1. **Purpose:**

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Evaluation Plan was designed to ensure a fair and objective process for selecting qualified providers for the award of funding to develop supports for participants served by the (DDS) through a Purchase of Service (POS) contract.

1. **Applicability**

Request for Proposal (RFP) teams are required to follow the standard DDS Evaluation Plan. If the team decides to write or revise the Evaluation Plan due to the unique criteria of the subject matter, the Team Chair must first receive approval from the DDS Commissioner (or designee). If some circumstance arises that requires deviation from the plan, the RFP Team may modify the plan by adopting a written amendment. The amendment must be approved by a majority of the members of the Committee and the DDS Commissioner (or designee) must approve the amended plan.

##### Definitions

1. **Amendment** - any modification, deletion, or addition to a Request For Proposal (RFP), Personal Service Agreement, POS contract, evaluation plan, procurement plan (etc.).
2. **Contractor** - see Personal Service contractor; POS contractor.
3. **DDS Commissioner** **-** a State government official who is in charge of the overall direction of the Department of Developmental Services.
4. **Ethics and Confidentiality Agreement** - a formal statement, signed by participants in the RFP process, promising to conform to ethical standards of conduct and to keep confidential all information related to the process.
5. **Evaluation Criteria -** the list of weighted factors used to evaluate proposals submitted in response to an RFP.
6. **Ex Parte Communication** - the transmission of information that is not part of the public record and not generally available or shared with anyone associated with the RFP process.
7. **Letter of Intent (LOI)-** a letter written by a person, firm, corporation, private provider organization, or municipality to a State agency stating that a proposal will be submitted in response to an RFP.
8. **Minor Deficiency** – identified submission errors considered minor to the overall content of the RFP.
9. **Official Agency Contact** (OAC) – a state agency employee responsible for handling all communications with outside parties concerning the RFP.
10. **Outline of Work** - an overall summary of a project, including the purpose, scope, activities (tasks), outcomes (deliverables), and work schedule (timeline).
11. **Participant** - A person who has been authorized by the DDS to receive services.
12. **POS Agency** - a State agency that purchases health or human services from private provider organizations or municipalities for the benefit of the agency’s participants.
13. **POS Contractor** - a private provider organization or municipality that is hired by a State agency for a fee to provide services for the benefit of the agency’s participants (as compared to providing services for the State agency itself).
14. **Proposer** - an individual, business entity, nonprofit organization, or municipality that has submitted a proposal in response to an RFP issued by a State agency.
15. **Prospective Proposer** - an individual, business entity, nonprofit organization, or municipality that may submit a proposal in response to an RFP issued by a State agency.
16. **Qualified Providers** - a private organization that is qualified to provide services to a Participant or group of Participants in a residential or day program who have applied for and been determined eligible for the programs and services of the DDS, or who have been determined eligible by operation of law, and who is maintained as such in the DDS’s individual data base.
17. **Regional or Division Director** - the managerial staff of a DDS region or Administrative division.
18. **Request For Proposals (RFP)** - the solicitation communication used in a competitive negotiation process.
19. **RFP Team** - the collective group of individuals responsible for developing the RFP, writing the evaluation plan, and evaluating the proposals submitted in the response to an RFP.
20. **Scope of Services** - see outline of work.
21. **Screening Committee** - the individuals, appointed by an agency head or designee, who evaluate the minimum qualification of the proposer and the minimum submission requirements of the proposals submitted in the response to an RFP.
22. **Service Provider** - see POS contractor.
23. **State** - State of Connecticut.
24. **Team** – a group of people working together to conduct the RFP process.

###### D Implementation

1. **Inquiry Procedures**

A hard copy of an RFP must be given to any prospective proposer who requests one. The Official Agency Contact must maintain a list of all those requesting a hard copy to issue any amendments to the RFP.

All questions from Prospective Proposers must be directed to the Official Agency Contact, who is responsible for forwarding the questions to the Team. Prospective Proposers must submit their questions in writing by the deadline(s) established in the RFP. The deadline for questions should be at least two weeks after the RFP is issued. The agency should allow Prospective Proposers to submit questions using a variety of means (i.e., US mail, e-mail, facsimile, or an electronic form posted on the agency’s website). Questions must not be accepted over the telephone.

All questions received before the deadline must be answered. The Team has the right to combine “like questions” and give only one answer. The Team is not required to answer questions considered to be not relevant to the RFP.

All questions and answers must be compiled into a written amendment to the RFP and numbered (e.g., Amendment 1), even if there is only one question and answer. In the event that multiple amendments are issued, they must be sequentially numbered (e.g., Amendment 2, 3, etc.). If the answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer must be placed at the beginning of the amendment and duly noted as such. Amendments should be reviewed by the Regional or Division Director, as appropriate, prior to release.

