



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL  
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION**

**MEASURING THE IMPACT OF A PROJECT FOR EARNED INCOME TAX  
CREDIT (EITC) OUTREACH, AND IMPROVING AWARENESS AND  
EDUCATION FOR ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EVENTS (ACEs)  
IN THE TEXAS PANHANDLE**

**2020-2023**

**INQUIRIES AND PROPOSALS SHOULD  
BE DIRECTED TO:**

**Robert Carlton  
Acting Executive Director  
Panhandle Community Services**

[robert.carlton@pcsvcs.org](mailto:robert.carlton@pcsvcs.org)

## **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **A. Purpose**

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is for PCS to obtain the services of a professional independent evaluator or an evaluation Firm whose principal officers are experienced evaluators, hereinafter referred to as the “Offeror” or “Firm”.

This (RFP) is to contract with an Offeror as of January 1, 2021 for the following:

- 1) Develop a rigorous evaluation plan for the approved EITC & ACE project and support PCS in designing adequate data collection tools and systems for the evaluation.
- 2) Conduct an independent evaluation of the impact of interventions on participants.
- 3) Create interim and final evaluation reports (formative and summative evaluation).

This project is funded by a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Minority Health (OMH). The federal award, Community-Based Approaches to Strengthening Economic Supports for Working Families (CASES), represents 93.75% of the project budget. PCS is leveraging the remaining funds.

### **B. Who May Respond**

Independent evaluators and evaluation Firms with demonstrated experience measuring changes over time in a project that was implemented in a school, community-based organization, municipality, or other setting with a significant sample size (500+).

The chosen candidate must have a successful track record of conducting prior evaluation(s) using an effective design, statistical techniques, and culturally-competent approaches to working with participants and gathering data.

### **C. Instructions on Proposal Submission**

#### **1. Closing Submission Date**

Proposals must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST), on Monday, November 30th, 2020.

#### **2. Inquiries**

Inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed in writing to Bob Carlton, Acting Executive Director, Panhandle Community Services. [robert.carlton@pcsvcs.org](mailto:robert.carlton@pcsvcs.org)

#### **3. Bidders' Conference**

PCS will host a videoconference on Zoom for potential bidders on Friday, November 11 2020, at 10 am Central Standard Time. To receive an invitation, email [robert.carlton@pcsvcs.org](mailto:robert.carlton@pcsvcs.org).

#### **4. Conditions of Proposal**

All costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal responding to this RFP will be the responsibility of the Offeror and will not be reimbursed by Panhandle Community Services.

#### **5. Submission of Proposal**

Proposals and attachments (including resumes, references, and certifications) may not exceed twenty (20) pages.

Offeror must include the Offeror's technical qualifications and signed Certifications. These documents will become part of the contract.

**Proposals must be submitted via e-mail and received by the stated deadline.**

All electronic proposals must be sent as a single PDF attachment to robert.carlton@pcsvcs.org. The subject line should read: Evaluation Services – EITC & ACE Project

If Offerors wish to mail a copy of the proposal (in addition), it may be sent to:

**Panhandle Community Services  
Attn: Robert Carlton  
EITC & ACE Project Evaluation  
PO Box 32150  
Amarillo, TX 79120-2150**

It is the responsibility of the Offeror to insure that the proposal is received by Panhandle Community Services by the date and time specified. Late proposals will not be considered. Failure to follow submission instructions may result in proposals being rejected.

6. Right to Reject

Panhandle Community Services reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received in response to this RFP. A contract for the accepted proposal will be based upon the factors described in this RFP, and agreed compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations 2 CFR 200, as well as Texas Uniform Guidance (UCGMS).

7. Small Businesses, Women-Owned and/or Minority-Owned Businesses

Efforts will be made by Panhandle Community Services to utilize small businesses, women-owned businesses, and minority-owned businesses.

