



## **Process Assessment on Chicago Early Learning (CEL) 2019 Request for Proposal (RFP) Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why did DFSS want to conduct an assessment?**

The RFP is the mechanism by which DFSS distributes funding to agencies. DFSS leadership felt it was important to request an independent review of the process as questions were raised about whether the RFP had been implemented objectively and without bias.

### **Who is Baker McKenzie? How were they selected to conduct a review of the DFSS early learning RFP process?**

Baker McKenzie is a general practice law firm and is considered one of the largest law firms in the world.

DFSS asked the Civic Consulting Alliance for assistance identifying a partner who would be willing to conduct an analysis of the RFP process. The Civic Consulting Alliance in turn approached Baker McKenzie and arranged an introduction.

### **What was Baker McKenzie asked to do?**

Baker McKenzie was retained in late-2019, in a pro bono capacity, to determine whether the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) had a reasonable process for the RFP in 2019 for the Chicago Early Learning program and if DFSS implemented that process objectively and without bias.

### **How did Baker McKenzie conduct the assessment?**

During the course of the assessment, Baker McKenzie examined the RFP and all related amendments, various internal documents related to the development and implementation of the RFP and documents provided by community-based organizations participating in the RFP. Baker McKenzie conducted nearly 60 hours of interviews with appropriate individuals including staff at DFSS, staff at delegate agencies, staff at other City departments that play a role in any RFP process (Chicago Office of Budget Management, the Chicago Department of Law and City Comptroller).

### **How long did it take for Baker McKenzie to conduct the process assessment?**

Baker McKenzie was retained on October 25, 2019. They began with a review of materials in November, worked around the Thanksgiving and holiday breaks before moving on to conduct nearly 60 hours of interviews. Once interviews were completed, Baker McKenzie drafted a report. The final report was received by DFSS on May 19, 2020.

### **What did Baker McKenzie's process assessment conclude?**

Baker McKenzie concluded that the CEL RFP process was appropriate, fair and unbiased. Baker McKenzie's determined that the CEL RFP process was reasonably designed, that DFSS adhered to the process set out in the RFP and that DFSS demonstrated a commitment to bring objectivity, impartiality and a level playing field to the RFP process.

### **Were community-based organizations part of the assessment?**

Baker McKenzie reached out to a representative sample of approximately 20 provider applicants, which included long-standing agency partners who continued to receive funding from DFSS, applicants who were newly granted and applicants who were not granted funding from the RFP.



**Did Baker McKenzie reach any conclusions about the Universal Pre-K policy objectives?**

No, Baker McKenzie was not asked to, and did not, judge the policy objectives and did not address or seek to resolve disagreements that applicants may have had with the policy.

**Did Baker McKenzie reach any conclusions about how any individual proposals were evaluated?**

No, Baker was not asked to evaluate whether the DFSS process deployed appropriate criteria or whether DFSS appropriately judged any individual submission.