The Team must release the answers to questions on the date established in the RFP. The established deadline must give the Team enough time to prepare the answers and have them approved by resource management, as appropriate. Any and all amendments must be distributed to the following individuals: (1) those on any mailing list used to distribute the legal notice or RFP, (2) those who submitted a letter of intent (if any); (3) those who submitted questions; and (4) those who attended the Proposers’ conference (if any). If, however, the RFP required a letter of intent or attendance at a Proposers’ conference, the Team need only distribute the amendment(s) to those who submitted such a letter or attended the conference. In addition, an agency must also publish amendments on the DAS website. An agency must not use its website as the sole or exclusive means of distributing answers to questions about the RFP.

The release date for the answers to questions about the RFP must be at least two weeks before the deadline for submitting proposals. If answering questions takes longer than anticipated, the Team should consider the amount of time remaining until the submission deadline. When an insufficient period of time remains (i.e., less than two weeks), the Team should establish a new deadline – using an amendment to the RFP to do so.

1. Receiving RFP’s

All proposals received *before* the deadline must be stamped with the time and date they are received. The proposals must then be placed – unopened – in a secure location by the Official Agency Contact. They must not be opened until the deadline has passed.

Any proposals received *after* the deadline must also be stamped with the time and date they are received. A memorandum, documenting the date and time that a late proposal was received, must be prepared and maintained in the project file. Late proposals must be disqualified and not reviewed by the RFP Team. Late proposals must not be opened and must be retained in a secure location by the Official Agency Contact for the duration of the review process. Any Proposer who submitted a late proposal must be immediately notified in writing that the proposal has been disqualified.

If fewer than three acceptable proposals have been received in response to an RFP, and the POS has an estimated cost greater than $50,000, an OPM form *“Request for Non-Competitive Personal Service Agreement”* must be submitted to OPM on line using their POS Request Website.

1. Screening Proposals

After the due date and timeline for submitting proposals has passed, proposals must be opened by a screening committee that comprises of the Chair (or designee) in conjunction with one or more Committee members. The screening Committee must conduct a preliminary review of each proposal to verify that theproposer has the minimum qualifications and the proposal meets the minimum submission requirements, as specified in the RFP. The screening committee must prepare a document that identifies the proposer and reasons why their proposal failed to meet the minimum qualifications and/or submission requirements for inclusion in the RFP file. The screening committee must report to the RFP Team about any proposal that does not meet the minimum submission requirements. At the request of the RFP Team, the Official Agency Contact may contact any proposer who submitted a deficient proposal and allow the proposer a specified period of time to correct *minor* deficiencies. A minor deficiency is considered one of the following items:

1. Failure to submit or properly sign the following documents:
2. Proposers Authorized Representative Form
3. Agreement and Assurance Forms
4. Notification To Bidders, Parts I – V (CHRO)
5. Conflict of Interest Forms (if applicable)
6. Consulting Agreement Affidavit Forms
7. Gift and Campaign Contributions Certification Form
8. Failure to summit the following documentation:
9. Organizational Chart
10. Executive and/or key staff Resumes
11. Letters of Reference
12. Financial Statements
13. Performance Reviews

Any such correction must be submitted to the Official Agency Contact within the time allowed (e.g., 24 hours). Failure to submit the necessary correction within the time allowed must disqualify a proposal from further review. Other than to correct a minor deficiency (as described here), no changes shall be made to any proposal after it has been accepted for evaluation by the Screening Committee.

1. Reference Verification

After the deadline for submitting proposals, the Chair must assign a Team member (or members) to check each Proposer’s references. The purpose is to verify the skills, qualifications, work record, or accomplishments of a Proposer and to seek other information about the Proposer that may be of interest to the RFP Team. The DDS RFP Reference Verification form must be used for checking references. Once the reference checks are completed, the Team members report their findings to the Chair and other Committee members.

# Qualifying Review Process

# The Chair will schedule a series of meeting dates based on the availability of the RFP Team members. Attendance is critical to the review process and members are encouraged to attend all meetings. It is the responsibility of the Chair to work with all team members to schedule flexible meeting dates and times to balance the timelines established in the RFP and enable all members to attend. If after several attempts are made to find a date where all members are able to attend, the Chair may schedule a time where the majority of members are available. At the discretion of the Chair, a team member may be dismissed for attendance issues.

