



**Kinship Navigation Program  
SFY 24-25 Grant Year**

**REQUEST FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS (RFGA)**

**Posting Date: August 30, 2023**

**Your application (+ one redacted copy) must be submitted in a sealed package if mailed or in-person delivery. “Kinship Navigation Program” and Deadline/Closing Date (see below) must appear on package exterior.**

<b>Deadline for Applications:</b> <b>September 26, 2023, at 11:00 AM EST</b>	<b>Must Be Received At:</b> <b>SCDSS State Office-Procurement Division</b> <b>1535 Confederate Avenue Ext.</b> <b>Columbia, SC 29201 or <a href="mailto:dssprocurement@dss.sc.gov">dssprocurement@dss.sc.gov</a></b> <b>(Preferred method is Email)</b> <b>No Later Than September 26, 2023, at 11:00 AM EST</b>
<b>Submit your sealed package to either of the following addresses:</b>	
<b>MAILING ADDRESS:</b>  SCDSS State Office-Procurement Division Attn: Larry Addison P.O. Box 1520 Columbia, SC 29202-1520	<b>PHYSICAL ADDRESS:</b>  SCDSS State Office-Procurement Division Attn: Larry Addison 1535 Confederate Avenue Ext. Columbia, SC 29201

SCDSS offers this Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) for the funds administered by SCDSS for the State of South Carolina’s Child Welfare Services’ Kinship Navigation Program that serves children and families. Funds will support the creation or expansion of kinship navigation programs in South Carolina. Programs accepted will utilize an evidenced based model for kinship navigation called Foster Kinship. Each organization must utilize this Foster Kinship model with fidelity to receive grant funding. Foster Kinship is a kinship navigation model that is rated “promising” by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse and is approved to be used by states under the Family First Prevention and Services Act to provide kinship navigation services.

SCDSS will consider all acceptable applications for award as part of this grant program. Acceptable applications are those that support the activities, goals, and objectives outlined in the scope of services. SCDSS, in its sole discretion, may determine whether a proposal falls within the scope of activities and is eligible for award under the stated guidelines. A panel of subject matter experts will evaluate responsive applications and score them using only the criteria stated in the RFGA.

SCDSS may award grants to one applicant per region (4 regions) under this RFGA. The maximum dollar amounts

available for each award under this RFGA is \$120,000. The Regions are Upstate, Midlands, Lowcountry, and Pee Dee. This is a one-year grant. Future funding is dependent upon successful completion of the grant activities and available funding.

**Eligibility:** To be eligible to apply for this grant funding opportunity, the organization must be willing to implement the Foster Kinship model with fidelity, including documentation and reporting, and must have at least three years of documented history (within the past three years) working with children, families, and community organizations. Demonstrated experience with kinship families is preferred. When applying for funding, the Provider should demonstrate their understanding of the strengths and obstacles faced by kinship families. The Provider must be located in South Carolina and provide services to kinship families in all counties of the Region in which they are located. If not already serving all counties in the region, the Provider must document how they will scale to provide kinship services to all counties in their region.

**How to Apply:** See the Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) starting on page three of this document for additional details about information to include with your application. A cover letter should be included and signed by a person authorized to submit a binding application on behalf of your organization. Eligible Applicants must submit the required documents to either the email address, the mailing address or physical address listed above.

**Deadline:** The deadline for all applications is **September 26, 2023, at 11:00AM EST**. Preferred method is by Email, although paper submission is permitted. Please see physical address instructions below. Applications received after the deadline will be rejected.

**Additional Physical Address Information:**

Visitors arriving at 1535 Confederate Avenue, Columbia, SC will enter SCDSS through the front entrance and deliver their proposal to Security Personnel.

It may take several minutes to obtain building access and have your application received. Please allow at least thirty (30) minutes for this process of obtaining building access and getting your application stamped in. The deadline for applications is identified on this Cover Page. Please plan accordingly as deadline times will not be adjusted and proposals will not be accepted after the deadline stated. If an emergency or unanticipated event causes delay, the time specified for receipt of applications may be extended at the discretion of the Procurement Division.