An Offeror qualifies as a small business Firm if it meets the definition of “small business” as established by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.201), having average annual receipts for the last three fiscal years of less than six million dollars.

8. Notification of Award

It is expected that a decision selecting the successful Offeror will be made within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the closing date for the receipt of proposals (by 12/21/2020.)

Upon conclusion of final negotiations with the successful candidate, all Offerors submitting proposals in response to this Request for Proposal will be informed, in writing, of the name of the chosen Firm.

It is expected that the contract will be a one-year fixed price contract with options for two additional one-year periods.

**D. Description of Entity**

Panhandle Community Services (PCS) is a private non-profit organization – 501 (c) 3 status – serving the northern twenty-six counties in the Panhandle of Texas. It is governed by a 15-member volunteer board of directors. PCS is a multi-service community action agency providing anti-poverty programs for individuals and families with low and moderate household income (below 200% of federal poverty levels - FPL).

Current programs include HUD Housing Choice vouchers, energy assistance, family development, transportation, RSVP, weatherization, and AmeriCorps VISTA. The annual budget is \$22,152,000. Last year, 108 staff and hundreds of volunteers served 5,561 families (12,855 individuals).

Administrative offices and records are located at 1309 SW 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Amarillo, TX. Thirteen outreach offices are located throughout the Panhandle. Many staff are working from home during COVID-19 restrictions. PCS uses WebEx to connect remotely.

**E. Options – Contract Extension and Teams/Subcontractors**

At the discretion of PCS this evaluation contract can be extended for two additional one-year periods (2022 and 2023). The cost for the option periods will be agreed upon by PCS and the Firm. It is anticipated that the cost for the optional years will be based upon very similar costs as the contract for the initial year.

Renewal of the evaluation contract is based on successful annual renewals of the HHS/OMH grant by PCS and satisfactory annual performance outcomes for the Firm.

While we prefer a Firm with the capacity to manage this work without subcontractors, the Offeror may propose teams of contractors, either through subcontracting a portion of the scope of work or joining with another evaluation Firm. The roles, resumes and qualifications of each partner should be clearly outlined in the Offeror’s proposal.

PCS retains the right to approve or reject the use of subcontractors.

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**II. SPECIFICATION SCHEDULE**

**A. Scope of an Evaluation**

PCS is requesting formative (mid-year) and summative (end of project year) evaluations. In the proposal, Offeror should describe the proposed relationship between the Offeror and PCS, and the degree of independence the Offeror will have.

The evaluation design and statistical methods used by Offeror must be able to detect intervention impact for the ACE-related objectives and EITC-related objectives established by HHS/OMH. It must also include culturally-competent approaches for conducting outreach and education with communities of color, including African-American, Black, Hispanic, Latinx, and Spanish-speaking individuals and families.

1. Evaluation Requirements in PCS’ Notice of Award from HHS/OMH

*OMH expects projects to implement a rigorous program evaluation to assess the impact of project activities. Awardees should develop and refine, in coordination with community partners, their evaluation plan, to include an evaluation design that will allow for detection of a significant increase in EITC claims*

*and changes in a least one or more ACEs risk and/ or protective factors. The evaluation plan should identify and provide rationale for appropriate indicators/ measures to document and monitor the impact of the intervention on outcomes.*

*Through a power analysis or other technique to establish/ determine statistical significance, the evaluation plan should clearly demonstrate that evaluation of the impact of the intervention will be able to detect a statistically significant difference on key project outcomes, if such impact is present. OMH expects the impact analysis of the intervention to be conducted within the project period. The OMH project officer may provide technical assistance at the awardee's request. Awardees should not assume additional funding will be available to support technical assistance for evaluation.*

*As part of demonstrating satisfactory progress during the first budget period awardees should be able to demonstrate through their evaluation whether the following occurred:*

- *Increased use by project staff of existing resources and tools for EITC marketing/ education*
- *Increased partnership awareness of risk and protective factors for ACEs*

