

Request for Applications RFA – 2023-2024.1.A

I/DD SERVICES CHAMPION

FUNDING AGENCY: North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD), NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office of the Secretary

ISSUE DATE: February 20th, 2023

DEADLINE DATE: April 12th, 2023

Receipt of applications online at www.ddsuite.org is preferred but not required. All applications must be received by 5:00 pm EDT on April 12th, 2023. Please notify at least two weeks in advance of the due date if you need application materials in an alternate format or otherwise require accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Direct all inquiries concerning this Request for Applications (RFA) to:

Mailing Address:

NCCDD-RFA

North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities

3109 Poplarwood Court, Suite 105

Raleigh, NC 27604

Via Email: RFAinfo@nccdd.org

Delivery Information:

Applicants for this RFA are strongly encouraged to submit the application electronically in the DD Suite online database found at www.ddsuite.org. Applicants that submit in hard copy are responsible for including all required elements in the submission packet.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The NCCDD makes funds available to fulfill its mission in accordance with the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) and the Council's Five-Year State Plan. The NCCDD's major funding source is the United States Dept. of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Administration on Disabilities, Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The NCCDD makes funds available primarily through competitive bids or Requests for Applications (RFAs). A general description of the current RFA is included in this document. The complete RFA package is available through DD Suite (www.ddsuite.org) or may be requested in alternate formats or by mail. Please complete and submit the [Notification of Intent to Apply](#) if your organization or agency intends to apply.

Applications are welcomed from any university, non-profit, for profit, or government agency that demonstrates that their agency is qualified, responsible, and capable of conducting the activities described. Eligible entities include any organization, agency, or non-profit demonstrating an expertise in the focus area of this initiative. To be eligible, non-profit private entities must also submit proof of 501(c)(3) status with a [recent IRS determination letter](#). The Council will not consider applications submitted by agencies that do not meet eligibility to apply for funding.

Private non-profit and for-profit applicants must be registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State to conduct business in North Carolina, or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the execution of the contract documents (see www.sosnc.gov/corporations).

II. ABOUT NCCDD

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD), authorized under Public Law 106-402, the DD Act, is one of 56 entities of its type in the United States and the territories. The NCCDD is an independent agency located in the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). NCCDD's activities are governed by a 40-member body, appointed by the Governor, and comprised of at least 60 percent people living with intellectual or other developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. Other members include legislators and policymakers representing various agencies and organizations having a vested interest in people with I/DD. The Council's [quarterly meetings](#) are open to the public.

The mission of the NCCDD is to assure that individuals with I/DD and their families participate in the design of and have access to culturally competent services, supports, and other assistance and opportunities that promote independence, contribution, self-determination, integration, and inclusion in the community. The NCCDD achieves this mission by promoting advocacy and leadership, community capacity building and systems change activities. It also serves in an advisory capacity, under state law, to the NC DHHS.

The NCCDD has established goals and objectives in its Five-Year Plan (2022-2026). These goals represent the most pressing needs as identified by stakeholders in North Carolina. These goals are approved by the Council as the framework for its work within the context of the Five-Year Plan.

GOAL 1: By 2026, increase financial security through asset development for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

GOAL 2: By 2026, increase community living for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

GOAL 3: By 2026, increase advocacy for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

This RFA will address **Goal 1, Objective A:**

Increase Employment First within educational institutions, governmental entities, and society at large.

Measurement: More educational institutions, governmental entities, and the larger community will prioritize employment in the general workforce (Employment First) for citizens with disabilities in North Carolina.

For further information on the work of the NCCDD, please see the NCCDD Five-Year State Plan at our website by clicking <https://nccdd.org/the-council/five-year-plan.html>

III. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

INTENT:

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) intends to fund a three-year initiative to champion and increase employment and leadership of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) within the systems that impact the developmental disability community, including care coordination, advocacy, schools, LME/MCOs, DHHS, and providers.

BACKGROUND:

North Carolina has an unprecedented opportunity to ensure individuals with I/DD and family members are employed and serving as leaders within the various systems that impact and support the developmental disability community. It is critical that individuals with I/DD and family members work and lead within these systems because they are who the systems serve.

Job descriptions and employment opportunities within the developmental disability system often do not value the lived experience of individuals and family members. This is beginning to change as family navigation and mental health peer specialists have shown the extraordinary value of individuals with life experience. Still, there is much more work that needs to be done, particularly for individuals with I/DD.

Over the last several years, NCCDD has invested in peer support and leadership training. A number of these individuals have begun to work within I/DD systems.