**Questions & Answers:** SCDSS will accept questions until **5:00 PM EST, September 7, 2023**. Submit questions in an easily copied format such as Microsoft Word and do not submit questions in table form. All questions must be submitted in writing to Larry Addison at [Larry.Addison@dss.sc.gov](mailto:Larry.Addison@dss.sc.gov) with “Kinship Navigation Program Questions” “Responses to questions and all other changes will be posted on the SCDSS website at <https://dss.sc.gov/about/procurement/> on September 14, 2023, by 5:00PM EST. We will not identify you in our answer to your question.

The selection of the successful applicants is anticipated to be made, and notifications released and posted on the SCDSS website no later than **October 11, 2023, at 5:00 PM EST**. If SCDSS needs additional time to evaluate responses, a notice of extension of award will be posted at same time and location. The Grant Agreement will be effective when signed by both the Provider and SCDSS.

All providers must have a state vendor number to receive reimbursement from SCDSS. To obtain a state vendor number, visit [www.procurement.sc.gov](http://www.procurement.sc.gov) and select New Vendor Registration. (To determine if your business is already registered, go to “Vendor Search”). Upon registration, you will be assigned a state vendor number. Vendors and Contractors must keep their vendor information current. If you are already registered, you can update your information by selecting Change Vendor Registration. (Please note that vendor registration does not substitute for any obligation to register with the S.C. Secretary of State or S.C. Department of Revenue. You can register with the agencies at <http://www.scbos.com/default.htm>

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Kinship Navigation Program  
SFY 24-25 Grant Year  
Request for Grant Applications (RFGA)**

**I. BACKGROUND**

Research has shown the benefits of kinship care, defined as the care of children by relatives or close family friends (referred to fictive kin). The use of kinship caregivers for out-of-home placement for children is the preferred practice in the child welfare system and SCDSS. The primary purpose of placing a child with a suitable kinship caregiver is to maintain a child's familial, cultural, and community ties, to promote safety, permanency, and well-being of the child, and to enable the child to live in the least restrictive environment. In addition, kinship caregivers are more likely to be permanent placement for children, and they are more likely to keep sibling groups together.

There are approximately 57,000 (Annie E. Casey KIDS COUNT Database 2022) children living in kinship care, compared to 3,804 in foster care in South Carolina. Children are placed in kinship care for the same reasons as those placed in foster care, often because of traumatic experiences including physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and abandonment by a parent.

Kinship caregivers face unique obstacles. Kinship caregivers are more likely to be over the age of 55, and the majority of them have low incomes or live in poverty. Kinship caregivers are more likely to have health challenges and limited education. Kinship caregivers are rarely licensed foster parents for number of reasons, including lack of awareness that the possibility exists, inability to complete the licensing process, belief that the child will only be with them temporarily, an aversion to becoming involved with SCDSS, or because becoming a licensed is not an option for them.

Kinship caregivers often do not plan to have children in their care and as a result, they are unprepared. They often receive misinformation about eligibility for assistance, lack the knowledge of and access to available community services and resources, emotional support and networks, financial, legal, medical, and mental health resources.

Despite the many challenges that kinship caregivers face, kinship care helps children maintain familial and community bonds, provides stability, and gives them a feeling of identity and belonging. Youth in kinship care are almost half as likely to develop the behavioral and social problems of children in foster care and as a result, their placement is more likely to be permanent.

South Carolina has historically used informal kinship care to prevent formal foster care placement, and over the past year, the agency has worked to increase the number of children and youth being served through formal kinship care (kinship foster care). As kinship placement numbers continue to rise, so has the demand for kinship-specific services and support. SCDSS is seeking Kinship Navigation Programs located within each region to offer aid to kinship families and fill these gaps.

**SCOPE OF GRANT**

The State of South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) is soliciting proposals from organizations to deliver the Foster Kinship Navigation Program in each of the four regions of the state identified in this document. Funds are intended to assist the Grantee in delivering the Foster Kinship Navigation Program to kinship caregivers who are caring for children who have are unable to live with their parent(s) and cannot be used for any other purpose. SCDSS will award one award per region.

