



Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing Ongoing Employment Supports and Youth Services (DDBHH OESYS) Grant(s)

GRANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Vocational Rehabilitation Services
180 East 5th Street, Suite 1200
Saint Paul, MN 55101

www.mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities

03/06/2026

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 612-213-3986.

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Request for Proposals (RFP) Part 1: Overview

Grant Overview

- Grant Name: Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Ongoing Employment Supports and Youth Services (DDBHH OESYS)
- Open for Applications: March 6, 2026
- Application Due Date: April 6, 2026

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DEED-VRS) division is requesting proposals for the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Ongoing Employment Supports and Youth Services (OESYS) grant program authorized in Minnesota Statute 268A.16:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/268A.16>

Activity 1: Ongoing Employment Support Services for Individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing. Grants for this activity are to provide statewide ongoing employment support services to individuals who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing and to empower individuals to maintain and advance in competitive, integrated employment.

Activity 2: Employment Services for Transition-Aged Youth who are Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing. Grants for this activity are to provide statewide employment services to transition-aged youth who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing.

Funding Availability

As authorized in Minnesota Statute 268A.16, up to \$950,000 in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026 is available for grants under the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Ongoing Employment Supports and Youth Services (DDBHH OESYS) grant program.

- Interested applicants may apply for a minimum of \$50,000 and a maximum of \$950,000 under this solicitation opportunity.
- Applicants must indicate whether they are applying for a grant for ongoing employment support for adults, youth transition services, or both.
- Applicants are encouraged to leverage federal, state, private sector and other funds.
- The number of grants will depend on the number of qualified proposals accepted and funded.
- Priority will be given to applicants that provide evidence of overall staff fluency in ASL.
- Applicants from rural areas are encouraged to apply, and collaborative proposals are highly desired.

5% (\$50,000) of total funding which is \$1,000,000 is designated for DEED to administer the grant program.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by a panel. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed, and the grant has reached its effective date.

Funding	Estimate
Estimated Amount to Grant	\$950,000

Funding	Estimate
Estimated Number of Awards	Minimum of one
Estimated Award Maximum	\$950,000
Estimated Award Minimum	\$50,000

Project Dates

July 1, 2026-June 30, 2028

Funding is allocated annually and can be used over the two-year period identified.

Eligibility

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements to be considered for this grant opportunity.

Applicants must be organizations or individuals with a significant and proven capacity to serve people who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing (DDBHH).

Priorities

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making. Office of Grants Management (OGM) Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities.

Grant outcomes for Activity 1 will include provision of ongoing direct employment supports to DDBHH adults and for Activity 2 outreach to DDBHH youth with services to develop employment skills, statewide.

Priority for funding shall be given to organizations or individuals with proven experience in providing accessible and innovative employment support services for adults and/or transition-aged youth who are deaf, deafblind, or hard-of-hearing in Minnesota. Direct services must be provided in American Sign Language (ASL) and other modes of communication, and with knowledge, skills and abilities to provide services to this population.

If only applying for the Youth Services section of the grant (Activity 2), applicant must demonstrate youth development experience during the contract period.

If school districts apply for funding, funds may not be used in replacement of school district obligations to provide reasonable accommodation to its students who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing. Organizations and individuals must be Minnesota-based.

Collaboration

Applicants are allowed to demonstrate multi-organization collaboration or can apply as a single entity.

Selection Criteria and Weight

The review committee will be reviewing each applicant on a 75-point scale. Organizations or individuals interested in receiving grant funding should submit a proposal to DEED-VRS which includes information as listed below.

First stage of Evaluation: The following will be considered on a Pass/Fail basis:

Proposals must be received on or before the due date and time specified in this solicitation.

Organizational or individual name, address and primary contact.

Only proposals that pass this mandatory requirement will advance to the next stage of evaluation.

Second stage of Evaluation: The applications that pass the first stage of evaluation will be scored using the identified rating and score guide for the following application components.