*By the end of the project period, each awardee's evaluation methodology should be able to demonstrate whether the following have occurred:*

- *Increased EITC claims among the population(s) of focus, including racial/ ethnic minority populations*
- *Increased receipt of EITC among the population(s) of focus, including racial/ ethnic minority populations*
- *Increased protective factors for ACEs among the population(s) of focus, including racial/ ethnic minority populations, such as increased social supports for parents/ caregivers*
- *Decreased risk factors for ACEs among the population(s) of focus, including racial/ ethnic minority populations, such as reduced parental/ caregiver stress and depression and improved psychological functioning.*

## 2. Data Collection

PCS anticipates data collection will begin by early February. (The tax season requires a quick start for this activity, because pre and post surveys are planned following EITC outreach in late fall and winter.) There will be a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data gathered. The following methods of data collection have been identified so far:

- a. PCS client demographics and intake form responses.
- b. Surveys of community partners and project participants using Survey Monkey
  - i. Surveys will be anonymous and/ or have unique identifiers
  - ii. Offered in English and Spanish
- c. County and state-level EITC data and ACE data from third parties
  - i. IRS, TX State Department of State Health Services, etc.
  - ii. PCS staff will gather this data and share with evaluator.

PCS will require technical support from the Firm to develop valid and reliable survey instruments for pre and post surveys of target group members and the general public.

The evaluator may conduct interviews with target groups who receive EITC and ACE interventions. If that activity is completed by PCS instead, the agency may ask the Offeror to help prepare interview questions and offer guidance on capturing responses.

PCS may need support with data sharing agreements, and would like data from the evaluator to be organized and shared with PCS for other purposes.

There are no institutional review board (IRB) approval issues for this project.

3. Relevant Attachments to this RFP

The following grant/project documents have been provided with this RFP to help Offerors better understand the project and present an accurate proposal.

1. Project abstract
2. Logic model
3. Work plan
4. Evaluation plan
5. Target groups and ACE risk factors selected for intervention
6. Target counties in the TX Panhandle with demographic and economic indicators
7. CASES Five Objectives for Grantees
8. Map of PCS Service Centers

**B. Performance**

PCS's project performance and the resulting impact on communities served will be evaluated for the project period of calendar year 2021.

Impact is defined by PCS in the approved federal grant as:

- 1) Increased awareness, trust, and understanding of the federal EITC in the TX Panhandle,
- 2) Increased EITC claim rates across the Texas Panhandle, especially in nine counties with low EITC claim rates,
- 3) Reduced ACE risk factors and/or increased protective factors among five target groups,
- 4) Decrease in ACE events in target group households surveyed, and
- 5) Enhanced community partnerships to better serve target group individuals and families in the Panhandle.
- 6) More referrals and connections to services with additional community partners.

The Firm must prepare annual reports (for 2021 and 2022 if the contract is renewed), plus a final project evaluation report for 2023. The reports should summarize evaluation activities and findings for the impact of interventions on communities served. The reports must include qualitative and quantitative data that is specific and detailed related to target groups affected by the dual purposes in this project (EITC outreach and education AND raising awareness of and reducing risk factors for ACEs – adverse childhood events).

Evaluation reports should be easily understood by a variety of key stakeholders, including PCS staff and board, funders, state officials, community partners, and the general public. They would ideally include infographics and visual elements that PCS can use to convey the impact of the project through a variety of channels and advocate for additional funding.

For the formative component, it is expected that the Offeror would deliver mid-year reports (with team discussion) on what is working well and how PCS might adapt the evaluation for the remainder of each project period.

**C. Delivery Schedule**

PCS will undertake pre-evaluation activities in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2020. This includes designing preliminary survey instruments (Survey Monkey), gathering and developing ACE & EITC outreach materials, organizing data, hiring key staff (including a project director and outreach specialists), and finalizing data collection systems and strategies.