Starting in December 2022, individuals with I/DD and family members could be employed to be part of care coordination teams under the state's new Tailored Care Management model. Under Tailored Care Management, all Tailored Plan members will have access to a dedicated care manager who will work with a multidisciplinary care team to deliver integrated, whole-person care management. Care Extenders can support care managers in delivering Tailored Care Management and fulfilling the member contact requirements. While individuals with I/DD and family members can serve as Care Extenders, there is a lack of clarity on the training and job responsibilities of the Care Extenders.

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities funded a short-term initiative in May 2022 which made recommendations on Care Extenders.

The prevalence of DD among US children aged 3 to 17 increased between 2009 and 2017. Families with children who have disabilities face a daunting journey to support and enable their children to live optimal lives, reach their full potential, and achieve the long-held goals of maximizing self-sufficiency and independent living promulgated in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Family members of individuals with I/DD currently serve as family navigators in various capacities across the state. Families generally provide the nurture, advocacy, and aspirational foundation for children who have disabilities, but families can fulfill this role only when they have the support of other families, service providers, and their communities.

One Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO), Trillium, funds Family Navigators throughout its catchment area. There was a significant question whether that LME/MCO would be able to continue to fund family navigation once the Tailored Plans went into effect. The Family Navigators will be able to continue at Trillium for one additional year in 2023 but the service may not continue after 2023 without additional advocacy. Many advocates believe that family navigation should not only continue at Trillium but be adopted across the state separate and in addition to Care Extenders because they do different work from Care Extenders.

Many more individuals with I/DD will have the opportunity to receive supported employment through 1915(i), which is a new Medicaid option that North Carolina plans to begin in December 2022. Many individuals who are currently on the waiting list who have I/DD and Medicaid will be able to receive 1915(i). It is possible that 1915(i) supported employment could be used to fund individuals with I/DD as peer mentors and in other ways in I/DD systems.

North Carolina was recently awarded a competitive federal multi-year grant to transition to competitive integrated employment (CIE). The work on the new grant will begin in the coming year. North Carolina also made a commitment to increase CIE and transition from sheltered workshops through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2022.

North Carolina is experiencing a direct support professional (DSP) workforce crisis. Providers are becoming more open to hiring individuals with I/DD and family members to serve as DSPs.

North Carolina's Governor issued an Executive Order making North Carolina an Employment First state. Despite this, only a very limited number of people with IDD and family members work in the systems that serve and support people with IDD. There is a growing self-advocacy movement in North Carolina and a growing array of family members of IDD who support the IDD community to navigate the systems.

Proposed Objectives:

- **Employ self-advocates and family members.** More self-advocates and family members would be employed and be leaders in the varied systems that support and serve individuals with IDD. Approximately 25 self-advocates and/or family members with lived experiences will be employed in paid leadership roles by the end of the second year of this contract. Approximately 75-100 self-advocates and/or family members with lived experiences will be employed in paid leadership roles by the end of year three of this contract.
- **Inform Individuals with IDD and Family members.** Inform individuals and family members with the knowledge and tools to transform their life trajectories and be employed.
- **Raise Awareness.** Raise awareness of competitive integrated employment, postsecondary education, and transition planning, assistive technology, and options for state funded services.
- **Establish Relationships.** Establish relationships with community organizations to share knowledge of other community resources, increase referrals, and participate in

a collaborative process to expand integrated services and supports for families with youth who have developmental disabilities.

- **Leadership by family and peers.** Develop a network of family and peers to help support others in navigating I/DD services and service systems, including employment.
- **On-going forum or network.** Create a forum or network for ongoing discussions to assess needs and develop resources and trainings for family members and self-advocates based on movement in the State around competitive integrated employment and changes in benefits
- **Develop Capacity for Self-Advocates and Family Members to Obtain Paid Leadership Roles:** Work with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS), Care Coordination Teams, Family Navigators, Peer Mentors, and other related stakeholders to support increased capacity for outreach training, support and networking for individuals with I/DD and family members working within the I/DD system.

DELIVERABLES:

The organization chosen by the NCCDD will be expected to:

1. Within first three months of initiative, develop a robust one-year plan with concrete action steps for increasing employment and leadership of individuals with I/DD and family members within the I/DD systems to be carried out by the initiative.
2. Actively recruit and establish a network of self-advocates and family members with lived experiences who are connected to or interested in obtaining paid leadership roles in the I/DD service system. Examples of paid leadership roles include Care Extenders/Family Navigators/Peer Mentors.
3. Engage the NC DHHS, Care Coordination teams, Care Extenders, LME/MCOs, Family Navigators, Peer Mentors, and related stakeholders to support the building of capacity for outreach, training, support, networking, and advancement of family members and individuals with I/DD to be successful Care Extenders, Family Navigators, and Peer Mentors.
4. Develop recommendations for the types of trainings, competencies, flexibilities, and other core policies and processes needed for self-advocates and family members with lived experiences to obtain paid leadership roles in the I/DD service system.
5. Champion employment and leadership of family members and self-advocates to be employed and leaders within all aspects of developmental disability systems, including care coordination, schools, advocacy, LME/MCOs, DHHS, and providers.
6. Spread awareness of competitive integrated employment, inclusive postsecondary education, Employment First in NC, home and community-based services (HCBS), supported employment through 1915(i), employment of family members and peers in care coordination, and assistive technology.
7. Expand self-advocates' and families' abilities to build the capacity within the natural support system that are already in place and that take some of the strain off state funded services.

