RFP for Vocational Rehabilitation Program Community Partners: April 18, 2022

Addendum 2: Questions and Answers

Date: April 29, 2022

This addendum is in reference to the RFP for Vocational Rehabilitation Program Community Partners posted at https://mn.gov/deed/about/contracts/open-rfp.jsp.

1. Modifications to Attachment A: Application and Application D: Cost Detail
   • **On the Job Training:** The RFP Attachment A: Application and Attachment D: Cost Detail published on April 18, 2022, included an error whereby “On the Job Training – Services” and “On the Job Training – Wages” were included. These service options have been removed from Attachment A: Application and Attachment D: Cost Detail as of April 29, 2022. On the Job Tryout is not a contracted service for Community Partners. Other On the Job Work and Training Options contracted services including Work Experience, Internship, Job Tryout, and On the Job Evaluation remain in the RFP attachments.
   • **E1 PBA:** The E1 PBA is an acronym for “Employment First” Job Placement and Follow-Up under a Performance Based Agreement. The RFP Attachment D: Cost Detail published on April 18, 2022, included an error whereby only the statewide standardized rate of $3,800 over 3 milestone payments for Job Placement and Follow-Up Services under a Performance Based Agreement was listed. That has been revised to include the statewide standardized rate of $5,000 over 4 milestone payments for the E1 PBA.

2. Amendment to RFP
   Amendments to the RFP are noted with new language **underlined** and deleted language with **strikethrough**.

   The RFP posted April 18, 2022 contained a typo that has been revised in the amended RFP posted April 29, 2022 to the DEED Grants and Contracts Opportunities webpage. The revision is:
   • Section 5: Evaluation Procedure and Criteria, page 10, Phase 3: Select Finalist(s):
     - The version posted April 18, 2022 stated: “Only those responses that have been evaluated under Phase 1 shall be eligible for Phase 2.”
     - The amended RFP posted April 29, 2022 states: “Only those responses that have been evaluated under Phase 2 shall be eligible for Phase 3.”

3. Information Session
   • Can I access a recording of the 4/25/22 RFP Webinar?
     - **Answer:**
4. **Question: I have an existing, active P/T contract – is this process for me?**

- “Proposals for initial evaluations must be received by 4:30 PM on Monday, May 9th” - who has to do that? We have an existing PT Contract.
- Do I need to redo my agency’s VR contract? Or is this RFP a separate topic?

  ➢ **Answer:**

  - All organizations that wish to be considered for a VRS Community Partner contract starting July 1, 2022, moving forward must submit a proposal in response to the Request for Proposals published April 18, 2022.
  - All P/T contracts currently held by VRS Community Partners expire June 30, 2022, even if an organization’s contract is relatively new. This initial proposal process is for contracts to start July 1, 2022.
  - The Request for Proposals and the proposal response process is for all VRS Community Partners, not simply new providers. The process to receive a new contract is the same for existing Community Partners and potential new Community Partners.
  - If a Community Partner does not submit a new proposal, that partner’s contract will end June 30, 2022, and VRS will not be able to authorize for services starting July 1, 2022. This may result in a break in services to individuals.
  - To ensure a contract start date of July 1, 2022, proposals must be received by 4:30 p.m., Monday, May 23, 2022.

5. **Question: How do I submit a proposal?**

- How can we renew the contract?
- We have an active contract with VRS in Minnesota. Do we need to re-apply? If yes, can you explain how we go about this?
- When should CRP’s submit requests to modify the contract, if needed?

  ➢ **Answer:**

  - For clarity: a “CRP” is a Community Rehabilitation Provider which is a VRS Community Partner that has CARF accreditation.
  - All organizations that wish to be a VRS Community Partner starting July 1, 2022, moving forward must submit a proposal in response to the Request for Proposals published April 18, 2022.
  - All the information and instructions about how to respond with a proposal is detailed on the DEED Grants and Contracts Opportunities webpage under “Vocational Rehabilitation Program Community Partners – Ongoing Solicitation.”
  - The specifics of the process and instructions are detailed in the Request for Proposals.
  - Responders should propose to provide any services they think might be a part of their P/T contract. You can look at contracted service definitions in the Contracted Services section of the VR Community Partner Guide.
• Community Partners with current contracts must submit proposals for new contracts as outlined above, as all Community Partner contracts expire June 30, 2022.

