outlined, and ready for evaluation by the Evaluation Team.

Registering with State Contracting Portal. Respondents **must** register with the State of CT contracting portal at https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/Registration if not already registered.

To download the Request for Applications, access the State's Procurement/Contracting Portal at the State of Connecticut Department of Administrative Procurement Services Home Page at https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard:

Official Contact. The Department has designated the individual below as the Official Contact for purposes of this RFA. The Official Contact is the **only authorized contact** for this procurement and, as such, handles all related communications on behalf of the Department. Respondents, prospective respondents, and other interested parties are advised that any communication with any other Department employee(s) (including appointed officials) or personnel under contract to the Department about this RFA is strictly prohibited. Respondents or prospective respondents who violate this instruction may risk disqualification from further consideration.

Name:	Donna LoCurto
Address:	55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105
E-Mail:	DSS.Procurement@ct.gov

The DSS is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. Deaf and hearing-impaired persons may use a TYY by calling 1-800-671-0737.

The Department reserves the right to reject any and all applications or cancel this Request for Applications at any time if it is deemed in the best interest of the State.

Procurement Schedule. See below. Dates after the due date for proposals ("Proposals Due") are non-binding target dates only (*). The Department may amend the schedule as needed. Any change to non-target dates will be made by means of an amendment to this RFA and will be posted on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, the Department's RFA Web Page.

- RFA Released: June 29, 2021
- Deadline for Questions: July 6, 2021
- (*) Answers Released: July 13, 2021
- Applications Due: August 10, 2021
- (*) Respondent Selection: Tentative 9/1/2021

- (*) Start of Contract: Tentative 10/1/2021

Inquire Procedures. All questions regarding this RFA or the Department's procurement process must be directed, in writing, to the Official Contact before the deadline specified in the Procurement Schedule. The early submission of questions is encouraged. Questions will not be accepted or answered verbally – neither in person nor over the telephone. All questions received before the deadline will be answered. However, the Department will not answer questions when the source is unknown (i.e., nuisance or anonymous questions). Questions deemed unrelated to the RFA or the procurement process will not be answered. At its discretion, the Department may or may not respond to questions received after the deadline. The Department may combine similar questions and give only one answer. All questions and answers will be compiled into a written addendum to this RFA. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFA, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the addendum and duly noted as such. The agencies will release the answers to questions on the date established in the Procurement Schedule. The Department will publish any and all amendments and addenda to this RFA on the State Contracting Portal and on the Departments' RFA Web Pages. **Proposals must include a signed Addendum Acknowledgement, which will be placed at the end of any and all addenda to this RFA.**

Part I - OVERVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND PROJECT

Section 1   Department Overview

The Department of Social Services (the "Department" or "DSS") delivers and funds a wide range of programs and services as Connecticut's multi-faceted health and human services agency. DSS serves about 1 million residents of all ages in all 169 Connecticut cities and towns. We support the basic needs of children, families, older and other adults, including persons with disabilities. Services are delivered through 12 field offices, central administration, and online and phone access options. With service partners, DSS:

- provides federal/state food and economic aid, health care coverage, independent living and home care, social work, child support, home-heating aid, protective services for older adults, and more vital service areas.
- supports the health of nearly 850,000 residents through HUSKY Health (Medicaid & Children's Health Insurance Program), including medical, dental, behavioral health, prescription medications, long-term services and supports.
- helps nearly 370,000 residents afford food and supports Connecticut's economy with federally-funded Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).

Section 2   Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Applications is to seek applications from Private Provider Organizations 501(c)(3 (defined as non-state entities that are either nonprofit) in the State of Connecticut to provide services to assist LEP persons and to remove barriers to self-sufficiency. Barriers to self-sufficiency shall be defined as "economic strain, employment challenges, educational challenges, lack of access to the Department's services that hinder a person's ability to become self-supporting due to their limited English proficiency. At a minimum, the LEP-BSS's application must demonstrates its competency in identifying barriers and needs of LEP persons, pro, vision of activities and services not currently being funded through other federal, state, or local resources to move the LEP person to self-sufficiency. The Department's expectation for LEP-BSS and description of possible additional uses of the funds are described below.

A. Program Requirement: LEP-BSS Program is to assist persons with LEP and address barriers to self-sufficiency. This is accomplished by using state funds to support education and employment activities and services to achieve self-sufficiency for persons at or below 60% of CT state median income. The successful Applicants shall strive to provide services in a person-centered and culturally and linguistically competent manner to enhance the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. The negative impact of communication barriers to LEP persons obtaining services are as follows: denial of needed benefits and/or services; delay in service delivery; incorrect services provided and/or inadequate services are provided to participants.