**Schedule of Reports and Required Meetings**

<b>Report Type</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Audiences</b>
Progress report	March 31, 2021	PCS staff, board of directors, OMH
Formative report	June 30, 2021	Same
Annual summative evaluation report	September 30, 2021	Same, also public

*Note: If the contract is renewed, formative and summative reports only will be required. (semi-annual)*

Under certain extenuating circumstances the contracting agent may extend this schedule upon written request to the Firm, with sufficient justification.

Reports may be submitted earlier than the above schedule. However, if the Firm fails to make delivery of reports within the time schedule specified herein, or delivers reports which do not conform to all of the provisions of this contract, PCS may, by written notice of default to the Firm, terminate the whole or any part of this contract.

Firm will be asked to join 2-4 conference calls and work sessions with OMH when evaluation activities are being discussed. Availability and dates will be negotiated following the award of a contract and requests from the Office of Minority Health.

**D. Price**

The Offeror’s proposed price should be submitted as part of the proposal, and should be based on deliverables. Include information indicating how the price was determined. For example, the Offeror should indicate the estimated number of hours by staff level, hourly rates, and total costs for personnel and other expenses. Any out-of-pocket and travel expenses should also be indicated.

PCS has budgeted appropriately for evaluation services and anticipates the price for an accepted offer to range from \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually.

Once it is safe to travel again and gather in groups, semi-annual site visits would be preferred. Until then, videoconferencing would necessary for most meetings, under this contract with email and phone calls supplementing face-to-face communication.

**E. Payment**

Payment will be made on a quarterly basis, once required deliverables for payment have been received and approved by PCS.

Should PCS reject a report (either an evaluation report or a progress report submitted with an invoice for payment), PCS’s authorized representative will notify the Firm in writing of such rejection giving the reason(s), and will outline steps the Firm can take to cure the deficiency. The right to reject a report shall extend throughout the term of this contract and for ninety (90) days after the selected Firm submits the final invoice for payment.

Upon delivery of the final data and evaluation reports to PCS, and their acceptance and approval of the same, Offeror may submit a bill for the balance due on the contract.

**F. Exit Conference**

An exit conference with PCS’s representatives and the Firm’s representatives will be held at the conclusion of the contract.

If an option to renew is sought by the selected Firm, observations and recommendations for the upcoming renewal period must be summarized in writing and discussed with PCS.

**G. Confidentiality**

All Offerors and the chosen Firm agree to keep the information learned throughout the course of this engagement (including responding to this RFP) in strict confidence.

For the Firm, other than the reports submitted to PCS, which will be made publicly available, the Firm agrees not to publish, reproduce or otherwise divulge such information in whole or in part, in any manner or form, or authorize or permit others to do so.

The Firm agrees to take reasonable measures which are necessary to restrict access to information, while in the Firm’s possession, to those employees who must have the information on a “need-to-know” basis.

The Firm agrees to immediately notify, in writing, PCS’s authorized representative in the event the Firm determines or has reason to suspect a breach of any of these requirements.

**H. Professional Standards**

The Offeror should describe the extent of their knowledge of and experience with cultural competence and the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (National CLAS Standards).

(<https://www.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/Content/clas.asp>).

This includes any partners and/or proposed subcontractors’ experience and knowledge.

In the Work to be Performed response, Offerors should describe how they will evaluate the quality of PCS’ implementation of the National CLAS Standards through process and outcome measures.

### **III. OFFEROR'S TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS**

The Offeror, in its proposal, shall, as a minimum, include the following:

#### **A. Prior Evaluation Experience**

The Offeror should describe its prior evaluation experience including the names, addresses, contact persons, telephone numbers, and email addresses of two similar organizations where programs or projects were evaluated.

#### **B. Organization Type, Size and Structure**

The Offeror should describe its organization, size, staffing, and structure. Indicate, if appropriate, if the Firm is a small business, women-owned business, or minority-owned business.