The scoring factors and weight that applications will be judged are based on the following:

- Description of interest in grant and summary of personnel involved with an organizational chart (20 points)
- Definition of activities provided in a workplan format (20 points)
- Budget with cost breakdown (15 points)
- Description of financial management capacity in terms of accounting, timekeeping and funds management (10 points)
- Geographic coverage area and evidence of knowledge, skills and ability to serve population, including American Sign Language (ASL) (5 points)
- Documentation of agency or individual policies and procedures that demonstrate compliance with state statutes and regulations regarding nondiscrimination against any other employee, applicant for employment or student based on age, race, color, sex, national origin, religion, disability or in any manner prohibited by law (5 points)

DDBHH OEYSS grant has the following weighted criteria in measurable outcomes and in reaching diverse populations:

Criterion Max Points Score

Description of Interest & Personnel 20

Definition of Activities (Workplan) 20

Budget and Breakdown of costs 15

Financial Management Capacity 10

Geographic Coverage & ASL Capability 5

TOTAL 75

Scoring Scale: 5=Excellent, 4=Strong, 3=Adequate, 2=Weak, 1=Poor, 0=Not Addressed

Questions, Technical Assistance and Information Sessions

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email to Elise Knopf at Elise.Knopf@state.mn.us.

Questions and answers will be posted within three business days of receipt at [Competitive Grants and Contracts / Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development](#)

Request for Proposals (RFP) Part 2: Submission

Applications must be received no later than 4:30 pm Central Time (CT), on April 6, 2026. Late applications will not be accepted.

The applicant will incur all costs incurred in applying to this RFP.

Applications may be submitted by email by 4:30 pm CT on April 6, 2026 to:

Elise Knopf

DEED-VRS

Email: Elise.Knopf@state.mn.us

Contact number for questions: (612) 213-3986

Application Content

You must submit the following for the application to be considered complete:

- 1. Exhibit A: DDBHH Ongoing Employment Supports and Youth Services Project Description**
- 2. Exhibit B: DDBHH OESYS Work plan and Budget**
- 3. Exhibit C: Capacity Responses**
- 4. Exhibit D: Certification that the entity is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government**
- 5. Exhibit E: Evidence of Good Standing**
- 6. Exhibit F: Nonprofit grantee as applicable**
- 7. Exhibit G: For-Profit Certification Disclosure and Required Documents**
- 8. Exhibit H: Certification that no current principals have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years**
- 9. Documented evidence of Personnel ASL skills (RID, SLPI or EIPA assessment or prior employer verification of skills)**

Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated. Applications must include all required application materials, including attachments. Do not provide any materials that are not requested in this RFP, as such materials will not be considered nor evaluated.

The Department of Employment and Economic Development-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DEED-VRS) reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet these requirements.

By applying, each applicant warrants that the information provided is true, correct, and reliable for purposes of evaluation for potential grant award. The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the award, as well as subject the applicant to suspension or debarment proceedings and other remedies available by law.

All costs incurred in responding to this RFP will be borne by the applicant.

Request For Proposals (RFP) Part 3: Application Review Process

Review Process

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by a committee representing content and community specialists with regional knowledge. The review committee will use the point scale provided above to evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. Reviewers will meet and discuss the proposals and then put forth their recommendations. The Commissioner of DEED will make the final funding decisions and award notification will be provided by email to applicants.

Timeline

RFP posted on the mn.gov/deed web site: March 6, 2026

Questions due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time: March 27, 2026

Applications due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time: April 6, 2026

Committee begins review of applications: April 13, 2026

Selected applicants undergo pre-award risk assessment: TBD

Selected grantees announced; grant contract agreement negotiations begin: April 27, 2026

Work plans approved and grant begins: July 1, 2026

Conflicts of Interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per Minnesota Statutes § 16B.98 Subd. 2-3 and OGM Policy 08-01 Conflict of Interest in State Grant-Making Policy.