6. **Question: Statewide Standardized Rates**
   - What services have standardized rates?
   - Are Pre-ETS service rates negotiable this year or still set at $75/hr for individual services and $30/group services?
   - Regarding PreETS Services on contract, it is my understanding they are currently set at the same rate for every vendor at $75/hr and group $30 for 2+. Will they be set statewide at the same rate going forward or do we need to propose a rate? We are wondering what to fill in on Attachment D: cost detail form for the PreETS if they will be set by the state.
   - FYI: there is a new rate structure for the city of Mpls and City of st Paul workers. Employers are required (based on their size) to pay specific rates. in addition to this - employers are mandated to provide 1 hour of PTO for every 30 hours worked. this turns in to 8.6 hours on a 260-hour traditional Internship auth. I would want to incorporate this into the rates for internships and long-term work experiences. I am not sure if this was on your plans for unveiling the rates for those thing.
   ➢ **Answer:**
     • Job Placement and Retention under a Performance Based Agreement (PBA), Occupational Communication Specialists Services (OCSS) differential for the Job Placement and Retention Performance Based Agreement, and any “Wages” service for an On the Job Work and Training Option have statewide standardized rates.
     • Organizations can propose rates to cover the cost for any services outside of PBA, OCSS, and Wages, by completing the rate rationale portion of Attachment D: Cost Detail.
     • VRS may set additional standardized rates based on responses to the RFP.

7. **Question: What Services Should I Apply to Provide?**
   - As a new provider, I am having trouble knowing what services to sign up for. Could you please advise?
   ➢ **Answer:**
     • Responders should select all services they can provide at this time and that might be a part of their P/T contract. You can look at contracted service definitions in the [Contracted Services section of the VR Community Partner Guide](#).

8. **Question: Independent Living Services**
   - IL Skills captures many of the additional categories: ie permit, bus, post-secondary supports. As a CIL provider, do we contract for both?
   ➢ **Answer:**
     • Yes, the CILs may propose any of the service options on Attachment D: Cost Detail. DEED-VRS calls out services specifically in the RFP that are options to purchase from all partner organizations.
9. **Question: Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Introductory Work Activities Services**
   - **What is Pre ETS Introductory work activities services?**
     - **Answer:**
       - Pre-ETS Introductory Work Activity Services falls under Pre-ETS Work-Based Learning.
       - Additional information around all Pre-ETS can be found [here](#).

10. **Question: Service not listed in RFP Attachments**
    - Some current P/T Contracts list “Pre-ETS Coordination Services”. Is that an option for the upcoming contract? If so, is there a definition that can be shared?
      - **Answer:**
        - Pre-ETS Coordination services will no longer be a contracted service.
        - All services that are an option are listed in the current Attachment D: Cost Detail response to the RFP and are current with services VRS will purchase. Past services not included in the Attachment D: Cost Detail should not be included in the response.

11. **Question: E1PBA**
    - I noticed when you were going over the Attachment D, E1PBA wasn’t on the list?
      - **Answer:**
        - The E1 PBA is an acronym for “Employment First” Job Placement and Follow-Up under a Performance Based Agreement.
        - VRS will continue to authorize for E1PBA.
        - To apply to provide E1PBA: please select “Job Placement and Retention under a Performance Based Agreement” in Attachment A: Application and Application D: Cost Detail.
        - The RFP Attachment D: Cost Detail published on April 18, 2022, included an error whereby only the statewide standardized rate of $3,800 over 3 milestone payments for Job Placement and Follow-Up under a Performance Based Agreement was listed. That has been revised to include the statewide standardized rate of $5,000 over 4 milestone payments for the E1 PBA.

12. **Question: Pre-ETS vs. General Services**
    - Can you differentiate between Services and Pre-ETS services? I.e.- job coaching & job seeking skills training (general services) vs Pre-ETS job seeking skills training.
      - **Answer:**
        - Additional information about general services and service definitions can be found in the [Contracted Services section of the VR Community Partner Guide](#).
        - Additional information about Pre-ETS and service definitions can be found [here](#).
13. **Question: No-Show Fee**  
- Are vendors allowed to have a no-show fee on their contract?  
  - **Answer:**  
    - DEED-VRS will not accept or approve cancellation or no-show fees on proposals.

14. **Question: Resumes of Supervising Staff**  
- Regarding Resumes: resumes of our supervising staff. Our current staff have been with us for 14+ years, do you want their resume from when they started? Or do we have them redo the resume to reflect current duties?  
  - **Answer:**  
    - Resumes for staff providing the direct services to individuals served under this P/T contract should be recently updated and submitted where requested.