#### **C. Staff Qualifications**

The Offeror should describe the qualifications of staff to be assigned to this project. Descriptions should include:

1. Evaluation team makeup.
2. Overall supervision to be exercised and lead contact person.
3. Resumes for individual team members.

#### **D. Work to be Performed**

The Offeror should describe its understanding of PCS' grant proposal objectives, the work to be performed under this proposal, including the desired approach to evaluating the project, statistical methods that will be used, and timelines for evaluation activities and reports.

#### **E. Certifications**

The Offeror must sign and include as an attachment to its proposal the Certifications on the last page of this RFP. This is not counted in the 20-page limit.

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### **IV. PROPOSAL REVIEW AND SCORING**

#### **A. Nonresponsive Proposals**

Proposals may be judged nonresponsive and removed from further consideration if any of the following occur:

1. The proposal is not received timely in accordance with the terms of this RFP.
2. The proposal does not follow the specified format.
3. The proposal does not include the Certifications.
4. The proposal is not robust enough to allow reviewers to form a judgment that the proposed evaluation would be sufficient to detect intervention impact.

**B. Scoring**

Scoring for each proposal will be based on the following criteria:

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Point Range</u>
1. <u>Prior experience (up to 25 points)</u>	
a. Working with PCS.	0-5
b. Cultural competency in evaluation (CLAS or other standards)	0-5
c. Evaluating programs and/or projects with federal funding.	0-5
d. Evaluating similar programs or projects.	0-5
e. Evaluating private nonprofit organizations of a similar size.	0-5
f. Working with community action agencies.	0-5
<p>PCS may contact prior organizations to verify the experience provided by the Offeror.</p>	
2. <u>Organization, size, and structure of the Offeror’s Firm. (up to 10 points)</u>	
a. Adequate size and capacity of the Firm to manage this project.	0-5
b. Minority/small/women-owned business	0-5
3. <u>Qualifications of staff to be assigned to the evaluation. (up to 25 points)</u>	
<p>This will be determined from resumes submitted. Offerors’ education, position, years and types of experience, and continuing professional education will be considered.</p>	
a. Evaluation team makeup	0-10
b. Overall supervision to be exercised	0-5
c. Prior experience of the individual team members	0-10
4. <u>Offeror’s understanding and outline of work to be performed. (up to 15 points)</u>	
a. Adequate coverage.	0-10
b. Realistic time estimates of each evaluation step.	0-5
5. <u>Price (up to 20 points)</u>	<u>0-20</u>
<b>MAXIMUM POINTS</b>	<b>100</b>

**D. Review Process**

PCS contemplates award of the contract to the responsible Offeror with the highest total points.

PCS may, at its discretion, request presentations by or meetings with any or all Offerors, to clarify or negotiate modifications to the Offerors’ proposals.

However, PCS reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposals submitted. Therefore, proposals should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms, from both technical and priced standpoints, which the Offeror can propose.

## CERTIFICATIONS

On behalf of the Offeror:

- A. The individual signing certifies they are authorized to contract on behalf of the Offeror.
- B. The individual signing certifies that the Offeror is not involved in any agreement to pay money or other consideration for the execution of this agreement, other than to an employee or subcontractor of the Offeror.
- C. The individual signing certifies that the prices in this proposal have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, or agreement for the purpose of restricting competition.
- D. The individual signing certifies that the prices quoted in this proposal have not been knowingly disclosed by the Offeror prior to an award to any other Offeror or potential Offeror.
- E. The individual signing certifies that there has been no attempt by the Offeror to discourage any potential Offeror from submitting a proposal.
- F. The individual signing certifies that they are aware of and will comply with 2 CFR 200 and Texas Uniform Guidance (UCGMS).
- G. The individual signing certifies they have read and understand all of the information in this Request for Proposal, including the information on the project to be evaluated.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

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Offeror's Firm Name

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Signature of Offeror's Representative

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Printed Name and Title of Individual Signing