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the Department due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties

In cases where a conflict of interest is in question or disclosed, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to, revising the grant work plan or grantee duties to mitigate the risk, requesting the grant applicant to submit an organizational conflict of interest mitigation plan, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, amending the grant, or termination of the grant contract agreement.

Public Data

Per Minnesota Statutes § 13.599

- Names and addresses of grant applicants and amount requested will be public data once proposal responses are opened.
- All remaining data in proposal responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in §13.37) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, data will be considered public when all the grant contract agreements have been fully executed.
- All data created or maintained by [State agency] as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret data as defined and classified in §13.37) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, Data will be considered public when all the grant contract agreements have been fully executed.

Request For Proposals (RFP) Part 4: Award Requirements and Grant Management Responsibilities

Preaward Risk Assessment and Financial Review

In accordance with Minnesota Statute §16B.981 and OGM Policy 08-06: Preaward Risk Assessment of Potential Grantees, it is required to consider a grant applicant's past performance and financial and operational capacity before awarding grants of \$50,000 or more. Granting agencies will request, review, and analyze information, including Exhibits C-H, as referenced in this RFP, as applicable.

Grant Contract Agreements

Each grantee must formally enter into a grant contract agreement. The grant contract agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation for the project. Grantees should read the grant contract agreement, sign, and once signed, comply with all conditions of the grant contract agreement. No work on grant activities can begin until a fully executed grant contract agreement is in place and the State's Authorized Representative has notified the Grantee that work may start. The funded applicant will be legally responsible for assuring implementation of the work plan and compliance with all applicable state requirements including worker's compensation insurance, nondiscrimination, data privacy, budget compliance, and reporting.

Accountability and Reporting Requirements

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to monitor progress on state grants by requiring grantees to submit written progress reports at least annually until all grant funds have been expended and all the terms in the grant contract agreement have been met.

The reporting schedule will be aligned with invoicing quarterly (see Grant Payments section).

Grant Monitoring

Minnesota Statutes § 16B.97 and Policy on Grant Monitoring require the following:

- One monitoring visit during the grant period on all state grants over \$50,000
- Annual monitoring visits during the grant period on all grants over \$250,000
- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at least once during the grant period on grants over \$50,000

The monitoring schedule will be negotiated with each grantee during the first week of grant award.

[Insert Grant Program Name]

For use with grants \$50K and over. Rev. 9.29.2025

Grant Payments

Per State Policy on Grant Payments, reimbursement is the method for making grant payments. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The State shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless DEED has given the grantee a written extension.

The invoice and payment schedule will be on a quarterly basis:

July 1-Sept 30 Invoice/Grant Progress Report due by Oct 31

Oct 1-Dec 31 Invoice/Grant Progress Report due by Jan 30

Jan 1-March 31 Invoice/Grant Progress Report due by April 30

April 1-June 30 Invoice/Grant Progress Report due by July 30

Authorized Representatives

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §16B.98, subd. 5 (d), grantees must clearly post on the grantee's website the names of, and contact information for, the grantee's leadership and the employee or other person who directly manages and oversees a grant contract agreement on behalf of the grantee.

Contracting and Bidding Requirements

A. Municipalities

Grantees that are political subdivisions or municipalities must use these guidelines:

- A. Municipalities are required to comply with Minnesota Statutes §471.345, Uniform Municipal Contracting Law.
- B. The Grantee and any subrecipients must comply with prevailing wage rules as applicable.
- C. Municipalities and any subrecipients must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government: Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement
- D. The Grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.

B. Nongovernmental entities

Grantees that are nongovernmental entities must use these guidelines:

- A. Any services and/or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.
- B. Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.
- C. Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.