B. Program Responsibilities:

1. Employment of bilingual staff members who communicate "in-language" to LEP individuals, or who serve as interpreters or translators; should be assessed and receive regular training on proper interpreting and translation techniques, ethics, specialized terminology, and other topics as needed. Without regular assessment and training, bilingual staff may not be able to provide the language access services necessary to ensure LEP individuals have meaningful access to your agency's program.

2. Utilize an outcome-based performance measurement system to assess barriers, identify objectives, milestones, track performance and report successes and barriers to completion. <u>Noteworthy</u>: Reporting of only inputs and services will not be considered as a compliant performance tracking activity.

3. Utilize an assessment tool that first identifies the LEP barrier; as well as a supplemental barrier or condition that impacts the participants' ability to be self-sufficient through the provision of employment and education activities and supports that are not currently funded through federal, state or local resources.

Section 3   Available Funding

The estimated funding available through this RFA is $2,410,293 as follows:

For the Period	Amount
07.01.2021 to 06.30.2022 (SFY 22)	$802,885
07.01.2022 to 06.30.2023 (SFY 23)	$803,704
07.01.2023 to 06.30.2024 (SFY 22)	$803,704 (estimated)

The narrative must estimate the number of unduplicated clients, annually, who would benefit if the Department awarded the applicant organization with the funds requested in the application.

Section 4   EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

Evaluation Process. It is the intent of the Department to conduct a comprehensive, fair, and impartial evaluation of applications received in response to this RFA. When evaluating applications, negotiating with successful respondents, and offering the right to negotiate a contract, the Department will conform with its written procedures for POS procurements (pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-217) and the State's Code of Ethics (pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 1-84 and 1-85).

Evaluation Team. The Department will designate an Evaluation Team to evaluate applications submitted in response to this RFA. The contents of all submitted applications, including any confidential information, will be shared with the Evaluation Team. Only applications found to be responsive (that is, complying with all instructions and requirements described herein) will be reviewed, rated, and scored. Applications that fail to comply with all instructions will be rejected without further consideration. Attempts by any respondent (or representative of any respondent) to contact or influence any member of the Evaluation Team may result in disqualification of the respondent.

Minimum Submission Requirements. All applications must comply with the requirements specified in this RFA. To be eligible for evaluation, applications <u>must</u> (1) be received on or before the due date and time; (2) meet the Application Format requirements; (3) follow the required Application Outline; and (4) be complete. Applications that fail to follow instructions or satisfy these minimum submission requirements will not be reviewed further. The Department will reject any applications that deviates significantly from the requirements of this RFA.

Evaluation Criteria (and Weights). Applications meeting the Minimum Submission Requirements will be evaluated according to the established criteria. The criteria are the objective standards that the Evaluation Team will use to evaluate the technical merits of the applications. Only the criteria listed below will be used to evaluate applications. The criteria are weighted according to their relative importance. The planned evaluation weights are defined in Table 1.

Table 1. The planned evaluation weights for the compliant applications

Response Section #	Response Section Description	Maximum Score
Sec. 1.A1 - 1.A7	The Organization	15
Sec. 1.B1 - 1.B5	Project Management	15
Sec. 2.A1 - 2.A4	Executive Summary	10
Sec. 2.B1 - 2.B5	Narrative Description for each Proposed Project(s)	15
Sec. 2.C1 - 2.C5	Work Plan for the Proposed Project(s)	15
Sec. 2.D1 - 2.D3	Quality Management	10
Sec. 2.E1 - 2.E4	Financial Information	20
	Total Available Points	**100**

Application submissions from respondents must achieve a minimum score of 60% of the total available points to meet the minimum submission requirements of the RFA (i.e. a minimum of 60 points out of 100 points). The Evaluation Team shall evaluate all applications that meet the Minimum Submission Requirements by score and rank ordered and make recommendations for awards.

Number of Awards: Multiple, at least one per region depending on applications and regional needs.

Respondent Selection. Upon completing its evaluation of applications, the Evaluation Team will submit the rankings of all applications to the Department heads. The final selection of a successful Respondent is at the discretion of the Department heads. Any Respondent selected will be so notified and offered an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the Department. Such negotiations may, but will not automatically, result in a contract. Pursuant to Governor M. Jodi Rell's Executive Order No. 3, any resulting contract will be posted on the State Contracting Portal. All unsuccessful Applicants will be notified by e-mail or U.S. mail, at the Department's discretion, about the outcome of the evaluation and Respondent selection process.

1. **Contract Execution**. Any contract developed and executed as a result of this RFA is subject to the Department's contracting procedures, which may include approval by the Office of the Attorney General.