**II. REQUIRED ACTIVITIES**

The successful applicants awarded under this grant application shall:

1. Hire staff in adherence to the Foster Kinship model, which must include at a minimum one full-time Family Advocate for intake and one full-time Family Advocate for navigation.
2. Complete background checks on employees as required by SCDSS.
3. Ensure confidentiality of information and data regarding children and families in accordance with state, local and federal laws and as required by SCDSS.
4. Use kinship caregivers lived experience to aid in the ongoing development and evaluation of the program.

5. Utilize the organization's website, and marketing materials, and conduct outreach in the regions to publicize and promote the program.
6. Develop relationships with each SCDSS county office within the region to publicize and promote the program.
7. Ensure that at least one staff member be trained in Caring for Our Own and provide Caring for Our Own training to kinship caregivers.
8. Provide kinship navigation services in adherence to the Foster Kinship model.
9. Document all participate data and services provided in adherence to the Foster Kinship model.
10. Ensure that grant funded staff and the organization's leadership staff attend all required training.
11. Build relationships with community agencies and organizations that provide services and resources in the local community and update as needed.
12. Develop and provide SCDSS a copy of your agency's plan and policies to provide kinship navigation services to kinship caregivers within 6 months of the beginning of the grant period.
13. Become an SC Thrive partner organization and utilize Thrive Hub to aid kinship caregivers in applying for benefits and other resources. <https://scthrive.org/for-organizations/thrive-hub/>
14. Submit an annual report detailing plan for on-going sustainability. Submit a plan detailing how your organization will support the program at the end of the grant period.

#### **A. GRANT REQUIREMENTS**

##### **Grantee must:**

1. Refer kinship caregiver to appropriate services and provide linkages between kinship caregivers and service providers.
2. Coordinate with other agencies to promote service coordination or provide information and referral services (i.e., SC Thrive, United Way 211 information).
3. Participate in the train the trainer, Caring for Our Own program, as coordinated by SCDSS.
4. Provide Caring for Own training to kinship caregivers.
5. Provide kinship caregiver with relevant legal assistance, referrals and help in obtaining legal services.
6. Develop and provide outreach to kinship care families, including by establishing, distributing, guides or outreach materials as well as working with state partners to update the kinshipsc.org website.
7. Participate in national, statewide, and regional training and events regarding kinship care.
8. Offer monthly kinship caregiver support groups either virtually or in-person to all kinship caregivers from the counties that make up the region.
9. Submit a timeline to achieve required activities.
10. Allow SCDSS, Foster Kinship staff, or both to visit sites for auditing purposes and make records available for financial, programmatic, quality management, and other grant-related visits.
11. Provide, upon request by SCDSS, specific documentation of expenditures included with submitted invoices. The following areas will be reviewed, audited, or both:

Financial Management: Financial records will be reviewed to assure compliance with generally accepted accounting requirements. The records must provide accurate, current, and complete disclosure of financial results. Records must identify the source and application of funds and must be supported by invoices and another sourcedocumentation.

12. Install and use Salesforce database software to document client's information and services received.
13. Utilize a program to deliver training and educational opportunities for caregivers.
14. Identify space within or outside the organization to host in-person training and educational opportunities for caregivers.

## **B. FUNDING RELATED GRANT REQUIREMENTS**

- Document all required activity with fidelity using Salesforce.
- Provide all required reporting to SCDSS and Foster Kinship.
- All funding must go directly towards Kinship Navigation Program and Grant Requirements.
- Invoices and all documentation must be submitted monthly, on-time to receive grant reimbursement.

**Funds may not be used for the following:**

- Lobbying
- Publicity
- Legal fees (for the organization)
- Any other item not related to grant conditions

**\*\*Note: Selected Grantee must provide 5% in-kind match \*\***

## **C. GRANT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Grantee will provide programmatic and financial reports as required by SCDSS. These requirements are:

1. Grantee must provide programmatic reporting as required and in adherence with the Foster Kinship model and with SCDSS.
2. Grantee must submit a monthly invoice to the Office of Permanency Management with required documentation and description of expenses.