- D. The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:
- a. State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List
 - b. Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business Program
 - c. Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: Central Certification Directory
- E. The grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- F. The grantee must maintain support documentation of the purchasing or bidding process used to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single source bid, if applicable.
- G. Notwithstanding the above, the State may waive bidding process requirements when:
- a. Vendors included in response to competitive grant request for proposal process were approved and incorporated as an approved work plan for the grant; or
 - b. It is determined there is only one reasonably able and available source for such materials or services and that grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
- H. The Grantee and any subrecipients must comply with prevailing wage rules per Minnesota Statutes §§177.41 through 177.50, as applicable.
- I. The grantee and any subrecipients must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government: Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement

Audits

Per Minnesota Statutes § 16B.98 Subdivision 8, the grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the Commissioner of Administration, the State granting agency, the State Auditor, the Attorney General, and the Legislative Auditor as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant contract agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

Grant Provisions

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review at: Office of Grants Management Policies, Statutes, and Forms/Forms and FAQs tab

Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes

[Insert Grant Program Name]

For use with grants \$50K and over. Rev. 9.29.2025

- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking violations and traffic violations
- Out-of-state transportation and travel expenses. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.

Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified per Minnesota Statutes § 363A.02. The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability regarding any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Minnesota Rules, Part 5000.3500.

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

Voter Registration

The grantee will comply with Minnesota Statutes §201.162 by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee.

Right of Cancellation

The State reserves the right to cancel this solicitation if it is in its best interest. The State reserves the right to negotiate modifications to the application or to reject all applications received because of this Request for Proposals. The State does not intend to award a grant contract agreement solely based on any response made to this request or pay for information solicited or obtained.

Required Attachments

- 1 Exhibit A: DDBHH OEYSS Project Description**
- 2 Exhibit B: DDBHH OEYSS Work plan and Budget**
- 3 Exhibit C: Capacity Responses**
- 4 Exhibit D: Certification that the entity is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government**
- 5 Exhibit E: Evidence of Good Standing**
- 6 Exhibit F: Nonprofit grantee as applicable**
- 7 Exhibit G: For-Profit Certification Disclosure and Required Documents**
- 8 Exhibit H: Certification that no current principals have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years**
- 9 Documented evidence of Personnel ASL skills (RID, SLPI or EIPA assessment or prior employer verification of skills)**



EXHIBIT C: PERFORMANCE CAPACITY

INSTRUCTIONS: Please respond to these performance capacity questions as required by Minnesota Statutes 16B.981 Subd. 2 (1) and as part of the response to this Grant Request for Proposal.

- 1. Describe your history of performing the work that will be funded by the grant or duties similar to those required. Include your organization's current and past staffing, current and past budget, and organizational framework.**

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 2. Have you been awarded a grant from the State of Minnesota in the past 5 years?**

No

Yes

- 3. If "yes", please provide the details of the award amount, the duties, and the outcomes of your grant.**

Click or tap here to enter text.

Print Name

Signature

Title

Date



EXHIBIT D: CERTIFICATION: NOT SUSPENDED OR DEBARRED BY THE STATE OF MINNESOTA OR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Grant applicant must certify to this condition required under this Grant Request for Proposal

INSTRUCTIONS: Sign below to finalize response and submit this document as part of the response to the RFP.

Office of Grants Management (OGM) Policy 08-04: *Grant Contract Agreements and Grant Award Notifications* requires that agencies must not award a grant to a vendor or grantee that has been suspended or debarred from doing business with the State of Minnesota or with the federal government.

By signing here, I warrant that my organization has not been suspended or debarred from doing business with the State of Minnesota or with the federal government.

I certify that this information is true, correct, and reliable.

The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the grant contract agreement award and may subject me and my organization to suspension or debarment proceedings, as well as other remedies available to the State, by law.

Print Name

Signature

Title

Date



EXHIBIT E: EVIDENCE OF GOOD STANDING

INSTRUCTIONS: Potential grantee must certify that the organization has a status of “in good standing” with the Secretary of State as required by Minnesota Statutes 16B.981 Subd. 2 (3) and as part of the response to this Grant Request for Proposal.