Part II - CONTENTS OF A RESPONSIVE APPLICATION

Section 1 - The Organization and Project Management

A. The Organization: To be considered responsive an application must include:

1. The identification and location of the applicant organization (name; address; FEIN number; contact person and contact information including phone, fax and e-mail address);

2. If applicable, the identification and location of any collaborating or partnering organization (name; address; FEIN number; contact person and contact information including phone, fax and e-mail address);

3. Proof that is a Connecticut 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation or partnership;

4. Last-due annual reports filed with the Connecticut Secretary of the State. The submission demonstrates that the corporation is in good standing;

5. Geographically located in one of identified Regions;

6. Currently provides a service designed to assist persons with LEP as well as education and employment services to address barriers to self-sufficiency; and

7. Fiscally solvent, which means, the Applicant's current operating capacity covers two (2) months of resources so as to cover any possible delay in request for or issuance of payment on the part of the Contractor or the Department.

B. Project Management: To be considered responsive an application must include:

1. A clear description of the roles and responsibilities of the staff of the applicant organizations, including any proposed collaborating or partner agencies that will implement the project if the funds are awarded.

2. A designation of the applicant's staff identified in B1 above that are considered by the applicant to be "key personnel". For purposes of this RFA "key personnel" are those of the applicant's staff that the applicant considers necessary in order to achieve each of the proposed project's objectives.

3. A resume, curriculum vitae or biography for each of the designated key personnel.

4. The identification of the position(s) within the applicant's organization that would have day-to-day responsibility for leadership of each proposed project and the key tasks associated with implementation of each of the proposed project's activities.

5. If the positions identified in B4 above are filled, a resume, curriculum vitae or biography of the staff person in the position. If the position is vacant, a description of the job responsibilities and the plan to recruit and hire for the position.

Section 2 – Propose Use of Funding

A responsive application must demonstrate how the funding, if awarded, would be used by the applicant organization for each proposed project and describe how each proposed project will result in improvements in access and quality of care of LEP persons.

A. **Executive Summary:** To be considered responsive an application must include an Executive Summary, limited to two (2) pages in length for each proposed project, that:

   1. Clearly and concisely sets forth the organization's goals and objectives for participating in this RFA process and the amount of funds being requested. Based upon gaps in service, maximum awards can range from $100,000.00 to $200,000.00;

   2. Clearly acknowledges the organization's understanding that the funds awarded through this process will be available for SFY 2022, SFY 2023 and SFY 2024. Funding commitments after SFY 2023 are contingent on availability of appropriated funds.

   3. Clearly acknowledges that the funds only should be for used for LEP-BSS initiatives and in alignment with the Office of Policy and Management Cost Account Standards for the Purchase of Service.

B. **Narrative Description for each Proposed Project(s):** To be considered responsive an application must include for each project proposed a narrative description of the project:

A description of how the proposed use of the funds will assist in the LEP-BSS and an estimate of the number of unduplicated clients who would benefit if the Department approved the project. Also, please describe applicant organization's targeting and gap identification activities. Analysis data sets to support estimates. For your information, the Department has identified minimum data sets to assist with LEP analysis by going to this link https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DSS/Contracts/LEP.pdf

   1. Identify the proposed Region(s) where services will be provided to the target population.

   2. A description of the outcome-based performance measurement system which shall assess barriers, identify objectives, milestones, track performance and report successes and barriers to completion. Examples of milestones, objectives and outcomes are identified in https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DSS/Contracts/LEP.pdf
   .

3. A narrative description of an assessment tool that first identifies the LEP barrier; as well as a supplemental barrier or condition that impacts the participants' ability to be self-sufficient through the provision of employment and education activities and supports.

4. A narrative description of the applicant organization's culturally and linguistically component service delivery model and communication methods.

C. **Work Plan for the Proposed Project(s):** To be considered responsive an application must include for each project proposed a clear and descriptive work plan that:

1. Provide a detailed action plan that will identify start up activities, outreach plan, staffing plan and service delivery model;

2. Explain how your performance tracking system will document unduplicated client services. If system upgrades are required, please describe the required upgrades and their importance to service delivery;

3. Explains how the purchases or expenditures will achieve the goal(s) of the project; and

4. If the applicant organization has stated in its Executive Summary that they will be partnering or collaborating with another or other entity, includes a letter from the collaborating or partner entity which states their intention to work with the applicant organization and a description of their role in each proposed project.

D. **Quality Management (QM): Quality Management (QM) refers to a comprehensive evaluation of quality and cost measurement, quality improvement and quality assurance activities responsive to the project's goals and objectives.** To be considered responsive an application must include for each proposed project:

1. A clear description of the approach and method(s) that the applicant organization will utilize to evaluate the applicant organization's progress towards achieving the project's goals and objectives.

2. Identification of the data that the applicant organization will collect to conduct the evaluation. Describe how the resultant evaluation will be shared with key stakeholders (e.g. funder, applicant organization board of directors, program operations, etc.)