15. **Question: Sole Proprietorship**  
- I'm an organization of one; do I need to submit my resume?  
- In the application, how do you want LUV's to fill out the organizational chart if it's a sole member business?  
  - **Answer:**  
    - If you are a Limited Use Vendor (LUV), we require a resume from the person providing and/or supervising the services, and all organizations need to follow the process to be awarded a new contract.  
    - If you are a sole proprietorship and submitting an organization chart, please simply list on the chart that the organization is a sole member proprietorship.

16. **Question: Professional Letters of Recommendation**  
- What is needed for the Limited Use Vendor (LUV) letters of reference?  
- I had a few questions about the references necessary for a Limited Use Vendor: Would a reference from a participant in our program who received job support [be] accepted? Or do they both need to be from a company or organization? Lastly, for the qualifications and experience section, would you like that for everyone at our organization who is part of the work or just those working directly with the participants?  
- Can we ask a VRS staff to write a letter of recommendation for the application?  
- Do we still have to follow this process even though we already have a contract with VRS and have to have 2 letters of recommendation? Who can we get these letters from?  
- Is there a form for References to fill out? If this is the case could you please send us a link?  
  - **Answer:**  
    - The professional letters of recommendation should serve as evidence that your agency has experience and skills in serving individuals who experience disability.  
    - Examples of who can provide letters of recommendation include individuals served, guardians, county waiver case managers, VRS field staff your organization has worked with, professional network members, school staff, etc.
17. **Question: Ability to Provide Quality Services**
   - How do I provide information on our qualifications and experience?
   - Lastly, for the qualifications and experience section, would you like that for everyone at our organization who is part of the work or just those working directly with the participants?
   - In Attachment A online form there is a question about the ability to provide quality job related services which opens a narrative box and asks us to provide a more descriptive statement. What could go into that statement? A description of background/experience as it relates to providing services or something else?
   - Do you have examples of a response to “organizations ability to provide quality xxx services”?
     - **Answer:**
       - Responders may respond in each service area with a statement that shows how the organization is prepared to provide services offered under a contract.

18. **Question: Not Ready to Provide the Service July 1, 2022**
   - I would like to provide benefits coaching and benefits planning in our new contract, but the person I contacted at DHS said the next training is not until July. Can I include the service in the contract with a note that we are scheduled to complete the training at a later date? Or will I need to do a contract amendment in July once our employees complete the training?
     - **Answer:**
       - Only add services the organization is trained and qualified to provide. Amending contracts for additional services may be completed as necessary.

19. **Question: Specific Requirements for Services**
   - Can you give me more specifics in what you are looking for in a resume to show staff are certified in CE and Benefits Planning?
     - **Answer:**
       - For services that require specific certifications or training, please include resumes that show the relevant education and training, as well as copies of current certifications.
       - The specifics of the requirements necessary are noted in the Contracted Services section of the VR Community Partner Guide.

20. **Question: Timeline**
    - Our organization’s PT Contract needs to be signed by a board of directors; how do we ensure we get our contracts on time?
      - **Answer:**
        - Please include timeline needs – such as board meetings - with your proposal and VRS will do its best to accommodate timelines.
21. **Question: Contracting Process**
   - What are the reasons VRS is changing from the historical contracting process to a competitive RFP?
     - **Answer:**
     - DEED-VRS is following the State of Minnesota competitive RFP process as outlined and approved by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 16C (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/16C).

22. **Question: Proposal Evaluation**
   - Who specifically is making decisions on which providers are chosen for contracts?
   - Who is reviewing and scoring provider responses?
     - **Answer:**
     - The evaluation and scoring process is outlined in the Request for Proposals. An evaluation team will be reviewing RFP responses.

23. **Question: Proposal Evaluation: Minimum Score**
   - What is the minimum score a provider has to receive to be eligible for a contract?
     - **Answer:**
     - The weight factors are noted in the RFP and scoring criteria will be based on the quality of the proposals received.

24. **Question: Number of Contracts**
   - Is VRS only selecting a certain number of providers to contract with going forward? If so, how many?
     - **Answer:**
     - VRS does not have a set number of providers we will contract with going forward.

25. **Question: Appeal Process**
   - What is the appeal process if a provider is not chosen to move forward with contracting?
     - **Answer:**
     - DEED follows the RFP process outlined in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 16C (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/16C). The RFP is ongoing, and responders can reapply at any time.