## **D. GRANT BUDGET**

The grant project period shall begin **October 23, 2023-October 22, 2024**. The total dollar amount available will be dependent on approval by SCDSS which shall be based on performance over the aforementioned project period; however, it may not exceed \$120,000 per provider. Organizations must demonstrate that they have the capacity to develop a navigation program, detailing what costs and expenses will be by the organization, for example, these may include space, internet, utilities, supervision of staff, supplies, etc.

## **E. INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS TO SUBMIT – EVALUATION AND SCORING**

To be considered for award all proposals must include, at minimum, responses to the information requested in this section. Scoring points associated with each section are noted in parentheses.

### **a. Qualifications**

- Submit a Certificate of Existence, also known as a Certificate of Good Standing, from the Secretary of State. This certificate states that an entity is in good standing with the Secretary of State's Office, and has, to the best of the Secretary of State's knowledge, filed all required tax returns with the Department of Revenue. The Certificate can be requested via: <https://web.sc.gov/SOSDocumentRetrieval/Welcome.aspx>
- List any lawsuits, claims, or demands that have been filed against the Provider or management of the Provider for the previous ten-year period. Include the status and a background on the claim.
- Nonprofit organizations should submit a copy of their 501 (c)(3) identification letter.
- A letter of support from a community partner.

## **b. Scoring and Proposal Outline**

- Proposals are limited to a maximum of 10 pages for the narrative. The cover page, budget, budget narrative, resumes, appendices and attachments are not counted against this 10-page limit.
- Additional attachments, other than those specified, will be accepted.
- Please submit only proposals with 1-inch margins, 12-point font and numbered pages. Single spacing is permissible.
- Proposals will be rated on a 100-point scale (Program Description = 40; Organization history, Experience, and Qualifications = 40; Community Collaborations = 10; and Reporting and Evaluation = 10).
- Applicants shall submit a signed Cover Page and Application addressing all of the above noted points. Application must include one (1) original and three (3) copies of:
  - Signed Cover Letter
  - Letter of Support
  - Table of Contents
  - Program Description
  - Organizational History, Experience and Qualifications
  - Community Collaborations
  - Reporting and Evaluation
  - Budget Narrative

Entities applying should restate each of the items listed below and provide their response immediately thereafter.

### **ALL INFORMATION SHOULD BE PRESENTED IN THE LISTED ORDER:**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** – Provide a **one-page** table of contents document that includes all the items listed below.

1. Program Description – the provider will describe how they plan to serve kinship families referred by SCDSS
2. Organizational History, Experience and Qualifications
3. Community Collaborations
4. Reporting and Evaluation
5. Budget Narrative\* (Requested for informational purposes only and not part of the scoring).

#### **A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (40 POINTS TOTAL)**

1. Outline the organization's capacity to replicate the Foster Kinship model with fidelity. Utilize your organizational chart to show how the Foster Kinship Program will sit in the structure and how it aligns with other services provided by the organization. Describe how your organization's infrastructure will support the needs of the program including program management, supervision of staff, and financial management.
2. Describe how your organization will support the Kinship Navigation Program.
3. Describe your outreach and publicity plan. How will you reach kinship caregivers in your region?

4. Describe the agency's current relationship with local SCDSS offices in the region. Describe how you will build on/establish connections with each county office within the region to raise awareness of your kinship navigation program and to get referrals for kinship families in need of services.
5. Describe any barriers you face in providing the kinship navigation service and support group meetings. How will you overcome these obstacles?
6. What other resources in your region are available to kinship families? Are kinship navigation services provided in your region by other organizations? Explain how you will assess the region's current resources.  
  
**Note:** Eligible kinship families are determined by SCDSS. Other kinship families may be served, but the organization must demonstrate that they are reaching and serving families deemed eligible by SCDSS.
7. Plan for implementation and operational processes to ensure timely access to care.

**B. ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY, EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS (40 POINTS TOTAL)**

The Provider must demonstrate the proven ability to accomplish the tasks set forth below.

