**III. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

***INTENT:***

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) intends to fund an initiative to establish a roommate-matching service for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD) to find a compatible roommate or a live-in caregiver in North Carolina.

***BACKGROUND:***

During NCCDD’s three-year *Supported Living: Making the Difference* initiative, family members of individuals with I/DD expressed an interest in seeing the State of North Carolina and its Department of Health and Human Services invest in a roommate-matching platform for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. One of the primary benefits of a roommate-matching platform or service is the ability to match a person with I/DD with a compatible person with a disability or other person who can act as a caregiver. Having a roommate reduces housing-related costs for each individual because they share the costs such as the rent and the utilities payments as well as the responsibilities such as cleaning. Bridges MN, a provider agency in Minnesota, shared an example by suggesting that one person might not be able to afford a one-bedroom apartment at $900 per month, but two people could afford a two-bedroom apartment at $1,200 per month where each person pays $600 of the cost. However, despite the benefits of matching people to become roommates, North Carolina does not currently have any type of formal roommate-matching platform or service available that is known to the Council.

The proposed initiative will take place during a time of significant need and change within the I/DD system in North Carolina. North Carolina experienced a Direct Support Professional (DSP) crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic where DSPs could not work for health and safety reasons or took higher-paying jobs. On July 1st, 2021, the Council started the *Supported Living: A How-to Guidebook* initiative to produce a step-by-step how-to guide to help individuals with the highest level of needs, their families, and service providers understand how to make Supported Living work successfully. On the same date, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services launched a statewide Strategic Housing Plan that is developing a five-year plan to implement between 2022 and 2027. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and Medicaid Transformation will all have an impact on the I/DD system. Also, on October 1st, 2021, the Council launched an initiative called *The Unmet Needs Initiative:* *A Coordinated Campaign to Meet the Unmet Needs* to take action on finding ways to meet the needs of the thousands of individuals with I/DD on the Registry of Unmet Needs.

**Proposed Objectives:**

1. Establish a roommate-matching service, platform, or portal that will help individuals with I/DD both lower their housing costs and find a compatible roommate who may also serve as a caregiver, a Direct Support Professional (DSP), a friend, a mentor, and more.
2. Demonstrate the value of a roommate-matching service as a way for individuals with I/DD to find a suitable and sustainable living arrangement and for families of these individuals to find a suitable and sustainable living arrangement for their loved one with I/DD.
3. Provide education on the potential tax and other benefits for live-in caregivers living with a person with I/DD as well as education on the benefits and other factors for people with I/DD to consider when choosing to live with a roommate.
4. Help stabilize the DSP crisis in North Carolina by providing opportunities for individuals with I/DD to live with their DSP or caregiver and have the support they need at home instead of relying on DSPs and caregivers who may come work in the home only whenever they are available.

***DELIVERABLES:***

The organization chosen by the NCCDD will be expected to:

1. Bring an existing roommate-matching platform or service to North Carolina. This could be done through a subcontract with an existing portal or by an existing portal provider expanding into North Carolina. Or develop a new one if the allotted funding allows, giving careful consideration to the potential costs involved in the development and establishment of a new platform and all of the related technological aspects.

2. Facilitate roommate matching and shared living development or identify a provider organization or multiple provider organizations to facilitate roommate matching and shared living development to assist individuals with I/DD in North Carolina who want a roommate to safely find a suitable, compatible roommate who may be another person with I/DD or a live-in caregiver.

3. Provide adequate training for the provider organization to use the platform and serve as the connector creating and/or facilitating matches and also developing sustainable housing plans with the individuals and their families that take advantage of all available resources.

4. Assist people with I/DD in finding a compatible roommate who could be another person with I/DD, a live-in caregiver/DSP, or a companion who might not have a disability or a defined caregiving role. This matching process must also help people entering into a roommate matching arrangement to find a safe, affordable, accessible place for the person with I/DD to live (if this person does not already have a suitable place to live with a room available for the new roommate).

5. Market the roommate-matching service and conduct trainings and workshops on the benefits and the other considerations that arise when matching with a roommate.

6. Pilot this roommate-matching service in one or more regions of North Carolina while working to ensure that this service will become available on a statewide basis in all 100 counties, including urban and rural areas, available to all individuals with I/DD, regardless of waiver status or financial resources, who are looking for a roommate or a shared living arrangement.

7. Ensure that certain safety protocols are in place such as criminal history disclosures and background checks are available to protect the individual with I/DD seeking a roommate. Specifically:

1. Gather the full legal name and telephone number of each individual seeking to enter into a roommate-matching agreement.
2. Conduct a background check through the state criminal court system for any state(s) that the individuals have lived in and the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website.
   * Note that the existence of a criminal record will not necessarily disqualify someone from entering into a roommate-matching arrangement. Instead, the facilitator will fully disclose this information to all parties involved in the potential roommate-matching arrangement to consider prior to signing a formal roommate-matching agreement.
3. Ensure that individuals with I/DD and their family members assisting them with finding a roommate do their due diligence in ascertaining a potential roommate’s background and interests to better assure a safe and compatible roommate match.
4. Ensure that access to the roommate-matching pool is by invitation only to prevent individuals who do not have a genuine interest in a roommate match from entering the pool.
5. Provide guidance to all potential parties on how to engage with connections to ensure safety as well as guidance on appropriate versus inappropriate behavior and communications.

8. If there will be a fee to use the service, provide funds to assist a designated number of individuals with I/DD and their families to access any such the service, platform, or portal at no cost to them as a way to demonstrate the value of this service to North Carolinians with I/DD and their families who are desperate to find a safe and sustainable housing arrangement for their loved one.

9. In situations where the roommate serves as a live-in caregiver, secure alternate caregivers or require the provider agency facilitating this roommate-matching service to secure alternate caregivers when the live-in caregiver goes on vacation or becomes unavailable in an emergency situation.

10. Provide education on natural supports and Personal Support Network development so that individuals with I/DD who enter into roommate-matching agreements and their live-in caregivers can understand how the individual can truly participate in the community in which they live.

***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 theinitiative 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.

1. 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.

1. Mutually Reinforcing Activities:

A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a **mutually reinforcing plan of action**.

1. Continuous Communication:

All players engage in **frequent and structured open communication** to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.

1. 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 the Supported Living service and how the I/DD system of services works in this state.

The funding for this RFA will be up to **$120,000.00** per year with required minimum of 25% non-federal matching funds ($40,000.00), for up to three years, with Year 1 beginning **October 1st, 2022** and ending **September 30th, 2023**. Within these parameters, an applicant shall propose a three-year work plan clearly identifying the outputs and outcomes for each year.  **The Year 1 budget is the only budget to be entered into the DD Suite application.**  Continuation of funding after each funded year depends on contractor’s performance, Council approval and continued funding from the United States Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Upon approval for continuation funding, the scope of work for upcoming year will be jointly reviewed and revised by the NCCDD staff and contractor 90 days prior to the start of the upcoming year.

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.”