8. Develop and implement satisfaction surveys addressing how prepared individuals with I/DD and/or family members with lived experiences to find, apply, obtain, and retain paid leadership roles in the I/DD service system.

ADDITIONAL CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

Performance Requirements

Provide NCCDD the mandatory reports (i.e., quarterly/annual programmatic reports in the NCCDD's DD Suite database, monthly fiscal reports for reimbursements, Initiative Information Sheet updates, and other relevant reports deemed necessary).

Also, the applicant selected for the initiative will be expected to establish and operationalize activities to facilitate outreach to and inclusion of the Hispanic/Latino I/DD community. The 2022-2026 State Plans of Councils on Developmental Disabilities must identify disparity among a subpopulation of the state's I/DD community and address that disparity. The NCCDD identified a barrier to services and supports for the Hispanic/Latino community caused by language access issues in response to the Administration on Community Living's (ACL) mandate. Outreach to, and collaboration with, the Hispanic/Latino community to increase engagement and involvement is the Council's proposed intent.

In addition, the Council has identified **Collective Impact** as the model to be used during the 2022-2026 Five-Year State Plan to develop, implement, and evaluate initiatives to produce systems change; therefore, the applicant selected for the initiative will be expected to operationalize activities to facilitate the five essential elements to a Collective Impact project, including:

1. **Common Agenda:**
All participants **share a vision for change** that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed upon actions.
2. **Shared Measurement:**
All participating organizations **agree on the way success will be measured and reported**, with a short list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.
3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:**
A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a **mutually reinforcing plan of action**.
4. **Continuous Communication:**
All players engage in **frequent and structured open communication** to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.
5. **Backbone Support:**
An **independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative** provides ongoing

support by guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.

Examples of when communities are ready or near ready for Collective Impact:

- There is a “champion” for this cause who has the ability to engage and encourage multiple sectors in the community and is willing to use that ability to help the community solve this problem;
- There is some local funding available to begin this effort or in-kind resources (protected time for selected staff members) to begin working to obtain funding;
- There is a history of other kinds of successful collaboration in the community among at least some of the relevant stakeholders;
- The general public is aware of this problem and cares about it or can be readily made aware and will care if they are aware.

Priority will be given to organizations that offer:

- Clear evidence of the agency's capacity to carry out the proposed initiative.
- Evidence of a history of providing related services that are demonstrated to be person-centered.
- Documentation of collaborative relationships in the I/DD field. This should include letters of commitment from partnering organizations and other collaborating agencies.
- That their work and the response in the RFA demonstrates a clear understanding of the Collective Impact model of systems change.
- Preference will be given to entities based in North Carolina that are already familiar with how the I/DD system of services works in this state.

The funding for this RFA will be up to **\$80,000.00 each year for three years** with required minimum of 25% non-federal matching funds (\$26,667.00) beginning **July 1st 1st, 2023** and ending **June 30th, 2024**. **The first-year budget should be entered into the DD Suite application.**

Definition of a Developmental Disability

Per the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Amendments of 2000, section 102(8), “The term 'developmental disability' means a severe, chronic disability of an individual that:

- ✓ is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments;
- ✓ is manifested before the individual attains age 22;
- ✓ is likely to continue indefinitely;
- ✓ results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity;
 - (i) Self-care;

- (ii) Receptive and expressive language;
- (iii) Learning;
- (iv) Mobility;
- (v) Self-direction;
- (vi) Capacity for independent living;
- (vii) Economic self-sufficiency; and

reflects the individual's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.”

IV. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Applications are welcomed from any university, non-profit, for-profit or government agency that demonstrates that their agency is qualified, responsible, and capable of conducting the activities described. Eligible entities include any organizations, agencies, or businesses demonstrating an expertise in the focus area of this initiative. To be eligible, non-profit private entities must also submit proof of current 501(c)3 status with a recent IRS determination letter dated in the current year. The Council will not consider applications submitted by agencies that do not meet eligibility to apply for funding.