1. Describe the record of service, including years and types of service, to children and families in the community. Specify if the organization works with kinship families. If they organization connects children and families to resources in the community, explain how this is accomplished.
2. Describe the need for kinship services in your region. What other services are available for kinship families, if any? What is the scope of the need in your region? If you currently serve kinship families in a different capacity, what are the major gaps in services you have identified? How will kinship navigation services fill those gaps?
3. Describe capability to utilize and implement technology requirements needed for effective implementation.
4. Describe how the Provider will track program expenditures and service provision. Describe your financial management system and it will support the monitoring, billing and maintain accurate records required of the program. Describe the role of the person who oversees the financial management of the organization. Does your organization conduct an independent audit annually?
5. Describe the hiring process for the organization and who is responsible. Explain how the required position will be filled in a timely manner in keeping with the conditions of the grant.

**C. COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS (10 POINTS TOTAL)**

1. Explain how your organization currently collaborates with community partners. Community partners may include social service organizations, schools, public agencies, etc.
2. Explain how you will utilize current community partners in publicizing the kinship navigation program, bringing awareness to kinship care, and in assisting kinship families.
3. List any community-based organizations with which your organization does not currently but will collaborate with to provide kinship navigation services. For each organization, define role in the region/area and types of services provided.
4. Describe how your organization will meet the conditions of this grant to provide beneficial outcomes for children and families.
5. Describe efforts your organization will make to ensure sustainability of the program.

D. REPORTING AND EVALUATION (10 POINTS TOTAL)

1. Describe who will be responsible for ensuring that data is collected and documented in adherence to the Foster Kinship model?
2. Describe who will be responsible for providing data to Foster Kinship and SCDSS as needed.



# ATTACHMENT 1

## Procedures for Dispute Resolution

### I. DISPUTE PROCEDURES FOR GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATIONS DURING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The following dispute procedures are available to any community-based organization, local or county program or any other Provider that object to any requirement(s) as outlined in a Request for Grant Applications (RFGA), amendment to RFGA or does not receive a distribution of funding as a grantee under a federal, state, or combined federal/state grant program. A Provider or grantee that disagrees with any element of the grant requirements or with the distribution of funding is also referred to herein as a “requestor.”

- A. **Request or Application for Funding.** Subject to conditions set forth in these procedures, any prospective Provider desiring to file a dispute concerning SCDSS’s proposed evaluation of applications or proposed manner of distribution of funds (as outlined in the RFGA) shall e-mail or fax a Notification of Appeal to the SCDSS Procurement Manager\*, within **three (3) business days** of the posting date of the RFGA or any amendment thereto. The notification of appeal must clearly specify the grounds of the dispute and the relief requested. Within **three business days** of receipt of a notification of appeal, the Procurement Manager shall render a decision as to the disposition of the dispute and will e-mail or fax written notification of this decision to the prospective Provider. If the prospective Provider is not satisfied with the decision rendered by the Procurement Manager, the Provider shall e-mail, or fax written notification to the SCDSS Program Area Director\* within **two (2) business day** of the date of the written notification of decision from the Procurement Manager. The Procurement Manager will conduct a review and e-mail or fax a written decision to the prospective Provider within **three (3) business days**. The written decision will be final and may not be further appealed by the requestor.
- B. **Award to a Provider.** A requestor with a dispute regarding the Notification of Award shall e- mail, fax or mail a Notification of Appeal to the Procurement Manager within **seven (7) business days** of the date of posting of the Notification of Award. The notification of appeal must clearly specify the grounds of the dispute and the relief requested. Within three business days *of* receipt of a notification of appeal, the Procurement Manager shall render a decision as to the disposition of the dispute and will e-mail or fax written notification of this decision to the requestor. If the requestor is not satisfied with the decision rendered by the Procurement Manager, the requestor shall e-mail, or fax written notification to the Program Area Director within **three (3) business days** of receipt of written notification from the Procurement Manager. The Procurement Manager will conduct a review and e-mail or fax a written decision to the requestor within **three (3) business days**. The written decision will be final and may not be further appealed by the requestor.
- C. **Notice of Decision.** A copy of all correspondence or decisions under this dispute resolution procedure shall be mailed or otherwise furnished immediately to the requestor and any other party intervening.