1. If applicable, the RFP Team will obtain references from the responsible state agency for all proposals from providers who are not currently operating programs in Connecticut.
2. The Selection Committee will obtain the last two Quality Service Reviews and/or the Semi-Annual Mid Year Regional Reviews for those providers providing services in Connecticut.
3. At the discretion of the Committee, a site visit to a representative program operated by one or all of the bidders may be conducted. Site visits must be done in accordance with the two memoranda (dated July 21, 2004 and August 3, 2004) by Governor Rell.
4. The results of the site visit and all reference information will be considered by the Committee during the evaluation process.
5. Members will individually review each qualified proposal.
6. Members will share initial assessments in a group discussion format and review past and current performance of the agency.
7. The RFP Team may ask clarifying questions of Proposers. The purpose of such clarifying questions is to allow Proposers to further explain aspects of their proposals causing confusion or misunderstanding. The Chair should designate a Committee member to collect questions from the team, organize the questions into sets by Proposer. The Official Agency Contact should send each proposer only those questions concerning his or her proposal. The questions may be sent by US mail, facsimile, or e-mail. Proposers should be given a limited amount of time to respond back to the Official Agency Contact with their written answers (e.g., three business days). The RFP Team must review each answer with an eye to make sure that it clarifies – and does not alter – the original proposal.
8. Members will individually score each proposal using the attached Qualifying Scoring Form. The members will share their scores with the team. A single score for each evaluation criteria will be derived for the committee. The chairperson will attempt to reach a consensus among the committee members. If consensus is unattainable, the majority opinion of the committee will prevail. Upon completion of all scoring, the committee may reexamine each of the proposals and adjust scores, if so desired. The collective score for each proposal will determine its relative rank.
9. The top candidates, as determined by the scoring of the RFP Team, will be interviewed.
10. **Qualifying Scoring Procedure**

Committee members will utilize the Qualifying Proposal Evaluation Checklist (Attachment A) to score all proposals in the qualifying process. Each of the criteria will be assigned a relative weight (total = 100%) based upon the type of program, special circumstances and unique priorities for the project. Absent any unique circumstances, the weighting will be as follows:

* Organization: 15%
* Agency Performance: 15%
* Support Strategies: 15%
* Preferences & Relationships: 15%
* Proposed Time Frames: 10%
* Staffing Patterns: 15%
* Budget/Cost effectiveness: 15%

The total score cannot exceed 100%. Specific instructions for completing the Qualifying Proposal Evaluation Checklist are in the Guidelines for the Evaluation Checklist (Attachment B). If none of the proposals exceed a score of 60%, the committee has the option to recommend to the DDS Commissioner to void the RFP process.

1. Interview Process

The Official Agency Contact will schedule the interviews with the top candidates.

The committee will develop clarifying questions specific to the individual provider proposals prior to the interview. Committee members may ask follow-up questions of the candidates. Candidates will be scored on Support Strategies, Preferences and Relationships, Staffing Patterns and Budget/Cost Effectiveness. Members will individually score each category. A single score for each category will be derived by the committee. The chairperson will attempt to reach a consensus among the committee members. If consensus is unattainable, the majority opinion of the committee will prevail. Upon completion of all scoring, the committee may go back and adjust scores, if so desired. The Selection Committee will discuss findings and prepare a recommendation for awarding the contract.

1. Interview Scoring procedure

Committee members will utilize the Interview Evaluation Checklist (Attachment C) to score all qualified proposals in the Interview Process. Each of the criteria will be assigned a relative weight (total = 100%) based upon the type of program, special circumstances and unique priorities for the project. Absent any unique circumstances, the weighting will be as follows:

* Support Strategies: 25%
* Preferences & Relationships: 25%
* Staffing Patterns: 25%
* Budget/ Cost effectiveness: 25%

The total score cannot exceed 100%. Specific instructions and guidelines for completing the Qualifying Proposal Evaluation Checklist are attached in the Guidelines for the Evaluation Checklist. (Attachment B)

1. **Reporting to DDS Commissioner**

The RFP Team must report the names of the three top ranking Proposers to the DDS Commissioner, who must select the Contractor from among these names. The RFP Team’s report to the DDS Commissioner must detail the review process and the recommendations. A copy of the qualifying scores, selection scores, cost comparison data and any other information considered by the committee material to its recommendation should be provided to the Commissioner for review.

1. **Attachments**

Attachment A [Qualifying Proposal Evaluation Checklist](http://www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/dds_manual/ig/igpr004_attachment_a_att_a_qualifying_proposal_evaluation_checklist.docx)

Attachment B [Guidelines for the Evaluation Checklist](http://www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/dds_manual/ig/igpr004_attachment_a_att_b_guidlines_for_evaluation_checklist.docx)

Attachment C [Interview Evaluation Checklist](http://www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/dds_manual/ig/igpr004_attachment_a_att_c_interview_evaluation_checklist.docx)

Attachment D [DDS RFP Reference Verification Form](http://www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/dds_manual/ig/igpr004_attachment_a_att_d_dds_rfp_reference_verification.docx)