1. Is your organization (for-profit or nonprofit) registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State (SOS) and “in good standing”? (Applicants can verify that they are “in good standing” by searching for their business name on the [SOS website](#).)
 - Yes
 - No



EXHIBIT F: REQUIRED NONPROFIT GRANTEE DOCUMENTS, AS APPLICABLE

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following questions and provide the requested information

1. **Were you required to submit a 990 or a form 990-EZ for your organization's last fiscal year?**
 - Yes
 - No

2. **If you are exempt from filing or your organization has been in business for less than one year, please describe the internal controls you have over business expenditures and outcomes of the grant funds, if awarded.**

Examples of internal controls include, but are not limited to: documented policies and procedures; segregation of duties such as having different staff who enter receivables versus those who post payments; using a payroll system; requiring usernames and passwords, along with appropriate levels of access to systems; supervisor review and approval of payments and timecards; and other internal controls to ensure compliance with laws and regulations and safeguard use of grant funds.

Click or tap here to enter text.

3. **Are you a charitable organization that made over \$750,000 in your last fiscal year and were required to have an audited financial statement per MS 309.53?**
 - Yes
 - No

Nonprofit grant applicants may be required to submit the following documents, as applicable to the organization and as required by Minnesota Statutes 16B.981 Subd. 2 (2) and Subd. 2 (5) as part of the pre-award risk assessment:

- Most recent 990 or Form 990-EZ filed with the IRS
- Most recent audit as required, under Section 309.53, Subdivision 3
- If not in existence long enough to file Form 990, Form 990 EZ or most recent audit, the nonprofit grant applicant must submit the most recent set of board-reviewed (or managing group if applicable) financial statements.
- If not required to submit any 990 forms per IRS determination, the nonprofit grant applicant must provide a copy of the IRS determination letter.



EXHIBIT G: FOR-PROFIT REQUIRED DOCUMENTS, LIEN DISCLOSURE, AND CERTIFICATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following questions and provide the requested certification.

1. Has the for-profit entity filed its most recent state and federal tax returns?

- Yes
- No

2. If you have been in business less than a year, please describe the internal controls you have over business expenditures and outcomes of the grant funds, if awarded.

Examples of internal controls include but are not limited to: documented policies and procedures; segregation of duties such as having different staff who enter receivables versus those who post payments, using a payroll system, requiring usernames and passwords along with appropriate levels of access to systems, supervisor review and approval of payments and timecards, and other internal controls to ensure compliance with laws and regulations and safeguard use of grant funds.

Click or tap here to enter text.

3. Asset lien disclosure:

- I do not have any liens on assets
- I do have liens on assets: Please describe the assets and associated liens below:

4. Certify not under bankruptcy proceedings

By signing below, I certify that the business is not under bankruptcy proceedings.

I certify that the information is true, correct, and reliable.

The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the grant contract agreement award and may subject me/this for-profit entity to suspension or debarment proceedings, as well as other remedies available to the State, by law.

Signature	Print Name	Title	Date
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For-profit business grant applicants may be required to submit the appropriate documents pursuant to 16B.981 Subd. 3 as part of the pre-award risk assessment:

- Most recent federal and state tax returns
- Current Financial Statements



EXHIBIT H: CERTIFICATION: NO CONVICTION OF FELONY FINANCIAL CRIME BY A PRINCIPAL

Grant applicant must certify to this condition required under this Grant Request for Proposal.

**INSTRUCTIONS: Sign below to finalize response and submit this document as part of the response to the RFP.
Upload or attach an organizational chart or list of principals that you are certifying for below.**

Minnesota Statutes 16B.981 Subd. 2 (6) requires that no current principals of a grantee have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years. A principal is defined as a public official, a board member, or staff (paid or volunteer) with the authority to access funds provided by this grant opportunity or to determine how those funds are used.

By signing here, I warrant that no current principal of my organization has been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

I certify that this information is true, correct, and reliable.

The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the grant contract agreement award and may subject me and my organization to suspension or debarment proceedings, as well as other remedies available to the State, by law.

Print Name

Signature

Title

Date