



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Administration for Children and Families

[Assistance Listing Number: 93.600]

Announcement of the Intent to Award Sole-Source Awards to the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands

AGENCY: Office of Head Start (OHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

ACTION: Notice of intent to award sole-source awards.

SUMMARY: The ACF, OHS announces the intent to award two sole-source grants in the total amount of up to \$7,200,000, or \$3,600,000 each, to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to support the establishment and provision of Early Head Start (EHS) and/or Head Start Preschool (HSP) services. These awards are made pursuant to new statutory authority and recent appropriations providing \$8 million to extend Head Start eligibility and services in the Freely Associated States, as authorized under the Compacts of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024 (Division G, Title II of Public Law 118-42), and the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

DATES: The proposed period of performance is 60-months, subject to the availability of funds.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shawna Pinckney, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Head Start, 330 C St. SW, Washington, DC 20201. Telephone: 866-763-6481; Email: HeadStart@eclkc.info.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Consistent with the Head Start Act and ACF grants administration requirements, OHS intends to fund these projects initially for 12-

months and issue additional yearly funding as supplements, subject to the availability of funds, satisfactory recipient performance, and compliance with applicable federal requirements. Continued funding is also subject to the Head Start Designation Renewal System (DRS) requirements (45 CFR § 1304.11) and recipients will not be subject to competition unless one or more DRS conditions are met, consistent with OHS policy and practice. To support initial program establishment and capacity building in these jurisdictions and consistent with the FY 2026 appropriations act, recipients of these awards will not be subject to DRS competition requirements for the first 24 months of their project period.

The Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands are sovereign nations in free association with the United States under the Compacts of Free Association (COFA). Historically, residents of these nations have had limited access to federally funded early childhood programs such as Head Start within their home jurisdictions.

Amendments to the COFA agreements in March 2024, along with accompanying appropriations, establish eligibility for Head Start services and provide dedicated funding to support early childhood education, health, nutrition, and family support services in FSM and RMI.

The purpose of these sole-source awards is to:

- Plan, establish, and operate Early Head Start and/or Head Start Preschool programs in FSM and RMI;
- Provide comprehensive early childhood services to eligible children and families;
- Support school readiness and healthy development;
- Build local capacity for sustainable program implementation.

OHS is proposing to make these awards on a sole-source basis to the governments (or their designated entities) of FSM and RMI due to the following:

- 1. Unique Eligibility and Jurisdiction:** FSM and RMI are the only jurisdictions eligible for these funds under the new statutory authority and COFA agreements.
- 2. Government-to-Government Relationship:** The United States maintains a unique political and legal relationship with FSM and RMI under COFA, necessitating direct engagement with their national governments or designated entities.
- 3. Lack of Alternative Eligible Applicants:** No other entities are authorized to receive these funds for the purposes described in the appropriations and statutory authority.
- 4. Need for Expedited Implementation:** Timely obligation of funds is critical to begin services and fulfill congressional intent.

OHS announces the intent to award the following sole-source awards:

Recipient	Award Amount
The Federated States of Micronesia	Up to \$3,600,000
The Republic of the Marshall Islands	Up to \$3,600,000

Statutory Authority: Head Start Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), and the Compacts of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024 (Division G, Title II of Public Law 118-42), which implements the Compacts of Free Association with the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

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