26. **Question: Authorizations Started Prior to June 30, 2022**
   - What happens with authorizations for services that started with our current contract and continue after a new contract? For example, a PBA? How do we ensure continuity of service?
   - How is VRS considering providers who have active/ongoing authorizations and currently providing services to VRS consumers that have chosen thru informed choice to receive their services from that particular provider?
Answer:
- Because all contracts expire June 30, 2022, all authorizations under an organization’s current contract (that expires June 30, 2022) will also expire no later than June 30, 2022.
- If a Community Partner does not submit a new proposal, that partner’s contract will end June 30, 2022, and VRS will not be able to authorize for services starting July 1, 2022. This may result in a break in services to individuals.
- To ensure a contract start date of July 1, 2022, proposals must be received by 4:30 p.m., Monday, May 23, 2022.
- If an organization is selected for a new contract to start July 1, 2022, then VR staff will reissue authorizations as of July 1, 2022 so there is not a break in service to individuals.
- If you have a PT Contract in place with a July 1, 2022 start date, then a service initiated prior can continue. Organizations in this situation should work with local VRS teams to request updated authorizations for July 1, 2022.
- If you have a PT Contract in place with a July 1, 2022 start date, then a service initiated can continue. Consumer choice will continue to be provided to individuals with their VRS counselor and local VRS office based on partners available to provide services.

27. Question: Informed Choice of Service Provider
- How is the competitive RFP going to insure informed choice for all VRS consumers throughout the State of MN?
  Answer:
  - An individual’s informed choice of service provider will be provided to individuals with their VRS counselor and local VRS office based on partners available to provide services.
  - DEED-VRS is following the State of Minnesota competitive RFP process as outlined and approved by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 16C (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/16C).

28. Question: Employment First Minnesota (E1MN)
- How does the new RFP process impact the MOU with DHS for Employment First?
  Answer:
  - The RFP process is in alignment with the Employment First Minnesota (E1MN) framework in that it allows opportunities for services providers throughout Minnesota to respond with a proposal to provide services.

29. Question: CARF Accreditation
- We currently have a contract as an LUV and have started the process of CARF accreditation. When we complete the application for this RFP should we follow Option 1 (Proof of CARF accreditation/intent to survey and fee) or Option 2 (resumes of supervisory staff and 2 letters of support)?
• We have started the process of CARF accreditation with an increase contracted budget. Will the contract be completed with the $200,000 LUV limited or increased above the $200,000 due to our pending CARF status?
  ➢ Answer:
    • If an agency has the CARF survey scheduled and the necessary documentation has been previously provided to the VRS Program Specialist, then please apply utilizing the CRP protocol for the response. If you have previously submitted payment to CARF and the Intent To Survey documentation to the VRS Program Specialist, the agency would be considered a CRP with lifted limit while you are in CARF pending status for the 7/1/2022 contract.

30. **Question: State Covid Policy vs Federal**
   • Why is the Covid Testing/Vaccination policy required since the lawsuit against the requirement was upheld at the federal level and it had basically been dropped?
     ➢ Answer:
       • The Minnesota State Covid Proof of Vaccination/Testing [Policy #1446](#) is specific to the state of Minnesota. Activities regarding federal rules are not connected to the state policy.

31. **Question: State Covid Policy Compliance**
   • Is the MN State Covid Proof of Vaccination/Testing policy still in place for PT Contracted providers? If so, where does our agency provide information related to the Minnesota State Covid Proof of Vaccination/Testing policy #1446?
     ➢ Answer:
       • The Minnesota State Covid Proof of Vaccination/Testing [Policy #1446](#) is active and in place.
       • Attachment A: Application contains an attestation statement related to your organization’s compliance with [Policy #1446](#).

32. **Questions: State Covid Policy Changes**
   • We have a covid testing/vaccination policy specific for staff supporting VRS clients. We also have a covid testing/vaccination policy that aligns with the federal Home Health Agency guidance (QSO 22-07-ALL) and allows for religious and medical exemptions. Do you foresee VRS/DEED changing or updating their COVID Vaccination policy to align with the federal policy that allows for religious and medical exemptions?
     ➢ Answer:
       • [Policy #1446](#) is set by Minnesota Management and Budget.

33. **Questions: State Covid Policy Changes**
   • Can an unvaccinated staff person take an at-home COVID test?
Answer:
- At-home COVID tests are acceptable if that is allowed under the organization’s written COVID policy.

34. **Question: Worker’s Compensation Insurance**
- If I am a sole proprietor of the business and only staff person providing services (in other words, only person) under my business, do I need worker’s compensation coverage in addition to: commercial general liability, commercial automobile liability, and professional liability, errors and omissions?
  
