



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: Planning Contractor Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program

Released May 22, 2024

Proposals due: June 28, 2024, by 5:00 p.m.

Please direct inquiries via email to:
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Introduction

The Buell Foundation is excited to embark on a comprehensive planning and design process for the next iteration of the Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program with the hope of relaunching the program in early 2025. We will contract with an agency for approximately six months to complete a planning/design phase of our signature program. Significant work is complete and ready for use as a foundation to build upon, including stakeholder interviews, program design frameworks, budget estimates, etc. Through the process, we anticipate significant interaction with Foundation staff. The contractor will be asked to present to the Foundation leadership, including the Board of Trustees, about the final design and budget for the program. Should the plan be approved, staff will work with the planning contractor, or another third-party operator, to launch and oversee the program.

We aim to contract with an agency that can demonstrate:

- Strong connections throughout Colorado.
- Capacity to take on a multi-dimensional project.
- Experience with complex projects, including project development and management.
- Familiarity with early childhood, business and/or government sectors. While it is not necessary for the planning contractor to have deep expertise in early childhood, it would be helpful to have a general understanding of the sector in Colorado.
- Ability to commit a consistent person/people for duration of project.
- Flexible, nimble, adaptable to changing conditions.
- Clear ability and demonstration of approaching program design with an equity lens.

Details about the intended scope of work and proposal process follow.

Summary & Background

Founded in 1962, the Buell Foundation is a private foundation dedicated to supporting the positive development of children across the state of Colorado through grants and partnerships with nonprofit organizations. Grants are primarily awarded in the areas of early childhood education and development and comprehensive sex education. Since we began focusing our grantmaking on early childhood in 1996, the Buell Foundation has awarded more than \$225 million in grants to support programs and organizations serving Colorado's youngest residents and their families.

Since the 1990s, thought leaders in both the public and private sectors in Colorado have worked to implement systems, policies and program supports that improve the quality of early childhood care and education. Increasing leadership capacity in the field at all levels was identified as a critical need to accelerate and amplify progress toward the goal of providing access to high-quality early care and education for all young children and their families. This need prompted the Buell Foundation in 2006 to fund the initial planning grant that would lead to the development of the Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program (BECLP). Since the program's launch, BECLP has prepared and deployed nearly 300 early childhood leaders in Colorado.

In 2021 the program paused in response to both changes in the early childhood system in Colorado and changes in leadership at all engaged organizations, including the Buell Foundation. The pandemic changed the narrative, and early childhood was in the spotlight as it had never been before due to the awareness raised about the essential nature of child care to keeping our communities going. With this new awareness of the sector paired with the passage of legislation that would create the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) and Universal Preschool (UPK), it was clear that the program should be adjusted to ensure relevance in the current context. In addition, within the last few years, there has been a renewed commitment to identify and minimize bias with a focus on equity for all. There is a need for equity-conscious leadership in organizations and communities, and this is particularly important when dealing with systems and services for young children and their families.

Since late 2021, staff at the Buell Foundation have been evaluating the early childhood leadership landscape and redesigning the program. Our goal is to move forward with a new focus that responds to the needs of tomorrow. Working in concert with other efforts, both public and private, our vision for this program is that leaders will be prepared to influence Colorado's early childhood systems so that more children from birth to five are happy, healthy, and thriving. Based on the planning already completed, we envision that BECLP will include the following components:

- Cohort model
- One-year fellowship
- Targeted focus for each cohort year (e.g., early childhood workforce issues)
- Learning at three levels: large group learning sessions, small group work, and individual support and mentoring
- Recruitment of mid- to senior-level leaders that have the capacity and authority to enact change within and beyond their organizations. Recruits should understand the importance of the early years in a child's life, believe in the power of advocacy to drive change, and approach this work with an equity mindset.
- External, third-party evaluation to measure change over time and make timely and responsive program adjustment.

Timeline and Scope of Work

The following table lists the anticipated timeline of activities. Dates may change as the project progresses.

Date	Activity
May 2024	RFP released
June 2024	Planning contractor identified
August 2024	Kickoff and Onboarding
September 2024-January 2025	Program Design in partnership with Buell Foundation leadership
February 2025	Present Final Plan to Board of Trustees*

* If approved by the Board of Trustees, the project would move onto the next phase of work – implementation. Staff would enter into a new contract, potentially with the planning agency, for program launch and oversight. A contract for the implementation phase of the project would be anticipated to last three years before renewal consideration by the Board.

The timeline is expanded below to include the anticipated scope of work.