Applicants must be registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State to conduct business in North Carolina, or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the execution of the contract documents (see www.sosnc.gov/corporations).

USE OF FUNDS:

Contract funds may be used to support personnel services, operating expenses, and contracted services. Funds must be budgeted in the categories listed in the line item budget. Applicants must develop a budget narrative to accompany the line item budget. The line item budget and the budget narrative must show a clear relationship between the proposed budget and the proposed activities stated in the initiative plan.

Funds may not support efforts to engage in any political activities or lobbying.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING/QUALITY ASSURANCE:

To meet the requirements of the initiative, the contractor must collaborate with NCCDD staff to:

- participate in trainings and meetings;
- participate in initiative evaluation;
- participate in the NCCDD federally mandated Periodic Performance Review and;
- participate in other activities identified or conducted by NCCDD.

Performance and quality assurance of this contract will be conducted as follows:

- NCCDD will conduct monitoring activities during each contract period and will utilize the contractor's objectives as its assurance criteria for meeting outcomes.
- The contractor must submit a quarterly progress report through DD Suite and a monthly expenditure report to NCCDD.
- The contractor must submit an Annual Performance Measures Summary form.
- The contractor must submit an End of Year Progress Report.
- The contractor must be available to present at the quarterly NCCDD meetings.

V. APPLICATION PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND APPLICATION REVIEW

The following is a general description of the process by which applicants will be selected for funding for this initiative.

- a. RFA announcements are sent to prospective agencies and organizations, via email, and/or posted on the NCCDD website, the DHHS website, and the NCCDD social media pages.
- b. Written questions concerning the specifications in this RFA will be received until **March 6th, 2023** via [email](mailto:RFAinfo@nccdd.org) at RFAinfo@nccdd.org to be answered at the Bidders' Workshop. A summary of all questions and answers will be posted on the NCCDD website (www.nccdd.org) within 5 business days after the Bidders' Workshop on **March 7th, 2023** and e-mailed to all agencies and organizations completing the Intent to Apply Form. Subsequent questions will be answered with their answers posted on the NCCDD website and e-mailed to all agencies and organizations completing the Intent to Apply Form prior to the application due date.
- c. Applications are due by 5:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time on **April 12th, 2023**. Electronic submission is required, except as otherwise noted. Complete application and attach/upload all necessary documents in DD

Suite before submitting. The complete RFA package and instructions are available through the DD Suite electronic submission program (www.ddsuite.org/).

- d. Applications will be evaluated by an RFA Review Committee. The recommendations of this committee will be reviewed by the NCCDD, which reserves the right to accept or reject the Review Committee's recommendations.
- e. Agencies and organizations are cautioned that this is a Request for Applications, and the funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all applications when such rejections are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency.
- f. Application Process Dates Summary:
 - **February 20th, 2023**: Request for applications distributed to eligible applicants and posted on the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities website (www.nccdd.org/).
 - **March 6th, 2023**: Deadline for written RFA questions to be answered at the Bidders' Workshop.
 - **March 7th, 2023**: Interested applicants may attend a Bidders' Workshop. If feasible, NCCDD may schedule an additional Bidders' Workshop or Question & Answer Session at a date and location to be determined. Check www.nccdd.org for announcements.
 - **April 12th, 2023**: Applications due to the NCCDD by close of business, 5:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time.
 - **May 16th, 2023**: Award announced.
 - **July 1, 2023**: Contract begins.

VI. ATTACHMENTS TO BE COMPLETED UPON AWARD

See DD Suite to download these attachments – all of these documents must be completed if your agency is awarded the contract for this RFA prior to the execution of the contract:

- Project Profile page
- NCCDD Assurances
- Notice of Certain Reporting and Audit Requirements
- Conflict of Interest Policy/Letter (Contractor's COI)
- Conflict of Interest Verification – Annual
- Indirect Cost Rate Letter – if applicable
- 501(c)(3) Status Determination Letter/Form (private non-profit agencies) (Note: Public organizations shall submit a document verifying their legal name and tax identification number.)
- IRS Tax Letter

- IRS Tax Exemption Verification Form (private non-profit agencies)
- State Certifications
- Federal Certifications
- DUNS Letter
- Completed Letter to Identify Individual to Sign Contracts
- Completed Letter to Identify Individual to Sign Expenditure Reports
- Certification of No Overdue Taxes (applies to non-governmental entities)
- Proof of Insurance, if applicable

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to submit the attachments along with their application. If attachments are not submitted and the applicant is selected to receive the funding for this initiative, the attachments must be completed and submitted with the contract. The NCCDD will not execute a contract until it is in receipt of all attachments. Failure to provide these timely may result in disqualification for funding.