  Answer:
  - If Contractor has no employees in the state of Minnesota, Contractor must provide a written statement, signed by an authorized representative, indicating the qualifying exemption that excludes Contractor from the Minnesota Workers’ Compensation requirements.

35. **Question: Network Security Insurance**
- I have a question regarding the Network Security policy, what exactly are you looking for? An insurance policy for coverage for cyber-attacks/data breaches? Or a VPN? Or secure server for accessing sensitive information?
- Is there a grace period for the Network Security to be fully integrated?
- If we can show documentation the insurance is being processed, can the application be submitted? Or do I wait until the insurance is implemented before submitting the application?
- Where do I find affordable cyber security insurance? How do I know if my quoted policy meets the state requirements?
  
  Answer:
  - Responders are agreeing to obtaining the insurance, if applicable, prior to the execution of the P/T contract, not necessarily during the response to the proposal/application period.
  - Network Security Policy is a State of Minnesota contracting standard practice.
  - The responder may submit an exception to this term under the RFP response. The State reserves the right to reject, negotiate, or accept any exception listed to the State’s terms and conditions.
  - VRS cannot allow a grace period to implement any insurance requirements.
  - DEED-VRS does not have a resource or referral to obtain insurance. Please discuss with your insurance agent for a referral source.

36. **Question: Minnesota Department of Human Rights Forms**
- If I already have an equal pay certificate, affirmative action certificate do I need to get new ones for this contract or can I send copies of what I have?
- If we anticipate our contract will be less than $50,000, do we need to fill out all the certifications that are only for the larger contracts?
  
  Answer:
• Please complete all the forms as outlined in the RFP, and if an update to any of the certifications is required with MDHR please do so.

37. **Question: Vendor ID Number: MDHR Form**
   • Looking at the Workforce document and are not quite sure what information needs to be included: what is the vendor ID?
     ➢ **Answer:**
     • The Minnesota Department of Human Rights form uses SWIFT vendor ID. SWIFT is the statewide payment system, and each provider is assigned a vendor ID number. Please refer to that number to complete the form. Any vendor who will be awarded a contract will need to register with SWIFT. Information for supplier/vendor contracts is found at [SWIFT Vendor Resources / Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) (mn.gov)].

38. **Question: Consultation**
   • Who determines which staff need to be in the Consultation Meeting/are there guidelines of who to include?
     ➢ **Answer:**
     • Each organization can determine the appropriate staff necessary for the consultation meeting.
     • Any combination of employees with authority to make decisions on contracted services and rates are appropriate to include in the consultation.
     • Often organizations find it helpful to have the Program Director, potentially the Executive Director or CEO, and the Chief Financial Officer attend.

39. **Question: Sub-Minimum Wage Employment**
   • The need to pay participants at least minimum wage is outlined in Pre-ETS, however not in general services? Are providers allowed to pay participants in VR general services sub-minimum wage based on productivity?
     ➢ **Answer:**
     • DEED-VRS will not support or purchase simulated work or subminimum wage activities for any individuals served. All work must be in line with competitive integrated employment goals.

40. **Question: Official Business Name Change**
   • How do we process a name change? Will this be a problem while the name change is implemented?
     ➢ **Answer:**
     • It is very important VRS has the responders correct organizational name. It would be best to have paperwork with the Secretary of State completed prior to applying for a 7/1/22 contract. After 07/01/2022 if an organizational name change is still needed, an amendment to the contract can be made when the name change is formalized with the
41. **Question: Official Business Address**
   - My home address is registered with the secretary of state since I work out of my home. Can I put this on the exceptions page, or should I put my home address and just identify it as personal information? (I have a PO Box I can use for public awareness).
   - **Answer:**
     - You should use the address that matches all business and registration accounts for the State of MN as that is how SWIFT verifies for payment.

42. **Question: Website Error**
   - My agency has previously submitted our CARF accreditation, and we are still listed as LUV. I was under the assumption that we would move to CRP. Do I still need to submit letters of recommendation?
   - **Answer:**
     - Please submit documentation of CARF accreditation to your VRS Program Specialist during the response period and follow the response protocol for a CRP.

43. **Question: Web-Based Forms**
   - I’m working on my RFP and wanted to know if it is correct that I get a new link every time I save and close. It doesn’t have an option to just save, it always says send link. This is going to be hard to keep track of what the most recent link is so I wanted to see if I was completing the form correctly.
   - **Answer:**
     - The web-based forms for Attachment A: Application and Attachment D: Cost Detail are web-based forms. It is possible to start completing the form and save the progress without submitting. A unique link will be sent each time to return to the form that was exited. Please keep track of the most recent link.