



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

External Organizational & Network Evaluation Services

KConnect | Grand Rapids & Kent County, Michigan

RFP Issued: January 30, 2026

Proposal Deadline: February 27, 2026, by 5:00 PM ET

Project Period: 4 to 6 months

Budget: Up to \$30,000

Submit Questions and Proposals To: Salvador Lopez, President & CEO | info@k-connect.org

I. About KConnect

KConnect is a backbone organization advancing systems change across Kent County's Prenatal to Career Continuum. We convene cross-sector partners, facilitate collaborative action teams ("Align & Design"), steward shared data and learning infrastructure, and support community-driven strategies that improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Our work is grounded in collective impact, shared accountability, and equity-centered decision-making. As our organization and network mature, KConnect seeks an external evaluation partner to support strategic learning, strengthen shared measurement, and inform the next phase of impact.

Vision: A future where every child and family has the opportunity and support to thrive, no matter their starting point.

Mission: We connect people, organizations, and data to mobilize collective action for lasting systems change.

II. Purpose of the Evaluation

This evaluation is intended to be learning-focused, practical, and decision-oriented. KConnect is seeking support to:

1. Establish a clear evaluation approach for the Align & Design action teams across the Prenatal to Career Continuum that can be applied and built upon beyond the terms of this contract.
2. Assess KConnect's effectiveness as a network organization, beyond the backbone function alone.
3. Define what success looks like at this stage of the organization's work and deliver clear findings, prioritized recommendations, and usable learning improvements.

KConnect expects to collaborate with the selected evaluator or firm to refine the scope and evaluation questions to ensure feasibility within the 4 to 6 month timeframe.

III. Key Evaluation Questions

Proposers should draft evaluation questions that will provide insight into the questions below, which may be refined upon the start of the project.

Align & Design (Action Teams)

- What does effective Align & Design team functioning look like across the full team lifecycle, and what criteria should guide decisions about sustaining, scaling, and transitioning to another home organization, or sunsetting a team or project?
- Which backbone supports and conditions are most associated with progress and results across stages?
- What standardized evaluation process should KConnect use across action teams?

Network Effectiveness

- How aligned and engaged is the network?
- How healthy is the network in terms of trust, collaboration, and shared ownership?
- Where is the network creating value, and where are barriers limiting impact?

Learning and Future Direction

- What does success look like at this phase of KConnect's development?
- Based on current strategic goals, how should learning and measurement support decisions through 2030?

IV. Methodology Expectations

KConnect expects a mixed-methods approach appropriate for systems change and network and process evaluation, grounded in our mission and values and centered on equity.

Data Sources May Include:

- Organizational documents and artifacts (strategy, governance, Align & Design materials, dashboard documentation, and organizational roadmaps)
- Interviews and/or focus groups with staff, partners, and other interest holders
- Best practices from similar collectives, as decided by the evaluator and the KConnect team

Equity and Disaggregation

Proposals should describe how equity will be centered throughout the evaluation and how findings will be disaggregated by relevant dimensions (e.g., race/ethnicity, geography, sector) where feasible and appropriate.

Collaboration

Proposals should clarify:

- Roles and responsibilities of the external evaluator vs. KConnect
- How tools and data collection protocols will be developed and finalized
- How the interest holder burden will be minimized
- How the evaluator intends to collaborate and seek input from KConnect

Work may be conducted primarily remotely. While in-person meetings and activities are not required, proposers may include travel costs in their budgets when travel would strengthen or support the proposed plan.

V. Deliverables & Timeline

Core Deliverables

1. **Evaluation Protocol & Tools Package** (*early deliverable*) - refined questions, methods, data sources, analysis plan, risks/limitations, and draft tools.
2. **Interim Learning Memo** - One or more sessions to review interim and/or final findings with KConnect staff and key partners, validate interpretations, and translate insights into implications and next steps.
3. **Final Evaluation Report** - Clear findings aligned to the evaluation questions, supported by evidence, with practical implications for KConnect's next phase of work.
4. **Executive Summary** - A concise, non-technical summary of key findings and recommendations.
5. **Presentation for Board/Partners** - A presentation summarizing the evaluation, findings, and recommended actions.
6. **Prioritized Recommendations Roadmap** - A concise roadmap translating evaluation findings into sequenced, actionable recommendations across immediate, near-term, and longer-term priorities.

Timeline

The evaluation must be completed within 4 to 6 months of the contract start date. Proposals should include a detailed timeline aligned to this constraint.

VI. Budget

The total budget for this engagement is not to exceed \$30,000. Proposals may include indirect/administrative costs, capped at an indirect rate of 24%.

Proposals must include:

- Budget by role and level of effort
- Rates and assumptions
- Any direct costs

KConnect will assess proposals based on value for money, not the lowest cost.

VII. Proposal Submission Requirements

Submit a single PDF including:

1. Letter of interest
2. Technical proposal (recommended no more than 5 pages)
 - a. Equity-centered evaluation approach
 - b. Timeline and workplan
 - c. Personnel bios & link to CVs, including relevant information about their firm and professional experience. If more than one person is on the proposal, indicate who will lead this work.
 - d. Budget and assumptions
3. Two to three relevant work samples or references

Deadline: Friday, February 27, 2026, by 5:00 PM ET

Submit to: info@k-connect.org with subject line: *External evaluation proposal*. Any questions regarding this proposal will be answered if emailed by Monday, February 23, 2026.

VIII. Selection Process

See Appendix A: Proposal Scoring Rubric Below.

KConnect may request to interview applicants with high-scoring proposals before making a final selection. KConnect anticipates making a final selection by Friday, March 13, 2026.

Appendix A: Proposal Scoring Rubric

Criterion	Description	Points
Fit of Evaluation Approach to KConnect's Context	Demonstrates a clear understanding of KConnect as a backbone organization and network; proposed approach is well-suited to collective impact, systems change, and network evaluation; scope is realistic for a 4 to 6 month timeline.	25
Experience with Collective Impact, Backbone, or Network Evaluation	Demonstrated experience evaluating collective impact initiatives, backbone organizations, cross-sector networks, or systems-change efforts; relevance and quality of prior work examples.	20
Equity-Centered Evaluation Approach	Clear, credible approach to culturally responsive and equity-centered evaluation, including attention to power, voice, disaggregation, and inclusive participation throughout design, data collection, analysis, and sensemaking.	20
Project Management, Feasibility, and Communication	Clear workplan and timeline; strong project management approach; designated project lead; ability to collaborate with KConnect and partners; clarity and accessibility of proposed deliverables and facilitation approach.	15
Cost Effectiveness	Budget is reasonable, transparent, and aligned with scope; roles and level of effort are clear; proposal demonstrates strong value relative to cost (not lowest cost alone).	15
Overall Proposal Quality	Overall clarity, organization, and responsiveness to the RFP; quality of writing; completeness of submission.	5
Total Possible Points		100