## II. PROCEDURES FOR GRANT DISPUTES OR CONTROVERSIES REGARDING SCDSS'S EVALUATION OF A GRANTEE'S EXPENDITURES IN THE POST-AWARD PHASE

- A. **Applicability.** These procedures shall apply to controversies between SCDSS and a grantee when the grantee disagrees with SCDSS's evaluation of an expenditure by the grantee as "not allowed" under the grant program requirements. These procedures constitute the exclusive means of resolving a controversy between SCDSS and a grantee of an awarded grant.
- B. **Grievance.** No later than *thirty (30) calendar days* after receiving notice that the agency's grant program area has denied an expenditure, a grantee must e-mail, or fax written notice identifying any dispute or controversy to the Procurement Manager. The Procurement Manager will, *within thirty (30) calendar days* thereafter, review and attempt to informally resolve the dispute or controversy. If the dispute cannot be mutually resolved within that timeframe, a grantee wishing to continue pursuit of the dispute must e-mail or fax written notice of the dispute to the Procurement Manager within *five (5) business days* following the 30-day review period. The Procurement Manager will, within *ten (10) business days* of receipt of a written notice of the dispute, meet or hold a conference call with the grantee. Within *ten (10) business days* after such consultation with the grantee, the Procurement Manager will e-mail or fax the grantee with a written determination as to his/her decision regarding the disposition of the expenditure. The decision of the Procurement Manager will be final and may not be further appealed by the requestor.

\* *Contacts are listed below:*

<b>Procurement Manager:</b> Larry Addison Procurement Manager SCDSS 1535 Confederate Ave Columbia, SC 29202 Phone: (803) 898-7114 Email: <a href="mailto:Larry.Addison@dss.sc.gov">Larry.Addison@dss.sc.gov</a>	<b>Program Area Contact:</b> Dawn Barton Permanency Management SCDSS 1535 Confederate Ave Columbia, SC 29202 Phone (803) 898-9051 Email: <a href="mailto:dawn.barton@dss.sc.gov">dawn.barton@dss.sc.gov</a>
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## ATTACHMENT 2

### Disclosure Of Your Proposal and Submitting Confidential Data

By submitting a response to this Request for Grant Application, you agree to:

(a) Follow the instructions provided in the solicitation document for marking information exempt from public disclosure. ***SCDSS may disclose all information not marked as required.*** If you mark your entire response as exempt from public disclosure, SCDSS may, in its sole discretion, determine your proposal nonresponsive and ineligible for award.

(b) The public disclosure of every page, or part of every page, of every document you submitted in response to this solicitation at any time prior to entering into a contract unless you redacted the page, or a part of it, and conspicuously marked "Confidential"

(c) All prices, commissions, discounts, or other financial figures used to determine the award, as well as the final contract amount, are subject to public disclosure.

#### Instructions for Marking Information Exempt from Public Disclosure

If your offer includes any information that you claim is exempt from public disclosure, you must submit one complete copy of your offer from which you have removed or concealed the exempt information (the redacted copy).

(a) Do not mark your entire response as confidential or protected. If only portions of a page are subject to some protection, do not redact the entire page. The redacted copy must have the same pagination as the original and show the empty space from which you redacted information.

(b) If you improperly mark your response, or any part of it, as confidential or protected, the SCDSS may, in its sole discretion, determine it nonresponsive.

(d) On the redacted copy, you must identify the basis of your claim by marking each redaction as follows:

1. separately mark with the word "CONFIDENTIAL" every page, or part of a page, that you redacted and claim as exempt from public disclosure because it is privileged and confidential, as that phrase is used in [Section 11-35-410 of the Consolidated South Carolina Procurement Code](#).
2. All markings must be conspicuous; use color, bold, underlining, or some other method to conspicuously distinguish the mark from the other text.

(e). In determining whether to release documents, the State will detrimentally rely on your redaction and marking of documents as being "Confidential." By submitting a response, you agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the State of South Carolina, its agencies, officers, and employees, from every claim, demand, loss, expense, cost, damage, or injury, including attorney's fees, arising out of, or resulting from withholding information by the State of South Carolina or any of its agencies, that you have redacted or marked as "Confidential."