Activities	Anticipated Duration
<p>Project Kickoff/Onboarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with Foundation staff to transfer knowledge and review work to date, introduce workgroup members, and understand the Buell Foundation’s vision for the project. Review all written documents created to date. Create detailed project design plan and present to Foundation for review and approval. Finalize theory of impact for the program, including vision, goals, objectives, inputs, outcomes, etc. Design and implement a schedule for regular engagement with Foundation staff on progress, budget planning and utilization, and successes/challenges in completing the scope of work. 	1 month
<p>Program Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop program oversight structure with clarification of roles/responsibilities/authority of all engaged parties. Recruit and convene advisory group representative of program alumni and other stakeholders. Curriculum/course design, including development of program calendar, identification of instructors, development of materials, etc. Research related to future program logistics: training spaces, catering vendors, hotels, etc. Develop initial evaluation plan with identification of potential third-party evaluators as well as draft an evaluator RFP for use if program launch is approved. Recruitment process design, including application development and selection process. 	5 months

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalize working relationship with the Buell Early Childhood Leaders Network (the alumni group consisting of previous program participants). • Develop marketing and communications strategy. • Explore and evaluate an optional credit-for-purchase structure through a higher education partner. • Develop a detailed budget for the program that shows startup costs as well as operating costs for the first three years of the program. 	
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Budget

The total cost of the planning phase will be finalized upon hiring of the consultant but is expected to be between \$50,000 and \$75,000. The Buell Foundation is a nonprofit organization. Our intention is to provide a fair price for the work accomplished by the selected consultant(s), and we generally strive to keep operating expenses reasonable to maximize our investments in grantee organizations.

Proposal Process

Eligibility

Bids for the planning phase of this project will be accepted from any agency with the ability to accomplish the scope of work. Please note, however, that the second phase of this project, launch and implementation, will be limited to bids from community-based nonprofit agencies with the ability to accept grants.

Proposal Content

Include all of the following information in your response:

- Name of firm and all contact information, including principal of firm.
- A brief background and history of the agency.
- Qualifications of firm to undertake this project, including specific knowledge and strengths in the following areas:
 - Content knowledge
 - Leadership development
 - Familiarity with the early childhood sector
 - Systems change and advocacy
 - Public/private partnerships
 - Ability to execute activities identified in scope of work
 - Project design and management
 - Curriculum development
 - Budget development
 - Community engagement
- Indicate primary contacts and staff members who would be assigned to this project and include a brief biography of each. Be sure to note specific expertise that may be applicable to this project.
- Provide brief descriptions and references for previous/current projects comparable to the scope of work proposed.
- Identify how your organization embodies an equity lens through internal operations as well as in project design.
- Allocated cost for the scope of work.

- Any concerns or anticipated restrictions in completing the work outlined in the scope of work.

Submission Instructions

- All submissions must be electronic in .pdf format. No hard copy proposals will be accepted.
- Submit proposal via email to tseyfarth@bueellfoundation.org.
- **Submission Deadline: Friday June 28, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. MDT**

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used to evaluate submitted proposals:

- Match of agency capabilities and qualifications with the needs expressed in this RFP
- Understanding of the unique challenges of developing a leadership program that will prompt changes to a system that is fragmented and evolving
- Experience and expertise of the agency in contracting work of this nature
- Competitive pricing structure

Interviews

- Applicants may be asked to participate in an interview, tentatively scheduled between 9:00 and 12:00 on Friday, July 12, 2024.

Notification of Contract

- All bidders will receive written notice of the award decision by July 19, 2024.

Conditions

This RFP shall not commit the Buell Foundation to award a contract to any firm or to pay any costs incurred by the firm to prepare a proposal in response to this request. The Buell Foundation reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, to negotiate with any and all bidders and to award single or multiple contracts. The Buell Foundation reserves the right to cancel this request in whole or part at any time.

The Buell Foundation further reserves the right to request additional information, oral discussions or presentations to support, supplement or clarify any written proposal. In no event shall any firm have any cause of action against the Buell Foundation or any of its members or any officer, employee, or agents of the same arising out of, relating to, or in any way connected with this RFP.

Use of Proposals and Consultant Work Product

- During the process of evaluating the proposals, the Buell Foundation reserves the right to request additional information or clarification from firms submitting a proposal and to permit corrections of errors or omissions without notice to other competing firms.
- All materials and work products developed or purchased by the consultants in connection with this engagement shall be the property of the Buell Foundation at no additional cost.