Project SEARCH Request for Letters of Interest

DEED-VRS Requesting Letters of Interest (LOI) from DEED-VRS Community Partners to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), Job Placement, and Job Coaching Services for Minnesota Project SEARCH Programs

September 19, 2022

Introduction

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DEED-VRS) is requesting Letters of Interest (LOI) from VRS Community Partners with a VRS Professional and Technical (P/T) contract to be the Employment Services Provider Agency at a Project SEARCH program.

A Project Search program Employment Services Provider Agency provides Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), Job Placement and Job Coaching services for students with disabilities participating in the Project SEARCH programs.

Two Project SEARCH programs are seeking Letters of Interest for the Employment Services Provider Agency:

- Burnsville/M Health Fairview Project SEARCH (to be located at M Health Fairview Ridges Hospital and Ebenezer Care Center)
- Detroit Lakes/Essentia Project SEARCH (to be located at the Essentia Health St. Mary's-Detroit Lakes hospital)

Each site serves 6-10 student interns a year and has a Project SEARCH Leadership Team that oversees the program operations. The Leadership Team will serve as the LOI review team and will make the “Provider Agency” selection. The Provider Agency is the sole provider to serve the student interns from that site. Funding is provided in the form of individual student intern service authorizations from DEED-VRS.

The selection team will rate higher those agencies that are CARF accredited and licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services as a 245D licensed employment services provider.

Questions and Deadline

The deadline for Letters of Interest is 4:30pm on Friday, October 21, 2022. Letters of Interest must be emailed to Alyssa Klein, VRS Youth Services Coordinator, at alyssa.klein@state.mn.us.

Questions should also be emailed to Alyssa Klein.

Program Description

Project SEARCH is an education and internship program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who are in their last year of high school eligibility. This is a one-school year program that prepares students for competitive integrated employment.

The Minnesota Project SEARCH sites are modeled after the nationally recognized program initiated by Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. As part of the Project SEARCH model, student interns spend their day at a host business site.
The student interns work on employability skills in the classroom for the first and last part of the day. Most of the day is spent in a skills-building internship for which they applied, interviewed, and were selected. The interns go through three rotations. The internship is unpaid and are designed to teach competitive, marketable skills.

The goal of the Project SEARCH program is for each student intern to obtain competitive integrated employment within four to eleven months after the completion of the Project SEARCH program. Job placement services typically begin by the end of the second internship rotation of the Project SEARCH program year.

During the Project SEARCH program, interns should receive Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) as needed. The five required Pre-ETS are job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, postsecondary education counseling, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. The school is the primary provider of transition services, but the selected Provider Agency will work with the school and VRS staff to fill in any gaps as needed.

Student interns begin a competitive integrated job search toward the end of their internship rotations. They may apply for open positions with the host business site during the course of the school year. The provider will assist the interns in finding employment with the host business and/or other businesses in the community using the skills they learned in Project SEARCH.

See Minnesota Project SEARCH Working Agreement for a list of all member roles and responsibilities.

**Scope of Services**

**Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Description**

The school provides transition services within the Project SEARCH program. The selected provider will be asked to enhance those services by providing Pre-ETS as needed. See the Pre-Employment Transition Services Definitions for P/T Contracts document for more detail.

**Job Placement Services Description**

Job placement services include all activities related to a search for competitive integrated employment. Activities include, but are not limited to:

Identifying and developing job opportunities, assisting with creating and updating resumes, completing job applications, preparing for job interviews, completing cover and thank you letters, providing on site job analysis, assisting employers to identify and eliminate barriers to both competitive integrated employment and to the advancement of individuals with disabilities.

Job Placement services will be paid by the Vocational Rehabilitation agency to the Provider Agency in accordance with their Professional and Technical contract and approved performance-based agreement fee schedule.

**Job Coaching Services Description**

Job coaching services include support, training, and consultation to the individual and the business to facilitate successful competitive integrated employment. Job coaching can be performed on or off the job site.

Job coaching can include but is not limited to any of the following:

- Job site skills training and assistance to perform work duties including utilizing appropriate instructional strategies to teach work tasks
- Assistance with job destination training and transportation coordination
- Training and assistance with work adjustment and interpersonal skills
• Training in employment practices, business policies and the work culture (breaks, check-ins, absences from work)
• Navigating changes in the work environment impacting potential for job retention
• Identify and integrate natural supports in the workplace, including modeling ways of supporting the new employee
• Reducing training and support as the individual becomes more independent
• Exploring and seeking job advancement

Job coaching services will be paid by the Vocational Rehabilitation agency to the Provider Agency in accordance with their Professional and Technical contract and approved fee schedule.

Letter of Interest

DEED-VRS P/T contracted agencies interested in becoming an Employment Services Provider Agency should submit a letter of interest (LOI) to DEED-VRS which includes the information in items 1-9 below. LOI respondents will be rated based on the responses, for a total of 100 points (points per item are indicated).

1. Identification of which site(s) the agency is applying for (choices are Burnsville and/or Detroit Lakes) (0 points)
2. Agency name, address, primary contact, and organizational chart which includes the personnel involved with Pre-ETS, job placement, and job coaching services and supervision. (5 points)
3. Indicate if the agency is CARF accredited and licensed by the MN Department of Human Services as a 245D licensed employment services provider. (10 points)
4. A description of the agency’s interest in being selected as a Project SEARCH Provider Agency. (10 points)
5. A description of three relevant past experiences where job development and job coaching were provided. Include the name of the business, details about the type of job, and the services that were provided. (20 points)
6. A description of the Pre-ETS services that the agency offers. (10 points)
7. Provide a listing of the qualifications, credentials and experience of key agency personnel involved in the provision and supervision of these services. (20 points)
8. Provide two letters of endorsement and support from organizations that partner with the agency. (15 points)
9. Provide relevant agency policies and procedures that demonstrate compliance with state and federal statutes and regulations regarding nondiscrimination against any other employee, applicant for employment or student on the basis of age, race, color, sex, national origin, religion, disability or in any manner prohibited by law. (10 points)