3. The timeline(s) for the implementation of the evaluation process.

E. **Financial Information:** To be considered responsive an application must:

1. Identify the total amount of funds the applicant organization is applying for;

2. If multiple projects are proposed, state the funding requested for each proposed project;

3. Include Board approved cost allocation plan.

4. For each proposed project include a proposed line-item budget for the utilization of the requested funds by going into the following website: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DSS/DSS-RFPs/ACS/Blank-LEP-BSS-budget-form.xlsx Using Date, 07.01. 2021 as the start of the budget period, identify proposed expenditures by date and line-item. **NOTE WELL:** The budget must allocate the requested funds to one-time purchases, administrative and service functions, and administrative costs by line item.

Example of acceptable services/activities

Services and Activities: At least one of the following services and activities **must** be provided to the participant to address a barrier to self-sufficiency.

    a. Education and Training Services are those services provided to improve knowledge of daily living skills and to enhance cultural opportunities for the target population(s). Instruction or training services shall include but are not limited to, such areas as literacy education, English as a Second Language (ESL), General Educational Development (GED), and vocational training. Component services or activities shall include but are not limited to screening, assessment and testing; individual or group instruction; tutoring; provision of books, supplies and instructional material; counseling; transportation; and referral to community resources

    b. Employment Services are those services or activities provided to assist clients' in securing employment or acquiring or learning skills that promote opportunities for employment. Component services or activities shall include but are not limited to employment screening, assessment, or testing; structured job skills and job seeking skills; special training and tutoring, including literacy training and pre-vocational training; career counseling; job search; provision of books, supplies and instructional material; counseling; transportation; and, referral to community resources

    c. English Language Classes is defined as for adults to gain English language reading, writing, speaking and listening skill development.

    d. Basic skills adults need, such as reading, writing, math, English language proficiency, and problem solving, to be productive workers and citizens. This can also include the basic education needed as a prerequisite to obtain additional education. For example, in order to be accepted to college and take college level courses, a participant must first complete and pass a basic math course.

    e. Basic Education Classes Courses that help adults get the basic skills they need including reading, writing, math, English language proficiency, and problem-solving to be productive workers, family members, and citizens. Activities may include: Adult education; Literacy; Workplace adult education and literacy; Family literacy activities; English language acquisition activities; Integrated English literacy and civics education; Workforce preparation activities; and Integrated education and training. These classes may prepare adults to obtain a GED or high school equivalency.

    f. Financial Literacy Education is defined as opportunities for adults that help participants learn budgeting skills, debt reduction, savings plans, etc. This training is provided in addition to other educational opportunities.

    g. Adult Literacy Classes are defined as opportunities for adults to gain reading and writing competency.

Examples of acceptable Primary goals and outcomes include but are not limited to:

Education – goals
- Clients in the Program seeking these services demonstrates an improved employment situation by completing the English as a Second Language or English Language Classes certification course.
- Clients seeking these services demonstrates measurable improvements in Adult Literacy.
- Clients seeking these services demonstrates measurable improvements in English comprehension and communication.
- Clients in the Program seeking these services demonstrate completion of High School Equivalency Classes.
- Clients in the Program seeking these services demonstrate completion of Basic Education Classes.
- Clients in the Program seeking these services demonstrate completion of Financial Literacy Classes
- Clients in the Program seeking these services demonstrate completion of post-secondary education preparation classes or workshops.

Education Outcomes

- The number of individuals who obtained a high school diploma and/or obtained an equivalency certificate or diploma.
- The number of individuals who obtained a high school diploma and/or obtained an equivalency certificate or diploma.
- The number of individuals who obtained a recognized credential, certificate, or degree relating to the achievement of educational or vocational skills.
- The number of individuals who obtained an Associate's degree.
- The number of individuals who demonstrated improved basic education.

Employment Goals:
- Clients in the Program seeking career counseling services demonstrate participation in the activity.
- Clients in the Program seeking job search services demonstrate participation in the activity.
- Clients in the Program seeking resume development services demonstrate participation in the activity.

Employment outcomes
- The number of individuals seeking employment secured and maintained employment for thirty (30) working days.
- The number of unemployed adults who obtained and maintained employment for at least ninety (90) days.
- The number of unemployed adults who obtained and maintained employment for at least one hundred and eighty (180) days.

- The number of individuals in the Program in need of an improved employment situation will obtain appropriate employment with sufficient income to satisfy their financial needs (e.g. non-seasonal labor).

Basic Needs* Basic needs is the ability to have consistent access to food, safe and stable shelter [including utilities] and ensure the safety of participants and their family.
Basic Needs Outcomes:

- The number of individuals who achieved and maintained capacity to meet basic needs for ninety (90) days.
- The number of individuals who achieved and maintained capacity to meet basic needs for one hundred and eighty (180) days.

LEP specific services
The Applicant shall keep a record of the number of LEP individuals served, the primary language spoken by each LEP person encountered, and the type of language assistance provided (oral or written) during each encounter